

Creative Fundraising Suggestions

***Consider including a robot demonstration as entertainment at any of your fundraising events. Participants will leave with a better understanding of robotics and why it is important to support your team.**

Gift Wrapping

A gift wrapping booth at a mall, shopping center or department store is a simple way to raise funds during holiday seasons. Most people find it hard enough to find time to do their shopping, so finding someone to wrap the present in an attractive manner is a welcome investment.

All you need are a few volunteers, a table, some wrapping paper in various styles and colors, a choice of small holiday cards, some holiday stickers and lots of tape. Material is inexpensive and may even be donated by your members, a supporter or the retailer who lets you operate in their area.

Approach major department stores or shopping centers and ask if you can set up your wrapping table at their entrance or a place of their choosing. Most businesses no longer offer a gift wrapping service so they often see your service as a benefit to their customers. In some cases they will help by donating some wrapping paper and tape. If in doubt, ask. All they can do is say no, and if you don't ask you will never know.

Remember that a little training in gift wrapping may be necessary. This can take place in advance or on the job.

Not only will volunteers be happy with the funds raised, but they will also love the warm responses from those that take advantage of the time saving service you are providing.

Clean-up Events

Make arrangements to clean up after Independence Day fire works displays, auto races, dog shows, etc. Often the organizers of these events will pay an amount of money to another organization for their volunteers to do the clean-up. Youth groups have had success with cleaning up Fall leaves in yards for a donation to the organization.

Local Drive-in or Restaurant Take Over

Students can contact a local restaurant and volunteer to serve as dishwashers, bus persons, and servers. Negotiate an amount the restaurant owner would donate for the volunteer services. Each student then has the opportunity to work approximately two hours for one or two days. In exchange for being allowed to work in the restaurant, members should promise to bring the owner additional patrons on the evenings they volunteer. This makes the project mutually beneficial. You may also ask the owner if you can inform the general public of the

students' volunteer status and/or set up a donation box by the cash register for additional contributions.

Give a Buck

This idea is similar to fundraisers that stores sponsor during different holidays such as St. Patrick's Day where organizations will sell paper shamrocks for a dollar, print the donor's name on the shamrock and hang it up in the store for all to see! You may choose to use an enlarged Botguy image and ask local businesses to sell them for your team. Give each business about 50 robots to start, a tally sheet and a money bag. Collect at the end of each week although the fundraiser may continue on for an extended period of time.

Radio Days

Ask a local radio station to reserve one day for your students to read commercial advertisements, which they will sell to area merchants, "live" on the air. The students can ask for a certain amount of revenue from each commercial sold. The activity can take place during an agreed upon air time. As students are on the air they can tell the radio audience about what Botball is and how the program benefits the school and its students. The project is both financially rewarding and good for spreading the word about your team's efforts.

Teacher Torture

Your school principal picks as many teachers as he/she feels will willingly participate – no party poopers! (The principal also has to play to be fair, of course.) The principal then selects an "appropriate" activity that each teacher has to do if they "win", such as: kiss a pig, color hair a wild color, dress outrageously, roller skate, etc. Be creative! Have fun! The teachers vote on what the principal has to do.

Get a large jar for each teacher and the principal. Write the name of each teacher and the principal and their "assigned activity" on their individual jars. Put the jars where someone can keep an eye on them - preferably in a high traffic area. Students, teachers, parents and other school employees "vote" by depositing money into the jar(s). At the end of the fundraiser, the three (five, etc) teachers who have the most money in their jars, have to do their assigned activity. Have the "winners" perform their activity at a pep rally or other regular assembly or hold a special assembly just for the fundraiser.

Miniature Golf Tournament

Reserve a miniature golf course for your Botball team. Have students ask people to sponsor them per hole they play. (.10¢ per hole.) Then, run the tournament just like an Iron Man competition except you play on the miniature golf course. Play 100 holes in two hours or as many as you can do in two hours. Kids can raise \$100.00 by just getting 10 people to sponsor them at .10¢ per hole. A youth group in Tennessee did this fundraiser and some students raised as much as \$700.00.

Various “Thons”

The following narrative describes a bowl-a-thon, but could be adapted to many other activities:

My youth group planned a bowl-a-thon in which we found people to sponsor us. Our sponsors either sponsored a bowler per pin or made a flat donation. We played 2 games, tallied our score individually, and collected money from those who sponsored per pin. Those who contributed a flat donation were asked to pay the bowler up front.

Other Options:

Hold a "Trike-a-thon". It is exactly what it sounds like. Make it an athletic challenge where students get either a flat donation or donations per lap that they will ride on their tricycles on a given day. Paint a special trike path in your parking lot or use tape on a gymnasium floor. Hold the ride on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon and invite parents and donors to attend to cheer on their child. Or it can be held during the school day and invite the parents and students to come at specific times to cheer for the participants.

