



## Fundraising: get creative; the sky is really the limit

*This is the second article in a three-part series about clever fundraising ideas. This time, we'll take a look at how sponsorship has helped schools.*

Last week, we explored giving circles as a feasible fundraising option for school districts (EGA vol. 17 /iss.20).

This week, we'll examine another creative fundraising idea that can be profitable for schools—corporate/community sponsorships.

These days, giving consultants are turning almost any concept into a chance to raise funds, and they're seeing success. Sponsorship seems to be working for districts, according to those few who are trying it out.

When it comes to securing sponsorships, schools may be sitting on a gold mine of fundraising options, since they might sell naming rights for everything from gyms and sports fields to cafeterias and hall corridors.

**Judy Haber**, a senior partner for Canadian-based firm, **Performance Sponsorship Group**, sees sponsorship as a largely untapped source for school fundraising with potential. "Many schools haven't really been thinking about how to best package their opportunities for the corporate sponsor," she said, adding "any company who sells products is interested in advertising."

Haber's company helped secure sponsorships for a private/public partnership in Saskatoon, Canada. The firm reviewed a school district/community project and identified opportunities that included naming rights for two pools, an outdoor sports field, a playground, a walkway and lobby, a cafeteria, and the overall site. Cable provider Shaw Communications Inc. paid \$1.3 million for rights to a facility recreational complex.

The city received some of the money, but the public school board also was allotted a portion and can spend the money for whatever it wants, Haber said.

In New Hampshire, the Bedford Education Foundation is marketing engraved bricks to parents, students, alumni and businesses that line the entrance of a middle and high school. The foundation hopes to raise \$300,000 by selling them at \$100 a piece. There are 8,000 brochures soon to be sent home with students, said foundation Treasurer Brian Lamy, who has informally surveyed the local community and anticipates the bricks will sell out.

"This business plan we have for the foundation could work at a state level," Lamy said. "Voids in the education system {[as with New Hampshire has no income tax] could be filled with private dollars through sponsorship."

Aside from providing actual funds, selling sponsorship opportunities "creates a marketing benefit for Bedford," said foundation Chairman Robert Donahue. "It says we're a town where residents and businesses will provide more support than tax dollars and leaves teachers feeling valued and appreciated."

"This is huge," Haber said of sponsorship opportunities. "Corporate sponsorship will be the model of the future as a funding solution for schools."

You can reach Judy Haber at [jhaber@performancesponsorship.com](mailto:jhaber@performancesponsorship.com)

### Tips to gauge sponsorship potential:

- **Figure out your assets**—Take inventory of what you can market, then price assets for the corporate sector. A sponsorship agency can help price and package opportunities, and identify whom to approach.
- **Develop a list of prospects**—Haber said be careful about whom you approach. Find out what companies would make for the best fit. A good sponsor will not only generate money for you district, but also add value to it. For example, Haber said if Panasonic sponsors your library, in addition to giving you money, the company may donate technology to help students in the library.

\*\* Tips courtesy of **Judy Haber**.



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