

## Fundraising in Rural Communities

Fundraising for community organizations in rural communities is not easy. Anyone who works or lives in a rural community can testify to the difficulties organizations have in striving towards financial self-sufficiency. It is even difficult for rural organizations to raise external money—which puts organizations in the double-bind situation of having to be more self-sufficient than their urban counterparts.

However, with a little creativity and careful planning, organizations in rural communities can develop solid funding bases in their own communities. As is the case in any organizing situation, an important first step in developing the plan is to identify the particular problems and advantages of fundraising in rural communities before taking action.

The following considerations are potential problems:

1. *There are fewer people in a rural area.* This is an obvious observation, but unless the community is wealthy, there is less consumer money to draw upon in rural communities. Rural areas tend to have poorer populations on a per capita basis.
2. *Organizations and institutions' main offices are located in the cities.* For the most part, churches, foundations and social service agencies that are potential funding sources have their headquarters and make their funding decisions out of urban offices and areas. This simple fact can hamper organizations' effort to get funded, as frequently the people who make the funding decisions have little understanding of rural issues. It is not "in" to fund rural organizations, as institutional and foundation views are often biased by their perceptions that there is less poverty and urgency to rural organizing. When the funders have little direct experience of rural poverty and issues, their funding priorities are urban groups.
3. *It usually costs more to fund anything in a rural area.* People are at the end of the receiving line in the way of virtually everything—energy, food, services, education, jobs, consumer goods—and thus the burden of higher living expenses tacks on to the cost of whatever an organization does. Also the problems of dis-

tance and bringing people together adds to the cost; travel cost for meetings, actions or events run very high for those organizing in rural communities. In fact, distances and the costs of bringing people together is one of the biggest problems of people organizing in rural communities because not only does it cost much more, but often, the time factor involved requires high commitment and availability on members' parts.

Telephone expenses are high; organizations that have other chapters and/or are a part of statewide organizations require much communication by phone for research information, coordination and simple support from other organizers or leaders. In rural areas, usually the calling areas make it impossible to avoid many long-distance calls.

Perversely, people based in urban areas think just the opposite about costs, as their image of rural living is based on a utopian vision of the good, self-sufficient rural life—a vision which is almost obsolete in many parts of the country, but does still have some credence in others. Unfortunately, this false perception results in rural organizations often being underfunded when they do get outside funding.

4. *It is impossible to be anonymous in rural areas.* If an organization is controversial or alienates the local power structure, which often controls the financial community in a small-town area, its image can be a problem in fundraising. However, the lack of anonymity can also work to the organizations' advantage; it is easier to identify supporters and detractors alike. It is dangerous to allow funding considerations to dictate an organization's activities, but it is also foolish to not recognize potential conflict and organize against it when possible.

5. *There are fewer resources in a rural area.* Because the population is smaller, there are fewer resources such as volunteers, equipment, accessories, etc. to work with in fundraising, and this effects what kinds of fundraisers work best in rural communities.

*continued on pg 3*

## Dear Joan,

Dear Joan, We have developed a non-voting membership for fundraising purposes. We want members to feel included in the organization, but don't want to give them voting rights. Are there other ways we can make them feel included?

Eager to please

Dear Eager:

Members join an organization because they want to contribute something meaningful. Any organization can keep more members if you ask them to do worthwhile work. People don't stay in an organization to get trinkets or tee-shirts; they stay in an organization to get results.

To make them feel included, ask them to:

1. Give money.
2. Recruit new members.
3. Host a party in their home to introduce the officers and discuss the issues.
4. Ask for large gifts from their church, union, bank, doctor, dentist, veterinarian, or boss.
5. Sell tickets to your special event.
6. Publicize the organization. Anti-highway groups ask all members who live in the path of the proposed expressway to put posters in the windows saying "We won't move." Members who live outside the pathway put up posters that say "We won't pay."
7. Advocate for the cause. Members can raise your concerns at local candidates' debates, press conferences, and benefits. Ask them to call in to radio and TV talk shows. They can write letters to the editor of the home town papers or articles for the newsletter of their union, church, or other organizations.
8. Do work. Members can read and clip newspapers, tape radio and TV shows, work in the office, organize child care for meetings and benefits, or do research. Almost anything you pay staff to do, a volunteer can do just as well, or better, for free.

Dear Joan, What do you think about planning events during a holiday? We were thinking about doing something on Thanksgiving, but have gotten mixed reactions  
Plymouth Rock Planning Committee

Dear Rock,

The best thing about fundraising is that you can test to find the right answer to any question. Fundraisers NEVER need to argue, because the customer is always right. If they buy, it's a good time; if they don't buy, pick another time.

If you're not sure if a holiday is a good time, just test market the idea. Ask your committee to do two things:

1. Purchase with cash (pledges don't count) the number of tickets they want for themselves, their families, and their friends.
2. Take one week to pre-sell their best prospects. This includes the people where they work, other groups like their choir or bowling team, and other people who have sold *them* a ticket to a benefit.

After the week, add up the number of tickets you have sold. If this does not add up to at least 33% of your goal for the gross profit (costs plus the profit you keep), then it is the wrong date. If it does—go ahead and ignore the turkeys who *always* say "Not now!"

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Joan Flanagan is the author of the new *Grass Roots Fundraising Book* (1982) and *The Successful Volunteer Organization* (1981), both from Contemporary Books and available through your bookstore.

Questions for the column should be sent to the *Grassroots Fundraising Journal* marked "Attention: Joan Flanagan." Ms. Flanagan regrets that she cannot answer each question individually.

The views expressed in this column are not necessarily the views of the publishers or other contributors to the *Grassroots Fundraising Journal*.

continued from pg 1

6. *Weather and climates are often limiting in rural communities.* The weather in rural parts of the country is often extreme, and it is important for fundraising plan to work around the limitations of harsh climates. Having your major annual fundraiser in January in New England would be very imprudent, as the possibility of whole communities getting snowed in for days is extremely high. Then again, people know how to take advantage of the weather; in northern Minnesota, towns hold an unusual winter fundraiser. A car is parked on a lake or pond, and people make bets as to when it will fall through the ice during a thaw.

