

Carroll Hospice
Earns Nearly \$4 for Every \$1 Spent
with Direct Mail Fundraising

graphcom®

Project Overview

Our Client

An affiliate of Carroll Hospital Center in Westminster, Md., Carroll Hospice offers compassionate hospice care to terminally ill patients and their families.

Carroll Hospice was seeking a new marketing firm to write, design, print, and mail its annual appeal letters to raise funds during National Homecare & Hospice Month in November. These funds help other families cope successfully with the suffering, confusion, doubts, and fears that surround a loved one's death.

Specifically, these donations help offset the cost of medical supplies, medical equipment, and pharmaceutical services; bereavement resources for grieving families; chaplains specially trained in the difficult work of counseling grieving families; and the cost of Camp T.R., Carroll Hospice's amazing bereavement retreat for children.

Our Challenge

The mailing was to be sent to two distinct groups:

- Patient family members, including some who have used bereavement services and some who have not, within the last two years (excluding the past three months, as it is too soon to ask those families)
- Hospice donors from the past four years who have not yet renewed their gift in this current fiscal year

Our challenge was to present information in a respectful, compassionate way, while also creating an impactful call to action that inspired donations.



Remembering Those We Hold Dear

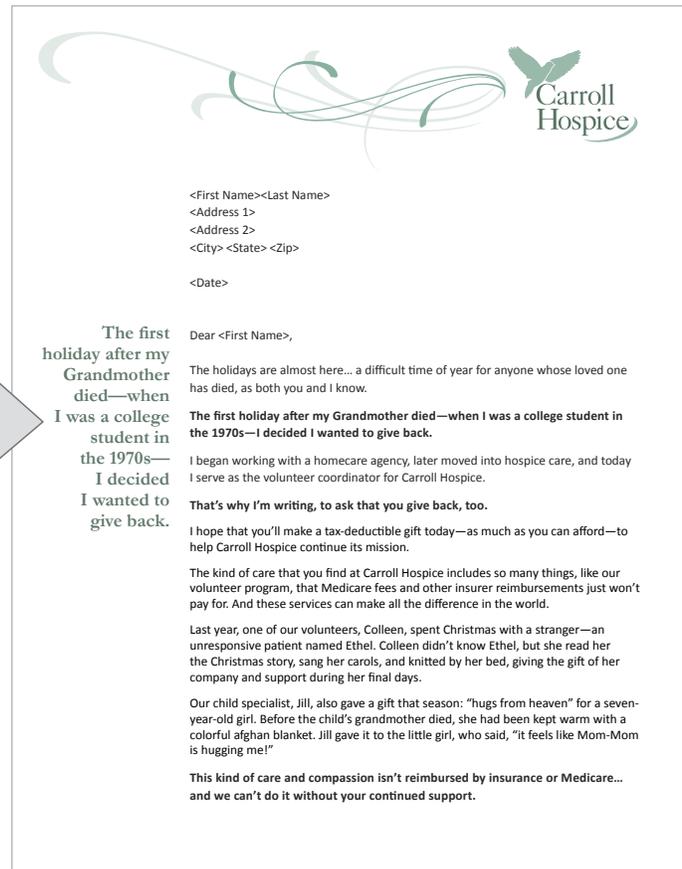
Because these letters would be sent to people who have donated before, as well as families who recently received hospice care and bereavement services, it was important to appeal to their emotions and their personal connections to hospice.

First, we selected a thick, cream-colored paper to give the piece a formal, respectful look and feel. Our art team worked within the Carroll Hospice brand to create a design that simulated personalized stationery.

For content, we interviewed Volunteer Coordinator Debbie Zepp, who shared a heartfelt story of her friend Betty's experience with hospice care, and how this inspired her to become a hospice volunteer coordinator. Debbie's personal, compassionate stories captured how other volunteers made an impact on grieving families, as well as the scope of care and services offered at Carroll Hospice that are paid for by donations, including the volunteer program.

Narrated from Debbie's perspective, we wrote two appeal letters (which included a follow-up letter for those who didn't respond to the first mailing), slightly modified for both recipient groups.

The first holiday after my Grandmother died—when I was a college student in the 1970s—I decided I wanted to give back.



