

The Legion Link

December 2009

Vol. 17 Issue 5



THE POWER OF COMMITMENT



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In this Issue...

Page 1

Dept. Commander

Page 2

Dept. Vice Commander

Dept. Chaplain

Dept. Law & Order

Dept. Commander (cont.)

Page 3

Children & Youth

Americanism

Page 4

Membership

Page 5

Veterans Employment

Homeless Veterans

Page 6

Flag Protection

Page 7

Job Fair

POW/MIA

Page 8

Boy Scouts

JROTC

Shooting Sports

Page 9

Legislative

Oratorical

December Fun Facts

Program Reminders



Phil Hearlson Department Commander phearlson@aol.com 352.307.8119

National Fall Meetings for Department Commanders and Adjutants were held in Indianapolis November 9th – November 15th. All 55 Departments were represented. The meetings were informative and enjoyable. In talking with Department Commanders from other Departments, I found that we all have the same problems. The highlight was attending the homecoming held for Clarence Hill at Post 64 in Indianapolis. Over 300 Legion Family members were in attendance to honor Clarence for his service to the American Legion. Clarence is an incessant road warrior, spending endless hours on airplanes as he travels for our organization.

On October 17th I traveled to Panama City to present Post 392 their permanent charter. The enthusiasm of the members in attendance was overwhelming. They have many active duty members. They started this year with 16 members; they now have 157 members for over 981%. Thank you to Commander Mike Kirchoff and his wife Tina for the hospitality that was shown to me and Peggy.

October 22nd and 23rd I headed for the 9th District. Thank you to the 9th District Commander Joe Motes for organizing a great visit. We visited 8 posts. On our visit to Post 142 in Pompano Beach a dinner fundraiser was held for a teenage burn victim. Congratulations to Post 142 they raised about \$3000.

The visit to 11th District was special as Department President Mary Kelly-Perkins and Detachment Commander Mike Dooley were also there for their District Visits. I was able to visit 6 Posts in 11th District. Post 47 in Lake Worth



held an Oktoberfest. What a great time we had and the food was wonderful. Thank you District Commander Paul Bosco for your hospitality.

On November 10th The American Legion Family at Post 284 hosted a Woman's Veterans luncheon at Belleview Post 284. About 60 women veterans were honored. It was a privilege and an honor to speak to these women who laid the foundation for our woman veterans serving today. Mary Montgomery did a fantastic job organizing this event.

If you have ever visited Post 54 in Fernandina Beach, you were at the small log cabin that the Legionnaires called home. But now, all that has changed. On November 11th we were at Post 54 dedicating their new Post Home. To the American Legion Family at Post 54, you have done a great job!



Thank you to Western Area Commander Martha Harris for assisting me with the charter presentation.

Commander's column, continued from page 1...

We were pleased at the response of two new initiatives that were held at Fall Conference. The first, the program chairmen for both the Legion and the Auxiliary set up informational tables with brochures and members could visit the exhibits and obtain information about the programs in which they had an interest. A Post and Unit Relationship Seminar was held. Myself, Al Porter, Mike McDaniel, Mary Kelly-Perkins, Irma Wehrli and Robin Brier, were on the panel. We were there to answer questions regarding matters between the Legion and the Auxiliary and to encourage The Legion Family to work together. We had a great turn out and many questions were asked and answered. We have had National Commanders in attendance at our conferences before, but this year had a very special meaning as our very own National Commander Clarence Hill spoke to us. The leading candidate for National Commander, Jimmie Foster, spoke to us. Jimmie is from Alaska and enjoyed the Florida Sunshine. Bob Proctor did a great job in putting together the Florida Homecoming for Commander Hill. The entertainment was great. Thank you to all the Legion Family members who attended the Fall Conference.



*Law and Order
Dennis Bruland
drbruland@embarqmail.com*

The judging criteria for the Law Officer and Firefighter of the Year Program have changed for 2010. The community service portion has changed from 50 to 35 points. Professional Career changed to 40 points from 25 points. Heroism and Letters of recognition, documentation, news clippings, etc have remained at 20 and 5 points for a total of 100 points. The Department of Florida is now in line with the National guidelines established for the Law and Order Program. Judges will also be looking for well rounded candidates that have exceeded above and beyond the duty requirements of his/her position, exemplifies the virtues of professionalism and dedication, demonstrated a distinct pattern of community service, on and off duty and proven his/her personal dedication to societal security and protection. The deadline to receive applications is May 17, 2010.

