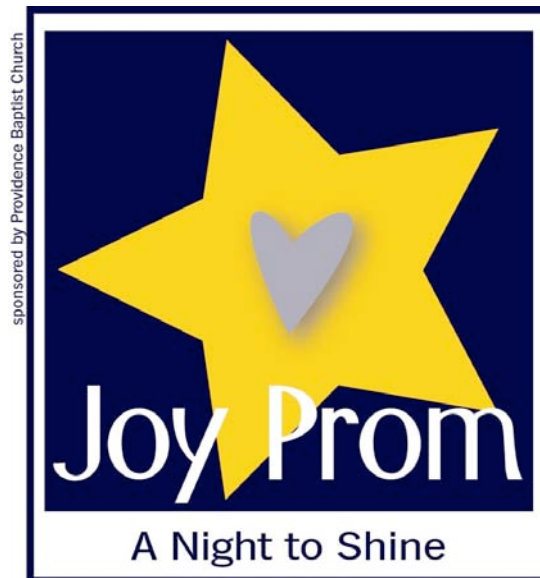


Spread the Joy: A Guide to Putting on a Joy Prom



Luke 14:13-14

Providence Baptist Church
Raleigh, NC
October 2007

Introduction: What is Joy Prom?

Joy Prom is a dinner-dance for those 16 years and older with special needs. Joy Prom started as a mission project of our eleventh grade and has grown to a whole church project. The purpose of Joy Prom is to demonstrate God's love to individuals who are frequently marginalized by modern society. Our guiding scripture is Luke 14: 12-14 which says:

"Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

Our goal is to honor our guests with a first class event that gives them an evening to remember. We want each guest to feel special and to have fun.

We have had multiple requests for information from other churches and community organizations that want to put on similar events in their communities. The purpose of this manual is to share with you the what's, how's, and why's of Joy Prom. We have hosted Joy Prom for four years and have made changes each year based on feedback from our guests and our volunteers and also hope to convey some of the changes we have made over the years.

Joy Prom also has the ability to bring in outside volunteers like no other church event. People who would otherwise never set foot inside a church will volunteer at the Joy Prom. This allows your church to take advantage of a unique opportunity to really show Christ's love to those who would otherwise never experience it, whether they are guests, family members or caregivers of guests or volunteers. Joy Prom truly is a joyful event, and we hope to spread the joy by sharing with you how we do Joy Prom. Feel free to take our ideas and use them or adapt them (or even reject them!) to develop your own Joy Prom so you can "invite the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind" and honor them as Christ would.

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Prayer

Joy Prom needs to be undergirded with prayer. This is included in the manual first because it is the most important aspect. We suggest that you pray before committing to having a Joy Prom. Ask the Lord for guidance about whether or not you should have a Joy Prom, about the event itself, the support of your church, the leadership team, and committees that will need to be put in place. Pray for the guests. If it is the Lord's plan for your church to have a Joy Prom then He already knows who will attend.

A prayer team be formed and meet regularly to pray for all aspects of the Joy Prom. The chair of the prayer committee should contact the committee chairs for specific prayer requests, which can then be sent out via e-mail or regular mail in addition to being prayed for at regular meetings.

Each committee meeting should begin with prayer. In an event with many details it is easy to get caught up in the details and the work to be done and forget the reason behind all of it. Pray for the work of your specific committee but also the work of other committees, the leadership team, the guests and the guests' caregivers.

Also incorporate prayer into volunteer training meetings. Some volunteers may not attend church and may not be familiar or comfortable with corporate prayer. This can serve as a blessing for them, but be sensitive about asking others to pray unless you know them. We have had volunteers tell us this was the first time they had prayed for an event, so you can also use this prayer time to model how to pray (for the event for them).

One special aspect of our prom is the prayer time held the night before Joy Prom. For a brief time all work halts and everyone who has gathered at the church to prepare for the event stops to pray. You may also want to have people pray during the Joy Prom and during the hour after the prom as the guests and volunteers go home. And finally pray after Joy Prom. Pray that the guests and volunteers enjoyed a wonderful evening and can find a place to get involved in a local church. And of course start praying about next year's prom!

The Nutshell Version

Joy Prom begins with invitations to our guests. These invitations include a registration form that guests complete, tear off and return to us via mail. Guests are also available to register online. Guests are not only invited to the Joy Prom but also invited to select a formal gown or suit to wear. The church is open for formalwear fittings about a month prior to the prom. During a three day period each guest is escorted and encouraged to try on clothing that has been donated by congregation and others. Volunteer seamstresses make alterations as needed and guests return to the church to pick up their outfits before the prom.

A week before the prom decorating kicks into high gear and is designed to carry out the theme, make the evening very special and deliver the “wow” factor. While some people decorate others prepare corsages and boutonnieres, are set up table for dinner, roll silverware in napkins all while the band does sound checks.

On the night of the prom the guests enter the parking lot. Some guests arrive by private car, some in limousines, some in group home vans, and others in the Raleigh Trolley. Guests then drive up to the curb where car doors are opened and volunteers provide assistance with unloading and are greeted by the tag team who makes sure we have the names of the guest or guests in the vehicle. The guests then approach the red carpet entrance where the Master of Ceremonies announces their arrival to the crowd of paparazzi (our students and their parents) who cheer, applaud and take pictures.

From this point, guests have the option of eating dinner or having their portrait made. Background music is played while dinner is served by waiters wearing black pants and white tops. This is a good time for the host or hostess to get to know their guest. The guest's name tag indicates any food allergies or special food preparation.

At the door the guest is paired with a host or hostess for the evening. The host and the guest proceed to the registration table where the guest is given a pre-printed nametag. The guest is then escorted to an area where the women are treated to makeup and hair styling and

the men get their shoes shined. The women then receive corsages and the men boutonnières.

Meanwhile, another group of guests meets with a professional photographer who uses a backdrop and props each picture. Each guest is photographed (sometimes with their host or hostess), and their final photos are mailed to them after prom.

From this point area guests either go to the fellowship hall for dinner or to the photography area. What would a prom be without a prom picture? Waiters wearing black pants and white tops serve dinner to the guests who eat while visiting with their host/hostess. The guest's nametag indicates if they have food allergies and/or need special food preparation. During dinner either music is played or guests are treated to a video feed of other activities at the prom. A professional photographer using a backdrop and props photographs each guest. Photographs are mailed to the guests after the prom.

Throughout the prom a medical team is available should any guest need medical care. Depending on the guest's needs, their caregiver can either leave the church to enjoy an evening of respite, or they can stay on site and relax in a caregivers lounge where they are treated to appetizers and a video feed from the party. Some caregivers, particularly some dads, stay and dance with their child. We ask that any guest who is unable to communicate or is not mobile have a caregiver who stays with them throughout the night.

Once the guest has dined and had their portrait taken, they go to the worship center for dancing to either a live band or a DJ. There are mandatory breaks throughout the evening for water, rest and a simple presentation of the Gospel. Many people are recognized during the breaks including anyone with a birthday and of course a prom queen and king. As guests leave the prom, they are given a prom favor such as a picture frame for their prom portrait.

We commonly hear from our volunteers that Joy Prom is "nicer than my prom was by a long shot." Our goal is to honor our guests with a wonderful evening that does indeed rival any other prom.

Time Line

Below is a sample timeline for hosting a Joy Prom. Generally you will need more for your first prom than in subsequent years. We typically have our Joy Prom at the end of April. Choose a time that does not conflict with high school and college final exams.

