

Class Reunion Planning Kit
Helpful Hints from
The Tower Foundation of Manhasset

Class reunions can be fun and rewarding. This planning kit is provided as a guide to help plan your class reunion. Keep in mind that each class and situation is unique and not all of the suggestions will be appropriate for your event.

Part 1 – Where Do You Begin? – Getting Started

Part 2 – Choosing Reunion Events and Arranging Accommodations

Part 3 – Locating and Contacting Classmates

Part 4 – Finances

Part 5 – Get the Word Out! – Publicizing Your Reunion

Part 6 – Details, Details, Details

Part 7 – After the Party is Over

How the Tower Foundation of Manhasset can help with your reunion planning:

Class List: The Tower Foundation of Manhasset maintains the official database for alumni of Manhasset High School. The Foundation office can provide class lists for reunion planning. The class list will contain the last-available addresses, phone numbers and e-mails for your classmates. The information will be as current as possible. The list can be provided on paper or electronically as an e-mail attachment. When you feel you have your class list as updated and as accurate as possible, send a copy to the Foundation office. Please give the Foundation office advance notice. Contact the Foundation at (516) 627-4921 or lynn.king@usa.com.

Publicity: (web site, press releases, newsletter). To help notify your classmates of your reunion plans, the Foundation office can publicize your reunion on the Foundation's web site (look under the *Events* section at <http://www.towerfoundation.org/>). The Foundation also publishes a yearly newsletter, the *Tower News*, where you can publicize your reunion.

Part 1 - Where Do You Begin? – Getting Started

The most important rule in planning your class reunion is to plan well in advance and announce well in advance! Ideally, begin the planning process *at least* one year in advance. But keep in mind that a very successful reunion can still be planned in a shorter amount of time.

Committee Formation:

Your first objective is to recruit and organize a reunion committee of dedicated and enthusiastic individuals. Select a committee of five to ten local alumni and include a variety of former students to provide balanced planning and help attract as many of your former classmates as possible. In some cases, former class officers take the lead role in reunion planning but this is not a general rule. All it takes is one person and a motivated group to get the process started.

Possible chairs or sub-committees and specific task areas you may want to assign:

- Planning (date selection, venue, format, lodging)
- Correspondence
- Publicity
- Finance
- Food
- Program
- Decorations/Memorabilia
- Entertainment/Music
- Set Up/Clean Up
- Registration & name tags
- Picnic

Other helpful planning tips:

- Appoint leadership roles: reunion chair, treasurer, etc.
- Establish regular reunion committee meetings (monthly)
- Delegate and recruit volunteers
- Consider inviting some of your favorite teachers, coaches and administrators

Part 2 - Choosing Reunion Events and Arranging Accommodations

Since many attendees will be traveling from out-of-town solely for the reunion, you may plan an entire weekend of reunion festivities. Many classes will plan weekend events such as a Friday night welcome mixer, a Saturday golf outing, a tour of the “old” campus, a main event on Saturday evening, and a Sunday brunch or picnic. Keep in mind that the more reunion events that are planned, the more work is involved.

Selecting a Date:

As soon as possible, select a date. The most popular times of the year for reunions are early summer through fall, for many obvious reasons. Summer months allow for travel from long distances as many classmates may plan their summer vacations to coincide with their reunion date. In addition, summer weather allows for more outdoor activities to be held. Fall is also an option as festivities can be planned around homecoming and football games.

Choosing Reunion Events:

Some classes have one evening reunion event while others will plan multi-day reunions. Following are some suggestions for the weekend should you choose to hold a multi-day reunion:

Friday night:

Many classes kick off their reunion activities with an informal Friday night get-together or mixer. Typically these are held at a local restaurant or bar. Keep this event simple—usually light hors d’oeuvres are served and classmates pay for their own cocktails.

Saturday:

While the evening is typically reserved for the main event, you may want to consider adding some daytime events. These could include: a tour of your old school, golf outing, or family picnic. The “formal” event may consist of a social hour, dinner, program, and dance. Some classes may consider a more informal dinner such as a buffet or barbecue.

Sunday:

If you aren't burned out from the weekend festivities, you may want to plan a picnic or brunch on Sunday. This may offer a chance to say good-byes in a less hectic atmosphere. This could be a family event with spouses and children invited.

Location:

Contact hotels, restaurants, parks, banquet halls and other facilities. Secure a block of hotel rooms for out-of-town attendees. Many hotels/motels will offer a discount whether you hold your event at their facility or not.

