



Raising Money, A Necessary Evil

Welcomed Ideas

By Anson Shuman

Some programs are very blessed with money. However, we, as a speech team, must acquire funding each year on our own. We are not in a situation where admission is charged to generate funds for speech, debate, acting, or drama. This fact is not new and we are not alone. Many of the programs across the United States must raise their own money. It is no different than band, cheerleading, drill team, music, and other programs. Car washes, bake sales, candy sales, candle sales, Christmas paper sales and the list goes on with ways that have been tried to raise money. Until we began attending national competition in the summer months, these types of fund-raisers were fine and produced the funds necessary to pay our fees and transportation to travel in the state of Oklahoma. Our district is a district not unlike many others with very limited funds. While the school system would like to give us funds, they are not available.

The first national trip we took was to the second middle school national tournament which was held at Atwood Lake Resort in Ohio. We needed to raise \$12,000. This was an amount we had never attempted before. How were we going to be able to do it? Car washes were not going to be adequate.

A parent volunteer, experienced in fundraising, became my drive chairman. She suggested two activities to raise the money. The first was to visit the Chamber of Commerce in Ardmore and obtain their help. They gave us a list of chamber members, as well as, the use of their fax machine to copy a letter to be mailed to some 400 members. A letter was drafted for this purpose which received the approval of the princi-

pal and was signed by the principal, the drive chairman, and myself. We, also, printed enough copies of the letter for students attending the trip to personally hand their prospects when they made contact with a business. An article explaining what we were doing was placed in the local newspaper, along with public service announcements on the local television and radio stations. Our students worked in groups of two or more, always with an adults. Each student group had a different list of businesses to visit. Students asked to speak to the manager or owner and simply gave them the letter, voiced a quick script of the purpose, and answered any questions they might have. The team also provided a receipt for tax purposes. We selected half of the businesses to visit in person and half to speak with on the phone. From 9 am until noon, we contacted businesses on the phone, as well as, visited the ones we had identified for personal contact. This project raised \$9,500 in ten days.

Our last activity was "A Night of Elegance". This event, which included a silent auction, was held in a new private school facility in Ardmore. Items were donated by community businesses, as well as, colleges (signed footballs, baseballs, and basketballs). Donations ranged from a set of tires given by Uniroyal plant to an autographed football by a popular professional player. The event was advertised on radio, television, and newspaper. Students, also, placed flyers in businesses that gave us permission to do so and in surrounding towns. Admission fee for "A Night of Elegance" was \$5 which included unlimited dessert, coffee or soft drinks. The team entertained our guests with a performance

of the pieces they would be taking to contest. This event raised an additional \$4,000.

Since that time, we organized and participated in the following events to raise funds for our AMS Speech and Debate program. We have one car wash where tickets are sold ahead of time, as well as, at the car wash. We advertise this event well in advance. We also, participate in a fund-raiser called the Lemonade Stand, which is easy and profitable. In addition, we present a play production each year with five performances. Of course, we visit the Chamber of Commerce to pick up their list of members. After five years, we still raise over \$7,000 a year by contacting the Ardmore businesses. We are grateful to those who give their support to the Ardmore Middle School speech team. We try to give back to our community by participating in community service. This is a win-win situation for our students and adult sponsors, as well as good for our community. The process of raising money is fun for the students on the team, it gives them a sense of pride, and is a great learning experience.

If you would like more information, please email me at pinknie63@hotmail.com. I will help you all that I can.

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