

# BCBUSINESS

## Raising \$1 Million in One Weekend

Amy Watkins | SEP 10, 2013



Image by: Fishing for Kids Tournament  
The 2013 Fishing for Kids Tournament on Haida Gwaii raised a record-breaking \$1.17 million for the Canucks Autism Network.

Ever wonder how charity events pull in the big dough? We take a peek at a million-dollar weekend and hundred-thousand-dollar day

It's a secret many entrepreneurs would love to know the answer to: how do you raise \$100,000 in a day or \$1 million over a weekend?

Philanthropy is big business in B.C. and sports tournaments in the province raise hundreds of thousands for charities. But it's not a one-man show—local businesses sponsor them with cash and in kind, and they attract participants by using corporate marketing strategies.

In June, Hooked on Miracles, an annual charity fishing tournament organized by the mining industry, raised \$350,000 for BC Children's Hospital Foundation. This Friday, the Whistler Blackcomb Foundation's Telus Golf Classic takes place in Whistler with the hopes of raising \$130,000 to top the \$115,000 that was raised last year. Since 1992 the annual golf tournament has raised over \$7.5 million for local charities. Telus has been title sponsor for the past 12 years, but one hundred other local businesses also sponsor and donate product in kind or for auction.

"The money raised comes from sponsorships, entry fees, proceeds from our auctions and various contests at the event," says Mei McCurdy, executive director of the Whistler Blackcomb Foundation. "One of our more popular fundraising initiatives has been our celebrity caddy auction, and in the past we've had amazing athletes donate their day for us, such as Olympic gold medallist Ashleigh McIvor, BC Lions defensive lineman Brent Johnson and Olympian Steve Podborski."

Celebrity participation is a popular way to raise the profile of a charity event. Ex-Canuck and LA Kings defenceman Willie Mitchell is a co-founder of the Fishing for Kids tournament, which takes place annually at West Coast Fishing Club on Haida Gwaii. This year the August event raised a record-breaking \$1.17 million for the Canucks Autism Network and the 44 anglers taking part in the tournament included Vancouver Canucks owner Paolo Aquilini, Vancouver Canucks president and GM Mike Gillis and Ledcor president of special projects Scott Lyons.

"There's a competitive tension in our company for philanthropy and where our money goes," says Scott Lyons. "We want to give back to the communities that we work in, so we've been a big part of Fishing for Kids right from the start as part of our social responsibility."

Fishing for Kids was conceived in 2005, "whilst sitting on the back deck fishing with like-minded individuals," says Brian Grange, VP of West Coast Fishing Club. "No one quite knew what was going to happen that first year when we threw all the ideas on the table, but we raised \$475,000. Individuals had their own reasons for wanting to be involved and we also had corporations wanting to take part. Any giving is started by one person, but bringing 10 decision-makers together means you can raise a lot of money."

The first Fishing for Kids took place in 2006 and has evolved over the years into a three-day fishing tournament that runs as a derby-style competition with a mandatory \$12,500 entry fee per angler. The prize pool is awarded back to the anglers, with the overall winner netting \$200,000, and in the spirit of the competition the money is donated back to support the Canucks Autism Network. Around 60 per cent of the funds raised come from these donations and anonymous contributions to the "wall of giving" at the West Coast Fishing Club, which enables philanthropists to make cash donations of a thousand to tens of thousands of dollars by buying a puzzle piece to slot into the wall.

Forty per cent of the funds raised come from the auction, which offers unique experiences and bespoke prizes, such as a private Versace runway tour in Milan that went for \$30,000 this year. "The auction is the biggest draw," says Grange. "These are not purchasable items and when we're able to put these 'money can't buy' auction items together with right individuals in the room, the sky's the limit."