

Alfred Snider, Sparking the Debate, 2013

Chapter 8: Major Events

By now you have introduced your group, attracted some people, held some early events and done some basic training, so it is time to get down to the real work of helping to spread the skills and abilities that can help build a more healthy civil society and democracy. This is where the accomplishments and the rewards will be found, but it is also these events that will call on you to work cooperatively and hard.

In this chapter we will discuss some major events you can hold that will provide significant services to your community and your membership. These events will also set into motion the process of transmitting to people skills in debating and public advocacy that should serve as the mainstay of your efforts. You should repeat these events over and over again, because they represent the lifeblood of what you are trying to accomplish.

Public Events

A public event is any event that demonstrates what you are doing and showcases the abilities of your members. These events are where you can be creative and adapt to the situation at hand. Instead of just plugging in one of the many types of events we will be looking at in this chapter and previously, you might also think of an idea that seems ideal for the situation. Remember, each community is unique and you should feel free to try out your own ideas and not just use these. These events are different in that they are a bit more complex and a bit more demanding to organize, as well as calling for larger numbers of people than previous events.

Types of Public Events

Public events can be of many different types other than those already discussed in Chapter 7. Other varieties (all less than two hours) include:

- *Historical celebrations.* Pick a historical occasion that is important to your community. Have students give speeches about the occasion, perhaps with a prize attached, or stage a debate set in that historical period, complete with costumes. You might stage a combined event, featuring the reading of historical documents, a very short speech by a prominent person, poems about the event read by younger school children, and a very short mini-debate. You might mix several of these suggestions into a sixty or ninety minute program.
- *Issue information session:* Pick an important issue in your community and have your group present background information and answer audience questions. If possible, make the presentation multimedia and show a brief background video to keep people interested. You can invite representatives other groups concerned about the topic, but only as members of the audience. Your group should give the presentation and answer questions. This event helps you operate as an information resource to citizens, serving a function as well as attracting people to your overall mission.
- *Student versus teacher debate.* Use a very short format to debate a motion of interest to both, but reverse the perspectives. For example have students argue in favor of more homework and teachers argue against it. Other themes might be longer school hours and calendars or merit pay for teachers. This has worked very well, especially at the middle school level. Parents love to come to such an event.
- *Candidates' debate.* Invite those running for office to participate in a debate. Use a real debate format and avoid the common "joint press conference" format that most candidate debates use. Make sure you have a moderator who can enforce order and adherence to the format. Allow candidates longer speech times to introduce and conclude, but otherwise keep speeches fairly short. You might have an eight to ten minute introductory speech by each candidate (depending on the number of candidates) and then keep other timeslots to two or three minutes. Remember that the audience cannot

benefit from a boring event because they will not pay attention. In their first speech, have them introduce their basic program. Then, ask them to comment on each other's stand on issues, allow short rebuttals, and always include questions from the audience before the concluding remarks. Try to maximize media exposure of the event.

- *Public forum.* Invite a few speakers on an important issue and then ask the audience to speak as well. Keep the speeches short, and make sure that your members are always there to offer thoughtful remarks if you don't have enough audience participants to fill the time.
- *Holiday celebration.* Have your members plan a public event to mark a holiday with short speeches, a mini-debate, invited public figures, short remarks from other groups. You might want to include auditioned singing groups, a pot luck supper, and perhaps dancing in your celebration but keep the emphasis on public speaking.
- *Sports pep rally.* Invite two local sports teams to come to a public event. Stage the event as a rally. Give a brief history of the teams, introduce players, stage a debate on some issue related to the teams (e.g., most dreaded opponent, team A is better than team B, greatest player ever, great player X versus great player Y). Invite the teams to become partners with you on future activities.

There are countless other ideas, such as fundraising events for worthy local charities, adult public speaking classes, holding events at elderly home facilities, and debate marathons. Choose the ones that work best to further your goals and excite your members..

Publicity Specifics for Public Events

Although you should use all your normal communications networks (website, Facebook, Twitter, press releases, etc.), different types of events will require different types of promotion. In adapting, utilize a thought experiment about your community; think to yourself who would be interested in attending such an event? How can I reach those people? Do not forget to have group members bring their families and friends and to invite new people and members of the general

community. Have full information available at several locations. Use posters in local shops and squares when possible.

Staging Specifics

You can stage your event at a school, local meeting room, youth center, public meeting room, or other creative locations such as libraries, open public spaces, and coffee houses. Think about how many people might attend and choose your space accordingly. Ultimately, however, you will probably have to use whatever space you can get donated. Remember that a venue that's a little too small is better than one that is way too big; a crowd generates a positive environment for public communication. Consider finding a room controlled by another group who would be willing to offer snacks and drinks on a cash basis in exchange for using the space.

Imagine yourself attending the event in order to determine how the space should be arranged. A preliminary visit can solve many problems. Determine how to use what's there but also think about things you may need to bring. Your group should have a very simple, lightweight podium; if you don't have one, use a small table placed in front of the speaker. Determine the optimal location within the space for the speakers and audience. Make sure you have enough chairs. Consider the lighting, need for a sound system, and how people will move around inside of the space.

You will have to return the space to its original state when you leave, so sign up volunteers in advance for cleanup and moving furniture. Praise these people lavishly.

Follow-up Specifics

Remember that many of those attending a public event will not be familiar with your group, so have small fliers about your group available as well as a sign up list people can use to receive information about future events. Every time any member of the public attends any event it is a chance for you to recruit new active participants. Your normal publicity network will report on the event and perhaps

even make a video available. Send brief thank you notes to people who helped with the event. Thank those who took part in the event for the first time (or who work with you infrequently) and invite them to collaborate in the future. Central organizers should make a list of what needs improvement and archive that list for next time.