1 Year Out:

- Cast the vision to your church's leaders
- Watch the Providence Baptist Church Joy Prom DVD for ideas
- Visit other Joy Proms
- Decide on a budget
- Secure your dates and facilities
- Secure Band and/or DJ
- Pray for the event

10 Months:

- Secure Committee heads
- Secure a mailing list from special needs homes and groups in the area
- Start accepting formalwear and store it for the fittings
- Pray for the event

8 Months:

- Decide on a theme and start collecting decorations
- Start working on a logo or design
- Start working on a promotion piece
- Secure budget approval
- Set up an income/ expense account. Prepare to receive any monetary donations
- Pray for the event

6 Months:

- Cast the vision to your church body and ask for volunteers
- Finalize promotion piece and allow it to go to print
- Pray for the event

2 Months:

- Mail invitations to guests and open online registration
- Set up a process for pre-ordering a DVD
- Open online registration for volunteers
- Finalize all plans (committee heads)
- Order gifts for guests (picture frame, magnet, cup, key chain etc. with your logo)
- Start the master database with names of all guests who register online and by mail (be sure to delete duplicates)

- Prepare for formalwear fittings
- Pray for the event

1 Month:

- Contact volunteers with details (committee heads)
- Determine what supplies you will need for registration and order
- Open church for their formalwear fitting times. Guests without formalwear can pick out something to wear that has been donated.
- After fittings are over, reorganize closet for next year
- Submit a press release to local TV stations and newspapers. Invite them to attend the event.
- Secure someone to take pictures and video the event
- Set up a way process to purchase DVD online
- Pray for the event

2 Weeks:

- Mail a postcard to all registered guests with any last minute reminders
- Pray for the event

1 Week:

- Close registration for all guests (at this point only accept walk-ins)
- Make guest nametags
- Remind the press of the event and invite them to attend
- Pray for the event

3 Days:

- Begin decorating
- Begin food preparations
- Make sure all volunteers are signed up and know when to arrive
- Remind press of the event and invite them to attend again
- Pray for the event

Day of:

- Ask volunteers and hosts/hostesses to arrive early. Meet with them to give final instructions.
- Meet with medical team separately to finalize plans for an emergency
- Photograph and videotape the event extensively
- Pray for the event

Post-Event:

- Clean-up team goes to work (this team should be different than the decorations team)
- Package any decorations or equipment that was borrowed and return to the correct donor or storage location
- Store all decorations for next year
- Pray for next year's event

1 Week After:

- Compile all photos, video footage, TV and newspaper reports to start on DVD
- Write thank you notes to committee heads and vendors who donated their time
- Email all volunteers to thank them
- Pray for next year's event

1 Month After:

- Set up meeting with committee heads to evaluate
- Mail out DVDs

Pray for next year's event

The Leadership Team

Our leadership team for Joy Prom consists of the Student Ministries pastors, the Student Ministries administrative assistant, the Joy Prom Coordinator, the committee chairs, the eleventh grade Sunday School teachers and the eleventh grade students. Our committee structure is below. The items in bold are committees that require committee heads. More detail for each of these committees will follow. The non-bolded committees are smaller and can be handled by one or two people or a small team.

Before the prom

Formal wear fittings

Decorations

Prayer team

Set up

Administration

At the prom

“Tag” team

Parking lot

Paparazzi

Greeters

Guest registration

Host/hostess

Photographer

Hair/makeup

Shoeshine

Flowers (corsages and boutonnieres or leis)

Medical

Dinnertime

Servers

Kitchen crew

Dancing

Live music or DJ

Master of ceremonies

Water stations

Chaperones on hand to help as needed

Hospitality**Family caregiver hospitality suite**

Volunteer registration

Volunteer break room

Coat/purse check

Joy Prom Coordinator

A key role is that of Joy Prom Coordinator. For our prom Katie Honeycutt fills this role. She explains:

When the youth pastors decided to do a prom for individuals with special needs, they asked me to be the coordinator and project leader because I was the only person they could think of who had been to a dance with people with special needs. My only real experience up to that point was volunteering with various groups and events that my younger sister, who has developmental disabilities, had been involved with. I do not think it is a requirement that a Joy Prom Coordinator have any experience working with people with special needs, just a heart to serve Christ by serving others, an ability to motivate others and the focus to keep a lot of small details organized.

The Joy Prom Coordinator keeps all the other team leaders organized and on schedule and makes sure all the little pieces of the event fit together. Coordinator's most important role is to see and understand the big picture of Joy Prom and to be able to articulate it to leaders and volunteers. The Joy Prom Coordinator should be familiar with everything from the location, purpose, and person in charge of each committee. They should also help the committees keep things running smoothly.

The Joy Prom Coordinator should also know the ins and outs of each committee and make sure team heads are getting all of their tasks done on time. Ideally, the Joy Prom Coordinator should know enough about each committee to take over in the event of sickness or to prepare another to take over.

The Joy Prom Coordinator also coordinates and facilitates all leadership meetings before and after the Joy Prom. The coordinator also attends training meetings as necessary, secures facilities, secures dates and should be available to answer any questions from guests, volunteers and others. As mentioned before, the Joy Prom Coordinator does not necessarily need to have experience working with individuals with special needs, but the individual does need to be someone with leadership experience, who can answer questions, make quick decisions on the fly if necessary, and who understands the various aspects of working with this special group of people. It is helpful if the Joy Prom Coordinator is familiar with community groups including those who serve the special needs populations the area and those groups that can be called on to help with the event.

The Joy Prom Coordinator has some year round responsibilities and the duties increase in the months prior to the prom. Our prom is typically held in late April or early May. The biggest time commitment is from January until the prom is held. We usually hold monthly Leadership Team meetings from January-April. This year we anticipate adding a mid-fall meeting to make sure we are on target and have resolved issues.

We typically hold a follow-up meeting with the committee chairs four to six weeks after the Joy Prom. Each committee chair gets input from their committee and brings it to the follow up meeting for a discussion about what went well and what could be improved. Every year we have changed some aspects of Joy Prom based on the feedback that is shared in the follow-up meeting. The Joy Prom Coordinator leads this meeting and keeps the committee chairs on task. It is important for the coordinator and the committee chairs to view this meeting as constructive. The goal is to improve next year's prom so the meeting needs to be a team effort towards that goal. The next page gives an example of the agenda for our 2007 follow-up meeting

Joy Prom Evaluation Meeting Agenda
Sunday, June 17th
8:00-9:15am

8:00- 8:20- Open with prayer

Committee heads answer the following for their section:

- What did we do well?
- What may need improvement?

8:20- 8:30- Team evaluation of the following new items from Joy Prom 2007:

- Tagger Team
- Postcard reminder
- Bathrooms
- Gospel Presentation

8:30- 8:45- Items to cover:

- Date for Joy Prom 2008
- System for picking up altered dresses and suits- better communication between seamstresses and guests/caregivers
- Lost and Found system
- Plan for moving off-site/numbers discussion

8:45- 9:00- Ideas for next year:

- Sign before leaving PBC "If your guest cannot communicate or is not mobile YOU MUST STAY."
- If staying late to work on Joy Prom decorations let Security know
- Point person for Friday night clean up

9:00-9:15- Committee Head assignments:

- Write thank you notes to specific vendors you worked with- hopefully they will want to partner with us next year
- Provide input for Joy Prom manual

Joy Prom Volunteer Coordinator

The Joy Prom volunteer coordinator serves a key role in planning and implementing Joy Prom and is responsible for organizing and managing the volunteers who help with the different facets of Joy Prom. Some of the duties include the following:

- “Advertise” the need for volunteers within the church and with former volunteers via e-mails, church bulletin, etc. If there are not enough volunteers from within the church, write letters to other churches and contact others outside of Providence expressing our need for volunteers.
- Answer any general questions from volunteers via e-mails and phone calls.
- Connect volunteers with their appropriate committee head for more specific questions.
- Visit Sunday School classes with members of the Joy Class (our Sunday School class for those with special needs) to recruit new volunteers who may not know about Joy Prom. We begin this about two months before the prom.
- Organize Volunteer Registration the night of the prom, providing nametags and instructions for each volunteer.
- Plan and implement general volunteer training sessions for the hosts and hostesses along with the Joy Prom Coordinator. We had three trainings in 2007. All other volunteers will be trained by their appropriate committee head.
- Identify category areas of shortage or overflow of volunteers. Recruit help in areas of shortage, sometimes moving volunteers from one area to another (with the volunteer’s permission).
- Serve as liaison for communication between church staff, leadership team and volunteers
- Serve on Leadership Team, attending all meetings, prayer sessions, etc.
- Write thank you notes to key personnel and committee chairs after Joy Prom.

