



The Official Publication of the Colorado National Active and Retired Federal Employees

Presidents Report

FRANK IMPINNA
CO Federation President



This past August was an exciting time, as I spent a week at the FEDcon26 conference in Indianapolis from August 19th through the 26th. The food and accommodations were excellent. We heard so many speakers and that anyone who has noticed the NARFE magazine. We had 12 attended and participated and expenses. I received a certificate Bill Shakelford, for my work with the national board over the past 4



much information from great attended excellent sessions couldn't pass up. You should what was to be presented in members from Colorado who were compensated \$1000 for from the national president,



years. See the Colorado website and, under the menu item, click on "2026 National FEDcon26 conference" to view the summaries of each session that was presented. In one session, we held a Region VII caucus meeting. Region VII, Sharon Reese presided, and all federations in the region gave a report. I gave my report for the past two years, then stepped up to receive a certificate for outstanding service for Larry Schluntz, Federation Treasurer and Chapter President for Longmont 820. Larry was unable to attend, so I notified him and sent him his certificate.



Open season is just around the corner, and Plan Year 2027 runs from November 9th – December 14th, 2026. This is a great time to visit agencies and recruit potential members. That doesn't mean you cannot ask friends, peers, and others to join NARFE. Carry an application with you just in case.



SHARON REESE
Region VII VP

Fall is in the air, summer is over, and it is time to get back to NARFE business. By the time you receive this newsletter, voting will have been concluded, and the results should be disclosed within the next few days, if not already.

I had a busy summer supporting Federations and Chapters with visits and FEDcon26. If you registered for FEDcon26, all the presentations are available online for you to view. So, if you missed a breakout session but are interested, the information is available.

At the Region VII Caucus Meeting both candidates for National President spoke to us. I presented a Certificate of Appreciation to Larry Schluntz for his outstanding work as treasurer from 2009 through 2025. Since Larry couldn't attend, Frank accepted his certificate and made sure Larry received it. Well-deserved Larry!

The next NEB meeting will be held in Alexandria on November 3, 4, and 5. We have a very full agenda with many extremely critical issues to resolve. The final agenda will be released next week, and I will make sure Frank receives a copy for distribution. I urge every member to set aside time in your busy schedules to attend the NEB meeting via Zoom!

There has been a push for chapters and federations to update their bylaws, but I suggest you wait until we know which bylaws were adopted and how that will impact your bylaw submissions.

On October 28th, I will be presenting at Ranger Rendezvous 49 in Tucson. This conference is for all National Park Rangers. Since every state has National Parks, we hope to recruit a few new members. The Tucson Chapter will also host the vendor table for the entire event (Oct 28-31). They will have information on the table for all Federations and Chapters within Region VII.

I will keep you updated on NEB meetings, events, and items of interest to you.

Thank you for all your work and support for NARFE!

Are you aware?

Susan Tabacheck, NARFE Member

As residents, NARFE members should be aware of federal and state laws. The following two State Bills are also important.

NARFE BILL INFORMATION

I found the following NARFE website excellent because you don't have to sign in to review the list of all Bills followed by NARFE, which are Supported, Opposed, and No position. **Just put it in the NARFE Bill Tracker**

STATE CONGRESSIONAL BILLS

Colorado House Bill 26-1110, Vulnerable Adult Financial Exploitation Banking, passed the legislature and went into effect on August 12, 2026, to protect older and vulnerable adults from financial exploitation. This requires financial institutions to notify law enforcement or adult protective services if there is suspicion

Colorado House Bill 26-1017, known as the Criminal Restitution Prohibited by Insurers, passed the legislature and was signed on 4/2/26 and went into effect on August 12, 2026, which prohibits insurance companies from receiving these restitution payments by removing them from the definition of "victim". Insurers can still recover losses through the civil court system.

