

## **MARKETING COMMISSION**

**Paul A. Evenson, South Dakota, Chairman**

**Kimberly Meesters, North Carolina (ALA), Director**

The Marketing Commission of The American Legion strategizes, promotes and ensures ground-up membership growth, robust organization-wide fundraising, partnership curation and corporate collaboration, brand awareness and issue elevation. During the 2023 calendar year, the Marketing Commission of The American Legion prioritized three key buckets of its strategic plan: showcasing the value of membership, ending the stigma surrounding veteran mental health, and increasing the positive perception of The American Legion's brand.

### **Earning The American Legion's 1.6 Million Membership**

Despite the nation's decreased veteran population, The American Legion has proudly earned the continued membership of 1.6 million veterans in posts, districts and departments across the country. To ensure The American Legion continues to earn the trust of its members, the Marketing Commission has successfully built a long-term initiative to define and showcase the value The American Legion brings to those among its ranks.

To do so, The American Legion continues to increase and elevate the availability of resources provided to Legionnaires through a variety of tools, to include partnerships with corporate collaborators, veteran-owned businesses, veteran-friendly employers and more. In 2023, the Marketing Commission brought forth opportunities adopted by the National Executive Committee of The American Legion:

- **Res. 4 – NEC, May 2023:** Building upon The American Legion's long-standing partnership with United States Automobile Association (USAA) to provide legionnaires access to USAA's top-rated insurance and financial services.
- **Res. 2 – NEC, Aug. 2023:** Establishing a new strategic partnership with Wellcare to provide innovative solutions that complement the benefits veterans receive through their VA health care via Medicare.

The Marketing Commission of The American Legion has also provided significant groundwork and inroads to attract new members and engage new audiences within the veteran community that have not historically joined as members. To engage new prospective members, the Marketing Commission embraced innovation with its paid and organic digital channels while working to maximize its successful partnerships with INDYCAR and Chip Ganassi Racing. During the INDYCAR season, The American Legion retooled and refined the significant visibility of its racing partnerships by localizing and personalizing its presence at events.

### **Be the One: Tackling America's Veteran Mental Health Crisis**

Since 1919, The American Legion has been the voice of America's veterans and worked to solve the greatest challenges servicemembers, their families and the veteran community face – as seen through The American Legion's pivotal role in helping establish the Department of Veterans Affairs, ensuring the GI Bill was signed into law, obtaining resources provided for veterans impacted by Agent Orange, passing the PACT Act and many more meaningful strides in between.

Today, American veterans are facing their greatest battle of all in communities across the country – an estimated 22 veterans lose their battle to suicide each day on American soil. The American Legion launched its greatest feat to date – destigmatizing asking for help, ensuring veterans know it's OK to not be OK and, ultimately, striving to end veteran suicide through the Be the One campaign. The Marketing Commission of The American Legion is working diligently with stakeholders across Capitol Hill, across wide-ranging industries and throughout communities across the country.

With a significant presence at key community and cultural events across the country, The American Legion's Be the One initiative achieved its initial milestone of saving just ONE in 2023. An active-duty servicemember came forward to the Legion's Be the One display at an INDYCAR race to ask for help. Similar stories are told at Legion posts across the United States. The Marketing Commission is proud of the milestones achieved thus far toward ending the stigma of asking for help, and remain focused on changing the conversation surrounding mental health in the veteran community by continuing to raise awareness, educate communities and foster communities starting within The American Legion Family.

During 2023, the Marketing Commission continued its lifesaving prioritization of Be the One by passing hallmark resolutions to change the conversation and encourage veterans to ask for help:

- **Res. 13 – NEC, May 2023:** Formally observing the first day of every month as “Be the One” Day to signal The American Legion's commitment to ending veteran suicide and destigmatizing asking for help.
- **Res. 1 – NEC, July 2023:** Joining a coalition of corporations, foundations, nonprofits and fellow veteran-focused organizations across the spectrum, The American Legion took a significant step toward expanding its resources and entering the next phase of its Be the One initiative.

### **The Voice of the American Veteran**

Since 1919, The American Legion has ensured the voice of the American veteran is prioritized in the nation's most important conversations. Founded upon the four key pillars of Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, National Security, Americanism, and Children & Youth, The American Legion's legacy is derived by the common goal of veterans strengthening America. The Marketing Commission of The American Legion is continuing to embrace and foster community at every level of membership – honoring the veterans who came before, celebrating the historical milestones Legionnaires led the way toward, and investing in ensuring the voice of the next generation of American veterans is heard.

The Marketing Commission is continuing to partner with leaders across The American Legion to tell the story of the American veteran, establish a face to the veterans comprising all levels of membership and, most importantly, thanking veterans at events hosted across the country through the mobile marketing unit's presence and veteran service officer resources. With continued investment in the brand of The American Legion with a wide, yet targeted, series of impactful audiences, and in elevating key issues important to veterans on Capitol Hill, veterans are increasingly motivated to become Legionnaires and engage in their posts and communities across the country.

### **The American Legion Legacy**

The Marketing Commission remains committed to preserving and continuing to build upon The American Legion's more than 100 years of service and leadership to country – that of veterans strengthening America for generations to come. Guided by long-term strategic plans and objectives to ensure effective, cohesive, and meaningful strides toward innovation, the Marketing Commission of The American Legion has also reached additional operational efficiency and resource prioritization milestones during the 2023 calendar year. A push toward modernization and innovation has also resulted in maintaining the integrity of the American Legion brand, while allowing for movement toward achieving other important objectives down the road.