



Silver Circle Starter Kit



American Chemical Society
800-227-5558 x4407

“Silver Circle” Starter Kit

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What are ACS and “Silver Circles”?

The American Chemical Society (ACS) is a nonprofit educational and scientific organization chartered by Congress. The Society is a self-governed individual membership organization of more than 158,000 members. ACS offers opportunities for peer interaction, participation in governance through committees, divisions and local sections, professional development and a chance to be involved in any number of the 33 technical divisions. Many professionals in chemistry and the chemical sciences become involved in the ACS as student affiliates during college or join just after and are members for more than fifty years.

The term “Silver Circle” was coined in 2003 by ACS past-President Eli Pearce to represent the valuable riches that are present in the growing group of ACS members who have reached a certain age and level of expertise—they may or may not be retired and may or may not appreciate the term “senior”. Silver Circles are active groups of ACS members, participating in the programs that ACS has to offer, gathering to participate in activities of mutual interest and sharing the wisdom of their collective years in chemistry, the chemical sciences, engineering and other related fields.

The Role of “Silver Circles”

Silver Circles can be created in any ACS Local Section to focus on offering opportunities to, representing the needs of and offering programming and services for the mature chemists in a particular area. Each Silver Circle will have its own culture and flavor but the role within the section is to bring people together to share in some way a mutual passion for chemistry and the chemical sciences. Depending on the section’s demographics, the Silver Circle could be the main outreach arm of a local section. In a section with a large population of younger chemists, the Silver Circle members may choose to meet in partnership with the Local Section Younger Chemists Committee and establish mentoring relationships.

Success Stories from Local Section Silver Circles (a.k.a. Senior Chemists Committees)

In some Silver Circles, the group is run by one member alone, or by co-chairs. In others there may be more officers. In the Rochester Local Section, there is a group of 10-11 members that use the phone-tree method to invite members to the lunchtime meetings. They call again about one week before the meeting to remind everyone using the same method, which has proven successful for them.

Established Silver Circles like the group in Rochester report program topics that switch between technical and more general-interest.

The Delaware ChemVets <http://membership.acs.org/d/del/ChemVets.htm> meet at lunchtime about eight times per year. They are also very active in the public outreach of the section. For example, they participate in the National Chemistry Week activities and the Chemistry Olympiad.

The Minnesota Section gives an award each spring to a senior chemist based on nominations solicited from the membership. The award for service to the Society is presented at a dinner event where spouses are also invited to be present. Fifty year members are recognized during this event as well.

The Southern Arizona Section's most successful event was a social event that was attended by younger chemists and Silver Circle members in about equal numbers. This allowed for informal mentoring to occur during the event.

The senior members Western New York Section helped to document the hundred-year history of their section in preparation for their anniversary. Members wrote histories of the industries significant to the section in which they were employed.

A list of sections reporting Senior Chemists Committees or Silver Circles in their most recent Annual Report is available by emailing silvercircle@acs.org or calling the Senior Chemists Staff Contact.

Program Ideas for Local Section Silver Circles

Programming is essential for any Silver Circle that wants to have staying power. Members will change over the course of the year; some have more time during certain seasons; some are less likely to come out when a region is cold and snowy; others will only be interested in certain types of programs; but they are all looking for something—for many, it is fellowship and a sense that their presence has made a difference to someone.

Silver Circles often have lunchtime meetings with speakers on technical and non-technical topics. This can reach some members, but the same program every time will not reach as many members as a varied offering of programming possibilities. There may even be some new faces that appear!

Possible events include:

- Career forums where Silver Circle members interact with younger chemists to give insights that come only after a number of years in a particular field or industry.
- Industry tours led for Silver Circle members through a laboratory that has recently installed a new piece of equipment or that is doing research on an area of particular interest. Tours for section members led by a group of Silver Circle members who have been in a particular industry for many years and who can share the history and a snapshot of the individuals involved in a particular field as well as talk about the physical equipment in the building.
- National Chemistry Week (NCW) or Chemists Celebrate Earth Day (CCED) hands-on activities where Silver Circle members team up with an NCW or CCED coordinator. They can assist in any of the steps in planning the outreach activities—calling possible venues; purchasing and organizing supplies; training the rest of the section's volunteers; promoting the event; helping with the event; writing the thank you letters; etc.
- Planning and organizing the section's Chemagination contest or Chemistry Olympiad. The retired Silver Circle members can go to the schools during the day and to mentor the students.

