

MEMBERSHIP IS “US”

It seems that we are always being asked to increase our membership. No matter what program or topic being discussed, it always goes back to membership. We all know the obvious reason for this is “Membership is the Lifeblood of The American Legion.” Without a healthy membership all of our programs would suffer. Without members, we would have no voice on Capitol Hill. Without members, there would be no accomplishment in assistance and support to our veteran’s, their families, our community, state and nation.

It is that time of the year when we all need to help recruit, renew and reinstate members. To accomplish this all we really need to do is “JUST ASK.” We need to get the word out to all veteran’s who are not members, all legionnaires who have not renewed their membership for this year and members who have let their membership lapse over the past few years. When asking veteran’s to join our great organization, to renew their membership or to reinstate their membership let them know we take care of our veteran’s in many ways. We love kids; we have some of the best Children & Youth programs in the nation. Through membership our voice is heard in Congress, to make sure the Department of Defense is funded to have the best equipped, best trained and best motivated military in the world. We support our troops. In Virginia our job, which we do extremely well, is to be here for them assisting their families. Just mention this to any veteran, any member who has not yet renewed or any member who has let their membership lapse about these four things. Mention the benefits available to legionnaires. We have insurance, vision care, prescription, financial, travel and many more benefits available to us.

We, in the Department of Virginia are very fortunate. We have legionnaires who know how important membership is. We also know that we have some of the best programs in the country. Our current membership is over 46,000. To make our 100% we still need over 10,500 members. To bring home another consecutive “ALL TIME HIGH” for the Department of Virginia we need approximately 13,000 members. With a little hard work from each and every legionnaire we can make our membership goals this year!! The time is now!! Each and every one of us needs to “ASK” veterans to join our great organization who are not currently members. In reality people want to be part of an organization who make a difference and that is “US.” Many of our current veterans are just waiting to be asked to join. Letters need to be sent or personal contact should be used to ask members who have not yet renewed or have let their membership lapse. “ASK” them to come back to our great organization.

A very important part of membership is recognizing and rewarding the top recruiters of each Post. Establish a top recruiter program. Recognize your top recruiters. Everyone likes to be recognized. Do this at your regular Post meetings or in your newsletters. Many Posts give away gift cards for dinner at local restaurants or a free pass to dinners held at their Post. Utilize the Department Awards Manual to reward top recruiters. There are many individual membership awards available. All Post Adjutants should have a copy of the manual. Any Legionnaire can go on line and download the manual at www.valegion.org

I am sure everyone could use some extra cash with the current state of the economy. Take advantage of the special “Department Commander’s Award.” A

\$500.00 debit card will be awarded, at the Department Convention in July, to the Legionnaire who recruits the greatest number of new members by June 1, 2009. The winner must recruit at least 50 new members, or any war era, and qualify for the Gold Brigade Award.

I am asking all Legionnaires to adopt the theme for 2009, "JUST ONE." Recruit, renew or reinstate "ONE MEMBER." If every Legionnaire does this from now until the Department Convention in Richmond, we will have absolutely no problem making our 100% or another "ALL TIME HIGH" at the end of the year and put Virginia "ON TOP." WE NEED YOUR HELP!

Department Commander Les Clevinger, the Department Officers and I thank you for what you have achieved in membership and what you will achieve in the coming months.

FOR GOD AND COUNTRY

Ron "SKI" Miluszewski
Department Membership Chairman