

## ALUMNI REUNION EVENT IDEAS

# Wesleyan Wine Walk Becomes an Annual Event

By Kerry Nenn

“This event has something for everyone,” explains Christian Garcia Wommack, director of alumni relations at Texas Wesleyan University (Fort Worth, TX). “It’s so versatile, everyone loves it.”

The Wesleyan Wine Walk offers participants the opportunity to visit various locations throughout campus and see what’s happening in each program. Plus, they get to enjoy food and wine pairings at each stop. Everyone receives a Wesleyan wine glass to use at each station of the self-guided tour. (For nondrinkers, there are also plenty of nonalcoholic beverage options.)

To begin the 2.5-hour walk, registrants pick up their tasting glass and a sample card at check-in. The card provides a map of the stops, a listing of the wines offered and seven bottles to cross off as they receive each tasting.

“We partner with different departments to offer program highlights and activities at each stop,” Garcia Wommack says. “For example, our nurse anesthesia program just remodeled their simulation lab, and they will give tours of the lab and have professors there to talk with participants, answer questions and do demonstrations. In our gymnasium, we offer a photo op with our mascots and cheerleaders. Another stop allows participants to listen to student musicians. It really offers something for every interest. This is a great way to engage not only alumni and donors but friends of the university and parents



who might want to learn more about the school.”

The last Wine Walk sold out at 150 attendees. Garcia Wommack says the key to its success is appropriate staffing. “There are a lot of moving parts due to collaboration with different departments,” she notes. “You need enough staff for each location, and the staff present must be knowledgeable enough to answer participants’ questions.”

To further enhance the experience, event planners have adapted the walk based on participant feedback. “This year, we decided to do seven stops instead of nine, as we did previously, and to extend the time by 30 minutes, so participants can spend more time at each stop,” reports Garcia Wommack. “We’ve also kept some of our more popular stops and added a few others we think will be of interest to attendees. Everyone loved the mascot photo op, so we kept that, but we decided to feature a different program in our school of arts and sciences. We send a survey out at the end of our events, and that helps us decide what stops to keep and which to change up.” ♦

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## APPRECIATION EVENTS

# Try a ‘Hats Off to You’ Theme

Looking for a creative way to spice up a mundane donor appreciation dinner?

Consider a theme that can be intertwined throughout your event from the centerpieces to the entertainment and décor.

A “Hats Off to You” theme could be the ticket to let donors know you could never have met the goal without them.

Incorporate the theme by sending out top-hat-shaped invita-

tions and using place cards decorated with top hats, top hats filled with flowers as centerpieces and chocolate top hats filled with chocolate kisses as party favors.

For entertainment, hire big band musicians and have them wear top hats. Incorporate your organization’s colors into the evening or go with a classic black, white and silver color scheme to bring sheer elegance to the dinner. ♦