



UNIT FUNDRAISING IDEAS

The following ideas are examples from other nonprofit organizations.

Some tips on selecting and planning a fundraiser:

- Consider who might be potential participants and volunteers – will you have enough of both?
- Set a date that does not conflict with other local events and far enough ahead to be able to plan and execute well.
- What is the fundraising event raising money for? Determine this so that it appeals to potential participants. Since it will be an ALA event, the focus should be on one of our programs such as: veterans and their families, ALA Girls State, ALA Foundation... choose something non-members can relate to.
- Marketing of the event needs to be well planned through local media (radio, TV, newspapers) and public announcements like flyers, newsletters, and websites.
- During the event, make sure participants can identify ALA volunteers by their clothing attire and signage – be bold. Don't forget to have ALA brochures available for distribution.
- Check local permit/license requirements for your events.

Adult Spelling Bee: Money can be raised through local businesses and individuals sponsoring an adult 21 years of age or older to be a contestant in the adult spelling bee held at a local establishment. The entry fee was \$50, and the sponsor of the entry was advertised at the event on a name board and thanked in a letter to the editor of the local newspaper. Other area sponsors were participants in the giving of prizes for both the winning sponsor and winning speller. We used words found on spelling word websites and also terminology from all areas of expertise represented by the sponsors that gained entry into the competition. Between the 40 spelling teams, silent auction, raffle, private donations and refreshment sales, the spelling bee raised approximately \$15,000.

Animal Pictures: Kids of all ages love to have their photos taken with animals, and parents have a hard time resisting because they are so very cute. You can borrow animals from a local pet shop or animal shelter. Get a local photographer to donate professional photo services and set up at a mall or other event. Be sure to keep a true animal lover around to handle anything that gets unruly. The usual agreement would be that the photographer has his/her film costs reimbursed, and of course his/her name is on the photos as free advertising and he/she would be the source of reprints. The photographer will usually have printed forms for completion. You should arrange for your members to handle the registration and collection to keep costs down. Payments should be collected in advance. Sample photos with the available animals at their cutest could help spur fundraising sales.

Alternatively, you could use a Polaroid or digital camera set up on a tripod with lighting and distance worked out ahead of time. If using a digital camera, have a separate pickup booth set up with a computer and printer to produce the prints. Don't forget to arrange for folders or



other packaging for your photos. If using a digital camera, you could even include a contact number for reprints within a certain time limit. In that case, make sure to store the original files safely for the allotted time limit. Possible sources of animal subjects could be your local humane society or shelter as well as members of your group. (It could result in some adoptions for the society/shelter.) You may want to arrange for several animals (parrots or toucans make a great choice if docile) to attract more attention and assure the animals don't get too flustered, particularly if you extend your hours. This could be a great compliment to an outdoor fair. Hay bales make a great backdrop and temporary corral as well as help with any 'accidents.' Be sure to plan for food, water and shade for the animals, and shovels to clean up after them. A garbage can with a tight cover can help keep the odor down.

Basket Raffle: Basket contents can be tailored to whatever holiday or event you choose. Have each member donate a food item to fill the basket. Example: If you are doing a Thanksgiving Basket someone can donate a can of corn, a packet of gravy mix, a bag of marshmallows, cider mix, etc. Try and have the turkey donated by your local grocer. Make flyers, announcements in your newsletter, memos, sell to people at work, school, church, neighbors, etc. Sell tickets for a dollar each, which is an easy sell to most people. Make sure to have the name and phone number on your tickets so you know whom to call when the winner is announced. Set a date to announce the winner and the delivery date. Put the name of your winner in your newsletter and on the website if you have one.

Benefit Singing: Hold a benefit singing fundraising event at a church or community center. Get local singers to volunteer. You can ask for a "love offering" or set an admission price. You might want to have a snack booth with beverages and treats. Around the holidays or Veterans Day these could be great themed events.

Box City: Box City is a fundraiser where participants raised pledges to become a citizen of Box City and then sleep in a box overnight to raise money and awareness for homelessness in their own county. Funds raised stay in the county to help homeless families and also those that are at risk for becoming homeless.

Box City can be more than a fundraiser. There can be food, games and entertainment and an outdoor movie. Participants love building and decorating their own cardboard homes. Boxes can be available by calling ahead to local retailers who can be requested to hold large appliance boxes for the event.

Cake Walk: Unit members donate cakes. You put numbers around tables (depending on the number of cakes and participants). You tape the top of the number close to edge of the table and far apart enough for people to stand by their numbers or on the floor. You charge a fee per number. Participants stand by their numbers. Second copies of the numbers that are on the tables are in a bag. Once the numbers on the tables have all been sold then you draw the number and the person who bought that number is the person who wins a cake. Also have numbers put on each cake and a separate bag with these numbers in as well. Then you also draw a cake number. That is the cake they win. The number of cakes you have is the number of rounds you have. People line up to buy their numbers again after each cake is won.

