

**A Lions Club**

# **“Open House”**

*An MD19 Lions  
Membership  
Recruitment  
Model*



Updated and edited by  
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# A LIONS CLUB “OPEN HOUSE” (The Multiple District 19 Lions Model)

(Updated & edited by Roger Richert, PID – MD19 Membership Chairperson – May 2002)

- The following club membership recruitment modal came out of Michigan. Similar membership recruitment models have been identified in other Multiple Districts in North America. Similar programs have been developed by clubs in MD19.
  - MD19’s official experience with this membership development plan is now in it’s 2<sup>nd</sup> year.
  - Clubs in MD19, who have used these guidelines, have always successfully recruited new members. **The program works!**
  - Minor variations to this program seem to work. However, when significant variations are instituted, the result ends up with fewer new members.
  - **Note: The  indicates specific action items. See the “Open House” action checklist with the attachments.**
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- Following the plan requires a serious undertaking by a club.
  - Several meetings are required for planning the actual presentation to potential new members and the follow-up sessions once the candidates actually become members.
  - The results are worth the efforts.
  - Every Lions Club can use new hands, new ideas and new projects. This is not to mention having enough help so that every member does not have to turn out for every project for it to be a success.
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- One of the reasons this approach seems to work is that a whole group joins together.
- This gives the club a “class” of new members, not just one or two at a time.
- This class can then learn the “how and why” of Lionism together rather than being the lone individual who must assimilate into the club individually.
- Also, the current members are influenced to work with all these new members by giving them jobs and committee responsibility.

## PLANNING AND ORGANIZING

- The first step involves a commitment by the entire club that new members are needed and that the existing members are willing to make a significant effort to gain those new members.
    - Membership is not the responsibility of just the Membership Chairperson or the Membership committee.
    - Membership must be approached like any other club project. Everyone must be involved.
  - Set up an Open House Committee (see suggested structure)
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- Once the club has committed to the effort, a special planning meeting must be set by the Open House Committee to begin the process.
- The planning meeting should be the focus program of a regular club meeting.
  - Separate meetings tend to end up with very few members attending.
- At that meeting, dates, times and locations should be set for the “Open House” event.
- A list of potential recruits should be developed and one of the best ways to develop the list is to use the Recruiting Wheel.
  - Use the Recruiting Wheel to brainstorm ideas as to those friends, neighbors, acquaintances and civic leaders who would make good Lions.
  - Not everyone will be able to fill in a name for every blank.
- A deadline is set for club members to turn in suggested names.
  - Sending the Recruiting Wheel with the club newsletter is a good way to get everyone involved, including those who do not attend meetings regularly.
  - Remember to ask your closest friends and your spouse for recommendations as to who might make good prospective members. You might consider asking your spouse!

- Be sure to have a specific date for the final return of the forms.
  - Allow minimally two or three meetings for names to be returned. You need everyone's ideas.
  - Don't stop at just those suggestions on the list. Stretch your imagination.
  - Think of those individuals that are not traditionally asked; such as, minorities, members of other service clubs (like the JC's), corporate leaders, community leaders, business owners or those that might have physical or financial resources that could be of benefit to your club.
  - If someone does not turn in a form, be sure to contact him or her.
  - The more names, the greater the likelihood you will get the new members you need.
- Once all the possible names have been collected, then the committee should review the names thoroughly for "pre-qualification" of membership for the club. Then, the committee's recommendation must go before the club membership committee and the board for approval.
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- Be sure to obtain the mailing addresses and phone numbers for those being suggested as members.
- Those typing the invitation letters do not necessarily know "Bud" Smith from all the other Smith's in the telephone book, so be sure proper names are submitted.
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- When all the names are turned in, a personal letter must be sent inviting the individuals to the "Open House". A sample letter is attached for your convenience.
- Adjust the letter to accommodate your specific club needs.
  - Be sure to allow your committee sufficient time to type each person's name on the letter.
  - You should consider addressing your invitations to Mr. and Mrs. XXX YYY. (Ms. For single women)
  - Many couples today like to do things together.
  - By addressing the invitation to both you have the opportunity to get two guests with one invitation.
- Open house invitation letters should be sent about three weeks in advance.
- Never send them less than two weeks in advance.
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- About three to five days in advance, call each prospective guest to remind them of the open house and to confirm their attendance. This is an important step.
- Experience has shown that if you call too early, you will have a lower turnout.
  - Three to five days seems to be about right.
  - This will also allow you to plan for the right amount of food.
- Offer to pick up guest. Make specific arrangements to have a club member drive them to and from the meeting

