



Fundraising 101: A Primer for Mature and Growing Waldorf Schools

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Introduction: Why a Fundraising Primer?

Our goal in this article is to give the rough contours of an actual development and alumni relations program at a mature Waldorf school. This philanthropic program came into focus over the course of three years of work, much of it the product of extensive conversations with the school's community: faculty, parents, alumni, and staff. It also included the guidance of consultants from both mainstream private and Waldorf education.

When Jason Drucker joined the Rudolf Steiner School of New York City in 2002 as the director of development, one of his major objectives was to initiate a capital gifts campaign for the school in coordination with Lucy Schneider, the school's faculty chair. Over the course of time, it became evident that one could not look at a single aspect of the growing development program without looking at the whole, including faculty, parent, and alumni awareness and understanding of our strategic goals, philanthropy, volunteerism in the community, the annual fund, special events, and class activities that require fundraising. With the impending 75th anniversary of the school just around the corner, we set about reviewing and revitalizing the entire philanthropic program at the school.

It is important to recognize the foundation upon which these efforts were built. For many years the Rudolf Steiner School had worked with a variety of part-time development directors, each of whom brought strength to the fundraising effort, but the program truly began to flourish when Bob Dandrew joined the school as a full-time development director. Bob, through his presence in both the New York school and the wider Waldorf community, was able to bring the idea of development to life and to establish a vital community of volunteers who supported events and a growing Annual Fund. How could the fundraising and volunteer program now move to the next level? The results of those three years of work are set forward below.

Much has been said and written about the proper role of fundraising, finance, and governance at Waldorf schools, but rarely has anyone attempted to articulate the very many details—or the soup to nuts—of an entire fundraising effort. Because there are so many Waldorf schools now and many are transitioning to more mature schools—which we define as schools with an alumni base—it is important to “get into the details.”

Annual Fund

Most private schools rely on their Annual Fund to make the up the difference between tuition income and the annual operating budget. Few Waldorf schools have considerable, if any, endowment funds to provide interest income, making the Annual Fund essential in meeting each year's budgeting goals. Without government funding or consistent earnings from other sources (e.g., renting out an auditorium), a school without an Annual Fund is likely to find itself short of money by the end of the fiscal year, and concerned about its ability to pay for scholarships for deserving students, music and art supplies, faculty and staff raises. For example, at the Rudolf Steiner School in NYC the Annual Fund is currently at about 5-7% of the annual operating budget (about \$250-300,000)—not an inconsiderable amount of money.

Many believe that this “gap” in tuition revenue and operating budget should be made up by 1) raising tuition, or 2) exclusively from special events income. But, both of these ways of thinking are problematic for a number of reasons.

Why not raise tuition? In fact, we do. Tuition tends to rise every year just to keep pace with inflation and general cost of living expenses, e.g., teachers’ salaries. Additionally, at some point families will find themselves priced out of the market altogether if tuition rises too quickly, especially middle class families. Raises in tuition are always accompanied by some proportional increases in tuition assistance.

Why not throw more events? Parents who make charitable contributions exclusively through special events do not tend to “transition” into Annual Fund giving after their contact with the school changes, e.g., after a child graduates, thus limiting a potentially substantial income stream from alumni parents. Alumni at Waldorf schools, which are mostly day-schools, also are less likely to give through special events as well. Special events tend to be extremely time and labor intensive. There are only so many volunteers that a school can enlist to put on special events, and there is a limit to how many events faculty, parents and alumni can attend. The money that is raised from special events (e.g., a ticket to a dinner-dance or a golfing event) is often only tangentially related to the reason why the money is given (e.g., a scholarship program), and thus tends to dilute the educational value of philanthropy. An *unrestricted* Annual Fund gift to support the overall goals of the school or a *restricted* Annual Fund gift to support scholarships, the music program, or the purchase of library books, helps raise the consciousness of the school community about concrete needs.

Special Events giving is very important for many reasons which we will explore shortly. But every school, even newer Waldorf Schools should take smaller steps toward instituting an Annual Fund program. Most mature schools with healthy budgets—and diversified sources of income—rely on the Annual Fund for the majority of its funds other than tuition. At larger and well-established private schools, especially boarding schools, the Annual Fund helps power their ability to institute “exceptional” programs for their student or attract and retain an outstanding faculty.

