

So You Want to Have the Seven Project... ...NOW WHAT?

Congrats! You are just about to embark on an exciting new adventure. You scared? Overwhelmed? Have no idea of what to do first? Well, this step-by-step list will help you figure out how to have a successful Seven Project event in your area. Remember, you can make this event as large or as small as you want and you can tailor it to fit your community.

The steps below were followed by a Seven Project event planning team from Carroll County, Maryland in 2003-2004. If you have any questions, you may contact Rachel Harrison, who was the coordinator of the Maryland event or Kevin Dawson, Youth Alive/ Seven Project District Coordinator at 703.753.0300. Good luck and God bless!

NOTE – The dates listed on the step by step process are approximate and we realize that everyone won't have the same amount of time in preparing for the event. Therefore, change this process according to how it fits your specific situation.

NOTE – You may want to obtain a community planner guide for other step by step ideas as well as templates for certain forms that you may find helpful in your planning. Contact Kevin Dawson to obtain one.

Step One: Initial meeting/ Networking of Community Members (about 6 months out)

Having a good, core group of churches, community leaders, Christian teachers/ administrators, and students is ESSENTIAL to a successful event! About six months before your event, pick a neutral place (not in a specific denomination's church—maybe a school cafeteria or community center) to have an informational meeting for all of your contacts. Select people from MANY Christian denominations. You may even want to have representatives from organizations such as Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Young Life, Students for Christ, Edge Clubs, and other service organizations there as well. Work through Christian networks that are already set up. If you have a minister's association in your community, bring the information to them and get them involved. Stress that this is not a NEW organization or ministry to set up; it is a resource to help ministries already in place! Invite Kevin Dawson to come speak to your group so he can answer all of the questions they may have.

***PRACTICAL TIP:** Provide lunch or refreshments at this meeting and send multiple notices or make multiple calls in order to get people there!

Step Two: Set Up a Planning Committee (about 5-6 months out)

This can be accomplished through your information meeting. Get the contact information of people who are DEFINITELY interested in being on a committee to plan the event. This will mean a time commitment; make sure people know this! Make one person on the committee the "Seven Festival Coordinator" in charge of coordinating the Seven Festival (Christian event), and one person in charge of contacting the schools and coordinating the school assemblies (Seven Project School Assembly Coordinator). One of these people should be your leader through the entire planning process and is ultimately the final decision-maker.

At your first planning meeting, you will want to brainstorm about what you want to do with your event. For example, you might want to have a Christian band concert, inflatable games, free food, door prizes, a car show, etc. Set up committees within your planning committee to take care of the different aspects of the event (ie: a food committee, a games committee, a prize committee, a prayer committee just to pray for the event, etc.).

***PRACTICAL TIP:** Set up regular meetings of the committee up front (ie: first Monday of every month). Meetings can be held in the same place and at the same time for consistency.

*** PRACTICAL TIP:** Have each committee member discuss with their organization or pastor how much money they can donate and what kind of extra support (volunteers, etc.) they can provide for the event. They should report back to the committee at the next meeting so a budget can start to be formed. ****THINK BIG!** Plans can always be scaled back!!!

***PRACTICAL TIP:** Select a theme verse for your event; something your committee can memorize and begin with at each meeting. Have a few people who are your prayer warriors—this is great for older church members who want to help but are unable to do much physically. Provide prayer requests to these prayer warriors and watch as God answers them.



Step Three: Contacting the Schools in Your Area (about 4-6 months out)

Your Seven Project Assemblies Coordinator and/ or their volunteers should contact the schools you plan to target to let them know about the Seven Project. Pick a week of dates to choose from before you go to the principals so you can have the assemblies all in the same week, and before the Seven Festival (evening Christian program). It would be helpful to have Kevin Dawson's card and contact information as well as written information to give him/ her when you visit them. Don't just pop in to see them—make an appointment—you will have captured more of their attention. Principals love to see what is going to be in their schools before it appears on their auditorium stage! If possible, visit a school where the Seven Project is conducting an assembly and videotape it, making copies for the principals you visit. Give them a list of possible topics they can choose from for their assembly and bring a copy of the presentation agreement from the Community Planner Guide with you in case they want to sign up on the spot! Contact Kevin Dawson for recommendations and evaluations of the Seven Project assembly from other school principals to show them. As principals sign up, get them or the PTA groups in the school to pay for at least a portion of the assembly so they will less apt to cancel it. Mail or fax all of the presentation agreements to Kevin Dawson at PO Box 603, Haymarket, VA 20168, 703.754.0469. Make sure to keep copies for yourself.



