

FUNDRAISING 101: KEYS TO A SUCCESSFUL CAMPAIGN

Congratulations, you're on your way to having the adventure of a lifetime on a Walking Tree Travel or Smithsonian Student Adventures program! Like anything in life, traveling has significant costs associated with it, but that's nothing that can't be overcome with a bit of planning, brain-power, and dedication.

This fundraising guide covers several different approaches to paying for your program, including financial aid options provided by us. Be sure to look at our Wandering Scholar Scholarship (visit www.thewanderingscholar.org), which provides full scholarships for participants coming from families with household incomes of less than \$40,000. If you would ever like feedback or personal advice on fundraising, you can always email us at info@walkingtree.org, or give us a call at (303) 242-8541.

Fundraising can be tough, but it's an incredibly rewarding experience if it's done with proper planning and the right mindset. Not only will your efforts enable you to make a difference in your host community this summer, but you'll also have a priceless sense of accomplishment that comes with knowing that you made this trip happen, in addition to a new set of skills and an experience in fundraising that happens to look great on a college application. Your approach will be different depending on whether you're working with a group or on your own, but whatever the case, raising money for your tuition is a very do-able and rewarding task. To start off, there are a few things everyone should do, and not do, when embarking on a fundraising campaign:

- **Know your goals.** The first thing you should do is set a target amount. Take the cost of your tuition, add things like vaccinations and insurance, and subtract the amount that you or your parents are already putting towards your program. Don't include things like digital cameras or clothes, only things that are absolutely necessary to make it possible for you to attend your program.
- **Set a schedule.** Break your goal up into weekly fundraising goals and put them on a calendar that you check regularly. Determine which activities you will complete in order to reach these goals.
- **Keep good records.** Keep a running list of people who have donated to you and how much they have donated. This will allow you to keep track of how much you've raised so far and how much you have left. When possible, get people's contact information when they donate so you can send Thank You letters out to them later.
- **Work with a team.** Fundraising is even more fun with more people, so try to involve other people from your school or group who will be traveling with us. The more the merrier!
- **Suggest donation amounts.** People often don't know how much is appropriate to contribute, so take people's backgrounds into account when soliciting donations.
- **Get excited.** Enthusiasm is contagious: let people know how excited you are about going abroad! It's a great conversation starter, and can easily lead into inviting someone to a fundraising event or selling them an item.
- **Be grateful and polite.** When sending letters, emails, or making a phone calls, always end (and begin, where

possible) with a sincere Thank You -- kindness puts people in the mood to be helpful.

- **Don't procrastinate.** Fundraising is not like homework or a science fair project: it absolutely will not get done if you start two weeks before your flight leaves for Costa Rica.
- **Don't be shy.** Fundraising can be uncomfortable for some people, but as long as you approach it with a positive and polite attitude, it will be received kindly and you'll be more successful overall.
- **Don't be pushy.** If you can tell someone is not interested in participating, it's best to drop the subject and thank them for their time.
- **Don't ever miss an opportunity to be grateful.** We can't emphasize this enough. Did your grandma recently send you an envelope of newspaper clippings? Did your neighbor walk your dog for you while you were away? Before (and after) you ask your friends and family for help, find something to thank them for.
- **Never misuse funds.** The funds you raise for this trip are for just that: your trip. You can use them to cover your tuition, airfare, vaccination expenses, insurance, and even donations to the projects you visit, but do not use these donations to get yourself a new camera or a pair of Oakleys, no matter how much you think you may need them in Senegal.
- **Don't give up.** Some people won't want to donate, but don't let that slow you down -- perseverance and a positive attitude are critical components of a successful campaign.

LETTER WRITING TO FAMILY AND FRIENDS

The most important part of fundraising is getting people to understand and connect with you and your cause. Your family and friends already love you, and are the most likely people to donate initially. Reaching out to them is a key first step in fundraising for your program.

