



# Creative Fundraising

JANUARY 2004

## WHAT'S INSIDE

- Advice from the Field . . . . . 1
- Planning Successful Fundraising Events . . . . . 2
- The Power of Individuals . . . 3
- Local Fundraising Tips . . . . . 4
- Find Out More . . . . . 4
- Valuing Your Volunteers . . . . 4

## IN THIS ISSUE

We at Scholastic Literacy Partners know how important it is to have a steady stream of funds to sustain your program. For this reason, our latest newsletter focuses on fundraising, with an emphasis on developing community sponsorships.

Successful fundraising is about building relationships. As a literacy organization, you already have a vital connection to your community; extending this relationship to fundraising is a logical next step. By partnering with local businesses and individuals, you can increase your current resources while establishing ongoing sources of support for your program.

Community sponsorship offers innumerable benefits, including added visibility and leverage for other fundraising efforts. Grant-givers often gauge a program's effectiveness by measuring the support it receives from local sponsors and individual donors. If your program is widely supported in your community, you'll stand a better chance of securing larger grants.

Read on for a wealth of creative ideas about community fundraising. We wish you a bountiful new year!

## ADVICE FROM THE FIELD

### Houston READ Commission

The Houston READ Commission was formed in 1988 by the Mayor and City Council of Houston to address the literacy needs of the city's adult population. As a nonprofit urban literacy coalition, the Commission makes its services available, free of charge, to adults and families. We spoke with Family Literacy Coordinator Julie Perea about the Commission's local fundraising initiatives.



Teachers from SEARCH's House of Tiny Treasures, an organization which provides childcare for homeless families, receive training from Houston READ.

**Q: What types of sponsorships have you established within your local community?**

We rely a great deal on in-kind donations. One of our ongoing sponsors is *Greensheet*, a local community newspaper that donates advertisements, delivery trucks, and storage space. When we receive a large book donation, the newspaper's drivers deliver the books to our warehouse—an empty storefront donated by a local realtor. Central Transportation, a local moving company, also collects and delivers book donations. Volunteers from our local JP Morgan Chase bank helped organize the warehouse as part of their Global Day of Service last year—and had such a great time that they plan to return this year. Through the bank, we also received a small grant that allowed us to purchase shelves and brooms to aid in the clean-up effort.

**Q: How do you "sell" your program to potential sponsors?**

Our staff understands that the program's success depends on how each member of our team interacts with the community every day. We talk with community members about the families who have been helped by our program. We work hard to maintain positive relationships throughout the community so sponsors will want to join our efforts—and we show great appreciation for every donation, so sponsors will want to continue as our partners.

**Q: Could you describe some successful fundraising events?**

One of our most popular events is our Great Grown-Up Spelling Bee, in which 12 to 15 teams participate each year. Each team of three adult spellers pays a \$2,000 entry fee. Some companies cover the entry fees for

*continued on page 2*

continued from page 1

local schools and non-profits so they can participate as well. We've also sponsored a Scrabble Tournament with two local Scrabble clubs. On a larger scale, we host an annual Evening for Literacy, a formal dinner featuring a well-known guest speaker whose speaking fee is covered by a local company.

**Q: How else do you connect with potential donors?**

We hold an annual Festival of Reading, a reading carnival for families. A local movie theatre donates its lobby, as well as hot dogs, popcorn, and soda pop. Local businesses and organizations sponsor booths, and volunteers offer educational games for the children to play. While the Festival isn't a fundraising event, it's an important way of establishing connections with potential donors.

**We work hard to maintain positive relationships throughout the community so sponsors will want to join our efforts...**

**Q: What other fundraising advice would you offer our Literacy Partners?**

Think creatively about what local businesses are already doing for themselves—photocopying, making deliveries, or locating space—and see if they can do it for you. Partner with your local newspapers for free publicity, joint sponsorship of events, and other services. Establish relationships with the local affiliates of national companies that have an interest in literacy. And be sure to maintain old relationships while cultivating new ones. Keep up a steady stream of communication with your current donors, not only with formal letters or annual appreciation breakfasts, but with personal thank-you calls and frequent pats on the back.

# Planning Successful

*The events described below can generate significant funds while providing important exposure for your program in your community. Any one of these could become an annual event, providing an ongoing source of support.*

## Employee Giving Campaigns

Employee giving campaigns can provide substantial income—and they don't require a tremendous amount of work. For a campaign to be effective, you'll need the support of the head of a local company, the director of human resources (if applicable), and one member of your staff. The campaign can be a day long, a week long, or a month long, depending on your fundraising goal. Matching gift campaigns, in which the sponsoring company agrees to match all or part of each employee's contribution, are particularly effective.

## Community-Sponsored Advertisements

A community-sponsored newspaper ad can boost your program's visibility while generating essential funds. To get started, contact a local newspaper and ask them to donate space for a full-page ad. Then find a graphic designer who can design the ad for free.

Once these in-kind donations are in place, contact local merchants or community members and offer them the chance to have their names listed beneath the heading, "We Support Literacy."

You can charge \$50 to \$100 for each listing, depending on your fundraising goal. Include a mail-in coupon at the bottom of the page so the newspaper's readers can make contributions, too.

### WE SUPPORT LITERACY

The Family Literacy Project extends its appreciation to the following businesses, organizations, and individuals who have demonstrated their support for the cause of literacy in our community.

XXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXX

On behalf of all the families who have benefited from the generosity of these sponsors, we offer sincere thanks.

\*\*\*\*\*

Your support counts, too! Use the coupon below to make a donation to the Family Literacy Project.

