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Contents

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Cover Feature

6 Building a Solid Foundation

Mark Levin, motivational speaker and member of the American Society of Association Executives, identifies five key steps that curling clubs across the country can implement to retain their members.

By Bruce Deachman

En couverture

9 Sur une base solide

Mark Levin, motivateur et membre de l'American Society of Association Executives, identifie cinq étapes clés pour retenir les membres.

Par Bruce Deachman

Features

12 From Boardroom to Bonspiel

Corporate Canada is discovering that a "day in the hacks" is often all that is required to motivate the troops.

By Bruce Deachman

14 Attracting Minors to a Major International Sport

Junior curling programs have proven successful in clubs across the country, but there is a lot that goes into getting one started.

By Bruce Deachman

15 Moving Out of the Stone Age

The federal government is working with various private computer vendors to bring not-for-profit associations in Canada online and into the new millennium. This initiative is tailor made for Canadian Curling clubs as they look to the future.

By Barre Campbell

16 For the Love of the Game

Curling has enabled Calgary native Gary Pepper to make a living while enjoying one of his favorite pastimes.

By Lisa Burke

17 Curling Gaining Momentum in Nova Scotia

Lower Sackville, Nova Scotia serves as a successful example for other urban centres that are considering building a curling club.

By Barre Campbell

18 Transcending Cultural Lines

Educator uses curling as a communication medium.

By Bruce Deachman

Departments

5 President's Message / Message du président

It is with great pleasure that the Canadian Curling Association introduces the premiere issue of *The Business of Curling*.

19 New Trends in the Food & Beverage Industry

Clubs can benefit from offering an interesting mix to the traditional beverage menu.

By Danny Lamoureux

20 The Last Word

Curling elite are always willing to assist clubs and the game that they love.

By Barre Campbell

21 Membership Association Directory

A complete list of the various association members.

22 CCA Board & Administration

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It is with great pleasure that the Canadian Curling Association introduces each of the affiliated curling clubs in our country to the premiere issue of *The Business of Curling* magazine.

The CCA will deliver this publication to your club three times in each curling season. The content will include information about new products available to your business, stories of success and

struggle from our industry, new trends in membership, ice-making, food and beverage, profiles of club managers and more. *The Business of Curling* magazine is not a how-to manual; rather, our goal is to show you - the club executives - what is happening in the curling world and its effect at the club level. We hope you will try some of the ideas introduced in this magazine that are offered to help the sport grow in our communities.

Canadian curling clubs are experiencing a variety of problems adapting to an ever-changing world. There are the pressures of financing, accountability, competition, and an increasing demand for quality products and services from knowledgeable customers. Today's sudden need to focus on economic issues is forcing many clubs to spend less time with the human and technical sides of their sport, and more time with planning and financing for the future. Executives must treat the operation of their club as a business.

The CCA has developed a program of workshops designed to help clubs do just that. In conjunction with our Provincial / Territorial Associations, we offer the three phases of the Business of Curling program to interested clubs. Our trained facilitators deliver the workshop-style program to curling club executives as follows:

- Phase 1:* A one-day session with four to six curling clubs touching on many topics including understanding change, looking at trends, and a sharing of ideas.
- Phase 2:* A one-on-one workshop with the goal of writing a short-term strategic plan.
- Phase 3:* This session focuses specifically on creating a three-year business plan.

Since its inception in 1995, the Business of Curling program has had an impressive impact on the operations of more than 150 clubs. Today, the Canadian Curling Association welcomes all of our curling clubs to an exciting extension of that program: *The Business of Curling* magazine.



Jack Boutillier
President, Canadian Curling Association

C'est avec grand plaisir que l'Association canadienne de curling présente à chaque club de curling affilié au pays le premier numéro de la revue - *Le curling, nos affaires*.

L'ACC fera parvenir cette publication à votre club trois fois pendant chaque saison de curling. Vous y trouverez des renseignements sur les nouveaux produits dont votre entreprise peut profiter, des histoires de réussite et de difficultés dans notre milieu, des nouvelles tendances du côté des adhésions, de la fabrication de glace, de la restauration, des profils des gérants de clubs et beaucoup plus. La revue - *Le curling, nos affaires* n'est pas un manuel pratique; notre but est plutôt de montrer aux directeurs des clubs ce qui se passe dans le monde du curling et quelles sont les répercussions au niveau du club. Nous espérons que vous mettrez en application certaines des suggestions faites et faciliteriez l'épanouissement du sport dans nos collectivités.

Les clubs canadiens de curling font face à divers problèmes afin de s'adapter à un monde qui change constamment. Mentionnons, entre autres, les pressions que présentent le financement, l'obligation de rendre compte, la concurrence et une plus grande demande de produits et de services de qualité de clients bien informés. Le besoin soudain de se pencher aujourd'hui sur les questions économiques contraint de nombreux clubs à consacrer moins de temps aux aspects humains et techniques de leur sport et plus de temps à la planification et la recherche de fonds pour l'avenir. Les directeurs doivent considérer l'exploitation de leur club au même titre que celle d'une entreprise.

L'ACC a élaboré un programme d'ateliers conçus pour aider les clubs à y parvenir. Conjointement avec nos associations provinciales et territoriales, nous offrons les trois phases du programme *Le curling, nos affaires* aux clubs intéressés. Nos animateurs qualifiés présenteront le programme sous forme d'ateliers aux directeurs des clubs de curling de la façon suivante :

- Phase 1 :* Une séance d'une journée pendant laquelle de quatre à six clubs de curling traitent de nombreux sujets dont la compréhension du changement, l'examen des tendances et l'échange d'idées.
- Phase 2 :* Un atelier individuel ayant pour but la rédaction d'un plan stratégique à court terme.
- Phase 3 :* Cette séance porte tout particulièrement sur la création d'un plan d'affaires triennal.

Depuis sa mise en oeuvre en 1995, le programme *Le curling, nos affaires* a eu une grande incidence sur les opérations de plus de 150 clubs.

Aujourd'hui, l'Association canadienne de curling présente à tous ses clubs de curling un prolongement excitant de ce programme : la revue - *Le curling, nos affaires*.



Jack Boutillier
Président, Association canadienne de curling

Building a SOLID FOUNDATION

Motivational Speaker Reveals Tricks of the Recruitment and Retention Trade

By Bruce Deachman

Who is the single-most important person at your curling club?

How about the club's manager? Or maybe the president? The icemaker, perhaps? Try the member.

It may seem somewhat trite to say and a bit self-evident, but a club's membership is its greatest asset. And, according to Mark Levin, the growth of that membership is the actual momentum of your organization.

Levin comes with an impressive list of credits to support his claim. For over 30 years, the Columbia, Maryland consultant, author and speaker has been helping not-for-profit organizations get, and keep, members.

He's been a local chapter director, a national membership and chapter relations director, and chief staff officer for three organizations, one national and two international. His list of clients includes the American Medical Association, Boy Scouts of America and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. He has also written books on this, and related topics, including *Membership Development: 101 Ways to Get and Keep Your Members*, *The Gift of Leadership: How to Re-light the Volunteer Spirit in the 21st Century* and his latest, *Millennium Membership*.

"[Curling club] promotions have traditionally been more into the participation in the sport than membership in the organization," says Levin. "And that's one of the things we want to talk to them about." He continues, "If you can institutionalize their support of the sport through membership in the organization, then it really allows the sport to grow."

Essentially, Levin has boiled the issue of membership down to what he calls "Levin's Basic Law of Membership Development." That law states that an organization's ability to get and keep members is almost always based on three things: being able to personalize membership for the member, being able to customize the recruitment and retention process, and being able to have and express empathy for both existing and potential members.

