

The Legion Link

May 2012

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AIMING HIGH FOR VETERANS



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**Fletcher Williams, Jr.
Department Commander
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As we prepare to celebrate Memorial Day, we need to think about what this Day really means. Some of us believe that it is just a day off work; others think that it is a day to Barbeque; and still others have no clue what this day really means.

You may ask why many Americans do not know what the day is all about. Sometimes the answer is obvious and that is because many of us do not know what the day is. We should educate ourselves and the local community on what Memorial Day really means.

"Memorial Day was officially proclaimed on 5 May 1868 by General John Logan, national commander of the Grand Army of the Republic, in his General Order No. 11, and was first observed on 30 May 1868, when flowers were placed on the graves of Union and Confederate soldiers at Arlington National Cemetery. The first state to officially recognize the holiday was New York in 1873. By 1890 it was recognized by all of the northern states. The South refused to acknowledge the day, honoring their dead on separate days until after World War I (when the holiday changed from honoring just those who died fighting in the Civil War to honoring Americans who died fighting in any war). It is now celebrated in almost every State on the last Monday in May (passed by Congress with the National Holiday Act of 1971 (P.L. 90 - 363) to ensure a three day weekend for Federal holidays), though several southern states have an additional separate day for honoring the Confederate war dead: January 19 in Texas, April 26 in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, and Mississippi; May 10 in South Carolina; and June 3 (Jefferson Davis' birthday) in Louisiana and Tennessee."

"U.S. holiday originally held (1868) in commemoration of soldiers killed in the American Civil War, its observance later extended to all U.S. war dead. Most states conform to the federal practice of observing it on the last Monday in May, but some retain the traditional day of celebration, May 30. National observance is marked by the placing of a wreath on the Tomb of the Unknowns in Arlington National Cemetery. Flags, insignia, and

flowers are placed on the graves of veterans in local cemeteries."

We have a lot to be thankful for and should never forget that we owe a big debt to those who paid the ultimate price.

Robert Proctor, NEC

To my fellow Legionnaires, SAL, Auxiliary and Riders, you have all been such an important part of my recovery and I cannot thank you enough for all the support you have shown to Ruth and I during this difficult time. I have cherished every letter, card, phone call and visit through these times of sickness and strength. It was in your words and in your prayers that I found strength and my family found comfort.

Thank you to all the Legionnaires that have stepped up to assist me with the duties and responsibilities of my position throughout this time. I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible during our next department convention and thanking you in person for all the hard work you've done.

I wish to extend a special thanks to one Legionnaire in particular. Without his tireless efforts, I would not have been able to focus on my health and on making it to our next convention. Dennis Boland has dedicated 28 years to The American Legion, and through those years I'm honored to have worked with him in making the Florida American Legion a top priority at The American Legion National level and the needs of the Florida Veteran a top priority at our Nation's Capitol. Through the great works of our Legion Family and Department team, I can say without hesitation that The American Legion is the Nation's greatest veteran's organization and the members in the state of Florida made that happen.

I have been blessed to call The American Legion a second home for over 40 years and I'm so grateful for all the lifelong friendships Ruth and I have made along the way. In the past few years I've been the one who needed support and you, my Legion Family, have never failed me. You all mean so much to us and I cannot thank you enough for your support, compassion, and encouragement.

