

Whether it's digital presence or business needs, small charities face technology struggles

There are over 100,000 students in Dallas County, Texas between the ages of 5 and 13 who are unsupervised after school hours. Economically disadvantaged students are the most likely to be left on their own due to a severe shortage of free or affordable after school programming in the Dallas area. This leads to an increased risk of dropping out of school as well as becoming involved in substance abuse, juvenile crime and early sexual behavior.

It is these students who are in greatest need of mentoring, academic support and guidance. Kids-U (<http://kids-u.org/>) addresses this profound problem. Since 2002, Kids-U has provided after school tutoring in math, language arts and reading to over 3,000 students in Dallas out of their eight tutoring sites setup in low-income apartment communities. 99.9% of Kids-U students have been promoted to the next school grade.

The organization relies on donations from individuals, corporations, private foundations and community organizations, as well as federal funding and in-kind donations that allow them to deliver services, such



Solution used

Everleap Single site plan with Managed SQL
C#
Entity Framework 6.0 Code First ORM
SQL Server Azure
Asp.net MVC 5.0
Razor View Engine
Bootstrap 3.0
HTML 5
JQuery
Visual Studio 2013 Update 3

as food for the children, rent, utilities, and Internet connectivity. Non-profit organizations like Kids-U need to do everything they can to keep their overhead as low as possible.

How can an organization like this afford to hire designers, developers, business consultants and IT professionals? In short, they can't. Every single penny they raise goes towards ensuring underprivileged children get the support they need.

"Getting a site is one thing. Paying for hosting is another. You might think to yourself, 'no big deal, that's like a couple hundred bucks a year', but that's a couple hundred dollars that will not be pointing towards the charity's mission."

- Ryan Gilmour, Dallas GiveCamp

The community steps up— coding for charity

This challenge was precisely what GiveCamp (<http://givecamp.org/>) was started for – to help non-profits like Kids-U get the technology and expertise they simply could not pay for, channeling the energy and passion of the developer community towards projects that benefit society as a whole.

GiveCamp is a weekend-long event that pairs charitable organizations with technology professionals who donate their time to assist these non-profits in developing solutions, strategies and tools that help them continue their good work more effectively and efficiently. Each charity gets their own team, which could include designers, developers, UI experts, database administrators, marketers and web strategists, depending on the specific project. There is no cost for the charities to participate.

Meet Ryan Gilmour, Lead Organizer of Dallas GiveCamp

Ryan Gilmour has been a professional technology consultant for nearly two decades and is currently the Director of Application Development at Slalom (<https://www.slalom.com/>), a business consulting company with offices across North America. Slalom focuses on philanthropy, getting involved and community. When Ryan shared with his coworkers in the Dallas office the GiveCamp endeavor and his desire to put his skills to good use, they got right behind the project. Twelve Slalom people are currently part of the core team of Dallas GiveCamp (<http://dallasgivecamp.org/>), doing the heavy lifting of organizing and managing logistics - from something as small as getting the right gluten free meal for someone to something as big as having enough designers on board. Their team of developers, business analysts and project managers come in to help the charities during the event itself. 2015 will mark Ryan's

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- Diana Baker, Executive Director and co-founder of Kids-U

GiveCamp relies on the support of local organizations and companies in the technology sector, including hosting services provided by Everleap, to make their events possible.

Since it was started in 2007 in Dallas by Chris Koenig, Developer Evangelist for Microsoft, the GiveCamp program has helped hundreds of charities all over the US with developer and designer services.

fifth year participating and his third year organizing Dallas GiveCamp.

“I love what I do - using technology to solve business problems,” shares Ryan. “With GiveCamp, I get to use the skills I use every day to help clients and give to charities that don't have the money or the expertise to make things happen. Whether it's starting up a digital presence or automating a business need, small charities face massive technology struggles. All their money goes

towards their beneficiaries. They need a web presence, social media, contact management, etc. to connect with donors, sponsors and volunteers. Seeing this come to life over the weekend is so rewarding.”

