

PART II
MEMBERSHIP
RETENTION AND
RENEWALS

MEMBERSHIP RETENTION

The Retention Team has already been mentioned as one of the teams to be established in our membership planning and development section.

A listing of some of the various retention methods are also listed in the same subject area but as part of an overall Post/District/Department Retention Program the following must be considered:

1. Direct Renewal notices, which are mailed to members directly from National Headquarters were never meant to replace the personal contact from Post members in the Renewal Program. The notices are meant to support and emphasize membership renewal efforts not replace those efforts. It is up to the Post Membership/Retention Team to continue renewal efforts by mail, by phone or by personal door-to-door contact, just like we used to do it. Try it – it works!

2. The purpose of the Post communication is to see if there is a reason the member doesn't attend meetings or hasn't paid his/her dues but mainly the visit, letter, or phone call is done to allow the member the easiest manner in which to pay his dues.
3. If there is a problem, it can be worked out and the member will once again become an active member of the Post or at least renew his/her membership.
4. As you communicate with the renewal member, make an effort to get him/her involved in at least one of the many activities or programs of the Post.
5. Last but definitely not least, remind the member of the many accomplishments of The American Legion and the fact that his/her dues allow these successful programs to continue.

RETENTION: THE KEY TO MEMBERSHIP GROWTH

Why do veterans join The American Legion and not renew their membership the following year?

Perhaps the best way to answer this question is to find out why they joined in the first place. If their reason for joining is realized during their first membership year, they will probably renew.

When we consider why veterans leave The American Legion, we find what we call the three M's of retention:

Moved – Mad – Mortality

Mortality: We can't do much about this one when our members report to post everlasting.

Moved: Operation Stay Active follows members from department to department so we might transfer those who move or at least keep them renewed in their current post but follow-up is necessary to assist the member in keeping his/her membership current.

Mad: This is where face-to-face contact is necessary. This is where the "rubber meets the road." Who or what is the member upset with? The retention worker must find this out before anything can be resolved. Most "mad" problems can be resolved by discussion and working it out with parties concerned. We must try!

The use of the three I's of retention as described here will help prevent many of the situations that cause members to leave our ranks.

Many of the things Legionnaires take for granted are not fully understood by the new member. Whether it is a post, district, or department event, the content and importance of the event must be explained to the new Legionnaire before he/she will make a decision to attend.

Words which must become action in order to retain members are:

Communication: Let everyone know what is going on.

Activities: Who, where, what, when, why and how must be answered to all possible participants.

Involvement: We must get as many Legionnaires as possible involved in the many and varied programs of The American Legion.

What is: a district meeting?
a division meeting?
a county meeting?
a department meeting?
a national workshop?
a department or national convention?

All of these are strange words to the prospective Legionnaire. Don't assume they know what they are – tell them.

The importance of retention at all levels is obvious for solid growth not only in membership but also in programs and overall accomplishment.

- I – Initiate: Tell the story of The American Legion.
- I – Indoctrinate: Explain individual programs.
- I – Involve: Find the interest area and involve the new member.

You remember when we came on board or reported to a new military assignment, we were many times given a sponsor who stuck with us and walked us through our new surroundings and new assignments until we were ready to be turned loose.

That’s what the Sponsor’s Guide and the Sponsor Checklist on the next few pages are all about. Assign a sponsor to each new member until the items on the checklist are accomplished and the Legionnaire feels knowledgeable and comfortable with membership in the Legion.

Just like the military, retention begins when the new member joins. As previously stated, it begins with a thorough initiation that is part of a good sponsorship program.

You will note on the guide and the checklist there is no positive indicator for the important initiation session. This is because each post has a different time sequence for conducting their initiation sessions. The important thing is to conduct initiation sessions early in the Legionnaire’s membership.

Guide and checklist: These are simple guidelines. We ask you to develop and use your own lists, but the importance of a program of this type cannot be overlooked if we are to retain those members we have worked so diligently to get.

“Retention: The key to membership growth”

HOW IMPORTANT IS MEMBERSHIP RETENTION?

An average of 200,000 Legionnaires do not renew their membership each year. That’s how important it is. Not for the sake of numbers but for our impact on our elected officials and the impact on our many programs at local, state and national level – “That’s why it’s important.”

MEMBERSHIP ACRONYMS

ADOVACATE FOR VETERANS’ RIGHTS

MEMBERSHIP NEVER TAKES A BREAK

ENERGIZE YOUR POST

RECRUIT NEW MEMBERS

I CAN’T DO IT, BUT **W**E CAN

COMMUNICATION IS ESSENTIAL

ASK, **J**UST ASK

NEW MEMBERS EQUAL GROWTH

LEGISLATIVE CLOUT

EYE CARE PLAN

GROWTH EQUALS MORE MEMBERS

INVOLVEMENT IN THE COMMUNITY

ORGANIZATION THAT SUPPORTS ALL VETERANS

NOW IS THE TIME FOR GROWTH

MMOTIVATE YOUR MEMBERS

EQUALITY FOR ALL MEMBERS

MEMBERSHIP NEEDS PROGRAMS

**BENEFITS OF BELONGING
EVERY MEMBER GET A MEMBER
RETENTION OF CURRENT MEMBERS
STRENGTH IN NUMBERS
HOW ABOUT 4 MILLION BY 2010
I WANT YOU IN THE AMERICAN LEGION
PROGRAMS OF INVOLVEMENT**

RENEWALS

Normally, during each membership year, the National Headquarters sends five renewal notices to members until they have paid their membership dues. The renewal notices are printed and mailed from National, but the dues are remitted to the Post the member belongs to, as printed on the renewal notice. The Post Membership Representative must then process the dues payment, extracting the Post per capita. The Post will then transmit these membership dues to the respective Department Headquarters. The Department Headquarters will then extract its per capita then transmit, collectively from all posts within the Department, the membership dues to National Headquarters. Within 1 – 2 days of receipt, dues payment information is recorded on the National database. Typically, this whole process should only take no more than 2 – 3 weeks.

There has been a measurable decline in traditional renewals, and frankly, we're not sure why. One way we know that Posts can get more involved with its members is by calling or visiting with these members who have not renewed yet. Find out if they need assistance, or if they have simply overlooked paying their dues. It also affords the Post the opportunity to "get in tune" with its members.

Membership should be transmitted on a regular basis – at least weekly. Listed in the Post Adjutant's Manual is a Renewal Notices Schedule that displays the cutoff dates National must receive the membership dues before a notice is generated. This schedule will be followed in order to remove the names of paid members prior to a specific mailing. If your Post Membership Representative is transmitting membership regularly as required, you or your members won't receive unnecessary Renewal Notices.

Renewal Schedule

Normally, during each membership year, National sends five renewal notices to members. The following is the renewal schedule: July, October, January, March, and May.

Sometimes, at the request of a Department, a special notice in February may be mailed to boost a Department's renewals.

The current membership year renewal schedule for transmitting memberships to arrive at National by the established date(s) are outlined in your Post Adjutant's Manual...this schedule will be followed in order to remove the name(s) of paid members prior to a specific mailing. Using this Renewal Schedule, National extracts (unpaid) member records, prints, and mails the renewal notices.

Renewal Letters & Phone Script

On the following pages are sample letters and a phone script that can be used by your post to communicate with non-renewing members. While writing letters and making phone calls is good, if you are able to personally visit with this member and meet face-to-face, you might find your results to be more proactive.

SAMPLE RENEWAL LETTER TO DELINQUENT MEMBER

Date:

MEMORANDUM: Regarding Continued Uninterrupted Membership

To: Legionnaire

Greetings. Currently, I have the privilege of being Commander of American Legion Post (number).

