

MUSICAL MONEY

By Scott Garvis

Wouldn't it be nice to sit back and watch your fundraising take care of itself? By capitalizing on the billion dollar music download business, that's what we're doing at Burnsville High School. We've created a Web site where people can purchase their favorite tunes, and each time they do, we get 20 percent of the download fee.

Digital music sales in the U.S. nearly tripled between 2004 and 2005. At the 2005 National Convention of High School Athletic Directors in Orlando, Fla., I learned that there was an easy way for our school to get a piece of this very large pie. Working with a Web business called PassAlong, we have been able to set up our own digital music store by choosing songs from their comprehensive catalog of licensed music, which includes over two million selections from R&B to rock, folk, and jazz.

Users simply go to our site (<http://blazemusic.passalong.com>) and set up

a user account by specifying a user ID, password, e-mail address, and mailing address. Registered users can buy music, enjoying all of the conveniences of the most popular music download sites. For example, our site offers an e-mail notification system that allows users to share music with friends and family all over the world.

Users have three payment options when downloading music from our site. They can use a PayPal account, a credit card, or a gift card. We sell the gift cards in the athletic department office, so students can download music without using a parent's credit card.

Each time a song is downloaded from our site, 20 percent of the fee is credited to our PayPal account. We began earning money as soon as our Web site went online, and PassAlong deposits our share of the proceeds in our PayPal account quarterly.

A key step in our success has been marketing our Web site. We use advertisements in the school newspaper, athlete and parent handouts, radio and television spots during sporting events, school announcements, PA game announcements, banners in our stadium and gymnasium, posters, ads on our

school sign, press releases, and links on our school Web site. We have also had the local television station and newspaper report on our fundraising efforts. By using these simple tools, we have been able to create an awareness of our site and increase traffic.

These days, high school athletics is powered by fundraising. This Web site has proven to be the solution we needed, and with very little further effort from us, we expect the profits to continue to grow.

Scott Garvis is the Athletic Director at Burnsville (Minn.) High School. He can be reached at: sgarvis@burnsville.k12.mn.us.

YOUR NAME HERE

By Fred Azrak

Four years ago, Everglades High School didn't have a stadium. Today, we have a state-of-the-art facility with seating for 3,750. One factor made it possible to build this great facility: For \$500,000, just over half of

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To secure the dollars needed to construct its new football stadium, Everglades High School in Miramar, Fla., sold naming rights to a local credit union. The stands now hold 3,750 fans.

the total cost, we sold the stadium's naming rights to Eastern Financial Florida Credit Union.

For us, selling the naming rights was a natural outgrowth of developing relationships with businesses in our area and being good partners with them in smaller ventures. I first met the management team at Eastern Financial in 2003, when I was visiting local companies to sell advertising on a rotating scorer's table use at our basketball games. I gave my pitch to the bank's director of marketing and vice president, who agreed to place an ad.

Six months after that meeting, I organized a breakfast to introduce faculty members from Everglades to all of our business partners. As everyone was introduced, the Vice President of Eastern Financial stood up and said that if there was anything else we needed, we should let him know.

So I told him we needed a stadium. He didn't even blink, but simply asked me some questions and told me I'd know in two weeks whether the credit union would put up the funding.

My next step was to communicate with

our school board about the plan. Then our board representative and I met with the mayor of Miramar and Eastern Financial's vice president, who made the formal offer of \$500,000 in exchange for 30 years of naming rights. The school board and the City of Miramar approved the deal and agreed to finance the additional \$450,000 needed to complete the project.

During the process of selling naming rights to our stadium, and also during the construction phase, one of my biggest jobs was facilitating communication. The school board, the city, and Eastern Financial all had to be happy working together. It was a crash course in politics, making sure nobody's toes were being stepped on.

Not everyone in the community immediately agreed with our decision to sell naming rights, but the success of our stadium has helped silence those critics. During the past two years, we've been able to rent the facility out for substantial sums, including to the NFL for rehearsals of this year's Super Bowl half-time show. Local businesses loved the fact that there were 900 to 1,500 people in the stadium the week before the Super

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Bowl, and the community is now 100 percent behind us.

Since news stories about our stadium hit the press, I have received calls from other athletic directors who want to know how to sell naming rights to their facilities. The answer is simple: Go out and ask.

Fred Azrak is the Athletic Director at Everglades High School in Miramar, Fla. He can be reached at: fred.azrak@browardschools.com.

NO MORE FEES

By Chris Feris

This year at Plano Independent School District, we had one big goal: ending our pay-to-play fee. Our varsity high school athletes were paying \$100 a piece, and we felt strongly that no one should have to pay to participate in high school sports. Through a combination of strategies, we increased our fundraising by about \$300,000 per year and ended the fee.

In Texas, where huge attendance is virtually guaranteed at football games, one of our most successful fundraisers has been the "Game Day Sponsor" program. For each Friday night home game, we solicit a local business to be the official sponsor. Sponsorship benefits include PA announcements, game promotion opportunities (drawings, coupons, and giveaways), hospitality room access, and tickets.

We charge anywhere from \$500 to \$1,500 for each game's sponsorship. A rivalry that generates more interest yields a higher fee for the sponsorship, and a game that tra-

ditionally doesn't bring in as many fans is priced at the low end. This program generates roughly \$15,000 per year.

We also began generating money by offering a six-week summer conditioning program at each high school in our district during the summer, coordinated and directed by our senior high coaching staffs. The camp costs \$195 per athlete, and exceptions are made for individuals who have financial hardship. Our coaches make approximately \$20 per hour for their work with the program, and we were able to generate about \$132,000 from this program this last year.

We've also focused on finding more opportunities to rent out our facilities. We rent to youth football, soccer, and lacrosse programs, as well as to area private schools. Over the last year we raised over \$50,000 in rental revenue.

Other successful fundraising efforts have come from advertisements placed around our stadiums. Scoreboards, walls, entrances, and parking lot light poles are just a few of the areas we have utilized with great success. The backs of game tickets have also turned out to be an excellent space for advertising.

When setting a price for advertising, we work with our sponsors to gauge what they are able to pay. Involving sponsors in the process has helped us cultivate a relationship that we believe will encourage their continued participation and ensure success in future projects. ■

Chris Feris is Assistant Athletic Director for Marketing and Special Events at Plano Independent School District in Plano, Texas. He can be reached at: Chris.Feris@pisd.edu.

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