

# Planning Community-Wide Special Events

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## Introduction

The North Dakota State Department of Commerce is sponsoring a flurry of events in the state never too early to begin because early organization and planning programs will insure a broad base of interest and future participation. A variety of community-wide special events can be planned in any community over the next three years. The special event can also be synchronized with shopping specials promoted by town merchants.

The purpose of this bulletin is to examine the steps for planning and implementing a community-wide special event. First, a community-wide special event is defined. Second, the reader is provided with a system for setting up a community-wide special event. Third, the material can give an understanding of the psychological and social benefits that accrue from the community-wide event. Finally, a rationale is given for synchronizing this special event with shopping specials and promotions by the business community that will affect tourism.

## Defining A Community-Wide Special Event

Community-wide special events are those unique, infrequent, short term activities which depart from everyday life and involve the entire community. They range in size from the small childrens' magic show put on at a local park for a small local crowd, all the way to a major festival that attracts thousands of visitors and takes place over the course of a week.

Community-wide special events are staged for a variety of reasons - to celebrate a holiday season or historical event, to raise money, to provide a cultural or educational experience for the local population, to provide fun and entertainment for members of a local community.

The key to these events is people involvement. Such events involve many people - those who plan the events, those who prepare the events, those who attend the events and those who clean up after the events. For people involved in the planning and conducting there are opportunities for social interaction, new experience, recognition and service. These events give opportunities for new leaders to try their wings.

The events may benefit individuals, groups or the whole community by providing opportunities to:

- (1) Widely publicize the event and the community simultaneously;

- (2) Unite church, social, civic, commercial and governmental groups working toward a common goal;
- (3) Share the unique location, history, skills, talents or facilities of a community with others;
- (4) Gain needed income for worthy community projects or organizations.

## Some Essential Qualities

Community-wide events do not just happen, although some of the more successful ones feature an air of spontaneity. A special event, particularly if staged on an annual basis, is likely to be a product of a well conceived planning process that involves the best efforts of many people from the community.

A case in point is Sun Prairie, Wisconsin. For almost a quarter of a century the citizens of Sun Prairie have had a corn festival in mid August. The corn festival draws many thousands of people from surrounding areas and from as far as Milwaukee. The inducements that bring people into the town are fresh sweetcorn, fresh butter and a chance to see what small town life is like. One community in North Dakota that has held a corn festival is Egeland.

Sun Prairie has several advantages in planning. First, the community has twenty years of experience. From this experience it knows crowd characteristics, site planning, and even what varieties of corn to plant for eating and for sale. Second, it is close to an interstate and to an urban center (Madison, Wisconsin), guaranteeing a flow of tourists who can respond to shopping specials and synchronized promotions. Finally, the community is mobilized for the event. Some officials estimate 75 percent of the town's residents and 40 percent of the area farmers take part in the event.

The trick to Sun Prairie's success is its apparent spontaneity. Months of planning, planting and building pay off each year by creating a special event that appears spontaneous. The workers are happy to give customers free corn. The musicians are happy to play music that creates the illusion of a festival. The public thoroughly enjoys the free corn and atmosphere. The community enjoys a regional reputation for its yearly event.

Behind the scenes, however, months of hard work are initiated right after the last Corn Festival ends. New leaders are recruited for special events, shows or shopping events for the next year. This planning provides an opportunity to expand the leadership base. Also, it permits the integration of community leadership as business leaders are "yoked together" in projects with farmers, senior citizens and other groups.

This new leadership cluster has the opportunity to work with experienced leaders, to learn the sequence of events through the experience of others. After this leadership group works up an event to a point where they feel comfortable it will hold together, they concentrate on including other groups and organizations as sources of volunteers. Sociological research has shown that the greater the civic participation in a project, the better success it will show in the end. But the planned sequence of group involvement is also important. Too often groups are involved prematurely in a special event. Premature inclusion can lead to "wheel spinning" and loss of member interest.

