

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL SOARING TOGETHER CAMPAIGN

- Establish a membership campaign season and set a membership goal.
 - ✓ The SOARing Together program sets parameters for both of these, but your League is welcome to adapt these to fit your specific needs. The important thing is to work with your Board and/or Membership Outreach Committee to establish both.
 - ✓ *Why?* Research shows that a membership campaign season yields greater results for the organization. It is a time where a strong push can be made to recruit new members to reach your membership goal. It encourages League members to ask prospective members to join by creating a deadline, rather than putting it off until later.
 - ✓ Additionally, a concentrated campaign season benefits new members, who will not feel isolated if they can share their experience of getting to know League with other new members.
- Be Action-Oriented and Externally Focused – People want to see how getting involved makes a difference, and whenever possible, they want to see a tangible outcome. Leagues need to assess the needs of the community and determine how Leagues can connect with these wider community issues.
- LWVUS *Diversity Toolkit* has a useful worksheet to help you assess what issues have “legs” in your area. It asks you to consider the following questions:
 - ✓ What are your League’s strengths?
 - ✓ What are the pressing concerns of the local community?
 - ✓ What are the interests of potential members?
 - ✓ Who are your potential coalition partners and what are their interests?
 - ✓ Where is the likelihood for results?
 - ✓ Where is the potential for visibility?

Those issues that are common answers for at least four questions are where your League should focus its activities. These are the issues that will resonate most with the larger community and therefore your pool of potential members, and they will reinforce the relevance and vitality of League in the community. Be sure to share your work (whatever the issue) with the broader community – especially success stories!

- Create personal benefits for joining – There are so many competing interests on people’s time and resources that League must make a compelling case for how joining the organization will benefit its members. Imagine that your recruitment (and retention) strategy is like a job interview. The League is not the employer but is the potential employee. The prospective member is in the role of employer.

How can you sell the organization? What benefits can you describe? What unique opportunities do you provide? The idea of providing “benefits” might sound daunting or even expensive, but your League already provides a great number of benefits to each of its members. It is a matter of packaging them in a way that resonates with prospective members.

The first step in this process is listening to the interests of the prospective member (rather than immediately telling them what the League needs but ask them what interests them, what concerns they have)! For example, someone new to the community might be looking for ways to get to know their new town. Your League may provide a “Know Your Community” booklet, offer “expert escorts” to city council meetings, and sends out updates on community issues in your local VOTER. These would all be benefits to this prospective member.

Your League undoubtedly provides many other benefits, but in a short “sales pitch” (such as you’ll practice in the icebreaker exercise suggested below) you want to try to identify the needs of the individual member and show how League will meet them.

Unsure about how to ask someone to join?

As an icebreaker at your next Board or Membership Outreach Committee meeting, practice asking people to join. A 20 minute exercise can help you to really clarify (in nonleague lingo) a short message about what the League is and does and to increase your confidence in making that *ask* in the future. Here are some possible role play scenarios:

- An acquaintance introduces you to a person who is new in town and notes in the introduction that you are an active League member
- A colleague at work asks you about an upcoming school board election
- You have just spoken to a community group and are asked afterwards about how you became such an excellent public speaker
- A person traveling on public transportation asks you about an article that you are reading from a League position paper.

TIPS FOR RECRUITING RECENT RETIREES

- Why recent retirees should be interested in League:
 - ✓ Research shows that Americans ages 55-70 want to see their talents utilized. Leagues need to accommodate the needs and concerns of this population, not expect that the organization’s needs will fit those of the volunteers.
 - ✓ This group will seek activities that will challenge them, provide flexibility, and an opportunity to volunteer in partnership with family and friends. They seek volunteer opportunities, in which they can make a meaningful contribution in a short amount of time. Therefore, Leagues should provide flexible opportunities through which members can become involved in the organization.
 - ✓ Recent retirees volunteer to regain the camaraderie that they lost when leaving work. They seek shared experiences and purposefulness. According to a 1999 *Wall Street Journal* article, 23 percent of surveyed retirees identified “alienation” as their biggest disappointment of retirement. League programs and meetings – specifically working on a community activity – could help to meet this need. With its unique blend of promoting political activism and fostering citizen education through a very social network, the League is a perfect fit!
 - ✓ According to Marc Freeman, author of *Prime Time: How Baby Boomers Will Revolutionize Retirement and Transform America*, recent retirees represent “...

the reemergence of the 'we generation' – the generation that first created the Peace Corps and that JFK challenged as young adults to think about what they could do for their country. These individuals are now entering their 60's, and they appear ready to embrace their idealism once again." Leagues should capitalize on this passion and commitment by trumpeting their successes and commitment to democracy and ideals in their communities.

- ✓ When surveyed about why they chose to participate in certain activities over others, some of the reasons given by adults ages 55-70 included:
 - an opportunity to try new things that one might otherwise not try
 - knowing that you provided information and options to an individual unaware of choices
 - working with youth
 - stretching your own mind
 - setting an example for your own children
 - getting involved with something that makes you feel good

Think about the ways League activities and retirees interests overlap.

- How should your League market itself to recent retirees?

Focus group research conducted in 2002 showed that the following messages or statements were most appealing:

- ✓ Having more control over one's life, more freedom, and more time for personal pursuits (*NOT needing to fill time*)
- ✓ Continued participation in life... learning, giving back, or mentoring
- ✓ Life is a journey (and therefore new experiences are waiting)
- ✓ Being part of something "larger"
- ✓ As personal descriptors, "advisors", "the experienced", "coaches"

Initiate a campaign to recruit "experienced" members of the community to participate in a specific project or program as a way for them to fulfill their goals in retirement.

- Identifying recent retirees

They are people that we already know: our neighbors, family, and friends. However, your League could take some specific measures to reach out to this community to attract prospective members: Ask representatives of these groups listed below if there is some activity that might bridge the League with their retiree group as well as offer to speak or present the LWV to them.

- ✓ **Professional organizations and/or unions** local teachers' unions, medical or legal associations, and public employees.
- ✓ **Adult learning centers/activities** -- Many colleges and universities offer programs and classes for retirees. Is there some special training that League could provide?

- ✓ **Religious institutions**--A 1999 Independent Sector survey found that almost three quarters of volunteers 55 years old and over found volunteer possibilities through their religious institutions.
- ✓ **Cosponsor an event with a community organization**—Such as the Chamber of Commerce, Rotary, AARP, or corporate organization (Building on the message that “Life is a journey”, examine community issues, new ways to look at your community, and how to become more engaged in them).
- **Create visibility**
 - ✓ A 2001 survey: volunteers in metropolitan areas had been influenced by marketing tools such as **billboards, brochures, and solicitations**. Your League’s newsletter can be used as a promotional tool as well.
 - ✓ Watch **newspapers** for announcements about retirements and other opportunities
 - ✓ Promote a **gift membership** program to honor retirees or perhaps a reduced-rate introductory membership
 - ✓ Welcome **new residents** to the community--Census data shows that 26 percent of 55 to 64 year olds moved to new communities between 1995 and 2000.
 - ✓ **Most importantly, ask people to join**

If asked, Americans ages 55-70 are approximately four times more likely to volunteer than if not contacted. Minorities – especially African Americans and Hispanics – are almost five times more likely to volunteer when asked.