Evaluation

When possible ask those involved to complete a simple online evaluation of the event. You can design a simple form by going to <http://www.emailmeform.com/> (use the same one for different events to save time). Place it online and have the answers emailed to you. The evaluation will alert you to problems you may not be aware of and help fine-tune future events.

Training Workshops

Training workshops are in many ways the body and soul of your group. You are training people how to debate, how to express themselves, how to speak in public, and how to think creatively and critically—and you are doing it all at once. These events help everyone, trainers and students, learn, develop, and form bonds with each other.

Training workshops can be extended, intensive affairs, or they can be held regularly on a weeknight or a first Saturday of the month. Many groups have one or two major training programs a year; others do them on a more frequent basis, while still others use both methods for training. Find out when people are willing to attend and use that as a guide for scheduling. Longer programs that run over a few days can provide a deeper experience while more spread out trainings can provide a way for busy people to stay involved and improve at the same time.

Trainers and Students

Every debater needs more training. The nature of the training will depend on the participants' level of experience, but often experienced and novice debaters can

benefit from the interaction in the same training session. Since you want people to continue their involvement with your group, make sure that new members feel welcome. Encourage their efforts and emphasize that they are learning and improving.

Those who provide training can also be a varied group. More experienced debaters can train less experienced to the mutual benefit of all. If you have a shortage of trainers, don't postpone training. Use the best people you have. Invite trainers from other groups; share human resources with other groups when you can.

Often people come to training events to improve their training skills. Have them participate in the general training but also provide additional instruction on how to train. Then, give them limited responsibility in conducting some basic sessions and watch them learn and grow. Your goal is to cultivate new human resources, allow people to improve their skills, and then have them become a part of your training system. Accept whatever anyone has to offer and find a way to use what skills they have most productively.

Recruiting and Publicity

Recruiting and publicity depend on whether you are having an intensive training session over a period of days or whether you are offering a regular training program that is scheduled for the same time and day over a longer period.

For an intensive session, publicity and recruitment must start well in advance, probably a few weeks or even a month before the event. People will need to make a commitment and set aside the time. Don't just publicize and invite people once, do repeatedly over a period of many weeks so that you can gain attendees. Contact all types of people and stress that all are welcome. If some people can only come to part of an extended training, you can still welcome them. Remember, any involvement is better than none. Often those who say they will come for a short time enjoy it and stay on.

For shorter and more regular training, publicize the initial event but don't stop recruiting or publicizing once regular training sessions begin. Continue during months where they are taking place.

Length

An extended training may take place over several days, perhaps a weekend. Often people have difficulty giving up an entire weekend, so don't overload make the training sessions all-day affairs. Regular trainings should be no more than two hours in length. Optimally they should be between sixty and ninety minutes long.

Setting

The nice part about debate training is that all you need is a space without too much ambient noise. In Bangladesh, Serbia, and other locations, groups often hold training sessions under a tree. Any room or space will do. If it is not entirely private, some newer participants may be reluctant to speak, but far more often passersby will become interested in what you are doing and eventually join in. If you have more than 15 attendees, you may need to break into smaller groups for some types of instruction and thus need more space. Hold your regular training sessions in the same space if possible so people can develop a habit of coming to a set location.

Schedule

Regular trainings are obviously scheduled at regular times. However, longer training sessions can be situated on days when people have more time available. For example, training might be held all day on a Saturday, or from Friday evening through Sunday morning. It is always good to leave some weekend time for people to do other things or be with their families.

In scheduling extended training sessions, remember to have the event go from basic to more challenging activities. Another popular option is to offer sessions on different subjects at the same time and let people choose which to attend. People

tend to like training more when they feel that have a choice of what to learn and how to be involved.

For extended training over a period of a week, use what is known as the “academy” model, where each day involves a mix of all activities along with practice debates. For more information on this model of training, see a short video at http://debateacademy.net/Debate_Academy/Academy_Model.html.

Mix of Activities

Regardless of your training schedule, make sure to mix activities. While you can include some lectures, they should not be too long and should be followed by an active session of drills and exercises where people can put the lecture material into practice. You might also include full practice debates.

Participants in regular training sessions often lose interest if all they do is practice debate, so include other activities, such as those suggested in Chapter 7 as well. Try to cover all of the basic skills: speaking, making arguments, refuting arguments, building cases, analyzing topics, points of information, and cross examination as well as strategies and judging. You can also target areas where those attending need additional work. Repeating an exercise can be useful for learning, but don’t repeat the same training exercise too often or people will become bored. Ask attendees to indicate which activities they like best and use their feedback in future scheduling.

Social Aspects

Remember that people are coming to your training not only because of their interest in debate but also to socialize. With that in mind, add a social component to your events, but make sure it is after training. Extended training over a weekend might feature a talent show, karaoke, dance, or just a social setting with background music in the evenings. Regular training sessions might end with the group adjourning to a coffee shop for a refreshment and fellowship. Making time for people to make

friends is important, because friendships will keep people involved and increase their commitment to your group.

Early Debate Competitions

Your earliest debate competitions will be your most important. If they go well, your group will grow and develop; if they don't everything later becomes more difficult. Have competitions, call them tournaments if you wish, but keep them small and simple. If these succeed, you can stage more complex events later.

Sample One Day Event

These events are usually held on Saturday, when people have free time. Below are three options.

Three full debates, short day

8:00–8:45—Arrival, registration, and coffee if possible.

8:45—Welcome and briefing about procedures.

9:00—Round One: Teams are matched randomly against each other. Judges are assigned. They give oral decisions and return ballots to tabulation room.

