

PLANNING A CHAPTER RALLY

This was prepared to aid members/hosts in planning and running a chapter rally. One of the first things to remember is that **you are not attempting to “out do” any past rallies** but to add your personality and originality to your own rally. This idea has been very successful and thus creates a lot of new and different experiences.

Keep in mind that our membership and future members come in all ages and sizes and, therefore, plans should be made accordingly.

When you decide to become a rally host you will find the experience very rewarding. In the process, you will have many pleasurable experiences and the membership will enjoy themselves. Many of the members will compliment you on having a very successful rally.

PLANNING A RALLY

The Wagon Master has approached you or you have approached the Wagon Master with a site and date in mind for a future chapter rally.

WAGON MASTER RESPONSIBILITIES: The Wagon Master is an experienced person designated by the chapter to have jurisdiction over your chapter rally. The Wagon Master should visit your potential site and help in its selection.

One of the first things is locating a suitable site. A rally site may be a campground, a state or local park, an open field or even a shopping center parking lot. A suitable site depends on the type of rally you are planning and the number of RV's you expect as well as the time of the year. You should try to provide a level area approximately 20' X 60' for RV's to park. If it is a campground you should check to be sure there are sufficient spaces of adequate size. You should visually check the facility yourself.

Ask about electrical capacities to handle multiple coffee pots and toasters. Watch also for low hanging wires and trees as well as tight turns for incoming RV's and tow cars. The parking area should be viewed, with attention given to discovering potential ground hazards, grass cutting needed, and garbage disposal. Check at fairgrounds to see that livestock areas are cleaned before parking RV's next to them. Observing and mentioning these problems to the campground management during your advance visit will bring to attention your expectation for problems to be resolved prior to your rally.

There should be a covered place for your meeting and social events (breakfast, social hour, etc.), and if it is in the cooler part of the year it might best be enclosed and heated.

Next is to confirm the site (availability) for your rally dates and make the necessary reservations. If there is a special event scheduled for your area, be sure to do this early enough to insure you get your sites. A year in advance is not too early.

In some chapters the Wagon Master will aid you in getting this accomplished, as it is his/her duty.

Now that a site has been obtained, thought must be given to whether you wish to have a specific theme for the rally so that expenses can be planned. The specific theme may be decided before the site is obtained. This is the case when the rally is planned around a local event.

Find Co-Hosts

The next task is to find some co-hosts for the rally. They will assist in parking, registration, food, etc. If you work as a team, each handling different responsibilities, the effort will be minimal and fun.

Draft Agenda

The next step is to draft a rough agenda of the rally to incorporate applicable coffee times, chip and dip, food, etc. At this point in time, you must decide on what type of food you are going to have, if any, such as “pot-luck”, “theme pot-luck”, dine out, catered, etc. Some ideas in this area are crab feasts, shrimp or crawfish boils, traditional picnics, pig roasts, Italian, Mexican, etc.

Keep the timeline light, moving and with enough variety to make members want to return to future campouts. There is no set rule on time of activities -- whatever you think will work best should be your guide.

Estimate Costs

As soon as you have formalized plans for what the rally is going to include, a package must be put together of “X” amount of dollars for rally fee and “X” amount of dollars for camping per evening.

Registration Limitations

The amount of space available at a particular rally site may require registration deadlines and limitations on the number of RV's. Be prepared to notify senders of late-arriving registrations that space and/or electric availability has been exceeded. This may be done by direct mail, phone or inclusion of an article in the newsletter. In case an overflow area is unavailable, you may need to return forms and monies sent.

The Rally Host or designee receiving pre-registrations should keep a tally form listing the members in the sequence of forms received. Breaking out the list into F#'s or in alphabetical fashion will enable your registration people to rapidly check in each coach as it arrived.

Every consideration possible is given to members of FMCA from outside the nearby area who request a campsite while "on-the-road".

