Letter from Executive Director, Cindy Pearson

Dear Supporter,

I want to personally thank you for your interest in hosting a fundraising event for the National Women’s Health Network (NWHN). A house party is a great way to raise consciousness about the issues we work on - both helping to build the Network’s visibility, and increase membership in your region. Questions can get answered: What are the most pressing issues today? What women’s health issues does the Network focus on, and what battles are we currently fighting?

Many NWHN members have hosted house parties and networking events throughout the years. Volunteering to host allows guest to see old friends, meet new people, and network over food and drinks, providing a cordial atmosphere to make a friendly fundraising pitch. If a representative from the NWHN is able to attend, we can deliver a brief presentation on the Network in person, but if not, you (or a friend) will need to be familiar enough with the Network’s mission and history to deliver such a presentation. This kit provides you with information in a straightforward way.

Your hands-on support makes it possible for us to continue this great and necessary work. Thank you again for helping us in continuing the fight to save women’s lives and provide unbiased, evidence-based information to all.

In Solidarity,

Cynthia A. Pearson
Planning Guide
Step-by-Step to Hosting a Successful “FUNdraising” Party

1. **What is a house party?** A house party is an event held by you (or a group) in someone’s home, or a comfortable place. The goals of the events are to:

   - Increase awareness and educate guests about the work of the Network
   - Raise funds to support the continuation of our mission and advocacy
   - Create an environment for you and your guests to enjoy themselves

This guide is intended for smaller, more informal events, where guests can be expected to contribute in the $25 to $100 range. If you are considering a more formal event, designed for donors who can give at higher levels, please contact us.

**How to get started planning:** Start the process by thinking about the type of event you want to have. Have a vision: what will be the theme, how many you can accommodate, and what is the best venue that meets your needs. Remember, your enthusiasm for our work is key in getting everyone invested, and having a successful event.
The type of party is only limited by your imagination. Start by picking a theme: have a barbeque, throw a cocktail party, or a holiday themed gathering! Ideas from past gatherings include hosting a taco & margarita mixer, a happy hour, and a Halloween themed brunch. Things to consider are: What would draw the most people in your specific circle? What theme is appropriate given the venue, date and weather? Remember, this can be as formal or informal as you prefer. The possibilities are endless.

The date is important. Start planning backwards once you officially choose a date for the event. Consider other events happening around the same time, and when guests are most likely to be able to attend. Pick a day that works best for your needs, and where there is little else going on. Network staff and/or local Board members, when available, can present “an insider’s briefing” on our current agenda, as well as some history of our work. If they are not available, there may be members in your area who have a robust history with the Network.

Everyone is a prospective guest. Cast a wide net: friends, family, neighbors, coworkers, workout buddies, and members in your area. Decide how comfortable you feel opening your home. You may also consider connecting with other Network members in your area for those interested in collaborative events.

“Remember, your enthusiasm for our work is key in getting everyone invested, and having a successful event.”
2. Create a timeline and agenda – *see sample timeline*
Using organizational tools will assist you in not feeling overwhelmed, and ensure you don’t forget anything. Use our sample time. A few other tips:
- Keeping track: your invitation list, including email and postal addresses, should be kept in one spreadsheet (ex: Microsoft Excel), which allows for easy sorting and reference. Track everyone who RSVP’d, attended, and who gave.
- Have a clear deadline date for when guests must RSVP.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Target Completion Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kick-off To Do List:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Select <strong>VENUE</strong> - Visit &amp; Inspect Venue for capacity</td>
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<tr>
<td>☐ Decide on a <strong>DATE</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>☐ Create a <strong>BUDGET</strong> and <strong>GOAL</strong> for how much you want to raise</td>
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<tr>
<td>☐ Draft <strong>INVITE</strong> and select dates for when 1st and 2nd reminders will go out and how – paper, email, phone calls</td>
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<tr>
<td>☐ Choose appropriate <strong>FOOD &amp; DRINK</strong> for the occasion and have logistics in place</td>
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<tr>
<td>☐ <strong>IDENTIFY</strong> which issues your audience care about most so that we may tailor Network materials when possible</td>
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<tr>
<td>☐ <strong>MAIL</strong> in donations and guests information to NWHN in enclosed envelope</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consult with Network about ideas, our calendar, members in your area, invitation language, and ways Network staff can assist</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 weeks prior – Send out first invitations</td>
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<td>5-4 weeks prior to event – Continue working on logistical details for event; recruit 1-2 close friends to assist; research which area you will focus on and our work around the issue</td>
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<td>3 weeks prior – Send second reminder invite</td>
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<td>2 weeks prior – Based on expected number of attendees, Network sends supplemental materials via UPS, USPS or FedEx</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 week prior – RSVP Deadline, finalize guest list &amp; confirm food/catering/drinks, purchase any needed decorations and tableware, pens and donations baskets</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sample Day of Run of Show:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ 7:00pm – House party begins</td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ 7:00 – 7:45pm – Eating, drinking, socializing</td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ 7:45 – 8:05pm – Presentation on the NWHN &amp; time for Q&amp;A</td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ 8:05 – 8:15pm – “The Pitch”</td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ 8:15 – 9:00pm – More chatting and conversation</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Post Event Follow-up and Thank You</strong></td>
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3. **Sending out invitations**: Invite roughly 2-3 times the number of people that you would like to show up. Ideally, invitations should be sent at least 6 weeks before the event. The Network staff can assist you in reaching out to members of your area, including sending mass emails and tracking RSVPs. See our sample invite letter in our House Party Kit.

