

FOURTH ANNUAL
Common Threads

A PLEDGE TO THE TIES THAT BIND

COMPLIMENTARY

We are many. We are one.



2011 FAMILY REUNION GUIDE & PLANNER



It's summer—time to reconnect, remember and reflect with family and relatives. It's the annual summer family reunion event: hundreds of families travel thousands of miles to visit each other.



ShopRite®



Dear Friends of ShopRite,

For this special occasion, I have written poems especially and exclusively for our dear ShopRite customers. These poems celebrate the core of family connections: poems about mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, grandmothers, and grandfathers. They are from my heart to your heart. The poems are beautiful reminders of the reasons why we travel so far to see family members whom we haven't seen since last year or last week. They are the rhythm of our heartbeat.

So, pack up your suitcases with clothes and shoes to wear to picnics, dances, and sightseeing adventures. Don't forget to bring pictures from the past—the ones that make you laugh, cry and gasp. Gather memorabilia from previous gatherings and take a journey down family reunion lane and hop over to family history road.

Get in the car or van with games and activities so you only hear 'Are we there yet?' a hundred and one times. Hope for a smooth airplane travel—no lost bags or kids, no circle-in-the-sky delays or missed planes.

For bus travelers, pack plenty of food, and bring good music or a great book. But be prepared for the talkative new best friend: tell them all about your family history.

Yes, summertime is for relaxing. It's also a great time to remember our family, celebrate our history, and acknowledge the tremendous challenges and accomplishments of multiple generations.

Please enjoy the poems and have fun at your family reunion! I hope that when you pack up your suitcases to return home, you have something special to bring back: a new memory, a stronger bond with a family member, a crazy story, a blackmail picture, a family history fact—something that will make this reunion different and even more special than last year's.

P.S. I would love to hear about your family reunion stories. Email me: rallen@oneworldcreative.com

Warmest Wishes,
Robin Allen

Common Threads

*Written by Robin Allen
Award Winning Author*



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Summertime

Summertime

June, July, August

Sunny, sunny, sunny

Hot and hazy

What better time to remember

Who you are, who you come from

To laugh and be a little lazy

Or just silly and crazy

But with the people who are your family

Who gather together

In the hottest weather



Mothers and Fathers

It begins with you
Mothers and fathers
The love that courses through
Our veins
Beats in our hearts
Simmers in our souls

We see it in your eyes
Chuckles and soft smiles
We feel it in
Tender hugs, warm hellos and good-byes
We hear it in your voice
Encouraging, confidence-building words
And sometimes chiding words and guiding tones

Words that help us grow
Strong and resilient
Preparing us for life's challenges
So we don't crumble
Have fewer stumbles
And know how to recover
From life's troubles



We watch how you live your lives
Yes, our eyes are watching you
The way you deal with obstacles
And everyday struggles
The way you keep going
And never stop doing

We feel your love
We know you are there
Almost ever-present
Near or far
To care and understand
To listen and hold our hands

When we are a little kid and a finding-our-way teen
We need you
Even when we are all grown-up
We still need you

We celebrate each day you are in our lives
Love and rejoice our time and special connection
Remembering that mothers and fathers
Must be there for their sons and daughters
As we grow from childhood to adulthood
And you transition to seniorhood
We are there for you too





My Sister, My Sister

My sister is more than
the big sister who has her
own room

My sister is more than
the little sister who knew
where I hid my secret box
under the bedroom floor

My sister is more than
the grown-up sister who
no longer lived at home
but I could see my face
in her face whenever she
stopped by

My sister is more than a
best friend

She is a soul mate, secret
keeper and comforter

We bare our souls
Share tender wounds
Hold each other's hand
Encourage us to try again

My Sister, My Sister
We comfort each other
through the night
When life is full of fright

I close my eyes
And know she is there
Even a hundred miles
away

On sunny days and
stormy nights

My Sister, My Sister
You remind me
Of the strength, courage
and dedication
That boils in our veins
You are the antidote
against fears, doubts and
desperation
You are always there
In my heart and spirit

My Sister, My Sister
When times are good
We laugh, party and
act wild

Dance, dance, dance
Eat, eat, and eat
Until we fall asleep

In the morning
We argue about what we
don't remember
But it doesn't matter

My sister, my sister
What only matters
Is you

My Forever Friend, My
Heart Beater,
My Spirit Keeper

My Sister, My Sister

A Different Family Reunion *Experience*

Family reunions are as much fun as they are work. What makes family reunions even more fun is that there is something different every year. A different place. A different theme. Different activities.

Do something new or different...

To get your creative juices flowing, here are a few theme and activity ideas to help you make this year's reunion unlike any before!

Music Theme

Celebrate the rich tradition of R&B and gospel music in the African American community with a lively musical theme. Throw a party honoring different family members' favorite R&B and gospel artists for a fun time. Play a game of musical chairs using musical artists like the *Jackson 5*, *Temptations* or *The O' Jays*. You can even play games of *Finish the Lyrics* by playing snippets of old and new songs and requiring family members to complete the lyrics. You could give out CDs as gifts throughout the event.

