

# Special Events

## GALORE!

December 2015 / Vol. 15, No. 12

MONTHLY IDEAS FOR THOSE WHO PLAN, ORGANIZE AND MANAGE EVENTS OF ALL KINDS

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### Six Steps to Secure Your Event

Considering hiring a security firm for your special event? Ask these important questions to determine that any firm you are considering is reputable and up to the task:

1. Ask for references of businesses the firm has worked for, then call them. Speak with the hiring manager at the referenced business, asking specific questions about the security firm and its staff to determine the level of professionalism and performance. Ask: "Would you hire this firm again?"
2. Assess training levels of security personnel and number of staff to be assigned to your event. Review copies of certifications required in your area.
3. Find out if the security firm has been sued for any reason.
4. Ask for verification that all security personnel assigned to your event have undergone criminal background checks and are clear of criminal violations.
5. Ask if security personnel will be in uniform or in plain clothes, and which type of dress you feel is most appropriate for your event.
6. Once you have chosen a firm, together determine steps needed to secure your event. Discuss anticipated attendance, celebrity guest issues and other ways to create a safe environment.

### PARTICIPATORY EVENTS

## Senior Olympics Reaches Out to 50-Plus Crowd

By Kerry Nenn

To participate is to win: That's the motto of Senior Olympics planners and participants. Each year, thousands of seniors compete in this state and national event.

Ted Wroth, executive director at Maryland Senior Olympics, explains how it works: "Participants just have to register, online or mail-in, and pay a fee. No experience is necessary. There are no qualifications. Pay the fee, and you're in."

The Maryland Senior Olympics includes around 100 events in two dozen sports. Athletes compete in five-year age brackets; the youngest is 50 to 54. Past events have seen competitors in the 100 to 104 age bracket. One of this year's athletes is 95-year-old Doris "Madame Butterfly" Russell, who is competing in six swimming events.

From archery to horseshoes to volleyball, seniors compete for medals, awarded to the top three in each event. Odd years are also qualifying years, meaning the top four in all state-level events qualify for the National Senior Games.

In addition to national-qualifying events, each state includes fun activities unique to its Olympics. Maryland's have included line dancing and individual free-throw shooting competitions. This year, Maryland added Pickleball, a sport similar to short-court tennis, played with paddles and a whiffle ball and prevalent in retirement communities.

Such popular events help spread the word about the Olympics, as do a Facebook page and registration brochures that are passed out to parks and recreation departments, libraries, senior centers, YMCAs and Elks Lodges.

"Planning for it is just like planning for any other event," claims Wroth. "What's different is, unlike any other sports competition, when it's over, these athletes sit down and socialize. It's more about camaraderie. They look forward to seeing each other every year. Some have competed for decades."

"The biggest challenge is acquiring and coordinating facilities," says Wroth. "Some states have their Olympics in one location over 4 to 10 days. We hold ours over eight weeks in multiple locations, but everything is within one to one and a half hours. The advantage is more athletes are able to compete in a variety of events because they are spread out, providing rest in between."

The Senior Olympics is self-sustaining and nonprofit. Fees collected cover facility rentals, awards, sports equipment and officials. Some in-kind donations are received, such as this year's donated table tennis balls. Wroth also obtained a grant from Blue Cross Blue Shield and a Montgomery County executive grant.

Some state Senior Olympics are run entirely through parks and recs offices or organizations such as the YMCA. "This is a low-budget operation," notes Wroth. "We don't have established committees or marketing teams, but the program runs well and the athletes are happy with it."

*Source: Ted Wroth, Executive Director, Maryland Senior Olympics, Maryland Department of Aging, Baltimore, MD. Phone (240) 777-4930. E-mail: [ted.wroth@mdseniorolympics.org](mailto:ted.wroth@mdseniorolympics.org). Website: [www.mdseniorolympics.org](http://www.mdseniorolympics.org)*

- Don't sign a speaker's contract without negotiating first. Because of the economy, many speakers are quite willing to consider alternative offers: reduced speaking fees, travel expenses, additional services and more.

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## What's Your Biggest Challenge?

As director of special events, what's been your biggest challenge, and what have you done to deal with it?

