Fundraising to fight MS!

Welcome to Bike the US for MS! We are excited to have you on the team. Your time, energy, and commitment will help many people now and in the future. My mother has had MS for my entire life, so I personally want to say thank you for joining the cause.

Asking for money can be intimidating. This guide provides ideas and a timeline to help get the ball rolling. Donations will start accumulating quickly once you get letters and emails out to your friends, family, and co-workers. You are doing something amazing. Don’t be afraid to share your story!

The dollars you raise will have a direct and lasting impact on many people. You may not have a close connection to MS now, but when the trip is over you will have a deep understanding of why we are riding. It is our job to make you believe in the work you are doing, and our privilege to distribute your hard earned fundraising dollars to organizations and individuals that need it. I take this responsibility very seriously and thank you for this opportunity.

On behalf of everyone affected by MS, thank you for your dedication and commitment! Please let us know how we can help you reach your cycling and fundraising goals.

Sincerely,

Don Fraser, Founder
Getting Started!

First, [login](#) and set up your profile on the Bike the US for MS website. Share the link to this page so donors can read your amazing story and quickly make a tax deductible donation!

Email and Letter Writing

Emails and letters will likely be the backbone of your fundraising.

Writing a great, personal letter which explains your involvement with Bike the US for MS, and sending it to as many people as possible is key!

In order for your letter/email fundraising to be effective, you have to start early, and send a lot (100-200+). Make it personal, and contact everyone. You will probably be surprised at the support you receive. After all, you are doing something incredible!

How to launch an effective letter/email campaign

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List Everyone You Know</th>
<th>Consider everyone you know to be a prospective donor. Do not say “no” for anyone. Think about everyone you know: friends, family, coworkers, colleagues, and so on. Do you know anyone who has been directly affected by MS?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ask</strong></td>
<td>Don’t be afraid to ask! Asking for donations may be uncomfortable at first, but most people are happy to pitch in. You’re setting impressive goals, tell people your story and why you’re riding for MS, remember the most important step is ASKING!</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Make it Personal</strong></td>
<td>Don’t send out the same copy-and-pasted, mass-produced letter to all of your potential donors. Write a short personal note, updating them about your life and plans to bike across the country. Include a personal story about why you want to help those with MS and why you’re choosing to ride for thousands of miles for them!</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Matching Gifts</strong></td>
<td>Remind potential donors that many companies will match employees’ charitable donations. Matching gifts can double someone’s donation!</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Reminders</strong></td>
<td>Keep tabs on who’s donated and who hasn’t, and send reminders to those who haven’t. Include notes about your training, and how you’re almost at your goal but still need their help. People easily forget and tell themselves they’ll get to it eventually. Often, reminder emails are more successful than the initial email.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Updates</strong></td>
<td>Donors love to see your progress in training, fundraising, and the ride itself! Send them links to social media, blogs, and pictures! Be sure to include those who have donated and those who haven’t.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Thank You’s</strong></td>
<td>Remember, your summer would not be possible without these donations. It’s nice to receive a note about the importance of a donation, no matter how small.</td>
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Dear Friend:

In the United States today, there are approximately 400,000 people with multiple sclerosis (MS). Approximately 200 more people are diagnosed every week. Worldwide, MS is thought to affect more than 2.5 million people. While more and more people are becoming survivors of this disease, there is still no cure. Having watched my relative’s battle with MS over the years, I decided that it was time to become involved in the search for a cure!

Last fall, I became a member of Bike the US for MS, whose mission is to fund home modification projects across the United States and support research and treatment of MS at clinics and treatment centers. I signed up to ride across the Northern Tier route of the United States, which is 4,295 miles beginning in Bar Harbor, ME and ending in Seattle, WA. I have been training daily with friends and on May 28, I will set off for a two month adventure from coast to coast. Along with my teammates, I will be cycling in honor of a survivor of MS: my relative. He was diagnosed with MS at the age of 26. After 3 months of testing with no conclusions, he relapsed and spent 3 more months undergoing tests to finally find out that he has MS. Throughout my training and the ride, I will wear a wrist band with his name on it which will be a constant reminder that no matter how hard I think the day is, it doesn’t even come close to his fight against MS.

I won’t be able to complete this ride alone, and I would be honored if you would help me. My goal is to raise $6,000 ($4,295 required). No pledge is too small! Donations need to be received no later than May 28. To date, Bike the US for MS has raised over $1.5 million! The goal of my Northern Tier team this summer is to raise $200,000. Now THAT’S making a difference! I invite you to be a part of my goal. I promise you, there is no better feeling than knowing that you were a part of an amazing mission that successfully helped so many people!

Thank you so much for your support! See you at the finish line! Please consider donating here.

