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HERALD HIGHLIGHT: CHARITY TICKETS

For charity, profits

Sox Foundation honors Priceline founder for latest co.'s aid

DONNA GOODISON | Published: October 12, 2009

When Jord Poster threw out the first pitch before a recent Red Sox game with his young son in his other arm, thoughts of his late father and their trip to Fenway Park for Game 2 of the 1967 World Series flooded into his head.

"Yaz homered twice," said **Priceline founder** Poster, who was 10 at the time. "It was one of the most memorable experiences my dad and I ever shared. He was definitely in my thoughts as I stood on the mound with my son. It was a pretty emotional moment for me."

Poster's father can take credit for his son's appearance that recent day at Fenway, where he was honored as the "Charitable Partner of the Year" by the **Red Sox Foundation**, which supports New England children and families in need. As the **founder** and CEO of Boston-based Charity Partners Inc., Poster has helped raise more than \$800,000 for the **Red Sox Foundation** - through his for-profit company's Tickets-for-Charity, which fuses a love for music, sports and philanthropy that his father inspired in him.

The 4-year-old Tickets-for-Charity, which had its national launch in June, gives music and sports fans a philanthropic way to land seats at in-demand events. It sells tickets purchased from promoters, recording artists and sports teams for prices at or below those of ticket brokers and scalpers, but the proceeds above the tickets' face values go to charities designated by the buyers from a pre-selected list. Poster's company generates its revenue through ticket service fees of \$5.95 to \$12.95.

Working with artists including James Taylor, Billy Joel, Elton John, Brad Paisley, Coldplay, Carlos Santana, Diana Krall, Kenny Chesney and Sugarland - as well as the **Red Sox**, **Celtics** and **Bruins** - Tickets-for-Charity has raised more than \$4 million for nonprofits ranging from the Wildlife Conservation Society and Farm Aid to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children and City Year. Poster's goal is to raise \$100 million annually in charitable donations by 2011.

"We're going to be quickly scaling the platform with the introduction of dozens of new tours and other partnerships, which we're going to be announcing in the next few months," Poster said. "We have dozens of commitments from professional sports teams."

Tickets-for-Charity cemented its relationship with the **Red Sox Foundation** three years ago, after raising about \$75,000 for the nonprofit through ticket sales for the Rolling Stones' "A Bigger Bang" U.S. tour, which kicked off at Fenway Park in 2005. It was the company's pilot program, raising more than \$1.1 million in total for 11 charities.

"That's when they got their first exposure to how our platform worked, and then we began a new partnership with them on **Red Sox** (ticket) inventory," Poster said.

Tickets-for-Charity receives an allocation of tickets from the **Red Sox** - usually under 50 per game for seats across Fenway - for every home contest of the season, including the playoffs.

"He clearly has great vision," said Meg Vaillancourt, executive director of the **Red Sox Foundation**. "He was a **founder** of **Priceline** and was able to capture energy and imagination by using the Internet to give consumers better deals, and now he's using the Internet in a way that can assist charities."

For some people, time is money, and they want to be assured that they can get tickets to **Red Sox** games without having to sit through a charitable auction, Vaillancourt said.

"We have a limited amount of resources anyway, and a limited amount of player time and use-of-the-ballpark times, so Tickets-for-Charity is an innovative new way for us to raise money," she said.

Poster started spending a lot more time with nonprofits when he returned to Boston after four years each at **Priceline.com**, the online travel site that he co-founded - in addition to conceiving its advertising strategy with actor William Shatner of "Star Trek" - and American Express VIP Subscription Service, a joint venture with Synapse Group that he co-founded to help magazines tie subscriptions to credit card payments to increase retention rates and lower costs.

"I frankly was pretty discouraged at how inefficient the fund-raising models available to nonprofits and charities were," said Poster, who also owns Boston's Genesis Capital Ventures. "There just seemed like there had to be a more scalable and efficient way to get more resources for all of these organizations that were literally fighting every day to save and improve lives."

Tickets-for-Charity is not yet profitable, but that's Poster's goal.

"It's easier to maintain the platforms if you're cash-positive, and we want to be a demonstration company and help like-minded social investors to understand that there are hybrid models of social investment that can do well by doing good," he said.

Poster was "unbelievably humbled" by the **Red Sox Foundation's** honor of his work so far, for which he received an original Fenway **foundation** brick.

And what about his pregame pitch before a crowd that was two times the population of Harrisonburg, Va., where he grew up?

"It was kind of a miscalculation on my part," said Poster, who was cradling his 17-month-old son Will at the time. "I didn't have quite the heat to cross the plate like I hoped to. It made for a once-in-a-lifetime picture opportunity for my son, but the ball sadly bounced in front of the plate."

ONLINE: Jord Poster's Charity Partner's Inc. seeks to use its Tickets-for-Charity setup to raise funds for nonprofits while making money by charging a service fee. HERALD PHOTO BY MATTHEW HEALEY