

# What Broccoli Taught Me About Raising More Money — Fast

TRUE STORY

How one brave (and slightly ridiculous) ask turned  
grocery shoppers into joyful donors –  
and how you can copy it today



a Nonprofit Storytelling Conference Publication



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TRUE STORY – How one brave (and slightly ridiculous) ask turned grocery shoppers into joyful donors — and how you can copy it today

I was just walking into the grocery store.

Nothing unusual.

Until I saw her.

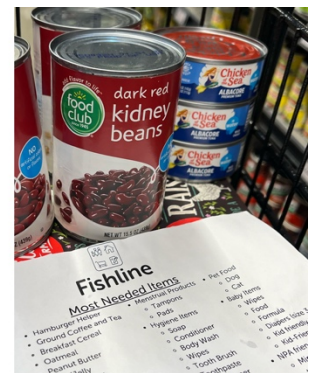
Bridget. Wearing a broccoli hat.

We made eye contact, smiled, and before I knew it, we were talking.

I asked her about the broccoli, and she laughed—saying it made her feel a little silly, but it was worth it if it got people to stop and help. She explained that she was collecting items for a local nonprofit called Fishline. Then she handed me a simple shopping list—nothing pushy, just a list of things that could help someone in need.

It was easy. I picked up a few items while I shopped, dropped them off with her on my way out, and felt like I'd made a small difference that day. No long pitch. No pressure. Just a warm, human moment that made generosity feel natural.

And it worked. For me — and for a lot of other shoppers that day.



## WHY THIS WORKS

Bridget—yes, the woman in the broccoli hat — did something many nonprofits *talk* about but rarely *do*: She showed up. She stood out. And she made giving feel personal, low-pressure, and joyful.

With nothing more than a veggie on her head and a grocery store sidewalk, she:

- **Grabbed attention**
- **Lowered resistance**
- **Made a clear, doable ask**
- **Engaged one-on-one**
- **Reminded people what generosity feels like**

It's simple, it's smart, and it's something *any* organization can do. Even yours.

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## A GUT-CHECK FOR LARGER ORGS

You might be thinking, *"That's cute, but we're too big for broccoli."*

But the truth is—**the bigger your org, the more powerful this becomes.**

Why? Because people don't give to institutions. They give to *people*. And moments like this say:

*"We're not above the ask. We care enough to be a little silly if it helps someone in need."*

That's the kind of heart that donors remember.

That's what builds long-term loyalty.

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## COPY-AND-PASTE MOMENT MAKERS

Not sure how to bring this idea to life for your own organization?

Start here.

Below, you'll find simple low-cost ways to stand out in public spaces, spark conversations, and make it easier for people to say yes.

Each identity idea below gives your staff or volunteers a way to break the ice—because when you make people smile, you make them stop. And when you make them stop, you can invite them into something meaningful.

Feel free to steal one of these or come up with your own:

## A few playful identity ideas:

- Broccoli (of course)
- Giant pencil (school supplies)
- Chef's hat (food pantry)
- Teddy bear ears (children's program)
- Graduation cap (scholarship fund)
- Cowboy hat (youth camp)

It's not about being goofy. It's about being *human*.

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## HOW TO STEAL THIS IDEA

### 1. Choose a spot with built-in foot traffic

Think: Grocery store entrance, farmers market, food co-op, or even inside (with permission).

### 2. Create a simple “Most Needed Items” list

Bridget used this (see below). Keep it short, specific, and easy to act on.





### 3. Use this line to start conversations:

“Hi there! I know this looks a little silly, but I’m helping [Org Name] collect items for people in need. If you’re heading in to shop, would you be willing to grab just one thing from this list?”

Or:

“Doing a silly thing for a serious cause. Want to help someone today?”

### 4. Smile. Thank them — even if they say no.

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## WANT TO MAKE IT EVEN BETTER?

- Offer stickers that say: *“I fed someone today.”*
- Let donors give *in honor of someone they love*
- Share photos or quotes from real families served
- Challenge your team: *“What costume or identity will YOU wear for donations?”*

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## STORYTELLING IN ACTION

Here’s one more reason this works:

It creates a story.

When someone sees a person in a broccoli costume asking for help, that image sticks. It’s unexpected. It’s lighthearted. And it’s meaningful. Whether they give or not, they’re likely to tell someone about it.

When they do give? That story becomes theirs:

*“You won’t believe what happened at the grocery store today. Someone in a broccoli hat gave me a shopping list to help feed local families. So I grabbed a few extra items. It felt good to help.”*

That’s not just a feel-good moment. That’s word-of-mouth fundraising. That’s brand-building. That’s community-building.

And it’s exactly what storytelling is made of: something worth remembering and repeating.

## THE BIGGER LESSON

Fundraising isn't always about polish.

Sometimes, the most effective thing you can do is **let people see you care enough to try.**

The broccoli wasn't just a gimmick.

It was a symbol of what fundraising is at its best:

**Brave. Generous. Human.**

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## THIS IS WHAT WE TEACH AT THE

### [Nonprofit Storytelling Conference](#)

You'll learn how to create **moments that matter** —

moments that move people, deepen connection, and spark generosity.

Bridget's moment started with a silly broccoli hat.

Yours might start there too.

Want to take your storytelling skills even further?

Join us at the Nonprofit Storytelling Conference, where fundraising professionals gather to learn from the best, refine their messaging, and unlock the full potential of storytelling.

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