

Enhancing MFWDC Local Clubs

The purpose of this article is to offer to increase the membership of and activate local Democrat Women's Clubs. A sense of community and trust between the memberships is vital to any club. All care should be taken to ensure the membership is both focused and enjoyable.

Meetings

Meetings should be on a regular basis for the survival and growth of any club. Choosing a meeting place and date and time is sometimes difficult, especially if some of your members have daily jobs and some do not work outside the home. Consider a luncheon meeting once a month if the bulk of your members are able to get away for 1½ hour. Attending a business lunch allows working women a chance to participate without taking away from family time. Evenings meetings are an obvious choice and offering dinner should be considered as a "treat" for those attending. Saturday meetings are the least desirable as weekends take away from Family time.

You know your county best and a discussion of the regular place, set place and time for your monthly or quarterly meetings must take place with all members. Publicize Date Time and Speaker in local papers inviting anyone to attend. Remind interested people by e-mail, mail, and /or phone

Probably one of the most important functions of any club is to inform its members, by having speakers at each meeting. Your speakers are the cornerstones of making your meetings worth their time. By simply asking all members of your club to be on the constant look out for speakers, you can tap into your community and the MFWDC for groups to share their expertise. Don't forget the local community. By getting in touch with the school districts, county offices, city offices, elderly and health advocates, local colleges and extension centers, and the mover and shakers on your town, you can enrich the lives of your club members. Become visible in the community. There is no more important person than the Newspaper Editor. In fact, the local Newspaper Editor should be the first speaker to your group.

Suggested Speakers:

Newspaper Editor

School Superintendent

State Teachers Association

County Prosecutor

Environmental Groups like Sierra Club

Recycling Centers

Garden Club

Local Hospital Officials

City Mayors (i.e. to talk about business opportunities in town)

City Health Department {i.e. discuss Bird Flu or Homeland Security}

County Election Board/Clerk

Judges {current decisions}

Union Officials to talk about legislation affecting workers and families

Division of Family Services on services available in your community

Democrat State Rep or Senator {if yours isn't Democrat invite neighboring one}

State Democrat Party representatives to talk about activating and organizing your club

NARAL or Planned Parenthood community activist

Stem Cell Research

Health related activists for Alzheimer's, Autism, and group homes

Women's Shelters

Mid America Council on Aging

It is recommended that the club have a discussion of goals when first organizing and periodically review them. For example; "our group is going to do everything in its power to recruit a female, Democrat candidate for County Executive in the upcoming election cycle." If that seems overreaching, try to set a goal of volunteerism with a particular Democrat candidate including door knocking and phone calling. Another idea is to set a fundraising goal and decide how much money will be used. Be careful of campaign contribution rules.

As soon as possible, or if your club has not yet, an election of officers must take place. It is important for your local club to have strong leadership. Be sure to submit the names and address of these officers to your district and state Federation Presidents so they can receive communications.

Publicity

All local events, from the Democrat booth at the county fair to the Democrat BBQ that draws a state Democrat Official to speak, are news. Be aware of all events local Democrats are involved in; charitable events that include Democrat participation are also new. Take a picture, write an article and submit it to the editor for consideration in publishing. They appreciate not having to send a reporter and appreciate articles and pictures ready to print. Most newspapers are on line. Make a call to get their email address.

Editors will accept letters on line but they may have specific rules. These are usually printed in the "opinion" section of the newspaper. At least one person in your club should be constantly thinking about Letters to the Editor. Write Letters to the Editors throughout the year, not just at election time. Again, be respectful to both the Editor and your audience. Someone may not share your opinion of the Governor, but they may agree that the Governor's particular choice on an issue is wrong. Letters to the editor should be short, precise, persuasive, and respectful. Try to get the reader to make their own decision on the issue by the information you provide them, not with strong-arm tactics.

Invite your local Newspaper Editor as a speaker to your local club to discuss how to get items in the paper. There may be a reason your local Newspaper Editor refuses your invitation to speak at your club, but that is no reason not to pursue them. You may need to remind him that his goal is to sell newspapers and you would like to help him. Have a discussion about how to get your group in the news along with the local high school football team. A short meeting in his office may be more convincing of your sincerity than a phone call.

Members

The best way to discover the level of interest and keep involvement of a new or potential member to the club is to give them a job. Appoint them to an appropriate committee or project. Ask what drew them to the Democrat Party and what issues are most important to them.

Listen to their ideas with out making an excuse about why they won't wok. Don't get struck in the past, no one wants to hear "that's how we did it in 1920". New ideas are an excellent opportunity to form a new committee and keeping volunteers involved and feeling invested. Always look for volunteer talent in the following areas; Community involvement, computer skills, available volunteer time, knowledge of a specific political issue or set of issues, past involvement in Politics, interest and talent in fundraising, decorating skills, good writing skills. Look to establish committees in these areas:

- *Community involvement; getting involved with local events such as fundraiser for county hospital) that are not necessarily Democrat events.

- *Communications; emails of upcoming events to members.

- *Publicity; articles to local papers

- *Event coordinator; set up booths at local fairs, float in parades, manpower for events, etc.

- *Fundraising

- *Decorating and Setup Committee

Getting a phone number, address, and email address of members or potential members is crucial to the growth of a Democrat Club. Every event should have a sign-in sheet. You can get information from the VAN file about people who voted in the Democrat primary and contact them by mail or phone for their email. Use emails to send out meeting notices. Restrict the use of the email list to one responsible individual and never send silly or time wasting emails. Limit the number of the emails you send, such as one per week.

Be sure to recognize members for their work or accomplishments. It can be as simple as announcing of their names at meetings, in the local newspaper, or at events. Everyone loves to hear his or her name mentioned. Recognition of members can go a

long way toward retention. Create award categories each year to give others something to aspire to. Be sure to include recognition to members for past years of participation and inspiration.