

By Frances McKenney, Deputy Managing Editor



Emerging Leaders

The Air Force Association's Emerging Leaders Program began in 2013 as a way to prepare volunteers for future AFA leadership roles. Here's the first profile in AFA's third group of Emerging Leaders.

Sharon A. Branch

Home State: Texas.

Chapter: Central Florida.

Joined AFA: Life Member, joined in 1981.

AFA Offices: State VP and chapter aerospace education VP. Formerly state aerospace education VP and chapter AFJROTC liaison.

Military Service: 26 years Active Duty.

Occupation: Clerk, Southeastern Freightlines.

Education: B.A., University of Central Florida; master's degree, Troy State University.

Q&A:

How did you first learn of AFA? I learned about it as an ROTC cadet because the Air Force Association did communicate with us. ... There were a lot of awards they provided for ROTC cadets and opportunities to travel to the Air & Space Conference up in Washington.

What was your major initiative as state aerospace education VP? The biggest highlight is: Each year the state hosts a JROTC drill meet, and I became involved in that at the chapter level before I was a state VP for aerospace education. At that point, it was being hosted by a high school, but I changed it to a college level. ... This past spring, we had it at the University of Central Florida, and this upcoming spring we'll be having it at the University of South Florida. ... It gives the ROTC student at the college level a rather large event [to organize], and it allows JROTC students to travel to a college and get a feel for what college is like. The AFA chapter level benefits, the state benefits, and the students benefit.

What's AFA's strength? They're strong on communications. To me they're always visible with the people who make the decisions. They're out there advocating for the Air Force and the airmen.

How can AFA increase membership? It's the same as anything else: It's personal contact. ... If I don't go out and champion what I believe, then nobody's going to know what I believe. ... If you really love it, you're going to talk about it.



Photo by Brenda Johnston

Branch speaks to a church council in Orlando, Fla.



Photo by Scott G. Patton

Nira, a trained therapy dog, sits with Sara Patton and the audience at a veterans facility in Huntsville, Ala. Patton is the daughter of Tennessee Valley Chapter member Scott Patton.

Gone to the Dog

Who enjoyed the visit more: the dog or the vets?

It was hard to tell when the therapy dog Nira joined Alabama's **Tennessee Valley Chapter** and other veterans for an Air Force anniversary celebration in September at a state veterans facility in Huntsville.

Chapter member Scott G. Patton explains that Nira belongs to his 18-year-old daughter, Sara. She rescued the Pit Bull mix from the Humane Society and formally trained her to become a therapy dog. Sara is no stranger to the veterans home and for this Air Force 68th anniversary party brought Nira along for practice in socialization. "Regular contact with groups is good for Nira, and from the veterans' reactions, good for them as well—they love having her visit," wrote Patton in an email.

Another hit: Cutting the Air Force birthday cake. The vets enjoyed identifying the oldest among them, selected to cut the cake, by tradition, with the youngest airmen. A1C Kevin Armstrong, who was home visiting his mom, chapter member Brenda S. Armstrong, filled the role of youngest.

And what's an Air Force birthday party without singing the service song? The chapter had that covered, too, with member Bryan Bennett playing it on his trumpet. 🎺



Photos by Edwin Hurston

Dr. Lee Duke, a former USAF flight surgeon, spoke to Pennsylvania's York-Lancaster Chapter in September. Now executive VP and chief medical officer for Lancaster General Health, his presentation covered a health care system focused on adding value and on patient safety.

How to Photograph Awards Presentations



Take photos before or after: AFA Member of the Year Jim Lauducci and his wife, Marie, chat before the awards banquet. Below, Ron Adams walks back to his table after receiving a Chairman's Citation award.



They already knew the requirement: Take chapter-news photos showing AFA members in action, not posing for the camera.

But at least three chapter leaders asked: What about awards ceremonies? Aren't those photos going to show people shaking hands and posing?

Photographer Jose Ruiz proved otherwise. He covered AFA's Field Awards Banquet at September's National Convention and illustrated several approaches to taking candid awards snapshots:

- Photograph the recipients *before* the awards ceremony.
- Photograph them *after* they receive the award.
- Photograph awardees *en route* to accepting the award.
- Take the photo the award winner wants—and then the photo the magazine wants. When Florida's Dann Mattiza arrived with a large group, Ruiz obliged them with the "school photo" they wanted. Then he kept shooting until he got the photo the magazine preferred.
- Take more than one photo. The more you take, the better your chances of nabbing a candid, unposed photo showing people in action.

En route: Bruce VanSkiver shakes hands as he heads to the stage to receive the Nation's Capital Chapter's Unit Exceptional Service Award for Best Single Program.



Dave Shiller before the ceremony where he accepted the Unit of the Year award for the Lance P. Sijan Chapter. Below, CyberPatriot Teacher of the Year Chris Sutton, from Grissom High School in Huntsville, Ala., just after an interview by Alabama Public Television.



One for them and one for the magazine: At left, 15 AFA members from Florida asked for a group photo. Afterward, the photographer kept snapping until he captured Dann Mattiza (at right), Florida state president, who accepted the AFA Outstanding State Organization award.

