



# Fundraising Toolkit



Dear Fundraiser,

Welcome to Team Mission Continues! We're so grateful for your decision to aid us in raising both awareness and funds in support of post-9/11 veterans. At The Mission Continues, we firmly believe that our veterans are assets, and we know that through service, these individuals can and will excel as citizens leaders here at home. Your commitment to The Mission Continues is also a commitment to our nation's veterans, and we thank you for your dedication and support.

Community fundraisers, like you, have been instrumental in our ability to raise support for and awareness of the skills and leadership of this generation of servicemen and women. Through localized support from dozens of communities across the country, we have been able to give hope to others, mobilize action, and make progress possible. Funding life-changing fellowships for our veterans is only possible through the passion and proactive initiative of individuals like you.

As you begin to plan your fundraiser in the coming weeks and months, The Mission Continues stands by ready and willing to support you in your endeavor. Already know what type of fundraiser you're interested in? Great! Not so sure how best to get involved? That's okay, too. The Mission Continues has put together a toolkit full of checklists, templates, and materials to help you out. Within this toolkit, you'll find a few documents to get you started.

Have a question? Want to talk through some ideas? Give us a call! Our team is here to help and we are incredibly excited by the opportunity of working with you. Best of luck— we'll be in touch soon!

Serve and Inspire,

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# Fundraising Ideas



Organizing a fundraising event in your community is a great way to both support The Mission Continues and raise awareness of the strengths and leadership of post-9/11 veterans. If you haven't yet figured out what your event might be, we have compiled a list of fundraising ideas that have proven to be successful for other individuals and supporters just like you. While this list covers a wide variety of events, know that the possibilities are endless, so don't be afraid to get creative and create something original!

Once you've got some ideas, The Mission Continues will work with you to finalize a plan of action, walk you through setting up a personalized fundraising page, and give you some tips and tricks to engage your friends, family, and local communities. With their help, you can reach your fundraising goal while also raising awareness for The Mission Continues.

## *Quick Tips:*

### **GETTING STARTED—**

It's time to make the commitment and start setting goals. Fundraising is fun, but it also requires hard work and dedication. Starting small and working towards pre-set benchmarks is a great way to achieve larger goals.

### **BRAINSTORM—**

What type of event will work best for your community? What kind of event will allow you to tap into your own interests, resources, and talents? What is the demographic of your target audience (athletes, donors, students, etc.)?

### **MAKE A PLAN—**

Make a calendar, sketch out a budget, and detail a list of priorities to help give you a better sense of your strategy. Then, create realistic benchmarks to help keep you on track towards achieving your goal. Remember, the more planning you do in advance, the easier the process will be!

### **BUILD A TEAM—**

The work you're doing is inspirational! Share your plans with others and think about recruiting some other hard-working friends to lend you a hand. Talk through your strategy and goals to receive feedback and additional ideas.

### **DON'T GIVE UP—**

This is *the most* important element to fundraising and if you put in the time and energy, your hard work will pay off. Having a hard time promoting your event or recruiting volunteers? Still haven't heard back from potential sponsors? Go back to the drawing board and try a different angle. We're here to help!



## Get social

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### Special Event Fundraisers

➤ **Backyard BBQ**

Host a cookout or crawfish boil in your backyard or local park and charge an entry fee to attend. Have a competitive group of friends? Increase the stakes with a chili cook off or a pie contest and have guests pay to participate in the tasting. Reach out to local restaurants for food donations, recruit a local band to provide entertainment, or consider adding a silent auction! This is a great event for holidays like the 4<sup>th</sup> of July or Memorial Day.

➤ **Motorcycle Rally**

Get your local club on board and host a ride on behalf of The Mission Continues.

➤ **Bar Night**

Ask your local bar to donate the space for a night of discounted drinks and delicious appetizers on behalf of The Mission Continues. Charge a cover fee, get your friends to bartend to raise tips, and have proceeds from a specialty drink be donated towards your event. Up the ante by offering a prize to the group of bartenders who raise the most tips!

