The Gift of Grain
A Fundraising and Marketing Initiative by Lori Bauer — St. John’s Lutheran Home of Albert Lea

Background
In order to raise funds, some organizations in farming communities look to farmers for donations. Farmers who donate grain instead of cash not only contribute to charities but can also receive federal and state tax breaks by reducing their income.

Importance
St. John’s Lutheran Home of Albert Lea is currently constructing a new senior campus and is seeking donations to help fund the Town Center of the facility.

Goals
• Start a donation program so that it may be utilized in future years
• Advertise and educate on the need for the Town Center and donations
• Measure the success of advertising and the overall program
• Collect grain from at least five farmers

Results
Ten donors contributed for a total collection of 6,138 bushels of grain.
• 8 farmers donated corn
• 2 farmers donated soy beans
The chart below displays donated bushels broken down by grain type.

Donated Grain

*Approximate Cash Donated via Sale of Grain
$23,346

*Estimated using April 8, 2016 grain prices. Prices change daily. The donated grain has not yet been sold. Grain is anticipated to be sold in the spring when market prices are typically higher.

Survey Results:
Seven of the farmers who donated were surveyed.

“How did you hear about the Gift of Grain program? (Check all that apply)”

Advertising Success

Word of Mouth  Mailed Brochure and Letter  Elevator Posters and Brochures  Church Posters and Flyers  Church Bulletin Inserts  Facility Brochures and Posters  Church Council Presentations

7  3  4  1  2  0  2

“We why did you give to the Gift of Grain program?”

“My grandparents lived at St. John’s before they passed away. We are very appreciative of the care they received and wanted to give back.”

“I gave to the program to support the new construction and save on taxes.”

Below are some of the marketing materials that were created.

Conclusions
Based on the survey, our most successful marketing strategies were:
• Word of Mouth Promotion
• Grain Elevator Posters and Brochures

Most other strategies were less successful but helpful. Information displayed at our facility was not successful at all.

Almost all of the farmers I surveyed commented that our efforts would have been more successful if grain prices were higher. The chart below displays the decreasing soybean market price trend from Sept. 2012 to May 2015. Corn prices are similarly decreasing.

Recommendations
• Start program in farming communities when grain prices are high
• Recruit key individuals in the farming industry to recommend and promote the program through word of mouth
• Begin marketing in the summer before the harvest season begins

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Methodology

- Research grain donation programs to learn the legality of donations and tax breaks
- Set up accounts with various grain elevators
- Create and distribute marketing materials
- Keep a log of all donations
- Survey farmers for feedback and statistics
- Sell donated grain for cash