

Ten fundraising ideas that work

A great deal of our service work requires us to provide material resources as well as our time, energy and commitment. Consequently, we are often searching for new, easy and enjoyable fundraising ideas.

One of our international projects is to put together a compilation of fundraising ideas that have worked for groups. Here is our first collection of ideas. Thank you to those TOS members who shared their stories of successful fundraising events and activities.

1. Hold a 'Bring and buy' sale of fresh food and produce

This activity works very well if you have TOS members with gardens or who are willing to cook.

As the name implies, members bring donated items for sale and they and others buy from the sale table.

Items might include:

- fruit, vegetables, bunches of herbs, bunches of flowers, small plant-pots of herbs, bulbs and seedlings
- bottles of preserves, marmalade and conserves, chutneys, pickles, tapenade, marinated vegetables and cheeses, and spice mixes
- biscuits and cookies, shortbread, slices, pikelets, crepes and cakes
- sweets and chocolates.

The 'Bring and buy' sale needs to be planned several months ahead, and if members have the energy it could be held three or four times a year. You will need to decide on the TOS project to benefit from the money raised and the date of the sale, preferably at a meeting or event which will have a good attendance. Invite members to contribute donations of cooking or produce from their gardens and draw up an overview of what is likely to be available for sale.

In the week of the sale, confirm with members that they are still able to contribute the items they had nominated. Ask for volunteers to set up the sale table, price items (sometimes members are happy to put prices on their items before bringing them) and serve customers. Make sure that you have a collection of coins and low denomination notes for giving change.

Arrange your donations of fresh food and produce invitingly on tables. Prominently display your posters about how the TOS is using the funds raised and be prepared to talk to customers about the project. Enjoy selling all these wonderful fresh treats!

After the 'Bring and buy' sale, send a thank-you email or note to everyone who donated items, congratulating them on the outcome of the sale. Remember also to announce at the next TS meeting how much was raised for your nominated project and thank everyone who supported the activity by buying items.



In France, home-made jam seems to sell particularly well and so do fresh fruit pies served with tea and coffee on the spot. Plants and flowers are also popular.



2. Collect a jar of coins

The favourite fundraiser of one TOS group is their “five cent jar”. All you’ll need for this idea is a large glass jar which you could decorate with stickers. Then decide what coins you’ll collect. The TOS group that contributed this idea chose to collect the smallest coin in their country’s currency, but these small donations add up to a very useful amount over a year.

Display the jar prominently on the TOS table at all TOS meetings and TS public meetings, study groups, yoga and meditation groups with a sign inviting donations.

Bank the donated coins frequently as the jar becomes half full. After each banking, report on how that donation will be used. For example, this TOS group recently reported that the 5c pieces banked had been enough to restore sight to two people in India through the SEE project.

Providing this information has a real impact on people’s willingness to save and contribute coins.

It is also worthwhile to ask members who attend other groups or who work in an office or school to encourage colleagues to save coins and donate them every so often.

You’ll be delighted with the success of this very simple, effortless and worthwhile fundraising strategy.



Joyce Tozer, the Coordinator of the Sunshine Coast TOS Group in Australia, with the jar for collecting 5c coins.

3. Hold a ‘Trash and treasure’ sale

The expression, “What is one person’s trash is another person’s treasure” is the basis for this idea.

You will need to plan your ‘Trash and treasure’ sale a few months ahead. You will need to decide on a suitable date when a large number of people are likely to be attending a TS or TOS meeting or other event. As well, invite members and their friends to go through their belongings, looking for items which they no longer use, but which are in good condition and that they would be willing to donate to the sale. Remember to tell them how your TOS group will use the money raised through the sale. You will also need to organise a collection point and boxes into which members can put their donated items.

Several weeks before the sale, start advertising it at meetings through posters and announcements. Draw up a roster of helpers and allocate roles. It is often efficient to have only one person receiving money. Arrange for this person to have a collection of coins and small denomination notes for giving change.

On the day of the sale, arrange items invitingly on tables. You might consider placing similar items together e.g. jewellery, kitchen items, china, photo frames, ornaments. You might have a collection of ‘odds and ends’ in a box labelled, “A silver coin each”. Put price stickers on items so that it is easy for customers to make decisions about buying.

Prominently display posters announcing how your TOS group will use the funds raised from the sale. Put on your smile and happiest disposition and get ready to have fun as you sell an extraordinary collection of items.



4. Hold a fundraising event

Holding a fundraising event can be a most effective way of raising significant funds and at the same time, promoting the TOS and its work to the wider community. Working together on a significant event also brings members together by creating a common purpose and providing opportunities for each person to contribute their particular skills.

