

Why I Loathe School Fundraisers

It's that time of year again – back to school already! For the most part, this means good news for me as it clears out half of the foot traffic around here during the day. And since my oldest 2 are school-age and also the ones who are constantly misbehaving lately – Whoo Hoo for back to school time!

But back to school season also means it's time for school fundraisers, and my oldest daughter brought one home on the *second* day of school! They really couldn't wait until the second week of school at least? Because of how busy we've been around here between the new baby, my husband being in a play and his health scare, I set the fundraiser order form aside until the night before it was due when I reluctantly sent out an email seeking fundraiser participants. We actually did pretty well; better than I thought, actually, so I have to thank those of you who ordered stuff. But I have to come clean and say I did not order anything from my own daughter's school fundraiser. I just could not find anything I needed or even wanted for quadruple what it *should* cost.

My nephew sent me an email about a week later seeking participants for his first school fundraiser, so for him I was a little more motivated to order something. Since the kids get credit for the number of items they get people to order versus how much is spent, I started looking for something inexpensive I could order. I began by trying to think of any gifts we might need for people sometime soon. No luck – we have a basement full of stuff my husband got from overstocked wholesalers that is just waiting to be gifted away. Next I tried looking for a small kitchen gadget I could use, even if it was only once in a blue moon. I found a can strainer – a plastic disk with holes in it you put over cans to drain the

water out. It was \$5 – outrageously expensive, of course, but I could justify it for my nephew's first attempts at fundraising for his school. This wasn't so hard, I thought as I clicked on the shopping cart to check out. Except that all of a sudden, I was spending \$11 instead of \$5. And there was a text box on the webpage that told me that \$2.20 of my order goes directly to his school. They were trying to make it sound like a good thing, but \$2.20 out of \$11? And I'm spending \$11 on a 4 inch piece of plastic with holes in it? It really is easy enough to just use the can lid to strain whatever is in the can – and now I couldn't even justify buying an over-priced item “for a good cause” since the school was only getting \$2 of my money! Ugh, back to shopping on the fundraiser's site...

Have you ever had to shop for something you didn't want? It's actually quite difficult. We had a similar experience after our new baby was born. Someone got him some clothes that were the wrong size, so we ended up with a bunch of Kohl's store credit. My husband and I spent almost 2 hours in the Kohl's trying to figure out what we wanted; it was really difficult for us. Kohl's is not our type of store – we love bargain shopping, and even though it was “free” store credit we were spending, it was hard to justify their expensive prices on things we barely needed. We ended up with 2 candle warmers and an electric razor for my husband. He can grow a beard in a matter of days, and this razor cut his shaving time drastically. The candle warmers are pretty cool too – you put candles on them and still get the scent, but without the ‘something's burning’ smell or the danger of the open flame – a must-have if you like candles and have 4 little kids running around. So anyway, where was I before the Kohl's tangent?

Oh, yes, trying to shop for things you don't need... Like I said, I could justify the \$5 for the can strainer, but when it climbed to \$11 (especially because only \$2 went to my nephew's school), I had to explore other options. I considered a ‘dip

kit' for \$6, figuring I could use it at one of the many game nights we host – then it would double as a conversation piece as well – but shipping on every item was \$6. Since the dip instructions read, 'just add mayonnaise and sour cream', I couldn't justify \$12 on a packet of powder, again with the school only getting a measly \$2. So anyway, over an hour later, I finally found a good solution – a magazine subscription. Sure, I was now spending \$15 instead of \$12, but there were no shipping fees which meant the school got \$8 of my money. With 4 kids I barely ever have enough time to read the daily newspaper, so I don't really know what I'm going to do with all the *US News and World Report* magazines that will soon be piling up around here. But hey, my kids already have a subscription to *Highlights* and my husband's not really into magazines, so what else was I supposed to do? The subscription to *Parents* magazine was actually cheaper, but as I've said many times before to people who try to borrow me books about parenting – at the end of a long day full of changing diapers, cleaning spills, refereeing fights, and serving meals for people to reject, the last thing I want to do to unwind is read about kids! So I figured I could maybe save time – instead of surfing the 'net at night reading news stories, I could bring my *US News and World Report* up to bed and start my reading time a little earlier so I don't stay up too late.

But the point of this long rambling blog is this: I hate school fundraisers. I hate asking people to spend their hard-earned money on them, I hate ordering from them, and I hate the way they're set up. Don't get me wrong – I was more than happy to order from my nephew, especially because it's his first one; I find that kind of cute. Nevermind that little voice in my head that says, "but he's only in *Kindergarten* and they're already making him sell things!" But lucky for me, my sister only has 2 kids. Can't say the same for us -our family's fundraiser victims will get hit up a whopping 4 times a year! Not only that, but when the kids are in different

clubs and activities, those are also prime targets for fundraising opportunities. My daughter brought home a newsletter just today that said her Girl Scouts fundraiser will be starting in a few weeks... ugh, here we go again. So even if we don't have any more kids and say each of our kids is in only 1 club or activity that does a fundraiser (girl scouts does 2 if you include selling cookies) – that's now a minimum of 8 times per year I have to hit up my family and friends. And that 8 times a year will probably all be overlapping in the autumn months! It is my hope to someday be able to put aside enough time to attend the PTO meetings and urge the implementation of a new fundraising system – one where not so much money is wasted on the company that is hired to actually do the fundraiser. Until then, maybe I will just buy stock in one of these fundraising companies that are preying on our children's schools... in a struggling economy, something tells me that is one type of business that isn't hurting!