

Neighborhood Reorganization Underway in Queens

By BRIGID WITKOWSKI

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Bearing in mind the challenge for 1997 to “create an organization rooted in the community,” members of Queens Territory met today at the New York Culture Center for a “Town Meeting.” Perhaps it should have been dubbed a “Borough Meeting.”

Although all members of Queens Territory live in Queens, some do not practice at the meeting places closest to their homes. More meeting places need to be developed so that, where possible, people can walk to their meetings and so that additional members, who now practice in other boroughs, can be accommodated when they transfer into Queens.

The leaders of Queens Territory set up this meeting out of concern that this reorganization not feel unnatural and not separate friends unnecessarily. They wanted every member’s voice to be heard.

A song from *My Fair Lady*, “On the Street Where You Live,” created a light atmosphere for the dialogues. Groups of about 12 people met to discuss their vision for their neighborhoods, their worries about a neighborhood-based organization, their recommendations and any experiences they have already had with local meetings. In addition, a survey was distributed to identify those who wished to work on the reorganization or to hold meetings in their homes.

In the dialogues, members mentioned their desire to see parks, playgrounds and constructive community activities for young people. They want to see drug-free and crime-free neighborhoods.

Others mentioned solving the problem of loneliness and alienation, especially among older people, in their neighborhoods. Members were eager to share the SGI with their neighbors, to bring a sense of family into the neighborhoods, to use their SGI training to volunteer in the neighborhoods.

Some expressed a conviction that during the reorganization they must take extra-good care of members who might get separated from the people who now communicate with them.

Jim Corwin, the joint territory chief, expressed his hope that during this process everyone can be flexible, can streamline the organization and shake free of the “position-consciousness” that has sometimes colored their thinking in the past.

Although there are still many unanswered questions, members seemed to be eager to get started, to find out what can be created from this fresh vantage point.

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