

SPONSORSHIP

INTRODUCTION:

Sponsorship is one of the most important jobs in Emmaus! It is integral to some of the unique features and strengths of the Walk experience. Many assume that everyone knows the how's and why's of sponsorship but it is more than just "signing up people" and getting agape letters together. It is the first act of agape before a Walk ever begins. It undergirds the whole weekend with sacrificial love. It is a commitment of time, responsibilities, obligations and acts of love. Good sponsorship has direct bearing on the health and strength of the community. It serves as an avenue for new members to become active in the Emmaus community.

As an effort to strengthen its ministry, the Bread of Life Emmaus Board acted to comply with a recommendation made by the Upper Room representative who came to Wichita to evaluate our adherence with the Emmaus Model as set forth by the Upper Room. His recommendation was that all sponsors have training. This decision was not made lightly and was arrived at only after prayerful consideration. Individuals can become a "qualified" sponsor by attending the "refresher course" or completing the Sponsorship Training Packet and be actively involved in the Emmaus Ministry for one year. However, it is possible to co-sponsor with someone who is a qualified sponsor until they have had the training. As team members are prepared for each set of Walks with special training, we also feel training for sponsorship is imperative for effective Walk experiences.

It is not the intent of the Board to impose a hardship or discourage anyone from sponsoring pilgrims but it is in an effort to strengthen the quality of sponsorship and emphasize the aspects of sponsorship which are sometimes overlooked.

Perhaps our first consideration is:

WHOM DO WE SPONSOR?

Emmaus is not for everyone. It is designed for active Christians and members of churches whose own renewal will mean new energy, commitment and vision in the church. A result being the development of Christian leaders providing an avenue for renewal of the church. Those being sponsored could include church leaders, active church members who are dependable; the quiet backbone of the church, Christians who are hungry for something more and want to grow spiritually. Others might include less active members who need to be rekindled and have their commitments renewed.

WHOM DO WE NOT SPONSOR?

Some examples of questionable pilgrim candidates include:

Non-Christians

Those who need to be "fixed", evangelized or converted.

Those whose theology is notably different or incompatible with that represented by the Walk to Emmaus.

Those in an emotional crisis, such as a family breakup, job loss, grief, etc.

Church hoppers, complainers and those who need an attitude change are more likely to be a hindrance to an effective walk for others.

Those who desire to go primarily "because my friends have gone".

STEPS IN SPONSORING A PROSPECTIVE PILGRIM

(These guidelines are taken from various sources of the Emmaus Library, booklets published by The Upper Room Books.)

1. Pray. Take a “discerning approach” to sponsorship with prayer. Who would God have you sponsor? Sponsors should refrain from sponsoring more than one couple or one individual per set of walks. It is too difficult to do well all the things a sponsor should do. You may ask a co-sponsor to help you if needed.
2. Once you have discerned God’s will, continue praying for the prospective pilgrim and discuss participation in Emmaus. If that person is married, meet with both parties of the couple. It is desired that they make the decision together.
3. Make an appointment to share some of the aspects of Emmaus. Share your faith. Explain the basic elements of the Walk, its purpose, length of the weekend and approximate number of pilgrims attending. Explain the follow-up dimensions of the Walk ... reunion groups and community gatherings. As a sponsor, you may choose to share an Emmaus Brochure or the booklet, “What is Emmaus?”, if deemed advisable with the pilgrim. This booklet is also recommended reading for sponsors and is helpful when answering questions from the prospective pilgrim. Gatherings are open events. They are a great avenue to introduce prospective pilgrims to Emmaus.
4. The commitment: Give your prospect an application. Copies of the revised forms are available on the Bread of Life Community web site: www.breadoflifecommunity.com If married, encourage a commitment by both. Ask the prospective pilgrim to fill out the application, answering any questions he/she might have. Obtain the completed application. Fill out the sponsor’s portion and submit the application with the appropriate deposit. Scholarships for pilgrims are available if needed and are obtainable upon written request to the Registrar. Sponsors are also making a commitment to fulfill their responsibilities and obligations as outlined with the Sponsor’s Form.
5. Continue to pray for the pilgrim. Stay close to answer questions they might have. Begin preparations to secure addresses for personal agape letters for your pilgrim. Once the pilgrim’s application has been accepted, mail your requests for agape letters. A sample letter is provided for you on this web site. Collect 15 agape letters if possible. Quality, rather than quantity is what really matters. A maximum of 15 letters will be delivered to the pilgrim on Sunday. Any over the 15 will be given to the sponsor at closing for the pilgrim’s 4th day. It is important for the sponsor to indicate in the upper right hand corner of the envelope which letters are from spouse, family members or close friends if this information is known. (“S” for spouse, “R” for relative, “F” for friend) Bind the 15 most important letters and indicate they are ones selected by the sponsor. Deliver them to the Agape room before Sunday for distribution. Contact the Prayer Coordinator of the Board so you can become a part of the 72-hour Prayer Vigil if you have not participated in the prayer vigil before.
6. Weekend Responsibilities: Take the pilgrim to Send-Off. Carry his/her suitcase and other belongings. Help with registration and help him/her find his/her assigned room. Make his/her bed and stay with him/her at the send-off reception until the Walk begins. Attend Sponsor’s Hour, Candlelight and Closing. It has been stressed that if you are unable to attend Walk activities, you should co-sponsor with someone who can. Wear your name tag at the Walk activities. Wear your lanyard/cross only at Closing. Participate in the 72 hour Prayer Vigil. You may have already received a card with a scheduled

