



Altrusa International

Media Guide

(A special thanks to District Five for providing much of the information in this media kit.)

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You Are Public Relations!

Much has been written about the use and process of public relations: writing a newsletter to relay information to your club members; contacting the media, local newspapers, radio and television, to advertise the programs, fundraisers and activities of the club; opportunities and methods for getting your name and projects to the attention of the community. These are necessary and important.

Altrusans, however, are also Public Relations. YOU are the best PUBLIC RELATIONS a club can have. Do you wear your pin at every Altrusa meeting and function? Do you wear your pin at work? (This is a very good way to solicit members.) Do you proudly display your membership certificate on the wall of your office? Is your Altrusa newsletter available in your office or other public places to provide information on your club to your friends and associates? Do you talk with your friends and others you come in contact with regarding your club, your projects, and the contacts you have made? Presenting YOURSELF is a great public relations tool.

You, each and every Altrusa member, are PUBLIC RELATIONS. What you say, what you do, and how you conduct yourself reflects on your individual club and on the Altrusa organization as a whole. BE PROUD TO BE AN ALTRUSAN.

Wear your pin, talk up your projects and display Altrusa emblems! Make everyone aware of our great organization and the many worthwhile projects that benefit the community.



It Means Getting the Word Out

Public Relations – Publicity – Marketing

There is often confusion about what term to use for communication information. All three terms — public relations, publicity and marketing — refer to calling attention to something or someone. For our purposes, as members of Altrusa, it means spotlighting our local club as an organization, Altrusans as members of that organization and of their community; and what Altrusans do — the projects and service we do.

Marketing usually conjures up the picture of a large commercial company deciding what color box to package their product in so that it will more likely catch the eye of a consumer.

Publicity has often meant a pre-planned “stunt” designed to get attention — good or bad — on the old premise — “I don’t care what they say about me as long as they spell my name right.”

Public Relations, on the other hand, refers to presenting an image to the public of who and what you are. Now we all know that Altrusans are very special people. They are people who care deeply about their communities, their country, their world, and their fellow human beings. They strive to improve things and solve problems everywhere they find them - children, students, senior citizens, community projects, and many others have been helped all over the world because Altrusans were there, and they cared. Now that’s a pretty wonderful image, isn’t it? Our public image should be at the top of the list, right? But that isn’t always true. Why? Because Altrusans, by and large, are rather humble people doing good things without any thought of personal gain. That’s wonderful. Humility is a virtue. But... we are losing opportunities to do even more good deeds — do them on a larger scale and do them with larger groups and therefore with more help.

Yes — “getting the word out” about who we are and what we do can bring many rewards. And it should be easy! An organization with such good qualities — made up of the leaders of the

community — continually accomplishing good things? Just shine the spotlight on yourselves. Think Public Relations as being just as important as everything else you do as a club. Blow your own horn! Not to be patted on the back or to be glorified, but to keep the name “ALTRUSA” in the public eye. How many times have you heard someone say “Altrusa? What’s Altrusa?” Should anyone still be saying that now as we celebrate so many years of service?



Often members say, “Well, what can I do?” Within the community you are the Public Relations team of Altrusa. Your club, and what it does, your members, and who they are, are what matter the most to the people to whom you provide service. Be sure the word gets out — before you present a fundraising event to generate interest and after a project is completed to promote what has been accomplished. It can lead to future information about Altrusa in every news release. Wouldn’t it be great if everyone said, “Altrusa? Oh, I heard about Altrusa on the radio or television or read about them in the paper.” or “Aren’t you the group who did the terrific job of opening a home for homeless teens?” Instead of “Altrusa? What is Altrusa?”

Spread the work on everything you do, every way you can. Don’t be humble! Use newspapers - daily, weekly, supermarket sheets, whatever. Remember local radio stations and cable TV stations can give you free coverage in the form of PSAs, public service announcements. Have your president or chairman available for interviews for print or broadcast media. Make it your business to know what programs exist

where this is possible. Never miss an opportunity to include information about Altrusa when promoting a particular project.

Enter the 21st century. Use your fax, online computer capabilities, and every cutting edge communication tool you have access to.

Don't overlook the simple things! Talk about Altrusa activities to your friends. Not only may it lead to new members, at the very least, it will generate support for a project when you need it. It's easier than you thought it was, isn't it? You may come up with even more ideas. Please send them to other clubs. If you do, we can pass them along to others. After all, we're proud to be Altrusans, so let's tell the world!



