

Rural Program Launches Successful Fundraising Plan

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After our CASA program opened in 2002, we recognized very quickly the need for developing a strategic plan that would include diversification of our funding portfolio. Jill Friedman Fixler of JFFixler & Associates was instrumental in working with us to develop our strategic plan. As a result of that process, we decided to implement a fundraising plan that would include an annual gala event. In researching fundraising event ideas, the following six necessary steps became very clear:

1. Develop our fundraising goals—the amount we needed and what those funds would be used for.
2. Create a written fundraising plan that included how much we needed to raise, from what sources and how we would go about it.
3. Estimate how much the fundraising program would cost (postage, printing, facilities, products, food, etc.).
4. Develop a timeline—filling in one year's calendar with specific activities

and identifying who would be responsible for each activity.

5. Identify potential funders/supporters for our event.
6. Evaluate the fundraising plan each year (amount raised, number of new donors, successes, challenges, changes/additions).

We live in a small, relatively rural community. There are many nonprofits seeking funding and support from the relatively few donors who are able to provide it. Part of our fundraising plan was to come up with an event that was different from all of the other local events. We chose the “celebrity serve” dinner format for our first annual fundraiser, held in August 2007. We invited local and state “celebrities” (politicians, doctors, business leaders, etc.) to be servers and tasked them with filling their tables and with doing whatever they saw fit to gather tips to benefit our CASA program. The event also featured a small live auction



Traci Mears and event guest Darth Vader

and silent auction. The theme was *Fragile Glass for Fragile Children*, and we brought in glass art pieces from around the country for our auctions. The success of our first event was phenomenal, with gross proceeds over \$100,000!

After the first annual event, we met to evaluate and determine whether we needed to make any changes to the plan. We felt that the amount of work that went into the celebrity serve was a daunting task to take on every year. We decided to plan something that would serve more as a community awareness event and to alternate the awareness event with the celebrity serve event

GET CONNECTED!

The National CASA Association hosts several websites of interest to anyone who values promoting and supporting quality volunteer advocacy to help assure each child a safe, permanent, nurturing home. Visit the following sites to learn more.

CASAforchildren.org

The National CASA website is one of the strongest resources for recruiting new volunteers and supporters for state and local CASA/GAL programs. The website contains volunteer stories along with information on recruitment, public



relations activities, news and donating to National CASA. The site now also meets the resource needs of CASA program staff and volunteers.

CASAforchildren.org/JudgesPage

This webpage is dedicated to judges who hear child welfare cases. Content is valuable to other child advocates as well.

ShopCASA.org

A broad assortment of support materials and CASA/GAL promotional items is available through the ShopCASA site.



every other year. So for our second event in April 2008, we featured a keynote speaker with a dinner and silent auction. We decided not to include a live auction so as not to detract from the keynote address. This event was also a huge success for us, and the planning and implementation were much easier than for the celebrity serve.

Our third annual event was held in April 2009, and following our fundraising plan we went back to the celebrity serve dinner. We again invited local and state celebrities and actually had so much positive feedback from the 2007 event that people were calling us and asking to be servers! For this year's theme, we decided to have

the dinner be a formal masquerade event. The theme was *Unmasking Child Abuse*, and we brought in masks from around the world. We asked everyone participating in the event to wear a mask and offered masks for sale at check-in for the event. For our table decorations, we partnered with one of the local high school art departments. Their students and faculty made masks that were used on each table and offered for sale by silent auction right at the table. Even with a difficult economy—and in spite of the blizzard that hit us the day of our event—the event was again a huge success.

What we have discovered is that fundraising is a process that combines

common sense, hard work, preparation, commitment and belief in your mission. We also learned that support must be earned and is not an entitlement. It is not only necessary but essential that you carefully cultivate your donors—they can and will become friends of your organization for life if you take the time to build relationships.

Fundraising, especially in a difficult economy, requires building relationships with other agencies and organizations in your community as well as with current and potential donors. If you prepare, work hard and truly believe in your mission and organization, it is possible to cultivate and increase your donors and funding. 🎯

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	50 or more candleholders	\$2.99 each
7032	Clear glass CASA ornament	\$7.95 each
	12 or more ornaments	\$6.95 each

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