



# UNITED THROUGH READING **FUNDRAISING GUIDE**

# Introduction

Thank you for deciding to fundraise for United Through Reading! You're joining a community of everyday people making a difference for military families. The good news is that you don't need to be a fundraising expert to raise a lot of money. This guide can help you crush your fundraising goals even if you're new to the process.

We'll teach you how to set up your page, ask for donations, and promote your campaign. And there is a checklist at the end of the booklet to help you stay on track! Please feel free to email us at [giving@utr.org](mailto:giving@utr.org) with any questions, comments, or if you just need some inspiration. We want you to know we always have your back.

Here we go!



## THE UNITED THROUGH READING STORY

*United Through Reading® connects service members and their families who are separated due to deployment or military assignment through the read aloud experience.*

Through the simple act of reading aloud, service members share a special connection with their children at home and become a relevant part of their child's development and growth.

Upon reuniting with family, participating service members credit the United Through Reading® program in helping their children remember their faces and voices. United Through Reading's simple-to-use program helps service members cope with the fear of being forgotten by their children. The reunion between separated service members and their families, which is a routine part of military life, is just the first step in the reintegration process for service members.

We believe reintegration is a lifetime journey for service members, and our program is a small part of making each day seem easier. The United Through Reading® videos are not only a keepsake for families but also serve as a constant reminder of the emotional family connection and the importance of literacy.

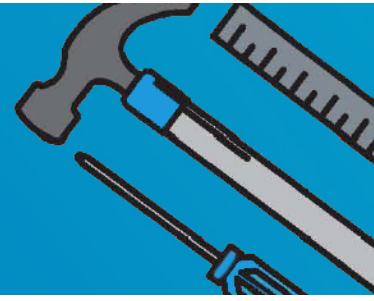
Even with the shifting military presence around the world, separation from loved ones is still a routine part of military life. We work to ensure that any service member who wants to read to their child will have the opportunity.

## MEDIA RESOURCES CENTER

To help you tell the United Through Reading story, please check out our Media Resource Center at <http://unitedthroughreading.org/media/>, your source for videos, pictures, logos, and more.

## CHAPTER 1

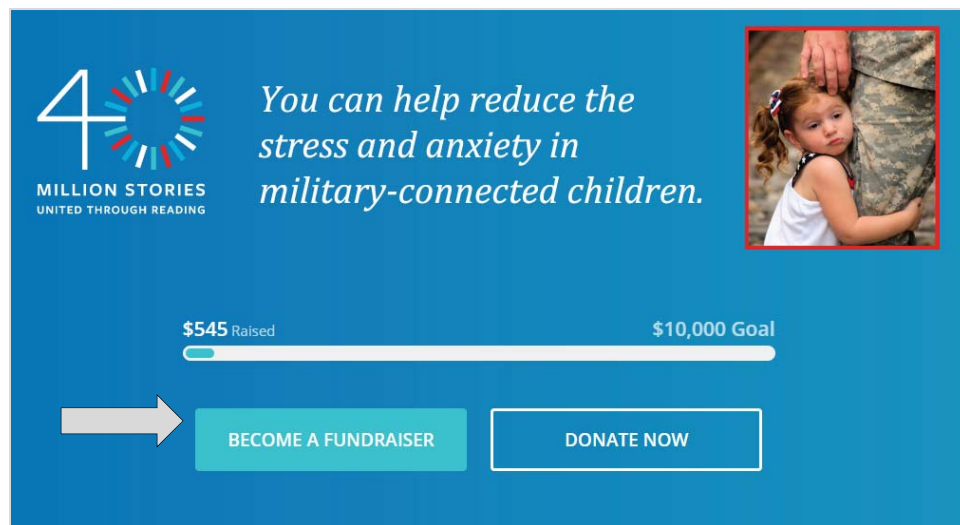
# Get Started



Fundraising is a chance to make a big impact on a cause, even if you can't personally make a big donation. By mobilizing your friends and family, you can help United Through Reading reach more people, raise more money, and make a bigger impact.

## CREATE YOUR FUNDRAISING PAGE

1. Locate the **Become a Fundraiser** button on the campaign landing page from your team leader, or the United Through Reading website. Go to: <http://unitedthroughreading.org/support/give/> and then click start a campaign.



2. The second step to creating your fundraising page is making a Classy member profile so you can access and manage your fundraising page. You will need to provide your name, email address, create a password, and enter your birthdate. Note: you must be over 13 years of age to have a fundraising page on Classy.

