



Storytelling for Nonprofits

How to Present Stories
That Attract Donors, Win
Support, and Raise Money

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Everyone in your organization needs a good story.

To intrigue a journalist. To inspire a donor to give. To motivate staff to aim higher. To spark an advocacy revolution. To land a corporate sponsorship deal.

Stories are the basic building blocks for reaching our goals.

As fundraisers, it's not enough to arouse sympathetic emotions. We need to motivate people to act on those emotions, to vote with their checkbooks. We need to overcome the painful feelings that come with acknowledging the presence of suffering in our world. Research shows that this is all possible, though it's not always easy. The most powerful tool in a fundraiser's bag is to tell a great story.

Strategic storytelling *can* be done. Let's start doing it together!

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Elements of a Great Story

Storytelling is the single most powerful communications tool you have available, bar none. But many good causes tend to have problems telling good stories even though people have been communicating through stories for thousands of years.

So, what makes narrative so powerful?

1. Stories help us remember.

When you have facts you want people to remember, it's much more likely they will be remembered if you contain those facts within a story.

2. Stories influence how we decide.

In 1990 a study was done on how people on juries came to conclusions. According to the study, most construct a story based on the facts offered in the case. Then they compared the stories they constructed with the stories the lawyers presented. The jurist would side with whomever's story matched their own the closest.

3. Stories link us to our sense of generosity.

Studies also show that donors tend to give twice as much when presented with a story about an affected individual as opposed to reading huge abstract numbers of the overall scope of a problem.

Hopefully, you realize your organization should be telling stories. Stories make a cause relatable, tangible, and touching. So how do you write one? What is the structure of a well-told story?

Screenwriting guru Michael Hauge boils all great stories down to three elements:

1. Character

Character is our protagonist. Hollywood can make us feel empathy for such unlikely protagonists as fish (Nemo) and aliens (Avatar). But how do they do it?

Roughly 99% of the time, the protagonist of a good story is a single individual. Try not to focus on an idea or an organization, but on one relatable character (or a personified entity, as Shel Silverstein did in *The Giving Tree*). A team led by Deborah Small of the University of Pennsylvania found that people are twice as likely to give a charitable gift when presented with an emotion-inducing personal story that focuses exclusively on one character's plight.



The Lampion Center creates an emotional appeal with an unlikely character: Roary the Lion. Donors can send a stuffed-animal version of the mascot to sick children.

Credit: Lampioncenter.com

2. Desire

Desire doesn't necessarily mean lust or greed; it can also lead to a burning need to change the character's world: to obtain something, get rid of something, restore order, or escape a threat. Don't forget about desire when writing your story. While character and conflict are definitely important, they can't shine without their third musketeer. As fantasy writer Mark O'Bannon writes, "Desire must be clear, specific, and definite."

3. Conflict

Conflict simply refers to the obstacles that arise and prevent the character from getting whatever he or she wants. Conflict is a story's oxygen; the more conflict, the more engaging the story. Powerful stories are about suffering and hardship. Readers respond best to conflict they can identify with, but that doesn't mean your readers need experience living in a war zone. They just need to be able to relate to pain, illness, or loss.

Don't be afraid to talk about conflict! Many organizations don't like to name their villains or show true conflict. They're afraid to unleash powerful emotions. But if organizations succeed in sanitizing their stories, scrubbing them of all conflict, emotion will fly out

To make sure you cover all of the basics of story structure here are the beginnings of six sentences that can help you with the process.

1. Once upon a time ...

This starts the story off and introduces our protagonist.

2. And every day ...

This will set up how life was before the challenge or inciting incident.

3. Until one day ...

This begins the action of the story with the challenge and the goal.

4. And because of this ...

This introduces the barriers or obstacles the protagonist faces.

5. And because of this ...

There could be several barriers that need introduction.

6. Until finally...

This ends the story with the resolution.

Get Into Character

It's becoming much easier to tell your story of the clients you serve—especially if you have a smartphone, a social media presence, and a few juicy questions to ask. Unfortunately, it can be more difficult to tell a story with which your donors can identify.

