

# **99s R and R**

## **A Handbook on Membership Retention and Recruitment**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Membership retention and recruitment are vital parts of any member based organization. This is particularly true of The Ninety-Nines because our members come from a very select and limited group - women who are pilots. With a limited number to draw from, every member is important. As a service organization, we count on our members to provide the “man power” for our many aviation oriented service projects. The support of our members is equally important in maintaining our two historical museums. Retained members bring experience and wisdom to the organization. Newly recruited members bring new ideas and energy. The Ninety Nines has been in existence since 1929. It is an established organization that is recognized and respected in the aviation community. The dedicated work of members over the years has made this possible.

Membership retention and recruitment is most effective at the chapter level. It is at this level that members are known personally and can be actively involved. The Membership Chairman is one of the most important persons in the chapter. She should be selected with care and given the respect her position warrants. This booklet has been designed to give the Membership Chairman guidelines and ideas in performing her duties.

It must also be stressed that the Membership Chairman can not do this job alone. Retention and recruitment are the responsibility of every member of the chapter. The activities, the personality, and the energy of the chapter depends on its members and these are all qualities that will attract or turn away members. It is easy to see in the several pages of suggestions that follow that it will take more than one person to increase membership in your chapter.

Every chapter should set goals for growth. Chapter activities should be planned with growth in mind. What is a realistic goal? That will depend on the number of women pilots in the area, but there is potential in almost every location. It is estimated that there are 650,000 licensed pilots in the U.S. Women pilots are estimated to be 6% of that number, or 39,000.\* Those numbers do not include the many women pilots around the world. With only 6,000 members currently in The 99s, there is definitely room for growth. Perhaps a motto for growth could be:

**EVERY WOMAN PILOT A 99**

## **DUTIES OF CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN**

1. Keep an updated roster of chapter members.  
This can be the list mailed out each month from headquarters or the list that appears on the web page. Create a directory just for your chapter, update as needed, and give a copy to all members.
2. Compile a list of potential members and update as needed.  
Use this list to invite potential members to events. Mail information packets and other material periodically, such as complimentary newsletters.
3. Check the monthly membership reports from headquarters.  
Contact those whose membership is about to expire. Look for discrepancies in member information. Notify headquarters of necessary changes. Search for members by your local telephone area code. You may find 99s who have moved to your area but have not yet transferred their membership.
4. Have a supply of application forms and brochures to give to prospective members.  
These are available at no charge from headquarters. Your chapter may want to produce their own brochure with information specific to your chapter or assemble "New Member" packets of information.
5. Screen all new applications for completeness  
Set up a system that requires all new applications to come directly to you. Determine applications are complete before sending on to headquarters. The copy of the pilot license should include both sides as the new licenses have ratings listed on the back. Check with new members a few weeks after sending application to be sure they have received their new member packet from headquarters. This packet includes a membership card, 99s pin, and a current directory.
6. Plan activities with other chapter members that will introduce potential members to The 99s.
7. Keep in contact with all chapter members, especially those who are not active.  
Contact can be via phone, notes, visit, cards, or e-mail. Enlist the help of other members.
8. Use the printed International Membership Directory and The 99s web page Directory as resources.
9. Be present at chapter meetings to give the Membership Report.  
Introduce new and potential members. Have a sign in sheet with space for address, phone and e-mail. Use this for follow up. Distribute new member packets and/or gifts.
10. Write a bio on new members for the chapter newsletter, include a photo and contact information.  
Send a copy to the section newsletter editor.
11. Encourage all chapter members to help with recruiting and retention of members.  
You can not do this huge job all by your self. Give recognition to those who help you retain and recruit members.

**The following ideas have been provided by 99s chapters across the country. Use these ideas as written, or allow them to spark your imagination. You may not be able to implement all of them, but you can have fun trying. Share this booklet with others in your chapter as you will surely need their help as you proceed to retain and recruit members and watch your chapter grow.**

## **COMPILE A CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY**

Every Membership Chair should have a current membership list for the chapter. This information is available from headquarters and is either mailed to the Membership Chair monthly or can be obtained from The Ninety-Nines web page. This information can be the primary source for compiling a personalized chapter directory. The directory can be a single page or a small book, depending on the size of the chapter and the amount of information included. The minimum member information would be name, address, home, work, and cell phone numbers, e-mail address and spouse name. Pilot ratings, aircraft, base of operations could also be included. Chapter information could include current list of officers, meeting date and place, calendar of events, and historical information. Consider using a computer program such as "My Advanced Mail List" in formatting your chapter directory.

