

AN EVALUATION OF ENGAGED VS. NON-ENGAGED DONORS AND THE IMPACT ON  
DONATIONS AT SAMARITAN'S FEET INTERNATIONAL

Sponsoring Committee: Dr. Karon Powell

Technical Mentor: Lilya Wagner

Internship Supervisor: Davida Serrani

Arianne Goff

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*I want to thank my supervisor Davida, for guiding and teaching me what it means to be a servant leader in philanthropy. A big “Thank you,” to my family, for continued love and support.*

## **Abstract**

Samaritan's Feet is a nonprofit organization located in Charlotte, North Carolina, with the initiative of donating new athletic shoes to low income and impoverished individuals. Through activity opportunities such as shoe collection drives, shoe distributions, volunteering at the warehouse, and joining mission trips, Samaritan's Feet engages their volunteers in a hands-on participation to serving. Such activities can provoke happiness and joy from volunteers and inspire them to donate after they have participated in a volunteer activity. Studies have shown that donors who volunteer with nonprofits are more likely to donate again. Strategic and wise nonprofit leaders must engage their volunteers soon after a volunteer activity to move them to the next checkpoint in the Donor Engagement Cycle to increase the chance of receiving additional donations. Keeping donor information categorized is also necessary for marketing to donors. This study aims to assess the correlation between volunteering and how it affects donations compared to donors who do not participate in activities. By averaging the donations of engaged and non-engaged donors in 2016 and 2018, the assessment found that volunteers who participated in an activity gave greater donations both years. This paper outlines the possible strategies for nonprofit organizations to maintain their donors with the 80-20 rule which suggests that 80% of recurring donations come from volunteers and 20% come from grants, company sponsorships, and reaching individuals who have not been involved with the organization.

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## **Introduction**

For eight months, I worked with the staff at Samaritan's Feet (SF), to discover the best methods for increasing donations from existing donors by maintaining relationships and facilitating their active participation in volunteering. During my time with SF, I learned the vital best practice of measuring donor engagement as a necessary component for retaining donors.

This study assesses two kinds of contributions made to Samaritan's Feet International which include financial support, and donor engagement in donor participation activities. Additionally, this research seeks to identify how donor engagement in volunteer activities affects repeated donations. "Engagement" is here defined as someone who has attended and actively participated in at least one volunteer opportunity sponsored by the organization.

Samaritan's Feet International is a nonprofit organization based in Charlotte, North Carolina, whose objective is to provide new athletic shoes and socks to the underprivileged around the globe ("Our Story," 2019). Since the founding in 2003, Samaritan's Feet has distributed over 7 million pairs of shoes worldwide and relies on donors and volunteers to further its objective and mission. Samaritan's Feet utilizes the donor cycle recommended by Jepson (2016) to turn prospects and those who support the organization's mission into devoted, engaged donors. Samaritan's Feet believes that the key to retaining donors and building strong relationships with new donors/volunteers is through hands-on engagement experiences and volunteer opportunities. In this unique way, individuals are introduced to the donor cycle. Samaritan's Feet volunteer activities include shoe distributions, shoe collection drives, volunteering to sort and organize shoes in the warehouse, and joining national and international mission trips. The details of these activities and how they relate to volunteer/donor engagement will be discussed later in this paper.

SF utilizes a program called, “Raiser’s Edge”, a robust database which provides several features for tracking information about individual donors including, personal information, email communication support, donor and volunteer activity, and numerous options for categorizing. The database currently contains over 60,000 individuals who have volunteered or donated since 2003. Samaritan’s Feet invites individuals to participate in activities with the hope of transforming them into a recurring donor. Their goal in collecting and housing this information is to move current and prospective donors through a donor cycle to continue building vital financial support for the organization’s operations. SF’s has discovered that engagement in donor activities touches the heart. Hands-on opportunities create a sense of personal satisfaction in sharing with others. As such, the mission of providing children with new shoes and socks results in an experience which prompts donors and volunteers to reinvest.

Nonprofits monitor and evaluate donations and donor involvement in volunteer activities. They also monitor the financial gaps between donors who volunteer to determine where they are in the donor cycle. This research assesses donors who volunteer and donors who do not volunteer and measures their donations over time. Examining donation and activity patterns of engaged and non-engaged donor/volunteers enables the organization to determine whether providing donor activity opportunities produces increased donor loyalty and investment. Studies have shown that, opportunities to become actively involved in an organization’s mission can be a powerful experience for donors and can create a tangible connection between the organization and the donor. Samaritan’s Feet can convey the urgency of the mission and the volunteer/donor forms a personal connection to that mission (Milligan, n.d.).

Using the model described above, SF attempts to build the donor/organization bond through various activities as described below.



## Shoe Distributions

Providing new shoes to those in need is the mission of Samaritan's Feet. A typical shoe distribution intends to serve at least 500 students and needs 90 volunteers. From the arrival of staff, to clean up, to actual shoe distributions, this process takes about four hours to complete. To attend or serve at a shoe distribution, volunteers are required to sign up online and must complete a participation waiver. Local churches and schools are invited to serve and promote information about shoe distributions. Emails, flyers, and word of mouth are the primary sources of event promotion ("Nine Ways Nonprofits Can Increase Community Engagement," 2017). Information is also available on the Samaritan's Feet website at [www.samaritansfeet.org](http://www.samaritansfeet.org). Donors and volunteers are emailed a link to sign up to serve in their local communities.

