

The Legion Link

June 2014

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Making a Difference for Veterans Everyday



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Art 'Ole' Schwabe
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Where did my year go! By the time this is being read we have just days before DEPARTMENT Convention. I would like to thank each and every one of you for your dedication and the job

you have done this past year. YOU TRULY ARE "DIFFERENCE MAKERS"!

We have accomplished a lot. Area training by the Past Department Commanders trained over 450 Legionnaires in all 6 Areas! We started a State Legislative team, National Cemetery Chairman working with the (7) National Cemeteries in Florida, 100th Anniversary Chairman, a Coloring Book for Elementary Kids on the American Flag, and we restarted the Color Guard competition. In Membership we won the Big twelve challenge and the Eagle award in the over 100,000 members category. We started a Legion License plate, a Banner "100% FAMILY IN THIS HOUSE", CPR reporting of 100 % and donations to

COTA "Children's Organ Transplant Association". The Legion Family raised over \$75,000 Dollars for the Kids in Florida that need our help. I would like to thank all Department, District and Post Chairmen for their hard work and dedication to the many programs we have for Veterans and Children.

I AM SO PROUD OF WHAT YOU HAVE ACCOMPLISHED!! THANK YOU SO MUCH!! IT'S A YEAR I WILL NEVER FORGET!

Convention is right around the corner. We have added some new classes and meetings. Please double check the Convention Agenda for possible changes in times and locations of meetings. For God, Country and The American Legion

And a very special *Happy Birthday* was sung for Bob Brown, a HoDAR who has attended almost every meeting for many years. Bob turned 92 on May 4, 2014! Linda Gasparini is shown below congratulating Bob.





Jay Conti Sr.
Department Vice Commander
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BRAVO-ZULU
352.287.1400



JUNE 2014! DEPARTMENT CONVENTION TIME!

What an Awesome year you, the Legionnaires of Florida, have had this year. I applaud each and every one of you for the outstanding job you've done. The 6th & 15th Districts won the RACE-TO-THE-TOP Honors. A total of 6 Districts (3 more just about there) and 156 Posts achieved 100% or more in membership. Another 20 Posts are at 97% or better. All Posts have participated in The American Legion programs helping out with Veterans Stand-down's across the state of Florida, floods in the panhandle, honoring Medal of Honor recipients, Blue & Gold Star Ceremonies, Honor

Flights, Legacy Runs, the dedication of a new Fisher House at the Gainesville VA Hospital, revitalizations, SOCIAL MEDIA, Law & Order Programs and much more!

On May 2nd, I had the pleasure of attending Fleet Week Ceremonies at American Legion Post #142, just like I did over 20 years ago when I served in the US Navy. This very same Post opened their arms to me in the 1990's.

On May 23rd, I had the pleasure of attending the start of a 3-day Memorial Day weekend. A homeless veterans Stand-Down was held at American Legion Post #29 in South Miami. The entire Post and its grounds was open to the volunteers, the VA and the National Guard from across the state in support of this massive Homeless Veterans Stand Down. Homeless veterans were bused in for 2+ days to get medical care and dental care for them and their animals as well as getting enrolled into the VA System.

To Post 142 Commander, John Silva, and Post 29 Commander, Jonathan Black, and the Legion Families I say "Thank you!" for your commitment to those who are serving and those who have served. BRAVO ZULU!

The Department of FLORIDA ROCKS!

Working together as a TEAM we acted as one all year. I know that WE will have another AWESOME year starting June 15, 2014. FULL SPEED AHEAD FOR VETERANS!

Volunteering ***Dennis Boland, NEC***

The American Legion is an organization of wartime veterans dedicated to service of the community, state and nation.

Service does not end when we take the uniform off. Veterans can continue their service in the community as an American Legion volunteer.

The American Legion is a staunch supporter of the Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) Program, the largest volunteer program in the federal government. As of September 20, 2013, there are over 8,064 regularly scheduled volunteers and 16,076 occasional volunteers who serve veterans in VA Medical Centers, Clinics, Vet Centers, Fisher Houses and State Veterans Homes across the nation. Their combined service adds up to over 805,541 hours which is valued at over \$17.6 million in Savings to the Federal Government.