The North Jersey Chapter has for the past five years prepared a booklet (made of 8.5" X 11" paper folded in half and stapled) that contains pertinent information such as chapter officers, committees, international contact information. All chapter members are listed along with their bylaws and standing rules. This booklet is not too big, is fairly sturdy and is used a lot.

Equally useful, but more challenging to create is a NON-MEMBER DIRECTORY. Using your imagination and detective skills, you can obtain names of licensed women pilots and students in your area. You may be able to get names from your local FSDO. Frequent visits to flight schools in your area will give you names of students. Ask all your members to be on the lookout for women pilots. You never know, the bank teller or a woman in your quilting club or at church may be a pilot. Whenever you see a woman at the airport ask her if she knows about The 99s. Set a goal of contacting the non-members at least four times a year. Invite them to meetings and activities, send them a newsletter. Assign 2-3 non-members to current members. Ask them to make personal phone calls to get non-members involved. They could meet for coffee or go flying or ride together to an aviation function.

*I have always found the more I put myself into something, the more I get out of it.*

## **PRODUCE ADVERTISING MATERIAL ABOUT YOUR CHAPTER**

Brochures are available from 99s headquarters at no charge. These can be personalized by putting the Membership Chairman's name and address on the mail-in card.

Even better, would be to create your own chapter brochure. This is easy to do with the many computer programs and specialty paper available today. Your chapter brochure could list activities, meeting dates and place, have contact phone numbers, reasons for joining The 99s, scholarship opportunities, etc. A tear off mail in card for more information would give you the interested person's name and phone

number. These brochures could be left in FBO's, flight schools, taken to safety seminars, left in women's restrooms at aviation related places, placed in colleges that have flight training.

Posters can be used much like brochures. Be sure to have a contact phone number on the poster. One chapter has made "Have you closed your Flight Plan" signs and has posted them at airports in their area.

If you have the resources and the talent within your chapter, create a traveling display such as a table top fold out that would have large photos of chapter activities along with hand out material. If you have access to a compact video player show an aviation video.

Make business cards for yourself, chapter officers, and any other members who want them. Use an easy computer program and special business card paper to create inexpensive but creative cards.

***Remember a group is what YOU make of it.***

## **CREATE A CHAPTER WEB PAGE**

We all need to come into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Computers, e-mail, the internet, and web pages are part of our everyday life. There are several ways your chapter can easily take advantage of "the web". First, check with your 99s section. If they have a web page you may be able to put information on it. Space may be limited, but at least you could list contact names and e-mail addresses as well as meeting dates.

Many internet servers, such as AOL or YAHOO offer free web pages. These are not fancy and may have advertisements, but they are easy to use and are a good way to get started. Almost every chapter has a member who knows how to set up a web page. Again, you will want to check with your section Webmaster to create a link to the section web page and to the international web page.

If your chapter has money to spend on an exclusive web page that is even better. Make sure you have links to common words pilots might use in searching for you. Use lots of visuals and let your imagination soar.

## **ASSEMBLE A NEW MEMBER PACKET**

Having information readily available for potential members can often make the difference in getting a new member. The Greater Seattle Chapter members carry a business sized envelope that contains a new member application, a brochure from headquarters, a flyer with their chapter history and a brochure about their section. Also included is a list of contact names and phone numbers. Whenever, wherever they meet a potential member, they are ready.

To help keep track of new members and to make sure applications are completed accurately, have all new member applications come to the Membership Chairman for review before they are sent to headquarters. Make sure you have a copy of both the front and back of their pilot license as the new licenses have ratings listed on the back.

## **MAKE NEW MEMBERS FEEL WELCOME**

If possible have someone bring the new member to her first meeting. In any event, someone should greet

her as she comes in. Learn her name and remember it! Introduce her to other members during the social time of the meeting. A formal introduction can be made by the Chapter Chairman or you during the business meeting. A small gift, a new member packet, or a chapter name tag can be given to the new member. Before she leaves the meeting be sure you have contact information and a definite date to meet for coffee or to go flying.

Make certain once you have a new member that you continue to nurture her and stay in contact. New members should be asked to participate and become active with committee work as soon as they join so they will have a feeling of belonging. But don't dump on them. This can be overwhelming. The Chapter Chair could meet individually with new members to find out their interests, talents, and available time. Together they could identify how the new member would like to participate.

Today's young people are into technology. Why not create a CD that tells all about your chapter. It could contain photos from your scrapbook, a bit of history, current officers with phone numbers and e-mail addresses, your web page address, meeting date and place, the Bylaws and Standing Rules, chapter activities and committees. As new members join they could be given the CD..

