

## **BIG GIFT FUNdraising Ideas from Earth's Birthday Project**



Earth's Birthday Project's BIG GIFT to the Earth is an annual event involving thousands of teachers and children in public and private schools and motivated individuals throughout the United States. Here are some innovative ideas for your school to try—from Earth Week pageants to reading pledge drives.

### **Rainforest Greeting Cards**

Several teachers that have been consistently raising the most money year after year have been enlisting students to create their own greeting and postcard lines. Photocopy or scan and print your students line art and have them color their own and each other's. Work together to create poems and copy these, too. Older students with access to computers can type and print greetings in interesting fonts. Techno-wizards can create cards on computer and print multiple copies.

Students sell cards to parents, relatives and friends. Also, sell cards at PTA meetings, school fairs and parents' offices. Is there a parent who owns a copy machine?

**Rainforest Trading Cards** are a fun art and science project. Each student can choose an animal, bird, or insect and put a picture on one side of their card, the stats on the other. Where in the rainforest does it live? How does it get around? What does it eat? What eats it? Students may be inspired to make whole sets of cards to trade.

### **RRIOT! Rainforest Reading Instead of Television**

With the help of your school librarian, organize a Rainforest Reading Instead of Television pledge drive. Students raise funds by agreeing to turn off their television and read for a set number of minutes—every week for four or more weeks. Family members pledge to make a contribution for each week the student's goal is reached.

Encourage students and families to read together from books, newspapers or magazines and discuss what they're reading. All family members can participate by reading aloud or sharing stories and information from books they're reading alone.

### **Rock for the Rainforest**

At Our Lady of Peace School in Michigan, students produced a spring music program, including a variety of songs that "expressed our connection to and responsibility for all people and places in the world." Teacher Jennifer Burla mailed the proceeds to the BIG GIFT to the Earth. Your school chorus can protect the Earth too!

### **Rainforest Walk/Run**

Lake Champlain Waldorf School in Vermont, schedules a Rainforest Walk/Run every year in May, when it's warm but not too hot. All students participate (first through eighth grade). Younger children collect pledges for participation and walk the course with their teachers; older students collect pledges for distances run. Children who can't walk or run work the water tables.

At the end of the run, children are treated to ice cream by one or more local businesses, and they receive tree seedlings, also paid for by local businesses. They're encouraged to take their seedlings home and plant them that day. Sponsors are recruited by one teacher who has

developed a gardening curriculum.

In the weeks after the run, first graders count the money raised. It helps develop their math skills and makes them feel essential to the project.

You might like to invite some local celebrities to join your Rainforest Walk/Run, and notify your local newspaper and television stations of this important media event.

### **Recycle for the Rainforest**

If your local recycling center pays for recyclable materials, hold a drive or go door to door in neighborhoods to collect aluminum cans, plastics containers, and newspapers. Older students can be responsible for smashing cans, bundling papers, and monitoring collection sites. Parent volunteers can take materials to the recycling center.

Recycling for the Rainforest is a great way to help keep your campus litter-free! Use the money you make recycling to finance another event, like a bake sale or pageant, and teach your students about investment and returns.

### **Rainforest Plant Sale**

Many common and hardy houseplants originated in rainforests around the world, including African violet, aluminum plant, begonias, Christmas cactus, prayer plant, rubber plant, snake plant (aspidistra), zebra plant, and philodendron. Hold a rainforest plant sale. Ask for donations from your local nurseries and variety stores or ask parents to contribute new (healthy!) plants.

Have students make colorful tags to go with plants describing the rainforests they come from. Include information about exotic or endangered plants and species from the same rainforests. Older students can research this information themselves.

### **Rainforest Calendar**

In New Jersey, Rutgers Prep School created a beautiful and imaginative wall calendar. The calendar featured great line art of endangered species and inspiring rainforest stories written by students. Calendars sold for \$4.00 to help support the environment. Students of Marty Kaminsky's class in Ithaca New York also designed and sold a Rainforest Coloring Calendar and used proceeds to adopt rainforest acres.

### **Rainforest Jobs**

Barbara Stamiris reports: second-grade students at Plainfield Elementary School in Michigan, earned money at home doing environmental jobs like yard clean-up and water saver. As they brought their donations in, they wrote their names on paper leaves and hung them on their Kapok tree bulletin board.

Besides yard clean-up and water saving, your list of essential environmental jobs can include bundling newspaper for recycling, carrying recycling to the curb, turning off lights in empty rooms, turning down the volume on televisions and stereos, composting and other garden chores, raking leaves, cleaning bird cages and aquariums, recharging batteries, rinsing plastic bags, and finding out lots of ways to re-use and recycle everything. Brainstorm with students for more ideas. Send your list home to parents and ask them to think of even more jobs. Some parents might want to pay kids to turn off the television and read about rainforests, ecology, and conservation.

### **Rainforest Raffle**

Invite local merchants to donate prizes in exchange for publicity and good will. Prizes could include a basket of rainforest fruits and nuts; a spice rack with tropical spices; a bath collection with bay rum lotion, sandalwood soap and lime bath oil; or rainforest house plants. Write and distribute a press release for the local media to spread the word about the raffle.

### **Rainforest Bake Sale**

Hold a sale of goodies made from products grown in rainforests. Decorate the site of your sale with a rainforest mural, and make signs explaining that the ingredients for the goodies come from the rainforest. Children can tell shoppers about the rainforest and the Big Gift.

Incorporate a math lesson. . . Using recipes that include rainforest ingredients. Decide how many batches of each recipe you'd like to prepare and do the math to double or triple the recipes. Have students price items and figure out what the gross and net profits will be if they sell everything.

### **Rainforest Play**

Write a play with your students that tells why rainforests are important and what's happening to them now. Characters in the play can be animals, plants, or people living in the forest. Characters should describe what's happening to their homes and what it means for the rest of the world. Perform the play for other classes and/or parents.

Have students write a program for their play listing the characters and describing the setting. Include a list of the most important and interesting rainforest facts and include some drawings of animals and plants.

Build a rainforest in your hallway and charge admission (a dime or a quarter) for guided tours. Students can do wonders with a little imagination and some construction paper. Use tissue paper, paper bags, and papier-mache to make flowers, insects, animals, birds, and plants. Make cutouts of leaves and hang them from ceilings and on walls. Create a giant papier-mache tree and hang green and brown crepe-paper vines. Paint murals on kraft paper and attach them to walls with masking tape. Tape a kraft-paper river on your floor and fill it with crocodiles. Borrow a few philodendrons and snake plants (hardy rainforest natives) from home. Play a rainforest sounds tape or some appropriate music. Students who write and recite information about the rainforest may become "certified tour guides."

Incorporate lessons on flora and fauna into your rainforest construction. Assign each child an animal, bird, or insect to create from construction paper. Ask children to share what they learn about their creature's habitat and behaviors.

Learn about rainforest layers and place each animal in its forest habitat:

Forest Floor - jaguars, ocelots, peccaries, tapirs, coral snakes

Understory - monkeys and margays

Canopy - sloths and butterflies

Emergent Layer - toucans

Rivers and streams - crocodiles and hicatees