If that looks a tad rose-coloured and sounds too ethereal, don't fret. Levin offers a detailed and extremely well-thought out step-by-step plan designed for any organization looking for growth.

For instance, one of the first steps Levin recommends, after determining the composition of your existing membership, is the implementation of a membership plan. Here, from the grand overview of Levin's Basic Law, come the nuts and bolts.

For even the membership plan, which one might initially imagine to be little more than a few numbers wishfully plucked from the sky, Levin has broken into a handful of

logical and manageable steps. This, it turns out, is not rocket science.

The first step in the membership plan is to set objective statements. This can be as easy as saying, for example, "We'd like to reverse the recent decline in membership and have a net growth within the first year of the plan. We would also like to increase our retention rate for each of the next two years."

Second, you would make some planning assumptions. These are simply descriptions and forecasts of what the conditions in your community and industry (in this case, curling) are expected to be over the period covered by your plan. This helps determine the reasonableness of both your goals and your plan of action, and helps monitor your progress in achieving your goals.

Next come measurement criteria for each objective. This is where you tell yourself how your success will be measured. For example, with the objective of reversing declining membership, you're likely to measure simply by the difference in the number of members between this year and the one prior. But you might also want to measure your success by the number of new members that you recruit. Your success will ultimately be determined by how you decide to measure it. This is the part of the membership plan, according to Levin, that most people don't like. It follows, he says, that if success is measurable, then someone will be held accountable. But that, he adds, is what a good plan is supposed to do.

After establishing measurement criteria (and prioritizing them), the next step is to declare the current measurement of each criterion. How many members do you currently have? How many new members did you recruit last year? Again, this may seem obvious, but if you don't know exactly where you started, you'll never know how far you came along.

Now you set your club's goals for the future. Not just some pie-in-the-sky target, these goals should have some basis in such areas as historical performance and available data. Future goals should, Levin states, be measurable, achievable, challenging and clearly defined.

The second-to-final step in the membership plan is that of determining your implementation strategies, the nub of exactly how you're going to reach the objectives you've set for your club. These, says Levin, normally fall into two categories: continuing programs and new ones. You might, for example, identify pre-invoice letters to members and "welcome" packets as current strategies you'd like to continue, and phone calls from board members and an early-renewal incentive as new strategies you'd like to implement.

PHOTOS BY MICHAEL BURNS AND DENIS DREVER



Finally, you have to assign responsibilities. Who's going to do what, and when. According to Levin, a comprehensive membership plan is significant in that it achieves three things: it organizes your limited resources most productively; it helps your club realize the importance of membership; and it defines success and gets members and staff committed to realizing the club's objectives.

Sound simple enough? Well it is, but that's just the membership plan. Now you've got to go out and put it into practice. For that, Levin has a number of suggestions.

Some, like identifying the actual benefits of joining your club in conjunction with illustrating the features that it possesses as necessary in order to attract new members. They allow your membership committee to empathize with prospective members and to be able to articulate the benefits of your club to them. Prospective members might already know what features your club offers. But why should they join your club? You have to be able to think like them if you want to overcome their objections and convince them to join.

Levin is convinced, too, that nobody can "sell" a club to someone like an active member can. To that end, he spends considerable time and effort describing how you can get your members involved in attracting new members and how to prepare them for it. "The problem with that is that people don't have a lot of time. Going out and getting other people to join is something that they'll only do when

enjoyment raised for everybody, but they're also interested in staying in it even if their participation in the sport a sometimes thing."

He continues, "We've found that retention is really a function of making a connection between the organization and the member, rather than just producing a product—that's where most organizations have a problem, because they assume that if they're putting out a good product that people will stay. But, sometimes, people just don't feel there's a place for them."

Some of the benefits of a planned retention program are obvious. For one, it saves time and money, as it cuts down on the resources you have to spend recruiting new members. Member retention also allows you to measure the effectiveness of your existing programs and services. In fact, high retention rates are a testimony to the fact that you're doing something right. They're also a good recruitment tool, too; who wouldn't want to join an organization that is able to keep its members year after year?

Another benefit of a strong retention program is how it adds to your human resources pool. As Levin points out, few people join an organization or club with the intention of immediately serving on committees and such. "If your organization can keep members coming back," he says, "they will get involved in organizational activities and move up through the various leadership positions to become active and effective members in the organizations."

In a nutshell, the longer members are around, the more likely it is that they'll be involved.

And just as in the membership plan, Levin has broken down the retention program into navigable steps. The first of his five steps is to focus on new members, to treat them as though they're special. One way to do this, says Levin, is to make sure you know

why they joined - what benefits they were looking for - and to reinforce those benefits to them early in their first year of membership.

Second, you should have a new member orientation system, one that informs them, welcomes them, makes them feel comfortable and allows them to meet other members.

The third step is to get new members involved. "When individuals... get involved in the activities of your organization," claims Levin, "it is less likely that they will drop out because they view their involvement as an additional way to get a return on their dues investment." Busy hands are happy hands!

The fourth step, which, again, may seem obvious but is all-too often forgotten, is to offer some form of recognition to those who do get involved. Learn how to say "Thank You!"

The fifth step is to have an effective renewal invoicing process in place. In other words, make it as easy as possible for members to renew their memberships.

While focussing on the broad rules governing membership acquisition and retention, Levin offers a plethora of practical methods by which to get there. And while some of

"...the lifetime value of a member is equal to much more than one year's dues."

—Mark Levin

they have the time, and nobody's got any time anymore," he explains.

"The second problem is that recruiting members is really a sales situation, and a lot of people aren't comfortable in a sales situation, especially if that's not what they do for a living," he says. "That's a tough thing to do."

Levin continues, "So what you have to do, if you're going to ask people to recruit, is to give them some of the tools to be successful." Those tools include some prospective members who might actually join their club, as well as information to help convince potential members to join. Still, considering the lengths that some organizations go to get new members, Levin thinks that member retention is at least an equal partner that is often forgotten. As he puts it, "the lifetime value of a member is equal to much more than one year's dues."

"That early period is very important," he says. "Sometimes the interest in a product or, in this case, sport, comes and goes with some people depending on who they have affiliated with. If they get into a club and somebody in that club really keeps them active and involved, not only is the



those, because he's dealing with a generic, unnamed organization, don't necessarily apply to curling clubs, lots of them do.

Individual clubs can look through his suggestions and pick and choose the ones they'd be most comfortable with, the ones they think suit their particular image, and the ones they think will most likely work for their given circumstances.

(Mark Levin will be the keynote speaker at the 2000 National Curling Conference in Saskatoon. His philosophies on membership retention and recruitment have been integrated into CanCurl's Business of Curling program. They are discussed at length during the Phase 1 workshop. Then, in Phase 2, his ideas are molded into strategies during the strategic planning process. For more information on the Business of Curling program, contact your Provincial or Territorial Association, the CCA at 1-800-550-2875, or e-mail Danny Lamoureux at danny@curling.ca)

Bruce Deachman is a writer for the Ottawa Citizen



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10 GREAT WAYS TO GET AND KEEP YOUR MEMBERS

1. Send a special newsletter to new members during their first year.
2. When members drop out and say they didn't get anything out of their membership, try to find out exactly what they mean.
3. Send a mini-survey to first-year members three months after they join to see how they rate your club's service.
4. Have group orientations so first-year members see others who have made the same commitment.
5. Get members involved at some level because involved members don't drop out.
6. If you ask a member to volunteer to do a job, make sure it's a worthwhile job!
7. Offer incentives to the first-year members who renew the following year.
8. When important issues come up, call some of your least active members and ask them for their opinion.
9. Recognize your members as often as possible. Be sure to thank them for their participation at each and every level.
10. Do everything you can to be one of the reasons why your members want to renew. For many members, the volunteer and staff leaders are perceived to be the "club," to which they belong. If members perceive you to be a group of dedicated, qualified staff and volunteer leaders, they'll probably be back.