Volunteering to support America's veterans and their families is what The American Legion has done since our founding in 1919 and the proud tradition we carry on today. The American Legion has established a goal of 1,000,000 volunteer hours and 9,000 volunteers by September 2014. To register, please visit any VA Medical Center's Voluntary Service Office.



TAPS

It is with deep regret that we report the passing of NECA, Harry F. McDowell, of Lehigh Acres, FL on Wednesday, May 14th, 2014 at the age of 89. There will be a Memorial Service for Harry McDowell on Saturday,

June 7, 2014 at 3:00pm at American Legion Lehigh Acres Post 323, 1124 Ashler Ave., Lehigh Acres, FL 33936.

Harry McDowell is survived by his two children, Ronald and Bonnie. Harry was a WWII Army Veteran and a member of Post 323, with 46 continuous years of membership. Harry served many roles during his impressive career in The American Legion. He served his Post at all levels including Post Commander. District positions included 13th District Commander, District Executive Committeeman and Boys State Chairman. Department positions included Department Commander (1983-1984), Southwestern Area Vice Commander (1982-1983), and NECA (1986-1990). On a National level, Harry served on the Membership Committee, Post Activities Committee, Vice Chairman of the National Security Council Committee, National Public Relations Commission and Vice Chairman of the National Legislative Council. In 1990-91, Harry was elected National Vice Commander.

If you would like to send your condolences you may do so through Carol Toney at 217 Lake Drive, Lehigh Acres, FL 33936-7019.

Steve Newman
Department Chaplain

Greetings and hello my fellow legionnaires. Well this has been a very rewarding and blessed year for me. I felt honored and privileged to be able to serve you all as your Department Chaplain. Congratulations to all who completed my Chaplain Training course and received a Department certificate.

Jay Conti Sr	Toni Conti	Jim Ramos	Joerg Wartenbos
Al Porter	Edie Porter	Joe Motes	Bruce Malcolm
Doug Deierlein	Stephen Shuga	Robert Young	Mary Holoway
Archie Mckuthern	Ralph Marceau	Loretta Young	Lawson Dukes
Michael Fitzpatrick	Pat Renneisen	Helena Pantal	William Reno, II
Samuel Pantalo	John Vazquez	Kennedy Parker	Patricia Lucas
Lucille Sweeting	Deborah Ezell	Byron Walke	Robert Lucas
Tom Pirro	Doyle Green	Richard Smith	Jim Douglas
Edward Manak	Nancy Thomas	Burl Thomas	Shirley Douglas
Fran Parrow	Ira Anderson	Leon Kohler	Bill Dover, Jr.
Dianne Tucker	Larry Mccann	Tom Mason	Lawrence Roelofsen
Robert Gillette	Chuck Griffin	Robert Scott	Greg Jones
Ken Rogers	Jack Bennett	George Singer	Cynthia Brunat
Maggie Justice	Elery Cope	David Hansen	Charles Archer
Jackie Kulpn	Chaplain Justice	Brenda Walsh	Jack Dingo
Stephen Cunningham	Bruce Carl	Lee Ann Jespersen	Lois Stachelrodt
Shelli Romeu	Betty Bennett	Jose Romeu	Frank King
Charles Haig	Kathryn Boyer	Rosemary Hamblin	Rev Robert Bonfiglio
Bernard Rock	G.W. Hambuis	Jerry Moore	Peter Wingard
Chuck Teaters	Eunice Butts	Roger Beatham	Loren King
Gerard Sherlock	June Habey	Elbert Zeigler	Donald Jones
George Becker	Vickie Leventhal	Ray Leventhal	Rev Willie Branch
Steve Gordon	Timothy Coady	Dee Shafer	Joe Corrales
Janet Schall	John Okeefe	Gerri Keenan	Robert Decarlo
Leonard Leavy	Helen Fuller	Barbara Kelly	Mark Tyler
Joann Beard	John Waterstreet	Ivan Garcia	Robert Schall
Jorge Montes	Len Holloway	Tim Linck	Lester Sheppard
Carol Toney	Doug Robeson	Jesse Figueroa	Chuck Gauthier
Larry Carpenter	James Hienry	Raymond Bath	Chuck Weinerg
Stuart Prestoni	Maria Vincent	Charles Hayes	Dominic Socci
Garry Justice	Robert Miller	John Petteboni	Ron Lechnek
George Mczeal	Ken Wall	L.A. Walden	Yvonne Slachta
Len Dube	Robert Doyle	Bob Franklin	Steven Slachta
Deborah Avera	James Stewart	Linda Walker	Maggie Leckner
Shirley Busuttil	Lou Lauster	Lew Olsen	Bill Nelson
John Sloat	Lynn Heibeck	Richard Heibeck	Cathy Stamboul
William Parks	Ruth Burgess	Paul Micieli	Barbara Carr