1. **Put your list together** – Brainstorm with your parents and draw up a list of people who might be willing to support your project. Your godparents, your parent's close friends and coworkers, that guy who you call your uncle but who's not actually your uncle -- cast your net wide and use this as an opportunity to say hi to people you may not have talked to in a while!
2. **Write letters** – Write a personalized letter to each of the people on your list and send it via snail-mail. This letter should be neat, personable, kind, and positive, NOT pushy, negative or desperate. You don't have to personalize every word, but do include the recipient's name and a customized opening and closing that lets them know you're talking directly to them. You can ask people to write you a check, and assure them that the money will directly fund your travel costs. A popular strategy is to ask for a donation in lieu of a birthday or holiday present. See the sample letters below for an example of this kind of letter.
3. **Follow up emails and phone calls** – After receiving responses from people, call them up and thank them for their contributions. Send emails with a similar message as the above letter to those who have not responded. After a week or two, you can also call people who you still haven't heard back from and remind them about your fundraising efforts.
4. **Thank you's** – Gratitude will get you a long way. A handwritten thank-you letter goes a long way, and the people who have donated once are much more likely to donate twice than anyone else on your list.

GETTING YOUR COMMUNITY INVOLVED

Reaching out to the local community is a very popular and effective way to fundraise. Over the years, people have tried just about everything, and we've put together a short list of some of our favorites.

Here are a couple of ideas to get your cogs turning.

COMMUNITY FUNDRAISING EVENTS

- **Marathons** – You can do this with running, jump-roping, biking, swimming, or whatever you happen to be good at. Get local businesses, friends, or family to sponsor every mile, hour, or lap that you complete of these activities, and invite them to come to the event. Be sure to promote this through school announcements, radio stations, flyers, etc.
- **Coffee House** – Recruit local musicians and performers, get a venue donated, and invite the entire community to come out for a night and enjoy some coffee or tea. Make sure attendees know that the profits from entry fees and refreshments go directly to support community projects in the country you will be visiting. The upside to this is that a lot of the performers will invite their friends and family who will be happy to pay an entrance fee to support a good cause. You can even sell bags of our Coffee and have the money go straight to your tuition!
- **Dress-down Day** – If you go to a school with a strict dress-code, talk with your administration to organize a particular day (say, Friday) where students can pay \$5 ahead of time to wear blue jeans or a t-shirt to school.
- **Penny War** – Pit the classes in your school (Freshmen, Sophomores, Juniors, and Seniors) against each other in a week-long Penny War. Each team has a jar in a main area of the school, and every penny in the jar represents one point. Coins and bills of any other denomination that end up in a jar subtract that many cents from that jar's team. At the end of the week, the team with the most points wins a prize or privilege agreed upon by the administration or donated by a local business.

GETTING LOCAL BUSINESSES INVOLVED

- **Profit-shares** – Many local businesses, as well as branches of larger corporate businesses, will agree to share the profits of an event with your cause. A couple well known examples are Chipotle (www.chipotle.com/email-us#philanthropy) and Whole Foods (<http://www.wholefoodsmarket.com/mission-values/caring-communities/community-giving>). Contact a manager via email (or, better yet, approach him/her in person) and ask if he/she would be willing to host a profit-share that helps offset your group's travel costs. See the sample letter for tips on writing to a local business for support.
- **Raffles** – Run a school-wide raffle with items donated by local businesses. Some stores might donate gift-cards, or coupons from local restaurants for a dinner for two.

CROWD-FUNDING

Platforms like CompassExchange (www.fgscholars.org/compassexchange), IndieGogo (www.indiegogo.com) and Kickstarter (www.kickstarter.com) allow you to make an account online and include a detailed description of your fundraising campaign. On some sites people receive incentives for donating online, which can range from a personal thank-you letter to big-ticket items donated by local businesses. The idea is finding something that you can make or get for free, and that people will pay for in order to support your cause. Higher donations receive better perks. These services are a great way to establish an online presence, and can serve as a landing-site for anyone interested in contributing towards your adventure. Consider printing business cards or flyers with a link

or QR Code for your campaign. A Google search will reveal tons of advice for people who want to start their own online “crowdfunding” campaigns, and you can learn a lot from looking at successful campaigns. This is a great approach for groups and individuals alike.

