

A group photograph of approximately 15 men in business suits, arranged in two rows (some standing in the back, some seated in the front). They are positioned in front of a dark sign with gold lettering that reads "AMERICAN SOCIETY OF CIVIL ENGINEERS". The photo is semi-transparent, allowing the title text to be overlaid on it.

**GUIDELINES FOR**  
***LIFE MEMBER***  
**INVOLVEMENT**  
**IN ASCE**

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## **1. THE OPPORTUNITY**

Life Member status is generally conferred by ASCE when a member reaches age 65 and fulfills a number of years of ASCE membership. Current data indicates that there about 21,000 Life Members, which is about 14% of ASCE membership, and the numbers will certainly grow in the future. Some surveys have indicated that this membership group is underutilized and that few Sections/Branches have engaged in specific efforts or programs to recruit this specific group into their organization. There are many long-time members that maintain their Section/Branch involvement as they move to Life Member status. Studies show, however, that many Life Members may not be involved with local geographic organizations because they relocated to a new area and do not have local contacts, they have had a long break in service and do not see an opportunity to re-engage with their local organization, or their career focus with ASCE has been only technical and they do not have contacts with their local organizations.

These Life Members provide an outstanding opportunity to bring new, untapped resources to a local organization. Life Members have the energy, experience and the enthusiasm to be involved in a great variety of activities that serve their desire to contribute to their chosen profession, but also is of service to the local organization membership.

The following Guidelines were prepared to provide proven concise steps on how a local organization can engage Life Members. Large numbers are not needed to start the initiative. The Guidelines show how one person can get it started. Review the Guidelines and see how all organizations can easily benefit from an increase in Life Member participation.

## **2. GETTING STARTED**

Two steps are essential in the beginning. First, an officer of the local organization must believe in the value of more Life Member participation and support the commitment of resources to the effort. Second, a motivated and enthusiastic Life Member champion must be selected that can contact and recruit other Life Members and foster their involvement in local organization activities. In some cases, an organization may find it appropriate to create a start up team.

The initial task is to determine the specific activities in which Life Members will be invited to participate. Life Member surveys indicate that they value specific activities and interaction with other Life Members. The first opportunity is participation in local organization activities. Next, is an evaluation on how Life Member experiences can be utilized to staff new initiatives within the Section or Branch. Examples that include infrastructure projects, disaster assistance, fund raising, and special events. And finally, Life Member only activities should be considered since peer relationships and face to face contact are a high priority for this group.

The most important Life Member activity is an annual or monthly recognition event. A formal presentation of a Life Member certificate at a specific meeting shows the member that their contributions to the Society are appreciated. In many cases this will be the only opportunity the local

organization has to have a face to face discussion with the member and invite their participation in local activities.

Once the specific opportunities to participate are identified, an invitation letter and interest questionnaire can be transmitted to the Life Members within their geographic area.

Critical success factors have been identified, that if utilized, will enhance the prospects for success. There are four organization models that can be used to establish the appropriate starting point based on activity level and organization size. As Life Member activities increase, the organization model can progress from an individual to a group to a committee and for a few groups to the forum level. There is a discussion on recruitment and unique considerations. Sample invitation letters and a questionnaire are provided in the appendices, to help an organization get started with the first communication.

The information that follows in the Guidelines will assist in bringing Life Member resources to the local organization.

### **3. ACTIVITIES**

Because of the experience, knowledge, wisdom, and discretionary time available to many Life Members, there are a number of activities which they could undertake, either individually or collectively. In the process they could add great value to ASCE, to the community in which they live, and, at the same time get a sense of contribution and accomplishment on a professional and personal level.

Following are some of the activities that have already been done by Life Members at the Section and Branch level:

1. Recognize their peers through Awards Programs and/or on achieving levels of recognition, such as becoming a Life Member.
2. Recognize Life Members through articles in Section/Branch Newsletters.
3. Volunteer for Section/Branch activities.
4. Promote ASCE Initiatives at the Local/Regional or Society level.
5. Organize and/or provide speakers for a speakers bureau.
6. Help improve communications through work on a web site or by providing hard copies for those who don't use computers.
7. Prepare a Life Members Newsletter.
8. Lead and/or participate in Engineers Week activities.
9. Organize History and Heritage projects/activities.
10. Assist Student Chapters with programs/activities. \*
11. Mentor students and Younger Members.\*
12. Involvement with engineering related public projects (speak at public hearings, etc).
13. Lead and/or assist with the preparation and dissemination of local Infrastructure Report Cards.
14. Organize or assist in disaster preparedness programs.
15. Offer transportation to other Life Members who want to participate but can no longer drive.
16. Help with fundraising such as golf tournaments and seminars.
17. Assist other Life Member Groups get started.
18. Digitize Section/Branch records and important historical information.

