

How to Host a House Party: Tips for a Successful Host

Thank you for hosting a house party for the OEC! House parties are a great way to find new donors and to deepen our relationship with existing supporters. Here are some tips to help make your event fun and successful.

8 Weeks in Advance: Create an invitation list which is 5 times more people than you want to attend. Only about 20-25% of your invited guests will show up. Create a guest list filled with people who may be interested to support the Ohio Environmental Council and include both mailing and email addresses. It's great to have some there who already know about OEC and have already been donors. Also, some of your guests who can't attend will send gifts anyway. The OEC can invite current OEC members in your area if you would like. A host committee is a great way to attract a sizeable and impressive audience.

7 Weeks in Advance: Prepare the invitations for printing. It takes a week to print all of the pieces, stuff the envelopes, and get them in the mail.

The OEC can help create and mail your invitations. A return mailing label from the host, instead of from the OEC, will get the best response. Be sure to tell guests that the event is a fundraiser and they should bring their checkbooks or credit cards. It's important to let people know what to expect so they don't feel like they were misled. Offer a way to donate if they are unable to attend. Two hours is the ideal length of a house party fundraiser.

4 Weeks in Advance: Send an e-invitation to all of your guests who have not yet responded and create a Facebook event, inviting them to RSVP by email and to forward the invitation to other interested friends. The OEC can create this for you, based on our successful template. Sending multiple invitations and reminders is critical to your success in recruiting a substantial crowd.

3 Weeks in Advance: Plan your food and beverages. Depending on the time of day, guests will expect light appetizers or a meal. Consider providing alcoholic in addition to non-alcoholic beverages. Think about logistics for serving food (layout, plates, napkins, cutlery, cups, ice, trash & recycling), where the presentation will be made, and where to set up a sign-in table. Parking may also be a consideration. Plan to withhold a gift receptacle, such as a vase, until after the pitch so guests are encouraged to make thoughtful gifts.

1-2 Weeks in Advance: Email each of the invitees who have not yet responded. Confirm that they received the invitation and ask them if they would like to come.

3 Days in Advance: Call or email each guest who has RSVPed yes or maybe to remind them about the party. Make sure they have directions and know when to come. Special information about parking, dress, and food may be helpful.

Party Day: Have fun! You are hosting the event to share your passion for the environment with family and friends. Help make your guests feel comfortable by introducing them to the Board and staff members at the event. Encourage them to ask questions. Make mental note of your conversations.

The OEC will make a brief presentation about our work. Because the guests are your friends and family, you are the best person to ask them to donate. If you prefer, the OEC can make “the ask,” but it would be great to have you standing by our side. The request should be personal, heartfelt, and specific. It’s really important to ask for a specific donation instead of asking people to donate in general. You will raise a lot more with a specific ask. Asking for \$250 to help underwrite specific expenses, like emergency lobbying efforts, is a wonderful ask. This is a formula for success! It’s enough to inspire larger gifts, but not too much to offend those who cannot afford it. It’s great to mention that you have already made a large gift, or even offering a match.

The Morning After: Send us any helpful notes on your conversations with guests and suggestions for future house parties. This will help as we develop relationships with our new donors. OEC will send thank you notes to everyone who donates. Please also send personal notes to all attendees thanking them for coming and/or donating. The OEC will promptly send a thank you note for every donation that we receive.

Also, send an email to those who did not attend, both who didn’t show up and those who didn’t RSVP that they would come. Tell them that you had a successful fundraiser for a wonderful organization and ask them to contribute!

Thank you again for hosting a house party fundraiser for the OEC! Please feel free to contact us any time with questions at (614) 487-7506 or membership@theOEC.org.