

Minnesota

Thoughts from putting on the 1990 Midwest Morris Ale:

Food

Our caterer often felt that there were more people eating than we claimed were attending. He figured around 200 portions when we thought there were around 185 people. And this was after he figured in for the kitchen staff and those eating second helpings. He also suggested considering a system where people have tickets or have to check off on a list of registrants at each meal - this would also be an easier way of making sure there are no extras getting in without paying their share. (He may also have offered these suggestions since we were paying him a per person rate). However, it isn't fair to have your caterer have to make extra trips for additional food during the ale weekend because of incorrect information on numbers of people. The information on portions would probably be very useful to any caterers you select - we eat a lot! The most favorable food comments we received were on the vegetables - cooked, yet still crisp - people loved them! We worked out a deal with our caterer that we would pay \$25 per adult registrant, and \$13 per child aged 6-13. We also guaranteed that we would pay for 175 adults whether or not we had that many (we were fairly certain we'd come close). In addition, we charged \$5 per meal for friends, etc., that came out for just one or two meals, and that full amount went to the caterer.

Budgets

In looking at budgets from past years, I came up with the following figures:

	<u>Ann Arbor 1988</u>	<u>Colorado 1989</u>	<u>Twin Cities 1990</u>
# people	199	171	183
shirts sold	144	120	173
Total fee	\$46	\$53	\$42
Fee breakdown (per person):			
Lodging	\$ 8.04	\$17.18	\$ 5.60
Food, cooks	\$21.11	\$22.07	\$24.97
Alcohol	\$ 1.88	\$ 1.89	\$ 2.19

The balance of the fee went for other expenses.

Registration Form and Surveys

We designed the registration form and surveys so that different

sections could be given to respective committees. For example, the flight information and dietary needs were on a page that could be cut in half and each section given to whichever committee needed the information. The survey had information for the workshops/mass dance committee in the top questions and information for the social committee in the bottom questions; thus, once again we could simply cut them in half and give the appropriate parts to the correct committees.

We would have liked to have known how many of the registrants were dancers, musicians, or support group members (non-team-members). This information is helpful in knowing whether a team needs help from another team in order to dance out. In addition, it would have been nice to know in advance whether a team that is short members had already arranged to borrow dancers/musicians from another team, and which one! SO . . . we would like to have had the following added to the registration form (in the Summary section):

dancers _____

musicians _____

Is there a particular person/team with whom you wish to tour (attempts will be made to meet requests, but we can't promise anything)? _____

What traditions do you dance? _____

We also thought afterwards that it would have been better to ask for return flight information with the registration form (we only asked for arrival information). Although we didn't have many problems in arranging rides, it would have been nice to be able to organize most of this in advance rather than during the ale.

I would suggest considering an earlier deadline for receiving fees - we had to pay our campsite fee in April, and when we gave a May 1 deadline, everything (except for maybe \$100) came in within a day or two of that deadline. Virtually no one sends the money ahead of the deadline, so don't expect it! It is a little scary to spend the entire start-up amount and be caught with absolutely no money available for a time. It would have been nice to have some money further ahead of the deadline we gave, so you might want to consider when you'll need to pay things to determine what the deadline should be. We had to pay in advance for the site, the buses, and half of the food expense. Late fees keep folks to deadlines, but allow others to still make last minute decisions.

General Suggestions

If I had to do it again, I would purchase an endorsement stamp. Most people send individual checks, not team checks, so there is a LOT of endorsing of checks to be done. Save yourself some work

and get a stamp - the cost is minimal.

I would also suggest that you advertise that no full refunds will be offered after a certain date. When you have to guarantee numbers to a caterer (and pay for them, whether or not they show, since the caterer has already bought the food), you may not be able to afford to offer refunds after a certain date. We had nine people who paid and didn't show. Most of those did not let us know in advance that they were not coming, and we found out during registration at the ale. At that point there was no way to change numbers for the caterer. Luckily, some additional folks registered at the ale, and we ended up with enough funds left over to give refunds, but it might not have been the case. Be prepared for this problem - it had not been mentioned in any previous ale comments, and I was surprised when it happened.

In general, my biggest suggestion is that you choose good committee chairs and let them do the work. Set up a structure for the organization, but don't get involved in the particulars. Certainly offer suggestions based on your knowledge and experience, but let their decisions ride. Just find out whether it has been taken care of, not how. This way there is at least one person who has an overview of the whole operation, but isn't having to take care of concrete tasks at the same time. I realize that this may not work well for everyone - each of us manages in his/her own style and has to work with those available. I was very lucky to have a large group so that I didn't have to work with anyone who has a tendency to not follow through. And this particular style of hands off management allowed me to be relaxed and to enjoy the ale. I think that is very important. Reading all the other entries in this massive book can get discouraging, since a common theme is "don't expect to enjoy yourself." I'd like all future ale czarinas to know that it is possible to have a good time while putting on an ale and that it has been done!! Good luck to all future hosts!

Please feel free to write or call me if you have any questions.

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