

LIVE UNITED



United Way of the Wine Country

SPECIAL EVENT GUIDE



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What You Need To Know

Special events can be a fun component of your United Way workplace campaign. They can raise funds, create awareness, motivate, promote team spirit and set the stage for your employee campaign. Quality is more important than quantity. Select events with a proven track record that involve as many employees as possible and will be cost-effective in terms of time and energy. Hold special events year-round, it is an easy way to raise funds and lessen the stress of packing a number of events into a single week. Special events are also a great way to increase United Way visibility.

Things to think about:

Before choosing an event for your campaign, ask yourself the following questions...

- What do you hope to accomplish with this event? Do you want to raise money, increase United Way awareness or boost employee morale? Some events are great fund raisers but poor as morale boosters.
- Has a similar event been held at your organization before? If so, you should determine how successful it was. If it wasn't successful, was it due to poor planning or a general lack of interest? You can learn from past mistakes and successes.
- How much time will you need to organize this event? Consider the time commitment the event will consume. If you are the chair of your organization's United Way campaign, you may be too busy planning the employee campaign to run a special event. In this case, recruit someone who is resourceful, creative and able to plan a special event. Encourage senior management to be visible and participate in the promotion and the actual day of the event.
- What are your resources? Before committing to an event, you need to think about the resources you have on hand. Is there someone on your committee who has helped organize this type of event before? Does a committee member know a local business owner that might donate prizes? Consider the tangible and intangible assets available. Recipients of services, agency staff and volunteers are available to speak about the positive impact that dollars raised for United Way have on people's lives. It's easy to request a speaker — just call your United Way contact.
- What is your budget? Plan a budget and stick to it. Include staff time, supplies, planning, food and facility expenses when determining the full cost of an event. You can decrease costs by soliciting donations of supplies, services and facilities. Compare the estimated cost of the event to the amount of money you expect to raise. You need to make sure the event is financially viable if the main objective of the event is to raise funds.
- Do you have a back-up plan? It's always a good idea to come up with some alternate ideas in case an event proves impossible. You may also need a contingency plan if your event is to be held outdoors.

Themes

Fun theme ideas:

- Monopoly — Don't leave your community to chance.
- Counting on you — Count jelly beans in a jar.
- Vegas — tie in the theme "What happens in Vegas..." to "What's raised in our community, stays in our community".
- Music mania — Play musical chairs, have a karaoke contest, play a musical trivia contest.
- Halloween / Fall Festival — Pumpkin decorating contest, guess the weight of the pumpkin, haunted house, apple bobbing, apple or pumpkin pie baking contest.
- Hawaiian — Wear Hawaiian shirts and have a limbo contest or a luau.
- 50s — Wear decade attire, have a sock hop or twist contest.
- 60s — Sell headbands, tie-dyed shirts, smiley face pins.
- 70s — Have a disco. Wear your favorite polyester shirt.
- 80s — Who has the best or biggest 80s hair?
- Dr Seuss — "Oh, the Places You'll Go."
- Wild West — Dress in cowboy hats and bandannas. Hold a chili contest. Serve BBQ's for a kick-off event. Use a cactus as a thermometer.
- Sports — Hold a tailgate party. Have a playing field with players advancing towards the goal. "Go the Extra Yard — Give!"
- Carnival — Have a putt-putt, pool table, ring toss
- Hot Air Balloons — Have a balloon rising as funds are raised.
- Health and Wellness
- Mission Possible
- Teaming Up for Tomorrow
- LIVE UNITED
- Give for the Gold
- Wine Country Idol
- Be a Superhero
- Get in the Game
- Lights! Camera! Action!
- Are You Smarter Than...?
- Teaming Up for Our Community
- Paint a Better Future
- Make a World of Difference
- Expressions of Hope
- Dare to Care
- Fear Factor
- Sports
- Ethnic
- Tropical
- Outer space
- Hollywood
- Indy 500 or NASCAR
- Medieval Times
- New York! New York!
- Mardi Gras
- A Night at the Casino
- Shoot for the Stars
- Reality Show
- Party in Paris
- Academy Awards / Red carpet
- Political Scandal
- Mystery Theme
- Olympics
- Back to School
- Christmas in September (or October)
- Pirate or Nautical

Ideas

Airplane Toss

Cost of running event: Low

Degree of difficulty: Low

Purpose of event: Fundraiser

Throw paper airplanes through a hula-hoop, and charge per throw. You may have to show how to fold the airplanes, but lessons will cost.

