

Fundraising to Volunteer Abroad: The Complete How-To Guide for Volunteers



As you may have discovered, the costs associated with volunteering abroad can be overwhelming. Aside from the general program fee that a volunteer placement organization may charge, there can be other costs including travel insurance and airfare. But don't let a lack of funds keep you from participating in such a meaningful activity! If it's a financial obstacle that's holding you back, there's good news to share: at [Volunteer Forever](#) we've created a comprehensive online fundraising solution to harness the collective support of your network and allow you to raise funds for your trip abroad.

This How-To Guide will help you navigate the process of creating, optimizing and managing a successful online fundraising campaign and even includes expert tips from our Co-Founders!

This How-To Guide Includes:

I. Getting Started	pg. 1
II. Optimizing Your Message	pg. 2
III. Preparing for Outreach	pg. 2
IV. Emailing Your Contacts	pg. 3
V. Promoting on Facebook	pg. 5
VI. Promoting through Other Channels	pg. 8
VII. Utilizing Blog Posts	pg. 9
VIII. Continued Promotion	pg. 12
IX. Other Helpful Tips	pg. 12

Step #1: Getting Started

The Volunteer Forever platform allows you to create a campaign page to tell your story and fundraising needs in a simple yet powerful way, and then promote the campaign to your extended network. To get started go to [Volunteer Forever](#) and create a user account. It's quick, free, and easy to do.

After creating your basic account you'll be given the option to create your fundraising campaign. You'll need to use a PayPal account to collect donations with, so if you don't have a PayPal account you can create one easily at that time. Once you've tied your PayPal account to your fundraising page you can begin adding all the information about your project.

Step #2: Optimize Your Message

Before you begin promoting your page, let's make sure it's compelling to your donors!

- **Tell a compelling story:** Each person has their own motivation for volunteering overseas, and it's important to communicate in your fundraising campaign description why you've decided to engage in this form of meaningful travel.
- **Share your plans:** Talk about what you plan to do while you are abroad. Whether you'll be teaching English in Africa or serving on a medical mission in Peru, be sure to highlight how you're going to add value to the host community.
- **Describe what the donations will be used for:** Those of us experienced with international volunteering know that it can be expensive, but your potential donors may not know that you have to pay a program fee, travel insurance, and airfare (all of which can easily add up to thousands of dollars).



BILLY'S TIP: Think of someone you know who doesn't know anything about volunteering abroad and the positive benefits it can provide. Would your campaign page convince them to contribute to your cause? If you think so, then you're ready to go!

Step #3: Prepare For Outreach

There's an art to crowdfunding and it starts by tapping into your core network. Think for a second and jot down the 10 closest people in your life. Parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, close friends- these are the people you should engage first in asking for a donation for your volunteer abroad crowdfunding campaign. These people know and trust you and will be comfortable donating to your cause.

Once you've done that, pull together an email list of your extended network including, friends, past teachers, co-workers, community members, or even just people that you know on a Christmas-card basis.



STEVE'S TIP: Read my article "[Top 5 Volunteer Abroad Crowdfunding Myths Dispelled](#)" before you begin your campaign outreach.

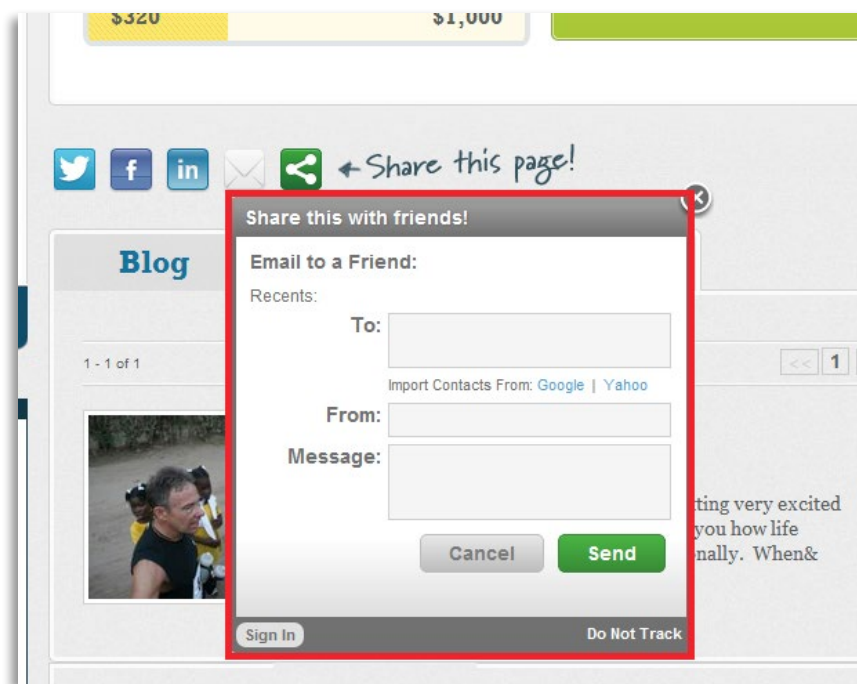
Step #4: Email Your Page to All of Your Contacts

