

**Retaining our members is ongoing**...not just a “one and done” project and should start the moment a new member joins your club. We must be positive, proactive and most importantly remain open to self-reflection through an open and honest look at our clubs. What is it about your club that keeps your members coming back and what is it about your club that keeps your members from not coming back? Below are some suggestions for you to start with but you can always add your own as it pertains to your club. Just remember to always be kind, open and honest and you will discover ways to keep your members coming back year after year.

1. **Ask your members what worked.** At the beginning of your club year engage your members by asking them what they liked over the past club year and what they disliked. Although we don't like to hear what our members disliked, you should remember you can learn as much from the dislikes as you can from the likes on the direction your club needs to go. Take it a step further and have your club's officers share what they thought went well and what they feel could have gone better. This open conversation makes your members feel they are playing a vital role in the direction of their club.
2. **Ask “Who are we as a club?”** – Where do our members come from? Are they educators, professionals that work outside the home or are they retirees or new stay at home moms looking for an outlet to be around others like them? Are we a group that is small and like it like that way or are we a large club with an ever-changing membership? Do we conduct an annual orientation program for new members or a *GFWC Federation Refresher Program* (available under GFWC Resources) that informs all members of up to the minute information regarding GFWC? If not, this is something each club should incorporate into their club year.
3. **Ask “What does your club do?”** Do you have that one project that stands out in your community? Are your meetings speaker driven only or “hands-on” projects only? Does your club have a big fundraiser that they do to raise money for other projects in your community? Does your club have a social time either before after the meeting allowing

your members to get to know each other better and to find common interests? Does your club have FUN? Remember “all work and no play....”

4. **How does your club work?** How long are your meetings? Is it all business – or do you include some time for fun and sharing laughter together on your agenda? Are they held at the dinner hour? Or right after work? If so, does your club have a “Hostess Committee” to provide refreshments prior to the start of the meeting?
5. **Do members feel needed and appreciated?** Do you recognize your members when they have done something above and beyond for the good of the club? Does everyone have an equal opportunity to work on club projects or are just the same few doing all the work?
6. **Are your club projects those the members still support?** You should keep your club projects fresh and relevant...if they have lost their sparkle maybe they should be sent to the archives.
7. **What is your club seeking from the members?** Is your club looking for a specific skill set for your membership to help achieve your clubs’ goals? Have you identified the skills needed to achieve your clubs’ goals?
8. **When do you meet?** Whether you are you a morning, afternoon or evening club, is that the best time for your members to meet? If a member works and can only help with projects done on the weekend or in the evening, is your club open to that type of participation? Most importantly, is your club flexible to your club’s ever-changing membership? Does the meeting time continue to meet the needs of the majority of members and importantly, the new members you plan to recruit?
9. **How do potential members find your club?** Evaluate how and where your club is publicized. Is your club utilizing social media to gain attention? Do you have your club’s information posted at your local library? What about at your Chamber of Commerce or Welcome Wagon? Do you have the GFWC emblem road sign displayed at the entrance of your town or city? Is your club accessible to a newcomer in your community?
10. **How do you involve new members in your club?** With club projects,

are new members added to a committee, so they can get involved right away? Does your club utilize mentors for new members? If an established member is asked to mentor a new member, they feel like they have an obligation to help the club succeed as well as a responsibility to this new member.

11. **Most importantly, how is your club perceived in your community?**

Do you have a club brochure available in the local library, town hall and community center? Does every member have a supply to share with potential members or does your club use the GFWC brochure "Living the Volunteer Spirit" available in the Marketplace? If your club has a brochure, you should use this as an opportunity to share what you have done in your community and where funds raised are distributed. Essential to the brochure is the contact information for your club...who can they call or email? Do you have contacts with the local newspaper, radio or news station? This is a great way to get your name out to many in one clip on the local news!

**Now let's look inside the club ...** at the members. What is your club doing to keep that member coming back year after year? Do your members understand the mission and projects they are asked to support? Is recognition for a "job well done" frequent and meaningful? On the flip side, what is it that drew someone to visit your club, join your club and then never return to your club?

Everyone whom you talk to about your membership in GFWC is going to want to know "what's in it for me"? You should be able to share your own GFWC story by being positive and more importantly passionate about why you are a member. This is your personal "elevator speech" and the more it's practiced, the easier it will be to share.

**FUN is in the ACTION** and that is what we want our members to feel when they attend a club meeting. Fun is infectious and allows you to release the stress of the day and then you can concentrate on the business at hand. Smiles and laughter also make a "visitor" relax too! Some pointers for making your meeting relaxing and enjoyable are:

- Open your meeting with an inspirational reading or quote.
- Always have food...remember ***if you feed them, they will come!***
- Assign "big sisters" to encourage members to sit with someone new at meetings to explain projects and our ever-present acronyms!
- When you are leading your meeting be sure to smile! Smiles are contagious!
- Involve as many members in project development/discussion as feasible. Remember, all ideas are good! Consider using the *GFWC Club-Member Survey* available under GFWC Resources.
- Educate your members so they know that they are part of district and state organizations. Encourage your members to attend district and state level meetings so they can see firsthand the overall affect GFWC plays in their state. The message should be stressed that district and state level meetings, as well as region and international meetings, are open to **ALL GFWC members**.
- Do you share information from GFWC News and Notes with your members? Do you encourage your members to subscribe to News and Notes? If not, then now is the perfect time to do that (or at the very least assign one of the officers the responsibility to forward the GFWC email to each member and prospective member. In that way, the member is receiving up to date information on GFWC and what national leaders and other clubs are doing.
- **Does your club utilize the GFWC Club Manual?** The GFWC Club Manual is available for our members to use, *not just the club, district or state leaders*. The GFWC Club Manual is full of wonderful ideas to excite your club members and to keep them coming back year after year! Use this tool when developing the club annual calendar of work.
- **Do you recognize and reward your members for their hard work?** Members are more likely to remain in a club that has a positive and fun atmosphere and one that is appreciative of service and dedication. Remember your members could choose anywhere to give of their time and talents and we want them to know that GFWC is honored that they chose us! Recognize achievements on social media, making certain to mention GFWC.
- **Does your club have a social function as well as a business meeting**

**monthly?** Many clubs have found that by not only holding their monthly business meeting but also a social function that the bond between their members is stronger. If having both in a month is too much for your club, you can add a social function every other month or even quarterly. Plan to meet to go to dinner, have coffee, or go to a new movie. Another plus is you can invite friends to the social outings because introducing a new person to your club on the “social” level is less intimidating than visiting a “business” meeting.

**Remember, a happy, fulfilled member is the single best tool to recruit new members. And each new member recruited will expand your club’s base to recruit additional new members.**