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## CREATIVE FUNDRAISING TIPS FOR SOLEMATES®

- **Start Early!** Give yourself time to reach your goal.
- **Build the base. Ask supporters to spread the word.** When you reach out to family and friends, ask them to also share the mission of Girls on the Run with their respective friends.
- **Customize and Personalize your Fundraising Page on Active.com.** The personal fundraising page is an opportunity to customize a message to friends, family, co-workers and other donors. It is important to spend some time customizing the page - people are more likely to contribute to a cause if they have a good understanding of the organization's mission and outreach.
- **Letter Writing Campaign.** Send letters to friends, neighbors, family members and business associates. Make sure the local contacts know that their donations will impact *their* community. Many folks are excited and willing to get involved in worthy causes which help their own communities, so just ask!
- **Let the donors sponsor a mile.** Decide what the event is worth per mile, and let donors "buy" a mile. Keep the online fundraising page up-to-date regarding how many miles are left to "sell" so they can make sure they contribute before they are all spoken for. 26 miles x \$100 = \$2600!
- **Matching Gifts.** Many employers will match gifts to non-profit organizations such as Girls on the Run SoleMates. Ask donors to check with their human resource department when they make their contribution. Girls on the Run can provide supporting documentation when requested.
- **Sponsor ME – literally!** Tell potential donors that they can sponsor an arm or leg, then write their name or message on it come race day. Not only is it a great way to encourage donors, but it makes the supporters feel like they are crossing the finish line with you.
- **Use the social network.** Use [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [MySpace](#), [LinkedIn](#) or other social media sites. Add the fundraising page link to the status update, comment or profile pages. Put a link to the fundraising page in the footer of any forums. It is a great way to get the word out about SoleMates and pick up a few donations.
- **Start a blog.** Some cool marathon training blogs:
  1. <http://got2trotlibrarian.blogspot.com>
  2. <http://eastcoastrunner.blogspot.com>
  3. <http://www.gettheserenity.com/blog>





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- Add the fundraising page link to a website.
- Email signatures. Include the fundraising page link in the email signatures. This is what a work and personal email signature might look like:

“Sincerely,

Cindy Walsh

I'm running the Bank of America Chicago Marathon for Girls on the Run SoleMates® - please support me!  
<http://www.active.com/XXX>”

- **Involve Others!** Inquire at local businesses about what they might be able to do to support your efforts. Suggest a night where a local gym will donate \$1-\$3 for every person who works out from 5-9pm, or ask to have a table with information during peak times where you can educate and ask for donations. Fitness minded friends are more likely to want to support the race goal and the mission of Girls on the Run.
- **Connect One on One:** Often people are not as willing to donate to causes that they do not know much about or do not have a personal connection to. Identify key supporters and offer to treat them to a coffee date or take them out to lunch to tell them more about Girls on the Run and the SoleMates commitment. The commitment of time and personal attention will go a long way in not only securing a donor but a future Girls on the Run supporter!  
**Make It a Family Affair.** Teach children the value of philanthropy. They can donate time doing odd jobs for family or friends. They can even donate a part of their allowance. **Garage/Yard Sale.** It is always the perfect time of year to clean out and pass on the things you never use or clothes you don't wear. Invite friends or neighbors to join the sale, with proceeds going to your SoleMates effort! **Bake Sale.** Sweets often brighten the day at work or school. Get co-workers or friends involved and have a bake sale. **Car Wash.** Recruit a team of helpers by using community resources such as local schools, youth groups, clubs, etc. Remember that many civic groups require members to perform a certain number of volunteer hours. Connecting these types of organizations with your SoleMates efforts could make for a great match! **Distribute Change Canisters.** Change adds up! Place a change canister at work and watch the contributions grow every day! **Donations in Stores.** Many small, locally owned stores will allow literature to be displayed to seek donations. Talk to store managers to see if they can help set up a process to collect donations.
- **Host a fundraising brunch or cocktail hour.** Invite your friends and ask for a donation of what they would have spent had they gone out to eat instead. Encourage them to invite additional friends. Sweet and profitable!
- **Be Creative.** There are lots of easy and fun ways to raise that last \$100. Host a game night with all winnings benefiting SoleMates. Try a raffle at the next family reunion. Ask a local restaurant for a donation and raffle a dinner for two to the highest donor, be creative!





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## How to Make the SoleMates ASK!

The KEY to a successful online fundraising campaign is writing a great letter that will convey the passion for SoleMates and Girls on the Run. Educating potential donors about Girls on the Run and our mission is of the utmost importance because people are hesitant to give to an organization they do not know. Here are some tips to start you on the SoleMates journey:

- **Make it Personal** – A customized message to friends, family and co-workers is the best way to go. Avoid form letters – they won't sound like you! Instead, use them as a template from which to build your own case for support. Let potential donors know what else you have going on in your life and why you are personally involved with Girls on the Run.
- **Introduce them to Girls on the Run** – Be sure to include information about Girls on the Run - what we do, who we serve, etc. Keep this impactful, yet short and to the point. Feel free to direct them to the Girls on the Run website site at [girlsontherun.org](http://girlsontherun.org), or to your local Girls on the Run council.
- **Be Positive** – If you are excited about the participation in SoleMates, chances are that your friends and family will be excited to read about it. Get fired up!
- **Get them Laughing** – Unique, funny and personalized letters will catch the interest of the donors. Make the letter stand out by being yourself!
- **Keep it Short and Sweet!** – Keep it to one page in length.
- **Suggest Giving Levels** – Don't be afraid to ask for a specific amount. Tailor the ask amount depending on that person's capacity to give. For example, you may ask your friends for \$25, whereas you might ask family for \$100. If you are not comfortable asking for a specific amount, give the donors suggested levels of giving. This helps the donor gauge what size donation is appropriate and what they can afford. For example, ask them to donate anywhere from \$1 - \$10 for every mile that you complete.
- **Set a Goal** – Let potential donors know your goal. For example, "I have committed to raise a minimum of \$500, but I've set my personal goal at \$1,500!" Add something about what this amount of money will mean to the selected council/community, such as "\$1,500 can provide 12 full scholarships, or 24 partial scholarships, to girls who would otherwise be unable to participate in this transformational program!"
- **Set a Deadline** – We recommend that you give donors a deadline for your fundraising efforts. Setting a final date and following up will motivate donors to give sooner rather than later.