Our Post is comprised of individuals from all walks of life, means, skills, and education, but is bound by one common bond, honorable military service to our Country.

The American Legion, for most of its existence, has operated under a calendar year for membership, and fiscal year for its general activities. This fiscal year commences after the conclusion of the National Convention held at the end of August and continues into the following August when the next National Convention concludes. For the convenience of national delegates, the Convention was changed and now takes place in late summer.

The membership dues payment forms are mailed sometime in July or early August and are to be paid by the end of December to remain in good standing.

Payments received during January of the following year will eliminate delinquency status. The American Legion continues to send reminders through June of that same year. A procedure of reinstatement needs to be followed after June.

The American Legion is interested in maintaining and increasing its role. Currently, one in 20 eligible veterans are members of a recognized veterans organization.

We encourage you to consider early payment of dues. If the last payment form is misplaced, please consider the following option – make your check payable to American Legion Post (number). Post Dues are (\$ dues amount). Please use the enclosed envelope and mail your dues to:

American Legion Post (number)
c/o Jane Doe – Adjutant
12345 S. Main Street
Any Town, USA 12345-6789

Please include your name, address, telephone number, and e-mail. We are interested in the branch of service you served with and your American Legion 9-digit membership identification number, which is on last year's membership card.

We thank you in advance for your continuing support of the programs and activities of The American Legion. Membership is an example you are "Still Serving America."

Most Sincerely,

(Your Name)
Post Commander

SAMPLE RENEWAL LETTER – CURRENT MEMBER

Dear **Jack**

The American Legion's (date) membership/fiscal year begins (date) and you will soon receive a "Dues Notice" from National Headquarters asking you to renew your membership. Your dues are (\$\$) a year and later in this letter I'm going to ask you to do me a favor. But first, let me point out some of the benefits of membership in The American Legion; in other words for (\$\$) you receive the following:

- (1) Twelve issues of *The American Legion Magazine*. Have you read it lately? It has been named one of the top general interest magazines in the nation.

- (2) Eleven issues of the *Sunflower Legionnaire* newspaper, which informs you of what your American Legion is doing and what activities are available to you, the member.
- (3) A \$1,000.00 Accidental Death and Dismemberment insurance policy if you complete and mail the application you receive with your membership card.
- (4) Automatic enrollment in the family benefit plan; participating retailers are listed on the back of this letter – just one weekend’s stay at a participating motel can more than save you the cost of Legion dues.
- (5) Membership in one of the finest Legion Post Homes in the State with unsurpassed food and beverage service – Post 173, Hays, Kansas. Last year Post 173 served (#s) youngsters in its Children and Youth Programs (such as baseball, teen suicide prevention, Special Olympics, School awards, Boys State, Christmas and Easter Parties, etc). The Post also participates in service to disabled and hospitalized veterans.
- (6) Membership in the largest volunteer organization in the world; the organization that wrote the G.I. Bill of Rights, the organization which gives so much to other organizations (the American Heart Association was started with a grant from the Legion, Reye’s Syndrome is no longer the “unknown” threat it once was thanks to a Legion grant, and the list goes on and on).

Earlier, I said I would ask a favor of you; actually two favors – first, please pay your American Legion dues so your officers can concentrate on the Legion’s community service and youth programs rather than worrying about membership, which we must have to exist. Second, I ask you to consider giving me credit for collecting your dues. Since I no longer live in Hays, I must rely on this letter to help collect membership thus retaining the distinction of being the top membership worker of your State Headquarters Staff.

If you wish to give me credit for collecting your dues – Great! If you would rather credit someone else, that’s fine too. You may credit me by completing the enclosed membership application, and returning it along with your (\$\$) check in the enclosed envelope provided, or by dropping it by the Post Home. Or scratch my name off and credit whomever you prefer, just as long as you pay your dues.

If you’ve already paid your (date) dues please disregard this letter, but don’t forget to complete and return the application for the free insurance when you receive your membership card.

Sincerely,

Chuck Yunker

CHUCK YUNKER
State Adjutant
Member Post 173

RENEWAL PHONE SCRIPT

Hello, I'm _____ from American Legion Post _____

Name – Position

Number

here in _____ . Are you

_____?*

Location

Former Member's

Name

(Is he/she at home? May I talk to him/her please?)

*If so, continue as follows – if not, repeat message above if member has just been called to the phone.

_____ The reason I'm calling is I (we) noticed you have not renewed

Prospect's Name

your membership in The American Legion for the current year. I (we) hope this is just an oversight but then again since your membership is important to us we wanted to make sure everything was all right and if we could perhaps assist you in some way. (Wait for response).

- a. If there is a problem – listen – see if Post can help and/or if problem can be solved.
- b. If there is an error – member has paid and has card – get any information available, check it out – get back to the member.
- c. If there is no problem, suggest times and dates you could come by to pick-up his/her dues. “Could I come by in the next 30 minutes to renew your membership or is tomorrow at 10:00 a.m. better?”
- d. Wait for response.
- e. Confirm the response by repeating it along with the address (they may have moved and we don't know it).
- f. Thank them for their time – no matter what the outcome.

THE AMERICAN LEGION
POST-NEW MEMBER (TRANSFEEE)
SPONSOR'S GUIDE

_____ IS APPOINTED AS AN AMERICAN
LEGION

Name

SPONSOR FOR

Name

Address

Phone number

HERE IS WHAT YOU NEED TO DO TO GET THE NEW MEMBER OF YOUR POST
OFF TO A GOOD START.

TELEPHONE THE NEW MEMBER:

-Talk about the date and time of the next meeting
-Offer to pick the new member up or set a place to meet
-Provide a telephone number where you can be reached
-Inform the new member of upcoming activities at Post, District, County
or Department level
-Briefly explain these activities

AT THE MEMBER'S FIRST MEETING:

-Discuss the normal meeting schedule
-Show the new member around the Post
-Introduce the new member to all those present, especially current officers
and committee chairmen
-Help the new member feel welcome
-Stay with the new member
-Answer questions that arise

MAKE THE INTRODUCTIONS:

- ...Arrange some time with key Post officials to talk to the new member about his/her interests
-Discuss each division and section and their key responsibilities
-Explain the various offices of The American Legion
-Help the new member meet as many Legionnaires as possible
-Provide assistance, answer questions, etc.

Each sponsor is asked to continue his/her contact with the newly assigned Post member until the new member is comfortable on his/her own. Each sponsor is also asked to keep in touch, periodically, with the Legionnaires he/she has sponsored.

REMEMBER... A new American Legion member, as all members, is a very important person. The new member has joined The American Legion with certain expectations of the Post, District, County and National Organization. The new member may feel somewhat uncomfortable at first but a good sponsor will assist the new member allowing him/her to build self confidence, get off to a good start and become involved as a valuable member of The American Legion team.

**THE AMERICAN LEGION
POST SPONSOR CHECKLIST**

_____ SPONSOR FOR

NAME _____ NAME

_____ ADDRESS

_____ PHONE NUMBER

WORK/HOME

	YES	NO	COMMENT
Call the new member before next meeting			
Discuss the place and time of meetings/activities			
Provide your telephone number			

Meet or talk with family regarding Auxiliary, SAL, etc.			
Offer transportation to the first meeting			
Accompany the new member on a tour of the Post			
Discuss normal meeting agenda and schedule			
INTRODUCTION:			
All members, especially:			
Post Officers			
Post Employees			
Post Committee Chairman			
FOLLOW-UP TO ASSURE:			
New members questions are answered			
New member is initiated			
New member gets involved with committee or program of his/her interest & selection			
Membership card is issued			
Family Benefits Plan is explained			
New member knows where to go to seek information and/or assistance			
Refer inquiries you can't resolve to the correct chairperson or member			

WAYS TO KEEP YOUR MEMBERS

From "101 Ways To Keep Your Members"
Compiled by Mark Levin, CAE
President, B.A.I., Inc.

