



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

October 16, 2014

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

We continue our tip-toe through the tulips of past DMC Newsletter articles. The article, below, appeared on February 13, 2012. We are going through a few of the old newsletters in response to a brother who wrote saying that the DMC Newsletter just talk about the decline in membership, but don't give Lodges helpful hints on how to grow membership. Au contraire. DMC Newsletters in the past (and those coming in the future) are replete with suggestions on how Lodges can grow their membership. The February 13, 2012, DMC Newsletter is yet another example.

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Dave Rosenberg
Deputy Grand Master

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

As you know, Dedicated Members for Change is focused on one thing, and one thing alone: Bringing new members into the Order. This is a goal around which ALL of us in Odd Fellows should rally. The biggest single challenge faced by our Order (and, frankly, faced by all fraternal orders in the nation) is the decline of membership. Declining membership affects everything we do. In Odd Fellows, our membership nationwide has declined steadily since World War II and is today only 10% of what it was during the 1940's. Obviously, such a decline cannot continue, and inevitably will lead to the diminution and death of our ancient Order. So, DMC is all about bringing in new members to rejuvenate, rehabilitate, and renew this fraternity! To do that, we need to refocus, recharge, and refresh the way we do business.

This last Saturday, my Lodge (Davis #169) voted to admit 14 new members - and we have scheduled the initiation for these 14 in March. To put this into perspective, there are some 40 Lodges in our California which have fewer than 14 members. And here we have one Lodge which will admitting 14 at one time. And to put it in further perspective, our Lodge already has 16 applicants for the next group of potential new members - scheduled for initiation in the Fall. How do we do it? And who are these 30 prospective members?



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We do it with a relatively simple formula based on three things.

First, we don't make it easy on the prospective new members. We don't admit new members soon after they submit applications. We make them go through a "pledge process" that takes about six months. During this pledge period, they learn about us, we learn about them, and most importantly, they learn about our unique Order. During the process, we have them print out a "pledge book" from our website (you can find it at www.davisoddfellows.com - the pledge book is on the home page, under "downloads"). The pledge book provides useful background information on Odd Fellowship. The pledges are each given a "mentor" who is not their sponsor, and who acts as a big brother or big sister, introducing them to others and answering their questions. The pledges are required to meet and interview a minimum of 13 of our members, and to attend a minimum of 8 of our social meetings and Lodge events. We encourage pledges to join and participate in our committees, planning events for the Lodge and the community. To join our fraternity, the applicants have to earn it.

Second, we focus on community and charitable works. We have found that one of the reasons that new members are attracted to our Lodge is because we actively support the community. So, our Lodge has committees that reach out into the community. We do good works and we are highly visible. We run Bingo games every month, each of which benefits a community group. We organize Breakfast with Santa and also Breakfast with the Bunny for the children and families of our town. We have a Helping Seniors Committee which helps frail seniors with projects in their homes; a Social Services Committee which works with persons with mental health issues, a Planting Trees Committee which plants trees throughout the town, a Community Support Committee which co-hosts events to benefit community and charitable groups. We have a Music and Concerts Committee that puts on monthly music venues at our Lodge for the benefit of musicians and the community, and so on. Helping others is a big draw to our new members. Our members don't just sit within the four walls of our Lodge.

Third, we have a good time together as a fraternity. We have found that people also join our Lodge because we provide a social network for our members. So, we have committees that organize wine trips, bicycle trips, movie nights and game nights at the Lodge, hikes, wine tasting, and the like. We hold an annual OddtoberFest at the Lodge, as well as an annual St. Patrick's Day Party, and an annual Halloween Party. This year, we may start a new tradition with an annual New Year's Eve Party. We have monthly social breakfast meetings. Our last breakfast was attended by over 100 Lodge members and pledges. We have a weekly informal "Lodge Night" where members come by the Lodge to enjoy food, drink and each others' company. We should never forget that our fraternity was founded in the pubs of England.



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Our 30 prospective new members include an almost equal number of men and women. They range in age from 16 to 60 - but most are in their 20's, 30's and 40's. There are a number of husbands and wives in the group. All ethnic groups are represented. We have the county sheriff, a physician and surgeon, a retail sales worker, a construction manager, a stay-at-home dad, a lawyer, a high school student, the deputy commissioner of the CHP, a judge, a music teacher and musician, a marriage and family therapist, a winemaker, a homemaker and knitter, a budget and finance assistant, a prep cook, an accountant, a graduate student, a brew master, a real estate broker, a bartender, a public health worker, a security guard, a university professor, the owner of a yoghurt shop, a real estate appraiser, etc. In short, a microcosm of our community.

In the 19th Century and the early part of the 20th Century, Odd Fellowship was the place to be. We can be that place again in the 21st Century.

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Dave Rosenberg