

Unexpected Considerations

"I was looking for a Dolly Levi with a business card that said, 'Woman who gets tents for storytelling festivals.'"

--Karen Ashton

"Caution, this is a real horse pasture."

"The last thing you want is for a port-a-potty to fall over with someone in it! We have a little bit of a hill at the Olmsted and if you don't set them just right they teeter."

--Karen Ashton

call her and she takes care of it. I was looking for someone with a business card that said: 'Woman who gets tents for storytelling festivals.'

" 'Let me call you back in a few minutes,' " she said. Minutes later she phoned back to say there were some big tents that would be needed the next Monday morning for an auto show, but we could use them Friday and Saturday for the storytelling festival."

The tents arrived at Karen's home at 6 p.m. By the time they were set up, it was dark. Most of the committee members and their husbands were out putting up signs, so people would know where to find the festival.

The few committee members who were not putting up signs pulled their cars to the end of the cul-de-sac and shined the headlights into the fields where the tents were set up. By the light of the headlights they and some youth volunteers carried the chairs out into the fields and set them up.

One of the fields was a real horse pasture, for which they had jokingly written a sign: "Caution, this is a real horse pasture." Because it was dark they were having problems with what was in the horse pasture themselves.

"But the tents looked fine, so we were thrilled," said Karen.

"We set up 200 to 300 chairs in each of the three tents, being very optimistic that first year. We really had no idea what we were doing, but the people came. It was a small group of people now that we look back on it, but we were thrilled to have anybody there. In truth, I think many of the people who came to the first festival were friends we had given tickets to, or people who were related to us. We had a few city and library employees come who were very supportive. That first year at all our combined events we probably had around 900 people. We had a great time. When it was over, everybody was quite excited and surprised, and pleased--we had a festival!"

Among the myriad of details the committee members went on to discover they needed to pay attention to, as far as the facility was concerned, were water, food, between storytelling activities, and portalets.

"And then we figured out that we had to have water for thousands of people. How do we do that? Do we just leave the hose running on the lawn?" remembered Karen.