REPORT TO THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OCTOBER 16-17, 2019

by the

21ST CENTURY AD HOC COMMITTEE OF THE AMERICAN LEGION

Adopted by the
National Executive Committee
October 16-17, 2019

REPORT TO THE
NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
OCTOBER 16-17, 2019
by the
AD HOC COMMITTEE
21ST CENTURY OF THE AMERICAN LEGION

Members of the committee are:

Rev. Daniel J. Seehafer (WI), Chairman
Joshua T. Clement (MT), Vice Chairman
Vickie D. Smith-Dykes (GA)
Mark D. Kearsing (NY)
John W. Crosby (IN)
Matthew D. Jabaut (ME)
Lowry Finley-Jackson (MO)
Robbie Walker (IL)
Sandra E. Kee (MA)
Derric A. Grimes (NC)
Guillermo Guillen (VA)
Desiree Guerra (CO)
Michael P. Davis (MA)

Ex-Officio Members

PNC David Rehbein (IA), 100th Anniversary Observance Committee
Robert Newman (IN), Internal Affairs Commission Chairman

National Staff members who have assisted are:

Jack Querfeld (IL)
Jeff Stoffer
Matthew Herndon (IN)
Nick Arnett (IN)
Doug Chace (IN)
Kevin Mook (MD)
Ron Neff (IN)
Michele Steinmetz (CA)

Re-establishing the 21st Century Ad-Hoc Committee

This committee was appointed by National Commander Denise H. Rohan and approved by the National Executive Committee of The American Legion on October 11-12, 2017. The purpose of re-establishing the 21st Century Ad-Hoc Committee was to review the original 21st Century Report given to the National Executive Committee during the Fall Meetings of 1997 and to update its recommendations for current and future needs to move the organization forward.

Reaffirmation of the Original 21st Century Report

The original 21st Century Report, as approved by the National Executive Committee in 1997, is just as relevant today as it was when it was originally written, if not more so.

Importance of Implementation

Although this Committee believes the original report was well-written and outlined a path for future success, the overall report was not properly implemented at all levels of the organization. This Committee believes that the recommendations here are not only urgent but possibly existential to our great organization. To ensure that this report is implemented at all levels of the organization, however, there needs to be a "Champion" going forward to advocate for the recommendations in this document while ensuring that it remains in the forefront and is relevant for years to come.

Legacy and Vision

Throughout our history, The American Legion has focused its vision on strengthening America. While initially focusing caring for the countless veterans who recently won the "war to end all wars," over the last century, our vision has transformed into a legacy of service to our respective communities, states, and Nation. All the while, we have never compromised our stance that veterans and their families deserve the best care and benefits they have earned through their service and sacrifice. For the next century, The American Legion must never forget our shared legacy of the last one hundred years, but also our collective vision – both of ourselves and how the public perceives us –must continue to harness and embrace the multigenerational culture we are experiencing today and into the future.

We have a common thread that most organizations cannot replicate: our undivided service to this Nation, our leaders, and those with whom we have served as well as their families--- our *Veteran Experience*. Therefore, our focus needs to keep building for those who are to come. We have a common bond as veterans because we grew-up in a culture where the mantras "battle buddies" and "no one is left behind" are taken seriously. There are few other organizations where members have shared such a common experience and that understands the bond of service that is created. We are an organization made up of multiple generations, which requires the need to understand and develop strategies in order to blend all of our members into a mission-purposed organization. Our new members learn from the experienced, and likewise, the experienced members must learn from the new members. Our mission is to embrace and cultivate all members to develop a winning team at every level of our organization. Each generation has unique expectations, experiences, generational history, lifestyles, values, and demographics all of which influence every behavior. Leaders who understand this and can (and willing to) harness the abilities of such individuals will continue to move an organization towards greatness – a greatness that we have experienced throughout our first hundred years. We have left our mark, but there is work to be done.

This Committee unequivocally endorsed the "A veteran is a veteran, is a veteran" ethos. Our leaders at every level need to instill mentorship programs to fully develop every member, especially those new to our great

organization. Each member, young or old, male or female, black or white bring a unique experience to the table that influences the future of this organization. We must embrace this reality, or risk being replaced by an entity that will. Our challenge then is to identify opportunities that may exist to engender trust and participation by all veterans (as well as our supporting communities) to recognize the value *they* can add to our next hundred years.

