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## Off the Deep End

Managing a swimming pool must be easy – just ask anyone who has ever stayed in a hotel. *How hard can it be?* Well, as contributing editor David Treber writes, it can be very difficult when you have to juggle schedules, fee negotiations, and pool staffing. Unlike Holiday Inns, college campuses have to make sure that enough life guards are present – even when “spontaneous” swimmers appear. Go to page 8 for the rest of the story.

# Campus EVENTS PROFESSIONAL

## Using a Facebook Mascot Account to Boost Relations with Students and Alumni

**C**ommunicating effectively with the Millennial generation has become a big concern for universities hoping to forge and maintain a connection with a generation brought up with online communication. For Kevin Tharp, information architect at the Missouri University of Science and Technology, the connection is forged using a Facebook account “owned” by the university mascot, Joe Miner. By serving as the voice behind Joe, Tharp has learned a great deal about how students interact using this powerful tool.

### The birth of Joe Miner

After attending a CASE conference presentation about Millennials, Tharp began pondering how to communicate with this generation. “One of the ways they are communicating with one another is through Facebook,” he notes. However, at the time, Tharp, like many who are not of the Millennial generation, was something of a novice at using this tool. “I had a personal account but didn’t have many ‘friends,’” he says of the Facebook process of adding preferred contacts.

Nonetheless, he understood the power that Facebook has to help universities connect with students and recent alumni. “We can go in where they live and communicate with them in their place,” he says. He wanted to find a way to interface with these Millennials while examining the dynamics of Facebook, so he created an account for Joe Miner, the university mascot.

“I didn’t want this to be an account that they say, ‘This is the institution,’ ”

Tharp says. “I didn’t want this to look like [it was run by] faculty or staff.” So, quietly, he registered an account for Joe. “I only told my immediate supervisor. I wanted this to be as viral as possible.”

### How mascots make friends

One of Facebook’s features is each user’s listing of “friends,” a group of people that he or she has invited into a relationship that they, as “friends,” have accepted. Tharp began to build Joe’s friends list organically.

For some time, Tharp grew the list in a very simple manner. Every time a user logs in, his or her list of current friends is shown in a different order, with a random selection appearing at the top of the list. Tharp simply logged in every day, chose the friend at the top of Joe’s list, and invited 10 of that person’s friends to become friends of Joe.

He did, however, begin to notice some holes in Joe’s friends list, and, after all, the university mascot should be friends with students who are involved in every aspect of university life. For example, Tharp noticed that there were no students from India on the list, so he looked up the Indian student group and sent out some friend invites from Joe.

As Joe’s circle of friends grew, Tharp began to learn more about the workings of Facebook, and he could see students and alumni taking a real interest in Joe. “When you look at how they interact with Joe, you can see they had developed a relationship,” he says. For example, at ➤

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## FACEBOOK MASCOT from page 1

one point Tharp moved Joe's birthday, and he was pleased to see that many of Joe's Facebook friends noticed. There is also a "wall" embedded in Facebook pages that visitors can "write" on, and Tharp notes that "Joe has had all kinds of discussions" on his wall.

The Facebook page has also become useful for publicizing events. Tharp says Joe "is regularly invited to events, which is what I wanted, because it becomes another way of publicizing events." And while inviting Joe to an event does not mean that a costumed mascot will attend, Tharp feels that students and alumni understand Joe's role on

JOE'S FACEBOOK ACCOUNT  
ALLOWS HIM TO ZERO IN ON  
INDIVIDUALS WHO MAY NEED  
SPECIFIC INFORMATION.

Facebook as the spirit of the university.

All this communicating and relationship-building happens through what Tharp calls "microinteractions." For example, there is a function on Facebook that allows a user to "poke," or send a quick greeting, to another user. Tharp, in his role behind Joe's mask, will "poke" other users, causing a fair amount of glee among those who are contacted this way by Joe Miner.

Although many of these interactions are brief, the net result is that Tharp can gauge campus opinions about a number of topics. For example, when the university changed its name from the University of Missouri-Rolla to Missouri S&T, opinions were strong, and Tharp could see that reflected in the discussions on Joe's wall. "It lets me see real quickly where things are going," he says.

