

Ideas To Make Unit Meetings More Appealing

Georgia White; Region 7 Vice-President

- The most important thing you can do to retain members or bring in new members is to make sure you meet their needs in your unit. Take a good look at your meeting place(s), times dates. Are they convenient for most members?
- Is your business portion of the meeting long, drawn-out, boring? Try setting a time limit for the business portion. Shake up the agenda from time to time. Above all, **BE ORGANIZED, AND SET GOALS!** Remember as an officer or committee head to delegate tasks to keep members returning to meetings and staying on their committees. But don't delegate responsibility without assuming any yourself.
- Decide what works and what does NOT work in your meetings. Don't keep any idea that is not working. Get rid of it.
- Involve everyone. Put everyone in the unit on a committee. For one meeting a year, at a minimum, have members break out into committees to discuss needs of the unit, projects or ideas for improvement on that committee, etc. That will give even the most shy of members a chance to give ideas in a smaller setting.
- Work actively to seek new and interesting programs for the unit. Draw from the resources in your unit, around your schools and communities, and from a speaker's bureau if available. Many new retirees are not interested in attending a meeting. Encourage their membership anyway. They might come around in a year or two. Consider meetings that center around something totally different that you've never tried before, such as a game day or night, meeting in a home for one meeting, a cooking demonstration or a cooking contest, an in-house scavenger hunt.
- Hold special events at schools, such as concerts, academic bowls, drama contests, craft shows, book fairs, carnivals, a mystery trip, and others. Make sure members are informed of special events in the communities and/or schools your unit serves.
- Go to activities as a group: attend a concert, go out to eat, stay after a meeting just to have dessert.
- Show an interest in your membership. Have someone in your unit responsible for sending cards when there is illness, death, or when something notable is done. Nothing means more than your personal touch. People don't care how much you know till they know how much you care. (Theodore Roosevelt)

-Don't forget the current teacher in the classroom. Volunteer, take them goodies for work days, attend CTA meetings and ask to present information about MRTA. Some schools allow retirees to attend CTA meetings without paying dues of any kind. Volunteer for open houses, parent-teacher conference nights to show parents around.

-How to get members involved:

- A. Ask them—personally! Most people will join if they're asked long enough!
- B. Have membership contests between teams of members.
- C. Don't forget to have members involved in service ideas and projects locally.
- D. Go for the low-hanging fruit. Non-renewals who are lapsed were members once. Go after them and bring them back into the unit. State the economic issue. There are **THOSE OUT THERE** who would take our retirement system and make it into a defined contribution plan. This can not be allowed to happen. We need all school personnel employees to join us in fighting this issue. Where else can you get the benefits we get, the options we have, and the representation we get for \$35?!? Membership in MRTA is important to their own peace of mind and livelihood.

-The most important thing you can do to keep members is to make your unit meetings productive, accessible, and exciting.

-Lastly...express your appreciation often and loudly to your officers, your committee chairs, and your membership. Their jobs are often unending, thankless, and sometimes without immediate rewards.

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MRTA