

# Youth Opportunity Center @ YouthLink

## Party Planning Kit Party with a Purpose!

*Thinking about throwing a party to benefit YouthLink?  
Here's a rundown of the Party with a Purpose process!*

### What is a house party?

A house party is a way to build community and spread the word about the great work YouthLink is doing but most importantly, it helps raise money for our critical intervention services for young people! These informal fundraisers are hosted by a YouthLink supporter or a friend/colleague of a supporter at his/her home, but can also be held at the Youth Opportunity Center, a local restaurant or other location of the host's choice. Parties can be as simple as a potluck or as elaborate as a fully catered, formal affair with multiple speakers. House parties typically raise anywhere from \$1,000 to \$15,000 and are crucial to introducing YouthLink's mission to new audiences.

### Why throw a party for YouthLink?

- Supporting YouthLink's critical intervention services through fundraising makes you part of the solution!
  - YouthLink's interventions reach more than 3,000 young people in-crisis or experiencing homelessness each year. Your fundraising efforts will be changing lives!
  - Partying with a purpose is fun! What better way to see old friends and make new ones than to gather for a common cause?
- ### How do I throw a YouthLink house party?
1. *Choose a date for a party.* Try to avoid planning your party around major holidays when many people will be out of town. Consider Friday and Saturday nights or Sunday afternoons as these are generally convenient times for hosts *and* guests. However, plans for Minnesota weekends fill up fast and successful house parties have also been held on a weeknight.
  2. *Develop a guest list.* The rule of thumb with party planning is to over-invite, as a quarter of your invitees will actually attend. If your apartment or your home's living room can fit 20 people, invite at least 60. Who should you invite? Everyone! Invite your friends, family, neighbors, co-

workers, people you volunteer or go to church with, and people you know with a passion for youth, ending homelessness or ending poverty. Don't worry about your guests' financial means or political affiliations – it's not all about fundraising, it's also about getting the word out, building relationships and making connections.

3. *Decide on a party plan.* Will you provide chips and salsa, and invite attendees to bring a covered dish? Do you want to have a garden party, host a happy hour or hold your event at YouthLink? Is your plan to combine your event with your birthday or other celebration? Or maybe a backyard BBQ? Choose your party's direction and then contact Frances Roen at [roen@youthlinkmn.org](mailto:roen@youthlinkmn.org) or 612.252.1283 to confirm the date of your party and plan your event. Can't decide what would be best? We can help with that too!
4. *Pre-party planning.* Our fund development office will work with you throughout the planning process to help coordinate and determine all the details. From speakers to fundraising materials to set-up and tear-down, we will work with you to make your event easy, fun and stress-free!
5. *Send invitations.* 4 to 6 weeks prior to your event, get those invitations sent! We can

create and mail paper invitations, as well as manage rsvps for you. Or, you can send and manage the invitations on your own. Just let us know your party details and invitation list. We have provided a sample invitation for you at the end of this document. [*Note: Always make it clear that your party will benefit YouthLink so that people will know it's a fundraising event.*]

6. *Send reminders!* If there are people who haven't RSVPed a week prior to the event, call or send an email reminder. Send the entire guest list a reminder 1-2 days before the event. Our fund development office can also help with email reminders.
7. *Party time!* YouthLink staff will be on hand to help you throw your party, and to invite your guests to help support young people in our community through a financial donation.
8. *Post-party wrap up.* Our fund development office will send thank you notes to each guest who donated, along with a follow-up note to who did not donate or were not able to attend. With effective follow-up, a significant amount of money can be raised post-event.

## The Party Plan

Just like snowflakes, no two parties are alike! Develop a party plan that fits your style. Here are some ideas:

- *Picnic party:* Invite guests to join you for an outdoor picnic or barbecue. Make it a BYOB.
- *Theme night:* Throwing a party around Halloween or just like to get dressed up? Have a costume party! Or, combine the party with your birthday or other celebration.
- *High class:* Have a wine and cheese party or serve champagne and strawberries.
- *The Classic:* Why mess with perfection? Serve drinks and light hors d'oeuvres in your home.
- *Just Desserts:* Serve coffee and desserts to your guests. Who doesn't love dessert?

- *Rock Out:* Throw a benefit concert for YouthLink. See if local bands and venues will donate services in exchange for advertising.
- *Group bike ride:* Get 20 of your friends to go on a long, weekend group ride on a fun route and end the tour at the Youth Opportunity Center for a fundraising benefit.
- *Eat out together:* If you don't want to host the party in our own home a great option is to find a local restaurant with a banquet room, reserve it, and host your party there. Often, once restaurant owners understand the purpose of the function, they are willing to kick-in a little something as well.
- *Wine tasting party:* Provide a wide variety of wines for sampling and host the party in your garden or at a neighborhood park.
- *Art gallery:* Partner with a local art gallery and host your party there or utilize the Youth Opportunity Center's gallery space as a creative spot for your event.

