**“Ask Event” Tool Kit**

**Presented by Kim Lauth, CFRE**

*As part of your fundraising strategy this year, your League may consider hosting an ask event. This is a guide to help determine if an ask event is a good strategy right and how best to execute.*

***WHAT IS AN ASK EVENT***

An event where costs are kept low and the mission of The League is showcased. The outline below is intended for an event hosted with tables, at an event space; however, you can easily adapt this to be a house party where there are one – four hosts (instead of “table hosts”).

***GOALS OF AN ASK EVENT***

The Ask Event has 3 key goals:

* To **celebrate** your contribution to the greater community – perhaps honoring someone who has been supportive of that work with a special award.

* To **inform** key members of the community about our work.
* To **raise money** to help fund our work and **engage** new donors. This is an Ask Event. Attendees will not buy a ticket. They will be invited to attend by a table host or host. Neither the host or attendee is charged to attend – but an “ask” takes place at the event and everyone is given the opportunity to make a donation.

***KEYS TO SUCCESS***

There are 3 keys to a successful event of this type:

* **Getting the right table hosts**. Hosts need to be committed to inviting people who need to know about our work AND who will consider making a donation that day.
* **Getting the tables filled**. We need to have our space filled with folks who are prepared to make a donation. We need to support our table hosts in making this happen.
* **Getting the right person to “make the ask”.** The asker needs to be well known and credible. Someone who is able to inspire others to join them in giving.

***PRE-EVENT PLANNING***

* Choose date/time and secure location. Some things to consider:
  + You know your community best. Pick a day that is good for an event. Thursdays are often a good day of the week to hold a lunch event and Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday often work for a breakfast event.
  + Breakfast is usually less expensive than lunch.
  + This type of event need to start and finish on time. Your guests see their time as valuable and we want to respect that.
  + If food is being served buffet style, the buffet should open 30 minutes before the program begins to give folks time to mingle and get their food.
  + Check local online event calendars for conflicts before setting a date.
* Create a mission themed name for the event like: *Democracy Defender Lunch; Voting Power Breakfast; or Election Engagement House Party.*
* Recruit the host committee – folks that will COMMIT to getting folks there and following the script.

***GETTING PEOPLE TO THE EVENT***

There are 3 tools to help us achieve success:

* The TABLE HOST INVITE - that can be used as an email or telephone script while securing table hosts.
* The FOLLOW UP EMAIL FOR TABLE HOSTS – which gives them the information they need to fill their table.
* EXECTRONIC VERSIONS of the event invitation that can be shared as needed

**TABLE HOST INVITE**

Dear [Host Name]

I am on the planning committee for EVENT NAME to support the League of Women Voters of XXX. The League has been actively defending our democracy since 1920 and we need your help to expand our reach, ensuring more of our citizens have access to and are empowered to vote. [Add more language about your League].

The event will be held on [Date and Location]. We will begin at [Start Time] and finish no later than [End Time].

I am writing today to ask that you serve as a table host at this event. As a host, you will be asked to fill a table of 10 (you, plus 9 guests). **There is no cost to you or your guests**. *However, everyone will be given the opportunity to make a donation at the event.*

***Since this event is both a celebration and a fundraiser, it is imperative that every table is full. All table hosts will receive a follow up email with helpful information and sample language for inviting your guests and ensuring a successful event.***

I know that you will enjoy being part of this very special event. Please let me know if you are able to serve as a table host or if you have any questions. An electronic invitation with event details is also attached.

Sincerely,

[Organizer]

FOLLOW UP EMAIL FOR TABLE HOSTS – Sent once someone agrees to host.

Dear [Host Name],

Thank you for agreeing to serve as a table host for INSERT EVENT NAME. This is going to be a great event and I appreciate your commitment to making it a success.

