

POST-CHALLENGE KIT

Build ... grow ... thrive!

Get solid footing.
Stretch for influence.
Your org's on the rise.

THRIVE THROUGH ACTION

Turn plans into progress, build momentum, and lock in your chances of bringing lasting impact for your community.

PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS

Actionable, progress-driven strategies



A SPECIAL NOTE JUST FOR YOU

You've reached an incredible milestone, and I want to tell you just how much your journey matters — not just to your community, but to me personally.

Groundswell Growth exists because I've seen how grassroots founders like you fill the gaps no one else is addressing. I grew up watching neighborhoods with immense potential struggle with challenges that larger organizations didn't even see. I saw families, neighbors, and individuals step up with creative, heartfelt solutions — and I've dedicated my career to making sure those efforts are supported and celebrated.

You're part of this vital movement. You've built something that didn't exist before — a vision for change that only you could imagine. And now, you're doing the work to turn that vision into reality. The steps you've taken over these six weeks are just the beginning, and I can't wait to see the future you'll create.

Let's keep this momentum going. In this packet, you'll find extra tools, ideas, and resources to guide you through this special phase of your nonprofit journey.

With admiration and gratitude,



Joy the Changemaker



**Groundswell
Growth**
Coaching & Community

A photograph of a woman with short grey hair, wearing a green tank top and blue denim shorts, flexing her right bicep. She is smiling and looking upwards. The background is a white fence and green foliage.

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KEEP THE MOMENTUM

going!

Make Good On Your Promises

You may not realize it, but sending in your application is like making a promise to the people who care whether you succeed in your mission. Many founders believe that after hitting “submit” on their Form 1023 application, they need to wait for official recognition before taking further action. ***This couldn't be further from the truth!*** The IRS operates on the assumption that you're acting in good faith, which means you're allowed to fundraise, deliver programs, and build your nonprofit's reputation while your application is being processed. And your current and future donors are looking for word that you're moving forward!

Don't Hit Pause—Use This Time Wisely

This is your opportunity to harness the excitement around your 501c3 application and use it as a springboard to attract bigger giving, create buzz, and demonstrate your mission in action. The momentum you build now will establish trust and visibility for the future.

Now That You've Completed The Challenge

The next step after the 1023 is to delivering on the promise of organizing that you've made to your community and supporters. Keep the eyes of potential helpers on your work that is most making a difference.

YOUR RECIPE FOR EASIER PROGRESS

- 1 Start small and build early successes.
- 2 Show progress to your supporters through regular updates.
- 3 Map your network to more easily see connections and opportunities.
- 4 Expand your reach by showcasing your work and inviting volunteers.
- 5 Plan an event to celebrate your wins and activate your community.

1. Start Small, Start Now

- **Pick One Goal:** Choose a manageable first step from your Prove-It Blueprint, then figure out how much it will cost over 12 months.
- **Show Progress:** Focus on delivering an early sign of achievement to build trust and excitement among your supporters.

2. Keep Supporters Engaged

- **Share Updates:** Use a free tool like Mailchimp to send newsletters and Adobe Express to design and schedule multiple social posts.
- **Celebrate Together:** Acknowledge donors and volunteers with thank-you messages or social media shout-outs to all your helpers.

Pro Tip:

Make it personal. Talk about the work that was made possible by help. Share photos, testimonials, or small wins. They bring your mission to life.

3. Map Your Network

- **Start with Your Inner Circle:** Picture people who know and support your work — friends, family, colleagues, and community leaders.
- **Broaden Your Reach:** Think of your local businesses, nonprofits doing related work, and leaders, politicians, or general movers & shakers aligned with your mission.
- **Visualize Your Network:** Use tools like Canva or Lucidchart to create a map of connections. This shows you ways to partner up.

Example Outreach Message:

“Hi _____, I love the work you’re doing in our community. I’d like to get to know more of what you’re doing and let you know what I’m getting started. Could we grab coffee or schedule a quick call?”

Pro Tip:

At first, don’t come already knowing how they can help — Genuine, mutually beneficial relationships end up paying off in unexpected ways.

4. Build Awareness in Your Community

- **Show, Don't Just Tell:** Decide where you'll post regular visual-based updates, such as behind-the-scenes photos or stories you'll tell.
- **Invite Others In:** Share about even small volunteer opportunities and ways people are supporting the good that's happening.

Pro Tip:

Got a website? Google for Nonprofits is a free service that will drive crowds of naturally interested people to your website's homepage.