1. **Have a program, not a campaign.** Retention is a year-round priority and needs to be planned. Any post that is, or wants to be, successful at retention must be able to identify the specific steps it takes to increase its retention rate. In addition to having a series of activities that make up a retention program, your post should be able to identify resources that can be allocated to help implement the program.

2. **Recognize members who reach milestone membership anniversaries.** If members stay in the Legion for five, ten, twenty or more years, they are probably not among those who are likely to drop out. When members reach one of these membership milestones, it provides two retention opportunities for your post. First, it is another opportunity to recognize a member or group of members for their continuing support. Doing that solidifies their membership even more. Also, by publicly recognizing these membership

milestones, you inspire other members to strive to earn the same recognition by maintaining their membership, too.

- 3. Start a regular column in your newsletter to thank members for their involvement.** One organization featured a column in their monthly newsletter that was called “Tip of the Hat.” This column’s sole purpose was to say “thank you” to those members who had helped the organization in some way since the previous newsletter. The member’s name and the specific service they had performed were all mentioned. It became the most popular feature in the newsletter because every month members saw their name or the name of someone they knew.
- 4. Provide and encourage the use of The American Legion Emblem.** There are good reasons for members to want to display the Legion emblem or other Legion artwork. The emblem can be an effective membership and marketing tool.
- 5. When important issues come up, call some inactive members for their opinions.** It’s natural for posts to contact their leadership people when an issue of importance arises, such as a legislative crisis, a local election or the setting of a new standard. These issues and events are also opportunities to involve some of the post’s least active members simply by asking their opinion. When the opportunity comes up, have a list of inactive members ready to call, fax or write and ask for their opinion on how the post should react. The fact that the post cared enough to contact them might make the difference at renewal time.
- 6. Accept credit cards for dues payments.** Credit card payments have become the norm for almost all purchasing transactions. If your post does not already accept them, you should consider doing so. Credit card acceptance is especially useful to posts during difficult economic times because it allows members to renew and still be able to make installment payments to the credit card company. Your post would also be able to accept dues payments on-line, which is a very popular method of payment for the younger veterans. Your finance officer must take the fee paid to the credit card company into consideration.
- 7. Send an audio CD with your regular publications.** Even members who don’t have time to read your regular publications will have time to listen to a CD on their way to or from work.
- 8. Create an annual slogan or theme for membership each year.** It’s often easier to get someone’s attention if they have an image of the goals of the post. Having an annual theme or slogan can rally the existing members around a specific program or set of objectives and create an image in the minds of those thinking about dropping. If your post is celebrating a milestone year, that entire year can be dedicated to an anniversary theme.
- 9. Recognize your members as often as possible. Thank him or her for their participation in each and every program or function.** Whether you do it formally or informally, it pays to express appreciation to members whenever possible.
- 10. Get members involved at SOME level. “Involved” members don’t drop.** Your post needs to try to find ways to get members involved in a meaningful way without taking up too much of their time. This is especially true with newer members.

- 11. Publish an annual report in the local media. Thank the community for their support and send a copy to members.** Publishing an annual report (Consolidated Post Report) allows your post to summarize all the accomplishments from the previous year. It shows the community that your post is an asset to that community and it shows your members that the post is run in a business-like manner and will remind any members thinking about dropping out that they would be giving up all of the benefits listed in the report.
- 12. Set up “car pools” to get people to meetings, especially new members.** Car pools help raise the attendance at meetings therefore increasing the involvement of those who may not have shown up if it weren't for the car pool. Some of the drivers may have even found excuses not to attend had it not been for their assigned driving duties.
- 13. Set up a speaker's bureau: Speak at other organizations' meetings.** Posts are always trying to spread the word about the Legion and the post's activities in that community. One of the best ways to do this is by finding speaking opportunities for your post's leaders. You can establish a post speaker's bureau, a pre-qualified group of members who are capable both in terms of knowledge and speaking ability to represent your organization to the media or to other civic groups. When these representatives speak, current members are instilled with a sense of pride in membership, which can make a difference at renewal time.
- 14. Be sure non-members pay a higher fee than members for programs and functions.** There are two ways to make this idea support your retention efforts. First, be sure that your post charges more for non-members to participate in any of your post functions or to purchase any of your goods or services. Second, be sure to remind your current members about this additional fee that non-members pay. This serves to remind members of the money they save each time they take advantage of your post's services.
- 15. Remind members how much money they have saved by participating in programs and functions at the member rate.** Remind your members of the money they may save by participating in the national member benefits program and the discounts for post functions.
- 16. Keep members' names and addresses current and accurate—it's the best sign of a “caring” organization.** It is common courtesy and good business practice to keep your membership records as accurate as possible. This becomes even more important because members' expectations increase as they compare your post's communications to those they receive from other sources.
- 17. Make sure you capture e-mail addresses whenever possible. Also make sure your members know your post e-mail address so they'll accept e-mail from you.** E-mail is the quickest and least expensive method of sending information and documents to your members and to receive correspondence from your members.
- 18. If you ask a member to do a volunteer job, make sure it's a WORTHWHILE job!** Even the smallest volunteer jobs need to provide some sense of accomplishment for the members assigned to do them. Although there is a lot of pressure to get members involved in the post's leadership structure, just having a title is not enough to justify the valuable time members have to give up in order to participate. Be able to pinpoint the

contribution each member makes to your post's success and be certain to mention that contribution when thanking the member.

- 19. Call your annual dues an investment rather than “dues”.** Referring to your dues as an investment will create an image that your post isn't spending the members' dues but rather investing it in programs and services that bring value to the members, to the post and to the community.
- 20. Assign an officer to contact a certain number of inactive members each month – just a little “say Hi!” call.** Some members believe the only time we contact them is when we need money, information or support. This impression is strongest among the less active members. To alleviate some of these feelings ask officers and E-board members to make some random calls each month to your inactive members. These courtesy calls will remind these members that the post knows they're still out there and that their opinion is valued. Be sure to give the callers something substantial to talk about, such as getting input on an upcoming legislative issue or proposed post policy changes.
- 21. Bring a list of inactive members to a post meeting and have members contact them.** It's an important sign to members when a volunteer leader takes the time to contact a member simply to say that the post misses them and to also relay to the member that the post is there to assist if there's anything the member needs.
- 22. Get spouses active – it assures renewal.** When you have multiple family members simultaneously belonging to the Legion, the Auxiliary and the Sons of The American Legion, your chances of having them renew is much greater than the renewal rates of individual members.
- 23. Bring in National speakers to describe how National adds benefits to state/local membership.** Posts should try to get representatives from the Department and National organization to speak at a post or District function to emphasize the member benefits available through affiliation with the National organization.
- 24. Hold leadership-training programs – give your members the tools to be successful volunteers.** It is important for members who do get involved to have a good experience during their involvement. Leadership training is becoming one of the best services that organizations can give their members. The skills developed through leadership training are transferred back to the members' workplaces. At renewal time, members will remember where these skills were developed.
- 25. Create a new member welcoming committee.** When a new member joins ask someone who is already a member to call the new member. Tell the new member what a good investment membership has been for them and congratulate the new member on making a great decision to join. In as little as ten seconds the welcoming member has validated the new member's decision to join by making that person feel more welcome in the Legion post.
- 26. Send a “New Member Newsletter” to first year members during their first year.** New members are special because they are the least likely to know everything that is going on in your post, the least likely to be involved in a leadership position, and therefore the most likely to drop out. Several groups have developed new member newsletters that new members get throughout their first year of membership. These

newsletters are basically a summary of the most important information that has been sent to them via other formats, such as newsletters and magazines, with further explanation and background. These publications usually go out three or four times during the year. New members stop receiving it as soon as they renew for the first time.

