

# Special Events

## GALORE!

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

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### Pair Up Volunteers For Special-Event Projects

From ticket takers to behind-the-scenes planners to event chairpersons, volunteer involvement is crucial to the success of most special events. When making assignments, consider pairing volunteers to work together on particular tasks or projects related to your special event.

In some instances, there are clear advantages to pairing up compatible individuals for a team project. For example:

- It's often easier to convince someone to take on a project if he/she knows responsibilities can be shared with an event co-chair.
- With two people sharing the load, one can fill in when the other is unavailable.
- Each partner can select project responsibilities which he/she is most skilled or comfortable undertaking.
- With a task or project getting twice the attention, it's likely to be accomplished more thoroughly.
- It's just more fun sharing in a project together.

If you have multiple teams working at various projects, you might even incorporate a friendly competition that includes inexpensive prizes.

### ACCOMMODATING CHILDREN

### Keep Kids Entertained at Grown-Up Events

By Kerry Nenn

Couples want to bring their whole family to your event, but you know it won't be a kid-centric affair. You want to remain family-friendly, but small children can be challenging. What can you do to meet the needs of your patrons?

Joy Sato, director of special events, Pittsburgh Center for the Arts (Pittsburgh, PA), has come up with a solution. Damaged artwork and injured children on gallery staircases led Sato to develop a better answer to bored or unsupervised children other than simply expecting staff on-site to babysit them throughout events.

"In my initial interview with clients, I started asking if children will be attending their event and what ages," explains Sato. "For the past three years, I have created a special area for children attending wedding receptions and other events."

Here are Sato's steps:

- Ask clients to provide two age-appropriate students or family members to watch their children throughout their event. One person can always be in the room to monitor the children. If a family has small children and teenagers, sometimes teenagers can watch the younger kids.
- If a client does not have anyone to volunteer to babysit, extend the opportunity to staff for a small stipend.
- When children arrive, give them a name tag. Create a 3 x 5-inch card with the child's name, parent's name and phone number. This eliminates searching for parents if they need to be reached and trying to remember who belongs to whom.
- Provide activities for everyone to be comfortable, safe and engaged:
  - Use a drop-down movie-size screen for videos.
  - Set up tables with brown paper covering and crayons for drawing.
  - Ask the client to bring other videos and games.
  - Put cushions on the floor.
  - Play music.
  - To make sure they are having their own party, order pizza.
  - Provide a small first aid kit with colorful Band-Aids.
- To cover costs:
  - Charge clients for babysitting fees and pizza.
  - Ask local supermarkets to donate brown paper from the meat department.
  - Ask clients to bring additional art supplies and toys from home.

"We have found that after an hour or so has gone by, and we have not called any of the parents, they begin to come and check on their children," notes Sato. "Most of the time the children are quick to tell parents to go back to their party — they are having fun at their own party. Everyone is happy, and we have found it to be a win-win situation for all concerned."

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