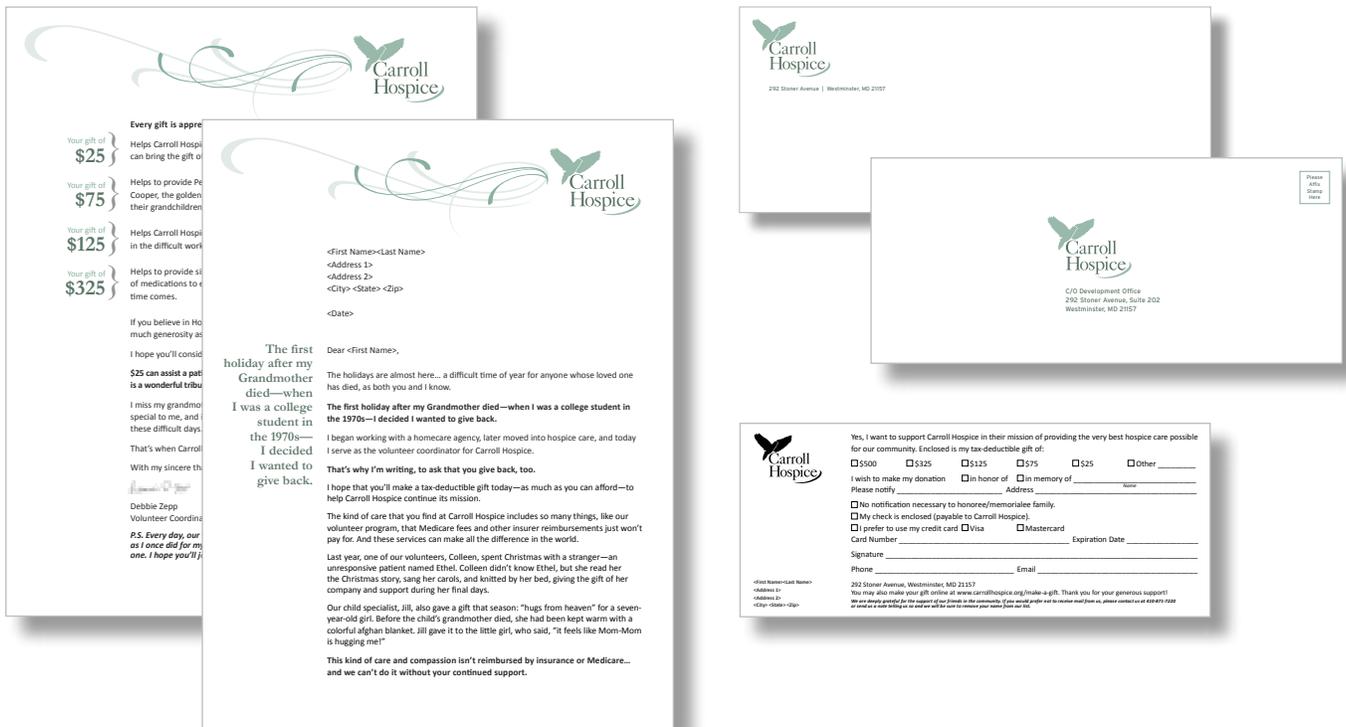
Testing & Results

In addition to interviewing Debbie and writing the appeal letters, Graphcom also provided design, printing, and mailing services. These packets included:

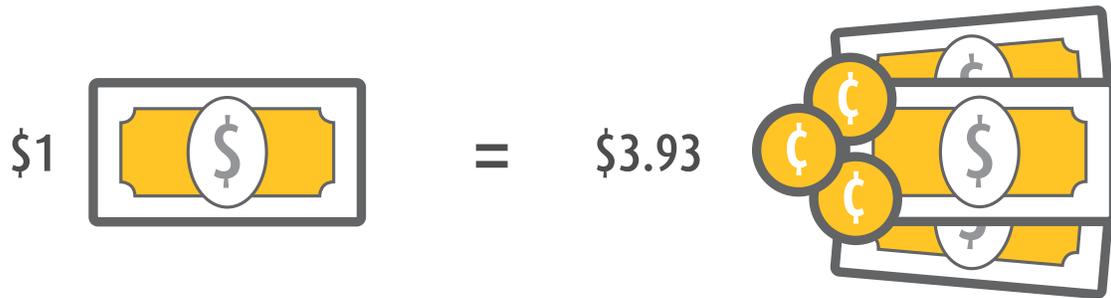
- 8.5" x 11" letter (2 pages)
- Reply card
- Reply envelope
- Outer envelope

All appeal letters were marked with a code so we could track data such as recurring vs. new donors, number of gifts received, and total gift amount.

Because we knew which recipients donated the previous years and what amount, we used variable data in each letter to replace the base amount of money requested to match the total the individual previously donated (for example: "I hope you'll consider giving at least \$75..." when \$75 is the amount they previously donated).



Results



For every dollar Carroll Hospice spent to produce these donor appeal letters, they earned \$3.93 in return.

For both acquisition and renewal groups, the letters achieved a very high response rate. According to fundraising expert Alan Sharpe, successful response rates for acquisition mailings range between 0.5% and 2.5%. For Carroll Hospice's appeal letters, the new donor response rate was 4.6%.

	All Donors	Previous Donors	New Donors
Response Rate	7.8%	8.5%	4.6%
Number of Donations	758	684	74
Funds Raised	\$58,938	\$49,925	\$9,013

Carroll Hospice received a total of 74 new donors and \$59,938 in donations, making this one of their highest yielding mailings to date.

Of the 758 gifts received, 90% came from previous donors, while 10% came from new donors. Of the total donations received, previous donors gifted 85%, while 15% came from new donors.

“We worked with Graphcom for the first time in fall 2014 on a mailing with a very short timeline. They were professional, fast, and efficient while producing an amazing end product with a fresh design. To top it off, the results of our mailing were the best we've had in several years! We are very much looking forward to working with Graphcom on our future mailings.”

- Amanda Vetter, Annual Fund Manager

