



Party with a Purpose Planning Guide

Welcome to the St. Johns Riverkeeper *Party with a Purpose* House Party Planning Guide — an easy and effective way to help us raise money and awareness and recruit, and grow our membership. If you are concerned about the health of our St. Johns River and want to support our advocacy and education programs, please consider hosting a party to benefit St. Johns Riverkeeper.

Our members are the lifeblood of our organization. A diverse and robust membership base sustains us financially and is critical to our success. Our members help spread the word throughout the community about the St. Johns River and our work to protect it. Our members also provide us with the clout, credibility, and influence that are needed to effectively resolve the many problems that are impacting the river's health.

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The St. Johns Riverkeeper *Party with a Purpose* House Party is a great way to:

- Have fun while supporting a great cause.
- Share your passion for the river with your friends, neighbors, and colleagues.
- Spread the word about St. Johns Riverkeeper and offer your guests an opportunity to join you in supporting our important advocacy work for the river and take the “River Friendly” pledge.
- Raise funds and recruit members that will enable St. Johns Riverkeeper to continue its effective advocacy, education, and community outreach programs.

You provide the venue, the guests and the refreshments, and we'll provide a Riverkeeper staff member or trained volunteer who will present a short program on the river and encourage your friends to join you in becoming members.

Step One:

- Contact the St. Johns Riverkeeper office to discuss your party plan and the guests you might invite. We can help you determine the format and type of event you would like to host and the materials and support that you would like St. Johns Riverkeeper to provide.

Step Two:

- Select a date and time. We suggest that you select a date at least three weeks out from the time you decide to give the party. Also, try to consider the day of the week and the time that will give you the best turnout.

Step Three:

- Make your guest list. Make a list of family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, acquaintances, and members of your church, civic or professional groups. We suggest about thirty people, but this is your party, so you decide how many to invite!

Step Four:

- Prepare and send the invitations. You may want to consider sending by e-mail to cut down on the expense and to save paper for the environment. We have had good experience with www.evite.com.

RSVP examples:

- *I'll be there to learn about the river and ST. JOHNS RIVERKEEPER.*
- *Sorry, I can't come but I plan to join ST. JOHNS RIVERKEEPER.*
- *Sorry, I can't come but I'd like to know more about ST. JOHNS RIVERKEEPER.*

Step Five:

- Party Time! The St. Johns Riverkeeper staff or volunteer will arrive 30 minutes to an hour before the start of the party to set up any AV equipment that may be necessary, display literature for the guests, and help with any last minute preparations.
- Welcome: Welcome your guests and introduce the Riverkeeper representative. We recommend beginning the program 30–45 minutes after the start of your event. Please, share with your guests why you joined and are a member of St. Johns Riverkeeper.

- **Program:** We will provide an informative presentation about St. Johns Riverkeeper lasting approximately 15–20 minutes that will include a request for your guests to become members. The program can consist of a formal presentation or a brief, informal introduction to the organization by you or the Riverkeeper representative.

The Time Line:

- **6 weeks before the event:** Contact St. Johns Riverkeeper staff and set the party date, discuss logistics and outline any expectations. Create your invitation list.
- **4 weeks before:** Mail or e-mail the invitations. St. Johns Riverkeeper can provide you with membership envelopes or brochures, if you plan to mail invitations and would like to include this information.
- **1–2 weeks before:** Contact everyone who has not rsvp'd and your Riverkeeper contact to confirm details and finalize any issues or plans that are unresolved.
- **Week after the party:** We will contact you to let you know who joined St. Johns Riverkeeper. We will send an acknowledgement letter to everyone who contributed.

Considerations:

- **Food and refreshments:** Will you provide simple snacks, hotdogs and burgers, or more elaborate food and beverages? If you are interested in having St. Johns Riverkeeper assist you with this purchase, please contact us to discuss options.
- **Door Prizes or Membership Gifts:** Are you interested in providing door prizes or a gift for those who join St. Johns Riverkeeper at a certain level? Our staff could help with ideas or possibly provide small gifts for those who become members at your party.
- **Parking:** Do you have enough parking to accommodate your guests?
- **Name Tags:** Do you want to provide name tags for your guests?

Tips for Success:

- Invite friends and acquaintances, and not strangers.
- Get your invitations out 3–4 weeks before the party.
- Contact everyone who has not replied 1–2 weeks before the party to encourage them to come.

- Voice your own support for the organization and encourage your guests to join at the party. Your support of St. Johns Riverkeeper doesn't just mean a lot to us; it is an important endorsement to your friends, family, and colleagues.
- Collect contributions from those interested in membership at the party. This can be done discretely by simply providing a basket or location where your guests can place their donation envelopes before they leave.