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# NYPD detective builds crowdfunding website exclusively for first responders and military



*By Eddie Molina*

The most common concerns I hear with crowdfunding websites like GoFundMe and Kickstarter is that “it’s all a scam” or “it’s too difficult to create and manage.” Either way, too many people feel it’s just not worth it.

Those concerns are not unfounded.

Despite GoFundMe’s protocol to prevent fraudulent activity, it still occurs. Recall the South Jersey couple that raised over \$400K for the homeless veteran who didn’t see the money. Or the Nevada mother who faked her son’s death (true story).

The problem was so prevalent that a watchdog website GoFraudMe was created to curb and limit GoFundMe fraud.

Then there's Kickstarter. It's better suited for fraud prevention but has an entirely different problem for the average user. It requires a tech savvy individual to create an elaborate, attention-grabbing campaign that requires videos, special effects and advanced graphics.

If you create a campaign without that *wow* factor, you stand almost no chance of raising funds. In fact, there are companies you can hire to help, but who wants to go through that.

Now, there is a new crowdfunding website designed to solve both those problems. And the best part is that it's strictly for first responders and military personnel (active-duty and veterans) called Fund the First ([www.fundthefirst.com](http://www.fundthefirst.com)).

LET sat down with NYPD Detective and founder of the Fund the First website Robert Garland to discuss the new concept and the need to even create it.

Robert tells LET:

**“After a friend of mine experienced a personal tragedy, I suggested he start a GoFundMe page to raise money to help pay the medical bills. His response was ‘No way, I don’t trust it.’”**

That's where the idea for Fund the First was born.

Robert said:

**“I wanted to create a platform exclusively for first responders and military. The main difference between us and the other fundraising sites is that we vet every campaign. Our mission is simple – eliminate fraud and provide a trusted platform and community for America’s heroes to receive the support needed.”**

That's reassuring.

Police officers see the worst in humanity and because of that, it is hard to trust anyone or anything. Robert's website provides the solution to that by vetting each campaign submission. Every campaign isn't approved right away. A member of Robert's team- all of whom are first responders and military- contacts the recipient of each campaign to verify its authenticity and in conjunction with *id.me* technology. Their goal is to make sure each campaign is legitimate and worthy of fundraising.

So as an experiment, I started my own campaign to see if it's as easy as Robert proclaimed. The recipient of my campaign was Fields 4 Valor Farms, a veteran-run Maryland farm that produces crops to feed struggling veterans in the Washington, D.C. area at no cost to them.

As I navigated the website and entered the information, I was completely and thoroughly impressed. The options were simple, self-explanatory, and navigating the website was very user-friendly. I used both my cell phone and laptop to get the full experience and it was a breeze. The toughest part was entering a description of the campaign, but I found that writing from the heart is the most effective method.

After a couple of days, the campaign went live. It sent me a link and gave me several options to share: email, Facebook, twitter, and more. With the platform being so easy to use, I wondered how well it helped other people in the military and first-responder community.

Robert tells LET:

**“We’ve raised over \$450,000 to various fundraising campaigns since we started back in July of 2020.”**

Yes, that’s correct, \$450,000 and counting.

Fund the First has recently branched out to another charitable segment- Fallen First Reserve.

Robert said:

**“Our goal is to provide financial support in the amount of \$5,000 immediately upon the passing of a first responder.”**

Another noble cause.

As America continues to move in wild directions, it is clear that we, as the first responder and military community, have to look out for each other. And that’s exactly what Fund the First is for.

To start a campaign or to view other campaigns, visit [www.FundtheFirst.com](http://www.FundtheFirst.com).

*About the writer: Eddie Molina is the author of **A Beginner’s Guide to Leadership**, available on his website [www.eddiemolina.com/blog](http://www.eddiemolina.com/blog). He also voluntarily writes articles to keep the law enforcement, first responder and military community informed on important issues. This article is dedicated to Jairo Waszaj.*