

Pediatric Low Grade Astrocytoma (PLGA) is the most common form of childhood brain tumor and can be life threatening. The PLGA Foundation is a 501c3 non-profit and is the only non-profit organization dedicated to providing hope to families fighting this disease by raising funds for education and research. We promote partnerships with other non-profit organizations, private individuals, and government entities and collaborate on fund raising, education, and grant allocation to leverage resources and funds. Our goal is to unite families around the country and around the world in the fight for the lives of our children who suffer from brain tumors.

Our annual Geared Up for Kids Ride and Family Fun Festival brings together hundreds of riders and volunteers for our biggest fundraiser. Through online events software, team captains solicit donations and participation on our behalf. In addition to containing all of our donor data, our database is our portal for all doctor, patient, and family related information. Our challenge was finding a way to coordinate information between our existing fundraising database, the online event software, and various spreadsheets of event invitation lists. We had recently invested in a major upgrade to our existing database, so we were not looking to purchase new software. Instead, we needed to maximize what we already had, but we didn't know how to manage the data migration or how to combine our multiple data sources while keeping future needs in mind.

Karen Schaller was recommended to us for this purpose, and after considering various consultants, we chose Karen for her experience and flexibility. Karen audited our existing Giftworks database and provided feedback on the integrity and consistency of the data. After several planning discussions, she then cleaned the database, eliminating all duplicates and creating formal procedures for inputting additional information. She upgraded our software to the most current version and then merged another entire database of information into the Giftworks database. This required sophisticated mapping and problem solving strategies to eliminate inconsistencies between databases. Finally, after the merge, Karen conducted virtual one-on-one training sessions with the Executive Director and her staff to help them utilize the database in a more effective and efficient manner.

In our system, households are now set up in a way that allows transfer of individual online event registrations based on the online ID number. This meets our year-end reporting requirement for giving amounts by individual and still lets us see donor counts for households. Karen also made suggestions that could help us streamline the process of moving the online information into the database in future years. Karen designed a detailed coding plan to segment riders or volunteers by teams and year of participation, and gifts by team, captain, and whether it was a donation or registration. Each team functions as a campaign, fundraising for our big event throughout the year in various ways. Segmenting all giving and participation by these unique campaign teams has made it much easier to provide the necessary supporting data to team captains.

Karen is a pleasure to work with. She was able to assess our situation quickly and come up with several plausible strategies for remedying our database issues. The transition to the new software and the merging of data was a dubious task for our staff, and Karen's confidence and knowledge gave us additional comfort and ease over the transition period. The peace of mind knowing that we were leveraging our database resource to help us was very important to us. Her tutoring skills were invaluable to us after the project was complete, and we continue to have an open and positive relationship with her whenever our database needs arise.

Amy Weinstein
Executive Director, PLGA Foundation