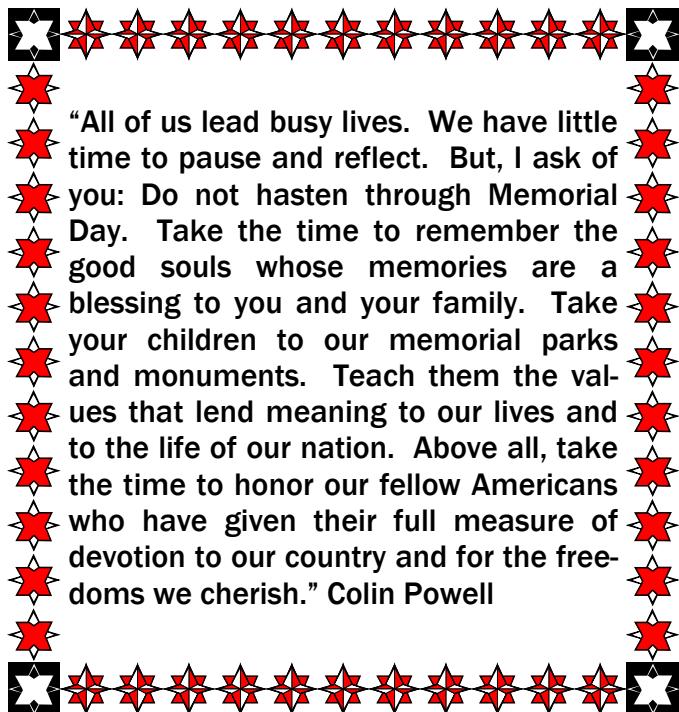
Al Dudley
Vice Commander

Another American Legion year is coming to a close. We need to pursue membership till the end! As the Leading Candidate as your Department Commander for 2012 - 2013, I am looking forward to working for you and with you. With your dedication and hard work, I firmly believe we can make Florida the Department to be admired. Let's show them that Legionnaires' in Florida can juggle cotton balls in a hurricane :) ! Remember, each one of us represent the American Legion so you should present yourself in a professional manner. We have a few important dates in May that are significant to veteran's - 19th Armed Forces Day, 28th Memorial Day, and please don't forget Mother's Day on the 13th! Everyone have a safe month as I look forward to seeing you all at Convention. Let's get them CPR's in! Thank you for your service

Michael Clark
Dept. Americanism Chairman

I am asking all Area and/or District Commanders to have a representative to attend the Americanism Meeting during this year's Convention. We need to discuss the Americanism Program and how to get it out to our Veterans and Community. And yes, I said a Representative as I know Area and District Commanders are busy. The new Area or District Commanders that have been elected should have a representative or the person they are planning on to be the Area or District Americanism Chairman. I will be expecting at least one person from each Area and District.

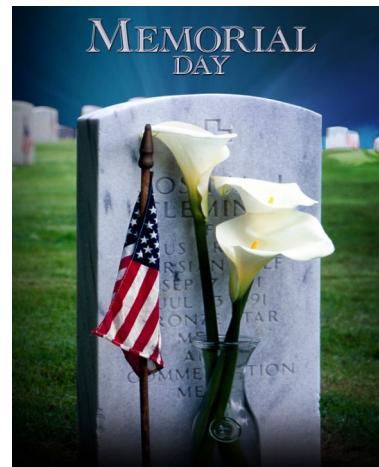
For God and Country



"All of us lead busy lives. We have little time to pause and reflect. But, I ask of you: Do not hasten through Memorial Day. Take the time to remember the good souls whose memories are a blessing to you and your family. Take your children to our memorial parks and monuments. Teach them the values that lend meaning to our lives and to the life of our nation. Above all, take the time to honor our fellow Americans who have given their full measure of devotion to our country and for the freedoms we cherish." Colin Powell

Art Schwabe
Department Sgt.-at-Arms

I would like to thank everyone for the support and those who attended the Sgt-at-Arms classes. You have truly made a difference for the Department of Florida. 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" by our actions and dedication to the Community, State and Nation. Hope to see you at the State Convention.



Dianne Thibodeau
Department Children & Youth Chairman
C&Y@floridalegion.org

The Convention is right around the corner so this will be my last newsletter. I want to thank you for all the work you have done this year for the Children & Youth Program. I have to apologize for having not being more involved these past few months. I have had some personal family health issues but I hope that is all behind me now.

When I was traveling, I distributed some "Don't Do Drugs....Make It Your Rule" six inch ruler/bookmark with the Pledge of Allegiance on the back. Lately Art Schwabe has been distributing them for me. If you still have not received yours, don't worry. I will have more at the Department Convention. All I ask is that you use what you take. Don't just leave them on some ones desk. These are good to give to schools and libraries, even the Police Department.

All your hard work must not go unknown. The Consolidated Post Reports (CPR) and Addendums are due. The Department needs to record and report this information so when the National Commander speaks, he will be heard. You should have been keeping totals monthly. Be sure your Post Commander receives your information. Check again with your other helpers to see if their miles and time have been accounted for as well. See you at the Convention.

