

It's ^{all} ~~None~~ of Your Business

Fundraising: Who Cares?

When embarking on a fundraising activity, the question that most people ask is “Who has the money?” The question they should be asking is “Who cares?” Who is passionate about the same things that you are? Who cares about your cause, values, outcomes and impact? These are the people who will most want to provide support for your project.

A great place to start looking for those who share your passion is in your own community. Who is sponsoring ads in concert programs? Who is hosting youth conferences? Who attends events similar to yours?

Fundraising is not solely about money. It is about matching opportunities with resources, bringing like-minded individuals (or organizations) together, raising donors (not money) and developing long-term relationships.

Heather Smith, an independent teacher in Utah, shares her fundraising story. It is a great example of connect-

ing with the community for a common fundraising goal.

Heather's Story

As an independent music teacher, I knew my own community desperately needed a quality performance venue for studio recitals and chamber concerts. The current venues were ill-suited for musical events due to poorly maintained and/or limited pianos, lack of audience space and substandard acoustics.

It is important to involve others because people support the things they create. It is more impactful to involve those whom you want to serve. They will want to be a part of the experience of creating something for their community. People who share a common goal that transcends their individual challenges can build momentum that can transform and elevate their community.

My own journey to create a recital venue led me to meet many like-minded individuals. In researching untapped

resources, I discovered that a local arts gallery was renovating a building on Main Street. The space in their main art gallery would be ideal for a recital venue. The purpose of having a recital stage in the art gallery was to promote the arts in multiple forms. Audiences would not only hear and experience the performing arts, but would also be surrounded by visual art in the gallery.

I met with the executive director and the board of trustees of the art gallery. I offered to organize a fundraising campaign to purchase a Steinway grand piano and to pay for a recital stage with one caveat—that they would allow local music teachers to use the main art gallery for studio recitals. The response was overwhelmingly favorable.

I learned that collaborations with people and organizations outside of my music network could be fruitful. In my situation, I chose to collaborate with those who oversaw an art gallery. Initially, creating a public space inside of an art gallery may not have seemed like a logical placement. However, our common goals to engage the community through quality artistic and cultural programs, to provide educational experiences and to encourage the growth and expression of art on Main Street made our collaboration work.

Some of the funding initiatives we undertook included the following:

- **Naming the stage after an influential music educator in**

Karen Thickstun, NCTM, teaches piano pedagogy at Butler University and directs the Butler Community Arts School. She holds degrees in music, economics and business.



Heather K. Smith, NCTM, is an independent teacher from Centerville, Utah. She holds degrees in music and accounting.



the community. Current and former students of Lenora Brown, as well as her friends and family members, all donated to name the stage after her. *(Lenora Brown is one of Heather's former teachers who taught at the University of Utah for 40 years. Heather asked Brown's son to provide names of former students. One is currently trustee of a private foundation in South Carolina. You never know where a personal connection will lead you!)*

- **Selling piano keys on the Steinway.** People throughout the community purchased individual keys to raise additional funds to purchase the piano. Once the piano was purchased, the donors inscribed their names on the underside of the keys, thereby creating a sense of ownership.
- **88-hour Piano-a-thon.** There was a great amount of support and excitement from music teachers and their students in the community regarding the new venue. For 88 straight hours during Memorial Day weekend, students and professional artists performed at the Bountiful Davis Art Center. Students obtained pledges for donations for the amount of time they performed.
- **Additional support from private foundations/government funds.** Additional resources were received from very generous private foundations as well as the local city and county gov-



ernments. *(Sources included the city council of Bountiful via its Recreational Arts and Parks tax fund, Davis County Tourism Board and the Utah Division of Arts and Museums, which oversees funding received from the National Assembly of State Art Agencies.)*

Once the funding is obtained and the project is realized, it is important to recognize all who were instrumental in establishing and implementing the project. Send out press releases regarding the project and the work that was done to benefit the community. Hold a ribbon-cutting ceremony and involve the local Chamber of Commerce. Provide an evening gala, concert or reception and show your support for those who supported your endeavor. After the stage was completed and the Steinway was purchased, we held several receptions

and performance events to thank all of those who were involved in making the project a reality.

Over the past 18 months, the art gallery has become the premier performance space in our community. The newly created performance venue is in high demand by teachers for their studio recitals and by professional performing artists who book the space for their concerts. The community has embraced the space as their own because they were invited to be a part of the project from the initial stages of development.

Heather's project raised more than \$200,000. One idea that fills a community need + a passionate champion + supporters who care = a winning formula for fundraising!