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Successful Mission Trip Fundraisers

Group Mission Trips has been offering youth mission trips since 1977. Over the years, we've met thousands of youth leaders who recognize that mission opportunities are a critical part of vibrant youth ministry. And fund-raising is a critical part of mission trips.

But fund-raising ranks right up there with cleaning up after the lock-in on the list of things youth workers don't like. What's more, many youth workers feel poorly equipped to provide good fund-raising activities—even though they appreciate how important they are.

To help you get the most out of your fund-raising efforts, we talked to our youth worker friends and asked them to submit their most successful fund-raising ideas. We've taken what they sent us and compiled them into this handy-dandy fund-raising e-book!

Take a few moments and browse through these ideas. We think you'll find this resource helpful. Who knows...you might even come to enjoy fund-raising! (OK, maybe not, but at least it won't feel like such a burden.)

Group Mission Trips has been offering youth mission trips since 1977. Our purpose is simple. To help young people grow closer to God while serving needy people, in Christ's name. Whether serving domestically or internationally, doing home repair or community service and one-day outreach, mission trips are life changing for youth and adults.

GroupMissionTrips.com
1.800.385.4545

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SALES



Tips from the Pros

Ah, selling stuff—the most common fund-raiser of all. Most teens don't like selling things, and they should know...they've been doing it since elementary school. If you're looking for any old thing to sell, check the ads in GROUP Magazine. But for some interesting and creative stuff to sell check out these offerings.

Pie Sale

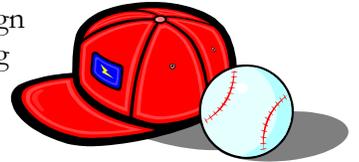
The weekend before Thanksgiving, our youth group takes orders for pies (pumpkin, pecan, creamy peanut butter, rhubarb). We get donations for the ingredients and spend two days making homemade crusts and baking pies. Since the ingredients are all donated, this event is 100 percent profit. We have a large grocery chain reclaim center in our town that generally donates several hundred pounds of flour, sugar, spices, and other ingredients. For any other ingredients we need, we ask for donations.

Jacky D. - Wisconsin

Take Me Out to the Ball Game

The parents of our youth group work a concession stand for Aramark, Inc. during the Astros' baseball season. Aramark pays nonprofit organizations 10 percent of the inventory that Aramark sells at the games. We have a crew of about 20 adults, who sign up for two to three games for a total of six to eight games monthly. During a successful Astros' season, our volunteers raised over \$43,000.

Nancy B. - Texas



Hoagie Sales

Our youth group takes orders for hoagie sandwiches. After the ingredients have been purchased, the youth gather to help put the sandwiches together and then collect the donations. Our group makes about \$5 a hoagie, and the amount of effort is small.

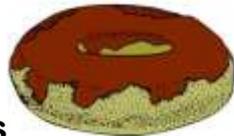
Robert G. - Illinois

Pizza Sale

A pizza fundraising business in our area brings us all the ingredients for making pizzas. We take orders, call them in to the company, and spend a day making pizzas.



Jacky D. - Wisconsin



“Dough”-Nuts

Krispy Kreme sells the donuts to our youth group for \$3 a dozen—we sell them for \$6 a dozen (which is the store price). The company lets us do this once every 60 days, and we easily sell 100 dozen at our Sunday services. It's the easiest \$300 you'll ever make.

Jim A. - Illinois



Tips from the Pros

Auctions, like the ones listed below, are fun ways to raise money. You can see there are different ways to do it and different things to auction. The beauty of an auction for the youth mission trip is you don't limit the amount people will pay, and they're willing to pay a little more since it's for a good cause. See the "Special Events" section, and you'll see ideas for combining an auction with a meal—twice the value!

Community Auction

We raised \$1,500 in an afternoon by auctioning off items that community businesses were glad to give us. Our youth went around to the businesses with fliers explaining what the mission trip was all about. Businesses were so generous! They donated things like a weekend stay at a bed-and-breakfast, yards of bark mulch were delivered—many businesses donated. It was great.

We advertised the auction, held it in the town hall, and people had fun bidding! We got two adults who everyone in the community knows to be the auctioneers, and the kids were runners with the items. Worked great!

Tom W. – Maine



Auction

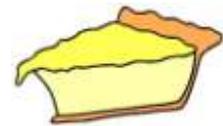
Our group of 10 youth raised \$9,000 at our auction. Each youth submitted at least one idea as his or her gift to be auctioned. We auctioned off babysitting hours, car washing, handmade baby blankets, buckets of Blockbuster essentials, and other items and services. Each young person approached at least five businesses they frequent and asked for either a donation or service that we could auction, and most of the businesses agreed. We also solicited our congregation through letters. We received wonderful gifts and talents from our congregation: weekend and weeklong donations of summer homes, baskets of all types, cake decorating, ice cream cakes, dinner for two, tours, entertainment gift cards, and so on.

This event brought our young people together as a team. They learned how to fund-raise, and they were partners with parents and Christian Ed leaders. It was very successful and we had so much fun.

Nancy S. - Connecticut

Pie Auction

Every spring we bring in a volunteer auctioneer from a local service organization. Initially, we started with only pies, baked by the family of our youth. But the auction has quickly expanded to include other baked goods, quilts, crafts, and personal services (such as lawn mowing and home-cooked meals). We raised just over \$2,000 for the mission trip, and we only had 55 bidders! Competition can be a wonderful thing!



*Daniel S. - Iowa
Sherry and Howard H. - Ontario, Canada*

Dessert Auction

Members and friends donate desserts. We get a variety of cakes, pies, cheesecakes, and desserts. Some of the items even have a theme. The day of the auction, which is right after church, we offer walking tacos for lunch, and the members have time to look over all the items. We raised over \$1,900.

Kate Anderson - Iowa



Food, Glorious Food

We participate in several grocery store fund-raisers—the best we've found in our area is Kroger. Church members buy gift cards for \$5 and then reload them to buy their groceries. Five percent of their purchases go to our youth group. We make about \$500 each month doing this.

Amy E. - Ohio

Taking Stock in Youth

We sell "stocks" to members of our congregation. Congregation members invest in the future of our youth because we are building the leaders of tomorrow. Stocks sell for the following prices: Gold—\$72, Silver—\$42, and Bronze—\$15. In addition to their investment in the youths' future, stockholders receive "dividends" throughout the year. These include sub sandwiches, a car wash, an ice cream social, a pancake breakfast, youth labor, May Basket delivery, and a stockholders' dinner (where stockholders hear about our mission trip for that year). Dividends vary depending on the level of stock purchases.

