

# Part 3

## Strategies

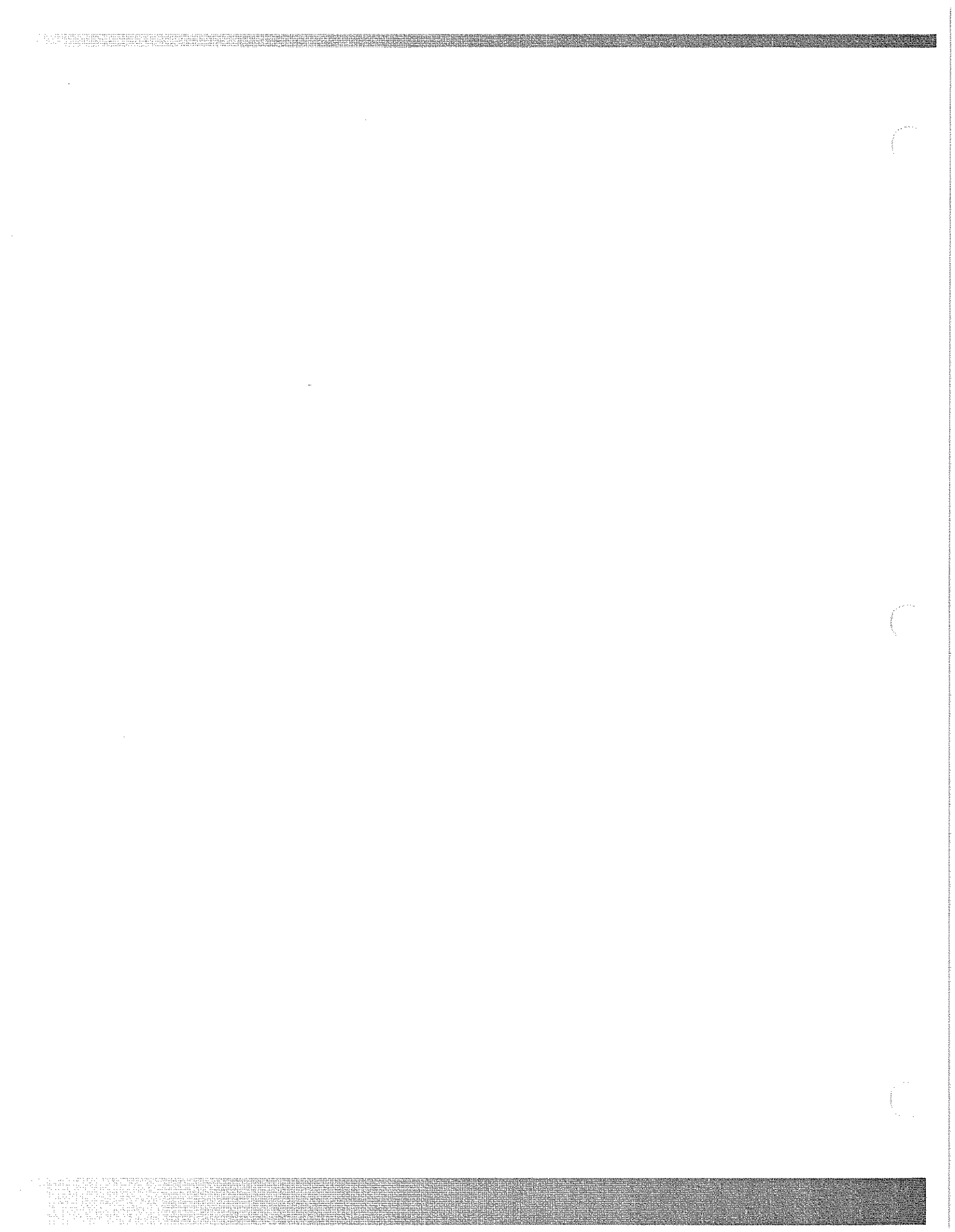
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This section provides a variety of strategies to be used in training and planning for a women's ministry.

These strategies should be adapted to the particular needs and structure of each church. These strategies do not stand alone. They should be used in conjunction with a study of *Leadership for Women in the Church* and/or *Women's Ministry in the Local Church*. To do otherwise will reduce a women's ministry to events and tasks.

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## 1. *Evaluating and Designing a Women's Ministry*

The umbrella model is one way to design a women's ministry. You may prefer another visual. The purpose is to help a leadership team identify the following:

- the various components of a ministry and visualize them as a part of a whole
- what needs and objectives are met by each component
- what characteristics of the covenant are expressed by each component

This model also helps a leadership team to do a yearly evaluation to determine if any component needs to be omitted or added.