What constitutes an Annual Fund program? It will vary greatly from school to school, but here are some essential aspects from the Rudolf Steiner School in NYC:

- Each fall, every constituent at the school—current parents, alumni, alumni parents, grandparents, and friends—receives an annual report. This document thanks each donor for his or her gift and educates new prospective donors about the culture and ethos of giving at the school. (Generally, this goes out in late September.) Additionally, new parents and recent alumni receive two brochures: one on the Annual Fund and another on volunteerism. Past donors receive handwritten notes of thanks to accompany their annual reports.
- All alumni, parents, alumni parents, grandparents and friends of the school are invited each fall (usually in October) to make a contribution to the Annual Fund, at a level comfortable for each family. It is also good to include parents who receive tuition

assistance and not to assume that they aren't eager to give and be included in the family participation goal. In recent years, the invitation has highlighted the artwork of students and given an explanation about particular items in the budget that a Waldorf education requires.

- In late November-December, follow-up letters are sent to all who have yet to make a contribution. In many cases, slightly different “appeal” letters are written to each constituency to highlight special areas of interest, update, and concern.
- In December of the past few years, the chair of the board of trustees has written a letter to the entire school community informing them about progress on the current strategic plan. There is a reminder about the importance of participation in the Annual Fund.
- In the winter and spring, a handful of volunteers contact parents and alumni, inquiring about their interest and willingness to support the Annual Fund. More than a solicitation, these calls and emails help build understanding about the nature of the Annual Fund. In particular, the goal is to build 100% or majority participation in the Annual Fund; a strong Annual Fund, in terms of participation, reflects the cohesiveness of the school community. “Everyone should give, as they are able.” Major gifts prospects are generally called by more senior or experienced volunteers, a key faculty member, or a member of the development staff.
- In May or June, at the end of the school year, the director of development or other key volunteers work to follow-up with individual prospective donors who have made pledges and reach out to likely individuals who can help boost participation goals. Sometimes an “end of the school year” letter goes out, updating the community about progress-to-date on the financial and participation goals. More than anything else, this is an important reminder to the very busy parents and alumni who had meant to make a gift but had failed to do so by this point in time. Generally, one would not want to impose upon the generosity of lead donors and return to them for additional gifts unless it is absolutely clear that everything has been done to reach the goal.
- The summer months are spent working on the annual report and creating the materials to complete the Annual Fund for the following year, since activities begin by mid-September and need to be prepared well in advance.

Even relatively young or newer Waldorf schools can implement a nascent Annual Fund Program. One letter a year—with a reply/return device enclosed in the envelope, and a follow-up call or email to follow shortly after the letter is received—from a key parent leader, school administrator, or faculty member can be a good place to start. In addition, during the earlier admissions interview, all new families receive two brochures about volunteerism and annual giving to ensure that they understand these two significant components of the school's culture.

As the community grows and the school's philanthropic work becomes more sophisticated, the Annual Fund program and its activities can and should expand. Because most Waldorf schools are day schools, it is to be expected that the majority of income from the Annual Fund will come

from current parents. More mature Waldorf schools should, though, over time expect to receive increased sums from alumni and alumni parents as well. (See section on Alumni.) Likewise, schools with routine Annual Fund drives tend to set the foundation for increased major, capital and planned gifts, so there is long-term benefit as well. Some Waldorf schools are doing quite well at raising participation in the Annual Fund, even garnering 90-100% participation from the parent body. (Although in some cases it is unclear if the participation is strictly from Annual Fund giving. We recommend that the annual report list Annual Fund gifts separately from gifts that are made for special events.)

A special note for finance and budget committees: Oftentimes individual classes and parent representatives will raise funds for ad hoc items such as class trips, yearbook ads, play productions, senior prom, and equipment for classes. It is our recommendation that any expenses that are programmatic and annual in nature be folded into the school's overall operating budget. Otherwise it is likely to undermine the Annual Fund, and dilute the focus of the school's fundraising efforts.

