

# Your Secret Weapon: An Email Welcome Series

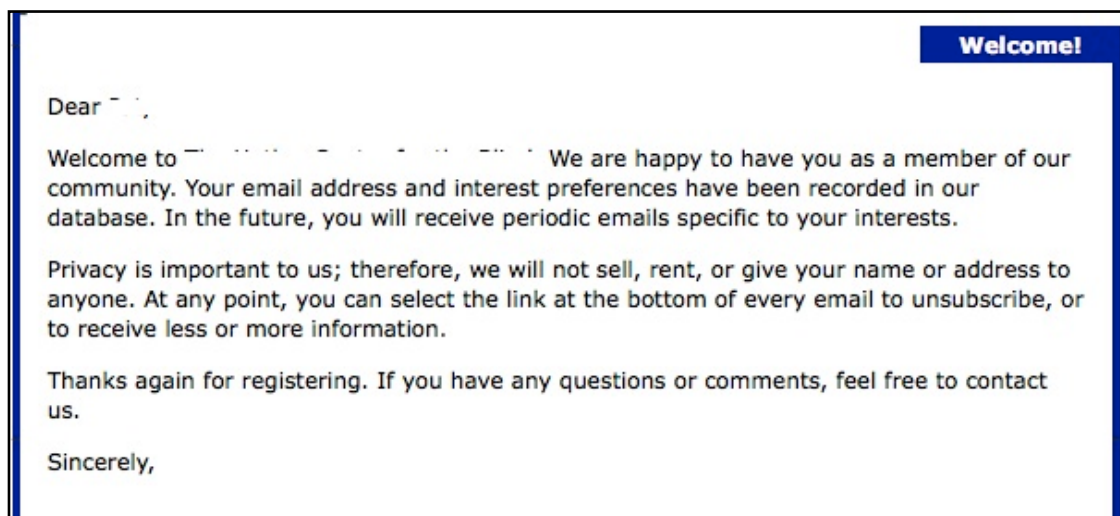
INSPIRE AND ENGAGE YOUR  
DONORS. RIGHT FROM THE  
START!



## Introduction

Let's say a prospective supporter has learned about your organization, visited your website, and been intrigued enough to sign up for your organization's bi-weekly enews. What happens next?

If you've set things up correctly, your new subscriber will receive a welcome email. And, depending on your email service provider, this may be the message your new subscriber and potential supporter might receive:



**Will Rogers famously said: "You never get a second chance to make a good first impression."**

And when you're running a small shop fundraising department with a staff of one (or less) you can't afford to pass up any opportunities for relationship-building. Your organization's Welcome Message provides the prime opportunity to systematize - *and humanize* - the relationship-building process.

### **What does your organization's Welcome message look like?**

And, if you want to take it a step further, I'm going to urge you to think outside the box and consider a three to five-part welcome auto-responder series. Let me explain: think of the auto-responder series as a magic wand of electronic communications. You know your success depends on building relationships and touching prospects multiple times in multiple ways –“dripping” on them until they are ready to give their first gift and then drawing them closer to the very core of your work. Inspiring to give more regularly.

It's pretty easy to understand the concept, but the work itself can be overwhelming, when it's just you. An auto-responder series can take some of the drudge work out of communicating with your online prospects.

### **What is an auto-responder?**

An auto-responder is a special type of automated tool provided by your email service provider designed to send prospective donors a series of messages over a period of days, weeks or months. Because the messages are written by

you and targeted toward a very specific audience, they read like personal email sent directly from you to a single recipient. And because the messages are sent by your email marketing service, you don't have to remember who is supposed to get which message when.

If you originally subscribed to my five-part free grant-writing course, that's a prime example of how an auto-responder works. While there are some similarities between an auto-responder series and your newsletter, there is one big difference: Instead of sending the same message to your whole list at the same time, the auto-responder delivers a sequence of messages to prospective donors over time. Each person gets the first message immediately after she signs up and then gets the rest of the messages sequentially, usually one or two messages a week.

