



The LEGION LINK

"Lil Leprechaun Fighting For Vets"



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Joe Magee
Department Commander
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Hello Legionnaires,

The year got off to a wonderful start, with an invitation to the New Year's Eve celebration at Post 274 Ft. Myers Beach. I would like to thank all involved, the hall looked fantastic and the food was delicious. Prior to going to 274 we took a side trip to Naples Post 135, I would also like to thank the Officers and members for their hospitality, especially Mead Holland for taking us to lunch.

Jan. 2nd was a quick trip to Avon Park Post 69 and meet up with Law Enforcement Chair Bill McIntyre. As always, the greeting at 69 was second to none. The highlight of this month has to be an invite to Post 115 Palm Coast for an Initiation ceremony. Congratulations to PDC Omar Smith and crew for a super job. As important as Initiation is it seems to have been lost, you just do not hear of it much, however 115 did this ceremony with the utmost respect and the reward for their efforts was a group of 53 Legionnaires being initiated. The following morning took us to Flagler Beach for breakfast at the Funky Pelican, anyone in that area should stop for the great food and great view of the Ocean. It was then on to Post 120 Holly Hill, again what a reception thanks to Art and Erna. On the way back to Orlando, I stopped in Deland Post 6, in fact there were no hotels available in Orlando so I stayed in Deland. The next morning, on my way to Department HQ with 11 miles to go it ended up taking me over two hours to travel that 11 miles. As always while in Orlando I visited Post 19 where one is always received with a friendly greeting.

Next up the Southwest Area Ball at Post 323 Lehigh Acres. What can one say, other than a job well done by everyone. The food was top notch, the service the same, and then the music by that guy, ah ah what's his name, oh yes Bouncer. Again, a great job by all. The following day was the 13th District Meeting which is part of the tradition.

“ Department of Florida attained its 80% prior to the deadline of Jan. 19th. ”

The good news in this article is that we as in the Department of Florida attained its 80% prior to the deadline of Jan. 19th. I would like to thank all of you, the members of this great Department for your efforts in helping us achieve this goal. Now its onward and upward, let's work on the 90% and then let's quiet the naysayers and go for the biggie: the 100%. There are people out there that say it will never happen, I do not believe that, do you! Last, but not least, my charity COTA, please help us out with your donations. For those of you who have donated, and some of you have in a big way, I thank you from the bottom of my heart. That's it for now hope I'm not leaving anything out, if so will fill you in next month. This weekend I'm off to the Riders Summit, that report next month.

The Department and Detachment Commanders, Joe Magee and Steve Gordon, **Homecoming** Event will be hosted at Post 347 in Lady Lake on April 22nd. Details to be announced soon.

SAVE THE DATE
APRIL 22, 2017
COMMANDER'S HOMECOMING
POST 347 LADY LAKE





FEBRUARY 2017

1	Dept Membership Goal 90%
1	National Freedom Day
1	Groundhog Day
4	Eastern Area Ball
4	USO Birthday
5	District Oratorical Completed
7	March on Tallahassee
11	Special Olympics Polar Plunge
12	Lincoln's Birthday
14	Valentine's Day
15	Legion Link Articles Due
16	Renewal Cut-Off
16-18	Florida Legion College
17	15th District Dinner and Auction
19	Coast Guard Reserves Birthday
20	Dept Headquarters Closed
20	President's Day
24-26	Boy Scout Cracker Trail
26	Renewal Notice Mailing
26	Area Oratorical Completed
26-1	National Washington Conf

- Commander Joe Magee's Attendance Events are subject to change.



Steve Shuga
1st Vice Commander

Will Florida have Districts achieve National's Race to the Top recognition?

This District Commander's Award is an annual contest that is open to Districts/Counties nationwide.

From a 1st prize of sending the Top District Race to the Top winner to the National Convention all expenses paid to monetary awards for 2nd and 3rd place finish. Florida in the past has secured this award for consecutive years. Florida set the membership bar high and has lost that aggressive approach over the past couple of years.

Can Florida regain National recognition once again? I truly believe we can but, it will take a surge of effort of all Posts to make this happen.

(1st Vice Commander- Continued)

The nationwide competition ends March 31, 2017. Does your Post still have Legionnaires who have yet to renew their 2017 membership? If so, encourage them to update it right then and there. Remind them that they are an important asset to the Post, District, Area, and Department. Without them, the Post suffers, Post programs and activities have less impact without their presence and support, and they will be missed by you and many others.

Your Department Leprechauns are working overtime to attempt to get you into the membership spirit. A pot of gold awaits the Posts that can achieve the success, make the mark, and be chosen to draw for some lucky charms at the Department Convention in June.

An administrative note: All Posts/Districts, please check your Constitution & By-laws to ensure that they are current and dated/approved. This document will require updates as the Department and National Constitution and By-laws are occasionally revised. There are still Posts/Districts that have neglected to update this important document, especially when its needed most. Remember, unless it has been approved by Department, all changes are not effective and the current (past) approved document is still in force. If no changes are required, submit it anyway to ensure that you have the latest approved document within the 3-year period.



Dianne Boland
2nd Vice Commander

Greetings,

February is the month the Florida Legion College takes place; February 16 – 18, 2017.

