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(ENJOYABLE, RELIABLE, RESOURCEFUL)

WAYS TO RAISE FUNDS

FOR YOUR CHAPTER

BY EARL HOWER

ILLUSTRATIONS BY PETER GROSSHAUSER

This article is the fourth in a series on helping chapters build their membership and become more active conservationists in their communities. The first three articles, which focused on conservation projects, marketing ideas, and ways to attract youth, appeared in the Winter, Spring, and Summer 2008 issues of *Outdoor America*. Electronic reprints are available on our Web site at <http://www.iwla.org/chapters>.

1. TURN TRASH INTO CASH

Recycling programs run by local governments are lacking in many communities, leaving a void for lkes to fill. If you do it right you can make some money at the same time. Some recyclables, like paper and aluminum, have a lucrative cash market. Other items, either donated or found, can be refurbished and sold.

The Southern Maryland Chapter, for instance, maintains a "Bargain Barn." Each Saturday, the members resell used-but-very-usable furniture, appliances, books, toys, and other nick-knacks that they have salvaged from a local landfill.



Across the Chesapeake Bay on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, the Talbot County Chapter collects and recycles tons of paper each year as a major funding source for its community conservation work. Gathering about 150 tons a year, they generate about \$10,000.

Some chapters with shooting facilities recycle fallen bullet brass and mined, spent lead shot and bullets. Some even collect and resell used empty shotgun shell hulls for reloaders. Both can be very profitable ventures.

2. SHOW 'EM WHAT YOU GOT

It's one thing to be an active exhibitor at community festivals, flower and garden shows, hunting and fishing expos, and other outreach events. It's quite another to host your own.

Although time consuming, such events or shows can be real moneymakers. Just ask the Norfolk-Chesapeake (Va.) Chapter, which hosts an annual "Mid-Atlantic Sport and Boat Show" that draws a cash and carry crowd from their community. The chapters cosponsors the event with the local newspaper. They rent the Virginia Beach City's Pavilion to boat dealers, fishing tackle retailers, and guide services from all over the East Coast. The largest concentration of these comes from a 100-mile radius of their annual outdoor product event. The event is so successful that booth space is already sold out for 2009. The chapter uses the profits to fund local on-the-ground conservation projects, college scholarships, and ongoing support of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation.



3. MAY YOUR WISHES BE GRANTED

The national Izaak Walton League has been the beneficiary of many grants from various sources including foundations, government agencies, and endowments. Likewise donations from corporations and individuals have also benefited the League. Chapters with a 501(c)(3) tax exemption status can also seek and receive such grants and donations.

One chapter that has benefited greatly from grant is the York #67 (Pa.) Chapter. For its work in restoring the Codorus Creek as part of the region's Chesapeake Bay Watershed Initiative, the chapter has received more than \$2,000,000 since 1995, mostly from the state Department of Environmental Protection's Growing Greener Grants.

There are plenty of grant dollars out there for worthy conservation efforts. You just need to get organized, follow their procedures, and submit the proper paperwork. With a hope and a prayer, you could get some serious funding.

Another grant source closer to home is the IWLA Endowment.

Outside groups, such as the NRA Foundation and Wildlife Forever, also award grants. Some League chapters partner with local chapters of the National Wild Turkey Federation, Pheasants Forever, Ducks Unlimited, and Whitetails Unlimited in order to bolster their chances of getting a grant.



4. WHIP UP SOME DELECTABLE DELIGHTS

If a chapter has a big kitchen in its clubhouse or access to one, there's a good chance it could make one kind of dough and turn it into another. Pies and other sweet treats are popular fundraising food items. So is bread stuffing for Thanksgiving and submarine sandwiches or hoagies.

The Havana (Ill.) Chapter is famous in its community for its homemade peanut brittle. Members make and sell an average of 3,000 pounds each year. The money they generate pays for the chapter's land lease and insurance, as well as the cost to stock their lake with fish for an annual youth fishing derby that is open to the public. They are hoping that this nutty idea will grow more this year so they can fund many more chapter "kids in the outdoors" projects in the near future.

But you really don't need a full-service kitchen to make tasty sales items. The Wapsiketa Chapter, a group of women in Anamosa, Iowa, pick local wild gooseberries, use donated ingredients, and make pies in their home ovens, which they sell for a sweet profit. The revenues are used to help with the upkeep of a local public park. The chapter also challenges local businesses to get into the act by providing matching funds or additional supplies for this effort.

Any type of food sales operation requires a fair number of reliable volunteers to prepare, package, and distribute the goodies. It pays to have a marketing plan in place and locate potential retail outlets (restaurants, grocery stores, gift shops) by bringing along samples for them to taste.



5. GOING ONCE, GOING TWICE ... SOLD!

Auctions are always fun events. Auction items can include donations from chapter members, friends of the League, and special contributors, including local businesses that donate products and services. Whether live (with an auctioneer and spotters) or silent (with the use of timed bid sheets), auctions may also include a meal, adult beverages, and various activities or entertainment.

The Des Moines (Iowa) Chapter hosts what it calls a “hillbilly auction.” Held quarterly, the chapter auctions off used hunting, fishing, and camping gear, and occasionally wildlife art—usually all donated by chapter members. Most of the proceeds benefit the chapter’s youth activities (youth and student members do most of the work preparing the auction, like collecting and organizing the items). One chapter member, a local auctioneer, even donates his expertise.

The Greater Seattle (Wash.) Chapter takes a slightly different approach when it holds its annual picnic and auction. Besides providing an opportunity for members to celebrate the year’s accomplishments, it is a venue for introducing potential members to the League. The auction contains mostly items donated by area businesses.



