

Working with the Community

Lesson Objective: Know how to reach out to other organizations and citizens in their community in order to appropriately expand their squadron's exposure to, interaction with, and possible membership recruitment from their local community.

Desired Learning Outcomes (DLO):

1. Discuss how to realistically approach other organizations and citizens in his/her community in order to further his/her squadron's goals.
2. Describe how to work with other organizations to recruit members, local talent and expertise.
3. Explain how to keep members' interest in their program alive and growing.

Scheduled Lesson Time: 15 minutes

Introduction

We've all heard at least one variation of "Civil Air Patrol is the ___'s best kept secret." Do you want to know the secret behind success? Stop keeping your success a secret! This lesson is designed to give you tips on how to sell (and ultimately grow) your squadron appropriately.

1. Approaching the community

You have a squadron of highly motivated members. How do you let the outside world know? Do you limit yourselves only to word of mouth and hope the information spreads? Do you use social media? Do you go out to the newspapers, radio stations, and TV stations in town to ask for story time? Do you talk to veterans organizations, optimist clubs, city hall leaders, or scouting leaders? Is what you've been doing succeeding? If not, you need to try something else.

The members of your highly skilled squadron can do some wonderful things. You want to brag about them because they REALLY ARE that good! Do you let people know what CAP does, or do you let people know what your people are really good at doing? If you let people know what CAP does, but don't temper that with what your squadron is capable of doing, you will be guilty of false advertising in the eyes of the prospective member or public when you can't deliver. Earning their trust after that is at best an uphill endeavor, and is frequently impossible until a lot of time has passed and leadership of both organizations has changed at least once.

The exception to the rule of telling everything that CAP does is if you are trying to build a capability. You must be very clear that you are striving toward that capability and that the member who is interested won't be walking in to a disappointment. Also, just because someone is a pilot does not mean that s/he will be flying a CAP airplane 2 weeks after joining. There is a lot of training required before a new member sits in a CAP airplane, especially as a crew-member or pilot. The prospective member needs to be aware of this up front.

Where is the balance between what you can offer and what your community needs? How do you proceed?

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The first step is to take an honest evaluation of your squadron. Identify your strengths and weaknesses. You must be realistic! Yes, we are willing to train on this every meeting, but we can't go out on calls because our work schedules are inflexible. (etc.) Questions you need to answer include (but are not limited to):

- Who is willing to do what?
- What is each person willing and able to do, how often, during work hours or on weekends, etc.
- What are they capable of doing very well?
 - Are your skills only in the ground team, aerial photography, or mission base arena?
 - Are you all excellent aerospace engineers and teachers?
- What are they willing to learn to do?
- What is the timeframe for this learning?
- How far are they willing to travel?
- How much are they willing (or able) to spend in the process?

Once you know what your squadron members' true levels of commitment and availability are, you are then in a position to talk to various organizations in the community. (This assumes you truly have something to offer: if not, you need to work on building up your team.) Find out what the community organizations or government officials need. You may be in a unique position to fill a void for them. How can you support them? If you have the personnel and logistical resources to learn the skills and support your local organization, you will build trust, working relationships, and enduring friendships. If you need to build the skills, the organization needing the manpower may be in a position to train your people.

To increase your visibility to the general public, you will need to do other things. Marching in parades, putting up an information/recruiting booth at the local festivals, and having a presence at the airport (e.g. for a plane wash as your fundraiser) are just some of the ways you can reach out and become known in your community.

The bottom line to success is to stop being a secret! Be realistic, flexible, approachable, and available.

2. Working with other organizations in order to recruit members and local talent & expertise

Schools need help with budgets; STEM is frequently overlooked and/or under-budgeted. This is where your AEO can help guide and lead your squadron to success. Even if your AEO is unable to go to the schools personally, s/he can explain CAP's AE resources available to you and your members who do have the ability to visit the schools. If you have some AE projects already built or presentations that you've already given, you have a ready-made resource that can pique the interest of students, teachers, faculty, and parents in your local schools. Your members may not be able to invest an hour of class time every week, but even if one of you can invest the time for one class period, you can teach the students about the science they are studying. Furthermore, you can tell them about the opportunities your squadron has to offer...all

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in one easy lesson. If they are studying weather, you can make it about aviation weather. If they are studying about stars, you can talk about anything from celestial navigation to satellites. (Who needs celestial navigation when we have GPS? What happens if the satellite feeds go down? Think outside the box.) An introductory phone call or letter to the principal is how you start the process. Discussions with the school principal and the science teacher will help you plan what you will talk about when you will be there. After your first meeting, be sure to follow-up with a thank you letter or e-mail, confirming the date, time, and topic of your presentation. Depending on the local attitudes toward military uniforms; consider wearing civilian attire. If you choose to wear a uniform, ensure you wear the proper uniform for the venue, for your weight and grooming and also ensure the uniform is clean, in good repair and has all the required items.

