

# MAKING FAMILY LIFE MORE FUN

## Tips And Cost-Saving Ideas For Family Functions

(NAPSA)—Family gatherings come in all shapes and sizes. And while every event has its own planning requirements, there are some basic tips you can use for any type and size of gathering that will alleviate your stress without breaking the budget.

“We’ve discovered that most people think getting together with family is important, but difficult. They’re always looking for new ideas for planning their family gatherings with minimal stress and costs,” comments Sharon Snawerdt of Modern Woodmen of America. Modern Woodmen sponsors a Web site, [www.gatherings.info](http://www.gatherings.info), that offers tips on everything from where to host your gathering to organizing games or entertainment.

“People can really get intimidated by the idea of entertaining, whether it’s a large or small gathering, formal or informal,” adds Patty Sachs, author of “Pick a Party: The Big Book of Themes & Occasions.” “No matter what kind of gathering you’re having or whether you’re entertaining 10 or 300, you need to be organized.”

Most parties have a purpose—from the simple Fourth of July barbeque to an elaborate Mexican fiesta—which can be translated into a theme for everything from the invitations to the menu.

“Using a theme really adds fun,” says Sachs, whose Web site, [www.partyplansplus.com](http://www.partyplansplus.com), offers a variety of ideas and merchandise for theme parties.

- Get the word out in a unique way. Use photos, write a jingle, or mail the invitations in a unique container. If you want to entice the kids—mail the invitation to them and tell them to bring their parents!

- Put your money where it will be seen. Guests will notice the



**With a little planning, family gatherings can be put together easily and inexpensively.**

table decorations much more than wall decorations. So dress up the seating areas and buffet tables or counters first.

- Think different for table coverings. Inexpensive white bed sheets and large rolls of paper from the office supply stores make great tablecloths. They’re blank slates on which kids and adults can draw or leave messages.

- Use party pooling. Make an inventory list of the tableware and decorations that you, your family or your friends own.

- Go homemade. Handmade decorations for everything from the napkin rings to the placemats can be charming.

- For casual gatherings, many people depend on the tried-and-true potluck.

Anniversaries, religious celebrations and other more formal gatherings can also be prime candidates for hiring a professional or simply calling, “Help!” But remember, whatever the gathering, family party planners need to remember the ultimate goal—providing an opportunity for family members to reunite and celebrate together.

For more tips on planning a family gathering, visit the Web site at [www.gatherings.info](http://www.gatherings.info).