The cornerstone of our organization is the post – our greatest institution. Through the post, we are connected to communities across this great Nation. Our posts are known in the community by their programs — Boys State, American Legion Baseball, Oratorical, Junior Shooting, Flag Education, Veterans Assistance, Job Fairs and the list goes on. Over the last 22 years our posts have fallen from 16,000 to just under 13,000. This means less children are afforded the opportunity to take advantage of Legion programs and, therefore, less opportunity exists for members to get involved in leadership roles and development of these programs (and new ones not yet conceived). This is not for the lack of eligible members or fewer communities. It has been our failure to nurture and grow these vital institutions that connect with the community. Regrettably, too many are at best shells of their former identities or at worst, have garnered a negative reputation within the communities within which they reside.

Wherever we go, we hear this story too often. Posts are chartered at a given moment in time, by a motivated group of brothers and sisters, all of whom share a vision of doing our veterans service. And with it there is vibrancy associated with being a part of the grand vision of community and veteran support. The mission is shared, and the people are drawn to these very virtues. No one executes this virtues like The American Legion. There are school connections, baseball games, picnics, dinners, poker runs and benefit fundraisers. Our cornerstone programs are prominent in the community. There are familiar faces, shared memories, and common bonds. Bit by bit, however, members tend to settle in, get comfortable, then perhaps complacent if not rigid. "But this is the way we've always done it." Money is raised for things, but members nonetheless fail to grow in their understanding of our overall mission. Over time, as the neighborhood begins to change (as neighborhoods always do) some voices become louder, more insistent. Fear begins to ripple through the familiar motions. Where are the members? Why doesn't anyone come to our meetings anymore? Bit by bit, the numbers start to shrink, and the remaining members are faced with a choice: change or cancel the charter. Many choose the latter. Some will make some nods to the idea of considering change but will never step-out of the comfort zone to effectuate the changes that are necessary. The rate of Post cancellations is a variable determined primarily by the willingness and/or ability of the last remaining members to keep the lights on. They are some that lose focus on their mission, or simply succumb to the burdens inherently created when volunteers are stretched too thin But, remarkably, somewhat miraculously, there are some that choose change so that their idea of community and veterans service is once again revived in their "new" community, so that they may feel, once again, that common bond we have experienced in our service to our country. This rebirth then becomes a legacy to continue our selfless service. When, or if, this happens—there is a beautiful, albeit difficult, lifegiving change—it can only be attributed to one thing: the members understood that it was not "their" Post but, rather, one structured to serve the unique and ever-changing needs of the community, state and Nation all the while serving our veterans and their families. They became refocused on our shared legacy and vision.

This scenario reinforces the need for vision and mission statements and leadership training at all levels of the organization, but most importantly at every post level so that we can maintain what connects us to our local communities and *their* needs—continuous revitalization and continuous support that only The American Legion can provide.

This Committee neither had the time nor expertise to completely study, analyze and recommend marketing strategies for these generational differences beyond the common thread of being a veteran. While we have been truly fortunate to have had lengthy discussions on mission statements, taglines, and modernized logos, we really reached no substantive conclusions or recommendations. We struggled with the same questions

that many organizations are attempting to answer today in this multigenerational society we are living in. But we do know that other organizations are beating us in this game – regardless of what they are truly able to offer to our veterans. In order to develop strategies for both marketing and communications, further study in these areas must be pursued by our Marketing and Media & Communications Commissions.

From Legacy and Vision discussions, there are five recommendations:

- Reaffirm the original 21st Century report adopted in October 1997.
- Appoint a body, or "Champion," to ensure that this report is implemented and not just set aside and referred to occasionally. We sincerely believe that it must be ingrained in our leadership at all levels.
- Develop mentorship programs from our posts all the way to the National organization to pass on the knowledge of our experienced leaders and to embrace the talents of our newer members.
- Concise and consistent Mission and Vision statements at all levels to be reviewed periodically for relevance.
- Further studies by Marketing and Media & Communications Commissions in order to capture the needs, wants, and desires of our multigenerational organization in order to develop strategies for membership and fundraising.

Membership and Member Engagement

This Committee focused our discussion on how best to reach our members and how do we engage them in our programs. Essentially, we have identified two major methods of reaching and recruiting our members. First, and the most common: traditional recruiting by face-to-face contact at the local level or at a venue where veterans attend, such as trade or association shows.

