

# Fundraising Ideas for Youth Ministry

compiled by Clarissa Maciel

Fundraising can become a full-time job for Directors of Youth Ministry. It is important that you speak with your Pastor about your ministry being supported through the parish budget and set clear goals for the year ahead. However, for large trips and WorkCamps, fundraising can be a good thing for the group of young people that are attending. It helps to create a commitment in the young people and forms a closer-knit community prior to the trip.

Below are some ideas that may or may not work for you. It depends upon where you can fundraise (some parishes forbid marketing outside of Mass) or advertise for the fundraiser. Be sure to speak with your pastor to find out where you can advertise.

If you will be selling items, people are often more generous with items of little or no value or are handmade... for example, people will “donate” \$10 to purchase a nail cross or small craft that is made by the young people.

## **5 Tips for Effective Fundraising** *(adapted from ProjectYM)*

### 1. Have a Clear Vision

Why are you fundraising? It’s easier for people to give when they know why you need the money. What is your goal amount?

### 2. Create Community Buy-In

Share about the different things the teens are doing in ministry. Invite parishioners to come and join and see the activities and events or host one event where you have testimonies from teens. Explain how much it costs to put a teen through a youth ministry event and be honest about how much you need to raise and why.

### 3. It’s about Advocacy not Money

Along with creating community buy-in, let this be more about advocating for your teens and the events they will participate in and how they will grow in their faith and in the end become part of the greater church community. Share what you’ll be able to do with the money you raise rather than just asking for money. For example, sending teens to Diocesan WorkCamp, Steubenville Conferences, Mission Trips, RALLY, BASH, etc.

### 4. Publicize and Promote

Use social media, posters, hand out fliers after Mass, use the bulletin, make announcements. Make a plan and set deadlines for publicizing. Make your first initial push 6 weeks before, and push a little more each week until your final week, push the event as much as you can. Get people excited. Don’t be afraid to ask. Use pictures of previous events to help with promoting.

5. **Respect/Know your Audience, your Team, and Yourself**  
Respect people's time, thoughts, ideas, and comments and know people's strengths, talents, and limitations.

**Letter Writing Campaign-** This is a simple fundraiser where the young people that are involved in the fundraising simply write to ten people (relatives, friends, and sometimes write one to a celebrity) to request donations. The key to a successful letter writing campaign is a well written letter. A strong, meaningful message is sure to take your letters to the next level. Always remember to say, "thank you". Whether they donate or not, the recipients of your letter have taken the time to read it.

**The Knights of Columbus Pancake Breakfast or Letter -** The Knights of Columbus are usually very generous. You can simply write them a letter asking for a donation, or offer to help out with the Pancake breakfast that they do, and take a portion of the profits. There are times where you can organize the event and ask the Knights of Columbus for help. A lot of times, they are very generous with their time.

**Nail Sale –** This fundraiser is excellent for WorkCamp. Create a card with information about why you are fundraising. You can use different color cards to identify the amount to donate (\$1 - \$100). Punch two holes on the side of the card and feed the masonry nail through the holes. You can also spray paint the nails in gold, silver, and bronze to identify the amount to donate (\$5, \$10, \$25).

**Bowl-a-thon -** This is a little more involved, but fun for the young people. You plan to go bowling for a night or a day, and each bowler/young person gets sponsored.(they get a certain amount of money for every pin.)

**Cash Board –** Take 200 envelopes and mark them with the amount of money that people can donate (\$1-\$200). Include a note explaining why how this money will be used and an expression of gratitude for the donation. Go to your local grocery store or hardware store and ask if you can have 2-4 of their wood pallets that they are going to throw away. Since some are so big, you can cut them. Paint them and make them look nice, hammer a few nails on the ends of each board and hang a cord or string from one end to the other. Then take close pins and hang your envelopes. Have these boards available after each Mass for 1-2 weekends with teens available to explain what the money is going to be used for. If this goes well and every envelope is taken you could make up to \$20,100.

**Service Day -** Depending on the size of your group you could do this one all together or split up. These small groups can for one day donate their services for money, either for yard work, babysitting, or another specialty. This will also give the young people an opportunity to do service, maybe even related to the event or trip that you will be attending.

