

**IEEE Virginia Council
Public Relations
September 28, 2002**

In January 2002, we set a goal of reaching out to IEEE members at the local sections, to sensitize them to become more active in the affairs of their sections. I am pleased to report that at least one section took the to the task and proved that our IEEE members are ready and willing to be involved. The Richmond Section, in 2001, was at the brink of collapsing, due to poor attendance and seemingly lack of interest. Region 3 was about to step in and take over, when few volunteers from the Section felt that the situation could be improved locally. This is what they did, and the results terrific.

They held a meeting in February 2002 to assess the situation. They had strong faith the members being committed to IEEE. They searched their collective memory for possible champions, who would be willing to take on Section leadership and jumpstart the Richmond Section. They formed a steering committee to spearhead this effort. The committee went to work according to an agreed upon plan. They called for a general membership meeting in March to gauge member interest. The meeting was held in local winery, and the owner's daughter, who is a chemist, gave a presentation on the science of wine making. This qualified as a technical program for the section. There were 72 members and spouses attending. The steering committee had attendees fill out a questionnaire looking for program topics and volunteers. The response was overwhelmingly positive. The committee was able to recruit new volunteers and use the talent of past active members as well. That meeting got the Section back on track. The following meetings for April and May were equally successful in terms of attendance and choice of speakers. There were few things Steering Committee members were concerned about. They wanted to make sure they have a selection of program topics to cover the more than one segment of the profession, they wanted to hold the meeting in a central place commensurate with section member demographics, and they wanted to make sure the price is right. They used member feedback to generate programs. In essence, they responded to members' needs, which is key to success in this business. They surveyed the Richmond area for a suitable location that offers a good meal at a reasonable price. They continue to enjoy good attendance, and they have had several attendees requesting IEEE membership applications.

The meetings are published in the Richmond Times-Dispatch, are posted on the Richmond Section web site, sent by the electronic mailing for those in the database, and sent by regular mail for the time being. Notices are sent to other engineering societies, to be included in society newsletters and respective web sites. Other societies send their meeting announcements to the IEEE Richmond Section Web Master, to be posted on the web site.

This is one thing members can do to attract new volunteers, bring new members, and have successful meetings.

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