Reprinted courtesy of Mark Levin
To order a copy of one of his books, contact him at: B.A.I., Inc., 9891 Broken Land Parkway, Suite 300, Columbia, MD 21046 Tel: (301) 596-2584 Fax: (301) 596-2594 mlevin0986@aol.com

Bâtir SUR DU SOLIDE

Un motivateur révèle les secrets du recrutement et de la fidélisation des membres

Par Bruce Deachman

Qui est la personne la plus importante de votre club de curling? Peut-être le directeur ou la directrice du club? Ou peut-être le président? Ou bien le responsable de la glace? Non, c'est le membre.

Cela semble un peu banal, allant presque de soi et simpliste, mais les membres d'un club représentent son plus grand atout. Et selon Mark Levin, la croissance de ces membres constitue la dynamique réelle de votre organisation.

M. Levin appuie ses dires par une liste impressionnante de succès. Depuis plus de 30 ans déjà, ce consultant de Columbia, dans le Maryland, aussi auteur et conférencier, aide les organismes sans but lucratif à trouver et garder leurs membres. Il a été directeur d'un chapitre local, directeur des adhésions nationales et des relations entre les chapitres locaux ainsi qu'agent en chef du personnel de trois organisations, une à l'échelle nationale et deux d'envergure internationale. Sa liste de clients inclut l'American Medical Association, les Boy Scouts of America et la U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Il a aussi écrit des livres sur ce sujet et dans d'autres domaines connexes, y compris *Membership Development : 101 Ways to Get and Keep Your Members*, *The Gift of Leadership : How to Relight the Volunteer Spirit in the 21st Century* et son plus récent ouvrage, *Millennium Membership*.

D'après M. Levin : «La promotion (des clubs de curling) a traditionnellement été davantage axée sur la participation au sport que sur les adhésions de l'organisation. Et, c'est l'une des choses dont nous voulons leur parler. Si on arrive à institutionnaliser leur appui du sport au moyen de leur adhésion à l'organisation, ceci permet réellement au sport d'évoluer».

M. Levin a en fait résumé la question des adhésions à ce qu'il appelle la loi de base de Levin pour le développement des adhésions. Selon ces principes, la capacité d'une organisation de trouver et garder des membres est presque toujours fondée sur trois éléments : être capable de personnaliser l'adhésion pour le membre, pouvoir adapter le processus de recrutement et de maintien et être en mesure d'avoir et d'exprimer de l'empathie tant pour les membres actuels qu'éventuels. Si ceci semble un peu optimiste et trop éthéré, ne vous inquiétez pas. M. Levin offre un plan étape par étape détaillé et extrêmement bien pensé pour toute organisation qui cherche à prendre de l'essor.

Par exemple, l'une des premières choses que M. Levin recommande, après avoir déterminé qui sont réellement vos membres, est la mise en oeuvre d'un plan d'adhésion. C'est là, à partir de la grande vue d'ensemble des principes de base de M. Levin, que se trouvent les rouages. Ici on voit les arbres et non seulement la forêt. Car même le plan d'adhésion, que l'on pourrait au départ imaginer être constitué de quelques chiffres souhaités, tombés du ciel, est organisé par M. Levin en plusieurs étapes logiques et faciles, qui n'ont en fait vraiment rien de sorcier.

La première étape du plan d'adhésion est l'établissement d'objectifs. Ceci peut-être aussi simple que de dire, par exemple : «Nous aimerions remplacer la perte récente de membres par une croissance nette des adhésions au cours de la première année du plan. Nous voulons aussi augmenter le pourcentage de maintien pour les deux années à venir».

En deuxième lieu, vous feriez des hypothèses de planification. Il s'agit simplement de descriptions et de prévisions des conditions dans lesquelles votre milieu et l'industrie (dans ce cas, le curling) devraient se trouver au cours de la période décrite par votre plan. Ceci vous aide à déterminer si vos objectifs et votre plan d'action sont raisonnables et à surveiller votre progrès vers la réalisation de vos objectifs.

Puis vient l'établissement de critères d'évaluation de chaque objectif. Ceux-ci vous permettront de déterminer votre succès. Par exemple, en ce qui concerne l'objectif de faire régresser la perte de membres, vous l'évaluerez simplement en comparant le nombre de membres de l'an dernier avec celui de l'année en cours. Mais vous voudrez peut-être aussi tenir compte du nombre des nouveaux membres recrutés comme mesure de votre succès. La façon dont vous l'évaluerez déterminera à la fin votre succès. D'après M. Levin, c'est la partie du plan d'adhésion que la plupart des gens n'aiment pas. Il s'ensuit, affirme-t-il, que si on arrive à mesurer le succès, quelqu'un en sera tenu responsable. Mais ceci, ajoutez-il, c'est justement ce qu'un bon plan devrait faire.

Après avoir établi les critères d'évaluation (et leur avoir donné un ordre de priorité), la prochaine étape est de faire état de l'évaluation actuelle de chaque critère. Combien de membres comptez-vous actuellement? Combien de membres avez-vous recruté l'an dernier? Une fois de plus ceci peut sembler évident, mais si vous ne savez pas exactement où vous avez commencé, vous ne saurez jamais combien de chemin vous avez parcouru.

Maintenant, vous établissez les buts de votre club pour



l'avenir. Pas seulement une cible imaginaire, mais des buts qui ont un fondement, tel que le rendement historique et d'autres données disponibles. M. Levin soutient que les buts futurs devraient être mesurables, réalisables, présenter des défis et être clairement définis.

L'avant-dernière étape du plan d'adhésion consiste à déterminer vos stratégies de mise en oeuvre, l'essentiel de la marche à suivre pour atteindre les objectifs que vous avez établis pour votre club. M. Levin signale que ceux-ci se répartissent normalement en deux catégories : programmes permanents et nouveaux programmes. Vous pourriez, par exemple, déterminer que l'envoi de lettres aux membres avant l'expédition des factures ainsi que des trousseaux de bienvenue sont des stratégies actuelles que vous aimeriez continuer et des appels téléphoniques des membres du conseil d'administration, ainsi que des primes de renouvellement anticipé constituent de nouvelles stratégies que vous aimeriez mettre en oeuvre.

Finalement vous devez assigner les responsabilités. Qui seront les responsables, que feront-ils et quels seront les délais. Selon M. Levin un plan d'adhésion complet est important du fait qu'il atteint trois buts : il organise vos ressources limitées de la façon la plus rentable possible, il aide votre club à se rendre compte de l'importance des adhésions et il définit le succès et engage les membres et le per-

Le deuxième problème est que de recruter des membres est réellement une situation de vente et que de nombreuses personnes ne sont pas à l'aise dans une telle situation, surtout si ce n'est pas leur métier. Ce n'est pas chose facile. Alors ce qu'il faut faire, si on demande aux gens de recruter, c'est de leur donner les outils qui leur permettront d'avoir du succès.»

