

Chapters throughout the Society are searching for new ways to increase membership. The International Membership Committee encourages the use of this new plan that has been used successfully to revitalize struggling chapters, to energize healthy chapters, and to develop new chapters in several state organizations. This easy to use recruitment plan, available on the DKG website, includes complete instructions and all the resources your chapter needs to begin building membership.

During a chapter meeting, members receive prospect cards on which they record the name and contact information of an educator they would like to nominate. Chapter members might nominate an enthusiastic teacher they noticed at a district training session or a talented music teacher they noted directing her school's student musical. A retired teacher could nominate a beloved teacher she learned about from a grandchild or a teacher she noticed while volunteering in a school. A member could record the name of an educator whose outstanding teaching ability she witnessed while receiving instruction at a photography or painting class, a master gardener session, or technology training.

Once the cards are collected and a vote is taken on the prospects, the chapter mails an enthusiastic letter to the prospective members inviting them to an orientation session. Research shows that holding the orientation on a weeknight from 7-8 p.m. is optimal for attendance. During the orientation, the prospects are introduced to the Society via the *Pride in the Big Picture* presentation, featuring specific chapter program and project highlights, benefits of membership, and shared stories of the power of DKG to transform lives. After initiation, the new members may also receive prospect cards to honor someone they know with membership in the Society.

Chapters that are having difficulty adding new members can use this plan to help turn the tide. The newest chapter in Premont, Texas, used the plan to develop a list of new members and other chapters in Texas are growing as a result of its use, as well. Joanne Davis, past Texas State Organization President who is working on chapter development, states, "All chapters should use this approach if they want a professional, new way of offering membership."

Step 1: This plan emphasizes the honor of membership in DKG. The chapter membership committee should request members to submit a name via a prospect card (See sample document, *DKG Prospect Card*) at one or two meetings. They should then compile a list to present to the membership for a vote. These active public and private school teachers and retirees do not have to be contacted before recommendation. (Key to making up this list is to choose those women

whom you really want in your chapter—assume nothing would prevent them from saying yes. Don't eliminate them because you "assume" they would say no. Let them decide for themselves!)

Step 2: Each should be informed in a special, personal letter that she has been chosen for membership in our prestigious society. (See sample document, *Prospect Letter*) Key elements of the letter are that the prospect was recommended by a member (named) based on her stellar qualities as a teacher and approved by the entire chapter. Brief info on DKG and the chapter is included, as well as the invitation to an orientation meeting. The letter emphasizes the honor of membership and asks them to RSVP for the meeting.

Step 3: Some may decline; some may call with questions; and some may agree to come immediately. For each of those who plan to attend, invite an equal number of current members to serve as "buddies" at the orientation.

Step 4: At the orientation, provide social time for current and prospective members and then present the *Pride in the Big Picture* slide show (available for download at www.dkg.org). Current members can meet with the prospects in small groups to answer any questions. At the conclusion of the meeting (which lasts only one hour), ask them to make a decision to accept or decline the invitation to become members. (Remember, no one has approached these women about joining prior to the letter.)

Step 5: The current member "buddy" can use the Chapter Member Application (See sample document, *Chapter Member Application*) to obtain information about the prospective member. This application serves as the Recommendation for Membership or Form 11 used by many chapters to obtain member information. It can also serve as a commitment from the prospective member.

Step 6: Invite the prospective members to the initiation ceremony with the Initiation Letter (See sample document, *Initiation Letter*). Remember to plan ahead and order all necessary supplies in preparation for the ceremony.

Sherri Wagemann, Washington State Organization and member of the International Membership Committee, commented: "Providing an orientation for prospective new members prior to their initiation is vital. It helps them understand the value of membership and what our organization has to offer. This recruitment plan also offers a natural transition for mentoring. The 'Rose Buddy' mentoring system helps to forge that all important 'friendship connection' and encourages active engagement in the new members' area of interest. Many of my state's chapters have been successful using this model. It really works!"