As recipients arrive for the shoe distribution, they are given a wrist band; this helps Samaritans Feet know how many shoes were given out and to whom. There are various jobs for volunteers including, greeting people as they enter the distribution site, foot washing, picking shoes and sorting shoes. Chairs are lined up facing each other in a long line. The recipient sits on one side, and the volunteer sits on the other side. Between the volunteer and recipient is a wash-bin that contains warm water and some soap. Another volunteer measures the recipient's foot and goes to a box to find the appropriate size shoe for the recipient. While an appropriate size shoe is being located the volunteer sitting across from the recipient asks permission to wash their feet. Foot washing for Samaritan's Feet serves two purposes including hygiene and a spiritual act of love. When distributing in Title 1 schools, however, foot washing is only encouraged to promote proper foot care. In all cases the recipient's permission is sought by the volunteer before proceeding. Some schools are hesitant about foot washing because it may be overtly religious and may conflict with the school's obligation to uphold the separation of church and state. As a

result, foot washing is always optional. After a recipient's feet are washed and dried with a microbial towel, new socks are then placed on their feet followed by a new pair of athletic shoes. Their old shoes are put into a plastic bag for them to take home.

Volunteers are encouraged to give verbal support to the recipient such as, "You can be anything you want to be," or "You're doing great in school." The recipient generally smiles showing excitement when receiving their new pair of shoes. Gratitude can be seen on the faces of attending parents as they smile and sometimes weep with gratitude. The reaction of the recipient is contagious as the volunteer gleams with a big smile.

### **Shoe Drive**

A shoe drive is an effective volunteer activity that engages donors to collect large numbers of new shoes in their community. Shoe drives can be conducted by an individual, a school, church, business, or organization. The Samaritan's Feet's website offers easy access to receive more information about how to plan. When an individual or church wants to do a shoe drive, Samaritan's Feet will send large bags with pre-postage for shipping the collected shoes to warehouses. The individual or organization promotes their shoe drive through their social media platforms and flyers which contain information regarding requested sizes, the drop off locations, and when shoes are needed. Whether ten or one hundred pairs of shoes are collected it is still considered a shoe drive. Shoe drives are unique because the responsibility of promotion and collection is on the volunteer. Individuals who have promoted shoe drives range from kindergarteners to the elderly, and they do not need permission from Samaritan's Feet to conduct a shoe drive but are encouraged to. An example of a shoe drive might be the one conducted by Thrivent Credit Union of Charlotte, NC. Thrivent posted information about Samaritan's Feet mission on their website with a goal of collecting 5,000 pairs of shoes ("Samaritan's Feet Shoe

Drive,” 2012). The online post explained the drop-off location, date for collection, and a local phone number for more information. Thrivent also offered to collect funds if people preferred to give cash donations. A Shoe drive is a self-motivated opportunity for donors to participate in.

### **Warehouse Volunteer**

A third way Samaritan’s Feet encourages active engagement from donors is by inviting them to serve at the warehouse. Donors who volunteer include students, companies, and families. This is a popular activity for companies to volunteer for, after they completed a shoe distribution. Donors and other volunteers can sign up online or call the volunteer coordinator to come to the warehouse. Donors who volunteer are on the path to becoming recurring donors. The experience begins in the volunteer room where all participants gather with the coordinator and logistics team. Together, they watch a video about how adequate shoes affects individuals in many parts of the world. Next, instructions are given about their assignments and what they will be doing. Sorting shoes is a fast-paced experience with uplifting music and an upbeat logistics team. Volunteers sort an average 30 pairs of socks and shoes per hour. After the time in the warehouse, participants meet back in the volunteer room for a wrap up session. Volunteers are offered to fill out a form about their experience and how they would like to further participate in the organization’s activities. The information collected is added to Raiser’s Edge by the volunteer coordinator and a development officer does a follow-up call within the next two weeks.

### **Mission Trips**

Mission Trips are the fourth activity donors can participate in. Samaritan’s Feet travels to countries such as Honduras, Cuba, Greece, Philippines, Uganda, and Spain. The short-term mission trips give donors a chance to discover a deeper level of compassion and servanthood

within themselves. Participants foster community, teamwork, and learn together through hands-on experiences (“Our Story,” 2019). Mission trips are a significant financial and time investment experience for volunteers and are considered a vital activity in the donor cycle.

This study will examine whether the activities above helped current or prospective donors to form a tangible relationship with SF and whether these activities resulted in increased giving by donors.

### **Literature Review**

Samaritan’s Feet mission statement states: “Samaritan’s Feet serves and inspires hope in children by providing shoes as the foundation to a spiritual and healthy life resulting in the advancement of education and economic opportunities” (“Our Story,” 2019). Shoe distributions facilitated in the United States are typically done at Title 1 Schools or community centers. These schools and community centers are selected on a needs basis directly linked to the school district’s participation in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) which measures economic need based on the number of students who are eligible to receive free or discounted lunches. Samaritan’s Feet identifies the number of students within a school (or school district) who are eligible. Schools measure eligibility by the students’ household income. The United States Department of Agriculture defines income as income “before any deductions such as income taxes, Social Security taxes, insurance premiums, charitable contributions, and bonds” (“Eligibility,” 2019). Samaritan’s Feet looks to serve communities where the average number of students eligible for free and discounted lunch is above fifty percent. This percentile standard is used by the organization to help identify areas of greatest need. Such areas are designated as potential beneficiaries for shoe distributions. Samaritan’s Feet utilizes donors from within the communities the organization intends to serve. This approach has proved to be an effective way

to engage donors in the donor cycle. Seeking donors to serve in their communities, rather than unfamiliar places may result in a greater emotional experience.

