

# ***Membership Retention and Recruitment***



**Ninety-Nines**

*Inspiring Women Pilots  
Since 1929*

*Mission Statement: The Ninety-Nines is the international organization of women pilots that promotes advancement of aviation through education, scholarships, and mutual support while honoring our unique history and sharing our passion for flight.*

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# Introduction

Membership retention and recruitment are vital parts of any member-based organization. This is particularly true of The Ninety-Nines because our members come from a very select and limited group - women who are pilots. With a limited number to draw from, every member is important. As a service organization, we count on our members to provide the “man power” for our many aviation-oriented service projects. The support of our members is equally important in maintaining our two historical museums. Retained members bring experience and wisdom to the organization. Newly recruited members bring new ideas and energy. The Ninety-Nines has been in existence since 1929. We are an established organization recognized and respected in the aviation community. The dedicated work of members over the years has made this possible.

Membership retention and recruitment is most effective at the Section or Chapter level as it is at this level that members are known personally and can be actively involved. The Membership Chairman is one of the most important persons in this endeavor. She should be selected with care and given the respect her position warrants. This handbook has been designed to give the Membership Chairman guidelines and ideas in performing her duties. It is a living document and will evolve as our membership evolves. These are only suggestions; do not expect to do everything listed herein. Use what works for your Section/Chapter!

The Membership Chairman cannot do this job alone. Every member can assist with retention and recruitment. The activities, personality, and energy of each Section and/or Chapter depend on its members; these qualities will attract or turn away members. It is easy to see in the pages that follow that it will take more than one person to increase membership.

Goals should be set for growth. Activities should be planned with growth in mind. What is a realistic goal? That will depend on the number of women pilots in the area, but there is potential in almost every location. In the United States alone, it is estimated that there are 650,000 licensed pilots; women pilots are estimated to be approximately 6% of that number, or 39,000.<sup>1</sup> Those numbers do not include the many women pilots around the world. With approximately 5,000 members currently in The 99s, we have lots of potential for growth. Perhaps a motto could be:

## EVERY WOMAN PILOT A 99

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<sup>1</sup> [www.faa.gov](http://www.faa.gov)

## DUTIES OF SECTION OR CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN

*Keep an updated roster of members.*

This can be the list mailed out each month from Headquarters or the list that appears on the web site. Create a directory just for your members, update as needed, and give everyone a copy.

*Compile a list of potential members and update as needed.*

Use this list to invite potential members to events. Send them information packets, newsletters, etc. periodically.

*Check the monthly membership reports from Headquarters.*

Contact those whose membership is about to expire. Look for discrepancies in member information. Notify Headquarters of necessary changes. Search for members by your local telephone area code or local towns/cities. You may find 99s who have moved to your area but not yet transferred their membership.

*Have a supply of application forms and brochures to give to prospective members.*

These are available at no charge from Headquarters. You may want to produce your own brochure with information specific to you or assemble "New Member" packets of information. Be sure to check The 99s' website for the most current versions as this information is updated periodically.

*If possible, screen new applications for completeness.*

If utilizing a paper application, set up a system that requires all new applications to come directly to you. Determine applications are complete before sending on to Headquarters. The copy of the pilot license should include both sides. If applications have been post mailed, faxed, or completed online through The 99s' website, check with new members a few weeks afterwards to ensure they have received their new member packet from Headquarters.

*Plan activities with other Chapter members that will introduce potential members to The 99s.*

*Keep in contact with all members, especially those who are not active.*

Contact can be via phone, notes, visits, cards, or e-mail. Enlist the help of other members.

*Use the online Directory as a resource.*

*Be present at meetings to give the Membership report.*

Introduce new and potential members at meetings. Have a sign in sheet with space for address, phone and e-mail. Use this for follow up. Distribute new member packets and/or gifts.

*Write a bio on new members for your newsletter; include a photo and contact information.*

Send a copy to your Section newsletter editor.

*Encourage all members to help with recruiting and retention of members.*

You cannot do this huge job all by yourself. Give recognition to those who help you retain and recruit members.