Once it's over, if you attended, I'd like to hear some feedback. *Did it cover what you expected? Did you learn a lot? How can it be improved? If you didn't attend; why not?*

Knowledge is power. Whether you are a blue cap working the programs or a post officer, you all have a responsibility to learn as much as you can about The American Legion. Then to go share that knowledge. When you become more knowledgeable, so will the ones you share it with. It makes our commitments to the Legion easier to accomplish.

(2nd Vice Commander- Continued)

I've been writing about the American Legion Extension Course found at legion.org. It's an online course that costs only \$4.95. Go check it out. Send me your thoughts. Let me know if you took it. I'm not hearing much back about it.

A lot of events will be happening in the next few months. Always remember to do your paperwork. The National and Department CPR's are very important. You should have been doing a tally on the information each month so filling out the reports at the end of the year isn't so bad. It's not too early to start thinking about them.

One last thing I'd like to mention, everyone knows and talks about Boy's State, Oratorical and a bunch of other programs that have been around a long time. *Are you aware there is a Youth Law Cadet Program started last year? Have you been to our web site to get information about it?* You can find the particulars under Florida's Legion website under Programs.

As always, the Florida Department Website floridalegion.org and National's Website legion.org have a wealth of knowledge about the American Legion, our programs, our history, our people and a whole lot more. When you have the time, you should browse to see what's available.

If you have any comments, questions, concerns, or suggestions I would like to hear from you at 2ndvice@legionmail.org or call me at (561) 315-0679.



Rick Johnson
3rd Vice Commander

Hello legionnaires, I hope this all finds you well. Well, we are in February and are getting ready for the last part of our year. January was a very good

month as we attended a couple of Balls in the Southwest Area and the Southern Area. I attended the first ALR summit which was well received by all, as we had a lot of Chapters there showing their support. Thank you, Jim and Jennifer for all of your hard work as it will make a difference.

As we reach February, we will have our Legion College, as well as the march to Tallahassee with our political leaders to voice our concerns within our four pillars. We will also have the Eastern Area



(3rd Vice Commander- Continued)

Ball and at the end of the month we will be in D.C. with our National Family members to testify in front of Congress to also voice our concerns about what is happening out there and what we would like to change for the betterment of our Veterans and kids.

We have a lot of work to do as a Family to attain our goals with membership and programs. Try not to forget, that is what we are built on. I know we preach it all the time, but the more we mention it the better we are and we will never forget who we are. So, with that being said, I hope all of you are safe in your travels and I look forward to seeing you out on the highways and by-ways out there. If there is a special event going on, please let me know and I will try to be there.

Thank you for all you do and continue to do for our veterans and their families. May God bless you and God bless this great country of ours.



Dennis Boland
NEC

THE STAR-SPANGLED BANNER

The Star-Spangled Banner became our National Anthem on March 3, 1931, when President Herbert Hoover signed Public Law 823.

The American Legion believes that many millions of Americans cherish and respect the currently accepted version, both words and music, of THE STAR-SPANGLED BANNER, our National Anthem. This traditional version was first used in 1918 as the "Service Version" by the War Department for use in Army and Navy song books.

Many Americans have been offended by the disrespectful and unconventional playing, and singing of the National Anthem at sporting events. The American Legion encourages the playing of the National Anthem in its original and traditional rendition.

Some celebrities and public figures have voiced their opinions that THE STAR-SPANGLED BANNER should be replaced with AMERICA, THE BEAUTIFUL, GOD BLESS AMERICA or another song. The American Legion opposes any changes in the words and music of the National Anthem

(NEC- Continued)

as adopted under Public Law 823 of the 71st Congress.



The American Legion urges radio and television networks and stations to desist from pre-empting with commercial advertisements the singing and playing of our National Anthem and the raising and/or lowering of our Flag.

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The American Legion also believes THE STAR-SPANGLED BANNER should be performed in the English Language.



Art Schwabe
NECA

We just have started with the 115th Congressional Session, and things are changing as

I am writing this article. We will be visiting all Florida Congressmen and Congresswomen as well as Senators Nelson & Rubio, giving them the Legion's requests for congressional consideration to put into bill form.

Here are a few of the Bullet points that we will be bring to Washington in February, before the National Commander's testimony on March 1st.

- Fully fund a superior national Defense as the global war on terror continue.
- Limit outsourcing, Unify, VA's programs
- Institute gender-specific health, care for women veterans.
- Develop alternative treatments, therapies for PTSD & TBI
- Reclassify cannabis for medical research
- Support those who care for wounded veterans
- Provide mandatory end of service exams for reservists

This is just half of the Legislative Agenda, more in next month's Legion Link.



Tom Gora
Sgt-at-Arms

"You will guard especially against the loss of one of The American Legion's greater possessions, our deep and abiding spirit of

comradeship."

We recently "saluted" in a new year, a new President, and some use the term 'salute' as a toast; generally it is a term of good will, a welcome, and a sign of respect.

As veterans, we know that a salute is a privileged gesture which shows a sign of trust and respect among members of the military. As a veteran's organization, we in The American Legion continue the practice of saluting when we address the Colors and when we make an official report to our Commander during assembly.

Although uncertain of its origin, historians believe the salute began in late Roman times when assassinations were common; or used when a citizen who wanted to see a public official had to approach with his right hand raised to show that he did not hold a weapon; or when knights in armor raised visors with the right hand when meeting a comrade.