Nonprofit event planners understand how difficult it can be to throw an event that's impressive, exciting and powerful, especially with limited resources. "Sometimes it can be tough to stay on the cutting edge of what's new in the event industry when you have an extremely limited budget, so finding sponsors that will donate their services is key," says Emily Miller, director of special events for the Washington (DC) Humane Society. "When you begin the planning process a year in advance, you can create a list of target sponsor categories, and within that create a short list of organizations and individuals within each category. This will make your asks much more organized." Miller reminds event planners that early asks allow for sponsors to assign space in their annual budget to support their upcoming fundraiser. "You can never give yourself too much time when it comes to securing event sponsorships," Miller says. "Start your asks a year to nine months in advance, if possible."

Miller recommends compiling an elaborate project plan prior to an event as a proactive method for overcoming potential challenges associated with securing sponsors and organizing on a limited budget. Here she offers her advice for creating an effective outline:

1. **Create a detailed 12-month plan with assigned deadlines.** "Everything from creating the logo/design to producing marketing materials and the overall strategy should be included in your timeline," Miller says. "Include it all. And then live by this plan. Refer to it daily." Make sure to include notes on your sponsorship and donation progress as you approach event day so you know exactly how much you have to spend.
2. **Create an hourly production schedule for event day.** "This differs from your project plan because it includes an hour-by-hour breakdown of each task," Miller says. "Fire drills and surprises will occur, but if you start with a detailed plan, you will be able to control whatever comes your way, and with less stress." Miller says the event manager is the one person on your planning committee who should always remain in control and calm.

Source: Emily Miller, Director of Special Events, Washington Humane Society, Washington, DC. Phone (202) 683-1822. E-mail: [EMiller@washhumane.org](mailto:EMiller@washhumane.org). Website: [www.washhumane.org](http://www.washhumane.org)

## ATTRACTING GUESTS, PARTICIPANTS

### Aim for High Event Attendance

If the success of your event depends, for the most part, on a minimum number of paying guests, you will want to do whatever is possible to maximize attendance.

Follow these steps to help ensure you reach those attendance numbers:

1. **Build event ownership among as many people as possible early on in the process.** If they own it, they will come. Get people personally connected to the event's success and not only will they attend, they will help get others there, too. That's why the most successful events have several types of committees with large numbers of volunteers involved.
2. **Appoint a committee to sell tickets and get people to attend.** Be sure they know and accept that expectation before they agree to help. Offer inexpensive incentives for selling a set number of tickets.
3. **Make it attractive to buy multiple tickets.** Some events that include a meal, for instance, offer guests the opportunity to purchase an entire table of eight or 10. A golfing event might have the option to fund a foursome of golfers in addition to the individual option.

## Use Social Media to Promote Your Events in Real Time

Texas Christian University's (TCU; Fort Worth, TX) Richards Barrentine Values and Ventures® is an annual competition that invites undergraduate students around the world to pitch plans for for-profit businesses that impact society in meaningful ways. The 2015 competition saw teams from 49 universities from across the United States and around the world. "I utilized a variety of communication tools to promote the event with the communications professionals at the participating schools, including social media, hashtags, live stream of the awards, e-mailing announcements before the competition and e-mailing winner announcements and photos after," says Elaine Cole, manager of public relations, marketing and communications for TCU Neely School of Business. "I used Facebook and Twitter to provide real-time updates on the teams' progress, finalist announcements, finalists' presentations and winner announcements."

Cole says hashtags are helpful because she can't be everywhere at once during the competition. When participants tweet or post their own updates, it provides the outside community with up-to-the-minute news, increasing awareness of the event. "Our social media analytics repeatedly show that our engagement is extremely high for the two days of the competition, with the majority of engagement coming from Twitter but also including Instagram and Facebook," Cole says. "By reaching out to the communications professionals at the participating universities, I am making their jobs easier."

To keep live social media updates organized and effective, Cole recommends nonprofits take the following steps:

- Research PR contacts of participating organizations, speakers and judges so you can inform them of interesting and specific details prior to the event.
- Send an announcement prior to the event to share the official hashtag, social media links and livestream links. This announcement should also encourage participants and spectators to follow the event live.
- Find and follow the participating organizations on social media so they can be tagged and integrated into posts and updates.
- Appoint staff and volunteers to post their own updates throughout the event to increase visibility and spread the word.

"I have used social media to successfully promote events where we bring in participants from various universities across the nation and world, to share information with their colleagues back home and spread the word to media," Cole says. "Social media increases a communications professional's reach and impact by providing a simple, cost-effective and quick way to share news and updates."

