



Family Reunion Planner



Dear Reunion Planner,

On behalf of the Chicago Southland Convention & Visitors Bureau, we extend an invitation to you to hold your family reunion in the Chicago Southland region.

Our area is comprised of 62 south and southwest suburbs of Chicago, encompassing nearly 400 square miles of urban and open areas. More than 7,000 acres of forest preserves are in the region to enhance your enjoyment of nature with walking, biking, equestrian trails, recreational sites and nature centers.

The Chicago Southland region has major enclosed shopping malls along with theatre and symphony performances, and one of the world's largest outdoor amphitheatres. Outstanding restaurants offer an array of diverse cuisine. The Chicago Southland offers 70 hotel/motel properties with over 6,500 sleeping rooms, and a wide range of lodging facilities from mid-range, interstate accessible properties with interior corridors and indoor pools, to major three diamond hotels.

Major interstates transverse our region, including I-57, I-80, I-90, I-94 and I-294 (Tri-State), making it easy to access these many resources and facilities. Should you need additional information or assistance, we encourage you to give us a call toll free in the USA and Canada (1-888-895-8233). We look forward to seeing your group in the CHICAGO SOUTHLAND region!

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Convention Services Manager

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Reunion Planners Guide

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Getting Started on Your Way to a Successful Family Reunion

Make sure there is interest in a family reunion.

Start with surveying your family members, asking vital questions about if they are interested in attending a reunion. Make sure you ask when a good time of the year would be for them, and also how far people are willing to travel. You need to find a central location if people are unwilling to travel far. One option is trying to have the reunion near where the oldest living relative lives.

Here is a suggestion to help you get started with your family reunion survey:

Family Name: _____

Would you be interested in attending a family reunion? **Yes No**

How far would you travel for a family reunion?

What is the best time of year for you to attend a family reunion?

Are there any particular activities you would like to take part in at your family reunion?

Would you be able to contribute any of your services (part of planning, DJ, Photography, etc) to the family reunion?

Do you have suggestions where the reunion should take place?

Getting Started

Set up a planning committee

Don't try to do everything yourself. There is just too much to be done. Enlist your family members to take some of the burden off your shoulders, and your family members will feel like they are taking part in the organization of the reunion.

Together as a group you can make the important decisions, including:

- Time of year
- Budget
- How many days it will last
- The theme, if any
- City Selection

If necessary, you can split up the committee into subcommittees making it even easier to make decisions.

- **Budget / Fundraising committee:** They will manage reunion funds, open a bank account for reunion, pay bills, keep accurate account records, etc.
- **Program committee:** They will plan and coordinate the activities that are going to be held on the day /weekend of the family reunion. They also can be the site selectors. Determine exactly where the reunion is going to take place i.e.: park, hotel, restaurant
- **Family History Committee:** They will be in charge of collecting and displaying family history such as family trees, pictures, and other historical documents

Some questions should arise when planning your family reunion, and here are a few you might not have thought of:

Should the reunion coincide with a holiday? That depends on your family, and what is most convenient is for your family members.

How often should a reunion occur? That also depends on your family, and how often they want to get together.

Are the hotels / motels going to be booked that weekend? A good way to find out availability is to check with the Convention & Visitors Bureau. Not only will they give you a sense of when a good time of the year is to hold a reunion, they will also take a lot of pressure off of you. They can help you select the perfect site to hold your reunion.



Site Selection

Finding the perfect location is probably the most important step in your reunion planning. You want to make sure that the space is accommodating to everyone, and it fulfills all your reunion needs.

To take a lot of pressure off of you and your committee, go to the Convention & Visitors Bureau. The CVB will send out your information and needs for your reunion to their hotels and banquet facilities. It really is your one stop. You give them the information and they do the work. Then the locations will contact you with availabilities.

Before going with the cheapest location, go for a site inspection. The facilities will be more than willing to work with you to make sure you select the perfect location for your family reunion.

While going through what your reunion needs are, make sure you ask yourself these important questions:

- Is it accessible by bus? by wheelchair?
- Is there plenty of parking?
- Where are the bathrooms? Are they close enough?
- Are there recreational facilities near by?
- Is there covered shelter (for a park) in case of bad weather or it is too sunny?
- Is there a place to grill? Or can you bring one?
- Are there picnic tables? Or ground space?
- Is there electricity?
- Do you need a permit?

Money Matters

Make sure a budget is developed in the beginning. You need to know how much money you have to work with from the start, and an estimate of the reunion costs.



When making your registration fee, be make sure that it is not too exorbitant. Remember this a family reunion, and you are not out to make a profit.

There are going to be many costs in planning a reunion. Below are items that need to be taken into consideration when planning a budget.

- Pre-reunion costs
 - Phone calls
 - Postage
 - Printing
 - Decorations
 - Transportation, renting busses
- Reunion Day Expenses
 - Minister
 - DJ
 - Photographer
 - Food and Beverages (making it pot luck if a local event will help to alleviate some of this cost)
- Location/site
- Post Reunion Expenses
 - Cleanup
 - Evaluations - printing and postage

Preparations

Even though you have your budget figured out, and have chosen your location there is still much to do.

