

# VA Grand Lodge Order Sons of Italy in America

## MEMBERSHIP—GAINING & RETAINING

### MEMBERSHIP DRIVE IDEAS

Submitted by Estelle Rondello (date unknown)

As we all know, the lifeblood of any organization is its membership. The number of members who renew each year, the number of members who take an active part in meetings and activities, and the number of members who pay their dues each year but only attend special events.

There is another type of member every organization absolutely must have if it is to survive – they are new members.

There are several ways to add new members. In my opinion, the least expensive is to have a membership drive combined with either an open house or special event.

There are several very simple steps:

1. Select several zip codes in your area and identify people with Italian surnames. *(Ask several members to search the telephone directory of your area noting Italian names is one way to do this.)*
2. Mail out a letter of introduction, which should include the following:
  - a. The name of your lodge
  - b. The name and telephone number of your president and membership chair
  - c. *The web address of your lodge (if you have one); the web address of the Grand Lodge of Virginia; and the web address of National OSIA*
  - d. Some of the activities and charities of interest to your lodge
  - e. An invitation to your next meeting or special event.
  - f. An invitation to attend even if they are not interested in joining. It is important not to pressure anyone into attending. If they feel pressured, they will not attend and they will be left with a bad impression about us.
3. At the open house or special event, have name badges for all members and a different color name badge for those who are guests. Members can then easily identify each guest, introduce themselves and help to make the guest feel at home. After all, that is what being Italian is all about.
4. Each guest should be given a packet which should contain information about the Sons of Italy, about your lodge (including names, phone numbers and email addresses of officers,) your latest newsletter, and an application form.
5. Each guest should receive a newsletter for a minimum of three months. Longer, if they attend meetings and events.
6. The president and membership chair should keep in touch with those guests who have not become members and find out why not. It is important to identify why they do not want to join. It might be the types of activities, or the lack of activities. Once the reason is identified *and corrected*, they and others might join.
7. Membership drives must continue all year long or the membership will dwindle. It is harder to build back up than it is to expand.



*Note: Italicized print was added in 2008.*

# VA Grand Lodge Order Sons of Italy in America

## MEMBERSHIP—GAINING & RETAINING

### Ideas/Suggestions to make your Lodge more appealing to new members Submitted by Laura Frappollo (Sept. 2008)

The most important thing you can do to draw in new member is to make your Lodge fun, productive, accessible and exciting. Here are some ideas you can try.

1. Take a serious look at your meeting place (if you do not have a Lodge building), dates and times. Are they convenient for young families?
2. Are your business meetings long and boring? Although OSIA does recommend the proscribed form of meeting and this should be adhered to, try conducting all business on the Council level. Let your General Meetings be a place to have fun after a *brief* business meeting.
3. Do your meetings only have speakers? Many younger people are not excited about sitting for ½ hour or so listening to a lecture. Consider some of the following programs to make your Lodge more fun:
  - a. Cooking contests
  - b. Wine tasting
  - c. Movie Nights
  - d. Game Nights
  - e. Cooking demonstrations
  - f. Parties based on time of year (Valentine's Day, Christmas, etc.)
  - g. Make Pizza or Gelato
4. Hold special events.
  - h. Trips to vineyards
  - i. Go to local shows
  - j. Go out to dinner at local restaurants
  - k. Take a trip to an Italian Festival
  - l. Participate in a local community event selling Italian goods (food, etc.) to help make your name known community-wide.
  - m. Columbus Day Dinner and/or Dance
  - n. Carnevale
5. How to get members involved:
  - a. Ask them personally! Rather than wait for someone to volunteer, ask them personally to do a job. Most people will say yes, they've just been waiting to be asked.
  - b. Divide your membership up into teams (Frances Cabrini Lodge uses Red, White & Green.) Then when you need jobs done, divide the jobs between the teams. This is also a good way to have lodge contests (cooking, etc.)

These are just a few suggestions. Do not be afraid to be creative and proactive.

*Buona Fortuna!*