Summer fair checklist

Before the event

* Speak to the school about having stalls run by each year group. Could the group who raise the most money win a prize?
* Make sure your lottery licence is up-to-date if selling raffle tickets prior to the event itself. Secure prizes as far ahead as possible.
* Start publicising the event at least six weeks in advance. Place posters in libraries, doctors’ surgeries, leisure centres, etc. Send a media release to local newspapers and radio stations.
* If using street banners to advertise your event, seek permission from your local authority. Contact them early to establish any criteria, i.e. proof of your public liability insurance. If getting a new sign made, use ‘This Saturday’ rather than a specific date – that way you can use it again next year. Most councils will only let you put your sign up for one week anyway.
* Refreshments are guaranteed to make a profit. If selling alcohol, you will need to complete a TEN at least 21 days before the event. Shop with a wholesaler such as Booker, which offers sale or return. If inviting your local ice-cream van along to the event, you should charge a pitch price for them to be on-site.
* Do a leaflet-drop to residents in the area just prior to the event. Offer them free entrance to your event and, if appropriate, contact details for booking any specific attractions.
* Find an MC/announcer and appoint a few ‘runners’ who can provide details and updates about particular attractions throughout the event. Give them a schedule of performances, the raffle draw, etc. Provide them with identification badges so people at the fair can go to them if they need help.
* Create a ground plan, outlining where each activity will go, bearing in mind the need for power/proximity to water, etc.
* If providing a programme, sell advertising slots to local businesses. Use this to publicise event timings and to give particular thanks to key supporters.
* Finalise your volunteer list and rotas. Distribute a spreadsheet listing each stall, with time slots, outlining who is signed up to help out where and when. Identify gaps and initiate a final recruitment drive. Ask volunteers to check whether their employers offer match funding as this can really help boost your profits.
* Have someone at the fair who can administer basic first aid. If your event is large, consider paying a local ambulance service to attend.
* Risk assessments will need to be carried out for each element of your fair, as well as for the overall event itself. Ask individual stallholders to complete these – give them last year’s version to use as a guide.
* Have a wet weather contingency plan in place and make a decision at the start of the week before your fair, allowing enough time to let everyone know.
* Make signs for the basics – toilets, first aid, refreshments – as well as for each stall. Based on previous experience, put together running notes for each stall, with details of costs per go, rules, instructions and advice. Laminate these and stick them on each stall – they’ll reassure new volunteers!
* Your treasurer will need to work out how much float each stall requires and order this from the bank.

On the day

* Prepare a box containing essentials such as marker pens, sticky tape, scissors, string, drawing pins and paper.
* Have a list of jobs ready for volunteers who turn up to help set up – there’s nothing more frustrating than getting out of bed at 8am on a Saturday to find yourself hanging around like a spare part.
* Provide bacon butties for those volunteers who arrive early to help set up – this can really boost morale!
* Keep checking that stallholders have everything they need – that stalls are well-staffed and well-stocked – and offer to take refreshments to them if they have no chance of a break.
* Safe collection and storage of cash during your event is essential. Appoint at least two people to be responsible for floats, collection and counting of cash and safe storage during the event. Have a book listing each stall, with details of the float they started with. Each time cash is collected, a note should be made.
* Food hygiene is key, so if using charcoal BBQs, make sure these are lit in advance, ensuring that coals have reached maximum temperature before cooking begins.
* Clearing up is the PTA’s responsibility, so have plenty of bin bags to hand!

After the event

* Thank all your volunteers and write to the businesses who gave donations or supported your event – let them know how much was raised and what you plan to use the money for.
* Ask stallholders and external contractors to complete a feedback form, so you will know if anything needs to be changed for next year. You can download our ‘knowledge capsule’ template from **pta.co.uk.**