

Wisconsin American Legion **First District**

Serving 60,000+ veterans from the shores of Lake Michigan to the idyllic Sugar River

October 2021

Greetings American Legion Family!

BLUF – (District Commander's Report to the Fall Conference) - So here it is, already October. The regular meeting schedules are back in full swing. I had the pleasure of attending all five County Councils in September, and the turnout for those meetings was very encouraging.

In spite of the fact that we lost 668 members last year to non-renewal, our membership is off to a good start. Now, as you have heard me say before, there is an old saying in baseball that "the more games you win in April, the less you HAVE to win in September". I liken this to our annual membership drive. The more members we renew in September, the less we have to chase down in April. I have never understood the process we put ourselves through in this exercise. We sit back and wait for the dues to come in, allowing National to contact our members, and then hoping they respond. Unfortunately, this usually leaves us running around like a bunch of sugared up 10-year-olds in the spring, trying to catch up with our renewals. The thing I really don't get is why? For the most part, everyone in this room is in the business of collecting our Post's renewals. We all know those veterans that we have to go see, go ask, go cajole, and in some cases go beg to get their dues. Since we know who they are, and for the most part they are the same people every year, why not start now? Call our members, make that contact. Don't wait for National to send out another mailing. By getting our renewals out of the way early, this will accomplish a couple of things. It will give you more time to devote to our programs, and when you call to do your Buddy Checks, that member knows you aren't just calling to talk about dues. The other thing it does is, you won't have to listen to me bring it up at every County Council meeting. Win - win, right?

Your County Commanders and hopefully Post Commanders are now in possession of the 2930 lists for the 1st District. There are 925 veterans who right now, today, belong to The American Legion. 925 veterans who have paid their 2021 dues. Over half of those have already paid their 2022 dues. 130 in Kenosha County, 240 in Racine County, 117 in Rock County, 79 in Walworth County and 359 in Waukesha County. Almost every Post in the 1st District has members that are in the 2930 holding Post that live right in your communities. Many are probably known to members of your Post. Can you transfer them all? No, probably not. We all know that there are those folks who don't want to go to meetings, don't want to work the fundraisers, don't want to sell raffle tickets, they just want to belong. But how many out of those 925 will gladly transfer into your Post, if you just ask? I'm willing to bet there are more that will than there are who won't. Try it. Get that list from your Commander, review it at your meeting and make that contact. Especially if it's someone that you or another member know. You already have a rapport with them outside the Legion, so it's not even a cold call. You can send out invitation letters and e-mails, but to be most effective, do it face to face. It's a lot harder for that veteran to look you in the eye and say no, than it is to ignore an email.

At National convention this year, I had a beer with a long-time friend of mine from the Department of New York. He too is working membership for his District and we were commiserating on the difficulty we seem to have in this area. In the course of this conversation, he said something that really stuck with me. We've all heard it said that the younger veterans today don't want to join. We've probably said it ourselves at times. But as my friend pointed out, they will join, we just need to give them a reason to join, and equally as important, when they do join, we need to give them a reason to stay. Who knows our organization



better than we do? And this goes to the heart of the matter. When that new member attends his or her first function at the Post, what is our role? Do we just let them fend for themselves? Try to introduce themselves around? Try to find out what's in it for them? The answer to all of those questions is a resounding NO. We must make it our mission to guide and mentor those new members. We must teach them what we are all about and what are our traditions and methods in our Posts. You've all heard the paragraph from the Installation of Officers ceremony: "You must exalt The American Legion in their eyes. You must make them know, as we know, its purposes and policies. Ever remember the tolerant sprit that animates its members".

I love to talk about and promote the training that is available through the Wisconsin American Legion College, and from the National Organization. I encourage everyone to take advantage of this training, even if you are a long-time member. Things change. This isn't the same organization that it was 20 or even 10 years ago. Encourage that new member to sign up for some of the training. Much of it is now online and can be done in the comfort of your own home. But here's the thing. All of this training and education must be part of a two-prong approach. The second part of this must be mentorship. I've helped teach Legion College courses. We have a wonderful, comprehensive curriculum, but it only goes so far. And this is where you come in. The training your new members receive are building blocks. We give them the tools, now it's up to you to teach that next step. You are the one who knows how things work in your Posts and Counties. We can't teach that. This has to come from you. You must mentor that new member and show them how to implement what we have taught them. Engage them in your Post's programs. Now that doesn't mean make them chairman right away, but give them the opportunity to help out. Give them the chance to put into action what they learned in that course. Be there to answer questions, be there to point out how things might be done a little differently at your Post. In the end, the mission is the same. Execute the programs. How we get there is the key to successful mentorship.