\* Life Members, engineering students and Younger Members seem to have an affinity for each other. Life Members have a wealth of experience at the end of their careers that they are willing to share and students and Younger Members are looking for advice and mentoring as they begin their careers.

#### 4. CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

From the experience of existing Life Member efforts, the following are a few factors that are critical to their success.

1. A key person, or Champion, must start the effort by identifying, communicating with, and developing interest and enthusiasm among other Life Members. This person must believe in the opportunity to involve Life Members and be able to generate interest from other Life Members.
2. Section/Branch support and follow-up is necessary to give the Champion/Group a reference place in ASCE.
3. There must be meaningful activities.
4. Need to develop a network that fosters peer relationships and communication. Life Members want to stay connected.
5. Activities that have an engineering focus are most successful.
6. Combinations of technical and social activities that allow for spouse/significant involvement are supported.
7. Need to have an active monthly or annual recognition program for new Life Members that allows them to feel good about their careers and provides an opportunity to invite local organization participation.
8. Person to person contacts are most effective.

#### 5. ORGANIZATION OPTIONS

Since there is a broad range of sizes, densities, and environments of the 250+ local organizations of ASCE, one size would not fit all. When undertaking a new effort it is also important to start small and grow as the opportunity presents itself. Therefore, there are four basic organizational options to consider when initiating a Life Member program.

The first, and most essential, is the Life Member Champion. This person must see the value of Life Member participation both to the member and to ASCE. The Champion should have the ability to define opportunities for Life Members in that specific Section/Branch and to recruit and engage others. The Champion could initiate the invitation letter and questionnaire to define the numbers and areas of interest of Life Members in the organization. At this point it may be appropriate for the Section/Branch to coordinate their interest with the existing activities of the organization.

Interest levels may increase to a point that additional support is desired. A Life Member Group could be formed to facilitate Life Member involvement and also to consider initiatives or new efforts within the local organization that could be fully staffed by Life Members. This would be an informal group working together at their own time and pace.

As Life Member participation grows there may be an interest in Life Member activities. They will continue to support Section/Branch activities, but will also enjoy increasing peer relationships. This would probably drive the need to establish a Life Member Committee. This would involve selecting Committee leadership and more formal scheduling. The Committee might do some reporting to the Section/Branch Board and may involve funding from the Section/Branch to help carry out agreed upon responsibilities and activities.

If interest continues to grow, a Life Member Forum should be considered. A Forum is an organization that, in addition to serving needs of the general organization, has Life Member Committees with specific tasks and Life Member programs and field trips. This level of organization would probably lead to a formal reporting relationship with their local organization.

## **6. RECRUITMENT/UNIQUE CONSIDERATIONS**

The key to recruitment of Life Members is offering activities that respond to their interests and under conditions that they are able to participate. Life Members want to be involved in specific activities and favor those activities that have engineering aspects. Unique considerations for Life Members may include hard copies of communications, daytime meetings and transportation assistance.

Recruitment of existing Life Members can be initiated with the invitation letters and questionnaire that are provided in the Appendices. Responses to the questionnaire should be acknowledged with a telephone call or a face to face contact. Personal contact was a key to the growth and success of the Los Angeles Section Life Member Forum.

New Life Members can best be recruited at an annual or monthly recognition event. Following are examples of current Section/Branch Life Member recognitions:

1. Framed certificate
2. Paid meal, some include a guest
3. Name in program
4. Biographical information on Web Site
5. Biographical information reported at meeting
6. Biographical information provided in a book at annual recognition lunch

The keys to the recognition event are to make it clear to the Life member that their years of service are valued and that the Section/Branch is interested in their service in the future.

