

**American Legion Auxiliary Department of Florida
Year End Membership Report 2015-2016
Ann King Smith – Department Membership Chairman**

At the beginning of the 2015-2016 American Legion Auxiliary year, many members throughout Florida were quite dismayed and discouraged by the goal increase that had been set by National for the upcoming year. Even before they had gotten off and running, many members had already made up their minds that goals could not be reached and seemed to be giving up on even trying. But, that way of thinking was soon gone and forgotten as the idea of “Monkeying Around for Membership” became something that made everyone smile.

Department President Pearl McIntyre had chosen a theme of “From the Service of One Comes the Support of Many.” This theme was represented by the palm tree and its’ beautiful green fronds. The trunk of the palm tree represented the eligible veteran and the fronds represented the eligible American Legion Auxiliary and Sons of the American Legion members that gained their eligibility through one veteran. I have always been a huge believer that any “work” should be fun in some way and this certainly applies to “work” performed by volunteers. Finding something fun about palm trees was going to take a lot of thought but one night, it finally hit me. Monkeys....what could be more fun than monkeys? Monkeys can climb trees and can certainly make everyone smile!

By the time our Department Workshop rolled around, we had a membership song titled “We’re the Membership Monkeys” to the tune of “Hey, Hey We’re the Monkeys” from the television show of the 1970’s. Many members already knew the tune and learning the words was a breeze. Yellow plastic banana chips were printed and given to members, Units and Districts as a token of work well done. A Department Membership Page was created to share membership news and this page became a place to hold our “Wednesday Night Monkey Membership Mania.” Each and every Wednesday night throughout the year, members would gather to talk about strategies, successes and goals. This proved to be an excellent way to get members excited and to answer questions. Suddenly, monkeys seemed to have invaded Florida and everywhere you looked at least one monkey could be found. Both Units and Districts adopted monkeys and some were even kidnapped and held hostage for ransom.

Each District President and Membership Chairman were asked to host at least one “offsite” membership drive when Department Present Pearl made her official visit to their District. Most Districts were able to make this happen and were able to share information about our great organization and how to become a member. It was great to see Auxiliary members exhibiting such visibility in their communities. It was great to see our Florida members interacting with people and doing such a great job of promoting who the American Legion Auxiliary is and explain all of the things we do for our veterans, their families and out communities. Unit 392 in Panama City held two membership drives, one at a local Harley

Davidson dealership and another at the Tyndall Air Force Base Officers Spouse Club. Other Units took advantage of special community events to showcase their membership efforts.

This year, contacting non-renewed members was a priority in Florida. Posted on our Department website were letters to mail and email, along with a telephone script to use when calling members. Our focus was to let members know that they are valuable and that they have not been forgotten by their fellow Auxiliary members. Districts 5 and District 12 both called members that had not renewed following their District meetings. It was amazing how many members simply had forgotten to pay their dues. Most everyone was grateful for the phone call, reminding them to renew. Several members took advantage of renewing online and one member even went to her Unit the same day to pay her dues. After making personal contacts, everyone agreed that it is worth the effort and it does work.

As of May 6th, twenty-eight Florida units have met or exceeded their 100% membership goal. This shows how much hard work and dedication has been shown by our members that truly care for the future of the American Legion Auxiliary. Unit 347 in Lady Lake, the second largest Unit in Florida, has achieved 102.99% with 1583 paid members. Unit 197 in Jacksonville has achieved 153.66% and is still recruiting more new members. Unit Membership Chairman, Carolyn Brown attributes their success to being readily available at the Post to remind members to renew. Although they only had a goal of 41 members, they are already 22 members above that goal and I am sure that number will continue to grow.

Florida has reached our 45%, 75%, 80% and 85% Promise Date Goals and was the only Department to reach the 85% Promise Date Goal. As of this writing, May 12th, 2016, Department of Florida has been in first place for twelve consecutive weeks. We currently have 35,344 paid members and are at 86.81%.

We attribute many things to our success this year.

- Recognition has been given to our members at all levels for a job well done.
- Motivation has been a key component. As Membership Chairman, I have been the cheerleader for our Department.
- Work has to be FUN, especially when volunteers are involved and what could be more FUN than MONKEYS?
- Communication is a key factor in keeping members motivated and up to date. This has been achieved through mailings, phone calls, emails and most of all, through our Facebook page.
- Teamwork has been something we have all learned about this year. Working together has made everyone's job much easier.

"Monkeying Around for Membership" has been both fun and rewarding for our members this Auxiliary year. Our members have enjoyed the opportunity to engage in friendly competition while keeping our American Legion Auxiliary growing so we can continue "Keeping the Promise" to our veterans for many years to come.