

COTA Bowling for Life *Getting Started*

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 – keep 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 COTA family 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. 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 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.

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 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.**

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 a silent auction, planning a 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 [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 Bowling 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 the title of the event (e.g. 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 and/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.

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. Templates for Pledge Sheets and Bowl-a-Thon Rules are available in the *For 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.

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 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 bowling center. 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 Bowling 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

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[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 Registration Waiver and Release Forms is available in the *For Volunteers* section of COTA.org.

It will be helpful to have a sound system (or other voice amplification) to make announcements, such as to announce the end of silent auction bidding.

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 *For Volunteers* section of COTA.org.

Coin Collection at the Bowling Center

Coin Boxes can be used by COTA community campaigns to build awareness and raise funds. Request Coin Boxes 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 Boxes is a public way to show that the bowling center cares about the community. Here are some tips:

1. Order COTA Coin Boxes and labels by visiting the [Order Supplies](#) tab in the *For Volunteers* section of [COTA.org](#).
 - COTA will provide a label to attach to the Coin Box with the patient's name and photo, COTA campaign information, and the COTA website URL and QR code. If the family did not provide COTA with a patient photo, the Coin Box label will have the COTA sun logo instead. Please email a photo to CampaignInfo@cota.org so we can update the Coin Box label.
2. Display COTA Coin Boxes 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 supporter 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.
4. Cash collected from the COTA Coin Boxes should be converted to a money order or cashier's check made payable to the Children's Organ Transplant Association or COTA with "in honor of *Patient First / Last Name*" written in the memo line. Mail proceeds to COTA with a note indicating funds are from the Coin Boxes fundraiser. The fee for the money order may be taken from the proceeds. Look for a bank or credit union with a coin counter to count the coins. Do not use the *Coinstar* coin counters as they charge a fee.



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 at the Bowling Center

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 *For 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 supporters to sign their icon and then display them prominently in multiple locations in the bowling center, such as around the shoe rental counter and/or above each lane. Hanging them from the ceiling on string is one idea to consider, or possibly using tape to affix them to walls is another.
4. Cash collected from the COTA Paper Icons should be converted to a money order or cashier's check made payable to the Children's Organ Transplant Association or COTA with "in honor of *Patient First / Last Name*" written in the memo line. Mail proceeds to COTA with a note indicating funds are from the Coin Boxes fundraiser. The fee for the money order may be taken from the proceeds. Look for a bank or credit union with a coin counter to count the coins. Do not use the *Coinstar* coin counters as they charge a fee.



Bake Sale at the Bowling Center

Eating snack foods while waiting for your turn to bowl go hand-in-hand. Consider selling bake sale goodies during the COTA Bowling for Life event.

Here are some classic bake sale tips to maximize fundraising proceeds:

In-Kind Donations

Put out the word about the COTA fundraiser and ask for baked goods to be donated. Make sure you are clear about where and when you will receive donations. Consider asking a professional baker to create and donate themed goodies -- like lung-shaped cookies -- for the bake sale. Remember to receipt these in-kind donations with a [COTA Gift In Kind Donation Form](#).



Plan the Budget

A food sale may require fundraising expenses. If you will be requesting funds to pay expenses, 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 out of funds raised.

Enlist Volunteers

A bake sale is not a one-person show; there is a job for everyone. You need several committed volunteers including bakers, sign makers, donation solicitors and salespeople. Create a list of 'who is doing what' to ensure your bake sale is organized and offers a variety of nicely displayed and tempting items.

Sale Supplies

To ensure your sale prep and actual sale run smoothly, gather the following supplies:

- Plastic gloves to use for safe food handling if volunteers will touch any of the items being offered.
- One or more folding tables. You may want a few chairs, as well, but always encourage your sales crew to stand to greet customers. The bowling center may provide these.
- A tablecloth, cover or white plastic, which looks neat, clean and inviting.
- Cash box and start-up funds. On average, ones, fives and quarters will be most needed. Price your baked goods in \$1 or 25¢ increments to keep change-making simple for your volunteers.
- Trash bin with liner and a few extra trash bags.

