

# **What Sleepy Hollow Thinks and Wants:**

## **Results of 2003 Village Resident Survey**



**Prepared for: Sleepy Hollow Service Club**

**Prepared by: Wayne Eischen**

**September, 2003**

## Table of Contents

<b>Background .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Objectives.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Methodology .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Conclusions and Implications .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Detailed Findings .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Overall Impressions .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Events .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Membership .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Communications .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>The Future .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Respondent Profile .....</b>	<b>14</b>

*This survey represents the feelings and attitudes of 138 residents in Sleepy Hollow, so results should be used accordingly. For questions about this report, contact Wayne Eischen at [weischenwe@aol.com](mailto:weischenwe@aol.com).*

## **Background**

The Sleepy Hollow Service Club has been serving the Village since 1973. It performs a number of services for the community, including managing special events (Fourth of July festival and fireworks, Halloween bonfire, Easter Egg Hunt, and Holiday in the Hollow), purchasing equipment for the local police and fire departments, and improving the appearance of the Village.

The Club was interested in better understanding residents' perceptions of the organization and its efforts. It was also important to identify what people want the Club to accomplish, especially since it is the financial support of the Village residents that allows the Club to operate. As a result, the Club decided to include a survey with a mailing it sent to all households in the Village.

## **Objectives**

The overall objectives of the survey were to learn how residents about the Service Club's past performance and what they would like to see in the in the future. Specific objectives included:

- ✓ Understand how residents feel about the Club and why.
- ✓ Determine in what areas the Club has the most impact.
- ✓ Assess how people feel about each of the main events sponsored by the Club, including specific aspects of each event.
- ✓ Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the events and programs initiated by the Club.
- ✓ Identify the best means of communicating with residents.
- ✓ Understand where the Club should focus its future efforts and how it should allocate its resources.

## **Methodology**

In the spring of 2003, it was suggested that a questionnaire be developed that would be used to gather information about the Service Club from residents. When it was completed, it was determined that the Club should send out a mailing to every household in the Village. The mailing included information about the organization, its fund-raising efforts, its programs, raffle tickets, and a stamped envelope for the return of materials (including the survey). The packets were mailed in early June and responses through early September were tallied and included in the report. A total of 138 residents responded to the survey.

The questionnaire was two legal-sized pages in length, consisting of 65 aided measures and four open-ended questions.

## **Conclusions and Implications**

### **Overview**

Overall, the Sleepy Hollow Service Club is held in high regard by the vast majority of residents in the Village. Its primary strength lies in the events it sponsors, with children being the primary beneficiaries of the Club's efforts. The keystones of the Club's initiatives are the Fourth of July festival/fireworks and the Halloween celebration featuring the bonfire and appearance of the Headless Horseman.

The following issues should be considered as the Service Club moves beyond its 30<sup>th</sup> year of serving the community:

### **Focus of Effort**

- Continue to make growing up in Sleepy Hollow a special experience for children.
- Spread the concentration of efforts from children to other audiences. The Club could reach out to adults (with or without children) and senior citizens to a greater extent.
- Develop a program or concerted effort that helps the elderly and those in need within the Village. This would allow the Club to provide service on a personal level on an as-needed basis.
- Continue to improve the appearance of the Village. Landscaping projects are currently available at the Village Hall through the Green Communities Environmental Planning Project.

### **Events**

- Provide additional activities at Halloween. Activities are needed to fill the gap between the end of the costume contest and the appearance of the Headless Horseman.
- An enhanced menu of food and beverages should be offered at events. People see these events as meal occasions and are looking for a more substantial offering (which also translates into an enhanced revenue generator).
- Realize that Holiday in the Hollow appears to be growing into a recognized event offered by the Club.
- Offer more entertainment and attractions for adults at events, especially at the Fourth July event. While people appreciate all that the Club does for children, this initiative would enhance the experience of parents already at the event and would attract more (older) adults who do not have children.

## **Communications**

- Communication with residents is good, but could be better. Some people still claim to be unaware of the organization and its contributions to the community, while others mistakenly think the Club's efforts are financed by the Village or taxes.
- Use the Village Newsletter and the back of the water bill to communicate information about the Club and events.
- Develop an e-mail system that allows interactive and instantaneous communication between residents and the organization.

