

INSPIRATION FOR MODERN WOODMEN FRATERNAL LEADERS

# Impact

M A G A Z I N E

WINTER 2024

## SPREAD THE JOY

*How will you make  
an impact in 2024?*

**Activities**  
across the country  
p. 6

**Go wild**  
for animals  
this year p. 8

Chapter members  
from Mississippi



[imakeanimpact.org](http://imakeanimpact.org)

# Cheers to a great 2024!

**I'm blessed and honored to be named Modern Woodmen's new Chief Fraternal Officer.** I worked in the Fraternal Department early in my career, overseeing chapters and fraternal programs. Throughout the years, I saw firsthand the positive impact our fraternal programs can have in the lives of our members and the communities in which they live.

I've seen Modern Woodmen:

- **Help** families who lost everything due to natural disasters.
- **Provide** financially for children whose parents died in a tragic accident.
- **Support** bright, young students wanting to advance their education.

I've seen the fundraisers, the hands-on service projects, the educational and social activities, and the countless other ways our members come together to make an impact. And I know so much of **that starts with you ... our volunteer leaders.**

As a recent example, fraternal leader Barbara Coats (pictured below, right) and other members from Mississippi stuffed holiday stockings with art supplies late last year. The stockings were then donated to area families through Starkville Strong, a local nonprofit that helps address food insecurity, housing instability and more. These gifts helped make the season a bit brighter for the recipients.

**We're so grateful for all of our volunteer leaders.** You all make life a bit brighter, and you're shining examples in your communities. Thanks for spreading kindness, good and Modern Woodmen's fraternal spirit throughout the entire country.



**Jason Nickles**  
Chief Fraternal Officer  
and Vice President



### IMPACT MAGAZINE

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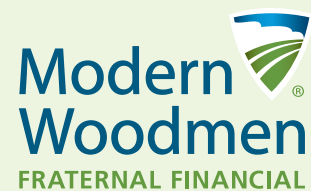
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## Look inside | Winter 2024



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Meet the newest members of the Fraternal Department leadership team.
- 6 Follow the leaders**  
Ideas to borrow from chapters and youth clubs nationwide.
- 10 Talk about it**  
News, tools and reminders to share with your members.

## Quick REMINDERS!



- ✓ **Avoid using ALL CAPS** when entering event requests. It can interfere with evite transcription.
- ✓ **Submit your annual equipment and asset report.** All chapters must submit this report by April 1, even if you don't own equipment.
- ✓ **Remember, activity types are flexible** for this year's Wild About Animals initiative. While each quarter has a specific focus, you choose the project and activity category to best meet your chapter's/club's interest and needs. Have fun ... and help some animals (and the humans who love them) in the process.
- ✓ **Keep in mind, some members may have animal allergies** (or fears). To ensure these members can still get involved, you could host donation events, offer a virtual option, or offer an aspect of the activity that doesn't involve the animals directly.
- ✓ **Find answers to more Wild About Animals FAQs** on the 2024 National Campaign page of the Training & Resources site (accessible through imakeanimpact.org).

# The future of FRATERNALISM



## A Q&A with JASON and KERI



**JASON NICKLES**

Chief Fraternal Officer and Vice President

The Fraternal Department has been undergoing a lot of changes over the past year. But what does it all mean to you and your role as a fraternal leader?

Get to know Jason Nickles and Keri Rursch, the newest members of the Fraternal Department leadership team.



**KERI RURSCH**

Director of Fraternal

**Tell us a bit about your background with Modern Woodmen fraternalism.**

**Jason:** Keri and I both worked in the Fraternal Department years ago. It's nice to come back together with new

perspectives and help build on the great work this department has already been doing over the last several years.

I believe strongly in the fraternal side of Modern Woodmen. My wife, four children and I have participated in many volunteer and social events over the past 24 years. We're grateful for those opportunities.

**Keri:** Fraternalism means a lot to me personally. It's way more than a job to me... it's part of my heart. It's the way my brain works and is near and dear to my family.

