



2011-2012 FFA Alumni

MEMBERSHIP CHALLENGE

National FFA Alumni Association

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2011-2012 FFA Alumni

Membership Challenge



MEMBERSHIP DRIVE HANDBOOK

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I. Introduction

Recruiting new members is one of the most important tasks that your affiliate will face during the year. It is important because a growing affiliate is a vibrant and healthy affiliate.

The only way to ensure that your affiliate continues to be a strong, powerful voice for agricultural education and FFA in your area is to keep its numbers multiplying. Not only will you be increasing the knowledge base of your affiliate, but also increasing dues revenue, which in turn will strengthen your affiliate. As an FFA Alumni member, and affiliate officer, you understand the value of your membership. Share that knowledge with your friends in the community. Like you, they also want to sharpen their skills, link up with other individuals who support agriculture, and assist the next generation of leaders by providing opportunities in agricultural education and FFA.

Increasing affiliate membership is an ongoing challenge. There is no short cut or magic pill that will produce meaningful growth and yield talented individuals to fill the variety of voluntary roles in an affiliate. Recruiting the quality individual and businesses within your community the affiliate requires will take some work, but will prove worthwhile.

This task, while at first may seem overwhelming, can be accomplished as long as there is a plan developed by your board that has the buy-in of all members. A cause that is not supported by everyone cannot succeed.

You should always think **MEMBERSHIP**.

**REMEMBER
WHEN
RECRUITING
OTHERS:
ANYONE CAN
BE A MEMBER,
NOT JUST
FORMER FFA
MEMBERS!**

When planning chapter activities. Promote a “membership development” attitude within your affiliate. Investing in membership development is investing in the future of your affiliate and the future of agricultural education and FFA.

This handbook will provide you with suggestions on how to develop your affiliate’s plan and, more importantly, how to implement it to reach your goals and objectives.

II. Definitions

Before you can begin focusing on increasing your affiliate’s membership, it is important that you are comfortable with the definitions of the various National FFA Alumni membership categories and the different eligibility requirements. All formal definitions can be found online in the National FFA Alumni Bylaws, located at: www.ffa.org/alumni.

Annual Member

This category of membership is open to anyone who supports agricultural education and FFA. Dues are paid on an annual basis to local, state and national FFA Alumni.

Collegiate Member

Collegiate membership is available to any student who is currently enrolled in a secondary education program and is a collegiate FFA member.

Life Member

This individually held membership is available to individuals who want to confirm their commitment to uphold the values and traditions of agricultural education and FFA by making a one-time payment of dues.

Corporate Member

This category of membership is available to any business or corporation that supports agricultural education and FFA. The corporation, not the individual, holds this membership.

III. Dues Structure

National FFA Alumni Association 2011 – 2012 Dues Structure

Annual member

Dues are \$10 per year, plus any applicable state and local affiliate dues. Annual membership is per individual, not valid for couples or families.

Collegiate

Dues are \$5 per year, plus any applicable state and local affiliate dues. Only valid for current Collegiate FFA members.

Life Member

Life membership is a one-time payment of \$150, plus any applicable state and local affiliate dues. A life membership will be issued in one individual's name (no group or company names will be accepted). Life membership dues are placed in a special investment account that produces additional interest income for the association's operations.

Life members receive a membership card, certificate, a life subscription to the *New Visions* newsletter, and a life subscription to the national FFA *New Horizons* e-magazine, if desired.

Corporate Member

Dues are \$300 per year, plus any applicable state and local affiliate dues. Membership is extended to businesses and corporations.

Corporate members are listed in one issue of the *New Visions* newsletter, in the Alumni Convention program and the Alumni website. They receive the *New Visions* newsletter and a subscription to the national FFA *New Horizons* e-magazine, if desired. Use of the FFA Alumni logo are subject to the terms and conditions of copyright law. There is a reduced cost for advertising space in the *New Visions* newsletter.

IV. Member Benefits

It is important to familiarize yourself with the many benefits that National FFA Alumni offers its members. Your own personal reasons and benefits you receive from being an FFA Alumni member are just as relevant as anything on the list below. Membership in the National FFA Alumni Association can make a difference. Consider the many benefits of membership. To learn more visit www.ffa.org/alumni.

Supporting FFA – Develop a deeper understanding of FFA all while connecting with FFA members and aiding the FFA advisor.

Networking – Meet other individuals and businesses that support agriculture, agricultural education and FFA.

Local/State Affiliates – Attend affiliate meetings to enhance your education, get involved on committees and get the most out of your membership.

Enhance your Education – National FFA Alumni offers you opportunities to enhance your skills and knowledge through conference workshops, the volunteer management online resources, planning and executing affiliate meetings and events, and opportunities to mentor and train students.

Advocating – Membership offers you unity with a group that shares your passions and opportunities to engage in sharing the message of agricultural education and FFA with your communities, school boards and administrators.

FFA Alumni Development Conference - Attend and experience the excitement of being with people who are just as passionate as you are for FFA and agricultural education! This four-day conference, held each July in a different region of the country, is your opportunity to gather with local and state FFA Alumni leaders from across the country. It's the perfect opportunity to network, make lasting friendships, share ideas and have fun! The conference is structured with half day workshops on a variety of topics related to member and affiliate growth and development. The second half of the day takes the group on educational or sightseeing tours of the host city/region and opportunities to interact with participants to exchange ideas and solutions.

