

# The Legion Link

January 2009

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## Shining Stars

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Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!! By the time you read this you will be done with the holidays and on the way to a New Year. Things will slow down a bit, but I'm asking you all to try to get membership to where it should be. We missed the 75% goal; we were only at 72%, and the 80% goal (a Shining Start for the New Year) will be January 7, 2009. I know we can do this, just put your mind to it and continue to 'Just Ask.'

I have been very busy traveling to Districts for our visitations and you have all been the best.

I have asked all District Commanders to allow me to spend a few more days in their area. Because I believe ALL Posts are important to the Department I want to stop by as many Posts as I can... BIG AND SMALL. Your hearts are as big as all outdoors and members are doing the job for the right reasons.

District Commanders, your leadership and guidance is so crucial to our American Legion. Never lose sight of where you are going and the reason you are going there. Sometimes we get involved in petty problems. Most of the time it has to do with personalities. Please try to keep an open mind and go by the manuals and you will be on the right track.

Our video at Headquarters will be a few days late because of the holidays but, it will be on the web site soon. Speaking of which, we do hope you have enjoyed them so far. As I have been saying, let's do the job, but do not forget to have fun.

If I may ask a big favor of you who have rifle tickets... please get the ticket money to Headquarters. We must get this job done. When all the tickets are sold, we will pull the winner on our video for all to see. In advance, I thank you

for what you do for our Legion. May God bless all of you and please keep all our men & women in your prayers.

### *Membership Round-Up Golf Tournament*

The Florida American Legion is again sponsoring a Golf Tournament hosted by No-Vel Post 159, Venice, Florida on March 7th, 2009. The tournament is in conjunction with the Department's 90% Membership Round-Up at the Lake Venice Golf Club. This is one of the few opportunities for the Department of Florida to raise money for the Legion sponsored programs. In order for this endeavor to be successful it is requested that all American Legion Posts, Officers and Candidates sponsor a hole in the golf tournament. Hole sponsorship is \$50.00. Two of the programs actively sponsored are the National Emergency Fund and Clarence Hill's National Commander Fund. Please send your sponsorship money to Dave Griffiths Jr. 18834 McGrath Circle, Port Charlotte FL 33948. Please make your check payable to: 90% Membership Golf Tournament. The 13th District is handling all monies involved in the tournament. Money for all Hole Sponsors must be in by February 21st 2009. Please provide this information to your Post. Thank you. For God and Country: Arnold Makovsky Golf Committee Chairman, 941.456.8571 or [amakovsky@embarqmail.com](mailto:amakovsky@embarqmail.com)

A HAPPY  
NEW YEAR

### A Veteran Needs YOUR Help

We are an organization of veterans helping veterans. One of our own needs your help. We have a gentleman in the Tampa area who needs a scooter lift for his vehicle. If anyone has a scooter lift they are willing to donate, please call Rachel at Department Headquarters, 800.393.3378 x239.

# I have a dream....

*Phil Hearlson*  
Department Vice Commander  
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They are our service members serving America, just as we served in the past. They were deployed overseas and sent on missions into harm's way. They returned with bodies changed by battle, limb amputations, some even multiple amputations, severe burns. We had an opportunity to show our appreciation and support by welcoming approximately 146 of these brave men and women and their families at the Orlando Airport on December 7<sup>th</sup>. They were arriving in Orlando for the "Road to Recovery Conference" held at Disney World.

An estimated 400 Legionnaires, Auxiliary and Sons of the American Legion, along with other Veterans Organizations, were present waving American Flags, cheering, and giving small gifts to the children. What an emotional afternoon. As we thanked these young service members for their service, their response was "I would go back if I could."

Thank you to Pine Castle Post 286 for providing a meeting place and serving a light lunch. Thank you to our Department Adjutant, Mike McDaniel for organizing this event. My appreciation and thanks go to all the Legion Family members who attended this event.

Every Legion Family member attending this welcome for our wounded warriors should have a renewed commitment to this generation and past generations of veterans that we will insure that they have their VA health care and benefits. I am borrowing a statement I saw on the internet, "On the battlefield we say we will leave no soldier behind. We must also say and when they come home we will leave no veteran behind." This year the VA is expected to treat 5.8 million patients including more than 260,000 veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. As the world's largest Veterans Organization it is our responsibility to continue to let our voices be heard and let our government know that we expect their support and funding for our VA facilities.

Peggy and I consider it a special pleasure to have this opportunity to send a New Year's wish for happiness to each and every one of you. HAPPY NEW YEAR!

### *Helen Gaekle* *School Medal Awards*

spacemom@mymailstation.com

Once again, we are faced with time. How many of us believe that we have plenty of time to begin our School Medal program?

We are now on the edge of a New Year, 2009, and time is certainly moving very rapidly. Some classroom teachers are new and may not be aware of this wonderful program. It is always good to find out who the teachers are, let them know that you will be doing the program again, or orient them if they need information. Please try to take the time to meet a new teacher, if possible, and bring information about the program to them. Answer questions and form a connection; a line of communication. I believe it helps to carry a couple of medals and certificates in your car to show the teachers and you will be on he way.