*The following ideas have been provided by other 99s to help get you started:*

## COMPILE A SECTION OR CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY

Every Membership Chairman should have a current membership list for their Section or Chapter. This information is available from Headquarters and is mailed to the Membership Chairman monthly; it can also be obtained from The Ninety-Nines online directory<sup>2</sup>. Use this information to compile a personalized directory. It can be as small or as large your needs require. Directories can be as simple as using 8.5" X 11" paper folded in half and stapling. Include member information such as name, address, home, work, and cell phone numbers, e-mail address and name of spouse/significant other. Pilot ratings, aircraft, and base of operations could also be included. Section/Chapter information could include a current list of officers, meeting date and place, calendar of events, and historical information.

How about creating is a NON-MEMBER DIRECTORY of licensed women pilots and students in your area? You may be able to get names from your local FSDO [Flight Standards District Office]. Frequent visits to flight schools in your area will give you names of students. Ask members to be on the lookout for women pilots. You never know, the bank teller or a woman in your quilting club or at church may be a pilot. Whenever you see a woman at the airport, ask her if she knows about The 99s. Set a goal of contacting the non-members at least four times a year. Invite them to meetings and activities; send them a newsletter. Assign 2-3 non-members to current members. Ask them to make personal phone calls to get non-members involved. They could meet for coffee or go flying or ride together to an aviation function.

*I have always found the more I put myself into something, the more I get out of it.*

## PRODUCE ADVERTISING MATERIAL ABOUT YOUR CHAPTER<sup>3</sup>

Brochures are available from 99s Headquarters at no charge. These can be personalized by putting the Membership Chairman's name and email address on the mail-in card.

You can also create your own brochure. This is easy to do with the many computer programs and specialty paper available today. Your brochure could list activities, meeting dates and places, contact phone numbers, reasons for joining The 99s, scholarship opportunities, etc. A tear off mail in card for more information would give you the interested person's name and phone number. These brochures could be left in FBOs, flight schools, taken to safety seminars, left in women's restrooms at aviation related places, placed in colleges that have flight training, etc.

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<sup>2</sup> [www.ninety-nines.org/members](http://www.ninety-nines.org/members) [log-in required]

<sup>3</sup> [www.ninety-nines.org](http://www.ninety-nines.org)

Posters can be used much like brochures. Be sure to have a contact phone number on the poster. One Chapter has made "Have you closed your Flight Plan?" signs and has posted them at airports in their area.

If you have the resources and talent within your Chapter, create a traveling display such as a table top fold out that has large photos of Chapter activities along with hand-out material. Having a PowerPoint or video presentation is also an option.

Make business cards for yourself, officers, and any other members who want them. Use an easy computer program and special business card paper to create inexpensive but creative cards.

Be sure to include the benefits of membership in The 99s, such as our e-Networking forum, the Professional Pilot Leadership Initiative, and our scholarships [Amelia Earhart scholarships, Vicki Cruse, scholarships through other Sections/Chapters, Fly Now Award].<sup>4</sup>

*Remember: a group is what YOU make of it.*

## CREATE A SECTION OR CHAPTER WEB PAGE<sup>5</sup>

Check with your 99s Section webmaster to see if a page can be added for your Chapter. If there is a Section website, you may be able to put information on it. Although space may be limited, you can list contact names and e-mail addresses as well as meeting dates.

Google 'free web pages' and see where this leads. Once you have developed a Chapter website, be sure it is linked to your Section website and to the International website.

If you decide to create your own website, use common words pilots might use in searching for you. Use lots of visuals and let your imagination soar.

Once you create a website, be sure to maintain it on a regular basis. An outdated site is worse than no site at all. There is also nothing more frustrating than finding outdated information/bad links.

