

# Finding the Next Generation

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“The only thing constant is change itself”

“It is never too late to be what you might have been.”

– George Eliot

Sniff and Scurry are two mice, and Hem and Haw are two mini-humans. They locate a huge piece of cheese in a maze, which they enjoy eating every day. Each day, they go directly to the cheese and become very comfortable with this life pattern. One day the cheese disappears. The two mice scurry off and very quickly locate another piece of cheese in the maze. Hem and Haw are another story.

After many days of hunger accompanied by anger and denial, Haw begins exploring cautiously for other cheese. Hem stays in his comfortable secure environment doing the very same thing he has always done and remains hungry and in a weakened condition. Haw eventually locates the new cheese and returns to Hem, trying to convince him to venture onto a new path in the maze without success. Hem weakens and dies.

Haw gave Hem “the handwriting on the wall”:

1. Change Happens
2. Anticipate Change
3. Monitor Change
4. Adapt to Change Quickly
5. Change
6. Enjoy Change
7. Be Ready to Change Quickly and Enjoy It Again and Again!
8. They Keep Moving the Cheese

The story and messages are from *Who Moved My Cheese?* by Spencer Johnson, M.D. It serves as a background for understanding change and for considering the future of the Community Educational Outreach Service. Change is uncomfortable, but it is inevitable for individuals and organizations. The story challenges us to step back and gain new perspective about our future.



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We can no longer talk just among ourselves about the CEOS marketing and membership challenge. We must reach out to understand what people want and how to meet their basic needs for social connections, service, and learning.

This process can be very enlightening. It may give us some “handwriting on the wall.” Interview one or more persons who are not CEOS members. It can be helpful to talk with two or three persons together. Take notes and bring the information to the next club meeting for discussion.

**Conversation Script:** First, explain that you are a member of a CEOS club and interested in learning how we can identify new members and develop new clubs.

- Tell me about a community group you are or have been involved with. What do you like about it? Why did you join?
- What makes you feel connected with your community?
- Do you feel that your family has community support?
- Have you heard of CEOS? What is your perception of this group?
- What would motivate you to be a part of a community group?
- What are some obstacles to joining a community group?
- Do you currently volunteer? If so, how? If not, how would you like to?
- What things do you want to learn more about? What are you excited about learning?

Close by explaining the purpose of the CEOS and describing some of your club’s activities. Thank them for their time.

## Learning

Clubs and county programs need to be open and flexible about meeting learning needs. Clubs could form around special interests and still meet the CEOS mission to strengthen individuals and families through continuing education, leadership development, and community service.

## Picture This – Some New Clubs May Look Like . . .

The basic purpose of WV CEOS is fulfilled when social connection, service, learning, and leadership are present. This opens the doors to new possibilities for club formats.

**Special-interest clubs:** Special-interest groups can follow the CEOS bylaws and participate in county council. Groups may include book clubs, travel clubs, investment clubs, and craft clubs. Allow folks to create their own club structure.

**Meeting variations:** Clubs can choose to meet over breakfast, lunch, and/or dinner. Clubs can meet at various times, day or evening, to accommodate challenging schedules.

**Mother-child activities:** This meeting structure may solve child-care challenges and support young mothers. Cooking, sewing, and working out are only a few activities parents and children can do together.

**Members-at-large or “mailbox members:** These members cannot attend meetings regularly, but they want to learn and participate when possible.

**Special county and area activities:** Retreats, workshops, and area meetings may interest nonmembers. Include them on a “member-at-large” mailing. They may become members later.

No one knows what the future of the WV CEOS will be. By exploring changing family needs and testing new approaches to the “club” concept, we will discover the future together.

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