



Fundraising Help

This year, Friends of the Mississippi River has the *goal of raising \$115,000 in pledges* to support our important land conservation, watershed protection, and river corridor stewardship work on the Twin Cities of the Mississippi River. Please help us reach our goal! Here are some tips to help:

Why raise the money? Great cause, great organization.

The Mississippi River is the reason the Twin Cities came to be. It provides drinking water for area residents. It is a huge part of our culture and a popular recreational destination. It is a migratory flyway for over 40% of the continent's waterfowl and millions of songbirds. It is home to many rare and beautiful species. It provides scenic vistas. And it does much more for our community.

Friends of the Mississippi River addresses the many threats to the river's health in a multitude of ways – land conservation and restoration, water quality work, building community stewardship, working on issues around river-friendly development and public access, watershed wide stormwater standards and more. The organization has been around for 18 years working successfully and strategically – and for the last eight years the Mississippi River Challenge is one of the key ways we raise awareness of the river and raise funds for our work to protect it.

Your attitude: You are asking people to support something very important, enabling them to be involved at a grassroots level in work that matters – especially if they live here. Even if the people you are asking to support you don't live here, the Mississippi is a nationally recognized and internationally known treasure and an ecological resource of incredible significance.

Protecting it can and should matter to people everywhere. If you are confident when you ask for support, people will notice. Be relaxed and use the style that works best for you. Also be prepared to spend different amounts of time with each ask - some people may want more information than others.

Share your passion for the event and the cause – help people feel good about supporting you!

Developing your plan: Set an attainable fundraising goal and then break it down into smaller goals and daily action steps (a timeline can be helpful). Make a list of who you're going to ask first and also have a second tier ready to go. Remember that you are going to ask people to give on the spot to save yourself work tracking down unpaid pledges. Keep track of your progress and congratulate yourself for reaching interim goals.

How do you ask? First, remember that you *do* have to ask! Use a personal approach – people are giving to you as much as they are giving to the cause. Don't forget to ask people spread the word to

their connections for you and to ask people if their companies will match their gifts. Take pledge forms and info everywhere you go! Also, don't sell yourself or the cause short. Try not to decide for people what they should pledge – suggest that they make a pledge that is significant to them. If asked about a suitable amount reiterate why protecting the river matters and then ask them what they would feel comfortable giving. You may want to remind them that it's tax deductible.

The primary way to raise pledges is to ask *everyone* – use networks, holiday card lists, email lists, Facebook networks or ask the stores or businesses that you frequent to make a contribution. Here are other ideas:

- make your own pledge first
- host a party or special event – ask for a contribution with the RSVP or at the door, or give a pitch to the whole group
- conduct a personalized letter or email campaign (be sure to include a stamped return envelope addressed to you, if using snail mail; with e-mails provide a link to your personal fundraising page.)
- take advantage of a holiday, anniversary, or birthday (June is National Rivers Month!)
- make a presentation at your church or rotary club or other organization you are associated with – and ask someone from FMR to help you
- create a button that says something like “Ask me about the Mississippi River Challenge!”
- hold a garage sale, bake sale, car wash, dog wash, pancake breakfast, or other fundraiser
- have an auction
- go door to door in your neighborhood – introduce yourself as a neighbor concerned about a community resource
- get publicity – get an article in your community paper or post something at your local community center or coffee shop
- make a display (with a donation jar) to put at your workplace or businesses you frequent regularly (be sure to leave a pledge form next to it)
- find a business (your employer or another business you frequent) to sponsor you for a significant pledge – you can wear a t-shirt advertising their sponsorship or devise other creative ways to give them recognition

Thank your sponsors! We will send them a written thank you and tax receipt, but they are pledging for you and need to know you appreciate it. Don't forget to let them know how the weekend went and what you ended up raising – they will be happy they were involved in a successful effort.

Don't feel discouraged or rejected by a no. It is rarely meant personally. Just accept it graciously and move on to someone else who may be more able to give. If you get discouraged, contact Mississippi River Challenge staff – we can help you get enthused again!

Questions? Contact Heather at Friends of the Mississippi River: 651-222-2193 x20 or hhaynes@fmr.org.



Thank you for participating and helping us make this year another successful one for the river!

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