



## SEAC Fact Sheet

# ORGANIZING AN EVENT ON YOUR CAMPUS!

Organizing an event on your campus or in your community can be a great way to build morale within your group, raise funds, and let the rest of the world know what your group is up to.

This factsheet is based on a workshop given by Dave Hutchinson (of the Un. of KY Greenthumb) at our 2002 SEAC Summer Training Institute. Dave and the good folks at Greenthumb organized an event that not only attracted several hundred people from the community, but also gained significant publicity for their group as well as recruiting volunteers and intern applicants for the Humane Society and the Cincinnati Zoo. By adapting the model that Dave presented to your own campus, you too can organize a successful event that will help build your organization and get the word out about your work!

### The Nuts & Bolts

- 1) Decide What You Want to Do. Dream Up and brainstorm an event that will benefit your group and will impact a target audience (small or large) effectively. You can do this at a group meeting, individually, or brainstorm during a class. Remember you can always change and improve your initial ideas!
- 2) Run the idea by the group you want to do this with. See what they think of the idea; see if they have the energy, financial resources, and willpower to put on the event. If they don't you can always work with other groups to make your dreams happen. If possible try to develop a goal at this point: Raise Awareness, Promote Something, Have Fun, or whatever.
- 3) Figure out if you want to include other groups (campus organizations, community organizations, local government, or whomever) and see what resources (volunteer time, financial resources, etc) they can offer. Remember that sometimes less is better.
- 4) Set a place and time. When you do this be realistic. Do you want to make it a small deal or a grand event? You can use previous events to gauge size and audience. Give yourself some time to let things fall into place. For most small events a month is probably enough time, while the bigger events you should plan far ahead! No matter how far ahead you plan, it will come faster than you think it will. Check to see if the location is available (make sure no one else has the facility reserved, make sure it can

- accommodate the crowd, and make sure it is accessible to your target audience). If you have a speaker or performer make sure that the time and place works for them. Check to make sure that the performer has everything he/she needs to be able to perform at the event.
- 5) After you have the time, location and idea in place you are really trucking. That is usually the hardest part of the whole process. Now you need to advertise. Advertising can be tricky; you need to really think about who the target audience is. Do you want this open to only a certain major, the general public, college students only, or a specific audience?
  - 6) Verify everything at this point. Make sure the performer has filled out any necessary paperwork; make sure you confirm the facility and special arrangements (i.e. special chair set-up, table set-up, etc). If you verify the details before you advertise you won't have to worry about changing anything at the last minute. Make sure all co-sponsors are aware of the time, location and the need for volunteers if necessary. Remember each event is special and may require special attention.
  - 7) See if you want to do any last minute adjustments. Some ideas include collecting money for a related charity, having educational PowerPoint slides prior to the event, having a sign-up sheet for interested people, etc. Sometimes the event motivates people to take action and you will want to be ready to let the audience participate to help your issue or goal of the event. This is also a good time to talk with your group to determine what else is on your agenda for the coming weeks/months. If you're going to be having another big event some time soon, the event you're planning now would probably be a good place to advertise that; so make sure to have the date and location figured out in advance so that you can make up a flier or give an announcement at the upcoming event.
  - 8) Have back-up plans. No matter how good you may be at planning an event be prepared for the worst. If you expect and prepare for the worst you will be ready for anything. Ideas include having extra volunteers on hand, having a rain site available if your event is supposed to take place outdoors, and having tape, scissors and everything you might possibly need ready just in case. You may not need these things but it's easier to carry some extra supplies than have your event flop for a preventable reason.
  - 9) Set-up directional signs if your event is in an odd location. Yard signs and posters help direct people to your event. Also you might catch people walking by that are interested in your issue/goal.
  - 10) Make sure you have volunteers show up early to help out with last minute set-ups, and anything else that might come up. Volunteers make the world go round when the event organizer(s) is/are busy.
  - 11) Have the event. This is the best part of the entire process. You will enjoy the event so much more after you realize how much effort went into putting it on.
  - 12) Clean-up Time. Hopefully your event was a success. Now clean up so your group can continue having events in the same location in the future. It's not only your responsibility but also a nice gesture.

