



Making Strikes to Spare Transplant-Needy Kids

Fundraising Event Guide

2501 West COTA Drive, Bloomington, Indiana 47403
800.366.2682 COTA.org



**Children's Organ
Transplant Association.**

If you could help make a life-saving difference for a transplant family, would you?

The question is as simple as that. If your answer is **'Yes'**, then we invite you to join the hundreds of thousands of volunteers and contributors who since 1986 have generously donated their time and money to the Children's Organ Transplant Association (COTA). These volunteers and financial supporters are COTA's Miracle Makers, a group of committed individuals who are helping give children and young adults across the country a second chance at life.

COTA is a national nonprofit organization that helps children and young adults who need or have had a life-saving transplant by raising funds for transplant-related expenses. Transplant families look to COTA for assistance and support.

Over the years, COTA has helped raise millions of dollars for transplant-related expenses. COTA is a 501(c)3 organization; therefore, contributions to COTA are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law. COTA is the premier national organization supporting transplant families because ***100% of all funds raised in honor of patients are used for transplant-related expenses.*** COTA does not charge a fee or take a percentage of the funds raised.

Please check out the ideas and resources included here for bowling events or for simple fundraisers you can hold at a local bowling center.

Keep reading and start turning your **'Yes ... I want to make a life-saving difference'** into action.

Getting Started

Planning your Bowling Tournament

A bowling tournament is a fun and entertaining fundraising event. You will attract experienced bowlers who are serious about the game as well as those who play only occasionally and want to support this important cause. This guide will assist you as you plan your event, keeping in mind that it is important to have something for everyone.



Some of your bowlers have paid to bowl as an individual while others are there as part of a team. It is important that all of your bowlers know they are bowling to make a life-saving difference for a COTA family. To help remind your players of the importance of their games, provide all your volunteers with basic information about the patient's transplant journey. You will also want to have photos of your patient posted in the registration area. If possible, invite the family (and the patient) to speak at the event. Also share information about COTA. COTA Information Cards are available to explain how COTA helps transplant-needy patients and their families.

Select a Bowling Center

The first step in planning the bowling tournament is to secure a location. Many bowling centers are experienced at hosting charity bowling events, and the staff can be a valuable resource as you plan your event. In most instances, the staff will be able to provide guidance on the timing and format for your COTA Bowling for Life event, and they may be willing to help promote it, as well. Check community calendars to ensure your event does not conflict with others – particularly the local bowling league schedule. You will want to contact the bowling center at least 10 - 12 weeks before your anticipated event. **Do not set a date for the bowling fundraiser before checking with the venue.**

Determine the Best Format

The next step is to determine what format would work best for your fundraising event. The number of bowlers you anticipate, as well as the expectations of your community, will help you choose the best option. One of your challenges will be finding the right format which allows the 'social' bowler to have fun without becoming frustrated, while allowing the more experienced bowlers to move at a pace that satisfies them. Consider these options:

- **Bowl-A-Thon:** Participants get sponsors or pledges before the COTA Bowling for Life fundraiser. They bring their sponsorships and/or pledges to the event and, if they collect enough, are able to bowl for free. Generally allow at least six weeks to plan a successful event: three weeks to recruit bowlers, then three more weeks for bowlers to complete their pledge sheets and collect their donations.
 - Establish a fundraising goal for participants. Do you want each person to generate \$50, \$100 or \$1,000 in pledges? Remember: *Participants are responsible for collecting their pledges in advance of the event.* It is too time-consuming and costly for your event

committee members to do this, and you will likely receive less money if your participants collect pledges after the event. It is quite acceptable to require bowlers to collect a minimum amount of pledges to participate. Just make this rule very clear from the outset of the bowl-a-thon. **A template for Pledge Forms and a Bowl-a-Thon Rules sheet are available in the *Volunteers* section of COTA.org.**

- **Team Bowling:** To orchestrate a Team Bowling COTA fundraiser, simply register teams who can ‘rent’ a lane for their group to use during the event. This is a great way to encourage businesses and community clubs to participate and possibly compete. Allow participating groups to post a sign or wear logoed attire promoting their group to other bowlers. Perhaps add contests for best-decorated ball or shirt.
- **Themed Event:** Give your COTA Bowling for Life fundraiser a theme that inspires participants to not just register to bowl, but also to have fun wearing themed costumes such as Hollywood Bowl (movie stars) or Space Bowl (Star Wars or Star Trek characters). Award prizes for the best, worst, most original and overall team costumes.
- **Fun and Games Bowling:** There are many variations to the standard 10-pin bowling game. Offering Fun and Games options may bring in seasoned league bowlers who want to show off or tweak their skills, and also bring in beginners who just want to have fun. Here are some examples:

Best Frame Game

This is a team game with two to five bowlers per team. All bowlers bowl as usual and the best score of all bowlers on the team for that frame is used on the team score card.