FUNDRAISING SERVICES

If you're a larger group, there are tons of fundraising services out there that sell you items at wholesale prices, then you keep the difference once you sell them. Make sure to read reviews and consider different options when choosing one of these services. Here are a couple, but try to make sure that you're selling a product that you can tie back to your cause.

- <http://www.school-fundraisers.com/>
- <http://www.schoolfundraisers.net/>
- <http://www.abcfundraising.com/fundraising-ideas/fundraisers-for-small-groups/>

IMPORTANT NOTE: In order for any of the above methods to be successful, you have to be very proactive in getting the word out to people about your cause. Post flyers, advertise through Facebook and Twitter, get your cause read over the morning announcements at school, call your local radio station -- there are tons of creative ways to expand your audience!

SCHOLARSHIPS AND GRANTS

Visit the guidance office, foreign language department, global programs office, or the like at your school and ask about scholarship opportunities. They often keep a catalog on hand with lists of organizations that support student travel and study abroad. Keep your eyes open for combinations of these keywords:

- Teens
- Student Travel
- Scholarships
- Travel Grants
- Culture
- Language
- International
- Immersion
- Essay Contest
- Volunteer
- High School
- Community Service
- Sustainable Development
- Wildlife Monitoring
- Conservation
- Study Abroad

Google searches for the above keywords can also yield some useful results. Here are a few sites that provide travel grants for students, but there are many more out there waiting to be found!

- <http://sytayouthfoundation.org/>
- http://www.myfamilytravels.com/SATW/Teen_travel_writing
- http://www.scholarships4students.com/scholarships_for_high_school_students.htm
- <http://www.fartherfoundation.org/>
- http://www.davidsongifted.org/db/Articles_id_10483.aspx
- <http://www.finaid.org/scholarships/service.phtml>

LOCAL ROOTS ASSISTANCE

We believe very strongly in the value of global citizenship, and want to make our trips as accessible as possible to anyone who wants to explore, learn, and lend a helping hand to others. If you haven't done so already, please browse our fundraising page for more details on all of the below offerings. Walking Tree Travel and Smithsonian Student Adventures offers over \$30,000 per year in financial aid to our participants.

The Wandering Scholar – The Wandering Scholar provides full scholarships for participants coming from families

with household incomes of less than \$40,000. To learn more and apply, visit www.thewanderingscholar.org. **Partial Journalism Fellowships** – Journalism Fellows are responsible for documenting their experiences while abroad with Walking Tree Travel or Smithsonian Student Adventures, and can receive a 5-50% discount on their tuition.

Coffee Fundraiser - We are partnering with Pablo's Coffee who works closely with local groups of coffee farmers in several of our host countries. For each \$20 bag you sell, \$10 goes to supporting Pablo's coffee farmers and \$10 goes towards your tuition.

If you ever want feedback or some personal advice on fundraising, you can always email us at info@walkingtree.org, or give us a call at (303) 242-8541. We love to talk!

WRAPPING UP

Remember to always thank anyone who helped you reach your fundraising goal, even if they only made a very small contribution. After you come back from your program, it might even be nice to send thank you letters and tell them about how much you learned, experienced and helped out as a result of their kindness.

We hope that this guide helps get you thinking about fundraising for your upcoming program. The most important thing is to stick to it, keeping in mind that your efforts will culminate in the experience of a lifetime this summer. If you come up with some new ideas for fundraising that worked well for you, share your experiences with us via email at info@walkingtree.org, and always feel free to contact us if you have any questions.

SAMPLE LETTER TO FRIENDS AND FAMILY

Use this sample letter as an example when writing a letter to friends or family. This is just a guide -- make sure to add personal touches and to customize everything to describe your situation.

Aunt Lily
47474 North Oak Road
Herndon, VA 12345

Monday, January 1st, 2018

Dear Aunt Lily,

I hope all is well with you and the family. Thanks again for the box of cookies you sent for Christmas! Mom, dad and I recently visited Grammy's house for the weekend and wished you were there with us! I'm writing to let you know that I've decided to devote a few weeks of my time this summer to [help people in need/volunteer for a wildlife conservation program]. I also would like to become a fluent Spanish-speaker, and there is no better way to do this than to immerse myself in the language. With these two goals in mind, I went out and found a program in Costa Rica where I'll have the chance to make a positive difference in the lives of others, and at the same time practice my Spanish with fluent speakers.