6. ARE YOU FEELING LUCKY?

Remember the old saying, “He who dies with the most toys wins!” This always seems to help sell raffle tickets for those typical outdoor “toys” that most Ikes want to own, such as firearms, fishing tackle, camping gear, and watercraft.

Raffles and other games of chance have long been a mainstay of League chapters. For example, the Wapashaw (Minn.) Chapter raises funds for its projects primarily from an annual kayak or canoe raffle. The raffle is so successful that, with just less than three dozen members, the chapter holds an annual river cleanup, removes invasive buckthorn from city parks, sponsors youth outdoor and conservation events, and provides scholarships for conservation students.

Other popular games of chance at chapters include pull tabs, bingo and casino nights, and the ever popular 50-50 cash drawings—usually conducted at membership meetings.

As far as raffles go, many chapters sell tickets to win guns and cash. Some do 30 prizes for 30 days, sometimes with as much as a \$30 price tag per ticket. IWLA Life Membership makes a great raffle prize: it’s worth \$500 and the winner will never pay national dues again.

Be advised that certain restrictions do exist and may vary from state to state, while some local ordinances may also apply. The U.S. Postal Service has further restrictions on how to mail raffle ticket solicitations. IRS regulations and understanding how to conduct these types of fund-raisers without jeopardizing one’s 501(c)(3) nonprofit status are not to be overlooked.



7. IF YOU BUILD IT, THEY WILL BUY IT

Product sales of manufactured and seasonal items made by chapter volunteers have long supported the efforts of many chapters. With little investment in raw materials and labor, chapters can make some serious money.

For example, the Mahaska County (Iowa) Chapter builds birdhouses and bat boxes and sells them not only to its members but through local retailers such as feed and hardware stores. Other chapters sell wood duck nesting boxes and bird feeders. Seasonal items can also be a hit. Christmas wreaths made from evergreen cuttings are a popular fundraiser at several chapters. Unless you have a steady flow of manpower to sell these, take advanced orders or sell them at wholesale prices to local garden centers or other businesses looking to promote a “green” Christmas.

Be sure to put the League’s logo with your chapter’s name and, if applicable, your chapter Web site on the products you sell, identifying the work that your chapter does for the community. This way the buyers know the source of the product, and it further encourages them to support your cause with a repeat purchase or, better yet, by becoming a member.



8. WANTED TO RENT: AWESOME FACILITIES!

Over the years, many League chapters acquire grounds. Next, they build a clubhouse as a place indoors to conduct business and membership meetings and educational events. Some of the clubhouses have kitchens, bathrooms, and dining halls. All of these things make the facility very attractive to outsiders who are looking for a good place to hold a wedding reception, birthday party, family reunion, or other event. And oftentimes they are willing to pay good money to access these facilities for a day.

The Sunshine (S.D.) Chapter has taken advantage of this demand for rental facilities in its community. It rents its clubhouse to various local parties throughout the year, turning a tidy profit. Even other conservation groups, such as Ducks Unlimited and the National Wild Turkey Federation, rent League facilities to hold their meetings because they can’t afford to buy their own.

Facility rentals do involve more bookkeeping for tax purposes and an understanding of zoning obligations, regulatory permits, and other health and safety concerns. Although volunteer driven, part-time employees, managers, cooks, and wait staff may need to be hired. And be sure to have the facility appear at its best for the event. After all, the guests could also be potential members.



9. SERVE UP SOMETHING TASTY

Izaak Walton League chapters with a clubhouse and kitchen or an outdoor barbecue pavilion can host banquets for members, their families, and invited guests to raise funds and attract new members. Given our members' interest in hunting and fishing, such banquets are a great excuse to serve up game.

The Fremont (Neb.) Chapter hosts an annual Mystery Meat Dinner to raise money. Chapter members contribute to the buffet by donating cuts from their hunts, including pheasant, duck, goose, and deer. But the star of the show is the mystery meat, donated by Marv Welander, who has been doing it for more than 30 years. Past meats have included kangaroo, zebra, and elephant. The mystery angle makes for a great social event, and attracts a lot of attention throughout the community. Other chapters host shrimp boils, oyster and bull feasts, fish fries, corn roasts, and even Super Bowl parties with great success. Banquets can be a major part of a chapter's revenue stream, and they allow guests to see and learn about the League's work in their community.

When planning a banquet, be sure to tap your membership for volunteer cooks and cleanup crew. You should also check with local stores to see if they would be willing to donate food or supplies for the event.



10. UTILIZE YOUR CHAPTER'S NATURAL RESOURCES

Chances are a chapter with property has some natural resources that could be used to raise money. Some chapters manage their standing timberlands for saw logs, pulpwood, firewood, and Christmas trees as part of their state forestry department's Forest Stewardship Program. Others participate in the American Tree Farm System (ATFS), a national program that promotes sustaining a thriving forestland for clean water, healthy wildlife habitat, and recreational opportunities—all while harvesting revenue-generating forest products.

The Wayne County (Ohio) Chapter has long sold timber through careful select-cutting and salvaged the tree tops for additional firewood sales. Its operation is certified by the ATFS and supported by free forest management consultation from the Ohio Division of Forestry. The chapter is a recognized member of the Ohio Forestry Association and the Ohio Woodland Owners Associations. A few years ago, the chapter even turned a natural disaster into an opportunity when a tornado swept through the property, blowing down many of the trees. The chapter members cut up the trees and sold off the timber. Now that's resourcefulness.

