

## How to Host a Profitable Pancake Breakfast Fundraiser!

Pancake breakfasts are an easy-to-organize fundraiser involving every member of your team. They can be a wonderful teambuilding exercise. Here are some tips to make it easier. Thanks go out to Jane Young, Mark McLeod, Wendy Austin, Jessica Boucher, John Boucher, Barb Bottiglieri, Katie Reynolds, and Jack and Kathie Kentfield for their suggestions.

### Choose a date

- Check school calendars, holidays, major town events, other organizations' calendars when choosing your possible dates. You don't want it to conflict with another big event in town if possible.
- You can have continuous serving from 8:00 to 10:30 am for example, but it requires that your wait staff be very attentive to cleaning up, etc. as people leave. OR you can sell X number of tickets to two settings - 8:00 and 9:30 - that way you can replace all the dirty stuff just once in between, before opening doors to the 9:30 reservations. It is also easier to cook for just two meals than for continuous seating.

### Location

- Look for a place to donate space for it - churches or schools may allow you to use their kitchens and space for 10% of the proceeds or a donation. They may also allow you to advertise on their bulletin boards or in church bulletins, etc.
- You need a place that will be shoveled/plowed in the winter in case of snow, and adequate kitchen facilities and seating and an easy-to-find location.

### Advertise

- Sell tickets in advance. Keep track of how many adult, seniors and children's tickets you sell so you get an idea of headcounts to know how much food to buy. Encourage reservations (pay at the door but reserve tickets in advance) so it helps with headcounts.
- Have someone print tickets on their computer instead of having them printed - put Adult, Child, Senior on them and have your sellers circle which kind of ticket it is that they are selling. Use inexpensive business card stock to print them up on. Consider charging different amounts for tickets purchased in advance or at the door; or offering family rates.
- Make posters and put them up all over town; advertise on your website, in the Fundraiser section of Chief Delphi and also on regional FIRST websites - area teams like to support each other... - if you go to their event, they will come to yours. Post flyers in your school and location of breakfast.
- If you have a local newspaper take a picture of your robot (maybe last year's) dressed in an apron and "serving up a plate of pancakes" or with a chef's hat on and have them write up an article in advance of the dinner so townspeople know about the fundraiser. Newspapers need a lot of lead time so plan that early.

### Organize Your Staff

- Break team into Setup crew - they come and set up tables, chairs, do kitchen prep work, get batter, meat, etc. started. Serving crew - train them on how to be waiters/waitresses - most people don't have a clue how to do that. Have Cleanup crew. That way all the team members can pick a time to work that is convenient for them. Put someone at door to take tickets or to sell tickets. Have someone escort people to empty tables. Have team photographer record the event.
- No one likes to go to a restaurant where you can see the wait staff standing around talking together. The team shouldn't be, either. They should be waiting on people, talking about FIRST, schmoozing! It's hard for them to do this but this is how you will attract more attention and more possible sponsors.
- Team gets to eat BEFORE the event has started or AFTER the breakfast and before you do cleanup. Don't forget to save some food for the team.

- Two ways to consider delivering food are buffet-style or table waiters. Buffet is certainly the way to go when you have limited staff. Patrons can be served at buffets or self-serve. It's easier to control the food and avoid excess waste by serving it either at the buffet line or by table waiters.
- If doing a buffet serving line then anticipate what people will be able to hold in their hands and still be able to serve themselves or be served. Don't make them juggle coffee, orange juice, a plate of pancakes/bacon/sausage, syrup, napkin, utensils, and payment all in one swoop through the line. Break up major areas: payment, entrée plate, drinks.
- If you anticipate crowds then several parallel areas might be better than one long buffet that everyone has to "feed" through. Make allowances for staff to add fresh pancakes, etc. to the food line.
- Spread plenty of large trash cans around so tables can be easily and quickly cleared. You'll need an active staff to clear finished plates and wipe down sticky tables.

### **The Food**

- Solicit food or paper good donations from area groceries, butchers, bread stores, grocery stores. Decide what you want to serve – pancakes, bacon, sausage, juice, milk, coffee, tea. Be sure to include butter, syrup and sugar-free syrup, cream, sugar and sugar substitutes.
- Contact your local health inspector to determine local regulations. You will probably need to use food handling gloves - NOT LATEX - and check regulations for cleaning dishes (disposable may be an easier alternative). Check to see if your local health inspector must come by to inspect before you can serve your meal. You may need to provide a list of food preparation workers. You might also have to show proof of temperature of hot items and cold items.
- People like lots to drink so wait staff must be attentive to that.
- Start big coffee pots EARLY, they take longer than you think to heat up. Check them frequently to be sure you haven't tripped a circuit breaker while multiple ones are brewing (it's happened to us before!!!). If you are tripping breakers consider using a heavy gauge extension cord and running a pot in a different room.
- Large quantities of pancake mixes, paper goods, etc. can be purchased at wholesale centers. Check the bags of pancake mix – some companies offer rebates to fundraising groups.
- Keep pancakes warm in crock pots; cook meat first and store in oven to keep warm (be sure you are at the correct temperature to meet health regulations).
- Consider offering local cuisine (breakfast tacos, for example) if pancakes are not popular in your area.

### **The Ambiance**

- Bring robot there for demos; have info about your team and FIRST on-hand
- Prepare a video presentation of pictures taken during your Build season – most people are not aware of what goes into building the robot. Keep volume turned off or very low.
- Team wears team t-shirts, of course!
- Plastic rolls of tablecloth can be purchased which can be wiped down or replaces if sticky. Or print some marketing placemats with info about how to become a sponsor for your team or sell advertisements on the placemats.
- Cheap centerpieces - go to local crafts store - watch for these to go on sale - pick up "ivy bowls" - they are like little fishbowls. Fill with nuts and bolts to hold inexpensive silk flowers or other items suited to the season. They are pretty and inexpensive and can be re-used.
- Some teams solicit prizes from area businesses and sell raffle tickets (but some states require a permit). Some teams offer a baked goods sale. They make extra money this way.