Volunteer Training

Each volunteer needs to receive information about: those with special needs, the prom and an orientation to their job. Each committee chair handles the orientation themselves. The hosts and hostesses are asked to attend a training session organized by the Joy Prom Coordinator and the Joy Prom Volunteer Coordinator.

Host and Hostess training sessions are scheduled the month prior to the Joy Prom and are offered at multiple times. A training session is also held the night of Joy Prom for those who were unable to make another session and for last minute volunteers. Training includes an overview of Joy Prom from arrivals to departures and the role of the volunteers.

We emphasize our desire to create an evening to remember for our guests. Hosts and hostesses are asked to dress to impress, preferably in formal dresses and tuxes or suits. Volunteers are given information about the type of guests who attend including the range of disabilities. We cover interaction with the special needs population keeping in mind that the volunteers also have a range of experience that could be from no experience to being a family member of someone with special needs. We also explain why we use first names only on the volunteer nametags and how to handle marriage proposals from guests (we have had several of these!).

Hosts and hostesses also receive guidance on how to approach the guests and how to deal with common issues such as communication barriers, bathroom help, etc. The volunteers are told how to recognize Medical Team members as well as how to get assistance with non-medical issues. On the night of the prom each host and hostess is given an index card with a map of the church indicating key locations with a suggested path through the prom (check in, hair/makeup, photography or dinner followed by the other, dancing).

Finally, hosts and hostesses are reminded that both they and their guests are there to have fun. It may seem counterintuitive but we have found it helpful to remind the volunteers to smile, to dance and to help make the evening special for their guest. Additionally, we ask

the volunteer to be sure to let their guest know if they will be stepping away to the rest room or to visit the volunteer lounge.

Committee heads should thank the volunteers in person at the prom and by e-mail or regular mail after the prom. Make special note of those volunteers who dealt with complex situations. Most guest/host situations are easily resolved at the prom itself, but some situations may require intervention such as reassigning a stronger male guest to a host rather than a hostess if the female volunteer is having difficulty, or reassigning a guest to an adult rather than teenage volunteer if the teenage volunteer is noticeably uncomfortable. All committee chairs should watch for situations such as these and intervene as needed. The Joy Prom cannot happen without volunteers, so we want the volunteers to feel comfortable too.

Community Partnerships

Community partnerships are key to a successful Joy Prom. This begins with your guest list. Our original guest list came from Raleigh Parks and Recreation, which offers services to the special needs population in our area. They provided us with the mailing list of all their high school and adult members and even mailed the invitations for us. In addition, they have also provided great, experienced volunteers each year, who know most of the guests and can help with medical and behavioral problems. If your area does not have a similar organization then check with local agencies like the ARC or Special Olympics or another local organization that serves this population for help getting the word out, or even for a mailing list of potential guests.

Community partnerships can also help with donations of flowers, food, dresses and suits, decorations, party favors, etc. Community partners can be recognized on the invitation and should be recognized during one of the dance breaks. Be sure to follow up after the prom by sending the community partners a thank you letter and if you make one, a DVD of the evening.



Dresses and Suits

Many guests will have or are able to get a prom dress or suit to wear to Joy Prom; however, some cannot. Providing dresses and suits makes sure that no guest thinks they cannot attend due to not having an appropriate outfit.

We take donations of formal dresses and suits starting in January. We also take shoes and purses and other accessories such as tiaras. Two important considerations for the donations are storage space and sizes. Our experience is that you will get fewer donations of sizes 14 and larger than you will need. You should specify what sizes you need and will accept. Also, specify that all donations should be clean, free of rips and gently worn at most.

Dresses and suits should be stored hanging and if at all possible with enough room to prevent wrinkling. Prior to fittings the clothes need to be moved into spaces where the guests can view the clothes and try them on. You may want to divide the clothes somewhat by sizes and then direct the guests to the appropriate room to help avoid disappointing a guest who sees the “perfect” dress only to discover it is too small.

Once the guest tries on the dress or suit, a volunteer seamstress will be on hand to determine what alterations, if any, are needed and whether or not they can be done by the time of the prom. You need multiple seamstresses, and they need to be realistic with the guest about what can and cannot be done. It is also helpful to have the fitting escorts help the guest find an outfit that needs fewer alterations.

One special note here is that some guests will need assistance in the bathroom. Even guests who are normally completely independent in the bathroom may struggle when they are wearing a prom dress, tuxedo, or suit. You may want to discretely discuss this with the care provider who may be able to help guide the guest to an outfit that they will be able to cope with in the bathroom. We provide volunteers in the men’s and women’s bathrooms for guests who need such assistance.

Arrangements also have to be made to have the guest pick up their altered outfit. If alterations are required, keep a careful record of whom the outfit is for and when it can be ready for the guest. Ideally this should be done one to two weeks prior to the prom. Guests keep their outfits and some wear them again the next year while others return to pick out a new outfit.

One aspect of volunteer training is to ask the hosts and hostesses to tell the guest how good they look in their prom outfits. We have found that the guests treasure getting dressed up for the prom and like to know that they look good.

Decorations

The Joy Prom brings people together, not just the special needs community, but your surrounding community and the church body as one. New friends are made, new ideas shared, and many are able to offer a personal gift of service to the Lord. The prom provides an opportunity for involvement for some who never have dared to come forward, and for others it is the first time they have ever been in a church. Decorations are a large part of making the evening special and are appreciated by the guests and the volunteers.

The theme should be determined at your first meeting. We have used the following themes: Movie Star, Under the Sea, and Hawaiian Luau. You also could use a simple board game as a theme to decorate. One church used the child's game Candy Land as a theme and called their Joy Prom "A Sweet Night to Remember." Remember you are decorating for fun and the "wow" factor, not promoting a romantic or love theme.

Your decorations have to be stable. Take time to think about what will be close enough to touch or be an obstacle for a walker or wheelchair. Keep in mind that many guests will want to touch the decorations so make sure that will be ok.

Our guests appreciate anything and every thing as you can see in each beaming face. So actually, you could put up any kind of decorations and know they'd love it. Yet, why not use your entire God given abilities, resources and talents (yourself, team & church as a whole) and decorate for the King Himself!

From the start we want our guests to feel like celebrities. The décor team puts the visual "wow" factor into Joy Prom. We start with first impressions upon arrival and work from there throughout the first floor of the church and finish in to worship center, which serves as the dance area. The only exceptions being the Care Giver Hospitality Room and photography areas which are only marked by an entry and exit sign as the photographer usually has their own backdrops. The following is a description of each area and what we do.

