



**Department of Massachusetts  
2022-2023**

**Population Plan  
(Condensed Version)**

*Make  
It  
Personal!*

## Introduction

It's time to flip the script: Change the message! Start talking to people from a personal value perspective. People need to FEEL they belong in our family. People need to FEEL they are cared about. People need to FEEL they are important. People need to FEEL they are valued. This goes beyond individuals to Posts and Districts. Treating people/posts/districts like they are just numbers is NOT a good practice.

Stop the INSANITY: Doing the same thing over and over while expecting a different long-term result is INSANE!

Attack the disease: Declining numbers is the symptom, not the disease. The disease is the lack of a personal reason to be a part of (or stay) in our Legion Family. They don't see value in belonging.

## Theme

### *Make It Personal!*

What does this mean? It's all about the personal touch. Understanding the personal value of The American Legion and building a stronger American Legion community. It is NOT about numbers. Numbers are just metrics to show. It's about making personal connections and forming personal bonds. Give people a sense of belonging so they'll join and stay in our community. This concept extends beyond individuals to the post/district levels as well.

## Goal

To build a stronger, growing American Legion Family to better serve our veterans, our families and our communities.

## Key Focus Areas

- Team Building & Problem Resolution: Together we can accomplish so much more than any one person can alone.
- New Blood: Attracting traditional new people to join our family
- We Gotta Keep 'Em: Engagement is the key to retention. Bringing people in the front door is useless if there is nothing stopping them from only passing through and out the back door.
- Keep the Swamp Drained (DMS): DMS is a powerful tool when properly used. Don't let DMS get out of control
- Inclusion: EVERYONE is welcome in our family. People are more apt to join and stay when they are surrounded by others, they feel are their peers.

## Traditional Department District Assignments

- District 1: DECW Cindy Lacoste
- District 2: DVC Scott Conner
- District 3: DECW Cindy Lacoste
- District 4: DVC Scott Conner
- District 5: DVC Nelson Blake
- District 6: DVC Nelson Blake
- District 7: DVC Nelson Blake
- District 8: DVC Lisa McPhee
- District 9: DVC Lisa McPhee
- District 10: DVC Lisa McPhee

## Workshop & Monthly Check-ins

- Building a Strong Legion Family Workshop
  - August 13, 2022 (Saturday) 10am-3pm
  - Quinsigamond (Worcester) Post 318
    - 180 Greenwood St., Worcester MA 01607
  - ALL District Commanders & Sr. Vice Commanders should plan to attend
- Monthly Round Table
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of every month, 7pm, on ZOOM
    - Meeting invite with link & call-in numbers will be sent out prior to each meeting
  - A monthly check-in and discussion about how things are going.

- DO NOT WAIT to until DEC meetings to report/get help with concerns, problems, or challenges.
- Districts should plan to attend especially if there are any concerns/problems/challenges that need to be worked on.

## Key Areas of Focus (Top Level Overview)

**Team Building & Problem Resolution-DSrVC Sandra Davis:** Together we can accomplish so much more than any one person can alone.

- Creating TEAMS is key to successful programs
- Meet the 2022-23 Starting Line-up:
  - DSrVC Sandra Davis:
    - Chairman (by virtue of office)
    - Areas of Focus
      - Team Building
      - Problem Resolution
    - Contact Information:
      - Email: skeeisme@hotmail.com
      - Cell phone (call/text): 978-879-8682
  - DVC Lisa McPhee:
    - Area of Focus: New Blood (Attracting new family members)
    - Districts 8, 9, & 10 Key Contact
    - Contact Information:
      - Email: Lredsox1964@aol.com
      - Cell phone (call/text): 978-230-6208
  - DVC Nelson Blake:
    - Area of Focus: Keep the swamp drained (Working the DMS)
    - Districts 5, 6, & 7 Key Contact
    - Contact Information:
      - Email: captblake82@gmail.com
      - Cell phone (call/text): 978-201-7821
  - DVC Scott Conner:
    - Area of Focus: We Gotta Keep 'Em (Retention)
    - Districts 4 & 2 Key Contact
    - Contact Information:
      - Email: smconner@charter.net
      - Cell phone (call/text): 774-239-6162
  - DECW Cindy Lacoste:
    - Area of Focus: Inclusion (Everyone is welcome in our family)
    - Districts 1 & 3 Key Contact
    - Contact Information:

- Email: clacoste13@gmail.com
- Cell phone (call/text): 413-530-0120
- Ten District Commanders & Senior Vice Commanders
  - GOAL: 10 Active District Teams
- No one likes handling problems, it's much easier to handle a problem with a team than to try to tackle it alone.

