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New Member Recruitment and Current Member Retention Report

Summary

This document was created as a subsequent membership aid to the fine work of PDC Dave Arnold's Department Membership Initiative guide created in 2010 during his tenure as Department Junior Vice Commander. The work included herein has been generated with the intention of having a living document for improved membership acquisition and retention. A questionnaire was generated with six question topics, focusing on activities, methods, and knowledge of items that have demonstrated success or have shown to be of little benefit. The questionnaire was sent to all 23 Camp Junior Vice Commanders (or Secretaries) within the Department. The intention is for this document to be updated by the Department Junior Vice Commander on a periodic basis with new information and techniques submitted that will ensure an ever increasing and robust membership.

Participation

12 out of the 23 Camps within the Department of Michigan submitted answers to the voluntary questionnaire, for a participation percentage of around 52%.

New Member Recruitment

Ultimately, new member recruitment needs to focus on what potential candidates find of interest. The submitted feedback points out activities and methods that may draw newcomers, as well as those that appear to provide no benefit. For ease of review, the submitted successful and ineffective methods have been separated, and the methods of interest have been formatted as a bulleted list. No order of importance is intended.

Successful Methods

- Word of mouth and one-on-one recruitment with interested acquaintances of Camp members
- Providing members with Camp business cards to hand out as opportunities arise
- Camp social media outlets such as Facebook (must be updated regularly)
- Field trips to historic sites, museums, etc. (invite potential new members to come along)
- Civil War seminars and roundtables with quality speakers

- Brochures or 5"x7" cards in libraries, museums, archives, bulletin boards, etc. (some Camps have had no/low success)
- Aligning events with other community organizations' events (provides new inroads with like-minded individuals for potential members)
- Inviting community organizations (e.g. Veteran's organizations, genealogy groups, Scouts, schools, etc.) to participate in Camp events (provides new inroads with like-minded individuals for potential members)
- Genealogy events (a bridge or stepping-stone to interest in SUVCW)
- Guided cemetery walks highlighting Veterans

Ineffective Methods

- Static booths and/or tables at events (almost every Camp that responded, listed this as about the most ineffective activity to get new members)
- Business meetings or events with no programs/speakers
- Brochures in libraries, museums, archives, etc. (some Camps have had success)
- Parades (great for camaraderie, but poor for obtaining new members)
- Public speaking engagements (good for teaching what SUVCW is, but unproductive for gaining new members)

Best Recruitment Methods in the Order

When looking at the pinnacle of SUVCW new member recruitment, one needs to look no further than Brother David Rish, PCC of the Jacob Parrott Camp No. 33, Department of Ohio. Brother Rish currently serves as Recruiting Officer for the Department of Ohio. He has won the B.F. Stephenson Award (for recruiting the most new members in the Order) presented by the Commander-in-Chief for the past four consecutive terms, with 11 new members in 2011-2012, 17 new members in 2012-2013, 15 new members in 2013-2014, and 19 new members in 2014-2015.

Brother Rish was contacted about his phenomenal track record in new member recruitment, and if he would be willing to share some of his methods. He graciously replied and provided insight into his success. His technique is described below:

First thing you have to do is talk to people. Start a conversation then work into asking if they had an ancestor in the Civil War. Here is the trick most don't know. I have ancestry.com so I will see if they are interested in the SUV, and if they are, I have the hook. I will get as much info on their father's and mother's lines that I can track on ancestry, for me I can do a search in about 15 minutes.

Once I find someone (a Union ancestor) I call them and fill out the PDF app on the Dept. of Ohio website. Not everyone is a meeting person so don't disregard them for that. You just have to get them into that first one to pay (the dues and fees) and swear them in.

I have about a 25% turn over at the end of the first year; however, most will stay involved. Our Camp is always working on projects to get the members involved. One that works well is to go out to cemeteries and straighten up the government tombstones. The guys like this project a lot.

Current Member Retention

Fraternity is one of the most important membership benefits as expressed by many Brothers throughout the SUVCW. Successful retention begins with the camaraderie of attending events, and working on projects together for the Good of the Order. This has been substantiated thoroughly with the results of the questionnaire. Listed below is feedback on items that are well received by members, as well as other activities that have shown little value in member retention. No order of importance is intended.

Successful Methods

- Effective and regular communication with the Camp membership by Camp Officers
- Various events, ceremonies, programs, activities in addition to business meetings
- Cemetery and memorials work events (including grave registration work)
- Field trips to historic sites, museums, etc.
- Publishing Camp newsletters
- Genealogy assistance
- Participating in parades
- Participation in Sons of Veterans Reserve (many Camps have a significant number in the SVR)
- Shooting range day(s)
- Casting of rounds and paper cartridge manufacturing day(s)/evening(s)
- Encouraging members to attend the Department and National Encampments (including the Camp paying for the registration fees)
- Christmas and/or annual dinners
- Providing updated Camp Rosters to the membership on a regular basis

Ineffective Methods

- Lack of speakers/programs at meetings
- Lack of activities (e.g. ceremonies, field trips, cemetery clean-up, etc.)
- Poor or infrequent communication – lack of current member contact information and low amount of communications sent out to the Camp membership by Camp Officers
- Summer cookouts/picnics (most Camps have had difficulty in getting members to attend due to hot temperatures and competing activities during the summer)

Revision Log

Rev. No.	Revision Date	Author/Modifier	Notes
0	30 November 2015	David Smith, LM, DJVC	Original Document
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