

Social networks help NALC reach beyond membership

Over the past couple of years, the NALC has slowly and steadily been expanding its presence on the popular Facebook and Twitter online community websites.

“We’ve found that these sites give us a chance to spread our union’s message farther and faster than ever before,” NALC President Fredric Rolando said. “They provide us a valuable opportunity not only to embrace the changes that technology has brought to our culture, but to use those advances to our advantage.”

Initially launched in 2004 as an online conduit for college students to maintain contact with each other, Face-

everyday use. It’s also the reason that the word “friend” is now used as a verb—to “friend” someone on Facebook is to connect with them on the service, whether they are actual friends, family members, acquaintances or simply business associates. (Users separately create a relationship with a Facebook page belonging to a business or celebrity by “liking” it.)

Twitter came along about two years later and now boasts about half a billion users worldwide. It is sometimes called a “microblogging” site because of its simple interface as well as its rule that messages posted to the site can be no longer than 140 characters long, a limit designed to make Twitter ideal for subscribers to access and post updates using their cell phones’ text-messaging function. The word “follow” describes how Twitter connections are made.

Both of these services provide users with ideal opportunities to post items of interest that can then be viewed by all of the friends or followers within an individual’s network. Facebook and Twitter cost nothing to join—they are subsidized by targeted advertisements placed both on their homepages and within users’ news feeds.

“As we began to see these social networking sites’ popularity skyrocket,” Rolando said, “we quickly realized that they held great potential for us to connect not just with our members, but with the public at large.”

The NALC already uses a number of ways to communicate effectively within our membership, the president said—this magazine, of course, plus the *NALC Bulletin*, the e-Activist Network and our own website, just to name a



You can “like” NALC on Facebook.

book today connects nearly 1 billion users all over the world, and it helped drive the phrase “social network” into



You can “retweet” on Twitter.

few examples. And we make extensive use of the news media at the national and local levels to get our message across, through op-eds and letters to newspaper editors, as well as through radio and television interviews.

“Members of the news media have been quick to embrace social media,” Rolando said, “so through Facebook and Twitter, we have tremendous opportunities—to communicate with reporters before they start to write their stories, and to extend our reach both to and beyond our members, since each of these services makes sharing information extremely easy to do.”

Sharing made simple

The NALC Facebook page, facebook.com/nalc.national, boasted about 10,000 “likes” as this article was being prepared, a number that grows steadily every day. Those “likes” mean that whenever the NALC posts an article or news piece on its own Facebook page, that item then appears on the newsfeeds of those 10,000 Facebook users—NALC members as well as allies and other interested individuals.

The same can be said about posts—known as “tweets”—that are seen by the NALC’s nearly 1,750 Twitter followers at twitter.com/nalc_national.

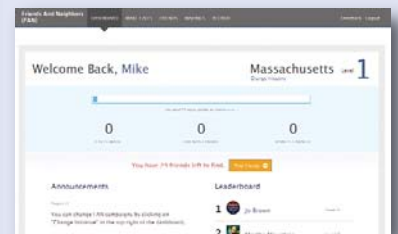
But the number of people who *can* see these posts and tweets is not limited to those individuals who formally follow our Facebook and Twitter pages. Users are able to easily repost items they find interesting, so that they show up on their own pages for their networks of friends and followers to see. In Facebook, that’s done by clicking “share” at the bottom of a post; with Twitter, clicking “retweet” accomplishes the same thing.

“This is one way that we see a real value in our participation in these online communities,” Rolando said. “For example, most of our members understand what pre-funding is and that the Postal Service hasn’t received a dime of taxpayer money in decades. But when our friends and followers share messages that we post on our own sites, that sets in motion a ripple effect that could carry our message to hundreds of thousands of people.”

And with so many users checking in with their Facebook friends and Twitter followers several times a day—via home computer, mobile phone web browser and/or smartphone app—it can only help the NALC extend the reach of our message far beyond our membership, the president said.

Links to the NALC’s Facebook and Twitter accounts can be found at the top of the homepage at nalc.org. ✉

Recruit your friends and family with the AFL-CIO



New for the Labor 2012, the AFL-CIO is rolling out a “Friends and Neighbors” Facebook tool to mobilize voters for the November election. This tool makes it quick and easy for activists to connect with their friends and family members via Facebook accounts to make sure everyone knows what’s critical in this election.

Signing up is as easy as logging into your Facebook page. The more you connect with your friends, family and neighbors, the more you’ll receive badges and other prizes.

Check out fan.workersvoice.org to join in the fight for working families. ✉