

A. The Brief

Barretstown, located on a 500-acre estate outside Ballymore Eustace, Co Kildare, provides a medically-endorsed programme of arts, adventure and activities for children with cancer and other serious illnesses. By facing new challenges in a supportive environment, these children rediscover their self-esteem, improve their self-image and find new skills to help cope with their illness – all adding up to **'Serious Fun'**. All children who come to Barretstown do so entirely free of charge, including round trip transportation. Barretstown relies on the generosity of individuals, the corporate sector and foundations to fund the €4.4 million it costs annually to run its therapeutic programmes.

Barretstown has a fully equipped 24-hour medical facility staffed by some of the world's top paediatric oncologists, employs 30 full-time permanent staff and runs 15 camps a year. The children who attend Barretstown take part in 13 core activities ranging from horseriding to climbing a 40ft tower, drama, canoeing, arts & crafts and photography.

Barretstown was established in 1994 by the Hollywood actor and charity campaigner Paul Newman.

In 2004 Barretstown reached its tenth anniversary. Coinciding with this was the recent appointment of a new Chief Executive Jenny Winter. Her objectives for the charity were, and are, to increase the numbers of seriously ill children who visit Barretstown and expand the number of programmes they can offer. This was dependant on increasing the levels of funding. The CEO identified PR as a key element in the strategic growth plan for Barretstown. It was at this stage that O'Hea PR was engaged.

After an initial meeting with key personnel in Barretstown and through media research, O'Hea PR presented a proposal which highlighted a number of key issues which needed to be addressed.

These were:

- The level of awareness of Barretstown within the media and the general public was extremely low and there were a number of major misconceptions about the charity which were acting as barriers to Barretstown's fundraising aims.

The Misconceptions:

Barretstown is a holiday camp funded by Paul Newman.

Barretstown is very much a 'Dublin 4' type of charity operating behind closed doors, therefore alienating the man on the street.

Barretstown is for children who are terminally ill.

Barretstown is for children elsewhere in Europe, not from Ireland.

These were very serious misconceptions. For Barretstown to move forward these needed to be put right.

- Barretstown's relationship with the national and local media was poor and general coverage over the years was sporadic. Most media did not even know where it was located or what actually happened there.

A communications campaign incorporating public relations, advertising and direct marketing was devised. In 2004 Barretstown wanted to open its doors (or gates!) wide and explain to people what the charity did, and most importantly, the amazing things that happen there.

B. Statement of Objectives

In order to realise the CEO's objectives, Roisin O'Hea was employed by Barretstown to work closely with its communications manager Hilary Makin and its programme teams to define key PR objectives for the 10th anniversary.

These were:

- Work to change the public perception of Barretstown.
- Open the lines of communication between the charity, the media and the public to a much greater extent than in the past. Encourage broadcast and print media and the public (through open days) to visit Barretstown.
- Build the Barretstown brand.
- Drive fundraising activities in 2004 and beyond in order to ensure that the charity has a secure financial future and can continue to service increasing numbers of children and families.
- Develop key messages to be used in all communications.
- Work with and support a new advertising campaign. A new campaign themed '*Serious Fun*' was created and the PR plan supported this.
- Enhance the offering to corporate supporters by working with them in launching their association with Barretstown e.g. Xtra-vision, Wyeth.
- Communicate the successes and challenges of Barretstown to a wider media audience. The campaign would also target the tabloid press, local press and radio, and national broadcast media as well as the broadsheets.
- Appoint and train Barretstown spokespeople - key people to be in regular contact with the media and public.
- Inform parents of sick children, and the medical community about the benefits of Barretstown.

C. Programme Planning and Strategy

Having established the key objectives, O'Hea PR worked closely with the client to develop a strategic plan to ensure success.

Developing key messages for Barretstown was a vital part of the public relations strategy. The three key messages, which would be used in all further communication with the media and public, were defined as:

- **10TH ANNIVERSARY**
 - 10,000 children and families have benefited from Barretstown's programmes in 10 years
 - founded by Paul Newman, not funded by him
 - serves 21 European countries, but 50 per cent of the children are Irish
- **MEDICAL**
 - serious aim behind serious fun
 - programme is recognised by the medical world as a key component in the recovery of children with serious illnesses
 - top children's cancer care specialists volunteer in Barretstown's medical centre each year
 - children are referred by consultants from 110 hospitals in Ireland and around Europe
- **FUNDRAISING**
 - €4.4 million needed each year to fund the programme
 - 12,000 children diagnosed with cancer each year in Europe
 - we could serve so many more children if we had the funds
 - in order to be here in the next 10 years we need your help

A calendar of launch and fundraising events was created using the 10th Anniversary as a theme.