100% +1 Goal

May 23, 2012

Membership Report as of May 1, 2012

District/Area	Commander	Goal	Rec'd	% Goal
6	Robert Kiley	9,710	10,058	103.58
5	Jerry Brandt	7,405	7,578	102.34
4	Jay Conti	4,065	4,149	102.07
2	Homer Frailey	1,322	1,332	100.76
1	William Bingle	6,197	6,195	99.97
13	Steven Slachta	8,682	8,631	99.41
12	Mark Johnson	8,357	8,305	99.38
3	Larry Krull	1,686	1,672	99.17
14	Gary Decker	3,171	3,135	98.86
8	Debra Roush	8,284	8,133	98.18
16	James Burgess	11,991	11,760	98.07
17	David Corning	4,188	4,097	97.83
9	Richard Davitt	4,390	4,290	97.72
15	James Zipler	5,286	5,104	96.56
11	Richard Smith	4,208	4,039	95.98
7	Nancy Thomas	4,002	3,810	95.20
E-	William Walsh	18,067	18,363	101.64
N-Northern	Jim Ramos	17,344	17,496	100.88
W-Western	Charles Lecroy	7,519	7,527	100.11
SW-South-western	Gregory Putman	16,966	16,764	98.81
S-	George Rafajko	11,769	11,464	97.41
C-Central	Charlie Wing	21,279	20,674	97.16
Department			92,288	
Post 400		14,133	11,788	83.41
Post 208		1,697	2,081	122.63
Totals		108,656	106,157	97.70

Bob Brewster
Membership Chairman
membership@floridalegion.org

I am writing my last or second last Legion Link article as your Membership Chairman. At this time we have 4 Districts, Districts 2, 4, 5, and 6, who have already exceeded their 100% membership. We also have 10 Districts over 95% and 2 Districts under 95% - not acceptable. We also have 1 Area, Eastern Area Bill Walsh, Commander, over 100%. Northern Area Jim Ramos, Commander, at 99.89%, and will most likely go over 100% before the end of the day. The other 4 Areas are above 96%.

Just counting the Post membership, we are 1,371 members ahead of last year's pace. Great job by the majority of our leaders! Post 400 is down 1,572 compared to last year. I sent out to the Area and District Commanders a list of 1,792 members of the 400 Post who paid dues in 2011, but have not yet paid their 2012 dues. That list was supposed to be passed out to the various Posts in each District.

At this time I don't know if we will hit our 100% or not. For the rest of the year, which is only about 6 weeks, I am personally calling the Posts throughout the Department who are not reaching their goals. I can't possibly visit everyone, but I will try. The complaint I have is that some of you have not gotten that list of 400 members into your Posts' hands. We don't have much time left. But again, I would like to repeat that the majority of our Area and District Commanders are doing a fabulous job this year.

Thank you very much and will see you all between now and Convention time. For God and Country

May Fun Facts

- 1, 1690 - First Colonial Congress
- 6, 1941 - First USO performance by Bob Hope
- 8, 1914 - Mother's Day established
- 15, 1984 - Undamaged Mayan tomb discovered
- 23, 1934 - Nylon invented—It's first use was for bristles of a toothbrush
- 24, 1883 - Brooklyn Bridge opens to traffic
- 25, 1951 - Willie Mays plays his first game
- 25, 1935 - Babe Ruth hits his last home run, #714
- 27, 1937 - Golden Gate bridge opens

Legislative
Stanley Gold, Department Chairman
786.423.2458

The first part of April, my wife and I visited the Netherlands and we did see the Bottle Bridge of Arnhem which the WWII book and movie was based on. We also visited Osterbech, nearby where there is a large Airborne Museum.

Last month I mentioned the problems in the Postal Service. Tim Tetz, Director of American Legion Legislative Division, wrote that he received a letter from a member who works at the Post Office asking him how the Legion (not me, I'm retired) could help veterans who work for the Postal Service from being 'laid off'.

In Tim's Weekly report he wrote:

QUESTION OF THE WEEK: "Does The American Legion have any idea of what is going on with the U.S. Postal Service? Postmaster General Donahoe has recommended closing hundreds of mail processing plants and displacing thousands of veteran-employees in general and thousands of disabled veterans in particular. The USPS is the second largest employer of veterans after DOD. If General Donahoe is allowed to take this irrational cost cutting measure, you're looking at the possibility of veterans being put out of a job housing market being what it is, how can anyone sell their house and relocate? This is an effort to just get people to quit out of frustration and anger. It's time The American Legion got involved and pressured Congress and the President to take action and tell Donahoe to cease and desist his plan to rein veteran's lives who have honorably served their country. I'm asking you to please get involved ASAP! I have been with the USPS for 26 years and I am rated at 90% disabled with the VA and I was told I would be without a job come June. I am just one of thousands of veterans nationwide this is happening to. DON'T ALLOW THIS TO TAKE PLACE! Thank you."

