

# The Art of Youth Ministry Fundraising



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The following is adapted from the book *Fundraising & Fellowship* by Mary Ann Zierler-Jasiak

### ***Why should we fundraise?***

1. Fundraising allows All young people to participate in a special event, trip, or project. It is the responsibility of adults in youth ministry to be an advocate for the teens, no matter what their financial status. A common fundraising effort helps to level the playing field so that all can comfortably participate.
2. Fundraising brings positive attention to your youth ministry program. Often teenagers seem to be invisible in our local and church communities. Fundraising efforts are a very visible way to help others to see and know just how faith-filled and committed these teens are.
3. Fundraising builds camaraderie and community among the youth. The teens that participate in youth ministry are of various ages and often go to different schools. They will also have a variety of interests and friendship groups. Holding a common fundraising event helps unify these diverse factions into once.
4. Fundraising helps teens and adults alike to practice their faith. It is everyone's responsibility to support others in their efforts to learn about Jesus and build the kingdom of God.

### ***Fundraising Options***

Regarding fundraising options, the real question is "What type of fundraising is best suited to the talents, interest, and needs of the group? Listed below are some various types of fundraising. Read through each option, keeping the particulars of your own group in mind.

#### ***Selling***

Fundraising companies provide many options for selling. A group can sell things like cookie dough, flavored coffee, frozen pizza, cheese, candles, ice cream cake certificates, wrapping paper, fruit, magazines, candy bars, and much more. All of these endeavors have some degree of profitability, as the group is able to keep a designated amount. They also require little work by the organizer and are generally easy to bring to a conclusion.

Comments: Teens who seem to do best at this type of fundraising are those with large, extended families or those whose parents work in office situation where soliciting is acceptable. This is also a negative for this for this type of fundraising as it is often the parents who do most of the selling on behalf of their children. Too much selling and buying can also be a burden on your church and school community, as many other organizations seem to use this method. Burnout including pocketbook burnout may occur.

#### ***Local Business Opportunities***

May local businesses offer special opportunities for teens to earn money. For example, Kohl's will allow teens to come in during the holiday season to help bag merchandise and they pay them per hour.

Comments: A benefit of this form of fundraising is that the teens are out in the community and the public is able to interact with them about the reason they are trying to earn money. Finding,

opportunities through your local businesses may take time, but once you do you will likely be able to tap into them more than once.

### ***Matching Funds and Grants***

Many businesses have matching funds programs. This means that if you raise money by selling candy bars, the business will match whatever profit your group has earned. Wal-Mart has traditionally sponsored such a program. You can encourage the parents of your teens to check with their employers to see if they would be willing to sponsor such a matching funds program.

Comments: Except for the fact that the teens may be asked to describe their reason for needing funds in a letter or presentation, this type of fundraiser has little or no youth involvement. However, it is a great avenue to communicate the work your teens are involved in to the community and business leaders. It is helpful to secure an adult with experience in writing proposals for grants and matching funds.

### ***Donations by Charitable Agencies***

Related to local business opportunities and grant writing you or your group can write or make a personal presentation to a charitable agency for donation to support an area of your ministry. Agencies like the Knights of Columbus, Lions Club and local veterans' clubs apply. If possible, have the teens compose the letters or make the presentations to these groups themselves.

Comments: This is a simple project that may only require a letter of request and a thank you note. ON the other hand, these agencies receive many requests for donations, so your inquiry may not be responded to immediately, if at all. However, it is certainly worth making the effort as it offers another way to publicize your program and the activities your teens are involved in.

### ***Charging for a service***

You are probably already very familiar with opportunities that fit in this category – everything from car washes, to baby-sitting services, to running errands, to doing yard work. A good deal of planning and publicity are required for each of these service events. But upon doing so you can expect a fair to good monetary return on your efforts.

Comments: I have found that young people truly enjoy events of this kind. They seem to value the time together working for a common cause. I usually include at least one of these types of events per year in our fundraising efforts.