Joe's Facebook account allows him to zero in on individuals who may need specific information. For example, Facebook allows users to update their status to reflect how they are feeling that particular day, and one day Joe noticed a student's status had changed to "I'm dumb." Joe replied that he didn't think the student was dumb, and

said that if there was an ongoing problem, people on campus were available to help, and he provided the URL of the counseling center. Fortunately, the student replied that feeling dumb was a transitory emotion, but the contact no doubt helped the student feel better.

With about 1,100 current friends, Tharp no longer recruits new ones, with the exception of incoming students. "I'm inviting them into the social network of the university. Some of them might have established a relationship with people before setting foot on campus," he explains.

## Guidelines for a mascot Facebook account

One of the most common questions Tharp hears about establishing a mascot Facebook account is who at the university should be in charge of such an account. While some universities use a committee to perform the task, Tharp has shied away from this approach. He feels that having a single individual behind the face of Joe Miner allows him to give Joe a unique voice.

Although Tharp has infused Joe with a personality, there are certain boundaries that he will not cross. For example, Joe doesn't "jump into religion or politics" in his discussions.

Additionally, Joe does not define the relationships he has with students and alumni; although Facebook allows users to specify the degree of their relationship, including "we dated" and "we hooked up," Tharp does not allow Joe to have input on this. "Joe doesn't negotiate relationships, but accepts anything they suggest," he says. This has led to some unintentionally humorous consequences; Tharp notes that to date about 14 people have said they "hooked up" with Joe.

One need look no further than Joe's Facebook pages to see the impact he has had on the students and alumni who visit him there. In a recent discussion identifying heroes, one student named Joe a hero. When pressed for a reason, the student posted a message on Joe's wall that said it all: "Easy. You're a mascot with a Facebook [account]. Making people's days with your antics. Hero." ■

# Goodbye, Silent Auction: Online Auctions Provide Greater Convenience, Fundraising Potential

If “Video Killed the Radio Star” more than 25 years ago with the birth of MTV, then similarly, the online auction could be making the silent auction a thing of the past. This is the message that Jon Carson, CEO of online auction platform cMarket, has for nonprofit event planners. Auctions have long been a part of the fundraising effort,” Carson says. “Live auctions are alive and doing fine, but silent auctions are broken.”

There are several reasons why silent auctions are not the most effective fundraising practice. The company points to a number of confounding issues, such as bidding limitations, logistics requirements, limits on the marketing value of items, and a lack of best practices data. One of the most interesting limitations is the lack of “competitive arousal,” a condition that Carson describes as “when things get silly before it [the auction] closes.”

Clearly, a live auction still has this last-minute frenzy built in, as bidders pay rapt attention and vie to get their bids in while in direct competition with one another. A silent auction, however, dilutes the frenzy; conversation, entertainment, and food compete for attention with the items up for bid. “The clipboard doesn’t exactly get up and follow you around the room,” Carson says. The online auction changes this, allowing colleges and universities to tap into their unique resources, target a wide range of bidders, and use tools that eliminate the need to lug items for bidding to and from the event venue.

## Targeting alumni; drawing on resources

“The Internet removes the barriers of time and geography,” says Carson. “This is particularly important for higher education, because alumni are dispersed.” As one might expect, the Internet can allow a fund-raising auction to reach a much larger audience of alumni, including those who could not travel to a silent auction event and those who could not make it because of time constraints and/or

scheduling difficulties.

Obviously, the fundraising potential of an event increases dramatically if one can target bidders in several different time zones and walks of life, rather than simply those who can attend an on-site event.

There is another important reason why online auctions are a valuable tool for colleges and universities to employ. “Alumni typically go dark in giving for 10 years,” notes Carson. During this period of getting settled, establishing careers, and perhaps starting families, young alumni can lose the connection with their alma mater, and some may never regain the bond they had with the institution when they were students.

This has always been a problem that development professionals have had to deal with; the difference with the current crop of young alumni, however, is that this generation is exceedingly comfortable using the Internet to communicate and connect. Institutions of higher education can capitalize on this comfort by hosting online auctions.

