

Making a Difference



There are various ways in which a business can contribute to charitable causes – it's not just about donating money. Here we examine two very different but equally innovative projects in which high profile organisations are becoming involved in the charitable sector.

Aims2Cure is a North London based charity, which was established in 1999 to fund research into a cure for Multiple Sclerosis. The charity has recently formed a relationship with Tottenham Hotspur FC, in which the football club helps to raise the profile of Aims2Cure whilst also generating funds for them. We spoke to three key members of the charity's committee to get their perspective on the partnership, and then to Spurs Chairman Daniel Levy about the club's charitable policy and why they decided to support Aims2Cure...



Interview with>

Candi Goldstein (Chairman)

Jennifer Thake (Secretary)

Lisa Simbler (Treasurer)

What is the history of Aims2Cure?

Jennifer: In 1978 Candi's father established a charity called Aims North West, after a friend of his died from the symptoms of Multiple Sclerosis. That charity held various events over the years to raise money for research into finding a cure for the disease. But as they got older, the committee members started to run out of energy and wanted to give the charity a new lease of life. So they approached some of their offspring about the possibility of taking over the responsibility. We changed the name from Aims North West to Aims2Cure. Aims North West continues to function on a minimal level, but any money raised is given to us.

How does your charity help in the fight against MS?

Lisa: The money raised by Aims North West paid the salary of a research scientist at the Institute of Neurology in Queen Square, London. When we founded Aims2Cure, we took on that responsibility, initially paying £25,000 a year for one scientist. But as we've got bigger we've had more money to spend and about four years ago we were able to start paying the salary of an additional scientist. We are also able to fund additional projects; we tell the Institute when we have extra money to spend, and they tell us how it can be used most effectively. We commit to the scientists' salaries for three years at a time, so there is a great responsibility.

How much money have you raised over the years?

Candi: In seven years, we have raised in the region of £350,000. When we first started we held several small functions each year, bringing in a few thousand pounds each time. Then we held our first big event, a 'Mr and Mrs' evening, which raised about £13,000. From then on, we decided to focus on one big event every year. The following year our event raised £26,000; in subsequent years we managed to raise £48,000, £65,000, and this year we made £99,000. In addition, we receive donations from contacts of ours who take part in sponsored events or raise money at their own parties. We now have 12 people on our committee, and so we have a wide network of people with connections to the charity.

What does the annual fundraiser involve?

Candi: It's held at the Marriott Hotel on Grosvenor Square in London, and takes the format of an 'X-Factor' style event. We send out flyers to our mailing list of 700 people, inviting them to audition to perform on the night. They audition in front of singing coaches, people from the music industry and ourselves, and we then create two bands with four people in each. The bands are subsequently given six months of voice coaching, choreography and styling, then on the night they go head-to-head against each other, and the 500-strong audience votes for the winning band.

Why did you decide that the talent show format would be an effective fundraiser?

Candi: When we held the 'Mr and Mrs' evening, the audience was very involved, and it made us realise how much people like to see their friends up on the stage. After that, we held a 'Stars in their Eyes' night in 2000, and it was an enormous success; people still talk about it. We have since kept to the TV show theme, and the events have got

bigger and better every year; the 2005 event cost £45,000 to put on, but we raised nearly £145,000. It's become so popular that we have a waiting list for tickets. The function is launched in November, and people can put their names down on the list for a table, but tickets sell out immediately. This year we were also featured in OK! Magazine, who came along to the event. Ever since we started holding these functions, they have donated magazines to be included in the goody bags we give out. But the fact that Dermot Murnaghan and Michelle Collins were hosting this year was a big draw, and so the magazine also decided to cover the evening.

How do you raise money on the night?

Lisa: Some money is raised from ticket sales, but that probably just covers the cost of putting on the event. The majority of the money we make comes from fundraising on the night through auctions, a raffle and a 'sign a £20 note' competition to win a holiday. We also produce a huge glossy brochure, which this year raised £17,000.

Jennifer: Before we hold the raffle and the auction, we play an appeal video featuring someone who is living with MS. It gives people an idea of what MS is about and how it affects people like them on a day-to-day basis. This year, a television crew videoed it for us, and it was a real tearjerker. When we played the video, you could hear a pin drop. We then go around selling our raffle tickets and asking people to pledge as much as they can.

How did the relationship with Tottenham Hotspur come about?

Candi: Daniel Levy, the Chairman of Spurs, has come to our functions over the past few years. He respects what we do, and feels an affiliation with our charity. He has donated prizes to our auction in the past, including signed shirts, days out at the club and the opportunity for children to be mascots at a match. Then earlier this year, he approached us to say that the club would be interested in helping us further.

How is the club supporting the charity?