Most historians believe, however, that the U.S. Military salute was influenced by the British Navy. The Naval salute differs from the "Open Hand" British Army Salute in that the palm of the hand faces down towards the shoulder. It was considered most undignified to present a dirty palm in the salute obtained by working all those ropes, oil, and other things on the ships, so the hand was turned downward 90 degrees.

In saluting, turn your head and eyes toward the person or flag you are saluting. Bring your hand up to the correct position in one, smart motion without any preparatory movement. The proper way to salute when wearing a beret or without headgear is to raise your right hand until the tip of your forefinger touches the outer edge of your right eyebrow (just above and to the right of your right eye). When wearing headgear, the forefinger touches the headgear slightly above and to the right of your right eye. Your fingers are together, straight, and your thumb snug along the hand in line with the fingers. Your hand, wrist, and forearm are straight, forming a straight line from your elbow to your fingertips. Your upper arm (elbow to shoulder) is horizontal to the ground. When



(Sgt-at-Arms - Continued)

dropping the salute, bring your hand directly down to its natural position at your side, without slapping your leg or moving your hand out to the side.

With the recent inauguration of a new Commander-In-Chief fresh on our minds, some may wonder how the President, a civilian, can return a military salute. Many believe the practice began in modern times with President Ronald Reagan. About the tradition, Ronald Reagan said:

"As Commander In Chief, I discovered it was customary for our uniformed men and women to salute whenever they saw me. When I'd walk down the steps of a helicopter, for example, there was always a Marine waiting there to salute me. I was told presidents weren't supposed to return salutes, so I didn't, but this made me feel a little uncomfortable. Normally, a person offering a salute waits until it is returned, then brings down his hand. Sometimes, I realized, the soldier, sailor, Marine, or airman giving me a salute wasn't sure when he was supposed to lower his hand. Initially, I nodded and smiled and said hello and thought maybe that would bring down the hand, but usually it didn't. Finally, one night I told the Commandant of Marines, "I know it's customary for the President to receive these salutes and I think there ought to be a regulation that the president could return a salute inasmuch as he is commander in chief. 'Well, if you did return a salute,' the general said, 'I don't think anyone would say anything to you about it.' The next time I got a salute, I saluted back. A big grin came over the Marine's face and down came his hand. From then on, I always returned salutes."



In the next Legion Link I will offer a few tips on preparation for the upcoming District Constitutional Conferences. Having attended so many over the past few years I've seen things done various ways and would like to offer some tips based on my observations. After all, one of the responsibilities of a Sgt.-at-Arms is to set up the conference hall and to identify all the guests for introduction and escort to the podium, in order to help the District Commander have an organized and successful DCC.



Jerry Brandt
Membership

It is the beginning of another year and we have some work to do.

The 85% Department Goal date was January 4th and the following Posts were able to achieve this goal. A Total of 72 Posts:

1st District, 6 Posts

Post 402, Panama City
Post 66, Panama City
Post 235, Ft. Walton Beach
Post 340, Pensacola
Post 75, Crestview
Post 379, Pensacola Beach

2nd District, 4 Posts

Post 172, Hosford
Post 272, Blountstown
Post 116, Post St. Joe
Post 82, Lanark Village

3rd District, 3 Posts

Post 215, Jasper
Post 68, Madison
Post 234, Monticello

4th District, 7 Posts

Post 166, Homosassa
Post 58, Dunnellon
Post 236, Williston
Post 354, Ocala
Post 230, Hawthorne
Post 237, Beverly Hills
Post 210, Ocala

5th District, 5 Posts

Post 372, Jacksonville
Post 102, Hastings
Post 202, Keystone Heights
Post 194, St. Augustine
Post 250, Middleburg

6th District, 5 Posts

Post 409, Avalon Park
Post 76, Tavares
Post 347, Lady Lake
Post 52, Leesburg
Post 112, Winter Park

7th District, 3 Posts

Post 71, Lake Wales
Post 15, Dade City
Post 72, Mulberry

8th District, 3 Posts

Post 254, North Port
Post 69, Avon Park
Post 320, Sarasota

9th District, 5 Posts

Post 142, Pompano Beach
Post 209, Dania
Post 310, Hallandale
Post 308, Hollywood
Post 170, Coconut Creek

11th District, 4 Posts

Post 62, Stuart
Post 367, Royal Palm Beach
Post 268, Riviera Beach
Post 20, Belle Glade

12th District, 7 Posts

Post 177, Cocoa
Post 200, Satellite Beach
Post 181, Gifford
Post 189, Sebastian
Post 394, Palm Bay
Post 1, Titusville
Post 318, Port St. Lucie

13th District, 3 Posts

Post 397, Fort Myers
Post 405, Punta Gorda
Post 404, Marco Island

14th District, 7 Posts

Post 145, Islamorada
Post 29, Miami
Post 144, Miami Lakes
Post 32, Hialeah
Post 133, Palmetto Bay
Post 31, South Miami
Post 43, Homestead

15th District, 5 Posts

Post 108, Lutz
Post 246, Sun City Center
Post 111, Tampa
Post 186, Spring Hill
Post 389, Ruskin

16th District, 2 Posts

Post 275, Dunedin
Post 305, St Pete Beach

DEPT MEMBERSHIP GOAL 90%, FEBRUARY 1, 2017



*(Membership - Continued)***17th District, 3 Posts**

Post 187, Deland

Post 259, Debary/Orange City

Post 293, Interlachen

As you can see, we are doing well. We can make the National upcoming 80% goal (please remember, the Department Goal dates are different than National), and to assist please be aware of the following:

As of the 2nd of January, renewal notices will be mailed out from National, we should see a large increase in membership. Let your Commanders know of the mailings.

