



March 2006

## *Development Directions*

A free resource for pastors, principals, development directors, volunteers and anyone engaged in the ministry of Catholic development.

### **"SUCCESSFUL ALUMNI PROCESSES"** **Laying the Groundwork: The First Steps**

Alumni are so important to the development of a Catholic school, and many of your alums are sitting in the pews of your parish and partner parishes every weekend. While high schools and elementary schools are different in their approach and their programs, the fact remains that the success of the development efforts are going to greatly depend upon the alum base.

The main focus for alums is identification of who is who. Without an accurate and comprehensive database, the alumni effort will be limited. Great care needs to be taken to make sure the best software, with proper fields and correct information, is in place or is going to be put in place.

1. **Alumni Organizational Committee**
  - o It all begins with a group of leaders - usually 10-15 alums - who take an interest in the beginning. Many times these leaders come from those who have been involved in some manner in the school - possibly through strategic planning, past fundraising efforts, key donor work, etc. These people are crucial to future success because, as alums, they have got to set the pace.
2. **Alumni Database**
  - o This, as stated before, becomes the first focus area of action, after the Alumni Organizational Committee is in place. All names, however old or inaccurate, must be plugged into the database.
3. **Alumni Newsletter**
  - o Communication is key. Many alums do not know what is going on at the school, and the only time they may have heard from you is to buy a raffle ticket or give money to the direct mail Annual Fund Drive. The Alumni Newsletter or "All Publics" Newsletter is important.
  - o By mailing every alum on database a copy of the newsletter, the school can put "ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED" on the outside of the newsletter (by the mailing label) and some of those incorrect addresses will be corrected and sent back to the school. While you have to pay for

it, this step becomes valuable in beginning to clean up the database.

4. **"THE" Alumni Event**

- One of the best ways to "rally the troops" when you are first beginning to organize the alums, is to have the Alumni Organizational Committee sponsor (host) an event. This could be a homecoming, an anniversary, a reunion for a bunch of classes, or whatever.

5. **Alumni Association**

- One of the key decisions is to decide if you want to have an Alumni Association that all alums would belong to. This Association could be "dues paying" or not. With an Association, you could have bumper stickers and decals; you could try and get everyone to join; you could have guest speakers; you could coordinate in different geographic areas of the country. It has possibilities.

6. **Alumni Social Activities**

- With input from the Alumni Organizational Committee, and surveys to the Alumni Association and those attending THE event, you next need to poll the alum base to find out what they may be interested in and how often. Alumni Softball Tournament? Alumni Basketball Tournament? Alumni Picnic? Alumni Volleyball Tournament? Alumni Career Day?

7. **Alumni Reunions**

- With an organized alumni effort, and an accurate database, the school should play a major role in the reunion efforts. In fact, working with class leaders, the school should be the one to initiate and help organize all reunions on a five-year cycle. The Development Office, acting as the catalyst, should offer the following:
  - Help organize any five year reunion for that school year
  - Motivate those classes who may not be thinking of a reunion to hold one - with excellent support from the development office
  - Provide class lists
  - Publicize the reunions
  - Help find lost alums
  - Serve as the communication headquarters for the class
  - Help schedule social events for the reunion
  - Help organize a class Mass, if applicable
  - Meet on a regular basis with class leaders to help coordinate the reunion
  - Take pictures and write articles about the reunion
  - Encourage classes to use the school facilities
  - Invite "key" faculty members to the reunions
- We strongly believe that Catholic schools could miss out on a wonderful opportunity to build relationships with alums if they take a passive role in the reunion process rather than an active role. Over and over, we see the value of serving as the "conductor" of these reunions by providing many of the items listed above. The main result that is reached with such an approach is the continuing development of the many gifts that alums have to offer.
- Some positive outcomes that we have seen take place:
  - Database gets put in shape.
  - Class leaders surface
  - Alums reunite with their classmates and the school
  - Alums become interested in what is going on, presently, with the school
  - Alums start giving to the Annual Fund Drive
  - Alum classes consider giving group gifts
  - Alums begin to step up and get involved in key areas of the

