

House Parties and Events

What is a House Party or an Event?

House Parties and Events can be a big production at a public location or a small gathering of people in someone's home. They can have a program that features a musician, an author, visual artist or speaker or they could be a gathering of neighbors in a Legislative district. The best house parties and events uniquely reflect the hosts or planning committee and are ones that are planned with a specific target audience in mind.

Why organize a House Party or Event?

House Parties and Events do not only do the important work of raising funds to carry forward our work, they are an important organizing tool. To put it simply, there are five foundational elements that are necessary for any event: they are great for new people, they are fun, the impact is lasting, they can help you to build your base strategically and they are an opportunity for donations:

- They are an easy way for new people to engage in this work. House parties and events are fun and often attract people who aren't the usual suspects. Information about an issue is typically broken up by good music, delicious food or other attractions. It's a non-threatening way for someone to get more information.
- They are fun. Since these aren't meetings or lectures, they have the potential to be really fun. This means that they are a good way to introduce new people to the work as well as an opportunity for people who are already engaged in the work to re-energize.
- The impact is lasting. This is true for any event. If it is a large event and there is press coverage, we have the opportunity to communicate with far more people than can be in attendance. For smaller house parties people will walk away with a closer connection to KFTC and talk about it with others.
- We really do care about this work. Let's face it. We're a passionate bunch and we care deeply about progressive change. Events and parties are a good way to do the much needed work of building our base and staying relevant. They are also an opportunity for us to hear from people and improve our organizing.
- They are an opportunity for donations. We can't do this work without the investment of a base of people. House Parties and Events are a great opportunity for people to make an investment of time and money in the work. We can't build a movement on only money and we can't build a movement on only time. We need both, so structure your event with an emphasis on the donations of time and money.

OK, so what do I think about as I organize an Event or House Party?

For every step, from the planning, preparation, the actual event and the follow-up, think about how you are staying true to your foundation. If you are planning an event, follow this link. For a house party, follow this link. (Follow this link for examples of KFTC events and parties that have been a hit in the recent past).

- I. **Planning.** This is the most important of any step. Here, you make decisions about the feel of the event or party, the scale, target audience, issues discussed, etc. If the event you are planning is geared toward a particular demographic, then make sure people who identify within that demographic are part of the planning. Don't underestimate how important and how much time this step takes- especially the step of building a team of people that will see it through. Here are some tips for structuring this first step with the four goals in mind.
 - **New people:** Some people theme house parties around introducing new people to the work. Particularly effective strategies include teaming up with 3 hosts and building a turnout list from your combined list of friends and contacts. On average, 2/3 of people invited won't be able to attend the event for a variety of reasons so invite three times the number of people you want to attend.
 - **Fun:** Think about a particularly fun party you've attended, what made it fun? Was there a good band, delicious food, did a good friend of yours put it on, did an author that you like do a reading there? While there isn't one way to make an event fun, there are a couple of things that make events not very fun. Try these tips:
 - don't try to pack too much in- if you have a party that lasts 3 hours, don't make a 2 hour program- make sure there is plenty of time for people to mingle and socialize.
 - think outside of the box- did you plant a lot of tomatoes this year in your backyard garden? Plan a party for late July when they're at their prime and invite your friends over for a simple backyard party and some fresh salsa?
 - **Lasting Impact:** When planning the party, be thoughtful about how you plan to follow-up with the people who attend and what types of actions they can take at the event. If, for example, you are planning a party around the issue of Restoration of Voting Rights for Former Felons in a specific legislative district during the General Assembly then plan to have postcards the attendees can sign at the party. Set up a meeting with the legislator that is after the party so you can deliver the signed postcards. At the party, invite the attendees to the meeting and follow-up with them after the meeting and throughout the session to keep them updated on the progress. This doesn't have to be the work of one house party host, but could be a way for a house party to integrate into larger campaign goals.
 - **Strategic Base Building:** Set up the party so that there is time for an explanation of the organization or issue topic. This should be simple, clear and hopefully spark other questions and interest from the audience. Be available to answer questions and help people know how they can be more involved in a variety of ways (phone banking, lobbying, mailings, letters to the editor, etc.)