11:00—Round Two: Teams are matched randomly (or based on the record in Round One). Same decision procedure.

13:00—Lunch break. Lunch may be provided, participants may go nearby, or bring lunch.

14:30—Round Three: Teams are matched based on record. Same decision procedure.

16:30—Awards given to best teams and speakers, announcement of upcoming events.

17:00—Departures.

Four full debates, long day

7:00–8:00—Arrival, registration, and coffee if possible.

8:00—8:15—Welcome and briefing about procedures.

8:30—Round One: Teams are matched randomly against each other. Judges are assigned. They give oral decisions and return ballots to tabulation room.

10:30—Round Two: Teams are matched based on record. Same decision procedure.

12:30—Lunch break. Lunch may be provided, participants may go nearby, or bring lunch.

13:30—Round Three: Teams are matched based on record. Same decision procedure.

15:30—Final Round: Best teams debate before selected judges; others watch.

17:00—Awards given to best teams and speakers, announcement of upcoming events.

17:30—Departures.

Training and competition for new debaters, long day

8:00–9:00—Arrival, registration, and coffee if possible.

9:00—Welcome and briefing about procedures.

9:15—Lecture: Motion analysis and case building.

10:30—Exercise: Meet in small groups and build cases from motions.

12:00—Exercise: Pick one, perhaps the Point of Information drill.

13:00—Lunch break: Lunch may be provided, participants may go nearby, or bring lunch.

14:00—Round One: Teams are matched randomly against each other. Judges are assigned. They give oral decisions and return ballots to tabulation room.

15:30—Round Two: Teams are matched based on record. Same decision procedure.

17:30—Awards to best teams and speakers, announcement of upcoming events.

18:00—Departures.

You can adjust or change these schedules as necessary. Adjust the start and stop times to reflect your local culture. If people leave the site for lunch, you will need to add time to the schedule. The schedules often show two full hours for a debate, which may not be necessary. In any case, try to build some time into the schedule so

the event doesn't run late. Remember, people expect to leave at a certain time, and the event should meet that expectation.

Sample Two-Day Event

A two-day event will probably will not cover the entire period. Remember that people have other lives and other commitments. If your event is convenient and not too exhausting, it encourages people to come again.

Here a suggested schedule for this event.

Friday-Saturday full tournament, short days

Friday

17:00–18:00—Arrival, registration, and coffee if possible.

18:00—Welcome and briefing about procedures.

18:30—Round One: Teams are matched randomly against each other. Judges are assigned. They give oral decisions and return ballot to tabulation room.

20:30—Departures for the evening.

Saturday

8:00—Arrival, registration, coffee if possible.

9:00—Round Two: Teams are matched based on record. Same decision procedure.

11:00—Round Three: Same.

13:00—Lunch break: Lunch may be provided, participants may go nearby, or bring lunch.

14:00—Round Four: Same.

16:00—Final Round: Best teams debate before selected judges, others watch.

17:30—Awards to best teams and speakers; announcement of upcoming events.

16:00—Departures.

Adjust the schedule as you see fit. You can keep the tournament on schedule more easily if you have volunteers collect the ballots from the judges, if the debating

rooms are close to the central meeting point, and if you can keep debaters on-site for lunch.

Extended Event

Instead of having weekend competitions you could hold one tournament that runs over number of weeks and ends with a public debate. This model has been used with much success both in Australia and in Chile.

The tournament would involve scheduling a debate each week. Each week, two teams who were assigned to debate each other with an assigned judge or judges would arrange to have a debate at a certain time, usually on a weekday evening. Groups such as schools and debate clubs with more than one team could begin by debating the other team(s) from their group. Decisions are filed with the organizers. These debates go on for many weeks with wins and losses building up. As teams defeat other teams from their own club, they move on to debate the best teams from other groups. Eventually, teams with the best record go on to elimination debates (quarterfinal, semifinal, final). The grand final determines the championship. Often this is an elaborately staged event with a crowd made up of the public and all the debaters in the tournament.

This format offers both benefits and challenges. On the one hand the competition is easy to organize because contestants find their own spaces, dates, and times to compete. On the other hand, keeping track of participants is more difficult because of the extended timeframe. Also some teams will change personnel or suddenly not be available that week, and judges and teams may not meet at the correct times or in the correct numbers. These sorts of things are fairly unavoidable, but as long as you keep on debating the event can be a success.

Planning and staging

Planning for a tournament needs to start many weeks in advance because you must accomplish several critical tasks before you send out invitations to your tournament. You will need to:

- *Locate a venue.* The site must contain rooms for debates as well as a central room for general meetings, bathrooms, access to a copier etc. The number of rooms available will set the upper limit for the number of teams who can attend. Schools are usually the best place to host debate tournaments if you need four or more rooms. Remember that you are responsible for cleaning up all space used after the event. If a facility is donated, make sure to advertise the group offering the space as a major sponsor of the event.
- *Set a date.* Set a date when both the facility you will use and the participants are available. For example, scheduling a tournament for students just before exams can be a bad idea, as is holding it on a date when many people will be on vacation. Your event should not conflict with other debate tournaments in your region, so coordinate other groups before formalizing the date.
- *Arrange for housing.* If you are planning on a long tournament with participants from outside of your immediate location, you might want to arrange for housing. This can involve arranging home stays hosted by your supporters and/or negotiating a good rate for rooms at a local hotel, hostel or dormitory. Have those staying in these facilities make their own reservations and pay their bills directly to the hotel. This will reduce your administrative burden.
- *Determine whether you will charge entrance fees.* High entry fees can discourage participation, so keep fees as low as possible, particularly if your tournament involves a large percentage of new debaters. Remember, a tournament is not a profit making activity. Often fees are a little higher than expenses so they can be waived for teams attending their first tournament. Attendees need to feel that they are getting something for their fees, so offer coffee, snacks, lunch, awards, etc.
- *Decide on what awards you will present and order them early.* You can buy awards for very modest prices if you check online and order in advance. Avoid ordering too many awards, since you don't know far enough in advance how many people will actually attend. If you are not sure what number to order, don't have a year engraved on the awards so you can use them for the next

contest. Many tournaments use certificates as awards; the organizers purchase certificate paper and print documents specially designed for the tournament. This low cost solution has the added benefit of being able to feature the name of the winners on the certificate. Some events provide participation certificates for all attending.

