

# From State Membership Director

## ASSESSING MEMBERSHIP AND PROGRAM PROGRESS

### ARE WE THERE YET?

**Ken Krause, State Membership Director**

As I reflect on these past two years, I think it's valuable to evaluate our progress. As a retired educator, I know that evaluation is an important part of the learning process. As reported in many meetings and publications, Michigan's membership has declined for the past ten years. At the start of State Deputy Kenneth Unterbrink's term, I spoke about stabilizing the decline and turning it around. To do this the State Leadership Team set five objectives that are listed on page 4 of the *Membership and Program Leadership Guide* that the State Family, Grand Knights, Membership and Program Directors received at the beginning of these two years. Each objective is intertwined with the others. Below is my evaluation of how we have done.

#### **INVOLVE ALL COUNCIL MEMBERS IN ACTIVITIES**

For two years the state leadership has emphasized engaging members in a variety of activities, so dropping out of the K of C is a difficult choice. Councils were encouraged to plan and hold programs that not only raise funds but are fun for members and their families. If members enjoyed being knights and felt they were gaining from their membership, they would be involved and take leadership positions in their councils. The best gauge of progress is fewer suspensions and withdrawals, especially a decline in the number of councils that suspend a large number of their members at one time. Last fraternal year saw a notable decline in suspensions, however this fraternal year there is a significant increase in suspensions and withdrawals. If those members on retention lists aren't saved in the next two months, numbers will be high like those in past years. **I would award a C grade.**

#### **COMMUNICATE WITH ALL MEMBERS**

Communication at all levels is essential for our organization. The State Council emphasized this through regular emails to District Deputies and Directors with the intention that the ideas, leadership resources, programs and goals would be carried to council members. The "Talking Points" published monthly for District Deputies and council leaders focused on events and program incentives and tasks that are important for effective quality councils. The Exemplary Public Relations Award is offered to councils recognizing them for their publications, selecting knights and families of the month, providing informative newsletters, etc. – with no membership quota to earn it. About 15 councils applied and earned it last year We'll see on June 30 the number earning it this year. At the listening session meetings communicating and publicizing the K of C and its activities came up constantly. Those attending realize the importance of good communication but are councils willing to do the work needed? Because I see a renewed awareness this fraternal year that can grow into progress in this area, **I would award a B- grade.**

#### **OBTAIN THE COLUMBIAN AWARD**

Completing the requirements for the Supreme Council Columbian Award including the Domestic Church items reflects excellence in programming to earn Star Council status. We know that councils are holding excellent programs, however reporting them, submitting the best for State Service Program Awards, and taking the time to complete the Columbian form proves a challenge. Councils holding quality programs involving their members impacts both retention and recruitment. Men and their families want to belong to organizations that help others and accomplish goals. I am encouraged by the programs described at the listening session meetings. If councils now report them, many will receive the Columbian Award. **I would award a B grade.**

## From State Membership Director

### OBTAIN INSURANCE QUOTA

Attaining insurance quotas is another challenging requirement for Star Council. Unlike past fraternal years, many knights are cashing in their annuities and insurance policies, and fewer have purchased them. Our insurance agents are working hard to provide valuable support to families. Councils must encourage members to avail themselves of the benefits that are important to their futures. Unless significantly more members invest in themselves through our insurance offerings, many councils will not earn Star Council Awards **At this point I would award a D grade.**

### OBTAIN MEMBERSHIP QUOTA

At this point in the fraternal year membership is slightly less than last year. However, it has stabilized and with the renewed concern and emphasis through the listening session meetings and reports to DDs and councils many have come to recognize that our future lay in attracting new and especially young members, getting them active and retaining them. Assuming this trend continues the next two months, the prognosis is good that we have turned the corner on recruitment. However, the impact from suspensions will cut into our gains. The Online Membership program offered by Supreme attracted an average of 25 members each of the past two months. If councils move these men to take their admission and major degrees and transfer into local councils, they will profit from the growth. At this point no new councils have been started this fraternal year, but several are in the process. A gain in new councils will contribute to growth. Michigan will still experience a net loss in membership resulting from the large number of deaths, but I hold my breath the next couple months as I look for progress through stabilizing retention and even an uptick in membership growth. **I would award a B grade.**

The ultimate gauge of progress is the number of Star Councils and Star Districts awarded in Michigan. Last fraternal year little more than fifty councils attained Star. At this writing only eight councils have their membership and insurance quotas, and along with submitting the Columbian Award form, councils must meet the safe environment requirement among others.

**IN SUMMARY;** as I view the objectives set by our State Leadership Team, I believe we've made progress. **My overall grade for the past two years is a B-.** Much has been accomplished, but much is left to do. We've built a strong base on which the new State Leadership Team can build continuing the progress we've made.

The past two years leading the state membership program have been challenging and exciting. Many have contributed greatly. The State Officers, State Directors, Diocesan Program and Membership Directors and specially a clear majority of District Deputies have worked hard to provide program and recruitment support. The leadership in many councils are making positive strides that will pay future dividends. Especially I must thank Assistant State Membership Director Ed Nickel, who has worked tirelessly in this position and several others at the state level. I would be remiss if I didn't also thank Supreme Membership and Program Consultant Dannie Harris for the guidance and support he has provided. Many have done much, but there's still so much to do making state program and membership growth the best it can be.