People who are not stockholders are allowed to participate in all the dividends (except the dinner) for a donation. While there's still a lot of work involved in doing these fund-raisers, we already know upfront how much money we have, and there's no pressure to make a certain amount of money on any event. Our congregation loves our stock sale because they don't feel like they're being hit up each month with a different youth fund-raising project.

Barb M. - Kansas

Donna D. - Illinois

Ray V. - North Carolina

Amy E. - Ohio



Explosive Sales

Our youth group operates a fireworks stand. Laws vary greatly around the country who can sell fireworks, but in our area we make around \$5,000 in a week.

Barb M. - Kansas

Church Garage Sale

Church members donate their items, and the sale is advertised and open to the general public. We set up the items inside the church in a large lobby and multipurpose worship/meeting area, but we don't price anything—the items are all sold through a freewill offering. Rarely do we have any conflict over price. Some people give too much, others give too little, but in the end, it all works out. Any items leftover at the end of the sale



are donated to local organizations like the Salvation Army or homeless agencies. We set the sale up Friday and run the sale Saturday. The youth help with the whole thing. Sales range from \$3,000 to \$4,500.

Bill L.

Simon F. - Maryland

Dan B. - Texas

Rick G.

Cathy C. - Nebraska

Mom's Sale

We rent table-space for people to sell children's articles and mother-to-be stuff. It's like a big garage sale within our church; only those who rent a table sell their stuff and keep the money. We rent 8-foot tables for \$30 and 6-foot tables for \$25, plus we have a large-item room where we charge 10 percent. For admission, we charge \$1 for people 13 years old and older. We start advertising 3 months prior to the sale.



Linda H. - Michigan

Steak Fry, Egg Rolls, and Crab Rangoon

We put on a steak fry for the congregation and community. Tickets are mostly pre-sold, but we allow for some walk-ins. We also sell homemade egg rolls and Crab Rangoon. We pre-sold 100 dozen Crab Rangoon and 80 dozen egg rolls!

Nancy B. - Iowa



Tips from the Pros

The following items are good because they're connected with holidays. This adds value to people, thus bringing you more revenue.

Holiday Shopping Bazaar

We invite 15 to 20 home businesses (like The Pampered Chef™ Tupperware®, Discovery Toys®, PartyLite, and Mary Kay®) to set up booths and sell their products.

They give us a portion of their profits (10 percent to 25 percent), plus some corporate headquarters match what their representatives give. We do this on a Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in our fellowship hall. The youth provide brunch-type food (casseroles, muffins, fruit) and offer the food with a freewill donation basket. We offer door prizes (that the home businesspeople donate) and sell raffle tickets to distribute them. We also have our praise band sing and play music to add to the shopping experience! It's one-stop Christmas shopping with food, music, and fun!

Eva D. - Kansas

Christmas Cookie Tin Sale



Everyone has old Christmas tins lying around the house they're dying to get rid of. Ask people to drop their unwanted tins off at church. Then, the last Saturday before Christmas, have all the youth congregate in your church kitchen with four dozen of their favorite Christmas sweets. Divide up the cookies among the different tins, and cover them tightly with saran wrap. Close the tins and mark them with a price. We usually charge \$3 for small tins, \$6 for medium tins, and \$9 for large tins (depending on how large). On Sunday morning (the last one before Christmas), take the lids off each tin so people can see the goodies in them. Sell the tins throughout the morning. Many people are sick of making baked goods by this time of the season and are looking for last-minute gifts. It's an easy fund-raiser and generates about \$200 for us.

Brenda C. - New York

Mother's Day Flower Sales

We have an arrangement with a local nursery to provide us with potted flowers at cost for Mother's Day. The nursery offers us a variety of colors of geraniums, petunias, and fuchsias in pots or hanging baskets. Flowers are brought in the two weeks before Mother's Day to allow people to see them and pre-order the ones they want. Then the Friday afternoon before Mother's Day, the flowers arrive and we label each plant with the buyer's name. Flowers may be picked up after the labeling is finished (it usually takes an hour), or they can be picked up after worship on Sunday. The remaining flowers are placed in the sanctuary to decorate for Mother's Day. The church bulletin notes whether flowers were given in honor or in memory of a loved mother, grandmother, aunt, sister, and so on. People may donate flowers to the church, which then get delivered to shut-ins who appreciate these lovely flowers. (Note: The Saturday before Mother's Day is a very busy day for nurseries, hence the Friday delivery date. We wanted to accommodate our gracious nursery owners.)



Desiree A. - New York

Simon F. - Maryland

Newspaper Sales

Our church is somewhat rural. The nearest store that sells the Sunday paper is a bit of a drive, so we sell the Sunday paper at church. The local paper drops off the inserts on Friday and the news sections on Sunday. I schedule youth, two months at a time, to sell papers. On Sunday morning, a young person arrives to put the newspapers together, and then another youth sells them throughout the morning. The company charges us \$.25 per paper and doesn't charge us for any papers we don't sell. Most businesses around the area charge \$1.50 per paper, but we charge only \$1.25.

Many people in our congregation have stopped having the paper delivered to their house and buy through us instead. We make about \$30 a week selling 25 to 35 papers. Any unsold papers get picked up on Monday morning; along with the money we owe the newspaper company. This is a very easy fund-raiser that doesn't take much work once you get it going.

Brenda C. - New York

Drive-Through Barbecue



Our group has a drive-through chicken barbecue. Menu: 1/2 chicken, baked potatoes, coleslaw, roll, and brownie. Purchasers don't have to get out of their car! We set up large pits and barbecue the chicken ourselves to save money. The congregation donates potatoes, cabbage, and other food items. The young people make the brownies for dessert.

Teresa B. - New York

Baked Potato Sales

Our group baked potatoes during worship, and afterward the congregation could buy a hot baked potato on a cold winter day. Toppings of butter, sour cream, cheese, bacon bits, broccoli, and chili were available. We also sold bowls of chili. Hint: It's best to scrub the potatoes the day before if you have an early worship service.



Desiree A. - New York

SERVICES



Tips from the Pros

Not only can you sell products, you can sell what your students can do. The positive side is there's little to no overhead or products you have to round up. The negative side is, well, they can be a lot of work. Be that as it may, giving youth the opportunity to serve others in addition to the mission trip is a good thing. And it's good for other people in the congregation and your community to see how great your students are.