27. **Send new members a letter or postcard saying, “Here’s where your \$25.00 dues went: \$3.00 for VA&R Programs; \$3.00 for Americanism Programs, etc.** This technique can be used effectively to show members that their dues investment is working for them. Even if the members are inactive, they can feel good that their dues are helping to support some very important programs sponsored by the post. Their dues are helping to make their community a better place to live.
28. **Offer plenty of member-only programs and benefits.** Your post needs to constantly remind members of the exclusive benefits they get as regular, dues-paying members. Depending on the legal requirements of your post, there will be many services and programs that can be reserved for members. These programs and services need to be highlighted whenever possible.
29. **Send a mini-survey to members about six months after they join to see how they rate your post’s services.** One educational organization called this their “six month report card.” It was sent to members half way through their first year and asked the members to grade the organization in several service areas. Any members that rated a program below an A or B was given a phone call to get more information. Then the organization used that information to try to correct that problem. The organization was also able to spot potential dropped members by noting which new members didn’t even bother to return the card. These members also got a phone call.
30. **Get new and inactive members to attend Department Conventions or Conferences.** They are more likely to renew when they witness the importance of the business conducted at these functions. Even if they don’t attend every year, the stature of the event and the impression they get by attending will help remind them of the benefits of membership.
31. **Hold a new member reception at Conventions.** Whenever your post, district or department sponsors a meeting or educational program, use that opportunity to invite new members to attend a special reception. These receptions are usually held prior to the start of the convention or educational program. In addition to talking about the Legion, and learning about the expectations of the newer members, it is also a chance to explain how to get the most out of their participation in the event.
32. **Give new members a special ribbon to wear.** Identifying newer members does several positive things. It lets the new members feel special and it reinforces for them the fact that joining was a good idea since there are others who have the same designation. Most importantly, it allows Legion leaders to spot new members and try to make them feel welcome.
33. **Use groups of volunteers for renewal phone-a-thons.** This project not only helps your renewal efforts, but it makes the callers feel more like an important part of your Post.
34. **Make sponsors or recruiters responsible for the first renewal, too.** If your post has a sponsorship program where the recruiters are known, contact the recruiters at renewal

time and let them know the new members they brought in during the past year are about to receive renewal notices. Ask that the recruiters call their recruits to let them know they are looking forward to having them with the post again next year. It reminds the recruiter about his or her efforts, and keeps those efforts from being wasted if the members they sponsored drop out a short time after joining.

35. **Give discounts or perks for early renewals.** One of the hard parts of retention is trying to figure out who among those who are late renewing is really a potential non-renewing member who is just putting their renewal off. One way to help resolve this problem is to give some sort of small discount or perk for members who renew early. Your post's financial managers need to work out the appropriate discount and accounting methods, but having the early renewal money in interest-bearing accounts may more than offset any discount given. In addition to the financial rewards for your post, there is the main benefit of being able to identify the post's most likely drops earlier in the renewal process.
36. **Give rebate vouchers for early renewals.** Instead of giving a discount for early renewals, try giving a rebate. When you ask your members to pay the full amount at renewal time, tell them that the post will send them a rebate voucher as a reward if they renew early. The voucher would have a monetary value or be in the form of a certificate good for a certain amount of credit when the member participates in a post function or social activity.
37. **Send a checklist entitled "What's your reason for not renewing?"** Send a survey that lists the most common reasons for dropping out to those people who have recently dropped their memberships and ask them to check off the reasons that apply to them. Be prepared to follow up and address each of the reasons. While a written form is not as effective as actually talking to these members, it does give the post one more chance to reinforce the value of membership and to personalize the next contact.
38. **Have the Commander send a pre-renewal letter on his/her letterhead a few weeks BEFORE the renewal is sent.** Tell of the great year you had, and how he/she is looking forward to working with the member again next year. This is usually done to remind members of all of the value they received during the past year and to tell them what they can expect in the future. By sending the report or letter prior to the renewal notice, you alert members that the renewal is coming and raise their anticipation level and their need to respond. This usually raises the number of early renewals. Having the letter on your post stationery adds to the credibility of the message and increases the chances it will be opened promptly.
39. **Have a retention committee – give it goals!** There is a need for member involvement in the recruiting process and there should also be member involvement in the retention process. Your post should have either a separate retention committee or a retention subcommittee of your membership committee. The retention committee needs to have goals and a plan of action with very definite steps that can be taken to raise the post's retention rate. The retention committee should be assigned to develop these steps and undertake them.
40. **List names of non-renewals at leadership meetings. Have a "10 Most Wanted Renewals" list.** Select 10 non-renewed members for each meeting and assign members at that meeting to contact those lapsed members. This shows your lapsed members that

the post still cares about them and it draws your current members into the membership retention process.

- 41. Reward renewal efforts as much as you do recruitment efforts.** There is nothing wrong with building in an incentive or recognition program for retention efforts. Such a program can even be integrated into your recruitment incentives by giving the member who recruits a new member some form of appropriate recognition when the new member joins, and again when the new member renews.
- 42. After a couple of renewal notices, begin personal contacts.** When members fail to respond to dues notices, it isn't always because they intend to drop out for a particular reason or because they are generally disappointed with your post. Some members just want to know if your post cares that they are out there. A personal call to let members know they are missed can make a big difference at renewal time.
- 43. Send non-renewals a newsletter with the front and back cover printed and the inside blank. Print a message inside about what the former member is missing by not renewing.** Your post's newsletters are among its most valuable membership benefits. When members drop out, they need to be reminded that they are losing these valuable benefits forever. By sending a newsletter with nothing in it except the table of contents listing all of the valuable information the former member *isn't* getting, you graphically describe the lost benefit.
- 44. Dig beyond the "never did anything for me" answer. Try to find out exactly why they chose to not renew their membership.** There's always something more. Your post should prepare questions that probe beyond the surface and get to the heart of why members are leaving.
- 45. Pay special attention to those who renew last.** They are the most likely to not renew next year. As your post begins identifying the non-active members it needs to contact, add these late payers to the priority list.
- 46. Hold a retention contest, just like a recruitment contest.** If your members respond well to incentives and competitions consider having a retention contest among your leaders. Divide the membership roster among the post officers, executive committee and the membership team and assign a certain number of current members to each leader. Give prizes to the leaders who renew the most members. Help them out by giving them suggestions on how they can get reluctant members to renew.
- 47. Offer incentives to the first 10% who renew (free dinner, etc.).** Why not have a contest among your members to see who can send in their renewal dues the fastest? Give some type of incentive to those who renew before a certain date or are among the first to renew.
- 48. List first-time renewals in a special section of your newsletter.** In addition to giving special recognition to new members, list those who are renewing for the first time in a special section of your newsletter. This will remind these members that the decision they made a year ago to join your post was a good decision. It will also remind them that the post is glad to have them back again for a second year.

