



## Event Planning 101

**Remember the old Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland movies from the 40's? They said, "Hey kids, we've got an idea. Let's put on a show!" And the next thing you knew they had a huge Hollywood production right there in the barn complete with costumes, an orchestra and elaborate sets. As much as we wish it were true, even the simplest events take pre-planning. Follow these basic tips for a successful event (and remember to use the Event Planning Checklist.)**

### **The Idea Phase**

Great ideas can come from brain-storming sessions. Brain-storm with alumni at your meetings. Let the ideas fly. Silly outbursts quite often lead to inventive event ideas.

### **Select a Date**

After deciding on an event, check local calendars as well as religious calendars to avoid obvious conflicts. For example, those of the Jewish faith refrain from social activity during Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, and Passover.

Remind your members to bring their personal calendars to planning meetings.

### **Publicity**

- Perhaps the most essential component to a successful event is good publicity. The Office of Alumni Relations will work with you to publicize your event.
- **"Towers"** – The publishing schedule is set a year in advance. If your event schedule is set far enough in advance you may be able to publicize it in the magazine.
- **Website** – Publicize your event on your club or network website. Keep text simple (What?, When?, Where?, Why?, How Much?, Where to Register?)
- **Broadcast E-Mail** (A.K.A. e-Blasts) – These are a great way to advertise because you can reach a lot of alumni quickly and they are free. However, we do not want to abuse the privilege of having our alumni e-mail addresses. Therefore, **Alumni Relations' policy is to e-blast alumni no more than twice per month total.** Send your e-blast request to us as soon as possible so we can put it on the communication schedule. Please provide the copy (text) for the e-blast. Other than leadership team meeting announcements, clubs are discouraged from sending e-blasts using their own lists.
- **Word-of-Mouth** – Don't forget that sometimes the best way to invite people is with the personal touch. Make a few phone calls. Prepare some calling lists and ask people to make phone calls. Ask people to put the event on their MySpace or other personal websites.
- **Press Release** – Reach alumni and friends of Otterbein through the local papers. It is easy and free to send a press release.
- **Mailings** – Although it is expensive, some events are best publicized through mailings. Keep this schedule in mind if you want to do a mailing:

Request artwork and provide copy to Alumni Relations	7 weeks prior to printing
Alumni Relations will request mailing data	2 weeks prior to printing
Alumni Relations will send piece to printer	1 week prior to mailing
Mailing date	5-6 weeks prior to event date for 1 <sup>st</sup> class postage 7-8 weeks prior to event date for bulk postage

## Event Space

When looking for an event location, keep these things in mind:

- Is it too loud? Will guests be able to hear each other talk?
- Is it easy to find?
- It is handicapped accessible?
- If your event is at a restaurant or country club type setting, talk with the manager directly about your event needs. They will work with you on prices, the menu, room set-up requirements and A/V requirements.
- If a contract is required, forward the contract to Alumni Relations for processing.
- Contact Alumni Relations for a tax exempt form.

## A Word about Food & Drink

Keep in mind that your menu should be enjoyed by all guests. Offer a few items for vegetarians. If you serve food with peanuts in the ingredients, please be sure to have a warning sign next to the item.

Alcohol:

- College funds cannot be used to purchase alcohol. Use a cash bar for your event.
- We want all guests to have a good time and to be safe. If your event is at a bar or restaurant and a guest's safety is becoming a concern, alert a manager. They are responsible for all guests' safety.

## Final Preparations

If using a caterer or restaurant, remember to contact them with your final guest count according to the contract stipulations.

Alumni Relations will provide nametags for your event if requested. Please request the nametags at least 2 weeks prior to the event.

## The Big Day

Use appropriate Otterbein signage and directions.

Recruit volunteers to handle administrative activities like check-in and on-site registration. The leadership team will designate two people to handle funds at the on-site registration. (See [Processing Funds at Events](#).)

Always try to have promotional materials at the check-in table from the Office of Admission. Contact the Office of Alumni Relations if your supply is running low.

Recruit designated "floaters" to mix and mingle with guests...especially at the beginning of the event.

If using a DJ, be sure to schedule time immediately prior to the event to run through the event's schedule with him/her. A well-informed DJ can be a great asset at a party.

If your event is in a **formal** environment, make appropriate introductions including:

Recognition of club leadership team members

Recognition of past leadership team members

Recognition of visitors from Otterbein or other VIPs

Announcement of upcoming local events

Announcement of the club website with local club calendar and info

If there is a guest speaker, publicly thank and present him/her with a gift (if possible)

If your event is in a more **informal** environment use this opportunity to connect personally:

Make a short welcome speech and introduce the club leadership team members

Welcome attendees individually and engage them

Make informal personal introductions among attendees

**After the Event**

The Events Coordinator will e-mail a survey to all attendees.

The Events Coordinator will prepare a Post-Event Report for the club or network's files and provide a copy to the Office of Alumni Relations.

The Membership Coordinator should contact alumni by e-mail or phone (depending on the alumnus' generation) who have not previously attended a club event &/or meeting, thank them for attending and invite them to future events.

The Club Coordinator will remit any funds collected at the event to the Office of Alumni Relations.

The Marketing Coordinator will e-mail photos from the event to [brobinson@otterbein.edu](mailto:brobinson@otterbein.edu) to update the club or network photo album on the website.