Engagement is a call to action, inviting donors to identify more fully with an organization, thereby keeping them invested in the organization's mission, growth, and development. Nonprofits must seek to attract their donors to volunteer their time, thereby continuing to guide them through the donor cycle (Feldmann, 2015; Garecht, 2016).

Tina Jepson (2016), a writer and fundraiser from CauseVox, recommends nonprofits follow a "Donor Engagement Lifecycle" (Jepson, 2016). The Donor Engagement Lifecycle suggested by Jepson includes the following steps: recruit and inspire, learn, engage, say 'Thank You,' and repeat (Jepson, 2016). The Donor Engagement Lifecycle promoted by CauseVox, is a suggested template for nonprofits to increase donor engagement and, subsequently, their donations (Feldmann, 2015; Jepson, 2016).

Samaritan's Feet utilizes the model described by Jepson (2016) and seeks to attract donors with hands-on opportunities. Samaritan's Feet also aims to acquire new donors by guiding volunteers through the Donor Engagement Cycle. According to Joe Garecht (2016), there is an important invitation for organizations to give their volunteers and donors once they become associated with the organization. After individuals give a donation, the next step is to thank them, then invite them to be involved with an upcoming activity (Garecht, *The 5 Steps of Donor Engagement*, 2016; Jepson, 2016; Milligan, n.d). This study intends to assess whether the activities provided by Samaritan's feet show increased donations and donor investment in the organization due to participation in activities.

In the nonprofit world, fundraising experts have found that asking individuals to give their time results in greater donations. Jennifer Aaker and Wendy Liu (2008) conducted a study with HopeLab, a healthcare company and found that asking individuals to volunteer resulted in greater donations. Their study conducted three experiments that used variables such as age and gender to measure participants' response to a survey. This study was very meticulous and looked at factors concerning individual attitudes toward volunteering before donating including: question-behavior effect, time-ask effect, how physiologic affects included increased empathy, social meaning, and happiness (Aaker & Liu, 2008). The question-behavior effect refers to the influence of asking someone about their intent to do something and suggests that simply asking them to volunteer may influence them to consider volunteering (Aaker & Liu, 2008). The time-ask effect for this study found that participants came to a decision to volunteer in the time frame of as early as 20 minutes after being asked and included up to one month later (Aaker & Liu, 2008). Overall findings were conclusive that individuals who have the intention of volunteering with an organization are more likely to contribute a greater donation than those who were not asked to volunteer. This response agrees with James (2014) who suggests that donors who are asked to volunteer and do so, donate more money (Aaker & Liu, 2008). Aaker writes that further investigation is needed to determine if the type of organization is a factor. In this study, participants were responding to a survey with the intent of volunteering with The American Lung Cancer Foundation.

The Fidelity Gift Fund is another organization that conducted a study on volunteering and the effects on donations. They wanted to determine individuals' response to volunteering by their donations to charity. For this study, they collected data that included participants average age, gender, marital status, employment status, and income. About a thousand participants were

polled, and the data showed that individuals who volunteered in the last year donated ten times more to nonprofits than non-volunteers (“Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund,” 2009). Two-thirds of the participants surveyed also believed that philanthropy includes donating time and money (“Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund,” 2009). The progressive use of fundraisers to canvass time and money agrees with the studies of Jennifer Aaker and Wendy Liu (2008), that donors are inspired to donate after volunteering. Sean Chisholm recommends to nonprofits to consider that not everyone may be able to volunteer (Chisholm, 2019). He suggests adding a volunteer section to websites and soliciting volunteer calls and emails to donors at least once a month (Chisholm, 2019). Categorizing donors as available to volunteer is also suggested as this prevents donors from being harassed (Chisholm, 2019). This method would be practical for development officers at Samaritan’s Feet to add to donor profiles.

There are strategies that can be used for donor retention and prompting donors to give. Michael Steger (2012) conducted a study that looked at the connection between behavior and happiness. The survey questioned individuals about volunteer activities they completed and how they felt afterwards. Steger concluded, from the survey responses that people who participated in “meaningful activities” were happier and “felt that their lives had meaning” (Steger & Shin, 2012; Weener, 2007). “In order to make sure that the relationship between happiness and doing good wasn’t the other way around—that happiness instead leads people to do good things—the researchers considered which tended to come first. They found that the subjects became happier after they did something good, suggesting that happiness does, in fact, come about because of doing good things” (Steger & Shin, 2012; Weener, 2007).

Shoe distributions and mission trips are a hands-on experience, and they are important activities for donor retention and overall donor experience as it creates an emotional prompt to

give. A study done by David J. Weerts and Justin M. Ronca (2007), considered the characteristics of alumni donors who volunteered at the colleges and universities they attended and found that alumni donors who remained socially active with hands-on experiences during their school days made greater financial contributions in comparison to the alumni donors who did not participate in school activities (David J. Weerts, Justin M. Ronca, 2012). These practices align with research by Brady Josephson and Feldmann who identifies three key factors for donor retention including keeping donors happy, engaged, and maintaining current donor records (Feldmann, 2015; Josephson, 2018). Rachel E. Rosenbaum (1994) also recommends that participating in hands-on events produces additional donations by keeping donors emotionally engaged with the mission of the organization (Rosenbaum, 1994).