*Al Porter
Department Vice-Commander
albertporter@bellsouth.net*

Hello Legionnaires –

What a wonderful experience I had at Fort Meyers Beach, Post #274 where 21 wounded warriors from the Army were treated to dinner and a night of entertainment. Congratulations to the Post Commander and all members of the Post, along with the elected officials of Fort Meyers Beach, for a job well done.

Veterans Day was very special as I attended the parade at Haley Medical Center in Tampa to honor our Veterans.

Trips were also made to Jacksonville, Holly Hill, and DeLand to attend their District Meetings. This is where information is exchanged. It is very important that you attend these meetings. District Commanders and Area Commanders put a lot of work into organizing them.

Fall Conference was held Nov. 13-15. I believe the programs and classes that were offered were both informational and educational. You can learn a lot and interaction between your fellow Legionnaires is important.

It is hard to believe that Turkey Day is almost here. My best wishes for all of you to have a Great Thanksgiving Day. We will be in Seminole, helping to feed our fellow veterans.

Please keep our active duty service members in your prayers.

*Robert Vick
Department Chaplain
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Having an accepting and caring heart toward others - We can all have a caring and accepting heart without surrendering our core beliefs. The American Legion has always been non sectarian. By that, I mean we do not promote a particular belief system or denomination.

The constitution of our great country guarantees this right to all of us as citizens. Conversely, we do not prohibit the personal beliefs of anyone.

As chaplain, when I perform a service for someone, funeral, wedding, counseling, prayer or visit, I do these things within the boundaries of your particular belief system.

I make no judgment about your belief system. that's personal, and between you and God. I suggest we all do that.

As long as one does not require another to accept his or her personal beliefs, we should be tolerant and accepting.

Your faith is not a badge you wear on your collar or cap. It's a matter of the heart, and is personal between you and a personal God. I can accept you, and call you friend, without espousing your particular faith or denomination. Please, let's all do this for our comrades and the veterans we represent. Trusting you are well God bless you



*Jim Ramos
Department of Florida
Children & Youth Chairman
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November was a very busy month within your Posts and the community. If you missed the Fall Conference you missed a very good meeting on Children & Youth. Also we had a Program Fair with all programs and Program Chairmen so you could talk about each program and what to do and how to work that program within your Post. No time to stop; we have to plan for December and January. This is a very good time to get your Post together. However we must look first at December 7, 2009 - Pearl Harbor Day. President Franklin Roosevelt said "Yesterday, December 7, (1941) was a date that will live in infamy." So please remember our WWII Veterans and honor them at your Post. Please don't forget Our Veterans within your Post, Community and how we can Support Our Troops NOW. Formulate a Plan of Action based on your Post needs for this time of the year. Some Suggestions: Still keep the Children and Youth program as the main focus. Your Post can plan a Christmas party for the children of the community with some small gifts. It will be a very happy event for the family's and your Post. The Post could just have an open house with some gifts for kids.

Also, visit the schools in your area (Middle and High schools). Let them know about the brochures of (TFA) Temporary Financial Assistance for families with children at home that need financial help; Warning Signs about Teen Suicide "8 out of 10 people who commit suicide tell someone that they're thinking about hurting themselves before they actually do it" This is a brochure on how to get help and facts and myths about youth suicide.

Gateway Drugs brochure promotes the ideals of citizenship, teamwork, loyalty, fair play, courage, physical fitness, and mental toughness, needed to give our youth the skills necessary to be a positive influence on others who need help.

Family Support Network a brochures is designed to promote support for military families.

Legion Kids website (www.legion.org/kids) is for children and youth so they will have some thing to do at home during the holidays.

Also think about planning a New Years party. If you and your Post can do it for the membership of the Post you can invite some of the community too. Now let's plan some for January 2010. I would like be the first to say Happy New Year to you and your Post membership.

Now to work in January - Operation Military Kids information will be coming soon. The Legion and Auxiliary will need help from your Post. Go out to the community and school. Say hello and let them know what is coming in the future with your Post activities and if you need some help. Take a day to care for children and/or Veterans in the community that needs help. Also look at Boys and Girls Scouting programs see what you or your Post can help with. Send out news releases on all activities to schools and the community leaders.

My program push for this year is for the Child Welfare Foundation. If you or your Post can gave just \$25.00 it will help our Children & Youth. More information and suggestions will follow in the future.



