

# THE LEADER

2007-2009 Altrusa International Leadership Newsletter

Conference Planning

Volume 6

Make no  
little plans;  
they have  
no magic to  
stir men's  
blood...Make  
big plans,  
aim high in  
hope and  
work.

*Daniel H. Burnham  
(1846 - 1912)*

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## **Congratulations!**

So, you've volunteered (or had your arm twisted) to plan a conference. Congratulations! The following are some simple guidelines.

## **Program**

A good program is critical. Look for variety, interest, timeliness. What do your members need or want to leave with? Try to balance lectures with discussions, hands on, social activities, and time for colleague interaction.

What kinds of information do your clubs need or want? The best way to fill a conference program is to ask your members what they want. A diverse mix of "Altrusa College" presentations, social causes, and personal growth presentations can attract more attendees.

A general call for presenters should have a deadline that gives you ample time to recruit and to fill in gaps should you not get all the good proposals you need. Network with other members to identify people who might be invited to make presentations.

Immediately after the deadline, begin organizing the conference schedule. Select the proposals you want to use and contact them to verify their availability. Create a tentative schedule, matching presenters to the facilities. You may want to lay out your schedule on a whiteboard, or use 3x5 cards on a corkboard so you can visualize how things fit together. Make sure you plan time for attendees to talk with each other, such as at breaks, before and after dinners, at receptions, etc.

Send a formal acceptance note to each participant, and ask them to confirm by submitting a request for any special equipment (AV, computer, etc.)

Where do you find good speakers? A good place to start is with fellow Altrusa conference planners. Speakers who have done a good job for them could do a good job for you. Here are some other sources for speakers:

- Government organizations
- Speakers and attendees from your previous conferences.
- Speakers from conferences sponsored by your colleagues. Create a file of brochures publicizing other related conferences.
- Journals, local papers, and magazines. Think about speakers when you are reading; you can find some interesting prospects.
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## **Conference Materials**

At a minimum, you need to provide some sort of printed program. For most conferences, the following is usually adequate: a simple folder with program, maps, lists of local restaurants and attractions, a name tag, and writing materials (pen and pad). For larger, better financed conferences, you may want to include a conference bag. Sometimes you can also ask vendors to provide "freebies" that you can include in the conference packet.

## **Name Tags**

If you plan properly, you should be able to generate name tags to be printed from your conference database program.

Keep the name tag layout simple: a small conference logo or title, the person's full name in LARGE, readable letters, and the person's club. Don't make people squint to read names on name tags.

The actual type of name tag (paper stick-on, pin on plastic case, hang-around-the-neck, etc.) depends on your preferences and budget. If you do provide stick-on tags, you may want to generate at least one tag for each day of the conference since they won't be able to reuse the tags. If you use plastic badges, you can invite attendees to recycle them at the end of the conference.