

INCREASE YOUR MEMBERSHIP THROUGH AN OPEN HOUSE

Zoë van der Meulen, governor of District 7170 (New York, USA) is building on a tradition established by district leaders before her: She's encouraging clubs to invite community members to receptions, or "open houses," to learn more about Rotary's work.

A member of the Rotary Club of Unadilla, New York, USA, van der Meulen says her small club has brought in 10 new members, thanks in part to open houses.

"At each open house there's someone who says, 'I've always been interested in Rotary' or 'I was a Rotary Youth Exchange student, but I never knew how to get involved,'" says van der Meulen. "So many people think very highly of Rotary but need this extra nudge to join."

Although the concept of an open house, also sometimes called a mixer, is not new to Rotary, a growing number of districts are urging clubs

to organize these events as an effective grassroots effort to promote Rotary. Van der Meulen has created an invitation template and tips (see graphic) that she shares during training sessions and club visits.

Programming for open houses varies from planning formal events to inviting guests to a regular club meeting to after-work gatherings. Wherever the events are held, van der Meulen says it is important that members talk to visitors about what Rotary means to them personally.

"At every [event], Rotarians have spoken from the heart about why they joined and what it means to them to be a Rotarian," she says. "The stories and sentiment help compel others to serve through Rotary."

Download **Creating a Positive Experience for Prospective Members** for more ideas.

10 TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL OPEN HOUSE

1

Plan with other clubs in your area so that prospective members have a variety of options for meeting times, formats, etc.

3

Send invitations a month before the event, and make follow-up calls two weeks beforehand.

4

Update club brochures and communications with content from the **Brand Center** at least three weeks before the event, and hand out the printed materials at the event.

5

A week beforehand, **assign specific event tasks** to club members. Put someone in charge of organizing the flow of guests as they arrive so that the event lasts no longer than 90 minutes.

6

Create a relaxed atmosphere so people can mingle informally, and remind members to share their personal Rotary stories.

9

Share information about your club's format and the club's expectation for membership.

8

Discuss Rotary's global causes using the **Discover Rotary presentation**, to which you can add your club's own projects, both local and international.

10

Follow up by inviting to a future club meeting anyone who has expressed interest. Be persistent but patient.