Relay For Life FUNDRAISING IDEAS A-Z

RELAY FOR LIFE American Cancer Society

Thank you for supporting our efforts to help save lives from cancer by raising funds and participating in an American Cancer Society Relay For Life event.

Relay participants seek donations rather than pledges from friends, family, and coworkers. We have many great fundraising ideas, both for individuals and teams, to help meet your goals. Be creative, have fun, and ask everyone to support your efforts!

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING THE AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY. TOGETHER, WE CAN FINISH THE FIGHT!

A

Ask – The easiest way to raise money is to ask your friends, neighbors, relatives, and anyone you know to make a donation to your American Cancer Society Relay For Life event. Explain your commitment and your personal connection to cancer or why you are involved.

Art Sales – Ask children to produce art to display at a show. Parents and friends buy back their budding artists' masterpieces.

Auctions – Put together a live or silent auction. Teams can make a whole event out of it by working with an auctioneer who will donate his/her time to host a live auction. Some teams have success in hosting silent auctions during their family reunions, while others put them together at sports auctions. Collectibles are great sellers!

Auction Off the Boss – Have your boss, department head, or company executive volunteer to do something, like be someone's assistant for the day or let employees throw pie in his or her face. Employees bid to be the lucky winner, with proceeds benefiting your fundraising efforts.

B

Babysitting – Do extra babysitting and give your pay to your team's effort. Or baby-sit as a team during a community event.

Bake Sales – Hold a bake sale at work or a busy public place (e.g., bank, grocery store, town square). You could even bake a different dessert each week for your coworkers. Or have a no-bake sale where co-workers pay so they don't have to bake goodies.

Balloon Day – This is good for students. For a $2 donation, students take orders for Relay balloons with special messages attached and deliver the balloon messages to fellow students.

Bank for a Year – Ask everyone on your team to save $2 each week beginning the week after this year's Relay event. In 50 weeks, each team member will have $100. Or, bank 50 cents every day, and in 50 weeks you will have saved $175. Add just two more friends giving you 50 cents each per day, and you will have a total of $525 in 50 weeks!

Bingo – Hold a bingo night at a local club, hall, or your place of business. Participants receive bingo cards for a donation. Ask local restaurants and businesses to donate food and prizes.

Birthday Party with a Purpose – At your birthday party, ask guests to make a donation to your Relay For Life fundraising efforts in lieu of gifts.

Block Party – Put together an old-fashioned block party in a parking lot, or close off a neighborhood street (with permission). Ask a local band to donate a few hours of time, provide food, and offer activities like face painting and hay rides. You can charge an entry fee or just charge for food and activities.

Book Sales – Find a publishing house or library that will donate books, or have everyone on your team donate used books in good condition. Get permission to set up a table in a local mall or plaza, or set it up in your break room.

Boss for the Day – Get permission from your boss to allow coworkers to bid on being boss for the day. The highest bidder wins.

Bounce-a-thon – Elementary students collect pledges for bouncing a basketball for a designated period of time. Classes take turns throughout the day to bounce their basketballs.

Bowl-a-thon – Ask your local bowling alley to donate lanes for a few hours, and prior to the bowl-a-thon, participants ask for pledges for each pin they knock down.

Bowling Chance – This could be held on-site at the Relay event. One dollar gives you two throws with a toy bowling set. If you throw a spare, your name is entered once into a drawing for a nice prize. If you throw a strike, your name is entered into the drawing twice.

Breakfast With – Put together a breakfast with a well-known, high-profile person in your community, such as a sports mascot, the mayor, or a local celebrity. Work with a local restaurant or put the breakfast on as a team at a hall or club. Sell tickets and have photos taken.

Brown Bag Lunch Day – Everyone brings in their own lunch and donates the money they would have spent to the Relay For Life event fund.

C

Can and Bottle Drive – Set up at a central location to collect cans and bottles. Return for deposit at the nearest redemption center. You can even ask a local redemption center or store if you can set up in their parking lot so you don't have to transport the cans to be redeemed.

Candle Sales – Offer scented candles or wax warmers to fellow employees and friends for a donation.

Candy Bar Sales – Sell candy bars at work, or ask a business to set up a display box at the check-out counter. You can purchase box kits from wholesale warehouses, or ask a candy store to donate them.

