

About BAKECO Fundraising, Seattle WA

The best way to describe BAKECO is to describe how we started, what we're doing, and where we're headed.

In 1993, a window of opportunity allowed me [Brenda Blair] to step back from a monthly paycheck and explore what I really wanted to do beyond age #\$\$%^&. I volunteered, served on a couple of boards, and completed the *University of Washington's one-year Certificate Program in Fundraising Management*. After a year of grant writing for *Make A Wish Foundation* I still didn't have the independence I was seeking.



Then a unique business opportunity presented itself. Two moms had started a pizza-making company here in Seattle and it was for sale. They brought parents together under the Company's direction to assemble and wrap ready-to-bake pizzas for the presale orders they had collected as a school fundraiser. **Abigale Corp., dba BAKECO Fundraising** was born, and with gloves, aprons, bowls and utensils, and my husband help, we headed off to school cafeterias every weekend to orchestrate these pizza-making events. Was I nuts? Exhausting! Demand grew and I finally found a manufacturer to make the pizzas to my specifications. What a relief. When the manufacturing business was sold, I said goodbye to pizza, hello other stuff.

In the interim, however, I had been researching other products for fundraising. My goal was to be different from the usual fundraising vendor—I didn't want to offer gift wrap and imported novelties with the associated prize programs; rather, I wanted to avoid delivering embarrassment and disappointment. I wanted people to be **"happy"** with what they bought and want to buy it again. I chose to offer only USA-made goods shipped directly to the client from the manufacturer. This ensured the customer received fresh, consistent, readily available, quality products that could be sold for a realistic retail price. No warehoused stale products here.

After all these years, I still subscribe to this same philosophy and only offer products made in the USA. As we enter the Fall 2012 fundraising season, many product suppliers have come and gone in part because of the rising costs of wholesale manufacturing and shipping making many suggested retail prices absolutely ridiculous. **In today's economy, I believe we must be even more respectful of our purchasers, family and friends, by ensuring the price we ask for a fundraising product provides them with a useful item of quality with NO disappointments, and do this while still providing the organization with a donation of reasonable profit for their effort.** To accomplish this, I have limited this year's product line-up to only three suppliers. These three companies continue to provide the most often requested products for maximum retail sales as well as outstanding service for accuracy and on-time delivery. And they are: Coffee and beverage mixes from Boston's Best Coffee, non-frozen, preservative-free cookie dough mixes from Delisheries, and environmentally friendly premium grade flower bulbs for fall or spring planting. Without fail, these three programs remain strong offering groups an affordable, desirable and easy-to-sell product.

With easy-to-download Adobe .pdf brochures directly at my web site, chairpersons can print information in a nice format to take directly into their meetings for discussion. We still provide beautiful full-color seller's catalogs and sale coordination materials such as announcement letters, order tally spreadsheets, and other promotional items as needed.

I am still a sole proprietor working from an office in my home near Seattle with the help of **"Pearl"** my feline supervisor and **"McGee"**, the Norfolk Terrier at right as support staff, who often disagrees with **Pearl** on most issues as noted. Most supportive, however, is my husband **Bruce** of 33+ years who keeps the computers, peripherals and web site operational.



In an effort to work smarter, not harder, I try to keep abreast of trends in the fundraising industry, taking advantage of the internet as an advertising tool while still staying personally involved with my customers. I'm not looking to grow or hire commissioned reps, rather I enjoy the one-on-one relationship I have with each chairperson. Don't look for me to host a blog, news forum or tweet like a birdie. Rather, count on me to get your group up and running with a strong promotional strategy. Any new programs will have to meet my same strict criteria, made in the USA, useful and of only the best quality. And, we test EVERYTHING! Our mantra: **Make people happy, never disappointed, and they come back again--to you and to me.**

To those of you who have let me serve you for so many years, a heartfelt **THANK YOU!** To those of you who are researching a new vendor, I hope to be able to provide you with the kind of products and service you deserve. 3/19/16.

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