

Children's Ministry on a Budget!

Working in children's ministry requires a lot of STUFF!!! Between events, crafts, object lessons, etc., a lot of STUFF circulates through your ministry. But the problem for many children's ministry leaders is that they are working with a very limited budget, if any.

How do you combat a minimal or non-existent budget? You get creative!

First, you get organized! Put all like items together. One of the biggest wastes in children's ministry is purchasing an item you already have...but can't find! Always shop this area FIRST before purchasing new items.

Go through ALL the closets in your church. Know what is available to you! Make a list of what you find and who it belongs to. Ask permission before removing any item from its location.

Ask! Ask! Ask! Make your needs known...someone in your church family has what you are looking for...they are just waiting to find a new home for it...or they are willing to loan it to you!

Shop after holiday sales. Many stores mark their after-holiday sales down to almost nothing. When you see a good sale, grab it! You WILL find a use for it.

Check thrift stores or yard sales for props or interesting items to reuse or repurpose.

At Christmas or Back to School time (when supplies go on sale), set up a drop box and request items that you need for the children's ministry. Glue, markers, Kleenex...it is all on sale during "Back to School" time.

If you get the question "could you use this?" always say "YES" (within reason). I have accepted items many times and am ALWAYS amazed at how "God provided...even before I knew I had a need."

Purchase items while in season. For instance, if you know you will need bubbles for a fall festival, purchase them during the summer. They are much cheaper and nonexistent in stores once summer is over.

Pass out a "Gifts and Talents" survey to your church family. (A great time to reach your adults in before their Adult Bible Study class begins. Talk with the adult Bible Study teacher and ask

them to pass out the forms to each of their adults.) Find out what strengths and talents those in your congregation possess. If someone is good at sewing...hit them up when you have a sewing need. If you need something built...ask the carpenters in your church to build it for you. etc. This is a great way to get the adults involved with your children's ministry.

Note: If you host a Mid-Week Adventures during the summer, this survey will be a great tool. For several years, I had a different adult come in each Wednesday night (summer) to teach the children a different craft/talent. The children love it...and the adults did too.

The greatest element of a great kid's ministry is great volunteers that invest in the lives of kids!

Big programs, buildings, and expensive stuff cannot replace relationships!

Think outside the box. Use everyday objects to help make props, games, decorations.

During VBS ask for any themed "sit in place" decorations that your congregation may already have. Some of my favorite VBS themes...western, farm, and beach themes were all done with few handmade decorations. Many of the items were borrowed and were simply set in place. I sat arrangements around the different areas such as a couple bales of hay with a saddle and cowboy hat, several crates stacked oddly and filled with plastic veggies, wooden pallets with rope and a huge fishing bobber made from an inflatable ball. etc. They turned out amazing! And the cost was minimal. When VBS was over, everyone picked up their items and clean up was a breeze!

Recycle:

Get creative...if you have an item that you purchase every week...and it comes in a cute bottle/jar/container...think of something useful that you can make instead of tossing it into recycling. If there is a specific bottle/jar/container that you need more of, ask your congregation to save them for you.

Take "near empty" bottles of paints and mix them together to create new colors. Make sure the colors will work well together before mixing.

Pour several bottles of "near empty" glue together to create new bottles of glue.

"IF" you have a recycling center near you, visit it often! We have an amazing recycling center and can request items that we are looking for. For instance, I have used the yoplait jars to

create lanterns and the Starbucks Frappuccino bottles that resemble the old milk bottles for our Bookies and Milk (Book drive) party.