## **Organization/Policy**

- Look for ways to encourage and increase membership. A larger organization generates more good ideas on how to operate, and spreads the work around to more people, reducing burn-out and turnover.
- Consider how women might play a role in the Club's efforts. Without being actual members, women could contribute to the "manpower" shortage at the Fourth or participate in other ways. Regardless, the Club should consider having a defined policy or position in place for the times where the men-only issue is raised.

## **DETAILED FINDINGS**

### **Overall Impression of the Sleepy Hollow Service Club**

Overall feelings toward the Service Club are quite positive (8.7 on a 10 point scale). Most people give the Club an “8,” “9,” or “10,” including 43% who give the Club a “10.”

The Service Club is perceived to have the greatest impact on the lives of children in the village (average rating of 8.9 on a 10 point big difference/no difference scale), with nearly half of participants giving the Club a 10 on this dimension.

*“I overheard our teenage sons talking with friends one night about how living in the Hollow is pretty boring for people their age, but the Fourth of July celebration and the Headless Horseman by the bonfire make it all worthwhile! We know that they, and we, will always remember these special events.”*

*“Three of our children have chosen to raise their families here because of their childhood memories centered around activities in Sleepy Hollow. Thanks to the Service Club!”*

The Club also makes a relatively big difference when it comes to the experience of living in the village for them personally (7.8), adults in general (7.6), and the appearance of the village (7.7).

*“It is what sets Sleepy Hollow apart.”*

*“Your efforts make the community a very special place to live.”*

*“It’s unique. There are many local organizations that do community service projects, but the Service Club has a special ring to it – a touch of class.”*

In open-ended questioning, one-third of respondents explain that they feel the Service Club offers good events (33%). While many mentions are general in nature (14%), some of these people specify the events (8%) and others cite the audience (children: 7%, family: 5%).

*“The special activities are super and we brag about them, including those we don’t attend.”*

*“Even though we don’t regularly attend, we’re happy knowing these events go on.”*

Nearly one quarter of respondents say their feelings toward the Club are based on the organization being good for the Village (24%).

*“They make our community home!”*

*“It is a great advertisement for people, especially young couples, interested in Sleepy Hollow. They are well aware of all the festivities put on by the Service Club.”*

A similar number of people mention that the Club is well-run with good members (22%), with some noting the members' dedication, commitment and sacrifice (9%).

One in five respondents comment on the Club's impact on the experience of living in the Village (20%), namely how it creates a special experience/unique feeling living in the Village (12%). Unaided comments describe the unique memories created by the Club's efforts.

*“July 4<sup>th</sup> Picnic will always be a fond family memory.”*

*“This small community feels so safe and homey. The Service Club does so much to give it that “small town” feeling.”*

*“My family has loved the tradition of attending social events sponsored by the Service Club. Our fond memories will last a lifetime. Thank you to all!”*

Lower scores are most often explained by people admitting that they do not know about the Service Club (7%) or that they do not care for the male-only policy of the organization (3%).

	%
<b>Good events (net)</b>	<b>33</b>
Good programs and events	14
Provide fun on Fourth, Halloween, Easter Egg Hunt/holidays	8
Focus on children	7
Good events for the family	5
<b>Good for the Village(net)</b>	<b>24</b>
Good for community	13
Good work, accomplishments	7
Provides good services for the community	2
Help with appearance of the Village	1
Sells/promotes the Village	1
<b>Well-run Club/good members (net)</b>	<b>22</b>
Members' dedication, commitment, sacrifice	9
Good group/organization with good goals/objectives	7
Well organized	4
Good job with limited resources/efficient	1
Believe in Club/ positive past experience as member	1
<b>Adds to experience of living in the Village (net)</b>	<b>20</b>
Create a special experience/unique feeling living in the Village	12
Creates lasting family memories/traditions	4
Bring the community together/sense of community	3
Creates small town feeling	1

<b>Miscellaneous (net)</b>	<b>15</b>
Don't know about the Club/what they do/just moved in	7
Policy about men-only organization	3
Do not have to travel to events	1
Need more participation from more members	1
Never got a return call about joining	1
Good, but became cliquish	1
Disliked efforts to enhance Saddle Club park	1
Shallow objectives	1
Men rude/drinking at gates on Fourth	1

Recall of instances where residents were disappointed in the actions of the Service Club is infrequent and unfocused. A few people mention aspects of events (4%), including shortening or filling the time between the Halloween costume contest and the arrival of the Headless Horseman, and better food provided at events. A few other others describe less than optimal communications between the Club and residents (4%), certain policies of the Club (3%), and efforts by the Club in specific areas (3%).

