



**PennState Health**  
Children's Hospital



**Children's  
Miracle Network  
Hospitals®**

CASE STUDY

CAUSE-MARKETING

**PARTNER**

---

**M1<sup>st</sup>** MEMBERS 1<sup>st</sup>  
FEDERAL CREDIT UNION

AUGUST 2021 // PREPARED BY JOE WATERS OF SELFISHGIVING.COM

## CREDIT UNION'S CHARITY PARTNERSHIP STRENGTHENS TIES WITH MEMBERS, EMPLOYEES

Members 1st Federal Credit Union was established in 1950 and now has 53 branches across the south central Pennsylvania region.

Members 1st's goals for partnering with Penn State Health Children's Hospital, a member of Children's Miracle Network Hospitals (CMN), include:

- To strengthen their connection with credit union employees and members by engaging them in CMN campaigns.
- To raise funds for a well known and trusted organization that supports their local community.



Amanda and her daughter Malaya, Miracle Family

Members 1st Federal Credit Union and CMN's close relationship of 25 years developed in part because of the local footprint the two organizations share.

"The coverage area of CMN mirrors very closely with the coverage area of Members 1st. We wanted to give back and help people in the area our members live in," said Sara Firestone, Community Relations Manager at Members 1st. "Penn State Health Children's Hospital is such a tremendous resource in our local area, which is why we wanted to support the CMN."

That local connection doesn't just apply to the credit union members. "We have employees tell stories about how they've received support from CMN," said Sara. As well, the company's previous CEO and current chief experience officer have served on the CMN board.



Sara Firestone

“

*No matter whether they're a member or an employee, there is a connection back to CMN, and people just feel really good about being able to support the organization.*

-Sara Firestone, Community Relations Manager,  
Members 1st Federal Credit Union

”



Celebrating the  
**HOSPITAL EXPANSION**



Members 1st supports CMN through a variety of company-wide campaigns, which engage both employees and their members.

One of the largest is the annual and much anticipated hummingbird ornament sale.

“We sell little hummingbird ornaments usually around the Christmas holidays in our branches,” said Sara. “It’s become a popular tradition for our members.”

Members 1st works with CMN and the ornament vendor to create new designs each year. This keeps the program fresh and members interested.

“We have members who have collected these ornaments for years so we try to make sure they’re not getting the same one each year,” said Sara.

Sara appreciates the communication and care that CMN shows their partnership.

“They reach out to share things that are important to the credit union and to congratulate us on our work. They recognize us and show their appreciation for our support and that makes a big difference for our relationship,” she said.

The partnership has helped Members 1st build community and brand awareness while also benefiting CMN.

- Members 1st raises about \$90,000 annually for CMN. The bulk of the funds are raised through hummingbird ornament sales (\$28,000) and by sponsoring events such as the People's Pay 4 Play, a radiothon where local listeners can make a donation in exchange for a song request.
- By having the opportunity to support CMN, employees are more engaged in their jobs. Members 1st recognizes the employees who have sold the most hummingbird ornaments by inviting them on a tour of Penn State Health Children's Hospital to see the impact of their efforts.

- Credit union members also feel more engaged and connected to Members 1st and CMN. Many expect and look forward to the regular annual campaigns, which helps to keep Members 1st top of mind.

“

*You leave work at the end of the day and know you've been a part of something that's so much bigger than yourself and that you've been able to help families. I think that's really the driver behind why we as an organization have partnered with CMN, but also why our employees are so supportive of it.*

-Sara Firestone, Community Relations Manager,  
Members 1st Federal Credit Union

”



“

*CMN is the type of partner that if they see something that relates to the credit union, they are the first to email or call us with a FYI or with a congratulations. Our partnership with them works both ways and that has a big impact on the relationship.*

-Sara Firestone, Community Relations Manager,  
Members 1st Federal Credit Union

”

For companies looking to partner with a nonprofit, Sara shared her advice for getting started and overcoming obstacles:

- 1. Think big - or small.** “Some companies may be able to write the big check and that's how they're going to have an impact,” said Sara. “A smaller company might not have the same financial capability, but their employees can get involved with a jeans and sneakers day or do a collection.”
- 2. Be clear about the why.** “Engage your employees so they understand the why behind your nonprofit partnership,” said Sara. “My \$5 contribution for a jeans and sneakers day may not seem like a big deal, but look at how that can multiply and the difference it can make.”
- 3. Be prepared to pivot.** “When the pandemic struck, we had to move hummingbird ornament sales from in-person to online,” said Sara. “We raised less money, but even a global pandemic couldn't stop us from supporting CMN. That's what a real partner does.”