Here are 12 questions to help you get into character and reinforce the emotional connection of your story. Think, “As the donor ...”

1. Do I Belong Here?

That's the first question in the mind of every donor. One way or another, they must locate themselves in your story. They must experience a genuine emotional pull that says what you do matters to them, personally. It might be the cause itself, a pet project, their relationship to a staff person—the possible intersections are endless. It's your job to help connect the dots and determine why people generally get involved.

Additional Questions:

- Can you describe who most easily identifies with your work?
- What are you doing to remind them of how they belong with you?
- How might you give them something to remember you for?

There are many reasons people are motivated to donate, but the constant is always **meaning**. That is your true currency and the building block of all great stories. How can you create a pride of belonging?

2. What Do You Stand For?

More than just numbers, donors invest in organizations that reflect their own personal values and worldview. In giving to a specific group, they are expressing themselves through the work that you do. Their image of self is bundled with how they direct their giving. When they give to your organization, that's a reflection of who they are—or who they aspire to be. So how are you reinforcing their story of identity?

Additional Questions:

- How do you communicate the philosophy of your organization?
- Does your ethos speak to a narrower or mainstream audience?
- What might you do to evolve your story for greater relevance?

As the saying goes, “The most important things are choosing what's most important.” That's why you need to clearly articulate your values, and in a manner that hopefully is generative for attracting more people into the mix.

3. Are You For Real?

There are plenty of “worthy” causes. Yet increasingly donors question what organizations are “worthy” of contribution. People more and more question where their money is going, and whether they’re making the right choices. Being “for real” requires that you demonstrate your authenticity and legitimacy. More than just numbers, it means that you are judged for your knowledge, trust and social capital.

Additional Questions:

- Why was the organization founded or started (in response to what)?
- What unique approach or knowledge do you have on your issue?
- Who do you truly represent, and how do you prove their support?

Communicating your nonprofit’s unique difference is a matter of survival. While you must paint a picture regarding the scale of impact, it’s not just about over-rationalized arguments. Strive to tell a bigger story that inspires the imagination. At the end of the day, are you giving your donors a story they can proudly believe in?

That’s it. You have those character, desire, challenge, and a structure ... and you have yourself a story!

If character, desire, and conflict are the passengers, the structure is the frame, and the story’s resolution is the engine that drives it, what’s the fuel?

Premium Storytelling Fuel: Emotion



Storytelling is the language of emotion.”

—Mark Rovner, founder of Sea Change Strategies

Nicole Lampe, the digital strategy director of Resource Media, says that audiences often experience information overload and ask themselves, “What does this have to do with my life?” What touches her are things she can connect to her home, family, friends, and community. Many times, those emotional connections are established through stories.

One of the fatal flaws in nonprofit storytelling is a lack of emotion. That’s ironic given that donors and constituents are engaging with organizations in a fundamentally emotional way. Karl Iglesias, an eminent Hollywood script guru and the author of *Writing for Emotional Impact*, says:



Good writing is good writing because you feel something. It’s why a great movie can be three hours long and you don’t even notice, while an awful 90-minute one can stretch into eternity. ... The experience of emotions is the most compelling reason we go to the movies, watch television, read novels, and attend plays and sporting events. And yet, emotional response is a subject too often overlooked. Emotion, not logic, is the stuff of drama. Emotion is your screenplay’s life blood.”

First, focus on the fact that, above all, you are in the happiness business. Your primary job is to find the emotional core of your mission and to connect it with the people you wish to reach.

But my supporters are logical, smart people, you might say. They love to hear statistics and see evidence for why they should donate to my cause!

While it’s great that your supporters are intelligent and motivated, research shows that no matter your audience, an emotional appeal will still win over more donors.

Which of these stories is more compelling to you?

Story #1

Any money that you donate will go to Rokia, a 7-year-old girl who lives in Mali, a country in West Africa. Rokia is desperately poor and faces a threat of severe hunger, even starvation. Her life will be changed for the better as a result of your financial gift. With your support, and the support of other caring sponsors, Save the Children will work with Rokia's family and other members of the community to help feed and educate her and provide her with basic medical care.

