

## **Membership Mentoring by Julie Curlin, AFA Director Emeritus**

I recently went to AOC training and was impressed with a young airman in the course; she was only 20 years old. I joined the military before she was born and I have been a member of Air Force Association for 28 years, starting as a cadet in Arnold Air Society. I couldn't help but to continue to watch her and the enthusiasm she had with each new learning experience; she reminded me of someone, I just couldn't put my finger on it.

Then I figured it out. She reminded me of myself at age 21, just entering the military. I felt it was time to mentor this young airman as I had been mentored by Air Force leaders through my involvement with AFA. So, we started with the basics: Air Force 101, deployments, promotions, fitness, PME. She even wanted to learn about airplanes and tactical weapon systems - yep, she was just like me.

At the time, I was TDY and didn't have the Air Force Magazine Almanac with me, only because it arrived after I had already left. So, I downloaded the almanac and sat with her for an hour and a half and went through it page by page. With each page, she made comments such as, "WOW, this is exactly what I've been looking for!" All I could say in response was, "Wait, that's not even the best part." We went through the stats and reviewed the leaders; we looked at the map of bases CONUS and OCONUS; I explained things like tail flashes and A is for Attack. Finally, I showed her the "best part" - the aircraft. We reviewed aircraft tactical weapon and space systems. Then I gave her a quick history lesson on AFA 101 through my many experiences with the organization.

She joined AFA that day. It will be something I will always remember. I know there are AFA members out there who have seen that same sense of wonder, excitement, and potential in other young troops. We must start our future Air Force and AFA leaders out on the right path. This can be done by sitting down with them and using materials from the Air Force Association to help teach them all about the Air Force.

As I closed the laptop, she said, "I can't wait to show the other airman in my unit my almanac when it comes in. I hope it's there when I get home. They will all want to join."

My brother, two younger sisters, and I had one of the best AFA recruiters - our father. As an AFA member and previous Arnold Air Society National Commander, my father encouraged all of us to reach out to AFA National and volunteer at AFA National events. AFA is "A Family Affair" for our family.

I encourage everyone to reach out to friends, family and new military members to introduce them to AFA and make it "A Family Affair." This may be done through the almanac, one of our best recruiting tools! It can also be done through a National Symposium or local chapter event. However you do it, just do it. I guarantee that you will find those young members who are excited about joining AFA.