

Fundraising Ideas

To Benefit Music Maker Relief Foundation

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For over ten years the Music Maker Relief Foundation has been aiding forgotten heroes and pioneers of Southern musical traditions, and helping these folks help themselves to a brighter future.

We would not be able to continue this service without your help. Music Maker takes no government funding. We have no endowments, and we don't receive any large foundation grants.

To put it simply, we're counting on you to help us keep moving forward with our goal of preserving a cultural phenomenon that is so crucial its decay and loss would be nothing short of catastrophic. Your effort, and the money you raise, will make a crucial difference to the future of Music Maker. Thank you and thank you again for your interest in Music Maker.

At the same time, we truly hope your experience is fun and festive. After all, this is your event. It's up to you to shape it to your personality and preferences, whether it's a few friends over for a country blues cocktail party or a few hundred shaking it to a dirty blues throw down.

On the following pages, we've included a few ideas and some advice to aid your fundraising efforts:

Questions (and answers). We've tried to anticipate questions you probably have about our event, and we've done our best to answer them. Of course, more questions will come up as party planning gets underway, so we'll keep adding to this list. Please feel free to ask us anything. As we get more questions, we'll email you more answers at info@musicmaker.org

Budget. Here are some ideas on how to keep it all straight.

Fundraising tips. Ok, so you're not a born fundraiser. Don't fret—it's really quite easy. Granted, it can feel a bit awkward to ask people for money but it gets easier the more you do it. Besides, once they hear what a valuable organization we are, the more likely they are to help out. We've also included a timeline to help you get your planning underway.

As Jerry "Boogie" McCain says, "Keep on loving the blues!"

Frequently Asked Questions

What do I do first?

Recruit some blues-loving friends, family and co-workers to help you. The more folks involved in making the party a success, the more of a success it will be. Subsequently, the more fun it will be.

OK, then what?

Decide on the date, time and place for the event. And decide what kind of party it will be: Big and loud? Or, small and intimate?

The next step is to decide on your fundraising goal. Pick a specific amount that you think you can raise. Obviously the bigger the better, but be realistic: this is your working goal. As part of this decision, you need to figure out how you're going to raise the money, e.g. one hundred guests at \$10 a head or ten guests at \$100 a head. The sky's the limit.

Then, divide up the fundraising responsibility. For example, if your plan is to sell one hundred tickets at \$10 each, you need to get your friends, family, and colleagues each to commit to selling five or ten tickets. These people are your host committee, and they are quite crucial. Very few people have the network of friends and acquaintances to sell hundreds of tickets by themselves. Most fundraisers succeed or fail based on the number of people committed to helping.

Spend time making a list of people who might be willing to help—not just to buy tickets but also to help sell them. Family, friends, acquaintances, parents of your kids' friends, fellow church members, co-workers—you're connected to a lot more people than you might think. Besides, this is a great cause—one that touches many deserving people. Odds are there are quite a few people who will be willing to help. So, ASK already!

Don't forget to utilize your professional contacts and those businesses that you patronize. Maybe your employer will buy a block of tickets and give them out to employees, or maybe your favorite restaurant will buy some to hand out to its best customers.

Should my event have to have a theme?

Not in the least. Your party is what you want it to be. It can have any theme you like, or no theme at all.

What if I get one big donation and don't charge people to come to my party?

Fine by us.

What if I donate all the money myself?

Go for it.

Can I raise money in another way?

Sure. Creativity is always a welcome breath of fresh air.

I'm not really a party person. How about if I collect money from my co-workers or get local businesses to put out a collection jar for MMRF?

Sounds good to us. Our ultimate goal is to raise money to keep the foundation operating. Any way you can think of to do that (as long as it is legal and ethical) is fine with us. Money raised in these other ways will still count towards your host goal. We've also included a list of alternatives to holding parties.

Can MMRF accept donations from corporations and foundations? How about from foreign citizens?

Yes, MMRF can accept donations from any individual, company or foundation in the world. All donations are tax deductible. Donations from foreign countries should be sent to us in the form of an international money order.

Who should they write the check to?

Music Maker Relief Foundation

Can they write a check to me and then I'll write a big check to you?

No, we prefer that each donor write his or her own check directly to MMRF. That way, each donor will be able to take the tax deduction available to them. Writing checks directly to MMRF will also reassure donors who don't know you well that this event is legitimate.

Can people pay in cash? What should I do with the money?

Cash is fine, but please don't send cash in the mail. We prefer that you send us your check or a money order for the amount of the cash you wish to donate.

My company will donate, but needs MMRF's taxpayer ID number.

Our tax ID number is 13-378-2018.

My company needs MMRF to fill out a tax form before they can cut a check.

No problem. Let us know and we will fax or send it on over!

Can people donate by credit card?

Yes MMRF accepts MasterCard, Visa and American Express. Folks can pay by credit card in any of these three ways:

- 1) They can give or mail the information to you (or your co-hosts). Then you can pass the info to us (by phone, email, mail or fax) and we'll process the cards and give you confirmation that they were approved.
- 2) They can call the MMRF office at 919-643-2456 and give their name, address, and credit card info to our staff. We'll process the donation and contact you with the donor name and amount.
- 3) They can donate online at www.musicmaker.org

How are you going to keep track of which donations are for my party?

Make sure people mention you when they call in. We try to ask people where they found out about us when they call in, but we don't all the time. It's the best way we can keep all the parties and donors straight.

What happens if a ticket buyer doesn't know or forgets my to mention me?