Returning to the Sun Prairie example, the end of one festival marks the beginning of a new cycle. Leadership experience and competence is high enough to include potential leaders in early stages of the next year of planning.

## Planning the Event

The techniques and approaches to planning community events described in the following sections are not a guarantee of success for every event. Experience and research, however, indicate that these guidelines are adaptable to diverse communities. Paying attention to planning detail is likely to produce a true community celebration in which all participants profit.

Once the leadership group is in place there are several pertinent questions that should be asked:

1. What is the main purpose for staging the event? To celebrate a holiday, a season, or a historical event? To raise money, to provide a cultural or educational experience, or to provide fun and entertainment? Or some other purpose?
2. What type of event would be most in keeping with a community's unique location, history, customs, facilities and abilities?
3. Will the event be aimed at the needs and interests of community residents and perhaps visitors as well?
4. What time of the year should the event be held to best meet the objectives and purposes for which it is organized? On what dates will the event conflict least with other local programs or those of nearby communities?
5. How long should the event last? Several hours, one day, several days, an entire week?
6. What basic types of facilities, equipment and supplies are needed to conduct the event?
7. How many people might attend?
8. How many planners and workers are needed?
9. How much money will be needed to get the event under way?

## Special Event Ideas<sup>1</sup>

Community leaders should not feel constrained when planning a community special event. Sometimes the crazy ideas are the ones that really appeal to people. Themes, titles, and activities for these community-wide special events are bounded only by the limits of imagination and the ability of local groups to transfer creative ideas into reality. However, events should be chosen with needs and resources of the community foremost in the minds of the planners. The following event ideas may spark the imagination and give some specific direction to planning. The events are listed according to the main purposes for which they were staged.

### To Celebrate Holidays, Seasons and Historical Events

Winter Carnival	Veterans Parade
A Musket or Cannon Shot	Old-Timers Reunion
Rail Splitting Contest	All-School Reunion
Buffalo Chip Throwing Contest	Labor Day Picnic
Old-Fashioned Weekend	Bell and Flag Day
Historical Home Tour	Fourth of July Parade
Winter Decoration Contest	May Day Festival
Centennial or Founders Day	Halloween Ghost Walk or Fun House
Harvest Celebration	Farmer Appreciation Day
Collector Days (toys, guns, etc.)	Steam Threshers Reunion

### Projects to Raise Funds

Flea Market	Donkey Softball Game
Local Rodeo	Las Vegas Night
Distance Walk or Marathon	Special Day for Hogs, Cows, etc.
Auto or Horse Race	BMX Cross-Country Bicycle Race
Pancake Breakfast	Beer and Bratwurst Day
Antique Auction	Circus
Dance Marathon	Chicken Fry
Charity Fair	
Silent Auction	
Corn Feed	

### To Provide Cultural or Educational Experiences

Community Art Fair	Community Garden Show
Children's Theater Production	Dance Contest or Show
Talent Show	Film Festival
Ethnic Exhibits	Ethnic Food Show
Country Music Show	Music Under the Stars Series
Barbershop Quartet Show	Livestock Show
Native American Craft Demonstration	Antique Auto Show
Community Sing	Fashion Show
Gem and Mineral Show	Madrigal Dinner with Singing
Science Fair	Comic Book or Baseball Card Exhibit

<sup>1</sup>Consult with the North Dakota Centennial Commission for lists of special projects developed at the Conference for Planning the Centennial (October, 1985).

## Events to Provide Fun and Entertainment

Corn and Pig Roast  
Community Pet Show  
Frog Jumping Contest  
Boat Show  
Beauty Pageant  
(even in winter)  
Car Rally  
Long Bicycle Race  
Softball Tournament (men,  
women & mixed teams)

Children's Fishing Event  
Hot Air Balloon Race  
Turtle Race  
Easter Egg Hunt  
Amateur Carnival  
Mardi Gras Festival  
Skydiving Show  
High School Sports  
Invitational Tournament

Most communities combine a number of separate activities into one major event. Here the role of community leadership is most needed. Someone must synchronize the events as well as synchronize the special events with the opportunities for shopping and commercial specials in the business sector. For example, a Christmas decoration contest may be one activity in a total celebration that includes the lighting of the community tree, a candle song fest for all ages and a Santa Claus parade, plus a calls-to-Santa program in which the town's older citizens telephone young children to ask them what they want for Christmas. These efforts could be synchronized with various shopping specials in town where the merchants provide goods for sale at lower prices.

