

So, your church is hosting a rally...ARRGH!! (Advisor Rally Resource Guide...Help!)

From the application process through closing circle, YRUU is responsible for the majority of the planning and execution of our district youth rallies. This is designed to be a learning experience for the youth involved in planning as well as for the youth attending. Though the process would be considerably easier if advisors planned it for them, it would then be just like all the adult-planned activities that they participate in every day and not the leadership experience that they need, deserve and crave.

The success of any rally depends upon ongoing communication between all parties –youth, minister, DRE, parents, Board of Trustees, and administrators, as needed. Any local rally policies should be consistent with the policies of the church and acceptable to the local adults who are responsible for the rally.

As adults, our most important role is to provide support and guidance for our youth leaders while they think through all of the details involved in planning. There are some things that can be learning experiences...others may require a little more adult intervention. It is our job to ensure that safety issues are addressed and handled appropriately.

The district YAC-Pack, available from the District Director for Lifespan Faith Development (DDFLFD) and on line at www.swuuc.org, contains a Rally Planning Guide and can be helpful as well. It contains a time line that will assist your youth.

Application:

Help youth review the application before it is submitted to the Southwestern UU Conference Youth Adult Committee (SWUUC-YAC) for approval. They should contact the Calendar Rally Approval Person on YAC if they have any questions about that process (crap@swuucyruu.org).

Spirit Committee:

The Spirit Committee is charged with managing any rule infractions at a YRUU district-level event. The district YAC-Pack, available from the District Director for Lifespan Faith Development (DDFLFD), can explain further about the Spirit Committee.

SWUUC-YAC guidelines require:

- 1 SWUUC-YAC adult advisor - SWUUC-YAC assigns
- 2 SWUUC-YAC youth - SWUUC-YAC assigns
- 1 Host church staff
- 1 Host church/cluster adult advisor
- 2 Host church/cluster youth

Be sure that the youth have *specific people* chosen and contacted for the spirit committee before the rally begins. It saves everyone much time, effort and bad feelings.

Physical Building Issues:

Boundaries – Are there any areas that may be off-limits? May youth leave the church campus?

Chores – What tasks must be completed at the end of the rally in order to return all space to the condition expected by the host congregation?

Fire Extinguishers– Where are they?

Safety Plans–Be aware of location of first aid kit, location of hospital & urgent care centers.

Heating /cooling – Determine location of thermostats and how to operate.

Police phone numbers – Provide all phone numbers needed for emergency and non-emergency situations – gas, electricity, etc.

Other contact information – Provide emergency numbers for church staff.

Evacuation – Provide fire and other emergency evacuation plans.

Registration:

Though a youth should be assigned the registrar duties, an adult advisor should be assigned as overseer of the registration process.

Before turning the forms in to the Calendar Rally Approval Person (CRAP) and DDFLFD, make sure the forms have:

- 1.) Correct dates, times, including any deadlines
- 2.) Cost and to whom the check should be made payable
- 3.) Fax number and youth and adult contact information for problems

The adult registrar/advisor will need to help keep track of the money and keep the youth focused so that everyone is properly registered. It is also their responsibility to make sure that registration forms are readily accessible in the event of a medical emergency.

An advisor or adult from the host church should contact each registered adult to confirm registration and sponsorship of youth attendees. Youth who have either not listed an advisor or have listed an advisor who is not registered should also be contacted for clarification. If doing on-line registration, encourage your registrar to email each attendee a few days before the rally to determine if they are still planning on attending. This will allow you to have a more accurate head count. All forms should be checked as they come in for proper signatures (parents', adult's, youth's, church rep's).

Safe House

It is always a good idea to have a safe house available just in case. This would be a member's home where a youth not allowed at the event might be able to stay until safe transport home can be provided. This home should include more than one person, preferably people well known to your congregation who have been through your congregation's safety checks. Examples of those who might stay at a safe house might include: youth who show up at the rally without registering first, youth who are caught breaking rules and determined to need to leave the event, youth who gets very ill and needs to go home asap.

Adult Support/Rovers:

Rovers are local adults recruited to provide support where needed. Schedule coverage (at least two rovers at a time) from 11 pm until 7 am each night. Rovers are usually scheduled in 2-4 hour shifts. They can monitor boundaries, keep a watchful eye open for safety issues, and allow the advisors that have driven long distances to sleep.

Daytime rovers are a good idea as well. It is an opportunity for adults to observe the YRUU community in action. This can go a long way toward fostering positive adult/ youth understanding.

There should be an adult available on site at all times who is prepared to answer questions about the building, where things are, where things go and general church policy. This does not always have to be YOU!! Possible options might be the DRE, parents familiar with church operation, a youth friendly Board member or RE Chair.

An adult who is savvy about the church expectations is particularly valuable on Sunday morning to check the rooms for cleanliness and appropriate set up. A "Rover's Guide" should be available so the Rovers know what is expected. This should include boundaries and who the essential contact people are (co-deans, adult in charge, spirit committee, chaplains) and how to find them. Examples of rover's guides are available from the DDFLFD.

