



## The Greenwich Country Day Kicks Off for \$50M!

**Sally Harris**  
Director of the Capital Campaign

The Greenwich Country Day School, a Nursery through 9th grade independent school in Greenwich, CT, recently kicked off its first capital campaign in ten years. The core element is a new upper school building to house 7th through 9th grades, but it encompasses other changes on the campus including a new theater, additional faculty housing, as well as additional endowment dollars. The campaign "Reaching for Tomorrow, The Campaign for Country Day" has a \$50 million goal.

When planning our public campaign kick off, Rocky and Becky worked with the campaign Core Committee to think through the purpose, timing, and tone of the event.

- 1) **Purpose:** Our purpose was twofold: on one level we wanted to inform everyone connected with Country Day that we were launching a campaign but since most of our donors are current parents and were aware of the new building and campaign plans, our real purpose was to generate enthusiasm for the project and the campaign.
- 2) **Tone, timing and presentation:** We wanted to make the event as much fun as possible. This meant a Friday evening cocktail party concluding with very brief ending remarks from the headmaster, the president of the board of trustees, and the campaign chair. BREVITY of the presentation was key. And we wanted to end the evening with a compassionate call to action by our campaign chair and a tug-at-the-heartstrings video. Our headmaster enlisted a budding ninth-grader videographer to conceive, direct and film the video. It wasn't slick or professional but, in four minutes, it captured the heart and the essence of the school and the whole campaign. The video featured many upper school teachers expressing their excitement for the new building, and joining students of all ages to proclaim that we could do this "together!"

We wanted to highlight the project, not the donors. There was no mention of any specific gifts or donors. We announced total amount raised to date and that 100% of our Board and our faculty and staff had already participated.

- 3) **Planning:** Rocky and Becky suggested we enlist a volunteer to assist with event planning. We are fortunate to have a Trustee/alumna/current parent who is a professional event planner. She knows the school, knows how to throw a great party, and prefers to work alone. So the preparation required virtually no volunteer time except for hers. She hired a caterer and an event production company. She also developed the overall look and feel of the venue and used our facilities crew and the event production company to do the set up. This took the burden off our parent volunteers who organize most other events on campus, and enabled them to enjoy the evening. Plus, the event was in the gym and we welcomed her new ideas for how to dress up this tried and true location!

- 4) **Rallying the troops:** Besides our campaign core committee, we had assembled an energetic committee of 60 parent volunteers. In order to generate enthusiasm, we needed to make sure there was a crowd! Those 60 did the rallying by specifically inviting their friends to the kick off and in some cases planning to go to dinner afterwards. In addition to parents, many of our other constituents attended—alumni, faculty, parents of alumni and grandparents.
- 5) **Fun give-aways:** In keeping with the FUN theme, we ordered M&Ms in school colors with the campaign logo printed on them (inspired by a gift given to us by some very creative campaign consultants we know...), pulled the 60 volunteers together for a massive BAGGING party and handed them out the night of the Kick Off. Attached to the bag was a little tag with the logo on the front and on the inside: "Be part of the future!"

What made sense and worked for GCDS was that we ascertained at the very beginning what we wanted to accomplish, what our audience wanted, what would bring out a crowd and how to make the best use of our volunteers. We deemed it a success. It generated all the buzz and excitement that we had hoped for, and more! Thank you Rocky and Becky for your invaluable help.

## Fall Board Retreat

Have you already planned your Fall Board Retreat? If not, now is the time and here are some development-related suggestions for what it might include:

- 1) **Provide** special orientation for new trustees that should include an overview of the development office: staff and programs.
- 2) **Present** a complete review of fundraising for the year, and a plan for next year. You might include a basic calendar listing dates for the annual fund leadership dinner and other cultivation events, auction or gala dates. List the events' volunteer leader(s). Make sure trustees understand their role in each of the listed events.
- 3) **Share** good examples of successful cultivation and stewardship. If possible, have a recent major gift donor provide a testimonial.
- 4) **Review** the current strategic plan, and update it if necessary. What are the topics up for review this year? Are there faculty members and/or students who could address and excite the Board about educational initiatives for the coming year?
- 5) If you are not in a campaign, are there special capital needs that will require special funding? If so, is there a plan? If not, do you need to **create** one?
- 6) If you are in the midst of a campaign, or are about to be, make sure your board understands their roles and seek their help early and often. Is there anything that can be done to **reinvigorate** the campaign?
- 7) Alumni, alumni, alumni. What can YOU do to keep them close to the School? They are the link to the future of your school. **Seek** ideas for better cultivation from Board members. Use alumni testimonials where possible.

Please call or email us at [fordassociates.com](http://fordassociates.com) if you'd like help in planning your Fall Board Retreat.