***PRACTICAL TIP:** When selecting a week to have your assemblies and Seven Festival, be aware of the school calendar in your area. For example, principals like to have assemblies dealing with character issues and drugs/ alcohol before major events like the Homecoming Dance or Prom. Usually, the two weeks between sports seasons (typically in November & March) do not contain after school practices or evening games. For your Seven Festival evening event, you want to stay away from times when there are major school sporting events (ie: football games, plays/ musicals, school dances) so you will have students show up.

***PRACTICAL TIP:** If you have a teacher or student from a specific school you wish to target that is on your planning committee, have them contact the principal. It's always best to find people with relationships to the principal so they feel more comfortable about allowing the group into their school.

Step Four: Soliciting Church Financial/ Volunteer Support (about 3-5 months out)

Hopefully, the members of your planning committee have already contacted their individual churches to ask for donations of time/ money for the event. You should, however, contact as many churches and religious organizations as possible to acquire more resources and involve as many Christian denominations as possible! Create a detailed "wish list" with specific dollar amounts assigned to each item so churches can see where their money will be going. Make a list of all the things that need to be done and how many volunteers are needed so churches can assign volunteers to specific tasks. You may even want to set up meetings with local youth pastors, pastors, or congregations to show them the Seven Project video or have Kevin Dawson come and speak to them to answer any questions they may have.

***PRACTICAL TIP:** Contact Kevin Dawson to obtain the Seven Project Logo or letterhead for your letter to make them more professional in appearance.

Step Five: Location, Location, Location (about 3-5 months out)

You need to start planning the specific details of your Seven Festival (evening event). You will first need a location. You can rent out a school, have it at a large church, a community center, etc. Make sure you take into consideration how many schools in which you are having the assembly and what the enrollment is in those schools. You can expect up to 30% of the students will attend the evening event, so make sure you have enough room! If you are renting a school, make sure you sign a contract with the school that details each room you are renting, what the cost is for those rooms, and how much it costs to pay the custodians to clean up. You will have to have insurance to rent schools, which in most cases can be provided under one of the churches that is sponsoring the event.

It is also time to start contracting the band, games providers, food vendors, etc. that you will have at the event. If you are grilling food or having food donated, do not forget that most local health departments require you to have a food permit.

***PRACTICAL TIP:** If you don't have a lot of money for food, assign each supporting church a food item to bring. For example, one church could provide the hot dogs, another the buns, another the chips, etc.

***PRACTICAL TIP:** If there is an active campus ministry already operating on the school, try having them reserve the room(s) in the school(s). A lot of times the school will not charge if this is the case.

Step Six: Preparing the Students as Missionaries to Their Campuses (about 2-3 months out)

The success of the Seven Project is in utilizing your Christian students as missionaries to their campuses PRIOR the Seven Project even coming to your town. The Seven Project sells Student Action Kits (kits are \$15 each) which contain valuable resources to help students do this: 7 project posters (7 of them), 7 project invitations (7 of them), 7 Books of Hope, a 7 project t-shirt, and a CD-Rom of Bible studies and prayer/ fasting schedule. You should try to provide a 7 Project Student Action Kit for Christian students in each of the schools where the assemblies will be taking place. Students can pick a day each week to wear their Seven Project shirt to school to draw attention to the event and build suspense among the other students. They can ask their administrators if they can put up posters in the school. They can target one unsaved friend each week by giving them a Book of Hope and an invitation to the Seven Project.

You may also want to set up a meeting of all the kids to train them on how to use the box rather than just hand them out and hope that they use them. Contact the FCA or other campus Bible clubs in the schools that will be having the assembly and invite them to a meeting to get their box (maybe provide food too!). Have them get together in groups by school at the meeting and talk about a strategy to evangelize their campus. Have them pray for their schools. Kevin Dawson would be willing to come and help train your students with the Action Kits.