- **Donations:** Donations look a lot of different ways for a party. Everyone who attends should be asked for a financial contribution and to volunteer, restaurants and catering businesses could be asked for a food donation, a musician can be asked to perform, authors, etc. People on the committee should all brainstorm details around the donations and be prepared to ask for them. Take the time to explore discomforts around asking for donations and identify different ways of support. Identify that at the beginning and create opportunities for people to engage at their comfort level.
2. **Preparation.** When you have figured out the basic foundation of the party, make sure that there are ways for other people to help out along the way. Preparing for parties is a different type of way for people to get involved in social justice work. The more ways we can open up the work for people's involvement, the larger our movement can grow. (Follow this link for a sample committee structure)
- **New People:** Create opportunities for leadership development when preparing for the party. Are there people who are new to the work and are interested in building more skills around organizing. Ask them to participate in parts of the preparation so they can learn how to put something on in the future.
 - **Fun:** Plan all of the preparation in a way that doesn't lose the fun. Put the work into building a big enough team to accomplish the tasks so that one or two people don't get bogged down with all of the details. That means planning enough time to build your committee or scaling back the event. If you are planning a meeting, make sure you're prepared so the meeting runs efficiently, but don't be so rushed that people aren't able to build relationship in the process. Be aware of your own style of organizing and be open to other people's styles.
 - **Lasting Impact:** As you are planning and preparing, think about the best way to document your process. Keep good records of who donated food, who is on what committee, contact information for everyone, etc. All of these details and documentation will be extremely helpful for others when they're planning parties in the future. If you are wondering what information to track, think about what information would have been helpful to you in the process of planning and preparing for this party.
 - **Strategic Base Building:** Spend time thinking about the program for your house party. A house party is not a lecture. Structure a program that has good information, but is not overwhelming for someone who is new to this work. The best, most impactful information that someone will get at a house party typically happens in one-on-one conversations, often based off of a question that was spurred by the program. Build in time at the event for people to self-select and ask more specific questions that they have. Prepare leaders and volunteers so they are able to engage with attendees and have these conversations. This will also lay the foundation for good follow-up after the event. This means, coming up with the program in enough time to be able to share it with the volunteer crew and prepare for party conversations.
 - **Donations:** Think about the party "pitch" - the time when we ask people to make a donation. Who will make the pitch, when should it happen in the program (it's more effective after an especially energizing speaker) and who will support the pitch by passing

baskets in the crowd? Is there a specific amount of money we want to raise from this event, are there particular volunteer roles we want to focus on filling? Make goals for these areas and be specific about how you'll meet them. This step will help you identify and support people in moving through their discomforts about asking people to donate.

3. The Actual Party

- **New People:** Make sure there are people prepared to have a good conversation about the focus issue and KFTC throughout the crowd. For a house party, it might just be a staff person and a couple of members at the door making sure people sign in and making sure that they have been asked to donate or join KFTC. These same people will also be the ones to make the pitch, pass the basket and work the crowd after the program.
- **Fun:** If the planning is spread out amongst enough people then the day of the party will be almost as fun for the planners as it is for the attendees. There is a level of anxiety that is to be expected, but think about this and visualize the day. Is there one or two people who will have all of the information that people need. Is there a way to prevent that type of burden for one person? Also think through the day from the perspective of people volunteering, are they prepared enough to approach their role confidently, do they have the materials they need? Are materials prepared well enough so that the day-of logistics will be reduced?
- **Lasting Impact:** When thinking of the action step for the party (whether it is a postcard to a legislator, an on-site call-in, etc.) think about how people will know to do that step and how you will follow-up with them after the party or event. It probably makes sense to have postcards at the door with sign-in sheets. Before the party, know how you plan to follow-up with the people who attend. That might change how you introduce the action. It will be useful information for everyone who works the party.
- **Strategic Base Building:** The biggest part of this is to capture the information of those who attend, recruit people who attend to join KFTC and have a variety of ways for them to continue being involved. People who attend will appreciate follow-up action steps because the party will motivate them to be involved.
- **Donations:** Make it easy for people to donate with a variety of upcoming actions (phone banks, rallies, letter-writing, etc.) and make sure they are asked to invest in this work at any level. Everyone should be asked to donate time and money at least once.

4. Follow Up: It is important to have a follow-up plan that is mapped out in the process of planning the event. This plan can be simple and involve a follow-up call to select attendees (those who have been identified by people who worked the party as good to follow-up with) or could be a larger call to action, like a rally or event. There should be consideration about how the new contacts and momentum that is built can flow into the larger campaign or organizational strategy.

- **New People:** It is a good idea to involve greeters in the process of follow-up. If you've planned this step before the event then it could be part of the volunteer ask to greeters: "would you be willing to come to this event or house party and also sign up for an evening the week after when we are getting together to make follow-up calls to people who

attended and write thank you notes". If the greeter knows this then when they meet someone to follow-up with they can say "Oh, that's a good question, I don't know the answer, but I'll do a little research and call you back next week."

