"LET'S DEVELOP OUR CENTER"

Steven K. Rogstad
Director of Development

We begin our annual membership drive in less than a month on September 1, which is an excellent opportunity to renew your own membership, but also to sponsor a new member. This past year the Center acquired over 50 new members, many of which were sponsored by current members like yourself, but a great many more joined because they are enamored with our organization's impressive archive and impressed with the service they've received in finding answers to their research questions!

In recent years, many fraternal organizations, churches, service clubs, and other groups are regularly facing downward spirals in membership and struggle to find volunteers. Frequently we hear that the current membership of some club is aging or disappearing; that there is no new blood coming in to provide new energy and ideas; that new members are needed if the organization is to be sustained for future years; that the demise of a group's legacy is a detriment to a community as a whole. All of these are legitimate concerns and merit serious consideration.

These issues have become very apparent in Racine, where several long-standing groups have dissolved as a result of an eroded membership base. After 43 years, one of its two Rotary International groups disbanded in 2011. The Racine Woman's Club folded two years later after 120 years of existence. In 2018, one of last two local Kiwanis organizations dissolved (Racine had six different Kiwanis groups in the 1980s), which threatened to discontinue the community's massive annual Pancake Day event. By the end of last year, it was announced that Racine's Kilties Drum and Bugle Corps were thinking about disbanding "because there are not enough available members to participate." They cancelled all of their events in 2018 and remain inactive. This past week I heard that the last operating Kiwanis group is contemplating disbanding because there are less than ten members left. All of these developments are discouraging - especially when you consider that these groups were operating in a city of nearly 78,000 citizens, yet they could not attract membership to sustain them from extinction.

The great news for our Research Center is that our membership is strong and growing at a time when other groups dependent upon membership are faltering. This is a testament to the high quality of the collections that comprise our archive, and to our great staff and volunteers, who process materials, answer research queries, provide necessary funding, and perform a myriad of task work that makes the Center a vibrant and exciting place to be!

This year, I am once again asking you to renew your membership, plus encouraging you - *challenging you* - to provide a new membership for someone who enjoys history. It is through membership *growth* that we sustain our fine organization for the future. If every member sponsored a new membership for someone else, the Center could raise *over $35,000!* More importantly, by giving a new membership to someone, you enhance the Center's visibility, promote a passion for local history, and support the Center's mission of collecting and preserving documents and photographs of Sheboygan County.

The Center, through its publications and programs, tells stories. Now it's your turn to tell someone the story about how great the Research Center is! While you're telling them your story, tell them you'll pay for their membership for a year and watch their faces light up!

Please feel free to contact me with your ideas, suggestions, and recommendations for enhancing our development efforts. You can contact me at 920-467-4667, or email me at steverogstad@schrc.org.

Thank you for all you do to support and help develop our Research Center!

Sincerely,
Steven K. Rogstad
Director of Development

[P.S. I hope you will come see me for "Taproom History" at the Fat Cow in Sheboygan Falls on August 15. I will be presenting an absolutely enthralling program on the mummy of John Wilkes Booth! Bring a friend, or your new member!]