Also on December 31st, 16,000 DMS members were transferred from National to our Department database and are now available to us in our Legion.Org database. Use the Legion.Org database and bring those potential members into our Posts.

My upcoming schedule:

January 14th, 81st Yellow Ribbon Job Fair

January 14th, S.W. Area Ball

January 21st - 22nd ALR Summit

January 28th, Southern Area Ball

February 2-4, Western Area Revitalization

February 4th, 3rd District Meeting

February 9-11, 5th District Revitalization

February 11th, 1st District Meeting

February 16th - 18th, Florida Legion College,

February 17th, 15th District Dinner

February 25th, FT. Steward Job Fair

March 2-4, Central Area Revitalization

March 4th, 4th District Meeting

March 10, 8th District Meeting

Please let me know if you need assistance.



Sid Damsgard
Central Area Commander

There are a couple of events upcoming in the Central Area, beginning with a grand

reopening of Post 104 Pinellas Park's canteen. Post 104 is located at 7550 60th St. N. Pinellas Park Fl. 33781. After extensive remodeling of the Post they are ready to unveil their new look. If you have been to the Post in the past you will find that now there is a bright and friendly atmosphere. With windows, a new coat of paint, and redone

(Central Area Commander - Continued)

flooring, the social area has become a place where you will feel welcome and right at home. Job well done by the entire Legion Family.

Next, there will be a District Commander and President's Dinner and auction to benefit Boys and Girls State transportation. This event will be held at American Legion Post 139. Post 139 located in the 15th District at 3818 W. Bay Vista Ave. Tampa Fl. 33611. Save February 18th to attend this dinner. Ticket price is \$13.00 per person cocktail hour starting at 1800hrs. Auction and door prizes to begin after dinner. These events may be found on the Legion web site under calendar of events.



Bruce Thurber
12th District Commander

It has been a very busy time with the Holidays. Now they are behind us and it's time to get back to work. Our District

meeting will be March 4th at Post 163 starting at 10 am. Our 12th District Picnic will be held at Post 117 in Palm Bay on March 11th. In conjunction with the picnic, we are having a ride to assist in raising the funds needed for Boys and Girls State Transportation. The ride is based on visiting five veteran's organizations between the start of the Legacy Run and the Picnic. Bring in your completed form and registration to the picnic and we will buy your lunch plus a High and Low hand will be drawn.

We are having a revitalization at Post 191 on March 25th from 10 am to 2 pm please come by and help us let people know we are there to help. Any service officer that can be there will be greatly appreciated.

I would like to thank all my Officers and Chairman for the great first half of the year we have had. I would also like to say that working with the 12th District Auxiliary and SAL has also been great, they have really got the family attitude. Putting these organizations together the Riders immersed and we need to put out a special thanks to my team for putting together an action plan when our Chairman was injured in an accident. Again, thank you everyone as the MIGHTY 12th District moves forward.

Renewal Cut-Off - Feb. 16th



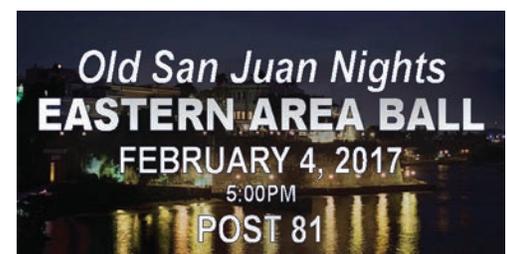
Alan Cohen
VA&R Chair

Greetings, fellow Legionnaires, and welcome to 2017. It is my most sincere hope that the new year brings each of you and your loved ones, good health and great happiness. For my part, I begin the year with a sense of renewed energy and dedication to doing whatever I can to make the lives of our veteran family better in some way.

I'd like to take this opportunity to recognize our own VAVS Miami VA Hospital Rep, Victor Owens. Victor is a long time Legion member at Miami Lakes Post 144 as well as a multi-year VAVS Rep. His day at the hospital starts before many of us are even awake and in early morning hours he can usually be found on one of the wards spending time with hospitalized vets. Whether in that capacity or any other, his service has been classified by his supervisor as "the definition of going above and beyond" and Victor has been formally recognized by the Chief hospital administrator. We thank you for your dedication, Victor.

Last month I, along with our State Commander and other Legionnaires, had the opportunity to visit the Bay Pines VA Hospital. We toured the hospital, spoke with several patients and staff, and spent time with members of the hospital administration. We spoke of many things, including the recent highly publicized death of a veteran at the facility. As uncomfortable a topic as it was, the administrators spoke candidly and assured us repeatedly that the necessary steps had been taken to prevent a repeat of anything of this nature. Overall the visit was positive and we thank Dave Miller, our VAVS Rep for making all the arrangements.

In closing, I am hopeful that we're on the right track to find the VAVS Rep we've been looking for to fill the vacancy at the James A. Haley VA Hospital.





