Friends of the Los Angeles River Restores Habitat with Sage Fundraising 50

Once upon a time, the Los Angeles River meandered through wetlands, marshes, willow stands, and sycamore glades, and was home to steelhead trout and grizzlies. Today the river runs through 14 cities and countless neighborhoods, and 80 percent of it is paved. With the cement came a perceptual shift: the river became merely a "flood control channel," surrounded by fences and signs.

Friends of the Los Angeles River (FoLAR) aims to change that. The 501(c) 3 nonprofit organization was founded in 1986 to restore the river. Its dream is a greenway stretching from the mountains to the sea, with 52 miles of parks, bike paths, gathering places and wildlife habitat—a waterfront park running from Canoga Park to the Queen Mary in Long Beach.

Evolving Needs

For many years, FoLAR used customer relations software to manage its operations—modifying the database to accommodate its contacts. But as the group achieved critical mass, it needed a more dedicated tool—a comprehensive fundraising solution.

"Our previous software made it difficult to perform sorts or extract data," says Shelly Backlar, executive director. "Reporting options were limited, and it required a lot of persistence to categorize contacts into groups."

Smooth Waters with Sage Fundraising 50

The former development director had conducted extensive research on nonprofit software at her previous organization, and recommended Sage Fundraising 50. "Our wish list included affordability, flexibility, and the ability to grow with us," notes Backlar. "Sage Fundraising 50 met all of our criteria."

FoLAR has been using Sage Fundraising 50 since 2004 to manage all areas of fundraising operations. "We rely on the software for everything, from entering potential prospects to organizing a focused membership campaign. It is our main database, allowing us to do normal recordkeeping, data mining, and research on both individual and corporate foundation donors, as well as managing information on our volunteers," explains Backlar.

CUSTOMER
Friends of the Los Angeles River

INDUSTRY
Nonprofit, Environmental

LOCATION
Los Angeles, California
Number of Locations: One
Number of Employees: Three

SYSTEM
Sage Fundraising 50

Challenge
Existing database software was cumbersome, offered limited reporting functions, and made it difficult to generate mailings.

Solution
Sage Fundraising 50 has automated all core fundraising tactics and outreach programs.

Results
Mailings that took several days can now be done in little over an hour; steps required for database sorts reduced from four to one.

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