

# Membership Action Plan

AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION

## **OBJECTIVE**

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AFA derives its strength through its members. As the membership base grows, so grows the strength of the Association. Every chapter official needs to understand this and commit to making membership growth the cornerstone of all programs.

This Membership Action Plan (MAP) has been written for AFA chapters, states and regions. The objective of the MAP is to provide ideas, suggestions and initiatives to help AFA chapters recruit and retain members. It also includes sections that address the roles of our elected leaders, the national staff, the membership committee, region presidents and state officials. The MAP is intended to complement and augment AFA Membership Resource Guides.

While recruiting and retention are the responsibility of every member, the local chapter provides the best venue for direct, person-to-person interaction. It is here that membership drives, professional programs and other activities have the most visibility. Thus the primary focus of the MAP is on local AFA chapters.

Every chapter is unique and serves a unique community of members. But our commitment to aerospace power for national security is the common element that all chapters share. The MAP recognizes the individuality of each chapter and tries to offer a broad menu of initiatives for chapters.

The elected leaders, national staff, membership committee, region presidents and state officials are available to assist. But recruitment and retention take place most effectively at chapter level. The MAP is an action plan. Chapters must commit to specific initiatives to recruit and retain members. The support network is in place. The rest is up to you. Together we can and will succeed. We must not accept continued decline or even stagnation in our membership base. We must continue to grow, or surely we will see our effectiveness and influence wane.

# **OVERVIEW**

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# CHAPTER 1. AFA - YOUR PROFESSIONAL MILITARY ASSOCIATION

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AFA is the Professional Military Association (PMA) for all military and civilian members of the Total Air Force. Unlike others, AFA does not target a specific group within the Air Force, but rather works to support the needs of all segments, enlisted and officer, reserve component and active duty, and civilian and military.

The purpose of a professional association is to bring together individuals having a common professional bond to provide support for the needs of the professional organization. AFA is dedicated to increasing public understanding and acceptance of the pivotal role that a well-manned, well-equipped and well-trained Air Force plays in the security of the nation and its allies and the relevance of American military strength to global peace. By doing so, AFA promotes public awareness and support on key issues affecting the Air Force. Each year, through the work of a number of specific Air Force councils, AFA ratifies a "Statement of Policy." This policy spells out support for actions and initiatives that AFA feels will benefit the combat readiness and quality of life of Air Force personnel and the weapons systems they support.

Every profession has one or more associations supporting its members and their common objectives. Individuals seek out those that best meet their professional needs. The "Profession of Arms" is no exception. While there are numerous associations that serve segments of the Air Force community, only AFA serves the needs of all active duty, reserve and guard members, and their families. Civilian and military leaders look to AFA to find the "pulse" of the Total Force. AFA is YOUR professional association!

You might be saying, "OK, I'm a chapter official, and I know all that! But what does it have to do with membership challenges?" Before chapter officials begin to address membership issues, they must really get to know AFA. As a chapter official, you may think you are quite knowledgeable, and you probably are. But think for a moment how you would respond to a simple request from a potential member who says to you, "Tell me about AFA." Can you capture the words necessary to convey an understanding of our great Association? Can you generate excitement and interest?

There are many AFA publications available, including the annual "Statement of Policy." Use this and other AFA field resources to gain the information you need. One of the best references is Guide III (Understanding AFA) of the Membership Resource Guides.

You need to be ready at all times to be an AFA spokesperson. A positive approach that thoroughly highlights AFA's mission will probably work best. Here's a quick refresher for chapter recruiters to review and use. AFA mission is as follows:

- To educate the public about the critical role of aerospace power in the defense of our nation
- To advocate aerospace power and a strong national defense
- To support the United States Air Force and the Air Force family

Here's an example of words you can use to explain AFA mission:

"The position you are in is extremely important. Not only is your service in the USAF and your country significant and rewarding, so is your involvement with a PMA. AFA focuses on three main pillars that make up our mission. AFA, first and foremost, promotes aerospace power and a strong national defense. This pillar primarily exists by keeping our skies and our nation safe with the strongest air and space force.

In addition to promoting a strong national defense, AFA's second pillar is more finite in its focus – supporting the needs of the Air Force and its people. TRICARE, closing the pay gap, and quality of life issues are areas of concern that you should have some input on, right? The best way to do this is to become an active AFA member. Become part of an organization committed to helping you and your family have a safe and secure working and living environment. AFA works to provide you with increased pay, improved housing and on-base recreational facilities, updated equipment, clearly written technical orders and state-of-the-art facilities. AFA needs you and others in your unit to join AFA.

Finally, AFA needs you to be a spokesperson for its important work in support of the Total Air Force. Not just on the base, but in the local community where you live and socialize. Americans need to see Air Force professionals as hard working, dedicated men and women who are willing to talk about aerospace power and a strong national defense. Join AFA today and contribute to the success of your nation's Air Force."

## **CHAPTER 2. ROLE OF AFA ELECTED AND APPOINTED LEADERS**

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AFA leaders are chosen for their dedication, knowledge, willingness to serve and enthusiastic support of AFA objectives. They provide leadership of the Association and are committed to supporting AFA volunteers at all levels. While AFA's elected leaders have many responsibilities, those cited below are focused on membership activities.

### **A. Responsibilities of the National Officers**

AFA's national officers carry out the following activities in support of chapter, state and region membership operations.

- Continually stress the importance of membership so that it is viewed as a critical success factor throughout the Association
- Cooperate with and support the efforts of the national staff in administration of the membership fulfillment programs and various membership initiatives
- Develop and implement innovative methods that can have a positive impact on retention of existing members and recruitment of new members
- Provide guidance to national committees and councils concerning membership issues to ensure they are focused on efforts to maintain emphasis on membership in their reports and recommendations
- Address membership issues when attending functions in the field, during interactions with Air Force and civilian leaders and all AFA volunteers
- Support chapter, state and region membership initiatives to the maximum extent possible

## **B. Responsibilities of the National Directors**

AFA's National Directors carry out the following activities in support of chapter, state and region membership operations.