National FFA Alumni Convention – Held annually in conjunction with the national FFA convention. Attend and experience firsthand the largest student youth gathering in America, dedicated to the development of our student leaders. As part of the overall convention, FFA Alumni hosts: awards and business sessions, benefit auctions to raise funds for student scholarships, educational workshops, and even provides entertainment to attendees by sponsoring hypnotist shows as a fundraiser for the association.

New Visions Newsletter – *New Visions* is our quarterly newsletter to all FFA Alumni who wish to receive it (one per household). It provides information on FFA Alumni activities, local and state Alumni events, advocacy needs, success stories and opportunities.

New Horizon Magazine – The official member publication for the National FFA Organization, *FFA New Horizons* highlights FFA member achievements, promotes careers in agriculture, prepares students for college, offers life lessons and more. This publication is available to annual FFA Alumni members at a reduced fee of \$2 per year. Life and corporate members are able to receive this as an e-publication if desired as part of their life membership benefits.

Volunteering – Not only will you have the opportunity to become involved with local and/or state FFA Alumni activities, you may choose to serve on committees or in officer positions to be involved in the setting of local and/or state FFA Alumni goals and objectives. From these opportunities you'll also gain benefits that will help you grow personally and professionally, leadership experience, satisfaction through helping others, and networking. Get involved! This is your association.

Recognition – Take pride in belonging to the premier association for supporters of agricultural education and FFA! Apply for state and national awards and recognition opportunities.

Understanding National FFA Alumni's eligibility requirements, dues structure and benefits will help you develop your membership recruitment plans.

V. Before the Plan

There is a basic set of criteria to look at when developing a plan to increase your affiliate's membership.

Determine your affiliate's goals and objectives – These should be both short and long term. Remember, the quest for members does not stop after you make the first contact. It is an ongoing process. Set realistic expectations for all parties involved and make them aware of what is expected. If expectations are set too high, then there is a sense of failure. This should be avoided, as it will affect the rest of your campaign and the overall morale of the volunteers.

Discuss goals with your local agricultural educator(s) – Periodically checking in with the agriculture instructors ensures that the FFA Alumni is maximizing their impact on the ag ed program and FFA chapter. These conversations should be focused around asking the teacher(s) what would be of assistance to them (in terms of classroom instruction, SAE and record book oversight, CDE training, award applications, etc.), the program (i.e., resources needed, advocacy) and the FFA chapter (i.e., chaperones, funding for events, mentoring). These conversations will allow you to offer a variety of volunteer opportunities to your members and potential members.

National FFA Alumni Strategic Long-Term Goals:

- For every FFA chapter to have an active, fully engaged FFA Alumni affiliate
- To become leaders in advocacy at the local level

Observe your affiliate – Determine the image of the organization, member satisfaction, changing demographics and the needs of the affiliate. What will it take to motivate a prospect to become a member? Why do people become involved? Why did you become involved? What is your affiliate's image in the community? Does it even have one? It is difficult to plan if you don't answer these questions first.

Do your homework – What's already been done? Why was it done? What needs to be done? Has your affiliate held a membership drive in the past? How long was the campaign? Was it successful? If a membership drive was not held, why not? Doing

your homework is an essential part of the membership drive program. As a board, develop lists of questions like those above and answer them to help you determine the best ways to implement your campaign. What is the value of joining? Services that are intangible, such as networking, sense of belonging, etc., should not be overlooked when assessing the value of membership.

Use your own experience to appeal to others. Your own testimony of what you have gained by being a member is a bigger selling point than any printed brochure, and just might be the persuading factor why someone should and will join.

Look at your current situation – You need to know who you are before you can start filling member needs and recruiting new members. What is the value and quality of the programs your affiliate offers? Are your meetings welcoming to new members? Do you send meeting announcements with advance notice? Do you nurture your current members?

Budget – The best plan and the best intentions will go nowhere without adequate financing. Remember, this is an investment in the affiliate's future. Determine the costs for mailings, brochure printing, phone calls, open houses, etc.

What are you trying to achieve? – Decide how many new members you are trying to acquire. Are you trying to increase membership by 5 percent, 10 percent, 10 local businesses? Are you trying to fill vacancies on the board? Make your goals visible and well known to your membership.

How are you going to achieve this? – Develop a timeline or a step-by-step plan. This will help you to see the bigger picture of the campaign. You'll be able to plan all the steps – such as who will write the pitch letters and by when? When will the phone calls start? When will we send invitations to attend an open house or Alumni sponsored event? What events could we attend to recruit members? Decide if your membership campaign will be short-term or all year-long. Outline what you will need to do to reach your goals. Are you going to have a membership drive by mail? By phone? Are you going to have a "Bring A Member" campaign?

Results and Evaluation – You will need to take a close look at what you did and what the results were. This is as important as the actual plan. What did you want to happen as a result of your membership drive? How many new members did you gain? How many did you have to start? Was the program worthwhile? How many "new" people know about FFA and FFA Alumni and the functions of your affiliate?



Grow
membership
in 2012!