## **7. FINAL THOUGHTS**

The number of Life Members in Sections and Branches ranges from about 40 to 1000. A five to ten percent response from small organizations provides two to four motivated volunteers, which is a significant new resource with great potential for service. A one percent response from a large organization results in ten new volunteers, which is also a major new resource. The keys are Section/Branch support, a motivated champion, and a program that utilizes the elements of these Guidelines that are appropriate for the specific Section or Branch.



APPENDIX A

**Sample Questionnaire for Life Members  
March 2008**

Brief Introduction: In order to [a] better serve the needs of our Life members and [b] integrate Section/Branch Life Members into our activities and operations, the Section/Branch is exploring the establishment of an active Life Member Group. Please complete this brief questionnaire to help our Section and Branch better address your needs and expectations.

1. Would you be interested in serving our Section/Branch in one of the following capacities: PE mentor, Future Cities advisor/judge, technical group advisor, Section/Branch report card preparation, etc. ....(enter other roles as previously defined in preliminary questionnaire here)?

Yes No

2. Would you like to attend periodic social or technical meetings with other Life Members?

Yes No

3. Would you require special travel accommodations to enable your attendance at Life Member functions?

Yes No

4. Could you provide transportation to meetings/functions for other Life Members who require assistance?

Yes No

5. Would you be willing to serve as a point-of-contact in assisting the \_\_\_\_\_ Section/Branch in reaching other Life Members?

Yes    No

6. Please provide any comments/suggestions you may have in aiding us in the formation of a Life Member Group:

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## APPENDIX B

Congratulations New Life Member!

The [blank] Section/Branch congratulates you on achieving the status of Life Member. As a Life Member, you have been recognized by ASCE for your years of working in the profession of Civil Engineering as well as your membership and service within ASCE.

At the next Section/Branch meeting (or annual meeting) you and a guest will be our guests to present you with a Life Member certificate. We also will present a summary of your engineering career so we would appreciate biographical information about your career in Civil Engineering, awards received, and family information that you would like us to share.

The [blank] Section/Branch has also formed the [blank] Section/Branch Life Member [Group/Committee/Forum] to provide opportunities for on-going services to our organization. There are many exciting and valuable activities which could benefit from your expertise such as Engineers Week, History and Heritage, Student Chapter Advisor, Mentoring Programs for Students and Younger Members, Section/Branch Speaker's Bureau, the Section/Branch Infrastructure Report Card, and the Disaster Preparedness Program. A questionnaire is attached that will help our Section/Branch identify your specific interests and needs. As Life Members, we hope you are willing to join in our Life Member activities.

A member of our (blank) Section/Branch Life Member [Group/Committee/Forum] will contact Life members that respond to the questionnaire within the next two to three weeks. We will discuss the volunteer opportunities that are available in our organization and the activities of our [blank] Section/Branch Life Member [Group/Committee/Forum].

We look forward to working with you to increase Life Member involvement in the [blank] Section/Branch

Congratulations again!

Dear Life Member!

As a Life Member, you have been recognized by ASCE for your years working in the profession of Civil Engineering as well as your membership and service within ASCE. But it doesn't stop there. We, in the [blank] Section/Branch, also want you to know that we value your experience and long service to the Civil Engineering profession and to ASCE. That is why we are in the process of forming the [blank] Section/Branch Life Member [Group/Committee/Forum].

We have identified several exciting and important activities that Life Members could contribute such as Engineers Week, History and Heritage, Student Chapter Advisor, Mentoring Programs for Students and Younger Members, Section/Branch Speaker's Bureau, the Section/Branch Infrastructure Report Card, and the Disaster Preparedness Program. If you would like to participate in any of the activities listed above, we would like to hear from you. A questionnaire is attached that will help our Section/Branch Executive Board identify your specific interests and needs. We are also looking for Life Members willing to help us form a [blank] Section/Branch Life Member [Group/Committee/Forum].

A member of our (blank) Section/Branch Executive Board will contact members that respond to the questionnaire within the next two to three weeks to discuss the volunteer opportunities that are available in our organization and to discuss plans to form a [blank] Section/Branch Life Member [Group/Committee/Forum]. .

We look forward to working with you to increase Life Member involvement in the [blank] Section/Branch.

Sincerely,