

NARFE April 2017 North and South Workshops – Membership – Nancy Brunson

Thanks to all of YOU for coming out and trying our new NM District Workshop format, and – a Special Thank You to the folks who fill in for me as I go through treatment and therapy for a bum knee.

1-Current Statistics. The 2016 Recruiting Contest nets 1,070 Members. Not only did NARFE add these numbers, Steven Singleton of Las Cruces was the Grand Prize winner. He donated the value of the prize to the NARFE-FEEA Disaster and Scholarship Funds on behalf of Chapter 182. Thank you, way to go Steven!

NARFE total membership at the end of March is 214,049 (this is a decrease since February of 773 members). There are 1,127 total chapters. The 2017 Membership Gain/Loss total is (2,083); however, in 2016, it was (2,956). The Death rate shows a decreasing trend, however, we are losing other members due to non-renewal or being dropped for non-payment of dues. It is noted that many Life Members are choosing to not pay their chapter dues, and they are being transferred to the new National Division (NA). We have learned that 2 chapters in Tucson, AZ, may need to close as they cannot recruit officers. This situation is a struggle for most chapters. And, this is exactly why we are here – to learn and improve!

2-Other Organizations. I interviewed some individuals who are officers and members of other organizations – all with members in the same age bracket as NARFE members. The Rotary Club has as their motto “Service Above Self.” (This is similar to NARFE, where some folks have said that when you take an office – it’s for ‘life’!) Rotary has as its guiding principles the foundation of their values: service, fellowship, diversity, integrity, and leadership. NARFE has these same attributes; however, our potential audience also needs to be a current or retired federal employee, or a spouse.

One local Rotary Club uses an unwritten rule that a future Rotarian must be recommended to the club. A member can bring a prospect and the club will pay for his/her first, second, or third meal. If a prospect seeks out a club, that person must be adopted by a member at that meeting and then be “invited” to the following meeting. They claim they retain members as their club is ‘dynamic.’

Another local Rotary Club has a different recruiting policy. This club does more outside recruiting for prospective members. They believe a personal invitation is best when you meet people face-to-face. They conduct Open Houses from 4-6pm

to attract prospective members. For the Open Houses, they state the new Brew Pubs are very popular for this activity. (Do I have your interest now?!) This club also utilizes Satellite Groups who meet in smaller numbers and at a different time from the regular club meeting time. Something like this is a real possibility for NARFE to host a mid-week coffee or a luncheon close to large federal buildings.

AARP stresses their low cost membership rate at \$16 per year with discounts for auto-renew methods and multiple year renewals. They emphasize several discounts that are similar to the NARFE discounts we see in each NARFE magazine every month. AARP stresses more visual attraction for the discounts on their website. NARFE, to our benefit, puts its emphasis on protecting our salary, annuities, and medical benefits.

Are you a member of another organization or do you know of experiences with other groups? Can you relay any of their success stories?

Conclusion: I note the difference here in the fact that NARFE is here to protect and preserve its membership for everyone member's benefit. The other organizations do not have this capability for a federal employee, a retiree, or a spouse. **I also see one common denominator here – advertising and promotion by 'word of mouth' method. This seems to be the best way, and it is also most cost effective.**

3-New Potential. Aging/non-aging population. We can be encouraged by the fact that the baby-boomers are retiring – and our life expectancy increases due to new technologies and early detection of diseases and conditions; therefore, as this younger population hits their retirement years, we will see members living longer. This is One Huge Encouraging Factor!

We learned at the Open Season Health Fairs that some federal agencies hold health fairs throughout the year. The BCBS federal contact and agency Human Resources folks can keep you informed of their schedules. In Albuquerque, the Army Corps of Engineers holds quarterly health fairs, and they have invited Chapter 80 to participate in the future.

This month BCBS notified Chapter 80's President of a large health fair taking place on April 21st at the Forest Service. It was their 'Annual Tree Mile Run/Walk Event.' BCBS slated this as the largest health fair in the state. The Albuquerque and Rio Rancho chapters were happy to set up a NARFE table at that event.

