



◆ *Innovation*

What Can We Do For A Fundraiser?

Ideas With a New Approach

By Toby Pickens

Fundraising is an idea that is often met with many heavy sighs and moans of frustration. No one likes to sell door to door, and many schools have even eliminated door to door sales as a fundraising option. So what's an organization to do? Many stick to the usual candy, food, or sports item sales. After that, we run out of ideas. However, the trick to fundraising is finding out what is unique to your school and community.

These ideas don't have to be bold and earth shattering - just find something that will appeal to a wide range of people. For example, most teachers at my school love having "casual Friday" when they are allowed to wear blue jeans. Knowing how strongly the teachers looked forward to this day, our principal allowed teachers to add an extra casual day to the week, on Mondays, at a cost of \$5.00 per week for 10 weeks. The "Casual Mondays" fundraiser added several hundred dollars to our NFL fund, and this project didn't cost our NFL members time or effort.

Another organization in our high school took advantage of our school's annual basketball tournament. The tournament is held all throughout the day on a Thursday and Friday. This year, teachers were allowed to take their students to see the games at a cost of .50 cents per student per period. It

was an all or nothing system in which every student had to go or no one was allowed to go. Students who didn't have money were always taken care of by other students who wanted to donate money for the common cause. In this two-day period, \$2500.00 was raised.

Other organizations have capitalized on the dreaded activity of wrapping Christmas gifts by hosting a Wrapping Day for our community. People in the community bring as many Christmas items and packages as they want and are eager to pay \$1.00 per item to be wrapped. Community members comment that this service relieves stress around this often hectic time of year.

Hosting a tournament is another idea. I'm not talking about hosting the usual speech and debate tournament. Instead, schools can host golf, fishing, and even domino tournaments where contestants put up an entry fee and then hope to win a trophy by the end of the day or a cheap prize like a \$50.00 gift card. These tournaments allow for a broader group of people to participate and have fun.

The key to fundraising is finding out what appeals specifically to your particular school and community. Ask yourself what types of activities do students and community members take part in? Do people like to bicycle,

walk, or ski? If so, then host a bike-a-thon or a walk-a-thon, etc. You'd be amazed how many people jump at the opportunity to pay a fee in order to compete just for the sheer joy of competition.

In addition, look for activities that involve all age groups. For example, organizations can offer some type of mini-camp during the summer that allows small children to learn and discover their surroundings. Anita Lee, our school's science department chair, hosts a science Geek Week every summer where students participate in fun, hands-on science activities, and then at the end of the week, they take a field trip. The students enjoy themselves without realizing that they are actually learning. Another interesting observation of Mrs. Lee's is that, more often than not, parents are willing to pay whatever fee necessary to keep their children busy during the summer as opposed to sitting in front of the TV.

Next year, before ordering those boxes of chocolate candy to sell, think of new and innovative fundraisers that your students and community members will actually enjoy. You'll be pleasantly surprised at the results.

(Toby Pickens, is an NFL Sponsor from Wills Point High School, Wills Point, TX)