You need to decide who will be invited to your reunion, and make sure you have a database with their names and addresses. You can later use the database as your registration list.

- Up to one year before event send out a “hold the date” postcard. This will give your family members an idea that an event is in the works, and allow people to plan ahead.
- 8-10 months before reunion: Send out a fact sheet. This mailing will contain vital information about fees, deadlines and ask for a response if you are at this time planning on attending. It does not have to be definite.
- 5- 10 months before reunion: Create a list of the hotel(s) that you are planning on using. Send out the list to family members of hotel prices. If you have a large reunion, you might need to get more than one hotel.
- 3-5 months prior: Send out an early announcement telling people the definite information about the reunion.
- 4 -5 weeks before reunion: Finally, send out a reminder notice again with all information and final deadlines.
Make sure you have everything organized:
 - Decorations
 - Food and Beverages
 - Transportation

Also, contact the **Convention and Visitors Bureau** for convention services. We provide a multitude of different things **FREE!!!**

Convention Services Guidelines

Name Badges

- The option of sticky or pin-on badges will be complimentary to all groups booked through the bureau.
- Groups not booked through the bureau will only receive sticky name badges.
- If there are 50+ printed badges needed, client must provide the names to us on a disk in a Word Database Format at least two weeks prior to the event.
- Sticky badges only will be provided to all other groups. No printing available.

Table Tent Cards – 8½" x 11" (single fold)

***Coupon Books**

- This book contains coupons from Chicago Southland restaurants and attractions

***Chicago Southland Maps (Based on availability)**

- This is a blown-up, detailed map of the Chicago Southland region

***Festival and Events Guides**

- Lists all of the Festival and Events taking place in the Chicago Southland region

***Plastic Bags (based on availability)**

***Pre-Mailer / Brochure Shell – 8½" x 11" (tri fold)**

- The inside is blank so you can print your own reunion information.

Informational materials and pre-mailer/brochure shells are limited to **one of each per family*

Fundraising

If you notice that you are going to need to raise some money for your family reunion there is a multitude of different ways to do so. Selling items is always a great way. There are many corporations that discount their items for fundraising activities.



Some companies are Krispy Kreme donuts, Fannie May Chocolates, Dominos, Pizza Hut, M & Ms and Hershey's Chocolate.

Other ideas include a bake sale, plant sale, spaghetti dinner, selling t-shirts or buttons, raffle, car wash or some sort of competition.



Activities

You don't want anyone to get bored at your family reunion, so why not plan some activities for people can do. Make sure you take into consideration the age ranges and agility of people. If your family is mostly older people, you are not going to want to have a game of soccer or basketball planned. Also, keep in mind that you don't just want to have one activity planned. Have a variety if people want to do different things.

- Bingo
- Tug a war
- Horseshoes
- Baseball, Basketball, Soccer, Volleyball, badminton, etc.
- Awards-Oldest living member, Longest distance traveled, shortest distance traveled, longest married, largest family present at reunion, most children, most grandchildren, etc.
- Give prizes away, give each person a ticket and have random drawings throughout reunion.
- Board games
- Cards



The Big Day

Today is the day of the family reunion. It is the culmination of all your hard work and much stress. You have put a lot of effort into making this reunion go off without a hitch, so make sure you enjoy not only all the work you have done, but most importantly enjoy your family. After all, that is the reason to have a reunion.

To help make sure you have the last few details arranged, here are a few things to remember:

-Be sure there is transportation to the reunion if from the hotel, if needed. You don't want anyone left behind.

-Have a registration area. Make sure that people sign in and get their name badge and registration packets.

-Registration packets are a nice detail to add to your reunion, all the information from the CVB can be included in the packets, but you might want to add some of your own personal touches.

- Agenda for the weekend
- T-Shirts or other items
- Meal Tickets
- Family Update forms

Have people greet everyone.

Start with a family meeting, welcoming them, and thanking them for attending.

Start any activities that you have planned.

Enjoy great food and great people.

Thank everyone again for coming, and welcome them back again.

Create a tradition within your family by planning for the next family reunion.

Afterward

Congratulations!! All your hard work has paid off in the end. Hopefully your event went off without too many problems. However, there are a few more things that need to be done to insure that future reunions are as great as this one.

You might want to think about sending out an evaluation to your family members both that attended and were not able to make it.

The first to those that attended should help provide you with information about future family reunions. The true purpose of the evaluation sent to members of the family that attended the reunion is to find out their true opinion of how it went, and what they did or didn't like.

Sending an evaluation, or even just a postcard asking your family members why they were not able to attend, because of travel or other circumstances will also give information that might help in years to come.

Provided below is a sample of some questions you can use for your evaluations.



Family Reunion Evaluation Form

Please answer all questions honestly, so we may be able to have an even better reunion next time.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone _____

Email _____

This Years Reunion (please give as much detail as possible)

Did you enjoy this year reunion? _____

What did you think of the location? _____

Would you go back to the same location again? (Why or Why not?)

