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March 2, 2014

**Focus Group Interview Report: Donors of Little Sisters of the Poor**

When an organization relies on donations to run, it is important to know the behaviors and thoughts of those who donate. This information is useful to be able to keep current donors happy and to attract new donors to donate regularly. Little Sisters of the Poor, a nursing home run by nuns who have taken a vow of poverty, funds half of its necessary budget from donors. The nuns go out into community and beg, often at churches, to encourage people to donate. Some donors become weekly or yearly donors.

The Little Sisters wanted to know why their donors decided to donate to them, what their thoughts on the organization were in relation to how they collect and spend the money, and what is the best way to communicate to them. As the world changes to a more technology-focused society, they were curious as to how this affects the Little Sister donors, and if it would be possible to improve their outreach and attract more donors using social media.

To find the answers to these questions, we performed a focus group with six participating donors. We collected general information (gender, occupation, how much they donate, etc.) through a questionnaire before asking about their experience as a donor.

The information gathered gave us insight into what current donors thought and how Little Sisters could improve upon for future generations of donors. Several themes began to appear on how the donors saw the organization, why they choose to keep donating, how they feel Little Sisters should continue to communicate with them, and what might be helpful to solicit younger generations or get others to volunteer instead.

**Method**

For this research we were asked to conduct a focus group, which is a secondary research method. Based on Jugenheimer (2008): “Qualitative research usually involves meeting with consumers face-to-face either in a focus group setting or in more natural settings. The goal of qualitative research is to gain a more emotional insight to a consumer's psyche than quantitative research can provide.”[[1]](#footnote-1) In this case the goal was to gather more insights on the individual’s motivation to donate and their general connection with the Little Sisters of the Poor. The focus group included six individuals who donate to the organization.

First, the participants were handed out a one page demographic questionnaire, which were filled out anonymously. Out of the answers given, the following insights could be gathered:

The participants were between 51 and 81 years. The median was 58. They all share the same religion, Catholic, and come from Chicago. Three of them live in the Little Sister’s neighborhood; two live about five miles away in Chicago’s north side, and one participant lives four miles away in Chicago’s west side.

Four of the participants are single and two are married. Half of them have a bachelor’s degree or a postgraduate degree. Two work full time, one as a computer consultant and the other as a community counselor, while one, a registered nurse, works part time. Three of the participants do not work. The Income varied from under 30,000 (1) to 60,000 - 75,000 (1) to over 75,000 (4).

Three of the interviewees donate less than $100 annually; one donates $100-500 a year, while two of them donate $500 or more annually. An interesting observation was that donors with more income do not necessary donate more than the ones with much less income. One donor with an annual income over $90,000 donates less than $100 annually, while a participant with the same income donates over $1000 yearly.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Participant A | Participant B | Participant C | Participant D | Participant E | Participant F |
| Age | 58 | 67 | 58 | 58 | 81 | 51 |
| Gender | Female | Male | Female | Female | Female | Male |
| Employment | Community Counselor: Area Representative |  | Registered Nurse |  |  | Computer Consultant |
| Zip Code | 60614 | 60610 | 60607 | 60657 | 60610 | 60614 |
| Salary Range | $90,000 or more | $75,000-90,000 | $90,000 or more | $15,000-30,000 | $75,000-90,000 | $60,000-75,000 |
| Donation Amount | $0-100 | $501-1000 | $1001 or more | $0-100 | $0-100 | $101-500 |

Below is a table that better outlines each interviewee and their demographics.

Second, two moderators, Tara Giuliano and Stefani Duhon, asked the group questions to the following topics:

* Donation decision
* Knowledge and awareness of the organization
* Awareness of donation usage
* Communication from the organization
* Method used to submit the donation
* Suggestions to acquire further donors.

The questionnaire included seven main questions and three to seven testing questions.

**Results**

The focus group conducted helped to highlight reasons that donors elect to contribute to the Little Sisters of the Poor while also uncovering insights on preferences and providing advice for the organization regarding communication and solicitation of additional donations.  Our interview guide certainly served as a useful tool, and the questions outlined were answered—although often due to the discussion itself rather than the intended question stated in the guide.  There were several overall themes that surfaced during the focus group.  The findings are grouped by these themes below.

***Donors have immense trust and respect for the Little Sisters of the Poor and their mission.***

The discussion began with participants informing us on how they found out about the organization and telling us why they choose to donate to Little Sisters of the Poor.  The ways in which participants first found out about the organization varied.  While a few mentioned their churches as a place they first learned about Little Sisters of the Poor, others mentioned living in the neighborhood, a press story, and personal connections.  When it came to understanding why the donors chose Little Sisters of the Poor, the room spoke at length about the immense trust and respect for the organization, as well as the inspiration of their mission.  Participants talked about how the sisters are caring, committed and living meager lives against a vow of poverty in order to fulfill the organization’s mission. This, in the minds of our group, made the Little Sisters of the Poor special and a worthwhile cause for donation. The participants all agreed as well that they believe their donation truly makes a difference.  Direct quotes included “The reason that I contribute to organizations is their mission”, “They are poor.  They really live that way.  They’re not cushioned in any way” and  “(Little Sisters of the Poor are) the most caring and the most committed people.”  Trust in the organization came out later in the group especially strongly when we asked if the donors understood where their funds went.  “I kind of have faith that if I can’t trust them I don’t know who I can trust.”  “I trust that they use it well.  I don’t need to know that it’s meant for x,y, or z.”

***Little Sisters of the Poor could be doing more to elevate awareness of their organization in the community and to solicit donations, though current donors appreciate their gentle approach.***

There was a noted gentleness regarding how Little Sisters of the Poor treats fundraising efforts.  “I think another thing I like about them is that they’re not aggressive…you appreciate the gentleness.” Participants in the focus group agreed that there is a lot of competition for funds especially amongst the Catholic nonprofits. While some other organizations are extremely aggressive in their means to raise funds including sending premium gifts, plenty of phone calls and mailing campaigns, etc., Little Sisters of the Poor doesn’t take that approach and the group liked that.  They also suggested that it seems wasteful (of money) to do those types of activities in the first place rather than using funds towards the cause.  That being said, several group members also felt that Little Sisters of the Poor could be doing a bit more than they are currently to raise funds.  In the words of one participant “Well if they want more money they’ve got to ask for it, obviously.”  We discussed what other organizations are doing successfully to raise funds without appearing aggressive.  Some of the initiatives mentioned that could be leveraged by Little Sisters of the Poor included soliciting in-church donations through appearances/partnerships/donation envelopes, official annual appeal campaigns and more focused efforts on getting out into the Chicago community to build awareness.  The room agreed that Little Sisters of the Poor can benefit in that it is a local charitable organization (as opposed to other national or even non-U.S. organizations that receive donations) and that could be tapped into a bit more.  It was noted that simple awareness was an issue with Little Sisters of the Poor and that they could personally use the newsletter as a way to share what the organization does with others such as friends and family.  Perhaps one of the most interesting points brought up is that donors would welcome the idea of the Little Sisters of the Poor soliciting funds ad hoc when there is a specific need.  In other words, it would not be unwelcomed if the organization were to notify donors that new air conditioning systems were needed or that a water bill was going unpaid.  In fact, the donors said they would want to know these things and would be more than happy to contribute in these circumstances.  “An immediate need like that would be nice to know about, because you want to do what you can to help them.”