### **Why an email welcome series?**

Online retailers early on discovered that an online customer's affinity is typically "highest for the first 30 days after the visitor opts-in to a retailer's email list." Known as the "honeymoon period," it's characterized by "new subscribers demonstrating higher email open rates, higher click rates, and higher conversion rates."

**And, it turns out that this same behavior is demonstrated by nonprofit supporters as well.**

In direct mail the use of a *Welcome Kit* following a thank you letter has been shown to increase donor engagement and retention -- and the same principles hold for creating your digital “welcome kit.” You can create a three to five part auto-responder *Welcome Kit* specifically designed to inform, engage and inspire your new newsletter signups.

## **How to get started**

If you’re already using an email marketing service, you should be able to use the same service to deliver your auto-responder welcome messages. If not, setting up an account with a new company is simple and most offer discounted pricing for nonprofits.

You have several options. We’ll be talking about the various options in Module Two. iContact, Mail Chimp and Aweber all offer fully-featured auto-responders. Each company’s pricing structure is different, focusing on slightly different features; therefore, it’s worth exploring several before you decide which one to use.

## **Writing your auto-responder welcome series**

The overriding goal of your welcome series is to thank, inform, engage and inspire. In general, you don’t want to rush the ask. Your subscriber / prospective donor has already shown an interest by signing up for your list -- it’s up to you to increase their interest by providing a sequenced, more in-depth introduction to

your organization (and why they should care). Additionally you'll want to lead them, *gradually*, through the process of greater engagement, such as forwarding the email to a friend, "liking" your organization on Facebook, perhaps viewing a video -- and possibly culminating in making that first gift. Your emails should be short, friendly and fairly informal. Schedule your emails over the course of 30 days.

## **In closing**

Whether you decide to attempt an auto-responder welcome series or not, at the very least take advantage of the opportunities your email welcome message affords you. Write a warm welcome -- one that lets your new subscriber know that you appreciate them and what they can expect in terms of future communications. Show them you're glad they've opened up their inbox to you!

## **Examples**

Following is an example of an auto-responder welcome series I wrote for a client in 2011.

### **New welcome message:**

#### **EMAIL #1**

**SUBJ HEADER:** Welcome [fname]!

**MESSAGE BODY:** A special thank you from ORG

Dear [fname],

Welcome to Organization ABC [pic]

You're part of a special network of friends and neighbors who are committed to the possibility within every child!

Over the next five weeks you'll be learning more about our ORG kids. You may be surprised. Some of our kids come from areas in Oakland and Macomb Counties where you'd least expect to find children on the federal free lunch program. Others have never known anything but poverty and lack.

As a part of the ORG family, you're an important advocate for all of our kids. You'll also be receiving the bi-weekly ORG newsletter.

In the meantime, want to learn more? Visit our blog often and be sure to follow us on Twitter and Facebook! Want to see us in action? Give us a call and set up a time to stop by our warehouse and see ORG in action!

Thanks again for signing up. If you have any questions or comments or, even better yet, if you'd like to schedule a visit to the ORG Teacher's Annex, let me know.

Yours for the kids,

PS: We're happy to have you as a member of our community. Privacy is important to us. We'll never sell, rent, or give your name or address to anyone. At any point, you can select the link at the bottom of every email to unsubscribe, or to receive less or more information.

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**Email #2:**

**Subject:** It started with 100 backpacks

**Delivery:** 4 days after Welcome email

**Message body:**

*"Our kids don't lack the desire, motivation or capability to succeed. Many simply lack sufficient supplies. We're passionate about making futures happen."*

Hi [fname]:

You rock!

By signing up for the ORGNewsletter you've shown that you care about the future of Michigan's kids.

You already know it's no secret that our country has taken a nose dive when it comes to educating our kids. We're ranked 14th out of 34 countries for reading skills, 17th for science and a whopping below-average 25th for mathematics.

There's lots of finger-pointing and political posturing going on, but one simple fact remains.

