



Planning Community-Wide Asset-Building Events

Community-wide events are an important element of an asset-building campaign. “Community-wide” can refer to a neighborhood, school community, town, city, state, or other definition of community. These events can be used to celebrate the great things already happening in a community, raise awareness of community needs, and bring people together in a way that encourages support and relationship building. They also provide a stage to share the asset message with a wide audience. Here are a few ideas about how to successfully plan and hold community-wide asset-building events:



- ✦ **Develop a steering committee** that includes people who can think about the big picture of what will happen at the event as well as concrete, action-oriented people who can focus on the details of making your ideas a reality. You need both dreamers and doers.
- ✦ **Identify your natural partners.** The best events succeed, thanks to strong, broad-based support. Invite groups and organizations who have a common interest in youth, children, and families. They will bring vision, energy, leadership, and an existing constituency to the event.
- ✦ **Establish clear objectives early on.** Make sure the organizers share similar ideas about what you want to accomplish with your asset-building event.
- ✦ **Name your event.** Take time to come up with a name that accurately describes the event and is interesting enough to draw people’s attention and enthusiasm. Be careful to avoid negative connotations or associations. One asset-building event mistakenly drew a number of people seeking information on financial investing!
- ✦ **Pick a date that works for as many of the organizers as possible** and doesn’t conflict with religious holidays or other community events or activities.
- ✦ **Determine a structure for your event.** Is this part of a long-term public awareness campaign or a single event? Do you need materials, speakers, small-group facilitators? How much time can you expect people to commit?
- ✦ **Once you have settled on when and what you want your event to be, decide on where to hold it.** Select a place that is affordable, comfortable for and welcoming to all, in a convenient location, near easy parking, close to a bus line, and handicap-accessible.
- ✦ **Appoint a finance committee.** Estimate a budget and ask the committee to investigate funding sources.
- ✦ **Make sure you have or can get all of the audiovisual and sound equipment you need.** A sound system can make or break your event. Find someone in your group with expertise in this area and ask them to coordinate it.
- ✦ **Create registration forms and information sheets.**
- ✦ **Appoint a marketing committee and develop a marketing plan.** Determine who your primary audience is and then select the best ways to reach your audience. Options include personal invitations from organizers, mailed invitations, announce-



ments in newspapers, and news items or ads on the radio or television. Consider sending out a press release about your event well in advance that may draw media attention before and during the event. Also consider less conventional marketing outlets, such as congregational bulletins, newsletters of local organizations, and flyers to schools, family education classes, or child-care providers.

- ✦ **Personally invite members of the media to your event.** Take the time to talk with them about the event's significance for your community and where it fits into your asset-building campaign. Offer to waive any fees involved. Make sure someone is assigned to help them get photos, quotes, or interviews they need. Have a designated spokesperson who can be available later that day or the next morning to answer questions as reporters put their stories together.

- ✦ **Decide whether or not you will include food as part of your event.** It can be a draw but can also add a lot of cost and hassle. If you plan on having food, assign the menu and timing of the food to someone who has experience. Keep in mind that entire meals can be costly and difficult to serve.
- ✦ **Include a satisfaction survey** as part of the event.
- ✦ **After the event, gather the organizers to talk about what went well, what didn't go well, and what you would do differently in the future.** Keep the comments on file in case you hold this same type of event another time.
- ✦ **Celebrate your success and everyone who helped make it happen.**