## PLANNING THE OPEN HOUSE

- The "Open House", preferably should be at your normal meeting time and place.
- This will give your prospective guest the opportunity to show up at the same time as you would normally meet.
  - With a different time or place, you may get guests to attend who might not be able to attend a regular meeting or you may not get prospective guests who, in fact, could attend a regular meeting.
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- Plan a light meal. What seems to work well is a sandwich buffet.
- A variety of breads, cold cuts, lettuce, tomato, cheese, catsup, mustard, mayonnaise, chips, dip, perhaps cake for dessert, etc.
  - Drinks should be coffee, tea and soft drinks. **NO ALCOHOL.**
  - This keeps refreshments inexpensive and allows for slight variations in attendance and lets folks go through the food line as soon as they arrive.
  - Do not charge guests or club members for the meal – The expense is on the club.
  - This may not be what you would normally serve at a meeting but you are not conducting a regular meeting.
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- Plan meeting as a social event with a "Lions information" program.
- Remember you are having an open house, not a regular meeting.

- There should be no pledge, no prayer or no tail twisting.
  - Members should agree on a dress code -- business, business casual, club shirts or vests all seem to work.
  - Members should dress reasonably the same and be sure to wear their name badges!
  - Have a greeter. Provide name badges for the guests.
  - All present members should approach each guest, shake his or her hand and introduce themselves.
    - Ask something about the prospective member and generally try to make the new person welcome.
    - Inquire what community causes (needs) are most important to them.
    - This is the member's time to get acquainted with the prospective new member.
    - By encouraging them to do the talking, they will feel at home and comfortable with your club.
    - Remember, they are looking you over at the same time as you are checking them out.
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- Plan a formal program not to exceed 30 minutes.
- Past experience shows about 5 minutes on each topic seems to work well without getting into too many details.
- Cover the following topics:
  - a) The International organization and activities, The M.D. organization and activities, The Club organization and Activities.
  - b) Obligations of membership.
  - c) Categories of membership (1. active, 2. member-at-large, 3. honorary, 4. privileged, 5. life, 6. associate & 7. affiliate.)
  - d) What goes on at a meeting (speakers, tailtwisting, business sessions, meals, etc.).
  - e) Cost of membership.
  - f) Opportunities of Membership

## **HOW TO MAKE THE SALE & CLOSE THE DEAL**

- Summarize (Lions provide opportunities for community service, recognition, praise, advancement, leadership development, self satisfaction, pride, teamwork, feeling good, and social contact, for example)
  - Have at least one of the presentations made by a dignitary from outside the club; the District Governor, if available.
    - Or, have past or present district officials give short five-minute presentations on the International, M.D. and District topics.
    - Remember, it is not important that each topic be covered in depth.
    - Use the club President to tell about the club's community support activities & stress the local community projects.
    - The Treasurer could talk about how money is made on projects and how service money is spent.
    - The Secretary could tell about the cost of membership, how meals are paid for and how dues are billed.
    - One speaker should address opportunities for service, leadership and having a say in which projects are supported by the club.
  - Emphasize that community projects can be accomplished by a group that cannot be done by any of the individual members working by themselves.
    - A broad presentation of what we do is much more important than going into critical detail.
    - Whatever happens, do not try to correct a speaker or add a pet project from the audience.
    - Keep the formal program itself to the one half hour limit!
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- Invite guests to join. Provide them with a membership application and assist them in filling it out.
  - Encourage them to give the applications, along with their checks, to a club officer before they leave. Have a table where a club officer sits (preferably by the entry-exit door) who can take applications and answer questions.
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- Have enough membership applications available so each prospective member has one.
- Order applications ahead of time from the Club Supplies Division of Lions International (Order Form ME-6)
- Don't use poor copies of a membership application. Remember first impressions are very important.

