

How to Sponsor a Public Education Program or Event

In the early 1980's the US and the Soviet Union (SU) were engaged in a fierce nuclear arms race, each with over 20,000 nuclear warheads on dozens of types of delivery vehicles including intercontinental missiles, bombs, artillery, torpedoes, sub-launched missiles and even "man portable" (US) or "suitcase bombs" (SU). Both sides were building more fast. The momentum was very strong, and no one in their right mind would have predicted that ordinary people without any special resources could turn that nuclear arms race around.

But ordinary people did in a few years by way of many thousands of small education programs. By 1990, major breakthroughs had been made in arms control, and strategic warhead inventories started a long decline to less than half of their peak numbers.

This guide distills the essence of public education programs. You need:

- 1) An audience.
- 2) A venue (place to do it).
- 3) A teacher or a teaching aid (book, video, slideshow, flip chart, game, exercise, etc.).

Of these an audience is the hardest to acquire. Good audiences attract good teachers, and good education events can always find a venue because they serve the public interest.

Venues include the standard classroom to auditoriums of any size, church basements or sanctuaries, halls of civic groups, kitchens, living rooms, baseball fields or other sports arenas. A venue is any space where people are comfortable, and can be attracted to in a mood to learn something. Remember, nothing is harder than getting an audience to share their precious time to come to your event prepared to learn something.

Teaching aids come in many forms and good teachers are actually quite abundant. Most are quite willing to talk for free, IF you will provide them a decent audience, which remains the hardest element by far.

Once you have done a few thousand public programs, it become clear that booking the speakers and the room make take a few minutes of work on the phone, or a few hours. Getting publicity out to attract an audience can easily take days and/or significant amounts of money.

You want to size the venue to your expectation of audience. Three people in a hall that fits 300 looks weak and makes your speaker nervous. In save-the-world work, many audiences are tiny, but that should not stop you because in the beginning of awareness this is commonly so. And those little groups of six or ten are extremely precious, because they can become the helpers and catalysts that get hundreds of people to larger educational programs.

Some venues may charge fees and some publicity costs money (like flyers @ about \$5 per hundred where we work). That noted, the vast majority of well over 5,000 educational programs we have sponsored have been free to participants, and cost us under \$10 actual cash to produce. But if your venue or your teacher charges fees, or if publicity costs become high, you may have to consider a committee to fund such expenses. Such committees often consist of one chairman (you) and no helpers! So our next topic is how to create a useful committee to share whatever work is required.