Low Ball Game

In this game, the lowest score wins. The bowler must knock down at least one pin for every ball thrown, so the lowest possible score is 20. Gutter balls and complete misses are counted as 10 points. This game is very competitive and more difficult than it seems.

No-Tap Game

In this game the bowler does not need to knock down all 10 pins to score a strike. A no-tap value is assigned to each bowler. That value is the number of pins (anywhere from three to nine) that a player must knock down to score a strike. So a player with a no-tap value of five needs to knock down five pins to get a strike. Because each bowler has their own no-tap value, novices and experienced bowlers can compete together for high-score prizes.

Bumper Bowling

Bumper Bowling is a variation of the game for beginners or children in which barriers (known as bumpers) are placed in the gutter. These bumpers keep errant balls in play and out of the gutter. Many bowling alleys have retractable bumpers which are automatically raised or lowered depending on whose turn it is to bowl.

Monte Carlo Game

In this game of chance, colored pins are set into the pin deck. When a bowler knocks down the colored pins, they receive a prize. You can alter the rules to make this easier or more difficult. One example might be requiring that the pins fall on the first ball or as part of a strike or spare. The prize may be a free shoe rental from the bowling center or a free soda from the snack bar.

Colored Pin Game

This is similar to Monte Carlo although it is played with only one colored pin in the pin deck, and the bowler receives a prize only if they score a strike when the colored pin is the head pin.

Odd/Even Game

This game is great for very young competitors. Only one ball is thrown per frame. If the pinfall is an even number, the frame is scored as a strike. If the pinfall is an odd number, the frame is scored as a spare. Young bowlers can record big scores and not get too tired out with this game.

Poker

This game incorporates poker with bowling. Each lane uses a standard 52-card deck. Players bowl in the traditional way, but for every strike or spare a card is drawn from the deck. At the end of each game, the best five-card poker hand wins a prize. You may designate that no more than five cards can be dealt to any one player. You can also allow a card be drawn each time a bowler gets a strike or spare but, after reaching five strikes or spares in a game, any additional cards can be exchanged with cards in the bowler's five-card hand.

Golf

In this system a player rolls as many balls as it takes for all 10 pins to be cleared from the deck. Each roll counts for one point and the winner is the player with the fewest throws. There are no bonus balls in the 10th frame, so a perfect score would be 10.

Enlist Volunteers

One of the keys to a successful COTA Bowling for Life Event is to recruit enough volunteers. You will need help identifying and securing sponsors, soliciting giveaways and prizes, registering bowlers the day of the event, assisting with the silent auction, planning the dinner, etc. As you plan the event, make sure there are enough volunteers so the day runs smoothly. Make a list of those areas in which you need assistance and ask volunteers to select those where they feel most comfortable serving.

Make sure you provide adequate communication with your volunteers so there are no surprises on the day of the event. Host regular meetings and share updates by email. All volunteers will appreciate hearing progress updates, and you will find that many volunteers will have great ideas to share as plans are developed. If volunteers feel they are part of the process, they will commit themselves to the success of the event.

Plan the Budget

A COTA Bowling for Life event will require fundraising expenses. You will have bowling center fees and catering costs, as well as other expenses for items that you will not be able to get donated. As with all COTA fundraising events, you will need to complete the [Budget Worksheet](#), which outlines anticipated expenses and expected revenue. Submit the Budget Worksheet to CampaignInfo@cota.org. Once approved, COTA will be able to pay fundraising expenses out of funds raised. COTA will work together with you to keep your expenses as low as possible in an effort to maximize the proceeds from the event. Preparing your COTA Budget Worksheet will help you determine registration fees and dinner ticket prices. It is a very important step in the COTA Bowling for Life planning process.

