



Benefit Event Kit

Welcome

Dear Event Host,

Thank you for organizing a Benefit Event for the National Center for Lesbian Rights!

Founded in 1977, NCLR is a national legal organization committed to advancing the civil and human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people and their families through litigation, public policy advocacy, and public education.

We are a non-profit, public interest law firm which litigates precedent-setting cases at the trial and appellate court levels; advocates for equitable public policies affecting the LGBT community; provides free legal assistance to LGBT people and their legal advocates; and conducts community education on LGBT legal issues. Each year we serve more than 5,000 lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people and their families in all fifty states, including LGBT seniors, immigrants, athletes, and youth. And our impact litigation serves *all* LGBT people in the United States.



Benefit Events are critical because they engage supporters like you in our work. It's an opportunity to spark a dialogue about freedom and fairness, and gives you the chance to involve your friends and family in this important organization.

The NCLR Benefit Event Kit walks you through everything you need to know and do to organize a successful event that will get all your friends talking.

Our easy-to-use kit includes:

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Thank you again. With your help, we will achieve justice for all.

Sincerely,

Kate Kendell, Esq.
Executive Director

Event Logistics

Set a GOAL. Before you plan your Benefit Event, set specific goals for the amount you would like your event to raise for NCLR.

Your goal should be ambitious. Setting a financial goal of \$2,500 may seem like a lot of money — but keep in mind that some of your friends may donate more if you simply ask. In addition, the more people who attend your event, the more money you will likely raise.

Here are sample goals:

- Get 15-20 people to attend.
- Raise \$2,500 (or as much as possible) from your guests (\$125 per person).
- Have two people commit to hosting their own Benefit Event.

The goals you set are up to you — but remember the point of your Benefit Event is to raise funds and awareness. The legal system can be costly, and every dollar counts. If you are nervous about asking your friends for money, don't worry. We will cover "the pitch" later (See "Tips for the Pitch").

Choose a THEME or FORMAT. Think about the kind of Benefit Event you'd like to hold. The only limitation is your imagination. A theme may help you plan your event, but it's not required — especially if it feels too complicated. Some host a simple house party, and others get more inventive.

Another way to focus your event is to organize it around a specific program or issue area of NCLR's work. If you are particularly motivated by a particular project or issue, you should feel free to host an event dedicated to it. For example, you could host an NCLR Youth Project Movie Night: begin with some food and drink, show a movie like *But I'm a Cheerleader*, talk about why LGBT youth issues are important to you, and ask folks to contribute to NCLR's work to change the legal landscape for all youth, ensuring health and safety for the next generation of all young people.

Choose a DATE. Plan to give yourself enough time to contact guests and organize details (4 to 6 weeks is generally sufficient).

Choose a TIME. Select a time that will be most successful for your event. Events during the week are best held from 6 to 8 p.m. or 7 to 9 p.m. Events on Saturday or Sunday are best held in the afternoon from 2 to 4 p.m. or 3 to 5 p.m., or an evening time slot. Let the type of event dictate when it should be — think of what is most convenient for your guests (but don't feel the need to accommodate everyone). It's best to give people a time frame. If they know the party is only going to be two hours, your guests will not arrive more than an hour after it starts.

Just make sure your event has ample time dedicated to talking about NCLR and the life- and law-changing work they do that affects every LGBT person's life. If you are planning on screening a film or having an activity, make sure you allow for time to talk about NCLR when deciding the length of your event.

Contact NCLR. NCLR is happy to provide print and other materials, including donation forms and envelopes, for you to make available or hand out at your event. In addition, we can also help you identify an NCLR speaker for your event, like a local National Advisory Board member or a staff member.

If you would like us to help promote your event to the general public, we can post it on our website and Facebook page and mention it in any timely event emails.

To make these arrangements with NCLR, please contact:

Eleanor Palacios, NCLR Events Manager

Here are some examples of what other NCLR supporters have done with their NCLR Benefit Events:

- Happy Hour at a favorite local bar
- Gathering at their workplace
- Event at their place of worship
- Cocktails & appetizers or dinner at local restaurant
- Reading or gathering at local bookstore
- House Party (cocktails & appetizers at their home)
- Movie Night
- Potluck
- Sporting Event Tournament (like dodge ball, croquet, volleyball, bocce ball, horseshoes)
- Barbecue
- Brunch
- Birthday or anniversary celebration
- Afternoon Tea

Determine LOGISTICS. What do you need to make your event a success? Parties can cost very little or a lot. Consider whether the money you spend on your event will help raise more money. The money you spend on your party should be out-of-pocket and not taken from the money you raise. Your guests will expect that their gift is going directly to support NCLR's legal services.