Auction

Cost of running event: Low

Degree of difficulty: Medium

Purpose of event: Fundraiser

Ask employees to donate an item to be auctioned off. Items can include old items from home, a service (i.e., car wash) or handmade item (i.e., baked goods or crafts). Advertise your auction well in advance and combine it with a potluck lunch. You may raise more money if you make up silly stories to accompany each item.

Baby Picture Contest

Cost of running event: Low

Degree of difficulty: Low

Purpose of event: Fundraiser

Post employee baby pictures and sponsor a contest to guess “who’s who.” Can also be done with pictures of pets.

Bake Sale

Cost of running event: Low

Degree of difficulty: Medium

Purpose of event: Fundraiser

Many organizations hold bake sales to raise money. Ask employees to bring in baked goods for the event. Package in individual serving sizes for a mid-day snack. Advertise well in advance of the bake sale with posters, flyers and e-mail. Don't forget to recruit volunteers to help with set-up, serving and clean up.

Balloon Pop Luck

Cost of running event: Low to Medium

Degree of difficulty: Low

Purpose of event: Fundraiser

Blow up balloons and place a numbered ticket in each balloon. Participants purchase balloons and pop them to win a prize. Balloons may be placed around the office to create a festive atmosphere or put balloon bouquets on a cart and take to each person’s work station. Prizes could be casual day stickers, movie passes, company promotional materials or donated items.

Barbeque

Cost of running event: High

Degree of difficulty: High

Purpose of event: Fundraiser

A barbeque is a common component of United Way campaigns. To make your barbeque successful, advertise the items that will be served and sell tickets well in advance so that you can determine how many hamburgers (or hot dogs) you will need. Encourage management to cook the hamburgers. Don't forget the condiments!

Bingo

Cost of running event: Medium

Degree of difficulty: Medium

Purpose of event: Fundraiser

Hold your bingo game in a meeting room during lunch. Ask representatives from senior management to act as callers. To reduce costs, negotiate with contacts / suppliers for a donation of prizes or give raffle tickets to the winner.

Candy Grams

Cost of running event: Low

Degree of difficulty: Low

Purpose of event: Fundraiser

It doesn't take much time to organize a candy-grams fundraiser, but it can end up raising a lot of money. Sell candy grams to employees for a small fee and deliver them on the last day of your campaign. Try to pick a treat that ties into your campaign. For example, you could use Halloween candy if there is a Halloween theme. Bulk stores sell a wide variety of shaped gummy treats.

Casual Day

Cost of running event: Low

Degree of difficulty: Low

Purpose of event: Fundraiser & Increase United Way Awareness

Casual Days are very simple to run. Get permission from management to hold Casual Day every Friday throughout your employee campaign. Then charge employees \$1 or \$5 to dress casually on the designated day. Give employees a sticker to wear that says they are dressed casually in support of United Way of Racine County. Request casual day stickers from your United Way representative.

Chili Lunch or Cook-off

Cost of running event: Low to High

Degree of difficulty: Medium

Purpose of event: Fundraiser & Team Building

Invite employees to bring in a batch of their best chili, then have co-workers judge each chili based on taste, texture and fire value. Advertise in advance with posters, memos and e-mails. To help the luncheon run smoothly, sell tickets in advance. Provide rolls and salad. Charge an entrance fee and tasting fee.

Coffee Cart

Cost of running event: Medium

Degree of difficulty: Medium

Purpose of event: Fundraiser

Arrange for volunteers to bring a coffee and snack cart throughout the office one day. You should advertise in advance. Solicit donations of coffee and snacks from suppliers or ask co-workers to contribute baked goods. If you do have to purchase items, make sure you sell them at a profit.