Fundraising events can take many forms. For instance, you could hold a concert or dance performance, a cinema event, a dinner, a fashion parade, an art show or a seminar.

You will need to create a sub-committee or team responsible for the organisation and running of the event. In some cases, such as an art show or fashion parade, planning will need to start up to a year before the event. The date and time, venue and the project to benefit from funds raised will need to be decided on. The programme and contributing artists, performers, speakers, etc. will need to be finalised well before the event as will a summary of costs so that the ticket price can be decided on.

Invitations and advertising posters will need to be designed, printed and given to members to distribute. Tickets will need to be printed and provided to members for sale and arrangements made for the collected money to be given to the treasurer.

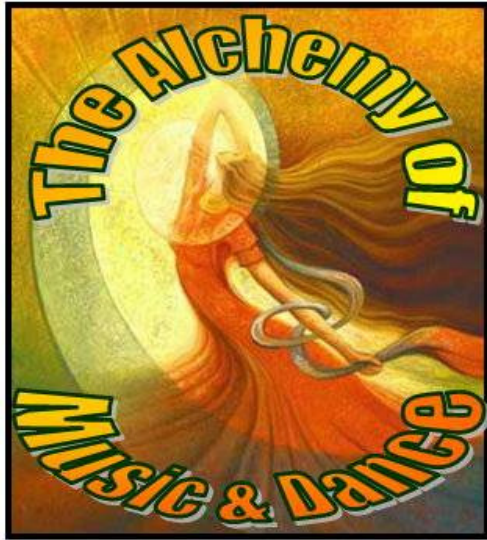
Catering may need to be arranged, either provided by members or brought in from a caterer. You might also consider raising additional funds by having a sale table of crafts, food, plants or flowers and by selling raffle tickets.

Close to the time of the event, seating arrangements and decoration of the venue will need to be finalised. Ask members to volunteer for roles needed on the day of the event. You will need a master of ceremonies and people to do such things as setting up the area being used, welcoming guests, looking after performers or speakers, selling food or waiting on tables, selling raffle tickets and helping with the clean-up after the event.

Enjoy yourselves at the event as much as your guests and remember to celebrate your success together. You might be surprised at the amount of money you raise.



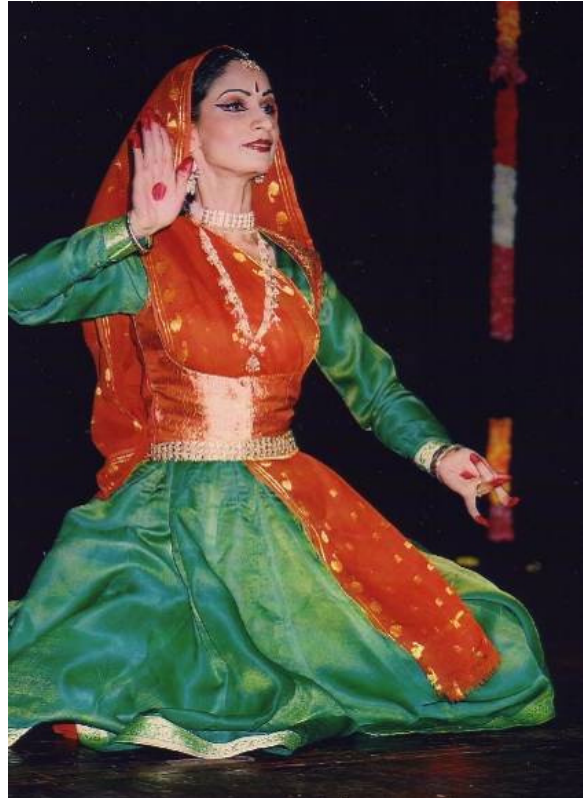
One TOS group held a Garden Party at the family home of one of their members. The host, who is a botanist and permaculturist, shared information on helping the environment and took people on tours of the amazing gardens. The group had homemade snacks available and sold plants and raffle tickets.



This event was a mixture of seminar and performance. The day began with an address by a local indigenous resident giving an account of her people's spiritual tradition which has many links with the ideas expressed in theosophy.

A variety of artists performed and the music and dance was interspersed with quotes from the ancient Hermetic philosophers and two short talks.

The TOS group charged an entrance fee of \$15 with an optional \$10 extra for lunch together with morning and afternoon tea. They also had various stalls scattered around the large venue. Some featured information on theosophy while others had second hand books, CDs and DVDs, posters and jewellery. All items for sale along with the raffle were donated by members.