Please remember in your thoughts and prayers our Past National Vice Commander, Department Commander and National Executive Committeeman Alternate Harry McDowell as he has gone on to meet the maker of us all. He will surely be missed as he had a major impact on many of us who came to know him. Please also keep his family in your prayers as they go through this difficult time. Also, remember each day is a blessing and brings us new challenges, hopes, and dreams. Through the power of the Almighty Father we can make these a reality in some way. With faith, strength and courage we all can succeed in making our lives more enjoyable, healthy, and happy. I wish each and everyone one of you, our veterans and members of The American Legion Family a blessed and successful upcoming year. Bless you and take care, everyday, everyday, everyday. For "God and Country"

John Dollinger
POW/MIA Chairman
POW/MIA Report

The following information comes from the Defense Prisoner of War – Missing Personnel Office and reflects MIA's accounted for from June 13, 2013 to May 20, 2014.

2013		2014	
Name	War Era	Name	War Era
Korea	Cpl. Cristobal Romo	Korea	Cpl. Glydon E. Moyer
Sgt. Clement Thibodeaux Jr.	Korea	Pfc. James R. Holmes	Korea
Sgt. 1st Class William Robinson	Korea	Pfc. William T. Carneal	WWII
Pfc. Jonathan R. Possey Jr.	Korea	Sgt. 1st Class John C. Keller ***	Korea
Capt. Harry S. White	WWII	Pfc. Donald C. Durfee	Korea
Staff Sgt. Thomas L. Meek	WWII	Sgt. Paul M. Gordon	Korea
Sgt. Domonic J. Licari	WWII	Capt. Douglas D. Ferguson	Vietnam
2nd Lt. Valorie L. Pollard	WWII	Cpl. William F. Day	Korea
Pfc. Herene K. Blevins	Korea	Cpl. William S. Blasdel	Korea
Sgt. Charles L. Scott	Korea	Pfc. Arthur Richardson	Korea
Pfc. Ronald C. Huffman	Korea	Cpl. Richard Isbell	Korea
Sgt. Melvin E. Wolfe	Korea	Cpl. William N. Bonner	Korea
2nd Lt. Vernal J. Bird	WWII	Cpl. Harold W. Reed	Korea
Col. Francis J. McGouldrick	Vietnam	Sgt. Richard J. Archambeault	Korea
Cpl. George W. Conklin Jr.	Korea	Cpl. Lucio R. Aguilar	Korea
Capt. Franklin B. Tostevin	WWII		
Staff Sgt. Lawrence Woods	Vietnam	*** Buried at Florida National Cemetery	
Tech. Fifth Grade Oneal Rush	WWII		
Cpl. Harold Evans	Korea	These are MIA Statistics as of 5/20/13	
Cpl. Harold A. Evans	Korea		
Pfc. Norman P. Dufresne	Korea	WWII	73,624
Cpl. Robert Tait	Korea	Korea	7,883
Sgt. Delbert D. Kovalcheck	Korea	Cold War	126
1st Lt. Louis L. Longman	WWII	Vietnam	1,642
Pfc. Jerry P. Craig	Korea	Iraq and Others	6
Cpl. William A. Newton	Korea	TOTAL	83,281 MIA's
2nd Lt. Verne L. Gibb	Korea		
Sgt 1st Class Joseph E, Gantt	Korea		
Cpl. Joe W. Howard ****	Korea		
Cpl. Cletus R. Lies	Korea		