Recruit Corporate Sponsors

The best way to ensure a profitable COTA Bowling for Life event is to secure corporate or individual sponsors. With support from local businesses, organizations and individuals, you will be able to keep registration costs reasonable for participants and provide giveaways. Consider businesses who have already supported the COTA community campaign as well as those with whom volunteers have relationships.

Some examples of sponsorships include:

- **Title Sponsor:** This would be your largest sponsorship, and depending on the size of the event could generate \$5,000. A Title Sponsor is supporting the entire event. Some benefits might include using the business name in title of event (i.e. COTA Bowling for Life in honor of Patient Name, sponsored by ABC Company), allowing two teams to participate at no additional cost, providing special recognition at the event or creating a large sponsor sign for the registration area.
- **Lane Sponsor:** This is a great opportunity for local businesses and organizations to support the cause for a smaller sponsorship of \$50 - \$150. Work with the bowling center to determine what type of sign they can accommodate in order to provide maximum exposure and the appropriate number of sponsorships, based on the number of lanes and any other special locations around the bowling center where signage could be placed.
- **Dinner Sponsor:** If you choose to have a dinner during the bowling event (and we suggest that you do), enlist the support of a Dinner Sponsor. This could even be the catering company if they will provide the food as a gift to the COTA community campaign, or provide it at a deep discount. Sample benefits might include a sign at the dinner as well as acknowledgement in promotional materials.

Promote, Promote, Promote

Once you have confirmed the bowling center, selected the date, submitted the Budget Worksheet and recruited sponsors and volunteers, the most critical step in planning your COTA Bowling for Life event is promotion. Many bowling centers require a minimum number of participants to host a bowling fundraiser, so you will want to have a plan to recruit as many bowlers as the center will allow.

Flyers, brochures (that include a registration form), social media and the COTA campaign website will be important tools in promoting your event. Ask volunteers to distribute flyers within the community, and always remember to provide several brochures to the bowling center, as well. Send a flyer and/or press release about the event to your local newspaper, Chamber of Commerce, radio stations and television stations and ask them to help publicize and promote the event, and to perhaps bowl and fundraise.

Add the COTA Bowling for Life event to the COTA campaign website. Use social media, like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, to amplify your promotional efforts by directing interested parties to the website for additional information and registration. Consider setting up a [COTA Event Thermometer](#) to accept online registrations. Remember, when using a COTA Event Thermometer 100% of funds raised go to the COTA campaign.

Remember to send all promotional materials for the COTA Bowling for Life Event to CampaignInfo@cota.org for approval.

The Day of the Event

Have volunteers arrive early to ensure registration tables are set up and everything is ready for a successful event. Recruit enough volunteers for registration so the process runs smoothly as you will be assigning lanes as well as collecting last-minute registration fees. You may want to set up tablets or laptops to register last-minute bowlers. Consider using a [Square Credit Card Reader](#), which allows you to accept debit and credit card payments via your cell phone or tablet and direct those contributions to your COTA community campaign. If your team would like to utilize a Square Reader for an upcoming event, please contact CampaignInfo@cota.org. Have all participants sign a Waiver and Release Form. **A template for Waiver and Release Forms is available in the *Volunteers* section of COTA.org.**

Say Thank You

Always thank your volunteers, participants and donors. While participants can be thanked at the event, you will want to put one or two people in charge of writing and sending thank you notes to additional volunteers and donors after the COTA Bowling for Life fundraiser. **COTA can provide thank you cards and envelopes at no cost. To request these items, simply visit the [Order Supplies](#) tab in the *Volunteers* section of COTA.org.**

Rummage Sale in the Bowling Center Parking Lot

Turning Trash into Transplant Treasure

Ever wonder why some rummage sales are crowded with customers while others have very few? It is often not just a matter of chance. Get people shopping (*and raising funds in honor of transplant-needy families*) with these fundraising planning tips.

Date

When researching a date for your COTA rummage sale, determine if your community has a big garage sale weekend. You might be able to capitalize on shoppers who are attending other sales in the area. In addition, research other activities in the area and decide whether any competing activities would help or hurt your attendance. For instance, a festival might draw people (and prospective customers) to your community or it may keep locals from attending because they are focused on the festival. Always remember to ask your volunteers what the best date is for them.

