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Former Frogs football coach finds new playing field

BY BETTY DILLARD

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Drew Myers' decision to hang up his uniform and whistle and kick start his own online business completely caught him off guard.

Two years ago while on a spring break camping trip, Myers, then the director of communications at Texas Christian University's athletics department, developed the idea for e-Partners in Giving, a Web site designed to make online charitable donations quick and easy.

"I came up with this idea out of the blue," said Myers, company president and CEO. "I literally woke up in the middle of the night thinking about it. I thought there should be an easier way to do online giving and the more I thought about it, the more ways I could see it working."

Myers, who launched e-Partners in Giving in December 2008, carries equal passion for philanthropy, marathon running and football. He previously served three years as assistant director of football operations at TCU and as the pro scout liaison to high schools and junior colleges.

Before that, he was the director of football operations and the defensive passing game coordinator at Blinn College, where he also coached the wide receivers. He earned a master's degree in education from Prairie View A&M University and has a bachelor's degree in mass communications from Midwestern State University. In 2000, he was a training camp analyst for the Dallas Cowboy Insider.

Now 34, Myers said he likes to see people's reactions when he tells them he's given up sports writing and coaching football to facilitate online donations.

"My time at TCU and at Blinn was outstanding and I don't regret that stretch of my life at all but it was time for me to do something different," he said. "I've found my true passion with e-Partners in Giving. I just really believe in giving back and want to help others give back."

Myers has written a simple playbook for e-Partners in Giving. A donation page is created for anyone or anything. Currently, about 80 percent to 90 percent of the Web site's focus is on



memorial giving, Myers said, and he has created partnerships with funeral homes across the country to take donations.

From birthdays to weddings, from graduations to anniversaries, all of life's significant events are represented as donation pages. Corporate donations and one-time donations to a favorite charity also are there. With one click of the mouse, Myers said, "you can emphasize someone or something you care deeply about, with a focus on collecting donations on their behalf."

The advantages of using e-Partners in Giving for both the person making the donation and for the person or family requesting the donation are simple, Myers said. Aside from security and convenience, the Web site keeps a running total of the money collected, a database of who made a donation and how much money was collected – donors can remain anonymous – and the ability to download the database for thank you notes and personalized greeting cards.

"Those differentiate us from other services," Myers said. "We want to make giving online simple and easy but we know it will take time to educate people. It's going to take a lot more vital marketing to change the culture and the mindset because people are used to just giving a gift in a box. This way you can make a donation for whatever tugs at your heartstrings rather than giving a gift that has to be wrapped and unopened."

The cost for the service is minimal, Myers said. Setting up a donation page is free. Each donation made has a \$4.15 convenience fee and a 4.04 percent processing fee payable by credit or debit card. There is a \$10 minimum for each donation and e-Partners in Giving will send each donor an acknowledgement when the money is sent to a designated charity.

"When we started this we saw the financial opportunity but then the opportunity to give back helped us get our priorities in order," Myers said. "The opportunity to give back is so tremendous whether it's helping raise funds for this nonprofit or actually going out and actively participating by donating time and effort to a charity.

"It's all intertwined and that's what gets me up in the morning. It's not the money we earn but the opportunity to give back. It's all about giving back," he said.

Myers practices what he teaches. An avid marathon runner, he ran in the Cowtown Half Marathon on Feb. 28 and plans to run in the Country Music Marathon in Nashville on April 25. He's donating all the money he collects to Back on My Feet, a nonprofit in Philadelphia that focuses on homelessness through running.

Already since December, e-Partners in Giving has helped host the kickoff rally for the 2009 Tarrant County Homeless Count, the first Christmas Extravaganza at Presbyterian Night Shelter and the North Richland Hills Trash Bash 2008.

Myers also helped with a Habitat for Humanity build in Orlando, Fla., in conjunction with the National Funeral Directors Association.

“I want to make giving back sexy and cool,” he said. “I think what will help pull us out of this recession is to take the emphasis off us and focus on helping others. Too many people are caught up in me, me, me. We need to start thinking about others, about giving back to help others. We’re making it easy for you to do that.”

On the web: www.epartnersingiving.com

Online at: <http://www.fwbusinesspress.com/display.php?id=9660>

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