Ces outils incluent quelques membres éventuels qui pourraient effectivement adhérer au club, aussi bien que de l'information pour aider à les convaincre de devenir membres. Cependant, compte tenu des efforts que font quelques organisations pour recruter de nouveaux membres, M. Levin estime que le maintien des membres est du moins aussi important mais souvent oublié. D'après lui, «la valeur de «longévité» d'un membre vaut beaucoup plus qu'une année de cotisations.»

«Cette période initiale est très importante» soutient-il. «Parfois l'intérêt dans un produit ou, dans ce cas, un sport, va et vient chez certaines personnes, dépendant avec qui elles s'associent. Si elles adhèrent à un club et quelqu'un du club les fait participer et être actives, non seulement le plaisir est accru pour tous, mais elles seront aussi intéressées à rester, même si leur participation au sport est sporadique.»

«Nous avons constaté que le maintien consiste réellement à faire le rapport entre le membre et l'organisation, plutôt que de simplement produire un produit. C'est où la plupart des organisations ont un problème, car ils présument que s'ils ont un bon produit, les gens vont rester. Mais, quelque fois ceux-ci ont le sentiment qu'il n'y a pas de place pour eux.»

Certains des avantages d'un programme de maintien planifié sont évidents. Premièrement, on gagne du temps et fait des économies, parce que les ressources qu'il faut investir pour recruter de nouveaux membres sont réduites. Le maintien des membres vous permet aussi de mesurer l'efficacité de vos programmes et services actuels. En fait, un taux élevé de maintien témoigne du fait que vous faites bien les choses. C'est aussi un bon outil de recrutement, car qui ne voudrait se joindre à une organisation qui est capable de garder ses membres année après année.

Un autre avantage d'un bon programme de maintien est l'augmentation de la réserve de ressources humaines. Comme le signale M. Levin, peu de personnes adhèrent à une organisation ou un club avec l'intention d'être immédiatement membre d'un comité. «Si votre organisation réussit à garder ses membres, ceux-ci participeront à des activités organisationnelles et occuperont les divers postes de leadership de la hiérarchie afin de devenir des membres actifs et efficaces de l'organisation.» En un mot, plus un membre reste longtemps, plus il y a de chances qu'il participera.

Et à l'instar du plan d'adhésion, M. Levin a détaillé le programme de maintien en étapes réalisables. La première des cinq étapes consiste à se concentrer sur les nouveaux membres, les traiter comme s'ils étaient spéciaux. Une façon de le faire est de connaître la raison de leur adhésion, les avan-



«la valeur de «longévité» d'un membre vaut beaucoup plus qu'une année de cotisations.»
—Mark Levin

sonnel à atteindre les buts du club.

Simple, n'est-ce pas? En effet, mais ce n'est que le PLAN d'adhésion! Maintenant, il faut le mettre en pratique. Pour ce faire, M. Levin offre un certain nombre de suggestions.

Quelques-unes, comme identifier les avantages de l'adhésion à votre club et non seulement les caractéristiques, sont nécessaires de façon à attirer de nouveaux membres. Le comité d'adhésion peut ainsi sympathiser avec les membres éventuels et leur montrer les avantages que leur offre votre club. Les membres possibles connaissent peut-être déjà les avantages du club. Mais pourquoi devraient-ILS devenir membres de VOTRE club? Vous devez être capable de penser comme eux, si vous voulez réfuter leurs objections et les convaincre d'adhérer.

M. Levin est aussi convaincu que personne ne peut «vendre» un club à quelqu'un aussi bien qu'un membre actif. À cette fin, il consacre beaucoup de temps et d'efforts à décrire comment vous pouvez amener vos membres à attirer de nouveaux membres et comment les y préparer. «Le problème est que les gens n'ont pas beaucoup de temps. Chercher d'autres membres est une chose qu'on fait seulement si on a le temps et plus personne n'a de temps de nos jours.

tages qu'ils recherchaient et de renforcer ces avantages au début de leur première année d'adhésion.

Deuxièmement, vous devriez avoir un système d'orientation des nouveaux membres, qui les informe, leur souhaite la bienvenue, les met à l'aise et leur permet de rencontrer d'autres membres.

La troisième étape vise à faire participer les nouveaux membres. «Quand des personnes... participent à des activités de votre organisation, soutient M. Levin, il y a moins de chance qu'elles abandonnent, car elles voient leur participation comme étant un autre bénéfice de leur cotisation. Heureux ceux qui se tiennent occupés.»

La quatrième étape, qui une fois de plus semble logique, mais est trop souvent oubliée, est d'offrir une certaine forme de reconnaissance à ceux qui participent. Apprenez à dire «merci!» La cinquième étape est d'avoir un processus de renouvellement des adhésions efficace. Autrement dit, faites qu'il soit aussi facile que possible pour les membres de renouveler leur adhésion.

Tout en se concentrant sur les règles générales de l'acquisition et du maintien des membres, M. Levin offre une pléthore de méthodes pratiques par lesquelles vous pouvez y parvenir. Et même si quelques-unes d'entre elles ne s'appliquent pas aux clubs de curling, parce qu'il parle d'organisations en général, beaucoup s'y rapportent. Les clubs peuvent examiner ses suggestions et choisir celles qui leur conviennent le mieux, celles qu'ils pensent correspondre à leur image particulière et celles qui seraient d'après eux les plus efficaces dans leur situation donnée.

(Les philosophies sur le maintien et le recrutement des membres de Mark Levin ont été intégrées dans le Programme Le curling, nos affaires de Can-Curl. Elles sont discutées en détail pendant l'atelier de la phase 1. Ses idées sont ensuite transformées en stratégies pendant le processus de planification stratégique de la Phase 2. Pour de plus amples renseignements sur le Programme Le curling, nos affaires, veuillez communiquer avec votre association provinciale ou territoriale de curling ou l'Association canadienne de curling, au 1-800-550-2875, ou encore envoyez un message par courrier électronique à Danny Lamoureux à l'adresse.)

Bruce Deachman est rédacteur au Ottawa Citizen

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10 BONNES IDÉES POUR ATTIRER ET CONSERVER VOS MEMBRES

1. Envoyez un bulletin spécial aux nouveaux membres au cours de leur première année d'adhésion.
2. Lorsqu'un membre ne renouvelle pas et dit qu'il n'a rien retiré de son adhésion, essayez de savoir exactement ce qu'il veut dire.
3. Envoyez un mini-sondage aux nouveaux membres trois mois après leur adhésion afin de savoir quelle cote ils accordent à votre niveau de service.
4. Organisez des sessions d'orientation pour les nouveaux membres afin qu'ils puissent rencontrer d'autres nouveaux membres.
5. Essayez d'impliquer les membres d'une façon ou d'une autre; un membre impliqué renouvelle généralement son adhésion.
6. Si vous demandez à un membre de se porter volontaire pour un travail, faites en sorte que ce soit un travail valable.
7. Offrez des incitatifs aux nouveaux membres qui renouvellent.
8. Lorsque des questions importantes surgissent, appelez certains des membres les moins actifs afin de connaître leur opinion.
9. Rendez hommage à vos membres aussi souvent que possible. N'oubliez pas de les remercier pour leur participation à quelque niveau que ce soit.
10. Faites tout en votre pouvoir pour assurer le renouvellement. Plusieurs membres considèrent les bénévoles et le personnel comme le « club.» S'ils les considèrent dévoués et qualifiés, ils renouvelleront sans doute.

From Boardroom to BONSPIEL

New Source for Club Patronage in Corporate Canada

By Bruce Deachman

Got some downtime on your hands? A quiet afternoon, maybe, when your club's not being used?

That's a good time to break out the silver polish and have a go at those dusty and tar-

nished old cups, bowls and salvers filling your trophy cases.