## SET YOUR FUNDRAISING GOAL

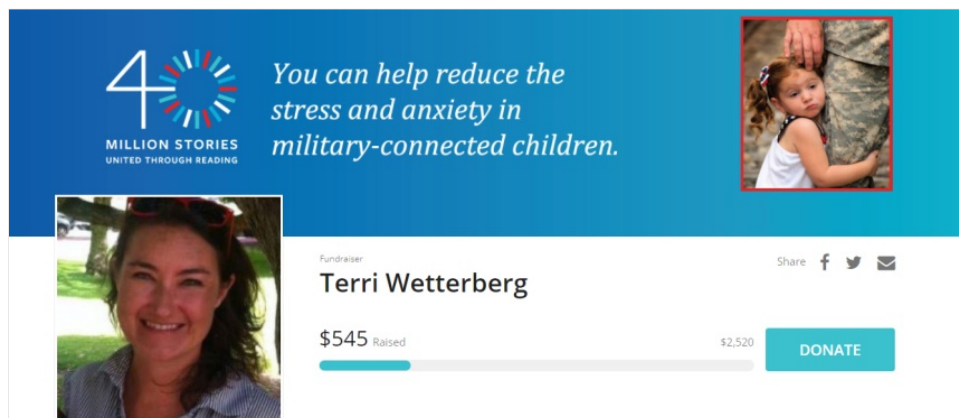
You can also use your page to explain the significance of your fundraising goal and/or ask people to give a specific amount. For example, if you're fundraising to celebrate your 25<sup>th</sup> birthday, you might ask your friends and family to donate in multiples of \$25 for a total of \$2,500. Or maybe you want to help fund stand up a United Through Reading site. In your fundraising story, you can explain that your goal is \$1,260, which could cover a starter pack of books, video equipment, promotional materials, and supplies.

These personal touches help your potential supporters feel more connected to you and why you're supporting United Through Reading.

Don't be afraid to be ambitious. While the average individual fundraiser nets \$568, many people have raised tens of thousands of dollars.

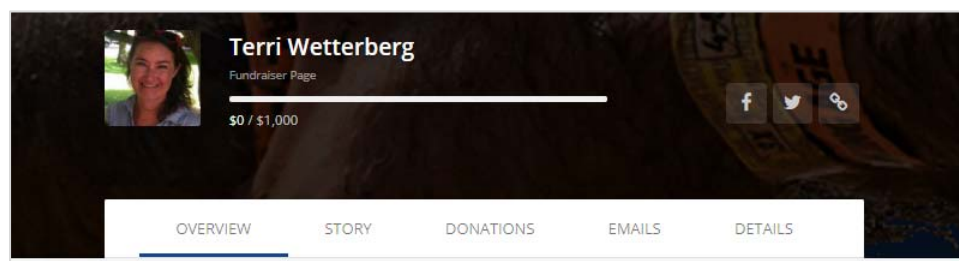
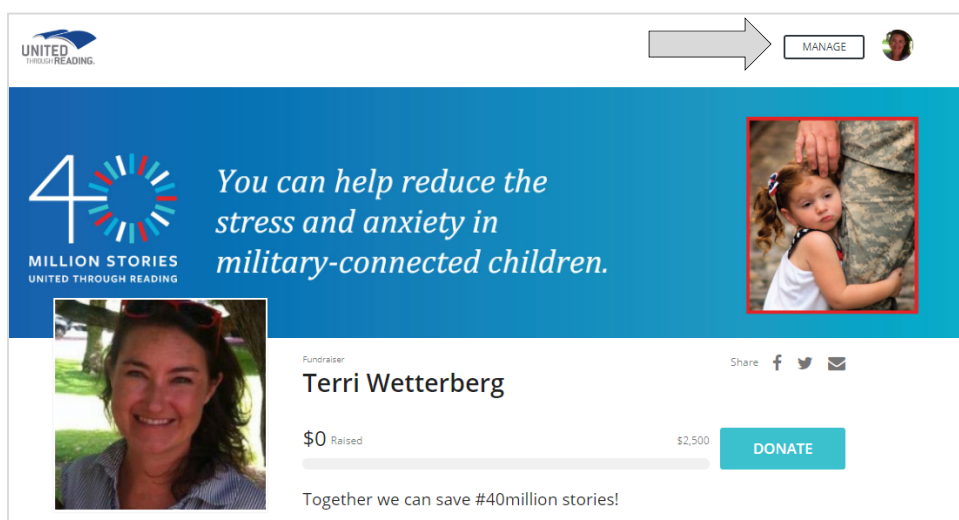


You can always change your goal if you need to.



## PERSONALIZE YOUR PAGE

When you're done submitting your information, you will be taken directly to your fundraising page. From here, your next steps are to personalize your fundraising page and share it with your network. Click the **Manage** button to visit your Fundraiser Dashboard and learn about suggested personalizations.



