

PDA Reunion Committee Timeline & Planning Guide

Poindexter Descendants Association

Prepare Your Reunion Ideas

36 to 24 Months Ahead

- Select a reunion destination.
- Get placed on the agenda of the PDA General Meeting. These are held once a year at a PDA Family Reunion.
- Make a formal presentation at the PDA General Meeting. Explain why your choice of location would be ideal for a PDA Family Reunion. Give an overview of your concept of this reunion should your location be selected by the membership for a reunion site. Submit a personal resume covering the talents and experience you have that will make you a good reunion host/hostess.

The Work Begins

24 to 18 Months Ahead

- Congratulations! The PDA membership has selected you to put on a PDA Family Reunion.
- In the PDA newsletter, place a survey to family members for opinions and ideas concerning a reunion in your area. Use the responses to help plan your reunion.
- Create a reunion planning binder to hold your information.

Make Reservations

18 to 12 Months Ahead

- Set a date.
- Book hotel, resort, or similar facility. Reserve all places in the vicinity you will need for the reunion. This includes a block of hotel rooms and group meeting room(s) at the reunion property, as well as locations off the reunion site itself. When selecting a location and property, keep in mind the availability of activities for family members of all ages and spouses who are non-genealogists, both on and off site. If you chose your facility wisely there should be lots to do at the property or close-by, e.g. tennis, swimming, amusement-park rides, arcade games, bicycling, bowling, golf, shopping, etc. Be sure there are play areas or activities at your site for the younger set as well. Also remember those who are physically challenged, i.e. wheelchair bound, blind, deaf, etc. Make sure that the site you choose has handicapped parking, wheelchair access (ramps, elevators, etc.), and handicapped restroom facilities. Availability of nonsmoking rooms is a must. For outdoor events, make sure the site has shade and shelter.
- Make arrangements for all meal events. These can take place at the reunion site or off property.
- Provide housing, reunion registration, and event/activity costs (at least approximate), plus room booking and early registration deadlines at PDA reunion 1 year prior to yours.
- Hand out information about area where reunion will take place and hotel brochures to attendees of reunion immediately prior to yours. At that time, ask family members if they may be coming, so you can get a rough estimate of attendees.
- Immediately following the reunion prior to yours, provide basic information to the newsletter editor and webmaster to publicize the reunion dates, tentative schedule, and host property. Develop enthusiasm for attending your reunion through details about the facility and location

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chosen. Review past Reunion info in newsletters and on the web site for ideas. On the web, go to <http://reunion.poindexterfamily.org>. You will also find past newsletters in the Members section of the newsletter.

- Make a master for a flyer inviting people to the reunion and have it put in the same PDA newsletter.
- Be ready to replace reunion information on PDA website with details on the reunion you are hosting, as soon as the reunion immediately previous to yours is over. Advise the webmaster of pertinent links, which should interest people considering attending the PDA reunion you are hosting, that you want placed on the website.

Form a Committee and Delegate Duties

12 to 10 Months Ahead

- Start enlisting volunteers from the start. Not only will you ease the burden on yourself, but you will also allow other family members to feel needed and involved. Begin signing them up at the reunion just prior to yours. Try to match the right person to each job (e.g., an accountant as treasurer; a good cook to plan menus). Volunteer jobs include: articles for PDA newsletter, mailings (e-mail and snail mail), money management, site coordination, publicity, ordering T-shirts and other souvenirs, buying decorations, soliciting and collating family surveys, organizing menus, planning games/activities for adults and children, handling registration, making name tags, organizing presentations, performing as master of ceremonies, setting up and cleaning up, plus anything else you need assistance with.
- Organize committees for welcome/greeters, registration/information table, entertainment/events, banquet, food, child care/activities, games, gift exchange etc. Be sure whoever is in charge of meal planning provides for the dietary restrictions of all attendees.
- Have committee get flyers posted at local genealogy libraries, delivered to genealogy organizations, and printed in genealogy publications.
- Arrange for PDA members to contact people with the Poindexter surname found in their local phone books and invite them to the reunion.
- Place reunion announcements on genealogy and family reunion websites. Reference announcements to poindexterfamily.org website for complete details.
- Keep in mind that once all jobs are assigned, you're not off the hook. Follow up regularly to make sure all the work is getting done. Make deadlines and reassign some jobs, if necessary. Keep the family informed of volunteer efforts in the PDA newsletter and be sure to express your appreciation at the big event.