What are some of the advantages, now that we have identified the constraints of fundraising in rural communities?

1. *There is less competition in fundraising.* As there are fewer organizations in rural areas, there are fewer other fundraisers to compete for the limited consumer dollars. It is also easier to avoid competition and duplication. There may well be gaps which a group can fill to their financial advantage. For example, one of the more successful fundraisers of a local community organization in Lebanon, New Hampshire was a filmshowing of several films made by independent filmmakers. This kind of event, and the kind of movies shown, were a novelty to the small town of Lebanon, where most organizations put on the usual bake sales and spaghetti suppers.

2. *Events have more visibility in a rural area.* In small towns, any kind of event is a big event, or can be built into one. Groups holding a dance or festival in cities are often barely noticeable to the media or public who are used to scores of events. In fact, a fundraising event in a rural community can be big news in a way that is impossible in cities; the news media in small towns are always looking for more local news to report; thus, the definition of what is news in rural areas is much broader than in urban areas where so much is edited out of the papers or TV news.

3. *Rural areas have extended kin networks.* The extended kin network that exists in most rural communities is an extremely effectively method of communication as well as support, and can help, not only in getting the word out about an event, but also in drumming up excitement and enthusiasm. Everybody is related to somebody else, and often participates in an event for that reason—"cousin Annie's appearing in a play to raise money for the Citizen Action League."

4. *Rural people tend to be sociable.* Rural people do tend to be neighborly, and fundraisers that are social events can attract good crowds. Because people do live isolated daily lives, an organized social event is a real draw to rural people. In the small town of Sandwich, New Hampshire, the town needed to raise \$1,000 to help renovate the town hall. They put on a night club called "Club Sandwich" in the old town hall, limited the number of people who attended, and had local, popular performers from the community. The event was so popular that they had

to have repeat performances, as the one 100-person show sold out. They overshot their fundraising goal because of the enthusiasm for what was an unusual social event in the town.

5. *It is easier to start and run a small business in rural communities.* Usually there is less red tape, and the organization has the advantage of being able to figure out

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*Having your major annual fundraiser in January in New England would be very imprudent, as the possibility of whole communities getting snowed in is extremely high.*

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what is lacking in the business community. Starting a business, particularly in the present economic and political climate, is not a light undertaking, but in a rural community that has no rec center or thrift store or craft store, the lack of competition is a definite plus. It is important to examine every angle of running a small business for the purpose of supporting an organization, as there are drawbacks, but in the future, having a steady ongoing source of income such as a small business, may be the direction many rural organizations will have to take, as the other choices are less rewarding or reliable. (See also April issue GRFJ, *Making Self-Sufficiency A Reality in a Rural Organization: The LACO Recreation Center*)

What follows are suggestions on how to make a fundraising plan for a rural community organization; there are some fundraising methods that have been tested in rural areas that I will discuss.

### *Making a Plan*

The first, very important step to take in making a fundraising plan in a rural community is to *carefully analyze your community*. What are the local customs and culture? Is it a farming community or a factory community? If it is a farming community, an annual event planned around harvest (but *not* during) could be a regular, institutionalized event. If the community has a large worker population in one plant, often everyone takes the same summer vacation when the plant closes down. That would be a bad time to plan a fundraiser, as many families go away.

Is the community in a tourist area? If so, when do the tourists come? How can the organization take advantage of the additional people and wealth during those times? A good example of opportunism on this level is an auction the local community services organization in Martha's Vineyard held during the summer. The various items for sale included things such as taking a sail with Walter Cronkite, having tea with Art Buchwald, taking a tour of another celebrity's house. The auction made

# Zucchini Festival

The Zucchini Central Committee denies persistent rumors that they have been sabotaging zucchini patches to insure their own victory in the International Zucchini Festival, to be held this Saturday, August 28, in the southern New Hampshire town of Harrisville (rain date, September 4).

Harrisville, N.H. Police Chief Rand Duffy has assured the committee that he has seen "no increase in zucchini-related crimes" and feels that the situation is well in hand. However, citizens from Maine to New York are urged to monitor their plantings carefully and to take whatever protective measures they deem necessary.

The International Zucchini Festival will begin at 10 a.m. with a parade, contests, and exhibits. At 8 p.m. there will be a '50s street dance. Zucchini entries must be in place by noon on Saturday and cost \$.50 per entry; for \$5.00 you can enter all 29 contests.

These will include: Most Grotesque Zucchini (not grown within 10 miles of a nuke plant); Most Original Zucchini Use; Best Musical Instrument Made From Zucchini; Biggest Zucchini in a Bottle; Best "Still Life with a Zucchini" photograph;

Best Zucchini Carving; Farthest Travelled Zucchini (that's where we figure in); Toughest Zucchini (to be judged by hanging weights on each end until it splits); and Best of Breed (the zucchini that best exemplifies the highest ideals of zucchini-dom and contributes to international understanding through zucchini power).

There will be zucchini essays, songs and poetry, as well as zucchini debates: Could zucchinis be substituted for ketchup as the federally-mandated vegetable in the school hot-lunch program? Should the government subsidize zucchini growers and pay them not to plant zucchinis, to avoid the yearly surplus and keep prices up? Does the United States have nuclear superiority over Russia?

Zucchini Central also recommends that you get into shape for zucchini peeling and grating, jumping bicycles over zucchinis, zucchini juggling, and balancing zucchinis on your nose, for the outdoor competitions.

Proceeds from the festival will be donated to a small non-profit school in Harrisville. For further information, contact Zucchini Central at (603) 827-3254.

Kitty Axelson

Submitted by Judy Austermler

## International Zucchini Festival



NO CUKES



\$10,000 in taking advantage of the wealthy summer population.