*Source: Elaine Cole, Manager of Public Relations, Marketing and Communications, Texas Christian University Neely School of Business, Fort Worth, TX. Phone (817) 257-5724. E-mail: e.cole@tcu.edu. Website: www.neely.tcu.edu/vandv*

## MAXIMIZE EVENT BUDGETS

### Sharing Can Stretch Your Event Dollar

Look for ways to save money throughout your special event to increase net proceeds.

One way to save from square one is to determine if another organization is hosting an event before you at the same location on the same day. If so, reach out to representatives of that organization to see if you can work together to cut event expenses.

For example, one of you could pay for flowers or centerpieces, while the other could pay for linens that would be used by both of you. Look for a band or music ensemble willing to split a three-hour gig between events. You could even go so far as to work together on a shared theme and split the cost of event décor.

By getting creative, the spirit of collaboration can do wonders for your event bottom line while letting you do even more for less money.

## Rainy Day Discount Draws Attendees

If your organization has extensive outdoor offerings, consider providing a discount during inclement weather to increase attendance. Palm Beach Zoo & Conservation Society, (West Palm Beach, FL) began offering a rainy day discount in 2013, which gives attendees a 50 percent discount off any regular price ticket.

Claudia Harden, marketing manager, explains the origins of this discount offering: "As an outdoor facility dependent on good weather to drive the bulk of our attendance, we were looking for ways to boost attendance on days when it was either threatening to rain or already raining. Without the promo being offered on days of inclement weather we can see around 200 to 500 guests in the park depending on the time of year. With the promo active we can see between 500 to 700 guests in the park, again dependent on time of year. Our social media engagements perk up as well when the offer is active with shares, likes and comments."

The marketing and guest service teams discuss the impending weather forecast and decide which days to offer the discount. Once it is decided that the promo should be offered on a particular day, the team gets approval from the CFO/COO, the discount is posted on its Facebook page and Twitter account and the receptionist and front gate staff are notified. "The discount is available to anyone who mentions the offer at our front gate upon arrival," says Harden. "Once the promo has been posted, it will continue for the remainder of the day even if the weather drastically improves."

When considering whether to create a weather-related promotion to maintain interest in your outdoor offerings, Harden suggests using the opportunity to review your indoor offerings as well: "We are by nature an outdoor facility, but while working on the creation of this promo we thought seriously about what we had to offer that was either indoors or unaffected by inclement weather and implemented a self-guided to-do list (<http://www.palmbeachzoo.org/rainy-day-to-do-list>) and placed the info prominently on our website."

*Source: Claudia A. Harden, Marketing Manager, Palm Beach Zoo & Conservation Society, West Palm Beach, FL. E-mail: claudia@palmbeachzoo.org. Website: www.palmbeachzoo.org*

## How to Cultivate Return Guests At Your Next Special Event

Meryl Snow, vice president of Feastivities Events and senior consultant for Catersource, has both attended and offered her services at her fair share of special events. “If people aren’t having fun, they aren’t going to come back. That’s just a fact,” Snow says. Many supporters, sponsors and donors are invited to several fundraisers annually, and you must take the necessary steps to make yours a memorable one.

Here Snow offers her tips for creating an engaging and memorable evening to which people want to return:

1. **Offer to cover costs when approaching caterers, designers and others.** “If you ask for something for free, you’re not going to get what you want,” Snow says. “When you offer to cover costs, you get a better product that will elevate your event.” When you show caterers, designers and other contributors you are willing to work with them, they will take extra steps to make sure you’re satisfied with their services, because hopefully that will translate into return business for them. Offer press or other benefits to supplement their donations or discounted prices.
2. **Avoid the traditional sit-down dinner.** “Everyone says cocktail parties are the best,” Snow says. Give your guests something to remember by creating a fun, inviting atmosphere that helps facilitate conversation among guests.
3. **Incorporate a Sotheby’s-style auction.** “Move everyone to a separate space where you have their undivided attention and hold a Sotheby’s-style auction,” Snow says. “They are infectious and really fun for guests.” By moving guests into a different room, you create a smooth transition into the next portion of your evening. Hand out paddles that are preassigned by name to ensure an organized auction, and offer both expensive and affordable items so all attendees can participate.
4. **Recruit an impressive board.** “Heavy-hitter names will attract reputable guests who want to be in their presence,” Snow says. Inviting big names creates excitement, but make sure to recruit board members who will purchase tables and cultivate new supporters for your organization.
5. **Push personal connections to guests.** Remember your event is a social outing for guests. When it’s fun and includes the people they want to meet, you’re guaranteed to have return attendees.