Using email to spread the word about your campaign is a critical first step. You can utilize the Share tool on your page to email your GMAIL or Yahoo! Mail contacts, or use your own email provider to send out emails manually.

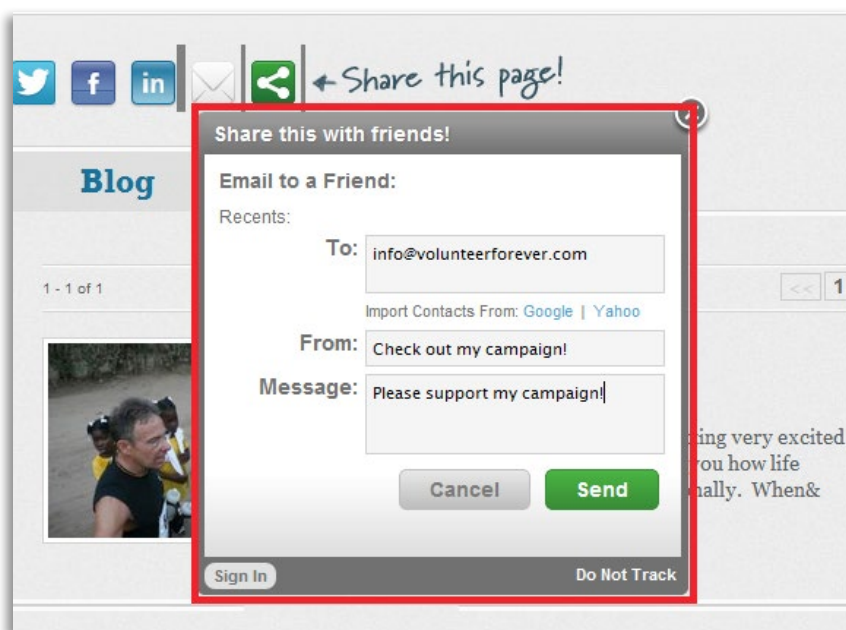
To use the Share tool for email, click on the envelope icon near where it says "Share this page!"



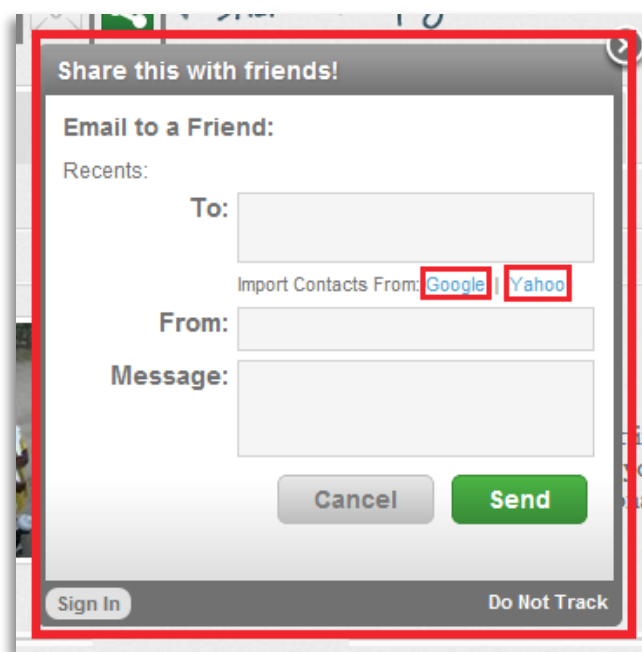
Clicking on the envelope icon will bring up the e-mail tool