Second, reaching-out to prospective members by Direct Membership Solicitation (DMS) either through direct mail or email. The Committee discussed various means by which a veteran learns about The American Legion, and learned that the most successful endeavor is the personal referral or face-to-face contact. While we have other means of marketing The American Legion, such as advertisement, if this is used, the message needs to be branded with a consistent message. We believe that there may be an opportunity to use cost-effective ways of advertising, such as public service announcements and commercial billboards. For example, we should develop sample messages to place on billboards where a post or department is able to obtain space at a reasonable cost. Marketing should also develop Public Service Announcements (PSAs) to be used at the local level, which are tailored to the local community. However, the Committee was not in favor of a "Super Bowl" hyped commercial, but generally preferred simple, more consistent messages that could be used and targeted at a local level.

The Committee also spent considerable time on how to better engage our members once recruited. We must recognize that the job is not completed once an individual is recruited. Attention must then turn to retaining the members we have. Recruiting and retention, we believe, must go hand-in-hand. The recruiter should be charged with the follow-up of new members by ensuring they are engaged and integrated into the organization. At this point, robust mentorship must take over towards developing the new member. In this area, the Committee made several observations:

- **Dissemination of Membership Impact Report / *Dispatch*. These communication tools do** not reach all members (neither new DMS/traditional members nor current membership). Several questions were raised: How do Legionnaires get this information? Can members sign-up to receive this? Online updates are known to drive members to these items. Therefore, information must be current, as these items are great tools for recruiting and retaining members. Bottom line: we must reach and every member somehow.

- **Targeted Surveys.** Recently, the Reconnect Committee in North Carolina conducted a survey of its memberships; its results help shed some light of the membership engagement issue A question posed to the Department's past three years of "drop-out" members asked, "**As a previous member of The American Legion, how many times did you attend local posts meetings?"** Most critically, the survey demonstrated that a "recruitment' does not necessarily translate to truly engaged and vested member: - 77% of the targeted sample (10,000 dropouts), had visited a Post 0-3 times before deciding not to renew. With the DMS at the headquarters level, this really shows the importance of directly reaching-out to these members, rather than waiting for them to reach-out to a Post. The Marketing Commission, therefore, should develop a survey at the National level to help answer the question: "Why aren't our members renewing?" An 86% retention rate is unacceptable. Likewise, a first-year retention rate of DMS members of around 50% is also unacceptable.

- **Joining Online.** We need to ensure that we have an easy way for prospective members to join online and also have the ability to choose a local Post. How can we vet eligible veterans when they join? Many members seem to believe that when they join online or through DMS, they are already a member of a local Post. We must somehow streamline this process. Additionally, how can we incorporate the Legion App to be more user-friendly for members wanting to join?

- **Member Retention,** Retention starts the moment a new member joins the Organization. New members, whether joining through DMS or traditionally at the local Post, should receive a welcome letter/postcard within 15 days thanking them for joining, informing them briefly on what The American Legion does, and offering the Basic Training link to learn more about the Organization.

- **Member Buddy Check.** We must have a culture and process of contacting our members and checking on them. To do so, we need to have resources on-hand when contacting members to be ready to assist their needs, or at least know where to find help. For example, service officer contact information, TFA and NEF applications, and useful websites that can assist with other needs. Posts should send an email prior to calling to let members know when they can expect to be contacted. However, we must also have the infrastructure in place to respond to and return emails and phone calls. The Committee suggests that:
    - Post's implement a Buddy Check Committee;
    - Buddy Checks are executed during American Legion Birthday and/or Veterans Day;
    - The operational focus be on reaching every member, post, etc.; and
    - A reportable item on the annual Consolidated Post Report be established for this purpose.

- **Military Transition Centers.** Transition Assistance Programs (TAP) provide information to service members who are either separating or retiring from the military and entering into civilian life. This is a unique opportunity to educate transitioning service members on what The American Legion is, what we do, and how we can assist them with their transition. It is imperative that we have representation to assist these servicemembers with any of our programs that may make this transition easier. We should look at placing informational resources on a periodic basis at these transition centers. While this might be resourcing challenge, the benefits may likely pay-off (especially in recognition that many recent servicemembers do not fully appreciate the value of the organization or its membership). To make this possible, information brochures must be available for the transitioning personnel, which includes website information and personal contact email/phone numbers.

- **Basic Training Course.** The Committee believes that this course is very important in integrating the member into the organization. Therefore, we should strive to get information about this course

to every new member within the first 15 days. The more they know about our organization and its history, the greater the opportunity for us to retain the member.

