Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario: Annual Report 2008

Parent Brand Team
Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario (HSFO) is one of 10 provincial foundations and one national office that constitute the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada, a nonprofit, volunteer-based, health charity that has been in operation for more than 50 years. HSFO is a highly recognized, highly respected organization and brand in the Canadian health sector whose mission is to eliminate heart disease and stroke, and reduce their impact through the advancement of research and its application, the promotion of healthy living, and advocacy.

The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario: Annual Report 2008 serves as a key communication piece beyond the requirement to disclose annual revenue and expenditures to donor and stakeholder groups. The annual report is truly a “storytelling” publication designed to demonstrate how effectively and successfully HSFO stewards donor and contributor dollars across the mission pillars of research, advocacy and education.

NEED/OPPORTUNITY / THE NEED

The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario’s strategic plan includes a recent initiative entitled “Together for Healthy Kids,” designed to address the critical threat of childhood obesity that is putting the health of this and future generations of children at heightened risk of developing a wide range of chronic diseases, including heart disease, at a much earlier age than would normally occur.

These chronic diseases threaten to create a generation of children who will not live as long as their parents. To this end, HSFO is investing more than CDN$9 million over the next three years to reverse this trend by educating the public, advocating to government for policy change, and partnering with like-minded organizations and industry to work together to drive change. Here are just some of the staggering statistics behind this life-threatening epidemic:

- Twenty-eight percent of Ontario children are overweight or obese.
- More than half of Canadian children between the ages of five and 17 aren’t active enough to support optimal health and development. Children need to be active 60–90 minutes a day, most days of the week.
- Only 25 percent of children are meeting Canada’s food guide recommendations for servings of grain products per day, and only half get the minimum number of servings of vegetables and fruit per day.

Heart&Stroke Together for Healthy Kids—OUR VISION

The Heart and Stroke Foundation believes that Ontario can be, and must be, a place where health flourishes and future generations are healthy and active.
With the launch of “Together for Healthy Kids” being planned for 2009, *The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario: Annual Report 2008* was considered the most effective resource to prepare the general marketplace, as well as internal and external stakeholder groups, with a comprehensive understanding of the issue and the Heart and Stroke Foundation’s solution, which is firmly rooted in awareness, advocacy and partnership as three key strategies to drive success.

**GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**
- Build a report around this single focused idea and initiative, while delivering on broader mission results, including clear, credible and trusted financial reporting to support donor investment.
- Create a sense of pride and engagement in HSFO supporters—regardless of their level of contribution.
- Break through the usual stewardship speak with a “sit up and take notice” message to hit readers on a rational as well as an emotional level to create an urgent need for support and action.

**INTENDED AUDIENCE(S)** / The annual report is HSFO’s key communication piece to its large range of stakeholder groups and audiences that reinforces the organization’s leadership position in the field of health, while reflecting innovation and forward thinking on a wide spectrum of personal and community health issues. Some of these audiences include:
- Hospitals and research institutions reaching medical and scientific communities.
- Provincial and municipal governments and the corporate sector.
- Health, wellness and lifestyle related nongovernmental organizations and nonprofits.
- Major gift donors.
- Volunteers and staff.

**IMPLEMENTATION AND CHALLENGES** / HSFO to date has been very proud of previous years’ annual reports, which provided a broad and balanced perspective on mission activities. Although this practice has been generally well received, it was time to communicate a more single-focused message. With this understanding, the annual report publishing team was encouraged to “push the envelope” to the point of potential controversy in order to be heard. The cover image of an overweight child emblazoned with the word FAT was key to HSFO’s goal, and needed to not only visually arrest the reader, but also to startle them with a message that would spur them to action through a number of means and channels.

**SIZE**
The team chose an off-standard 10-inch by 7.5-inch size, and designed it with a horizontal orientation as another way to cut through the normal mass of publications that hit most desks and mailboxes.

