CASE STUDY · DUKE HEALTH

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How Duke Health had its best Giving Tuesday in five years

Overview

Duke Children's provides pediatric care and research within Duke Health, supported by the Duke Health Development & Alumni Affairs (DHDAA) team. Lori Apicella, Director of Engagement for Duke Children's Development, leads donor engagement, corporate partnerships, and event-based giving, and brought in Mongoose Text to modernize outreach.

INSTITUTION	Duke University · Duke Health
LOCATION	Durham, NC
DEPARTMENT	Advancement (DHDAA)
CHANNEL	Text
NUMBER	Local 919 area code

The challenge

Duke Health's keyword-based tool only replied when donors texted a code, like "DUKEKIDS" to 51555, so the team couldn't reach out first or hold a real conversation. Event updates got lost in email, and a national shortcode felt less credible.

- → No proactive or two-way texting
- → Event details buried in email
- → A shortcode that hurt trust and drove opt-outs

Why Mongoose

After strong feedback from Duke University's Annual Fund team, Lori's team chose Mongoose for two-way Text. A local 919 area code built trust, and segmentation made targeted giving and event messages easy.

- → Two-way conversations with donors
- → A local, recognizable number
- → Segmented giving and event outreach

47%
more dollars raised on Giving Tuesday

85%
more donors on Giving Tuesday 2024

29%
of donors gave as a direct result of a Mongoose text

> "We needed a tool that could do more than just keyword-based texting. Mongoose gave us everything we needed and more, with the ability to proactively engage donors and participants in a meaningful way."

LORI APICELLA · DIRECTOR OF ENGAGEMENT, DUKE CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT

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Record giving and smoother events

In 2024, Duke Health had its most successful Giving Tuesday in five years, and Mongoose was its top-performing donor engagement channel.

01

A text that became a $5,000 gift

During a match challenge campaign, one donor saw the text, traded messages in real time, and hand-delivered a $5,000 check to the hospital. “We never would have secured that $5,000 check without Mongoose,” Lori said.

02

Real donor relationships

Donors who couldn’t give this year replied with personal messages, which opened the door to caring follow-ups. Segmentation also helped target outreach and lift conversion.

03

A local number donors trust

Moving from a national shortcode to a local 919 number raised response rates. “When donors saw a local number instead of a generic shortcode, engagement skyrocketed,” Lori said.

04

Smoother event days

For Over the Edge, where participants raise $1,000 to rappel down a building in downtown Durham, texts made it easy to cover any gap. Reminders sped up check-in and lifted attendance.

> **“We assumed people wouldn’t want texts, but the response was overwhelmingly positive. Donors engaged in personal conversations, shared their reasons for giving, and appreciated the direct communication.”**
>
> LORI APICELLA · DUKE HEALTH

LOOKING AHEAD

Duke Health plans to text retail associates during corporate campaigns with partners like Walmart, Ace Hardware, and Costco, sharpen segments with tags, and scale its Giving Tuesday and event texting, with support Lori calls “proactive, responsive, and truly invested in our success.”

> **“Texting has become our top-performing donor engagement channel. Mongoose allows us to meet donors where they are, improve response rates, and create deeper connections.”**
>
> Lori Apicella

Want to see what two-way texting could do for your advancement team?

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