

# The Donor-Centered Thank You Letters Project Volume IV

Penelope Burk

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### The Power of Thank You Letters

It's the simple things that count.

When donors say, "*The acknowledgement is the recognition*", they are making a profound statement about what matters in their relationships with not-for-profits. And nothing matters more to donors than thank you letters. Four out of five people who give say that a beautifully crafted acknowledgement letter, promptly received, is all that it takes to make them want to give again.

There is a huge difference, though, between thank you letters that fulfil the requirement of acknowledging gifts and letters that inspire donors to give again. Great letter-writing is an art, and creating art requires original thinking and constant practice.

This resource is a compendium of thank you letters from fundraisers who modeled their correspondence on donor-centered principles. While every entry is already superior to what donors typically receive, I have added my comments to help the authors, and others who read this publication, expand their letter-writing horizons.

Every minute spent crafting the best letter you can possibly write is worth it. Your thoughtfulness and your refusal to settle for second-best will pay off in donors who stay loyal to your cause longer, who make more generous contributions, and who put you on their list for exceptional support.

Simple...and powerful.

Penelope Burk  
*President*  
Cygnus Applied Research, Inc.

## Donor-Centered Fundraising

*“Once you have made a first gift to any not-for-profit, what would cause you to remain indefinitely loyal to that organization while giving at an increasingly generous level over time?”*

Cygnus has asked this question of more than 250,000 donors over many national studies since 1998 and the answer has always been the same. What donors want is a “donor-centered” approach to fundraising, which they describe concisely as:

- receiving prompt and meaningful acknowledgement whenever they make a gift;
- having their gifts assigned to a specific end purpose such as a program, project or initiative that is more narrow in scope than the mission of the entire organization;
- receiving a report, in measurable terms, on what was accomplished with the gift before being asked for another contribution.

## Twenty Things that Make a Thank You Letter “Donor-Centered”

*from Donor-Centered Fundraising, Second Edition® by Penelope Burk*

1. The letter is a real letter, not a pre-printed card.
2. It is personally addressed.
3. It has a personal salutation (no “dear donor” or “dear friend”).
4. It is concise.
5. It does not continue to “sell”.
6. It is received by the donor promptly.
7. It concerns itself with the donor, not the gift.
8. It starts with an original opening sentence.
9. It communicates the excitement, gratitude and inner warmth of the writer.
10. It has an overall “can do”, positive tone as opposed to a hand-wringing one.
11. It makes specific reference to the intended use of funds.
12. It acknowledges the donor’s past giving and, where applicable, his/her relationship beyond philanthropy.
13. It is personally signed by someone from the highest ranks of the organization, not someone who is employed to raise money, no matter how senior.
14. Is handwritten, in certain cases.
15. It does not ask for another gift.
16. It contains no spelling or grammatical errors.
17. It avoids form-letter characteristics.
18. It feels good to hold.
19. It does not ask the donor to do anything (like complete a survey, for example.)
20. It is different every time (i.e. donor never receives the same letter twice).

## Acknowledgement

My thanks to professional fundraisers in the United States, Canada and as far away as Romania, who submitted their thank you letters. Fifty are published in this edition of *The Thank You Letter Project*. Of course, authors and their not-for-profits are not credited because we guaranteed anonymity to all who participated and to the not-for-profits and institutions for which they work.

### POINTING OUT DONOR-CENTERED OPPORTUNITIES SOMETIMES, BUT NOT ALWAYS

Sometimes Penelope comments on a particular aspect of a thank you letter and then doesn't comment when that same issue occurs in another letter. It does apply in every instance, however; she just didn't want her comments to be overly repetitive. Here are some issues that came up many times:

- Who signs thank you letters: the Donor-Centered preference is that letters are signed by board members, CEOs or other senior influencers such as deans and professors in higher education, physicians and nurses in healthcare, artistic directors and performers in the arts, etc. Except in rare cases, thank you letters should not be signed by a professional fundraiser, regardless of his/her title or level of seniority.
- Using the phrase, "donors like you" instead of just saying "you": Donor-centered letters speak directly to the donor to whom you are writing. The same applies to the phrase, "support like yours".
- Bolding copy: save bolds, exclamation points and other revved up punctuation for appeals. They do not belong in thank you letters.
- Using the phrase, "You made a difference" or other over-worked sentiments: As the author, you are writing one letter, but your donors give to several or many causes and receive many thank you letters in return. Express your gratitude in an original way, and your letter – and your not-for-profit – will stand out.
- Including the IRS statement in the body of the thank you letter or below the signature: Remove it to a separate enclosure because its phraseology ruins your prose. The same applies to referencing the gift value, date of receipt and other administrative aspects of the gift.
- PS's make thank you letters look like appeals. Never include them.

### COVID-RELATED COPY

All the thank you letters in this volume that reference COVID-19 were composed in the first three months after the pandemic was declared. At time of publication, we are six months into this emergency and COVID fatigue is settling in. Anxiety over the pandemic preoccupies the media, political discourse and, well, everything. So, unless you work for an organization that is on the front lines of the pandemic (hospitals, food banks, etc.), consider giving your donors a break from the constant barrage of COVID-related information.

[Date]

[Name]

[Address]

[City, State, Zip Code]

Dear [First Name],

Knowing how you feel about ABC, I knew you would want to hear about Ava.

She was giddy with excitement for weeks leading up to her first prom. She wore a navy blue dress that twinkled in the light, her shoes were a shimmering silver, and her hair was in curls. She danced the whole night away before riding back to ABC in a limo with her friends. Ava never thought she would be able to go to prom, but thanks to you, she experienced real joy, something that might not have been possible before.

Personal victories like these would not happen without your generosity. Thank you for believing in the work we do. We would love to have you tour our campus and meet our inspirational clients and dedicated staff. Please contact me to set up your visit.

Thank you for being remarkable.

[Name]

Foundation President

[Email]

xxx-xxx-xxxx

This is a very unusual thank you letter and highly effective because of the vivid picture it paints of how a not-for-profit can impact the life of a single individual. This kind of storytelling is even more important in organizations whose mission may not be easily understood. The letter also reads like a continuing story, picking up on an existing donor relationship. Different and donor-centered.



Dear [First Name],

[Date]

In the midst of a crisis, you raised your hand to help. The animals needed you, and you volunteered. Thank you for your extraordinary generosity and for being such a reliable voice for the animals.

We are all facing an unsettling time. Thanks to the support of donors like you, animals of our community are receiving the care they need. Animals like Ohbee, a special dog looking for a special family.

Ohbee loves being a hound, singing at everything. At times his enthusiasm overpowers his brain, and staff and volunteers focused on helping him calm down with treats and training. Ohbee needed space to sing, gallop, and release his energy.

When a pandemic was declared, ABC implemented new procedures to ensure the health and safety of staff, volunteers, and animals. Donors ensured that we had the resources to respond and care for those in need. Thanks to you, pets like Ohbee have all the time they need.



*Ohbee*

In late March a family met the beautiful hound they'd been watching on the website. After losing two beloved pets in December, they were ready to fill their home and hearts with Ohbee's special song.

With your support ABC can meet the needs of animals in our care even in a time of crisis. Thank you for ensuring pets like Ohbee find the love they deserve.

With gratitude,

[Name]  
President & CEO

P.S. For the latest updates on ABC's COVID-19 response, [Website]

*We affirm no goods or services were provided in return for this donation. Tax ID #xx-xxxxxxx  
**Your privacy matters!** ABC never shares or sells our supporters' personal information.*

One of the best things about this thank you letter is the opening line. It's original, it references the pandemic without belaboring it, and it draws the reader in. In fact, the opening paragraph is an excellent example of a donor-centered, grateful statement.

The story about Ohbee is endearing and it avoids the mistake made by many animal rescue communications that focus on the problem instead of the solution that donors help make possible. Be mindful of the length in this thank you letter, however, so that the expression of gratitude is not overshadowed. In fact, the opening paragraph is so good that it could stand on its own as the entire thank you letter – handwritten on a notecard.

*"You" not "donors like you".*

*"With your support" is language used in appeals. A small change brings this letter back to acknowledging the donor for what he/she has already done:*

*Because you are our donor (or partner), ABC can meet the needs of animals in our care...*

Dear [Salutation],

At times like this, we are grateful we can count on donors like you when we need you the most. Thank you so much for your support during ABC University's Giving Day 2020.

Nelson Mandela said, "Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world." On Giving Day, and indeed every day, your gifts to ABC University are an investment in educating the next generation of thinkers, doers, conveners and leaders. Thanks to you, we can provide ongoing resources that are critical to our students, especially now.

While there are so many worthy destinations for your generosity, we are so thankful that you chose to support ABC University and the students who will one day go on to change the world.

With gratitude,

Vice President for University Advancement

It is a particularly difficult challenge to compose a thank you letter that is meant for many donors who gave in a large annual fund campaign. This is one of the best examples. What makes it donor-centered is its concise composition, its higher quality opening line, its focus on donors rather than on their gifts, and its especially good closing paragraph.

Giving to the same cause does not turn donors into a homogenous group. An individual donor does not see him/herself as like any other person. Thank you letters are automatically improved when they speak to the one person who is named in the salutation.

In contrast, this sentence and the closing paragraph are instantly more compelling because they both use the word, "you", not "donors like you".

I know this is the top dog in fundraising, but not having the letter signed by a professor, dean or other academic authority misses an opportunity.

## ABC Food Bank

## Community Owned Community Supported

[Donor Name]

[Address]

[City, State, Zip Code]

Dear Mrs. [Last Name],

Together, we fight hunger and its root causes, because no one should go hungry. Your gift of \$[Gift Amount] helps to accomplish this goal, thank you.

We never could have imagined that the world would turn on its head so quickly. Your gift means [that people in our city] needing food support will receive an Emergency Food Hamper as safely as possible in these uncertain times and in the future. Thank you for thinking of the ABC Food Bank, we feel fortunate to have you as part of our team.

Each one of our fellow [residents in this city] that visits the Food Bank feels the generosity from you. One of our clients put their gratitude into words, and we wanted to share it with you:

"Receiving an emergency food hamper relieved a huge amount of stress. I am certainly feeling the goodwill of the community which means a lot." - A very grateful client.

We are humbled to say we are truly community owned and community supported. We know that [people who live in this city] are struggling in light of the ever evolving COVID-19 situation, thank you for continuing to ensure that no one goes hungry.

Thank you,

The ABC Food Bank Team

A great thank you letter is all about the donor to whom you are writing; it is not about you. I know how difficult it can be to pivot when the majority of a fundraiser's time is spent crafting appeals and grant applications that are all about you. Remember, your donor just gave. You don't have to sell him or her on your case or your cause. For this donor, your pitch already worked.

One of the best things about this very informative thank you letter is this first sentence of the second paragraph. In fact, it is so good that it should become the opening line of the letter because it is very compelling. And, while too many causes that are not on the frontlines of the pandemic are referencing this emergency in their acknowledgements, in this case (food bank), it is entirely justified.

Use a semi-colon or a period here.

*who visits the Food Bank feels your generosity.*

Note: It is always a good idea to have at least one other person read your final draft. As the one responsible for who knows how many revisions, you get to a point where you no longer see an error that someone else will notice right away.