Young alumni can “attend” this kind of auction at virtually any point in their day, regardless of geography, and maintain their relationship with their university. If the auction is also well stocked with items for bid in a range of prices, the young alumni may also be enticed to bid and buy, starting a lifelong habit of contributing to their college or university.

“Higher education has an advantage” when it comes to getting people to attend an online auction, Carson says. He notes that colleges and universities are “the most advanced nonprofits at developing an email list.” Institutions of higher education tend to be very deliberate about maintaining contact information for alumni and friends of the institution, making it easy to send invitations to an online auction.

Additionally, “alumni participation tends to be high,” Carson says. With colleges and universities adept at contacting large percentages of their alumni, and with large percentages of those alumni willing to participate,

## Three more tips for a successful online auction

Jon Carson, CEO of cMarket, offers the following tips for online auction success:

1. Get started at least three months in advance. Carson notes a strong correlation between the success of an online auction and the amount of advance preparation done.

2. Draw on a variety of sources for auction items. In addition to professors and staff, consider asking parents, students, and alumni to contribute.

3. Get young alumni involved in a variety of ways, including contributing items and bidding as a part of the auction. This will help solidify alumni relations with the university in addition to helping the auction succeed.

Carson says the demand side is healthy for online auctions.

## Managing items

If the demand side for an online auction benefiting higher education is robust, then what about the supply side? Obviously, if many bidders are attending an online auction, they will expect to find a variety of items to bid on, and Carson finds that higher education excels in this area as well.

Higher education “has a ready ability to develop items,” Carson says. Development professionals hosting an online auction can draw on professors and staff at the university to create unique affinity items and experiences for their auction catalogs. For example, a “be an assistant football coach” experience could allow the high bidder to come to campus, hang out with the football coaching staff, participate in practice, or even be on the sidelines during a home game.

However, even the most well-connected development pro-

## SILENT AUCTION from page 3

fessional can find the creation of a complete auction catalog draining, and this is where companies like Carson's cMarket can help. Through cMarket's cMarketplace, participating institutions have access to thousands of items available on consignment to add to their auction catalogs.

For example, universities that want to add a \$10,000 dream vacation to Paris to their catalogs could find it on cMarketplace with an initial value of \$4,000. A simple click adds it to the

university's auction catalog with a minimum bid of \$4,000; if it sells, the university will pay only \$4,000 for the trip and can pocket the rest for its fundraising efforts.

Carson explains that cMarket also has a number of tools and pieces of information to make online auction creation simpler for colleges and universities. Through cMarket Auction Manager, universities can build their own auction website, and an email engine allows users to import their email lists and send notifications about the online auction.

Additionally, "we now have very interesting data about item sell-through

rates and bidding rates," says Carson. "The data is really key; we'll give them the data roadmap even if they don't sign up [with cMarket]." This allows universities to better determine the scale of online auction they need to meet their fundraising goals.

Overall, cMarket has helped colleges and universities raise some \$1.8 million for their charitable goals. Online auctions, Carson says, "take the auction from an art to a science."

Contact cMarket at [www.BiddingForGood.com](http://www.BiddingForGood.com) or [www.cmarket.com](http://www.cmarket.com). ■

# A Fresh Look at a Traditional Day: Tips for Observing a Regular Holiday

**W**hen Cristen Porter, coordinator of community service, and Larry Williamson, director of the Black Cultural Hale Center, at Ohio State University in Columbus sat down to plan the annual observation of the Martin Luther King Day holiday, they faced a challenge common to many event planners: how to respect the tradition of a regularly occurring holiday while keeping the observation appropriate and fresh.

Their solution—a day of service bracketed by supporting activities such as a send-off celebration, speeches, a march, and a lunch—yields tips that others can follow.

### 1. Coordinate with larger efforts.

The Martin Luther King Day service project is part of a national initiative to make the King holiday a "day on, not a day off" (see [www.MLKday.gov](http://www.MLKday.gov)). Using this national initiative as a jumping-off point allows OSU to participate in something larger than it could create on a single campus,

with students aware that they are joining other students nationwide in a day of service.

