



Independent Order of Odd Fellows  
Dedicated Members for Change

October 15, 2014

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

We are taking a little trip down memory lane over the next few days, as we re-print some articles that were published in past DMC newsletters. The point of doing so is in response to a recent e-mail from a Brother suggesting that we never say anything positive nor do we make suggestions on how Lodges can increase membership. Of course, the criticism is wrong. Anyone who actually takes the time to read our newsletters would know that. We don't just point out the problems created by declining membership. We also offer solutions. DMC newsletters do provide many helpful hints on methods, techniques and ideas of "how to" increase Lodge membership. In this regard, DMC is a think tank for our Order - and we are proud to fill that role.

Here, for your reading pleasure is an article that appeared in the January 19, 2012 DMC Newsletter.

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Dave Rosenberg

Deputy Grand Master

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Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

As you all know, the major purpose of Dedicated Members for Change is stem the tide of declining membership in our ancient Order. This is a mission that ALL Odd Fellows and Rebekah should support. Over the last 60+ years our Order (like other fraternal organizations) has been victimized by steeply declining membership. This decline ultimately affects everything we do, and as a result we have seen Lodges losing their charters, consolidating, and declining in membership to such an extent that Lodges can't fill officer positions, have lost their checks and balances, and often can barely muster a quorum of five members for a meeting.

We believe that we, as a fraternal Order, must become relevant to men and women in the 21st Century - and in this way we will be able to attract the new members to re-create the vibrant Lodges we enjoyed in the 19th and 20th Centuries. We need to be more visible and more active in our communities, and we need to develop an active social program to foster good fellowship in our Lodges.

More and more Odd Fellows and Rebekahs understand this, and so I am happy to say that the e-mail matrix of Dedicated Members for Change continues to grow by leaps and bounds.



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Welcome to all the new DMC members. And here's a reminder to all DMC members: if you have members of the Order you believe would enjoy DMC., please check with them and get their approval, and then send me their names and e-mail addresses - I will add them to the list. And thank you!

What follows is an article by the leader of one of our more active Lodges. DMC doesn't believe that there is just "one way" for Lodges to be active and grow. Each Lodge must find it's own special recipe that makes them unique. Sycamore Lodge # 129 in Hayward has discovered the formula that works for them! Please see the article below from Brother Frank Goulart, the distinguished and active Noble Grand of Sycamore Lodge #129. In my opinion, Frank is the kind of dynamic leader that every Lodge eventually needs.

Fraternally,

Dave Rosenberg

Brothers and Sisters,

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Dedicated Members for Change.

Odd Fellowship, and its unique opportunity to enrich and improve our lives and the lives of others, has been renewed in Hayward in the last two years. There are too many of you to mention who have continued to help me and the members of our Lodge with our Odd Fellow education. Thanks to all of you.

The story of Hayward's Sycamore Lodge No 129 is instructive to the issues of saving lodges and increasing membership, both critical issues of the day for our Order.

The story of Hayward's return from charter revocation is simple on one level.



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A group of musician/artists were motivated by a local historian to save an endangered local treasure and use it as a base to help local non-profits and agencies co-operate to encourage music and art education, especially in the public schools, to relieve the distressed students of all ages who desperately need the music and art as a fundamental part of education.

What a concept! Save a local historic landmark! Get together with like minded people to do good in our community and have a good time, while respecting a historic landmark and the moral traditions that have served the Order well for 160 years in the State of California and for 145 years in Hayward.

To the issue of saving the lodge, we must candidly admit that a majority of those who joined were of a mind to save an important historic building.

The Odd Fellows Building, built in 1868-9 was not quite completed when the great earthquake of 1868 ruptured the earth some 100 feet southwest of the building. When the shaking stopped, the building stood, its first floor finished, the second floor framed and the roof on top intact. The Lodge Room was renovated in 1926.

This shared interest in saving the building has played a major role in increasing our membership. Our guests are regularly attracted to the Order after coming up the stairs to the Lodge Room.

With regards to increasing membership, the factors we have identified involve community service via a shared interest and good fellowship events. Sometimes both factors utilize the talent in our lodge.

Sycamore Lodge members definitely have a shared interest in the arts, music in particular. This is in addition to the common shared interest we have in protecting the building, which is also a service to the community. Our list of projects are driven by interests shared by our members, and discovered by listening to our members. .



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And we try to listen to our members to discover ideas for good fellowship events at the lodge. Dinners and pot lucks are always popular. We have had readings, historic presentations, classical and popular pianists, chamber music groups, small combos, big band, pick up jams and sing-a-longs, all led by one or more lodge member.

Along the way, we have discovered Odd Fellowship, which has given us a unique opportunity to enrich our lives. Just as we respect and admire the integrity of our historic building, we have grown to respect and admire the many facets of the Odd Fellows, and how it can improve our lives and the lives of others.

Just as we seek to spread music and art in our community, we seek to spread the news of opportunity to join this good Order, to work together on worthy projects. Odd Fellowship is the glue which will make our efforts endure and have meaning, as relationships and fellowship underlie it all. Sycamore Lodge feels blessed to have re-connected to its roots.

May we all continue to help each other in our quest.

Friendship, Love and Truth

Frank Goulart,

Noble Grand

Sycamore Lodge No 129