



**SIR Branch Leadership Workshop**  
**Lafayette Veterans Memorial Center**  
**2780 Mount Diablo Blvd. Lafayette, CA**  
**March 15, 2024**

**10:00 – 10:30 – Opening Remarks**

- What's going on around us in our communities?
- Where is SIR today and where should we be headed?

**10:30 – 11:00 – How to Increase Visibility and Attract members**

- Successful approach to improving our visibility
- Why aren't younger seniors joining organizations?
- Successes in community outreach

**11:00 – 11:30 – How to Put FUN back into Volunteering**

- Gong on-line to get rid of time consuming Form updates
- Available tools to help the new volunteers and leaders
- Increasing the visibility of leaders and rewarding positive behavior
- Distribution and discussion of the SIR Handbook

**11:30 – 12:00 - The Key to Success is Improved Communications**

- The role of the Area Representative as a consultant
- Making Branch/State communication more regular and helpful
- Navigating the SIR website for organization and marketing ideas

**12:00 - 1:00 Lunch with Guided Table Discussion**

- Develop a prioritized list of Actions to improve SIR and make it FUN

**1:00 – 1:45 – Tables Report on Prioritized Actions**

- Tables will report on their prioritized list.
- Group participation in prioritizing the list

**1:45 – 2:00 – Closing Remarks and Call to Action**

- What is the role of training for improved organization
- When and how should we all report on our progress
- When and where should we meet next



## Your Distinguished Service Award

### An Award for Overcoming Difficult Times

For the past half-century, engagement in civic, religious, and social organizations has dropped off drastically. Three examples of year over year decline are - the number of Americans who attended even one public meeting, down 40%, union membership, down 66%, and the number of times Americans attended a club meeting like this one, down 50%.

In April, 66 years ago Damien Reynolds founded SIR just down the road in San Mateo County and it grew quickly to over 30,000 members in over 175 branches. Since our high point in the late '80s we have experienced this same downward trend in membership until today we have half the branches (85) and less than 30% of the members (8,500).

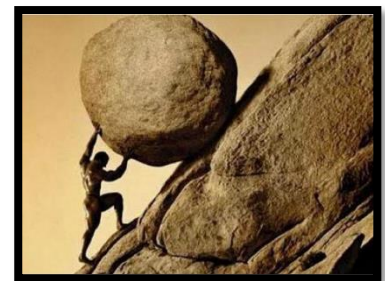
Unknow to most, the world is fighting an uphill battle against changing cultures accelerated by the covid pandemic and new technologies like the mobile phone, social media and now AI. SIR branches like yours have survived thanks to the leadership of the generous few – YOU!

You are attending the first SIR Branch Leaders Workshop to lay the foundation for the new SIR and find ways for you as its leaders to continue to meet and maintain strong local branches and offer active lifestyles so others can rediscover past activities they have loved.

**SIR offers you and society an alternative.**

**You need to go out and promote yourselves!**

**In a Greek myth, Sisyphus is punished in the underworld by the god Zeus, who forces him to roll a boulder up a hill for eternity. Every time he nears the top of the hill, the boulder rolls back down. Go Out and Raise that Boulder.**





## Let's Not Forget ...

### Who we are, Want to be and Act as we do

SIR was founded in 1958 and exists to enrich the lives of its members through fun activities, luncheons and events while making friends for life.

SIR's vision is to be the best senior's organization in Northern and Central California by providing well organized opportunities for physical, mental, and social engagement. This active lifestyle improves participants social well-being and lengthen lives.

SIR is totally managed by its members at both the branch and State level who volunteer their time and expertise to maintain and sustain their branches and the State parent organization.

SIR branches are independently incorporated in the State of California as "Social Welfare" non-profits who offer seniors well run social activities and events which are stimulating mentally and/or physically. All revenues must be used for the benefit of members.

State SIR is the independently incorporated parent organization offering the branches common costly and time-consuming services, activities, and events unaffordable at the branch level. State SIR offers the branches these services for a fee to cover its costs.

The State of California incorporation statutes require organizations to meet specific guidelines and submit bi-annually organization information. State SIR submits these forms for the branches from the information supplied by the branches on forms 20 (officers), 27 (members) and 65 (rosters).

Federal and State governments require organizations with revenue to complete tax returns which in turn require them to be incorporated and assigned a tax ID. State SIR handles this.

Insurance companies require organizations they insure for general liability to be incorporated with a tax ID number. State SIR handles this.

New members are important to any organization, but especially important to SIR because a continuous supply of new members is needed to replace outgoing members and maintain a healthy balance of newer and older members and ideas.

In other words, as our members "Age Out", they must be replaced by younger, more active seniors who understand that they must contribute to managing the organization for it to remain a vibrant and successful entity.



January 1, 2024

Fellow Sirs,

I am deeply honored to serve as your new President as we step into 2024. It's with great enthusiasm that I assume this role and with it the opportunity to evolve and strengthen our organization.

**Our mission at SIR is clear:** to enhance the lives of our members through fun activities, special events, and lunches while forging friendships that last a lifetime. **Our vision is compelling:** to be the best active senior's organization in Northern and Central California by promoting physical, mental, and social engagement which research shows will improve our quality of life and longevity.

**Our number one challenge** is to embrace the purpose and increase the vitality of our organization. It is clear we need to attract younger members as our older members are becoming less active. New members will play a pivotal role in leading us into an exciting new time. They bring fresh ideas and perspectives, ensuring a dynamic blend of the past with the future. In 2024, our primary goal is to reach out to our local communities and add new members and new life to every one of our branches.