## **HOLD AN ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING**

Although recruiting new members is an ongoing endeavor, it can be stimulating to hold a meeting specifically for that purpose. All potential members can be contacted with colorful invitations to a party in their honor. One chapter holds an ice cream social at the end of summer as a special recruiting get together. The Pikes Peak Chapter has a "Chocolate Feast" every September for potential members. The event is very festive and energetic. Invitations and complimentary newsletters go out in advance of the meeting. All current members are encouraged to bring a potential member. These guests receive a small gift and of course an application form. An interesting speaker tops of the evening.

## **GAIN COMMUNITY VISIBILITY**

Some people say The Ninety-Nines is the world's best kept secret. Let's break that myth! Get your chapter's name and The Ninety-Nines' name before the public every chance you have. Whenever you hold a flying event, invite the news media. Have a publicity packet prepared for them with details about The 99s and your chapter. If they don't show up, write a story yourself and submit with photos.

If a chapter member is presented with an award or participates in an air race contact the local media. Even if a member has distinguished herself in another arena, her affiliation with the chapter should always be mentioned. Once her name or picture has appeared, she should be sent a copy and a copy should go in the chapter scrapbook.

Put your chapter meeting date and place in your newspaper's list of meetings. It doesn't cost anything and is another way of getting your name before the public. Since most people don't know what The 99s is, add "International Organization of Women Pilots" after your chapter name.

Participate in other organizations' activities, representing The 99s. Community service work earns favorable recognition. Jointly working on a project and thereby linking yourself to a successful, established group is powerful. For example, "Walk for a Cure" is especially appropriate for a woman's organization such as The 99s to support. Habitat for Humanity, local food banks, Muscular Dystrophy...the list is long and there is bound to be one or two that are of particular interest to your chapter. Wear t-shirts or carry a banner that recognizes The 99s.

Plan a joint event with your local Zonta organization. Our ties with Zonta go back to Amelia Earhart who

was an active Zonta member. Zonta and The 99s have supported each other through the years. A joint luncheon would be a perfect opportunity for both local organizations to get to know each other.

Invite guests from the community to a special meeting that features information about your chapter and The 99s. Community leaders tend to be very busy people, so plan ahead and have several options as to who you invite and when. Ask the community leader to tell your group what is foremost on his/her mind and then allow time for articulate chapter members to tell a little about The 99s. Along with your written invitation send an information sheet about The 99s. There should be something in it for the invited person, such as potential votes next election, support on a local issue, awareness of their favorite cause.

*As your chapter grows, so will your enthusiasm for The 99s.*

## **JOIN FORCES WITH ANOTHER AVIATION GROUP**

Individuals with like interests have a definite reason to band together. The 99s are a small part of aviation, but they are recognized as a group that gets things done. Your support of other aviation groups will be well appreciated and will open many doors to prospective members, flying activities, and more.

The EAA is visible in most communities that have airports. Their Young Eagles program has given all of us an opportunity to participate in bringing more young people into aviation. Volunteer to help with this project as well as the many other activities the local EAA Chapters conduct. You may want to have a joint meeting occasionally. Plan to join the EAA members in some of their flying activities also. How about some friendly competition in proficiency racing or spot landings?

Safety Seminars are a great venue for meeting other women pilots. Your chapter may want to sponsor a Safety Seminar in conjunction with your local FAA personnel from the FSDO. Members from your chapter should attend in mass the AOPA seminars. Ask if you can put up a display about your chapter with handout brochures and membership forms. Ask if someone from your chapter can speak at the seminar. This could be an in depth presentation on some safety aspect if your member is qualified or just a few minutes talk about The 99s scholarship program or museums.

Don't forget balloons, gliders, and helicopters. If these forms of aviation are popular in your area, contact those pilots to see how your chapter can become involved.

Always wear your Chapter name badge and your 99s pin whenever you are with other aviation groups and whenever it would be appropriate at a public function. The pin has a history, just like The 99s. One of the early members of The 99s was married to someone in the Tiffany family. The pin was created by a designer at Tiffany Jewelers in New York City.

## **SPONSOR A NON-MEMBER ACTIVITY**

Plan an activity just for non-members and invite their family members and friends. Casual events such as picnics or hangar parties work well. Most pilots love to eat, so plan an event where you provide lots of food along with some fun ice breakers. Gear the party to the age level of the group.