## Special Event Names

Naming the event can be important. The name, ideally, should not only give some idea of the activities to be enjoyed, but should invite interest and questions about details. Thus, a Fourth of July festival could become a Heartland Heritage Days with events added to promote the local history of a region. An environmental educational event could be labeled Spring in the Woods and might include various nature walks and lectures. Finally, a Pork Roast might be called a Piggy Cue, with certain educational materials added about nutrition.

A community's unique location, ethnic interest and special beautification efforts may lend themselves to the titles of special events. In the Red River Valley some shopping specials are entitled Old Red River Days. Some Missouri Valley communities have a German Cheese Fest; other German communities have a Kirchen Fest. In some German-Russian communities there is talk of Kuchla Days. An Ohio community combines numerous parades, contests, pageants, and other special activities under the overall title "Holiday At Home." Another Ohio community hosts the World Giant Pumpkin Contest.

North Dakota's distinct advantage here lies in its ethnic heritage. Ethnic groups can organize

themselves along ethnic history and genealogy as well as ethnic cooking. Exhibits and displays that deal with pioneer days and past farming conditions are very much in order. But a very salable point in North Dakota ethnic festivals is the distinct cookery and recipes that ethnic groups have retained for several generations. Ethnic dishes become objects for sale in churches or restaurants and provide a unique culinary opportunity for people who come in from outside.

Concern for the past is growing into a business. But the interest must have a base of popular support. Monuments and markers are ways to represent the historic past on a low budget. Homes of famous people that become museums with period furniture are very good tourism draws. Special events planned around historic homes or forts have the potential for tourist shopping appeal.

Special interest has been generated by "living history" projects. Two kinds of living history are useful for special community-wide events. Actors may portray historical characters like Mark Twain or Sakakawea, giving an onstage performance and discussing topics with the audience. The chance to experience historical labor also will draw people. In a pioneer city in Missouri for instance, tourists can make soap and candles, fire muskets and pull taffy by hand as part of a historical living experience.



## Writing Objectives for a Special Community-Wide Event

An important step in planning a successful community-wide event is to write objectives or goals for it. The list of objectives should outline what is going to be done, who is going to do it, who will benefit, and what specific results are desired. Writing a list of objectives will aid planners in keeping within the boundaries of their goals. It will also

help in recruiting individuals in groups who identify with the planners' specific aims. The list of objectives will also be an important evaluation tool, a yardstick by which to measure the community's success in the event.

The following objectives were written for a Pioneers Day done in another state, but they can be used as a guideline for writing objectives for projects that may be planned in North Dakota. Objectives such as these provide a focus for the entire planning process, which is why they should be determined before moving ahead on the project.

### Objectives of Pioneer Days Festival

1. To interpret the unique pioneer history of the community through pageantry, displays of craftsmanship, and displays of authentic food.
2. To use the full resources of local governmental, civic and church groups for voluntary help, facilities and financial backing.

3. To provide fun and entertainment for children and adults of all ages.
4. To attract at least 3,000 visitors to the community from surrounding areas and cities.
5. To raise at least \$5,000 net profit for the installation of the children's playground and other equipment in the community park.

These goals were tangible. They had an idea of what they wanted to do, how many people they wanted to bring into the community, and what type of cash goal they would need for a successful program.

Below is a mock schedule for planning tasks and assigning tasks to different groups in a community. It is a fairly general schedule developed in conjunction with pioneer days, but we suggest looking at the sequence of dates and the sequencing of organizational development to get an idea of how much work should go into planning such an event.

