

# M A T U R E Living

## LEADERSHIP EDITION

### Ten Ways to Assimilate Seniors in Your Ministry

by David P. Gallagher

**I**ntegrating and assimilating senior adults into your church is essential if the church is to remain healthy.

One way to keep track of new people is to create a chart that lists the name of each new person down the left side and includes various columns representing key assimilation points across the top. For example, the chart could include columns to record the dates of (1) the person's first visit, (2) welcome letter mailed, (3) home visit made, (4) person's name added to mailing list, (5) became involved in a small group, etc. Tracking every new senior is an important process of follow-up. I have found 10 keys to be helpful.

**1. Know how and when to involve new seniors.** A fine balance exists between a new person feeling pushed or ignored. Exercising godly wisdom makes the difference.

**2. Perception is reality.** You can never make a second first impression. A mental image of your church is created the moment a senior adult picks up a brochure or hears someone talk about your ministry. Once someone drives into the parking lot or walks in the door, that perception becomes reality. I call it the ministry of "First Impression."

**3. Be proactive in making new seniors a high priority.**

The best way to grow a senior adult ministry numerically is by word of mouth. One contented person tells another. Conversely, one unhappy person can do irreparable damage.

**4. Involve new people in small groups.** In addition to Bible study groups, we also provide a wide variety of small groups for senior adults that meet different needs. As examples, we have groups with a social focus, various interests, and by geographical location. Regardless of how they are grouped, we encourage a spiritual focus. Everyone wants to be loved and appreciated and small groups help meet that need. Involve new people in a small group as quickly as possible, but make sure the group provides a meaningful and quality experience.

**5. Love and care for new people.** Senior adults have pretty much seen it all. They've "been there and done that." The bottom line is whether they sense in the leader a genuine heart that is sincerely loving and caring.

**6. Create new ministries that involve senior adults.** Add new ministries to meet expanding needs. Be creative;

*(Continued on p. 4)*

*(Continued from p. 1)*

think outside the box of traditional programming.

**7. Keep the organizational structure simple.** Have a simple, well-organized, and efficient structure that is people oriented.

**8. Communicate clearly and often.** Senior adults need lots of clear communication. Print it, say it, show it on PowerPoint®, and say it again.

**9. Set the example.** As your senior adult leadership team goes, so goes the group. You lead the way.

**10. Disciple new seniors.** Jesus called us to make disciples. A decision to accept Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord is only the first step. Discipleship is a lifelong process.

Look over the 10 factors above and select two or three to implement in your senior adult group. Ask God for guidance in the process.

#### Questions to Think About

- What are the impressions first-time guests have of our senior adult group?
- Which of the 10 factors above is God asking me to focus on at this point in my ministry?

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