➤ **Calling all Concert Fans**

Whether you showcase just one performer or put together a whole set list, concerts can be a great way to fundraise. Find a concert hall, school, or restaurant to donate space, or head to the local park and sell tickets to attend. See if participating artists would be interested in donating a portion of their merchandise or CD sales from the night to the event.

➤ **Movie Screening**

Reach out to your local theater to see if they'll donate a theater to you for a night. Pick a crowd-pleaser from the past and have ticket sales go towards The Mission Continues. Have friends and family help make specialty snacks and sell those as well!

➤ **Super Bowl/March Madness Pool**

Is the end of the season approaching? Rally your friends, coworkers, and colleagues to participate in a 50/50 pool with a portion of the proceeds going towards The Mission Continues. Reach out to a local bar to see if they'll give you some space to watch the game and then charge an entry fee to attend.



## Get Out There

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### Fundraisers for the Campus and Community

➤ Spare Change/Penny Drive

Put jars around town and in classrooms for a month to collect spare change. Add some incentive by offering prizes for the business, homeroom, or dorm that can raise the most. Reach out to pizza joints to donate a pizza party or concert venues for free tickets to a show.

➤ Alumni Support

Ask your alma mater to run an ad in the alumni newsletter or magazine featuring The Mission Continues and asking for donations. Have the athletic department chip in tickets to a Homecoming game with free parking to raffle off to participants.

➤ ROTC/Boot Camp Challenge

Organize a basic military style PT challenge with the added incentive for students to compete against not only their peers, but their professors as well. Get the whole school involved by challenging prominent school athletes or the student body president to compete! Sell tickets to participate and have a raffle on the day of the event.

➤ Sororities/Fraternities

Contact the national chapter of your sorority or fraternity and ask that they host one of their annual fundraisers on behalf of The Mission Continues. Help by bringing out additional volunteers, supporters, sponsorships and add incentives for participants to attend by organizing a raffle or silent auction.

➤ Retail Therapy

Ask popular stores and local businesses to host a one-day in-store or online promotional special with a portion of proceeds being given to The Mission Continues. If you can get a few stores in the same general area to participate, coordinate the dates and market the event as a “Day of Discounts.”

➤ Partner Up

Reach out to local service organizations (Rotary, Elks, Lions Clubs, Kiwanis, etc) to have them support you in hosting a fundraiser or directing some of their charitable giving towards The Mission Continues. These are also great organizations to reach out to for sponsorship of your events!



## Get out and get active

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### Athletic Fundraisers

➤ Go the Distance

Organize or participate in a 5K, marathon or triathlon on behalf of The Mission Continues and ask your friends and family to pledge support. (Don't forget to check out the Team Mission Continues homepage to see what upcoming races The Mission Continues will be featured as a charity partner for. Available race slots may be available!)

➤ Test Your Endurance

Organize or participate in an endurance race. Include military-style obstacles, lots of mud, and see about making each challenge point in memory of a soldier from your surrounding community. Host a celebratory party at the end and consider finding a local band to provide entertainment and local restaurants to donate food and drinks.

➤ Host a Tournament

From tennis to golf, or even Frisbee, athletic tournaments are great fundraisers. Find a course or club that offers a charity discount, have teams pay an entry fee or reach a pre-set fundraising minimum to participate and include a silent auction so spectators can get in on the fun as well.

➤ Throw down with a Boot Camp Challenge

Recruit the help from some local trainers to put together a military-style Boot Camp Challenge using traditional Physical Training testing. Have a local gym donate their space and equipment or head to the local park and set up a course. Charge a price for participation and offer prizes for winners in different categories.

➤ Cycling/Bike-a-thon

Organize or participate in a bike ride for The Mission Continues. Reach out to local bike shops for sponsorship. Worried it's too cold? See if your local gym would be open to you having a spin-a-thon in their facility.

