

# SCHOOL FUNDRAISERS CAN BE HEALTHY AND PROFITABLE

Many schools in the U.S. raise funds to pay for supplies and equipment and to supplement school activities. Given the high rates of childhood obesity and children's poor diets, many schools are reconsidering whether selling low-nutrition foods is an appropriate way to raise money. The environment is changing:

- The Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010 includes a provision that food fundraisers meet the Smart Snacks nutrition standards, so healthy fundraisers on campus during the school day should become the norm.
- As a part of their wellness policies, many school districts are setting policies to ensure that schools conduct only healthy fundraisers (47% of schools recommend that schools prohibit unhealthy foods from being sold for fundraising purposes).<sup>1</sup>

Clubs, PTAs, athletic departments, school principals, and others may be reluctant to stop using fundraisers they have been conducting for years. However, many healthy fundraising alternatives are available. Many of these are not only practical, but also can be as or more profitable than unhealthy fundraisings approaches (see next page).

## UNHEALTHY FUNDRAISERS UNDERMINE STUDENT HEALTH



Too many school fundraisers involve the sale of **unhealthy foods**.

Before passage of the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act, a national survey found that nearly 50% of elementary schools, 56% of middle schools, and 67% of high schools sell chocolate candy and high-fat baked goods through fundraisers.<sup>2</sup> Fundraising activities have centered on unhealthy foods, such as bake sales, sales of fast food at school, and doughnut sales. On-campus food-related practices, such as the sale of low-nutrition foods through school fundraisers, are associated with increases in children's body mass index (BMI). One study found that every separate food-related practice that promotes low-nutrition foods in a school is associated with a 10% increase in students' BMI.<sup>3</sup>

Marketing in schools has become **big business**.

Companies view school fundraising as an opportunity to make direct sales now and to cultivate brand loyalty to ensure future sales. Companies want to market their products in schools for a number of reasons, including that school children are a captive audience; schools are relatively uncluttered marketing environments in comparison to other venues, and school-based marketing adds credibility associating a company's name, brands, or products with schools and teachers, which are trusted institutions and role models for children. Companies market products in schools through a variety of fundraising methods, including direct product sales, redemption programs (e.g., Campbell's Labels for Education Program), selling brand name fast food in the cafeteria, and school fundraisers at fast-food restaurants.

Junk-food fundraisers **undermine parents**.

Parents entrust schools with the care of their children during the school day. Selling unhealthy food in schools undermines parental authority and parents' efforts to feed their children healthfully. When parents send their child to school with lunch money, they should not have to worry that their child will buy a doughnut and a sugary drink from a fundraiser instead of buying a balanced school lunch.

Junk-food fundraisers **contradict nutrition education**.

Students should receive consistent messages about health throughout the school day, across all subjects, and in all school venues—from the classroom to the cafeteria to the gymnasium. Selling low-nutrition foods in schools contradicts nutrition education by sending the message that good nutrition is unimportant.<sup>4</sup>

# HEALTHIER FUNDRAISING ALTERNATIVES ABOUND

Instead of this:	Try this:
Sales of foods and beverages of poor nutritional quality through a la carte, vending, or school stores.	Implement USDA's Smart Snacks standards for a la carte, vending, school stores, and fundraisers. Many schools have already implemented nutrition standards for school snacks and beverages and have reported no decrease in revenue. <sup>5</sup>
Bake sales, pizza kits, candy, cookie dough, and doughnut sales. Bake sales may be popular with kids, but many parents dislike bake sales, which require them to purchase ingredients, bake an item to sell, and then give their child money to buy the products for which they have already paid.	Sales of bottled water, calendars, stationery, greeting cards, fruit, holiday decorations and ornaments, jewelry, clothing, first-aid kits, personal care products, plants, flowers, spices, and many more items. Caution: many popular catalogs that sell gift wrap also include chocolates, high-fat, high-sugar baked goods, and other unhealthy foods.
Label redemption programs that include products of poor nutritional quality. Label redemption programs (e.g., Campbell's <i>Labels for Education</i> and General Mills' <i>Box Tops for Education</i> ) are not effective fundraisers. For example, to earn a \$200 laptop computer, a parent would have to purchase 47,400 Campbell's soup products. At \$1.59 per can of soup, students' families would have to spend over \$75,000 on Campbell's products to get a \$200 laptop.	Programs such as grocery store Scrip or gift-card sales, book fairs, cookbook fundraisers, scratch cards, and recycling of clothing, cell phones, and printer cartridges.
Fundraisers at fast-food restaurants. Fast-food restaurant fundraisers 1) market fast-food restaurants to children, 2) are image marketing for restaurants, and 3) drum up business on a slow night. While there are some healthy choices available, the overwhelming majority of choices at most fast-food restaurants are of poor nutritional value. Few fruits, vegetables, or whole grains are available.	Events such as car washes, fun runs, walk-a-thons, bowl-a-thons, golf tournaments, sporting events, and raffles.

# EXAMPLES OF PROFITS FROM HEALTHIER FUNDRAISERS

Profit	School Fundraiser
\$1,000	A school sells 1,440 water bottles with the names/logos of 5 local business sponsors
\$4,500	A walk-a-thon with 100 student, parent, and family member walkers each raising \$50 in sponsorships
\$9,000	110 families buy scratch cards with discounts at local businesses
\$30,000/year	100 school families belong to a grocery store Scrip program

For more information about healthy fundraising, contact the NANA Coalition:

- 202-777-8387
- [nana@cspinet.org](mailto:nana@cspinet.org)
- See report, *Sweet Deals: School Fundraising Can Be Healthy & Profitable*, at: <http://www.cspinet.org/schoolfundraising.pdf>

<sup>1</sup> Bridging the Gap. *School District Wellness Policies: Evaluating Progress and Potential for Improving Children's Health Three Years After the Federal Mandate: School Years 2006–07, 2007–08 and 2008–09*.

<[http://www.bridgingthegapresearch.org/\\_asset/r08bgt/WP\\_2010\\_report.pdf](http://www.bridgingthegapresearch.org/_asset/r08bgt/WP_2010_report.pdf)>.

<sup>2</sup> O'Toole T, Anderson S, Miller C, Guthrie J. "Nutrition Services and Foods and Beverages Available at School: Results from the School Health Policies and Programs Study 2006." *Journal of School Health* 2007, vol. 77, pp.500-521.

<sup>3</sup> Kubik M, Lytle L, Story M. "Schoolwide Practices Are Associated with Body Mass Index in Middle School Students" *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine* 2005, vol. 159, pp. 111-114.

<sup>4</sup> Food and Nutrition Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA); Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS); U.S. Department of Education (DoEd). *Making It Happen! School Nutrition Success Stories*. Alexandria VA: USDA, DHHS, and DoED, 2005.

<sup>5</sup> Pew Health Group and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. *Health Impact Assessment: National Nutrition Standards for Snack and a la Carte Foods and Beverages Sold in Schools*. 2012. Available at: <<http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/reports/2012/06/01/hia-national-nutrition-standards-for-snack-and-a-la-carte-foods-and-beverages-sold-in-schools>>.

