

## 2016 AFA National Convention Summary

Seventeen AFA Florida delegates attended the AFA National Convention, held at the Gaylord National Harbor on September 17-18. We able to listen to many informative briefings about the state of AFA and a summary of their major programs. In addition, the delegates voted in the new AFA Leadership. The new AFA Chairman of the Board will be Whitt Peters, former Secretary of the Air Force, and the new Vice Chairman for Field Operations will be Gavin "Mac" MacAloon. In addition, Katie McCool, Len Vernamonti, and Terry Cox were voted as new Board members.

As I emphasized at the AFA Florida State Meeting, I feel attending the National Convention gives members a better insight into AFA and the roles played at both the National and Chapter levels to support the AFA Mission to Advocate, Educate, and Support. On the AFA Website, select Field Leaders, and at the bottom right corner you will find the Power Point presentations given to delegates (soon). For those unable to attend, this will give you a feel for what was discussed.

At the State Convention, I emphasized that the AFA Budget and membership were the top two topics this year and that held true at the National Convention. Larry Spencer, AFA President, briefed that for the past few years, AFA has run a \$20 million Budget but only received \$18 million in revenues and unless that changes, AFA will cease to remain a viable organization in the near future. Another problem is AFA receives significant contributions for specific programs, such as the Wounded Airman Program, Mitchell Institute, CyberPatriot, and StellarXplorers, but those monies must be used only for those specific programs. Revenues for the General Operating Funds, which pay for all the administrative costs for these programs, are down significantly.

There were many discussions during the Convention concerning the Budget. You may have heard many rumors about what will and will not be cut out of the 2017 Budget, but be assured that nothing has been decided at this time but it was briefed several times that you can expect painful cuts across the Board at both the field and national levels to get the 2017 Budget closer to a balanced budget. Prior to the Convention, the Board of Directors and the EXCOM provided guidance to the AFA National Staff on which programs to cut and they are charged to develop a 2017 Budget. Prior to approval, the suggested Budget will be reviewed by several groups for input. In Florida, it will go to me, as Region President, and I will pass this along to the Chapters for review and input. You can anticipate, however, that Chapter payments from AFA National will be cut, probably at least 50% and maybe more. They have suggested, to help offset this, to allow Chapters to charge whatever they want for Community Partners and the Chapters would keep 100% of the income. Reports were also discussed t eh Region President meeting and they will be changing, probably less than once a quarter. I know many of you see them as a waste of time but there are a couple of reasons to continue them. First, as State president, it gives me a better feel for what is going on around the State. Second, much of the data is needed to verify that AFA (as an national entity) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit.

Membership was also discussed several times. So far in 2016, AFA has had a record number of new members, but the revenue associated with membership has declined. That is because of the high number of complimentary memberships. In addition, there was only a minor increase in overall membership due to the large number on non-renewals. Retention is a primary issue for the future. For example, over 3000 CyberPatriot Team leaders were given free membership with the hopes that they will renew as full members. In addition, Every Airman a

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Member, an AFA pilot program, gave free memberships to numerous airmen just completing initial training at six bases. Retaining these new members needs to be a primary field effort along with retaining current Chapter members. If you have one of these new members arrive in your Chapter (or a new CyberPatriot member), it is imperative that you make contact. After the State Convention, I recommended Chapters have at least one person join the Membership Community. Go to the AFA Website Home Page, click on Communities at the very top. Scroll down to the Membership section and hit Join. This is essentially a Blog where you can provide questions and look at solutions to membership issues that have worked at other Chapters. If you have a Chapter Membership VP, that individual should belong and if not, I expect the Chapter President to join.

It is important that each Chapter member keeps their AFA profile data current. That includes your mail and email addresses. This ensures that you continue to receive the Air Force Daily Report as well as Chapter updates of issues affecting mission capability of the department. You can easily do this by going to: <http://www.afa.org/AFA/InformationFor/MembersOnly1> and click on "Update your address for AF Magazine and other AFA Mailings".

Advocacy is a primary AFA mission at the National level. The AFA Government Relations staff routinely interacts with Capitol Hill and other federal agencies on national policy topics such as: caring for veterans, retirees, and active duty personnel; recapitalizing the Air Force's aging fleet; securing space and cyber space; strengthening the nuclear mission; and investing in airpower.

Advocacy must also come from the field level and one of the best ways for local Chapters to become involved is by having AFA members become Air Power Advocates (APA). Mark Tarpley, from the Tinker Chapter, gave a great briefing on how Chapter members can become an effective APA. The APA is a grassroots effort that reaches out to the public and key stakeholders in communities across the country in order to effectively communicate the important role that our Airmen play in supporting our nation's global defense strategies. APA members receive daily emails from AFA National that include air power related news articles, and other documents pertaining to air power advocacy. This community exists to keep APA members updated and to provide them with an environment for discussion. The APA Program is only open to AFA Members, and APA members must be committed to promoting air power in their local communities. To become an APA member, go to the AFA Website Home Page, click on Communities at the very top. Scroll down to Air Power Advocates section and hit Join.

AFA has several Education Programs which can be supported at the Chapter level. At the Convention, I heard the AFA National Teacher of the Year, Greg Ennis, give a talk about how AFA superbly supports education throughout the country. Greg knows what he is talking about because he has participated in two of AFA's largest science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) programs; CyberPatriot and StellarXplorers. CyberPatriot is the National Youth Cyber Education Program and has programs at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, including the National Youth Cyber Defense Competition. You can find more details about CyberPatriot at <http://www.uscyberpatriot.org/>. StellarXplorers inspires and attracts high school students to pursue STEM through a challenging, space system design competition involving all aspects of system development and operation with a spacecraft/payload focus. You can find more details about StellarXplorers at <http://stellarxplorers.org/>. In addition, AFA

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has teamed with the Civil Air Patrol (CAP) to create and strengthen Aerospace/STEM Education Programs. CAP supports AFA Education programs and AFA promotes the free K-12 STEM Education Programs provided through the CAP. You can find more details about CAP Education Programs at

<http://www.afa.org/afafieldleaders/aeprograms/civilairpatroleducationalprograms>.

Another important AFA Program is the Wounded Airman Program (WAP). AFA is committed to putting 100% of donations towards directly supporting the Wounded Airmen, but this comes at a significant administrative cost. If you can convince people to donate some portion of their donation to the AFA Airman and Family Support Program, which can be used to cover the administrative costs.

The Arnold Air Society (AAS) and Silver Wings (SW) national leadership gave a briefing about their status. They have told their members to contact the nearest Chapter to see how they can partner. Remember, all the AAS/SW members are also AFA members. In case you don't know, the AAS/SW units in the "Region IV" include FSU (SW), Valdosta State University (AAS), UF (AAS/SW), ERAU (SW), UCF (AAS), USF (AAS), Miami (AAS), and University of Puerto Rico (AAS). The Region IV ARCON will be held in Puerto Rico from October 7-9 and I will be attending. This year, the AAS/SW NATCOM (national convention) will be held on Disney property at the Coronado Springs Resort from April 15-17 (Easter weekend).

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