



# SIR HAPPENINGS

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A Nonprofit Public Benefit Organization for Men Devoted to the Promotion of Independence and Dignity of Retirement

## *President Derek Southern's "Guiding Principles for 2018"*



I am honored to be your President for 2018. Every January we see big changes in SIR. We welcome, and thank incoming Big Sirs and Little Sirs, Regional Directors and Area Governors, as well as all the other volunteers who are necessary to make our organization work, and who create an attractive Branch for our members and guests.

SIR lives and dies (literally) on the efforts of our volunteers in this all-volunteer organization. Where we have a dearth of volunteers we see branches closing for the lack of leadership. Where we have a relative abundance of volunteers, we see active branches full of members having fun and making friends.

So, throughout the year I will emphasize four guiding principles:

- Volunteerism and Leadership
- Improving communication between branch and state volunteers.
- Supporting and strengthening the role of Area Governors. .
- Encouraging Branches to improve their own health. State officers can offer help and advice, but a Branch must act and help itself – think **toolbox**, think **RAMP!**

I would appreciate hearing your ideas, thoughts and comments about these four principles and will share your feedback with the Board and our other members.

Please contact me anytime at the following email: [Derek.Southern@gmail.com](mailto:Derek.Southern@gmail.com).

I thank, and welcome, each new volunteer in every one of our branches and on the State Board. I also welcome back all those who continue to support our organization at every level.

Please remember: the ultimate test of everything we do is "Does it support the SIR mission?"

To Improve the lives of our members  
through fun activities and events  
while making friends for life.

**BRING IN A GUEST—WE NEED NEW MEMBERS**

## *2017 in Review: Past President Sir Jerry Strain*

As your Immediate Past President, I thought it appropriate for me to Review the last year for the newly revived Happenings!

2017 saw many changes in SIR. We realigned our Regions and Areas. We did this as a direct result of the reduction of SIR members. At one time we were 32,000 strong, with 10 Regions and 29 Areas. Since we are basically half of what we once were it was time to reduce the management level correspondingly.

Sadly we continue to lose members at about 3-4 % per year. This has also led to closing of more and more branches. We have gone from 179 Branches at our peak to just 119 now. We have closed 5 this year alone.

Gentlemen, this is a great organization and we desperately need to find the key to sustaining its existence.

We have tried to bring the State Board Members closer together by introducing Go-to-Meeting. This is not only convenient for meetings, but it cuts time and travel cost.

One of my main objectives this year was to insure that the Training was done by a Team which would travel to keep training consistent throughout SIR. I give special thanks to Dean Stiechen for making that happen. I have had nothing but positive feedback about the training and the members of his team.

Someone said that they thought that the President was wasting his time going to Branches to present HLM's and that they should be designated to RD's and AG's etc.

I could not disagree more. I have presented more than 30 HLM awards this year at 30 different branches. I have found that when the President shows up to a Branch there is a high level of respect and appreciation just for being there. I would never suggest stopping the travel for HLM presentations.

As I leave this office and a new President takes over, I would just like to say what an honor it has been to serve as your President for 2017.



## *Jack Meylink, State Bocce Chairman needs You!*

Sir State Bocce is alive and well in many of our branches. As the state committee chairman, I am asking for those branches who play and would be interested in joining our committee to call me at (530) 305-9112 or email [jachmeylink@yahoo.com](mailto:jachmeylink@yahoo.com).

For those branches looking to increase their membership, bocce has been very successful for my branch. Our branch meets twice weekly for pickup games at our local courts. We form teams from whomever shows up including those who are not SIRs and introduce ourselves and what SIR is all about.

The state bocce committee is your resource for promoting the game throughout our organization. We do this by helping any branch start an activity and organizing branch tournaments. We are looking for local, area and regional players to promote the game.



## Branch 68 at the Marin County Senior Information Fair

Bill Bunderson our Membership Chairman earlier this year forwarded the idea to host a booth at the Marin County Senior Information Fair, with the backing of the Big SIR, Bill and Kent Dutrieux were tasked with the assignment.

