

Silent Auction

Set auction date and location

A silent auction may be held on its own, but it may work best in conjunction with another event such as a dinner or concert. Holding the auction with another event increases attendance as well as entertains people and keeps them around (and bidding!) longer. Some organizers have found auctions held prior to the winter holidays are particularly successful.

Get permission to hold a silent auction if you will use public property. Make sure the property owner does not have any policies against using the space for fundraising activities.

FARF asks those who hold events to make certain that the event is covered by liability insurance. This insurance for a one-time event is often available through a family's homeowners insurance provider as relatively inexpensive "special event" insurance. Please contact FARF if you need assistance obtaining or paying for this required insurance.

Get help

A successful auction requires work. Some people may want to help by soliciting items; others may prefer to help with arrangements and logistics before, during, and/or after the auction. Consider a committee to help share the work load.

Solicit contributions

Make a list of possible auction items and businesses to contact for donations. Think of things that you and your potential bidders would buy. Contact family, friends, and acquaintances for donations that they might purchase or have on hand, such as unopened items, gift cards or handcrafted items. Contacts may also be able to donate vacation rentals and professional services such as haircuts, massages, yard care, classes, etc. Multiple small items can be combined into themed baskets which are often very popular auction items.

Consider offering to publicize sponsors and donors.

Arrange for collection and storage of donated items. Log items as you receive them so you will have an inventory of donations. Get the value of a donation from the donor to include on the bid sheet. Ask if the donor has a suggestion for an opening bid and bid increments (the donor may not want it to go for less than a certain amount). Donors may also have restrictions on the donation (for example, if they are donating nights in a vacation home they may have blackout dates).

Keep a record of prize donors so they can receive an "in-kind" donation tax receipt from the Fund.

Publicize event

Publicize your event by word of mouth and with invitations, emails, flyers, announcements, press releases, etc.

Create a bid sheet for each item

Recognize the donor of the item and provide any pertinent information about the item. Set a minimum opening bid and a minimum incremental amount for subsequent bids. The bid sheet should provide space for bidders to record their name or bidding number, amount of bid, and phone number (if desired). Include on the bid sheet any restrictions set by the donor, such as blackout or expiration dates. You may also want to note on the bid sheet or in a prize program that a bid is considered a commitment to buy.

Display prizes to their best advantage

If the prize is just a description (such as a certificate, service, or vacation rental), consider having a description (and photo, if applicable) of the prize in a large font in a picture frame next to the bid sheet.

Note that gift certificates can be easy to lose at an auction. Keep them in labeled envelopes in your cash box and provide the certificates to the winning bidders after payment.

Publicize items and closing time

Determine a time for closing the auction and announce remaining time periodically at the event. Use this announcement time to encourage friendly rivalry for hot items or announce those items are great deals. Describe items periodically to encourage bidding.

Once the auction has closed, mark the winning bidder on each bid sheet. Collect the bid sheets to determine the winner of each item and what is owed.

Collect payment for items

Have an ample amount of change on hand for those paying cash.

Any items that are not bid on may be saved for a future auction, sold another way, given to another FA family for their auction, or event organizers or volunteers can purchase unsold items.

Post-event follow-up

After the event, follow through with any remaining work from the event. You will need to contact any winning bidders who were not present at check-out time for payment and item distribution. Thank your donors and volunteers. Provide FARF with a list of everyone who should receive a tax receipt thank you letter.

Wrap-up meeting

Plan a final meeting with your planning/volunteer committee soon after the event to go over what went well and what could be improved. Consider making this a party-style meeting to thank everyone for their time and effort and to celebrate the success they made happen. Even if you expect this was a one-time event, this meeting is a great final thank you for your volunteers and you will gain valuable information for possibly holding another event or assisting others with one.

Consult the FARF Fundraising Toolkit for more helpful tips & forms to make your planning easier and your event more successful!

Available at www.fanconi.org, by calling 541.687.4658 or by emailing info@fanconi.org