This fundraiser used her page to share her story about why United Through Reading is meaningful to her. This kind of personal touch helps motivate her readers. Friends, family, and acquaintances will be moved by her story and more likely to give to her page.

### **Join me in giving bedtime stories to the children of deployed service members!**

As a military spouse, I've seen first-hand how deployments and tours of duty impact military families, particularly our children.

Annually, nearly than 250,000 military children miss their nightly bedtime stories while their parents serve around the world.

Together, we can give military children the joy of reading with their parents.

United Through Reading (UTR), a nonprofit organization founded by a military spouse, is dedicated to uniting military families who face physical separation by facilitating the bonding experience of reading aloud together. UTR offers military service members the opportunity to be video-recorded reading books to their children at home.

UTR creates emotional connections between parents and their children, encourages early literacy, and makes homecomings easier. I want to raise \$2,200 by Veteran's Day to honor the sacrifice and service of our military families. Please join me in supporting United Through Reading.

Eugenia

## **MAKE A DONATION TO YOUR OWN PAGE**

Other people are more likely to donate to your page when they see someone has already contributed. Giving some of your own money also demonstrates to potential supporters you are serious about helping military families stay connected through the read aloud experience.

## **WITH THESE ELEMENTS IN PLACE, YOUR PAGE IS READY TO START ACCEPTING DONATIONS.**

# Outline Your Audience

Your network is bigger than you might think.

The power of fundraising is in mobilizing your own network of family and friends. Rather than making one gift by yourself, you can get all the people you love involved. You get to share your passion, and United Through Reading gets support from an even wider community.

Even if you're not a "social butterfly," odds are you have dozens if not hundreds of contacts who might be willing to help. Some of these friends are closer than others, but you never know who might be moved by your story or feel compelled to support your cause.

## YOUR INNER CIRCLE



When it comes time to ask people to make donations, it's best to start with the people closest to you. Your inner circle is made up of the people you know will be happy to hear from you and want to support you. People like your family and close friends. You can brainstorm a list of these people first.

Here's what your list might look like:

MY INNER CIRCLE	
FAMILY	CLOSE FRIENDS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mom &amp; Dad</li> <li>• Peter (Brother)</li> <li>• Sara (Sister)</li> <li>• Uncle Bill &amp; Aunt Jane</li> <li>• Uncle Johnny</li> <li>• Aunt Ginger</li> <li>• Grandma &amp; Grandpa</li> <li>• Poppa</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Linda</li> <li>• Chad</li> <li>• Emilio</li> <li>• Kim</li> <li>• Jill</li> <li>• Brad</li> <li>• Kara</li> </ul>

Hold onto this list. In the next chapter, we'll cover how to reach out to them.

## YOUR SOCIAL NETWORK



Your broader social network will be much larger than your inner circle. Nowadays, we're connected to hundreds of people through social media. Half of all adults using Facebook have more than 200 friends on the platform. Add Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn, and you've got a huge audience for your fundraising campaign.

Some of this group will be reachable by email, but social media will also be very important when appealing to this part of your audience.

By posting personal updates about your fundraising campaign, you can hopefully inspire some people in your networks to visit your page.

## OTHER GROUPS



The third tier of connections is with groups or organizations you belong to. Are you on a recreational sports team, or do you attend church regularly? When you reach out to these groups, you can reference what you all have in common before asking for a donation. For example, if you play in a recreational soccer league, you could reference the upcoming practice in an email and also let everyone know about your fundraising goal. You can also mention it at practice.

Other groups you should appeal to include:



If you're hesitant to ask all these people for help, remember you share things in conversation and social media all the time. This time, you're doing it for a good cause. You're showing people your passion and giving them the opportunity to make a difference.

You also never know which friends or acquaintances have a personal connection to the cause you're fundraising for. This is why it's worth promoting your fundraising page and appealing to all of your various networks, on- and offline.

## CHAPTER 3

# Ask for Donations



Many people are afraid to ask others for help, but research shows people are more willing to lend a hand than you might expect. In this chapter, you'll learn how to approach the people in your network through email, social media, and more.

Remember that it's not a selfish ask—you're trying to help a good cause.

The worst they can do is say "no."

## USE THE ONION METHOD



Think about your fundraising strategy like peeling an onion from the inside out. The best fundraisers start by asking their closest contacts first (the core) and progressively work outward to their more distant contacts (the outer skin).

**Day 1 Email:** Send to 5-10 very close contacts such as immediate family and best friends.

**Day 2 Email:** Send to 10-15 close contacts (your entire family and good friends).

**Day 3 Email:** Send to as many additional contacts as you feel comfortable (coworkers, friends of friends, old friends, your entire address book, etc.).

