



## **Apex Management & Special Events, Inc. Case Study** **Service: Event and Meeting Planning – Event Audit**

### Situation:

A nonprofit, whose main goal is to encourage organ and tissue donations, holds an event every year to honor, thank and educate family members of organ donors. The event is held at a beautiful outdoor venue, attended by over 200 people. The program, which was very compelling, consisted of talks by donor families and organ recipients, an honor roll of donors and overall reinforcement of the families' decision to allow their loved ones' organs to be donated. The event was considered successful, but the nonprofit felt that it could be improved, so Apex was asked to audit the event and offer suggestions for improvement. The budget had to stay the same.

Apex attended the event and noted many families drove over two hours to attend, often arriving several hours in advance. The program content was very strong and meaningful to attendees, especially the reading of names and sewing wildflower seeds in the prairie adjacent to the venue. Some asked for an extra cup to take home. After the program, the families would leave quickly, picking up some snacks that were provided. All were given departing gifts, but they were costly and unconnected to the emotional nature of the event. The opportunity for the nonprofit's staff to interact with the attendees, cultivating relationships, recruiting volunteers and educating individuals about its goals and mission was lost.

### Solution:

Apex concluded the nature of the event, the outdoor venue and the willingness of families to travel considerable distance were the right combination for adding a pre-program component allowing for interaction between the nonprofit's representatives and the attendees that didn't exist before. An adjacent courtyard area was reserved, and families were invited to bring a picnic lunch – beverages and desserts were provided. The picnic was a relaxed and informal opportunity for the nonprofit's staff and volunteers to meet and talk with the families.

In previous years, the nonprofit and other related organization's attendance had been very low profile. Families were there simply for the program. The nonprofit's and the other organizations' presence was strengthened by providing professional-looking table top displays. This offered an educational and recruiting opportunity that benefited both organizations and families. In addition, the picnic time allowed ample time for the organizations to talk with the attending families before the program began.

In previous years, the conclusion of the event had been somewhat abrupt. Apex wanted to instill a memorable and peaceful feeling to the family members as they were leaving. Instead of gifts, family members were given personalized wildflower seed packets to take home, in addition to the cups of seeds they were provided to sow. This last part of the program became more intimate and memorable because it wasn't intermixed with picking up snacks and receiving departing gifts, such as clocks.

### Benefits

- Attendance has more than doubled in three years
- Flow of the event's agenda is more logical and offers opportunities for the families to enjoy the venue, other families in attendance, and leave knowing they made the right decision
- Budget has remained the same; spending in different areas has changed dramatically
- The nonprofit reports:
  1. It has gained long-term support from multiple families for related programs
  2. Volunteer recruitment is more successful
  3. Education efforts are improved based on attendee input and conversation