Leslie Crutchfield and Heather McLeod Grant (2007), emphasize the need for organizations to be involved in the community which creates a win-win impact, and creates a relationship. To become a better organization, Grant describes instances that make an organization great: “Working with the government and advocate[ing] for policy change, in addition to providing services, create meaningful experiences for individual supporters and convert them into evangelists for the cause” (Crutchfield & Grant, 2007). Samaritan’s Feet initiates relationships with individuals by inviting volunteers to serve in their local community.

Upasana Joshi (2019) writes that maintaining a relationship with donors is a key element to donor retention (Joshi, 2019). She also suggests that, while development and donor teams work with donors on the financial side, that they sometimes miss out on the relationship side of donor engagement. “Donor relationship management (DRM) is the process in which an organization strengthens the relationship with donors to enhance donor engagement and donor retention” (Joshi, 2019). Information acquired from donors is used in building the relationship



and is essential for categorizing and promoting volunteer opportunities. Designating one individual to build and maintain a relationship with 60,000 individuals in the Samaritan's Feet database is not feasible. The development team must strategize how to complete the technical duties of donor management and invest in building a relationship. Relationships at Samaritan's Feet begin when the organization reaches out to their donors, invites them to continue to serve, and follows up with the "ask."

By providing shoes, Samaritan's Feet is addressing a complexity of issues including poverty and obesity with the help of volunteers. A donor who gives financially to an organization shows commitment, but when they volunteer, they become personally invested. Through engagement, Samaritan's Feet plans to increase donations from donors by following up with them and communicating upcoming activities.

A study conducted by NextAfter, a nonprofit fundraising tool, wanted to analyze how the slight change in email sender impacted donations (Peters, 2019). NextAfter partnered with a nonprofit organization Bucker International and sent two different emails to 23,545 donors over the period of a month. Half of the emails were sent by the CEO of Bucker International and the other half were sent by the vice president. After a month, the results indicated greater response from recipients of the vice president than the CEO. There was an 85% increase in opened emails and 149.8% increase in donations from individuals who received emails from the vice president compared to the CEO (Peters, 2019). This would be an ideal strategy for Samaritan's Feet to communicate with the 60,000 volunteer and donor profiles because almost all the email blasts are sent by the founder. Creating a variation in email senders could render more overall donations.

While measuring donors' contributions, it is important for organizations to categorize their donors and promote applicable service opportunities based on their profile. Eddie Thompson (2014), a reputable fundraiser, recommends categorizing profiles by age, assets, giving capacity, and giving approach (Thompson, 2014). Categorizing profiles on Raiser's Edge can be done with simplicity by tagging members' profiles with key tags. This may be tedious to update older donor information as many organizations have thousands of profiles. Moving forward, it is important for Samaritan's Feet to capture donor's information and apply it to applicable marketing strategies to forego donor participation. Thompson continues to express that even the most comprehensive databases may not yield donations from donors unless the organization utilizes the information in their marketing strategy (Thompson, 2014). Samaritan's Feet categorizes its donors into 4 categories: yearly gifts of \$10,000 or more, \$1,000-\$5,000 a year, \$25-\$200 monthly donations, and random one-time donations between \$10 and \$50,000. Donor profiles at Samaritan's Feet are categorized based on how much they give financially. If the organization took the time to include categories such as age, assets, giving capacity, and giving approach, they would have a much more holistic fundraising strategy (Thompson, 2014). The marketing company Lipman Hearne (2018), conducted a study that analyzed 165 remarks from wealthy business individuals who were invited by Warren Buffet to pledge part of their income to charity. The pledgers were asked what inspires them to donate to charities and a profound similarity among twenty percent of the pledgers was that their parents inspired them (Joslyn 2018). A third of the group also expressed that joy and happiness motivated them to donate (Joslyn, 2018; "Megadonor Archetypes," 2019). Weener, Steger & Shin, Feldmann, Josephson, and Joslyn, agree that the happiness of donors is a strong indicator for continued donations and loyalty to the organization.

Interestingly, there is now scientific evidence in the process of donating to charity and the sense of “happiness or joy,” that emanates from the action. Scientists have coined the term “impure altruism,” which means that people give because it feels good (Andreoni, 1990). Functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) have been used to monitor the brain during the response of individuals in the process of donating to charity. Russell James conducted a study that used a fMRI and measured individuals’ brains when they talked about volunteer experiences. Individuals were more likely to donate to charities when they accounted their experience from volunteering because the brain was triggered with the same emotion (James, 2014). Two areas of the brain associated with happiness and memory lit up on the fMRI when they spoke of the volunteer event (James, 2014). “For example, donors who are asked about causes that have been important to them throughout their lives will be more likely to support those causes in a bequest” (James, 2014). This study supports the need for donors to have an emotionally triggering experience so that they may be influenced to donate when asked. Sonja Lyubomirsky, the writer of “The How of Happiness,” explains that the chemical reactions that occur when people volunteer, are seen again when the individual gives a donation. She also suggests that the brain does not have the same response if the same activity is repeated (Lyumbomirsky, 2007). Lyumbomirsky (2007), suggests organizations rotate volunteer activities for donors to appeal to the chemical stimulation from a new and exciting experience.

Scans of the brain show that volunteers feel good because of the release of oxytocin that also occurs when they donate. This good feeling prompts individuals to continue to donate because it makes them feel good and they enjoy the feeling that comes from doing good.