Show Me the Money

10 to 9 Months Ahead

- Create a budget committee to help research all expenses and make sure to keep track of every dime that comes and goes. In coordination with the PDA Board of Directors, determine the budget. Arrive at a comfortable sum for the vast majority of family members.
- Make a list of all your potential expenses. Then add 10 percent to offset unexpected costs. It is always better to overestimate than be caught short at the time of the reunion. (You can always return the extra proceeds or bank them for the next reunion.) You might want to open a separate checking account to keep track of all reunion income and expenses. Your list of expenses might include: bank account and checks; phone calls; printing; deposits for hotel,

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caterer, keepsakes, and tours; registration supplies; awards and prizes; entertainers; picnic supplies; rentals (tables, chairs, computer projector and screen, Internet access in the presentation rooms, etc.); decorations and flowers; daily food expenses; photographer and/or film; tips/gratuities; and taxes.

Putting It All Together

9 to 6 Months Ahead

- Plan reunion schedule and daily activities (programs, speakers, awards ceremony, tours, etc.).
- Include reunion activities that spouses, significant others, and the non-genealogists in the group may enjoy (e.g., swimming, golf, fishing, sports, shopping).
- If planning a reunion activity in a park, reserve space and shelter (if necessary).
- Via the PDA newsletter, send out a second announcement with the finalized schedule including event times. Provide information such as details about the place of the reunion, accommodations, types of activities available in the surrounding area as well as at the reunion, **registration forms** listing all costs, and call for additional volunteers.
- Update information on website to include everything you have provided to the PDA newsletter. Be sure registration forms are placed online.
- Reconfirm banquet or other catering arrangements for large events. Discuss room set up and decorations for these occasions with food services or property manager.
- Contact a photographer (or delegate a family member as official photographer). You may want someone assigned to take candid photos throughout the reunion. Then use a professional photographer to take the Family Group Photo the night of the banquet.

Coordinate and Confirm

5 Months Ahead

- This is good "in-between" time to relax. Get a massage.
- Stomp out fires when necessary (e.g., emergency calls from committee chairpersons).
- Check on Reunion publicity to be sure it is accurate and being disbursed everywhere.
- Make sure hotel reservationists are properly providing information and correctly processing reservations for reunion attendees.

Attending to the Nuts and Bolts

4 Months Ahead

- Design and order family T-shirts, hats, or other keepsakes.
- Confirm reservations, entertainment, photographer, caterer, restaurants, etc.
- Follow-up on decorations, particularly those requiring professional printing (such as banners).
- Calculate loaner or rental needs (e.g., chairs, tables, coolers, etc.). Reserve.
- Reserve a tent for outdoor activities (if necessary).

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Involve Everyone

3 to 2 Months Ahead

- Place a reminder in the PDA newsletter. Let members know they need to get their registrations in if they have not done so yet.
- Draw up list of attendees. Make follow-up contacts where necessary.
- Enlist volunteers for set up, clean up, etc. (for whatever events require them).
- Give an assignment to everyone who is registered for the reunion and not already working on the reunion. Providing everyone a job to do can break the ice and strengthen bonds before the reunion begins.
- Ask spouses to get together with other "in-laws" to stage a roast -- or toast -- for the family (e.g., "The top 10 reasons we married into the Poindexter family are ...").
- Teenagers could easily be bored with the prospect of spending a whole weekend plus with relatives they hardly know. Therefore, it is important to have plenty of opportunities to make them feel needed and involved. First, provide them with jobs, such as assisting with the welcoming committee or helping at the registration table. Should you need any last minute signs and/or banners put them in charge of this task. Most enjoy decorating rooms or being given the responsibility of putting out material before a meeting. Use this eager, ready, willing, and "looking for something to do" workforce.
- Prepare programs and schedules.
- Buy (or assign a volunteer to buy) nonperishable items (e.g., name tags, raffle tickets, craft supplies, decorations, etc.). For picnics and barbecues, be certain to include paper goods, trash bags, etc.

