



Knights of Maryland State Council

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WIDOWS PROGRAM

Maryland State Council Knights of Columbus

When we became Knights, we took an oath based on the principles outlined by Blessed Michael McGivney to assist our widows and orphans. Helping a widow immediately following the death of her husband and in the following months and years to come is core to who we are as Knights. Simply remembering the widow of a Knight is too little to meet the expectations of Fr. McGivney.

What's needed is more than just immediate emotional support. In our conversations with several recent widows, they say what is most important to them is for the Knights to acknowledge deceased Knights, to keep widows' lives as normal as possible through support and encouragement, and to keep widows active in their Council programs and activities. Many widows admit it's hard to let people help them, but they greatly appreciate the outreach and support.

Ask yourself – what is my Council doing to assist our widows?

Here are some quick, easy, and no-cost to inexpensive ideas to create and maintain an effective Widows Program that keeps your widows involved and valued at your Council.

Maintain regular contact with your widows. Everything in a widow's life is busy from the period of her husband's death up to the burial, then slowly goes back to normal. Do not drop your efforts to include your widows in your programs and activities. Be sure to check on them to ensure their needs are being met. **One step is to create a database of your Council's widows and invite them to all State and Council events throughout the year,** including the Annual Maryland State Council Memorial Mass, the State Picnic, and other State and Council events. Send a quarterly or more frequent notice to widows with whom you have email or other addresses. Our widows need to know we are always thinking about them.

Start an "adopt a widow" program. Delegate a Council member to be available to help a deceased member's wife with practical ways to address daily and community needs. Suggestions include:

- **Provide transportation to meetings/events/Mass.** Many widows may find it difficult to get themselves to/from Mass and events, and some might find it difficult to feel as if they fit in without their husband being there. Try to include your widows as much as they will allow.
- **Offer to help with finances, insurance, and legal issues.** Everyone's financial and legal picture is not the same. Some widows will need very little help, but others will need someone to help them navigate the many legal and other tasks (such as Social Security, Veterans Affairs, military benefits, insurance, etc.) they suddenly face, even if there are family members to help with these tasks. Offer to help with basic changes that are necessary. Your Council's Insurance agent can help a widow, or her representative, understand insurance and financial decisions needed following the death of her husband.
- **Help with chores and tasks.** This could include trimming the hedges, mowing the lawn, cleaning the gutters, putting up or taking down decorations, and so on. This would be a good connection point with the Scouts if available.
- **Establish a widow's support group.** Hold regular luncheons or events that allow widows to meet and talk about their experiences and to share their stories related to the things they have had to do related to their husband's

passing, as well as serving as a social event. This group will be able to further define what type of support your widows need going forward.

- **Involve your Ladies Auxiliary if your Council has one.** The Ladies Auxiliary may know the widow better than you as a Council member, and what immediate and future support is needed. Also, there may be ladies in the auxiliary who are widowed and can share their experience/insight with new widows.

- **Create a card and call program.** Have a Council member call a widow or send cards to remember a birthday, holiday, or other event. Your Council Insurance agent and/or financial secretary may be able to provide some information. Also, remember to check on your Council's widows during inclement weather/power emergencies to see if they need assistance.

- **Prepare a list of resources** that can be tailored to your community, such as local references for grief counseling, encouraging outreach support from parishioners, and establishing a point person within your Council for general questions. You also may want to develop a list of state and national organizations through which widows help other widows. Be sure to consider outreach for young children and young adults who lose a parent. Also, think about offering grief/bereavement resources, such as the 4-book set *Journeying Through Grief* by Kenneth C. Haugk (available from Amazon). This will help the widow understand her feelings as she is going through each phase of grief. Many of these ideas are Council-oriented, but they also could be Parish-oriented. A Council could partner with any parish program.

Make your Council a vital part of Fr. McGivney's vision to assist our widows. Your widows can be an excellent source of information and offer new ideas for your Council's ongoing growth and service.

For more information on creating a Widows Program at your Council, contact:

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