I leave you with this one final thought. When you first joined the Legion, someone was there to guide you along, to show you how to be a success. You owe it those new members, who are our future, to do the same. And remember, when we all decide that we don't want to do this anymore, we need to make sure that someone is there to carry on all of the great things we have done. So, GO RECRUIT THE NEXT YOU!

Membership Report

In the interest of saving space, I will only publish the totals for the 5 Counties. Your County Commander will have the numbers for each Post. These are the totals as of September 30, 2021. There may be some tweaking of the goals, as I am questioning a couple. I am waiting for an explanation from National.

- 1. Walworth County (753) (goal) 518 (paid), 68.79%
- 2. Rock County (731) 466, 63.75%
- 3. Waukesha County (2765) 1584, 57.29%
- 4. Racine County (691) 393, 56.87%
- 5. Kenosha County (545) 284, 52.11%

First District (5485) 3245, 59.16% (7th place in the Department)

2022 National Targets: 55% - 10/14/2020; 65% - 11/10/2021; 75% - 12/8/2021

2022 100% POSTS

Ingalls - Koeppen Post 102, Walworth

What's News?

1. District Conference – The Fall Conference was held on October 3, 2021 at Wells – Davis – Young – Neal Post 209 in Orfordville. 60 delegates were in attendance. I would have liked to have seen more Posts send delegates, but overall, it was well attended. Department Commander Greg Eirich stopped by on his way to Indianapolis for the National Fall Meetings. He addressed the delegates and reviewed some of the accomplishment of the Department so far. He also laid out his vision for the coming year, and spoke of re-energizing our programs, especially those that

were affected by COVID. He announced his theme for the year, Make A Positive Impact, and urged the delegates to approach everything we do in the Legion with the intention of having a positive impact. He thanked the District for the invitation to the conference and also for including him in the District POW/MIA Silent March. Department Vice Commander David Latimer addressed the delegates and thanked them for their support over the last several years. He urged members to always think in terms of The American Legion Family, and to include the Auxiliary, Sons and Riders in our programs and events at every opportunity. 1st District President Lylette Smith brought greetings from The American Legion Auxiliary, and pledged the support of her Units as we carry out our programs this year. Past Detachment Commander Bob Sirovina spoke on behalf of Commander David Fuller, and introduced the delegates to the ALF (American Legion Family) dog and described how that program is working. The delegates heard reports from the District Committee Chairs, some of which will be reviewed later in this newsletter. The conference awarded the 2022 POW/MIA Silent March to Kelley - Gardner - Katzman - Stoflet Post 45, Elkhorn, which will take place on September 17, 2022. The 2022 Fall Conference was awarded to Essman - Schroeder Post 20, Waterford, and will take place on October 2, 2022. The delegates voted to endorse the candidacy of District Commander Karl Stuvengen for the office of Department Vice Commander. Thank you to Post 209 for hosting a very successful conference, and providing a fine meal to the delegates. If you missed the conference, see the video here.

2. POW/MIA Silent March – The annual POW/MIA Silent March was held on Saturday, September 18, 2021, hosted by Sponholtz – Deignan Post 183 in Genoa City. Department Commander Greg Eirich, Department Vice Commander David Latimer and area elected representatives were in attendance. Those present heard a riveting speech by Korean War POW Grant McMillian. Mr. McMillian described how he was forced to amputate the feet of a fellow soldier, suffering from severe frost bite, in order to save the man's life. Your editor's description of Mr. McMillian's recollections does not do them justice, but suffice it to say there was not a dry eye in the house at the end of his talk. The attendees enjoyed a fine meal and fellowship after the ceremony at the Broken Spoke Eatery. Thank you to Commander Casey Juszczyk and Post 183 and to District Chair Bob Miller for all of their work in presenting this memorable event.

