

The 2nd Century – Invite to Impact Ohio Centennial Year “Homecoming” for Lions

Experience suggests that it is easier to reach out to former Lions and get them to rejoin than it is to convince someone to join for the very first time. After all, former Lions already understand what Lionism is all about. You don't have to explain to them who Lions are and what they do – you just have to remind them how important the Lions are to the community, and how fulfilling they once found it to be a Lion.

As we approach the 2019-2020 program year and the Ohio Centennial Celebration, we have a great opportunity to use that 100-year excitement to reach out to “lapsed” Lions. It is a chance to let them know what their involvement in Lionism meant in the past, and what it could mean for their future. This packet contains materials to help you do just that – to plan a “Homecoming” celebration for former Lions that is unique to them, and to your club, and see if you can bring them back to service. **First, and foremost, your club must buy-in to the Homecoming Event concept for it to be successful.**

Identifying Your Guests

What Former Members Are Out There?

Go back AT LEAST five years (perhaps longer!), and identify people who have been members of your club in the last five years who are no longer members. In sifting through your prospects, think about these possibilities along the way:

- (a) Spouses – The spouses of your long time *current* members, who came to Lions activities for many years WITH their family Lion, are great potential prospects for your outreach efforts. Here is a chance to make a personal outreach to those folks, saying “you have always been a valued supporter of what we do. Isn't it time that you were one of us?” And, as you reach out to former Lions who are no longer affiliated, don't forget to consider offering an invitation to their spouses to attend, as well. Invite them to come along and help celebrate the 100th anniversary of Lions.
- (b) Have you lost any Lions Clubs in your area in the recent past? Where are the Lions who were part of the club that disbanded? Can you entice them back for a Homecoming celebration and encourage them to consider joining YOUR club now?

Who, Among Your Current Active Members, Is Still In Touch?

Often, when we recruit new members, we are approaching folks we don't know. For this activity, you don't have to worry about establishing rapport with someone new – these folks aren't new to you (or you to them!). They are friends and colleagues. They are people you worked with for some time in the past.

That gives you the unique opportunity to create a one-of-a-kind outreach for each of those folks, based on what you know about their past experiences with Lions, their personal situations, and more. Find out who in your club is still in touch with these former Lions or who was very comfortable with your prospect in the past and let them be the contact. You want to personalize this outreach effort as much as possible – friends talking to friends.

Why Did They Leave?

For each of the former Lions (or potential Lions) that you identified, determine why they decided to drop out (or, for spouses, why they may not have joined before). Was it because of health reasons? Age and energy levels? Work schedules? Family commitments? You **NEED** a clear understanding of the reason, if you are going to convince them that the reason they left shouldn't

keep them from coming back now. How you deliver your outreach “pitch” may be very different depending on their reasons for leaving, or not stepping forward, in the past.

A Personalized (Club) Approach to Homecoming

Who will be in charge and what expenses should you plan for?

You need to clearly identify who will take on those responsibilities within your club. It may be one person, or it may be a committee, or decisions may be made by the entire Board. You also need to figure the expenses from your administrative fund for this particular membership outreach activity. Such things as costs for meals, printing, and paying new member fees need to be considered.

Single-Night or “Get-Em-When-You-Can”?

Will your Homecoming outreach center on a special evening when you carefully plan the evening and promote it as something special, with your “honored guests” as the focal point? Or will you individualize the approach and go after your potential members one at a time, inviting them to come and visit with your club when they can? There are lots of things to consider in making that decision.

Depending on the size of the club and the number of folks you identify as possible recruits, you may determine that one strategy or another is more appropriate. If you have only a very few people identified, planning a whole evening JUST for them could seem awkward. You may be better off to provide the same information and the same outreach on an individual basis, inviting folks to join you whenever they can. Either way **when they are there, they will be your honored guests (and should be recognized as such).**

On the other hand, if you can identify a fair number of likely prospects to invite, there may be significant advantage in planning a special **Homecoming EVENT**. Besides being able to reach more people in one presentation, with your best presenters making the pitch, seeing lots of other folks who are considering coming back is another way to encourage your prospects to take the leap. There is something psychologically satisfying about knowing that the idea of being a Lion is something that LOTS of people are considering.

Of course, even if you plan a big event for a single night presentation, not all the folks you want to reach out to will be able to come on that night. You need to be prepared to do a one-on-one approach whenever you can get those prospects in. You need to find a way to provide the *BIG* presentation on a *small* scale.

Talking Points for Your Outreach/Invitation

While you are hoping to attract folks back to Lionism, if you make that your sole reason for the invitation, some folks may say “no” as a reflex. So make that a part of why you want them to come, not the whole reason. When you talk to folks about your reason for inviting them back at this time, let them know that: 1) Lions everywhere are celebrating our 100th anniversary, and that means celebrating the club’s *past* and future; 2) while you don’t deny that you would like to have them back, whether or not they are ready to return, you’d like to have them there because they have been part of your history; 3) you are excited to have a chance to share with them all the accomplishments of the past and plans for the future.

Proposed Preparations/Agenda for Homecoming Night

Once all of the above decisions have been made, the use of the sections of the “Ohio Plan” that deal with inviting guests, planning the actual meeting, talking points and follow-up is recommended. **The more personal contact after the meeting the better.** Whatever approach you use, it boils down to **Just Ask**.