

To: Unit Presidents and Membership Chairmen

From: Marilyn Collins, International Standing Committee for Membership

Subject: **Membership Bulletin** – November 2004

Your International officers approve this direct means of communications to inform you and your Unit members about WBCCI's membership program. This bulletin provides membership recruitment and retention statistics and suggestions, information about the public relations and adopt-a-dealer programs, and a reminder to review your Unit's membership definitions. Please share this information with your members and forward this bulletin to your 2005 officers.

Membership numbers continue to decline, with 8,231 members as of June 1, 2004, vs. 8,561 the previous June. Two years ago, the rate of decline had slowed to only 1.9%; last year, it increased to 3.9%. Three reasons may have contributed to this change: (1) the number of new recruits was less by almost 20 percent than the previous year (899 vs. 1,095), and (2) a slight increase in the number of non-renewing members (14.9% vs. 14.8% of the total m/ship did not renew). In other words, current members leave the club faster than new members join. (3) The free member program (which has been discontinued) influenced the m/ship increase in 2003 and also contributed to the increased losses in 2004 when they did not renew.

As officers and persons responsible for m/ship in individual units, please set goals and procedures for your unit to recruit and retain the good folks who can or have joined our club. How do we answer Airstream owners who say: "I've never been asked to join before." and "I recall receiving something from Ohio, but never heard from anyone locally about joining." or the current members who say: "No one gave me directions to the XYZ Park and we didn't know how to get there, so we didn't come." or "We've been members for 2 years, attended a few rallies, and we've never received our badges." ? ? ?

I've heard all four of these comments within the past 2 months. How would you react if you had experienced these situations—not a positive feeling, I'm sure. In today's competition for people's time and involvement, every one of us must extend the hand of friendship twice as much if we are to be successful in our recruiting and retention efforts. Our best tool is the personal contact by Unit members who ask others to either join or to keep their membership.

Now is the time to set membership goals, develop a positive recruiting program, and plan exciting, quality Unit rallies and caravans, as suggested in the Unit Planning Guide and Appendix 14 of the Blue Book. For instance, one of your first steps to take for *retaining* members: *Immediately contact all members who have not paid their 2005 dues to remind them they are due.* A personal phone call or note may be the catalyst for them to remain

members this coming year. A first step to take for *recruiting* members: *Immediately contact all new Airstream owner referrals from Headquarters or local dealers.* Again, personal phone calls and notes may be the catalyst for joining your Unit.

At the Unit Officers and the Membership Workshops at the International Rally last summer, two new programs were discussed and information was subsequently furnished to your Units. Both of these programs will help introduce your Unit and WBCCI to local non-member Airstream owners and thus improve your recruitment efforts. (1) The News Media Kit provides information on how and examples for contacting local news people to “advertise” your club in the local papers during a rally or other newsworthy event, such as a community service activity. For instance, several Units report announcing their attendance at local rallies in the paper and recruiting new members each time! Similarly, several Regions report recruiting 5 to 9 members at their rallies!

(2) The Adopt-A-Dealer Program provides guidelines for developing a mutual agreement with your local dealer for exchange of information and services, such as displaying bulletin boards in their show room, allowing dealers to place ads in newsletters, etc. This win-win program will encourage interaction with your dealer to the benefit of your club and also to their benefit with you as costumers.

As a reminder, please review the Constitution in the Blue Book, Article VI, Qualifications of Members, and Bylaws and Policy, Article IV, Membership and Membership Privileges, for the definitions of a member. There are several reasons that Units (and Intra-clubs) may not establish a class of membership other than defined or listed in these articles. The Internal Revenue Service has established very specific rules regarding non-profit organizations such as ours; for instance, money collected from non-members is considered profit. In addition, our insurance carrier provides liability coverage for approved events, and coverage and rates could be jeopardized if m/ship policies are ignored. Membership in this club carries certain responsibilities and privileges; adherence by all Units in following these policies is vital to protect that privilege.

With these guidelines, good luck to you and your Unit in developing a successful membership program for this and future years. Let's help increase our membership-- Recruit and Retain members, the heart of WBCCI!

Marilyn J. Collins