Or send checks to:
Bike the US for MS  |  PO Box 10001  |  Blacksburg, VA 24062

For more information about Bike the US for MS, please visit my profile at: www.biketheusforms.org

Thanks!!
Northern Tier Cyclist
Following up with Supporters

Following-up is typically MORE important than the initial email/letter and just showing people your online profile. People are busy and it can easily slip their mind. Help them remember this amazing commitment that you have made to those affected by MS!

There are several ways to follow up your initial fundraising campaign and it’s up to you to let your potential donors know that this is a big deal! Don’t forget to mention the size of the challenge you have undertaken. Following up gives them the chance to understand and support you.

- Review your original list. Send out reminder emails to everyone about the progress you’ve made and how much more you have to go.

- Remind people you see at school, at work, at parties, etc that you’re still fundraising. People often forget or misplace letters, and telling them in person will help your message resonate.

- Mention to prospective donors about the power of matching gifts and ask them to check with their employer’s Human Resource department about matching gifts.

Updates and Blogs

Keeping in touch with the people on your mailing list periodically through the training season is an excellent way to increase your response rate.

- Post updates on social media!
  Most of your donors are likely your friends on Facebook, or follow you on Twitter and Instagram. Publicly thank your donors, post pictures from training rides, and talk about fundraising! People will notice the awesome thing you’re doing and will want to get involved!

- Send email newsletters.
  This is an excellent way to reach both those who have donated and those who haven’t. Once a week, or month, or whenever, send out an email describing where you are in your training/fundraising.

Continue to ASK EVERYONE! You’ll be surprised who’s willing to support your ride. Speak enthusiastically about your commitment and what it means to you to help those who are dealing with the daily struggles of living with MS.
Thank You’s!

Whether it’s by hand, email, phone, social media or in person, giving sincere thanks to your donors is an incredibly important part of fundraising!

Tips for Thank You’s:

• Don’t assume people know how much you appreciate their donation – tell them! You know personally how good a genuine thanks can make you feel.

• Hand-written thank-you notes are rare these days. Never underestimate what taking the time to physically write a thank-you could mean to someone!

• Don’t wait around! Be prompt in sending your thank you notes.

• Thank donors on social media - publicly recognizing their contribution will let then know you appreciate their support and might inspire more friends and followers to donate.

• Just like your fundraising letter, make them warm and personal. Copy-and-pasting the same letter removes from its authenticity.

• Send thank-you’s before, during, and after your ride! When the miles are done and you’re back home, write one more time, thanking them and telling them about your experience!

• Send postcard updates while on the trip As you ride through Small Town, USA, pick up a few postcards and mail them to donors. Describe the area, the trip, and always remember to thank them for their donation.

Sample Thank You Letter

Hi Friend,

Thank you so much for supporting my Bike the US for MS ride! The whole fundraising process has been really amazing. Every person I’ve talked to has been very supportive of the trip and the cause. I’m truly lucky to know a lot of kind and generous people and I’ve found the more people I get in touch with the more encouraged I am to sit on a bike for two months!

With the trip closer than two months out, I have started my formal training and wanted to invite you to follow me through my online blog (http://www.blogger.com/), as well as on social media on my Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. My goal is to thank someone each and every day on Twitter for being the daily sponsor so keep an eye out for your name!!

Thanks again!
TransAm biker

Sample Thank You Posts

Kaylee Schwitzer
May 7 | Edited .

Thank you Karu Priya Thatte and Kate Glantz for your generous donations to Multiple Sclerosis treatment & research this week! Don’t worry - all of you lovely people can still get in on all the action! I have $1,480 left to raise in order to meet my fundraising goal... And I need your help to get there! Only 18 days until I make the trek up to Maine to bike from Bar Harbor to Seattle, Washington.

Bike the US for MS : Kaylee Schwitzer 2015 Northern Tier Cyclist

We leave May 26th from Bar Harbor, Maine and arrive in Seattle, Washington on August 8th. We rode anywhere between 60-100 miles a day (depending on where we are and how many mountains there are).

M. Krajewski
July 25

Thanks to donations from Geri Krueger Gerlison and Ryan Moran we’ve now raised $5,000 for multiple sclerosis! Your donations will go to help fund research on the disease and service projects to help those living with the disease!! Thanks guys!

It’s not too late to make your donation at the link below!

Bike the US for MS : Matt Krajewski 2015 Self-Contained Cyclist

Biking across the US has long been a dream of mine. Recently an opportunity presented itself to allow me to take on this grand challenge. I knew I wanted to...

Stephanie Crawford
April 28, 2014

Hi folks! I want to extend a huge thank you to those of you who have been helping me fundraise for Bike the US for MS. It’s been really incredible to see friends, family, strangers, and local businesses coming together to raise money for this cause and I’m so grateful for all of your support. With your help, I’ve already raised $3,497 for multiple sclerosis research!

I’ll be leaving for Bar Harbor, Maine in about a month and would love to reach my goal of $4,296 by then, so if you would still like to make a donation or want to spread the word, see my webpage below! Thank you all!

