Hello – It’s a real pleasure to be here to present our project, the Rumsey Street Bazaar.

The Grand Rapids Symphony Women’s Committee was founded in 1941 to provide financial support to the Symphony. This past September, we changed our name to Grand Rapids Symphony Friends to reflect a more diverse membership that included men.

Grand Rapids, Michigan is located in the southwest part of the state, 30 miles from Lake Michigan. It has a population of roughly 200,000. Grand Rapids is an art town, a college town, an entrepreneurial town and one of the country’s top medical centers. It is the second largest city in Michigan after Detroit.

In creating our project, we had two goals:

1. Attract community partners to foster an appreciation for symphonic music in a diverse neighborhood, and
2. Have some FUN while raising FUNDS!

When we were made aware that Rumsey Street was available as a venue for our event, we jumped on it! Located south of the downtown area, it is a lower income, racially diverse neighborhood. The property, owned by Habitat for Humanity, was also one of the many sites for “ArtPrize”, an internationally recognized art competition. It was in a neighborhood that had very little, if any, awareness of the Grand Rapids Symphony or classical music.
The available space, specifically the church and the bright yellow auto body shop, had a major impact on the evolution of the Rumsey Street Bazaar project. The initial plan was a fundraiser featuring “of value” resale items including clothing, furniture and household goods.

During a brainstorming session we learned of a symphony connection with a New York designer who worked with top performers including Lady Gaga. This connection evolved into a “wearable art” fashion show with designs created from vintage, or second hand clothing. The costumes were then included in the silent auction.

Other elements of this project included performances by symphony musicians, local food and wares vendors, a science/music area with a laser harp, instrument “petting zoo”, children’s art activities, live bands and a beer garden.

In addition to these activities, evening events were:

- Thursday: Opening night gala - the “Rumsey Rumble” featuring a live band, food and drink, a preview of the fashion show costumes
- Friday: “Rumsey Rocks” featuring a local David Bowie tribute band
- Saturday: Rumsey Runway Show title “Bach to the Future” featuring “wearable art”
- Sunday: Cabildo, a Hispanic band (unfortunately cancelled due to sound system issues).

A general overview of the timeline included:

- November: venue and dates
- **January & February:** logo and early marketing
- **March & April:** permits and licenses, security and vendors, website and sponsor solicitations
- **May:** PR, volunteers, finalized fashion show and other events
- **June:** Final prep and execution

**CLICK TO ADVANCE**

**Slide 8** Marketing Materials

We connected with members and friends of the symphony via newsletter articles, ads in the Grand Rapids Symphony concert programs, postcards, our Women’s Committee website, and a website dedicated to this event.

We sent letters requesting donations and sponsorships to businesses, organization members and prior donors.

We created a Drop Box for committee members to post and edit event information.

**CLICK TO ADVANCE**

**Slide 9** Flyers

We developed bi-lingual flyers that were distributed door to door – to homes and businesses. We also met with the local elementary school principal who was especially supportive. We connected with the local Hispanic radio station.

**CLICK TO ADVANCE**

**Slide 10** Financials

We completely covered our $24,000 cost, with tremendous community support demonstrated by in-kind donations of $20,500 ... The most expensive item was $16K for entertainment and food, and included $9K for wearable art materials and seamstresses per our contract with the designer.

**CLICK TO ADVANCE**

**Slide 11** Volunteers
Our volunteers included our **planning team** of 14. A number were community friends highly interested in the project. You can see the various committees listed and the wide range of categories.

**CLICK** More than **50 of our members** participated; **23 Symphony musicians** played during the three days. Over **30 community partnerships** (individual as well as businesses), and almost **40 others** including design students, models, hair and make-up artists and more joined in the fun. It took almost **100 people to staff** the event over the four day period.

Symphony staff helped too. The Education Director helped us with children’s instrument activities. Our CEO actually helped with tear-down on Sunday.

**CLICK TO ADVANCE**

**Slide 12**  
**A New Generation**

The project effectively reached 30-40 year olds who enthusiastically volunteered to help develop this event. They included a number of young entrepreneurs who helped set up our website, on-line ticketing, and vendor applications. They even donated their “David Bowie Tribute Band” for the evening.

The group also connected us with design students, and provided access to the theater costume shop and recruiting models. **CLICK** CitizenShirt designed a T-shirt to sell at the event (Beethoven, Bach, Brahams and Bowie). **CLICK** They just knew “people”! **CLICK IN PHOTO & COUNT TO FOUR**

**CLICK TO ADVANCE**

**Slide 13**  
**Community Partners**

We worked with partners from the ArtPrize SiTE:LAB to Habitat for Humanity, and Blandford Nature Center, who loaned the picnic tables. A local art gallery (Richard App Galleries) set up shop for the event in one of the auto-body shop stalls. West Michigan Piano loaned us a grand piano. A local lumber yard supplied the stage materials at a discounted price.

The picture in the corner was done on our painting wall by a group of developmentally disabled adults while listening to the music.

This project clearly demonstrated the excitement and interest that exists in becoming involved in community activities, especially those reaching out to diverse groups.
Measuring Success

Remember our goals? First, community engagement

Subsequent to our completing the initial planning for the Rumsey Street Bazaar, the Grand Rapids Symphony released their Five Year Plan. One of its objectives was “attracting new audiences and serving increasing diverse communities”. It was very satisfying to see we were on the leading edge of helping to accomplish this objective.

Success was measured by the engagement of 30 community partners, the enthusiastic participation of our fashion designer and 53 members who donated time, money and resale items. Additionally, there were more than 50 outside volunteers, as well as 23 Symphony musicians performing throughout the event.

The community partners we attracted far exceeded our expectations. They included millennials, as well as 30 to 40 year olds, most of whom never worked with our organization before, or had much prior involvement with the Symphony. Also included were a number of members of the LGBT community. The event was housed in a diverse neighborhood.

Second – have FUN while we raised funds. While only breaking even, we successfully generated revenue with a number of creative ideas. However, attendance was down due to hot weather, a first-time event, and the safety street barricades ultimately discouraged some neighborhood participation.

Here are some recommendations we would make . . .
- Start early and focus on a few good ideas
- Make sure all materials look “professional”
- Develop a website for the event
- Think “outside the box” for partners and volunteers . . . first time participants, . . . millennials, engineering and design students, . . . middle and high school students who need community service hours, girl scouts and boy scouts, the “Y”
• Canvass door-to-door
• Handicap Accessible venue
• Use social media extensively
• Thank you notes and an event summary. We also included a thank you in the fall symphony program book and our event brochure.

CLICK TO ADVANCE

Slide 17     Coda!

As you look at some pictures of the designer and costumes, I want to end with a final thought. It’s not always about the money. To this end we received the following note from Lori Lee Curley, one of our past presidents:

”However the numbers come out, the Women’s Committee made an amazing effort to engage in the community in a way that has never been tried before by any faction of the Grand Rapids Symphony. You should feel very proud of that fact and how hard you, and a very small and dedicated group, worked.”