Outside Entrance or Curb Drop Off



- Driveway entry is marked with some type of flag or balloons reflecting the theme of the evening.
- Red carpet is laid at the curb and runs to all the doors at this drop off point. Our church has three doors. The red carpet runs from the handicapped ramp as well as the curb all the way to the entry threshold for two doors with the middle door roped off for “Paparazzi folks with flashing cameras” **Think big; don’t think “we can make do” because you never know what the Lord has in store for you!
- Remember wheelchair ramps as well as walkways. At the curb there is a visually marked area for cars to drop off their guests. Last year, we used balloon palm trees at each side.
- Be aware that if the weather is less than cooperative you may need tent coverage of some kind from the curb to the entrance. Plan in advance for this.

Guest Registration Area



Host/Hostess Stations are located at each entry door and are decorated and marked. This is where the guest will be assigned a host or hostess who will then proceed with guest arm in arm to the Registration Table.

Registration Table is marked with theme oriented signs and background. The starting letter of the guests' last name (A-C, D-G, etc) marks each post. There is some type of decoration at each post.

Doorways are marked and decorated for what they represent. For example, our Registration Area has several doorways. One leads to the worship center, one to the fellowship hall, and one hallway to the welcome center. We also post some type of directional signage with arrows labeled dining, photographer, restrooms etc. Each area was re-named for Joy Prom in accordance with our Hawaiian Luau theme, i.e. the worship center is the Paradise Ballroom, the fellowship hall is the Flamingo Dining Room, and prisms is the Care Giver Cabana.

Hallways At this point we try to use decorations as a way to draw or direct the guests to different areas. In the past we have lined the hall from the Registration area to the welcome center area with a tunnel of balloons. This adds to the "wow" factor and for our Under the Sea theme gave the illusion of walking under water. The hall leading from the welcome center to the amphitheater is also decorated keeping in mind the traffic flow and fire codes.

Volunteer Registration Area

We placed directional signage near this table. It also is decorated and marked for visibility purpose so the volunteers know where to go. It does not need to be extravagant but should keep with the evening theme.

Dinner Area



Doorways are marked entrance and exit for traffic flow. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't.

Tables are decorated with themed centerpieces. We do not use lit candles.

Serving Stations can be minimally decorated but should not interfere with the flow of service.

Ceilings can be used to hang lightweight decorations. We have used large colorful paper lanterns or inflatable items to hang. Again be mindful of fire codes.

Welcome Center



Hair & Makeup Stations are marked and decorated according to theme for the night. Please make sure the tables and guest chairs are set in place before you decorate to ensure that your decorations do not get in anyone's way. Remember to allow for wheelchair access.

Shoe Shine Station is a set of risers that have been decorated. There are two chairs on the top with the supplies at the base. Nothing should block the guest's path to the chair. Again remember to allow for wheelchair access.

Floral Station is marked and decorated according to theme and situated in the traffic flow where our guests can get their boutonniere and corsages.

Care Giver Hospitality Room is decorated at the entry area to be noticeable enough for the family and care giver to realize this room is for them.

Nurse's Station, Water Stations, Information Station & Security Station is marked with some theme decorations to make them visible so the guests and volunteers know exactly where they are if needed.

Photographer Station is clearly marked with a sign to show that the entry line starts here and exits here.

Worship Center

This area becomes the ballroom for the evening. All the chairs are removed with the exception of a few rows for guests to sit back and take a breather from dancing. The maintenance staff hangs and connects a mirrored ball to the ceiling. The sound booth is decorated. The steps leading up to the podium are blocked to prevent anyone from climbing the steps and falling backward. Make sure you maintain access to the steps for use by the medical team to get a view over the crowd. In the past we have hung paper lanterns, large three-foot balloons or draped lightweight material. Water stations are against each wall and decorations are kept to the side. Leave room for the dancing guests and do not block any of the exits. This is another lesson learned, as water stations outside the dance area did not encourage enough drinking.

How early should you start planning, and what's the average timeline for planning? As decorations leader, my mind starts "thinking" right after Joy Prom. I make notes of what works and what doesn't that year and try to apply what I have learned or experienced to plan for the next year. Depending on whether or not we repeat a theme or a new one is already picked out, I might start keeping my eyes open for sales on decorations. For example, if you were going to use a winter theme or red and white theme, look after Christmas for big sales. Deciding on a theme EARLY is a big help in watching for decorations on sale as well as recruiting helpers and getting items built if needed. From past experience, if you can make plans and start early you are not rushed at last minute.

Pick your Team Leaders

One person cannot for the prom alone, so choose your Decorating Team Leaders from responsible and committed people. This will take time and thought. Depending on your church, the youth group alone will not be enough, because depending on the time of year, you may run into exams, graduations or even SAT exams. Again, remember the words responsible and committed. It is wonderful if you can get people from the Adult Sunday Schools to volunteer. One option is to pair adult volunteers with youth group members. This can be a great way to mentor youth in leadership roles. You can meet some very creative folks with willing hearts and hands. Once you have your

team together, have a meeting. At this meeting explain the how, what and why of decorations for the Joy Prom and what you plan to accomplish. Make sure you yourself know your facility use guidelines. Talk to your facility administrator and get permission to hang anything from ceilings as well as what is allowed on the walls. Your best approach is to have clear communications with both your team and facility administrator. Directions to each person on your team are clear. Have your supplies organized if you break into work groups. If others will be purchasing supplies be sure to get copies of receipts before they are turned in for reimbursement.

How much money do I need/ spend? The amount you will spend depends on the theme and how much of an impact you want. As mentioned earlier, I always try to give the “wow” factor. This is a night to remember not only for our special guests, but also for the volunteers and families.

Can any of my section’s supplies be donated? Yes, some can be donated. You can ask a carpet business for the red carpet. Be sure to ask for low pile, commercial grade or indoor-outdoor carpet if possible. Before you go get carpet, know your measurements, how much you will need in red, and specify not burgundy or wine. Note the type of carpet you place here has to be heavy enough to lay flat and not wrinkle where it might one of the guests to trip or fall as well as cause a hardship for anyone in a wheelchair.

Some of your craft stores give a discount to churches if they have a letter ahead of time explaining the event on a church letterhead. Even though local supply stores may donate items, you need to make specific requests. This past year I asked for luau decorations. It was great to get the lei’s, but I had to purchase large items. Sometimes you may be surprised who has that one item that can be donated and used as a focal point of your theme. Think outside the box as there are many things that can be transformed into something else. PVC pipe can be painted to look like a dock, pier posts or bamboo Big is better for a visual because of the large crowds. If you are putting a lot of work and effort into your decorations, make sure they are large enough for the guests to see them and enjoy them. Backdrops and decorations make a wonderful photo opportunity for everyone.

Invitations

Invitations should be mailed two months ahead of the Joy Prom. Once you set your date you need to stick to it in order to honor your guests, community partners and volunteers. Be sure to check your church calendar and book the date early. We basically take over the first floor of the church for the week prior to Joy Prom, so make sure that you book all the areas necessary to have the prom.

Your invitation should match the theme for the prom. We typically do a brochure type invitation with a tear off registration form to mail back to the church. You can also direct guests to a website to register. Be sure to ask for specific information from the guest including any allergies and special food preparation needed such as pureeing. Another important piece of information is a caregiver contact and how to contact that person during the prom. Our invitation also lets guests know that photographs and video will be taken at the prom and used, in certain publications and promotions. Their registration serves as permission to use their photograph. We are especially careful not to use photographs that might be embarrassing for guests or their caregivers.