Another TOS group organised a series of Indian dance programmes in collaboration with the city's Indian community. A professional dance group volunteered their services, the Indian Embassy helped with publicity and the TOS provided a hall and eager spectators.

5. Publish a booklet for sale

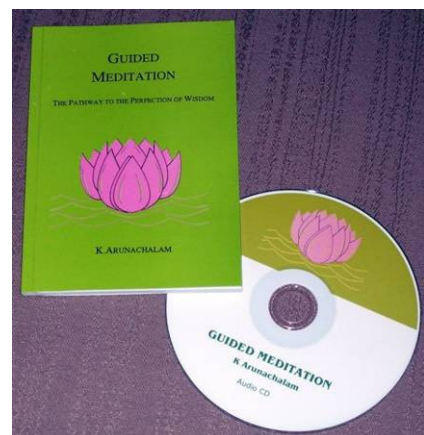
Have you ever considered publishing a booklet? Possibly not, but it is easier to do than you might think and it could be an on-going fundraiser for your group.

Consider the interests of members of your TOS group and use these as a starting point for publishing ideas. You could, for instance, compile a collection of

- recipes for favourite treats brought to meetings or sold at fundraising events
- handcraft ideas and patterns
- poems and inspirational stories
- favourite quotations for reflection
- favourite meditations
- notes and commentaries for a TS study group.

You will need to form a team of people to undertake the project – contributors of material, an editor, a desk-top publisher, possibly an illustrator and a project coordinator. Depending on their skills and available time, some of these roles could be held by the one person.

Once the booklet is printed, you will need to decide on its sale price, considering how much profit you want to earn after paying the cost of publication. You will also need to consider how you will publicise it and where you will sell it.



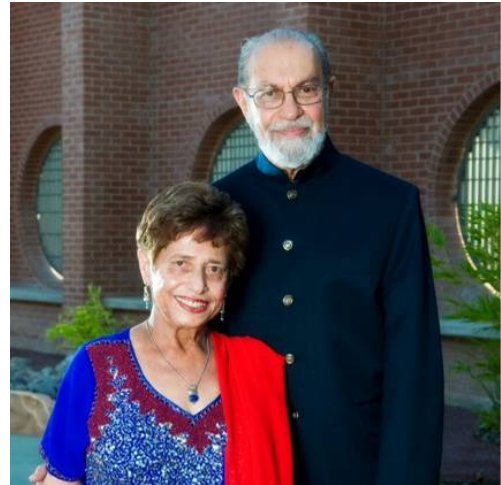
In one TOS group, a member with many years of experience teaching meditation wrote a little book of guided meditation and made an accompanying guided meditation CD. His TOS group published the book and CD and sell the sets as a fundraising activity. Each year, these sales raise several hundred dollars that are then used for TOS service projects.

6. Invite donations instead of presents

If you are celebrating a birthday, anniversary, retirement or other event, consider inviting guests to make a donation to one of your favourite TOS projects instead of giving you a gift.

You could nominate several projects from which to choose and provide guests with information about each. While some guests may write cheques in your name, you'll need to also provide details for those wishing to write cheques to the TOS.

The photograph to the right shows Dinshaw and Hutoxy Contractor, who requested donations instead of gifts when they celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary.



7. Organise handcraft workshops

If you have even one member who enjoys a handcraft, then they may be willing to lead a workshop to raise funds for a favourite service project. They'll need a small team to support them in organising the workshop and at least six weeks to do this.

You'll need to consider the date, potential participants interested in the craft and the project to benefit from the funds raised. List the materials you'll need and cost them so that you can advertise the cost of the workshop. You'll also need to design an advertising poster and encourage members to promote the activity to their friends and family.



The team will need to organise snacks and drinks for the workshop, taking registrations, buying the materials, setting up the room and clean-up area, providing name-tags, etc.

Handcraft workshops are often very popular with young people who enjoy both the creative activity and the knowledge that the money they have paid will help someone. Some of the most popular workshops have involved participants in painting T-shirts, making kites, making wire sculptures and card making.

8. Hold a book table sale

Another popular idea is holding a regular book sale at TS members' meetings and public meetings. The books can come from various sources. Invite members to donate books from their personal collections and consider approaching the TS for help. For instance, when the TS library reviews its collection, unneeded books and magazines could be provided to the TOS for sale. The TS bookshop might also be willing to donate unneeded books.

You'll need to invite contributions about a month before the book table sale and organise a box in which contributions can be left. You'll also need to organise storage for unsold books that are kept for future sales.