Questions to consider:

- Will you need food? If so, what kind?
- Where will people park?
- What kind of drinks will you serve?
- Will you use a caterer or prepare food yourself? (If you are using a caterer, make arrangements as soon as possible.)
- Where will your event be held? (If you are holding an event at a public venue, it is always good to let the venue owner or operator know what your plans are, and to reserve private rooms or areas well in advance.)

Organize your GUEST LIST. Decide on a manageable guest list - remember that some folks who RSVP will not show up, and some who don't RSVP will! (See the section on Building Your Invitation List below for more ideas on who to invite.)

Begin your INVITATIONS. It's best to use a combination of methods to get guests to your event. Some people respond best to postal mail, others to email, and some only to phone calls.

Send out an invitation letter, giving people a clear and compelling idea of why they should attend and letting them know you will be asking them to contribute. We have provided a sample invitation letter that you may use as a guide, or feel free to create your own. (The earlier this goes out, the more likely you'll get a positive response.)

Send out emails from your personal email account or use an evite (like from evite.com). Send out an initial email as well as regular reminders to people who have not yet sent an RSVP. Send out another reminder the week (and day) before your event to people who have sent RSVPs.

Always include information about making a donation so people can contribute to NCLR even if they don't attend the event.

Don't forget to follow-up. Phone calls are essential and will increase your attendance rate. Start calling when your invite goes out and make reminder calls the week before your event.

DURING the Event. Have a check-in table at the door to sign people in when they arrive, using the Sign-In form provided in this kit. Use this table as a place where you or a volunteer can collect donations throughout the event. Be sure guests fill out their donation forms completely. Have fun! (For more pointers on how to schedule the entire event, see the section called Event Timeline.)

AFTER your Event. Mail thank you notes to your guests. (NCLR will also mail thank you letters for their contributions, but it's best to add a personal touch.) Send all contributions and donation forms at your earliest convenience to:

Kris Hermanns
NCLR Benefit Events
870 Market St., Suite 370
San Francisco, CA 94102

You can also reach Kris at 415.365.1302 or khermanns@nclrights.org.

Building Your Invitation List

Not sure who to invite? Here are some great ideas of people to put on your list:

Family: Consider including both your immediate family and relatives you haven't seen in a while.

Friends: Think about your friends and your partner's friends.

Social acquaintances you don't see often: People you see once in a while, people you met online, friends at your old job, people you went to school with, former teachers and professors, volunteers for other organizations, past sorority and fraternity friends.

Your cell phone and social networks: You may have a friend's number on your cell phone or be friends on a social network like Facebook or MySpace. These are great places to look — maybe you've lost touch and haven't thought of them recently.

People you worship with: The head of the congregation, leaders, justice committee members, regular attendees.

Colleagues at work: Walk around the office and talk to people. Take co-workers out to lunch. Meet up for coffee during break.

Neighbors: Next door, upstairs, downstairs, one floor up, the whole block! People you always run into when you go jogging, walk the dog, or visit the market. Remember your neighborhood association members, landlord, babysitter, pet sitter, and parents of your children's friends.

Social gatherings: Take a minute to talk to people about your Benefit Event and why you support NCLR.

Organizations you belong to: PTA, labor union, neighborhood watch, bowling league, softball team, running group, workout friends, yoga or pilates class, book club.

Event Timeline

Parties are often scheduled for a two-hour time slot. Commonly chosen times include weekday nights from 6 to 8 p.m. or from 7 to 9 p.m. Many people also have success on Saturday evenings or Sunday afternoons.

The first hour should be dedicated to the arrival of guests and conversation. As guests arrive, ask them to sign in using our Benefit Event Sign-In Sheet. This way, we'll be sure to have their names and current addresses, so we can send everyone a prompt thank you note or appropriate follow-up.

At the beginning of the second hour, the program begins. It has three parts:

1. **Introduction** (3 to 5 minutes). Usually done by the host. Thank your guests for coming. Talk to them about what NCLR means to you and why you decided to host a Benefit Event for NCLR.
2. **Remarks** from host or guest speaker about NCLR (10 minutes). Questions and answers (10 minutes).
3. **The Pitch** (5 minutes.) Given by the host or guest speaker. The "pitch" asks people to invest in NCLR and the fight for justice for all LGBT people, and explains how they can help, especially by making financial contributions. Don't worry about making the pitch. We provide some fool-proof tips later in this kit.

