

New Member Mentoring Program

1. GROWING THE COUNCIL

Mahatma Gandhi once said, “We must become the change we want to see.” Councils like ours rarely change, but people do. We join; we work hard in service; we socialize; and we pray together. We look forward to being with fellow Knights. That’s who we are – a service fraternity of Catholic men. In time, however, many of us will reach our comfort zone. We extend our hand less and less to new members. It’s not wrong. Some of this is generational. Some of this is just human nature. But the day soon comes when we stop and wonder: **why is such a large portion of our membership rarely, if ever, as active and as engaged as we are?** The question has many answers. But let’s be frank. The fault in fostering new member participation and retention rarely lies with the quality of the candidate-member. More often it rests in the manner we, as a Council, welcome our **new** recruits. The problem becomes even more evident when our focus is **more** on membership **quotas** and less on developing quality Knights. The purpose of this New Member Mentoring Program is to address a single but important need: the need to become the change we want to see – a growing, engaged membership that will benefit the Council for years to come. This will help our council grow and keep more Catholic families within the Church.

2. NO NEW MEMBER IS THE SAME

Most of us are first introduced to new members after a 1st Degree Exemplification. Our Council traditionally integrates its 1st Degree ceremonies into a Monthly Business Meeting, our evenings run long, since it starts 45 mins before the regular business meeting. Post-ceremonial greetings and introductions are often cursory due to time constraints. New members come in all shapes and sizes. That’s on the outside. But sometimes we fail to recognize that new members are very much different on the inside. They have different personalities, different interests and different aspirations. However, they all can become a quality Knight, each in their own special way.

A. Do **not** make these new member assumptions:

- i. They are familiar with our mission and traditions.
- ii. They are related to, or a close personal friend of, a current or past Knight.
- iii. They are either from or familiar with our community or parish.
- iv. They have the same interests, values and priorities as you.
- v. They are well-aware of the time commitment or nature of our service initiatives.

B. New member assumptions are generally:

- i. They want to be of service to the Church.
- ii. They prefer to be with those who share the same interests and values as they do.
- iii. They do not want to overcommit to service initiatives they are unfamiliar with.
- iv. They are aware of a selective benefit of membership such as the fraternity’s insurance program.

3. ENCOURAGING AN EARLY SENSE OF INCLUSION

The Council is **responsible** for making every new member feel welcomed, active and engaged. New members will become more active and will retain their membership longer if they experience a sense of inclusion early in their membership. Remember the first impress is the last impress! A Council must:

- A. Impress upon them that they are full members.
- B. Welcome and encourage their participation in Council meetings.
- C. Emphasize that they have the right to vote at Council meetings.
- D. Encourage them to speak and share their opinions at Council meetings.
- E. Explain the purpose of our dues structure.

4. MENTORING PROGRAM APPROACHES

The following program approaches are designed to encourage new member participation and increase the sense of inclusion in our Council:

- A. Assign a volunteer Council Mentor upon achievement of 1st Degree.
- B. Personally invite new members to participate in Council meetings.
- C. Maintain close personal contact particularly during the first six months of membership.
- D. Encourage participation in Council activities of their choosing.
- E. Inform new members of the Shining Armor Award program.

5. SELECTION OF COUNCIL MENTOR

There are many definitions of the word “mentor.” The definition that works best in a Council role is that of “a trusted counselor or guide.”

A Council Mentor is a member who has volunteered to be personally responsible to a new member to help make him feel welcomed, active and engaged. The Council Chancellor has the responsibility and the honor to coordinate this New Member Mentoring Program to help make new members feel welcome. He is also the person responsible for seeing that each new member has an assigned Council Mentor who can best serve the Council’s responsibilities to him. The selection of Council Mentors is critical to the success of the New Member Mentoring Program, membership recruiting and member retention.

- A. Council Mentor selection should consider the following:
 - i. **Any** Council member can be a Council Mentor, preferably a 3rd Degree Knight.
 - ii. He should be a member in good standing with a **good** and **current** attendance record.
 - iii. He should be a volunteer for the position and indicates an interest in helping.
 - iv. He should know and understand the workings of the Council.
 - v. He should know and understand the laws and rules of the Knights of Columbus.
 - vi. He should be willing to be a best friend to the new member.

B. Council Mentor selection should address the following concerns:

- i. Proposers do not necessarily make the best mentors. Some do not want to assume the responsibility.
- ii. Selecting a Council Mentor without personally interviewing the candidate member to access his personality, interests, values and aspirations may result in mismatches.
- iii. Failure to familiarize a proposed Council Mentor with the intent of this New Member Mentoring Program may result in partial success and possible loss of the member's interest.

6. PROGRAM SUCCESS PREREQUISITES

The following prerequisites can best help make the New Member Mentoring Program a success:

- A. The Council Chancellor shall formally welcome new members and introduce them to Brother Knights who have volunteered to be their Council's mentor as the **first** step in making them feel that they are a part of the Council.
- B. Council Mentors shall introduce new members to Program Directors or Event Chairmen that best match their interests.
- C. The Council Chancellor shall encourage the free exchange of phone and email address information between new members and their Council Mentors to facilitate communication.
- D. Should a new member have transportation restrictions, the Council Mentor should try to arrange travel arrangements for him to and from Council events.
- E. Remember to suggest the inclusion of a spouse or significant other in invites to activities and events, where appropriate.
- F. Encourage participation in the Shining Armor Award program.

