TechSoup Global Microsoft Local Area Impact Map Client Profiles
by Karen Solomon

TEAR Fund New Zealand Streamlines Cross-Continental Communication

TEAR Fund New Zealand partners with local organizations in developing countries to help them find their own solutions to overcoming poverty. Its key activities are child sponsorship, micro enterprise, community development projects, and disaster relief. It has been serving the globe's poorest people for over three decades.

Much of TEAR Fund's work within New Zealand is focused on fundraising. At home, it focuses on several different events and activities, such as Poverty Cycle, Gift for Life, and its Sponsor a Child program.

Coordinating projects between its New Zealand offices and its multiple aid partners in developing countries requires well-managed communication. Each stakeholder requires effective communication tools to ensure that TEAR Fund can maximize its impact. TEAR Fund is now a benefactor of the TechSoup NZ program, adding the Microsoft Dynamics CRM tool to its suite of technology.

TEAR Fund general manager Jon Horne points out that before taking up the TechSoup NZ package, "We used to cobble together a number of different tools to manage our stakeholder relationships. But now, the Microsoft Dynamics CRM package has allowed us to streamline our systems and processes so that we can take our supporters on a deeper journey. With the CRM tool we are able to garner and build a better understanding of our supporters and their individual needs, and as such we can tailor and personalize our relationship with them. This means that we can target our messages and communication, and create a deeper connection -- which ultimately leads to positive action and advocacy for the poor."

Horne continues: "Without TechSoup NZ, the Microsoft Dynamics CRM package would have been out of our reach, and we may not have considered it as an option, and instead continued on with our many systems. In the long run, this would have been more costly in time, effort and expense."

Pull Quote:
"While technology isn't the most glamorous thing, it's really the engine room. And having the right tools is really helping us to improve our operations, our accountability, and most importantly our relationships so that we can focus on helping people in developing countries overcome poverty." – John Horne, General Manager, TEAR Fund New Zealand

Organization URL:
http://www.tearfund.co.nz/

Restart Education Takes the TechSoup Challenge For Creative Learning

Restart Education is a partnership between the Romanian American Foundation, TechSoup, the Resource Center for Student Organizations (CROS), and Microsoft. These collaborating organizations have orchestrated The TechSoup Challenge, a prize competition designed to inspire broad creative thinking to help improve public education in Romania. The Challenge presents a unique and valuable opportunity to share and receive feedback on ideas, build communities of support, and receive a kick-start to launch a fully functional platform.

And what better way to build excitement and inspire creative thinking than a contest? Every February, enthusiastic youth gather in Bucharest at the National Museum of Contemporary Art for a 2-day "Imaginarium" to brainstorm ideas. This year they proposed 86 concepts to deepen learning. The projects were shared in an online gallery with 45,000 unique site visitors. And, a jury of eight people from Romanian education organizations reviewed the entries.

Seven finalists were selected and paired with hackers – student teams that designed web solutions tailored for each team. Every May, over 300 guests attend the awards gala where three of the projects are awarded US$5,000 each. Winners are congratulated by the U.S. Ambassador to Romania, along with representatives of the Romanian American Foundation and Microsoft.

"The idea download has begun," says the Restart Education site, and it will continue. TechSoup and the other founding organizations will partner once again to launch a new Restart campaign in Romania. This same Challenge will also be coming soon to the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

Pull Quote:
"The event was designed as a mixture between an unconference, a workshop, and a game with some 100 participants, mostly young people. The first session was devoted to exploring a model for the future of education... In the second session, the groups or 'tribes' brainstormed ideas for new applications to support learning. That resulted in some 169 ideas..." – Blogger Graham Attwell

Organization URL:
http://www.restartedu.ro/about

Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Canada Gains Flexible Communication

Efficient communication is often the backbone of any large nonprofit. This is especially true for Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Canada (BBBSC), an organization that spans more

than 120 agencies in 1,000 Canadian communities. Thanks to its efforts, more than 28,000 mentors are building positive relationships with more than 33,400 children and youth.

As it grew, BBBSC realized that it needed a better way to keep volunteer mentors, participants, and donors informed in the field. "Microsoft Dynamics CRM clearly met all of our needs, even if they were to shift in a dramatic fashion," says BBBSC's Dynamics CRM system manager Malcolm McAuley. "It's a very flexible, scalable, and robust system."

Recently, more than 80 of the organization's agencies adopted Microsoft Dynamics CRM, representing a user base of 745 people. "This solution allows staff to access important case information from their tablets or mobile phones," explains Leard. "This kind of flexible and immediate access is invaluable to our work."

