



Independent Order of Odd Fellows  
Dedicated Members for Change

January 29, 2014

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

A strange thing has happened in the Order this year.

At the last Grand Lodge Session, the membership approved the creation of a Membership Development Grant Program, and under the direction of Membership Committee Chair Peter Sellars, the Grand Lodge Board of Directors launched the grant program a few months ago. A number of e-mails and letters went out to all the Lodges alerting them of the launch of this program. It is a very simple program. Lodges can apply for a grant not to exceed \$1,000 for membership development. All a Lodge needed to do is e-mail or snail mail a one-page proposal of how the Lodge intended to use the money for the purpose of bringing in new members. Could not be simpler or easier.

Now here's the strange thing: Only 11 Lodges submitted their e-mails or letters requesting the funds. Let me repeat: Only 11 Lodges of California's 120 Lodges submitted requests for funding. That's less than 10%. Parenthetically, each and every one of the 11 Lodges that did submit proposals were approved and received their money. Kudos to the 11 Lodges who submitted. But what in the world happened to the other 209 Lodges?

Our number one challenge in Odd Fellowship is our decreasing membership numbers. There is no greater priority for this Order than to work to bring in new members. And yet, only 11 Lodges took the time to submit a request for these membership development funds. The program did not mandate a particular type of membership development proposal. Lodges were given complete freedom to submit requests for funding. Yet only 11 Lodges took the time to pursue it. Why is that? I have thought about it, and have come up with only four possible scenarios:

1. Lodge Secretaries - to whom the requests for proposals were sent - simply did not read their e-mails or letters from Grand Lodge.
2. Noble Grands never pursued the subject with their Lodge members and no one took responsibility for submitting a proposal.
3. Lodges could not come up with a plan for membership development.
4. The majority of our Lodges in California do not wish to grow or bring in new members.

I can think of no other scenarios why Lodges left money on the table and never pursued a plan for bringing in new members. All these scenarios are sad, to be brutally frank. But the scenario that is the most troubling is the fourth one - there are Lodges in California that do not wish to grow or bring in new members. That scenario - I am afraid - is prevalent in this State and in this Order. Due to laziness, inertia, or a desire not to change the status quo - Lodges in California



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have become comfortable and complacent. This comfort and complacency is, ultimately, a death sentence for those Lodges.

So, I commend the 11 Lodges that have pursued the Membership Grant Program - those are the Lodges that care about the continuation of this great fraternity of Odd Fellowship. And for the other Lodges that failed to pursue this grant program, I urge those Lodges to examine "why" they failed to do so.

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Grand Warden