Major Gifts in the Annual Fund

All fundraising efforts ultimately strive to have a major gifts effort. It is often the case that 50-60% percent of the monies raised each year comes from just 10% of the overall donors, so it is reasonable to want to put considerable time and effort into cultivating and stewarding major gifts, and it is well worth the volunteer and staff time to create an affirmative effort to solicit major gifts, given the right base of support. At the Rudolf Steiner School, a major donor was considered anyone who gave more than \$1,000 a year, but at other institutions that number could be higher or lower.

In truth, major-gifts fundraising is more time intensive than other types of fundraising. Soliciting a parent for a gift of \$5,000 may require a special letter, a meeting, and a follow-up phone call. It may require an extra focus on educating the prospective donor. And, like all gifts of time and money, this person needs to be thanked for his or her contribution. A major gifts focus really just involves the appropriate segmentation of the Annual Fund; it is not "separate" from the Annual Fund. There are numerous times during the Annual Fund process, when people who are prospects for a major gift can be selected out for specific cultivation and solicitation. All gifts, whatever the size, should be acknowledged with genuine gratitude.

To be sure, many Waldorf schools, especially those that are at the initiative-stage will rely heavily on the largess of a few families to help move a nascent program to the "next level." The same is true of a younger or even mature Waldorf school that anticipates a small cohort of donors will largely fund certain projects which, over time, come to be considered a "routine" component of the school's programming. *It is also the case, however, that a donor's interests may change over time.* A parent or an alumnus may decide that he or she wants to fund a different project or change the focus or level of his or her giving for a period of time. We can think of a number of schools—many of which are the most established Waldorf schools—that have suffered major budgetary problems when a significant donor has stopped providing annual or project support for the school. Sometimes, there is no sufficient replacement for the funds, but in other cases, there had been no on-going effort to cultivate and solicit funds because of the

expectation that the donor's major gifts would go on in perpetuity—a case of wishful thinking and poor planning.

It is essential that the school not become overly-reliant on any one individual or family for support. This again underscores the importance of the Annual Fund (as well as other revenue sources) and the need to maximize overall sustained participation and support.

A final caveat. Some schools have annual events for major donors, but we have found in our community that it is somewhat counter-productive. While major donors need to know that there are other contributors matching their level of support, it is not the basis for the cultural life of the community. The Rudolf Steiner School decided to phase these events out over time. On occasion, the school has brought together a smaller cohort of volunteers and donors who made a special contribution to the school, e.g., working on a special event such as the fall fair, but the goal here tends to be more about *acknowledgement and thanks* rather than solicitation per se and focuses more on *volunteer* than on *financial* contributions.

Special Events and Volunteerism

Special events play a particularly unique and essential role in a Waldorf school and have the ability to meet a number of objectives simultaneously, including: 1) educating the community about Waldorf education, 2) building community and an active and enthusiastic volunteer corps, and 3) raising funds to supplement tuition income and the Annual Fund.

Sally Bickford, a Rudolf Steiner School alumni parent, former development chair and board chair, wrote eloquently in an earlier volume of *Renewal* about how volunteerism links the members of a Waldorf community into a shared network of giving. Good volunteer efforts and fundraising programs do more than just “invite” members of the community into service. They provide concrete and specific ways to get involved that meet the actual needs and goals—both short-term and long-term—that have been set out by the school leadership. Sometimes volunteers come up with projects that serve the perceived or stated needs of the school; others, however, are “pet projects” that serve no real stated purpose or expressed goal, and may in fact be counter-productive to helping the school accomplish its fiscal goals. Having one key faculty member or staff administrator who can work in tandem with a member of the parent association to partner with volunteers is essential.

There is some benefit in designating a specific budgetary purpose for each event. At the Rudolf Steiner School, the November fall crafts fair supports the scholarship fund, the February/March winter music event supports music scholarships and purchase of new instruments, and the May spring event supports faculty salaries, benefits, and professional development. These various goals help to “create a clear picture” rather than a vague sense that the monies raised are merely going to pay for the school's outstanding bills. It connects a volunteer's time and charitable contribution to a goal that is aspirational, e.g., raising funds to support the school's annual budget for student scholarships. This is often the source of enormous pride for the beneficiary of the gifts and the volunteers who helped raise the funds successfully.

