

One of the few positives to come out of the current NHL work stoppage is the Hockey Fans Fight Cancer initiative, spearheaded by Ross Bonander. I sat down to talk with Ross about his charitable endeavour, and how people can get involved.

Angus: What was the motivation to start the Hockey Fans Fight Cancer (HFFC) movement?

Bonander: By trade I'm a freelance health writer with a focus on the so-called blood cancers—the lymphomas, leukemias and myelomas—so I'm generally cognizant of the Hockey Fights Cancer (HFC) campaign every year well in advance. With the lockout, and with HFC occurring in October, it occurred to me that there was a very real possibility that the league's charity initiative wouldn't happen.

Written by Jeff Angus

Thursday, 18 October 2012 12:25 - Last Updated Friday, 19 October 2012 12:06 So my first thought was, 'How will this affect the league's charity partners?' I put calls in to three of the four partners: Prostate Cancer Canada, ZERO-The Project to End Prostate Cancer, and the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network, and asked them how losing out on those funds would impact their programs. I didn't call the other partner, the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, because I know what their revenues are and HFC's contribution is a fraction of a percent of it. What did the partner charities tell you? Well I called the NHL first, and asked them about HFC and the lockout and whether there were other plans being put in place. I got a chilly response from the person I spoke with and then did not receive a call back. That sort of clued me in to the sensitivity of it from a PR standpoint—something that I should have realized before. At any rate, I then put in calls to the partner charities and got very much the same response as the NHL—nothing. The exception was the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network, which sent me a very formal email saying in sum 'no comment.'

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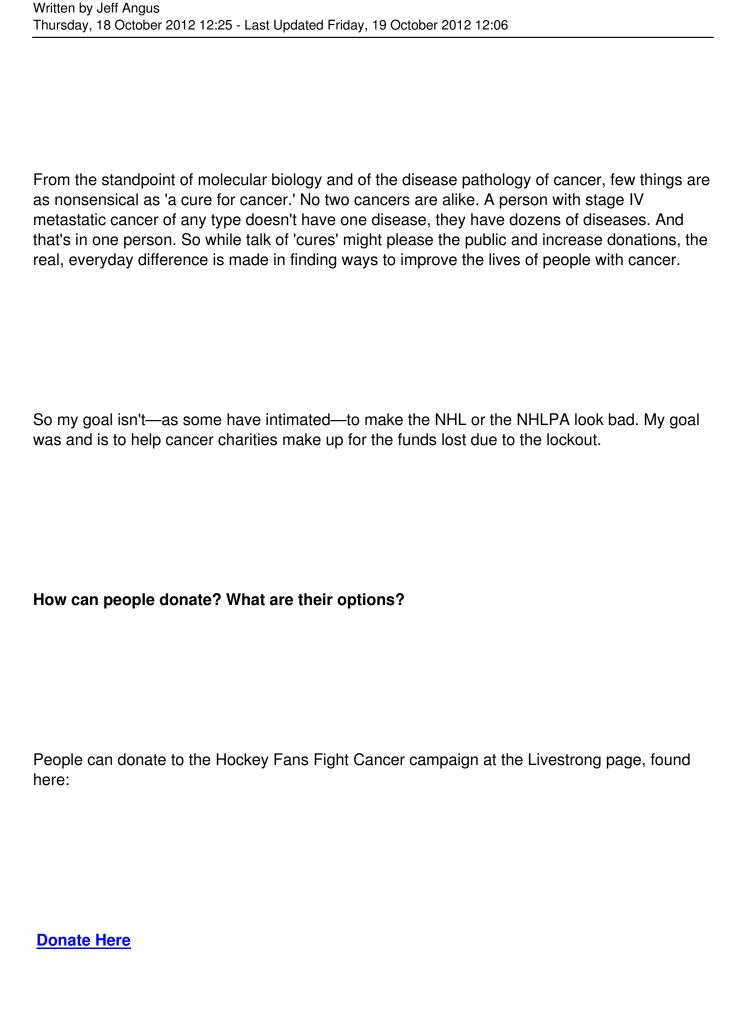
I can't speak for them, but surely they value their partnership with the NHL and the NHLPA and maybe they saw going on record as saying, 'Without HFC, we won't be able to conduct outreach programs' or something like it as potentially detrimental. Or they just forgot about me.

