SPECIAL INTEREST NETWORKS

In regard to specialty clubs, I would like to add that the special interest network beyond our club members is an enormous asset. Whilst we would love all of these people to join our club, as we know, there are many who are not interested in joining, or the time is not ‘right’, or whatever other reason.

In Victoria we have 92 quilt groups registered with the state guild. There are many more which are not registered. And there are many individuals who link in with the network to promote their classes, books, exhibitions, shops etc.

Group membership in the non-Lions quilt network ranges from a handful of friends who get together socially, to several hundred in the larger groups.

Across Australia, we can multiply this by each state and territory, to appreciate the scope of the special interest network of quilters and textile artists.

This opens many doors to membership and project support - and our club also needs to make better use of this resource as we have been so enormously preoccupied getting the projects established and have fallen behind in membership and PR/media. I am fully aware that this is something we desperately need to catch up on and address now. Please give me more hours in the day!!!

DEVELOP A GREAT PROJECT

The Lions Club of Quilters Victoria Australian Quilt Collection and Museum project will ultimately provide a publicly accessible gallery of unique and significant Australian textile works. It will also provide educational and research facilities as well as address social isolation and other issues. It will be a destination point for tourists and quilt enthusiasts from the local area, from interstate and internationally. Local towns will benefit from increased visitors to the area - accommodation, transport, cafes and restaurants, and many other businesses.

A great special interest project which appeals to a vast number, within the particular special interest network (Lions and non Lions) is essential. We are out there talking about the project (e.g. the Centennial Quilt and recent additions to the Australian Quilt Collection/Museum project). Our members are speaking at a vast array of Lions clubs AND quilting groups and organisations and we have found that many people want to help as individuals, and as special interest groups.

They are eager to support our projects and their donations make our project sustainable i.e. our members will no longer need to work night and day relying solely on our own club resources.
FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND SUSTAINABILITY:

We are developing ideas and programs for quilt groups to contribute an annual donation to the Collections project. Non Lion special interest groups are talking about adding a small levy to their own club membership fees which will be donated to the Lions Club of Quilters Victoria (LCQV) for the purchase of textile works for the Australian Quilt Collection (this is our growing collection of works of award winning Australian quilt artists or works which have a unique cultural, social, historical, or other significance).

We are also developing a program where quilt groups or individuals can sponsor the entire or part purchase of a specific artistic work - and be recognised in material related to that particular work.

SPECIALTY CLUB NETWORK - WITHIN THE LIONS ORGANISATION:

Ultimately, our members would love to have a compatriot club in the other states of Australia, and indeed internationally. What better fun would it be to identify a huge project (diabetes, vision, hunger, whatever it might be....) with an Australia wide or international network of quilters within the Lions organisation all working together to support it. This can apply to any specialty club network.

ALLOW THE SPECIAL INTEREST TO SHINE:

I feel that it is important when the club charters initially, to encourage members to come up with ideas to let their special interest shine, and not to push Lions with a heavy hand. Rather, talk gently but with passion about the great history of Lions and how they have contributed in so many ways to help our communities over our organisation’s history. Tell the stories. Give examples - I love the YouTube clip of a beach disability chair donated by one of the Q District clubs and how it allowed the elderly man to ‘feel the sand between my toes again’...’ Emotional and beautiful.

Talk about 100% going back to community projects.

Gradually the members begin to understand the absolute value of being a Lion - and experiencing the impact of the power of WE. I am observing that they actively look for ways to support LIONS projects now, rather than some other obscure ‘charity’, which in the beginning, they thought was what you had to do!!

WHAT IS DIFFERENT ABOUT SPECIALTY CLUBS??

We are a Lions Club just like any other Lions club. We observe Lions Purposes, Ethics, and Constitution just like any other Lions club. We have the two required Administration and Activities Accounts.
The only differences:

- we enjoy and utilise our special interest in developing club activities and projects - because we LOVE our special interest... and Lions.

- we can tap into the huge existing networks of our special interest.

I hope this might be useful in understanding specialty clubs - from our LCQV perspective anyway.

The potential is enormous and we invite both men and women into our club. There are a number of men who are excellent quilters and in fact, in past wars, military recuperation activities for men involved cutting up old uniforms and stitching them into magnificent quilts.

Warm regards,

Robyn

Robyn Falloon