Cemetery Walk: If you have a local cemetery that has some interesting residents and stories you can stage a cemetery walk and offer a soup-n-salad with bread supper, followed by a tour



of the local cemetery with a few short and dramatic (living-history type) “vignettes” based upon events in the lives of the more historically significant residents and then an after-tour dessert and coffee held in the cemetery administrative building or other convenient location.

Cheap Little Tarts: The name is the draw at this event with multiple vendors. Purchase small tart shells (not the crumb crust type) and fill with various puddings and pie fillings made up from grocery store mixes. The chocolate is most popular and the cherry filling the least. Set your price (\$1 is good) and add a lemonade or iced tea and picnic tables.

Decorative Bowling Pins: Ever wonder what bowling alleys do with the old worn bowling pins? They usually sell them or give them away. Crafters have figured out a variety of ways to decorate bowling pins and repurpose them for additional uses such as for table legs. Bowling alleys, charities, schools, and other organizations have bowling pin decoration contest fundraisers. Contestants are given the bowling pin to decorate and must follow the contest rules, such as decorating for a holiday or specific theme.

Helpful hints:

1. Sand old wooden bowling pins to diminish scratches and nicks from the wear and tear they received. Once they are smooth to the touch, apply a sealant.
2. Coat the bowling pin with a solid color of paint. White and tan are easy to work with and can be the background for a variety of items such as a person, penguin, ghost, or an angel.
3. Paint facial features and clothing on the pin. For example, paint a girl's face wearing a bikini or a comical man wearing a tight t-shirt with his belly button on display. Other ideas include painting city skylines, beaches, mountains, or animals onto the pin. For the non-artistic, you can use decoupage to attach pictures, decals, or stickers.
4. Sign and date the bottom of the bowling pin with a permanent marker. This may make your piece of art more valuable in the future or be a treasured keepsake for your descendants.
5. Apply a sealant over the project and allow it to completely dry.
6. Cut pieces of material to create wings, eyebrows, beaks, or buttons and hot glue onto the pin.
7. Decorate the finished piece by adding a bow tie, pom-poms, hats, or tying a scarf or cape around the neck. Other options include adding real buttons, beads, fur, hair, or ribbon.

One Night Stand: Get talented artists to volunteer to create whimsical and beautiful night stands to donate for your fundraising event. Unusual pieces are the biggest draw. This can be held at a local boutique or wherever there might be lots of people. Participants bid on the chance to take home a one-of-a-kind nightstand and support a good cause!

Donut Eating Contest

This is a fun event to partner with local law enforcement and hold at a local donut shop or at another venue that holds more people. Whoever eats six doughnuts the fastest wins the contest. A donation jar can be placed at the shop entrance with a unit volunteer handing out thank-yous and ALA brochures. T-shirts that advertised the event can also be sold.



Flag Subscription Service: This is a perfect fundraiser for the ALA! Your unit (and post) places flags on subscribers' yards for a specific number of days per year. Set your fees based on how many days the flag will be placed. The subscription cost for 1 year is \$50-\$100. The first year, expect to clear about half of the proceeds after paying for the flags and accessories. Renew subscribers annually. Subsequent years are mostly profit - allowing for the replacement of damaged or worn flags and receptacles. Advertise in local neighborhood papers, "sell" door-to-door, or set up a booth outside the local grocery or at sporting events. Confine your sales to a geographic area that's doable for your group. Split the coverage area and assign 2-4 person teams to each. That way you can get finished quicker and provide back-up coverage when a team member is out of town. Be sure to leave contact information with your subscribers so they can refer friends and neighbors who want to participate. This fundraising project can raise funds and make your participants and supporters feel good.

After subscriptions are sold, purchase the flags, aluminum conduit (for poles) and PVC pipe. That way you only buy what materials you need, although you may wish to allow some extra for last-minute subscribers. The PVC is cut to about 14 inches and put into the ground as a receptacle for the flagpole, which is about 5 feet long. The PVC should be "planted" ahead of time. Be sure to keep a record of specifically where it is located on each property. Make sure the pole and PVC are a reasonably close fit to keep your flag upright. You can add a threaded end on top and cap the PVC when not in use to keep out dirt and rocks. But be sure the top is below lawn mower height to avoid damage. Use a hack saw to cut the poles and PVC to the desired lengths. Drill holes in the pipe to attach the flag with picture hanging wire or other sturdy wire for long wear.

Gas Station Attendant: Ask a local gas station to let you pump customers' gas and wash their windshields. You can either ask for an unspecified fundraising donation or a set amount (you will do better without a set amount). Since most stations are now self-serve, you will be offering the customers a welcome option. It's a win-win situation. It doesn't cost the station a cent and their customers get premium service. You have no upfront cost. The gas stations already have the windshield cleaner, squeegees, and paper towels. You just provide warm bodies and elbow grease.

