

Special Event Ideas

Special events are a fantastic, low-cost way to raise awareness, infuse your workplace with energy and build excitement about local love and supporting United Way. We've compiled some unique ideas for both online and in person events and fundraisers to help engage your team! These are just suggestions that we've seen or heard of from other United Way's, so feel free to create your own – the sky is the limit, and we would be happy to work with you to help you

Health & Wellness

- **Team Workout:** Host a drop-in or virtual fitness class (yoga, Zumba, etc.) for your colleagues! You can either teach it yourself, bring in a professional or watch the same instructional video on YouTube. Suggest participants donate \$10 to participate.
- **Wellness Bingo:** Create a bingo card that has a variety of wellness squares that are based around overall wellness (ie, walk for 1 hour; try a new activity, read a book, meditate for 10 minutes, try a new healthy recipe, do a random act of kindness) The possibilities are endless with this one!
- **A physical challenge:** For every \$10 raised, employees commit to climbing flights of stairs, doing a certain number of push-ups, planks, wall-sit or some other physical feat. This can be completed in the workplace or at home (doing it as a group can be a lot of fun and could certainly amp up the competitive factor!)
- **Bike-a-thon:** Have participants raise pledges to ride their bikes for United Way.

Food and Nutrition Activities

- **Cooking Lessons:** Have a staff member who's a bit of a chef? "Hire" them to host a cooking class (virtual or in the workplace). Suggest employees donate \$10 to participate. Ensure enough money is raised to pay your chef, if not being otherwise expensed.
- **Digital Cookbook:** Everyone contribute a favourite family recipe and then staff could pay \$10 to have access to the full digital cookbook.
- **Food Box Fundraiser:** Partner with a local business like a butcher shop or a local farmer's market to do a meat box or a veggie box. A percentage of each box sold goes to United Way.

- **Potluck Lunch:** Everyone brings a dish and share a delicious meal together of your team's favourite foods. Suggest a pay-what-you-can donation model. Or you can add a bit of friendly competition by deciding on a single dish and making it a cook-off (chili works great)!
- **Other food related events:** Ice cream social, pizza party, pancake breakfast, Bake Sale, BBQ (anything food related is always a hit!)

Arts/Games/Entertainment

- **Watch Party:** Host and invite your friends and colleagues to watch the latest movie or an old favourite. Everyone donates what they would have spent going to the theatre and you all enjoy chatting about your favourite scenes, favourite characters, and the best snack pairings.
- **Read-a-thon:** Participants pledge to read a certain number of books in a set time and ask their friends and family to support them with a donation.
- **Mario Cart Tournament:** Set up in your board or lunchroom and let the games begin! Charge a registration fee for participants.
- **Paint Night:** Everyone can follow along to the same instructional video on YouTube or bring in a professional instructor!
- **Office Talent Show:** Host an in-person or virtual talent show (ask them to record and upload a 2-3-minute video of themselves showcasing their talent). Encourage people to vote for their favourite act by donating, where every donation is a vote towards selecting a winner. The act with the highest dollar amount raised wins! To raise even more money, consider asking for a registration fee from all the contestants, or asking executive leadership to sponsor a contestant, and have it count towards their total money raised.
- **Comedy Hour:** Ask a local comedian or improv group to donate their services over the lunch hour. Have employees buy tickets to attend.
- **Trivia Night:** Host a trivia night - pick a theme, set the time, and have everyone join you for some fun and education! This can be done virtually over Zoom or Microsoft Teams.
- **Family Art Contest:** Give employees photographs of 1 or 2 top executives to take home for their children under 12 to draw. Charge a \$5.00 entry fee to vote for the best portraits. Display the winning portraits as part of the organization's permanent art collection. Variations of this event include having family members paint depictions of people helping other people, writing poems, or submitting photographs of a chosen theme.

Other Ideas:

- **Auction:** This can be done in the office or online using e-transfer (does not require a lottery license). Encourage donations of popular items (gift cards, gift baskets, etc.), as well as unique and rare ones (sports memorabilia, autographed items, virtual coffee with a prominent person within your organization, etc.).
- **Raffle or a 50/50:** Gather items from local businesses and use an online platform (such as rafflebox.ca) to perform raffle. Or talk to United Way staff about our 50/50 lottery license available.
- **Beard or Ponytail Fundraiser:** Grow your ponytail or your beard and charge a fee to get in on the challenge (\$10 for example) and a cost if you shave/cut before the end (\$100). You can also use this to encourage people to donate (ie, if we can get 100% of staff to donate on their pledge form, I'll shave my beard!)
- **Theme days/meetings:** Jersey Day, 80's meeting, or ugly sweater event. You could also donate to wear your pajamas while you work from home or host a fancy virtual staff meeting where everyone dresses in their fanciest clothes! Formal Friday - if you're in the office, have a day where you put on your finery!
- **Donate your commute/coffee/parking/:** If people are working from home, challenge them to consider donating the cost of their daily commute, parking, coffee, or lunch! If you have prime parking spots in your office building, hold a draw to win parking for a week/month, etc.