*Americanism
Dianne Thibodeau
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One of the most lasting Legion contributions to American life is that of making our communities better places to live. Community Service is a major Americanism activity. Every community is in need of many improvements; especially now a days. Before moving forward, your post should first conduct a survey, look over what activities are being promoted by others, decide what the community needs, and set out with the cooperation of the other organizations to accomplish the desired goals. Let's work together with the other Veterans organizations (such as the VFW or the AmVets).

Each post should also look within the Legion Family when accomplishing these community goals. When events are being planned (such as a Veterans Day Parade or a Job Fair), why not ask other posts within the area to participate? Take turns with another post close by when doing a ceremony at the post (such as the Legion Birthday or the Four Chaplains). There will be twice as many people in the community participating (when it is advertised in both areas). This is much better than one post planning it with only a few participants and another post close by not scheduling one because they don't think they have the time. Work together!

The Department just had their Fall Conference. They are constantly trying new ideas to get people more active and informed. I hope you stopped by Friday night when the Legion and the Auxiliary had their program Chairmen set up together so everyone could stop and ask questions. This is a great learning tool. During the Conference, a Chairman gets only a few minutes to talk about their program. This was a wonderful opportunity for everyone.

We are at that time of year when our lives are usually quite hectic; thinking about family and friends; gifts to buy, cards to send, and many other wondrous things to do for the holidays. Let's not forget our fellow veterans close to home. There are post members who live alone and we may be the only family they have. Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays to you all! For God & Country

75% Goal

December 2, 2009

District/Area Membership Report as of Nov. 30, 2009

District/ Area	Commander	Goal	Rec'd	% Goal
4	Gerald Montgomery	4044	3378	83.53
16	George Paradise	12144	9618	79.20
7	Keith Holz	4440	3504	78.92
11	Paul Boxco	4757	3733	78.47
17	Arthur Schwabe	4368	3420	78.30
2	George Segrest	1376	1072	77.91
15	Larry Faulkner	5794	4442	76.67
3	James Troupe	1655	1268	76.62
6	William Walsh	9570	7318	76.47
9	Joseph Motes	4818	3673	76.23
10	Larrio Walden	1095	832	75.98
8	Gregory Putman	9042	6859	75.86
12	Carl Schneider	8772	6647	75.78
13	Frank Ward	9365	6975	74.48
1	Stephen Shuga	6473	4796	74.09
14	Angela Glover	2314	1664	71.91
5	Gregory Lovejoy	8154	5677	69.62
Central	Kathryn Ferrin	22378	17564	78.49
Southern	David Knapp	12984	9902	76.26
Eastern	Earl Friedeborn	18342	13965	76.14
Northern	James Corner	18221	13743	75.42
SW	Richard Francis	18407	13834	75.16
Western	Martha Harris	7849	5868	74.76
Dept			74876	
Post 400		22248	14461	65.00
Post 208		1942	1409	72.55
Totals		132000	90746	68.75

*Robert Brewster, Membership
brewsterrobert@bellsouth.net*

This year is really flying by. I am just back home from the Fall Conference in Orlando. I had the opportunity to meet and talk to so many of you who were attending this Conference. It was an eye opener. People who know me know that I am a little on the emotional side. But all of you, who I had met with, really inspired me. So many of the people I met held important jobs in the State, from Post level and on up. I was really impressed with their enthusiasm and dedication to The American Legion. They truly believe in Vets helping Vets in the local community. I had the fantastic experience to attend the joint session of the Auxiliary and the American Legion, where all types of ideas, problems, and successes were discussed. I believe we all came away with the feeling that this type of work session should be continued. I know, for one reason or another, a lot of you could not attend the Fall Conference. Please attend your Post meetings, your District meetings, and your Area meetings for they are full of inspiration and education. We all benefit by attending these meetings.

Our National Commander Clarence Hill was in attendance at the Fall Conference. I got a chance to briefly talk with him and he gave a very good and educational presentation. My fellow Florida Legionnaires – you came through again. There is no way I can thank you for the hard work and dedication you are displaying. We reached our 65% goal. It was close, but we reached it together. Every District and Area made it. Our 400 renewal rate is a little down.

Our next goal is 75% in December. I am heading back out Friday to continue visiting Posts and working with the various Districts. I am hoping you are all working on retention of existing members, reclaiming lost members, and getting the new. As long as the District, Area, and Post Commanders keep me informed about your special activities, I will be there to work with you.