**** Buried at Jacksonville National Cemetery

Undersecretary of Defense Lumpkin has begun the process of reorganizing the entire POW/MIA community to eliminate duplication and create 1 budget and 1 consolidated Department. This project is a priority for the Department of Defense but will take a great deal of time to re-align functions, personnel and facilities. The U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee and its counterpart in the U.S. House of Representatives are closely monitoring progress and are committed to see short term results.

As Veterans and American Legion members we can never our government forget their commitment to these POW/MIA families to properly account for every one of their loved ones listed as POW or MIA.

It is not fair to ask of others what we are not
willing to do ourselves.
~ Eleanor Roosevelt ~

100% Goal

May 7, 2014

Membership Report as of May 30, 2014

District/ Area	Commander	Goal	Rec'd	% Goal
6	Thomas Biddle	10,741	11,476	106.84
13	John Dollinger	8,782	9,211	104.89
12	Kenneth Wakefield	8,442	8,722	103.32
3	Randall White	1,715	1,738	101.34
5	Thomas Gora	7,810	7,904	101.20
15	Eunice Butts	5,329	5,367	100.71
14	Gary Decker	3,026	3,035	100.30
2	Willie Jackson	1,373	1,369	99.71
1	Jimmy Martin	6,288	6,249	99.38
16	Sidney Damsgard	12,028	11,831	98.36
8	Joseph Magee	8,255	8,053	97.55
17	Dorothy Moore	4,152	3,995	96.22
7	Charles Giffin	3,911	3,753	95.96
11	Frank Maitland	4,168	3,922	94.10
9	John Vazquez	4,349	3,986	91.65
4	Charles Ferguson	4,198	3,825	91.11
Eastern	Robert Kiley	19,183	20,198	105.29
SW	Debra Roush	17,037	17,264	101.33
Western	Verna Joyce	7,661	7,618	99.44
Central	James Burgess	21,268	20,951	98.51
Northern	Michael Wolohan	17,875	17,462	97.69
Southern	William Johnson	11,543	10,943	94.80
Dept			94,436	
Post 400		12,067	12,359	102.42
Post 208		3,181	3,060	96.20
Totals		111,525	109,855	98.50

Doug Deierlein
Department of Florida
Membership Chairman

Hello Legionnaires, SAL and Ladies

OK team we only need 2.46% to hit 100% goal. We can do this! Let's work hard and get there and make our Department 'Duck' Commander, Art proud. Remember sitting on membership is not a good thing to do as all you are doing is stopping those members continues years.

Thank you all for what you do each day for Veterans



Benny Combs
Baseball Chairman
PLAY BALL!!!!

It is that time of the year again, Legion Baseball. We currently have 22 teams in the Department of Florida. The list of cities is lengthy. I encourage all members of the Legion Family to support your local teams and go out to the games. Let's show these young men that we really do care. We need to put the post back into the program by promoting and supporting the local teams. You never know if your team may have the next Babe Ruth.

The rewards are scholarships, camaraderie, and just the love of America's favorite past time. This year's senior tournament will be held in Jacksonville, FL. Details will be on the website soon. All are invited to attend and support the young men. Let's hope our Department champions will also be the Regional and National champs. Good luck to all of the teams and may God Bless you all. For next year if you are interested in participating in some way please feel free to contact me at benny.combs73@yahoo.com or 904-210-2236. For God and Country

Jim Burk, ALR
Dept of Florida Chairman

I can't believe how fast the past year has zoomed by. It seems like yesterday I was appointed State Rider Chairman.

