

## **Is your council ready for to add mobile giving to its fundraising toolkit? The Maryland Humanities Council shares their story and some lessons**

by Aaron Heinsman, Director of Development

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For several years, as the growth of personal technology has skyrocketed, mobile fundraising has been given more and more attention. In late 2011, the Maryland Humanities Council began discussing how we might integrate mobile into our efforts. We knew we were failing to fully capitalize on having a captive audience at program events. We had been doing a good job following up with direct mail solicitations, but we thought we could make some inroads by offering folks a way to give a small amount during the event itself, while they were experiencing it, with minimum hassle. We decided to give “text-to-give” a try.

We signed up with Give By Cell and were able to negotiate special pricing that made the experiment affordable. The first year we struggled to gain traction, even at events we thought would be packed with likely donors. We learned that we needed to express the text-to-give message in multiple ways. We made sure to have signage, instructions in event programs, verbal announcements—including the speaker pulling out her phone to demonstrate how simple it was to give—and occasionally even a tee-shirt emblazoned with the instructions worn by a staffer at events. We started to see much better results, and we raised enough from these \$10 donations to cover our initial costs after 18 months. Now, because of a fairly low monthly fee, we’re able to keep the service going and more than cover the expense.

Obviously, we’re never going to make huge gains in our annual fund with this method, but we are able to accomplish several things:

- 1) We drive home the message to our event participants that we’re a non-profit organization both worthy of and needful of individual support.
- 2) We introduce young people to philanthropy with a technology that is second nature to them.
- 3) We have a simple way to get folks into the donor pipeline.
  - a. 10% of our text-to-give donors have made multiple mobile gifts.
  - b. Even more exciting, 10% of our text-to-give donors have transitioned to become donors with larger gifts through online or direct mail.

If you can negotiate a reasonable monthly service fee, consider trying it out. You might even convince a board member to underwrite your set-up expenses.

*If you learned something from this article and would like to thank MHC with a \$10 donation, text the keyword **GIVE2MHC** + your name + your email address to **20222** (message & data rates apply; [more info here](#)).*