

Membership Message - Workshop Wednesdays - March 3, 2021

If you're like me, prior to the pandemic, I only thought of "Zoom" as a part of a camera lens or fast travel. But this last year it has added a whole new dimension to our ability to communicate.

We take it for granted now - many of us are zooming all over the country and, in some instances, all around the world. Just look at what we're learning on Workshop Wednesdays and who we're learning it from. Our world has expanded! We are no longer bound by geography.

Garden club is very social and very personal. We joined a garden club to learn and be around like-minded individuals who want to beautify our communities and our world. This last year, all of this has been stripped away from many of our clubs. All of a sudden, we could no longer be together.

Some clubs just stopped meeting! If this is your club or a club you know, find someone to help you get onto Zoom and pull your membership together again. It's very inexpensive. If you don't know of anyone who can help, contact your Region Director - she'll find someone to help you!

The fortunate clubs that had some tech-savvy members were able to regroup and start meeting by zoom, continuing their education online, bringing in speakers just like Robin has done here! It's never going to be as good as being in person, and getting to give and receive those garden club hugs, but it's been do-able. And many clubs have been able to sustain their membership. I know of a club who has actually increased theirs!

One of our roll-call questions the other day was what we miss in our zoom meetings that we were used to in our regular in-person meetings?

The first response was food! If we could figure out how to take care of that problem, we'd be very rich and extremely fulfilled! And next, of course, was the personal touch.

What about those who have not been so fortunate?

I'd like to share a personal story with you. Earlier this winter, I was looking through our Fairbanks newspaper - it certainly doesn't take long - and I saw a picture of a room containing one single woman, sitting in a chair by the window, and sadly peering outside. I'm ashamed to say this, but I recognized her - she was a member of one of the organizations to which I belong. I read the article, and she told the reporter that she had been alone for months, hadn't seen anyone except the individual who delivered her groceries, and had heard from few.

I felt so sorry for her, and so guilty. I just hadn't thought about the many that are probably in that same situation. People that we should be reaching out to.

Most of us that are probably on this Zoom are busy - we've found a way to continue on with our lives as close to what it was as possible. But, there are the unlucky ones. And, we need to find them and show them we care.

I've talked to club leaders who tell me they have lost half of their members during this pandemic - and when questioned on how they're reaching out, they say they send out emails to those members who haven't paid, and then they're dropped from the membership.

We all have club directories containing the contact information on our members. If you're having meetings by zoom, first make sure you're providing good programs for your members - it's very easy to find them these days. Then, make a note of who isn't attending and reach out to them. Maybe they have internet but they are intimidated by zoom. Offer to send them a zoom invite, communicate by phone on how to open it, and train them on how to use it. It really is simple, as you know. Try it a couple of times until they start showing up.

If they are unable to zoom in, share with them what the club is doing and what you're planning as things start to open up. Give them some hope for a bright future. Have a member of your club do a monthly newsletter if you don't already, and be sure to mail it out to the members who don't have email.

Let them know you care and miss them. It might be the only interaction they receive that day.

And, don't forget about them. Divide those members up among your membership and establish calling committees.

There may be some who, because of the economic crisis many are feeling, can't afford to pay for their membership. Don't drop them - keep them on your rolls until circumstances improve. It's a small price.

We may concentrate a little too often on how to bring new members into our organizations. Right now may be a time to realize that we have our own members, or other members of our community, who are suffering that need our help. This may help you keep those members and, at a minimum, feel proud for doing the right thing!

If I can help you any further, please let me know.

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