5. Plan Your First Community Event

- **Start Simple:** Host a gathering to thank supporters and showcase the progress made possible by their involvement and giving.
- **Make It Memorable:** Use free tools like Eventbrite to manage RSVPs and Adobe Express or Canva to design invitations and updates.



Let the fancy folks have a little fun when they're making good things happen with some dollars.

EXPAND YOUR TOOLBOX:

free tools you're gonna need

One of the best things about founding a nonprofit in today's world is the abundance of free tools available to make your work easier. You've already accomplished so much—why not let these resources save you time, streamline your efforts, and amplify your impact?

The tools below are tried-and-true solutions that can help you manage projects, engage supporters, and build your nonprofit's visibility.

YOUR TOOL EXPANSION ACTION PLAN

- 1 Set up Mailchimp to engage supporters with regular updates.
- 2 Set a brand and design materials that make your nonprofit stand out.
- 3 Sign up for TechSoup to save on software and services.
- 4 Apply for Google for Nonprofits to access ads, tools, and websites.
- 5 Talk to library employees to find foundations and big investor info.

1. Mailchimp: Stay in Touch with Supporters Right Now

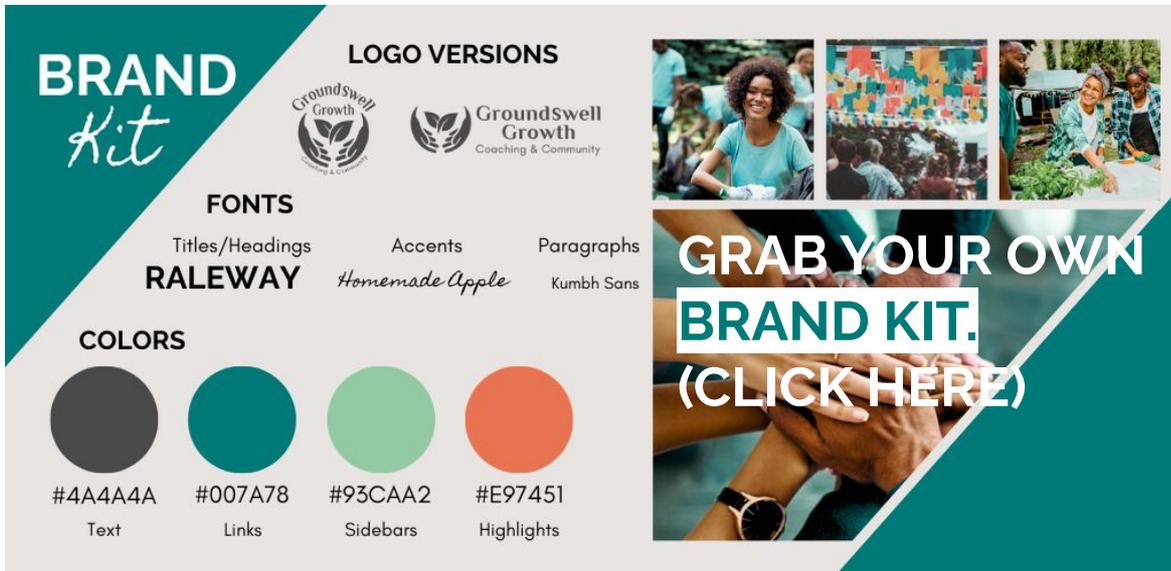
Engaging with your donors and volunteers is easier with [Mailchimp](#)'s free and discounted email marketing plans for nonprofits. Build email lists, send newsletters, and track your engagement all in one place.

How to Use It:

- Send monthly updates with support stories and upcoming events.
- Automate welcome emails for new subscribers.

Pro Tip:

Use Mailchimp's templates to create emails that are visually engaging and mobile-friendly. After you get your letter: [Mailchimp for Nonprofits](#).



2. Design Matters: Get On Brand and Design Like A Boss

It's [free with the basics](#) now, but better once you get your letter. Canva's letter-unlocked plan gives you access to on-message stock images and premium design tools for creating well-designed flyers, sweet event invitations, and more. (Super useful if you're not using Adobe Express.)

How to Use It:

- Design all messaging tools with a look and feel that says "This is us."
- Keep consistent presence with emails, website, socials, events, etc.

Pro Tip:

Create a "brand board" with the org logo and colors. Save templates of your favorite work for consistent branding across all your materials.

