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How to Orchestrate a Successful Reunion

We Are Here to Help

BROUGHT TO YOU BY: **Experience Columbus**

Nothing creates lifelong memories quite like a reunion. The gathering of family and friends near and far to share their common history, relive stories and discuss dreams is the essence of bonding.

Reunions are a lot of fun, but they can also be a lot of work. At Experience Columbus, we recognize this and are here to help you coordinate a phenomenal reunion gathering. Our destination has fun and engaging activities for all age groups, many of which are found on pages six and seven of this guide and available on our website.

To get your reunion off to the right start we've put together a few resources, courtesy of *Destination Reunions*. From defining your reunion to forming committees for important tasks, to tips on budgeting success, use these guideposts as you gather your group.

We look forward to seeing your group in Columbus in the near future!

Sincerely,
Roger Dudley
Director of Tourism Sales



“From defining your reunion to forming committees for important tasks, to tips on budgeting success, use these guideposts as you gather your group.”



STEP 1:

Define Your Reunion

Spending time upfront clarifying the purpose of your reunion will ensure a successful outcome.



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“Establish goals and objectives. How many people do you hope/expect will attend? How long will it be? What budget range do you want to stay in?”

Here's a few tips to get you started.

1. GET THE HISTORY

What has been done before? What worked and what didn't? What was the cost of past reunions? Where have they been held? Be upfront and ask people who didn't attend why they stayed home. Knowing that can help you create an irresistible event.

2. ESTABLISH GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

How many people do you hope/expect will attend? How long will it be? What budget range do you want to stay in?

Armed with this information, **form a committee** to research and decide on all items reunion-related, from pre-

event fundraising to post-event cleanup.

Could you plan a big reunion on your own? Sure — if you quit your job, cancelled your social media and left your family to fend for themselves for a few months. For most of us, this is as unappealing as it is impossible.

A reunion committee's function is clear: they research and decide on all things reunion-related. Committees should be responsible for the main areas of reunion planning — things like communications, accommodations, activities, finance, food, and, well, planning.

Consider your reunion committee organization like that of a business. Your president is the reunion chairperson who also oversees the planning committee; the secretary is also the leader of the communication committee, and the

treasurer is the person in charge of the finance committee.

Wherever possible, schedule face-to-face meetings with committee members. Since you will be in the planning stages for some time, regular updates are imperative. You may want to schedule a standing monthly or quarterly meeting just to see where everything stands.

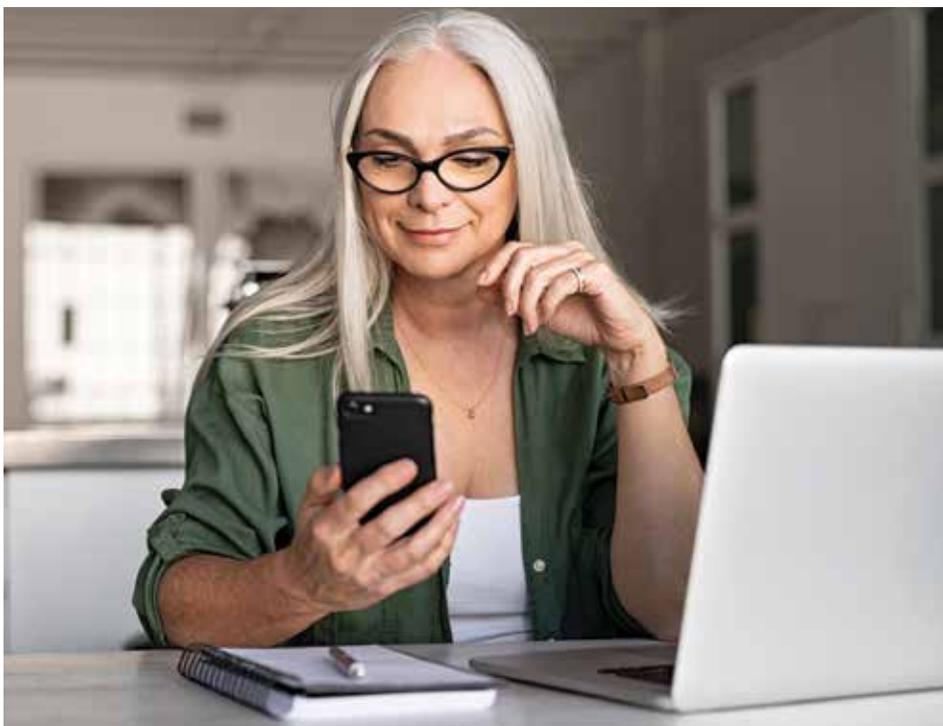
One final note: take meeting notes and email them to the participants so everyone is on the same page. You may also want to send an agenda to everyone before the meeting so they can be ready with reports and ideas.

