

BHSAA

Burlingame High School Alumni Association

Reunion Planning Guide

Your class is planning a reunion. You'll be surprised at how much fun it will be, especially when you are a member of the planning committee. This may be your first reunion, or possibly your most recent one was five or even ten years ago. One of the goals of the BHSAA is to serve as a connection between your class members, other alumni, and the school.

This guide is an attempt to offer assistance in the following ways:

- What to do and maybe not to do for a successful reunion. (Look for "Highlights" throughout the guide.)
- Assist in reaching Reunion Planning Chairs of other classes
- Help with communication to your classmates. We can add your event to the Upcoming Reunion page of our website, to our Facebook page, and the BHS website
- Assist with school tours at Burlingame High School and creating special class alumni gear for sale (pending)

Pointer #1 If you are considering a fund raising event, separate from the costs of your reunion, please let the Alumni Association know. Our scholarship program and support of student organizations are our way of "paying it forward" to the students at our Alma Mater.

Why should your class have a reunion?

First, imagine what you want to accomplish with a reunion:

- Get old friends together
- Return to the Burlingame community for a visit
- Planning to keep in touch in the future
- Raise money for the Alumni Association Scholarship Fund
- Honor the legacy of Burlingame High School

Getting started

You have this guide, and now it's time to begin the collection of contact information of class members.

Timing: some reunion committees like to plan 24 months in advance. But most committees start no more than a year before their event. A lot depends on how elaborate an event you are planning. It is good to get the rough details nailed down 6-12 months before your event so that classmates have plenty of lead time for planning. Once you decide the date/location of your reunion, send a "Save the Date" announcement to all classmates.

Pointer #2 Even in the age of social media, you cannot rely 100% on any one method of communication to your class. At this time, the Alumni Association has very few email addresses, and not everyone uses Facebook or Twitter. When you send a "Save the Date" notice, direct classmates to your reunion website, Facebook page, etc. Create a calling "tree" to have classmates contact friends or reach out to find those who have little information available. Collect email addresses with all contacts, as that will be a very convenient way to communicate as the process proceeds. However, plan on the fact that even today some may not be connected to the web, and may need materials mailed to them.

Considerations for the reunion planning committee: You may have a single planning committee that meets as often as you can or gets together on conference calls or something like gotomeeting.com. It will be a good idea to create smaller sub-committees to work on particular necessary tasks. The ideas below are discussed in more detail later in this guide.

- Date selection
- Venue(s) selection
- Event(s) format (sit-down dinner, cocktail party, brunch, picnic, etc.)
- Financing, select treasurer
- How to contact classmates
- Search for missing classmates
- How to remember deceased classmates
- How to honor classmates who served in the military
- Website development and maintenance
- Reservations and record keeping
- Food and drink
- Event program
- Entertainment
- Documenting the event, photos, videos
- Video, photo, memorabilia displays
- Decorations

- Registration table and nametags
- Novelties, door prizes, awards
- Class reunion programs, booklets or Class Book
- Promoting and advertising your reunion
- Additional activities available the weekend of your reunion (golf outing, school tours, football game, etc.)
- Class gift to BHSAA scholarships

Financial planning: One of the challenges each reunion committee faces is how to pay for up-front costs associated with early planning, before you have begun registrations. Some of the early costs you may face are:

- Stationery supplies and postage
- Printing (reunion books, name tags, etc.)
- Gifts, novelties, decorations
- Website development and hosting
- Reunion t-shirts, other items for purchase
- Liability insurance
- Reunion facilities deposit
- Catering deposit
- Entertainment, music deposit

Occasionally, a class will have a generous member who will pay for either the upfront costs or the cost of the entire reunion (we should all be so lucky!). Some reunions have found it reasonable to have each committee member put in what they can afford into a petty cash fund to get the reunion started. Generally referred to as “seed money,” these funds can either be redistributed to the contributors or donated back to the fundraising efforts. Asking for donations from committee members and friends may be the best way to collect the needed costs. Make sure to check with the committee from the last reunion to see if there is any money left over from that reunion.

Setting the price for the reunion is very important. Make sure you have all of your costs outlined prior to setting a ticket price. You can create a low, middle and high chart of estimated costs in order to help with pricing. It is helpful to add a few dollars to the price of the reunion to donate back to BHSAA or to retain for the next reunion.

Pointer #3 The person in charge of the finances should: be selected early, be trustworthy, help create the budget, communicate frequently, maintain accurate records.

