

CUSTOMER STORY

\$1.4 Million in 24 hours: Kesem's Path to Giving Tuesday Success



FOUNDED
2000

VOLUNTEER COLLEGE
STUDENT LEADERS
5,000+

UNIVERSITY CHAPTERS
NATIONWIDE
100+

ANNUAL REVENUE
\$10M+

STARTED ON CLASSY
2014

Kesem is a nationwide community that supports children through and beyond their parent's cancer. With 117 chapters, they are the largest national organization dedicated to serving this unique population. Kesem addresses this worthy cause by providing training, support, and leadership development to more than 5,000 passionate college

students who create, manage, and run Camp Kesem's innovative, fun-filled, life-changing programs.

Through Kesem's willingness to experiment and solid engagement strategy, the organization was able to activate each of these chapters to turn Giving Tuesday into one of their most lucrative days of the entire year.

Starting With a Giving Tuesday Experiment

In 2014, Kesem was grappling with the same question that countless other nonprofits were asking—to what extent should they get involved in the Giving Tuesday movement? Specifically, Kesem was concerned that a Giving Tuesday campaign may not generate a worthwhile return on their investment of time and resources or, worse, that it would compete with their year-end appeal.

Despite this potential risk, Kesem decided to embrace its entrepreneurial culture and devise a simple Giving Tuesday campaign as an experiment. Reflecting on the mindset of Kesem's approach at the time, development director Cristin O'Leary Jones said, "If we didn't put ourselves out there, we wouldn't get noticed."

"For our first year, we didn't do much of an online push," said Cristin. Instead, Kesem did an awareness campaign without a fundraising component. At the time, they wanted to test the waters before engaging their chapters in fundraising.

With only an email campaign and a video about their programming, Kesem raised nearly \$34,000 on Giving Tuesday—more than triple what the organization made the prior year when they didn't do any

Giving Tuesday communication. This return showed Kesem that Giving Tuesday was an opportunity worth pursuing with more planning and resources in the years ahead.

In particular, they believed they could grow their revenue significantly by creating two separate appeals: a Giving Tuesday appeal to their more digitally inclined supporters, and a year-end direct mail appeal to major donors who tended to give offline.

"We realized there was a missed opportunity. Most of our donors give online and we complemented our year-end fundraising push with Giving Tuesday."

– CRISTIN O'LEARY JONES



In order to fund free year-round services that support children through their parent's cancer, Camp Kesem relies

heavily on Giving Tuesday. For the last three years they've been the top fundraising organization on Classy, recently raising as much as \$1.4 million. As they look to the future, they can rest assured knowing that Amazon Web Services will help keep Classy up and running during these peak giving moments, so they don't leave potential funding on the table.





Empowering Each Chapter for Giving Tuesday Success

Starting in 2015, Kesem realized the revenue potential of equipping all of its chapters with the assets to raise as much money as possible. Kesem requires its chapters to increase their revenue each year and recognized Giving Tuesday as a significant way to catalyze that growth. By planning early and preparing effectively, they believed they could set their chapters up for Giving Tuesday success.

They focused on empowering their chapters with the ability to define their own strategies. Kesem told its chapters, “Whatever you feel

comfortable with is fine, but do something, do anything. It doesn’t have to be a multi-tiered campaign. Just try it. Once we did, the success spoke for itself,” said Cristin.

Kesem encouraged its chapters to

use Classy’s peer-to-peer campaign for the online portion of Giving Tuesday fundraising. They’d used two other online fundraising tools previously—Click & Pledge and Kintera—but the process of

The screenshot displays the Camp Kesem fundraising interface. At the top, the 'Camp Kesem' logo is visible. A 'Create an account' modal is open, offering 'Continue with Facebook' or 'Or use your email'. The email section includes a field for 'Enter your email address' and a 'Create password' section with requirements for 8 characters, 1 number, 1 letter, and 1 special character. A 'NEXT' button is at the bottom of the modal. The background shows a video of children, a progress bar indicating a \$500 goal, and a 'DONATE' button. Social media share icons and a 'POWERED BY Classy' logo are also present.

setting up campaigns proved to be cumbersome, prompted too many questions, and consequently took too much of the staff's time. In short, neither option could scale the way Kesem needed.