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<sup>4</sup> [www.ninety-nines.org/index.cfm/email\\_networks.htm](http://www.ninety-nines.org/index.cfm/email_networks.htm);  
[www.ninety-nines.org/index.cfm/professional\\_pilot\\_leadership\\_initiative\\_ppli.htm](http://www.ninety-nines.org/index.cfm/professional_pilot_leadership_initiative_ppli.htm);  
[www.ninety-nines.org/index.cfm/resource\\_center.htm](http://www.ninety-nines.org/index.cfm/resource_center.htm)

<sup>5</sup> [www.ninety-nines.org](http://www.ninety-nines.org); click on the 'About the Organization' tab, then click on 'Find A Section/Chapter' to find other Chapters' websites and/or newsletters

## ASSEMBLE A NEW MEMBER PACKET

Having information readily available for potential members can often make the difference in getting a new member. One Chapter has its members carry a business sized envelope containing a new member application, a brochure from Headquarters, a flyer with their Chapter history and a brochure about their Section. Remember to list contact information (phone numbers and/or email addresses)!

If you receive a paper application from a potential member, make sure applications are completed accurately and make a copy of the license (student, military, pilot) with both front and back sides prior to sending to Headquarters.

## MAKE NEW MEMBERS FEEL WELCOME

If possible, have someone bring the new member to her first meeting. In any event, greet her as she comes in. Learn her name and remember it! Introduce her to other members during the social time of the meeting. A formal introduction can be made by either the Chairman or you during the business meeting. A small gift, a new member packet, or a Chapter name tag can be given to the new member. Before she leaves the meeting, be sure you have contact information and a definite date to meet for coffee or to go flying.

Make certain once you have a new member that you continue to nurture her and stay in contact. New members should be asked to participate and become active with committee work as soon as they join so they will have a feeling of belonging; however, do not "dump" on them as this can be overwhelming. The Chairman could meet individually with new members to find out their interests, talents, and available time. Together they could identify how the new member would like to participate.

Consider presenting new members with a CD that tells about your Section or Chapter. It could contain photos from your scrapbook, a bit of history, current officers with phone numbers and e-mail addresses, your web page address, meeting date and place, Bylaws and Standing Rules, activities, and committees, etc.

## HOLD AN ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Although recruiting new members is an ongoing endeavor, it can be stimulating to hold a meeting specifically for that purpose. All potential members can be contacted with colorful invitations to a party in their honor. Send out Invitations and complimentary newsletters in advance of the meeting. Encourage current members to bring a potential member. Potential members receive a small gift and, of course, an application form. Top off the event with an interesting speaker.

## GAIN COMMUNITY VISIBILITY

Some people say The Ninety-Nines is the world's best kept secret. Let's break that myth! Get your Section's/Chapter's name and The Ninety-Nines' name before the public every chance you have. Whenever you hold a flying event, invite the news media. Have a publicity packet prepared for them with details about The 99s and your Section/Chapter. If they don't show up, write a story yourself and submit with photos.

If a member is presented with an award or participates in an air race, contact the local media. Even if a member has distinguished herself in another arena, her affiliation with the Section/Chapter should always be mentioned. Once her name or picture has appeared, she should be sent a copy and a copy should go in the scrapbook.

Put your meeting date and place in your newspaper's list of meetings. Since most people don't know what The 99s is, add "International Organization of Women Pilots" after your Section/Chapter name.

Participate in other organizations' activities, representing The 99s. Community service work earns favorable recognition. Jointly working on a project and thereby linking yourself to a successful, established group is powerful. For example, "Walk for a Cure" is especially appropriate for a woman's organization such as The 99s to support. Habitat for Humanity, local food banks, Muscular Dystrophy...the list is long and there are bound to be one or two that are of particular interest to you. Wear t-shirts or carry a banner that recognizes The 99s.

Plan a joint event with your local Zonta organization. Our ties with Zonta go back to Amelia Earhart who was an active Zonta member. Zonta and The 99s have supported each other through the years. A joint luncheon would be a perfect opportunity for both local organizations to get to know each other. One of Zonta's monthly meetings is typically about Amelia.