Or you could have your club filled with newcomers, many of them curling for the very first time. All of them eating, drinking and being merry, and keeping your kitchen and bar staff busy, busy, busy in the process!

With just a gentle prod from yourself; a phone call, fax or letter, a brochure perhaps, large companies and corporations are more and more willing to close shop for an afternoon and come to your club for fun, food and drink.

Why?

Because more and more forward-thinking companies are coming to the realization that a happy worker is a productive worker and that **team building** is an important aspect to that end. Those companies have also learned that nothing motivates employees and creates loyalty like spending time away from work, having fun and allowing everyone to meet each other's personal sides.

And if, by happy coincidence, they spend a tidy sum at your club, well, so much the better.

Some companies are also holding recreational days as a thank-you for a job well done. When Stentor's director of information management, Denise Lamoureux, recently wanted to show her appreciation to her 110-strong work force, she decided to hold a mini-bonspiel at the Ottawa Curling Club. "I wanted a day for them (the work force) to relax and let their hair down," she says, adding that the employees needed to recover from the stress associated with the company's recent five-month transition period.

"I wanted them to have some fun and rejuvenate as a team."

The fact that Lamoureux's "team" was so large made planning such an event somewhat problematic. "There was quite a broad range of ages and a mix of men and women," she admits, "so how could I manage to do something that would please

everybody? The time of year (late-fall) didn't help either; we might have wanted to go golfing or do something outdoors, but we couldn't be sure that the weather would have permitted it."

So Lamoureux, whose parents curled and whose brother still does, chose a day in the hacks. "I'd spent a lot of time in curling clubs," she explains, "I even got married in a club but had never actually thrown a rock...it's something I had always wanted to do," she says. "I've always wanted to curl with a group of non-curlers," she continues, "It just seemed like a fun atmosphere and a good sport that everybody, regardless of their age or skill level, could enjoy without prior knowledge of the game."

The importance of her team having fun was significant to Lamoureux, and having fun meant being at ease, another reason she chose curling over golf. "We were all going to be inexperienced," she recalls, "which would make everybody comfortable. In something like golf, you can have half-a-dozen people who are fabulous golfers, and everybody else feels horrible when they're golfing with them. But the odds of having fabulous curlers on the team were going to be minimal."

"And we had a blast," she says, "an absolute blast."

Curling clubs, Lamoureux believes, are ideal for this sort of company day, especially with larger companies. Part of the reason, as almost every curler knows, is that larger bonspiels are more fun than their smaller counterparts.

"You need enough critical mass of people to be able to have a bonspiel. If you have a small group, it doesn't quite have the same energy level that you do when you have a large bonspiel and can pretty much take over the rink," she asserts.

"You want to be able to take over all the sheets and the entire club, so you can create that environment that says, 'We're all here together and we're all in it together.' No one is watching you from other sheets



PHOTO BY MICHAEL BURNS

and saying, 'Look at those idiots!' It's a comfort zone for everybody."

A company bonspiel can really solidify a group of people. Lamoureux chose her curling teams so that people throughout the organization had the opportunity to meet and interact with new people. "With us, each person is a piece in a chain of exercise that has to happen," she says, adding that the event provided everyone in attendance with an excellent opportunity to interact.

"My philosophy regarding people is that if you've never had the opportunity to meet on a personal level, you may discover, upon interaction, that your personalities clash and, because of that clash, your common objective is never reached," she says. "But once you have the opportunity to meet each other on a personal level and come to know one another as individuals, you always remember some common interest you have and things seem to run smoother."

Lamoureux continues, "And when you're curling, you're not talking work. It's more 'Hi, who are you? Are you married? Do you have kids? What do you like?', and you start to know people on a different level."

"I can't tell you how much positive feedback I got from the team. They really enjoyed being out on the ice together, watching each other. I had one sheet free for people to practice, and it was constantly being used. They were lined up to keep trying, thinking 'If I could just throw one more, I think I could get it!'"

So put the silver polish away. It can wait.

(A terrific source of businesses to attract to a company curling/field day at your club is right within your membership. Find out where your members work and approach them about having some type of event at your Club. Make certain the Club is the best that it can be in appearance, food and beverage and ice, then reap the benefits!)

Bruce Deachman is a writer for the Ottawa Citizen

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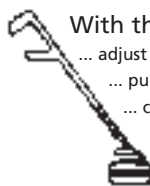
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Junior Curling Programs are Sweeping the Game

By Bruce Deachman

Let's see... if I tell two people, and then they tell two people, and then they tell two people... why, eventually, we could start our own club!

Seven years ago, when Darryl Gunnlaugson began a Little Rocks program at Winnipeg's Charleswood Curling Club, he inherited the proverbial 40-watt radio station. In his first year, he had 16 little rockers and one set of little rocks.

Today, Charleswood's program boasts a membership that would dwarf many clubs' entire directory. There are now 80 little rockers, 80 bantams and 96 juniors curling at Charleswood. Those 256 underage curlers outnumber Charleswood's Men's curling roster by 16, and now, seven years after taking up the sport, some of those 256 are just reaching the age where they are beginning to replenish the stock of Winnipeg's adult curlers.

"Back then," Gunnlaugson recalls of the club's earlier junior program, "they had what I call a 'conventional' junior program, with about 60 kids, 20 and under, all lumped together, in either boys' or girls' curling."

One problem, though, was that Gunnlaugson had two kids, aged six and eight, that he wanted to get into the game. And six-year olds and 20-year olds didn't want to curl together, he reasoned. So Gunnlaugson started a little-rock program.

The first decision he made was to use adult rocks in his little-rock program, and just play on half a sheet, scribing circles between the two houses. Gunnlaugson admits that he took over the program at just the right time. "Television has really helped us out a lot," he says. "With more and more people watching, kids are tuning in and saying, 'Hey, I think I can do that.'"

As the little rockers grew, so did Charleswood's program. After a couple of years, Gunnlaugson added a Bantam program. Then he took over the Juniors. Charleswood has tapped into its top competitive curlers for help with the younger ones.

In 1996, after winning the province, Jeff Stoughton's entire team came down for a day of instruction and, of course, photo-ops

for the kids. "The kids already knew him," says Gunnlaugson, "because they had seen him on TV, so that was pretty thrilling for them." Then, when they won the Brier, Team Stoughton returned and did it again. And again after the Worlds.

Under Gunnlaugson, and his replacement this year, Bob McKenzie, Charleswood's program has grown like wildfire, and it's done so without any special advertising or extra costs.

"It's all been word of mouth," says Gunnlaugson. "The key has been getting them early. The ones from seven to 10 are the ones you attract. After that, you have to keep it fun and challenging."

He continues, "As long as they're learning all the time, they keep their interest up. Once a kid gets bored, he's gone."

"We try to keep kids involved and having fun. With the younger ones, we don't keep score. They all have a coach - in fact, the key is to have lots of volunteers and parents involved." Gunnlaugson also tries to keep everybody in the program feeling special, and has found some relatively inexpensive ways of doing it.

"All the little-rockers get a trophy," he says. "I discreetly put signs up in the club, asking people to donate their old ones, and the response has been fantastic."

He continues, "Everybody seems to have one or two lying around that they don't really want, but don't know what to do with. Now I've got too many; I've had to bring boxes of them to work."

**"As long as they're learning all the time, they keep their interest up. Once a kid gets bored, he's gone."
—Darryl Gunnlaugson**

"So all I have to do is take off the old plaque and put on a new one. Sometimes, I have to buy a new figure for the top - if, say, I get a baseball trophy donated," he says.