- Continually stress the importance of membership so that it is viewed as a critical success factor throughout the Association, and particularly in the region in which the director is based
- Support the efforts of the national staff and national officers in administering the membership fulfillment programs and membership initiatives in the region in which the director is based
- Identify innovative methods that can have a positive impact on retention of existing members and recruitment of new members; implement these ideas in the region in which the director is based and propose such ideas for Association-wide implementation
- Provide guidance to chapter, state and region leadership and actively engage in membership retention and recruitment efforts within the region in which the director is based
- Build relationships with Air Force leaders in the region in which the director is based so that local commanders will be aware of the Association and be willing to actively support chapter operations
- Address membership issues when attending functions in the field, during interactions with Air Force and civilian leaders and all AFA volunteers

## **C. Responsibilities of the President**

The President carries out the following activities in support of chapter, state and region membership operations.

- Continually stress the importance of membership so that it is viewed as a critical success factor among the members of AFA national staff and the Association
- Ensure that the national staff administers the membership program and various membership initiatives in the most effective manner possible in order to provide maximum support to the chapters, states and regions
- Develop and implement innovative methods at the national level that can have a positive impact on retention of existing members and recruitment of new members

- Address membership issues when attending functions in the field, during interactions with Air Force and civilian leaders and AFA volunteer leadership
- Support chapter, state and region membership initiatives to the maximum extent possible

## **D. Responsibilities of the Region Presidents**

AFA has divided the United States into 14 regions, each run by a region president, who is elected by the region. In addition, there are special assistants for Europe and the Pacific, appointed by the Chairman of the Board. They have responsibilities similar to the region presidents. The areas of responsibility of the region presidents and special assistants are listed in each issue of *AIR FORCE Magazine*. These individuals have many responsibilities, but the MAP will focus only on those responsibilities associated with membership fulfillment. Region presidents carry out the following activities in support of chapter and state membership operations.

- Continually stress the importance of membership so it is viewed as a critical success factor in their region
- Support the efforts of the national staff and national officers in administering the membership fulfillment programs and membership initiatives in their region
- Identify innovative methods that can have a positive impact on retention of existing members and recruitment of new members; implement these ideas in their region and propose such ideas for Association-wide implementation
- Provide guidance to chapter and state leadership and actively engage in membership retention and recruitment efforts within their region
- Build relationships with Air Force leaders in their region so that local commanders will be aware of the Association and be willing to actively support chapter operations
- Address membership issues when attending functions in the field, during interactions with Air Force and civilian leaders and other AFA volunteers
- Write articles for region and state newsletters focusing on membership issues

In addition, the region presidents are the link between the Chairman of the Board and the state presidents. They have the following responsibilities in that regard.

- Maintain continuous communications with the state presidents on membership matters; quarterly communication is not enough
- Ensure that the Chief of Staff's annual memorandum pertaining to support of PMAs and AFA is widely distributed within their region
- Ensure that state organizations and chapters take advantage of the "Chief's Memo" through definitive actions and membership drives
- Forward articles and studies, focused on membership, to state organizations and chapters; ensure they are published in quarterly newsletters
- Create a membership section in the region newsletter and provide useful and meaningful information in each edition
- Stress the Membership Resource Guides, particularly Guide II (Organizing and conducting an AFA Membership Drive) and ensure that state organizations and chapters are aware of their contents and how to use them
- Maintain a region focus on membership incentive programs and motivate state organizations and chapters to meet incentive targets

## **E. Summary**

Chapter officials should take full advantage of the talents and wisdom of these individuals when developing and implementing membership fulfillment programs. Most national leaders have served as chapter officials and can provide valuable assistance and guidance. They have experienced the challenges and rewards of chapter leadership.

One specific way these national leaders can assist chapters is to help set membership goals and then ensure that these goals are met or exceeded. They know how to quantify initiatives and measure results.

These talented and dedicated individuals stand ready to serve. Use them!

## **CHAPTER 3. ROLE OF THE NATIONAL STAFF**

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The President supervises the national staff and sets broad policy. His responsibilities in the area of membership were listed in Chapter 2. In consultation with the elected leadership, he develops and conducts quality national policies and programs consistent with the Association's mission. These policies and programs are designed to enhance the status of the Association as a means of retaining current members and attracting new ones. The President also establishes membership policies and programs consistent with AFA national policy and goals. Finally, he directs staff implementation of approved membership programs.

AFA employs a professional staff to manage its activities under the guidance of the President. Within the headquarters the membership department is responsible for all aspects of membership fulfillment. The people who work there are committed to supporting volunteers in the field at all levels. Use them!

AFA's national leadership has set the following membership goals. The national staff implements these goals.

- AFA's short-term goal is to stop the current decline and stabilize its base. Once stabilized, the goal will be to build on this base and grow the membership. The national staff has key roles to play in recruiting new members and in helping chapters recruit new members

All goals must have the means and wherewithal to achieve them. AFA has identified the following path or roadmap to achieve its goals.

- Retain as many existing members as possible. Recruit new members equal to or exceeding the number lost. Programs to achieve these ends are a partnership between national headquarters and the chapters. The national staff does those things best suited to a large, central organization and provides administrative, financial and material support to the grass roots for the personal contact and outreach best suited to chapters

### **A. Staff Responsibilities**

The national staff has a significant number of responsibilities.