At this time let me wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! Keep all our members in your hearts, pray for our success, our troops, and our country. For God and Country





VETERANS EMPLOYMENT
Dick Mondro, Department Employment Chairman
dickmondro@comcast.net

Sears Celebrates Military Heroes This Christmas With Programs That Give Back

With many active-duty military fathers and mothers not home while fighting for our country, Sears is again calling on America to step up and say "thanks" to the families of our troops this holiday season. As part of its long-standing commitment to the military, and their families, Sears is kicking off the second year of its Sears Heroes at Home Wish Registry. Adding to that, the retailer is also introducing its new Jobs for Vets program, which will provide job mentoring and placement to returning military veterans and their families.

Last year, the Heroes at Home Wish Registry helped thousands of military families. For many, the wishes were simple and practical including everything from warm clothes to new toys for their children to a Christmas tree and other holiday decorations for their homes. In fact, many veteran families that were helped by last year's efforts have shared their stories to encourage customers to donate to the program this year.

This fall more than 20,000 active members of the military registered to participate in the Heroes at Home Wish Registry. Now through Dec. 31, customers can visit www.Sears.com/heroesathome and read stories, as well as donate to the Heroes at Home Wish Registry. Upon making a donation, customers can include a note to the families and wish them happy holidays. Donations made to the Wish Registry are not tax deductible and will be used to purchase Sears gift cards that will be equally distributed to all registered families.

The Wish Registry enables all Americans to recognize and celebrate the commitment our military makes on behalf of our country every day. I can't think of a better time than the holiday season to give back to those who have given so much.

What's more, this year Sears is expanding its military support by working with the non-profit organizations MyVetNetwork Foundation, Inc. and The American Legion, to create the new Jobs for Vets program. As a part of this initiative, the Heroes at Home program will also help provide job placement and mentorship assistance to military veterans.

MyVetNetwork is an online social networking community custom designed to be the most valuable and sustainable community of individuals in the U.S. military — whether active duty, retired or veteran — and their spouses, families and friends.

Job mentorship and placement are provided through MyVetNetwork and The American Legion at no cost to veterans and their families.

"This is our chance to both provide our brave and dedicated veterans with employment opportunities, and attract and hire more qualified veterans to our ranks. Sears Holdings' ongoing commitment to assisting troops and their families includes several recruiting and employment programs, as well as a military pay differential to Sears associates employed (full time) who are reservists serving on active duty. Reservists who are employed full time are allowed to continue participating in life insurance, medical and dental programs.



Homeless Veterans Are In Danger

Dick Mondro, Chairman Homeless Veterans Task Force

dickmondro@comcast.net

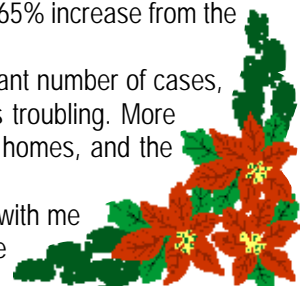
Last month I was honored to receive a request from our department commander to chair the Homeless Veterans Committee for Department. This issue has always been troubling to me and I accepted hoping, with your help, to help improve conditions for our homeless veterans.

Some of the dangers inherent to homelessness are easily known, for example, those that stem directly from the lack of adequate shelter from the elements and food. Florida's homeless veterans are among the most susceptible to these effects as they are among the oldest and most at risk due to illness.

There is an increasing threat to the safety of the homeless. The number of violent crimes against the homeless that have been reported, has risen drastically in the past few years. A 2006 study by the National Coalition for the Homeless found 142 violent crimes (including 20 fatal attacks) committed upon the homeless in the US. This number demonstrates a 65% increase from the number of violent attacks in the previous year and a 170% increase from their findings five years ago.

The crimes documented included rape, stabbing, battery, and being set on fire. The fact that in a significant number of cases, the crimes were committed by teens and young adults, for no apparent reason other than boredom, is troubling. More veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan are becoming homeless. "We're also seeing more families without homes, and the economic crisis is contributing to this problem. Some younger veterans are living out of their vehicles.

I am appealing to all Post's to name a person to serve on this important Homeless Veterans Committee with me and hopefully we can improve their conditions. Please let me know if your Post has a program to help the homeless.





Protecting Our Flag Worth The Effort?
Dick Mondro, Chairman Citizens Flag Alliance

In its 1989 *Texas v. Johnson* decision, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down - by a 5 to 4 vote - more than 200 years of laws protecting the U.S. Flag from physical desecration.