My two daughters were involved with a youth service club when they were younger. I think it impacted them

and the way they look at the world. I feel like coming back to Modern Woodmen gives me the opportunity to help others experience some of what we were lucky enough to experience.

### What are your hopes for the future?

**Jason:** That fraternalism will have even greater impact ... and in such a way that it leads to membership growth. We want more people telling others about the great things Modern Woodmen does.

I've heard that we're "the best kept secret" more times than I can count over the years. I don't want to hear that anymore.



**Keri:** We want to bring even more attention to the good work you're doing. And we have a big, bold vision of making an even greater impact on our members, on their families, and on the communities where they live. In part, that means finding ways to connect with people where they are and where they want to be.

### What changes should fraternal leaders expect moving forward?

**Jason:** We need to make sure Modern Woodmen fraternalism relates back to the lives people live today. A lot has changed – even since I was last in the Fraternal Department.

We'll continue to work on renovating/creating programs

to ultimately have a bigger impact. We don't know the extent of those changes or what that will look like exactly ... and everything won't change overnight. But we are going to think a little differently moving forward.

**Keri:** What we're looking at changing are things that will help us connect better to members, make processes more efficient and ultimately drive greater impact. Our commitment to you, your members and the philosophies that have driven this organization for decades will never change.

Continue doing the great things you've been doing. Know that fraternalism is core to who we are. And feel free to get excited about new things to come. I am!

## KEY TAKEAWAYS from recent research

Throughout 2023, the Fraternal Department spent time with fraternal leaders (like you!), field representatives and members to help us as we reexamine Modern Woodmen fraternalism. A few things we learned...

### WHAT'S WORKING WELL

- The most popular, well-attended events for chapters are social activities involving meals or food, and hands-on, interactive educational events for youth clubs.
- Exclusive events, those offering unique/special experiences, and those aligned with holidays are particularly popular.
- Chapter educational, Matching Fund and service events are very similar in overall member popularity. Participation depends entirely on specific event details. Pairing these events with a social activity usually increases attendance.
- Chapter events with a flexible time frame allow members to come and go more easily. They're well-liked, but the event needs to offer something unique or of value to members – especially if a longer drive is involved (more than 30 minutes).
- Incentivizing members to attend fraternal events is necessary for high attendance, usually in the form of free food/meals, discounted tickets or door prizes.
- Changes made over the past few years are positive and help planning efforts: shorter lead times for event approval, providing annual themes and suggested activities, and the [makeanimpact.org](http://makeanimpact.org) website, which saves time when submitting requests and reports.

### WHAT MEMBERS SAY

- Most members are unlikely to have time during the week for anything outside of their routine. Saturdays are usually their free days to do anything new and fun.  
**Takeaway:** When planning activities, Saturdays may be the best option for most members.
- Retired members are more likely to do activities during the week than others do on the weekends.  
**Takeaway:** For retired members, try scheduling activities on weekdays.
- Most weekend activities involve getting outdoors and spending time together as a family (e.g., camping, hiking, swimming, boating, golfing, etc.). Members in more urban areas are interested in socializing at big events, like those with live music.  
**Takeaway:** Activities that might pique the most interest are outdoor activities that involve the whole family or live entertainment events.
- Members often don't have a lot of extra spending money.  
**Takeaway:** Consider using premier dollars to provide extra discounts on activities.



**Take a hike**

Social activity  
Mira Loma, California  
Chapter activities coordinator: Melissa Moore

Dinners have been a go-to social activity for years, but there are so many other events that work well for this activity type. Your members may appreciate more active options ... and you may attract a few new attendees. Chapter 203 members gathered for a hike, using their funds to purchase Gatorade and stay hydrated. Ask your members for social activity ideas.

**Wild About Animals idea:** Meet at an animal shelter to walk the dogs.



**Kitchen helpers**

Service project  
Kalamazoo, Michigan  
Chapter activities coordinator: Erica Wheeler

Summit Chapter 18244 members volunteered at a not-for-profit business that makes and sells treats to support youth outreach services in the community. Nonprofits often sell products to support their mission and fund their activities. They may need some extra help your members could provide throughout the year.

