

Greetings to my Legion Family.

As I write my final article as your Department President, I would like to express my deepest thanks and appreciation. We all talk about how time goes by so fast. It doesn't seem like it has been almost a year since I was installed. Even if it started off a little rocky, it has been a year of fond memories. Time truly does fly. To not forget anyone, I will not mention any names. First, I would like to thank my mentors who have guided me throughout the year. You have always been there for me, whether it be by email, text, phone calls, and sometimes in person. With your continual knowledge and dedication to our American Legion Family, you have helped me in ways I cannot put into words. I succeeded because of you. You always made me feel that I was important, you took time out of your busy schedules to assist me, and assured me that there were no wrong or dumb questions. You gave me the courage to stand up for what is right, to always fight for our veterans and their families. You gave me strength and courage when I needed it most and to stand up for myself. You helped me in ways that you are probably not even aware of. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. I am stronger because of you.

Those of you who have always had my back, thank you. To a special friend who always listened, never judged, who lent a listening ear, and offered compassion, and gave me strength. Sometimes we just need someone we can be ourselves with and who is willing to listen to us and cry with us when needed. I am blessed to call you "friend" and will always treasure that friendship.

To my District Presidents and Chairmen, working beside you has been a true joy. District Presidents, thank you for everything you have done and continue to do within the Legion Family. You each helped me do my job. To my Chairmen, I could not have done my job without each of you doing yours. The reports, scholarships, and writings have all been top notch. I could not have picked a better team to work with. Each of you continue to amaze me with your undying dedication to our Veterans and their families.

To our Department Secretary, Marcy. Wow, where do I begin? You have been my rock, my go-to person. I always knew that when I contacted you that you would be able to help me. You make the job of every Department President a little easier because of your knowledge and willingness to help everyone. We all know that the office of Department Secretary is not an easy job with long hours, stressors, and many deadlines. Yet, you make it look easy. You truly are the best, and our Department is lucky to have you. Keep on shining!

The Spring District meetings have been amazing despite all that snow. Overall, we had good turnouts, good food, and I especially loved the camaraderie and the laughter. To our Department Commander, Dan Brown, I could not have asked for a better person to work with. You have taught me so much. It has been a wonderful year working with and beside you. One of the things Commander Brown talks about is that we may not all get along, nor agree on everything, but we are the American Legion Family. We are in this together. I can say that we haven't always agreed on everything, but our hearts have always been in the right place. Our dedication to our veterans and their families is the best.

I would like to do a "Shout Out" to all units that achieved 100% or more in membership this year as well as signing up new members. We all know that getting new members is not always an easy task. Our first step is to introduce ourselves, explain what we are about and ask them to become new members. Sometimes we may need to sign up the spouse who is a veteran to the American Legion to get his spouse and children to join our Auxiliary. Always carry applications with you or keep them in your

vehicle so they are readily available. Many units this year have signed up new members. Kudos to them. We all need to work together to recruit new members. It is a team effort.

I would like to leave you with some quotes and things to think about.

“Thoughts from a New Member”

I see you at the meetings, but you never say hello. You're busy all the time you're there with those you already know. I sit among the members, yet I'm a lonely gal. The new ones feel as strange as I; the old ones pass us by. You folks urged us to join and talked of fellowship, you could just cross the room, you know, but you never make the trip. Could you just nod your head and smile or stop and shake a hand, get over your mom's good intentions, then sit among your friends? Now that I understand. I'll be at your next meeting, and hope that you will spend the time to introduce yourself, I joined to be your friend.

A leader's role is greatly diminished without their team because no one can do everything alone, and know one knows everything. You don't become successful on your own; you have to rely on really good people. – **Leadership First!**

Sandra Petermann