**Day 4 Social Media:** Promote via Social Media to everyone who follows you.

## WHY THE ONION METHOD

- Your closest contacts are the most likely to support you, and you are more likely to build up a good foundation of donations for your campaign.
- Studies show that the closer you are to your fundraising goal, the more likely people will donate. So when your outer circles view your page with some progress, they will be more likely want to be a part of "the movement" too!

## WRITING A PERSONALIZED EMAIL

When it comes to asking people for help, the more personal you can get, the better. If you ask a big disconnected group of people all at once, you can fall victim to the bystander effect. When you make a very general ask, people are less likely to act because they assume someone else will take care of it.

This is why we targeted more specific groups of people in the previous chapter.

Be sure to include the following information in your email:



- **Start by explaining your connection to United Through Reading** and why it is important to you. Describing how the cause has touched your life is probably the most essential element of your message.
- **In a sentence or two, explain the good work United Through Reading is doing.** This helps potential supporters understand where their money would be going and what it would be used to accomplish.
- **Be clear about what you want your potential supporters to do:** “Will you help me reach my goal by making a donation?”
- **A link to your fundraising page.**
- **Thank your contacts** for their time and support.

## EMAILS TO THE INNER CIRCLE

Start your fundraising campaign by approaching the people you are most comfortable with (your inner circle) first. These are the people who are most likely to donate. By asking them to give first, you can start moving the bar on your fundraising page before you appeal to your entire network.

If you regularly talk on the phone or in-person with some people in your inner circle, tell them about your campaign directly. They may even ask you to send them the link. Email, however, is the easiest way to reach out to the whole group. Plus, you can include a link to your page. Consider writing a few personalized emails for the people in your inner circle.

Aunt Jane,

I'm writing to let you know this month I'm fundraising for [United Through Reading](#).

As you know my husband retired from the Virginia Army National Guard after serving 21 years. He deployed multiple times when our boys were very young. The most significant deployment was in 2004 which took him away from home for 18 months when our two boys were 3 and 5 years old. I was essentially a single parent during that time, trying to run a business, maintain our home, and still make sure our children's needs were being met. Bedtime stories were a big part of that but there were nights I was so tired I would fall asleep in the middle of the book!

United Through Reading exists to support service members by keeping them connected with their family back home. The service member is video-recorded reading a book to their children and then the recording along with the book are mailed back to them at home.

**I didn't know about this wonderful organization when we could have used them most – so I have made in my goal to raise \$1,500 by August 31<sup>st</sup>, so other children don't miss out on months of bedtime stories like my sons did.** I know it would have made a tremendous difference in our lives if we had received DVD recordings of their father reading stories to them (both for the boys and for me too!)

I'll be asking pretty much everyone I know to check out my fundraising page and donate if they can, but I wanted to ask my family first. Will you help me by making a donation on my fundraising page by clicking this link? (Paste Link)

Any support you can give will mean so much to me. Thanks for reading my email and helping me support military families.