3. Conference Committee Reports

- **a. A&G Test Program** Chair Jim Foster reviewed the 2021 District winners and gave direction on how students may participate in 2022.
- b. Badger Boys State Chair Michelle Adams gave a very informative report on the status of Badger Boys State. The program will take place in 2022, after a 2-year hiatus. The event has been moved to the campus of UW Eau Claire, which will allow for more dorm space, more meeting space and better accommodations for assemblies and meals. Discussion was held on the possibility of the District furnishing mass transportation for attendees due to the increased distance from the old site at Ripon College. Chair Adams will have more information on this at the Spring Conference, once the number of attendees is firmed up.
- c. Oratorical Chair Lisa Fauster submitted a written report and reiterated that the District Oratorical Contest will be held on Saturday, January 29, 2022 at Harvey Funk Post 494 in Caledonia. The contest will begin at 10:00 AM. She urged delegates to approach area schools now to solicit entries for the program. Each County may send one delegate to Caledonia. Counties should plan to hold their contests during the second week of January to allow for the certifications, etc., to be sent to the District. General contest information can be found on the National website, here, and on the Department website, <a href="here. For more information, contact Chair Fauster at lisav1124@hotmail.com or 414-902-0461.
- **d.** Legislative Chair Nate Bond reviewed several pieces of legislation working their way through the Wisconsin Legislature that directly affect veterans. More information will be provided in future newsletters as these bills develop and require action by Legionnaires.

- e. VA&R Chair Richard Strehlow reiterated the role of the Post Service Officer and how they must not get involved in the process of filing claims for veterans. He also asked delegates who were not currently receiving his monthly newsletter to get him their contact information so he can add it to his distribution list.
- f. American Legion Riders Chair Randy Timms introduced himself as the new District president and gave an update on ALR activities. He also reviewed ALR membership numbers in each of the District Posts, so that Post Commanders are aware of participants in this program. He urged them to make use of this resource, as the ALR is here to serve the District.
- g. National Security Chair Jim Schmidt reviewed recent world and national events and their effects on National Security. He spoke of The American Legion's position on these activities and reminded delegates to take a non-political approach when discussing these matters as Legionnaires. He passed out Blood Program certificates to Posts that held blood drives during the 2020 2021 program year.
- h. Communications Communications Officer Allen Morris urged delegates to send information regarding Post events to him and to the District Commander for inclusion in newsletters and on Facebook. He asked any Post or County with Facebook pages or websites to make sure that the District is aware of them, so that they can be publicized. He discussed upcoming action by the District Awards Committee, especially in the area of Public Relations. Many Posts in the District have fine newsletters and deserve recognition for all of the work that goes into them.
- i. Sons of The American Legion Chair Chris Sherman submitted a written report. He reviewed Squadron activities in the District. He urged Posts to work with their Squadrons to ensure that the Squadron Consolidated Reports (SCR) are filed in a timely manner. The District was lacking in this area last year. Commander Stuvengen noted that the 1st District has the largest number of Squadrons of any District in the Department. He noted however, that with only 16 there is great growth potential for this beneficial program within the District.
- 4. Commander Eirich's Membership Incentives Department Commander Eirich presents his 2021-22 Membership Incentives. This incentive is a little bit different. This a "Legion Post improvement incentive." The post must use winnings for post improvements. This could include, but not limited to; rent, community giving, donations to Legion programs, Troop and Family Support, Sponsor a Vet to Camp American Legion, or similar Positive Impact causes. There will be 3 winners

1st place-\$2,000 – The post that exceeds the highest percent of goal 30 days before convention.

2nd place-\$1000 – The Post that exceeds membership goal by the highest actual number of members.

3rd place-\$500 – Most improved Post (Current year percentage compared to last year percentage.)

The post must provide the following:

- A CPR filled out and returned to HQ by 6/1/2022.
- Must have at least 3 brand new members (which means either new or last paid year of 2020.)
- A CIP-R (Capitol Improvement Project -Request Form) explaining what the money will go for. (This form is for accountability of the money)

Lincoln Pilgrimage - All posts that obtain 100% by December 31, 2021 will be put in a drawing to be the Commander's guest at the 2022 Lincoln Pilgrimage. The Pilgrimage is February 11-12,

2022 in Springfield, IL. This will include hotel, breakfast, lunch, tour/pilgrimage and a commemorative jacket.