Denver-Capital City Chapter 81

JIM DODRILL

President, Chapter 81



Denver-Capital City Chapter 81 meets on the third Friday of each month at El Gran Jardin Restaurant at Windsor Gardens, 597 S Clinton, Denver, CO. Eight members and guests attended the annual chapter picnic on July 17, 2026. The chapter provided the traditional fried chicken, and members brought a dish to share. Twenty members and guests attended the August 21, 2026, meeting. Four members from Aurora Chapter 1072 also joined our meeting. Our speaker was Eileen Laubacher, candidate for the Colorado 4th Congressional District House of Representatives. She served 34 years in the U.S. Navy, retiring as a Rear Admiral. Her campaign emphasizes service before self, defending the Constitution, and providing honest representation for Colorado. Our speakers for the September 18, 2026, meeting were Justin Woodbury and Shaun Walker with Stonebridge Capital Management, a Colorado advisory firm

that works exclusively with federal employees on FERS, TSP, FEHB, FEGLI, and Social Security. They discussed "The Three Biggest Mistakes Federal Employees Make in Retirement". Stonebridge publishes a free Federal Retirement Report — a written, personalized analysis — for any federal employee who wants one. Their federal retirement content is at www.stonebridgecm.com/federal-retirement. Three chapter members joined the September meeting via Zoom. We plan to make future meetings available via Zoom.

Frank Impinna and I attended the NARFE Arvada Chapter 1040 meeting on September 16, 2026. Brady Porterfield-Finn, Neighborhood Engagement Coordinator for the City of Arvada, was the speaker. Frank made the meeting available via Zoom for Arvada chapter members. We are planning our annual Christmas luncheon on December 10, 2026, at El Gran Jardin restaurant; we will provide additional information later. Chapter 81 ended the September 30, 2026 quarter with 232 members. One of our long-time members, Wilton Brown, died on August 29, 2026. He had been a member of NARFE for 40 years, joining in June 1986.

Aroua Chapter 1072

At our last meeting in July, Tracy Young, Chief Planning and Projects Officer for the Highland Canal Conservancy (pictured on the left), presented on the history, legacy, and continued importance of the Highline Canal to our Front Range communities. Carolyn Williams, a Chapter 1072 member, shown with Tracy, coordinated this event because she and Tracy are members of a group that regularly walks the canal. The canal also holds special meaning for Carolyn, as this is the third year she is walking the 71-mile length of the canal in honor of her late grandson, Alex, who was found murdered on the canal in 2022. Over the last several months, our membership numbers have declined. As you will see from Vice President for Membership Debbie Rodgers' report, our chapter now has



237 total members - this is a total of 117 chapter members and 120 national members in our chapter area. Since June 28, we have lost 8 chapter and 3 national members due to non-renewals. Several of these individuals are recent members who are not renewing after their first year. This drop in membership mirrors what is happening nationally in NARFE and within our Colorado Federation. Some of the national decline in membership results from a database cleanup that removed deceased members. As much as I enjoy the summer months, I have been eagerly looking forward to the cooler autumn temperatures and giving my air conditioner a much-needed rest. Usually, Chapter 1072 does not hold a July meeting, but this summer both Debbie Rodgers, Vice President for Membership, and I had vacation plans in June, so we didn't meet that month. We have been fortunate to have several dynamic speakers joining us at our recent meetings.

Dr. Frank Impinna, Colorado Federation President, introduced Ryan Uyehara to chapter presidents via email and recommended him as a speaker. Ryan is an advocate for veterans through his organization, Stop Firing Vets, raising awareness of veterans who have unfairly been terminated from their federal jobs. He spoke to our members at our June chapter meeting. He was well received, sharing information about his organization's goals and handing out T-shirts for our members to show their support.

At our August meeting, we welcomed Tracy Young, Chief Planning and Projects Officer for the Highland Canal Conservancy. The Highline Canal has a long history and is important to Denver metro communities, and it's always been a favorite walking path for me. Tracy's presentation focused on the canal's legacy and its continued role for Front Range communities.

Chapter 1072 member Carolyn Williams coordinated the event, as she and Tracy are members of a group that regularly walks the canal. The canal also holds special meaning for Carolyn, as this is the third year she is walking the 71-mile length of the canal in honor of her late grandson, Alex, who was found murdered on the canal in 2022. Carolyn worked hard with the City of Denver and the Conservancy to have a bench placed on the canal in Alex's memory.

Our chapter continues to see a decline in membership, as NARFE is nationally. However, we have also welcomed several new members, and I'm excited that our monthly meetings continue to be well attended. Additionally, several members are increasing their involvement in the chapter. Recently, two of our members, Vice President Debbie Rodgers and Cynthia Brown, who joined our chapter this year, attended FedCon26.