Crazy Olympics

Cost of running event: Low

Degree of difficulty: Medium

Purpose of event: Fundraiser

Employees compete in crazy “athletic” events for silly prizes. Participants donate to enter. Observers wager bets on their favorite entrants. Examples of events: Crazy obstacle course; three- legged race, tricycle race, miniature golf using beach balls, pool cues, walk a circle track with a full glass of water on a tray using one hand, spilling as little as possible. Use your imagination!

Elevator Toll

Cost of running event: Low

Degree of difficulty: Low

Purpose of event: Fundraiser

In order to instigate an elevator toll, you should get prior approval from the building management and from senior management to charge a toll to those who use the company's elevator on a particular day. Advertise well in advance and then have an employee collect a toll from every patron using the elevator. Give each toll payer a sticker to avoid being charged on the return trip.

Email Bingo

Cost of running event: Low

Degree of difficulty: Low

Purpose of event: Fundraiser

Email bingo can take place throughout the day unlike traditional bingo. Sell bingo cards to email users. Sporadically throughout the day, call out bingo numbers using email. The first email user to get bingo should then notify everyone, either through email or the phone intercom. Solicit contacts / suppliers for prize donations or use raffle tickets.

Employee Talent Show

Cost of running event: Low

Degree of difficulty: Medium

Purpose of event: Fundraiser

Hold a talent contest. Charge an entry fee for contestants or audience members and award prizes.

Executive Car Wash

Cost of running event: Medium

Degree of difficulty: Medium

Purpose of event: Fundraiser

Ask members of the senior management team to wash cars during one lunch hour. Hold the car wash in the parking lot and charge employees \$3 or \$5 to have their cars washed.

Fortune Teller/Palm Reader

Cost of running event: Low

Degree of difficulty: Medium

Purpose of event: Fundraiser

Recruit executives to disguise themselves as fortune tellers or palm readers and read staff fortunes or have an authentic palm reader who will donate their services.

Games (Carnival Style)

Cost of running event: Low to Medium

Degree of difficulty: High

Purpose of event: Fundraiser

Set up old-fashioned carnival games such as a ring toss, fish pond and balloon dart-throw. You can purchase inexpensive prizes through Oriental Trading. Award prizes to those who do well at the "games of skill".

Get out of Jail For a Fee

Cost of running event: Low

Degree of difficulty: Medium to High

Purpose of event: Fundraiser

Give employees the opportunity to send other staff members to "jail" during their lunch hour or coffee break. Have someone on the campaign team act as warrant officer. The person having someone arrested will go to the warrant officer and purchase a warrant for the arrest of a co-worker at a cost of \$5. The warrant officer then advises the prisoner-to-be that there is a warrant for their arrest. The individual may then pay bail to avoid jail time (\$5). You may want to limit the number of times each person can be arrested!

Grease

Cost of running event: Low

Degree of difficulty: Medium

Purpose of event: Fundraiser

Have employees cast ballot for which members of the Executive Team should dress up like characters in the musical Grease (or any other popular movie / play). Have them stand in front of the assembly of employees and let employees pick the best "look-alike" by loudness of applause. Charge them \$1 per vote, with proceeds going to United Way.

Ice Cream Social

Cost of running event: Medium

Degree of difficulty: Low

Purpose of event: Fundraiser

Offer employees the opportunity to build their own sundae. Have a selection of ice cream available as well as different types of toppings. Make sure that there are plenty of volunteers to supervise, assist and clean up.

Las Vegas Style Gaming

Cost of running event: Medium

Degree of difficulty: High

Purpose of event: Fundraiser

If your campaign is going to have gambling, sell employees tokens / chips to play the games. When they decide to cash out, have them swap the chips for prizes instead of money. Set up poker games, black jack and craps.

Media Sale

Cost of running event: Low

Degree of difficulty: Medium

Purpose of event: Fundraiser

Arrange for staff to donate used articles such as: books, DVDs, or video games for your media sale. Have volunteers price, sort and set-up display tables.

