

INSPIRATION FOR MODERN WOODMEN FRATERNAL LEADERS

Impact

M A G A Z I N E

SPRING 2025

What drives

PEOPLE

off the couch?

p. 9

Attendance

TIPS

from leaders

p. 4

Chapter members
from Arkansas

Modern Woodmen
FRATERNAL FINANCIAL

ANIMAL *attraction*

Wild and fun
activity ideas

p. 6



imakeanimpact.org



“Alone we can do so little;
together
we can do so much.”
— Helen Keller

IMPACT MAGAZINE
Official fraternal publication of
Modern Woodmen of America.
1701 1st Avenue, P.O. Box 2005
Rock Island, IL 61204-2005

**FRATERNAL
ADMINISTRATION**
Jason Nickles
Chief Fraternal Officer and Vice President
Keri Rursch
Director of Fraternal
Haile Swearinger

FRATERNAL IMPACT
Melissa Gottwalt (manager)
Helene DeVine
Hannah Glaub
Kate Schieffer

**FRATERNAL SERVICE
& PROGRAMS**
Karen Dahlstrom (manager)
Abigail Berntgen
Cynthia Flores
Britney Holst
Melissa Mayers
Tammy Mielke
Martha Nelson
Amber Nichols

IMPACT EDITOR
Julie Fuhr, *Enterprise
Communications*

IMPACT DESIGNER
Christine Elliott,
Creative Services

Find us on:
f Modern Woodmen
fraternal leaders (group)
f @ModernWoodmen
i @ModernWoodmen1883
y @ModernWoodmen
x @ModernWoodmen

800-322-9805
fraternal@modern-woodmen.org
imakeanimpact.org



Look inside | **Spring 2025**



4 HOW DO YOU ATTRACT A CROWD?
Learn from leaders nationwide.

6 FUN IDEAS TO TRY
More ways to support Wild
About Animals.

8 THE MORE THE MERRIER
9 tips to help grow attendance.

10 TIPS AND TOOLS
Make members feel welcome.


**3 REASONS
WHY INCREASING
ATTENDANCE
MATTERS**



BIG GROUPS CATCH ATTENTION
They make people say, “Hey, what are they doing? I want
to be a part of that.” That’s one way Modern Woodmen
can grow and help even more people.



MANY HANDS MAKE LIGHT WORK
And greater impact! Decrease the workload, while
multiplying the good you can do in your community.



YOU’RE HELPING FULFILL A PROMISE
Chapter activities are a key part of Modern Woodmen’s
mission as a fraternal financial services organization.
Larger attendance means more members are gaining
meaningful experiences and getting the most of their
membership. (Member involvement is also a requirement
for our tax-exempt status.)

How do you ATTRACT a crowd?

Attendance tips
from leaders

"If you build it, they will come." Right? *Right?*

If only life was as easy as the movies. We've all been there, spending hours (or days/weeks/months) planning an activity, only to be disappointed by the number of attendees who show up to enjoy it. Frustrating, but don't lose heart.

Here's how fellow leaders "build" their activities, so "they" (aka members and guests) will come.

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Curtis Langemeier, Wisconsin, says the biggest factor leading to good attendance is choosing an event that will be well-received by a large group of people.



While this may sound obvious, it could take some trial and error to figure out what types of events work best for members in your area. Get to know their interests. Plan events you know will be engaging and relevant to them.

"Newer events seem to take a few years to become popular," says Curtis. "If they don't take off, I drop them."

MAKE IT MEMORABLE

Patrick Linehan, Maine, relies heavily on the power of a well-written promotion.



"Your postcard has to be appealing," he says. "Make it tell a story, make them laugh or create some intrigue. And keep it simple."

One way he catches attention on his postcards is to "gleefully annoy" members. Instead of selecting a standard start time, like 4:30 p.m., he changes it to 4:19 or something else out of the ordinary.

Patrick also likes to use the chapter's premier funds to offer something special and memorable. One year, the chapter purchased T-shirts for attendees to wear while placing flags on veterans' graves.

"People still have the shirts," he says. "It was like their rite of passage for doing that project, and it meant a lot."