- **Fun:** Think of some way to thank those who worked on the party. It might be a follow-up email to the committee with highlights and a final progress report about goals. It could also be an in-person potluck that is celebratory and includes other pieces like writing thank you notes and making follow-up calls. Just the same as any other meeting in preparation for the event, make sure that materials are prepared for whatever follow-up (thank you notes, if it is a follow-up meeting with a legislator- have fact sheets, etc., phone lists, etc.).
- **Lasting Impact:** Make sure that there is time to celebrate and reflect about the party. What worked, what didn't, document this as the final piece of the party documentation. For a small party, this might be a quick phone call evaluation
- **Strategic Base Building:** It is very likely that you will meet people at the event or party who should have specific follow-up. Someone might mention that they would love to learn to lobby and are pretty sure they can go to Frankfort with a group on Thursday. A follow-up call on Monday is necessary to firm up those logistics. Right after the event, comb through the list and see if there are people who need immediate follow-up. Your follow-up will be a reflection of what type of event it was and what information you find on the sign-in lists. For those who didn't join at the event or party, make an effort to follow-up and recruit them after the event. Their membership to KFTC will keep them engaged throughout the year.
- **Donations:** Keep a list of all of those who made in-kind contributions, financial contributions and signed up for volunteer shifts. Make sure the financial contributions make their way to the main London office of KFTC and thank you notes get sent to those who made in-kind contributions.

The most important thing to remember for every step of party planning is that the entire thing is part of building a movement. So if you think about your planning and preparation, does it look like the type of movement that you want to be building, with room for new people to engage and build skills, mutual respect and inspiration? If you attended the party and you were inspired, would it be easy for you to know how to get more involved after the party is over with? Does what you want to plan contribute to a larger organizational strategy so that there are ways for people to continue their involvement?

The truth is, house parties and events are essential to building and maintaining our movement. If you're interested in planning one, being part of one or just want to know more, contact Jessica George (jessica@kftc.org) or a KFTC organizer.

START EVENTS SECTION

- 5. Planning.** This is the most important of any step. Here, you make decisions about the feel of the event or party, the scale, target audience, issues discussed, etc. If the event you are planning is geared toward a particular demographic, then make sure people who identify within that demographic are part of the planning. Don't underestimate how important and how much time this step takes- especially the step of building a team of people that will see it through. Here are some tips for structuring this first step with the four goals in mind.
- **New people:** Make sure that turnout is a large part of your planning and you start early. For an event it is helpful to start early in creating a buzz- whether that is electronically via email, Facebook and other sites, with fliers and handbills on campuses or in local businesses and churches and phone calls to members and allies. When talking to our base, ask them to bring someone they know who is not a member- let them know that this will be a good place for new people to get more information and possibly get engaged.
 - **Fun:** Think about a particularly fun event that you've attended, what made it fun? Was there a good band, delicious food, did a good friend of yours put it on, did an author that you like do a reading there? While there isn't one way to make an event fun, there are a couple of things that make events not very fun. Try these tips:
 - don't try to pack too much in- if you have an event that lasts 3 hours, don't make a 2 hour program- make sure there is plenty of time for people to mingle and socialize.
 - think outside of the box- are there friendly businesses that would want to partner up? Is it nice outside, a good place to swim and someone who knows how to make some mean BBQ? That's an event right there.
 - **Lasting Impact (Event):** Once the details are set (about three weeks before the event) send a press release and then send the release again a couple of days before the event. Plan to have people at the event who will take pictures, film footage and then circulate the images and videos on the kftc blog, other online sites and write an article for balancing the scales (our nearly monthly newsletter) and other newsletters.
 - **Strategic Base Building:** Set up the event so that there is time for an explanation of the organization or issue topic. This should be simple, clear and hopefully spark other questions and interest from the audience. Be available to answer questions and help people know how they can be more involved in a variety of ways (phone banking, lobbying, mailings, letters to the editor, etc.). This is best done during the event at a table and throughout the crowd with clipboards.
 - **Donations:** Donations look a lot of different ways for an event. Everyone who attends should be asked for a financial contribution and to volunteer, restaurants and catering businesses could be asked for a food donation, a musician can be asked to perform, authors, etc. People on the committee should all brainstorm details around the donations and be prepared to ask for them. Take the time to explore discomforts around asking for donations and identify different ways of support. Identify that at the beginning and create opportunities for people to engage at their comfort level.
- 6. Preparation.** When you have figured out the basic foundation of the event, make sure that there are ways for other people to help out along the way. Getting ready for events or parties

are a different type of way for people to get involved in social justice work. The more ways we can open up the work for people's involvement, the larger our movement can grow. (Follow this link for a sample committee structure)