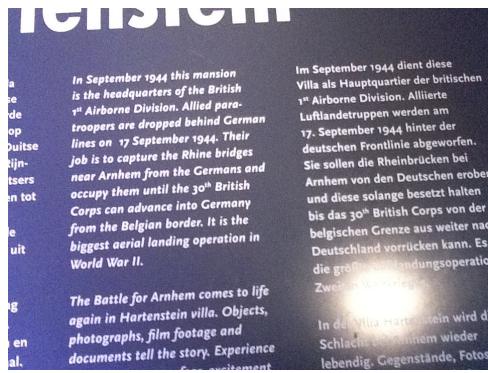
Thank you for reaching out to The American Legion on the proposals being considered within the Postal Service that could dramatically impact veterans. As you note, because of the high number of veterans who have served (and continue to work) within the USPS, we have been contacted on numerous occasions relating to this matter. We are working with some of these veterans, who are members, to assist them in their efforts towards providing a resolution.

The American Legion is an organization based on the power of the resolution. Through our posts and departments (states), the individual member can bring forward a position that leverages the Power of the Organization. Yet without a resolution from our members identifying that issue and our position in relationship to the issue, we do not take positions. This protects our organization from the whims of elected leadership, paid staff, and other pressures. It also allows us to have a broad and wide-ranging number of positions on a multitude of topics.

At the National Commander's testimony last September, a question was raised concerning the consolidation. In his reply to the committee member, Commander Wong noted that we do not have a position on the consolidation proposals at that time.

We understand that some of our members are attempting to pass a resolution in the upcoming May NEC meeting or Convention in August that will address this issue. When they do, we'll certainly advocate on behalf of the resolution.

NOTE: I'll be at that May NEC meeting. The Department of Indiana did submit a resolution thanks to the work of Paul Norton from that state.



**Gary E. Cardenas
Commander, Post 32**

Below is a picture of me with our son (on the far right, and now a SAL member) presenting the School Medal/Certificate to the 2012 recipient. This was at the same School where he received this same Award in 1981. Needless to say, he was very proud and excited to have been able to share this moment with me (as I was), and to be able to give back to the students at his old Alma Mater. In fact, he is looking forward to doing the presentation with me again, at their Awards Ceremony scheduled for May 31st.



**Robert Scott
Department Boy Scout Chairman
BoyScouts@floridalegion.org**

I have just received a roster of Boy Scout units in our department chartered by American Legion Post. This information was provided by the Boy Scout of America.

In 2011, we had in the state of Florida 85 units chartered, with 2917 boy Scouts. In 2012, we now have 85 units, and 3085 Boy Scouts. We did not gain in the number of units, but we did gain 168 Boy Scouts. Nationally in 2011, we had 2659 units, and in 2012, we had 68290 which was a decline of 1200 units. Nationally we lost Scouts, but the state of Florida gained 168 Scouts. This was not a large gain, but when other states are losing, we are holding on to our own.

I want to thank Ken Nichols for all the fine work he is doing and a special thanks to a great Scout and Scout leader, Mr. Jorge Montes whose list of accomplishments would fill a book. I also want to thank Tom Gora whose work in the 5th District is outstanding. This list could go on and on, but I will stop with these three for the time being.

Well the clock on the wall is telling me it time to strap on my pack and get up and out. So may your trails be straight, and the sun bright and the breeze be at your back.

Yours in Scouting For God and Country



**ROTC/SHOOTING SPORTS
Loretta Young, Department Chair**

A picture is worth a thousand words. Thanks to 15th District Vice Commander, Eunice Butts, for support of the University of South Florida ROTC Program. Their team attended the Military Banquet and presented the Scholastic and Military Excellence Awards. Now is the time when all the posts and the Districts should be supporting the schools with the Awards Program. With over 300 posts in the Department of Florida, NO University, College or High School, ROTC or JROTC Program should go without support with the Year End Award Metals. Sending in reports and letting others know what a great program we have in the Department of Florida only helps to build our youth and young adults for the future. Thanks to all who support our programs and the work that you do. For God and Country