**2. Use speeches to teach and maintain interest.** Porter notes that she works with the office of minority affairs and Williamson to "make sure we respect what is most important about the King Day holiday." This year, in Williamson's send-off speech he discussed why the holiday should be seen as a "day on," but every year's focus is different.

### 3. Allow for flexibility and choice.

Even though the national focus and the meaning of the King Day holiday remain consistent from year to year, there is always an opportunity for choices. This year, students could pick from about 30 different services sites throughout the Columbus area. A focus this year was on assisted living sites, along with other places such as the zoo.

### 4. Tap into student enthusiasm.

Porter notes that the students who come out to participate in the King Day service projects are typically well educated about the civil rights movement, Dr. King, and the meaning of the holiday. They also, she says, are very in tune with the idea of serving one's community, many of them having participated in service projects from the time they were in middle school. This lays a foundation for enthusiasm for an annual morning of service.

### 5. Take advantage of consistency.

Porter notes that "the physical logistics of the day are the same every year." Not only does this lend a sense of consistency to the event, it also makes the celebration much easier to plan, allowing Porter and Williamson to focus on the details and the message that make each year's observation memorable. ■

# The Top 10 Ways to Reduce Your Email and Reclaim Your Productivity

**Marsha Egan, CPCU, PCC**

We all know that email use is on the rise. Every day people at all levels of academic administration complain about the number of emails they receive, how much work it is to handle them, and how stressful just opening up the inbox is. But instead of letting excessive amounts of email control you, here are 10 sure-fire ways to manage your outgoing messages in order to reduce the numbers that come in.

- 1. Be very clear.** Make sure that the content of your email is completely understandable by taking a small amount of time on the front end to read through each message before you send it. This can go a long way toward avoiding return questions.
- 2. Make the subject line detailed.** By including detailed information in the subject line, your recipient will be able to sort and respond to your message with the right priority. The detailed subject line will also help you sort and handle responses.
- 3. Use only one subject per email.** The reality is that most people skim. If you put two requests in one email, there is a strong likelihood that only one of them will be responded to. It is more effective to send two emails with different subjects than to incorporate two subjects into one email. This practice is also helpful for people who want to file their messages.
- 4. Place the main point, assignment, or request in the first two lines of the email.** People have a tendency to build up to a conclusion when they write; this makes it very difficult, at times, for readers to figure out what the main issue or request is. By putting your main point in the first two sentences, you can avoid misinterpretation and get your reader

focused on exactly what you want, right from the get-go.

- 5. Copy only the people who need to read the message.** For every extra person copied on an email, you have more potential to receive a response. That creates more unnecessary email for both of you!
- 6. Resist getting involved in threads that are not related to your work.** This tends to happen most often when we respond to emails that we are excessively copied on. If this happens to you, just don't respond. Once you get involved, you become a player in the game and your workload increases.
- 7. Send less email.** While this may seem a no-brainer, email begets email. Sometimes it is better and easier to pick up the phone, or to just not respond.
- 8. Have a detailed signature line.** Make sure that all your contact information is in the signature line of every email you send. That way, anyone who needs to contact you will not have to email asking for your address, fax number, etc.
- 9. Make it a group standard to use the electronic calendar.** When everyone places all their appointments in the electronic calendar, this makes it very easy to schedule meetings and avoids emails going back and forth with questions like "Are you available next Wednesday at 2:00 p.m.?"
- 10. Avoid controversial or argumentative emailing.** When you engage in an emotional discussion via email, the emails will fly. Emotional issues should never be handled by email; it is best to make a phone call or handle the situation in person, for the sake of your inbox and the health of the office dynamic.

While each one of these may save only a small amount of time or reduce your email numbers by only a few, collectively these actions have the potential to significantly help you control the number of the emails you receive. Email is here to stay; the sooner you develop productive habits regarding its use, the more time you will have for what is really important in your life.

For more information, visit [www.eganemailolutions.com](http://EganEmailSolutions.com).