Love,

Rebecca



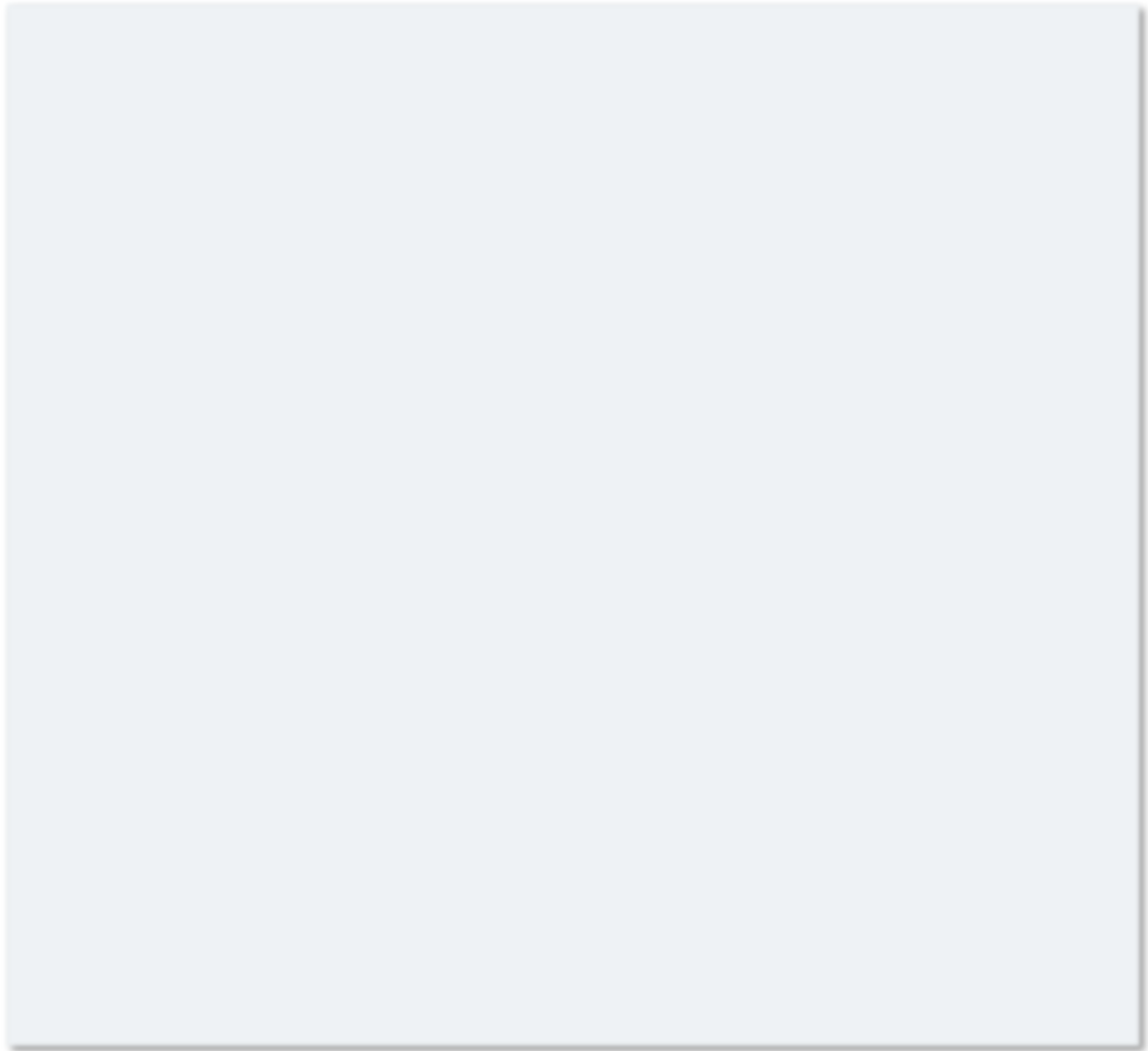
**TIP 1:** When you are writing to your contacts, just be yourself. If something feels forced or inauthentic, scrap it.



**TIP 2:** Share the fact that you're starting with your closest family and friends before opening up to your larger network. This will help them get on board a little faster as well as make them feel honored that you reached out to them first.

## EMAILS TO OUTER CIRCLE

Email is also a great way to ask your coworkers, softball team, church congregation, or classmates to donate. Here is an example email for the workplace.



## SOCIAL MEDIA

Posting to your social media profiles is an important step to reaching as many people as possible. After you've reached out to your inner circle and are ready to open your campaign up to everybody, announce you're fundraising by posting links to your campaign page. While most people use social media regularly, they don't all check the same platforms. This is why you should post to Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and any other networks you have.

A social media appeal won't be as long and detailed as an email, but you can start by simply telling people about your campaign.

Some tips for social media posts:

- o **Posts with images** tend to get more engagement, so include a screenshot or favorite picture from United Through Reading
- o **Include the link to your fundraising page**
- o **Ask people to share and retweet**
- o **Use related hashtags** to make your post searchable

- Military children make up a very special part of our nation's population. Although young, these brave sons and daughters stand in steadfast support of their military parents. To honor their unique contributions and sacrifices on behalf of our country, I am raising \$1,250 for @UnitedThroughReading so their parents can better stay connected to them while they are away. #UTR #milkids #milfams *Fundraising Link*
- This month I am fundraising for @UnitedThroughReading (UTR), a national nonprofit that connects military families through the read aloud experience. Every year, more than 100,000 military parents deploy leaving nearly 250,000 children at home. A conservative separation is about 6-months — that means these military children have 180 nights without their parent home for a bedtime story. That's 40 million bedtime stories missed each year by military children. UTR saved more than 10 million bedtime stories last year; but that is not enough. Help me reach my goal to raise \$400 this week and support 8 military families throughout a deployment. Your gift makes a profound difference to these families. #40MillionStories #milkids #UTR #milkids #milfams *Personal Fundraising Link*
- For all of our military children — who are patiently waiting for their mom or dad to return home --- please help me reach my goal of raising \$250 by Friday and ensure that through @United Through Reading, thousands of special family moments will be still be possible through stories, lovingly shared. #UTR #milkids #milfams *F Personal Fundraising Link*
- Only 25 more days until this year's Tough Mudder and to raise money for @UnitedThroughReading, a national nonprofit that serves the families of EVERY branch of the military. Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and Coasties on active duty, in the reserves, or in the National Guard can read to their children from bases and installations around the world. When physical closeness isn't an option, United Through Reading recordings make it possible for service members to spend unhurried, focused time with their children. #milkids #UTR #milkids #milfams *Personal Fundraising Link*
- 

Don't forget to tag United Through Reading in your post.