A completed umbrella is also a communication tool to publicize the women's ministry to the church.

1. Use the umbrella graphic on the next page to explain the following:

- Some women's ministries are single-focused. They have only one or two spokes on their ministry umbrella and they expect all women to huddle under those spokes. There may be a traditional monthly Circle, or a weekly Bible study, but no other opportunities for women who cannot attend these functions. A better approach is for the leadership of a women's ministry to think in terms of a multi-spoke umbrella.

2. Use the graphics to make a handout for each participant or make a transparency for an overhead projector, or you may prefer to draw an umbrella on a flip chart.

3. Use the following if you are evaluating your current ministry:

- Put everything the women's ministry does on a spoke. It does not matter how many spokes the umbrella has.
- Ask: What else should our women's ministry be doing?
- Ask: What things on the umbrella are no longer needed?

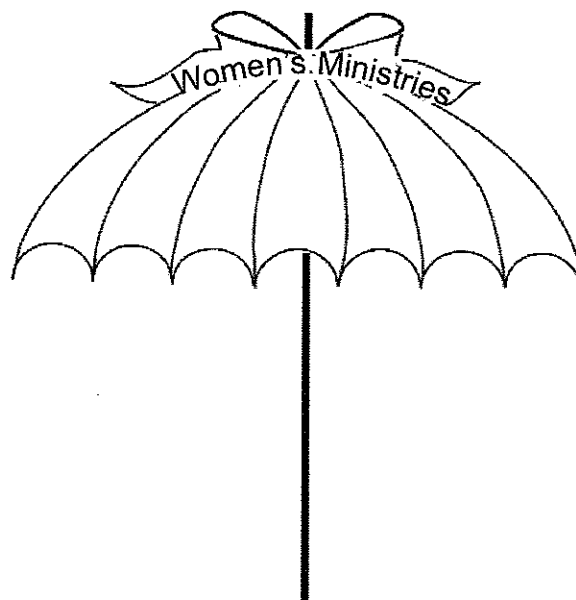
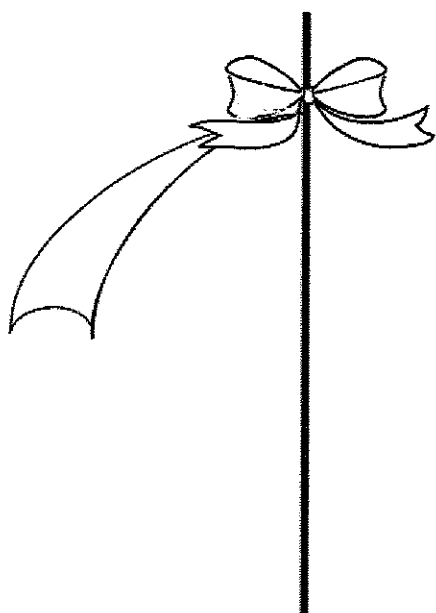
4. Use the following if you are designing a women's ministry:

- Ask: What are some things you would like for a women's ministry to do? (List all the ideas, but explain that you will eventually prioritize to determine which things are feasible and purposeful.)

5. Once the umbrella is designed, add the names of the women who are in charge of each spoke.

6. Advantages of this approach:

- You can evaluate each year to determine if some projects or activities are no longer needed.
- You can evaluate each year to determine if additional spokes are needed. This helps to prevent a ministry from becoming entrenched.
- Once the umbrella is designed, it can be used in publicity to explain the women's ministry to the church.



## 2. *Assessing Needs and Interests of Women*

It is important for leaders to know the women they lead. The suggestions below will help a leadership team to gather information from the various groups of women and develop a ministry that addresses all of the women. Every woman may not be able to attend women's ministry Bible studies and events, but the leadership should attempt to minister to and equip all the women in the church.