Source: Meryl Snow, Vice President, Feastivities Events, Philadelphia, PA. Phone (610) 659-9197. E-mail: [meryl@merylsnow.com](mailto:meryl@merylsnow.com). Website: [www.MerylSnow.com](http://www.MerylSnow.com)

## Attract Families With Family Days

Family days offer unique opportunities to engage the community and involve persons of all ages. Planning these events requires unique considerations, however. Here two museum family day coordinators offer some tips:

1. **Host both large- and small-scale events.** Marie Trope-Podell, manager of gallery programs for The Morgan Library & Museum (New York, NY), coordinates small monthly programs for families and large family fairs. “Our monthly programs are small in scale and typically confined to the Education Center that holds a maximum of 40 people (15 kids and their adults) for hands-on workshops. Our larger programs, Family Fairs, are scheduled twice a year, in the winter and spring. These programs include three hours of six or seven simultaneous activities on a theme or two. They are spread throughout the campus, in seven different spaces, and include performances, crafts, costumes, photo shoots and dramatized tours.”
2. **Be aware of unique planning logistics.** Larissa Raphael, head of school and family programs for the Rubin Museum of Art (New York, NY), notes, “Logistics for families’ comfort are as important as planning the activities and performances. Make sure you have considered where families can have a snack, place strollers, sit down for a quiet moment, change diapers, etc.”
3. **Create events with family appeal.** Trope-Podell reports success with developing themed events around a family-centric exhibition at the museum, such as Babar and the Little Prince. “Medieval themes are also well-received,” she notes, “and puppets are a big attraction for very young children.” Raphael advises, “Families like events that connect to celebrations or seasonal activities.”
4. **Engage the entire family.** “Remember that while most family events are geared toward children, adults and teenagers might accompany younger visitors. Be sure your activities and performances can speak to people on multiple levels,” advises Raphael. Trope-Podell adds, “A family program needs to be appealing to both children and adults. Because our monthly programs aim at some degree of skill acquisition, learning about art techniques and using materials that are not typically made available to children, adults are often eager to participate in the activities.”
5. **Market appropriately for your audience.** “It is usually a targeted audience, and we assume they are young parents or grandparents,” says Trope-Podell. “So we need to advertise in a traditional way, using a list of e-mails we have collected over the years during our programs. We also advertise through our corporate donors, Facebook, Twitter and other social media. We are often listed in The New York Times the Friday preceding the programs.” Raphael adds, “Using printed and online media is important, but word of mouth is also a key way of getting families to attend.”

Sources: Larissa Raphael, Head of School and Family Programs, Rubin Museum of Art, New York, NY. Phone (212) 620-5000. E-mail: [lraphael@rubinmuseum.org](mailto:lraphael@rubinmuseum.org). Website: [www.rubinmuseum.org](http://www.rubinmuseum.org)

Marie Trope-Podell, Manager of Gallery Programs, The Morgan Library & Museum, New York, NY. Phone (212) 590-0332. E-mail: [mpodell@themorgan.org](mailto:mpodell@themorgan.org). Website: [www.themorgan.org](http://www.themorgan.org)

## Confirm Individuals' Assignments in Writing

When you're in charge of a committee that meets periodically and requires action on the part of committee members between each meeting, it's wise to confirm what's expected of each individual and by when. An e-mail or other communication that spells out individual duties accomplishes three important goals:

1. It places greater accountability on the volunteer who agreed to complete particular tasks by a certain date.
2. It shows the volunteer that you, as committee chair, are aware of what's expected of him/her.
3. It leaves no room for confusion about what's to be done.

At right is an example of a committee meeting follow-up memo confirming the assignment of one committee member.

### PROFITABLE IDEAS

## Incorporate a Reverse Raffle Into Your Annual Event

Raffles are a common component of many fundraisers, but have you considered flipping that original concept upside down? That's exactly what the Ark-La-Tex chapter of ThinkFirst has done for the past nine years. ThinkFirst's annual Draw Down event features a reverse raffle, where guests have a chance at winning a substantial cash prize. This year's event saw 325 attendees and raised \$43,000 for Shreveport's leading injury prevention organization.

