

MICHIGAN STATE COUNCIL

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS

LISTENING SESSION MEETINGS - WHAT WORKS

State officers, state and diocesan directors met with district deputies and council leaders throughout Michigan requesting their ideas for growing membership. The discussions revolved around three topics: Membership recruitment ideas, incentives to motivate recruiters and suggestions for state and Supreme Council support. Diocesan directors facilitated the meetings and recorded participant comments. These are organized topically, although many ideas fit into more than one category. These ideas emerged from the meetings.

BUILDING THE DOMESTIC CHURCH

- Knights must be active in service to their parishes.
- Purchase kiosks for display in churches served by the K of C and restock the books as needed.
- Serve all round-table parishes equally.
- Educate men in Catholicism, convince them, invigorate them.
- Encourage members to serve in the parish RCIA program (a good source for recruitment).
- Participate in parish retreats and 5th Sunday rosaries.
- Hold a district-wide K of C retreat.
- Invite the entire parish and even the community to attend K of C family picnics.
- Invite the parish to attend Past Grand Knight dinners, appreciation nights, etc. with no cost.
- Meet with the pastor at the start of the fraternal year and ask how the council can help him and serve the parish.
- Meet periodically with the council chaplain / pastor to informally discuss council / parish involvement activities.
- Emphasize getting God back in our lives emphasizing Catholic men leading the way.
- Recognize knights and families of the month at a mass.
- Stress the need for knights to be active in parish religious education programs.
- Encourage fallen away Catholics to remarry in the Catholic church.
- Host coffee and donuts (coffee hours) after Sunday masses once a month, and possibly even ice cream socials/coney dogs after Saturday evening masses.

YOUTH INVOLVEMENT

- Invite students from the parish or local schools to assist at appropriate activities like helping on fish fries or Habitat for Humanity projects.
- As appropriate donate part of the profits to the school / organization helping at the activity.
- Ask the principal at Catholic high schools if the council can present in April or early-May to graduating male students.
- At a minimum, the grand knight and youth director take the "Protecting God's Children" course (a Star Council requirement).
- Young members want a specific charity or project to work on /raise funds, not simply funds for council coffers.
- Hold as many youth contest activities as possible advertising in public and Catholic schools.

- When possible coordinate council youth activities with like community activities, and don't schedule contest "playoffs" that conflict with those events.
- Plan activities for youth and their dads like a canoe trip.
- In parishes where there isn't a similar organization, ask the parish to start a young men's club where the members might later become knights or that might evolve into a K of C council.
- Consider new youth activities sponsored by the council like a hockey tournament, 3 on 3 basketball tournament.
- Offer "hands on" programs for youth getting more teens involved.
- The K of C cannot continue to recruit millennials believing that what we wanted out of life and our faith is the same for current men in their 20s and 30s.
- New methods and activities must be developed to recruit and retain new young members, bake sales and fish fries aren't sufficient.
- The K of C must identify ways to draw younger people back into the Church, and once back recruit them and keep them engaged.
- Update the state website with promotional information targeted to young men, getting away from the "old person organization" content.
- Finance and support social media training aimed at informing and engaging the interests of the young parish demographic.
- Young Catholics are discovering evangelical ideas and methods more appealing lifestyle choices, so the K of C and the Church need to promote Catholic beliefs.
- Encourage a young knight be a member on parish councils and serve as a mentor in parish youth organizations.
- During corporate communions have young members / families bring up the gifts.
- When a youth contest is held in a parish or school program, offer a pizza party for the class with the most participation.

RECRUITMENT

- All council members need to know they are recruiters.
- Carefully select the council membership director (articulate, friendly, knowledgeable, good people skills).
- Membership directors should have a business card with the council website listed on it.
- Offer training and support to the membership director.
- Appoint a membership team.
- Have husband and wife recruitment teams that may visit prospect families in their homes.
- Provide a district "mobile recruitment team" to assist councils.
- Use the *State Membership and Leadership Guide* for recruitment ideas.
- One on one recruiting works best.
- Invite sons and male relatives to join the K of C.
- When Online Membership referrals are made to DDs and councils, they must follow up immediately to have the member take the admission degree and transfer into the council.
- Ask the pastor to recommend ten men who might join the K of C and send them a letter invitation from the pastor with a follow-up letter or phone call from the council inviting the man and his family to an information program. As appropriate offer child care during the meeting.

