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National LGBT fundraiser set for May

by Matthew S. Bajko
m.bajko@ebar.com

A national LGBT fundraising effort is set to debut next month and will harness the power of social media to seek donations.

Called Give OUT Day, the first of its kind crowdsourcing effort on May 9 is enlisting LGBT nonprofits in all 50 states to take part. More than 300 groups, in rural areas and major cities, have already signed on.

In the Bay Area more than 40 LGBT charities and community-based organizations have agreed to participate in the fundraiser. Donors will be encouraged to contribute to the charities starting at midnight that day through 11:59 p.m. (Eastern Time) through the website <http://www.GiveOUTDay.org>.

As an added incentive, there will be cash prizes awarded to the nonprofits that attract the most individual donors over the 24-hour fundraising drive. The San Francisco-based Horizons Foundation will hand out six additional financial prizes to

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Bolder Giving



Bolder Giving's Jason Franklin

Bay Area charities from funds it solicited from donors.

One prize pool is for groups with budgets of \$500,000 or under, the other is for groups with \$500,001 to \$5 million budgets. First place winners will receive \$5,000; second place will receive \$2,500; and third place earns \$1,000.

Nonprofits have until the end

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of Thursday (April 25) to sign up. Horizons will not be actively seeking donations for itself on May 9 but will have a dedicated page on the fundraiser's website.

"Most people are busy with their lives and giving may not be central to them," said Roger Doughty, Horizons' executive director. "This is a way of putting giving in the spotlight and showing how vital it is to our community and how vital it is to the individual nonprofit organizations."

The idea for the coast-to-coast fundraiser came from the New York-based Bolder Giving, an initiative of the nonprofit Zing Foundation. Bolder Giving uses profiles of major donors to inspire others to contribute to charitable causes. In 2011 it created a specific LGBT-focused campaign.

It profiled Charlie Rounds, who lives in Minneapolis and was an early partner in the gay leisure company RSVP Vacations. He has been a longtime trustee of the Kevin J. Mossier Foundation, named after RSVP's founder.

Rounds suggested to Bolder Giving Executive Director Jason Franklin, an out gay man, that it create an LGBT day of giving modeled after a successful event that is held annually in the state of Minnesota. The 24-hour call for donations netted \$16.3

million last year for charities in the Gopher State.

Franklin agreed to take on the project, and the Mossier foundation awarded Bolder Giving a three-year grant of \$425,000 to help cover the costs of the 2013, 2014, and 2015 Give OUT Days.

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Bolder Giving teamed up with crowdfunding site Razoo.com to create the online platform needed to collect donations on Give OUT Day. The donations will be made to the Razoo Foundation, which is its own nonprofit, so that donors can claim their entire contribution for tax purposes.

Razoo will keep 2.9 percent of the donation (which also covers the credit card transaction fees), while Bolder Giving will retain 1.5 percent in order to cover their expenses associated with launching the national fundraiser. Franklin explained that the grant Bolder Giving received fully funds this year's costs but drops to 80 percent next year and then to 60 percent in the third year.

"The money collected this year will go to support next year's organizing," he said.

Franklin said they have not set a dollar amount they are hoping to reach this year. And he suspects most donations will not be large but total either \$50 to \$100 that day.

"Really, this is a way to bring in new donors," he said. "It is a way to ask small dollar donors to step up their giving and engage your base in supporting in another way your work."

Razoo CEO Lesley Mansford, whose company provides the technical support for the Minnesota fundraiser, also declined to estimate how much money the LGBT fundraiser would bring in this year. Not only is this the inaugural event, it is also the first time a giving day has centered on a specific cause, she said.

"I think it is always challenging on the first day to really determine an actual amount," said Mansford.

She did predict that "it will be a very exciting day" and expects to see numerous tweets over Twitter and posts to Facebook on May 9 about the campaign not only by the participating nonprofits but also by donors.

"There should be a lot of activity on Facebook and Twitter,"

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predicted Mansford.

As the Bay Area Reporter noted in a story earlier this year on crowdfunding, until now few LGBT nonprofits have embraced the online platforms to raise funds. Reasons varied from the method for raising money being untested to uncertainty that current donors, many age 40 and older, would participate in online-based fundraisers.

"I have heard the exact same hesitation and concerns from LGBT groups around crowdfunding," said Franklin.

"The value of a proposition such as Give OUT Day is we are doing all the work and creating the online platform with Razoo."

Bolder Giving also developed sample materials and has held online trainings for the nonprofits taking part. Part of the message has been that Give OUT Day is not meant to replace the groups' established fundraising methods, such as gala events.

Doughty with Horizons hopes to see younger people take part. His agency has documented that less than 5 percent of the LGBT community regularly donates directly to LGBT nonprofits.

"Many organizations have struggled to reach young donors and are very, very interested in, for obvious reasons, developing support from younger donors," he

said. "This is an experiment but is a way that has some promise of reaching new audiences of potential donors." ■