

## **Fundraising Ideas**

*Gina Walker, Teacher, Sandy Lake Academy, Bedford, NS*

As the school year begins, budgets and fundraising may be the last thing on your mind. Even so, I decided to share with you some ideas that I have collected over the years. Some I have tried, others are Internet finds I am still waiting to test out! The first two are my favourites. Good luck!

### *Take-Out Tuesdays*

This fundraiser requires a bit of planning, but is worth the effort in profit! On the first Tuesday of each month, why not sell a home-made pre-packaged meal for parents to pick up after school. At our school, we advertised to our parents and in our church bulletins. We had people e-mail the school to pre-order their meal. The teachers then got together Monday after school to cook and package the meal. They were then ready the next day for people to pick up at their convenience. Our baked pasta meal with Caesar salad and garlic bread was a big hit!

### *Dinner Theatre*

Do you have a great music program at your school? How about really talented parents or teachers? Why not hold a dinner theatre instead of your regular old fundraiser dinner? We had our elementary students plus staff put on a musical program. The staff were the actors and the kids did the singing. Throughout the meal, the staff came down and served the various courses to the guests (in character, of course)! It was lots of fun and really brought the school together!

### *Bagger for a Day*

Sometimes it seems that your local grocery store can be too busy and that you always end up bagging your own groceries. Provide a nice service to your community and raise funds at the same time. Find a busy grocery store that is willing to help your group and pick a busy day of the week. Print off flyers that explain your group and what you are doing in the store that day. Hand out the flyers to people entering the store. Give your "baggers" a quick lesson on how to properly bag, for example heavy items on the bottom and eggs and bread on the top. Have a tip jar at each register. You may want each bagger to wear a nametag with your group's name on it as well. Bag each person's groceries quickly and with a smile. Offer to push their cart and help to unload them into their car. This should be done with adult supervision for safety reasons.

### *Beautiful Baby Contest*

Everyone loves a beautiful baby, and all parents know their baby is one. They won't be able to resist entering their child into your beautiful baby contest. This fundraiser is appropriate for everyone. Ask for submissions of the best pictures of people's children. Have them sign a waiver giving you permission to use the picture for your contest. Set up all the pictures in a public location and have a small bio of each child. Put a voting jar at each picture as well. One cent equals one vote. Find a local baby and kids store that is willing to donate a years worth of diapers or a bedroom set to the winner. If you have a large prize, you will create more excitement for your contest and have more entries and votes. You may also want to have prizes for second and third place, as well as categories, such as best smile and prettiest eyes. The categories can be more for fun and judged independently of the voting jars. Have judges or allow the public to vote with ballot boxes.

### *Break the Balloon*

Pop, pop, pop. What can be more fun than popping a balloon? Winning something for doing so, of course! This is an easy fundraiser and can be incorporated into other events, such as a dinner fundraiser or fair. You will need balloons, a helium tank, string, and slips of paper with prizes printed on them. Go to the local retailers and explain who your group is and what you are raising funds for. Ask if they

would like to donate a prize in exchange for free advertising at your event. On the day of the event, place the prize slips into the balloons, fill them with helium, and tie a string to them. All balloons should have a slip of paper, even if it is just a thank you for participating, so they all look the same. You may want the balloons to all be the same color to distinguish them from others at the event. Sell the balloons telling people to hold onto them until a big announcement. After all the balloons have been sold, instruct everyone to pop their balloon and see if they have won. It will be humorous to see the different methods of popping the balloons. Instruct the winners to come up and claim their prize.

### *Carnation Day*

Everyone loves to receive flowers and it can be very uplifting to know that someone is thinking of you. Have a carnation day on Valentine's Day or Sweetest Day as your group's next fundraiser. This is a great fundraiser for a school. Carnations are a relatively inexpensive flower and you should be able to get a great deal buying them in bulk. Contact a local nursery, greenhouse or florist and see if they can help you out. Have pre-sales of the carnations before school and during lunchtime for a week before the day. Make up cards that have a line for the student's full name and homeroom, and a spot for a personal message. Set up a table to sell the cards and pens for the students to fill out. Have collection boxes to place the cards in. You may want to have the boxes labeled with homerooms or alphabetically (A-D, E-G, etc.) to make sorting easier. Have a cash box with small bills and coins so that you can make change. On the morning of Carnation Day, have some people grouping flowers and cards and others delivering them to homerooms. The recipients will love hearing their names read off and receiving the flowers. Consider ordering extra to give each teacher and principal one as well.