What's missing in the community? In Lisbon, New Hampshire, there was no youth recreation, so the organization started their own rec center and game room, which is now totally supporting the organization. The same community services organization in Martha's Vineyard runs a thrift store in Vineyard Haven that brings in over \$80,000 a year—this on an island whose year-round population is 10,000 people. In northern Maine, the HOME craft coop not only supports the organization and runs an extensive business, it also provides employment for its members.

What is *not* going on in the community, and what do people like to do in their leisure time? What do people, tourists or year-round residents, like to spend their money on?

What are the big holidays in the community? Plan events that celebrate them. What is distinctive about the area? Is there skiing, fishing, fall foliage? Use these to raise money; have fish fries, run an annual ski contest. The American Friends Service Committee in New Hampshire runs an annual "Ski for Peace" race on Valentine's Day weekend every year.

*Institutionalize your fundraisers.* A church group in

Newbury, Vermont holds an annual "Strawberry Festival" every year that has many events, including a fiddling contest of some reknown. The event grew over the year to a big regional summer happening that brings in more than \$10,000.

Plan a calendar and set goals that take into account your community analysis. Although it is important to be creative—particularly if your organization has limited fundraising experience and has not tried much beyond the usual bake sale—do not be afraid to repeat successes. It is important to time things carefully in smaller communities. Avoiding other events and seasonal considerations such as harvests, harsh weather, etc., can make or break a fundraising calendar's effectiveness.

When setting goals for how much an event should bring in, remember the limitations of population. You may want to plan a major event when tourists are around, and set your goals accordingly. But it is important to diversify and plan to hold regular fundraising events, as they are likely to be smaller and to bring in smaller amounts of money than if they were held in urban communities.

Analyze your organization's capabilities and resources. Perhaps you think running a small business would be a good way to support your organization. Do you have



enough volunteers or people to help run it? Are you capable of dealing with the red tape that does exist, such as insurance, workers' compensation, etc.? If you are planning a big event, do you have enough members to help plan and work on it? Creative and grand ideas are good only if they can be successfully carried out, and the limitations of rural areas should inject a bit of caution in trying out anything risky. For example, a community organization in Lancaster, New Hampshire decided to run a thrift store cum office and community center to support the organization, but because there were not enough people to staff the store and keep it open all the time, the business suffered and kept sinking further into the red until the group had to close it, in debt.

The best principles rural organizations—and, indeed, any organization—can follow in these times are *diversity* and *frequency*.

If an organization plans to be around for the long haul, it is important for the leadership and/or staff to carefully look into every kind of funds available to it, and to try every kind of funding source appropriate and possible. My bias for rural organizations is for them to develop sound grassroots fundraising plans, as there are no other reliable sources any more such as foundations or government programs. If an organization can develop a sound, diverse series of fundraising events, their time is much better invested in those fundraisers than if much time is spent writing proposals that are iffy in the now extremely competitive grants world.

Not only do most fundraisers make at least some money (as opposed to proposals that don't get funded, which make nothing), but grassroots fundraisers build the organization in other important ways. They involve larger numbers of people; they require a team as opposed to an individual approach to fundraising, thus making the burden shared; they develop leaders and skills that only improve over time and through experiences; the successes are repeatable, and the events are social as well as fundraisers. This last point is important in rural fundraising, as it is one of its most advantageous characteristics, and one that should be used as much as possible.

Organizations in rural areas must hold their fundraisers frequently. It is usually much more difficult for a rural organization—particularly if it is a community or local organization as opposed to a branch of a national or statewide organization located in a rural area—to raise its entire budget in one or two events. In Maine, the AFSC raised most of its entire annual budget through a disarmament ad campaign, but many community organizations working on local issues do not have the broad appeal or statewide members to do such a fundraiser.

Therefore, it is wise for rural organizations to plan regular, diverse events that take into account local spending priorities, seasons, holidays, local traditions, organizational resources and capabilities and needs. It makes sense for organizations to have major and smaller fundraisers on an on-going basis, and to regard its fundraising as equally important to the organization as its other activities.

There are certain kinds of fundraising that either don't work or may not be appropriate in rural areas. These include:

*Las Vegas Nights or gambling.* In many rural communities gambling is frowned upon and could create other problems later for the organization. It is also more difficult to hold such fundraisers logistically.

*Canvas.* Unless the organization is part of a statewide or national organization, it is difficult to canvas in a rural area where there are fewer doors and they are far between as well. Add to this a local focus to the issue, and it further limits the total amount of canvassable people and money. Canvas in rural areas for any organization is difficult due to the distance problems.

*Teas and luncheons.* Many organizations hold fundraising teas, where organizational supporters attend a tea held at someone's home, where a fundraising pitch is made. In rural areas this is impractical for any number of reasons, the major ones being the distances people have to travel and the limited number of givers in a rural area.

*Ad books.* Like canvassing, ad books for a purely local organization do not make much money, due to the limited number of ads a local organization can solicit in rural areas, where the businesses are likely to be small and few. However, as part of a statewide ad book campaign, they have good prospects.

There are many big moneymakers that urban organizations can rake in on; rural organizations, however, must always remember their own unique rural characteristics and limitations and be careful not to imitate what is clearly not appropriate or duplicable under those limitations.

Some fundraisers that work in rural areas are:

*Suppers and dinners.* As I've repeatedly said, social events, particularly when timed well, can raise good money in rural areas. They needn't be limited to the somewhat standard suppers and dinners, but could include fun events such as local concerts, plays, films, fairs, festivals, sports events—whatever entertainment is popular can be a good, major fundraising event in a local area.

*Memberships.* People should pay for their own organization. Membership dues, collected on an on-going basis, can be a regular, repeatable fundraiser, and cannot be emphasized enough, in my opinion. Not only do dues bring in money, but adding members builds the organization in so many ways that pay off in the long run that every organization should seriously consider making memberships a major part of their program. Dues need not be prohibitive, but should reflect the organization's constituency, as well as be enough to make a real contribution to the organization.