3. Public Library Helpers: The Right Info Connects You To Big Dollars

Every once in a while, insider information can bless a special project. Many public libraries provide free access to foundation search tools, and even ideal donor contact information from sources like ReferenceUSA.

How to Maximize the Library Connection:

- Build a free market research list with prospect mailing addresses.
- Search for funders who match your mission and geographic focus.
- Keep a grant calendar to stay on top of applications and reporting.

4. **TechSoup**: Deep Discounts on Software, Computers, and More

After you get your IRS letter, sign up for [TechSoup](#). This is your “in” to save huge amounts of money on essentials like QuickBooks and Zoom.

5. **Google for Nonprofits**: Your Secret Weapon After The Letter

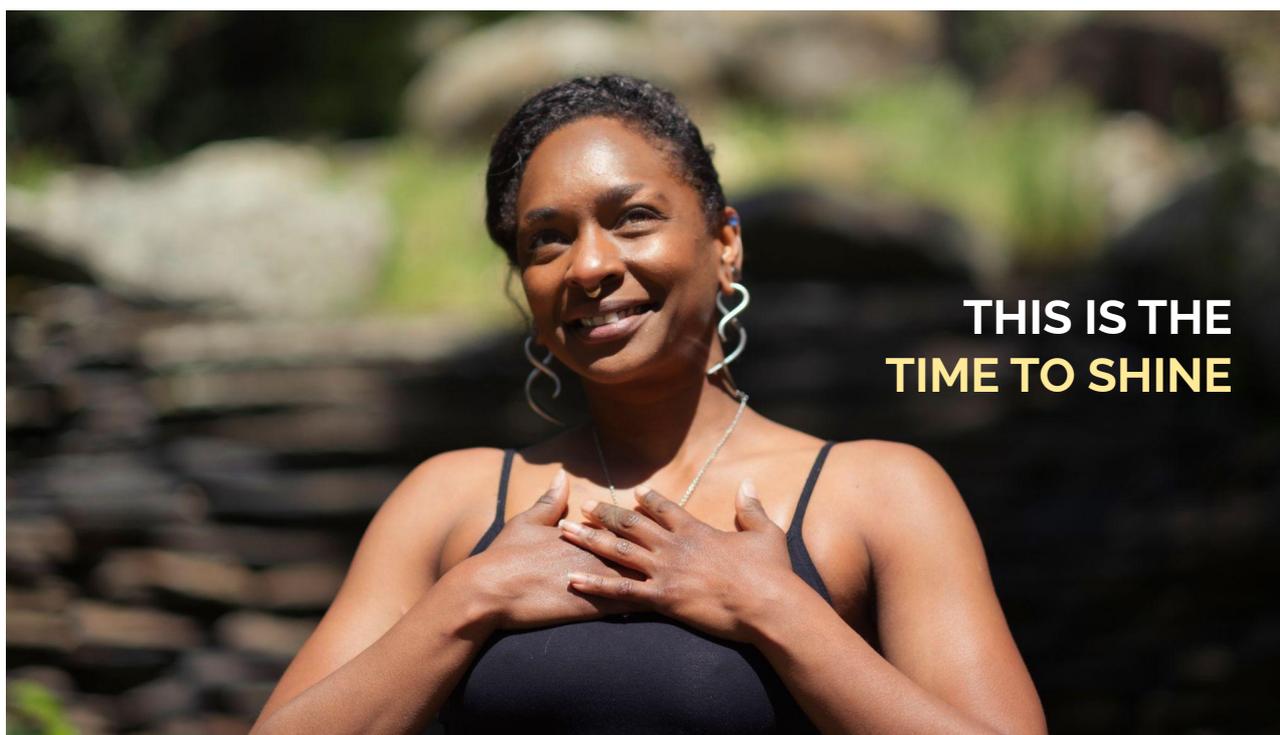
Imagine having up to \$10,000 a month in free ad credits to drive traffic to your website. That’s just one benefit of [Google for Nonprofits](#). This program also offers free access to tools like Google Workspace for apps, email, calendars, and file sharing.

Game-changing free perks:

- Use Google Ads to bring people to your homepage.
- Get unlimited email addresses and more Google Drive storage.

Pro Tip:

If you don’t have a website yet, Google also offers a free site builder. Three months after you get your letter, apply at [Google for Nonprofits](#).



STRENGTHEN YOUR TEAM:

Recruiting and training

A nonprofit is only as strong as the people willing to work towards its mission. Your team — whether it's volunteers, advisory board members, or staff — will define "success." Building a motivated, well-informed team takes intentionality, but the rewards are immeasurable.