- *Determine whether you will provide food.* Refreshment options include: food provided at the tournament or a meal ticket to a nearby eatery (both paid for by entry fees); food provided on a cash basis on-site arranged by either you or a caterer; or the use of an existing facility (such as a cafeteria) at the site (usually a school). Remember that any time food is available on site, the need for cleanup increases.
- *Plan your publicity campaign.* Utilize your standard communication network to publicize your tournament, but also determine what other groups you want to participate in the event and target them as well. List a training session before the event to help people prepare and determine if they actually want to participate in the event. Debate tournaments should be public events, so invite spectators, parents, friends and others. Make sure to indicate in all publicity that the debates will be taking place over the course of the day and people can come whenever they wish. Alert the media about the event.

After you have dealt with all these matters, you can draft, review, and then sent out your invitations.

The day before the event, walk through the site to make sure it is order. Inspect all rooms you will be using and check that they are clearly marked. Check the large meeting room to ensure that the public address system is working and that any media equipment requested will be in place. Make sure that the room you will use to collect and tabulate results is centrally located and of adequate size; inspect the bathroom facilities to make sure they are fully stocked.

Put yourself in the place of a participant. Imagine you are coming to the site for the first time, wander in and see if you can determine where to go. Stand in the meeting room and imagine it during welcome and announcements. Go from there to a room where a debate will be held, especially the room that is the farthest distance from the meeting room. Imagine the participants using the bathrooms at the same time (half before a debate and half after a debate). Imagine where people will congregate between debates. Actively imagining the tournament in this way will help you anticipate and solve problems.

Judge and Participant Mix

A tournament involves both debaters and judges. Too often organizers are excited to add more teams before they realize that they don't have enough judges. More experienced members of your group can serve as judges, but you may need to ask attending teams to bring judges. Often groups are asked to bring judges in proportion to the number of teams they will enter. For example, at World Universities Debate Championship (WUDC) format tournaments the standard is often N-1 (one less judge than the number of teams). For formats with only two teams in each room, you might require one judge for every two teams. If groups can't bring judges and you can't supply them, don't let their teams enter.

In many cases, judges may not yet be qualified, so send a training packet to all judges attending or schedule a training session before the first round. Sometimes tournaments make a debate available as an online video and ask judges to view it and render a decision. This can be useful, but before requiring this, be aware that it may be a substantial entry barrier. You don't want to turn people away because they did not take an online judge test. If judges are very inexperienced, you can assign them to accompany a more experienced judge who can advise them on proper procedures as well as report back on when they are ready to judge in their own.

Long Critique and Feedback Periods

Make sure that the schedule includes time for judges to explain their decision. The explanation is part of an educational experience, and debaters learn most when receiving feedback about their performance. Encourage judges to discuss their decision openly and in detail. Some contestants will be unhappy with the decision. This is inevitable at debate tournaments, but debaters learn to get over it. The more feedback judges are able to give, the more comfortable those losing will be with the decision because they better understand its basis.

Tabulation, Recognition, and Awards

Debate tournaments produce wins, losses, and quality rating points for speakers and teams. All of this needs to be tabulated properly and then used to produce the next rounds matches. While very small events can be tabulated by hand with nothing more than a calculator, any tournament of even modest size should use tabulation software. Tabulation software can be found at <http://debate.uvm.edu/software.html>

You might consider using different software packages based on the debate format you are using. If it is one team against one team (with 1, 2 or 3 speakers), you might consider TRPC software, proven and effective all over the world. If you are using the two teams against two teams format (WUDC, or British Parliamentary), then Tournaman might be best for you. Both are fairly simple and come with manuals. Remember to do a test run before your event. Hold a mock tournament using the program with imaginary teams, judges, and results so that you can see how the program works and anticipate difficulties. You will need a PC laptop and a printer to use any of these programs.

Recognition and awards take place at the assembly held at the conclusion of the tournament. Keep the meeting short and to the point, since everyone has done a lot of talking and listening already. Avoid long speeches and guest speakers. Recognitions should include thanking sponsors, hosts, and organizers. Awards should involve announcing those teams and individual debaters who did best and

presenting trophies, certificates, or small gifts if you are using them. Announce names with pride and vigor, and ask people to come forward. Have them pose for photos.

Following the closing assembly, begin working on future events. Remind everyone of the next activities and how they can get involved. Obviously, you will have had information about your group and their activities available throughout the tournament. Make sure that all attendees give you their email address and other contact information so you can stay in touch with them.

Evaluation

Take some time after a tournament to consider the good and bad parts of the event. Discuss major shortcomings, determine their causes, and then think about how to improve the next event. Make sure to have these notes available as you plan the next event.

