

FACILITY

Our criteria for an adequate facility included a lodge or dining hall big enough to serve about 125 people in one sitting (which would also serve as the contra dance space), showers and restrooms for the number expected, with cabins (if available) or tenting space. Camp Easter Seals was wonderful to work with for our Ale. They had many turn-overs in camp directors and caretakers in the year that we were involved, but never did their commitment to provide us with quality assistance falter. They were the only organization in the area that allowed alcohol, they provided all the necessities such as toilet paper as part of the fee, and we were fortunate to have clean cabins with big showers. The cabins, the second lodge, the infirmary space, the pool and the playground made Camp Easter Seals a great place to have an ale.

REGISTRATION

We tried to be very succinct in our correspondence. This kept the mailings to 2 sheets front & back, and only 1 stamp per envelope. Samples of all correspondence are included in this report. You can send 3 sheets per envelope and still get by with one stamp.

1st Mailing - Mid-January: 1) Teams planning to attend and numbers coming, 2) dietary needs [vegetarian, dairy restricted, etc], 3) housing preferences, 4) workshops, 5) mass dances. This information is critical for the host team as most of the planning and budget is based on this information. You cannot begin to set a budget until you have a good estimate of how many will be attending. Teams who attend but do not respond until the last minute make it difficult for the host team to do a good job of planning. *Note: Our deadline was too early for most teams. Late-February is more reasonable.*

2nd Mailing - Early April: The registration form, in which we requested names, housing preferences, t-shirt orders, and a workshop survey. We did not list the mass dances selected, but probably should have. We did include questions and answers received on the 1st mailing, a description of the camp, and the menu in case some individuals preferred to bring their own grub. Deadline for registration was April 25 (many of our fees were due early May). *Note: put the mass dances in this mailing and save the menu for mailing #3.*

3rd Mailing - Early May: The final mailing included confirmation of attendance, housing assignments, mass dances, teams attending, things to bring, emergency numbers, maps, and the olympics. We decided that people who needed music &/or notes for mass dances could call for it. That is one reason why we should have put the list of dances in the 2nd mailing.

Check-in The registration book had only the names of the team and team members to check off arrivals, and the original registration form in case of questions. We posted a large map of the site and cabin lists for teams to identify their locations. Space was reserved for teams who requested it, otherwise finding cabin space was a first come first served process. Diddy bags were given to the first person from each team willing to take responsibility for distributing the contents. Bags included a copy of the registration form (so teams knew who ordered what and where they were staying), for each team member a copy of the camp notes, map, daily schedule and tour schedule, name badges, t-shirts, plus other nonessential stuff.

FOOD

We went with basic meals, but fancy desserts. The menus were determined in October and we took advantage of sale prices throughout the year (be conservative when buying ahead of knowing your attendance). It's much cheaper to hire your own cooks (look to relatives and friends with experience, or organizations such as churches that have catering or regular dinners); relatives work well because you can beat them up if they don't come through for you. Purchasing food on sale and through wholesale distributors made the actual cost about \$2.00 per person per meal for the food (we budgeted \$2.50 per meal/ea). The fee for the cooks is above this figure. Additional information on food is included in this report.

Provide your cooks with each day's menu, what time meals are to be served, and the recipes for each dish (which they may or may not use). If your cooks do the grocery shopping they will have this info, but if you do the shopping, they need to know what you bought for. Let them have input on what meals get served which day as prep time may be a factor.

TOURS/BUSES

Buses were anchored by the largest teams. We tried to accommodate requests for individuals and teams who wished to tour together. Teams, such as those from Minnesota, were kept on separate tours as they get to dance together often anyway. We also tried to arrange it so that teams did not tour together both days; not always possible. Each bus was supplied with a first aid kit, 3 gals water, and snacks. Bus drivers and guides need specific maps. Time schedules must accommodate loading, unloading, walking, drive time. See Tour report for additional information.

HELPERS

We were assisted by 7 individuals who are friends of the team (some previous dancers). They served as friendly native guides and provided extra help for the cooks. Choose dependable individuals with lots of energy and enthusiasm. They were our biggest bonus for the weekend. Because they weren't involved in the actual planning, they had more energy to pick up on those tasks we were too preoccupied to remember. Their jobs were to help keep the dining hall clean (wipe tables, sweep floors), to assist the cooks as needed during meals, and serve as friendly native guides on the tour buses. These divine individuals were volunteers.

EQUIPMENT and PROPERTIES

We needed to provide additional tables, chairs, dishes, silverware and cookware. To save on rental fees we borrowed these items from the volunteer fire department and our cook's church. Again, relatives in both organizations made this possible and inexpensive. The public address system we used was also borrowed from a friend whose payment was a bottle of mead. What a deal! Local fast food restaurants will usually donate a tube of cups for non-profit group activities. Collect them early and often. Don't forget lots of ice; fortunately our facility had it's own ice machine.

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

Query the likes and dislikes of previous ales from your own group and follow your instincts.

**14th ANNUAL MIDWEST MORRIS ALE
MAY 1994
PRAIRIE WAVES MORRIS, NEBRASKA**

We enjoyed reading through the ale notes from previous coordinators, and learned a lot about how the ale has evolved. From the beginnings of \$12 per person, provide your own food and transportation event, dancers now enjoy a full service ale with housing, entertainment, 8 meals and tour transportation. It is assumed that the host team will keep the costs as reasonable as possible, yet provide mass quantities of quality service. The cost of this ale @ \$68/ea, and even Ales at higher costs, is certainly a good deal when you consider all of the expenses incurred by the host team.

The 2 main ideas we tried to stick to were 1) throw a big party and 2) with good food and beer, everything else takes care of itself. Previous ale notes indicated the likes and dislikes of the dancers, making it a matter of following tradition. Our structure consisted of a dynamic duo (who in their fantasy thought it would be keen to host an ale) who master minded and acted as facilitators for everything. Individuals easily drifted into their areas of expertise and took charge of what needed to be done. It's fair to say, that despite the work which was shared among the entire team, we had a good time planning and hosting the ale.

Other hints that worked for us: get your main plans set early - September/October. Keep in regular contact with the suppliers of your major needs - bus company, camp site, cooks. If any of these things fall through you need time to regroup and prepare. A benevolent dictatorship works better than too many individuals on committees; keep it to one or two trusted decision makers (who have similar visions) and lots of worker bees for nearer ale time. The amount of stress and things to be done increases exponentially as the date of the ale approaches. Team members who don't have a lot of the planning responsibility are really needed during this time for the manual labor.

Some concerns that came up were: should locals be allowed to attend the ale contra? We decided no (if they wanted to attend they had to work at least one meal).

Funding - Should we find supplemental funding? If someone on your team has the time and wherewithall to seek it out - great! We did not and do not have the proper status to seek arts funds from local or state agencies. Perhaps the Ale should be incorporated itself and given 501c3 status for arts grants etc.

Hope you enjoyed the Ale in Nebraska.

Prairie Waves Morris

Kathleen Zuchniak
SuAnn Witt
Cheryl Buse
Allen Collingham
Linda Collingham
Rita Corell
John Dimon

Jennifer Forbes-Baily
Orest Lechnowsky
Alice Love
Frances Mendenhall
David Nichols
Cynthia Cress Nipper
Diane Predmore