

Smaller Fraternal Benefit Societies Tackle Common Challenges Through New NFCA Section

By Allison Koppel

The 122-year-old National Fraternal Congress of America (NFCA) unites 73 fraternal benefit societies operating in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Canada. Fraternal benefit societies provide their members with leadership, social, educational, spiritual, patriotic, scholarship and volunteer service opportunities. They are non-profit, mutual aid organizations that insure members and their families against death, disease and disability and maintain an active lodge system.

The NFCA offers its membership many of the same benefits—to learn, lead and connect through its committees and special interest groups called sections. A new section, the Fraternal 100 Section, gives smaller member societies—less than \$100 million in net assets—a forum for education, training, information, experiential learning, fellowship and networking opportunities with similarly sized fraternal benefit societies. Known in the past as an informal group called the Fraternal 50, the Fraternal 100 Section was formally recognized and expanded in scope by the NFCA Board of Directors in 2006.

At the 2007 NFCA Annual Meeting in Pittsburgh, Pa., the Fraternal 100 adopted by-laws and elected an interim chair, Timothy L. Kuzma, secretary/treasurer of Polish Falcons of America. Pittsburgh is also home base for the Polish Falcons of America.

“I am proud to serve as interim chair of this NFCA Section. It is important that we recognize that smaller and medium-sized organizations handle challenges differently from our larger



counterparts,” said Kuzma. “At Polish Falcons, we have a staff of 12, so when something like a compliance issue comes up, our entire staff needs to become informed. This new NFCA Section will help us tackle the nuts and bolts of running our organizations.”

Since September, two additional interim officers have been elected: Daniel J. Wenzler, Sr., president of CSA Fraternal Life, headquartered in Oak Brook, Ill., and Jerry D. Boswell, D.B.A., CFA, chair of the Board of Directors, Woodmen of the World/Assured Life Association, headquartered in Greenwood Village, Colo.

“In the past several months, the Fraternal 100 Section has offered several educational webinars that our staff found most helpful,”

said Wenzler. “I was eager to become more involved in the planning of future educational programs and also to help guide the content of meetings.”

These affordable webinars tackled governance issues, the new IRS Form 990-N and the importance of strategic thinking.

“Because of our size, we don’t have funds allocated to travel to all of the educational offerings we would like attend. The NFCA Fraternal 100 Section webinars are a very cost-effective way for our society to stay informed,” added Wenzler.

Future webinars will tackle other issue-specific topics, with the occasional conceptual program worked into the calendar. One that likely will attract many participants is a



webinar on the significance and implications of the annual financial analysis provided to NFCA members through the firm Tillinghast Towers-Perrin. This member benefit, provided by the NFCA at no additional cost, is a confidential and detailed financial examination of each society, and uses annual statement data to benchmark societies to each other, industry averages and commercial life insurance companies.

Future programming at face-to-face meetings will consist of idea sharing through roundtable discussions. Time-sensitive topics also will be addressed.

“We hope to hold a meeting in Chicago this summer and offer an exciting agenda,” said Boswell. “Issues like principle-based reserves are ones we need to cover. Providing these updates, plus sharing our success stories through joint discussions and panels, should make for a compelling event.”

At the 2008 NFCA Annual Meeting in September in Washington, D.C., the Fraternal 100 Section will again meet to discuss common challenges facing fraternal benefit societies and how the section can best address them. The locale also will provide a perfect forum for NFCA members to tout their volunteer activities and to expound on the

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charitable contributions within their communities. In fact, the NFCA is planning an event on Capitol Hill at which attendees will meet legislators and have the opportunity to tell their stories first hand.

“Societies included in the Fraternal 100 Section contribute greatly to the NFCA’s combined 10 million fraternalists in 37,000 local chapters, making it one of America’s largest member-volunteer networks,” said Kuzma. “Speaking directly to lawmakers on how the NFCA’s member societies maintain more than \$329 billion of life insurance-in-force and, in 2006 alone, contributed almost \$410 million to charitable and fraternal programs will be very meaningful. Our Fraternal 100 Section members are a vital part of the fabric of this country and we look forward to telling our stories.” ●



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