**COVER PHOTO**
The cover photo was deliberately chosen to cause a slightly uncomfortable reaction with an aim to
stimulate the conversation about childhood obesity. In order not to exploit the sensitive issue of childhood obesity, the team used creative photography and digital imaging to develop a cover shot of a child that clearly conveyed the problem, with the statement “FAT: saving a generation before it’s too late.” The intention was not to blame children for their condition, but to depict childhood obesity in the broader sense of the growing problem resulting from a multitude of societal and environmental factors, including poor access to healthy food and lack of physical activity.

PHOTOGRAPHY
The cover image was not created in isolation, as the balance of the photography used in the report was developed to continue the story throughout. The flip-book concept was borne out through each photo image, consistently displayed on the right-hand side of the book, showing the child getting slimmer and slimmer until the last photo where he is his normal weight. With that photo, there is a disclaimer that addresses how photography and digital imaging were used to manipulate the photos to tell the story, to alleviate concerns as noted above.

MEASUREMENT/EVALUATION / EFFICIENCIES
Given year-over-year limited financial budgets for communication and stewardship, the foundation is highly conscious of how the public, foundation donors and stakeholders may perceive spending against communication pieces of this type. Instead of hiring a marketing communications firm to produce the entire 2008 annual report, the team adopted a totally new approach that resulted in cost and process efficiencies that afforded much greater flexibility in overseeing content and design stages of development, review and revision. They hired a corporate communications agency to develop and manage the overall concept, and fully briefed a freelance writer to develop the content. The parent brand marketing department then took all the creative design and layout in-house.

OBJECTIVES MET
The 2008 annual report has proven itself to be the publication of choice for soliciting support across all of HSFO’s programs—both community and provincially based—because of its highly impactful focus and message. The creative concept and design are being repurposed in a multitude of different ways in materials and communications—both print and web-based—aimed at advancing the “Together for Healthy Kids” initiative within the organization’s government relations/advocacy work, awareness campaign development, and community mission efforts with local schools, health organizations and networks. The report’s content is the resource for building communications that appeal to a diverse range of audiences with a view to both fundraising and collaboration.

The following are just two of several responses received:

“Congratulations on your annual report. I think this report makes a bold and compelling statement. HSFO should get recognized for the quality leadership being provided.” —Sophia Papadakis, Champlain CVD Prevention Network

“I absolutely love what Heart and Stroke have done here with the messages on the t-shirt/
child progression.”—Maureen Lapointe, Partners in Healthy Living Ottawa Ottawa Public Health/Santé publique Ottawa

OUTCOME MEASURES
Over the past few years, the foundation has dropped hard copy production of its annual report by 70 percent to 4,000 copies based on decreasing demand as well as ease of access to the report online as a downloadable PDF. This year’s 2008 report was on back order within three days of its availability, and a second run of equal quantity is already nearing depletion within two weeks of delivery.

In addition, within a two-month time frame, downloads of the annual report from the web site totaled 373. This demand is attributed to high interest in and value of the report by HSFO’s fundraising programs—provincial and community based—volunteers and key stakeholders for its ability to tell this important story to the broadest range of customers and constituents.

A key, long-standing, school-based fundraising program, Heart&Stroke Jump Rope for Heart is currently exploring how the annual report content and concept can be integrated into their fiscal year 2009 communication/support materials, as well as broader marketing and sales materials and tools during fiscal year 2010. This will result in efficiencies across the board from both a community-based level in providing quick and effective “story” support to school coordinators, as well as providing a one-stop resource for provincially driven marketing initiatives aimed at this program’s many audiences, including students, teachers, parents and community supporters.

IN CONCLUSION
The 2008 annual report provided an impactful and cost-effective tool to update a wide range of partners and key influencers on the foundation’s activities. The integration of marketing and mission budgets enabled the organization to tell its story in a more effective and engaging manner. Response has been overwhelmingly positive and supportive. In addition to direct feedback, partners have been forwarding the report to their networks, thus enhancing the reach of HSFO’s messaging, strategies and support.