



Member Tips

Growing Rotary Membership



Membership
Newsletter of
Zones 27/28

January, 2008

Attracting Younger Members

From Rotary's *Membership Minute*. Vol. 3, Ed. 5

It almost goes without saying that attracting younger members into Rotary is the key to our future. A new member joining in his or her twenties will probably have 40 more years of potential service to Rotary than a member joining in his or her sixties.

The integration of more young members into Rotary remains an elusive goal. Currently only 11% of our members are under 40 years old and just 1% are under 30. The Membership Minute* newsletter recently offered the following tips for young member recruitment.

- **Induct several young members at once, instead of recruiting them one at a time.** If your club has no younger members, inducting several at the same time gives these new members an immediate peer group in the club.
- **Conduct service projects that are likely to appeal to younger members.** The Australian Bureau of Statistics found that volunteers in two age groups, 25-35 and 55-65, do the same amount of service work. But the younger volunteers were more likely to focus on areas such as education, sports, and family matters.
- **Recruit Rotaractors, GSE team members, and other Rotary program alumni.** Their participation in RI and Foundation programs shows that they already know about Rotary's ideals and are interested in pursuing its mission.
- **Consider lowering the total cost of membership in your club.** Some younger members have trouble meeting the financial obligations of club membership. To combat this problem, some clubs have lowered their fees or have a meal only once or twice a month instead of every week.
- **Consider waiving certain fees or expenses for the first year or two.** Younger members who aren't yet fully invested in Rotary may be more apprehensive about committing to all of the financial obligations of club membership. Once they become involved in your club and dedicated to Rotary's mission, they may be more willing and able to pay the full amount.
- **Make sure meetings are efficient and productive.** Younger members, who often have competing priorities, are more interested in attending meetings that are conducted efficiently. Also, make sure your club has an appropriate balance of meetings and hands-on projects and activities.
- **Recruit "up-and-comers."** Managers who are on their way to becoming important business and professional leaders are often interested in the networking and professional development benefits of Rotary. Getting them invested in Rotary while young can help ensure their dedication to Rotary when they reach top-level management, executive status, or ownership positions.
- **Be open to the new ideas of younger members.** Maintaining the status quo in your club may bore and discourage them. Younger members will be more likely to stay in your club if their opinions are valued and appreciated – and if they aren't treated like junior members.

* Additional newsletters can be found at www.rotary.org. From the home page, click on the [Members](#) tab then select [General information](#) from the sub menu.

Don't Overlook the Older Members

By Dennis Dinsmore, PDG, Zone 28 RIMZC

We are constantly reminded that the recruitment of younger members is the key to Rotary's future. While that may be true, that does *not* mean that we should abandon recruiting older members as well. The over-40 segment of our membership is 88% and our largest group by age is 50-59 at 30% which means that Rotary continues to rely on the Over-40 set as the largest component of our population.

Analysis of the full breakdown of age groups in 2003 and 2006 shows that the numbers haven't changed much:

	2006	2003
Age < 30	1%	2%
Age 30 - 39	10%	9%
Age 40 - 49	23%	21%
Age 50 - 59	30%	29%
Age 60 - 69	22%	22%
Age 70 +	14%	17%

Older members, especially recently-retired baby boomers, represent a huge pool of potential new Rotarians. Besides bringing years of accumulated experience and wisdom to the table, the recently-retired are in good health, have lots of time to devote and, lets be frank, have a fair amount of disposable income. What more could we want in potential new members?

The ideal situation for any club is to try to strike a balance between younger and older members. Each segment brings something to the table and working together, can strengthen any club. It has been said that "The problem with the young is that they have no experience, the problem with the old is that they have no energy." Working together, the under-40's and the over-40s can provide an unbelievable level of energy and wisdom for any club.

One Club's Success Story

By Dennis Dinsmore, PDG, Zone 28 RIMZC

In the interest of full disclosure, I should say at the outset that this membership success story I am about to present is from my own home club, located in the small town of Clio, Michigan. I should also say that I personally cannot take any credit for my club's growth. It was a joint effort by the entire club.

First, some background. The Clio Rotary Club was chartered in 1925 when only a few hundred people lived in the small farming community near Flint. In recent years the area has grown to a population of more than 15,000 while the Clio club membership began to slide. When I joined in the 1980's the club was down to 18 members and, even though I was in my 40's at the time, the joke was that I single handedly brought down the club's average age by 20 years.

Fast forward to 2008. Clio is at 38 members and closing in on a goal of 40 members by the end of the club year. The membership is well balanced and representative of the community. 40% of our members are women. The oldest member is 80, the youngest is 28. During the past 5 year period, while our district lost 5% of its membership overall, the Clio Rotary Club grew by 40% !

Many have asked the secret of our success. I think there are several key events and situations that brought about this turnaround.

- **The club changed its meeting time from noon to breakfast.** In 1925 community business leaders worked and lived in town and the slower pace of business life allowed the members to easily meet for lunch. Over the years, the town evolved from a farming community to a bedroom community and many of its leading citizens worked far away during the day. The club leaders bit the bullet and made the time switch.

- **Baby-boomers retired.** At the same time, a local developer built a retirement condominium complex in the area which attracted a large population of recently-retired to the community. The club succeeded in recruiting a couple of new members from this project and they, in turn, recruited their neighbors. Ironically the average age of the club has gone down slightly because younger members are being recruited as well.
- **Focus is put on community leaders as potential members.** In a small community, certain individuals stand out as leaders, not only in their own occupations but also in community activism. People running the local school system, the local government and the local churches were approached to join and in many cases did join, partially because they realized the positive impact Rotary could have on the community.
- **New businesses in the area are recognized.** Once a month, the club invited owners of new businesses in the area to a Rotary meeting and gave them the opportunity to present their businesses to the club. Several of these people subsequently joined the club.
- **New members are put to work.** Senior club leaders have been very aware of the importance of getting new members involved right away and consequently, turnover is down to almost nothing. The bonus is that new life has been breathed into both service projects and fund raisers.
- **The press is kept in the loop.** The club's weekly newsletter is emailed to members of the local news media who, maybe surprisingly, do indeed read it. The newsletter editor is often contacted by news staff for additional information. We also define "the press" broadly to include the school district's newsletter and the local government newsletters which do a great job of covering service projects for us. These free newsletters often get as much circulation as the local newspaper.
- **We "fly the colors."** Whenever Rotarians participate in a community project, members wear Rotary hats, shirts or jackets. Even if they work on another organization's project such as Salvation Army Christmas bell ringing, the Rotary logo is visible. As a result of press coverage combined with visibility, it is becoming increasingly easy to attract new members.

Every club is different and some of the techniques employed by this club to grow its membership may not apply. However, one can never argue with success and hopefully there will be a few nuggets which may help your membership efforts.

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