Story #2

Food shortages in Malawi are affecting more than 3 million children.

In Zambia, severe rainfall deficits have resulted in a 42% drop in maize production since 2000. As a result, an estimated 3 million Zambians face hunger. Four million Angolans—one-third of the population—have been forced to flee their homes.

More than 11 million people in Ethiopia need immediate food assistance.

If you answered Story #1, you are like most people, according to a study by University of Pennsylvania's Deborah Small and her colleagues. They found that individuals give more to identifiable victims who have an emotional appeal than they do to a faceless, statistical group. But those donations diminished when readers began to think analytically about the protagonist. Donations for statistical victims—stories containing characters and statistics—are always consistently low.



Which image is more appealing to you? Most people would choose the image on the right because it features real, distinguishable people and animals.

(Left Credit: Xavier Ceccaldi/Flickr)

In an interview with Perla Ni of GreatNonprofits, Small said:



The more vivid the story—through narrative or through imagery—the more emotionally arousing. And emotions are what triggers the impetus to help. The more surprising finding is that showing statistics can actually blunt this emotional response by causing people to think in a more calculative, albeit uncaring, manner.”

Don’t talk in numbers or statistics. A cerebral case for your cause is less effective than a heartfelt story.

Researchers have also found that that when people have a personal connection to a cause (or know someone who does), that can lead them—and others—to be more supportive.

In a different study, participants were told two different stories about a college student:

1. In one case, the student had a parent who suffered a heart attack.
2. In another case, the student had a parent who had been diagnosed with cancer.

The participants were then asked how they would react if the student invited them to a volunteer event. When the event was directly related to the student’s personal experience, people were sympathetic and said they would have a hard time saying no. When the event was not personal—that is, the fictional student whose parent suffered a heart attack was advocating for a cancer society—the effect was not the same.

Emotion is power. Remember:

1. Focus on the fact that, above all, you are in the happiness business. Your primary job is to find the emotional core of your initiative and connect it to the consumers you wish to reach. Give them the opportunity to feel great by doing good.
2. Don’t talk in numbers or statistics. A cerebral case for your cause is less effective than a heartfelt story.
3. Personal connections and stories have a big effect on a person’s inclination to help. If you’ve got ’em, use ’em.

Collecting Your Stories

Far better than organizational jargon or sterile statistics, stories help donors (and future donors) learn an organization's personality. Stories help donors feel engaged in your work and see the difference they can make in a real person's life. They empower the organization and its supporters to continue on.

But getting good stories is easier said than done. Here are a few tips learned from interviewing hundreds of people who received help from charitable organizations.

1. Start with the end in mind.

Do your homework. Get the “story behind the story” from the program manager before you ever pick up the phone. Think of the story you want to end up with and backtrack from there to draft your questions.

2. Never use the word “interview.”

The word “interview” makes people feel like they're being interrogated by Woodward and Bernstein. It can cause anxiety and stage fright. Instead, ask if you can “chat for a few minutes about the assistance he/she received.”

3. Talk less, listen more.

Use the first minute or so to make the interviewee feel at ease and express your thanks. After that, zip your lips. Closed-ended questions will give you just what you might expect—one-word, dull answers. Ask questions like “what did the help mean to you?” and give people time to think about and respond to the question. Resist the urge to fill dead air as some of the best responses come when the interviewee is given the floor.

4. Veer from the script.

As mentioned in #1, a list of questions is always a good idea. But that said, it's a starting point. Listen closely to the interview, and be ready to jet off in another direction if needed. Use probing questions to get more in-depth answers.

5. Get approvals.

After you've drafted the story, give the interviewee a chance to review for accuracy. Most make no changes, but it's better to know any problems before publishing it. Keep a paper trail, you might need it.

6. Be prepared for anything

Interviewing for nonprofits is unique. You're talking to people who were—or are—in crisis. Don't be surprised if you encounter hostility, tears and any other emotions. Listen and be empathetic, but never say, “I know what you're going through.” Most importantly, stay calm no matter what's thrown at you.

Why Bad Stories Happen to Good Causes

“

I find that most people know what a story is until they sit down to write one.”