In-Kind Donations

Put out the word about the COTA rummage sale fundraiser and ask for items to be donated. Make sure you are clear about where and when you will receive donations. Provide a COTA Gift-In-Kind Donation Form to those who give items, and remember that you will include a description of the donation; it is the responsibility of the contributor to record the Fair Market Value of their donation(s). Your sale is not a junkyard; discard or turn away donations of broken, stained or incomplete items.

Sale Supplies

Gather the materials (and the volunteers) you will need to make your COTA fundraising rummage sale successful:

- Petty cash (a \$100 cash box should include one roll each of quarters, dimes and nickels; \$28 in ones; \$25 in fives; and \$30 in tens) in a cash box
- Pens, markers, stickers, labels, rubber bands and safety pins
- Flyers and/or poster board
- Tables
- Coat racks (to hang donated clothing items)
- Portable heaters or fans (if the weather forecasts high or low temperatures)
- Shopping bags, boxes and newspaper (for packaging breakables)
- Extension cords, power strips and batteries of all sizes (*Demonstrate an item works for the buyer but remove the batteries before sale as they may cost more than the merchandise.*)

Variety and Volume

Larger rummage sales are always more appealing than smaller ones. Make sure you have enough items to make it worth a shopper's time. Consider these categories to help in the collecting and sorting of desirable merchandise:

- Kids' Toys
- Kids' Clothing
- Women's Clothing
- Men's Clothing
- Sporting Goods
- Books, Music and Movies
- Housewares
- Furniture
- Electronics
- Best of Show
(*designer labels, collectibles, antiques, etc.*)



Note: Clothing can be tricky at a rummage sale. While most people can most easily find clothes to donate to your sale, many shoppers may not be interested in used apparel. Sizing, condition and season all definitely impact the ability to sell clothes. Some clothes are fine as long as they are neatly arranged on tables by type, i.e. women's, men's or seasonal. However, baby and children's clothing in great condition will definitely sell. Create quick clothing racks by using two ladders with a pole between them. The steps and rungs of the ladders also make good display places for hats or shoes.

Pricing

Before the COTA rummage sale fundraiser, organize items and price everything clearly. A good rule of thumb for pricing is 10% of the original cost. Keep all items priced in increments of 25¢. If you think it should sell for less, put it in a 'free' bin or a 'treasure chest' for kids.

Leaving items unpriced will almost always cost you sales since many customers are shy or in a hurry and will not ask you for the price. A 'Make an Offer' sale might be a good option, but be aware that rummage sales vary greatly in pricing, and many shoppers will not know what you consider reasonable, especially since all sales are going to charity. If shoppers are uncomfortable with suggesting a price, they may simply walk away from the purchase.

Sale items are donated. There are no expenses to cover; price everything to be sold.

At the cashier station, post a sign indicating that all items are sold 'As Is' with no returns or refunds.

Children

With traffic in the common area, customers coming and going, and with all the tables of merchandise, this is not a good place for children. Encourage volunteers to leave their children at home (or provide child care) so they can focus on their responsibilities at the rummage sale.

While a child's presence at the sale may not be optimum, a poster or flyer about the COTA child you are fundraising in honor of should be part of the rummage sale. Create a colorful poster or display featuring a picture and description of the transplant journey and place it at an entry point

and/or the check-out area. Consider handing out information about the COTA campaign to shoppers, or possibly placing the flyer in each bag of purchased items. Always make sure to include the campaign website address on all flyers.

Coin Canisters

What if every rummage sale shopper dropped the change from each purchase in a COTA Coin Canister sitting on the cashier's table? Think how those coins, and possibly bills, would add up! Make sure to place a canister near the COTA display and also at the cashier's table. With this placement strategy, attendees who do not make a purchase can still donate. **COTA can provide Coin Canisters at no cost. To request these items, simply visit the [Order Supplies](#) tab in the *Volunteers* section of [COTA.org](#).**

Signage and Publicity

There is nothing more frustrating to shoppers than having to hunt for the sale. If your COTA rummage sale signage does not create impact, you will lose potential shoppers. Design signs that look good from several yards away, and most likely from a moving vehicle. Use materials such as large florescent-colored poster board and write in large/bold/black block lettering. A few key words such as location, date and time of the rummage sale are sufficient. Shoppers will learn more about the cause they are supporting when they are at the sale. Test the signs by stepping back at least 25 feet; if the words cannot be seen at that distance, the sign will not be effective.

Post the signs in places where there is good traffic, like at intersections a few blocks from the rummage sale site. Do not forget to retrieve all signs after the sale.

