

# *Shining* Success!

It's great to network with other women's ministries, sharing and gathering ideas. That's why we've collected several fresh and vibrant stories to inspire and equip you. These are stories from women just like you who desire a relevant and meaningful women's ministry—and are passionate about getting there. ◦



# Sparkling Stories

These are stories to inspire you. Give you ideas. Get you started. One thought, though: It's tempting to get caught up in the excitement of an idea and try to replicate it when it doesn't fit your purpose—or to reject an idea when you see one or two details you can't replicate. You might toss out the entire idea, when instead you could tweak it and give it your own flavor for a customized (and effective) ministry approach.

We follow each story with a few basic questions. If you decide to adopt an idea you read, commit to working through the questions to confirm where God is leading you. Be open to gathering ideas, evaluating ideas, and then planning what will work best for your women and community.

As you get started and grow your women's ministry, we'd love to hear from you. E-mail us at [women@group.com](mailto:women@group.com), so we can learn from you and share your experiences with others, too!

## Outreach

*We were on the way home from a team brainstorming session. We like to go to a restaurant in a nearby town, hang out, and eat "girl" food. It seems the drive together is usually the best part of evening. We're relaxed and enjoy being goofy together. This ride home was no exception. We had planned all our groups and events for the summer, so we didn't need to generate more ideas, but we started talking about television shows.*

*"We should have an Iron Chef competition!"*

*Abbey came up with the basic idea, and little by little, it began to morph, until it became our biggest outreach event of the summer.*

*We called it the Grill-Off, an Iron-Chef-like competition held outdoors with all cooking done on grills. We had gas and charcoal grill divisions. Competitors formed teams of no more than four people. Teams registered with an entry fee, and we had several prizes involving cash and logoed Grill-Off aprons and hats.*

*All proceeds benefited our area food pantry. Several of the winning teams donated their cash prizes to the food pantry, and we gathered a small bus-full of nonperishable items for the food pantry.*

*Here's a sample of the fun rules created by our Judging Committee:*

1. Bring your own grill, fuel, seasonings, utensils, cooler with ice, paper towels, water/ container for rinsing dishes, and other supplies you think you'll need. Bring your own shade. (Suggestion: Each team might want to bring some canned goods for penalties incurred throughout the competition.)
2. Grill-Off personnel will provide a box of secret ingredients, all of which need to be used in one of three categories: main dish, side dish, or dessert.
3. Spectators will be able to donate canned food items to their favorite teams. The People's Choice award will be given to the team with the most food pantry donations.

4. Cooking will stop at 4:30 p.m., and all team members will leave the cooking area. Each team must have 5 samples of each dish (main dish, side dish, and dessert) for judging, as well as 20 samples of each dish for the People's Choice tasting.
5. If the Fire Department has to extinguish a fire you created, your team will incur a 500-can fine.
6. Referees will be on-site to enforce all rules. Bribing of the referees might be permitted.

*Some teams took the competition seriously, showing up with trailers full of supplies, including canopies, generators, small refrigerators, and coffeemakers. Some teams came with the bare essentials. All seemed to enjoy the friendly banter of competition.*

*After teams received final rules and their ingredients—pork loin, apples, pita bread, marshmallows, lemons, limes, and potatoes—they got started. Halfway through the competition, they were given the surprise ingredient: a large pickle! For any infraction of rules, teams paid in canned goods.*

*What fun we had for a great cause! Not only did we help the food pantry and the people it serves but we built relationships with our community, involved a lot of people that might not otherwise go near church property, and enjoyed some fabulous food!*

## Be Fresh & Vibrant!

- What excites you about this idea?
- What concerns you?
- What elements would you like to use?
- What adjustments would you make?

Now put together the elements that fit your ministry well with the improvements you'd like to make. Pull it together with your team, and get started!

