

Sips and Civility: How to Do It

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Before the event

Day/Time: I choose weeknight at a later time to young professionals and parents to join. This worked really well. So far we've had three and they've all been at 7:30 p.m. on a Tuesday. Many don't show up until 8 p.m., which tells me we can go later.

Since we've had large crowds (20+, many are not League members), I've reserved spaces in restaurants that I know have large dining areas. Checks are individually calculated. Most people seem to order at least a drink.

Facebook! Once I set the date, I make a Facebook event on the League's page. I invite my personal FB friends (most are not LWV people and many I don't even know). This function is on the "share" button on the LWV-VA's Facebook page. I shared this with Carol and she's been doing it for the WRT events. In addition to sharing the event with friends, I also share it on other groups (this is not the same as a page). I share on the Together We Will page (aka formerly known as Pantsuit VA). I share it on a few other pages. This works really well because our Sips event is then in their newsfeed. The Falls Church League only has 159 likes but because I share the event with my friends and in Facebook groups, we get a lot more coverage. We have not promoted the events in the traditional media and the last event we did not send a separate email to League members but we still got 21 people to attend--most were not LWV members (but it seems they return and/or join LWV shortly after).

Every week (and when the event gets within a few days) I post on the event page. This keeps people thinking about the event. A gentle reminder that it is happening and how we can't wait to meet them.

EventBrite is another place to post events. I did that for the first event and it was also successful. Free, too

Night of the event

I bring everything I can think of to info our attendees--what the state is doing, upcoming events at the state level and local level (even other Leagues if I can remember). I share info about OneVirginia and Falls Church commission opportunities, etc. I also have name tags, a Rosie the Riveter bobble head, and books on the topic at the event. A LWV member brings a table top banner to help with visibility. I always wear a LWV shirt so there's no question about who we are.

I talk less about the LWV initially because it seems we talk a lot about it in our individual groups since most are not LWV members. Here's why: I assign a LWV member to informally moderate the conversation to make sure it stays nonpartisan and civil, and to make sure everyone has a chance to share their experience and opinions on issues. In this

conversation, the LWV moderator usually will talk about how the LWV is already working on that particular issue (or at least I hope that is was they are saying).

I use a nonprofit, nonpartisan group called, Living Room Conversations, to get my attendees started. This way I don't have to create the questions (saves me time and headache). I think Everyday Democracy can be another resource for Sips & Civility meet-ups.

For the structure of our meet-up, I break the group up into smaller groups with no more than seven people in each group. This has worked beautifully and League members have liked the small group conversations as opposed to our traditional larger groups.

At the End

At all of the meet-ups, we have a sign-in sheet. I have the LWV membership person collect the forms and do the follow-up. I've asked her to reach out within three days of our meeting. She lets them know about FB, the website, and upcoming events. She also lets them know how they can join LWV.

I try to pick themes based on current events and what is on people's minds. So far we've discussed 'Election Reflections,' 'Reforms for 2017,' and 'Women in leadership and politics.' I think our next one will be a civics board game night. We'll place Timeline (there are several versions of this game), American Trivia, and Loaded Questions Political party. Game night since we'll need some "me time" after all of the activism. Plus, it's a great way to celebrate the League's 97th birthday. Our March event will probably be immigration and April will be Climate Change (Earth Day is in April, I think).

Here are some helpful links:

Living Room Conversations: <http://www.livingroomconversations.org/>

Everyday Democracy: <https://www.everyday-democracy.org/resources>

Eventbrite: <https://www.eventbrite.com/>

Timeline game: https://smile.amazon.com/Asmodee-TIM06ASM-Timeline-American-History/dp/B00KU13448/ref=sr_1_3?ie=UTF8&qid=1485190569&sr=8-3&keywords=timeline+game

Loaded Questions Political Party: https://smile.amazon.com/Loaded-Questions-5511583-Political-Party/dp/B0043234J0/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1485190628&sr=8-1&keywords=loaded+questions+political+party

American Trivia: https://smile.amazon.com/Trivia-Game-American-Family-America/dp/B0088YPMQC/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1485190857&sr=8-1&keywords=american+trivia+family+edition

I hope this helps give you some ideas for growing Leagues and engaging new people. You and others may call me anytime! 510-812-6410 I hope other Leagues in VA will adopt Sips & Civility and make it their own. I can see this as a great way for non-League members to learn and grow using League's welcoming and can-do-attitude.