Name: _____	_____ \$10
	_____ \$25
Address: _____	_____ \$50
_____	_____ other

## Crafts Boutique/Silent Auction

This type of fundraiser takes about six months to plan, but can generate significant funds. You'll need a corps of committed volunteers to help with planning and to provide support on the day of the event. Begin by finding a

# Fundraising Events

local organization to donate space; then see if a rental company can provide tables and chairs for free. Once these elements are in place, have your volunteers contact local craftspeople to invite them to display and sell their wares in exchange for a small fee.

To accompany the boutique, ask local merchants and community members to donate goods or services—e.g., dinner for two at a local restaurant, a pair of football tickets, or a weekend at a summer cottage—to be sold in a silent auction. As customers roam the boutique, they can bid on items of interest. All proceeds will go directly to your program.

## Community Contests

A contest is a great way to engage the spirit of your entire community. Try sponsoring a poster design contest through the local library, or a window-painting contest in honor of Read Across America Day. Charge a moderate entry fee—perhaps \$5 for a child to submit a poster design, for example, or \$100 for a community group to enter a window-painting contest—to support your program.

To organize a window-painting contest, arrange for local merchants to donate window space; then invite community groups to paint a scene about books or reading on each window. Assemble a group of community experts—local librarians, teachers, and children—to judge the entries, and get a local bookstore to donate gift certificates for the winners. A scout troop could sponsor a bake sale at the event, with these proceeds also going to your program.

## Round Up for Literacy

Small donations add up! Work with local merchants to establish a “Round Up for Literacy” campaign in your community. For a day, a week, or a month, merchants can ask customers to round up their bills to the nearest dollar, with the extra money earmarked for your program. Stores that are part of large chains often use a computerized process, with a customized thank-you message printed at the bottom of the receipt. When the campaign is over, present each participating merchant with a letter, plaque, or certificate of appreciation.



# The Power of Individuals

While foundations and corporations are important sources of funding for non-profit programs, most charitable donations—about 80 percent, in fact—come from individuals. Here are a few ways to make your program known to potential individual donors:

**Community sponsors:** Present a certificate of appreciation to each of your community sponsors and encourage them to display it where it can be easily seen by other members of the community. Your sponsors should be happy to advertise their connection with your program, since it will give them added visibility, too.

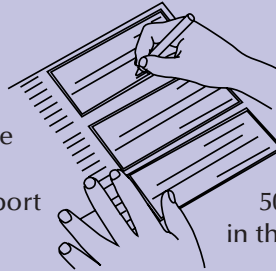
**Print materials:** A simple flyer or brochure about your program can be created at little or no cost. Invite local stores to hang the flyers in their windows or to reserve some counter space for the brochures. Be sure that all print materials include clear instructions about how to make individual donations.

**Local news coverage:** Encourage members of the local media to see your program in action. Ask a community radio station to do an on-air interview, or invite a local newspaper to write an article about families who have been touched by your program's services.

**Advisory board:** Create a local Advisory Board for your program, including representatives of local businesses, social service organizations, and civic groups. If these community members become an integral part of your effort, they will have reason to support it financially—and will be willing to seek support from other community members, too.

# Local Fundraising Tips

- **State your mission:** Tell prospective donors about the powerful ways that literacy benefits individuals, families, and communities. If you are passionate about your mission, others will share your enthusiasm and will want to support your cause.



- **Tell your story:** Let people know why you do the work you do. Describe the joy you experience when you place a book in a child's hands or the excitement you feel when an adult achieves a new level of literacy. If you make your program come alive for prospective donors, they'll want to be a part of your story, too.
- **Spell it out:** Develop written materials about your program, such as information sheets, flyers, or brochures. To defray costs, seek community sponsors who can donate layout and printing services.

- **Quantify it:** Inform prospective donors of the material value of their contributions. A donation of only \$25, for example, will buy 10 new books. With a \$125 donation, your program can purchase 50 new books—and make a positive impact in the lives of 50 families in your community.

- **Go public:** Advertise your program through your local newspapers and radio stations. Ask stores to post flyers or to hand out brochures. Invite local politicians, businesspeople, or community activists to visit your site and see your program in action.
- **Always say “thank you”:** Thank every one of your program's supporters, large and small. When donors feel valued, they are more likely to make future donations—and to encourage others to support your program, too.

## FIND OUT MORE Print Resources

Flanagan, J. (1999). *Successful Fundraising: A Complete Handbook for Volunteers and Professionals*. McGraw-Hill/Contemporary Books.

Keegan, P.B. (1994). *Fundraising for Non-Profits*. New York: HarperCollins.

Klein, K. (1994). *Fundraising for Social Change*. Iverness, CA: Chardon Press.

Klein, K. and Roth, S. (2001). *Raise More Money: The Best of the Grassroots Fundraising Journal*. Oakland, CA: GFJ Publications.

Mutz, J. and Murray, K. (2000). *Fundraising for Dummies*. New York: Hungry Minds, Inc.

## Valuing Your Volunteers

Everyone wants to feel appreciated—especially if they are donating their time and talents. Be sure to offer thanks to everyone who does volunteer work for your organization. Send each volunteer a personal note to express your gratitude for his or her contributions. Host a volunteer appreciation party or luncheon. Present awards, plaques, or certificates of appreciation. Mention volunteers by name in your program's newsletter, or take out a “thank you” ad in your local newspaper.

Volunteers are an integral part of many literacy programs. If their experiences have been satisfying, they will want to support your program in other ways. Volunteers are often well-connected to the community and can play an important role in letter-writing campaigns, event-planning, and other outreach efforts. By making volunteers feel appreciated, you can strengthen your ties to the larger community and gain greater grassroots support.

COMMENTS OR QUESTIONS? Call us at (888) 531-2665, e-mail us at [litpartners@scholastic.com](mailto:litpartners@scholastic.com), or visit us on the Web at [www.scholastic.com/literacypartners](http://www.scholastic.com/literacypartners). We'd love to hear from you!