

Hosting an Asteroids Club Dinner Party

This document contains suggestions for hosting a small and informal gathering in a private home. Please improvise as you see fit.



Goal: Host a casual, friendly dinner party in which friends and acquaintances gather to help each other see threats (asteroids) more clearly than they did before. This is not a debate. It is more like an open viewing night at an observatory, where the participants invite others to look through a telescope at an object they might not have seen before, or have not seen with such fine resolution and clarity.

Who is involved: The dinner is co-hosted by two people with different political affiliations but with a real relationship. This existing relationship is critical to the ultimate success of an Asteroids Club event. These two co-hosts work with the local Asteroids Club's leadership to plan the event – they are partners in its ultimate success. The guest list is created by the co-hosts, ideally with each co-host inviting both liberal and conservative friends. The more relationships that exist between the guests before the dinner, the better.

Suggested format:

1) In the week before the meeting, both co-hosts may choose to circulate articles, essays, or videos on the internet. These should not be long or difficult. They should ideally illustrate an asteroid in an intuitive or emotional way. Or they could be links to articles or videos on political civility. See www.AsteroidsClub.org/materials for suggestions.

2) The warmup phase. The first portion of the event should be informal talk and socializing, ideally over drinks and hors d'oeuvres. Let this feel as much like a normal dinner party as possible – a setting in which people want to like each other, and in which they discover the many ways in which they are linked together.

3) Calling the Asteroids Club to order. *“Any time two people with differing political identities mutually acknowledge that the other side may see some real threats more clearly than does one's own side, the Asteroids Club has been convened.”* It is important to trigger some common associations and virtues in all participants. For example, we suggest that the person whose home it is in welcome everyone. (The sense of being a guest puts everyone on good behavior). Then the co-hosts, or others, could read quotations about political civility and moral humility (see www.AsteroidsClub.org/quotes for examples). Then, if the hosts feel its appropriate, someone could lead the group in singing the Star Spangled

Banner, or America the Beautiful. (When people move or sing in synchrony, it helps them to trust each other, particularly if they are singing about their love for their country). Grace could be said, if the hosts both think it appropriate. At this point, dinner could be served. The next step could begin as soon as everyone has been served.

- 4) First viewing of the Asteroids.** Each side gives the other a first look through the “telescope” that they brought. Each side makes a presentation of no more than 15 minutes. After each presentation, there is a 10 minute period for questions from the other side. These questions should focus on factual issues as much as possible. The audience should be clear about what exactly the asteroid is, and what damage it is expected to cause to America. Factual issues that cannot be resolved by consensus within a minute or so should be written down and set aside. After the first viewing of both asteroids is complete, the group might adjourn to another room, or clear the table for dessert.



- 5) Second viewing of the Asteroids.** The goal at this stage is for both sides to work together to get the clearest possible picture of each asteroid, and how it might be deflected. What is the proposing side’s suggested remedy for the problem? Are there other possible remedies that the listening side can suggest? Is the proposing side missing something in its analysis which might be more obvious to the listening side?

- 6) Conclusion of the evening.** Participants are asked to vote either by a show of hands or by private “ballot” depending on the sense of the co-hosts about what would be most comfortable for guests.

