

A handout from




The Rural Adoption Recruiter

A Guide to Growing Families

*For a complete copy of the guide contact
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Planting Methods - Recruiting Techniques


You can do a lot without a lot of dollars. Here are some suggestions that have worked in other rural areas. Each technique has a dollar amount at the end - these are just general cost estimates and will vary from community to community.


-  Free (or almost)
-  Usually can be done for a few hundred dollars
-  Likely more than \$500

Host a Table at Local Farmers' Markets: Or county fairs are useful ways to provide recruitment information - or to plant seeds for future families. Information tables at local events such as farmers' markets or even just at the local grocery store on a busy Saturday provide people a chance to ask general questions about adoption. Being able to win a prize for asking a question about adoption further encourages people to stop at the table and ask a question. Free balloons for kids also attract families. 



Sunflower Tip: If you must make a choice, farmers' markets are a better recruitment tool than county fairs - families learn that you will be in the same place at the same time so they feel comfortable stopping by and asking questions.

Another variation is to rent space at a local mall or shopping area where you can leave posters and adoption information for everyone passing by. 

Adoptive Parent Newsletter: (print or via email) This is a good way to continue to cultivate veteran families while encouraging them to assist in planting the seeds for new families. 

Pass-Along Card: A small business size card which includes a child's picture along with myths and facts, as well as information about adoption of a waiting child. Give these to current families in the community to pass-along when someone asks them about adoption. Also, they are handy to place at the local library, grocery store, post office and other community information locations. 🙌🙌

Local Newspaper Advertising: This often is a great resource to raise awareness about adoption in a rural area. There tends to be few sources of local news and information, so local newspapers are well read. A regular ad in a local paper will plant adoption seeds throughout the area! Many small papers offer special community rates or even free advertising if space is available. 🙌🙌



Sunflower Tip: Write (or have current families write) letters to the editor regarding the need for more families, especially around National Adoption Month in November or at the beginning of a new recruitment effort. Everyone in small towns reads the letters to the editor! 🙌

Fostering Families Today Magazine: Placing subscriptions of this magazine in rural doctor's offices is a subtle recruitment tool that serves as a way to bring attention to the community about the need for foster care and adoption. Families look forward to receiving this magazine as part of parent support and read many of the articles. 🙌🙌

Banners: Whether it is one hanging across a main street or on a prominent building, banners share a message that can't be missed! Ideal for annual events such as celebration of National Adoption Month in November or Foster Parent Month in May. 🙌🙌



Sunflower Tip: Often local radio stations have an "open microphone" spot where a recruiter can chat with the host about adoption related issues. This is an inexpensive way to highlight National Adoption Awareness Month in November or National Foster Parents Month in May. The same stations also may be willing to run free public service announcements for you! 🙌

Lending Library: Placing a collection of adoption and foster care related books in the county library works well for most communities. Most librarians welcome these books, featuring them in displays and making sure their readers know about them. We suggest making a regular visit to the library to talk with the librarian and let him/her know you appreciate his/her help as information about adoption and foster care is important to the community. 🙌🙌

Give-Aways: Giving items to people with your phone number and website on them is a way to plant a seed. Each time they use the item, they are reminded about the need for more families. Suggestions are: seed packets, bookmarks, bottles of cold water with your sticker on them (ideal for events outdoors), travel mugs, sewing kits, bandage kits, beach balls for kids, balloons, pens, bandanas, fold up flyers, and paper fans for hot days. 🙌🙌

Adoption Celebration Event: This type of event can be done as simply as hosting a pot luck party in a park one afternoon with a bouncy castle and three-legged races for the kids. If you have additional funds you could rent time at a local swimming pool, a small museum or petting farm. Provide some food, (local places will often donate pizzas or sub sandwiches), a few prizes for the kids to win, and a place for parents to connect with each other and it will be a hit! 🙌🙌 to 🙌🙌🙌



Sunflower Tip: In a rural community these events may have a better turnout after school on Wednesday than any time on Saturday. After school there is a better chance of getting local politicians, caseworkers, and families to attend - most rural families do all of their errands on Saturday.

Pass-Along Gift Box: If your community is plagued by low attendance at recruitment and/or appreciation events, try mailing gift packages with recruitment information to all adoptive families. Knowing that experienced families are the best recruitment tool for new families, these packages (with a gift card to a local store) may be sent along with an *extra package* to give to a neighbor or friend who might be interested in becoming an adoptive family. Once that new family enters the homestudy process, the current family is sent another gift card in appreciation for their recruitment effort. 🙌🙌 to 🙌🙌🙌