



A Great Idea

fundraising

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Partnering with For-Profits to Raise Money and Awareness

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Summary:

To raise funds for a health initiative, DC Action for Children (DC ACT) collaborated with the national grocery chain Whole Foods and received 5% of a day's proceeds from one DC area store. Facing a short two week timeframe to prepare, DC ACT still managed to put on an effective fundraising event while expanding public awareness about its health campaign. DC ACT plans to develop similar business partnerships to support its advocacy work for children and their families in the District of Columbia.

Background:

DC Action for Children is the lead organization for the District of Columbia's Covering Kids and Families Initiative, part of a national health access initiative funded by The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and also works to coordinate a citywide effort to increase access to health care that will be sustainable beyond the four-year period of the Covering Kids grant. One way to achieve that sustainability is by building beneficial relationships with the business community.

Key Elements:

- **Choosing a corporate partner.** DC ACT found a business partner that was not only well known, but also reflected one of the main messages of its initiative: good health. The grocery chain's focus on nutritious food and promotion of a healthy lifestyle made it an ideal fit. The chain also had a history of working with area charities, and was willing to underwrite some of the publicity costs, e.g., printing posters for display in the store.
- **Connections.** A DC ACT staff member had a friend in Whole Foods' regional headquarters personally committed to improving conditions for children and families. Understanding that business relationships often arise from personal relationships, the organization made good use of this contact.

- **“What’s in it for the business partner?”** Connections don’t seal the deal! DC ACT presented the event to Whole Foods as mutually beneficial, predicting not only heightened awareness of the DC Covering Kids and Families project, but also increased revenues for the grocery store from issue-conscious patrons.
- **Communication.** It is important to ensure direct communication during the planning phase. DC Act recommends identifying one staff member to serve as the lead communicator with the store representative.
- **Choosing a date.** Due to a Whole Foods fiscal year deadline, DC ACT had only a little over two weeks to prepare. If possible, it is best to allow much more planning time in order to engage more traditional media outlets such as local radio stations and community newspapers.
- **Pre-event planning and publicity.** The grocery chain aided publicity efforts by announcing the event on posters in the supermarket for one week prior. DC ACT sent out postcards to current donors living in the area, and set up an information table in the store on the Saturday before the event. DC ACT also sent out announcements on its print and electronic mailing lists.
- **The Day of the Event.** Besides an informational table placed at the entrance of the store and balloons and posters placed in and around the store, DC ACT recruited 10-15 volunteers to inform the neighborhood, locating some near the local subway stop. (They found the volunteers through the local health coalition and in local high school students who needed community-service hours for graduation.) Hourly raffles, with prizes provided by the supermarket, gave shoppers an additional incentive to come in on the day of the event. DC ACT also hired street musicians to play outside for a few hours.



Jed Pittleman, D.C. Action for Kids,
Covering Kids & Families, Project Associate
with a customer who won a 'goody bag'.

Staff Time:

- **Management.** Much of the event was planned and executed by the Covering Kids and Families Director and Project Associate at DC ACT. These activities required about 10% of their time during the two and half weeks prior to the fundraiser. The Executive Director helped publicize the project by informing key personal contacts.
- **Staff.** The Saturday before the event two people staffed a table in the store to encourage people to return on Wednesday. On the day of the event, DC ACT only needed 3-4 people to provide coverage over twelve hours, handing out information, answering questions, and assisting with the raffle. (Several additional DC ACT staff members also provided moral support by attending the event to ensure that it ran smoothly.)

Outcomes:

- DC ACT raised over \$3,700, while expanding public awareness about its health campaign. Though it did not meet DC ACT’s \$5,000 financial goal, the publicity it generated satisfied DC ACT’s expectations.
- The mayor and a number of city council members turned out to shop and show support!
- DC ACT built a strong foundation for a good relationship with the grocery chain, which will allow it to continue to do similar kinds of events in the future.

“This was a great fundraiser and we really enjoyed putting it together. My one piece of advice to anyone who is considering doing a similar project is to **remember to have fun** during the event. It is a very social fundraiser and a great deal of its success is based on staff and volunteer enthusiasm about the cause.” - Kim Bell, DC ACT