



Acknowledgment

We express our deep appreciation to Arsenal Drum and Bugle Corps for developing the original framework of this fundraising guide. Their dedication to making drum corps accessible is not only commendable but also inspirational. This version, adapted for the Spirit of Atlanta Drum and Bugle Corps, is a testament to our shared commitment to the marching arts community. It is with respect and recognition of Arsenal's pioneering efforts that we offer this resource to our members, tailored to reflect the Spirit of Atlanta's unique needs and culture.

The collaborative spirit within the drum corps community allows us to learn from one another, and in this instance, the Arsenal Drum and Bugle Corps has set a benchmark for supporting students in their fundraising efforts. By adapting and expanding upon their groundwork, we aim to continue the legacy of inclusivity and support that enables talented individuals to participate in this transformative experience, regardless of their financial situation.

Preface

Spirit of Atlanta understands the financial hurdles that come with participating in our programs. To ensure that every talented performer has the opportunity to join us, we have developed this handbook to assist our members in navigating the financial aspects of participation. This guide is a testament to our commitment to making the drum corps experience possible for all.

Introduction

When it comes to marching drum and bugle corps the first thing a lot of students say is “I’m not good enough” but once they get over that hurdle the next thing they say is “I can’t afford it”. Indeed, the prospect of paying thousands of dollars to march is daunting, especially to high school and college students who either have no steady income or whose income goes mostly towards covering living expenses. While it’s certainly expensive to march the experience is worthwhile. We never want money to stop a performer from achieving their dreams

This guide is designed to assist students in fundraising for their tuition and travel expenses as members of Spirit of Atlanta. The methods contained here are based on current best practices within the drum

and bugle corps world as well as practices adapted from the development (fundraising) section of the nonprofit sector. While this guide is meant to provide helpful strategies, several great resources can be found online, as well as corps-specific fundraisers that might well be able to cover all of your fundraising needs. In addition to this guide be sure to research other strategies as well as the specific fundraisers utilized by the corps you hope to march.

The single best piece of advice we can give... Start now.

One of the most important aspects of fundraising is to be proactive; if you wait until the last minute, you will not be able to reach your goal. Reading this guide, know that you should be thinking about how to pay for drum corps long before you even audition, and should begin setting aside money long before your first bill arrives.

Fundraising Fundamentals

The Case for Support

In the fundraising world, it's important to understand that non-profits are created to provide a specific benefit to society. The mission of the non-profit is centered around this benefit, and when a non-profit seeks funding from an outside source it must demonstrate why they deserve to be funded. This demonstration is called the support case, and serves to justify not only why the organization needs the funds, but the benefit they will provide. The concept of a support case applies to any instance where an individual or organization is trying to raise funds for a cause by asking for outside help. Before you begin the task of fundraising you should create your support case; essentially you need to justify why people should give you money to march.

Use a piece of paper to write down why drum corps is important, not just to you as an individual, but how it has the potential to positively affect your community as well.

Remember that drum corps is a relatively niche activity, and that not many people are familiar with it. In seeking support for your own tuition needs you must also act as an ambassador for the activity. Familiarize yourself with DCI's mission, and with Spirit of Atlanta's mission. A strong case for support gets people excited about your cause; if you can get people invested in the activity you are more likely to get their support.

Once you have a good idea of your case for support, type it and print it out. As you make your fundraising plan, reference it often. When you begin soliciting donations you should use the language in your case for support to encourage people to give.

The Ask

One of the most difficult aspects of fundraising is directly asking other people for money. It can be embarrassing, and it feels impolite, yet "The Ask" is essentially the cornerstone of all fundraising. In today's social media-driven world it can be easy to make a post regarding your fundraising effort, but it can be just as easy for others to just scroll past it. No matter what fundraising method you use, be it Crowdfunding, Sponsorships, or Sales, you must get used to asking people directly if you want to be successful.

Before you begin, practice your ask. Write it down on a piece of paper and read it until it becomes familiar. Use your case for support as a reference and write an ask that is short and to the point. For each fundraising method you use, you should write a different ask; the ask you're going to use to sell chocolate bars is going to be different than the ask you use to get a local business to sponsor you.

For people who are new to fundraising, the Ask is often the hardest part. You might feel awkward asking for support at first, but it will get easier each time; just like playing your instrument, fundraising takes practice. When you're just starting, approach your friends and family to help you out. They know you and probably know that you're into the marching arts and that familiarity will help you get over the awkwardness of asking for help. Talk to them about the activity, about what you're doing, and how excited you are to march- get them excited for you, and then ask.

