



# 10 Event Centerpieces That **Cost Less and Do More**



## Nonprofits are EXPERTS at using their resources wisely.

Most tabled event fundraisers need a table centerpiece. Nonprofits often acquire floral arrangements that are sold to guests for a nominal fee, awarded to one person at the table, thrown out or donated to a local nursing home that can enjoy their temporary beauty. Whether donated or purchased by the nonprofit, the expense is incurred.

**Don't be typical.** Here are ten ideas for reducing, eliminating or reallocating the centerpiece expense to elevate your mission.

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## 1. The Community Garden

For this event, each centerpiece is a young vegetable, herb or fruit plant/tree that is wrapped at its base with burlap or another simple fabric. Nonprofits utilize a variety of options to vary the heights of the centerpieces and consideration given to clustering small plants. One table, for example, can be a pizza garden (tomato, basil, red pepper) while another might be a mixed salad. Most importantly, following the event, the room of centerpieces can become a neighborhood community garden and in subsequent years you can include a picture of the previous year's garden.

This is perfect for a Spring event depending on your growing season.



## 2. Art

Many nonprofits that serve individuals include an art component in the programming. If you do, consider engaging a local artist, children, or even board members to participate in an organized sculpture/ clay project guided by a professional. This can be a wonderful way to celebrate and highlight the owner of a local business or studio as well as the work of your program. Centerpieces can be sold post event or used in a combined display. In this scenario, the centerpieces can become highly anticipated by the guests and of higher value—particularly true of children’s art related to a school or the beautiful pottery of local artists.



### 3. Literacy / Children's Book

We love this idea for TWO reasons: (1) You can engage guests to participate, and (2) The centerpiece can be a great conversation starter.

For this centerpiece, the nonprofit can purchase books to 'start' the stack but also ask guests to bring a new or gently used book to add to a collection of books in the center of the table. Stacked with the spines in the same direction this serves as a colorful display, a point of interest and mission-centric. Key to this project is the following: (1) Seeding each table with a few books to demonstrate the stacking pattern and (2) Use a few volunteers to help stack books in a visually appealing way.

When the event is complete, the books can then be **used by your center or donated.**



## 4. Trash Art

For an environmental group, recyclable materials or trash reused as art is a creative, mission-centered approach. Ideas include reusing **white plastic bags to create lighting**, **creating pom-poms from recycled plastic bags**, creating flowers from aluminum cans, or simple mason jars with twine and tea lights.

This activity is just one, Pinterest search away.





## 5. Herb Collection

While the community garden noted above has a good application to food security, a collection of herbs can be combined into a more elegant display and is appropriate year round. Organizations that support women, culinary arts, or a broad range of services can make the mission connection to good health and fresh herbs. This may also fit your guest profile well. Bonnie Plants is particularly focused on community impact and provides an excellent resource for growing, storing and using herbs. Inquire about a donation.

In this case, the centerpiece is the perfect take home centerpiece and you know it will last!



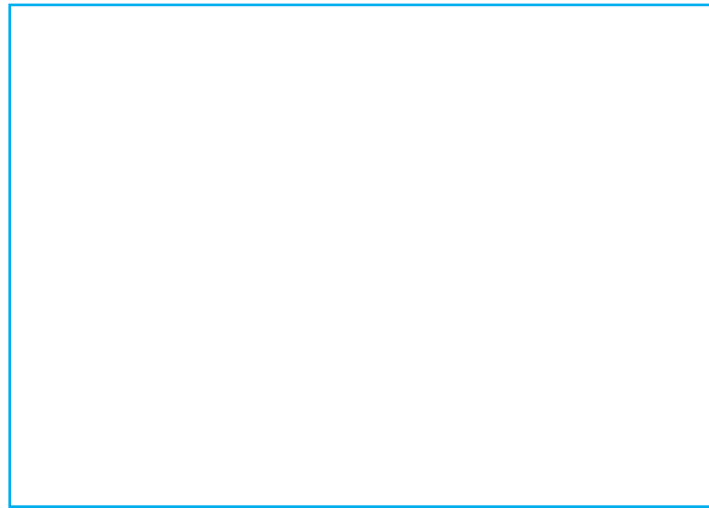


## 6. Pack a Purse

Applicable to women's organizations, for this centerpiece the nonprofit purchases a colorful purse / bag that sits in the center of the table. Ask guests to bring items to fill the purse that a teen or adult woman would need when transitioning from foster care, homelessness or incarceration to an independent life. Those include the following: wallet, toothbrush, toothpaste, lip gloss or chapstick, brush, pens, small notebook, lotion, nail care items, hair care items and also something pretty (scarf, pin, earrings etc).

**Note:** The nonprofit should also stock a table with these items for guests that forget to bring something—the main point here is to engage the guest in your mission.

Purses can then be donated annually to those you serve or an appropriate organization. One can imagine this centerpiece concept taking on a life of its own if guests/board members become engaged with the selection of the purse and the symbolism of the wallet.



## 7. Nothing

In contrast to the expectation of a centerpiece, for organizations that advocate for poverty alleviation - the blank space of a table can serve as an important reminder for guests. In this instance, the look of the entire event should be minimalist where guests find beauty in the blank spaces and reminded, by the absence, of the event's purpose.



## 8. Make Your Own Flowers

For the many organizations that serve children or adults, the craft of making flowers to serve as the centerpiece for an annual event could serve as beautiful reminder of your mission. There are so many applications for this idea—White Peonies made from coffee filters, Large colorful flowers from tissue paper, personalized flowers made from the crafters favorite picture or magazine pictures—the materials used to create flowers are endless. [See this board on Pinterest.](#) Our favorite for Fall—this [use of leaves](#) to make a floral arrangement.



## 9. Food Drive

Let your centerpiece serve as a canned food drive. The nonprofit can choose to do this by (1) purchasing the canned goods, or (2) asking guests to bring a canned good. While this particular look won't be the "prettiest", you can mitigate the mix-matched look by providing pre-printed, pre-cut can labels that you or guests can attach to the exterior before stacking. These new labels enable you to essentially create an art installation from the cans. To promote your mission further, use the labels with statistics about your mission.



## 10. Job Placement / Workforce Development

For this mission-centric centerpiece idea, nonprofits use the hats from jobs that those served by the organization have obtained recently or those for which you have provided training. The use of hats as the centerpiece can also provide an interesting opportunity for sponsor participation. Examples include: Hard hats from a manufacturing or construction company, scrub caps from the medical industry, caps with corporate logos, chef's hat, police hat, postal employee, firefighter, military and graduation caps.