The first question is fairly easy to answer – What did you want to happen as a result of your membership drive? While it is obvious you are trying to attract as many new members as possible to your affiliate and FFA Alumni, the long-term plan must be addressed as well. Your goal is to gain members who will become active participants, serve as committee volunteers and eventually become board members. New members bring with them new ideas and skill sets, vitality and succession. They will give your board the opportunity to begin to break through the lax behavior or burnout that sometimes begins to take over. An active affiliate with enthusiastic members is one that people want to belong to and dedicate their time. If **you** don't believe it is worthwhile, neither will anyone else.

Now you know what the benefits are to increasing your affiliate's membership, what can you do to determine the overall perception of your affiliate? What are the outside factors that influence the success of your affiliate?

Start internally; take a look at your current members. Are their needs being met by the programming you are offering? Is there something missing that they would like to see offered? Conduct an affiliate survey to find out. Not only will you learn what your active members are thinking, but it will also give you the opportunity to reconnect with members you have not seen in awhile. Be prepared to contact the members who do not complete the survey. These are usually the members who do not show up for your meetings and are the people you are trying to bring back into the affiliate. Track the inactivity of members, as well as those who participate. Each and every individual/business is an advocate for agricultural education and FFA and their affiliation adds to the overall effectiveness of your affiliate.

Why do people become involved? There are many answers to this question, but usually it will boil down to a few basic needs.

- ***What's in it for me?*** People tend to join groups, including associations for professional or for personal gain. You'll need to advise your potential members what skills and knowledge they will acquire or improve by becoming a member of FFA Alumni and how being active in the affiliate will help them to advance these skills. Explain how being a member will benefit their career, public or personal life. Always look at it from their point of view. As an FFA Alumni member they will have access to other FFA Alumni across the nation. Think of all the knowledge and experience your members possess at one affiliate meeting! Ask them what they need and what they are looking for and tell them why FFA Alumni can help them. Don't spend time touting benefits the individual or business isn't interested in. You must LISTEN to what they want then give it to them.

- *The desire to belong* – People want to be able to network, have fun, and build quality relationships that fulfill personal and professional needs. These people are the joiners; they enjoy being part of a team.
- *The desire for recognition* – Belonging to FFA Alumni and affiliate offers credibility and status. A person, who sees the impact of FFA and agricultural education on our future leaders and wants to be affiliated with this organization, may respond to your offer of membership with eagerness.

Do not get discouraged – There will always be those individuals on your prospect list who will not join, no matter how terrific your services and affiliate benefits are, or how often you solicit them. Take these individuals off your list. Continuing to try to recruit them not only frustrates you, but also irritates them and practically guarantees that they will not join.

VI. Getting Started

Develop an outline to get you started – This will give your plan a beginning and an end and will ensure that you have not forgotten any steps. More in depth explanations follow this outline.

Step 1 – Committing and Assessing

- Commit to a membership campaign.
- Affiliate assessment. What do we have? What do we need?
- Analyze past membership campaigns the affiliate has conducted.

Step 2 – Setting Goals

- Set clear, attainable objectives.
- Decide what type of campaign you are going to run.
- Determine the duration.

Step 3 – Budgeting

- Now that you know what you want to accomplish, how much money do you have to spend?
- Understand your affiliate's finances.
- Designate funds for the campaign.

Step 4 – Creating the Plan

- Decide what needs to be done to achieve your goals, set dates and assign people to be responsible for various parts of the project.
- Affirm goals and begin implementing your plan.
- Identify where to find prospective members.
- Obtain lists.
- Assign someone to write the prospect letters.
- Select the content of your membership packet.

Step 5 – Implementing the Plan

- Divide lists and qualify prospects.
- Write prospect letters/e-mails/phone scripts/open house invites/etc.
- Assemble membership packets.
- Mail/deliver membership packets with prospect letter signed by the affiliate president; include a phone number of someone within the chapter to call for information.
- Begin follow up to initial contact via e-mail/phone/mail.
- Meet as a group to share findings.
- Set up phone trees for calls if necessary.
- Assign each prospect to an affiliate member who will be responsible for calls, follow-up, questions, etc.
- Find out as much as you can about the prospects.
- Communication between members is key to any plan working.
- Hold an affiliate meeting focused on new members/new prospects.

Step 6 – The Recruitment Meeting/Open House

- Make sure the event starts and ends on time.
- Assign each new attendee/member a buddy or affiliate mentor.
- Seek out guests. Call them guests, not prospects.
- Watch the door for new attendees.
- Personally greet them when they arrive.
- Introduce guests to others.
- Use nametags. Consider color-coding them for new comers.
- Don't allow the board to sit together.
- Make sure that your program is relevant and engaging.
- Focus on the benefits of membership after the program.
- Use testimonials. Utilize the FFA members and advisor.
- Facts tell, stories sell.

Step 7 – Follow-up and Maintenance

- Call the prospective members who attended the meeting. Thank them; remind them to complete a membership application if they have not already joined.
- Send thank you notes to those who have joined and provide any additional information to get them acquainted with the affiliate and its members.
- Consider introducing new members in your affiliate newsletter or on your website.
- Make new members feel that they are an important and special addition to the affiliate.
- Conduct a follow-up to those who did not join with information on how to become involved.
- Immediately get each new person involved on a committee or with a task.

Step 8 – Measure Results and Recognition

- Review and analyze what you have done. Did the results meet your goals?
- Calculate how many new members you have gained. Don't be discouraged if it's not as many as you had hoped. This isn't always easy.
- Determine how the campaign helped the affiliate.
- Recognize members who have volunteered their time to the membership effort. This is very important. Make sure to do this at an affiliate meeting and encourage these members to fill out the National Legion of Merit Citation to be recognized for their efforts to recruit new and renew members. Remember everyone has volunteered his or her time.

