

FUND RAISING FOR SCHOOLS USING A VIRTUAL BALLOON RACE

This short case study looks at the positive outcomes from sharing school fund raising revenues with the local hospice - the experiences of Bolton Le Sands Primary School and St Johns Hospice, Lancaster



In times of severe Government cutbacks, the general public tends to look more than ever to charities for help. And the recent dramatic rises in the use of food banks is testament to that very action.

Witness the comments from the The Trussell Trust, a food bank charity, after commenting to BBC reporters that it handed out 913,000 food parcels in 2013, up from 347,000 the year before. A Trust spokesman said a third were given to repeat visitors but that there was a "shocking" 51% rise in [new] clients to established food banks. It suggested benefit payment delays were the main cause.

So a big issue for hospices like St John's is how to maintain revenues when people have less disposable income.

In step Rentaballoonrace with a unique and imaginative new fund raising platform and the local schools. Schools like Bolton Le Sands Primary, one of eight local schools who took part in a week-long race managed by award winning marketing company, Purepages Group based in Bolton, Manchester. Tim Cross, headteacher, said with some feeling, "we have a very special relationship with the hospice, they were great with my father who passed away there recently"

But whilst the headteacher is clearly enthusiastic, how do you motivate school kids in an increasingly shallow society, and over a topic, i.e. easing the pain of dying, they don't think too much about or remotely relate to.

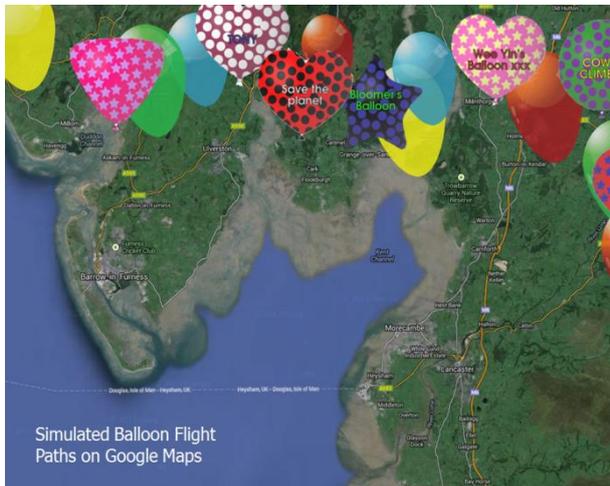
The unique Rentaballoonrace.com virtualisation process allows charities, like St Johns Hospice or even a school itself, to raise funds from a fun and educational balloon race, but without any negative effect on wildlife. Unfortunately, real balloon races using helium filled latex balloons have been seen as responsible for a growing number of deaths to sea birds, turtles and other animals when they, the latex balloons, eventually fall back to Earth after accidents or losing their gas.



Mike Phillips, managing director of Purepages, further added: "All UK eco-charities are currently working really hard to get the Government to ban the use of such latex balloons for fund raising purposes, so we're pleased we can offer a great virtual experience instead.

Each balloon has three construction metrics which can be tweaked to help the balloon fly faster and higher - thickness of the rubber; amount of helium; balloon shape. But be warned that making the balloon fly very high and fast means it is highly vulnerable to bursting. So it will not make the finish, probably.

As well as changing the aerodynamics, you can also decorate your balloon(s) with added text, new colours, a range of decals such as stars and stripes and import pictures of your pet dog or mother in law.



Once your balloon has left the ground from its designated launch location anywhere in the world, you can follow its progress on Google Maps. And remember that your balloon's route is determined by the current real weather. So if there is a south westerly storm and you have launched from London, your balloon will soon be over the North Sea. If you're lucky, you may win the race. Of course you might not, but at least you will have had some fun and contributed to fund-raising for a good cause.

Anna Scott, Community Fundraiser for St John's explained "we thought the whole virtual race idea was really different from our normal events such as our highly successful Midnight Walks"

The virtual race launched from St John's on the 7th March and with amazing endeavor, several pupils at the school sold over 30 balloons each, with star-fundraiser Ash Cartwright selling a whopping 34 on his own. This echoes performances by children at Eyton Primary near Wrexham, who also sold over 30 balloons each in a race organized at their school last year.

Top fundraiser Ash was presented in front of his proud school pals, with a special prize of book tokens for his achievement by Mike Phillips, managing director of Purepages Group.

When asked how he managed to sell his 34 balloons, Ash, who is only six and a Year Two pupil, replied "My mum and I made a big list of all our family, relatives and friends!"

Headteacher Tim further added, "my family was really taken with the race system and actually got quite addicted to it. Sadly, my balloon burst after three days though. We were very interested in the physics of it all and debated endlessly about the logic and background as to how it all worked."



In summary, it is clearly apparent that the Hospice's idea of working with local schools was a good one. By sharing revenues, everyone got something from the relationship and was motivated to do well. And positive outcomes were achieved not just from handing money over either -there was genuine interest from staff and pupils, plus intrigue and educational components to be had.

Empirical evidence so far, albeit from a small statistical sample, indicates that primary schools provide better working partners than secondary or more senior establishments. We at Purepages and Rentaballoonrace, though, are keenly awaiting a secondary or high school to prove that hypothesis very wrong

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