Post event publicity

One of the most effective forms of post event publicity is to publish the results. While the media might be more interested in the top levels of performance, those who attended will appreciate seeing the complete tabulated results. These will show the performance of each team and speaker in each debate. The tabulation programs suggested above produce either web pages or PDF documents of results. Post photos and videos from the tournament to your website. Twitter when the stories go live online. Update your Facebook pages with links to the full stories. Make sure to provide the media with a complete story, including pictures of the happy winners holding their awards.

In your post-event publicity, remember to thank hosts, service providers, individuals who provided special assistance and especially those who helped clean up the site. It is these kinds of small actions that create huge good will.

Later and Larger Debate Tournaments

Once your program is firmly established and your debaters have experience, you may want to stage a larger tournament that welcomes teams from other cities, regions, and even countries. While it may be more difficult, you also may be able to access increased resources. Because the event is large, it may be easier to obtain sponsors for the event. This has been true in countless national and regional championships, enabling ambitious debate organizers to take on these larger tasks.

A larger event means everything is larger: you will need a bigger venue and more ballots, food, and housing. Budgeting, accounting, collecting registration fees, and arranging social events will be more complex. To handle a large event efficiently you need to recruit more people and subdivide tasks among volunteers. Maintaining communication among the organizers and volunteers is critical.

All of the advice from the previous section on smaller debate tournaments also applies here, but even more so. Make sure you are familiar with that section before attempting to stage a larger event. As you step up to a larger event, the work by Garau and Muranyi on how to hold an international debate tournament will prove useful

(http://idebate.org/sites/live/files/HT%20Organize%20A%20Debate%20Tournament_final.pdf).

Planning, Publicity, Staging

Planning a major even involves a longer time frame. Set the date at least six months in advance. Arrangements for facilities, food and housing may have to come far earlier based on the way these services are provided. When the US Universities Debate Championship was held at the University of Vermont, tournament organizers reserved classrooms ten months in advance before others did. Housing may need to be reserved as early as one year in advance for hotels, hostels and dormitories, but only four to six week in advance when organizing small scale home stay opportunities for visiting debaters. Many large tournaments are scheduled and

planned six months to a year in advance. One option is to have an annual event held on roughly the same dates so that it becomes predictable.

Publicity should be extensive, of course, but since you have a longer lead time, you can enlist your members to begin spread the word within their social networks, both offline and online, long before you generate formal publicity materials. Ask if you can announce your tournament in any other meetings you attend. Just creating the awareness that “a big debate tournament is coming up” can be helpful as the event nears. Media outlets are not likely to report on your event until just before it takes place, but make sure it is on their calendars so that when they are looking for a story later they will see it. Contact radio and television stations early and offer to help them cover the event, at least several weeks in advance.

Hosting a large tournament means a lot of attention to detail. After you choose your site, get a written contract from the venue owner that includes a detailed list of agreed upon fees. Make sure to reserve the site not only for the tournament but also for the time needed to set up and clean up. Get the phone numbers of the people who have keys in case spaces need to be opened. Make sure you have adequate trash cans and trash bags, extra toilet paper and towels in bathrooms, spare ink cartridges for the printer in the tabulation room, the use of projector facilities to show the draw for the debates as well as the topics if that is appropriate to the format you are using. You might want to set up a small music system or video projection in a main room if people are waiting there. Supervise food provision so that the first few people don't take too much food and you run out later. Restock soda and snack machines before the event. You will need a mobile phone directory of all working on the event to hand out to those same people. Ballot collection efforts become more important and may involve additional volunteers.

Staging will involve the same walk through of the space and schedule as a smaller event, but the process will take longer because you have more elements to consider. When you plan a large tournament there is no hope for perfection. During the event,

it can be comforting to realize that you are dealing with little things that are going wrong, because that means that big things are not going wrong.

Debater and Judge Orientation

A larger event is likely to attract more experienced debaters, who need less training and preparation before the tournament. However, this also means that the small number of less experienced debaters face a gap between their abilities and those of their competitors, so offer training in the weeks leading up to the event. If some teams become discouraged early in the tournament because of their performance and/or competitive results, comfort them with the fact that in later debates at the same tournament they will meet competitors with similar records and that they are welcome to attend future trainings.

To determine judges' experience, ask them to fill out an online evaluation form in which they include any life experience that might be relevant (lawyer, judge, teacher, community volunteer) and indicate if they had any experience debating in general and using the format you have chosen. Analyzing these can help you use judges properly as well as determine what kind of training, if any, you need to offer. If necessary, schedule a long training session before the tournament begins. Early in the tournament, pair new judges with more experienced ones as a process of apprenticeship that can lead to them judging on their own later.

Preliminary debates

Preliminary debates are fairly straightforward. In the first round (or sometimes in the first two rounds), teams are scheduled randomly. After that they are scheduled based on their results. This process is called "power pairing." As the tournament progresses, the process becomes more refined as teams with similar records debate each other. This makes each debate a closer, more engaging contest and ensures that teams do not reach the elimination rounds because they had a weak schedule. The tabulation programs pair teams automatically with some constraints that tournament managers can select. Usually organizers attempt to have a balance of

positions or sides during the tournament, so that teams will debate for or against the topic same number of times, for example. Usually judges do not judge their own team or group, and in some formats, teams from the same organization don't debate each other.

Different Experience Levels

In some cases, debates are organized by experience level. Thus, a tournament might have "novice" and "varsity" or "open" divisions. This type of organization has both pluses and minuses. Those in favor maintain that novices will not become discouraged debating against the more experienced debaters. Those who oppose this organization point out that novices can learn from debating against the more experienced debaters and that power pairing will even out this effect. Decide which type of organization best serves your goal, but remember that one large division is easier to schedule, tabulate, and administer than several smaller ones. If you learn which teams are "novice," you could arrange to have a strictly novice final round to recognize their achievement.

