

From the RVC:

Recently I asked all of you to suggest ways for Mensa to save money if you wanted to avoid repeated dues increases. At Gulf Coast Mensa's SynRG last month, Hugh Brown, of Lone Star Mensa, pointed out that there is a third option: increasing membership. We have a number of fairly effective programs for recruiting new members, but Hugh pointed out that we lose about 18% of our membership each year at renewal time, including a large percentage of our new members who fail to renew after their first year. He suggested that a major reason for this might be our failure to welcome new members and make them feel part of the group.

Now this may be understandable in a way. After all, many of us are in Mensa because we didn't fit in with our peer group earlier in life, and one consequence of that is a lack of social skills. However, while that may explain the situation, it doesn't excuse it. The one thing we all have in common is that we have demonstrated superior problem-solving skills on a test designed to measure just that. So, why can't we recognize the problem of failure to welcome new members and find a solution? I suspect at least part of the reason is that we all think it's someone else's problem.

Many local groups have an officer with a title like "New Member Chair" or something similar, or perhaps your group's by-laws make the Assistant Local Secretary or some other officer responsible for new members. That leaves all the rest of us free to hang out with our friends and let the designated officer welcome the newbies, right? Well, no. If we want to grow and expand our membership rolls, all of us who attend Mensa events are going to have to make a concerted effort to recognize and welcome new members. I know it may take you out of your comfort zone, but remember that someone must have done it for you at some point, so please "pay it forward" and keep an eye out for opportunities to meet the new folks at every event you attend.

And as for those of you who have no local events to attend, well, that's another problem altogether. I'm still working on that one.

That's all for now, folks - I'm off to Nevada for the Annual Gathering and the Annual Meeting, plus a meeting of the American Mensa Committee. I'll be back next month with details of the AG and AMC meeting.

Roger Durham