### ***How do we fundraise?***

#### **Setting up a Game Plan**

- Goal -how much do you need to raise?
- Research -What other fundraising is taking place in your parish and when
- Approval- who gives you the go ahead, how does fundraising fit in if your parish does stewardship
- Budget/Cost -what cost will you incur to put on this fundraiser

- Marketing- how will you advertise and promote this event?
- Volunteers/Labor -how many adults will you need
- Youth Interaction -what are their roles. How safe will they be? Are they responsible enough for this activity?
- Parents- informing them, seeking approval and support
- Recruit parents and adult leaders who will be attending the event to sign up and lead 1 or 2 of the fundraising events. Let them sign up for the ones they have an excitement for or have some energy around -to ensure its success.
- Calendar -plan a calendar from start to finish -actual event information and promotional info and dates as well -coordinate this with the full youth ministry calendar and parish calendar
- Distributing the profits, setting rules regarding over earning, making sure time is logged for equitable disbursement. Etc.
- Be creative, build community, involve as many folks as possible

### *How to pick a fundraiser that works*

1. Look for a unique product that is needed versus wanted.
2. Find a product that is priced fairly to the donor.
3. Ask yourself "is this something for which I would have a need?"
4. Would this product cost less at a department store?
5. Could the general public use this product?
6. Is there a cost involved for our organization to try this fundraiser?

If you follow steps 1-6, then I would say you have done your homework and this would be a good fundraising product to sell

### *Tips to Fundraising Successfully*

**TIP #1** - Don't re-invent the wheel. If your church has a favorite product fundraiser they have done before, regardless of how unsuccessful it has been, stick with it. Any fundraiser that raises funds is a successful fundraiser. To try to introduce a new fundraising idea to the group right off will certainly be met with a great deal of resistance requiring much debate (and will make your job twice as hard). Besides, you're going to have a hard enough time with the members who believe the money should just "come in"! Wait until you have a success or two before you decide to take on the committee.

**TIP #2** - Hope for the best, but plan for the worst. Rarely are fundraisers ever successful enough, so you'll probably need a back-up fundraising idea or two ready to present to the board. Always be looking for fundraising ideas that work well for other groups. Plan several fundraisers in advance even if you feel confident that one or two will produce the funds you need.

**TIP #3** - Pick a fundraising company for their fundraising expertise, not the products they offer. Regardless of the product you select, the chances that the people you solicit will be in the market for that product at that price are slim to none. People will buy from your organization mostly because they are compelled to help you, not because of the products you offer. You can

buy products wholesale easily enough; what you really need is a company that specializes in helping groups raise money.

Good fundraising companies understand you might not have a great deal of experience in conducting fundraisers. They will assist you in planning the fundraiser dates and point out any pitfalls you may be setting yourself up for. They should also have a system of collecting orders and distributing them to your participants that is easy to organize and saves you time.

How do you find a product company that knows fundraising? There are hundreds of companies that see fundraisers as a nice way to sell a little more of their wares. Look for a company that promotes fundraising as their main marketing effort, can provide you all the materials, i.e. order forms, reconciliation forms, etc., and will consult you on how best to conduct a fundraiser using their products. And, of course, get references from groups that have used their fundraiser before.

**TIP #4 - Organize your organization.** The attitude of many participants of an organization is amazing. 80% will sit back and do nothing, figuring someone else will take up their slack. It is unrealistic to expect every member of your organization to contribute the maximum effort, but there is a lot you can do to increase the productivity of the slackers.

First, never start a fundraiser with out a "Kick Off" meeting involving all the participants. If you have several groups with in your organization such as youth group, choir, etc., set up a leader meeting to train the leaders in conducting their individual Kick Off meeting.