Ask a non-member to be a speaker at a chapter meeting, then be sure all his/her co-workers and friends

are also invited. Another pilot from outside the chapter can give a fresh perspective to a familiar subject, or may even know about something that is new to your members. And who knows, they just may decide to join your chapter.

## **NURTURE CURRENT MEMBERS**

Remember, every member is important. Develop within your chapter a means for maintaining contact with every member at least four times a year. For many members an e-mail broadcast is sufficient, for other members you will need to be more creative and/or personal. Older members who no longer fly would probably enjoy a personal visit or an invitation to lunch or a ride to an event. Some people prefer a hand written note while others never find time to read their mail. You know your members better than anyone, so personalize your method of contact and elicit the help of other chapter members.

Do not write off a member who does not come to meetings. Find out why. It may be illness, work, schedule, or distance. All are factors. Keep in contact. Once in a while hold a meeting on a day when they are available. Offer to pick them up. Hold board meetings at their house. Ask them to address newsletters or in some other way work from home for the chapter. Make a tape recorder of a program and take to them.

Members usually stay in an organization if they feel a commitment to the organization. Every member should be given an opportunity to contribute to the chapter and international in a way that is comfortable for them. For some this will mean physically working on chapter projects, for others it may mean a financial donation, for others it could be writing or speaking about The 99s. Everyone has something to offer, but work, social, and family commitments often limit the amount of time and energy we have available for other things. Keep this in mind when asking people to give of their time.

Plan meetings and activities that interest the majority of members. Strive for excellence in everything your chapter does. Invite speakers who are energetic and dynamic. Their topic does not always have to be aviation related, but it does have to be of interest to your members. The Program Chairman must plan ahead and have a list of potential speakers. A survey of members will give ideas on areas of interest. All speakers should receive a written invitation and a written thank you. Small gifts or an airplane ride are also nice, if possible.

Not everyone will be able to participate in all chapter activities. A variety of events and dates will help make them more accessible to more members. Try to spread the organizational work around so the same people are not always planning an event.

Monitor your membership list. Know the expiration date of every member. When her renewal comes due, send an attention getting card or postcard reminding her that she will soon receive her renewal notice from headquarters. A follow up phone call is also a good idea. Thank her when she does renew.

## **HAVE A CHAPTER NEWSLETTER**

This is a great way to communicate within the chapter and is almost essential. The format of the newsletter can be a paper edition complete with photos and color highlights or it can be an e-mail broadcast. Some chapters use a combination, to suit the wishes of their members. The newsletter should be informative and personal. The newsletter is more than just a way of communicating. It is a way to say, "We care about you."

The Chapter Chairman should write a column in each newsletter. The topic is her choice, but her presence is very important. Her photo and phone number or e-mail should accompany her article.

The Membership Chairman should likewise have a column in each newsletter. She should introduce new members via the newsletter with a short biography, photo, and contact information.

Add a calendar of coming events, an article about a recent chapter activity and some flying stories from members and you have a full and interesting newsletter.

Remember our bylaws require that all members be notified in writing of meetings. The newsletter is the best way to do this. If your newsletter is not published monthly you can send a postcard on off months or you can put an extended calendar in the newsletter. If you charge for your newsletter and not all members receive it, then you must somehow notify those members, in writing, of your meetings.

## **CONDUCT A MEMBERSHIP SURVEY**

To keep your member directory updated you will need to get information from your members. An annual survey can provide new information on ratings, e-mail changes, etc. This is also a good time to ask what projects the member would be interested in helping with. Do they have a specific schedule, such as, “never available on Saturday”, or “work evenings”. Is there a topic they would like discussed at a meeting. Do they have ideas for flying activities? Do they have suggestions for improving something in the chapter?

Plan for personal follow-up after the surveys are returned. One on one phone calls can clarify any questions and will make the member feel important. Make sure vital information gets to the right people. For example, if a member says she wants to help give programs in the schools, make sure the chairman of that committee knows about it. Take members suggestions seriously. Discuss them at a meeting and look for ways to incorporate new ideas.

## **ESTABLISH A MENTORING PROGRAM**

The Phoenix Chapter started years ago with a member sponsorship program. Every new member was assigned a sponsor. They created a sponsorship pledge and the sponsor took the pledge in the presence of her new member. The pledge required the sponsor to help the new member get to meetings and flying events, explain 99s procedures and lingo and to share flying stories.

Now that The 99s have opened membership to student pilots who have three years to complete their flight training for their private license, it is especially important that these students have someone helping them along their journey toward licensure. The current terminology for such a person is MENTOR.

