

Thoughts on site management from previous ale committees:

Madison (1982) - We always found ourselves looking for more volunteers. People for security, watching the campsite.

Ann Arbor (1983) - The little things count here. Try to have things on hand that you know people won't bring - plastic forks, cups, etc. I think the thing that got us the most favorable comments was the box of Kotex that was left by our campsite manager in the women's restroom.

After the ale, someone has to clean up, and someone has to take care of all the junk that morris dancers leave behind. This is a pretty straightforward job, but nobody seems to have much energy for it after the ale is over. This is a bit like writing thank-you cards - you're best off if you get it taken care of right away.

Mark the roads to your campground plainly. There's nothing worse than driving for ten hours and then spending an hour lost within 5 miles of your destination.

St. Louis (1986) - Scope out your camp area extremely thoroughly. Note on your map of the camp all of the bathroom locations.

Establish a plan for participants to be taken to a local hospital for non-emergency care by their own teammates. Two or three of your core people tied up for 4-10 hours at the hospital could be disastrous.

You will need lots of ace bandages, cold packs, and bags of ice - especially after the massed dances.

Ann Arbor (1988) - A lot of work went into our camp directions. We felt that they would be your first impression of the ale and could strongly influence the reception you would give us upon arrival. The routes were driven and recorded by one group, and the directions were tested by volunteers (there were mistakes). Large, visible (day and night) rain-resistant signs are a must along the routes.

Colorado (1989) - Have extra sleeping bags on hand. We had 2 people forget to bring them. Luckily, I was able to scrounge a couple up, or they would have been awful cold.

Beth's thoughts for 1990:

I think the signs are very important. The ones directing folks to the site must be BIG, black and white (easiest to read, especially at night), and located in spots where questions arise. I think we are also going to need signs at the site itself. The ones I saw at the camp were small and not easy to find and read. The camp is spread out and a bit confusing, so we should re-sign things in large, black and white, rain-resistant signs.

Thoughts on food from previous ale committees:

Coffee urns take a long time to brew and a short time to empty. We would rent a second large coffee urn in the future.

If it's cold, have plenty of coffee, if it's hot, there can't be enough beer.

Ann Arbor 1983 hired a former team member to cook for them - they paid him \$150. Sunday dinner was prepared ahead of time, with the team helping the cook prepare at two "food workshops" the week before the ale. Have your cook prepare twice as many vegetables as he thinks necessary - they will get eaten.

Minneapolis/St. Paul last time - about 1/3 of ale attendants were vegetarian, with only 7 who were strict lacto-ovo veggies.

St. Louis - Food is very important to people. If everything beyond your control goes wrong, but people's tummies are happy, they will still enjoy themselves. Have a full-time "volunteer finder" to get participants to help clean up the hall, empty trash cans, slop dishes, slop pans, serve food, and prepare and cook food. A thankless job. Participants' willingness-to-help peaks very sharply around Sunday dinner. (I've attached the other notes from St. Louis and their menu).

Madison -

Drink - this will depend strongly on weather! We used about 3.5 half barrel kegs (said to be 16 gal.) of beer with 165 people. We would have used more if the weather had been hotter or if the beer had been available for more of the time (e.g. lack of a second tap meant that there was none at the camp during the contra dance). We also used 18 cases of soda (including 8 cases of mineral water), 25 gal. of lemonade and 5 gal. of hot tea in addition to what was consumed during meals.

Food - people will eat more than you think. They will complain if you stint and adequate supplies don't add too much to the cost. On-time meals make an enormous difference. Full time help makes an enormous difference and is well worth paying for!

Fruit - we got through about 2.75 cases of apples (about 100 lb) over the weekend, in addition to the fruit with the meals.

Snacks - something on Friday night with left overs available through the weekend proved to be appreciated and was quite cheap.

Ann Arbor 1988 - We chose professional cooks/caterers because we felt that quality food and timely service were vital to a successful ale. Someone on the team knew the caterers and their cooking, and we were lucky because these people were great! The Czars and the Food Committee interviewed them in the winter of 1987, made sure they agreed with our plans and budget, and hired them. (We should have followed the meeting up with a letter outlining the agreement as it would have helped avoid minor misunderstandings which occurred later). We gave them a sample menu for the ale, including all the snacks, which they amended and returned to us. Then there was a final meeting with the Food Committee to agree on the changes and other questions. We stressed that food must be on time, and that Morris dancers eat a lot! In addition to the two cooks, we hired two kitchen helpers. There were about six people with restricted diets and 20-25% of the registrants requested vegetarian food. The 1988 ale was a hot weekend and we consumed six kegs of beer. (I've attached other notes

Food (continued):

from Ann Arbor and their menus - I thought they did the best job of food of any ale to date).

Colorado -

When doing a count for food, be sure to put in the cooks, helpers and general extras, then add in 6-10 more for the random people showing up. Every night, we fed 4-8 extra people who were friends of someone at the ale, or friends of a friend, or in a couple of cases just people who thought the ale sounded like fun.

Giving people something to eat on the busses coming back seemed to be appreciated. And as dinner is going to be late, as it always seems to be (Beth's comment: it wasn't in Ann Arbor, and I'd like to strive towards that goal!), be sure to have some munchies out. With snacks, a late dinner is at least tolerable; without them, be prepared to get handed your head. Last, because we were so isolated, we did offer a Friday night dinner, and we certainly got no complaints. However, it is a significant expense. Take your choice.

Hire a big enough kitchen staff that your team can stay out of the kitchen. We had a couple people help in serving at meals, and we asked for help bussing tables after meals. We paid a head cook \$200 to do all the shopping and menu preparation. In addition, we paid 6 assistant cooks \$25 for the weekend and free room and board. They were all folk dancers who did it in part to help out and in part to have some fun. We also used all paper plates and did not regret it. Washing dishes is time-consuming and no fun.

Beth's thoughts on food -

I checked past budgets and Ann Arbor in 1988 paid \$4,200 for food and cooks and \$375 for alcohol. Colorado in 1989 paid \$3,425 for food, \$350 for cooks, and \$325 for alcohol. If we can figure out a way to keep it under \$4,000, that would be great. I think \$4,500 is the max. I'd like to go. Let me know as soon as you can, what you expect you will need. This is the biggie for determining exact ale fees. Oh, yes, Ann Arbor had about 200 people and Colorado had about 180.

I really liked the food and how it was handled in Ann Arbor. It was ready when we got off the buses from touring (apparently, they called as they were leaving to come back, so the cooks would know when we would arrive!), the choices were the same for veggies and non-veggies (e.g., spaghetti with meat or no-meat sauce; tacos in a similar way; chicken rice curry vs. veggie rice curry). Also, I know that Libbie loved the menu because all dairy products were on the side and not part of the main dish. If we can do these things I think everyone will be pretty happy. I'd suggest going for inexpensive ingredients, heavy on carbohydrates like pasta, rice, etc. (good for dancing energy!), and in some easy-to-serve system - big pans full of sauce, etc., work well - folks just go through line and take what they want.

Art and Leif have agreed to handle the alcohol part of things. At some point you should probably communicate with them on what's up.

Some ideas for folks to help in the kitchen: significant others who are not morris dancers, former morris dancers (like Deb Sampson - she offered at one time to help if she could). If you think you want to consider the idea of offering scholarships for work in exchange for a lower ale fee, let me know soon, so that we can budget for it and get an appropriate registration form together.