**Wild About Animals idea:** Some animal shelters sell calendars featuring animals available for adoption. Your members could help promote, prepare, sell or distribute the calendars.



**Stomping grapes**

Matching Fund project  
Caldwell, Idaho  
Chapter activities coordinator: Sheila Harting

Chapter 15659 partnered with the organizers of a community event to raise funds for the YMCA's youth and senior programs. Attendees participated in a grape stomping tournament and fun activities for kids. Find upcoming events in your area through social media and by checking in with local community/nonprofit groups. Could you partner with them to raise money for a good cause?

**Wild About Animals idea:** Raise funds for an animal shelter.



**Kids are heroes, too!**

Hometown Hero event  
Starkville, Mississippi  
Club leader: Robert Graham

Youth Service Club 15969-5 recognized youth council members as Hometown Heroes. Ask your club kids to nominate a classmate or friend who goes above and beyond to help others. Chapters and Summit chapters – you might consider recognizing a young, local hero, too.

**Wild About Animals idea:** Recognize a young person who regularly volunteers at the animal shelter. Your local shelter could nominate someone.

SHOW *gratitude*

*The timeless art of sending thank-you notes*

Our world often seems fast-paced and increasingly impersonal. The act of sending thank-you notes is a subtle, yet powerful way to foster connections and express appreciation. Folks may argue this age-old practice is becoming a lost art. However, the tradition remains a valuable tool your chapter/club can use to build and strengthen relationships.

**How long?**

Expressing gratitude toward members who consistently attend activities is a simple, yet impactful gesture. You don't need to write paragraphs. A few short sentences can say a lot and foster a sense of belonging.

**Sample message for regular attendees:** *It's always great to see you at our Modern Woodmen activities. Members like you are so important to our chapter/club. Thanks for coming often and showing your support.*

Equally important is extending gratitude to first-time attendees, whether they're existing members or guests. Welcome them warmly. Express delight at their attendance. Invite them to future activities. It not only makes them feel valued, but also encourages their continued engagement.

**Sample message for first-time attendees and guests:** *It was so good to have you join us for the Modern Woodmen activity. I hope you'll come back often. Our next activity is [insert date].*

Thanking guests holds particular significance for a membership organization like Modern Woodmen. Recognizing and appreciating attendance is a gesture of goodwill and a powerful means to increase membership in a chapter/club.

**Handwritten or electronic?**

Both mediums have their place. When time is of the essence, send a quick text message or email to convey gratitude. When time permits, go for the handwritten note.

As the Emily Post Etiquette website suggests, "In an increasingly informal digital world, continuing to pull out pen and paper is a way to distinguish yourself. The handwritten thank-you note speaks volumes simply as a medium and sends the message that you care enough to invest yourself personally in acknowledging another."

**When is it too late?**

Don't worry if it's too late to send a thank-you. Ideally, send messages as promptly as possible following an activity. However, a late note is better than no note at all. Expressing gratitude transcends the constraints of time and can make a positive impact, even if belated.

WHO TO *thank?*

- Members who come regularly.
- Members and guests who attended a chapter/club activity for the first time.
- Members and guests who supported a service project.
- The owner or manager of the venue where you hosted an event.
- A newspaper reporter who wrote a story about a chapter/club activity or service project.
- The nonprofit or community leader who served as your contact for a chapter/club activity.



# GO WILD IN 2024!

## Ideas for animal-centered projects this year

Members across the country are wild about animals. Folks in the Fraternal Department are no exception. As we kick off the 2024 national fraternal initiative, we caught up with a few Fraternal Department staff members. Learn about their animal connections ... **and gain a few ideas as you plan events for the year.**



**Name: Amber Nichols**

**Favorite animals:** Dogs and cats.

**Beloved pets:** I currently have a dog, Biscuit (half Aussie/golden), and two cats, Precious and Ollie.

**Q1 project idea – Go wild for animal shelters:** All I can say is thank God for those volunteers at the shelters. Almost all are very welcoming and need all the help they can get to take care of the animals. I think it would be great fun spending time with the animals, walking the dogs, cleaning where needed and/or donating supplies. **Don't forget about the branded tennis balls, bandannas and other Modern Woodmen supply items you can order this year.** You might also consider providing lunch for the volunteers or having pizza delivered. This is what I'm planning for my chapter.

