

Wild Ones Conference
August 20, 2011
Join the Group: Increasing Membership

Workshop Goal: Create a list of best practices and lessons learned for increasing membership.

1. Give free memberships to Garden Hosts, Speakers, etc. The dues are paid to National by the chapter in the hopes that the person will renew at the end of the year.
2. Welcome new members with a phone call.
3. Solicit volunteers from new members – get them involved right away
4. Use booths to collect emails of prospective members
5. Chapter Board develops a membership plan – makes gaining members a priority for the chapter
6. The membership chair speaks at every meeting encouraging guests to join
7. Chapter members act as ambassadors to the community for Wild Ones
8. Put fliers in the public library, nature centers, and other public places
9. Hold an annual conference
10. Create a chapter grant program
11. Donate books regarding native plants to local libraries
12. Have two sign-up sheets at monthly meetings: one for members and one for guests. Follow up with the guests.
13. Have a social time before the meeting
14. Provide permanent name tags for the members
15. Connect newer members with existing members who share a common location, interest, type of garden, etc.
16. Provide each member with stickers for their name tags that indicate which what habitats they are gardening (e.g., woodland, wetland, prairie, etc.)
17. Create your own membership brochure. (You can view the one that Kane County created at nkwildones.org)
18. Create a Wild Ones business card to hand out at booths, etc. It's small, inexpensive, and has website and contact information on it.
19. One chapter hosts an "Inviting Nature to Your Backyard" event in February. They have found that by charging a \$5 entry fee (which they use to provide refreshments), that people are more likely to attend because they feel that they must be getting something more because they have to pay to get in.
20. Create a FaceBook page and use other social media

21. When people show an interest at your WO booth, ask them to join.
22. Limit some meetings to members only, or charge for non-members. This way members realize a benefit for joining.
23. Connect with environmental students through the teacher to get younger members. One chapter arranges for the student to get extra credit for attending a meeting.
24. Co-sponsor presentations with local university staff.
25. Have the chapter president send out a summary of the last meeting with the website and how to join information to the "interest list."
26. Emphasize member benefits
27. Keep the website up-to-date.
28. Partner with like-minded organizations (Master Naturalists, Master Gardeners, local Audubon Chapters, local nature centers, etc.) Advertise in their newsletters, give presentations about native plants at their meetings.
29. One extension gives Master Gardeners education credit for attending Wild Ones meetings.
30. Set the expectation that board members mingle with current members and guests at monthly meetings
31. Get newspaper coverage: interviews, pictures of native flowers or landscapes
32. Hand out WO literature at booths (chapter schedules, website addresses, contact information)
33. Create a refrigerator magnet with meeting schedule on it
34. Make contact with local garden clubs
35. Send a letter to new members welcoming them
36. Set up your chapter display at meetings for prospective members to see
37. Offer 3 free chapter newsletters. With their third newsletter ask them to join.
38. Call members who recently let their membership lapse and ask what the chapter could have done better to keep them as a member. (Many will say they just forgot to send in their dues and re-join.)
39. Use the customizable membership form on the National website to create a form specific to your chapter.
40. Have members send their renewal money to the chapter first. That way the membership chair can make sure there is no lapse in the member's newsletter. The membership chair then forwards the money on to National.
41. Put the Native Plants brochure with a chapter membership form insert (available from National) at local native nurseries.

Let's keep the sharing going by having membership chairs "get together" to discuss best practices on a regular basis.