

involvement by developing meetings that address the needs of the local members. National meetings should provide the right blend of work and fun to attract members who attend ROA with their spouses. This area needs to be discussed at length at local meetings.

When asked to rank the factors that influenced the decision to attend meetings, information, relationship-building/networking, and affordability were ranked highest. As important, factors preventing ROAL respondents from attending included health, cost, relevance, work responsibilities, travel, and family/child care, in that order. Responses were directly correlated to the age of the respondents.

Consistently providing members with what they want will drive the attendance at meetings. Let's face it, many people simply cannot afford the time away from home for national meetings. Making sure that members get value for membership at the local level can increase participation. And when the time is right, maybe more locals will be able to attend national.

Given the surge in the use of technology for communication, the leadership group is exploring better options to keep in touch. A special session with ROA webmaster Kelly Matthews is scheduled during the February conference, and expanding the use of the ROAL website for purposes of communicating local activities is a major goal. In addition, the SPC and area directors have initiated monthly teleconferences, and ROAL is introducing a Facebook link.

Most important, please react to any information in this article by mail, conversation, or blog. We need your input!

Final thoughts from Dr. Garrett: *For more than two years, I've had the opportunity to get to know the ROAL leadership team. I've worked with many organizations who recognize the need for change, but few who are committed to doing the hard work that creates positive change. This group is devoted to moving in a direction that keeps ROAL alive and active. I really like that. And I know there is a bit of sadness as traditions change. Nostalgia keeps many groups stuck. My hat is off to the women and men who are willing to say*

goodbye to ROAL as it was several years ago and say hello and welcome to the evolution of the organization.

I encourage every member, whether your local group is active or close to dormant, to respond to the surveys, questionnaires, and inquiries posed by your leadership team. You will help create a vibrant organization that will serve you and military families for years to come. ▀

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