

UOW Current Issues

Fundraising

Formal Neighborhood Watch groups often find the need to raise money in order to fund activities and projects in the community. While a fundraising project can be challenging, it can also be fun for the watch group if it is well organized. If your group is ready to take neighborhood watch to the next level here are some creative ideas to explore, but some caution must be taken when beginning any fundraising activities.

Benefits of Fundraising

RAISING MONEY: It is not necessary to have money to run a Neighborhood Watch group. The basics of NW are being aware of the neighborhood and building relations with law enforcement. Holding meetings shouldn't cost a group anything and many groups choose to keep neighborhood watch minimal. It doesn't cost anything to hold meetings in someone's living room, and each neighbor can take turns bringing snacks to a meeting. However, many neighborhood watch groups want to become more active and need a source of funding to carry out projects. Raising money outside of traditional funding methods allows the group to explore neighborhood watch at the next level.

INCREASING AWARENESS: Community members may not be aware there is a NW in the neighborhood. One way to increase awareness (and more importantly, interest) is to make NW sound as interesting as possible. Instead of sending out a flyer just for a NW meeting, include a description of the upcoming neighborhood events, such as a car wash or community clean-up day. The average American is very busy and doesn't want to waste his or her time at a meeting with no purpose. Community members may be willing to donate their time to efforts if they believe there is a focus and it will not be another fruitless meeting.

GETTING PEOPLE INVOLVED: Other than preventing crime in neighborhoods, a great benefit to Neighborhood Watch in general is building relations among community members. Knowing your neighbors is essential to understanding when something is out of order in the neighborhood. Besides holding meetings, organized events will bring people out of their houses to participate. A community clean-up may introduce new neighbors to the rest of the street. Spending time working together on an auction will allow neighbors to connect and recognize what they have in common. Fundraising is also a great way to involve youth in Neighborhood Watch. Participating in community activities gives children and teens a sense of belonging and connection. While attending monthly meetings to discuss stop signs might seem tedious to a 13-year-old, he or she might be excited to plan a car wash for a Saturday afternoon.



Encouraging Partnerships

Fundraising does more than raise money. It builds partnerships between community organizations and Neighborhood Watch groups. Businesses in the community should be included in crime prevention projects. For example go to the local hardware store and ask the manager if the store would be willing to donate rakes for a neighborhood clean-up. Once this partnership is formed, community members will support the business and in turn the business will continue to support neighborhood watch.

Fundraising Tips

1. Don't be afraid to ask: If you are turned down, you are in no worse a position, but people won't donate if they are not asked.
2. Be creative in what you are asking for from individuals and businesses. Instead of just asking for monetary donations, ask for supplies you may need.
3. Have a plan to show potential donors. Be prepared to account for what you are asking others to give accompanied by an explanation of why you need the money.
4. Reach out to the rest of the community with fundraising efforts. Individual businesses will be more inclined to contribute if they realize the whole community will benefit and be aware.
5. Personality goes a long way. Individuals and businesses are more likely to donate if there has been a personal connection.



USAonWatch is the National Face of Neighborhood Watch

Ideas for Neighborhood Fundraisers

In **Pine Bluff, Arkansas**, the city's Neighborhood Watch program sponsored a rummage sale to raise funds for the program. The Pine Bluff Convention Center donated the hall to the Neighborhood Watch program. Funds were raised by renting out spaces to individuals or nonprofits. Then each participant sold items. All contributors were pleased with the results. The city raised funds for neighborhood watch and those renting spaces made some money for themselves. More importantly Neighborhood Watch in Pine Bluff received good press and attention from the community.

Take Caution with Fundraising

While there are many benefits to fundraising, Neighborhood Watch groups must also be careful to obey the law and be wary of dangers which may be in the community.

- When making phone calls remember to respect the privacy of the potential donor. Politely explain the purpose of your call, but if the person is not interested, do not push. A phone solicitation gone wrong may turn a community member off from NW forever!
- Going door to door creates a physical danger. A personal appearance is optimal when asking for support or donations, but be sure several members are working together. If children are involved in door to door fundraising make sure there are a sufficient number of adults to supervise.
- Tax consequences. If your watch group is not a tax exempt 501(c)(3) organization make sure the donor is aware their donations cannot be taken off on their taxes. While some people may be turned off from donating if there is no tax benefit, it is better to be honest than cause tax problems down the road.

San Francisco SAFE, Inc. is having fun with fundraising. The city-wide nonprofit organization works in association with the police department, mayor's office and other city groups. Although San Francisco SAFE receives substantial grants from the city, they also rely on private donations. Recently they held an auction to raise money. The most sought after prize: auctioning off 10 police captains who serve the various districts in the city. It was a fun, social event that served the fundraising purposes of bringing in money, increasing awareness for neighborhood watch, and bringing the community together.

Showcasing classic cars brought money to a local neighborhood watch in **East Knoxville, TN**. The watch group has worked tirelessly over many years to remove illegal activity from their economically challenged neighborhood. Each year the group holds a fundraiser and last summer they brought in classic cars for a show. Using the ticket proceeds from the



UOW Mission

USAonWatch(UOW)-Neighborhood Watch works to enhance, expand, and revitalize watch programs throughout the country. UOW provides information, training, technical support and resources to local law enforcement agencies and citizens about Neighborhood Watch.

event the group buys signs and supplies for the watch group. Plus the watch group has taken neighborhood watch to the next level by helping to repair homes of elderly neighbors and offering renovation financing with money raised from fundraisers.

Other Ideas:

- Car washes
- Auctions
- Rummage Sales
- Awards programs
- Book sales
- Partnerships with businesses

Don't be afraid to create new fundraisers unique to your community—it may be the most successful idea yet!

Additional Resources

<http://www.usa.gov/Business/Nonprofit.shtml>

A website sponsored by the US government which gives tax advice and links to grant opportunities. If your watch group plans on conducting substantial fundraising activities, you might want to consider applying for 501(c)(3) status with the IRS. A link to information from the IRS is on this website.

www.idealists.org/tools/fundraising.html

This website pulls ideas from all over the US and the world on effective fundraising. In addition there is a place to post volunteer opportunities and find tips on fundraising for your grassroots organization.

http://nonprofit.about.com/od/fundraising/Fundraising_Tips_and_Tools.htm

For more ideas about fundraising as well as links to other helpful websites about nonprofit organizations and fundraising.

Note: Always remember to be careful when searching the internet for ideas or when exploring any kind of fundraising activities. This is not intended to be legal advice. Consult the advice of an attorney in your jurisdiction regarding laws affecting your community.



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