Ten Commandments of Being an Editor

- I. Thou shalt always be truthful.
- II. Thou shalt always tell the news as stated with no opinions unless so stated.
- III. Thou wilt always check for misspelling and incorrect dates in thy copy.
- IV. Thou wilt always honor the President (to a degree).
- V. Thou shalt always do thy best to be on time with thy edition regardless of the thoughtlessness of those reporting the news.
- VI. Thou shalt always be humble, accept the incorrect data that is given thee until the giver can be bludgeoned to death.
- VII. Thou shalt always add good tidings and cheer to thy copy so as not to be classified with the doomsayers and sourpusses of thy club.
- VIII. Thou shalt always praise for a job well done and reserve the criticism for the others with less consideration than thyself.
- IX. Thou shalt do thy best to serve as a mentor to another so as to keep continuity to thy responsible position.
- X. Thou shalt exchange thoughts, ideas, methods and any other data with members of other clubs and any other member for the betterment of Altrusa.

Tips on Publishing a Newsletter

(The following information was contributed by the former Editor and General Manager of The Daily Reporter, Coldwater, MI. The Editor participated in the judging competition of newsletters for the American Legion Auxiliary Department of Michigan.)

CALENDAR OR LIST OF EVENTS:

One of the primary purposes of a newsletter is to generate interest and participation in the goings-on in the local club. A calendar can easily be clipped and hung on the refrigerator (a place of honor in most homes). It serves as a tickler to remind members of upcoming events. The grid is recommended because it is visual and easy to read. Members' birthdays, special holidays, etc. may also be used to flesh-out the material.



ART ELEMENTS:

A “must have” is art elements of some sort — whether they be photos or clip art. It is important because the art draws the reader’s eye and breaks up the monotony of a gray/all typeface page. It is visually interesting and chances of it being read are greatly increased. Clip art books are available at most office supply stores and bookstores and many disks are available for the computer. There is also an abundance of clip art available FREE online

(Try <http://office.microsoft.com/clipart>)
Art elements brighten your newsletter.



VARY THE TYPE:

All capital letters and all same size type are offensive to the reader. Copy in all caps is tough to read — it strains the reader’s eyes. It also becomes impossible to read copy when all-caps sentences are single spaced.



SNAPPY HEADLINES:

Newsletter editors need to bear in mind that human animals have a really short attention span when it comes to reading material. Writers have exactly 2.3 seconds to grab the reader’s attention with their headlines. While some headlines, like “FREE MONEY” draw the reader into the copy following, others are dull and do not entice the reader into going further.



COLUMN WIDTH:

2 ½” width should be the maximum size for a single newsletter column. Anything beyond that width is not reader-friendly and creates eyestrain (unless the point size of the type is exceptionally large). When a reader has to draw their eyes along six inches to read the text, then back six inches to the next line, then proceed another six inches – well, you get the picture. By the time you read a half page of copy, your eyes are exhausted because they’ve had to scan almost 24 feet at a close range. The reader may be inclined to put the newsletter down, not because it’s boring, but because the eyes are too tired to go on reading. Note: Regarding online newsletters, horizontal presentation is often better than columnar spacing.



ADVERTISING:

Advertising is an excellent practice when budgets are tight. This revenue can certainly be used to improve the quality and appearance of a newsletter, not to mention offsetting postage costs. Twelve issues could be sold as a one package deal — and shouldn’t be a tough sell, either. Most members are a desirable target customer group from a marketing standpoint. They have a fair amount of disposable income.



Publish a Powerful Publication

Producing your Altrusa club’s newsletter can be rewarding and challenging. Although the primary aim is to communicate club news to members, it can also recognize members and club achievements educate and motivate your members. How can you, as an editor, achieve these goals and also make your newsletter sparkle with originality? Here are six easy steps toward starting or improving your Altrusa club’s newsletter.

1. KNOW YOUR READERS

Before you can plan an issue, you must know who your readers are and what they want and need to know about your club, your District, and International. Obtain demographics from your membership, conduct formal and informal polls and use your own instincts to develop an accurate reader profile.



2. FIND THE ARTICLES

Once you understand your audience, you can develop appropriate article ideas. As an editor, you should strive for a balance between news stories, i.e. reports on projects, business meetings, and features, i.e. member profiles, and articles that address District and International activities and news. You will also want to include stories about your local club.