Step 9 – Retention

- Consider welcoming new members with a letter from the president and a welcome kit with a copy of the affiliate constitutions and bylaws, meeting schedule, contact list, program of activities, etc.
- Put each new member on your e-mail or mailing list immediately.
- If a new member has just joined and your affiliate is breaking for a period of time, tell them! They will feel forgotten if you don't advise them that the next meeting or activity won't be for a couple of months.
- Continue to stress the value of membership.
- Have a plan for new members to become active members.
- Don't threaten members to become involved.
- Ask new members for their opinion and ideas.
- Don't complain about others or the affiliate to new members.
- Create an air of excitement about being involved.
- Recognize those who do get involved.
- Make it fun!

VII. Details for Getting Started

Below you will find in depth information for each step of the membership campaign outlined on previous pages.

Step 1 – Committing and Assessing

Getting your member's buy-in is crucial to the success of any recruitment program, because it is your members who will be the most effective recruiters. Your members must be convinced that this is a worthwhile investment of their time. Everyone must support the campaign since promoting and encouraging FFA Alumni membership is everyone's responsibility.

Take a look at your affiliate and what campaigns, if any, have been held in the past. If you held a telephone campaign, try something different like an e-mail distribution or utilize social media to recruit members. Determine what will work best in your area. You can do this by taking a quick survey at your affiliate's board meeting. Often overlooked when assessing your affiliate is whether or not your affiliate can support these new members. Are your programs strong? Is the morale of the group high? Is your meeting attendance acceptable? If the affiliate is not succeeding in at least one of these areas, no one will want to join. New members should WANT to join.

Step 2 – Setting Goals

Your goals should reflect the total potential of your area. Once your goal is established, publish it everywhere you can, and provide follow-up reports on how the campaign is progressing. Be positive; encourage your members to be enthusiastic about reaching the goals that have been set. Emphasize how an increased membership will benefit the affiliate's ability to offer worthwhile programs and greater support to your teacher(s) and students. Emphasize that teamwork is needed to succeed.

Set a realistic quota for your membership drive. If you set your goals too high and the affiliate is unable to meet them, it lowers morale and threatens the campaign. To keep morale high, make sure the goal is attainable and make every effort to surpass it.

Always remember that

More members = more volunteers

and

More dollars = more new programs

The impact of more members joining your affiliate is twofold. You increase the knowledge base of the affiliate, which is invaluable, plus you increase the resources to provide better services and programs.

Now that you have set your goals, the next step is to decide what type of campaign recruitment you'll implement and how long the campaign will last.

Step 3 – Budgeting

By now, your affiliate has agreed on the type of campaign you want to run and the goals it hopes to attain. Next you need to develop a budget for the campaign. Budget for the printing of materials, postage, incentives for members who recruit the most new members, supplies for open house/meeting, etc. Your treasurer should be prepared to keep accurate records of all expenses. These records are necessary for planning future campaigns and to evaluate the cost effectiveness of the campaign you will have run.

When setting the budget and deciding on the type of program to run, you might want to consider making the first meeting and meal complimentary. If you can afford to do this, it is a nice touch, and might bring more attendees. Just be sure it is included in your final budget of the program.

Step 4 – Creating the Plan

Now that you know what your goals and budget are, create a plan to achieve them. The keys to achieving goals are to make sure deadlines are set and met, and members accept responsibility for various pieces of the project. This includes any written or e-mailed prospect letters, invitations to events, writing thank you notes, assembling membership kits, etc. A project of this nature cannot succeed without everyone being clear of what is expected of them, and by when. Remember that you must have a core set of volunteers in order to reach your goal. This cannot be a project where only the membership chair gets involved and does the work. This is an affiliate commitment. At the onset of the program, reaffirm the goals so that everyone is starting off on the same page.

So, you've created the plan, and set deadlines, now what about prospective members?

Where are you going to find prospective members? Prospects can be found using your networks. It's likely the friends, family and business associates of your members may be interested in getting involved. Don't forget about the parents/guardians of your current student population, school administration and other teachers. Local agricultural businesses may be interested in uniting with your affiliate in support of agricultural education. If you have a larger agricultural related business in your community, ask to

host a booth in their cafeteria over the lunch hour or host a “reconnect with FFA” reception after work. One activity may be to write a list of all individuals within the community that you think would have some interest or connection to FFA and/or agriculture and agricultural education. Have your current members review the list and identify individuals on the list they know or have a connection to and commit them to contacting this prospect about joining. Consider offering a prize to the person who brings in the most members. This should be included in your budget for the campaign.

Facebook is also a great way to reconnect with former members of your FFA chapter and members of the community. Have a young member of your affiliate or current FFA member create an affiliate Facebook page, get all of your membership to join and invite their friends to join. You can post your activities, host events, send reminders of meetings and show your affiliate’s success in posts and photos. This is also a great activity for a new member to be assigned.

Select in advance what your membership packets should contain. Membership applications, brochure, upcoming meeting notice, newsletter, letter from the president, invitation to special membership event (including an RSVP card), member testimonials, program of activities for the year for both the affiliate and the FFA chapter. A list of opportunities to engage with the affiliate’s activities or assist the teacher and students throughout the year (chaperoning, CDE training, classroom guest speaker, fundraisers, advocacy day, maintain affiliate’s website/social media presence, etc.), officer contact list, anything that you think will capture someone’s interest to join.