Youth for Hire

Our church advertises for odd jobs and yard work, and a coordinator has a list of young people to call for jobs. We earn \$3,000 to \$4,000 a year. One year we moved a used bookstore to a new location.

Simon F. - Maryland

Work for Work?

Beginning in January, we spent almost every Saturday at the homes of church members and friends performing a variety of jobs. We cleaned inside and outside houses, picked up sticks, cleaned out garages, prepared flowerbeds for summer, and did minor construction projects. We raised over \$3,500.

How did we get jobs? By announcing in church (using newsletters, e-mail, presentations, and announcements from the pulpit) that our group wanted to earn money for a mission trip by doing work projects. (We also did “S.O.S.”—Someone Special—projects for senior citizens who couldn’t afford to pay.) We kept a scheduling calendar handy at church on Sundays to schedule our Saturday projects.

An unexpected benefit from doing this fund-raiser was the positive relationships that were created between our youth group and adults in our church who don’t usually “hang out” with students. Church members were pleased that the youth were *earning* money for their mission trip—not just *asking* for it. Also, working alongside the students provided great relationship building and discipleship time.

John W. - Alabama

Parents’ Day Out at Christmas

Our youth spent a Saturday in December babysitting while parents went Christmas shopping for their children. We allowed enough time (9 a.m. to 4 p.m.) for them to shop and then go home and hide or wrap the gifts. It was a fun day. We had games, crafts, movies, and music for the children. Plus the kids and the youth had a great time. Their relationships grew, and parents received a heads-up on who likes to baby-sit.



Holly T. - Kentucky

It's in the Bag

This tradition is a combination of fund-raiser and service project. Each year, the weekend before Thanksgiving, our youth spend the day raking and cleaning yards for shut-ins and disabled persons, who are recommended by members of our congregation, church staff, and the local agency on aging. Depending on the situation, we may or may not notify them that they've been selected. By not notifying everyone, you're able to leave some people off the list if you run short on time. (This was a major mistake we made our first year because we notified everyone of our intent and it took us several weekends to finish.)



We don't charge for this service because our fundraising has already been conducted beforehand. Before the event, all participants recruit sponsors. Sponsors pledge an amount of money for every bag the group fills. The average number of bags we fill for the day with 15 to 20 people working is between 300 and 400 bags. If a person sponsors a penny per bag, then we collect \$3 to \$4. Since most people sponsor a nickel or a dime per bag, the money begins to add up quickly. All of the bags are then taken back to the church and placed in a spot where everyone in the congregation (as well as those driving by) will notice and be reminded of their pledges. The following Sunday, we announce that the leaves are for sale. Typically all the bags are sold in a short period of time.

Paul F. - Arkansas

Rent-a-Youth



Our youth group invited the congregation to sign up to “rent a youth” for any “reasonable” job and at a time that suited them. We indicated that youth should be hired at \$5 to \$10 per hour depending on the job and asked for funds to be paid directly to the youth leader.

Youth were matched to jobs, parents were asked to drive them to the work site, and those hiring were asked to drive the youth home when the job was done. If a job lasted for several hours, we instructed the young people to bring their own drinks and snacks; hirers were asked to provide any equipment needed. Jobs included babysitting, lawn mowing, all kinds of yard work, window cleaning, gutter cleaning, filing, painting, dog walking, and so on.

The program lasted for eight weeks, and work was done after school and on the weekends.

We were overwhelmed by the generosity of the congregation and their pride in our youth, who were actually working instead of expecting a handout. We saw some wonderful friendships formed between youth and older members in the congregation and noticed the sense of pride the youth took in being able to be helpful, as well as earn their mission trip fees.

Janet C. - Kansas



Car Wash With a Perk

As car washes are a staple among fund-raisers and can get a bit old and overused, all it takes is a little extra effort to make them super effective. For example, we sent out coupons in the church bulletin the week before the wash for free air fresheners with each car wash, and we greatly increased the number of cars we washed—as well as our profit. You might also send out coupons for free car vacuuming.

Jason L. - Ohio

Not Your Usual Car Wash

It's sometimes difficult to get people to stop and have their car washed when you're waving signs in the air. So, we had ours on a Sunday morning at church. Youth were placed at the entrances to the church. Each youth had a clipboard, key collector box, and labels to mark the keys.



As people entered the church, youth asked them if they would like to have their car washed while they were in church. Donations only—no specific amount. If they said yes, we would get their keys, tag them (we had a local garage donate the little tags they use when people drop their car off for maintenance), and write their names down on a clipboard, noting where they're parked as well as the color and type of car.

Adult volunteers drove cars around and have them washed—and then returned them to their parking spot. It's important that your youth and volunteers attend a church service that day; otherwise your youth get a message that raising money is more important than attending church.

After the church service was over, people received their keys as they exited the building. Each exit had a donation box. We raised about \$300 from this fund-raiser with a congregation of about 150 (about 3 people to every car).

Brenda C. - New York



Tips from the Pros

We'd like to second what Amy from Michigan writes in this item. You genuinely do get more revenue when you don't set a price for a service, but instead ask for donations.

Ask and You Shall Receive

Our group did several fund-raisers—a car wash being the most successful. However, I have noticed time and time again with fund-raisers that when we set a specific price or fee for a service, we make *less* than if we just *ask* for a donation. You can always give a suggested donation amount, but in general, the "overly generous" donations make up for the "less than fair" ones that you receive.

Amy H. - Michigan

SPECIAL EVENTS



Tips from the Pros

Events that involve the congregation do more than raise money. They help people build relationships, showcase the youth, and give your group a more casual opportunity to explain the value of your mission trip. Plus special events can be a lot of fun...especially if they include food! Yum!

Dinner and Dessert Auction

Our group makes a delicious and inexpensive meal of entrees such as beef tips and chicken cordon bleu with salad, vegetables and bread—a complete meal without dessert. We sell tickets for \$5 each, with a goal of breaking even on the meal. After everyone is finished with the meal, we have a dessert auction. Desserts are displayed on a center table with a description next to them. People at each table pool their resources and bid on the desserts they wish to eat. Desserts are introduced along with the dessert maker. Desserts are donated by people in the congregation, so the competition becomes intense at times as spouses and others begin to bid on desserts made by their loved ones!

