

SHEILA NICKELSON'S
TOP TIPS FOR PLANNING A FAMILY REUNION
Phone: 612.767.8104 Email: sheilan@meetminneapolis.com

- 1. Use your local convention and visitors bureau (CVB) to help you plan your reunion.** CVBs assist reunion planners by checking hotel rates and availability, suggesting activities and providing visitor guides, maps, bargain books, etc. It is a one-stop shop to start your reunion planning. And? These services are FREE.
- 2. Brush up on your negotiating skills.** Know that most things are negotiable, so if you're interested in a free hospitality room, late check-out, upgrade for planner/grandparent or complimentary breakfast – ask for it and you might get it.
- 3. If you plan it, they will come.** Getting everyone in your family to agree on all details of your reunion can be a challenge. Keep cool and remember that the best you can do is make the majority happy. Reunions strengthen our roots and ensure a lasting legacy; we need to make the effort. And if you do, people will come and have a great time.
- 4. Be prompt in reserving your hotel to ensure everything else falls into place.** Most hotels have a deadline on how long they can hold rooms and meeting space. So, the sooner you decide, the quicker you can get the ball rolling on the rest of the reunion.
- 5. Decide on a theme.** This can help you make decisions on food, decorations and entertainment. Think about how you want to make this reunion unique from past gatherings. Incorporate a theme that will help your group revisit and celebrate the past. For example, you could celebrate your heritage, 25th anniversary, "Minneapolis, City of Lakes," a 100th wedding anniversary of your grandparents, awards ceremony, back to the '50s, etc.
- 6. Empower teenagers.** Although this might sound crazy, a good way to keep all the children happy is to put the older kids in charge of planning the activities for the younger ones. Teens can plan activities like a scavenger hunt, games (Survivor, Amazing Race or quiz questions relating to family), crafts, or working on the entertainment.
- 7. Use your family as the entertainment.** We all enjoy a concert of children more when they are your own relatives. The best resource for free and fun entertainment may be within your own family, so show it off. Consider a family talent show, put on a skit, play, concert with musical instruments and singing, or an easy sing-along with grandma's favorites.
- 8. Think about group activities for your family.** What about a riverboat cruise, Mall of America, GameWorks, Valleyfair, picnic, ballgame, tug of war, water balloon toss, sack races, book club discussions, family fitness workouts, card games or church? Each family is different and you may want to choose a few different activities to help bond family members together.
- 9. Fundraising can be fun.** If you want to start a family fund, a fundraiser is an easy sale to your family members. Create a cookbook of family favorites with a story about the recipe, raffle off a homemade quilt, have a silent auction, family T-shirts, directories, photo books, DVDs and more. This fund can be used for postage, website fees and family fun activities.
- 10. Get your family involved.** All of the above tips take work and if you create committees and delegate, it will be fun for everyone. Consider committees for: accounting, creating a reunion book, researching family history/genealogy, making souvenirs, taking photographs/videos, maintaining a website, decorating, stuffing welcome bags, coordinating travel/flights, entertainment and children's activities.