	%
<b>Events (net)</b>	<b>4</b>
Fill/shorten time between costume contest and Horseman	1
Better food	1
Easter Egg Hunt needs to be more fair	1
Need more volunteers on Fourth	1
<b>Communication (net)</b>	<b>4</b>
Need better communication on times/details on web site	1
Not getting return call from Club	1
Forgot to pick up sign	1
<b>Policies (net)</b>	<b>3</b>
Raffle should cover \$5 for parking	1
No women allowed in club	1
Club became clannish/cliquish	1
<b>Activities/efforts (net)</b>	<b>3</b>
Maintain landscaping in common areas	1
No lights on firehouse, village hall	1
Should help residents in need/give them a way to ask	1
Disliked efforts to enhance Saddle Club park	1

## **Events**

### **Attendance**

Two-thirds of respondents say they attend the Fourth of July festival (67%). Even more indicate that they watch the fireworks display in the evening (83%), suggesting that many people stay in the Village for this holiday and that most visit the events at Sabatino Park. Of the specific events taking place during the day, more people are in attendance to see the parade (52%) than the more targeted fishing derby (17%) and fun run (10%).

Just as many villagers attend the Halloween festivities as the overall Fourth of July event (70%). The Easter Egg Hunt is attended by 35% of respondents, most likely those with younger children. Despite existing for only a few years, Holiday in the Hollow attracts 20% of the respondents.

### **Feelings toward Events/Elements of Events**

All four of the Service Club's main events are well received by residents, averaging between a 4.5 and 4.8 on a five point scale of positive feelings. In fact, most people give a "very positive" rating to each event: Holiday in the Hollow (88%), Fourth of July (78%), Halloween (74%), Easter Egg Hunt (65%).

For the Fourth of July event, the fireworks display generates the strongest positive feelings (89% give the display a "5"). These very favorable reviews are confirmed by the numerous verbal compliments the Club receives about the quality of the show. Two-thirds offer a very positive response to the \$5 fee for fireworks parking (66%), which could mean that many villagers watch the display from their homes an/or that they feel people from outside the village should contribute to the cost of the fireworks. Nearly as many people rate the entertainment for children very highly (63%).

At the same time, the entertainment for adults at this event receives a neutral or negative response from 47% of respondents. While the children's entertainment is rated very highly by many (as noted above), 21% do not have a positive perception of the games and prizes. Other Fourth items receiving a relatively high percentage of non-positive ratings include raffle prizes (24%), fun run (23%), parking (22%), and quality of food (20%).

	Event Attendance	Feelings (5 Point Scale)	Leading % of Top Box (5s)	Leading Negatives (%: 1, 2, 3)
<b>Fourth of July event</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>4.8</b>	<b>78%</b>	
Fireworks	83%	4.9	89%	
Attractions/things to do for children		4.5	63%	
The \$5 donation for the fireworks		4.4	66%	
Fishing Derby	17%	4.4		
Price of food and beverages		4.3		
Parade	52%	4.3		
Games and prizes for games		4.3		21%
Variety of food and beverages		4.2		
Fun Run	10%	4.2		23%
Quality of food		4.2		20%
Parking		4.1		22%
Raffle prizes		4.1		24%
Attractions/things to do for adults		3.7		47%

Three-quarters of people attending the Halloween activities are very positive toward the experience (74%). Even more offer an especially favorable assessment of the Headless Horseman (84%) and the bonfire (81%), while nearly two-thirds feel the same way about the costume contest and prizes (63%). On the other hand, over one-third of these people do not have positive feelings toward the food and beverages provided by the Club at this event (36%). In addition, a number of villagers complain about the time gap between the costume contest and the arrival of the Headless Horseman.

	Event Attendance	Feelings (5 Point Scale)	Leading % of Top Box (5s)	Leading Negatives (%: 1, 2, 3)
<b>Halloween</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>74%</b>	
Headless Horseman		4.8	84%	
Bonfire		4.8	81%	
Costume Contest and prizes		4.5	63%	
Food and beverages		3.9		36%

Nearly two-thirds of those attending the Easter Egg Hunt see the event in very positive terms (65%), with 60% feeling quite positive about the prizes children receive if they find a specially marked egg.