The right to protect the flag was a right that we, as a country, had possessed since the birth of our nation. In the years since our independence, the U.S. Flag has come to symbolize the values of America - freedom, democracy, courage and peace through strength. To desecrate the flag is to desecrate those values.

The American Legion's unwavering support for the amendment, and the fact that about 80 percent of Americans feel that passing such an amendment is the right thing to do.

Five years of polls by the Citizens Flag Alliance show that more than three-quarters of Americans favor the amendment, and 80 percent say they feel that flag desecration is wrong. Why, then, won't the Senate put the vote in the hands of the people it represents? That's all the Legion asks: pass the amendment and then send it to the states for ratification. Let the people decide. But some in the Senate believe they know better than their constituents, or perhaps they're just not listening.

Here's where the grassroots power of The American Legion can make a difference. Florida Legislators must care what we think about the flag amendment because we have the power to a vote, and that vote is our most powerful tool when it comes to dealing with Congress.

That's why I'm asking you to contact your senators and representatives. Call their district offices. Write to them in Washington. Send them e-mails. Give them this simple message: "Support the flag amendment when it's introduced. Sign on as a co-sponsor. Urge your colleagues to do the same. Give the amendment a chance to go before the people."

Your lobbying at the local level empowers our lobbying at the national level. Congress will listen to me more closely if they've already heard from you. That's how The American Legion has always worked.

The language of past amendments has been simple enough: "The Congress shall have power to prohibit the physical desecration of the flag of the United States."

The words are powerful. They would allow us to protect a symbol so sacred, it's draped over the caskets of the men and women killed defending our way of life. A symbol that gives hope to oppressed countries under attack from dominating enemies, and for citizens legally traveling to the United States to seek a better life. Shouldn't a symbol so significant to so many people be protected, the same as someone's personal property? Shouldn't it be afforded the same protection as a U.S. mailbox or a dollar bill? Adoption of an amendment requires a two-thirds affirmative vote from the House [290 ayes] as well as from the Senate [67 ayes]. Adoption of the amendment, making it part of the US Constitution, then requires ratification by three-fourths [38] of the states.

Twenty years ago, five court justices took away our right to protect the U.S. Flag. Trying to retake that right has demanded a lot of time and effort, but every second has been worth it. And every second we spend on it in the future will be worth it, because Old Glory is worth it. With the recent introductions of flag amendments in both the US House of Representatives and the Senate, the cosponsor list grows. More than 200 Representatives have indicated support for the House amendment, and more than 50 Senators have indicated support there. The Let the People Decide booklet is a brief collection of information, observations and techniques for use in promoting the flag amendment. and can be found as a PDF File at: <http://www.cfa-inc.org/publications>

Current Florida Co-sponsors, Nays and Undecided - If your Senators' or Representative's names are not shown, contact them and encourage them to get in touch with Sen. Vitter or Rep. Emerson, respectively, to become an official co-sponsor of S.J. Res. 15 or H.J. Res 47.

YEA House Joint Resolution 47: Jeff Miller [FL-1], Allen Boyd [FL-2], Corrine Brown [FL-3], Ander Crenshaw [FL-4], Ginny Brown-Waite [FL-5], Cliff Stearns [FL-6], John Mica [FL-7], Gus Bilirakis[FL-9], Rep C.W. Bill Young, [FL-10], Adam Putnam [FL-12], Vern Buchanan [FL-13], Connie Mack IV [FL-14], Bill Posey [FL-15], Tom Rooney [FL-16], Ileana Ros-Lehtinen [FL-18], Lincoln Diaz-Balart [FL-21], Mario Diaz-Balart [FL-25].

UNDECIDED: Alan Grayson [FL-8], Kathy Castor [FL-11], Suzanne Kosmas [FL-24].

NAY: Kendrick Meek [FL-17], Bob Wexler [FL-19], Debbie Wasserman-Shultz [FL-20, Ron Klein [FL-22], Alcee Hastings [FL-23].

Senate Joint Resolution 15: Senator Bill Nelson, Senator George LeMieux has indicated he is UNDECIDED!

"The immortal immutable truths embedded in our Constitution are embodied by our flag.

When you burn the flag, you burn the Constitution." Major General Patrick H. Brady, USA (Ret.) Medal of Honor Recipient.

