

VENTURING MAGAZINE

Crew Fundraising by Joe Garrett

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One of the most rewarding activities for a Venturing Crew can be a well thought out fund raising campaign. If you can find a way to raise money while participating in a Crew activity, the results can be financially rewarding and fun at the same time. As an example, my Crew used to participate in several Civil War Reenactments every summer. Early on we realized that there were no cold drinks or snack foods available at these events. We tried a few different ideas before we got it right. At first we just tried to solve the "lunch problem" for our fellow reenactors. We started out by selling hamburgers cooked on a charcoal barbecue grill. We sold a lot of

hamburgers but made very little money. Then we tried selling bottled root beer iced down in a galvanized tub (antique style) and had success on hot days but sales fell off on cool weekends or when it rained. Keeping ice on hot days became a chore, too. When we bought too much root beer, we simply stored the extra inventory away for the next event. Selecting an item that won't spoil, we discovered, is very important. Next, we tried snow cones, and then cotton candy. These were both wildly successful, very profitable (once you own the machines) and lots and lots of fun. We started by renting the machines since the initial investment is pretty steep. We soon discovered that the cost of rental eats up much of the profit, so once we had proven the concept, we bought the equipment.

Once we owned our own snow cone and cotton candy machines, we found many more opportunities to use them as both fund raisers and as program features. On a good Civil War weekend, we could count on making several hundred dollars while still participating in the event. Then we were invited to provide treats at a local airport fly-in. This was fun for everyone and the several hundred dollars we collected was a bonus. We found other uses for the equipment such as offering treats at our church's Sunday School kickoff in September and at our Crew karaoke and Xbox parties.

One of the issues that made this fundraiser work is that in our home state, bottled drinks, cotton candy and snow cones are exempt from typical food vendor regulations, and a permit to sell them at an off-site event can be obtained online for free. The materials don't spoil, are inexpensive, and can be easily stored.



There are many other ways to raise funds for a Crew that are fun and rewarding. Some are even viewed as a public service. Many years ago, when I was a youth member of an Explorer Post, we sold US Flags with a home display kit during the month leading up to 4th of July. The idea was to get as many homeowners as possible to display a flag for the summer holiday weekend. We found a wholesale

source for the flag kits and sold about a thousand of them. I do not recall how much money we made, but I remember the fund raiser was fun and very successful.



Another community service we have tried with success is painting house numbers on curbs in front of homes to make it easier for emergency services and others to locate an address. We made up a set of stencils to paint a white rectangle on the curb using special striping paint (for parking lots). Then we made a template of number stencils so that we could come along a half-hour later and paint the house number in black. I think we charged about \$6 each for this service, and could make several hundred dollars on a summer weekend cruising neighborhoods with our stencils and paint cans.

Many, many years ago as an Explorer Advisor, I helped my Post pay for a summer trip to Florida by selling Yule Logs at Christmas. We cut white birch logs into sections about 16 inches long, drilled holes for tapered candles, decorated around the candles with holly, and installed feet on the logs so that they would not roll. This was simple idea that raised thousands of dollars for us. We were lucky to have a ready supply of white birch and holly, too, so our cost of materials was limited to the candles.

I came across a variation for this idea more recently at my church. A few years ago we assembled "Remembrance Lanterns" for an evening Worship Service right before Christmas. The lanterns were made with white paper lunch sacks, a little sand to hold them in place, and a plumber's candle. Members of our church could "sponsor" a lantern for a departed family member or friend by filling out a card and "donating" a few dollars for our effort. At the designated Evening Worship Service and on Christmas Eve we lined the sidewalk in front of the church with these lanterns, each displaying a card with the name of the person being memorialized. This idea was well received by the congregation and we had fun doing it. A bonus was that the Crew attended these worship services as a group. We tried this idea two years in a row, and both years it rained on each night that we set up the lanterns. The candles still functioned, but we ended up with a bunch of wet lunch sacks with sand in them, all in front of the church. The cleanup was a little more difficult than we had anticipated.

