LEND A HAND UP
Dakota Medical Foundation

Host a Successful In-Person Benefit Event

A step-by-step guide to help you plan an in-person benefit or event for someone facing hardship — with our free tools, planning guide, and Boost funding to make every gift go further.

Before You Begin

Most in-person benefits pair with a Lend A Hand Up online fundraiser, so you've likely already handled this part. Here's a quick recap:

- You've picked a fundraising champion and submitted your request at give.lendahandup.org/start-a-fundraiser.
- You've decided where donations will go – a benefit fund or an existing checking account – and Lend A Hand Up has set up your giving page.

What You Need to Know

Here's what it takes to plan and run an in-person benefit, from your first conversation to your final thank-you.

1. Build your team and choose your activities

- Once approved, Lend A Hand Up sets up a giving page for you — 100% of what's raised goes to the family, and Boost funding follows based on proceeds (more on that below).
- Gather a core team: friends, neighbors, co-workers, churches, and others connected to the family. Look for a mix of skills — promotion, accounting, auctions, food, tech.
- Brainstorm activities that fit your team's time, space, and the recipient's interests — a pancake breakfast, a themed night, a silent auction. Weigh weekday vs. weekend and check community calendars for conflicts.
- Check permit requirements: silent auctions and set-price sales don't need one, but raffles and other games of chance usually do. Permits can take up to 30 days and may involve a fee — check with your city or county early (Fargo: 701-241-1304).
- Set a budget (facility, entertainment, food, printing) and lock in your site, date, and time as soon as you can.

2. Promote your event

- Build a flyer with a brief story and photo, event details, donation options, and sponsor/contact info. See examples at give.lendahandup.org/fundraisers.
- Share it everywhere — email your contact list, post on social media, and consider a video for your giving page.
- For direct mail, pair a short appeal letter with your flyer and a simple donation form.
- Reach out to local media with a flyer or news release and a contact person for interviews.

3. Organize your volunteers and collection process

- Assign volunteer categories (setup, check-in, food, auction tables, cleanup), figure out how many you need for each, and confirm details with a reminder call a few days out.
- Decide how you'll collect gifts: set ticket price or free-will offering, a welcome area with a QR code to your online giving page, and how checks should be made payable (e.g., "John Doe Benefit Fund").
- For auctions or raffles, plan how bids are tracked, when bidding closes, and what happens with winning items and leftover donations.

4. Run the event

- Keep at least two volunteers at the welcome area throughout to greet guests and watch over donations.
- Stagger auction closings if you have a lot of items, and highlight winning bids right away.
- At the close, have two volunteers count funds together for accountability — and don't forget to take pictures!

5. Wrap up and secure your Boost

- Deposit donations promptly and settle any remaining expenses.
- Boost funding: $100 for every $500 raised online through lendahandup.org, up to $5,000 total, with a $1,000 cap per individual donor. Boost is based on your campaign's online gifts over its 3–6 month timeline — cash, checks, and gifts from the recipient's own family don't count toward it.
- Keep your benefit fund open until the Boost check is presented, then work with our team to schedule a check presentation (a photo with the big check is optional!).
- Deposit the Boost check, update your final budget, and talk through how funds should be used, especially if there's any impact on the recipient's assistance eligibility.
- Close the fund once it's depleted or transferred.

6. Say thank you

- Thank everyone who showed up — personally, and publicly if you'd like (a local paper, church bulletin, newsletter, or social media).
- We'll ask you to share quick feedback on how it went, so we can keep improving.
- Stay connected: support another family's fundraiser, refer someone to us, give on Giving Hearts Day, run with us at the Fargo Marathon, or host again. Gifts to the Lend A Hand Up program itself are tax-deductible.

Available Resources

Helpful tools for each stage of planning:

- **Fundraising Resources & Boost Criteria:** give.lendahandup.org/start-a-fundraiser
- **Example In-Person Benefit Event Timeline:** a suggested planning schedule
- **Flyer Template:** for promotion
- **Volunteer Assignment Sheet:** for organizing your team
- **Silent Auction Form:** for the event itself
- **Host A Successful Online Fundraiser Guide:** if you're pairing your in-person benefit with an online campaign

Questions? We're here to help.

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Lend A Hand Up is a 501(c)(3) subsidiary nonprofit of Dakota Medical Foundation that boosts financial support for people experiencing hardship due to a health issue or other traumatic event across North Dakota and Northwest Minnesota.