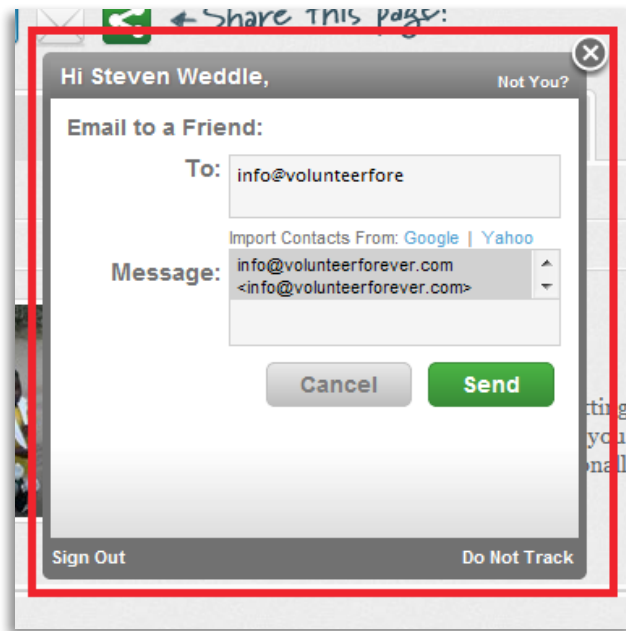
You can either enter in e-mail addresses individually or import them from Google or Yahoo by clicking those the blue “Google” and “Yahoo” links.



Enter in your GMAIL or Yahoo! Mail login information when prompted!



Now the “to:” line will auto-populate when you type in a contact’s name or e-mail address.



Enter in a message and hit “send”.



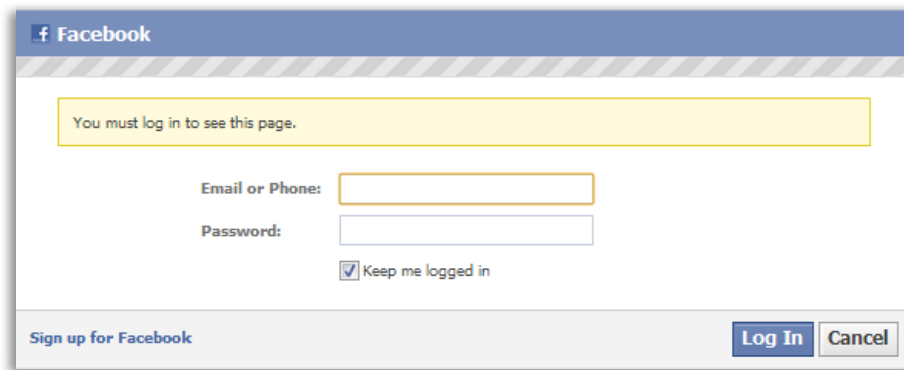
BRIAN'S TIP Briefly explain your cause in the body of your email, and make sure to remind people that you're asking them to give **THROUGH** you and not **TO** you. Also, include the following statement at the end: “Even if you can't donate, will you support the cause by sharing my fundraising page with your family and friends?”