- 5. Veterans get free entrance to national parks Veterans, Gold Star Families, current Military and their dependents have free access to approximately 2,000 public locations spread out across more than 400 million acres of public lands, which host activities to fit any lifestyle, from serene to high octane, including hiking, fishing, paddling, biking, hunting, stargazing, camping and much more. Learn more here.
- 6. Enhanced VA pension benefits If you are a wartime Veteran who meets certain requirements, or you are a surviving spouse, then you may be eligible for VA's pension benefits. VA's Aid and Attendance and Housebound benefits, or enhanced pension, can boost your pension payments. If you need help with daily activities, or if you are housebound, you may qualify for an increased monthly pension. Learn more here.
- 7. Track Your VA Claim or Appeal Status Do you have a VA claim or appeal under review? You can use <u>VA's online tool</u> to review the status of any claims or appeals related to compensation, education benefits, VA health care, and more. <u>Learn how to track your status online</u>.
- 8. National Commander's Engagement Incentive One of National Commander Paul Dillard's priorities on membership is to engage our members. Whether they are current members, expired members, or potential members, we need to engage these individuals and show them the value of being a member of The American Legion. One of the ways that Commander Dillard has discussed in engaging members is to contact those 2020 members and offer them the ability to continue their continuous years on their membership. This offer is only for those members who were last paid in 2020 and did not renew for 2021 they can continue their continuous years if they pay for 2022. With COVID affecting many aspects of daily life over the last year and half, this is an easy way to talk with those 2020 members and show them some good will.

Here is how it would work: Someone contacts a member who was last paid for 2020 (*only ones eligible for this offer*) and they had 5 years continuous membership at the time. If they were to pay for 2022 – their continuous years would now be 6 years. If they would like to also have 2021 as well, the offer would be as normal and they would have to pay for the 2021 year. If they do not care or do not want to get back 2021, but pay for 2022, then the adjustment on the continuous years would have to be made at the post by filling out a Member Data Form (MDF) to correct the years or the department can correct it within Personify.

Things to remember – when transmitting the dues, unless the member is paying for 2021 and 2022, do not select 2021 as part of the payment. If 2021 is selected, the payment will come out for that portion of the per capita and it will be deducted as part of the eCheck payment processing.

- * For this, only 2022 needs to be selected and then the adjustment should be made on that member's record in Personify or send in the MDF to be processed at the National Headquarters. If the member wants both years to be added to their continuous years, then accept payment from them for both 2021 and 2022 membership years, and then process both years through PGO.
- 9. Woman Veteran of the Year Starting in 2008, the WDVA has annually recognized women veterans who have compiled records of exemplary service as a military service member, a veteran, and an outstanding member of the community. Veterans, family members, friends, veterans service organizations, County and Tribal Veteran Service Officers, other veterans groups, and those in the community are encouraged to submit nominations to be considered in this year's process. The 2021 Woman Veteran of the Year will be selected by a panel based on a set of criteria. Go here for information and an application. Although the deadline for 2021 nominations has passed, Posts should consider and submit worthy nominees for the 2022 award.

Current and past recipients of the honor can be found by visiting <u>WisVets.com/WomenVets</u>. Questions about the nomination process should be directed to <u>WomenVets@dva.wiscomsin.gov</u>.

10. Flu Vaccine Update From the Madison VA - With the flu season fast approaching, the CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccine as the first and most important action to protect against flu and its potentially serious complications. This year it is even more critical to get a flu vaccine as we continue to work to stop the spread of COVID-19. We will have flu vaccines available at our Main Hospital and all of our clinic locations beginning September 28th.

We encourage you to call and make an appointment to receive your flu vaccine. If you have an appointment coming up at the VA, you can also ask about getting vaccinated at that time. Below is the contact information for each of our clinics to set up your vaccine appointment:

Beaver Dam: 920-356-9415 Baraboo: 608-356-9318 West Annex: 608-284-6360

Central/Main Hospital: 608-280-7209

Freeport: 815-235-4881 Janesville: 608-758-9300 Rockford 815-227-0081

We encourage you to get vaccinated as soon as it is available to you. If you are unable to get to a VA Location and have received care through either a VA or a Community Care Provider within the past 24 months you are also eligible to get a flu vaccine at an in-network pharmacy. For more information or to find an in-network pharmacy, please visit: Flu Shots - Community Care (va.gov)

A note about COVID Boosters: The Madison VA and Clinics have the Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine. At this time, the FDA has approved a Third Dose of Moderna Vaccine for only people that are moderately to severely immunocompromised. We have conducted outreach to this group of Veterans. If you have a history of an organ transplant, are receiving treatment for cancer, have advanced or untreated HIV or are taking medication that may suppress your immune system and received two doses of Moderna Vaccine at least 28 days ago, you may call 608-280-2160 to inquire about scheduling a third dose. At this time, Booster Doses of the Moderna Vaccines are not approved for the general population.

