

Are You Booster-Wise?

Dr. David W. Vandewalker

A wise band director knows they cannot get everything done that is needed to make their program run and thrive; they harness parent power to help achieve their goals and objectives. Parent power is found in band booster organizations and, to work well in the 21st century, directors need to wisely examine recruitment of parent volunteers and sharing your vision to that team.

In the book *Remarkable! Maximizing Results through Value Creation*, Ross and Salyers wisely state, "Life is all about creating value. The secret to fulfillment is in seeking to bring value to every endeavor." Generally, parents want to be involved

in their kids' lives; they want to put forth some effort to "help" through a booster organization. To enable parents to give their most, you must wisely recruit them to specific tasks knowing two key components. The first aspect is understanding clearly defined roles. Instead of asking parents to generally, "Come and help," take time to understand the specific roles needed. Do you need a detail person to be a project leader, or do you need a people person to gather community sponsors for a fundraiser? Do you have small tasks for parents who are just beginning in your booster organization (i.e. help with uniforms once a month for a

three-month time period)? A wise leader knows the specific roles within the organization and specifically ask parents to be a part of something larger than themselves.

Secondly, call these volunteers to action. In the book, *The Wisest One in the Room*, Thomas Gilovich and Lee Ross report that most people remember experiences they didn't do rather than things that may or may not have turned out poorly. "When research participants are asked to list their biggest regrets, they report more regrets of inaction than action by a two to one margin. When asked more specifically whether their biggest regret in life involved something they



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**How to Build Sustainable
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**Friday, July 22, 2022
8:30a - 5p
Henry B. González
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San Antonio, TX**



**\$100 per booster club,
no limit on the number
of attendees**



Dr. David Vandewalker
Author, *Boosters to the Rescue*
Founder, Strategic Boosters Academy

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had done or something they failed to do, three times as many respondents named the latter” (p. 182). Many in your band community want to help; they need to be specifically called to participate based on their skills/passion and to assist with very specific task so they can be part of a bigger than life experience called BAND. Gilovich and Ross remind us that wise people enjoy life by working and playing as they strive and are actively engaged in the world. You can provide a myriad of opportunities by recruiting the right people for the right job in your booster organization.

As you recruit your army of volunteers, it's vital to share the vision. A wise director knows, “To create change, smooth the path or open a clear channel that links good intentions to effective action.” (p. 51). Do you want your team to move toward fewer fundraisers that have more “bang for the buck” instead of ten smaller, less monetarily effective events but, your team has been doing these ten events for years? A wise leader knows to create change, obstacles need to be eliminated that are standing in the way of the desired activity (p. 51). So, you must identify and then remove the activities that are standing in between the current situation and your vision. For instance, if your vision (regarding fundraising) is to harness your parent volunteers to have two large fundraisers a year (i.e. mattress sale or fruit sale) and move toward a community pops concert in the park event. The vision of moving away from product sales and toward community activities that provide fundraising opportunities is a big shift and wise leaders make the course clear and clean by determining “what is preventing the desired changes from taking place and then implanting strategies to remove the relevant barriers” (p. 52). You may have a contingent of volunteers that want to continue an activity (i.e. candy sale) just because “we’ve always done it.” So, you should “make the actions you want to discourage more difficult.” (p. 55). Therefore, do some work and point out all the tasks needed to have gather the many small items needed to participate in a candy sale. Encourage the team to think that a community outreach has lasting sustainability for

your program because you involve other community groups to play in the pops program (for a fee) as well as offer fundraising opportunities through the sale of group tables, group food, craft vendors, etc. These other community groups will look toward being a part of your group one day, thus creating an ongoing fundraiser. To make this change in vision happen, remember “The wisest in the room understand that the secret to getting big things done is to get the ball rolling, take additional smallish steps one at a time, block whatever channels make it easy to get sidetracked, and then count on the boost in motivation that comes when the end is in sight.” (p. 62).

A wise leader of a booster organization harnesses parent power to achieve their goals and objectives for their band. Be “booster-wise” by knowing the specific roles in your booster organization, encourage belonging in your organization by sharing a vision to be part of something larger than individuals themselves and offer your boosters purpose with specific, strategic calls to action.

David W. Vandewalker serves as the lead instructional coach for Strategic Musicians, executive director for the Servant Leadership Association for Music, and the principal conductor of the Georgia Wind Symphony. Additionally, he served as the Coordinator of Performing Arts for the Fulton County Schools (2016-2020), associate conductor for Tara Winds (2017-2019), assistant director of bands at Georgia State University (2012-2016) and Director of Bands at Harrison High School in Kennesaw, Georgia (2000-2012). Dr. Vandewalker earned degrees at Baylor University, Central Michigan University, and Boston University.

Dr. Vandewalker has led concerts before esteemed audiences such as the CBDNA/NBA, Music for All National Concert Festival, and the Midwest Clinic. Marching Bands under his instruction received honors including participation in the 57th Presidential Inaugural Parade, 2009 & 2014 Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, ranked top-ten nationally by the 2013 College Band Directors National Association (CBDNA), and Bands of America Grand National Finalist. He serves as an evaluator for the Music for All National Festival and Executive Director for Conn Selmer Parent Booster Community, is an author of multiple resources with GIA publications, and has shared professional development in North America, Asia, Europe, and Africa.

Dr. Vandewalker is a recipient of the Sudler Flag of Honor, ten-NBA Citation of Excellence Awards, three National Wind Band Honors Awards, and is an elected member of the American Bandmasters Association. David and Pamela reside in Marietta, GA where she serves over 800 children in music each week.