

Planning Major Events *by Jane Carrico*

1. Prayer should be the first and most important part of the planning process. God does such wonderful work when included in our plans. Let God provide some of the answers and ideas.
2. Engage the help of a good friend. Together you can brainstorm, suggest, create, encourage and organize. The old saying, "Two heads are better than one," really does make a lot of sense.
3. Plan ahead. It literally takes months for our conferences, spring events and retreats to come together. You can't expect to get popular speakers with only a month's notice (unless, of course, you have in your state a Susan Markwood, who does beautifully at a moment's notice!).
4. Delegate! If you have a committee, use members' gifts, time and brains and let them help with the work. Put one in charge of hospitality, another in charge of music, another in charge of decorations, etc. If you don't have a committee, get one! No big event is possible with one person doing all the work. If you are one of those who must do everything yourself to you know it will be done right, you need to learn quickly to let go of some responsibilities. That way, you will be allowing someone else to use her gifts and it will relieve some of the stress you may be feeling. Trust! (This is a great time to include some women who have never been asked to do anything before. Small responsibilities are an easy way to start).
5. Keep a notebook of all your thoughts, contacts, ideas, actual plans, costs, etc. (I use a spiral notebook so I can't lose the pages in it.) And make sure you pass on the notebook (or copies of the pages) to the person who will be in charge of the event the next time.
6. Communicate with your committee and all involved in the program or event. It is important that the right hand knows exactly what the left hand is doing if the event is going to be well coordinated. Letters to participants should include expectations, time allowances, a word of thanks and encouragement.
7. Work with a theme. Events are more easily planned when they have a central theme and scripture. All aspects of the meeting can be coordinated to go with the theme.
8. If you have evaluations from a previous event, make sure you use them. Listening to the suggestions of your ladies gives you new ideas, new contacts, and lets the women know that you are paying attention to what they say.
9. Make your room welcoming to those attending. Decorations may seem like a frivolous luxury for meetings, but when the women enter the room and see that someone took the time to make it attractive and comfortable, it says to them, "Welcome. Come in, make yourself at home, and enjoy your day with us."
10. Color outside your circle! This means you don't have to do things the way they have always been done! It is so much fun to do something different, just because it is different. And how do you know if it will work or not unless you try? Don't be afraid to step outside that box and take a chance. While it might not appeal to some who don't like change, it may invite some new women to join you for the first time.

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11. Meet with all program participants the day of the event (or the day before an early morning event) at a mutually convenient time to answer questions, to make sure everyone knows her responsibilities, and most of all to pray together.

12. Don't be afraid to think big! Sometimes that means to not let finances keep you from doing what you really want to do. For example, if you want a nationally renowned speaker, then make sure your registration helps cover the cost for having such a speaker.