## LIONS LITERATURE TABLE(S)

- Prepare for your "Open House" by having a table of Lions related materials.
  - These should be brochures on various Lions activities and photographs of your club working on projects.
  - Have copies of the International and Multiple district magazines/bulletins as well as your club newsletter.
  - Information on the Lions Eye-Bank, the Lions Health Screening Unit, the Newborn Infant Hearing Screening Program and Low Vision Clinics are well received.
- Provide a door prize or two; it doesn't have to be much.
  - An item with a Lion logo is nice.
  - The prizes should be for the prospective members (guests).
- Plan well in advance in order to obtain a wide range and variety of materials about the club and community services; about the Zone, District, MD & LCI. It is important that the club, brochure and bulletin be displayed. Provide handouts on key materials.
  - Impress the prospective members by starting and stopping on time!

## FOLLOW-UP

- Be sure to send a nice note thanking each individual for coming to the open house.
- Set a meeting date for a formal induction ceremony and include that date in your letter.
- Congratulate those who joined, remind them to schedule the club-meeting dates on their calendars and tell them your club is looking forward to seeing them at the next meeting.
  - For those who attended but did not join, send a thank you along with another membership application. Ask them to consider joining in the near future and invite them to attend a regular meeting.
  - Remind them of the costs and be sure to tell them where to send their membership application (or bring it with them to their first meeting) should they decide to become a member.

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- For those who were invited and were unable to attend, send a letter with a membership application noting the membership initiation fee, dues, etc.
    - Invite them to attend a regular meeting of your club and encourage them to attend at their convenience.

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- All new members must be formally inducted.
    - Have a District Officer, Governor, Past District Governor or Past International Director perform a group induction of the new members.
    - The induction ceremony must be memorable for the new members.
    - Be sure to have a membership pin and new member packet for each of the new members.
    - The Sponsors should pin the Lions pin on their newly sponsored members.
    - Be sure to schedule the new member induction soon after the open house; and most importantly take photos of the induction ceremony, and provide photo prints to the new members at a subsequent meeting.
  - Adopt the LCI Mentoring Program as proposed by the MD19 and District LEM/PR Teams and utilize to build the new members into productive Lions.

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- New members should participate in a new member orientation session.
    - This is generally a two-hour session expanding on the items covered briefly at the open house.
    - There are a number of outlines available on orientation programs. Be sure one is used.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **Who gets credit for the new member?** Generally, most clubs give credit to the member that suggested the new member's name. Ties: two members that suggest the same person; go to the first member suggesting the new member.

- **How many will sign up?** Experience has shown that about 50% or more will accept your invitation to the “Open House”. Of those, approximately 50% will actually sign up.
- **Should we let them take the application home and “think about it”?** The majority of those that take the application home are not likely to join unless a proper follow-up is made by a club member. So, if a prospective member does take an application home, it is very important for them to receive a follow-up phone call within a week’s time.
- **How do we handle the normal requirement of board approval for membership?** Our club likes to invite new members to several meetings to see if the new member will “fit in” with our club and our members. Then, we vote on asking them to join. **How can we make this program work?** Lions Clubs are slowly going away from this type of membership approvals. Ask your members to carefully select those you invite. Pre-qualify prospective new members using the previously described guidelines prior to sending out invitation letters. You might consider changing your standards and/or your method of bringing new members into your club. If your old methods are not working and your membership is dropping, perhaps it is time for “change”.

