



Beyond Belief Network Event Guides: Hosting your own Light The Night walk

Although the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society has Light The Night cancer walk sites across the country, you may find that your group is too far removed from a walk site to make the trip to one of the official locations. The cancer walk experience is a great way to build community and reach out to other local groups. One option you have if your group is too far away is to register a team at the closest location (at www.lightthenight.org) and then organize a “do it yourself” cancer walk closer to home.

The goal of this guide is to make the process of running your own cancer walk as straightforward as possible. It does require a lot of work, but the payoff can be enormous in terms of amount raised and raising your profile in the community. If you find yourself with questions or concerns, please check out the “Resources” section at the end or contact us at llsteam@foundationbeyondbelief.org.

Becoming a part of Foundation Beyond Belief’s [Beyond Belief Network](#) is a great way to get additional event-planning guidance, fundraising tips, and promotional assistance and to become a part of the larger humanist giving community. Contact volunteers@foundationbeyondbelief.org for additional information on joining BBN, or [apply online today](#).

Starting a team

- Use FBB’s [Registration Quick Start Guide](#) to create a team associated with the closest official Light The Night event.
- Recruit members of your secular community to be walkers and have them sign up with your team on the LTN site.

Tip: Be sure to balance signing up a large number of walkers with making sure that the people you sign up are invested in raising money and making your event a success!

Finding a walk site and choosing a date

- Find a local park, walking path, outdoor stadium, track, or gymnasium that would be a promising walk site. Consider parking, access to restrooms, whether/where you’ll feed your walkers, where you’d have walkers meet and walk, and any sound/electrical equipment you’ll need.
- Investigate your options to find out what permits or fees are associated with some locations.
- If you’re planning an outdoor event, be sure to have a contingency plan for bad weather!
- When choosing a date, consider the probable weather, time of sunset, and events that might conflict. If students are involved, consider holding it after the semester starts.

Tip: If you’re partnering with a college group, they will often have access to facilities at little to no cost.

Raising money

- Individual walkers should alert their families and friends that they are raising money for cancer.

- Businesses might be willing to donate money, host events, or donate supplies.
- Consider holding fundraising events to give you another opportunity to promote your event and build your local nonreligious community.
- Possible events include bake sales, auctions, parties, or (Flying) Spaghetti (Monster) Dinners. You can get as creative as you want. For inspiration, check out the [Illini Secular Student Alliance's "Hug an Atheist" fundraiser](#) or join the [Beyond Belief Network Facebook group](#) for access to additional fundraising guides and tips.

Tip: Ask your employer about corporate charity matching programs!

Promoting your walk

- Engage your team and the rest of the community via social media. Set up an event page on Facebook, Meetup, or another event-based online application.
- Write a press release for your local newspaper(s).
- Inform allied organizations of what you're doing.
- Ask your group's members to sign up as walkers and recruit others.
- Consider asking an artistic member of your community to create posters that could be printed on 8.5"x11" paper and put up at local cafes.
- Nothing brings people out to an event like the promise of being fed, so mention food (if applicable) when promoting your walk.

Tip: Include advertisements or list your corporate sponsors in your promotional materials. The publicity will help pay them back for their donations of money or goods and convince more people to attend or donate.

Community outreach

Light The Night walks can be a great opportunity to reach out to the community.

- Consider engaging the religious population of your area, LGBTQ groups, schools, and other allies to participate in your walk.
- Make local politicians aware of your nonreligious community and the work that it does. Explain LTN and your group's involvement, and invite your mayor or state senator to say a few words at the beginning of your event! Even if they are unavailable, your local politicians will be more aware of their nonreligious constituents for your effort. The Illini Secular Student Alliance invited their mayor, and not only did he accept their invitation but he promoted the event on his social media!

Tip: Be sure to emphasize that this event is about supporting cancer research and patient care as a community, rather than proselytizing or promoting skeptical/atheist/nonbeliever viewpoints.

Feeding your walkers

- Make sure your walk site is equipped to handle trash and that your venue allows food. Some locations might have contracts with food companies (especially soft drink companies), so check on their policies. It might limit your options or the company might donate something, too.
- Ask local businesses if they are willing to donate some subs, a pizza, or some chips and soda for your cancer walk in exchange for promotion. Better yet, have their staff come and pass it out!
- If your community has food trucks, let them know about your event. They might help promote and even donate.

Tip: In this and all other aspects of putting together your own cancer walk, don't get discouraged if you don't get someone who's interested right away. There are plenty of potential partners, and you only need a fraction of them to say yes to make your event a huge success.

Entertainment and programming at the walk

- Ask your Light The Night chapter if someone will come and speak, or have a local celebrity, mayor or senator, cancer survivor, or members of your group give presentations.
- Have a ceremony honoring your Honored Heroes before the walk starts.
- Consider giving away raffle tickets or other prizes at entry. Local restaurants and movie theaters are often willing to donate gift cards to charity events if you ask!
- If ordinances and your venue permit, ask a local band or DJ to provide music and emcee.
- Local schools might also be interested in student performances and will promote your event.

Tip: Be careful about the local ordinances. If you are having a "raffle" you may need to either change the way you refer to your drawing or get a permit. Contacting your local chamber of commerce might be helpful.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF AS YOU ORGANIZE

- Do I want to charge people to attend?
- Should we have a donation box at the event?
- Is this going to be an event just for my nonreligious group or the broader geographic community?
- How can I encourage walkers to raise money for LLS ahead of the walk?

RESOURCES

Foundation Beyond Belief: The Leukemia and Lymphoma Society's national partner in the secular community. For logistical questions about running your own walk, email the Light The Night coordinator at llsteam@foundationbeyondbelief.org. Be sure to check the "[LLS Light the Night](#)" section at www.foundationbeyondbelief.org, the [Foundation Beyond Belief LTN team](#) page, and LTN newsletters (check your inbox!) for additional resources.

For additional FBB support, idea guides, tips, and awards, [join Beyond Belief Network](#), FBB's network for humanist communities with an interest in volunteer and charity work. Please email volunteers@foundationbeyondbelief.org for more information on joining BBN or [apply online today](#).

Leukemia and Lymphoma Society: For questions about setting up a team, check with your [local LLS chapter](#). You can also find helpful resources for fundraising and promotion in your dashboard (sign in to your LTN account).