*Jacky D. - Wisconsin
Brenda C. - New York*

Chili Cook-Off

We had a Chili Cook-Off at our church. It was easy to do because the congregation did all the work. We announced the cook-off to the congregation, and asked them either to bring a pot of their own chili to be judged or just come to taste everyone else's chili. We chose different categories like spiciest, most original, best vegetarian, and so on.



We charged \$5 to come and taste all the different types of chili and vote for their favorites. The youth group provided cornbread, drinks, and toppings (like cheese and sour cream). Awards were given to the winners (we chose to give out certificates). We also bought some disposable Tupperware and sold containers of leftover chili to go.

The Cook-Off concluded with a Dessert Auction. People brought their homemade cakes, pies, and cookies, and we auctioned them.

*Sara S. - North Carolina
Bill L.*

Talent Show/Auction

Our youth group has an annual Talent Show/Auction. The youth and any interested people from our congregation sing, dance, perform skits, and so on for the program portion of the evening. Afterwards, we auction off bake sale items and services. Examples of auctioned items include casseroles, cakes, pies, and special desserts. Examples of services include yard work, pressure washing of homes, dinners for four, and a fondue dinner for six.

The Talent Show is a big attraction, and over 80 percent of the congregation comes and brings friends and extended family. Our youth group has made \$4,000 during the auction.

*June C.
Rick B. - Maryland*

Time and Talent Auction

We solicited offerings of time and talent from our congregation. People offered things like "a child's birthday party for 10," "aerating and raking your yard," "a weekend at our cabin," "a blueberry pie," "a welcome baby gift basket"...you get the idea. Gifts were then auctioned via either a silent auction or live auction.



The event was held on a Friday night, and to make it a little glamorous for adults, it was "black tie optional". Two of the girls going on the mission trip were auctioneers, and they dressed in evening gowns. The girls had been coached on how to be an auctioneer, as well as some clever ways to "sell" each item.

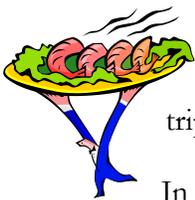
The doors opened at 7 p.m. We served beverages and hors d'oeuvres. The decor was black tablecloths with black top hats, overflowing with silver confetti. From 7 p.m. to 8 p.m., the guests ate, drank, mingled, and bid on the silent auction items placed around the room. At 8 p.m. the live auction started. Each item was listed on a flip chart, so the girls didn't need notes. They flipped the chart, noted the item (which often had a funny picture of it drawn on the page), and started the bidding (the starting bid was at the bottom of the page to prompt them). The silent auction items were on the flip chart, too, and the winners were announced as the girls got to each particular item. After about an hour, we had an intermission. We ended between 9:30 p.m. and 10 p.m...we wanted people to wish it would go on longer, not hope it would be over soon.

The response was overwhelming. People loved buying each other's items and services. The auctioneers were fun, and everyone had a great time. Aside from the money that was raised, the congregation got to know one another better as they exchanged goods and services!

Buddy H. - Idaho

Dinner and Silent Auction/Live Auction

Our young people prepared a dinner (Italian/Mexican/shrimp feast) and charged a flat fee for individuals and for families. We got a local distributor to donate most of the food and ingredients, so the only costs were decorations and drinks. During the dinner, we ran a video slideshow of the previous summer's mission trip so people could see what they're supporting.



In conjunction with the dinner, we held a silent auction. Members of the church and people in the community donated items of value (not rummage-sale items, quality stuff). We had artwork, a week at a summer cottage, cleaning services, computer services, furniture, jewelry, time-share weeks, sports memorabilia, and so on. We found that if you get the right items, you can get some great bids going!

Mike P. - Ohio

Bob S. - Maryland

Joanne W. - Maryland

Spaghetti Dinner

Our group had an All-U-Can-Eat Spaghetti Dinner, which was open to the public and advertised in the paper. All of our dinner supplies were donated by local businesses—sauce, meatballs, noodles, bread, and dessert—so our only cost was the ad and the paper products.



We set up in our fellowship hall using long tables with fabric tablecloths, fresh flowers, and candles for family-style dining, and some small tables for couples. The youth group served, and some of our talented youth played dinner music on the piano. We asked for a \$10 donation per person, \$5 per child under 12.

*Vanessa S. - Maryland
Robert G. - Illinois
Tracie H. - Pennsylvania
Nancy B. - Iowa*



Tips from the Pros

The next couple entries are regularly scheduled events. These do well over time because people in the church remember and look forward to these happening. They don't typically provide a big one-time payoff, but neither do you need to get everyone involved every time.

Wednesday Fellowship Dinner

Our youth group meets every Wednesday from 6:30 p.m. to 8:15 p.m. But, before our youth group meeting, we prepare a home-style meal for our congregation members and their friends. The dinner is open to anyone who wants a good meal for a good price. We charge \$5 for adults, \$2.50 for children under 11, and no charge for children under 2. We serve dinner from 5:30 p.m. to 6:15

p.m. The youth are responsible for helping cook, serve, and clean up. As youth leader, I'm "head" cook and I usually start cooking around 3 p.m.

Our menus vary—baked chicken, spaghetti, meatloaf, soups, chili—basically good, old-fashioned, home-style meals. The dinners have become an opportunity for the youth to raise money, and for our congregation to enjoy fellowship and food. We have families and individuals ranging in age from 2 years old to 90 years old. For each dinner, we average about 50 to 60 persons and earn about \$75.

Vickie L. – Missouri

Monthly Luncheon

Our youth group has monthly luncheons following our church service. As the youth leader, I provide drinks (lemonade, water, and coffee) and dessert (one large cake and cookies), and the parents of the youth take turns hosting the monthly lunches. They usually work in groups of two and provide a variety of food each month. In the past, we've had potato bars, pizza, baked ham, and hot dogs and hamburgers (to name a few). We ask for a freewill offering and usually raise around \$200 to \$300 a month. It's a great fellowship opportunity, and the regularly scheduled event practically runs itself.

Jennie T. – Indiana

Friendship Tea

Mothers of the youth participating in the mission trip put on a Friendship (English) Tea. Members of our congregation and community are invited to attend. The young people help bake and prepare the sandwiches, cookies, and small finger foods. They also set up the tables, fill the teapots, serve the food and tea, perform worship songs, and then clean up afterward.