Notify Editor

Once this is accomplished, a letter should be written to the Newsletter Editor and should incorporate an article, about the rally, to appear in the newsletter or on the web site. This article should include a brief summary of the rally - what is being done for excitement; where it is going to be held; earliest date of arrival, even though a nightly charge may be added for early arrivals; what are the plans for food, and what should the membership bring to the rally, such as tables, chairs, or if you plan to furnish any of the items such as plates, silverware, tables, etc. And, most important of all, explicit directions on how to get to the rally site.

The sooner the article is sent to the Chapter Newsletter Editor the better. This allows the Newsletter Editor to plan future newsletters based on the material available. Please note that fees must be kept as low as possible, yet not scrimping so as to hurt the success of the rally. **LOTS OF ENJOYMENT CAN BE HAD AT A LOW PRICE.** Attached to the article should be the information for your registration form.

The pre-rally write-up should include the following information and a pre-registration form.

- Name and concise directions to the rally site.
- Names of the rally hosts.
- Name/Address of person receiving registration form and money.
- Cost of the rally, with and without food.
- Cost of an extra person (grandchildren and visitors who are not adult chapter members pay an extra charge. Children under 16 of a chapter member in parent's coach are free (except for catered meals).
- The dates and the length of the rally.
- Emergency contact phone number for the campground and/or police.
- Planned highlights or local points of interest.
- What, if anything, you are asking registrants to bring.
- The registration deadline.
- The name, address and F# of the registrant.
- The cost of stayover camping, if available.
- Ascertain which services are available (such as electricity, sewer, water) and include this information in your rally publicity.

Keep Track of your Expenses

Some rallies require money to be paid in advance. If advance money is required, a request should be made to the chapter's executive board. Other expenses may also be incurred, such as telephone, forms, tickets, etc. It is mandatory to keep all receipts and to keep track of your phone calls. At the close of the rally, deduct these and all other costs from the money taken in and submit this information on your rally report. No costs pertaining to a rally should come out of the host's pocket.

Refund Requests

The rejection or acceptance of requests for refund is to be based on whether a cost is incurred by the Chapter. Generally, refunds for rally and camping fees plus food are given if notification is received prior to the rally and food ordering adjustments can be made.

Refunds for rally registrants who may miss a catered meal are not given. The Wagon Master is available to assist you to interpret refund request policies to members.

Leftover Items

The Wagon Master may have some consumable items in his/her possession from previous rallies. Request that he/she provide a list of these approximately two or three weeks before the rally date. Once this is accomplished, you are well on your way to another fine rally.

Schedule of Events

Next, a schedule of events should be published on your website or other social media. If possible have a copy for each RV when they arrive so everyone knows when and where coffee, chip and dip, playtime, meetings, food, etc. are to be conducted. One way of accomplishing this is to include it in the article to the Newsletter Editor. Coordinate with the chapter president when, where, and if meetings are to be held.

Involving Newcomers

Hosts have the additional responsibility during a Chapter Rally for greeting guests and first timers and getting them involved in rally activities. If they are first timers, be sure to give them a ribbon and consider assigning them a mentor for the length of the rally.

ON SITE

Identify Host RV's

If possible, you should be the first to arrive at the site of your rally. Your RV should be immediately visible for arriving RV's. It is important that your RV be marked in such a way that the membership can find it easily and that your co-hosts are parked close to you so that you can locate them when needed. Your Wagon Master may have Host signs available. One thing to keep in mind is that you, as host, are only one person and, therefore, cannot do everything by yourself; i.e. move tables, decorate, etc. So, if you see something which should be done, ask a member if he/she could do it for you; most members will be happy to help you.

Parking Guidance

An area should be set aside as close to activities and buildings for the physically handicapped whenever possible. Rally Host and Committee Head RV's should be parked so as to be visible by arriving RV's and close to the registration table, tent and bulletin board. All parking is to be done by Chapter designated parkers.

Posting Road Signs

Road signs should be posted at strategic locations and turns leading to the rally site. You are encouraged to map your sign placements so ALL signs may be picked up and returned to the trailer at the conclusion of the rally.

