

# **THE STATE OF THE ARKANSAS FEDERATION OF NARFE**

**Charles Schmieder, Federation President**

**I always have liked to tell the bad news first, if there is any, so that I can end the presentation with the good news and maybe feel better about the whole situation. With the Arkansas Federation of NARFE, there is some bad news. The worst thing is, we are following the national trend and declining in membership. We are now below 3500 members in the State of Arkansas. Of the thirty-six chapters, we have three chapters that are inactive at this time and three chapters that have chosen non-affiliation with the Federation. Membership in the thirty-six chapters range from a low of twenty to a high of two hundred ninety-four in the North Little Rock chapter and the Little Rock Chapter is following closely behind. We are of course small as most federations go, simply because there is not a large concentration of governmental installations in the state of Arkansas. About ten to fifteen percent of the membership of any chapter attends meetings on a regular basis.**

**As I have said on several occasions, an organization is only as good as its members and the Arkansas Federation is indeed blessed. Look around the room. You have more than one Past President in attendance at this convention even though your current president is not here because he is enjoying himself in Canada. Are you aware that 10 chapters have responded to the request of how many individuals they have who do volunteer work and approximately how many hours they have given? 152,911 volunteer hours were donated in 2007. Two ladies that have been reported to me who do untold amounts of volunteer work are Mrs. Molinaro from Clarksville Chapter 594 and Mrs. Nora Ruth Morrison of Fort Smith Chapter 299.**

**I have had the privilege of attending the meetings of at least thirteen chapters during the past year. In addition, I say it is a privilege, because everywhere I have been, I have been so well received and have met some of the nicest people that anyone could ever want to meet. Each chapter is slightly different but all have one theme, not only are we banded together to try to insure that our annuities will continue as we were promised at the time**

of employment, we enjoy a camaraderie by caring for each other. Many of us are in our Golden Years (I have not discovered where the gold is!) and have personal needs that are seen to by other members of the chapters. It may be a simple telephone call inquiring as to how you are doing or it may be offering a ride to the next meeting (this is something that the price of gasoline may force us all to do.) I also see the members of the chapters just having a good time with each other and that is one of the reasons that many attend the chapter meetings. I get the minutes of some of the chapters and some of you have the most interesting and informative programs.

Chapter Presidents are the immediate glue of the Federation. They are in the trenches, so to speak, and guide each individual chapter. I have heard it said that once you get to be a chapter officer you have it for life. In some chapters that is true and I am thankful for those who still fulfill that role. Chapter 287 in Pine Bluff has that kind of Secretary and I believe that if she quit, the chapter might possibly fold; however, in many chapters that is the glue that still works.

**District Vice Presidents nurture the chapters within their respective districts. They are the next level of glue in the Federation by attending chapter meetings, organizing training seminars and rescuing chapters that are having difficulties. I am always hesitate to mention anyone in particular by name because invariably someone will be left out and have their feelings hurt, but two district vice presidents that I have had the opportunity to observe in action are Louise Leverett and Jim Kuzilik. They are, in my opinion, outstanding in the Federation. The other five are great as well; I just simply have not personally seen them in action.**

**The overall health of the Federation is watched and nourished by the Federation Officers. The Executive Vice-President, Winston Wolfe has stepped up to the plate and is conducting the Federation Convention in the absence of the President. This is a one-time thing, I hope, but that is one of his jobs as Vice-President to fill in during the absence of the President and he has willingly decided to fill in for me.**

**When I became President, Anna Crow, the secretary, said she was not going to run again. I said you must, at least someone needs to know what is going on! She offered the position to someone else this year, but so far, there have been no takers. Remember, there can be nominations from the floor for any officers' positions and it would not upset me in the least if someone else wanted to be President. However, if not, I will serve one more year.**

**There will be copies of the Treasurers' report available to everyone. Look how well organized the finances of the Federation are. Every penny is accounted for and this is not an easy job but Ron Lambert is one of the best at keeping up with it. I think we are very fortunate to have a retired IRS employee in this position. Wally Shelton, the Legislative Chairman, is organizing a run on the State Capitol in January 2009 to bring to the attention of the state legislators that all states surrounding us do not, or are in the process of phasing out taxation of Federal Annuitants pensions.**

**The Alzheimer's Chair, Hinda Gibbs, decided that the Arkansas Federation was behind in donations so she had a carport sale and raised over \$500, which she donated to the Alzheimer's Foundation. Jim Geisler, the Federation Service Officer, has been selected for his outstanding work and will be recognized at the National Convention in Louisville, KY, in September. All of these individuals are part of the glue that binds us together.**

**The largest bucket of glue in the Federation is sprinkled over us all by George Wilken. George does not like to have any particular recognition for his work, (his wife says he is a work-alcoholic). He prefers to work behind the scenes doing such things as building the Federation Website. Have you looked at it? Just in region VI alone, Louisiana does not have one and Texas and Oklahoma both are paled in comparison to Arkansas. He is a bottomless fount of knowledge. Where do you think I went to get the volunteer hours? Who has informed us that all chapters have to file with the IRS this year? He is one of the greatest resources for the Federation and will be the most assistance that any Federation President can have or wish to have.**

**Overall, I believe the Federation is alive and well. NARFE nationally is being reorganized and that will filter down to the chapters or it may filter up from the chapters. Either way, we will be here to have our say with the national organization, with our legislators in Washington and our State legislators in Little Rock. It has been my pleasure to serve and thank you for electing me President last year!**

**END**