At the Rudolf Steiner School, special events collectively represents about another 5% (\$250-300,000) of the overall school budget, which is considerable. Combined with the Annual Fund, it raises anywhere from \$500-600,000 in total, and thus it is easy to understand how each part is essential to the whole and not easily “replaceable.”

We have found that special events volunteers are often the people who come to understand the Annual Fund, join the school’s board of trustees, work actively in parent leadership circles—including parent education programs—or are the largest financial contributors themselves. There is no better way to create community and enthusiasm for greater involvement in the well being of a Waldorf school than through special events.

Much more could be said about how to raise funds through special events, including sponsorships, silent and live auctions, etc., but it is essential to know that considerable funds can be raised through special events and they are an important part of the fundraising mix. Nonetheless, without a strong program of annual giving, the emphasis placed on the fundraising side of special events can become overwhelming to the volunteers (as they continuously try to match or top the previous year’s financial goals) and counter-productive to developing a stronger and more cohesive community. Whatever the goals and scope, volunteers need encouragement, feedback, and recognition throughout their work on events. Therefore, it is essential that some member of the professional staff be charged as a liaison to supervise, support, and champion their efforts.

The Development Chair

Most schools, especially mature ones, have a development chair who serves on the board of trustees as well. This person will help set the philanthropic goals for the school, work with faculty, staff, and volunteers to develop and implement the philanthropic plan, and act as the public representative for the philanthropic efforts. Schools with a particularly diverse fundraising program also may have an alumni chair, annual fund chair, and special events chair. Smaller schools may have a parent council member or interested parent volunteer(s) serve in this role.

Many development chairs come into the role with considerable anxiety or concern, thinking that his or her job will be exclusively to solicit their fellow parents or alumni. But, again this is a misperception. Most Waldorf parents, especially newer ones, are not aware of the philanthropic goals of the school. In most cases, they are merely relieved to have their children accepted at the school or are so far removed from the day-to-day workings of the school that they know nothing about this important goal. The development chair is an important educator who can help “fill in the gaps” and help supplement the work of the paid staff or faculty who are doing a lot of the solicitation work. A good way to start is to have the development chair do some of the following activities: 1) sign the Annual Fund solicitation letter or follow-up letters or email appeals, 2) speak at an annual event or class meetings about the importance of the Annual Fund and answer questions, 3) call or write to donors to thank them for their participation, and 4) serve as the moderator of monthly or regular meetings of the development committee.

This is not to say that the development chair should not solicit his or her peers. Just the opposite. But the majority of the work at a Waldorf school tends to focus on sharing important information and answering thoughtful questions. When sufficient education has been done over the course of a couple of years, the groundwork has been laid for future cultivation and solicitation.

Capital and Endowment Gifts

Oftentimes schools, especially ones that are going through a major growth and building phase, will require capital or endowment campaigns that require a level of philanthropic giving above and beyond the norm.

How to structure capital and endowment giving efforts will depend greatly on the nature and scale of the project, the budget of the school, and the current state of its Annual Fund program. Nevertheless, some important lessons can be gleaned from school to school.

First and foremost, capital and endowment giving plans will only be successful when they reflect the beliefs, values, and decision-making of the community as a whole. In our experience, many Schools have moved forward with capital projects without sufficient support. At the Rudolf Steiner School, like other schools, there was considerable discussion and agreement about the strategic plan. In its last iteration, written and published in 2002, the school community desired to: move to a new location to unite its lower and upper schools; raise faculty salaries; support increased opportunities for professional development; add staff positions; and provide additional technology resources for students. And yet, as the Development Office made its plans to structure a capital campaign in support of the strategic plan, significant disagreements about the *priorities* of those items in the plan came to the fore. There were also serious and deeply-felt concerns about how the objective, or raising much larger sums of money, would affect the culture of the school. Finally, a feasibility study that surveyed donors' and volunteers' priorities and inclinations to contribute toward a capital campaign, also showed some variation. How to proceed?