- **New People:** Create opportunities for leadership development when preparing for the event. Are there people who are new to the work and are interested in building more skills around organizing. Ask them to participate in parts of the preparation so they can learn how to put something on in the future.
- **Fun:** Plan all of the preparation in a way that doesn't lose the fun. Put the work into building a big enough team to accomplish the tasks so that one or two people don't get bogged down with all of the details. That might mean that you plan for enough time to build your team or you scale back the type of event. If you are planning a meeting, make sure you're prepared so the meeting runs efficiently, but don't be so rushed that people aren't able to build relationship in the process of planning. Be aware of your own style of organizing and be open to other people's styles.
- **Lasting Impact:** As you are planning and preparing, think about the best way to document your process. Keep good records of who donated food, who is on what committee, contact information for everyone, etc. All of these details and documentation will be extremely helpful for others when they're planning events. If you're wondering what information to track, think about what information would have been helpful to you in the process of planning and preparing for this event or party.
- **Strategic Base Building:** Spend time thinking about the program for your event. An event is not a lecture. Structure a program that has good information, but is not too long that you lose people's attention. The best, most impactful information that someone will get at an event typically happens in one-on-one conversations, often based off of a question that was spurred by the program. Build in time at the event for people to self-select and ask more specific questions that they have. Prepare leaders and volunteers so they are able to move through the crowd and engage with attendees and have these conversations. This will also lay the foundation for good follow-up after the event. This means, coming up with the program in enough time to be able to share it with the volunteer crew and prepare for party conversations.
- **Donations:** Think about the event "pitch"- the time when we ask people to make a donation. Who will make the pitch, when should it happen in the program (it's more effective after an especially energizing speaker) and who will support the pitch by passing baskets in the crowd? Is there a specific amount of money we want to raise from this event, are there particular volunteer roles we want to focus on filling? Make goals for these areas and be specific about how you'll meet them. This step will help you identify and support people in moving through their discomforts about asking people to donate.

7. The Actual Event.

- **New People:** Make sure there are people prepared to have a good conversation about the focus issue and KFTC throughout the crowd. For an event it might be a rotating team of people with clipboards who mingle through the crowd making sure people

signed in and making sure that they have been asked to donate or join KFTC. It is important that the people mingling the crowd are prepared and energized for this role. It is an exhausting role, though so make sure there are enough people to cover the crowd size and make sure that their shift is short enough for them to enjoy the event too. You will also want to consider that there will be a lot of new people at the event and you made the program such that they will have a lot of questions. Ideally, it will take a while for the greeters to make it through the crowd. This is good, but plan for it.

- **Fun:** If the planning is spread out amongst enough people then the day of the event will be almost as fun for the planners as it is for the attendees. There is a level of anxiety that is to be expected, but think about this and visualize the day. Is there one or two people who will have all of the information that people need. Is there a way to prevent that type of burden for one person? Also think through the day from the perspective of people volunteering, are the shifts short enough that they will be able to enjoy the event too? Are materials prepared well enough so that the day-of logistics will be reduced?
 - **Lasting Impact:** When thinking of the action step for the event (whether it is a postcard to a legislator, an on-site call-in, etc.) think about how people will know to do that step and how you will follow-up with them afterwards. It probably makes sense to ask the greeters to also have postcards with them and enough information to ask people to sign them and describe the background of the issue. Before the event, know how you plan to follow-up with the people who attend. That might change how you introduce the action. It will also be useful information for the greeters.
 - **Strategic Base Building:** The biggest part of this is to capture the information of those who attend, recruit people who attend to join KFTC and have a variety of ways for them to continue being involved. People who attend will appreciate follow-up action steps because the party will motivate them to be involved.
 - **Donations:** Make it easy for people to donate with a variety of upcoming actions (phone banks, rallies, letter-writing, etc.) and make sure they are asked to invest in this work at any level. Everyone should be asked to donate time and money at least once.
- 8. Follow Up:** It is important to have a follow-up plan that is mapped out in the process of planning the event. This plan can be simple and involve a follow-up call to select attendees (those who have been identified by people who worked the party as good to follow-up with) or could be a larger call to action, like a rally or event. There should be consideration about how the new contacts and momentum that is built can flow into the larger campaign or organizational strategy.
- **New People:** It is a good idea to involve greeters in the process of follow-up. If you've planned this step before the event then it could be part of the volunteer ask to greeters: "would you be willing to come to this event or house party and also sign up for an evening the week after when we are getting together to make follow-up calls to people who attended and write thank you notes". If the greeter knows this then when they meet someone to follow-up with they can say "Oh, that's a good question, I don't know the answer, but I'll do a little research and call you back next week."

