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Podcast Reunion leadership: part two

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

The focus of this podcast is the second part of Reunion Leadership.

In a study with *Reunions magazine*, Dr. Larry Basirico of Elon University in North Carolina, found that the reunions that were most successful were also well and thoroughly planned.

Leadership and volunteers are both very important to the successful outcome of your reunion planning. These are a few important leadership positions that you might want to consider for your reunion.

Organizer/chairperson/leader/planner/angel ... probably you. This person must be willing to nurture and gather a crowd of people who share a past. Must be able to harness pesky details, comprehend and settle conflicts, and act on gut instinct. Must be diplomatic to a fault, able to bear early costs (such as long distance calls, printing, copying and postage), and must love hugs. The **treasurer** collects and spends the reunion's second greatest asset — its money. She manages the budget, the books and the bank account. She

may handle reservations, registration and purchasing reunion keepsakes.

A secretary keeps minutes at meetings, develops and maintains member and mailing lists, writes and distributes invitations, newsletters and registration materials.

The program chairperson must be creative, able to identify members' talents, skills and desires, and able to plan and organize memorable activities for participants of all ages. She also selects entertainment, may hire a photographer, and arranges set-up and clean-up.

The historian/genealogist/griot/storyteller shares a passion for research and reveres the past. She provides displays of family trees, historical wall charts, yearbooks, memory books, albums, historical documents and computer printouts at the reunion.

In addition you may want to use committees to carry out some additional activities. Committees are crucial and add to the fun and "ownership" of reunion organizing. Committees share planning, generate and implement ideas, and inspire attendance.

These are suggestions of what committees you might want to have and some of their responsibilities.

Obviously, few if any, reunions are going to want or need all these at this or any reunions. Pick and choose

what works for your reunion this time; but you may wish to have different committees next time.

Francia Malone, Flint, Michigan, reports that for the Malone Family Reunion, each state has a committee. When the reunions are held in Michigan they have scheduled meetings to discuss the amount of dues to be paid, site, calling committee, cooking committee etc. We plan a weekend of fun and fellowship for 300 or more people and end with a gospel concert, Sunday evening. In fact the Malone Family Reunion gospel CD is available at shopping on reunionsmag.com.

The accommodations/housing committee selects the reunion site, makes site inspections and arrangements, and welcomes members.

The fundraising committee develops long-range fundraising projects such as cookbooks or quilts, and plans and stages reunion day fundraisers such as auctions and raffles. They select and purchase personalized souvenirs and collect and organize items to sell, auction or raffle at the reunion.

The program committee plans and coordinates reunion day activities. They arrange event facilities or locations and they're in charge of entertainment, sports events, games, ice breakers, booking the band or DJ, and arranging for a public address system and

visual aids, if necessary. If there are both a banquet and/or dance and a picnic/barbecue planned, it may be wise to have a different coordinator for each. The program committee will also plan activities for kids or might appoint a subcommittee to create a program for kids. One essential step will be to ask kids what they want to do. It will better ensure happy kids at your reunion. (There's also a podcast about helping kids look forward to your reunion. Listen to that one too.)

The food committee plans, chooses and provides food and cooking schedules, if you plan to do your own cooking; or works with a caterer or banquet manager.

The transportation committee sends directions, maps and instructions, and lists accommodations and restaurants along the way. They make airport pickup arrangements, as well as arrangements to move members during the reunion (hotel to picnic, tours, church).

Choose a coordinator for awards, scholarships and prizes. She sets criteria, recruits judges and supervises judging. She orders honorary plaques or prizes and presents awards.

The worship or fellowship committee plans and presents rituals, ceremonies, memorials and worship

services if you're not going to a church, synagogue or mosque.

Often times members don't live where they can help with early planning activities. The following are all great assignments for out-of-towners, because their work and responsibility may be all on reunion day.

- **Registration:** organizes a welcoming committee, checks in new arrivals, makes and distributes nametags, gets change and collects money from last-minute arrivals.

- **Photography:** Photographer, videographer, and memory album organizer hires professionals and arranges payment, or locates willing family members with the right equipment and expertise to preserve the reunion in pictures (video or audio).

- **Set-up/clean-up:** Volunteers work hard on Reunion Day. Recruit as many as you possibility can.

Beth Gay of Walhalla, South Carolina, offers these additional committee ideas.

A Decorations Committee makes the place festive and welcoming. A Signage Committee makes the reunion easy to find. And a Scrapbook Committee watches newspapers for any mention of family members, asks family in other cities to send clippings, and displays the scrapbook at reunions.

A "medic" is essential at outdoor events. Sandra Welch, of Hampton, Virginia, has a first aid

committee on site for each outdoor event who are individuals with knowledge of CPR and who, if you're lucky, are nurses, doctors or EMTs.

Emma Wisdom summarized the reunion of descendants of Mary Cage Givens Gilmore in Nashville, Tennessee. Committee members from Arkansas, Texas and Ohio plan the reunion at a meeting during the year-end holidays. They discuss activities, map strategies, decide upon a site coordinator, treasurer, someone to be in charge of correspondence, t-shirt selection and the family tree. Then, each carried out assigned tasks from home. Expenses were kept reasonable, in part, by a cousin who paid to cater the picnic.

For the Wills Family Reunion, Melenda Gatson Hunter, of Lathrup Village, Michigan, broke a huge challenge into manageable increments and assigned/cajoled talented family members to the right jobs of chair, co-chair, treasurer, hospitality, registration, souvenirs and t-shirts and tour. Hunter, a family historian with advanced computer skills, took on program planning. She created a display board and memory book; collected for and assembled goodie bags and door prizes.

Finally, Sandra Welch also created a Care Package Committee with the responsibility of gathering and setting up food and supplies including paper, pens,

handouts, phone for conference calls, tape recorder and drinks before each meeting. After the reunion this committee writes thank you notes to vendors, and mails packages (t-shirts, DVD's, directories, family histories) to individuals who were not able to attend the reunion.

These are just some examples of how to spread the reunion planning chores among members. You'll know what's best for your situation. Do use some of these ideas to ensure the success of your reunion.

At Reunions magazine, we are always looking for ideas you've tested at your reunions. Feel free to email them to 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.

If you've never seen Reunions magazine, you can request a free copy at www.reunionsmag.com.

Thank you for downloading and listening to this podcast.

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