A capital campaign should ultimately raise funds for a project that is worthwhile to the entire community after there is a legitimate decision-making process that involves faculty, parents, alumni, and other important stakeholders. Once the goals of the community have been initially articulated, a feasibility study or some coordinated survey of donor and volunteer interest around these specific goals should be undertaken. In our view, many Waldorf schools, because of the diffuse leadership structure, tend to second-guess their decisions, especially decisions that might be as momentous as what is a worthy goal for raising hundreds of thousands of dollars. Thus, we would recommend that before a school embark on an extremely ambitious campaign, the Board of Trustees in close consultation with the College of Teachers, development committee and staff, might take on a modest campaign that truly reflects the united interests of the community. Second-guessing a decision of this scale will tend to undermine an effort.

A school can always take on an additional campaign after the completion of a successful smaller one, but it will often take a generation or more for a school to recover from a failed campaign or one which only reflects the partial interests of the community. A modest project such as the renovation of a cafeteria, a series of classrooms, or a smaller building, can help galvanize the

entire group of parents, students, and faculty and raise everyone's sights. Experiencing success together cannot be underestimated as a key to all good fundraising; so attainable goals (and attaining set goals) are essential.

This is not to say the schools should not review the progress of their campaigns and revise them as new information comes in. For example, in the progress of three summers of renovation work on its landmark buildings, the Rudolf Steiner School determined that a particular phase, if completed correctly, would cost an additional \$250,000. The School had to determine whether it was important to make this cost-correction which, if it did, might affect its capacity to raise money in a timely way for another phase of the building work or its growing endowment. But making these decisions in a thoughtful, rational manner, and bringing the issues to the attention of the proper committees responsible for making them, can have the overall effect of strengthening the campaign.

It is important not to over-generalize about capital giving. There is considerable difference (and challenge) between a Waldorf school in New York City which would have had to have raised \$30 million in funds to move to a new school, and a rural school that can add a new building on existing and available lands for a small fraction of that amount. But some trends hold for small and large, rural and urban schools.

Capital needs are, of course, a line item in any school's existing operating budget. This happens all the time, when for example, miscellaneous capital projects need to be completed for the school to open in the fall. Some capital projects, though, might seem to be at a different level altogether. The school needs to distinguish between what is a capital expense that can be reasonably folded into an annual budget (even over a set period of time), e.g., roof and window repairs, plumbing, and a larger capital project that can form the basis of a compelling campaign, e.g., a gym, library, new preschool space. In other words, a campaign should be formed only around something where the community recognizes that the children will directly benefit from this project. Here, some outside counsel and judgment can be extremely helpful in determining the nature and scale of the costs and how it should relate to the annual operating budget and capital expenses, a component of that budget, or not.

Endowment giving, when should one start it? It is never too early to begin creating an endowment, but like all things, it must be weighed against the other immediate needs that have been prioritized by school leadership. In general, donors that make on-going gifts to the school should be encouraged to look at the Annual Fund as the number one priority. Planned gifts and larger unrestricted major gifts that represent a significant increase on a donor's normal Annual Fund gift might be appropriate for an endowment, which is the bedrock of a school's long-term stability. All mature Waldorf schools should consider the importance of creating an endowment and weigh it carefully next to capital needs. Indeed, families with students in the classroom may find the latter more attractive, but an endowment is essential to withstand fluctuations in the economy that affect demographics and tuition income as well as the school's ability to maintain its program and faculty. It is essential, too, to allow a Waldorf school anywhere to admit a truly diverse student body.

Either way, it is important that the school have a capital or endowment gifts plan in hand. It is not sufficient to have a long menu of items that the school wants in the future. Focusing on one or more priorities, and building some supporting literature, financial information, and other collateral materials that create a “case for support” is a necessary element that will show prospective donors that the school is truly committed to the project(s) and has planned appropriately to make it a reality. The results can be quite impressive. Many schools have demonstrated success at this work, but as a case in point, the Rudolf Steiner School’s overall giving went from approximately \$400,000 in 2001-2002 to \$1,700,000 in 2004-2005, an increase of more than 400%. And this is mostly due to the fact that we had created a case for our larger campaign, which supplemented the giving we needed to meet our Annual Fund and Special Events goals. With additional pledges in hand for future years, the benefits of having a capital and endowment plan are many and obvious.

Alumni Relations

Like other independent schools, especially at the secondary level, alumni tend to form close bonds with fellow alumni and faculty. They also tend to be loyal donors, volunteers, and supporters of their schools. Waldorf schools are no exception in this regard.