3. WRITE THE ARTICLE

In all of your writing, strive to “express, not impress.” Your goal is communicating with your audience, not creating a new art form. News stories are the easiest ones to write because the facts are usually unambiguous. When writing news stories, follow the basic rules of journalism: cover the who, what, where, when, why and how of the story. Use quotes and avoid flowery language.

Features — “human interest” articles about Dorothy or Carrie — are often the most challenging and enjoyable to write. To locate good future prospects, express interest in your club members, ask questions, and listen carefully. Keep features short and write leads that pique readers’ interest. Use anecdotes and quotes to enliven the story. It’s permissible to tidy up someone’s grammar or language, but don’t put words in your subject’s mouth. Always mention the person’s position in the local club, District, or International and their responsibilities.



4. MAKE YOUR PUBLICATION LOOK INTERESTING

Visual appeal is extremely important. An attention grabbing layout is far more likely to attract readers than long columns of uninterrupted type. Experiment with bold designs, and - if possible – use color. Don’t cram too much information into the nameplate or on the front page. The name, a subtitle that clarifies the topic or audience, the name of your local club, number and volume number are sufficient.

Use bold headlines for the lead article. Use the daily newspaper as a layout guide to make sure the publication’s pages look “newsy.” Add photographs whenever possible. (Remember,

print ready make the best copy.) If photos aren’t possible, use illustrations or clip art to add interest to the pages.

Whether your newsletter is printed from a word processor, typewriter or computer, keep the design clean, inviting, and easy to read. Dividing your publication into departments creates a sense of continuity and ensures that the publication regularly covers topics of importance within the organization. Devoting a column in each issue to a specific project or committee guarantees equal coverage to various groups within the club. When cleverly designed, departments also add to a publication’s visual appeal.

5. CHECK SOURCES

Making sure the facts are correct is critical. However, checking with your sources doesn’t mean you should change a story to reflect the way the subject believes he or she should be portrayed.

When a story includes many facts, obtain written confirmation of the story’s accuracy. As the Russian proverb says, “Trust, but verify.”

6. ALWAYS TELL THE TRUTH

Your newsletter should not be club propaganda. If it is, it will lose credibility. And credibility and communication are what a newsletter should be about. You may never write the Great American Novel or crack a Watergate-style story, but there is great satisfaction in producing a balanced, informative, well-written and innovative publication.

Destroy the Top Ten Trouble Spots

Your mission is to find as many sloppy, lazy and boring words as possible in the articles in your newsletter. After you find these trouble spots, eliminate them. Editing can transform a so-so article into an effective, well-rounded presentation.

Think of editing as a challenge. Like a youngster playing a video game, you can search and destroy with your red pen or pencil. If you're laying out your publication on a computer, try using your software's "find" feature to help locate trouble spots. Then zap them into oblivion with a touch of the key.



All of the following items contribute to poor communication and need to be destroyed. So grab your newsletter and begin your mission!

1) *Excessive use of punctuation*: Sometimes the use of exclamation points, underlining, italics and the like create emotion that the words themselves lack. Try rewriting, using more powerful words to say what you mean.

2) *The word "that"*: Read the sentence without it. Usually the meaning will not be changed. For example, replace "Zapping trouble spots mean that you'll have a better article" with "Zapping trouble spots means you'll have a better article."

3) *The overused "I"*: Beginning too many sentences with 'I' bores an audience. Remember, people live to read their own names or references

to "you". As in, "You can master the universe if you follow this advice" not "I have some advice I'd like to give."

4) *Words that end in "-ly"*: It is wise to avoid adverbs since they tend to make articles bland. For a more vivid account, describe the action. For example, instead of "the alien quietly took over the world", try "the alien oozed into each computer, gaining control over the world one terminal at a time".

5) *Connectors*: "And," "but," "then," "furthermore," "perhaps," "however," "because" are often used unnecessarily. Eliminate the connecting words and you'll have two strong sentences instead of one weak one.

6) *Pronouns such as "he", "hers", "theirs"*: When you're talking about more than one person or thing, pronouns tend to confuse. You know "she" is your president's daughter and not your president, but your readers probably don't.