Use your close friends and family to practice your ask, and then move on to others. Ask where people know you or someone in your family; don't be afraid to ask your dentist, doctor, auto mechanic, or anyone else with whom you have a long-standing relationship.

Remember that email, mail, and social media are not effective by themselves. Even if you 'get the ball rolling' by sending someone a packet or making a social media post, you must follow through with a direct ask.

Practice Gratitude

When somebody donates to you, thanking them should be the VERY FIRST THING YOU DO! A handwritten thank-you note is good, but a personal phone call is better. Make sure you properly thank everyone who supports you, regardless of gift amount; not only is it a polite thing to do, but thanking sponsors can also help you to secure their support again when next season rolls around.

Thanking people is the first step to getting repeat donations! Whatever you do, don't skip this step.

Persistence

You will get discouraged while fundraising. For every yes, you will get a lot of no's. This is common and exists at every level of fundraising, so it's important to keep a positive mindset moving forward. Consider that every "no" potentially gets you closer to a yes and use both your progress and your end goal as fuel to keep pushing yourself to go out and raise more money.

Respect Intellectual Property

There is one last important thing we must discuss before getting into specific fundraising strategies- intellectual property. It can be very difficult to fundraise without showing people what exactly you are fundraising for, and while it can be tempting to use corps logos, videos, and photos without asking for permission, remember that such use constitutes theft, not to mention that as an artist you want people to respect your copyrights as well.

A good rule of thumb is to not use images/logos of a corps you haven't marched with. That said, you can generally gain access to all the materials you'll need through the audition process. Most corps will grant

you permission to use their logos when you are granted membership and begin formally fundraising for your fees; some corps will even provide corps letterhead for you to use.

Additionally, if it's your first season oftentimes they will let you take a picture during uniform fitting so that you have a photo of yourself in uniform to help you fundraise.

If you've marched before, there will definitely be a number of photos/videos of you in performances. Be sure to contact the photographer before using their images; some may ask you to pay a small fee before using their work. Videos, however, are a very different story. Due to ongoing legal issues, it is safe to say that you should never distribute videos en masse. While showing a family member or friend a video on YouTube probably won't cause any problems, it is better to send them to places where videos with pre-approved copyrights are hosted, such as DCI's or specific YouTube pages.

Ultimately, if you are unsure about copyright, ask. More than likely, a corps or photographer will be more than willing to let you use their material if it helps someone to march.

Part II: Specific Fundraisers

This section briefly goes over the three most common drum corps fundraisers; Crowdfunding, Sponsorship, and Sales. For most students, these fundraisers, combined with the income of a part-time job or familial support, will cover the full cost of marching. That said, there are a number of options available beyond these, not to mention corps-specific fundraisers, such as the Bluecoats March-A-Thon. When preparing your fundraising plan, you should conduct your own research to see if there are other options available, including with the corps you intend to march.

Crowdfunding

Currently, the most popular way of fundraising for drum corps is to set up a Crowdfunding Page and share it over social media. For those unfamiliar, a Crowdfunding Service is a website that allows you to set up a campaign page to raise money for a project or cause.

The service acts as a payment intermediary, taking credit card payments on your behalf and then cutting you a check, with the service taking a small percentage of each transaction. The most popular service for drum corps fundraising is GoFundMe, which has a 5% transaction fee.

For Spirit of Atlanta, we have acquired the help of a specific service called "Classy". Last year, our Classy crowdfunding tool helped many of our members find the financial support needed to march the 2023 season.

We highly suggest using our Classy fundraiser over GoFundMe as the fees are lower, and all of the money earned (aside from the fees) will go directly into your tuition account.

To get the most out a Crowdfunding campaign, you should follow these best practices:

- Set reasonable goals. Don't try to raise your entire tuition through Crowdfunding alone. Instead, ask for a portion of your tuition and explain that you have a plan for raising the rest of it, but that you are seeking help with this specific amount.

- Setting a reasonable goal not only makes it more likely that you'll be able to achieve it, but it also helps donors feel like their gift matters.
- Record a video. While it can be easy to write multiple paragraphs about drum corps and why it's important to you, remember that your average donor won't want to read paragraphs just to learn why they should donate to you. The best way to appeal to people is to record a short video (less than one minute long) featuring you making a direct appeal for people to donate.
- In a video, they not only get the message, but they get the emotional appeal of seeing and hearing you personally asking for their help. Your video doesn't have to be of professional quality (cell phone video is fine), but you should plan out what you want to say ahead of time and you should wear a corps t-shirt to drive the point home. In addition to the video, don't forget to write a short paragraph to further explain your goal to those who are interested in donating.
- Be direct. While making generic social media posts about your fundraiser is easy, it is not effective. Thousands of social media posts are made every day and amidst all of those posts, it can be easy for your fundraiser to get lost.
- To be effective, approach people directly through direct messages, emails, and phone calls. Social media posts will raise awareness but will rarely convert friends and family into donors. You will have to get comfortable with sending a text message, a personal email or even making a phone call (the latter will work best almost 100% of the time). While it's easy to just scroll past a post, it's pretty hard to directly say no to a person.