There are strategies that better appeal to donors and prompt them to volunteer. Nonprofits should advertise the best phrases in campaigns, pictures, and give appropriate time to run a

campaign to gain interest (Anft 2015). Anft suggests that fundraisers should maintain similar campaigns when addressing small and large donors. Doing so creates a more holistic approach in reaching all possible donors. It can be overwhelming to maintain relationships with all donors in the database and some organizations only market to major donors because of time pressure. By marketing campaigns and activities to a singular group, the organizations miss out on receiving funds from other individuals.

Lipman Hearne studied millionaires who had donated to nonprofit organizations and categorized them into five giving types. These five categories are: Closers, Enthusiasts, Strategists, Explorers, and World Builders (Joslyn, 2018). 1) A Closer is someone who is prideful and identifies their wealth as success, 2) Enthusiasts, identify as civic leaders who do good for the community and they feel good about themselves, 3) Strategists are hands-on individuals with projects and feel a sense of accomplishment when finishing tasks, 4) Explorers are new to philanthropy and are not yet loyal to an organization, 5) World Builders are social changers who see philanthropy as a tool that includes technology, government policy, and social media (Joslyn, 2018; “Megadonor Archetypes,” 2019). Samaritan’s Feet is not currently categorizing their donors with these categories. Of the five donor profiles Joslyn mentions, Samaritan’s Feet is marketing their activities to the Strategists but lacking outreach to other profiles because they do not categorize their donors. Parikh (2017), suggests that categorizing their donors with these profile tags would be useful for nonprofits. Minesh Parikh also suggests that categorizing donors is a tool that “can truly inform your communications strategy” (Parikh, 2017).

There is a need for change in how Samaritan’s Feet follows up with donors. Michael Anft writes that the lack of change in organizations is due to not enough time, being understaffed, and

lack of financial resources to monitor donors. Samaritan's Feet use of Raiser's Edge database to communicate with donors and keep track of their information is very useful but considering this research, it seems underutilized. It is possible that Samaritan's Feet has the personnel, resources, and finances to keep track and categorize their donors but are unaware of these approaches or they do not recognize the importance of collecting these kinds of data for follow-up. The organization has room for improvement and outlook in fundraising. Rather than working solely on fundraising goals, they might consider working on goals towards organizing the database with additional proven strategies.

### **Methods**

This research attempts to identify the average difference in donations from donors to SF who are engaged versus those who are not engaged. The objective is to measure whether there is an increase in recurring donations among donors who participate in volunteer/engagement activities.

After gaining permission and access to Raiser's Edge, I gathered information focusing on individuals who donated to the organization in 2016 and 2018, to determine whether those who volunteered also donated those years. In addition, I used the data to determine whether the organization's overall donations follow the 80-20 rule. The "80/20 rule" is a template that was used to assess whether 80% of the organizations' donations comes from recurring donors and 20% comes from new donors as noted by Langley, (2008).

Information collected was obtained by running reports and queries on the database. The information selected for extraction included the donors first and last name, address, email, phone number, date of donation, volunteer activity, and amount donated. All information except the date, individual verification number, volunteer activity, and amount donated was disregarded for

review due to time limitations and the scope of the study. This data was then assembled in an Excel sheet and organized by date of donation and volunteer/engagement activity.

The average donations from engaged and non-engaged individuals from 2016 and 2018 was calculated using the Excel average formula. Once the average donation for engaged and non-engaged donors was found, they were then compared to determine the conversion rate, relative difference, and confidence. The conversion rate was found by dividing the difference in averages by the relative number. Relative difference was found by dividing the donors who volunteered and donated by total number of volunteers. The confidence score was obtained by dividing the standard deviation by the square root of the count and then multiplying by the T-Score. All measures were calculated using an Excel spreadsheet (Appendix C).

Knowing the percent of active donors and their donation average is important for an organization in analyzing growth. Donation activity is significant for nonprofits to track, as they need to measure if they are within the 80-20 rule. Categorizing donors allows for the organization to better market activities and opportunities to inspire volunteer participation and donations. Organizations that do follow the 80-20 rule, usually see 4-7% of their donors remaining with their organization for life (Steger & Shin, 2012). Other nonprofits that do not already follow the 80-20 rule or measure donor activity should start monitoring it.

Difficulties were encountered when the secondary data queries were not narrowed down to only data from 2016 and 2018. All the donor data from as early as 2005 to 2018 was mixed together and had to be sorted manually. Sorting the data before the analysis could occur was timely. Further research should narrow down the variables before running a specific query that can pull dedicated information.

The type of activity or variable such as shoe distribution, shoe drives, warehouse volunteering, mission trips, and happiness were not considered as variables for this study due to the limited scope of this research, availability of records and time (Feldmann, 2015; Josephson, 2018).

Although studies have shown that there is a link between donor happiness and amounts donated, for this study, donor happiness obtained from volunteer activities is subjective and was not measured (Feldmann, 2015; Josephson, 2018). Identifying the volunteer's level of involvement and how their activity correlates to their donations was determined by comparing engaged and non-engaged donors. The different activities are described and explained in detail to help those outside of the organization better understand how SF serves and involves donors. In addition to the data collected from Samaritan's Feet, outside resources were assessed, including peer reviewed articles, industry magazines, similar studies from online sources, databases and libraries, to support findings and conclusions specific to Samaritan's Feet that donors who volunteer, donate more.