***Communication mechanisms should be budget friendly and consideration should be given to allow donors to choose their own preferences.  Do not call.  Do continue the newsletter.***

When discussing preferred communication mechanisms, there were a few overarching points of agreement.  Firstly, the majority of the group agreed that they do not want phone calls as a method to be communicated to.  Additionally, the group also agreed that their preference is that Little Sisters of the Poor not utilize any communication methods that cost much money.  Thirdly, they agreed that the content of the current newsletter is on-point and didn’t need to really be revised in any way.  “They do a real good job on their newsletter.”  The participants in the focus group also however realized that there is an array of different preferences amongst a donor base. “I’m sure with the number of donations they have, the donors, they have a different variety, and hopefully that way you hit the person the way they want to be hit.” “Maybe there can be some information about if you want to be on our mailing list, if you want to me on our email list, contact us by, call us, or contact us by, you know, cut this card out, or send us an email to get on our list.  Whatever the donors preference would be.”  It was interesting that the group thought about the donor base more broadly when considering communication and donation mechanisms rather than just answering the questions about their own preferences.  They also mentioned consideration for the donors of the future when thinking about social media, for example.  Amongst the focus group participants themselves, some preferred receiving the mailed newsletters, some noted they would prefer email and one noted Facebook would be interesting.  The group suggested that Little Sisters of the Poor start to collect email addresses more proactively (such as when they are in the parishes) and use them to distribute their newsletter electronically.  This was especially interesting to some because of the very low cost that email has.  “It’s probably a lot cheaper, it probably saves them on mailing costs to do it electronically.”  When it came to donation, some prefer online, some prefer writing checks (some in-person, some via mail) and some prefer donating through their churches.  Though the group seemed open to online donation, one person did mention that Little Sisters of the Poor might incur a credit card servicing fee so that would be a negative impact of electronic donation.  But again, it was mentioned that the donors should be able to select their preference.  “It’s probably best to send some type of survey to the person who’s donating to say what they prefer.” We also asked the group if Little Sisters of the Poor did an adequate job thanking them and found that donors felt it wasn’t necessary for the organization to spend much time or energy to thank them and that the current one thank you card they receive is indeed adequate. “I’m not looking for a thank you… I guess save that one thing if, you know, with that donation they send.”

**Discussion**

After interviewing these donors, we realized how much of an impact the organization has made on their lives. These individuals talked about Little Sisters of the Poor as if it was their own organization and they are really invested in seeing it grow and prosper. The donors really admired the fact that the sisters live a very humble life and have devoted their lives to taking care of others. While they are content with how Little Sisters of the Poor communicates with them, they did have many suggestions as to how they could promote themselves and receive more donations and supporters.

The number one suggestion the interviewees had for the organization was to use free public relations media tactics to promote the work that they do and their mission. Some of the donors learned about Little Sisters of the Poor from an article that was written years before, which prompted them to learn more and donate. These media stories they read had, and still currently have, an impact on the donors today. The donors suggested a few tactics the organization could use to solicit more donors and donations. First, the donors believed Little Sisters of the Poor should use local events, such as the Sheffield Garden Walk, to promote themselves in their neighborhood. This would help to promote the organization to those who are not Catholic to donate. Although the majority of the donors stated that they use social media at a very minimum, utilizing social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram could promote Little Sisters of the Poor to a younger generation. Promoting events on these sites could potentially solicit a new, younger generation of donors, which will be vital to the organization in the future. To add on to this, they suggested obtaining positive press in the media other than in Catholic publications to broaden their donor range and give other individuals the opportunity to discover who they are and their mission in the Chicago area. Lastly, allowing the media to partner with the sisters and experience a day in their life would show a different perspective on the organization and give others the opportunity to see how they are carrying out their mission.

The second suggestion the donors had for Little Sisters concerned the current and future donors. They believed they should solicit the preferred communication methods from current and new donors. One participant suggested having a box on the donation envelopes that the donor would check off the method they choose to receive news and updates from the organization. This could cut costs on stamps and printing for those donors who prefer electronic updates. Also, not only should they ask for their preferred communication methods, but also the way they prefer to donate. This is also especially important for the organization to understand the best way to suggest individuals donate and make it convenient on the donor.

The third suggestion the interviewees had been in regards to the newsletter they receive. They love the content that is currently included in the newsletter, but suggested making the donors aware of any unexpected costs that come up. For example, the facility recently needed air conditioners installed in each room. One interviewee suggested alerting the donors when these costs come up so they can offer donations or services and the costs will not have to come from donations used for current expenses. As far as the distribution of the newsletter, the donors suggested that they increase the general communication from bi-annually to quarterly. This would give them the opportunity to get more updates on the organization.

**Limitations**

Some of the interviewees were both donors and volunteers. Their opinions may have been biased because of the fact that they are involved with the organization from a different perspective. They often see the day-to-day activities that take place and where the money goes, so they could be defensive of how the money is spent.

Some of the donors only donate through their church, so they may not have that connection to the organization to know or understand what would be best for them based on their needs.

This was only a portion of individuals who donate to the Little Sisters of the Poor. While it is great to understand their perspective, they only represent one portion and may not accurately reflect the feelings and insights of all donors of the organization.

**Appendix A:**

**FOCUS GROUP TRANSCRIPTION**

**DONORS**

**Interviewed by Stefani Duhon and Tara Guiliano------ on Feburary 18th, 2014**

***Transcribed by Jennifer Lavine and Kim Dearnley February 2014***

**[*Start*]**  
  
**[Stefani]** Well, welcome everyone. Thank you guys for coming. We really appreciate it. My name is Stefani, this is Tara, Jenny, Sue, and Kim. We are all students at DePaul University. Um, we really appreciate you taking the time to join us and share your opinions this evening. You were asked to participate because you are donors to Little Sisters of the Poor, and your insights and opinions are really of interest and of value to the organization. Uh, we’re going to be asking you guys a series of questions about Little Sisters of the Poor and your affiliation with the organization. It doesn’t have to be anything in particular. If it’s negative or positive we accept it. We’re really, really just interested in your opinions. We really want you to speak up if you agree or disagree. Either way we’re not going to have any qualms about that whatsoever. Everything is confidential, and is not associated with you as an individual. So your names won’t be used or anything like that. Just a few of the ground rules, and that way if you have any questions you can ask us. Some basic things just before we get started with our questions; it’s important for just one person to speak at a time just because we can hear everyone and what they’re saying and just give them a chance to talk. Everyone will have their say and their opinions. Just in case I haven’t heard from you in a little while I might call on you just to ask your opinion or your insight, that way you feel like you’re welcomed to join the conversation at any point as well. We are videotaping and audio taping this discussion. It’s only for reference for later analysis. Like I said, we do have our other group members as well watching this as we go through it. They’re just interested, as I said, in your opinions and your insights. So if you can just act like the camera’s not here, the video recorder is not here…. We want you guys to feel comfortable, ‘cause I’m comfortable so I want you guys to feel comfortable. At the end of discussion we will leave a little bit of time for you guys to ask us any questions that you might have. So before we begin with the questions, we’re just going to go around the room and we’re going to say our names and just one interesting fact about yourself. So I’ll go ahead and start. My name is Stefani, like I said. Um, and an interesting fact about me is, if you haven’t noticed my accent, I’m not from here I’m actually from Louisiana. So I’m a good ways away from home.

**[Tara]** I’m Tara, uh, something interesting about me is that I published a book when I was in my twenties.

**[Participant A]** My name is \*\*\*\*\*\*, and uh, I can’t think of what I was going to say, but I’m a native Chicagoan. Born here, raised here, and still live here. Why? I don’t know, this winter.

**[Participant B]** My name’s \*\*\*\*\*\*, I retired now. I made a transformation from a lifetime account to a lunchroom worker now, so volunteering with little sisters, so it’s quite a transition in life. Different job [shrugs].

**[Participant C]** I started out as a volunteer at little sisters and I’m a registered nurse so I actually ended up working with them for a few years doing some assessments for them and things they need to do for the state of Illinois. I was a restorative nurse.

**[Participant D]** I’m \*\*\*\*\*\*, and I did some volunteer work through my church.

**[Participant E]** And I’m \*\*\*\*\*\* And I’m retired, and I did work for a foundation that has had and continues to have a relationship with little sisters in Palatine. So the foundation is (inaudible), so I know something about little sisters.

**[Participant F]** I’m \*\*\*\*\*\*, and I’m a graduate of DePaul.

**[Stefani]** Thank you guys for sharing that, soif you don’t mind we’re going to get started with the questions. Like I said, feel comfortable, tell us your opinions whether it’s positive or negative. I promise we will appreciate it. So first, how did you decide to donate to a particular organization?

**[Participant B]** Well I think that what impressed me about little sisters was that they come to the churches periodically, about once every two years roughly, the thing that was so unusual was that they were really so positive. You know, we have so many people coming into churches asking for money, telling us how many people are going to die of starvation if we don’t contribute right away. The little sisters were nothing but positive, and they were very brief, too, because one of the things that doesn’t go well when they come to mass is that they ask for money and go on and on and ramble for a long time. Little Sisters are very positive, and very brief. They get their message across very quickly. Very impressive organization.

**[Participant D]** I have a neighbor for many years, and then she became sick. She went into some nursing care, but finally she was able to, she always wanted to go to the little sisters of the poor home before she died, and I went to visit her, and I was really surprised at how nice it was. It’s so different from any other place. I just thought that, you know, it was really special. It made an impression on me, so that’s what caused me to contribute.