Start publicizing the rummage sale early. Use community bulletin boards, media, social media, emails and the COTA campaign website. The week before the sale, place signs promoting the sale date and time on lawns near the sale's location. On the actual sale day, place bold and simple directional signs leading bargain hunters to the sale.

Remember to send all promotional materials to CampaignInfo@cota.org for approval prior to printing or distribution.

**HUGE
MULTI-FAMILY
GARAGE SALE!**

COTA for Chloe
COTAFORChloe.com
Children's Organ Transplant Association

**All proceeds
benefit COTA
for Chloe
Children's Organ
Transplant Assoc.**

**Saturday, June 12
9 am to 4 pm
ONE DAY ONLY!
1725 South 91st Avenue**

**No early sales
Private Residence
MASKS REQUIRED!**

Volunteer Management Tips

- **Take care of your volunteers.** Arrange for a volunteer committee to solicit donations of refreshments such as donuts, pizza, sub sandwiches, bottled beverages and coffee. Set up an area where volunteers can take breaks. This helps keep volunteers happy and at the rummage sale venue for set up, for the sale, and for cleanup and tear down.
- **Meet regularly.** Even though a COTA rummage sale has fewer organizational details than some fundraisers, it is still important to have regularly scheduled planning meetings to organize and motivate volunteers. Make the last meeting a ‘working meeting’ that includes sorting and pricing. Consider offering a pizza lunch to thank volunteers while they sort and price.
- **Set up work shifts.** Organize all volunteers in advance of the sale. Schedule breaks. Also schedule shifts to set up before the rummage sale and to clean up after the sale.

End-of-Sale Planning

Two hours before the end of the rummage sale, mark everything down by half. One hour before closing, charge \$1 per each bag of items. This price slashing will streamline clean up and will minimize leftovers that will need to be hauled to another charity or to the dumpster.

Make prior arrangements for pickup of unsold merchandise. Contact the local Salvation Army, Goodwill, homeless shelter or resale store. They should pick up at no charge and are often grateful for the donation. Secure dumpster space for those items that did not sell and are not acceptable to other organizations.

Sending Proceeds to COTA

Most shoppers will pay for their rummage sale items with cash; remember all cash proceeds should be converted into a money order or cashier’s check and mailed to COTA. Also consider using a [Square Credit Card Reader](#), which allows you to accept debit and credit card payments via your cell phone or tablet and direct those contributions to your COTA community campaign.

Raise Even More Funds

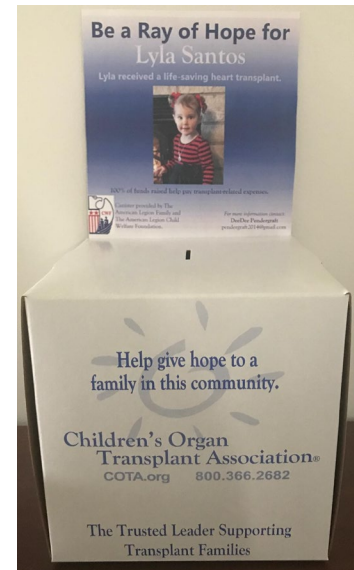
Consider add-ons to your COTA rummage sale fundraiser such as a concession stand and bake sale. Solicit in-kind donations of snacks, drinks and baked goodies from volunteers and additional supporters that can be sold to shoppers and others ... increasing the impact of the fundraiser.

Coin Collection at the Bowling Center

Pennies, Nickels and Dimes Do Add Up!

Coin Canisters can be used by COTA community campaigns to build awareness and raise funds. Request coin canisters at no cost from COTA and place them throughout the bowling center. Even a bowling center's small staff can manage this fundraiser. The display of COTA Coin Canisters is a public way to show that the bowling center cares about the community. Here are some tips:

1. Order COTA Coin Canisters by visiting the [Order Supplies](#) tab in the *Volunteers* section of COTA.org.
2. Display COTA Coin Canisters prominently in multiple locations in the bowling center, such as on counters beside cash registers staffed with employees, at each bowling lane and in employee break rooms.
3. Train all COTA fundraising volunteers and bowling center employees to ask every customer to donate change. Donations go to the Children's Organ Transplant Association (COTA) in honor of your local patient to assist with transplant-related expenses.



