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## Minnesota Wing Group 2

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## Still Looking for Your Articles

I am still in need of your articles for the quarterly newsletter. The more we share ideas and collaborate, the better we make the whole group. Remember to have them to me by the end of January to make it into the next newsletter.

Thank you for all you do.

*If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader.*

*John Quincy Adams*

### Staying Connected

I was a unit commander less than 6 months when the 2020 COVID shutdown began. Like most middle-aged non-corporate types, I hadn't heard of Zoom. And in the initial weeks of converting our weekly meetings to virtual, I found myself learning a lot from our confident, tech-savvy cadets as we developed a communication strategy and meeting format that would keep cadets engaged and active. Meanwhile, our seniors really became disengaged and used it as a "vacation" from any non-essential CAP business.

With sudden social isolation, feelings of hopelessness and despair have been on the rise. Suicide among all age groups is increasing at an alarming rate, and I feared our membership would be among the groups struggling to counteract those struggles. My goal was to ensure every member, cadet or senior, feels that they matter and that they are accounted for, that someone actually cares about them individually.

I wanted to connect with each squadron member to offer reassurances, but making individual phone calls to 70+ members was too time consuming and would be awkward for some who've been inactive for years and never met me. So I called on my grandmother's wisdom of what used to be called personal correspondence. I purchased aviation-themed postcards and set out writing a short note of encouragement to every member. I focused on counteracting any feelings of discouragement or isolation in the new all-virtual environment. I ended up sending each member multiple postcards throughout the lock-down periods of 2020, and I called several of my key members to check in on a more personal level.

It seems to have worked. We had retention comparable to a normal year, which is a big win when considering the obstacles to remaining engaged with a hands-on program when it's very hands-off. But more importantly, the membership seems to be committed to the organization and believes their contribution is important. In a 2-week timeframe in August 2020, our squadron completed more cadet online tests than any other squadron in our region. And our first fitness night in 2021 after the second lock-down saw 85% of our cadet membership attend. They were active and engaged in CAP despite the obstacles.

More recently, I've pressed my cadet leaders to use their personal engagement skills to encourage their cadets on an individual basis. The "old fashioned" phone call. Imagine the sense of validation a Curry Cadet would have getting a personal phone call encouraging them to take a test and promote from a Flight Commander or even the Cadet Commander. The cadet leadership has even admitted that there's something different about a phone call than a social media engagement that is more encouraging and motivating than an Instagram connection.

My take-away from the many months of isolation from our membership is that everyone needs to know they matter. And it is unit leadership that must respond. The human experience is defined by its connection to others. And CAP would be nowhere without its volunteer members.

Capt Heike Dodge, CAP  
Crow Wing Composite Squadron Commander

### Annual Awards

We are coming up on the end of the calendar year, and you all should know what that means. It's time to start thinking about the annual Wing awards. Every Squadron has members that do amazing things, let's honor them for it. I have been on the Wing Awards Committee before, and I know that every year they are fighting to get people nominated. Sometimes they don't even get nominees for everything. Let's make sure we are celebrating the accomplishments of our people.

### COVID Update

As you heard, it looks like MN Wing will be reverting back to Phase I of the remobilization plan in the near future. There is still a small chance that we won't have to, but be prepared. This means groups of no more than 10 members, and social distancing. If you aren't able to do this due to your facilities, please consider returning to virtual meetings, or a hybrid meeting. Also remember that you can ask for an exemption, if you have a need for it. This can apply to meetings as well, however, unless you have a very large squadron, you may not be able to get one for that.

### Quick Tip:

Document everything. If you ever want to have proof of something you need to document it. This can be used for disciplinary reasons, or just to have records of how to do something. This is especially useful during the SUI.