

THIRTEEN TIMES AS GOOD!

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With an increase of ten members at Christmas, one wonders how this happened, but the trend continued into the new year with a further three members inducted by March. Has it been luck, pure circumstance or effective planning?

The latter is most likely the most correct response, with a little of luck and circumstance thrown into the mix.

The Rotary Club of Mont Albert & Surrey Hills celebrated its fourth birthday in late October, having commenced this Rotary year with 32 members. The 33rd member is our Community Bank Manager who joined in September. Around that time, we held a specifically planned Information Evening with around 200 invitations issued – with very little cost involved due to the sponsorship of our postage. Of this, we had eleven rsvp in the positive for that evening with several others indicating their interest for Rotary, but not just yet.

So with our meeting planned very carefully, but quite relaxed and flexible; we set out to gain a very positive outcome from our eleven guests. Ultimately, we have had six of this group join the club at the same meeting.

Why did this Rotary Information Meeting work when others haven't? We believe it relates to the fact that we advertised it as exactly what it was – a Rotary Information Evening. We didn't have a high profile Guest Speaker – we simply shared the success story of our club with our guests. They were with us that evening, because they wanted to know more about Rotary and Mont Albert & Surrey Hills in particular. As we don't meet normally over a meal; we had drinks and supper / eats available which we all contributed to. With all guests still chatting an hour after the completion of the formalities, we felt a positive buzz around the group.

With a fun power point, one of our members shared the successes of our club, very carefully focussed on project outcomes – rather than on fundraising or club service. During the presentation, we broke for a short chat with the members sharing the story of "their favourite project" with the guests. Our Information packs were also tailored professionally with our Clubs Vision Statement, Upcoming Projects, Upcoming Speakers and Program all in key positions in the pack. We maintain updated stocks of the packs at all times ensuring our upcoming program is always current.

So this group induction made it seven members – we also have a member who became our 40th member on her 40th birthday, then two more who have been aware of the club for some time, expressed their interest in becoming a part of the M.A.S.H. team and were inducted at our Christmas Celebration. What a very special Christmas gift for our members. Then, a delightful event – we had two of our group of six bring along their friends and so it was twelve. Our thirteenth new member in 2008/9 is a local resident who expressed an interest in Rotary – and after visiting us as our Guest Speaker about his profession, he decided to join the club. With growth of 40% during the year, we aim to continue the clubs growth; to further the opportunity for new and exciting programs for our club.

With it possible that we could have another five members this Rotary year, the secrets to recruitment are clear to our club – invite and involve. All have been assigned a mentor and been asked to complete their Inventory of Interests – along with all our members. Our challenge, as with all clubs throughout the world, is to match our members interests with projects – the key to retention.

Perhaps one of the very real secrets of the success this year, has been the commitment of our club to planning. We revisited and updated our Strategic Plan and are now working to achieve it.

But, we can make plans, have information nights, put great packs together and still have no impact if we don't make every guest feel welcome. This is an integral part of our membership recruitment and retention approach.

For further information – please contact Jennifer Coburn on bph@bigpond.net.au.