—Flannery O’Connor

Storytelling is a craft. If you’ve never tried to write a story, it can be humbling and difficult, but it can also be joyous and rewarding. Trying to write a story will help you get better at spotting good stories, which in turn will help you write better ones.

A great place to start is to identify your character, his or her desires and conflicts, and build from there. But watch out for these common problems along the way:

1. Fear of emotion.

While people might not be afraid of emotions, organizations usually are. Nonprofit staff members tend to be a very left-brained lot: highly educated, literate, rational folks. Try not to look down on emotion—passion, love, fear, tension, lust, rage—as noise in the system to be minimized or hidden.

It feels good to give because giving is mostly emotional and irrational. It feels good to speak up. Rage—at wrongdoing, at injustice, at suffering—has been the linchpin of social-change movements since the beginning of time. Ever wonder why your online activists keep sending letters to Congress? It gives them the feeling of having done something.

We appreciate your support during the past disasters, and we urgently need your help now!

Please return the above reply form, along with the most generous donation you can make, before January 14th. Just \$19 can provide a hot meal, warm blanket, and comfort kit containing basic necessities to a disaster victim.

How could this letter from a nonprofit have been more successful with a story and emotion instead of statistics?

(Source: Future Fundraising Now)

2. Bad casting.

You’ve probably heard this story before: “Something bad happened. Our organization fixed it and saved the day. The end.”

When an organization is cast as the hero of a story, the appeal of the individual is ignored. Many organizations are fantastic, but they probably can’t pull at a reader’s heartstrings. Try casting someone who benefited from your organization as the hero, such as a cat that was given a new home or a child who received a new pair of shoes.

Here’s an example:

“*Since Amanda started the therapy program, she has gained upper-body strength and improved her posture, learned many skills, and developed greater independence. She can dress herself, brush her teeth and hair, and play by herself. Now we hear all the time, “Let me do it!”*

3. The “everyone can do it” myth.

Good storytelling is really hard. Hire writers—or engage your organization’s very best ones—to craft your most important narratives. Remember, it takes time to craft a great story. Keep trying, and ask others for feedback and advice.

4. It’s storytelling, not stories telling.

More is not always better. In fact, more can be worse if you haven’t worked out your organization’s central narrative. A multiplicity of stories may confuse rather than inspire readers, so think about what your central narrative is. It’s the story that expresses the heart and soul of what you do. Your central narrative may even be the story of how your organization came to be founded.

5. Happy ending syndrome.

If an organization wants to send out a call to action, to organize, to rabble-rouse, it needs to tell stories that don’t always have happy endings. Nonprofits can ask constituents to step into the narrative and help craft the ending. If you already have a happy ending, why should your donors help? Or, if your story does have a happy ending, how can you use it to tell supporters how their donation was used or how their volunteer effort made a difference and inspire them to keep giving?

Create a Sense of Urgency

In addition to leveraging emotion, creating urgency can be a great way to drive donations through storytelling. Think about the calls to action in infomercials: “Limited-time offer!” Or a travel website: “One seat left at this price!” How can you emphasize the urgency of your issue? You want your story to encourage your supporters to act—not just when they’re ready, but NOW!

Here are four simple tactics for building a sense of urgency:

1. Set a deadline.

As any procrastinator knows, nothing concentrates the mind like an imminent deadline. Set a goal and tie it to a date—and think about how you can add this to your story or write one about it. People will be far more likely to give or take action as the deadline approaches.

2. Make it close.

When people sense you’re close to a goal’s finish line, they are more inclined to help you cross it. If you’re near your goal, create tremendous urgency with a story showing people how they can put you over the top.

3. Create scarcity.

When people feel an opportunity is running out, they are more inclined to take action. “Get your tickets now—only 10 seats left at our gala!” is better than “Attend our gala!” Stories can create a sense of urgency within your conflict. For instance, is the amount of fresh water your character has access to quickly diminishing?

4. Be specific.

Think of it this way: It’s easy to say no to something hard and hard to say no to something easy. Make your call to action clear, quick, and easy, and people will be more likely to act now.