**FACEBOOK** (@unitedthroughreading)  
**INSTAGRAM** (@UTR4Military)  
**TWITTER** (@UTR4Military)  
**LINKEDIN**

<https://www.facebook.com/unitedthroughreading/>  
<https://www.instagram.com/utr4military/>  
<https://twitter.com/UTR4Military>  
<https://www.linkedin.com/company/1334323/>

Popular UTR Hashtags you can use:

#UTR #milkids #milfams #40MillionStories

Don't worry about coming off as annoying or bothersome. Social media moves so fast a single post can easily get lost or ignored. This is why you should post multiple times to each platform. To keep your appeal fresh, you can change up each post with slightly different information. You can reference how much progress you've made toward your goal or include details about why the cause matters to you. You can also your followers to share your post to reach an even wider network.

Here are some guidelines for how often to post.

- o **Twitter:** Once or twice per day
- o **Facebook:** At least once every two or three days
- o **LinkedIn:** Twice per week
- o **Instagram:** Twice per week

**UNITED THROUGH READING.**

**Prior Lake National Honor Society and the Junior Optimist Club Believe Every Child Deserves a Bedtime Story!**

**And We Need Your Help**

We are fundraising for United Through Reading, a nonprofit organization that helps military families cope with long deployments. United Through Reading offers service members the opportunity to be video-recorded -- reading books to their children at home from more than 200 locations around the world. With your \$15 donation, we will purchase a book that a service member will mail to their child along with their recording. Each book we purchase will include a book plate with the name of the book donor. The first set of books we buy will be donated locally to a Minneapolis-St. Paul Joint Air Force Reserve Station. For more information about United Through Reading go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J-aSa7ekOGw>

**Which is your favorite?**

Please message me if you are willing to help. I can pick up your donation and bring you a bookplate to fill out.

Checks can be made payable to Prior Lake National Honor Society

**Jessica Chacich**  
November 2, 2017 · 🌐

Hey guys this is an important charity to me. If you're willing to help by making a \$15 dollar donation, please send me a message. For more information click on the link.  
<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=J6ncCIIeiz8>

3 · 2 Comments · 7 Shares

Like · Comment · Share

**Char Mader** Call Gpa, please  
Like · Reply · 38w

**Sally Ann Draper Zoll** Jessica Chacich, you and your family continue to serve and support our military families in so many ways! United Through Reading is grateful for all of you!  
Like · Reply · 38w

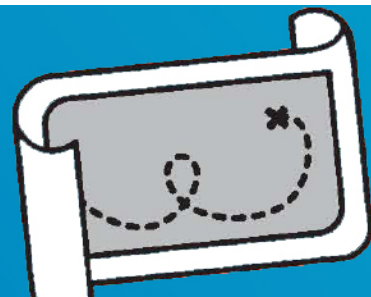
Write a comment...

## WHERE CAN I FIND MY PERSONAL FUNDRAISING PAGE LINK?

1. You can copy the link directly from the URL bar of your personal fundraising page.
2. You can use a vanity URL, which can be set in the Details section of the fundraising page manager.

## CHAPTER 4

# Go the Distance



Hopefully, sending out emails and posting to social media will get you well on your way to hitting your fundraising goal. But after the initial interest and excitement, you may find your campaign slows down. Fortunately, there are some ways to keep people engaged and motivated to help throughout your campaign.

## SET INTERVAL GOALS

To reach your overall fundraising goal, it helps to break up the amount over; however, many days or weeks, you're fundraising. For example, if your goal was to raise \$1,000 in four weeks, you could try to raise \$250 each week. This means there's always a future goal your friends and family can help you reach.

### WHICH OF THESE TWO APPEALS SOUNDS MORE COMPELLING?

*“Please help me reach my goal of \$1,000 by the end of the month!”*

*“I’m only \$35 away from reaching my goal of raising \$250 this week. Who wants to put me over the top?”*

The first appeal has a big goal and a far-off deadline. Someone reading might think, “I’ve got plenty of time. I’ll do it later” or “My small donation wouldn’t make a difference.” In your follow up appeals to non-responders, there’s a sense of urgency, and the goal is within reach. Breaking up your fundraising goal also gives you a gentle reason to reach out to non-responders to help encourage people to take the plunge and make a donation to your page.