Step 5 – Implementing the Plan

Whether you are conducting a phone, letter or e-mail campaign, assign someone the task of writing the introduction of the prospect letter. Make sure that the copy highlights the benefits of membership, as well as the programs that your local affiliate has coming up. Write it from the perspective of the reader. What’s in it for them? If you are inviting them to a specific event, make sure full details are supplied. With everyone so busy, it is important to give people enough time to rearrange their schedules if necessary. Always make sure that communications include contact information should someone want further information or have questions. This goes for all your affiliate correspondence. Your members and guests should be told continually who to contact for more information.

Train your members. As you prepare to make contact with prospects, ensure that your members are armed with the information and knowledge to approach their peers. If they feel they have been adequately trained and have sufficient information it makes their job of contact potential members very easy. If you have members that are not

comfortable making “cold” calls to people in the community, provide them with sample scripts and opportunities to practice in a mock setting.

The responsibility of putting together the membership packets should be divided amongst the membership committee and any willing volunteers. If you will be sending large quantities of kits, consider hosting assembly over a lunch hour to provide food and fellowship, whatever it takes to get everyone motivated.

Most importantly, remember to have fun! While it can be a lot of work, it should be a worthwhile and fulfilling experience for everyone involved.

Step 6 – The Meeting/Open House

Assuming these guests will be attending your next affiliate meeting or special membership drive event/open house, your affiliate members should be assigned to watch out for them, greet them, talk to them, and then pass them on to another member who will do the same. Introduce them to others to help get the conversation started. Some people are naturally gregarious; others need more of your attention until they feel comfortable with the group. For most of us, walking into a meeting where you do not know anybody can be very intimidating. Be sure your affiliate’s board does not all sit at one table. Use nametags to promote conversation. Consider color coding nametags to identify new comers. It is the job of every member to be friendly and open. When a person is at ease, he or she is more likely to have an open mind. An open mind enhances your chance of selling membership. Have a relevant and engaging program with a good presenter to encourage attendance.

Make sure your affiliate members know there will be new people at the meeting and they should make every effort to attend and assist the affiliate by seeking out these guests.

Since this is a meeting to “sell” membership to FFA Alumni and your affiliate, the best way to do this is by having several board and affiliate members prepared to discuss why they joined, and what benefits they receive for themselves and their employer. Most people will react favorably by listening to the real world value, as opposed to a list of benefits. Don’t underestimate the value of testimonials. Also, don’t underestimate the power of our students in their blue corduroy jackets. Invite your agricultural instructor(s) and FFA members to attend the event. Provide them with the same direction you’ve provided your membership, to interact with guests and share with them the benefit they receive from the FFA Alumni and the many volunteers, give tours/updates of the local agricultural education program and FFA Chapter activities, success stories, etc. Be sure you have membership applications on hand and a method and contact person for new prospects to give their form and dues to onsite. Most will want a receipt showing

that payment was received, especially when dealing with cash, so be prepared to provide this service.

Step 7 – Follow-up and Maintenance

No matter what method you choose to use for your campaign, don't forget to schedule time to follow up. Remember someone is not a member until your affiliate has received and application and payment.

After the meeting/open house, make sure to send a letter thanking each person who attended the event with any additional information they may need to assist them in their consideration of joining. If someone was planning to attend but did not, send a letter with a "sorry we missed you" sentiment and include information that was shared during the event. Maintain contact with these individuals, inquire if they have questions or invite them to upcoming affiliate activities. Don't be discouraged if they came to the recruitment meeting and didn't join, ask them to sign up to work a shift with you at the next affiliate fundraiser. They may need hands on experience to demonstrate they are wanted and needed within this group.

Send hand written thank you notes to new members, along with a welcome packet. An Affiliate welcome packet should include a welcome letter from the president (you may consider also including a welcome letter from the FFA advisor or FFA president), an introduction of your affiliate's board members, updates on upcoming meetings, program of activities for the year, your affiliate's website and Facebook, a copy of affiliate's constitution and bylaws, list of contact information, opportunities to engage with the aged program or FFA chapter as a volunteer. The goal is to make the individual feel they are an important addition to the affiliate. This is the time when "affiliate habits" are developed. If the member develops an early pattern of not attending meetings, they are not likely to remain a member.

You might want to include, along with a your welcome letters, a new member profile form, a brief series of questions to understand what your new members are interested in. This will allow you to see what your new members are looking for and expecting from their affiliation with the FFA Alumni. This allows you to make sure the affiliate is meeting his or her expectations, and you are on your way to maintaining a member on a long term basis. If you have a newsletter, consider listing all the new members or highlighting them at meetings or on website. Your affiliate might want to develop an annual meeting that is an orientation for new members. The purpose is to encourage new members to participate in FFA Alumni activities and to answer any questions the members might have. It is also a great way to build enthusiasm for participating on committees.

Encourage active participation from all your members, not only new. Those who give their time, talent and treasure to the affiliate gain the greatest satisfaction and reward. Remember that the first year of membership is critical. Without encouragement, inclusion and participation during the first year, a new member is not likely to renew for a second year.

