

The Problem is Retention NOT Membership!

Retention is one of our most serious problems in Lionism. Each year we are bringing in new Lions in the front door but far too many are going out the back door. We must shut the back door by determining why we are losing so many Lions.

In education, retention, has both a positive and a negative connotation. We want students to retain the information and skills they learn so they do not have to be retained. In Lionism, I cannot think of any negative meaning to retention. We know we want to maintain our members and we want them to retain or maintain their interest and enthusiasm for Lionism.

If we were evaluating our efforts to retain our membership, I wonder what grade we would give ourselves. Let's do that. If an A is excellent, B is satisfactory, C means needs improvement, and F means unsatisfactory, write down the grade you would give your club on the retention of members. How many of you gave your club an A, B, C, or F?

With that self-evaluation, let's think of some possible strategies for improving retention. First, let's analyze the situation. Why do people become Lions, stay Lions, or drop out of Lionism?

Why do people become Lions? It is a non-paying job, which sometimes requires many hours and much effort. Some possible reasons include:

- 1) They want to help their community and/or the world community. In other words, they want "to serve".
- 2) They have an interest in one or more of the particular projects Lionism maintains.
- 3) They are friends with a Lion and wish to share the camaraderie.
- 4) Another family member is a Lion.
- 5) They want a sense of belonging.
- 6) They think it would be a good business or personal contact situation.
- 7) They didn't know how to say "No" when they were asked.

Five out of those seven possibilities mean that individual really wanted to be a Lion. Let's concentrate on a few of the reasons and how we offer positive or negative reinforcement to each.

One: The person wants to serve, either to help the local community or mankind in general. What better vehicle of service than Lionism? Think for a moment of the service projects your club has in the community and also of those sponsored by Lions International. Have we

made that Lion who joined because of a desire to serve aware of how vital they are if we are to continue to serve? Have we had interesting and informative programs to educate that Lion regarding all the ways "We Serve"? Have we allowed that Lion to ask questions and have we respected that Lion's opinion?

Two: If that person became a Lion because of a particular interest in one or more of the projects, has that person been allowed to find out more about that particular project and also to channel their interest in that area? Is that Lion's interest, talent, and skills being utilized in a way that give a sense of accomplishment and increased motivation." Is that Lion encouraged to pursue the interest in that project by having a leadership role?

Three: To that Lion who joined because their friend is a Lion, are we making that Lion our friend? Are we offering the camaraderie that makes the work of Lionism so much fun? Are we letting that Lion know they are part of our extended family? Are we in "cliques" where we talk with and sit with only two or three other Lions at our meetings? Do we think "Oh well, Lion Joe is their sponsoring Lion, he can make him feel welcome? Lion Beverly is her friend; it's her job to make the new Lion feel comfortable.

You have just read a slightly reworded portion of a report written by PDG Ed Stebbins. I want to thank him for making this document available. It's everyone's responsibility to prevent someone from dropping. We need to make a better effort on keeping our Lions. Remember it is probably easier to keep a Lion than to replace one. By this time each club should have a Membership committee in place; I encourage each club to set up a separate committee to check on why we are losing members and to complete exit interviews on why they are dropping. If we know the reasons why they want to leave, we might be able to change something within the club that would encourage them to stay. Every Lion that has missed more than two consecutive meetings should have someone call them and check out what (if any) problem there may be. This could be a part of the Retention committee duties. There will be more ideas on retention to follow in the next issue of *The Texas Lion*, until then do **WHATEVER IT TAKES** to have a plus in membership.

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