Elimination Rounds

After preliminary debates, the teams "break" into the elimination rounds, such as quarterfinals, semifinals and finals. The number of teams you allow to break will depend on the number at the tournament, your schedule, and the level of difficulty you want to impose for teams to earn the right to "break." If you hold a tournament with sixty teams, a break at 16 is far easier than one at 8. The level of challenge you want to earn the "break" is a part of your tournament design. The elimination round debates need to be sequenced properly based on the order in which teams finished the preliminary debates. Those who did better during the preliminary debates have earned the right to face weaker teams in the elimination debates. Thus, the number one team will debate the last team to break in most instances. Brackets for appropriate levels are available in Appendix 3.

Sample two day event

Saturday-Sunday full tournament, medium days

Saturday

7:00–8:00—Arrival, registration, and coffee if possible

8:00–8:15—Welcome and briefing about procedures.

8:30—Round One: Teams are matched randomly against each other. Judges are assigned. They give oral decisions and return ballot to tabulation room.

10:30—Round Two: Teams are matched based on record. Same decision procedure.

12:30—Lunch break: Lunch may be provided, participants may go nearby, or bring lunch.

13:30—Round Three: Teams are matched based on record. Same decision procedure.

15:30—Round Four: Teams are matched based on record. Same decision procedure.

17:30—Departures.

Sunday

8:00–9:00—Arrival, registration, and coffee if possible.

9:00—Round Five: Teams are matched based on record. Same decision procedure.

11:00—Round Six: Teams are matched based on record. Same decision procedure.

13:00—Lunch break: Lunch may be provided, participants may go nearby, or bring lunch.

14:00—Semifinals: Best teams debate before selected judges; others watch.

16:00—Finals: Best teams debate before selected judges; others watch.

17:30—Awards to best teams and speakers, announcement of upcoming events.

18:00—Departures.

Saturday-Sunday full tournament, long days

Saturday

7:00—Arrival, registration, and coffee if possible

8:00—Welcome and briefing about procedures

8:30—Round One: Teams are matched randomly against each other. Judges are assigned. They give oral decisions and return ballot to tabulation room.

11:00—Round Two: Teams are matched based on record. Same decision procedure.

13:00—Lunch break: Lunch may be provided, participants may go nearby, or bring lunch.

14:00—Round Three: Teams are matched based on record. Same decision procedure.

16:00—Round Four: Teams are matched based on record. Same decision procedure.

18:00—Round Five: Teams are matched based on record. Same decision procedure.

Sunday

7:30—Arrival, registration, and coffee if possible.

8:00—Disqualification of absent teams.

8:30—Round Six: Teams are matched based on record. Same decision procedure.

10:30—Quarterfinalists announced.

10:45—Quarterfinals: Best teams debate before selected judges; others watch

13:00—Lunch break: Lunch may be provided, participants may go nearby, or bring lunch.

14:00—Semifinals: Best teams debate before selected judges; others watch.

16:00—Finals: Best teams debate before selected judges; others watch.

17:30—Awards to best teams and speakers; announcement of upcoming events.

18:00—Departures

Sample Three-Day Event

The three-day event is much like the two-day event, but has more preliminary debates and fewer elimination debates within the context of shorter days. Debate can be intellectually challenging as well as physically tiring, and if days are too long, some contestants might find it less enjoyable. You need to evaluate your participants as well as determine the costs of adding an extra day to make your decision about two- versus three-day schedules.

Friday

17:00-18:00—Arrival, registration, and coffee if possible.

18:00—Welcome and briefing about procedures.

18:30—Round One: Teams are matched randomly against each other. Judges are assigned. They give oral decisions and return ballot to tabulation room.

20:00—Round Two: Teams are matched based on record. Same decision procedure.

22:00—Departures.

Saturday

8:00—Arrival, registration, and coffee if possible.

9:00—Round Three: Teams are matched based on record. Same decision procedure.

11:00—Round Four: Teams are matched based on record. Same decision procedure.

13:00—Lunch break: Lunch may be provided, participants may go nearby, or bring lunch.

14:00—Round Five: Teams are matched based on record. Same decision procedure.

16:00—Round Six: Teams are matched based on record. Same decision procedure.

18:00—Departures.

Sunday

8:00—Arrival, registration, and coffee if possible.

8:30—Round Seven: Teams are matched based on record. Same decision procedure.

10:30—Round Eight: Teams are matched based on record. Same decision procedure.

12:30—Lunch break: Lunch may be provided, participants may go nearby, or bring lunch.

13:30—Semifinals: Best teams debate before selected judges; others watch.

15:30—Finals: Best teams debate before selected judges; others watch.

17:00—Awards to best teams and speakers; announcement of upcoming events.

18:00—Departures.

You can adjust this schedule as desired. You might add more elimination debates and have fewer preliminary events. You might replace a debate with judge and debater training.

Recognition and Awards

At a larger event, you will have more people to thank, recognize, and give awards, and people will be a bit more tired and perhaps a bit more impatient. So, keep the recognition and awards ceremony as short as possible.

Post event publicity

When you have a large-scale event, you need to follow the publicity guidelines outlined above but also do a bit more. Create a photo album of the event (people love to see themselves, parents love to see students, friends love to see each other). Increase the number of debate videos you put on line. Produce some videos with short comments by champions and top speakers. Remind the audience that your event is annual (if true) and urge them to mark the next event on their calendar.

Public Speaking Contest

A public speaking contest can be an easy, fun, and meaningful event. It can get people excited about debating and it can also raise community awareness of your group and what you are doing. Such contests can become a regular event during a specific time of the year.