However, because so few Waldorf schools have large numbers of alumni, there has been little work done overall to create true “alumni programs.” And yet, this is where the future of our volunteer and fundraising base is likely to come for more mature and evolving schools. It is never too early to put into place structures and systems that, slowly and over time, will be beneficial in myriad ways.

At the Rudolf Steiner School, some very simple elements were put into place to help foster overall alumni participation in the school life after graduation, and in the last three years, these activities have emerged into a full-fledged annual program. In 2004, this work took impetus around the planning for our 75th anniversary event for the school and Waldorf education in North America, attended by over 500 current parents, alumni, and school representatives from across the country. The event, co-sponsored by the Rudolf Steiner School, AWSNA, and the Rudolf Steiner Foundation, was to date the largest gathering of supporters for Waldorf education, raising the consciousness of the entire movement about our past, present, and future.

In some cases, these various alumni activities have had a direct benefit on the Annual Fund and alumni participation in it, but in general the overall community benefit has been enormous. These features include:

- Keeping good and centralized data on all alumni and alumni parents, especially contact information, class year, and college or secondary school attended;
- Identifying one class agent for each graduating year, who is (loosely) responsible for staying in touch with fellow alumni, and tracking their address and email information;
- Writing and emailing all alumni at least 1-2 times a year to collect information to be published in both in a print newsletter and on-line;

- Publishing one annual newsletter that features stories written by and about alumni, updates on faculty, and important information about the school and its progress— curriculum, enrollment, fundraising, building and facilities, and more;
- Helping coordinate reunion events for classes that are enthusiastic about organizing one, a wine and cheese reception at the annual fall crafts fair, and in school anniversary years (every five years), holding a larger all-alumni and school event;
- Hosting a graduation tea for seniors and college/career talk, with alumni speakers billed as part of the program; and
- Convening quarterly alumni committee meetings to strategize about building community and helping support alumni participation in the Annual Fund.

Again, these various activities should be part of a large menu which, based on the staff and volunteer support available, can be accomplished at different times and levels. Admittedly, with one dedicated development staff person, it will be difficult to accomplish all of these things. It is important, however, to set priorities and ensure that the building blocks—such as keeping records on alumni—are in place, so as resources become available, you have a structure to build upon each year. Having a plan in place, delineating the direction the development work can go in the future, keeps priorities clear and helps the school to build on success through possible development personnel changes over time.

Planned Gifts

Mature Waldorf schools can affirmatively create planned giving programs that allow the school to receive and acknowledge the important philanthropic and volunteer contributions of people who have played an important role in the life of the school. The Rudolf Steiner School has alumni from the 1930s and 40s who are regular supporters of the school and a large enough alumni base (1,000+) to support this kind of initiative in addition to on-going support for the Annual Fund, special events, and capital giving.

In the 2005 edition of its annual report, The Rudolf Steiner School made an effort to go back over the last decade and record each individual who had either made or named the school as a beneficiary of a planned gift, especially in wills. This is an incredible testament to much love and devotion, especially of alumni who deeply cherished their time at the Rudolf Steiner School and see the long-term benefits of a Waldorf education. We also wrote articles about a family of current students and an older alumna who had declared their respective intentions to make a planned gift. Even without an overly aggressive effort to solicit these types of gifts, having a specific and special way to recognize and educate the community about planned giving will have positive effects. At the rate of 2-3 planned gifts a year, the list will likely grow to having 30-50 names over a decade, and raise considerable funds over time. In just the last three years, the Rudolf Steiner School has received gifts that range from \$25,000 - \$150,000 in planned gift income each year (without trying), and it would expect to receive larger gifts in the future based on a marketing plan and a growing alumni base.

Additionally, planned gifts that are restricted to the endowment can, over time, really add up to something very substantial. (Planned gifts also can go directly into supporting the Annual Fund, but are the perfect opportunity for creating an endowment.) For mature Waldorf schools with a significant alumni community, planned giving represents an important ingredient in the future of Waldorf education in America. Mature Waldorf schools are often fertile ground for student teachers and newer faculty members to become trained in pedagogy. Because they have larger budgets, they also provide a richness of curriculum and leaders in the movement that can help provide counsel to newer schools. Even a modest endowment of \$10 million can provide \$400-500,000 in annual revenue, which is why all Waldorf schools should aspire to create a planned giving program, even a fairly passive one, at some phase of their development.