	Event Attendance	Feelings (5 Point Scale)	Leading % of Top Box (5s)	Leading Negatives (%: 1, 2, 3)
<b>Easter Egg Hunt</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>65%</b>	
Prizes		4.5	60%	
Organization of the egg hunts		4.4		

Of the people who attend Holiday in the Hollow, the vast majority hold strongly positive feelings toward the event (88%). They respond quite favorably to Santa's appearance (85%), though many also give the highest rating to the food and trees/decorations (60% each).

	Event Attendance	Feelings (5 Point Scale)	Leading % of Top Box (5s)	Leading Negatives (%: 1, 2, 3)
<b>Holiday in the Hollow</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>4.8</b>	<b>88%</b>	
Visit from Santa		4.8	85%	
Trees and decorations		4.5	60%	
Food		4.4	60%	
Music and caroling		4.4		

### **Issues Related to Membership**

Relatively few respondents completed the section about membership (42% left this section unanswered), with 9% indicating they are members (or spouses of members), an additional 9% are former members and 40% are non-members. This clearly reveals that the results of this survey are not skewed by over-representation of members.

General reasons cited for not joining the Club include lack of time and other commitments (including on Tuesday nights when the Club meets). A few contend that this is not the right time in their life to participate because their children are either too young or too old (or that they did not have children). Two individuals note the men-only policy. Finally, a few others admit that they did not know about the Club and its existence or that they have not been invited to participate.

*"I just moved here, but after reading the packet, it seems to be an outstanding group."*

Most former members appear to have enjoyed their time with the Service Club, but they indicate they no longer participate because they had served their time (or even "burned out" in a few cases) and that they felt it was time for others to contribute. Others mention other time commitments or the simple fact that their children had gotten older. Only one person offers a negative reason ("the Club became cliquish").

*"I was active for a number of years and served (as an officer). I have very positive feelings and good memories for the Club and will continue with our support. Keep up the good work."*

One member explains that he joined to meet people in the Village. Another expresses concern over the Club spreading itself too thin and making membership more of a burden than an enjoyable experience.

*“You have to balance the scope and number of events with the ability to support them. Better to do a few things well than a lot of them mediocre. You don’t want to stretch Service Club members too thin or then it becomes a chore, not fun.”*

**Communications**

Nearly everyone feels that the Service Club communicates its events and activities very well (49%) or fairly well (44%).

While different means of communicating with residents seem to work, participants clearly feel that the best way for the Club to communicate with residents is through the Village newsletter (85% choose this option as the best or second best approach). Other popular choices include messages on the back of the water bill (32%), e-mail (23%), and the Daily Herald newspaper (13%).

	Best <u>one or two ways</u> to reach residents	Overall: Ways to Reach Residents
Village newsletter	85%	93%
Back of water bill	32%	58%
E-mail	23%	31%
Daily Herald newspaper	13%	29%
School newsletters	7%	20%
Club page on Village web site	4%	20%
Courier newspaper	2%	14%
Other	3%	6%

It should be noted that 43 of the 138 respondents provided their e-mail addresses, demonstrating their desire to receive information in this manner. An e-mail delivery system has been started with these people in the hope that many more respondents can be added to the database in the near future.

Past coverage of the village by Club members selling raffle tickets appeared to be solid, with 73% of participants indicating that a Club member visited them last year and an additional 9% saying they did not know.

## **The Future**

### **Focus**

Most people believe the Service Club should focus its efforts on events for children of the village (75%) and in improving the appearance of the Village (74%). Over half also feel that the Club should raise funds that will supplement the efforts of the Village (57%) and help residents of the Village who are in need (53%). A few people cite other areas of focus, such as the physical appearance of the Village (5%, including nature trails, bike paths, village entrances, tree maintenance), Village management (help with taxes, keep open land open), and events (5%).

Interestingly, when asked to identify what they feel the single focus of the Club should be, nearly half contend that the focus should be on conducting events for the children (44%). None of the other three alternatives presented receives support from more than 18% of the respondents.

