

## RETAINING MEMBERS IS A CONTINUAL PROGRAM



Lions Clubs must be ready to meet the challenges of tomorrow. But in order to do so, each club needs dedicated, hard-working members whose effectiveness is not constantly thwarted by fellow-Lions dropping out of the club. It does little good if more members are recruited, because if the club cannot retain them, there can be little progress towards meeting community needs.

Membership retention is one of the most important goals a Lions club can have. If a significant number of members do not maintain an active interest in club projects and as a result become ex-Lions, the club's ability to plan and carry out meaningful service programs will be severely curtailed, if not eliminated. How can a Lions club insure that members do not drop away?

Let me emphasize that this is a continual process, an ongoing program which begins even before a man joins the club. Officers cannot say that next week or next month a membership retention program will be conducted. Instead, it must be a part of every meeting and every service program and every ceremony, for it is through these that members gain the necessary enthusiasm for Lionism and the desire to be active Lions.

That is the key—*active members*. A man must be made to feel he is welcomed as an active, sharing Lion from the first day he puts on the lapel pin.

He must understand that his talents are indeed needed by the club and that he will not be just a name on the club roster. Inform him of the challenges, responsibilities and rewards which await him as a member. He should be inducted at an impressive ceremony during which the basic ideals and goals of Lions International are stressed. Be certain the prospective or new Lion is informed of the accomplishments of the club and told what is expected of him. By all means, be sure he understands that, while comradeship is a part of being a Lion, the main purpose of a Lions club is the rendering of unselfish service through hours of planning and participation. One of the reasons many a man soon drops his membership is because he thought Lions clubs are merely social and good fellowship organizations. He wasn't ready to work during the evenings and on weekends to fulfill service obligations.

Once he is a member, properly inducted and informed of Lionism's humanitarian principles, it is vitally im-

portant that he be given assignments—immediately.

By joining with his fellow-Lions in a service project, the new member will feel he is wanted and that his talents and opinions are valued. If a new Lion is an energetic and civic-minded man but his only activity the first couple months after induction is to exchange handshakes with other Lions, he will soon lose interest in the club, have better things to do on meeting nights and thus become an excellent candidate as a statistic in the "dropped" column.

If a veteran member shows signs of quitting, fellow club members should make every effort to prevent him from dropping out. If the source of his displeasure is found, action should be taken to correct it. Appoint him to a committee more to his liking, perhaps, or ask him how exactly he would like his talents used. Remember—a Lion who has devoted years of service to his club doesn't drop his membership without a valid reason. If he still cannot be discouraged from quitting, it is probably because the club failed in some way to satisfy his desire to serve. This failing must be found if other long standing members are not to take the same path.

The real key to retention, however, is a successful Lions club. A good, active club, with strong projects involving all members, and interesting meetings to generate attendance, has no problem with retention. Lions in such a club do not think of quitting. They are eager to attend the regular meetings and to help plan and participate in the club's many humanitarian and community service projects.

To emphasize the importance of membership retention, every club that maintains its total membership at or above the total number of members reported in July, 1974, will receive the 1974-75 President's Retention Award. The special Club Membership Development and Retention Kit, sent to every Membership Committee Chairman, will help clubs reach this goal.

Our Association's proud heritage is a result of dedicated Lions bound together within the framework of a well organized club. If members cannot be retained, the club will operate at considerably less than its full potential. Membership retention is necessary if a Lions club is to achieve the humanitarian objectives of Lionism in the community and around the world.