- **Community Engagement Opportunities.** We must better demonstrate and communicate our value to our respective communities, states, and Nation. Sponsorship opportunities may include, but are not limited to:
    - Veteran Service Day
    - Sports Day (sports team/event)
    - Family Play Day
    - Academia Engagement (e.g. Post hosting debates, contests, etc.)

- **Attend Conferences/Conventions of other Organizations** (e.g. VFW, AMVETS, AUSA, etc.)
    - Marketing Commission prepare a strategic plan;
    - Participate as a guest speaker/presenter;
    - Establish presence with e service/membership display booth.

All of this comes down to awareness and educating members as well as potential members. We cannot have retention if we were not successful with recruiting and vice versa. The National Organization emails a PUFL campaign with the National Commander's endorsement on it; it should also email the Impact Report. The American Legion often refers to itself as a "grass roots" organization, and while local posts remain a fundamental element our success, survival is a National concern. This report cannot be the responsibility of the posts to distribute – this requires a forceful and diligent National intervention.

The chart below illustrates our eligible veteran population. Notably, this is not another chart to show who is eligible, but is instead used here to demonstrate two things: (1) the age difference in our veterans, and (2) how we need to consider engaging them in light of their respective needs while recognizing the upscale of conflict and service organization eligibility over the last three decades.

- A Korean War Vet drafted in 1950 at age 18 is 87 at the time this was written.
- A Vietnam War Vet drafted in 1961 at age 18 is 76 at the time this was written.
- A Lebanon/Grenada service member serving in 1982 at age 18 is 55 at the time this was written.
- A Panama service member serving in 1989 at age 18 is 48 at the time this was written.
- A Desert Shield service member serving in 1990 at age 18 is 47 at the time this was written.

First, the age gap. On the chart is the Korean War veteran through the Panama Conflict Veteran at age 18

and the age they are today (as of August 2019). There is a 39-year age difference between the two- almost two generations. Focusing on Desert Shield to present day, a 29-year difference exists. If we focus on the age of the veteran and where they are in life, we can assuredly recognize that different needs exist. An 87-year-old veteran is not worrying about kids in school, funding college tuition for kids graduating from high school, promotions at work in order to save and sustain their family's lifestyle, or myriad other concerns a 48-year-old veteran from Desert Shield may be experiencing. Likewise, today's service members entering the military, for the most part, do not have the same concerns that the typical 48-year-old veteran from Desert Shield is concerned about (and certainly not that of an 87-year-old veteran). While we nonetheless share a common bond, when we market for members or try to get our members involved, we need to consider how we address their concerns as well as market to them while recognizing that their values may not be synonymous.

Transitioning to eligibility, there have been many contingencies since 1950 outside of major combat operations that have involved a small number of soldiers, Marines, sailors, and airmen below 5,000 troops. However, since 1989 with the buildup of combat power in the Saudi Arabian desert, we have experienced a larger number of named combat operations and contingencies/peace keeping/enforcement deployments that have often forced all services to keep their service members on a rotational cycle in order to support these requirements. This upscale in operational requirements is illustrated in the six lines of the above chart. Due to this, many eligible members have seemingly naturally flocked to the VFW and DAV for membership. The question that Marketing needs to address, now that President Trump has signed the Legion Act making all service members eligible, is how not to solely focus on marketing to the newly eligible members, but how do we market to veterans who are also eligible in other VSOs.

Training

Just as the original 21st Century Report believed training was important to the success of the organization, so does this Committee. The white paper developed by the Internal Affairs Commission in 2017, outlines a vision of a training development system for individual members, posts, districts and departments. Training must be recognized as an important element to the success of The American Legion. It is essential to have a direct focus on training at all levels to continually improve the effectiveness of the organization as well as ensuring that all members are good stewards of our Legacy and Vision.

The ultimate goal is to ENGAGE, EDUCATE, and EMPOWER American Legion Family members. It is our duty to provide a conduit for American Legion Family members to obtain the institutional knowledge that they need to grow within the respective Legion family organizations and to engage and promote Legion programs.

In the end, we have concluded that if we do not train and mentor future generations of Legion family members, then there will be no Legion family. It is an investment in our future that we must make – we can't afford not to.

