

What is a CVB?

The Convention and Visitors Bureau is here to serve you.

In order to accomplish that goal, we will answer the most frequently asked questions about our organization enabling you to get to know us better.

What is the purpose of the Bureau?

The general purpose of the Bureau is to advertise, develop and promote the city of Tuscaloosa.

How does the Bureau promote tourism?

- ❖ Distributing tourism related literature to interested parties and potential tourists.
- ❖ Produce travel literature, such as the Tuscaloosa Area Visitors Guide, Calendar of Events, and the African American Heritage in Tuscaloosa guide.
- ❖ Attending industry related trade shows.
- ❖ Providing current information and assistance to potential tourists via our toll free number (1-800-538-8696) or website visittuscaloosa.com

How is the Bureau funded?

Funding is provided through the city of Tuscaloosa collecting lodging tax (tax on persons staying overnight in a hotel or motel). We are allocated a percentage of the total collected revenue from Tuscaloosa and Northport hotels and motels.

Why does Tuscaloosa need a visitor's bureau?

Tourism is the nation's second largest employer offering over 15 million jobs. Leisure travelers, reunions, tour buses, and conventions added millions to Tuscaloosa's economy. The bureau's efforts contributed greatly to this financial success.

Planning a family reunion can be a monumental task. Your friend, Lynette at the Tuscaloosa Convention and Visitors Bureau can do some of the legwork for you.

What can Lynette do for me you might ask?

In the few minutes it takes you to read the information, you should go into your planning meeting more equipped to take on this task.

Lynette can and will:

- ❖ Send out proposals to all of the hotels to find out which ones have the rooms available to host your family.
- ❖ Assist with planning a tour of the city
- ❖ Assist with finding a location to host the dinner
- ❖ Assist with finding a location to host a family gathering
- ❖ Provide welcome packets
- ❖ Assist with registration **
- ❖ Provide a list of companies that perform various event services

Okay, what are these services going to cost me?

Well before we talk prices, here are just a few other ways Lynette can assist you.

Site visits to prospective hotels

Site visits to prospective venues for family gatherings

The total for all the services listed above is (don't cover your eyes)! The cost is one hundred percent **FREE**, that's correct, **FREE**.

Lynette is able to assist with all the items listed above and not charge you a cent.

What is the catch?

No catch, plain and simple, when you stay in a hotel, we (the Convention and Visitors Bureau) gets a percentage of the room tax. So you see, you do not directly pay for any of the services, the hotels actually fund the CVB through what is called a lodgings tax.

Now, don't you feel like you can take on the task of planning your family reunion?

How do I even get started? *This still seems too much to handle.*

Pick up the telephone and call Lynette Rice at the Tuscaloosa Convention and Visitors Bureau. She can be reached Monday-Friday from 8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m. at 800-538-8696 or locally at 391-9200. You can also visit our website at visittuscaloosa.com and fill out the reunion form, or lastly, email at lynette@tcvb.org.

When you telephone Lynette, have the following information available so that she can better assist you:

Name of the reunion:

Reunion date:

Alternate date:

Number of rooms required:

Number of expected participants

Will you need banquet space?

Will you be hosting a family gathering?

What type of activities are you interested in?

From the information above, Lynette will create a proposal and send it to all of the hotels. They in turn will respond with the number of rooms and the rate for that particular date.

All of the proposals are then sent to the reunion planner who has the responsibility to look over them and select a host hotel or hotels.

Once you select a host, contact Lynette and let her know so she can inform the other hotels. Your family members will need to pick up the rooms from that block of rooms the hotel is holding for you after the contract is signed. If they miss the deadline for the room block, they may pay more than the other family members who picked up their rooms in time.

Contract negotiations are between the planner and the hotel, the Convention and Visitors Bureau does not take part in that aspect of the process.

Is that all I need to do?

