

Mentoring a New Member or a New Grange

First and foremost, be sure you make everyone feel welcome at your functions, be it regular meetings or other activities. Also, do not thrust them into being an officer if they are not ready. Let them make that decision, if you push too hard, you might find yourself without that member.

The following is from some introductory information for the National Grange Heirloom Program and the National Grange Growth and Development Committee Policy Statement.

Here are a few recommendations when working with new members:

- Provide them a Grange mentor who is positive and encouraging, but who does not force them to learn all things about Grange all at once. Use the time to reflect on the lessons already before them and share positive experiences about the Grange, as well as history of the organization as a whole and the Grange they have joined.
- Learn why they joined Grange and “take their temperature” throughout the first few months and beyond about their Grange experience. Most new members will have questions they are uncomfortable asking in a large group or they do not find an appropriate time during our meetings. See if there are ways you can enhance their experience and make sure your Grange is fulfilling the needs of the member and the opportunities as advertised in your recruitment documents or pitch.
- We encourage all States to help enrich the value of this conversation by convincing your members with e-mail addresses of the importance of providing it to the National Grange. In addition, please consider for those members who do not have e-mail creating a buddy system to pair that person with someone who has an email and would accept responsibility to communicate the information they receive with their buddy. The buddy system also has the possibility of strengthening relationships locally as well.
- Encourage them to see or take part in the First Four Degrees and beyond but consider waiting to recommend this until they have been part of Grange for at least a year, or until they have attended at least a dozen meetings where they can be exposed to the lessons through track one of this program. While this is not our tradition, through this program new members are still learning about our values and the lessons of the Grange, and when they see the full exemplification are more likely to feel comfortable and be more receptive.
- Consider helping them find their personal motto from the work of the Grange. Ask them after some time with the Grange what phrase from the readings they connect most with, which motivates them most or what summarizes their reason to be part of the Grange.

Consider providing them a personalized gift with this phrase to connect them with the Grange and take it with them in their daily lives.

- Encourage them to take part in opportunities that broaden their Grange world – from State contests to reading the National Grange magazine. Allow them to see the connection they have with other members from outside their Grange thanks to the shared values and fraternal experiences.
- Some individuals who join find they are not a good fit after learning the Grange's central tenets. While the Grange should be and is flexible about the "how's," we should not be flexible as to who we are (nonpartisan; charitable; law-abiding; etc.). Encourage the new member to examine if they can respect the differences between their values and those the Grange holds. If they can – for example, if they accept that a prayer is said and faith is a key component, but they do not practice a faith of their own – continue to encourage them on their Grange journey. If they cannot and would demand all references to faith and a higher power be removed, accept that this may not be a good fit.
- Others find the Grange they are in does not fit them well. If this is the case, consider introducing the regional deputy or State membership director to them to encourage a demit to a nearby Grange or to help establish a new Grange that provides programming and outreach more in line with what the new member is looking to accomplish as part of the Grange.

If you are involved with establishing a new Grange, keep in mind that there are differences among the prospective members and what their expectations may be. It is important that you share our history, our grassroots foundation that establishes our policy and that we are a non-partisan organization.

You may want to involve members from other Granges in your Pomona so the prospective Grange can gain insight into how other Grange's function and perform activities.

Whether you are mentoring a new member or a new Grange, I would recommend having on hand some of the excellent brochures available from the National Grange. I think the following are especially useful: *Taking the Oath of Membership*, *Degrees and Symbols of the Subordinate Grange*, *Sneak Peek – What to Expect When You Visit a Grange Meeting* and *Hometown Resilience and Personal Growth Starts Here*.