THE WITTENBERG FUND

Only 24 Hours Left

You still have time to make a difference in the lives of Wittenberg students! Hurry, there is no time to delay!


Your gift, no matter the size, will help The Wittenberg Fund complete its financial aid goal by year end. We are so close to being able to help all of our students return for the spring semester. They need your help, and there has never been a better investment.

Every gift is important, and your gift can make the difference for a student in need. Please, act right now!

Thank you for helping close the 2010 holiday season by helping students in need.

Happy New Year!

[Make A Gift To The Wittenberg Fund](#)



The Wittenburg Fund has made urgency central to this fund-raising appeal.

(Source: iModules)

The Power of the Picture

Why are visuals so effective at storytelling? Resource Media's guide *Seeing Is Believing: A Guide to Visual Storytelling Best Practices* offers three principles of visual communication:

1. Humans are visual first, verbal second.

From the earliest stages of cognitive development, our brains organize the world around us by processing visual information.

2. Our decisions and actions are based more on emotional reactions than rational thought.

Good visuals make people feel first and think second.

3. Visuals are the most effective communication vehicles for evoking emotion and getting people to take action.

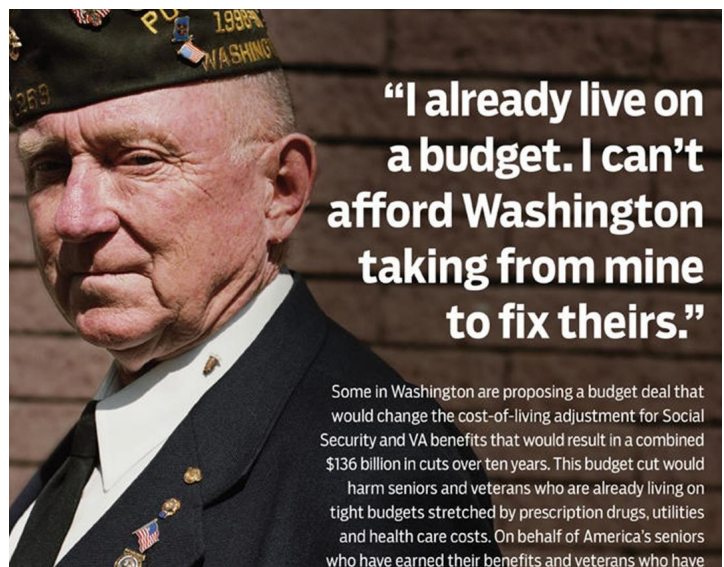
So storytellers need to use them intentionally and strategically.

Because humans are visual creatures, images and photos can communicate more effectively than text alone (think memes and infographics). Visuals help us to understand and retain information better and are more persuasive than words alone.

On his blog, Neuromarketing, author Roger Dooley reports on a study that “showed that statements about a celebrity being alive or dead were judged to be accurate more often when they were accompanied by photos of that celebrity.” Another study found that factual information is viewed as more truthful when accompanied by pictures—even if the images are topically unrelated to the text. Incorporating images can enhance your story, add detail, and create credibility with your reader.

But what about telling stories through pictures?

This AARP magazine advertisement uses a powerful combination of text and visuals to reinforce one veteran's story. The image introduces the character, the quote presents his desire and conflict, and the supporting text expands on all three.



“I already live on a budget. I can't afford Washington taking from mine to fix theirs.”

Some in Washington are proposing a budget deal that would change the cost-of-living adjustment for Social Security and VA benefits that would result in a combined \$136 billion in cuts over ten years. This budget cut would harm seniors and veterans who are already living on tight budgets stretched by prescription drugs, utilities and health care costs. On behalf of America's seniors who have earned their benefits and veterans who have

Telling Your Story with Visuals

A picture is worth so much more than 1,000 words! They inspire, organize, and express things incredibly fast and with great emotion. Don't forget them when sharing your stories!

