

VFW Auxiliary Membership Moment

How to Engage Your New Members from the Start

UNWAVERING SUPPORT



FOR UNCOMMON HEROES

The key to retaining new members is to ensure that they are receiving value from their VFW Auxiliary membership and that they are aware of the value they are receiving. Engaging with your members on a regular basis to communicate this value to them helps keep it fresh in their mind, and reminds them of why they became members in the first place. Studies on new members of any organization show that the first three months are critical to engaging that member and therefore keeping that member.

Here is a timeline to help you and your Auxiliary engage its new members during the first three months:

Within the first week: Call or e-mail the new member introducing yourself. Offer your contact information should that new member have any questions. If your Auxiliary has a website or Facebook page, tell them about it so they can see what's going on.

Within the first month: Invite the new member as soon as possible to whatever event is coming up next, whether it be a meeting or something else. Offer to pick him or her up. Or if it's a family event, be sure to say that anyone can come. They might feel more comfortable coming with their family or friend.

Because people are very busy these days, be sure to send a reminder at least three days out from the event.

At the event or if they come to the Post home for a social event, there is ONE THING you can do when they step through that door. If the new member says "How can I help?" stop right then and there and find a way for them to help. DO NOT tell them, "Oh, don't worry, I've got it." Even if you are peeling potatoes and you're almost done, let them peel the potatoes!

Immediately following the event, send an e-mail or handwritten note saying you're glad they came.

Within the first two months: Your Auxiliary will most likely have a meeting within this time period. Specifically invite a new member and save them a seat. Have a copy of "Understanding VFW Auxiliary Traditions" printed out and explain each of the items on it. Much of it will be entirely new to them.

Within the first three months: Scheduling is difficult, but try to meet up for coffee or drinks, and see if the new member has any questions about what they have been involved with so far. If they have a family, consider having them over for dinner. Have a copy of the Bylaws available in case a question comes up that you can't answer.

The goal with each of these steps is to maintain contact with a new member in order to engage him or her. Once you have engaged that member and extended that hand of friendship, continue to nurture that relationship. There is so much to learn, and learning it from a friend is the best way to develop future Auxiliary leaders.