

## **The Desert Christian Schools' Story Update**

**By**

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I would like to share with you an incredible capital campaign story; one which was a real blessing to Corfield Consulting Services (CCS). In leading Desert Christian Schools (DCS), Tucson, Arizona, through a feasibility study and capital campaign, we learned a lot about trusting The Lord for everything. DCS showed such a zeal for the Lord, His DCS constituent families and students.

We have conducted many successful capital campaigns but none like this. First of all, the parents and other constituents did whatever they were asked to do to raise the needed funding for a three-year, \$3.5 million, five-facility, school building project. That is really what is needed in all campaigns but it was definitely exemplified in this one.

The amazing thing is that it was successful during the economic downturn, when most schools put a hold on this type of project because of enrollment decreases. DCS lost almost a fifth of their enrollment yet they still went forward with the project and now have a beautiful elementary campus consisting of five facilities: an administration building; a preschool; an elementary K-5 facility; a 6-8 facility; and, a maintenance building.

Prior to hiring CCS to do their feasibility study and ensuing capital campaign, several things happened that made it necessary for DCS to first find property on which to build the new campus. Before we get into that, I would like to insert a section on the history of the growth DCS that may help in understanding their urgent need.

Desert Christian Schools originated back in the 80's in a peculiar way. Unlike the traditional Christian school model of building from the ground up, DCS started from the top down as a Christian high school; one that would fill a great void on the east side of Tucson.

As time went on, an already existing middle school, evicted by a local church, was added, however, DCS hardly had the facilities for this addition. Realizing that their facility back then was not equipped to house grades 6-12, God led them to buy a tennis complex and convert it to a middle school/high school campus. That was a miracle in itself. DCS offered a price for only part of that property but was given the entire property for the same price.

It wasn't long afterward that DCS became the new home of a Christian K-6 elementary school that had left its original church home. The completion of this somewhat unconventional Christian school configuration made DCS a full service, K-12 Christian school but with another facilities problem.

DCS then had to find facilities to house more than 500 students. The problem was temporarily solved when a local Baptist church and DCS entered into a five-year facility lease agreement for the K-6 school with the understanding that DCS would pursue property to build a new campus.

Mrs. Kimm Cray was hired as their Development Director, several years prior, to handle the fundraising for the new property effort. Kimm was instrumental in raising a record \$2,000,000 to purchase a beautiful 16 acre property where a new K-8 campus would be built.

This was extremely important because the school was running out of time. DCS had only two years remaining on its lease. DCS needed a miracle to appropriate property & build its new school on it.

Because of a webinar attended by Mrs. Cray, CCS was hired to conduct what would become a very successful feasibility study; one that turned twice the number of major donors than DCS had given us too interview. The study showed significant support for a capital campaign; which was conducted successfully for several reasons outside of CCS.

Led by a very godly administrator, a very determined director of development, a great campaign team and 150 volunteers (determined in the study), much of the funding in gifts and pledges was raised in just three months. It was the best example of what a capital campaign should look like in my 25 years of major capital fundraising.

Let me tell you about Kimm; a person of tremendous Christian character. What she learned in campaign, she implemented. She was (and still is) zealous for the Lord, her family, the school and the campaign that she ran from the inside. Once she received our campaign plan, she did her best to see that the campaign team worked it to the letter.

Why was that important? It was essential that those, having never entered into a major capital campaign for new facilities, would follow instructions in implementing the plan; one that maximizes giving. Knowing this, Kimm and the DCS leadership were committed to keeping the volunteers on task and the campaign schedule moving forward. Because of her confidence in the plan, DCS succeeded in ways CCS has rarely seen.

When we first talked, Kimm's initial question to me was, "How and where do we get the needed volunteers to run a successful capital campaign?" Great question! She continued to say, "We find that just a few, only about 20, do everything and same ones volunteer over and over again." I was familiar with this comment; having heard it many times throughout my career.