We're looking ahead to a busy membership drive this year. Debbie has ordered materials for the upcoming Open Season Health fairs, and several members have already committed to join her recruitment efforts.

MORY LEWIS CHAPTER 1085

PAT MATHER, President, Chapter 1085



Our bi-monthly meetings have consistently been held at the Sunrise Sunset Restaurant, 1424 S. Wadsworth Blvd, Lakewood, at 11:30 am on the second Tuesday in February, April, August, and October. We have a meeting room that provides privacy for a speaker and lunch. This restaurant charges a gratuity at the end, but they are very efficient at setting the tables and getting them ready each time we meet. Our Executive Committee meets before our Chapter meetings to discuss the agenda and review details for future meetings. In June, we hold our annual picnic at the Stone House Pavilion in Lakewood. In December, we have a Holiday Party. Our Chapter currently has 271 members.

On July 8, 2026, Cindy Renee Blythe, NARFE's National Secretary/Treasurer, approved our updated Chapter Bylaws. In addition, our Chapter updated its Standing Rules on April 14, 2026. Based on the approved Bylaws, our Chapter notified NARFE that our annual dues changed, as voted by our membership, from \$10 to \$6.

On August 11, 2026, our Chapter meeting speaker was Ron Uchida from the Alzheimer's Association, speaking on Building Brain-Healthy Habits. Ron was an excellent speaker who provided handouts highlighting 10 healthy habits: controlling your blood pressure, managing diabetes, maintaining a healthy weight, being smoke-free, getting moving, eating right (see the MIND diet), sleeping well, challenging your mind, staying in school (if you are a student), and protecting your head.

As Chapter President, I attended NARFE's National Conference (FEDcon26) in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 23-25, 2026. The General Session Speakers, Breakout Session Training, NARFE-PAC Breakfast, exhibits, and the two evening activities (entertainment district and ballgame) were all outstanding. At these conferences, there is much to learn from other NARFE members who came from Chapters and Federations across the U.S.

Bill Douglas, our 1st Vice President, Membership, is preparing for the health benefits open season. Fortunately, our Chapter has dedicated members who assist Bill once he receives the locations where he will recruit.

At our October 13, 2026, Chapter meeting, Jane Fluekiger from Blue Cross Blue Shield and Michelle Stoll from Kaiser Permanente will discuss 2027 rates (if available), the new Medicare-covered GLP-1 Bridge Program, and answer questions.

On December 8, 2026, we plan to have our Holiday Party at the Sunrise Sunset Restaurant. Our past president, Nancy Richardson, always makes it fun with a raffle of various items. We will also install new Chapter officers for 2027.



DIANA HEYDER

President, Chapter 1040

Arvada Chapter 1040



Chapter 1040 continues to meet at Corona's Mexican Grill in Westminster, near 88th and Wadsworth, on the 3rd Wednesday of every month at 11:30 am. This has been a year of change for our chapter, with Bob Carr stepping down as President and Diana Heyder stepping in. Bob has graciously agreed to continue serving as Vice-President. Pat Wakham continues her hard work as Treasurer.

With only a handful of regular attendees, the September meeting took a different approach...a hybrid format. Bob Carr led the meeting, joined by Frank Impinna, as Diana Heyder was out of town and unable to join the call from the rural trails of Missouri. As expected, there was a small glitch, but we will continue to address it as it arises. We will also continue to explore new presenters for our meetings. Our goal is to increase attendance by making the meetings more accessible to those who are still working or otherwise unable to join in person.

Loveland Chapter 821 News

In May, at our chapter meeting, we had a program about Wycliffe Bible Translators. Our guest, Bob Hallissy, presented on how they use computer software to translate the Bible in countries around the world.

In June, we held a potluck picnic at North Lake Park in Loveland. About 20 members and guests attended. It was not a regular meeting, and we would not have another chapter meeting until September.

In September at our regular chapter meeting, our program presentation was from Beth Conery of "People and Pollinators," covering honeybee biology, colony organization, environmental threats, and ways people can support pollinators.