### SYNCHRONIZATION TABLE

DATE DUE	TASK	ASSIGNED TO	DATE COMPLETED
July 15	Hold first organizational mtg. Discuss event objectives Determine type of event Suggest activities to be held Determine tentative date(s) Elect event chairperson	Total planning group	
Aug. 14	Clear date(s) with authorities	Event chairperson	
Aug. 15	Meet with total plan group Determine main tasks Name committee chairpersons Agree on objectives Discuss name of event Discuss site(s) and facilities needed Discuss financial, group, & individual resources Send release to local & area news media	Event chairperson Total plan group Event chairperson Total plan group  Publicity committee	
Sept. 14	Recruit cosponsoring groups Recruit committee members Meet with committees, list tasks Select sites & facilities Make up tentative budget Write objectives  Plan promotional campaign Plan food & refreshments Plan for parking & safety Plan evaluation & clean-up	Total plan group Committee chairpersons Committee chairpersons Facilities committee Finance committee Event chairperson & secretary Publicity committee Refreshment committee Parking & safety committee Evaluation and clean-up committee	

<b>DATE DUE</b>	<b>TASK</b>	<b>ASSIGNED TO</b>	<b>DATE COMPLETED</b>
Sept. 15	Meet with total plan group Give committee reports Adopt committee plans Discuss event timetable Send release to all news media	Event chairperson Committee chairpersons Total plan group Total plan group Publicity committee	
Oct. 14	Order publicity materials Sign contracts & agreements for sites & facilities Request appearance of special performers or announcers Order special supplies, equipment, & awards	Publicity committee Event chairperson Event chairperson Facilities committee	
Oct. 15	Meet with total plan group Hear committee reports Send release to all news media	Event chairperson Total plan group Publicity committee	
Nov. 15	Meet with total plan group Hear committee reports Sign agreements & contracts with special performers Adopt event timetable Send release to all news media	Event chairperson Total plan group Event chairperson Total plan group Publicity committee	
Dec. 15, Jan. 15, and Feb. 15	Meet with total plan group Hear committee reports Send release to all news media Speak at church & civic group meetings	Event chairperson Total plan group Publicity committee Publicity committee	
Mar. 14	Print signs, flyers, posters, & banners	Publicity committee	
Mar. 15	Meet with total plan group Hear committee reports Send release to all news media	Event chairperson Total plan group Publicity committee	
Apr. 14	Begin construction or acquisition of booths, props, etc. Invite special guests	Facilities committee Event chairperson	
Apr. 15, May 1, and May 15	Meet with total plan group Hear committee reports Send release to all news media	Event chairperson Total plan group Publicity committee	
May 16	Begin final promotional campaign	Publicity committee	
May 31	Order special food supplies Contact help for parking & safety Finalize evaluation process	Refreshment committee Parking & safety committee Evaluation committee	
June 1	Meet with total plan group Hear committee reports Set up event work schedule Send out timed promotion & publicity	Event chairperson Total plan group Total plan group Publicity committee	
Weekly through June	Meet with total plan group Hear committee reports Initiate final promotional events	Event chairperson Total plan group Publicity committee	
June 29- July 1	Finalize physical arrangements Stage dress rehearsals & dry runs	Facilities committee Total plan group	
July 2-4	<b>STAGE EVENT</b> Conduct evaluation	Total plan group Evaluation committee	

DATE DUE	TASK	ASSIGNED TO	DATE COMPLETED
July 4-5	Clean up	Clean-up & evaluation committee	
July 14	Send thank-you letters to helpers	Event chairperson	
July 15	Hold evaluation meeting Present evaluation report Present financial report Set tentative date for next year	Total plan group Evaluation committee Financial committee Total plan group	
Aug. 1	Compile evaluation report	Committee chairpersons & event chairperson	

## Mobilizing the Whole Community

Special events should be planned not only for the whole community but also by the entire community. For this reason event planners should strive to interest and involve a large number and variety of people. The planning group should consider the main task which needs to be completed and then recruit those people who can best aid in getting the job done. A variety of individuals and groups can be approached to aid in the planning and the operation of the event. People with special skills and groups who have expressed an interest in the activities to be held should be recruited along with representatives of agencies which can contribute facilities or funds. All organizations in the area should be asked to help - 4-H clubs, church groups, county extension personnel, local service clubs, and others.

