

## Successful Referendum Campaign for Southwest Dubois Schools 2009

By Jeffrey L. Bounds, chairman, 'YES for SOUTHRIDGE' PAC

- 1) Hire the right architectural firm
  - a. Most of us knew nothing about how to run a successful campaign. Your architect is more than just the one that designs your building. The right one will help you get it passed.
- 2) Engage the community
  - a. Superintendent organized CARE (Community Action to Reform Education) years before the renovation project began to get traction.
    - i. Met monthly to discuss issues
    - ii. Talked with teachers/coaches/administrators about needs
    - iii. Toured buildings to view wear, damage, needed upgrades
    - iv. Showed community that it's their own citizens that recognized the need and now want the renovations, not just the Superintendent
  - b. Superintendent educated teachers on how they can participate in campaign
  - c. Met with business/agricultural leaders in the community
    - i. Worked with them to find items that seemed 'excessive' or 'frivolous'
    - ii. Negotiated a dollar amount that they'd not just 'not oppose', but would support.
      1. Original estimate was \$39m. When made public, a group of business/ag leaders formed to object to the amount, based on tax impact. We met 3 times to discuss and negotiated an amount of \$22.5m. There was no organized opposition to the referendum.
    - iii. Asked them to allow use of their name as endorsement
- 3) What we felt we did right
  - a. Regular short articles in local paper (one of our members was responsible for content)
    - i. Highlighted various items and explain why it's needed and how it's going to be fixed.
  - b. Engaged booster club leaders and members, highlighted the benefits of the renovation to their special interest areas... ie. football- new dressing rooms, new weight room facilities, etc.; band, softball, baseball, wrestling, swimming, etc., all saw improvements to the facilities they use at the school and members were supportive.
  - c. Met with local clubs, made presentations whenever possible to answer questions, dispel rumors, highlight the benefits, discuss taxation issues.
  - d. Worked diligently to consistently build list of supporters & likely 'Yes' voters
    - i. Secured list of names of teachers, past and present.
    - ii. Developed list of voting age students, past and present.
    - iii. Placed info booths at entrances to home football games
      1. Set up tents to attract attention
      2. Passed out literature (brief and simple)
      3. Passed out stickers ("I am voting YES for Southridge!")
      4. Requested endorsements (signature allowed use of name)
      5. Asked for help at future events
      6. Wore 'Yes for Southridge' t-shirts/stickers
      7. Displayed banner in prominent locations
      8. Held drawing during football game, required registration with name & contact info
    - iv. Identified likely 'Yes' voters on registered voter list (Contact Cty. Clerk)
      1. Those recently graduated with memory of shortfalls at school
      2. Those with children progressing through the school system
      3. Those with graduated children but were involved at one time
    - v. Saved names of those that signed petitions (always get cell phone & email at every opportunity)
    - vi. Paid to have database built and organized with important information
      1. Name, address, cell phone, email, source of contact info

- e. Created Website
  - i. Highlights of project
  - ii. Endorsers names scroll across page
  - iii. Tax calculator available for visitors use.
  - iv. Posted Ballot Question exactly as it would be seen on election day
  - v. Fact Sheet & FAQ section
- f. Created Facebook presence
  - i. Sent periodic reminders to vote on election day and to encourage parents to do so.
  - ii. Sent periodic messages with info on highlights of project.
  - iii. Worked it every day, either with 'Friend Requests, Friend Finders, or messages'.
- g. Herbstfest Parade
  - i. Annual festival, timing was a few weeks before election
  - ii. Recruited 30 people to wear t-shirts and walk parade route
  - iii. Distributed flyers, shake hands, ask for "Yes" votes
- h. Booths at Student Registration Day
  - i. Answer questions, get endorsements w/contact info
- i. Postcard Project
  - i. First mailing listed facts about project. What it does /doesn't include. (in-home 10 days prior)
  - ii. Second mailing emphasized importance of voting, polling locations (in-home 2 days prior)
  - iii. Promoted website
  - iv. Focused on likely 'Yes' voters ONLY.
- j. Phone Blitz
  - i. Recruited 20+ callers, developed script, called EVERY identified probable 'Yes' voter, left VM or live message, questions directed to committee members, served sandwiches & drinks to participants
  - ii. Scheduled on Sunday and Monday before Tuesday elections.
- k. Yard Signs
  - i. Check local ordinances for size, placement dates, duration
  - ii. Placed in high traffic areas (around school property, intersections, etc.)
- l. Promote early voting & absentee voting
  - i. Learn process, promote via email, website, facebook
- m. Chose to not advertise on radio/television/newspaper
  - i. Felt cost was too high, and possibility exists that it would stir the 'no' voter as much as the 'yes' voter.
- n. Strategically placed 'letters to the editor' in local newspapers on last possible publication date to avoid negative responses
  - i. Asked selected people to write letters
  - ii. Focused on topics that we felt would drive turnout of 'Yes' voters
    - 1. Taxes, Security/Safety, Energy Savings, Technology upgrades
  - iii. Contact papers to learn of Editorial deadlines/policies
- o. Organized 'Post-Election' Celebration
  - i. Coffee, drinks, cake
  - ii. Invited press, committee members, school board members, administration, anyone involved in campaign

Jeffrey L. Bounds  
 616 N. Main St.  
 Huntingburg IN 47542  
 (812)630-1285