

Best Practice – Formation of a Club Branch

In pursuit of continuous improvement within a learning association, we submit to the Lions of District 410 A an on-going report on how the Windhoek Lions Club is progressing with the formation of a Club Branch in Okahandja in the hope that we can share with you our successes and mistakes.

Progress Report 1

a. Need Assessment

We were, I suppose, fortunate in that the Club had become involved with a project in Okahandja for the past 12 months and we knew that there was a need in Okahandja which could justify the establishment of a Lions Club on the ground. I would, however, urge that at the very least, one need be identified on the ground before members of a parent Club can become motivated to justify their time and effort in establishing a Club or Club Branch.

b. Anchor person

The next point would be to find someone on the ground that is as passionate about serving the community as Lions are and then using that person to find more like-minded people in the identified area. Again, we are lucky to have Susan de Beer, whom we had also nominated as Woman of the Year last year to enthuse excitement amongst her friends and colleagues for the establishment of a service organisation within their own community.

c. Meanwhile, back at the ranch

It goes without saying but it is imperative that members of the Parent Club must endorse the drive to establish a Club Branch and then, to find at least five enthusiastic Lions within the Club that will take ownership of and be committed to making a success of the initiative to establish a Club Branch or even charter a new Club.

d. Getting the ball rolling

We spoke to Susan de Beer, our anchor person in Okahandja and pointed out that despite our continued support with the Okahandja Home Base Care Givers, it would make more sense “taking Moses to the mountain” and we should try to establish a service organisation within the community itself. Susan agreed wholeheartedly and we asked her for names of like-minded people who she would think would support her. She gave us approximately 20 names.

e. Making contact

We deemed it important that the correct message be put across from the outset and our LP Dalene commenced with making personal contact with each and every person on the list, stating :

- The contact to Susan and our thought to establish a service organisation in Okahandja, mentioning that it would be a Lions Club – and not more detail than just that
- Assessing their views on our idea and obtaining a “buy-in” from them (in this case, we had a 100% buy-in)
- Indicating that we will call for an informative meeting and will advise them of the date, time and venue (get their e-mail, cell number, etc)
- Following up with e-mails confirming the telephone conversation and indicating when and where the meeting will be held.
- Approximately three days prior to the meeting, a reminder, also indicating that we will serve light finger snacks and that the meeting itself would not exceed 60 minutes.

The timeframe from the first call to the date of the meeting was less than 1 month.

f. The first meeting

- We arranged with a local hotel to use their balcony and also asked them to provide finger snacks for 20-odd persons. (It is a good move to get the hotel owner/management involved as well) These are all admin costs for the parent Club.

- We made sure that the meeting starts on time and accepting some late arrivals, we ended up with 7 attendees. We were there with 7 Lions and one prospective member. The attendees did make apologies for some of their friends.
- Our strategy for the first meeting was as follows :
 - i. We accepted that we would in all likelihood not draw all 20 people contacted and were hoping for a 25% turnout which we achieved.
 - ii. We opted not wear Lions clothes/vest, etc. except for Lions pins and our name badge and we all dressed smart-casual
 - iii. Whilst we wanted as many of our own Lions there, we hoped that we would not outnumber our guests – this is more a psychological thing than for practical purposes
 - iv. The entire information meeting was dedicated to success stories of Lions at local, national, and international level. We did not make reference to any lionistic titles, lions structures, rules, constitution, etc.
 - v. Then we allowed for questions on their part – only now did we explain that membership dues are payable (did not mention how much) that they would form part of our Club until they are enough members to charter their own Club, they decide to run with their own projects, they raise money independently from us, etc.
 - vi. We also asked whether they could think of other people who would like to join such an organisation seeing that they now understood who we are and what we stand for. If their response is anything to go by, they could charter within three months. The list of further potential members just kept growing.
 - vii. We made sure that the meeting did not exceed the 1 hour and then invited all to join us for the snacks and ask more questions if they have.
 - viii. The discussions and plans continued, albeit less formal for a further hour approximately

- ix. The meeting did, however, not end, until we had plans for the next/follow-up meeting. We decided that the arrangement of this meeting would be their responsibility and that we would fit in with their plans. Maybe somewhat of a gamble but we believe that 90% of the people that attended will be back at the next meeting. We also indicated that at the next meeting we will discuss structure, costs, etc.

Now we wait for their response but we have decided that we will follow up if we do not hear from them within the next two to three weeks.

The first meeting with Okahandja residents