**TIP: Continue to use social media.** Social media is a softer medium for communicating with your contacts, and it’s more acceptable to frequently post updates in those channels. You can update followers on your progress toward each goal and ask for people to help you get over the next hurdle.

Remember, people can easily miss or skip over your initial outreach!

## HIGHLIGHT YOUR DONORS

Another way to maintain energy and excitement around your campaign is to publicly thank donors on your fundraising page and on social media. This shows your gratitude and celebrates the donor while also promoting your campaign and keeping it top of mind. Also, when you tag someone, your post not only gets shared in your activity feed, it gets shared on the other person’s activity feed too. This also lets people know others are already donating to your page (remember success breeds success!).



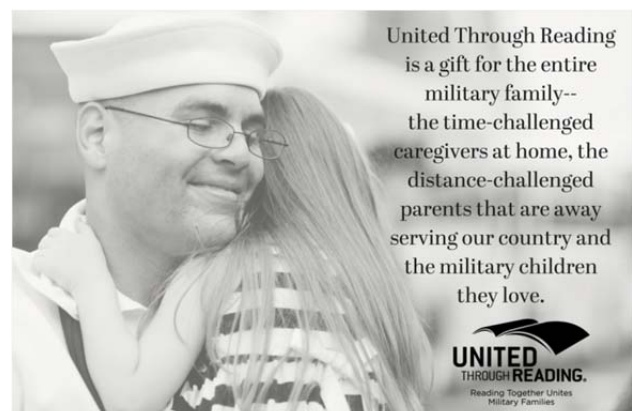
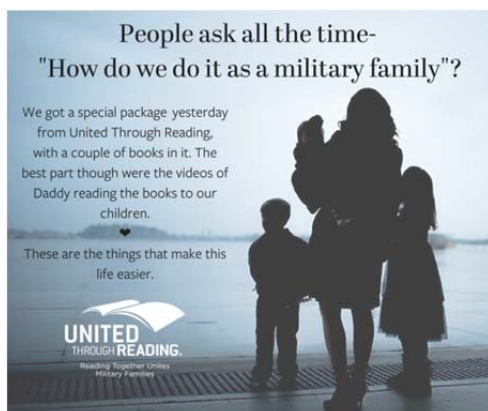
## DON'T MAKE EVERY SOCIAL MEDIA POST AN "ASK"

Educate your audience about United Through Reading by sharing inspiring news stories or other positive anecdotes, such as:







You can also talk about the purpose of this particular fundraising campaign. If you're fundraising as part of a team or for an event, you can also show your team's progress and why United Through Reading deserves their attention.

One way to do this is to share a great blog post or some awesome pictures from United Through Reading's website (<http://unitedthroughreading.org/media/>) or social media.



You can also share what certain donation amounts help United Through Reading accomplish. This is interesting information to share on social media or in emails because it shows specific ways in which donations really do make a difference.

 <p><b>Laptop &amp; DVD Burner</b> \$300</p> <p>Your donation of \$300 can supply a laptop to burn the DVDs that will bring stories home from loved ones far and wide.</p> <p><a href="#">DONATE</a></p>	 <p><b>30 Books</b> \$150</p> <p>Your donation of \$150 can supply 30 books for military parents to choose from, to read to their child at home.</p> <p><a href="#">DONATE</a></p>	 <p><b>Site Resource Kit</b> \$70</p> <p>Your donation of \$70 can supply a site resource kit that includes 50 blank DVDs, keepsake DVD sleeves, padded mailers and promotional posters to a new command.</p> <p><a href="#">DONATE</a></p>	 <p><b>Backpack</b> \$35</p> <p>Your donation of \$35 can supply a backpack to ensure that all the camera equipment stays safe between recordings filled with love.</p> <p><a href="#">DONATE</a></p>
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## MATCHING GIFTS ARE A FUNDRAISER'S BEST FRIEND

The secret to some fundraiser's success is finding donors who work for corporations with a matching gift program. There are lots of companies that will match the amount of money donated by your donor. Every dollar you get from them nets \$2 for the cause. You can find a search engine for companies with matching gifts here: <https://www.matchinggifts.com/rit/>

## CONSIDER GIFTS OR FUN CHALLENGES

Offer your own gifts to people who make a donation, provide raffle or prizes for certain giving levels, or complete fun challenges when you reach your final or weekly goal.

