



Training Newsletter

National Headquarters Internal Affairs and Membership Division | Vol.4 Edition 5 | Sept. - Oct. 2020



Steve Barnett, Post 34 southern vice commander for the Department of Indiana, makes a call during a Buddy Check at Post 500 in Speedway on Tuesday, Oct. 8, 2019. Photo by Ben Mikessell

2020 VIRTUAL MEMBERSHIP WORKSHOP

A virtual session of the 57th annual National Membership Workshop was held Aug. 3-6. The theme this year was "Growing a Post." The workshop was hosted live through Microsoft Teams, with National Headquarters staff as the presenters and moderators.

The PowerPoint slides and audio presentations for each session can be used for training at the post, district and department level.

Engagement efforts must adapt and overcome

WE ARE ALL TREADING NEW GROUND AS WE ADAPT TO WHAT SEEMS TO BE CONSTANT CHANGES AROUND US.

Now more than ever, we cannot expect a "cookie cutter" approach to retention, recruiting and engagement to work. There is no "one size fits all" strategy for a successful post membership program because nobody knows your neighborhoods, communities and departments better than the Legionnaires who live there. Use that expertise to create the plan and program that will work for you, your post, and your department. All of the tools are in place, but our success will come from the execution.

Embrace this opportunity to get to know your post membership by reaching out via email

and phone. Our "Buddy Check" program has received national attention and has been exceptionally well received. I have received hundreds of calls, emails and text messages about what a GREAT idea the Buddy Check is.

Veterans Day is right around the corner and has been the traditional time to conduct your biannual Buddy Check. Your post may wish to move the timeline up this year and plan a Buddy Check event sooner to personally contact veterans living in your community. This is not a membership drive, but solely a health and welfare check on current, past and potential new members. And while you are making phone calls, check on a neighbor, friend or relative. This is one of our



James W. "Bill" Oxford
National Commander

reasons for existence – we do not want to leave anyone behind. Assisting veterans and checking on their well-being is the essence of one of the founding four pillars of The American Legion. Reassure your members and potential members that The American Legion is alive, well and active as ever. Our programs and events have not gone away, they are just on hold for the safety of participants. When the current crisis is over, your post's fish fry, Legion Family Day, Boys and Girls State program, flag retirement ceremonies, and American Legion Baseball games will resume. We must be ready with a plan involving the entire American Legion Family when we invite and welcome veterans back into our posts.

Embrace this opportunity to get to know your post membership by reaching out via email and phone.

As my extended term as national commander continues, my membership goals have extended as well. Our all-time high was 3.3 million members in 1946. This needs to be our ultimate goal, but we cannot expect this to happen overnight ... or even this year. We need to set and achieve goals that will act as stepping stones to getting us back to attaining our all-time high.

For the 2020 membership year, our retention rate for the whole organization finished at 86.8 percent, and we recruited 62,351 new members at the local post level. Although these numbers are respectable, if we are going to have success and grow over last year's membership totals, we have to increase our retention rate and our traditional new recruiting. That is



Jaime F. Caratini of Texas calls department holding post members to assist them in transferring into a local post. Photo by Lucas Carter

why I have set a few personal goals for our great organization based on membership.

The first goal is to increase our overall retention rate to 90 percent. As of Aug. 31, our retention rate stands at 44.32 percent, which is nearly halfway to our goal. We have to reach out to them personally through email, text message or phone call. We cannot solely rely upon the renewal notices to make contact.

The second goal is to increase our traditional recruiting to bring in 100,000 new members. Last year's passage of the LEGION Act opened the door for 4.2 million veterans to join The American Legion. That gives us an eligible pool of over 19 million veterans. We just have to ask these veterans to join and educate them on what we do. Every member, post, district and department can help by increasing our visibility by engaging these veterans.

As we work to surpass our membership goals, we have to tell our story to complete the job.

The final goal I have is not based around membership numbers but rather on the Consolidated Post Report (CPR). I want to increase our CPR response rate from 70 percent to 100 percent. Each post has a story to tell and when we

speak collectively our strength is magnified. Some posts may have created new processes for assisting their communities during the current crisis. Be sure to report these efforts by attaching a narrative, including any articles or pictures along with the written descriptions.

As we submit reports about our American Legion programs and efforts, we must consider the people it took to make these things happen. I want to recognize American Legion Family members for a job well done.

So any Legionnaire, Auxiliary or Sons of The American Legion member who recruits three new American Legion members will receive my commander's membership incentive pin. The commander and membership chairman of any post, district, county or department that exceeds 103 percent of their membership goal also will receive my pin.

If we meet these goals, we will set the organization up for success. Ultimately, we have to raise The American Legion's visibility in our communities if we are going to be successful in membership.

The things we do today, and the things we will do tomorrow, are critical to the future of our organization.

INTRODUCING TRAINING TUESDAYS

Beginning in October, American Legion National Headquarters staff will present 60 to 90-minute sessions on topics aimed at post commanders and adjutants.

Oct. 27 – 7 p.m. Eastern

Topics: Changes & Updates to Online Membership Processing and Buddy Checks

Presented via Microsoft Teams



WHO SHOULD TAKE ONLINE BASIC TRAINING? EVERYONE!

Basic Training is not just for new members or longtime Legionnaires. Basic Training is for everyone. This training is designed to remind or educate all of us about the extraordinary accomplishments of Legionnaires past and present. It's also designed to align all of us to the strategic mission of The American Legion.

NATIONAL AMERICAN LEGION COLLEGE POSTPONED

As the coronavirus pandemic continues nationwide with various restrictions by state, the 2020 National American Legion College has been rescheduled from November and application deadline is now extended as a result.

The new date for National American Legion College is March 20-26, 2021, at National Headquarters in Indianapolis. Application deadline is now Oct. 1.

Visit legion.org/college for more information about the program.

ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER

This periodic and Legionnaire-driven newsletter, produced by the Internal Affairs & Membership Division, is designed to address best practices, ideas and training that every Legionnaire needs to know to engage our membership through effective training now and into the future.

Highlighting new training ideas and resources becoming available in 2020 and beyond, it will also feature essays from successful leaders and training ideas of posts, districts, departments and individuals throughout The American Legion.

Are you a trainer? A writer? We need your submissions!

Send your training ideas and articles to LegionTraining@legion.org.