Every chapter should think seriously about starting a Mentor Program. Start with a list of current members who are willing to be Mentors. As new women come into the organization, whether they are students or not, assign a mentor, someone who has similar interests, lives in the same part of town, flies at the same airport, or other commonalities. It is probably a good idea to make it a serious commitment by having a pledge and/or special ceremony to recognize both parties. Periodically the Chairman should ask for a report from the Mentors.

## **FIND STUDENT PILOTS**

It is estimated that there are 87,000 student pilots in the U.S. and that 11.6 % are women. That makes a total of 10,000 potential FWPs in the U.S. alone.\* These are young, energetic women, many with aviation careers as a goal. They have much to offer The 99s and we in turn have much to offer them. So

how do we find these women?

Obviously, Flight Instructors and Flight Schools are a primary source. If you have Flight Instructors in your chapter, you already have an established contact. Encourage your CFIs to bring their students to meetings. Make contact with as many CFIs as you can. Take them cookies, invite them to meetings, leave your business cards and brochures with them. Go flying with one for your Biannual Flight Review. If there are local CFI meetings, attend one, or ask to speak. Since new students are starting all the time, visit these CFIs at least once a month.

Provide a bowl of candy at a local flight school with a sign, "Compliments of The 99s". Of course, leave a few brochures with contact phone numbers.

If ground school classes are offered in your area, volunteer someone from your chapter to speak at one. Depending on the experience of the 99, the topic could be a technical aviation subject, careers in aviation, scholarships available, or things to do for fun in aviation. Of course, bring brochures and membership forms to the ground school.

Other ways to reach students are: contacts at an aviation event such as a safety meeting or air show. Civil Air Patrol Commanders, brochures, posters, and business cards left at airports and flight schools, publicity in local newspapers, airport managers, and events held specifically for students.

*Reach out, stay visible and show off what a wonderful organization we are!*

## **OFFER SOMETHING SPECIAL FOR STUDENT PILOTS**

The information packet you give to student pilots should be personalized for students. Highlight the membership fee on the applications (\$30.00 - such a deal!). Include a stamped, addressed envelope (remember they don't have much money).

Make students feel special from their very first meeting. Ask each student to tell a little about herself. Welcome each student with applause and recognition and be sure to talk to them during the break. You may want to give them a gift that shows you care about them. A tote bag, log book, ear plugs, something related to their flying.

Create a network with other students and mentors. Arrange for phone calls to remind them of meetings. Offer rides. Plan periodic or "on call" sessions where students can ask questions of more experienced pilots. These could be monthly "share and care" meetings, held at the airport or in a members home. Always provide food and a casual atmosphere.

Give a student pilot workshop. You could have half hour clinics on flight planning calculations, understanding weather reports, airspace criteria, radio communications. A student needs direct information and an opportunity to ask "dumb" questions in a safe environment. Such a workshop will give the student a chance to troubleshoot any areas that are holding the student back or creating a problem. Male students could also be invited to these work shops. Keep an attendance list and have follow-up contact.

Prepare an information packet for students. It could contain a list of student pilots in the area as well as ground schools, flight schools and CFIs. A list of towered and non-towered airports with pros and cons of training at each. Information on how to get aviation weather from web sites, FBO weather programs,

local airport phone numbers for weather, and the local FSS. If the chapter has a library or if members have books they are willing to loan, include a list of these.

Invite them to dinner. A home cooked meal in a family setting can mean the world to a student away from home, living on a limited budget.

Congratulate FWPs on their progress. Computer generated cards or certificates are easy to produce and can mean a lot to a student who has just soloed or completed a cross country. More formal letters of congratulations can come from the chapter chairman, especially when the FWP becomes a Private Pilot.

Your chapter may want to purchase special gifts for FWPs, such as t-shirts, hats, or solo wings

Report students' progress in the chapter newsletter along with photos. Plan tours that would be of special interest to students, such as a tower tour, an airline maintenance hanger, a FSS station. Take student pilots flying. They never have enough money to do all the flying they would like to do. Also, just flying for fun without an instructor on board can be a nice change of pace.

To accomplish all of this with student pilots, your chapter may want to designate a person to be the Future Woman Pilot Chairman.

**Thank you for your sincere interest in creating growth in The Ninety-Nines. We hope the ideas in this book are helpful. With all of us focused on the same goal, our numbers are sure to increase.**

**The End**

*Compiled by International Membership Chairman, Andrea Chay, 2003*

Resources:

\*FAA statistics, 2001

Carol David Nigro, Coach U, [www.corporatecoaches.com](http://www.corporatecoaches.com)

Hundreds of ideas came from chapters across the country.