There are limitations and benefits to this methodology. One benefit is that there is no risk to participants because participants' information is excluded from published data and the study is not a distressing topic (Labott, Johnson, Fendrich, & Feeny, 2013)(Appendix E). However, a more detailed study should assess the age, income, gender, geography, marital status, and employment status, to obtain more accurate data to represent the connection between increased donations from engaged vs. non-engaged donors.

## Results

The sample size for this study pulled 23,780 individuals which includes engaged and non-engaged donors from Raiser's Edge. In the year 2016 there were 11,888 volunteers; 40 participated in shoe drives, 6,227 at shoe distributions, and 5,621 at the warehouse. In 2016 the organization received \$3,507,873 of in-kind donations from engaged and non-engaged donors. The average donation from individuals who participated in an activity in 2016, was \$25 a month and the average donation from individuals who did not participate in an activity was \$15 a month. Two years later in 2018, the organization saw an increase in activity, donors, and overall donations. The organization raised \$4,277,710 from engaged and non-engaged donors and had 11,892 volunteers at various activities with the greatest participants at Shoe Distributions. The average donation from individuals who participated in an activity was about \$30 a month and those who did not participate in an activity gave \$23 per month, that year. A chart in Appendix B compares conversion rate, relative difference, and confidence from the years 2016 and 2018.

The conversion rate in 2016 between non-engaged to engaged donors was 66.66%, meaning that 1.68% of individuals who donated also volunteered. The relative difference for engaged donors 2016 was 50% greater in donations compared to non-engaged donors. The data collected showed to also have a 95% confidence in the legitimacy of the records. The data from 2018 presented growth in donations, greater than in 2016. The conversion rate of 30.43% showed an increase in overall donations and a decreased gap in the average donation of engaged and non-engaged donors. The relative difference also was 26.42%. This data shows that donors who volunteered gave significantly more in 2018 than in 2016. Over the two-year period, engaged donors did not increase their donation average as much as the non-engaged donors. These results of 2018 also demonstrated a 95% confidence in the data.



The data assessed, found that individuals who volunteered in 2016 and 2018 gave on average 38.21% more to Samaritan's Feet. The donations from 2016 and 2018 found that they were not following the 80-20 rule.

### **Discussion and Analysis**

Studies show that donors who volunteer are twice as likely to donate than non-donors (Aaker & Lie, 2008; James, 2014). At Samaritan's Feet, turning volunteers to donors is a key initiative to sustain donations as a nonprofit. There are steps that nonprofits can take to obtain donor loyalty. Samaritan's Feet invites donors to participate in activities where they can experience happiness and joy from the good deeds they are doing. SF then follows up with the volunteer and asks them about their volunteer experience. As memories of the experience flood back to the brain, the same chemicals that sparked joy during the volunteer activity resurface. The similar good feeling prompts the volunteer to donate when asked by the fundraiser because of association. Shoe distributions are a great opportunity for individuals to participate and it takes no skill. The special, hands-on experience promoted by Samaritan's Feet can touch the lives of the individual receiving a pair of shoes and the person giving them. Samaritan's Feet does a wonderful job at creating opportunities for everyone to be involved.

For Samaritan's Feet to continue to move individuals through the Donor Engagement Cycle, the organization might consider initiating follow-up conversations with individuals to maintain donor loyalty (Appendix A). The data presented shows that individuals who volunteer with the organization donate greater amounts, but it is not clear if those individuals were sought out by the organization.

Aaker & Liu (2008) and James (2014) recommends that nonprofits be bold and ask people if they would be interested in being a recurring donor. Samaritan's Feet plans to implement a strategy that their development team will reach out to donors within two weeks of their activity. Before asking for a donation nonprofit should reach out to their donors through social media and personal phone calls to invite them to participate in another activity.

People in general have different preferences for serving. Some individuals donate twenty dollars a month, while others volunteer their time; both are valuable to the organization. Samaritan's Feet needs to increase follow-up with donors to maintain the relationship. Nonprofits should seek to solicit donations from all applicable individuals that participate with the organization rather than focus on obtaining large, one-time donations from corporations. If half the people in the database gave twenty dollars a month, that would equal \$7.2-million in donations (Appendix D). Change is possible, but the organization needs to follow up with individuals to keep them in the donor cycle. Their new initiative moving forward in 2019 shows much promise and includes sending letters to volunteers, inviting them to participate in shoe distributions, ask if they would host a 5k run, go on a mission trip, or become a recurring donor. Increasing 'SF'S recurring donors through engagement and following up is necessary for sustainability and the continued mission of the organization (DiVirgilio, 2013). Having sustainable resources will allow Samaritan's Feet to plan for long-term outreach. This research suggests that engagement is not the component lacking for the donor cycle, but a potential growth area might include a strategic follow up and dialog with individuals to encourage them to donate.

The Development and Donor Relations department at SF is now transitioning to the 80-20 method for fundraising. Connecting the individuals who have already been engaged with the

organization and pursuing donations from them is how they will follow this method. By focusing 80% of their efforts on individuals who already have a connection with the organization and maintain the relationship, they have a greater chance of receiving another donation from those individuals. The other 20% of the development team's time will be dedicated to applying for grants, company sponsorships, and reaching individuals who have not yet been involved with the organization. More effort to connect with donors after an event has resulted in donor loyalty. By investing time in the relationship with donors and reaching out to them, their continued donations create sustainability for shoe distributions. DiVirgilio (2013) recommends that organizations that invest in their donors by providing volunteer opportunities see a return on investment for the organization.

