

# 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!