Candi: They are helping us to raise awareness of MS via their website, which has a link to ours. Then on a given match day, we will have the opportunity to collect change amongst supporters before the match. I will go up on the big screen beforehand, then we'll be in the programme and the players will wear our blue charity wristbands. We have created 2,000 wristbands, to be sold at £1 each, but the wristbands worn by the players will each be auctioned to raise more money. Spurs are also nominating a player who will be expected to have a lot of knowledge about the charity and to represent us whenever we appear in the press. In addition, they have kindly given us the opportunity to run a 'Father and Son' day at the club. In the future, we hope to send a group of fathers and sons to the ground for the day, where they'll get to meet the coaches, look at the pitch and receive some training.

Does Aims2Cure have associations with any other businesses?

Lisa: Other companies generously help towards the annual event: Tesco sponsor the wine and Marks & Spencer have

sponsored the water in the past. In return, we offer them a page of sponsorship. HOB Salons are very supportive, and allow us to use their salons for auditions and rehearsals. There are also numerous companies that donate items for the auction and the raffle.

Do you see the charity getting bigger?

Lisa: This summer we got to the point where we had to ask ourselves whether we should grow bigger. We can try to raise more money, but we can't hold more than one major annual function because the charity will become bigger than we are. There's a lot to do when you're asking people to pay to come to an event and so we have to pay incredible attention to detail; in the weeks leading up to the function, we are hardly at home. This charity has become our life. We are absolutely instrumental in everything Aims2Cure does and fiercely passionate about it. We can't walk away from our commitment, because we're paying people's salaries. But all the work we do is voluntary, and most of us are working mums.

What are your hopes for the future?

Candi: It would be amazing if we could feel that we had made a difference to the lives of people with Multiple Sclerosis, or if we could come close to a cure. At the moment there are a few drugs on the market, but the treatment options are very limited.

Next year's Aims2Cure fundraising event will take place on 17th June at the Marriott Hotel, Grosvenor Square, London.



Michelle Collins, Dermot Murnaghan and Candi Goldstein



The Aims2Cure committee at the 2005 event

Interview with>

Daniel Levy_Chairman_Tottenham Hotspur FC

Why have Tottenham Hotspur FC decided to support Aims2Cure?

As a rule, MS doesn't receive as much attention as it should. It's a disease that affects a lot of people, but by its very nature it's not often revealed and I think that people consider it less of an issue than it really is. THFC has recognised it and we are keen to do our bit to raise funds for Aims2Cure's work, which actively researches cures for the disease.

In what ways do the principles and ethos of the club fit with those of the charity?

The charity has a clear goal and a focus, as we have at the club. Aims2Cure looks to improve the quality of life for individuals and we at THFC are also intimately involved with people's quality of life - on and off the pitch.

Are you involved with awareness raising activity for the charity?

Our relationship with Aims2Cure is in its early stages. We are developing our relationship to promote the association through many of the club's communication channels such as the match programme, the big screens at the stadium and the club's website; and we will look to make a match-day collection supported with some player appearances too.

How do you see the relationship between the club and the charity developing?

I hope it develops well and we are able to raise significant funds for the charity. As we work together we would like to reach a stage where the work of one becomes synonymous with the other.

What other charitable work is Tottenham Hotspur involved with?

The club also supports its national charity, Kidscape, and our local charity, Kith and Kids, as well as an international charity. In addition, we work with the FA's charities such as Kick Racism out of Football.

How do you decide between the many requests you receive from charities?

We tend to look at those who are focused in the areas in which we already have charities, other than that, we look for a local link or if there is a link with established Spurs fans. It is important for the club to take its role as a corporate good citizen seriously, and it's also important for the club, its players and its employees to be actively involved in supporting good charities.

What activity do you undertake to raise money for your chosen charities?

We have a selection of tools available to us, the most important of which is simply supporting the charity's ideas and efforts, but by using the club's assets and fan base we can significantly boost a charity's income. We offer charities the opportunity to collect money at the stadium on a match

day as well as offering signed merchandise and money-can't-buy experiences for raffle or auction.

How do you get the supporters involved?

We ensure that all of the club's communication channels are aware of the work we are doing with good causes and that they promote and report on the partnerships that we have.

Aside from your main charities, are you able to assist other charitable organisations on an ad hoc basis?

Yes, we try and focus our efforts on our main charities, but we do try and help as many others as possible with donations of raffle prizes - particularly if the charity is in our area.

How do you feel businesses can best go about supporting charitable organisations to the mutual benefit of both parties?

By using what we have as natural assets in conjunction with the requirements of the charity. For example, we have signed items that can raise a large amount of funds and we have high-profile players who will attract the interest of the media and raise the charity's profile.