No, there is a little more to it than that, but you are off to a good start. Here are some other suggestions:

Choose a committee

- a.* President, vice president, secretary (very important to record the minutes of the meeting), assistant secretary, treasurer and assistant treasurer.

Choose a time to have the family meetings

- a. Meetings should be monthly in order to hear progress reports on the activities, facilities, tours, etc.

Choose a date (*try to stay away from the busiest months of June and July*)

These months are the absolute busiest for hotels, try to host during off peak months. Generally the second weekend in August is slower; however since most reunion attendees plan their vacations around the 4th of July, this will probably be the most popular date.

Decide the costs

Will you have one price that includes everything, i.e. family gathering or picnic, tours, dinner, T-shirts, and any other items you might want to order with your family name printed on it.

Having one price cuts down on bookkeeping duties. Make sure you do not underestimate the costs. If you overestimate, take the difference and start a savings account for the next reunion or award some of it to a student in college as a scholarship.

Choose a park for the family gathering

You will need to take into account the people attending and make certain there is shelter for the elderly and the restrooms are nearby.

Choose a menu

Will your meals be catered or will family members be responsible for bringing a dish. Save yourself the headache and let someone else do the cooking and cleaning up. You can find caterers who are willing to work within your budget; a list is included in this booklet.

Decide the activities

In the pages that follow, samples are included to give you a better idea of what you might want to ask for. By no means is this a strict regime for you to follow, these are merely ideas derived from other family reunions. You may customize them to fit your needs.

You should get some really good ideas from the surveys if the family members return them. It will surely make your task easier because you are not hard pressed to generate the ideas alone. To encourage the family members to return the surveys, you might include a self-addressed stamped envelope. When you call the first

meeting, ask the attendees to contribute something towards the postage costs for the initial mailings.

Decide on the colors

After you choose a theme, you will want the colors to coincide with the theme.

Before you run out and purchase a lot of items to decorate and place on the walls, check with the venue to see if they even allow anything to be adhered to walls. Most community centers will allow you to hang posters or artwork as long as it does not damage the wall.

Okay what else can I do to make this a memorable event for my family?

Some ideas that I have personally found to be great are souvenir journals, or CD's with the family pictures done in the form of a movie. If you have someone in your family who is computer savvy and has the time and equipment....ask them to put the journal together. There are a number of FREE downloadable programs that will assist you in getting the information and photos organized into a format that would yield good results.

You might want to start small with the photos and build on the gallery each year that you host a family reunion. Arrange the photos chronologically if possible, beginning with the father, mother, siblings and their children. The next time you hold a

reunion, you might want to include the grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and spouses of the grandchildren.

Keep in mind that these are just ideas.

For the souvenir journal, ask family members to write a message to be included in the journal. You might want to include a business card as well. Include photos of family members wherever you can. You can telephone the mayor's office and ask them to write a letter of welcome to be included in the journal.

Take some of the photos and enlarge them to create a gallery to be displayed in the room. This will allow family members to mingle prior to the start of the events.

Transportation Services

If you need transportation for your family outing, charter services are available for tours of surrounding areas.

Check these out!

ABC Tours

Have yourself a great reunion and if there is anything else I can assist you with, call me.

Contact info:

Lynette Rice
Director of Multicultural Tourism/Group Tours
Tuscaloosa Convention and Visitors Bureau
1305 Greensboro Avenue
Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35401
205-391-9200
email: lynette@tcvb.org

Sample Survey Letter

This will give you a good idea of the family members who are interested in participating in the reunion. You might want to send this out 18 months in advance to allow enough time to compile the list of interested members.

Dear _____ (family member):

The Planning Committee for the

_____ (name of the family)

reunion would like you feedback. The reunion is being planned for

___ / ___ / ___ (date) in _____ (city/state).

Below is a list of questions we would need answered in order to better select accommodations, and events for our reunion.