- school - planning, development, Career Day, recruitment
    - Some alums begin to consider planned gifts to the school
    - The many gifts that alums have to offer get identified, and these alums are then invited to share those gifts of wisdom, of expertise, of finance, thereby becoming more engaged
  - An Alumni Reunion Weekend is an excellent event to schedule:
    - *Friday Night*: Social and open bar just with alums
    - *Saturday (day)*: Games and tournaments
    - *Saturday (night)*: Dinner and dance with spouses and/or significant other
    - *Sunday (morning)* : Mass
    - *Sunday (noon)*: Family picnic
  - Regardless of the plan or the activities, the Development Office should help coordinate every Class Reunion process.
- 8. **Alumni Class Agents**
  - Once the alumni effort gets on its feet, an organized class agent system would be great to put in place. Having 2-3 people responsible for each class, or block of classes, would allow the school to keep up with the database, keep track of lost alums, and communicate what is going on to all their former classmates.
- 9. **Alumni E-mail**
  - In the past 5-10 years, using e-mail addresses to stay in touch with alums is paramount in importance. By always asking for e-mail addresses, and keeping these addresses in an electronic file - by class, by occupation, by whatever - will prove to be very valuable in the future.
  - Recently, I was visiting one of the schools we were working with, and I noticed a person in the development office pounding away on a computer keyboard. In looking closer, and inquiring at length, he said he was e-mailing by decades to all alums on the database. A different message for each decade. This was done once per month.

Alumni are so important to the development efforts of all Catholic schools, and there is no better time to engage them than right now – while they are still students in your school. So, before they graduate, go ahead and encourage them to do the following:

1. Elect their alumni class officers and contact people
2. Induct them into the alumni association during one of the commencement exercises
3. Let them plan a one year reunion
4. Let them plan their five year reunion
5. Make sure all members of the graduation class have some kind of directory of every person's name, address, phone number, e-mail, name of next institution, etc.

\*\*\*\*\*

## The ISPD DEVELOPMENT SCHOOL

### Thank You to Attendees

The ISPD Development School here in New Orleans wrapped up on February 22nd, and we want to thank those who joined us at the Wyndham Hotel at Canal Place for three days of discussion, education and resource sharing. In retrospect, all of us here at ISPD feel good about staying in our home town and putting on this annual

conference. The attendee ratings of the Development School were high; many wonderful stories were exchanged, and a lot of wonderful New Orleans food was eaten.

Again, even though in recovery mode, the city of New Orleans is quite capable of opening their doors to all. Thank you.

\*\*\*\*\*

## SPRING 2006 WORKSHOPS

Dynamic presenters share proven strategies and discuss development issues during one and two day seminars for Catholic parishes and schools. These workshops are conveniently held across the country at an affordable price of \$49-\$149

We hope you'll join us soon!

**Topics Include:** \*\* Strategic Plan for Development for Parishes & Schools \*\*

\*\* Total Stewardship \*\* Annual Funds & Capital Campaigns \*\*  
\*\* Charge Up Your Development Battery! \*\*

**Scheduled Locations:** \*\* Atlantic City, NJ \*\* Chicago, IL \*\* Cincinnati, OH \*\*

\*\* Denver, CO \*\* Houston, TX \*\* Las Vegas, NV \*\* Louisville, KY \*\*  
\*\* Miami, FL \*\* Nashville, TN \*\* New Orleans, LA \*\*  
\*\* Pittsburgh, PA \*\* San Diego, CA \*\* San Francisco, CA \*\* Sante Fe, NM \*\*

- [Check Here for Details](#)

*ISPD - Bringing people, process and ministry together to build the Kingdom of God*

E-mail: [ispd@bellsouth.net](mailto:ispd@bellsouth.net)  
Phone: 800-299-2393  
Website: <http://www.ispd.com>

Please feel free to forward this newsletter to anyone you think could benefit from this information. If there are any topics you would like to see covered in a future newsletter, please contact us.

@Copyright 2005 ISPD: Institute of School and Parish Development, Inc.  
This document or any portion thereof may not be reproduced in any format whatsoever without the written, expressed consent of the Institute of School and Parish Development.