The campaign plan was two-fold:

1. The initial launch of the anniversary year
2. Ongoing profiling and publicity support for events throughout the year

1. Initial Launch Activity:

- Spokespeople were appointed and briefed – Jenny Winter, CEO; Terry Dignan, Programme Director; Hilary Makin, Communications Manager.
- Contact made with families whose children attended programmes at Barretstown over the years, and encouraging them to talk to the media about their experiences.
- Built up a library of new and modern photography for use in the media. We negotiated an association with Maxwell's Photo Agency, who provided their services for free.
- Made associations with a number of celebrities who could help with publicity for various fundraising initiatives; Paul McCartney, Heather Mills, The Edge, Gerry Ryan, Ray D'Arcy, Alison Doody, Ardal O'Hanlon, and George Hook.
- Approached hotels to host fundraising events.
- A new strap line – ***Serious Fun*** was created.

The 10th Anniversary campaign began on 4th April 2004 with a media launch day at Barretstown. The media attended to meet with parents and children whose lives had been changed by attending programmes at Barretstown. Tours of the facility were given, interviews set up with key Barretstown spokespeople, activities such as high ropes and canoeing were set up with past campers to show what ***Serious Fun*** at Barretstown was all about.

TV, radio, national and local press attended the first ever open media day at Barretstown.

2. Ongoing public relations support: to build on and maintain the new public profile of Barretstown

A number of large and small fundraising initiatives took place during the 10th Anniversary Year, all of which were very well received by the media. Once the media knew Barretstown had opened the lines of communication, they gained interest as the year progressed, resulting in new lasting media relationships being formed, journalists approaching Barretstown for features and comment, and coverage like never before.

Paul Newman visited Barretstown in September 2004 to participate in three key fundraising events. There was huge media interest in his visit, but equally in the children and families he met with while he was at Barretstown.

The 10th anniversary fundraising initiatives and events included;

- Serious Fun Porsche Race at Mondello with Paul Newman – funds were raised by offering the chance to race with Paul Newman.
- Kids Party with Paul Newman at Barretstown – 700 past campers and their families were invited to a fun-fair day at Barretstown.
- 10th anniversary gala ball at Barretstown – over 400 guests, attended by Sir Paul McCartney, Heather Mills, The Edge, etc.
- Launch of Xtra-Vision Movie Magic Promotion - €140,000 raised.
- Launch of Domino's Pizza promotion.

- Opera a la Carte at Barretstown.
- Surf 'n' Hitch - Barretstown employees hitched and surfed around Ireland to raise funds
- Brazil Trek – launched by Today FM's Ray D'Arcy.
- Three issues of Barretstown's magazine *Serious Fun* were published and distributed.
- Barretstown Golf Classics and Race Days.
- Wyeth – Worldwide President of Wyeth Laboratories visited Barretstown and announced €500,000 donation over 5 years.
- International Childhood Cancer Day – February 15th 2005 – Barretstown marked the day by announcing they will facilitate more children in 2005 because of funds raised in 2004, and hosted a reception for 10 ambassadors from countries sending children to Barretstown.
- Visit of Beslan survivors to Barretstown in association with *To Russia with Love* charity – March 2005.

D. The Measurement Stage

As part of the strategic PR plan it was agreed with Jenny Winter and Hilary Makin that apart from ongoing operational meetings, a quarterly review meeting would take place to monitor progress.

Barretstown's press coverage over the past number of years had been minimal, and in 2004 the quantity and quality of press and broadcast coverage grew enormously. A media monitoring service was set up and clipped over 2,000 separate cuttings during the 10th anniversary period.

As set out in our objectives, all print media was targeted and coverage came from a wide cross-section including tabloids, broadsheets, local and regional press, speciality magazines, national TV, and national and local radio coverage. Progress was measured against the number of cuttings and the quality of the cut pieces i.e. key messages contained in coverage.

Also, these results speak for themselves:

- Barretstown hit its target for new donors in 2004 with 500 new donors recruited during the 10th anniversary period. These are also regular givers.
- Barretstown's fundraising targets were reached and surpassed in the 10th anniversary year.
- 700 volunteers have been recruited for Barretstown's 2005 programmes. There were 400 volunteers in 2004.
- In 2004, 1,049 children visited Barretstown. In 2005, 1,580 children will attend Barretstown's therapeutic programmes.
- Barretstown has expanded its programmes and has added new countries to the list of those they serve.

Overall, Barretstown's increased awareness in its 10th anniversary year has set the standard for 2005 and beyond. Media contacts now enquire regularly for information, something that hadn't happened in its ten year existence.

O'Hea PR continues to work with Barretstown on its 2005 campaign.

E. Budget

€12,500-€32,000