Here are a few ideas:

- I will not eat this cupcake until I raise \$150 more dollars for United Through Reading.
- I will not shave until I raise \$500 more dollars toward by \$2,000 goal.
- If you donate \$50 or more, I will send you a cool and custom 'thank you' fridge magnet.
- If you donate \$20 or more, I will create a personalized playlist for your listening pleasure.
- If I reach my goal by Friday, I will wear a dinosaur costume for the event.
- For anyone who backs my campaign, I will write their name on the back of the t-shirt I will be wearing at the event.



Go ahead and get creative!

## COUNTDOWN TO THE DEADLINE

A countdown of the final days of your fundraising campaign can help get people's attention. When you point out that time is running out, your appeal becomes more urgent and compelling.

You can even take a selfie or post a new image to count down the days of your campaign.



In the final days of your campaign, be sure to emphasize how close you are to your goal. People are especially willing to give when you're just shy of your goal because it feels like their gift is especially meaningful. It's kind of like scoring the game-winning goal. It has the same impact on the score as any other goal, but it feels special to clinch the victory.

With only a few hours left, I am just dollars away from reaching our goal to give a Navy unit the resources they need to set up one @United Through Reading site in their deployed location. Will you be the one to put me over the finish line? #UTR #milkids #milfams [Personal Fundraising Link](#)

## CHAPTER 5

# Almost Done!



Reaching the end of your fundraising campaign is like crossing the finish line of a marathon, but you are not entirely done yet. You still need to cool down.

### SAY “THANK YOU” TO YOUR SUPPORTERS

Your donors will be receiving thank you messages from United Through Reading, but best practice indicates you should take the opportunity to tell them you appreciate their help two times.

1. Immediately after someone donates.
2. When the campaign is over with final results.

Whether it's through social media (more than a thumbs up or emoji), email, a phone call, or in-person, anyone who donated to your fundraising campaign should immediately hear how grateful you are for their support of military families.



Then after the campaign, you can show them how their gift contributed to a larger purpose; this will strengthen the connection to you and also to United Through Reading. We suggest doing this in two ways:

1. A group social media “thank you” and with a link to the United Through Reading website or your favorite UTR story so they can learn more on their own.
2. A quick handwritten thank you note.

*Kelly,*

*I just had to tell you again how much I appreciate your donation to my fundraising page for United Through Reading. I am happy to report that with your help, I surpassed my fundraising goal of \$1,000 and raised \$1,173 for military families. Because of you even more service members will be able to stay connected to their families while they are deployed.*

*Thank you for being so generous and thoughtful!*

*Mike*

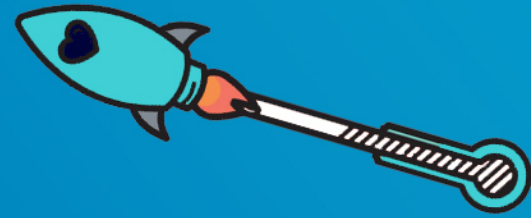
## KEEP IN TOUCH FOR NEXT TIME

Follow United Through Reading on social media and share our posts. This way, you'll continue to see the impact your work made possible and also update your donors with new success stories over time.



## Fundraising Checklist

# Pathway to Success!



### CHAPTER 1

- ☐ Create your fundraising page.
- ☐ Set your fundraising goal.
- ☐ Personalize your page with pictures and text to tell your story.
- ☐ Make a donation to your own page.

### CHAPTER 2

- ☐ Make a list of all the people in your inner circle, such as family members and close friends.
- ☐ Think of a few groups of people in your life to appeal to including co-workers, teammates, and church groups.
- ☐ Identify all the social media networks on which you can promote your campaign.

### CHAPTER 3

- ☐ Draft and send emails your inner circle to announce your campaign and ask for donations. Tell them why you're fundraising and include a link to your page.
- ☐ Draft and send emails for distinct groups of contacts, like coworkers.
- ☐ Announce your fundraising campaign on all your social media profiles.
- ☐ Post multiple times to each platform, adding updates and details about your campaign each time.

### CHAPTER 4

- ☐ Break your overall fundraising goal into weekly goals to motivate donors via follow up emails or social media.
- ☐ Call out donors on social media to thank them. Include a link to your fundraising page.
- ☐ Look for donors whose companies offer matching gifts.
- ☐ Consider gifts or fun challenges as incentives for people to donate. .
- ☐ Countdown the final days of your campaign. Consider using images to grab people's attention.

### CHAPTER 5

- ☐ Say "thank you" to all the friends and family that supported you. Update them on the end results of your campaign.
- ☐ Subscribe to your organization's email and follow them on social media.
- ☐ **CELEBRATE!**



HEADQUARTERS - 1455 Frazee Road, Suite 500, San Diego, CA 92108  
858.481.7323 | [unitedthroughreading.org](http://unitedthroughreading.org) | [giving@utr.org](mailto:giving@utr.org)