As you're hosting your big event, be sure to acknowledge the reunion committee's efforts — their tireless work helped produce the event, and saved you from having to quit your job! ■

STEP 2:

Create a Communication Strategy

Combining low-cost digital with effective print creates a winning formula.



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The more ways we can talk about a reunion, the harder it is to keep the communication cycle running smooth. There are many options available to you and because of the likely age variance of your attendees, it's smart to try them all.

Most people are comfortable using online tools like emails, websites and social media, so use what's already in daily use.

MAKE A REUSABLE WEBSITE

It doesn't matter if it's your first or your 10th reunion. Your very first step is to set up a website. This doesn't have to be complicated or expensive; use a free service like Weebly, or spend a few extra bucks and get your own domain name which you can reuse. Stock it with family photos and images of your destination.

This site is going to serve as your main conduit for reunion-related information, so

“By keeping all your planning in one cloud-based place, you don't have to worry about losing anything or being unable to access something on-the-fly.”

keep it updated. You can use built-in forms and survey tools to get feedback on dates and activities.

SET UP A FACEBOOK PAGE

Your Facebook page can link back to your website, or you can set it up like your website and use it to collect feedback and ideas. Why should you have both? The 20 percent of American adults who don't use

Facebook are a pretty good reason.

Facebook has some nice features, like setting up an event and inviting your entire group. Facebook users can respond to your invitation and you'll automatically be notified.

SIGN UP WITH AN EMAIL SERVICE

You're going to want to send out emails whether as newsletters, progress reports or reminders. An easy way to do this is to use Mailchimp's free account which lets you have up to 2,000 subscribers and customizable sign-up forms.

If you're selling tickets to a reunion, you might want to consider an online event planning service such as Eventbrite.

ORGANIZING WITH GOOGLE

Chances are you're going to have more than one person working on your reunion. In this situation, Google's Drive, Docs and Sheets are invaluable. Google Drive lets you store and retrieve photos and documents; Google Docs and Sheets lets you edit documents and collaborate in real-time.

By keeping all your planning in one cloud-based place, you don't have to worry about losing anything or being unable to access something on-the-fly.

ADD THE PERSONAL TOUCH

Even with all this technology, there is no substitute for talking to a real human being: you. Make sure that people can reach you by phone when they have questions.

FINALLY, SEND A POSTCARD

You've got the date, you've got the location, you've got the activities, you've even got the food and music nailed down. Now it's time to step out of the cyber world and send some snail mail. Postcards are cheap, and even a fancy invitation won't set you back very much. Having this tangible reminder makes the experience that much more exciting. Remember, nobody has ever stuck a Google notification on their fridge. ■

STEP 3:

Budgeting for Reunion Success

Balancing debits and credits will ensure your event doesn't end up in the red.

Whenever crafted the song “The Best Things in Life Are Free” clearly did not have reunions in mind.

There are still a myriad of other expenses that can do considerable damage to a planner’s checking account.

If you sell tickets to your reunion, fundraise or accept donations from attendees, you need a method for collecting money. Need to rent a hall, hire a caterer or book a band - how are you going to pay for it?

“The best way to ensure a reunion will transpire economically and on time is to establish a budget early in the planning process.”

Once the money starts to flow in and out, keep track of balances, deposits, payments and pending expenses.

The best way to ensure a reunion will transpire economically and on time is to establish a budget early in the planning process. Here are some pointers:

1. UNDERSTAND THE OBJECTIVE

That objective, of course, is to avoid going broke. You also don’t want to upset the attendees, so it’s best to determine the reunion’s finances early and meticulously, so when you ask family and friends for money, you only have to do so once.

2. DETERMINE THE ATTENDANCE

In order to gain an initial understanding as to the event’s cost, it’s important to roughly establish how many will attend the reunion and the hotel it will take place. It is strongly recommended this portion of the budget is resolved 12 to 18 months prior to the reunion.

3. CALCULATE MACRO EXPENSES

These are major and necessary expenses



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virtually every reunion planner will encounter. Create a category listing the venue, food, drinks, entertainment, lodging and travel.