- 11. Tricare Pharmacy Co-pays to Increase in 2022 Do you get your prescription drugs through TRICARE Pharmacy Home Delivery or at a TRICARE retail network pharmacy? If so, you'll pay anywhere from \$1 to \$8 more in copayments starting Jan. 1. These cost changes won't affect all beneficiaries. Read this article to learn more.
- **12. Post 20 Meat Raffle -** On Sunday, October 17, 2021, American Legion Post 20 will be hosting a Pancake Breakfast & Meat Raffle at River City Lanes in Waterford from 9 AM to 1 PM. All proceeds of this event will be donated to select Veteran Organizations and the community.
- 13. Notes from Wisconsin American Legion Headquarters

Post Mailings – Post mailings can be viewed at https://wilegion.org/post-mailing/.

Membership Cards – A fillable PDF of the official American Legion membership card is now available from Department Headquarters. Contact Chet at membership@wilegion.org or District Commander Stuvengen at orfywi@gmail.com for a copy. This can be used for new members or to replace a lost or damaged one for a current member. You will still need to fill out the National and Department portions of the card for new members, but this will now allow you to provide a smart-looking, typewritten membership card to those new members.

Administrative Manual 2021-2022 - The Administrative Manual is completely on-line this year. All forms can be found on the website, can be saved to your computer and are fillable. The manual can be found and downloaded on the Headquarters website. Go to the "MEMBERS" dropdown option and select "RESOURCES & MANUALS". This manual will help you see what your Post/County/District should be working on each month.

If you wish to receive a printed copy at the cost of \$20.00 each, contact Department Head-quarters at 608-745-1090.

Sign up for Department Headquarters Weekly Updates – Go to the Department website and select "GET CONNECTED" from the dropdown menu, select "Contact Sign-Up" and fill out the form. Lots of great information is passed on each week to include important information for Post and veterans, event information, Legislative & VA Updates, and more. The updates are sent out weekly via email each Friday. ALL Legion Family members are encouraged to sign up for these updates, you do not have to hold a leadership position to receive them.

3rd Annual Celebration of Freedom –THANK YOU to everyone who helped at this year's event. You are what the Legion is all about. To The American Legion Foundation, thank you for creating this event and sharing the Legion with the Wisconsin Community, the impact is invaluable. SAVE THE DATE, the 4th Annual COF will be back at the Columbia County Fair Grounds September 9-11, 2022 with some exciting new additions.

Department Facebook Page - PLEASE, we need to get our word out. Go to Facebook, search Wisconsin American Legion and like our page. When we post information, please SHARE it. WHY is this important? If you share it, 10 of your friends share it, and 10 of their friends share it and so on, soon 100s of people have seen it. For example, we had a Celebration of Freedom Post that had 52 shares and it reached 8800 people. Most of our posts average 4-5 shares and only reach about 500 people.

Past Department Commander David Wegener - It is with great sadness that we share the passing of Past Department Commander David Wegener. PDC Wegener served as Commander from July 1998- July 1999.

Visitation:

Friday, October 8, 2021
3:00-6:00 PM
Heritage Funeral Home
16880 W. National Avenue #5520
New Berlin, WI 53151
Walk Through at 5:00 PM
Funeral at 6:00 PM

Burial: Saturday, October 9, 2021 10:00 AM Valhalla Memorial Park 5402 N 91st Street Milwaukee, WI 53225

(Cards can be sent to the Funeral Home at the address listed above)

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made in David's name to the Rainbow Flowage at Camp American Legion, Youth Sports Program or the POW/MIA Program.