This is quite a meaningful quote. It doesn't need the paragraph that precedes it as an explanation. It stands on its own, and you might consider placing it at the top of the letter, just under the salutation, or at the bottom below the signature.

Period here, not comma. Then, start a new sentence.

[Date]

[First Name] and [First Name] [Last Name]

[Address]

[City, State, Zip]

Dear [First Name] and [First Name]:

Thank you for your recent gift made to ABC Hospice in memory of [name of deceased].

Please know how grateful I am to you for your \$[Gift Amount] contribution to the Area of Greatest Need.

Gifts to this area help us respond quickly to emerging needs to provide what's necessary as well as what's visionary.

Your generosity allows us to continue to serve more than 4,000 people annually in southwest [state] and northwest [state]. For generations, families have depended on us for care, comfort, and support during trying times. Your gift truly helps bring peace of mind to them. On behalf of those we serve, I thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

[Name]

President & Chief Executive Officer

Received \$[Gift Amount] by Personal Check on [Date] for the Area of Greatest Need

No goods or services have been provided in consideration of this contribution.

Federal Tax ID: xx-xxxxxxx

Questions? Contact xxx-xxx-xxxx or Give@xxxx.org

Two of the best, donor-centered characteristics of this letter are its concise composition and its signatory -- it is coming from the CEO of the Hospice.

Referencing the gift value (regardless of the amount) shifts the tone of the letter from sensitive and thoughtful to administrative. I find it's better to reference gift amount, date received, and the IRS statement on a separate enclosure folded in with the letter rather than in the body of the letter or in a statement below the signature.

"Area of greatest need" is a commonplace statement in fundraising but it begs the question, "What IS your area of greatest need?" When donors know what they are helping you achieve, they feel proud of their philanthropy and eager to keep giving. Even in memoriam programs can be more successful at renewing donors' support by assigning gifts to a specific initiative.

Thanks from all of us!

**Do you know what it feels like to have someone believe in you? Thanks to you, we do.**

We know that no one really has spare time or spare money, but you found a way to make both for ABC Not-for-Profit. Because of you, we've planned and shared meals together, learned leadership skills, burned off energy in the gym together, put together resumes, learned babysitting skills, and been mentored by people not much older than us who are on paths we might want to follow.

You wouldn't have contributed your time or money unless you believed in us. That's the most valuable contribution of all.

Thanks,

[Signatures of youth council members]

A very different and, therefore, very donor-centered thank you letter. The only slight change I would make would be to move the first line, "Thanks from all of us!" to the end of the letter so that it becomes the complimentary close. The bolded next line blew me away and it should be the start of the letter. But, when copy is this good, it doesn't need to be bolded. In fact, never bold anything in a thank you letter.

Wow, can't get better than this, and a rare situation when I'm totally fine with several signatories.

ABC University  
**Office of the President**  
[Address]  
[City, State, Zip Code]  
xxx-xxx-xxxx • [Fax]  
TDD: x-xxx-xxx-xxxx  
[Email]

[Date]

[First Name] [Last Name]  
[Address]  
[City, State, Zip Code]

Dear [Salutation]:

Please accept my sincere gratitude for your thoughtful commitment to ABC University. This extraordinary support, the largest single gift to date to the XYZ Scholarship initiative, will provide critical resources to fully fund a deserving student from the [City] area. By encouraging student success on our campus, you are setting a wonderful example for others in the community looking to make a similar impact.

In addition, I am touched by your steadfast support of the XYZ Athletic Fund, which enhances the quality of our athletic program and affords the best possible undergraduate experience for our student-athletes.

Your engagement with the university is both incredibly significant and deeply appreciated. We are grateful to dedicated alumni and friends like you who are devoted to the mission of this institution and the experience of its students.

**Best Wishes,**

Sincerely,

[Signature]

[Name]

President

ABC University and ABC University Health System

This is an excellent, donor-centered letter. Assuming it was drafted by a fundraiser, congratulations on accomplishing one of the toughest jobs of all which is writing in someone else's voice. Since it's apparent that a relationship already exists between the President and the donor, could the President offer an observation about the donor that would inspire you, the fundraiser, to craft an unique opening sentence?

I would end this letter with the statement of appreciation expressed in the first sentence of this paragraph, rather than shifting the focus to "alumni and friends like you".

A letter to friends and donors

I am writing simply to reassure you and to say thank you.

In these very uncertain and difficult times, we all feel a bit paralyzed, uncertain about the future, even uncertain about what our next steps should be. One thing we know is that this is a time to keep close those who are important to us. That is true for our families and friends, and it is also true for those, like you, who have been our best friends and supporters at Hospice of [State].

Many things have changed in our world and in our community. None of us are in the financial situation we were just a week ago. Many of us feel uncertain and afraid.

I want you to know that Hospice of [State] stands on solid ground, and that we will survive this crisis. As I write, physicians, nurses, social workers, nurse assistants and chaplains are in [Patient Facility] or on the road throughout [State], caring for more than 250 patients and families each day. They are at the bedside and at the kitchen table. They are working all night at [Patient Facility], or working from their cars, delivering medicines and supplies day and night. They are easing pain, listening to heartache, saying prayers. They have done those things every day for decades, and they do it now even in these uncertain and difficult times.

Our Boards of Directors, both at ABC Hospice and at the Hospice of [State] Foundation, are solidly behind our mission and fully supportive of all the new measures we have undertaken to insure the well-being of our staff, volunteers, patients and their families.

And we know that you, our friends and supporters, continue to hold us in your hearts.

Hospice of [State] is here for those who need us because you have been here for us in the past. Your loyalty and support through almost forty years have built a strong community institution that will weather whatever is coming. We will do that together, with you, with our partners in the healthcare field and with our neighbors in the communities we serve.

Thank you.

Because of the timing of our request for thank you letter submissions, many that we received reference COVID-19. This one is an important reminder to readers to communicate with donors during difficult times, not just when they give. So, well done for taking that step; it will undoubtedly help sustain donor loyalty through this prolonged crisis.

I don't think you need to state the purpose of the letter. The content itself is the reassurance.

*"you and other donors"*

These two paragraphs are very well written; in fact, the whole letter is beautifully composed. My only caution is that statements about anxiety and uncertainty about the pandemic are becoming commonplace in thank you letters and other communications to donors. COVID-19 also preoccupies the media, political dissertation and, well, everything. So that you don't fall into the trap of saying what everyone else is saying, you might consider focusing first on your gratitude for donors' past support. The fourth paragraph is especially reassuring and the last paragraph is a graceful appreciation of donors. If you start with a blend of that copy, then you can ask yourself whether that's enough or whether you still want to make a more general statement about the pandemic.

Dear [First Name] and [First Name],

THANK YOU! What a wonderful surprise to see your generous donation in support of our work to change the way the world reads the Bible. Even this week, we had new evidence of [name of program] welcoming students and prisoners to a fresh encounter with the Bible. The movement is underway and your gift will make a big difference! So thanks!

Trust you are well. As always, holler when you get to [State]!

[Name]  
Executive Director  
xxx.xxx.xxxx

I like the brevity and “respectful friendliness” of this thank you letter. Consider taking the emphasis off the money and putting it on the donor in the opening sentence and, again, towards the end of the first paragraph. For example:

*The movement is underway and I am very grateful that you are part of it.*



[Date]

Ms. [First Name] [Last Name]

[Address]

[City, State, Zip Code]

Dear [Name],

ABC College looks different now than it ever has, with nearly all of our students, faculty, and staff working remotely in an effort to slow the spread of COVID-19. And yet, because you have their backs, our students and faculty can stay safe and connected while they carry on their important work together.

Even as the situation evolves rapidly, I can share that as of April 9 the new COVID-19 Student Support Fund has offset travel and relocation expenses for 288 students as well as emergency funding for housing and food. More than 81 hotspots, 79 laptops, and 8 tablets or other devices have been supplied to enable students and faculty to continue working and learning together. Needs will continue to emerge, and because of you, we can keep meeting them.

This is not the case everywhere. This is the ABC College community in action. Thank you for helping our students get home safely, making sure their basic needs are met, and enabling them to focus on their health while continuing with their studies.

I hope you and your family are staying safe and healthy during this challenging time. With gratitude,

[Name]

Senior Development Officer

xxx-xxx-xxxx

[Email Address]

So many thank you letters I received have referenced the pandemic, even when the connection between COVID-19 and why donors gave isn't evident. But this one is not only justified but very well explained. I love how the author positions the donor's critical importance to students, then goes on in the second paragraph to state exactly how donors' contributions have been put to work to make essential COVID-related adjustments.

I'm guessing this is a veiled criticism of other colleges that may not have such a well-defined COVID strategy, but I don't think it belongs in a thank you letter. I would delete this paragraph.

It would be great if this thank you letter came from the Provost or someone of stature in the college. That aside, this is a very informative and compelling thank you letter.

[Date]

ABC Hospital Auxiliary  
Attn: [First Name] [Last Name]  
[Address]  
[City, State, Zip]

Dear [First Name],

Please share with all the members of the Auxiliary our gratitude for your recent gift to our COVID-19 Support Fund. You have been a valuable partner in our mission to provide first-rate care to our most vulnerable citizens, and your willingness to “pivot” to help us take care of our ABC family is sincerely appreciated.

As you know, this pandemic has presented our enterprise with unprecedented challenges, and we have answered with unwavering commitment to protect the citizens we serve. The investment required to meet those challenges is substantial, and your willingness to step up and share our burden is a testament to your commitment to the people who walk through these doors every day to care for [those who need it most].

In spite of the challenges we face, we consider it a moral imperative to always find ways to say “yes” to those in need here in [State] and beyond. Your generosity enables us to continue to stretch to meet these ever-growing demands. We are deeply grateful for your philanthropic leadership.

Sincerely,

Name, MD  
Executive Vice President of Health Affairs

It is hard enough to write a compelling thank you letter when you are expressing your own personal sentiment, but it is even more challenging to do so when your composition will be coming from someone else, especially someone in authority.

This letter is courteous and grateful – two important donor-centered characteristics. But its somewhat overly careful and formal voice tends to put the writer/signatory at arms-length from the donor. An exercise that I find helpful when composing acknowledgement letters is to ask myself, “If the donor walked into my office, is this what I would say and how I would say it after she handed me the check?”

In this case, it would be worth asking the Executive VP who is signing the letter to talk about what the Hospital Auxiliary means to him/her. Something in the answer to that question might spark an idea that allows you to draft an opening line that is more personal and that may help relax the tone for the rest of the letter that follows.

[Date]

[Title] [First Name] [Last Name]

[Address]

[City, State, Zip]

Dear [Names],

What a year this has been! After an incredible start, we all have had to find new ways to accomplish our goals and serve our families. Thanks to your gift we have been able to keep building using just staff but we do miss our volunteers! As the restrictions begin to ease, we look forward to welcoming everyone back to our worksites. By the end of this fiscal year, we will have completed 9 homes toward our goal of 100 in the next decade. We have also completed 9 repairs toward our goal of 50.

Your gift of \$[Gift Amount] received on [Date], is the fuel that keeps us building. ABC Not-for-Profit could not accomplish this work without your support of our mission. You help build strength, stability and self-reliance in each homeowner as together we construct their home.

This summer we will begin the construction of another 8 homes in [location]. We currently are building in XYZ Park, [location] and we are finishing two Handicapped Accessible homes in [location]. ABC has also secured two more sites for major builds in the future.