Down Home Theme

Go back *home*: where ever that may be. Many African Americans have family roots in a particular city or part of the country. Celebrate these roots with a *Down Home* theme. Play trivia games about the region your family is from and your family's journey around the country. You can ask questions like, *Who was the first relative to leave Alabama for California?* You can even cook food native to the region you are celebrating.





Storytelling Theme

Stories. Stories. Stories. Most African American families have a rich storytelling tradition which can be incorporated into a unique family reunion theme. Help young members of the family get to know their history by playing trivia games about the family. Or, you can set aside storytelling time each day of the family reunion and have one or two elder members of the family tell a story about the family's history. You can record these moments as stories to be passed from generation to generation in years to come. A blog or web page can easily archive these stories for future reading.

Black Greek

Black families that have a high number of family members who are a part of Black Greek Letter Organizations can unify the family around this theme. Make special t-shirts with your organization's colors and letters that have the family name on them for an added touch. For a fun time, have a step competition between family members and invite younger members of the family to create their own steps to perform.

Games

Let the games begin. Many family members will gather together to play games, especially at a family reunion. Card games like *Bid Whist* and *Pitty Pat* are a hit. Hold a tournament with games that bring groups together, such as *Dominoes*, *Checkers*, and *Connect Four*. Award prizes to the winners.

Dear Brother

I inherited you
You inherited me
Sometimes I wish
I inherited a million dollars, a mansion
or a genie with magical powers
But that's only a wisp of a wish

What I have inherited
Our love, commitment, and bond
Is a bountiful and endless treasure
Filled with precious memories
That nothing else can measure

We have fought, cried and laughed
Together
We have shared dreams, secrets,
and plans
Together

We have gotten into trouble and caused
rumbles
Together

We have managed happy gatherings
and heartbreak tragedies
Together

We have stood side-by-side,
holding hands
Brother and brother
Sister and brother

And together
We will always be
Connected by the roots
of our family tree
Whether near or far
I can call, email, Facebook or text
My dear brother

Granddad, Pops, Paw-Paw, Grandpop

I descend from you
Mama's dad, or Daddy's grandpop
We are connected
Not by Legos' constructed
But physically and spiritually
Sometimes your stern presence
Was a little intimidating
You belong to a world that I did not understand
Until I started growing up
All the pieces began to come together
And I realized that you are a man
Of many roles
The decision maker
The bread winner
The future planner
The family manager
So now when I see you

Smile or frown
Tell a joke or tell someone to jump in the lake
I listen and understand now
And know more about the man
Defined by a life journey
Of challenges, victories and sometimes danger
You are no stranger
You're my Granddad, Pops, Paw-Paw, Grandpop



Learn Family History

A family reunion is a wonderful time to share and learn family history. This is especially true for African American families who were separated over time due to historical events such as slavery. The family reunion is the perfect time for the elders of the family to share stories with the younger generation about forgotten ancestors. Family history can be shared in a variety of interactive ways. Younger family members can conduct on-the-spot interviews with older family members. Create a giant family tree wall chart and allow reunion attendees to add or correct the chart. Host a family scavenger hunt where family members must question each other to find the answers to pre-printed family questions. Organize a group tour of locations with historical significance, such as the family plot at a cemetery, the church where your grandparents were married, or the house your great-grandfather built. Ask family members to bring old family photographs to be scanned and copied onto a CD and distributed to family reunion participants. Hold story time and give family members an opportunity to share stories about prominent family members. Take this activity a step further by performing a skit or reenacting significant events from the family's history.

Recognize Family Accomplishments

Everyone likes to be acknowledged for their achievements. Host an awards ceremony to celebrate the successes of individual family members such as graduations, promotions and other significant accomplishments. Recognize family milestones: wedding anniversaries, engagements and births. You can even hold a candle lighting ceremony to honor deceased relatives.



We are many, We are one

We are one, but we are many
 Come from all around the country
 Nearby cities and neighborhoods
 And far away places
 We come together for the family reunion
 We share a dream and sing with one voice
 I am you, you are me, we are family
 We come together
 We celebrate
 Our family ties
 Tightly woven
 Never to be broken
 We celebrate
 Our family reunion
 I'm the daughter of a steel miner who took care of his family
 The girl who became a woman on the wings of the 'I have a dream' speech
 I'm a child of the civil rights movement, I felt a different freedom
 I'm a dreamer, I'm a survivor, I'm a winner
 I celebrate my family all year
 I rejoice at our family reunion this summer



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 with one voice
 I am you, you are me, we are
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 We are many, we are one.



The black family reunion experience...

...A POWERFUL SOURCE OF INSPIRATION!

Those special moments and unforgettable memories are motivational and inspirational.
 It's the time and place to feel love and beauty, share hope and wisdom,
 and experience joy and laughter. **Enjoy the moments: be inspired and inspire others!**



For additional Family Reunion Resources please visit:
www.shoprite.com/familyreunion