The objective of this meeting is to get a commitment from each and every participant to set, and work to achieve, a personal sales goal. At leader meetings you get a group commitment from each leader. The best way to do this is to start the meeting by explaining what the fundraising goal is and where the funds will be spent so each participant can see who will benefit. Then, break down the fundraising goal to a dollar figure by participant. For instance, if you need to raise \$1,000 and you have 20 members in your group, that's \$50 profit per member. Convert this amount to a sales goal. If your profit margin is 50% then each member must sell \$100 in goods. You may even want to break it down to the number of items, i.e. \$5 item = 20 items to sell. Then, get their heads nodding by looking them in the eye and asking, "Can you sell 20 items?" This is when you answer questions about the fundraiser...after they have committed to a personal goal. Anything you say before you get everyone involved and his or her goal has been set will go in one ear and out the other.

By the way, don't ever figure that everyone will know what to do just because you have done this fundraiser before. Some of your best contributors have left your group and some of your members are new and don't know what to do; provide clear instructions.

#### **Tip #5- Get Organized**

Ask yourself what you are raising the money for? How much am I trying to raise, and how many participants will it take to make this happen? If you come into this project without knowing the answers to these 3 questions, you could fail in your efforts. Offer incentives if you are raising money for something other than what people are going to personally benefit from. For example: if the fundraiser is to raise money for church playground equipment it would be feasible to offer your highest earning participants with either a cash prize, pizza party or gift

certificate (etc.). Whatever the prize is, it needs to be announced at the beginning of the sale. Do not wait until the end of the sale to announce what you are going to give away.

### **Tip #6- Be On Time**

If there is one crucial piece of advice I can give you, it is to turn your orders in on time! I have seen groups that start off selling for 2 weeks; then it turns into 4 weeks; then drags on for 6 weeks. Not only will you be stressed, you will have unhappy customers, as well. Customers want their orders as soon as possible. If you drag out your fundraiser, you jeopardize any future activity with your customers. Most companies have a 2 week turn around time. By the time the customers get their order, a 2 week fundraiser is actually a 4 week fundraiser.

Remember that it is vital to keep your customers happy. If customers are happy with the product and your service, they will be willing to purchase from you time and time again. If you follow the steps above, not only will you have happy customers, but your success will be much easier to attain. Success is not a final destination that we arrive at; it is our journey along the way. Happy fundraising!

### **Tip #7 Promote Your Fundraiser**

Before your fundraiser starts, issue a press release. We will be happy to supply you with a sample press release, which you can easily adapt to promote your group. Have each group member email family members about your cause. Send a letter home ahead of time informing parents about the event - goals, dates, and the need for volunteers.

### *Fundraising Ideas*

Pancake Breakfast/Spaghetti Dinners - hold these once a month on the same Sunday and have a supplementary Bake Sale and Raffle of some donated or handmade prize going on at the same time. Many grocery stores will donate the supplies if asked (provide the store with a request on parish letterhead beforehand). Jewel will give donations for events like this. In addition, consider asking each youth to get 5 business sponsors to place their ad on a placemat to be used for the meal. Each contribution can count toward that person's fundraising total and insures that the meal event will be a success whether or not hundreds of people show up. Consider partnering with the Knights of Columbus or the Ladies Club of your parish -some times they will have cook and serve and/or donate the food.

Donut Sales- Hold after mass every Sunday. Note: If you are doing Krispy Kreme sales, be sure to call them ASAP -they are limited in the number of donuts they can make for each Sunday for church sales.

Holy Bears - Wonderful personalized "beanie baby" style bears with hundreds of personalized logo's and words on them. Parish gets 50% of profits from the sales. This is especially good around first sacraments, Mother's Day and graduations. Call (713) 849-1980 or go to [www.holybears.com](http://www.holybears.com) for info.

Wal-Mart - Allows fund raisers outside their doors (selling grilled hotdogs, hamburgers, other items) and will allow car washings (and they provide the supplies) on site. If you contact them 6

weeks prior to the event in writing, they may be able to match all funds you raise during your fundraiser. See the store manager for details.

Rummage Sales - These can be done by individuals at their home or better yet at the parish in a hall or gym. Invite parishioners to drop off items beginning the weekend before (starting with masses). Hold the sale Friday-Saturday so all is done by the next weekend's masses. Hold a "bag sale" the last 2 hours where everyone pays \$5 for a paper bag and anything they can fit in it they get. This helps to get rid of the extra stuff you have left over. Contact the local thrift stores to come in afterwards and take anything that's left over. Sometimes the Ladies Club will help out or partner with youth ministry on events like this.

