

Make Lunch an ‘Extraordinary Experience’

By JEREMY PARK

Last week we explored ways you can work with your favorite restaurant or retailer to put together a special promotion that creates a win-win with the nonprofit you support. Today we are going to look at how you can turn a normal business lunch, workshop, seminar, social mixer, or even family get-together into an experience that is memorable and gives back.

There are a number of nonprofit organizations around town that have amazing venues and meeting space. Some have elaborate boardrooms and others have very unique settings, which are perfect for hosting various events. Often these types of venues get overlooked for the more traditional hosting sites.

Junior Achievement, for example, is a great change of pace, perfect for hosting events with a large conference room filled with audiovisual amenities. Their JA BizTown – which is like a mini-city bustling with tons of stores, City Hall and a radio station – is always a big hit for business leaders and families to tour.

If you are looking for something unique, check out BRIDGES, which has a huge space, an indoor rock climbing wall, adventure challenge and outside area perfect for movies and concerts.

Feeling sporty? Check out **Memphis Athletic Ministries and their Grizzlies Center**. We have hosted some large events in their gymnasium and always love feeding off their energy.

Even smaller nonprofits, like Advance Memphis or HopeWorks, have meeting space that organizations can utilize. Others, like the Salvation Army, Porter-Leath and Memphis Oral School for the Deaf also love playing host. Of course, I would be remiss not to include such nonprofit venues, like the Memphis Botanic Garden, the Dixon Gallery & Gardens, the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art and the Memphis Zoo, which are tremendous cultural assets for our great city.

If your event involves food, such as a business lunch or workshop, I highly recommend JIFF (www.jiffyouth.org). Rick Carr, their Executive Director, is doing a tremendous job working with kids in the juvenile justice system and helping them get their life on track. They have a top-notch culinary school where kids are learning valuable skills that apply from the front of the restaurant to the kitchen – and they serve some delicious four-course meals! I can vouch that you and your guests will be in for a treat.

What makes these types of events special is that they turn into a give back. What was once a normal business lunch becomes an extraordinary experience. To add more meaning, invite the executive director to make a few remarks or take everyone on a short tour. It is always impressive to see firsthand the impact these organizations are having in our community. In the process, you provide valuable exposure for the nonprofit. So, next time you are planning an event for your company or family, make it a give back event!

Jeremy Park, director of communications at Lipscomb & Pitts Insurance and director of the Lipscomb & Pitts Breakfast Club, can be reached at jeremyp@lpinsurance.com.
