How to Organize Water Paloozas/Educational Outreach Programs

13 Steps to Successful Events

1. **Getting started**: Identify what method of outreach your organization wants to hold.
   a. Live demonstrations, exhibit-booths, actively including students and/or community members (hands-on/interactive), etc. Hands-on and demonstrative activities have shown to best grab and maintain younger participant’s attention.

2. **Key questions for choosing a location**: a school, a Community Center, a pre-planned community event, etc.
   a. Who is your target audience? Make sure the material is conveyed in an age-appropriate manor.
   b. How many people will participate? Be conservative in your estimate for your first year. Note: A school provides the benefit of a “built-in” audience if held during in-session hours.
   c. How far do you want participants to travel from a central location (site of corresponding conference, site of corresponding service event, etc.)? Use 15 minutes travel time as a restriction. Traveling more than 30 minutes may limit the number of people who participate and waste precious volunteer time.
   d. How long do you want the event to last? Choose a reasonable length of time given the location and expected attendance. You will want people to want to participate in subsequent years.

3. **Develop an outline**. It can be a paragraph or a page, but should summarize:
   a. What outreach method you will be employing
   b. What your goals for the outreach are
   c. What you will be expected to provide (volunteers, materials, etc.)
   d. Why other groups should want to partner with your organization

4. **Determine your metrics**
   a. Set goals and track your progress of meeting them. Track goals and successes from year to year: fundraising, number of volunteers, number of local community participants, effectiveness of outreach method, etc.

5. **Project planning/development**
   a. Document everything! You will want this for your next event and to hand the leadership role over to the next person.
6. **Identify what materials you need to gather for the outreach**
   a. It’s great to work with a local business. They may be able to help with materials, video equipment, port-a-potty, speakers and podium, etc.
   b. What materials do you need (displays, signage, demonstration supplies)?
      i. Develop a list of possible material vendors. Ask for donations or for discounted/wholesale pricing. Many companies provide donations for events such as this that positively impact the community, just make sure to ask!
      ii. How much money do you need to raise to cover the cost of materials identified?
   c. Potential Cost Considerations
      i. Transportation, food/drink for volunteers, t-shirts, banner, activity materials, give aways, insurance, shelter, venue rental, etc.
      ii. Look to maximize partnerships by partnering with groups that have a venue or available transportation for participants to reduce major costs.

7. **Reach out:** to government entities, nonprofits, schools, etc. to publicize the outreach and suggest participation opportunities.
   a. Identify organizations whose goals align with yours as they make great partners and/or participants

8. **Solicit volunteers:**
   a. Start talking about this event (whatever it might be) and get people excited. It’s good to have a champion group (YPs are always enthusiastic) to help spread the word.
   b. If they have to travel, let everyone know so they can plan accordingly.
   c. Have a marketing strategy
      i. Come up with a catchy name for the event (Water Palooza)!
      ii. Develop a flyer with the project description, goals, and why people should get involved.
      iii. Request the organization add this info to the website, marketing emails, newsletters, and post on social media.
      iv. Feel free to reuse a similar description for each advertisement, you want a consistent message.

9. **Solicit funding:**
   a. Set your donation levels (under $100, $100, $250, etc.) and what the benefit is for each level.
   b. Does your MA host a large event that the donation can be rolled into as a sponsorship?
c. Don’t limit yourself to the typical water-related companies – think about other associations, agencies, businesses that would be interested in supporting an endeavor like yours (community focused).

10. **Frequent communication with the volunteers is key.**
   a. Plan emails to the volunteers at 8 weeks out, 6 weeks, 4 weeks, then every week until the event. Use these communications to provide important logistic information: where to meet, what to wear, whether food is provided, and when the event will start and end.

11. **Day of Event**
   a. Assign volunteers to set-up prior to the event. Typically, 2 hours before the event starts.
      i. Assign locations of organizations prior to arrival. Align locations in proximity to specific needs they may have to host their activity such as water, electricity, or additional space.
   b. Organizations should be allowed to set-up between 30-60 minutes prior to the event beginning.
   c. Conduct a safety meeting with all volunteers and organizations prior to the start of the event. Identify the location of first aid materials, shelter, available water for drinking, and identify a volunteer to be notified if any safety issues arise.
   d. Welcome participants in a manner to set the tone for your event, it should be exciting and energized!

12. **After the event:**
   a. Send thank you’s to key event participants, planners, and all partners/donors (monetary, materials, and in-kind).
   b. Get feedback from the venue host, participants, and partners on how you can improve the event for next time.

13. **Repeat!**