Also, be sure to note the drawbacks of using a Crowdfunding page:

- The service takes a percentage of your earnings.
- Social media can become saturated with Crowdfunding leading up to the season, so start early
- There's no outside incentive for the donor (these types of donations do NOT qualify as a tax right off).

To get started using Classy, create your account by logging in here:

<https://www.classy.org/campaign/2024-member-tuition-campaign/c556418>

Sponsorship

One of the most significant (and often overlooked) ways of fundraising is to seek sponsorship from individuals and businesses. While this is effectively another form of crowdfunding, this method is significantly more direct and will often yield larger donations because it gets people more interested in you and your success specifically.

An important thing to note is that you should not specifically seek sponsorships until you have received a membership contract. While family and close friends might donate to help you cover audition fees, people from outside your close circle probably won't. Sponsorship is a way for others to be a part of your success, and they'll want to be sure you are actually on your way to being successful before they contribute.

Your first step towards seeking sponsorships of should be to create a "Sales Packet" using these materials. You should make several of these and have them with you at all times- throw them in your backpack or car to ensure that you always have one on hand.

Contents of the packet:

- **Sponsorship letter** endorsed and provided by Spirit of Atlanta
- **Handwritten note.** Write a short note on your typed letter or on a small piece of paper. This personal touch should be brief (less than three sentences) and should be friendly while expressing your hope that they'll donate:
 - "Hello Dr. Moore, I hope you're well. I've been given an amazing opportunity for the coming summer, but I need some help to make it happen. I hope you'll consider supporting me!"
- **A color photo of yourself**, ideally an action shot from a performance, about 3"x4" with a clear view of your face; a great resource for these is the Drum Corps
- **Finally, include a Sponsor Donation Form** with your name already neatly written on the "member name" line. Include a pre-addressed return envelope for the form.

Fasten your packet together with a paper clip with the photo on top; the photo not only adds an emotional appeal but also makes it less likely that someone will just throw your packet away. Once you've made up your sponsorship packets, you are ready to begin asking people to sponsor you.

Although you will encounter spontaneous opportunities to give someone a packet, you should also take the time to plan out who you are going to ask. Each week, take twenty minutes and make a list of people you want to ask. This list should include:

- Family (Mom, Dad, aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents)
- Friends & neighbors
- Parents of friends
- Local small businesses
- Local service organizations and clubs like VFW, American Legion, Kiwanis Club, and Rotary Club (these groups in particular have ties to drum corps that stretch decades and often sponsor young people who march)

Prepare packets for your audiences in advance and then figure out if you can drop the packet off in person or if you will have to mail it. Use the following tips as a guide to help you become more successful:

- You will most likely get a lot of no's before you get a single yes. Be persistent!
- Think of this as relationship building – you have to build a relationship with someone before they will be moved to give you money. Build your relationship first, then make your ask.
- Never rely on a packet alone. If you mail a packet or drop it off at a business, make sure that you follow up with a phone call or a personal visit. While the packet may give them useful information, it rarely will make enough of an emotional appeal to convince someone to donate. By appealing directly, you not only establish a more formal relationship, but you also take advantage of the fact that it's a lot harder to say no to a person rather than a pile of papers.
- Ask for specific amounts. This is somewhat counterintuitive; while it might seem like a good idea to allow a potential donor to decide on the amount they are comfortable giving, you'll generally do better if you ask for a specific amount.

- Lastly, use information from the corps when coming up with the amount you plan to ask for. People are more likely to give if they know specifically what their funds go to cover, so let them know that \$25 covers four meals, \$100 covers a camp weekend, \$150 covers your uniform fees, etc.
- If you are using the Classy Fundraiser, you can have your sponsors donate directly to your Classy fundraising page.

Work Part Time

While it is possible to raise the entirety of your tuition through fundraising alone, you can (and should) also get a part-time job to maximize your ability to raise funds. If you can get a job in October that allows you to set aside \$500 every month then you'll be able to easily pay off more than half your tuition by the time move-ins start. A part-time job is also good because it is a reliable income source. This is important because although you may be able to fundraise \$500 a month, you are more or less guaranteed that amount if you have a job. A job will give you money in a direct, predictable proportion to the amount of time you spend; fundraising might not.