- **Paper or email invites?** Both are effective, and should be considered. Traditional paper invitations look great, and give guests the special feeling of an exclusive event, but email invites are more modern, cost effective, and easier to customize for each guest. We can provide you with resources for paper and email templates.

- **Be sure that the invitations specify that this is a fundraising event.** Setting the expectation that guests will be asked to make a contribution this early on will relieve awkwardness at the event. You may even want to indicate at what time the presentation on the Network will take place, to ensure that as many people as possible are in attendance for this portion of the program. Invite your guests to bring their checkbooks! The invitation also serves as the first opportunity to raise money. Consider including a reply envelope or a link to a contribution page. This encourages those who are unable to attend to donate.

- **Responses**: Having one point of contact will make the process easier. We encourage using one email address and phone number, making sure to provide multiple ways for your guests to RSVP.

4. **The Welcome**: Thank everyone for coming. Appreciate their initial interest and commitment. You want to keep the party upbeat, but fire up the attendees to take action!

5. **Presenting the Network**: Schedule your presentation and “The Pitch” at the natural midpoint of the event, when attendance is at its maximum. Find a creative but brief (10-15 min) way to present the work of the NWHN. This can be delivered by the host, a trusted friend, another Network member, or by an NWHN representative, if available. The presentation should include a brief history of the NWHN, information about its mission, and current programs and issues that the NWHN is working on.

This is where you may want to pass out recent copies of our newsletter, the latest fact sheets on specific topics, our annual report, etc. A great resource is our website – where we catalog our every article, blog and fact sheet. Network members often influence the people around them. If other members attend, encourage them to
speak about what attracted them and why they continue to support our work. Be sure to leave a little extra time after your presentation for questions.

- **The History** – review our timeline to decide what events to highlight and show our video on YouTube “National Women’s Health Network: A Voice for Women, A Network for Change”.

- **The Issues** - Make it clear that we are not a think tank – we’re activists! The Network’s is a collective voice: we testify before Congress & regulatory agencies, we meet with key officials, we develop and advocate for policies that align with our values and mission. This is the time to highlight our advocacy campaigns to challenge dangerous drugs and devices, secure sexual and reproductive health rights, and expand access to health care through the Raising Women’s Voices for the Health Care We Need initiative. See our website, or contact us for the latest information on the “Network in Action”.

- **Membership (leading up to “The Pitch”)** - The basic benefits of membership starting at $25/yr:
  - Receive a one year subscription to *The Women’s Health Activist*, our bi-monthly newsletter
  - Strengthen our voice as we advocate for better women’s health policy
  - Help women receive evidence-based, unbiased health information and join thousands of other NWHN members who are committed to improving women’s health.
  - We offer small business and low-income/student memberships
  - Internship program: Many former and current staff and board members started as interns with Network. Request flyers for more information.

6. **“The Pitch”: Make a clear ask for donations!** After your presentation, a pre-determined speaker should stand up for no more than 1-2 minutes, and thank the host (or whoever made the presentation). Next, ask all guests to make a donation to the National Women’s Health Network. The pitch should always be personal, and can begin with: “I am committed to the mission of this organization because...” and share a personal story or anecdote about why the work of the Network is so important.
Prepare membership brochures with the Network’s donation envelopes already placed inside for distribution. Explain they may give a gift via check or credit card. **Also, make it clear that there is no pressure to donate.** They can donate on their own (sending it in directly or donating online). This way, it’s not automatically assumed that because a guest did not place anything in the basket that s/he isn’t supporting the cause.

