

2019 Team Case Study

BUILDING A PROGRESSIVE COALITION IN PUGET SOUND

Overview

Sister District Puget Sound raised \$30,128.28 for candidates in 2019, an increase of 146% from their 2018 fundraising total. How did they do it? A big part of the answer is that the leaders focused on building a coalition of progressive groups as a force multiplier for fundraising and voter contact support for their candidates Josh Cole and Debra Rodman.

Coalition-building is critical for increasing our power to make an outsized impact in 2020. Who can you collaborate with? Who can you recruit as an affiliate group? And how might you work together?

The following is adapted from a write-up from HQL Bridget Burns summarizing how they built the coalition and collaborated with their partners to, most notably, knock fundraising out of the park.

PUGET SOUND PROGRESSIVE COALITION

- Sister District Puget Sound
- Code Blue Washington (affiliate)
- Wallingford Indivisible (affiliate)
- North Seattle Progressives (affiliate)
- Indivisible Eastside

FORMATION OF THE COALITION

Each group plays a slightly different role in the coalition and each joined in a different way:

- Deborah Carstens, a leader of Wallingford Indivisible (WI) attended a spring information session the SD Puget Sound DCs were hosting at libraries around Seattle. WI meets weekly and are particularly interested in postcarding. Sister District HQL Bridget reached out to Wallingford Indivisible about joining the affiliate program and co-hosting the fundraiser. After Deborah had a conversation with Neal, they signed on to both.
- Julia Ricketts, the leader of Code Blue Washington (CBW) contacted Bridget with an interest in working together on a fundraising event. Bridget told Julia about SDP's affiliate program and connected her with Neal. Code Blue Washington became part of the affiliate program and the two groups began planning an early summer fundraiser.
- Some of our members are also members of North Seattle Progressives (NSP). They initially didn't want to officially be part of our affiliate program, but they signed on to co-host the fundraiser and were interested in other action items as well.
- Louise Pathe, one of the leaders of Indivisible Eastside, attended the fundraiser and contacted Bridget afterwards with an interest in hosting a fundraiser for candidates on the Eastside. IE is not a member of our affiliate program.

Coalition Actions

SUMMER FUNDRAISER

Our first coalition event was a great success. Drawing contacts from 5 different groups really helped boost attendance. We set a goal \$8,000 for our candidate Josh Cole. In our invitation we included our donation link and asked people to donate when they RSVP'd, and also invited those who couldn't attend to donate. Our host provided food and we asked for donations of wine, beer and non-alcoholic drinks from our leadership team.

We focused on personal outreach to recruit attendees. Leaders of each coalition group were responsible for recruiting. We worked with SDP for recruitment help from one of the Organizing Fellows, who called through our volunteer list. We sent a number of emails, including a save-the-date, and multiple invitations and reminders. We confirmed and reminded 69 RSVPs and had actual attendance of 50.

We had several speakers who helped build excitement, including Sister District alum and current Washington State Senator Claire Wilson, SDP Executive Director Rita Bosworth, and our candidate Josh Cole. The most essential speaker, however, was Julia Ricketts, who made a strong ask at the end. Julia talked with Neal to talk about best practices and how to "make the ask." Neal also connected Julia with HQL Lisa Diaz Nash (fundraising pro!) of the SDP CA Peninsula team to talk further. This was a great example of how staff can facilitate leaders learning from one another. Lisa was so helpful and it made a big difference in our fundraising to incorporate her tips and suggestions.

Our most effective fundraising tactic was a matching gift program. Our goal was to recruit 15 matching donors for \$100 each across our 4 organizations. Not only did it encourage donors at the event to give more than they might have, the matching gift donors also gave more than they otherwise would have, and did not have to attend to contribute. We reached out after the event to remind those who had pledged to donate to do so, and again inviting those who couldn't attend to donate. Between the matching gifts, the issues map to encourage donations at the event, asking those who couldn't attend to donate, and the follow up emails, we surpassed our \$8,000 goal by several hundred dollars.

ONLINE FUNDRAISER

Efforts were spread thin in the fall and the coalition decided to do an online fundraiser rather than an in-person fundraiser. We set a goal of \$3,000 and 10 matching donors of \$100 each. We recruited the matching donors, then sent emails to our respective volunteer lists, with 2 follow-up emails. We surpassed our goal while expending relatively little effort.

PHONEBANKING

The coalition hosted a phonebanking training in the fall. Having 4 groups recruiting callers boosted our turnout. Neal led a training session before we began calling for our candidates. We recruited callers to host their own phonebanks. Each of the coalition members hosted a phone bank on their own. All told, we made over 2,000 dials.

Conclusion

Forming a coalition of pre-existing groups significantly increased our volunteer reach, our metrics for each of our action categories and, importantly, our collective energy and support for planning events.