During the Membership Workshop in Indianapolis, I asked leadership in attendance to work toward increasing the number of Legion Family members who complete the updated and free online American Legion Basic Training course, formerly known as the American Legion Extension Institute.

I am happy to report that since the release of the training program last October, 1,572 Legion Family members have taken the course – over a 13 percent increase. I am proud to see Legion Family members interested in learning more about our great organization.

West Virginia, the first department to be over 100 percent in membership this year, had a 32 percent increase in the number of people who took the training. Last year, West Virginia was 54th in membership.

Through training and other strategies, they earned first place in our membership standings.

My home state of Wisconsin is also seeing growth through expanded training. Alternate National Executive Committeeman and Legion College Dean Bob Shappell said there

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I was asked to write a note on the importance of training and education and what it means to me. I believe that if we are going to try to sell The American Legion, which we should be doing to gain membership, then training and education are essential. You cannot sell something you don’t know anything about.

We must develop training in ways that work to assist our members in knowing the four pillars of this organization. Within those pillars there are many programs, and certainly a program that would be of interest and motivation to just about anyone. Also, any member that recruits a new member should be willing to be that member’s go-to person and steering that member toward our American Legion Basic Training program at www.legion.org/alei. Unfortunately, many of our members do not even know the program exists.

I challenge all of us at every level of The American Legion to inform people of the Basic Training program. As a department commander, I challenge all current and future commanders to push a strong training and education program, including the Basic Training program.

I remember talking with a good Legionnaire friend at his garage. He was working on a car that belonged to a veteran who he had tried to recruit into The American Legion for some time. He introduced his friend to me and mentioned that he had been unsuccessful in getting him to join. I started on my soap box about our programs and when I got to the GI Bill, he mentioned that he went to school on the GI Bill. And guess what? He joined. That is the importance of training.

I was a Legionnaire for some time before I attended post meetings. At my first meeting they discussed the programs they had and about upcoming community events. They asked for a volunteer to help set up for bingo so I volunteered (I did not learn from the Army not to do so). The person that I helped was a past post commander who gave me a lot of insight about The American Legion. From what he told me, I started becoming more involved. That is the importance of training and knowledge.

The American Legion is nearly a 100-year-old organization where members are elected yearly for positions at every level. We must be constantly looking for our replacements and in doing so, we must give them training, knowledge and education. It is sort of like a game of pool. It is not only about our shot, it is also about our leave.

- DW
are now over 110 graduates of the new Department Legion College and a growing number of posts hosting Legion College courses. He credits this accelerated training and renewed sense of purpose to helping Wisconsin achieve 100 percent in membership this year.

I am also proud of the Department of Tennessee with over a 55 percent increase of graduates and from going 39th to 15th in membership. Texas has had 250 Legion Family members take the course and is currently in 14th place. The more you know about The American Legion, the more you can understand where we came from and can plan for where we will go in our next century. However, please don’t depend on an online computer course to do all the work for you.

I believe it ultimately comes down to “being there” for one another. The sergeant-at-arms charge is to make sure no one remains a stranger in our midst, however, this isn’t just the job of the sergeant-at-arms. It is a responsibility that we all should accept.

Watch for new members and visitors and help them feel welcome; explain to them what is happening while you go through your opening sessions and meeting; and ask questions about their interests to help them get connected to the programs of the post.

Once those “strangers” become part of the family, continue to mentor them. And as you watch these new members flourish, you are helping our American Legion Family grow and become stronger.

I love this quote by that famous person named “anonymous:”

“**To make a difference in someone's life, you don't have to be brilliant, rich, beautiful or perfect. You just have to care enough to be there.”**

- DR

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**DISTRICT TRAINING-IN-A-BOX (DTIAB) UPDATE**

The following DTIAB modules are available, contact your district/county/department to set up a training event:

- Intro to BASIC TRAINING
- Post Adjutant Training

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**FIND IT ONLINE** : **myLegion.org** is a FREE website designed to connect members of The American Legion to their post and department leadership.
National Online Resources

Encourage all your fellow Legionnaires to take BASIC TRAINING.

Just send them to http://www.legion.org/alei, log-in to the website and earn their certificate!

Are YOU a Trainer?
Have a hot training tip? We need your submissions! Send your training ideas to train@legion.org.

Missing an Edition?
Go to http://www.legion.org/training/newsletters and download the edition you are missing!

Training Events Calendar
is now active! Check out http://www.legion.org/training/events for trainings in your area.

Are you a department or district trainer and want your event on this calendar? Add it today!

Don’t see the training you know should be there? Contact your department training team and ask them to input the training on to the training events page.

Upcoming Issue Topics:
* Bob Sussan (VA) on Post Operations —Best practices (Multi-part series)
* Brett Reistad (VA) on Training Vision

Ready to Train CHECKLIST
☐ Most Recent Approved Script?
☐ Most Recent Appropriate Presentation?
☐ Helpful Handouts?
☐ Appropriate Attire?
☐ Your current Legion cap
☐ Winning SMILE

LAST CALL!!!
For applications for 2018 National American Legion College
Visit http://www.legion.org/college to download an application, complete and submit to your department before July 31st!