

“Cops on Top” Special Olympics

Meeting with the business owner: I suggest that you meet with this person at least 6 months in advance if this is the first time you are having such an event. This will give them adequate time to research any obstacles involved. Many business, though they have local ownership they are bound by national charters or guidelines. During this time you should consider potential dates and project a date for the event.

To make the event even more successful, get the business owner to take some ownership in the success of your event. Ask them for their ideas about making the event successful and how they see this event being pulled off. The owner or manager will be invested if they can tie in some type of promotion with the event. Ask them about any obstacles they know of and how to address these.

During the time with the owner it is important to inquire about their expectation of your activity for the event. Make sure that they have an idea of the details you plan and ask for their input. Tell them that you want people to stand in the drive thru and ask where they want them to stand, is there somewhere they do not want them to stand? If you're going to be on the roof, who can be up there, is it okay for media, etc? Do they have any objection to you advertising for people who donate money to this event? Some companies have agreements with Coke that Pepsi products will not be advertised on their property and visa versa. This may affect how you do fundraising planning for the event.

Who is doing what? Determine who is going to do what for this event. My experience with the “Cops on Top” event is that 3 people or groups of people are required for this event. Each of these people or groups has a specific role in the event and they are crucial to the success of the event. For the “Cops on Top” event to be successful you should delegate a group of people to be on the roof, a drive thru coordinator and drive thru collection volunteers.

The people on the roof are just that. The people on the roof are the icon for this part of the event. They are the ones who the event becomes trademarked after. These are the people who should report to the media about the success of the event. They should stimulate people to come to the location and donate money. I prefer to have these people be there for the entire event. I have heard of events where people change daily, hourly and etc. I don't feel that this collects the same novelty as having a person or group there for the entire event.

The Ground Coordinator is the guy in the shadow. This is the person who works hard to make sure that everything happens right during the event. They deal with issues that may arise during the event, moving supplies, setting up and tearing down any mobile displays (shirts, hats and etc.). This person also offers training to those collection volunteers. The ground coordinator should have a general knowledge of Special Olympics and the Law Enforcement Torch Run and be available to answer questions that

come from citizens. The ground coordinator should have knowledge of what the business owner expects of the people in the drive thru and share this with the collection volunteers who help with this event.

The Collection Volunteer can be any volunteer that you can get to help. I suggest having a schedule for this and only request that people donate 1-2 hours of their time. You will need 3-6 people in the drive thru, depending on the time of day and volume of your location.

I suggest having influential community members in this position. This gives community members a way to help our cause as well as adding identity to our event. I have seen business executives raise several hundred dollars working in the drive thru for 2 hours, just because people come to see, or people know them. It is important to have people who will talk to customers, respectfully, not just someone who will waive at them as they drive by.

I also recommend offering this opportunity to area businesses. I have made this competitive. Give incentive prizes to the businesses that bring the most people. Let them wear their uniforms or business attire and advertise at the same time. Tell the media about it, so they get some recognition for what they are doing. You can fill a drive thru with bank executives, realtors, business folks and several others by advertising their assistance.

This area includes Special Athletes and Teams. I encourage you to have these athletes be a part of your fundraising; you will be surprised with the character that they bring to the event.

Remember that these people are a vital part of this event being successful. The experience that they have helping will determine if they will help you in the future. Schedule times for them to be there so that when they are there they are helping. You don't want too many people there with nothing to do. The ground coordinator should know who has committed to be there and be expecting them to arrive. When they get there the ground coordinator should explain to them with clear directions the expectations of the event. They should get enough information that they can comfortably tell people coming through the drive thru what they are doing in the drive thru. The ground coordinator should be able to give a brief overview of the Torch Run, if the volunteers don't know and supply tools (advice and buckets, etc.) to let them collect money. The ground coordinator should be available to assist with questions regarding the suggested donation for support materials and the destination of donations.

Getting the money with this event comes from many things. General donations of ashtray change, cash donations, purchasing support items, pre-event fundraising, and promotional donations are ways that I have seen be successful.

Make sure that you have a supply and variety of Law Enforcement Torch Run support items available for the event. These items can include calendars, hats, tee-shirts, coins

and any other item you know of. Our event is usually planned early in the year, meaning that the new design for shirts and hats are available, as well and any leftovers from the previous year (for those smaller donations).

We have been very successful with event sponsorship through pre-event fundraising. We offer businesses the opportunity to have their logo displayed on a banner during the event for \$100. We are able to place 10 business logos on each banner, which is provided by a local supplier at a discounted rate. A business can have a solo banner displayed at the event for a \$500 donation. Past events have raised \$3000 to \$4000 with pre-event fundraising. Think of that you have raised \$4000 before the event. Many fundraising events are successful if they only raise that amount.

If you can get businesses to call and donate you will be successful. This can turn into a challenge type situation where businesses are donating and challenging other businesses to make a similar donation. If this happens try to find a way to get the message relayed. I suggest using the media to relay this information, but you should check with the media representative to prior to doing this.

Use the media to help you plan your event. I have found that these guys in the media have seen several fundraisers and they have some pretty good ideas. They tend to know what will work in our community and will tell you about the things that have not worked. I always ask for their ideas about making the events better. I try to get them to buy into the fundraiser and commit to at least coverage of the event. We have gained the support of our local media by involving them not only in this event, but in all of the events that we are a part of. They will provide advertisement of the event prior to it happening and media coverage of the event itself.

Another idea for you to consider is contacting your local cell phone provider. US Cellular has donated 2 to 4 cell phones for the last several years. We were able to use these phones during the event. We have been able to publish the numbers in press releases and these numbers are used in the media, encouraging people to call and make pledges toward our fundraiser. This also provides a method for the media to contact you for news stories. You can report money the event has raised and do live radio spots using the phones.

The thing to remember about fundraising is that many people can raise more money than one person. People who feel ownership in a part of the event give all of their potential to that part. Putting the right people in the area where they can experience ownership is the challenge of an event coordinator. Good luck to you and your event.