You might try a “Bot-a-Thon” following the process above. Instead of contributing for laps on a trike, sponsors can contribute for the number of laps your robot can do in a specified amount of time.

Sell Your Wares

Have your students hold a "sell your wares" evening. Parents, friends, or other interested people who normally sell items at home parties (e.g., Longaberger Baskets, Tupperware, Usborne Books, Mary Kay, Creative Memories), set up vendors' tables in a meeting room or school cafeteria. Make booths available for two hours one evening for people to come in and do a little early holiday shopping. The salespeople can provide some cash-and-carry items, as well as catalogs for items to be delivered in time for the holidays. Either charge booth fee or ask each salesperson to donate a percentage of his/her profits from the evening to the group's treasury. Or perhaps each salesperson could contribute a basket of products to be sold during a silent auction at the event with all proceeds going to the club.

Curbside House Numbers

Paint street numbers on curbs in front of houses. Using a cardboard cutout, paint a dark rectangular background on the curb. After it dries, paint the house number in reflective paint. You may even want to be creative and offer to include your team's school mascot with the house number.

Before you start, contact the Licensing and Permit section of your local municipality to see if a permit is required. Ask the local police and/or fire departments if they have any special advice/guidelines regarding the project.

Pick a neighborhood with good curbs and canvas the neighborhood one or more weeks ahead, taking orders and collecting payment. Specify an initial and rain date when the work will be done. You may wish to give a ten day period (two weekends) to allow for possible delays.

You will need several sets of stencils, masking tape, black background spray paint, and reflective spray paint.

Work in teams of three, one to sweep the curb, one to paint the background and one to paint the house number. Since you will need to let the background paint dry before applying the house number, you may be able to get by with teams of two, depending on the size of the neighborhood.

Pumpkin Festival

Have a pumpkin festival in October or November with pumpkins for the children to paint. Cover a table with newspaper (tape it down with masking tape so it stays covered). Set out liquid tempera paints, paintbrushes and plastic containers filled with water for rinsing the brushes. Let the kids paint goofy or creepy faces on the pumpkins. Add in pumpkin baked goods including a pumpkin pie bake-off. Other things to include in your festival might be storytelling, a hayride, pictures with the Great Pumpkin, simple carnival games, etc. The result is fun and funds!

Blind Auction

A blind auction is mostly about fun but can also raise funds for your group. It works best as part of an ongoing event such as a luncheon or dinner meeting. Here's how it works. Get as many people as you can that will be attending the event to bring a wrapped package. The contents could be humorous or something of actual value. Think of the possibilities! You can get rid of that ugly "xxx" in the back of your closet for a worthy cause.

Donors can weight the boxes with a brick to disguise the contents, have an oversized box for a very small present, or wrap boxes within boxes to increase anticipation. You get the idea! Announce that at least one of the boxes contains a "\$x" bill or something of value that is small enough to fit in all the boxes. The dollar value will depend on your group and anticipated bidding amounts.

As guests arrive they place their boxes on a display table so potential bidders can examine them and speculate on what they contain. Whether you use a live or silent auction, make sure everyone has time to pick them up and shake them before the bidding. Guessing the contents is much of the fun.

At the specified time, the boxes will either be auctioned individually or the results of the silent auction announced. If you have a live auction, make sure you have a couple of "valuable" prizes auctioned first to stimulate the bidding. Above all, make sure you allow time to let everyone open their box in front of the group. That's where the fun is.

Breakfast with.....

Hold a Breakfast with Santa in late November or December. Sell tickets for \$10 in advance, \$12 at the door. Serve pancakes, sausage, bacon, coffee, milk and juice. Servers dress as Santa's elves. Santa visits each table addressing the children by name (courtesy of name tags). Santa then retreats to his decorated throne where you sell pictures of the children with Santa. Use a Polaroid or a digital camera (with laptop computer and printer) on a tripod for consistently clear shots. Arrange a good back drop and/or props such as a sleigh or reindeer.

Experiment ahead of time to determine the best lighting and distance for good photos. Get photo cards or envelopes to make sure the photos get home in good shape. Photos can be extra or included in the breakfast ticket charge, raise ticket prices accordingly. If included, tables for service could be assigned as participants arrive and photo sessions called by table number to avoid long waiting lines. You might also arrange a secret microphone on Santa, with the speaker in the parents designated waiting area to learn their child's secret wish for Christmas.

Other Options

Change the date and costumed characters, and you have Breakfast with the Easter Bunny, the Great Pumpkin, Uncle Sam, the Pilgrims, you name it. For Easter, you could also include a sale of flowers and spring plants or decorated eggs. You can sell appropriately decorated cookies, pies or cakes at any event.

