

Tips to Keep in Mind

Photography for the Wheaton Park District by Lana Kozol | Graphic Design Assistant

Thank you for your willingness to volunteer at events and shoot for us! We greatly appreciate the help. Below are a few ideas to hopefully help you as you shoot photos at events.

- **Story story story**

A photo is all about the story it tells. Photo-graphy, is literally 'light writing', so you are writing a story with the photos you capture. So, tell us what you see! Each photographer sees different things and in different ways, so use that to tell the story of what's going on in the way you see it.

Photos for the Wheaton Park District are used for marketing purposes. With that in mind, try to find the stories that show people engaging with/at an event, having fun, energetic moments, etc. We want to shine the highlights of these events, so showing people interacting and engaging, and having a blast is really helpful.

Strong photos of happy (or pleasant) people are preferable to someone making a weird face. As you're going through the photos, in your head replace yourself with the subject: if you wouldn't want a certain photo you got of yourself on a poster, they wouldn't either. Be sensitive and respectful to how the subject may react to how they look in photos, and don't be afraid to weed out photos you think might not be flattering to the subject.

- **Singular focus**

For marketing purposes, we generally can use photos that have a very specific focus, rather than photos that are super busy and/or have a lot going on. Think poster, a poster is a lot more engaging when there's one singular thing going on, rather than a static photo of lots going on.

One technical thing you can employ to achieve that:

Shallow depth of field/wide open aperture.

This really helps you focus in on one story. Take a race event. We don't necessarily need to see every single runner, but one or two runners with more blurred in the background that suggests there's more going on, but isn't distracting from the main focus. Shallow focus allows you to really pull out one story and let everything else suggest context without taking away from your main idea.

- **Don't be afraid to leave white space**

Again, for marketing purposes, it's helpful if photos have some breathing space around the subject, so text can be added, and the designers have more flexibility to work with the photo. In general, don't worry too much about cropping photos, as we can crop to what we need in the specific pieces we're working on. Tightly cropped images are usually harder to design with. Rule of thirds is really helpful for this idea, make sure your subjects are looking into the space of the image, rather than into the edge of the frame. It feels jolting/cut off if the subject is running into the frame edge, rather than into the space of the rest of the image.

- **Clarity**

Blurry/movement photos are sometimes cool for a more artistic feel, but generally we aren't able to use those sorts of shots in marketing materials. If you have to use a higher ISO to keep your shutter speed up, it's okay to do so.

- **Natural colors**

As photographers we all have our editing styles, but just keep in mind how the photos might be used, as we generally need things to look as natural as possible.

General technical things to help create great images

A hopefully helpful list of things to keep in mind that usually help a photo create a really engaging story!

- **Good light** | appropriate exposure settings for the event. Indoor is harder, but remember you are writing WITH light, not fighting the lack of it. So, use what light you can find (light bouncing off of white walls, finding light sources and staying close to them, etc), and use it to style the tone of your image. In bright light, be careful of super-hot spots/over exposed areas that would distract from the subject.
- **Composition** | creating a story with how you place the subject(s) of your photo in the frame. Try looking at things from different angles and see if you can tell a more unique story if you were say, below the subject, or above it.
For people, they generally do look best if you're not looking up their nose. (: If you can, get on the same level with kids so you're not shooting down at them.
- **Keep moving!** | This ties into the previous point. Keep moving around and keep finding new things or angles to shoot. My personal favorite way to remember this idea is to put a boring object on a table, and then walk around it to try to find a way to tell a story about it in an interesting way.
- **Reflections and silhouettes** | these are both fun tools to use to help tell your story
- **Natural Frames** | this applies less to marketing photos, but in general find things that can frame your subject and help point to it. Natural frames that maybe even aren't obvious but help draw the attention to your focal point are really neat.
- **Shallow depth of field** | using a wide-open aperture is a win-win in terms of getting the most light/higher shutter speeds, and creating more focused stories. As you're shooting think about what needs to be in focus and what doesn't, and change the f/stop as needed.

Lastly, if you ever have questions about shooting an event leading up to one, please let us know! Thank you again!