**[Participant A]** I think a few already talked about church, I’m going to talk about the Sheffield neighborhood association. They have a garden walk every year, and there’s always the jazz music going on over there, and I live across the street, so. [laughs] It stares you in the face!

**[Stefani]** You can’t ignore it when it’s right there, huh?

**[Participant A]**  It’s a good garden walk, yeah.

**[Stefani]**  Do you guys donate to any other organizations? Do not say names, or do you guys just donate to little sisters of the poor?

**[Participant F]**  I donate to other organizations.

**[Stefani]** Okay.

**[Group]** Yeah.

**[Tara]** And how do you decide which organizations to donate to? How do you decide how you donate in general? There’s a lot of organizations out there.

**[Participant C]** Well, when I started working for little sisters, and my husband started contributing through united way through his work, and he knew I really liked the place and was positive about it, so he indicated little sisters on his united way thing, so that was an extra few thousand dollars or something. So you try to think of a place that really inspires you.

**[Participant F]** I think that the good that they do, and just the affiliation that they have with the Catholic Church, or the appearance of an affiliation weighs a lot in my mind.

**[Participant E]** I think it’s the mission of the organization. The reason that I contribute to organizations is their mission, and obviously I’m catholic, a lot of them are catholic organizations, but also the management of the organization, because you can look on charity navigator and some of things and find out about their rating and that kind of stuff.

**[Participant B]** One impressive thing about the little sisters is that now in the catholic church, a lot of brothers, sisters, and priests take a vow of poverty, but it’s, I think it’s just because of the way things are these days is that while they don’t have money themselves, most of these organizations, they live very, very good lives and they have cars and everything accessible to them even though they don’t have their own money. Little sisters, they have nothing. When mother superior was transferred from little sisters, and I was talking about gifts and a party and they really go out with the clothes on their back. You know, they have nothing. It’s very unique in this day and age, because most of the others who take a vow of poverty, like I said, while they don’t have their own money they live a very nice life. The sisters live a very meager life and they don’t own nothing.

**[Participant C]** Yeah, little sisters have had a long history of being special. Cardinal Bernadine was the cardinal before this cardinal. He had his mother with them, and I even remember reading that in the paper, and thinking, so they have a long history. I think they get constant donations just because people like them. There’s, you know, they’re pretty special.

**[Participant E]** I think they’re very committed to what they do, and if you look at nursing home care they’re not the most advanced nursing home care in the country, but they’re probably the most caring and the most committed to people. If you want cutting edge, you wouldn’t go to little sisters, you would go to some other location.

**[Participant C]** They actually send their residents out, like if they broke a hip, to, and then they actually come back to us and they save the room, and they actually make decisions about that. They want it to be more homelike. Medically, that’s not their focus.

**[Participant E]** No, I understand. I’m not talking about rehab or anything, but just the care, and the person centered care. They have always just focused on people. When it comes to person centered care they don’t really have to pay much attention to, because that’s the way they’ve always operated.

**[Participant A]** I think the question was how do you decide how to give money. For me it’s affiliation with something, and relationship. And with little sisters, the things I don’t like, and this has nothing to do with little sisters, but organizations that ask for money. If you go to a wake, and you give a donation to something, and all of a sudden you get on every mailing list. I get that from other organizations. I’ve never seen that through little sisters, but that is one thing I do not like, that turns me off of an organization, and they send you all that stuff. Now whenever I go to a wake or funeral I put down this is an on or off, please do not contact me for further donations. [inaudible] and it’s a waste for them to send me a 20-page book every year. I give a one-time donation.

**[Participant E]** [inaudible] in mailing.

**[Participant A]** Right, so some kind of connection to donate. You know, whatever type of [inaudible]

**[Stefani]** I know a few of you have mentioned it, but how did you first learn about or get involved with little sisters of the poor?

**[Participant C]** I remember reading years ago about cardinal Bernadine having his mother there, and I had some time when my kids were a little older and I thought about volunteering, because I remember them talking about their founders and how they live day to day and the charisma and that, and they seemed really special. So, a few years ago, I don’t know if this made a difference, but the founders got canonized a saint, too, in 2009. So they had a lot in the paper about those articles. So they’re in the news once in a while.

**[Participant D]** I heard a lot about it when Cardinal Bernadine’s mom was there, and like I said this neighbor would constantly talk about it. You know, I want to end up there, you know, little sisters of the poor. She’d say “oh, you say the rosary every day, in the dining room” and everything like that. That’s she wanted, so that made an impression on me like I said I had saw there, and then it was after she died I started, uh, not, uh, not, not right away but I started making donations. In other ways I guess I get a lot through the mail, and that’s how I look at, that’s how I decide how I’ll give to something and usually I like to give to things that are catholic because I’m catholic and I always thought they did the best job with distributing the funds and I do give to some that are not catholic because with grade school children collectively, the American lung association, and [Easter Seals?] so I give to as well.

**[Participant C]** Because you’re familiar with the…

**[Participant D]** Trust, yeah.

**[Participant C]** Trust is very important.

**[Participant D]** And we put it in the collective, in the scripture, that they must be good. You know? Yeah, that’s right.

**[Participant A]** You always have those little kids who have those eminems. “Can you give me money for my football team?” No. [laughs]

**[Participant B]** I think the little sisters got surprising good publicity the day before the super bowl game. They were interviewing the coach from the Seattle Seahawks, and they were asking “how tough is it to play against Peyton Manning?” and then he asked “Well if you could choose any team you wanted, who would you like to face in the super bowl?” and he said “The little sisters of the poor.”

**[Tara]** And so how important is it that the little sisters of the poor are here in Chicago? I mean, I know it’s a larger organization than that, but national versus local. Elements of a charity when you decide to donate. Does that play a factor?

**[Participant C]** Well for you (directed towards Participant D), if your friend was there and it’s local, I would think that would make a difference that you got to see it first hand.

**[Participant D]** Yeah, and there are other things that are local, too, so I think it is, you wanna try to give to the local things, so yeah.

**[Participant A]** I don’t know if I’d be aware of the little sisters if they weren’t local. I know by them they’re not just local, they’re international, but I don’t think I would have known that.

**[Participant B]** I don’t think that they’re very aggressive about getting their message out. I think they could do a lot better job of that, so yeah, I agree with that. If they weren’t local you probably would never had heard of them.

**[Participant F]** Not to say that they’re not aggressive in other areas.

[laughter]

**[Participant B]** [Inaudible] they’re pretty aggressive, but they don’t really. I’ve got a niece who has a recording of her for over thirty years and they are aggressive about getting the message out like you can’t imagine. They are so much different from sister rosemary. They are so much different from the mother superior’s or Trisha, who was mother superior up until recently. There’s an incredibly difference. Yeah, they’re not very aggressive in getting the message out.

**[Participant E]** Do they have a development director here? Little sisters?

**[Tara]** Yeah, that’s actually how we’re kind of doing this project. That was a question that came out of the development director in partnership with DePaul, so that was part of the with us.

**[Participant E]** Because they aren’t aggressive in fundraising than many other catholic organizations. I give to them through the church, but I never get another appeal from them.

**[Tara]** And do you like that, or do you think they should be more aggressive?

**[Participant E]** Well if they want more money they’ve got to ask for it, obviously. Because if you get something you think “Oh well I haven’t given to them since February,” and you could check your checkbook and go “Oh well I could give them more now.” But if they don’t get to you. I get mail out of the gazoo and a lot of them are from Catholic organizations that I have supported at some point. I think being local is important, but I think they could maybe be more aggressive in their fundraising and follow up to the parish appeals.

**[Participant B]** One of the things that I can’t believe they don’t do… you know, they’re very popular when they speak, and their reaction is very good. What they should be doing is having someone in the back of the church asking for email addresses, and you know, getting an incredibly database for volunteers and contributors because they’re starting to use, and this is fairly new, they’re starting to use emails to email out their little publication and…

**[Participant A]** I’m not on their email list. I’m starting today.

**[Participant B]** I’m starting to get emails from, and I don’t think a year ago, until a year ago I don’t think I ever received an email from. You know, that would be such a natural thing is trying to build their databases, whether it’s a business trying to get clients, and they’ve got this captive audience at church and all they’ve got to do is ask anybody who has any interest, please leave your email. Phone numbers turn people off, but email addresses, most people don’t object to giving out their email address.