- Partnering with a local elementary school and offering to provide a “Chemists in the Classroom” with teams of Silver Circle members who enjoy the enthusiasm of that age group taking turns visiting the science classes. The group of members that does this outreach could have their own series of meetings where they plan the topics that will be covered and team up to prepare their topics.
- Social events at local bakeries/breweries/wineries/coffee houses/chocolate factories accompanied by talks on the chemistry of the particular food or beverage.
- Participate as a group in a softball tournament, fun run/walk or a bicycling event.
- Depending on the geographic location—have a section member lead a hike in the early fall of the year and discuss the various xanthophylls, carotene, and anthocyanin pigments in the changing leaves as well as the chemistry of the rocks in your particular part of the country; take samples of the water and test basic properties like pH, hardness and nitrate/phosphate levels. This could evolve into a stream study in a particular area with several trips a year to monitor changes.
- Have a “chemistry of cooking” potluck dinner. Everyone brings a dish and explains some aspect of the chemistry involved in making their dish! There is so much chemistry in cooking—from the denaturing of protein to alcoholic fermentation and simple dehydration. A fun event that encourages creativity and prompts lively discussions!
- Participate as a group/team in a volunteer activity sponsored by another organization. Paint a house with Habitat for Humanity. When a reporter comes by, use the opportunity to talk about the advances in chemistry that have brought us more durable and longer lasting paints. Be the group of Silver Circle volunteers that cooks a meal once a month at a local hospital’s hospitality house for families whose children are sick and in the hospital. If a Silver Circle member struggles with diabetes or cancer, join together to participate in the local event for that particular cause.

Ten Steps to a Successful Program

- 1) Know your population.
 - People are not likely to attend an event that does not interest them.
 - One way to find out what does interest them is to ask them either formally or informally.
- 2) Find an advocate.
 - The program coordinator should oversee a project or projects.
 - They should engage a group of people to plan the program.
- 3) Create a committee.
 - The committee will believe in the program if they participate in the planning.
 - Shared responsibilities through division of tasks give individual members accountability and increased commitment level.
- 4) Plan ahead.
 - Start well before the event will occur.
 - Compare data from any similar previous events and let that shape your plans. For example if a weekday evening event was not well attended, perhaps a Saturday afternoon event should be considered.
 - Confirm date and location.

- 5) Budget accordingly.
 - Determine budget; evaluate need for fundraising or sponsorship and proceed as necessary.
 - Record planned and actual expenses for future reference.
- 6) Promote, promote, promote.
 - Consider your audience and how to best reach them.
 - Create any necessary advertisements (flyers, banners, promotional newsletter text).
 - Make phone calls as needed to spread the word to members
 - Send invitations through the mail and/or electronically.
 - Make use of community newsletters, bulletin boards, free local paper or weekly paper advertising, and perhaps the Chamber of Commerce.
 - Invite the venue to promote the event through their usual channels.
 - Ask members to talk up the event in their circles of acquaintance.
 - Look for partners and co-sponsors.
- 7) Engage the audience or attendees.
 - No one should go home wondering why no one spoke with them. Recruit a greeter for every event so that everyone feels welcomed.
 - Laughter is good for many things. Spreading good will is one of them.
 - When the audience participates in some way in the program, they are much more likely to remember something about it.
 - Wear nametags. It will make it easier on everyone, especially newcomers.
 - Solicit feedback to help shape future programs.
- 8) Vary the program.
 - There is no way to please everyone, but by offering several sorts of opportunities in a few different formats/times of day the chances of pleasing more people are increased.
 - People are more likely to sit through a program of medium interest to them if they know that they will be engaged in it and that there are other programs in which they have higher interest being offered in the future.
- 9) Express appreciation.
 - “Thank you” is a powerful combination of words. It is too often left unsaid.
 - People like to know that their contribution has been acknowledged. They like to feel appreciated.
 - Taking the time to say thank you can make the difference for some volunteers in whether they return or not.
- 10) Cultivate new leadership.
 - No one wants to lead forever. Be on the look out for shining stars.
 - Cultivate your next group of leaders by giving them small projects with definite beginnings and endings at first. Increase the amount of responsibility in small steps and choose projects where the person has an interest.

Funding Ideas

Request that the local section budget for Silver Circle programming. Provide a concrete plan for how the money will be used.

Participate in a fundraiser. There are many types of fundraisers that the group can have to raise money. Some younger chemists groups have been known to staff concession stands at sporting events. A silent auction can also raise a fair amount of money.

