

Use 'Legion Charities' for your fundraising efforts

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I attended the fall conference in Indianapolis Oct. 13-17.

The fall conference includes training for adjutants and commanders, committee and commission meetings, and ends with the meeting of the national executive committee.

While the training is specifically for adjutants and commanders it is open to all Legionnaires that choose to attend the meetings.

In one such meeting the national judge advocate, Kevin Bartlett, presented on an issue that is of concern to our Department and that is: Should we establish a 501(c)(3)?

The answer isn't as direct as we would like it to be but the recommendation is no, you should avoid creating a new 501(c)(3) and here is why.

We know that many posts are having difficulties properly maintaining their non-profit status for the post. Many times, because of transitions in

leadership or lack of training, Legionnaires sometimes forget to file documents with the state or complete the federal form 990.

If your post creates another non-profit you will have to complete those documents for both corporations. In addition, how the corporation is structured and who serves on the board can cause

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problems for the parent corporation.

I can tell you horror stories about problems posts have faced with the operations of their 501(c)(3) not to mention the many issues that arise at the department level.

Despite these problems the need for access to a 501(c)(3) in some cases is needed. For example, your post may have worked hard to find a corporate donor for one of your major programs and the donor asks for proof of tax-exempt status.

Your post provides them with your status as a 501(c)(19) only to be told they can only give to non-profits formed under section 501(c)(3).

You can try and form a 501(c)(3) but will take a while and again may open you up to future problems. I am happy to say there is another much easier option which is to use Legion Charities.

Legion Charities is a 501(c)(3) that was formed by the National American Legion Organization to help post deal with donations. This does not cost your post anything.

One hundred percent of the money donated to your post through Legion Charities is returned to your post.

The requirements are very simple; two post officers are required to sign a three-party indemnity agreement between the post, The American Legion and American

Legion Charities.

The need for the agreement is the requirement that the post must follow any instructions accompanying any gift so that American Legion Charities and The American Legion will not be involved in litigation over said instructions.

Once the agreement is fully executed and a fully signed copy returned to

the post, the post can begin soliciting donations through the American Legion Charities.

The agreement must be renewed each year. The donations must be made out to American Legion Charities and must identify the post when they are received so that American Legion Charities may properly remit.

Finally, the donation must be for \$1,000 or more.

The reason for the \$1,000 baseline is to cut down on administrative

expenses.

If every post were using Legion Charities for \$20 or even \$100 donations the administrative costs would skyrocket and those costs might have to be passed along to the post.

To get a copy of the agreement or for more information, call the national judge advocate's office at 317-630-1224.

I hope this "Did you know" moment provided you with some insight on how you might be able to accomplish many of your long-term fundraising goals.

One last thing, the form to request training at your post, district, or area is now online and ready to use. Go to caLegion.org/training-resources/, look for "Training request form" and click where it says "click here."

The form is self-explanatory and will notify both Department and the training committee of your request.

The person listed on the form will be contacted in order to confirm your request.

Construction begins on homeless housing in South Los Angeles

Construction is underway on a \$23 million permanent supportive and low-income housing complex in the Florence-Firestone community of South Los Angeles.

The nonprofit housing organization A Community of Friends and Los Angeles County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas hosted a groundbreaking ceremony on Oct. 30 for the Firestone-Phoenix complex at 7321 Miramonte Blvd.

"This project represents progress," Ridley-Thomas said. "We are on a path to restore dignity and purpose for all who call Los Angeles home. We simply must not stop until we achieve that dream."

Of Firestone-Phoenix's 44 units of supportive housing, 36 will be set aside for formerly homeless households — with 20 of those units for veterans who are homeless, chronically homeless or home-

less with a disability, and 16 units reserved for formerly homeless households.

Seven apartments will be for low-income families and one will be used as a manager's unit.

Amenities will include a community room and kitchen, computer room, laundry room, outdoor lounge, community garden and children's play area, according to ACOF.

The project has about a dozen financial supporters

that include state, county and local funding sources as well as Bank of America.

Case management services that will be provided to the tenants of Firestone-Phoenix are being funded by the county's Measure H, and ACOF will be the service provider.

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