

Silent Auction Tip Sheet

Almost any item, big or small, practical or unique can be an item for bid in the Silent Auction. This includes all merchandise, services, gift certificates or gift cards, monthly or annual memberships/passes, lessons, vouchers, or anything else a business might offer for sale.

Think toys, books, electronics, games, artwork, gadgets, gift baskets, small appliances, recreation & sports equipment, sports event tickets, flowers, gardening items, professional portraits, haircuts, massages, spa services, maid services, yard services, car service, dining, entertainment, travel, hobbies, UNIQUE EXPERIENCES etc. The possibilities are endless!

How to approach a business for donations:

1. Make a list of businesses or individuals to approach. Choose those:

- Where you have a personal contact OR
- Where you shop regularly and may be familiar with staff/manager/owner OR
- Where your child takes lessons (swimming, gymnastics, martial arts, etc.) OR
- Where you take lessons (yoga, pilates, dancing, golf, etc.)

2. Phone the business or individual first.

Introduce yourself and explain the reason for the call:

“Hello, my name is _____. I’m a parent from Lord Tennyson Elementary School. We are holding a Winterfest Silent Auction Fundraiser, and I am looking for donations of merchandise or gift certificates to be featured as items in the auction. Is there a manager or person in charge available who I could talk to?”

Offer to drop off, fax or email a formal letter of request for donation.

3. Always follow up with a phone call for every letter delivered. Within 3 days to 1 week is good.

4. Don’t be shy. Some of the most generous donations come from cold-call drop-ins:

- If you are passing by a shop that looks like it might have something auction-worthy to donate, drop in and drop off a letter.
- Introduce yourself to staff and ask to speak to a manager. Explain the reason for coming in as in the phone call example above.

5. It’s okay to be spontaneous, carry copies of the formal letter for request of donations with you. You never know when you’ll run into a potential auction donor.

6. Be prepared to suggest a specific item or service that the business might donate.

7. Always discuss and arrange a time/date to pick up the donated items.

8. Emphasize that the business or individual is welcome to provide promotional material to be displayed with the donated merchandise during the auction. This may include brochures, pamphlets, business cards, pens, stickers, coupons, etc.

9. Ensure all documentation is completed. (Item Summary, Bill of Sale or Appraisal) before or at time of pick up of donated item(s).