

Message From Executive Director Michael Chrisley

Growing Ruritan - Highest Priority



I would like to share with you some of the information that I shared with the Board of Directors at the August meeting. I always try to give the Board a feel for the state of Ruritan in each of our meetings and August was no different. Part of what I share with the Board is statistical information about the membership of Ruritan. The statistics as of the end of July are as follows:

- 22,095 Adult Active members
- 2472 Associate members
- 417 Living Ruritan Forever members
- 179 Deceased Ruritan Forever members
- 387 Business or Organizational members
- 340 At large members
- 1034 Youth members in Adult Clubs
- 1651 Ruri-Teen members

I think it is important that you know the numbers so that you have a general idea of the status of Ruritan and its membership. Back in the early 80's when I was just beginning my work as an administrator for Ruritan we were budgeting on 38,000 members all of which were adult active members. You can see the number of adult active memberships is nearly 16,000 less than it was then. Additionally, you will be able to see how important non-traditional types of membership have become over the years. We have almost 6500 members that fall into the category of non-traditional members. In the 80's we didn't have Associate members or Ruritan Forever members or business and organizational members and our youth program was just beginning.

The truth of the matter is that the non-traditional member types are what have kept us close to even over the years. We have had a loss in membership in 24 of the last 31 years. Over the last 10 years the loss of membership has averaged over 600 members a year. The corresponding loss in dues revenue over the last 10 years is staggering at nearly \$275,000 a year.

The bigger issue is the loss of 16,000 members. If the average Ruritan Club is 28 members then that equals roughly 570 clubs. That is 570 communities that we are no longer in, 570 communities that no longer benefit from Ruritan Community Service.

We have been able to offset the loss of income with corresponding cuts to the budget and reduction in staff. However, we cannot offset the loss of service to communities that no longer have a Ruritan Club.

I recently attended Dublin Ruritan Clubs 70th anniversary. 70 years is a long time to serve the local community. I asked them to consider what the community would have lost if the club had not been there to serve. I also asked them to consider what the community would lose if the club no longer existed. Two important questions that you should ask about your club as well.

Communities need us. People need us. We are as good for the local community today as we were in 1928. That is why we have to continually keep growing Ruritan as our highest priority. Getting a new member in your club is as simple as asking someone to join. If you know of a community that would benefit from a Ruritan Club, call us at the national office and we will assist you.

New Clubs for 2017

New Club	District	Sponsoring Club	DRM*
Black Knight Ruri-Teen	35	Clear Springs	Jonathan Lafollette Evie Lafollette
Unicoi Ruri-Teen	35	Unicoi	Jonathan Lafollette Phillip Hensley
DeRuyter Ruri-Teen	55	Tioughnioga	Shea Skeelee Trina Purcell
Brookneal 21 st Century	5	Lyn-Dan Heights O.H.	Bobbitt III

* DRM - Distinguished Ruritan Member, who is the person most responsible for organizing the new club.