Raising Funds for Other Anthroposophical Projects

It is often the case that families at a Waldorf school are involved with other pursuits related to Waldorf education, organizations such as Camphill, biodynamic farms, retirement communities, and teacher training institutes. These are all worthy groups deserving of philanthropic and volunteer support. But what role, should your school serve in meeting their goals and needs? The answer, of course, depends.

At the Rudolf Steiner School, the development office, in coordination with the College of Teachers, selected one or two groups each year to partner with and to promote with the parent body. In recent years, we have chosen to help coordinate a mailing to support AWSNA's work and an event to support the Visiting Students Program at the Hawthorne Valley Farm in Ghent, New York. While the development office staff did not actually do the mailings or produce the event itself, we reviewed the letters that went out, provided the mailing labels, and did some additional publicity to ensure their success. Many other organizations could have been chosen, but in our case, two groups were selected which were either ranked as a priority by the College or, as in the case of Hawthorne Valley Farm, where we have a particularly strong program connection. In our opinion, it is better for a school to have a proactive policy toward supporting additional fundraising work rather than deal with each case that comes along on an *ad hoc* basis since all will seem urgent or important to some member of your community. Indeed, there will always be causes which are deserving of parent interest and support, but there is also a limit to how many fundraising drives your volunteers and school can reasonably sustain.

Helping support other organizations, or as in the case of the recent tsunami in southeast Asia or Hurricane Katrina in the Gulf coast, can actually promote the idea within your community that giving is an act valued and honored. It also helps make the dialogue about philanthropy much easier as the act of volunteerism and giving become a norm rather than an exceptional deed. Including classes and students in efforts like these has the added benefit of pedagogically building philanthropic consciousness in the young. Young people often feel relief when they understand that help can be offered, even from far away.

Fundraising Goals and the Culture of Waldorf Schools

Schools are small communities. People tend to talk to each other—a lot. Perceptions and feelings are shared freely and a data bank of partial truths and opinions can affect the decision making process. Faculty as well as families, especially parents and alumni who have had limited exposure to philanthropy or private school culture other than Waldorf education, often misunderstand the reason for fundraising much less the details of fundraising. It is our impression that many teachers and families, especially those in larger cities and rural communities as well, come to Waldorf education to escape the excessive materialism and values of our consumer society. And, increasingly, middle class families who are committed to Waldorf education for their children find themselves squeezed financially to pay for tuition. These factors, when combined, can be a daunting backdrop for anyone who is planning to introduce a fundraising program at his or her school.

Today, the current state of fundraising in Waldorf schools shares much in common with philosophically-based, “spiritual,” or grassroots non-profit organizations: leadership tends to be more diffuse, faculty and parents are highly suspect of consumer culture, a strong volunteer corps supplements “staff” roles, and fundraising is somehow seen as either antithetical to the mission of the organization or a necessary evil. In addition, while most parents are highly satisfied with the curriculum of Waldorf education and the benefits for their children, many problems exist. Faculty and staff are consistently underpaid and have few retirement options, facilities are strained, and many families are unable to either gain access to or afford a Waldorf education. It is true that neither a beautiful building nor a well-paid faculty member guarantees a good education. But, the converse also holds true, and, despite what some people might believe, an impoverished school does not translate into a more dedicated faculty, increased program, or a more holistic school community. No independent school today can ignore the necessity for fundraising.

Fundraising often can *appear* to exacerbate or increase those anxieties about consumerism and the influence of money in private education, but in truth those anxieties are often just below the surface. A development effort that invites all members of the community to participate as donors, whether small or large, and as volunteers—in the classroom, at special events, and on school committees—is likely to build the kind of community that develops mutual understanding and trust. Rudolf Steiner named the economic realm as the realm of brotherhood and sisterhood. This is not a coincidence. We have found that special events volunteers are often the people who come to understand the Annual Fund, join the school’s board of trustees, work actively in parent leadership circles (including parent education programs), or are the largest financial contributors themselves. There is no better way to create community and enthusiasm for greater involvement in the well being of a Waldorf school than through special events. Pretending that fundraising is not an important function in a Waldorf school is likely to have a poor publicity and community-relations effect.