Step #5: Share Your Campaign on Facebook

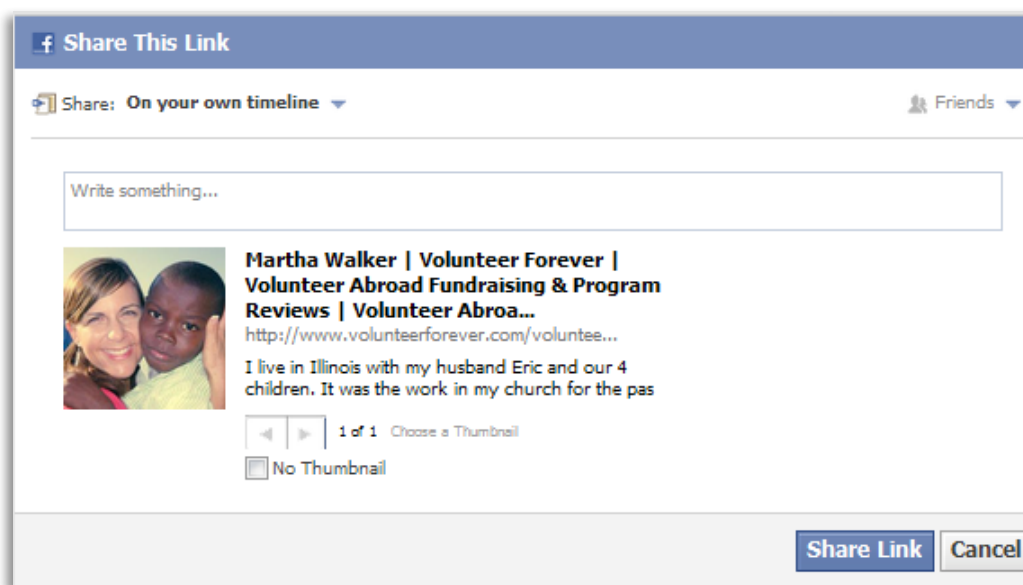
To share your fundraising campaign on Facebook, click on the Facebook icon near where it says “Share this page!”



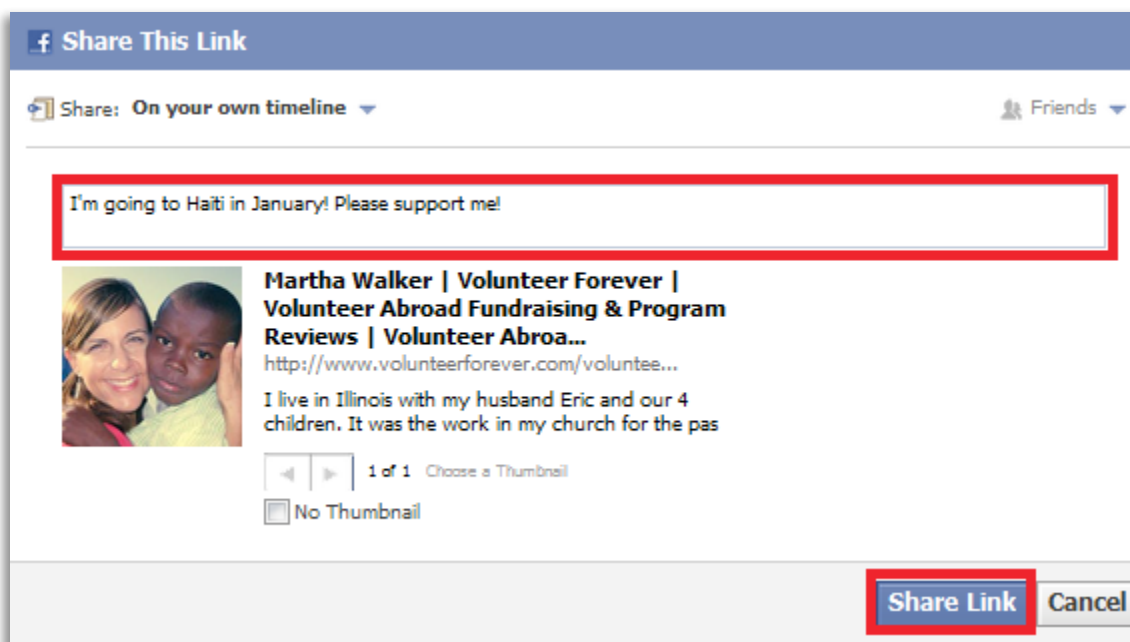
Next, log in to your Facebook account (if prompted).

A screenshot of the Facebook login interface. At the top is a blue header with the Facebook logo and the word "Facebook". Below this is a yellow box with the text "You must log in to see this page." Underneath the yellow box are two input fields: "Email or Phone:" and "Password:". Below the "Password:" field is a checkbox labeled "Keep me logged in". At the bottom left is a link that says "Sign up for Facebook". At the bottom right are two buttons: "Log In" and "Cancel".

After logging in, you should see a post with the link to the page you want to share.