Three courses of food are served:

- Scones with jam and clotted cream
- Cucumber, salmon, and egg salad sandwiches
- Pretty iced cookies, tiny fairy (cup) cakes, strawberry shortcakes, and heart-shaped puffed pastries with raspberries

The young people/servers dress in white shirts and dark dress pants. We also have a silent auction.

Desiree A. - New York

Let's Not and Say We Did!

Do you cringe when you receive an invitation to a high-priced charity dress-up event? Well, here is an easy fund-raiser geared for the busy folks who don't have the time (or desire) for another fancy event.

We had a "pretend" gala event where tickets and tables were sold to a formal dinner dance that did not exist. Fancy invitations and tickets were printed (a local printer donated them), and sent to church members. The invitations looked very real, but we made it very evident that this was not a real event by using wording such as "You are cordially invited NOT to attend this gala event NOT located at the _____ and NOT held on July 12, 2006," and so on.

People loved being "off the hook" for another event and happily sent in their checks. We charged \$50 per person or \$200 for a table of eight. The "event" was also advertised in the local paper. We set up a free Web page to use as an RSVP site. On the Web page, we provided information about our mission project, goals, photos, and so on and also made it very evident that this is NOT a real event! Depending on your congregation/ mailing list size, this event could net your group thousands of dollars with very little work!

Vanessa S. - Maryland



Dance Marathon

Our group put on a 12-hour dance marathon. Each youth group member brought a maximum of five friends. Each individual raised \$40 to attend. We had about 50 youth, with the limit being 100. Every hour we had a different theme. The dance included a stage with live bands from the youth's friends, downloaded music, a break dance demo, an hour of line dancing with callers and instruction, different themes for different time periods, and disco to contemporary Christian music.

We went into the community for donations of food and door prizes to be given away each hour. There was also a food theme every hour. We decorated the church hall with disco lights, laser lights, mirror balls, and so on. We also had a crash room for those who wanted to take a nap or quiet break.

All the youth from our church had at least one parent or guardian as a chaperone for the entire period from 8 p.m. to 8 a.m. Before the dance, we provided contact forms, release forms, and parent consent forms, which had to be filled out and signed. Also, we had nametags for everyone.

Everyone in attendance won at least one door prize, which ranged from an MP3 player to a Cold Stone Creamery cake coupon. The dance took four months to plan and raised around \$3,800.

Coffee House

Our group has an annual Coffee House. People come and donate money to hear music and have snacks.

June C.

'50s Night

The first Wednesday in September, we turned the church parking lot into a '50s drive-in. Our youth were dressed in '50s attire (some with roller skates!) and served as the waiters and waitresses. Parents grilled hamburgers and hot dogs, and "customers" were given menus to check off what they wanted. A local radio station set up shop on the premises and played '50s music during the evening. We also had hula-hoop and bubble-gum blowing contests, and we gave away inexpensive door prizes (a local Christian bookstore gave us freebie promotional stuff they'd received during the year).



In case of bad weather, we'd have moved the event into the church basement and used a boom box and CDs. The only overhead was buying the little plastic "baskets" which can be reused. Members of the congregation and youth group donated most of the food.

Valerie V. – Iowa



The Family Jewels Are Missing

We wrote an interactive, audience participation mystery titled “The Family Jewels Are Missing.” The event was inexpensive and also provided a way for the congregation to get involved. We asked for donations of sandwiches and goodies and also incorporated “actors” from the congregation. The youth served the food and cleaned up.

The play was held on a regular Friday youth night, and there was no cost to attend. We put a jar near the front door and asked for donations to our mission trip. There was no pressure and no plate was passed. The play was in three acts. Food was served between the acts while the actors mingled with the crowd and asked questions and looked at the clues. The evening lasted between two and three hours, and we raised over \$700.

Sherry and Howard H. - Ontario, Canada

Bible Trivia Night

We enlisted a supreme "collector" of Bible trivia who made up about 45 questions. Then we recruited teams for a Bible trivia night. The more teams the better. Our church's council had a team, the boys' club had a couple of teams, parents had a team...we ended up with 15 to 20 teams. Each team paid a \$25 fee to enter.



Teams could have as many people as they liked, but only four people could play at a time (we let people switch in and out about every five questions). The moderator read the question, and each team had a small dry-erase board or chalkboard slate to write down its answer. After about 15 seconds, the moderator called "Time," read the correct answer, and then the teams with the correct answer held their slates in the air until the scorekeeper recorded them.



Tips from the Pros

While a Bible Trivia Night sounds like a lot of fun to us, we'd suggest your pastor or youth leader take a few moments to share how the Bible isn't trivial but a vital love letter to us from God. That way you get the fun game plus a brief message.

We gave away small gift certificates to the winning team. One thing we learned: Be sure your answers aren't vague, and have a Bible reference ready for the correct answer—people will quibble over the smallest details! Appoint your pastor or a similar authority to be the final judge.

Valerie V. – Iowa

Reporting Sunday

Reporting Sunday is a Sunday where youth talk about their mission experiences. We have a great slide show; youth lead worship, and present great information in the church bulletin about the present year's mission trip. As the pastor, I emcee the worship time, filling in gaps. The theme of the worship is "thank you for making a mission trip possible."

We "sell stock" or ask for donations of support for the mission team. Reporting Sunday allows members of the congregation to feel as if they're a part of the team, support youth, and directly affect the lives of the youth.

Dan S. – Minnesota



Tips from the Pros

Special events that revolve around holidays, like the following, tend to raise the value of the event for people, thereby increasing your chances of financial success. They also help the congregation celebrate holidays in fun ways.

Caution: too many fund-raisers during holidays take you and your students away from your families during these times.

Lenten Dinners

We provided Lenten dinners, prepared and served by our young people.

Barry G. – Maryland

Lenten Fish and Crab Cake Fry

Each Friday during Lent our young people (and their parents) fry up fish and crab cakes (baked servings are also offered).

They also prepare fries with coleslaw or macaroni and cheese. In addition we offer a children's menu including

peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, macaroni and cheese, and fish sticks. The cost is usually \$8 for the fish and \$12 for the crab cakes, and the kids' menu is \$5.

Bob S. - Maryland



Tips from the Pros

If you advertise Christmas-time events like this for children as a chance for parents to get out and do some Christmas shopping, you increase the value.