To this end, the Committee makes the following recommendations:

1. All levels of the Legion family must be committed to education:
    - National –Set basic standards
        - Establish core training ideals for all levels of the organization, including:
            - What every Legion family member should know;
            - What a model post looks like; and
            - What a department Legion college should include, etc.

- Establish best known practices, including:
  - How/when training should be conducted;
  - Who should participate in what training; and
  - Training progression model.
- Enforce three vehicles of delivering training:
  - On-line courses expanded beyond the American Legion Basic Training course.
    - Web based/webinar In-person (including maintaining a library of training materials (Training-in-a-box, presentations, how-to videos, etc.).
- Provide storage & access to training materials and courses to training cadre at all levels.
- Continue mission of National American Legion College.
- Maintain and update Basic Training, including making this available to all Legion family members.
- Continuous leadership focus on training year after year.

- Departments must take ownership of training and mentoring. Every department should have:
  - An active training committee.
  - A mentoring program.
  - A Legion college that consists of the following subjects (at a minimum)
    - Leadership
    - Conducting a meeting properly
    - Resolution writing
    - Train-the-Trainer
  - A training cadre.
  - District Commander training is critical.

- Districts are responsible for getting the right training out to the Posts
  - Include training in all district events.
  - An active training cadre.
  - Bring training to the post level.
  - Post officers training critical.

- Posts need to actively support training opportunities for their Legion family
  - All members should take the American Legion Basic Training course.
  - Send post leadership to district and department training events.
  - Bring back what is learned to the post level and implement it.

- Individuals should progress along four levels of training:
  - Basic - Organizational general knowledge (everyone)
    - Basic Training
    - Introduction to American Legion programs
  - Advanced - Informative (post/district officers)
    - Operations/Posts
    - Resolution writing
    - Who we are/what we do
    - Introduction to mentorship
    - Trainer through basic level
  - Senior - Implementation (district & department officers)
    - "Fluency" in The American Legion
    - Trainer through advanced level
    - District/department training leaders
    - Community engagement training

        - Mentorship/mentor - empower lower levels

    - Professional - Execution
        - Trainer/train-the-trainer for all levels
        - Mentorship/mentors-empower all levels
        - Legislative
        - Public Relations

2. All levels of The American Legion must be committed to mentoring
    - Every level of the organization should be responsible to nurture and mentor the future leaders of the organization.
    - All districts/departments/posts should have a mentorship program.
    - Trial by fire does **NOT** work, Legion Family members should be nurtured and coached.

3. Continuous leadership focus on training year after year at ALL levels
    - Develop evaluation program.
    - Ensure training initiatives are funded.
    - Accountability.
    - Recognize if we do not invest in our future – Who will?

4. Pathway to the future:
    - Establish Training Committee with the intent to develop train the trainer instruction and instructional material—this needs to be a priority resourcing item at all levels.
    - Promote post development training at district events.
    - Establish department Legion colleges that meet minimum criteria.
    - Create and maintain multiple paths to deliver training at all levels.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS:

Legacy & Vision:

1. Reaffirm the original 21st Century report adopted in October of 1997.
2. Appoint a body to ensure the report is implemented; it must be ingrained in leadership at all levels.
3. Develop mentorship programs from the post to National levels to pass on the knowledge of our experienced leaders and embrace the talents of our newer members.
4. Mission and Vision statements at all levels to be reviewed periodically for relevance.
5. Further studies by Marketing and Media & Communications Commissions in order to capture the needs, wants and desires of a multigenerational organization to develop strategies for membership and fundraising.

Membership:

- Timely and effective communication through a new member welcome packet that includes a link to the American Legion Basic Training course.
- Conduct retention surveys to ensure we are meeting the needs of our members.
- Wider dissemination of the Membership Impact Report and the *Dispatch*.
- Continue the Buddy Check program.
- Reach-out to Military Transition Centers to provide literature and assistance for transitioning servicemembers.
- Create PSAs focused on membership messages for posts and departments.
- Continue to build connections with other veteran service organizations and attend their conventions.

Training:

1. Establish training committee with the intent to develop train-the-trainer instruction and instructional material—this needs to be a priority resourcing item at all levels.
2. Promote post development training at district events.
3. Establish department Legion colleges that meet minimum criteria.
4. Create and maintain multiple paths to deliver training at all levels.

