

Tips on planning a Celebration of Support

By Heidi Frederickson

A Celebration of Support event is a one day event that is a fund/spirit raiser for individuals and their families struggling with a medical crisis. Making sure the Celebration of Support is successful is crucial in the emotional and financial wellbeing of the family you are helping. Having the knowledge and tools can make that difference!

Tip 1

Permission- Getting the individual and family's permission to hold the event is VERY important. You are displaying their personal information out there to the public. In order for it to be successful emotionally, you need to know they are excited and happy about the event and getting their permission will help with that as well.

Tip 2

Planning- Planning a Celebration of Support event is not an easy task but very rewarding so be prepared to give of your time in order to make it a successful one. A Celebration of Support is a one-time event so it is important to get it right the first time and not have the mind set of whatever we raise is better than nothing, since it is vital to raise the amount they need to survive their financial medical crisis. You have one shot to do it right and they are counting on you! Average planning time for the event is three to four months and you will need 5 to 10 people on the planning team. The more you are prepared the easier the planning and the day of the event will go.

Tip 3

Location/Date- Location is very important in the success of getting and holding attendees. Items to look for; making sure the venue you hold the event is in a key location that majority of the family's support system is located and making sure the venue has enough room to hold 200 to 300 attendees at a time and has room to set up tables for the different activities (silent auction, raffles, bake sale, food, etc...) The two best days to have an event are a Saturday or Sunday. Stay away from weddings, family reunions, Packer games, and big public events such as fairs and carnivals- don't try to compete. Maximum hours to hold the event is between 4 and 5 hours. Questions to ask the venue: will they let you bring food in, do they have a discount on food or can we bring in food donated by other restaurants, do they give you a % of the sales from the bar and most importantly will they give you the place for free.

Tip 4

Promoting-Promoting the Celebration of Support is vital, if you have no attendees then there is no fund/spirits that are being raised for the family that you are planning the event. There are 5 key components to creating awareness for the event: Compose a solicitation letter to solicit for donation, create a postcard invitation to send to family, friends, co-workers, etc., create a poster for awareness to the general public and Social media/website creating a Facebook page and a webpage to invite people that will have the capability for people to donate online or know where to donate. Remember this isn't like a wedding where you only invite a certain amount of people, this is where you invite as many people as you can, even people you don't know to come and support the family. It is key to remember to put majority of the focus on the families support system in getting them to be aware of it and attendee, then it is to focus on the general public.

Tip 5

Raising Spirits and Funds- It is important to raise the funds needed for the family to survive the medical crisis. It helps to have the family work with a financial planner to assist them in coming up with that amount needed and then giving it to the planning team so they and the supporters have a goal in mind. It is important for the team to figure what activities they will do in order to raise the funds needed. Such ideas for activities are silent auction, bake sale, games, food, live auction or raffles (but remember in the state of Wisconsin it is illegal for anyone to hold a raffle unless they have a Wisconsin Dept. of Gaming license.) Having a credit card machine at the event will encourage attendees to spend more. Give the attendees opportunities to spend their money by having many different activities. It is also about raising spirits some ideas to make it a celebration are having a personal theme logo and decorations that fits the recipient's likes and interests such as a theme logo "Fishing for Support for Tom" with fishing decorations or In "Honor of her Royal Highness Brooklyn" and have castles and royal attire. Other ideas are having a photographer and videographer capture the event, along with a message board for the attendees to write message on, to be a continued remembrance of that joyous day. Having the planning team, volunteers and family wear a t-shirt in support along with it being a great keepsake.

Heidi Frederickson is the executive director/co-founder of Community Benefit Tree, a nonprofit organization that is here to celebrate people's lives and support them during their medical crises. We help families; friends and co-workers plan Celebration of Support events for their loved ones. Community Benefit Tree also provides education, support, resources and financial

assistance for families struggling with medical crises. We have assisted with planning over 500 Celebration of Support events in the last eleven years. Visit the Web site at www.communitybenefitree.org or contact them at 920.422.1919.