For questions, more information, or to talk through your ideas, email us at [TeamMissionContinues@missioncontinues.org](mailto:TeamMissionContinues@missioncontinues.org)



# Fundraising 101

Welcome to Team Mission Continues! We're excited to have you join us and grateful for your commitment to supporting the post-9/11 generation of veterans. By channeling your talents and passions into fundraising with Team Mission Continues, you are playing an important role in challenging America's veterans to continue serving and leading in communities across America. As you work towards your fundraising and event goals, our team is excited to both support and motivate you to succeed. Here are a few tips and tricks to get you started:

➤ **Do your research**

Are you familiar with the acronym OEF/OIF? Can you explain what a Mission Continues Fellowship provides? As a fundraiser, you will encounter friends, colleagues, and potential donors who will ask you questions about where their support is going; it's important that you have some context. Visit [www.missioncontinues.org](http://www.missioncontinues.org) to learn more about both the post-9/11 generation of veterans as well as the unique programs that The Mission Continues provides to challenge this generation of servicemen and women once they return home.

➤ **Be your biggest advocate**

As a fundraiser, it's important that you are your event's biggest cheerleader. Fundraising can be extremely rewarding, but remember that it is a commitment that you have to remain dedicated to. Before asking others for donations, consider being the first to donate to your event. Remember, it's easier to ask others to join you in something you've already proven you believe in 100%. Stay positive, stay enthusiastic, and don't forget that your passion is a powerful tool in showing others why they should want to join in supporting a worthy cause!

➤ **Shout it from the rooftops**

In order to be successful in raising both awareness and donations, you'll need to spread the word as far and wide as you can. Utilize all of your resources (social media, email, and personal and professional networks), provide friends and family with messaging to send through their channels, and don't be afraid to be persistent. Even little steps—like adding your fundraising page link to the bottom of your email signature—can make a big difference!

➤ **Prepare, prepare, prepare**

When it comes to successful fundraising, you can never be too prepared. Know the resources and templates available in your Fundraising Toolkit; allocate some time towards strategically thinking about who and how you will engage during your fundraising campaign; print out extra copies of the Donation Form (available in your toolkit) and be sure to keep one on hand in case an unexpected opportunity for support arises. Remember, our team is here to ensure your success so don't be afraid to ask for advice!

➤ **Know your networks**

Have a friend with some videography experience who could help you put together a quick promo for your donors? Know a colleague who could introduce you to an influential donor or corporate sponsor in your community? Don't be hesitant to enlist the talents and resources already available within your network to lend a hand in making your fundraiser stand out!



➤ **Set your sights high**

Put together a list of donors or businesses in your network who you think have the capacity to give generously with a gift of \$500 or more. These may be employers, business clients, family friends, etc. Consider arranging a formal meeting at their office or over lunch so that you can give a more personal introduction to your fundraising inspiration and goals. Prepare a list of things you wish to cover ahead of time and make sure you have a pre-planned “ask” in mind.

➤ **Don’t be afraid to hear “No”**

If haven’t fundraised before, you may feel uneasy with the task of asking others for financial support; but you shouldn’t. Through your fundraising, you are working hard to change the lives of post-9/11 veterans and your generous endeavor is something that many people will be excited and inspired to support. Remember, you can only raise money if you ask for it, so don’t be afraid to be bold or ambitious. If you have trouble figuring out how to start, ask yourself why this cause is important to you and be sure to share that passion and honesty when you ask for support.

➤ **Send reminders**

After sending out your first wave of letters and emails, remember that while some donors may respond immediately, others may need to be reminded to donate. Depending on the length of your campaign, sending out a quick status update every once in a while is a great way to update current donors on your progress and engage potential donors in deciding to invest. Consider including a picture, short anecdotes, the current fundraising total, and an exciting update on what is to come next. The more you can engage people in feeling that they are a part of your team, the more likely they are to be invested in seeing you succeed.

➤ **Thank your donors**

Sending thanks to donors for their support and encouragement is an important part of the fundraising process. You can find a thank you template in your Fundraising Toolkit, but, like your fundraising letter, the more personal you are, the more impactful your thanks will be. This is your opportunity to remind your donor why they felt compelled to give in the first place so feel free to get creative or add a photo. You might also consider providing a link to [www.missioncontinues.org](http://www.missioncontinues.org) or a specific Mission Continues event/service project in their area as a way to keep them engaged in supporting the post-9/11 generation of veterans.

