

Should K-12 physical educators seek private funding for their programs, or does this raise ethical objections?

On the same day that I received the March 2001 *JOPERD* containing this question, I attended a professional meeting at which copies of the spring 2001 issue of *The Humanitarian* (the magazine of the American Red Cross) were distributed. One major feature in the magazine was entitled "The Art of Raising Money." It described the contributions of artists and illustrators in the past (e.g., Norman Rockwell) who vied for the chance to create original art for American Red Cross fundraising posters. In the pre-digital age, this strategy was one of the most effective ways to reach a vast audience and generate money. The hostess at this meeting was promoting an American Red Cross CPR workshop in which half of the \$20 participant fee would be donated to a local high school dance team.

At the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics, Peter Ueberroth, the head of the Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee, had to come up with a fresh approach to financing; he was, after all, the head of an organization that had no public funding! Ueberroth's master plan was, in essence, relatively simple—limit costs and maximize revenues. To achieve this, he used volunteer helpers and generated a considerable cash flow from sponsorship, television rights, ticket sales, and Olympic commemorative materials.

In contemporary K-12 physical education, we need to tap into two elements of the Ueberroth model: explore the notion of volunteer help-

ers and, more important, sniff out private funding (a type of sponsorship?) that is traditionally directed towards the arts and the humanities. Will there be ethical objections? If the Republican and Democratic parties seem to be constantly ensnared by controversy over fundraising, it seems unlikely that educators will emerge unscathed by the process. The more important concern is sustaining good physical education; in these perilous times of fiscal uncertainty, private funding should be seen as the profession's lifeblood.

—Scott A. G. M. Crawford, professor, College of Education and Professional Studies, Eastern Illinois University, Charleston, IL 61920.

Seeking private funding for any public school program raises ethical questions concerning who is doing the fundraising, the source of the funds, and the disbursement of funding. I do not want my child soliciting door to door, used as a target by greedy advertisers, or endorsing corporations with questionable backgrounds (e.g., child labor, poor environmental track record, or just plain unhealthy products). By accepting donations, there is an implied endorsement of the donor's products.

Furthermore, it is already unfair that poor districts are so under-funded; why add to the imbalance? Wealthy districts have always received more private donations, largely because of the parents' ability to give and the community in which they live. What

message does this send? Physical education is not valued enough to receive an equal share of the pie, so we have to raise our own funds? Or, we are lucky enough to have the necessary resources, so our kids get more while your kids get less? I'm so sick of this fundraising shakedown. We're talking about *public* schools; shouldn't *all* programs in *all* schools receive equal funding for *all* students? Or do only the wealthy districts deserve to benefit from what extra funds can buy?



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I would agree to fundraising only if it was done statewide, involving reputable companies and products and distributed proportionally to those schools most in need in order to correct the imbalance of wealth that already exists in our public school system.

—*Laurel A. Burghardt, student, Hutchins School of Education, Sonoma State University, Rohnert Park, CA 94928.*

I believe that physical educators should be able to receive private funding for their programs if it helps them provide a better learning environment for their students. Many teachers already receive funding from private parties (e.g., books donated by alumni and other classroom resources ranging from pencils to maps). However, I feel that if private funds are accepted, there should not be a “quid pro quo” for the donors; that is, those who donate

materials or money shouldn't receive special privileges or benefits. I believe that private funds should be accepted if they are needed to improve the learning environment. However, beyond the courtesy of acknowledgment, the donor cannot expect—and the school must not give—any special favors or treatment for their contributions.

—*Dan Jorgensen, student, Winona State University, Winona, MN 55987.*

I am strongly opposed to physical educators seeking private funding for their programs, as this practice raises some important ethical objections. Based on previous patterns, the groups offering financial assistance would most likely come from corporate America (e.g., big tobacco, an industry that desperately wants to appear child-friendly). Opening the schoolhouse door to even more corporate influence is like inviting the fox into the henhouse. I resent that McDonald's and a host of other businesses have the opportunity to take advantage of a captive audience—to bombard our school children with advertising in the classroom. They are already saturated with advertising every day. Let's give them a respite from the consumerism that is at the core of our culture. As voters, we should be exercising

our power to allocate a little more public money for something as important as physical education in order to help counteract the rampant obesity that is damaging the health of our children.

—*Joyce Kelly, student, Sonoma State University, Rohnert Park, CA 94928.*

Physical educators should not have to raise private funding; teachers in other subjects do not have to find such funding. What is our education system saying to us when we have to go out of our way to get funds for physical education while math, science, and other subjects are receiving full funding? If we make physical educators find their own money, people will get the general idea that physical education must not be that important. This is not the idea that we want to put in people's heads. We already have too many people avoiding physical activity; we don't need to influence any more people to do the same. If anything, physical education should be getting more funding than other subjects because it requires more equipment than subjects such as math or English (balls, hoops, jump ropes, and lots of other equipment).

—*Aric Attig, student, Winona State University, Winona, MN 55987.*

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NOVEMBER QUESTION

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*Preferred length is 200 words or less; occasionally, longer responses may be considered.

Please include your institution's name and your position—whether faculty or staff member, administrator, or student. We also welcome suggestions for future Issues questions.