

CreateAthon!

Teams around the country pull all-nighters for charity.

The sound of a ball slamming against concrete reverberates through a darkened office park near Dallas. It's 4 a.m., the candy corn supply is running low and so is the energy. But not the enthusiasm or commitment.

In five hours, the MODassic Marketing team will present the efforts of its all-nighter benefiting three nonprofits. With the exception of this 4 a.m. soccer break, a late-night pizza run and at least one prank, the team would work 24 hours straight developing websites; designing social media graphics, email templates and print pieces; and creating a promotion schedule and PowerPoint presentation.

MODassic was among more than 20 organizations participating in CreateAthons nationwide last fall.

"When I first brought up the idea to our team, I wasn't sure how they would respond because, after all, I'm asking them all to stay at work for 24 hours straight," says Ryan Short, MODassic creative director. "However, I was pleasantly surprised when everyone was really excited about the idea. I shouldn't have been surprised, though, because creatives are almost always motivated by doing good work that's important, that gets used and that makes an impact, so *pro bono* work is win-win."

Since 1998, when Riggs Partners, a South Carolina agency, came up with the CreateAthon concept, about 100 agencies, universities and colleges, professional organizations and corporations have delivered projects with a total \$16.7 million in market value to more than 1,600 nonprofits.

Not all volunteers pull all-nighters; corporate teams may work a couple of intensely focused days, and students may spread the work over a semester,

says CreateAthon Executive Director Peyton Rowe.

Regardless of how the work is done, "there's a kind of magic that happens when you're doing it because you know you're going to serve a nonprofit that's going to serve your community," Rowe says.

For Cheryn F. Branch, founder of The Healing Branch, which helps victims of child sexual abuse, MODassic's work was nothing short of "awesome."

"When they called me to ask me to apply, I didn't believe it—to think they would actually work all night long for us," she says. "And when we were selected and I saw what they'd done, it really touched my heart."

CreateAthon is recruiting volunteers for spring events, Rowe says. To find out more, visit CreateAthon.org.

—Lisa Ocker

TOP of Mind

I owe all of our company's success to asking hundreds of questions—good, bad, silly or stupid. Back then, I was frustrated with the nut butter choices and was curious why there weren't better options. How do you even make peanut butter? How do you become a company? Who's the FDA? Today, my curiosities focus on sustainability and becoming a better company—from a virtually zero-waste office to co-creating sustainable food packaging—which creates more questions than ever.

—Justin Gold, founder and CEO, Justin's



I pull inspiration from everything in my life. My travels; things that I read, taste, see; even the people I talk to. I love meeting new people and hearing their stories. Learning new things sparks my curiosity and is the sweet sugar in life. Life is about learning every day—and from this we can create.

—Judy Joo, Iron Chef and owner, Jinjuu



I try to find some quietness and reflect on the problem, like in a hike or a run. The combination of endorphins and stimulation let me think deeply about a problem. This isn't to say that I relocate to a cave and don't socialize ideas, but I think that if you are trying to challenge orthodoxies or really stretch thinking, I can most successfully do this first by myself and then with others.

—Darren MacDonald, founder and CEO, Ingress Capital



From top: Benjamin Steiner prepped for the all-nighter; the MODassic team, from left, Colin Coolidge, Steiner, Banner Short,

Ryan Short and Jeremy Monroe; The Healing Branch's new website.

