***Fundraising in Youth Ministry***

For many of us the word “fundraising” can cause great anxiety. And if you are anything like me you may put off this time consuming duty until the last possible minute. After all who of us comes into youth ministry with a back ground in fundraising? There may be a few extroverts out there that say they “love” fundraising but my experience was total anxiety and fear! Over the years I kept the good stuff, what works and dumped the time consuming events that do not reap the best profits.

1. **Start early and never stop:**

Don’t wait to start talking about fundraising and setting a date on the parish calendar! Parish calendars fill up fast and you may need to get your time reserved a year in advance. That sounds crazy but it’s true. It also shows how much importance you are placing on your youth fundraiser. Instead of having several fundraisers plan a solid fundraiser that will take less time and bring in more money.

1. **Involve Parents and Parishioners:**

Get to know the people who know everyone! Talk to the active mom who has a knack for sales, maybe she is even in marketing and sales. One of our best fundraisers ever is because a mom came to me with a fabulous idea and was completely excited about raising money for her son and his friend’s mission trip. The energy she brought to the table drove the fundraiser and I let her have a big piece in decision making. What I found to be key is that I acted as the support person. All too often youth ministers think they have to do everything on their own. This comes from legitimate feelings because as youth ministers we can feel as if we are operating on a youth ministry island in our parishes. So, find the energetic parents and parishioners who love kids and God!

1. **Getting Others Involved:**

We must be very pro-active in our recruiting and using sales techniques will help you when recruiting others. Letting the parish know what your goals are for the youth is very important. Growing disciples and being part of your parish mission statement will get adults listening. A very good read for all youth ministers is Rebuilding Youth Ministry by; Christopher Wesley. If you do not have a well formed youth ministry team behind you it will be very difficult to raise substantial amounts of money.

1. **What Works vs What Doesn’t:**

Long term planning works – verbally repeating the date of your fundraiser to others works – getting on the parish calendar early works – having a solid team works and using as much social media as possible works. You will need to have a fundraiser that works for your community. ***Things for consideration:***

1. How much money needs to be raised and how is it being used?
2. Who benefits from this?
3. How will this impact the community, youth and families?
4. How are the youth involved in the fundraising?
5. How will you keep track of the following: expenses, volunteers, youth involvement, parent involvement, training, donations, etc?
6. Other questions?

Holding several fundraisers throughout the year is very time consuming and you will not raise larger amounts of money. We have all done a car wash and candy sale and these just don’t bring in the amount of money that makes a difference. I suggest that having several fundraisers does not work because you can utilize your time as well as the youth and adult volunteers time better by holding a once per year fundraiser.

A wise parish council member said to me, “We need to know what you need from us, tell us what you want.” He meant all parishioners. So get everyone involved by praying for the youth! Anyone and everyone can pray. Be creative in asking people to pray and be sure to tell them that your team is praying for them as well.

***Reaching Out to Parents***

Just as *location* is vital to the success of a business, *relationships* with parents are vital to youth ministry. My early idea of youth ministry was to be present to “youth” and thought I didn’t really need the parents input. (Bad attitude on my part or at the least a rookie mistake to think that way.)

We need the buy-in of parents and we need to be specific about what youth ministry is. Our current parish youth minister reminded me the other day about something very profound that a parent said to him, “*As a parent, I don’t feel equipped to talk to my teen about the faith”.* Assuring parents that they are doing the best they can is important. Validate them and assure them that you are on their side and available to them.

In recent years our parish RE program began parent/child classes by grade level beginning with the elementary grades. These are once per year sessions that help draw the parent into faith learning with their children. The sessions are designed to equip the parent with simple yet important tools they can use at home with the family to build the whole faith journey in the household. We receive good feedback and continue to grow the sessions based on parent/family need.

By asking parents what they need from you and the parish you are building trust and as we know any relationship begins with trust. Good communication and consistency is important to building a solid trust with parents.

Think of three ways your RE/Youth ministry team can reach out to parents in your parish community:

1-

2-

3-

What are some practical steps you can take to invite parents into your ministry?