

Surviving Homecoming with Your Sanity Intact

By Lyn Fiscus

At most schools, Homecoming is a huge undertaking that has many elements which all must come together for one week of frenzied activity. And it's all done at a time of year when your members are least experienced! How can an activity adviser keep from going crazy with it all? Follow these tips to survive Homecoming with your sanity intact:

Realize it's an opportunity for learning. Students should be doing the planning, organizing, and carrying out of all the myriad activities—not the adviser. The adviser's role is to provide guidance, ask questions, and prompt students to take action. If someone slips up and overlooks something that should have been done, resist the urge to step in and make it right by doing it yourself. Find the student leader, ask some questions—starting with “what can we do to fix this now?” Let them figure out how to fix their mistake, error, or omission. Yes, this takes more time initially. But if the adviser continually steps in to make things right, the students won't learn how to do it.

Define responsibilities. Spell out very clearly who is responsible for what, especially where two committees might have overlapping areas of interest or a project is co-sponsored with another group.

Make checklists and timelines. Have each committee create a list of all the tasks it is responsible for completing, a deadline for each task, and the person responsible. Committee chairs should turn these lists in to the overall chairs and the adviser so a master timeline of tasks to be completed can be compiled. Post the list in the

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meeting room so everyone can see it. This will help keep people accountable—it's hard to say you didn't know you were supposed to do something when it is posted right there for all to see—and makes it easier for the adviser and the overall chairs to keep track of everything.

Delegate. Get more people involved by delegating responsibilities to lots of people—don't burn out a few of your most able members by saddling them with all the responsibility. Encourage your student leaders to delegate as well. But remember the cardi-

nal rule of delegating: delegating responsibility isn't abdicating responsibility. Be sure to follow up with the person to whom you've delegated to ensure the job gets done.

While we're on the topic of delegating, Homecoming is a great opportunity to build school pride by involving all groups and subgroups in your school. It's probably too late this year to get some of the other groups to sponsor elements of the activities, but think about it for next year. Does your group really have to do it all? Delegate the pep rally to the spirit squads, and the mum sale to the horticulture club, etc.

Plan ahead. Make it easier on yourself for next year by teaming up experienced members with inexperienced members this year as co-chairs of all the events you sponsor. That way, they can mentor the inexperienced member and next year you'll have someone who knows what they are doing to serve as mentor in turn.


Keep good records. On the topic of next year, be sure to take time to evaluate this year's activities and write reports for your files so that next year so you don't have to start from ground zero.

Stay calm. Feed yourself well

(avoid junk food), get some sleep, and approach each day with a mantra that you are a competent human being and can handle anything that comes your way.

D Have fun! No matter what happens—the bonfire gets cancelled by the fire department, the parade gets rained out, there are fights at the powder puff game, there's controversy in the Homecoming Court selection, and your team loses the game—remember that you are making memories for students that will last a lifetime. Have fun with your group members and build a sense of camaraderie—"We're all in this together and we'll get through it!" It can be a great teambuilding experience that will be a solid foundation for the rest of the year.



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