Invite guests from the community to a special meeting that features information about your Section/Chapter and The 99s. Community leaders tend to be very busy people, so plan ahead and have several options as to whom you invite and when. Ask the community leader to tell your group what is foremost on his/her mind and then allow time for articulate Chapter members to tell a little about The 99s. Along with your written invitation send an information sheet about The 99s. There should be something in it for the invited person, such as support on a local issue or awareness of their favorite cause.

*As your Chapter grows, so will your enthusiasm for The 99s.*



## JOIN FORCES WITH ANOTHER AVIATION GROUP<sup>6</sup>

Individuals with like interests have a definite reason to band together. The 99s are a small part of aviation, but we are recognized as a group that gets things done. Your support of other aviation groups will be well appreciated and will open many doors to prospective members, flying activities, and more.

### Young Eagles.

The EAA [Experimental Aircraft Association] is visible in most communities that have airports. Their Young Eagles program has given all of us an opportunity to participate in bringing more young people into aviation. Volunteer to help with this project as well as the many other activities the local EAA Chapters conduct. You may want to have a joint meeting occasionally. Plan to join EAA members in some of their flying activities also. How about some friendly competition in proficiency racing or spot landings?

### Safety Seminars.

These are a great venue for meeting other women pilots. Your Chapter may want to sponsor a Safety Seminar in conjunction with your local FAA [Federal Aviation Administration] personnel from the FSDO [Flight Standards District Office]. Members from your Chapter should attend en masse any AOPA [Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association] seminars. Ask if you can put up a display about your Chapter with handout brochures and membership forms. Ask if someone from your Chapter can speak at the seminar. This could be an in depth presentation on some safety aspect if your member is qualified or just a few minutes talk about The 99s scholarship program or museums.

Don't forget balloons, gliders, and helicopters. If these forms of aviation are popular in your area, contact those pilots to see how your Chapter can become involved.

Always wear your Section/Chapter name badge and your 99s pin whenever you are with other aviation groups and whenever it would be appropriate at a public function. The pin has a history, just like The 99s. One of the early members of The 99s was married to someone in the Tiffany family. The pin was created by a designer at Tiffany Jewelers in New York City.

## SPONSOR A NON-MEMBER ACTIVITY

Plan an activity just for non-members and invite their family members and friends. Casual events such as picnics or hangar parties work well. Most pilots love to eat, so plan an event where you provide lots of food along with some fun ice breakers. Gear the party to the age level of the group.

Ask a non-member to be a speaker at a Chapter meeting, and then be sure all his/her co-workers and friends are also invited. Another pilot from outside the Chapter can give a fresh perspective to a familiar subject, or may even know about something that is new to your members. And who knows, they just may decide to join your Chapter.

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<sup>6</sup> [www.eaa.org](http://www.eaa.org); [www.aopa.org](http://www.aopa.org); [www.faasafety.org](http://www.faasafety.org)

## NURTURE CURRENT MEMBERS

Remember, every member is important. Develop a means for maintaining contact with every member at least four times a year. For many members, an e-mail broadcast is sufficient, for other members you will need to be more creative and/or personal. Older members who no longer fly would probably enjoy a personal visit or an invitation to lunch or a ride to an event. Some people prefer a handwritten note while others never find time to read their mail. You know your members better than anyone, so personalize your method of contact and elicit the help of other Chapter members.

Do not write off a member who does not come to meetings. Find out why. It may be illness, work, schedule, or distance. All are factors. Keep in contact. Once in a while hold a meeting on a day when they are available. Offer to pick them up. Hold meetings at their house. Make a recording of a program and take to them.

Members usually stay in an organization if they feel a commitment to the organization. Every member should be given an opportunity to contribute in a way that is comfortable for them. For some, this will mean physically working on Chapter projects. For others it may mean a financial donation, or writing or speaking about The 99s. Everyone has something to offer, but work, social, and family commitments often limit the amount of time and energy we have available for other things. Keep this in mind when asking people to give of their time.

Plan meetings and activities that interest the majority of members. Strive for excellence in everything you do. Invite speakers who are energetic and dynamic. Their topic does not always have to be aviation related, but it does have to be of interest to your members. The Program Chairman must plan ahead and have a list of potential speakers. A survey of members will give ideas on areas of interest. All speakers should receive a written invitation and a written thank you. Small gifts or an airplane ride are also nice, if possible.