At the COTA Bowling for Life event, your fundraising team may also opt to create coin collection receptacles such as:

- Empty plastic coffee containers
- Glass jars
- Water cooler jugs
- Flower pots
- Fish tanks

Consider asking local artists/celebrities to design or decorate containers as part of a COTA Bowling for Life event. Then the public can vote (with coins) on their favorite design.

COTA Paper Icons

Show Off Bowling Patrons' Commitment to Saving Lives.

Paper Icons can be used by COTA community campaigns to build awareness and raise funds. Request icons at no cost from COTA and make them available to supporters for a contribution of \$1. Even a bowling center's small staff can manage this fundraiser. The display of icons is a public way to show that the bowling center cares about the community. Take time to plan your icon fundraising effort to maximize results. Here are some tips:



1. Order COTA Paper Icons by visiting the [Order Supplies](#) tab in the *Volunteers* section of COTA.org.
2. Train all COTA fundraising volunteers and bowling center employees to ask every customer to donate \$1 for an icon. Donations go to the Children's Organ Transplant Association (COTA) in honor of your local patient to assist with transplant-related expenses.
3. Ask customers to sign their icon and then display them prominently.

Display

Pick a location(s) in the bowling center to display the icons. Hanging them from the ceiling on string is one idea to consider, or possibly using tape to affix them to walls is another. Consider stringing the icons on cords above the lanes so all bowlers see them while they are bowling. Before long this fundraiser will have the bowling center's regular league and recreational bowlers looking for their icons among those displayed and asking a buddy where his icon is hanging, thus encouraging even more donations.

Going ... Going ... Gone ... Sold to the Highest Bidder!



Auctions are a popular, and successful, way to raise funds – either as an event by itself or as part of another fundraiser. However, before the host or auctioneer can say “Going, going, gone!” ... please remember to plan, plan, plan. There are two major forms of auctions, and in both types of auctions, the highest bidder wins.

Live Auctions feature an auctioneer who calls for, and takes, bids on items. Live auctions encourage bidders to have a lively and entertaining exchange as they bid against each other.

Silent Auctions utilize bid sheets and offer a chance for event attendees to place their own bids while challenging other bidders using written bids taken during a pre-determined time period. Silent auctions can also be held online.

Here is how to coordinate an auction fundraiser:

1. Contact local businesses and ask them to donate items for the auction. You need a wide range of items in order to have something that appeals to everyone. In exchange for their generosity, provide the business with a COTA Gift-In-Kind Form (available to order at no cost on the Order Supplies tab of COTA.org’s *Volunteers* section) and promote the businesses at the auction by including their names on display boards or on a banner at the venue. You can also use the public address system to announce the businesses’ names periodically throughout the evening. Friends and family can also donate auction items, such as crafted goods, and should be receipted with a COTA Gift In Kind Form.

Tip: It is important to create and maintain a ‘sellers’ market’ and avoid creating a ‘buyers’ market.’ To do this, estimate the number of unique bidders you will have attending your event. One couple or one individual attendee equals one buying unit. A good balance is to have one silent auction item for every one to three buying units. A higher ratio of bidders to items will increase yields, but the lack of items will reduce total income. A lower ratio of bidders to items will reduce the yield, meaning items will likely sell under their potential value.

2. Display all auction items on tables neatly and spread them out so they are easily viewed. For silent auctions, place a bid sheet that includes a description of the item, minimum bid, and the required bidding increments in front of the item.

Details for volunteers managing this area include:

- Set-up auction tables.
- Design attention-getting packaging of live or silent auction items.
- Customize and print the bid sheets with item descriptions or a note card with each live auction item described for the auctioneer to read as the bidding begins. Silent Auction bid sheet templates can be found on the *Volunteers* section of COTA.org.
- For Silent auctions, provide a pen for each bid sheet.