During the open season health fairs, please note the e-mail addresses for the H.R. offices. You can provide them with notices throughout the year on upcoming

Webinars that pertain to current employees or those contemplating retirement. Potential members can view a Webinar for the cost of \$39 and receive a year's membership along with the webinar. This is very helpful for the current employees. In addition, you can offer to provide these offices with current brochures and NARFE magazines.

4-Idea Exchange. In your area and chapter: What works? What does not work?

At Chapter 80 in Albuquerque, we publish a Free notice in Abq Journal Business Outlook Publication. The Business Outlook section is published each Monday. We place the small announcement in the paper on the Monday prior to our meeting on the following Saturday. I usually get one or two calls in response to this. And, new folks also just show up at one of our meetings. Any other advertisement in the local paper costs big bucks.

Chapter 80 does have Kirtland AFB nearby. We recently explored the cost of placing ads in the 'Nucleus,' the base newspaper. This is a bit pricey; however, it will reach our target audience – current federal employees and retirees. The lowest price ad in that publication is \$449 for 3.5" x 4.375". We will be bringing this up for discussion at our next meeting.

If chapter funds are not available to place an ad in your local paper, try to organize an event or noteworthy occasion and call to notify the paper for local coverage. That is a good way to get some 'free' advertising!

City Senior Centers usually have bulletin boards where you can place meeting notices, or a poster or ad about NARFE. Be sure to include your local meeting place, date, and time.

The chapters are losing many members to the National Division (NA). The Federation has been encouraged to include National members in communications for conventions, conferences, and advocacy or training events. They also have an opportunity to serve in Federation elected and appointed positions. It goes without saying that they have access to our chapter Service Officers. They will also receive information on the Federation voting process and ballots.

To retain members, consider a new-member orientation. Periodic orientations are excellent forums for welcoming and educating new members and as reminders for seasoned members. In Chapter 80 specifically, we will be losing one of our Service Officers this year. We will be presenting a program explaining those duties and recruiting a replacement. You can help new members become familiar with the role of the chapter in community involvement. Our volunteer hours are so important – if you have a NARFE shirt, blouse, or nametag – please wear that

when you are volunteering to help get our message out. Get our newest members involved in a committee or leadership role in the chapter. Schedule insightful speakers to cover common topics of interest, and provide some entertainment perhaps in July for some patriotic music. Find out how well you are doing by providing a questionnaire at meetings. Ask, “How are we measuring up?” You can try to make the responses part of your overall retention strategy.

If your chapter does not have a monthly newsletter, consider putting out a quarterly postcard. You can announce the programs for the upcoming quarter. If this is too large a project, I suggest an old-fashioned telephone tree to notify and remind members of meetings and special events. This is a task that can be done from home – which helps some people do a bit of volunteer work and helps to increase the chapter meeting attendance.

Please call NARFE headquarters and always have some extra NARFE magazines on hand. These make excellent recruiting tools for folks to carry in their cars, or take along to doctor’s appointments or other local events.

5-Action Items. As much as we would like you to believe that the benefits federal workers have earned and have been promised cannot be touched, the truth of the matter is - your benefits are vulnerable! Your health and retirement benefits are bargaining chips, and federal benefits are easy pockets for Congress to pick. Your federal benefits are your lifeline to a secure retirement. You owe it to yourself to be informed on the urgent issues that can affect them.

Secondly, as you meet up with fellow retirees or current employees, be ready to tell them about the benefit issues pending that will impact our financial security, such as streamlining the workforce, health insurance premiums, etc. Each active employee, retiree and annuitant will be impacted by some of the proposals before Congress now. Let your voice be heard so that NARFE can be a lobby for you.

Third, communicate with your Senators and Congressman. As stated by Lorna Howerton who attended the recent Legislative Training – when Congressmen and Senators receive a message or letter they know someone does have an interest in that area. This is important if we ever expect our representatives to listen to their constituents and then support the NARFE position.

Remember – NARFE has the power in its numbers to act and make our voices heard in Washington and thus have an impact for each current federal employee and federal retiree.

Discussion.