Over the next six months they talked to who were involved with the last time we tried this, they found what went right and what went wrong. They discussed several different ideas with several different people to get an idea what would work best. They decided to go with an activities theme. They would display in physical form all the activities that SIR provides. They got bowling, golf, bocce, poker equipment for their tabletop. They put together a slideshow with our members enjoying luncheons and activities, put our web address on bite size candies for giveaways, dressed up in their bowling shirts and gave it their best effort.



Tuesday the day before the show they got to go in and set up their display and test their equipment. At the end of the hour they were pretty proud of themselves, everything looked great for the next day. Bill and Kent arrived at 8:30am to ensure everything was set for a 9:00am opening. At precisely 9:00:20 a group of around 20 little old ladies came rushing in grabbed several pieces of candy each, their pens and whatever else wasn't bolted down and then took off to the next booth. They both sat there with mouths agape and in shock, they had no idea how the day would go on. Once the candy ran

out, less unattached women would come around. Thus, they began to have a chance to work on the wives who had their husbands in tow. With the help of Raul Carter, John Eller and Rich Berkvam they could convince several wives to encourage their husbands to take an application and really think about it. At the end of the day, there were four couples who really liked the idea, two wives who said "I'll get him to sign up" and one guy who said he would see us at the November Luncheon (Fingers Crossed).

Overall this was a great learning experience and improvements would need to be made before next year but the guys feel confident enough to go at it again and also to try to get the other branches to come out and join us in a shared booth. On the follow up, Branch 68 signed up two new members to the group and 2 other branches will be going in with them next year.





## *SIR Leader Training in 2017 for 2018*

Regional Directors and Area Governors participated in training in August. They learned effective techniques and tools for assisting Branches improve the lives of our members through fun activities and events. In October and November, eleven trainers traveled to six locations to conduct training for Branch Officers (Big



Pictures from Branch Training in Sonora, October 31

SIRs, Little SIRs, Secretaries, Treasurers and Membership Chairman) and RAMP leaders (Recruiting Chairman, Activities Chairman, Member Relations Chairman, Publicity/Image Chairman and Nominating Committee Chairman). The training for all attendees included “Where to find the answers” (SIRINC.ORG website), Recruiting Leaders, Leadership Self Assessment and Branch Self Assessment and goal setting. This was followed by break-out discussions for each leadership position where Position Descriptions, key forms and documents, key resources and references, challenges, solutions, clarifications, explanations and more were presented and discussed.

Feedback evaluations indicated the training sessions were greatly appreciated and participants got a lot of good ideas and information which will be useful in leading their Branches. If you missed the training, the training materials are available on the SIRINC.ORG website at <http://sirinc.org/MemInfo/BOTraining2017/>

## *Honoring our Military, Branch 172, Twain Harte*

SIR members who joined our branch since last November received a Congressional Certificate from Rocky Deal, Congressman McClintock’s Chief of Staff on Thursday, November 2, 2017. Chase Anderson described the local effort to catalog WWII veterans that included Wayne Bolitho of our branch.



Ed Nissen, Col., USA (Ret), and branch HLM, reads aloud the wording of the U.S. Congressional Certificates that were presented by Ed and Rocky Deal (second from left), Congressman McClintock’s Chief of Staff to Richard Nedbal, Vic Carella and Richard Wattenbarger.

## Why RAMP?

As many of you may have learned, SIR is gradually losing membership. In 2017 SIR lost over three percent of its members. This was not universal across all SIR Branches. About a third of the Branches gained members, however, two-thirds of the Branches lost members.

In 2016 the State Growth and Membership Committee (G&M) did a study to try to find out why some Branches were gaining members and others were not. What they found out was that it didn't matter whether the Branches were large or small, urban or rural. The Branches that grew membership had a strong emphasis on recruiting new members.

These Branches also provided a broad range of activities of interest to the members. In other words, they didn't just limit their focus to one or two popular activities like golf and bowling. These Branches also made sure that their new members assimilated into their Branch, by making them feel welcome and by introducing them to other members in the Branch during the critical first four to six months after they joined the Branch. They even involved spouses in some of their activities. To aid in the recruitment of new members they publicized their meeting dates and guest speakers in local newspapers.