Gift-Wrapping Service: Get in touch with a store or mall in your area and ask about setting up a gift-wrapping fundraising booth for their customers for Valentine's Day, Mother's Day, Father's Day, and/or Christmas. Just like regular gift-wrapping stations, you can charge different amounts for different levels of wrapping. You will need to invest in boxes, tape, wrapping paper, and bows. You can either accept donations or charge a fee per gift (depending on size, etc.). Usually, the store will let you make announcements advertising your booth over their intercom while you are there gift-wrapping. Make sure you have enough people on hand to staff the booth during times advertised.

Remember that your "Wrap Staff" are representing the American Legion Auxiliary and the cooperating merchant and should act and dress appropriately. Do not waste gift-wrap material by creating "works of art" during down time. Even if you are using scraps, it gives the appearance that you are wasting supplies. Do not tape directly on the box you are wrapping. Some boxes contain collector's items that lose their value if you damage the outside packaging. Be safe, and don't use tape on the box.



Grocery Bagger: A few days per year volunteers could work with a local grocery store to bag and carry groceries for their customers, for tips. Have a coffee can sitting at the end of the checkout and give the volunteers some basic bagging lessons beforehand...no bread on the bottom, eggs on top, etc. It's a great time and the donations are pretty generous. Hand out a flyer to shoppers at the door when they walk in explaining your organization is there to bag and carry groceries free of charge, and if they choose to make a donation, please feel free to drop money in the decorated coffee cans provided at each register.

House Number: For this fundraising idea, paint street numbers on curbs in front of houses. Using a cardboard cutout, paint a dark rectangular background on the curb. After it dries, paint the house number in reflective paint.

Before you start, contact the Licensing and Permit section of your local municipality to see if a permit is required. Ask the local police and/or fire departments if they have any special advice/guidelines regarding the project. Pick a neighborhood with good curbs and canvas the neighborhood one or more weeks ahead, taking orders and collecting payment. Advertise your services by going door-to-door and talking to homeowners. Leave printed flyers on doors of homeowners who are not home.

Specify an initial and rain date when the work will be done. You may wish to give a ten-day period (two weekends) to allow for possible delays. You will need several sets of stencils, masking tape, and black background and reflective spray paint. Work in teams of three – one to sweep the curb, one to paint the background and one to paint the house number. Since you will need to let the background paint dry before applying the house number, you may be able to get by with teams of two, depending on the size of the neighborhood. Have additional order-takers available on “paint day” for the homes you missed previously. Your worker's activity will create additional sales.

“It’s A Girl Thing!”: Sell raffle tickets where the winner will receive a ‘Pamper Me’ packet for a day of relaxation and pampering, with all items being donated by local merchants. Tickets are sold for \$1 each, all of which is profit and with minimal effort! The packet included a body massage, haircut and style, manicure, store gift certificate, dinner for two, and movie passes. Be creative and tailor your fundraising packet to fit your organization and supporters! Prepare a certificate or letter for the winner. Make sure you publicize the donations from the local merchants AND be sure to send them a personal thank you!

Coat Check: Between Thanksgiving and Christmas, work with your local mall management company for an area to have a coat check. Stores in the mall may donate the temporary use of racks to hang coats on and a secured area to leave packages, etc. Hand out a coat check ticket and shoppers can leave their coats, mittens, etc. while they shop. Set a minimum donation for the service. You can raise thousands of dollars with very little upfront cost. The only things to pay for are rolls of tickets that you can buy at any office supply store.

Miniature Golf Tournament: Reserve a miniature golf course for your fundraising event. Have participants ask people to sponsor them per hole they play. Then, run the tournament just like an Iron Man competition except you play on the miniature golf course. Play 100 holes in two hours or as many as you can do in two hours.



Potato Bar:

Bake potatoes and set up like a salad bar with all the fixings. Set price or ask for donations. You can also add salads and desserts donated by unit members. Add some fun by having someone dressed in a Mr. Potato Head costume walking around making sure everyone has everything they need. His parts are Velcro so the little kids can have a blast taking him apart and putting him back together.

Squeegee Day: What we do is ask people at a local drive thru to donate money to have their windshields washed. Have one person at the beginning of the drive thru asking the person if they would like their windshield washed as a donation to your cause. If they say yes, our volunteer places a pamphlet under their windshield wiper. Once they get to the front of the drive thru and they have a pamphlet under their wiper, your team of two washes their windshield and thanks them for their donation. Get the squeegees donated as well as the windshield washer fluid and mix it 50/50 with water. There's very little setup (your pail and pamphlets) and it takes a very small number of people to pull it off.