

Marketing Your Lodge Is More Than Just Selling Beer & Sandwiches!

In a February 5, 2009 article, written by Elaine Johnson and published in the Naperville, IL newspaper by Sun Publications, it's the headline that catches this reader's eye: **"Moose lodge too hip to be square."**

Using an anecdotal lead, Ms Johnson writes, "On their way home from the train after working late, a couple of businessmen popped into the Moose Lodge for a quick beer.

"They were quickly informed that the Moose, a private fraternal organization that has existed in Downers Grove since 1930, serves only members.

"So they joined on the spot, securing the necessary sponsorship from one of the denizens at the bar.

"The two are among more than 600 new members who have flocked to the Moose in the last two years, attracted by its convenience, its family-friendly atmosphere and its retro vibe.

"Since May 2007, membership in the organization has more than doubled to about 1,000 men. Women can join as Women of the Moose.

"We're lucky to be part of the Downers Grove downtown area, with neighborhoods all around us,' says Mike Pelling, the lodge administrator. 'A lot of members can walk to us. We're close to the train. And we've added things younger men like to do.'

"Aside from the free popcorn and occasional \$7 buckets of beer, which are popular among young and old, those activi-

ties include a refurbished pool table from the 1950s, PacMan and other vintage video games, and a beanbag league, which has become 'the hot bag league in town,' Pelling said.

"In fact, 'hot' is the adjective I've heard applied to the Moose again and again.

"It has become noticeably more hip in the last few years,' said one new member. 'It's really the "anti" nightclub -- the place to be when you're too cool for the room where everyone is too cool!'

"It has undoubtedly become the unpretentious place to see and be seen, where younger community leaders, such as Mayor Ron Sandack, can mingle with long-time lodge members without feeling like they're on show.

"The mayor is just another member when he comes in,' Pelling said.

"The addition of so many younger members has raised the hackles of some old-timers, but Pelling said they might just be the saviors.

"I believe we would have lost the building if not for the infusion of new members,' Pelling said. 'We weren't making it.'

"It costs about \$6,000 per month to keep the doors of the 55-year-old building open' he said. 'The old members didn't come out at night.'

"The new members and their families have revitalized the lodge, and the Moose have responded by becoming more family friendly.

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“The main floor social area now includes a kids room outfitted with a television, Nintendo and video games, and donated toys. There’s also a one-way mirror that allows parents to keep track of their kids.

“‘We’re children friendly,’ Pelling said. ‘You couldn’t believe how many members bring their kids in. No one complains -- as long as they don’t sit on a bar stool -- and parents like that.’

“The lodge is also community friendly, with a major goal of ‘getting people from charitable organizations to use our hall,’ Pelling said.

“During my son’s Cub Scout years, we spent many an hour attending Pinewood Derbys and Blue-and-Gold banquets in the lodge’s upstairs hall. In recent weeks, the DG Cares organization hosted a school board candidates’ forum in the lower level, and several local schools and churches have events scheduled there this spring.

‘We give it away for free,’ Pelling says of the space, although groups that want to serve liquor have to pay for a \$156 village license. ‘But we’ll donate the bartender,’ he said.

“The lodge also hosts Friday-night fish fries for \$6.50 to \$9 -- ‘Lent is going to be huge’ -- and special events such as a Super Bowl party with snacks and beer for \$10.

“The cost of membership is also modest: \$35 per year with a \$20 initiation fee.

“The question remains whether the Moose’s new members will continue to bask in the lodge’s resolutely retro atmosphere of terrazzo floors, well-worn bar and simple

furnishings.

“‘The Moose could be so much more popular than it is -- they just need someone to market it,’ said one new member.

“You couldn’t invent a place as anti-cool and hip as the Moose Lodge.”

EDITOR’S NOTE: *Thanks, Elaine Johnson, for such a well written and revealing article.*

Marketing your Moose Lodge IS more than just selling beer and sandwiches, isn’t it?

Briefly, to summarize:

- You need to exploit your location. Look at what Lodges such as Montpelier 312, Port Clinton 1610, Celina 1373, Indian Lake 1533 do with their lake-front properties. Celina 1473, for example, a couple of years ago, initiated their annual MooseStock Weekend, a combination fishing event and party time! *(see pictures below of this year’s event)*



Consider also how Columbus 11 exploits an olympic-sized swimming pool, BBQ pit, and camper hook-ups. And consider how Sidney 568 has taken advantage

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Wouldn't you love to see people packed three-deep at the auxilliary bar (in this case a patio) who had been participating in a special event?

over the years of its delightfully difficult nine-hole golf course.

Obviously you need to analyze your location to discover the strengths that your lodge could exploit.

- You need to exploit the strengths of your membership. Are your members oriented to community services projects? Is there a strong fraternal element, an outgrowth of your Moose Legion? Do you have diversified sports interests among your members?

For examples, if you read last week's update's article entitled "Polar Bear Plunge 2009," you can appreciate what Trumbull Lodge 186 was able to do to support Special Olympics (\$14,000 is a bundle for a one-day event, but that's what the lodge raised.) Nearly 60 people braved the icy waters--- now that's community service!

Or consider the amazing "Blessing of the Bikes" each year, organized at Dayton 73, with the Moose Rider Herd providing the bulk of the work force. And did you notice that last year the equivalent of a football field contained all the participating bikes.

And how about those four Ritual teams from Ravenna 1234, Mogadore 1082, Bucyrus 669, and Hilliard 2236 "hanging in there" by continuing to compete.

And if you are a faithful reader of the weekly updates, you have to marvel at the contributions of our state's sports programs, under the direction of Buck Dials.

What makes these success stories?
ANSWER: Leadership, plain and simple.

For examples, Shining Star Award winner Harold C Bond, Jr. has been the impetuous behind Colonial City 2555's continued annual award-winning in Highway Clean-up.

In re-reading the updates, you have to recognize the "high energy" operation that Administrator Steve Speaks of Gahanna 2364 and his dozen or so DRBs (you'll have to check with Steve for that encryption).

And look at the tremendous job that Greg Batross and Steve Ward have been doing with Zanesville 867 in their new lodge building fund drives, and, with four or five other administrators, have put District 13 literally on the fraternal map of Ohio.

Consider the leadership's efforts to provide Ohio sportsmen and women with over a dozen tournaments each year.

It's good to have a wild one appear every so often in the officer corps of your lodge, for that's the Moose Legionnaire who has caught fire for his lodge and the Moose, that's the Moose Legionnaire who won't settle for a "no" to trying out a new--and sometimes admittedly bizarre idea.

In short, Brothers, if it ain't happenin' in your lodge, you'd best be looking for new blood to revitalize your lodge or be looking for a real estate agent to put your building on the market!