

Animal-Free Fundraisers

There are countless ways for groups, clubs, schools, and nonprofit organizations to raise money without exploiting animals. Cheap gimmicks like donkey basketball, goldfish giveaways, kiss-a-pig contests, and circuses that use animals are falling by the wayside as progressive groups find humane, innovative ways to raise funds. Here's an A-to-Z listing of fun, easy ways to raise money for your organization.

Amusement Days: Arrange an "Amusement Day" with ring- or penny-toss games, kissing and dunking booths, fortunetellers and weight guessers, puppet shows, and other fun activities.

Annual Sales: Organize a book or clothing sale. Hold the sale at the same time each year, and plan ahead to get a good location. Be sure to publicize the event. If you have storage available, you can collect donations all year.

Auctions: Before the auction, create a list of the auction items and assign a number to each one. Be sure to list and thank the donors. On the day of the auction, charge a reasonable admission fee and allow time before the bidding starts for buyers to view the listed items and decide which ones they would like to bid on. Set up a table near the exit where winning bidders can pay, and enlist volunteers to assist winning bidders with their items.

Bake Sales: They still work. And let's face it—teenagers are always hungry.



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Car Washes: Team up with a local gas station and spend a weekend morning washing cars.

Cashola Nights: Many restaurants offer fundraising opportunities. Ask members of the community to eat at the participating restaurant on the scheduled evening, and the restaurant donates a percentage of its profits that night to your organization.

Celebrity Auctions: Television anchors, radio personalities, elected officials, and other local celebrities may be willing to have a meal with a lucky winner or donate personal items, tours of their stations, etc.

Community Business Support: Some large retailers, such as Barnes & Noble, Whole Foods, and Starbucks, host special days during which 5 percent of their sales are given to a local organization. Ask for details.

Consignment Shops: Ask members of your group to clean out their closets, then take nicer clothing items to sell at a local consignment shop. Many stores give the seller 50 percent of the sales price.

Derby Duck Races: Derby Duck races (using yellow rubber ducks) have been held in more than 200 American cities and a dozen countries. In Grant's Pass, Oregon, three rotary clubs grossed \$133,000 racing 13,000 Derby Ducks. For more information, please go to game-group.com.

Dog Wash Days: Contact a local pet supply store for a nominal donation of dog shampoo, set up a dog-washing station with small kiddie pools, and start washing dogs. You can either charge per dog or request donations. Offer treats for all the dogs, and don't forget about the hungry humans. Make sure that it's warm outside!

Duct Tape Fundraiser: For a few dollars or a free donation from a local hardware store, strips of duct tape can be sold to students so that a brave staff member standing on a stool can be taped to the wall. Several schools have raised funds this way, and it's an exciting moment when the stool is removed and students cheer for their "suspended" teacher.

Entertainment Books: These books—which offer two-for-one deals at restaurants, hotels, movie theaters, and other entertainment venues—have soared in popularity. Your school or group can buy the books at a discounted price from Entertainment.com and then sell them for a profit.

Fashion Shows: Fashion shows are a fundraising staple and attract large crowds. Add a twist by having a theme and encouraging local aspiring designers.

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Flights: Contact a local flight school and arrange for your group to sell discounted or donated tickets for an aerial view of your town.

Fountain Coins: Most shopping malls donate the pennies left in their decorative fountains to community groups. Contact your local mall's management and request the mall's fountain coins. You don't even have to roll them! Just put the coins into a cloth coin sack (provided by your bank), and ask the bank to ship them to the Mutilated Currency Division of the U.S. Mint. Your organization will receive a check in the mail!

Fun Nights: Many bowling alleys, miniature golf courses, and small amusement parks will rent space to groups for an evening of fun. The fee varies, but often, it's what the business would normally make, minus a contribution to your organization. Money from raffles, concessions, and sales (such as T-shirts) goes to the hosting group.

Games Tournaments: Bingo is still a popular moneymaker, but popular games like Scrabble, Yahtzee, and mahjong draw crowds for tournaments too. Charge an entry fee and offer small prizes (donated by area merchants) for the winners. The town of Hebron, Nebraska, held a living chess game to raise money. Donors sponsored a volunteer human "chess piece" for \$100 to \$1,000, and the game was played on large boards. You can set up a similar event in a gym or field.

