

BOOTHS and TABLES **DONE RIGHT!!!**

BEFORE: PLAN, PLAN, PLAN!

- **Be Targeted!** Select events for your booth or table that will attract the kinds of families that you need to serve the children and youth in your jurisdiction. For example, if your agency is in need of more homes for teens, select an event at the high school where students are performing or participating in sporting event. Decorate your booth to coordinate with the event!
- **Get a great location!** Work with event planners to get the best spot possible even if you are given a location for free. This requires meeting in advance, thanking them for the opportunity to participate in their event and sharing information about foster care.
- **Partner with entertainment or speakers at the event.** Perhaps you have a connection to a group that will be performing. Ask them to help by dedicating a song or dance to foster children or adoptive parents. Or if there is an individual speaking on the program that would be willing to put a plug in for you. Prepare a few talking points with data for them. Don't forget a nice "Thank-you" note afterwards!
- **Have your "own program" within the event's program.** Too often, we set up a booth and wait for people to come by. We offer candy, pens, sticky notes which people are happy to collect but they don't stop for a conversation. However, once they have passed you...they are gone. (See last page for example)
- **Have "Special Guests" at your table.** Plan times during your event to have special guests to draw people to your booth or table. For example, have experienced foster parents from 1-2pm or adoptive parents from 10-11am. Foster care alumni, adult adoptees, agency staff can also be special guests. Have announcements made by the emcee to invite people to the meet and greet!

DURING: MEET, GREET, ENGAGE, EDUCATE AND ENCOURAGE!

- **It's not about your pens or chip clips....its about relationships.** For most people, the thought of becoming a foster or adoptive parent is daunting and scary. However, if they meet a friendly, knowledgeable and passionate person who is encouraging, it can make the difference between prospective foster/adoptive parents taking the next step or walking away!
- **Get out in front of your table or booth!!** Sitting behind your table, on your cellphone, is uninviting and gives the public you're not interested in them or your mission! Stand in front, welcome people, have brochures in your hand...ready to meet, greet and inform folks about foster care and adoption! Be friendly and enthusiastic!

- **Engage people...especially their kids!** Plan activities for kids to get their parents to come by and stay! You'll need to keep the children entertained with face painting, games or arts/crafts for 6-7 minutes while you talk to their parents
- **Have a sign-in sheet.** Be sure to capture information on people that you had a conversation with at your booth. Getting names, addresses, phone numbers and email addresses ensures that you can follow up!

• **Don't overwhelm people with lots of information and paper.** Ditch large packets with lots of forms or pages. Simple brochures or booklets with information such as FAQs, basic info on foster care/adoption, how to take the first steps and multiple ways to contact the recruiter are a good idea. A short story about a child or foster family is also a nice touch. Create simple invitations to your next three orientations to hand out. Be sure to bring lots of business cards!

• **Circulate among the other vendors.** Take a walk around to the other booths and displays. Introduce yourself and share a little about the need for foster and adoptive families. Leave a brochure or pamphlet along with your business card.

• **Get a commitment!** While talking with prospective parents, have your calendar ready! If you can get a commitment for a call or visit while at your booth, you have a greater chance of meeting with them to share more information.

• **Create incentive system!** For folks working the table, give an award or prize to staff or foster parents who secured the highest of inquiries. Provide another tier of incentives for staff or foster parents who converted the most number of inquiries to approved foster parents

AFTER: FOLLOW UP ASAP!

• **Create your Follow-Up Plan in advance of the event.** A big mistake that many recruiters make is they fail to plan what will happen AFTER the event is over. Your follow up plan needs to be part of the initial planning so that it can be immediately implemented the next business day. Don't drop the ball after all your hard work!

• **Have materials made in advance that can be mailed out or, preferably, emailed the next business day.** Customize your follow up materials to reference the event and meeting the prospective parent. Include a short, personal note to the prospective parent encouraging them to take the next step in the process.

• **Plan an orientation to occur within 10 days of your booth event.** Get folks into an orientation as soon as possible while their interest is fresh. Send a special invitation to the people that visited your booth as part of your follow up materials.

• **Use follow-up calls and emails to remind interested person of orientation or offer**

alternatives. With busy schedules, it's easy to forget when the orientation is. Send emails with a countdown of days till orientation. Provide alternate methods of completing the orientation. Make a call the day or two prior to the orientation—it's ok to leave a message!

•**Include your business card/contact information.** You can never give your card out too much! While we hope that people who stop by your booth will jump at the chance to become a foster or adoptive parent, they may not take that next step today. But your card in their purse or wallet is a constant reminder of your conversation with them and perhaps, tomorrow or next month, they will be ready to proceed.

SAMPLE “PROGRAM INSIDE THE PROGRAM

ANNUAL FALL FESTIVAL—MAIN STAGE	OUR RECRUITMENT PROGRAM
9:00am Event opens Welcome	9:00am Have announcer invite people to our table
9:45am East High School Band plays	9:45am Band dedicates song to foster kids in their school
10:20am Announcements	10:20am Make announcement about coloring table for kids ages 4-7 till 11:30am
10:30am Miss Pam's Dance School Performance	10:30am 2 nd dance to be in honor of foster and adoptive parents
11:00am Pie Eating Contests for Teens	**Still having coloring for kids
12noon Announcements	12noon Make announcement re: FP guests at table till 1:30pm
12:15pm Country Boys Band plays	12:45pm Band leader will remind people about FP Guests when they finish
1:00pm Tug of War—Police vs Fire Dept	**FP Guests continue
1:30pm Announcements	1:30pm Make announcement re: balloon game for kids 8-12 for next 45 mins. with prizes
1:15pm Square Dancing Expo	**Still having games for kids 8-12
1:45pm Pumpkin Pie Judging Largest Pumpkin, squash, zucchini contest	**Still having games for kids 8-12
2:15pm Contest Winners announced	2:25pm Make announcement re: pumpkin decorating for teens till 3:30pm
2:30pm Barbershop Quartet	**Still pumpkin decorating for teens
3:15pm Magic with Renaldo	**Still pumpkin decorating and cleanup
4:00pm West High School Glee Club	4:00pm Make announcement re: Adoptive Parents and Adult Adoptees at table for 60 minutes.