For Kesem, Classy's out-of-the-box solution provided the right level of customization for each fundraiser to tell their own story, while still enabling Kesem to maintain control of its brand. Additionally, the organization had thousands of individuals fundraising on its behalf, and Classy's user-friendly software enabled those individuals to set up their pages easily, quickly, and with minimal questions.

"We really encourage everyone to go through the Classy platform. It's just much easier for us to maintain control, for us to see what's happening, and for the fundraisers themselves to manage the content."
– Cristin O'Leary Jones

In addition, Kesem helped its

chapters identify key opportunities to engage their respective target audiences and equipped them with a Giving Tuesday toolkit. The toolkit included:

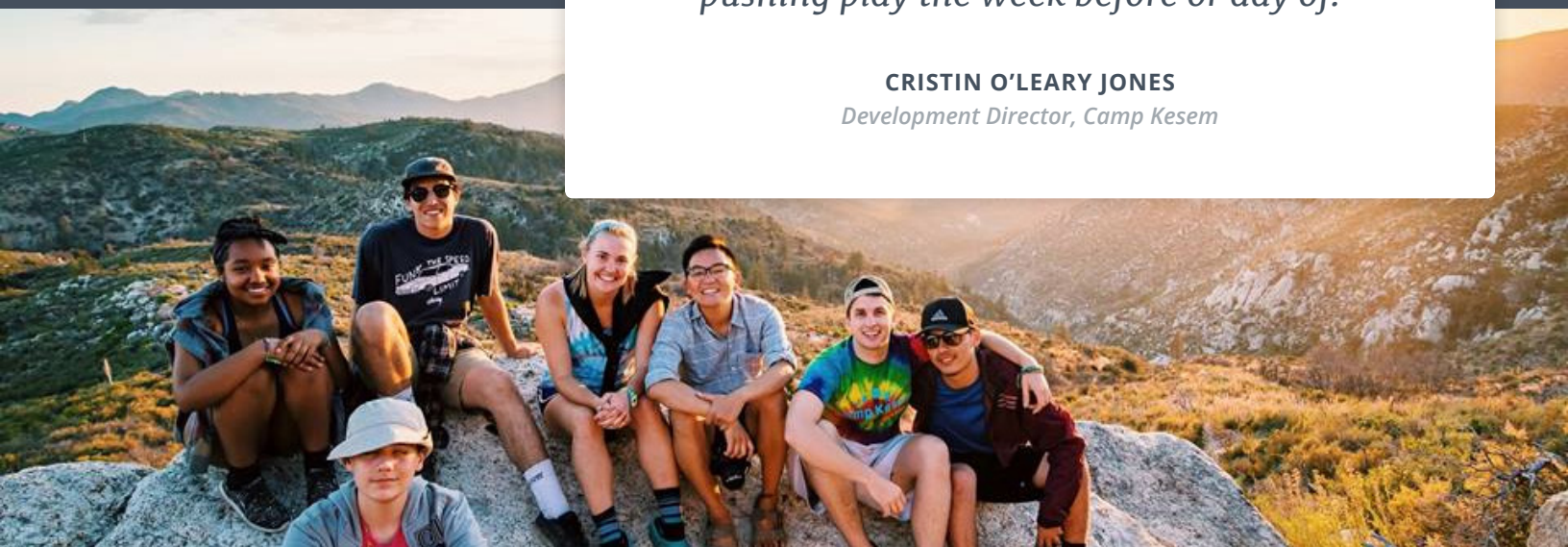
- Successful fundraising ideas from prior years, including sample campaign timelines
- Social media content including Facebook cover photos, images counting down the days to Giving Tuesday, and photos of Camp Kesem campers
- Brochures and other collateral describing the missions of both Camp Kesem and Giving Tuesday
- Email and social media templates written for different audiences and campaign milestones to help supporters facilitate the fundraising process
- Thank you postcard templates and recommendations for acknowledging and stewarding fundraisers and donors

By anticipating the needs of fundraisers and simplifying the creation and management of a Giving Tuesday campaign for its chapters, Kesem removed many barriers that would otherwise have limited their chapters' growth.