GO THE EXTRA MILE ... LITERALLY

Linda May, North Carolina, has learned nothing can beat a good discount ... and plenty of advance notice. She always plans activities at least 30 days out to ensure postcards can be mailed.



"That has helped my attendance tremendously," she says.

Her members have their favorite activities they insist on repeating, but they also really like out-of-the-ordinary educational events that involve a trip. A family-oriented excursion to Rock City and Ruby Falls (about an hour away) had great participation. Chapters and clubs in her area sometimes partner up, which helps them get a deeper group discount for these special outings.

"Members might not plan these things on their own," she says. "But if you're offering a good price and are going to arrange it all for them, they're all for it."

Across the country

BABY BASICS COLLECTION DRIVE

PARTICIPANTS: Chapter 13029, Murfreesboro, Tennessee

CHAPTER ACTIVITIES COORDINATOR: Patricia Chunn

ACTIVITY: The chapter partnered with a United Way drive, held at a local park. Members went shopping together and dropped off donations of diapers, wipes, bottles and necessities for new mothers.

MAKE IT YOURS: Partnering with a community group or local business can make service projects easier. Be sure to find a cause your members are passionate about.



HONORING THOSE WHO HONOR OTHERS

PARTICIPANTS: Summit Chapter 18030, Marshall, Minnesota

CHAPTER ACTIVITIES COORDINATOR: Glenda Vizecky

ACTIVITY: The chapter recognized local quilters as Hometown Heroes. Members attended the Senior Day program at the Lyon County Fair (a draw in itself!), where Quilts of Valor were presenting beautiful patriotic quilts to three veterans. Chapter members, in turn, honored the women who made these works of art. Members then served coffee and cookies.

MAKE IT YOURS: This event gave members a close-up look at the impact these volunteer quilters make. Could your chapter honor a hero in action?



GAME NIGHT AT THE HIGH SCHOOL

PARTICIPANTS: Chapter 12868, Gamaliel, Kentucky

CHAPTER ACTIVITIES COORDINATOR: Beth Thompson

ACTIVITY: The chapter covered a portion of admission costs and invited members to meet up at the local high school for a basketball game. This fun, family-oriented social activity attracted 76 member attendees and nine guests – proof that if you "go where the members are," chapter attendance can go up, too!

MAKE IT YOURS: Partner with school events in your area to attract more families with kids. During the summer, look for community events, outdoor concerts and fairs.



INSTRUMENT PETTING ZOO

PARTICIPANTS: Youth Service Club 1066-1, Coldwater, Michigan

CLUB LEADER: Amey Elkins-Little

ACTIVITY: No fur at this petting zoo! For a fun, hands-on educational event, club members went to the library, where they got to view, touch and experiment with a variety of musical instruments.

MAKE IT YOURS: To catch attention and draw more interest for your events, try a unique twist on a classic activity.



ANIMAL attraction



Wild ideas to get your members quacking up (sorry, couldn't resist)

Way to go! In 2024, you helped plan **1,642** Wild About Animals activities and your financial impact far surpassed past national initiatives. You showed us just how much our members across the country LOVE animals ... and just how creative you can be!

Why are we continuing this initiative in 2025? Well, first of all, why mess with success? Let's build on last year's momentum and keep all those warm fuzzies going. And, secondly, why not give you the opportunity to try more of those wonderful, impactful ideas with your own chapter or youth service club?

Here are a couple fun ones to consider.

BABY GOAT PHOTO SHOOT

PARTICIPANTS: Chapter 12199, Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin

CHAPTER ACTIVITIES COORDINATOR: Jeanine Walentoski

ACTIVITY: The chapter hosted a fun social activity where members could take Valentine photos with baby goats. Cuteness overload!

Members also brought nonperishable items to donate to the food pantry.

MAKE IT YOURS: Ask a local photographer (or a willing member who has talent and a good camera) to snap family pics at a future activity. A chance to interact with baby animals in the process is a little irresistible.

PIE A REP FOR A CAUSE

PARTICIPANTS: Chapter 198, Ravenna, Michigan

CHAPTER ACTIVITIES COORDINATOR: Karla Twork

ACTIVITY: The chapter hosted a fun Pi Day event. Members could pie their Modern Woodmen representative in the face (whip cream only!) on Pi Day, March 14 – one chance for every item they donate to the local animal shelter.