Recruiting volunteers is difficult but we suggest a direct, personal approach. Volunteer workers can be recruited in many ways. Personal phone calls are perhaps the best. But talks to various local clubs, discussions with elected officials and appeals at public meetings seem to work. (Extension bulletins on recruiting volunteers are available at local county extension offices.)

People should be challenged with opportunities and tasks which best fit their interests. Also, having clearly defined written objectives will aid in the recruitment of willing workers. But these objectives must be interpreted to people in terms of the roles they as individuals and groups might play. This role and definition process is very important to the community leadership.

The most common way to organize event planning is to form committees with each group in charge of a special function. An overall event chairperson should be appointed or elected to coordinate all planning and operations. This individual should be responsible for appointing committee chairpersons

who, in turn, must recruit sufficient help to ensure that their committees are successful in completing their tasks.

The number of workers and committees needed will depend largely on the nature of the event. Several committees are needed for almost any event: publicity, program, finance, facilities, clean-up, evaluation and special activities. Some events might also require committees for refreshments, parking and safety, decoration and props, and other special functions.

Subcommittees may be needed for large events which include many different activities. For example, the finance committee may be responsible for soliciting pre-event donations, selling tickets and auditing all event receipts. This group may elect to divide the tasks among several smaller subcommittees. The publicity committee may have one subcommittee which works on posters, banners and another which works on scheduling promotional talks in neighboring communities. The number of committees and subcommittees formed will depend on the amount and variety of tasks that need to be accomplished. A skillful chairperson will designate enough committees so that many people are involved in meaningful efforts and can realistically accomplish their goals in the time available. But the key factor here is flexibility on the part of the leadership and on the part of the subcommittee members.

Communication is important to the overall success of the event. All members of the planning team should be kept informed about what various committees are doing and should have a voice in the overall planning. No individual or group should speak for a planning team as a whole unless a group decision has been made regarding the reactions or directions to be taken.

Some efficient event planning teams may decide before the event or after one year's success to form

ongoing organizations that can evaluate the past event and plan for future ones. Such organizations usually take the form of non-profit corporations chartered by the state with officers and standing committees who can raise funds and enter formal agreements with other groups and organizations. Formations of non-profit corporations may be desirable but with full citizen participation a main objective of community-wide events, care should be taken that a closed corporation does not result.

In North Dakota, local development corporations may be formed to sponsor an event. Care must be taken in forming a non-profit corporation if a community expects to receive a 501(c)(3) IRS tax exemption. With this tax exemption a community can solicit dollars and those dollars can be deducted from an individual's tax liability. For more information, read NDSU Extension circular 39, "Do-It-Yourself Community Development."

## Planning for Special People

A community-wide event provides an opportunity for everyone to celebrate and become involved. Thoughtful consideration should be given to those who, because of age or physical or mental handicap, may find it especially difficult to participate fully without assistance. The overall aim of such assistance should be to enable each individual to enjoy the event with as much independence and self reliance as possible. Special provisions may need to be made for these people but not to the extent that they are likely to receive excessive visibility or attention.

Of special concern is the construction of handicapped access facilities to displays at the special event. In past times these were not particularly important. Lately, with the social access that the handicapped have, it is important to keep the options open for wheelchairs and people with mobility handicaps.

The following actions should be considered when planning a community-wide event. Most of these are based on handicapped accessibility:

1. Build ramps at curbs or steps to accommodate wheelchairs.
2. Make restrooms accessible and equipped with extra-wide doorways.
3. Set up a reserved viewing area for people with special disabilities so they can view the parade or other events.
4. Set up a special time when special people can look at fixed events, like 4-H events that have been judged.

