

Newsletter Editor/
Communications
Kit



AMBUCS™

What a good newsletter will do for your chapter:

A well edited chapter newsletter can be one of your most effective communications tools. A good newsletter reflects a chapter whose members care about quality.

An effective chapter newsletter will . . .

- Stimulate attendance
- Advertise your chapter
- Give recognition to members
- Provide program information
- Boost chapter morale
- Aid in membership development

To be effective, your chapter newsletter must have an objective and should achieve that objective. It should be well planned and attractive. It must be published regularly and reflect the AMBUCS™ standard of excellence.

What makes a newsletter effective?

There are many qualities that make a chapter newsletter look good and provide interesting reading, but the presentation can be divided into three general categories: **content, readability, and visual impact or layout.**

Content

The most important requirement for an outstanding newsletter is to have a balanced presentation of material. This will include:

- Recognition of members' achievements
- Encouragement to attend activities
- Brief summary of past meetings
- List of guests in attendance
- Awareness of the activities and programs at the district, region, and national levels
- Short biographical sketches of members
- Resume of chapter business

All of these items need not be included in one issue of your newsletter, but should appear regularly in order to give a well-rounded presentation.

Your newsletter might open with a brief message from your Chapter President, Vice President or, on occasion, the District Governor, and continue with an encouragement to attend upcoming events. When previewing upcoming programs, do not merely list the speaker's name and title, but write a brief summary of the person or a teaser about the program to stimulate reader interest. This is one reason why the editor must get advance information on speakers and activities from other committee chairmen and the chapter officers.

The newsletter should also welcome guests by name, address, and place of employment; introduce new members and include short biographies of chapter officers and other members. Your newsletter should report chapter business, including meetings of the Chapter Board of Directors, and district, region, and national activities. Member activities should also be included, such as birthdays, anniversaries, job changes, promotions, etc.

A chapter newsletter is an important part of the National President's Citation Award, and should relate to the steps outlined in the Chapter President's Scorecard toward the standard of chapter excellence. Each chapter officer should keep copies of the newsletter in his/her file for reference and recognition. Be sure to use information from the Blue Chip Report, The AMBUCS™ Leader, the AMBUCS™ Web site, www.ambucs.org, and *AMBUCS™ MAGAZINE* to keep members informed on goals and programs of the National Association.

Remember, your newsletter is not just a history book and meetings schedule. If it degenerates to that, it fails to com-

municate. Each issue should include ideas and items which are of interest.

Readability

Be sure to carefully proofread your newsletter for typing errors or mistakes in grammar. Pay close attention to spelling and punctuation.

You are in the best position to judge how the materials should be presented, whether it should be serious or not, depending upon the makeup of your chapter. Be sure your writing is clear and accurate. "Small" words do a better job than "big" words.

Visual impact and layout

Your newsletter should be designed to attract reader attention. Use the most prominent position on the page to feature upcoming events. Break up text with boxes, borders, creative lettering, and graphics or photos.

If your newsletter contains columns and headlines arranged in an attractive, logical manner, you have a good beginning. Now experiment! Try balancing the page in a variety of ways, rearranging articles and images to lead the reader through the page. Vary the size and shape of headlines and clip art to avoid monotony. These are approaches that make a good newsletter a great newsletter. The main point to remember is to make your ideas look deliberate, not accidental. Be bold in your design. Try something which may be new or different.