Car Washes – Car washes are a great idea for both students and adults, and are especially successful in the spring. Accept donations instead of charging a set price.

Car Smash – Secure an old car and write "CANCER" across the car. For a donation, people get to "smash cancer" with a sledgehammer.

Challenges – Challenge another team to raise more money than you. Some radio stations may even put your challenge on the radio.

Change Makes a Lot of Sense – Ask a bank or credit union to ask its members to donate the change from their deposits to your Relay For Life team. For example, if someone's check total is for $187.67, they could donate the 67 cents.

Chili Cook-off – Host a chili cook-off in your neighborhood. Cooks donate to enter their chili in the competition, and everyone else donates to receive a spoon and bowl for tasting.

Coffee and Company – Enjoy coffee and a chat with your friends, and raise money, too! Invite your neighbors to your place for a mid-morning coffee break. You supply the coffee and treats, and ask them to donate to your Relay team. Try having a few luminaria bags available so friends can donate and decorate in honor or memory of a loved one.

Coin Drive – This is a good fundraiser for students. Set up a coin jar in the school cafeteria at the beginning of the school year, and see how the donations grow.

Comedy Club – Ask a local comedy club to host an evening in support of your Relay For Life event, and invite all teams to sell tickets. Teams would get a portion of the proceeds for the tickets they sold.

continued on back

Concession Stands – Volunteer to run a concession stand or booth at a school or community event, with your team getting a portion of the profit.

Corner Collections – Consider staking out a popular intersection with donation buckets and signs that say, "Relay For Life – Donate to finish the fight against cancer!"

Craft Fairs – Have your team set up a table at a craft fair or festival to sell your creations.

Cut-a-thon – Ask a beauty salon or vocational school to hold a cut-a-thon with donations going to your Relay team.

Cutest Baby – Host a cutest baby contest at your place of work. Place a photo of each coworker as a baby on a display board. People donate $1 to vote for the cutest. Ask a local business to donate a prize for the cutest baby winner.

D

Dances – Students can hold a school dance, or adults can put together a dance at a local club or hall. Ask a band or DJ to donate their services. People can attend in exchange for a donation.

Day of Cleaning – Team members donate a few hours to clean homes, with homeowners donating a specified amount to the team.

Day Spa – Raffle off a day of beauty, or, for a set donation, provide haircuts, manicures, and massages.*

Decorating Service – Who has the time to decorate for the holidays? Provide a holiday decorating service! Offer to put up holiday lights on houses in exchange for a donation.

Deliver Flyers – Find out what businesses distribute weekly sales flyers and offer for your team to deliver them to houses in exchange for what their distribution costs would have been. This is a good idea for a student team.

Die Cut Cards – Sun and moon, and footprint paper cutouts (available through your staff partner) can be provided to businesses and retailers for people to dedicate to a loved one for a $1 donation. They can also be used during the holidays to place on a memorial or honor tree.

Dog Walkers – Ask your team members to walk the neighborhood dogs for a donation.

Donut Days – Get donuts donated from a bakery on a weekly basis and give them out at school, the office, or church in exchange for donations.

Dress Down Days – Get permission for employees to dress down for a day for a designated donation. This is also a good fundraiser at schools that require uniforms.

Dunking Booth – Set up a dunking booth at a local event festival, fair, or picnic and recruit local celebrities to sit for you. Try to get the dunking booth donated by a local vendor.

E

Envelope at Restaurant Tables – Ask a local restaurant to help your team raise money by placing a Relay For Life donation envelope at every table during a designated time period. Envelopes can be provided by your American Cancer Society staff partner.

Errand Service – People never have time to get all of their errands done! For a donation, help people knock some errands off of their to-do list.

Event Parking Spaces – Get permission from a local business to provide parking spaces in their lot for community events. Ask for a $10 donation per car.

F

Face Painting – Set up a face painting booth at a local event, fair, or festival and ask for donations. Kids love it!

Fashion Show – Work with clothing stores to hold a fashion show. You could have it at the store, a club, or hall. Ask local celebrities to model the clothes, and offer admission for a donation. Ask if a local restaurant will donate refreshments.

Fry Day Friday – On a Friday prior to your Relay event, ask a local restaurant to donate a quarter to your team for every order of French fries sold.

