

IV. Special Events



Get Your Message Out!

Gaining Recognition for your Adult & Community Education Program

Special events are great ways to promote organizations. However, the keys to a successful special event, are planning and organization. The plan of action must be detailed and contain a variety of information – including a press list and logistical details about necessary materials.

✓ *Special Event Considerations*

Describe the event?

- Outline an event; including a budget.
- Decide if planning the event is worth the time and effort.
- Choose a name and/or theme for the event.
- Produce a logo for the event (if applicable).

Where will the event be held?

- Locate a venue that is the proper size for the number of attendees.
- Check on lighting and audio-visual needs.
- Contact area businesses for location ideas, or ask if they would be willing to donate space.
- Area schools often make facilities available for little or no cost. This is free publicity for the school.

**Do you have access to any possible locations for a special event?
List your ideas here.**

When will the event take place?

- When choosing an event date, be aware of other community happenings, and important events in the state or nation.
- When possible, link an event to another taking place at approximately the same time. For example, combining a local book drive with International Literacy Day festivities. This gives an event a better press angle.
- Be aware of press deadlines! The media you invite will be more likely to attend and cover an event if it fits easily in their schedule. The best time is usually mid-morning.

Who will attend the event?

- Decide on a target market for the event, then tailor the message to attract that group’s attention.
- Be creative – but don’t get carried away. Journalists hate publicity stunts.

How will costs be handled?

- If additional funding is needed for an event, try to solicit help from business partners, or get other area businesses to sponsor the event.
- Determine a budget and stick to it.



How will the event be publicized?

- Produce flyers and posters describing the event, and post them in areas frequented by target audiences.
- Call local radio stations and publicize the event. DJ's are always open to information that they can talk about on the air. They may also be willing to have an ACE representative visit the radio show and do a brief interview or announcement.
- Send PSAs to local radio, television and cable stations.
- Send a press release to the area media
 - Use local media guides for distribution
 - Try to make follow-up calls when possible
 - Send releases to the right person at each publication, this increases the chance of coverage.
- Send a media advisory, a day or two before the event.
- Make sure to highlight photo or TV opportunities and the “who, what, when, where, and why” of the event.



✓ *Ideas for Events*

Program Showcase

Open house for potential students to inquire about the types of programs that ACE offers

Job Fair

Held twice a year for ACE students and graduates, as well as the general community. ACE administration can work with the area Chamber of Commerce as well as other area businesses

Interviewing Workshop

Held twice a month. This is a good opportunity for ACE students and other members of the community to meet, exchange resumes, and conduct mock job interviews.

Enrollment Drive

Held prior to the beginning of each term

Volunteer Drive

To help with literacy program - recruit mentors that will work outside of class with people in the program

Books for Literacy™ Campaign

Series of events to promote International Literacy Day

Talk Show Tour

Book an ACE representative on various area radio and television talk shows

Speakers Tour

ACE representatives visit area civic club meetings

CASE STUDY: *Implementing Marketing and Public Relations Techniques*

International Literacy Day offers a unique opportunity for ACE programs to attract local print and electronic media. However, this is just one subject for special event planning. The following are suggestions for publicizing International Literacy Day:

✓ *Focus on Success Stories*

Press Release

Write press releases or feature stories about successful ACE students in the Adult Basic Education Program. Use International Literacy Day as the "angle."

- Fax release/feature story/advisory/PSA, as appropriate, to all local media contacts approximately two weeks prior to International Literacy Day.
- Send feature story/release to local television morning shows. Follow up with phone calls to see if producers will invite ACE "success students" in the Adult Basic Education Program to appear as guests on International Literacy Day.

Note some interesting and newsworthy students in your program that would be good subjects for "feature" or success stories.

Media Advisory/Written PSAs

Write a short advisory or public service announcement (PSA) for radio stations that do not have guest programs. Most radio stations are unlikely to cover a feature story, but they may mention International Literacy Day and ACE's Adult Basic Education Program.

- Call media contacts/editors a few days after sending the story to confirm that they received the fax. Ask if they plan on covering the story – try to sell them on a local angle, such as illiteracy rates in the area, and that illiteracy is a very important issue that deserves coverage.

✓ *Books for Literacy™ Campaign*

In some communities, local residents can drop off donated (new or used) books at libraries, local businesses and ACE schools to be used by new readers. These books can be used at ACE with the Adult Basic Education Program, donated to local libraries and sent to other organizations that offer adult literacy programs.

General Contact

- Contact local libraries to get them involved in the "ACE Books for Literacy" drive to promote adult literacy.
- Contact businesses about placing a donation box at their place of business for book drop-offs. They may also display a sign in their front window promoting the event and announce that their business is a book drop-off location.
- Send letter to civic groups asking for help with the "Books for Literacy" drive.
- Send a letter with information about "Books for Literacy" to local homeowner association newsletters. This should be done at least three months prior to kick-off (most of the newsletters are bi-monthly).

Event Flyer

- Create a mini-poster and event flyer (containing information about the event and book drop-off locations) for libraries and businesses to display and distribute. Save money by designing an 11 x 14" poster (legal size), copy it in-house and matte on a florescent poster board.
- Talk to managers at local grocery stores and retail stores about placing event flyers in grocery bags/ shopping bags on Saturdays and Sundays.
- Call bookstores about distributing flyers in bags and displaying posters.

Public Service Announcements

- Write several 15- and 30-second radio PSAs (with event and book drop-off location information) and fax or mail to radio station PSA directors.
- Produce a 15- or 30-second TV PSA for airing on local broadcast stations.
- Ask local television stations to produce/run PSAs

News Release/Advisory

- Write a media advisory/news release for local papers and fax to editors approximately one-to-two weeks before kicking off the event.

Miscellaneous

- Write a calendar announcement for the community news sections of local newspapers.
- Use *pro bono* outdoor billboard space to create publicity for event.



What other ideas do you have?