Ms. Conery was an experienced beekeeper who recently sold their beekeeping business but continues providing services. It was very entertaining and informative.

This fall, we will help with a fundraising event at our host's facility. November will be our annual "Health Fair," and December will be our annual Christmas Luncheon at the local Golden Corral Restaurant.

Kermit Klepper, Chapter 821 Secretary

Chapter Meeting Information

Chapter 81 • Denver-Capital City

Meets on the third Friday at Windsor Gardens, 597 S.

Clinton St (Alameda & Clinton). Board meeting in the El Gran Restaurant starting at 10:30 am, followed by a business meeting at 11:00 am. The hall is handicap accessible.

President - James Dodrill, 303-238-0191

Chapter 256 • Fort Collins

Meets the third Monday except July and August,

11:30 am. Elks Lodge 804, 1424 E. Mulberry St, Fort Collins.

President - Ron Briggs, 970-493-2202

Chapter 351 • Grand Junction

The following dates are scheduled for the remainder of the year: June 13, September 12, and possibly December 12. Tuesday at 10 am.

Grand Junction Public Library, 443 North 6th Street, Grand Junction. • President - Brad Pearson, 970-243-3078

Chapter 820 • Longmont

Meets the second Friday except August; 12:00 pm.

Perkins Restaurant, 2051 Main St., Longmont.

President - Larry Schluntz, 303-772-6419

Chapter 821 • Loveland

Meetings will start in September on the second

Tuesday of the month at 1:30. Meetings will be held at Chilson Senior Center, 700 East 4th St., Loveland President - Tom Cherry, 970-663-0083

Chapter 1040 Arvada

Meets at the Corona Mexican Grill, 7617 W. 88th Ave, Westminster at 11:30 on the third Wednesday of each month except August.

President- Diane Heyder, (720) 272-2996

Chapter 1072 • Aurora

Meets on the first Monday; Lunch 11:00 am;

Business 12:00 pm, Golden Corral, 11090 E. Mississippi Ave., Aurora.

President – Jane Gahan, 720-256-5056

Chapter 1085 • Mory Lewis

Meets 2nd Tuesday at 11:30 of every other month (Feb, Apr, Jun,

Aug, Oct, and Dec) at the Sunrise Sunset Restaurant, 1424 S. Wadsworth, Lakewood.

President – Pat Mather, 303-953-1146

Chapter 2286 • Billie Love

Chapter meets at 11:30 on the second Monday once each quarter in

March, June, September, and December at alternate locations. Call the Chapter President for dates and locations.

President - Greg Kann, 303-718-730

ARE YOU A NATIONAL-ONLY MEMBER?

As a national-only member not affiliated with a chapter, you have the same privileges within the federation as a chapter member. As a member of the Colorado Federation, you may be a candidate for a federation-elected or appointed officer. You can get this information from anyone on the executive committee. National-only members are encouraged to participate and, if desired, engage on the fed hub community page.

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Articles must be submitted to the editor by:

Dec 30 for the January 2027 issue.

Frank Impinna, Editor.

Four times per year: January, February, March, and October.

Contributor's Instructions: The Colorado NARFE News, The Official Publication of the Colorado National Active and Retired Federal Employees, will be in print every third month (tri-monthly). To ensure a quality product, we need help and support from you, the members. Material may be edited for grammar, clarity, and length. Because of the volume, they will not be acknowledged. Please use the following instructions as a guide for your article submissions. If you have questions please feel free to contact the Editor.

It is incumbent on all federation officers to submit appropriate articles and pictures of events occurring in their area of responsibility. Chapter officers and members are encouraged to submit brief articles and pictures of general interest about Chapter happenings.

GRAND JUNCTION CHAPTER 351

Our next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 20, at 11 am at the Mesa County Public Library, 443 North 6th Street, Grand Junction. The topic will be the upcoming changes to benefits, particularly health insurance, for retired and current Federal employees.

OPM has stated that it will announce changes by the end of September. Hopefully that will happen.

A NARFE benefit specialist based in Washington, D.C., will join our meeting via Zoom to explain the changes and answer our questions.

The week of October 12, I will send another email reminder.

Best wishes for a wonderful Fall for everyone!