Also remember to state that the National Women’s Health Network is a registered 501 (c)(3) organization and that all contributions are tax-deductible to the fullest extent allowable by law.

**7. The Close.** Thank everyone for coming. Invite guest to mingle and ask questions. Ask everyone to visit our website [www.nwhn.org](http://www.nwhn.org)

**8. Thank you & Follow-Up.** Within a week to 10 days following your event, be sure to send a thank you letter, card or email to each guest who attended, reminding them to make a gift to NWHN, if they haven’t already. The Network will send all donors a receipt for tax purposes.

**A FEW TOOLS – WAYS NETWORK STAFF CAN HELP**

- Assist in creating timeline and agenda
- Create an online donation page specific to your event (Allow 10 business days prior to the date of event)
- Send out emails to local members upon your consent, and providing NWHN logo
- Send thank you email to attendee list with direct link to join page
- Provide articles on fundraising events and/or specific health concerns

**Need help?** For questions, resources, consultation on your house party agenda, or fundraising tools, please feel free to contact us.

**NWHN Contacts:**

**Amirah Tyler, Membership Coordinator**  
attyler@nwhn.org  
(202) 628-2640 x226

**Heidi Gider, Director of Advancement**  
hgider@nwhn.org  
(202) 628-2640 x227
Sample Invitation Letter

Dear _____,

I am writing to invite you to a house party in support of the National Women’s Health Network. I am thrilled to be able to host this event to raise awareness about the complex health issues that women face today. The Network is the only advocacy group working to develop a critical analysis of health issues in order to affect public policy. They support consumer decision-making by raising questions, and providing unbiased evidence-based information – all without taking a dime from the pharmaceutical or medical industry.

Please join in this effort, and enjoy a fun and informative occasion to raise awareness about the Network’s mission.

Details

When: October 7 from 6:30-8:30 PM

Where: The Home of Jack and Jill Doe, 1000 Center Street, Anytown, USA 00000 {Insert Map & Directions}

RSVP by July 31 to Jill Doe at (555) 555-5555 or {email address}

Food and drinks will be provided! Your donation of $25 or more would be greatly appreciated. If you are unable to attend, but would still like to donate to the cause, visit www.nwhn.org/donate.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me. Hope to see you at the party!

Sincerely,

{Your Name}

(phone number)

(email address)
Throughout 2013, the Network brought women’s voices to decision-making tables and ensured that women’s priorities and concerns were heard! Our three advocacy campaigns successfully supported women’s expanded access to health insurance, ensured that there is evidence to support the medical products and treatments available to women, and promoted access to the full range of reproductive health care including abortion.

Raising Women’s Voices coordinators from across the country came to DC in September.

2013 Board of Directors gather in Phoenix, Arizona.

Staff and interns celebrate Love Your Body day in October.

Summer interns Claire, Elli and Rachel show off over-the-counter emergency contraception—acquired with ID!

Cindy and Kate join activists with Congresswoman Elizabeth Esty on CAARE Lobby Day in November.
Sample Follow up/Thank You Letter
*To be sent by host or directly from NWHN within 30 days after event

Dear ________,

Thank you for attending the NWHN [insert city, state] party hosted by [insert host]. I hope you enjoyed the event. Your interest in our work means a lot.

The National Women’s Health Network continues to move forward with our initiatives to advocate for safe drugs and devices, secure sexual and reproductive autonomy, and expand access to health care for women and their families.

**I want to invite you to join the Network as a new member today!** As you heard at the event, membership is the backbone of our organization. For 40 years we have grown with support from individuals like you, who value integrity in health policy, advocacy and information. By choice, we do not accept funding from drug companies, health insurance companies or medical device manufacturers.

Membership levels range from $25 - $250. Please give as generously as you can. You can join online at [www.nwhn.org/join](http://www.nwhn.org/join) or mail a check to:

National Women’s Health Network
1413 K St NW, Suite 400
Washington, DC 20005

Join thousands of other NWHN members who are committed to improving women’s health. You will:

- Receive a one year subscription to *The Women’s Health Activist* newsletter
- Strengthen our voice as we advocate for better women’s health policy
- Help women receive evidence-based, unbiased health information

Thank you in advance for your support.

Sincerely,