

Membership Recruitment

GENERAL FEDERATION OF WOMEN'S CLUBS



There is no secret formula for recruiting members to a club. Gaining new members is always a challenge — it takes enthusiasm, creativity, and determination. Most importantly, clubs need a plan.

TO ATTRACT NEW MEMBERS BE A STRONG CLUB

Being a member of a GFWC club and participating in its activities has enormous rewards. Club members share their passion with others who have the same enthusiasm. They learn exciting new things and make new and lasting friendships, and they accomplish good deeds, strengthening their communities and making an impact with clubs across our nation.

How is a strong club created? One with a robust core of active members that others want to join and serve year after year? One that generates excitement with its programs and projects, builds members' skills and community involvement, and continues to attract action-minded volunteers?

Clubs need to identify who their members are and what they are looking for. Begin by surveying current members to learn why they joined and if club activities and programs are what they wanted and expected. Then, talk to former members to determine why they no longer belong. Did the club meet at a time when they were unavailable? Were seasoned members resistant to new ideas?



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Clubs should also connect with non-club members who have taken part in events and ask what can be done to meet their needs. These prospective members may provide a window into how the group is perceived in the community and what changes must be made to attract new members.

Successful clubs have a clear mission. They know what they want to accomplish each year and have planned for the number of volunteers and resources required to meet their goals.

Once clubs have a clear idea of their objectives, they should take steps to achieve them. There are many tools that can further a club's mission, such as a club website, programs and events, a newsletter or another form of communication, and even community newsletters and non-member mailing lists.

Each club should work to distinguish itself so others will be eager to spend their time and money to join. Experiment and try different things, so club work is interesting and stimulating. Some new ideas may not succeed, or might require two or three attempts to become fruitful, but change is necessary to ensure clubs and members grow in new directions.

Growth is vital to the continued success of your club and this concept needs to be shared by everyone in your club.

Growth produces new talent, brainpower, and manpower. It propels the club to greater involvement and more meaningful community service, and it boosts the club's ability to raise funds for charities and service projects.

Your club should create a prospective member list.

There are many ways to find prospective new members.

- Each club member could provide the names of friends who like to help others, or who enjoy taking part in group projects or activities.
- Members could also identify people in other community groups. Consider those at your school's Parent Teacher Organization or Neighborhood Watch meetings. These people have already discovered a passion for community engagement and service.
- Clubs could collect prospective member information at an information table or project booth at a community fair or festival.
- Members could also attract prospective members with a project table at the entrance to a neighborhood store where they are collecting items, such as school supplies for needy students.

Decide how your club will approach new members

- Consider involving prospective members in a club project before asking them to join. Recruits may volunteer because of an interest or a passion, but may be reluctant to jump into membership. Introduce them to a project, teach them a skill, and make sure they have a good time volunteering with the group. A memorable experience might provide the motivation to tempt them to a regular club meeting.
- Have a party centered on a GFWC Community Service Program. For example, partner with a local hospital in October, Breast Cancer Awareness Month, to make comfort pillows for breast cancer survivors.
- Invite prospective members to a social gathering, such as a picnic or wine and cheese evening, and provide information about your club's activities.



REAL LIFE *ideas* FOR SUCCESSFUL RECRUITING

GFWC Heartland Woman's Club (GA) held a membership recruiting event called "Come Grow with Us!" with prospects invited to an educational event with a local organic gardening expert.

GFWC Treasure Coast Women's Club (FL) handed out brochures and bottled water labeled with club information at a Senior Expo.

GFWC Women's Club of South County, Inc. (RI) recruited new members at their annual Book and Author Lunch by placing contact information cards at each table and then inviting the prospective members to a follow-up Meet & Greet.

GFWC Homer Glen Junior Woman's Club (IL) hosted "Java with Juniors" at a local Starbucks, sharing info on the rewards of membership and then planning future socials to build comradery and genuine friendships.

GFWC Menomonie Woman's Club (WI) members rose to their club president's challenge to create a list of ten women friends who might join and then bring one to a meeting.

GFWC New Tampa Juniores (FL) invited members of Alpha Chi Omega Sorority to help plant pinwheels for PCAA to raise awareness of their common interest in domestic violence prevention and to "court" them into GFWC clubs after graduation.

GFWC Beloit Junior Woman's Club (WI) organized a Magnificent Mile bus trip to Chicago and garnered four new members by sharing info on the great things they had accomplished.

PLANNING A SUCCESSFUL MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

Club officers must develop a membership plan that fits the needs of their club. Many clubs add new members continuously throughout the year. However, it is important to “roll out the red carpet” and provide an opportunity for others to join during a Membership Social Event or an Informational Meeting at least once a year.