When it comes to school-age children, CAP competes with other organizations for time, money and membership. While eligibility for membership in CAP starts at 12 years of age, scouting, sports, and other activities have feeder programs from kindergarten up. What you may now realize is that CAP uses its aerospace education program as a feeder also. While you focus on the students in 6th - 8th grades; it's a good idea to also approach elementary school teachers to introduce CAP's ACE program and other STEM initiatives to light the fire in younger kids. When they get to be 12 years old, they are primed to join us. By the way, this does not mean you ignore grades 9-12, but you will have more competition for their time as the students get older.

Another way to get members into CAP is to recruit Aerospace Education Members ("AEM"). AEMs are not only eligible for a lot of free AE/STEM materials, they get to go for a TOP Flight. Think of this as an O-Ride for teachers. The AEM gets to ride in a CAP plane and fly it just like a cadet does on an O-ride. The AEM gets to do this every year that s/he is an AEM. (For further details, see CAPP 15.) This is a fantastic recruiting tool for teachers, and it also makes for happy pilots who are flying more: this gives you better retention...two birds with one stone, so to speak. AEMs do not attend your meetings, so there is no extra time involved for them. If they find that they like CAP so much that they want to join your squadron, they can become teacher members, and are still eligible for the TOP Flight every year. If the AEM is using CAP materials, they are probably advocating CAP in the classroom. This can lead to more students showing up at your meetings.

Home schooling is becoming more popular in many areas of the country. If this is the case in your area, the parents will probably have limited funds for STEM activities. You can frequently visit with your local home school association, or have a note sent out with their newsletter. This increased exposure offers you the potential for more members, the students with a chance to mingle with other children their age, and the parents greater access to STEM materials. Your first step in this process is to do an internet search for ____ home school association(s). The blank is filled with your city, town, county, or state. If you live on the border of your state, and the next state over has more resources that are closer to you, you may want/need to consider going into "foreign" territory. (Be sensitive & sensible if your squadron is named after your local school, and the place you are trying to recruit in is your arch-rival.)

If you have a local military recruiter, active duty base, post, or fort nearby, talking to them about CAP and what your squadron does may help you in several ways. Inviting a local active duty service member to your meeting as a guest speaker (especially a uniform inspection meeting) is a real treat for the cadets because that meeting can give them an opportunity to see a "real" Airman, Soldier, Marine, Sailor, or Coast Guardsman up close and in person. It gives them a chance to ask questions of what it's really like in the military. It adds variety to your meeting. If

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you can get a guided tour of the base, post, or fort, you are not only taking care of your members, but you are giving your squadron exposure to people who probably don't know about you. If that base, post, or fort has a rappelling tower or obstacle course, you may be able to get the military unit to give demonstrations and even let the cadets participate. Touring a military plane, boat, ship, or training facility is not only a fun activity, but it is educational and motivational. Your imagination will be what limits you from making even more connections between what they just experienced and how CAP can help your members get more of this in life. You may even be able to talk to the person in charge of base property to get a weekly meeting place or an occasional FTX location. Cadets LOVE to train on military installations!

If you have a VFW, Foreign Legion, or American Legion type of organization nearby, they may offer scholarships, awards, and meeting locations. Because these organizations are made up of former or retired military members, they can also be a great resource for stories as well as being an incredible source of hands-on/how-to knowledge. If you are weak in Ground Team skills, but your local VFW has five former Army Rangers, two former Navy Seals, three former Marine Special Forces/Recon guys, one former Coastguard Rescue Swimmer, and six former Air Force Pararescuemen, you have access to skills beyond measure. The sheer number of these people and the various forces they were with will not only give you a fantastic breadth and depth of knowledge, the competition that will still exist between them will most assuredly guarantee that you will have people trying to one-up each other to teach your squadron how to do it the "right" way.

Fire fighters and police officers are people we may be called to work with in ES situations. Making contact early gives you the opportunity to not only meet them, but let them know what your squadron can provide in terms of support to their missions. Having the local sheriff or police department bring a working dog to the meeting as a demonstration can go a long way toward your drug demand reduction program and opening doors for members getting their GTM 1 training requirements checked off. Even if the police officers and firemen don't join, they may know someone who is looking for the opportunities your squadron has to offer. This is called, "networking."