49. Be sure to acknowledge renewal checks, just like new member applications. Your post probably makes a big deal when new members join by sending them welcome letters and new member kits and by putting their names in your newsletter. Yet, few posts do anything to acknowledge renewals other than sending them their new Legion card. Find some way to thank them for their renewal. Put a letter or a postcard in the return envelope with their membership card. After all, these renewing members are making the same financial commitment as first-time members and they deserve some recognition.

Do everything your post can to be a reason a member wants to renew. **For many members, the Legion is the staff and the leadership. If they perceive that they have a group of dedicated, qualified staff and volunteer leaders, they'll probably be back.**

KEEPING OUR MEMBERSHIP 100%

.....



.... AND BEYOND!

PART III

SPECIAL PROGRAMS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Leadership

*Right up front, Commander/Chairperson we'll admit that this is an article about "Leadership." Perhaps you consider it one of those dull topics you have been barraged with at meetings and conferences. And you're sure you've heard this before – right? Well, Maybe. If you've heard it before, did you **do** anything about it? Were you successful in your efforts? If so, **great!** Congratulations on a job well done! However, if you think something needs to be done about developing leadership in your post and district – and you want to do your part – read on; you'll find some good ideas on where to start.*

The First Step

If you are still reading, you have taken the first step. That is, you have identified the problem and considered it a challenge, rather than an insurmountable obstacle. You recognize it as a challenge to overcome **and** a challenge that could stimulate **positive growth** through renewed activity in your post.

Where to Start?

Begin by evaluating the situation and by asking questions. What is the challenge? Why is it needed? How are we going to do it? Who is going to do it? Obviously, the question of "Who?" becomes critical when dealing with volunteer workers.

What is Leadership?

Dictionaries offer a variety of definitions of "lead", usually offering "direct or guide" or "to be ahead of." The latter definition is perhaps the most overlooked quality of leadership. A good leader has to anticipate obstacles, and this can only be done through preparation. The Boy Scout motto – "Be Prepared" – says it best.

Beyond the dictionary definition, "leadership" can simply be stated as, "inspiring and helping others to work toward a goal." This can be done in several different ways: 1) Setting an example (for others to follow by what you say and do); 2) Introducing new ideas (that help solve problems, i.e., "speak up" and "think up"); 3) Helping to settle differences (and disagreements by encouraging a spirit of cooperation). When dealing with volunteers, the "dictator" approach should be reserved for dire emergencies – and may not work even then.

2. Keep Everyone Working Toward Team Goals.

A team of individuals working together, sharing ideas and

Why Develop Leadership?

Leadership skills will enable you to better fulfill the duties and obligations of your position. Not everyone is born a leader, but each can develop leadership skills and benefit from using them.

Whether you are elected or appointed, or simply assuming an informal leadership role, leadership skills can help you to:

- contribute to the achievement of group goals (by helping focus everyone's energy on the task at hand);
- grow professionally (leadership skills can be applied to any line of work); and, most importantly,
- enjoy personal growth and satisfaction (knowing you are making the difference).

How's Leadership Developed?

Communication ability is the key to developing leadership skills. People simply can't work together without communicating with each other. Communication is the art of getting a message across. It may be written, spoken, or that which is referred to as "non-verbal" or "body language". If you don't think this last form is powerful, just remember the expressions that greeted the last unpopular suggestion made at a post meeting.

Person-to-Person Communication

1. *Develop your speaking skills.*
Speaking, whether to an individual or group, is a skill that improves with practice (recording your speech on a small recorder and playing it back for yourself is a good technique here).

Become actively involved by taking the initiative and make things happen.

- a) Seek help and information as

2. Be "Timely"

Present only information that is relevant. Also, make it a point to be on time and stick to the schedule.

3. Practice Good Listening Habits.

Be courteous and pay attention to what is being said. Take notes and ask questions if you do not understand.

4. Keep A Positive Attitude.

Smile! Even if you disagree with what is being said, don't let your emotions interfere with clear thinking. Summarize without injecting your opinions, too.

Written Communication

1. Be Brief.

Stick to the subject at hand to avoid confusing your readers.

2. Be Accurate.

Check all the facts before putting anything on paper.

3. Keep It Simple.

Don't use confusing technology or unnecessary complicated explanations.

Audio-Visual Aids

1. Utilize Appropriate Visual Aids

Used properly, A/V material can help clarify your point and maintain your audience's interest (too much or too little may only cloud the issue; the key word here is "approximate.")

In addition, the following points form a guideline for development of other important leadership skills.

Become "Team Minded"

1. Help Develop Team Spirit.

Encourage enthusiasm and a sense of belonging by showing Friendliness, Understanding, Fairness and Good Will. (Sincere enthusiasm is contagious.)

7. Make Your Own Self-improvement Plan.

Devise a strategy for upgrading your skills (write down and refer

responsibilities, can accomplish much more than a number of individuals working alone. Do this by reminding everyone of the group's goals and providing encouragement. Strive to harmonize differences and involve everyone in the process of achieving the group's objectives.

3. *Know The People Around You.*

Everyone has different abilities, wants, needs and purposes in life. To get along with other people and get results, you need to know what makes them tick.

4. *Treat Others as Individuals.*

Put your knowledge and understanding of each group member to work.

- a) Be aware of their expectations.
- b) Be creative.
- c) Provide rewards of your workers and achievers.
- d) Delegate responsibilities. Don't try to do it all yourself!

5. *Accept Responsibilities For Getting Things Done.*

well as offering it.

- b) Most important, know when and how to say, "NO".

6. *Take Time to Analyze Yourself.*

Learn to understand yourself and identify areas of improvement. Before you can interact with others, answer the following two questions:

a) **Who Am I?**

A leader who helps solve problems, a leader who helps people get along, a take-charge leader, one who leads by example or a combination of these different styles. How do others see me as a leader?

b) **What Am I Doing Here?**

What are **my** goals, purposes and expectations in working with this particular group or organization? What are the purposes of the group, as a whole?

After analyzing your own strengths and weaknesses, it's time to take action in pursuit of improved personal leadership skills.

to it from time to time; this is also true of group goals and plans). If you don't write them down, you may forget; or, in the case of a group, a new leader or group will have no reference to aid in maintaining continuity. When this occurs, each new set of group members must start from scratch (sometimes referred to as "reinventing the wheel"). Some examples of areas of improvement might include the following:

- a) Communication Skills (by taking a speech class, observing others, practicing new skills, etc.).
- b) Understanding of Groups and Individuals (by getting to know the people around you).

Willingness to Accept Responsibility and New Ideas (by making an effort to take on bigger, more creative challenges).

Start Today!

1. **WATCH AND LEARN** (from other effective leaders wherever you find them).
2. **READ** (about leadership techniques and practice them wherever you can).
3. **GET INVOLVED** (by making your group's goals and purposes your own).
4. **GET THE JOB DONE!** (This is the common characteristic ability of all leaders).

The time is now, the Plan is real, and mere lip service will not suffice.

If you care, really care, you'll back your words with meaningful action.

“If not **YOU**, then **WHO?**”

PUBLIC SPEAKING

Giving a speech to a live audience is one of everyone’s most feared tasks – until they learn how to do it! Public speaking is an essential skill for those in leadership positions. There is not enough space in this publication to do justice to this subject. However, a printed resource known as “The Speakers Guide” is available from the Public Relations Division of the National Headquarters in Indianapolis. It provides useful information, suggestions and guidelines on how to improve your speaking skills.

If you are serious about becoming a better speaker, you may wish to consider joining a local Toastmaster’s chapter. If you are already an experienced speaker, the information listed below on what to avoid may be helpful to you.