Sid Damsgard
Children & Youth Chair

With April quickly approaching please keep the 1st open for the Children and Youth picnic at Palm Bay Post 117. Come and

see Third Vice Commander Rick Johnson get soaked in the dunk tank. That is if his hand is healed enough to take his turn. I have been informed that I will be taking a turn in the tank as well. I hope it is warm that day. As always, we need sponsorships and any other donations to make this another successful event.

March 4th Sons of The American Legion Post 275 will be hosting a golf tournament to sponsor COTA. If you want a good laugh come, see us in our green knickers and tams. At least we will not be in kilts. Entry fee is \$50.00 per person which includes lunch and a raffle ticket for after the tournament. Beer will be available for those who like that sort of thing for \$2.00. Come and have a good time with the 275 family.



Tom Gora
Legion College Chair

The next Florida American Legion College Class is scheduled for February 16-18, 2017, and registration closed for this class on February 1, 2017. The FALC is an American Legion leadership class which has been structured from recommendations made by The American Legion for department level colleges. This will be the 3rd consecutive year the FALC has been conducted, and the first FALC under guidance of the newly formed FALC Committee. I will report more on this class with photos in the April Legion Link.

Thinking about "leadership" I enjoy watching the popular show, "The Game of Thrones." Although fiction, I view it as an entertaining lesson on leadership, how kings succeeded or failed. My personal favorite leadership book, oddly enough, is "The Leadership Secrets of Attila the Hun." This is a fun read in which the author draws from the imaginary thoughts of one of history's most effective and least beloved leaders, Attila the Hun, to discover leadership principles you can apply to your own situation. In a uniquely creative and entertaining approach to a most serious

(Legion College Chair- Continued)
task, "Attila" reveals his principles for successful morale building, decision making, delegating and negotiating, and gives advice on overcoming setbacks and achieving goals! Some lucky participants in the FALC class will be awarded a copy of this book.

Bill McIntyre
Law & Order Chair

I hope by now you have appointed a Law & Order Chairman at your Post, and that you have contacted your local Police and Fire Station asking them for a Candidate for this great program. I Have contacted all District Commanders via letters and literature asking them to reiterate my message at their District meetings. I have also been sending literature and letters to many Post Commanders reminding them of this program and asking them to participate this year.

It is my hope that you honor these brave men and women; EMT's, Police and Firefighters in your community. Let's show them how supportive and proud we veterans are of them. Without you I cannot do what I promised our Commander, that I would do my utmost to achieve his goal for this very important chairmanship.

If you need my help in any way do not hesitate to contact me.

REMINDER: Your Law Enforcement Officer and Firefighter of the Year nominations are due into Department April 25, 2017.

DARE TO EXCEL



Bill Walsh
Oratorical Chair

Well February is here. We have a new President, Valentine's Day is two weeks away and the Oratorical Scholarship Contest is almost over. As of January

15th, all Post Oratorical Contests must be completed and by February 5th all District Contests must be completed. The deadline for the Area Competition is February 26th. Chairpersons at all levels make sure that all paperwork is correctly prepared and submitted in a timely manner.

(Oratorical Chair- Continued)
The Department Contest will be held at Department Headquarters in Orlando, Florida on March 11th 2017 at 9:00 AM. The National Contest will be held at the National Headquarters located in Indianapolis, Indiana April 22nd-23rd 2017.

This event is open to everyone. All Florida Legionnaires and their guests are invited to attend. I am personally inviting all Department Officers and Chairpersons plus all Area and District Officers. All Area Oratorical Chairpersons should be in attendance to assist with tabulation and time keeping. District and Post Chairpersons who have a contestant representing their District and Post should be in attendance also.



Florida Legion College

Florida Dept, Headquarters
1912 A Lee Rd
Orlando, FL 32810
(407) 295-2631

February 16-18, 2017

Register at floridalegion.org





Dave Miller
POW - MIA Chair

I hope everyone got thru the month of January and the New Year unscathed. Our Pow-Mia program is very strong in the Department of Florida. I am still trying to make sure all Posts have a Pow-Mia table setup in their Post home and display a Pow-Mia flag as well. We must still get involved in the issues of bringing all our missing troops back as well as any POWs from any war or conflict. That is our responsibility as Legionnaires and Proud Americans. I visited several families of former POWs and families who have no idea where their loved ones are over the holidays. It really opens your eyes as to how strong these families are to keep up the faith and hope to find their missing or captured spouse, daddy or grandpa. Tears will come to your eyes as you speak with these families. I would appreciate if everyone would hit their knees at the beginning of the New Year and say a short prayer to give these families hope and compassion.

Remember POWs never have a nice day while being captured!

Get involved with this most important program and issues!

Once again, I am available for any ceremonies or flag dedications at your Post, District or Area events. I am still waiting to hear from Area Commanders about their availability for our Pow-Mia black and white dinner programs that will be held at several of the area balls this year. Please contact me if you are interested. My info is listed in the Department roster. Keep safe and I hope everyone is ready for a great and productive New Year for yourselves and your families.



Roy Havekost
Social Media Chair

Greetings Legionnaires;

Well, I hope that everyone has come into the new year looking to better our American Legion organization. You need only to spend a little bit of time each day in promoting your Post and its activities. You just have to look online to see that Facebook is alive and well in Florida when it comes to the American Legion. Today we can find not only individual Post activities being advertised, but also the activities of the Auxiliaries, Sons and Riders, too.

