

A successful Project Celebration can come in many forms. Most organizers rely on the promise of food, fun and prizes to generate interest in the party. Some schools give away goody bags to each senior and have a drawing for one grand prize, like a new or used car that someone donated. Others give away a nice prize worth \$100 or more to each attending senior and do not offer a grand prize. Based on the efforts of your fundraising committee, you may choose a combination of these options. The ideas offered here are written as though you'll give a goody bag to each attending senior along with a nice prize, both given as “lovely parting gifts.”



Collecting and Storing Giveaways

Giveaways and donations for Project Celebration are categorized as:

1	Cash or checks, which are deposited in your Project Celebration bank account and used to purchase prizes and goody bag stuffers. To obtain the right amount of stuff you need, your fundraisers will need to calculate how much money needs to be collected to meet your giveaway goals.
2	Merchandise or gift cards worth \$50–\$100 from area merchants, banks and service providers to use as prizes. You may need to supplement these kinds of donations by purchasing merchandise and gift cards from area vendors.
3	Small items, coupons, brochures and samples to fill goody bags

Orchestrating this effort takes coordination. Be sure to keep accurate, up-to-date records of what is collected, and take periodic inventories of the giveaways. Designate one person as the keeper of the giveaway list (in a spreadsheet, database or even on your Project Celebration website) so you always know which businesses have been solicited, what's been donated and, if merchandise, its brand name and estimated value. Have this list available to avoid having

more than one volunteer solicit a business or service provider.

Take a look at last year's donors (unless this is your school's first year hosting Project Celebration). You can ask past donors to contribute again. You may also want to use information about past donors to solicit new donors—there's nothing like a little friendly competition to increase your contributions. After all, it's for a good cause!

Although parents of seniors are a built-in source of funding, there's no end to the kinds of organizations that would consider giving. Solicit funding and merchandise from a variety of locally owned businesses, chains and even national companies. Most businesses have community outreach goals, and Project Celebration is certainly a worthy cause. You may ask your employed seniors and parents to solicit donations from their employers. Also, inquire among civic, fraternal, community, neighborhood and youth organizations in your area. Don't forget schools,

churches and social organizations. Be sure to have a sheet that explains what Project Celebration is, in case you need to leave it with someone for a solicitation call later. See a sample solicitation letter in the **Budget & Fundraising** section.

Determine a secure location to store all giveaways. You may elect to divide this responsibility among several volunteers or parents. Also, make sure you arrange enough large vehicles to help transport prizes and goody bags to the high school the morning of the event.



Favors for Goody Bags

Giving away goody bags filled with small, useful items and helpful information is a nice way to provide a little added value for your students and a great way to feature some of the products and services of area merchants, banks and service providers.

Your local representative at the Texas Department of Transportation may be able to offer you some free promotional items to use in your goody bags, too. The section titled **TxDOT As a Resource** describes the kinds of materials sometimes available (including drawstring backpacks, MP3 player covers, highlighters and

pens). TxDOT is constantly searching for new materials to spread traffic safety messages that also interest young people, so check with your local representative to see what may be offered.

Customize your bags based on what's available in your area, what merchants can donate (one per student is desirable) and what won't break your bank. Some vendors may want to donate the bags themselves. Be sure to ask for a deal when purchasing lots of small items, especially if you're buying in bulk. It never hurts to ask.

Fill your seniors' goody bags with stuff, such as:

- Calendars
- Candy, gum
- Confetti
- Coupons
- Small gift cards
- Hats, visors
- Highlighters
- Pamphlets, brochures
- Pens, pencils
- Personal care items
- Product samples
- Snacks
- Stickers
- Sticky notes

Once your team has collected enough items for all goody bags, organize a team of volunteers or students to assemble the bags before the event. Be sure to store stuffed bags (open side up) in large boxes you can transport to the event drop-off area when you are ready to distribute them.

Prizes

Your Budget and Fundraising Committee has been working hard to get you the cash you need to make this event worthwhile, so make sure your prize purchasers buy prizes that students want. (The section titled **Student Input** has a sample survey to students about what kinds of prizes they might like.) Many schools allocate funds to purchase a nice prize for every attending senior.

Prizes should include fun or practical items teens might need as they start their adult lives. You'll need multiples of various items, such as:

- Blenders
- Digital cameras
- Dorm fridges
- DVD players
- Electronic game players
- Gift cards, certificates
- Microwaves
- MP3 players
- Stereos
- TVs



A Word About Cash

A word about cash: Experienced organizers know not to give cash to students. Graduates have been known to pool funds and throw a party later where alcohol and other drugs are available. Organizers may even put themselves and the school at risk of lawsuits should funds be involved in the purchase of alcohol, other drugs, guns, knives or other items that later cause harm.

If it becomes known that cash was provided at Project Celebration, organizers or school administrators may be liable. Check with authorities about any local, state or federal laws, rules and guidelines that may pertain. If you want to have a cash cube activity, you may want to use fake money that can later be exchanged for a gift card or other item.

Distributing Goody Bags

You can give students their goody bags anytime, but if you dole out giveaways during the event, students may worry about their things, which might distract them from having fun. You may want to hand each student their goody bag after the event, such as when they get off the bus.

Distributing Prizes

You may want to give away your prizes during the night using drawings or as booth prizes for contests and games, which means students will have to keep track of their prizes during the event. Most organizers opt to keep it simple by distributing prizes at the end of Project Celebration, such as when students return to the high school to their cars or rides.

Once all students are registered and locked in, complete your list of who gets what. Aim for an equitable distribution among your seniors (as much as is practical and logical) with prizes most teens would value. Avoid situations where one gets an expensive MP3 player with free downloads while another gets only a cheap clock. Combining similar giveaways is a good way to even things out.

Using your final attendee list, record on the prize list the name of each student attending the event. (If you purchased wristbands with pre-printed numbers, apply these numbers on the prize list.)

Then make sure your volunteers who distribute prizes have a final list. One savvy event planner even updated her spreadsheet with last-minute registrants from the event facility, emailed it using a nearby wireless connection to a volunteer at the high school, and volunteers there used it as their final checklist to distribute door prizes—talk about an organizer!

Make prizes and gift cards available behind a set of three tables manned with volunteers who will greet students and distribute the prizes according to your final list. Create signs for tables such as A–I, J–R and S–Z (or with wristband number ranges), and make sure each table has the prize list that corresponds with that set of letters or numbers. Check off each prize given and send students away with their goodies and your congratulations.

