

<http://www.philanthropy.com/free/articles/v20/i12/12f00301.htm>

IDEAS THAT WORK

Raising a Glass for Charity: Wine Sales Benefit Good Causes

[By Anne W. Howard](#)

A red wine named after a pig is raising thousands of dollars for charitable causes in Seattle.

The Pike Place Market Foundation, in Seattle, has counted on a giant bronze piggy bank named Rachel to solicit donations for more than two decades. It attracts about \$8,000 a year from visitors to the popular Pike Place Market, which runs the charity.

To gear up for the market's 100th anniversary last August, the organization spent \$5,076 and commissioned 47 cases of custom-labeled cabernet sauvignon from Northwest Cellars, a winemaker in Kirkland, Wash., to raise money for its programs. Rachel the pig, which turned 21 last year, was pictured on the wine's label, created by a graphic-design firm in Seattle.

The wine was christened Rachel Red, and since December 2006 has earned \$15,121 for the Pike Place Market Foundation, which runs social-service programs, including a health clinic, a food bank, a preschool, and a center for elderly people. The organization also supports local farmers, heritage programs, improvements to the market's buildings, and low-cost housing.

Northwest sold the wine to the Pike Place Market Foundation at the wholesale price of \$9 per bottle — it is against state law to donate wine — and the charity began marketing the wine, priced at \$16.95, on its 10,000-subscriber newsletter mailing list. The group has also sold Rachel Red at events, including a street festival with a wine garden.

Wine stores within the market, which houses about 600 businesses in all, and outside vendors have featured the wine, and give the charity \$2 from every bottle sold. The charity gave a wine tasting for restaurateurs in the market and around town to induce them to put Rachel Red on their menus.

Marlys Erickson, executive director of the Pike Place Market Foundation, says the custom-labeled wine has been a low-maintenance way to raise money for the charity that also jibes with the market's gastronomic mission. So far, 2,931 bottles of Rachel Red have been sold.

Other groups, like the Abilities Foundation, in Clearwater, Fla., have made wine into a fund-raising centerpiece.

The Abilities Foundation, which helps people with disabilities, reaps at least 40 percent of its annual income from wine-related events, including an annual three-day wine and food festival in Florida's Tampa Bay region.

In the 1980s, the relatively unknown group decided to host an event that would raise awareness for its cause and attract donors. In 1990, the organization was thrilled when 600 guests bought tickets to a tasting with wine donated by the Sonoma County Vintners, in California, which raised \$5,000.

"The immediate question that night was, When are we doing this again?" says Frank De Lucia, president of the Abilities Foundation.

In 1995, the event moved to a 20,000-square-foot airplane hangar; three years later, it had outgrown that venue and moved to Tropicana Field, a domed, air-conditioned baseball stadium and home to the Tampa Bay Rays baseball team. Six thousand guests now pay from \$75 to \$150 to attend the annual tasting, which serves food from 40 restaurants, auctions 400 items, and pours out scores of different wines.

Mr. De Lucia says that nearly everything is donated, and it is crucial to make sure the wineries and restaurants benefit as much as the charity. Restaurants gain exposure to food enthusiasts and wine lovers, while the vintners meet local distributors and restaurants.

The Abilities Foundation now hosts three wine-related functions a month — too many to easily manage, says Mr. De Lucia, who adds that he would

prefer to focus on a few very large annual events.

"I wouldn't recommend it, but it's kind of the way it evolved," he says.

[Copyright](#) © 2008 [The Chronicle of Philanthropy](#)