

Professional Corner



To complement the fund-raising emphasis in this month's *Dimensions*, we are featuring some fresh and inventive fund-raising ideas from advisor **Laura Benincasa (Manchester-Essex**

Regional H.S., Massachusetts). Laura is a fairly new teacher, but one with personal experience as a DECA member in high school. Her mock DECA competition was described in last March's issue.

You will see in this column that Laura has a knack for fund-raising. She estimates that the chapter has to raise \$100,000 each year to run their program. The number looks staggering, but the chapter has about 100 members, and those going to conferences will contribute part of their cost. The school gives them \$10,000, and then they do about \$45,000 in fund-raising. Going to state competition alone costs them \$23,000.

Laura believes that fund-raising is correlated to the curriculum, so they start their money-making projects in the fall. Their first sales project in October is holiday wreaths—each student must sell a minimum of 5. The class that sells the most gets a lunch party of pizza and soda, and bragging rights. She doesn't make the students compete within each class, because she wants to develop team spirit. She gives star stickers for each wreath sale and posts a chart to show the sales. Seeing the progress some have made on the chart motivates the others. This project yields \$7,000 to \$8,000, since they sell 800 to 900 wreaths.

Laura has great success with a "Calendar Raffle." The raffle runs for a month, with prizes given away each day of the month. The calendar (with prizes listed) is printed on every raffle ticket sold. The last time they did this fund-raiser, they had three prizes for each day. Drawings for prizes are held every day of the month, and they post the winners on the chapter's Web site.

The chapter also puts the winners in the local paper (the *Manchester Cricket*, a weekly newspaper). This exposure provides PR to contributing businesses. (They have also received publicity in two other papers.)

Raffle prizes are donated. Each student contributes one prize—some families give more. In the past, prizes have been a round of golf, dinner for six (delivering a homemade meal), Red Sox tickets, lobsters (some of the parents are fishermen) and handmade blankets. It is noteworthy that families from every socio-economic level of the class can give something.

The chapter sells 2,000 tickets for the raffle, with profits amounting to \$18,000. Because everything is donated, the only expenditure for the project is the printing cost.

Laura notes that the project is easy to link to the curriculum. Why do businesses want to contribute to this project? It gives them publicity on every ticket. Tickets have a calendar at the top and list the prizes for the day. Tickets are on 8½-inch by 12-inch cardstock, perforated at the bottom so that the buyer can put name, address and phone number. Laura also provides a prize for the student who sells the most and also for the class that did best. The top fund-raiser receives a plaque.

To raise funds for travel to ICDC, Laura runs a program where students send out letters to obtain corporate sponsorships, usually local. She estimates the average cost of the ICDC trip at \$1,000 for every member attending. The chapter gives half and the students need to raise the other half. Members take every sponsorship off of their \$500 individual cost. Laura says most students acquire \$100 or \$200 in sponsorships. Some get it all. They note that contributions are tax deductible, and they give receipts.

Members meet the Saturday after state competition—a required morning meeting for qualifiers. The kids have to write the letters themselves. The computer teacher coaches them on the form of business letters and helps them.

Why run the sponsorship program? Laura says a lot of DECA advisors don't use the community enough. "You should have people come in—kids like this. Ask people to help work on role-plays. They see what the program does and the educational value it has for kids." This is how you lay the groundwork for donations.

A good piece of general advice from Laura is that one key to being a successful advisor is to be openly enthusiastic about your program. "Kids can see right through us. You have to understand what you're doing and put in the effort. Even body language is important. Remind yourself every day that what you're doing is important. It's a lifelong relationship with these students."



New to online membership processing?

A tip: Enter the membership processing system **now** to get a feel for it and to establish your user name and password. These preliminary actions will save you from trying to acclimate yourself when you're under the actual deadlines.