Part 3 - Locating and Contacting Classmates

The reunion committee needs to make this a high priority in your reunion planning activities, as this is one of the more difficult and time-consuming projects in planning any reunion. The reunion's success is largely dependent on participation. The first step is to obtain a complete list of all of your classmates from the Tower Foundation office. The Foundation office is maintaining the alumni database for all Manhasset High School graduates. By having the committee carefully review the class list to uncover any incorrect addresses, you can reduce the number of returned mailings due to incorrect addresses.

To request a class list contact the Foundation at (516) 627-4921 or email lynn.king@usa.com. The list can be provided on paper or sent electronically as an e-mail attachment. The class list will contain the alum's name, last known address, phone number and e-mail (if available). In some instances, the information may contain the alum's parent's name and phone number. It is advisable to divide the class list among committee members. Finding “lost” classmates can be difficult, even when they may live locally.

Resources to help locate your “missing” classmates:

- Local phone book
- Online national phone directories: www.switchboard.com, www.anywho.com, www.whitepages.com, and more!
- Try contacting parents or siblings of missing classmates or networking with other alumni.
- Advanced data search by Alumni Research, Inc which can be requested through the foundation for a nominal cost.

A missing persons list can be created and included with the mailings to classmates with a request for information.

Part 4 - Finances

Plan finances carefully. Be well organized and plan wisely with your funds. Generally, the goal of most reunion organizers has been to “break even” on reunion finances. The following are points to consider when organizing the financial aspects of your reunion:

1. Establish an operating budget: In the majority of reunions, the organizers, or committee members, paid the initial expenses and later were reimbursed from the reservation funds.
2. Open a bank account: It is strongly recommended that a separate bank account be opened specifically for the reunion as opposed to using someone’s personal bank account.
3. What to budget for:
 - Stationary/envelopes/postage
 - Printing costs (booklets/programs)
 - Telephone costs
 - Name tags
 - Food/beverages
 - Facilities deposit/rental
 - Entertainment (music, DJ)
 - Decorations (centerpieces, flowers)
 - Door prizes
 - Souvenirs
 - Class Gift
4. What to charge: Individuals who attend the reunion should be charged enough to ensure that the reunion committee does not end up “in the red,” thus ensuring that the committee members will be reimbursed for any initial funds they provided. The committee should pay close attention to both the projected cost of the event(s) as well as the number of people they anticipate coming. These projections will determine the per person cost. It is encouraged to have attendees pay in advance for their reservations, and then the committee can determine how to handle any “pay at the door” situations.

Here are some suggestions on how to plan an affordable class reunion:

A lack of funding doesn’t have to prevent your class from having a reunion—be creative and have fun—your former classmates will too!

- Look for the alumni connections—ask around your hometown for classmates who may own or work for bars, restaurants, hotels or other potential reunion sites. These people may be more than willing to arrange a good deal for your reunion.
- Not only is e-mail a great way to correspond with classmates, it’s free. Keep in mind that regular mailings are still needed since not all classmates use e-mail.
- Look around for the best deal and negotiate. Many bars and restaurants have party rooms available for a minimal fee.
- Consider a casual picnic at a park. Parks offer an inexpensive place to eat and socialize.
- Take advantage of your talents. Members of the planning committee may have the skills to design a commemorative program/booklet. The Foundation has a source for getting the booklet printed at a nominal cost.

- Reserve blocks of rooms for out-of-town alumni. Ask for special group or event rates, and include hotel information in the reunion invitation.

Part 5 - Get the Word Out! – Publicizing Your Reunion

Determine how many mailings you will need and the timeline of these mailings. Remember that by including a return envelope with your mailing, you will greatly increase your response rate.

Here are some potential reunion mailings and things to keep in mind:

- Save the date—Send out an initial reunion “save the date” notice approximately 9-12 months before the reunion date. Include a “missing” classmates list and ask people to respond if they have any information about the lost alumni.
- Invitation—In addition to the invitation with the schedule of events, consider including a registration form, return envelope and questionnaire to obtain information about classmates for the program/booklet. Clearly state the reservation deadline and contact persons.
- Follow-up mailing—After the reunion, you may want to send a “sorry we missed you” letter to those unable to attend. Some classes have made the program/booklet available to non-attending classmates for free or for a small fee. It is also possible to assemble a reunion program after the reunion and mail this to classmates. Candid photos, reunion stories, a committee message, a list of “award” winners, and a current class directory can make a meaningful keepsake and may also boost attendance at future reunions.
- E-mail is a great way to locate class members, communicate information during the reunion planning process and keep in touch with class members between reunions. Regular mailings are still needed since not all class members utilize e-mail. E-mail messages can also be sent to class members to update them on reunion plans between mailings and send reminders about registration deadlines.