- Develop an annual plan to retain existing members and acquire new members at a cost consistent with the financial goals of the Association
- Include sufficient funds in the annual budget to meet the targets set by the annual plan

- Create and maintain general database functions to support membership and member benefit activities
- Compile and distribute membership statistics
- Develop and administer benefit programs to increase the attractiveness of AFA membership
- Operate a responsive member service function for members, potential members and volunteer leaders
- Publish *AIR FORCE* Magazine
- Develop support materials to assist chapters in grass roots membership initiatives
- Maintain familiarity with membership recruitment, retention and benefits approaches taken by other membership organizations and others in the industry and test their applicability to AFA when appropriate
- Provide administrative support to AFA Membership Committee and other committees as requested

## **B. Member Retention**

The Membership Department processes all member renewals. They carry out the following activities.

- Plan and execute cost-effective membership renewal mailings, to include sending renewal notices for each expiring member, tracking results statistically and modifying renewal series as needed
- Support and administer chapter operations, especially the chapter support payment program that provides payments designed to assist with chapter activities in support of their members' needs
- Explore alternative renewal vehicles such as telemarketing and web-based initiatives

## C. Member Acquisition

The Membership Department carries out the following activities in support of acquiring new members.

- Plan and execute a cost-effective direct marketing campaign for new members to include direct mail to large groups of individuals likely to join AFA because of demonstrated interest in aerospace power, veterans' affairs, or professional activities.
- Develop and maintain an in-house prospect list for direct marketing
- Place membership acquisition materials regularly in *AIR FORCE* Magazine and on AFA website
- Develop and maintain media elements for use nationally and at the grass roots level to call attention to AFA, its policies and its accomplishments, such as radio/TV public information spots, editorial/issue papers and web sites with a value-added section for members only
- Develop and maintain membership materials for use at the national and grass roots levels, to include:
  - ◆ new member information and kits
  - ◆ posters, display stands and other materials
  - ◆ membership handbook
  - ◆ membership reports to chapters
  - ◆ chapter rosters
  - ◆ membership applications
- Conduct special membership campaigns in cooperation with chapters to include:
  - ◆ Congressional Membership Program
  - ◆ base recruiting drives
- Test new approaches targeted at specific audiences
- Administer new member incentive programs such as:
  - ◆ new member rebate payments to chapters
  - ◆ new member incentive portion of the chapter support criteria
  - ◆ national membership awards

## **CHAPTER 4. ROLE OF THE MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE**

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The Chairman of the Board appoints the Membership Committee on an annual basis. The Committee consists of a Chair and a selected number of members and is supported by the Membership Director from the national staff. In accordance with the Operations and Procedures Manual, it is the responsibility of the Membership Committee to carry out the following activities.

- Review the membership policies of the Association and provide oversight of the administration of the membership program at the national and local levels
- Report and make recommendations to the Chairman of the Board on the progress and relevance of existing programs and initiatives for membership development
- Perform other duties that may be assigned by the Chairman of the Board

On a practical basis, the Membership Committee is the focal point for generating initiatives to retain and recruit members, for considering and recommending implementation of new programs, and determining if existing programs should be continued, modified or terminated. The Committee reviews ideas submitted by the field as they pertain to membership and makes recommendations to the Executive Committee, Board of Directors and region presidents as appropriate.

The Membership Committee can provide assistance to chapters in a number of ways and will endeavor to do the following to support chapter membership activities on an annual basis.

- Produce a list of best practices that reflect accepted membership recruitment and retention initiatives and distribute that list to all chapters
- Serve as a problem solver for chapters that have issues in need of resolution; committee members have been selected for their experience in membership matters and can be counted on to help when chapters raise issues for consideration and resolution
- Develop recruiting initiatives to help those chapters not associated with an Air Force installation

# **CHAPTER 5. ROLE OF STATE ORGANIZATIONS**

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The state presidents are the direct interface between the region presidents and the chapters. State presidents and their staffs play an extremely important role in nurturing and stimulating chapter leaders. One of the most critical functions at the state level is membership. Each state should make every effort to appoint a membership vice president. These individuals work directly with their counterparts at chapter level to develop and implement effective membership fulfillment programs.

The state presidents are ultimately responsible for the effective operation of chapters in the state and they have a very important role in support of membership. Many of their actions are taken through the membership vice president. As mentioned in the region presidents' roles, the state presidents must insure that their chapter presidents are informed about the "Chief's Memo" regarding membership support. Where appropriate, the state membership vice presidents should work with their counterparts at chapter-level to make effective use of the "Chief's Memo" in membership recruitment efforts.

State presidents should write articles about membership for insertion in state newsletters or the section of chapter newsletters entitled "News from your State President." The thrust of the message to be conveyed is that membership is a key ingredient in all chapter programs.

State presidents and their membership vice presidents should visit their chapters on a frequent basis (perhaps quarterly) and ensure that membership is a main topic of discussion. During these visits state officials should help chapters develop a strategy that will attract members. Membership brainstorming with chapter leadership generates positive results.

## **A. State Membership Vice President Responsibilities**

State membership vice presidents have significant responsibilities to support chapters in the areas of membership recruitment and retention. Responsibilities include the following.

- Conduct meaningful membership workshops to help chapters. Material and guidance are available from the National Membership Committee
- Coordinate state membership activity
- Become intimately familiar with AFA history as well as current issues and membership benefits
- Communicate frequently with the National Membership Committee chair

- Communicate monthly with chapter presidents to ensure they are appraised of National AFA information
- Ensure they have a current copy of the Membership Resource Guides and MAP
- Ensure they have adequate copies of membership applications and “What’s In It For Me?” guides
- Mentor chapter membership vice presidents to enroll new members and retain existing members
- Be enthusiastic – you are the state membership cheerleader
- Assist chapter membership vice presidents in developing an annual plan for increasing chapter membership, goal setting, and planning/execution
- Ensure chapters know how to use the Membership Resource Guides, particularly Guide II (Organizing and Conducting an AFA Membership Drive)
- Encourage chapter membership vice presidents to visit local ROTC units, businesses, bases, and other agencies as appropriate to solicit support
- Ensure chapter membership vice presidents understand the importance of Community Partners to overall membership
- Ensure chapter membership vice presidents include all potential target audiences in local membership campaigns
- Write an article with helpful information to be included in the chapter newsletter

# CHAPTER 6. ROLE OF THE CHAPTERS

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## A. Introduction

The chapter is the principal unit in AFA's organizational structure. Local chapters operate at the grass roots level and have the most direct contact with AFA members as local programs and activities are developed and presented. Currently, there are more than 200 chapters throughout the United States and at other worldwide locations.