Step 8 – Measure Results and Recognition

Review and analyze what you have done. Did the results meet the goals the affiliate set? Be sure that your notes reflect all the steps the affiliate took to meet its goals. It is always easier to work on your next drive with a plan that has a proven track record. If the goals were not met, why? The important thing is to learn from what you have done in order to continue to build on the effort made.

How many new members has the affiliate gained from this effort? It's okay if there are not as many new members as you had expected. How many annual members renewed their membership? Celebrate this renewal just as you celebrate new members.

Be sure to recognize all those that contributed to the membership effort. This is one of the most important steps of your entire drive. People need to be recognized for the work they have done.

Feature your volunteers in your affiliate newsletter, website or through social media. Send personalized thank you notes to everyone that participated. Schedule time at the beginning of your chapter meeting to publicly thank everyone that was involved and report results.

Remember, volunteers are the key to your affiliate's success!

Step 9 – Retention

Recruiting members is only half the battle...retaining them is the other half! The affiliates that are most successful in accomplishing their goals are the affiliates making a concerted effort to involve as many of their members as possible in affiliate activities.

Remember, your members are constantly being sought out by other organizations for their time and resources. Once you know what they want, you will know if FFA Alumni is a good fit for them. Your job is to assure them their efforts and involvement with the affiliate are an important part in enriching, not only their activities with the affiliate, but their personal and/or professional life as well.

According to the Association for Volunteer Administration (2005), today's volunteers expect:

- To be part of a well managed organization that doesn't waste precious time.
- A clearly defined volunteer job with a realistic and manageable time commitment.
- Roles in making decisions that affect them or their volunteer duties.
- Recognition that matches their motivations for getting involved.
- Assignments that produce results.
- To meet real needs.

Get new members involved right away. Help them feel connected to the affiliate by asking them to volunteer on a committee or serve a role on an upcoming project. Make a real effort to get new people involved rather than relying on the same core group of members who always step up. Your membership base will start to suffer if the group is viewed as being a clique.

Solicit your members periodically to see what it is they want and expect from the affiliate. Make an effort to meet those expectations when planning your affiliate's activities and meetings. If someone indicates a specific concern on a survey during a meeting, contact him or her to discuss the issue. Your members want to know they are being heard.

Your retention effort can only be successful if you maintain good affiliate records. Make sure that your roster is updated and accurate. Check to make sure the e-mail addresses you have in your distribution lists are up to date.

The following suggestions might help you to organize a successful retention program:

- Establish a committee so one person doesn't do all the work.
- Appoint a membership committee vice-chair for retention.
- Develop a retention plan.
- Spread the workload - get everyone involved, members and board members alike in calling new members, lapsed members, etc.
- Request feedback from members on how programs are meeting their training and development needs.
- Provide a means for members to talk about their concerns, complaints and suggestions.
- Provide answers to members' questions.
- Consider changing meeting times to permit members to attend during alternative times.
- Consider forming a car pool to meetings if a large number of your members are located in the same area.
- Develop high-level affiliate projects to interest people to participate.
- Conduct an orientation program for new members.

- Look for opportunities to report on the achievements of members.
- Encourage board members to get to know affiliate members by circulating at meetings.
- Consider assigning a board member to introduce new members and guests at the monthly meeting and guide them through the process until they begin to feel comfortable. Having a “buddy” assigned to a new member helps to bring the new member into the group and encourages participation.
- Issue plaques, certificates, small gifts, etc., to reward member efforts. Write letters to members expressing thanks and explaining the success of the project and how it will benefit the community, students, or program.
- Consider getting your members involved with public service projects. It is excellent visibility for the affiliate and helps promote a “family” atmosphere within your affiliate. People will want to belong!
- Keep new members happy! Add them immediately to mailing lists. The new member should not have to call to find out when he or she will be contacted. You have only one chance to make a first impression.
- Call to invite them to their first meeting. Welcome them warmly. Invite them to serve on a committee.
- Don’t threaten members to become involved.
- You do not have to “sell” members on membership, but you should remind them of the value of their membership.
- Don’t wait until a member is about to lapse before you start reminding them why they should remain a member.
- Develop a contest and award the member who brings back the most non-renewed members, or new members. (see side bar)
- Network.
- Lead by example.
- Have fun.

Legion of Merit Citation

Legion of Merit is a citation recognizing FFA Alumni members who are spending their own time and energies to building the FFA Alumni through renewing and recruiting new members.

To qualify, a member must enroll 15 NEW or RENEWING National FFA Alumni members or 5 NEW life members for the current membership year (To determine number of members when combining annual and life, 1 life member = 3 annual).

Visit www.ffa.org/alumni to download the application by the May 15 deadline!

X. VIII. Conclusion

As you can see, the membership equation is equal parts recruitment and retention. As simple as it sounds, members who are welcomed, advised and informed, involved and recognized, who perceive that the affiliate and FFA Alumni are benefitting them, will renew year after year. Sample letters and resources follow on the next few pages.

The National FFA Alumni Council and staff are available to assist you in developing your membership drive and answering questions you may have. You can also visit us online at www.ffa.org/alumni for additional resources to assist you in your recruitment and retention efforts.

Holding a membership drive is a rewarding process, but it does take time and the commitment of the whole affiliate. You belong to the premier association that supports the future leaders of this nation and the future of agriculture; showing your enthusiasm and getting others involved will increase the knowledge base of the affiliate and FFA Alumni.

