

Your USNA Alumni Association and The Evolution of Web Sites

The Naval Academy Alumni Association has long provided the server space to host Chapter web sites, as well as hosting Classes and Parents Clubs sites. Our own New Mexico Chapter has taken advantage of that hosting since Day One, as our web site has been found via this web address (URL): <http://newmexico.usnachapters.com>

Change happens, and now the Alumni Association is encouraging a transition to a new foundation for the sites it supports on its server. Under this new system, our web presence will be found at:

<http://newmexico.usnachapters.net>

See the difference? The new address ends in **.net** rather than **.com** – but what does this mean? The address ending is not the important change, the real change is moving from a standard web site to a WordPress based web presence.

Here are a few **FAQs** (Frequently Asked Questions) about this migration/evolution of web sites:

What is WordPress? The US Naval Academy Alumni Association is now offering hosted WordPress sites *free* for all chapters as another tool in our chapter leadership toolbox. WordPress is a free and open-source content management system that has been around since 2003, and is installed on a USNA web server that is a network host in its own right. Thus the Alumni Association now has WordPress installed on its server for use by Chapters, Classes, and Parents Clubs.

WordPress powers many blogs and websites, thus the Alumni Association is in good company to go with this underlying ‘engine.’ Examples of WordPress users for web sites among Fortune 500 companies are GM, Sony, Ebay, Best Buy, and UPS; among news orgs are Forbes, Reuters, CNN, and The New York Times. Microsoft News, the official portal for news about Microsoft Corp, is powered by WordPress.

About 20 Chapters have already switched over to the .net (WordPress) format. Visit usnachapters.net to see what chapters have switched already, and what chapters are “in development” (i.e., working toward this goal) – which includes us, the New Mexico Chapter. As a good (big) example, see the [Texas Gulf Coast Chapter](http://txgulfcoast.usnachapters.net/) (i.e., Houston area).

<http://txgulfcoast.usnachapters.net/>

What does WordPress offer? WordPress provides something the Academy values: structure and discipline. These derive in part from a limited set of standard templates to choose from; thus there will be a uniformity of Chapter websites, and a visitor or an alum can move from Chapter web site to Chapter web site and know where to find the local contact info, events and

calendars, and how to join. Another advantage is that the 'mother ship' (usna.com) can provide direct update information to the Chapters so all can show the latest information to their members.

Here is another way to envision the change: a web site has 'static' pages – they don't change quickly or easily. A blog has 'dynamic' pages – for example, a Facebook page may change as you view it – users may add posts, or "likes" or comments. WordPress is a hybrid of these worlds: some pages are static, plus there are "posts" that may include calendars of upcoming events, or comments from Chapter members.

What are the advantages of this new approach? Advantages for having our chapter website on this network are:

- WordPress is intuitive for the 'users' – about as easy as Facebook.
- Admins ["users"] can update our chapter website from any device, including iPhones, from anywhere in the world – thus even if Christine is in Afghanistan, she could update the New Mexico Chapter website.
- We can add multiple "users" [different levels of admin] to our site admin team to share communications responsibilities.
- Like our old website, this new chapter website is FREE, no need to register our own domain, no worries to keep our domain registration current, no need to find website hosting. All site platform maintenance, improvements and updating is done by a team of site constituents.

When will the New Mexico Chapter migrate to the new net, the WordPress site? We are currently in development and will be for some time. The Alumni Association encourages the migration, but does not force it. If we as a Chapter prefer to keep our old web site, USNA will continue to host it on their server. Our Webmaster (Blackie '63) is slowly migrating toward the new WordPress engine.

Is there a way I can help? WordPress allows multiple 'users' on a site – users meaning some form of administrative control. Consider all these ways to participate as a 'user':

- Administrator – somebody who has access to all the administration features within a single site.
- Editor – somebody who can publish and manage posts including the posts of other users.
- Author – somebody who can publish and manage their own posts.
- Contributor – somebody who can write and manage their own posts but cannot publish them.
- Subscriber – somebody who can only manage their profile.

Currently, all we have is a single Administrator (Blackie '63), who is also the Webmaster for our old 'traditional' web site. If you would like to sign on for one of the above five levels of participation, send an email to mike@blackledge.com

The latest USNA.com web enhancement includes a geographical (US Map) method of locating Parents Clubs and Alumni Chapters. You can view this interactive map here: <https://www.usna.com/FindAChapter>

The map links to our New Mexico Chapter web site, and our Chapter Facebook group page. We have a Facebook page, but not much on it, and probably most of our members are not aware of it, as we have given it little publicity.

Facebook: Would you consider joining our Facebook group? Just go to Facebook.com and search for:

USNA Alumni Association - New Mexico Chapter

... or you could just search for **New Mexico Chapter**, and our group page will be suggested.