

## How We Did It

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*Preface: This was sent to me by Donna when, in preparing for a family history leadership conference, I requested information on how the Family History Consultant programs got started and worked in her stake. I contacted Donna, because she has been the Stake Consultant for a stake that genuinely embraced the Spirit of Elijah and realized the blessings of this crucial work for both the members and their ancestors. There is much wisdom in the words that follow. It deserves to be studied and emulated. I have added the section headings, Dick Nowlin, nowlin@flash.net.*

Hi Dick: I am so excited for you and those you will bless at your conference. I know it will be wonderful - a spiritual experience for so many on both sides of the veil. Let me know if there is anything I can do to help.

### **Direction comes from the Priesthood leadership.**

When I was called as Stake Consultant, the High Councilor asked what I wanted from him. I asked for Ward Consultants to be called in every Ward and gave him a target date 4 weeks away.

He went to the Stake Presidency, then met with the Bishops at Bishop's training meeting. They had all prayed about it and knew that it was sacred. The Bishops were given direction to have the names of their Ward Consultants to the Stake Presidency within 4 weeks.

Of the 10 wards, 9 responded with the names. The remaining Ward told the Stake Presidency that they knew who they would like to call but they were out of town. Within 2 weeks following they had been called and accepted.

### **Activities that promoted Family History and Temple attendance.**

These are the things I told the High Councilor I felt impressed to do:

1. Stake meetings each month where I would train the Ward Consultants (except August and December. Each December we have a dinner or something special).
2. Stake family history firesides each quarter.
3. One month a year the High Council speakers would speak on family history/temple in the Wards (This helped because they spoke under the direction of the Stake Presidency).
4. A family history/temple sacrament meeting in each Ward once a year - under the direction of each Bishop
5. An annual family history Seminar. (We are still having those and our usual attendance is 500-600)

### **We worked as a team.**

We began by having a monthly training meeting. This helped the Ward Consultants to feel connected to one another and gave them opportunities to share ideas, thoughts, etc. I have my High Counselor give the spiritual thought at each of these meetings. It is always wonderful and filled with the Spirit. Here are some things we did:

#### **On the Ward Level -**

1. Each Ward Consultant then handed out a survey to members of their Ward and asked for input from their members.
2. Each one then asked their Bishop for a family history sacrament meeting. I told them I was available to speak with them if they wanted.
3. Each Consultant met with their Bishop/or designee to set a date in their Ward for the Family History Sunday School class to be taught. This would follow their Sacrament Meeting on Family History so that members could respond to the Sacrament Meeting.
4. Each Ward Member was handed a newsletter/reminder, etc. each week. I would give them several examples each month to choose from if they needed help.
5. We met with Bishoprics, Stake Presidency, etc. and asked if they needed help with their family history. Nearly everyone usually has at least one name already to go to the Temple.
6. The Ward Consultants then asked for permission in their Ward to meet with the Young Women, Young Men, Primary, R.S., Priesthood, etc. (I gave each one a handout that I made up on ways to involve all the Ward Members in Family History).
7. Bishops were asked if they were comfortable sending out a letter to each family bearing testimony of Family History/Temple and inviting their members to participate.

#### **On the Stake level**

1. We asked the Stake Presidency to write a letter and have it read in all the Wards.
2. We scheduled a Stake Fireside for each quarter of the year. Topics might include: Family History on the Internet; TempleReady, Finding the Lost Ones, etc. (Of course, attendance was small at the beginning. We asked the Temple President to give one of them the first year and it was wonderful!)
3. Next we encouraged Ward Families to go to the Temple to do Baptisms for the dead. This also involved new members of the Church as well. Our current Stake Mission President's policy is to take new members to the Temple for Baptisms within 3 months of their baptism.
4. Ward Consultants met with Ward Mission Leaders and told them they were available to help with the new member lesson on Family History/Temple as well as the investigator lesson on Family History/Temple.
5. We scheduled our annual Day in the Temple and asked for Priesthood encouragement. It was wonderful.

**Blessings follow when the counsel of the leaders are followed.**

In all we did, the Spirit of the Lord and of those in the Spirit World was manifest. The Stake Priesthood leaders saw that when members were doing family history they were focused on the Temple. Recommends increased and there was a general increase in spirituality throughout the Stake.

I have been the Stake Consultant for 13 years now and, of course, we have evolved through that time. New consultants have been called, we have been through 4 Stake Presidencies and numerous H.C. but through it all, those in the Spirit World have continued to inspire us by their lives of quiet courage and devotion. We have wonderful consultants and have always had incredible Priesthood support. We also spoke with the Temple and told them what we were doing so that we could enlist their help as our families attended the Temple. Wards set up Temple excursions, etc. It has been wonderful!

Donna Cuillard