Lenten Fish Fry - The second Friday of Lent, youth ministry collaborates with Knights of Columbus to sponsor a parish fish fry. For the last two years our youth earned 5900 and \$1500 respectively. Some parishes just do a fish fry one week, others offer a fish fry every Friday during Lent.

Direct Appeals (*Second Collections and Personal Sponsors*) - Have youth speak to parishioners at every mass before the second collection or after Communion to request for interested parishioners to sponsor some or all of the youth attending this event. Be sure the youth share what they hope to get out of the event and how this will benefit the parish locally. Another option is to station youth at the exits with cans or buckets collecting money using a theme such as "a dollar and a dream" or "we need your drop in the bucket".

Sponsor A Youth Envelops - This is part of the regular envelope distribution of the parish. Once a month there is an envelope featuring an upcoming activity of youth ministry that parishioners can support if they choose. Some parishes offer the opportunity monthly, others quarterly. As parishioners go through their envelopes, each month they are reminded of youth ministry, what is coming up and are given the opportunity to support youth ministry.

Who Makes the most CENTS (sense) - s a neat idea that involves a friendly rivalry between the men and women of the parish. The fundraiser lasts several weeks. Have the youth decorate a half dozen or so "pink" buckets for the girls and women and half dozen or so "blue" buckets for the boys and men. Each week before or after mass ask parishioners as they enter and exit church -who have the most sense? As they donate "Cents" -keep a running tally of how much has been collected in the pink buckets verses how much has been collected in the blue buckets. Announce the totals to the parish at each mass -"Well it looks like the men in the parish have more sense - they are ahead by \$14.27." Encourage the women to raise more and the men to continue their lead. It really helps if the pastor is behind this and encourages the parishioners to join in the fun and fund!

Discount Cards - Successful in some places or parishes. Two types -one is with a multiple business discount card. The second is a buy one get one free card. You purchase the cards, have the youth sell them. Turn in remaining cards left unsold. Every card sold you can make \$4-\$6

dollars. The purchaser can use the card many times and receive the discount multiple times. Blimpies, Dominos are a couple of places that do this.

Fall Lawn Decorating/Cleaning -This works great in October. Create a simple lawn decoration of corn stalks (get them donated), pumpkins and gourds and display it along with the price, after masses with a sign up table nearby that invites people to pay to have this display set up in their yards during the fall, prior to Halloween. Have additional options people could sign up and pay extra for, such as having leaves raked or the decorations taken down the week of Thanksgiving.

Pizza Sales- Check with local distributors and make pizzas from scratch for sale to parishioners, family and friends. Have youth take orders and collect payments. Schedule a night to make the pizzas. The crust is already made -after decorating the pizza with sauce and toppings, they can be frozen or are ready to bake. Youth take pizzas and deliver them to the people who placed an order with them. You can do this quarterly! Super bowl Sunday and the final game of the World Series are good times to host this event.

Car Window Wash - During the warmer months, have a group of youth wash all of the car windows while people are at mass. After communion, have a couple of the youth get up and explain what they did while everyone was at mass. Tell them that the youth will be available at each of the exits to take donations that will help send them to this particular event. Be sure to have plenty of cleaning supplies and people on hand to accomplish this feat in an hour. A good way to keep track of the cars that have had their windows cleaned is to make a prayer card asking those folks to pray for the youth and the success of the experience they hope to have. Leave these prayer cards under the windshield wipers when a car is finished.

Flower Sales - these work great, especially on Easter and Mother's Day. Have youth selling carnations (and stick pins) before and after each of the masses. Contact local greenhouses for reduced or bulk rates. You can also sell these with the long stems and attached a heart made out of construction paper for the folks to hand write a note on it for the person they are giving the flower.