5. Invite residents from care homes, daycare centers, and other agencies to participate; and inquire about their special needs.
6. Organize a volunteer service for the relief of individuals who must care for the ill and the handicapped, so they can participate in the event.
7. Provide a minibus or automobile transportation service to help individuals get from one event to another. The use of a senior citizen bus in some counties may also be suggested, but insurance issues should be investigated.
8. Set up a nursery program so that mothers with young children may make visits to the festival. Here it may be wise to consult with churches and other business groups on setting up programs for the children themselves.

## Securing Financial Support and Physical Facilities

Among the many areas of concern for the special event planning team are securing enough funds to get the event under way and arranging for adequate space and physical facilities. Regardless of the main purpose of the event, planners will need some finances to get started. Promotional efforts, rentals, purchase of special equipment, contract agreements with entertainment groups, acquisition of smaller supplies and prizes—all these require some funding prior to the event. Equipment and facilities such as buildings, stages, parks and concession stands may have to be rented beforehand.

Fortunately, the community nature of most events makes the task of securing funds, equipment and other donations easier than it would be if the planning group and event were narrow in focus. It is likely that community business people, club leaders, government officials and other citizens **expect** to be asked to contribute either funds or services through direct donation of supplies, equipment and other facilities or through discount prices of other items needed for the event. Many more people expect to help build floats and stages and set up bleachers and public address systems, to sell concessions, to make food and serve it, or to do other tasks.

When direct appeals do not produce enough funds or facilities to stage the event, special event planners must employ a number of other techniques for securing money. Some groups ask their local Chamber of Commerce for support. Others sell decals, booster buttons and bumper stickers advertising the events in town. Other groups have gone the route of printing special t-shirts, special hats, limited edition plates, mugs and other items for which the profit margin is fairly high. Still other groups raise money by holding raffles with prizes





donated by local merchants, or by selling advertisements in the printed events program. Printing time and paper often are donated by the local printing company. A community putting on a large regional event may want to get in touch with professional public relations firms and fund raisers to check out the price of a package deal on promoting the event.

At many state universities, one can find the Foundation Index. This guide to grants from foundations covers all grants of \$5,000 or more given to citizen groups in a calendar year. Grants available for special projects are categorized to make the information easy to extract. For further information, see extension circular EC-849, "Challenge Grants."

Another fund-raising option is unique to North Dakota. Charitable gaming laws provide many opportunities for communities to develop income for special events. State law requires that over half the gaming revenues be allocated to a charity. If the organization sponsoring the community-wide event has a 501(c)(3) tax exempt status, it can legally become a recipient charity. Contact with the North Dakota State Attorney General is advised.

## Planning for Crowd Control and Safety

Studies of typical community events show that groups often make insufficient plans for the control, safety and comfort for those who attend. To insure the fewest problems in this area, estimates of the anticipated audience should be high, a pessimistic attitude should be taken concerning weather, and consideration should be given to unfortunate results that could occur because of the nature and location

of the event activities. In planning for safety and comfort of those attending the event, obtain as much professional help as possible. Police and firemen, ambulance and hospital personnel, boy scouts and girl scouts, 4-H club members and other service people should be identified, recruited and made aware of what might happen if something goes wrong.

The health, comfort and safety of those attending the event can be enhanced by creating a rest area away from the main stream of activity but close enough to the action to be readily accessible. This area can be located in a vacant store, a park shelter, a large tent, or any place where people can rest when tired of walking or in need of relief from the hot sun or noisy crowds. Local garden center operators, garden club members and park department personnel could develop a decorative minipark for this purpose. Frequently all that is necessary is a grove of trees and some benches. In these sheltered spots, mothers with tired children and senior citizens can rest.

Restrooms should be clean and near the event. Adequate, staffed parking lots should be available during the event. Access to the event area should be clearly marked and free of barriers and danger spots that may injure pedestrians. Activities should be placed close enough together for convenience but not so close that event areas become overcrowded.

