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AMERICAN LEGION

Department of Arizona

"For God and Country"

WHY IS MEMBERSHIP SO IMPORTANT?

In my travels I have heard members scoff at, get excited and enthusiastic over, and some just didn't care about membership. The reasons have been many!

1. We concentrate on the canteen so we can stay in business.
2. There are no veterans in our area.
3. Post 100s are a waste of time.
4. We have enough to do already to keep the Post going.
5. I already spend too much time on other Post activities or needs.
6. We don't have enough volunteers.
7. What does it get us?

I'm sure I haven't heard all the reasons why membership is not a high priority within the Post, but I'm here to say that increasing your membership can minimize or mitigate all the reasons above. Consider the following.

1. New members bring in more business to a canteen.
2. There may not be a list of Post 100 veterans for your area, but I guarantee there are more veterans in your area. The National Center for Veteran Analysis and Statistics estimates that Arizona has over 500,000 veterans as of 2020. Legion membership in Arizona is less than 34,000. You do the math.
3. Over 1,400 AZ100 members have renewed since July 1. Some of those members could've been members of your Post if you would have transferred them in before July 1. Most of them pay higher dues than the cost of dues at your own Post. Many of them say no one has ever called them and many have been Post AZ100 members for years.
4. More members increase the chances that your Post revenue and number of volunteers will increase.
5. It is said that it takes money to make money. Well, it takes members to make a Post. Without new members, your Post will slowly dwindle to the point where you can no longer operate the Post. A smart business owner will invest time and money back into their business to stay relevant and up to date so they can compete for business and in the Legion's case, it takes an investment in time and effort to recruit members. There are other VSOs out there as well as veteran charities that you must compete with to stay relevant.
6. Potentially having more volunteers may allow the Post to be more involved in Legion programs. This has a side benefit of raising the awareness of your Post's existence within the local community.
7. But, having said all of the above, the question of "What does it get us?" is in my mind the most important. It provides an increase in numbers for The American Legion to stay relevant as a VSO so we can lobby Congress and the President for more or improved veteran benefits. **BENEFITS**, that's what it gets us. It was only 20 short years ago that the Legion had over 3 million members and now we are not even half of that. How many members will we have in another 20 years? Think about it. **I urge all of you to make membership one of your highest priorities.**

Gary Smith
Department Membership Director