Reunion dates, timing

Many classes decide to hold their reunions during the Little-Big Game weekend. The football game is a big draw. Some classes chose to have their reunions in the summer to enjoy an outdoor venue or take advantage of summer vacations. Others have decided to hold their reunions over a holiday break, such as Thanksgiving or Christmas, thinking that many people have plans to come back to Burlingame for a weekend family visit. The holiday reunions seem to make most sense for your first reunions (5, 10, 15, or 20) when it is logical to assume many parents or relatives still live in Burlingame.

Venues

You may have already have chosen the venue for your reunion. If that is so, your date may be dictated by that venue's availability. Don't worry if you don't have a venue in mind yet. There are plenty of available venues in the vicinity of Burlingame. Other reunion chairs may be helpful in sharing the places they considered and why they eventually chose their location.

It is important to remember the estimated size of your reunion, the size of the event space and the cost. Be aware, too, that a high price dictated by a costly venue may deter classmates from attending. Sometimes, smaller, more intimate restaurants or clubs are just fine, particularly for first-time reunion gatherings when you are not sure exactly how many people to expect. Consider access, parking, size of the venue. The cost of renting a facility can range from a few hundred dollars to a few thousand dollars. The fees add up as you request more services. For example, at one reunion, red napkins cost twice as much as setting tables with white ones.

You will have to do some early budgeting and ticket price estimating to determine what is going to work for your class. Unless you have that lucky situation where someone in your class is willing to cover the entire cost of the reunion, registration fees may be your only source of recouping the reunion costs.

Below is a partial list of venues that have hosted BHSAA reunions in the past. There are many wonderful locations in and around Burlingame. If you use a venue that is not on the list, and you had a good experience, please let us know about it.

Name of Venue	Location	Type of Event/Number	Contact
Mimi's	San Mateo	Brunch/40-50	
Coyote Point Yacht Club	San Mateo	Dinner Dance/150	
Doubletree Hotel	Burlingame	Dinner Dance/200	
Mariott Hotel	Burlingame		
Poplar Creek Café	Coyote Point, San Mateo		

Pointer #4 A trend has developed that may be the future of class reunions, especially in “off” years. It seems that making the event affordable and less formal will help in getting better attendance. This involves having a less expensive meal or buffet, music, or casual venue. Also, if cost is an issue for any potential attendee, make sure you factor in scholarship money to confidentially provide entrance. Often some class members will volunteer to anonymously fund another’s registration.

Locating classmates and advertising

Finding classmates is always the most difficult part of planning a reunion, but it is also the most rewarding. The early reunions are the hardest to locate classmates. Though the BHSAA has a partial list of contact information for your class, it is only as good as the updates that have been shared with us. Your reunion will be a valuable source of new contact information to keep our lists current.

Be careful with access to contact information. Many people do not want their confidential information shared with others, even classmates. Do not give away information for a classmate without first getting approval from that individual.

Tools for locating classmates

Your class list will have the most recent known address, phone number and in a few cases, email address. Have every one you contact reach out to their old friends from school and return the information received back to the chair. The following tools are available:

Contact Method	Cost	Complexity	Effectiveness
Word of mouth	Free	Easy	Good for locals
Facebook, Twitter, electronic social media	Usually free	Easy with familiarity	Good for those who use social media
Email, text	Free	Easy if have addresses	Unpredictable
Phone calls	Free	Easy, time consuming	Very effective
Mailings	Expensive, use bulk mailing, return of undeliverable mail	Time intensive	Very effective with current contact info
Reunion website	Small cost	Need expertise to set up and manage	Useful for posting new information
Posting to existing websites (e.g. Craigslist, BHSAA site)	Usually free	Usually easy	Hit and miss. Be sure to post info to BHS and BHSAA sites
Classified ads and other print publicity, list in local ‘datebook’	Free or small cost	Not difficult	Okay for local audience, unpredictable

You cannot assume people have heard about your reunion, even after you have spent months trying to get the word out. Try multiple methods, multiple times.

Pointer #5 A reunion website can be created on several commercial sites. For as little as \$9.95 per month you can update your information regularly and register participants online. Start early on your website, so that you can direct classmates to it in your “Save the Date” communication. Make sure to link you Facebook page and your reunion website if you have both.

Pointer #6 It is imperative to update information on your missing classmates as soon as you get it. Keeping accurate records is one of the keys to your success. Highlight or keep a colored font for any changed information.