Special precautions need to be taken for the control and safety of the crowds for many events such as parades, auto races and fireworks displays. Such precautions may include the provision of auxiliary police barricades, public address systems, signs and roped off areas. A well-marked first aid tent and a standby ambulance crew should also be part of almost any community-wide special event.

## Planning for Refreshments

An important ingredient of most successful community events is food and drink. This is especially true if the refreshments are made with a secret recipe, served in a unique way, given creative or ethnic names, or served in a decorative setting. An example of this is German beer and food served in a German beer hall.

Planners of successful special events have used many special ways of making and serving refreshments. In many communities secret recipes for stews, barbeque sauce, desserts and other foods have been used from one year to the next. Other groups use unique serving styles, such as selling

beer in a bucket engraved with the name of the event, or serving beans in small crocks. In Sun Prairie, Wisconsin, individuals can have as much free corn as they want but they have to husk it themselves and find their own place to eat and relax. Still other planners invent unusual names for the things they serve. For example, stewed hot dogs with sauerkraut become pigs in a cabbage patch.

Decorations and names for refreshment centers can also be important. To provide decorative centers for eating and drinking, several Illinois towns have produced German beer gardens complete with umpah bands. In western states special names such as "The OK Corral" can be used. Planners must be aware of state liquor laws prohibiting the sale of alcoholic beverages on Sundays. Some states and towns have local ordinances. It is best to check with local officials on the matter of beverage sales.

Many reference works are available to aid groups in planning food for large crowds, "Food Purchasing Guides for Group Feeding" and "Recipes for Quantity Service" can be obtained by writing the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington D.C., 20402.

## Promoting the Event

Nothing is more important to the entire event than promotion. Publicity plans should be made early and carried out by individuals who best know how to reach their intended audiences in a most creative way. People who have a flair for writing, making posters and delivering speeches should be sought out and encouraged to help out with the events publicity.

Promotion involves "selling" the event to the public and is part of the larger process of community public relations - helping to assure that the event makes and sustains a favorable public image. Public relations should be a year-round effort which includes everything from showing slides or films about the event to local clubs, to making a special effort to thank those who helped make it a success in the past.

Plans for publicity should include identifying the intended audience, deciding what media to use, and determining when to release specific publicity. The list of objectives compiled at the start of the planning process should be kept in mind when trying to identify the intended audiences for the event. If the planning group particularly wishes to attract a certain age group or families or residents in other communities, then specific media must be used to reach those potential participants.

In addition to defining the intended audience, promotion plans must include specific ideas about what media to use and when to release the publicity. Timing is extremely important. The ideal promotion campaign will include initial releases meant to create an early awareness of the event, followed by more detailed information with highlights on specific activities. Promotion carried out during and after the event also greatly enhances the success of the event, especially if it is to be held annually.

Promotion ideas are almost limitless. Those suggested below are given to aid planning groups with their own publicity, but these ideas are not mutually exclusive and can be combined in any way. The ideas are grouped according to creative and remember that the wider the variety of promotional methods, the more likely they are to receive public attention.

### Section I. Before the Event

News releases and ads	Radio and television coverage
Bumper stickers & buttons	Poster billboards & signs
Fund drives	Talks to local groups
Printing on shopping bags	Mayor's proclamation
Fliers enclosed with bills	Parades in neighboring towns
Beard growing contests	Airplane banners
Endorsements by local firms	Event names or slogan contests
Newspaper supplements	Reduced price ticket sales
Special news edition by school newspapers	Mail to past high school graduates
Invitations	

### Section II. During the Event

Appearance of famous persons	Balloon ascensions
Newspaper picture stories	Fireworks shows
Strobe lights	Bumper stickers
Car-top signs	Parades through the business district
Lettered hats, pennants, etc.	Staging of some activities in other towns
Skydiving shows	Guessing contest (like how many beans in a jar or the weight of a giant pumpkin)
Prize drawings for early arrivals	Mud football game
Television & radio coverage	
Ugly bartender contest	