To meet the new system's basic requirements, a number of agencies were challenged with having to simultaneously upgrade their Microsoft operating system and Office suite software. "TechSoup Canada's donation program made upgrading our system possible," says Robin Benedict, the Annapolis Valley agency's executive director. "We were able to affordably acquire Microsoft Office, Simply Accounting, and the latest version of Windows, and we are now prepared for any future CRM upgrades."

One of BBBSC's next big CRM-related ventures will be exploring if and how they can apply this technology to its donor management system and HR management. "Technology plays a key role in our day-to-day operations, and we'll forever more be reviewing how it best serves our needs," says Benedict. Together, Microsoft and TechSoup Canada are committed to supporting BBBSC on its journey.

Pull Quote:
"Thanks to Microsoft upgrades acquired through TechSoup Canada and Dynamics CRM, all of our information is in one place. We can see in our notes what was said in the last call with a donor or mentor, which makes our customer service that much more effective and consistent." -- Jonathan Leard, Program Manager, Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Canada

Organization URL:
http://www.bbbsc.ca/defaultlanguage.asp

Easter Seals Nebraska Moves People and Information with Microsoft MapPoint

For more than 80 years, Easter Seals Nebraska has helped individuals with disabilities and special needs improve their physical mobility, return to work, and gain independence. The organization's transportation service line, Nebraska Mobility, relies on Microsoft MapPoint to help plan smarter, more direct routes that save time and

money for riders, medical offices, and community and senior centers.

"We currently work with over 1,000 private and 116 public transportation providers to help make their routes more efficient as well as more affordable to the people who need them most," says Jamie Chambers, mobility administrator.

Before launching Nebraska Mobility, there was a lot of duplication in transportation services. For example, senior centers in a single neighborhood were picking up passengers with three separate buses at the same time. Now, thanks to MapPoint, one bus is scheduled to service an entire neighborhood.

Easter Seals Nebraska also benefited from Microsoft upgrades for their organization's internal administration. They used to run their organization on two operating systems, three incompatible servers, and, explains Chambers, "Half of our office is on Macs and the other half is on PCs." It was not uncommon for a staff member to send a file to someone other than its intended recipient so it could be converted into a readable or printable file. "We couldn't easily find, print, share or sometimes even open files," says Chambers. "It was more than a mess — it was a showstopper."

A new Microsoft server and the latest version of Office for both Macs and PCs, acquired through the TechSoup Donation Program, brought all staff members onto the same page.

Now, instead of troubleshooting or spending an afternoon figuring out how to open or share a file, Easter Seals employees can focus on increasing their impact. Chambers adds, "Since we are so closely constrained by time and money, this means being able to help more people in our community."

Pull Quote:
"These donations have increased cooperation between staff, streamlined internal technology training, and provided more efficient and reliable transportation services to individuals with disabilities, seniors, and the underemployed," Jamie Chambers, Mobility Administrator, Easter Seals Nebraska

Organization URL:
http://ne.easterseals.com

Claremont Senior Computer Club Makes Savvy Seniors the Norm

As a young electrical engineer in the 1960s, Tom Deno worked with some of the earliest computers. By the time he retired at age 64, he was a self-proclaimed "technology geek." But he discovered that, among his peers, his tech-savvy was in the minority. His quest to share this knowledge inspired him to found the Claremont Senior Computer Club in Claremont, California, in March of 1994.

"We are now the largest and most successful senior club in the city," he says with pride. A big part of that success comes from having affordable access to the most up-to-date versions of Microsoft Office and Windows operating systems. Software donations from Microsoft through TechSoup's donation program make this possible.

Deno launched the senior computer club with a donated IBM XT and an ad in the local paper. Sixteen people showed up. When the club topped 60 members, it moved to a large room at the Claremont Community Center where it still holds regular meetings, in addition to offering guest lectures, classes, and workshops.

About 60 to 70 members meet weekly to discuss topics like cloud computing, self-publishing, and Internet genealogy. And, volunteers from the club run a hands-on computer workshop to help members get the most out of their personal computers, including assisting with memory upgrades, software installation, and general troubleshooting.

"We are one of the oldest special-interest clubs in Claremont," says Deno. "And we're still going strong."

Pull Quote:
"We just wouldn't be as legitimate — or as popular — if we were teaching our members outdated versions of the Windows operating system and Office, like Word and Excel." – Tom Deno, Founder, Claremont Senior Computer Club

Organization URL:
http://cscclub.org/