

Your Role as a

New Lion Sponsor

&

Lion Mentor

Congratulations- If you've introduced someone to membership in the Elkhart Lions Club, the 'easy' part is over. If you've agreed to be a mentor to a new member, you and the member's sponsor will be an integral part of that person's introduction and involvement to the world's largest service club.

You also have a responsibility to make sure the new member not only becomes regular in attending meetings and working on projects, but knowledgeable in all aspects of Lionism from the local club through the district, state and international organizations.

Wow! That seems like a lot. But if we are to be successful, we must make new members feel welcome as well as make sure they understand our past involvement since the Elkhart Lions were chartered in 1924, but our current projects and visions for the future.

Don't worry. To be successful as a Sponsor or Mentor, take your time in helping a new member become fully aware of our club. As an aid, follow the plan outlined here and become a valuable member of the Membership Committee designed to not only open the doors wide for prospects to enter and become members, but also to close the back door, reducing the opportunity for members to leave because of any lack of understanding of our club's purpose and expectations we have for them.

Assimilation: First and foremost in getting new members involved is make sure they develop the habit of attending meetings. Hopefully new members are informed during the initial phases of joining how important attendance at meetings is. But we also need to encourage their attendance at other events to grasp a larger understanding of the scope of Lions beyond the camaraderie of the weekly meeting.

- 1) **Weekly meetings-** Encourage new members through personal contact, including phone calls, or other periodic contact (preferably face-to-face) to attend weekly meetings. But let's take this one step further. Since we assign two mentors and one sponsor for every new member, those contacts can be rotated, so that new members have a chance to get to know more people. When at the meetings, take care to sit at different tables each week, to acquaint new Lions to as many other members as possible. And you'll also get a chance to widen your knowledge about other members, too!
- 2) **Board meetings-** The Elkhart Lions board of directors meets the first Thursday of every month. These meetings are held at the 'Lions Den'. This is where many important details of the club are 'hammered' out, saving time from our weekly meetings. Any member of the Elkhart Lions is encouraged to attend, and one of the requirements for Cubs (a Cub is a new Lion) to get a 'blue' name badge is to attend one board meeting.

- 3) **District Events-** Indiana is a ‘multi-district’ state, that is, there are eight districts (we’re in District 25-G) geographically arranged throughout the state. Our district has approximately 60 clubs in St. Joseph, Elkhart, Marshall, Kosciusko, Fulton, Miami and Wabash Counties. There are a number of Cabinet meetings held throughout the year where the various committee chairmen and officers meet and discuss the status of their work. All Lions clubs’ members are encouraged to attend. This is another great way to introduce new members to activities beyond the local club.
- 4) **Indiana Lions Association-** Over 435 clubs and over 14,000 Lions in the state belong to the Indiana Lions Assn. A number of events are held annually, including a Mid-winter conference in January; a state convention in April and numerous other special events. In addition, the Indiana Lions has state projects with separate governing boards that address specific service issues, including: Lions Cancer Control Fund, Inc.; Indiana Lions Eye and Tissue Bank, Inc.; Indiana Lions For Leader Dog, Inc.; Indiana Lions Speech & Hearing, Inc.; Indiana Lions Foundation, Inc.; and the Indiana School for the Blind. Each Lions district elects three trustees that serve as the governing body for their particular state project. Each trustee is elected for a three year term at an election held at the district convention in the spring and take office officially on July 1st of their election year. The terms are staggered so one trustee is elected annually from each district. There are also several committees that work with other special needs and concerns apart from the state projects.
- 5) **International Lions-** There are more than 1.3 million members in over 45,000 clubs in 200 countries and geographic areas throughout the world. Lions Clubs International is the most active service organization in the world committed to reduce preventable blindness. An international convention in July attracts several thousand members and offers numerous opportunities to interact with Lions worldwide.

Involvement: The key to new members becoming valuable participants in our club is to get them involved. Hopefully we learned in that person’s introduction to the club what activities and projects interest the new member. However, the scope of understanding of those projects and events shouldn’t be taken for granted. Even though we reviewed and outlined a lot of our activities in the formal orientation program, the amount of information presented was probably overwhelming, to say the least. As we progress through the year, be sure each new member is again introduced to these projects and events by explaining them in more detail as we announce them at meetings.

For example, we often refer to the ‘Lions’ Den’ as a meeting place to kick off or organize events. But most new Lions have no idea what we’re talking about. Remind the individual what our Lions Den is, where it is and that it is detailed in the New Member’s Manual that was given to him/her upon joining.

While we are planning projects and events, be sure to use positive comments about their involvement. Rather than asking, “Are you interested in selling chicken bar-be-que tickets?”, present the new member with an option, “What part of the chicken bar-be-que

project are you interested in helping the club with this year?" See how we change this 'Yes-No' question into a question that elicits a 'positive' response?

Additionally, we need to make sure new Lions are aware of the social activities our club offers throughout the year. Getting family members involved in the mentoring program expands the understanding of our club to them, further strengthening the relationship of the Lion and his spouse and others to us.

Education: Once we add new members' names to the Indiana Lions and the Lions International member rosters, they will begin receiving mailings and magazines. Use these opportunities to follow-up with them and discuss items of interest. Of course, that presumes you take time to read and review these publications, too. Flip through the pages and find an item or two you can discuss with the new members, to make sure they see what Lions are doing, not only locally, but everywhere. Bring it to a weekly meeting and discuss it at our table during the noon luncheon.

Another area you can encourage new members to stay informed through is the internet. The Elkhart Lions website is an excellent forum to review what we've done, what we have planned, as well as links to other sites with Lions 'stuff' for them to become familiar with on a regular basis. For example, they can 'bookmark' a page on the Lions International site (www.lionsclubs.org) and see the Lions Quarterly Video Magazine (www.lionsclubs.org/EN/content/lmq/), short videos of extremely interesting events held in local clubs just like ours.

Lion for Life: If we do our job and assimilate new Lions into our midst, making sure they get involved to the extent they are interested in and help educate them through awareness of the activities and programs of Lions locally and throughout the world, we will indeed be positioned to make that individual a 'Lion for Life'. By helping the new Lion develop habits of meeting attendance and serving on projects and committees, his interest should also become contagious, spilling over and attracting that person's friends and acquaintances. Instead of allowing a new person to wander out the 'back door' because we neglected him/her during the first year or so, the member will become an 'ambassador' for the Elkhart Lions, attracting more new Lions to pursue our vision and grow in service to the community.

Monitor: In the New Member Manual, the page marked 'Badges' spells out the criteria for new members to complete that will give them a 'Blue' badge. Be sure to review these requirements with the person you mentor, and assist them in getting all the requirements fulfilled. When they complete all the items, be sure to contact the club secretary so that a new name badge can be ordered and presented at a subsequent meeting.