

# Brilliant Special Events

October 2009



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A service of the Corporation for National and Community Service - Special Projects and Sustainability Initiative

## Dear “Brilliant” Colleague,

Special events can give your program brilliant opportunities to shine in the public arena, and as a result, reap tremendous rewards. Click on the titles on the right to learn how to...

**Select the Right Event**

**Save Money on Your Special Event**

**Make the Best Use of Celebrities**

Do you have questions or need expert assistance for your special event? Contact Campaign Consultation, Inc. at [OnTheGo@CampaignConsultation.com](mailto:OnTheGo@CampaignConsultation.com) to get more information about planning for the rest of the year.

*NOTE: Starting in October, On-the-Go eTA, your online sustainability resource, will be coming to you on the third Tuesday of each month. And in November, we will be launching a series of monthly Action Guides.*

*Action Guides are tools to enhance your skills in community building and sustainability. They will be highlighted in each issue of On-The-Go eTA and posted on the VISTA Campus as well as on CNCS Resource Center.*

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## Select the Right Event

Special events can help you reach different goals, such as raising money, building awareness, honoring champions, and solidifying trust. Success depends upon matching the goal you wish to accomplish to your event. Consider the goals and their possible events below:

If your goal is...	Consider one of these events.
A <b>Fundraising event to raise money</b> for your organization or a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Galas and Parties</li> <li>Carnivals and Festivals</li> <li>Games and Contests</li> <li>Auctions, Etc.</li> </ul>

### IN THIS ISSUE:

*click on titles below to read full articles*

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[Make the Best Use of Celebrities](#)

### TIPS FOR THE TIMES

In your search for a celebrity, don't forget to tap into connections that your volunteer leaders may have. Someone may be able to make an introduction that will smooth the way to an invitation to become part of your event.

### Visit the VISTA Campus for more information

- [VISTA Viewfinder](#)  
See the latest issue
- **e-Seminar #5: Heritage Tourism - From the Inside Out** October 22, 2009, 3:00 – 4:00 pm, EDT  
To register for this event, please [Click Here](#).
- **Featured eGIZMO** (Giving Information for Zooming Mission Objectives)  
**AmeriCorps VISTA Ready**

special project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sporting Events</li> </ul>
A <b>Visibility event</b> to build <b>awareness</b> of the work you do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conferences, Workshops, and Lectures</li> <li>• Openings, Tours, and Demonstrations</li> <li>• Arts and Entertainment</li> <li>• State Legislative Gatherings</li> </ul>
A <b>Celebration event</b> to reinforce the commitment and attract more <b>champions</b> for your organization by honoring volunteers, special occasions in your organization, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awards and Recognition Programs</li> <li>• Thank You Celebrations</li> <li>• Faith-based Celebrations</li> </ul>
An <b>Accountability event</b> to inspire <b>trust</b> from your community, volunteer leadership, staff, etc. together to work to report on progress, problems, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual Meetings</li> <li>• Volunteer Orientations and Information Meetings</li> <li>• Retreats /Advances</li> </ul>

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## Save Money on Your Special Event

Organizations that produce big gala events as fundraisers are finding such events challenging in these economic times. Here are some ways you can tone down the expense and meet your goal:

### Cost Saving Tips

1. Book early. A year out is not too soon. This includes your venue, catering, entertainment, etc. Last minute bookings usually cost more.
2. Avoid high demand event days and dates. Facilities, caterers and other services usually cost more on

**Kit:** Developed for those working in the Katrina-affected region and in other disaster-affected areas, the VISTA Ready Kit provides tip sheets, guides, templates, best practices, references, work sheets, training materials and other such resources to support VISTA projects and members working in these most difficult of situations.  
[VISTA Ready kit](#)

### Sustainability Learning Products and Services:

#### Resources

[On-The-Go eTA](#)  
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[The Chronicle of Philanthropy](#)

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*"Audiences are the same all over the world, and if you entertain them, they'll respond."*

Saturdays and during high demand seasons. Avoid holidays and peak prom and wedding seasons to get the best prices.

3. Keep the time of your event short. The longer it runs, the more it costs.
4. Pay cash whenever possible. Since it costs merchants an average of 2% or more to process a credit card transaction, ask for a cash discount.

[Click here](#) for more ways to save on the cost of your special event.

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## Make the Best Use of Celebrities

Celebrities can add brilliance at a special event. Some of you may be fortunate enough to attract a national celebrity, but a local celebrity, because he/she is known and respected in the community, can attract favorable attention to your program, too.

Celebrities can be involved in events and projects in a variety of ways:

- Feature a celebrity as a keynote speaker if he/she has expertise and is outspoken about your issue.
- Ask a celebrity to serve as master of ceremonies at any event.
- Recognize the celebrity or ask the celebrity to present an award to a local hero and build champions.
- Make print, audio and video public service announcements with your celebrity.
- Involve a sports savvy celebrity in golf or fishing tournaments. Think baseball/basketball challenges as well.
- Maximize celebrity brilliance by taking pictures of the star with your volunteers, leaders, and donors. Frame for placement in your workplace and mail to your stakeholders.
- Invite the celebrity to a ribbon cutting or program kick-off and have the media present to maximize publicity.
- Invite celebrity artists/decorators or special guest chefs to special events and publish results.
- If your celebrity cannot attend your event, ask him to record video greetings

[Click here](#) to learn about locating national celebrities for your event.

– Liza Minnelli, b. 1946. American entertainer.

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Thank you for your interest in On-The-Go eTA. We encourage you to send this and other issues of [OTG eTA](#) to friends and colleagues who would benefit from the information. Also, if you're on information-overload, you may request [email removal](#). Otherwise OTG e-TA will be back soon with another edition.