4. DON'T FORGET ABOUT MICRO EXPENSES

No detail is too small or insignificant when planning a reunion so account for other possible purchases that don't immediately spring to mind, including:

- ✓ Decorations (balloons, banners)
- ✓ Nametags, trinkets, gifts and prizes
- ✓ Printing costs for invitations, family tree chart or a newsletter
- ✓ Website hosting
- ✓ Invites, including postage
- ✓ Taxes that will be paid on everything that is purchased

5. DECIDE ON A REVENUE STREAM

There are several ways to earn enough capital to get the event off the ground. Creating a revenue section that is separate

from the expenses section will help you deduce how much money will be coming in verses how much will be going out. On that list should include such ideas as:

- ✓ Cost each attendee will be charged
- ✓ What they are responsible for on their own versus what is covered in the fee
- ✓ Fundraising ideas and benchmarks
- ✓ Donations – either financial or auction items
- ✓ Miscellaneous fees for activities, T-shirts and so forth

6. DETERMINE THE COST

Break out the calculator and count up how much money is in the revenue section of your budget and compare it to the expenses portion.

If the total cost per person exceeds what you're comfortable with, you should probably trim the fat a bit.

With budgeting, transparency is your primary objective. ■

COLUMBUS OFFERS:

- Sixteen downtown hotels offering 4,250 rooms and over 29,000 rooms citywide
- A centrally located capital city offering hundreds of acres of greenspace
- A slew of family friendly attractions which include National Veterans Memorial and Museum, LEGOLAND Discovery Center, Columbus Zoo and Aquarium/ Zoombezi Bay Waterpark, COSI (Center of Science & Industry), Franklin Park Conservatory and Botanical Gardens
- Best of all, we will assist you with itinerary planning, referrals for local service providers, site inspection assistance, reunion planning checklist and discounted souvenirs

Why Reunite in Columbus, Ohio

Ohio's state capital is home to incredible dining, hundreds of acres of greenspace and a top-notch sporting scene

"I would like to thank you so very much for your professionalism and prompt attention to my request for brochures and souvenirs from the City of Columbus to assist in making our 47th Family Reunion a success."

– Antoinette B. Dawson

As the 14th largest city in the country, Columbus is much more than Ohio's state capital. As one of *The Travel Channel's* Top 10 Domestic Destinations for 2020, the historic neighborhoods, nationally acclaimed attractions and booming culinary scene, make it the ideal place to host your next reunion.

Columbus offers experiences for the whole family. **COSI** continues to be a top-rated science center thanks to its more than 300 interactive exhibits including the American Museum of Natural History Dinosaur Gallery. The **Columbus Zoo and Aquarium** allows guests to hand-feed giraffes in the Heart of Africa, watch interactive sea lion shows at Adventure Cove, the newest exhibit, or splash



The **Ohio State Fair** is one of the largest state fairs in the country.



Franklin Park Conservatory and Botanical Gardens features the brand-new Scott's Miracle Gro Foundation Children's Garden introducing and connecting children to the natural world.



Get outside the hustle and bustle of the city with **Hocking Hills Canopy Tours**.

in the wave pool at the connected **Zoombezi Bay** during the summer months. **Franklin Park Conservatory and Botanical Gardens** houses over 400 plant species and features the Scott's Miracle-Gro Foundation Children's Garden which focuses on introducing and connecting children to the natural world. Billed as the ultimate indoor LEGO playground, **LEGOLAND Discovery Center** at Easton includes two rides, 10 LEGO build and play zones, a 4D cinema and more.

Looking for an area to host an outdoor event? Columbus has hundreds of acres of greenspace located conveniently throughout the city, including more than 20 metro parks. Downtown's **Scioto Audubon** is a former industrial space transformed into an oasis filled with wildlife and exciting activities. Museum-lovers should visit the **Columbus Museum of Art** or the newly opened **National Veterans Memorial and Museum**, the only place where the stories of our veterans, their families and the Fallen – across all branches of service and all eras of conflict – are told together.

For families that love sports, there is no offseason in Columbus. Catch a **Columbus Clippers** game, the Triple-A affiliate of the Cleveland Indians, or head to a **Columbus Blue Jackets** NHL game and hear the cannon boom every time the home team scores.. Both teams are located downtown, surrounded by many opportunities for exploration before and after a game. Not to be outdone, **Columbus Crew SC** of the MLS play big-time soccer and have an impressive tradition, having been one of the 10 charter clubs of the league. The **Ohio History Center** opened a new sports

exhibit, called Ohio – Champion of Sports, which is highly interactive and is full of stories told by the athletes, owners and coaches through recorded interviews. The exhibit also shares the rich and varied stories of sports across the state. Organized in six thematic zones – Victory, Adversity, Character, Tradition, Identity and Innovation – the exhibit shares stories of Ohio sports' past, present and future. The friendly and knowledgeable Experience Columbus staff is prepared to make your visit convenient and worry-free, so reach out today to begin planning your reunion in Columbus.

