

CHALLENGE



PUT SOME PIZZAZZ INTO HOMECOMING

Homecoming activities at many schools tend to be very similar from year to year, with traditions including such things as bonfires, pep rallies, parades, and spirit days. The challenge for student leaders is to come up with new ideas to make the old traditions exciting each year. Inject some variety into your school's Homecoming activities with some of the following ideas.

TEAM SPOTLIGHT. While the football game is typically the focus of Homecoming week, there's no reason the rest of the fall sports teams can't also be recognized. One way to do this is to provide each fall sports team with the opportunity to run a lap through the halls at a designated time during the school day. For example, tennis team members run on Monday, cross country on Tuesday, volleyball on Wednesday, soccer on Thursday, and the football team on Friday. Precede the run through the halls with a short PA announcement or video clips with highlights of the team's season.

An alternative to the run through the halls is to have a parade of

teams into the pep rally similar to the parade of nations at the Olympics. After students are seated in the stands, have each team enter carrying a decorated sign while an announcer talks about the team. Team members circle the gym and proceed to a reserved section where they sit together for the rally.

SPIRIT RAFFLE. Give a raffle ticket to every student wearing school colors on the day of your pep rally. During the rally, draw tickets for various prizes.

CLASS SERVICE PROJECTS. Capitalize on the energy generated during spirit week by putting it to good use in a class service project. At Crofton HS in Nebraska, changes in football scheduling in 2010 had shifted the homecoming parade to Friday, which meant fewer people were available to view it. The school decided to replace the parade with community service projects.

Instead of working on parade floats, students and staff members worked on a variety of service projects in the local community.

Seventh grade students cleaned up a creek, eighth graders baked cookies and delivered them to a local senior housing facility. Freshmen clean up local parks and conducted a canned food drive while sophomores removed debris around the school's softball and football fields and cleaned the interiors of student transportation vehicles. Juniors helped cook meals and provided music and games at the senior housing facility. Seniors painted city fire hydrants and provided games, entertainment, and manicures to patients in a local nursing facility.

BLANKET CHALLENGE. Challenge your Homecoming rival to see which school can bring the most blankets to the game. Set up collection boxes marked with each team's name outside the gate and have people put their donations in the box corresponding to their school. During the first half of the game have students from both schools count the blankets and announce a winner during the second half of the game. Donate the blankets to a local homeless shelter.

TAILGATE PARTY. Tailgate parties are usually associated with college and professional football games, but they can easily be made a part of the high school tradition as well. Hold yours about two hours before the homecoming game. Have a disc jockey play music in the parking lot and put on a barbeque and bake sale for folks who don't want to bring their own food. You might want to remind students that school rules are in effect, similar to school dances.

DECORATED STOREFRONTS.

Encourage local businesses to get into the spirit by decorating their storefronts with slogans and school colors to go with the Homecoming theme. Award a plaque to the business that does the best job.

GLOW FOR IT. Give out free glow sticks to everyone in the stands at the Homecoming game to help the team "glow" for a victory.

KIDNAP THE COACH. On the Thursday of Homecoming week, kidnap the football coach and announce that he won't be returned unless a certain amount of money is raised. Have students collect money between classes and at lunch, and make announcements throughout the day about how much has been

raised. Donate the money to a local charity or use it to buy prizes for a spirit raffle.

SPIRIT DOLLARS. Sometimes people need just a little extra incentive to participate in spirit week activities. Reward people who participate in dress up days, noontime activities, and other events with play money that can be used to buy tickets for a prize raffle at the end of the week. Get local businesses to donate good prizes, or budget for a popular item to use as a prize, and watch your participation soar!

FLOATS MADE OF FOOD. At Port Huron HS in Michigan, homecoming organizers added a service twist to their requirements for homecoming floats: the floats had to be made mostly of canned food and other nonperishable food items. Members of each class had to first conduct a canned food drive to collect construction materials. Construction presented an extra challenge because students couldn't do anything that would damage the food labels. After the parade, the food was donated to different agencies in the community.

FLOATING FOOD DRIVE. Another idea involving canned food is to

have an empty pickup truck or flatbed trailer as one of the entries in the Homecoming parade and ask spectators to bring canned goods and nonperishable food items to donate as the "float" goes by. Volunteers would walk alongside to collect the donations.

SPIRIT DASH. Host a 5K run for charity on the Saturday morning of Homecoming week.

FOOD SCAVENGER HUNT.

Still another food-related idea is to create a food collection scavenger hunt as part of the class competition. At a designated time after school one day, provide class officers from each class with a list of food items and quantities. They are responsible for organizing class members to disperse and find as many of the items as possible in the time allowed. Award spirit points to the first, second, and third place classes.

CANAPALOOZA. On a designated day, have each class create a sculpture made of food cans that displays an artistic design relating to your Homecoming theme. Have a team of judges rate the creations and award points in the spirit week competition.