- Have form 100s in the usher closet in church.
- Members should carry form 100s with them along with their rosaries.
- Lent is a good time to recruit, usually a slow time of the year in parishes before Easter.
- A team of members should be talking informally at fish fries, breakfasts, etc., with parishioners about joining the K of C.
- Develop a 90 second recruitment presentation on “Why I should become a Knight.”
- Offer a new membership family event using the 90 second speech.
- When recruiting, make friends and then recruit.
- Focus on recruiting non-member ushers in parishes.
- Ask non-members to help on council activities like fish fries.
- The quality of members recruited should be on a par with the focus on numbers recruited.
- Provide simulation training exercises for recruitment and retention with a demonstration and then participant involvement (perhaps videotaped and critiqued).
- Offer welcome packages to new parishioners, perhaps distributed when they register in the parish.
- Publish the proposer list in the *Michigan Columbian*.
- List the names of new members (and their proposer) in council newsletters.
- List member milestones (birthdays and anniversaries) in council newsletters.
- Institute ladies’ auxiliaries in councils to support programs and recruitment.
- Use former members lists that can be obtained through K of C insurance agents.
- Members bring the name of one prospect to a council meeting and the membership team follows up contacting him.
- Waive first year dues / waive the initiation fee (or use it to buy the new member a K of C shirt.
- Recruit businessmen (especially ones whose business is supported by the council and parish) in the community.
- Allow eMembership members to participate in council activities before they take the admission degree.
- Establish a “network system” for men going to college / contacts with companies for part time jobs, apartments, K of C hall rentals, etc.

INCENTIVES

- Councils award points to recruiters that they can turn in for K of C apparel, gas cards, etc.
- Council incentive suggestion: 1st member – waive dues, 2nd member – coffee mug or small K of C gift, 3rd member – gift card.
- Possible council proposer incentives: 24 years or younger – iTunes, food or gas cards / Older members – food and gas cards and scratch off lottery tickets.
- Offer an incentive for the proposer’s wife.
- Offer family-oriented awards like movie tickets or dinner certificates.
- Recognize proposer in council bulletins for their work.
- Work to attain Star Council and receive the \$4.50 per billable member Supreme incentive.
- Put State Council money into advertising, not incentives.
- Instead of incentives, use State Council money to set up an electronic system to receive member payments.

- Initiate an online payment system that would accept credit cards, debit cards or PayPal.
- Use incentive funds to develop a master tool kit that would be easy for councils to use.
- If incentives are offered they should extend over the entire fraternal year.
- Have K of C wives talk with prospect wives about how the K of C has made their husband a better Catholic man.
- Councils offer a “proposer dinner” where the new knight and their proposer-mentor and their families can socialize.
- Encourage the use of proposer recognition certificates.
- Tangible awards / incentives motivate people more than money.
- Council covers the cost of its youngest member to attend the State Convention and have him report on the experience at a council meeting.
- At the end of admission degrees, explain the Supreme Council Shining Armor Award requirements.
- Present the lapel pin to recipients of the Shining Armor Award.

ADVERTISING

- Have a council invitation ad in parish bulletins.
- Councils should request a “Knights Corner” in parish bulletins updating parishioners on donations and other activities.
- Have an annual article in parish bulletins listing council donations, programs held, etc.
- Advertise council programs and donations in parish bulletins.
- Advertise the Online Membership program in parish bulletins along with information about joining the local council.
- If the parish has an annual volunteer survey, be sure the council is listed on it.
- Fulfill the Exemplary Public Relations Award requirements and submit the form.
- Have the state PR director send monthly articles to civic and diocesan publications telling about K of C diocesan and Supreme Council programs.
- Knights should wear their K of C shirts, sweaters, jackets at events.
- Use billboards to advertise K of C events like Keep Christ in Christmas and MI Drive weekends.
- Councils in a district could donate to post a highway billboard advertising events.
- At fish fries, dinners, breakfasts if a computer and projector are available, show knights in action pictures or Supreme Council videos.
- Use K of C placements at council meal programs.
- Offer a K of C baseball cap with the logo caption: Join the Knights.
- Compose brief council slogans that can be used in advertising publications like “In Solidarity with Our Priests.”
- Advertise and market the Knights like the U.S. Marines: Self-sacrificing, strong, fraternal.
- Use slogans in parish bulletins, etc., like “Knights Changing Lives Changing Knights”, “You Can Trust a Knight”, “Chivalry is Not Dead.”
- When recruiting say: “As a Catholic, you have the *opportunity* to become a knight.”
- Use the monthly 50-50 drawing money to buy council K of C coats given to members.
- Sell K of C license plate frames to members to install on cars.
- Use the Star Council per capita refunds for charities and advertise donations in parish bulletins.