1. Discuss: What do we do to assure that our ministries are relevant and accessible for women of all ages and circumstances? For example:
  - Young mothers?
  - Women employed outside the home?
  - Single women (widows, never married, divorced)?
  - Older women?
  - Women with special needs?
2. Determine how many women are involved in the women's ministry. There will be some women who do not want to participate, some are hindered by their circumstances, and some are involved in other ministries in the church. The important question is not how many women attend Bible studies and events, but how is the women's ministry ministering to all of the women in the church? Brainstorm to identify reasons women are not involved. Some ideas:
  - Are women offered substantive ministry opportunities?
  - Is there a lack of creativity in communication and women are not aware of study and ministry opportunities?
  - Are women using their energies in ministries outside the church?
  - Are there a variety of opportunities to attract the variety of interests and gifts of women in different seasons and circumstances of life?
  - Are the women's needs being addressed?
  - Do women feel that they belong and are accepted?
  - Are there particular groups of women who are not involved (homeschoolers, single women, women with a mentally or physically handicapped child, widows, etc.)?
3. Listen to the women to assess their needs and interests. You may want to do a survey of the women. This assessment can have the added benefit of increasing their support for the women's ministry. Whether this is done formally, with a written survey, or informally, by talking to women, attempt to include all of the female population of the church, not just those involved in the women's ministry. Basically, you need the following information:
  - What do you like about what the women's ministry is doing?
  - What do you think could be improved?
  - What suggestions do you have for the women's ministry?
  - What ministry would you be interested in helping with?

If it is a written survey, you may want to include more specific information, such as listing various opportunities for ministry and asking the women to check their areas of interest. You could also use this to gather such information as birthday, anniversary, interests, hobbies, etc. However, for planning purposes you only need the basic information above.

Another option: Determine the needs of specific groups by meeting with representatives. For example, invite two or three women representing various groups for coffee. The leadership team could be paired to meet with different groups such as widows, single women, women employed outside the home, homeschoolers, etc. Ask questions such as:

- What encourages women in your season and circumstance of life to participate in the women's ministry? What hinders their participation?
- What are some ways the women's ministry could encourage and support women in your season and circumstance of life?
- How can the women's ministry effectively communicate with women in the church?
- What particular ministry gifts and interests do the women you represent bring to the church?

This last question may lead to a new ministry such as the widows meeting monthly to support one another and then visit shut-ins. They may even mobilize the shut-ins for a prayer ministry for the young mothers in the church. A picture of a mother and her children could be given to each shut-in with the request that she pray for them. The young family could be encouraged to write and visit the shut-in. Often, those who need to be ministered to can become a resource for ministry, and this involvement meets their need to be needed.

After the brainstorming session, work with the pastor to determine if there is any overlap with the responsibilities of the elders and/or deacons and how the women can support and work with them. Publicize the needs. For example, the widows may express the need for someone to do home repairs, help with insurance forms, give financial advice, etc. Perhaps people with skills in these areas can become a task force to help widows. Many times people who do not have gifts of teaching, music, etc. feel they do not have skills that are needed in the church, and this kind of opportunity can utilize their abilities.

4. A profile of the women can be very helpful. Information for a profile and questions to assess needs and interest could be combined.

- How many women are in the church?
- On the line below, fill in how many (or the approximate number) in each age group.

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13-19      20-30      30-40      40-50      50-60      60-70      over70

- Marital status:

How many are married? \_\_\_\_\_  
How many have never been married? \_\_\_\_\_  
How many are divorced? \_\_\_\_\_  
How many are widowed? \_\_\_\_\_

• How many (or what percentage)

Work outside the home? \_\_\_\_\_

Do not work outside the home? \_\_\_\_\_

Have preschool children? \_\_\_\_\_

Homeschool? \_\_\_\_\_

Have children and work outside the home? \_\_\_\_\_

Do not have children at home and do not work outside the home? \_\_\_\_\_

• How many

Grew up in your church? \_\_\_\_\_

Have been in the church more than five years? \_\_\_\_\_

Have been in the church less than five years? \_\_\_\_\_

Are confined because of illness or because they are someone's caregiver? \_\_\_\_\_

### *3. Gathering Information from Elders and Deacons*

In order to be sure that the vision and goals of the women's ministry are consistent with the overall vision and goals of the church, you will need to communicate with the pastor and/or elders, and the deacons, to get their ideas and requests. You may want to ask for an appointment with the pastor, or you can send a letter expressing your desire to integrate the women's ministry with the total ministry of the church. Questions such as the ones below can help you gather the needed information.

1. What is the women's ministry doing now that is helpful to you?
2. What other responsibilities would you like for the women's ministry to assume?
3. What is women's ministry doing that you would like discontinued?
4. What can the women's ministry do to coordinate with the total ministry of the church?
5. What can the women's ministry do to support the vision and goals of the church?
6. How can the women's leadership team pray for you?

## 4. *Determining Opportunities for Ministries of Community and Compassion*

A leadership team should always be outward-focused. One part of discipling women is to encourage them to be involved in ministering to others. The following suggestions can help to determine needs and opportunities for women to serve the church, the community and the world.