**[Tara]** And would you donate through an email or electronic means, or would you still…?

**[Participant B]** They have a service now that you can donate electronically.

**[Tara]** Would you personally donate…?

**[Participant B]** I’ve done it a couple of times. The only thing now, if you do it with a credit card they’re going to loose 3% of whatever you give because of the credit card fee. It’s still a nice thing to have, because it may entice people who don’t want to sit and write a check and mail it so you probably would get some extra contributions going.

**[Participant F]** I donate online. I find it so easy. Filling out a form is a lot easier than writing a check and…

**[Participant B]** You don’t have to mail.

**[Participant A]** The younger generation, they don’t really write checks, do they? If nothing else, it can appeal to them.

**[Tara]** Do any of you volunteer for them as well, or…

**[Participant B]** I do, three days a week.

**[Participant E]** Participant D, you said you volunteer.

**[Participant D]** Only through my church. I volunteer through my church, not for little sisters of the poor. I don’t live around little sisters of the poor. No, it’s jus the church, yeah.

**[Stefani]** So, when you think about little sisters of the poor, what feelings come up? What’s your favorite aspect of the organization? I know you mentioned how open they are, and how welcoming they are, but what’s the first thing that makes you feel, that makes you think about little sisters of the poor? What’s the first thing that comes to your mind? What do you think?

**[Participant E]** I think of the poor. They’re serving people who can’t afford to pay for a nursing home, and even though they get some Medicaid funds they have to underwrite that, you know, in different ways. But a lot of places won’t even accept a Medicaid client into a nursing home, so that’s the first thing that comes to mind, and then the second thing is the kind of love and care.

**[Participant C]** And the respect for life, and you know the sisters will be there.

**[Participant E]** To the end.

**[Participant C]** Right.

**[Participant F]** I’d say it’s their respect for life and just their faith.

**[Participant D]** And I think really, truly, like how they said they are poor. They are poor. They really live that way. They’re not cushioned in any way. And um, and also um, I think another thing I like about them is that they’re not aggressive. There’s nothing that turns me off me than how aggressive people can be. And I don’t like that. I like just getting an envelope or two a year from them, and I like that. I prefer that rather than having it pounced at me or calling me on the phone, or this and that, you know. So that’s what I think when I think of them because they rely on their faith and prayer to get them what they need, you know. That’s how I always think of it.

**[Participant C]** (Directed towards Participant D) That’s beautiful. That’s nice that you actually appreciate the gentleness; that it’s attractive to you. Yeah, that’s nice.

**[Tara]** And what do you think your donation is used for?

**[Participant C]** Well since I work there I kind of know salaries, operations.

**[Participant B]** Yeah, salaries are probably their biggest hassle because they’re very good at getting food donations. Um, there’s still certain things they have to buy. They’ve got generally the, two of the sisters go out, they call them the begging sisters. They have a refrigerated truck and they go to the wholesale district, and I mean today we got a produce delivery in it, and it’s like a super market. We have an employee there that just spends the entire day sorting out. It’s just cases and cases and cases and cases. So they’re very good at getting the food, and some things, like some of the dairy products and stuff they have to go out and buy. But most of the stuff is donated, especially the meats and vegetables. Of course with them doing this, and having quite a good relationship with wholesalers and, so yeah, the salaries have to be by far the biggest.

**[Participant C]** And the works, the works. They had to put air conditioning in each unit this year to meet codes because the state of Illinois, they’re always getting surveys. I mean the survey the way of any home, nursing home codes, and they have to meet all of it and it’s really expensive. And equipment like lifts, [inaudible]

**[Participant A]** And they are the first to have their snowplow, believe me, they got out there at 4am, and that’s because of the nursing home regulations that they have to, because it’s like a hospital.

**[Participant C]** So they have a lot of challenges. So maybe they should do a better job of, you know when they give their talks, but they do have challenges. Expensive challenges to meet all the codes and that.

**[Participant E]** What they request they need for operations. I’ve never thought of for what specifically.

**[Participant C]** But you trust that they use it well?

**[Participant E]** I trust that they use it well. I don’t need to know that it’s meant for x,y, or z.

**[Participant B]** You can tell that things are getting a little bit tough because they’re stressing more about shutting off lights and not letting the water, they have to pay for water now, Mayor Emmanuel has changed that and so they didn’t have to pay for water in the past and that’s a very expensive thing now, so now we’re kind of hearing about don’t let the water run, and turn the lights off when you don’t need them. So, things are just a challenge I think for them. A big challenge every day. Many years ago when they come to the churches they used to talk about, “Well we’re running kind of low on food,” and then we prayed and someone came to the door and gave us money, and it’s really nice.

**[Participant C]** It is still part of their faith, you know, they just don’t have this anxiety. They just are sort of very…

**[Participant B]** They trust in god.

**[Participant C]**  They trust in god that things will work out, but not unrealistic that the state isn’t going to come back and shut if they don’t do anything. They have to live in that world, too.

**[Participant F]** You know, if I gave to the school or something I’d be more interested in where it was going, but with the little sisters I kind of have faith that if I can’t trust them I don’t know who I can trust.

**[Participant C]** Yeah, that’s true.

**[Stefani]** You don’t feel like it’s important to know their budgetary needs and what exactly they use it all up for?

**[Participant F]** Well, I think, no. I would say I don’t care, but I would be interested if something like the State of Illinois thing came up and say they all have to have air conditioners. An immediate need like that would be nice to know about, because you want to do what you can to help them. But as far as a general donation goes, it doesn’t matter.

**[Participant C]** That’s an interesting thing, like when they have a really big project. When they get stuck with it, some of the nice donors would like to know about that stuff.

**[Participant E]** Yeah, a campaign or something that would focus just on that, and you might get donations that you wouldn’t get any other time. Because they need new air conditioners or something.

**[Participant B]** You can actually go online and get, there’s a form they fill out, because they’re non-profit, it’s kind of the equivalent of an income tax return, but for a non-profit. It’s called 9-90 report. You can go online and look at that. It’s very interesting, um, you see where all these sources of funds come from and then they have to categorize where they’re spending the money. Even like some of their fund-, two of fundraising events each year; our golf outing and the wine tasting. Our financial, you know, our financial statement what their revenues were, what our costs were, but it’s very interesting, just looking at their financial statements it’s a constant challenge to get all these things, and you know the government keeps changing things so much that they can’t even always plan to, you know with this water thing that the mayor instituted, um that was probably a shock to everybody. All the non-profits now have to start paying for the water.

**[Stefani]** Do you feel like your donations, your gifts that you give, make a difference to them? With some larger organizations, since it’s not local, you don’t know where the money is going other than you’re giving money to them. So because you’re actually here and you can see it, do you feel like your donation actually makes a difference?

**[Participant C]**  I think so, yes.

**[Group]** Yes.

**[Participant C]** I like think, having it closer.

**[Stefani]** Do you think it makes a difference actually having it closer where you can see it?

**[Participant C]** Yes.

**[Stefani]** Where as if you give it to a larger organization you can’t see it?

**[Participant C]** Yes.

**[Participant F]** You’re kind of thinking that you’re helping someone in the neighborhood in a way rather than someone in states far away where you would never cross paths.

**[Tara]** So some of you mentioned that you get things in the mail or that you’re on an email list now, but in general how do you receive communication from little sisters of the poor? Where do you get your updates from?

**[Participant E]**  I don’t receive any information. I donate to them through the church, and I don’t receive… I used to get a thank you letter, but then I don’t hear from them again.

**[Participant B]** There’s a little thing they put out, newsletter like, that I think comes out about four times a year and they mail that, but now they’re starting to do that electronically. So it’s probably a lot cheaper, it probably saves them on mailing costs to do it electronically.

**[Participant A]** They’ll put the banners out for the Sheffield walk. I don’t know if they do it or if the neighborhood does it, but I know they do that. People who come to the event go “Oh little sisters of the poor, who is that?” and I’ll just tell them that it’s right across the street and they’re like “Oh, okay.” They’ve got their maps and they’re trying to figure out everything. But they do post banners outside. Same with the wine, when they do the wine event, the wine tasting, and then um the third one I notice, and I think they should put it up sooner is when they do the [Participant C] of the dogs, because there’s a ton of people who walk their dogs there. [laughs] So, they should [inaudible].

**[Stefani]** So do you like, I know you said you’re starting to get the newsletters electronically, would you like to receive it electronically, or would you like to receive it in the mail? Is there a certain way you prefer to receive information from them?