Thank you for the e-mails, thank you for the "Add one new school" and thank you for participating.



### *Endorsements*

Phil Hearlson – Department Commander  
Sonny Bywaters - Department Vice Commander  
Al Porter – Department Vice Commander  
Faye Skaggs, Department Vice Commander  
Fletcher Williams - Department Vice Commander  
Robert Meyer - Department Chaplain  
Sue Mason - Department Historian  
Dale Lueck - Department Sgt-at-Arms  
Mike Addis - Department Sgt-at-Arms  
Jim Corner - Northern Area Commander  
David Knapp - Southern Area Commander  
Bob Koger - Eastern Area Commander  
Earl Friedeborn - Eastern Area Commander  
Kathryn Ferrin – Central Area Commander  
Richard Francis - SW Area Commander  
Jerry Montgomery - 4th District Commander  
Gregory Putman - 8th District Commander  
Joseph Motes - 9th District Commander  
Mark Johnson - 12th District Commander  
Carl Schneider - 12th District Commander  
Frank Ward - 13th District Commander  
George Paradise – 16<sup>th</sup> District Commander  
Art Schwabe - 17th District Commander

# 80% Goal

## January 7, 2009

*Dianne Thibodeau, Membership*  
*D.Thibodeau@floridalegion.org*

*Well we didn't make it this time.* We missed our 75% goal with only 71.39%. Thirteen Districts got there as well as all the Areas! Congratulations to everyone for working so hard. And once again, District 4 (Jim Ramos) and Eastern Area (Art Dudley) were on top. So far, so good. (Sorry Jim, according to this week's numbers, District 2 (George Segrest) is currently ahead. We'll see where he stands at the next goal).

Our next goal is 80% by January 7<sup>th</sup> then 85% by February 4<sup>th</sup>. Already two districts have reached their February goal. Great job!

How is it going with Sears? That's the question National and I want to know. I would like to send a thank you to every volunteer who helped work the Sears program. For that I need names. National would like to know if the program was successful or not. Please send me a report, by district, by store, who worked and the hours. Also, how many new members were signed up and how much money was collected. I would like this by the middle of January, if possible.

How are the renewals coming? Don't forget Irene has some post cards, created by National, which you can send to members who have not renewed their 2009 membership. All you have to do to get them is Just ask!

Don't forget your Area Commanders are set up with canopies, signs, banners, and just about everything else you might need for a membership drive. Have you had one yet? Some Districts are doing them for their entire District collectively and so are some Areas. Communicate. Advertise. Make it a fun time for your post, district, area and your community. If you need the equipment, check with your Area Commander. If you need supplies, check with Irene. Remember, Just ask.

Got ideas? Need help? Call or write. Just ask! I will do everything in my power to help us reach the top and then some. I want to meet all of you Shining Stars out there. For God & Country

*Bob Pirucki*  
*Department Chaplain*  
*Kshoot2000@aol.com*

Hello and Happy New Year to our American Legion Family.

I first want to apologize for missing the last two months of articles for The Legion Link. The schedule had changed to a different date! So I am off on a new schedule for 2009!

We have finished up what has been a tumultuous year, what with the war and the economy and all. And, with seeing an election happen that I could never have imagined happening in my life time! Surely a year to be recorded!!

Dates to remember for this New Year's first month are as follows: January 1st, of course, then January 7, Orthodox Christmas and the 14th is the Orthodox New Year. January 19th is Martin Luther King day and, of course, each day of each month is a good time to thank God, as you know him, for the blessings that you do have.

I will leave you with this thought:

In love, he came to teach the world, in peace, he walked the earth. In hope, he gave us all a chance....to choose a second birth!

My prayer for the year is that you all enjoy a healthy, happy and prosperous new year!

### *District/Area Membership Report as of Nov. 26, 2008*

District/ Area	Commander	Goal	Rec'd	% Goal
2	George Segrest	1,323	1,197	90.48
4	Jim Ramos	3,813	3,430	89.95
6	Earl Friedeborn	9,237	7,940	85.96
12	Carl Schneider	8,657	7,262	83.89
16	Raymond Maya	12,033	10,079	83.76
17	James Baker	4,343	3,613	83.19
9	Joseph Motes	4,890	4,063	83.09
7	Keith Holz	4,582	3,806	83.06
15	Kathryn Ferrin	5,784	4,794	82.88
11	David Knapp	4,867	4,026	82.72
10	Larrio Walden	1,155	951	82.34
8	Richard Francis	9,281	7,569	81.55
1	Martha Harris	6,518	5,230	80.24
3	James Troupe	1,705	1,340	78.59
13	Frank Ward	9,796	7,577	77.35
5	Robert Brewster	7,915	6,118	77.30
14	Louis Woodward	2,606	1,849	70.95
Eastern	Arthur Dudley	17,894	15,202	84.96
Central	Mike Addis	22,399	18,679	83.39
Western	Fletcher Williams	7,841	6,427	81.97
Northern	Joseph Nolan	17,776	14,501	81.58
Southern	William Hoppner	13,518	10,889	80.55
SW	Dennis Bruland	19,077	15,146	79.39
<b>Dept</b>			<b>80,844</b>	
<b>Post 400</b>		<b>39,232</b>	<b>18,346</b>	<b>46.76</b>
<b>Post 208</b>		<b>1,538</b>	<b>1,572</b>	<b>102.21</b>
<b>Totals</b>		<b>135,500</b>	<b>100,762</b>	<b>74.36</b>