*Marsha Egan, CPCU, PCC, is CEO of the Egan Group, Inc., in Reading, Pa., and an ICF-certified professional coach. Her recently released ebooks *Help! I've Fallen into My Inbox and Can't Climb Out! Five Email Self-Management Strategies That Will Add Hours to Your Week and Reclaim Your Workplace Email Productivity: Add BIG BUCKS to Your Bottom Line* can be found at <http://EganEmailSolutions.com>. ■*

## Introducing New Editorial Board Members

*Campus Events Professional* would like to introduce the two newest members of our Editorial Board. They will be responsible for suggesting article topics, identifying experts, serving as resources, and occasionally writing for these pages. Look for articles from each of these board members in upcoming issues.

Melissa Werner, M.Ed., is director of university ceremonies in the office of the senior vice president and secretary of the university for Arizona State University. She is also a co-founder of the North American Association of Commencement Officers.

Kathy Nelson, Ph.D., CSEP, CMP, is director of hospitality administration and executive master in event management at William F. Harrah College of Hotel Administration, University of Nevada Las Vegas. ■



# Resources

New and noteworthy publications for the event planning professional

### People-to-People Fundraising: Social Networking and Web 2.0 for Charities

Ted Hart, James M. Greenfield,  
Sheeraz D. Haji  
Hardcover (also available as an e-book)  
262 pp., \$34.95  
ISBN 978-0-470-12077-4  
Jossey-Bass (2007)

From Jossey-Bass:

Cutting-edge strategies, data, and techniques from the world's foremost e-Philanthropy experts.

Giving donors the chance to participate in and contribute to the success of a charity beyond the online gift is proving to be successful for many nonprofits. Find out how to make the most of your online fund-raising efforts with the expert advice found in *People to People Fundraising: Social Networking and Web 2.0 for Charities*.

Featuring a foreword by James Austin of Harvard University, this hands-on guide is filled with creative ideas, techniques, and suggestions to help readers harness the power of social networking for any charity, including:

- Getting supporters to do more than give
- Evaluating your Web site
- Blogs – an important development in fundraising
- The power of celebrity in building communities
- How to leverage an individual supporter's social network
- Online marketing to ethnic and special-interest communities
- How to influence single-gift Web donors to become monthly donors
- The opportunities and challenges of multichannel marketing
- Why e-Philanthropy succeeds –

seven pillars of e-success

- Connecting with planned gift donors and prospects
- Buttons and banners on company Web sites

Based on the authors' decades of combined real-life experiences plus scores of international case studies demonstrating e-Philanthropy success stories from around the world, *People to People Fundraising* provides a wealth of proven, practical techniques to help you boost your organization's success.

### How to Write Successful Fundraising Letters, 2nd Edition

Mal Warwick  
Paperback  
336 pp., \$34.95  
ISBN 978-0-7879-9908-7  
Jossey-Bass (2008)

From Jossey-Bass:

Once again, Mal Warwick has shown why he is the "guru of direct marketing." Readers of the second edition of *How to Write Successful Fundraising Letters* will find themselves returning to its pages again and again to enhance and reposition their own fundraising efforts.

Chapters include:

#### Part 1: Motivating Your Audience

1. Why People Respond to Fundraising Letters
2. How a Fundraising Letter Is Like a Personal Visit
3. What Donors Really Think About Fundraising Letters
4. Characteristics of an Effective Fundraising Letter
5. A Leisurely Tour Through One Successful Appeal

#### Part 2: The Letter Writer's Plan of Action

6. What to Do Before You Write Any Fundraising Letter
7. Eight Steps Toward Successful

Fundraising Letters

8. The Cardinal Rules of Fundraising Letters
9. You're Writing for Results – Not for a Pulitzer Prize

#### Part 3: Customizing Your Appeal

10. Recruiting New Donors: Starting Intimate Conversations with Strangers
11. Welcoming New Donors: Treating People Like Part of the Family
12. Appealing for Special Gifts: Bringing Your Case Down to Earth
13. Asking for Year-End Contributions: Making the Most of the Holiday Spirit
14. Recruiting Monthly Sustainers: Offering Small Donors a Chance for Greater Impact
15. Soliciting High-Dollar Gifts: Framing the Case for Major Contributions
16. Going for Bigger Gifts: Persuading Donors to Make an Extra Commitment
17. Seeking Annual Gifts: Building Long-Term Loyalty, One Year at a Time
18. Thanking Your Donors: Friend-Raising Before Fundraising
19. Promoting Legacy Gifts: Seeking the Ultimate Commitment