Bike the US for MS : Stephanie Crawford 2014 Northern Tier Cyclist

Bike across the United States for multiple sclerosis research and awareness.
Events are a great way to both raise funds and promote the cause. You can incorporate a drawing/raffle/silent auction to raise even more funds. However, supplemental events do require some planning! The work you put into planning is always worth it because they can be incredibly fun and highly effective at fundraising!

### What type of event should I host?

Anything! Popular alumni events include charity night at your favorite bar/restaurant, donation jars, yard sales, bake sales, dinner parties, sports tournaments, bike races, 5k runs, and even house parties.

Small, local businesses are most likely to help you fundraise. Host an event doing something you enjoy!

### How do I get the word out?

Put energy into marketing the event! Reach out to friends, coworkers, family, neighbors, and more. Just like with your fundraising letters, don’t count anyone out!

Create event pages for it on social media, email out e-vites, and ask attendees to bring a friend or two!

### How do I organize an event?

Unless you plan to host your event in your own home or workplace, you will most likely partner with an area business. Many restaurants and local bars are willing to work with Bike the US for MS fundraisers to promote their efforts. Some offer percentages of the night’s earnings, while others may let you place a donation jar or even let you ride your bike on trainers outside their doors as a fundraising event.

### What are the challenges with events?

Weather, timing, and day of the week are a few variables you which can make an event less effective. Asking businesses to partner with you may initially be challenging, but you will be surprised at the outcome. The more time and effort you put in, the more likely your event is to be successful!
**Sponsorship:**

Corporate sponsorship is a way to raise funds, get your employer involved, and expose yourself to even more prospective donors. When you’re seeking sponsorship, you’re essentially asking for donations in exchange for you representing the company.

Many people often ask their employer for sponsorship, but asking other local businesses (especially local bike shops and outdoors shops) is a great idea too!

You never know who may be willing to sponsor you. Past riders have received sponsorship from businesses of all sizes, from their favorite local donut shop, to bottled water companies, to barbecue restaurants.

**How to ask:**

1. Research the company’s giving history and focus, then find out which department would handle your request.
2. Don’t be deterred by the amount of digging you might have to do. Often times the person who may help you gain sponsorship will be hard to find.
3. Show how your participation is positively affecting the company, and how the company’s participation is a good thing for them (e.g. cause-driven marketing or employee philanthropy).

**What to include in a sponsorship letter:**

1. Your story and how you got involved
2. Information about Bike the US for MS and your reason for riding.
3. The needs of Bike the US for MS and the needs of the company.
4. A request for support
5. A description of the value sponsoring you carries. Mention that you’ll promote the company on social media and wear their logo.

**Exceed the $1 per mile fundraising minimum and you will get:**

- **$2 per mile**
  Bike packed and shipped home at the end of the trip

- **$3 per mile**
  Free Flight Home
  Bike packed and shipped home at the end of the trip

- **$4 per mile**
  Free flight home
  Personal room during all hotel stays
  Bike packed and shipped home at the end of the trip

*applies to full tour cyclists only*
Important Fundraising Deadlines:

1. Each cyclist must raise the $1 per mile fundraising minimum by the start date of the trip you are participating in.

2. In the two months following your acceptance, you need to raise $500. This will secure your spot on the team and ensures we are not holding spots for people who aren’t planning to ride.

3. To encourage riders to not fall behind in fundraising, everyone should have raised at least half the requirement by two months before the trip’s start date.

Where do the dollars go?
Cyclists will be able to hand deliver funds to research and treatment centers across the US!

We are proud and work hard to contribute approximately 90 cents of every dollar to MS research, treatment, direct financial assistance, outreach, education and raising awareness.

Fundraising Guidelines:

- The final fundraising deadline is the start of the trip! You must reach the fundraising minimum to participate in the trip.

- If you exceed your fundraising minimum we will be able to give more to the amazing organizations that we support AND you will personally benefit in the ways described above!

- If you have not reached the halfway fundraising amount by two months before the trip, we will be in contact to see if we can help. This is when Bike the US for MS begins spending money on your behalf and we want to ensure it is being spent on those who will meet their fundraising goal and participate in the ride.

- If you’re enrolled on a Bike the US for MS team, you cannot transfer or raise funds for another rider in the organization. Additionally, any funds raised above the fundraising minimum may not be transferred or carried over to a future ride.

- In the case of your withdrawal or failure to meet the fundraising requirements, your balance will be considered a donation to Bike the US for MS, and will not be refunded, but will go toward fighting MS.

- We encourage every cyclist to set a fundraising goal over the minimum amount! The more you raise, the more we can help people living with MS and donate to research!

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research and Treatment</th>
<th>Direct Financial Assistance</th>
<th>Public Outreach and Volunteering</th>
<th>Administrative</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>10%</td>
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