

Project Information Sheet

By: Rachel Ginsberg

Rachel Ginsberg, Green Street Youth Advisory Committee Member, shares her 'how-to' approach on an annual project implemented at her school. Find out all the necessary steps it took to ensure her school project was a success.

Theme of Project

- Fair trade
- Environmental issues
- Socially responsible business practices

Example of Project

- "Fairly Bazaar" information night and sale
- Eco-ethical fashion show
- Silent auction of donated items
- Benefit concert

Background Information

Currently, a large portion of manufactured goods sold in Canada come from sweatshops. Many food products are harvested by farmers or even children who are exploited and are not paid enough for their products or labour. Harmful chemicals and pesticides are used in the making of many everyday products. Inefficient production often creates huge amounts of waste, uses a lot of electricity, and contributes to climate change. There are alternative ways to make products and grow food that do not cause as much harm, however businesses often ignore the harm they cause so they can sell their products for low prices and still have huge profits.

Some useful definitions:

Fair trade certified - the product or food was manufactured or harvested under good conditions. Workers were paid a living wage and were treated with respect. For more info about fair trade, check out: <http://transfair.ca/>

Organic - the product was grown or made without the use of pesticides or other harsh chemicals. For more info about organic products and labelling, check out: <http://www.organiccouncil.ca/organic.sz>

Sweatshops - workshops where workers are paid very low wages and are subjected to poor working conditions. For more info about sweatshops, check out: <http://www.coopamerica.org/programs/sweatshops/>

Project Necessities

What:

The goal of this project is to educate your local community about how the things that we buy can be made and harvested in ways that are less harmful to people and the planet.

At my school, we hold an annual event called the "Fairly Bazaar" where we invite environmentally friendly and socially responsible businesses to come to our school in the evening and set up displays and sell their products. We also invite representatives from non-governmental organizations to provide information about what other action we can take to fight against environmental and social

justice issues. For the last few years, we have combined this event with an eco-ethical fashion show where we showcase sweatshop-free and environmentally friendly clothes. After the fashion show, we open our silent auction table, so our visitors have the opportunity to bid on the clothes they have just seen modelled. Our upcoming Bazaar will also be combined with a benefit concert, to draw in more visitors.

Most of the materials needed for this event are provided by the businesses and NGOs that we invite, however there are some things we have to provide ourselves. Some things I suggest for an event like this are:

- Tape! (a must-have)
- Extra tables and chairs
- Posters to advertise the event and to give definitions for terms like fair trade, organic, etc. (see the last page for examples)
- T-shirts for volunteers (to distinguish the volunteers from the visitors – fair trade, of course)

Who:

This is a big event and requires help from everyone. Students can do the majority of the planning, which includes inviting businesses and NGOs to the event, asking for donations for a silent auction table, looking for bands to play for the benefit concert, etc. Depending on the age of the students, teachers or parents may need to assist in booking a venue or making arrangements with school administration for the use of school space. Of course, business and NGO representatives will provide your visitors with information and lots of cool things to buy. Your visitors are the most important of all--they are the reason for the event!

Where:

The ideal location for this event is a large, open space that is easily accessible by the public. Our annual "Fairly Bazaar" is always held in our school's foyer and cafetorium. If you would like to hold a fashion show, make sure you can use an area with a stage and room for seating.

Make sure to ask your vendors how many tables and chairs they will need, as well as if they will require access to an electrical outlet. This will help you to decide what type of room you will need and will also be useful when making a floor plan.

When:

At the very least, begin to contact businesses and NGOs 2 to 3 months in advance. However, before you starting making invitations for your event, make sure you have a definite date and location. Depending on the location, you may need to meet with school administrators, or simply make a phone call to book a room in a community centre. Keep in mind that you may have to pay for permits to use the space. You may also want to do research 4 to 5 months in advance to create a list of organizations to invite and locations you may be able to use.

From personal experience, I recommend making an organized list of contacts, including names, phone numbers, e-mail and mailing addresses. Create an email to send out that explains the goal of your event, the date, time, location and any other information you feel necessary to mention. Remember to say who you are and make your e-mail professional.

If your invitees do not respond right away, do not fear! For whatever reason, they may not have received or read your invitation. If you contacted them by e-mail, email them again. If you still do not get a response, you may need to give them a phone call. Be persistent and do not give up!

While you are waiting for vendors to respond, start to publicize your event. Get in contact with local newspapers, make announcements at school, put up posters, hand out flyers, tell all your friends; make sure that EVERYONE knows about your amazing event and why they should come.

About 2 to 4 weeks before your event, try to develop a finalized list of every business and NGO that will be attending. Make sure you know what you will need during the event (ex. extension cords, extra chairs, extra tables, decorations, etc.). Organize your volunteers. If you are having a fashion show, plan out which models will wear which clothes.

It may be helpful to create a floor plan of your venue to organize where each business or NGO will be set up. Have volunteers assigned to greet them at the door and show them where to go.

At the end of the event, or within a week after, give out thank you cards or e-mails to thank the businesses and NGOs who came. Let them know how much you appreciate what they did.

MOST IMPORTANTLY! Share the work! Make sure that one person is not doing all of the work. This may cause people to feel left out or overworked and can create problems within the group.

Obstacles

SPACE: Make sure that the space you have is big enough for the number of people you are expecting. Your invitees must have enough room to display their products and your visitors must have enough room to move around and shop.

TABLES AND CHAIRS: Make sure that you have more than enough. This may seem easy, but do not overlook it. It is not so fun when you have 3 invitees arriving and you have no tables left for them.

ADVERTISE! ADVERTISE! ADVERTISE!: You need visitors for your event to be successful. Your invitees may have to travel a long way to get to your event; make it worthwhile for them to be there and ensure you will have lots of visitors.

ORGANIZE: There is no such thing as being too organized. Organize EVERYTHING. Make sure everyone knows exactly what their responsibilities are. This is a big event and everything needs to get done.

Last Tips/Comments/Links

Be grateful to your invitees and make sure they have everything they need! They have taken time out of their busy day and possibly taken time away from their business to be at your event. Thank them whenever you get a chance and after the event.

Try to get some variety in the businesses that you invite. You don't want to end up with 10 different businesses all selling organic candles.

Something to keep in mind: Business practices are largely dictated by what consumers want. If more consumers demand products that have a lesser impact on people and the planet, more products will be made with these things in mind.

For more information, contact YAC member, Rachel Ginsberg at ra.ad.gins@gmail.com .

Here are three fair trade and environmentally friendly companies to get you started:

Ten Thousand Villages

<http://www.tenthousandvillages.com/>

La Siembra Co-operative

<http://www.lasiembra.com/>

Me to We Style

<https://www.metowestyle.com/>