A screenshot of the Facebook "Share This Link" dialog. At the top is a blue header with the Facebook logo and the text "Share This Link". Below this is a section with "Share: On your own timeline" and a "Friends" dropdown menu. Underneath is a text box with the placeholder "Write something...". Below the text box is a post preview. The preview includes a photo of a woman and a child, the text "Martha Walker | Volunteer Forever | Volunteer Abroad Fundraising & Program Reviews | Volunteer Abroa...", a URL "http://www.volunteerforever.com/voluntee...", and a paragraph "I live in Illinois with my husband Eric and our 4 children. It was the work in my church for the pas". Below the preview are navigation arrows, the text "1 of 1 Choose a Thumbnail", and a checkbox labeled "No Thumbnail". At the bottom right are two buttons: "Share Link" and "Cancel".

Enter in a message to your followers in the “Write something...” box and hit “Share Link”. Your post will now show up in your news feed for all of your Facebook friends to see.



Share This Link

Share: On your own timeline Friends

I'm going to Haiti in January! Please support me!

Martha Walker | Volunteer Forever |
Volunteer Abroad Fundraising & Program
Reviews | Volunteer Abroa...
<http://www.volunteerforever.com/volunte...>
I live in Illinois with my husband Eric and our 4 children. It was the work in my church for the pas

1 of 1 Choose a Thumbnail

☐ No Thumbnail

Share Link Cancel



STEVE'S TIP: Ask for your family and friends to also share your Volunteer Forever Facebook post. Doing so will significantly increase the number of potential donors viewing your page.



Brian'S TIP: Tag your most influential friends in the post! This will ensure the post doesn't get lost in their News Feed. To tag someone simply type the symbol "@" and then the first letter of their name. A list of friends should show up, select the right one from the list.

Once you've posted your campaign to Facebook, keep the momentum going! Facebook posts only stay relevant for about 24 hours, so it's important to continually go back and post as often as possible. We recommend posting at least three times a week and choosing different times throughout the day to post.



BILLY'S TIP: Posts with pictures are usually more attention-grabbing, so post directly from Facebook and include a picture that might apply to your trip. For example, if you're planning to volunteer at an elephant rehabilitation camp in Thailand, you could Google images of elephants and include that in your post. Another idea is to take a picture of yourself holding a sign that says "Help me rehabilitate abused elephants in Thailand!"

Step #6: Share Your Page through Other Channels

What other channels can you use to reach out to your network and spread the word of your campaign?

- **Twitter, Google+, Pinterest, LinkedIn and other social media:** Facebook is the most common social media to use for promotion, but there are many others that work just as well. Do you have a Twitter account? Tweet about your campaign and use a service like Hootsuite to easily schedule all of your Tweets at once to be sent at different times throughout the week. Have a Pinterest account? Use imagery to communicate your cause and spread awareness of your campaign. And LinkedIn is a great tool for reaching out to colleagues, past professors, and others in your professional network. [Click Here](#) for more ideas on how to use social media to promote your campaign.
- **Text messages:** Text messages are also a highly effective way to reach potential donors. Text messages have a 98% open rate, so your message has a high probability of being read by a potential donor. Simply text your Volunteer Forever profile web URL to your potential donors. Your potential donors will be easily able to click on the link, view your page and even donate directly from their phone!
- **Add your campaign to your email signature:** Want an easy way to remind people of your fundraising campaign? Add a brief sentence about your campaign to your email signature and include the link to your page. This is just another way to try and ensure everyone that you interact with knows about your campaign.

Remember, don't limit your outreach to just people you think have the money to donate; think also of anyone that might be willing to share your page with their network as well! If you don't ask they may not even realize how they can help.



STEVE'S TIP: *The more specific your request is and the easier you make it for someone to share, the more successful you'll be. Here's a great example: "Mom, would you mind sharing my campaign with your coworkers at the office tomorrow? If so I'll send you a sample email that includes a description of my project and the link to my campaign, and all you'd need to do is forward it to everyone. Thanks!" (and make sure to thank everyone that shares your campaign just as much as if they donated).*

Step #7: Create Blog Posts

Volunteer Forever has integrated blogging with each fundraising campaign page to make it easy to keep your personal network informed about your campaign. Blogging is a great way to “soft sell” your fundraising campaign by drawing people to your campaign page without directly asking for a donation. By blogging, you can communicate your thoughts, feelings, and experiences with your audience in a very powerful and engaging way. Here’s how to get started.