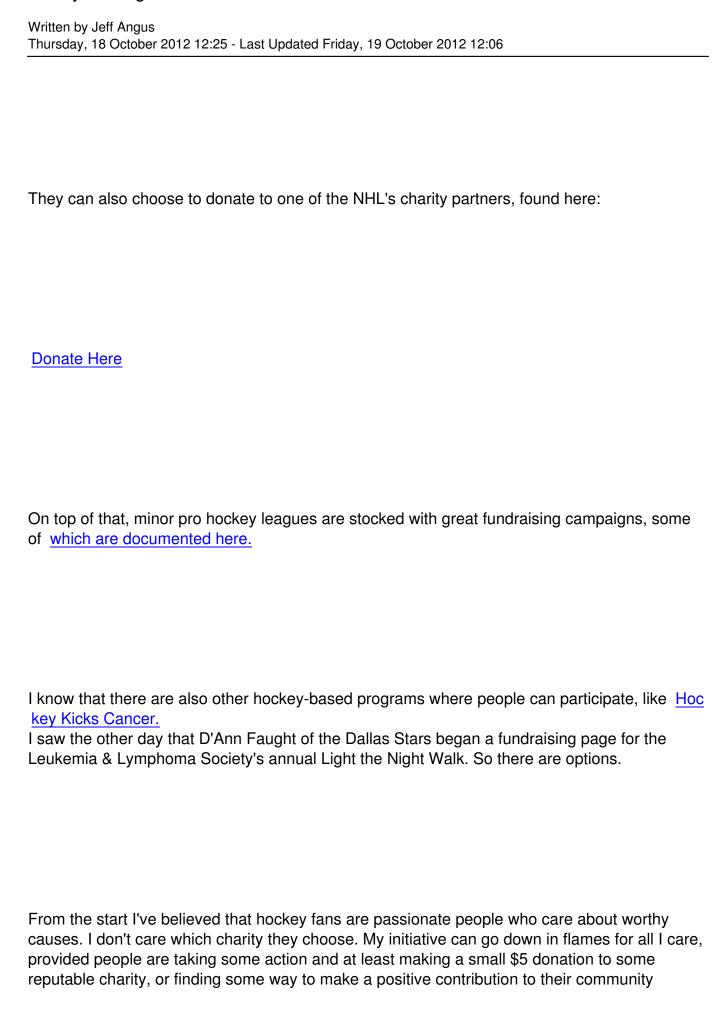
So that's when you launched Hockey Fans Fight Cancer?

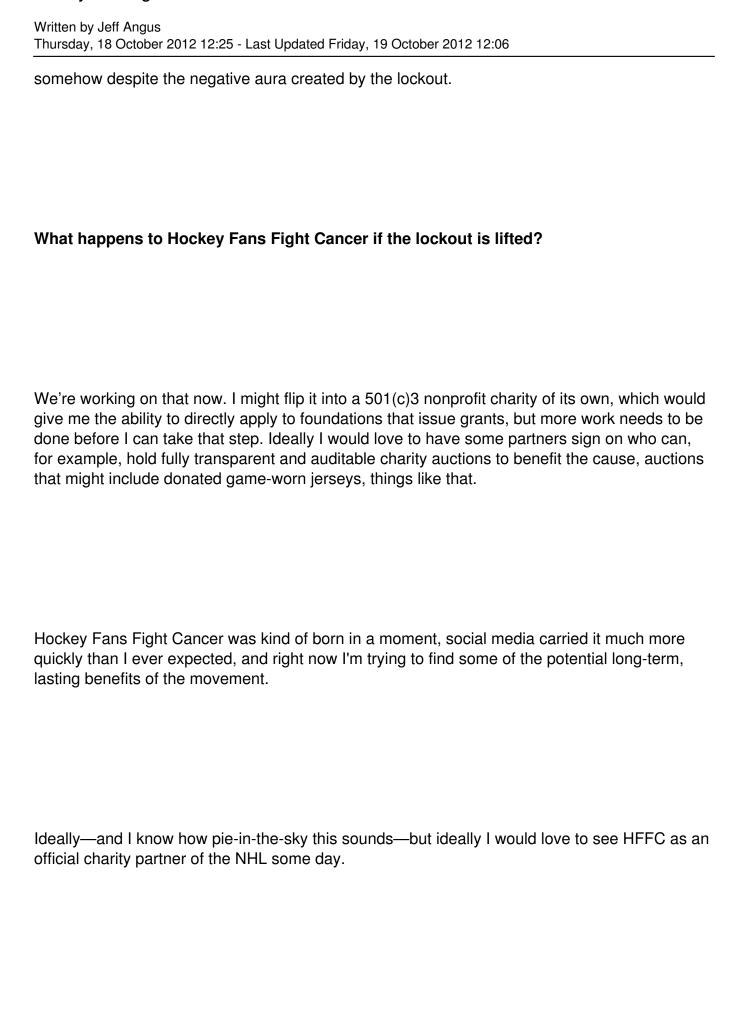
Pretty much. I did some digging to determine how much money HFC made, and tried to find old press releases and other information that gave me an idea of how the funds the partners receive are dispersed. Cancer patients don't have the luxury of a cancer lockout, so I figured if the league and the PA can't or won't be doing it, the fans might.

What is your goal with this fundraising initiative?

Initially I launched the campaign through Livestrong. I did this because people can donate directly to Livestrong—I personally don't handle any donations. I chose Livestrong because of their high rating according to two charity watchdog groups, and because of how they approach cancer: they might receive more donations if they called themselves "Livestrong to Cure Cancer" but instead they're dedicated to improving the quality of life of cancer patients, however that might be achieved—providing transportation to appointments, navigating people through the health care system, practical things like that.







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Thanks for taking the time to speak with me, Ross.

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