**[Participant B]** I think electronic, I think it’s so much more efficient , because some charities send stuff so often I have to wonder what their mailing costs are, it’s amazing, especially if you give such a small donation you starting getting, Food for the Poor is one, I get stuff almost weekly. I get both mail and email, and I often wonder what kind of costs… I know they get a break, but their mailing costs must be phenomenal, so I think it’s much more, you know, they’re not spending money fundraising because the internet costs very little if they use a service or nothing at all if they’re able to do it totally themselves. I think that’s a better use, you know, keep your donation, they don’t have to spend a third of the money soliciting that you give them.

**[Tara]** What about phone calls? Someone mentioned maybe they wouldn’t like that?

**[Participant B]** I don’t think they ever do that.

**[Participant C]** I hate when colleges call, my kids colleges call, and they don’t live here, they haven’t lived here for eight years. I don’t know if I should give the forwarding address. But I can always tell, those are annoying, aren’t they?

**[Participant A]** Yeah, they always call Sunday night.

**[Participant B]** Or during dinner.

**[Participant A]** Or during dinner, yeah. Always Sunday night, or during dinner, or some other time.

**[Participant E]** Don’t send premiums. That’s what annoys me. Don’t send greeting cards, and I just got a blanket from covenant house. You know, premiums that are unsolicited, you’re not giving the money by choice because there are so many other organizations, yet I always feel some compulsion to send them cash to pay for the cost, and say “take me off your list.” But I just think premiums are the worst things in the world. I do. It’s something fundraisers do, and catholic fundraisers are among the worst in sending premiums, I think.

**[Participant F]** It’s probably best to send some type of survey to the person who’s donating to say what they prefer to connect, or what type of communication they prefer because I’m sure with the number of donations they have, the donors, they have a different variety, and hopefully that way you hit the person the way they want to be hit.

**[Participant A]** I agree with that, after people have donated follow-up with them, or like I said you found out about it through a church, maybe have the church have the newsletters available at the church, and in there maybe there can be some information about if you want to be on our mailing list, if you want to me on our email list, contact us by, call us, or contact us by, you know, cut this card out, or send us an email to get on our list. Whatever the donors’ preference would be.

**[Stefani]** And in these updates that you’ve received from the organization, what kind of things would you like to hear from them?

**[Participant C]** I think this newsletter that you talked about is nice, it usually has an intro story about a resident, and maybe they’ll talk about how they finally installed those new air conditioners and people are enjoying them and an update about one of the sisters, what they’ve been up to, it’s kind of a , you know, it’s nice. They do a real good job on their newsletter.

**[Participant B]** Yeah, they do.

**[Tara]** So there’s nothing missing in there that you’d like to see in there.

**[Participant C]** They cover all the bases, don’t they, in that letter?

**[Participant B]** Yeah. They’re starting to profile new residents. You know, getting everyone familiar with the new residents.

**[Participant C]** So you kind of get an idea of where the resident came from.

**[Participant F]** Autograph sessions later?

**[Group]** [laughs]

**[Stefani]** Sorry, we’re just making sure we get all the right questions.

**[Tara]** Are there, um, are there other organizations that you donate to that have some kind of communication that you think little sisters of the poor could learn from? Like if they’re doing something really well in terms of providing you updates and information.

**[Participant E]** I think little brothers friends of the elderly does a good job. It’s uh, and they do a newsletter, and they do a kind of quarterly report, and periodically they have a card that you can write to an older person that they’re going to deliver something to, sending them best wishes or something, and that along with a donation. And something like that could be, I don’t know, it’s a creative way to do fundraising. They have a pretty good result, fundraising.

**[Participant F]** Going on that, I donate to a high school, and every once in a while I get a letter from a student. Maybe an employee or a resident could send an email to one of the larger donors to thank them for their kindness. I think that would go a long way.

**[Participant D]** I think you know, when you make a donation, they have to send you a letter statement for your tax, I think that’s by law now, and so they automatically send you a thank you letter and list the amount you gave, and you save that letter for your taxes. So they have to do that now, so they send you a thank you, I guess.

**[Participant B]** Those letters are kind of nice, they tell what’s going on and you know and what’s going on. “We’re going to be out planting in the garden with residents,” and you know. All around the year when they’re sending the letters they’re giving you a few paragraphs, a few blurbs about what’s going on and what they’re doing with the residents. It’s not so much you gave and didn’t get anything in return, it not just this gets deducted from your taxes. There’s some newsy stuff in there that’s quite nice.

**[Participant E]** I think the law extends to contributions of $300 or more, other than that I don’t think that by law they have to send you a thank you letter.

**[Participant B]** But they do.

**[Participant E]** They all do, yes.

**[Participant D]** They do with the amount. If you only give small amounts like I do, but if you add them up for your taxes you need those letters. Even if it’s for twenty dollars. Yeah, you gotta.

**[Participant E]** The IRS doesn’t require it, though, of them at this point in time.

**[Participant D]** They did start doing it a few years ago. But little sisters of the poor, they wait to do it until the end of the year, and I think that’s okay. That they only have to send you one, detailing what you might have contributed. Because I noticed it doesn’t come after you make the contribution, it came at the end of the year, or at the start of the New Year.

**[Stefani]** Uh, what do you think that Little Sisters of the Poor should do to try to get more people like your friends and your family, other than you guys know and tell them about it, what do you think they should do to get more people to donate to the organization.

**[Participant C]** I don’t know. Sometimes I think just the type of organization they are, is that like you had (directed to Participant D) neighbor that had such a good experience that’s like the best way to hook somebody. Because you know, you see first hand, but the Sheffield walk, um, I think what you said before about them being gentle, if they do use some of these modern ways, the emails and that, maybe when you go to the church have an envelope that checks out and you can put your email on it and do it a soft way, that people want to be on it, so you don’t lose people from them starting to be too aggressive because that’s what they have going for them is that they have, they said people are gentle, but give opportunity for the modern ones, but in a kind of non-aggressive way. You know, like you can voluntarily put that on the envelope if you’re making a donation after church. Because you do worry about them, because everyone thinks of them as so sweet, and if they start making phone calls and that, you don’t want them to lose the people.

**[Participant E]** I think the parishes are a good way, the churches they go to. But anyway, I think that at parishes people respond a healthy percentage, and that’s a good way .

**[Participant C]** So put a box to put your email on, on that envelope at the church.

**[Participant D]** My parish just got, I don’t know, my parish just got a sharing parish. I don’t know what it is. But that would be interesting. Maybe they could try to do more of what they do at your parish and maybe have a Sunday, we’re going to take a second collection for little sisters of the poor.

**[Participant B]** They actually come out to the churches and they make, they talk and the sisters actually go up and down the aisles to take offers.

**[Participant D]** But what if they had something permanent, maybe that wouldn’t be a good idea, but if they had something permanent, like my church said that they’re going to start the third Sunday of the month they’re going to have a second collection for another parish. I forget what this is. It just started I think, and I wasn’t there Sunday. But maybe that would be a good way, you know.

**[Participant A]** Because [inaudible], and we were pressured because we go to school there, and now we switched to St. Vincent DePaul, which they do come in and they the sisters talk, and that’s how they get the money. St. Clemens, maybe it’s similar to what your parish does, they give 7% of collections to different organizations, and they get a committee that decides, you know that 7% of total income, that 1% goes here, and 2% goes to wherever, but however many places they can divide it up, and I don’t know how they divide it up. So they probably wouldn’t even let little sisters of the poor come in. I don’t know if they would. Last time I was there they just said “no, we’re not going to have these people come in and ask for money, we’re going to do it a different way.”

**[Participant C]** A lot of parishes have gotten to that point where they don’t like a lot of second collections, but I think that, I’ve heard of parishes that only have it two or three times a year that have those, and little sisters usually gets in there. That’s one of the ones in most places that they let them come because everyone likes them, but I think they know some parishes get annoyed if there’s one every single Sunday. So yeah.

**[Participant F]** I don’t know how this would work out, but what about the Lincoln Park chamber of commerce, had presence there, showed up to some of their events to let people know they’re in the neighborhood and what they provide, and maybe even attending some catholic functions, like I can think of St Nicholas dinner or something, just to reaffirm they’re out there, and maybe just being there would lead to questions.

**[Tara]** So do you think that in general the Chicago community just doesn’t know that they exist.

**[Participant F]** Yeah.

**[Participant A]** That’s what you said (directed towards Participant C), when the cardinal’s mother was up.

**[Participant C]** I wouldn’t have known about them otherwise.

**[Participant A]** Yeah. People read about it in the paper, or announce [inaudible], or there’s papers in. You know, just that kind of… some kind of positive press. I bet there’s always going to be people like that in there, but they could do other stories, too.

