

KEY ELEMENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL ASTRA CLUB

~Debbie McBee (District Twelve) & Pam Hayes (District Fifteen)~

1. KNOW WHAT ASTRA IS

ASTRA is an international community service organization for students from middle school through college and is supported by local Altrusa Clubs.

ASTRA is an acronym for:

- Ability – to know that all of us have special talents to share with others.
- Service – to improve the lives of those less fortunate in the community.
- Training – to develop leadership ability and potential.
- Responsibility – to learn to accept obligations and know the satisfaction of carrying projects through to a successful conclusion.
- Achievement – to experience success; to know that a group can accomplish so much more than any one individual.

2. ACTIVE SPONSORSHIP OF ASTRA BY YOUR ALTRUSA CLUB

- Recruit Altrusans who enjoy working with and inspiring youth
- Support the ASTRA Club financially each year
- Meet with officers before the school year starts to create a loose plan for the year
- Act as leadership and service mentors to the ASTRA members
- Guide your ASTRA members as they “plan and do”, but avoid jumping in or taking over; step back and let the members work through things, prompt their discussions and considerations of details that they may not have considered, but don’t do it for them

3. MAKE ASTRA STUDENT-RUN AND FUN: PROVIDE MANY OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN LEADERSHIP

- Create many opportunities for leadership: officers, committee co-chairs, project chairs
- Allow the ASTRA members to do the work and make the decisions; guide them as needed through the processes
- Teach club members about how to run a meeting, Robert’s Rules of Order, how to contact a potential speaker, how to plan and carry out a project, how to keep records
- Let students work out when and how often to meet: days/evenings, before/during/after school, once or twice a month or more; dues, etc.
- Teach ASTRA members to hone their decision-making skills and to evaluate pros and cons, so that they don’t overcommit to too much
- Celebrate successes and recognize members for their hard work
- Use an ASTRA meeting agenda
- Take advantage of their youthful energy and help channel that!
- Have the Club President formally hand off the gavel to the new president each year

5. HAVE THE ASTRA MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE HOLD SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

- Club members can brainstorm on fun social events: game nights, movie night (at school), ice skating, corn mazes, bowling, pot luck meals/ food from different culture; invite speakers who have various cultural traditions to share,... involve parents too-

4. FOSTER THE CONCEPT OF SERVICE THROUGH PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS IN SCHOOL/COMMUNITY

- Have ASTRA members brainstorm annually on potential service activities: school, local community, national and international projects
- Invite ASTRA members to help with Altrusan service projects; create a joint project
- Have ASTRA members create their own projects (make a timeline and carry out the planning/steps through to the project completion) but also spread the word in the community that they are available to help with community events
- Have ASTRA members wear their ASTRA t-shirts during service activities
- Ideas can include serving food, visiting elderly, supply drives, clean ups, holiday “secret gift giving”, mentoring younger children (eg Lunch Buddies), sending care boxes to soldiers, raising funds/items for needy project in foreign country, and so much more!
- Have sign up sheets at meetings; have committee chair send out reminders

6. FUNDRAISING: TEACH ASTRA MEMBERS HOW TO FUNDRAISE AND TO GIVE

- create a meaningful reason to raise funds, set goals and plan details of fundraising campaign, consider collaborating with a local organization to match funds (including Altrusa), try to connect the students with the people they are helping; donation jars

7. PUBLICITY: HELP ASTRA MEMBERS TO PUBLICIZE WHAT THEY ARE DOING

- Spread info with apps, club Facebook page, social media, bulletin boards, in school daily messages, written notes, school newspaper, invite the media to ASTRA events

8. ALWAYS RECRUIT NEW ASTRA MEMBERS—AND TALK ABOUT ALTRUSA TOO-

- Get creative on recruiting members: take notes to freshman classes, talk at the middle schools, bring a friend to meeting, participate in a school club fair, send out recruitment letters to potential students, hold a pumpkin-carving membership drive meeting, ...
- Keep your membership form updated--and have a consent signed for a photo release
- Have ASTRA members participate in your District Conference
- Make sure new members understand the purpose and goals of ASTRA (& Altrusa)

9. ALLOW ASTRA MEMBERS TO MAKE MISTAKES...without rescuing them every time

- Young people need to learn how to make mistakes, handle failure and disappointment, and fix problems and move on. Don't jump in too quickly to “save” them!
- Talk about what the failure was and what could be done differently next time
- Teach them to own up to their peers if they failed to carry through on something

10. “QUOTES” BY ASTRA MEMBERS: WHAT THEY LOVE ABOUT ASTRA:

- The ASTRA Club is run completely by students. You learn a lot about leadership.
- You get to hear interesting things from different speakers each month, often about careers and volunteers, such as being an FBI Agent, a US Army soldier, a social worker, Bikers against Child Abuse, a physical therapist.
- Performing service is fun, especially when you're doing it with friends and you can see how it helps other people.
- You can be in charge of something, and have to be responsible for doing it.
- You meet new people and learn new things.
- Other kids enthusiasm is contagious
- It's the best club to belong to because things really happen with ASTRA!