We'll still accept his or her donation, of course. We'll just get the location of the party, the name of the host, or some other identifying information. And we'll do our best to make sure the donation gets credited to the right party. But to make sure you get credit for all the money you raise, please make sure that all donors know to include your name with their donation.

Are donations to MMRF tax deductible?

Yes. MMRF is a non-profit organization (also known as a 501(c)3). Contributions to MMRF are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

I'm a resident of somewhere outside the US. Are contributions still tax deductible?

That depends on the tax code of your country. Some countries allow deduction of contributions to foreign (US) nonprofits, but others prohibit such deductions. Please check with the tax agency in your country or with an accountant.

Can I get a letter from MMRF so that when I solicit people they know I'm legit?

Yes. As soon as we receive your commitment form, we will send you a letter of legitimacy. If a company needs something more personalized, please email us at info@musicmaker.org

Is there a minimum age to be a host or attend a party?

No, we welcome participation by people of all ages. Of course, we expect all hosts and guests to abide by all alcohol laws.

How much are tickets to the parties?

That is up to each party host. Since you know your friends and community best, you're the best person to decide how much to charge. Some parties are charging as little as \$10. Others are charging vastly more per person. We suggest you pick an amount with which most of your friends will be comfortable.

What if I promise to raise \$xxxx, but come up short?

No worries—this isn't a legal commitment. Nothing will happen to you if you come up short. All we ask is that you do your best, and do everything possible to meet the fundraising goal.

Will my party be covered under MMRF's insurance?

No. MMRF cannot assume any liability for injuries or anything else for that matter. But in most cases your party will be covered by your homeowner's or renter's insurance or the insurance policy of the venue where it will be held.

Will MMRF send thank you letters?

Yes, MMRF will send thank you letters to all donors. This letter will also serve as their receipt for tax purposes. If there's anybody else we should thank—somebody who donates food or drink or is a great volunteer—please let us know.

Can I get a Music Maker artist to play my party?

As our mission is to get work and recognition for our recipient artists, we have a policy of never asking our recipients to work for free. It may be possible to hire an artist, but only the largest parties (perhaps with a corporate sponsor) will be able to cover this cost and still meet their fundraising goals.

Budget

These parties are all about raising money, not spending it, so we know you'll want to keep costs as low as possible. Here are some items to keep in mind when developing your budget, and some suggestions for how to keep your costs to a minimum:

o **Graphic design and invitation printing:** Make your own. You don't need to go crazy with this, use your home printer. Have fun with this!

o **Postage:** The Post Office won't donate its services, but you can save money by using email, hand-delivering invitations to friends, neighbors and coworkers, and posting flyers in semipublic places (local shops, the gym, churches, schools, etc.). Of course, please get permission before posting flyers.

o **Catering (food and drink):** Ask friends to bring food or beverages, or ask local supermarkets and restaurants to donate some items.

o **Advertising:** Approach the radio stations and newspapers in your area and ask for donated ads. Every media outlet routinely has last-minute space available (when an advertiser cancels, for instance), and most will consider donating the ad space to a worthy cause. Don't forget to approach weekly papers or local "shoppers" which are even more likely to help out by giving you a free ad or running a story on your party. Also, think of non-traditional places that might donate an ad or run a story: employee newsletters, church bulletins, school papers, alumni magazines, gym-club newsletters and so on.

o **Rental of party location:** Most likely you'll hold the party in a private home, restaurant or bar, and won't have to pay anything for the space. If you do need to rent a party space, try to get the owner to donate or discount the rental (it's for a good cause!). Also try to get extras like security, bartenders and sound equipment thrown in for free.

o **Decorations, props and signage:** Hand-made is the best, and cheapest option. If you do need something more—balloons are festive and cheap.

o **Rental of tables, chairs, glasses, etc.:** Again, only the largest parties will need to rent these items. If you need them, ask caterers, restaurants, and other businesses to lend them to you.

o **Music:** CDs are easy and easily accessible. If you want live music, ask around about up-and coming local groups, who might be willing to play for free in exchange for the exposure.

In short, be creative and ask lots of people and businesses for their help. Getting local businesses to donate products and services can eliminate many of these expenses.

Not a party kind of person?

Alternative ways to fundraise for MMRF

Garage sale: You don't need it...you've been meaning to give it away. How about a garage sale, with the proceeds going to MMRF?

Bake sale: The more fattening your goodies, the more money to be made!

Loose change: Ask all of your friends and coworkers to collect their loose change for a month. Donate the result to MMRF.

Matching Gift: Many companies will match employee donations to charity. Ask yours.

Restaurants: Ask your favorites to donate a portion of one night's revenue to this worthy cause.

Your birthday: Instead of gifts, ask your family and friends to donate to MMRF.

Picnic/BBQ: Invite the neighbors and friends and sell food and drinks—a great way to spend a summer day.

Wine & Cheese: Burgers and beer not your forte? Try a wine & cheese party.

Newsletter: Ask your company to send an inter-office email or put a blurb in your company newsletter about donating to MMRF.

Online auction: Now's a great time to clear out the attic, sell your old stuff through E-bay or other Internet auctions, and donate the proceeds to MMRF.

Run: Challenge some friends to a 10K and gather some pledges for MMRF.

Curse Jar: Make everyone in your office put some money in the jar every time they utter one of the forbidden words. Charge different fines for different words. (Works great with kids, too.)

Volunteerism: Many companies will make a donation to a charity its employees volunteer for. Check with your HR department.