



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

December 9, 2013

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

On December 6, 2013, I sent out a DMC Newsletter suggesting that Odd Fellows at the Sovereign Grand Lodge level and at the Grand Lodge level needs to focus attention on one signature project that will be identified with Odd Fellowship. I noted that the Shriners (also a fraternal group) has high a high visibility and public opinion quotient because of their singular focus on children's burn hospitals. I compared this to the Odd Fellows who are all over the place with projects (e.g. arthritis, eye research, S.O.S. village, the educational foundation, etc.) and, accordingly have a low visibility and public opinion quotient.

I received a significant number of comments on that December 6 DMC Newsletter. One of them, below, is from our Brother Louie Sarmiento. I forward it on to you for your reading pleasure.

I am also pleased to note that yesterday, the leadership of the Grand Lodge and the leadership of the Rebekah Assembly met together and there was considerable discussion on the development of a signature project for our Order, at least in the jurisdiction of California. No decision has been made on this subject yet, but we will meet again soon. And for your information, I suggested the following as our signature project: "Helping Children in Need". In my opinion, such a project is a natural evolution from the ancient admonition to "educate the orphan." It is focused, yet broad enough to encompass many things - for example, feeding hungry children, helping foster children or those emancipated from the foster system, helping needy children and families with school clothes and school supplies, etc. I know that a number of Lodges - my own Lodge included - already have projects underway to help children in need. I am very optimistic on where this is going, and I will keep you posted.

And finally, here is an inspirational thought/quote for the day, submitted by Past Grand Master Gene Breeland: "People will always have opinions about your decision because they're not courageous enough to take action on their opinion."

F - L - T

Dave Rosenberg
Grand Warden



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Brother Dave,

Good observation. I agree.

The signature of the Odd Fellows in the 19th to 20th Century were the IOOF Homes for elderly and orphans. Many of these homes, however, are now converted into retirement facilities or a number have also closed-down already. We only have one children's home which is one in Gilroy and that's it. We still do have Odd Fellows retirement homes which a lot of our members and non-members do not even know.

For us to be appealing and relevant, we need to set clear organizational goals that will serve as guide for the Lodges to follow. Our lodges should go beyond "visit the sick, relieve the distressed, bury the dead and educate the orphans" because these are a bit out-dated in our current setting (unless there are natural calamities).

Analyzing what is taught in our rituals, what projects many of the Grand Lodges and Lodges support and what most "strong lodges" do, the SGL Revitalization Committee last year actually have already written and summarized the general goals (purposes) of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows (page 11 of the Members Handbook):

1. To seek to improve and elevate the character of mankind by promoting the principles of friendship, love, truth, faith, hope, charity and universal justice as exemplified in the degrees and practiced in real life.
2. To help make the world a better place to live by aiding each other and by organizing charitable projects and activities that would benefit the less fortunate, the children, the youth, the elderly, the environment and the community in every way possible.



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3. To promote good will and harmony among peoples and nations through the principle of universal fraternity, holding the belief that all men and women regardless of race, nationality, religion, social status, gender, rank and station are brothers and sisters.

4. To promote a wholesome and fulfilling fraternal experience without violence, discrimination and vices of any form.

The way these general goals are translated into specific goals (projects or events) depend on each Lodge. It is up to the Lodge what kind of project or event coincide with purpose 2, 3 or 4. Purpose 1 is obvious, it is just the performance of the rituals which will somehow make IOOF unique from plain social clubs. Although I completely agree that it needs revision and that we may need to just set with one handshake, one hand sign and one password (but I doubt it if our members aging 60 years old and above will make us do this). I will just have to stand in the middle because it's my job to be neutral but I am definitely not anybody's puppet.

I do agree that we must at least have a national or international project that will help make up our "public identity" but what will the project be, I do not know. IOOF would also make a bigger impact if each Lodge will have at least 1-3 programs that are similar with other Lodges (and with similar name) for example,:

- "Annual Odd Fest"

- "Annual Oddventure"

and many more.

Lodges may be autonomous from each other but we make a "bigger impact" as a whole. A member from California may have attended an "Annual Odd Fest" organized by Davis Odd Fellows and still can attend similar event when he or she travels to Illinois or Philippines. Having similar events (though there are differences because of the setting and population) with similar names, we make an "impact". In this way, even the public from various cities will have an idea that "Oh, the Odd Fellows. Aren't they the organization who organizes the Odd Fest?" This connects each lodge. It connects the dots of worldwide Odd Fellowship.



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As of the moment, most of our Lodges are too individualized. When a person from another Lodge visits or attends a Lodge in a different State or City, it may be too different that they cannot relate or will feel out-of-place. This is also a reason why a "very active member" in California may not be an "active member" in North Carolina or South Dakota. What many of our lodges do are too different than alike and that affects any organization. If you read various theories and principles of Management or Industrial/Organizational Psychology, alignment is very important when it comes to activities and values of an organization. If values, activities and other parts of an organization are misaligned, the organization will not reach its highest potential and can even result to problems (and we have been facing a lot of problems for the past 60-100 years ranging from membership decrease, new member retention, in-fights and conflicts, Lodges that are doing nothing, etc).

In FLT,

Brother Louie