Ruth Anna

Finding the Right Opportunity

At different points in your life, you may be ready to do some volunteer work. You may see it as a chance to give back to your community, support a cause you believe in, develop new skills, or build new friendships. Whatever your reason, you can put your time and talents to good use by volunteering in your community or NARFE.

Your help is always needed. Many organizations face volunteer shortages while demand for direct services continues to grow. To help organizations keep up with increasing demands, volunteers now play a greater role in developing and providing key services. Today's volunteers bring a breadth of skills and experiences to many organizations. Behind the scenes and in the forefront, you too can make a difference in the lives of others in your community.

When considering volunteer opportunities, ask yourself a few questions. You'll need to decide if you're interested in a formal or informal assignment — one that is regular and ongoing or one where you work as needed.

Many organizations offer opportunities to apply a variety of leadership and technical skills. So, you'll need to decide whether you'd like to work directly with people being served or behind the scenes helping to plan, coordinate, and establish programs. Take time to think about the type of opportunities that would most interest you. The clearer you are about what you want to take pride in and what you enjoy about the experience you provide, the better. To help you make this decision, ask yourself some key questions like:

- Why am I interested in filling a position?
- What type of activities can I help fill and will interest me?
- What are my natural strengths and gifts? What do I really enjoy doing?
- Would I prefer a position in a chapter or the Federation?
- What issues do I care most about and want to make a positive change in?
- How will my desire to serve fit in with my current time commitments?
- How much time do I want to give? What days, or parts of days?

These questions are meant to help you start thinking about your skills, interests, and preferences. Once you've thought these questions through, you'll have a better idea of the type of volunteer opportunities that would most interest you. When looking for volunteer opportunities, consider becoming a NARFE volunteer within your Chapter or the Federation. A range of opportunities where you can put a little of your time, based on the skills and experience you have, to good use. Working closely with other members, you ensure that important positions are filled. Others provide information to empower members on a range of important issues. Those who apply for and are selected to hold key positions, such as treasurer, Alzheimer chair, or Secretary, and any other small administrative position you are helping to guide, shape, and/or advance NARFE's state or national priorities. Together, as a volunteer to fill a position, you are working to enhance the quality of life for all as we age by achieving positive social change through information, advocacy, and service. You can too!

Candidate visited Denver-Capitol City Chapter 81



81 (Denver-Capitol City) welcomed speaker Eileen Laubacher, the Democratic candidate for Colorado Congressional District Four, who is challenging incumbent Republican Congresswoman Lauren Boebert. Chapter 81 Congressional District Four Leader Nick Cresanta invited Ms. Laubacher,

In her remarks to the assembled Chapter 81 membership, Ms. Laubacher outlined her qualifications for public office. She is a retired two-star admiral and Naval Academy graduate. Concerned about the future of the United States, Ms. Laubacher noted that her candidacy is gaining support in the Republican-majority Fourth District. She cited growing dissatisfaction among District residents, mostly rural, who are troubled by the rising costs of making a living

through farming. Chapter 81 attendees listened closely to Ms. Laubacher's comments. She concluded her talk with this statement: "If you aren't frightened by what's going on, you aren't listening."

Thank you to Nick Cewsanta, Congressional District Leader CO 4, for setting up this meeting.

GREG KANN

President, Chapter 286

Billie Love Chapter 2286



We welcome the cooler, rainy weather as we transition to Fall, with the beautiful scenery here in Buena Vista and Salida. Although navigating the roadways has been a challenge with all the leaf peepers, 14teener Fest, and a music festival over the weekend, we hope you all have a chance to get out and see the

beautiful colors before they are gone. See the attached picture as one example.

Billie Love Chapter 2286 held our quarterly meeting at Casa Calaca Mexican Restaurant in Salida on September 7th. We had a great time catching up with everyone and discussing what happened at the FedCon26 Biennial National Conference. Our next quarterly meeting will be our Christmas luncheon at Jan's Restaurant in Buena Vista on December 7th at 11:30. We will have lunch, followed by a short business meeting, and will collect donations for Alzheimer's.