Dinners

This is a tried and true favorite for many schools. It can be very successful for any organization that has access to a hall with kitchen facilities and willing hands to prepare and serve. Everyone likes to eat and enjoys getting together. You can choose any meal; breakfast, lunch, dinner, or anything in between from high tea to an ice cream social. Make it as formal as a black tie gala or as casual as a picnic cookout. It can be catered or home-cooked. Make it a one-time event or an annual affair.

It often helps to combine a meal with some other activity such as a dance, choir concert, lecture series, or a fundraising auction. Consider scheduling it after or before a major school function (PTA meeting, athletic event, talent show, etc.). When used as a prelude to some other activity, the meal need not be spectacular, merely filling and wholesome, served hot and timely. Spaghetti or meat loaf, soup and salad come to mind. Spaghetti can also serve as a stand alone fund raiser with your special sauce, salad and garlic bread.

To be really successful, your dinner should offer something a bit unique (or considered difficult, time consuming, messy, or requiring special knowledge to make). The best events often capitalize on some cultural heritage (i.e. Italian ravioli, Texas chili, Southern fish fry, Louisiana crawfish boil, Country BBQ).

Develop a signature dish or go with a theme (Irish dishes for St. Patrick's Day, a German Oktoberfest, authentic international meals from a different country each year). If you hit on the right recipes, these events can become yearly standards, anticipated throughout the community. Once established, you can increase profits with both plate service and take home portions or cartons.

If you want to attract the general public, make sure you appoint a publicity chairman to get out flyers and posters in neighborhood stores. Submit your event for inclusion in the community calendar in your local newspaper and on the radio. If you've chosen a unique menu, you might even get a "human interest" article. Also encourage your members to invite friends and neighbors.

You'll have to decide how to serve your meal. Table service is more formal and allows for closer time scheduling, since everyone is served at once (or as closely as possible), but it takes more workers to serve everyone. A buffet is less formal, but often your best choice logistically. Cafeteria style works fine for more informal events. It's a good idea to have separate cooks and clean-up crew. Spreading the work around keeps volunteers from burning out.

You'll need to sell tickets ahead of time for more formal and catered events, at the door for others. The price should be set to cover your costs and provide a profit or it's not much of a fundraiser.

Carnival

Host a fundraiser that also includes community involvement. Hold a carnival at your school. First, make announcements at your school to see which clubs would like to participate in such an activity. From then on announce that the clubs participating will be able to keep whatever profits they make at the carnival. Hold the carnival in an open space, such as the gym or auditorium at your school, and place the booths all over the place with enough space for people to walk by.

The booths can consist of simply an arrangement of tables with poster boards on the side of the tables advertising what the booth is all about. Advertise as well to the community!!! Get permission from local libraries, schools, and businesses to see if you can put up posters and flyers asking your community to drop by. Booths may include friendship bracelets, pie in the face, face painting, tattoos, candy/sweets, pictures with Santa, simple carnival games (like a bean bag toss), cake walk, etc. Be creative!

Guessing Games

A guessing game is so simple than many groups never think of it and it is appropriate for school organizations. There are many versions but the principle is the same for each. Participants are given the opportunity to guess something, and they pay for each guess.

The simplest version is a large jar filled with virtually any item as long as it takes

a lot of them to fill the jar. If you use candy, you could vary it by the season - red hots for Valentines Day, candy corn at Thanksgiving, multi-colored Hershey kisses at Christmas. Once the game is over, the winner gets to keep the contents. Try to think of something that would be intriguing to your probable participants. However, unless the items are donated, keep them very cheap for obvious reasons.

Once your jar is filled, you need to place it in a conspicuous place such as a display case at a school or break area at a business so everyone can see it. Place a sign next to the jar (and in all other areas you can think of) challenging participants to guess the number of "whatevers" in the jar. Your specific organization and target participants will dictate how much to charge per guess and how to collect for the guesses. Make sure your signage explains where the proceeds will go.

There are many variations that can be considered. Have a guessing game jar at each of your monthly meetings with the proceeds going to a specific program or activity. Eliminate the jar contents and have the guess relate to an event -- the first snow of the year, etc.

Parents' Night Out

Using your past year's Botball equipment, have a parents' night out hosted at your school! Plan some fun robotics related activities and charge parents to bring their children to the event and drop them off. The children enjoy an evening of fun robotics related activities and the parents enjoy a night off. This also gives you a chance to promote your club to possible future Botball team members!

Several weeks before the event, send flyers home with the elementary students advertising the event. Plan to provide snacks and drinks during the evening and have a definite cut off number in mind so you do not overload your space and volunteer capacity. Plan several different activities, break the children into smaller groups and have them rotate through the different stations in specific time increments. Be sure that one of the stations is the snack table!

This concept could be expanded by hosting an all day Saturday "camp" at your school or even a summer camp that runs several days.

This is a great way to raise funds, promote your program and provide a valuable community service.