Communicate and Entertain

1 Month Ahead

- Complete plans for organized activities for youngsters when the PDA General Meeting and EPARC Research Group are in session.
- Party and picnic games make it easy for long-lost relatives and shy cousins to relax and get to know each other. This is true for adults, as well as children. Be sure to include traditional games, which have simple rules and are proven fun. Add interest to the tried-and-true by customizing a game. Pin-the-tail-on-the-donkey becomes Pin-the-hat-on-Aunt-Lucille. Everyone can be a winner if you play games that require a willing spirit, teamwork, and very little skill! A good resource is the book *Fun and Games for Family Gatherings* by Adrienne Anderson (Reunion Research, 1996). (See PDA Family Activities and Games sheet for more ideas.)
- Send a reminder to all registrants about important details concerning the reunion, such as remembering their present for Saturday night's gift exchange. Add in what the weather is likely to be, a synopsis of all the planned reunion activities, and a list of items that they should bring, i.e. family pictures, research information, bathing suit, and so on. A list of clothing needed is always helpful, especially if you are having any theme activities such as a Western night, a Hoe Down, a Mardi Gras, etc. Be sure to mention Saturday night is dressy. Always remember a polite and sincere "Thanks for your interest, can't wait to see you at the reunion" message at the end. For those with e-mail, use this method, others can be sent snail mail.
- Along with your reminder note, include a sign-up sheet for people to choose the games/activities they would like to participate in or supervise. Include a description of the game

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and/or activity because these can vary regionally. You can use the sign-up sheets to organize teams, too.

- When you have assembled all the supplies for a game, put them in a box and label it with the name of the game. Include a contents list to be checked off as you clean up and, if necessary, also add instructions.
- If you intend to give prizes to the winners, purchase small novelties by the gross (which typically totals 144 pieces) or by the dozen from party goods stores, or at the catalog retailer Oriental Trading, www.oriental.com/home.
- For a large reunion, you can give every player a card. When players play a game, their card will be stamped. Cards can be redeemed for prizes at a prize booth.
- Should there be several families registered with small children, consider enlisting a few preteens or young teens from registered attendees to baby-sit the younger children on a rotating basis (e.g., half-hour stints). You can even arrange to pay them a nominal fee. Keep the children nearby (in an adjoining room) and provide plenty of toys, books, healthy snacks, diaper-changing gear, bubbles, and games. Check on them occasionally (without being seen, if possible) and have the babysitters call for you whenever you are needed. (Cell phones come in handy at these times.) Establish set times when this service will be available, i.e. during seminars, when you have planned adult activities, and other select occasions.
- You could also have older kids create a video of the reunion or take photographs. Some teachers might be willing to give extra credit to teens who interview family members and write essays about their past. And what a fantastic record this would be for PDA to have!

Last-Minute Details

2 Weeks Ahead

- Make a checklist. Include list of volunteers and their assignments.
- Check in with volunteers and review final details.
- Reconfirm reunion arrangements with the facility.
- Contact bus company to reiterate tour details, pick-up and drop off times, itinerary, etc.
- Verify restaurant reservations and meal selections.
- Go over plan with seminar presenters. Be sure you have arranged for all the equipment they need. Ask if they will have handouts that need to be distributed. Will they need assistance before, during, or after their programs?
- Touch base with photographer, entertainment coordinator, children's activity director, babysitters, etc. to go over details of their jobs/assignments.

Final Preparations

1 Week Ahead

- Load up cameras and camcorders with film/tape/batteries.
- Assemble welcome packets.
- Prepare name tags.
- Collect together all items you are bringing to reunion, e.g. pens, pencils, printed programs, decorations, game boxes, prizes, awards, etc.
- Pick up or have "loaners" (chairs, coolers, etc.) delivered. Arrange for tent to be set up.

