

# Direct Donation

## Drives Simplify Asking—and Giving

BY MARILYN FERDINAND

**If you're like most parents,** your life is very busy. Between going to work or volunteering, taking your children to extra-curricular activities, caring for your home, and running errands, you're probably already over-extended. Organizing and volunteering at PTA fundraisers is important to you, but you wonder if there might be a way to make better use of your time and get the same or better results for your PTA.

There is. More and more PTAs are discovering that direct donation drives are a time-efficient, effective way to raise funds.

In 2006, the PTA at Lake Harriet Community School in Minneapolis, Minnesota, tested the waters with a mixed approach, asking for direct donations as well as selling products from a well-known company that returns 50 percent of the money earned to the PTA. Donors were also encouraged to ask their employers for matching donations. The PTA made the change to doing more pledge-based fundraising after a survey it conducted revealed parents' strong support for fundraising that did away with multiple buying/selling events, which were time-consuming and caused "giving fatigue."

"We made \$61,000 through the pledge drive, including \$2,000 in company matches. We made approximately \$30,000 through merchandise sales. All together, we raised \$91,000 in less than two months," said Mary Kirkeby, fundraising chair for the Lake Harriet Community School PTA.

Longfellow Middle School PTA in Falls Church, Virginia, holds

an "armchair" fundraiser as its only fundraiser of the year. In addition to mailing donation solicitations to parents, the PTA posts a donation form on its website. The form can be downloaded and mailed in. The PTA also lists all donors on its website. The list is organized according to donors' giving levels: platinum, gold, silver, bronze, and participating donor. Many donors appreciate this type of recognition and enjoy being associated with a group effort.

Another PTA that confines its fundraising to one donation drive, held in the fall, is Rosemont Middle School PTA in La Crescenta, California. It, too, places its donation form online. In soliciting donations, the PTA highlights not only the fundraising goal and the suggested donation per family, but also what families' donations funded the previous year: special events that complemented the school curriculum, parent-teacher workshops, library books, the PTA Reflections Program, drug prevention and safety weeks, school dances, various PTA communication vehicles for parents, and more.

According to most professional fundraisers, fundraising efforts are more likely to be successful if specific uses for the money have been defined. Rosemont PTA's list of programs and activities it

has supported not only includes a variety of worthwhile projects of interest to parents, but also emphasizes student achievement as a core value of the PTA.

Sunset Ridge PTA in Middleton, Wisconsin, decided to hold a fall donation drive as its primary fundraiser after 90 percent of the school's parents said they would prefer making a monetary donation over participating in a fundraising program. In its 2006 donation solicitation, the PTA informed potential donors that "the PTA spends over \$60 per student per year on special programs, field trips, activities, and resources." This statement emphasizes that PTA funds are spent on students, not administrative costs. Giving parents further incentive to contribute, the PTA told parents that if the PTA met its fundraising target with the direct donation campaign, there would not be a schoolwide spring fundraiser.

Having adequate funding is an important part of being a successful PTA. Direct donation drives may be your PTA's ticket to making efficient use of resources while keeping the financial pipeline flowing. **PTA**

*Marilyn Ferdinand is writer/editor for the national PTA organization.*

For more information about online giving campaigns, see the article on page 23 "Click Here to Donate"