**[Tara]** So the main reason you think more people don’t donate is because they simply don’t know they exist

**[Participant A]** What are, they’re like, Little Sisters of the poor. What are they? You know? Here’s what I-I think.

**[Participant E]** Well I think that’s one reason, but you have to think of the competition. There is a tremendous number of organizations, Kathy, that are soliciting money from the Catholic community. They don’t necessarily always do it at church, but they do it a lot of different ways. And so it’s partly competition. They need to be better known. You know but, do you think of the religious orders in Chicago who are soliciting funds. I betcha I could think of 15 I get solicitations from, but not Little Sisters. Then you have non-profits. I mean this whole thing. And there is a organization nationally called SOAR which is Save Our Aging Religious, and I was on the board of that for a while, but anyway, they can’t even get a fundraising event in Chicago because there’s so much that the Catholic community is being tapped for that the Arch Diesis and the Sisters won’t endorse a campaign for SOAR. Now that gives you some indication of the level of competition that there is for dollars from the Catholic community and Little Sisters can get it from- they don’t have to only get it from the Catholic community, but others- but some how people have to know what they do.

**[Participant B]** Mmmhmmm and yeah and they really, they’re really just not very good at PR. Maybe, maybe by design. Maybe they just don’t want to be like some of those other organizations. You know, with, I was talking about Misarachordia before. They have, um, the last weekend in April, they have a two day, we volunteer for two days, out, you know, out handing out Jelly Bellies, and um, they reach so many people, um, the JellyBellie company donates, I think it’s a million and a half bags of, um, you know of the little Jelly bellies, and I don’t know how many hundreds or thousands of volunteers they have out there, and you know there’s a little thing in- with the Jelly Bellies that there’s, or on the tags that they give out and it says, you know, uhhh here’s our email address and here’s what we do and, and if- if you gives us your email address we’ll put you in the drawing for, for something from our the bakery that they have the residents there doing, and I mean, you know, so they just are so well known I mean they are on every street corner in the metropolitan area, but Little Sisters, I-I-I, I imagine the number of people who have ever heard of them is probably a pretty small percentage. You know, if you’re familiar with them from the Sundays when they come, Satur- the weekends when they come and collect, it’s probably they only way you’d know about them. There’s really, and as you say, back when the cardinal’s mother was there

**[Participant C]** Right, or word of mouth, like her neighbor, you knew somebody

**[Participant B]** They got some publicity

**[Participant C]** and she, and she knew that when she got, what that was her time, that’s where she wanted to be.

**[Participant B]** But just was never in the news like some of these other organizations

**[Participant E]** No they aren’t. Yeah.

**[Participant C]** I don’t know if that’s enough these days, but I think they got by most of the time by word of mouth, you know, and going to the parishes, that was their only two.

**[Participant E]** And they originally took literally the begging. You know, they’d go out and beg, and I can remember seeing them in New York around the harbor.

**[Participant C]** They still do!

**[Participant E]** Yeah, and they still do that. They still use the term begging.

**[Participant C]** Right

**[Participant E]** So they may do other things that I am not aware of. But like, getting their name out or using modern marketing to get- I don’t see them doing that.

**[Participant C]** It’s a little more difficult I think for them to stay true to their, you know their traditional ways.

**[Participant E]** Yeah. Right.

**[Participant C]** It’s a little harder probably. But some of them probably are necessary, though. To get that, like you say, to get that Catholic dollar that’s being tapped.

**[Participant E]** Yeah, whether the, uh, competition is incredible in the city of Chicago.

**[Participant C]** Yeah

**[Participant B]** You know one of the sad things, at least I think, the, you know, just judging all these second collections we have at, at Catholic Church on Sundays, um, a lot of these, most of these organizations are not local.

**[Participant E]** Exactly

**[Participant B]** You know, we collect for the Church of South Ameri- um, Central America, the church of Eastern Europe. I mean this goes on and on and on about all these things, you know, I asked our pastor why we didn’t take up a collection, you know, when they had the- I think, I’m trying to think what was the- Maybe it was the- the tornadoes or something, you know. I said why didn’t we take up a collection for that. He said, Participant B, we had four straight Sundays we had a second collection. He said, I couldn’t fit it in! He said, I- you know, he said, I put it in the bullet and you know, if you’d like to contribute, you know, Catholic relief

**[Participant E]** Catholic relief it was, yea

**[Participant B]** Or what ever it was. But he said, but how could we, we can’t take up three collections on Sunday. He said we have four straight weeks, because we have a sharing parish and we had three other things. We had four weeks in a row that we had a second collection and he said, you know, and we just can’t do it. Yeah, it’s, everybod-, but , but it’s sad that we’re giving to people all over the world and we don’t take care of…

**[Participant E]** Little Sisters, yeah.

**[Participant B]** Local. You know, local problems.

**[Participant C]** Yeah, they must rely on studies like you people are setting up. When people get asked too many weeks in a row for second collections, that’s probably why St. Clements changed to-, you know the annoyance factor, you know, went down.

**[Participant C]** Yeah the pressure- We’ve gotta get out! We don’t want to be here any longer.

**[Participant C]** (Laughter) Yeah the second one!

**[Participant C]** To hear these people.

**[Participant F]** But don’t cut the sermon short. (Laughter) Gotta keep that as long as possible.

**[Stefani]** I know one of you mentioned a little while ago about receiving thank you letters, do you feel like Little Sisters of the Poor does a good job about thanking their donors and volunteers?

**[Participant C]** Well since I’ve kinda worked there and been a volunteer you always get a beautiful Christmas card and a thank you letter for the whole year.

**[Participant B]** Yeah

**[Participant C]** I think that’s very nice. I think, do you said they do a good job with that.

**[Participant D]** Yeah, I don’t look for that from them. I’m, I’m not looking for a thank you, you know, from them and, I just, you know, I guess save that one thing if, you know, with that donation they send. So I don’t, you know, to me I feel like I don’t want a thank you from them, you know. That’s how I feel about it. And it wouldn’t make me donate more if I got a thank you. You know? That’s what I’m trying to say I guess. Yeah. I don’t know. I’m sure they thank, um you know they have the volunteers that are there all the time doing thinks, they thank them. That they appreciate that. But I don’t, you know I feel like, for what they do why do they have to be burdened with having to thank everybody. You know? That’s how I see, or feel.

**[Participant E]** I think they do an adequate job.

**[Participant F]** I agree. They seem very prompt with their thank yous.

**[Stefani]** Do you have anything else (to note takers). Do you guys have any additional questions we didn’t cover?

**[Sue]** I might have one or two.

**[Stefani]** Ok. That’s fine.

**[Sue]** We already ask about, um, what like, how your friends and family would get to know about it, or what would you guys think would be a way or a possibility to provide with the Little Sisters could provide you to get your friends or family involved?

**[Tara]** To tell a story. Is that what you mean?

**[Sue]** Yeah, to tell a story to make them to be a donor

**[Participant E]** Could you repeat that? I didn’t quite get it all.

**[Sue]** Um, so we were asking how we, how you could get like friends and families involved? Like on one side, um, what could be done that your friends and families would know about the Little Sisters. Like if you would want to give them out some information or share little cards with them. Or how, what could be done to animate them to be a donor. I mean obviously it’s like word of mouth, like you were talking to your neighbor they were there, or would you wish you like would have a little card to give them, or similar things?

**[Participant C]** Oh, Little Sisters would provide cards that you could give to your friends?

**[Sue]** Yeah, for example.

**[Tara]** Do you talk about the organization to your friends and family and if not is there something we could provide you to help you do that, I guess that’s the question.

**[Participant C]** I guess our newsletter. If I knew somebody that asks me, oh you volunteer there, what do you like about it and they wanted to know more, I’d probably give them one of their like quarterly newsletters. I don’t know if there needs to be a separate card. They always have plenty of their fliers talking about their residents and what’s going on.

**[Participant D]** Some places, they’ll, um, will sometimes mail you envelopes to give to people or you know you have a list and you write the names and the address of the people down who give you money, and then you mail that back to them and then that way they get on the mailing list (laughter).

Participant F- I don’t know how effective it would be, but the thought that crossed my mind would be Facebook if you like Little Sisters of the Poor and you see newsworthy events you want to share with your fellow friends then maybe that would be a way, but that might be a stretch.