1. Talk with the pastor and the deacons to determine needs that the women's ministry could help to meet. Cooperate in diaconal ministries. (See *Women's Ministry in the Local Church*, chapter six).
2. Assess needs by asking about the women's involvement with community ministries such as a homeless shelter, crisis pregnancy center, nursing home, etc. Meet with these women and discuss how the women's ministry can support and help them.
3. Meet with the missions committee and ask how the women's ministry can support them.

## *5. Intentional, Strategic Planning*

Every ministry, project and activity should be carefully planned. Be intentional and strategic. There should be a stated purpose that helps to accomplish the over-all purpose of the women's ministry and the church. Be prayerful and purposeful.

1. The following questions can help a leadership team to be intentional in planning programs and activities. Use these questions to plan and implement every study, event, project, and activity. Every activity or ministry will not accomplish all of these, but each activity should accomplish some of them.
  1. Why are we doing this?
  2. How will this glorify God by reflecting His character?
  3. How will the gospel be presented?
  4. How will this teach women to think biblically?
  5. What will this teach women about biblical womanhood?
  6. What will this teach women about living covenantally?
  7. How will this build community among the women?
  8. How will it build community with other members, age groups and ministries of the church?
  9. How will this extend the boundaries of the church to enfold those outside the church?
  10. How will this demonstrate Jesus' compassion?
  11. What characteristic of the covenant does this express?
  12. Will what we do and how we do it have a life-giving or a life-taking effect in our church?
  13. Will what we do and how we do it help or hinder our church leaders?
  14. How will we communicate our answers to the above questions to the church so that they understand why we do what we do?

## 2. The Four “P’s” of Events:

**Purpose:** The purpose of all events should be integrated with and reflect the total philosophy, purpose, and goals of the women’s ministry. Implication: The event does not detract from the overall ministry focus but enhances and furthers the goals.

**Planning:** The planning of an event flows from a purpose that establishes a baseline for the plan. Implication: Personnel, place, publicity and audience are all decisions emerging from that purpose. A practical consequence is that the leadership team is setting the agenda rather than a guest speaker establishing the agenda.

**Process:** The process of planning and implementation are more significant than the final product. Implication: The atmosphere on the planning team must reflect Jesus so that the event glorifies God.

**Prayer:** More important than the event plan is the prayer plan. Implication: Be intentional about the prayer guide, who will pray, and who will “work” the prayer plan.

## 3. Event Planning Guide

- **Evaluation:** Purpose, planning, and process begins with prayerful evaluation. There are many useful evaluative questions including the universal evaluative question: How will this event celebrate and maintain our unity in Christ?

Begin each planning time with an evaluation of the last similar event. What was the purpose? What expectations were met or unmet? What were the greatest weakness and strength? What was the reputation of the event? What can you build on? What do you need to overcome? What were some unexpected benefits of the last event?

Be brutal in constructive evaluation, including inviting the toughest critic to the process. Learn from criticism.

- What is the philosophy and purpose of the ministry sponsoring this event, including current goals?
- What is the purpose of this particular event?
- What is the prayer plan for the event?
- What are the goals and anticipated outcomes including a follow-up plan?
- **Creative planning:** include themes, teaching methods, activities, play time, meals, etc.
- What personnel are needed?
- What kind of environment will enhance the purpose of the event?
- **Publicity:** What’s in a name? What word or words best describe this event? Is it a retreat, a conference, a seminar, a gathering or a party?
- **Creative communication:** What will appeal to the audience? What are the most effective ways to communicate and inform? How will the purpose be communicated? How will women register? Are there groups that need personal invitations?

4. **Speakers:** The planning team must determine whether a speaker is needed to accomplish the purpose of the event. The purpose should determine who is invited to speak. No matter how effective a speaker is, it is not good stewardship of time or resources or of the speaker's gifts, to invite someone who will not help you accomplish the purpose and goals of the event.

- The planning team should be prepared to provide the following information when extending an invitation to a speaker: The purpose of the event, the anticipated audience, a brief history of past events, the reason you are inviting this speaker, the format including the time allotted for the speaker, and the financial arrangements including what honorarium you can offer or whether the speaker has a fee.

- **Speaker etiquette:**

- What do you want from the speaker—handouts, small group discussion guides, and small group meetings with leadership?
- Provide the speaker with the prayer plan.
- Be diligent in sticking to the event plan so that singing, testimonies, etc., do not reduce the time you have given the speaker.
- Accommodations: Consider the speaker's need for space and privacy. Ask about any particular needs.
- Assign a hostess to the speaker to be sure needs are met and that there is someone assigned for mealtimes.
- Communicate with the speaker. Send publicity, brochures, and website addresses.