Between 15 and 18 charities participate over the weekend in Dallas. It’s about getting something concrete accomplished, so the project has to be doable during the time of the event. It could be getting a website online for a grassroots organization supporting female literacy in Africa, or developing a mobile app to track sea turtles for a conservancy. It’s a whirlwind, from 5pm Friday to 5pm Sunday.

In 2014, well over 5000 hours were donated to the Dallas event. This includes the time spent planning for the event, as well as the impressive amount of focused energy involved in delivering the various charity projects over the weekend.

Local companies act as sponsors and technology partners also come on board to power the event. As Ryan explains, these sponsors are critical. “Getting a site is one thing. Paying for hosting is another. You might think to yourself, ‘no big deal, that’s like a couple hundred bucks a year’, but that’s a couple hundred dollars that will not be pointing towards the charity’s mission.”

“When you get to hear how excited the charities are about the help that they will receive, that just makes any day great. It’s phenomenal. I’m thrilled to head up the organization of the event and for the opportunity to give back to the community and be part of something as cool as this. I just fell in love with what GiveCamp does. It absolutely resonates with me.” – Ryan Gilmour, Lead Organizer of Dallas GiveCamp

A technological dream comes to life

Kids-U participated in Dallas’ 2014 GiveCamp to have a database designed to track and retrieve student grades and outcome data. Each year, Kids-U students

take pre/post tests in various subjects as well as pre/post self-esteem testing. Collecting and analyzing the data on spreadsheets for 300 students took a minimum of four months. To get specific data for different age groups, control areas, and tutoring subjects was almost impossible. All of this had to be manually added to the spreadsheets and calculated.

“It was important that I had a database where we could collect data on our students to present outcomes on an annual basis,” shares Diana Baker, Executive Director and co-founder of Kids-U. “This database is something that I have always dreamed about. When I found out that we were selected by GiveCamp, I couldn’t believe it.”

There were nine developers helping with the project, led by Brent Daily of Slalom. The team members each averaged 33-36 hours of work over the GiveCamp weekend. It would have cost Kids-U between \$40,000 and \$65,000 to purchase the database Brent’s team delivered.

“Staff now input the data directly into the database on each student - a huge benefit,” says Diana. “We can now pull number of students, ethnicity, income levels or whatever criteria we are looking for. We are able to pull the specific data to report our outcomes in a matter of days versus months. There is no way we could have ever afforded to do this. What GiveCamp does is such a value to charities. Our database will save us so much time and time is money for a non-profit. I can’t even express how wonderful it is to have this.”

The Kids-U database is now hosted free of charge on the Everleap cloud. Brandon Baker, VP of Operations & Development at Kids-U, had this to say: “Everleap’s hosting has been terrific for us. Our site has always been up, functional, and we haven’t had any reports of down time or lag time from our site users. The best part of Everleap was the weekend of GiveCamp. We

were making change after change, developing new updates, creating and testing profiles (user and student), and just doing some extensive testing of what we had developed, and there were zero issues on the sites end. There were zero compatibility issues, the site was fast and responsive, and we had all the space and tools we needed to create our functional database.”

To learn more about Kids-U or to donate, please visit <http://kids-u.org/>

To learn more about GiveCamp events and how you can participate, please visit <http://givecamp.org/>

Everleap is a proud sponsor of GiveCamp, offering free cloud hosting services to the charitable organizations that participate in the events.

DiscountASP.NET has been a long-time supporter of GiveCamp, providing free sites to charity participants for many years. With their launch of Everleap cloud hosting services, GiveCamp participants can now get their sites onto a cloud hosting platform. ■

Everleap is modern hosting for today's developer. Built by the team at DiscountASP.NET on top of Microsoft Windows Azure Pack, Everleap brings together the reliability and scalability of the big cloud hosting providers with the predictable pricing, bundled services, and ease of traditional web hosting.

[More information at Everleap.com](http://Everleap.com)