MAKE IT YOURS: Try involving your local representatives in an upcoming chapter activity. They can be really fun people and may help you attract more members to your event.



▲ WISCONSIN



▼ MICHIGAN



Find out the TRUE NEED



Kara Patton, a fraternal leader from Arkansas, was recently reminded of the importance of reaching out to recipients before planning a service project. It may lead to a larger impact.

In February, Kara and other volunteers from the region participated in a service project for the humane society. They:

- Collected needed items to donate.
- Interacted with the animals.
- Spruced up rooms that hadn't been painted since the 1980s.

"The first thing we did was to get ahold of the humane society to find out what their

need was," says Kara. "Then we figured out how we could help meet that need."

This project will likely lead to others like it in the future. While painting, volunteers got a firsthand look at other repair needs – such as new ceiling tiles. Kara felt good knowing they were helping in a different way than most people. Volunteers love to interact with cute puppies and kittens, but the humane society itself doesn't often get support.

"Staff members were super appreciative," Kara says. "They enjoy having more of an updated space. And this big painting project was really quick because there were a lot of us."



"The first thing we did was to get ahold of the humane society to find out what their need was. Then we figured out how we could help meet that need."

– Kara Patton

THE MORE the merrier



9 WAYS TO HELP GROW ATTENDANCE

1. Allow time

Set plans months in advance and promote upcoming activities at the current one. Preplanning also allows time to send postcards. (See Page 11.)

2. Get personal

Ask members if they'd like a reminder call or text message from you. Ask your membership coordinator and/or local Modern Woodmen rep to extend a personal invitation to members – especially new members and those who haven't attended in the past. They can also reach out to former regular attendees to let them know they're missed and learn why they stopped coming.

3. Invite guests

Include nonmembers who know Modern Woodmen well, like Hometown Hero and Matching Fund recipients. Encourage members to invite guests, too. Help them see what Modern Woodmen is all about. *Keep in mind, chapter activities are for members. The majority of attendees should always be current members. Encourage repeat guests to become beneficial or social members if they would like to continue to attend activities. See the Fraternal Leader Handbook for further guidance.*

4. Change it up

Vary locations to attract a broader group. Move beyond the usual spots and hold activities at trendy or unexpected locations

(a brewery, trampoline park or game café, for example). Vary the time and day of the week, too! (Try a Saturday event.)

5. Have fun

So. Many. Options.

- Host "can't-miss" experiences – something people wouldn't normally do on their own, like a behind-the-scenes tour.
- Announce a fun mystery element ("A special guest will be there!" or "The first 10 to arrive get a free treat!").
- Tie into trends, like Taylor Swift nights or social media-inspired food challenges.
- Offer hands-on experiences (painting or cookie decorating) and competition (trivia, mini golf or a scavenger hunt).

- Think beyond a typical chapter dinner – unique food trucks, build-your-own taco bars or dessert samplings.
- Pair a volunteer project with a social event (pack care kits, then go out for ice cream).
- Go where members already are (host a tailgate at local sporting event, take your members bowling on kids-bowl-free night, attend a music festival together).

6. Build traditions

Host signature events each year that people look forward to. This could be a good time to use your premier funds!

7. Make it about your members

Ask for input on future events, so members feel invested in coming. Consider giving members a role at your activity, such as helping greet

people, taking photos or handing out supplies. People show up when they feel involved.

8. Create buzz

Get the word out to as many members as possible. Did you allow enough time for the home office to mail postcards in addition to sending texts and emails? Have you shared your activity on your chapter's closed Facebook page? One idea is to run a poll and ask who's coming. When people see others will be attending, they may be more likely to attend as well. Share testimonials or photos of people having fun at past events to give members an idea of what they're missing out on.

9. Don't get overwhelmed

Make a goal to grow attendance with each activity you host – if even by one or two members.

What the experts say

5 KEY FACTORS THAT DRIVE ATTENDANCE

Ever been to an event and wondered, "How did they get so many people to leave the comfort of their couches to venture out into public?" According to event professionals, they may have been motivated by one of these five desires.