"But those kids' eyes sparkle when they see things like that, things like the trophies and the high-performance curlers," he asserts. "As a matter of fact," he adds, chuckling, "at the Bantam level, we don't give everybody a trophy, and some of those kids are so terribly disappointed. There was this one kid, about 13-years old and six feet tall, and he was just bawling his eyes out (because he didn't get one)."

Gunnlaugson has long been a firm believer in the benefits of a strong youth curling program to a club. "Obviously," he says, "without young curlers, you're not going to have older curlers down the road. A percentage of people stay in the neighbourhood they grow up in, and with the numbers we have, Charleswood would be guaranteed to be full for years and years and years," he says, making reference to the retention success of the Charleswood program. "Some of the kids that started with us seven years ago are just now entering adult curling."

There's another benefit, too, though, and Gunnlaugson hopes that Charleswood's senior executive is aware of it. "When I was a kid," he says, "if your parents didn't curl, you didn't curl."

"But these days that's not the case. We've got entire junior teams where not one of the parents curls. And what's happening is that a lot of them take it up," says Gunnlaugson. "I know a number of people that either didn't curl, or curled a long time ago, and once they got in with the kids, they started joining the women's league or the mixed league." Says Gunnlaugson, "We now have these kinds of parents in every league in the club," he says.

"Sometimes I think that the senior executive fails to see the 'bigger' benefits (of youth curling), but they should be able to understand that."

Bruce Deachman is a writer for the Ottawa Citizen

PHOTO BY MICHAEL BURNS

Moving Out of the Stone Age

Federal Government Backs Rock-Solid Internet Program



By Barre Campbell

Curling is steeped in ancient traditions; customs and practices, but more and more people are beginning to realize that in order for the game to grow, they must look to the future.

A program from the federal government provides curling clubs with a way to take a step out of the past. In 1998, the federal government set aside \$15 million over three years in its federal budget to the Voluntary Sector Network Support Program, or VolNet as it has come to be known.

The mission of the program is to help volunteer and non-profit organizations acquire the necessary equipment and know-how to connect to the Internet.

The program, administered by Industry Canada, is designed to help these organizations reach their mandates by providing new technology. A minor hockey organization, for example, could set up an Internet connection, and coaches could become involved with online chat groups to exchange ideas and experiences about coaching.

The government predicts 10,000 organizations might be served before the program expires in March 2001. An approved organization is eligible for a grant to cover the cost of one year of Internet access and support, 50 per cent of the cost of new computer equipment to a maximum of \$400 for each system, and training in basic Internet skills development.

How can the program help a curling club?

Paul Woolner, manager of the RCMP club in Ottawa, believes a connection to the Internet is so vital that he applied for a VolNet grant, although he's not a big fan of computers. "It seems to be the thing these days, to be on the Internet," he said.

To receive a grant, organizations must apply through a regional volunteer organization designated by Industry Canada. Appli-

cations are reviewed by the regional organization, then forwarded to Industry Canada's VolNet National Advisory Committee for final approval. In the case of the RCMP Curling Club, its application for the VolNet grant was made to the Volunteer Centre of Ottawa-Carleton, then forwarded to the federal body.

some misconceptions that it's exclusive to RCMP officers.

"We've been very fortunate," says Woolner, whose club has 600 members with an annual turnover rate of about 20 per cent. "We're riding a crest right now, and we want to continue that. But some of the smaller clubs might have a problem," he continues,

It seems to be the thing these days, to be on the Internet

—Paul Woolner, manager RCMP Curling Club in Ottawa

Among the necessary requirements for eligibility, an organization must be incorporated as non-profit or registered with Revenue Canada as a charity, or an amateur athletic association; have a voluntary board of directors; and annual revenues of less than \$500,000.

Woolner believes an Internet connection is useful for his club, because a web page can be used to attract new membership. It will also assist him in promoting his club as open to the public and eliminate bother-

"If people don't know about you, then you're not going hear from them."

(For more information about the VolNet program, contact Industry Canada at 1-800-575-9200 or visit their Web site at www.volnet.org. If you would like to speak with Paul Woolner, his number at the RCMP Curling Club is 1-613-749-7086)

Barre Campbell is a writer for the Ottawa Sun

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For the Love of the Game

Calgary Native Takes Curling from Casual to Career

By Lisa Burke



Calgary Pepper knows he's one of the lucky ones.

As manager of the Calgary Curling Club, Pepper gets the opportunity to make a living while enjoying one of his favorite pastimes—curling. While curling started out as a hobby, somewhere in the last 20 years it became Pepper's career.

The 55-year-old has been managing the club for the last seven seasons and loves every minute of it. Pepper's work is not just a job, it's a way of life. Not a day goes by that he doesn't get to socialize with others who share the same love of the game.

But curling hasn't always been Pepper's way of life.

Working for the Alberta Treasury Branch in the late 1970s, Pepper first got involved in curling while assisting with the sport's instructional program. While he had always possessed an interest in curling, he had never really taken the sport seriously, but he was hooked once he began working within the instructional program.

Having the opportunity to work the 1980 Labatt Brier in Calgary solidified Pepper's involvement within the sport. "They were looking for people to initiate the officiating program," says Pepper. "I got involved in that, and then I just got in deeper from that point on."

Pepper finally left his job with the Alberta Treasury Branch and decided to make curling his full-time employment. It's a move he's never regretted. "I always thought I would like to do it," he says. "I was just fortunate enough to get the opportunity. There aren't many out there."

Taking over the Calgary Curling Club wasn't an easy task. As manager, he oversees the club's entire operation which includes everything from the sheets of ice, to administration, the food and beverage lounge and a cafeteria. Pepper had new ideas that he wanted to initiate and he knew it would take time for them to be implemented.

With eight sheets of available ice, Pepper wanted to find a way to make the club as efficient as possible. "Scheduling is one of the most difficult things," he asserts. "You're trying to accommodate everyone's desires for ice time."

While the sport of curling has always been popular in Calgary, when Pepper first took over the club, the leagues weren't completely filled. Since that time, however, the club's leagues are at capacity.

The change to an open format, allowing teams to play against different groups, is one of the biggest reasons for the upsurge in the league's popularity. On any given night you might see a men's team playing a mixed team or a women's team.

"I think that's proven very successful for the club," Pepper says. "People seem to really be enjoying themselves."

While Pepper is pleased with the way things have progressed at the club, he's quick to offer praise to the numerous volunteers and staff members that make his job that much easier.

During his reign as club manager, the Calgary Club has hosted the Scott Tournament of Hearts, the Labatt Brier, the Canadian Juniors, the Skins game and many other events which proved to be both hugely successful and rewarding, but Pepper says the dozens of volunteers are what make such events possible. "I couldn't do it without them," he says. "The events are a lot of work and it's the volunteers that make them so successful."

The one thing Pepper has been pleased with since taking over the job is the increased number of draws the club has during the day. "We have very heavy utilization during the day. We get a lot of seniors and women's leagues, and later in the afternoon we have rental leagues."

He continues, "That seems to be very popular with players as it makes it very accessible for people after work."

While the club is running quite smoothly, Pepper says they're always looking for new and different options, but the nearly-full capacity doesn't allow much room for change. "It's difficult to make a lot of changes when you're nearly 85 to 90 per cent filled," he says. "The only time that is available is daytime ice."

Amid all his duties as managerial duties, Pepper still finds time to play with a Senior men's team. While the winter season is Pepper's busiest time of year, he says things surprisingly don't slow down all that much in the summer.

