

Lake / Sumter AAUW
Mah Jongg Fundraiser
Final Report to the Board
Submitted by Linda Carpenter, event organizer
April 2, 2019

Our branch hosted an event, Farewell-to-the-Old-Card Mah Jongg Celebration, on March 21, 2019, to raise funds for scholarships and camperships. I made all arrangements, but eight other members volunteered to help the night of the event.

Location

I contacted The Villages Recreation Department and requested a 4-hour block in a card room in a neighborhood recreation center; I specified three choices of centers and two choices of dates. No neighborhood recreation centers in The Villages were available for a 4-hour block. I was offered a 3½ - hour block at Bradenton Recreation Center, which was the only center available on either date. Because 3½ hours is the typical length for Villagers to reserve a card room for free, we were not charged for the room. However, there was an added requirement that all participants have Villages IDs or guest passes.

Recommendations

1. Continue to use card rooms. They are a good size and the amenities available make it easy to run the event.
2. Rooms fill up fast, so reservations should be made early.
3. Continue to request 3½ hour block to avoid paying for the room. Although this restricts participation to The Villages residents and holders of guest passes, the event is a fundraiser and we can use the \$277 for our programs.

Advertising

I created and duplicated flyers and registration forms (see attached). They were made available to members at the January and February General Meetings. They also were posted on our branch website. I took flyers and registration forms to one "open" mah jongg sessions at a recreation center; although people expressed interest and some took flyers and forms, I did not receive any registrations from that group. I later learned that people don't come to sessions as foursomes, and that may have been a deterrent to their participation. Other "advertising" was largely word-of-mouth.

Recommendations

1. Do better/wider advertising. With minimal advertising, there was no problem filling 15 of the 19 available tables. With a little more effort, we might have to turn people away.
2. Begin with emails to this year's players offering right of first refusal; I have all email addresses and phone numbers. Encourage them to share registration materials with other friends. We could do "early" or "priority" registration with a deadline; that would give us a sense of how much extra effort will be needed to fill the room.
3. Continue articles in branch newsletter, announcements at meetings, email blasts.
4. Collaborate with Communications Committee to get some coverage in the Daily Sun, if needed.

5. Modify this year's flyer and registration form – I have them electronically – or re-design. I printed the flyer in color, the form in black and white. If both were black and white, it would reduce expenses, but might be less visually appealing.

Registration

I asked that people register as foursomes as I couldn't guarantee being able to create foursomes from individual registrants. Most registrations were completed via ground mail. This is understandable because of the foursome requirement. In addition, the registration form required Villages ID#s and guest pass ID#s for each member of the foursome, and it took time to organize a foursome, collect the registration fee, and get the required information from each player.

I received registrations from 15 foursomes, which filled 15 of the 19 tables available in the room. I created a spreadsheet to keep track of registrations. This spreadsheet also permitted me to reformat to create check-in lists. The entire registration process was painless.

Recommendations

1. Give a longer time line from the first announcement to the deadline for registrations, so people have enough time to gather registration information for the foursome

Mah Jongg Sets

I used the recreation center's mah jongg sets, which include tiles, racks, and dice but lack tile pushers. I advised all players to bring their own tile pushers. Some of the center's sets were not complete; fortunately, we had enough because we only used 15 of the 19 available.

Recommendations

1. If future organizers want to use the center's mah jongg sets, check early to make sure the center *has* sets and that all available sets are complete. Sets may need to be checked again at the event as they get used frequently. Organizers will need to be prepared to arrange for other sets.

Drawings

I had not originally planned to include drawings in the fundraiser, but several people – AAUW members Ann Marie Lombardi, and Carmel Leese, as well as non-members – offered items for a random prize drawing, and I contacted Kathy Howe about table pads. With minimal effort I ended up with the following gifts:

- A mah jongg bag
- A mah jongg-tile bracelet
- 2 sets of mah jongg tile earrings and necklace
- A mah jongg tile eyeglass chain
- 2 mah jongg table pads
- A beaded bracelet
- A glass fusion bowl
- A glass fusion oblong plate
- A glass fusion platter with side dishes
- A pair of AAUW mugs

Numerous small fabric bags for storing mah jongg cards

In addition to the prize drawing, a friend suggested we do a 50/50, so we included that in the plan as well.

I was not aware of any drawing tickets available in the branch. So, I bought two rolls and turned the unused tickets over to Liz Schweers.

Recommendations

1. Future organizers will need to decide if they choose to do drawings, either or both from this year, or others
2. If future organizers include a random drawing for prizes, they will need to work harder than I did to gather donations. Most of the gifts were mah jongg-related, which seemed to be an added draw; it might also be an added challenge in future.

Snacks

The recreation center provided coffee and water; players brought their own beverages, if they wanted something else to drink. I had not thought about snacks until several people asked if we would have any so I provided light snacks: pretzels, nuts, hard candy; my intent was to provide snacks that would not be messy or elaborate.