**Included & Attached:**

1. **Open House Committees Organization**
2. **Sample Invitation Letter**
3. **Recruiting Wheel**
4. **Potential New Lions Club Member List**
5. **An Open House Action Checklist**
6. **LCI Membership Issues – 7 categories**
7. **Membership Categories/Obligations, Rights and Responsibilities**

# Open House Committee

\_\_\_\_\_ Lions Club “Open House” – \_\_\_\_\_, 201\_\_

- **General Chairperson:** Responsible for overall planning, delegations & coordination
  - Club Membership Chairperson
  - Assistant (co-chair)
- **Planning Committee:** Responsible for specifics of planning, delegation and coordination
  - Includes general Chairperson and chairmen of sub-committees
- **Guest List (Recruiting Wheel) Committee:** Responsible for collection of names/addresses of potential guests from club members from their “Recruiting Wheel” forms. This includes reviewing names, qualifications and completeness of addresses, etc.
  - Chairperson:
  - Sub-Committee members:
- **Invitation Letter/Follow-Up Committee:** Responsible for preparation of basic letter text for review and approval, preparation of letters/ mailing & follow-up personal contacts, arrangements to attend meeting, etc.
  - Chairperson:
  - Sub-Committee members:
- **Meeting Program (30 minutes) Committee:** Responsible for preparation of agenda for meeting including lining up M.C. and speakers.
  - Chairperson:
  - Sub-Committee members:
- **Literature Table Committee:** Responsible for planning and organizing of table including obtaining appropriate literature.
  - Chairperson:
  - Sub-Committee members:
- **Application Information Table Committee:** Responsible for setting up, membership applications, and “closing the sale” activities.
  - Chairperson:
  - Sub-Committee members:
- **Greeter Committee:** Responsible for greeting guests and seeing that they are properly taken care of at all times.
  - Chairperson:
  - Sub-Committee members:
- **(Venue) Meeting Room Arrangements:** Responsible for scheduling the venue, arranging space, set-up for meeting, food, etc.
  - Chairperson:
  - Sub-Committee members:
- **Media:** Responsible for informing media of event, invitation to attend, and follow-up to obtain media coverage.
  - Chairperson:
  - Sub-Committee members:

## MEMBERSHIP IS EXCITING - GROW YOUR CLUB

### PLEASANTVILLE LIONS CLUB

Lions Clubhouse  
123 Fourth Street  
Pleasantville, WA 12345

Fred and Mary Smith  
456 7th Avenue  
Pleasantville, WA 12345~

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Smith,

Your names have been given to us as leaders in our community, those who are concerned with the well being of our fellow citizens.

The Pleasantville Lions Club, formed over 38 years ago, is part of an international organization founded with a desire to serve our communities. The club has several projects we use to raise funds to purchase eyeglasses for needy children and adults. Our club owns and has fully equipped four baseball diamonds at Lions Field, north of town. The baseball program has grown to the point where all the fields are busy well into the night, all season. We also sponsor Boy Scout Troop and Cub Pack #322.

The Pleasantville Lions sponsor high school students in the Lions All-State Band, sending qualified student musicians to the Lions International Convention in sites around the world, We sponsor the Lions Quest program at Central High School, considered one of the most effective youth life skills programs in the nation.

We extend a cordial invitation to both of you to attend a special Lions Club Open House on Wednesday, October 7 at 6:00 PM at our meeting room in the Pleasantville Lions Clubhouse at 123 Fourth Street. A light meal is planned along with a short informative program about Lions community service. We should adjourn no later than 8:00 PM. *(Note to letter writer: Provide here information on the proper "dress" for the evening)*

A few days before the meeting, one of our Lions members will phone to confirm your reservation. We hope you realize the importance of making a positive difference in our Pleasantville community, and will make plans to attend this special Lions Club meeting.

We have enclosed a brochure, "The Lions - We Serve", which gives an excellent outline of what we do as an organization.

Very truly yours,

Thomas Jones  
Membership Chairperson



CLUB  
NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

TEAM MEMBER: \_\_\_\_\_

- ❖ BUSINESS ASSOCIATE OR JOB
- ❖ CHURCH
- ❖ NEIGHBOR
- ❖ FRIEND
- ❖ SOCIAL OR CIVIC ORGANIZATION
- ❖ SOMEONE YOU DO BUSINESS WITH
- ❖ RELATIVE
- ❖ PROFESSIONAL PERSON

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Work/Business \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation \_\_\_\_\_  
Marital Status \_\_\_\_\_ No. of Children \_\_\_\_\_  
Length of Time in Community \_\_\_\_\_ Years  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Home \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
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Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Home \_\_\_\_\_