To write a blog post, make sure you are logged into your account and navigate to your profile page.

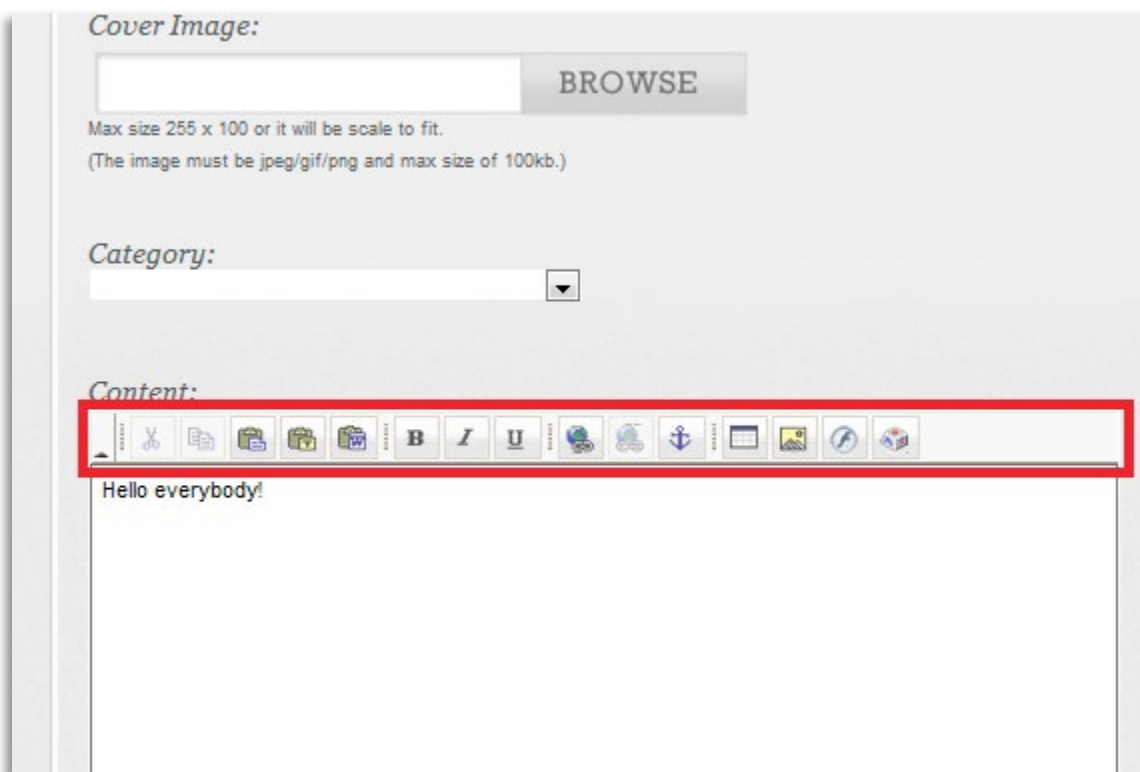
Next, click on “Add a New Blog Post”



Now, fill in a title for your blog. You can also add a “cover image” for your blog post, which will be the image associated with this blog post. If you don’t select an image, the default Volunteer Forever cover image will be used. The category will automatically be selected as “volunteer blog”. You’ll write the body of your blog post in the “Content” box. Lastly, you’ll need to create a tag for this post. Tags help our website sort all of our blog posts to make it easy for other users to find your blog post. For example, if you’re writing a post about your fundraising efforts, you can use the tag “fundraising”. At least one tag is required for each blog post, but you’re allowed to enter in many tags.