What to do at your reunion

Eating, Drinking and Socializing

The three most popular things done at almost any reunion are eating, drinking, and socializing. There is a variety of ways to do them all. Consider your budget, venue and number of people attending. Will there be a sit- down dinner, a buffet dinner, or no dinner at all? Dinner does increase the cost of an event substantially. It’s possible to have just as much fun over hors d’oeuvres and cocktails. Consider price if you plan to have an open bar, a few complimentary drinks or bottles of wine, or a cash bar. Classmates with vineyard connections can donate cases of wine. You need to work it all out within your budget, your venue, and your drink vendor. You can have picnics, golf tournaments, softball games, family events, dinners, brunches – use your imagination!

Many places have an in-house food and drink vendor, but some ask you to find your own caterer. Check to see if the venue or caterer has a food or drink minimum. Consider anticipated attendance and budget.

Photography: Document your reunion. Decide whether to have a professional photographer, who can charge a flat fee or by the hour. Or, have classmates take photos or videos and post them to your website after the reunion. Photo booths can be rented for the event.

Programs: Your committee can put together memory books or programs for your reunion, either online or printed. It can include old photos, new photos, classmate updates, surveys, a directory or anything else you decide. A program can provide the order of events for your reunion.

Door prizes/awards/fundraising: Some classes like door prizes or souvenirs, some don’t. You can use prizes as fund-raisers, or have a silent auction, but both activities add another dimension of work for the committee. Often, an “in memoriam” segment is included, as is recognition of classmates who have served in the military.

BHSAA/BHS Wear: The Spirit Shop at Burlingame High School has a large variety of apparel and other BHS items which you can sell at your reunion or use as prizes.

Entertainment: Most people prefer music at a reunion. You can hire a DJ, a band, or have someone in your class put a mix of music together, such as music that was popular when you were in high school. It might be possible to arrange for one of the talented vocal or instrumental groups from BHS to perform at their reunion.

Pointer #7 Remember that your classmates are there to reconnect and talk, so make sure that whatever you select, you will not have to scream over the music to talk. Many recent Reunion Committees have elected not to spend the money on a band or a DJ, but to upload music of their era onto an iPod for background music.

Have a master of ceremonies to guide attendees through any program you may wish to hold at your event. Often this is someone on the reunion committee. Other ideas: a slideshow of old high school pictures or photos from past reunions, a special guest speaker, or playing a DVD of the last reunion, etc.

Vendors

With the help of past reunion committees, BHSAA will try to compile a list of vendors that you may consider for you reunion.

Service	Name	Contact	Phone	Email	Web	Discount
Event planning						
Photography						
Printing						
Direct Mail and Printing						
Entertainment						

What else to plan for your weekend

Many reunion committees plan an entire weekend of events for people returning to Burlingame. If your reunion centers around the Little-Big Game, you can schedule a class tailgate prior to the game. Some Friday night events can be small gatherings at the home of a local classmate or a no-host event at a local restaurant or bar. Some groups who were close friends get together for dinner or brunch.

Pointer #8 Some committees have noted that having a free Friday night event takes away from their main event on Saturday. If there are two equivalent offerings and one is costly, most will opt for the less expensive or free gathering. This could result in a lower turnout for Saturday night, and less income than you anticipated. This can be a problem if you are dealing with fixed rental costs or minimum food and drink commitments.

Options:

- You can charge an entrance fee for Friday night, with each participant paying his/her own expenses. It can act as a fundraiser or as a way to offset any shortfall on Saturday.
- Charge a higher fee for Friday get together to cover appetizers, a drink ticket
- Eliminate having two organized events and make it a one night only reunion
- Charge more than planned on Saturday to cover possible shortfall

Some classes have organized Saturday or Sunday family picnics at a local park or have had a buffet brunch at a restaurant. One of the most popular events is the tour of BHS. To arrange a tour, please check with the school's primary administrative assistant. Golf outings can be arranged at Crystal Springs or Coyote Point Golf Courses. One class arranged a tour of San Francisco Bay on a Blue and Gold Ferry boat.

Giving back to Burlingame High School

This is your chance to see the big picture. Your class had the opportunity for a great education and personal development at Burlingame. Now it's your chance to 'pay it forward' to the next generation.

The BHS Alumni Association serves as a conduit to award scholarships to worthy students for their next level of education. We have been lucky to receive many class donations after reunion events are held. We encourage you to view your reunion as a way to generate excess money to contribute to the BHSAA Scholarship Fund. Or consider offering a scholarship to a BHS student from just your class, based on money raised over your reunion weekend.

Many people contribute their time and experience every year to make BHS Class Reunions possible. After you have concluded your reunion weekend, the BHSAA Board would love to have your share your experience to assist other classes in their planning. Your feedback on ways the Alumni Association may assist upcoming reunions and be included into future editions of this guide.

