



Getting Youth Involved Case Study: St. Theodore

In an effort to get youth involvement in their Friends of the Poor® Walk/Run, the St. Theodore Conference employed the following initiatives with the help of the St. Theodore principal, teachers, and the Friends of the Poor® walk coordinators.

1. The principal and teachers began publicizing the Friends of the Poor® Walk immediately after Labor Day. This provided a full three weeks to promote the Walk and gave students more time to collect pledge money. Previously, we started promoting the walk only two weeks before the event, and we found that the sooner we started, the better the results.
2. Using their Fast Direct email system, the principal sent a memo to parents early on, asking for their support, and encouraging their child(ren) to “follow Jesus’ instructions to care for the poor in our midst.”
3. The principal and walk coordinators spent time with classes, explaining the Friends of the Poor® Walk, and the St. Theodore grade competition. Grades K – 4 compete against each other, as well as grades 5 – 9. In the week following the Walk, the winning grades in each category enjoy an ice cream party treat.
4. The walk coordinator collects the money from each grade twice during the competition. She posts the totals on a Friends of the Poor® Walk poster outside each grade after each collection, so the children can see how they are doing. This helps to stimulate their desire to win the competition.
5. During lunchtimes prior to the Walk, the teachers and walk coordinators went from table to table to find out how the children were doing in their effort to collect pledges. The teachers fully participated in the Walk initiative, acting as cheerleaders for the children.
6. Walk coordinators and teachers encouraged each class to design a Friends of the Poor® poster, come up with a name for their team, and fill in a 20x30 inch poster with sayings, footprints, and other symbols which will remind them of the campaign. This fostered the concepts of team ownership and cooperation in the children.
7. The children conducted their Walks during the recess on specific days prior to the national official Walk date. The walk coordinator took pictures of each grade, and the principal posted on the school Facebook page.
8. Lastly, the principal used email to send a heartfelt thank you to all parents for supporting the Friends of the Poor® Walk, and praising them for instilling in their child “Christ’s spirit of service and caring for others.”

By putting forth this extra effort with the school, not only did St. Theodore raise money for their local Conference, but they were able to raise awareness of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, and how the Society helps those living in poverty.