- Use big signs or banners so your sales table is easy to see and the reason for the sale (*raising funds in honor of transplant-needy families*) is clear.
- Plates – all sizes for single or family-sized servings.
- Napkins. Some customers will want to munch on their purchase as they walk away.
- Plastic wrap and storage bags.
- Price stickers and labels. Be sure to not only label with item ingredients or type of item but also include your COTA campaign website link.

Product Ideas

Make sure you have enough food items to make it worth a shopper's time. Consider these perennial bestsellers:

- Breads – pumpkin, banana or other 'sweet' varieties
- Cakes – pound, carrot and any variety of coffee cake recipe
- Cupcakes
- Muffins – all flavors
- Cookies – add creatively decorated sugar cookies to favorites like chocolate chip
- Bars and brownies
- Pies – fruit pies work best. Consider offering single serving pie slices.
- Yeast breads and rolls – very popular as most people do not bake bread
- *ANYTHING* chocolate

You do not need to limit your items to baked goods. Consider adding munchies such as:

- Snack mixes
- Caramel corn or popcorn balls
- Jars of homemade salsa and bags of chips

Important reminder: Avoid perishable items such as cream pies, custards or bars that require refrigeration.

If planning your COTA Bowling for Life event and bake sale around a holiday, encourage your volunteer bakers to cut bars and cookies in holiday-themed shapes. Make your items and packaging look as attractive as possible. Never throw away a plate of broken cookies. Break them up into even smaller pieces, line a basket with a napkin and offer samples to your customers (or those thinking about buying). These extras can help to make a sale.

Details

You have probably heard the saying, "It's all in the details." That is very true, especially when serving or selling food in public venues. Make sure you have a COTA committee member working on these important pieces of your bake sale fundraiser.

- **Permits.** Bake sales are typically exempt from local food handling permit rules, but please call your county health department to make certain.
- **Ingredient Labels.** Alert your customers to ingredients that may cause allergic reactions or that have a special benefit. The best time to gather this information is when bakers drop off their goods. Make sure to check their recipes because your sales force may not

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know what is in a certain cake or cookies. Place a label on items that contain nuts or are low fat, sugar free, gluten free or dairy free.

- **Pricing.** The key is to keep things affordable. This is quite easy if all products are donated. Try to offer a range of serving sizes and price points accordingly. Offer items in small groups (one to three cookies) and in larger groups (a dozen cookies). A visit to the bakery department in a grocery store or local bakery can help you determine basic pricing.
- **Packaging.** You may want to pre-package all items so you will not need to touch any of the food at the sale site. Or you may want to allow customers to pick and choose from a variety of items and then sell the items either by the piece, the plate or the pound. Choose the method that will work best for your group and for the venue.

If you have questions about hosting a bake sale alongside your COTA Bowling for Life event, please contact CampaignInfo@cota.org. Remember to send all promotional materials for the bake sale to CampaignInfo@cota.org for approval.

COTA Auction

Another Fundraising Layer for the Bowling Event

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 Bowling 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. 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.
 - Set-up auction tables.

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- Design attention-getting packaging of live or silent auction items.
 - 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.

COTA 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 Bowling for Life event with a 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 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:

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- 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, e.g. 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 all the tables of merchandise, this is not a good place for children. Encourage volunteers to leave their children at home (or provide childcare) 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 Boxes

What if every rummage sale shopper dropped the change from each purchase in a COTA Coin Box sitting on the cashier's table? Think how those coins, and possibly bills, would add up! Make sure to place a coin box 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 Boxes at no cost. To request these items, simply visit the [Order Supplies](#) tab in the *For 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.

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 setup, for the sale, and for cleanup and teardown.

- **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 bag of items. This price slashing will streamline cleanup 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.



For more ideas or for help implementing COTA Bowling 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.