The Burlingame High School Alumni Association Board is gratefully indebted to the North Central High School of Indianapolis, Indiana for their Reunion Handbook, from which a majority of this guide has been used and amended to fit the needs of the Burlingame Alumni community. Thank you, kind people, for sharing your wisdom with us!

Class reunion timeline

18-24 months before

- Organize reunion committee. Reach out via internet (Facebook, etc.) or word of mouth.

- Delegate tasks to committee members (consider each person's strengths).
- Define the events and length of reunion (one event, two events, a weekend, etc).
- Survey classmates for activity and date preferences.
- Research costs, create budget.
- Reach out to fellow alumni for current contact information (all committee members).

12 months before

- Continue classmate information search.
- Set official date of reunion based on feedback and venue availabilities.
- Decide official activities, book venues, vendors (caterers, DJ, photographer, etc).
- 9 months before
- Set up official website with all information on the reunions, issue invitations.
- Contact local hotels to arrange special discounts for reunion attendees.

6 months before

- Meet with caterer to plan menu. Keep food restrictions in mind as you plan.
- Send reunion invitations (include venues, directions, hotel discounts, food, attire). Let them know listed ticket price is good until RSVP date, tickets will be higher price at the door.
- Decide how to honor deceased classmates. (Include in a publication or have a memorial table with list, photos.)
- Confirm reservations and bookings.
- Invite BHS teachers and school staff.

3 months before

- Create and purchase decorations.
- Collect old photos for a slide show or video, photo collage for first event.
- Plan awards or prize giveaways. Get donations from classmates for prizes.

1 month before

- Get final head count for attendees; give count to caterers, adjust as necessary.
- Finalize all plans and make final purchases or confirmations.
- Put necessary reminders on website. Include list of attendees.
- Create nametags.

1 day before or day of

- Decorate venue.
- Pick up last minute purchases (flowers, wine, cake, etc).
- Expect last minute hiccups, problem solving.

Class reunion checklist

- ✓ Form your committee and choose your Committee Chair, other chairs
- ✓ Appoint a treasurer and a secretary, volunteers for subcommittees
- ✓ Decide on frequency and location of reunion committee meetings
- ✓ Get class database from BHS Alumni Association Membership Chair
- ✓ Survey committee or classmates for ideas, timing, etc. Consider using online survey such as www.surveymonkey.com
- ✓ Select your date(s). Consider Little-Big Game weekend if in the fall
- ✓ Notify BHS Alumni Association so they can add dates to the website
- ✓ Determine event(s) venue and format(s) (cocktail reception, dinner dance, etc.)
- ✓ Select venue, caterer, photographer, entertainment, program, music type
- ✓ Create sub-committees to handle event responsibilities
- ✓ Decide on event programming (presentation, awards, memorial, guest appearance)
- ✓ Decide if you want to offer lodging options and negotiate with local hotels
- ✓ Establish funding (seed money) for upfront expenses, down payments, etc.
- ✓ Establish budget
- ✓ Decide registration price. Consider one price for early registration and increase the price for late and or registration at the door
- ✓ Begin contacting classmates and searching for those without contact info or email address. Have one person maintain the master list
- ✓ Develop reunion website and Facebook page
- ✓ Mail 'save the date' postcard directing class to your website and Facebook page
- ✓ Place reunion information on Alumni and BHS websites
- ✓ Decide on theme, decorations, venue layout, etc. Maybe create event logo
- ✓ Decide type of photography – stills, video, photo booth
- ✓ Order, purchase or create event mementos, awards, program, spirit wear
- ✓ Place ads or announcements in local papers
- ✓ Create deceased classmate list, memorial, tribute or gift. Create military service list.
- ✓ Arrange for school tour and/or football ticket availability
- ✓ Create non-main events (Friday night, tailgate, cocktail party, picnic, brunch, etc)
- ✓ Create nametags – use yearbook photos, current photos, etc.
- ✓ Decide on a "Pay It Forward" gift from your reunion for BHSAA scholarships
- ✓ Find people to staff your event so the committee and classmates can enjoy the reunion (hint: some classes a year behind may want to learn about reunion for their own the following year, or ask family members, friends)
- ✓ ENJOY YOUR REUNION!

AFTER THE REUNION

- ✓ Send thank you notes to committee, volunteers, vendors and donors or sponsors
- ✓ Email or drop off all contact information to BHSAA. Please remember to forward only those that have been updated or highlighted, otherwise we will need to go through every classmate's information and every field on the database
- ✓ Make your class gift donation to the Alumni Association
- ✓ Forward photos, updates, etc. so they can be posted on our Alumni website
- ✓ Celebrate your hard work and success of your event