



## Fundraising Tips and Ideas

*from Amazon Rainforest Workshops & EcoTeach*

### A Success Story – the intangible benefits of fundraising

In 2007, two teachers from Scriber Lake High School (an alternative school in Edmonds, WA) planned a trip to Costa Rica with EcoTeach. They needed to raise \$20,000!

After raising \$40,000 (double their goal,) the teachers and school principal discovered that their fundraising efforts paid off in ways never imagined. The community – rotary clubs, real estate offices, local restaurants & friends and family – rallied around the school group. The local newspapers tracked the group's progress and published articles about their efforts. The group's fundraising efforts raised tremendous awareness for the school and the positive impact it was having on its students and the community! "It's the best thing that's ever happened to our school," said the school principal.

### Raise Money & Awareness

We've all had experiences with less than stellar fundraising schemes. We buy things we don't want, we sell things we don't believe in and we eventually end up with a freezer full of cookie dough that will last longer than the freezer. How do we break out of our bad habits and select fundraisers that achieve results like Scriber Lake High School? How can our fundraising make a difference by supporting a local business, promoting a "green product" or supporting companies dedicated to sustainability and the environment? While we don't profess to be fundraising experts, here are a few suggestions we've compiled from our creative teacher and student fundraisers over the years:

**Look for local fundraisers.** Select a fundraiser that supports a local, family-owned business. Local businesses can send representatives to help with the fundraiser, deliver orders and promote it at their location. Also, product doesn't have to be shipped across country and you don't have to worry about the carbon footprint.

**Select "green fundraising"** companies that offer sustainable products. Type "green fundraising" into your search engine and it will return an array of options from fair-trade and organic certified coffee to on-line fundraisers, organic chocolate, shopping bags, flower bulbs and more. Look for companies that offset the carbon footprint associated with their business.

**Contact local businesses,** restaurants, yogurt shops, candy stores, etc. that offer a marketable product. Just because they don't advertise a pre-packaged fundraiser, doesn't mean they wouldn't love to support your organization. What business doesn't want the chance to promote their service or product?

**Contact your local community newspaper** and pitch them a story about your fundraising efforts. Many local reporters are happy to have a story delivered to them. This is a great way to gain support for your fundraiser, educate the community about your cause and connect with individuals or businesses who want to support you.

**Don't be afraid to just ask for support.** Identify businesses that might be interested in supporting your cause and ask for a donation. This could be in the form of a phone call, email or both.

**Conduct a letter writing campaign.** If you're working with students, this is a great way for each student to get involved and promote their own reasons for fundraising. A hand-written letter by a student to a local business or individual can be very powerful.

**Hold a Silent Auction.** Ask local businesses to donate products/services. Ask a local restaurant to donate the space and sponsor a dinner. Some school districts may help advertise the Silent Auction.

**Forget the fundraising prizes.** Instead of incenting your group with a list of "prizes," come up with a fun activity you can do together if you reach your fundraising goal. If it's a school group, offer an "extra" recess. Offer top fundraisers, special privileges for the day. Ask a local business if they will donate pizzas for a pizza party or a free day of bowling. This fosters team work and gives everyone the opportunity to win.

## **Fundraisers that Work**

### **Grounds for Change Coffee Fundraiser**

<http://ecoteach.com/for-teachers/how-to-fund-raise/>

EcoTeach and Amazon Rainforest Workshops work with Grounds for Change to offer a simple and profitable coffee fundraiser. Grounds for Change is passionate about operating as a green business, has received the Washington award for Outstanding Achievement in Sustainability and donates 10% of each Amazon Rainforest Workshop coffee fundraiser order to the EcoTeach Foundation, a 501c3, that then passes the donation directly to CONAPAC.

Your group sells organic and fair-trade certified coffee and/or tea as a Pre-Sale Fundraiser or Event/Direct Sale Fundraiser. Coffee is roasted to order and sold in 8 oz. bags for \$5.00/bag with a suggested retail of \$10/bag. Suggestion: find a PARENT to take on organizing this specific fundraiser – especially someone who is willing to manage the accounting and \$ for you.

### **Scrip Gift Cards**

<https://www.shopwithscrip.com/>

Perfect for the holidays! Students "sell" gift cards to a wide variety of businesses and national chains and get a cut of the face value. Great for gifts, stocking stuffers, and even just everyday purchases at places like Target.

### **"Crowd Sourced" Fundraising**

Harness the power of Social Media and use it to help spread the word and raise funds. Two recommended platforms are:

Go Fund Me: <http://www.gofundme.com/> and Donors Choose: <http://www.donorschoose.org/>

### **Sell "Stock" in your trip**

Sell "stock" in your in return for donations. Individual donors receive postcards and/or yagua artifacts. Organizations (Rotary, Lions Club, Garden Clubs, etc) receive a presentation about your trip at one of their meetings.

### **Restaurant Nights**

Partner with a local restaurant. Advertise a particular night, help fill the restaurant with customers and receive a percentage of the profits in return. Students “work” at the restaurant during the event, greet guests, and tell their Amazon story

### **Odd Jobs**

Many hands make light work! As a group, advertise your services for yard work, spring clean ups, fall clean ups, help with holiday decorating, etc.

### **Old Standbys**

50/50 raffles, bake sales, crazy hat day, holiday gift wrapping at the mall, etc.

### **More ideas - 40 Fun Fundraising Ideas**

<http://www.gooverseas.com/blog/40-fundraising-ideas-study-abroad>

## **Get the Word Out!**

Now that you have a fundraising plan, you need to advertise and let people know how they can help. They can't help you if they don't know what you are doing!

**Hold weekly fundraising meetings.** Dedicate time to fundraising each week. Ask students to send out handwritten notes or e-mail messages to local businesses, rotary clubs, chamber of commerce groups, etc. to ask for their support. Give each student a goal at each meeting. For example, 10 letters per student per meeting. (Scriber Lake High School called it “Turtle Tuesday.”)

**Social Media.** The huge success of the recent ALS Ice Bucket Challenge demonstrates an excellent use of social media. With one posting, you can easily reach friends and colleagues and let them know about your fundraising efforts and how they can support you. The success of the Ice Bucket Challenge is seeing your friends support a cause and then asking their friends to continue the support. What a great way to engage friends and family

**Contact local media and newspapers.** They're usually happy to help and grateful for an inspirational story!

**Advertise your fundraiser.** Distribute flyers, post cards and email notices letting people know about your fundraiser and how they can support your group.

**Involve your community.** Engage local restaurants, businesses, real estate offices, etc. Tell them what you're raising funds for and why! Inspire them to help you!

**Rotary Clubs.** Rotary members can provide "sales training" for your group and help you maximize your fundraising resources. Ask your local rotary club to train your group on how to develop successful fundraising methods, how to communicate your fundraising message and how to meet your fundraising goals.

**Track your donation requests.** Keep track of donation requests that are sent out and responses that are received.

**Thank your letters.** The thank you letter is just as important as the donation. Send thank you letters to groups/individuals who have donated to your cause within days of receiving the donation.

### **NEXT STEPS**

**Hold a fundraising meeting** and brainstorming session with your students (and parents).

**Share the information** above as a source of inspiration.

**Give participants ownership** and responsibility for increased enthusiasm and results!

**Create a Fundraising plan and timeline** with goals and benchmarks!