- 1. I want to meet new people.** Events create a natural way to meet others. *Tip!* Allow time for attendees to chat and get to know one another at activities.
- 2. I want to learn something new.** People look for events that have value to them. *Tip!* Ask your members what they'd like to learn. You'll grow more excitement for your activity if you meet member interests.
- 3. I want to have fun.** Events allow us to escape our daily lives. *Tip!* Bring your members to new and exciting places.
- 4. I want to connect with others who share my interests.** Events help us surround ourselves with people who have similar values and passions. *Tip!* Incorporate elements into your activity that unite your group. For example, support a cause that's meaningful to your members.
- 5. I have FOMO (the fear of missing out).** We don't want to miss what others experience. *Tip!* Create buzz and excitement around your event.

Break the ICE

Make first-timers feel welcome

Group activities can be scary ... especially for members attending an event for the first time. Your regulars know what to expect. But others may feel uncomfortable approaching and interacting with people they don't know.

Encourage first-timers to **bring a friend or family member** if they're nervous about attending alone. Always **introduce yourself**. And help break the ice at your activities to ensure attendees feel welcome, get to know each other and enjoy themselves. You can find an endless number of icebreaker activities online. Here are just a few simple ideas to consider:

- **Assign a "buddy" for first-time attendees.** A Modern Woodmen rep may be perfect for this role.
- **Recognize/welcome individuals** at the beginning of your activity. Ask attendees to raise their hands or stand up if they're new to Modern Woodmen, attending an activity for the first time, celebrating a birthday/ anniversary, etc.
- **Include a list of fun and easy conversation prompts** at each table or throughout your event space. Encourage attendees to share the answer to one or more of the prompts with someone they don't know. Examples: My favorite color is ... I'm here today because ... A little-known talent I possess is ...

As your event wraps up, **personally thank first-timers for coming**. Consider dropping a note in the mail and/or posting a shoutout on your closed Facebook group.

Ensuring first-timers have a good experience makes it more likely they will attend again.



Increase awareness with POSTCARDS

Help ensure more members are invited to and aware of your activities

Plan and request activities **at least 28 days in advance whenever possible**. This important planning step affords you the option to send postcard invitations to members within a selected mile radius. (Hint: Choose the full 100-mile radius option for the biggest impact!)

Why?

1. People can't attend what they don't know about.
2. Postcards are currently Modern Woodmen's **most effective way** to reach the largest number of members. Reminders on your chapter/club closed Facebook page are invaluable at spreading the word, as are automatic emails/texts sent by the home office. However, those methods currently only reach a limited number of members.
3. Postcards act as **invaluable touchpoints**, keeping Modern Woodmen's fraternal brand promise top of mind.



▲ **Leader Ashley Lowing, Michigan, knows how to make an impression at activities.** She says this set-up, including pop-up tent, tablecloth and supply items, helps draw attention to Modern Woodmen and gives kids and families fun items to take home and engage with.



Make your activities **VISIBLE!**

Do your activities scream Modern Woodmen? You can view and order a variety of free or low-cost items to help members feel welcome ... and capture the attention of others passing by. (We're all involved in growing membership, right?!)

- Matching Fund big check.
- Modern Woodmen banner.
- Balloons. (Tip! Create a balloon arch for a fun photo backdrop.)
- Welcome tabletop sign.
- Door prize drawing form.
- Raffle tickets.
- Modern Woodmen plastic tote bag.
- Modern Woodmen brochures.

Select "Order Supplies" in the left navigation bar on imakeanimpact.org to check out what's available. Please order 14 days in advance to ensure items arrive before your activity. Reps, you can order additional branded supplies through Build Your Marketing Toolbox and the My Modern Woodmen Brand program.

New! You can now **order T-shirts** (like the ones pictured on the cover) through Supplies.

- Try to wear something that says Modern Woodmen at every activity.
- Consider a swag giveaway or mini welcome kit for first-timers. Include the T-shirts and other supply list items.



NORTH CAROLINA



KENTUCKY



TEXAS



Celebrate MEMBERSHIP!

Got premier funds? Why not use the extra money to help increase attendance at your next activity? Flip through this issue for some inspiration. Then jot down a couple ideas you'd like to try with your chapter/youth service club.
