

FLORIDA SOCIETY, SAR, REPORT TO SOUTH ATLANTIC DISTRICT

26 April 2017

The Florida Society, (FLSSAR) continues to grow. Data gleaned from a recently commissioned Florida Society Strategic Plan showed a steady growth of the society over the last ten years. The society had a census of 1507 members in calendar year 2007 (excluding dual and junior members). The census for calendar year 2016 was 2126 (excluding dual and junior members). These figures show a net growth to the society of 42% (including drops, deaths and transfers).

The commissioned Strategic Plan and Study identified the strengths and weaknesses of the society and is allowing us to formulate a short, intermediate and long term plan for complying with the many programs sponsored by the National Society. With projected estimated numbers of manpower and financial revenue, the Florida Society will be able to increase involvement as well as increased spending promoting these programs. The study also identifies areas of improvement in the cyber domain.

We continue to employ the concept of conducting Regional Meetings throughout the State of Florida. We started this concept under Past FLSSAR President Steve Williams' leadership with consultation and recommendation from Past VPG Randy Moody. South Atlantic District VPG Larry Fehrenbacher expanded the concept when he was State President and it has been carried over under my term as President. It has been very successful as it affords the opportunity of many members to attend a Regional Meetings locally, conducted by the State leadership, without the need to travel to a Board of Management or Annual Meeting. The meetings have been well attended and many issues have been resolved with positive affect. They have been tremendous in dispelling negative rumors regarding the State and National societies.

The Florida Society, for the second year in a row, will have entrants in all six SAR Youth Programs. At last year's National Congress, the Florida Society received recognition from PG Lawrence for having entrants in all six programs. The Florida Society works very hard in promoting these contests and through the newly commissioned Strategic Plan, we hope to identify future sources in financial income to increase prize/scholarship money to entice more participation.

The Florida Society had adopted PG Tomme's Youth Education Outreach Program and implemented phase I, the Youth Protection Program. We have appointed a statewide coordinator as well as a statewide training officer. The training officer has begun chapter implementation and will also begin group training at our May 2017 Annual Meeting. We have set a goal of training 75% of our members in the next twelve months. We are in the early stages of implementing Phase II.

We have also implemented PG Tomme's SAR Mentoring Program. The Florida Society recognizes an immediate need for implementation of this program to help stem the continued problem of short term member drops. We support the concept that a mentoring program initiated at the chapter level will create a welcome atmosphere to new members and help the society to meet their initial expectations. We believe that the first step in keeping a member is making them feel welcome.

The Florida Society recently created its very first Ethics Committee. The charter mirrors the national charter and will deal with violations of SAR ethics within the society. The committee will move from an ad hoc to standing committee at our May Board of Management meeting in May 2017.

One of my Presidential initiatives was to recognize and welcome home Vietnam Era Veterans in conjunction with the U.S. Presidential Proclamation dealing with such. We conducted a very meaningful welcome ceremony for Vietnam Era Veterans of the Florida Society during our October Board of Management meeting. PG Tomme assisted in this ceremony and 42 members were recognized. We have been conducting additional welcome home ceremonies around the state at chapter meetings and our goal is to identify every Vietnam Veteran in our state society and give a dignified and proper welcome home.

Another goal of the Florida Society was to recognize the magnificent contributions that our President General First Ladies have made during the terms of their husbands. We are fortunate to have four living First Ladies in the Florida Society. We started the "First Lady's Tea Luncheon" a year ago where all the living First Ladies in the Florida Society are invited to a complimentary luncheon during the Board of Management Meeting. The luncheon transitions to the Florida Society Ladies Auxiliary meeting after the luncheon. This has become a very successful program for the ladies and has garnered additional interest in the auxiliary. A goal was set a year ago to increase the auxiliary membership by 10%. Currently there are 112 members of the auxiliary, a one year increase of 12 members or 12% exceeding the established goal. The ladies have been extremely helpful in supplementing our cash prizes and scholarships for our SAR Youth Programs.

Since my last report, I have attended and represented the Florida Society at the South Atlantic District meeting in South Carolina and the commemoration of the Battle at the Cowpens, the Georgia Society Annual meeting in Atlanta and the SAR Spring Leadership meeting in Louisville.

As my term as Florida Society President ends on 20 May, 2017, it has been my extreme pleasure to be a member of the South Atlantic District under the leadership of VPG Fehrenbacker. He has been a mentor and offered valuable guidance in my growth as an SAR Officer.

Respectfully Submitted,

Raymond F. Wess
Florida society President 2016-2017