- **Fun:** Think of some way to thank those who worked on the party. It might be a follow-up email to the committee with highlights and a final progress report about goals. It could also be an in-person potluck that is celebratory and includes other pieces like writing thank you notes and making follow-up calls. Just the same as any other meeting in preparation for the event, make sure that materials are prepared for whatever follow-up (thank you notes, if it is a follow-up meeting with a legislator- have fact sheets, etc., phone lists, etc.).
- **Lasting Impact:** The first thing to do is produce the publicity materials (whether that is a blog post, video, follow-up press release, etc.) Get these things out and on the web as soon as possible. For larger events it is necessary to have someone who attends and their only role is to document the event and produce publicity materials right away. You can create a team that can do this. If the people who are doing this have not been central to the planning of the event they will need to know some details about the event (what is the schedule, who is performing, a copy of bios) and some expectations for the product (is this supposed to activate others to take an action, drive people to donate, inspire others to organize a similar event, etc.). This should all be part of the planning and something that the planning committee discusses and helps to facilitate on the day of the event.
- **Strategic Base Building:** It is very likely that you will meet people at the event or party who should have specific follow-up. Someone might mention that they would love to learn to lobby and are pretty sure they can go to Frankfort with a group on Thursday. A follow-up call on Monday is necessary to firm up those logistics. Right after the event, comb through the list and see if there are people who need immediate follow-up. Your follow-up will be a reflection of what type of event it was and what information you find on the sign-in lists. For those who didn't join at the event or party, make an effort to follow-up and recruit them after the event. Their membership will keep them engaged throughout the year.
- **Donations:** Keep a list of all of those who made in-kind contributions, financial contributions and signed up for volunteer shifts. Make sure the financial contributions make their way to the main London office of KFTC, thank you notes get sent to those who made in-kind contributions and confirmation calls get made to those to sign up for a volunteer shift.

The most important thing to remember for every step of event or party planning is that the entire thing is part of building a movement. So if you think about your planning and preparation, does it look like the type of movement that you want to be building, with room for new people to engage and build skills, mutual respect and inspiration? If you attended the event and you were inspired, would it be easy for you to know how to get more involved after the event is over with? Does what you want to plan contribute to a larger organizational strategy so that there are ways for people to continue their involvement.

The truth is, house parties and events are essential to building and maintaining our movement. If you're interested in planning one, being part of one or just want to know more, contact Jessica George (jessica@kftc.org) or a KFTC organizer.

Event and House Parties

Here is a short list of some great events and house parties.

Author's Readings

MTR Open Mic: This took place at a Louisville Coffeeshop, Heine Brothers on the night of their regularly scheduled open mic. Authors and musicians played or read, in the midst of coffeeshop regulars and members. It was a packed house and helped to educate people about Mountaintop Removal and engage them in the work of the General Assembly.

Crescent Hill Baptist Church Reading: The contributing authors for the Missing Mountains ([link!](#)) book gathered for a reading at a local church in Louisville. Co-sponsored by Carmichael's Bookstore, 100% of book sales and a silent auction benefited KFTC. This was one of the first big MTR events in Louisville and was a giant step in terms of awareness.

Concerts

The Last Waltz: This event started in Lexington and organized by a local band Tula. They worked to secure a location, do turnout, logistics and KFTC got to table and take a cut from the door. There was some good awareness building and these concerts (4 total over 2 years) have raised a good bit on money at the end of the year to set us over the top of our fundraising goals.



House Parties

Crepes of Wrath: This annual event happens in Letcher County as a way to get together, eat delicious crepes and write letters to newspapers and legislators about current issues. It is hosted by the Chapman- Cranes.

Summer Auerbach's House Party: This was a gathering at Summer's house with delicious food, a small program and a mix of friends, neighbors, KFTC members and allies. There was a big push at the party for people attending to join and recruit a new member.

Artercroft: This event was a mix of Kentucky authors and artists. Artercroft is a remote retreat center in rural Nicholas County. The event included locally grown, home-cooked food, good music from the band Public Outcry. This event recruited a lot of new members, was fun and raised money.

Issue-themed events

Poetry Slam: This was an event in Louisville in collaboration with Jobs With Justice with the goal of bringing awareness to the issue of Restoration of Voting Rights for Former Felons. There were prizes, a professional MC and DJ and a focus on turn-out. The event was a good mix of people who were already engaged in the work and people who didn't know much about the Restoration issue.



Emergency Ice Cream Social: This was a variation of the Crepes of Wrath event at the Chapman-Cranes, but this time they made ice cream and it was an emergency because it was during a Special Legislative Session when Coal to Liquid subsidies were moving through quickly. Attendees wrote letters to the editor and contacted their legislators.

Outdoor Events

Harlan County BBQ: This has become an annual event with good local support and turnout. There is always good music,

good bbq and fun. The BBQ is less about a particular issue, but more about building the chapter, introducing people to KFTC and getting to know people who are already involved.

