

QuarkXPress 6 Helps the Nonprofit Heuga Center Do More with Less

For 20 years, the Heuga Center in Edwards, Colorado, has been improving the lives of people with multiple sclerosis (MS), an incurable disease of the central nervous system. Like many nonprofit agencies, however, the Heuga Center has seen fewer funds in the wake of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. Upgrading to QuarkXPress 6 has helped this agency rebuild and increase productivity after deep cuts in staff.

More than 30 years ago, U.S. Olympian and bronze medallist ski racer Jimmie Heuga received a devastating diagnosis: He had MS. His doctor ordered him to give up sports and follow a sedentary lifestyle.

But six years of declining physical and mental health convinced Heuga that this prescription was not the right treatment for his condition. Instead, he abandoned conventional wisdom and returned to an active lifestyle that included biking, swimming, and skiing. When his emotional and physical wellness rebounded, he knew he had tapped into a new way of managing the disease and that he needed to share his insight with the rest of the world.

Still going strong at 60 years of age, Heuga has revolutionized the way the medical community and patients think about MS, and through the work of the center that bears his name, he creates health and hope every day for people with MS.

Today, the center provides an international program in Canada and the United States. According to Susie Kincade, Heuga Center Director of Marketing and Public Relations, the nonprofit organization is not only a traditional charity that supports people with MS, but it is also a special events company that creates skiing events to raise funds and awareness of the Center and its purpose

“That dual focus requires us to create diverse collateral that speaks to all our audiences. For example, we communicate with the alumni of our programs, as well as the general public and our donor community,” she said. “To do that, we create ads, brochures, an annual report, a press kit, and a development packet. We also have to produce several newsletters targeted at all our different audiences.”

Under the best of circumstances, the Heuga Center would face a huge creative challenge in meeting its collateral goals, but as a nonprofit in a post-9/11 world, the obstacles it faced were even greater.

Kincade explained that after 9/11, the decline in the economy reduced the funds available for charitable giving, and those funds that were available were often diverted to 9/11-based charities. The Heuga Center, like many charities in the U.S., was hit hard, and the center needed to let go half of its staff.

Soon after, when Kincade first joined the Center, she confronted many challenges. Among them was an ancient computer running QuarkXPress® 3.

“Because we’re a small organization, I have to wear many hats, serving not only as its public relations director, but also as its writer and graphic designer. I quickly decided I wasn’t going to be able to accomplish a fraction of what I needed to achieve unless I upgraded our technology and desktop publishing software.”

“Thanks to the efficiency we gained when we upgraded our computer and our QuarkXPress software to version 6, we’re now more productive than we were when we had twice the staff,” Kincade said. “My boss — Brian Hutchinson, President and CEO of the Heuga Center — is delighted that we’re able to do so much with so little.”

Relying on QuarkXPress 6 is more than a matter of efficiency for the Heuga Center: If it hoped to continue taking advantage of services donated by the community, it was going to need to upgrade.

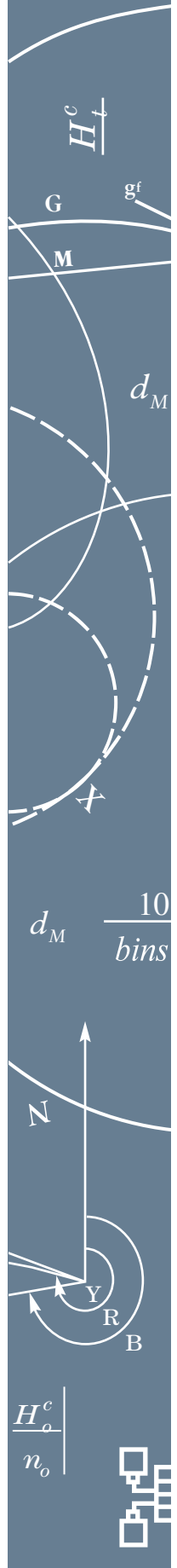
“We have received a tremendous amount of support from the Breckenridge agency, Wilson-Lass Creative Communications,” Kincade said. “They helped redesign all of our materials to create a consistent branding in our look and message. Because they produce their documents in QuarkXPress 6, it was essential that we upgrade so that we could continue our cooperative relationship.”

Upgrading to QuarkXPress 6 was also essential for the Heuga Center to work effectively with the local media and other sponsors who used QuarkXPress 6 to design ads and inserts.

Because QuarkXPress is such a sophisticated product, Kincade was surprised by how easy it is to use and appreciates its stable, familiar, and user-friendly interface. “Two years ago, the only software I knew how to use was MS Word,” Kincade said with a laugh, adding that most high school graduates today have more computer skills than she does. “The fact that I’m now working with this high-end program would have been beyond my wildest imagination a few years back. But here I am, creating documents that I’m proud of and that help us achieve our mission.”

As she creates communication pieces, Kincade said she struggles to maintain a delicate balance between professionalism and excess.

“We don’t want to look like we squander money on our publications, but we need to look professional,” she said, adding that with QuarkXPress, the Center can create a professional image all while staying within a small budget.





Making the leap from QuarkXPress 3 to 6 has been easier than Kincade expected. "Learning QuarkXPress 6 has been fun," Kincade said. She has been thrilled with the huge improvement in the collect-to-output function between the versions. Also among her favorite capabilities are the easy manipulation of photos, the grouping feature, the support for PDF output, and the support for the offset printing process.

She added that she is excited about the way QuarkXPress 6 has simplified her work with complicated documents. Features such as master pages and consistent layout design have helped her create a final product that looks as if it was created by a talented graphics artist, "not a writer moonlighting in design," she said. "It has so much more depth than older versions of QuarkXPress."

Because she must often take content that was designed for print and repurpose it for publication on the Web, Kincade said she finds the "print to Web" feature of QuarkXPress 6 especially helpful.

"We're trying to use our Web site more and more," she said. "So, being able to create documents and brochures and send them to the Web site in PDF format is a real help."

She also said she is eager to learn QuarkXPress 6's Web-design capabilities. Although volunteers have donated Web design support to the center in the past, Kincade said that a nonprofit can only ask so much of its donors.

"The more I can do in-house, the less I have to rely on volunteers or use up precious donations," she said.

The Heuga Center is recovering ground lost in 2001, thanks in part to the productivity gains provided by QuarkXPress 6, Kincade said.

"We've recouped our financial losses by cutting staff," she explained. Since the layoffs, the Center has been able to rebuild and is now doing as much or more as it was before 9/11.

"That's a result of better organization, and certainly due to better technology and our upgrade to QuarkXPress 6," Kincade said. "Now we're well recovered and looking forward to the future."

The Heuga Center will need every advantage in the years ahead. The nonprofit organization just released its new three-year strategic plan detailing the Center's plan to triple its endowment fund by 2007.

"I'm confident that QuarkXPress 6 will be a key part in helping us achieve our goal," Kincade said.

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