### *Funny Photo Contest*

This is a chance for all aspiring photographers to show off their funniest pictures. Have a funny photo contest and ask for submissions from your group. Set up pictures like an art show. Have the picture framed or matted and include a small biography of the artist. In order to raise money, make it a juried art show. Place a jar, can, or box in front of each picture in which people can place coins or bills to vote for their favorites. One cent equals one vote. Offer sparkling grape juice, fruit and cheese to your patrons as a thank you for coming. Consider setting up in a public space, such as a local shopping mall to increase your traffic and votes. Leave the display set up for a week or a long weekend. As an alternative you could auction off the funny photos and whichever one sells for the highest price is the winner.

### *Gift Basket Auction or Raffle*

No one wants to do another candy sale for his or her school's fundraiser. Here is an alternative that is gaining in popularity and returning large rewards for those who host it. Make each classroom or homeroom responsible for one themed gift basket. Send a note home to parents to donate one item within the theme or contact local retailers, businesses, and sales representatives to see if they would like to help out. For instance, one classroom could have a sports theme and their basket could include a baseball glove, basketball, jersey, and tickets to a local game. A chocolate lover's basket could include a chocolate bar, hot chocolate, chocolate cookbook, and a box of brownie mix. The assembled baskets could then be auctioned off in a silent auction or raffle tickets could be sold. Have a listing of each basket's full contents on the basket. Get a roll of two part raffle tickets. Set up a bucket near each basket so people can place half of their raffle ticket into the buckets of only the baskets they want to win. At the end of the night, draw the winning tickets and let the winners claim their prizes.

### *Going to the Dogs*

Dogs are now considered a member of the family and people are spending more time, love, and money on them than ever. Give your employees the chance to bring their dog to work for a day. Set a day and a price for the day. Most people would probably be willing to pay fifteen to twenty five dollars. Have a

few rules, such as dogs must be kept on leashes, they should be up to date on shots, you must have a vaccination record, and you must clean up any messes your dog makes both inside and outside. Provide “bio” baggies and a trash can outside to deposit the messes. Set up a dog free zone in a conference room for those with allergies or who don’t want to participate, to work in for the day. At lunchtime have a contest for the prettiest dog, the silliest pet trick, and dog that most looks like its owner. You will probably find your employees are happier and more productive on this day.

### *Grown Up Spelling Bee*

Use a classic childhood competition for your next fundraiser. Have a grown up spelling bee. Find volunteers that would like to participate. You can either collect an entry fee to raise money, or charge an admission fee to the audience. Give participants a copy of the “Spell It” book to study from. Use the official spelling bee rules, such as asking for a definition of a word and asking to use it in a sentence. Use easier words for the first few rounds. Later rounds should be interesting as you start using the more difficult words, such as extrapolate or neurological. Have a concession stand and sell snacks and drinks to earn extra money. It would be really cute to sell cookies cut into letter shapes and alphabet soup. Give each participant a certificate and award the winner with a trophy and a dictionary. This would be a fun event to host every year, so consider getting a large trophy that you can engrave with all the winners’ names.

### *Head Shaving*

A head shaving fundraiser can have many incarnations, so you are only limited by your imagination. Here are a few ideas to help you brainstorm. Find a school teacher or principal willing to shave his/her head for your fundraiser. Someone who has long hair would be ideal, because they will seem to be giving up more and people will be more willing to donate. Have a public head shaving when your goal has been met. Let the top donors or fundraisers take turns with the clippers or find a local barber willing to do it. As an alternative, you could also do a beard or mustache shaving. Find a salon or barbershop willing to donate their time, service and place of business for a day. Offer head shaving and hair cuts in return for a donation. Find a group of people willing to shave their heads in support of someone who may be losing their hair to chemotherapy. Have them find sponsors who are willing to donate money in return for shaving their head. Some charities will collect donated hair to make wigs for cancer patients. Check with local organizations or beauty salons about the requirements for donations.

### *What's in the Box Auction*

Curiosity killed the cat and it will be curiosity that will work in your group’s favor with this fundraiser. Have all the attendees bring a wrapped package, big or small, to the auction. They can place anything they want in the box from tickets to the opera (perhaps weighted down with some rocks) or the lamp Aunt Esther bought them as a wedding gift (a hideous thing really). As each box is brought in, label it with a number and place on tables that have been set up. People should be allowed to examine the boxes, picking them up and shaking them. Absolutely no unwrapping or peaking! You can either run the auction live with an auctioneer, or as a silent auction. In a silent auction, people write down their bids on a piece of paper kept near the box and try to outbid each other that way. Seed the auction with a few really great items that have been donated by local stores to keep bidding high. Let each winner unwrap his/her box in front of everyone after they win to show off if they got a great prize or a dud. This will be fun for everyone.