# Creating A Friends Group

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#### Outline

- Why Friends?
- Roles and Responsibilities
- First meeting
- Organizing your Friends group
- Logistics
- Pitfalls
- Examples



# Why have a friends group?

- Advocate
- Increase public awareness
- Raise funds
- Sponsor programming
- Provide support for programs or special events
- Establish a good volunteer base
- Enable you to achieve goals that might not otherwise be achieved.
- Bridge between park/forest and community

#### Things to Consider:

- How can you develop goals jointly?
- What is the purpose of the group?
- How will you work toward common goals?
- What can a friends group do that you can't do on your own?
- Where will the group be housed? What can you offer?
- Liability
- Who has final say? Who from agency sits on board?

#### Role of the Friends/Friends Board

- Be informed and be an informer
- Work with a diverse set of user groups
- Leave behind personal or other organization agendas
- Seek win-win solutions
- Remember that you are the face of the public lands.
- Keep your sense of humor.
- Govern the friends group
- Raise funds

## First Meeting

# First Meeting

- Promotion—invite wide array of user groups reach out to diverse audience
- Planning
  - Agenda
  - Potential project ideas
  - History of park/forest
  - Time for open discussion

#### Promotion

- Advertise the meeting to attract interested people who are regular users.
- Personally invite volunteers and user groups.
- Reach out to civic organizations, tpa's, business owners, and others who benefit from your work.
- Encourage attendees to help spread the word.
- Use social media, flyers, traditional media, and word of mouth.

Activity: Who would you invite?

#### Planning the First Meeting

- Work cooperatively to develop agenda, plan location, and brainstorm projects.
- Location of meeting
- Refreshments.
- Assign someone to welcome guests as they arrive and have a sign in sheet to capture name, address, email, phone
- Have a rough idea of the purpose/mission of the group.

#### Sample agenda for first meeting:

Welcome and Introductions

Background on park/forest

What is a friends group

Sample projects

deas from audience

Discussion

Pulse of interest for group

Next steps



# Follow Up To First Meeting

- Utilize on line communication to discuss goals/issues.
- · Get a feel for leadership
- · Build support for the group
- · Begin baseline action plan
- Begin discussion of mission statement participatory
- · Discuss goals
- · Organize second meeting

#### Steering Committee

- Serves as a transition body to a Friends group.
- Responsible for drafting the Friends' Constitution and By Laws, as well as board structure.
- Board should represent the user groups.
- Keep board size minimal! Can always add committees.
  - Activity: Potential board members and what to look for in a board member

## Constitution and Bylaws

- Governing documents Constitution and By Laws - are a necessity to outline the purpose of your group, the executive positions and a job description for each position, what happens to the funds you raise and defines the friends relationship
- If you are planning to apply for Charitable Status, governing documents are required as part of your application. You must also incorporate. Resource: PANO.org

#### Charitable Status

- PPFF Groups function under our charitable status.
- Benefits of charitable tax status.
- ✓ the organization may issue tax receipts;
- Exempt from taxation
- May more readily qualify for other benefits;
- More appealing to donors
- Necessary to register with the BCO

- Takes time to receive approval at state and federal level.
- Yearly filing requirements must be met. Yearly conflict of interest statements now required.
- In Pennsylvania, also recommend that you register with BOC even if you do not meet the minimum average budget.
- Best to work with attorney for filing.
- Articles of incorporation, IRS filing, local/state requirements/bookkeeping

#### Organizational Questions

- Will it be a membership based organization?
- How will revenue be raised?
- Project priorities?
- How often with the group meet?
- Will there be committees of the board, and if so, what will they be?
- What are some easy projects that can be tackled in the beginning to bring success to the group, that are relevant to need and meet skill levels?

# Keeping Things Moving

- Its easier to get people involved/keep people if they know what is expected of them and are given guidance but not micro-managed.
- Limit meetings-go quickly to actions.
- Stick to agenda at meetings—no meeting should last more than 90 minutes!
- Thank often.
- Have a plan
  - Activity: Discuss goals for your friends.

## Early Success

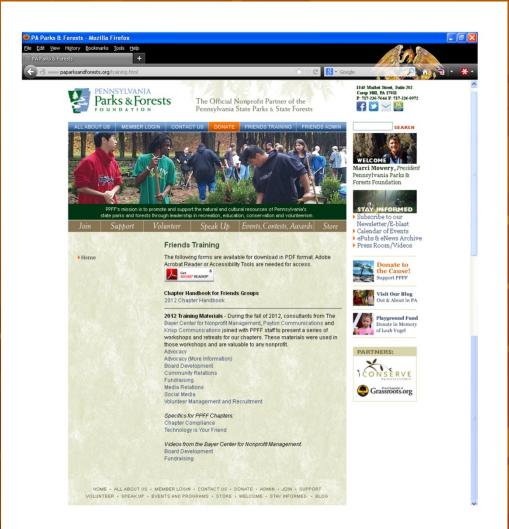
- Pick a project that is guaranteed success, and do it.
  Promote the project and its success.
  Build relationships.

- Develop an identity-logo, brochure, etc.



- As part of the action plan, identify key volunteers required. Develop position descriptions for these volunteers.
- Develop committees based on the action plan and interests of the group.
- Promote the friends group at every opportunity.
- Remember: A member is not necessarily a volunteer and a volunteer is not necessarily a member.
- For DCNR, all volunteers must be registered Conservation Volunteers.
  - Activity: Develop a position description

# **PPFF** Resources



#### Avoiding Pitfalls

- Communicate, communicate, communicate.
- Friends may either be an independent 501c3 or part of an umbrella organization, and must abide by the roles and responsibilities of this designation
- Don't assume.
- Prepare to spend time—especially in the early days of a groups existance.
- Be aware of union concerns/constraints
- Train, train; thank thank thank

#### Success

- Visibility in the community
- Excellent media contacts
- A good volunteer base
- Being willing to learn from what other Friends groups have done
- A good recruitment plan for additional volunteers and Friends members
- Open communication with hosting entity.
- Flexibility and a sense of humor.
- Ability to answer question, "Why are we here."
  - Activity: Why a friends group? Can your goal be met other ways?

## Social Media

- Enewsletters
- Facebook/Twitter
- Pinterest
- Web pages (free)
  - Grassroots.org
  - Weebly
  - google