14. Ask VA (AVA) to replace IRIS - (Article courtesy of the 3rd District's *The Informer*) Effective Oct. 18, 2021, the Department of Veterans Affairs is launching its new Ask VA (AVA) system, which will replace the current Inquiry Routing & Information System (IRIS). IRIS is a web-based system that allows anyone to submit a question to the appropriate VA office, accessed via the VA.gov homepage, GI Bill help portal, and MyHealtheVet tech support. AVA will provide faster customer support and access to VA services. The option to authenticate on va.gov establishes a centralized location for veterans to find all inquiry related information/documentation. This will eliminate the need for veterans to sift through various emails to view inquiry answers or locate any forms. Inquiries can be submitted through the VA.gov Ask A Question Page.

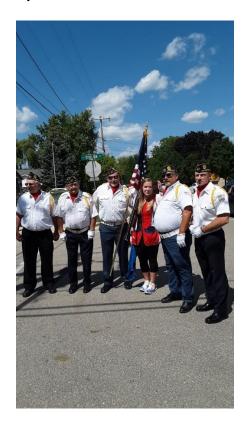
Ask VA will allow customers to submit questions, concerns, recommendations, and compliments. AVA provides the ability for customers to Interact with all VA branches and receive timely, verified, and accurate responses for VA-related questions. Why use ASK VA (AVA):

 Your questions, recommendations, and suggestions are quickly routed to the correct VA contacts to provide timely responses

- Using your VA.gov login safeguards your personal information
- Easily track your conversations and inquiries using your VA.gov login
- Frequent users will need a VA.gov login for the best experience
- 15. Bells of Peace Since the centennial of the WWI Armistice in 2018, Bells of Peace have been tolled in remembrance of all those who served in WWI at 11 AM on Veterans Day. Bells of Peace also commemorates the WWI Armistice of November 11, 1918, when the guns fell silent, and bells tolled on the Western Front after four years of brutal combat. Participants in the Tolling of the Bells of Peace have included, to date, tens of thousands of participants including states, cities, municipalities, ships, military installations, churches, schools, veterans' organizations, museums, and individuals. For more information on this year's event go here.
- 16. 2021 Wreaths Across America National Wreaths Across America day will be December 18, 2021. On this day, the mission to Remember, Honor and Teach is carried out locally by coordinated wreath-laying ceremonies at Southern Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery (SWVMC) located in Union Grove, WI. This cannot be done without your support. Your sponsorship will ensure that a wreath is laid at each grave. Corporate/business sponsorships are always welcome and appreciated. \$15 will sponsor one wreath. \$30 will sponsor two wreaths, plus an extra wreath will be donated by the wreath provider. For more information on how to donate or to participate in this year's wreath-laying contact: Mary-Ellen Crandall at dabs1951@yahoo.com or (262) -894-5420. Wreaths and sponsorship checks must be submitted by November 1, 2021.

17. What's happening around the First District

Essman – Schroeder Post 20, Waterford participated in a community parade to honor Waterford native and Olympic Bronze Medalist Maddy Bernau. Bernau medaled in mixed trap shooting at the Tokyo Games.





(Photos courtesy of B. Shane Morris)

1st District POW/MIA Silent March

Participants march to Veterans Park in Genoa City for the ceremony



(L to R) District Commander Karl Stuvengen, Korean War POW Grant McMillian, Department Commander Greg Eirich and Department Vice Commander David Latimer await the start of the POW/MIA Silent March



Korean War POW Grant McMillian addresses the gathering, while Kenosha County Adjutant Mike Hellquist (L) and 1st District POW/MIA Chair Bob Miller look on



(Photos courtesy of Joe "Leftie" Rice)

1st District Fall Conference

Welcome First District





District Sergeants – at – Arms Joan Sallee and Carl Bogar, Jr. post colors





President Lylette Smith



Badger Boys State Chair Michelle Adams





(Photos courtesy of Morris Digital Photography)

- **18.** Training Time-out Since we finished the Preamble, there will be no training this month. Next month we will delve into the 4 Pillars and how they relate to and drove the creation of our many programs.
- 19. Thanks Again Once again, I want to thank the 1st District for your endorsement of my candidacy for Department Vice Commander. I am humbled by your support, and I look forward to continuing to serve the American Legion and the 1st District. Thank you also for the many donations I received at the close of the Fall Conference. No matter where I go, or what I do, I will always be proud to be part of the 1st District!



Until next time, recruit, retain and engage. Have a safe and sane Hallowe'en!

Go recruit the next YOU!