Michigan Astrobugs

Information for Nationwide User Groups

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Below is a list of things to do to get your new user group functioning. This is the same outline we used to organize our group.

First of all, get a dealer list of the names of people who bought Astrocades in your area. Add to it the list we gave you. Once you have this list, call your first meeting of all the names you have accumulated. Make your first meeting semi-informal to get everyone acquainted, and to explain what you are going to do.

Set scheduled user group meeting dates and elect officers. Also, designate how often you should hold board meetings (we hold four meetings a year).

Set up a committee (usually your board) to get together information for your newsletter. This is an information sheet used to send to your members, letting them know the whereabouts of your next meeting. This should be sent out a month in advance of your meeting. It should include:

- A schedule of events for your meeting… speakers, etc.
- Who to contact for information on events for the meetings.
- Any news of the arcade, its' software and hardware.

Also at the meetings, we have included some of the following information, to help combat problems and have lots of fun…

- A corner store. This is a special corner we set aside to sell software that our members write. We also sell any other products that are associated with the Arcade such as dust covers, special handles, hardware, etc.
- What to do with kids at a meeting. We have lots of members with kids, and we like to include them in our meetings. However, we also like to keep our meetings down to a dull roar, so we don't allow them to spend the meeting time playing games, and disrupting the other people. Just the same, we do take the time before and after the meetings to play games and have extra fun. Please explain that kids must also sit still during a meeting and listen to the speakers. Also, that they don't help themselves to any games, even if they're setting there, or set up in a machine. This saves a lot of hard feelings and lost items.
- If you take any articles to the meeting, please be sure you label everything, even your handles and tape cases. This way, you will find it much easier to find everything when it's time to go home.

- Do not have excessive equipment at the meetings. This only causes crowded areas, and more chance of losing things. Designate who should bring what for each meeting.

As far as drawing up by-laws, that is up to each individual group. You can do this in whichever form you need.

We are also trying to hold game tournaments at our meetings. Choose a cartridge for your tournament, the level it will be played, and charge $1.00 per person to play it. The high scores can win a cartridge, a club tape, a T-shirt, what ever you wish to use money for. It also gives people a chance to check out the cartridges.

It's a very good idea to have someone at your meetings who can give a fifteen minute to a half-an-hour talk, teaching beginning BASIC. This will be an attention getter for people who would like to learn how to program, and can't quite understand the books.

We're also putting together a club tape. We're hoping to have several user groups so this, so we can sell our tapes to each other. It will consist of quality games, which will be donated by our members. If they have any such games to donate, have them send a copy of the game and listings to your board members. Accept and quality games that the members wrote themselves. Be sure they are not games that have been donated elsewhere, such as the *Arcadian*. However, they may be games which they sell. The charge we have chosen is $4.00 for club members and $10.00 for non-members. Any monies made go into the club treasury.

You will also find that if you'd like to hold a class on something special, do it after your main meeting. Have a suggestion box, to let people say what they want to learn. After your meetings, break into special interest groups, such as advanced programming, machine language, etc.

Set a price for your membership. We have set a $5.00 yearly fee, to cover mailing costs. You will have to set your own fees, in accordance with your costs. You also have to consider the cost of having your newsletter copied or printed. You also charge a small fee at your meetings, to cover refreshments. This fee, as we charge it, is $2.00 for members, and $1.00 for each child or spouse.

Where to hold meetings. This is a real toss-up for each group. We have had meetings at member's homes, at shopping malls and at community rooms. For each meeting, you have someone in charge. This person is in charge of purchasing cookies, like we do here. At the end of their meeting, present the bill for the refreshments to the treasurer, to be paid out of the meeting fees. Any leftover monies will be added to the treasury.

Whenever you get a new member, be sure to give them the receipt for their club fees, to be used as a membership card. We have membership cards printed on business cards, that each member keeps on hands. These cards are also used for any club discounts.

We also review and show new products, both software and hardware, and make sure there is enough time left over for a bit of gaming and trading. However, we do ask that you NO NOT trade programs that you have bought, for this is not fair to the programmers. It only helps raise the prices of software. It would be really appreciated if everyone follows that train of thought!

Please let us know how you're doing, by sending us one of your newsletters. If there is anything else we can help you with, please let us know… call or write anytime.

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