

whether you want to **TRAVEL**, raise money for a **worthy cause**, or pursue an artistic endeavor, you can **MAKE IT HAPPEN.**

cles (program directors, doctors, researchers, etc.), asking for support for the bike trip. The main objective of the trip was to raise money to help improve the lives of children infected with HIV and AIDS, and thus, It's for the Kids was born.

From there, It's for the Kids grew rapidly into not only a volunteer program that sends college students to local hospitals to cheer up sick children, but a dedicated fund-raising organization that also sponsors outings, holiday activities, and a pen pal program. Initial donations of approximately \$6,000 supported the volunteer efforts, and when Sobhani and friends completed the cross-country bike trip, the group had raised nearly \$70,000, above and beyond the trip costs.

think creatively

Andrée Cazabon knows it takes ingenuity to find funding for a creative endeavor. Her dream was to create a docudrama that centered on the unsent letters her father wrote to her during the two years she was a drug addict living on the streets of Ottawa, Toronto, and Montreal. Unlike other movies that focus on an addict's road to recovery, Cazabon's 25-minute film looks at the struggles a family faces when one member is an addict. But the 26-year-old aspiring filmmaker faced many fund-raising obstacles simply because her experimental film was hard to sell on paper.

Without a film credit or money to get started (she was in film school at the time), Cazabon and a photographer friend used photographs to present the vision for the film to potential sponsors. They set up scenes, then arranged the photos in a book as if they were actual movie stills. "It was like a film on paper," Cazabon says. "We put pictures of me as a kid next to a street scene, along with a little bit of the letters in my father's handwriting." She says the book was more effective (and far cheaper) than an amateur video that could never represent the quality she sought for her film. When she approached potential sponsors, Cazabon showed them the book, her proposal for sponsorship, and a folder containing a mock movie poster. She attributes this ingenuity to two courses she took, one in marketing and one in small-business management.

Nevertheless, the fact that Cazabon eventually secured funding from the Rotary Club of Toronto had more to do with pluck than with grades or talent. "I believed that this

film would benefit others, and that gave me the cockiness to sell others on it," she says. Indeed, the Rotary Club was struck by Cazabon's passion, enthusiasm, and eloquence, and when she least expected it, they provided her with \$65,000, enough to make her film, entitled *Letters to a Street Child*. The film's budget was tight, but the Rotarians helped whenever possible, securing donations of props and shoot locations that would have cost thousands of dollars.

express enthusiasm

Despite the good intentions of people and organizations, securing donations is no easy task, and the job is even more difficult if you're young. Like it or not, projectpreneurs must be resourceful about developing credibility. "We needed clout," says Sobhani, "and we needed it early because the first thing people said was, 'How old are you?'"

Sobhani learned that expressing his enthusiasm for the project could help him overcome the ageism. After submitting more than 700 grant applications to no avail, Sobhani sent an impassioned letter to a contact he had been given at the Stargazer Foundation (an organization that provides entrepreneurial grants) detailing his frustrations over the ageism he'd experienced, his desire to help children, and his explicit plan and budget for the bike trip. "We were fighting two battles at once," he says, "one against AIDS and one against the misperception of our generation." Less than a week after Sobhani faxed the letter to the CEO of the Stargazer Foundation, It's for the Kids received a \$20,000 grant. The difference? "For six months we had been looking for money based on a medical cause," says Sobhani. "But the one thing we didn't realize was that we should have approached people who support entrepreneurs, who support ideas."

To further establish his credibility, Sobhani started a board of advisors that included professors and prominent members of the medical community. As his contacts grew, the list of advisors read like a who's who of D.C. and provided Sobhani an important entry to other funding sources. Equally important, says Sobhani, advisors can give you