Lunch With Santa

On the second Saturday and Sunday in December, our mission trip participants made a lunch of smiley fries (yes, round fries with a smile on them—available at most grocery stores), hot dogs, macaroni and cheese, and ice cream. The lunch also included a picture with Santa, and a Santa's Workshop for kids to purchase items for mom and dad. In addition, we offered face painting—anything fun for children.

Bob S. – Maryland

Mother's Day Brunch

About a month before Mother's Day, our mission trip participants began to sell tickets for a Mother's Day Brunch. We set up a portion of our church hall as a formal dining room complete with tablecloths, napkins, silverware, and so on. The young people served as waiters, and we offered a full service buffet brunch including made-to-order omelets prepared by the young people (with adult supervision of course). We charged \$20 per person for this event.

Bob S. - Maryland

Valentine Sweetheart Dinner Dance

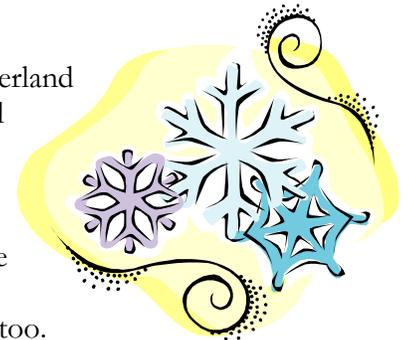
Every February we host a dinner for the congregation and friends. The youth decorate the fellowship hall in a Valentine theme. A photographer takes a picture of each couple and gives it to them as a memento. Each couple is greeted at the door by a hostess and seated at their table. Dinner is served by the youth (with a lot of help from other church members, as far as planning and preparing food). After the meal is music and dancing. We have a set ticket price, but a lot of people give over and above what we ask. This event has always been a big hit, and the youth love to do it.



Les L. - Tennessee

Winter Wonderland Dance

Our youth hosted an adult prom in February and titled it "Winter Wonderland Dance." We advertised it as an opportunity to return to your high school days and to invite your sweetheart" to the prom. The youth served as DJs, playing music from the 1940s to the 1980s. They decorated the fellowship hall with all kinds of winter decorations. We chose the theme because we were able to get all kinds of winter decorations on sale in the Christmas clearances. We hung snowflake ornaments from the ceiling and decorated tables with blue and silver. We had lots of candles too. Tickets were sold in advance. We also provided a snack buffet with food such as chips, cheese and crackers, little hot dogs, small sub sandwiches, and drinks.



In addition to the dancing, guests had the opportunity to have their prom picture taken. We set up a backdrop and had an amateur photographer take "prom" couple pictures. Guests ordered the pictures they wanted, and we delivered them the following Sunday. We also had ballots for everyone to vote on the prom "king and queen."

We tried to stay as true as possible to an actual high school prom with one exception—we provided childcare at no extra cost. The adults enjoyed the dancing, the fellowship, and dressing up. (Some even came in tuxes and long dresses, but most came casually dressed.) This event was such a hit that we have been requested to repeat it again this year.

Vickie L. - Missouri



Football Rivalry Competition

Our Football Rivalry Competition is based on the craziness of the Virginia Tech and University of Virginia football rivalry. Though the games are sometimes lopsided, this competition is fierce and raises lots of money for our mission trip experience. Here's how it works:

Several weeks before the big game, we put out plastic containers for each football team. We add a container for "don't care" or "designate your own team" just for equality's sake. Each dollar you put in your team's container counts as one vote (for example, \$300 equals 300 votes). The actual points scored in the game are added to each team's total (if 27 points are scored by your team, and there is 300 points in the container, the total for your team would be 327).

The winning fans get a prize: They get to see the other group of fans put on jerseys, sing fight songs, lead cheers, or put on tattoos of the opposite (winning) team, which, by the way, may not have won the actual football game. We generally get three to five fans from each team willing to commit to being present and performing the necessary task of homage to the other team. Use your imagination to come up with different ideas of how to pay homage to the winning team, but make sure it stays fun and not humiliating.

The winning fans are revealed after church (keeping the winning team a secret) so we don't impinge on the dignity of the church service. We take pictures, too. All in great fun!

We find that every couple of years works best for us (not every year). We raised \$1,000 (in a church of 350 members) through this simple, but fun, fund-raiser.

Doug P. - Virginia

Fall Scenes



For \$30 our mission team delivers (and later removes) the following: three bales of straw stacked in a corner design (two bales on the bottom and one across those two on the top to form a corner setting), four pumpkins set around on the straw, and a bunch of cornstalks tied with bright orange ribbon set in the middle of the bales.

We deliver these before Halloween and remove them before Thanksgiving.

Nancy B. - Iowa



Tips from the Pros

While all the events offered in this section are great, this next one really caught our attention. It does so many good things: teenagers are serving to earn their money in a fun way, children have a great time and see how much fun the big kids are, parents love it, and it's sure to impress the congregation about how wonderful the teenagers are. Our suggestion is to add a similar event where teenage guys host an overnight for boys.

Princess Night

The high school girls of our youth group dreamed up Princess Night. They invited all the little princesses of the congregation ages 4 to 8 to a girl-only sleepover at the church (friends were welcome, too). Each princess was told to bring her favorite dress-up, a friend (doll or stuffed animal), sleeping bag, and so on. Parents signed permission forms and provided emergency contact info.



The high school girls brought all the supplies for the activities, which included movies (little princess appropriate, like *Sleeping Beauty* or *The Little Mermaid*), manicures, makeup, dress-ups and fashion show (dolls and animals as audience), dancing, tea party, pillow fight, and pancake breakfast. None of the girls cried or wanted to go home—amazing! We charged only \$10 per girl, but most gave \$20. It was a huge success and parents are bugging us for another one!

I recommend advertising this event up to a month in advance so parents can make plans for their night out. We had one teen “queen” for every four girls. Also plan on a few responsible adults spending the night, just in case.

Vanessa S. - Maryland

Sundries and Other Stuff



Tips from the Pros

There are more ways to raise money than selling stuff and hosting events. It's good to have a variety of projects to raise funds, because people respond to different methods. Some of these are so unique and wonderful that merely announcing you're doing it at church will bring a smile to people's faces and remind them of the importance of supporting the youth mission trip.

MissionFast28

Last year we tried something that is kind of a spin-off of the 30-Hour Famine, but it's focused on our teen missions. We call it MissionFast28.

Students received sponsorship envelopes and collected sponsorships for their 28-hour fast to raise awareness of need and poverty, and to support the youth group doing its part to make a difference.