For the past several years, chapter level recruiting efforts have been marginal. There may be several reasons for this.

- Local chapter leaders may have become stagnant and satisfied with the "status quo"
- Chapter leaders may not understand the process by which chapters get credit for new member recruitment; nor understand the rewards for doing so
- Chapter leaders may not have heard that base recruitment drives are possible in light of the "Chief's Memo" supporting PMAs and AFA
- Chapter leaders may be unaware of potential recruitment opportunities to expand membership into new areas
- Chapter leaders may not know how to use the tools and resources at their disposal to help them track their membership statistics

The 2000 AFA Membership Survey showed that members not only want to participate in quality chapter-sponsored programs, they want to receive some sort of personal benefit from their membership. Since each chapter is unique, chapter leaders must determine what the membership community wants from the chapter and focus efforts to satisfy that need. For instance, it makes no sense to focus efforts on retirement issues if there are not a significant number of retirees in the community. Chapter leaders must identify and target the available audience(s) even though they may not be familiar with them.

Chapters must be flexible in their focus and establish a member "liaison" to various Air Force-related activities and organizations. These may include but are not limited to the following.

- Aerospace industry
- Veterans community
- AFROTC in both High Schools and Universities

- Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard units/bases
- Active duty bases – in the Fact Sheet attached to the “Chief’s Memo,” commanders are encouraged to appoint an official liaison to act as a base representative to AFA
- Business/civic leaders

As chapter presidents plan yearly activities, every event should have a recruitment element in it. When committees are formed to plan events, the membership vice president should participate. Every activity should be viewed as an opportunity to recruit new members.

Even though recruitment is an ongoing effort, the chapter must set aside a specific time period each year for a recruiting drive. This is when the membership vice president really gets a chance to shine and display some leadership.

The membership vice president has to be more than the individual who maintains a membership roster. He/she should take a leadership role in establishing a yearly membership acquisition and retention plan and develop opportunities to make the chapter's presence known in the community.

The chapter Membership Committee must set measurable and achievable goals. AFA Awards Program provides a ready-made benchmark to work towards.

Essential to AFA future success is a viable Leadership Development and Succession Plan and quality programs to reach potential community members. Without leadership development, a chapter will become stagnant. Without quality programs that meet the needs of the community, the chapter will be in name only and membership retention will become a crisis.

The chapter staff must work as a team. Future AFA leaders must be recruited from the community and channeled into leadership development. New fresh ideas must be encouraged and are essential to your chapter’s future.

## **B. Chapter Membership Vice President Responsibilities**

Chapter membership vice presidents have significant responsibilities to support chapters in the areas of membership recruitment and retention. Responsibilities include the following.

- Lead the charge to increase membership by enrolling new members and retaining existing members
- Become familiar with both on-line and published membership roles for the chapter

- Follow-up on expiring memberships – write letters or make personal contact via telephone or in person
- Be enthusiastic – you are the chapter membership cheerleader
- Become intimately familiar with AFA history as well as current issues and membership benefits
- Communicate frequently with the state membership vice president to be aware of National membership activities – know what’s going on in AFA
- Ensure the chapter has a current copy of the Membership Resource Guides and MAP
- Ensure the chapter has adequate copies of membership applications and “What’s In It For Me?” guides
- Take responsibility for forming a chapter membership committee representative of the potential membership target audience(s)
- Include local ROTC units, both high school and college
- Include Civil Air Patrol
- Include local businesses – Community Partners are important to your chapter and your membership
- Make membership a year-round program
- Write an article with helpful information to be included in the state newsletter

## **C. Chapter Retention Initiatives**

Even the most successful chapters will not renew 100% of their members. That is why chapter growth and strength continues to depend on the acquisition of new members. Chapters need to work on recruiting and retention with equal importance.

Retention is an ongoing process that takes place at both AFA National and at the local chapter. As soon as new members are recruited, chapter officials need to think about retention. Remember the long-term strength of our organization depends on our ability to sustain or grow the membership base. We must also keep in mind that recruitment of an individual only begins the membership process while retention sustains members in their lifelong AFA journey.

## **C-1. National Retention Efforts**

Before we can talk about chapter retention we must first review the retention efforts being made at AFA National. This is because the steps taken by AFA National are sometimes the last steps in the process and, in many cases, are not necessary if the chapters are able to renew members in a timely manner.

AFA National contacts expiring members directly through the mail up to six separate times with a letter from an AFA official and a notice asking them to renew. The monthly process begins two months before the member's expiration date and continues for up to six months. This is an administrative function and lacks the personal touch only a chapter can demonstrate.

## **C-2. Chapter Retention Efforts**

***Using Chapter Rosters and Update:*** AFA National mails the rosters to the person designated in each chapter to receive chapter mail. This info should in turn be passed on to the individual tasked with chapter membership. AFA National publishes complete chapter rosters in January (current as of December 31) and July (current as of June 30) of each year. Membership update rosters are published monthly.

These same rosters are available electronically for those members who have access to and enjoy using AFA website. Membership rosters are available to only one designated individual per chapter. Other membership reports are available to members through AFA website. The chapter president can send an e-mail to [fldservice@afa.org](mailto:fldservice@afa.org) designating the individual he/she has selected to have this special access.