CHURCH DRIVES

- Have a pulpit announcement by the priest / council member (preferably younger / member and his wife on church drive weekends.
- Pulpit announcements should be prearranged for presenters.
- On church drive weekends, give prepared packets (including an image brochure) with other K of C info (*These Men They Call Knights, 24 Hour Knight*) as parishioners leave mass.
- On church drive weekends, give a bookmark to parishioners leaving mass with K of C information on it.
- Church drives work best when they're organized and planned correctly.
- Have a district recruitment team that can help councils holding church drives.
- Pick a council holding a church drive and have the diocesan membership director work with them to plan and hold the drive.

RETAINING MEMBERS

- Involve new as well as senior members in planning and working council activities and programs.
- At meetings introduce new members, so they feel they belong.
- When a member comes to help on an activity, make sure he has a meaningful job to do.
- Assign a mentor to a new member.
- Publish monthly / quarterly newsletters so members know what the council does.
- Let members know that the time commitment to the council is up to them given their job, family and parish involvement.
- Use the New Member Involvement Survey from Supreme and place them on a committee where their interests lay.
- Contact the state retention director with questions or help in locating members.
- Be open to new ideas from programs when members suggest them.
- Follow the Supreme Council retention process.
- Councils should have a flyer – information sheet on council / K of C activities like ultrasounds purchased, babies saved, charitable donations that can be included with the Knight Alert letter when members don't pay their dues.
- Councils must show members they have value and purpose.
- At the close of a retention conversation with a member behind in dues ask: "What can we do for you? We will be praying for you."
- Eliminate the "I don't have time" excuse for K of C membership by supplying "talking points" rebutting that excuse.
- When announcing knights and families of the month, detail why they received recognition.
- Financial secretaries need to review the council membership roster and personally contact very senior members who haven't been active to be sure they're not deceased.
- Encourage member participation in sports (golf, bowling, softball, etc.) and participate in statewide contests.
- Remember, every knight joined for a reason.
- Have members talk about their "highlight" experience as a knight.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

- Involve members on committees and offices to develop their leadership skills.
- Build a grand knight succession plan (deputy grand knight, chancellor) so the grand knight isn't recycled.
- Establish a council mentor program (tactfully tell proposers about their responsibilities toward those they recruit).
- Advertise the Supreme Council webinars as excellent learning opportunities.
- DDs establish a district leadership / mentor team that can work with council officers and directors when needed.
- At the start of the fraternal year, the grand knight should meet with his officers and directors and their families to detail his goals and expectations soliciting the commitment and support.
- Toward the end of the fraternal year, the council officers and directors and their families should meet to identify council programs, fundraisers, etc. for the new fraternal year and get them on the parish calendar.
- Offer more council officer training, beyond what was offered this past fraternal year, make it more specific to what is expected of officers.
- *The state deputy should provide the delegates at the state convention an update on what was learned at the listening session meetings and what actions are being taken. After the membership should receive regular updates via email, meetings, etc.*
- The state leadership must think outside the box and continue listening to its members.
- Use the chain of command when addressing council issues.
- Run councils like a Catholic business.
- The state leadership should be compassionate, less bombastic in addressing members.
- Schedule officer / executive committee meetings prior to council meetings, so they should rarely exceed an hour.
- In addition to business, council meetings need to be fun and engaging.
- Establish council contact teams that can call members with information about activities, deaths, etc.
- All leaders must have a positive attitude, be enthusiastic and try to energize the membership.
- Officers should recruit their replacements, perhaps having a period where the two works together.
- Establish diocesan "fix it" teams that can visit councils / districts that are having problems and are in poor shape.
- Develop a state leadership training program, the current top-down training is not effective.
- Provide training for recruiters.
- Follow protocol at council meetings / Have the advocate review proper council protocol after council officer elections.