- 13) Use the energy and success from this event to do other projects and endeavors. Follow-up with the people who expressed interest in being involved in your group. Thank the people who volunteered to make the event a success (so that they'll want to volunteer more in the future), and celebrate your success with the co-organizers and volunteers.

## **Suggestions and Techniques / Ideas to Consider When Having an Event**

- Make a Timeline for your event. If you do this far in advance you can keep up with all the big and little dates to verify contacts, verify spaces, notify press, etc. Without a timeline you may forget some important last minute details.
- DELEGATE Responsibilities. You cannot put on a big event by yourself. You need the help from as many volunteers as possible to make the event a success. Delegating does not mean bossing people around, but getting volunteers to do things that you won't have time to do. By delegating you will get more input and more creativity in your event, and more people will feel invested in making the event a success.
- Make sure you have support from your group. The more people who are interested and have input the better the event will be.
- If you're doing anything special, notify the building director. You don't want to have your event shut down due to fire or health regulations that you weren't aware of in advance. An example of this is that you cannot have animals in any building with a restaurant in it.
- Get to the location of the event early. If you cannot get there early make sure someone who knows what is going on is there early. The earlier the better--you can always read a book why you wait on volunteers and participants to arrive.
- Ask the building director for access time before and after the event. The access time will allow for set-up and take-down of the event.
- Use all the resources possible from outside parties to make your event happen. Often there are community groups that will donate their time and money to help your causes. Student government will usually be willing to help financially support events open to any student, although with some restrictions. Just remember most groups' financial resources are limited.
- Think about having fundraisers prior to your event to help fund and promote it. Bake sales with flyers are a great way to get people interested in your event. (The best part is you make money too.) Sometimes handing out freebies such as necklaces with flyers will get people interested too. Remember to fill out the appropriate forms if you are raising money on campus.
- Remember that you want to reach a target audience. Cater to their needs. If you think refreshments will get a few more people it may be worth it. Sometimes professors will give extra credit if their students attend an event. Local schools and community centers are often a great place to advertise your event.

- You will not master the art of putting on an event the first time. It often takes trial and error to pull off the best event possible. Sometimes the event flopped for other reasons such as bad weather, finals/midterms, etc. Take notes based on your experiences and pass those on to the other people in your group; this will make your group stronger with time and prevent people from having to make the same mistakes that you did.
- Hope for the best, and expect the worst and you will probably have a successful event.

### **Case Study: “Cat Scratch Fever 2002”**

Nine student organizations banded together to bring the Cincinnati Zoo’s Cat Show to the University of KY. Over 1,200 people watched the live animal cat show. See how each of the groups contributed to the success:

- Student Government - Provided funding
- Green Thumb Environmental Club – Raised \$300+ for cheetah conservation and volunteered time and energy to make the event happen
- Pre-Vet Club – Provided volunteers, on-site advice, donations, and did outreach to the community
- Campus Girl Scouts – Made flyers, and advertised to local Girl Scout groups
- UK Green Party – Volunteered for the event and participated in volunteer fair
- UK SPCA – Provided volunteers and promoted the event
- Phi Sigma Pi – Provided volunteers
- UFOSC – Provided volunteers and donations
- Phi Alpha Theta - Promotion and volunteers

The Cincinnati Zoo got intern applications, The Lexington Humane Society got volunteers, and the organizers got increased publicity and interest in their group, in addition to building morale and organizing experience amongst participants.

*Disclaimer: This document, as with all SEAC documents, is a work-in-progress. Have you had experiences in your campus/community organizing that contradict or compliment what you’ve read here? If so, let us know! We’re always looking to update our materials, and are always looking for new perspectives and insights from the people who know best—those of you at the grassroots. Keep in touch...*

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