

COTA Golf for Life *Getting Started*

A golf outing is a fun and entertaining fundraising event. You will attract experienced golfers 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 – keep in mind that it is important to have something for everyone!



Some of your golfers have paid to golf as an individual while others are there as part of a foursome because their company is an outing sponsor. It is important that all of your golfers know they are golfing to make a life-saving difference for a COTA family. To help remind your players of the importance of their round of golf, 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 COTA family to speak at the outing. Also share information about COTA. COTA Information Cards are available to explain how COTA helps transplant-needy patients and their families. COTA Info Cards, as well as other supplies, can be ordered at no cost via the [Order Supplies](#) tab in the *For Volunteers* section of COTA.org.

Select a Golf Course

The first step in planning the golf outing is to secure a location. Many golf courses are experienced at hosting charity golf outings, 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 Golf for Life event, and they may be willing to help promote it, as well.

Determine the Date

The next step is to determine the date for your event. Check community calendars to ensure your event does not conflict with others – particularly other charity golf outings. You will want to contact the golf course at least 10 - 12 weeks before your anticipated event. **Do not set a date for the golf outing before checking with the venue.**

Enlist Volunteers

One of the keys to a successful COTA Golf for Life event is to recruit enough volunteers. You will need help identifying and securing sponsors, soliciting giveaways and prizes, registering golfers the day of the event, driving the beverage carts, assisting with a silent auction, planning a luncheon, 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 Golf for Life event will require fundraising expenses. You will have golf course 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 [COTA 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 from funds raised by the event. 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 is an important step in the planning process.

Seek the Help of Sponsors

The best way to ensure a profitable COTA Golf for Life event is to secure corporate and/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 (ie.g. COTA Golf for Life in honor of Patient Name, sponsored by ABC Company), allowing two foursomes to participate at no additional cost, providing special recognition at the event and/or creating a large sponsor sign for the registration area.
- **Beverage Cart Sponsor.** Most golf outings include volunteers driving golf carts around the course to provide beverages to golfers. The Beverage Cart Sponsor would help cover the cost of the beverages and should generate \$500 - \$1,000 per cart. Benefits for this sponsor might include having a sign with the sponsor name on the beverage cart, listing the sponsor's name on promotional materials, allowing one foursome to participate at no additional cost, etc. *At some courses, the beverage cart might provide alcohol. To serve alcohol at any COTA activity, alcohol must be served and/or sold ONLY under a liquor license and liability insurance held by someone else, AND their personnel must serve the alcohol. The golf course should provide advice and counsel regarding this issue.*
- **Hole or Tee Sponsor.** This is a great opportunity for local businesses and organizations to support the cause for a smaller sponsorship of \$100 - \$250. There can be up to 18 Hole Sponsors and 18 Tee Sponsors -- one for each hole and each tee on the golf course. Benefits for these sponsors might include a sign at 'their' hole as well as listing the sponsor names in promotional materials.
- **Luncheon Sponsor.** If you choose to have a luncheon following the golf outing (and we suggest that you do!), enlist the support of a Luncheon 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.

Determine the Best Format

The next step is to determine what format would work best for your fundraising event. The number of golfers 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' golfer to have fun without becoming frustrated, while allowing the more experienced golfers to move at a pace that satisfies them. **The Scramble** is often the best option.

In Scramble play:

- Each foursome will be playing one ball together as a team to obtain a score.
- Each golfer hits a tee shot; the best shot is then selected and the team members pick up and move their balls to that spot to hit again.
- Play continues in this manner with each stroke being played from the best position until someone puts the ball in the hole.

Because the social aspect and speed of play are the advantages of the scramble format, most golfers will be more interested in enjoying the day than 'winning.' This format also provides a great opportunity to connect with others and share your COTA patient's story. You may prefer a different format, or the golf course may suggest one with which they have had great success. The most important consideration is to select the format that will appeal to the most golfers.

At most golf outings, winning teams are given prizes. Talk with the golf course staff to determine if pro shop gift certificates can be provided as prizes. Remember, these in-kind donations are tax deductible and can be receipted with [COTA Gift in Kind Forms](#), which can be ordered at no cost via the Order Supplies tab in the *For Volunteers* section of COTA.org.

Consider Fun Activities on the Course

Your golfers understand they are playing in charity golf outing, so they will expect on-course activities that provide additional fun, friendly competition and additional revenue for your COTA community campaign. Solicit prizes for these opportunities from local businesses to provide an extra incentive for participation and remember to announce the winners at the luncheon. Consider these on-course activity options:

- **Longest Drive or Closest to the Pin Contest**
Select a different hole for each of these contests. The golf course staff can help you identify the best options. You will need a volunteer stationed at the hole throughout the day to measure and record results.
- **Mulligans**
At registration, provide golfers with the opportunity to purchase mulligans that allow them to replay a stroke without penalty. You will want to limit the number of mulligans per team, but most golfers will gladly pay for a few 'do-overs.'
- **[Drawings](#)**
Golfers can make a contribution of any amount at registration and before the luncheon begins to put their names into a drawing for a chance to win. Consider collecting several items as in-kind donations so multiple participants can win.

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Promote, Promote, Promote

Once you have confirmed the golf course, selected the date, submitted the Budget Worksheet and recruited sponsors and volunteers, the most critical step in planning your COTA Golf for Life event is promotion. Most golf courses require a minimum number of participants to host a golf outing, so you will want to have a plan to recruit as many golfers as the course will allow.

Flyers and brochures (that include a registration form) will be important tools in promoting your event. Ask volunteers to distribute flyers and brochures within the community, providing several to the golf course. 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.

Add the COTA Golf for Life fundraiser as an Event on the COTA campaign website. Use social media, like Facebook 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 Golf 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. You may want to set up tablets or laptops to register last-minute golfers, and/or to collect outstanding registration fees or payments for 'mulligans' or other gifts. 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 Registration Waiver and Release Forms is available in the *For Volunteers* section of COTA.org.

Celebrate with a Luncheon

Conclude your COTA Golf for Life event with a luncheon to celebrate the success of the event and to recognize and thank the sponsors, volunteers and participants. This also provides an opportunity to announce winners of the outing and of the various on-course contests conducted throughout the day. As you work with the golf course to plan your outing, you will have a reasonable idea of when it will conclude. Allow time for golfers to store their clubs and celebrate the great shots they made on the course.

The luncheon program should be brief, but be meaningful and fun. This is an opportunity to share information about COTA and the community campaign, and if possible, introduce the COTA patient and family.

COTA Auction

Another Fundraising Layer for the Golf Outing

Auctions are a popular, and successful, way to raise funds. 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. *This tends to work best for COTA Golf for Life events.*



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 in the *For Volunteers* section of COTA.org) and promote the businesses at the auction by including their names on display boards or on a banner at the venue. 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.
 - Set-up auction tables.
 - Design attention-getting packaging of live or silent auction items.

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- Customize and print 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 in the *For 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. Generally, 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 (once 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 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 as 'paid' so they can take it back to the table to claim their merchandise. Be sure to have plenty of volunteers working checkout!

Always thank your volunteers and donors. COTA can provide thank you cards and envelopes at no cost. To request these items, simply visit the Order Supplies tab in the *For 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 or for help implementing COTA Golf for
Life events that will work well for your fundraising
volunteers, service group and your community, contact
COTA at 800.366.2682 or CampaignInfo@cota.org.**