

Knock, Knock... Who's There?



A Message From President Ron Huxley

“MOfucious say, Club that struggle, find answer in new hands and minds.” This may be a little tongue in cheek, but it is very true. Many of our Clubs’ leadership are so new to Optimism that they need help sorting through the challenges of making a Club successful. Over the years, there has been a real disconnect between the need to recruit new Members and the need to address deletions in a responsible manner.

I have been an Optimist since 1983 and there hasn’t been a single year where membership recruitment was not a main focus of the organization. That being said, we still find that many Clubs put a higher priority on deleting rather than recruiting. Sure there are reasons, such as non-dues paying Members or Members who have moved away or worse yet, Members who have passed on before us. We have never hidden the fact that deletions happen, but the issue is the lack of a real membership plan which anticipates the uncontrollable losses with a means to replace them. There is no doubt that the leadership of many Clubs are asking for more Members, but do not have a plan in place to effectively recruit those Members. If I am successful in one small way this year, it will be to have every Club recognize that what they do in membership deletions without equal additions affects every facet of the organization.

If your Club is having problems finding Members to chair activities, or you can’t find people to fill the seats on your Board of Directors, then you have a membership recruiting problem. If you have been holding onto Members even though they have disappeared because you wanted someone to be honor or distinguished, then you have a recruiting problem. If you bite the bullet to straighten out your roster without providing equal additions for your deletions, then you have a recruiting problem. If you think that the Member sitting next to you has a potential new Member and that is good enough, then you have a recruiting problem. The result of the lack of recruiting is very simple. We will have fewer people to raise the money to do the job and fewer people to put smiles on the faces of the children we serve.

The Presidential incentive program was designed to offer support for healthy recruitment. It was designed to reward those that are successful in recruiting with the possibility of winning a \$250 grant every quarter towards a Club’s youth activities. Ask yourself where your community would be without your Optimist Club. Ask yourself if you have made a difference in the life of a child and ask yourself, “What is my MO?”

Ideas and answers to this challenge and many more are coming to 16 locations in the second and third quarters of the 2013-2014 year. Optimist Leadership Summits are one-day educational exchanges where new leadership can discover new approaches to making their Clubs more valuable to their communities. Please plan to attend and while I’m thinking about it, let me personally invite you to the Optimist International Convention in Las Vegas. Pack your bags, bring your MO and we will see you soon at an Optimist meeting near you.

Thank you,

Ron G. Huxley,
Optimist International President



Optimism *is More Fun*

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The Pacific Northwest District has instituted a plan to increase their membership by 151 Members and earn the designation of Distinguished. Another objective is to provide future leadership for the District and garner innovative ideas through the introduction of new Members. The plan was introduced by co-Membership Chairs Robin Stanhope and Chris Stearns, based on a model that helped their Club grow from 75 Members to 131 and earn Honor and Distinguished status.

Every Member has friends, co-workers and neighbors that would benefit from becoming an Optimist and also serve as a great resource for their Club. The plan stresses that every Optimist Member is vital to the strength of Clubs and the International organization. Current Members are encouraged to invite someone to become an Optimist, educate them about all levels of the organization and motivate them to participate in activities.

Club Membership Chairs are asked to develop a list of past Members from the last three years and contact them. The plan indicates this should be a personal contact to ask them to consider joining the Club again. Conducting a NOW program to reach new Optimists is also strongly suggested.

There are numerous groups that are full of great potential Members. Consider the parents of scholarship contestants or JOOI Club Members. Make sure to invite younger Members to bring in new energy and ideas. Bilingual Members can help reach new areas of the community that may not have been served in the past. The Friend of Optimists program allows Clubs to offer membership to people who may not have the time to dedicate to meetings.

To make the recruiting of new Members fun, the co-Chairs have proposed a District contest. There will be two teams: the District Board of Directors, including the Governor, Past Governor, Governor-Elect, Presidents and Lieutenant Governors versus the membership. At the fourth quarter conference, the team that added the most Members will win an ice cream social. The losing team will serve the winners.

Growing your Club and District can be fun. The benefits far outweigh the work. Set reasonable goals with an incentive to encourage Members to participate. Start recruiting today!

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