**Paint Night** – Talk to an artist friend that will donate their time and talent to help you create this fun fundraiser. It can be for adults only, moms and daughters, kids only (with parent supervision), or families. Supplies can be pricey, but make sure you look for deals along the way. Include simple snacks and baked goods. You can easily charge \$25-\$50 per person depending on how many people you have and what your demographic is.

**Trivia** – You can hold this in the church hall. It can be family-friendly or adults only. Charge a group fee or individual fee. You can provide a concession stand with pizza, wings, and popcorn and a cash bar. You will need prizes. Ask local businesses for donations. Your main prize should be worth at least 3 times the entry fee of an individual person and you should be able to divide it amongst a team. There are so many things you can do with this event.

**Mulch Sales** – Talk with local mulch company to find out if they are willing to help you with a fundraiser for WorkCamp (they are usually willing to offer contractor pricing). Take orders for mulch in late January, early February. Have a booth setup for 2 weekends after Masses. Offer 3 different pricing options: Pick-up, Deliver, Deliver and Spread (pick-up adds about .75 per bag, delivery adds another \$1 per bag, and spread another \$1). Then in the middle of March you're your order delivered to the church parking lot. Have adult volunteers help deliver orders and have youth attending WorkCamp help with spreading.

**Bingo** – It's not just for retirees! Make it a family night. Include a concession stand and sell snacks, drinks, hamburgers/hotdogs.

**Screen on the Green/Movie Night** – You can do this outside or inside. Tickets can be all-inclusive or you can add a concession stand. Make sure you have the appropriate copyright permissions.

**Easter Egg Hunt** – This is a special occasion that only happens once a year. Children of all ages love to go on safari to find goodie-filled eggs. This is incredibly simple to set up with the help of a few volunteers. Gather your supplies: eggs, treats, baskets and more. On Easter Sunday hide as many eggs as you can throughout the hunting grounds. Charge \$1-\$25 depending on the age of the participant then let them loose to go hunting!

**Flowers** – You can get beautiful and inexpensive flowers in bulk from Trader Joes or Costco. People are always looking for a way to say thank you or I love you. What better way than with flowers. You can sell them on Valentine's day, Mother's Day, Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas.

**Holiday Child Care and Gift Wrapping** - This fundraiser takes a little more time and preparation. You invite parents of children to a day of babysitting at the church. Your young people will plan a fun day for the kids with crafts, games, and other fun activities while parents

go Christmas shopping. It is wise to set an hourly wage plus the cost of dinner for the kids if you hope to make money. The kids and parents can have a great day and you raise money for your trip. When the parents come back, young people offer to wrap the Christmas gifts they bought for donations or a set price.

**Mini-Festival/Carnival** – Inflatables, food, music for several hours on a Saturday afternoon or Sunday after Mass. You can also include some of the following fundraisers to your festivities.

**Fun and silly games people will pay \$.25-\$2 to play (think carnival)** – Ring toss, Rubber Duck Racing, Paper Boat Racing, Pig Races, Balloon Pop, Hoop Shot, Tin Can Toss, Egg Toss/Egg Walk, etc. Pinterest has great ideas.

**Tournaments \$1-\$10 entry fee**– Potato Sack Race, Corn Hole, Kan Jam, Giant Jenga, Ladder Ball, Human Hungry Hippo, Tug of War, Dodgeball etc.

**Face Painting** – Face painting kits are fairly inexpensive and there are sure to be a few members of your church who would love to be the artists.

**Picnic Table/Corn Hole/Adirondack Chairs/Giant Jenga Raffle** - This works great for WorkCamp. Spend a day teaching tool safety to your teens and build any of these in the process. You can raffle them off and sell tickets in advance after Masses.

**Guessing Game** – Have jars filled with different items and have people pay to guess and win a prize (the jar and \$5 gift card). Ex. jelly beans, water balloons (not filled or blown up), M&Ms, buttons, hair ties, marbles, coffee beans, pasta, popcorn kernels, peanuts, paperclips, candy, etc.

**Bake Sale** – Have the teens bake a couple dozen of something and sell the delicious homemade goodies. Ex. cookies, brownies, cupcakes, cake pops, snack mixes, etc.

*Ideas gathered from various Directors of Youth Ministry, Project YM, and Youth Specialties, and compiled by Clarissa Maciel. Clarissa is an Administrative Assistant in the Office of Youth, Campus, and Young Adult Ministries.*