After the pitch, the formal program is over and guests go back to mingling.

Collecting contributions is, of course, of great importance. After the pitch, you should distribute donation forms, and have your guests make their donations. Be sure that they fill any forms out clearly and completely.

Please make sure everyone is asked to make a contribution before they leave.

You may also decide that you want your event to be less formal, so feel free to adapt this format to something that would better suit your friends and guests. Remember though, that we want to give each of your guests an opportunity to donate to support NCLR.

Making the Pitch

We all get nervous when it comes to asking our friends, acquaintances, and colleagues for money. This is perfectly normal. Most of us have been raised to never talk about money. Yet the reality is that people mostly give money only when someone they know and respect asks for it.

One of the key components that keeps NCLR's doors open is how much we rely on the regular donor, much like the people you will be inviting to your event. Fundraising success doesn't just rely on whether or not you know wealthy people, but instead, relies on exactly the people you already know and will be asking to give whatever they can.

Tips for Making the Pitch

- Talk about how NCLR's work affects you and those you love personally. Tell your story about why this is important to you. You are asking your friends for money, and they will give because it is important to you.
- It's okay to be honest about how nervous you are. ("I don't usually enjoy asking people for money, so I'm a little nervous. But this is so important to me....")
- Be specific in your ask. Have a dollar amount in mind. ("I'd like to ask everyone in this room to join me in donating \$125 to NCLR tonight." OR "I'd like this party to raise \$2,500 tonight. Will you join me in donating to reach that goal? There are 20 of us here, so that is just \$125 per person.")
- Have volunteers collect the money as guests mingle after your talk.
- Have fun!

The most effective solicitations for donor money don't come from the big shots, experts, or leaders of organizations. They come when a peer asks a peer for money. If you've been upfront from the beginning that you are holding this event as a fundraiser, people will already know that you will ask for money, and they will be ready to give when you make your pitch.

The key to success is that YOU believe in NCLR and that you are able to explain to people why raising money to support NCLR's work is so important to you. Research your favorite issue areas of NCLR's work on our website at www.nclrights.org. For instance, if you were a high school athlete and NCLR's Sports Project inspires you personally, talk about that and tell your guests why - why does NCLR's work to level the playing field in sports for all LGBT athletes and coaches motivate *you* to give? Remember, you are the person who will have the largest impact on motivating your guests to give.

At some point during your event (when the crowd is peaking in size) you will stop the party and ask for donations. You will already have planned how to collect the donations, and you will be ready for people to respond. You will ask your friends to give something to a cause that is personally important to you.

If you are feeling nervous and unsure of yourself, just ask yourself if the work NCLR does is more important than your nerves - then plow forward and have fun. A lot of people say they get a little adrenaline jolt when they ask for money and then receive it!

Suggested Planning Timeline

4 to 6 Weeks Before Event:

- Draw up invitation list (see above for ideas).
- Draft invitations (sample provided).
- Contact NCLR to request materials and/or to promote your Event

3 Weeks Before

- Mail or email invitations.
- Ask two reliable friends to serve as "door people." They'll answer the door, take coats, make sure people sign in and help collect checks.

2 Weeks Before

- Follow up with everyone who has not RSVP'd.
- Keep a list of who is coming.
- Make sure you have all the materials you need from NCLR, including donation forms and envelopes.

1 Week Before

- Decide who will do the introduction.
- Prepare and practice the introduction.
- Read and highlight information so that you're able to answer questions.

Week of Event

- Remind “door people” of their duties and the time they need to arrive.
- Purchase and prepare refreshments.
- Print enough sign-in sheets to accommodate your estimated number of guests (see below).

Refreshments

Refreshments can be as simple or as complicated as you want. Some relatively low-cost items include: cheese and crackers, nuts, vegetables and dip, chips and salsa, fruit, wine, beer, soda, sparkling water, coffee, tea, milk, and sweet rolls, cake, and cookies. Whatever your budget, your guests will understand that the refreshments are not the highlight of the party. Their support of NCLR’s work to secure full civil and human rights for all LGBT people and families is the centerpiece of your Benefit Event.

After the Event

Your big Benefit Event is over! Now what?