We require caregivers to stay if the guest has certain medical needs, such as a diabetic who needs insulin, someone who has seizures, or someone who needs to be suctioned. A caregiver should also stay if the guest is not able to communicate and is not bathroom independent. We suggest that this information is in bold on the invitation and have a sign with the same information where cars leave the property. It is very scary for the guest and the volunteers at the prom when a guest has problems or can not communicate their needs and their caregiver has left the building.

Take special care to determine the number of guests you want to have at the Joy Prom. Over the past four years we have grown from 178 guests to 531. Obviously you have to have the space to accommodate your guests, but you also have to have space for all of the volunteers. In 2007 we had more than 700 volunteers the night of the prom, and while the parking team and paparazzi were outside most of the volunteers were inside. Be cautious about the fire codes

for your building remembering that evacuating a building with handicapped guests will take longer than if you had no or very few handicapped people in the building. You also must have adequate food, bathrooms and parking for the guests and volunteers.

For your first year you may want to invite fewer guests to allow you work out the kinks of your event and make sure you have everything in place. You also may want to consider either doing Joy Prom every other year or alternating the lead role with another church. For large churches or for large Joy Proms you may need to consider him a part or full-time staff member who has Joy Prom as part of their job. Make the size and frequency a focus of prayer. The Lord has the guest list planned, so be sure to ask for His guidance in this area.

Our 2007 invitation:




**Special Thanks to Our
Community Partners:**



- Raleigh Parks & Recreation
- Specialized Recreation Services
- Spudbag.com
- Savvi Formal Wear
- Chick-fil-A
- Sanderson High School
- Positive Results Photography
- Cary Academy



YOU ARE INVITED TO...



Joy Prom
Evening in Paradise

FRIDAY, MAY 4
6:30-10:30 p.m.
Providence Baptist Church
6339 Glenwood Avenue
Raleigh, N.C. 27612

joyprom@pray.org • www.pray.org/joyprom
Contact Sarah Tucker (919-326-3000)

GET READY TO DRESS UP AND HAVE SOME FUN!
At Joy Prom, a dinner banquet and a lavishly decorated dance will be awaiting you. And that's just the beginning...

FREE PROM PORTRAIT! SHOE SHINES FOR THE GUYS! SPECIAL GIFT!
HAIR AND MAKEUP FOR THE LADIES UPON ARRIVAL!

This event is especially designed for people ages 16 and older with developmental and/or physical impairments. **If an attendee has specific medical, communication or behavioral issues, they are required to have a chaperone.** Parents and caregivers are welcome to join us in the hospitality suite during the dance or join us on the dance floor!

Ladies, we have received a great selection of donated dresses just for you. Come visit our boutique and choose from more than 400 dresses. Guys, you are invited to select a coat and tie for the big night. Alterations, dress fittings, and coat/bie selections will take place at Providence Baptist Church on the dates listed.

There is no charge for this event because it is your night to shine. Community Partners, donations and volunteers have made Joy Prom possible.

To help us plan this special night, we are asking for all those interested in attending to register by April 1, 2007. Complete this registration panel and drop off at or mail to Providence Baptist Church. You must be pre-registered to attend Joy Prom. Online registration is also available at www.pray.org/joyprom.

FORMALWEAR FITTINGS

Thursday	April 12	4-8 p.m.
Friday	April 13	4-8 p.m.
Saturday	April 14	10 a.m.-2 p.m.

JOY PROM SCHEDULE

Friday, May 4, 2007
Providence Baptist Church

6:30-7:30 p.m.	Arrival, registration, pictures
7:30-8:30 p.m.	Dinner
8:30-10:30 p.m.	Dance

Providence Baptist Church uses photos and video taken from events for print, web, and video resources. Your registration constitutes permission given to Providence Baptist Church for these purposes.

REGISTRATION FORM

Name: _____	Group Home Name (if applicable): _____
Address: _____	Special Instructions (medical needs, dietary, allergies, etc.; communication impairments): _____
Day Phone: _____	_____
E-mail: _____	_____
Birthday (day/month/year): _____	_____
I plan to come for my formalwear fitting (check one): April 12 April 13 April 14	If you would like to pre-order a Joy Prom DVD, please place this form and \$10 per DVD in an envelope and return to Providence Baptist Church. You will be notified when your DVD is ready. DVDs must be picked up at Providence Baptist Church.
Emergency contact information for the night of May 4: Name: _____ Phone: _____	

If an attendee has specific medical, communication or behavioral issues, they are required to have a chaperone.

Medical Team

Our medical team consists of physicians, nurses, nurse aids and other health care providers with CPR certification. The role of the medical team is to provide first aid as needed and decide whether or not to call 911. The largest numbers of volunteers are nurses from the local emergency department who are familiar with dealing with the unexpected.

The medical team wears yellow shirts, so all other volunteers are asked not to wear yellow. This allows all volunteers to recognize the medical team and get help as needed. The yellow shirts also show up better in the low light conditions of the dance area. We have also found the yellow shirts to offer reassurance to the youth pastors who like knowing that the medical team is there. The second year we had t-shirts made. This served as a thank you to the medical team volunteers and also to advertise the prom in the community when the shirts are worn again. We also have a stock of plain yellow t-shirts in a variety of sizes.

Most medical team organization is done via e-mail in the four to six weeks prior to the Joy Prom. The medical team volunteers get weekly e-mails with information about the prom such as where to park that night and what to wear. Medical team training is done the night of the prom an hour before guests arrive. A brief overview of the evening is provided, along with a tour and the location of medical supplies.

The supplies include: latex free gloves that are distributed to each team member and a fully stocked medical bag. The bag contains a variety of supplies including stethoscopes, blood pressure cuffs, ammonia ampoules, a glucometer, band-aids, other first aid materials, airways and an ambu bag. A medical team leader is assigned to each major area (i.e. the dining room, the dancing room, etc.) and is given ammonia ampoules. The church also has several wheelchairs, an oxygen tank and automatic defibrillators. You may also want to consider having an EMS crew on site although it is generally expensive. You can contact the EMS in your area for information on the cost of this option and average response times to your location. in order to make an informed decision.

The medical team is assigned in pairs, dispersed throughout the church, and are moved around to provide different numbers at different times. Early in the evening when more guests are dining than dancing the medical team is heavily represented in the dining room. As the evening progresses and more guests are dancing, the medical coordinator shifts more volunteers into the dancing room. In previous years the medical team members also assisted guests in the bathroom, but this took so much time away from their posts that we now have bathroom volunteers.

We have dealt with relatively minor issues each year including blisters, overheating, anxiety, small seizures in known seizure patients and medication reactions. The biggest problem we have had was a guest who fainted on the dance floor. Another guest also fainted minutes later although this turned out to be a bid for attention and was stopped by his caregiver who told him to “get right up” which he did. In the chaos of having two guests down on the dance floor a security person used their cell phone to call 911 even though we had two doctors and eleven nurses with the two guests! The firefighters and paramedics who responded were very nice, but the lesson learned is to make sure that the volunteers and security staff know that the medical team is on site and to let them make the decision about whether or not to call 911 for medical issues.

We strongly recommend that you have enforced water breaks. We have always had water available but found that if the music continued to play, some guests would not stop dancing to get a drink. We tried having nurses escort guests to the water but found it was much more effective to stop the music, direct the guests to the water stations, and then hand them a pre-poured cup of water. Even with this in place we keep a close eye on the dancers both with nurses dancing and nurses standing on steps above the crowd to keep an eye out for overheated guests. We periodically direct guests to get some water and take a break.