"It's probably a lot busier than even I expected it was going to be," he says. "We're finalizing the financial side of things, planning the following season, taking registrations for the leagues, it's just very busy."

For more information on Gary's secrets of the trade, call him at 1-403-283-8381 or e-mail <calgcurl@home.com>

Lisa Burke is a writer for the Ottawa Sun

"For sheer frustration, curling reminds me of that other Scottish torture called golf. Both demand a surgeon's sense of millimeters and a bombardier's feel for distance."

—Bruce Watson
"Lay it up! Curling is chess on ice, with broomsticks"
Smithsonian magazine,
February 1999

Curling Gaining Momentum in Nova Scotia

By Barre Campbell

Betty Lou Killen has never thrown a curling stone in her life, but she hopes to become one of the sport's trendsetters.

As the executive director of the Sackville Sports Stadium in Nova Scotia, Killen is at the centre of a \$4.5-million expansion project that will add a six-sheet curling club. The new ice will be ready in the summer, and already the facility's staff has received inquiries about memberships and ice rentals.

But Killen says this isn't a case of, "if you build it, they will come."

"We want to look at new ways that we can promote curling," she says. "We want to hire somebody who can think out of the box and who can create enthusiasm for the sport here and in the community."

Plans for the expansion began in 1997 and construction started in the fall. The facility is located in the Halifax suburb of Lower Sackville. It has two pools, a hockey arena, a lounge and banquet facilities. The curling club and an upgrade to an existing gym will complete the expansion.

Killen describes the community's response to the curling club as overwhelming. "We have people calling every day who want to buy memberships and rent curling ice now for next year," she says. "We're trying to put a plan together to manage the whole business of renting ice. People want to rent it now. They want to be the first ones because they don't want to be left out."

Interest in curling memberships was already high when Nova Scotia women's champion Colleen Jones won her second Scott Tournament of Hearts title last February. That win created even more momentum for the new curling project.

"We have a lot of young families and young kids that are eager to play the sport," says Killen. "We have a lot of people between 45-50 (years old) and up looking for something, folks who have been involved in athletics throughout their younger years and are now looking for some kind of a sport they might be able to enjoy with their spouse."

The expansion project is steered by a volunteer board of directors. A development firm has been hired to raise funds to offset part of the \$4.5-million cost. The board hopes some

\$1.5 million can be raised through donations and projects, where people can have their name inscribed on a wall of honour.

"It's really important for folks to have a sense of ownership," says Killen. "I think that ties in with why it's so successful."

As for her lack of curling experience, Killen has pledged to take up the game. "A group of us here are going to join up somewhere where we can get our feet wet," she asserts.

Sports Facility Facelift Generates High Anticipation in Lower Sackville

(It is important to note that feasibility studies have identified a segment of the market that is willing to curl – young families and individuals between the age of 45-50. How does your club take advantage of this trend? Try customizing your promotion and advertising campaigns to target this group specifically. If the programs and services at your club don't suit this potential group, design programs to suit their needs.)

Barre Campbell is a writer for the Ottawa Sun

TAKING ADVANTAGE OF A TREND....

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Transcending Cultural Lines

Educator Uses Curling as a Communication Medium

By Bruce Deachman

"This is stupid," he thought, as he crouched in the hack and, cocking his head a bit and squinting one eye, gauged just how far away the other end might be. "So stupid."

Sixteen-year old Vincent He, a recent immigrant from China, had done just about all he could think of to avoid being where he was at that moment. He had been the last one to get on the bus, back at the school, and the last one off of it when it pulled up outside the curling club.

Once inside, he had made countless trips to the washroom, hoping in vain that time might simply run out before anyone realized that he hadn't curled yet. It might have worked, too; Vincent He, despite being tall, lanky and handsome, was terribly shy. So shy that some people thought that he couldn't speak.

"If I can just avoid Mrs. Grier," he thought, as he watched his teacher guide one of the Afghanistan students across the treacherous, pebbled ice. "I don't understand this game," he thought, as he began another slow, silent shuffle to the washroom, "and I don't get this 'ice' stuff."

He noticed that a few of the Indian students had skipped school today. Students in the English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) program rarely, if ever, skipped school. "Just when we're forced to play curling," thought Vincent, wishing that he, too, had stayed at home.

Then one of Mrs. Grier's aides mentioned to her that Vincent hadn't been out yet. "Damn," thought Vincent, as he was led by the arm onto the rink. All that Mrs. Grier said to Vincent He was, "You know, Vincent, we all have to try this...it's not optional."

When you think of curling cities, which one immediately springs to mind? Winnipeg, right? The capital of Manitoba and home of Jeff Stoughton, Kerry Burtnyk, Mike Riley, Vic Peters, Orest Meleschuk, the Duguids, Don and Dale, Barry Fry, Ken Watson and Dave Smith. God, the list just winds and snakes like the Red River.

Winnipeg, Manitoba. It's curling country. Always has been, always will be. Of course, things are always changing, and Winnipeg is no exception. Once upon a time, for example, the north end of Winnipeg, where Sisler High School is located, was the stomping ground for people of Jewish, Ukrainian and Polish descent. Today, more and more Asians are calling it home.

As head of Sisler's ESL program, Carole Grier couldn't help but notice the changes. With 1,640 students, Sisler was the province's largest secondary school comprised mainly of ethnic minorities. "That had caused quite a decline in our school's curling club, because none of these kids had come from a curling tradition," says Grier.

"It's not that they're holding on too tightly to the sports that they grew up with," she adds. "For the most part, they all seem happy to drop soccer like a hot potato...they'll play it for a little while once they get here, but it will usually fall by the wayside," she explains.

"And they do seem to want to embrace Canadian sports, but curling isn't one of them."

Last year Grier became the faculty adviser for the Sisler curling team. That's when she noticed that a disproportionately high number of whites were associated with the team, and she decided to work with the primarily Asian immigrants, introducing them to curling. She chose the first-year ESL class as her jumping-off point, the class probably furthest removed from the game.

"These kids are from all over the world," Grier says, "and it was just fascinating to watch them."

"I've got five from Afghanistan who were refugees and who spent a year in Pakistan. No ice. Another five or 10 are from India. One is from Cambodia," she explains. "The ones from Kosovo knew nothing of curling, and the ones from Poland thought that they had heard of curling - of course, they had stood on ice before, because of hockey."



Members of Sisler High School's ESL Program
Back row, L to R: Suong Khau (Cambodia), Navdeep Sandhu (India), Michael Reyes (Philippines), Alban Gjoni (Kosovo), Nilofar Haideri (Afghanistan), Malalay Baraksay (Afghanistan), Karam Brar (India), Sandheep Sandhu (India), Elmaze Maqedonci (Kosovo), Tahmina Haideri (Afghanistan), Vincent He (China), Carole Grier (teacher).
Seated: Adam Tumilson, Roxy Trembath, Lindsay Barabash (Canadian student-coaches)

Says Grier, "One or two of the students had probably seen ice before, but none of them, absolutely none of them, had a notion about curling."

So Grier introduced them to the very basics of curling. She taught them some of the game's vocabulary, described what the ice-surface looked like and explained the different parts. She held an off-ice workshop, where the students could hold a broom and heft a stone.

And then they got on the bus for the near-by Victoria Curling Club.

"Everyone was having a hard time even standing on the ice. People were walking in pairs, holding each other up. Others were falling down, left and right. And everyone was just shrieking," she recalls.

"And there was Vincent, sliding out of the hack. He threw the most beautiful rock and had the most wonderful slide...he knew he threw it well, too. And as it stopped in the far house, he turned around and looked at me through the glass and he just beamed," Grier explains.

