

## **Running to stop the hunger – Garvan clicks on to web fundraising**

*By Carole Renouf, Chief Executive Officer, Garvan Research Foundation*

*Date: November 2007*

Research into Prader-Willi Syndrome (PWS), a rare genetic disorder that affects around one in 10,000 – 20,000 children, recently received a much needed fundraising boost courtesy of some determined parents, a special event, and the internet.

Kristin and Mark Ranucci and Susi Trevena, whose daughters Charlie and Stephanie respectively have PWS, decided to raise funds for the Garvan Institute, which is carrying out research into the disorder (which causes children to become morbidly obese through an insatiable appetite).

The Ranuccis got the ball rolling, with over \$30,000 raised through friends and business colleagues and running in the Canberra Marathon.

Then Susi sought support from her work colleagues within Global Commercial Card, a major business unit within American Express. An employee engagement team (Team Prader) was established to raise awareness and develop several initiatives to raise funds, with the City2Surf being the focal point of activities.

An important cog in the fundraising machinery involved setting up a fundraising web page through Everyday Hero, which friends, colleagues and family could visit and make donations through.

Getting the word out about the web page through emails and other means ensured plenty of people ‘hit’ on the page and donated. In fact using the internet as a fundraising tool acted as a springboard for the cause to catch on like wildfire - some employers even dollar-matched donations.

Susi and her band of supporters were so successful at spreading the word that Team Prader became the fourth most successful fundraising team in the City2Surf. The combination of effort from the Ranuccis, Team Prader, and other associates has raised over \$100,000 for research into PWS.

This is an extraordinary example of what can be achieved ‘from the bottom up’ by dedicated individuals acting as ambassadors for a cause, their employers, and the broader community.

The funds raised will be used to add another PhD student to the PWS research team.

Susi said she was touched by the number of people who jumped on the bandwagon to help kids with PWS. “The key learnings were that it takes sharing your passion to touch

people's hearts, and that you need to find a channel that makes it easy for people to contribute. Once you've done that, there are many out there who want to do some good.”

For the Garvan, this was the first time online fundraising had been trialled. Typically, Garvan's fundraising income is generated mostly from major gifts and bequests from a specific but relatively narrow field of donors.

The seeds of this successful campaign were sown in a number of ways. Firstly, nothing would have happened without these parents of children with PWS, who were driven to reshape the destinies of their kids.

Secondly, Susi works in a corporate environment that is supportive of its employees' charitable ambitions. Thirdly, the timeliness of a focal, participatory event like the City2Surf galvanised people around a specific initiative.

Finally, the availability of a new and well-publicised online fundraising portal helped facilitate the collection of donated funds.

However, it was the combination of these factors that worked. Each leveraged the other to generate a whole that was so much more than the sum of its parts.

*For more information on Garvan research: [www.garvan.org.au](http://www.garvan.org.au)*