Use Your Skills As A Musician

Beyond part-time jobs like delivering pizzas or serving tables, look for other opportunities to earn money that take advantage of your abilities as a musician. Many of these opportunities come with a chance to ask for tips- stress to patrons that their tip not only shows their gratitude for your performance but also will allow you to pursue an opportunity to become a better musician and performer:

- Gigs. Gigging is the universal standard of part-time work for musicians. Look for any opportunities where you can get paid to play, especially where you might have a chance to ask for tips in addition to being paid a stipend.
- Student Recitals
- Church productions for Christmas and Easter
- Open Mic/Student nights
- Sit-ins for Orchestras or Concert bands
- Form your own group and seek performance opportunities
- Teaching.

If you have already marched at least one season, many band programs will be willing to hire you as a student technician for their marching program. In exchange for a few hours each week you can often get paid enough to cover half of your tuition.

Conclusion

Hopefully, this guide has helped provide you with the information you need to successfully fundraise for your drum corps tuition. Remember that although this guide contains good information about a variety of fundraising methods, it is in no way comprehensive and the best way for you to help yourself be successful is to conduct as much additional research as possible to best prepare yourself for making your fundraising plan.

Remember that every step of your fundraising should be treated with the same care that you use while practicing your instrument; only by reflecting on your methods, evaluating your progress, and coming up with specific strategies will you be able to maximize your potential.

Spirit of Atlanta 2024 Sponsorship Letter Example

Dear Friends and Family,

I am excited to announce that I have been accepted as a member of the Spirit of Atlanta Drum and Bugle Corps and that I will be traveling with the corps this summer to compete as part of the 2024 Drum Corps International Summer Tour. Spirit of Atlanta has been in existence for almost 50 years and it's truly exciting that out of the many who auditioned I was selected as one of the 160 members of this year's corps.

If you are not familiar with Drum Corps, you should know that for over 50 years Drum Corps International has worked to advance the marching arts through competitions across the country. Every summer young people share the experience of a lifetime as they work together to master a combination of music and intense choreography. Through this activity, they learn and grow together with other young people as they push to develop themselves through personal commitment, discipline, teamwork, the exhilaration of athletic achievement, and the pure joy of performance.

Following auditions, training for the corps begins each year in January, with weekend rehearsal camps taking place almost every month during the Spring. In June, more intensive all-day rehearsals begin, with members relocating to Jacksonville, Alabama for several weeks of training. During these rehearsals, members will spend over 12 hours a day working together to hone their skills and master their show. Following this intensive training, the corps will leave on tour, traveling via bus caravan across the United States and performing in a new city almost every day.

To participate, members must pay tuition and fees totaling almost \$6,000 for the season- which brings me to the reason for my letter. I am writing to ask for your help. Would you help me march by sponsoring me? Any amount you can give, no matter how small, would be greatly appreciated and 100% of your contribution goes directly towards offsetting my fees. If you can, please use the enclosed form and mail your contribution to the Spirit of Atlanta address. Be sure to write my name in the memo so that I get the credit to my account! Also, make sure that your address is correct so that they can mail you a receipt. If you're not comfortable mailing your information, then please go to Spirit of AtlantaPerformingArts.org/support go to the 'Sponsor a Member Section' and enter your information there.

Spirit of Atlanta Drum and Bugle Corps is a program of Spirit of Atlanta Inc., a 501(c)3 non-profit organization whose mission is to provide enriching performing arts programs in Atlanta. SOA's Executive Director Jason Burns has approved this letter. If you have any questions about the Spirit of Atlanta or about my request, you can reach the corps admin team at information@spiritdrumcorps.org. You can also get more information on our website - www.spiritofatlanta.org.

Thank you in advance for your support, and for helping me to make history with the Spirit of Atlanta!

Sincerely,

Your Name

Building your Spirit of Atlanta Sponsorship Kit

Supplies:

- Standard envelopes
- Small Envelopes
- Tape
- Stamps
- Printer Paper
- Return Labels and Stamps (optional but useful)
- Black or blue ink pen

How to:

1. Type your sponsorship letter.
 - Should be no more than one page in length.
 - Consider adding a small picture of yourself marching with Spirit of somewhere else.
 - Be professional, yet personable.
 - Explain why you want to march, what it means to you, and how they can help you fulfill your dream!
 - Proofread!
 - Leave room for a handwritten signature.
2. Print and fold letters.
 - Print your letters on nice paper.
 - Trifold letters for the standard letter size.
3. Set up your envelopes.