One issue to consider is whether to have the doctors on the team float or be stationary. We have floated them in the last four years but for 2008 will move to having at least one doctor at a set location. That will make it easier for everyone to know where to go to find the doctor

if needed. We have used cell phones and walkie-talkies to keep the medical team in touch with each other but neither has been successful due to noise issues, so the medical coordinator and area team leaders make rounds in their areas to look for issues. This allows us to get help and catch problems early.

Another consideration is whether to move the medical supplies to a guest who needs them or moving the guest to the supplies. The primary consideration is how crowded your event is and how many guests you have. In a more crowded event or an event with large numbers of guests you will probably do better to move the guest to the supplies. This allows the supplies to remain in a location known to the entire medical team and therefore available in the event of a second or third simultaneous event. If this is not possible, such as in a fainting event, then you may want to bring only the supplies needed to the guest so that the other supplies are available to other medical team members who may need them.

Check with your church administration about what documentation they would like about events that required the medical team to intervene. We have handled this via verbal communication, e-mail and have now moved to formal incident reports. Whatever method you select needs to be completed the night of the prom or the next day so that the documentation is on file and so that you do not forget what happened and what you did.

Many of our medical volunteers are required to do community service for their employers. When they check in we ask them to indicate whether or not they need documentation for their employer. All medical team volunteers are thanked via e-mail, and those who said they needed community service credit also receive a letter on church letterhead that they can give to their employer. Let the medical volunteers know how long this will take---remembering that both you and church personnel will be tired after the Joy Prom---so allow at least two weeks for this.

Volunteers and Committees

Hosts and Hostesses: This is the largest area of need for volunteers. We typically like to have a one guest to one host/hostess ratio. They are paired up at the beginning of the night and it is the host/hostesses' responsibility to escort the guest to every area of the Joy Prom and to stay with them throughout the night.

Prayer Team: One person can head up this team. He or she will provide team members with specific prayer needs and perhaps coordinate an evening of prayer for the Joy Prom.

Set Up: At our church, the initial set up (moving chairs, hanging mirror balls, putting up tables) is handled by a team that is on our staff. The Joy Prom Coordinator and/or committee heads provide needed table configurations, linen counts, chair arrangements, etc. to the set up team.

Administration: The student ministry administrative assistant on staff has handled this area over the past four years. Responsibilities include answering questions via phone or e-mail, directing website information as needed, printing and copying information, printing guest nametags, coordinating the calendar, acting as a go-between for the volunteer team and church staff if the coordinator is not on staff, and heading guest registration.

Greeters: We have a very enthusiastic church member announce our guests as they arrive. This is done using a loudspeaker system while guests are walking up the red carpet. We also have two volunteers at each door. They connect each guest to a host or hostess as soon as the guest enters.

Hair/Makeup: This team is usually made up of high school girls under the direction of an adult female—but could be any team of ladies. The makeup is donated and this area does not have to be elaborate. We set up tables that are beautifully decorated where ladies sit and have baby's breath or sparkles put in their hair, and lip-gloss, blush or eye shadow applied.

Shoeshine: This team is usually made up of high school guys under the direction of an adult male but could be any team of men. Again this does not have to be elaborate. We have a simple shoe shine area where gentlemen can sit and have their shoes (including sneakers or tennis shoes) "shined," or buffed with a rag, no polish necessary. What an amazing act of service to see a high school aged volunteer kneeling before a guest and their tennis shoes.

Flowers: In the past we have had a florist donate flowers and supplies and have had a team of pre-prom volunteers make boutonnieres and corsages the night before the prom. At the dance, a couple of volunteers are needed to assist guests with pinning their flowers. We have also used leis made of silk flowers.

Music/DJ: We have had a live band recently, and we've had one volunteer who is handy with a pre-approved music play list. The DJ plays during the band breaks. Have the songs submitted to the pastor on staff ahead of time to be screened.

MC: We always use our youth pastors because they are crazy and like to talk in front of a crowd! They also make a point of renting very cool tuxes. The MC keeps things flowing, makes announcements, enforces water breaks every half hour, etc.

Water stations: Someone from the kitchen team usually makes sure there are several coolers located on the edges of the dance floor. A small group of volunteers can make sure there are plenty of pre-filled cups and can keep the area clean. Guests must drink a lot of water and often do not do so without reminders because they do not realize how hot they are. We encourage everyone to sit down for breaks and have mandatory water breaks throughout the evening. Be sure to stop the music during the breaks or some guests will continue to dance.

Volunteer registration: The volunteer coordinator uses a handful of people to check in volunteers, point them to their station and find their name tag. We use a separate entrance for volunteers and guests to avoid mix-ups. This is a good job for someone who does not want to do a lot of walking around. Volunteer nametags use first names only and should look noticeably different from the guest nametags. This is

a lesson learned from year three in which a volunteer was mistaken for a guest. The one exception is that medical team volunteers are directed to the site of the medical team orientation and checked in there.

Volunteer break room: We have asked a larger Sunday school class to provide donations of snacks and water for volunteers. We instruct volunteers to eat before they arrive but it is a long night, so this team would set up some drinks and light snacks for volunteers to enjoy when they have a chance for a break. We did not offer this in the first two years but have found that it is important and very much appreciated.

See [Guest Specials](#) for additional information on student volunteers.

Arrivals



Probably one of the most fun parts of Joy Prom is the arrivals. It is also a favorite volunteer location. Guests are greeted by the Tag Team as they pull into the parking lot. [Note: The Tag Team has a pre-printed list of small sticky labels that include the names of all the pre-registered guests. As the guest arrives, the tag team finds the appropriate label and places it on the shoulder of the guest. This serves two purposes. The first is to announce the guest's arrival. The second is for assistance with registration. This is done so that as some non-verbal guests are registering, their caregiver can park the car and there is no problem identifying the guest].

The guest's car then pulls up to the curb where their door is opened and the guests are helped from the car. This may take several minutes for less mobile guests or if a wheelchair needs to be set up. We have moved from one drop off lane to two but if you do this you need additional volunteers to make sure that guests entering from the outside drop off lane are safe. Direct the caregivers to the designated parking area if they plan to stay.

The guest is then escorted to the edge of the red carpet (see [Decorations](#) for more information about the red carpet) where the MC announces their arrival to the crowd (tenth grade students and parents, medical team members, and various volunteers who just like arrivals). The announcement can be tame (Ladies and Gentlemen, may I present Miss So-and-So) or wild (Ladies and Gentlemen, on the right hand red carpet just back from the Academy Awards is Mr. So-and-So!!). The crowd applauds, cheers and takes pictures. You

can use disposable cameras or ask the students to bring their own cameras. One other fun aspect is to have one or two volunteers ask guests for their autograph. The smiles on the guests' faces let you know that this is a favorite part for them too. [Note: We asked the tenth grade students to be the paparazzi in order to get them excited about Joy Prom. By doing this they have some idea of what Joy Prom is about the next year when it is introduced as the eleventh grade mission project].

At the door to the church the guest is matched with a host or hostess from a line of volunteers. Some guests will arrive with dates and can be matched with one host/hostess or two. The host/hostess escorts the guest to the Registration Table using the tag from the Tag Team to get into the correct alphabetical line. At the Registration Table, the guest is checked off the spreadsheet and given a pre-printed nametag. The nametag should be noticeably different from the volunteers' nametags. We recommend that you put a colored dot or star on the front of the nametag if there is pertinent information such as allergies or special food preparation that volunteers should know about. This information can then be written on the back of the pre-printed nametag. We have tried different methods of communicating this information such as spreadsheets and separate cards but have found the back of the name tag works best since is less likely to be lost and is more private. Make sure to use either a closed pin or strong clip type nametag to avoid having it fall off, but keep in mind that it will need to be removed for the formal prom photograph. [Note: Sticky nametags do not work well].