Identify a date for a Membership Social Event or Informational Meeting prior to the beginning of the club year. Remember, the key to a success of any event is planning.

1. Begin by establishing a Membership Chairman and Committee. It is important that the Membership Chairman is in charge of managing all aspects of the recruitment event.
2. Set goals. The plan can be targeted specifically for the recruitment event or a recruitment drive for the full year.
3. Allocate funds to cover costs, such as meals, snacks, prizes, promotions, and postage.
4. Engage members in planning so they feel a sense of ownership in reaching the goal and will be proactive in bringing prospective members to the recruitment event.

Keep the following suggestions in mind when planning your Membership Social Event or Informational Meeting:

- Set a membership goal by deciding the number of new members your club needs to complete and possibly exceed the projects and events planned for the year.
- Club officers should “lead by example.” The president and other officers should bring prospective members into the club during the year and especially during membership drives. This shows they are committed to the goal and motivates members to also bring prospective members to meetings/projects and, most importantly, to the recruitment event.
- Club members should advertise that they are looking for new members. Use fliers and social media, such as Facebook and Instagram, to invite friends and acquaintances to recruitment opportunities, as well as to promote regular meetings and social events.
- Be organized when preparing for your event, whether it is a social or a formal meeting. Information should be comprehensive and completed well in advance, so it provides a proper overview and can be presented competently. Involve as many members as possible.

- Establish a timetable. Arrange for a venue and refreshments. If PowerPoint or videos will be incorporated, secure the required equipment.
- Tap outside resources, especially within GFWC. Contact GFWC, Region, State, or District leadership and ask an officer to speak at your event.
- As an extra enticement, prospective members could be offered free or discounted membership dues for the first year.



SOME *themes* FOR A SUCCESSFUL RECRUITMENT EVENT

Bring Two You Know

Encourage members to identify two people who would like to know more about being a member of a GFWC club. They can be friends, family members, business associates, business clients, or neighbors. The idea is to inspire, motivate, lead, and reward members for their membership efforts.

Bring Them Back

Invite past members to a meeting. Ask a former member or two to relate a memory of a project or event they experienced with the club. Highlighting past involvement during a membership event is a great way to rekindle interest.

Information Social/Meeting for Younger People

Challenge club members to invite younger prospective members. The list could include members' daughters and their friends, nieces, fellow employees, church members, business associates, and neighbors.





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POST RECRUITMENT

After any successful membership event, your club will likely gain several new members. However, there may still be a few who are undecided. It is important to continue to communicate with these prospective members.

- The president should send a letter thanking the prospective member for coming and let them know they are welcome to join at any time. Contact information should be included in the event they decide to join.
- Send the club newsletter and other communications to prospects who attended an event to keep the door open for membership in following months. List the names of the prospects who attended in the newsletter. Even more important, list the names of all the new members who joined!

NEW MEMBERS!

Once clubs have signed up new members, they should ensure they feel welcome and valued.

- Send new members a congratulatory letter from the president directly after the membership event.
- Formally induct new members at an installation ceremony or welcome and introduce the new members at their first meeting.
- Assign new members specific duties within the club so they begin to be a part of the group. It is important for them to know they are useful and needed, but take it easy, you want them back at the next meeting!
- All club members, both new and seasoned, should know exactly how they fit into the club's structure. All members are important and should be a part of committees and projects. The viability of your club depends on the participation of every member and new members should be involved from the day they join.

FINAL SAY...

Always keep meetings and projects fun and stimulating. People join a club because they think it will add value to their lives. All members should be positive and welcoming and willing to share their club knowledge and personal expertise, while also being open to new ideas and opportunities presented by the newcomers.

Clubs should be forward thinking. What worked ten years ago, or even three years ago, may not succeed now. Overcome the fear of trying new things; you will learn as much from what does not work as from what does work. Embrace new ideas and new members!

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Access the Membership Advancement Guide, which is packed with recruitment information, on the GFWC website at www.gfwc.org. Look for "GFWC Resources" on the homepage, and then click on "M" to find the Guide and a variety of membership tools.

The GFWC Membership Committee is energized and committed to helping all clubs. Contact Henrietta Belcher-Stack, Membership Chairman, at 302-354-4102 or hstack@aol.com

GFWC Membership Services at GFWC Headquarters is also available for assistance. Reach Melanie Gisler, Director of Membership Services and Programs, at 202-347-3168 or mgisler@gfwc.org