

CUSTOMER SPOTLIGHT

Bright Beginnings



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Bright Beginnings is a Head Start and Early Head Start nonprofit serving families in Washington, D.C.’s Wards 7 and 8. Through a two-generation approach, it supports children during critical years of development. And it equips caregivers with the resources needed for long-term stability.

Bright Beginnings Confronts a Strained and Fragmented System

As Bright Beginnings grew, so did the demands on its development team to manage fundraising, reporting, and donor engagement with accuracy and efficiency. Meeting those expectations required systems that could support both day-to-day operations and long-term sustainability.

Instead, the organization found itself constrained by tools that made routine work more difficult—setting the stage for a reassessment of how its technology supported its mission.

Because federal Head Start funding only covers 80 percent of approved program costs, Bright Beginnings needs to secure the remaining 20 percent through private support. This makes accurate reporting and strong donor stewardship essential to sustaining the organization’s programs.

Bright Beginnings is powered by:

Blackbaud Raiser’s Edge NXT®

When Rebecca Rorke, director of development and external affairs, stepped into her role, however, she inherited a technology environment that undermined those goals.

The organization had attempted to adopt Salesforce and GoFundMe Pro (formerly Classy) as replacements for DonorPerfect, hoping the combination would modernize its development workflow. Instead, the systems produced constant friction. Salesforce required customization and IT expertise that Bright Beginnings did not have. GoFundMe Pro relied on a third-party connector which frequently broke and left gifts stranded. “Anytime we knew there was a sync issue,” Rorke recalled, “it took hours and hours of troubleshooting to understand why a gift didn’t come over from GoFundMe Pro.” She emphasized the impact on donor relationships: “It was a lot of extra work to get the system functioning in a way that honored what our donors wanted.”

“Staff spent hours on manual cleanup and creating custom reports instead of donor relationships or timely updates to the Board,” Rorke said. The deeper she investigated, the more concerns she uncovered. Data integrity within the disconnected systems was deeply compromised.



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Rorke discovered that nearly half of the donor records were duplicates. “It was a mess,” she explained. “We had thousands and thousands of duplicate records, and Salesforce didn’t have a good way to manage that.” The compromised data made accurate reporting extraordinarily difficult and hindered the team’s ability to understand donor history and behavior.

Bright Beginnings Evaluates Its Needs and Identifies Raiser’s Edge NXT

The turning point came during budget season, when Rorke conducted a full cost comparison. She discovered that the combined expenses of Salesforce, GoFundMe Pro, a third-party syncing tool, and a separate grant management platform far exceeded what Bright Beginnings would pay to simplify on one solution with Raiser’s Edge NXT.

“We’ve been able to save \$14,000 a year in software costs by bringing a donor database, grant management, gift processing, and communications all in one system through Raiser’s Edge NXT,” Rorke said. When the team compared both cost and functionality, the decision became clear. “Moving to Raiser’s Edge NXT was a no-brainer,” she added. Despite the organization having invested a lot of time in trying to salvage the Salesforce setup, the CFO and CEO agreed they needed a new, more sustainable, system.



\$14k

saved annually by moving to
Raiser’s Edge NXT

Bright Beginnings Implements Raiser's Edge NXT as a Unified Platform—with Purpose and Urgency

Bright Beginnings signed its contract with Blackbaud in June, with a firm requirement: the new system had to be fully operational by GivingTuesday. The Raiser's Edge NXT implementation team prioritized training and timelines to meet that date. "It was not a painful process," she said. "We got it done in time for GivingTuesday, and that was huge."

When the system went live, the contrast was immediate. Donation forms connected directly to constituent records without relying on a fragile third-party integration. "Having the donation forms integrate directly with the database was huge," Rorke emphasized. "We're not spending hours figuring out why a gift didn't sync." This direct integration restored trust in the accuracy of donor transactions and eliminated hours of manual reconciliation.



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Bright Beginnings Realizes Efficiency, Insight, and Confidence

With Raiser's Edge NXT, reporting became dramatically faster. Instead of exporting data into QuickBooks reports and creating manual graphics, Rorke now uses dashboards and lists within the system to share real time fundraising progress with the board. "Being able to pull lists and reports and look at dashboards has saved us 8 to 12 hours a month in reporting alone," she said.

The organization also consolidated grant management processes into Raiser's Edge NXT, eliminating yet another standalone platform. For Rorke, this integration has strengthened team collaboration. "We're much more confident," she explained. "The fact that we're all working from one system unites us. We know our donors better." The shared visibility has even led their individual giving manager to begin exploring grant writing, a shift made possible because the entire development and grants workflow now lives in a single place.

In a fundraising landscape marked by uncertainty, particularly for government-funded nonprofits, Raiser's Edge NXT has enabled the team to respond swiftly to funder requests. "I've had a number of funders say, 'Show me what your gap is—where were you last year compared to this year?'" she noted. "I've been able to quickly pull reporting out of Raiser's Edge NXT, whereas that would have taken me substantially more time in a different system."



8 to 12
hours saved monthly



Bright Beginnings Looks Ahead with Clarity and Momentum

Today, Bright Beginnings operates with a clean database, an integrated set of tools, and a unified team that can focus more on stewardship and storytelling than on troubleshooting. Rorke summarized the transformation succinctly, “Switching to Raiser’s Edge NXT allowed us to consolidate our donor and grant management, payment processing, and communications all in one system.” With renewed confidence in their data and workflows, the organization is better positioned to support caregivers, nurture young learners, and share the impact of its work with the donors who make it possible.

Raise more—smarter.

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About Blackbaud

Blackbaud unleashes the potential of the people and organizations who change the world. As the leading software provider exclusively dedicated to powering social impact, Blackbaud expands what is possible across the nonprofit and education sectors, at companies committed to social responsibility, and for individual change makers. Built specifically for fundraising, nonprofit financial management, digital giving, grantmaking, corporate social responsibility and education management, Blackbaud’s essential software accelerates impact through unmatched expertise and powerful data intelligence. Millions of people across more than 100 countries connect, give, learn, and engage through Blackbaud platforms.

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