Match Contest with Purpose

You can use public speaking events in countless ways, including to:

- promote public speaking in a community.
- prepare school children for future involvement in debating.
- increase publicity for your group in the community.

You can stage an event in cooperation with a sponsor and use a topic of interest to the sponsor. For example, you could host a speech contest with a sports club. The club would could sponsor it and provide prizes, while videos of the winning speeches could be posted at their website.

Contest Design

A public speaking contest can be short or long, large or small. Here are some factors to consider when selecting a format.

- Host the contest for a specific audience (such as business persons, students, young children). school, middle school, elementary school).
- Choose a broad topic area for the speeches, one that is of interest to the group you are targeting
- Keep speeches short; four to seven minutes is optimal. Use shorter speeches for younger participants. Set time limits within a range (between X and Y minutes) to avoid judging based on meeting a specific time limit.
- Keep rules simple. Speeches should be within time limits, address the topic; be the work of the speaker, and involve no visual aids or props (to ensure speeches are comparable and avoid staging problems).

Your contest could have a large or a very targeted reach, or fall between these extremes. A very local contest could target a small group, such as a school or a neighborhood. If you have a small event, keep the format simple. Ask the speakers to give their speeches one after the other and then determine the winner or winners. If you have more than six speeches, you might hold a preliminary contest to determine who will be in the final. You might offer an inexpensive prize either from your group or from a sponsor.

If you host a larger contest with speakers from different schools, clubs, or neighborhoods, you could host preliminary events to select the best speakers at each individual location; the top one or two speakers, then move on to the next level. A final event would determine overall winners. The final event might interest the media, so make a video. Sponsors may want to be featured at this final event. An even larger event could involve an entire region or nation. Speeches could be given at several different levels, ending up in a grand final for the region or the nation. Once again, this would be popular with sponsors and media.

As with many events, start small and grow over time. Staging a small event enables you to determine the organizational challenges and the rewards for your group. Also, sponsors may be more attracted by a larger contest that has grown from a smaller one.

Publicity

Focus your publicity efforts on the participating groups, potential speakers and your audience. Target speakers first or else you won't have a contest, so whoever is to be speaking at your event should be the focus of all early publicity efforts. Formal sponsorship by a school, community or other group may help draw more participants. If you provide support, participation will increase. Offer basic public speaking training, if necessary, and provide a place on your website for instruction and advice. Don't forget your audience—family, friends, sponsors, those interested in the topic as well as others such as the elderly (who often love such events, especially if staged in a convenient location such as an elderly living unit). If your event is school-based, make sure information goes out to all teachers and parents.

Publicize your event through your normal channels: press releases, communication through website, Facebook and Twitter, as well as posters, word of mouth, and media packages. Offer to appear on a radio program to discuss the event. Give radio stations the opportunity to host part of the contest or else play sound clips of the speeches.

Judge training

Judges can include members of your group, teachers, leading citizens, and others who you believe are persons of good will who will treat the event with attention and respect. Supply each judge with a list of basic rules as well as judging criteria. A sample of a sheet provided by Toastmasters International can be found at <http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/InternationalSpeechJudgingCriteria.pdf>

Have more than one judge for an event. Each judge can then rank and score the speakers using a simple five-point scale. The ranks and scores can be tabulated and then the speaker scoring higher being named the winner. If they are tied on ranks, then use the quality point scores to break that tie. Avoid a discussion over the winner and instead use the numbers.

Staging

Staging a speaking contest is fairly simple. You just need a room big enough to hold the participants, judges and audience. You may or may not wish to have a podium, small table, or lectern. If you have a podium place a prepared sign about your group, the sponsor or the contest on the front. Chairs should be available for the audience. Most classrooms will serve quite nicely for this purpose. Judges can sit together near the front. You may need a public address system if your audience is large.

Your program will include: welcome and orientation, introduction of the judges, introduction of the speakers, speeches, judges complete scoring sheets, results are tabulated, results are announced, awards presented and then farewell. While scores are being tabulated you can talk to the audience about your group and its future events as well as how they can get involved. Make sure to get contact information from all interested in your group and its activities.

Recognition and Awards

Every participant should receive a certificate of participation with his or her name on it. These are easy to produce with almost any word processing program printed on quality paper. Judges should also receive a certificate for their participation.

Awards can be of various types: certificates, trophies, products, gift certificates, or money. Remember, the contest is important, not the award, but award quality can increase contestant motivation.

Evaluation

Do not become discouraged if few people participate the first time. The costs are very low, administration is easy, and your event will grow over time. Have a discussion after the event with supporters, sponsors and fellow organizers to identify areas that can be improved and determine how to expand the contest. A public speaking contest should be a special event, and probably would not sustain interest if held every week or every month, but may work well if held at the same time each year.

Media Events

We often think that media exposure is difficult and expensive. This is not necessarily so. Given the right situation you can be assisting the media in doing their job while they assist you. Here are some simple examples of where you can gain media exposure.

Radio programs

Many radio programs are searching for content. Bringing two or four debaters to a radio station to have a short debate about an important issue may be what local and smaller radio stations are looking for. You might even consider bringing a recorded debate or have one or two members of your group debate live in the station. These types of events have been shown to be very successful when they are followed up by telephone calls from listeners. Many “talk radio” format stations and programs are looking for a way to get listeners to call in, and staging a reasonably provocative short debate and then inviting calls is often just the right way to do that. Some debate groups have been able to negotiate regular appearances on smaller radio stations of exactly this type.

The key is to locate opportunities. Spend some time looking up and down the radio dial and locate stations and programs that might be interested. Contact them and go from there.