This section is about finding the right people, giving them the tools to succeed, and creating a culture where they feel valued and empowered.

YOUR TEAM-BUILDING CHECKLIST

- 1 Create an advisory board of influencers and potential major donors.
- 2 Recruit the best volunteers using outreach and personal connections.
- 3 Empower your team with clear training and ongoing support.
- 4 Build loyalty and morale with regular gestures of appreciation.

1. Build an Advisory Board with Purpose

An advisory board is a powerful way to engage enthusiastic supporters without changing the authenticity of your governing team. It's perfect for individuals who have valuable expertise, connections, or ideas but may not be suited for or interested in a governing board role.



Why Advisory Boards Work:

- **Harness Expertise and Connections:** Leverage advisors' passion and networks without the formal obligations of board membership.
- **Set Clear Boundaries:** Create a structured way to include well-meaning supporters, even those who may have strong personalities, too-frequent input, or a savior complex.
- **Keep Governance Focused:** Protect your governing board's ability to back the original vision. Help them all lead effectively by directing only the most useful advice to your governing board.
- **Use It Like a Wait List:** An advisory board can be a great place for potential governing board members to learn the ropes before going for the legal fiduciary role of governing board member.
- **Let Them Help You Fundraise:** Advisory board members are the best people to recruit onto the governing board's fundraising committee, where they can help without the legal pressure.

Tips for a Strong Advisory Board:

- **Clarify Expectations:** Advisors provide input and connections but have no decision-making authority.
- **Select Thoughtfully:** Focus on members who align with your mission, can offer meaningful contributions, and are more likely to show up when you call on them to help.
- **Stay Engaged:** Schedule periodic check-ins to update advisors, gather feedback, and maintain relationships.

Pro Tip:

Position your advisory board as a prestigious and meaningful role. This makes it attractive to influential individuals while protecting your leadership team's focus.

2. Recruit Passionate Volunteers

Volunteers bring fresh energy, ideas, and hands-on help to your nonprofit. Start by connecting with people who are enthusiastic about your mission, or civic groups that pride themselves on volunteerism.

How to Find Volunteers:

- **Host Volunteer Info Sessions:** Invite potential volunteers to learn about your nonprofit and available roles.
- **Post Opportunities Online:** Use platforms like VolunteerMatch or Idealist to broaden your reach.
- **Leverage Current Supporters:** Ask donors or friends to share opportunities within their networks.

Pro Tip:

Assign specific tasks that match volunteers' skills and interests. Early successes will keep them motivated and engaged.

3. Train and Empower Everyone: Advisors, Volunteers, Staff and Board

Recruitment is just the first step. Empowering your team with clear training and ongoing support ensures they feel confident and connected to your mission.

How to Train Effectively:

- **Develop Onboarding Sessions:** Ask an HR or training professional to work up a training covering mission, vision, and key processes.
- **Provide Role-Specific Guidance:** Equip team members with the knowledge they need to excel in their tasks. This [free collection of nonprofit management document templates and tools](#) can help.
- **Encourage Growth:** Lean on your top leaders of each group to seek and find free resources, webinars, or tools for skill development.

Pro Tip:

Check in regularly to provide feedback and address questions. A little guidance goes a long way toward creating a confident, aligned team.