### Section III. After the Event

News releases	Speeches to civic groups
Post-event parties	Newspaper ads or letter of thanks
Movies or slide shows	Volunteer recognition banquets
Announcement of contest winners	
Radio and T.V. post-event interviews	

## Evaluating the Event

Evaluation is an important step in conducting a community wide event. It is, as everyone knows, probably the least implemented stage of a program development process. It is the means by which future planning committees can examine the success of each activity within the total event and discover the extent to which the original objectives were met. But it is difficult to motivate people to become interested in this phase. Several points should be remembered when planning for and conducting effective evaluation.

1. Planning for evaluation should be included with all other event planning details.
2. Information and opinions gathered in the evaluation process should be as objective as possible. It is just as important to record minor failures as it is to report major successes.
3. Input to the evaluation process should be made by planning and evaluation committee members and others involved in the event.
4. A variety of evaluation methods should be used and the results combined and compared.
5. The evaluation committee should suggest evaluation methods which fit the event and those which are within the feasible resources of the planning group.

No specific method can be considered best for evaluating an event. But a simple head count and a financial accounting are **not**, in themselves, an adequate means of evaluation. This also holds true for the comments of committee members and perhaps the complaints of a few disgruntled participants. They are but a part of the whole. Questionnaires, personal interviews, and even reports on the weather should also be included in the evaluation.

Specific assignments for the various evaluation methods should be made well in advance of the event so that each committee member understands his or her responsibility. Forms and checkout sheets should be designed and printed as necessary. If questionnaires are to be used, they should be designed with particular attention to the specific information and opinions desired. For help with designing a questionnaire, contact a county extension agent or staff member of a nearby college or university. Members of the evaluation committee may wish to administer questionnaires by personal interviews as people leave the event, in a so-called exit interview, or may wish to mail the forms to the local residents. Committee members should be aware that computer facilities are usually accessible at their local universities or through the extension service.

The total planning committee should meet soon after the close of the event to discuss and record all the information received. Following the meeting, a

complete report of all aspects of planning and conducting the event should be compiled from written facts and opinions and informal comments by event planners and participants.

## Planning and Synchronizing

Events can be planned. But there needs to be a quarterback, a manager who is dedicated enough to stick with the project for the entire time required. County fairs in many states have fair managers. Chambers of Commerce have managers and secretaries who can comprehend event planning. But frequently a community person, a volunteer, has to be selected. How can a community recruit an enlightened, altruistic, community-oriented leader who will be a demon for punishment, harrassment and abuse, who will work long hours free, and who will have the wisdom of Solomon and the patience of Job in disputes? It isn't easy!

A recruitment committee should select the potential leader and emphasize two things: first, that the job is necessary and that they are the best person for it, and that it will have rewards and pleasant memories. Second, that the job will be difficult but will last only one year or less and will benefit the community.

The role for which this individual is recruited can be looked at as a symbolic role that has legitimacy conferred by participants, groups and organizations in the community. The real task of this events leader is to synchronize the groups and organizations. Events can be planned; sequences can be worked out. But someone has to make sure that everything gets carried out on time with minimum social stress and with maximum repeatability. The event leader is a coordinator and synchronizer who pulls all the operations together and makes the event a benefit to all sectors of the community. The community-wide events that are synchronized with shopping specials and publicized business promotions take advantage of the positive outlook the participants and visitors have during the event. Translating positive consumer psychology into sales is less difficult in a spontaneous, smoothly run community-wide special event.

Promoting community special events and sponsoring better business cooperation among businessmen are two positive directions that the community can take in its overall strategy for survival and expansion in the coming years. In North Dakota we have another added attraction - the Centennial. And with the Centennial will come a flurry of activity and an inflation of local pride ingendered by a state reaching its centennial year. Taking advantage of all these opportunities in program planning, and using special events judiciously, will help a town prosper in the next decade.

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