

Dear Friends,

We are pleased and honored that you will be joining us in support of the IRSF Strollathon, a fun-filled, family oriented fundraising event to raise much-needed funds to enable researchers to unlock the mysteries of Rett syndrome. All proceeds from this event will benefit the **International Rett Syndrome Foundation** whose mission is...

...to fund research for treatments and a cure for Rett syndrome while enhancing the overall quality of life for those living with Rett syndrome by providing information, programs and services.

The **Strollathon** is IRSF's version of a walkathon, and the name is designed to signal our desire to include all members of our families and our community, especially our loved ones affected by Rett syndrome, some of whom can no longer walk and must rely upon wheelchairs or strollers for mobility. The **Strollathon** is not a sporting event or a race – it is an outdoor party, with entertainment, refreshments, activities and surprises, incorporating a relaxed but invigorating stroll and roll for attendees.

Some of the proceeds of our Strollathon will come from generous corporations and organizations – we call them our **"Sponsors"**. But the bulk of the dollars raised in this event will come from the **Strollathon Team Members** – we call them our **Strollers and Rollers** – each of whom will approach family, friends, neighbors, co-workers and others to request sponsorships in the form of donations.

If you have received this **Team Captain Kit** from a member of the Strollathon Planning Committee, it is because we are hoping that you will consider forming a Strollathon Team and serving as Captain of that team. This kit contains guidelines for Team Captains, tips on Team building, fundraising ideas and many other tools you'll need to lead a successful team! If it doesn't answer all of your questions, please feel free to contact any member of our Planning Committee.

Thank you in advance for your participation and your efforts on behalf of the International Rett Syndrome Foundation.

With deep appreciation,

**Strollathon Planning Committee**



# Guidelines for Team Captains



# Team Captain Responsibilities

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Have fun and help make the Strollathon and the activities leading up to it a fun experience for Team Members!

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Name your Team, and communicate the precise Team name to all Team Members (be certain, for example, that “Jackie’s Team” is not sometimes called “Jacque’s Team” or “Team Jackie”)

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Recruit your Team. Recruit as many Strollers and Rollers as early as possible, but continue recruiting until the day of the Strollathon.

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Create your Team Page on First Giving! Inside this kit are instructions to create your very own Team Fundraising Page on First Giving.

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Encourage every Team Member to create their fundraising page as well. The more pages your Team has the more money you’ll raise!

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Set-up and maintain a Team Member contact list so that you can email out updates to every member to keep them motivated and on track to reach your goal.

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If possible, hold a Team meeting to get everyone pumped up and to make sure that all members understand the job that needs to be done and how to do it best.

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Communicate regularly with each Team Member. Ask about their progress; give them suggestions on how to be more successful. Provide ongoing encouragement and advice!

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Coordinate the design and production of Team spirit gear! Have a Team t-shirt, sign, banner, hats, etc. made to show your Team spirit at the Strollathon.

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Be on the lookout for potential sponsors (large donors, particularly businesses and organizations) among your contacts and those of your Team Members. We also need in-kind donors, particularly for refreshments and entertainment for the Strollathon. Contact the Strollathon Committee when you identify such potential supporters to coordinate approaching them for donations. We will also ask you to be on the lookout for volunteer workers for the day of the Strollathon.

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Post-event follow up with Team Members is important to be certain that all donations are collected and monies sent in, and that all sponsors entitled to matching corporate gifts are following through with the necessary paperwork. Thank them for making your Team such a success!

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# Team Building Fundraising Tips

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Promote Team spirit and identity. Engage the Team in efforts that will build Team spirit and create a sense of Team identity. Along with a Team t-shirts, develop a Team “slogan” and a Team sign to carry at the Strollathon.

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Learn and teach why this cause is so important. Take a few moments to learn about the important work IRSF does and why Rett research, family support & advocacy are so important, and share your knowledge with Team members. This will bring great credibility to the fundraising efforts of your entire Team. Your Captain Kit contains great information as does the IRSF website ([www.rettsyndrome.org](http://www.rettsyndrome.org)).

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Set individual and Team fundraising goals and communicate these to all Team members. Set a goal that is high but also attainable.

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Develop plans both for recruiting Team members and for soliciting sponsor donations. Make lists of potential supporters and decide which function (Team member or sponsor) and which method of approach (letter, email, telephone call, personal visit, etc.) is appropriate for each one. Consider any of the following as potential Team members and/ or sponsors: *immediate and extended family members, neighbors, co-workers, friends, members of clubs to which you belong to, everyone on your Holiday Card list, the professionals and merchants who get your business (doctor, dentist, lawyer, accountant, broker, insurance agent, pharmacist, veterinarian, architect, realtor, restaurant owner, landlord, health club, dry cleaner, etc.), and anyone whose charitable cause you have supported in the past.* Don't limit your list of possible recruits and sponsors to people who live in your community: out-of-town family members and friends might be among your biggest supporters. **Remember:** *anyone can participate virtually using your First Giving fundraising page!*

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Double your Team size by asking every person you recruit to recruit one more Stroller and Roller to join the team. Encourage EVERY team member to create their own fundraising page under your Team on First Giving. The more you expand your reach the closer you will come to hitting your goal!

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Share your motivational letters and emails with your Team members and encourage them to utilize an email campaign. Examples of letters and emails are also available through IRSF.

