

## **How to Fill a Reunions Goodie Bag**

*by Edith Wagner*

Hi. I'm Edith Wagner. I'm the editor of Reunions magazine and these podcasts are done to add to your reunion planning resources. We hope you enjoy them, learn from them and will let us know, if they help.

The purpose of this podcast is to share ideas for finding trinkets and treasures to fill goodie bags for your reunion.

Memories are a great thing to take home from your family reunion but a little loot is even better. It's not just party favors that cater to the kid in all of us—though any five-year-old can tell you that a party just isn't a party without a goodie bag. In reality, souvenirs give family members something tangible ...

to remember the reunion by. And they confirm, if only subconsciously, that the cross-country trek to hang out with relatives was worth the effort and expense.

Many reunions assemble goodie bags for families and some for individuals. While there's no rule about what to include, this is a list of items that are often found in goodie bags. Family membership list (name, addresses, phone and email), reunion schedule or program, name tags, favors, souvenirs, order form for cookbooks, videos, pictures, family history books or t-shirts, feedback/evaluation form, freebies and coupons from local businesses, information and brochures about local attractions and events, maps and emergency phone numbers.

It doesn't need to be fancy, just a collection of whatnots that show family and friends you're glad they came. Best of all, you can often put the collection together almost free. Start with area merchants and your local convention and visitors bureau.

Several months before your reunion, write letters to local companies asking if they'll donate promotional giveaways to your celebration. First, determine who to send your letter to; often the head of promotions or marketing. Stress your ties to the community

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We, at Reunions magazine, are always looking for ideas you've tested at your reunions. Feel free to email them to [reunions@execpc.com](mailto:reunions@execpc.com) or send them to Reunions magazine, PO Box 11727, Milwaukee WI 53212 or post them at our forum at <http://forums.reunionsmag.com>. If you've never seen Reunions magazine, you can request a free copy at [www.reunionsmag.com](http://www.reunionsmag.com).

and how long your guests will be in town, which is important, if they'll be able to take advantage of the company's goods or services.

Don't request specific items. State the number and ages of members and ask for what they can spare. Promise to mention their business contributions in reunion newsletters, program and at the reunion (and send copies of wherever you've done to keep your promise). Show your appreciation by providing them with additional advertising.

Lean on family members and friends, including ones who don't come to reunions but who do attend conferences and trade shows. Ask them to donate their give-aways to your collection: not large supplies, but little prizes. Ask reunion members to request promotion items or coupons from their own employers. Many companies have pencils or key chains and maybe a baseball cap or t-shirt.

Ask family members and friends to dig through their purses and "junk" drawers to find keytags, pencils, pens, letter openers, knickknacks and doodads.

Whenever you see imprinted novelty items, take note of the company and call them.

It's a sure sign they purchased many of these giveaways to drum up business.

Don't overlook national companies and their regional offices. They are more likely to give to get their company name in front of likely customers no matter where they live.

High-ticket items such as mugs and thermal cups are usually reserved for customers.

Ask if they'd share one or two of these items. Then, use them as door or game prizes or for raffles or drawing give-aways.

If you do not get enough to give to each guest, put everything you get in the middle of a table and put one item in, until each bag has a token gift.

Thank contributors profusely. Send thank you notes to your contributors and a copy of material that features their name. A card, signed by many reunion members, included with the note, will go a long way to making contributors willing to offer products for future reunions.

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The following are companies who regularly purchase promotional items and the types of things they will likely have available.

Banks are a large purchaser of promotional items such as pens, credit card cases, calendars, wrapped hard candy, change holders, note pads, golf tees and money clips.

Best of all, you probably have many banks in your area.

Mini first aid kits and healthcare products are the choice for hospitals. They often have sewing kits, magnets and phone cards with emergency numbers.

Insurance companies, airlines and travel agencies are a good source for pens, pencils and golf tees and airlines may have luggage tags. Car dealers give away keychains, magnets and litter bags.

Hardware stores often imprint paint sticks and pocket-size tools. Beverage distributors, especially regional offices of national products, may offer bottle and pop-top can openers and sometimes chip clips and plastic beverage cups.

Real estate companies are another good place to get keytags, calendars and magnets.

Print shops often distribute note pads, business card holders and pens.

Bookstores have heavy-duty imprinted plastic bags and bookmarks which libraries may also have.

Supermarkets may be a great source of leads to manufacturers who distribute samples, ask the manager.

Long distance service providers may be a source for pens, scratch pads and magnets.

Beauty supply houses and hair salons use combs to promote their businesses.

Contact your reunion city convention and visitors bureau for souvenirs and discount coupons, and don't forget to explore freebie websites online.

If you are willing to pay for some of the goody bag fillers and prizes you need, most cities have great party supply stores or go to Oriental Trading Company (check it out when you're checking out ideas for reunion themes at [reunionsmag.com](http://reunionsmag.com)).

And finally, an anecdote that will inspire you to go after some of these ideas. Joan Waters of Charlotte Hall, Maryland, says she hit some dead ends trying to get stuff but

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her efforts did pay off. To fill her goodie bags, Waters declared, email is great. She contacted folks via their websites and found most responded within a couple days. Nationwide Insurance Agent K. Smith gave Joan 50 bags, balloons, pencils and rulers. The Maryland Department of Tourism gave travel guides and maps while Kelvin Boston gave copies of his Credit Smart booklets. American Legacy Magazine gave free copies while Old Country Buffet in Waldorf, Maryland, gave meal coupons. Door prizes Joan collected include discount coupons and 10 barbecue kits of grilling utensils from Hebrew National. Baltimore Harbor Cruises donated two free lunch cruise passes and Dandy Dinner Boat Cruises who ply the Potomac River with historic DC on one side and Virginia on the other, gave discount dinner cruise coupons. There were also a couple subscriptions to Reunions magazine and tickets for the Bowie, Maryland, Baysox baseball team.

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There are lots of ways to communicate about reunions.

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