"It's important to incorporate an activity everyone can be involved in like a reverse raffle, to ensure that guests stay engaged throughout the entire event," says Program Coordinator Heather Buford. "The excitement of knowing every guest has the potential of winning \$5,000 gives our entire audience something to look forward to before the night even begins."

The reverse raffle is just one component of ThinkFirst's fundraiser, which also includes a sit-down dinner, music, and live and silent auctions. Here Buford lists the components of her organization's effective reverse raffle:

- Every \$100 admission ticket automatically includes one entry to participate in the Draw Down and two dinners.
- Guests are encouraged to purchase "ticket insurance," which allows their names to be re-entered into the pot if they are one of the first 100 names drawn at the beginning of the event. "They are only allowed to go back in the pot once," Buford says.
- The event organizers pull 100 names at a time, at different intervals throughout the night, until there are five names remaining in the pot. "The final five people are not announced until the end of the night, so people are constantly on the edge of their seats waiting for the grand prize winner to be announced," Buford says.
- The remaining five people have the option of splitting the money or drawing until the last entries are removed one at a time. This continues until the remaining people decide to split the money or until one solitary winner remains and takes the entire \$5,000 home. "Most times they decide to split the money five ways," Buford says.

Source: Heather Buford, Program Coordinator, ThinkFirst, Shreveport, LA. Phone (318) 226-0066. E-mail: [think1st@bellsouth.net](mailto:think1st@bellsouth.net). Website: [www.thinkfirstlouisiana.org/](http://www.thinkfirstlouisiana.org/)

## MEMO

### HARTLEY FOOD BANK

To: Marie Currans, Recruitment Committee Member  
 From: Jane Saunders, Chair, Recruitment Committee  
 RE: Volunteer Enlistment  
 Date: January 11, 2016

This is to serve as a confirmation (from our January 10 meeting) that you agreed to meet with the following individuals to determine their willingness to participate in our day-long food collection effort.

It's important that we know by January 22 who will be a part of this project. Please call me with your results or e-mail me at [jsaunders@hfb.org](mailto:jsaunders@hfb.org) on or before that date.

Thanks and good luck!

| Potential Volunteer  | Daytime Phone | Evening Phone |
|----------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Susan Eberheart      | 390-3345      | 371-2187      |
| Michelle Sievers     | 393-4744      | 371-3220      |
| Tom Burkfechtel      | 353-2295      | 343-2264      |
| Marty Toth           | 390-6430      | 371-4475      |
| Dave Behrens         | 393-6354      | 376-1131      |
| Harry Cartwright     | 393-7740      | 376-0505      |
| Patrice Merryweather | 390-5222      | 371-3499      |
| Melony Horst         | 353-2290      | 343-4446      |

## Include a Collector Item With Annual Special Events

If you host a repeat event year after year, don't go without including some sort of collector item that attendees will receive (or purchase) as a keepsake.

A sampling of examples might include:

- A button with a winning design selected by a panel of judges. (The button could serve as ticket to the event.)
- A limited-edition holiday ornament, seasonal print or artwork.
- A photograph taken with each year's event celebrity.
- A book signed by the author.
- A handwritten note from someone served by your organization — one note per attendee, each different.

Annual collector items add to the fun and provide one more reason for attendees to keep coming back year after year.

## Keys to Planning A 'Dancing With Our Stars' Event

For four years running, the Portsmouth, OH, community has danced its way to fundraising for the Ohio River Valley American Red Cross. Its annual Dancing With Our Stars event raised \$172,000 last year and has raised over \$310,000 in all, with increasing totals each year.

These funds are not without cost. Pulling off the event requires the work of more than 60 volunteers and a strong planning committee. Debbie Smith, American Red Cross community executive, says, "We have done other events, and this is a little more complex. It takes more work and more planning. Ten months of the year are spent on it."

The event models the TV show "Dancing With the Stars" but features 10 well-known local stars who are both willing to dance and are interested in helping raise funds for the local Red Cross. At each event, attendees are asked to submit names of those who may be interested in participating. Recruiting stars has not been a problem, according to Smith. A bigger challenge has been finding partners for them.

"We recruit from the local dance school, the college, local gyms and Zumba classes, and we put on Facebook that we are looking for experienced dancers. It's always easier to find females than males. Sometimes the stars request a partner they know. Other times previous star dancers want to come back as partners," explains Smith. A simple kick-off event is held to announce the "cast" to the public.