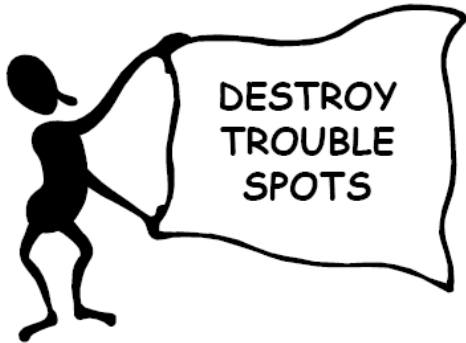
7) *Overused, vague words like "rather," "thing," "lots," "quite a few," "stuff," and "some"*: These are often the sign of a lazy writer. Take the time to find more precise words. Get rid of the clutter.

8) *Language that offends*: Eliminate the obvious sexist or racist phrases and choose words from your audience's point of view.

9) *Long sentences*: Short, descriptive sentences are more interesting for readers than sentences that seem to run on forever, because those reading lose track of what you are saying before you get to the end of the sentence and therefore your point is lost somewhere among all those words. Simplify!!

10) *Sentences that begin with "there is" or "There are"*: Start sentences with an action verb, and your listeners are more likely to pay attention. (Example: Rather than saying: "There are 37 members in the Altrusa Club of ____." Re-phrase it to read: "The membership of the

(Adapted from Altrusa International 1998)



Photographs

PICTURES ARE WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS

All information is more acceptable when photographs are attached, Why? Because pictures are worth a thousand words.

Contact the media first, advising them of your event, and maybe they'll send their photographer. If they do, don't tell him/her what to do — cooperate with them.

If a member takes the pictures, make sure you provide left to right identification. Use proper names, not nicknames. Make sure all members are dressed appropriately for the event and, if posters/banners are available, they are prominently placed to be seen in the picture. Stand close enough so that people can be seen and identified. Try to eliminate any extraneous surroundings.

Either black and white or color photographs can be used. Pictures are not returned unless specifically requested. If you wish your photograph returned, place proper identification information on the back of the photo. Photos with contrast are sharpest and reproduce best.

All photographs need a caption. Every caption tells the story of the photograph. When writing a caption, start with a "kicker" or introductory phrase to get the reader's attention. The first sentence should tell what is happening in the photograph, and it should contain a verb. Everyone in the photograph should be identified by name. Today's readers are impatient and want to read in short bursts rather than long articles.

News Media

TYPES OF NEWS MEDIA:

Medium	Characteristics	Deadlines
Television	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is a highly visible medium; effective for demonstrating behavior; use backdrops that visually portray the importance of your message. • Graphics are often used by TV producers as part of segments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Day before” for breaking news (contact the assignment editor). • Usually by 10 a.m. to make the 6 p.m. news. • 3-8 weeks in advance for public announcements.
Radio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use 10 to 15 second sound bites. • Be aware of tone and firmness of voice; lack of hesitancy in responding to questions adds credibility. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow several days notice for public events – with other news, the same day usually is adequate.
Newspapers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide more in-depth treatment of a subject. • Print reporters may use direct quotes from press statement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily a.m.:2-3 p.m. the afternoon before. • Daily p.m.: early a.m. the day of issue. • Weekly issues: 3-5 days before the issue • Check local deadlines as they may vary.
Magazine Articles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target to specific segments of public. • Explain in more detail. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6-8 weeks before publication goes to press.

Remember the members of the media are also members of the community. They will be interested, both as private citizens and as professionals, in what you are doing. Only two keys are needed to open the door of interest for the media – (1) understanding what they want in a story and (2) making sure that the information is provided to them in a clear and timely manner. Effective media relations are simple as long as you observe these guidelines.

Reports and producers all seek similar story elements: audience appeal; issues that stimulate debate, controversy and even conflict; stories that generate high ratings and increased readership; and fresh perspectives on an issue that will sustain public interest. They try to avoid “old Hat” stories that have been duplicated by a competitor or are inaccurate or incomplete, as well as people who are overly persistent when a story has been rejected.

Influence Public Opinion

Op-Ed Pieces and Letters to the Editor are tools for expression within newspapers. Some points to remember include:

For Op-Ed Pieces:

- Op-Ed pieces are articles written with a viewpoint.
- They usually appear opposite the editorial page (thus “op-ed”).
- A newspaper will usually accept up to two op-eds per year.
- The piece ought to be somewhat short (ideally 800 words), well thought out and written, persuasive, and authored by the head of an organization or someone of similar status.