### **Our kids are hurting.**

You can help. Kids can't write without pencils. They can't color without crayons. Can you imagine going to school every day lacking basic supplies?

And did you know that our teachers, already resource-tapped, are regularly spending upwards of \$1500 a year of their own personal money to buy school supplies for their kids?

[fname], together how can we turn this around and help our kids reach their full potential?

Organization ABC was founded with a vision: a community where every child's basic school day needs are met. You can accomplish that vision by helping us of provide free school supplies, books, hygiene and food items for local children in need.

Today we've grown from 100 donated backpacks in my garage to opening the Teachers Annex, a warehouse treasure trove where teachers can shop for their students **for free**.

It goes without saying. When kids' basic needs are met you've removed one more obstacle to success.

One of ORG's supporters said it best:

*"I love kids. They are our future and in order to have a future they need education. I have always felt it was important for everyone to have the opportunity to have a good education, but without proper tools how can they learn? So when I heard what Founder had accomplished from his living room, I knew this was the organization I needed to get involved in. When I did a distribution and saw the looks on the faces of both children and their parents when receiving their supplies, I was hoORGd. My heart was totally touched. The excitement of a boy getting his first ever HIS book to keep was contagious."*

Stay tuned. You'll be hearing some very special stories of children whose lives have been directly impacted in inspiring ways.

Yours for the kids,



PS: Wondering how you can help? Forward this email to a friend who cares about the future of our children - just like you do!

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**Email #3:** Matthew's story

**Delivery:** 4 days after email #2

**Subject:** [fname], Got Milk? Many kids don't

**Message body:**

**Photograph**

Dear [fname]:

It breaks your heart. And it's a situation that's seen far too often these days in Southeastern Michigan schools. Little Matthew, just entering the second grade, was mortified. His backpack was leaking and the other students had noticed. What's more his teacher had noticed too and, as she opened his backpack, Matthew was nearly in tears.

What was in the little guy's backpack?

Milk.

You see, Matthew only drinks half of the milk he receives at lunch. Then he tries to save the other half for home. There's no milk at home. Some nights, there's no dinner either.

But thanks to the support of compassionate donors like you, Matthew's teacher was able to visit the well-stocked Teacher's Annex in Troy that evening and pick up a brand new backpack and new school supplies, free of charge.

The next morning when Matthew showed up in class with nothing his teacher gently took him aside to give him all the things she had picked up for him at our warehouse. Matthew's teacher was also able to pick up resources for food assistance to share with Matthew's family. Matthew won't need to conserve his lunch anymore.

Stories like Matthew's aren't uncommon. They're the day to day reality of public education in Southeastern Michigan. But, thanks to generous partners like you, in-kind gifts and volunteers, ORG is helping kids like Matthew every day. What's more, a full 95% of every cash dollar donated to ORG goes directly back to the program.

ORG is a life-changing program. But we've only just begun. Thank you for joining us on the journey!

For the children,

PS: Are you on Facebook? Spread the love and suggest us to friends!

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**Email #4:** Poverty close to home

**Delivery:** 5 days after email #3

**Subject:** [fname], can you believe it exists in our own backyard?

**Message body:**

Dear [fname]:

One of our awesome volunteer teachers recently wrote:

*"I see it every day in my first grade with students asking for pencils to extra snacks to everything in between. It breaks my heart to see what they go through then to come to school where they rely on their food, comfort and education. One student even asked me, "Do you sleep good at night?" Where I responded, "I am usually tired I go right to sleep." The eyes of this little first grader looked right into me and said, "I don't because the bed bugs keep me up all night."*

*When we think we had a bad day, think of what our students go through daily!"*

The criteria for ORG schools? At least 70% of the students are on the federal government's free or reduced lunch program. Right now we're serving 104 schools representing 53,000 kids -- and adding new schools regularly.

But if I were to tell you that 40 of our schools were in Oakland County, in what area would you imagine those schools were located? Surprisingly only 10 of the ORG schools in Oakland County are located in Pontiac.

