

Membership Growth

Joe Weiss



Many of us give our all for Kiwanis and each of us gives in the best way that we can. Our giving is in many directions. We give money, we give time, and we give ideas. We give so much that Kiwanis makes an incredible contribution to our communities and to the world.

I am proud to be a part of this incredible organization, and have been captivated by the attitudes of our outstanding membership as I have traveled through the state in my last two years as a District Chairperson.

We fund raise our hearts out and then we give our money and labors throughout our communities. We give until it hurts and then still wonder how we can give more. We spend hours helping in the community without thought of personal gain. Yet, many of us are missing our most important role in Kiwanis.

A longer version of this article with additional information is available on the district web site, www.kiwanis-ny.org.

To define this role, I would like to first review the three missions of being a Kiwanian (in my opinion). First, we must fund raise to have a foundation of money to give out in our community. Secondly, we must find ways to help in our community with both collected monies and our labors, looking for appropriate causes for our dollars and our work. Finally, the third mission is that we must develop our clubs in strength and size.

This third responsibility of being a Kiwanian is often overlooked and frequently under done. A seriously missing piece, the mission of helping our clubs to grow. A club that is not continuously adding membership each year becomes less and less effective and reduces its ability to help in the community.

A club that is growing continuously increases its ability to be of assistance in the community. This basic fact may not be surprising to most but there is more to the story. A club that stops growing begins a slow death as its members become fewer and older.

Simply put, a growing club will do more in the community and will be around for a longer time. A stagnant or declining club will ultimately get so small that it either dies or substantially loses its ability to support its community. Sometimes, members even exacerbate the problem by unconsciously trying to keep the club at "status quo" without re-

alizing that they are causing their club to become "status dying". Do we really want to kill our clubs in order to keep them the way they used to be? Of course not.

What can you do? First, of course, you must be sure that your club is vibrant and interesting; a club that others would want to join. This requires that a club has fun and that its members feel valued. Additional emphasis should be placed on welcoming and monitoring new members (and guests) for the first year, as this is the year that we lose most members.

Then comes the third mission, perhaps the most important task in today's volunteer world: making the time, spending the time, and finding many ways to bring in new members. The most important single thing that we can do to accomplish this is to run club or divisional roundups twice a year.

A roundup is a meeting in which members commit to bringing a qualified guest to an interesting meeting at which they can hear all about Kiwanis and its accomplishments and needs.

Call me at 631-647-3712 or email me at joeweiss@optonline.net and we will find a way to start the process for you immediately. I am part of a team of dedicated Kiwanians that stand ready to help the clubs in the New York District develop a growth plan.

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