The organization I'm traveling with is called Walking Tree Travel/ Smithsonian Student Adventures, and their mission is to inspire people like me to become global citizens by taking an active interest in the world around them. I'll be traveling around Costa Rica with a group of students my age, and [living with a host family in a small village where we'll complete a community service project // living at a research camp where I'll be assist researchers] and experience a completely different culture. I chose this program because I believe that spending time in a different country will allow me to meet new people, gain new skills, and explore the opportunities that are open to me during and after college.

I'm really excited to be part of the Walking Tree Travel/ Smithsonian Student Adventures team; there are a limited number of students that participate in these programs every year, and I've already been accepted to the program of my choice in Costa Rica. In order to go on the trip, I have to raise \$_____ to cover the cost of my tuition, airfare, and vaccinations. I am writing to ask if you would be willing to invest in me, since this experience will not only impact a community in need, but will give me a whole new set of skills and perspectives. You can consider this an [early/late birthday/Christmas/Hanukah] gift that I'll enjoy not only this summer, but for the rest of my life.

Thank you, Aunt Lily, for your consideration and for giving me the opportunity to help this community in Costa Rica, as well as the chance to grow as a person. Please feel free to call, email, or write me; it would be really nice to catch up!

Love/Sincerely,

{{SIGN YOUR NAME}}

Johnny
12345 Drury Lane
Rochester, NY 12345
John@yahoo.com
(555) 555-5555

SAMPLE LETTER TO LOCAL BUSINESS

Use this sample letter as an example when writing to solicit donations or propose events to a local business. This is just a guide -- make sure to add personal touches and to customize everything to describe your situation. Think creatively about what the business might have to offer, and try to think about and highlight what you can offer to their business. Could you put their logo on a t-shirt? Could you bring new clients or customers to their business? Will lots of other people hear about their donation to your cause?

Thompson's Candy Store
12345 Live Oak Drive
Waterbury, CT 12345

Monday, January 1st, 2018

Dear Mr. Thompson

My name is John Smith and I'm a student at Local High School. My parents and I have lived in Waterbury for over ten years and are long-time customers of your store. I'm writing to ask for your support in a community service project that I plan to complete this summer. Rather than taking a vacation, I've decided to devote a few weeks of my time to [help people in need//volunteer for a wildlife conservation program]. I went out and found a program in Costa Rica where I'll have the chance to make a positive difference in the lives of others, and at the same time practice my Spanish with fluent speakers.

The organization I'm traveling with is called Walking Tree Travel/ Smithsonian Student Adventures, and their mission is to inspire people to become global citizens by taking an active interest in the world around them. I'll be traveling around Costa Rica with a group of students my age, and [living with a host family in a small village where we'll complete a community service project // living at a research camp where I'll be assisting researchers] and experiencing a completely different culture. I chose this program because I want to help people have access to the same resources and services that we take for granted here in Waterbury, CT.

I'm really excited to be part of the Walking Tree Travel/ Smithsonian Student Adventures team; there are a limited number of students that participate in these programs every year, and I've already been accepted to the program of my choice in Costa Rica. In order to go on the trip, I have to raise \$_____ to cover the cost of my tuition, airfare, and vaccinations. I am writing to ask if you would be willing to invest in me and the development of a community in need. [MAKE A REQUEST OR SUGGESTION HERE -- EXAMPLES: Would you be willing to donate a variety basket of your candy to use as a raffle item to fund this program? // Would you be willing to host a profit-share night to raise money for my program? It would really help me out and I could bring lots of students from my school to your restaurant.]

Thank you, Mr. Thompson, for your consideration and for giving me the opportunity to help this community in Costa Rica. Please call or send me an email if you would be interested in setting something up. Looking forward to working with you.

Best regards,

{SIGN YOUR NAME}

John Smith