1. Find inspiration

Look to other organizations you admire and see how they are using images. Here are a few examples from our Network for Good partners:

- Gardens for Health International's website has beautiful images of their work. Most of their images are action shots with high color contrast that leave the viewer feeling positive.
- The St. Anthony Foundation has a great collection of photos from their Willing to Serve campaign (including some famous faces).
- The St. Bernard Project has wonderful stories and images accompanying their Faces of Katrina campaign.
- The Arts Council of New Orleans never misses an opportunity to take pictures at community events showcasing the arts in their area.
- Public radio station 90.7 KSER has a unique way of highlighting their staff members and behind-the-scenes moments with images on their Facebook page.



To recruit volunteers and supporters, the San Francisco-based St. Anthony Foundation used Facebook to showcase a collection of images featuring current volunteers, local famous faces and their clients posing with their dining room's newly branded cafeteria trays.

2. Organize your ideas

Organizing good examples and the images you have available helps set an expectation for the kind of images you want:

- Start a Pinterest board and collect images you admire. When the time comes to work with a photographer, show them the images you've collected so that they understand the types of photos you are looking for.
- Think about the work your organization does. How can you capture that in an image? Are there any upcoming events that would serve as good photo opportunities that can help tell your story? Would an on-site photo shoot or a series of pictures of your fieldwork do a good job of illustrating your mission?

3. Getting started

When moving beyond inspiration to taking and choosing photos, don't forget the basics:

- Use photos to help tell your story.
- Choose photos that grab the attention of the viewer. (Human faces are best!)
- If you can't take your own images anytime soon, use stock photos.

4. Sharing stories that have pictures

Before you start publishing images online, sharing them with the media, or adding them to your annual report, be sure to have the following:

- Photographer's name. (Don't forget to give credit!)
- Caption to accompany the image. (Captions are read more often than blocks of copy.)
- Relevancy. Images need to enhance your story, not distract or confuse.

5. Storing Your Photos

Once you have a solid collection of photos that represent your work, what do you do with them? Here are suggestions for storing and managing photos:

- Your organization's shared drive is one place where you can keep images. Photos stored on a shared drive are accessible to everyone in your office and, unlike a desktop computer, can be recovered if your organization's system crashes.
- An external hard drive is another option for photo storage. External hard drives are portable, reliable, and are a good storage solution for organizations that don't have a shared drive.
- If you chose to store images online, consider using a free tool such as Picasa, Flickr, or Dropbox.

Five Reasons to Tell Your Story on Social Media ...



Pairing your nonprofit storytelling with social media is another smart tactic for engaging supporters and inspiring them to take action. When coupled with a compelling story, social media is an easy way to promote stories about your cause. It works because:

1. **It's dynamic.** Social media makes it easy to combine text, photos, video, and interactive elements to tell a richer story than words alone.
2. **It puts stories front and center.** For many, social media is part of their daily routine. Sharing your stories through social channels will put your message front and center for your supporters.
3. **It's easy to consume.** Breaking your stories into snackable sizes—just right for social media—helps your readers engage with your message quickly from wherever they happen to be.
4. **It provides instant feedback.** Unlike other channels, social media is optimized for real-time interaction. Get insight into what resonates with your supporters by offering a variety of stories and formats.
5. **It's shareable.** Stories that amaze or inspire are irresistibly shareable. Take advantage of the fact that social tools are built to allow people to interact and share. Let your social media fans help you spread the word and attract new supporters.

... And How to Do It

Now that you're ready to go social, how should you package your stories to really stand out? Think outside the box when presenting your stories via social media. Here are a few creative ways to frame your content:


- **Invite your supporters on a journey on Facebook.**
Take readers on a journey to your field sites, local outreach events and through video, photos and up-to-the-minute updates. Use a combination of formats to really capture the full experience.
- **Curate an exclusive exhibit in a Facebook album.**
Have a collection of artifacts, illustrations or thank you notes from constituents? Show them off and let them speak for you.
- **Make them part of the action on Twitter.**
Share a play-by-play of live events or behind the scenes activities with a virtual “back stage pass.”
- **Create a serial drama on Tumblr or Twitter.**
Never underestimate the power of a cliffhanger—tell your story in installments over several days or weeks. Use hashtags, photo albums and landing pages to link the pieces together.
- **Have a caption contest on Instagram or Facebook.**
Post an image and ask your fans to contribute caption suggestions.

