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Incorporating

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Tennis Fundraising

Money Supply

To ensure continued success for your tennis fundraiser, make sure it's fun and a great experience for all.

By Ann LoPrinzi

I've been to more tennis fundraising events than you can shake a racquet at. In my central New Jersey tennis hub, fundraisers have run the gamut—breast cancer, mental health, medical centers, USTA League teams going to nationals, the arts, Chambers of Commerce, a tennis player's personal health battle, and various nonprofits. Round-robins with added benefits, pro ams, clinics with celebrities, dinners, exhibitions, and anything in between. Money raised? Anywhere from a hundred bucks to a couple hundred thousand dollars.

"You have to figure out what your main purpose is: raise money, create awareness in the community, or whatever," says Princeton Tennis Program (PTP) Executive Director Gwen Guidice. "We used to have people and companies paying a lot of money for an upscale event at a country club. Now it's more affordable at a community park. The best part is the grassroots feeling."

Another local charity, Volley for SERV, now in its 24th year, finds success in conducting a pricier fundraiser

Tips for Your Fundraiser

- Decide what your main goal is and plan accordingly.
- Get items donated.
- Raffle off items like a TV or a dinner at a local restaurant.
- Promote your event through social media and e-mail blasts.
- Consider selling ads in a program book.
- Give people an easy way to donate, if they can't make the event.
- Ensure that it is well-organized and a great experience for attendees.



Enjoying the experience: Finalists for the A Division at last year's Princeton Tennis Classic.

PHOTO BY ANN LOPRINZI

at a premier tennis venue. Player gift bags, lunch and dinner, open bar, and watching finals complete with a master of ceremonies highlight this event.

There are no hard-and-fast rules to raising money through tennis. Some long-running events have been forced to evolve. Getting sponsors is tougher nowadays. Admission/entry fees may need to be re-evaluated. The more options there are out there, the more difficult it is to get people to attend your event. It's important to have a key drawing element, whether it's a history and tradition, an interesting guest or celebrity, a chance to play with a pro or college player, etc. And success is not always judged by how much money is raised.

PTP held its 30th annual fundraiser, the Princeton Tennis Classic, last year, and it's come to mean more than raising money for the 60-year-old non-profit. The round-robin brings the tennis community together.

Don Loff was asked by the Mid-Jersey Chamber of Commerce to chair the tennis portion of its long-running annual golf and tennis fundraiser, and to revitalize an event that had been faring poorly. Instead of the tradi-

tional social round-robin, he made it a competitive tournament named for a popular tennis personality who had recently died. The new Ed Meara Tennis Challenge was a sellout.

The National Junior Tennis and Learning of Trenton (NJTLT) went from a small, sparsely attended tennis club exhibition to a huge gala in a ballroom, attracting about 400 people every year. The secret to its success is a committee of well-connected and enthusiastic supporters who attract big sponsors.

Courtside Racquet Club brought in former world-class players like Jimmy Arias and Luke Jensen, as well as some current up-and-comers like Alison Riske and Christina McHale. They offered a clinic with the pros, a pro am, and a meet-the-players party.

In recent years, having a silent and/or live auction has been a huge part of raising big dollars. Getting more attendees or participants has been enhanced, also, by honoring someone.

In the end, a key consideration should be a great experience for the attendees so they'll talk it up and make the next one even better. ■