*Auctions.* Well-organized and planned auctions are frequently the best fundraisers an organization can hold. They involve a lot of work, but I have rarely heard of an auction being held that netted under \$5,000. Even if your particular rural community is not wealthy, people in rural areas love to go to auctions. A well-publicized, well-stocked auction can bring in thousands of dollars.

*continued on pg 13*

# Advisory Boards: No Miracle Solution

One of the most frequent suggestions currently being made to non-profits is to form an 'advisory board' for fundraising purposes. While this can be a helpful strategy, it is not as easy as it sounds, and it certainly is not a miracle solution to fundraising problems. The purpose of this article is to discuss the ramifications of forming and maintaining an advisory board for fundraising purposes, provide some guidance and suggest criteria by which to decide if such a move would be the best one for your organization.

## *What Is An Advisory Board?*

In some ways, an advisory board is an administrative fiction. There is nothing that an advisory board has to be—no legal requirements, no length of time to exist, no purposes that must be fulfilled. It is an extremely malleable concept, and can be tailored to fit the needs of an organization. An advisory board is a group of people who provide work, expertise, advice, status, or perspective to profit or non-profit groups. The groups can be of any size. There are advisory boards made of one person, and there are advisory boards with 200 people.

Depending on their functions and purposes advisory boards are variously called advisory councils, community boards, Auxillaries, Task Forces, \_\_\_\_\_ Committee, or Medical, Legal, Corporate, Fundraising, Political, you-name-it Advisory Board. Some advisory boards meet frequently, and some never meet. Some are merely names to add to letterhead. Some organizations have ten or more advisory boards, all with different purposes and commitments. In at least one case, an organization's advisory board was called together, met, and disbanded itself all in the same day. More often, however, members of advisory boards serve at least one year, and sometimes members serve for decades.

Many groups are now seeking people to serve on an advisory board for the primary or sole purpose of fundraising. Since the people on the advisory board have no responsibility for the overall organization, they can be recruited from anywhere, and the group can be completely homogeneous—something which most groups try to avoid in a Board of Directors.

People like to be on advisory boards because it gives them a role in helping an organization without accepting the full legal and fiscal responsibilities of a member of the Board of Directors.

Clearly an advisory board has the potential to be an important tool in the structure of any organization. The problem in forming them for fundraising often lies in the rationale that groups use, which goes like this: "Next year our group has to raise three times as much money as this year. Our Board can't do it. We can't/don't want to add people to the Board. So, we will just ask ten rich people to be on a fundraising advisory board and they will raise the money we need." Or, a slight variation, "We need X amount of money, but we don't want those type of people having control over our organization so we'll ask them for their advice and then they'll give us money." Sometimes, foundations and corporations suggest forming advisory boards, and in several instances, they have made such a formation a requirement or a 'strong suggestion' for getting a grant.

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*It is easier to form an effective advisory board if the organization has a Board of Directors which is carrying its share of the fundraising responsibility.*

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There are obvious problems in any of the above scenarios. To find "ten rich people" is not simple. If it were, the group would have an easier time starting a major gift program. It is important to remember that just because a person is wealthy does not mean that they will have an easier time asking for and getting money than someone who is not wealthy. Nor will they necessarily be more willing to give you their money. What is most important is to find people willing to fundraise and who are committed to your organization. People generally do not function well in situations in which they are only valued for their money. So, if you do not want "those people" to have input into your organization, you are making a mistake asking them to sit on an advisory board.

Foundation and corporate giving staff who suggest advisory boards may be well intentioned, but unless you perceive this need and see this as a solution, it is probably not going to work.

With that as a caveat, let's look at the conditions under which an advisory board might be an excellent solution to a fundraising need:

1. When the Board of Directors is already doing the most fundraising that it can, and this is not enough.

An advisory board is an excellent supplement to the efforts of the Board. *It does not take the place of the Board of Directors.* It is easier to form an effective advisory board if the organization has a Board of Directors which is carrying its share of the fundraising responsibility.

2. When an organization has a specific project which needs separate funding. For example, a large national organization is launching a media campaign related to a specific health problem. The media campaign will cost \$30,000 a year for the next three years, and is an addition to the programs of this organization. The Board of Directors already raises the money needed for the ongoing operating, publication and outreach costs of this group. To fund the media campaign, the staff formed a Funding Advisory Council made up of 10 people who have pledged to raise and/or give \$1,000-\$5,000 each. They have agreed to serve from the planning stages of the campaign through the end of the campaign (March, 1986) and then disband. They work closely with staff and Board of Directors, and they have a very clear understanding of their role. For an expensive project like this, a Funding Advisory Council was an excellent solution.

3. Similar to #2, when an organization wants help with a specific type of fundraiser, such as corporate, major gifts, or capital campaigns. The advisory board is made up of experts or representatives of the group that is being solicited. Usually the campaign is time defined and the Board forms and disbands within a certain period of time.

4. When an organization has, or wants to create, a specific fundraising project which takes a lot of time and

energy, but has large pay off capacity. Usually this type of advisory board is called an auxillary. The auxillary runs a gift shop, thrift shop or other business, or puts on a very large special event every year, such as a cotillion, dinner dance, or auction. Some famous versions of this are the Brandeis booksale people (??) gift shops in hospitals which are run by 'pink ladies' or 'gray ladies', and UNICEF gift shops.

### How to Select Advisory Board Members and Define Their Functions

Having decided that an advisory board is a good tool for your group, be sure to write out clearly what you want in your advisory board. In terms of fundraising, set an amount that you want them to raise as a goal, set a number of hours which they are expected to work per month, the number of meetings they need to attend, and suggest ways in which they can raise this money. Once you know what you want, and you have refined it so that it seems like a reasonable request to make of a busy person, you are ready to target prospects for your board. (A good question to ask yourself is whether you would agree to serve on such an advisory board.)

