



Raising money for a worthwhile cause is easier than you may think! Many of your friends already donate to charities, and if you suggest a charity you feel passionate about, they'll feel passionate about it, too. And they'll be honored that you asked. Here are some creative ideas for how to ask.

Create a personal fundraising webpage!

What easier way to connect with your acquaintances from all over the world than through the internet. A great way to reestablish contact with old friends. Visit <http://www.firstgiving.com/habitat-mc> to get started.

Write It Down

For the less computer-savvy among your friends, a personalized letter is the most basic tool of fundraising, and that's because it works. Use your letter to explain the facts -- that you'll be participating as a builder at the Habitat for Humanity of Montgomery County Build-a-Thon and that you'd like to offer them the opportunity to help you support deserving families in Montgomery County. Explain why this is important to you. Don't forget to include a donation form, and a pre-addressed return envelope.

Work the Neighborhood

There are countless opportunities to raise money within a few miles of your home. Think about it: the coffee shop, the gym, the laundromat, the car wash, the supermarket, the newsstand, the dry cleaner, the video store, the dentist's office, the bar, the deli, the parking lot, the bike shop, the pizza place. You patronize these businesses all the time - ask them to help you out with your fundraising effort.

Get Social

Making contact with as many people as possible will be key to your fundraising. Chances are, your friends and family will be more than happy to be a part of your fundraising campaign, but you'll probably need to go beyond your inner circle.

Throw a party!

Ask everyone who attends to write a check when they enter the front door. Or host an event -- a film screening, a boat cruise, a band night in a local bar. Ask your friends to ask their friends for donations. Then ask their friends to ask their friends.

Bring It to the Office

Your place of work is another opportunity to reach more people, and they're often a captive audience. Let people at work know what you're doing, and enlist their help:

Just ask for money

Your company might be happy to donate to your Build-a-Thon fundraising goal. Then, ask for more -- see if your company has a matching gift program. Send an e-mail to the entire company with a donation form attached.

Timing is Everything

Special circumstances can provide an ideal opportunity to grab a donation.

For example:

Use March and April to suggest a great way to use tax refunds. Birthday coming up? Ask for donations in lieu of presents.

Throw an Olympic sporting Event party

Sell betting squares with 50% of the money going into the pot and 50% towards your fundraising goal. Who knows - maybe the person who wins the pot will graciously choose to donate those winnings towards the goal as well! Do the same with Golden Globes and Oscar parties -- put together a sheet of all the nominees for all categories and get everyone to select who they think will win. You can do this as a party, or even as an office pool.

Get Crafty

Use your creativity, whatever it may be. Everyone has the ability to do something well; sell your product or skill to benefit your fundraising campaign. A few ideas: cookies, lapel pins, knit caps, poems, chili, short stories, tax preparation abilities, photographs, babysitting time, car washing, drawings, language tutoring, personal training, t-shirts, designated driving, dog-walking, errand-running, gardening.

Garage Sale

Know all that stuff that's been hanging out in your garage... in your attic... in your basement? Gather it up and ask your friends to do the same. Put it in your front yard and sell, sell, sell! Put all the money raised toward your fundraising minimum!

Bake Sale

Become Julia Child (and ask your friends to do the same) and host a bake sale. You can even have it in conjunction with your garage sale.

Extra "Change In My Pocket" Box

Create these little boxes for your friends and family and have them place it on their dresser. At the end of the day they can drop that spare change in the box. Before the pledge deadline, you can gather the boxes and count the dough!

Office Fundraising Challenge

Speak with everyone in your office and get them to challenge each other to raise the highest amount. Give the "winner" a prize. Maybe some movie passes? Gift certificate to dinner?

Answering Machine Message

This will alert everyone who calls you at home that you're up to something special! Let them know that you need their support!

Return Address Labels

Print return address labels for your outgoing mail. Print something like, "I'm participating in the Habitat for Habitat of Montgomery County build-a-Thon. Will you sponsor me?" You may want to include a pledge form and a self-addressed envelope to make it really easy for them.

Internet Chat Rooms

Post a message on an Internet chat room. You'd be amazed at how many people you don't even know who will be willing to help you.

Ask your local bartender to donate a portion of one day's tips

Same as the waiters and waitresses. Ask them to donate tips from one night. You can create a sign for the bartender to place on the bar stating that "All tips collected tonight will go directly to 'Joe Builder' who's helping to eliminate substandard housing in Montgomery County." If the patrons see that sign they may be willing to dig a little deeper in their pocket!

Happy Hour party

Invite all your friends (and their friends!) and get them to sign your Habitat T-shirt (the one you'll be wearing as you build.) Charge \$10.00 per signature.

Theme Party/Dinner

Hold a theme party for 10 (or more) of your friends. Donation: \$50.00 per person. Spend no more than \$20.00 per person on the food and you'll have \$300.00 (or more) in donations by the end of the night.

Delegate

Give 10 of your friends 10 donation forms each and ask them to help raise money for you.

Creative Friends

Find a local artist or ask a creative friend if they would donate a piece of art or some jewelry that you could auction off.

House Warming Party

Are you moving anytime soon? If so, ask your friends to make a donation instead of purchasing a gift for your new place.

Color Donation Forms

These can be very eye-catching. Send them in colored envelopes, too. These will stand out among your friends' bills and stuff.

Signing your Correspondence

Get in the habit of signing your note cards and letters with your name and "Build-a-Thon Participant." You'll be surprised at how many people will ask you what that means.

Business Cards

Print up some inexpensive business cards (you can even do it on your own computer). Have all the pertinent information on the card including your name, name of the event, and your address (or PO Box #). Hand these out to everyone you meet!

