

First Annual Volunteer Recognition Event Madison Symphony Orchestra League

Who We Are:

The Madison Symphony Orchestra League (MSOL), which began in 1956, is an organization of 378 members (men and women) committed to supporting the artistic, financial and educational mission of the Madison Symphony Orchestra, a Group 3 orchestra. Members support the award-winning Education and Community Engagement programs of the MSO through a variety of annual fundraising events and activities. Members enjoy the fellowship of other music lovers through special concert previews, lunches with musical performances, and social events.

What We Did:

Held our first Volunteer Appreciation Party. It was an idea our Membership Committee identified as a retention strategy. We realized that having a steady flow of members willing to volunteer was critical to our ability to successfully fulfill our mission to support the orchestra. Our Volunteer Appreciation Party project was born out of the belief that by celebrating volunteers with a special invitation-only event we not only directly demonstrated our appreciation, but also indirectly provided them with a reason to share their experience and inspire others to volunteer.

How it Worked:

Membership Committee members provided food and beverages; our President-elect (herself on the Membership Committee) volunteered to host in her beautiful home. Invitations were sent by email. We cast a wide net and invited anyone who had volunteered during the 2018-19 fiscal year —whether they served on a committee over many months or just helped for a day. We included MSO staff members who are invaluable to our efforts. We also invited non-members who were either sponsors or hosts of a Party of Note (small, themed fundraising events.) We hope we converted some to members, but at the very least we created goodwill for the organization.

The message of our invitation was simple: come and enjoy yourself and let us say thank you. It was a relaxed gathering with no agenda except a brief welcome from our President who also shared details of the upcoming symphony season. The MSO Marketing Director, on his own initiative, made a highlights tape of music selections from the upcoming season; this played in the background.

What It Took:

This was planned by our six-person Membership Committee and we began about one month before. We asked the MSOL Board to approve a budget of \$500 to reimburse committee members for the cost of food and beverages; there was no cost for the venue as we held the party at the home of our Board's President-Elect.

Our Results:

We had very positive feedback from all who attended.; almost half of the 80 people invited were able to attend. Those who weren't able to come often replied with a note thanking us for hosting the party and telling us what a good idea it was. We plan to make this an annual activity and hope the party — a benefit of volunteering — becomes a sought-after invitation.

Keys to Success:

- We kept it simple and low-cost — email invitations, hosted in a member's home.
- We made it fun — food, wine, conversation and very brief remarks.
- We cast a wide net to include anyone who volunteered.
- We asked nothing of our hard-working volunteers except for the pleasure of their company!

Contact information:

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EVENT PHOTOS