Not everyone can participate in all activities. A variety of events and dates will help make them more accessible to more members. Try to spread the organizational work around so the same people are not always planning an event.

Monitor your membership list. Know the expiration date of every member. When her renewal comes due, send an attention getting card or postcard reminding her that she will soon receive her renewal notice from Headquarters. A follow-up phone call is also a good idea. Thank her when she does renew.

## HAVE A SECTION OR CHAPTER NEWSLETTER<sup>7</sup>

This is a great way to communicate. The format can be either a paper edition or an e-newsletter. Be sure to engage all members, regardless of the format used. The newsletter should be informative and personal. The newsletter is more than just a way of communicating. It is a way to say, "We care about you."

The Chapter Chairman should write a column in each newsletter. The topic is her choice, but her presence is very important. Her photo and phone number or e-mail should accompany her article.

The Membership Chairman should also have a column in each newsletter. She should introduce new members via the newsletter with a short biography, photo, and contact information.

Add a calendar of coming events, an article about a recent Chapter activity and some flying stories from members and you have a full and interesting newsletter.

Remember our Standing Rules<sup>8</sup> require that all members be notified in writing of meetings and your newsletter is a great way to do this. If your newsletter is not published monthly, you can send a postcard on off months or you can put an extended calendar in the newsletter. If you charge for your newsletter and not all members receive it, you must somehow notify those members, in writing, of your meetings.

## CONDUCT A MEMBERSHIP SURVEY

To keep your member directory updated, you will need to get information from your members. An annual survey can provide new information on ratings, e-mail changes, etc. This is also a good time to ask what projects the member would be interested in helping with. Do they have a specific schedule, such as "never available on Saturday" or "work evenings"? Is there a topic they would like discussed at a meeting? Do they have ideas for flying activities? Do they have suggestions for improving something in the Chapter?

Plan for personal follow-up after the surveys are returned. One-on-one phone calls can clarify any questions and will make the member feel important. Make sure vital information gets to the right people. For example, if a member says she wants to help give programs in the schools, make sure the chairman of that committee knows about it. Take members' suggestions seriously. Discuss them at a meeting and look for ways to incorporate new ideas.

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<sup>7</sup> Go to [www.ninety-nines.org](http://www.ninety-nines.org), click on the 'About the Organization' link, then click on 'Find A Section/Chapter' to find other Chapters' websites and/or newsletters.

<sup>8</sup> Standing Rules, ST II -CHAPTERS. CHAPTER OPERATION, A. Member Notification of Meetings: Each Chapter member must be notified in writing of the time, place and agenda of all Chapter meetings, at least five (5) days before each meeting.

## ESTABLISH A MENTORING PROGRAM<sup>9</sup>

Consider assigning new members a sponsor. Have a 'sponsorship pledge', including such things requiring the sponsor to help the new member get to meetings and flying events, explaining 99s procedures and lingo, and sharing flying stories.

If your Section or Chapter has Student Pilot members, mentors are especially helpful as they work through their flight training.

Start with a list of current members who are willing to be Mentors. As new women come into the organization, whether they are students or not, assign a mentor (someone who has similar interests, lives in the same part of town, flies at the same airport, or has other commonalities). It is probably a good idea to make it a serious commitment by having a pledge and/or special ceremony to recognize both parties. Periodically, the Chairman should ask for a report from the Mentors.

## FIND STUDENT PILOTS

According to the FAA, there are 87,000 student pilots in the U.S., with approximately 11.6 % who are women. That makes a total of 10,000 potential student pilots in the U.S. alone. These are young, energetic women, many with aviation careers as a goal. They have much to offer The 99s and we in turn have much to offer them. So how do we find these women?

