

When completing a Year-End Impact Report, it is easy to question whether the numbers truly reflect the time and effort involved. At a recent executive meeting for Unit 135 of McVille, I realized how much my reported hours underestimated my actual involvement. In just one week, I spent four days in National-level ZOOM meetings focused on strengthening our organization, from revising the “Mission Statement” to improving the leadership development process.

These meetings were led by our National Executive Director, Ben Hendricks, whose marketing background and collaborative leadership style have been impressive. He listens openly, encourages ideas, and offers thoughtful guidance without judgment. Attendance from the 52 Departments could have been much stronger at the five information-packed ZOOM sessions held this week and last. The lack of participation highlighted a broader issue - members at the Department, District, and Unit levels are not taking advantage of the extensive resources available to them.

One such resource, delivered quarterly to all members, is ‘The Auxiliary Magazine.’ This publication consistently offers valuable information for Auxiliary members, sometimes even through its advertising. For those less comfortable online, printed resources remain essential, but the National website and ALA Academy provide a wealth of training opportunities that are easily accessible and self-paced. Programs can even be viewed together during Unit meetings.

Additional National sessions addressed membership, inclusion, and leadership development. We discussed the importance of first impressions and ensuring that the public understands we are a service organization rooted in honoring those who serve our country. Inclusiveness across generations was emphasized along with the idea to “meet members where they are.” Some members may not attend meetings but are eager to contribute their talents in meaningful ways.

At Unit 135, members serve effectively based on their interests and availability: coordinating, designing, and delivering greeting cards to veterans; overseeing the poppy poster contest; managing community service projects, participating in legislative efforts, and serving in Girls State leadership. These examples show how meeting members “where they are” strengthens our organization.

Leadership growth and advocacy were recurring themes, and the training options currently available support this development well. While I may have spent more hours than officially recorded, every moment was worthwhile. The knowledge and enthusiasm already exist - we simply need to encourage participation, engage one another, and get excited about our shared mission.

*Encourage, Engage, Get Excited.*

Judy Twete