Stories in Action

When companies authentically discuss their efforts, they highlight the contributions of many players and add transparency to their organization. Telling your story accomplishes three important goals:

1. Focuses attention on the need and the call to action.
2. Personalizes your commitment to the cause.
3. Reports to your community on why your cause matters and the impact of the donations you've raised.

Nonprofit animal care farm Sanctuary One actively engages donors on Facebook and YouTube. They incorporate stories and content into social media in an approachable, friendly way to reach more fans. Here they are telling a success story that shows donation and action at work. The story features Halle, who was in poor shape when she arrived. Supporters followed her progress for every step from discovery to adoption.

**Sanctuary One**
June 20 · 🌐

More good news to share ~ After a 13-month stay here at the Sanctuary, Halle has been adopted by one of our interns.


Halle has a strange meow, kind of like the croak of a frog. This funny voice, and her big bright eyes, endeared her to her new momma. Here's a video on our YouTube Channel where you can hear Halle's adorable voice: <http://youtu.be/v7i1J-BIVRk>

Halle came to live at our care farm after being rescued by the kind-hearted heroes at the Southern Oregon Humane Society. We are honored to work together with animal shelters and humane societies to rescue special-needs animals like Halle.

When she first arrived at the Sanctuary, Halle's hair was falling out, most likely due to a combination of the stress of living in a shelter and food allergies. But after many months of tender loving care, eventually we were able to restore Halle to purr-fect health.

Thank you to all the supporters who make it possible for our care farm to rehabilitate and rehome animals like Halle. We couldn't do it without you!

If you would like to get involved, please visit www.SanctuaryOne.org/support for a list of ways to help.



Sanctuary One shared a link.
18 hours ago · 🌐

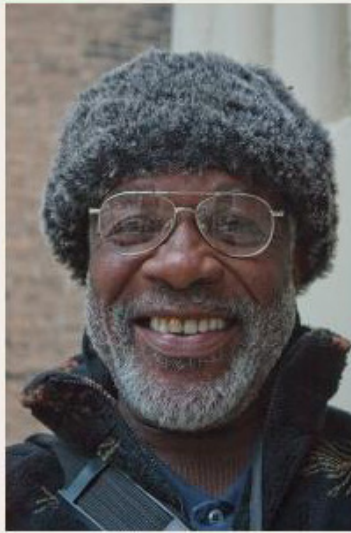
Hot off the presses! Here's a new video profile of Leela, one of the Sanctuary's adorable adoptables.



Meet Leela the lovable bulldog mix

Leela is a big heart in a small package.

The Contributor is a street newspaper that highlights the contributions and lives of the formerly homeless individuals it serves. These stories feature individuals and portrays their desires, conflicts, and interactions with the organization.



Albert Warren. Photo by Linda Bailey

Albert Warren

By Linda Bailey

Editorial Assistant

linda@thecontributor.org

Are you from Nashville originally?

No, ma'am. I'm from Memphis. I got to Nashville about 2002. I was born in Mississippi and came to years old. After my wife died, I kinda had a break get my three girls—we had six kids, she had three had three. But she was on dialysis and she had kidney she died, I didn't want to stay in Memphis anymore girls, but they turned me down cause I was a man through a temporary service and that wasn't good

Check out these organizations and websites for more examples of stellar storytelling:

- **Michigan Nonprofit Association Story Bank** gathers stories from Michigan's nonprofits. Having trouble coming up with your story? Look to this bank for inspiration!
- **League of Women Voters** invites women to share their stories.
- **American Cancer Society** has a large storybank divided by cancer-type so that people who've been touched by cancer can find inspiration, hope, and support.
- **FamiliesUSA** gathers stories as "the voice of health care consumers."
- **WaterAid** tells the stories of the people it helps and the projects it undertakes to give their mission a human face and elicit donations.
- **Barack Obama's Share Your Story About the Economic Crisis** says, "It's up to you to share and collect the real stories of this economic crisis ... to show how critical it is to support the economic recovery plan." They're using stories to promote their specific plan.
- **Mothers2Mothers Mentor Mother Stories** are meant to inspire mothers, educate readers, and motivate donations.
- **Community Food Bank of Eastern Oklahoma** features a hunger story that focuses on one character, their struggle with hunger, and how they've benefited from the food bank.