***Retention starts with new members:*** Chapters must reach out to their new members and let them know that they have an effective, well-run organization that does great things. One thing chapters can do that AFA National cannot is establish personal contact. You can do this by sending a welcome letter that outlines your chapter programs and invites the new member to participate. Then continue regular communication through your chapter newsletter to help strengthen the relationship. Remember that it is critical we renew "first-time" members. If they say "yes" a second time, the likelihood increases that they will remain with AFA.

***Having an effective and well-run chapter can help promote retention:*** Programming, publicity, newsletters, community partnerships – these things tell even the members who do not like to come to meetings that they are part of a successful organization. For that reason it is important that each chapter know and understand the different audiences that make up their own diverse membership (active duty, reserve, guard, retirees and veterans, aerospace

industry, community partners and the general public). Once you know your membership you can begin to shape and plan your chapter's strategic plan and calendar to include activities and programs that sustain membership.

***Supporting the Air Expeditionary Force (AEF) deployment/re-deployment process:*** For those chapters on or near an AF base, the AEF schedule provides an excellent opportunity to provide a much needed AFA presence. Deployments are normally scheduled well in advance so chapters should have plenty of time to plan activities in support of these people and their families. Retention among this group (active duty, reserve and guard) can and should be pursued for they collectively represent the smallest current membership group.

***Communication prior to and after membership expiration dates:*** Personal contact is imperative and can be scheduled using the expiring and expired names listed on your roster and monthly updates. This list becomes a prospect list and should be used to complete the retention effort. Former members are people who, because they have said "yes" to AFA once, are far more likely to do so again. That's a fact that every successful membership organization recognizes – and uses! Just because they haven't answered the letters from AFA National doesn't mean they'll say no to you.

***Conclusion:*** AFA is a professional organization that represents any and all in our Air Force family. Successful retention initiatives help to persuade expiring members to continue participating in AFA as a lifelong endeavor. And in doing so can help to sustain the organizations membership base. The real answer is what works best in the situation today and in the place where you live. Base your decision on experience, cost and the knowledge of what AFA National is already doing.

## **D. Chapter Recruitment Initiatives**

National recruitment programs are addressed in Chapter 3 – Role of the National Staff. This chapter discusses ideas and initiatives that chapter officials can develop and implement to grow their chapters. As previously stated, chapters are unique and have different demographics and different populations from which to recruit new members. Thus, this chapter is divided into sections that address the different audiences that typically are attracted to AFA.

### **D-1. Active Duty**

Chapters that have an active duty base in their area have a population of commissioned and non-commissioned officers, which should constitute their primary recruitment focus. Most of these individuals are dedicated to the Air Force mission and believe in AFA's goals and objectives. The local chapter's challenge is to educate these individuals about AFA and link AFA's goals and objectives to the Air Force mission.

Officers who entered the Air Force through the USAF Academy and Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) have already been exposed to our affiliate organizations, Arnold Air Society (AAS) and Silver Wings (SW). Those who entered through Officers Training School (OTS) or through a professional commissioning program (e.g. doctors, lawyers) were probably not exposed to AAS or SW. Their training was short and intense and if they heard about AFA at all, it was most likely at graduation when they received a package of information on numerous PMAs. Knowing an officer's source of commission can help chapter officials tailor their message and personalize the appeal a little better. All it takes is one simple, innocent question "how did you get your commission," and you're on your way.

Another tremendous target audience is the enlisted force. AFA continues to battle the myth that it's an "officers only" PMA. The only sure way to change this perception is to include enlisted members in local, state, and national positions and to continue highlighting AFA awareness among the enlisted force. Non-commissioned officers and airmen are active and interested in joining PMAs. The key is to focus your recruitment efforts in areas with the highest probability of payoff. Here are some specific suggestions.

- Attend the Top Three and Bottom Six meetings at the base and talk about AFA. Reinforce the fact that AFA needs their support. Ask them and the squadron First Sergeants to support AFA and post membership fliers in their respective work places and squadrons. Consider purchasing a one-year AFA membership for the base quarterly and annual award winners
- Talk to the wing Command Chief Master Sergeant. If he/she is not a member, encourage them to become one, and have them act as a spokesperson for AFA and the local chapter. Consider adding an enlisted member to you chapter "Board of Directors." It will demonstrate that AFA is concerned and in-touch with what is going on with today's enlisted personnel
- Talk with the base leadership and ask if the chapter can come into the base's First Term Airman's Course and/or Airman's Leadership School (ALS) and make a presentation on what AFA is, what AFA can do for them, and what they can do for AFA. It is a great venue to reach young enlisted personnel. Consider presenting the junior member of each ALS class with a free one-year AFA membership

AFA needs solid support from our active duty commissioned and non-commissioned officers. *They are the Air Force's lifeblood for the next century.* They are mission-oriented and driven to lead and serve. They will most likely have positive feelings about PMAs. Your challenge is to convince them that AFA is the PMA to join. In fact, there's nothing wrong with encouraging them to join multiple associations, as long as AFA is one of them.

## D-2. Reserve and Guard

The Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard are other tremendous target audience. A low percentage of reserve and guard members are AFA members, mostly due to lack of awareness of AFA.

The Air National Guard has a long-standing tradition of supporting community needs dating back to the Colonial Militia. The guard has indeed become the “Home Town Air Force” and in many cases is the only USAF presence in the region or state.

The following are specific things chapters can do to boost AFA awareness and sign up new reserve and guard members.

**Boost Awareness of AFA and Promote Membership Benefits:** Local chapter have several ways to boost awareness and promote membership benefits of AFA. In doing so, chapters will provide support to reserve and guard units or bases. The following are proven ways to increase membership.