*COMMIT NOW TO REACHING A NEW
MEMBERSHIP CHALLENGE
IN YOUR AFFILIATE
IN 2012!*



IX. Ideas for Recruitment

Sample Renewal Reminder E-mail:

Good Afternoon,

I would like to take this opportunity to encourage you to renew your annual dues for the National FFA Alumni Association for the 2010/2011 membership year. To maintain your status as a local, state and national FFA Alumni member, please <INSERT INSTRUCTIONS FOR RENEWAL>

As the president of the <INSERT AFFILIATE NAME> affiliate, your membership and participation is greatly appreciated. It is through your participation in our local affiliate that we are able to <INSERT AFFILIATE ACTIVITIES> for the <INSERT FFA CHAPTER NAME> chapter. (See below for alternative paragraph)

If you do have any questions about your membership please feel free to contact me.

<INSERT AFFILIATE PRESIDENT CONTACT INFORMATION>

*alternative paragraph is below.

As the president of the <INSERT AFFILIATE NAME> affiliate, your membership and participation is greatly appreciated. It is through your participation in our local affiliate that we are able to sponsor various <INSERT AFFILIATE ACTIVITIES>.

Collecting Testimonials from Supporters:

We posted “Why are YOU an FFA Alumni Member?” on the National FFA Alumni Facebook Page. Here are some of the responses!

Colleen McChesney, Florida

[I joined] to help support my son and daughter with their local FFA School Chapter and show that Agriculture is a vital part in the economy and world.

Lori Morgan-Hughes, Florida

FFA taught me so much about how important the future of agriculture is and how important it is to keep that education going. Being an officer enabled me to enact programs to reach out to students who were not in FFA or 4-H and involve them in passing on the importance of the agriculture industry.

Allison Robinson

It started as a way to support my child, but soon I realized how important agriculture education is and how vital this program is to our schools and community.

Joan Wall, North Carolina

I helped organize our local chapter because of my daughter's involvement in FFA. I absolutely believe in and support agriculture education. FFA was probably one of the best things that ever happened to my daughter and many others as I witnessed! She developed leadership qualities that she may never have explored otherwise. I truly wish more parents and past members of the FFA would get involved in this very worthwhile organization.

Carrie Zambrano, Arizona

[I joined] because 20 years later, we still bleed blue!! Oh, and to be there to support our local chapter, of which my daughter is a member.

Amanda Scott, Idaho

FFA taught me so much in life, helped me with leadership skills and made me a better person. I am an alumni member to help support my family members that are a part of the amazing organization that helped me grow.

Jennifer McGregor, Oregon

To help support the local chapter my son is involved with. I believe in the reason for FFA. I wasn't a member myself, but in 4-H. I wish I had been a member! It's a fantastic organization!

David Wilson

Before the FFA, I was a little, scrawny, kid afraid of his own shadow. I started off in the greenhouse, became a chapter member, attended leadership weekend, learned Public Speaking, and self confidence, and it just got better, chapter officer, state officer, countless degrees, national offices, National conventions, and endless list of opportunity. I will always owe the FFA for the man I am today.

Bonnie Van Atta-Christensen

[I joined] because of what FFA did for my husband & my son. I have continued to be active in the Alumni for the past 30 years to help make sure that Ag Education is continued in our schools and working with the kids keeps me young!! Girls were not allowed in FFA when I was in school but I still believe in the blue and gold!!

Matt Baxter

I have so much fun working with the kids and I want to give back to the organization that did so much for me.

Loralei Crum, Missouri

Not only is it important for young people to belong to this organization, but certain scholarship dollars are unavailable to chapters that don't have an Alumni Association. I loved being in FFA and encourage others to join!

Resources on the web:

Visit www.ffa.org/alumni and click on link titled “Affiliate Resources” from the menu on left.

Resources available:

- National FFA Alumni Manual
- Important National FFA Alumni Dates
- 2011 calendar with national dates and ability to add state and local events and due dates
- Volunteer Training Materials
- Materials presented at the 2010 FFA Alumni Development Conference
- Monthly webinars – Topics may include: how to start a new affiliate, advocating on the local level, great fundraising ideas, board member roles and responsibilities and more! Check back frequently for webinar dates and times.
- Utilizing Social Media – including developing a Facebook page for your affiliate, posting images, etc.

Promotional Materials:

- National FFA Alumni commercial
- National FFA Alumni membership brochure
- National FFA Alumni recruitment ads in various sizes

Official FFA Fundraisers & Retail Licensees:

A listing of vendors that have entered into a licensing agreement to use the FFA emblem on a variety of products and fundraisers.

Connect, share and learn by interacting with National FFA Alumni on these social media sites:

- National FFA Alumni Facebook site – www.facebook.com/ffaalumni
- National FFA Alumni Twitter – www.twitter.com/ffa_alumni
- National FFA Alumni blog – <http://ffaalumni.blogspot.com>

Advocacy Website:

- <http://www.naae.org/advocacy/advocacytools/>

Sample Recruitment Letter – no prior contact

<Insert Address Block>



Dear <Insert Salutation>,

You know the importance agriculture plays in our economy as well as the importance of training our youth to become future leaders in this industry. Agricultural education and the National FFA Organization are key vehicles in ensuring that today's students have the skills and training to step into more than 300 careers in agriculture. By joining the FFA Alumni Association, you will have access to the networking, personal and professional development opportunities, and have the ability to impact the lives of FFA students..