A hackneyed but effective way to establish criteria for advisory board prospects is to list *essential* and *desirable* criteria for members. Essential criteria are those things which everyone must have to serve. Desirable are qualities or abilities which some of the people should have, but which you could skip in otherwise qualified candidates. The following chart shows how this might be done simply:

NAME OF PROSPECTS	ESSENTIAL CRITERIA				DESIRABLE CRITERIA				
	Will give \$1,000 or more	Will work 4 hours per month	Committed to this issue	Easy person to work with	Well liked in community	Has a successful small business	Has fundraising experience	Has political clout	Knows foundation work
May Riley	X	X	X	X	X	X			
Nancy Faith	?	X	X	X		X		X	X
George Harrington	X	?	?	X	X	X	X	X	X
Sara Goldman	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	
Bert Wheeler	?	X	X	?			X	X	X



In some cases you won't know the answers to your questions about these people, and it will be necessary to ask them straightforwardly.

Organizations are sometimes hesitant to be blunt about their expectations from an advisory board member. They fear that prospects will be turned off if they find out what is expected. But it is important to keep in mind that the prospect is bound to feel ripped off if they come onto a board with one set of expectations only to discover that another is in place. People who are turned off by the idea of asking or giving money are not good candidates for a fundraising advisory board anyway, and your organization should use them in another capacity.

fairly short period of time, say six months, so that both your organization and the prospect can end the relationship if it is not working out without either party losing face.

Unlike soliciting a major gift, you don't want to talk somebody into serving on an advisory board who is clearly reluctant to do so. Don't feel as though you must have your ideal size of advisory board from the beginning. Two or three people can work for awhile, until you can find more. Each prospect who agrees to be on the board can be asked if they know of others who might serve, and the board can become self-expanding.

## DES ACTION, NATIONAL

### DES Action Funding Advisory Council The Purpose of the Council:

To raise money for the DES Action media campaign, culminating in National DES Awareness Week.

This fundraising can take many forms including:

- a. Asking friends and acquaintances for gifts.
- b. Giving DES Action staff people names so that we can solicit donations.
- c. Host cocktail parties, luncheons, teas, and so on in order to ask guests for gifts in that setting.
- d. Hosting parties such as the above so that DES Action staff can solicit contributions.
- e. Writing support letters to foundations and corporations.
- f. Visiting foundations and corporations in the area on DES Action's behalf.
- g. Giving money.
- h. Putting DES Action staff in touch with people who would be willing to solicit contributions for this campaign.

### Profile Of People Being Asked To Serve On The Council

1. Committed to the issue, and committed to the strategy of this media campaign.
2. Willing to speak about the DES issue to friends, relatives and acquaintances.
3. Willing to give generously.
4. Well respected in their communities, and among people not generally represented in DES Action presently.
5. Willing to give about three hours per month (average). Some months more will be needed, and other months no time will be required.

All members of the Funding Advisory Council will have one person on the National staff as their liaison. They are free, and encouraged, to contact that person whenever they want to, and that person will be in regular contact with them.

*(reprinted with permission of DES Action national)*

Drawing up a statement of expectation (sample on this page) for prospective members will keep misunderstandings to a minimum. The statement, and your whole treatment of advisory board members should be straightforward and concise. The people you will be asking to serve are busy and they have been or will be asked to serve on many different boards and in many different roles. They can choose where and how to commit time, and many of them are overcommitted already. Setting a precedent from the beginning of honesty, full disclosure, enthusiasm and respect will get you those things in return, as well as money.

Once you have targeted a few prospects, either write or phone them, and make an appointment to see them. A board member and staff person is a good combination for the interview. The entire interaction should be handled like a big gift solicitation. Go over the statement of understanding. See if the prospect thinks it is reasonable, and would be willing to agree to it for a specified period of time. In some cases, you may want to suggest a

### Maintaining an Advisory Board

Advisory board members should be sent minutes of every meeting, kept in touch with the organization, phoned frequently, and generally treated like board members and major donors. They will need more pushing than Board of Directors members usually need, and you should not be shy about holding them to commitments, reminding them of deadlines, and asking them how they are doing in whatever tasks they have taken on. Keeping each advisory board member informed of what the others are doing will help insure that work gets done.

Allow the advisory board to evolve, and provide members with direction. The first few months of their existence may be slow as they decide what they are going to do, and when. But, in the experience of many groups, once an advisory board begins working well together, and carries out their commitments, a substantial amount of new money will be raised, and more of it every year.

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# Why Most Benefit Concerts Lose Money

*A letter from a concert promoter*

"We want to do a benefit concert!"

I have heard these words more times than I can count from representatives of excellent causes. Why do I cringe? I have produced over fifty successful benefit concerts in the last six years, and yet, I know that benefit concerts are one of the highest risk fundraising schemes you can choose to pursue.

"We'll get Jackson Browne to do it!" My new client says with enthusiasm. "We'll do it at the Oakland Coliseum! We'll raise \$100,000!" (I've used Jackson Browne as an example because he is probably the most frequently approached artist in the benefit world.)

"Wait a minute. Slow down. How you talked to Jackson Browne? Does he want to do this?" I ask.

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*A commitment in the benefit business  
is about as illusive as it is  
in a relationship.*

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"Oh, he'll do it. He does all those NO NUKES things and this is so much more important. And, his road manager had dinner with my cousin in Atlanta last tour, and he said that Jackson would do it."

By this time I have retreated to a full defensive position, ready to fend off this joyous assault. Now I have heard enough buzz words to warn me of an imminent disaster. I realize that I am going to have to do a lot of disillusioning if this client and I are going to get anywhere.

Problem Number One: Jackson *may* do this concert. However, in order to promote a successful benefit concert you need a clear commitment from an artist. A commitment in the benefit business is about as illusive as it is in a relationship. And, without it, you have nothing. The few top artists who have shown themselves to be receptive to benefit work receive approximately fifty requests per week from legitimate and quasi-legitimate causes. Some of these artists have actually hired staff to research the requests, looking for the one in one thousand that they will actually do. And, usually the decision to do a concert comes as a result of a personal connection.