In addition to e-mails and direct mailings to classmates, reunion plans can be publicized through a variety of ways:

- Alumni newsletter: Our alumni newsletter, the *Tower News*, is published once per year. Reunion information can be published within printing timelines and space limitations.
- Foundation web site: Located at <http://www.towerfoundation.org/>, the web site includes an “Events” section (coming soon) which will include information on upcoming reunions.
- *Newsday*—Utilize our local paper, *Newsday*, to further publicize your reunion.
- Telephone

Part 6 - Details, Details, Details

This section of the planner is devoted primarily to compiling some ideas/options you may want to consider when organizing the details of your reunion. It is often the “finishing touches” that make the reunion special.

Registration Table:

This important area can provide space for classmates to sign in, pick up their name badges, and for you to collect last-minute registrations and payments.

Slide Show:

You may want to set up a continuously running slide show of old class photos in one corner of the room—this is usually a great attraction.

Memorabilia/Nostalgia Table:

You may also want to display class memorabilia on a table. This is a great way to jog memories and spark discussion. Possible items to include are: commencement program, yearbooks, photos, etc. You can ask classmates to bring class memorabilia to display on the table.

Decorations/Themes/Favors:

How much you do in this area may depend on your budget and the creativity of your planning team. But keep in mind that you don't have to spend a lot of money to create a festive atmosphere. Decorating with balloons in school colors is usually a good place to start. Centerpieces, photos, memorabilia can all be used to create a festive atmosphere.

Door Prizes:

You may want to give out door prizes or awards. Consider asking local businesses to provide door prizes.

Programs/Booklets:

Printed programs/booklets containing a schedule of reunion activities and personal biographies can be a meaningful reunion keepsake. Decide if the book will be available at the reunion or after the reunion weekend. Decide if the book will be mailed to those unable to attend. Consider including in the booklets:

- Schedule of events
- Reunion committee message and acknowledgement to the planning committee
- Class trivia, statistics
- Current class directory with biographical info. (compiled from questionnaire sheets returned by classmates)
- Photos
- Memorial(s) to deceased classmates

Staffing the Event(s):

Unfortunately, the reunion committee's job isn't over after all the plans and arrangements are complete. To help you enjoy the reunion events, you may want to ask for volunteers. Consider asking family members or members from the class ahead of or behind yours to help with registration or serve as hosts for each event.

Name Badges:

Make name badges for all attendees, alumni, spouses and guests. These can be simple handwritten labels or they can be printed on the computer. Name badges that include copies of senior yearbook photos can provide an interesting topic of conversation for

introductions and greetings. You may want to have blank name badges on hand for any last minute arrivals.

Awards:

Most classes give some type of awards during the program. The awards should be kept in “good taste” to keep the tone of your event comfortable for everyone. Some ideas for awards include:

- Longest married man/woman
- Newest bride/groom
- Man/woman with the most children
- Most recent father/mother
- Newest grandmother/grandfather
- Traveled longest distance to reunion

The Program:

Plan a schedule for the evening. This timeline is, by no means, set in concrete. However, you will want to be sure to schedule things like a class photo before people start to leave. You may need a master of ceremonies to keep the program moving smoothly and you may need a microphone, depending on the size of your group and location. Your program may include:

- Welcome address
- Reading of letters, messages from classmates or teachers who could not attend
- Introduction of Guests/Speakers
- Acknowledgement of Reunion Planning Committee
- Acknowledgement of deceased classmates
- Reading of class prophecy/class will
- Present awards
- Class Photograph

Class Photo:

Many classes have a scheduled time during their reunion program for a class photo. Frequently a professional photographer is hired to take photographs of the entire group, groups of classmates, award winners or candid shots. It is best to arrange that the photographer be responsible for taking orders for prints, collecting money and mailing them.

Part 7 - After the Party is Over

- Schedule a post-reunion meeting or gathering to celebrate a job well done!
- Discuss and evaluate what worked well and what didn't work so well.
- Keep a record of the budget, contacts, schedules, programs, etc. This information will be invaluable when planning for your next reunion. Create a file of this important information for a committee member to keep in a secure place.
- **Provide the Foundation with a final listing of alumni addresses and information. The Foundation continually works on keeping in touch with alumni and collecting e-mails, addresses, and phone numbers. By turning in an accurate, updated class list, you will help future reunion planning.**

- Class Gift-If you've completed the reunion, paid all the bills and still have money left in the bank, you may want to consider a gift to the Foundation on behalf of your class. A class gift is a popular option for many classes. For example, the gift can be from the "Manhasset High School Class of 1982," and can be made in memory of a deceased classmate or in honor of a favorite teacher.

We hope this planning kit has been useful and we wish you and your classmates a very happy reunion.

The Tower Foundation of Manhasset

P.O. Box 421

Manhasset, New York 11030

(516) 627-4921

<http://www.towerfoundation.org/>