prayer time, sent by the Prayer Coordinator. If you do not receive one prior to the Walks, request to be included. You can also find the link to sign up for the Prayer Vigil on the Bread of Life Community web site. Support the Pilgrim's family in helpful ways as needed ... (babysitting, feeding pets, preparing food, etc.). Let the pilgrim's family know you love and care for them.

7. A sponsor's responsibilities are not finished once the Walks are over. After the Walk, stay in contact and encourage the pilgrims to become involved in his/her Fourth Day. Talk through his/her weekend experience. Take them to their first Gathering so they have opportunity to share their experiences with others. Help them become involved in a Reunion Group as soon as possible. You may want to give them a copy of the Emmaus Booklet, "Coming Down From the Mountain".
8. Inform the pilgrim of ways to serve the Emmaus community including future walks. Talk about serving in the kitchen, signing up for the prayer vigil, providing snacks, preparing agape, and other "behind the scenes" needs. Model progressive servanthood by inviting him/her to serve alongside you. Most areas can use the help.
9. Help the new Emmaus member sponsor others. New community members must be actively involved in Emmaus for one year and have completed the sponsorship training before they are eligible to be a sponsor. However, an experienced sponsor may co-sponsor with the new member. This is an excellent introduction to sponsorship.

As pilgrims are beginning to prepare for their Walks, do not overlook informing them or reminding them of the following:

Sleeping arrangements are different and they will need to bring their own bedding, personal items and towels.

Dress is casual.

Special diets may be arranged if needed.

Suggest they may want to leave their watches at home so time is not a distraction to their experience during the Walk.

Children are not allowed at any activities (Thursday Night for Send-Off, Sponsor's Hour, Candlelight or Closing).

Childcare is always available at First United Methodist Church.

Assure them that each weekend is unique but each person seems to find exactly what God wants that person to experience. It is expected he/she will attend all sessions from Thursday Send-Off through Sunday Closing. There are no expected results other than experiencing God's love. This is another opportunity to share what the three days meant to you.

There are NO secrets. Answer any questions they might have. It is not that we are not allowed to tell what about the special events, but avoid telling the details of these unique aspects of the Walk. Answer questions in general terms. It is fine to tell them there will be 15 presentations dealing with such topics as priorities, improving knowledge about God, and how to serve God. Explain there will be time for discussing, singing, meditation and prayer. There will be communion.

Candlelight has its own special effect so please let that be a surprise.

We encourage you to let the Agape letters be a surprise also.

Any persons who have participated in Walk to Emmaus are eligible to sponsor another person as long as they have had sponsorship training, have been active in Emmaus for one year and are willing to assume the responsibilities of sponsorship.

Sponsors should not serve as team members on Walks with persons they are sponsoring. Pilgrims should not see their sponsors during the event (except at Candlelight and Closing).

Some questions that are often asked, along with their answers are found on page 23-27 of the "Sponsorship" Booklet.