#### Part 4: Using E-Mail and the Internet

20. Writing Online Appeals: Harnessing the Power of the Internet

#### Part 5: The Letter Writer's Toolbox

- A. Sixty Successful Outer-Envelope Teasers
- B. Fifty-Four Strong Leads for Fundraising Letters
- C. Ninety Ways to Use the Word "You" in a Fundraising Letter
- D. Sixty-Three Ways to Handle Awkward Copywriting Transitions
- E. Forty-One Powerful Ways to End a Fundraising Letter
- F. Fifty-Eight Ways to Start a P.S. in a Fundraising Letters
- G. Fifteen Ways How to Not Get Results





## RESOURCES

### RESOURCES from page 6

#### How to Talk About Hot Topics on Campus: From Polarization to Moral Conversation

Robert J. Nash, DeMethra LaSha Bradley, Arthur W. Chickering  
Hardcover  
288 pp., \$38.00  
ISBN 978-0-7879-9436-5  
Jossey-Bass (2008)

#### From Jossey-Bass:

*How to Talk About Hot Topics on Campus* fills a gap in the student services and teaching and learning literature by providing a resource that shows how to construct and carry out difficult conversations from various vantage points in the academy.

It offers a theory-to-practice model of conversation for the entire college campus that will enable all constituencies to engage in productive and civil dialogue on the most difficult and controversial social, religious, political, and cultural topics.

Using concrete frameworks, ground rules, and examples, the authors clearly demonstrate how to put *moral conversation* into action. They map out how to justify, compose, launch, and facilitate respectful and engaging conversations.

#### What's Happening to Public Higher Education? The Shifting Financial Burden

Edited by Ronald G. Ehrenberg  
Paperback  
408 pp., \$24.95  
ISBN 978-0-8018-8713-0  
The Johns Hopkins University Press (2007)

#### From Johns Hopkins:

American public higher education appears to be in a state of crisis. Declining funding for public colleges and universities has led to increasing tuition and declining faculty salaries relative to those of private institutions, threatening access and compromising quality.

Ronald G. Ehrenberg and a team of experts examine the current state of public higher education, the public policies that shape it, and what the future may hold for institutions and their students, faculty, and administrators. Sounding a warning about the declining condition of public higher education, Ehrenberg and his contributors make a compelling case for increasing support for these institutions.

An overview of national trends and the forces that drive them is followed by studies of the financial complexities found in representative states (California, Georgia, and Texas, among

others), an analysis of the implications of these developments, and prescriptions for improving public higher education at the state and national levels.

In concluding chapters, contributors provide valuable assessments of the critical issues and their practical implications—from state policy initiatives to the privatization of public universities.

#### Request for Submissions

*Campus Events Professional* invites submissions of articles. Articles should be 800 or 1200 words long (or length as arranged with the editor) and submitted at the end of the first week of the month, preferably as a Word document via email. We are also looking for regular readers to assist the editor with generation of topics for coverage in future issues. Must be available for a phone call or an email exchange. Please contact the editor at [jcpatterson@prodigy.net](mailto:jcpatterson@prodigy.net).

### OPINION from page 8

church would not hear “NO.” They were going to hold this event and it was going to be the biggest, baddest lollapalooza our pool had ever witnessed.

We told them no again. I suppose I could have brought in the cops, but I didn’t.

Stephen, bless his soul, put up with it, especially when I gave staff T-shirts to the water aerobics instructor and two wonderful Poolesville HS football

players, all of whom had their lifeguarding certification on them. Yes, they really were from Poolesville, and they would not get in the pool. These high schoolers stayed on the side and life-guarded. Need a job next summer, guys? We announced to the church that we had to close from three to four o’clock when I let the water aerobics class meet, so Stephen could go help the band, and then we reopened the rest of the afternoon. It was a brutally hot afternoon and that pool was a lifesaver for the groups.

Coach Parker liked that we waived

that portion of his bill. The football teams behaved—they love the diving board. We made it through that afternoon and we kept our guests safe.

Were the soccer girls upset? No, they really liked having all the football players swimming with them.

