



# A Great Idea

## *Voices for Utah Children Brings Home the Bacon By Hosting Breakfast with the Experts*

### *Fundraising*

#### *Summary*

Voices for Utah Children (formerly Utah Children) invites the public to breakfast meetings to hear experts in different professions talk about how their daily concerns apply to child advocacy. The events, called Breakfast with the Experts, elevate children's issues with a variety of people in the state. The speakers have included a Supreme Court chief justice and the Speaker of the state House of Representatives, among others. Those in attendance pay \$25 per person, raising \$1,500 each event for the organization.

#### *Background*

The organization first got the idea in the spring of 2002 when Dr. Diana Pearce was visiting Utah to unveil the Self-Sufficiency Standard. Voices for Utah Children wanted to showcase her work in as many venues as possible. The organization decided to hold a breakfast for Dr. Pearce to talk about this innovative new advocacy tool. A firm dealing in women's finances agreed to underwrite the breakfast. A large number of people attended and learned about Dr. Pearce's work, and the event raised money at very little cost to the organization. As an added bonus, the event took very little staff time to plan. Voices for Utah Children saw that it could raise money and expose people to children's issues. It was time for the organization to bring home the bacon and fry it up in a pan.

#### *Key Elements*

- ◆ A month before each breakfast, Voices for Utah Children chooses a speaker and topic.
- ◆ The organization then goes to a firm or company with an interest in the topic being discussed and asks for funding. For example, the organization was able to get a law firm concerned with children's issues, to underwrite a breakfast where the state's chief Supreme Court justice spoke.
- ◆ A restaurant, with private rooms, that is inexpensive and charges for meals only is chosen. The breakfast usually costs the organization an average of \$15 per plate and is paid for by the underwriter. The people buying tickets receive a \$10 tax deduction for the cost of the ticket minus the meal.
- ◆ Basic invitations are printed with the speaker and underwriter's names and a RSVP request. They are then printed in-house in divisions of four on heavy stock paper. The staff at Voices for Utah Children then cut the invitations and mail them.
- ◆ The invitations go to the organization's past and present volunteers, contributors, board members and people who might be interested in the breakfast topic.
- ◆ Three days before the event, staff members at Voices for Utah Children call the people on the invitation list who have not yet confirmed their attendance.

### *Staff Time*

- ◆ The Executive Director spends two hours over several weeks scheduling the speaker, booking the restaurant and getting someone to underwrite the event.
- ◆ The organization has an intern or staff member dedicate two hours to preparing the invitations and mailing them.

### *Financial Information*

- ◆ On average, the organization pays \$1,050 for the food (\$15 per plate for 70 people).
- ◆ It spends \$10 for a ream of thick, quality stock paper on which to print the invitations.
- ◆ Around 200 invitations are mailed, costing the organization \$74 (\$.37 each).
- ◆ Total costs: \$1,134, which is paid for by the underwriter.
- ◆ The organization's total net income is \$1,500.

### *Things to Think About*

- ◆ It could take your organization longer to plan each breakfast than it does Voices for Utah Children. Think about tapping firms or organizations with which you have had prior dealings. It would expedite the process, as there would probably be less red tape.

- ◆ Raise money for your organization by asking sponsors for more money than the cost of the meals.
- ◆ Be opportunistic in scheduling breakfast speakers. If you have an important person visiting you from out of state, invite them to speak at Breakfast with the Experts.
- ◆ Depending on the topic and date, it is at times difficult to attract people to the events. When faced with such situations, consider providing incentives, such as a free ticket for every ticket purchased.
- ◆ Make sure you choose a time that is good for everyone. Voices for Utah Children has found that it is best to hold the event in the morning. The organization begins registration at 7:30 a.m. and ends the breakfast at 9 a.m. so that people can get to work at a reasonable time.

### *Outcomes*

- ◆ The organization was able to reach people who are normally not exposed to children's issues.
- ◆ The organization nets about \$1,500 per breakfast.
- ◆ The speakers are able to learn about the issues important to Voices for Utah Children, while sharing their professional perspective on children's issues with the audience.

### *Contact Information*

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