Don't want to have a party in your home? Think outside your living room – a bar, a park, a coffee house. The possibilities are endless!

### **What happens at a YouthLink party?**

You've chosen a plan for your party, developed a guest list, and sent out invitations, what now? Decide how the event will run its course! A sample agenda of a typical two-hour party might look like this:

6:00 -7:00pm Guests arrive and are greeted by host. Eat, drink, be merry!

7:00-7:30pm Host thanks guests for coming and explains the purpose of the party, introduces YouthLink speaker (5-10 minutes).  
 A young person shares his/her story (5 minutes).  
 Host or YouthLink representative asks guests to make financial contribution to YouthLink (5 minutes). It is always best to start the giving with a pre-determined contribution from the host!  
 Guests fill out donation cards and turn in (5 minutes).

7:30-8:00pm More mingling. Host and YouthLink staff makes themselves available to answer questions.

Remember, there is no one true way to have a party with a purpose! Structure your party in a way that makes the most sense for you!

### **Asking for donations**

Asking your party guests for donations is the part most people find a little scary and intimidating. It doesn't have to be that way! After your YouthLink speaker makes their presentation, thank them for coming and simply say, *"I invited all of you here tonight to learn more about YouthLink. For many of you, this is the first time you are learning about this amazing organization; others of you are already involved with YouthLink. As I mentioned at the beginning of the evening, YouthLink is an organization that I personally support. I hope that what you saw and heard this evening was eye opening, bold and innovative and that you believe it is worthy of your involvement. If you have a connection with*

*YouthLink—if you’ve had time to digest their mission and vision and you believe in what they are doing—I’d like to invite you to make a financial commitment and be a part of something that I am already significantly vested in and committed to. If tonight is the first time you’ve heard about YouthLink and their well-rounded approach to ending homelessness for young people in our community—I ask that you take time to consider getting involved—through a financial contribution, volunteering your time, or learning more by touring the Youth Opportunity Center.”* Then, walk everyone through the donation card and pass around the basket to collect the donations. However, **if** the idea of asking for a gift fills you with dread and is the only thing that’s stopping you from having a house party, please let us know. We'll be happy to make arrangements for a YouthLink representative to make the donation pitch instead.

## **Party Planning: The Nitty-Gritty**

### Host Responsibilities:

- Develop invitation list
- Provide party location, details, and date of event
- Food and drink (unless otherwise specified)
- Plates, utensils, glasses
- Play host/hostess during the event
- Make donation pitch

### YouthLink Responsibilities:

- Develop invitations
- Send invitations & accept RSVPs (unless otherwise specified)
- Provide YouthLink materials
- Schedule speaker(s)
- Process all donations
- Acknowledge all donations
- Follow-up with guests

*Ideally, we work on an 8 week party lead time – we are happy to expedite the process to fit your needs*  
Timeline

### **8 weeks until the house party:**

- Determined preferred method of invitation
- Get in touch with YouthLink with party details and invitation list
- Request speakers through YouthLink (Is there a specific program that will appeal to your audience?)

### **7 weeks until the house party:**

- Approve invitations with YouthLink

### **6 weeks until the house party:**

- Save the Date invitations to be mailed out from YouthLink (optional)

### **4-5 weeks until the house party:**

- Mail invitations

### **2 weeks until the house party:**

- YouthLink reports RSVPs to host

- Host makes reminder calls/emails to those who have not responded to invitation

### **1 week until the house party:**

- Coordinate food and beverages (host)
- Final reminder calls/emails (host)
- YouthLink confirms details with host
- YouthLink confirms with all speakers and prepares them for the event, and provide bios to host
- Coordinate host’s introduction and pitch

### **Day of party:**

- Have the party!

### **1-3 days after the party:**

- YouthLink will send donation acknowledgement and begin follow-up process.

Sample invitation:

**Join our party. Change a young life.**

Frances Roen  
invite you to a benefit party for the

Youth Opportunity Center  
@ YouthLink

Tuesday, June 14, 2011  
6:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

**Frances's house**  
**1234 YouthLink Avenue**  
**Minneapolis, MN 12345**

*light dinner and drinks*  
*casual attire*

RSVP by June 7  
Frances Roen, Director of Development, YouthLink  
612.252.1283 or [roen@youthlinkmn.org](mailto:roen@youthlinkmn.org)

**[youthlinkmn.org](http://youthlinkmn.org)**