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Host a Strollathon party and use the opportunity to recruit Team members and sponsors. Reach out to families, teachers, professionals, support groups who are touched by Rett syndrome and other developmental disabilities. Don't forget that scientists believe there may be connections between Rett syndrome and Autism, Schizophrenia, and other neuro-developmental disorders.

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Set a positive example. As Team Captain, you will motivate Team members if you are the first to make a donation, the first to develop a personal plan for Sponsor solicitation, the first to initiate a letter-writing campaign, the first to approach extended family members about supporting the Strollathon, etc.

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Talk the talk; tell everyone you know or meet about Strolling and Rolling for Rett syndrome. Look for opportunities to give a public presentation (at schools, clubs, etc.) about Rett syndrome and the Strollathon and don't hesitate to ask the Strollathon Committee for help.

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# A Few Basics of Fundraising

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People give to people, not causes. There are more good causes than any of us have friends, so we tend to give because our friends/family/ colleagues support the cause.

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However, people do not like to give to bad causes. Make sure your donors know that IRSF is a well run organization doing important work. You should feel that you are doing the donor a favor by providing an opportunity to support a serious organization with a compelling mission. Provide a copy of the IRSF and Rett syndrome fact sheet (included in this kit) to each of your team members.

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Usually people only give if they are asked to give. Unsolicited contributions are rare. If you tell someone you are raising money for an important cause but forget to ask the person for a donation, the chances are you will not receive a donation.

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Unless you are making your request in writing as part of a letter-writing campaign, it is better to ask for a contribution in person than over the telephone.

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Always make your own gift first. Your donation gives you credibility when you ask someone else for a donation. A donor is much more likely to support an organization that you personally support.

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It is best to ask for a specific amount. People like to know what is expected of them. If possible, do your homework in advance and try to determine the appropriate amount to ask a donor to give.

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People are more likely to be insulted if you ask for too little rather than too much. It is flattering if someone thinks you have the potential for a more substantial gift.

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Don't apologize for requesting a donation. Most individuals and businesses make contributions to worthy causes, and it makes them feel good to do so.

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After you've requested a gift, don't linger if the potential donor doesn't immediately respond. Rather, suggest a time when you might contact the potential donor to follow up and make a quick and graceful exit.

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You should thank a donor as often and as profusely as possible.

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Contributions are often made for their goodwill and public relations value as well as for their tax-deductibility. Some charitable organizations even make donations to other charitable organizations. Do not hesitate to ask any and all organizations to support the Strollathon.

# Types of Teams

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**Strollathon Teams come in various shapes and sizes. Basically, a Strollathon Team is a collection of participants (Strollers and Rollers), organized and led by a Team Captain (a very large Team may have two or more Captains), who raise money for the benefit of IRSF by soliciting donations from friends, family, neighbors, co-workers and other individuals or organizations. A Team can consist of as few as one or two people or as many as several hundred (as might be the case with a large corporate Team). Generally, Teams fall into the following categories:**

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## Family/Friends/Neighborhood-Based Teams

These teams are usually centered around a family that is directly affected by Rett syndrome through a family member or through a close friendship with an affected family. Immediate and extended family members are often Team participants, as are friends, neighbors and co-workers. It is not unusual for a family member or friend in a remote location to form a “Virtual Team” (see below). A family member often serves as Team Captain, and the Team name is often based on the name of the person affected by Rett syndrome (e.g. “Julie’s Dream Team”, “For the Love of Megan”, “Hannah’s Hope”). Letter writing campaigns are particularly effective with Family/Friends/Neighborhood-based Teams.

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## School/Service-Provider/Organization-Based Teams

All schools, whether or not they serve children with developmental disabilities, are candidates for Strollathon Team formation. All groups or individuals that provide services to persons with Rett syndrome and other developmental disabilities, including medical offices (e.g. developmental pediatricians, neurologists and other specialists), physical therapy, speech and language pathology practices, law offices that practice disability law, financial planners who specialize in establishing special needs trusts, etc., are candidates for Team formation. In addition, any organization, group or club with a civic orientation, whether it be the Rotary Club, the Girl Scouts, the Junior League, or a Church or Synagogue congregation, has the potential to form a Team.

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## Business-Based Teams

A business Team would typically be formed in support of an employee with a child or relative with Rett syndrome. A business-based Team might also be formed as a result of a relationship with a key executive or an owner of a business. Many companies make a practice of encouraging employee participation in civic or charitable activities within the community, whether or not anyone within the company has a personal connection with the cause.

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## Virtual Teams

While the Captains and the Strollers and Rollers of the Strollathon Teams will typically attend the event, it can be very effective to form a virtual team. For example, Julia’s aunt, who lives 600 miles away, can serve as Captain of “Julia’s Traveling Team”, and recruit friends, neighbors and co-workers to serve as virtual Strollers and Rollers. These virtual Team members can solicit sponsorship donations just as regular Strollers and Rollers would. Instead of handing in all donations on the day of the Strollathon the virtual Teams will create a Team fundraising page on the Strollathon’s First Giving page! They can also collect checks and cash rather than just online donations and mail them in to IRSF before or after the Strollathon. Or, a family in a distant community whose daughter has Rett syndrome can support the Strollathon by forming a virtual Team made up of family, friends, neighbors and co-workers.