Get Going!

Does writing a story sound really hard? It can be. Storytelling tests every writer's mettle, but great benefits await those who devote themselves to mastering the art of powerful storytelling.

Talk to members of your organization—staff, volunteers, donation recipients—to discover what makes your nonprofit tick. What story can you tell that makes your reader feel the same way? Don't be afraid to uncover your organization's emotional draw and to tell your supporters all about it! Just remember:

- A good story has a passionate storyteller (you!), clear stakes, and a tale of transformation at its core.
- Powerful stories always have character, desire, and conflict.
- Every story needs EMOTION!
- Stories don't just have to be printed on paper. They can be uploaded to websites, told in pictures, and shared via social media and videos.
- Every story needs a focus. Don't try to tell everything that's ever happened. Focus on one succinct story to allow your readers to really connect with the experience you're trying to relate.
- Compelling photos instantly draw readers into your story.
- Use real details to tell your story. Quotes, sights, sounds and events help make your story more tangible and give readers something to grab onto.
- Just as you focus on one story, focus your attention on one person. Tap into that human emotion to let readers form a bond with your characters.

For more help, check out other great storytelling resources:

- “Seeing Is Believing: A Guide to Visual Storytelling Best Practices”
- “The Brainiac’s Guide to Cause Marketing”
- Nonprofit911 Webinar “Nonprofit Storytelling: Convey Your Cause, Your Need, and Your Triumphs”

Everyone has a story. What's yours?

Telling Your Nonprofit's Story

Are you telling a compelling story on your nonprofit website and donation page?
Assess the quality of your stories with these questions.

On your home page ...

- ☐ Do you have a story that's front and center or the start of one?
- ☐ Does your story have a clear protagonist that is a person or a character—and *not* your organization?
- ☐ Do you have a large picture with the face of a person or an animal that triggers emotion and connects to your story?
- ☐ Does your story inspire supporters to donate?
- ☐ Is your story unique and a little unpredictable?
- ☐ Does it create urgency? Is there something important at stake?
- ☐ Is there a lesson in the story that is connected to your organization?
- ☐ Do you keep numbers and statistics to a minimum?



On your donation page ...

- ☐ Do you have a call to action on your donation page that relates to your story?
- ☐ Do you keep the story going by assigning real value to donations, such as "Donate \$100 to feed a child for 1 year"?

About Network for Good

Network for Good powers more digital giving than any other platform. Since 2001, we've processed over \$1 billion for more than 100,000 nonprofits. We are Level 1 Audited PCI Compliant and accredited by the Better Business Bureau Wise Giving Alliance, meeting all 20 of its standards for charity accountability. Plus, we're registered in every state for online fundraising.

We're a mission-minded organization, just like you, so we understand the challenges you face. We're here to help.

Our suite of affordable fundraising solutions helps nonprofits raise money and engage supporters online—plus we provide the training that will make you a fundraising superstar.

1. **Online fundraising:** Get an easy-to-use, branded, and secure online donation page with DonateNow. With built-in best practices and mobile-friendly giving options, you'll raise more than ever before.
2. **Professional communications:** Email campaign and newsletter tools by Constant Contact for sending and tracking emails and telling you which messages work best.
3. **Fundraising Fundamentals premium training:** Exclusive access to Network for Good's expert advice with personalized reviews, step-by-step tutorials, fundraising templates, and more.
4. **Online event management:** EventsNow powered by givezooks! for accepting donations, registrations, and ticket purchases online.

Free Fundraising Tips

Get weekly fundraising advice delivered right to your inbox.

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Make a Case for Giving!

Use these eight steps as a guide to help your nonprofit craft a compelling case for giving.

[Learn More!](#)

Let Us Help

Find out how you can attract more donors and raise more money online.

[Contact Us!](#)

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