

## Proper Orientation Critical to New Member Success Lions Magazine (November 2002)

Conducting thorough new member orientations is essential to engaging members in your club and retaining them. The information offered during orientation provides a foundation for members. It gives them a perspective regarding the association's goals, the responsibilities of membership, its programs, history and traditions. Without this foundation, new members are not likely to feel committed to the club and motivated to help it reach its goals.

Think of orientation as an instrument. It's an instrument of time you take with your members that will yield large dividends for your club. The sense of dedication and belonging derived from a well done orientation session, supported by actively involving new members in activities they find meaningful will be well worth the effort. Statistics have shown that a properly orientated member is also one who will most likely remain in a Lions club through the years.

### **The Elements of Effective Orientations**

Successful orientations achieve more than just basic instruction; they go beyond mere facts. Orientations touch the heart; they also inspire and motivate new members to be the best Lions they can be. Effective orientations can be conducted in different manners. However, they share several common elements:

- They are conducted promptly. Ideally, a new member orientation should take place within one month of the member's introduction into the club.
- They present a manageable amount of information. It is important to strike the right balance. You want to give new members a thorough understanding of the topics, but not give them too much information to process.
- They are respectful of the member's time. Whether the orientation is held in one session or several, limit the session time to no longer than two hours at a time, and start and end promptly.
- They are lively and interesting. Pick up the pace by interspersing session segments with question and answer periods, a few short breaks and audio-visual materials.
- They allow plenty of time for questions and answers. Schedule an adequate amount of time throughout the session to address questions.
- They provide take-home materials. Assembling a comprehensive packet of essential materials for new members is extremely helpful.
- They provide a support/reference network. During each portion of the orientation, new members learn where they can turn for more information. Club members, the club directory, the Lions Clubs International Web Site and other sources many times can provide the answers to additional questions.
- They are enhanced with visuals. The use of visuals, such as a video, PowerPoint (or another PC-driven presentation) or overheads adds an additional element to the presentation and will help keep participants interested in the session.

- They use multiple presenters when possible. Varying the presentation among qualified individuals is beneficial to both the participants and the speakers.

Effective New Member Orientations can be conducted in several ways. It is important to choose a method that best suits your club. The most important consideration isn't necessarily the method you choose for presenting the information, but rather thorough, consistent information to each new member who joins your club. Orientations can be led by the new member's sponsor, a designated trainer or a trainer team, and conducted in one session or divided up into a few sessions.

### **New Orientation Guide Available**

The Orientation Guide, which has been completely revised, provides complete information for planning and conducting an effective orientation that will benefit both new members and your club. It contains information regarding the elements of a successful orientation, a description of the various orientation styles and helpful outlines and checklists for planning orientation sessions. The publication also includes a reference section packed with the information needed to conduct the orientation and other tips and suggestions.

To order this essential guide, contact the Membership Operations Department at (630) 571-5466, ext. 356, or [memberops@lionsclubs.org](mailto:memberops@lionsclubs.org). In the near future you will be able to download the Orientation Guide from the association's Web site at [www.lionsclubs.org](http://www.lionsclubs.org).

**Note:** The Orientation Guide is available at: <http://www.lionsclubs.org/EN/content/pdfs/me-13.pdf>.