7. MENTOR DUTIES

Appendix A is a Council Member Checklist. This checklist is intended to outline this program and remind Council Mentors of their timely responsibilities to new members. The process is simple. The Council Chancellor shall select a volunteering Knight as mentor, and, upon his acceptance, complete the top information section of the form.

A copy shall be given to the Council Mentor for his use in implementing the mentoring process, and optionally, to the new member for information. The original form shall be retained by the Council Chancellor for file record and follow-up. The Council Mentor shall use, update and maintain the new member's record as mentoring milestones are achieved.

The checklist form presents an order of milestones, but the program is intended to be flexible with respect to the order of their completion. The goal is **not** the checklist, but the proper care and nurturing of every new member. The Council Mentor shall endeavor to encourage a new member to complete tasks (except those identified as Council Chancellor Responsibilities) during a three-month mentorship period. At the end of that period the Council Mentor and new member will discuss and review the new member's progress and his experience and how best to complete progress toward the Shining Armor Award.

Upon conclusion of this 3-month review, the Council Mentor will complete and signature sign-off the Council Member Checklist form, returning it and any membership experience feedback learned back to the Council Chancellor for further member development and program improvement. When this task is completed, the Council Mentor is relieved of any further mentoring responsibilities under this program. From this point on, the Council Chancellor shall be responsible for maintaining the new member's checklist record and encouraging progress toward the achievement of the Shinning Armor Award within the member's first year.

8. AVAILABLE RESOURCES

Possibly the most critical steps in making the New Member Mentoring Program a success is to **quickly** identify the primary interests that motivate new members to join. The current application process may identify early on which of the four (4) service programs are most important to a candidate-member. Many new members are quite open when describing their reasons for joining our fraternity. Others may find it more difficult to self-identify.

Knights of Columbus Member Interest Surveys include service initiatives under the four traditional categories of Church, Community, Family, and Life each with program sub-categories without program descriptions. Since the Member Interest Survey is a national form, the program listing does not necessarily align with our Council-specific program. A partial listing of Council-specific programs can be found on the back of The 24-Hour Knight flyer.

Our most Council-specific program resource is the Directory of Service Initiatives. It provides a detailed description of each Council service initiative, the where and when it is held, event photos, the level of effort, the service category it supports, and a list of personal contacts for more detailed information.

While these resources provide a service initiative list and a level of description of each, there is **no** substitute for personal interviews with key Program Directors, Event Chairmen and contacts indicated in the Directory of Service Initiatives to help make a new member's membership a rewarding and fulfilling experience.

9. THE SHINING ARMOR AWARD PROGRAM

The concept of the "Shining Armor Award" program is to get new members active in the many facets of the Knights of Columbus as early as possible; to assist in maintaining that activity; and, to honor them as **valued** members of our Council.

A. First year of membership award prerequisites are:

- i. Be involved in at least three (3) Council service programs
- ii. Attend at least three (3) Council Business Meetings
- iii. Achieve their 1sr, 2nd and 3rd Degrees
- iv. Meet with their Council's insurance representative
- v. Recruit at least one new member.

B. Shining Armor Award program benefits are:

- i. It gets new members actively involved early
- ii. It increases volunteer participation and the charitable works of the Council.

Appendix A Council Mentor Checklist

Member Name: _____ Date of exemplification _____

Member phone: _____ Member email: _____

Council Mentor: _____ Date Assigned: _____

Done Task

- Mentor personally interviewed new member to determine interests and aspirations¹
- Mentor welcomed and encouraged new member to fully participate in Council meetings
- Member met with fraternal Insurance Representative (Field Agent)
- Member was introduced to appropriate service program leaders and contacts
- Member was briefed on requirements for the Shining Armor Award Program
- Member attended his first Council Meeting on: _____²
- Member participated in his 1st service initiative: _____³
- Member attended a second Council Meeting on: _____
- Member participated in his 2nd service initiative: _____³
- Member attended a third Council Meeting on: _____
- Member participated in his 3rd service initiative: _____³
- Mentor and member reviewed member's first three month experience and progress
- Mentor shares 3-month review with Council Chancellor and signs-off program.⁴
- Member achieved his Degree Exemplification on: _____
- Member has recruited a new member
- Member was awarded the Shining Armor Award

¹ Task may span pre- and post-1st Degree but should be more than cursory.

² Task is satisfied if degree exemplification incorporated into a Council meeting and the candidate member remains in attendance.

³ Identify or describe the service initiative in which the member participated.

⁴ Reporting from this 3-month milestone continued by Council Chancellor or his successor.

Council Mentor's 3-month program sign-off: _____ Date: _____

Chancellor's 12-month program sign-off: _____ Date: _____