None of this work can happen without your wonderful support. Thank you for making this possible for the last thirty years and join us as we build the next 100!

Gratefully,

[Name]

Executive Director



*ABC Not-for-Profit provided no goods or services to you in consideration of this gift. Your gift helps us build simple, decent, affordable houses for very low-income families in our community. With your gift we can continue our mission. May God bless you!*

There is a lot to love about this thank you letter and its lush content. The first paragraph explains how the pandemic has suddenly and dramatically changed how the organization carries out its work. I think a separate communication about this change is warranted which should be sent to all donors, whether they have given recently or not. It shines a light on this not-for-profit's ingenuity and flexibility.

This paragraph could be the whole thank you letter. It includes two creative ways of metaphorically putting the donor at the center of the not-for-profit's success. A small improvement would be to take the focus off "your gift" and put it back on "you" (the donor). *You are the fuel that keeps us building.* The photo, if you choose to include it, tells the rest of the story. Nicely done. That aside, take out the reference to gift amount, date received and the statement below the signature and put them on a separate enclosure.

[Date]

[Address]

[City, State, Zip]

Dear [First Name],

Today, a curious mind was inspired by science to make the world a better place. Penguins, fishes, butterflies, and all varieties of animals at ABC were fed. Volunteers, scientists, and researchers worked to explore, explain and sustain life on Earth. Today, this happened in memory of [Deceased], thanks to your gift \$[Gift Amount] to the ABC received on [Date].

Your gift to ABC protects endangered animals and fragile ecosystems from extinction around the world. [Program Name] and our XYZ penguin breeding program are global initiatives led by ABC researchers to preserve genetic diversity and restore critical ecosystems.

From pioneering biodiversity research to free or reduced admission for 330,000+ guests every year, world-changing science starts at ABC and is powered by generous supporters like you. Your thoughtful contribution connects people of all ages and all across the globe to the wonder of nature, the power of science and solutions for a sustainable future.

It is our honor be entrusted to remember someone so dear to you. On behalf of the more than 40,000 animals at the ABC and all else who benefit from your generosity, thank you.

With gratitude,

[Name]

Associate Director, Gift Planning

[Email Address] | xxx-xxx-xxxx

Memorial letters are hard to write, but this one ticks a number of boxes. I especially like the respectful opening line of the last paragraph, and perhaps that could be brought up to the top of the letter to set the tone.

It was interesting to learn about the breadth of programs that are described in the second and third paragraphs. I've long wondered, however, whether not-for-profits would be more successful at renewing in memoriam donors (where retention is notoriously poor), if funds raised were dedicated to supporting a single initiative. I think if this organization could zero in on something specific, then report back to this group of donors a few months later, more of them might develop an interest in this cause that they would otherwise never think of supporting. There would be nothing to lose by trying this approach. I know this seems more like offering advice on soliciting, but great appeals start long before the ask is made. They start with the thank you for the previous gift.

Definitely a higher authority should sign this letter which will help if you follow my advice above on renewing in memoriam donors' support.

[Organization Logo]

[Date]

[First Name] [Last Name]

[Address]

[City, Province, Postal Code]

Dear [First Name],

Thank you for caring! You are the reason for our existence. We know that philanthropy is important to you, and that there are likely many charities close to your heart - we are privileged to be counted among them.

We are grateful to you for helping us to provide the highest calibre of education to the professionals who will lead our sector in strategic charitable giving. Together we will be able to make a significant impact on countless causes and communities in [Country].

Your gift of \$[Gift Value] is very much appreciated. We would be honoured to list your name in our annual report. Unless otherwise notified by you, we will recognize you as: [Name].

We could not do this without you. Thank you again.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]  
Chair of the Board of Directors

[Name]  
Executive Director

I am very pleased to have received a thank you letter submission from one of our industry's professional associations, and I'm especially delighted because this one is so good.

When fundraisers are thanking other fundraisers, it's easy to adopt a tone in acknowledgments that is overly familiar or which sees the fundraiser/donor's contribution as part of the duty of our profession. This letter has definitely not fallen into that trap. Its opening is sincerely grateful, acknowledging up front that giving to his/her membership association is a choice for this donor, not an obligation.

The first and second paragraphs are a pleasure to read and the closing line is a winner. Very well done.

The only thing I question about this thank you letter is this third paragraph. I think it changes the tone from grateful to administrative. Could this be handled in a separate enclosure?

Dear [Name],

We at ABC Housing Charity envision a world where everyone has a decent place to live. Because of you, we can build it.

You have created a child's quiet place to study, a parent's peace of mind. You have ensured our neighbors a safe home where they can age in place. You have helped people to achieve their financial and housing goals. You have paved the way for better health, education, finances, and well-being. People, families, communities, and generations to come – strong legacies are being built on the foundation of your generosity.

You have made an investment in opportunity, and we would be happy to talk to you about how your investment is being leveraged. Feel free to reach out to [Name], Director of Individual and Leadership Giving, at [Phone Number] or [Email] to discuss your giving.

Thank you for believing our work, and for making it possible.

With gratitude,

[Name]

President & CEO, ABC Housing Charity

A slight alteration makes this excellent opening line even more powerful:

*You envisioned a world where everyone has a decent place to live; then you helped us build it.*

This is a superb illustration, not of what this organization does, but of the results that it achieves through its work. In fact, it is so well written that I would prefer to delete the third paragraph so that the letter does not shift into a more administrative tone. Go straight to the last line and you will have a terrific and very donor-centered thank you letter. (Just make a small grammatical correction in that last sentence.)

Dear [Name],

ABC University has been home to me for the past five years. I've spent more time in class at the School of Business and on the ice with the women's hockey team than in my own home!

I am so grateful for every donor who generously contributed to ABC University's annual Community Campaign to support students like me.

This year, more than 9,700 donors like you came together to raise nearly \$2.2 million for the 2018-19 Community Campaign, which closed on April 30.

Your donations also support the Campaign for ABC University: Next-Gen. Now, an ambitious multi-year campaign to advance the university's 9 strategic directions. We're at \$166 million so far — more than halfway to the overall goal of \$250 million.

I know firsthand the impact that donors have on a student's life. More than anything, scholarships gave me the gift of time. They allowed me to be the best I could be at my studies and on the ice. Donations to Recreation and Athletics, the School of Business, and the University Library — to name a few — also played a part in providing me with an amazing education. I was offered countless opportunities to develop skills that will support my future career as an accountant.

Every student's story is different. I am one example out of 50,000 university students who benefit from donor support. No matter what area of the university you give to, please know that your generosity has enhanced the ABC University student experience.

On behalf of my fellow students — thank you. Your support and encouragement makes all the difference.

[Name], BComm 19  
*Co-captain and goaltender of the women's hockey team*

P.S. Learn more about the impact of your gift, and explore the stories of other donors and students at [Website].

A first-person account from someone who has benefitted from what donors are funding is powerful beyond measure and very donor-centered. Kudos to the author for taking this approach.

My caution is that the letter might be attempting to accomplish too much and, in so doing, it diminishes the student's personal story. Paragraphs one, two and five are the core message from the student; everything else is information from the Development Office on fundraising which is not part of the student's education experience. Including it might make donors think that the entire thank you letter has been ghost-written by a fundraiser.

The student's story stands on its own as a beautiful illustration of what donors accomplish through giving. Save the rest for a report to donors on Campaign progress.

Please no P.S.'s in thank you letters, especially asking the donor to do something, no matter how well you say it.



**WELCOME  
MARK AND  
SHARON!**

ABC Children's  
Hospital of  
[State] Logo

**THANK YOU** for joining our Monthly Miracle Club. I don't have to tell you that miracles happen every day at ABC Children's Hospital of [State]. Your two beautiful grandsons are proof of that. **YOU** are a big reason that those miracles will continue.

Because of you, children and families throughout [State] continue to have access to the best pediatric care possible.

All year long, each and every day, your gift is making a difference. Your monthly donation isn't just dollars. It's the medical device that keeps a boy's heart beating during surgery, a private room that lets a mother sleep beside her child, innovative care in the NICU and so much more.

As a Monthly Miracle Club member we'll send you updates, event invitations and stories of children your gift helps.

Thank you for making miracles possible!

[Name]  
Annual Fund Coordinator

**P.S. I hope to see your ABC Children's Hospital car decal around town!**

**P.S.S. Say hi to Vince and Abe for me!**



There is a lot to like about this letter, both content and layout. But what I was especially pleased to read was the reference to the donors' two grandsons. Their names appear in the second PS at the bottom (although the PS information should be in the body of the letter). This speaks to excellent record-keeping and personalization.

A slight tweak to this beautiful description makes it even more powerful while allowing you to eliminate the opening line of this paragraph, which is not as impactful. Try this:

*Your gift is more than money; it's the medical device that keeps a boy's heart beating...*

According to donors, thank you letters are not as powerful when they are used to ask donors to do something. Consider testing two approaches to saying thank you: a stand-alone, beautifully composed letter or a welcome package that includes a thank you letter plus (in this case) a car decal and maybe other enclosures. Which is more effective at renewing and/or upgrading donors' support? And don't forget to take the cost of a welcome package into account. According to our research on what makes thank you letters superior, donors say that additional enclosures tend to water down an otherwise personal and grateful acknowledgement.



Dear [First Name], [First Name], [First Name] [First Name] and [First Name]:

We know it is often your role to do the work of making donors and volunteers feel like heroes (and they no doubt are!), but it is your extraordinary team of five that operationalizes all that those heroes make possible through their giving. You are heroes in your own right, and for that, we are truly grateful.

We have been so moved and inspired by the leadership and action of the ABC Community Foundation during this crisis. Thank you for magnifying philanthropy and for making the work of the mission-driven sector possible right now, when it's needed most.

With your support, ABC Not-for-Profit will continue to respond to the changing housing needs of the community so that together we can ensure every one of our neighbors has a safe, affordable place to call home.

Thank you for all that you do.

Wishing you well,

[Name]  
Development Manager

All I can say about this amazing thank you letter is that it is completely donor-centered...and the CEO of the Community Foundation who received it agreed. Here is the note that the author included with this submission:

*This thank you letter was written to our local community foundation after receipt of a COVID-19 relief grant. It even received a thank you email in return from the Foundation CEO which read: "Thank you for your marvelous thank you note, VERY well done and I see a lot of them, BRAVA."*

It's such a good letter that I'm willing to overlook the fact that it is signed by someone in the fundraising department rather than by a board member or Executive Director. But, imagine if it had been...

[LOGO] ABC Animal Rights Organization

[Date]

[Donor Name]

[Address]

[City, State, Zip Code]

Dear [First Name],

As they say, not all superheroes wear capes (unless you do, which we'd support). Rest assured that your gift of \$[Gift Amount] on [Date] makes you a superhero in the fight for justice for animals, the environment, and human health.

**Thank you, from the bottom of our hearts, for your generosity.**

Innovation is one of our core values, and we've been laser-focused on innovation in particular during these challenging several months. For instance, we took to the sky for our first-ever drone investigation of a factory farm in Brazil. Our footage, which reveals tremendous animal suffering, reached millions as some of Brazil's most influential celebrities shared it.