Doctor / Therapist / Veterinarian / Insurance Agent

Ask him/her to make a check out for you instead of the other way around!

Dentist

Hopefully you won't have to pull teeth to get him/her to help you out a little!

Chiropractor

They've cracked your back. Now ask them to crack open their checkbook and make a pledge.

Yoga Instructor

You've bent over backwards for them ... now it's their turn to do the same for you!

Gym

Ask your gym to place a Pledge Jar at the front desk! Leave a stack of pledge forms at the counter, too.

Hair Salon

Ask your barber or hairdresser to donate \$2.00 of every haircut they complete over one weekend.

Picnics

National Holiday Picnics are a great place to raise some money!

Mow-a-thon

Get your kids involved in this weekend activity. Check ahead of time with all your neighbors and ask them if you can mow their lawn for \$50.00.

Neighbor

Write to all your neighbors on your block (or in your building). Attach a letter stating what you're training for and ask them to make a donation.

Free Rent!

Ask your landlord to donate one-month's rent to the cause! (You never know).

House sit

Friends going out of town for awhile? Maybe they need a warm body to stay in their place in their absence, in exchange for a donation!

Neighborhood Chores

Are you a Mr. or Ms. Fix-it? A lot of your neighbors would probably rather pay you than someone else. Place signs around your neighborhood advertising your services (i.e. watering gardens, cleaning roof gutters, sweeping the driveway, fixing an easy plumbing problem, painting a room, etc.)

Karaoke Night

Who cares if you can't carry a tune. Spend a Friday night at a Karaoke Bar and sing your guts out! Have the announcer tell the crowd that you're singing for pledges!

Talented Friends

Do you have a little piano bar in your neighborhood and a talented piano playing friend? Ask the owner to let you bring some friends in one night for a cocktail and piano night. Charge anyone who attends and let them know that it's a fundraising event for Habitat.

ebay.com

Remember the garage sale idea? How 'bout rounding up the goods from your friends and putting it all in Ebay.com to be auctioned off?

Company Vacation Days

Ask your boss or human resources director if they can swap one of your vacation days for a day's pay.

In memory of...

If you're building in memory of a loved one, include a picture of you with your loved one in your pledge letter, on posters, etc.

Television show finale Party

Remember when Chandler married Monica? Remember when Jerry, George, Elaine and Kramer ended up in jail? How about when Niles and Daphne sped off in an RV on the "Frasier" finale? It'd be fun to gather a big group and friends to tune in to watch a big season or series finale. Of course, charge 'em at the door and put the \$\$\$ toward your fundraising.

Game night

Get out those board games and start playing! Break into teams and let the fun begin.

Host a poker game

Call your serious (or not so serious) card-playin' friends invite them over for poker night.

Bowling Nights

Plan a fun night of bowling at your local lanes. Ask the owner to waive the cost of bowling and you can collect that money and turn it into pledges.

Used book sale

Everyone has books that have been sitting on shelves or in the attic in boxes or in the basement collecting dust. Ask your friends, family and neighbors to donate whatever they've got and set up a little weekend book sale in your front yard. Wear your Habitat t-shirt and put up some signs so people will know where the money is going. Once they know that they may even give you more money!

Curse Jar

C'mon, everyone does it. Now they'll have to pay for it. Place a Curse Jar in your office and whenever someone says a bad word they have to open up their wallet, grab a dollar and put it in the jar.

Dress Down Day

Ask your company to allow an official Build-a-Thon Dress Down Day. For the privilege of dressing down, employees pledge \$20.00 toward the build. Wear your hardhat and tool belt!

Company Grants

Find out if your company offers grants to employees who volunteer their time for charitable causes. If so, you can volunteer your time at the Build-a-Thon office and get paid grant money for the work. You may need a letter from us stating that you'll be volunteering and we'd be happy to make that happen.

Church Bulletin

Place an advertisement in your church bulletin letting the congregation know what you're up to!

Other Parents

If your kids play on soccer leagues or any other sports teams distribute your pledge forms to the other parents at the event.

Build Alongside

Ask a potential donor to build with you on the construction site prior to the Build-a-Thon. They may be more willing to donate once they fully understand what you've committed to doing!

Remind Them

In case you didn't receive an answer the first time you asked ... ask again! Your potential donor may need a little coaxing.

Inspirational Book Marks

Create them and sell them to your friends and family.

Universities and Colleges

Contact your local schools and ask if you can put an advertisement in their school newsletter asking for donations. Some of the organizations may even invite you to make a short presentation.

Computer Screen Savers

Create a Build-a-Thon Screen Saver and send it to everyone in your company! A gentle reminder is a good reminder!

Mechanic

You've given 'em lots of money to work on your car. Now it's time for them to give a little back to you!

Share the Experience

Tell your story. The more you talk about your upcoming adventure, the more people will share in that excitement and want to pledge to you.

Children's Party

Throw on that Barney outfit and get out there! The kids will be having fun as their parents are writing you pledge checks!

Wine and Cheese Party

Host a party at a local restaurant and ask the owner to donate the wine and cheese.

Temporary Tattoos

Swap a temporary tattoo for a pledge.

Do you have a favorite magazine?

Call the editor and ask them to be your sponsor. If you've subscribed to a particular magazine for a long time they may be willing to give something back to you.

Fraternities and Sororities

Contact the National Chapter of your college Fraternity or Sorority and ask them to make a donation.

Alumni Organizations

Call your own college or university and ask them to place an ad in the alumni newsletter asking for donations.