A screenshot of the 'Create New Blog' form on the Volunteer Forever website. The form is divided into several sections. On the left, under 'ENTER BLOG DETAILS', there are fields for 'Blog Title', 'Cover Image' (with a 'BROWSE' button), 'Category' (a dropdown menu), and 'Content' (a large text area). A red rectangle highlights the 'Blog Title' field, the 'Cover Image' field and 'BROWSE' button, the 'Category' dropdown, the 'Content' text area, and the 'Blog Tags' field at the bottom. To the right of the form, there is a sidebar with sections: 'CATEGORIES' (listing Adventure Blogs, Volunteer Blogs, and Beginner Blogs), 'MOST POPULAR BLOGS' (listing 'Helping for Humanity - House Building'), 'LATEST POST' (listing 'These phones are fantastic! Thanks for posting!'), 'POPULAR TAGS' (listing various tags like volunteer, fundraiser, etc.), and 'ARCHIVES'.

We'll now explore one important feature of text editor toolbar.



Cover Image:

BROWSE

Max size 255 x 100 or it will be scale to fit.
(The image must be jpeg/gif/png and max size of 100kb.)

Category:

Content:

Toolbar: [Icons for undo, redo, bold, italic, underline, link, unlink, list, image, etc.]

Hello everybody!

You can embed images into your blog post by clicking on the image icon (it looks like a portrait).



When the "Image Properties" box pops up, select the "Upload" tab.

