



AFP NEWS

DATE: May 25, 2012

FOR RELEASE: Immediate

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The Spirit of Cincinnati First in Tri-State to Receive Prestigious International Fundraising Excellence Award

(Arlington, VA) The Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP) has bestowed its highest fundraising honor, the Award for Excellence in Fundraising, to The Spirit of Cincinnati in Cincinnati, Ohio.

The organization received the award for its innovative Rusty Ball fundraising concert that generates support for a wide variety of charitable organizations in the Cincinnati area every year. The most recent Rusty Ball event raised \$400,000 for 119 charities.

The Award for Excellence in Fundraising honors an organization that has developed campaigns, initiatives, projects or techniques that have grown and increased its fundraising infrastructure, program and results.

The Rusty Ball concert event originated with a local Cincinnati 80's cover band formed in 1999, The Rusty Griswolds, that was often invited to perform for charitable events. With so many requests from nonprofits, the band, led by Steve Frisch, recognized an opportunity for a collaborative event that could generate revenue and increase awareness for a large number of

charities.

“We found that each charity was seeking the same resources to hold their individual events,” said Frisch. “The simple idea was to maximize the benefit of the requested resources and sponsorships to as many organizations as possible in a single night. The concept was simple, set the band up, play music, give money to charity. We quickly learned it was not that easy.”

The Spirit of Cincinnati, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, was created to provide the operational foundation for The Rusty Ball. This one shared event combines the efforts, talents and passion of many people into a unique format, added Frisch, with minimal investment/maximum benefit and tremendous positive exposure for both the corporate and nonprofit participants.

Nonprofit beneficiaries receive the net revenue of ticket sales based on the percentage of tickets sold on their behalf. Tickets are sold through www.therustyball.com. During the ticketing process, the purchaser selects the charity to receive the benefit from a drop down menu. Charities also can participate in the event’s auctions, basket raffle and cash raffle. Starting with the 2010 event, corporate sponsors can nominate a favorite beneficiary for a chance to win one of several \$5,000 drawings.

The first Rusty Ball event in 2008 sold more than 1,000 tickets and raised \$85,000 for 56 charity beneficiaries. One year later, the 2009 event nearly tripled the previous total, with 3,000 tickets purchased and \$210,000 generated in support of 91 beneficiaries. Fundraising for the event has increased every year, with the 2011 event generating \$400,000 in revenue for the benefit of 119 local charities. To date, The Spirit of Cincinnati’s collaborative model has raised \$993,000 in support of Cincinnati’s charitable community.

In addition, the event has created significant public exposure for all of the participating organizations through its website’s beneficiary profiles, public service announcements, media partnerships and social networking. The size of the event has had positive economic impact for businesses in downtown Cincinnati.

A 100% volunteer organization, The Spirit of Cincinnati is fortunate to have a corporate advisory board comprised of: **Richard Graeter**, President and CEO, Graeter's Inc; **George Yund**, Managing Member, Frost Brown Todd LLC; **Ashley Strehler**, Assistant VP/Director Commercial Property Management, Eagle Realty Group; **Elizabeth Pierce**, Vice President Marketing Communications, Cincinnati Museum Center; **Brian Keenan**, Founder & Creative Strategist, Openfield Creative; **Kevin Canafax**, Vice President Public Affairs, Fidelity Investments; **Kevin Bright**, Managing Director, Energy Efficiency, Duke Energy and **Jeanette Altenaeu**, Director, Strategic Community Initiatives, Local 12 WKRC-TV.

The advisory board and their respective organizations were joined by these and others in support of The Rusty Ball: Montgomery Inn Barbecue Sauce, Heidelberg Distributing, Shop-A-Dealer/TradinPaper.com, Elmer L. Jones Painting Inc., ServPro/Bryant Hartke Group and Loth Inc.

”The Spirit of Cincinnati and our volunteer base are glad that together we are able to do something positive for our community,” said Frisch. “It’s been very exciting to watch this event grow. We are extremely appreciative of the collaboration among our participating beneficiaries, advisors and corporate partners which have made The Rusty Ball successful. In every crowd we see a community!”

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The Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP) represents over 30,000 members in 230 chapters throughout the world, working to advance philanthropy through advocacy, research, education and certification programs. The association fosters development and growth of fundraising professionals and promotes high ethical standards in the fundraising profession. For more information, go to www.afpnet.org.

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