It has been an honor and privilege to have served the Department of Florida and over 5000 Riders. I made so many new friends. Our finest things this past year were the Legacy Run and the State Rally. I thank you my fellow Riders for your confidence in me and your support. I leave you with this:

When our country is harmed there are those who respond.

With honor and duty they are sent.

In war and peace, with strength and resolve.

It's the blood of the soldier that's spent.

We fight and some die, on these foreign lands.

With freedom and God at our side.

And when our service is done, we need to keep on.

So we join the Legion that rides.

The souls of the fallen and breath of the living, bestow God's blessings on this country's side.

So with flags held aloft and the sound of thunder, we join the Legion that rides.

When our day is past, and our duty is done God's angels will ask "Have you been a provider? What have you done for your country and man?" I'll answer with pride "I'm an American Legion Rider" Do good, Have fun, Ride Hard

Steve Shuga
Children & Youth Program Chairman
CY@legionmail.org

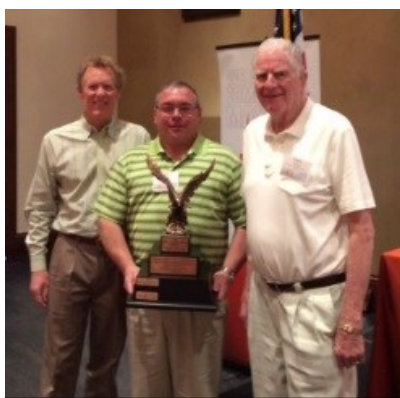
Summer plans are in full swing and Posts should be hosting or supporting local children & youth activities in their communities. Remember the picnics, parades, and various bazaars/kidfest events that are in your areas that can be a great place to pass out information and inform the public of The American Legion. Don't forget to push membership as this works well with the programs that we support.

Any lingering funds collected for COTA and CWF should be turned into Department ASAP. Thank you for the total effort to support those organizations.

Temporary Financial Assistance and/or the Gilchrist Fund, is available year round to provide assistance, providing that you meet the basic program requirements. Contact Cliff Collins at Department Headquarters for additional information.

It's been an honor to serve you all as your Department Children & Youth Chairman for the past two years. I have enjoyed the positive excitement for the various programs that we support within the Fourth Pillar – Children & Youth. Thank you all for the encouragement and support that you gave me, to those before me, and I can only ask that you do the same for the next Legionnaire who will take this chairmanship to the next level.

My next assignment will encompass all programs that we support as they draw veterans to our American Legion. The Florida Team effort will always shine upon The American Legion's Fourth Pillar, promoting the core purpose of "A Square Deal for Every Child".



John J. "Jack" Flynn Trophy
Presentation to the
Department of Iowa
From left to right: John Wigle –
AGIA Chairman, John Derner –
Trust Director for Iowa,

The Legionnaire Insurance Trust Holds Its 49th Annual Meeting of the Board of Directors CHICAGO, Illinois (May 2, 2014) - The Board of Directors of the Legionnaire Insurance Trust (LIT) held their forty-ninth annual meeting on April 15, 2014 in Scottsdale, Arizona. Forty-seven of the forty-nine participating Departments – state organizations of The American Legion – were represented at the meeting.

Since its inception in 1966, the LIT has returned around one billion dollars in benefits to insured Legion families and over \$71,000,000 to the participating Departments for their use in areas such as veterans' affairs & rehabilitation.

This year, the Board met to receive the financial report for the past year, and to distribute nearly \$2.5 million to participating departments. The report outlined both the 2013 activities and 2014 plans on behalf of the Trust and introduced the proposed changes and additions to the Trust's portfolio of products. Additionally, Board officers were elected for the coming year.

The Board Meeting also included a new award presented by the agent/administrator – AGIA Affinity Services – the John J. "Jack" Flynn Trophy to honor the Department that excelled in promoting the programs and services of the Legionnaire Insurance Trust in the prior year. Jack Flynn was the founding Chairman of the LIT and served in that capacity until his passing in February 2013. The 2013 winner of the Jack Flynn Trophy was the Department of Iowa. Iowa will hold the Trophy until the April 2015 Board Meeting.