Indoor Mini-Golf

Cost of running event: Low

Degree of difficulty: Medium to High

Purpose of event: Fundraiser & Team Builder

Advertise in advance for foursomes to enter (BYOP – Bring Your Own Putter) and charge a flat fee for entry. Set up the mini-golf game throughout the hallways, offices, elevators, etc. Be creative and construct water traps (buckets) and sand traps (popcorn). The lowest score wins. To reduce costs, solicit prize donations from contacts.

Pancake Breakfast

Cost of running event: High

Degree of difficulty: High

Purpose of event: Fundraiser

Have senior management cook and serve the pancakes to staff. Negotiate with your cafeteria or a wholesale distributor for a donation or discount of supplies. Advertise well in advance with posters, letters and flyers to create awareness in both your organization and the community.

Penny Wars

Cost of running event: Low

Degree of difficulty: Low

Purpose of event: Fundraiser

This event can last the duration of your campaign. Have departments compete to collect the most pennies. For an interesting twist, you can make it so that other types of coins are worth negative points. For example, a nickel would cancel out five pennies. This allows people to "sabotage" other teams while raising more money for United Way, and increase the fun!

Pie Toss

Cost of running event: Low

Degree of difficulty: Medium

Purpose of event: Fundraiser

Recruit management to help you with this carnival classic. Give employees the opportunity to toss whipped cream pies or damp sponges at willing volunteers for a dollar or two. Make sure that targets wear garbage bags to protect their clothes.

Pot Luck Lunch

Cost of running event: Low

Degree of difficulty: Low

Purpose of event: Team Building

Hold a potluck lunch one day during your campaign. Ask each staff member to contribute a dish. Have each person sign up ahead of time to ensure a mix of salads / starters, main courses, drinks and desserts. You may want to give your potluck a multicultural twist by requesting dishes from all over the world. Charge a small fee to eat.

Races

Races can be a fun way to raise money and promote team building. There are many different types of races that can be held, including the following:

HORSE RACE

Cost of running event: Low

Degree of difficulty: Low

Purpose of event: United Way Awareness

Draw a mural of a racetrack and display it in a high-traffic area. Have horse cutouts representing each department. Advance horses on the track as dollars and / or participation rates increase in each department. Award prizes to all departments that meet dollar and / or participation goals.

PENTATHLON

Cost of running event: Low

Degree of difficulty: Medium

Purpose of event: Fundraiser & Team Building

Schedule noon-hour events each day of the week. Some suggested events are paper airplane-throwing, wastebasket basketball, an obstacle course and a briefcase toss. Encourage interdepartmental competition and hold finals in the main lobby so that employees can cheer on their colleagues.

STRETCHER RACE

Cost of running event: Low

Degree of difficulty: Medium

Purpose of event: Fundraiser & Team Building

Have different departments dress-up and compete to be the fastest to carry a stretcher and "patient" across the parking lot. This event can complement a "Health and Wellness" campaign theme.

TRICYCLE RACE

Cost of running event: Low

Degree of difficulty: Medium

Purpose of event: Fundraiser & Team Building

Have Senior Management compete in a tricycle race around a pre-determined track. Staff can then place bets on who the winner will be.

RADIO-CONTROLLED CAR RACE

Cost of running event: Low

Degree of difficulty: Low to Medium

Purpose of event: Fundraiser

Set up a pre-determined course / race map. Use timers to see who can run the course in the shortest time.

Raffle Tickets

Cost of running event: Low to High

Degree of difficulty: Low to High

Purpose of event: Fundraiser

Solicit managers and suppliers for donations, such as a day off with pay or a gift certificate.

Advertise in advance with posters or memos and position ticket booths in key areas. Rather than giving out prizes throughout the campaign, many organizations award raffle tickets instead. Prizes can be donated by staff or an outside source, some ideas have included tickets to sporting events or themed gift baskets.

Scavenger Hunt

Cost of running event: Low

Degree of difficulty: Low

Purpose of event: Team Building & Increase United Way Awareness

Hold an office scavenger hunt. Split into teams (perhaps by department) and have employees search for a few items during the lunch hour. Award a prize to the winners.

Something-a-Thon

Cost of running event: Medium to High

Degree of difficulty: Medium to High

Purpose of event: Fundraiser & Increase United Way Awareness

Walk-a-Thons, Dance-a-Thons, Skip-a-Thons and other "Marathons" are popular events. Have participants collect pledges for your event based on the number of hours danced or miles walked.