David Treber is director of conferences and events for Frostburg State University. He is a contributing editor to *Campus Events Professional*. ■



# Off the Deep End

**David Treber**

**T**he Office of Conferences & Events runs the campus pool for the summer. We do this mainly because it solves several problems. When the pool was under Athletics, we'd have part-time lifeguards patching together three different pool gigs. Staffing was not as reliable.

I offered to direct the pool if I could employ the staff out of a separate account from Conferences; then I also got those students for other summer tasks, such as camp registrations. I was able to expand Conferences staffing by six students, all of whom were now on the full-time payroll with FSU.

This method also allowed us to continue the wellness activities and birthday parties that were so popular during the school year. The community loves our swimming pool!

Running the pool brings in revenue, but it also brings in more than its share of headaches. The group that pays FSU's "Activities for Life" (an annual membership fee) is not very laid back. These guests are addicted to that pool.

My summer camps are not any better. Pools are expensive to run. Groups want access to our swimming pool when they want it, and they would rather not pay a dime for it. They want a 24-hour open-swim environment, like hotels offer. But while everyone understands that a hotel pool is not exclusively theirs, our groups don't always understand this about our pool.

Further complicating the problem is that while hotels can post a "No lifeguard on duty. Swim at your own risk" sign, we have to have lifeguards on duty in a ratio of one for each 25 swimmers.

That means that when a group decides to crash another scheduled activity, we run the risk of being out of compliance and unable to ensure everyone's safety. We don't have to deal with this. We could just close down the pool all summer, but we

don't want to do that.

So we set out to develop a rate for our costs and to hire the needed lifeguards to be fair to all our groups and help keep supply and demand in balance. But it is a struggle; the groups don't want to participate.

The worst problems are created by groups that have no respect for the camping regulations covering the number of guests who can fit into that water safely, and who also have no

**THERE WAS A MOMENT LAST SUMMER—THE LAST WEEKEND, IN FACT—DURING WHICH I FELT LIKE AN ENABLER WHO HELPS ADDICTS GET THAT NEXT FIX.**

respect when I say I have already reserved the pool for someone else.

What often happens is this: When we provide a tour of the campus, I offer the chance for a group to reserve the pool, but they don't tell me they want it until they arrive for camp. Even then, they don't tell me until I finagle a schedule; then they ask, "About that one to five p.m. activity you have listed..."

Yes, this really happens.

There was a moment last summer—the last weekend, in fact—during which I felt like an enabler who helps addicts get that next fix. As happens almost any summer, another addiction that is hard to keep at bay is addiction to "vacation." Students get told there may not be a lot of vacation time in this job, but once they get a little money in their hands they always want to go out and do something with it. They become close friends with one another over the summer, and suddenly I am down two or three staffers because a group decides to vacation

together.

I started with six, but by that last weekend, Stephen was the only lifeguard I had.

Stephen was not real keen on being at that pool either. A standout member of the drum line from his high school days, Stephen was a great liaison for the band groups. Stephen had promised he would be there for band camp's checkout. At the same time, we had all our other groups demanding their turn to swim.

Soccer coach Parker is the one who had reserved the pool, working well with me as he always did. His camp was done, but one girls' soccer team had gotten set up for the weekend, including some pool time for them to get a break from the soccer.

We knew that "Activities for Life" would get very upset if we tinkered with that early afternoon weekend lap time we had finally given them. We had all our football camps arriving, too, because our coaches told them it was OK. A water aerobics crowd had taken to meeting on a regular basis every time there was an open swim, in a corner they wanted to themselves, with a CD player on deck.

And I was there all afternoon because I realized that the demands from soccer, football, and water aerobics would each pale in comparison to the Presbyterian church. They had met with me many times, but they were not going to request the pool when I wouldn't cave and let them have it at no charge.

That morning, though, 100 youth wanted to meet with me to plan out a relay on land and water they had hatched late the previous night. They would all start in the auxiliary gym, race through the side door and across the pool deck, jump in, swim across, and race out and down the concrete steps, probably exploding firecrackers in the stairwell and having a judging for best reenactment of the stoning of Stephen while they were at it.

At least they asked! The

