

Guest Speaker Best Practices

Having a good Guest Speaker Program is a definite plus for the Council. It keeps the membership interested and informed. It is a positive method to encourage member participation and if advertised in the local media (Council website, Newsletter, Facebook page, and press release to the newspaper) it helps draw in new members.

Finding the right guest speaker for Council meetings is always a challenge. With proper planning it doesn't necessarily have to be a burden. The first issue is to select the right program chairman. It needs to be an experienced Council member with some knowledge of the community and the Naval services. Traditionally in our Council, this falls to the Vice President/ President Elect.

The First step is to lay out a long range calendar starting with Holidays, local Council and military events. Armed Forces Day, Memorial Day, Veterans Day, Rose festival, Fleet Week, etc. If you have dignitaries coming into town for these events attempt to schedule a Navy league function for them to be Guest speaker.

Look for significant events in Naval History (<http://www.history.navy.mil/wars/dates.htm>) D Day, Battle of Midway, Great White Fleet, Pearl Harbor Day, etc. Then go look for a speaker that can address the significance of these events. We have used local historians, college professors, Council members, and interested Retired Officers to cover these dates.

We try to have a number of theme events nominally timed to Service Birthdays (Navy Oct, Marine Corp Nov, Coast Guard Aug, Naval Reserve Feb, Navy Supply Corp Feb, Seebees Mar, Naval Aviation May, Submarine Apr, etc) and have an appropriate guest speaker.

Our Council is blessed with a target rich environment for Guest Speakers. We attempt to get unit update from the local commanders when we honor their Sailors of the Year. We attempt to schedule each of the local flag officers and major commanding officers once a year. If there is a local Navy event, building a new pier, Navy Environmental Impact Study, etc we ask for a brief.

Whenever a navy VIP (2, 3 and 4 stars) come into town we attempt to set up a joint meeting with the other local service organizations (MOAA, VFW, etc) to honor the dignitaries.

Local Politicians are a good source for guest speakers we have our congressmen, state legislators and mayors on our newsletter mailing lists (many are Council members) and attempt to get them as speakers. State military and Veterans affairs Directors can present their programs. Do not overlook Naval Reserve Units, NOSC, NROTCs and Navy Recruiters as a Source.

We also reach out to our local college and have asked them to discuss local education programs (STEM, Shipyard Apprentice programs, veterans programs, etc.) We have had the local Fire district talk on their firefighting programs and the training that they provide to our local military.

Consider having a NL Community Affiliates day to let the affiliates speak. Always provide time for a new Affiliate to speak.

We attempt to keep our ear to the ground and when an author of a book of naval interest is in town for a book signing, we ask for a presentation.

Always have a Plan B when a speaker drops out at the last minute. The Navy League has Navy and Coast Guard presentations available for down loading on the website and is actively producing more. <http://navyleague.org/communications/nlp.html> Consider a membership forum to ask the members what they want improved in the council. Get the Local Sea Cadet Battalion or the head of the Sponsored NJROTC to give a presentation on their activities.

The formula for success is to be creative and keep it interesting.