

MAKING IT COUNT IN 2008

Sometimes in the post-consolidated world of broadcast you can feel you are the smallest person on earth. You wonder how you can do something positive and make a *real difference*. If you're like me, you may have always thought that being in broadcasting was a powerful way to make a difference in people's lives.

I especially believe that the local programmer of any individual station has a powerful responsibility and opportunity to impact lives in any local community. This goes beyond what your company does or seeks as goals for your radio station. It is a personal responsibility. That responsibility and the power to achieve success with it has not changed with consolidation and the modern questions broadcasters face every single day. It is still about impacting your local community, and the power of the local programmer can and should still rein supreme. It is not a matter of ***can you do positive things*** to impact people. The question becomes "**How?**"

Events in my own life have given me pause to reflect on all our responsibilities to make a genuine difference in this world. My little boy, John, has been in treatment for leukemia the last two and 1/2 years. We have been very lucky, and I am inspired to want to take some of that luck and try to pass it on.

We discovered that John had a bump on his head. It is an unusual way to discover your child has leukemia, *but it was our way*. We had been chosen by whatever chooses you for such an experience, and we were not alone. Childhood leukemia has been on the rise in this country year after year. Of course, we didn't know it right away, but being diagnosed with leukemia would have a starker influence on our lives than anyone would be prepared to face. We spent months dealing with chemotherapy and the treatments associated with trying to save a small life.

I had some experience with St. Jude because of the radio fundraising I had done in my programming career, but I was shocked beyond explanation with the sudden impact and broad-based changes leukemia can have on you and your family. I watched in absolute horror as *my son literally fought for his life*. And I learned what real luck is. Other children have not been so lucky during this same period. At the same time, people think it won't come visit their family. The truth is you never know when it is coming to visit *you*.

We tend to think of luck in this country as winning the lottery or some similar experience, but I know that lucky is all about my seven-year-old and his ability to keep moving and *fight the fight*. He is a blessing in my life, and I want to return that blessing by having an impact on other kids and their families. I can only do this by reaching out to other people and trying to strengthen the fight against these childhood illnesses. And I have chosen to reach out to you because I believe in you.

I applaud fundraising for purely local issues and have done local fundraising in different markets, but I make this appeal to you today based upon the deep need for a centralized and focused effort in the fight against leukemia and other illnesses that can happen to your children and mine. The choice of radio to line up with St. Jude Children's Hospital means more focused research and powerful sharing among doctors across the United States. The strongest centralized effort to date in the fight for these children happens every day in Memphis at St. Jude Children's Hospital. I urge you to know that you can make a powerful difference by picking up the phone and saying, "How can I help?" Simple words – powerful meaning.

The research done at St. Jude is shared with hospitals around the world to bring speed to the fight against childhood cancers that kill thousands of children. When your child could die, speed is an essential element in giving the hope of life to you and your family.

Country radio has embraced St. Jude like no one else and continues to show real leadership in broadcasting. ***I want to thank anyone*** who has ever said one word to help St. Jude raise money. Perhaps your radiothon has saved my little boy's life. This is primarily done through the efforts beginning with people like Randy Owen and the local program directors. But I especially want to speak to anyone who has wondered about a St. Jude radiothon but has yet to do it. You are in the most powerful position of all. You could actually provide the tipping point to the cures that lay ahead.

If you have not been compelled to share in a radiothon with your listeners, I urge you to call St. Jude and talk about how you can do a radiothon and strengthen your station in 2008. *You may see actual St. Jude patients who come out of your own neighborhood or the one next to you.* More than likely you will see patients who have been impacted directly by the research and the protocols of treatment developed at St. Jude. And you will be surprised at how sharing a radiothon and really getting behind it will make your radio station larger and more respected in your own community.

Trust me when I say you don't know what it is like if you've never heard the words, "Your son has leukemia." There may not be one phone call to St. Jude from this article, but I must try to engage you in making the call. You can be responsible for bringing more ratings and revenue to your own station by sharing with your listeners what St. Jude is, the miracles that are happening there and how it impacts your market and the children in your listeners' neighborhoods. That's right, radiothons have been known to have positive impact on the primary mission of these stations. However, you should do it because it is the best opportunity you have to do something really amazing. Show your staff who you are and allow them to show the market who the station is in helping their children and children like them. It will have a great impact for you and the listeners. It will show the difference between your station and others in the market.

I know you have a lot of things on your plate. Ratings. Revenue. Staff issues. Corporate meetings. These are daily challenges that must be met just to keep the job and be able to provide for your family. Those things are very important, but I will make this appeal to you today: Call St. Jude Children's Hospital and get your radio station involved. Put a donation link on your site to St. Jude. It's painless and it can help real people in your community.

If you're already involved with St. Jude, engage the St. Jude staff on how to make your impact broader and even more meaningful.

There is a great scene in the Kevin Costner movie *13 Days* where Robert Kennedy says to his brother Jack, "Hey, shouldn't there be some old guys we can call about this?" The president turns to his brother and says, "We are the old guys." In other words, the buck stops here. If you are still reading this article, that's where you and I are today. If you reach out and call St. Jude and set up a meeting about participating in a radiothon in 2008 or enlarging your radiothon's impact, you will be helping the children in your community and all over the world. I don't know how to make it any more real to you. The children who are being treated for cancer are in your market today. It is very real. Getting involved or building strategy to make your impact larger can be *your way* to make a huge difference. *And it will be powerful.* You will become my hero and the hero of a lot of little children like my boy.

One day when you look back on your broadcast career, I promise your call to St. Jude will be something that is at the top of what you are most proud you did with your time.

Choose to be a hero and make the call today.

You can call Radio & Entertainment Marketing @ Country Cares and Radio Cares. Matty O'Shea is the associate director or Leslie Ann Thompson is the Country Cares Specialist. Matty O'Shea's number is 901-578-2392 or reach out to Leslie Ann Thompson at 901-578-2030. Melba Foster is the coordinator and you can reach her at 901-578-2032.

You can also spend some time with the Country Cares site set up just for you. There are resources for you on this site and you can see how to **get involved on any level**. And getting involved can save the life of a child or many children.

www.countrycares.org

Please don't tell them Loyd Ford told you to call. Tell them you are calling because of John Ford.

And thank you for your help. You don't know how much it is appreciated.