CONCLUSION:

The purpose of this Committee's report is to propose recommendations aimed towards bettering our organization. These recommendations are intended to assist The American Legion's leadership in developing and implementing new or refined strategies in order to improve recruitment, engagement, retention, and training in a multi-

generational service organization. The members of this diverse Committee have identified several key elements listed above that The American Legion should examine in greater depth as we strive to be our Nation's most innovative and forward-thinking veteran service organization.

Our continued survival depends on several critical points to remember:

- We cannot lose focus on what brought us into the game--- know our mission.
- We must understand the wants, needs, and desires of our membership base.
- We must engage our members through effective and timely communication.
- We serve a diversified veterans demographics, but a veteran is a veteran.
- We must collectively maintain a committed, dedicated, and trained leadership.
- We must strive for each and every Post to be the pillar of their respective community in service to each and every veteran and their family.

As a Committee, we challenge our leadership to take these key elements and develop strategies to empower our individual members and our leaders at all levels so that The American Legion can continue to change and move to new heights in the years to come.

Every member of this Committee is proud to be a member of the strongest and the largest veteran service organization in the country. We make our recommendations not to criticize, but to be fairly considered and acted upon as soon as practical. We are in this fight together.

We sincerely thank the leadership for allowing us to gather together and discuss the future of our great organization. It has been a privilege. At times, you have may have collectively wondered why you allowed this to happen. But through your trust, you have allowed us to express our ideas as well as our unique perspectives and experiences within the organization. We hope that the ideas that we have generated will be beneficial to the leadership but also for our future generation of members: **For Those to Come.** Our objective was to further the proud and prestigious legacy just like the one our forefathers gave to us. Thank you for this opportunity.

Addendum to the 21st Century Relook Ad Hoc Committee Report to the Fall 2019 National Executive Committee.

(Note: The National Adjutant asked the staff to provide updated information as it pertains to the recommendations in the report. This is the updated Media and Communications Division input.)

Status Report, Media & Communications Division
Support of 21st Century Committee initiatives
Jeff Stoffer, Director
Oct. 8, 2019

Introduction

The following status report addresses areas of the Fall 2019 21st Century Task Force report to the National Executive Committee. I have personally attended two of the task force meetings and was unable to attend one other but have worked to engage task force members to improve our media program to best meet the committee's stated objectives and interests.

Generally, the division has made some strides in this effort, notably the market research and development of a new digital media product designed to best meet the interests of this generation. The division has also

prioritized the profiling of American Legion posts and members with strong post-9/11 veteran involvement, community engagement and diversity strategies. Some successful steps in this effort have included the monthly Membership Impact Reports, which can and will be enhanced under the 2020 Media & Communications Division strategic plan and media attention to young Legionnaires in active roles in their communities so that veterans of this generation will see themselves in Legion print, digital and social media. Another prominent development was the production of the Team 100 video and print promotions during the centennial, which fed a growing portfolio of public service announcements for digital and social video delivery. A challenge and massive opportunity for improvement is in the better organization, promotion and distribution of these messages, which will be a top priority for the division in 2020.

Specific to the report, status/progress updates are presented below, according to the following line-item recommendations from the committee:

- Legacy and Vision
- Membership and Member Engagement
- Make JOIN easier to use on the mobile app
- Buddy Checks
- Community Engagement
- Attend Conventions of Other Organizations
- Wider Dissemination of Membership Impact Reports

1. **Legacy and Vision**

- Further studies by Marketing and Media & Communications Commissions in order to capture the needs, wants and desires of a multi-generational organization to develop strategies for membership and fundraising.

Actions taken: Three focus group sessions with a 21st Century Media & Communications Task Force (August 2018, May 2019, August 2019); quantitative survey (500+ responses from post-9/11 veterans on their media habits; produced multiple stories, profiles an videos to understand, capture and express the desires and interests of the post-9/11 Legionnaires, through such features as I Am The American Legion and a number of post-success stories, as well as Spirit of Service Award winner profiles; appearances and presentations at Student Veterans of America national conferences (2018, 2019) to interact with more than 1,600 student veterans and more than 2,300 student veterans, in respective years, to get their perceptions of the Legion; development and modeling of Family Fun Day events in North Carolina and California, a direct response to post-9/11 market desire; recruited and cast two post-9/11 veterans to host "To Strengthen a Nation," a video series to tell the American Legion story through their eyes and observations; and development of Tango Alpha Lima, a new digital media product with podcast element, now in review by post-9/11 veterans for product refinement before rollout.