I see the role of State SIR as a **Service Organization to the branches**. We offer you support for functions that 1) are needed by all branches (incorporation documents, management training, marketing material), 2) offer cost savings based on volume (liability insurance), 3) are one-time efforts unaffordable by a branch (Golden Gate Field party, travel programs), and 4) are Statewide athletic competitions to challenge to all members (Golf, Bowling). We promote these services through eMail and sirinc.org.

**We need to improve the bi-directional flow of useful information** between State SIR and all branches. Soon State SIR will introduce a new regular communication effort to provide informative, impactful organizational updates to Branch officers and a second effort to provide meaningful content such as innovative ideas and articles of interest to all our members. In return, we ask you to work with your Area Representatives to seek their consulting assistance on branch issues and inform State SIR on what is not working well for your branches.

**I'm excited to announce** that the fillable online management forms announced at the annual meeting to minimize your workload and reduce transcription errors are now being pilot-tested. State SIR will begin promoting their availability this month to the appropriate BEG members with instructions and helpful hints.

In closing, I want you to remember the sole goal of SIR is to **Have FUN with FRIENDS**. I want you to honestly evaluate how you can contribute to this legacy of SIR. As you do, remember SIR has simple expectations of its members: **1)** be friendly to all, **2)** actively participate in mental and/or physical activities, **3)** eagerly volunteer and lead when asked, and **4)** keep us vital by introducing SIR to your community and invite guests to our activities. Let's set a goal that we each bring one younger member into our branch to **Have FUN with Friends**.

Dale Decker  
President, SIR Inc



## A Value-Based Branch Checklist

### Maintain a Stable Branch Membership

1. Big Sir's must focus on recruiting at every opportunity.
2. Have visible incentives for bringing guests (future members).
3. Have Formal new member orientation with participation options and assignments.
4. Follow up with new members to check on satisfaction every 4 to 6 months.
5. Have a Proactive Leadership Succession Plan: Proactive identification and cultivation.
6. Focus on member relations and retention based on member satisfaction surveys.
7. Have a reasonable budget resulting in affordable annual dues (know price elasticity).

### Good Internal and External Communications

8. Have an on-going effort to maintain visibility in the community.
9. Use multiple approaches to have excellent member communications.
10. Maintain an active, up to date website and member newsletter.

### Meaningful Luncheon Program

11. Attractive venue for lunch.
12. Good quality food.
13. Affordable luncheon cost.
14. Entertaining speakers on topics meaningful to members.

### Locally Attractive Activities & Event Programs

15. Support activities which are attractive to members of the community.
16. Have activities which encouraged member's ladies to join in.

The following article by Larry Sokoloff appeared in the December 4, 2023 *San Mateo Daily Journal*. It first appeared in the December 1, 2023 *Bay City News Foundation* with the bit-off-center title “*NorCal Fraternity Helps Retired Men Build Social Connections, Find Fun Through Events.*”

## Sons in Retirement Offers Social Activities for Men

Larry Sokoloff, Bay City News Foundation

What’s a retiree supposed to do with all that free time?

One solution, for men, is to join SIR, a Northern California organization that exists to create more social activities for them. SIR stands for Sons in Retirement. This little-known organization has its roots in the Bay Area. It was founded in San Mateo in 1958. Today it has 90 chapters (called branches) from Bakersfield to Redding. About 35 chapters are in the Bay Area. Some chapters have 30 members, while the largest one, located in the South Bay community of Los Altos, has over 300 members. Some chapters meet in restaurants, others at country clubs or community centers.

SIR members gather for a variety of activities, including poker, hiking, bicycling, book exchanges, wine tasting, and golf. Golf is a big part of SIR. “Sixty-four percent of the state membership comes to play golf,” said Andy Danver, 79, of Los Altos Hills, communications director for the state organization. Danver said SIR has about 8,500 members in total, so that’s more than 5,400 golfers, plus spouses and partners. Bruce Karney, 71, of Mountain View, initially joined SIR when he was 60, and looking for golf partners. Karney said he now golfs three days a month with club members. “A lot of research shows that social isolation is a problem for older people, but particularly for men,” Karney said. “SIR is about increasing the happiness of its members.” Both Danver and Karney are retired Hewlett-Packard employees, and Karney said members in his South Bay chapter often join after careers at companies like H-P, Intel and Lockheed Martin.

The chapters hold monthly meetings with guest speakers. In summer, expect a picnic and in December, a holiday party. Dues are \$45 a year. Each chapter sets up committees to follow its members’ interests. There are a wide range of activities to choose from, including pickleball, fishing, digital photography, bridge, walking, BBQ and travel groups. One recent SIR event was held at Golden Gate Fields, the East Bay horse racing track that’s expected to close in mid-2024. One hundred and sixty members came together there for a day at the races, Danver said.

SIR is called a fraternal men’s organization. Currently, women cannot join as members, but wives and partners are featured in the group’s promotional materials as full participants in the events. And both Karney and Danver said that women are welcome at all SIR events. “Every single one of our events is open to women,” Danver said. He did note that there has been resistance to allowing women as members from some of the rural chapters. Each chapter will have to change its incorporation documents to admit women, Danver explained. “My personal opinion — it’s inevitable,” he said. Anyone who wants to seek more information about the organization can contact SIRinc.org or call (925) 331-0444.

**Online Event**  
**The dark side of the universe**  
WEDNESDAY 21 FEBRUARY | 7- 8pm EST  
ONLINE & ON-DEMAND

### Our quest to understand the universe

The *known* universe — everything — all the planets & stars, constitutes *only 5%* of all matter and energy in the cosmos. The remaining 95% is  $\frac{1}{4}$  *dark matter* and  $\frac{3}{4}$  *dark energy*. Theorists contend that dark matter consists of as yet *undiscovered fundamental particles*. Learn more about it all in [https://](https://www.newscientist.com/science-events/dark-side-of-the-universe/)

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