Guest Specials

Following registration guests move to the welcome center area of the church. Female guests are treated to hair and makeup. This does not have to be elaborate and can just be some blush or lipgloss or baby's breath or glitter for hair. You may want to ban perfume as some guests or volunteers can have respiratory reactions to strong scents. Male guests receive shoe shines, which can be true shoe shines or simply a buffing or just a quick wipe of the guest's tennis shoes. We usually have eleventh guys man this station.



Following this the female guests get corsages (wrist or pin on) and the male guests get boutonnieres. We have also used leis when we had a Hawaiian theme. We ask a florist to donate the carnations and teach us how to make the corsages and boutonnieres, which is very cost effective. Whether you are making or buying these items, it should be done no more than two nights in advance. These items will need refrigeration to stay fresh, so make sure you have adequate space for this.

For the last two years we have had the Chick-fil-A cow visit the prom. A local Chick-fil-A franchise owner provides the costume, and one or two eleventh grade students volunteer to be the cow while other students serve as the cow's escort. The guests love seeing the cow and talking to the cow although of course the cow does not answer since cows do not talk. Typically the cow visits with the guests in the make up and shoeshine area, takes a break (the costume is very hot), and then comes back for dancing later. This can also have a profound impact on the student volunteers. One student who served as the cow wrote the following in his college essay:

After the prom was over I realized that my experience as the cow was not unlike many of the guests' daily

experiences. In the costume I could not talk, could not see well, and could not hear well. In addition to this I had to be led around by an escort who did not always know what I needed or who forgot to tell me things like to duck when going through low doorways. People talked to the escort and not to me, since cows cannot talk, but this was similar to people not talking directly to handicapped people. Some of the guests were scared of the cow and hesitated to approach me which is again similar to people being afraid of people with disabilities. I have a learning disability in written language, which has given me some personal experience with a disability. But my disability is not a visible one and I have generally compensated for it. Being the Chick-fil-A cow at the Joy Prom helped teach me what it must be like to be severely handicapped both because the cow's experience was similar to that of the guests, and because I was treated in the same way that many of the guests are everyday. Of course it was also different since at the end of the evening I took off the costume and resumed my regular life: an option not available to the Joy Prom guests.

Of note here is that you should provide orientation for students involved with the Joy Prom but also a debriefing after the prom. For many students this will be their first experience with people with special needs. Just as our adult volunteers tell us that Joy Prom is nicer than their prom was, we regularly have students tell us that they had more fun at Joy Prom than at their own proms. However, we have also had students who were very uncomfortable and some who chose not be involved in spite of their involvement in other mission projects. By incorporating this into the eleventh grade Sunday school curriculum, the Sunday school teachers can offer chances to talk about fears and give guidance about getting involved. We also have the students visit the Joy Class, a Sunday school class for people age 18 and up with special needs taught by the Joy Prom Coordinator. Obviously, no student should be forced to participate but encouragement, a choice of jobs, and getting students excited about Joy Prom before they reach eleventh grade has resulted in the majority of our students participating.

One last note is that some high school students need community service credit for graduation or for organizations such as National Honor Society or Key Club. We have been happy to provide this and also to contact these type groups for additional volunteers. If you have a local college or university you may also want to see if groups such as Campus Crusade, Intervarsity, fraternities, or sororities will volunteer.

Dining/Food

The dining room is set with tables and chairs in such a way as to accommodate guests easily. This includes plenty of room around and between tables for guests, wheelchairs, and dining room staff to walk. We have used rectangular and round tables over the past years, but recommend round tables with six or seven chairs at each table so as to allow easy access and ample room for guests in wheelchairs. Linen tablecloths are nice to use along with color coordinated paper placemats and napkins. The placemats can be replaced between guests. Tray stands and extra place settings can be set up around the room for easy clearing of tables between guests.

Planning for the dining room is minimal. The most important aspects of preparing the room are to make sure there are enough volunteers to staff the room, coordinating with the kitchen crew to determine which staff will be responsible for which things (prepping plates, filling cups/pitchers) and coordinating with the decorating committee to make sure the dining room is decorated in accordance with the theme. The main preparation takes place about two hours before the doors open. The dining room coordinator should meet with the volunteers to assign tables and other duties. This meeting can take place the week before the prom, but there is a better chance of having everyone together the night of the prom.

The dining room helpers consist mainly of adult volunteers although teenagers could also certainly help out. There should be two to three helpers per table, with two floaters for every three tables. Those assigned to a specific table will bring food and drink to the guests after they are seated. The floaters will help out as needed with their assigned section when the dining room gets busy. It is also nice to have two or three people to help with drink refills and table resets. There should be about two people for every 50 guests to seat the guests as they come to the dining room. These helpers stand at the door, like a host or hostess at a restaurant.

The budget for the dining room will vary depending on other areas and should include both a food budget and a decoration budget. Supplies specific to the dining room include: table linens, disposable

plates, cups, silverware, napkins and placemats. Some churches may need to factor in table and chair rentals. Some or all of these supplies could be donated. We place the silverware in a napkin, roll it up, and tie it with a ribbon. This is usually done the week before Joy Prom but could be done months in advance as long as you keep it in a secure location so that it is not used for another event.

The food for the Joy Prom can consist of a meal, heavy appetizers or party food. We have done a meal and heavy appetizers successfully. The key is to have the food or at least the entrée and drinks donated to keep costs down. For a first Joy Prom allow eight to ten weeks to identify vendors who are willing to donate food. For subsequent proms less time is needed particularly if your first year donor is approached soon after the prom about helping the next year.

Allow for one gallon of beverage per twelve guests for dinner. Water and sweet iced tea are much more cost effective than other beverages such as fruit punch or lemonade. The food should be a special meal, but also factor in items that do not require cutting, as the guests may not have the dexterity to do this independently and/or plastic knives may not lend themselves to cutting food effectively. Also consider the type of food so that choking risks are minimized (i.e. no grapes, no hot dogs, etc).

Consider the kitchen capabilities as you plan the menu. If food will need to be reheated do you have microwaves and/or convection ovens including the knowledge of how to use them? For food that can be prepared ahead such as fruit cups do you have adequate refrigeration space to hold the items until the prom? Do you have a plan if you run out of food or run low on one or more items? Ask for donations of insulated beverage coolers. Use several for the dining room but also allow for three or four additional coolers to provide water breaks in the dancing room. Finally make sure you can meet any guest needs for special food preparation. The most common issues you will probably face are the need for pureed food, food allergies and special calorie requirements. All of these should have been noted on the guest registration form and then on the guest nametag (this can be done with a colored dot or star so that the dining room staff is alerted to look on the back of the name tag).

Consider whether you are feeding the volunteers or not. We have asked the volunteers to eat before they arrive, and then we provide a volunteer lounge with drinks and snacks or pizza. Asking volunteers to come from 5:30pm-11pm with no drinks or food may guarantee they will not come back next year; however, you probably can not afford to feed them the same food you feed your guests. The volunteer lounge can be a volunteer job for a large Sunday School class. They can donate, set up, serve and clean up the volunteer lounge. We have found that our volunteers really appreciate this. It also gives them a chance to sit since many of our guests will dance non-stop once they hit the dance floor!

Photography/Video

Below are the roles necessary for the photography and video part of Joy Prom. We have been privileged to have the same photographer every year. She has taken this role seriously so that all of the guests will receive a quality prom portrait.