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Reunion Days

Between Memorial Day and Labor Day

- Double-check your checklist. Organize volunteers.
- Have greeters welcome all arriving attendees. Let new arrivals know where things are, i.e. the registration/information table, the public restrooms, the Poindexter room, other family members, etc.
- In attendees' rooms when they check in, have some type of small card or gift from the Reunion Committee and PDA Board of Directors welcoming them to the PDA Family Reunion.
- Have plenty of maps on hand at the registration/information table. Prepare maps for state, city, local attractions, hotel, vicinity around reunion property, historic or local color walking tour(s), etc.
- Give every registrant a welcome packet which, among other things, will include that person's name tag, event/activity tickets, T-shirt (if they are to receive one), schedule of events, maps of hotel and area within walking distance of reunion property, locations and operating hours for nearby restaurants (including those in hotel), information about local attractions and events that are currently going on, etc. Require those picking up packets to sign your registration sheet. This will be your receipt of who has picked up what for whom.
- Have lots of PDA Membership Applications and Family Group Sheets at the registration table.
- Ask the PDA Treasurer or that person's representative to be at the registration table during the hours you have it open. This will allow members and guests to pay PDA dues for the upcoming year. (You may want to suggest he/she have a team to handle this, so no one is stuck at the registration table all the time. This is also applicable for your registration/information crew and your welcoming/greeter committee members.)
- Provide welcome, mixer, and entertainment happenings for all attendees at appropriate opportunities. Plan the reunion with a variety of multigenerational mixers, so young and old get to know each other. Sports, dancing, relay races, family storytelling, talent shows, walking excursions, and shopping trips are great ways to break the ice. Help all attendees get involved in activities that suit them (e.g., special talents such as music or crafts; keeping track of family history; entertaining young children, etc.).
- Like the Boy Scout motto says, "Be Prepared." Expect the unexpected. Hope for the best, but prepare for the worst, i.e. inclement weather, late or lost tour bus, etc. Make sure you have extra everything (registration forms, blank name tags, game accessories, etc.). It is almost a given that someone will forget something.
- **Line up plenty of help.** There is no reason why you should have to do everything yourself. In fact, it is best if during the reunion event you are assigned nothing to do – have everyone else do it. You will have lots of questions to answer and things to oversee, without you being responsible for any single thing.
- Arrange for aid of physically challenged attendees should they request or need this service. Assign a family member to assist anyone who may need help at meals and/or other activities.
- When organizing presentations (seminars, meetings, discussion groups, etc), offer front-row seating or aisle access to attendees needing these accommodations, i.e. wheelchair bound, blind, deaf, and so on.
- Keep teenagers involved in discussions of family history. Create games like Jeopardy, Trivial Pursuit, or Who Wants to be a Millionaire?, based on Poindexter family history.
- The most important thing to remember is not to expect everything to go exactly as planned. It never, ever works that way. Be flexible to the inevitable changes in the reunion plan.

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Otherwise, not only will you stress out and get a brain short when things veer from the expected, but you may miss some of the hilarious spontaneous events that family reunions are notorious for.

- Enjoy yourself! You've done all the preplanning, now it is your turn to visit and participate in the group activities.
- Make sure you have a cleanup crew to help dismantle the Poindexter Room the last day of the reunion.
- On the final day, ask guests to evaluate the reunion. Use the PDA Family Reunion Evaluation Form.

Follow-Up

- Pat yourself on the back, relax, and enjoy the pictures.
- Complete bookkeeping; settle accounts.
- Call or write volunteers to thank them for their efforts.
- Send thank-you notes to the location manager, caterer, hotel staff, photographer, presenters, and others if you were happy with the services provided.
- Provide an article to the very next PDA newsletter describing the events of the reunion. Include a photo or two, if available.
- Share the memories. Post photos from the reunion on the PDA website.
- Reflect and evaluate for the next reunion: What worked? What didn't? Write these down in a notebook and give to the next PDA reunion host/hostess. Also provide to the webmaster to update this document.

The End!