2. **Membership and Member Engagement**

Actions taken: A portfolio of membership-engagement digital media has been developed for uses in web and social platforms by Media & Communications Division and "We Believe" PSA from the Marketing Division have been promoted, distributed and shared accordingly. These products can be found at:

http://psa.legion.org/

The LegionTV landing page of legion.org contains a variety of promotional videos geared to the post-9/11 community:

https://www.legion.org/legiontv

And, a collection of American Legion PSAs and promotions, can be found at this link:

https://vimeo.com/americanlegion/albums/sort:date/format:detail

American Legion YouTube promotional videos are posted at this channel:

https://www.youtube.com/user/americanlegionHQ/playlists

The Media & Communications Division has made a top priority of consolidating video content onto one platform for convenient access and understanding by posts and those who can share them locally and socially. The top need in this area is coherent arrangement, promotion and distribution.

3. **Make JOIN easier on the American Legion app**

JOIN is the top-center click on the American Legion mobile app, which takes the user directly to the join platform under administration of the Geiger Operations Center.

4. **Buddy Checks**

Actions taken: In the first Buddy Check initiative (March 2019) the Media & Communications Division developed and produced promotional materials in print and digital media, including assistance with Buddy Check call scripts, and reported on local posts that conducted the checks. Generally speaking, the posts that

conducted Buddy Checks reported good results, and those that conducted no Buddy Checks, reported no results. New media promotions are now being developed to advance the November Buddy Check campaign, with follow-up coverage to ensue.

5. **Community Engagement**

Actions taken: On the Family Play Day front, the 100th Anniversary Observance Committee made the same recommendation, and the Media & Communications Division worked with Membership/Internal Affairs to craft a resolution to encourage such events. Two of those events were modeled in the summer of 2019, and the next step is to create a how-to guide based on those posts' observations and after-action reports.

Post flyer sample:

https://www.legion.org/publications/246795/legion-family-play-day-flyer

National Adjutant's Message:

https://www.legion.org/dispatch/246638/legion-posts-host-legion-family-play-day

Coverage of Post 116 modeling:

https://www.legion.org/membership/246464/play-day-brings-north-carolina-community-together

Coverage of Post 365 modeling:

https://www.legion.org/membership/246261/family-fun-and-camaraderie-fulfill-legion-post%E2%80%99s-vision

6. **Attend Conventions of Other Organizations**

Actions taken: The American Legion Media & Communications Division/100th Anniversary Observance Committee has had featured roles in the 10th and 11th Student Veterans of America National Conferences. At the 10th conference in San Antonio, the centennial GI Bill exhibit was displayed and had great reaction, before more than 1,600 student veterans. At the 11th national conference in Orlando, the smaller GI Bill exhibit and the 10-foot Legion chronology were displayed before about 2,300 student veterans.

Coverage of 11th National SVA Conference:

https://www.legion.org/education/244444/legion-presence-prominent-student-veterans-conference

Coverage of 10th National SVA Conference:

https://www.legion.org/veteransbenefits/240502/%E2%80%98best-kind-handshake%E2%80%99-young-veterans

7. **Wider Dissemination of Membership Impact Reports**

Actions taken: Media & Communications developed the monthly Membership Impact Report in December 2018 for web, social and Dispatch publication. Starting in the October issue, that report was modified for timeliness and designed for one-page treatment in The American Legion Magazine. To present membership

impact material in more pages per month is on the division's strategic planning agenda for Nov. 18 to coincide with a redesign to make more efficient use of scarce page count and 50-50 ad-to-editorial ratio.

https://www.legion.org/membership/impact

Conclusion

The American Legion Media & Communications Division strives to fulfill the media needs of all organizational initiatives. Opportunities for improvement are numerous, so it is a matter of prioritization in order to fulfill those initiatives given current staff resources, or band width. This is the primary purpose of the division's Nov. 18 strategic planning session, which will produce a new mission statement, key objectives and reasonable timelines for completion and performance measurement. Among the tactical opportunities ahead are the Memorandum of Agreement with Stars & Stripes to content-share and swap advertising space to put the Legion message in front of forward-deployed military personnel. As with all tactics, this needs a strategic roof over it, and we will work to construct that. Another tactic, one driven by market research and a strategic plan to better reach the younger veteran, is the Tango Alpha Lima mobile site/app that is now in market review with rollout expected in November, based on recommended changes from the desired audience.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rev. Daniel J. Seehafer (WI), Chairman
Membership & Post Activities Committee