

Open House & Fundraising Plan – Spring 2022

The Toast – Reality-testing for 2022

- The outlook for the COVID-19 pandemic was more optimistic last spring when the RL ballroom was booked, and the situation in April is hard to predict.
- The success of The Toast, in its current format, revolves around Table Hosts, who invite guests to attend (and also ask for in-lieu gifts). Liquor Control regs require that all attendance be by invitation.
- Before COVID there had already been waning enthusiasm among the core group of long-time table hosts, and it had been increasingly challenging to recruit new hosts and guests.
- In recent check-ins with core long-time table hosts, 90% indicated that they were not comfortable attending or inviting others to attend a large indoor gathering, nor was there enthusiasm from most for the idea of a “virtual event”.
- The Toast’s “gala” format had not been attractive to or attended by many younger donors, or even by most of the DRC’s volunteers.
- The logistics to put on The Toast are significant in normal times, and would involve additional health and safety protocols this year, such as checking proof of vaccination and masking. The total cost to put on the event is typically \$10,000-12,000.
- Recent personal observation of the hotel’s health protocols at a large in-person event were not reassuring.
- Our hotel catering contract stipulates forfeiture of the \$5,000 room guarantee (prorated) for cancellation less than 90 days before the event date.
- Individual giving has increased more than 50% over the last two years, despite not holding this event, due in-part to increased personal outreach and capacity-building emphasis. The DRC’s most committed donors continue to give generously – The Toast is one of many opportunities to give, not necessarily the cause of that giving.
- The long-standing concept and format of The Toast is due for re-examination, in any case, in light of changing donor and volunteer demographics and preferences.

Spring 2022 Plan

Open House

- One or more open houses for DRC volunteers, donors and the community had already been part of the vision after our expansion and renovation is completed.
- An expanded, day-long, indoor-outdoor open house would include:
 - Outdoor space (covered and uncovered), and a small number of tables, for eating, drinking and socializing.
 - Our main chocolate vendors will be asked to either be present or to donate treats for the event, with promotional signage and acknowledgement.
 - Simple, light hors d'oeuvres will also be provided throughout the day.
 - Beverages will be provided, but no alcohol will be served to attendees, both to minimize liability and avoid liquor license issues.
 - Masking will be required inside the building and encouraged outdoors (when not eating or drinking), informed by public health guidelines
 - Tours of the DRC's expanded facilities (staff or self-guided) with the number of people in the building at any one time limited to minimize exposure. Two large HEPA air filters (part of our capacity-building purchases) will be utilized.
 - Videos and PowerPoint presentations (30 year retrospective, client testimonials, etc.) would run on the new large video screens in the building.
 - Staff will be available to describe their respective programs to interested attendees, and descriptive signs will be posted throughout the building.
 - Each attendee will be given a packet with service and impact information, an update on our capacity-building efforts (and how they can help support them), and donation/commitment cards, return envelopes, and QR codes for on-the-spot online donations.
- The event would be held on a Sunday, when most businesses in our office park would be closed, to minimize traffic congestion and maximize parking capacity. It could be held either on the original Toast date of April 24th, or on a Sunday in May (next 40-Hour training is May 5 - 7 & 12 - 14). In any case, it will be impossible to 100% guarantee the weather.
- All prospective attendees, when they RSVP, would be asked choose a 2-hour arrival "window" (10-12, 12-2, 2-4) to help manage the number of people on-site in relation to capacity, parking and health & safety considerations.

- Presentation of the Peacemaker Award as part of this drop-in open house format is not ideal, so options for an alternative event specifically for the formal presentation will be considered.
- One-third of our current active volunteers have come on-board during the past two years and have never set foot in the DRC offices, nor have most of them met staff and other volunteers in-person, so this “low-barrier” open house format may be an appealing opportunity for them.
- The open house will be an opportunity to give our donors a glimpse of what their generous support has helped make possible, as well as to identify remaining needs (technology, etc.) that they can help fund through their support.
- Many community leaders, elected representatives, our partner agencies, and even past 40-Hour Training participants may also be curious to see our new facilities.
- All Board members, past table hosts and current capacity-building champions will be asked to invite people to the open house, and to encourage in-lieu contributions from those who are uncomfortable attending or unable to attend (see below).

Fundraising Outreach & Resources

- Sample messages re the open house and in-lieu giving requests will be provided to all past table hosts, Board members and capacity-building champions for their outreach communication, along with links for online donations, etc.
- A new set of Talking Points, including updated service descriptions, impact stats, and capacity-building progress report, will be provided to all Board members and Champions to use as a resource in their outreach to friends, family, colleagues, prospective business supporters, etc.
- Virtual “House Parties”, piloted last year – or even small group gatherings later in the year - are an additional option for Board members and other Champions who wish to invite people to learn more about the work of the DRC, and to support it.
- Videos - including a video tour of the DRC’s expanded facilities - and other information presented at the open house would also be made available online to all those involved in fundraising outreach to be shared with people they contact.
- A special fundraising appeal (direct mail and email/social media) will occur in late spring, in addition to participation in the Give Big state-wide crowdfunding campaign, tied to on-going messaging as part of Year Two of our three-year capacity-building emphasis.