***PRACTICAL TIP:** Get the email addresses of each student who has a Seven Project Student Action Kit and email them devotions, ideas, or reminders to wear their 7 shirts.

***PRACTICAL TIP:** “Light For the Lost,” the men’s missions ministry of the Assembly of God church, will often give funds for Student Action Boxes (usually grants of \$1000 or lower). Contact George Raduano at Trinity AG in Lutherville, MD (410.821.6573) for more information.

***PRACTICAL TIP:** Order your Student Action Kits about a month before your training meeting (if you have one) to insure their arrival in time. Contact Kevin Dawson for more info on how to order these kits.

Step Seven: Soliciting Prizes from Local Businesses (1-2 months out)

One way to get students to your evening event is to advertise the door prizes that are available. Contact local businesses and ask for donations of electronics, gift certificates, etc. Ask churches to buy prizes (TVs, video game systems, car stereos, manicure/ pedicure gift certificates, etc.) and donate to the event. At the Seven Project Assembly in each of the schools, the team may announce what prizes will be available at the Seven Festival to draw in the kids.

***PRACTICAL TIP:** Put the prizes on the stage during the Seven Festival as a reminder so students aren’t tempted to leave the event early before the altar call.

***PRACTICAL TIP:** Give tickets to each student at the beginning of the Seven Festival and use the numbers on the tickets to give out the door prizes.

Step Eight: Small, But Important Details (1-2 months out)

Make sure you get your volunteers trained. This can happen a week before or 30 minutes before your event, but make sure all the volunteers know what they are doing, especially adults that will be ministering at the altars.

Contact Kevin Dawson and ask what needs his team will have (housing, food, etc.). Perhaps families within the supporting churches can prepare meals for the Masters Commission/ drama team that is coming with the Seven Project team.

Make sure you have enough volunteers for clean-up!!! You want to leave the place EXACTLY how you found it (be a good witness, especially if you have rented a school)!

***PRACTICAL TIP:** Print out directions for each volunteer so they know what to do and when. That will eliminate some of the confusion and questions everyone will be asking you during the event.

***PRACTICAL TIP:** Write out directions for the Seven Project team so they know how to get to the schools. Also print out a list of restaurants and local fun activities for them during their down time.

Step Nine: Don't Forget About Follow-Up!!! (1 Day to 1 Week after the event)

Contact Kevin Dawson about purchasing extra Books of Hope (\$1 each) to give to students that come to the altar at the Seven Festival.

Students will come to know Christ at your Seven Project and most of them will not have a home church. Follow-up is a MUST! After the Festival, ask local youth pastors to get together (that night even) to distribute the response cards filled out by students at the altar. Each youth pastor must contact the students whose cards they received, **WITHIN THE WEEK**, to invite them to youth service. They may even want to drop a gift on their door step or something like that. Encourage the Christian students who invited friends to follow-up with those friends after the Seven Project leaves.

Other Ideas/ Tips:

Order a different color 7 Project shirt for the key volunteers that are working at your Seven Festival so they will stand out and people will know who to go to for help/ direction.

Borrow walkie-talkies for your event (especially if it is a large event) so you can communicate with the committee leaders overseeing various parts of the event.

Have a student prayer room or tent at the event for students who need special prayer. You can set it up like a coffee house.

Have a prayer intercessor room or tent at your event to pray while the event is taking place so things will run smoothly. If problems arise, take it to the prayer room; as you are trying to deal with the situation practically they will be dealing with it spiritually.

Make sure you set up adults who are **JUST** security at your event. They can guard doors and be visible during the event. Also, contact the local police and ask them to drive by or through the event on occasion for added security.

Have local youth ministries/ churches set up ministry tables at your event with information about their youth ministries so kids can see their options. If students make a decision to follow Christ at the Seven Festival, they can visit the ministry tables to find a youth group.

Email communication is key. Make sure you have all the contact info for your supporting churches/ organizations as well as planning committee members.



Kevin Dawson
Youth Alive/ Seven Project Coordinator
Potomac District
PO BOX 603
Haymarket, VA 20168
703.753.0300
YADawson@aol.com