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## Save Money on Your Special Event (cont.)

### Entertainment

1. Consider alternatives, i.e. taped background music rather than a pianist, a dj rather than a band.
2. If you still want live music consider a solo musician, duo, trio or quartet as opposed to a full sized band or orchestra.
3. Book top local entertainment. Contact the music division of a local college or university for student groups.

### Food and Beverage

1. If you hire caterers, make sure you have open bidding and get good cost comparisons. Compare the cost of plated vs. buffet. Look for the "extra" charges like rental items, additional labor charges, delivery charges, gratuity rates, etc.
2. Select a less expensive entree item. Talented caterers can prepare a variety of entrees that are very appealing to the eye and palate and that cost significantly less than fillet mignon. Select themed or ethnic foods which often are less expensive.
3. Use a coffee bar instead of setting cups and saucers at every place setting. Have salads preset at the table.
4. If renting china and glassware, check the items before you sign for them. Don't pay a replacement fee for chipped or broken items.
5. Consider using eco-friendly disposable plates and glasses rather than china and glass
6. Time your event for late afternoon so that a cocktail or beer/wine reception with heavy hors d'oeuvres is appropriate. Beverage consumption will be significantly less during an afternoon event versus an evening event.
7. Purchase liquor (if the facility allows) from a liquor store yourself.

8. If you or a beverage service company purchases the wine or liquor, make sure that you receive credit for unopened or unused products.

## Venue

1. Consider your audience and identify lower cost alternative locations such as local parks or community centers, a church or synagogue hall, an aircraft hangar, a party room in an apartment complex or condominium, or a backyard. Some local universities and colleges, unions and professional associations also have very nice special event facilities available for alumni or member use that are free or relatively inexpensive.
2. You could also have the event in your office or facility if you have space.
3. Recruit volunteers to set up items like tables and chairs instead of paying additional fees to set up.

## Decorations

1. Have responsible volunteers pick up orders versus paying for delivery.
2. Twinkle lighting is easy, and most people have some in-house. Another thing is wrapping the tent legs in your own fabric or some plastic from the party store.”
3. Shop some of the components that may be provided by the caterer, i.e. decor or rental table cloths, napkins, glassware, china, silverware, etc. You may be able to save a significant amount of money by obtaining these items directly from another source.
4. Select "in season" floral items rather than exotics. Consider renting plants from a garden supply center.

## Marketing

1. Use the internet to spread the word. Post details about the event on free websites. Begin by putting an ad on your local Craigslist site. Write about it on social networking websites like Facebook, Twitter and MySpace.
2. Simple is the way to go on invitations. Custom colored inks, special graphic enhancements, raised printing, decorated liners and multiple enclosures increase the cost.
3. Avoid oversized or overweight mailings since this increases your postage costs.
4. Establish a toll free response telephone number or a response web site rather than a separate R.S.V.P card and stamped reply envelopes.
5. Follow up by email to attract more attendees.

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## Resources

### eOrganizer

eOrganizer is an interactive clearinghouse for the latest and greatest web instruments of change. This GIZMO shows you how to maximize free and inexpensive online tools and resources to mobilize people around issues and within organizations. Structured around eight categories important to community organizing, it offers descriptions and provides access to many of the most current web arenas and strategies for bringing groups together to create community change.

*The National ASK (Awareness, Skills, Knowledge) to Sustain Institute*, sponsored by Corporation for National and Community Service, provided by Campaign Consultation, Inc. 1998, 2002.

*The CNCS Resources Now! National Institute*, sponsored by Corporation for National and Community Service, provided by Campaign Consultation, Inc. 2005-07.

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## Learning Products and Services

### **Sustainability:**

OntheGo@CampaignConsultation.com is designed to give information fast on building capacity. Use this online support for advice from a fundraising professional. Contact [OntheGo@CampaignConsultation.com](mailto:OntheGo@CampaignConsultation.com)

### **VISTA Campus:**

VISTA Campus is an online learning environment for the VISTA community. The aim is to support you in your development throughout and beyond your VISTA service. The Campus includes self-paced tutorials and courses, reference materials, discussion boards, a campus bookstore and more to help improve your skills and connect with other VISTAs. To access the site, go to <http://vistacampus.org> and select the "VISTAs" option. You will need to create an account to access the content and discussion boards.

### **GIZMOs:**

(*Giving Information for Zooming Mission Objectives*) GIZMOS are resource and fund development tools for you and your volunteers. They are tangible products in packets, pocket brochures, CD-ROMs, games, etc. They feature a myriad of fundraising topics such as The Case for Support, an interactive online resource. View and use our newest GIZMOs at [www.CampaignConsultation.com/gizmosplash](http://www.CampaignConsultation.com/gizmosplash)

### **The Chronicle of Philanthropy:**

Everyone who comes to a Resources Now! National Institute gets a free subscription to the Chronicle for a year. Participants in CNCS Campaign Consultation workshops receive the latest issue free of charge plus a \$20 discount on one year's subscription.

### **Workshops/Clinics:**

The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), through its T/TA service provider Campaign Consultation, Inc., offers a three-hour workshops and clinics for those interested.

### **WebWizard:**

CNCS sponsors this new service that Campaign Consultation provides to assist programs and projects in maximizing their websites for program, client, volunteer and fundraising needs.

### **Online Courses/Webinars:**

Web course delivery of topics pertinent to resource development such as — **Build Fundraising Volunteer Champions** and **Cause Related Marketing and Corporate Partnerships**. Available through the Resource Center at <http://www.nationalserviceresources.org>

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