1. At your earliest convenience, please send an event report and all donations received to:

Kris Hermanns
NCLR Benefit Events
870 Market St., Suite 370
San Francisco, CA 94102

415.365.1302
khermanns@nclrights.org

Please make sure your event report includes a list with contact information for all the donors to your Benefit Event, including:

- Full Name
 - Partner Name (with a note to let us know if they are *not* giving jointly)
 - Mailing Address, City, State, & Zip
 - Email address(es)
 - Phone number(s)
2. Once NCLR receives the contributions, we will send your guests a thank you letter.
 3. It’s a good idea to send your guests who donated a thank you note yourself to add a personal touch.

Please know how appreciative we are of all the work you’ve done to raise the critical funds needed to fight for justice for all LGBT people!

Sample Invitation Letter

Dear [Name],

These are incredible times for our/the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community.

In May of 2008, the National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR) was lead counsel in the historic marriage case that brought marriage for same-sex couples to California. And today, they are lead counsel in the legal challenge to overturn Prop 8.

What many folks don't know is that NCLR has been working for civil and human rights for the entire LGBT community for over 30 years. Their works spans all 50 states and covers every issue that is important to our community: elder law, employment, families and parenting, healthcare, immigration, marriage, relationship recognition, sports, transgender law, and youth.

The fact is that if you or someone you know lives with more dignity and legal protection as an LGBT person in this country, it is due in no small part to NCLR.

That's why I'm asking you to a Benefit Event for NCLR. Please join me to learn more about NCLR and their current work to fight for justice for the entire LGBT community.

Date:
Time:
Place:

RSVP to [email address or phone #] by [RSVP cut-off date].

Please feel free to bring a friend – or two – and don't forget your checkbook! There's no obligation to contribute, but if you're impressed with the work NCLR is doing, you'll *want* to write a check.

I hope you'll join me on [date] and help us make this country a place where all LGBT people can live freely and with full dignity.

Many thanks,
[Your name]

Donations to NCLR are deductible as charitable contributions for income tax purposes.

Sample Thank You Note

Dear [Name],

Thank you for attending our recent Benefit Event in support of NCLR and their work to secure civil and human rights for all LGBT people.

Your contribution will be put to work right away – NCLR's docket is always full, and every donation helps. Thank you so much!

It means a lot to me that you attended the event and that you made a personal donation.

Sincerely,
[Your Name]

NCLR Logo and Materials for Download

NCLR's logos and other press materials are available for download online for you to use in putting together your Benefit Event. Visit www.nclrights.org/EventDownloads to find them all.



NATIONAL CENTER FOR LESBIAN RIGHTS

Benefit Event Host Name: _____

Benefit Event Date: _____

Do not share my information	Name(s) First and Last	Mailing Address Street Address City, State ZIP	Phone Please include area code Please circle phone type	Email Address(es) NCLR will never share, rent, or sell your email address.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mickey Mouse & Donald Duck	123 Main St. Anaheim, CA 12345	work cell <u>home</u> (415) 555-1212	mickey@disney.com donald@duck.net
<input type="checkbox"/>			work cell home () -	
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Benefit Event Donation Form

Thank you so much for attending an NCLR Benefit Event and making a contribution to ensure NCLR has the resources we need to fight for civil and human rights for the entire LGBT community.

1 Your name and contact information:

Name(s):

Address:

Preferred Phone: () Home Work Cell

A daytime phone number is required for all credit card gifts.

Email Address(es):

2 Choose the type and amount of your donation:

I would like to make a one-time gift to NCLR in the amount of:

- \$40 individual membership
\$65 family membership
\$100
\$1,500* anniversary circle
Other:

*Donors at the \$1,500+ level become members of NCLR's Anniversary Circle and receive many special benefits.

Join NCLR's Sustainer Fund by giving \$10 or more each month with your credit or debit card - you can make a huge difference with only a modest impact on your monthly budget.

I would like to make a recurring monthly gift of \$ (\$10 minimum)

Please keep this gift anonymous.

3 Payment information:

Please make your check payable to NCLR, or pay by credit/debit card here:

- Visa MasterCard American Express Discover

A daytime phone number is required for all credit card gifts.

Card #: Expiration Date:

Name on Card: Security Code:

Signature:

4 Return this form to your NCLR Benefit Event Host!

Please give this form to your Benefit Event Host to turn in for you so we can be sure to credit your gift to the Benefit Event you attended.

(Or keep your form and return to: NCLR Benefit Events, 870 Market St., #370, San Francisco, CA 94102. You can also donate online at www.nclrights.org/donate.)

THANK YOU!

For Benefit Event Host use only

Benefit Event Date Benefit Event Host Last Name: