

Sponsorship Training

We all understand the importance of Sponsorship to Emmaus. Sponsorship is crucial to both the longevity of the Emmaus Body as a whole, but more importantly, to the lives of the pilgrims it will change. I think we can all agree that there is nothing more meaningful that we can offer to our friends and loved ones than the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. Sponsorship is our first act of Agape that we extend, before the Walk even begins!

1. So, let's start with WHY we sponsor. We should not sponsor to "fill up the weekend", to fix people's problems, or to reproduce one's own religious experience in others. Rather, the aim of the sponsor is to bring spiritual revitalization to Christians, who, in turn, will bring new life and vision to the work of the church. The aim of sponsorship is to build up the Body of Christ.
2. Next, WHO should we Sponsor? Of course, we all desire to share this wonderful experience with those we love the most. But keep in mind, Emmaus is NOT intended for non-Christians. Although we all agree that these three days can be life changing, it is not intended to "convert" those among us that are unbelievers. Emmaus is intended to strengthen the church by developing church leaders and renewing the church body. The strength of any Emmaus community is a direct result of its recruiting practices! If the community is committed to recruiting strong church leaders for the purpose of strengthening the local church, then the community will be a strong and vital force in the renewal movement. On the other hand, if Emmaus is looked upon as a "hospital" where every human ill can be cured, it will have a weakening effect on the entire community. We should not encourage persons who are psychologically unstable to attend the Walk. We also should not encourage persons undergoing an emotional crisis, such as family break-up, job loss, or severe grief to attend the Walk: not only are they not in the right mind-set to fully experience these three days, but they may actually detract from other pilgrims' experiences and affect the tone and outcome of the entire Walk. It may be better to attend Emmaus after their situation changes; God's timing is always perfect!
3. Onto HOW we sponsor! Many in the Emmaus community have had the privilege of sponsoring many pilgrims over the years, and therefore may not give a second thought HOW to sponsor since they have done it so many times in the past. But for those that are new in the community, here are a few good reminders for all of us:
 - a. First and foremost, PRAY for the person's openness to God's call to discipleship. Notice the distinction: this does not state to pray for their acceptance to attend the Walk...but for openness to God's call to discipleship, whatever and whenever that may be! Again, it is God's timing!
 - b. Extend the invitation. ASK!
 - c. Provide them with a registration form.
 - d. Be up front with the cost of the Walk. If possible, pay the registration fee to help the pilgrim defray some of the cost.
 - e. Arrange to help pilgrim's family in their absence...kids, pets, etc...
 - f. Collect Agape! Letter Agape can be turned in right up until Sunday morning, as the pilgrims do not receive their letters until Sunday afternoon right before the Closing. The Agape room can be found downstairs on the first floor (under the sanctuary). Follow the stairs out the front of the sanctuary, down two flights and around the corner to the left; the Agape room is the first door on your left after the double doors.

- g. Attend the Sponsorship Hour on Thursday night after Pilgrim Dinner and Drop-off. Sponsorship Hour usually starts around 7:30. This worship time is set aside in the sanctuary and is a time for you to pray over your pilgrim's cross and to share in communion with other sponsors.
- h. Participate in the weekend through your participation in the Prayer Vigil. Prayer is the single most important act of agape that you can do for your pilgrim!
- i. Attend Candlelight Saturday night at 8:30. Candlelight is a gathering and sharing of communion among the community before the pilgrims enter the sanctuary in darkness...except for the "candlelight" being shared from the community while they sing to the pilgrims. It is a beautiful and extremely powerful moment for the pilgrims, as well as for the community!
- j. The Closing in the Central Ohio Emmaus is at 4:30 on Sunday. The community gathers in the room directly across from the Agape room. The doors to this room are open and many folks will be gathered to greet you. At the direction of the ALD's, the community will move into the sanctuary via the back and join the pilgrims as they sing, "*Amazing Grace*".
- k. Fourth Day Books...Buy them and give to your pilgrims! They are only \$5, but are an excellent tool to help with the transition to "real" life. Books are available at Sponsorship Hour, after Candlelight and before Closing.
- l. Help your pilgrim get into a Share Group! If necessary, go with them and model a meeting a few times until they are comfortable with the process.
- m. Accompany your pilgrim to Gatherings, Walk weekend events, help in kitchen, etc...Help to get your pilgrim INVOLVED in their new community!
- n. Help pilgrims to understand how to sponsor others and the importance of Agape.

Some things to keep in mind about the weekend: traps to avoid

1. When possible, team members should not sponsor. Our first commitment as a team member is to the Walk as a whole. Our first commitment as a sponsor is to your pilgrim: at times, it is impossible to serve both well. If a team member must sponsor on the Walk they are serving, the team member should recruit outside aid to help the pilgrim's family.
2. When possible, do not sponsor more than one pilgrim at a time.
3. If you choose to serve by helping in the kitchen, try to remember to stay out of sight and make no contact with the pilgrims. As excited as we are to see our pilgrims interact and grow throughout the weekend, it is not about us. There will be plenty of time after the Walk to catch up with your pilgrim and share in their wonderful experience.
4. Don't forget your pilgrim after the Walk! Keep in touch with your pilgrim throughout his first 4th Days. It can be challenging to return to normal life after experiencing these incredible three days with God!
5. DO NOT keep the Emmaus experiences a secret or keep details from your pilgrim. Model the weekend for them if it helps...say something like, "There will be singing and fellowship and talks given by Christians with various life and spiritual experiences." Just don't make it a big secret or folks tend to look at Emmaus as a cult. You can give them a general idea of what the weekend holds without giving away all the "delicious" details.

The bottom line.... keep praying, keep asking....and keep sponsoring!