

CONNECT THE DOTS

Use this fun, unusual training event to make a yearlong impact on your team of volunteers

It's time to kick off your year with a fantastic volunteer training and affirmation event! So why not do it with a **D**ynamic **O**utstanding **T**raining event—**DOT!** Help your volunteers make connections with one another and a dynamic year of ministry with this **DOT** event.

Dot Marks the Spot

Decorate your meeting room with dots, dots, and more dots! Tape solid-color paper plates (color side up) on the floors, walls, and ceilings of your room. Use fishing line to string plates from the ceiling at varying levels and all over your room.

Seat people at round tables, if possible, to carry out the dot theme. Cover the tables with white tablecloths. Then using Bingo markers (available from S&S Worldwide for \$1.20 per marker for orders of 12 or more; www.ssw.com; 800-243-9232), dot the tablecloth with paint dots. Run a colorful streamer down the center of the table, twisting it as you go. Sprinkle confetti dots all over the table, and add bowls of round candies, such as M&M's or Skittles. Place solid-color paper plates at each setting to create even more dots on the table.

Something extra: Even though it's not a decoration, cut any handouts and name tags into circle shapes as well.

Spotted Staff

For those who are staffing your event, encourage them to wear polka dots on their clothes. If you need to, have a seamstress in your church create aprons for these folks out of polka-dotted fabric. Also, give each of your event helpers a polka dot derby hat (\$4.95 per dozen; www.orientaltrading.com, 800-875-8480). You could outfit your staff in jumbo polka-dot ties (from Oriental Trading Company, Inc., \$1.95 each) and polka-dotted socks (\$7.50 a pair at www.jollywalkers.com, 877-597-4637).

Goody Bags

For each guest, fill a cello bag with some or all of the following goodies. Fifty cello bags with white dots are available for only \$7 from Paper & Party Warehouse (www.paperandpartywarehouse.com/store/page19.html).

- **Round Candies**—The sky's the limit here. Fill the bag with Sprees, SweeTarts, Reese's Peanut Butter Cups (large or small), Rolos, or York peppermint patties.

- **Polka-Dot Jewelry**—Have kids create special polka-dotted bracelets for each volunteer. You'll need jewelry wire and polka dot glass beads from Oriental Trading Company, Inc. (\$5.95 per 50 beads).

- **Round Boxes**—Encourage your volunteers to keep special prayer requests for children in nested round boxes from S&S Worldwide (\$1.49 per set for orders of 3 or more; www.ssw.com; 800-243-9232).

On the Spot

Use this devotion from Steve Harney, children's pastor in Somerset, Kentucky.

Say: "Did you know that according to Barna Research Group, most people who believe in Christ as their Savior, do so before age 12?"

Give each person a 35 card with a spot drawn in the middle of the card.

Say: "Spend a minute thinking about what you see on the card. What does the spot say to you—or not say to you? (Allow time.)"

"Turn to a partner and talk about what you thought about the spot. (Allow two minutes.) I'd like to hear what you talked about. What did you think about the spot? (Take four or five responses.)"

"In each of us there's a spot—an empty spot that needs to be filled. Unfortunately, from the day we're born we try to fill it with the wrong things. Some try food, others try games, and still others try alcohol, drugs, sex, violence... the list can go on and on. We know we have this spot, and we know it needs to be filled. We just can't seem to figure out what to place in it. Sadly, people who try false substitutes find out, usually too late, that the spot is still empty and they're not satisfied.

"The only thing that can fill the spot is Jesus Christ. And that's why it's a privilege to minister to children. We can introduce them to Christ at an early age. We can spare them years of agony. We can help them fill up their spot with the love and grace of Jesus Christ."

Dot to Dot

Help your volunteers make connections with one another and God with these ideas.

- **Sign-In**—As your guests arrive, stick a colored dot sticker (available at office supply stores) on the bottom of their shoes. Whenever you want to mix people to get to know one another, you can have them find a partner with the same color dot or a different color dot. You can also color-code your dots to represent the age group people minister to.

- **Candy Color Codes**—Have guests grab three candy dots from the dishes on your tables. Then have them form trios with people who have

different-colored dots on their shoes. Have them follow the Color Codes guide below to tell one item related to the appropriate color that matches one of their candies. After three minutes, have people form new trios with people who have the same-color dots on their shoes and share in the same way again for a second color candy. Then after three more minutes, have people form a new trio with different-colored dots on their shoes and share about their third colored candy.

● **Giant Twister**—Create a giant adapted Twister game in a large area on your floor. You'll need a large circle for each group of four guests. Place these randomly in your playing area. Then place colored red, yellow, green, and blue plates randomly all over your play area. You'll need a spinner from an actual game of Twister.

Have guests form groups of four. Each group must start out on a large colored circle. When a direction is called out, groups must have at least one person stay connected to the group while following the direction, such as "left foot on green." The goal is for the group to stay connected, but even if a group falls or becomes disconnected, let them continue to play the game.

After this game, have your groups discuss these questions: How easy or difficult was it to stay connected as you played this game? How easy or difficult is it to stay connected to one another and God as you minister to children? What things did you do during this game to stay connected that you could use in your ministry to stay connected to one another and God?

● **Policy and Practice Bingo**—Because repetition is a key ingredient to memory, this Bingo game will help your volunteers learn your policies and practices in a fun, creative way. Use our Policy and Practice Bingo card, or an adaptation of it, at www.cmmag.com.

Give each person a Bingo card and a Bingo marker. Have your guests find other people in the room who can say they already know that a certain policy or practice is in effect in your ministry. If someone knows a policy, that person then dots that policy on the other person's paper. The winner of this game is the first person who gets every single square of his or her card dotted.

● **Now You See It**—Now you don't! Use this dot illusion to make a powerful point with your volunteers. A fuzzy, colored dot that has no distinct edges seems to disappear when stared at. To make your own illusion for each person, go to www.exploratorium.edu/snacks/fading_dot.html. Or use a color printer to print the illusion from www.exploratorium.edu/exhibits/fading_dot/fading_dot.html.

Give each volunteer a copy of the fading dot page. Then have them stare at the center dot until the outlying areas fade away. Afterward, say, "When you focused on the dot in the center, it disappeared. Turn to a partner and discuss how focusing on your relationship with God this year can help all the distractions and challenges of ministry to children also fade away."

Allow time. Then read aloud Hebrews 12:2. Ask, "What challenges will you face in your ministry this year? How can you stay focused on Jesus in the midst of those challenges?"

Dot to Mouth

Serve round food such as the following:

- Make hamburgers and round tortilla chips for lunch.
- Decorate a round cake with Dots candy.
- Make a gelatin mold with mini-marshmallows "floating" in it. [cm](#)