**[Sue]** Who of you guys use social media?

**[Participant E]** Pardon me?

**[Participant C]** A little

**[Tara]** Do you use social media?

**[Participant E]** Little bit

**[Participant C]** Not much. Just a little

**[Participant B]** Not much. Too old. (Laughter)

**[Participant E]** Not as much as Participant F does.

**[Jennifer]** What is your preferred method of social media. Is it like Facebook or Twitter or Instagram?

**[Participant F]** Facebook is more of an interest. Twitter- er- Instagram it kinda- I look at that as kinda pictures

, um, but I know it’s very popular with many people so I’m not- I think I might be an exception there.

**[Participant C]** I do Facebook and Instagram. I don’t do Twitter. I don’t know how it works.

**[Sue]** Someone else on Facebook or Instagram or Twitter?

**[Participant C]** I have a Facebook account, but I barely use it. It’s like to look at my kids to see if they post anything. It’s like I look to see if they have anything on their news feed to be nosey. (Laughter) None of my friends do it.

**[Participant E]** I think that’s a generational issue. And that’s maybe something you need to think about is when you are targeting donors of different age groups you use different media. Because, you know, a couple of us use Facebook but not very often, I’d say don’t communicate with me that way. But, where as Instagram I haven’t even done yet, but you know for Participant F and people younger, but I think you need to think about segmenting the donors by age group. Because communication now is a real generational issue. Social media is just evolving very quickly. And you know, it’s got all kinds of users to Facebook, Instagram, all these things, Twitter, and smart fundraisers are struggling with how to use it and how to tap into it to raise money. So I think you need to- there’s not a single way, cause your trying to reach people of all ages.

**[Sue]** Right

**[Participant E]** and obviously, you know, Little Sisters of the Poor might appeal to older people only maybe cause nursing home care is more a reality for older people then younger people (giggles) I don’t know.

?- But younger people, I mean they should realize that their grandparents are, their grandparents are going to be in places like that

**[Participant E]** That’s true. That’s a good point.

**[Participant B]** I’m not totally familiar with it, but it seems like, um, more of the schools are requiring the students to do some sort of, um, be charity work or something for graduation, uh, I don’t know how common that is but you know, we do get so- we have had a few volunteers that way where, and I don’t know exactly what it was for, but, fact for a fun case where a doughtier and then her mother came with her and sometimes another student they had to do community service and so they were volunteering and that would be great, I mean, first of all we could always use the volunteers there, cause they don’t have, you know, obviously he money for staffing is very tight and, um the volunteers really are important for some of the areas and they just can’t afford to hire peopled do some of the things here. They have to rely on volunteers. So that was really nice because for a while there we were getting especially on Sundays, I suppose maybe that was the weekends may have been the only time that the student could volunteer there, but we had a couple people, a couple young girls where coming in on Sunday and then one of them their mother came and they were very nice and they, and they, you know, came and worked for maybe four hours or volunteered for maybe four hours. It was really nice, but now we really haven’t- occasionally we get someone like that but not very often.

**[Participant C]** Cause when they do confirmation kids have to, they have to do certain-

**[Participant B]** They were probably a little young maybe, I don’t know.

**[Participant C]** Well, you know what has to happen, it’s because of all the, you know, the different things they had, they can’t be under 18 without a parent to come with them.

**[Participant B]** I think maybe they have-

**[Participant C]** Cause they don’t want to get in trouble like you have to take, what is that, um, that class you have to take when you work with kids? Um, and I can’t remember the name of it. But there’s a course.

**[Participant D]** Oh yea, um, the um…

**[Participant C]** The you know, you know if the kid is getting molested or abused.

**[Participant D]** Vertus?

**[Participant C]** Vertus? Vertus training! I think now there’s like laws that Little Sisters used to have a lot of high school kids, but now if they are under 18 here has to be an adult in the group to be there when they’re doing the volunteering. So you see again, laws change everything, you know?

**[Participant B]** Maybe that’s why we got that mother one time. Maybe that’s why we got the mother with the-

**[Participant C]** Oh yea. I think so. There has to be somebody that’s- yea.

**[Participant D]** The colleges I think do that. Some majors they have to have so many hours of community service. Yeah. I think they do, some of them, do they- yeah.

**[Participant B]** We get, on, on, on Saturdays, I think on Saturdays, which I’m rarely ever there on Saturdays, but I think they still get volunteers from DePaul, you know they,

**[Participant C]** There’s a good relationship there

**[Participant B]** They used to get quite a few on Saturdays, especially like for the noon meal that they would get a lot of volunteers. Some of them, you know, helped and some of them more spent time with the residents, you know which is important too. You know talking and visiting the residents.

?- Maybe the development staff should promote the fact that, you know, DePaul is such a big name and that when students do volunteer they put that in their newsletter and make the connection to DePaul something bigger then they have this relationship going. Maybe that would get them a little more visibility. Like try like some of those kinds of tactics. Like have a picture of all the DePaul students coming over and have a nice headline. DePaul students work with Little Sisters and…

**[Participant E]** Do they have a (murmuring)… Excuse me, go ahead.

**[Participant F]** No, no. Go ahead.

**[Participant E]** No go ahead.

**[Participant F]** Well I was just going to say maybe DePaul put a plug-

**[Participant C]** Put a plug in too. Go either way. Yeah. Reach out. That would be a really nice way.

**[Participant F]** Hit the last Catholic university in the country,

**[Participant E]** I was just going to say, they could have an article in New World or something. Which would tell more people in the Arch Diesis about the Little Sisters. And indirectly solicit funds through the article, you know?

**[Participant C]** That would be nice.

**[Participant E]** What they do and how they do, but I don’t think I’ve ever seen anything in the New World about

**[Participant C]** You know they had a couple articles because they’re complaining they don’t want to have to offer reproductive services, um, things with their insurance policy for their employees. You know with the new Obama thing? They are actually going ahead in front of the Supreme Court and stuff so there was an article in the paper about that. Did you see that?

**[Participant B]** Well it’s been going on-

**[Participant C]** Yeah and it’s been in the Tribune too

**[Participant E]** But that’s kind of a negative perception. I mean…

**[Participant B]** Yeah, that’s a very controversial story…

**[Participant C]** Maybe they better not book their donations

**[Participant E]** I don’t think that’s a way to raise money (laughter)

**[Participant B]** I’ve had discussions with some of the nuns there about that, cause, you know, we have a lot of non-Catholic employees there and I’m saying is that really fair to them? You know, we don’t believe in it, but, we’ve got all these, and you know, specially some of the lower paid employees that aren’t Catholic, I think it kinda put a burden on them. So I’ve had some discussions with a couple of the nuns about it.

**[Participant C]** But in a more positive light they should have articles in the New World.

**[Participant E]** Not about the law suit (laughter) You know the good work they do, and the fact they- how much money have to self raise to keep operational things like that.

**[Participant C]** That would be a very good one.

**[Participant C]** I know the people that live there aren’t Catholic. Are they?

**[Participant B]** No

**[Participant E]** No

**[Participant D]** So, they need to reach out besides Catholics. Besides the churches

**[Participant C]** Yeah.

**[Participant D]** I don’t know. Maybe they do. Maybe they go to other churches.

**[Participant C]** don’t think so.

**[Participant B]** But you know, some charities kinda get corporations to kind of adopt them, you know, and that would be a great thing too. I would think with the connections they have with the begging, that that might be something that they might want to concentrate on. I think they’re working more with smaller companies, although they get a lot of food donations from Costco, so…

**[Participant C]** I know, they do.

**[Participant B]** And really nice food donations from Costco. You know, that might be a great something to pursue to get Costco to kind of adopt the Little Sisters, get some of their employees, you know, are, well not force them to, but you know, try to get some of their employees to, you know, kind of participate to Little Sister volunteer… fundraising.

**[Stefani]** Did you guys have anything else?

**[Jennifer]** Actually I kind of have a follow up question to clarify about the newsletter because I know you said that you kind of prefer email, but do you think overall they should still continue with a physical form as well?

**[Participant C]** I think it’s nice when they have that at Little Sisters or when they go out places to have that. Um, then if they contact you you can make the choice of if you want it mailed to you or if you want it by email. So I think you kind of have to have both, but you won’t have to print as many.