Jefferson County Open House: For two years the Jefferson County chapter has planned this event with good leadership participation. There is always a good line-up of musicians, donated local food, allies who table, and games.

Pass the Hat

I Love Mountains Day: For the 2009 I Love Mountains Day in Frankfort (LINK), KY we made a pitch from the stage at the rally. This turned out to be a good opportunity for people to invest in our work when they were already feeling motivated to act. For those who were actually walking around the crowd with baskets, they had a hard time making it through because so many people stopped them to donate money.



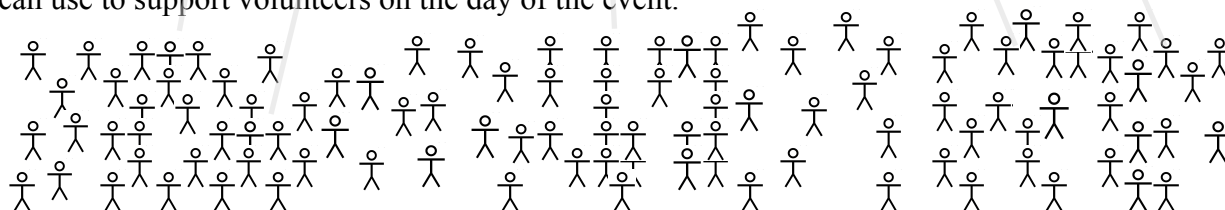
Coordinating Committee- This team meets twice a month or more as needed. Meetings should be held in person at least once a month and the second meeting can be over the phone. Each member of the team should coordinate one of the events which involves: maintaining an online workplan, building a planning team for their event, support all aspect of the event including the film, leadership development, speakers, logistics, food, turnout, etc. Weekly updates will be generated from this team and sent to members of all other teams. This team will help each other to create planning teams that develop more KFTC leaders to play all roles, they will help each other to make sure the messaging of their planned events are consistent, they will help each other to reach out to other communities. This committee should identify the target audience of the events and recruit planning members that reflect those audiences. The team should operate in a way that builds community: this may mean check-ins, manageable workloads that are created by sharing work with others and flexibility.

All leaders will help do turnout for all events and will reach out to their own communities.

Planning Team- This team will meet weekly or as needed. Members of this team plans and builds a bigger team to execute all aspects of the event including: film, logistics, food, location, date, turnout, speakers, messaging, action steps, connection to next event, and representation. The team should identify and reflect the target audience of the event. Members of this team should keep good, accessible records of the details of the event. This team should plan the event in a way that makes a good deal of opportunities for members to plug into the plan at any point in the process. The team should operate in a way that builds community: this may mean check-ins, manageable workloads that are created by sharing work with others and flexibility.

All leaders will help do turnout for all events and will reach out to their own communities.

Event Team- This is a bigger team of people who have not necessarily been part of the larger planning process, but are able to dedicate several hours at a time to help execute the event. Members of this team need to be given explicit directions and tasks. Their tasks should require minimal training. This is a good place for professionals (sound and light engineers, caterers, someone savvy with film screening, etc.) Keep your needs in mind and plan far enough in advance to be able to make explicit job descriptions so that volunteers are never waiting around to be helpful. Everyone on the planning team should be prepared with a volunteer plan that they can use to support volunteers on the day of the event.



Timeline*

Step 1 (4-5 weeks out)

- If you are going to host it with other members, work with them to pick a date, time and location of the party.
- Work together to determine some details like food, a budget and outcomes.
- Decide if you all want additional attractions like musicians or authors.

Step 2 (3-4 weeks out)

- Work together to develop your invitation list. (Typically 1/3 of the people invited will be able to come, so create and invite a larger list of people than will be able to attend.)
- Make your invitations that include a reply card so people can donate even if they can't attend. Invitations should be hand addressed.
- Once the invitations have made it to people's mailboxes, give it several days and then call to follow up.

Step 3 (3 weeks out)

Take care of event logistics and think through a short program. The program should include basic information, an introduction by the hosts and a pitch to donate.

Step 4 (Party week)

- Make sure you have the materials you'll need for the event: sign-in sheets, brochures, petitions, etc.
- Keep a good list of people who have donated before the party and a way to track those who give at the party.
- Final logistics for food and other entertainment.

Step 5 (1 week after)

- Work with others involved to do some basic evaluation of the event.
- Write thank you notes to all of those who gave for the event

* This is just one model. House Parties can be successfully planned in other timeframes

I. Planning your party

House parties are most successful when scheduled for a two hour time period.

Commonly chosen times on weeknights include early evenings, 5:30 – 7:30 or 6:00 – 8:00, so that people can drop by right after work. On weekends, late afternoons or early evenings, such as 4:00 – 6:00 work well because people can come by your party on their way to other events or plans.

You know your circle of friends and your own community best, so pick a time that feels good to you, even if it's not one of the times listed above.

About 30-40 minutes into your party, you should do your program. This is the time when most people will have arrived and before people start to leave. (See information about the program and sample agenda.)

The program should include:

a) A welcome and introduction from the host – (3 to 5 minutes)

You should welcome people, thank them for coming and share why you are having this party (why KFTC is important to you)

b) A short presentation about KFTC - (10 to 15 minutes)

Someone familiar with KFTC's history, current programs and future plans should do a short talk about KFTC. This could be done by a KFTC member. The presentation should ask include a specific way for people to get involved. That could be signing a petition, attending a meeting or otherwise participating. Be sure to allow a couple of minutes to answer a few audience questions.

c) The ask/pitch for gifts - (3 to 5 minutes)

The ask or pitch is given by the speaker or the host who asks other people to support KFTC with a financial gift. Make sure it is clear to people how they give. We recommend having a basket or bowl with envelopes where people sign in and then move that basket or bowl to the program area when the pitch/ask is made. Refer to the bowl or basket and pass it around. One of the common mistakes in less successful house parties is not making a clear ask and not making it clear how to give.

2. Develop your invitation list

The most important part of the house party is making sure people come. In our experience, people will come when asked. Set a goal of how many people you would like to come to your party and create an invitation list that is 2-3 times that number. For instance, if you want ten people to come to your party, invite 20-30 people. Or if you want a larger party of say 40 people, you should invite 80-120 people.

Thinking about this ahead of time helps ensure a successful party that you will feel good about because you will have met or exceeded your goals. Don't get so caught up in the logistics of the party that you miss getting people to come. Here are some tips for putting together your invitation list:

Family: Consider using parents, grandparents, children, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins and in-laws

Friends: Invite your friends and friends of your spouse/life partner/boyfriend/girlfriend. Think of old friends you only see on occasion, friends from college/school, friends from your old job, colleagues from community or charity work

Co-workers: Invite people you work with, people who do the same type of work you do, business partners and clients

Professionals: Invite your doctor, dentist, lawyer, chiropractor, pharmacist, broker, dry cleaner and other service providers that you use

People from past lists: Pull out the invitation list to your last party, your Rolodex at work, your personal address book

Interesting people you've met: Think about interesting people you've met, but may not know well. Think of people who are active in their communities - African-American, Asian, Caucasian, Latino, lesbian/gay/bisexual transgender (LGBT), Native American, the disabled community, the women's movement, seniors and retirees, students - anyone who's made an observation that we need to build the capabilities of social justice organizations across the United States.

3. Make your invitations, hand address them and mail them

You can print your own invitations or KFTC may be able to print your invitations in house. The invitation should include the following:

- Clear information about the party - what it is, who it's for and the date, time and location of the party
- An indication that people will be asked for money -
 - Bring your checkbooks
 - A chance to learn about KFTC and contribute to this important work
 - Your financial support is more important than ever.
- A way for people to make a donation without coming to the party - Include an option on the RSVP card, such as, "I can't come to the party, but wish to make a gift in the amount of _____.
- A suggestion that people bring friends - Ask people to RSVP so you'll know how many are coming
- Clear directions to the house - Include a phone number for the host and a map if the location is hard to find.

Please include the following enclosures in your invitation envelope:

Invitation
RSVP information

4. Make follow-up phone calls

One week before your house party, please call everyone on your invitation list that has not sent in a response in order to confirm their attendance or to secure a contribution. Only a small number of people will RSVP before they get a phone call. It's a long established fact that PHONE CALLS MAKE OR BREAK A HOUSE PARTY. We also know from experience if you mail 30 invitations and follow up with call, you will have 10 people at your party.

The following is a suggested script for the calls:

“Hi, this is (your name). Did you get the invitation for my house party? The party is at my house on (date of event). Can you come?”

(If they're coming) – “Great, I'll see you then. The program will be starting on time so you can be here at _____. Oh, don't forget your checkbook!”

(If they're not sure) – “Well, I sure hope you can come. I'm having the party so people can get information about KFTC and their work in movement building and helping strengthen social justice organizations. You can ask questions and get information directly by those involved in this work. So why don't you come?”

(If they can't come) – “I'm sorry you can't come. Can you send a check to support the work?”

5. Prepare for the event

Refreshments

Refreshments at your party can be plain or fancy. Remember, people don't come for the food. They come because they are interested in supporting the work of KFTC, and they respect the fact that you've gotten involved.

There are many types of food and drink that are easy on you, easy on your budget and just right for your house party. Other hosts have had successful house parties and served one of the following menus:

- ❖ Cheese and crackers, wine and soda
- ❖ Coffee and cake
- ❖ Vegetables/chips and dip, fresh fruit, soda and beer
- ❖ Sweet rolls, tea, milk and coffee
- ❖ Tea and cookies

You don't have to spend a lot of money on refreshments to have a house party that will really help. Serve whatever refreshments you like, and they'll be fine.

Layout of the Party

Here are a few things to think about when setting up the party:

Register guests – Have someone sit at a small table and chair by the entrance to register guests when they arrive. Remember to have a sign-in sheet, pen and nametags available for the guests.

Food placement – It is best to have the food in a nearby visible area but away from where the program is taking place. You want the speaker and program to be the attraction, not the food.

Layout – Try to arrange the furniture so that the program is in front and the guests can see and hear without much difficulty. However, you still want to have room for guests to mingle before and after the program.

6. Do a short and effective program at the event, including a pitch

About 30 minutes after your party starts or when you feel the party is at its critical mass of people, begin your program.

The program should include:

- a) A welcome and introduction from the host – (3 to 5 minutes)
Welcome people, thank them for coming and share why you are having this party (why KFTC is important to you)
- b) A short presentation about KFTC - (10 to 15 minutes)
Someone familiar with KFTC's history, current programs and future plans does a short talk. Be sure to allow a couple of minutes to answer a few questions.
- c) The ask/pitch for gifts - (3 to 5 minutes)
Given by the speaker or the host, those attending are asked to support KFTC with a financial gift. Make sure it is clear to people how they give. We recommend having a basket or bowl with envelopes where people sign in and then move that basket or bowl

to the program area when the pitch/ask is made. Refer to the bowl or basket and pass it around.

One of the common mistakes in less successful house parties is not making a clear ask and not making it clear how to give.

Sample Agenda:

5:00 – 6:00	Hosts/Staff Arrive; Help with Setup
6:00 – 6:45	Guests Arrive Registration (Someone does nametags while guests sign-in) Food, Drinks and Socializing
6:45 – 7:15 or 7:30	Guests Welcomed – Host/Homeowner Host Committee and Staff Introduced Entertainment Introduced and Performance (if any) KFTC Current Work Talk/Questions – KFTC Rep Pitch for Gifts – (Done by Host or other designee) Gifts Collected – (Have baskets available) Guests Thanked for Coming – Host/Homeowner
7:15 or 7:30 – 8:00	Music and Socializing

7. Follow-up and Evaluation

Follow-up

KFTC will write a thank you to everyone who comes to your party and to everyone who donated though they couldn't attend. It is a nice touch for the host to write a personal thank you as well, and this follow-up courtesy is helpful to KFTC. Mentioning the total raised in the thank you lets people know how their gift contributed to the overall success of the event.

Evaluation

A few days after your party, it is a good idea to contact fellow hosts and even guests to see what they thought of the party. Ask people what worked and didn't work with the set-up, food, etc. You should also ask for ways to make your next party even more successful. Then, have a follow-up conversation with KFTC.

Frequently Asked Questions

When you're in the heat of planning, specific questions often arise. Here are some that come up over and over.

Should we have alcohol at our event?

This is a decision that should be discussed by the planning committee. Alcohol has the potential to raise a good deal of money, especially if it is donated or it can add to the ambiance. Alcohol can also limit the people who are able or interested in attending, especially children, teens or people in recovery. This should be thought through carefully.

What are other ways to raise money?

A silent auction or raffle is good, door prizes, make sure to pass the basket during the pitch, sell merchandise or donated goods.

Who pays what?

Typically the host or co-hosts pay the expenses of the party since the purpose of the event is to raise money and build the base of KFTC. In some cases this is not possible and for those situations KFTC staff will work with the hosts to think through donations, fundraising or if KFTC can cover some of the expenses as long as there is a clear budget and clear fundraising aspects.

How should I support people to attend my event?

Think about how your event is accessible. Talk this over with your committee and consider your audience and the people you want to attract. Are you providing childcare, is it on the busline or otherwise easy to get to? Is it physically accessible, translation. (don't make fliers in Spanish if you don't have a good way for the entire event or house party to be bilingual)

Resources:

This information is a collection of institutional knowledge and information collected from allies at the Highlander Center, the Grassroots Institute for Fundraising and Training and the Grassroots Fundraising Journal. Many thanks to allies at Kentucky Jobs with Justice, the ACLU of Kentucky and the Davis-Putter Scholarship Fund for your valuable input.
