

# Sarah and Shane's Guide to SMAzing Events

Co-Founders Shane and Sarah have been working hard to perfect their Laughing at My Nightmare fundraising event planning/execution skills since 2012! Starting with small open mic nights to gala events and 5k's, the duo has had a fun time learning the in's and out's of fun, original, and exciting ways to raise money for Laughing At My Nightmare, Inc.!

We hope this information will help show you that ANYONE can set up a fun and exciting event to benefit any cause! If you're interested in setting up an event to benefit LAMN, we would love to work with you and hear your ideas on how we can help!

## Determining What Type of Event

### WHAT TYPE OF EVENT SHOULD I HOST?

For Shane and Sarah, this is always one of the hardest choices they have to make. It's easy to take on the already existing events that have been done before- annual galas, basket raffles, 5k's, etc. but it takes some "outside of the box" thinking to decide what type of event works for YOU! Their advice- you want to plan an event that you're going to feel passionate about creating and making successful and one that YOU would attend if you heard about it. If you're a runner, you're probably going to be energized by planning a run. If you're a musician, you're probably going to be energized by planning a Battle of the Bands, etc. Any type of event can be a fundraiser its just a matter of being resourceful and methodic about how you will host and fundraise at the event.

## Tickets

### HOW WILL THEY BE SOLD? WILL THEY BE SOLD AT THE DOOR? WHAT WILL BE THE PRICE? WILL THEY BE AVAILABLE BEFORE THE EVENT?

Some of these questions will be easier answered once the event is in the planning stages. If you're hosting an event, like a concert or dinner, you want to at least cover the cost per person to hold the event. From Shane and Sarah's experience, the best way to sell a high number of tickets, is setting up online ticket sales through any ticket purchasing vendor online. Yes, there is a fee that is taken out of the each ticket sold, but you're opening up ticket sales to people that would not have known about the event. Offering discounts for "pre-sale" tickets is also an EXCELLENT motivator to sell tickets quick!

## Provisions

### SHOULD EVERYTHING PROVIDED AT THE EVENT HAVE BEEN DONATED?

A common misconception about fundraising events is that every single offering (food, drinks, etc.) at the event should be donated. Although, yes, it is helpful to have donated or very low cost items, you want to make sure the attendees are going to be happy with what they're receiving at the event. Also, if this is a recurring event, people will

remember the experience they had and will be more likely to bring their friends next time if they know the food was good and plentiful. That being said, if you are going to look and “ask” for lower cost high quality items, you MUST create an engaging letter or ask for the people and organizations you’ll be requesting items from. These asks should not only include the information about the event but also contain detailed information about the cause they’re helping and what results/impact this successful event will have for the cause it’s benefitting. Individuals and organizations will be more compelled to help if you provide an ask for EXACTLY what they sell or provide as opposed for “any donated item or service will be helpful.” ie: if you’re requesting items from a grocery store, you want to ask for; 6 boxes of Nature Valley Granola bars, 12 Powerade's, etc. Sometimes the response might be “instead we can provide...” but at least they know exactly what you’re needing from them instead of having to decide on their own or not at all.

## Fundraising

### YOU MAKE MONEY ON TICKETS AND THAT’S IT, RIGHT?

You might have seen this label and thought.. “wait i’m planning a fundraising event... isn’t that it?” Short answer- is yes. However, there is a little bit more to it than that. Unless you have a well known performer providing free entertainment that can justify high ticket prices, you need to think of other ways to fundraise at an event. A common choice is offering a silent auction, raffle, 50/50 but there are other ways to raise money at an event. For example, Shane started creating one of a kind wheelchair art using paint, the wheels of Shane’s chair, and a canvas. Although Shane might disagree, he wouldn’t be classified as an “artist” per say, but the creativity and motivation to bid after a speech from Shane and Sarah was a driving factor in making this idea successful. General rule of thumb; plan to raise the majority of the event’s money through the fundraising offerings at the actual event. Another option is to get sponsors for the event. These are individuals or organizations that make donations towards the cause that can help to cover the cost of the event.

## Marketing

### HOW DO I SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT MY EVENT?

Shane and Sarah are not at all marketing professionals. They tend to lean on others that they know have a better handle on how to best market an event to get more ticket sales. What they do know, is that content is KEY! Making Facebook posts or email blasts that say “come to our even on this date..” will always fail. But “come to the most epic event in Laughing At My Nightmare history that will help 15 people obtain adaptive technology”... has a much better ring to it. With fundraising events, make sure to promote the cause that the event will be benefitting and if possible, make those results quantifiable! Shane and Sarah typically host events right before major gifts that are happening with the organization. For instance, the end of year event held on Giving Tuesday specifically benefits their Tech The Halls Campaign which provides adaptive technology to 15+ people living with muscular dystrophy. Another suggestion is to stay away from creating a Facebook event, inviting your friends, and thats it. If you create a

Facebook event, you should do your best to keep up with posting in the event about fun things happening, contests for free tickets, polls about what people want to see, and “announcements” about entertainment, etc. GET CREATIVE! This is the fun part!

## Permits and Licenses

### WHAT AM I FORGETTING?

Before ticket sales are made public, make sure you have obtained all the necessary permits, licenses, and insurance you need for the event. Typically, you can find anything you’ve missed on the website for the county where the event will be held, but make sure you cross your T’s and dot your i’s! The last thing you want is to have to cancel the event because it turns out you didn’t submit the correct application to the city.

## Cost

### HOW DO I MAKE MY MONEY BACK?

Depending how you’re planning to fundraise (tickets sales, silent auction winnings, live auction, raffle, etc.) may mean that it will not be until after the event that costs are covered. Sometimes this means that you personally have to pay in advance for the venue space and caterer, but after you’ve tallied all of the revenue that was raised, you take the expenses to hold the event out of the revenue to cover the costs. If this is your first time holding an event, this might be scary in the beginning because you were not expecting to pay \$500-\$5000 for an event that ends up raising \$15,000 through the silent auction the day of. This is the reality of fundraising events. Sometimes you have to stay positive about that fact that your event will raise money the night of, but of course, there is no guarantee. This is where accurately pricing tickets is essential! You want to make sure ticket sales will at least cover the cost of holding the event.

## Volunteers

### WHO WORKS THE EVENT?

Make sure to bring the right amount of volunteers and get them on board as early as possible! Be sure to get their contact information and set the right expectations about when you’ll have their job duties ready and all of the details they need for the event. Volunteers are the backbone of all successful events, and you need to make sure they know that! These people are giving their time to work for the cause that means so much to you, and showing them appreciation and gratitude should be one of your top priorities going into the event. Be sure to over staff as well just in case some people are not available the day of.

## The Day Of

### ITS FINALLY HERE!

There is a good chance you may lose some sleep the night before your event is held. This is normal. But with good organizational skills there is a great chance you will have

an awesome event. Prior to the event, make sure you have envelopes with payment to give each of the vendors. Finally, a good MC will make or break an event. If someone is helping to MC or many announcements at the event, make sure their script is as specific as possible as far as times they need to speak, what they need to say, etc. This will help the event flow and will take stress off of you! Again, be prepared to step in if need be! **MAKE SURE TO THANK ALL OF YOUR VOLUNTEERS AND SPONSORS THE NIGHT OF THE EVENT!** Without them, the event would not be happening!

Please feel free to ask us any questions or give us any suggestions!  
We can be contacted at: *info@laughingatmynightmare.com*