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I. INTRODUCTION

As youth director, you will lead the mission to engage young people in the activities of your lodge. You will help to develop and support entertaining and educational programming geared towards children, teenagers and young adults, with the goal of sparking and nurturing excitement about Sons of Norway and Norwegian culture and heritage. Growing up in a lodge family with a youth-focus can instill a sense of personal investment in the Sons of Norway which may well last a lifetime.

By developing and maintaining a vibrant youth program you will be:

- Contributing to a positive and energetic atmosphere for the entire lodge.
- Providing an incentive to attract and retain adult members who have children.
- Engaging youth in the organization to build a foundation for continued membership into adulthood.

In this section of the Guide for Leadership you will learn about your duties and find guidelines for creating a successful youth program.

II. YOUTH MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

Before discussing how to establish a youth program in your lodge, it might be helpful to have some basic knowledge of the Sons of Norway youth membership categories:

HERITAGE MEMBERS

Heritage membership is a free benefit available to children ages 15 and under who have at least one family member who is a current member of Sons of Norway. To sign up a child or teenager who meets these criteria, a Heritage membership application should be completed and mailed to Sons of Norway Headquarters. Once approved, the new Heritage member will receive a Sons of Norway membership card and a copy of our award winning Vikings for Kids magazine which they will continue to receive quarterly. Heritage members are not included in the official membership count for your lodge, nor can they vote or hold office. Also, years of membership as a Heritage member do not count towards golden membership or other membership awards. However, special 5, 10 and 15 year awards are available to recognize their time as Heritage members.

UNGE VENNER MEMBERS

Unge Venner members are between the ages of 16 and 23. They have the same rights and benefits as regular adult members. They can vote, hold office and serve as convention delegates. Unge Venner members who live with an adult member of Sons of Norway or who have a lineal relative who is a Sons of Norway member pay no dues. These free Family Member Unge Venner can pay a small subscription price if they wish to receive their own copy of the *Viking* magazine. Unge Venner who do not qualify under the family membership category pay a dues rate that is about one-half of the regular adult rate. Years as an Unge Venner do count towards Golden membership and other membership awards. Unge Venner also count towards your official lodge membership totals.

III. DEVELOPING YOUTH PROGRAMS

SELECTING A COMMITTEE

To help you develop your lodge's youth program you may want to enlist the assistance of other members, both adults and Unge Venner, who are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about youth programming. Forming a committee to help organize the program, and then to help plan and supervise activities, can be immensely valuable. Selection of the right committee members will do much to ensure a successful group.

ORGANIZING GROUPS

An excellent avenue to get youth involved in the lodge is through participation in a club, group or a junior lodge. A good place to start when planning a group is by making a list of prospective participants (*children and grandchildren of lodge members*) and then surveying them to determine their interests. The list will also help you determine the age group(s) you will be working with. To help gain cooperation and support from parents/guardians and interested lodge members solicit their expectations for the group(s) as well. Always remember to make the group truly an organization for youth by planning gatherings and activities that are age-appropriate and that meet their interests and expectations. Creating groups that are age and/or interest specific is always an option.

ESTABLISHING A BUDGET

No youth program can work successfully without funding for necessary expenses. Your lodge may ask you to submit a budget of anticipated expenditures. In addition to supplies, you might also need to budget for refreshments, field trips/travel, postage, facilities rental, etc.

DETERMINING ACTIVITIES

After determining the age group you will be working with, decide on what kinds of activities you want to run. You can always have the group participate in typical youth activities such as sports, music, handicrafts, community service, field trips, themed parties, etc. However, activities that focus on Norwegian heritage and culture are encouraged. Some examples include:

- Teaching Norwegian songs, dances, language, games, arts and crafts
- Teaching and participating in orienteering
- Offering summer language/heritage camps/classes
- Having a Berneløpet
- Having a folk dancing troupe
- Collecting cancelled stamps for Tubfrim

WORKING WITH OTHER LODGE OFFICERS

As youth director, you should work closely with the social, culture and sports directors of your lodge since these positions share a focus on lodge activities and events. While their involvement is primarily with adult members, ideas can be shared and activities and events can be coordinated

IV. YOUTH RESOURCES

To help you plan activities for your youth group, Sons of Norway offers numerous valuable resources:

BARNAS NORSK KLUBB

Barnas Norsk club (“*The Children’s Norwegian Club*”) is intended for children ages 5 to 12. The emphasis is on teaching children Norwegian songs, dances, simple phrases, etc. Norwegian culture is also taught through art projects, folk tales and stories. A packet of new materials, games and exercises are sent out monthly to all youth directors.