Television

Television programs can range very large and national to very small and local. Slovenia, for example, for many years had a weekly debate television program entitled "Tekma" where high school students debated important issues before a panel of judges. The program also had background information about the topic. After the short debate the judges discussed their decision and then at the very end the students mentioned what side they were personally on as opposed to what side they represented in the debate. There were a series of debates leading up to a final for the championship. For a story about this program, see http://debate.uvm.edu/debateblog/doctortuna/Blog2006/Entries/2006/10/11_WITH_THE_TEKMA_DEBATE_TV_SHOW_IN_THE_STUDIO.html. Kazakhstan had a very popular national television program featuring debaters called "City of the Future." No television program lasts forever, but these programs helped propel the debating program in these nations into the forefront of public awareness.

On the other hand, programs can be small and local. Debaters can tape a short debate and then offer it on local cable networks, public access networks or school video networks. These can be fairly basic affairs as opposed to being technically elaborate and low-end cameras and editing can be sufficient. Programs can also be taped "straight through" to avoid editing. These programs can be offered in the USA over what are called "public access television stations" that give the public studio space and broadcast time. Companies who have won the local cable television franchise cover the costs. One of these is Flashpoint, a program at the University of Vermont, that now has over 440 episodes. The program is an issue-based discussion program of thirty minutes in length. For more information, see <http://flashpointtv.blogspot.com/>. One of the advantages of such small and local programs is that they are easy to prepare and implement, and once institutionalized are fairly easy to sustain. Your debaters gain valuable experience as well as gaining community visibility. Flashpoint programs are popular in Vermont, and the website that displays them for on demand viewing usually logs many hundreds of views for each show. Such programs can be put online using inexpensive services such as <http://vimeo.com> and then displayed on your website.

The secret to gaining such opportunities is to be active in other areas and then look for ways to integrate media into your efforts. They want programming, your group has content, and so what you need is to find the right opportunity to connect these two things together.

Press Conferences

Many community, business and political groups would like to hold press conferences. Quite often at a local level they are fearful of doing so for lack of experience and expertise, your group can provide an answer to them. Your group can provide support services for press conferences.

If a group wants to hold a press conference your organization is probable able to assist with publicity to gather the press, prepare those present to answer questions effectively as well as introduce the issues before questions begin, serve as audience members to ask relevant questions and assist in making a video of the event to place online. These are simple tasks that your organization is probably in a position to accomplish easily.

These efforts take place to the benefit of all involved. The group holding the press conference gains from it, but also your group can gain from it. You can ask for a small fee, support by that group for future projects, prizes for competitions and other forms of support that can be useful for you. They can also serve as endorsements for others who would like to use this service.

For basic information about holding a press conference, see the Community Tool Box at http://ctb.ku.edu/en/tablecontents/sub_section_main_1066.aspx.

Internet events

You can easily integrate the Internet into your organization's program. Regardless of what type of event you're hosting, you can share it over the Internet, and offers

you new opportunities. You just have to determine what works best for you. I recommend three options:

For a discussion of the specific technologies, see Snider (2009)

<http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/nfhs09distance.pdf>.

1. *Stream your events.* Streaming involves setting up video and audio feeds through almost any laptop computer, sending it to a free server, and then allowing viewers with an Internet connection to watch the event live. Just let your viewing population know when the event will take place (watch out for confusion about time zones) and give them a web address to watch from, and you are ready.

The technology is very simple and easy to use. Anyone who can use a laptop can be streaming within 15 minutes. Many companies provide video streaming services, but UStream (<http://www.ustream.tv/new>) is the best, and it's free. It also allows viewers to use text chat and pose questions while watching.

Don't be discouraged if only a small number of people view the event online, As you offer more and more events, audiences will grow. By the way, this is a wonderful way for parents to watch their children perform.

2. *Host a simultaneous event.* A simultaneous event offers live streams from different locations. Thus, one debate team could be in China and another in Europe and they could debate each other live, with the ability to see and hear each other as well as allow others to watch. Judges can be in still other locations.

These technologies are a bit more complicated, but you don't have to be a "techie" to use them. Internet telephone and video provider Skype provides conference sessions for up to twenty-five participants at low cost, see

<http://techtips.salon.com/conference-call-skype-1020.html>. Other services include Gotomeeting at <http://www.gotomeeting.com/fec/>.

While these events are exciting, they also present some challenges. You have to coordinate time zones and stage your event at a time appropriate for an audience the can span countries and continents. You have to make sure all technical matters must be successfully dealt with or the entire event will crash.

3. *Organize a sequenced debate.* This event utilizes the power of the internet most fully. In this event, your members debate with others over long distances without the problems associated with a simultaneous event. For example, Team A gives their speech to a laptop video camera in Slovenia. The speech is then uploaded to a video website such as <http://vimeo.com> or <http://youtube.com>. Then, team B in Chile watches that speech online. They have one day to draft an opposing speech, deliver it into a camera and upload it. These video speeches volley back and forth until the debate is concluded. A judge or judges then watches the entire debate and determines the winner, announcing the decision to a video camera. The complete debate is then released to general public for viewing.

Staging such a debate is relatively technique and involves almost no cost. It erases the tyranny of distance and allows all debaters to become global debaters. This technique has been tried successfully but has yet to be used for a major international debate tournament—but that is probably coming soon.

Conclusion

When determining what to stage, you have many types of events to choose from. Your challenge is to pick those that meet your broader goals and advance your organization, and then experiment with them, repeat them if justified, improve them, and then look for ways to incorporate other events into your program. If you maintain a narrow vision of “we debate each other,” your community will not reap the benefit of the amazing skills your members develop. Your goal should be to empower individuals to make a difference in civil society. All of these events promote this goal.

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