We held the fast the weekend of Palm Sunday, right before Easter. Over the weekend, the students learned about hunger and poverty issues. Our team served the church community as

it prepared the church building for Holy Week. And, as it was the start of the Easter season, we had our own time to come together and walk the steps Jesus walked—what a powerful time!

The weekend ended by sharing a light meal with parents to break our fast and discuss what we experienced.

Meg H. – Massachusetts



Dunkin' Willie

"Dunkin' Willie" was the name of the dunking machine we rented. But it should have been named "Dunkin' Pastor" because ultimately, that's what happened.

Our church has four picnics during the summer. At one of them, we decided to rent a dunking booth as a fund-raiser for the youth mission trip. At first, the idea was to have the youth leaders and some of the youth volunteers sit in the tank and charge \$1 to try and dunk the dunkee. However, our activity director and pastor came up with a better idea.

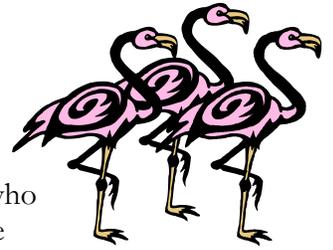
For \$300 the pastor would get in and allow one dunk. Then, after that, any additional dunks would be allowed for an additional \$50. They passed a bag around to collect money, and over \$700 was collected, just to dunk the pastor! An additional \$200 was collected as donations and for the others who were dunked.

It was the first fund-raiser our church has ever done, and it was a huge success! Plus, it was a lot of fun and brought together people of different ages for the afternoon.

Georgia H. - Pennsylvania

The Pink Flamingos

For one month each year, pink flamingos land in the lawns of church members! The flamingos are made of plastic (available at lawn and garden stores), and about 20 get stuck into a person's yard. Members can purchase flamingo insurance to prevent the flamingos from landing in their yard. Those members who decide not to purchase the insurance are subject to a flamingo landing. When the flamingos land in a church member's yard, they must call the church to have them picked up by a youth. The church member then gets to tell the church office where the flamingos will land next. The youth are responsible for picking the flamingos up and dropping them off.



Dee E. - Minnesota

Restaurant Hosts

Our church is small, so raising money for a big trip each year would be difficult if we didn't go outside the church walls. Along with the usual car washes, yard sales, and spaghetti lunches, we go out into the community and solicit sponsors from local businesses.

We have found several family-owned restaurants very willing to let us "host" an evening shift or a Saturday morning breakfast shift. They get additional customers, and we get all the tips plus a portion of the profits. As an extra bonus, our church gets *lots* of visibility from patrons.

We have a wonderful Christian radio station that gives away free airtime for churches to advertise fund-raisers and special events, so we make a commercial before our scheduled "shift" to let the community know.

Jennyfer N. - Florida



Fill the Soft Drink Can

On a Sunday; usually in January or February, the youth give an unopened can of soft drink to each person as they leave the service. We place a sticker on each can that lets people know they may enjoy the beverage. However, they're asked to wash out the can and fill it with change...especially paper money and checks. We ask them to return the can in a couple weeks.

This is an easy fund-raiser. All you need to do is buy the soft drinks beforehand (make sure you have different kinds, because even though it's a fund-raiser, people won't take a can unless it's something they like). The youth are more than happy to drink the leftovers.

Mike P. - Wisconsin

Go Greek

This year our group is enlisting the aid of local sororities and fraternities to help us raise money. They get the service hours—we get money for our trip, and the teenagers get to see a part of campus life that's making a positive impact on the community.

Jennyfer N. - Florida



Tips from the Pros

This suggestion is perfect even if you don't tie it into receiving donations (but providing the opportunity for people to give makes it even better). Any way you can make the youth more visible in the congregation is a good thing.

Mission Bulletin Board

We put up a bulletin board with pictures of each of the mission team members, along with a map of where we're going. We create coupons for baked goods, cases of water, soda, sport drinks, and differing quantities of gas (figuring from 2 gallons to

300 gallons). Congregation members take the coupons and offered a donation or in-kind gift.

Barry G. - Maryland



Tips from the Pros

The following suggestions are different variations on the tried and true method of simply asking people for help directly. Letters are touching to grandparents and friends who love reading about the mission trip the student is going on. And postcards from the student during the trip are valued highly. This is an excellent way to unite generations in the congregation through a personal touch.

Letter Campaign

Our campaign began with an overnight lock-in. During the lock-in, we photographed each youth member with a digital camera, printed and signed letters, addressed envelopes, and then had fun the rest of the evening.



At the lock-in, we took the church directory, divided the members into groups of 10, and gave each youth group member a list of 10 people. We created a form letter. Each young person attached their photograph to letters addressed to 10 church members, asking for a monthly donation of at least \$10.

Some members sent in one sum of money, others sent in monthly checks, and some did not respond at all. Midyear, we sent another letter to the church members thanking them and letting them know we were close to our targeted amount.

We were also able to communicate with members who did not come to church often or who had retired and moved but still were a part of our church body. This kept us from taxing our weekly church members; many of who were youth group parents.

We raised all the money we needed, plus some seed money to start this year's fund-raising.

Lisa G. M. and Joe E. - Ohio

Weezie H. - New Jersey

Thank You Letters From Jesus (and Me)

Our group sends mission letters to potential contributors. We call this project “Thank You From Jesus (and Me).” This fund-raiser gives families and congregation the opportunity to participate...and allows them to share in our story. Sending mission letters introduces many of our young people to the idea that asking in *God’s* name is a blessing for everyone, and helps our youth understand that mission happens on many levels. During our mission trip, each young person sends all their contributors a postcard, sharing stories and saying thanks. We also invite each contributor to an appreciation event after we return home. This gives our young people the opportunity to share their stories, pictures, and newfound love of God with those who supported their mission trip.

We raise most of our needed funds with this one fund-raiser. The following are some tools to help young people write their mission letters. **Please take the time to make these words your own and compose a letter that speaks to those you’re asking to support you.**



*Sandy R. - Colorado
Judy T. - Pennsylvania*

Letter to mission trip participants

Each year we raise the majority of our mission trip funds through donations. The major source of these donations is your family and friends. Please take the time to write to anyone who might be interested in helping you help others. You’re going out into the larger community in response to your call to mission.

Enclosed you’ll find a list of suggested ideas to include in your letter. Please feel free to use any of these ideas to create your own letter. If you choose to use the ideas in this list, please rewrite them in your own words.