National FFA Alumni members receive a host of benefits, including:

- Subscription to the quarterly newsletter, *New Visions*
- E-subscription opportunities to the FFA member magazine *FFA New Horizons*
- Access to the FFA Alumni Development Conference and national convention
- Networking at the local, state and national level
- Access to online resources
- Discounts with National FFA Alumni corporate partners on special programs
- And more

Our local <Insert Affiliate Name> FFA Alumni Affiliate offers you the opportunity to:

- <Insert affiliate benefits here>

<Insert brief paragraph of why you joined FFA Alumni>

I know that you will find membership to be of great value. Enclosed is an application for membership and a brochure that details the benefits available to members. If you have any questions, you can contact me at <Insert phone and/or email information>.

Sincerely,

<Your Name>

<Position or role in the affiliate>

Sample Recruitment Letter –prior contact made

<Insert Address Block>



Dear <Insert Salutation>,

It was a pleasure speaking with you today regarding membership in the <Insert Affiliate Name> FFA Alumni. As promised, enclosed is an application to join FFA Alumni.

As a member you will have access to the following National FFA Alumni benefits:

- Subscription to the quarterly newsletter *New Visions*
- E-subscription opportunities to the FFA member magazine *FFA New Horizons*
- Access to the FFA Alumni Development Conference and national convention
- Networking at the local, state and national level
- Access to online resources
- Discounts with National FFA Alumni corporate partners on special programs
- And more

Our local <Insert Affiliate Name> FFA Alumni Affiliate offers you the opportunity to:

- <Insert affiliate benefits here>

<Insert brief paragraph of why you joined FFA Alumni>

I know that you will find membership to be of great value. If I can be of further assistance, feel free to contact me at <Insert phone and/or e-mail information>.

Sincerely,

<Your Name>

<Position or role in the affiliate>

Ideas to Reach Membership Goals:

Long-Range Goals:

- Every FFA chapter has an active, fully engaged FFA Alumni affiliate
- Become leaders in advocacy for agricultural education at the local level

Events/Activities:

- Host a reconnect event for former FFA members to engage with the chapter and join FFA Alumni.
- Challenge your FFA students to recruit FFA Alumni members during FFA Week and offer prizes for their recruitment efforts.
- Hold a community event inviting the public into the ag ed program to learn about FFA.
- Work with a neighboring school to help them organize a local FFA Alumni affiliate.
- Participate in any state legislative or advocacy days and invite your government leaders to become FFA Alumni members.
- Hold an event for parents of students and invite them to join.
- Challenge each of your senior FFA members to join FFA Alumni before they graduate.
- At every FFA, FFA Alumni, or Team Ag Ed event, task those in attendance to join the FFA Alumni! This includes banquets, fundraisers, meetings, CDEs, etc.

Spreading the Word:

Idea: Post a “Join FFA Alumni!” message on your Facebook status and then ask your friends to copy and paste it to their own status. This is called a viral message and is an easy and free way to reach hundreds of people.

- invite people to join your affiliate through Facebook, Twitter and your webpage
- Post messages asking your followers on social media to invite their friends to participate and join FFA Alumni. Don’t forget to follow the National FFA Alumni on Facebook and Twitter.
- Post ads with your local paper or community newsletter asking former FFA members to reconnect with the local chapter and FFA Alumni.
- Show the “[What does it mean to be an FFA Alumni?](#)” commercial at local and state FFA, ag ed and community events.
- Utilize the FFA Alumni [recruitment ads](#) for publications, programs and newsletters. Get creative! Post one in your high school basketball

program, state FFA convention program, or regional publications.

Idea: Place FFA Alumni recruitment ads in your high school basketball program, state FFA convention program, or regional publications.

- Offer incentives (i.e., grants, scholarships, FFA jackets) to the first three chapters that start a new FFA Alumni affiliate this year.
- Challenge each state FFA Alumni leader to help organize local affiliates. “I will visit (X number of schools) within (X time frame) to help them organize a local FFA Alumni!”
- Give the gift of a Life membership to someone you love and respect!

National FFA Alumni Association Incentives for Increased Membership:

- [Legion of Merit Citation](#): Ask your friends! Challenge your Alumni officer team (or even your entire membership) to qualify for the Legion of Merit Citation. All members receiving the Legion of Merit at the 2011 national FFA Alumni convention will receive a special token of recognition for helping reach our goals. It only requires you to sign up 15 new or renewing annual or five new life (or a combination of both) FFA Alumni members!
- **Affiliate Incentive Program**: All new or reactivating local FFA Alumni affiliates by the May 15 deadline are entered into a \$1,000 drawing (Local ag teacher receives \$500 and the local alumni affiliate receives \$500).
- [Local Program Support Grants](#): Grants (up to \$1,000) will be awarded to local FFA chapters with a nationally chartered, active local FFA Alumni affiliate. Grants can be used on a variety of projects to enhance the local program.
- **Rebate Program**: This program rewards annual membership growth on the state level. Increasing your membership will increase the amount of money coming back to your state!
- **Washington Leadership Conference Scholarships**: These scholarships are awarded annually to all active state associations according to national membership achievements. Local affiliates can earn WLC scholarships by having 250 annual members or 100 life members.