**Name: Cynthia Flores**

**Favorite animals:** Horses, for their emotional support.

**Beloved pets:** Scooby and Princess Raven.

**Q2 project idea – Go wild for pets:** Why not make toys for pets? After all, our pets most want our attention, hands-on care and love! And it's a fun project for kids. Make a cat wand, braided dog toy, fleece cat blanket, crazy cat toy or parrot toy. You can use service project funds to purchase the materials. Learn how to make these toys at [bestfriends.org](https://bestfriends.org).



**Name: Melissa Mayers**

**Favorite animals:** Horses. My dad had some after all of us grew up, and I loved being around them. They were like being with big, loving dogs.

**Beloved pets:** I had two pets that were special to me. Ever since I was a young kid, I always wanted a big yellow dog like Old Yeller. After I got married, we ended up getting a yellow lab. He was a pain, but also the most devoted and loving dog I have ever had. I had also wanted a Yorkie and was able to get one once I was single again. She was also a pain, but she meant the world to me. I took her everywhere.

**Q3 project idea – Go wild for wildlife:** Assist with a wildlife rescue group that rehabilitates and releases injured and sick wildlife. You could build nesting boxes for birds and/or help clean up a wildlife preserve.

**Name: Martha Nelson**

**Favorite animals:** Elephants. They're such amazing animals. I love that they're devoted to their herd and care for ill and vulnerable members. Elephants seem to have that "for the good of all" mentality.

**Beloved pets:** Thor was my roommate's Doberman pinscher. This dog was big and intimidating! And with his name – the first impression was terror. Thor was actually the sweetest, most devoted dog. He thought he was a lap dog.

**Q4 project idea – Go wild for service animals:** Consider helping a local K-9 unit. Members could shop for and deliver supplies requested by the unit or dog handler(s). This could include everything from food to protective gear. You could also donate some of Modern Woodmen branded supply items.



**Participate this quarter and win!**

You could be one of 30 lucky leaders to win a Modern Woodmen branded lawn chair with an animal-friendly surprise inside!

Go to the 2024 National Campaign page of the Training & Resources site ([accessible through imakeanimpact.org](https://imakeanimpact.org)) for drawing details. While you're there, check out tips, supplies and more fun ideas for hosting Wild About Animals projects throughout the year.

## Stay CONNECTED

### Create a Facebook group for your chapter or club

Looking for a convenient, no-cost way to regularly communicate with chapter and youth service club members? Request a closed Facebook group! They're private spaces where you can share information, gather feedback and build community with your members.

As a fraternal leader, you can request a new closed Facebook group or request to become the administrator of an existing group. Find the request form on the Facebook page of the Training & Resources site (accessible through [imakeanimpact.org](https://www.imakeanimpact.org)).

- Stay connected to your chapter and youth service club members.
- Post invitations to upcoming events.
- Poll members to gain insight and ideas for future events.
- Gather feedback about past activities.
- Share fun event photos.
- Host virtual activities.
- Answer questions from members and engage with their posts and comments.

**Who should join your group?** Invite all members listed on your chapter or youth club roster on [imakeanimpact.org](https://www.imakeanimpact.org) to join. Create one closed group per chapter to ensure your members have the most exclusive and relevant information. See the Fraternal Digital Policy (located in the Training & Resources site) for more information.



## A nod to TRADITION

### Share the 2024 password with your members

In Modern Woodmen's early days, it was common for members to share secret handshakes, wear ceremonial attire, or perform elaborate routines during activities and meetings. A lot has changed in the past 141 years, and our chapters and youth service clubs now opt for a more low-key approach.

If you'd like to be part of one long-standing tradition, use the cipher below to learn this year's password. Then share with your chapter president and members at your next activity.

