



# Taking Care of Business at the Banquet

By Donald C. Collins

An officials association's banquet is clearly a time for a fun get together without the pressures of having to officiate a game. However, associations can use the banquet to help take care of business.

**External Business.** Independent contractor issues and physical attacks on sports officials make it a good idea for an association to cultivate relationships with people who can help the association. The banquet lets associations form those relationships in a fun setting.

Associations should be wise in cultivating relationships. It's appealing to invite elected officials and their aides to a banquet. However, elected officials are invited to and honored at numerous banquets. A banquet invite is not likely to increase your association's access to or bonds with them. Thus, elected officials may not always be the best people to invite unless your association has a specific reason to honor them.

Elected officials' aides often bounce around from job to job. Unless they're high level or long-term aides, an association may not reap an enormous benefit from having them at the banquet.

An association may gain a greater benefit from inviting a representative from the local Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber of Commerce works full time on a wide array of business and governmental issues. It is not a transitory entity; it will always be there and can provide effective support on a vast array of governmental, tax and business issues that affect sports officials.

An officials association should form effective bonds with the police department and prosecutor's office. Those bonds can have tremendous



value if an official should be the victim of a battery.

Associations should invite the police chief and the prosecutor to the banquet. Of course, associations should be cognizant of the fact that prosecutors and the police chief may not actually be able to come to an officials banquet — especially in a big city. If that is the case, an association should ask for a delegate who can come. The association can push for a high ranking assistant district attorney or a high ranking police officer who can attend the banquet. Having those people at the banquet allows officials associations to form some personal bonds with them. The people who come to the banquet will become your association's liaisons with prosecutors and the police. An association should periodically stay in touch with its liaisons after the banquet.

Finally, an association should invite the people it does business with to the banquet. Associations are in the business of providing officials to games played by teams or leagues. Economics may preclude giving a freebie to administrators of every team —

although an association could invite them and have them pay. However, it makes good business sense to invite the commissioner of any league serviced. The good feelings may carry over into the next fee negotiation.

**Internal Business.** Officials associations lose one-third of their first-year members. The statistics get worse after two and three years. Most associations use the banquet to recognize some of their own. The recognition lets the officials know they are appreciated. Skillful banquet recognition can be a part of an ongoing retention strategy, letting an association take care of its internal business interests.

Associations can take a number of steps to recognize their new officials. The easiest is a term of service award after one year. The association can continue issuing term of service awards after three years, five years and then every five years thereafter. Remember, the idea is to recognize officials — an association does not need to spend a lot of money on that. Indeed, associations that overspend on banquets lose the retention benefits because they are forced to raise their dues or cut back other services.

Other ways to recognize new officials include Rookie of the Year awards, awards to the new official who works the most games and awards to the new official with the highest test scores. Also, associations which give scholarships to help new officials go to camps, and associations which promote new officials into full-fledged membership in an association, can time the scholarships and promotions so they can be announced at the banquet, giving new officials an award in a celebratory environment.

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Of course, veteran officials should be recognized too. Many associations have Official of the Year awards and awards for officials who worked playoff or championship level games. Also, special recognition awards for officials who did something noteworthy off the court, and term of service awards give veterans other opportunities for recognition.

Some associations try to get families involved in banquets, inviting spouses to attend. Having a family feel, like it's part of the officiating community, can help retain members. Most associations use

dues to cover member officials' costs. However, an association must decide whether it can foot the bill for the spouses or if it needs to charge them either a reduced fee or a full fee. That may require a balancing act between fiscal health and social harmony. A poor or unpopular decision may offset some of the potential gains. It should be noted, though, most banquets are a social success. It's the fiscal issues that can often create problems.

**Fun Comes First.** After discussing business issues at length, let me remind all associations the banquet is still first

and foremost a social event. Business issues must never compromise the fun. (Donald C. Collins is the executive director of the San Francisco Section of the California Interscholastic Federation. He is a longtime basketball official and lawyer.) ■



LOAN currently has 470 members. In all, those groups represent more than 55,000 individual officials. We welcome our newest LOAN-member associations, listed below along with their home cities and contact persons:

**California:** North American Sports Management, Woodside (Christopher Miller), North Coast Section Water Polo Referees Association, Walnut Creek (Sam Earnhardt).

**Colorado:** Colorado Volleyball Officials Association, Colorado Springs (Brenda Wolfe).

**Maryland:** Western Maryland Soccer Officials Association, Frederick (Tony Bollino).

**Ohio:** Findlay Officials Association, Bluffton (J.M. Benroth).

**Washington:** South Sound Umpires Association, Olympia (Paul Perz).

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limitation of liability in the event of a lawsuit.

A nonprofit corporation may adopt its own bylaws, except for provisions inconsistent with applicable state law or the corporation's articles of incorporation. Bylaws should contain provisions necessary for the governing of the corporation. Nonprofit corporations with members, such as sports officials associations, should include in their bylaws provisions for membership meetings, meetings of the board of directors, disciplining members and other provisions necessary for managing the organization.

The management of a nonprofit corporation is vested in a board of directors absent an express provision to

the contrary in the corporation's articles of incorporation. The officers and members of the board are elected by the members.

Want to ensure that the organization always has an adequate supply of members capable of leading the organization? Set up committees and directly involve the membership in the organization's social activities, educational program and clinics. Members who feel they have input in the governing of the organization are more likely to be supportive of the organization's programs and goals.

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