

# TARC Attax

## Setting Up a TARC Team to Take Advantage of Tax Laws

by Jeff Lane

Many corporations, small businesses and individuals will not consider donating money to a teen science team if they can't deduct the contribution from their tax bill. They don't care if teens are being exposed to the wonders of science, technology, engineering and math. They don't care about getting their logo on national television. They don't even care if you went to finals last year and are a shoe-in for this year's competition.

*A substantial reduction in the number of bucks they have to fork over to our fastidiously efficient, ever-accountable government is literally some companies' only consideration.*

To take advantage of this mindset, the best type of group for a TARC team to have as a sponsor is a 501(c)(3) tax-deductible charitable organization. There are *lots* of organizations like this; churches, some public schools, private schools, science education groups, etc. The accounting details will vary with each organization.

In Cheyenne Mountain D-12 (home of the *Stargate*), the run-of-the-mill public schools don't have 501(c)(3) status. But there's a public charter school in the district (Cheyenne Mountain Charter Academy) that *does* have 501(c)(3) status. Because they're not fully funded by county, state, and federal dollars compared to other public

schools, they have to raise some supplementary funds from corporate grants. This is a young, hungry school. They've achieved an incredible record of delivering the best public middle school in Colorado for seven years straight, according to the state public school tests. The science and math teachers are gung-ho about after school programs that introduce students to practical application of their classroom material. CMCA administrators are extremely supportive of the TARC teams. Parents at the school are encouraged to be more



participatory in their kids' education, and they regularly spend time with the TARC teams.

That such an academically successful, progressive, attitude-laced school does this well with less government support is not lost on potential supporters in the business community. They eat it up. It's a marriage made in heaven. We have garnered support from such varied

sources as huge corporate aerospace organizations, banks, law offices, marketing agencies and individuals. Oh, and a junkyard.

Sorry... *Used Auto Parts Supplier.*

We have a Powerpoint show (with videos) that the *students* present to decision-makers. They have been extremely successful when they get their foot in the door. Some success has been achieved with cold-calling businesses, but most contacts have originated through friends, relatives, and neighbors of TARC teammates.

We encourage all TARC teams to take advantage of this motivational technique, and to pitch for support year 'round, not just when you need money to buy those expensive Aerotech casings. One of our contributions in 2007 was landed during a meeting in May. The largest, though, was contacted through a simple appeal for yearend contributions on the Yahoo list server through which COSROCS (the local NAR club) distributes club emails to members.

The bottom line is that these types of donations make it much easier for teams to build their designs, test new ideas, buy altimeters and Rocksim (used by 9 of the top 10 teams in 2007\*), dial in their flights, and travel to finals. We have seen firsthand, though, how important it is for the team members to do the presentations and the accounting themselves. They have a sense of *ownership and pride when they raise the funds themselves* and are much more accountable to contributors for their spending. Teams that get "free money" like grants tend to waste their dollars and achieve less-precise results.

Building responsible, savvy science teams is what TARC is all about.

At finals 2006, the Cheyenne Mountain team proudly displayed corporate and educational sponsors on their tube launcher. The rocket is just exiting the tube in the photo. Bigger sponsors get more real estate on the rocket or launch system. Since one of the parents owns a sign shop, you'll also see more sponsor banners in the backgrounds of our photos this year. Sponsors are featured and have live links in our e-publicity releases.



Tube photo by Glenn Feverye, the rest by Brandango.us  
\*You're welcome, Tim