"It was a tremendous gain in his self-confidence, and any educator will tell you that when you raise the self-confidence of a kid, that's when you can teach them. I really believe that this sort of thing - success at a sports level, or in a non-verbal level like that - can lead to all sorts of accomplishments," she asserts.

"That's why I do it."

(Curling clubs, especially urban-based operations, more than ever, need to understand they may have to recruit outside the traditional source for new members. This story articulates a strategy to do that - English as a Second Language classes. As the Canadian population continues to diversify, curling club executives should investigate non-traditional membership opportunities and design strategies to take advantage of them.)

Bruce Deachman is a writer for the Ottawa Citizen

PHOTOS BY CAROLE GRIER



PHOTO BY DENIS DREVER

Interesting Mix Complements Traditional Club Beverages

By Danny Lamoureux

Despite the significant decline in alcohol consumption in contemporary society, the majority of Canadian curling clubs continue to rely heavily on bar sales as their single-most important source of revenue. Clubs that have reduced their dependency on traditional beer and hard liquor sales by identifying new beverage sources, both of the alcoholic and non-alcoholic variety, continue to enjoy considerable success.

So what types of products are these clubs serving?

Fruit based, non-alcoholic drinks:

There are a number of choices in the marketplace for tasty, healthy fruit drinks. Ocean Spray™ and Fruitopia™ are two of the many popular after-game drinks selected by those who choose not to indulge. They can be purchased for about \$9 for a case of twelve, and there are a number of delicious flavours available. Unit cost for these types of beverages range between 75 and 85 cents, a benefit which enables clubs to retail them for \$1.50 to \$2, plus tax. This is an exceptional profit on an item that is easy to store, chill and serve.

Coffee, tea, espresso and ice coffee:

There is a simple reason why Tim Horton's and other coffee houses are popular and profitable – they serve good coffee. How often can you say that you've had a good cup of any of the aforementioned beverages at a curling club? The coffee house concept proves the consumer is willing to pay a decent price for good taste; therefore, serve a good cup and charge accordingly.

If you have the sales volume, check out coffee-service companies. There are some impressive machines available that will produce a fresh cup every time. If not, experiment with different coffee brands until you have found a product that meets your needs and those of your customers. It isn't necessary to purchase the most expensive brand to generate a profit. Here's an additional hint: buy real coffee cups—your customers will appreciate it.

Teas, in particular, flavoured and herbal, are becoming considerably popular and make an excellent addition to

your beverage menu. If your club has trained staff, consider purchasing an espresso machine and/or serve iced coffee drinks as further alternatives to your non-alcoholic drink menu. If volunteers staff your bar, reserve serving these drinks for special events.

Wines – red, white and rose:

Today's customers are willing to pay for good products, so it isn't necessary to purchase the least expensive brand of wine at the liquor store to make a profit. There are a number of terrific wines available with screw caps that are ideally suited as house wines.

For interest sake, try conducting a wine tasting to determine what your members enjoy drinking. Alternatively, it is also a good idea to rotate your brand choice on a monthly basis.

Visit a restaurant with a good dining reputation and find out what they are serving. Check with the management at the liquor store where you buy your stock or consult a wine rep for their input. If you can afford it, buy appropriate glassware.

Draught beer:

Installing a draught beer unit at your club can be as simple as tapping the beer fridge, buying a contained single-unit machine, or designing a multi-tap system. Draught beer helps broaden the range of products available at the bar and offers your customers a less costly product while delivering the same profit margin. It can also be served in a number of different sized glasses and /or pitchers.

Danny Lamoureux is the Director of Development for the Canadian Curling Association

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By Barre Campbell

Curling Fraternity Serves as an Invaluable Resource for Clubs

Some people believe Yours' Truly has one of the best jobs a guy can have in this world, that being a journalist who writes about sports.

The newspaper I work for pays me a salary to attend sporting events, dig up stories that are interesting to the general populace, and to write about those events in words that make sense. It's a very satisfying profession, if you want to call it a profession. Others might think sports writing is more like adult daycare, which sometimes it seems to be.

Ninety percent of the time, it's a great gig. Most athletes are easy to deal with. If you treat them professionally, they'll respond in a similar manner. Then there's the other 10 per cent that considers the sports writing fraternity as one of the lowest forms of life on the planet, somewhere stuck between the species of jellyfish and amoebae.

Those percentages change when writers deal with curlers. There are no finer athletes in the world to deal with, from a sports journalist's perspective, than curlers. They're always willing to give writers all the time needed for a good story. If it weren't for curlers, we'd have to say that the profession of "jock journalism" would be a much harsher place for one to make a living.

If curlers can be so generously approachable to us sports scribes, then it would make sense that they'd be even more willing to help out the friendly neighbourhood curling club managers who are – we would hope — diligently working to recruit new people and fresh blood into the roarin' game.

Perhaps there's a perception out there in the minds of club managers that elite players aren't interested in coming to the aid of the sport they love. This is an unfortunate misconception because most elite players – at least now, while the cashspiel purses are relatively low compared to other sports and the egos are at a moderate level – would be eager to participate enthusiastically.

"Most players would get involved if they're asked," says Anne Merklinger, three-time Ontario women's champ. "They know it's the clubs where they came from."

The involvement of elite players to promote curling at the club level, however, is seen as an untapped resource; especially in many of the smaller clubs that dot the landscape of this country. For the most part, the elite players are ready to help. All that needs to be done is for somebody to ask this simple question: Can you help? The answer will invariably be yes.

Imagine the boost an elite curler can provide to a club's membership drive. In cases of a club barely surviving, having a recognized player show up at an open house on registration day could make a huge difference in the success or failure of the club's future.

Brier champion Jeff Stoughton, for example, is heavily involved at the grassroots level by donating time to the Little Rocks program at his club in Winnipeg. Surely the club receives tremendous interest from youngsters who get a chance to play a sport they like with one of the game's celebrities, one they see on TV so often during the winter months.

How often do you think youth hockey players get a chance to skate on the same ice and be instructed by an NHL superstar, like Wayne Gretzky for example, without their parents paying a hefty price for the privilege.

Sure, there are some elite players who will decline an invitation from a club manager. But odds are that limited availability due to work and family commitments are the only things preventing the curler from offering his or her assistance. Rarely will there be a case where a request is snubbed because a player's ego is too large.

I recall a bonspiel organized for the folks who work at my newspaper. It was the first one we ever had, and there was some thought as to what would entice non-curlers to attend. Free beer, supplied by the social club, was one of the factors, but another was the presence of some of Ottawa's top-notch players. We thought it would be worth a try to ask Merklinger if she might show up to help show some of the novices how to deliver a stone. We were surprised when she said yes, and even more shocked to learn no appearance fee was necessary.

We were so impressed, we decided to ask Bill Walsh, another perennial Nokia Cup threat from Ottawa, to come too. He did, and helped put sliding tape on the shoes of those who didn't know they needed it.

This can happen only in curling, a unique sport that makes this job so much fun. It can happen at your club too, and it's there for the benefit of the game.

All you have to do is ask.

Barre Campbell is a writer for the Ottawa Sun



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**The Canadian Curling
Association's Mission
Statement**

**"The Canadian Curling Association
aims to attract, retain and advance
participants to grow our sport"**



Sweep Your Curling Club Members Off Their Feet

With Sports & News Coverage That's Right On The Button!

The most channels and flexible packages. Our Public Viewing packages contain over 60 sports and news channels! Choose a package that best suits your customers viewing needs.

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