



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

October 9, 2013

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

I recently published a DMC Newsletter where I suggested that, notwithstanding the serious work that we do, we also have to have some fun with our name (Odd Fellows) and our "odd-ness". It is, after all, a distinctive and historical feature that makes us unique and memorable. I posited that this will not only be fun for the members, but is also a nice way to reach into the community and generate interest in the Lodge - in other words, a good technique for membership development.

Louie Sarmiento, our brother and friend and a dynamic leader developing our Order in the Philippines, responded with an insightful e-mail, which I am pleased to publish for your reading pleasure, below.

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Dave Rosenberg, Grand Warden

In Dumaguete City, we also have an "Annual ODDventure" where lodge members go for a one day adventure to the beach, go hiking in the mountains, go caving, or just go somewhere out of the city to have fun and relax together. We usually organize an Oddventure at least once a year and the event is also open to friends and family of members. We had several people who joined our lodge through such event because they had fun and they got the chance to bond with us and see how deep our friendships in the Odd Fellows.

To save Odd Fellows, I think the Odd Fellows should think of creative ways to regain or recreate its identity. For years, we have lost our public identity. Nobody really knows who we are now. We used to be very well-known from mid-1800 to mid-1900 because we were "ahead of other organizations" in terms of pioneering social work projects and events. We helped conceptualize the insurance system. We were the first fraternity to build homes for the widows and orphans. We built cemeteries with our own name "Odd Fellows" and many more. But when the government adopted most of these projects, many lodges lost their creativity.

Today, many of our lodges are stuck to just "handing out a check" to a different charity group. We are stuck to supporting projects organized by other foundations. We are stuck to just waiting for other groups to organize projects and we just hand them out a check. Some lodges boast "we



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donate to the food bank", "we donate to S.O.S.", "we donate to the arthritis foundation", etc. Well, ANY person can donate without the need to be a member of the Odd Fellows. So why do we think they should join us? People want to join a group because it has its own projects not just because it supports projects of other organizations. You can't convince people to join your lodge by saying "We help ring the salvation army bell every year". That is a salvation army project, that is not pure Odd Fellows. They don't need to join Odd Fellows to do that; anyone can volunteer directly to the salvation army to do that. Is there something unique that our lodges offer that is purely an "Odd Fellows" project?

For Odd Fellows to be relevant and interesting to people, we have to formulate projects that are named "Odd Fellows" and under Odd Fellows. Our lodges have to organize events that are named after "Odd Fellows", etc. For example, there is a lodge in Illinois that organizes an annual "ODD FEST" and the proceeds thereof go to several charities. Not only does it give members a time to bond together and help the community, it brings the name "Odd Fellows" out to the community.

If all lodges have these kinds of unique events that are purely Odd Fellows, it's easier to bring our name out to the public. And if all lodges in the US and Canada or around the world have a uniform "annual event" or international project named "Odd Fellows", we create a bigger impact. Right now, lodges support tiny and scattered projects that are not really Odd Fellows projects. Anyone can donate a check to those foundations.

in FLT.

Louie