

1,112 words

## Summary

**This podcast is reunion leadership: part one**

**Hi. I'm Edith Wagner. I'm the editor of *Reunions magazine*.**

**This time I'm going to talk about reunion leadership. Reunion sounds like and is a great idea! If you volunteer to be in charge, step forward with your whole heart and soul — there will be times when nothing less will do!**

**A successful reunion requires good leadership. But it's best not to go solo. Do not plan a reunion alone. There is much evidence that one person can organize a reunion alone; some people started and never gave up. But is it fair? And does it generate the greatest possible commitment?**

**Doing it by yourself can be lonely and may not get the results you want. Anyway, it's lots more fun when you share the planning, work and worries. Involving others as early as possible generates help — ranging from moral support (no small thing!) to taking charge of large and small details. Be sure early involvement includes monetary contributions to defray start-up phone,**

**printing and postage costs, plus money for deposits you'll need shortly.**

**One person must be the leader, and if that person can also delegate tasks and inspire lots of volunteers, there will naturally be more interest in and ownership of your reunion.**

**When delegating, make sure each volunteer understands the purpose and your expectation of the task. If necessary, write instructions, read them together, then ask questions to make sure the job is understood.**

**Don't take on everyone's overload. Find others to help.**

**Each of the six families comprising the McGinty Family Reunion has a representative on the Board. Within the extended family structure, family talents emerge. As extended families come to know one another, members learn to use the talents of others, to mobilize resources. Members learn to use knowledge, expertise and resources within their own families.**

**Listen to everyone's ideas. Of course, people who make suggestions should be ready to help or assume responsibility for carrying them through! Some aspects of reunions — such as newsletters, parts of the program, decorations or food — can**

**be accomplished by enthusiastic, dedicated individuals who often have special talents.**

**Reunions are best when ruled by consensus — equality and ownership are great group motivators. Every member owns a reunion equally. Every member has a voice — those who choose not to use their voices, make the choice to enjoy what others plan.**

**It might look formidable, if you're new to reunion organizing. Who will pay? When, where and how will everyone get there — on time and happy? What will they do when they get there? Lots of questions need answers. Having enough time is crucial. You must decide when and where, then on to all the details.**

**If your reunion is not the gift of one person to the family (and even if it is), start building a consensus of what everyone wants from the beginning. Ensuring that everyone's ideas, likes, dislikes and desires are taken into consideration, is a smart way to generate reunion ownership. It also gets some ideas and suggestions on the table that otherwise might not have been considered. For example, if the oldest generation in the family is doing all the planning, swimming might not be considered important to the program. On the other hand, if parents know that they can count on some quiet**

**time to enjoy other adult relatives with a minimum of hassle because the kids are off gleefully swimming, such entertainment must be planned.**

**One reunion which numbers about 500 annually has a standing committee of seven permanent members, one representing each of the patriarch's children. Co-chairs include one appointed each year. The experienced co-chair provides continuity and acts as a guide. Co-chairs select committee members. There are three work committees: entertainment, refreshments and reunion supervision. This system ensures constant turnover and involvement of new people.**

**Bridgette Fisher's Hamilton Family Reunion committee, for example, meets four times a year to plan every detail and compile a calendar with everyone's birthday and address.**

**Many large families form associations with boards of directors who oversee various events and activities. The reunion committee can be appointed by the board and chaired by a board member. One family alternates responsibilities between generations. Careful notes are kept from one reunion to the next.**

**At an initial meeting, a task list should be made to aid in forming subcommittees. After evaluating**

**tasks, several subcommittees may be combined.**

**Subcommittees vary for different reunions.**

**Myron Halpin of Bloomfield, Connecticut, reported that to keep enthusiasm high and others involved in the Full-Fledged-Rahm-Family-Reunion (FFRFR), subcommittees were formed for children's games and favors, sports tournaments and other activities, and family memorabilia displays and "The 100 Year Book," a keepsake of photos and information about everyone in the family.**

**Distance affects how committees are structured, but it shouldn't keep members from participating. Communication can be done by phone, fax, letter or email. Three-way calling, now available on most residential phone lines, allows for conference calls. Distant members can help with correspondence, searching, ordering and, of course, many tasks at the reunion. Appoint advisors from past committee members, people with a particular area of expertise or those unable physically to help.**

**New people mean fresh ideas. People who work to implement reunion goals will continue to support and improve it. Avoid burnout: share the workload with everyone.**

**Beth Gay of Walhalla, South Carolina, starts with relatives who live nearby. It can be just a**

**committee of two or three to make basic decisions.**

**1) Do you need officers? 2) Who will keep records?**

**3) Is a chaplain needed? She suggests monthly family meetings. Yes, every month; Sunday afternoon is the best time. Call everyone about the meetings. Better yet, send reminder post cards. Everybody is busy — it's easy to forget. Remind everyone, every month.**

**During the meetings you can do lots of things together. Gay suggests work on a quilt, scrapbook, cookbook or banners and signs. The greatest thing gained at meetings, she says, is that you become better acquainted and all this work, planning and caring will show at your reunion.**

**This is a long podcast so I'll do a part two and talk more about committees.**

**At *Reunions magazine*, we are always looking for ideas you've tested at your reunions. Please email them to [reunions@execpc.com](mailto:reunions@execpc.com) or send them to *Reunions magazine*, PO Box 11727, Milwaukee WI 53211 or post them at our forum at <http://forums.reunionsmag.com>.**

**There are lots of ways to communicate about reunions.**

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