You actually have a commitment when the artist

agrees to the date, the facility, the method of distribution of the proceeds, and which expenses will be paid by whom. All of this must also be agreed to by the artist's management, and in the best of circumstances, is all confirmed in writing. There is nothing better than to have a written agreement before you start spending money on this event. (For more information on this topic see *GRFJ*, Vol. 1, No. 3, *Finding a Performer for Your Benefit Concert*.)

But, let's say you actually have a commitment from Jackson. Now, let's move on to the Oakland Coliseum idea. The Oakland Coliseum holds 14,000 people. My policy is to take a cup of talent and pour it into a thimble full of facility. To be more precise, guarantee yourself a sell-out by going into a smaller facility than you think you need. If you were a commercial promoter, you might want to gamble a little by choosing a facility slightly larger than you are sure you can fill. But, you're not in the business of promoting; you're doing this to raise money. So, put Jackson in a smaller facility. If you only have to sell 7,000 tickets instead of 14,000, your budget will be lower, and so will your anxiety level. Larger facilities cost more to do shows in, so the theory that the more tickets you can sell for your show, the more money you can make, simply doesn't work. Performers and their managers are generally very receptive to the idea of going into a smaller facility than they usually play, because that way, they don't exhaust their audience in an entire area and can return much sooner to do a commercial date.

Now, about raising \$100,000. Let's take a look at where this money is coming from. If you have 7,000 tickets being sold at \$10 each, you have a potential gross income of \$70,000. Here is how that figure gets divided up in a commercial event.

\$ 7,000	Advertising
10,000	Hall Rental and Staffing
20,000	Production
20,000	Artist's Fee
8,000	Promotor Profit
5,000	Miscellaneous (catering, insurance, etc.)
\$70,000	Total

To the surprise of many, new to the field of benefit

concerts, in benefits the costs stay basically the same. The income is generated by the artist and the promoter giving up all or a portion of their fees. Instead, their expenses get covered, and in some cases, they get paid a set fee to cover salaries, etc.

Covering expenses can be tricky. Airfares, hotel rooms, and rental cars all add up. When you agree to cover such expenses you had better be clear about how many plane tickets you will have to purchase, and from and to which locations, how many hotel rooms the performers and their crew will require, and how many and what kind of cars are required. The last thing you want to learn after your tickets have already gone on sale, is that the band (a party of 20) will be flying in from Paris, and will need two limousines and 3 vans to meet them upon arrival. Only the more reason to have an agreement in writing.

In a benefit, your breakdown of money looks like this:

\$ 7,000	Advertising
10,000	Hall Rental and Staff
20,000	Production
5,000	Miscellaneous
3,000	Promoter's Expenses
5,000	Artist's Expenses
\$50,000	Total
20,000	Net profit to cause (If show is sold-out)
\$70,000	Total

You have just made \$20,000—on a sell out, if it all goes according to plan. However, remember, everyone else gets paid first and you get what's left. So, if for some reason, the artists expenses are higher than you budgeted for, you may get less than \$20,000. If you only sell 6,000 tickets, you only make \$10,000. And, if you only sell 4,000 tickets, you lose \$10,000. Some benefit . . .

These are the primary reasons why benefits get into trouble: 1. Lack of artist commitment 2. Over-sized facility and 3. Improper budgeting.

A few other comments: 1. Miscalculation of your artist's ability to draw in a location is a common error. Just because you love the act, and they love your cause, that doesn't mean the general public is going to dish out \$10 to see them perform. Consult a professional. Talk to your friendly local promoters, radio stations, check on record sales, and most important of all, find out how many tickets the act sold the last time they played in your town. And, when did they last play there? If it was within six months, forget it. A year ago is better.

2. "Raising a lot of consciousness" as a goal can get you into trouble too. It is really difficult to raise money and consciousness at the same event. Most people won't love to hear an hour of speaking before they get to hear Jackson Browne. If they see a long list of speakers in your ad along with Jackson Browne's name, they may not buy tickets to the show. So decide what your primary goal is and stick with it.

3. Give yourself enough time. A professional promoter can pull off a concert on three weeks notice, but unless you are such a professional, don't try it. Six weeks

lead time from the commitment to show day. Four weeks is a basic ad schedule.

4. Speaking of publicity . . . Yes, it is great to get all of those free spots on Public Service Radio and to leave flyers at the student union, but concert goers are creatures of habit. If an ad about your show does not appear in the section of your local paper that usually advertises such events, or if there is not an announcement on the radio stations that play the music of the artist who is performing, that artist's fans may never know the concert is happening. Don't try to save money on advertising.

5. If it all comes together for you and you're actually down to producing a concert, please, please, get some professional help. Hire an experienced stage manager, and a professional sound and light company. Once again, this is not an area to scrimp. The audience expects a certain level of professionalism and the artist demands it. You may find yourself with a canceled show four hours before the time when the show is scheduled to start, if the artist's production manager doesn't feel that the technical end is up to snuff. After all, he or she has a reputation to protect.

6. Concerts can gross substantial amounts of money, and all of it must be administered and accounted for accurately both before and after the event. If you are trying to coordinate a show for a general issue, raising money for several different specific organizations, make sure you have proper channels for distributing the profits. If you generate \$20,000 and none of it finds its way to the actual cause for which it was raised, the show was not a success, it was a rip-off.

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*Just because you love the act and they love your cause, doesn't mean the general public is going to dish out \$10 to see them perform.*

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7. Last of all, it's lots of work. Be prepared. Have a strong volunteer crew willing to do the leg work.

One final word. Use your head. If you find yourself five days from the date with only 500 tickets sold—CANCEL. You'll lose less.

I always recommend to my clients that they enlist the aid of a good benefit concert or commercial concert promoter if they are serious about producing such an event. You wouldn't try to assemble an automobile by yourself. Don't try to put on a concert without solid professional help.