(Social Media Chair- Continued)

Remember that Facebook is free advertising and used correctly can be one of the best tools to educate our communities on what we do to help our veterans and our children and youth in the area. Showing our public the programs that we are involved in also helps as a membership recruitment tool.

I ask that all District Social Media Chairman statewide to review your District's Facebook pages for content showing the Post activities that help promote the programs of the American Legion. Please send me the Post in your District that stands out among the others. The Posts that are submitted will be considered later this year for an award.

If your District does not have a Social Media Chairman, bring it to the attention of the District Commander so one can be appointed in accordance with established guidelines.



Larry Roberts
VA Entitlements Chair

If you were stationed in Fort McClellan or if you know someone that was stationed in Fort McClellan, you may want to look at this.

Information taken from U.S. Dept. of Veteran Affairs @publichealth.va.gov/exposures/fort-McClellan

Potential Exposure at Fort McClellan



Photo: U.S. Army

Fort McClellan was an Army installation in Alabama that opened in 1917.

Some members of the U.S. Army Chemical Corp School, Army Combat Development Command Chemical/Biological/Radiological Agency, Army Military Police School and Women's Army Corps,

among others, may have been exposed to one *(VA Entitlements Chair- Continued)* or more of several hazardous materials, likely at low levels, during their service at Fort McClellan. Potential exposures could have included, but are not limited to, the following:

- **Radioactive compounds** (cesium-137 and cobalt-60) used in decontamination training activities in isolated locations on base.
 - **Chemical warfare agents** (mustard gas and nerve agents) used in decontamination testing activities in isolated locations on base.
- Airborne polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs)** from the Monsanto plant in the neighboring town.

Although exposures to high levels of these compounds have been shown to cause a variety of adverse health effects in humans and laboratory animals, there is no evidence of exposures of this magnitude having occurred at Fort McClellan.

PCBs and the Monsanto chemical plant

From 1929 to 1971, an off-post Monsanto chemical plant operated south of Fort McClellan in Anniston. PCBs from the plant entered into the environment, and the surrounding community was exposed.

In 2013, the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) completed an assessment of the potential health risks caused by airborne PCBs in Anniston and concluded that the concentrations found were "not expected to result in an increased cancer risk or other harmful health effects in people living in the neighborhoods outside the perimeter of the former PCB manufacturing facility."

Fort McClellan today

Fort McClellan closed in 1999 as part of the Army Base Closure and Realignment Committee (BRAC) program. The BRAC legislation required the environmental cleanup of Fort McClellan prior to its transfer to the public domain. Oversight of parts of the base have since been transferred to the Alabama Army National Guard, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Justice, and the Department of the Interior, as well as to the community of Anniston, where the re-development and re-use of the land is overseen by the McClellan Development Authority.



(VA Entitlements Chair- Continued)

Veteran health care and compensation benefits

Veterans who are experiencing health issues that they associate with their service while at Fort McClellan should see their primary care provider or contact their local Environmental Health Coordinator.

Veterans may also file a claim for disability compensation. VA decides these claims on a case-by-case basis.

Useful resources

- DoD Fort McClellan website
- Environmental Cleanup Program Fact Sheets
- Chemical warfare materials
- Underground storage tanks
- Landfills
- Wildlife refuge
- Cleanup process
- McClellan Land Use Map
- Chemical Fact Sheets
- PCBs
- Sulfur mustard
- Nerve agents
- Radioisotopes - Cobalt (Co-60)
- Cesium (Cs-137)
- Environmental Baseline Survey
- Volume I
- Volume II
- ATSDR Health Consultation: Airborne PCBs in Anniston
- Federal Register Notice of Intent (2001)
- EPA Superfund Webpage: Anniston, AL

(Youth Law Cadet Chair- Continued)

Again, I would like to advise you as to where to find the potential cadets. Take some brochures in to your local police departments. Talk to someone there and explain the details of this great new program. From my own experience, this is where you will get the best cadets for this training exercise.

Any questions whatsoever, you can call me, email me, or send up some smoke signals. We would love to have a full class this year. We have 2 kids from last year who want to go this year again. However, they will only be accepted if we don't have a full class.

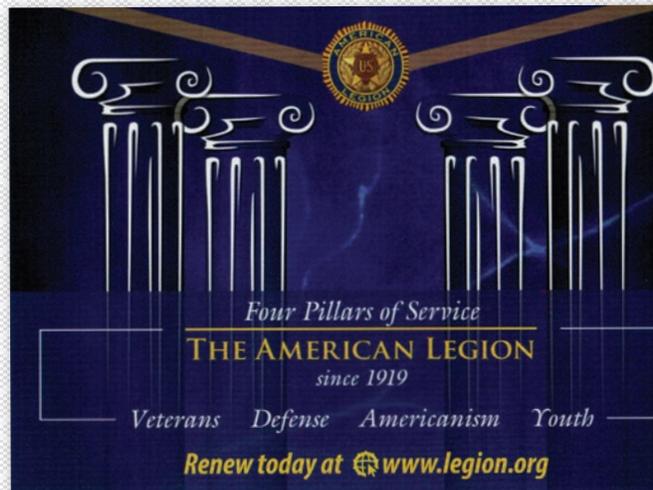
If you have any questions, please contact me at 904-272-1619 (home), 904-635-4492 (cell), or email: brewsterrobert@bellsouth.com.



March On Tallahassee

Calling All Posts

FEBRUARY 7, 2017



The 2017 Renewal Postcards have arrived!



