



United States Coast Guard CHIEF PETTY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

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From: Sarah B. Foster

CPOA-National Membership Committee Chair

To: CPOA Chapter Membership Chairs

Subject: CPOA Membership Program- Chapter Guidance

Greetings from CPOA National!

As the new National Membership Committee Chair for CPOA, I would like to introduce myself. I am Chief Petty Officer Sarah B. Foster and currently work for the D11 Region Public Affairs staff in Alameda, Calif.

While I hold this national position as a collateral duty, my CPOA/CGEA lineage on the Chapter level has been as a two-term secretary for CPOA, Washington, D.C. Chapter and Membership Chair; and as a petty officer first class, was the Secretary and Public Information Officer for the Southeastern Connecticut CGEA at the Coast Guard Academy.

I assume this position with great pride as well as with a commitment to serve you as your National Chair and set up your membership programs for success. The enclosed CPOA Membership Program Guidance was developed to augment your present member outreach and recruitment efforts. This is the first of many outreach tools as part of CPOA's strategic planning efforts.

In the guidance, we emphasize member satisfaction and understanding your prospective members as keys for a successful membership program. As member chairs, we recognize your tireless efforts to recruit and retain your members are instrumental to the success of the CPOA.

Please let me know how I can be of service to you. I welcome your thoughts and would like to hear about your best practices to sustain our membership program. I can be reached at (703) 389-0420; email: sbfosteruscg@gmail.com.

I look forward to working with you and wishing you and your Chapter much success!

Very respectfully,

Sarah B. Foster

(signature on file)

CPOA MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM- CHAPTER GUIDANCE

Every chapter should have a good mix of member outreach strategies for retention and to increase growth. In most associations, the start of the new year is the time to evaluate the membership plan, however, since the majority of our uniformed members are highly mobile, the transfer season between May through August is an ideal time to take an accounting of membership levels and evaluate the need for an annual membership drive.

First and foremost, it's important to understand who are prospective members and how the CPOA can work for them. As defined in the CPOA By-Laws, Section VII, prospective members are:

- Regular: Coast Guard active duty, reservists, retired military of the E7 and above
- Associate: E7 and above from other U.S. Armed Forces.
- Silver lifetime: lump payment converted from regular membership
- Gold Lifetime: any E7 and above regular member who has distinguished his or herself in community service and support for the CPOA.
- Honorary: membership awarded by the Association to those not eligible for membership but has uniquely distinguished themselves to the Association.

Sample recommendations for reaching out to prospective members and build (or re-build) the member roster include:

Military retirees, members of other military organizations with overlapping interests- CWOA, Retiree Councils, NCOA, corporate sponsors, local community leaders, etc.

By simply focusing on uniformed-only members make your chapter roster highly volatile to changes every transfer season. Expanding the membership rolls beyond the active duty constituency allow for a wider exchange of marketable ideas/knowledge, influx of fresh resources and continuity of Chapter programs whose project officers have geographic stability.

Key to attracting, recruiting and retaining new members, the membership chair is expected to be an advocate for all members and to promote member satisfaction. To successfully achieve these goals, the member chair is expected to:

- Develop membership packets to include a copy of The Chief magazine, application form and welcome letters from the CPOA National President. Copies of welcome letters will be initially provided to Chapter membership chairs by the National Office and upon request thereafter.
- Customer service: vigilantly follow-up with member sign-ups, allotments and issues with their membership. Chairs are expected to communicate any and all member issues affecting the member roster to their Chapter officers and to their respective regional advisors.
- Personally solicit new members face-to-face (if possible) versus online. This is the most effective where few select prospects are sought.
- Have prominent members, Chapter officers meet with prospects.

- Work with CPOA Chapter officers to diversify Association activities and outreach tools to recruit new members.
- Track member attendance at meetings and events.
- Evaluate Chapter roster for any changes in membership levels.
- Contact members at large (MAL) in your area to see if they are interested in affiliating with your chapter. This list is available from the CPOA National office as part of your outreach tools.

