

Planning Events

Along with newsletters, emails and your website, association-sponsored events are major functions of an alumni association. At these events, the social ties of the Fraternity's alumni are allowed to continue and prosper. There are a number of events which are coordinated by an alumni association, many times in conjunction with the chapter's assistance – these include, but are not limited to: association meetings, monthly luncheons, International Work Day, Homecoming, Founders Day, golf outings and banquets.

Alumni Association Meetings

Each business meeting should limit itself to just the meeting and should not conflict with a social activity. An agenda should be composed and distributed at the meetings, and in most cases, the agenda should include the association's financial report, report of special projects or committees, a listing of upcoming events, communications and elections. If possible, a report on the status of the undergraduate chapter should also be given. Attendance is always boosted by notifying the participants of the date, time and location of the next meeting before adjourning.

Monthly Luncheons

Many alumni associations sponsor monthly or quarterly luncheons in the city where their chapter is located or in a metropolitan area where most alumni reside. The agenda at these luncheons should be fairly casual with most of the time dedicated to interaction and networking between the alumni present. However, a leader in the community or area business, or a university official or athletic personality being invited to make remarks could be an excellent way to increase attendance. At some point, the association president should make announcements regarding upcoming events.

If conducive, have the luncheon at the chapter house. The association can contribute extra funds to provide for the additional meals. In addition to getting alumni over to the chapter house, this also provides the opportunity to interact with undergraduate members. However, the location should be central to the majority of the alumni membership. Chapter representatives should be invited to each luncheon.

International Work Day

Chapters, colonies, and house corporations all across North America plan a day, primarily in the months of April and May, to get together with students, alumni, parents, and guests to improve the chapter house and/or grounds. Groups conduct projects and provide food and fellowship for all who participate. Since its inception, International Work Day has become an annual tradition for many PIKE chapters, their alumni and house corporations.

Every participating chapter qualifies for many incentives, which include a \$250 participation grant, an event planning kit, recognition in the autumn *Shield & Diamond*, and eligibility for selection in one of six International Work Day Award categories. In addition to the participation grant, all award recipients receive a \$100 gift certificate at a hardware store in their area and the Overall Work Day Award Winner receives a \$500 participation grant and a trophy to be proudly displayed in their house.

In late February, watch for an invitation via e-mail, check the housing section on the Fraternity's website for dates and details, or look in the spring issue of the *Shield & Diamond* to see if your chapter or the chapter nearest you is participating. If you have difficulty contacting the project coordinator, or the information on the website, www.pikes.org, doesn't answer your questions, call (901) 748-1868 and ask to speak with someone in the real estate department or email them at pikehouse@pikes.org and ask for information about getting involved.

Other Association Activities

There are a wide variety of alumni association events which fit into the “other” category. These events can be split into two categories: smaller types of events and major events. Examples of smaller events include:

- Golf Outing
- Barbecue
- Outing to a sporting event (school or pro league)
- Holiday Reception
- Alumni-active sporting event
- Canoe trip or other outing
- Chapter Scholarship Dinner
- International Work Day
- Sponsored chapter recruitment event
- Tailgates or pre/post game receptions
- Civic activities (blood drive, food drive, etc.)

Examples of major alumni association events, and ones which will require more planning, include:

- Homecoming Weekend
- Founders Day or other banquet
- Special anniversary
- Holiday dinner-dance

Obviously, even the smaller events can turn into large, complicated gatherings. However, the keys to successful alumni events include advance planning and advance notification to alumni.

Event Planning Tips

Consider the following points as you plan your event:

Keep your event cost reasonable. Cost is a major factor for individuals when deciding whether or not to attend your event. A relatively high price will prevent alumni, especially recent graduates, from attending. A price of \$35-\$50 per person is about the national average for banquets.

Distribute event evaluations. Ever wonder if those who attended your event had a good time? Were there areas that could have been improved? The best way to answer these questions is to develop a short, simple evaluation to have your guests complete at or a few days following the event. Evaluations will provide you with invaluable information for planning the next event.

Find a venue that is centrally located. Another factor that determines turnout is where you hold your event. Consider having activities at a site easily accessible to alumni in your area. Sites that have a novel twist can also enhance turnout. Stadium clubs, museums and other attractions might be alternatives to hotels and country clubs.

Budget your event cost to cover the basics. As you set your event price don't forget to factor in the following: meal cost, tax, gratuity, room charge, guest speaker's meal, audio/visual charges if used, decorations and door prizes.

Keep your program brief. An hour-long program featuring your guest speaker or other activities, plus an hour for dinner, is generally long enough. Your attendees will become restless with a long, drawn out program. The goals for your event should be to generate enthusiasm and provide information about the Fraternity and the alumni association, and the chapter if applicable.

Silent auctions generally work better than live auctions. If your association plans to have an auction, consider having a silent auction. Silent auctions not only give people something to do during the social hour (browse through the items), they also take less time to administer than live auctions. This is a great way to raise revenue for scholarships or to provide funding for a future association event.

Adding the Extras

Depending on the type of alumni association activity, the following extra suggestions and ideas can be used to get the most of an event:

1. **Budget** – Avoid overestimating the number of attendees by cutting off registration far enough in advance so the attendance can be confirmed with the facility. Plan on last minute cancellations as well as late registrations.
2. **Undergraduates** – Be sure all chapter members are aware of the event and expectations of attendance and participation are clearly presented.
3. **Contact Local Hotels** – Get special rates, and list it in all publications.
4. **Wives and Older Alumni** – If wives and children are welcome, make sure they know it. Plan alternate activities for older alumni and families in the event they don't want to participate in the main activity such as an open chapter house, campus tour, school art gallery tour, etc..
5. **Child Care** – Arrange to have the undergraduates or a sorority assist in keeping any children entertained.
6. **School Alumni Office** – Inquire to what services are available, such as mailing labels, use of phones and school facilities. Invite a representative from the university to speak or attend any major banquets.
7. **Photographer** – Plan to have a group picture of all alumni attending to include in future publications.
8. **Banquet Etiquette** – Make use of a head table, speakers and a program.
9. **Alumni Awards** – give out recognition for fraternity service, community leadership, oldest member present and possibly other awards.
10. **Chapter Scholarships** – Provide scholarships to the local chapter in recognition of leadership, academic excellence, etc. This will get the chapter more involved and provide insight into an association they will be expected to join upon graduation. For more information or assistance in this matter, contact the Pi Kappa Alpha Foundation at (901) 748-1948.
11. **Guest Book and Name Tags** – This allows for better recognition of participants, address up-dates, and listing of attendees in the next newsletter to increase interest in future events. Arrange to have a welcome committee to supervise registration, signing the guest book, pinning on name tags, handing out programs and football tickets, etc..
12. **Feature Article for the Next Newsletter** – Include the names and initiation years of the attendees to help increase visibility for future events.
13. **Thanks** – Publicly and privately thank all alumni who have helped. Send a handwritten thank you to special alumni.

14. **Evaluations** – Evaluate and document everything from the promotion of the event to the facilities used. This information will become invaluable in future years.