

# You've got the Right idea!

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Notes from a workshop held at the 2010 World Conference in Washington D.C.

Moderators: Andrew Stirling (Canada) and Cecile Bouchet (Belgium)

## 1. How to recruit new members, ambassadors and hosts.

- a. Bruce Wazorko from Conn.: The club in their city learned that the sister Cities organization had become defunct. They took the membership list of the few remaining members and signed up a number for Friendship Force. This approach can be used even when Sister Cities is still functional because membership in one organization does not preclude the other. The same approach applies to groups like Peace Corps Alumni, AFS Alumni, and Rotary Exchange student's alumni.
- b. Barry: You must offer new members more than just talk. This club reserves 4 slots in every outbound exchange for new or non-members. Another club stated that they put all new members first on their outbound exchanges. Another participant thought that 20% of all exchanges should be populated by new participants.
- c. Dave Bentzin from Denver: Invite speakers to meetings who will attract listeners with an interest in FF goals (peace, international understanding etc) and invite people from organizations with common interests.
- d. Eileen from Ottawa: Travelling Village Dinner. Hold a travelling dinner (not a progressive dinner) in the neighbourhood. Invite strangers within a 1 or 2 mile radius to offer one of three (or four) courses 10 days to 2 weeks ahead of an incoming exchange. Assign people using a spread sheet so that the eight people who meet for appetizers meet a different 8 people for the main meal and a different 8 people for dessert. The travelling dinner gets 24 persons who start out as strangers to break bread with 24 people together creating a sense of community and good will familiar to FF. This is indeed what FF does around the world so the people who accept the invitation are already people who have demonstrated the kind of open spirit we are looking for as new recruits. It gives them a taste of Friendship Force. Follow up by inviting them to participate in the incoming exchange as night dinner or day hosts or dinner hosts. People who enjoy the Travelling Village Dinner are likely to enjoy Friendship Force and the Incoming Ambassadors will "sell" FF especially if you hold an event on about the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> day of the exchange when everyone is relaxed and having a good time and eager to talk about how much they are enjoying the exchange. More details can be found on the link from FFI web-site.
- e. Wayne: book a booth at the local "Peace and Justice Fair" and seek out people who share our goals.
- f. Andrew Stirling from Ottawa. Reserve a booth at a travel show and use youngest members to staff it. As a non-profit organization seek a booth at no charge from the

leftovers at the last minute. Use professional signage to give a good image and be sure to follow up with invitations to the membership officer of your club within 3 days.

- g. Provide every member with a professional looking business card with the mission statement and link to website(s). The Los Angeles (and many others) club print lots of brochures for their members to hand out.
- h. Shirley from greater Milwaukee: Diversity dinner. Find 8-10 people of different religions, races, genders etc. who agree to hold a pot-luck supper each month for 8 months. Each dinner has an assigned topic for discussion.
- i. Val from Winnipeg: Hold a 6@6 dinner for people in your neighbourhood.
- j. Use [www.meetupyourcity.com](http://www.meetupyourcity.com) to create a meet-up group on the subject of "cultural understanding through travel"
- k. Ask neighbours who are not Friendship Force members to host inbound ambassadors as either night hosts or day or dinner hosts.
- l. Hold the "Welcome Party" or a similar gathering on the 3rd day of an inbound exchange, invite non-members and let the inbound ambassadors sell Friendship Force.
- m. Approach strangers (particularly younger) or in the demographic that you are seeking. Ask them "Do you like to travel?" If the answer is "Yes", follow up with a brochure and information on the next club program by saying "We have a speaker on \_\_\_\_\_ at date, time and location.
- n. Put a paragraph in the "Calendar of Events" section of your local newspaper on a regular basis.
- o. Hold "coffees" regularly for prospective members. If a prospect gets to know some members by coming several times, they might feel more comfortable about participating.
- p. Change the itinerary offered to Inbound Exchanges frequently. More members will want to participate, and there may be activities of interest to prospective members.

## **2. How to fill undersubscribed inbound exchanges**

- a. Check whether the inbound club has a record of filling exchanges (with FFI staff) 9-12 months before the exchange.
- b. Try to get FFI Staff to add a second club if it is likely the exchange will be unfilled
- c. Consider inviting another foreign club to assist in filling the exchange
- d. Consider inviting a club from within your own country. N.B. Be warned that this can create a two class exchange as your own members may all want to host the real foreigners.
- e. Consider inviting a small contingent from a club that is just forming to give them the experience of an FF exchange.
- f. Change the dates for the exchange if that will improve its popularity

## **3. How do I get a new club started?**

There is a challenge in building a club in a new town or city where it is not clear whether you can host or arrange an exchange for 20-24 people with no idea of who will fill it or who will host the visitors. A start is to discuss the plan with the FFI Field Representative and ask them to get an FFI staff member looking for a suitable opportunity for your “about to be formed club”. Find a “mentor” club within a reasonable distance and to have one of two people join them on an outbound exchange. Then arrange for a dynamic person from that club to speak to an interested group in your town/city. If there are organizations with similar general goals as Friendship Force consider asking them to advise their members. (Service clubs may be helpful but are often overly busy with their own goals. Use a venue that is inexpensive and has no connection with any religious, political or age related organization, e.g. the library rather than the senior’s center. Once a nucleus is established consider an out bound or inbound exchange