If your Scout Council sells popcorn as a local fund raiser, you can get in on this and possibly make some money along with the local Boy Scout Troops and Cub Scout Packs. The typical commission on these popcorn sales varies from 35% to 50%. The trick here is to avoid competing with the Cub Scouts at your local grocery store and the Boy Scouts who go door to door. Teens can be very inventive, and my favorite story is about the young man who sold popcorn at his dad's bowling league each year. He consistently sold \$400 to \$500 worth of popcorn in one or two nights' effort. Others were successful selling at their churches, at their parent's service clubs, and even at their high schools. One year we were able to pay for much of the cost of a trip to BSA's Florida Sea Base with nothing but popcorn sales.

By far our best fund raiser over the years was a whitewater raft trip we hosted to finance a trip to Mississippi to assist with Hurricane Katrina Recovery. The trip was anticipated to cost around \$500 per person and we had 16 people including adult leaders and our pastor who wanted to go. Our church had scheduled an annual fund raising auction and dinner so we offered a long weekend whitewater trip hosted, guided, and fed by our Crew. Since many of the youth were trained whitewater guides and we

already had the necessary equipment, this was an opportunity to "show our stuff" to the congregation while funding an important church service project. At the auction we sold enough trips to pay for airfare to New Orleans for all sixteen people. We went to Mississippi in August and upon our return we spent the Labor Day Weekend hosting members of our church on a 50 mile weekend on a beautiful desert river in nearby Oregon. This had three great results. Our Crew and the church helped 6 families in Mississippi rebuild their homes, we as a Crew grew much closer to members of our church, and our Venturers learned some valuable construction skills while spending a week in a Southern culture they probably would never have otherwise experienced.

Over the years, however, we have probably raised more money with carwashes than all the other schemes put together. Carwashes are a well-known and over-used way to raise money for youth groups. Many years ago we discovered a trick to make them more successful, more lucrative, and weatherproof. Instead of just scheduling a carwash and hoping for the best, we provide car detailing services by appointment. We pre-sell the appointments (collecting in advance), collect contact information, and publish our rain-check date in case we have to cancel due to bad weather. We currently charge \$35 for a hand-wash, paste wax, and wheel polish on the exterior. Then we vacuum the interior, clean the inside windows, vacuum out the trunk, and clean the dash and instrument panel. We use premium wax designed for modern clearcoat auto finishes, upholstery cleaner, lots of Windex, lots of old towels and several big shop vacuums. We also use pressure washers (carefully, of course) to rinse the exterior. This keeps the amount of water used to a minimum and reduces run-off significantly. We set up a line for the cars to be washed first in a wet area. Then we move the cars to a dry area where they are vacuumed, waxed and polished. We have found that with enough workers, we can detail about three cars an hour and can run for about 6 hours before we get too tired to continue. That is 18 cars at \$35 each! We always aim for repeat customers so quality is very, very important and every car is inspected before it leaves. We have been successful at holding these events twice a year and get lots of repeat business.

Fund raising can be a fun program activity for your Crew. A lot of its success depends on the attitude and enthusiasm of the adult leaders, but if you find something that works and ties in well with your Crew's focus, it can be very, very rewarding. You will run into families that would prefer to pay for their trips instead of participating in the fundraising activities. In my opinion, this is to be discouraged. It sets up a privileged class within your Crew, and it is likely to cause resentments between youth members. Kids who miss out on the fund raising activities may not be fully invested in your crew activities, either, and can cause morale problems. If you approach each fund raising event as if it is just another Crew adventure, you will have a lot more fun, get stronger commitments from your youth members and their families, and build a stronger program. A strong fund raising component can enable better, more successful Crew activities, and will allow more youth from a broader spectrum of backgrounds to participate. What is most important is that, like your weekend events, each fund raiser must be viewed as successful and fun!