Good luck. \$

About the author: *Mirandi Babitz has been producing benefit concerts for the past seven years. She currently works as a professional concert promoter with Northern Stage Company and continues to consult with non-profit agencies about benefit concerts.*

# In the Spirit: Fundraising During the Holidays

November and December—two months that many fundraisers dread. In fact, some think that these two months compete well with August as a time when fundraising plans are the most difficult to implement. What is the reason for this sentiment? The holidays.

The end of the year holiday season is a time when most people are very busy with family gatherings and shopping and therefore are less available to volunteer their time. Further, so much money is getting spent on presents that one would think that less would be available for contributions. However, the end of the year is one of the most active giving times and every fundraiser needs

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*... the end of the year is one of the most active giving times ...*

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to take advantage of these two months to encourage giving among his or her donor base and to expand that donor base.

There are two elements that make November and December particularly good times to fundraise. One has to do with that fact that December 31 is the last day on which individuals can make a contribution that can be deducted from their taxable income for that year. Many individuals wait until the end of the year to determine how much they can give away in tax-deductible contributions. This is a time to ask your present donors and any potential new donors for end-of-the-year contributions.

The second element that makes these times conducive to successful fundraising is the "holiday spirit." Brotherly and sisterly love; good will towards others; a sense of togetherness; good cheer; joy and peace to the world; turning over a new leaf: these sentiments which are associated with the holidays at the end of the year clearly coincide with the long-range goals of many non-profit organizations, and should be used in any fundraising pitch. The holidays are a time to give special emphasis to the positive and that which might give people hope in all of your fundraising pitches.

The following are some ideas of how to use and how not to use the holidays for fundraising.

## *Marketing for the Holidays*

People buy things during the holidays, and more and more, they seem to resent pouring their money into the profits of large companies. Almost anyone would prefer to see their money going to a good cause, especially if they are already feeling a little guilty about spending so much on presents. The key to marketing for the holidays is to develop products that people would buy anyway. Calendars, holiday cards, Christmas tree ornaments, and baked goods are all big sellers during the holidays. This is a time to push your organization's t-shirts or posters. Some organizations have actually set up Christmas tree lots. One organization developed a calendar with a tear-off form and envelope for their members' monthly pledges. Marketing for the holidays is such a successful way to raise money that some of the larger non-profits, such as the Sierra Club and Unicef, have opened entire stores to display their items and now operate these stores as small businesses all year round.

## *Events*

With a few exceptions, November and December are bad times for fundraising events because people tend to spend this time with their families and friends at home and because they don't have a lot of extra spending money. There is only one week between Thanksgiving and New Years when people still haven't spent all of their money on presents and still may have some evenings free. This is not a great time to schedule a benefit concert or a fundraising dinner or luncheon. However, it is a good time for an open house/holiday party. People go to lots of office parties during the holidays, and there is no reason why your organization should not open its offices to your friends, clients and associates. Don't see these events as fundraisers, and definitely do not charge admission. See them, rather, as an opportunity to do some PR for your organization. They provide great opportunities to let some prospective donors or members find out more about your organization without making any kind of commitment.

For the particularly creative fundraisers, the holidays are a very good time to think up a special event that in some way relates to the holiday season. In San Francisco, one of the most successful fundraising events is a sing-a-long Messiah, at which San Franciscans gather to sing Handel's Messiah under the leadership of the San Francisco Chorus. This event is now so popular that it sells out many months in advance and is televised live for the thousands who could not get tickets.

In most large cities, it is hard to find a place to party on New Year's Eve that is not very expensive. Many people are looking for a party to go to, and would enjoy bringing in the New Year with people who share similar social or political concerns. You can sponsor a party, charge a lower admission than the commercial events in your city, and still raise a reasonable amount of money.

### Membership

The holidays are a wonderful time to expand your membership base. During this time of year people have a greater sense of concern about others. As a result, some organizations have found this to be one of the better times to send out membership mailings. As the end of the year arrives, people are also thinking about "turning over a new leaf." Joining your organization or sending you a contribution may have been one of those things they intended to do all year. An appeal arriving at this

time could be just the kind of encouragement they need.

The holidays also provide you with special opportunities to let your current membership help you expand your donor base. If you sponsor an open house, ask your members to invite one or two friends who they think might be interested in your work. Also encourage your members to buy gift membership for their friends.

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*The key to marketing for the holidays  
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would buy anyway.*

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Finally, the holidays are a good time to let your donors know how important they are to your organization. In addition to inviting them to your office party, you might want to send out a holiday greeting, thanking them once again for having supported you during the past year.

One final note—fundraising during the holidays takes planning in advance. If you want to try out a new idea, now is the time to start thinking about it. If you come up with an idea too late, don't try to implement it quickly. Write it down and start planning to use it next year the best thing about holidays is that they happen every year. So, what you can't try out this year, you can try out the following one.

—LH

\$

f i r s t e d i t i o n

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continued from pg 5

Many organizations, in addition to selling items, also auction off services donated by professionals, such as a physical by a doctor, or a will drawn up by a lawyer. A local chapter of the Connecticut Citizen Action Group held an auction that netted \$9,000 and the group intends to make it their regular annual fundraiser. Groups located in tourist areas can make a killing by timing auctions during the tourist season.

**Raffles and sales.** Although these fundraisers are not always the most lucrative, they can be held on an ongoing basis to bring in regular, small amounts of money. Some organizations have had great success with raffles, particularly when they have been able to secure a major grand prize, such as a trip to the Bahamas, or a car or TV. Where such prizes are not possible to get donated or buy (which is usually the case in a rural community) other kinds of items can be raffled, such as \$100.00 of groceries, or a popular item such as a fishing rod. The bigger the prize, the more successful the raffle. Some possibilities in rural areas for prizes are: cords of wood, a used car, food (a piglet or a side of beef) or other things that can be donated by members, such as crafts.