Flamingo Alert – Place pink flamingos in someone's yard with a note that they will "fly away" once a donation is made to your Relay For Life team. They can donate a specific amount to select the next yard, or they can purchase "flamingo repellent" so the flamingos won't land on their yard again.

Flower Sales – Work with a local florist or wholesaler to give out bouquets, potted flowers, or individual carnation or rose stems at your work or school for a donation.

Fountain Coins – Get permission from the local mall to collect all the coins tossed into a fountain for a designated time period. Display signs that state that the coins will be donated to the American Cancer Society Relay For Life program.

G

Game Night – Host a party with a purpose at your house! Charge a small entry fee.

Glow Sticks – At your Relay event, offer glow-in-the-dark sticks for a set donation that can be carried or worn as necklaces.

Go Door-to-door – Go door-to-door and ask for donations. Canvas your neighborhood, or work as a team to canvas the town.

Golf Tournament – Ask a local golf course to donate space, time, and use of their links. The entry fee goes toward your Relay For Life event.

Gym Day – Work with a local fitness center to hold an open house with a variety of classes offered throughout the day. People can participate for a donation. This is great exposure for the gym. Also consider including a silent auction and baby-sitting service.

H

Hat Day – For a donation, students can wear a hat to school for the day.

Haunted House – For Halloween, organize a haunted house or haunted forest and charge admission. Ask a local restaurant to provide refreshments to sell.

Hoagie Sale – Hold a hoagie sale at work or around town, taking orders ahead of time. Try to get the sandwiches donated.

Hole-in-one – Set up a portable putting green at your office or in a popular public place. For a donation, people can try to putt golf balls. This could also be done as an on-site fundraiser at your Relay event.

Holiday Crafts – Create hand-made holiday decorations for a Relay For Life donation.

I

Ice Cream Social – Host an ice cream social at work or for friends, asking for donations.

J

Jail and Bail – For a donation, employees can have a coworker "arrested" and placed in "jail," which is a designated place they must remain. They can donate to "post bail." Alternatively, employees can have a bounty placed on a coworker's head. The coworker is arrested and is not set free until the entire bounty is raised ($100 or more per person). This activity can also be done on-site at your Relay event.

Jewelry Sales – Ask people to donate jewelry they don't wear anymore. Find a jeweler who will donate his or her time to clean it up, and host a jewelry sale. This could be done on-site at your Relay event.

K

Kiss the Pig Contest – Recruit a local celebrity to kiss a pig once a certain amount of money has been raised. Or make it a contest at school or work. Put pictures of all the teachers or employees on collection jars, and whoever raises the most money must kiss the pig.

L

Lawn Service – Offer to mow neighbors' lawns for a donation.

Letter Writing – This is a great way to ask for donations without asking in person. Send letters out to your friends and family with your personal story, information about the American Cancer Society Relay For Life program, and your fundraising goal. Ask them for a specific amount or leave it up to them. Some people write letters on behalf of their pets or babies to add a little humor.

Line Dancing – Work with a local club or facility to offer a night of line dancing. Ask a DJ to volunteer his or her time to play music, and find someone to teach dances. The entry fee goes to your Relay For Life team.

Lunch with the CEO – Auction off lunch or a round of golf with your company CEO or president.

M

Massages – Ask a massage therapist to donate his or her time to offer massages for a donation at your Relay event. This could also be done at your place of work for a pre-event fundraiser.

Matching Gifts – Ask your company to match what you raise for the American Cancer Society. Check to see if your company has a matching gifts policy at matchinggifts.com/acs. If they don't, ask them anyway!

Money Jars – Set up money jars or coin boxes at a place of business. People can donate when they frequent that business. This is a good fundraising promotion for banks, diners and restaurants, hair salons, and retail stores. Empty the jars frequently.

Mother's Day – Beyond your personal Mother's Day plans, consider hosting a Mother's Day event, such as a brunch fundraiser, a fashion show, a flower sale, or a ladies-only golf tournament, with donations going to your Relay For Life team or event.

Movie Night – Invite your friends over for admission to a night at the movies, popcorn, and soda. Or have a movie hour during lunch at work. Charge admission and invite employees to eat their lunch while they watch.

