



CHALLENGE



September 2006

A Herff Jones IMPACT Resource for Students

Putting the Fun in Fundraising

While fundraising should never be the sole focus of a student organization, it has become a necessary part of student activities in many schools to keep cocurricular programs going. Fundraising efforts can be divided into two main categories: sales campaigns in which a product of some sort is offered and activities where the main focus is an event or service for which you charge admission or another fee.

Sponsoring fun activities that also make money is a great way to keep the focus on your group's worthy goals—instead of just worrying about raising funds—and involve other students in activities that create lifelong memories. These activities will take time and energy to plan, but they offer a chance to practice some of the leadership skills you've learned.

Next time your group needs to raise money, put the fun in fundraising with one of these events:

- **Airband Contest.** Invite student airbands to compete to see which is voted the best by students, community members, and others in attendance. Charge admission and sell

refreshments. See if a local music-related business could sponsor the event.

- **Almost Anything Goes.** Teams from each class compete in Jell-o wrestling, musical chairs, water balloon toss, obstacle courses, tricycle races, skateboard races, and other events.
- **Anything-a-Thon.** Plan a marathon of anything you



like—dancing, bowling, jumping rope, weight lifting, walking, rocking in a chair, you name it—and recruit participants who collect set contributions or pledges for the number of hours they participate or the number of times they do something.

- **Bowling Night.** Coordinate with a local bowling alley to have a bowling night for your school, where your group

earns a percent of the profit in exchange for publicizing the event. Award prizes for best style, best shoes, and best score.

- **Carnival.** Classes and clubs have game and food booths in the gym and elementary, middle, and high school students are invited to attend. Hold it outside and hire a company to provide rides.

- **Coffee House.** Create a stage with a black background and twinkle lights and bring in couches to create more comfortable seating in your school's cafeteria for an evening of entertainment with coffee, tea, hot chocolate, and snacks. Feature a series of student performed acts—music, poetry, dance, and so forth. Charge admission and sell refreshments.

- **Dances.** Many schools make their best money with dances, while at others a dance is a sure way to lose money. One key to having a successful dance is to develop a theme and publicize it well. Some possible themes for casual dances include sponsoring a "Back to School Bash" at the beginning of the year, a "Jam Before You Cram"

just before semester finals, a “Fifth Quarter” after a football or basketball game, or a “Spring Fever Reliever” in the spring. Keep your expenses down and generate as much attendance as you can to make holding a dance a worthwhile fundraiser.

- **Dive-in Movie.** Pick a movie with a water theme (e.g., *Jaws*, *A Perfect Storm*, or *Waterworld*) and project it on the wall next to an indoor pool at school or in the community. Allow students to bring rafts and inner tubes to float on and watch the movie. Charge admission and sell snacks (but create a designated area in which refreshments must be consumed to avoid problems with food getting in the pool!).
- **Friday Fun Night.** Host an evening of fun and games on the athletic field with such things as jumpy houses and inflatable slides, obstacle courses, tug of war, jousting, and so forth. Hire a live band or disc jockey to perform. Charge a fee for three to four hours of unlimited access to the fun. End with a movie on a big screen in the field.
- **Game Show.** Organize an evening of game shows with students or faculty members as contestants and charge admission to the show. For “Class Feud” have teams representing each grade level compete to answer survey questions about your school that 100 students have

answered. A *Wheel of Fortune* type game could be done with phrases your group selects. Have teachers make up questions for a *Jeopardy* type quiz show or a take-off on *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* Invite students from other schools to be contestants in a *Dating Game* or *Singled Out* format.

- **Murder Mystery.** Hold a murder mystery dinner theater featuring faculty members as the actors. Make a stage in the cafeteria and decorate the area to look like a restaurant. Work with local grocery stores and the cafeteria staff to prepare a donated dinner. Get prizes from businesses to raffle off or use as door prizes. Have members of your group serve the dinner, followed by the play featuring teachers in costumes. Give attendees a paper to complete to solve the mystery and raffle off clues to help them solve it.

- **Sports Tournaments** Charge teams a flat fee to participate in a sports tournament. Softball, volleyball, basketball, golf, and bowling can all be profitable. Increase the fun by putting a twist on things: play volleyball in mud pits, do the bowling at midnight under neon lights, have faculty play against students, and so forth. Look for a local sporting goods store that might want to sponsor the event. Charge admission for spectators and sell refreshments.
- **TV Show Takeoffs.** Cash in on the popularity of television shows with a version featuring your own students and staff members. Shows that could be adapted include *Dancing with the Stars*, (pair up popular students with staff members); *So You Think You Can Dance*; *[Your School] Idol*; *Fear Factor*; *The Amazing Race*; and *Survivor*. Charge admission to view the fun or vote on the outcome.

Support Group Goals with Fundraising

Since most organizations will have to do at least one fundraiser during the year, turn the experience into a positive one by tying the effort to the purpose and goals of your group. Rather than simply conducting a sale of some item that is unrelated to your goals, consider how you could raise money and accomplish your goals at the same time.

For example, if one of your goals is to raise school spirit, brainstorm a list of fundraisers that could be related to school spirit. Perhaps you could sell bumper stickers, spirit ribbons, or school shirts. Perhaps you could have a spirit couch in a choice location at sporting events where students purchase a chance to sit with three of their friends and be served refreshments by members of your group. Relating your fundraising efforts to already established group goals enables you to get double the value for your efforts—raise funds and accomplish goals at the same time!