- Sponsor interesting programs that will attract members from the local units and bases
  - ◆ Advertise these events during the drill weekend
  - ◆ Use the unit newsletter/base newspaper to advertise
  - ◆ Ensure attending members know AFA is behind the program
  - ◆ “Register” attendees; this will provide a contact list of potential new members and some common ground from which to introduce yourself. Follow-up with contacts immediately
  - ◆ Include a member of the reserve and guard unit on your chapter council
  - ◆ Ask the commander to appoint an official liaison
- Sponsor awards for base members; make receipt a prestigious honor
- Circulate copies of *AIR FORCE* Magazine with a chapter “Compliments of...” label
- Regularly advertise chapter/national AFA activities in base newspapers and on public bulletin boards
- Be visible on base during drill weekends conducting activities, manning an informational or recruiting booth, or just talking to members at lunch breaks or at the “club” afterward
- Emphasize AFA support for reserve and guard issues
- Become the base advocate with local, state and national political officials for local and reserve/guard issues and advertise your advocacy

- Work with commander to establish a “mission” for AFA at the unit/base level
- Get involved with the Family Support Group...sponsor joint programs. Sometimes, the way to new members is through their spouse!
- Use the “What’s In It for Me?” guides appropriate for the target audience. Develop a local one emphasizing your chapter’s strengths
- Develop ground rules for the chapter to conduct an on-base membership drive with the commander
  - ◆ Be cognizant of the fact that commanders only have a majority of their people for two days a month and don’t like extra distractions. Conduct recruiting efforts during lunch periods, at the end of the day, or in the evening on drill Saturdays
  - ◆ Work around the base’s exercise and deployment schedules
- Ensure that chapter members conducting recruiting efforts have a good working knowledge of AFA programs, benefits and legislative issues
- Request permission to leave membership materials in unit orderly rooms. Post fliers or posters wherever able. Check and fill regularly
- Support base members through Eagle Grants and scholarships with the assistance of the base education office
- Attend Community College of the Air Force graduations and base picnics

The key to successful recruiting in the reserve and guard is to be visible and active within the unit or base’s activities and to find a meaningful way to support them. By promoting a greater knowledge and awareness of AFA, the Association pretty much sells itself!

***Network with Other PMAs:*** Reserve and guard associations are considered by many to be AFA’s competition. This is not the case. Even though the reserve and guard associations offer a valuable and significant service, they are unable to provide many services that AFA has to offer. Many reserve and guard members may feel under represented and be searching for another source more closely related to their needs. That source is AFA.

Reserve and guard membership levels in AFA are currently less than 5 percent. These members are a vast untouched source of membership to local AFA chapters.

### **D-3. Air Force Retirees/Veterans**

AFA membership can be increased by successful recruitment of retirees. These individuals have a natural affiliation with an organization whose purpose is to increase the knowledge and awareness of the mission of today's aerospace force in maintaining a global peace. In addition, the desire to affiliate with others who have experienced the transition to "civilian life" can be satisfied by joining the local AFA chapter and attending meetings/programs.

Here are some ideas and tools chapters can use to recruit military retirees and veterans.

- If there is a base nearby, ask the public affairs office when retirement ceremonies will be held. Designate someone to attend. At the post-retirement gathering, ask the retiree if he is an AFA member. If not invite him to come to a chapter meeting and introduce him to other retirees. If he is moving to a new area, determine where, get his name and new city, then send it to the appropriate state president so he can send it to the closest chapter. This chapter can then invite the individual to a meeting and to join
- Most cities have a military section in the local paper. These usually list the retirees from the local area. Call them, or one of the listed family members to find his or her address, and invite them to a meeting
- Have a list of VA assistance offices to be sent by mail along with a letter inviting the person to a meeting
- Stay in contact with the local Air Force recruiters. Many retirees gravitate towards recruiters and want to talk about their service. The recruiter could pass on names to the chapter, who could in turn contact these retirees
- Have a chapter "Veterans Appreciation Day." Announce in local paper, radio, TV spots that veterans are invited for a "free" hamburger/hotdog cookout
- Have the chapter become active in Armed Forces Day parades and activities. Invite nonmembers to a meeting. Memorial Day services and parades are another good source of meeting retirees
- Talented AFA speakers can get invited to various organizations and even radio "talk shows" to present a program. They should announce that they are AFA members and ask if there are any veterans present. During "break" or after the presentation, they can seek out those individuals and invite them to a chapter meeting

- Ask spouses if they have any new members in their organizations that are married to a military retiree. Invite both of them to a meeting
- Use any other way that the local chapter may be uniquely qualified to identify retirees and transition them into new AFA members
- Have a chapter member volunteer work in the retiree affairs office

## **D-4. Aerospace Industry**

Individuals and companies representing our nation's aerospace industry have traditionally been strong AFA supporters. Chapters can capitalize on this to increase membership and support. Chapter officials should encourage employees of local aerospace firms to not only become active in AFA, but to take chapter leadership positions. Many companies subsidize the dues of employees who join professional associations.

On many occasions, aerospace companies are willing to contribute funds to support chapter programs. This is especially true if the programs are being run in support of scholarships or local school programs.

Chapter officials should look beyond the traditional aerospace firms such as Lockheed-Martin, Raytheon and Boeing. Many information technology companies, suppliers, and others see themselves as aerospace companies. Get a list of companies that support the National Convention as exhibitors. Look in *AIR FORCE* Magazine to see which companies advertise. Ask the national staff to identify the corporate affiliation of AFA national, regional and state leaders. Then see if they have a local office or subsidiary. Reach out and encourage them to participate. Contact the local Chamber of Commerce to determine if there is a local aerospace industry committee.