To preserve the integrity of the church and local YRUU:

Workshops:

Encourage youth to recruit workshop leaders well in advance. If it is an adult from the outside community, it may be helpful to them for you to follow up with a phone call to make sure there is a clear understanding of expectations. They should understand that this is a youth-led event and that workshop attendance may, or may not, be mandatory and that there will be varying degrees of attention from youth.

Social Action:

Many youth love Social Action so this is usually something they are more than willing to tackle. Let the youth make the initial call, but follow up with a check-in phone call to the agency or site, just to make sure that there are no questions. You may want to role-play the phone call with the youth, or work up a tentative “script”. Since Social Action is mandatory at many rallies, it is important to know how many youth the chosen project can accommodate so that alternate arrangements for another project can be made if you have large numbers in attendance.

If transportation is needed to the social action site, have maps for each advisor/driver and have each driver list the youth riding in their vehicle. For liability and logistical reasons, it is recommended that, if possible, youth ride to social action events with the driver who brought them to the rally. Youth should not be allowed to change vans on the return trip. Be sure the each driver does a head count, checking it against a written list of riders. It is not appropriate for youth to drive to these events.

Food:

Encourage the youth to seek out resources when planning the menu for the rally. They may need help with large-quantity recipes, making sure that the equipment at the church will be sufficient to cook the large amounts of food that will be needed, and determining amounts to be purchased. Every church has someone knowledgeable in this area who would be flattered to be asked such questions as how long it will take to bake 150 potatoes or to cook five gallons of beans (A lot longer than one might think!!). An adult should also go along on the shopping trip, to help “talk through” the list, make changes as necessary due to availability, etc.

Logistics:

Keeping on schedule should become your problem only with regards to outside agencies or presenters (social action or special workshops) or on Sunday for church cleanup. Hopefully the co-dean(s) will handle this - give them space to do it.

It’s a good idea to have specific youth, preferably with a thick skin and a strong sense of what needs to be done, designated to be the “Sunday Morning Monster”...hopefully NOT a co-dean, since they are usually exhausted and may, understandably, be irritable by Sunday morning.

Mugbook:

The Mugbook is typically a very popular item. It usually lists all the attendees, their contact information, their photo along with their funny/outrageous/silly quotes. The imaginative, open ended content provided by youth is occasionally questionable. If that might be an issue for your group or community, you may want to talk with your editors about what to do in that case.

Make sure that the mugbook editors talk about the technical details: Where will it be printed? How long will that take? If it's being printed at a copy shop, how late are they open? If being printed at the church, they may need technical support from church staff.

How will the photos be done—digital or film? If film, what's the timing involved in getting them developed? If digital do they have everything they need to produce the pictures? Don't forget batteries and additional supplies. How will they ensure that EVERYONE is included, even late arrivals and adult participants? Remind the mugbook editors how it might feel to be left out of the mugbook, especially if it is your first or second rally and you're already feeling overwhelmed and out of the loop.

Remind youth that they may have additional pages submitted to promote upcoming youth events. They may want to check with the District office, YAC, SWUUSI Staff and the next rally-hosting church.

Will they need an adult driver? Here again, it is not appropriate for youth to drive for this purpose.

Visitor Policy:

It is important to have a visitor policy in place for every district youth event. Anyone who is not registered is considered to be a visitor whether they are youth, young adult, or adult. It is a good idea to post signs on all outside doors advising visitors to contact a designated youth or adult. Name tags for visitors are recommended.

Protect your fellow advisors:

Make sure there is ample sleeping space in the quietest place possible. Separate snoring and non-snoring rooms, though not always possible, are always appreciated.

Advisor meeting: Be sure to hold an advisor meeting on Friday, not too late (midnight?), so that the new advisors can meet the experienced advisors and everyone can be on the same page. This is a good time to review the registration information to make sure that each youth attending has an advisor present. Talk about the schedule for the weekend, boundaries, issues concerning the physical environment and any other specific concerns. Use this opportunity to tell the advisors about the advisor workshop and Sunday brunch plans, if any...see those topics below.

Consider that an **advisor workshop** on Saturday is another good time for advisors to get together. Committee for Youth Advisors (CYA) members and other experienced youth advisors can help with topics and facilitation, or the "workshop" can simply be a guided discussion or support session. Check your schedule for openings where this would be appropriate and consider scheduling extra or particularly experienced rovers at this time.

It has become an informal tradition to meet at a local restaurant for a **post rally brunch**. This is not a required activity, nor is it an official YAC or YRUU event. It has simply evolved into a part of the current culture. You and your youth group can decide how to handle this event. If you do decide to support the brunch, it is a good idea to ask the youth leaders to select a restaurant, provide copies of a map and give advance notification to the restaurant.

When it's all over:

Encourage the youth to hold a de-briefing meeting. Use this as a time to relish your successes and target changes for next year. Re-direct them from blaming, talk about what everyone has learned. Write any thank-you notes. Fill out and return the district's event form and pay your YAC taxes. And, most importantly, celebrate – you (all) did it!!