I bought three large bags of Rolled Gold Tiny Twists and one large bag of Werther's Original Caramel [hard] Candies. I also mixed roasted but unsalted nuts from my own pantry: one cup each of almonds, cashews, pecans, and walnuts. I also bought three packages of cocktail napkins (30 count) and two packages of 6 oz. plastic cups (50 count). At the end of the evening, all the nuts were gone; one full and one partial bag of pretzels and a quarter of the bag of Werther's were left. Cups and napkins were also left over. I turned over all left-over snacks and supplies to Sharon Squires for the Hospitality Committee.

Recommendations

1. Snacks should be included in future events, and they should continue to be simple and not messy.
2. Future organizers might include more nuts, as they were a big hit. But nuts are expensive so having them will be a point of discussion

Logistics

Because there wasn't an event in the room before us, we were allowed in at 6:15 p.m., which is when we started setting up. I recruited eight members to help the evening of the event. We all participated in setting up the room. At 6:35 p.m., two volunteers (Sharon Squires, Patti DuBois) stationed themselves in the lobby of the recreation center to check in players. Two other volunteers (Mary Terrazas, Lucie Jones) were in the lobby, one to sell 50/50 tickets and the other to sell tickets for the prize drawing. The remaining volunteers (Liz Schweers, Kathy Mason, Cathy Cirocco, Kathy Howe, Linda Carpenter) continued to set up the room. This involved moving five of the tables, placing two in one alcove and three in the other; re-distributing the remaining tables and placing the mah jongg sets on each table; arranging the gifts on the tables in one alcove and the snacks and branch posters on the tables in the other alcove.

I planned to open the doors at 6:50 p.m., but we finished setting up sooner than I thought so we were able to open the doors at about 6:40 or 6:45 p.m. Two volunteers (Liz Schweers and Kathy Mason) were stationed at the doors to the room, welcoming people, encouraging them to help themselves to snacks, and generally get settled. After all players had arrived, I made a few welcoming comments, including a plug for AAUW, and laid out the plan for the evening. Volunteers served two functions during play: they continued to sell drawing tickets, and they replenished snacks for players so they could continue playing. People played until approximately 9:00 p.m. We held the 50/50 and prize drawings beginning at 9:15 p.m.

Some volunteers left after set-up and returned for clean-up. This worked well as we didn't need all nine of us during the evening.

Recommendations

1. One person pulled this event together, but it will work better to have two or three people doing the legwork before the event.
2. Future organizers will need to plan for appropriate staffing with volunteers before, during, and after the event. We needed all nine of us to do the set-up, check-in, and ticket-selling at the beginning of the evening; and we needed all of us for clean-up at the end. We didn't need all of us during the event.
3. At least four people will be needed to do check-in before the doors open. With 60 people, the two people doing check-in this year were not enough; they could have used one or two more. If the room fills (76 people), four will be a minimum.
4. If two types of drawings are included, at least two people will be needed to sell each type of ticket (four total) before the doors open. One of each will be enough during the event.

Recognition and Branding

I viewed the event as a mini recognition and branding opportunity. Accordingly, I identified AAUW on the flyer and registration form, and I introduced the event as an AAUW fundraiser and gave a brief overview of what we do and where the money would go. I also placed two tri-fold posters that show branch activities on the snack table and our branch mission and vision poster on an easel next to the table where prize gifts were displayed. Finally, one of the prizes was a pair of AAUW mugs.

Recommendations

1. This event should continue to be viewed as a recognition and branding opportunity.
2. Whatever marketing materials the branch has available should be provided to players.

Financial Summary

Income

60 registrants x \$20/person	\$ 1,200.00
Donation from Carol Kleinman	\$ 20.00
Donation from Rosemary Pent	\$ 20.00
50/50 ticket sales	\$ 267.00
Prize drawing ticket sales	\$ 283.00

Total Income \$ 1,790.00

Expenses

Drawing tickets – 2 rolls	\$ 20.68	(unused tickets for future events)
Snacks and supplies	\$ 29.75	(see receipt for details)
Duplicating (flyers and forms)	\$ 26.22	
50/50 payout	\$ 130.00	
Change for ticket sales	\$ 100.00	
Total Expenses	\$ 306.65	

Net Profit \$ 1,483.35

Overall Evaluation and Recommendation

This event was more successful than I had anticipated: We made a reasonable amount of money with relatively little effort, and participants seemed to have a good time. Several players asked whether we would be doing it again, sooner than next March, and one person suggested doing it quarterly.

I recommend doing it again next year – at least once in mid- to late-March – and keep the “farewell to the old card” theme because people liked it.

The branch might consider hosting similar events at more than one center simultaneously – could be a Mah-Jongg Gala Celebration. If we do that, we should plan different locations throughout The Villages. For example, we used Bradenton, which is just south of 466A. We might reserve a second center north of 466.

The branch might consider hosting similar events more frequently. If, for example, we hosted one event quarterly, the proceeds would fund four camperships.

The event needs to get on the calendar as early as possible; the more lead time, the more opportunities for drumming up business.