Remember, CPOA membership programs invest in the Association's operating expenses, start-up costs for new projects, and on-going program expenses. It also helps engage and cultivate those with a potential interest in making larger capital gifts in the future.

A membership program alone is not enough to sustain an association, yet it serves as a basic building block along with other fundraising tools such as on-line fundraising, campaigns, and deferred giving programs (individual and corporate giving).

More importantly, building, nurturing and sustaining a membership base takes work! Consider it a bank account of human capital and you are the treasurer of people who are all contributors to the Association.

To summarize, core responsibilities of the Chapter membership chair is to take an active accounting and reporting of member roster levels at every meeting, announce and welcome new members, actively solicit and engage members at all times and to pursue a diversity of members for the regular, associate, honorary and silver membership lifetime levels.

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TIPS TO INCREASE MEMBERSHIP AND FOSTER MEMBERSHIP SATISFACTION

CPOA Membership Chairs are encouraged to employ the following tips to increase membership and foster member satisfaction:

1. Exude a warm and welcoming attitude

A warm and welcoming Chief can translate into a warm and welcoming chapter. The membership chair must take a pro-active approach in meeting and greeting potential new members. Any chapter officer, in fact, should stand at the door, and shake the hand of members and guests as they come in for the monthly CPOA meeting. It can be hard for people to walk into a roomful of people they don't know. Introduce yourself as the member chair, take an interest in them, and introduce them to other members.

2. Get to know your members

Make sure your chapter officers make a special effort to get to know each member by name. This can be a challenge, as your chapter grows, but it is essential. A member needs to feel that he or she is a valued part of the chapter, regardless of how much service or volunteer hours are contributed.

- Be sincere and open. People are more likely to trust someone who is honest. And trusting people are more likely to be motivated to perform well.
- Spend more time with new members. Tell them how they can get involved. A bit of attention now will pay off well later!
- Smile and be positive. People like being with happy folks. Nobody wants to stick around moody, negative, or whiny people!
- Say thank you and be appreciative. These two words may be simple but they go a long way. So use them on a regular basis!

3. Get new members involved

Ensure that members are aware of what your committees are, and encourage them to get involved. A wide variety of skills and talents are needed to run a successful chapter, and everyone's contribution is needed. Use your chapter website to feature all the committees and what they do.

4. Incentivize: have a membership contest!

Any member who brings in a new Chief during the year has their name put into a hat. The drawing is held, and the winner gets their membership dues for the coming year reduced by half! There can be various takes on this - maybe the member who brings in the most members during the year gets a free membership the following year. The key issue is that your membership grows as a result of a collaborative effort.

5. Challenge every member to bring a friend to at least one meeting or event per month

Ask a visiting Chief to provide a short comment toward the end of an event or meeting about their thoughts. This will give the member chair a gauge on the prospect's level of interest. Just make sure to tell the Chief at the beginning of the meeting that these comments will be requested at the end so that he or she won't be caught off-guard.

6. Make use of other organizations in the military and civilian community to "spread the word" about your Chapter

Service organizations, and professional associations are always looking for speakers. Most municipal councils are open to presentations by local non-profit organizations. Economic development organizations often organize conferences and one-day seminars where you might have an opportunity to speak to others about your association.

7. Set up a Chapter website and keep it "fresh"

People increasingly expect an association to have a website. Online search has become the most common and easiest way to research for more information. Chapters should ensure that they aren't missing out on valuable exposure online. Setting up a Chapter website is also a valuable resource to members, who need to find timely information quickly and easily.

8. Make every Chapter event a "media event"

Now that digital cameras are so easy to use, capture photos at all events and meetings if possible - keynote speakers at the monthly meeting, new member inductions, when meetings with your distinguished visitors. Post these images to the Chapter website immediately and forward to the local community paper. Newspapers, especially weeklies, are always looking for items of local interest.