

WHAT ARE YOUR CHAPTER'S MEMBERSHIP TRENDS?

DIANE — Once again Membership is taking center stage for this year's Workshop and that is because membership continues to decline and the number going inactive continues to rise. This is serious and we need to reverse these trends. Simply put ...when membership increases we collect more dues, which, ideally, would cover the cost of operations of our philanthropies. If this happened, then 100% of our contributions to our projects could go directly to our recipients and we would be able to help more women. When membership increases, our chapters are stronger, healthier, have more fun, have more members to carry the operations of the chapter, give programs and more dues-paying members also means that International wouldn't have to raise its dues as often.

How can we reverse these trends you might ask....our chapters only **grow** by initiating new members and reinstating inactive members. Women transferring into our chapter are an increase to our chapter but a decrease for another so we cannot count those as a way to increase our membership. Therefore only initiations and reinstatements can increase our membership. Of course, if our chapters lose members then membership declines even further. Our chapters decline when members enter chapter eternal, which, of course, we can't prevent...we can't control... it is going to happen! The largest decline, and it continues to rise, occurs when members go inactive. And this we can control! The bottom line to reversing these trends is to initiate more new members and to prevent members from going inactive.

Let's listen and watch as Joan and Becky discuss the impact of these trends on two chapters. The average attendance at chapter meetings in Ohio is 22. We have a "chapter" on each side of the stage beginning with the same number of 22....thank you to all our participants.

BECKY— The visiting officer to our chapter XYZ asked our chapter where we would be in 5 years. A lot can happen in five years and it seems to happen overnight. Five years ago would you have realized where your chapter is today???

JOAN— I think so. Our chapter ABC consistently initiates 1-2 new members each and every year in order to off-set our losses so I would have imagined that we would be a bit larger now than we were then. Let's see....five years ago we had 36 members. That year we initiated 2 members (*wait while 2 members pick up gifts and give to 2 participants waiting in the wings and bring them to the "chapter."*) One sister transferred in to our chapter (*one from the wings picks up suitcase and joins the circle*). Unfortunately one sister entered chapter eternal (*someone in the circle "flies" off*) but we ended that year +2 or 38 resident members.

BECKY — Ch. XYZ had a transfer in (wait while someone from wings picks up suitcase and enters circle) and we also had one enter chapter eternal. (someone in circle “flies” off) but we didn’t initiate that year. (chapter puts hand on hips, shrugs) We started with 36 and ended with 36....at least we didn’t have a negative change in membership! (chapter claps and pats themselves on back, high fives!)

JOAN — The next year we initiated OF COURSE (one member picks a gift, gives it to someone in the wings and brings her to the circle, they hug) but didn’t have any other membership changes so ended the year up one member with 39 members.

BECKY— Well guess what....we initiated a new member also (someone gets gift, gives to one in wings and brings to the circle, they jump up and down) BUT we had 2 go inactive! (2 put their gifts back in the basket and walk off). So let’s see +2, -1 = 35 members.

JOAN — eeeeeek! Inactive?!?!? We rarely, rarely, rarely ever have any one go inactive. No one even thinks about doing that. Guess it is not in our mindset. Our members are so proud to be P.E.O. they would never want to give up their pin. What caused your 2 to go inactive?

BECKY — Ummm... it was Mary and Jean. Mary went back to work years ago and hasn’t felt connected to our daytime chapter and Jean was caring for a sick husband. She was exhausted.

JOAN — Our chapter works hard at keeping connected with our nonparticipating members. I’d think Jean would have found a respite in P.E.O. and wouldn’t want to give up the loving support of her sisters. We also let those unable to come know how appreciative we are of their continued membership and that their dues help the sisterhood to award all monies donated. It makes them feel good and as if they are a part of the chapter even in their absence. We look forward to their return when they are able to come again.

BECKY — Did you hear that! Maybe showing some caring concern to those who cannot come and keeping them connected could help prevent sisters from going inactive in the future. Thanks, Joan!

JOAN — Well, 3 years ago must have been when the state president set a goal for every chapter to strive for a net gain of 2 new members. (*Becky looks like ...what??? We never heard that!*) We passed out Franc’s list because we knew we were probably going to lose 2 members. We did — Jan entered chapter eternal (*one flies off*). Carol moved to Texas (*takes suitcase and leaves*) but fortunately we had a couple of guest days and with the help of Franc’s list we had no problem finding guests to invite. We gave the gift of P.E.O. to 3 new sisters. (*wait as 3 come, give gifts to 3 in the wings and bring them into the circle...lots of hugs.*) We reached our goal of +2 and ended with 41 resident

members.

BECKY — Our chapter must be living under a rock...we never heard about the State President's goal of a net gain of 2. And what is Franc's list....I'm sure our chapter doesn't have one of those...whatever it is. Tell us about that.

JOAN — Franc's list is available on the International web site. You DO know who Franc is, don't you?

BECKY — Well, yeah....she's the Founder who said "Let's go find the Others!"

JOAN — It's also an acronym... F for friends, R for relatives, A for acquaintances, N for neighbors and C for our children's friends. That pretty much covers all the places we look when we think of people we know who might like P.E.O. and be congenial to our chapter. And with 3 social meetings allowed a year it makes it easy to have opportunities to introduce those on our Franc list to members in our chapter. Your chapter DOES have guest days don't they????