N

Non-alcoholic Cocktail Party – Host a non-alcoholic cocktail party at the Relay event for donations. Or, organize a rotating cocktail hour/buffet, where each team has different appetizers and drinks available at their campsite. You could also do this prior to the Relay event as a team and take turns hosting.

O

Odd Jobs – Call on your neighbors and ask if they have any odd jobs they've been putting off, such as fixing a rain gutter, shoveling the driveway, painting a fence, or raking leaves. You and your team can help with their to-do lists in exchange for a donation.

P

Pancake Breakfast – Hold a pancake breakfast at a community center, church, or work.

Parking Space Auction – As a college student, ask for permission to auction off the president's parking spot for a day or a week. Company employees can also auction off a prime spot.

Payroll Deduction – Employees can have contributions automatically deducted from their paycheck. A little each week adds up!

Penny Wars – Compete against other Relay teams or between departments in your workplace to see who can collect the most pennies. All silver and paper money in the penny jars count against the total number of pennies. This builds competition and raises more funds because teams try to sabotage each other's jars with bills and large coins.

Percentage of Sales – Ask a restaurant or retailer to designate a percentage of sales or proceeds for a day to your Relay team fundraising. Ask your team spread the word!

Pet Fashion Show – Host a pet fashion show where you give everyone's pet the opportunity to flaunt a favorite outfit. Charge admission and vote for best dressed, matching outfits (owner and pet), wildest costume, etc.

Pet Sit – Take care of pets while the owners are on vacation – it saves them from sending their pets to the kennel.

Photo Booth – Set up a photo booth for people to have their photos taken with a local celebrity for a specified donation. Or use a cardboard stand-in of a major celebrity. This can be done at work, a local fair or festival, or as an on-site fundraiser at your Relay For Life event.

Pie in the Face – Hold a "Pie in the Face" contest at school. Students and faculty vote by placing money in jars designated for each teacher or administrator. The faculty with the most money gets a pie in the face.

Pie Sales – These are similar to bake sales, but they are especially popular around the holidays. Take orders in advance and have team members bake and deliver pies, or set up a table at a busy grocery store or shopping center.

Pizza Sales – Work with a pizzeria to take orders and deliver pizzas, giving you a percentage of the sales. Or, put pizza kits together and sell them. Work with a wholesaler to get ingredients donated.

Place a "Plea" – Place a plea in your business, place of worship, or neighborhood newsletter letting people know that you are fundraising for your Relay For Life event. Include a photo of the person your team is honoring or remembering to encourage participation.

Plant Sales – Like flower sales, work with local florists or wholesalers to sell potted plants. For a special touch, paint the pots and add a bow and card.

Potluck Lunches – Designate a day of the week as Relay For Life potluck day, where team members take turns making lunch for employees at a set price or donation.

Product Party – Host a party selling a particular product, such as re-sealable kitchen storage or candles, with the profits benefiting your Relay For Life team.

Q

Questions for a Buck – If your company boss is always being asked questions, ask him or her to start charging $1 for each question they answer. Word will spread throughout the company, and hopefully employees will be happy to support the effort.

Quilt Raffle* – Ask a team member to make a quilt to be raffled off. Or if you have a creative seamster on your team, hold a quilting class. Quilters like to sew in groups, so make a night of it and ask for donations.

Quoits Tournament – Hold a quoits or horseshoe tournament with entry fees going to your Relay For Life team. Ask a local retailer to donate a prize for the winner.

R

Raffles* – There many types of raffles. Make themed baskets, where everyone on the team brings one item to go in the basket. A summer fun basket could include sunscreen, paperback books, sunglasses, bottled water, and magazines. A night out package could include gift certificates to the movies or tickets to a play, concert, or sports event. Be creative!

Recurring Gifts – Did you know that your Relay For Life event website allows donors to set up recurring gifts to the American Cancer Society? Recurring gifts can vary in frequency, such as quarterly or monthly. Did someone give you $100 last year, but this year they said they can only give you $50? Ask them if they would be willing to give you $20 a month for five months. You don't need to do anything special to set it up; just direct them to your Relay For Life participant page.

Restaurant Day – Ask your local restaurants if they will have a "Relay For Life Day." A percentage of meals sold or the proceeds of the sale of a certain menu item will go to your team. Team members could be on hand to talk about the event and ask for donations from the patrons.