**New Blood (Recruiting)-DVC Lisa McPhee:** Attracting new people to join our family

- Self-Identifying Veterans
  - Talk to people wearing armed forces gear
  - Have Veteran License plates on vehicle
  - Look around at Veteran Interest Events (Memorial Day, Veterans Day, Flag Day)
- Resources
  - Local Community Events
  - Local VSO (Reach out to)
  - Local Community Groups (VFW, Excel Club, Scouts)
  - Local Colleges (Community, State and Private)
  - Local Military Installations (Bases, Reserve Centers, Coast Guard Stations)
- Plan
  - Participate in local community events
  - Informational Seminars (VA benefits)
  - Coffee Hours (Simple get togethers)
  - Your Post & District Meetings (Invite, Invite, Invite)
- Means
  - Personal Contact (talk to people)
  - Local Community Events
  - Local Newspapers (Free advertising,)
  - Libraries (Good place for advertising for local events)
  - Local School Events (Veterans Day, Flag Day)
  - Social Media
  - Local Cable Access
  - Pod Casts
  - Webpage
- Support:
  - We are here to help
  - Don't hesitate to reach out

**Now We Got 'em, Let's Keep 'em (Retention)-DVC Scott Conner:** Engagement is the key to retention.

- Welcoming people in the front door is useless if there is nothing stopping them from only passing through and out the back door.

- Why are so many individuals, new and old, not getting involved with the Post. We sign them up, and then they don't show up at Meetings or events.
- So we literally have two different types of "newbies": those that join willingly, and others you have to give the hard sell. Regardless, they both have the same needs, they both want to be a part of something that has good/great structure, is Veteran, Family, and Community focused, and has relevance in their community.
  - When you first interact with prospective newbies, be warm, genuine, and don't forget to ask them if their significant other or partner is also a veteran. Don't forget the kids!
  - Accompany them to a meeting, make sure their significant other is also invited. Introductions all around. Make sure they brought a copy of a DD-214. It's quite alright for the Veteran to "interview" the Post. You may not realize it but, many, many, Posts get interviewed by prospective Newbies.
  - Provide the individual with a "Participant Packet". A brief history of The American Legion, the Sons of The American Legion, The American Legion Auxiliary, and the American Legion Riders. A copy of a recent Post Newsletter, calendar of events, a flyer or two of upcoming Post events. An info sheet with Post meeting nights, times, phone numbers, Post leadership structure, etc.
  - Reconnect with prospect at the conclusion of the meeting. Make sure to come full circle to help seal the deal.
  - DO NOT ASK THEM TO BE AN OFFICER OR HOLD ANY POSITION WITHIN THE POST RIGHT OUT OF THE GATE. This will come with time. Many new individuals are lost from participating because they just want some comradery, and do not want the pressure of being in charge of anything. Wait until they are comfortable in Post surroundings BEFORE asking them to take the plunge into Post Operations.
- Keep 'em Interested:
  - Strong meetings: Most people are not interested in the dysfunctional, please don't waste their time with dysfunctional of meetings. Keeping meetings focused and orderly is key.
  - Information flow:
    - Have an information monitor, keep it current.
    - Set it up "Family Style".
      - Post Calendar of Events, either posted on paper, or on your monitor.
      - Newsletters: use a digital platform, snail mail to those that don't have computers.
      - Facebook - must be kept up to be effective, the more you post, the more they see.
      - Maintain an old fashion bulletin board.

- Family Events: Let your imagination run wild! Poppy Sales, Parent/Child Cornhole event, mid-summer BBQ, outings to interesting places (drivable). Spend a little money, invest in your family.
- Community Events: Of course, the Holidays. Outside of the obligatory Holidays, random acts of kindness to local Vets in need. Flag Day at the local school. Host a veterans coffee club once a month. Bring in guest speakers. Develop a relationship with local community and businesses.

**Keep the Swamp Drained (DMS)-DVC Nelson Blake:** DMS is a powerful tool when properly used.

- Don't let DMS get out of control.
- DMS and what will it do for your district and post
- DMS is the fastest way to grow a post and find new legion family members to help your district and post grow.
- Always check your towns and surrounding areas to see if there are potential veterans and family to make your districts and posts grow.

**Inclusion-DECW Cindy Lacoste:** EVERYONE is welcome in our family.

- People are more apt to join and stay when they are surrounded by others, they feel are their peers.
- Welcome to the Family.
- Now that you're here - check us out
- We have it all - check in and see what branches of service are here, active, reserve and national guard, maybe you'll find a connection with someone who walked where you did.
- Where have you been? You'll hear that question often because this is the place to join up with others who may have the same background as you - the fun is finding out and sharing our stories together.
- We embrace our differences, without the older generation we would lose our sense of history, without the younger one, we will lose our sense of wonder, change and adventure.
- Listening is important, all voices should be heard since everyone comes from different places, experiences and backgrounds. Connections grow as ideas and people come together. We want to hear from you.
- So, let me ask ... are you a veteran? is your spouse? do you have a child currently serving or has served? The more the merrier, our doors are always open to all.
- We have something for everyone, dinners, celebrations, events for our kids, volunteering for those in need, whether for our family or in the community, or more importantly, a place to come and relax with friends who share a bond that can't be explained.
- Come be a part of our dynamic Legion Family.

## Conclusion-Food for Thought

Stopping the slide year over year will take a concerted, multifaceted TEAM effort approach.

We are here to help. We are stronger together.

The Weekly Report: This is a METRIC that merely shows a weekly NUMERICAL representations of our CURRENT Legion Family population. This report does NOT contain any information about our FUTURE health, it simply measures the past. It is a snapshot of what has already happened, not what we can shape our future to be.

Something to ponder: If a post closed would their community notice? If the answer is no, therein lies the root of the problem. Healthy, growing posts/districts have a strong presence in our communities with lasting positive personal impact on individuals.

*Make It Personal!*