## POTENTIAL NEW LIONS CLUB MEMBERS LIST

***Run down this list and it may help you in finding new lions Club member prospects:***

1. Friends of yours (check your Christmas list).
2. Fellow church or synagogue members (check the roster).
3. Business Acquaintances (check customer and supplier lists).
4. Your son, daughter, nephew, niece, brother, etc.
5. Someone in business for themselves, who needs contacts in the community.
6. Someone in business for themselves, who is community service minded.
7. A business executive or professional who needs contacts in the community. (Especially a major employer in the community)
8. Administrative staff or teachers from the community.
9. Merchants or professionals from the local shopping or business areas. (Especially those who might benefit from your projects or charities)
10. New managers of any franchise business in your area.
11. Speakers at club meetings.
12. Golf or sports friends (check team or club rosters).
13. A former Lion who has moved into our area.
14. A former Lion from a club that has disbanded.
15. Son or daughter of a former Lion (especially deceased Lion).
16. Friends, associates, business contacts of new members.
17. Women in business (check rosters of business women's clubs).
18. Managers of community services organizations (YMCA, Scouts, etc)
19. Executive from a community service which is supported by Lions.
20. A recently retired person. (They may be looking for some involvement).
21. Young business people.
22. Merchants and owners in the area (check the Chamber roster).
23. Former members, their situation may have changed.
24. Your doctor, dentist, CPA, etc.

# **A Lions Club “Open House” Action Check List Planning and Organizing**

- Obtain commitment for the program from the members of the entire club.
- Set up an Open House Committee (see suggested structure in this appendix).
- Set special planning meeting --- as a “Program” of a regular club meeting.
- Set dates, times and location of the “Open House” event
- Obtain a list of potential Recruits from club members utilizing the recruiting Wheel.
- Set a deadline for club members to turn in suggested names.
- “Pre-qualify” names of potential Recruits and submit to Club Membership Committee and Board for approval.
- Obtain mailing addresses and phone numbers of suggested names. Verify spelling of names.
- Send letter of invitation to each prospective Recruit utilizing the “sample” letter provided as a guide.
- Send letter 3 weeks in advance.
- 3-5 days in advance, call each prospective Guest to remind him/her of the Open House and confirm his/her attendance.
- Offer and make specific arrangement to drive Guest to and from meeting.

## **Planning the Open House**

- Conduct Open House at normal club meeting time and place, if possible.
- Provide a light meal with no cost to the guest ---- and no alcohol.
- Plan meeting as a social event with a “Lions Information” program.
- Have Greeters and provide name badges for the Guests.
- All present club members must be social, introducing themselves, inquire about Guests personally, make them feel welcome.
- Plan a formal program not to exceed 30 minutes.
- Cover suggested topics in approximately 5 minute increments.

## **How to Make the Sale and Close the Deal**

- Summarize opportunities provided by the Lions Club.
- Have at least one of the presentations by a Lion Dignitary from outside the club.
- Emphasize community projects by groups of Lions that cannot be accomplished individually.
- Invite Guests to join and provide them with membership applications.
- Have a sign-up table near the entry-exit door with applications. Assign knowledgeable Lions who can answer questions and assist with applications.

## Lions Literature Table(s)

- Provide table(s) with displays of Lions related materials.
- Plan well in advance to obtain a wide range and variety of materials, including the clubs own brochure and bulletin.
- Provide a door prize or two for a Guest drawing.
- Provide a club brochure for each Guest.

## Follow-up

- Send thank you notes to each Guest who attended the Open House whether they joined or not. For those who did not join, invite them to come to a regular meeting.
- Set a meeting date for the formal induction for those who joined.
- Congratulate those who joined in a note, remind them of meeting schedule, installation date, welcome them, etc.
- For those who were invited and were unable to attend the Open House, send a letter with a membership application, noting dues, specifics, etc and invite them to attend a regular meeting.
- Plan a formal Induction which will be memorable for the new members.
- Adopt the LCI Mentoring Program and utilize to build the new members into productive Lions.
- Provide an Orientation session for the new members.