Roll Coins – Roll those coins that have been sitting in a jar. Take them to the bank to count, and contribute that money to your Relay event.

S

Sell Services – Ask the best cook on your team to go to someone's home and prepare a meal for a donation. Ask your vice president at work to commit to wash an employee's car, or several if they're willing. Ask the company photographer to take family photos for a donation.

Shave Your Head – Commit to shaving your head (or get a local celebrity to do it) once your team has raised a certain amount of money. Promote the challenge to the community to encourage donations.

Shoe Shines – Shine shoes for donation.

Shutter Bug Mania – Take candid shots around the community, schools, and Relay events for a donation. Other great places for this fundraiser are weddings, anniversaries, or birthday parties.

Signed Relay Event T-shirt – For a designated donation, people can write the names of those with cancer whom they would like to honor or remember directly on your Relay event T-shirt. You will walk/run representing them.

Skunk Them – Place a stuffed skunk on a coworker's desk. They make a donation to have the skunk removed.

Soup Sales – Host a soup day at work. You can even offer it to other businesses throughout the community. Take orders ahead of time and have an evening of team soup-making.

Spaghetti Dinner – Put together a spaghetti dinner at a local community hall or club. Make it a fancy occasion by having team members wait on diners, take their orders, and clear tables.

Sports Tournaments – Organize bowling, hockey, basketball, soccer, and other sports tournaments. Teams gain entry into the tournament with a donation. Ask a local business to donate a prize for the winning team.

Story Time Reading – Have an organized story time. Hold it at your place of work where employees can bring their children, or work with your local library. Ask attendees to donate to your Relay event.

Student/Faculty Basketball Game – Set up a benefit basketball game between students and faculty at a school, put together an alumni game, or challenge a local radio/television station to have a team. Charge admission at the door to raise money for your Relay For Life team.

Super Bowl Party – Have a Super Bowl party with refreshments, and ask everyone for donations. The same can be done for the NCAA Championship basketball game, Indianapolis 500, Masters Tournament, etc. This is a great idea for the team member with a big screen!

T

Turkey Raffle* – This is a great way to raise money during the holidays! Ask a grocery store to donate a turkey for you to raffle. You could also do the same with a ham for a springtime feast or a BBQ package for Memorial Day.

"Cold Turkey" Subs – Encourage sub/pizza shops to donate a set amount from each cold turkey sub sold to benefit your Relay team. Consider asking sub shops to participate during the American Cancer Society Great American Smokeout® on the third Thursday in November.

30x30x30 Campaign – Ask 30 people to donate $30 each on the 30th of the month. That's $900 in one day! This can be done individually or as a team. Make sure to tell people about the challenge to drive excitement and donations. This could also be a 20x20x20 campaign.

U

Unique Boutique – Collect or make one-of-a-kind items and raise funds through a live or silent auction.

V

Vacation Day Drawing – Ask your company if you can organize a drawing for an extra vacation day. Employees donate money to be entered into the drawing.*

Vending Machines – Coordinate with your vendor to add five cents to the cost of a snack or soda prior to your Relay event, with the extra nickel going to your team total.

Vendors – Ask vendors you frequent for cash donations or goods you can raffle* or auction at the Relay event.

W

Wait Tables – Work with a restaurant that will designate a specific night to benefit your Relay For Life team. Your team acts as servers, and you collect all of the tips. You may also be able to receive a percentage of that evening's profits from the restaurant.

Wear Company Logos – Tell companies that you will walk around in a highly visible, public place, wearing their hat or T-shirt for a half hour for a $25 donation.

Wrap Presents – During holidays, set up a booth at a local mall, plaza, or busy department store. Have your team members donate the paper, tape, and time wrapping presents to raise money while helping out holiday shoppers.

X

Xylophone Concert – Hold a music concert or recital. Pass out refreshments and ask for donations, or sell tickets in advance.

Y

Yard Sales – Work individually or as a team to set up yard or garage sales. Clean out your attic and raise money for the American Cancer Society at the same time!

Z

Zoot Suit Party – Hold a swing dance party and give awards for the best zoot suit.

**Any fundraising activities that include raffles are subject to state laws. Please contact your American Cancer Society staff person for details in your area before planning your activity.*

©2015, American Cancer Society, Inc. No.008741