4. Build a Culture of Gratitude

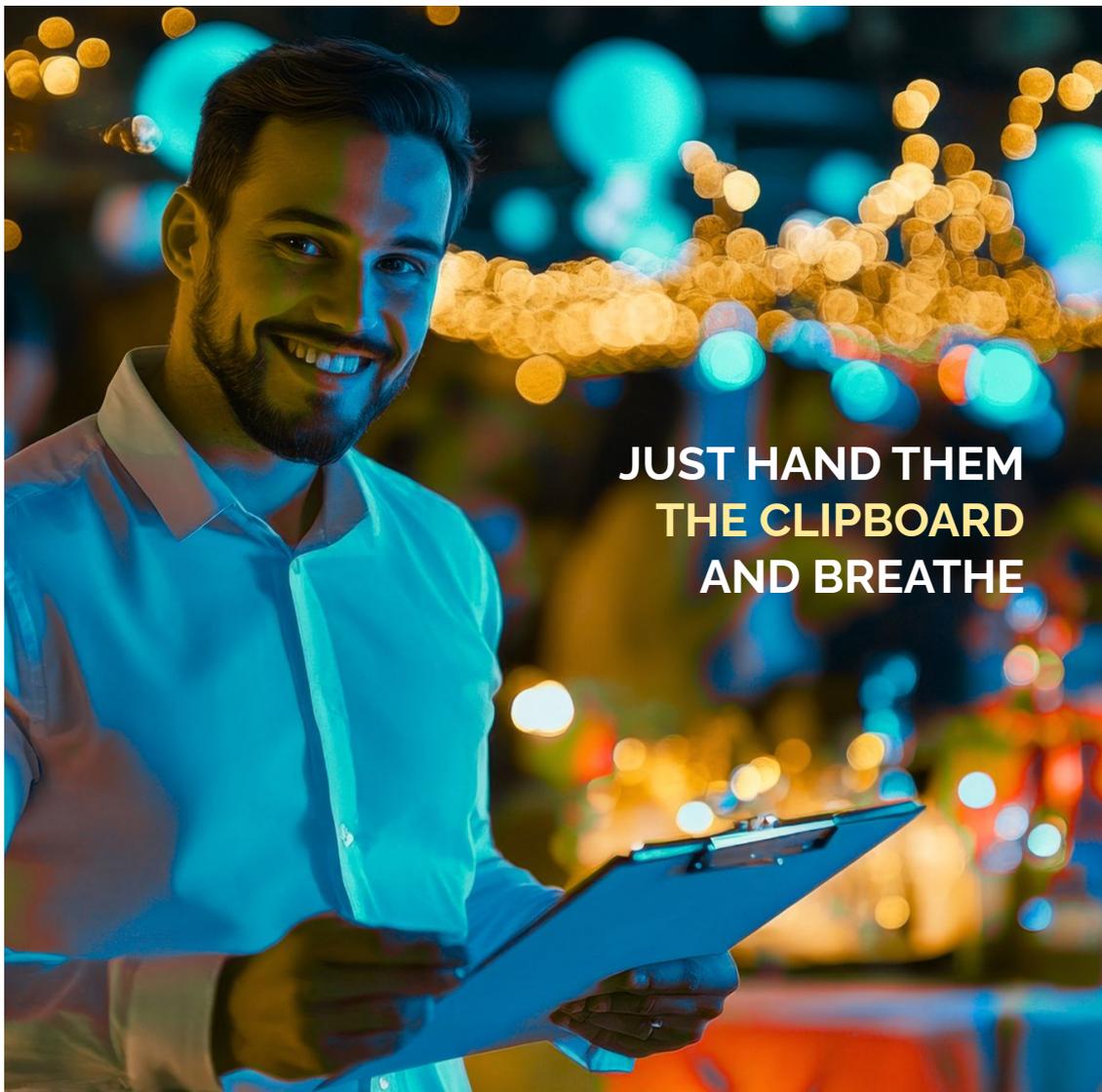
When your team feels valued, they're more likely to stay motivated and connected to your mission.

Ways to Show Appreciation:

- Host a low-key appreciation event or awards ceremony at a party.
- Have a few trusted volunteers send handwritten thank-you notes.
- Highlight contributing efforts in newsletters or social media.

Pro Tip:

Recognition is most meaningful when it's personal and specific. Consider daily how the efforts of others contribute to your nonprofit's success.



**JUST HAND THEM
THE CLIPBOARD
AND BREATHE**

SET YOUR NEXT MILESTONES:

in it to win it with strategy

Now that you've laid the foundation for your nonprofit, it's time to set your sights on what's next. Milestones are the guideposts that keep you focused, motivated, and moving forward. Whether it's launching your first program, hosting an event, or securing your first major donor, setting clear goals with actionable steps is the key to sustainable growth. Start creating a strategic roadmap that builds on your success and positions your nonprofit for long-term impact.

YOUR STRATEGY ACTION PLAN

- 1 Prioritize your goals based on urgency and impact.
- 2 Break milestones into smaller, actionable steps for easier progress.
- 3 Create realistic timelines to stay focused and accountable.
- 4 Regularly review your progress and adjust as needed.

1. Prioritize Your Goals

Not every goal is created equal. Focus on what will have the biggest impact on your nonprofit and your community.

How to Prioritize:

- Start with high-impact goals that address urgent needs, like launching a critical program or securing a funding source.
- Balance short-term wins with long-term vision.

Pro Tip:

Ask yourself: "What's the one thing I could achieve this quarter that would make everything else easier or more effective?"

