

Donation Solicitation Guide for Parents

Before You Walk In: Quick Tips

- Go in person when possible — a face-to-face ask is far more effective than a phone call or email.
- Ask to speak with the owner or manager. Front-line employees usually can't approve donations.
- Go during off-peak hours — mid-morning or early afternoon on weekdays is ideal.
- Bring the donation request letter (provided separately) to leave with them if the decision-maker isn't available.
- Be friendly, brief, and grateful — most business owners hear these asks often. Make yours genuine and personal.
- Always follow up with a thank-you note or email. We'll provide a template.

The Event

Fundraising Dinner Auction — Saturday, January 10, 2027 All proceeds benefit the St. Louis AAA Blues 2014 team's trip to the 2027 Quebec International Hockey Tournament (February 9–21, 2027).

What to Ask For — By Business Type

Use the table below as a cheat sheet. It tells you what kinds of donations to request based on the type of business. Most items work well as silent auction items; higher-value items can anchor the live auction.

Business Type	What to Ask For	Auction Type
Hair Salon / Barbershop	Gift card for services (blowout, color, cut, beard trim)	Silent
Nail Salon	Gift card for mani/pedi package	Silent
Oil Change / Auto Service	Free oil change(s) or service gift card	Silent
Car Wash	Book of washes or gift card (detail packages are great)	Silent / Live
Restaurant / Bar	Dinner for 2–4 gift card (\$50–\$150+), or host a table night	Silent / Live
Pizza / Fast Casual	Gift card bundle or 'pizza for a year' pass	Silent
Brewery / Winery	Tasting experience, case of product, or gift basket	Silent / Live
Coffee Shop	Gift card, coffee-for-a-month club, or branded basket	Silent
Gym / Fitness Studio	1–3 month membership or class pack	Silent / Live
Spa / Massage	Massage or treatment package (\$75–\$200+)	Silent / Live
Golf Course	Round of golf for 2–4, or a lesson package	Live

Bowling Alley / Mini Golf	Party package or game credit bundle	Silent
Movie Theater	Ticket pack (10–20 passes)	Silent
Escape Room / Entertainment	Group experience package	Silent / Live
Hotel / B&B	1–2 night stay certificate	Live
Sporting Goods Store	Gift card or gear package	Silent / Live
Chiropractor / PT / Wellness	Consultation + treatment package	Silent
Dentist / Orthodontist	Whitening treatment or consult package	Silent
Florist	Flower arrangement or credit toward event florals	Silent
Bakery / Sweet Shop	Custom cake, treat basket, or gift card	Silent
Landscaping / Lawn Care	One-time service or seasonal package	Silent / Live
Cleaning Service	Home cleaning session(s)	Silent / Live
Pet Grooming	Grooming package or gift card	Silent
Photography Studio	Family portrait session or print package	Silent / Live
Art Studio / Pottery	Class pack or private event experience	Silent / Live
Retail Boutique / Clothing	Gift card (\$50–\$150)	Silent
Wine/Liquor Store	Curated bottle selection or gift basket	Silent / Live
Ice Cream / Dessert Shop	Gift card or party catering credit	Silent
Tutoring / Learning Center	Session package or learning subscription	Silent
Local Sports Team	Signed merchandise, game tickets, or meet & greet	Live

Thinking About Value

Not sure if something is worth asking for? Here's a general guide on what works where:

Silent Auction — Great for items under \$150

- Gift cards (\$25–\$100) from restaurants, coffee shops, salons, retail stores
- Single-service certificates (oil change, massage, haircut)
- Small experience packages (bowling night, movie tickets, escape room)
- Product bundles (wine basket, coffee gift set, pet care kit)

Live Auction — Aim for items \$2,000 and up

- Round of golf for 4, weekend hotel stay, spa day for 2
- Signed sports memorabilia, exclusive experiences
- Restaurant takeover night or catered dinner experience
- "Dinner and a show" packages combining multiple donations
- High-end service packages (professional photography, premium detail, etc.)

Pro Tip: Bundle It

Two smaller donations can become one great auction item. A \$40 pizza gift card + a \$30 movie ticket pack = a fun "Family Night Out" bundle. When you collect multiple small gifts, bring them back to the team coordinator and we'll group them strategically.

What to Say — Script Starters

You don't need to memorize a script — just be yourself. Here are some natural ways to open the conversation and handle common responses:

Walk-In Cold Ask

"Hi, my name is [Name] — my son plays on the St. Louis AAA Blues 2014 youth hockey team. We've earned a spot in the 2027 Quebec International Hockey Tournament in Canada, which is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. We're hosting a fundraising dinner auction on January 10th to help cover travel costs, and I was wondering if your business would be willing to donate something for the auction. Even a gift card or a service package makes a big difference — and we'll include your name in our event program."

If They Ask About Tax Deductibility

"We're a youth sports team, so we're not a 501(c)(3). I can provide a written acknowledgment of the donation for your records — many businesses are able to deduct it as a marketing or promotional expense. You'd want to confirm with your accountant."

If They Hesitate or Say Budget Is Tight

"We completely understand — if a full gift card isn't in the budget, even a smaller amount or a 'buy one get one' offer makes a great auction item. We'll list your business name in our printed program which goes to all the families at the event, so it's also a nice bit of local exposure."

If the Owner Isn't Available

"No problem at all — could I leave this donation request letter with you? It has all the details about our team and the event. The owner can reach me at [your number/email] if they have questions. Thank you so much!"

What We Provide For Donors

When a business agrees to donate, let them know we will:

- Include their business name and logo in signage at the event
- Include their name in digital displays at the event
- Provide a written donation acknowledgment letter for their records

These perks matter to business owners — it's not just charity, it's local marketing. Don't be shy about mentioning the exposure.

Logistics: How to Submit Your Donation

Once a business agrees to donate, here's what to do:

1. Collect the item or a gift card/certificate from the business.
2. Get their business name, contact name, and email if possible (for the acknowledgment letter).
3. Log it in the donation tracker — Blake will share the Google Doc with you.