Local industry can be a source of funding for any project of the Silver Circle, especially the outreach projects which are more likely to garner media coverage and offer publicity benefit to the ACS. Learn a bit about the missions and goals of the companies in your area. Some are interested in the future of the industry and want to be sure that high school students have an interest in chemistry. This sort of company would be much more interested in supporting a Chemagination contest or Chemistry Olympiad than they would a fun run.

The ACS also has money for various types of programming. The Local Section Activities Committee offers Local Section Innovative Projects Grants for funding of events that would be new to particular sections. The Younger Chemists Committee gives grants as well, so partnering with your younger chemists could be advantageous for this reason as well.

Regional Meeting Program Involvement

Regional meetings can be outstanding opportunities to showcase the research and accomplishments of a Silver Circle member. They are generally more easily accessible than national meetings and are lower in cost. Divisions, companies, and regional meeting program chairs may be willing to help build a symposium around a particular field of research that reflects where a Silver Circle member has made significant contributions. The symposium could also be of an historical nature, and feature the scientist along with a special event such as a dinner or luncheon held in the person's honor.

There can be symposia created to highlight issues of concern to Silver Circle members. Topics like health care and computer use and estate planning are possibilities.

ACS Staff Contact

The ACS Staff Contact for Senior Chemists' issues and concerns is Cheryl Brown, ACS Office of Local Section Activities. You may contact her at 800-227-5558 ext. 4407 or by emailing silvercircle@acs.org or c_brown@acs.org. The Silver Circle website is at <http://chemistry.org/silvercircle.html>.

For information on the opportunities below, contact Marisa Burgener at the number above and your call will be directed to the appropriate staff member:

- Serve as a Student Affiliates Chapter Advisor
- Serve as a resource for local news reporters seeking scientific information.
- Serve as a resource for and provide reliable information to local legislators.
- Become a member of the Legislative Action Network and contact federal legislators.
<http://chemistry.org/government/lac>
- Serve as mentor or coordinator of local section programs:
 - National Chemistry Week
 - Kids & Chemistry

- Chemagination
- Chemists Celebrate Earth Day
- Chemistry Olympiad
- Chemists in the Library
- Project SEED

Other Programs, Associations and Resources

Other possibilities for involvement through ACS:

- Go to elementary schools and give presentations and demonstration shows using materials from <http://chemistry.org/kids>
- Establish a section-run mentor program for middle and high school students.
- Team up with high school chemistry club members during ACS outreach events.
- Become an ACS Career Consultant.
- Serve on a national ACS committee or task force.
- Support an ACS Division. (<http://chemistry.org/divisions>)
- Participate as a speaker in the ACS Speaker Service.
- Review materials as service to an office or publication like *ChemMatters* or *Chemistry*.

Opportunities with other organizations:

- Contact a local Big Brothers Big Sisters organization at <http://www.bigbrothersbigsisters.org> to share chemistry with children.
- Team up with local after school programs.
- Visit <http://www.mentoring.org> to find local mentoring opportunities by zip code.
- Visit <http://www.aarp.org> to find local community service opportunities by zip code.
- USA Freedom Corps <http://www.usafreedomcorps.gov>
 - Launched on Jan. 30, 2002 to foster a culture of service, citizenship and responsibility.
 - Largest clearinghouse of volunteer opportunities ever created with millions of opportunities with 60,000 organizations.
 - Peace Corps, AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, Learn and Serve America, and Citizen Corps programs are all part of the USA Freedom Corps.
- Become a chemist-participant in the Freedom Corps' Silver Scholarship Program.
 - Volunteer 500 hours of service tutoring and mentoring students in after school programs.
 - Earn a \$1000 scholarship for a child or grandchild.
- National Senior Service Corps <http://www.joinseniorservice.org>
 - National network of projects to match older volunteers with opportunities in their communities.
 - Oversees three programs:
 - Foster Grandparent Program
 - Senior Companion Program
 - Retired and Senior Volunteer Program

For data and facts on volunteerism and aging:

- Experience Corps <http://www.experiencecorps.org> has an interesting fact sheet on aging in America.
- Public/Private Ventures <http://www.ppv.org/ppv/youth/youth.asp> has research about youth and volunteering.
- Information about mentoring is available at <http://www.mentoring.org/>.
- Electronic gazette for volunteerism <http://www.volunteertoday.com/>.
- Newspaper for the non-profit world <http://www.philanthropy.com>.
- Electronic journal for volunteerism <http://www.e-volunteerism.com>.
- Association for Volunteer Administration <http://www.avaintl.org/> with excellent electronic and print resource lists.