- Use receipts/note cards to record each winning bidder's name and bid amount. Present this to the buyer to give to the cashier when making the purchase, and then to the volunteer who will help the buyer find the purchased item.
3. Assign volunteers to work at each of the item tables to answer questions or to hold up the item as the auctioneer is ready to start the bidding. Depending on the value of the items, volunteers may also need to be stationed around various items for security purposes. ***Tip: COTA suggests keeping gift certificates in a safe place and simply placing a copy of the certificate on the display table. The buyer can receive the actual gift certificate from the cashier at check out.***
 4. Designate a time during the event that live bidding will start or silent auction bidding will end – stop all bidding exactly at the same time. Generally auctions are held in conjunction with another fundraiser and silent bidding goes on for a couple of hours. Have the auctioneer announce when the live auction starts or have volunteers make several announcements about when silent auction bidding ends to help build excitement and participation.
 5. Gather all bid sheets when the silent auction closes. During a live auction, have at least one volunteer noting who the highest bidders were and the amounts of the winning bids. Hand the winning bidder a receipt. Keep the table volunteers at their stations so the winners can give them their receipts (marked 'paid') to claim their items.
 6. Set up a checkout line for people to pay for their items. The 'winners' of the auction items may pay for the item by cash, check or credit card. Have a laptop or tablet with the COTA community campaign website available so that guests may make the gift online and receive a receipt by email. Using a [COTA Event Thermometer](#) will allow you to confirm amounts paid for each item. You might also incorporate the use of [Square Credit Card Readers](#) to speed up checkout. (Remember ... only the amount of the gift greater than fair market value of the auction item may be tax deductible. Contributors should consult tax advisors for more information.) Mark their receipt so they can take it back to the table to claim their merchandise. Be sure to have plenty of volunteers working checkout because at this point in the event timeline, guests are ready to go home. They may become impatient if they have to wait in a long line.

Always thank your volunteers and donors. Put one or two people in charge of writing and sending thank you notes after the auction fundraiser. **COTA can provide thank you cards and envelopes at no cost. To request these items, simply visit the [Order Supplies](#) tab in the *Volunteers* section of [COTA.org](#).**

Tips for Live or Silent Auctions

A Live or Silent Auction can be an important component of a fundraising event for your COTA community campaign. As you plan for all aspects of the event, you will want to consider how best to maximize event proceeds. In many cases an auction can be a profitable addition.

As items are contributed to your COTA live or silent auction, think about the anticipated number of guests at the event and plan the number of auction baskets accordingly. If you have too many auction items, available bidders' dollars may be spread too thin, thus limiting the amount raised by the event.

Many COTA teams have discovered that assembling baskets comprised of several smaller items can produce more income from an auction. Connecting items to develop a theme for a given basket can produce a much-desired item at your event. Consider themed auction baskets that will allow you to combine several items into one larger and more profitable auction item.

- **Family Fun** – Gift certificates to movies, arcades, miniature golf, bowling, sporting good stores or others combined with dinner at a family friendly restaurant ...
- **Pamper Yourself** – Certificates for a day at the spa, pedicures, haircuts, cosmetics, lotions and potions ...
- **Get Away** – Overnight certificates to a resort or hotel in the area, winners can use it themselves or treat out-of-town guests. Add some chocolate mints for their pillow and a classic novel, a bottle of champagne and bubble bath ...
- **Good Taste** – A sampling of ethnic, gourmet, regional, sweets, or other cooking ingredients. Throw in a cookbook and some cooking utensils ...
- **Pet Supplies** – Gift certificates to local pet stores, treats, toys, a collar, a leash, bowls ...
- **Sports Enthusiast** – Game tickets or certificates for lessons or the 'latest' in equipment. Add items like a water bottle, duffle bag or binoculars to complete the package ...
- **Celebrate the Season** – Is it time to garden or shovel snow, picnic or make a pot of chili? Include items to help the bidder celebrate the time of year: potted plants and gardening tools, checkered cloth and tableware, ice melt and scraper, or ingredients to prepare a seasonal meal ...

Have you considered adding a mystery item? Just like a child who wants to shake each holiday gift to try and guess what is inside, having your event attendees bidding on auction items they cannot actually see will be sure to spark curiosity (and perhaps competition) between bidders at a fundraising auction. Using creative wrapping and packaging to fool your participants/bidders adds to the fun of shaking boxes, guessing the contents, bidding, buying and unwrapping. Have event volunteers make sure there is no peaking in the corners of wrapping or tearing of paper. Keep in mind that it is fine to have one or two gag boxes, but most items should have value. As each box goes to the highest bidder, have the winner unwrap the box in front of the rest of your bidders so they can all share in the fun of discovering the prize.



**For more ideas that are sure to ‘bowl you over’
or for help implementing COTA Bowling for Life events that
will work well for your fundraising volunteers, service
group, local bowling center and your community,
contact COTA at
800.366.2682 or CampaignInfo@cota.org.**