8 GREAT SPEECH BLUNDERS

- Reprinted from “Speakers Idea File” from Ragan Communications Inc.-

1. Dullness itself: Relying on only one or two illustrations to make your points.

Use salient statistics...timely quotes... appropriate industry examples...and personal stories to help your listeners visualize your message – and remember it.

2. NOT repeating your message enough.

Repetition is crucial to retention. Half an hour after a presentation, the average listener has already forgotten 40 percent of what was said. By the end of the week, 90 percent is usually forgotten. The more you repeat and illustrate your message, the more retention you’ll get.

3. NOT answering the audience’s most major questions, “What’s in it for me?”

You must understand the payoff: why your audience is willing to come and listen to you. If you can answer their question, you can tailor-make your speech for them - and reach them in a very personal way.

4. Burying your point.

You can lose your audience, even if you have something that they want to hear, unless you

5. Forgetting to practice (and time) your speech out loud.

This little item can cause major embarrassment on stage. A short spoken rehearsal will eliminate tongue twisters...make sure the speech’s spoken length is appropriate...ensure that your opener is no more than the recommended three minutes long...and that you close snappily, in 30 seconds or less.

6. Forgetting to check visual aids for readability.

You can only have yourself to blame if you lose your audience over this. Look at all your visual aids in advance. If anything you present cannot be read from the back of the room, get rid of it.

7. Answering hypothetical questions after the speech.

You can get into real hot water on this one, because these questions have no boundaries, no budget or time constraints, and can pin you down to a future you’d rather not have. Turn the question, instead, back to reality by saying, “Based on these facts and the existing situation, this is how I would handle the situation.”

point out the most vital sections for them, in advance. Use signal phrases (like “What’s important here,” or “This can’t be overemphasized”) to focus people’s attention on the most important parts of your message.

8. Getting distracted before you speak.
Very few speakers can answer a phone call or deal with some minor emergency before they speak, and NOT have it distract from their presentation. Always take five minutes (or more) to collect your thoughts, focus on your message, and breathe before stepping up to the podium. Don’t allow distractions to ruin what you’ve taken days to prepare.

Understand and make better use of words that...

IRRITATE

Understand? You don’t say?
Get the point? See what I mean?
But honestly now! Not really.....?
I, me, my, mine. Old friend. Old pal.
Don’t you know...? I’ll tell you what!

MOTIVATE

Will you help me? I’m so sorry.
It was my fault. Thank you. Please.
Gee, I’m proud of you. Congratulations!
You were very kind. I beg your pardon.
It’s been a real pleasure.

PROBE

What is your opinion? What do you think? Why?
Can you illustrate? What do you consider? How
do you feel about...? Could you explain? What
happened then? What were the circumstances?

INVITE ACTION

You, your.....Money.....
Save.....Guarantee....
New.....Results.....
Health.....Easy.....
Love.....Discovery.....
Proven.....Safety....

SOME SUGGESTIONS TO CELEBRATE THE AMERICAN LEGION BIRTHDAY AND INCREASE MEMBERSHIP AT THE SAME TIME

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>1.) POST OPEN HOUSE: Invite the public to your Post home to explain programs and activities of The American Legion and services being provided to your community. This should dispel any false image or stereotype. Put up tabletop booths with promotional materials on the various commissions and activities of The American Legion. Have enough materials for distribution. Invite someone from a local VA hospital regional office, Vet Center, the SBA or the PTA to assist in answering questions and to provide appropriate handouts where indicated. Invite the public to meet and greet your sponsored Special Olympics Team, American Legion Baseball Team, National High School Oratorical champion, a well recognized local hero who is a member of The American Legion, etc. It is also important to have your committee chairman and Post Service Officer available to explain their operations. Schedule your Open House so it doesn't conflict with other community events. Publicize widely and well in advance (i.e., newspaper, radio, TV, all appropriate public places, posters and neighborhood leaflets). Conduct a special raffle night (for guests and members).</p> <p>2.) "APPRECIATION" DINNER: Hold a special dinner (and social event) to show your support and appreciation of all veterans by having your members invite/sponsor a guest who is an eligible veteran. Have a distinguished member of your community be the guest speaker (preferably a veteran – definitely a veteran's advocate). Help ensure the evening's</p> | <p>6.) ESTABLISH CONTACT WITH OTHER COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS: As part of ongoing outreach program to raise awareness and improve the image of The American Legion in your community; contact other fraternal and civic groups. Ask for time on their meeting agendas to address their membership on some aspect of your Post's programs. (Many of these groups are looking for guest speakers and would most likely be glad to oblige).</p> <p>7.) DISPLAY PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS IN HIGH TRAFFIC AREAS: Approach supervisors of these places diplomatically and request display space. Point out advantages of cooperative efforts for mutual benefit (i.e., announce their help at meetings and encourage your members to consider doing business there). Some typical high traffic areas include: banks, supermarkets, medical facilities, shopping malls, town halls, civic centers, stadiums, and auditoriums, etc. Materials may be placed in some places unattended, but the best method is to have them available at an attractive booth manned by your best recruiters (note: if a booth is not possible for some reason, a simple folding table will do).</p> <p>8.) COMMUNITY ACTION TEAMS: Develop 5-10 member teams comprised of the best go-getters from surrounding Posts and make them an American Legion Community Action Team. Have them canvass the immediate community (emphasizing the local or state project you have chosen to underscore your effort) and ask them to join your Department</p> |
|---|---|

<p>success by preparing a brief but appropriate agenda. Distribute promotional materials and publicize properly.</p> <p>3.) V.I.P. INVOLVEMENT: Enlist the aid of local or state personalities in promoting the good works of your Post and District. If possible, try and relate their appearances to your local or state projects you have decided to undertake (i.e., Mayor and Governor proclamations, appearances, speeches and events).</p> <p>4.) BLOOD DRIVE: Contact your local agency and arrange to have your Post sponsor a blood donor program. (If you do not have a Post home, secure an appropriate public place and supply a volunteer work force to assist). Make sure your volunteers wear their Legion caps for visibility. Don't make a membership pitch at the actual drive – but why not send thank you notes to the donors afterwards and include an invitation to join your Post if they are eligible. As always, schedule wisely and publicize widely.</p> <p>5.) SPONSOR COMMUNITY SERVICE SEMINARS AND WORKSHOPS: Contact local social service and educational agencies (such as evening schools, colleges, the Small Business Administration (SBA) office, etc.) and offer to host an informational workshop. Your emphasis could be on re-training and assistance for unemployed veterans.</p>	<p>Headquarters Post initially, then let them decide which local Post they would like to be associated with.</p> <p>Related projects could be in the form of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Telephone Membership Round Up (new members and/or renewals). Half of the team makes calls while the remaining members stand by with vehicles to go pick up the dues immediately. - Door-to-Door Membership Drive: Target one or more neighborhoods in your community; divide up the streets and conduct a door-to-door canvassing effort. Good planning and organization (advance publicity, prepared introductory remarks for all canvassing and a follow-up report listing the results) will greatly aid your chances for success providing an evaluation of your effectiveness. <p>9.) FULLY UTILIZE NATIONAL TOOLS AND PROGRAMS: Supplement your efforts to increase awareness and membership through greater use of materials available from Department and National Headquarters. Additionally, you may wish to have billboards strategically placed in your community. This can also be handled through your Department at a minimal cost.</p>
---	---

PUFL MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM

A Good Deal for Department, Post, Member

The American Legion's Paid-Up-For-Life (PUFL) membership plan is a good deal for all parties involved – the National Organization, the Department, the Post, and most important, the individual Legionnaire. Affirming the fact it is a good deal are the nearly 250,000 Legionnaires who have taken advantage of the PUFL plan.