Price the books and magazines reasonably to attract buyers and display them in categories on large tables. You could group them by topic, author or price. When you ask for volunteers to help at the sale table, it's a good idea to ask them to be ready for customers half an hour before the meeting.



You may find that bargain hunters arrive quite early so that they have time to look through the collection of books for sale.

This is a simple and effective way of raising funds for service projects.

9. Raffle donated prizes

Members and friends may be willing to donate their handcrafts, produce or books for raffles.

As a fundraiser, one TOS group had the bright idea of obtaining an inscribed and autographed copy of Joy Mills's latest book to raffle at their National TS Convention, raising several hundred dollars for TOS projects.

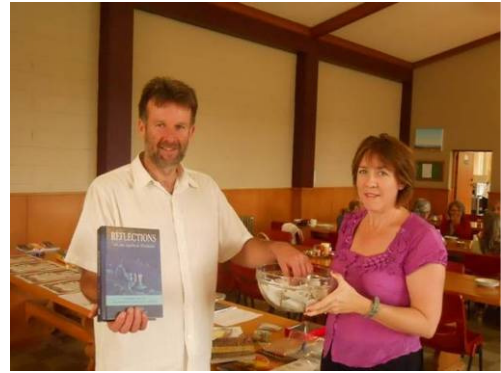
This is a simple fundraising strategy. Once you have decided on the price of tickets, the project to benefit from the raffle and the date of drawing the winning ticket, you only need a small amount of time to put together booklets of 5 to 10 raffle tickets for members to sell. Make a colourful cover for the booklets, providing details of the price, the project being supported and the drawing date.

Unless you conduct the raffle at an event with a large number of participants, you will need to sell tickets during several months to raise a worthwhile amount of money.

Ask members to write the contact details of purchasers on the ticket butts and to return their booklets to you several days before the date for drawing the raffle. Put the butts of all purchased tickets in a large container and if possible, ask a committee member to draw the winning ticket at a public event.

After the winning ticket is drawn, remember to announce the winner, making this information as widely known as possible.

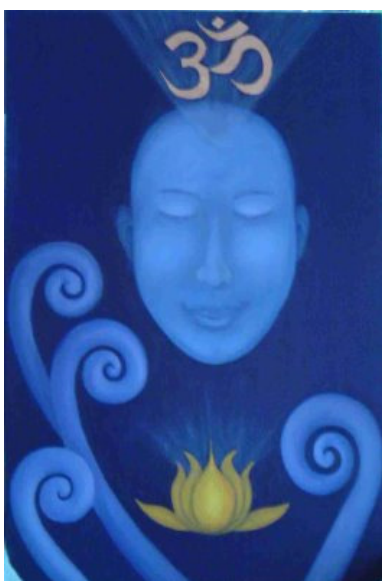
Please note that in some countries, only groups that are registered as charities are legally able to conduct raffles.



Kerry James Goodhew of Dunedin (left) drawing the winning ticket for the Joy Mills book at the Annual Convention of the TS in New Zealand.



A handmade quilt, hand-painted porcelain doll and painting donated for TOS group raffles



A rolling raffle

For a variation on a raffle, you might hold a rolling raffle. This is particularly popular when used at a fundraising event and guests will often buy five or more tickets in the raffle.

You need to have at least ten different donated items to make a rolling raffle exciting. Package the prizes in decorative bags of different sizes or wrap them artistically and display them on a table.

As you draw out a ticket and read the name, the winner comes to the table and chooses a mystery prize. Another ticket is then drawn, and that winner chooses a prize.

This process continues until all the prizes on the table have been won.

10. Sell art work and handcrafts

This is an interesting and enjoyable fundraising activity for TOS groups that have members and friends interested in creating artworks.

The organisation involved is very similar to organising a 'Trash and Treasure' sale table (see Idea 3). You could restrict a particular sale table to one type of creative work or you could have a wide variety of items displayed on tables, walls and stands, such as:

paintings, drawings, sculpture, pottery, items made from felt, embroidery, jewellery, fabric printing, silk painting, painted china, items made from timber, handmade paper items, glass and weaving.

Art and handcraft sales can be held at any time of the year, or you can hold 'themed' sales to coincide with festivals or seasons. Either way, they are lots of fun for both the creators and the buyers.

As a variation, you could auction larger pieces of art.



'Brownies' for the Christmas tree: some of the handcraft prepared by TOS members in Finland for their festive season sale.



New Zealand TOS member, Elizabeth Sell, donates her paintings for sale, auction or raffle in aid of TOS projects.



Carla Nobis of the TS in Italy shows one of the many fine items of handwork she makes for sale.



Jewellery for sale