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- **MAKE THE ASK!** Asking for money isn't easy. Make sure the letter or email includes an actual ask, such as "I hope you will join me on my SoleMates journey by making a donation – no gift is too small! To make a contribution online, visit my fundraising page at [www.MySoleMatesPage.com](http://www.MySoleMatesPage.com).
- **Make Sure The Donors Know HOW to Donate** – Be sure to include information in the letter/email about how to make the gift online or with cash or check. Making it as easy as possible for the potential donors to give is a sure way to increase the success rate! Don't forget to mention Matching Gift programs!
- **Send Updates** – Send the donors updates on your progress via email, blogs, etc. Include funny stories, training accomplishments and things that will keep them interested in the progress.
- **Be Prepared to Send a Reminder** – It is often the case that people plan to give and then simply forget. Include the initial solicitation list on the blog or email newsletter. This is a subtle way to remind them about making a gift. Don't be afraid to follow up with a "Thank You" to everyone on the list two weeks after the first request. Saying "thank you to those who have made a donation to my SoleMates effort" is also a nice (and easy) way to remind those who have yet to give – but be sure to mention that you still have X amount to raise!
- **Stewardship and Record Keeping** – Make sure you keep track of the people to whom you've sent a letter or request. Unintentionally soliciting donors on multiple occasions is never a good idea! Be sure to thank those that have given, and follow-up with those who stated their intention to give but have yet to do so.
- **Send a Thank You Card** – People want to know that you are aware of their contribution and that they are appreciated. It is always great to send a final message to all donors following the completion of the event – even if this is in the form of a mass email. They will enjoy hearing more about the SoleMates journey!





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## How to use Facebook to Raise Money for SoleMates

**Status Updates** – Tell your friends what you are up to! Maybe you've had a big donation, or gone training, it could be anything. Update. Be rigorous and organized about it. Three times a week is acceptable. After all, you've got something to promote that can be a discussion point. It's a surefire way to be present on your friends' newsfeeds so there is no possible way they won't know what you're up to. Enlist a couple of your closest friends to share the page URL on their pages as well.

**Post Photos** – The Facebook photo application is a great tool. The one thing that elevates it over other photo apps is the ability to tag people. Make sure you try and capture as much of your training story on camera and regularly upload photos, tagging yourself and anyone else in them as necessary. Also, make sure your profile picture is related to what you are doing with SoleMates.

**Do Video** – Most cameras and phones now have video capabilities. You've got a few options with Facebook video as well:

- Use the Facebook video application. This is great for short videos, especially if your friends are in it. It has the same tagging functionality as the Photos application, so it can spread through newsfeeds effectively.
- Use a dedicated video site like **YouTube** or **Vimeo**. Both YouTube and Vimeo have outstanding Facebook integration. If you're already using them then make sure you share the videos in the newsfeed or you can use the dedicated applications.

**Events** – If you are training for an official event, search for it on Facebook. If it is listed, add yourself to it.

**Groups** – You should definitely build a group and invite all your friends to join it. Those who actually join are the ones who you can lean on a bit harder. Get some forum discussions going, don't let it stagnate. The other good thing about Groups is they act as the bridge to other Facebookers who you don't know.

**Facebook Mail** – The internal messaging system in Facebook is very powerful. It is often more effective than standard email because it threads messages properly and integrates well with the registered email address. So this tip is an easy one - **use it**. Nine times out of ten, it works better than normal email. It works great for groups too, though don't underestimate the power of writing to people individually. It will yield much better results than sending the same message to everyone.

**Don't forget to say thanks** – Wall-post a thank you note when somebody sponsors you. It acts as a thanks and a reminder to others in the newsfeed that they need to sponsor you because other people are. When you complete your event, don't forget to thank people collectively and individually. Let them know in as much detail as you can how much of a difference everyone has made together through the activity. It's the end of the story. Make sure it gets told.





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## Matching Gifts

Below are some tips to help you optimize corporate matching gifts:

**Do not be afraid to ask** - When you ask donors to make a contribution, ask them if their company provides a matching gift program.

**Stay on top of the fundraising** - If a donor tells you they have a matching gift program, follow-up with them to see if they need any information about Girls on the Run, such as our Tax ID number, address and contact information. We will be happy to provide this for you!

**Tell your local Girls on the Run Council.** Most often the donor must submit something to their workplace who will then forward something to Girls on the Run to confirm and return to the organization for payment. \*Please note that once a matching gift is submitted to an organization it may take several weeks or months for payment to be received by Girls on the Run.

**Share the good word** - Be sure to highlight any donors when you give the fundraising updates, but don't forget to include companies who provide matching gifts - they're donors, too. This serves a few purposes. It promotes the company who gave back to the community, it reminds other donors about their companies' matching gift programs and it encourages other companies to match gifts.

