

## This Year-end, It's Back to Basics

By Mary Ellen Clark

As we approach this year's end we are aware of many factors that may have an effect on giving. Back to the basics is where we should all go to see that our annual fund is secure during challenging economic times. How you communicate this and how you approach donors for year-end gifts does not require additional skills, simply good basic fundraising tools.

If you plan a direct mail campaign, be certain that yours is one of the first pieces your donor receives. This is not the time to delay mailing. Recognize that your donor will most likely be making fewer gifts, so be sure that your request clearly thanks them for their previous support, while letting them know your needs continue, no matter the state of the economy. Pay special attention to the look of the appeal; this might be the time to add a teaser to the outside of the envelope, use a commemorative stamp or consider a reply card. If your appeal traditionally comes from the organization's CEO, add a personal letter of your own, from the development officer with whom they are familiar.

Place special emphasis on cultivating your current donors rather than just using this year-end campaign to attract new donors. Phone calls, personal notes, invitations to tour a new project, lunch with the CEO or to attend your organization's holiday event are more important this year than ever before. Remember to include key donors to your employee campaign, as they know your story better than anyone.

Be certain that your website is up-to-date, that fundraising success stories are mentioned, and that clear instructions for donating online are available for donors who are new to this method. With online donations increasing, this might be the time to consider adding a brief survey to your website to learn more about your donors.

It has been a year of challenges for every organization, not just yours. Stay positive with donors, and don't forget the first rule of fundraising: ASK!