**Stanley Gold, Department
National Legislative Chairman**

Last November at the Fall Meeting in Orlando, Our Department asked me to 'help another group of veterans in securing support for House bill 1726 introduced by Florida Congressman Bill Posey. The bill requests the Congressional Gold Medal for veterans of the 65th Infantry Regiment (known as the Borinqueneers). Originally based in Puerto Rico for their distinguished service during the Korean War. A companion bill was also introduced in the Senate. Within a week after the Department made calls all 27 members of Congress from Florida were co-sponsors plus our two Senators. Coral Gables Post 98 passed a resolution to have The American Legion support this cause. Last week with good help from other departments, two-thirds of the House and Senate co-sponsored these two bills were voted on by the full House and Senate and passed. Now it goes to the President for signing.

On May 23rd I was assigned by the Department to go to Senator Marco Rubio's office in Miami for a press interview along with four other groups. We met with the Senator and answered questions concerning the problems at the VA hospitals. We all gave them our input.

The Senator stated the House passed the VA Accountability Bill introduced by our Florida congressman Jeff Miller. This bill gives the right for the VA Secretary to fire or demote career VA employees involved in cases of negligence or mismanagement. Now the Senate will vote on a similar bill introduced by Senator Rubio. He stated, "this bill, if passed, will highlight the need to bring real accountability to the VA.

From problems in Phoenix, AZ to Miami, FL and now potentially Gainesville too, we've seen plenty finger pointing and excuses but no one actually being fired for incompetence and negligence in the performance of their duties." He also mentioned that Bill Nelson was a supporter of this bill.



Stanley Gold, Post 29 Commander Jonathan Black, Post 29 Vice Commander Robert Bellamy, Marco Rubio

**CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION
Clarence Hill
Past National Commander**

Long-time Legionnaires will remember Bob Francis. One of our most productive members in Florida history, Bob noted in 1959 that there was no history of Florida on file anywhere and set out to remedy that situation. He eventually compiled "A History of The American Legion—Department of Florida—1919-1960." Most of the Florida Founding Fathers were deceased, but he was able to put a couple of pages together. And of course, there are two versions depending on which Founding Father you believe. I will provide more on that in later articles. Bob quoted the following information from an author unknown letter written May 28, 1958, to Department Adjutant Ernest Rowton: "For the historical record of The American Legion, Department of Florida, these are the facts concerning the founding of The American Legion, Department of Florida. The American Legion, Department of Florida, was founded on a Pullman Car between St. Louis, Missouri, and Jacksonville, Florida, on May 10, 1919."

The American Legion will hold a 15 month commemoration of 100 years of service to veterans, military personnel, families and communities starting at the National Convention in 2018, continuing throughout 2019, continuing through the National Convention in 2019 and culminating on Veterans Day 2019. The Department of Florida will form a Centennial Celebration Observance Committee to develop a plan for events at the Department level. PNC Clarence Hill will serve as chairman of the committee and each District should appoint one member to serve on the committee. When selecting a representative, District Commanders should consider someone interested in history and willing to serve through the celebration. The goal is to have a committee established and hold a meeting at the 2015 Department Convention. Anyone else desiring to be on the committee should volunteer by email to cehill316@aol.com.

Posts should form their own centennial committees and plan events around significant events in their history. Each Post can convey its legacy by sharing historical photos, videos and print material on the Legion's new Centennial Celebration web page: www.legion.org/centennial. Detailed instructions on how to create a Post history page is available on the web page, as are the types of information a Post should look to identify for their centennial. For more information on the National web page, email ledwards@legion.org. Department HQ has copies of the Centennial Celebration Workbook that gives step-by-step procedures on creating and posting your history, and the Legacy Vision which is an overall guide to the process. Department has little in the way of early history, but from the 1950's on, there are issues of the Florida Legionnaire and Legion Link that can be consulted.