

## **Friends Donor Communication Strategy**

January 13, 2020

### **AFFILIATIONS WITH RETAILERS & NONPROFIT SEGMENT-WIDE ACTIVITIES; SOLICITATION FREQUENCY**

At various times, Friends has considered participating in (1) charitable affiliations with retailers and (2) Giving Tuesday activities. Most recently, in the summer of 2019, we declined a promotion activity offered by Birds Unlimited in Rockford and again last year did not participate in Giving Tuesday. Here is why:

1. We have worked hard to distinguish Friends and Nachusa from other non-profits. In our communications, especially our annual report, we have attempted to establish Friends and Nachusa as a unique and emotionally positive place in the minds of donors and volunteers ... a place separated from the everyday commotion and noise of commerce that pervades most of our lives. We try to reflect that our donors and our volunteers are, indeed, part of something special.
2. We limit the number of times per year we ask our existing donors for support. Our main fundraising effort takes place in conjunction with our annual report mailing early each November. We also usually conduct one major, highly focused social media campaign in the spring and occasionally contact current donors with special appeals or follow up with lapsed donors (ones who had previously supported Friends but have not done so for several years). This has been a key strategy that many donors have told us they appreciate. We believe that when we do ask, our donors usually give us serious consideration. This is supported by our response rates that are higher than industry averages.
3. Every communication from Friends is important and carefully crafted. We choose to educate and uplift instead of suggesting that our donors to shop at certain places or purchase specific items.
4. Many of us feel overwhelmed by the number of charities urging us to support them on Giving Tuesday. This event is not an opportunity that gives Friends room to distinguish ourselves or allows us to reinforce our unique relationship with donors.

Our website does promote donations on the home page and Donations page and provides links to the Donations page on other relevant pages, such as the Science Grant ones. PrairieE-Update newsletters include links to the Donations page when appropriate. Our social media platforms – Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram – primarily focus on fulfilling our missions of encouraging stewardship and supporting education through event announcements, photography, and links to restoration-related online articles.

We do believe that we need to have more contact with our donors. To that end we have started developing a newsletter program to increase the number of times we “touch” our donors. The first newsletter should go out in February 2020. Still to be resolved is the frequency of “asks,” if any, that will be connected to that program.

In the short run, we may be giving up a modest amount of revenue by not promoting retail affiliations and by not making more frequent appeals. But just like prairie stewardship, we are in this for the long run. It is our judgment that our reward is the preservation of the precious and unique relationship we have with our donors. It's the way many of us wish the other charities we support would connect with us.

**CURRENT EXCEPTIONS:** Several years ago, we set up an AmazonSmile account, but we have not promoted it to our donors/volunteers. Several supporters do designate AmazonSmile donations to Friends, however, as reflected in our annual Treasurers Report. Additionally, we recently accepted participation in a Target Circle program because the company promised that we would receive \$500 without any obligation to promote it.