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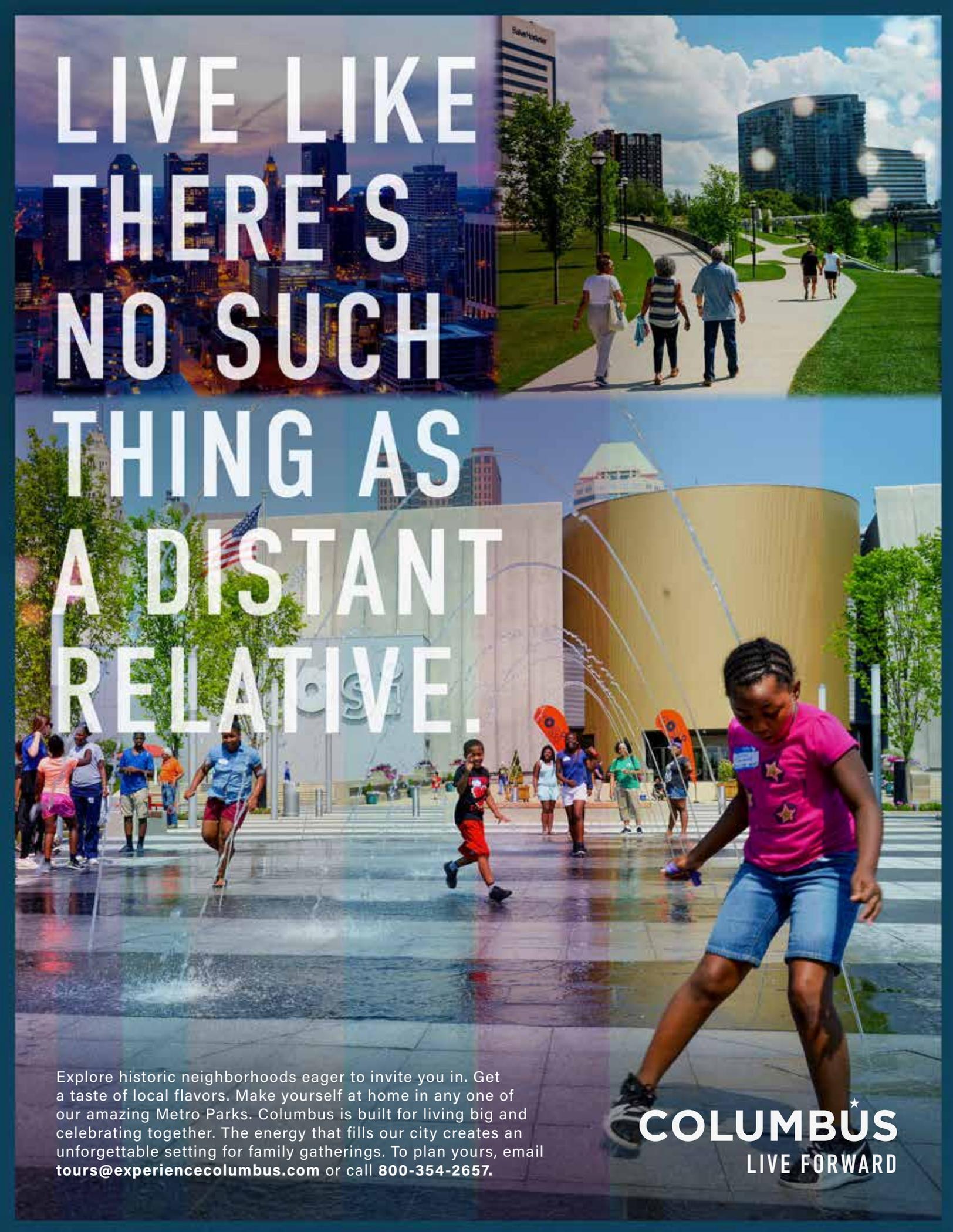
experiencecolumbus.com/reunions



Scioto Audubon Metro Park offers the largest outdoor climbing wall in the country.



National Veterans Memorial and Museum, the only place where the stories of our veterans, their families and the Fallen are told together.



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THERE'S
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Explore historic neighborhoods eager to invite you in. Get a taste of local flavors. Make yourself at home in any one of our amazing Metro Parks. Columbus is built for living big and celebrating together. The energy that fills our city creates an unforgettable setting for family gatherings. To plan yours, email tours@experiencecolumbus.com or call 800-354-2657.

COLUMBUS
LIVE FORWARD