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## Mentoring

*We tried a traditional mentoring program and loved the benefits, but the structure didn't appeal to large groups of women of various ages. And it didn't allow for much flexibility.*

*We wanted to bring a casual feel to a minimally-structured program, so we designed what we felt would work best with our women. We call it Girls in Groups, or GiGs for short. Some of our team thought it would be fun to be able to say "I have a GiG tonight!"*

*We opened GiGs to teen girls and older, and we asked girls and women to fill out a basic information sheet to give us contact information, age group, and availability. We intentionally grouped women to represent various life stages while also considering availability to get together.*

*We kicked off GiGs with a high-energy event, including delicious soups and salad and other goodies. Everything we did throughout the evening focused on creating connections among women. We started by letting women sit wherever they wanted, transitioned into everyone connecting around the room with high-energy icebreakers, and then we revealed the groups and guided them through more icebreakers and plans for upcoming gatherings.*

*For the remainder of the year, GiGs got together every month, based on their own interests and schedules. They might do something adventurous they've never tried before or something everyday—like grocery shopping or going*





to a child's sports game together. Everyone received a simple newsletter each month, including ideas and tips for connecting and growing healthy friendships. At the end of the year, we had a big celebration!

## Service

We enjoyed *Girls' Nights Out* at our church, but we wished more women would join us. We knew of so many women in the area who really needed a night away from the pressures and routine of their daily lives—like the single moms who lived in the apartment complex close to our church. We knew they didn't have child care, and they didn't know us well, so they probably wouldn't be comfortable letting our women take care of their children. We were stuck.

Then we realized we were whining because women in need weren't coming to us...but what was keeping us from going to them? Once our perspective changed, we got excited and quickly began scheming. We contacted the apartment complex manager to get permission to use the community room; then we set a date and started inviting women. They probably thought we'd lost our minds as we approached them with our intense enthusiasm!

We included all the elements we most enjoyed about our own *Girls' Nights Out*. We had upbeat music, delicious food, fun games, and plenty of choices to let the young moms choose just what they needed most. Needless to say, the pampering was the biggest hit. In fact, I think advertising the pampering was the reason we had such a great turnout. And the fun part was that we did most of the pampering ourselves. What a thrill to get to sit on the giving side of hand massages, fingernail painting, and hairstyling!

The first event was definitely a hit, and we've planned several more. The truth is...I think most of us enjoy the "on-the-go" events even more than the ones we host and attend at our church!

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## Budgeting

Women love freebies at an event, but we don't have a lot of extra money. We often have miscellaneous leftovers from various events, such as sample soaps, lotions, and other small items, and sometimes we bring small giveaway items from home. We keep all the goodies organized, and before our events, we take a look at what we have and place about the same number of items in brown lunch bags. We staple the tops of the bags so women can't peek, and we let each woman choose one as they leave our events. It's an inexpensive way to give fun surprises!

Women also like coupons, which make great giveaways. We have a coffee shop at our church, and they let us give free coffee certificates. We give \$2 Bible study coupons to

help women save a little money on their study guides, while encouraging them to get involved in a small group. We also have women with talents and passions they're willing to share, so they donate "coupons" for things like a specialty dessert, coffee date, scrapbooking lesson, two hours of babysitting, or a handmade scarf.

We have a team of "mission shoppers," women who regularly shop for groceries, clothes, gifts, and more, and are willing to be on the lookout for great deals. We have a point person who coordinates the team effort, and we create monthly lists of what we need. We have guidelines for reimbursement and reporting what's been purchased.



# Fundraising

*My leadership team really wanted to attend an event at Group Publishing in Loveland, Colorado, but money was a big issue. We had to get creative. We'd been tossing around the idea of a Christmas bazaar and decided to try a small vendor fair and see how it went. WOW! Within five days of announcing our event, we had booked 35 vendor booths! We kept the registration fee small (\$25), since this was our first time. We kept our costs down by advertising via e-mails, Facebook, community bulletin boards, word of mouth, and flyers. We paid for an ad in the garage sale section of the paper.*

*We had no idea what kind of response we would get the day of the event but we prayed A LOT! We ended up with 40 vendors, and almost 300 people came through our doors that day. We offered a "Coffee House Cafe" full of muffins, brownies, cookies, and drinks. All food items were donated, so there were no out-of-pocket expenses, and all items were sold for 50 cents. Admission was free. After our expenses, we cleared almost \$900!*



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**Group**

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