

The Legion Link

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AIMING HIGH FOR VETERANS



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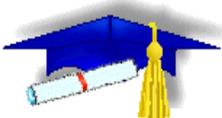
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Fletcher Williams, Jr.
Department Commander
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It has been a pleasure and my honor to serve as your Department Commander for 2011 - 2012. Karin and I are very grateful for all the kindness you have shown us.

As we have traveled the State of Florida visiting Posts, Auxiliary Units, Sons of the American Legion and American Legion Riders, we have witnessed firsthand the Legion's Family dedication to our Veterans and to each other.

My special thanks to Diane Rousseau, our Department President and Detachment Commander, Bill Kelly for their friendship and support during my tenure.

I would like to thank Michael McDaniel, Department Adjutant and the Department Staff for their friendship this year. You all have become an extended family and each of you do an outstanding job to make the Department Commander look and act his best. I will definitely miss you all very much. We have shared many laughs but the job got done.

There are many special people to say "Thank you" to but my membership chair is the one. My membership Chairman, Robert "Bob" Brewster was my sounding board when I had no one else to talk to. Bob is Mr. Membership and he is definitely a friend to all our Legionnaires and his hard work ensured that we won the "Big 12" in our respective category. He realizes the importance of membership and what it means to our veterans and imparted this to all our Command-

ers. However, you the blue caps made the "Big 12" a reality and for that I think you.

To my wife, Karin Williams; a big thanks you for your support and encouragement throughout the year. Without you on the team this would have been a hard journey.

Our Department will undergo a transition in the near future and face many challenges. I would ask that we remember the purposes of the American Legion and we can overcome any obstacle.

My best wishes to incoming Commander Al "Gunner" Dudley and his wife Belinda, as they travel the State of Florida making their mark on this great Department. Thank you, Department of Florida American Legion Family, for everything.

AL "GUNNER" DUDLEY
American Legion, Department Of Florida
Vice Commander

It's been a fantastic year! Let's finish it off with a, "Got 'R' done". I look forward to working for all of you this coming Legion year and seeing you all at Convention. Always remember "United We Stand, Divided We Fall", so let's all work together and great things will happen for the Florida American Legion Family! We must continue to strive letting the Veteran's and their families in Florida know who we are - "Veterans helping Veterans". Remember, every day is Veteran's Day! God Bless you and your families and see you at Convention!

Scott Grabner
Dept. ALR Chairman
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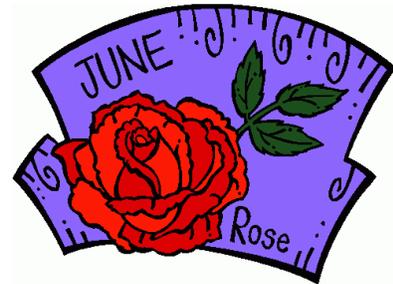
As the current Legion year comes to a close, we should be reminded that we have our first ALR training scheduled for conference June 8th. If we do not train our future ALR leaders, we are setting ourselves up for failure. As we have already had some major changes in the ALR leadership there will be new leaders that will be appointed for the coming year. I hope everyone provides them the opportunity to excel in our organization. We have grown so fast over the past several years, which we have had to endure some growing pains. Just remember that The Department of Florida has a great American Legion Rider program and we do great things within are various communities and at a National Level. I want to remind the Post Commanders, you are responsible for the welfare of the American Legion Rider program within your Post. As a Post Commander you are responsible for ensuring that copyright laws are not violated on patches that your Chapter's wear. The Post Commanders and Chapter Directors are responsible for ensure that the integrity of the American Legion and the Legion Riders are up held. First and foremost we all must remember that we are Legionnaires, Auxiliary and SAL members first and must support our Post, Units and Squadrons. I look forward to seeing everyone at convention.

Art Schwabe
Department Sgt.-at-Arms

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those Legionnaires who attended the Sgt-at Arms Class. You have truly made a difference, not only in me but the Department of Florida American Legion. You are the reason I do what I do. Because of you, things get done for our Veterans. Because of you we are respected as "The Best Veterans Organization". It is great to be a Legionnaire! Soon it will be time for the installations of our next years' officers and it will be necessary they provide proof of eligibility.

Proof of eligibility can be a DD-214 or an official document that shows Honorable Discharge and dates of service we require. If you are unsure the documentation is appropriate please send it to Department so they can validate.

For all New Post officers ensure you start your year off right. Dress appropriately for the event and remember you now represent the Largest Veterans Organization in the Nation. Again, Thank You for a great year!!



	<p>TAPS</p> <p>It is with great sadness that we must share the news of the passing of Richard A. Thibodeau, husband of our Children & Youth Chairman, Dianne Thibodeau. Dick was born in Maine and graduated from the University of Maine. Dick was a devoted and generous advocate of several causes. He was especially fond of donating time and money to benefit many children's charities. For over 30 years he was a sponsor through Save The Children Fund as well as Special Olympics.</p>
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Michael Clark
Department Americanism Chairman
Americanism@floridalegion.org

I would like to thank all the Post that participated in Americanism Programs this year. It has been a pleasure serving as Americanism Chairman this year and I would like to thank Commander Williams for his trust in me. Also a special thanks to all the ladies at Headquarters for without their support things would not go as smoothly as they have.

The only thing that I am asking for next year is that all incoming Area and District Commanders have a representative at the Americanism Meeting.

Thanks and see you at Convention.... For God and Country

*Deep Summer is when laziness
finds respectability!*

100%+1 Goal

May 23, 2012

Membership Report as of June 1, 2012

District/ Area	Commander	Goal	Rec'd	% Goal
6	Robert Kiley	9,710	10,170	104.74
5	Jerry Brandt	7,405	7,655	103.38
2	Homer Frailey	1,322	1,355	102.50
4	Jay Conti	4,065	4,158	102.29
3	Larry Krull	1,686	1,702	100.95
1	William Bingle	6,197	6,242	100.73
12	Mark Johnson	8,357	8,393	100.43
13	Steven Slachta	8,682	8,711	100.33
16	James Burgess	11,991	11,931	99.50
14	Gary Decker	3,171	3,155	99.50
8	Debra Roush	8,284	8,203	99.02
17	David Corning	4,188	4,134	98.71
9	Richard Davitt	4,390	4,321	98.43
15	James Zipler	5,286	5,155	97.52
11	Richard Smith	4,208	4,084	97.05
7	Nancy Thomas	4,002	3,835	95.83
Eastern	William Walsh	18,067	18,563	102.75
Northern	Jim Ramos	17,344	17,649	101.76
Western	Charles Lecroy	7,519	7,597	101.04
SW	Gregory Putman	16,966	16,914	99.69
Central	Charlie Wing	21,279	20,921	98.32
Southern	George Rafajko	11,769	11,560	98.22
Dept			93,204	
Post 400		14,133	11,930	84.41
Post 208		1,697	2,125	125.22
Totals		108,656	107,259	98.71

Bob Brewster
Membership Chairman
membership@floridalegion.org

As I write this letter, I am reflecting on the last 3 to 10 years. I have come to this one major conclusion - membership is out there and is available. Too many of us don't get it. The Department of Florida, thanks to some of you, is having a very good year percentage-wise. I want to thank you who have done well, because without you, this year would have been a disaster. Department-wise we are in 2nd place out of 55 Departments. We have Posts much larger than the Departments who are close to us, whether in front of us or behind us. Florida stands at 98.152%.

After talking to a large volume of Posts, just about every Post have members who paid last year, but who have not paid this year. They also have DMS and 400 members living in their area. The young vets who have served from December 20, 1989, to today, are everywhere. They are not coming to us. We have to go to them.

I want to thank all of the Posts, Area Commanders, and District Commanders who have treated me so well this year. It has been an experience I will never forget. I only wish that I could have instilled some of the enthusiasm into all the Post membership teams. Even when we get our 100%, we have lost some good members along the way, and not just to Post everlasting.

In closing, I want to again make sure you understand that I sincerely appreciate each and every one of you, from Commander Fletcher Williams, Jr. for giving me this opportunity, to Mike McDaniels, our Adjutant, and his entire staff for not saying no to anything this year, to all of our 100% Posts, our Eastern, Northern, Western Areas, who have exceeded their 100% goals, to the 6th, 5th, 4th, 2nd, 3rd, and 1st Districts for exceeding 100%, and let's not forget the 6th and 4th Districts who won the race to the top, and the 5th District who moved from last place in the standings last year to 2nd place this year. I only pray that everyone will continue the good they are doing and be even better next year. For God and Country

May Fun Facts

- 2, 1899** - Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid commit their first bank robbery
- 4, 1896** - Henry Ford completes his first automobile. Testing was delayed as it was too wide to get out of his workshop door.
- 6, 1933** - First drive-in theatre opens in Camden, New Jersey
- 15, 1752** - Ben Franklin flies a kite
- 19, 1978** - Garfield the fat cat debuts
- 30, 1985** - Yul Brenner's 4,625 and last Broadway performance of The King and I.



Kenneth C. Nichols, Cracker Trail Chairman
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Dear Legionnaires, and Scouters,

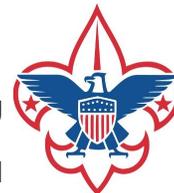
I am real excited that plans for the 2nd Annual , American Legion, Department Of Florida ,Boy Scout Cracker Trail Competition is well under way and shaping up to greatly exceed the attendance of the 2012 event. We are receiving a lot of feedback from the Troops, Ship, Crews, from last year and receiving inquiries of their reservations for this year. Please allow me to share one of the many quotes received on our check out survey, "This was the best Boy Scout camping event that we have attended in the last 10 years"

We have a goal this year to expand from about 25 Patrols, to at least a 10-15% , which is a strong reality, since many attending the 2012 Skills Adventure, have been talking it up , not only in Gulf Stream Council, but in Northern Florida, as well, as in Miami-Dade, and are anxiously waiting for February 8-10, 2013 to arrive, to come back to Tanah-Keeta, and , or, a proposed Northern Florida event, which is developing.

The real goal for this event is obviously to rebuild the relationship between the American Legion, and the Boy Scouts Of America, which has existed since 1919, and to encourage youth and their families to get involved in both programs, since our interests are the same in many ways, so, we have opened this event up to any Troop, Crew, or Ship; the only requirement being that Troops, etc. must obtain the signature of a (neighborhood?) Post Commander (Post locator-www.floridalegion.org, and Troop locator, www.beascout.org, by zip code in right hand, top section), also located on the attached , Cracker Trail flyer. We hope that this will start a new relationship, developing in such possible areas as Honor Guard, ceremonies, Eagle Projects, Citizenship Badges, etc.

So, let's get the ball rolling and start the registration process, obtaining your Troops registration forms at your local council office, or by contacting our Dept. of Florida, Cracker Trail Registrar, Carol Polk, at www.floridalegion.org, or at 1-800-393-3378 x222 . You may also contact either myself, or our awesome Program Chairman, Pietera Siegler, at pietera241@bellsouth.net, or 561-202-4605 for information. I remain yours in American Legion Scouting

Robert Scott
Department Boy Scout Chairman
BoyScouts@floridalegion.org



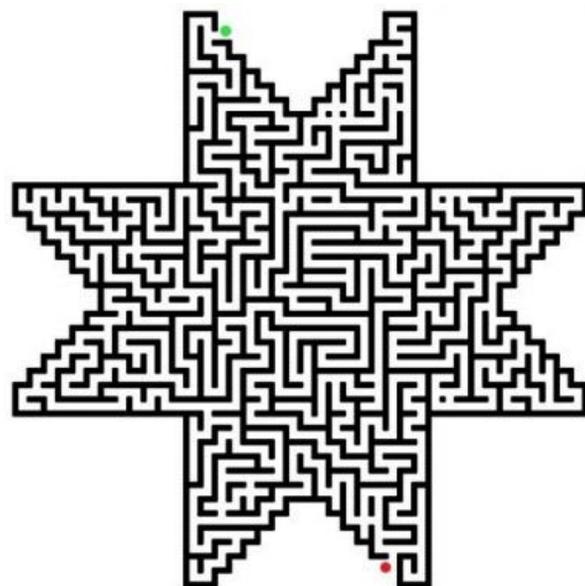
How time flies when you are having fun. Where has this year gone?

It seems like only yesterday that Phil Harrison gave me a call telling me that Steve Shuga had been in a car and would I take over the Chairmanship of the Boy Scout Program. I must admit I was as green as grass. (I'm still green around the gills, or so I have been told). I have had my share of ups and downs, but I would not have missed it for all the tea in China. But as all good things must come to an end, so too is my time as Boy Scout Chairman. Somewhere I read that at the end of 3 years, you are no longer part of the solution you are now part of the problem. It is time for a new person to step in with new ideas, and a new direction.

One of the things I am most proud of as my time as Boy Scout Chairman, is the Cracker Trail Competition. We had a couple of hitches and some bad publicity at the start, but this year's Camporee was one of the best. The Camp told us that it was one of the best in the past ten years. What was more important was that the Scouts loved it. Like they say 181 Boy Scouts can't all be wrong.

I want to thank the crew that put on the Cracker Trail Competition and Carol Polk for all the hard work that she put into the event.

I want to thank the American Legion for letting me be the Boy Scout Chairman, and as Bob Hope would say, "Thanks for the memories". Well it is time for me to it the long trail, and please give the new Boy Scout Chairman all the love and support that you have given me. Yours in Scouting For God and Country



WWW.JEU-LABYRINTHE.COM

Legislative
Stanley Gold, Department Chairman
786.423.2458

More on the Postal Issue... While I was at National Executive Committee meeting I was able to talk to the National Economic Commission concerning support of Federal Legislation that protects the employment of veterans in the U.S. Postal Service mail processing facilities that are slated for closure. The resolution was approved on May 9th during our Washington D.C. meeting in March. PDC Paul Martel and I were able to meet with my post member Senator Bill Nelson. We discussed problems of returning veterans trying to find jobs. He asked us many questions. This month he sponsored legislation S. 2130 to create a Veterans Conservation Corps to employ veterans and provide transitional opportunities through a range of projects that leverage skills developed in the military. The **Veterans Conservation Corps Authorization Act** will put veterans back to work doing conservation projects on federal lands and waters.

Veterans Skills to Jobs Act

Many veterans with specialized find that when they leave the service states, federal agencies do not recognize the training they received in the military. Many are required to go through duplicative training and certification for jobs they trained for and executed while in the military. This prevents veterans from quickly integrating into the workforce after separation from the Armed Forces. To help these veterans, Senator Nelson introduced the Veterans Skills to Jobs act of 2012, S. 2239, which requires Federal Agencies to recognize the relevant military training and skills when certifying veterans for Federal licenses.



ROTC/SHOOTING SPORTS

Loretta Young, Dept. of Florida ROTC/Shooting Sports

We have come to the end of the Legion Year and ROTC/Shooting Sports has been on a steady rise in participation. The final Cadet of the Year had an outstanding response with 81 applications. This has far exceeded previous year's response. I can only hope that the posts participation for the Year End Metal Awards has the same response. Most of the schools have completed their Military Balls and Award Ceremonies. I personally have attended as many as time would allow along with several ROTC Formal Inspections.

I would like to give congratulations to Charles W. Flanagan NJROTC Unit who were crowned the 2012 NJROTC National Champions and have brought honor to the state of Florida for the second year in a row. They outlasted 24 other units to capture the 2012 Navy Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps (NJROTC) National Academic, Athletic and Drill Championship in Pensacola April 13-14. The 25 NJROTC units, representing 15 states from coast to coast, were challenged on their athleticism, tested in academics and evaluated on the drill deck during competition held at the Naval Air Technical Training Center's (NATTC) Chevalier Hall and on the Naval Air Station (NAS) Pensacola Track and Parade Field.

"The cadets worked very hard to get here, not just undergoing the extra practices in drill and athletics to prepare, but extra studying for the academics as well," said Lt. Cmdr. Jim Stauffer, senior naval science instructor for Flanagan High School, located in Pembroke Pines, Fla. The personnel inspections, color guard and most drill competitions were judged by Navy Recruit Division commanders and Marine Corps drill instructors from Officer Training Command, Newport, R.I. In addition, Marines from Marine Aviation Training Support Group-21 assisted in judging the armed rifle exhibition, while Sailors from the Navy Recruiting Orientation Unit at NAS Pensacola judged the curl-up and push-up portions of the competition.

While Flanagan High School finished first, four of last year's top five units returned to the top this year. Boca Raton (Fla.) High School, last year's champion, finished second followed by Centennial (Las Vegas) High School. Approximately 25 of more than 600 NJROTC units qualify for the national competition annually.

Flanagan's NJROTC program was started in 2001 and Naval Science Instructor, Senior Chief Petty Officer Wayne Smith, was there to open the doors and just last year was named Flanagan High School Teacher of the Year. "The unit held fundraisers throughout the year to fund this trip," Stauffer said. "Most of the financial burden falls on the backs of the parents as our annual expenses exceed \$40,000. We are always looking for creative ways to keep the coffers from running dry. The parents, school and community really supported and got behind these kids."

I want to thank everyone for their hard work this year and look forward to serving the Department of Florida next year as our programs continues to increase. Thank you all and have a good summer. For God and Country