Rally Host Early Arrival

Rally Hosts or your designees are expected to arrive at least two (2) days prior to rally day, if possible, to take care of such things as sign locating, plus confirming all contracts and necessary arrangements. Your early arrival will also prevent early-arriving RV's from parking in the wrong places. Rally-going members may not shout about your extra effort put into advance planning, but it will pay off in their enjoyment and problem-free experience.

P.A. System

Check to find out whether a P.A. system will be needed and available for use at our rally.

Security

The need to plan for the nighttime security of campers will vary according to the type, layout, and location of your rally ground. Requesting campground surveillance and/or area police surveillance should be considered.

Rally Clean-up

When the rally is over, Rally Hosts are responsible for seeing to the policing of the area to ensure proper site clean-up.

FOOD

Coffee

Should coffee be provided for members upon arrival? This depends on your chapter's habits and the weather. When the temperature is 90 degrees coffee isn't usually the preferred drink. Some chapters have coffee "and's" every Saturday morning between 7:00 and 9:00 AM. "And's" can be anything: coffee and toast, coffee and rolls, coffee and donuts. Something that works well is: host provides the coffee and the members bring the "and's". This is something you may wish to consider.

Breakfast

Is it going to be 'on your own', community, or travel to a local restaurant? A community or pot-luck breakfast encourages members to get together and socialize. It can be a lot of work and is not for everyone but if everyone pitches in, it is a lot of fun. Of course, if you have scheduled coffee "and's" breakfast is taken care of.

Lunch

A community lunch can be a wonderful way to get everyone together. At one rally the hosts provided two six foot submarine rolls, each coach was requested to bring specific items. After much fun, and I might add some effort, we had two six foot submarine sandwiches for all to eat.

Dinner

Is it going to be pot-luck, theme pot-luck, at a local restaurant or on your own? At a theme pot-luck members must bring a dish that meets the theme; i.e. Italian, Polish, etc. When you decide what kind of event you are going to have, make sure you publish your "schedule of events" and what the members are to bring, chairs, silverware, dishes, etc. If you plan to furnish any of these items, it should be noted so that members can plan accordingly.

Entertainment

You shouldn't feel you must provide entertainment for the members. But you should try to schedule things that will cause people to mix and mingle. This can be accomplished in several ways. The chip and dip social around noon is one way. A social/entertainment hour after dinner is another. Guessing games, card games and other games encourage people to mix and mingle. Often one or more club members, who are gifted in the entertainment field, would provide entertainment if asked.

ESSENTIAL FINAL DETAILS

Now that you have hosted a successful chapter rally there are a few functions remaining to be performed:

1. Was the site left in as good or better condition than it was when you arrived?
2. Write a brief summary of the rally and forward this to the newsletter editor/webmaster.
3. Write thank you letters to campground staff, vendors, suppliers, and other applicable people.
4. Last, but not least, a financial report must be prepared and sent to the proper club officers. This should be completed as soon as possible, preferably within two weeks.

Fiscal Responsibility

When conducting a Chapter rally, your efforts should be directed to incur neither a substantial profit nor a major loss of Chapter monies. You are expected to maintain records of all income and expenditures.

Money Handling

Registration Forms and checks are to be made out to the chapter and sent to the person designated by the host to handle registrations. An advance may be requested from the Wagon Master and/or the registration money received can be used for the purchase of rally supplies and services.

Rally Accounting

Rally Hosts are expected to request reimbursement for all reasonable costs necessarily associated with putting on the rally. This includes phone calls and postal charges. You are not expected to subsidize your rally.

All money received and expended must be accounted for and documented. Remember to instruct your committee members to give you all their bills and receipts as well. A form will be given to you by the Wagon Master to assist you in the accounting. Attach receipts to a copy of the form and send it to the Wagon Master. This report should be to the Wagon Master no later than three (3) weeks after your rally.

The better planned rallies are the most successful rallies.

**ADVANCE PLANNING IS A MUST
REMEMBER, YOUR WAGON MASTER IS AVAILABLE TO AID YOU
IN PLANNING A SUCCESSFUL RALLY
ASK FOR HIS/HER HELP**