

## What One JO Sailing Festival Did That Worked

*We asked organizers of the USA Junior Olympic Sailing Festival-Narragansett Bay Jr. Race Week to share their experience and tips in getting donations of both money and goods.*

### ***Start early - This is key!***

- Try to get sponsorship from the “Olympic” sponsors first; you’re more likely to get product than money from them.
- Keep in touch with the US SAILING office; we told them what we were doing and got guidance.
- Call and find out the right person to contact, and don’t stop until you know the letter is going to the right person. In approaching Coca Cola, I started with the local distributor and made many phone calls before even sending a letter.
- Send a letter with a nice sponsorship package.
- Be prepared to make a little effort. We had to drive an hour plus to pick up the 35 cases of free soda.
- *Ask!* We used our three-day supply of donated water the first day (it was hot), and called the donor, prepared to pay if he couldn’t furnish more. He said, “They have to have water!” and gave what we needed (60+ cases total).
- Go after companies that are interested in sailing, or have employees who sail. One sailing-oriented local firm made a generous cash donation.
- Go after companies that are sports-oriented or interested in helping children.
- Surf the Internet. I found energy bars there; they sent us 600 bars.
- Tell what you can do for them in exposure: banners, list on a sponsor sheet (with names/logos) which will go into goodie bags; flyers of their product can go in goodie bags; sponsors/contributors will be mentioned at the event as much as possible. Put yourself in their shoes: What would you want an event to do for your company?
- Not everyone will be receptive to sponsorship. If not, okay, move on. Don’t get discouraged, because there are companies willing to help (we were surprised how many!).
- Most companies are willing to give product. If they can’t give enough for each goodie bag, use the items in a random drawing. We did this with 24 yo-yos, and a wallet, duffel bag, jacket, vest, hats, T-shirts, sailing gloves, etc. It’s *fun*, and a number of sailors win something.
- FUN is a consideration in going after products and services: Everyone should have fun! The local taco shop came and made tacos for us virtually at cost.
- Be sure to follow up after the event with a thank-you note, clippings, etc.

- Nancy Hood

*Be sure to read the preceding Sponsorship information. It’s important and helpful.*