Flamingo Raids -Get a flock of plastic pink flamingoes from Oriental Trading Co. (800-228-2269) and announce that parishioners can have anyone's yard "flamingoed" for a donation (the youth group sneaks into their yard at night and places 2-3 dozen flamingoes all over it with a sign saying they have been "flamingoed" with a note from the person who paid for it and that, for a donation, the youth group will come and take them away.) The donation can range between \$25- \$50. You can also sell "insurance" for the same amount and that keeps flamingoes out of a person's yard (recommended for Parish Staff and Pastoral Council Leaders).

Stock/Shares Certificates - This is an excellent program that youth can do by themselves to raise their share of the costs. Copy and give them sets of stock certificates. As they collect "stock" from family, relatives and friends, have them keep track of their stockholders. Tell them that they will receive a "stock report" after the event (in the form of a summary letter) from the person they are sponsoring. Another option is to have a Stockholders Party and everyone's



stockholders are invited to a gathering at church to hear the stories of the group, see pictures, items traded, etc. You can have a pitch in -or just have desert. . whatever works for your group!

Ornaments - Consider having a Christmas ornament made of the Church and selling these to parishioners before the holidays. Some parishes make it an annual fundraiser- and sell a different type of angel each year. Lots of options with this one!

M & M- Mission Money Fundraiser - Head to the local supermarket, department store or Sam's Club and buy (or have donated or reduced price) the little plastic containers filled with little M&M's. During announcements at each of the masses, explain the fundraiser. Families are invited to have a canister filled with M&Ms -enjoy the M&Ms -and when the canister is empty -fill it with their extra quarters over the next few weeks. The quarters fit perfectly in this canister and each canister holds @ \$14 or \$15. When they fill the canisters have them bring them to church and turn them in. You can have a special place -or they can turn them in during offertory. They can keep getting more M&Ms -as long as they last.

Home Parties - Companies like: Avon, Party lite, Pampered Chef and Tastefully Simple have ways for you to sell their products or have home shows where you can earn a percentage of the sale for your organization.

Parents Day Out - Offer a free baby-sitting day for your parishioners. Have parents sign up their children in advance and have the teens watch them for a few hours so that the parents can have some free time to do other things. The Christmas season is a good time to do this because it allows the parents to go Christmas shopping without the kids. Ask the parents for a free will offering when they pick up their children. Most parents are so happy to have the day to themselves that they are very generous.

Dunk Tank - Sponsor a Dunk Tank at your parish picnic or town festival. Get your pastor or other well known parishioners to sit in it for a half hour.

Local Band Concert - Every high school has teens who have their own bands. Most likely one of those band members is a teen in your program. Ask 4 or 5 bands to come play in your gym and tell them you will pay each band 10 % of the profit. Charge \$5 to get in. The bands will take on the responsibility to advertise because the more people that come the more money they make.

Turn old cell phones into cash -- 50 million used cell phones lie in homes and businesses. we provide a way to turn these into cash for your group. Become part of a revolutionary fund raising concept that is sure to generate substantial funds for your organization.  
<http://www.cellfund.com/>

INKBANK Inkjet Cartridge Recycling Fundraising Program -- This fundraiser will be fantastic in bringing in additional funds and providing your community a valuable service by recycling used inkjet and laser cartridges for a profit. Yes, you can make a good profit from cartridges

that would normally be thrown in the trash. It helps the environment too. All marketing materials are free to you. There are no minimums or long term contracts. Simply collect and recycle. You'll get an average of several dollars for each used inkjet cartridge in good condition. Some cartridges bring you up to \$14 apiece. We pay the highest for cartridges. No selling involved. Expect to raise thousands of dollars with a moderate effort on your part. Your nonprofit qualifies. We've shown hundreds of organizations how they can easily raise funds year after year with minimal effort. [InkBizshop.com](http://InkBizshop.com)

Additional Ideas -

- Silent Auction
- Market Day
- Breakfast with Santa
- Volleyball Marathon
- Dog Wash
- Annual Plant Sale
- 1950's Drive IN
- Delivery of Phone Books
- Car Wash
- Bake Sale