

## CASE STUDY

# Heart Ministry Center

Serving the Omaha, Nebraska area

How Heart Ministry Center Raised 121% of Their Annual Fundraiser Goal with Bloomerang

## ABOUT HEART MINISTRY CENTER

The Heart Ministry Center's mission is to provide food, healthcare, and a way forward for people severely impacted by poverty in the Omaha area. Serving as one of the largest food pantries in Nebraska, the Heart Ministry Center also provides resources to help people become self-sufficient. The Heart Ministry Center's guiding motto is: Dignity for all.



## Fundraising Overview

*Raised 121% of Annual Fundraiser Goal*

*800 Annual Fundraiser Attendees*

*Increased Donor Retention Rate to 39%*

### Challenge:

The Heart Ministry Center needed intuitive fundraising and donor management software that their "small but mighty" development team could use to:

- + Improve donor retention
- + Grow and refine donor data
- + Manage fundraising events
- + Build development strategy

### Solution:

- + Donation Forms
- + Donor Management
- + Event Management
- + Integrations

## CHALLENGES

The Heart Ministry Center in Omaha, NE is more than just your typical food pantry. The center also provides job placement services, social work and case management assistance, parenting classes, and a free healthcare clinic with medical, dental, vision, pediatric, mental health, and OT/PT care. Their extensive and valuable programming requires financial resources to ensure the community remains supported.

“While many development functions were already occurring, we had an opportunity to more fully utilize our data,” explained Rick Berger, Chief Development Officer. “Our goal was to put more intention around our fundraising and grow our resources.”

Before switching to Bloomerang—and about two years before Berger joined the team—the center used Blackbaud Raiser’s Edge, a

platform that Berger was familiar with from his previous roles in development.

When managing donor communications, they had challenges with the accuracy of their data. “Last year, we decided to do a year-end tax letter,” explained Berger. “But we discovered there were inconsistencies in our data.” They decided to focus on data improvements, so they could be more intentional with their communication and fundraising efforts.

Additionally, the Heart Ministry Center needed a way to better track attendance and sell sponsorships for their large annual Holy Smokes event. The fundraiser started in a backyard and now attracts hundreds of attendees, which presented an opportunity to improve fundraising efforts at the event.



## SOLUTIONS

The Heart Ministry Center began using Bloomerang about two years before Berger joined the team. “With Bloomerang, we found it was very intuitive in all aspects of running the development operations and tracking our financial performance,” said Berger. “It works wonderfully and covers all the major areas that we needed to address to help us grow. It suits our purposes very well.”

The center has taken on the challenge of building a more comprehensive development budget and fundraising strategy—which is largely determined by the data and reporting within Bloomerang. “We engaged with Bloomerang’s team early on, when we were working through our data mapping and consolidation,” said Berger. “Those services were especially helpful.”

Bloomerang’s user-friendliness, ability to scale as the team grows, and ease of adding and accessing data helped the Heart Ministry Center

team improve their donor acquisition efforts. “We know that it’s vitally important for us to grow our database,” he said. “We’re capturing supporter data in Bloomerang and then using it for mailers, emails, research, and so on—to identify and reach out to those individuals that are most likely to support our mission.”

The Heart Ministry Center also used Bloomerang’s donation forms and event management tools, particularly for their annual Holy Smokes Fundraiser Barbecue. “The humble origin of the event was in someone’s backyard,” explained Berger. “As the mission grew organically over time, so did Holy Smokes.” At the 19th annual fundraiser, the Heart Ministry Center used Bloomerang’s auction tools to register attendees for the first time by selling individual tickets rather than tables. This functionality enabled them to cultivate relationships with supporters and improve donor retention year-over-year.

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*Rick Berger, Chief Development Officer  
Heart Ministry Center*



“The platform was very helpful and straightforward in managing the logistics of the event,” said Berger. “My development specialist didn’t have any fundraising or event experience but took to the platform quickly.” With Bloomerang’s intuitive tools and top-notch customer support (including in-person event attendance), Berger’s team of two and a group of “power volunteers” were able to run check-in smoothly for 800 Holy Smokes attendees.

“The feedback we heard was that the event was ‘really well done!’ and I credit the Bloomerang team for giving us great guidance on how to staff it and the best way to leverage the tool effectively,” said Berger. “The first impression somebody gets of your event or organization is important—like if the check-in process is arduous or slow, that can cause a poor event experience that people remember. But it went very well for us.”



## THE RESULTS

With **800** attendees at the 2024 Holy Smokes Barbecue, the Heart Ministry Center raised a whopping **121%** of their fundraising goal. They have also seen great success in year-over-year growth with Bloomerang over the past several years.

The Holy Smokes Barbecue had about **80 sponsorships**, an increase from previous years. Based on research conducted across donation and supporter data, the Heart Ministry Center increased their sponsor pricing and improved year over year sponsorship sales for the event.

They also secured a generous matching donation for the recent Holy Smokes paddle raise. “The vibe of the night was very energizing, but the highlight of the evening was when we did a matching paddle raise—we had **81 matching donors**,” recalled Berger.

“I’m an advocate for matches for two reasons,” explained Berger. “First of all, a match is a gift by itself. But beyond that, it inspires others to give by seeing their donation matched in real time.”



## WHAT'S NEXT?

The Heart Ministry Center development team is excited to use Bloomerang to continue creating new fundraising and donor retention strategies. “We’ve been building programs, incorporating best practices, and using Bloomerang to raise more money,” he said. “It’s been sort of basic building blocks of getting the format and nomenclature defined.”

The functionality to access historical giving data and donor management through Bloomerang has been irreplaceable to the Heart Ministry Center team in this building phase, and they look forward to growing their use of the platform. “With Bloomerang, we’re getting

more specific about how we’re recording our donations, and that gives us the ability to get more and better data,” he explained.

For these reasons and more, the Heart Ministry Center has been quick to recommend Bloomerang to other nonprofits. “I recommend Bloomerang because of the vast functionality and intuitive nature of the product,” said Berger. “I’ve been very impressed with everybody that we’ve worked with: our local rep, the consulting services, and the fundraising team that helped us with Holy Smokes. The Bloomerang teams are all very responsive and knowledgeable.”