Survivor

Cost of running event: Medium

Degree of difficulty: Medium

Purpose of event: Team Building & Increase United Way Awareness

Create tribes (teams) to compete throughout your campaign for prizes. Hold luxury challenges each day where groups compete mentally or physically for a treat such as soda, candy or raffle tickets. Some suggestions for luxury challenges include the following: United Way quiz, office mini-putt game, trivia game or a scavenger hunt.

Tacky Toilet

Cost of running event: Low

Degree of difficulty: Low

Purpose of event: Fundraiser

Inspire competition between branches or departments. Put a toilet on a platform, with a plexi-glass lid with a slot under the seat. Employees must fill the bowl with change before they can pass it on to the next location. Each location must add a "tacky" decoration (such as a hula girl, etc.) to the toilet before they pass it on. Post a sign saying "Don't Flush Your Money Away, Give to United Way" to inspire customer giving too!

Turkey Feathers

Cost of running event: Low

Degree of difficulty: Low

Purpose of event: Fundraiser

This event can easily tie into a Thanksgiving theme or can be modified for almost any theme. Have employees purchase paper feathers for a dollar. Then have employees award these feathers to their favorite member of the Senior Management Team. At the end of the day, announce the "Biggest Turkey of the Day" (the one with the most feathers) and award a prize.

Who Wants to be a Millionaire?

Cost of running event: Low

Degree of difficulty: Medium

Purpose of event: Increase United Way Awareness

This event is based on the television game show and is a great way to increase United Way knowledge among staff. Instead of “Who Wants to be a Millionaire”, you could play “Wheel of Fortune,” “Trivial Pursuit” or “Jeopardy.” Ask your United Way representative for trivia information.

United Way Thermometer

More Fun Ideas

Auction

Solicit employees or businesses to donate items or services to auction. Use live auction or silent auction format. Set a minimum bid for each item.

Dress-up the Boss

Boss wears a costume voted on by all employees if the campaign goal is reached. Examples: tutu, animal costume, devil costume, etc.

Guess How Many

Guess the number of jelly beans, M&Ms, pennies or other items in a jar. Buy chances to guess. Closest guess receives a prize.

Golf Ball Sales

Collect old golf balls to clean and shine. Employees purchase golf balls (4 for \$1.00) during lunch or breaks.

Chip in for United Way

Place chocolate chip cookies on everyone's desk to let them know about the upcoming campaign and encourage them to "chip in."

Recycled Goods

Turn in recycled paper, cans and bottles, and exchange them for money for the United Way.

Theme Lunches

Add fun to the campaign week by hosting a theme lunch such as: 50s, 60s, 70s, 80s, a holiday, TV show, or sports.

Trivia

Ask trivia questions about the United Way and United Way funded agencies at campaign meetings. Give away prizes for correct answers.

Computer Printouts

Print memos on colored paper with campaign updates, words of encouragement and/or words of thanks. Attach pieces of candy, breath mints, packs of gum or jars of colored paper clips with the notes.

Bakery Cart

Wheel a cart of bagels, doughnuts, Danishes, coffee and juice through the office, collecting United Way donations in exchange for the goodies.

Wall of Fame

Put pictures on a wall recognizing employees who have been contributing for the most consecutive years.

Buck Coupons

Give everyone who attends campaign meetings a "buck" coupon that can be redeemed in the company cafeteria or company store.

Just Desserts

Campaign committee furnishes the main dish at no cost, but sells desserts with proceeds going to United Way.

Best Photo Contest

Employees submit photographs taken at campaign and celebration events. Photos are displayed on a bulletin board and judged by a committee, with the best photo receiving prizes such as a new camera, free film developing, photo album, camera carrying case and film.

Easter Egg Raffle

Fill plastic Easter eggs with raffle numbers. People buy eggs or “chances” for springtime prizes such as Easter lilies and gift baskets.

Buttons

Give all who donate a button stating: “I gave to United Way.”

Football Helmet Drive

Use football helmets for employees to drop in loose change all week.

