



### Is Volunteering a Thing of the Past?

Is volunteering a thing of the past? How would you answer that question? We all know from the statistical evidence that our number of members is slowly shrinking. Does that mean people don't volunteer anymore? Has our society changed so much that people no longer care about the fate of those around them? Are we so interested in our own well-being that we don't care about others? I don't think any of that is true.

What I do think is true is that volunteering and volunteers are changing. Several studies show that volunteerism is actually up in the United States. However, the way volunteers give of their time has changed. The term episodic volunteer was coined a few years ago because that was the way people chose to serve. People are interested in seeing a need, planning to fix it, fixing it and then moving on to the next need. There may be gaps in the time between when the volunteer decides that a need should be addressed and finding or addressing the next need. People are more interested in short bursts of meaningful service without the restraint of an ongoing commitment.

What could that mean for us? Our model looks for people who will join our clubs and volunteer through the club for extended periods of time. We have members who have been members of clubs for 50 or more years. We have clubs that have been in existence for even longer.

The current studies show that some people are

not as interested in that model as they used to be. I believe that what it means for us is that when the episodic volunteer decides to give their time, we have to be the best choice they can make. We have to have mechanisms in place to allow for volunteers to seek us out and serve in any way they choose. We have to have a model that is flexible enough to allow members to serve without restrictions.

I believe we are changing to meet those needs now. We offer some membership types that allow for members to serve when they can and not be obligated to attend every meeting or be involved with every fundraiser or service project. The associate membership is one of those types. The affiliate membership is another.

There is still a need for the traditional model, but I believe that comes from specific groups. AARP did a study years ago that talked about how people aged 45 and up fit that category best. That group typically has a vested interest in the community they live in (because they are usually long-term residents). They tend to have reached a place in life where they see the need to give back. They have finished raising their children. They are in a place of financial independence. They fit our model.

We should continue to recruit into the traditional model. We should also look for ways to satisfy the needs of volunteers who want to give of themselves in a more flexible way. We should always keep our goal in view, making our local community a better place to live and work.

Have a great summer!

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## Recent Ruritan National Board Action

In August 2018 the Ruritan National Board voted to amend the **Ruritan Club Bylaws** (Article IV Fees and Dues, Section E). The section previously stated "Except for club dues and applicable district dues, members shall not be assessed for contributions for any sole purpose. Proceeds from club fundraising should not be used for meals and dues." The board's motion changed "should not" to "shall not" making the section end with "Proceeds from club fundraising shall not be used for meals and dues."

The **Ruritan Club Bylaws** were also amended by the Board at its January 2019 meeting (Article IV Attendance, Section B). The section previously stated, in part, "... attendance made up in accordance with the rules set forth above, must have been within one (1) calendar month immediately before or following the day of absence." After the Board action that section now reads "... attendance made up in accordance with the rules set forth above, must have been within the entire calendar month before or the entire calendar month after a missed meeting to make up the meeting missed."