



# KEEP THE FUN IN FUNDRAISING

by Hilary Harkness

## I do not enjoy fundraising.

I do not relish the idea of asking people for donations. However, I absolutely love our local high school show choir, which boasts amazingly talented students who manage to balance studying with after-school rehearsals and competitions across the state. For that reason—for those kids—I am willing to step out of my comfort zone to do whatever I can to help make their show choir dreams a reality. Other parents and the surrounding community feel the same way; they also want to help create and support opportunities to financially support the show choir. With that in mind—and after a few years of parenting a show choir kid, volunteering as a chaperone during competitions, and helping behind the scenes—this is what I have learned about successful fundraising.

### Brainstorm Event Ideas

Donors are more likely to come forward when the event is engaging and fun. Keep ticket sales affordable so the whole community can participate—more ticket sales equate to more money raised beyond donations. Consider your audience. If the event focuses on student donations and ticket sales, make sure the fundraising activity is something students will be drawn to and excited about. If you are targeting businesses for larger donations, share with them how their support benefits the students and the show choir program. Make sure your fundraiser appeals to and is accessible to your target audience.

Here is a wide range of event suggestions for your consideration:

**Donation jar at the reception desk**—make sure it stands out visually.

**Spaghetti or pancake dinner**—cooked and served by the show choir.

**Quick pick-up dinners** for families on a weeknight.

Holiday or themed **school dance**.

**Direct sales**—socks, popcorn, coffee, or cookie dough. Online offerings allow for out-of-state sales to family and friends.

**Bake sale**—good, old-fashioned cookies, cakes, loaves of bread, and brownies baked by show choir kids and their families.

**Online or in-person auctions**—ask for auction items from the community.

**Pie or water balloon throwing contest**—design different targets to aim for.



**Dunking booth**—definitely get teachers and administrators to participate!

**Raffle** off a prime parking space for a week or semester.

**School spirit sale**—set up a sales table before and after school for a week or one day a week for a month. Ask for parent volunteers to help run the table.

**Movie night**—consider a character costume contest tied into the movie theme.

**Barbecue sale** for spring or **smoked turkey** for Thanksgiving.

After-school **tutoring services** for students.

**Car or dog washes** along with a **lemonade stand**.

**Silly sports competition**—egg on spoon race, water balloon toss, burlap sack race, tug of war.

**Fun run**—invite everyone to participate, including students, their families, and even community members. Create a space for all abilities. Set up fun events at the finish line and don't forget to crank up the music.

**Photo contest**—decide on a theme and showcase the winners.

**Scavenger hunt in the school**—consider setting a specific number of participants, selling tickets, and handing out awards.

**Obstacle course event**—could be in the gym or on a sports field.

**Tie-Dye event**—sell shirts or white bandanas to tie-dye. Set up multiple dying stations.

**In-school singing telegrams for Valentine's Day**—let students express their love to someone or send an anonymous telegram to a love interest.

**Family Recipe Cook-Off**—sell tickets and allow students and the community to vote for their favorites.

**School-wide talent show**—wonderful talent exists beyond the show choir family; encourage other students to step up and share their gifts as well.

**Video game marathon**—several companies offer online gaming events.

**Board game tournament**—Monopoly, chess, bingo, or include multiple games to draw in all ages of participants.

**Battle of the bands**—ask student-created bands to participate. Set up in the parking lot, the school gym, or the theater. Offering a space to dance is always a good idea.

## Let Everyone Know

Find avenues within your school and community to let everyone know about your upcoming event. Create excitement by ramping up publicity in the weeks leading up to your fundraiser—keep your event information fresh and out there. Make sure to include the date, time, location, and what the event is raising money for. Early on, send and post eye-catching Save-the-Date invitations.

Look at creating different levels of donation amounts for donors who contribute before the event, then list their names in the program or in event promotions. Offer multiple ad sizes in a performance program to either promote a business or lift up a child in the show choir for specific amounts of donations.

Consider listing possible contribution amounts alongside what that amount would help to cover. For instance, \$100 covers the cost of a badly needed new microphone; \$500 covers the cost of bus rental to a competition in a different city; \$1,000 goes towards new costumes and props for the upcoming show choir season. Be clear about what your show choir needs and what contributors' donations will help support.

## Plan, Plan, Plan

Establish a group of show choir students and parents alongside a faculty representative to outline the fundraiser from

start to finish. What is the fundraising amount you are hoping to reach? When is the auditorium available? Reach out to volunteers to help with ticket sales, handing out programs, and helping out backstage.

Create a timeline for promotional pieces to go out—is there someone who could help with creating social media posts? If needed, decide on an MC to keep the event engaging and moving along while also highlighting past successes or funny stories about the show choir.

Do you need to request permission from the school or event location? When do those requests need to be completed? If you are bringing in local vendors, make sure to complete paperwork and cover any initial deposits on rental items. Consider backup options if plans fall through due to weather or unforeseen events.

Hit the ground running and put plans in order so that when last-minute issues pop up, which they will, you have the time and space to figure out workarounds.

## Spread the Love

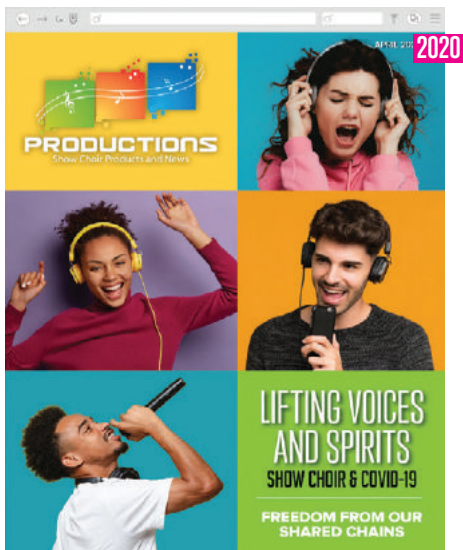
Most show choirs need to participate in multiple fundraisers to meet their monetary goals. Offering varied types of events and sales will make it easier for large donors to consider giving more than once. When fundraisers are financially available and creatively entertaining to everyone, your fundraising goals can be met. Figure out which fundraisers are a success for your show choir, which ones need revamping, and which ones need to be replaced by fresh new ideas next year. Include the larger school community and foster a sense of connection and support to help these talented rising graduates move on to the next phase of their young lives with confidence and joy.

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