CULTURAL SKILLS

Sons of Norway offers many great Cultural Skills Programs in which youth can participate as individuals, as an informal group or as part of a lodge youth group. The Cultural Skills packets help set goals and find resources to learn skills like rosemaling, chip carving, genealogy and more. Youth can earn recognition awards (*pins*) for satisfactorily completing unit requirements. The awards are free, as is participation in the program, for Sons of Norway members of any age. To learn more or to download the units, go to the members section of www.sonsofnorway.com. Units can also be ordered by calling 800-945-8851. Cultural Skills Units currently available for youth are:

- #30 – Folk Dancing
- #31 – Figure Carving
- #32 – Hand Knitting
- #33 – Norwegian and North American Stamp Collecting
- #34 – Hardanger Embroidery
- #35 – Rosemaling

More units for youth will be added in the future. In addition, many of the adult Cultural Skills units can be adapted for youth by choosing to do Part 1 of the unit.

Media Lending Library has a wide variety of videos, slide shows, and CDs available for loan for you to use in your youth group. Many of these programs are created specifically for children. A list of available videos and slide shows, as well as ordering instructions, is available in the members section of www.sonsofnorway.com or by e-mailing culture@sofn.com or calling 800-945-8851.

Idea Bank provides helpful and creative ideas with instructions for planning lodge programs and events. Idea Bank materials can be found in the members’ section of the Sons of Norway website and can be downloaded for use. Materials are also available by calling 800-945-8851 or e-mailing culture@sofn.com. (Note: *Idea Bank # 40: Planning a Barneløpet* and *#4: Orienteering* might be of particular interest.)

Information Bank is a series of informative articles containing practical knowledge on Norwegian customs and culture. Materials can be obtained on the Sons of Norway website, by calling 800-945-8851 or by e-mailing culture@sofn.com.

Mini-Presentations are three-minute scripts on various topics and their connection with Norway. Similar to the Idea and Information Banks, topics are listed in the members section of www.sonsofnorway.com, and can be downloaded for use from the site or can be obtained by contacting cultural@sofn.com.

Sports Medal Program participants of any age may earn medals by achieving goals in skiing, walking, cycling, and general sports. As with the Cultural Skills Program, youth members can earn recognition awards (*pins*) for satisfactorily completing program requirements. The awards are free, as is participation in the program. Information on the program is available on the Sons of Norway website, along with record cards for download.

Viking for Kids is a magazine for kids published by Sons of Norway four times a year. It is distributed free to Sons of Norway Heritage members ages 0 – 15. Copies can also be requested from Sons of Norway Supply department (supply@sofn.com or 800-945-8851), at no charge, for use with your youth group.

V. FORMING A JUNIOR LODGE

Once you have established a successful youth group, you might want to encourage greater involvement and responsibility for your youth members by establishing an official junior lodge. A junior lodge is an independent Sons of Norway youth group with official standing, officers and a budget. Although the junior lodge operates independently, its leadership must report to a board consisting of at least one adult member from each of the sponsoring lodge(s). Typically, it is the youth director from each lodge who serves on the board. The duties of the board of directors are to:

- Oversee the junior lodge
- Coordinate activities between the junior lodge and the sponsoring lodges
- Inform the sponsoring lodge membership about the junior lodges activities and needs.

To form a junior lodge, first hold an organizational meeting with interested youth. The youth can decide or vote amongst themselves who will hold official positions in the junior lodge. Although there are several officer positions available, similar to the ones in a regular lodge, only the president and secretary positions need to be filled in order to establish the junior lodge. Once these and/or other positions have been filled, your junior lodge will need a charter and a constitution. You can either write these from scratch or contact Sons of Norway Headquarter for examples to use as a guide.

As you work with the junior lodge to develop their charter and constitution, be aware that the documents should address:

The relationship between the junior lodge and its sponsors, including duties/responsibilities of each to the other

Objectives of the junior lodge (*reasons for its existence*)

Membership Qualifications

Fees and dues

Required officers, their duties and their election

Voting requirements and procedures

And other topics of concern for the junior lodge.

