

To: Linda Conger

From: Katy Dooley

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Subj: AAUW Younger Member Involvement

Here are a few of my thoughts on younger member recruitment and how younger members fit in.

My thought on the younger member study groups for branches is an ok idea, but I am afraid what happens is that younger members are “pushed” into that group and the hope of the branch is that the younger member group will “nurture” the new younger member. I think the branches need to find a way (particular to their branch) to incorporate younger members into the AAUW community without focusing on the younger member group. For example, when I joined I wasn’t really interested in the Younger Member group but I started it because I was asked to.....I found the group wasn’t really interested in our monthly meetings but was more interested in being involved from the Branch perspective.

Having said all that, what I am about to say can work for new members not just new younger members. It seems to me a “mentoring” program that matches a new member with an experienced (experienced does not necessarily mean age) member who can call them and encourage them to get involved in the different aspects of AAUW. For example, just giving the list of URLs, the new member may or may not explore the websites, but if someone called or emailed them to talk about the website and the facets of the organization, then there might be a bigger sense of belonging. Also, when you join an AAUW branch, it is not very clear how you would get involved unless you attend the business meeting. Well, younger members are going to have a hard time making those meetings. I haven’t attended one in a year, but I still consider myself a strong supporter of this branch and the AAUW mission. So, if the new member had a point of contact that might be a way for them to get involved.

As each Branch is strategizing on how to bring in younger members, they should probably answer a few questions for themselves:

- Why do we need younger members?
- Where will we find younger members?
- How can younger members be involved with us/what will we do with them when we get them? (Volunteer for branch events, Board Member Development, recruit others to be involved with our branch?)
- How will we orient them to AAUW?
- How can we make them feel welcome/how do we keep them (retention)? (remember to include not separate the younger members)

Although I have put some of the answers to the questions, I think it is important that the branch makes the younger member strategic plan.

As with all new members we need to ask younger members their motivation for joining (the mentor could take this role). If we know the motivation, then we will have a better idea of what to do with them.

Here are some thoughts on your list of ideas; I am making my comments based on the idea that this list will be given to the branches to work with.

Let the branches know that they are recruiting a wide range. Someone born in 1960 is mostly likely not going to have the same interest as someone in 1980. (as an aside – this is why the younger member group didn't work very well – we were all on different “wavelengths”)

Target Groups: Let the branches know that this is an “idea” list, but their membership committee should brainstorm on where their new members should come from.

I also would add to the list **other younger members.**

Media When looking at media ideas – encourage the branches to be specific with what they will do with the media (is it a recruitment tool to let people know about AAUW or is it a tool to use once you have recruited the new members?). And be specific, so when you say listserves (existing or developed by the branch) WWW (which websites?)

I would add the newspaper/radio and tv Public service announcements – they are free)

Language I would also include the mission of AAUW as part of the language. This is often forgotten in the recruitment process.

Orienting add:

- the history, mission and purpose of the organization
- descriptions of the programs and opportunities
- benefits to being a member
- descriptions of events and activities of the Branch
- ways to get involved
- how to be developed to become a board member

Retaining is different then recruiting (remove recruiting your current members)

add:

- create a climate for success for the new member (let them “in”)
- provide opportunities
- pay attention to how they group themselves
- ask them periodically how they feel about their membership
- recognize their involvement (newsletter, monthly meetings if they attend, etc.)

Programming

I think the ideas that you have are good, but I would also emphasize to the branches to strategize on how younger members can be involved in existing programming. For example, I have

enjoyed my involvement much more with “regular” Austin Branch programming than my involvement with the younger member group.

Note that these are all suggestions, and you can take and leave what you like. Also, I want to stress that a mentoring program (which does not need to be “overdone”) could be very successful with a limited amount of time and energy to get one started within a branch (of course getting people to buy in to the concept is another story). Hope this helps.