Once the dancer line-up is established, the stars have six to eight months to fundraise. The Red Cross sets up a Web page for the dancers that includes pictures and bios. Stars are free to organize anything they wish. Methods have included everything from Zumba-thons to golf outings. Each dollar raised equals one vote for that dancer. Whoever raises the most money before and during the event wins the Mirror Ball trophy and title of Champion Fundraiser for the American Red Cross. A People's Choice trophy is also awarded for the dancer with the most votes by event attendees for best dance performance.

"The important thing is to have a lot of help," advises Smith. "We couldn't do it without all the volunteers. One or two event coordinators are needed to delegate tasks for decorations, scripts, programs, sponsors, mailings, catering, lighting and communications with the dancers. It's also important to partner with local sources for press releases and ensure it is shared in paper and social media."

Funds are raised through individual star efforts, sponsorships and tickets to the event (\$125 each.) It has sold out every year.

*Source: Debbie Smith, Community Executive, American Red Cross, Portsmouth, OH. Phone (740) 354-3293. E-mail: [Debbie.smith@redcross.org](mailto:Debbie.smith@redcross.org). Website: [www.redcross.org/localoh/cincinnati](http://www.redcross.org/localoh/cincinnati)*

## Group Generates Revenue With Winter Fundraiser

Snowmobilers are blazing the fundraising trail in Grand Lake, CO. Now in its 15th winter, the Annual Snowmobile for Life Poker Run and Silent Auction raises funds for Flight for Life Colorado. Since its inception, the event has contributed almost \$80,000.

Cohosted by the Grand Lake Trail Blazers Snowmobile Club and Denver's Mile High Snowmobile Club, the event offers participants a combination of activities, competition and giving.

Here Toni Boettcher, event chair, offers the details:

### *What is a Poker Run?*

"Riders can purchase a poker hand for \$5 or five hands for \$20. Snowmobilers draw their first card for each hand at the Community House; cards two, three and four at card stops along the trails course; and card five back at the Community House. The course is roughly 35 miles round trip. Riders begin whenever they wish before noon and complete by 4 p.m. They can choose to complete the entire course or go to some stops and draw the rest of their hands back at the Community House. The best poker hand wins \$700. Second place receives \$200. Third place is \$100."

### *How is participation encouraged?*

"For those who don't own one, snowmobiles are available for rent at multiple locations in Grand Lake. Those who do not own or are unable to rent or ride a snowmobile can still purchase poker hands. We have participants who come year after year. These past participants, word of mouth and social media are the main methods of promotion. The earlier we start to get the word out and inform the community about the event, the greater success we have."

### *What are the keys to raising funds?*

"The event includes a silent auction, held at the Community House, open from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Items can be viewed and bid on during that time. Obtaining the right items for this auction is key. These range from snowmobile items such as helmets, gloves, jackets and bibs to restaurant gift certificates, airline flight cards, movie theater tickets and lodging certificates. The auction is open to all, no need to participate in snowmobiling."

### *What safety and insurance measures are needed?*

"The clubs provide the insurance to cover the course. Riding participants are required to sign a waiver stating the National Forest Service and the hosting clubs are not held liable for any injuries or damage to a snowmobile. We provide sweepers on snowmobiles to make sure there are no stragglers and no one is stuck or stranded while the Poker Run course is open to participants. These sweepers also make sure that everyone is back safely at the end of the event."

*Source: Toni Boettcher, Snowmobile for Life Poker Run Event Chair, Mile High Snowmobile Club, Denver, CO. Phone (720) 208-6692. E-mail: [toni\\_boettcher@hotmail.com](mailto:toni_boettcher@hotmail.com) Website: [www.snowmobilecolo.com](http://www.snowmobilecolo.com)*

## How to Get Men Interested in a Silent Auction

Although women seem to be naturally attracted to silent auctions, getting a man interested in buying something can be a challenge. Here Sherry Truhlar, founder of Red Apple Auctions (Arlington, VA), offers her advice for making silent auctions more appealing to men:

- Offer the option of a guaranteed bid or a buy-it-now price. “When men want to buy something, they don’t want to waste time shopping,” says Truhlar. “If you offer a buy-it-now option that is 150 to 200 percent of the value of the item, men will be more likely to buy the item outright.”
- Offer mobile bidding. Mobile bidding allows people to bid on their phone or tablet by using either text or a Web page. The person is then alerted when he or she is outbid. “Generally speaking, men like gadgets, and they are more likely to participate in a silent auction if they can bid electronically using their smartphone or iPad,” Truhlar says. Several auction software companies offer mobile bidding, but Truhlar advises shopping around since prices and services can vary.
- If tickets are an item, show and tell the location of the seats. Sports or concert tickets typically are appealing to men, so if tickets are one of your items, both show and tell the location of the seats. “Given that most of your bidders are visually oriented, you’ll want your display to include a diagram or seating chart that indicates where the seats are. You should also tell the bidder the actual seat number and section, but remember showing the location is just as important,” Truhlar suggests.
- Watch out for fake memorabilia. Sports or music memorabilia may be a great way to catch a man’s attention, but Truhlar warns that the fake memorabilia market is actually larger than the real memorabilia market. “A certificate of authenticity doesn’t necessarily mean it’s real,” she says. “That’s why some of my clients just say, ‘No,’ to memorabilia. A few take a more aggressive stance and refuse to accept anything — that means memorabilia or not. If the item is consigned, it’s not in their auction.”

Source: Sherry Truhlar, Founder, Red Apple Auctions, Arlington, VA. Phone (888) 474-0838. E-mail: [info@redappleauctions.com](mailto:info@redappleauctions.com) Website: [www.redappleauctions.com](http://www.redappleauctions.com)

## CELEBRATORY EVENTS

### Host Grand Openings with Local Flair

A fun, festive, well-organized grand opening will leave a long-lasting positive impression with your guests. Take your grand opening a step further to emphasize the positive aspects of your city or region to celebrate your community and draw more attendees. To do so:

- Offer free local samplings. Play up the grandest aspects of your region with locally grown or produced food and drink. Post information sheets that detail the local connection.
- Invite a local expert to speak on a topic related to your organization. Check in with the chamber for recommendations on lively presenters in your area.
- Create a business-to-business grand opening offering special discounts or trial memberships to other business professionals in your community to promote your dedication to local membership.
- Work with organizations aligned with your goals to showcase all resources and organizations in your region. Consider hosting a co-grand opening with these other organizations.
- Set the mood by inviting local musicians to play at the grand opening — a lyricist who can set the mood with up-tempo music, regional talent playing throughout the day, a local songwriter who can create and premiere a theme song for your organization.
- Invite local notables to speak to the guests — specifically, a hometown hero or native son/daughter who has gone on to fame and fortune but is willing to come back and support your cause for an evening.

### Celebrate Significant Events With a Time Capsule

Dedicating a new or renovated building is just one type of special event for which you might consider creating a time capsule. Other events include celebrating a milestone anniversary, launching a major program or expanding your services to a greater geographic region.

A time capsule creates a built-in option for a special event 25 or 50 years down the line as the next generation unearths the treasure to see what memories are stored inside.

A time capsule event can also be an opportunity to generate media coverage while setting up opportunities for related media events. To make the most of your time capsule dedication event:

- Stage a group photograph. Gather volunteers, staff, board members and supporters to pose for a photo forming the numbers in the year you plan to open the capsule. Include some small children and babies who might be at the opening ceremony.
- Hold a sneak preview of capsule items. Invite media to film a display of photos, newspapers, clothing, technology or copies of speeches, and announce the time and date of the ceremony to encourage attendance.
- Give a demonstration on how to assemble a time capsule. Mentioning considerations like proper materials and items to avoid because they easily deteriorate or become unusable because of technology changes may be an interesting way to draw newcomers to your organization.
- Predict the future. Gather supporters to write about their predictions for the year the time capsule will be opened. Host a coffee or lunch where the correct type of acid-free papers and inks are provided. If your time capsule is small, have a contest to determine which ones will be included, but save the others for a display both at your facility and online.
- Host a children’s activity. A coloring contest, a joint mural scroll project that will fit into the capsule or donations of a favorite toy for children of the future can be fun ways to involve an audience who might still be here to see the capsule opened again.