JOB FAIR's & EXPO's

November 2009

VETERANS' JOB AND BENEFITS FAIR

November 6, 2009, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Workforce Alliance Career Center

1951 N. Military Trail, Ste. D, West Palm Beach, 33409

WORKFORCE CONNECTION

OCALA/MARION JOB & CAREER FAIR

November 10, 2009, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

CFCC Klein Conference Center in Ocala

across from the Paddock Mall

THE 3RD ANNUAL NW FLORIDA VETERANS

and MILITARY HIRING FAIR

Sponsored by WORKFORCE ESCAROSA AND JOBSPLUS

November 13th, 2008 from 9:00AM –2:00 PM

Days Inn Conference Center

8700 Navarre Pkwy., Navarre

Call 850- 607-8700 ext. 104 or 103 or 850-833-7587

December 2009

RECRUIT MILITARY CAREER FAIR

Dec 3, 2009, 11:00am - 3:00pm

Tampa Bay Performing Arts Center



Hang this poster in your meeting hall to let everyone know of the reward for recruiting new members. Give your community a chance to be WANTED!

Kathryn Ferrin
Dept POW/MIA Chairman
usafkf@yahoo.com

Department introduced the "Program Fair at Fall Conference. A chance for Legionnaires to ask questions on "how to" and what works & what doesn't. The POW-MIA table was well visited.

Response to the POW-MIA Poster Contest has been positive to date. So all you artists and artistes sharpen your #2's and get your pen nibs and brushes ready. Remember there is \$250.00 for one of you out there. But more importantly this is the opportunity to express your deepest feelings for POW's. Don't forget you have until 1 June 2010 to submit two (2) copies of your poster to Carol Polk at Department. If you have any questions please contact me at: Fldeptpow-mia@yahoo.com For God & Country



Stephen Shuga - Boy Scout Program – shugaste@knology.net
Robert “Bob” Scott – Boy Scout Program - wvcaller@msn.com

Scout units should be working feverishly pushing their Scouts closer to completing their rank requirements and should begin working soon on arrow points, academic and sports pins, belt loops and compass points.

Please remember your designated District Boy Scout Chairman is your go to Legionnaire regarding local Scouting Legion information. If you are unable to reach them or they are unable to answer your question, please contact either myself or Comrade Scott and we will follow-up on your request.

Eagle Scouts who are eligible to compete for the Department of Florida American Legion Eagle Scout of the Year are directed to the Department or National American Legion website under the Boy Scout or Scouting links to download or copy this year’s Candidate Form. Review and follow the instructions. Submit it on-time (NLT 1 March 2010) to Department Headquarters for your package to be considered.

Now is a great time to be registered in the BSA. Special events galore are less than two months away. Witnessing the end of the first 100 years of the BSA and bridging into the next century is a major event for those that have enjoyed being a Scout and are registered now to carry on history into the next.

With the Thanksgiving activities behind us, we are now focusing on the winter holiday activities, vacations, travels, and parties. As the coming weeks swiftly pass us by, we wish all Legionnaires, our Veterans, their families and our Scouting Nation the happiest of holiday seasons, a prosperous, safe, and healthy new year. For God and Country – Yours in Better Scouting



ROTC/Shooting Sports
Loretta Young
Lorettayung@yahoo.com



Postal Target Order request forms are coming in very slow so far. Again a reminder that these have to be in to National by Jan. 15, 2010. The word must not be getting down from the Districts to the Posts. Are the Chairmen keeping on top of the events held in their area? There have been several local matches that I have had the opportunity to visit with the JROTC Units that are usually held on Saturdays. Cadets compete on a local level before advancing on to County levels with trophies that are presented to the winners. The Commander’s Cup Marksmanship Event held annually in Titusville will be early this year on Nov. 21st and will have 3 teams coming from Broward County; Everglades H.S., Monarch H.S. and Stranahan H.S. These events should be supported and attended by the local posts and Legion members.

This is an opportunity for our youth to get scholarship money for further education as they advance up to State and National competitions. First Place Winners in the State Postal Matches receive \$500 and can advance up to National winners with a \$2,500 scholarship. Last year Florida was very fortunate to have Courtney Bates from Oveido H.S. who was the 1st place winner receiving \$1,000 and she advanced to Nationals in Colorado Springs in August and placed 3rd. Oveido H.S. is sponsored by Post 112 in Winter Park and is a shining example of the success a Post can have by continuing to support our youth programs. Thank you to all who support these worthwhile programs.

