



SAFETY • COMMUNITY • RESOURCE



2026 Team Captain Fundraising Guide

Run Wild for Autism is an important fundraiser for Pathfinders for Autism. Your fundraising efforts help us continue programming throughout the state of Maryland. Pathfinders for Autism is here to help you achieve fundraising success in any way possible.

Lead Your Team to Fundraising Success!

Congratulations, you are one of our vital and valued Team Captains for Run Wild for Autism! Through your many displays of leadership and enthusiasm your team will be inspired, supporters will be rallied, and a lasting impact will be made. Use this booklet as your step-by-step guide on how you can build a strong team and maximize your fundraising efforts.



Step 1: Build Your Dream Team

- **Recruit friends, family, coworkers, and neighbors** to join your team.
 - **Choose a fun and meaningful team name** that reflects your shared story or inspiration.
 - **Set a team fundraising goal** and encourage individual team members to set personal goals.
 - **Craft a compelling story** – share why you're fundraising, include personal experiences, and highlight how donations will make an impact. Use images and videos to engage supporters. Your story will inspire!
 - **Personalize your Team Fundraising Page** with your team's mission and updates.
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Step 2: Kickstart Your Fundraising

- **Make a self-donation** – show your commitment and inspire others to give.
 - **Encourage team members to donate first** – it sets the tone for success.
 - **Leverage Social Media:**
 - Share your team's progress on Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), LinkedIn, and TikTok.
 - Launch a linked fundraiser on social media platforms for easy donations.
 - Go live on social media to share updates and encourage participation.
 - Tag friends and family in your posts to expand your reach.
 - **Reach out to your network** – send personal messages, emails, or even handwritten letters to ask for donations.
 - **Use workplace connections** – check if your employer offers matching gifts or will support your efforts.
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Step 3: Engage & Motivate Your Team

- **Create a team email or text chain** to keep everyone connected.
- **Send hand-written letters** – people love to receive letters. It doesn't have to be long, you can keep it short and heartfelt.
- **Hold mini challenges or incentives** to keep team members motivated.
- **Celebrate wins** – highlight top fundraisers, share success stories, and post shoutouts on social media.
- **Keep it fun** – fundraising should be exciting! Get creative with your approach.
- **Post pictures and videos** of your team in action, tagging teammates and linking to your fundraising page.
- **Thank your donors!** A display of gratitude can go a long way and help keep people motivated.

Step 4: Get Creative with Fundraising Events

- **Host a fundraising night at a local restaurant** – a portion of sales can go to your team's efforts.
- **Organize a happy hour, trivia night, bingo, or game tournament** to raise money.
- **Get together for a pancake breakfast or ice cream social** and charge people for a plate of pancakes or scoop of ice cream – who doesn't love to gather around food!
- **Plan a themed party, fitness challenge, or bake sale** to attract donations.
- **Set up a garage sale** and sell the household items you no longer want/need – all sales can go to Run Wild!
- **Try a crazy challenge** – promise to do something fun (or silly!) when you hit your fundraising milestones.

Step 5: Maximize Donations with Matching Gifts

- **Does your company offer matching gifts?** Many employers will match donations dollar-for-dollar.
- **Encourage donors to check with their employers** to see if they offer matching gifts.
- **If your company doesn't have a matching gift program, ask leadership** if they'd be willing to make a corporate donation or match what employees raise.

Step 6: Celebrate Your Impact

Your hard work and dedication are making a real difference! Keep your team motivated, thank your donors, and enjoy the journey leading up to Run Wild 2026.

Let's make this year the best yet!

Fundraising Timeline

June:

- Think about **why you are inspired** to participate in and fundraise for Run Wild 2026.
- Craft your team by asking **10** friends, family, or coworkers to join and donate.
- Share your **story** and create **fundraising goals**.
- Send **emails and handwritten letters** sharing the cause and asking for donations.
- **Launch a linked fundraiser** on a social media platform (Instagram, Facebook, X, TikTok, or LinkedIn).

July:

- Keep spreading the word and send **follow-up emails or letters**.
- Brainstorm **new people** that you can send emails and letters to.
- **Host a fundraiser** (4th of July or Summer-themed!).
- **Repost/reshare** the fundraising link on social media.
- Gauge how close your team is in achieving its **fundraising goal**.
- Share **fundraising updates** with your team.

August:

- **Host a fundraiser** (Maybe an outdoor event? – the weather is beautiful!).
- Send **reminder emails and letters** about Run Wild 2026.
- Review your team's fundraising plans. **Set new targets if need be and celebrate milestones!**
- Send **words of motivation** to your team members – you're almost there!