BECKY — I think having a guest day must be on our chapter's bucket list! So obviously we did not reach the president's goal of a net gain of +2. Actually we had a loss of 2 since Sally transferred her membership to a Florida chapter (someone in the circle takes suitcase and leaves) and Mable entered chapter eternal. (someone flies off). Gosh, our chapters started out the same, with 36 members and now you have 41 and we are down to 33. I can see that initiating every year and not having anyone go inactive can make a big difference in the chapter and so quickly too.

JOAN — We have certainly grown....in 3 years we had initiated 6 and had 2 transfer in. We needed to take that next year to just nurture our new members and get to know each other. We knew Jane was going to move away and would transfer right away, (member takes suitcase and leaves) but we postponed bringing anyone else into the chapter for a year while we concentrated on each other. We had a fundraising project that took the whole chapters' efforts, planned several getting to know you programs and had BIL socials so we could get acquainted. We ended the year with 40.

BECKY — Even though we initiated a friend of mine from Church (someone takes a gift and gives it to a gal in the wings and brings her in the circle) that was a bad year for us. We had another sister enter chapter eternal (someone flies off) but ...oh I hate to tell you this....we had 4 (covers face) sisters go inactive. (4 return gifts to the basket and walk off) We have got to do something to reverse this trend!

JOAN — I'm afraid once someone goes inactive in a chapter it seems it becomes an acceptable

thing to do. That it is ok to turn in your pin. Perhaps you can begin reversing the trend by making sure prospective members understand the commitment to P.E.O. during pre-acceptance counseling and that they know once a P.E.O. always a P.E.O. They don't have to be a stellar member every year; some years are a better time than others, but usually there is something they can do to contribute to the chapter and feel connected.

JOAN — Last year our chapter received one of those forms Introducing a Woman Not a P.E.O. No one in our chapter new Marguerite so 2 gals called and met her for coffee. Then they invited her to one of our programs, she was interested and well you know the rest of the story. Nancy became a new member last year....we were so lucky....what a wonderful surprise to receive that form and what a gift to the chapter it was. So you asked where we thought 5 years ago our chapter would be today. We initiated 7 and had 2 sisters transfer in so even though we had 2 enter Chapter Eternal and 2 transfer out we more than offset our losses. A lot of our members are nearing retirement and we're sure some of our snowbirds will transfer to other chapters. We realize the importance of continually initiating one to two new members a year.....not too fast, but slow, steady, thoughtful growth.

BECKY — I wish someone would send our chapter one of those Introducing a Woman Not a P.E.O. forms. Our chapter could use such a gift and would be forever grateful. We lost 2 more sisters last year. Mary entered Chapter Eternal (Mary flies off with daisies) and Judy (takes suitcase and leaves) moved to Arizona. We haven't had a positive change in membership for some time. Our chapter will be in trouble if we do not reverse this trend! For the first time our average attendance is fewer than 20....you know with 7 officers, being hostesses and co-hostesses, giving programs, filling all the committees it takes more than that so members don't burn out and feel burdened. We definitely need to concentrate on bringing 2-3 new members into our chapter this year and we certainly can't have anyone else go inactive.

JOAN — I'm sure your determination and enthusiasm will be contagious to your chapter. Remember the logo MEMBERSHIP BEGINS WITH ME! Remind your chapter members that Membership is up to each member.....each of us is responsible for the membership health of our chapters. Membership begins with ME does not necessarily mean that you have to propose a name or even bring guests, you can hostess a guest event, or help with the decorations or invitations, you can sit with a new initiate and tell her why you love P.E.O., you can write a nonparticipating member and tell her how much you look forward to when she can attend again, you can take cookies to a member who you heard had knee replacement even

though you haven't seen her at meetings for several years. These kindnesses may prevent her from considering going inactive. Give your chapter Franc's list and plan a fun event. I'm confident by this time next year your chapter will have 2-3 new members! Just look There are women out there just waiting in the wings to be given the gift of P.E.O.

DIANE — Joan and Becky will be passing out "GIFTS" to remind us that we each have been given this wonderful gift of P.E.O. and that our chapters continually need to pass this gift on to others. Please take that message back to your chapter! And as we know Membership Begins with ME! Each of us can do something to help our chapter reach our goal of initiating new members. Joan and Becky are also passing out copies of Franc's List. These are available on our International Website. Please copy them for members of your chapter. The website also has lots of ideas and suggestions to help your chapter's membership health. There are several "Membership Begins with ME" videos that will inspire your chapter to put having a guest day on your bucket list. Remember...what your chapter looks like in five years is up to you today!

Thank you Joan and Becky and I must say that they were not talking about their own chapters. Chapters ABC and XYZ, however, are very real in that they portrayed what many of our chapters experience every year. If you haven't noticed already, the membership history of your chapter and your trend is on the back of the yellow handout you received before the workshop. We would like to applaud the chapters that have initiated EVERY year for the last five years....would you please stand and hold the applause until all of have stood: Chapters A, J, N, AF, AI, AJ, AL, AO, AZ, BF, BG, CB, CE, CH, CI, CN, CY, DF, DK, DM, DO, DQ, DS, DU, DY, EB, EH, EI, ET, EY, FA, FF (If they also initiate this year....these have initiated every year for the last 4). We need to also celebrate the 13 chapters who have had no one go inactive in the last five years: Chapters U, AC, AJ, AK, BQ, CE, CX, EE, EL, EO, EQ, FB, and FJ. (If they don't have anyone go inactive in this year.) These chapters are already helping Ohio reverse the trend. Thank you!