*"I've learned more about the home lives of my students in the six months I've been going to the ORG Teacher's Annex than I have over the course of the almost 20 years I've been with my district."*

ORG Teacher

The reality is that poverty is touching the lives of far too many these days - including your own neighbors.

Thank you for being part of the solution.

For the children,

PS: Want to help? ORG is always on the lookout for more supplies. Crayons, notebooks, rulers, pencils - it's easy to donate! Link

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**Email #5:** Becky's story

**Delivery:** 5 days after email #3

**Subject:** [fname], Becky's future is looking a whole lot brighter!

**Message body:**

**Photograph**

Dear [fname]:

Every child should have someone who believes in their dreams. You can be that person.

[picture of Becky]

Becky's a second grader from (location). She's also dreamer and a reader and she can never get enough books. Sometimes she even gets in trouble for keeping her nose in a book while the teacher is trying to explain a lesson.

You've probably known a kid like Becky. Maybe *you* were a kid like Becky.

One of Becky's biggest dreams is to start her very own home library. She told us that when she's done with the books, she's going to let her brother read them, too.

But, like all too many families these days, Becky's mom is spending all of their limited income on housing, food, bare necessities and keeping gas in the car to get to work. There isn't any money in Becky's house for books. Becky has never been to a Borders, and by the time her mother gets home from work, the libraries are closed.

Then ORG delivered hundreds of books to Becky's school.

Becky didn't receive one, two or three books....she got five books! Becky's excitement and smile reached across her universe. She especially loved the book on horses because she wants to be a veterinarian when she grows up.

Books said to Becky, "you are loved & valued and I believe in your dreams."

Thanks for being a part of ORG and keeping Becky's dreams alive and making her smile.

For the children,

PS: You're going to love watching kids' eyes light up when they get their new books!  
Link

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**Email #6:** Introduction of Backpackalooza

**Delivery:** 3 days after email #5

**Subject:** [fname], would you like to be a hero?

**Message body:**

You're amazing! Thanks for everything that you've done on behalf of ORG over the past weeks.

Want to make even more of a difference in ensuring that our kids have the school supplies needed throughout the school year?

For as little as \$10 you can be a hero by making a gift to Backpackalooza(link)!

Your sponsored backpack will have a retail value greater than \$30 and will include pencils, crayons, paper, glue, scissors, new books and hygiene items.

As an added bonus, you'll receive a special e-mail to join us for an exciting event on August 20th where you will be able to give your backpack(s) directly to a local child in need.

But the best reward of all is knowing how you're helping to build a brighter future for the kids of Michigan.

On behalf of the teachers, volunteers and, most of all our kids, thank you.

For the children,

PS: By spreading your support over several months, you'll be making an even greater impact.

**And, on the following pages, you'll find general samples of nonprofit welcome email messages:**

# Welcome!

## #tccheelpingchildrenheal

Thank you for signing up for the Carousel Center's newsletter for updates on events, news, and stories! You will receive a confirmation email to allow us to send you emails. You won't receive any unless you confirm.

You have joined a group of very special individuals and businesses committed to helping children heal from abuse and preventing child abuse in our community. To learn more about the Carousel Center go to this link [What We Do](#).

Together, we can work towards a world free from child sexual abuse, where children can grow up happy, healthy and safe.

Together, with your support we can create the most child-focused approach to the investigation, prosecution and treatment of child abuse in Brunswick, New Hanover and Pender Counties.

If you ever have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to us, by emailing [Laurie.taylor@carouselcenter.org](mailto:Laurie.taylor@carouselcenter.org)

Best regards,  
Amy Feath, Executive Director

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## House of Friendship



## Thanks for joining us!

We are so excited to be joining your inbox! Thanks for subscribing!

You can look forward to regular stories and updates about the difference your support is making in the lives of men, women and children in Waterloo Region.

House of Friendship values your privacy - we do not sell, trade or share your contact information. If you would like to change the way we communicate with you, please call Yasir at 519-742-8327 x 131.



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