Production methods

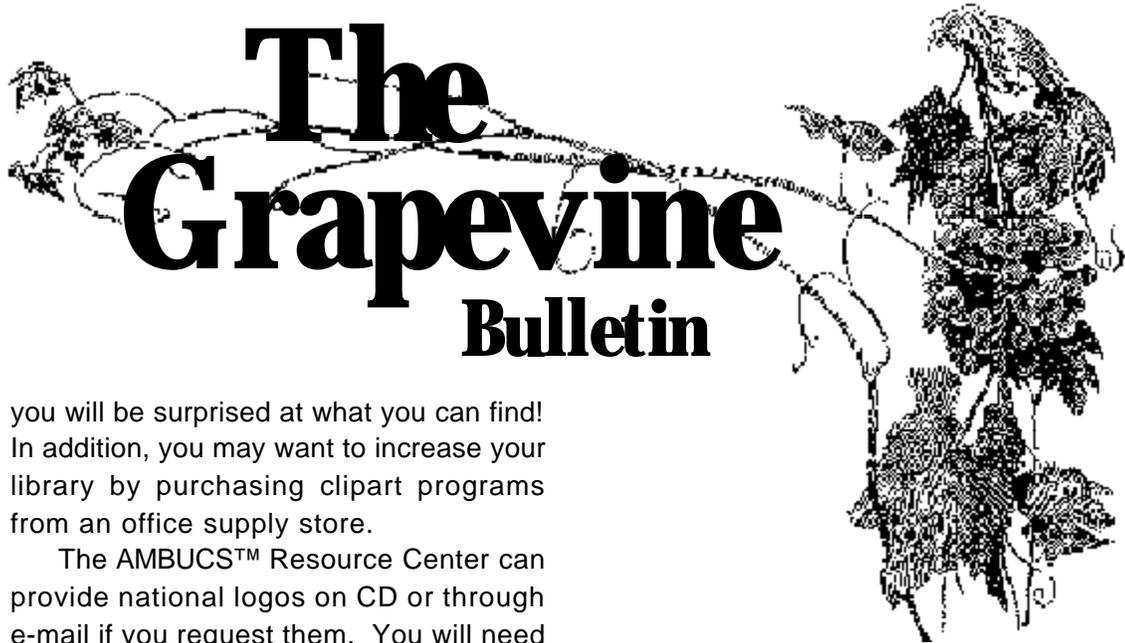
The actual assembly of a newsletter involves typing the text and headlines, selecting and sizing the artwork, then arranging them in visually appealing position on a master template. It is recommended that you use a computer or wordprocessor to produce your newsletter, but a typewriter can also be used. A computer will allow you to produce a more professional-looking publication as well as allow you access to clipart. It is also recommended that you frequently use the AMBUCS™ logos (AMBUCS™, AmTryke® therapeutic tricycle, AMBUCS™ Scholars-Scholarships for Therapists, etc.). These logos are available on the AMBUCS™ Web site, www.ambucs.org, as well as in the Communications section of this CD.

Computers are by far the easiest and most effective way to produce a newsletter. There are many types of programs out there that will make your creation easy. Many of you will have access to Microsoft Word. This is a simple word processing program that will allow you to create columns, boxes, fonts and insert clipart. There are more advanced programs that can also be used to create your newsletter. The easiest thing to do is to use a method that you are most comfortable with and a program that you are familiar with.

Artwork

National logos are available through the AMBUCS™ Web site, www.ambucs.org, or on this CD in the Communications section. If you are in need of additional AMBUCS™ logos, you can always contact the AMBUCS™ Resource Center at ambucs@ambucs.org. General images, clipart, accompany many software programs or can be found for free on-line. Conduct a simple search for clipart and

The Grapevine Bulletin



you will be surprised at what you can find! In addition, you may want to increase your library by purchasing clipart programs from an office supply store.

The AMBUCS™ Resource Center can provide national logos on CD or through e-mail if you request them. You will need to tell us the format needed.

The Template

After you have established your resources for text and graphics, you must create a template and masthead as a foundation for later newsletters. A template is simply a working surface to paste the contents upon. In all practical sense, it will be a piece of paper containing the masthead and any other text or illustrations that will consistently appear from issue to issue (i.e. page numbers, chapter's name, Newsletter Editor's name, etc.). The template also provides margins, establishing where text and images can be placed to insure uniform column widths and alignment of adjacent elements. If using a typewriter or word processor you should reproduce enough templates to accommodate the number of issues you intend to publish in the year.