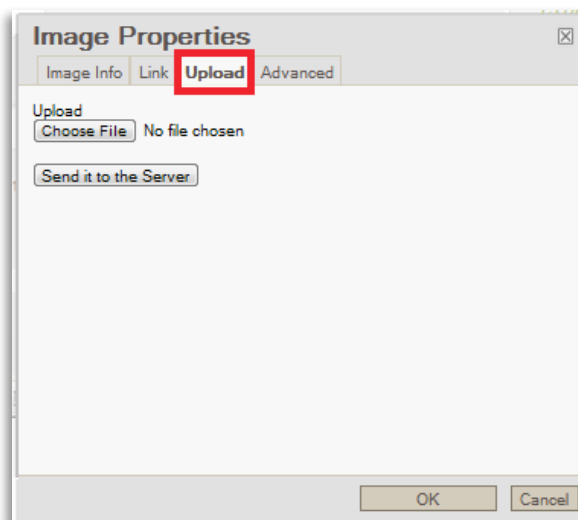


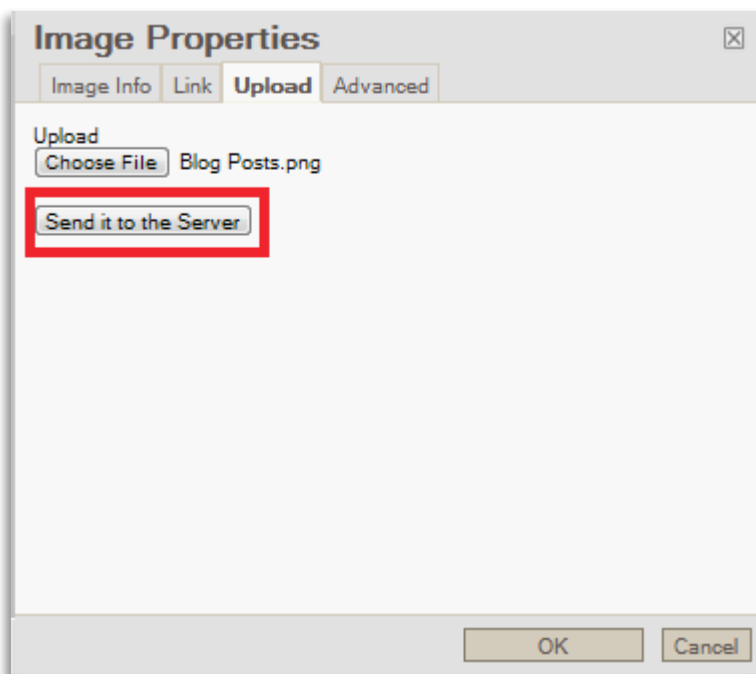
Image Properties

Image Info **Link** **Upload** Advanced

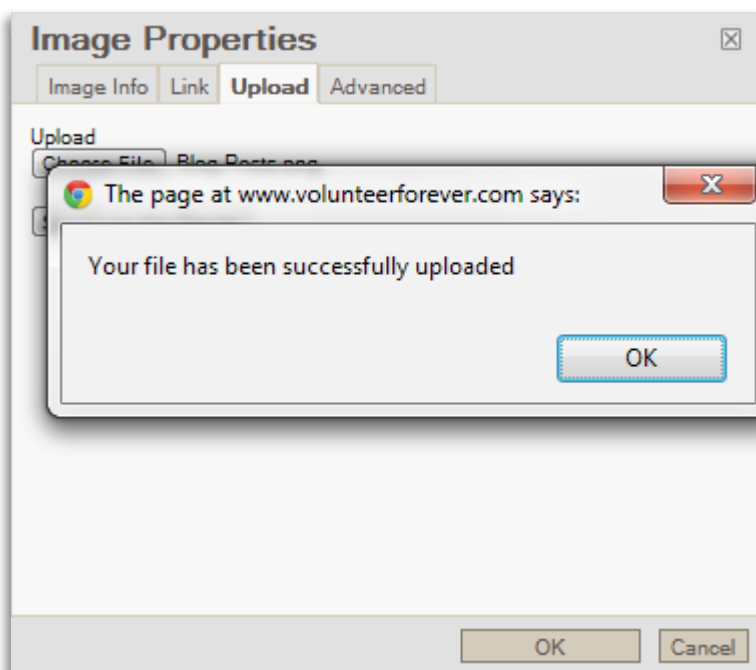
Upload

No file chosen

Select “Choose File” to pick an image from your computer and click “Send it to the Server”.



You should get the following message. Hit ok.



Your image is now embedded in your blog post. When you finish writing your post, hit “save” at the bottom. Your blog post is now on your campaign page. And since you know how to share your campaign page via Facebook and email, you can now share your blog posts with your personal network.

Step #8: Keep Sharing Your Page

Your campaign will only be successful in raising funds if you continue to share your campaign everywhere you can and often. People may need several reminders before they take action, and there's a good chance they may not have even seen your initial request for donations. Lastly, you can use your campaign timeline to create a sense of urgency, especially towards the end.



BILLY'S TIP: Are you not getting the responses you'd hoped? It can help to change up your messaging. If you've been asking people to donate in general terms, you may want to try asking people to donate specific amounts and remind what that money will be going towards. For example: "Please consider donating just \$20 to my 'Build a school in Ghana' project, every \$20 donation will go towards helping them build a much-needed school for the youth in the community. Donate \$20 and make an impact!"

Step #9: Utilize These Other Helpful Tips

- **Share Your Campaign with Volunteer Forever:** Let us know about your campaign and we'll promote it as well! Post it on our Facebook page or include us in your Tweets and we'll make sure to repost. Are there other ways we can help? Contact us at info@volunteerforever.com.
- **Share Your Campaign with Your Organization:** Inform the organization you're volunteering with about your campaign as well! We know they'll help you promote it and help you reach another audience that you might not otherwise have access to.
- **Reach Out to Local Media:** Send a short press release to your local media about the campaign. Make sure to include your campaign page link in the press release so people know where to go to donate. If you're not comfortable writing a press release you can contact your local media and tell them about your volunteer abroad story, and they'll let you know what they need from you. They may want to do a short Q&A or simply have you write up a short description of the campaign.
- **Take Advantage of Holidays & Special Events.** No matter what time of the year you're running your campaign, there's usually some kind of holiday or special event you can integrate into your campaign. Make donations to your campaign the first thing you ask for as a Christmas or Birthday gift. You can do the same thing for a graduation or a wedding/engagement party. And use holidays or other family get-togethers as an opportunity to show everyone your campaign page in person all at once. If you live in the US, Thanksgiving would be a great example of a holiday you could do this for.
- **Thank Donors Publicly.** People love recognition and this is your chance to give them well-deserved praise! Make it public so that everyone can see that someone has contributed to your campaign- this will help get additional donations from others. Also, when you thank your donors make sure to ask them to help you spread the word among their contacts as well. **Always remember- you can't thank your donors too much!**



Closing Thoughts

We hope you found this guide to be useful. If you have any comments, suggestions, or questions, feel free to reach out to Volunteer Forever Co-Founders Steve (steve@volunteerforever.com) or Billy (billy@volunteerforever.com) directly. Remember, we're here to ensure you have the most successful fundraising campaign possible!