American Legion Posts with a high participation in the PUFL plan have successfully stabilized their membership base. They don't have to spend so much time and effort on renewals and can concentrate on their new membership recruitment program.

Many posts are finding the PUFL plan an effective way to assure uninterrupted payment of dues for those Legionnaires honored with a Life Membership. A post can waive its per capita

Department and National per capita to determine the final cost.

The post that uses the PUFL plan to take care of Life Memberships saves money and avoids the possibility of embarrassment should someone in the future fail to pay the Life Member's dues.

Note 1: The National PUFL program is not available in the Department of Kansas. They have their own program.

Note 2: The National PUFL program is designed to be a convenient way for a member to pay membership dues. It was never intended to be a discounted membership.

and figure the PUFL rate using the total of

PAID-UP-FOR-LIFE



**FOR A PUFL APPLICATION, WRITE TO - PUFL, BOX 1055, INDIANAPOLIS,
IN 46206**
(Please provide your name, address, post number and department)
OR CHECK The American Legion WEB SITE @ www.legion.org

THE AMERICAN LEGION
Paid-Up-For-Life
Rate Schedule - effective January 1, 2004

DUES	AGE GROUP													
	24 & Under	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65-69	70-74	75-79	80-84	85 & Over
\$14	\$488	\$464	\$438	\$410	\$378	\$345	\$309	\$272	\$234	\$197	\$163	\$130	\$101	\$82
\$15	\$523	\$497	\$469	\$439	\$405	\$369	\$331	\$291	\$251	\$211	\$174	\$139	\$108	\$88

\$16	\$557	\$530	\$500	\$468	\$432	\$394	\$353	\$310	\$267	\$225	\$186	\$148	\$116	\$94
\$17	\$592	\$563	\$532	\$497	\$459	\$419	\$375	\$330	\$284	\$239	\$197	\$158	\$123	\$100
\$18	\$627	\$597	\$563	\$527	\$486	\$443	\$397	\$349	\$301	\$253	\$209	\$167	\$130	\$106
\$19	\$662	\$630	\$594	\$556	\$513	\$468	\$419	\$369	\$317	\$268	\$221	\$176	\$137	\$112
\$20	\$697	\$663	\$626	\$585	\$540	\$492	\$441	\$388	\$334	\$282	\$232	\$186	\$145	\$118
\$21	\$732	\$696	\$657	\$614	\$567	\$517	\$463	\$407	\$351	\$296	\$244	\$195	\$152	\$123
\$22	\$766	\$729	\$688	\$644	\$594	\$542	\$485	\$427	\$367	\$310	\$255	\$204	\$159	\$129
\$23	\$801	\$762	\$719	\$673	\$621	\$566	\$507	\$446	\$384	\$324	\$267	\$213	\$166	\$135
\$24	\$836	\$795	\$751	\$702	\$648	\$591	\$529	\$466	\$401	\$338	\$279	\$223	\$174	\$141
\$25	\$871	\$829	\$782	\$731	\$676	\$616	\$552	\$485	\$418	\$352	\$290	\$232	\$181	\$147
\$26	\$906	\$862	\$813	\$761	\$703	\$640	\$574	\$504	\$434	\$366	\$302	\$241	\$188	\$153
\$27	\$941	\$895	\$845	\$790	\$730	\$665	\$596	\$524	\$451	\$380	\$313	\$251	\$195	\$159
\$28	\$976	\$928	\$876	\$819	\$757	\$689	\$618	\$543	\$468	\$394	\$325	\$260	\$202	\$165
\$29	\$1,010	\$961	\$907	\$848	\$784	\$714	\$640	\$563	\$484	\$408	\$337	\$269	\$210	\$171
\$30	\$1,045	\$994	\$938	\$878	\$811	\$739	\$662	\$582	\$501	\$422	\$348	\$278	\$217	\$176
\$31	\$1,080	\$1,027	\$970	\$907	\$838	\$763	\$684	\$601	\$518	\$436	\$360	\$288	\$224	\$182
\$32	\$1,115	\$1,060	\$1,001	\$936	\$865	\$788	\$706	\$621	\$534	\$451	\$372	\$297	\$231	\$188
\$33	\$1,150	\$1,094	\$1,032	\$965	\$892	\$812	\$728	\$640	\$551	\$465	\$383	\$306	\$239	\$194
\$34	\$1,185	\$1,127	\$1,064	\$995	\$919	\$837	\$750	\$660	\$568	\$479	\$395	\$316	\$246	\$200
\$35	\$1,219	\$1,160	\$1,095	\$1,024	\$946	\$862	\$772	\$679	\$585	\$493	\$406	\$325	\$253	\$206
\$36	\$1,254	\$1,193	\$1,126	\$1,053	\$973	\$886	\$794	\$698	\$601	\$507	\$418	\$334	\$260	\$212
\$37	\$1,289	\$1,226	\$1,157	\$1,082	\$1,000	\$911	\$816	\$718	\$618	\$521	\$430	\$343	\$268	\$218
\$38	\$1,324	\$1,259	\$1,189	\$1,112	\$1,027	\$936	\$838	\$737	\$635	\$535	\$441	\$353	\$275	\$223
\$39	\$1,359	\$1,292	\$1,220	\$1,141	\$1,054	\$960	\$860	\$757	\$651	\$549	\$453	\$362	\$282	\$229
\$40	\$1,394	\$1,326	\$1,251	\$1,170	\$1,081	\$985	\$882	\$776	\$668	\$563	\$464	\$371	\$289	\$235
Other *	\$34.84	\$33.14	\$31.28	\$29.25	\$27.02	\$24.62	\$22.06	\$19.40	\$16.70	\$14.08	\$11.61	\$9.28	\$7.23	\$5.88

* If the annual Post dues are an amount not shown in the above table, compute the cost by multiplying the actual dues by the amount shown on the "Other" line, according to age.

**TIME PAYMENTS
NATIONAL PAID-UP-FOR-LIFE
MEMBERSHIP PLAN**

Applicants may use the Time Payment Plan to purchase their Paid-Up-For-Life (PUFL) membership in The American Legion, with no additional interest or service charge added to the fee. Below are rules to follow:

1. You must be a member in Good Standing to apply for a PUFL. Good standing means that the member must have a valid membership card for the current Legion
2. The first payment must be at least 10% of the total fee. Should your time payments extend into the next calendar year, your Post Adjutant should issue you that year's regular paper membership card.
3. After receipt and approval of the application, National Headquarters will provide Time Payment applicants with coupons and envelopes to be used for submitting monthly

- membership year.
2. The total PUFL membership fee must be paid within twelve (12) months from the date you apply for the PUFL membership.
 3. There are no provisions for refunds in the PUFL program.
 4. Check the appropriate box on the application that you wish to purchase.
 5. When you submit the application to your Post Adjutant or Finance Officer for certification, an initial remittance must accompany the application.

payments until the entire PUFL fee is paid-in-full. The monthly payment due will be at least 10% of the total fee. *(Note: Monthly statements will not be sent from National.)*

7. Your permanent PUFL membership card will be issued to you when the fee is paid in full.

If you need assistance or have any questions, please contact your Post Adjutant or Finance Officer, or write:

The American Legion
National Paid-Up-For-Life Plan
PO Box 1055
Indianapolis, IN 46206