Open Season Moves Further Online



On September 10, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) announced that Open Season Online will now require a new, more secure process that provides greater protection for personal information. Once Open Season begins in November, enrollees can use their Login.gov credentials to access their accounts. If any issues occur, enrollees should contact Login.gov at 844-875-6446, where support is available 24/7. It's important to note that OPM did not announce the elimination of traditional communication options, such as mail. If you do not have Login.gov credentials, you may create one directly with Login.gov. In recent years, OPM has expanded its digital services, encouraging the use of online tools for information that was once distributed by mail. Although online access can make Open Season faster and more convenient for many, the move toward digital-only platforms may pose difficulties for retirees who are not comfortable with computers, smartphones, or the internet. Some older annuitants may lack technology skills, have limited or unreliable internet access, or simply prefer to receive information by mail or phone. It's important to ensure these retirees still have reliable access to plan information and enrollment support. As Open Season approaches, NARFE members should familiarize themselves with all available options, online, phone, and mail, and plan ahead to review their coverage and make informed decisions. Open Season allows federal employees and retirees to review their health plan options, compare premiums and benefits, and make any changes to their coverage for the upcoming plan year. This year, **Open Season runs from November 9 to December 14, 2026**

NARFE Chapter 1040 legislative and general info for September 16, 2026 Hybrid Meeting



In person: Corona's Mexican Grill at 7617 W 88th Ave.

Bob Carr

1. Voting is open for the NARFE 2026 election until 11:59 p.m. ET on September 30, 2026. You should have received an email with a link to vote. If you need assistance, please email narfehelp@electionservicescorp.com or call 1-866-720-4357 on Monday - Friday between 9 a.m.-5 p.m. ET
 2. FEDCon26 in Indianapolis, IN was a success! Several hundred attendees participated in various workshops and breakout sessions. There was an emphasis on membership recruitment and retention.
 3. NARFE President William Shackelford submitted a public comment in response to a proposed rule titled "Promoting Employee Accountability," issued by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB). In the official comment letter, Shackelford indicated support for efforts to ensure effective performance management, including the ability to address underperforming or nonperforming employees, as well as training for supervisors and managers. But NARFE expressed concern that a one- to five-day turnaround is not enough time for employees to respond to allegations supporting adverse actions and recommends at least a seven-day grace period. NARFE also expressed criticism of the "totality of the circumstances" test in lieu of the previous Douglas Factors framework. NARFE argued that the answer to an overly-rigid framework does not lie in the complete absence of one and that a set of clear, understandable, and reviewable standards be utilized to guide penalty determinations. Shackelford also reiterated NARFE's opposition to the repeal of Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) appeals for those recategorized under the Schedule Policy/Career employment category implemented earlier this year.
 4. The Partnership for Public Service released a new study suggesting that the Deferred Resignation Program (DRP) greatly reduced agency knowledge, efficiency, and capacity. The study showed that at least 41% of position departures in 2025 were due to the DRP. Because the DRP was offered to almost every federal employee, many positions that were already struggling with employee retention became even more short-staffed. While there were few exceptions to which positions could be offered the DRP, the blanket nature of the program gave little consideration to which positions were legitimately essential. According to this study, approximately 20,500 positions were replaced by new employees, many of which lacked critical knowledge and experience.
 5. Legislation announced recently would expand and fortify Social Security as well as repeal the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and Government Pension Offset (GPO). Social Security 2100, introduced by Rep. John Larson, D-CT, is a comprehensive Social Security reform bill and the latest bill to repeal two unfair penalties that diminish the earned Social Security benefits of federal retirees.
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Growth Isn't Enough: Five Signs Your Community Has an Engagement Problem

September 30, 2026 By: Tatia Zuolaga

It may be time to rethink how your organization measures—and designs for—engagement.

Membership growth is one of the first metrics community leaders celebrate and understandably so. New members represent new opportunities, new perspectives, and the potential for a stronger network. But growth can also create a false sense of security.

I've worked with communities at every stage of maturity, from organizations building their first structured engagement program to established networks with tens of thousands of members. One lesson has remained remarkably consistent: A growing membership doesn't necessarily mean you have a thriving community.

In fact, some of the fastest-growing communities I've encountered were also the ones quietly struggling with participation, relationship-building, and long-term retention. That's because community health isn't measured by how many people join. It's measured by what happens after they do.