Rummage or bake sales are usually easy to do in rural areas, but, depending upon the community, are often not big moneymakers. They are, however, low-risk, reliable sources of small, ongoing income. This kind of fundraising should not be ignored, but integrated into planning for the major events as well.

There are no easy answers to the problem of raising money for a rural organization. As is the case in any fundraising, the key to success is planning well and integrating fundraising into the organization's work as fully as if it were a major campaign or program. Rural organizations need to work particularly hard at making a careful plan and moving ahead with it due to their particular limitations and sources. However, as is demonstrated by the success of groups such as LACO (Lisbon Area Recreation Center), the possibilities for self-sufficiency do exist and need to be taken advantage of creatively. Ultimately, an organization's funding strategy can test the organization's strength and *raison d'être*. If people—because after all, any financial support we get comes directly from people—can't or won't support our work, maybe the real problem lies in the work being done. Our biggest resource is ourselves, the leaders, members and/or staff, and, in my experience, some of the best of these kinds of resources have come from the rural communities and organizations. \$

#### About the Author:

Ellen Fleischman is an organizer and activist in New England. She specializes in serving the needs of those organizing for social and economic justice in smaller cities and rural communities. Other articles by Ms. Fleischman have appeared in various community organizing journals including Community Jobs, Rural America, and National Catholic Rural Life Magazine.

## Back Issues of Grassroots Fundraising Journal Available

Many readers have inquired about getting back issues of the Grassroots Fundraising Journal. Limited quantities of three of the Journals are available for \$2 each from the Grassroots Fundraising Journal, P.O. Box 14754, San Francisco, CA 94114. The articles in each issue are as follows:

#### *Volume One, Number Two (April 1982)*

Fundraising Events for Non-Profits (Part One): Overview. Making Self-Sufficiency a Reality in a Rural Organization: The Lisbon Area Community Organization Recreation Center

#### *Volume One, Number Three (June, 1982)*

The Lord Loveth a Cheerful Giver: How to Set Up a Pledge Program. Fundraising Events (Part Two): Finding a Performer

#### *Volume One, Number Four (August, 1982)*

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## Book Review

# The Grass Roots Fundraising Book

Joan Flanagan  
for The Youth Project



### *The Grassroots Fundraising Book:*

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To write a glowing review of the latest book written by our columnist, Joan Flanagan, seems self-aggrandizing at first. However, this review joins a parade of glowing reviews for this update of the classic text on grassroots fundraising. There is no doubt that a copy of this book should be in the library of every community-based organization, every fundraiser and every organizer. The price makes this possible.

*The Grassroots Fundraising Book* is an updated and much expanded version of Flanagan's previous book of the same name which was published in 1977. That book was one of the first, and remains one of a very few, books which addressed the fundraising needs of community based organizations.

This current manual will be useful both to novices and veteran fundraisers. It has everything you need to know about fundraising, and a lot about organizational development. Taxes, legal structures, accounting procedures,

and other things that make for smooth and effective fundraising are also covered. The superb bibliography and index make it an excellent reference tool, and the contents can be read again and again, with new ideas emerging every time.

Flanagan draws on 11 years of fundraising and organizing experience in writing this book. She is an excellent fundraiser herself, and sits on the Board of Directors of her church, and the Chicago Hospice among other groups. She knows fundraising from DOING it as a volunteer. She also knows from interviewing and training literally hundreds of groups all over the country.

Flanagan updates and expands her excellent discussions of small, medium and large special events, as well as how to do direct mail, door to door canvassing, how to find, cultivate and keep major donors, and how to do long range planning. She spends a good deal of time discussing the need for a clear case for your organization—why do you need to exist? Getting and staying clear, continuing to respond to the needs of the community you serve, and being willing to change directions if necessary are all imperative to successful community based fundraising.

The book is worth buying simply for the information it contains. But, as added extras are Flanagan's humor and commonsense style of writing, which makes the book easy to read and enjoyable.

Like the publishers of the *Journal*, and like hundreds of organizers and fundraising trainers, Flanagan knows, and is dedicated to spreading the knowledge that ANY-ONE CAN DO GRASSROOTS FUNDRAISING. Any-one of any class, race, age, or education.

She says, "You can be a tenants' club in a big city skyscraper, and still be grassroots. You can be a national environmental organization with a goal of \$1 million, or a high school ecology club with a goal of \$100. You can be a block club that has just won its first stop sign, or a statewide action league working on six different issues in fourteen counties. Grassroots simply means that you are ordinary people. You don't have to be a professional fundraiser or know a lot of important people to raise money for your group. To do grassroots fundraising you need only a basic understanding of money and of people."

—KK

# The Continuing Saga of **JEWEL** at F.I.G.A. (FUNDRAISING INSTITUTE OF GREATER AMERICA)



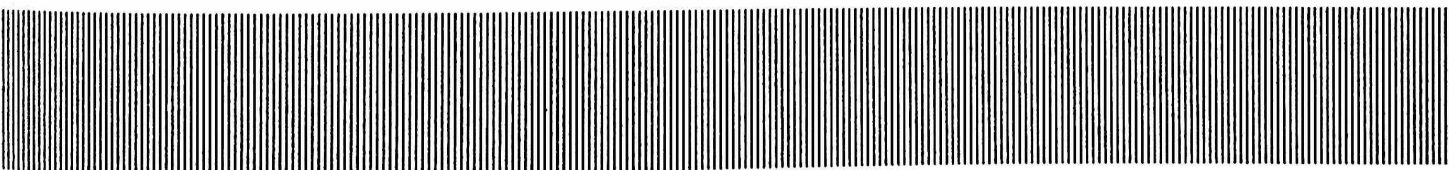
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## IN THIS ISSUE

### ARTICLES

Fundraising in Rural Areas ....	1
Advisory Boards: No Miracle Solution .....	6
Why Most Benefit Concerts Fail .....	9
In the Spirit: Fundraising During the Holidays .....	11

### REGULAR FEATURES

Dear Joan Flanagan .....	2
Book Review .....	14

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