



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

April 26, 2013

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

Earlier today I received a thought-provoking e-mail from one of our Sisters in the Saratoga Lodge. It goes to show what can be done to turn the tide of declining membership. It also gives us some subject matter for future discussions. Obviously, Odd Fellowship began as a beneficial order (or as the British called it, "a friendly society") at a time when government provided little or no social support. In those days, Odd Fellows really did have to tend to the sick, educate the orphan, bury the dead and perform a myriad of tasks to help members and their families. Today, of course, we have employment development departments, Medicare, social security, public guardians, and a host of government programs. But, clearly, there is still a place in today's society for a fraternal order than can provide some level of support, aid and comfort to members. And Odd Fellowship does so through many programs such as the Beneficial Fund, the Odd Fellows Homes of California, the Rebekah Children's Home, and many other local and statewide endeavors.

But can we do more?

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Dave Rosenberg

Hello Mr. Rosenberg or may I say Dave,

My boyfriend and I met you at a seminar you held at the Cupertino lodge around 2010. We both were impressed with what you had to say and how it has made a difference in Davis.

At the time we were new members of the Saratoga #428 lodge and had very few members. Most of them were associates trying to keep the lodge open. Since that time and using some of your suggestions we now have 14 new members for a grand total of 23 home lodge members.

I know you have mentioned several times in your email that we need to make changes to our order to accommodate the time in which we live. What worked in the 20's, 30's and 40's and made our lodge so viable then may not work today since state and federal programs can fulfill that need.

However, I think we still live in a time when many people face hardships even when these programs are available. There are families that need more even when these programs kick



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in. Just because you have medical insurance doesn't always guaranty that you can meet all of the uncovered costs. Some people don't have enough money to cover extensive plans and some don't have any at all. I know the new nationwide medical coverage is starting soon but from what I've heard there will still be cracks that some people will fall through.

If we can somehow get the word out especially to younger people that joining the IOOF can be a wonderful opportunity to fraternize and to use a newer word "network" to find ways within our group to subsidize or help out with additional financial resources.

Another area that many younger families struggle to meet is childcare. We live in a age when in many cases both parents have to work in order to survive. We should strive to find some way within the order to assist in this area. Maybe financial aid or a local childcare center discount for being an IOOF member.

This brings me to what I call "perks" from being a member. Nowadays a lot of people are looking for an additional perk you have to offer. We could be full of them. We could offer discounts on travel, sporting events and theatrical performances. I know your lodge probably already does this but I think this is a great incentive for membership, that we offer group discounts. Also I get the AARP newsletter and you can show your card at several places and get an immediate discount. What about the IOOF using this tactic. Not only nationwide but you could go to your local vendors and ask if they would give a discount to IOOF members. An added boon is once we start getting new members we can help out our charities in a bigger way.

Wouldn't it be nice to have some of the larger companies support us in growing IOOF membership to post war levels by offering discounts and free memberships?

These are some thoughts that might draw from the past and build on the future.

In FLT

Jill Whitcomb

Saratoga Lodge #428