

TIPS FOR APPROACHING DONORS FOR THE ARC OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA GALA

- Make a list of all potential prospects. This may range from family members and friends to business associates, clients, and people who work with your loved one with a disability. You know more people than you think. Appeal to them because they know you, your child, or as an obligation because you've done business with them or some other favor.
- Begin a conversation as soon as possible with potential donors about your own relationship to The Arc of Northern Virginia: talk about having a family member with a disability, serving on the board, being involved with advocacy, recent events/accomplishments of the organization. Just as we share updates on work, family, vacation, movies seen, books read, restaurants, etc., include information about The Arc of Northern Virginia in your conversations with other people.
- Take advantage of "boilerplate" documents available online, including draft auction and sponsorship solicitation letters, draft email texts, templates for personalized webpages, Gala invitation and up-to-date list of sponsors. You can find all support materials online at <https://thearcofnova.org/happenings/gala/committee/>.
- Be sure you know WHY you are asking. Have one "hook" or reason for "the ask" to explain the impact the gift will have in furthering the mission/programs.
- Keep "the ask" short. People prefer a shorter message/story.
- Be specific and aim for a higher amount than you think they might be able to afford. The important part of "the ask" is the ASK! Remember that people are not insulted by a request for money for an excellent cause. Never think you are being crazy or rude.
- Dealing with "donor fatigue": Do not assume you know their financial situation; you still need to ask. Don't decide for them.
- When you actually ask for the money, *stop talking*. WAIT FOR THE ANSWER. (The old adage in negotiations is that he/she who speaks first, loses). It will feel like forever, but simply politely wait for them to consider and respond.
- If they indicate they cannot do the requested amount, ask what they can do at this time.
- Donors may contribute in a number of ways:
 - Sponsorships
 - Online ticket purchases through The Arc of Northern Virginia website.
 - Fundraising pages set up by individual Board Members.
 - Responding to invitation with ticket purchase (make sure we have their address!)
- We are happy to allow for a pledge to be paid in installments over multiple months, if this will make it possible for someone to consider a larger gift.

Questions?

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