September:

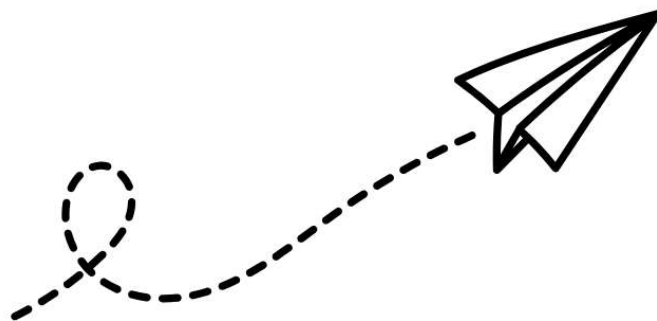
- Make the last push count! **Reach out to new people**.
- **Send out details** about the day of the event to your team members.
- Show your gratitude and appreciation by sending a **note of thanks** to your donors.
- **Attend Run Wild for Autism on September 27, 2026, at the Maryland Zoo in Baltimore from 7am-11am!**
- **Post photos** and share your memories from Run Wild 2026!

Need Help With Email/Letter Ideas?

Here's a template!

Dear [Recipient],

I'm participating in my Run Wild for Autism, benefiting Pathfinders for Autism at Maryland Zoo in Baltimore on Sunday, September 27. This event is not just another 5K Race; it's about supporting individuals with autism and their families on their journey. This year, I am running on team _____. Our team supports Pathfinders and their mission of safety, community, and resource. I would appreciate it if you would donate today. [Please consider donating to my fundraising page [INSERT OR WRITE LINK TO YOUR FUNDRAISING PAGE]. Your contribution, no matter the amount, will provide hope for these individuals on their journey. I hope together, we can make an impact! Thank you for your generous support.



Need Help With Social Media Ideas?

Here's a template!

Hear the call of The Wild and join us for the 16th Annual Run Wild for Autism on Sunday, September 27th. Grab your shoes and stride this September to benefit Pathfinders for Autism. Join my team, [TEAM NAME] to make a difference: [Link to registration]. Every step you take and every dollar you raise will provide hope for individuals with autism and their families. Join me in supporting Pathfinders for Autism. Even if you can't join my team, you can make a difference by donating to my team: [Link to your personal fundraising page]



About Pathfinders for Autism

Mission “Pathfinders for Autism works to educate and train the community to support and improve the lives of individuals with autism and their families throughout the lifespan.”

Vision “A world where autism is understood and accepted, and individuals with autism and their families have the opportunity to lead their fullest lives.”

Pathfinders for Autism History Pathfinders for Autism was started by parents with autistic children in a time when autism had little awareness and even less understanding. These parents were looking for answers and couldn't find the support they needed. As more and more children were diagnosed with autism, more Maryland families found themselves in the same situation; they couldn't find the answers they needed.

These parents banded together, and Pathfinders for Autism was created to help Maryland families like theirs gain access to safety, community, and the resources they need to improve their lives. Today, Pathfinders for Autism is the longest-standing, statewide autism organization in Maryland, supporting individuals with autism and their families throughout the lifespan.

Organizational Description Pathfinders for Autism (PFA) is a Maryland-based 501(c)(3) non-profit organization established in 2000 by parents of children with autism, including Baltimore Orioles Hall of Famer William "B.J." Surhoff and his wife Polly Winde Surhoff. For the past 26 years, Pathfinders for Autism has been committed to helping individuals with autism, their families, and professionals find safety, community, and resources. PFA's passionate staff and personally-invested board members dedicate themselves to providing valuable tools from a source that people can trust.

Pathfinders Pillars Safety Education and practical training in the most prevalent safety areas to reduce and prevent the risk of injury and danger.

Community Growing relationships and educating all members within Maryland to increase awareness, acceptance, and belonging for all individuals with autism and their support networks.

Providing events for individuals and their support networks to engage and enjoy social opportunities throughout Maryland, fostering greater belonging for all.

Resources Offering and developing guidance for individuals and their support networks in locating providers and information to meet their immediate needs.

How does your fundraising support our programs?

- \$1,000 – Supports the Resource Center for one week.
- \$500 – Supports a first responder training program.
- \$250 – Provides scholarships for five students at swim safety.
- \$100 – Allows a family of four to attend a free recreational event.
- \$50 – Helps distribute five “Where Do I Begin?” kits to newly diagnosed families.
- \$25 – Supports Pathfinder for Autism Self Advocate Trainers.

Thank You! Thank you for your dedication and hard work as a team captain. Your efforts are making a significant impact every day on the lives of individuals with autism and their families. If you have any questions or need further assistance, please contact our Run Wild staff:

- Vince Fiduccia: 443-585-0704 / vfiduccia@pathfindersforautism.org
- William Freeman: 443-585-0729 / wfreeman@pathfindersforautism.org

Feel free to reach out to schedule a fundraising team captain strategy session.



Together, We Can Make a Difference!