Photographer

- Shoot Full-length, three or four exposures for each guest
- If the guest wears glasses, shoot last image with no glasses.
- Give last image number shot of each guest/couple to the “envelope person.”
- Posing: Simple. Don't even try to get weight on back leg, turn left toes to camera, etc. ***Just go for expression.***
- Shoot Highest Resolution in a JPG format
- Time is of the essence. ***“No Chimping.”*** If you do not know what this is it is after you shoot an image you look at the display on the back of the camera and start chimping—***“Ohhh-Ohhh-Ohhh!”***
- ***Drop all images on the computer at your station and burn a CD or DVD. Also, drop your images on Cindy's computer. Please do not format your cards until Sunday if possible...***

Computer Operator

- Last Name, First Name, Image Number
- Don't forget to save your work often.
- If hosts want a copy of a photo, they can order it from Cindy. They will need to know the guest's name. (The church only pays for printing of guest photos). They can get prices by calling Cindy.

Envelope Person

- Write the image number of the last image shot of the person/couple in top right corner of the envelope where the postage will go.
- This envelope is the mailing envelope for the guest's final portrait. The mailing label should already be on the envelope.
- The computer is a backup/crosscheck of names and image numbers.

Posers

- Two posers are needed at each station, not including the photographer
- Posing: Keep it simple! Have the guest look at the camera, get good expression and go for it!

Registration desk at photography station

- The 6x8 envelopes should already have the mailing labels on them and should be in alphabetical order.
- Be sure to have extra blank envelopes in case you have walk-ins who did not pick up an envelope at the main registration desk.

Greeters

- Take off name tags and give to host or hostess
- Host/hostess will keep up with the nametag and the mailing envelope.
- Send guest to the next available station. Try to have one guest waiting at each station.

FYI:

- Prints will be mailed to the guest approximately four weeks after the prom. You will get asked how long it takes—this is a safe answer.
- Be sure to have a station where there are no steps for the guests in wheelchairs
- *SMILE* and be ready to get hugged!!! And a few kisses too!!!

If a photographer reading this has questions, you are more than welcome to call me. I will be **HAPPY** to talk to you. This was my fourth year. The first year we had one station, three people on the photography committee and 174 guests were photographed. The fourth year we had 28 people on the photography committee, four stations and 542 guests were photographed. This event is nothing but rewarding and I look forward to it every year more and more.

Cindy Smith
 Positive Results Photography
 541 Pylon Drive Raleigh, NC 27606
 919-832-9339

Video



If your church can videotape the event and then in turn produce a DVD of the event this is an added bonus. We offer the DVDs for sale on our website and use clips from the DVD for promotion of the Joy Prom. Any time your committee chairs' energy levels are lagging, show them all or part of last year's video. Most of us are unable to watch dry-eyed, and it reminds you why Joy Prom is so wonderful!

Dance

The dance part of Joy Prom is held in our worship center, which is a very large room with a flat floor. We have a raised platform at one end and removable chairs. We remove the vast majority of chairs but set up chairs around the edge of the room and towards the back for guests and volunteers to rest.

We have used both a DJ and a live band for previous proms. If you can arrange for it, a live band really adds to the prom atmosphere. Our prom runs from 6:30pm-10:30pm with the music for dancing usually starting at 7:00pm. [Of note here is that we have had guests arrive early every year, sometimes as early as 5:00pm!] Be clear on your invitation that the doors open at 6:15pm in order to avoid too many early arrivals. On the other hand you should be prepared for early arrivals and have preparations completed by 4:30 or 5:00pm. This also allows your volunteers who have been there that afternoon to take a supper/rest break before the guests arrive.

For the dance itself we provide a variety of music that is mostly fast, dance music. Sometimes an MC leads dances such as the Macarena and a Conga line invariably forms at some point. Hosts and hostesses ask guests to dance as do the nurses, the MC and the servers once the dining room is closed. This is truly the heart of Joy Prom, and is a blast! Most of us will never forget the year that a guest challenged one of youth pastors to a dance off. Let's just say that the guest won convincingly!! We are fortunate to have excellent video services, so during the dancing the camera crew provides a live feed to screens though out the Worship Center. The guests love to see themselves on the screen.

We include water/rest breaks throughout the evening. [It is important to stop the music during this time or some guests will not take a break.] We also let guests know when the evening is wrapping up by announcing the last few dances and then the last dance. After the last dance the lights come up, the music stops and guests who need it are helped to the door. Generally it takes 30-45 minutes for the last guest to pick up their favor, find their ride and leave.

Hospitality

A hospitality suite is provided for caregivers who remain at the prom but are not needed to stay with their guest. Our coordinators describe it as "a place to rest, socialize and eat a lot of 'Heavenly Manna'." Planning begins about six weeks prior to the prom with coordination and staffing done by our senior citizens' sunday school class although any age group could do this job.

Sunday school classes are asked to volunteer by providing heavy appetizers, beverages and paper products. The food is served buffet style in a room that has tables and chairs where caregivers can interact and relax. One consideration is the availability or not of refrigeration and/or microwaves. Refrigeration can be accomplished via coolers if necessary but bringing in microwaves may or may not be possible due to electrical wiring issues.

In addition to serving the food the hospitality volunteers also visit with the care providers and make sure that they are also shown Christ's love. Many enjoy the break and the conversation. We have a video feed in the room so that caregivers can see what is going on in other areas of the Joy Prom. You should have care givers sign in when they enter the lounge so that they can be located if their guest needs them.

Clean Up

Clean up should begin as soon as the last guest leaves. The eleventh grades students generally are very helpful with this process but they do need directions. We have had more than one occasion of reusable decorations having been thrown away or damaged beyond repair at the hands of enthusiastic teenager. They traditionally get to pop the thousands of balloons we use.

Having one person clearly in charge of clean up will make the process smoother. This person can direct the volunteers and should have knowledge of how the church wants trash disposed of, the location of the vacuum cleaners and what to do with reusable supplies. The more cleaning you can do the night of the Joy Prom, the happier you will be the next day. We have Joy Prom on a Friday night to allow time for final clean up on Saturday so that the building is ready for Sunday morning. If you are using a location other than your church be sure to ask about cleaning that must be done by you versus the venue and also the clean up costs.

Be sure to be good stewards of the facility you use and clean it well. At this point you will also find things that have been left behind by guests and volunteers and therefore need a plan to deal with these items. We have found everything from shoes to purses, tiaras to neckties and even wheelchairs!

Following clean up our eleventh grade students traditionally go out to Waffle House or IHOP for a post prom gathering. Our adult volunteers traditionally take some Advil, a shower and go to bed!!

Conclusion

Almost every Joy Prom committee chair, committee member and volunteer would tell you that Joy Prom is one of the best events that they have ever participated in. Our guests have a wonderful time, but so do we. Not only do the hosts and hostesses dance with the guests, but so do the medical team members and other volunteers, and even on one occasion, a photographer from the local newspaper joined the dance.

Seeing guests enjoy the evening is rewarding enough, but we also receive hugs from our guests as they come and go. Afterwards we have guests and volunteers begin to attend church, and receive heart felt thank you letters from guests and/or their families or friends. We have found that most volunteers return every year and frequently bring their friends and family. The volunteers look forward to the prom as much as our guests look forward to it. Truly Joy Prom is a taste of what is to come when we celebrate in heaven, although then our guests will no longer be lame or blind or handicapped.

If you would like to visit our prom please contact Student Ministries at (919) 326-3000 for more information on how to do this. You can also find more information about Providence's Joy Prom online at: www.pray.org/joyprom. We are praying for you as you consider hosting on a Joy Prom. We have loved showing Christ's love to our very special guests and hope that you will prayerfully take on this mission in your community.