*Stephen Shuga*  
*Boy Scout Program*  
*sshuga@cfl.rr.com*

November has concluded the family camping activities, popcorn fundraisers and the Scout units should be working feverishly to get their Scouts closer to completing their rank requirements and begin working soon on arrow points, academic and sports pins, belt loops and compass points.

Registration opportunities for the Camporee CLOSED on 30 November. The economic outlook has reflected on a lean group of Scout Troops this year. The American Legion Department of Florida Boy Scout Camporee will be held January 16 – 19, 2009 at the Leonard & Marjorie Williams Scout Reservation, Paisley, Florida. The 2009 Camporee Guidebook is posted online thru the Boy Scout link at the Department website for those units still seeking information, although that link will shut down December 15th.

I am seeking Venturing Crews, Scout Leaders and Legionnaires from our Florida Posts to attend and lend a hand with staff, administration, programs and merit badges that are being offered during this event. Your assistance is needed to ensure a safe event is provided to all attending. Increased participation is necessary on Friday afternoon and evening, all day Saturday and Sunday. I need more information, contact the Department Boy Scout Chairman at the email posted above.

Remember also, those Eagle Scouts that are still eligible to compete for the title as the Department of Florida American Legion Eagle Scout of the Year should go to the Department or National American Legion website and under the Boy Scout or Scouting links you will discover the Candidate Form. Review and follow the instructions. Submit it on-time for your package to be considered.

Now is a great time to be registered in the BSA. Special events galore are about to begin and to be a part of the first 100 years of the BSA and bridging into the next century, now is the time to register as a member to absorb all that is about to occur. Seek out your District Boy Scout Chairman, your local BSA Council or contact the Department Boy Scout Chairman for more information.



With the Thanksgiving activities behind us, we are now focusing on the long awaited Winter Holiday activities, school vacations, family travels, festive parties and seasoned bakery goodies that seem to find their way into our homes and workplaces. As the coming weeks swiftly pass us by, I wish all Legionnaires, our Scouting Nation, and your families the happiest of holiday seasons, a prosperous, safe, and healthy new year. For God and Country – Yours in Scouting



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*Department Legislative Chairman*  
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Letters were sent to all our members from Florida to the US Congress congratulating them on their re-election and our four new members: Representative Alan Grayson (D), Bill Posey (R), Tom Rooney (R), and Suzanne Kosmas (D). We need to work with all of them.

I believe this time we have the right leader for the Secretary of Veterans' Affairs. Here is a news release from Chairman Bob Filnee of the House Committee: "I applaud the nomination of General Eric Shinseki. This four-star general will bring a new energy to the Department and bring hope to our veterans."

"The stakes are high at the Department of Veterans' Affairs. Our veterans need to know that their service to our country is respected and honored. A new basis of stable funding must be developed. The claims backlog must be attacked in a new and dynamic way. And the mental health of our veterans – from every conflict and each generation – must remain a high priority."

"I look forward to working with General Shinseki and the Obama Administration to restore the sacred trust with our nation's veterans and provide the care and benefits our veterans deserve."

*Kathryn Ferrin*  
*Department POW/MIA Chair*  
[usafkf@yahoo.com](mailto:usafkf@yahoo.com)

As I visit Posts & Districts, I present the POW/MIA Program as equal to all of our other Legion Programs: Boys State, Americanism, Baseball, etc. I've learned to adhere to the K.I.S.S. theory of simplicity and brevity. In closing my "infomercial" I ask for questions and suggestions. Suggestions because we need ideas to expand awareness and promote interest; questions so we better offer the "right" answers and "correct" information as we update and enhance the POW/MIA Manual. Response has been positive from those who have responded about the Manual. Your advice, your feelings and your input on the advancement of our involvement in the POW/MIA Program is welcomed.

My most fervent hope is that each Post has a POW/MIA Chairman, and that Chairman will have the correct information to create a working program at the Post level. That the Posts will petition & encourage their District and Area to promote a District/Area wide Recognition Dinner, Bar-B-Que, Social Event to include the community in showing our support for Ex-POW's and their families and the families of our MIA's.

Please contact me at [FLdeptPOWMIA@yahoo.com](mailto:FLdeptPOWMIA@yahoo.com) with any questions or suggestions. If you have a POW/MIA event on your calendar please let me know – I would love to attend. Thank you. For God & Country