At the same time, interest in certain proposed future events and activities is quite weak. Almost half of participants give a “4” or “5” to offering food/music at night on the Fourth, though the average score is only a 3.1. Other average scores are even lower: Valentine’s Day Dance (2.3), a golf outing (2.2), and commemorative license plates (2.2). The relative lack of interest in the license plates was confirmed by the weak sales of the plates in July.

### **Male-Only Policy**

Several people suggest that the Club should involve women in some manner to enhance the organization’s efforts. In addition, a few individuals are quite impassioned regarding the male-only membership of the Service, demonstrating a very negative feeling toward the Club as a result.

*“Involve women more to help with organizing ideas for events and how to run the occasion, child activities, and beautification of the Village.”*

*“Stop taking the fact that women would like a role so lightly. Perhaps support a club of women that would run parallel to the Service Club.”*

*“Eliminate men only for Club membership. It’s a little sexist in this day and age.”*

*“I’ve never joined because I’m female. However, I support the efforts of the men in the Village.”*

*“My opinion would be higher if the Service Club was co-ed. I feel that you are missing out on a whole population of females who would love to be involved and contribute to the community. In today’s world, it is ridiculous that this is still men-only.”*

## Ideas for Future Efforts

While no ideas offered for future events generated strong enthusiasm, residents' suggestions are widespread and do not provide any consensus. Several people feel additional events should be offered or aspects of events should be fine-tuned. A few other feel the Club should maintain landscaping in certain common areas in the Village. Certain people feel the Club should assist the elderly or those residents who are in need.

All suggestions are included in this list regardless of number of responses in order to facilitate brainstorming efforts in the future.

	%
<b>Events (net)</b>	<b>9</b>
Shorten time between contest and bonfire	1
Add another summer event/carnival	1
Offer social events	1
Re-instate sack race/games on Fourth	1
Utilize Sabatino Park more	1
Flea market	1
Be safe with fireworks	1
Continue with children's events	1
Different music on the Fourth	1
Increase cost of fireworks	1
<b>Physical appearance (net)</b>	<b>6</b>
Work on landscaping in common areas	1
Add/trim trees	1
Walking paths around Sabatino Park	1
Expand covered shelter at Sabatino	1
Improve signage	1
Look at impact of Lake Sharon dam on other waterways	1
<b>Programs (net)</b>	<b>17</b>
Add women/let women join	4
Add separate women's group	1
Offer services to elderly/residents in need (lawn service, snow removal, shopping)	4
Fund-raising event to help certain Villagers	1
Help hotline/list of tradesmen	1
Sponsor a Goodwill/FISH drive	1
Clean/fix up Saddle Club park	1
Sleepy Hollow Logo clothing	1
Facilitate pool repair/improvements	1
Promote fishing at Lake Sharon	1
Get children involved in helping	1

Tornado siren for West Side	1
<b>Village (net)</b>	<b>4</b>
Promote leaf burning ban/leaf collection	1
Help police and fire department with needs	1
Improve the village	1
<b>Communication (net)</b>	<b>1</b>
Ask school for projects	1
Publish budget	1

### **Respondent Profile**

The 138 people who responded to this survey represent about 11.5% of the approximately 1200 households in the Village. This response provides a good picture of what people are thinking in the Village, but does not necessarily represent different groups within the Village proportionally (people in different age groups or different parts of the Village). The following section details the profile of the people who did respond.

#### **Years in Village**

On average, respondents have lived in Sleepy Hollow for 13.5 years. Nearly half of the participants have lived in the village for between six and fifteen years (46%; 6 – 10 years: 23%, 11 – 15 years: 23%).

Number of Years Living in Village	
0 – 2 years	8%
3 – 5 years	15%
6 – 10 years	23%
11 – 15 years	23%
16 – 20 years	8%
21 – 25 years	6%
Over 25 years	15%

#### **Age**

The most common age range for people responding to the survey is 35 – 44 years old (33%), followed closely by those in the 45 – 54 age group (30%).

Respondent Age	
18 - 24 years old	0%
25 - 34 years old	5%
35 - 44 years old	33%
45 - 54 years old	30%
55 - 64 years old	19%
Over 64 years old	14%

## Children

Nearly half of the respondents have children under 18 years old currently living in their household (49%). The children are fairly equally spread between the three age groups shown below.

Respondents with Children in the Each Age Group	
0 - 5 years old	25%
6 – 12 years old	25%
13 – 17 years old	20%