Garage Sale

Find a volunteer willing to loan garage space or use your work site “after hours.” Two or three weeks before the sale, employees bring in items which volunteers price and sell the day of event. Advertise within the company and outer community.

Tourney Time

Hold a broomball, softball, tee-ball, kickball, racquetball, tennis, kickball or ping-pong tournament.

Jail 'n Bail

Hold in correlation with an employee picnic or carnival. Have a “Catch 'Em 'N Cuff 'Em” Jail booth where employees pay to have co-workers, supervisors, managers or executives “incarcerated” for short periods during the event.

Team Tees

Design a t-shirt with your company logo joined with United Way’s logo to give to contributing employees who “team up” in the United Way effort.

Ugly Hat, Tie, Suit, Bridesmaid/Prom Dress Contest

Employees pick a category and then display or model their entries, and other staff vote on what is truly “ugliest.” Charge a fee for each vote. Take pictures and charge for photos taken of employees with their favorite contestant.

Frozen Turkey Bowl

Use 2-liter plastic bottles filled with water for bowling pins and a frozen turkey for the ball.

Back to High School

Employees bring high school pictures of themselves. Contest to guess the year of the photo and who it is.

Football Toss

Measure scores for distance and accuracy with prizes for the top guy and top gal winners.

Chocolate Kick-Off Rally

Print gold paper candy bar wrappers with the employee-giving theme. Put the wrappers on chocolate candy bars and distribute at kick-off.

Kid's Coloring Contest

Great way to get everyone involved whether it be your children, nieces, nephews, or neighbors. Have kids color a United Way logo or have them make a picture that shows giving or sharing. Display the artwork. Hint: These pieces of art are great to use on thank you cards.

Marshmallow Golf

See Indoor Mini-Golf and substitute marshmallows for golf balls.

Spelling Bee

Hold a spelling bee, charging a \$5 entry fee. Observers place \$1 bets on their favorite participants. Present winner with a special award.

Eating Contest

Who can eat the most in a given amount of time – burgers, hotdogs, pie, pickles, watermelon, etc.

Pumpkin Carving Contest

Put together a team of carvers or individuals. Set different categories for judging (most creative, scariest, funniest, etc.). Charge teams/individuals to enter.

Online Auction

Set up a special voice box with weekly messages announcing auction items. Outline the items, including their face value, in a flyer. Employees can call the hotline to record their bids. Update recorded messages daily, announcing the highest bids received to date.

International Food Day

Employees team together to create taste treats from around the world. Employees dress in appropriate costumes. Hold the event over the lunch hour. Employees purchase tickets redeemable for food at the booths. A panel of “celebrity” judges awards prizes.

Raisin Money for United Way

Buy a small box of raisins for each employee and attach a note to the box saying, “We are raisin money for United Way”. You can also add some facts about United Way and the company goal.

Prizes and Incentives

- Managers take employees to lunch
- Department pizza day
- Award a “dinner for two”
- Tickets to sporting event
- Free meal or dessert
- Gift certificates
- Movie or concert tickets
- Ask local businesses or vendors to donate items
- Have lunch catered from a favorite restaurant
- Use of company car
- CEO for the day
- Lottery tickets
- United Way promo items- shirts, cups, pens
- Company promo items- shirts, caps, coffee mugs, pens
- Gas card
- A traveling trophy
- Ice cream sandwiches
- Massage at local spa
- Leave work early passes
- Trophy for department with highest participation
- Executives serve lunch to employees
- Open soda machine during lunch
- Cookie jar filled with cookies weekly
- Pay for a weekend at a “bed and breakfast”
- Buy your leading team a round of golf & let them leave early to play
- Movie passes
- Restaurant gift certificates
- YMCA membership for a year
- Gas and car wash gift certificates
- Help with income taxes
- Use of co-workers vacation home
- Homemade quilt
- Computer lessons from knowledgeable employee
- Office redecorated or cleaned
- Maid service
- Family portraits
- Boat ride
- Company picnic
- Picnic basket full of goodies
- Time off to go to child’s school event
- Organize a company volleyball, softball or bowling team