Did you like the length of the reunion? _____

Would you keep it the same length? _____

Did you enjoy the activities provided? _____

What was your favorite activity? What would you have liked to see as an activity?

How was the food? _____

What about this reunion did you really like?

What would you like to change for years to come?

Would you be willing to help with preparations for the next reunion?

Chicago Southland Park Districts

Park District	Phone #	Address	City State Zip
Blue Island	708-385-3304	12804 Highland Avenue	Blue Island, IL 60406
Blue Island	708-385-5667	12301 Western Avenue	Blue Island, IL 60406
Burbank	708-599-5832	8500 State Road	Burbank, IL 60459
Burbank	708-599-2070	8050 New Castle Avenue	Burbank, IL 60459
Cabnet City (Cabnet Memorial)	708-862-6440	612 Wentworth Avenue	Cabnet City, IL 60409
Chicago Heights	708-756-7275	1400 Chicago Road	Chicago Heights, IL 60411
Chicago Heights	708-755-3050	2100 Euclid Avenue	Chicago Heights, IL 60411
Chicago Ridge	708-636-4900	6252 Birmingham Street	Chicago Ridge, IL 60415
Chicago Ridge	708-423-3947	9807 Sayre Avenue	Chicago Ridge, IL 60415
Country Club Hills	708-799-8171	4200 183rd St.# 100	Country Club Hills, IL 60478
Crete	708-672-6969	515 1st Street	Crete, IL 60417
Dunmoor	312-658-6125	111 West Washington Street	Chicago, IL
Dolton	708-841-2111	721 Engle Street	Dolton, IL 60419
Dolton	708-849-8189	142nd & Ellis Avenue	Dolton, IL 60419
Forest View	708-484-3002	4621 Wenonah Avenue	Berwyn, IL
Frankfort	815-469-3524	7540 West Braemar Lane	Frankfort, IL 60423
Frankfort	815-469-8067	20028 South Rosewood Drive	Frankfort, IL 60423
Frankfort	815-469-9400	140 Oak Street	Frankfort, IL 60423
Harvey	708-331-3857	15335 Broadway Avenue	Harvey, IL 60426
Harvey	708-331-9419	234 West 150th Place	Harvey, IL 60426
Hazel Crest	708-335-4794	3000 West 179th Place	Hazel Crest, IL 60429
Hazel Crest	708-335-1500	2600 171st Street	Hazel Crest, IL 60429
Homewood Flossmoor	708-799-1323	2920 183rd Street	Homewood, IL 60430
Lansing (Lan Oak)	708-474-8520	2550 178th Street	Lansing, IL 60438
Lansing (Lan Oak)	708-474-5020	17551 Chicago Avenue	Lansing, IL 60438
Markham	708-596-5853	16200 Lafin Avenue	Markham, IL 60426
Markham	708-596-3366	16053 Richmond Avenue	Markham, IL 60426
Matteson	708-748-1080	4450 West Oakwood Lane	Matteson, IL 60443
Midlothian	708-371-6191	14500 Kostner Avenue	Midlothian, IL 60445
Oak Forest	708-687-7270	15601 Central Avenue	Oak Forest, IL 60452
Oak Lawn	708-857-2215	10444 Central Avenue	Oak Lawn, IL 60453
Oak Lawn	708-857-2225	9400 South Kenton Avenue	Oak Lawn, IL 60453
Oak Lawn	708-857-5173	9320 South Kenton Avenue	Oak Lawn, IL 60453
Oak Lawn	708-857-2420	9401 Oak Park Avenue	Oak Lawn, IL 60453
Olympia Fields	708-481-7313	20712 Western Avenue	Olympia Fields, IL 60461
Orland Park	708-403-7275	14560 Ravinia Avenue	Orland Park, IL 60462
Park Forest	708-748-2005	301 Centre Street	Park Forest, IL 60466
Posen	708-371-1484	14300 Campbell Avenue	Posen, IL 60469
Riverdale (Ivanhoe)	708-841-8720	14322 South Ivanhoe Drive	Riverdale, IL 60827
Riverdale (Ivanhoe)	708-849-9853	14401 South Stewart Avenue	Riverdale, IL 60827
Riverdale (Ivanhoe)	708-841-0095	151 West 137th Street	Riverdale, IL 60827
South Holland(Community Center)	708-331-2940	501 East 170th Street	South Holland, IL 60473
Steger (Community Center)	708-709-0288	3501 Hopkins Street	Steger, IL 60475
Summit	708-496-1012	5700 South Archer Road	Summit Argo, IL 60501
Thornton	708-877-4454	701 Highland Avenue	Thornton, IL 60476
Tinley Park	708-614-6503	17420 67th Court	Tinley Park, IL 60477
Tinley Park	708-342-4200	8125 171st Street	Tinley Park, IL 60477
University Park (Reigel Farm)	708-534-6456	578 Farmview Road	Park Forest, IL 60466
Worth	708-448-7080	11500 South Esbit Avenue	Worth, IL 60482