COMMUNICATIONS

- Use text messages on upcoming council events.
- Have a council ombudsman that members can contact when they have concerns.
- Offer a breakout session at the State Convention that shows what is available and how to navigate the K of C and the Michigan State Council websites.

- Post online membership information on Facebook.
- Use Facebook and Twitter along with electronic council newsletters to communicate with members.
- Organize information sent to councils to reduce the number of emails.
- A K of C membership table should be at diocesan men's conferences.
- At council meetings when a topic is addressed, it shouldn't be repeated by other directors or the DD.
- Redesign the Supreme and state websites to make navigation easier.
- Adopt a state "robo call" or automated text message program to inform knights when important activities arise.
- DDs are encouraged to provide monthly district newsletters, so councils can support one another with each council advertising the district activities to their members.
- Provide an "app" members could use to facilitate interaction.
- It's extremely important that all councils have an active public relations director, who looks for ways to publicize council events, projects and donations.
- The state public relations director is available to assist councils writing press releases and articles reporting on their events.
- Councils might use programs like Skype so homebound members can watch council meetings and other council events.
- Post "best practices" on the state council website and make it easy to find and use.

INSURANCE

- Have an active insurance agent available to council members.
- If needed to achieve Star Council, buy an annuity for the council chaplain.
- Insurance agents must be able to more readily help members access details about insurance, IRAs, annuities, etc.
- The Supreme Council IT department should have safeguards on member insurance accounts so that members are able to access their information without going through insurance agents.
- Send council bulletins to insurance field and general agents who serve the council.
- Don't be afraid to ask the insurance agents for recruiting help.

CHAPLAINS / SEMINARIANS

- When situations arise between councils and pastors, contact the diocesan chaplain for help.
- Purchase the K of C vestments for council chaplains.
- Emphasize the RSVP program to support seminarians, perhaps have the parish offer a special envelope for seminarian support that the council could use in its RSVP program.
- If possible have a presentation about the K of C at vicariate meetings.
- Can't bishops do more to support the K of C / encourage pastor support?

FORMS

- When completing forms, be sure all information is listed on them.
- Councils should have one form per month that goes to their DD that might include attendance at meetings and events and project participation for future activities and events.

- Reduce the number of youth activity participation forms.
- When possible consolidate Supreme and state forms to eliminate duplication.

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

- Emphasize council activities where the entire family can participate.
- Try different family centered activities like feather bowling.
- Councils need to offer fun activities with food and socializing, so everything they do doesn't involve work.
- Personally, invite new members and their families to upcoming family events.
- Have a young family recruitment party with games, food, etc.

STAR COUNCIL / SUPREME COUNCIL

- Change from the present system to a point system.
- Remove the deduction of suspensions/withdrawals/resignations from Star Council progress toward quotas.
- Progress toward council goals should be measured on activities and not be penalized for individual knight decisions when they decide to drop their membership.
- When councils suspend many members, they give up recruiting for that year, which reduces their recruiting efforts.
- Supreme develop a member website with information about all councils, their locations, meeting days and times, etc.
- Lower the age of K of C membership to 16.
- Supreme should spend money on a major advertising campaign.
- Supreme or the state council should offer help to councils / assemblies to set up websites and publishing newsletters.
- Hire / retain a marketing expert to design programs targeted at millennials.

IMAGE

- Knights should be positive examples for other men.
- Live life as a "real" knight, so other men will want what you have.
- Councils should develop an image brochure telling about their history, awards, officers and membership information.
- Promote donations to the Sacred Heart Major Seminary Endowed Scholarship Program and encourage contributions to the MIKofC Charities Inc. 501.c3 tax deductible program.