2. Break Milestones Into Steps

Big goals can feel overwhelming, but breaking them into smaller steps makes them manageable.

Example:

- **Goal:** Host your first fundraiser.
- **Step 1:** Choose a theme and set a budget.
- **Step 2:** Secure a venue and in-kind sponsors.
- **Step 3:** Promote the event and recruit volunteers.
- **Step 4:** Execute and celebrate the success.

Pro Tip:

Treat each small step as a mini-milestone and celebrate its completion. Progress builds momentum!

3. Create Realistic Timelines

Setting timelines keeps your team focused and accountable.

How to Create Timelines:

- Use a project management tool like Asana or Trello to map out key tasks and deadlines.
- Be realistic about how much can be accomplished within a specific timeframe.

Pro Tip:

Include buffer time for unexpected delays, especially for events, grant applications, or community engagement efforts.

4. Review and Adjust Regularly

Even the best-laid plans need flexibility. Take time to reflect on what's working and make adjustments as needed.

Review Questions:

- Are we on track to meet our goals?
- What obstacles have come up, and how can we address them?
- Does this goal still align with our mission and priorities?

Pro Tip:

Have all the special groups meet for quarterly check-ins to review milestones, celebrate wins, and refocus on priorities.



GAMIFY THEIR GIVING

Make fundraising FUN!

Fundraising is the lifeblood of your nonprofit's mission, but it doesn't have to feel like a chore for your governing board. When you make the process engaging and enjoyable for both your board and your donors, you're not just raising money — you're building relationships, excitement, and long-term support. It is possible to make fundraising fun, if it's goal-oriented, you keep plans moving along, and celebrate accomplishments with everyone involved.

YOUR FUNDRAISING ACTION PLAN

- 1] Set clear, exciting goals to motivate your team and donors.
- 2] Add fun challenges or themes to energize your fundraising efforts.
- 3] Plan impactful events that bring people together for your cause.
- 4] Celebrate achievements along the way to keep enthusiasm high.

1. Set Clear, Exciting Goals

People are more likely to contribute when they understand exactly what their donations will achieve.

How to Set Effective Goals:

- **Be specific:** Instead of "Help us raise money," say, "We're raising \$10,000 to fund 12 months of workshops for local families."
- **Share the story:** Explain why this goal matters to your community, and how accomplishment of the goal will affect them.

Pro Tip:

Use a visual tracker—like a thermometer graphic or progress bar—to show how close you are to hitting your goal.

2. Add Fun Challenges or Themes

Fundraising gets to be fun when you add elements of play or creativity.

Ideas for Mixing It Up:

- **Team Competitions:** Divide your volunteers into teams to see who can raise the most.
- **Donation Milestones:** Offer rewards when specific amounts are raised, like posting a team video or announcing top donors.
- **Creative Themes:** Base your campaign around a unique concept.

Pro Tip:

Make time early on for idea sharing from various groups on themes — they'll all feel more invested and excited about the oncoming drive.

3. Plan Impactful Events

No matter the theme, events create opportunities to connect with your donors face-to-face and show them the heart of your mission.

Event Ideas:

- **Supporter Celebration Night:** Thank donors with an event that shares your progress and highlights their impact. Include a soft ask for future support.
- **Program Progress Showcase:** Get food and entertainment donated. Money raised can equal the sum of ticket sales plus any in-person live fundraising like auctions or text-to-give campaigns.
- **Community Challenge Day:** Host a walkathon, cleanup event, or similar activity where participants gather pledges for your cause.

Pro Tip:

Incorporate free fundraising tools like GiveButter for text-to-give campaigns or QR code donations to simplify giving.

4. Celebrate Achievements Along the Way

Acknowledging fundraising accomplishments keeps your fundraisers' energy alive and shows gratitude to your donors and organizing crew.

Celebration Ideas:

- **Share updates:** Post on social media or send newsletters highlighting progress and donor contributions.
- **Recognize top contributors:** Offer personalized thank-yous or feature them in your communications.
- **Host a mini-celebration:** When you reach a major milestone, take time to gather your team and reflect on your success.

YOU ARE A HERO!

Your work matters deeply. The passion, determination, and care you've poured into this process are admirable. By showing up and taking action, you've already proven that you can make a lasting impact.

As you continue forward, know that you're not alone. You're part of our family of changemakers dedicated to making this world a better place.

Keep building, keep growing, and keep changing lives. The future you're working toward is worth every effort.

With gratitude and encouragement,



Joy the Changemaker



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