

Lake / Sumter AAUW
Mah Jongg Fundraiser
Final Report to the Board
Submitted by Beth Hicks, event organizer
March 23, 2021

I am not going to reinvent the wheel...I updated the excellent report from the 2019 event!

Our branch hosted an event, Farewell-to-the-Old-Card Mah Jongg Celebration, on March 22, 2023, to raise funds for scholarships. I made all arrangements, but five other members volunteered to help the night of the event. We charged \$25 perperson which gave an even \$100 per table

Location

I contacted The Villages Recreation Department in October and requested a 3 ½ hour block in a card room in a neighborhood recreation center; I specified three choices of centers and two choices of date. Allamanda was #1 since our meetings are there and we were able to get it. Because 3 ½ 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 3 ½ 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 General Meetings. They also were posted on our branch website. I think the 11-15 tables we get with internal advertising is a sweet spot. We only have 15 tables at a rec center card room since four tables are used for door prizes and snacks. I think we have achieved a "sweet spot" of attendance with just internal and word of mouth advertising.

Recommendations

1. Continue to advertise internally for future events.
2. Create a mailing list from this year's participants to send flyers for the next event.

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.

Recommendation

1. Get people thinking about the event early , so people have enough time to gather registration information for the foursome.
2. ~~I did not use the Villages ID for anything as the desk checked folks in like always. Would revamp the registration form and just ask for name, address, and email.~~

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; one set was missing one tile. Fortunately, we had enough because we only used 10 of the 11 available.

Recommendations

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. For example, I asked for several folks to bring their sets and leave them in the car to be used in case. I also brought some extra dice in case they were missing...did not need them.

Drawings

We had a 50/50 drawing which collected \$200. We gave out four \$25 dollar prizes. We got a roll of tickets from AAUW and will return the leftovers.

We decided to just have door prizes rather than a raffle. After the players were seated, a committee member went around to the tables and each player got one ticket. At the end of the evening we called numbers and went over to the table to select their prize. Several people donated items. Kathy Howe came through with glass fusion pieces and restaurant coupons. Debbie Barnett of MajCon donated two card covers for information about her events. I went on Amazon and purchased some maj jongg soaps, cheese spreaders, and key chains.

Recommendations

1. Continue with just one money drawing. The 50/50 works well.
2. Door prizes gives folks a chance to get something fun.

Have one person selling the 50/50 tickets.

Snacks

The recreation center provided water and prepared the coffee we provided; 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.

Susan Gold did a Sam's Club run. This time not many ate, so we had leftovers that will go to the upcoming AAUW meeting. Mixed nuts and peanut butter pretzels were popular. The hard candy and regular pretzels were eaten...but not as much

Recommendations

1. In future, a Publix run with the smaller sizes would be enough.
2. Light snacks should be included in future events, and they should continue to be simple and not messy.
3. 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

Five of us arrived at 5:30 p.m. and quickly set up the room. We put two tables together for food and another two for door prizes and AAUW information in the alcoves. We took down extra tables and chairs and repositioned them so there were 11 tables for the participants. We placed a tablecloth and a mah jongg set on each table.

Two of our team became crowd control in the lobby and sold 50/50 tickets and kept the masses from "storming the gates" until we were ready.

We opened the doors at 5:50 p.m. and folks streamed in and found a table and set up to play. 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 replenished snacks for players so they could continue playing. We also took water around a few times. People played until approximately 8:15 pm. We held the 50/50 and prize drawings, and the event ended at 8:30 p.m.

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 did fine with five setting up and did not get involved in checking folks in.

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

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.
3. A brief "commercial" for AAUW should be provided at the beginning of the event.

Financial Summary

Income

44 registrants x \$25/person	\$ 1,100.00
2 donations	\$ 50.00
50/50 ticket sales	\$ 200.00
Total Income	\$ 1,350.00

Comped Expenses

Food	\$45.00
Prizes	35.00

Expenses

50/50 payout	\$ 100.00
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Net Profit \$ 1,250.00

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.

Since next year 2024 the branch will be sponsoring a Casino Night, I recommend we do another mah jongg celebration in two years, not next year.

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.