"If a student can get a fundraising campaign up and running on Classy by Giving Tuesday, it pretty much runs itself. It's just a matter of pushing play the week before or day of."

CRISTIN O'LEARY JONES
Development Director, Camp Kesem



Improving for Continued Growth on Giving Tuesday

By executing the above plan, as well as adding new chapters and fundraisers each year, Kesem has increased the amount raised on Giving Tuesday by over 100 percent every year.

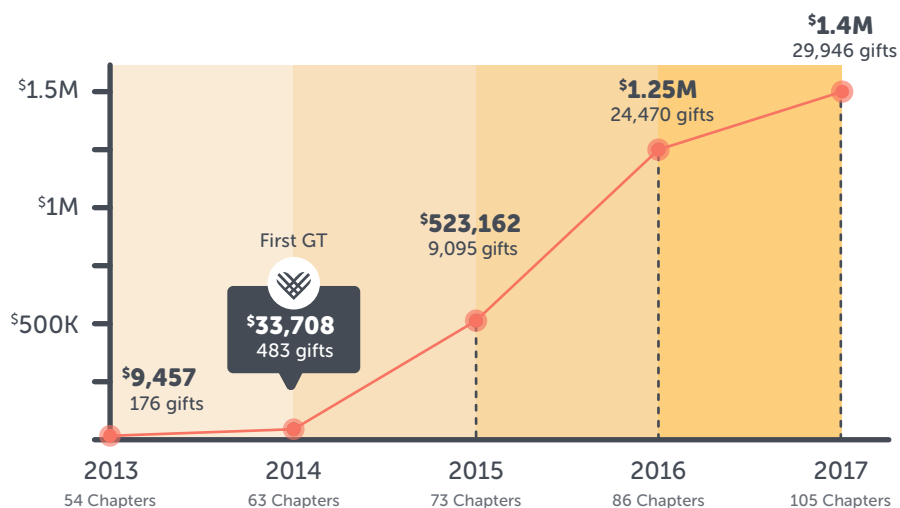
In 2017, 105 chapters raised over \$1.4 million online on Giving Tuesday.

Though Cristin recognizes this pace of growth may not be sustainable in the long run, she believes it's important to set challenging goals for her chapters.

To reach these goals, Kesem doesn't simply run the same playbook every year. Instead, they iterate upon the strategy, **further improving upon the aspects of the campaign that worked effectively and leaving behind the ones that didn't.**

One such iteration for Kesem's Giving Tuesday 2018 involves engaging more corporate sponsors. Specifically, they're planning to use a corporate sponsor's donation as a matching gift. With Classy, a donor can see that their gift has been

GIVING TUESDAY YEAR-OVER-YEAR GROWTH



matched in the Activity section of the campaign page.

Kesem is also encouraging corporate sponsors to participate in workplace activations for Giving Tuesday. For example, partners who typically uphold business attire might allow their employees to wear jeans to work on Giving Tuesday if they make a \$5 donation to Kesem.

Kesem is also adjusting the way it grows the Giving Tuesday movement to include constituencies it previously didn't include, such as camper families, parents, and professional volunteers like nurses and mental health professionals. According to Cristin, "This year,

the appeal won't include a direct ask necessarily. [Supporters] have the option to give if they want to, but the primary call to action is to advocate on our behalf—share this with a friend and show people Kesem cares about your issues on Giving Tuesday. By doing that, we hope to get more of the smaller gifts from their friends and family."

By primarily calling upon supporters to share, not only give, Kesem anticipates reaching a bigger audience and acquiring new donors. Those new donors will give according to Cristin because "the look and feel of Classy gives confidence to the people who are donating on it."

