



Fundraise like a *pro*



You Will Never Know, Unless You Ask by Alyssa Kitlas

When I decided to do Tour de Pink East this October and ride from the Philly suburbs to the Jersey shore, my greatest fear was not whether or not I would be able to physically ride my bike for over 200 miles (although maybe it should be), it was about asking people for money. I have fundraised a number of times before for various organizations and it has always been a little uncomfortable for me. Fundraising for Tour de Pink added a new layer of discomfort since I would be sharing my personal story of being diagnosed with breast cancer last year at the age of 29.

That fear quickly went away and my team managed to meet its goal with two months left to spare before our ride (go team Kickin' Asphalt!). **We also had a blast along the way which was a really pleasant surprise. I learned that all you have to do is ask.** The worst that can happen is that someone says no, and after all we have been through, that is nothing. And sometimes, well you don't even really have to ask.

It was amazing what happened when I started telling people about Tour de Pink and my training: they started donating, both financially and in other ways. For example, one of my good friends runs a non-profit that works with women in a slum in Western Kenya. I mentioned that I am fundraising for Young Survival Coalition (YSC) and she knew how important the meetups and other support YSC provided during treatment was for me, so she designed a special bracelet called the Hope Bracelet and is donating half of all the proceeds to YSC.

People also started offering ideas. They suggested that I organize fundraising events. **I thought this was perfect because so many people I know in DC go to happy hour or workout classes every week, so it would be easy to convince them to do both for a good cause.** I reached out to a few bars and fitness studios and within a couple of weeks had a charity trivia night, spin class, and yoga fundraiser on the calendar. This was a great way to engage our friends and family in fun activities while also raising money. This was also a powerful tool for me to share with people I love why Tour de Pink and giving back to YSC is important to me.

Friends also mentioned that I should start local. I emailed a handful of businesses that I frequent to tell them what I was training for a 200-mile bike ride, fundraising for YSC, and share my story. One email actually read "Hello! I am a big fan of Chaia and wanted to reach out to 1. thank you for making delicious tacos and 2. see if you would be interested in donating a giftcard to a fundraiser I am hosting in May for the Young Survival Coalition (YSC). I was diagnosed with breast cancer last year and went through a year of treatment at Georgetown (where I often treated myself to Chaia after a long day of appointments)." This email resulted in a \$50 donation within hours.

I received donations from restaurants, fitness studios, coffee shops, climbing gyms, movie theaters, and more! Some businesses even offered to donate 10% of their proceeds to YSC on a selected night without me asking. My friend Lisa, who owns Kuli Kuli foods, donated hundreds of Moringa energy shots (delicious!) so we could make goodie bags for the events we were hosting. This reminded me of my favorite part of having cancer (if I had to choose one)-the generosity and support I received from my friends, acquaintances, and even complete strangers. **People showed up for me during my year of chemotherapy, surgery, and radiation, in the most amazing ways and continued to do so along my TdP journey, both in helping me reach my fundraising goal and joining me for 7:00 AM spin classes to train.**

I decided to do TdP because my friend Kate did it last year and told me it was a really important part of her post treatment healing journey. I couldn't agree more. **Just like every bike ride when I feel stronger and stronger again after feeling so weak; I am excited to be paying it forward and channeling my newfound time and**

energy into helping support other young women dealing with a breast cancer diagnosis through organizing fundraising events for YSC.

Our team so far has hosted three events that raised us over \$2,000 towards our team total of \$11,535.





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