College students are frequently overlooked because they aren't cadets, and they aren't old enough to be "real" senior members until they are 21. What is one thing that young people need when entering the workforce? A good résumé. A good résumé contains more than classes taken and jobs held: it also lists community service activities. The college student may have science, business, finance, or organizational skills that your unit could use. Your cadets will also be able to ask these members about applying to college and interviews. This is a win-win for everyone. To get access to these students, you will need to contact your local tech school, community college, college, or university to find out the best avenue for their particular school. It may be going through the student union or a particular department chair. If you start with the chair of the science or social science departments, you will probably find what you need rather quickly.

If your cadets can wear their uniforms to school one day a week or on special occasions, they are walking, talking billboards for your unit. If they are willing to bring a classmate to a meeting, they did their job. Your job is to keep the classmate's interest long enough for them to join and become an active member. Have contests to see who can bring the most classmates to meetings. The winner gets a prize you know they want.

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If you hold an open house once a year or once a quarter, you are letting the public know you exist. Make it interactive, and you grab their interest. Have a CAP plane there (especially if it is a glass cockpit), and let the pilot do some talking.

Having all of these resources is fantastic. What will make it even better is if you have a few members who are shutterbugs and/or write for their high school newspaper. Making contact with the local news media not only helps them in their careers, gives you professionals who can assist your PAO/PIO members, but this contact also gives you media coverage. Be sure you are professional in appearance and demeanor, and you will have people coming to the meeting asking what's in it for them.

3. Keeping members interest in their program alive and growing

How many times have you been at a CAP meeting where all you did was hangar flying? If this is what entertains you, great. Or is it? How much will hangar flying help you grow your squadron, increase your ES skills, or increase your professionalism? Hangar flying doesn't appeal to many people: your squadron will not grow if this is a large component of your meeting times.

Having various topics presented at your meetings keeps members interested. How you vary the topics is up to you. You can have a recurring pattern, for example:

Seniors:

Week 1 is the Business Meeting

- Safety
- Promotions
- Report on last month's events
- Upcoming Events
- Ongoing SUI Update (one area every month covers all 12 areas every year)

Week 2 is Aerospace Education

Week 3 is Emergency Services training

- Ground
- Air
- Mission Base Staff

Week 4 is Guest Speaker

Week 5 (when there is a 5th meeting in the month) is Family Potluck

You can decide to take one topic and continue with it until it is complete. This may mean your meetings will be a 6-week course for everyone to get their technician rating in communications. Then you choose a different topic. Planning ahead gives members something to look forward to. Having variety allows members with different likes to not skip meetings for 6 weeks. If you are fortunate enough to have enough members and space to accommodate both of these tracks, you are fortunate, indeed.

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Cadets are not little senior members. CAPR 52-16 gives specific requirements for things that must be accomplished in the cadet program. There is almost a limitless variety of ways you can accomplish these tasks. Setting up your template to meet your needs and CAP requirements is critical for a successful cadet program. Here is only one example:

Cadets:

Week 1 is the Business Meeting

- Safety
- Uniform inspections
- Promotions
- Report on last month's events
- Upcoming Events

Week 2 is Aerospace Education and Testing

- Vary this up! Do not have your pilot tell them about the 4 forces of flight every month!!!
- Get the AEX, do model rocketry.

Week 3 is Emergency Services training

- Ground
- Air
- Mission Base Staff

Week 4 is PT Test and Character Development

Week 5 (when there is a 5th meeting in the month) is Leadership Movie night

Movie is chosen based upon leadership and/or aviation theme, and discussion occurs during the movie (pause it) to point out positive and negative leadership traits that were displayed.

Again, if you are fortunate enough to have enough cadets and space, you can have several things going on simultaneously. You can have one area reserved for the new cadets to get brought up to speed so they can join the squadron and actively participate. If you do this, ensure you rotate the cadets who are training the new recruits!

If your program has clear goals, the steps needed to achieve the goals will be obvious. Use the SMART Goals approach to set yourself up for success. If you have need of a specific talent or skill set, you may be able to recruit someone with that talent / skill set to become a subject matter expert in the squadron, or you may be able to get that person to come in as a guest speaker. Either way, your squadron benefits by the fun that variety offers and the skills that your members and guests bring in to share.

Lesson Summary and Closure

Many squadrons have outstanding programs, but what they have to offer is unknown. Other squadrons can improve what they have to offer by making some fundamental changes. Both

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squadron situations will be improved with a community outreach program that is realistic, flexible, approachable, available, and above all IS NOT A SECRET.

ASSIGNMENT: Complete the Squadron Asset Form and bring with you to class (in-residence) or have it available to discuss (online classes). This is a mandatory activity.