School publications, such as an annual report or school newsletter, can help the immediate and extended community to recognize the enormous ways in which different parents or alumni volunteer or contribute. The school leadership needs to spend a significant amount of their time—in class meetings, general assembly, and other venues—giving visibility to the volunteers who are so essential to the running of a Waldorf school by valuing every gift, large and small,

financial or volunteer. Volunteer work often can seem invisible, so small gestures of recognition here can go a long way.

Along with a vital community of volunteers, a flourishing development program is an essential aspect to running a proper Waldorf school. Just as other administrative functions such as admissions, finance and accounting and management play a vital role in a well-run Waldorf school, development staff (whether part time or full time) and initiatives are essential to a school's success. Money will always be connected to the social/cultural life. Indeed, it is the responsibility of the economic sphere to support the cultural sphere, and it is the responsibility of the cultural sphere to use the money wisely and well to strengthen the work of the institution. Our schools are not in danger of accumulating money for the mere sake of accumulation.

“If any person works for another, he/she must find in this other the reason for his/her work; and if any person works for the community he/she must perceive and feel the meaning and value of this community, and what it is as a living organic whole.” (Rudolf Steiner)

Thus, creating goals that engage the perspectives of the entire community enables us to work together to ensure the future of the school. Carrying them forward through a carefully developed philanthropic plan is responsibly fulfilling our duty as a cultural institution to our current and future children. The very first Waldorf school was made possible through the request and finances of a private donor, Emil Molt. That Rudolf Steiner had the vision to create an inspired education that would serve children all over the world, does not diminish our appreciation of the underlying philanthropy that made this possible.

Philanthropic gifts are made not by angels but by individuals. And, the best way to ensure healthy philanthropy is by professionalizing it in your school. By this we do not mean simply hiring professional staff; rather, we mean educating yourselves about the power of engaging all members of the community in your philanthropic goals, determining together and stating explicitly where you are now and where you want to be tomorrow, next year, a decade from now.

Given this reality, we believe that conducting fundraising only among “wealthy” families and alumni tends to reinforce stereotypes and class bias in schools, which is ultimately destructive to creating community. Every gift is an act of participation and 100% participation in a community is as worthy a goal as a school's financial goals. Gifts to Waldorf schools tend to come from current parents, alumni and alumni parents; it is engaging in purely wishful thinking to assume that local foundations or businesses are going to sweep in and fulfill your philanthropic goals. While it is important to bring people outside the immediate community into your mission, it should be the highest priority to focus your attention on every member of the community and help them share in the fundraising goals, as they are able, and to recognize each person for his or her unique contributions.

In this way, Waldorf schools have much to learn from the longstanding and well-supported fundraising traditions of independent and religious schools that derive their support from alumni, many of whom were “scholarship students” years ago and are now able to *endow* scholarships for a next generation. Healthy Waldorf schools have significant and growing participation in

their Annual Fund, a strong volunteer corps and community spirit that shows itself through inspired events, and broad buy-in for their larger capital and endowment goals. It is only through this “diversified” approach to philanthropy and volunteerism that Waldorf Schools will flourish.

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Both authors worked closely on developing an expanded philanthropic program at The Rudolf Steiner School of New York City, the first Waldorf school in North America, and are deeply committed to helping the Waldorf school movement develop the philanthropic expertise to flourish in the 21st century. We are indebted to the work of the development committee of the school, especially parents Dawn Trachtenberg and Stephanie Papoulis, our development colleagues Shannon Williams and Rhoda Lauten, and our consultant, Diana Morel of SERAPIS, who helped steward this vision and continue to do so today. Additional thanks to Patrice Maynard, Leader of Development & Outreach, AWSNA, and John Bloom, Director, Advisory Services Program, Rudolf Steiner Foundation, for their thoughtful edits to an earlier draft of this article. For those who would like additional ideas and resources about fundraising, please go to the websites for AWSNA or the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS).