



*Cultivating
Grass Roots
For Growth
2009 - 2012*

PURPOSE/DEDICATION

This booklet has been assembled as a source of information and inspiration to those Chapters which find themselves in the position of losing more members than they are gaining; to help them get a foothold and stop the downward spiral. Likewise, it is hoped the topics addressed herein will increase the attendance and participation of your Chapter's current membership. The ideas and suggestions contained herein did not originate with the compiler, but have been gleaned from ideas offered to the Visionquest and Visioneers Committees of General Grand Chapter and others who are striving to bring their Chapters back to life.

This effort is lovingly dedicated to our Most Worthy Grand Matron, Sister Rennie Ofton, who recognized the need and gathered much of the included material.

If your Chapter is not prospering and moving forward, then perhaps this booklet will provide you with some helpful ideas. That is my fervent wish and hope.

Fraternally,

June Bell

IS THERE A NEED?

To answer the question, we need only to take a brief look at history. In 1973, total General Grand Chapter membership was 2,692,996. Since that time, there has been a steady decline until, in 2007, a membership of 606,764 was reported. This shows that in the last 34 years, we have lost 2,086,232 members.

In recent years, specific General Grand Chapter Committees, such as Membership, Visioneers, and Visionquest have diligently entered into a program to try to reach and educate our membership about this loss. Many dedicated members have held special meetings to bring forth the information. Our thanks to all of them!

Now, what can **WE** do in the 2009-2012 Triennial to continue their efforts? This booklet is an effort to reach the "grass roots" Chapters to ask for their assistance. We hope there are some things you can use in **YOUR CHAPTER** to start a rejuvenation of our Order in your area.

Sincere thanks to Dean Wyant, PGP of Kansas and Visionquest South Region Coordinator 2006-2009, for his research which gave us the above figures.

HOW DO I BEGIN?

No new project should be undertaken without prior serious and detailed planning. Since most tasks are too large and important to undertake alone, ask two or three other concerned members to work with you. Remember that two or three heads produce more ideas and viable solutions than one.

Revitalization is not an easy task, nor is it one that can be accomplished quickly. Be prepared to commit to persevering for the 'long haul.'

There are several things that you should consider as you begin:

1. Look at your active members, listing their strengths and weaknesses. Then you know how best to utilize their talents.
2. Define any problems in the Chapter: financial, membership, vision, activities, poor attendance.
3. Talk to inactive members to determine why they no longer come to meetings. Don't be afraid to ask "What can we do to make you want to come?"
4. Survey those members who do attend. Are their attitudes positive or negative? Are they proud of their Chapter, its members, its activities? Do they talk about their Chapter to others? Consider what can be done to change the negative to positive. Ask a very important question of the faithful members: Why do you remain a member; why do you continue to attend and support your Chapter—meeting after meeting? Then, follow up with a great big, THANK YOU!

5. Talk to members about what Eastern Star means to them, and then build on their opinions.
6. It is possible that one or two members do most of the work. Find others who are willing to do one or two of these jobs so the chores are handled by many, rather than a few.
7. Be aware of the possibility of negative leadership and work toward making it positive; thus, generating a harmonious atmosphere.
8. Does your Chapter have a vision, a goal? Establish a committee, i.e., the elective officers, to formulate a goal and ways to reach it. Inform the Chapter – don't keep it secret.
9. Consider giving a "Gift of Eastern Star" to potential members. Have the Chapter members defray the minimal cost of International Headquarters dues and per-capita fees. Let new members see what we do by joining and attending without having to bear the initial costs. It's easier to 'show' what our Order does than trying to 'explain' what we do. If your meetings are exciting, fruitful and conducted properly, the new members will, after the first year, remain members and pay their own dues.
10. Adopt as your motto the following quote from Brother Dean Wyant: "Have a Vision and go in Quest of that Vision."

ATTENDANCE

If you are going to put more life into your Chapter, you need to increase attendance at meetings and other activities. The following ideas are not listed in a step-by-step order, for not all of them are applicable to every situation. Read through them and pick those that can be adapted to your group.

1. Attitudes are contagious. Therefore, work at always projecting a Positive Attitude. If you look, something good can always be found so, focus on that.
2. Have a 'pot-luck' before every other meeting.
3. Send invitations to other Chapters, inactive members, and new members.
4. Send "flyers" to area Chapters with an invitation to special events.
5. Call all members to help with events, refreshments, programs, etc.
6. Abbreviate some meetings to make time for fun.
7. Set up a Ride Committee.
8. Have an Official Greeter or Hostess or, a different one at each meeting.
9. Arrange for baby-sitting. Enlist members of youth organizations to plan activities for baby-sitting time.
10. Establish a Telephone Committee.
11. Have a regular Chapter Newsletter, participate in the Masonic newsletter, or have a joint letter with another Chapter.
12. Have Officer Guideline Handbooks with duties and suggestions.

13. Have regular Study classes that include the work of the Order (the Ritual, the small print in the Ritual), Grand Chapter yearly changes, the Secret Work, and Grand Chapter Constitution. Start with a few students. If the sessions are interesting and productive, the group will grow.
14. Have practice sessions for your Officers so that they can perform all their work (Opening, Closing, and Initiation) proficiently. Have a "mock" meeting in which officers change positions.
15. Have practice sessions for specialized groups of Officers, such as Conductresses and Star Points.
16. Have theme nights for meetings and dress accordingly.
17. Call or send a note to members when they miss a meeting. Show concern!
18. Participate in Grand Chapter as a group.
19. Be supportive, encouraging and willing to try something new.
20. Make ALL members feel welcome at meetings and social events. Always thank everyone for coming and tell them you hope to see them at the next meeting.
21. Find ways to involve more members in meaningful tasks. Spread out the work rather than over-working your most dependable and faithful members.
22. Accept all suggestions and ideas, even if you don't use them all. If something similar has been tried in the past, ask "how do you think this will work now?"
23. Have regular "Line Officer's" meetings.

24. Don't refuse help or turn away volunteers. If another task doesn't immediately come to mind, say, "Yes, you can do this," and then find something else to do yourself. Remember, people feel more a part of a group when they have something to do.
25. Have a lot of "family oriented" activities with some at locations other than the Lodge Building: picnics, box socials, Christmas parties, a "prom," a talent show. Turn your imagination loose.
26. Ask a different member to serve as "prompter" at each meeting.
27. Send greeting cards to "shut-ins," out of town members, those who are ill, those with birthdays/anniversaries.
28. Plan outside social events – bus trip or mystery trip, ball games, theater, community events.
29. Ask all members to participate in ways they can serve — pro tem, refreshments, telephone committee, etc.
30. When a project succeeds, let the membership (and public) know about that success.
31. Contact all local members before each meeting to remind them of the meeting and let them know what is happening. It will make them feel important and let them know that you care.
32. Plan activities that **all can attend and afford**; where all feel equal and involved. Give consideration to working members and members with small children.

*"Evaluation of the past is the first step
toward vision for the future."*

Chris Widener

*"Spend 80 percent of your time focusing on
the opportunities of tomorrow rather than the
problems of yesterday."*

Brian Tracy

*"The greatest good you can do for
another is not to share your riches but to
reveal to him his own."*

Benjamin Disraeli

MEETINGS

Getting members to attend is just the first step. When they arrive, you must give them a reason to continue to come. Some ways to make meetings more interesting:

1. Keep the business moving. Members won't mind the passage of time if they feel the time was well spent. Off-subject, private conversations are a waste of time during the meeting.
2. Include a brief 'something interesting' in each meeting. It might be a funny or inspirational story, or an interesting bit of trivia.
3. When possible, abbreviate introductions. Many members quickly tire of the formal introductions at every meeting.
4. Have an agenda; know what is going to happen.
5. Be organized and discuss membership concerns and solutions at every meeting.
6. Don't let meetings go too late. They should be short and snappy and leave the members wanting more.
7. Have "theme" nights and dress accordingly.
8. Have a Recognition Night: oldest member; youngest member; one with longest membership; the family with the most members; the one who has been Worthy Matron or Worthy Patron the most times, etc.

9. Have programs on the meaning of the Order of the Eastern Star, The Landmarks, the Star Points, or the founding of our Order by someone who will explain the depth of our Order.

10. Have members provide entertainment. Older members could present "remember the way it was 30, 40, 50 years ago" programs which include humorous stories.

11. Have someone work up a brief history of the Chapter by reading past years' minutes, using carefully selected milestones and funny stories.

12. Have a program on your Grand Chapter with emphasis on projects accomplished, membership and Chapters' figures. Your Worthy Grand Matron might know someone who can do this.

13. Invite Community Groups (school choirs, drama clubs, youth groups, etc) to come early to present a program so that they can leave before time for your meeting. Provide light refreshments for them.

14. Have a drawing for door prizes before closing.

15. Bring in people to bring a short, five to ten minute program that will leave your members feeling encouraged and optimistic.

16. Toward the end of your meeting, have a "Brag Bucket" when members may contribute a certain amount of money (\$.25, maybe) for the privilege of bragging about something special.

FINDING NEW MEMBERS

Sometimes the best way to revitalize and reactivate a Chapter is by bringing in new members. This will not happen unless you actively seek out possible new members. This can be done by:

1. List the Chapter name and number in your local telephone directory.
2. Ask the Lodge to allow you to install the Chapter logo and/or sign outside the building.
3. Create and support (financially, if necessary) a Chapter Membership Committee.
4. Hold a "prospect" session to come up with a list of possible members.
5. Promote activities with your Masonic Brothers and their families – meals, clean-up, honor night, social gatherings. As you get to know their families, you might interest them in Star membership.
6. Have an "Open House" to invite the community to learn about you.
7. Put on a supper for the volunteer fire department members/constables/police and their families to show your appreciation for them.
8. Donate to disadvantaged persons, especially on holidays.
9. Put pictures and stories of your activities and good deeds in the local newspaper. Regularly advertise what you do.
10. Provide your members with petitions and a list of all Chapter charitable contributions to carry with them at all times.

11. Order Eastern Star brochures so that they are available to your members.
12. Have an open Installation and invite friends, co-workers, family, church family.
13. At your Open Installation, welcome all non-members and briefly tell about our Order and what we do.
14. Have a 'secret pal' program with the Masons or a youth group.
15. Hold a children's party for the community near a holiday.
16. Have a food booth, float, information booth at community events.
17. Have members bring a friend to an activity.
18. Have a 'Family Dinner' evening.
19. Invite representatives from community projects in which you might be interested. If you participate, you open yourself to new people and possible prospects.
20. Have a fundraiser, advertised as a 'Scholarship Project' for a local school. Present the scholarship at the school.
21. When participating in community activities, wear Eastern Star emblems and identifications.
22. Urge new members to tell their friends about the Eastern Star and invite them to join.

WE INITIATED -- NOW WHAT?

Getting a new member is just the first step. Now you must work at getting them involved and wanting to participate.

1. Develop a 'New Member Handbook.'
2. Create a new member orientation program.
3. Have members wear name tags at meetings until the new members know everyone.
4. Assign a Big Sister/Brother to help answer questions and give instruction. Choose this mentor well, trying to match interests and personalities.
5. Give them something specific to do so they feel needed and a part of the group.
6. Continue the same diligent attention that you showed new members prior to their initiation. Spend time with them.
7. The more members there are who really get to know the new initiates, the more comfortable they will feel.
8. Offer to pick them up to attend activities and visit other Chapters.
9. If a new member is asked to "pro tem," ask some knowledgeable member to instruct/demonstrate what should be done. Use tact and diplomacy when correcting mistakes.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Becoming involved in your community is one of the best ways to put your Chapter in the forefront of people's minds. If they see that you are active, if they see what you do, they will be more inclined to want to become a part of your group. Some of the previously listed suggestions also fit this category. Here are some others:

1. Attend fundraisers of local organizations and participate by having a booth with an Eastern Star banner. Make yourselves visible by wearing Eastern Star identifications.
2. Show your support for churches and other organizations by attending their celebrations (100th birthday) as a group, wearing your Eastern Star pins.
3. Get pencils with the Eastern Star logo and distribute to school children along with other school supplies.
4. Ask the organizers of charitable fundraisers for Masons, Shriners, Scottish Rite how you can help.
5. Make and donate items for annual fundraisers for Knight's Templar, Scottish Rite, Shrine Charities, and Cancer Centers.
6. Give annual gifts in the name of your Chapter to other charitable organizations.
7. Invite fire/police departments and their families to a picnic or meal. Include games and prizes for the children. Invite all to the Lodge for a program thanking them for specific heroic acts. Close with remarks about Masonic appendant bodies and their charitable contributions.
8. Host a "Tea Party" at a local nursing home.
9. Sponsor a Christmas tree in the city park.

CARING FOR THE CHAPTER

It takes diligent attention from all members to maintain an active, "alive" Chapter and to prevent a slide back into complacency. That is what caused your problems in the first place. In addition to some of the suggestions already listed in other sections, these are some further thoughts on this matter for you to keep in mind.

1. Success fosters success; start with little things, publicize, keep actions and attitudes positive and reap the benefits.
2. Work on the premise that a Chapter that works together, stays together.
3. Arrange for members to visit 'shut-in' members. Set up a voluntary schedule.
4. Participate as a Chapter in a meeting of a Sister Chapter.
5. Have an exchange "Friendship" meeting with a Chapter from another section/district.
6. Keep going – don't get discouraged and give up.
7. Develop and publish a Chapter Membership Roster.
8. Keep accurate, business-like records.
9. Ensure that your Chapter is fiscally secure; consider periodic fund raising activities.
10. Ensure fiscal responsibility by requiring two signatures on all accounts.
11. Have regular financial reports.
12. Annual audits are a protection, not an accusation of wrong-doing.

RESOURCES

In addition to the suggestions contained in this booklet, actively search out other information and then willingly share it with others. Go to:

1. Other Chapters in your area. If you find a Chapter that is suddenly having a growth spurt, talk to its members to ascertain what they are doing that you might incorporate into your own activities.
2. Your Grand Chapter. Your Worthy Grand Matron may know of a Chapter that is being successful in recruitment and rejuvenation. Visit or talk to them.
3. Your Grand Chapter website. This can be a valuable starting point from which you can find other information sources.
4. If you are looking for help with a New Member's Handbook, many can be found on Grand Chapter websites, and in the hands of Grand Officers and your neighboring Chapters. Most will be happy to share if you will ask.
5. Take advantage of the Chapter Restoration Committee appointed by our Most Worthy Grand Matron, Sister Rennie Ofton. Contact Dean Wyant, General Chairman of the Committee, and share ideas, proven solutions and concerns. Email: eagle6@embarqmail.com General Grand Chapter Committee Members are available, on request of the Grand Chapter(s), to conduct seminars and brainstorming sessions designed to enhance Chapter restoration by increasing membership and attendance.

*"Productivity is determined
not by work,
but by EFFECTIVE
actions disguised as work."*

Doug Firebaugh

To exemplify this adage, Sister June Bell took comments, papers, and "grit" to put together this booklet for our use. We extend our sincere thanks for her efforts and for all who contributed their expertise to it. To all who assisted in any way, special thanks are given from a grateful heart.

Rennie Ofton