The Masthead

As was mentioned before, your template should contain the newsletter's masthead, since it will appear in the same position issue after issue. The masthead is comprised of:

- **Your newsletter's name and any logo**
- **Name of the chapter**
- **Time and place of chapter meeting**
- **City and state**
- **Newsletter Editor's name, address, and phone number.**
- **Publication date**

The main feature of a masthead is the newsletter's name. The name should show a relationship to the chapter or to AMBUCS™ in general. It may be humorous, but should not be downgrading to the chapter or its purpose. "Newsletter" alone is not a very creative name, and reflects a lack of concern for quality. Along with a distinctive name, the masthead is the perfect place for a special logo, which will give individuality to your chapter and its newsletter.

What about reproduction?

Unless your newsletter contains photographs, or incorporates color, copies of 500 or less can be adequately and affordably reproduced by photocopying. Look for a printer or office supply business with state-of-the-art equipment. A desktop model, or self-service, copier will not give you the quality reproduction you require. Instead, assign the task to a high speed, production copier capable of dark, legible copies. These machines are capable of reproducing large solids, minimizing the shadows that appear along the edges of pasted material, and providing duplex copies. Most can collate and staple multiple page newsletters.

Should your newsletter contain photographs and/or you intend to print with a color other than black, visit with a quick printer who can advise you on preparing your newsletter for offset printing, unless you have the capabilities to print in good color quality on your home printer.

In either case, you may wish to consider color paper as an inexpensive way to dress up an otherwise plain newsletter.

What about mailing?

Be sure your newsletter is sent to members well in advance of the next meeting. Copies should also be sent to your district and region officers and AMBUCS™ Resource Center, as well as your local Chamber of Commerce and local news media. Try to exchange newsletters with as many other chapters as possible for both current information and ideas. Guests should always be put on your mailing list following their visit.

If you fold your newsletter in half or thirds, leaving enough space for an address and postage stamp on the back, you

have a self-mailer which saves the cost of an envelope and the labor of stuffing and sealing it. Make a sample of your self-mailer, using the same weight paper as the actual newsletter, and take it to the post office for approval. They will advise you any special postal requirements that you may not have considered.

What about Faxing or E-mailing?

You may be surprised at how easy and cost effective it is to fax or e-mail your newsletter. If enough of your members have fax machines or e-mail capabilities, it is a great way to send your newsletter. The advantages include no paper costs, no copying cost, no folding and stuffing, and no postage costs. The other big advantage is instant delivery. Check into it, you may find it's a great way to keep your chapter informed.

Many AMBUCS chapters have incorporated a policy of sending the newsletter via e-mail to members who have supplied e-mail addresses and via mail to those who have not.

What about you the Editor?

Your effort on the chapter newsletter will reward you the same way membership in your chapter does. You broaden your experience. You help others with community service experience. You share information, and have the fun of seeing your writing in print. And you stay on top of everything that's happening in the chapter.

A few chapters assign a different member as editor each week in order to give all members the opportunity for experience.

This method is not recommended because the newsletter will tend to lack personality, and never really develop into a quality publication.

A suggested alternative is to have a permanent editor with rotating contributing editors who each write about one aspect of the chapter's activities. This way every member can participate, and there is still continuity in the newsletter.

Be sure the newsletter editor's name and address are sent to the AMBUCS™ Resource Center with the New Chapter Officer Listing or separately. This is a great way for your chapter to be kept informed of what's happening in AMBUCS™.

Is help available?

The AMBUCS™ Resource Center is always ready to help editors with any problems they may encounter. The AMBUCS™ Resource Center can provide newsletter editors with additional logos, content ideas, and guidance. Meanwhile, contact us at:

AMBUCS™ Resource Center
PO Box 5127
High Point, NC 27262
Tel. (336) 852-0052 Fax (336) 852-6830
e-mail: ambucs@ambucs.org
www.ambucs.org

Newsletter Worksheet

Next meeting time and place _____

Next program topic and speaker _____

Brief resume of next speaker _____

Last program recap _____

Attendance Recap _____

President's message _____

District and national news _____

Projects report _____

Prospective members/guests _____

New members _____

Member of the week _____

Coming events _____

General Information
(Board action, sick, members in the news, birthdays)
