

NFMS JUNIORS COMMITTEE--10 Tips to Start a Juniors Rock Club

by Gary Buhr, Chairman, Spring 2005

- 1.) A Juniors Club can be a separate entity/name or a part of your regular Rock Club. May need to modify Bylaws or Club Constitution to make it official. This model is based on the success of Everett Rookie Rockhounds during the past 7 years growth where the Advisor interacts and leads the meeting. Some Juniors Clubs run their own meeting with Juniors as officers using Roberts Rules of Order, but that seems to be the minority pattern.
- 2.) It only takes one or two Juniors and a durable, consistent Advisor to begin. Growth will depend on demographics or population, convenience of meetings and how fun/enjoyable the meetings are. This is our hobby so be sure not to make your Juniors meetings seem like “boring” academic school class. A “hands on” meeting will occupy minds and prevent disturbances.
- 3.) Empower the imagination of the Juniors by making their meeting participatory rather than observatory. Making lapidary or rock/fossil related projects should be a top priority. If not making items for the Juniors to take home, then play a game that all ages (4 to 17) can understand and win rock prizes to take home.
- 4.) The general Rock Club membership must have ongoing generosity where they or the Rock Club funds are continually donating items for the Juniors to utilize, work with or win as prizes at every Juniors meeting. The Juniors need to take something home from each meeting to appreciate, ponder and add to their collection or simply to be the “carrot” on a stick.
- 5.) Juniors meetings should be the same date and time as the regular Rock Club meetings because of transportation and the Juniors should meet in another room of the same building because of noise levels. Preferably during the “boring” (to Juniors) part of the regular Rock Club meeting which is the program or the business parts, usually during the first hour. Then after the Juniors complete their one hour meeting they (quietly) come into the regular meeting to enjoy show & tell, the sales table, socialization and treats with the rest of the general membership. Each Juniors meeting should be different to maintain vitality during the year, but can be repeated on an annual basis unless it is something the Juniors really enjoy and ask for more often. Also is healthy to do an annual poll of the Juniors about how you are doing, what they like, what they do not like and what they would change in their meetings. This feedback helps guide the Advisor with a “pulse” of what the Juniors want.
- 6.) The Juniors Advisor should be fairly creative and spontaneous while enjoying the Juniors meeting. Always have a plan for the one hour meeting, but entertain questions as they come up because that is when the best learning happens according to each Juniors interests and abilities. Keeping the mood of the meeting fun and happy will create a positive experience for the Juniors and that will maximize the learning. With many ages present at the same table a briskly paced meeting will be more fun and without the prospect of boredom/noise. The same Advisor at each meeting creates a familiar face which gives the Juniors a sense of security plus a stable environment that allows more fun and freedom to participate. Success for your Juniors Club will never be built on excuses but rather being there every month with a fun program so the Juniors have an expectation of fun while learning.

7.) If there are Junior Guests, introduce each at the start of your meeting, ask how they found out about your Rock Club and what they like about rocks. Many times this will spawn a (curious) conversation amongst the Juniors which helps compatibility and cohesion of your meeting group so they will want to come back each month to interact with their new friends the Rockhounds.

8.) Besides a monthly meeting, create the opportunity for Juniors to attend a Field Trip (indoors or outdoors) or a lapidary workshop. Modern schedules are nearly hectic, but you need to offer these opportunities or the Juniors will do something else since we live in a culture of so many choices. Time is the big challenge for parents and the Juniors only want to do what is fun or interesting.

9.) Promote the Juniors who participate. After each meeting or Juniors activity the Advisor or volunteer scribe should write an article and photo if possible about what happened at the meeting or event. Actually taking notes helps develop an interesting article and promotes accuracy of name spelling. In the verbiage, print the names of the participating Juniors in CAPITAL LETTERS to emphasize how special they are in your next newsletter or on your website. This communication will empower the Juniors and the future of your club.

10.) Resources List to give you ideas for projects, but it is always best to use your own thoughts and creativity because they may be easier for you to develop with affordable resources at hand and more compatible with your local community. No matter what you are doing or what project is at hand, always treat every Junior with respect and recognize their importance as the future leaders of your Rock Club.

a. Websites

(amfed.org/nfms/juniors)

(Canadian Rockhound: Junior Rockhound Web-Magazine)

(Rock Hound Kids.com)

b. Printed publications

Geology Crafts for Kids--50 nifty projects to Explore the Marvels of Planet Earth by Anderson, Diehn & Krautwurst/Sterling Publishers, NY.

Rock & Gem Magazine--Rock & Gem Kids centerpiece by Steve Decker.

c. Contact your NFMS or AFMS Juniors Committee Chairman