

## GETTING STARTED

### Start Early

...at least one year ahead; some classes start two or three years ahead. This applies whether you and some classmates plan your reunion or if you hire a reunion company to pull things together.

**An excellent way begin your planning is to review the Reunion Surveys that are included in a folder on ETHS CLASS REUNION HANDBOOK CD** (available upon request). These may answer many of your questions. Also, each survey lists contact information so you can ask the questions that may not have been answered. In addition, you can talk with those who have already had their reunions but who volunteered to assist those planning reunions before the survey process was put in place.

### Form a Committee

While you can be as inclusive as you want, we recommend a minimum of 10 people to share the duties. Some reunion committees have a single chair. Others have co-chairs to head the event to take the pressure off a sole leader. Diversify your committee membership, choosing people from different backgrounds as well as their interests at ETHS (e.g., sports teams, clubs, theatre, school leaders; remember ETHS is a diverse school, so your committee should play to the strengths of everyone). It is important to have one or more committee members living in the area where the reunion will be held. These are some special skills that can make organizing a reunion more successful—accounting/bookkeeping to record and disburse the many thousands of dollars that will flow through the bank account; computer skills to help with mail lists, email, attendance lists, creating the memory book, and nametags; and classmates who have experience with organizing events or have contacts with event locations.

### Key Considerations

What the committee decides about the first three of the following considerations will to a large extent determine the fourth: reunion cost. However, there are many other costs, some of which are listed on the next page.

### *Select a Date*

This decision will drive all others, so think about when most of your classmates will be able to make it to Evanston. This will be different for every class. To help you decide on a date, ask yourselves these questions:

- What time of year do you want the reunion?
- Do you want your reunion on a three-day weekend?
- Should it be around a holiday or ETHS homecoming or graduation?
- How many days should the reunion last?
- What's happening locally that might limit reunion venues (Northwestern's graduation, sporting events, conventions, etc.)?
- What other dates should you avoid that would preclude attendance (e.g., religious holidays)?

- As soon as you have a firm date contact the Alumni Office so that they can put your dates in the next issue of the “KIT” as well as on the ETHS alumni web site. As your plans evolve, updates can also be posted on the web site.

### *Determine Activities*

Many classes like to make the reunion more than a one-evening party. Some plan events over an entire weekend. Here are some ideas:

- Friday night casual get-together, either all together as a class or in subgroups (sports teams, grade-school graduates, ETHS Choir, Y Clubs, etc.)
- Saturday at ETHS: tours of the high school (provided by ETHS Public/Alumni Relations Office, free of charge). **Note: that if you plan to include an ETHS tour, you need to check with the alumni office to ensure that someone will be available for the tour. This is particularly true for the summer time.**
- Catered continental breakfast or a brunch at ETHS, attend a football game or a musical event such as YAMO
- Rent a bus to tour Evanston (particularly if your classmates haven’t been back for decades!)
- Dinner and dancing at a hotel or country club
- Sunday picnic at a local park (this could be a family event and might be included in the total package, charged separately, or offered ad hoc through voluntary contributions)

### *Determine Activity Location(s)*

Once you have ideas about dates and how many events you want to hold, you need to decide where to hold them. Often events such as dinner-dances are held at hotels in the Evanston or North Shore area or out near O’Hare Airport. Others have been held at the Woman’s Club of Evanston, at local country clubs, or at local restaurants. Some events are held at ETHS itself or in local parks (no alcoholic beverages allowed).

Determining factors seem to be the age of your classmates, convenience, “family” events, festivities at the event, food and drinks (including alcohol), and, of course, cost.

Some common issues to discuss with the host location include:

- Size of the room: Will it hold the crowd you expect? Can you dance there, too?
- Food: Is food available in-house or should it be catered?
- Hours: Opening and closing hours? When can food be served?
- Drinks: Open or cash bar? How long will you need a bartender? Added costs?
- Inflation clause in the contract: How much will costs increase if you contract a year or more in advance of the reunion date?
- Parking facilities
- Decorations: Can we? What is available through the event location?

- Music: Band or “DJ”? What type of music? How much will it cost?
- Is there a separate place for dancing from dining?

### *Determine Cost*

Reunions can be pricey, especially if spouses, significant others, and children are part of the festivities, so you need to determine a ballpark high-end cost you feel your classmates would be willing to spend. You want to cover your costs and maybe add an amount for a class gift. (Some classes also ask for voluntary donations to help underwrite the cost of the reunion.)

Things to consider:

- Location of the event(s), room rental(s)
- Food (menu, refreshments, buffet or sit-down dinner, etc.)
- Decorations
- Entertainment + music
- Publicity (mailings)
- Honored guests (subsidy for former teachers? honoraria for special speakers?)
- Photographer
- Reunion book, directory
- Nametags
- Class gift

Once these costs are determined, along with a reasonable guess of the number of attendees, a price can be fixed. We recommend your committee open a checking account for expenses, deposits, and raising “seed money,” if necessary. Opening an account that will allow payment by credit cards can be beneficial. The Alumni Association has arranged for reunion classes to have a free banking account with the First Bank & Trust of Evanston. The bank will also process credit card transactions.

### *Commercial Reunion Services*

We all lead busy lives and may not have the time collectively to pull a reunion together. There are companies that can help you plan your reunion. They will all do the following:

- Plan your party or parties
- Send out your mailings
- Research to find classmates
- Make nametags with high school pictures copied from your class’s senior yearbook
- Advance deposits for dinner
- Compile a reunion booklet

Some companies will do more. You will have to contact them and make your own arrangements. Their cost, which is based on the number of people they get to come to the reunion, is included in the reservation price.