## **D-5. Business and Civic Leaders (Potential Community Partners)**

Business and civic leaders are a great source from which to recruit community partners. Community partners can play a vital role in developing increased understanding of the Air Force and creating or sustaining support for Air Force people. They can also be a solid resource for AFA in the local community, because community partners have a stake in the local community. Chapter officials can capitalize on this by recognizing that community partners are a special group of business men and women who understand that there is a unique opportunity for cooperation between the citizens of the community and the United States Air Force. They can make significant contributions to America's peace and security through affiliation with an independent, non-profit, national association dedicated to promoting a strong deterrent force to protect our nation.

**Identifying Prospective Community Partners:** Here are some examples of prime targets for community partnerships.

- Any individual who is a "vendor" to an active duty, reserve or guard base
- Any community business that serves Air Force members – for example, restaurants
- Any business that is affiliated with the Aerospace Committee of a local or national Chamber of Commerce
- Any business located at a local/regional airport where the owners/employers have an interest in flying
- Any business owned or managed by a retired or ex-Air Force active duty, reserve or reserve member
- Veteran service clubs
- Principals and school board members of schools that already have the "Visions of Exploration" Program in place
- Members of the Chamber of Commerce Military Affairs Committee
- Any other business or person who demonstrates patriotism

**Recruiting Community Partners:** Here are some methods chapter officials can use to recruit community partners.

- Invite prospective community partners to an informal lunch. Show them a plaque, explain the Community Partner Program and sign them up. This works exceptionally well if you can take them to a local base, have lunch at one of the clubs and show them around the facility
- Ask current community partners if they are acquainted with a friend or relative who would also like to support the Air Force
- Have a chapter community partner picnic. Ask each community partner to bring one or two friends who might be interested
- Ask any business that deals with veterans and reservists if they would like to increase their business by having the community partner sticker on the front door, to be recognized as a Community Partner
- Explain that this is considered an advertising expense and can be "written off" the business as opposed to taking the money out of the owner's personal pocket

**Recognizing Community Partners:** Community Partners deserve and should be given recognition at every appropriate opportunity. Chapters can do this in a number of ways. Each chapter should consider the type of recognition that is both affordable and that works best in the local area.

The following types of recognition are suggestions but are certainly not all-inclusive. Chapters have used them successfully.

- Provide special invitation to community partners whenever similar invitations are mailed to community/military VIPs
- Recognize and thank community partners at chapter events
- Use newspapers, bulletins, and newsletters to list and thank community partners
- Encourage chapter members to support local businesses that are community partners
- Plan and conduct a special event or a social function for community partners. If possible, use some of this time to ensure they are familiar with AFA and its activities. Use AFA videos and highlight the chapter's mission, goals and activities

## **D-6. Civilians**

With civilians playing an ever increasingly important role in the Air Force, they represent another valuable target audience. AFA membership provides civilians many opportunities to develop leadership skills and confidence by serving in key positions and on committees within the chapter. They will become more knowledgeable on the issues affecting their Air Force and Nation's security. If desired, civilians have the opportunity to progress to increasing levels of responsibility in the Association.

The following are specific things chapters can do to boost AFA awareness and sign up civilian members.

- Include the civilian work force in invitations to and advertisement of chapter programs
- Sponsor awards for all base members, including civilians; make receipt a prestigious honor (many bases include civilian categories in their local awards programs)
- Emphasize AFA support for civilian issues

- Become the base advocate with local, state and national political officials for local and civilian issues and advertise your advocacy
- Use the civilian “What’s In It for Me?” pamphlet
- Remind civilians of AFA membership benefits such as the monthly magazine, online brokerage, travel services, car rental discounts, employment assistance, education assistance, identity protection, electronics products discounts, access to members only online community and more
- Develop ground rules for the chapter to conduct an on-base membership drive
  - ◆ Be cognizant of the fact that commanders can allow Air Force civilians excused absences for “reasonable periods of time” to voluntarily attend AFA activities

## CHAPTER 7. COMMUNICATIONS AND AWARENESS

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Clearly a major driver of membership retention and recruitment is an effective communications system to keep the membership knowledgeable about chapter activities and to create awareness among those who are not involved with AFA. A key reason given by members for not renewing their membership is that they do not receive information from their chapter. They believe that communications is lacking and they lose touch with the organization. The 2000 Membership Survey showed that there is a significant lack of awareness among active duty, reserve and guard personnel about AFA and its mission, programs and legislative activities. A fair number indicated that if they knew about AFA's programs, particularly those conducted to support the base, they would seriously consider becoming members. However, without awareness of the organization, people are simply not motivated to become members. Therefore, it is critically important that every chapter place a strong emphasis on enhancing its communications and awareness initiatives.

Most chapters publish a newsletter at least three times each year since this is a requirement to receive chapter support payments. Certainly, the newsletter is an excellent communications method and should be done regularly, not just to generate the payment, but also to inform the membership. Your objective should be to publish and distribute a newsletter every quarter. Distribution beyond the membership should be considered as a means to create awareness among non-members. Other things can be done in addition to the newsletter. The "Chief's Memo" outlined a set of activities that local commanders could legally carry out to help communicate information about AFA. Chapters that are affiliated with an active duty, reserve or guard base should work with their affiliated unit to take advantage of this opportunity. The approved activities include the following.

- Publishing news items about AFA
- Issuing information memos about AFA
- Issuing letters of thanks to AFA for supporting the Air Force community
- Publicizing AFA events and activities
- Placing promotional materials about AFA in common areas of the base
- Appointing an official liaison to act as a base representative to the local AFA chapter.

Every chapter that has an affiliation should immediately request an official liaison be appointed. Do not wait for the local commander to take the initiative; you must be proactive if you want it to happen. Once you have the liaison in place,

this person can serve as a facilitator to generate various types of communication, such as articles for the base newspaper, thank you letters, flyers, memos, etc. You should make every effort to keep a continuous stream of communications about AFA and chapter activities flowing. If people see something positive about AFA every month, awareness will increase and the opportunity to gain additional members will grow with it.

