

# Mighty Moms – Lexington Altrusa Club

## Background

Mighty Moms is an annual event conducted by the Lexington Altrusa Club to honor the mothers of children who have a disability and reside in the Bluegrass Area\*. Altrusa is an international service organization, and while attending their international conference, Lexington Altrusans learned of a project from the Altrusa Club in Auckland, New Zealand. This project identified area mothers of children with a disability, and gave them a weekend away from their responsibilities and showered them with relaxation and pampering.

The Lexington Altrusa Club was inspired by this project, and launched Mighty Moms in 2007. Using community contacts, the Lexington club identifies mothers who are the primary caregivers for their children with a disability, and offers them a relaxing weekend away from their responsibilities. The moms get to choose from a variety of services and activities, such as hair-cuts, manicures, pedicures, massages, movies and shopping. They are also treated to meals at local restaurants and other activities, such as a horse farm tour. Altrusans are matched up with moms as escorts, giving the moms a truly relaxing experience.

In addition to providing a relaxing weekend, the club has found that the Mighty Moms program gives these mothers something more lasting. They make contact with other moms who are similarly situated and form a community of support. Many of the club's past moms are a source of referrals each year, sharing this experience with other moms in the community.

One former Mighty Mom wrote:

The invitation was just the push many of us needed to self-care. The "Mighty Moms" program gave us a chance to physically separate from our children, bond with others in similar situations, relax and simply enjoy. Most important, the program told me very clearly that my job as a parent to my special child was appreciated. It was a priceless weekend for me and nine others.

Another unexpected benefit of the weekend arises from the need to arrange care for the child in the mom's absence. The Mighty Mom is responsible for all childcare arrangements, and they have told us their family and others really stepped up and learned how to provide care to the child, and as moms they learned to entrust that care to others.

The local community has been very supportive of this program. Hotel rooms and most services and activities are donated or discounted. Altrusans solicit donations and host various fundraising events throughout the year to fund this event.

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\*Bluegrass Area includes: Anderson, Bourbon, Boyle, Clark, Estill, Fayette, Franklin, Garrard, Harrison, Jessamine, Lincoln, Madison, Mercer, Nicholas, Powell, Scott and Woodford counties.

## Process

The Lexington Altrusa Club organizes its Mighty Moms event through a team structure lead by a chairperson(s). The club works on fundraising year-round as well as recruitment.

- Core Team
  - o This team consists of the chair or chairs of the event along with all of the team chairs and the club president or presidents. This team prepares the budget, establishes the teams and selects chairs for those teams, scheduling of meetings for the team and review evaluations by former moms following the event for use in subsequent years.
- Publicity Team
  - o This team helps with recruitment of Mighty Moms and solicitation of donations. This team arranges media and publication prior, during and after the event, which includes interviews with radio, TV and other groups to promote Might Moms.
- Recruitment/Selection Team
  - o This team revises and distributes the application for Mighty Moms to various area agencies and organizations as well as former Mighty Moms. The Recruitment team is also in charge of the selection process for the moms each year. This team is also the primary contact with the moms prior to the event, ensuring that child care has been secured and that the moms' needs are addressed.
- Food/Lodging Team
  - o This team seeks sponsors, donations and discounted rates for lodging and the dinners. They also make all of the arrangements and coordinate the meals and entertainment for the moms.
- Activities and Donation Team
  - o This team draws up the schedule for the day of the event, coordinating the services requested by the moms and transportation as well as the preparation of a welcome packet for the moms.
  - o This team works on collecting items for the welcome gift basket for the moms as well as sponsorship donations to cover the expense of lodging.

The Recruitment/Selection team contacts various agencies within the Bluegrass Region as well as former Mighty Moms and other community contacts requesting names of moms as nominees for the program. Altrusa prefers nominations from community organizations serving the child or family. Once the applications have been collected, the Recruitment/Selection team meets, along with the Board of

Altrusa, and selects up to 15 moms for that year's Mighty Moms class. Once the moms are selected, other teams arrange the services and activities for the weekend, and finalize the lodging and meals for the moms as well as activities for the entire group. The club also presents the moms with various gifts and has refreshments available throughout the day during the event.

### **The Day of Mighty Moms**

The Moms arrive at the hotel early Saturday morning and are greeted by Altrusans, and checked into the hotel. Each mom is given their schedule of activities and matched up with Altrusan escorts who drive moms to and from events and services (if necessary) and pay any charges. Other Altrusans attend meals and events along with the moms, tending to requests and needs of the moms and ensuring that the events are coordinated and paid for by the club.