I told Kimm that we turn up a great number of willing volunteers during our feasibility studies and that recruitment of them would be explained in the set up phase of the CCS campaign plan; one in which we would lead them through --- step by step.

After raising \$202,000 from the campaign team alone, the DCS Board of Directors, faculty/staff, volunteers and the feasibility study participants were solicited. We proceeded on to a "Leadership Dinner" to announce, especially to the attending major donors, that over a third of what was needed had been raised from that entire group. They were impressed, to say the least.

Having been trained to solicit by CCS, major donor volunteers spent the next few weeks visiting other major donors face-to-face. Armed with a special video prepared by David Webb of Sonlight Studios, they went on to visit those major donor prospects identified mainly by the feasibility study but also some that others recommended. With their gifts and pledges added to the others, well over half of the funding was raised. That was very important in rolling out the public phase.

Having done all of that fairly quickly, we proceeded onto the public phase with a "Constituency-wide, Campaign Kickoff Banquet," (KO). Kimm announced that the campaign team had recruited over 150 volunteers and had put together the KO event in less than 6 weeks through

CCS's systematic approach to building a team. She had all of the donors, including faculty and staff, stand before announcing the total pledged. This had been an incredible start to a Christian school capital campaign. It was also an incredible blessing to the DCS constituency and to CCS. However, there was much more to come.

I cannot close this without sharing the many firsts that occurred during this wonderful campaign to raise \$3.5 Million for a new K-8 facility. They are:

- 82% of survey participants attended the leadership dinner; the average is generally 40%
- Schools rarely recruit all 18 campaign team members; DCS did that in the first month
- The campaign team led the way by pledging \$202,000 – a first by a wide margin
- The board, admin, faculty, staff & survey participants pledged over \$1,200,000
- A year-end appeal letter prior to the campaign brought in \$500,000 in cash
- A surprise pledge of \$500,000 was made from a past giver out of the blue
- DCS had \$560,000 in cash already in the bank to begin the Admin Building
- DCS had 150 volunteers; the most, by far for a capital campaign that CCS has witnessed
- The KO banquet was packed; some who had not RSVP'd came anyway
- CCS/DCS felt an overwhelming joy because Scriptural FR principles were followed
- DCS had a school a contact list of 300 families.
- They also had a contact list of over 400 grandparents, businesses, alumni, etc.
- God brought a **new unity** to the entire PK-12th grade school that makes up DCS
- The Glory belongs to the Lord in all of us; the joy is ours

Much more could be said about the efforts of the constituents of this school but I think you get the point. **The program works if it is worked properly; The Lord will see to that.**

**DCS Today:** In talking with John O'Hair within the past 3 months, I learned that DCS had a 23% enrollment increase this year in the K-8 campus alone. That speaks volumes in terms of Christian schools positioning themselves to be leaders in the 21st century. New updated facilities showed the community that DCS is serious about its Christian school mission.

John O'Hair also expressed that they got the "bang for the buck" by working with both CCS & Sonlight Studios. You are welcome to contact John O'Hair to ask him about his experience in working with CCS and Sonlight Studios. His work number is: **520 901-5499**.

If you would like to contact CCS, our number is **703 217-0634**. It is obvious that God's Spirit had gone before us and created great excitement, joy and unity; His true purpose in all campaigns. That goal cannot be accomplished by an outside company soliciting all of the constituents. Great excitement for what the Lord led us to do, the joy of seeing His hand in all of this, and the spiritual unity (which He desires for us) can only come from getting as many constituents involved in the capital campaign as possible. That happened here and with great success. CCS found that when all of that happens, the funding follows. All of the glory for that goes to the Lord and we are grateful to Him for letting us be a part of it.

It may be your turn to let the Lord go ahead of you in meeting your capital funding needs. If so, CCS & Sonlight Studios, the affordable companies for Christian day schools, are here to help

Sincerely,  
*John W. Corfield*

John Corfield  
CCS President