

Juggler For Jesus

AWARD NIGHT IDEAS:

Pre-event

Prayer Team - Assemble a team who will pray for the awards night and during the actual event. What a difference it makes when we bath this event in prayer.

Awards Night Flyer - Send a special card home after the first game (so the award night can get on their calendars) and again after the second to last game, building up the big awards night.

Wear Your Uniform - Be sure to remind the players to wear their uniforms to the award night. I've seen many frazzled parents having to race home to retrieve a uniform or embarrassed kids feeling out of place because they didn't wear their uniform to the Award Night.

Line Speaker Up Early - Most leagues around the country run simultaneously. Therefore, most award nights fall in the same few months. As soon as you have your calendar set, start looking for your award night speaker. Many of the recommended speakers fill their calendars quickly. A quality speaker makes all the difference in reaching your players and their families with the message of the gospel

Opening of Event

Video Highlights - Have a video or power point presentation with music playing as the parents arrive. This is a great way to keep everyone focused and ready for the program.

Seating - Leave extra seats for the teams and coaches. Many times I've seen families who thought they were going to be up front, have to give up their "good" seats for "poor" ones to make room for players who wouldn't all fit in the player's reserved seating area. It is much better to have too many seats reserved for the players and coaches than not enough.

Extra Parents With the Teams. Sometimes the teams can get a little unruly during the award night event. Having one or two extra parents (other than the coaches) sitting with the teams really makes a difference in keeping the kids focused.

Fanfare - Many programs have come up with some kind of tunnel for the teams to run through and enter the gym/sanctuary. An emcee simply calls out the team name and they run in to music and the applause of the parents.

Response Cards

Parents - As the parents arrive, hand them a response card and encourage them to fill out a shaded area. The shaded area would include their name, address, phone numbers, etc. along with an evaluation of the league. There should be another area of the card where

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they can let you know of any decision they might make.

Prizes - Encourage everyone to fill out a response card by having several nice door prizes. Some churches give adults a different colored card and have some prizes specifically for adults.

Players- One way to save time and make the cards easier to read is to pre-print the names and addresses of the players on a response card and have the coaches hand them out to their team at the invitation time. This really helps the invitation time go more smoothly and quickly.

Invitation Time

Coach the Coaches - The coaches need to know what the response cards are going to be asking ahead of time so they can better aid the players. After the last game is a good time to round up the coaches and let them know about the response cards and how they can help the players fill them out. }

Music - One thing that is often overlooked is some kind of music during the time the parents and players are filling out their response cards. There can be an abrupt change in mood/feel if there is just dead air. Quality music seems to help the kids/parents stay focused on what God is doing and their need to respond to Him.

Recognition/Awards

General vs. Specific - There are as many different ways to recognize the help and give out the awards, as there are Upward leagues. I have found in most cases it works best if the focus is on the kids. Generally recognize the coaches, refs, etc. and specifically recognize the kids.

Keep it moving - This is one area that can really drag on and on. Have someone in charge of getting the teams up and ready to receive their awards.

Another option - Many programs have so many players it would be too time consuming to call each name and hand out their award. Many programs have the coach give the awards to the players at the end of the awards night.

When balls are awarded- Having a hundred plus basketballs or soccer balls bouncing at the same time can sound like a herd of elephants. One solution is to give the balls to the players deflated, but has several air compressors in the parking lot where they can get them aired up on their way home.

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Post-event

Reception - Some churches have a post award night reception. This is a great time to show special thanks to the coaches, refs, etc. Others feel this is just one more thing to add to a very busy night. They usually are really fun, but they do add to your workload.
Funding Your Award Night

Concession stands - Many leagues pay for their award night with proceeds from their concession stands. Parents can be encouraged to take turns providing snacks for after the game by making \$1.00 coupons available from the concession stand. This is a win-win-win situation. The parents don't have to run to the store to buy the snacks; the kids get to pick out what they want as a treat; and the league is supported through the proceeds.

Team Pictures - Many churches have talented photographers who can make team and individual pictures available for a reasonable price. Many are willing to donate a portion or even all of their proceeds to the league.

Please take from these ideas what is useful to your situation. If you have any questions feel free to contact me at the number listed below. I pray God richly blesses your league!

Steve