We are always seeking innovative ways to spread our message and mobilize supporters worldwide to help us construct a compassionate food system. In July, along with coalition partners, we sent a letter to India's prime minister, requesting that he promote plant-based foods to improve nutrition, alleviate food insecurity, and enhance the country's future. We also joined a huge coalition effort to pressure Tyson, the largest U.S. meat company, to address rising COVID-19 cases among workers at its processing facilities.

We know we can't achieve our goals for animals unless we address all systemic injustice, so we've committed to making our organization more inclusive. Our blog post [name], details our commitment.

ABC Animal Rights Organization has been busy these past months. But so much work remains in realizing our vision: a world where animals are respected, protected, and free to pursue their own interests. That's why your continued support, [First Name], is so critical. We thank you, and we know the animals thank you too.

With gratitude,

[Name]

President

P.S. For real-time updates on our progress, check out our Impact Center at [Website]. If you have questions, don't hesitate to contact us at [Email].

*ABC Animal Rights Organization is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization (Tax ID number xx-xxxxxxx). Your contribution is tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. No goods or services were provided in exchange for your donation.*

What a wonderful, lighthearted but still very respectful opening sentence. And I like how this sweet theme carries into the second paragraph with the phrase, "we took to the sky".

While the sentiment is just what donors want to read, please do not bold copy in thank you letters. It gives them the appearance and "voice" (bolded copy is like yelling) of fundraising appeals. Saying thank you should be done with grace.

Rather than shifting the letter back to your organization, keep the focus on donors instead. This revision to the second paragraph would accomplish that, while carrying through the creative theme in the opening sentence of the letter:

*You are making it possible for us to remain innovative during this challenging time. We donned our cape, too, and took to the sky last month for a drone investigation of a factory farm...*

A thank you letter should not serve as a newsletter. Don't deprive yourself of the opportunity to circle back to donors at a later date with this great information. It will set up your next ask.

Donors interpret phrases like, "But so much work remains" as a statement that they have not done enough, so never even hint at that in a thank you letter. Remember that you are writing to the people who DID step up and your sole objective should be to appreciate them.

The writer may be acknowledging donors' past support here, but this phrase can also be interpreted as another ask, albeit a veiled one. NEVER ask for another gift in a thank you letter, no matter how subtly. (That also applies to enclosing a self-addressed envelope, which is another way to ask for more money.)

Overall, this letter is much better than what usually comes from causes of this kind, so congratulations for breaking the mold. If you take these comments into account, you'll have a winner.

[First Name] [Last Name]  
[Address]  
[City, State, Zip Code]

[Date]

Dear [First Name],

**Love**  
YOUR neighbor  
as yourself  
Mark 12:31

Last year, when the news of Deb's passing became public, it was clear that our community and state lost a person who was the embodiment of a public servant. Former Governor, now Senator, [Name], said it best:

*"She brought compassion to her advocacy and I believe it made me a better governor. Her service was not without sacrifice. On top of time away from her family and the strain upon her health, her empathy was so deep and pure that she carried the weight of the vulnerable through long hours and personal anguish."*

We know leaders that are often identified by their ability to be strong, confident, and outspoken. What set Deb apart from everyone else is that she was all of that and more. Her ability to connect with people from all walks of life, make them feel understood, respected, and supported set her apart from the rest.

The similarities between you and Deb are easy to spot. You have committed your entire life's work to selflessly serve others, just as Deb did. Your empathy, courage, patience, willingness to listen, and commitment to ensuring that ABC Not-for-Profit continues to offer the breadth of services it does to all who live in [state], regardless of who they are or where they live, is so invigorating.

Like Deb, Luann's inspiration to pursue a life path in social services was influenced by her personal life experiences. Your gift ensures that Deb's legacy of supporting youth through social services lives on. Thank you for your generosity and for inspiring us all through your leadership every day.

God bless you,

[Name]  
Development Associate  
ABC Not-for-Profit

**Statement of Giving – Please Retain for your Records**

Date	Type	Amount	Gift Restriction
[Date]	Donation	\$(Gift Amount)	Deb [Last Name] Scholarship Fund

Please note that no goods or services were received from ABC Not-for-Profit of [State] or ABC Not-for-Profit Foundation in exchange for your gift.

This is a highly unusual and very personal thank you letter that pays tribute to three people: Deb in whose name the scholarship fund was created, Luann who has been awarded a scholarship from the fund and the donor. It is very donor-centered.

Wow, what a passionate and respectful tribute to the donor.

Some insight into the scholarship recipient, something that is especially important to donors.

This already great letter would be even more memorable for the donor if it came from a leadership volunteer at the top of this not-for-profit.

Great thank you letters allow the emotional side of their authors and signatories to shine through, making this kind of administrative copy so out of place. Remove it to a separate enclosure to maintain the beautiful tone that this letter's author created.

## BE BOLD

THE CAMPAIGN FOR UM-FLINT

Dear [REDACTED]

My name is [REDACTED] and I am a student with the privilege to take part in the Mpowering My Success program at the University of Michigan - Flint. I learned about your gift to the program and wanted to thank you personally. Without this program, I would not have been able to attend college. I was fully enrolled at [REDACTED] when I learned that the cost would be too great for me to attend as a pre-medical major. This is when I found the people at Mpowering. They made it possible for me to attend UM-Flint and thrive. I am currently a junior majoring in both Molecular Biology/Biotechnology and Clinical Lab Science/Medical Technology. This program not only helps me afford college, but also provides me with a meal plan and teaches me life skills that will aid in my progression in life both during and after college. We as students are also able to partake in team building activities and events which help us bond and have new experiences. Without donations and funding, Mpowering My Success would not exist. It's people like you that help this program thrive and make college possible for kids in my situation.

Thank you,

P.S. It was really interesting to learn that [REDACTED] graduated from the University of Michigan-Flint. It's amazing to see alumni involved and caring for their alma mater.

If you are lucky enough to have a thank you letter composed by someone who is the direct beneficiary of donors' gifts, anything that person says is wonderful. This one is terrific...and handwritten. My donor-centered rules (e.g. no PS) don't apply in such circumstances.

So many donors, especially those who give to scholarship funds, are keenly disappointed when they are not thanked by the student beneficiaries. I know how difficult it is to get students to sit down and write those letters, so my biggest accolade goes to the fundraiser(s) who made sure this great letter was written.

It's virtually guaranteed that the donors who made this gift will give again. Just try to hold them back!

Because it was impossible to disguise certain information and still show readers the original hand-written thank you letter, names of the institution and its program are shared with permission from the University of Michigan - Flint.

[Organization Logo]

"This is a wonderful thing you are doing."

—John, cancer patient and XYZ Program participant

Dear [Name],

At a recent XYZ Program, John, who has stage 3 cancer, beamed as he looked at the painting he had just created.

It didn't matter that John's hands shook. It didn't matter that his voice was weak, or that his shoulders drooped. What mattered is that John found a moment of joy.

In that moment, your hand was on his shoulder, steadying him as he faces cancer. You are there in every moment of joy he finds whenever he looks at that painting.

Your gift makes moments like these possible for John and all of the people touched by cancer who participate in our Program.

On behalf of John – and the countless others you are helping – thank you.

Sincerely,

[Name]

Executive Director, ABC Not-for-Profit

[Name]

[Address 1]

[Address 2]

[DONATION/SPONSORSHIP/GRANT/IN-KIND AMOUNT]

Please keep this acknowledgment of your 2020 contribution in order to claim a charitable deduction for federal income tax purposes. ABC is a 501(c)(3) organization; our Federal tax ID is xx-xxxxxxx. No goods or services were received in exchange for this contribution.

This is an excellent example of a thank you letter that is already brief, personal and heartfelt but which could be even more powerful with some rearranging. I think that the most beautiful sentiment is the first sentence of the third paragraph. The letter could open with, *Your hand is on John's shoulder, steadying him as he faces cancer.* Then, in the second paragraph, it could explain what that means in the context of the wonderful program offered by this not-for-profit.

This is a passionate and respectful thank you letter, brought to a close beautifully with the last sentence. Very nice.

Quotes from those helped through donors' contributions are almost always great additions to thank you letters. But this one doesn't really add value. I think the letter stands on its own without this quote, especially considering my comment above.

Dear [Name] and [Name],

August 2000, you signed a Donor Advised Agreement with ABC Community Foundation and WOW! Since 2003 (as far back as I could go) this fund has granted out over \$95,000.00! With this years allowance of just over \$10,000.00 – well the math \$105,000.00!

Thank you!!

This does not include the grants from your flow through fund, but I can only imagine that amount.

Just a couple save the dates:

May 6 – Leave a Legacy Lunch

Sept 19 – ABC Community Foundation XYZ Gala

Nov 13 – National Philanthropy Day Lunch

ABC Community Foundation is celebrating 50yrs this year. I will let you know of any special events. Also a very important date: August 9th – 20th anniversary of [Donor Name] and [Donor Name] [Last Name] Fund. Thank you for all you do!!

Chat real soon 😊

[Name]

Normally I would be uncomfortable with the heavy focus on the amount of money donated, which usually turns an otherwise grateful thank you letter into something that feels like it's coming from the accounting office. But, crediting a donor's long-time support shows that you are paying attention, so that is a good thing. What is missing, however, is balance. A more meaningful and donor-centered thank you letter would acknowledge twenty years of support but reference what was *achieved* because of this donor couple's loyalty and commitment to their community.

Save this for a separate communication. Keep thank you letters focused on your gratitude for what donors have done.

This was a hand-written thank you letter, a very important gesture of respect for a twenty-year donor couple.

I have to assume that a relationship exists between this donor couple and the author of the thank you letter that would make this kind of casual closing appropriate. (There was no title after the signature.) If not, the letter should definitely be coming from the highest authority in the Community Foundation.



Dear [First Name],

Thank you, thank you, thank you!

As the needs of the community continue to grow, so does your generosity! You ensure that teachers continue to stay connected to their students and families and that essential food and hygiene items get into the hands of families who need it most.

Thank you for your relentless support for children and families in these challenging times.

You provide a better tomorrow for children and families.

Very sincerely yours,

[Name]

Director of Donor Relations

ABC Not-for-Profit

[Address] | [City], [State] [Zip Code]

[Phone Number]

Brevity is the best characteristic of this letter. And, it's definitely passionate and sincere. Very important donor-centered qualities.

Saying it three times does help convey the author's genuine gratitude. Still, as most acknowledgement letters start with the words, "thank you", you have a better chance of grabbing the reader's attention with an atypical opening line. Try it; it's more difficult than you think.

There is a big difference between "pronouncing" the generosity of donors and saying how grateful you are for what donors have done. It is a small adjustment to the wording of thank you letters but it achieves a significant change in tone.

Because the phrase, "for children and families" was used in the previous paragraph, this sentence could be shorter and more impactful. A single paragraph can include both statements:

*Your relentless support for children and families in these challenging times is giving them a better tomorrow.*

If this letter came from the CEO or a leadership volunteer, it would be more powerful.

[Date]

Mrs. [First Name] [Last Name]

[Address]

[City, State, Zip]

Dear [Name]:

Please accept our deepest gratitude for your recent gift to the ABC Health Foundation. Because of people like you, ABC Health is able to continue to provide the best possible care to our community, remain independent and locally owned.

In 2019 the Foundation gave the hospital nearly \$2.7 million to directly benefit the patients and staff at ABC Health. Through gifts from generous donors like you, the Foundation was able to provide funding for the East Wing expansion, scholarships, equipment needed, and programs benefitting patients and the community.

This year's focus has been to support the purchase of equipment for ABC's Health's neurosciences program. However, during these times of uncertainty we have created a COVID-19 response fund to support ABC Health's highest priority needs. We appreciate everything the community does to give back to their hospital.

With warmest regards,

[Name]  
President

## GIFT RECEIPT

**AMOUNT:** \$[Gift Amount]

**FOR:** COVID-19 Response Fund

**DATE:** [Date]

In these extraordinary times, healthcare institutions and many other not-for-profits are having to quickly reassign donors' gifts to pandemic-related needs. Kudos to the Foundation for being transparent regarding how gifts are being redirected and saying so in this thank you letter.

It is more effective to speak to the individual to whom you are writing than to refer to the donor as part of a group of people who are similar in their views. *Because of you, ABC Health...* is a more powerful statement.

When saying thank you, it is not advantageous to draw donors' attention to the Foundation which, for them, is an administrative body that concerns itself with raising money. In fact, that is unintentionally reinforced in this letter which implies that it is the Foundation that is funding critical healthcare work when, of course, it is donors.

Offering an example of what falls under the category of "highest priority needs" in light of COVID-19 would also help set up your next communication to donors.



[Date]

[Title] [First Name] [Last Name]

[Address]

[City, State, Zip]



Thank you for your gift of \$[Gift Amount], which we received on [Date]. Your gift has been designated, as you wished, to the ABC's Reflective Garden.

The ABC Reflective Garden continues to provide a safe and secure outdoor space for all of our Sisters, but especially for our Sisters residing in the memory care unit. Within this meditative area, Sisters are able to walk safely on new pathways, sit and reflect on new benches, and not have to worry about traffic or uneven cement. Thanks to you, ABC Reflective Garden is a reality and is bringing so much joy to our Sisters!

When asked about this the Reflective Garden, Sister [Name] said, "I can picture myself sitting in the Reflective Garden as the sun is coming up – taking in God's earth. Being in nature can really touch one through and through."

Thank you for making this dream come true for so many of our Sisters. You and your loved ones are remembered daily in the prayers of our Sisters.

With deep gratitude,

[Name]

Director of Development

P.S. We want to stay connected with you! Follow us on Facebook and Twitter. I also invite you to contact me directly anytime at [Email].

What a beautiful project that donors are funding. This is a lovely thank you letter whose gentle composition matches the feeling that people have when enjoying time in the Reflective Garden.

I would begin the thank you letter with this quote. Nothing is ever more powerful for donors than hearing directly from someone who is benefitting from what they have helped make possible. Then remove the current opening sentence to a separate enclosure.

Lovely closing paragraph.

My preference is to stay away from PS's in thank you letters and to avoid using acknowledgements to ask donors to do something. Short, beautifully composed letters that are 100% focused on gratitude are rare and, consequently, prized by donors.

“

#GIVINGTUESDAY

Dear Giving Tuesday,

*I'm trying to find the right words to thank you for yesterday. Although I wasn't supposed to be the surprised one, look, you succeeded. How much emotion I lived ... how many times I stopped my tears from running down my face ... how much hope seeing that is not all lost and that this world around us still has hope as long as generous people still exist.*

*What a pity you didn't see Marius' mother's face when she found out that someone with a big heart will pay for his glasses, what a pity you didn't see when she saw the donated food vouchers and said with an almost unreal smile that she will be able to buy food.*

*To have seen the tears streaming down her face when seeing the money donated by people willing to do good. And the hope she had when she found out how many people are willing to continue to help them.*

*Marius had an unforgettable evening surrounded by people who managed to make him feel important and loved. But me, I was overwhelmed. Thank you Sebastian for the involvement you prove every time, thank you to everyone who got involved on the evening of December 3rd. I love you!*

*And thank you, Giving Tuesday, and I want you to know that I am waiting for you to come next year as I never did before!*

#GivingTuesdayAlbaIulia #GivingTuesdayRomânia



Dear Ryan,

The above message was posted on Facebook by a person from Alba Iulia who on Giving Tuesday chose to support a family in need from the local community. Her emotions show us that Giving Tuesday means equally receiving and giving, it means kindness, friendship, humanity.

We lived this year's Giving Tuesday with much more joy and intensity than the years before. And this is primarily due to the enthusiasm with which more people have chosen to get involved through the most diverse gestures of generosity. Whether they donated money, goods, blood, their time or voice, each of them brought joy, emotion and hope in the life of people who needed support.

Thank you so much for supporting our campaign this year. Our aim is to transform Giving Tuesday, step by step, into a powerful and an impactful movement in Romania. Your help means a lot to us and has a key role in our journey.

Have a magical Christmas and a very happy New Year,

The Giving Tuesday Romania team

[givingtuesday.ro](http://givingtuesday.ro)

I was very eager to include this letter because it is a thank you to donors who gave through *Giving Tuesday* but the letter has a special twist. The italicized narrative above the picture is an expression of gratitude posted to Facebook by a donor who participated in the *Giving Tuesday* campaign. You may have to read the post more than once to grasp the details, but the donor's passion and gratitude are evident from the very first sentence.

A thank you letter this extraordinary defies the rules but is still donor-centered. Thanks to the organizers of the *Giving Tuesday* campaign in the city of Alba Iulia, northwest of Bucharest for sharing this letter.

[Date]

Mr. [First Name] [Last Name] and  
Mr. [First Name] [Last Name]  
[Name of Fund]  
[Address]  
[City, State, Zip Code]

Dear [First Name] [Last Name],

What a joy it is to partner with you to achieve our shared goal – to end pediatric cancer! We are incredibly thankful for your recent gift of \$[Gift Amount] to support ABC Center for Cancer and Blood Disorders.

Your generosity changes lives. Families need a place like the ABC Center, where kids can get the very best care, specialized just for them. Your generosity empowers us to provide vital programs that help kids and families who are facing some of the hardest struggles out there. With your help, we are providing kids wraparound care and treatments with dignity and ease.

Everything we do is better because of your generosity and commitment to the kids and families of [State]. We're honored to partner with you. Thank you for helping us help kids!

Warm regards,

[Name]

[Name]

This is a lovely opening phrase. Partnering is what donors hope they are doing when they decide to give. However, I would end the first paragraph after the word, "thankful" so that this otherwise beautifully composed sentiment is not lessened by the transaction information.

Be careful that you don't change the tone of a thank you letter from appreciative to instructive. You got the gift, so you and your donor are already in agreement about what motivated this couple's support. What donors do find meaningful, however, would be a statement about where their gift is being directed, in specific terms.

Because this letter opens with a reference to partnership, I think the closing paragraph should be this single, powerful sentence:

*Everything we do is better because of you.*

I see there are no titles associated with these names. First, thank you letters are considered more powerful when they come from a single individual and if that individual is a person of influence (board member, hospital CEO, physician), then you should definitely include the title which adds another layer of respect.

[Date]

[Name]

[Address]

[City, State, Zip]

Dear [FName]:

Thanks to you, a student who would not be able to enroll in the ABC School of Aviation due to financial reasons, will now be registering for classes. With you as our partner, educating students of all ages from our community is taking place at a record level. Over 8,000 students now attend our college campuses!

Please know how grateful we are to you for your gift of [Amount] to the XYZ Fund. Your commitment will help provide a pathway for students who have a passion to make their careers in the aviation industry.

You are making a difference in the lives of students, their families, to the region, and beyond. Thank you again for your support. I am...

Sincerely,

[Name]

Executive Director

"How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world." - Anne Frank



Gifts are tax-deductible to the extent provided by law.

The Foundation acknowledges that it did not provide any goods or services in exchange for this gift. Your gift of [Amount] on [Gift Date] may be tax-deductible. Please retain this letter for your records.

There are several donor-centered characteristics in this thank you letter that make it stand out, especially its references to the donor, rather than just the donor's money, its overall positive tone and its concise message. The opening line is great, too. (Another opening line came to mind because this is a School of Aviation – *Another student is about to soar into her future because of you.* Lots of possibilities for crafting a new letter if this donor gives again.)

I think this has already been said. You could eliminate this last paragraph.

This is such a beautiful quote. Could it be placed above the salutation rather than having it as an afterthought?

The perfunctory IRS language diminishes the quality of a thank you letter. I always suggest to fundraisers that it be moved to a separate enclosure that states the gift amount and date and that this enclosure be folded in with the letter.

[Date]

[Name]

[Address]

[City, State, Zip]

Dear [Salutation]:

Thank you for your gift of \$[Gift Amount], received on [Gift Date]. Your support has made an impact on so many people in our community. People like Shiloh.

A few years ago, Shiloh experienced homelessness after losing a home that was left to him by his grandmother. He struggled to get his house back, but just wasn't able to. Shiloh decided to volunteer with our organization and he used his time to help staff teach the community about homelessness. During his time volunteering, using our basic services XYZ Program, he worked hard and finally regained the rights to his home, where he now resides with his partner and 17-month-old daughter.

Because of generous support like yours, we were able to help him find his way onto a path of healing and stability. Thanks to you, Shiloh is home.

Thank you for making transformations like Shiloh's possible. We couldn't do it without you.

In Gratitude,

[Name]

Annual Fund Manager

xxx-xxx-xxxx

**P.S. Thank you so much for your patience and understanding regarding the delay in your acknowledgement letter. Please know this is not a reflection of our gratitude, just the current circumstances. We appreciate you!**

ABC Not-for-Profit is a 501(c)3 public charity and gifts are tax deductible to the extent provided by law. No goods or services were provided in exchange for the contribution acknowledged above. Please retain this letter for IRS tax purposes.

For a not-for-profit that is less well known or whose mandate is not readily apparent in its name, it can be valuable to use stories like this one about Shiloh. I especially like how the story is then connected back to the donor in the final paragraph before the closing.

Starting a thank you letter with an administrative statement about the gift misses an opportunity to begin building a relationship or move an existing relationship higher.

Oh, this is interesting. donors in our research studies say that receiving thank you letters promptly gives them an added degree of confidence that they just supported the right not-for-profit. If the pandemic is the cause of the delay, then you can say that COVID and our work-from-home situation has slowed our ability to respond quickly (or some such sentiment). If the problem is not related to a crisis outside your control, you should try to figure out why your attempts to thank donors promptly are being compromised. Fixing that will help you build loyalty which, in turn, will help you raise more money in the future.

[Date]

[First Name] [Last Name]

[Address]

[City, State, Zip]

Dear [First Name],

**Wow** – what an amazing 24 hours we just experienced with the 2020 Giving Challenge! Thank you for being a part of this community-wide giving event and for coming through for ABC Not-for-Profit in a big way. Because of you, we raised \$[Amount]. Just think of all the good that will do!

By taking advantage of this special opportunity, you were able to triple your \$[Gift Amount] donation for seniors in our community. And because of you, during this time of crisis we continue to serve thousands of seniors with nutritious home-delivered meals, case management services, telehealth in medical clinics, and online support groups. None of this would be possible without friends like you.

From the bottom of our hearts...thank you! Thank you for believing in our mission and ensuring that seniors in [State] can still rely on us, especially during this time. We're all in this together, and we couldn't be prouder to partner with you for this life-changing work.

With grateful hearts,

[Name]  
President & CEO

[Name]  
Chief Development Officer

This sentence deters from the otherwise gracious tone. "By taking advantage of ..." reads like it was a 3:1 matching opportunity. If so, maybe a more delicate approach that focuses on the philanthropic act first and the financial advantage second might be more appropriate in a thank you letter. How about something like...

*You stepped up when we needed your help and did so when our giving challenge could also leverage the value of your already generous contribution.*

*"possible without you and other donors who stepped up."*

Very nice closing paragraph.

Thank you letters feel more like genuine letters of appreciation when they come from one person and express that individual's sincere feelings. Yes, I know that letters signed by the CEO are invariably drafted by the fundraiser, but that's part of a fundraiser's job description. This donor will want to know that the highest level staff person took the time to notice her.



<p><b>[ORGANIZATION LOGO]</b></p> <p>xxx-xxx-xxxx [Website] [Address] [City, State, Zip]</p> <p><b>Board of Directors</b> [Name] [Name] [Name] [Name] [Name] [Name]</p> <p><b>Executive Director</b> [Name]</p>	<p>[Date]</p> <p>[Name] [Address] [City, State, Zip Code]</p> <p>"Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not." -Dr. Seuss</p> <p>Dear [Name]</p> <p>We want to thank you for caring "a whole awful lot" about ABC Not-for-Profit! Your support and steadfastness in the belief that ABC has a role in supporting our community through the COVID-19 pandemic means so much to us.</p> <p>Already, we have 44 clients and their families scheduled to receive mental health services via telehealth. Our equine professionals continue to keep the ranch well-maintained and our horses in good health; as our experiential "boots on the ground", they are also videoing their daily experience, recording storytime with the herd, and capturing great moments to share with clients and the community.</p> <p>We are working diligently to reach out to the foster care and healthcare community to assess their immediate mental health needs. It is our intention to offer our remaining counseling time slots to these community members, who are taking tremendous care of others and are searching for support of their own during this pandemic.</p> <p>Thank you so much for helping ABC in this endeavor. Right now, we know that everyone is being asked to stay inside and be safe, so it can be hard to find ways to help people. But your gift will help so many. We are grateful for your persistence in finding a remote way to extend hope and love to the community.</p> <p>When it's safe to gather with others again, we hope to reconnect with you out at the ranch to enjoy a much-needed sense of togetherness. Our team and our horses would love to say thank you in person! In the meantime, please stay safe and stay well.</p> <p>In health and hope,</p> <p>[Name] Executive Director</p> <p>P.S. Because ABC is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and you received no goods or services in exchange for your \$[Gift Amount] gift, your donation is tax-deductible as allowed by law.</p>
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The author certainly turned to a well-known expert for a quote, but I'm not sure this one is the best choice for a thank you letter. It's focused on the problem when the donors you are thanking are contributing to the solution. I do realize that the author cleverly tied the quote to the creative and original opening line of the thank you letter. Still, I would save this quote for an appeal, and find one that is more hopeful. In fact, as I read the rest of the letter, I concluded that the quote was unnecessary. The content of the letter is exceptional, needing no other affirmation.

This letter is a pleasure to read. It explains how quickly the organization was able to reconfigure their services to remain vital during the pandemic and how fast they are putting donors' gifts to work. Although the letter is somewhat longer than I would normally recommend, it is riveting from beginning to end in its description of how donors are contributing to innovative healthcare right now. Very compelling and donor-centered.

University of [State] | FOUNDATION

## Thank you for making a difference

[Picture of hospital staff holding signs thanking donors]

Dear [Name],

**YOU ARE AMAZING!** In these unprecedented and uncertain times, your generosity and that of others is incredibly encouraging and inspiring to those on the front lines.

Your donation in support of our front-line healthcare staff has an immediate impact on our ability to serve our community's needs. Thank you!

Though we are physically distant, our community remains socially and globally connected.

We're in this together. Thank you again and be well!

Sincerely,

[Signature]

[Name]

Associate Vice President for Development, Health Sciences

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As the current situation changes rapidly, visit University of [State]'s Coronavirus (COVID-19) Updates webpage for the latest updates.

The note that accompanied this submission mentioned that the appeal was for this organization's COVID-19 Rapid Response Fund. It must have been a very compelling ask. Overall, I think this thank you letter communicates the right message in an unprecedented situation. It's concise, heartfelt and respectful. Well done.

The phrase at the top, "Thank you for making a difference" has become overused and, consequently, has lost its punch. I would delete it. The pictures (which I realize readers cannot see) and the well-crafted letter speak for themselves.

I know this person is a senior Development leader and someone that the fundraisers in the department look up to. BUT, I think an opportunity has been missed. In the middle of a pandemic, when the Health Sciences faculty or school is raising money, could the University's leading authority on infectious diseases be the signatory? That would be amazing.



## [Cartoon image of a woman driving a car and pulling into a repair shop]

Your gift ensures youth impacted by the foster care system have access to positive experiences, tangible support and coaching to graduate from high school and launch successfully into adulthood.

Our youth submit a variety of requests, like Julie, who needed to get her car fixed:

"I want to start by saying thank you for always being there to support me. I'm very grateful, and I hope that someday I will be there for somebody the way ABC Not-for-Profit has been there for me and my family. I'm in need of new tires for my car. I'm going to start school, and the tires on my car are very old. Some of them have holes in them. I was wondering if ABC Not-for-Profit could please help me to get new tires, please."

With your support, youth like Julie are getting what they need when they need it so they can more freely pursue their post-high school plans.

With gratitude,

[Name]  
Chief Development & Marketing Officer

Your Gift:

Received:

Given By:

ABC Not-for-Profit supplied no goods or services in connection with this contribution; all donations to our organization are tax-deductible under IRS code 501(c)3. Our tax ID number is XX-XXXXXX. You may use this as your receipt.

The third paragraph in this thank you letter is the donor-centered essence and a very meaningful story from someone helped by this not-for-profit. In fact, it is so good that it could become the entire thank you letter and it would be very powerful. Just change the quote from a request for funding to a thank you for the tires made possible by the donor. Having the letter come straight from this student who is moving forward after growing up in the foster care system, makes it an unbeatable expression of gratitude.

A tear-off receipt at the bottom of this thank you letter takes away from the letter itself and makes it look like a formatted communication coming from the accounting department. Instead, enclose a separate receipt along with the card.

[Organization Logo]

No act of kindness, however small, is ever wasted. – Aseop

[Date]

[First Name] [Last Name]

[Address]

[City, State, Zip]

Dear [First Name],

**What a wonderful thing you have done!**

The most heroic of acts come directly from the heart and yours is boundless. Thank you for your generous and compassionate gift to the ABC Not-for-Profit.

Through the COVID-19 crisis, the shelter will continue to strive to meet the needs of the homeless shelter animals and community pet owners. It is through your act of kindness that we are able to keep our shelter animals safe, cared for, loved and provided with the medical care and attention they deserve.

Thank you for your grace, generosity and good will. You are a light at this difficult time and your generous support is greatly appreciated.

With profound gratitude,

[Name]

Executive Director

While a quotation is sometimes a beautiful enhancement to a thank you letter, this particular letter is so good that I don't think it needs it. Actually I focused in on "however small" which could be interpreted as a judgment call on the value of the donor's gift and/or the effort made to help.

Never bold copy in a thank you letter.

I would end this sentence after the word "time" because there are several other expressions of gratitude, the loveliest of which is the complimentary close that follows. Let it stand out. Shortening this sentence also makes it more powerful.

Very high marks for this donor-centered thank you letter, including that it is signed by the highest staff-level authority in the organization.

[Date]

[Name]  
[Address]  
[City, State, Zip Code]

Dear [First Name],

There is no such thing as a small act of kindness. Every act creates a ripple. And, when combined with the generosity of others even grows into a wave. Your gift today is doing just that—becoming a wave!

Your [Name of the Fund] gift of \$[Gift Amount] received on [Date] provides the [young men we serve] with new learning opportunities, enhanced hands-on training, consultations for your chapter and more health and safety education.

It's a challenging time to be a values-based fraternity man on a college campus. Your gift is a bright spot and the encouragement they need as leaders. Your investment helps sponsor their attendance at vital programs, like the ABC Leadership Institute, where they learn how to have crucial conversations and take positive action among their peers.

Each [name of program] undergraduate who experiences the leadership training, skills building and educational programs your gift provides, makes a larger impact because of you. The transformation they will bring to their communities, campuses, chapters and in themselves is made possible because of your latest investment. Talk about a ripple effect!

With this gift, you have contributed a total of \$[Amount] to the ABC Foundation. We are fortunate to be able to count you among our valued "Foundation Fellows" for accumulative gifts of \$1,000 to \$4,999.

Your investment grows in magnitude with each young man you help build. This ripple effect means even more young men will benefit from the same positive [program's name] experience you had and in turn impact their family, career and community. Thank you for making waves with ABC!

Loyally,

[Name], CFRE  
Executive Director & CEO

Your gift is tax deductible to the full extent of the law and this letter is your official receipt. In compliance with IRS requirements, the ABC Foundation is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization (Federal Tax ID #xx-xxxxxxx) and did not provide any goods or services in return for your thoughtful gift... other than the joy of giving to help to Build the Leaders of Tomorrow. Thank you again!

Picking up on my comment on the previous letter, I think this opening paragraph could be improved by removing the reference to "small" which could be interpreted as a judgment call about the donor's gift. How about something like, *Every act of kindness creates a ripple effect. Your kindness and generosity have helped turn a ripple into a wave.*

I think this letter would be improved by leaving out the second paragraph and, as I have mentioned in commentaries on other letters, relegating gift amount and date received to a separate enclosure.

I very much like how this paragraph and the last one below reintroduce the theme that is so skillfully articulated at the beginning of the letter.

This paragraph could be moved to a separate enclosure.

I think this has already been said, so take the best of this paragraph and the fourth one above and turn it into one brief and powerful statement to end this excellent and donor-centered thank you letter.

[Date]

Mr. and Mrs. John Doe  
[Address]  
[City, State, Zip Code]

Dear Mr. and Mrs. John Doe,

Thank you for making the mission of The ABC Museum and Park possible! Your gift of \$[Gift Amount] on [Date] allows us to provide engaging educational programming for students throughout our community. Whether they participate in a program at the Museum, have a Museum educator come to their classroom, or engage via interactive video conferencing, students benefit from hands-on, cross-curricular educational experiences that bring history, science, and language arts to life.

A young girl recently visited the Museum as a part of a group, participating in a program focused on African American maritime experiences. When a staff member asked our young visitor what the best part of her day at the Museum was, she thought for a moment and replied, "Learning things you don't learn in school!" At The ABC Museum, children can learn things and discover stories that they would have otherwise never known. As we said in the letter you recently received, our student programs are not just a day off of school. They complement classroom lessons and help improve learning outcomes for students. We want everyone—no matter socioeconomic status, race, or gender to find their connection to the world's waters.

Mr. and Mrs. Doe, thank you for partnering with us to ensure that our students continue to receive impactful educational programs. Together, we will continue to build and inspire the next generation of Mariners! If you would like to learn more about how you help us accomplish our mission or have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me [Phone] or [Email]. We hope to see you at the Museum soon!

With sincere appreciation,

[Name]  
Director of Individual Philanthropy

Thank you for your contribution of \$[Gift Amount] received on [Date]. No goods or services were provided in exchange for this contribution. The ABC Museum is an exempt organization as described in Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, EIN: xx-xxxxxxx.

There is nothing like hearing directly from someone who benefits from the gifts that donors make, so I was very excited to find a terrific quote from a student in this thank you letter. In fact, the quote in the second paragraph plus the partnership reference in the third paragraph are so good that they could become the whole thank you letter.

Everything else is great information, but it reads like an information brochure or the content of the appeal that already won this couple's support. Here is a shorter version that gives readers an illustration of the difference between a letter that expresses gratitude for what donors do and one that uses the acknowledgement as an opportunity to educate. It can definitely be improved, but this could be a starting point:

*"It's pretty cool that I'm getting a day off school. But the best thing about coming to the ABC Museum is learning things you don't learn in a classroom!"*

Thank you, Mr. and Mrs. Doe, for partnering with us so that, together, we can inspire the next generation of Mariners.

With sincere appreciation,

If this letter were signed by the curator of the Museum, it would be much more powerful.

I wanted to take a moment to reach out to you with a huge and heartfelt thank-you. These are challenging and uncertain times for all of us, but there's also so much hope. You're playing a life-changing role in a heroic fight for human service needs—something that is needed now more than ever before. As the coronavirus continues to spread, your support is directly helping the most vulnerable families in ABC County. At times like this, we all need the support of community. Thank you for providing a safety net for those that don't have one. This couldn't be done without you.

Name | Director of Donor Relations & Major Gifts  
Preferred Pronouns: she/her/hers  
ABC Not-for-Profit | [Address] | [City/State/Zip]  
xxx-xxx-xxxx (Direct) | xxx-xxx-xxxx (Main)

This is a great donor-centered thank you letter. I wonder if the donors receiving this have just given or if the author was inspired by the pandemic to reach out and express her thanks to all their donors, regardless of the timing of their last gift. I hope it's the latter because it's a reminder that anytime is a great time to thank donors for what they do.

Here's one of the rare occasions when sending a thank you letter from a staff member is appropriate. Fundraisers are the ones who always have donors on their minds.

I think the entire composition is excellent but I especially love the "safety net" reference near the end.

Beautiful!

[Date]

Dear Mr. and Mrs. [Last Name],

You made this smile possible.



Emily is facing challenges that we wish no four-year-old had to face, but today - - -

Today, Emily felt like a queen, because you cared.

You made it possible for Emily to forget about needles, to forget about pain, to forget about losing her hair.

You gave Emily a chance to have fun, to be creative, to be a little girl with dream, not just a little girl with cancer.

Thank you.

And Emily wasn't the only one smiling.

We wish you could have seen Mom and Dad. When your support gave Emily time with Arts for Life, when Mom and Dad saw their sweetheart having fun, you filled their hearts with hope.

You made this smile (and so much more) possible.

Thank you!

Warmly,

[Name], Director of Development

**For your Tax Records:**

On May 4, 2018, [First Name] and [First Name] [Last Name] donated \$[Gift Amount] to ABC Not-for-Profit, a 501 (c) 3 organization. No goods or services were received in return.

I do like this letter very much because of Emily's story which vividly explains what this organization does. So, well done. I felt it was missing something, however, and that is an expression of gratitude to accompany the information about what this donor is helping accomplish. I'm pleased to see the author using "you" instead of "your gift", but "you" is referenced too often at the expense of a softer, gracious statement of appreciation. Still, an excellent and original letter overall.

Use your influence whenever you can. This should be signed by the head of pediatric oncology.

Remove to a separate enclosure

[Date]

Mr. [First Name] [Last Name] and Mrs. [First Name] [Last Name]  
[Address]  
[City, State, Zip]

Dear Mr. [Last Name] and Mrs. [Last Name],

You made a difference in the life of one of our students through your generous donation to create the non-endowed XYZ Scholarship. We are so grateful to you for supporting the ABC Academy with this scholarship that will be awarded to one student per year.

Your ongoing support of the students here at ABC is truly appreciated by everyone. Your allegiance to the school and its mission is deeply felt and we are in your debt for the many ways you demonstrate this commitment.

For almost 150 years, the ABC Academy has had a rich heritage of great art and great art instruction. Since its earliest beginnings, the Academy has educated many accomplished artists and designers, provided personalized attention to students, and touched residents' lives through community education.

We are proud of our mission to provide personalized education in the visual arts. Our vision is to excel and to be recognized as a vibrant, creative community dedicated to engaging innovative visual artists who make meaningful contributions to the world. And with your support, we can "Make Art, Make a Difference."

Again, thank you for your generosity. It is deeply appreciated.

Kind regards,  
[Name]  
President  
(xxx)xxx-xxxx

Since the next sentence confirms that the scholarship has not yet been awarded, it might be more intriguing to start the letter with, *You are about to make a difference in the life of one of our students....*

This is one of the very few times when I'm OK with using the phrase "make a difference" because a full scholarship would definitely do that. In most instances, however, fundraisers should try to stay away from "you made a difference" as it has become an over-worked substitute for starting a letter with another overworked phrase, "thank you for your generous gift."

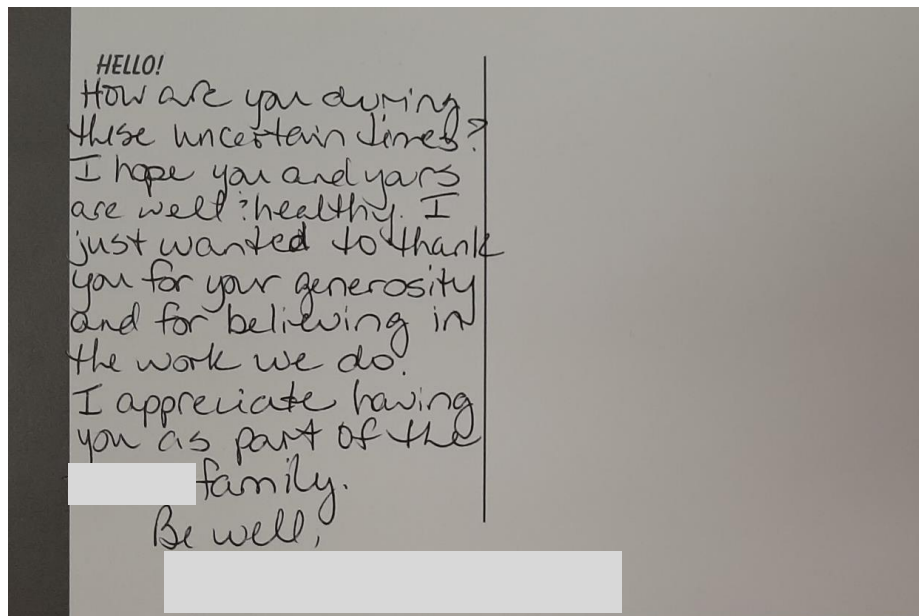
This paragraph serves as an example to writers about how genuine feelings of gratitude are muffled by using third person language instead of first. This alternative illustrates:

*I am so grateful for your continuing support of students at the Academy and I truly appreciate the many ways you have demonstrated your commitment over the years.*

You don't have to sell the Academy in a thank you letter. Save these two paragraphs for your next appeal.

Signed by the right person, and with a direct contact phone number. Well done.





There is so much to praise about this very donor-centered thank you note. First, the author let me know that she is sending out these personal cards just to keep in touch with donors, not because they recently gave. Second, the message on the outside of the card is definitely right for the times. Third, the notes are all handwritten.

My comment to this caring fundraiser: if you wrote to some but not all your donors, you would have an excellent controlled test on the impact of personal communication on fundraising success. You will likely find that those who received these delightful personal notes are more likely to give again, to make more generous gifts, to signal their interest in developing a closer relationship and to tell you more about themselves, like why they singled your organization out for support.

Very well done.



[Date]

[Name]

[Address]

[City, State, Zip Code]

Dear [Salutation],

**“You** all inspire me to do better, to be better, and I will do my best to make you proud.”

– [Name], 2019 XYZ Scholarship recipient

“Thank **you** for believing in me as a student, for believing in me as a future physician,  
and for making me realize that there is no dream too big not to accomplish.”

– [Name], 2018 XYZ Scholarship recipient

“Thank **you** for helping us to help each other as we work to continue to  
improve the health of diverse communities across the nation.”

– [Foundation], 2019-2020 Community Health Partner

These are just a few of the messages we received from grateful individuals and organizations.

They are not thanking us; they are thanking you! Your generosity continues to inspire and motivate them to improve our nation’s health. Your donation has positively impacted the lives of countless physicians, medical students, patients and families. We join them in gratitude!

Every “frontline” needs a solid foundation, and we thank you for your support. Now, more than ever, we are resolved to improving the public’s health – especially those among us who are most vulnerable.

Sincerely,

[Name], MD, FACR  
President, ABC Foundation

[Name]  
Manager, Advancement

Gift Date	Gift Amount	Type	Designation

Please save this letter as a receipt for your charitable gift to the ABC Foundation. In accordance with IRS requirements, no goods or services were provided in exchange for your donation. Please note: In consideration of our environment, you will receive a physical tax-acknowledgement letter in January with a summary of your complete yearly giving. If you would like to request a physical copy of this letter sent by mail, please [Email].

To learn more about how your gift is helping others and hear from recipients, including [Name] and [Name], visit [Website] and follow us on social media.

Of the 3 quotes at the top, I like the second one best and it could become the entire thank you letter. Just take the bold off the word, “you”. Bolding copy in a thank you letter is like saying, “Do you get it?” Donors always get it when they read something as beautiful as this quote (though you should do a small edit and remove the word “not”). The other two quotes are excellent too, allowing you to vary the content of your future acknowledgements.

Well done to the fundraiser who encouraged scholarship students to say thank you to donors. It’s not an easy job.

[Date]

Mr. and Mrs. [Last Name]

[Address]

[City, State, Zip]

Dear [First Name] and [First Name]:

Your most generous gift of \$[Gift Amount] to the ABC Fund was received today with great joy!

In it, we see your compassionate awareness of the extraordinary times we are living in along with a responsiveness of equal magnanimity.

Through it, you have spoken resolutely about your faith in the future of ABC and reminded me of a verse from Philippians 1:6 "I am sure of this, that he who began a great work in you will continue to perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus."

Thank you for sharing your sincere wish to bless other people's lives with all that they discover here.

We are humbled and deeply grateful for your loyalty and generosity.

God bless you, and again, thank you so much for your caring support!

Sincerely,

[Name]

Director of Donor Relations and Planned Giving

[Email]

[Work Number]

[Cell Number]

I read this far then skipped to the bottom to see who wrote this letter. (Except in rare cases, letters signed by not-for-profit leaders are still drafted by fundraisers.) The composition felt labored as if the author were struggling to find the human connection. It could very well be that an original, compelling letter was crafted at the outset, then subjected to edits from above that stripped it of its warmth. Or maybe the author was just having one of those days when the narrative refuses to come together. In either case, my heart goes out to you.

Try this: Before composing another thank you letter, pick up the phone and call a donor whose gift you received in the last day or so. Maybe make one call first thing in the morning and one at the end of the day before you go home. Do it for a week or two. Most of the time you'll be leaving a message on voicemail; sometimes you will get lucky and reach the donor directly. Even when leaving a message, what you say and how you say it will be much more natural and no doubt very gracious. The exercise will raise your confidence about communicating with donors and you will learn some interesting things in your phone conversations that will inspire your next thank you letter.

If there is still resistance from above, this is the essence of what you are trying to convey to your donors. What about putting the Philippians 1:6 quote on the front or back of a small notecard, and handwriting these sentences inside. That could be the entire thank you letter.

[University Logo]

[Date]

Dr. [First Name] [Last Name] '73 and Mr. [First Name] [Last Name]  
[Address]  
[City, State, Zip]

Dear [First Name] and [First Name],

The gift you made today sends a clear message to our students; that their dreams matter, their success is possible, and most of all, that countless members of the ABC community believe in them. Your support inspires their hard work and encourages their passion. From everyone on [campus], thank you.

Now more than ever, it is clear that the world needs [what our students will become]. We need our nurses, leaders, researchers, and we need our teachers, activists, and artists. We need the people who will ask questions, assess needs, and take action. We need the fearless heart, the curious mind, and the outstretched hand. With your gift to University of ABC, you help meet that need, and we are endlessly grateful.

Your support changes lives. From all of us here at ABC University, thank you.

Gratefully,

[Signature]

[Name]

Associate Director of Donor Engagement

#### YOUR TAX RECEIPT

**Gift Date:** [Date]

**Gift Amount:** \$[Gift Amount]

**Gift Designation:** ABC Fund: Immediate Assistance for Students

As no goods or services were provided to you in return for your donation, the entire amount of your contribution is tax deductible to the full extent otherwise allowed by law. Please feel free to retain this document for tax filing purposes. The University of ABC's tax identification number is xx-xxxxxxx. University of ABC is a 501 (c)(3) tax-exempt organization.

Wow, I love this opening. It's such a well-crafted and powerful sentiment that it should stand alone as the opening sentence – in fact the opening paragraph. Just shift the focus from the gift to the donor.

*You just sent a clear message to our students – that their dreams matter and their success is possible.*

Given the wonderful comment that opens this letter, it should definitely be coming from a higher authority – a Dean, a longtime professor or the President of the University perhaps.

This “administrative” statement takes away from the exceptionally good letter above. It would be better to move it to a separate enclosure.

[Date]

[Donor Name]  
[Address]  
[City, State, Zip Code]

Dear [First Name],

The fight against cancer is a tough one.

Thankfully, because of wonderful people like you, our patients are not alone. From the research staff enrolling patients in clinical trials to the caregivers supporting someone through chemo, everyone battles this disease together at ABC Hospital Cancer Centers.

Your gift of [Amount] is already at work in our Cancer Research Institute where more than 900 patients are currently participating in clinical trials. They join these trials with the hope that future patients will have an easier fight or that their type of cancer might be eliminated altogether.

Fortunately, progress is made every day.

Since December of 2018, nine of our studies have led to changes in how we fight cancer. These changes are creating new standards of care and improving the quality of life for cancer patients.

Thank you for trusting in us and joining this noble mission!

I promise you that your generous contribution will be used wisely in the fight against cancer. If we can assist you in any way, please contact us at xxx-xxx-xxxx or [email address].

Thank you for making a difference,

[Name]  
Foundation Director

**Please keep this letter for tax purposes.**

ABC & XYZ Hospitals and ABC/XYZ Hospital Foundation  
provided no goods or services to the donor in consideration of this contribution.

This is a short and compelling sentence, the kind that makes donors sit up and take notice. I think it would be even better if the donor was included since this is a thank you letter. I think you can come up with something better than my attempt, but here is what I mean by including the donor:

*You stepped in so our patients don't have to fight cancer alone.*

If you make the above adjustment, you won't need the first sentence in the second paragraph.

Excellent that this Hospital has designated donors' contributions from their campaign to a specific, compelling initiative.

I would delete this sentence and pull up the next paragraph to the end of paragraph #3. The content in #3 and #5 is related and this change will make the letter shorter.

Dear [Salutation],

Over the past few months, you have placed raised Braille dots under the fingertips of an individual who is Blind. You have put a Specialized Large Print Bible into the hands of somebody who is elderly and struggling to cope with the isolation happening in the world around us. You have provided a voice to those who listen to the digital Audio recordings of devotions and God's Word. Your gifts, your prayerful support, have shared the love of Christ with many, many people living in darkness.

To thank you for what you have done for the ABC Ministry, a friend who understands the power of giving, has provided a number of our stylized masks for us to give to our top supporters. These masks have proven very popular and have attracted positive attention from strangers and friends our staff and volunteers are encountering in the world. The message "Love Works" has resonated in today's climate with people seeking purpose and understanding.

To be clear, your gifts are not going towards providing you these masks, but rather, directly to the ministry and the Gospel-proclaiming work we are doing.

We hope you will enjoy and use these masks. If you would like more, please feel free to contact [Name] via e-mail: [Email], or by phone: xxx-xxx-xxxx.

Thank you again for your loving support. You are making a difference in the eternal lives of people who are Blind or Visually Impaired.

In His Service,

[Name], President

This is a sensational opening paragraph, made even more compelling by the first line which took my breath away..

For me, nothing you offer donors (including something as timely and practical as a mask) can usurp the gift that is embodied in the beautifully crafted opening paragraph.

I think it's great that these masks exist and that they are of a unique design and not funded by donors' contributions. But, save them for a separate communication. Take that amazing first paragraph, transpose it to a lovely notecard (handwritten if possible), add a simple "thank you" at the end. You will have a completely donor-centered thank you letter that your donors will reread until they have memorized it.

Especially in this case, less is more.

Signed by the right person.

Dear [Name],

For millions of young people around the world, Canada is often just an unattainable dream. This is why your donation is so important. More than a gesture of great generosity, your donation opens the door to hope. The hope for these students to continue their graduate studies at ABC University.

This is the reason why we are extremely grateful to you for contributing to the XYZ Memorial Fund.

This fund, created in memory of [First, Last] and [First, Last], two graduates who lost their lives in the PS252 plane crash on January 8, 2020, will grant an annual scholarship to an international student registered for a master's degree.

Your donation will help find solutions to real industry problems and promote the success of our students, by supporting the practical and applied education, at the heart of our reputation. You make the difference for a whole generation of future engineers from around the world.

Together we will go further. Thank you for believing in the future of our students.

[Name], CFRE  
Director Advancement and Alumni Relations

This is a superb, albeit gut-wrenching thank you letter. Kudos to the brilliant writer who took on the challenge of crafting this acknowledgement. One comment only: even though the Director of Advancement deserves the credit, assuming he/she wrote this letter, in this highly charged and delicate situation, it would be important that the President of the University or Chair of the Board of Trustees is thanking donors personally.

So donor-centered. Well done.

[Date]

ABC Foundation  
Grants Manager  
XYZ Corporation

Dear [First Name],

**Thank you!** We received your wonderful gift and fewer children will be deprived of medical services now.

Children are our future and it takes caring organizations to assure they get a good start in life. Your grant award of \$[Amount] will bring life changing benefits to a child afflicted with eye disease. Thank you for nurturing healthy vision.

We're thrilled to have your support again this year. Your kindness assures that patients in need have immediate access to specialized ophthalmologic treatment. Your gesture gives the medical team inspiration to continue daily efforts to examine and treat these special children. For this, we are extremely grateful.

Your gift will be used to screen eye disease of disabled and trauma pediatric patients rejected from medical establishments. This urgent and unique initiative will help preserve and restore vision to those children with disabilities and complex needs facing sight threatening conditions.

Thank you for responding to the need of the less fortunate. Thank you also for your partnership in this important work and for sharing our vision of an inclusive world that welcomes children with developmental disabilities as valued community members.

We look forward to completing the Final Report Form to reflect our achievements at the end of the year.

On behalf of the children thank you for renewing your caring support.

Sincerely,

[Name]  
Executive Director

This is a thank you letter to a corporate charitable Foundation for a grant that has been awarded. From other information in the letter, it is clear that this is not the first time the Foundation has given to this not-for-profit.

What makes giving through a corporate foundation different is that all employees collectively make grants possible. Their hard work creates the profit, some of which gets assigned to a fund for charitable purposes. With this in mind, a different opening could be drafted that certainly thanks the grants manager but also acknowledges the granting committee and, in fact, all employees of this company.

Exceptional thank you letters get distributed to employees and management through the company's internal newsletter or via other means. So, take advantage of this unique opportunity to increase your not-for-profit's profile and the likelihood of receiving future grants.

While it is good that this thank you letter is signed by the Executive Director, it would be even more powerful if the letter came from the physician or other medical professional responsible for this program.

Wonderful to see this very specific acknowledgement of how the Foundation's grant will be used. And, further down in the letter, there is a commitment to circle back later with an achievements-based report. Excellent!

[Organization Logo]  
[Name] | President and CEO

Dear [First Name],

I speak for all of those involved with ABC Housing in thanking you for your beautiful donation made in Ron's memory. Your recent cash gift of \$[Gift Amount], processed on [Date], is meaningful recognition of our shared commitment to uplift the lives of people in need.

I am incredibly grateful for your support, personally and professionally. This means so much to me. What a lovely way to honor his legacy.

Warm regards,

[Signature]

*Thank you for helping at this critical time*

The simplicity and brevity of this thoughtful in memoriam thank you letter are lovely attributes. As is often the case, the most moving statement comes near the end and, with a slight adjustment, could open the letter and make it even more powerful – *What a lovely way to honor Ron's memory.* Hand-writing this letter would make it even more significant for donors who have lost someone dear to them.

The quality of any thank you letter is lessened by any administrative reference, so words like "cash" gift and phrases like "processed on..." should be avoided.



[Date]

[Name] and [Name]

[Address]

[City, State, Zip Code]

Dear [First Name] and [First Name],

We're doing a cheer!

You have given kids a megaphone. You have amplified their voices. And you've made their voices matter.

I can't thank you enough.

If you could hear directly from the kids, you would know what I mean. Here's what 11-year-old "Natalie" wrote about her ABC Organization attorney:

She said what I wanted to say

Thank you for giving Natalie a voice. Gratefully,

[Name]

Executive Director

This letter acknowledges receipt of your generous gift of \$[Gift Amount] made via check [number] dated [Date]. ABC Organization is a federally recognized 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. In compliance with IRS guidelines, please let this letter confirm that, as a result of your contribution, you did not receive any goods or services from ABC Organization. Your donation is tax- deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law.

What an unusual organization. I didn't understand its mission until near the end of letter when I realized that this not-for-profit must be providing child advocate attorneys in contentious divorce cases, for example. Knowing that, it would be great to move that heart-wrenching quote (in the child's handwriting) to the top of the letter. Frankly, I think it could replace the opening line, "We're doing a cheer!" because the child's concise attribution makes such an impact. You can also eliminate the line that starts, "If you could hear directly from the kids...". The quote says it all.

With those few edits, it's an outstanding example of a concise, powerful and donor-centered thank you letter. In fact, it's now so concise that it would look great on a notecard, but standard stationery is OK, too.