**How the Shawnee Rotary Club, Started Its Service Companion Club**

*By Matt Zimmerman, past president, Shawnee Rotary Club and member, District 5710 Membership Team*

**Introduction**

This is the story how the Shawnee, Kansas Rotary Club started a Service Champion Club.

Please use this with the **Service Companion Club Fact Sheet** by Rotary Zone 25B and 29: to download, please click:

[*https://clubrunner.blob.core.windows.net/00000050186/en-us/files/homepage/service-companion-club-information-sheet/Service-Companion-Clubs-Fact-Sheets-Updated-V1.pdf*](https://clubrunner.blob.core.windows.net/00000050186/en-us/files/homepage/service-companion-club-information-sheet/Service-Companion-Clubs-Fact-Sheets-Updated-V1.pdf)

**The Story -**

1. The *Shawnee Service Companion Club idea began* with discussion of the *Service Companion Club* concept in one of our Shawnee Rotary Club Monthly Board meetings. Our club meets on Friday mornings at 7:10 am.
2. Initially, there was a little resistance due to some concerns about losing membership to another start-up Club.
3. But *once the concept of having a Service Companion Club* (SCC) whose membership was integral to our own was understood, the buy-in amongst the board members was 100%.
4. Our Membership co-chairs (we have two) were particularly enthusiastic about this concept.
5. As the planning process evolved, we did not concern ourselves with timing, cadence, location, or special interest purpose of the *Service Companion Club*. Our collective opinion being that our SCC should self-govern to the maximum extent possible and determine based on what the consensus of their membership and how it would work and evolve.
6. Next – began the *search for Service Companion Club Membership*:
7. We reached out to one of our former club members who had resigned due to workload issues and scheduling constraints of our club’s meeting time and cadence. After a short conversation and some email exchanges, his interest and enthusiasm was very positive and he agreed to chair the SCC if we would help recruit members.
8. Our efforts to recruit additional members started with a “short list” of former club members who had resigned due to schedule and cadence conflicts. We reached out to all of them and shared the concept of the SCC.
9. We also reached out to a 2nd list of people who had visited our club and pondered membership, but declined due to schedule, cadence, and/or cost of membership.
10. *The Exploratory Meeting*
11. Once we had accumulated a potential “starter group” list of 10 prospects, we scheduled an exploratory meeting at a local tavern. They had a meeting room we could use that would provide us a little privacy and less noise.
12. The purpose of this meeting was to share the concept of Rotary International in general, and more specifically, the intent of starting a SCC that had a different set of operating constraints in terms of schedule, cadence, cost, and programming.
13. The feedback was VERY positive.
14. *The Next Steps* – *Forming the Service Companion Club*
15. Over the course of 3 to 4 months of follow-up meetings: over 8 prospects (the minimum for a SCC) were recruited; paperwork was filed with Rotary International; approval obtained; and an official “launch” for the Service Companion Club was initiated.
16. Our Club secretary (Ray Liggett) was instrumental in assisting the Membership Chairs with the appropriate documentation and procedural filings that were required to officially launch our SCC.
17. *Post Start-Up – more members joining*
18. Within 4 weeks of official “launch, the SCC had added another 4-6 members by word of mouth.
19. A few more members transferred out of our Friday AM club, as they were on the cusp of resigning their membership to the Shawnee Rotary Club due to work/schedule challenges. The club’s 7:10 am Friday mornings is a difficult time for many Rotarians who want to serve others to meet.
20. The overall attrition rate in the combined Friday morning club and SCC club were reduced by providing an option that would better accommodate more members’ individual issues.

**Thoughts Regarding the Service Companion Club Start-Up Process**

Some comments on general observations, challenges, and areas where the overall process might be improved are as follows:

* Currently, the overall RI administrative process is a little “clunky”. By example, the new member application needs to be submitted to RI, then the same information needs to be manually re-entered into Club Runner. It would be good to streamline the process for clubs that are working through the startup process.
* Attendance tracking/reporting doesn’t really accommodate the SCC cadence, as it is different than that of the parent club. This isn’t an issue with members of our SCC, but a few of the more traditional RI oriented members have mentioned the missing discipline of perfect attendance.

On a very positive note, the SCC was instrumental in bringing down the overall average age of our membership! Something that we have struggled with locally, regionally, and internationally.

Similarly, the SCC has boosted the number of volunteers that are available for different service projects. *Most of these new members are simply* ***more oriented to the Service activities*** *than to regular club meetings.*

*Remember* - Every Rotary club is different. Don’t try to create a carbon-copy of your club. Let the ServiceCompanion Club members decide what kind of club they want to be!