Send requests to Irene Graham,
igraham@floridalegion.org.



Bob Brewster
Youth Law Cadet Chair

We have been getting some very positive comments from all over the Department of Florida regarding this program. I am hoping that we will have a full class of 25 cadets for this year. Our counselors are in place, and all the information needed by the Posts is on the Department's website under "Programs." This program gives the kids a chance to meet and interact with actual police officers. I am not going to explain the whole program here since we have done that before. It is on the website, plus the Department and I have a good stock of the program brochures. I keep these on my desk so they are available at all times.



"If they are remembered, they are not gone truly, they simply change duty assignments and are amongst the best."

POST EVERLASTING



George J. Rafajko
Past Southern Area Commander

It is with deep regret that we report the passing of Past Southern Area Commander, George J. Rafajko, of Pompano Beach, FL on January 20, 2017 at the age of 67. George is survived by his wife, Elaine, 3 daughters, 7 grandchildren and 8 great grandchildren. A Post Everlasting Ceremony will be held on Saturday, February 25, 2017 at 2:00 p.m. at Post 142, 171 American Legion Way, Pompano Beach, FL 33060.

George was a U.S. Marine Corps Vietnam Veteran and a member of Sterling McClellan Post 142, with 25 continuous years of membership. Please keep his family and friends in your thoughts and prayers in this time of grief. Condolences may be sent to his wife, Elaine, at 406 S. Cypress Rd., Apt. 324, Pompano Beach, FL 33060.



Terry Nolan
Past Dept Judge Advocate

Long time Stuart resident, Terry Nolan died on January 4, 2017, after a valiant battle with cancer. He passed away peacefully with the support of his wife, Jollyn and daughter, Caroline.

Terry served in the United States Marine Corp, with the Stuart Police Department, in the State Attorney's Office as a board certified attorney, and in the Martin County Sherriff's Office. He was involved with the Hibiscus Children's Center and fostered 25 children. Terry was also a member of the founding board of the Character Counts program. The American Legion benefitted from his support at the local, state and national level. Terry was also a proud to be a Kiwanian, and as a member of St. Joseph Catholic Church, his faith flourished.

Terry was a noble and honorable man. He actively made the world a better place. His family was his passion and he was a perfect and amazing husband and father. Terry will be greatly missed by the community and his surviving family.

Visitation will be held on Friday, January 6, 2017 from 2:00-4:00PM and from 6:00-8:00PM at Aycock Funeral Home, 505 South Federal Highway in Stuart. A Mass of Christian Burial will be held on Saturday 7, 2017 at 10:00 AM at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Stuart with a Committal service to follow at Fernhill Memorial Gardens. A reception will be immediately held following Terry's Committal at the Nolan residence on Starfish Lane in Stuart.



The Inner Workings: Legion Link

The Legion Link is an important tool, that's why we encourage all of our Officers, Chairmen, Commanders and Posts to utilize it. We're delighted to read about your latest news, upcoming events, articles, testimonials and more. The Legion Link belongs to you, it's your platform to share, engage, and inspire your comrades.

A lot of care and work goes into each edition of the Legion Link, which is why we thought we would share our process with you. It's our hopes that if you understand the "process" you'll be more likely to contribute and keep in mind our deadlines. Our goal is to provide you with a publication you can be proud of, and we're happy to put in the time on your behalf, so we hope you will too!

THE PROCESS

Phase I: Collection

- Deadline** The deadline for articles is the 15th of each month. Articles received after this date will be saved until the following edition.
- **Reminders** We'll send out multiple group mailings to remind you your articles are due, up until the deadline. If you have turned in your article, and receive a reminder, please don't worry. Emails are sent to group emails, they go to everyone on the list, whether you have submitted an article or not.
 - **Content** Officer Reports, big news, upcoming events, veterans' issues...we want to hear it all. We do reserve the right to edit and/or deny certain content that does not align with the purpose and ideals of our organization.
 - **Recipient** Send your articles directly to Allyson Capecea, at acapecca@floridaleigon.org. Articles not sent to her directly, can not be guaranteed publication.
 - **File Format** Send in a digital format (email, Word Document, etc) with regular font size and basic formatting. No need to do anything fancy, we'll make it look nice.
 - **Photos** Any photos should be sent as separate attachments and not embedded within documents. Otherwise the quality isn't nice.
 - **Confirmation** When Allyson receives your article she will send you a quick confirmation, and then you can ignore our future reminders.

Phase 2: Publication

- **Editing** Allyson is our editor, among the many hats she wears here. She'll give your articles a look over to double check for spelling and grammatical issues. Don't worry she'll make sure you get YOUR message across clear and concise. Any questionable articles, she'll run through our Department Adjutant or Assistant Department Adjutant.

Once your content is checked over and fully prepared, Allyson will send them to Carrie for the next stage in Publication.
- **Design** Carrie will create your Legion Link's overall look and flow. She will fit each article into the finished template. Often times, highlighting important information and adding special reminders based on the information you provide.

Once the Legion Link articles and design are compiled, Carrie will forward the first draft to our Department Adjutant, Assistant Adjutant, Executive Assistant and a couple other staffers for a final proofing.
- **Final Draft** When the Legion Link comes back from "proofing", Carrie will make any suggested edits and prepare a final digital copy for web publication and digital print.