A study by DiVirgilio (2013) concluded that nonprofits need to invest in guiding their recurring donors through the donor cycle to maintain adequate financial resources for funding programs. Engagement alone is not enough to maintain donor loyalty. The nonprofit must also follow through with moving the donors through the engagement cycle. The Donor Engagement Cycle has checkpoints and the nonprofit needs to steer the donor to each checkpoint to complete a lap in the donor cycle. If the nonprofit does not guide the donor through each checkpoint, the donor will fall off course, and this will ultimately impact the organization and the donor. If the donor is left hanging after a checkpoint, without completing the cycle, it is not likely that the donor will give a donation.

Joshi (2019) emphasizes the need to build relationships as a strategy for maintaining donors. To meet these goals, nonprofits can set up reasonable deadlines for contacting volunteers. Samaritan's Feet implemented a two-week strategy for contacting donors. With nearly 12,000 volunteers in 2018, it would be difficult for the development team to call 75 each

day. Methods for meeting this goal can be done by delegating the work to an intern or volunteer. Hiring a call center is another method to give the pitch, however this method is not as personal and may defeat the purpose of building a relationship but still passes on information. Nonprofits need to have a donor relationship strategy implemented to move donors through the cycle and guide them through the checkpoints.

### **Conclusion**

For nonprofits it is important to assess the status of their donors in the donor engagement cycle. It is the responsibility of the nonprofit to offer activities that create engagement. Engagement is created by sharing activity opportunities for volunteers to be involved in and having an open dialog with volunteers. After an activity, the nonprofit will follow-up with their volunteers utilizing social media and tools such as Raiser's Edge. Once information is received the volunteers will be categorized for better marketing purposes. Strategizing the follow-up and maintaining the relationship is where some nonprofits fall short due to not having a strategy or time.

When nonprofits do follow-up with volunteers, they remember their experiences much more vividly like when they volunteered, how they felt as they were serving, and these good experiences do lead to further donations of time and money. Studies show that donors are more likely to donate when asked to volunteer their time. At Samaritan's Feet the donors who volunteered gave on average 38.21% more than other donors.

It is not conclusive in this study whether the donors who volunteered and donated were contacted after their activity and moved through the donor cycle. It is also not conclusive if the individuals felt happy after their activity as it is a subjective factor and was not assessed in this

study. Measuring donations by engagement has its limitations as this study did not assess factors such as age, gender, occupation, assets, location, marital status, employment status, or giving approach. This information can be collected and assessed when nonprofits take the time to build a relationship with their donors and categorize findings. Despite not assessing these factors the findings tend to suggest that donors who volunteered at one of the activities at Samaritan's Feet in 2016 gave greater donations in 2016 and in 2018.

The findings of this study are important for Samaritan's Feet and other nonprofits to consider when assessing their donor engagement strategy. Samaritan's Feet has a great method of engagement with various opportunities that are year-long and across the globe. Marketing these activities with Raiser's Edge, social media, and personal outreach is important for sharing information. Categorizing donors helps to promote applicable activities to volunteers who are likely to participate and result in giving a donation because of their experience.

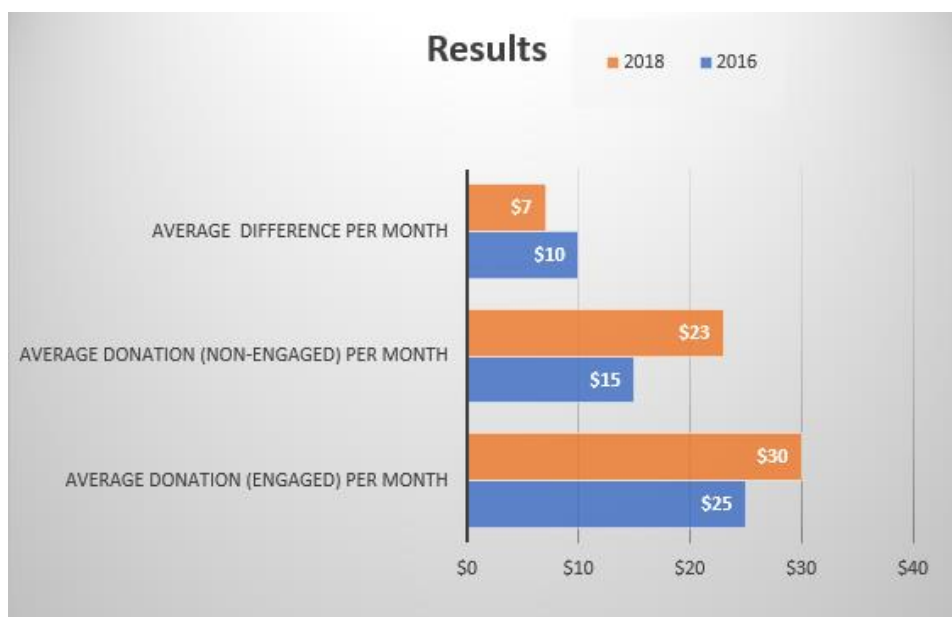
Nonprofits using the Donor Engagement Cycle should assess if their donors are being moved through the cycle and this can be done by assessing the number of donors and volunteers. If the volunteers are not donating to a cause they are volunteering their time for, then the nonprofit is falling short at one of the checkpoints.