You will be filling a table of 10 (you, plus 9 others for this event). ***Since this event is both a celebration and a fundraiser, it is imperative that every table is full. Here’s how you can ensure a full table of guests:***

We suggest that you begin by making a list of 15-20 possible attendees, Invite your first 9 and use the remainder to extend invitations as needed until you have 9 guests who have committed. Should you have a guest cancel before the event you can use your list to invite a replacement.

You can use the sample language below to craft an email invitation or use it as a guide for a telephone call:

***Dear [Invitee Name],***

***I am writing to you today to invite you to be my guest at [Event Name, Date, Time, Location].***

***The League has been actively defending our democracy since 1920 and we need your help to expand our reach, ensuring more of our citizens have access to and are empowered to vote. [add more language specific to your League.***

***There is no cost for you to attend. However, everyone will be given the opportunity to make a donation at the event. The choice to give is up to you. However, once you learn about the impact that we are making in our community I know you be interested in being part of this important work.***

***This is going to be a great event and I would love having you as a guest at my table. If you are able to attend please let me know and provide me with a preferred mailing address for the guest list. An electronic version of the invitation is attached for your reference.***

***Sincerely,***

***[Host Name]***

Once you have filled your table please email your guest list (including a mailing address and email for each attendee) to: INSERT CONTACT

Thank you again for serving as host. We appreciate your commitment to this great organization and look forward to celebrating with you on INSERT DATE

Sincerely,

[Organizer]

***WHAT TO DO AT THE EVENT***

Plan to use the event to showcase your work and think of a couple was to do so. You could include a speaker that has been impacted by the mission or give an award. You also may consider providing written materials that support your story. An example of the flow of the event is below.

* Gathering and mingling (20-30 minutes)
* Serve lunch or buffet (20-30 minutes)
* Program starts
  + Greeting from hosts (2-3 minutes)
    - One host should represent for all and welcome to the event (this host may do the ask later). All hosts should be acknowledged in some way.
  + Greeting from President (5 minutes)
    - Include introduction of board members and special guests
  + Mission Success Showcase
    - This could be an award celebration or a speaker talking about a recent accomplishment. To determine a good option, think about what shows your success and the impact.
  + Future plans
    - Talk about what future successes you are planning for. Is there a legislation you are advocating for? Is an election coming up and you have an ambitious registration goal? Use this time to highlight upcoming work and don’t be afraid to talk about it will cost. People love to understand how their money is being used.
  + The ask
    - It may be effective to have the same host from the greeting return and do the ask. Here is a sample of what they may say:
    - Thank you for to our speakers for showcasing the amazing work of the league. I have been involved because… (add a personal story about how the League helped them) And I know how important the work is that we do. AND, we could not do this work without financial support. Today, I ask that you join me and all the hosts and make a philanthropic donation to support the amazing work you just heard about. With a donation of $100, you can help us [fill in blank like “register 50”] With $250, you can help us [reach 1,000 voters on Vote411.org]. With a $1,000 donation you can support [a lobby day at the state house.] Every bit counts. On your table there are envelopes and your table host can answer any questions you may have.
    - While checks are being written and collected, you can also talk about other ways people can get involved like volunteering, attending a lobby day, calling their representatives.
  + The host thanks everyone and closes the event

***FOLLOWING-UP***

Make sure to follow up with everyone who attended to either:

* Follow up with everyone via email and include a link to donating in case they were unable to donate
* Personally thank those who hosted or donated either via phone or handwritten card (in addition to a tax receipt)
* If they did not donate, ask hosts to personally follow-up and see if they can answer any questions. Also ask, “what did you think of the event.”

***CELEBRATE!!***

Congratulations on a job well done!

About Kim Lauth:

Kim Lauth is a Certified Fundraising Executive (CFRE) with over two decades of experience in fundraising and nonprofit management. She currently heads Kim Lauth Consulting, a fundraising and nonprofit strategy firm in Knoxville, TN. She sits on the nation LWV Board of Directors, serves as Development Chair and on the executive Committee. To learn more, visit: <http://www.kimlauth.com>