



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

February 21, 2014

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

Recently, I received an e-mail from a new, young member of our Order. He expressed frustration that his Lodge seemed to be locked in a time warp. "We really don't do much of anything except go through the red book and plan some dinners or potlucks for the Lodge." He wanted to know what else he could suggest to the Lodge to liven things up. He said he is bored at Lodge meetings and doesn't know how much longer he can take it. He added that he doesn't want to bring in potential new members into his Lodge because "they will just be as bored as I am."

Well, step number one in solving any problem is recognizing that there is a problem. This young man has achieved the first step. He recognizes that his Lodge is essentially one-dimensional. Just having ritual meetings without much more is a problem. This young man is frustrated and bored. Why would he continue his membership and why would he bring in new members? Why, indeed, would a new member consider joining a boring, one-dimensional Lodge?

The next step is doing something about it. That's the more difficult step. The young man is asking for suggestions, but even if he accepts the suggestions, he still has to convince his Lodge brothers and sisters to accept them. In some Lodges this is truly challenging, because the long-time Lodge members are generally "comfortable" with the status quo - change is hard.

Yet, to survive and flourish in the 21st Century, we have to recognize that there are, ultimately, two other dimensions that should be explored in order to transform a one-dimensional Lodge into a full three-dimensional Lodge. The other two options are: Involvement in the community and good fellowship activities within the Lodge. Lodges that engage in good works in the surrounding community and who have an active and fun social life within the Lodge are truly well-rounded and three-dimensional Lodges. These are the Lodges which provide a satisfactory fraternal experience for the membership and which also attract new members.

Ultimately, however, new ideas must come from the members of the Lodge. I can (and will) make some suggestions to this young man. But these are only suggestions to get the juices flowing. At bottom, it is the Lodge members of each individual Lodge who must determine which projects resonate with them. That being said, here are 5 suggestions of projects and activities that might liven things up for the young man's Lodge:

1. Plan a potluck at the Lodge, inviting friends and family, and have an hour set aside for "Trivia Night". Set up teams of 4 - 6 players around tables. Appoint one of the members as "Trivia Master". After dinner, run three rounds of trivia questions - 10 questions each round - and award prizes (candy bars are fine) for the winning team in each round. Lots of fun, lots of bonding, easy and inexpensive.



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

2. Start a "Senior Project" in your community. You will need two, and preferably four, volunteers for this. Contact the Senior Center or Senior Housing in your community and offer to help out frail seniors in their homes with one-time projects. Send teams of two Odd Fellows into the homes to do the projects. Without revealing names of the seniors, let your local newspaper know what you have done.
3. A "Wine Club" is a simple and inexpensive way to socialize. Schedule a "wine club" once each month in the home of a member or applicant to the Lodge. People who attend bring a bottle of wine and appetizers. The host supplies wine glasses and plates. Each month can be a theme like Pinot Noir or Chardonnay or Zinfandel.
4. Breakfast with Santa. Around the holiday season, if your Lodge Hall is big enough, think of organizing a "Breakfast with Santa". All you need is volunteers, a kitchen and a member who can wear a Santa suit. Invite the community to attend for a nominal price, and provide a meal, perhaps a small goodie bag for the children, and an opportunity for the kids to meet Santa. It's a feel-good event for the members, and a popular event for the children and their parents.
5. Take a hike. There is no cost involved. Just organize a local hike for the members who wish to participate. Some hikes can be easy and some can be more strenuous, depending of the members who participate.

I could offer many more suggestions, but the above provides a flavor of the kinds of things your Lodge could do to enhance the fraternal experience for members, and to attract new members to a more active Lodge. Ultimately, Lodges in the 21st Century need to reach out into their communities and need to engage in good fellowship activities within the Lodge. That's the secret of success for Odd Fellowship. That's the fountain of youth for our Order.

F - L - T

Dave Rosenberg
Grand Warden