## Appendix A

### Samaritan's Feet Donor Engagement Cycle



## Appendix B



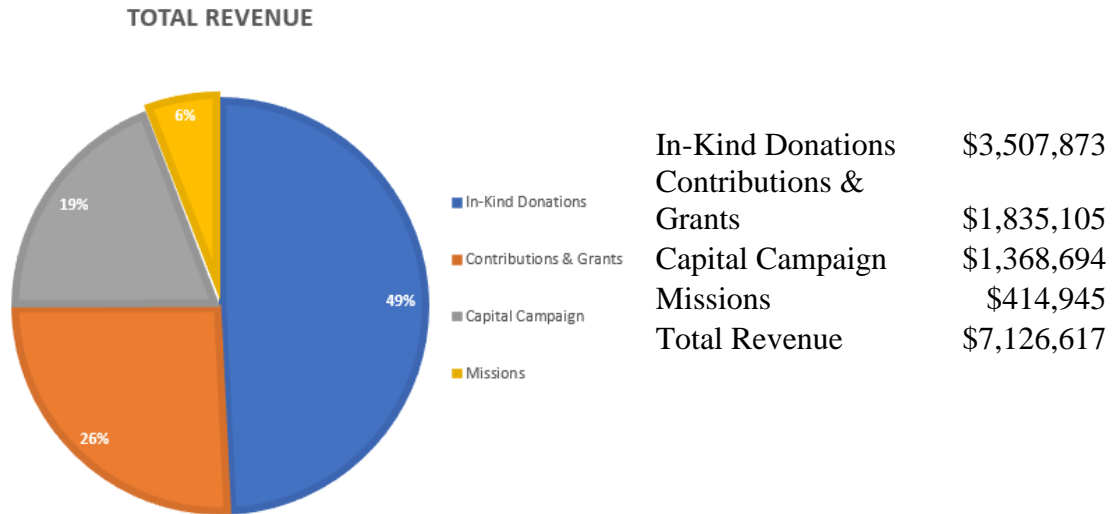
### Appendix C

Treatment Group 2016	Conversion Rate	Relative Difference	Confidence
Engaged Donors	66.66%	50%	95%
Non-Engaged Donors	0.0%		

Treatment Group 2018	Conversion Rate	Relative Difference	Confidence
Engaged Donors	30.43%	26.42%	95%
Non-Engaged Donors	0.0%		

### Appendix D

#### Total Revenue from 2016



## Appendix E

### Informed Consent

Hello,

### Purpose of Study:

Arianne Goff, a student at Southern Adventist University is conducting research on donor participation and their donations at Samaritan's Feet International. The purpose of your participation in this research is to help the researcher establish the financial difference between engaged and non-engaged donors and how activity relates to their donations for one calendar year. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because the activity opportunities made available from Samaritan's Feet are applicable to this study.

### Study Procedures:

If you agree to participate in this research study, the following will occur: Arianne will request quantitative data from the database Raiser's Edge to collect the average number of donations from donors, separating them into two categories of those who are were active (shoe distribution, shoe drive, warehouse, mission trip) and non-engaged donors from the year 2016 and also the year 2018. Donations from engaged and non-engaged donors will be compared in 2016 and 2018.

### Confidentiality:

The records from this study will be kept as confidential as possible. No individual identities will be used in any reports or publications resulting from the study. All quantitative data collected from Raiser's Edge will be given codes and stored separately from any names or other direct identification of participants. Research information will always be kept in locked files. Only research personnel will have access to the files and Raiser's Edge data and only those with an essential need to see names or other identifying information will have access to that file. After the study is completed and donations averaged from both groups calculated by the researcher, then the data with personal information will be destroyed before May 2019.

### Voluntary Participation:

Your decision whether to participate in this study is voluntary and will not affect your relationship with Samaritan's Feet International. If you choose to participate in this study, you can withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without prejudice.

### Contact Information:

If you have any questions at any time about this study or need any information regarding this research, please contact Arianne Goff at ariannegoff63@gmail.com or 407-432-1635.

### Consent:

If you have any questions about the study, please contact Arianne by email or phone at ariannegoff63@gmail.com or 407-432-1635. You can also contact Dr. Cynthia Gettys at cgettys@southern.edu with any questions about the rights of research participants or research related concerns.

**YOU ARE MAKING A DECISION WHETHER OR NOT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY. YOUR SIGNATURE BELOW INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE DECIDED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY AFTER READING ALL OF THE INFORMATION ABOVE AND YOU UNDERSTAND THE INFORMATION IN THIS FORM, HAVE HAD ANY QUESTIONS ANSWERED AND HAVE RECEIVED A COPY OF THIS FORM FOR YOU TO KEEP.**

Signature Arianne G. Goff Date 1-27-19 PI

Signature  Date Jan. 28, 2019 Research Participant



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## VITA

**Name:** Arianne G. Goff

**Date of Birth:** November 15, 1995

**Parents:** Timothy & Carolyn Goff

**Education:**

2017-2019 Master of Science in Global Community Development, Southern Adventist University

2014-2017 Bachelor of Science in Health Science, Southern Adventist University

2011-2014 College Prep-Diploma, Forest Lake Academy

2010-2011 Port Charlotte Adventist School

**Experience:**

2018 World Vision Rwanda, Gicumbi Internship

2018 Samaritan's Feet International Internship

2018 Girl's Health Ed Volunteer Fundraiser