**AAZK Chapter Resource:**

# How to Host a Fundraising Event

# GETTING STARTED

**Purpose**

* Determine your focus for the event
	+ Conservation fundraiser – solicit suggestions from your Chapter members, consider organizations supported by your institution, or support National AAZK efforts (Bowling For Rhinos or Trees for You and Me)
	+ Chapter fundraiser
* Identify what funds will be used for
	+ Be specific
		- Example: Prusten Project; to purchase an additional sound monitor or Professional Development grants for local chapter members
	+ Be thorough and transparent; involve all chapter members in the process
	+ When donating to another organization, it must be a 501c3 non-profit. Make sure you can access the organization’s EIN number. You will need this number later for your chapter’s re-charter or taxes

**Goals**

* Set a fundraising goal
* Determine if funds will be donated or if only profits will be donated
* If selling merchandise, determine a concrete goal for sales
	+ Follow local tax guidelines when selling merchandise

**Event Details**

* For large scale events, plan at least 4-6 months in advance
* Identify possible venues
	+ Keep expected attendance in mind
	+ Determine what time of year and time of day the event will be held
* Communicate event details clearly when booking venues
* Mention your chapter’s Federal Non-profit Tax ID #
	+ Proprietors may, but are not required to, offer discounts at the venue or donations of goods and services
* Identify your audience
* Identify ways to make the event enjoyable
* Don’t limit your audience to zoo affiliates
	+ Consider reaching a wider audience
	+ If your event is on a weekend you may achieve greater public involvement
* Create materials to educate attendees about your cause and how they can get involved

# PLANNING YOUR EVENT

**Staffing**

* Form a committee (even if it ends up consisting of only 1 or 2 people)
* Create a timeline
	+ Have monthly check-ins with your point people, weekly when closer to the event
* Assign tasks based on event outline
	+ Designate volunteers or members to help with duties including registration, raffles, entertainment, and photographs

**Promote**

* Determine how you will promote the event
* Promote the cost of the event and what is included
* Promote prizes or silent auction items to attract more people to your event
* Promote your event in calendars, newsletters, fliers, social media, and any other avenues available to you
* Educate the community about your cause
* Create a presentation about the beneficiary organization and present it to the chapter, volunteers, or other local community groups
* After the event, make sure to remove any advertisements
* Invite local celebrities from radio and TV stations
	+ Consider one of them as an event EmCee
* Prominently advertise the percentage of event profits that go towards conservation
	+ If all profits are to be donated, advertise 100% of profits benefit the cause
* If some profits are being retained to help with chapter funding, advertise that the majority of profits will benefit the cause
* Seek assistance from your Special Events and Graphics departments, etc. to market your event

**Donations/Prizes**

* Draft a donation request letter using professional format
	+ If collecting in advance, consider the expiration date on any donations (ex. Gift certificates, coupons, passes, etc.)
* Solicit for donations or prizes; create a standard greeting when calling or emailing
	+ For Example: “My name is \_\_\_\_\_\_ and I am a member of the \_\_\_\_\_\_Chapter of the American Association of Zoo Keepers. We are having a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_fundraiser where proceeds will go directly to support (insert benefiting organization). We are currently looking for donations for our event. Would your business be interested in supporting us?
* When soliciting for donations, clarify that you are seeking donations for your AAZK chapter, not your home institution
	+ Do not wear work uniform when soliciting in person
	+ Use your personal email for contacts
	+ Take a copy of your donation request letter if approaching donors in person
* Some companies require use of their online forms to solicit donations
* Keep a master list of all the businesses/individuals you contacted
	+ Note their response, participation, donations ( or lack thereof), and any special instructions for working with them
* Communicate with your institution regarding any institutional restrictions or yearly limitations (donation request lists, facility usage, facility advertising, facility name usage, facility email usage)
* Become familiar with your state’s fundraising regulations on raffles, bingos or auctions
	+ Example: some states do not allow gambling, or they allow gambling with limitations
* Donated items can be given out in a silent/live auction, raffle, and/or given as door prizes
* Contact the organization you are raising money for
	+ They may donate a raffle item and help you promote the event
* After the event, write thank you letters for prizes and celebrity attendance

# Expenses

* Create a budget for the event and have your treasurer keep a detailed record of all the monetary transactions
	+ This information may be needed for annual taxes, chapter budgets, etc.
* Event holders may cover expenses for events by charging a set fee/cover for attendees
* Decide if you want to package a deal for your event
	+ Ex: One fee that covers the cost of the event, raffle, meal, and t-shirt
* If interested in having a t-shirt and/or other merchandise for an event, find local talent to volunteer to do the artwork
* Silent Auctions, raffles or sale of merchandise can generate income for the event
* After the event, review finances, and make recommendations for future events

**OTHER HELPFUL GUIDELINES**

* Make sure your chapter has a record of your tax identification number (EIN number).
* Reach out to other chapters for help
* Check with your Chamber of Commerce prior to setting date to find out events that could conflict. Once you choose the date, inform your Chamber of Commerce
* Advertise event where volunteers may see it
* Talk to your Zoo Society or other organization that monetarily assists the zoo for sponsorship opportunities or other support (if any or if permitted by your institution)

**CONTACTS**

* Reach out to communication@aazk.org or visitor@aazk.org with questions or clarifications



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