If you are not affiliated with a base, you can still do many of these same things to increase community awareness about AFA. Newspaper articles, editorials, letters to the editor, and speeches, are methods that can be used to help in this regard.

Chapters should establish a speakers' bureau comprised of people who are knowledgeable and capable of presenting information about AFA, the Air Force and national defense. Once you have established this bureau, aggressively seek opportunities to present this information in public forums.

It takes initiative and desire on the part of the chapter. You cannot sit back and wait for the Air Force or some other outside agency to take these actions. You must do it. If you are aggressive, you have an excellent opportunity to create more awareness of AFA, enhance the reputation of your chapter and increase your membership.

## CHAPTER 8. GOALS AND TARGETS

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AFA's membership has been on the decline since the late 1980's. This trend is common among all defense-related membership associations. Numerous factors have contributed to this decline.

- First, the number of military installations has been reduced as the size of our armed forces has declined.
- Second, the age of the membership base, coupled with the fact that fewer and fewer Americans are serving in the military, contributes to a net loss of members.
- Third, the growing number of membership organizations across the country has us competing for people's time. The net effect is that our membership has declined from a high 237,000 in 1987 to nearly 125,000 today.

AFA continues to analyze the membership decline to understand its root cause. One significant factor is that the percentage of active duty, reserve and guard members within AFA represents only a small percentage of our total membership. Again, in 1987 the active duty membership made up almost 100,000 (42%) compared to 20,000 (16%) today. In conclusion, it can be said that today's losses can be directly attributed to the reduced presence of active duty, reserve and guard personnel.

The two most critical areas to be addressed are improving chapter recruitment and enhancing membership from the active duty, reserve and guard. Keep in mind that if each chapter recruited 25 new members per year, or about two per month, AFA could maintain its membership at 150,000. As a minimum we should strive as an organization to hold and eventually exceed our current membership base.

**Here is the challenge. Make an assertive effort to stop the declining membership trend. Make a commitment to sustain or increase the membership base. Set realistic goals and attainable target. The Association needs your support to remain a strong, viable force for the future.**

## A. Key Chapter Actions

**Leadership Development:** The strength of our association lies in its foundation at the grassroots level, the chapter. Each chapter is challenged to execute AFA mission while at the same time finding and developing new leaders who will execute the mission in the future. A successful Leadership Development Program can be divided into four distinct yet interrelated steps.

- Select a Leadership Development Vice President
- Focus on identifying future AFA leaders
- Get them to join AFA team
- Keep leaders for the long haul

**Set New Member Recruitment Goals:** The chapter executive council must set achievable goals. Simple reporting of membership statistics is not enough. The council must develop a quarterly target for new member recruitment. In addition to the benefits gained by recruiting new members, chapters can also achieve other significant goals. Income increases as a result of new member rebates and the quarterly chapter incentive bonus. Chapters also receive national recognition through membership awards. Set up worksheets to track progress. The executive council should also monitor chapter retention efforts.

**Identify Sources (Target Audiences) for New Members:** The most effective tool in acquiring new members is to use a prospect list. Over time accumulate the names of individuals who are potentially interested in AFA. Who are these people and groups and how do you reach them? You must look at your own unique demographics and create your own list. The following is a sample list which offers you specific people to talk with – and to revisit if they seem interested but aren't yet ready to join.

- Previous members
- People with the Air Force or other military services
- Community leaders
- Businesses (potential Community Partners)
- ROTC, JR ROTC or CAP cadets/sponsors/instructors
- ...and so on. Use your imagination!

Once you have identified all the potential target audiences in your local area you must develop specific activities or events to attract them. A dinner or lunch program could be built around membership recruitment by featuring a guest speaker that could draw a link between the audience and AFA. It is most important to fill the audience with non-AFA members so you don't just end up "preaching to the choir."

***Recognize and Address Reasons for Losses:*** It is important to understand the dynamics of your chapter's membership. You can only do this by monitoring and tracking changes to the Membership Roster/Monthly Updates. Review the changes and make attempts to communicate with these members so you can get the necessary feedback. In some cases your losses might be out of your control as in the case of the aging veterans. On the other hand, you might find that your losses are due to people losing interest in what the chapter is providing. Either way, you must know and understand the reason(s) for your losses. Set a goal to decrease the rate of your losses and begin to draw back past members.

***Other Opportunities/Events to Increase Membership:*** Holding your existing membership base is important for the future and health of our organization. But more important is the need to recruit and hold onto the new members that will help shape the Association's future. The key is to retain these new members long enough to train and mentor them so they can begin to take part in leadership roles within the Association. You must also have the courage to step back and let them lead.

The chapter's programs, initiatives and activities define that chapter. If your chapter's focal point is veteran's affairs you may only be attracting veterans. This could be limiting your potential for new members associated with other aspects of AFA mission. Like a smart investor you must diversify your portfolio, complete your membership base with people of different backgrounds and interests in our organization. The many different programs and activities your chapter may develop to fill the calendar year may attract the interest of different audiences. A member might only be interested in one specific activity a year but may look forward to participating in that activity year after year. A strong chapter with many such programs and activities will not only hold these current members but will also attract new members with the same interests in our Association.

## **CHAPTER 9. SUMMARY**

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As stated in the objective, this MAP is primarily designed to help chapters do a better job of recruiting new members and retaining existing members. AFA national, regional and state leaders are there to assist and guide you. The national staff will provide the necessary resources. But in the end it is up to the local chapters to sustain and grow this great Association.

Use the tools and suggestions listed in the MAP. Adapt them to your specific demographics and conditions. Turn them into concrete actions that produce results. The future of AFA will be determined to a great extent by the strength of its members. There truly is strength in numbers. Together we can grow, prosper and continue to have an important impact on aerospace power and national security.