For clarification on the JROTC Cadet of the Year program - The application was sent out by Department at the beginning of the semester to all of the high schools that have a JROTC program. We have found in many cases they are not getting to the instructors. PLEASE follow up with your schools to make sure they have the form and if they do not, please contact Carol Polk at Department and have one sent to the chairman to give personally to the Senior Instructor. These are due by March 1, 2010. Again this is a strict deadline so don't miss the date. Get them back to Department! Last year we had 45 applicants and I'm sure we can do better this year.

I want to thank the Department of Florida for giving the Chairmen the opportunity to present their programs at the Program Fair during the Fall Conference. I had a chance to personally meet some of the Legionnaires who support our programs and answer many questions for some of our new supporters. Keep up the good work.

The Department of Florida last year received the Paul H. Griffith Award for participation in the ROTC program under the Securities Commission. This can only be accomplished by filling out your end of the year reports, CPR's and Addendums. We thank you all.





*Stanley Gold
Legislative Chairman
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In September I was in Washington D.C. when our National Commander, Clarence Hill, gave the Legion's Legislative goals to the Joint House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committee. His number one topic was a request for the Veteran's Health Care, Budget Reform and Transparency Act of 2009.

This landmark legislation contained a provision for which the Legion had campaigned for many years. After this was passed by the House and the Senate, President Obama signed it into law on October 22, 2009. The American Legion was there for the signing.

Another bill in which Commander Hill talked with us was HR 3365; The Medicare VA Reimbursement Act of 2009. We did get many of our Florida members of Congress to co-sign this bill. Please call our two Senators and tell them we need their support too.

Another item for the past few years the Legion has been fighting for is the Relaxation of Priority Group 8 Enrollment Restrictions. Public Law 110-329 which provides VA additional funding to allow expanded enrollment opportunity for certain Priority 8 veterans who may have been previously denied enrollment in VA's health care system because their income exceeds VA's National and Geographic PG 8 Relaxation income thresholds (which was over \$21,000 a year income).

The new regulations take effect on June 15, 2009 to increase the income of veterans without dependents to \$32,342 and to veterans with 2 dependent to \$38,812 and each additional dependent add \$2,222.

This law could help thousands of homeless veterans to receive free medical care at a VA hospital. For more information on this call the VA-Resource Center at 1-877-222-8387.

At the NEC meeting in October I was appointed to the high office of Vice Chairman, National Legislative Council.

At the Fall Meeting in Orlando I was glad to see the Florida American Legion Press Association (FALPA) become alive again by the election of new officers. Mark Johnson is the new President. FALPA will help any Post get a newsletter out to their members. When I asked you to let Congress know about the Medicare Bill, only about 1000 of you would follow through. But, if each Post Editor would mention this, we may get 100,000 members and family to contact their member of Congress. FALPA will help you get a paper started or help you improve one you already have. FALPA dues are \$10.00 a year for membership and National Press is \$5.00 a year. You can call Mark Johnson at 321.749.1118 or 321.690.0791.

Last month as Department Legislative Chairman I was invited to a dinner honoring President Obama in Miami Beach. I did get to talk with him and also the ten Congressmen from Florida who were also there.

Oratorical

*Ron Musselwhite, Department Chairman
Ron_seis@comcast.net*

All Post should have their Post contest scheduled by now. Most will have them completed. Remember that all Post contest need to be completed by Jan 10, 2010. District chairpersons should have their District contest scheduled by now also. District contest have to be completed by Jan. 31, 2010. Most Area Contest are scheduled, I only need two more Area dates.

District chairs need to get with all the Post in their Districts to see which Post are having a contest and which ones are sponsoring a contestant at the District contest. Let's make this another great year for the Oratorical program. For God and Country



Steve Shuga, Larry Carpenter, Martha Harris, Stanley Gold - Freeport, FL

Program Reminders

Boys State - Registration Fees due December 23, 2009. The registration fee is \$300.00 per boy.

Oratorical - Post Contests must be held no later than January 10, 2010.

Blood Donor - Holiday Drive begins Thanksgiving Day, ends New Year's Day.

Boy Scouts - Their 100th anniversary is celebrated through December 31, 2010. Have you made plans to celebrate with a scouting unit?

JROTC/Shooting Sports - Have you contacted your High School JROTC to find out if they are interested in participating in the Shooting Sports program?? Targets are due to National January 15, 2010.