**[Participant B]** Cuase, yeah, if you just do it by email you’re going to cut off a lot of people. You know, a lot of people- maybe that’s changing- you know, maybe the older people are replaced by younger people who are more- use email constantly, Probably still a lot of people who probably don’t use email on a- It’s hard to believe there are still probably a lot who don’t even on a very regular basis. So- yeah, I think your idea about getting, kind of separating gets- getting to know the ones who want it by, you know regular mail and then using that for only a select few that don’t want the email.

**[Participant C]** or as a leave behind. You know, when they go places I think, it can say email, you know, email us at [LittlesistersofthePoor.org](http://LittlesistersofthePoor.org) or whatever it is, but you know, I mean they need to have something if people- for them to remember it by.

**[Sue]** And you mentioned it before, you don’t like getting too many emails for donations. I guess right now they are sending out two email blasts a year, how much would you say-

**[Participant C]** That’s not too much. Two a year.

**[Sue]** Right, how much would you say how much is ok, like, to have from Little Sisters of the Poor?

**[Participant A]** If they did a quarterly newsletter, I’d say a quarterly would be fine, you know, would be fine. Then it’s nice, you know, if they’re having something special to promote that separately. Like the wine evening, or those types of things, the golf outing. You know. Special things, so that the ones that come every day- and don’t think that there are many fundraisers that do it every day, but like the stores that send, that have a sale every day.

**[Participant C]** Oh my god, yeah! Macy’s, it’s like…

**[Participant A]** Delete, delete, delete.

**[Participant C]** I know, it’s constant.

**[Participant A]** Unsubscribe.

**[Participant F]** It’s easy to avoid email in a way, and some ways I do like the mail in as long as it’s not too much and because it’s kind of in my face it’s harder to just pass off as just as just another email, but, uh, I think I like the idea of having the choice how I want to be communicated with.

**[Stefani]** Do you have anything else? Good. Ok. Like I mentioned at the beginning we were going to leave a little bit of time for if you guys had any questions for us. I mean, I mean, I’m not going to force you guys to ask us questions. But just if y’all had anything to ask us we’d be more than happy to answer them.

**[Participant B]** Were you going to be offering, you know, a list of suggestions to the Little Sisters, to you know, things they might want to change as far as…

**[Stefani]** Yes. We have to, we’ll write a report on this, and actually give them the results and like different ideas and things that were said in the group. So, they will hear anything and everything that you guys suggested.

**[Participant E]**  And did they approach you for this?

**[Tara]** So our professor actually last quarter did a survey, that you had suggested a survey, um, that was emailed and they collected some responses who some of there ideas that way, but um, survey can only give you so much in terms of quantitative metrics so they wanted to take the time to do a more of a qualitative approach where we could really hear what’s behind some of those answers. So the survey was more about the Chicago community and the perception not just of donors and volunteers, to the community at large, which did result in some of the things you mentioned the perception and the awareness of what they do is quite low. Um, so this is now just really digging in a finding out how to take some of those recommendations along with some of our recommendations and what you said to really do a better job marketing and getting more PR for what they do. And of course, there are three other groups kind of doing what we’re doing right now too, so all of those reports will be provided to them. Hopefully they will take some of your suggestions.

**[Participant E]** What are all you girls all majoring in? What course is this that you’re doing this for?

**[Tara]** We’re all getting our masters degrees in the college of communications in PR and advertising.

**[Participant E]** Ok

**[Jennifer]** And this is a research methods course.

**[Tara]** Correct.

**[Participant E]** Ok. Ok.

**[Sue]** This is our research project.

**[Participant E]** Thank you

**[Tara]** So very much in line with the recommendations you were providing.

**[Stefani]** -Anything else? Like I said we really appreciate you guys coming out and participating in- with us. It’s very, very beneficial to us and to Little Sisters of the Poor obviously. Um, to thank you guys we do have a small gift for you. And also if you drove we have the cards for the parking validation. Um, and you can get one of those from us as well.

**[FINISH]**

**Appendix B:**

Interview Guide

**Topic**: Insights on donor’s preferences to Little Sisters of the Poor

1. **Arrival of participants**

Distribute nametags to participants and have them complete the background questionnaire.

1. **Welcome, purpose, and ground rules**

Good evening. My name is Stefani, and this is Tara, Sue, Jenny, and Kim. Thank you for taking the time to join us and share your opinions this evening. You were asked to participate in this discussion because you are a donor to the nonprofit organization Little Sisters of the Poor. Your opinions and insights are of value to the organization.

There will be a series of questions to ask you about Little Sisters of the Poor and your affiliation with the organization. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. Whether negative or positive, your opinions are of interest. If you agree or disagree, speak up; we want to hear everyone’s opinions. Everything that is said or written will be confidential and not associated with you as an individual.

Before we get started, I’d like to share a few ground rules that will enable me to hear what each of you thinks and have all questions answered.

First, it is important for one person to speak at a time so that I can clearly hear them and understand. Everyone’s individual opinion is important.

Second, I may call on you if I haven’t heard from you in a while. Some people talk naturally, while others do not. It is my job to make sure each person has the opportunity to comment on each question asked.

Third, we are videotaping and audiotaping this discussion, as you can see, so that I can refer to the comments later for analysis. Also, some colleagues are also observing the discussion as well. They are just as interested as I am in your opinions and insight. Please ignore the cameras and observers and talk naturally as if they were not in the room.

Fourth, I will save time for any questions you may have for me at the end of the discussion.

1. **Participant introductions**

We’re going to begin by going around the room and introducing ourselves. Please tell me your name and one interesting fact about yourself.

1. **Questions**
2. How did you decide to donate to a particular organization?
   1. Do you donate to other organizations? What is your motivation for donating to charities? How does it make you feel?
   2. Do you donate to them more or less than Little Sisters of the Poor? If so, why?
   3. Is there a reason you prefer to donate locally compared to nationally or worldwide organizations?
   4. What are other local non-profit organizations that come to mind? What is their purpose and how do they ask for financial support?
3. How did you first learn about or get involved with Little Sisters of the Poor?
   1. Do you have a personal connection to the organization?
   2. Did they also donate?
   3. Were you aware of them prior to your affiliation with the organization?
   4. What is the main reason you choose to donate to Little Sisters of the Poor? (mission, location, Sisters’ mission, serving seniors)
   5. Do you volunteer as well? If not, why do you donate instead of volunteer?
4. What is your favorite aspect of the organization?
   1. What feelings come up when you think of the organization?
5. What do you think your donation is used for?
   1. Do you think it helps sisters pay daily expenses?
   2. Do you have an understanding of the overall amount that comes from private donors annually?
   3. Do you feel your gift makes a difference?
   4. How important to you to know the organization’s budget?
6. Do you receive communication or updates from the organization?
   1. How often?
   2. In what form do you receive the communication/updates?
   3. How would you prefer (website, social media, phone call, thank you card) to receive updates or information?
   4. What types of things do you want to hear from the organization?
   5. Do you receive the newsletter?
      1. Do you read it and find it effective?
      2. What do you like about the newsletter?
      3. What could the organization do to make the newsletter more effective?
      4. What features would you like to see or that you see are missing?
   6. Are you registered to receive email blasts?
      1. Do you read them? Are they effective?
      2. What else would you like to see in the email blasts?
7. What method do you use to submit your donations to the organization?
   1. Do you donate online? If not, would you be open to donating through these means?
   2. Do you have reservations with donating online?
   3. How easy is it to donate online? How could they make it more user friendly?
8. What do you think Little Sisters of the Poor should do in order to get other people, such as your friends, family, or colleagues, to donate to the organization?
   1. Why do you think more people do not donate to the organization? How do you think the Chicago community perceives them overall?
   2. Are there things that other charitable organizations do to encourage more donations that you feel would be beneficial for Little Sisters of the Poor to adopt?
9. Do you think they do a sufficient job of thanking donors?
10. **Additional or follow-up questions not included in the outline**

See if observers or note takers have additional questions to be asked based on the discussion.

1. **Questions from participants**

I mentioned in the beginning that I would leave some time after our discussion to answer any questions you had for me. Are there any questions?

1. **Closing**

Thank you so much for taking the time out of your schedule to join us. Your comments and insights have been very beneficial to us and to Little Sisters of the Poor. To thank you for your time, we have a small gift for you. Also, if you parked in the parking garage, please take a business card for a free exit. This concludes our discussion for the evening. Thank you again for your help.

1. Jugenheimer, D.W., Bradley, S.D., Kelley, L.D., & Hudson, J.C. (2010) *Advertising and Public Relations Research.* Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)