

Cracking the Code on Recruiting Notable Members

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As the chairman of the Membership Committee’s Task Force For Notable New Members and Patriots, I’ve been challenged to figure out a way to recruit notable members. I’ve had negligible success myself, but I keep thinking “SOMEONE must have recruited our seventeen presidents; how did they do THAT?”

Who qualifies as a “notable new member?” Certainly, presidents do, but the list includes other government and community leaders, history teachers, and descendants of Black, Native American, and female patriots. Those of us who have tried “cold calling” patriotic authors and others whom we were “JUST SURE” would want to join our organization have generally met with a close-to-zero response rate. At times, we may get back a polite “my boss doesn’t have time for this,” meaning that the nice letters we prepared didn’t get past the “handlers,” or secretaries.

After I polled subscribers to SAR-TALK, respondents universally agreed that the best form of recruitment is to know someone of “importance” and to contact them on a personal level. In my chapter, each member is considered a recruiter. And, it’s safe to say that each member of every chapter is also a member of one or more church groups, veteran’s associations, historical and genealogical associations, and civic clubs. THAT’S where the recruitment should take place, and THAT’S where notable new members also can be found.

With all chapter members being recruiters, they need to know who in the chapter is willing and capable to sponsor these new members. At least one chapter member needs to be up to speed on researching the ancestry for these interested individuals and preparing their applications for them. In my chapter, it’s the registrar. (Recruiters in my chapter may sign as the co-sponsor and pin the rosette on the new member during the induction ceremony.)

Once a notable recruit expresses interest in joining the SAR, it shouldn’t be necessary for him to even have traced his ancestry. A good recruiter and a good sponsor will assure the individual that the chapter will do ancestry research for him, with his assistance of course, and that if there is a patriot ancestor in his “tree,” then there’s a fair chance one will be found, along with the documentation necessary to complete the application.

Here is a real opportunity for us all to do something about our dwindling chapter membership rolls. Chapter presidents: Make a pitch at your next chapter meeting for everyone to become a recruiter. Recruiters: Invite a Revolutionary War-uniformed member of your chapter to speak at your club meetings. His pitch can include a short segment on the benefits of SAR membership. Our efforts WILL pay off!