#### Official cipher

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
\$	@	?	!	:	.	,	*	=>	§	€	&	—
N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
∏	†	‡	[	( )	]	)	‘	“	(	°	[ ]	a

**2024 password** ( = & ! \$ @ † ° ) \$ ∏ ⇒ — \$ & ]



## Member program SPOTLIGHT

### Provide peace of mind for member families

Modern Woodmen recently enhanced two long-standing programs for member families. Both are designed to alleviate some financial worries during an especially trying time.

#### Orphan Support Benefit (formerly Orphan Benefit)

Modern Woodmen supports qualifying children who lose both parents by providing a monthly allowance to the child's guardian. The program also includes an education grant.

#### Newborn Life Insurance Benefit (formerly Newborn Benefit)

This two-part member program supports parents of infants born in poor health.

1. It ensures member parents can obtain permanent life insurance coverage for their newborn's future ... regardless of current health.
2. In case of early tragedy, the program automatically assists with the newborn's funeral or medical costs.

Dollar amounts and qualification guidelines have been updated to better align with the needs of today's families. Get the details at [modernwoodmen.org/memberprograms](https://www.modernwoodmen.org/memberprograms). Or ask your members to contact their Modern Woodmen representatives to learn more.

**Activity idea!** Host an educational event to remind attendees about all the programs available exclusively to Modern Woodmen members. Check out the Fraternal Programs Educational Event Activity Guide and use one of two separate presentations:

- **PowerPoint and script.** This presentation shares current member programs in a standard, straightforward format.
- **Interactive presentation.** This format incorporates fun activities to add some excitement to your event and aid learning.

Access the guide and presentations on the Training & Resource site (accessible through [imakeanimpact.org](https://www.imakeanimpact.org)). From the left-hand navigation, go to Activity Ideas > Project Guides.



## TRAVEL with us

### Enjoy beautiful fall foliage and more

The Modern Woodmen Travels program brings members nationwide together for exciting excursions at a group rate. Remove the stress of planning your own trip. And enjoy unique experiences you likely wouldn't have on your own.

#### Tell your members about these upcoming trips:

- **Costa Rica, July 15-20** – Visit [eventscloud.com/2024CostaRica/](https://www.eventscloud.com/2024CostaRica/) to get all the details about this family-friendly, all-inclusive trip. Registration is nearly full, but you can sign up to be notified if a spot opens!
- **New England/Canada cruise, Sept. 29-Oct. 6** – Registration opens in February for this trip geared to members 50 and up. Ship departs from Boston, with ports of call in Maine, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Learn more at [eventscloud.com/NewEnglandCanadacruise/](https://www.eventscloud.com/NewEnglandCanadacruise/).



# Pioneers for life<sup>SM</sup>

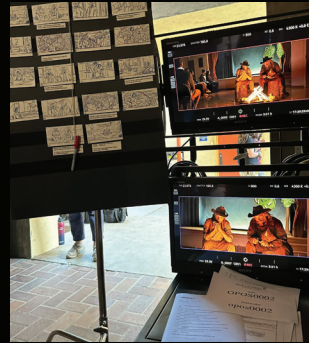
Behind the scenes of Modern Woodmen's new national ad campaign

Modern Woodmen has embodied the pioneer spirit since 1883 – ahead of the curve and long before it was fashionable. That's the inspiration for Modern Woodmen's new national "campfire stories" ad campaign.

Commercials and video for social media were shot in Los Angeles in October. (In a small-world twist, the director, Brian Billow, is originally from Wells, Vermont, home of a long-standing and successful Modern Woodmen camp hall. He grew up going to events and was excited to work with our organization!)

The goal of the campaign is to make Modern Woodmen relevant for a new generation of life insurance buyers, building brand awareness and driving membership growth. The message, channels and tactics were based on extensive research about how to reach our target audience.

The campaign launched in select areas of California, Mississippi and North Carolina in November. Stay tuned as our message spreads across the country in 2024.



SCAN THE CODE FOR A PEEK!

The full ad campaign features a range of multimedia, including commercials on connected TV, billboards, audio ads during podcasts and more.