Phase 3: Distribution

- **Release Date** The Legion Link is published by the 1st of each Month. Please note Dept Convention and some holidays could slightly delay release.
- **Digital** Carrie will place a digital copy on our website, floridaleigon.org. A link is also shared on Social media and emailed.
- **Print** Allyson prints copies for each post and mails them out.

Next Legion Link Deadline: February 15, 2017



PROJECT: VETRELIEF

A PROGRAM OF THE AMERICAN LEGION, DEPARTMENT OF FLORIDA



WE NEED YOU...

The demand has increased as more people learn about our newest Legion program. In just the **first 6 months** of our fiscal year we have already helped **127 military families** with financial assistance through the PROJECT: VetRelief Fund and National's Temporary Financial Assistance program.

We are tracking to more than double the number of cases we did last year! Take a look at the graphs below showing the level of support given through the PROJECT: VetRelief Fund. You can see the drastic change in the number of support cases that we have provided to our service members.

They need us! And, we need YOU!

Now, more than ever, we need the support of the Legion Family to help us continue our mission of providing assistance to our service members in their time of need!

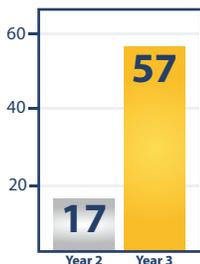
Here's how you can help - Get your Post involved in the PVR Challenge that was initiated at the Fall Conference. Posts can make a one time donation or hold a fundraising event to meet their Challenge Goals. Be sure to check out the PVR Challenge Central **on the reverse side** for details and leader board of participating Posts and Squadrons!



NUMBER OF FAMILIES ASSISTED

PROJECT: VetRelief Fund
first 6 months of fiscal year (Jan - Dec)

Number of Support Cases



Total Dollar Amount Given



Average Amount Per Family



UPCOMING EVENTS:

- ★ **2/18/17 - Coral Head MusicFest Marathon, FL - Riders Chapter 154**
Come rock out during a full day concert event. Featured bands include: Molly Hatchet, and the Georgia Satellites.
- ★ **2/18/17 - Clam Bake**
Hollywood, FL - SAL Squadron 92
Only 100 tickets available for this event. Contact Jennifer Cooper to reserve your seat today!
- ★ **4/15/17 - Fundraising Event**
Ft. Lauderdale, FL - Rick Johnson
Details TBD.

Visit our website for event details.

Want to receive our monthly newsletter?

Visit our website
to sign up today!



Like us on Facebook!



Services Provided



Emergency Assistance

Provide financial assistance during life's emergencies.



Benefits Support

Ensure veterans can access and utilize all benefits earned with service.



Community Engagement

Eliminate isolation by creating a community of veterans helping veterans.

Funding Guidelines

1. Veteran, Active Duty Military, or Immediate Family Member (*Spouse, Legal Guardian, or Child*)
2. Honorable Discharge or General Under Honorable Conditions
3. Must be a Florida Resident for at least 120 days
4. Show Sustainability
5. Provided for necessities: *shelter, food, utilities, and some emergency transportation and critical medical expenses*
6. Application / Interview does **not** guarantee funding
6. Funds are awarded on a case by case basis
7. Funds are granted one time annually

For more information visit our website: www.ProjectVetRelief.org

PROJECT: VETRELIEF

A PROGRAM OF THE AMERICAN LEGION, DEPARTMENT OF FLORIDA



PVR CHALLENGE CENTRAL

Each month a leader board will be posted of all donations that has been turned in.

- ★ The Challenge is *Simple* - Raise \$1 per member of your Post
- ★ **Donations can be sent to:** PROJECT: VetRelief, 1912A Lee Road, Orlando, FL 32810
- ★ **Donations must be turned in by May 31, 2017** to count towards recognition awards
- ★ Money raised during Post fundraising events will also count

By now, your Post should have received your Challenge packet from your Area or District Commander. If you have not received it, please contact them or Jennifer Cooper at the Department Headquarters.

Thank you to the following Posts and Squadrons for participating during our Challenge!

Way to go SAL Post 148 for staying in first place for the second month in a row!

	POST	DISTRICT	AREA	CITY	DONATION	PVR GOAL	GOAL %
SAL	148	15	Central	Riverview	\$1,000	142	704%
	29	14	Southern	Miami	\$3,000	476	658%
	221	1	Western	Niceville	\$1,000	333	300%
	382	1	Western	Navarre	\$1,000	406	259%
SAL	117	12	Eastern	Palm Bay	\$476	196	243%
	170	9	Southern	Coconut Creek	\$108	54	200%
	59	3	Northern	Branford	\$70	41	171%
	92	9	Southern	Hollywood	\$300	254	118%
SAL	321	9	Southern	Cooper City	\$131	150	115%
	67	14	Southern	North Miami	\$200	179	112%
SAL SAL	113	8	Southwestern	Rotonda West	\$225	209	108%
SAL SAL	375	1	Western	Southport	\$140	134	104%
SAL	81	12	Eastern	Melbourne	\$120	119	101%
	385	9	Southern	Pembroke Pines	\$233	233	100%
SAL	80	6	Eastern	St. Cloud	\$101	101	100%
SAL	24	8	Southwestern	Bradenton	\$141	141	100%

For more information and Challenge materials:
Jennifer Cooper at jcooper@floridalegion.org