Here are five warning signs that your community may have an engagement problem even if your membership numbers continue to climb.

1. Members Join ... Then They Become Invisible Then They Become Invisible

Every new member begins with good intentions.

They register for access, professional development, networking opportunities, or simply because they want to belong. Yet weeks or months later, many have done little beyond creating an account.

If new members aren't making introductions, joining conversations, attending events, or building relationships, they're never truly becoming part of the community. Communities don't create value through enrollment alone; rather, they create value through participation.

The first few months after someone joins are the most important. If members fail to establish meaningful connections early, it's much harder to reengage them later.

2. Event Attendance Is Slipping

When attendance starts declining, the instinct is often to rethink programming. Maybe the topics aren't compelling enough. Maybe the speakers need to be stronger.

Sometimes that's true. But more often, declining attendance is a symptom rather than the root problem.

People don't consistently return to events simply because the agenda looks interesting. They return because they expect to reconnect with people they know, meet someone new, or continue conversations they've already started. Relationships are what transform events from calendar appointments into experiences people look forward to.

When those relationships are missing, attendance almost always becomes harder to sustain.

3. A Small Percentage of Members Generate Most of the Activity

Every healthy community has highly engaged members who naturally contribute more than others. The problem emerges when nearly all engagement comes from the same small group.

They're the ones welcoming newcomers, answering questions, attending every event, volunteering, mentoring, and keeping conversations alive. Meanwhile, everyone else watches from the sidelines.

Communities are strongest when experiences are designed with intention for the many. Every gathering, event, and interaction should create opportunities for every member to contribute, connect, and be seen, rather than allowing the same voices to dominate. Small moments of structured interaction can transform passive attendees into active participants and, ultimately, lifelong community members.

If your community depends on the same familiar names year after year, you've built a loyal core, but not necessarily an engaged membership.

4. Your Mentorship Program Starts Strong but Quickly Loses Momentum

Mentorship is one of the most powerful tools for building community. It creates trust, transfers knowledge, and often becomes the foundation for lasting professional relationships.

Yet, many mentorship initiatives lose momentum after the initial excitement.

Matches are made, kickoff meetings happen, and then conversations become sporadic. Schedules get busy. Accountability fades. Before long, many partnerships dissolve.

The lesson is that meaningful relationships require ongoing support. Successful mentorship programs move beyond simply matching people once and into a space where those initial relationships can continue to grow over time.

5. You're Measuring Wrong re Measuring Wrong

Most organizations know exactly how many members they have. They can tell you how many joined this month, how many attended the annual conference, and how many opened the latest newsletter.

Those are useful operational metrics, but they don't necessarily tell you whether your community is becoming stronger.

Questions like these often provide much deeper insight:

- How many new professional relationships were formed this month?
- Are members connecting across industries, generations, or geographic regions?

- How many mentoring conversations are active?
- Are new members becoming contributors within their first year?
- Which members are helping others build connections?

These are harder metrics to collect. They're also far more predictive of long-term engagement and retention.

The Communities That Endure Build Belonging

Technology has made it easier than ever to grow a membership list but building a community is much harder.

People don't stay because they receive another newsletter or attend another webinar. They stay because they develop relationships that matter. They find mentors who change their careers. They meet collaborators who become partners. They discover peers who understand their challenges and celebrate their successes.

Those experiences create something much more powerful than engagement. They create belonging. As community leaders, we should absolutely celebrate growth—but we should never mistake growth for health.

Articles must be submitted to the editor by:
December 30 for the January 2027 issue.

EDITOR:
Frank Impinna
Four times per year: January, April, July, October

Send Us Your Comments.



IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS AND ON-LINE

- NARFE Colorado website: • www.narfe-colorado.com
- Thrift Savings Plan: 1-877-968-3778 • www.tsp.gov
- Social Security: 1-800-772-1213 • www.ssa.gov
- NARFE Members Records (Email or Address Change): 1-800-456-8410
• memberrecords@narfe.org
- National NARFE website: www.narfe.org
- National Headquarters NARFE Service Officers: 1-800-456-8410
- NARFE Legislative Hotline: 1-877-217-8324
- Federal Legislation - White House: 1-888-225-8418 • Direct Line to Congress: 1-866-220-0044