Obviously, flight instructors and flight schools are a primary source. If you have flight instructors in your Chapter, you already have an established contact. Encourage your CFIs to bring their students to meetings. Make contact with as many CFIs as you can. Take them cookies, invite them to meetings, and leave your business cards and brochures with them. Go flying with one for your Flight Review. If there are local CFI meetings, attend one or ask to speak. Since new students are starting all the time, visit these CFIs at least once a month.

Provide a bowl of candy at a local flight school with a sign, "Compliments of The 99s". Of course, leave a few brochures with contact information.

If ground school classes are offered in your area, volunteer someone from your Chapter to speak at one. Depending on the experience of the 99, the topic could be a technical aviation subject, careers in aviation, scholarships available, or things to do for fun in aviation. Bring brochures and membership forms to the ground school.

Other ways to reach students are: contacts at an aviation event such as a safety meeting or air show; Civil Air Patrol Commanders; brochures, posters, and business cards left at airports and flight schools; publicity in local newspapers; airport managers; and, events held specifically for students.

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<sup>9</sup> The Ninety-Nines one-of-a-kind formal mentoring program is the Professional Pilot Leadership Initiative [PPLI]. For more information:

[www.ninety-nines.org/index.cfm/professional\\_pilot\\_leadership\\_initiative\\_ppli.htm](http://www.ninety-nines.org/index.cfm/professional_pilot_leadership_initiative_ppli.htm)

*Reach out, stay visible and show off what a wonderful organization we are!*

## OFFER SOMETHING SPECIAL FOR STUDENT PILOTS

The information packet you give to student pilots should be personalized for students. Highlight the membership fee on the applications (\$35 - such a deal!). Include a stamped, addressed envelope (remember they don't have much money).

Make students feel special from their very first meeting. Ask each student to tell a little about herself. Welcome each student with applause and recognition and be sure to talk to them during the break. You may want to give them a gift that shows you care about them. A tote bag, log book, ear plugs, something related to their flying.

Create a network with other students and mentors. Arrange for phone calls to remind them of meetings. Offer rides. Plan periodic or "on call" sessions where students can ask questions of more experienced pilots. These could be monthly "share and care" meetings held at the airport or in a member's home. Always provide food and a casual atmosphere.

Give a student pilot workshop. You could have half hour clinics on flight planning calculations, understanding weather reports, airspace criteria, and radio communications. A student needs direct information and an opportunity to ask "dumb" questions in a safe environment. Such a workshop will give the student a chance to troubleshoot any areas that are holding the student back or creating a problem. Male students could also be invited to these workshops. Keep an attendance list and have follow-up contact.

Prepare an information packet for students. It could contain a list of student pilots in the area as well as ground schools, flight schools and CFIs. A list of towered and non-towered airports with pros and cons of training at each. Information on how to get aviation weather from web sites, FBO weather programs, local airport phone numbers for weather, and the local FSS. If the Chapter has a library or if members have books they are willing to loan, include a list of these.

Invite them to dinner. A home cooked meal in a family setting can mean the world to a student away from home, living on a limited budget.

Congratulate student pilots on their progress. Computer-generated cards or certificates are easy to produce and can mean a lot to a student who has just soloed or completed a cross country. More formal letters of congratulations can come from the Chapter Chairman, especially when the student pilot becomes a Private pilot.

Your Chapter may want to purchase special gifts for student pilots, such as t-shirts, hats, or solo wings.

Report students' progress in the Chapter newsletter, along with photos. Plan tours that would be of special interest, such as a tower, an airline maintenance hangar, or an FSS station. Take student pilots flying. They never have enough money to do all the flying they would like to do. Also, just flying for fun without an instructor on board can be a nice change of pace.

To accomplish all this, you may want to designate one person to oversee your Associate members.

# THANK YOU!!

*Thank you for your interest in creating growth in The Ninety-Nines.* We hope the ideas herein are helpful. Please let us know how YOU grow your Section or Chapter so we may share that information!

## AND A FINAL THOUGHT...

Don't expect to take on everything listed here. These are *suggestions*...use 1 or 2 ideas, or whatever works for YOU.

Also, remember that membership at the International level needs to be maintained in order to be part of the Section or Chapter.