

RETIREMENT DINNER PLANNING GUIDE

A retirement celebration of some kind is a good idea for most of us – after all, you'll most likely have spent much of your adult life as an LAFD member. Whether it's a firehouse breakfast, a backyard BBQ, or a more formal event, a retirement party can be the milestone that marks the transition to retirement, both literally and psychologically.

INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS

A lot of hard work goes into the planning and executing of a successful retirement dinner. The responsibility usually falls upon a co-worker, good friend, or spouse. Some of the initial considerations are the possible dates, times, and places for the party. You'll want to be aware of which platoon is on-duty, the day of the week, major holidays, and other conflicting local events. Most retirement dinners include families and non-department friends, but some are "traditional fireman" events.

When considering a venue, check the accommodations to ensure they are appropriate for the event. What is the maximum number of guests that can be accommodated? Is there a minimum requirement? Will a caterer be necessary? Will it be a buffet or sit-down dinner? What are the menu options? What are the costs (including tax, tip and service charges)? How much of a deposit is required? Who will provide the cake? Is a bar available? Is a bartender required? Can you supply your own alcoholic beverages? Is a podium and PA system provided? Tables and chairs? Are decorations allowed?

STAYING ORGANIZED

Organization is key when you plan a retirement event. One important component of staying organized is having a timeline for your event. A timeline should include all of the tasks needed to make your event a success and a due date for having them completed. It is important to keep the timeline updated if new tasks become necessary and as tasks are completed.

GETTING THE WORD OUT

Once all of the details of the retirement celebration are finalized, it will be important to "get the word out." Send notification (see sample below) to LAFRA at editor@lafra.org for inclusion in the *Grapevine* and also on the events page of the Relief Association website (www.lafra.org/events). The *Grapevine* deadline is the first of the month for the following month (i.e. Jan 1st for the Feb issue).

SAMPLE RETIREMENT DINNER ANNOUNCEMENT

Name: JOHN A. DOE, Engineer, FS 32-B

Place: Old FS 27's Fire Museum

1355 North Cahuenga Blvd., Hollywood

Date & Time: Saturday, August 17, 2019

Social Hour: 6:30 PM - Dinner: 7:30 PM

Food & Price: BBQ Buffett, \$55.00 includes tax, tip & gift

RSVP: Call FS 32 (213) 555-6232

(if applicable) Spouses Are Cordially Invited

Have a retirement dinner flyer made up and send it out six to eight weeks prior to the event. You can send a hardcopy to the firehouses of your choice (either by dept. or U.S. mail). Have someone with department e-mail privileges send a digital copy of the flyer to select addresses or blast it to "All Captains." Send copies to your e-mail and/or text contacts (esp. to retired members). Have the event posted on social media like Facebook. It's always a good idea to resend to all your contacts a week or two before the dinner as a last-minute reminder.

RETIREMENT AWARDS

The department and member organizations provide a host of commemorative awards to retiring members. For the Fire Chief's Resolution or Certificate, members must fill out a form provided by the Personnel Services Section. The City Service Pin is also obtained from PSS. Call (213) 978-3750.

LAFRA provides a retirement badge (your choice of silver or gold) for every retiring member. Members may also purchase a small badge for their spouse. Also provided is the "Red Book" to commemorate the retirement celebration. Contact LAFRA member services at (323) 259-5259.

The UFLAC plaque or ring can be ordered by calling (800) 252-8352. Dates of department service and promotion, and member's badge number are needed.

CSFA makes available a framed certificate. Contact CSFA at robert.cordobes@lacity.org

PRB Personal Record Book comes directly from the fire station. Make sure the captain holds the PRB for the retirement party and does not forward it to PSS.

IMPORTANT:

Make sure that award orders are placed at least 60 days prior to the retirement celebration.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Besides the guest of honor and the event planner, the Master of Ceremonies is a retirement celebration's most important entity. Even the backyard BBQ retirement party will benefit from someone directing the festivities. Consult with the retiree to choose an appropriate M/C and provide him with the necessary information to personalize the ceremony.

Another important function is documenting the occasion. You'll definitely want to have a photographer on hand and many also want to include video. You can hire a professional or use a friend (or two) who is good with a camera.

Next you will need a list of people to present the retirement awards. LAFRA and UFLAC will provide a board member to bestow their awards. The PRB has traditionally been presented by the member's last company commander, the city pin by a last chief officer. But consult with the retiree and choose whomever you deem appropriate.

Retirement Gift

LAFD tradition has been to provide a gift for the retiring member. Determine an appropriate gift by talking with co-workers, family, friends, etc. Usually the cost of the gift is added to the price of the dinner. In the past, a "can" has been passed around the battalion to solicit contributions. Consider also a flower bouquet for the retiree's wife if she is to attend the dinner.

Many recent retirees have requested that, in lieu of a gift, a donation be made to a charity such as the Widows, Orphans and Disabled Firemen's Fund. Others have forgone the gift altogether.

The Countdown

About a week before the dinner, go back over your notes to make sure nothing has been overlooked. Check with your M/C and make sure he is ready to go. Be careful not to over-estimate the number of guests when dealing with the restaurant but also consider that many guests arrive without an RSVP.

If the retiree would like to have an article in the *Grapevine*, be prepared to send the story and photos in digital format (word.doc and jpegs) to editor@lafra.org as soon as possible after the event.

Good luck and have fun!