So, what you have is that **these growing Branches focused on Recruiting, Activities, Member Relations and Publicity**, hence the acronym RAMP. This wasn't necessarily formalized nor did it happen overnight, but growing Branches evolved into having some form of these four functions in their Branch. In 2017 RAMP training was introduced to all five Regions in SIR. I was involved as a trainer for the Recruiting portion of RAMP.

Interestingly, a large number of the attendees in the Recruiting group training sessions were current and former Big Sirs of their Branches. They realized that if they didn't focus on recruiting new members, their Branch membership would decline, and, as a result, they wouldn't be able to get volunteers to fill officer and activity chairmen positions, and that could eventually lead to a downward spiral.

So, what works? Some of the take outs from the training sessions were:

- There must be a strong emphasis from the Big Sir on down for all members to bring in new guests. This should appear in the newsletter, during the meeting, and at the end of each and every meeting. It should always be front and center.
- Encourage new members to bring in their friends, neighbors, and former working acquaintances. Most Branches find that the majority of their new members come from new members.
- Be sure each new guest has a sponsor. Have the sponsor find out his guest's interests, and introduce him to the activity chairmen of his top three interests.
- Give him a welcome package with a copy of the Branch newsletter. Provide him with a list of Branch activities. Include a membership application.
- "Ask for the Sale". At the end of the meeting ask the guest/prospective new member if he enjoyed the luncheon experience, and if he is willing to give SIR a try.

These are proven techniques and are freely offered by participants in 2017's RAMP and Nominating Committee training. Consider them, modify them if necessary to fit your branch and use them to make your branch increasingly robust.

Bill Holly, Director Region 5, 2017 Recruiting Training Leader  
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## *The SIR Mission and Expectations*

In the course of completing Project 2016, there were many suggestions made by our leadership at all levels that were subsequently approved by the Board. Among the more important were the following three:

- The SIR Mission Statement
- SIR's expectations of its members, and
- SIR's expectations of its leadership

We'll cover the first two in this issue of Happenings, and discuss leader expectations in the next issue.

The SIR Mission Statement clearly expresses why SIR exists. "The Mission of SIR is to improve the lives of our members through fun activities and events while making Friends for Life." We should all memorize this statement, and have it ready should we be asked, "What does SIR do?"

In order to fulfill our Mission, the leaders felt that SIR should have some expectations of its members. The following four expectations were approved:

- Be friendly and sociable
- Participate in our luncheons, activities and events
- Bring guests so they can enjoy the benefits of the SIR experience, and
- Volunteer when asked to ensure the perpetuation of SIR and its activities and events

We have updated the "What is SIR" statement on the sirinc.org website. Although it is mostly read by prospective and new members, we feel it is a good reminder for current members as it captures what SIR is about. Any man can join SIR provided he has the free time to participate in our luncheons, activities and events.

***SIR (Sons in Retirement) is a non-profit, public benefit corporation formed for men. Our Mission is to improve the lives of our members through fun activities and events while making Friends for Life!***

In 2018 we become 60 years old. Our 120 branches include over 14,000 members. The branches cover Northern California from Bakersfield to the Oregon border and Lake Tahoe to the Pacific Ocean.

Membership is open to men regardless of age, race, color or religion. We are an all-volunteer organization, so our members need to help out when called upon. SIR supports no outside causes or interests. We prohibit discussions of politics and religion, soliciting or selling anything to any member.

Each Branch has monthly luncheon meetings where Sirs renew old friendships and establish new ones. Speakers are invited to speak on topical subjects of general interest. Most Branches have summer and winter luncheons and a BBQ where wives, partners and guests are invited.

Of special interest are Branch activities like golf, bowling, travel, bocce, bridge, poker, walking, hiking, computers, dining out, wine tasting and investing. Our list of activities and events is almost endless and many are coed. If there is an activity you are passionate about and your selected branch doesn't have it, we will help you start it and involve others.

**Come join us and be part of the fun – and, better yet, Make Friends for Life!**

**Visit our website - [www.sirinc.org](http://www.sirinc.org) for more information**

Ed Benson, 2018 Vice President, ebensonbwa@aol.com