

BUILDING A SPONSORING COMMITTEE

Good Morning, my name is Cathy Bach. I am the past Chair and current Director at Large of the Parent Sponsoring Committee of the 2812 Royal Canadian Army Cadet Corps in Surrey B.C. I have been involved with this Corps for the past 6 years.

Our Corps is 100 cadets strong, run by a terrific leader Major Rob Thompson, 8 officers and 10 parent volunteers on the Parent Sponsoring Committee....plus another dozen or so parents that show up from time to time to help out.

I have been asked to speak to you this morning about our experience at building a strong Parent Sponsoring Committee. A Parent Sponsoring Committee does not necessarily have to be made up of parents. It could be a grandparent, a guardian, a member from the community or local business who simply wants to volunteer, or a member from a local legion.

First let me say...building a Parent Sponsoring Committee is not easy....but it can be fun and rewarding.

A Parent Sponsoring Committee is an important PILLAR of the Cadet program and works hand in hand with the other important PILLAR being the CO and OFFICERS of the Corps. We like to think the officers are the heart of the program and we are the soul....arms and legs running like crazy helping them pull it all together. We are very lucky in our Corps that there is an amazing co-operation and respect between the officers and the parents.

We all know the expression...many hands makes light work...this is so true when it comes to a Parent Sponsoring Committee. A couple people cannot bear the weight of what needs to be done through the year to support the program.

We at the 2812 invite all parents/Guardians to a meeting at the beginning of each Cadet Year. At this meeting we layout the ground work of the year ahead and what is needed in the way of fundraising to support the program. We go into detail of what it costs to run a Corps..and in our case we have an operating

budget of \$53,000 a year..most of which is turned over to the Surrey School Board for rent.

Early on, parents are made very aware that although the program is FREE for Cadets..it does require parent participation. We also stress and 'it is no secret' that parents that get involved are more informed and the odds of having a child that excels in the cadet program is a given!

We have Parent Meetings 2 or 3 times a year and these are so important to keep lines of communication open and get to know your 'pool' of possible Directors that are out there that would be beneficial to have on your committee.

Our Directors use these meeting and any other opportunity where parents are around to talk it up about the Committee, getting involved and what they can do to support their Cadet and the overall program.

We make it a point to do regular newsletters and send out emails where we outline how parents can help...we all have experienced the drive by 'parenting ' that eject and collect their cadet never to be seen by anyone.....so we get out there into the parking lot and distribute flyers directly to them in the cars. This ensures we get out to as many parents as possible.

Our Newsletters and important notices are also posted on our website. In the newsletters and on the website, we will advertise for help that we need for various projects.

We have a pot of coffee on during regular parade nights...and encourage parents to come in for coffee and a chat.

A secret to building a Sponsoring Committee....is to get parents to volunteer for little projects here and there.....it grows from there....once they get involved and get to know the officers and sponsor committee members....little by little we reel them in. This really works. Also, we have several cadets coming from many miles away.....we find out who these cadets are and encourage their parents to spend the evening with us...rather than drive back and forth. Our weekly parent count in attendance on a regular parade night is from 7 to 15 each night.

Last but not least, we have regular Informal meetings between the Officers and the Parent Sponsoring Committee members....usually at one of local supporting legions! It is amazing how these “meetings” work to build our TEAM. Like for the cadets, you have to remember that if it’s not fun, the parents won’t show up so we work hard to ensure that a constructive fun social atmosphere exists within the unit. And let me say that it’s amazing how a night of Karaoke and a few meat draws at the local legion can go a long way to building a better team. After all it should just be fun for everyone!

Mentoring and succession planning has to always be top of mind to ensure continuity and growth in a successful Parent Sponsoring Committee.

Now for the important positions on the board....the 4 most important positions are: Chairperson, Vice-Chair, Treasurer, and Director of Fundraising.....once you have these positions solidified, then you can add other directors as you see fit or as volunteers materialize. Remember...get them doing small jobs first...and once they are involved....they are more receptive to taking on more.

Your Chairperson needs to a strong individual who can work well with the CO and lead the team. They cannot be the type that have to do it all ‘themselves’...they have to be able to delegate and supervise. They have to keep their fingers on all the issues, but ensure that other volunteers are holding up their end. They also need to understand the roles and responsibilities of the Committee, its members and the Corps officers and work with the CO to support the “lanes” that they all live in and where they do and do not overlap. Clear direction and understanding of boundaries makes for a much better working environment at any Cadet Corps.

Your Vice-Chair is your Chairs back up....they both should work hand in hand and cover each other off in the event of absences or whatever. The Vice-Chair gets a bit more involved in the DETAILS.

Your Treasurer has to have good understanding of ACCOUNTING and either an accounting accreditation or a bookkeeping background is essential. This person is responsible for your monthly accounting statements, your yearend statements, processing your GST refunds, helping in the preparation of grant applications etc.

Your Director of Fundraising has to be an outgoing, friendly, dynamic individual who can work with the parent volunteer base and build subcommittees in order to flesh out the fundraising needs early in the year in conjunction with the officers “wish lists / Budgets” and the responsible day to day needs of the corps. Together a plan is set for the upcoming year. Part of this person’s responsibility will be ensuring that a subcommittee is struck for all GRANT APPLICATIONS. Grant applications usually require financial statements so the Treasurer also works with the GRANT SUBCOMMITTEE to complete the applications.

2812 is living proof of how well a Corps can succeed with the right combination of sponsors and officers working in harmony to better benefit the needs of the Army Cadet program. It’s not magic; it’s just simply working hard, having fun, being respectful of everyone’s role, and standing back to watch the wonders that can happen in a cadet’s life when they are in an environment that helps them to succeed.

One final note might be that it’s important that the sponsor and officers recognize and publicly applaud the efforts of your volunteers and committee members. Just a simple thank you, a handsome certificate, small gift or just acknowledging their efforts at a CO’s parade or annual inspection can go a long way to securing the support of the parent volunteers. We have parents who continue to provide support to us long after their cadets have aged out of left the Corps. Keep in mind that some of these people make Ideal candidates for officers in the Corps when opportunity and vacancies arise and don’t be afraid to suggest this to the Corps CO’s if you see potential and interest. 2812 has four officers who started out as parent volunteers when their children were in Cadets (including our Current CO) plus we have parents of past cadets returning to visit us, help out and attend our social events on a regular basis. We make sure that their efforts are always appreciated and they are always welcome at the Corps or any of the events we participate in.

Thank you