Host a Fundraising Event How-to Kit

The great advantage of hosting a fundraising party is that you can make it as “upscale” and involved, or causal as you want! The most important key is to try to get everything, or almost everything, donated. It is a charity event, after all. You should not be spending money on things that could be donated.

Step 1

Plan FAR in advance -- 6 months ahead of time.

Decide what kind of event you are going to hold.

- Dinner
- Cocktail Party
- Dessert Party
- Wine Tasting

Form a committee

- You’ll need volunteers to make this happen. Recruit them now!
- They can help get all the things you’ll need to make a successful event
- They will also help you set up, manage a ticket table, help clean up, etc.

Step 2

Make a list of supplies you’ll need and create a budget. CLICK HERE for a Budget Worksheet. Remember – the goal is to get everything donated if possible!

- Facility Rental
- Audio Visual Equipment
- Food and Beverages
  - What will your menu include? This may depend on what kinds of things you can get donated by local businesses.
- Dishes and Glasses
- Decorations and Supplies
- Door Prizes
- Printing expenses (flyers, invitations, advertising)
- Postage

Find a location 6 months in advance!

- Be willing to shop around! Don’t be afraid to ask for donated items/space.
- Private home
- Community Centers
- Hotels and restaurants (make sure that they donate the space or give discounts)
- Restaurants
- Parks
- Fire halls
- Religious Venues
- Tent in a backyard
- Contact the event coordinator of the location you wish to book.
  - Make sure there is an adequate dishwasher/cooking facility or an adequate disposable system if necessary for whatever venue you choose
Step 3

Once you have a location, you can start looking for sponsors. Draft a letter -- tell your story and why you are holding the event.

CLICK HERE for a sample sponsorship request letter and CLICK HERE for a sample sponsorship form.

- Consider different levels of sponsorship
  - Gold, Silver, Bronze, etc.
  - Each level is based on cost, and has different perks for the sponsor in terms of the event and publicity.

- Target
  - Local businesses
  - Travel Agencies
  - Restaurants
  - Hotels
  - Spas

- You’re going to want most of the food donated! Look into:
  - Grocery stores
  - Restaurants
  - Bakeries
  - Liquor Stores

Don’t be afraid to use connections if you have any. Do you frequent a local restaurant? Ask for their support! Do you have a cousin who works for a supermarket? Request donations! Local companies, rather than national chains, will be more likely to support your event. Make an appointment to talk with the manager. Bring the letter you drafted and some IDF brochures.

Be sure to thank them for their time, and ask when you can follow up on your request. Then do so!

Step 4

Find entertainment!

- Band
- DJ
- Or simply use an iPod!
- Face painters for children (if this is a family event)
- Comedian
- Don’t forget a photographer to publicize your event!
  - Just make sure anyone you hire donates their time or offers a steeply discounted price. Entertainers can likely get a tax deduction for their time…whatever they would normally charge. Have them check with their tax advisor for specifics.

Step 5

If you want to offer alcohol at your event, there are a few things to consider

- Many public venues will not allow you to bring in your own alcohol. However, you can purchase alcohol through the venue. Be sure to include the price of alcohol in your budget or ticket prices.
- If you are in a private home, try to have alcohol donated from local stores.
- If you are having a wine tasting or liquor at your event you must check with the county in which you reside regarding liquor licenses and laws.
- Address liquor stores to see if they would donate in exchange for advertisement
- Sometimes bartending schools will have a program where you can “hire” a bartending student for a deeply discounted price. If you ask, maybe they’ll even donate their time!
Step 6

Figure out the ticket price. For example, sell tickets for $35/person which could include the buffet and drinks. You also can charge more for tickets at the door, to get people to commit to attending earlier. Again, ticket prices will be decided when you have a better idea of what is being donated versus cost. Remember: THIS IS A FUNDRAISER! Make sure you charge enough money for each ticket!

Step 7

Publicize your event.

- However you decide you want to advertise your event – keeping it within family and friends or expanding to the public. You can:
  - Create an Event on Facebook
  - Email everyone in your address book
  - Create an Evite
  - Build a website for your event
  - Distribute flyers
  - Submit it for inclusion the local newspapers’ coming events columns
  - Send out invitations

Remember: The goal is to keep your costs low, so try to make this step as cost effective as possible!

Step 8

On the day of your event:

- Make sure to set up at least 3 hours before the event in case anything is forgotten at the last minute.
- Make sure you stick to the schedule! If you said dinner was going to be over at 9 p.m., don’t drag on speeches until 10 p.m.
- Create a display table for IDF – make sure there are information cards and pamphlets to raise awareness for your cause, as well as giving envelopes!
- Keep speeches short and sweet – if you have a lot of people to thank, think about creating a pamphlet so that time isn’t eaten up by speeches

Step 9

- After a successful night, make sure you send out thank you notes/e-mails to everyone who made your event a triumph! For a sample note/e-mail, CLICK HERE

Step 10

- Fill out the Funds Raised form CLICK HERE and Donor List CLICK HERE
- Send both forms and all checks (made payable to IDF) to:

Immune Deficiency Foundation
Grassroots Events
40 West Chesapeake Avenue, Suite 308
Towson, MD 21204

Do not send cash!

Remember: If you collect cash and send us one big check, we will be unable to provide tax receipts for your donors, unless you document how much each donor contributed as well as his/her contact information (preferably e-mailed to us in Excel).
Other Ideas

- You can have items donated for a silent auction (see Raise Money through a Silent Auction!), raffle, or door prizes as well!
- Have a bidding war (all for profit of course!) on desserts for tables!
- Have bakeries donate (or bake some goodies yourself) and at the end of the night you can auction off deserts
- Make enough so that every table will get one, but vary the deserts