➤ **Stay motivated**

Fundraising can be challenging, but don’t lose sight of the goal. Thanks to passionate individuals like you, a generation of deserving veterans is being provided with an opportunity to discover a renewed purpose and strength here at home through continued service in their communities. The Mission Continues family of staff and Fellows are grateful for your support and inspired by your dedication to raising awareness and support. We fully believe that together, we have the ability to make a truly powerful difference. Thank you.



## Grassroots Fundraising FAQs:

### **Can I host a fundraising event to support The Mission Continues?**

Yes! We would be happy to work with you in setting up your own fundraising event. Please contact the development department directly at [teammissioncontinues@missioncontinues.org](mailto:teammissioncontinues@missioncontinues.org) to get started.

### **Can I create a personalized donation page?**

A great way to spread the word about your fundraising efforts is through our online fundraising module. This personalized page describes the fundraiser and your efforts, and makes a great marketing tool! You can even send supporters an email with a special link to your personalized page. Your supporters will be able to donate online directly to your event. There are many great features you can adjust to your own preference with the personalized donation page.

### **Who should I approach if I need a sponsor for my event?**

Our supporters have had success asking local companies and the local branches of larger companies for support. Think about what local companies, restaurants, etc. would benefit from getting their name out in support of a local philanthropic effort. Samples of donation request letters can be found in our Fundraising Toolkit.

### **Can The Mission Continues issue a receipt for my event's sponsors?**

The Mission Continues cannot issue tax receipts for your event's sponsors, nor can The Mission Continues accept sponsor funds and funnel those funds back to the event organizer.

### **Can The Mission Continues issue a receipt for donated goods or services to my fundraiser?**

The Mission Continues cannot issue tax receipts for the value of an individual's time, goods or services donated to your fundraising event, as these items are not deductible under federal tax law and therefore are not eligible for a tax receipt. We can only acknowledge checks written to The Mission Continues directly.

### **Can I accept donations and then write The Mission Continues one check from my personal account?**

No, you should not use this method. If you deposit donations into your account, the IRS will consider that deposit income in your account and tax you on it. Also, because the check is from your account, we will not be able to issue your donors tax receipts for their gifts.

### **What should I do with cash donations?**

It is never safe to mail cash. Have cash donors (or yourself) fill out a donation form with the donor's contact information and donation amount. Transfer the cash into a cashier's check and mail both the cashier's check and the donation form to The Mission Continues.

### **Can I get some Mission Continues materials for my fundraising event?**

Upon request, The Mission Continues would be happy to provide you with brochures, cash donation forms, and other Mission Continues materials. To request these materials, please contact a member of the Development Team at [teammissioncontinues@missioncontinues.org](mailto:teammissioncontinues@missioncontinues.org).

### **Can The Mission Continues help promote my event in the media?**

While we cannot directly promote your event in the media, we offer tools on dealing with the media in our Fundraising Toolkit. You will find a sample press release and tips on pitching various media outlets. Please make sure to share the final draft of your press release with us.



Please send donation along with this form to:

**The Mission Continues**  
1141 South 7<sup>th</sup> Street  
St. Louis, MO 63104

Donation Amount: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**YES!** I would like to make this a recurring monthly donation for \_\_\_\_\_ months.

Anonymous donation? YES  NO

**DONOR INFORMATION:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Company (Optional): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**IF DONATING BY CHECK, PLEASE ENCLOSE YOUR CHECK MADE OUT TO *THE MISSION CONTINUES***

**IF DONATING BY CREDIT CARD, PLEASE FILL OUT THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION:**  
(Visa, MasterCard, American Express, and Discover accepted)

Cardholder's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Card Type: \_\_\_\_\_

Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Card Expiration: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Cardholder: \_\_\_\_\_

**TO MAKE YOUR GIFT IN HONOR OF OR IN MEMORY OF AN INDIVIDUAL, PLEASE COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING SECTION:**

Donation type:  In honor of  In memory of

Would you like us to include the amount of your donation?  Yes  No

Honoree: \_\_\_\_\_

Please send acknowledgement of my donation to: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip: \_\_\_\_\_