Good luck on your fundraising efforts and please let any team members know if you need any assistance.

Need help? Need information? Call _____ at -- _____
Or e-mail the youth ministries office at _____

Thoughts to include in the letter

- Mention that any donations made to the church are tax deductible (unless it’s your immediate family). Checks should be payable to _____, and mailed to _____. Make sure YOUR name is written on the “memo” line. Any donation, no matter how small is appreciated.
- Prayer is as important for the success of your mission trip as monetary donations. Ask the people you’re writing to remember you and the rest of the team in their prayers, whether or not they can financially support you. Commit to sending some sort of mail during your mission trip to the

people who support you. As you've asked them to pray for you, tell them you'll be praying for them also.

- Explain what your mission trip is all about. Phrases like service, making new friends, being part of a bigger group and working with your fellow Christians are thoughts to share.
- Tell how much the trip will cost you, and what the fees go to: room and board during the week in _____, transportation to and from camp, and supplies used for your service. Let them know they can get a copy of our financial statement if they want one.
- If you've gone on a mission trip before, tell about your last experience. Mention what kind of work you did. Mention the single event that was most outstanding for you.
- This phrase explains who we are and what we do "The only hands that Christ has are ours..."
- Ask them to think make their donation as soon as possible, as spots fill quickly and we must get our money in to reserve our spaces.
- A mission trip is one of the most memorable experiences you'll have during your High School years. You **MAKE A DIFFERENCE** in the world during your mission trip.
- You go on your mission trip representing the _____ community as well as all those who support you. You represent the larger _____ community also. For people who can't do this service themselves, you go as their representative.
- We'll serve people who need our help in _____. We'll be gone from ____ to _____. We'll share the marvel of God's creation through each other, the service, the travel, the people we encounter, and the Christian growth experiences. We're each given the opportunity to see the love of God at work in ourselves as well as others.

Loose Change Collection

About two months before our mission trip, we put out a large vase and a "thermometer" drawn on a piece of poster board. We tell the congregation our goal is to collect \$800 in loose change to pay for gas. Members dump change in each week, and we take it to the bank, marking the thermometer so people can see how close we are to the goal. This is an incredibly easy no overhead fund-raiser that gets everyone involved.



*Valerie V. – Iowa
Brian S. - Virginia*



Tips from the Pros

The following suggestion is great because some people prefer giving items instead of money. This gives them a meaningful way to support the trip, and it makes for a great visual in the church. In our experience you tend to receive way more than you ask for. We suggest making a list of who's getting what so you can make follow-up calls to people who don't deliver items on time, and you can post a large thank-you poster, naming each person, on the ladder afterwards.

Tool Ladder

About six weeks before our mission trip, we compile a list of tools we need. We then make tool tags (similar to tags on a Christmas tree for gifts for the less fortunate) and put them on a stepladder. We make the tags colorful, and each tag asks for an item—it could be a roller cover, a hammer, or even a 12-foot ladder—and we include information on when the item needs to be brought to the church.

In addition, we make "prayer tags" for each mission trip participant, requesting prayer for that person. And, on the back of the tag, we provide information on how to send a greeting to that person during the mission trip.

Marcia F. - Connecticut

Grocery Store Discounts

Grocery stores have programs for discounts on products for their customers. These discounts will either go back to the store or can be given to charities or schools. Set up an account for your youth group. You'll need your church's tax identification number. After setting up the account, let everyone know about it! Hand out detailed directions about how people can get their card number linked to the account. (Hint: The best way to give detailed directions is to do it yourself and take detailed notes as you link your card to the account.) Some stores require a minimum number of people who have their cards linked to the account in order for your group to be able to obtain funds.



Brian S. - Virginia



Recycling Cell Phones and Ink Cartridges

Some businesses give money for recycled items. Aluminum cans were once popular to recycle. Now the craze is used cell phones and ink cartridges. Some businesses will send fliers and boxes with free shipping for you to return recycled items. This is an easy way to raise money and help the environment. However, watch for a required minimum. Some businesses won't take your items for recycling unless you send 200 to 300 items.

Brian S. - Virginia



Cookbook

Ask church members to submit their favorite recipes by a specified date. Choose a date that will give plenty of time to create, proof, and publish the book. After you compile the recipes, ask several people to proofread the finished product. Then publish the cookbook through a publishing company or at home.

Note: To help pay for the cost of printing the cookbooks, go to local area businesses and sell ad space in the back of the cookbook. Take a letter on church letterhead, with the pastor's signature, indicating the details of your fund-raiser.

Brian S. - Virginia

Direct Request

Several times during the year our young people speak at our services to update members on the fund-raising progress and to share their reasons for wanting to participate. They directly ask the congregation to contribute that day for a particular portion of the trip (for example, plane fare, van rental, adult chaperone cost).

Bob S. – Maryland



Tips from the Pros

This suggestion touched us deeply. What a great way to do many things at once. You're honoring people in the congregation, offering a helpful way for people to grieve, teaching the meaning of Easter, and emphasizing the importance of the youth and the mission trip. We wondered if there was something meaningful that could be done with the nails...putting them in a cross or a sign for example...that would add a great visual.

Nails for Service

We purchase new nails of various sizes and sell each nail for \$5 "in memory of" or "in honor of" someone. We set up a table covered by a paint-stained drop cloth, with "Nails for Service" painted on it. The nails are in boxes, and a small paint or metal bucket sits on the table nearby. Preprinted forms are available to indicate how many nails you wish to purchase and for whom the nails are being purchased in honor or in memory. The buyer also indicates his or her own name. The money, form, and purchased nails are dropped into the bucket.

We run this fund-raiser during Lent, ending on Palm Sunday. "Nails" during Lent have an additional meaning. The names of those honored and remembered are published in our April newsletter and Easter bulletin. A local denominational

insurance agency graciously matches collected funds.

Youth serve at the table before and after each Sunday service during Lent. Even though the process may sound simple, it's a very emotionally moving activity. I am forever touched by the response we get from our small congregation contributing to our mission trip. Those participating in the mission trip may be physically doing Jesus' work, but we feel that we have the hearts and hands of our congregation working alongside us. The nails seem to take on a symbol of unity, connecting the giver, those whose name they were given in, the worker, and the family of the service project.

When we explain the nails to the people we serve on our mission trip, it becomes meaningful to them as well. One person commented with watery eyes, "Your church did this for me?"

Margo P. - New York