Please Print

1. Are you interested in participating in the
_____ family reunion?
2. Are there any particular activities or events you would love to see take place during the reunion?
_____.
3. Are there any special needs you or other family members require to participate in this reunion? i.e. diet restrictions, mobility aids, and etc. _____.
4. Do you have a special talent that could be shared with the family during some of the activities? _____
_____.
5. Do you have a particular theme in mind for the reunion?
_____.

6. Do you have a preference of colors for the reunion? _____.

Please feel free to add any additional suggestions or comments that you might have.

Please share this survey with any family member who might not have received it. Have them return it to the committee.

Letter After Survey is Returned
Accommodations Selected
Banquet Space Selected

Dear _____ (family member):

We are planning the _____ family reunion for the year _____ in _____ (city/state). The committee has selected _____ as the host hotel based on the responses generated from the previous survey. The room rate is \$ _____ per night _____ for _____ rooms.

The hotel is located at

.

The banquet will be held at

The theme for the reunion

is _____.

Based on the number of family members participating, the registration cost per family is \$_____. This amount will cover the costs for postage, stationery, transportation, meeting space, catered meals, etc.

Please look for additional information in the coming months. If you have any other suggestions while we are still in the planning stages, feel free to share those with us. We want to make this reunion one that each family member will enjoy and we need your input to make that happen.

Note: All of the above information was based on the surveys returned to the committee.

Registration Letter

Approximately 6 months prior to the reunion, send this form out to family members. Include the registration form, just in case someone has misplaced the first one. You might pick up a few members who were not interested in the beginning.

To: _____
From: Reunion Planning Committee
Subject: _____ Family Reunion

Hello,

The excitement is building, as we are just a few short months away from our family reunion. The committee has planned the following activities for the weekend of _____. We are extremely thrilled with the plans and hope that you will register.

General Information:

Reunion Theme:

Colors:

Dress: Casual except for dinner/dance and or worship service.

Accommodations:

Name of Facility:

Street Address:

City/State/Zip:

Telephone Number:

Room Rate: _____ this is the same for singles or doubles.
You must pay this amount directly to the hotel. Please call the
hotel and give them the name of the reunion in order to get this
price.

Overview of the Activities:

Friday: Arrival/Check-in/Hospitality
Saturday: Tour of the city/Family gathering in the park.
Dinner, banquet, dancing.
Sunday: Worship services/Brunch and Planning
Meeting/Departure

Registration Form:

Please complete the registration form and return it with your
check or money order no later than
_____ (two months prior to the
reunion).

Make checks payable to:

Name of Reunion
Address
City/State, Zip

Registration Form

Name of family

member: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip _____

Telephone Number:() _____ Cell Phone:(
) _____

Number attending: _____ adults() children (
) _____

Number of T-shirts needed _____ sizes

Activities you plan to participate

in: _____

When do you plan to

arrive? _____ Driving () Flying ()
)

If you are flying list the arrival time and

airline: _____

Will you be renting a car or will you need a ride from the
airport? _____

Are you staying at the host hotel or with a family
member: _____

If staying with a family member please list their
name: _____

If you are not paying the full amount, please indicate when
the balance will be paid: _____.

*All fees must be paid in full before welcome information, T-shirts, etc.
will be presented.*

**Please do not fill in the information below, the committee will
complete.**

**Total received: \$ _____ Paid in full () Partial
payment: \$ _____
Balance due: \$ _____ Check number: _____**

**Registration Assistance is provided to any reunion that books and
pays for 50 rooms or more. You will be given 1-2 people to register your
guests for a maximum of 2 hours. This will give the planner the

opportunity to enjoy the festivities without the worry of finding someone to cover the area.

Class Reunions

Class Reunion planners run into the same sort of questions that the family reunion planner will need answers to. Both planners have to stay on top of their game if they want to minimize the headaches.

The same services offered to family reunions are available to the class reunions. Many of the forms provided can be customized to fit your particular reunion, so feel free to change them reflect your event.