Garage Sales: People love to go to garage sales! You'll make more money if your goods are clean and well displayed. Tag clothing with size labels, and make sure that prices are clearly marked.

Guess That Baby: Have staff/faculty bring in baby photos. Color-copy and enlarge them, then post them on envelopes that will contain votes and money. People can guess who's who by placing money in the envelopes along with their votes. Winners get prizes.

Kite Parades: If you have access to a large playing field, it would be perfect for a kite parade! Charge an entry fee and give small prizes for the largest kite, the kite with the longest tail, the kite that stays up the longest, the one that flies the highest, etc. Events like these attract local media, so your group can get some publicity too!

Marathons: One of the most profitable fundraising marathons is Pennsylvania State University's annual dance marathon, "THON," which raised almost \$7.5 million in 2009 after more than 700 participants competed for two days of nonstop dancing. Walk-a-thons and bike-a-thons can also be very profitable. Choose a safe route and check with the police, then prepare sponsorship forms. Participants should ask family members, friends, and local businesses to pledge a specific amount (for example, two or three dollars per mile).

Penny Wars: This competition can last a week or two. Provide each classroom teacher with a large bucket. Students place pennies in their homeroom bucket to gain points, and they place nickels, dimes, quarters, and dollar bills in other students' homeroom buckets to subtract points. At the end of each day of competition, administrators tally points and post the results. At the end of the competition, the overall winning classroom is awarded a prize that can be donated by a local restaurant or other business.

Raffles: Successful raffles have good prizes and lots of ticket sellers. On each ticket, print the name of your organization, the date and place of the drawing, and a list of the prizes. Make sure that ticket sellers always have enough tickets on hand. Ask local merchants to donate prizes, or have a 50/50 raffle, meaning that the prize will consist of half the money that you collect. Make sure that you comply with your local solicitation regulations.

Reading Olympics: Have students recruit sponsors to pledge donations for every book they read over the course of one or two months. Encourage local bookstores to participate and offer gift certificates for winners or even matching donations.

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School Competitions: Arrange a publicized event in which students are assigned to teams to compete in fun events like potato-sack races, “crab soccer” tournaments, relay races, and group dance competitions. Assign judges and offer nominations for a “king” and a “queen” of the event. Pennsbury High School in Pennsylvania has held a “Sports Night” for more than 60 years and has had sold-out crowds nearly every year.

School of Rock: Host a “Battle of the Bands” event. Charge a nominal entry fee to participants and an entrance fee to attendees. Offer a prize to the winning band. Be sure to publicize the event.

Service Auctions: Donors offer their time for yard work, housework, dogsitting, car washing, etc. High-end donations might include plumbing or electrical work, house painting, oil changes, etc.

Silent Art Auction: Organize a silent auction using art created by local artists. Include various media like paintings, sculpture, pottery, jewelry, photography, and woodworking. Decide whether you want to charge for admission, depending on how large the desired audience is. Some silent auctions keep things interesting and encourage bidding by not setting an exact end time and periodically removing items from the bidding floor, announcing the winners and replacing the items with new ones. See what works best for you!

Special Skills Classes: Ask members of your organization about their special skills and offer one-time classes. Ideas can include furniture refinishing, basic computing, flower arranging, cake decorating, upholstery, paint stenciling, and basic car maintenance.

Sponsored Athletes: Ask high-school wrestlers, tennis players, and other athletes to recruit sponsors to pledge donations for each of their wins. Your organization can promote games to encourage locals to cheer on the home team and raise much-needed funds at the same time!

Sticker Sales: PETA offers free stickers for schools to sell to students.

Talent Shows: Encourage members of your organization to participate in a fundraising talent show. Charge a nominal entry fee to participants and an entrance fee to attendees. Offer a prize to the winning act. Be sure to publicize the event.



Thrift Shops: Set up a thrift shop in a church or unused garage to provide steady revenue for your activities. You’ll need a staff of volunteers to sort, price, and display items and to take care of the sales and bookkeeping.

Ticket Sales: Some local sports teams will help with your fundraising. The Kalamazoo, Michigan, Wings hockey team has “Fun Raising” tickets for specific games or season-long, open-dated tickets in blocks of 100. “Fun Raising” tickets are discounted to your group so that when you sell them at face value, you get to keep the difference. Check with your local teams.