ANSWERS TO MOST FREQUENT INQUIRIES CONCERNING PUFL

1. The National Constitution gives the member the right to pay dues annually or for life.
2. A member in good standing may purchase a Paid-Up-For-Life Membership only through his/her own Post. The Post Adjutant or Finance Officer will certify applicants for such a membership.
3. A permanent, distinctive membership card will be sent to each PUFL member upon receipt and acceptance of the application by National. Thereafter, an annual membership card will be sent to each PUFL member.
4. Each year National Headquarters will print a register for Posts and Departments of their National PUFL members and will issue checks in payment for the Department per capita and the Post share of the annual dues.
5. A Department so desiring may exclude itself from the National plan by action of the Department Executive Committee or the Department Convention and notification to the National Adjutant.
6. A PUFL membership plan is necessary to retain a competitive position with other major national organizations.
7. Many members, particularly those approaching retirement age, wish to purchase a paid-up membership to assure the continuance of their membership
8. Paid-up members may transfer from a Post in one participating Department to a Post in another participating Department. The PUFL member may continue to be not only a member, but an active member after changing residences.
9. Rates are actuarially established at a level that anticipates further inflation.
10. The National Treasurer will annually withdraw from the trust account an amount equal to each Post's share of the per capita dues when application was made plus the sum of National and Department per capita dues in effect at the time of withdrawal.
11. A Post cannot charge less than National and Department per capita.
12. Transfer procedures have been established. Posts would retain the right to be the judge of its own membership and acceptance would not be mandatory. However, once approval to transfer has been secured from the new Post and the Department, both are obligated to honor the PUFL membership.
13. No refunds are planned in the event of the member's death. However, provisions have been made for refunds to be made when a charter is cancelled or a member cannot complete a transfer, or has a membership revoked.
14. Distinction will clearly be made between PUFL membership and Life Membership.



DIRECT MEMBERSHIP

Research studies have shown that many veterans would consider joining The American Legion, but they have never been asked. In an attempt to reach as many veterans as possible, who have not been previously asked to join, we have been soliciting new members through the mail since 1982. This membership program is called Direct Membership Solicitation (DMS).

The DMS program is a form of direct marketing used to solicit membership in The American Legion. Although we are primarily using direct mail to solicit new members at this time, direct marketing includes one of, or a combination of, direct mail, television, radio, magazines, newspapers or telephone. The best way to determine which of these media will work the best is to test them. Previous tests have shown that direct mail is very successful.

Briefly, this is how DMS works. We rent mailing lists from commercial list brokers. We then compare these lists with our membership files in an effort to remove our members' names from these commercial lists. This is done to ensure that our members do not receive an invitation to join. After this step is completed, we mail out a letter with the National Commander's signature, which lists many of The American Legion's past accomplishments, our current concerns, and reasons why we need this prospective member's support. After reading the letter, if a prospective member wishes to join, they complete the enclosed application form certifying their dates of active duty and separation from the armed forces, their character of discharge, their branch of service, and their birth date. They then sign the application and return it with a payment for \$20.00 in the envelope provided. There is also an option for the prospective new member to charge their membership dues to their Visa or Master card account.

When responses are received at National Headquarters, the paid new members are keyed into our computer

2. Who signs the card?

Answer: The National Adjutant.

3. Does the local Post have to accept transfers of these newly acquired DMS members from the Headquarters Post?

Answer: No. The Post still remains the judge of its

system. These new members are then assigned directly to the Department Headquarters Post in the state in which they live. National Headquarters then sends the new member a membership card signed by the National Adjutant, a congratulatory letter, information on The American Legion Family Benefit Plan and a Legion Lapel pin or other premium.

A list of all the new members of a specific Department is then forwarded to the Department Headquarters to inform them of the new members. The Department also receives a set of mailing labels for these new members to be used to send a communication to each member informing them of any specific Department benefits, welcoming them to The American Legion, and informing them of their option to transfer to a local Post or remain in the Headquarters Post. The Department also receives a set of 3 x 5 cards for these new members which can be used to distribute to Districts and or Posts in the new member's area. It should be noted that the computer list, the mailing label, and the 3 x 5 cards are all supplied in Zip Code order for ease of mailing and distribution at no cost to the Department.

Listed below are some of the most commonly asked questions pertaining to the DMS program:

1. How do you know if someone is eligible?

Answer: Initially, a new member provides his/her service dates and character of discharge and signs the application certifying their eligibility. However, the ultimate responsibility for verifying the new member's eligibility, using Form DD214 or other official proof of separation, lies with the local Post. It should be mentioned that of over 3 million new members that have been acquired through the DMS program, National Headquarters has been informed of less than 300 instances where an individual was found to be ineligible at the local Post level. Therefore, the eligibility question does not appear to be a problem at this time.

Subsequently, he/she will receive an invitation to join. It should be mentioned that this unfortunate situation does not occur frequently, when compared to the millions of letters sent out annually.

As mentioned previously, the DMS program is, in fact, direct marketing. Direct marketing is the most disciplined of the marketing theories. The key word, in fact, the foundation of direct marketing, is measurability. Direct marketing's complex mathematical formulas provide a strict account of expenditures and exact methods of

own membership. But, why would you not accept a new member in your Post?

4. What should a local Post do if a prospective new member walks in with one of these letters inviting them to join?

Answer: Sign them up using normal procedures.

5. How often does National Headquarters send out these mailings?

Answer: Primary mailings will be done between July and February.

6. What is the potential of the DMS program?

Answer: There are currently over twenty (20) million eligible veterans who do not belong to The American Legion yet.

7. Why does National Headquarters ask for membership dues of \$20.00 through the DMS program?

Answer: This price was established as follows: \$9.00 is national per capita as established by the National Constitution. The remaining \$11.00 is needed to offset the first year's cost of acquiring the new member through the DMS program.

8. Is a member who signs up through DMS different from any other member?

Answer: No! He or she is a member of The American Legion in good standing!

9. Why do current members receive these DMS mailings inviting them to join? Doesn't National know who its own members are?

Answer: Every precaution is taken to ensure our own members do not receive these mailings. However, if one of our member's name and address is listed on a commercial mailing list with a different spelling or mailing address as compared to his/her listing on our file, then the computer cannot remove it.

measuring response. For example, The American Legion must receive a 1.18% response rate to each mailing in order to cover the first year cost of the program. Simply, this means that for each 1,000 letters mailed, we must acquire twelve (12) new members in order to break even for the first year.

In summary, the DMS program is an effort on the part of National Headquarters to help our traditional word of mouth recruiters in the field reach these millions of veterans who are eligible for membership in The American Legion. There is no valid reason why we cannot re-establish our membership base and begin to experience a true positive growth. The National organization has made tremendous strides by establishing a direct marketing program (DMS) utilizing the various media such as direct mail, television, and telephone to reach out to those potential members. DMS is a valid approach and one that will require continuous support and communication at all levels of The American Legion. District Commanders and Post officers are of critical importance in this program. They will, more than likely, be the first to personally contact a new DMS member. That contact may be the determining factor as to whether or not that new member will stay a member.

It is also interesting to note that the distribution of veterans by war eras is more equal in the DMS program. That is, we are basically signing up the same percentage of WWII, Korea, and Vietnam veterans. In comparison, our traditional word of mouth efforts signed up approximately 60% WWII, 23% Korea, and 17% Vietnam veterans. The challenges are many and the opportunities are great. Through the DMS program and increased efforts through our traditional word of mouth membership recruiting, The American Legion is again experiencing positive growth.

One final point. Every effort should be made to contact these new members personally and urge them to transfer into a local Post in their area. Although an increase in the number of members alone does give us more strength in our lobbying efforts, **these new members cannot become active while they remain in the Department Headquarters Post.** Your Post needs new members and the fresh ideas they bring with them, if it is to remain a viable force in your community.

NOTES
