

## April Patriotic Instruction

Brothers,

As the Winter turns to Spring and the weather gets warmer, we hope to be able to head back out into our communities and do the work that we all volunteered to do when joining this order. We head to our local cities, villages and hamlet church-yards to fix or clean up them up and to educate our neighbors on why these locations are important not only to us as Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, but to our country as a whole. Most people will walk by these monuments and cemeteries and not think twice about them or will look at them as memories of a far gone past. However, we see a Brother, a Son, a Husband, or a Father whose life was forever altered from the conflict, we see stories worth being remembered and told for future generations.

I think we can all agree that telling these brave men's stories and ensuring that their memories are not forgotten is part of the very fabric of patriotism. Now the question becomes how do we tell their stories in a way that entices and engages our audience. The answer to this question changes as the times change but the basic answer is to captivate the youth. As we have seen in the past some of the answers are in using social media to attract the new generation. However, sometimes we need to invite the youth out to get their hands dirty and to see firsthand the work we do.

There are plenty of youth organizations out there that we give awards to, the Scouts and ROTC Units come to mind, however how many of these groups do we involve in our clean ups, restorations or flagging details? Many of these youth organizations require community service hours for its members, but they do not know we exist as a group, or if they do know we exist, do not realize that we do service projects in which their members can get hours. So how do we let them know we are always looking for volunteers to help? We communicate out by any means necessary. With most of these groups being on social media, we can find their email information or send them a direct message through the application itself, by doing this we show these groups we are taking the initiative and there are other organizations and projects out there that need help. We can also do it the old fashion way, many of these groups reach out to us to provide an award to their groups, well let them know by word of mouth at these awards ceremonies that we also offer volunteer opportunities as well. In some instances, it's the old "who you know" adage. My own Camp was able to get linked up with a local Naval JROTC group because of a few of the Brothers had graduated from the high school years prior and knew who to talk to.

Getting younger folks to help us at these events does three main things. First, and foremost as this is a Patriotic Instruction, it helps educate the youth of today as to the sacrifices these brave souls made and why it is important to honor these Patriots. Second, it instills in these young minds a sense of community and giving back that they might not have already had. On many occasions have we had young Cadets come to our clean ups thinking "oh great just another thing our command is making us do" and they leave with a deeper appreciation, pride, and excitement for what they had just done. Third is we could get young recruits into the one of the Allied Orders, once they see that we are not just a bunch of "history geeks", again I am self-identifying as said history geek, but people that do good in our community, they will be hooked, if not to join then to simply lend a hand when they are free. All three of these things are in their nature Patriotic.

In Fraternity Charity and Loyalty,  
Br. Ben Frail, PDC  
National Patriotic Instructor