For Letters to the Editor:

- Your letter is more likely to get printed if it’s short (less than 400 words).
- Develop your main idea within the first two paragraphs, and if you are responding to a specific article, cite its title, author and date in your first sentence.



Public Service Announcements (PSAs):

When writing:

- 8-15 lines in length, double-spaced
- provide a contact name and number
- submit 3-4 weeks ahead of event

When calling:

- The best time to call is on a Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday morning; never on a Friday or just before or after a holiday weekend



- Ask for the person who schedules PSAs, not the general manager, sales manager, or news director
- Identify yourself clearly and take no more than two minutes. Be prepared to
 1. give the name of your club and specify it is a service club
 2. tell the purpose of the event or project in one sentence
 3. “sell” your PSA – remember that it is competing with many other worthwhile announcements
- Offer to have the tapes or scripts delivered to the station’s reception desk
- Send a thank you note, whether or not your PSA is accepted

Press Releases and Public Relations

The press release is a primary public relations tool. Don't be afraid to write one. It's more challenging than a sensible, straightforward business letter and has a list of acceptable subjects limited only by your imagination and budget for paper. Whatever is newsworthy — elections of officers, service project highlights, awards presentations, visits of district officers — deserves a press release.

Follow a few simple rules, and your release will contain information in a logical order permitting a professional newsperson to review the release for use with a minimum of editing.

How to Formalize a Press Release

- Type on standard letter-sized paper. Use your most inexpensive letterhead since editors are unimpressed by glitz.
- Include contact information — a name and telephone number with the name and address of the organization.
- If you include a headline (many editors prefer to write their own), type in caps. The headline summarizes the content of the release and must contain a verb.
- Double space. Use wide margins; 1 1/2 inches to the left, one inch on the right, one inch at the bottom. Begin typing the information 1/3-1/2 of the way down the page. The space allows the editor to make notes and assign a headline. Indent paragraphs.
- If continuing to a second page, type "more" centered under the last line of copy on the first page. On page two, type the page number and slug line (a one word description of the title/story) two inches from the top of the page, flush left.
- Under the final paragraph, center the termination symbol. "###".
- • Type on only one side of the paper. Keep the release to a single page if at all possible.

How to Get Your Press Release into Print

- Present your story in the "man bites dog" fashion. That is, come up with an original, but truthful angle (story idea) for describing your event.
- Put your "lead" or the compelling reason for writing your news release in the first paragraph. The lead must answer the classic five W's of a news story: who, what, where, when and why. Furthermore, the release must be able to stand by itself as a complete news story in case the editor runs out of space and needs to cut the additional information you supply. Finally, your lead should have a local angle.
- When you give the media a good lead story, also give them the name of a contact person, first making sure that the contact person is reachable. Be careful, too, when providing alternative contacts. Make sure you inform them that the media may be calling, and when possible, supply the contacts with a copy of the release.
- Follow-up calls are very important. You cannot just send out your release and hope for the best. You have to call and remind the media of your event and inquire if they will be sending a reporter to cover it. If they are not coming, offer to send them information and a photograph of the event as soon as possible after the event.
- In addition to supplying the media with interesting angles and well written releases, it is also very important to thank them for their coverage, either by inviting them to an end-of-the-year dinner/meeting or through a simple thank you note.

MODEL PRESS RELEASE FOR A FUND RAISER

Contact: Altrusa International, Inc. of _____
(Name, office)
(Address)
(Phone)

Altrusa International, Inc. of _____ continued their local tradition when they (*describe event*). This year over (*amount of money*) was raised and more than (*number*) people participated.

For the last (*number of years*) Altrusa International, Inc. of _____ has (*sponsored, cosponsored, organized etc.*) this event. Members have raised more than (*amount of money*) directly for (*beneficiary*).

In addition, the _____ club has (*developed, advocated, supported etc.*) programs on behalf of (*list of major past and present projects, i.e. abused women, neglected children, scholarships, literacy, etc.*).

Altrusa International, Inc. of _____ is a group of (*number*) women (*men, if appropriate*) involved in programs to benefit their community. Members combine their talents to develop and finance projects meeting specific community needs and further the programs of Altrusa International, Inc. The _____ Altrusa club has been recognized with (*number*) state and (*number*) national awards.

(Name of writer)

(Position)