## Team Mentality Helps Events' Success

Patty Perry, director of event management at Creighton University (Omaha, NE), offers these words of wisdom when it comes to event planning:

- “Events are a team sport. Events done team style allow planners to bounce ideas, come up with best solutions and brainstorm to stimulate creativity.
- “Teams help alleviate the anxiety that is a familiar aspect of events. After all, hosts are anxious: ‘This is costing a lot of money, and I want it to be perfect.’ Guests are anxious: ‘Where and with whom will I be seated?’ Event planners are anxious because the success of the event lies on their shoulders. It’s best to carry this across more than one set of shoulders.
- “Planning an event ‘Lone Ranger-style’ can compromise the integrity of the event. If something happens to that person, there is no one to quickly pick up the pieces.”

*Source: Patty Perry, Director of Event Management, Creighton University, Omaha, NE. Phone (402) 280-1724. E-mail: [pperry@creighton.edu](mailto:pperry@creighton.edu). Website: [www.creighton.edu](http://www.creighton.edu)*

## Who Shares Your Birthday?

Are you about to celebrate your organization’s 10th, 20th or 100th anniversary?

If you have a milestone anniversary coming up, determine what other businesses or corporations are celebrating that same anniversary. Contact and partner with them to form a joint celebration plan.

A joint celebration provides a way to forge new business relationships, and it might even result in gifts, grants, sponsorships, future cooperative ventures and more.

## Keep Yourself Pumped

- To stay motivated and positive, make a weekly list of sweet stuff — things that are going right. Begin each Monday with a new list and add to it each day as the week progresses.

## Tips for Planning a Successful Women’s Luncheon Series

*By Megan Venzin*

For more than two decades the Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce (Scranton, PA) has provided working women with a platform to share their expertise and meet others in a friendly and professional setting through their annual women’s networking luncheon series. “These events were spurred by the vision of really incredible women 21 years ago who had a goal to bring women and business together,” says Director of Membership and Events Mari Potis. The chamber promotes an open format, allowing for a wide array of speakers and topics, something to which she credits the luncheons’ success. Here Potis offers her tips for planning a successful luncheon series geared toward women:

1. Keep the event to one hour. “People don’t have work schedules that allow them to sit around all day,” Potis says. She insists that the most successful luncheons are the ones that are short and to the point. The event should start at 12:00 p.m. on the dot. Guests must be in their seats with lunch by 12:20, with the speaker starting his/her presentation at 12:30. The host should be at the podium saying “Thank you,” at 12:55 to ensure guests are out the door at 1:00 p.m. sharp.
2. Market your event around a unique female speaker. “We market the luncheon around the speaker’s name and area of expertise, rather than a luncheon title or topic, because there’s always the chance they may change their presentation that morning,” Potis says. “If you advertise the person and their résumé properly, people will inevitably be interested.” One of the chamber’s most recent luncheons featured Nadia Daily, a successful female entrepreneur in app design.
3. Pick easy-to-serve foods that appeal to women. “When you’re serving a roomful of women, foods like salad and chocolate are really all you need,” Potis says. “Buffets are fastest, and avoid giving people too many options like a build-your-own salad because that can ultimately slow down the line.”
4. Survey your attendees regularly. “Planning a successful luncheon series is all about identifying the areas of interest to your specific audience,” Potis says. “At every luncheon, we ask people to speak up about the things they want to hear.” Potis recommends conducting formal and informal surveys to ensure you are delivering the most valuable content to your attendees.
5. Set a reasonable price. Potis says every luncheon holds an affordable \$500 sponsorship. She has negotiated a \$20 per head rate with each venue, and attendees pay \$25 for their seat, yielding \$5 per person to the Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce. “We aren’t trying to make money with these kinds of events,” Potis says. “We’re really more interested in volume.”

*Source: Mari Potis, Director of Membership and Events, Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce, Scranton, PA. Phone (570) 342-771. E-mail: [mpotis@scrantonchamber.com](mailto:mpotis@scrantonchamber.com). Website: [www.scrantonchamber.com](http://www.scrantonchamber.com)*

## Appoint an Event Chair-Elect

If you’re not already doing so, be sure to appoint or elect a chair-elect for your annual event. Preparing this person to hit the ground running for the subsequent year’s event will make for a smoother transition year to year and a more confident chairperson managing your event.

During his/her chair-elect year, this individual should:

1. Assist the chair with key details.
2. Observe overall event management.
3. Attend various committee meetings as an observer.

Don’t overload your chair-elect with additional responsibilities — such as chairing a committee — that will prevent him/her from grasping the overall operation of your event.