

Sponsor Family Social Events¹

In addition to helping parents get to know staff, family social events provide a great opportunity for parents to get to know other parents and children in the program in a relaxed atmosphere. Many programs offer family events every month or every other month. Listed below are some examples of family social events that are popular with families in school-age programs. Many of them can be combined to make one social event. Schedule events at the most convenient time for parents.

-  ***Pot Luck Dinners*** - parents provide home-made or healthy “fast food” dinners.
-  ***Pizza Parties*** - the program provides the food (purchased pizzas OR pizzas made by the children) OR families bring their favorite pizzas to share.
-  ***Taste of the Program*** - children prepare their favorite dishes and set up “booths” for parents to sample them.
-  ***Continental Breakfast Socials*** - the program provides coffee, donuts, muffins, juice, etc. OR parents volunteer to take turns providing the pastries.
-  ***Talent Shows*** - performances by children and/or parents and staff.
-  ***Picnic and Game Festival*** - Program provides drinks and supplies; parents bring a picnic food to share. After the meal, parents, children, and staff play some of the program’s favorite games together (cooperative games, competitive games, “wacky” games like water balloon toss, etc.) Several games may go on at the same time in different locations.
-  ***Performances of Original Plays by the Children.***
-  ***Roller Skating or Ice Skating Parties*** - at a commercial rink or public park.
-  ***Camping Experiences, Hiking, and/or Canoe Trips*** - many programs make these two-day overnight events.

¹ Excerpted with permission from Roberta L. Newman, *Building Relationships with Parents and Families in School-Age Programs, 2nd Edition, Revised*. New Albany, OH: School-Age NOTES, 2008. (Originally published in conjunction with Work/Family Directions, Boston, MA, AT&T Family Development Fund.) Pages 118 – 119.

-  **Mini Mall Night** - Children create mini store fronts and display items they have made for sale. A **Mini Food Court** serving drinks and snacks prepared by the children can be part of the mall. Option: Issue each family “play money” they can use to purchase items on sale in the “stores.”
-  **Art Gallery Night** - Children create an art gallery of work they have done over several months and host an “opening exhibit.” Children prepare a program that lists artists and titles of their work. Special snacks are prepared and served by the cooking club.
-  **Inventor’s Night** - Parents and children work and play together to create “wacky inventions,” using a variety of scrap materials. At the end of the night, families demonstrate their inventions (twist can be that other families try to guess what the inventions are supposed to do).
-  **White Elephant Auction Night** - Each family contributes a usable item (or a mystery object!) from their house which they no longer want. One parent serves as a “goofy” auctioneer and others bid on the treasures until all are sold. Proceeds can go to the **Parent Comfort Corner** or to purchase an item for the program.

Other Ideas for Family Social Events at Your Program.....