

# The Legion Link

May 2014

Vol. 21 Issue 10



## *Making a Difference for Veterans Everyday*



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**Art 'Ole' Schwabe**  
**Department Commander**  
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I would like to thank everyone who attended the Family Homecoming. It was a great success. Thanks to Post 7, for opening their doors, Chef Bill, Karen, Randy, Tom, Kathy,

Sandy, Mike, Department Staff and all those who volunteered to make this event one to remember. President Gerrie, Commander Kirk Thanks for your help in "Making A Difference". This has truly been a great ride for everyone. Because of your leadership our friendship will last a lifetime. Thank You!

By now Post Consolidated Post Reports (CPR) should be turned into Department. If not, expect a call on why you haven't sent the very important report in to Department This is your report card on what your POST has done this past year. Be proud of your member's great accomplishments. Department needs this information to complete its reports to National so National can re-

port this information to Congress. This also gives us the ability to inform others of what the Legion does monetarily as well as the volunteer hours, costs and services this organization does for this country.

The DCC's have started. Make sure you have a voice and choice in the District elections. MAKE A DIFFERENCE. I hope to see you at the DCC's just to say Hi and Thanks. Also Memorial Day is at the end of the month. Don't forget the Coloring Books for kids. (\$20 per 100 books). Let's tell the kids about the flag and Thank You to Veterans coloring page. Contact Department for your order. The books are great for early elementary school students.

Again, I thank you for supporting COTA and our great American Legion programs. For God and Country



*Thank You For Serving*



**Jay Conti Sr.**  
 Department Vice Commander  
 ViceCommander@floridalegion.org  
**BRAVO-ZULU**  
 352.287.1400



WOW! It's already May! It seems like last week we were just at the Department Convention, time really fly's when you are keeping busy and having FUN! And from all of my travels across the State, Legion Family Members sure are having FUN!

What an Awesome ALR "State Legacy" Run this year. I had the pleasure of attending parts of the Run and I saw 1st hand what a BANG-UP job that the Riders did. Great job to Mike "Goat" Kirchoff for organizing the run and to Jennifer Day for doing an outstanding job administratively and tracking all the donations and registrations.

All Posts should have your End of Year Reports, if NOT please contact Carol Polk ASAP! Please fill out and send in as soon as you can as your Post awards are based on them, don't delay. Congratulations goes out to the 6th District & 13th District for achieving 100% in membership and **RACE-TO-THE-TOP** in Category #5; awesome Job to District Commanders T.C. Biddle & John Dollinger.

On April 5th, I attended a **GOLD-STAR** Ceremony event at American Legion Post 71 in Lake Wales, FL. This included the Traveling Wall of all that paid the ultimate sacrifice from that tragic day of 9-11-01, Iraq and Afghanistan Wars. What an outstanding job the Legion Family of Post 71 did with this Ceremony as they honored the Families of six of our fallen Comrades with a GOLD-STAR Salute. In attendance were the Mayor as well as County Commissioners and many other local and state officials.

And on Saturday, April 19th, I had the pleasure of attending an "Honor Dinner" **Saluting Congressional Medal of Honor Recipient Melvin Morris** who was just awarded the MOH on March 18th by President Obama, Piper - Gardner American Legion Post 191 of Melbourne did one OUTSTANDING job coordinatng and organizing this event as it was a sellout crowd to honor a True American Hero.

To Post 191 Commander Carl Finerson and Post 71 Commander Andy Anderson and the Legion Families; I say thank you for your commitments to honor our True Heroes. **BRAVO ZULU!**

**ATTACHED PHOTO:**

- (1) Group Picture of ALR Riders Stop at Post #155 for the State Run.
- (2) Picture of ALR Chapter #155 Director George Gasparini and Dept Vice CDR Jay Conti Sr.
- (3) 4 Pictures of Medal of Honor Recipient Melvin Morris and Legionnaires & Auxiliary members





**Dennis R. Boland**  
**National Executive Committeeman**  
**The American Legion**  
**Department of Florida**  
"Airborne All The Way"



### System Worth Saving Program

The American Legion's System Worth Saving Program is the primary VA Healthcare evaluation tool to assess the quality and timeliness of VA Health care programs.

This is the System Worth Saving's 10th year of the program and the Task Force's upcoming report will focus on VA's progress achieved over the past ten years, current issues and concerns, as well as VA's five-year strategic plan for several program areas.

This cycle areas of focus are VA's budget, staffing, enrollment, outreach, hospital programs, mental health, intensive care unit (ICU), long-term care, homeless programs, information technology and construction programs. The objectives of the Blue Print of VA Health Care: Past, Present, and Future are: to comprehensively review VA healthcare since the creation of the System Worth Saving program in 2003, and review the past, present, and future of VA healthcare to support our belief that the VA is truly a "System Worth Saving." The official report will be published during our 2014 National Convention.

Fifteen VA Medical Centers have been selected which are: Pittsburgh, PA; Nashville, TN; El Paso, TX; Huntington, WV; Leavenworth, KS; Roseburg, OR; Jackson, MS; Butler, PA; Atlanta, GA; Dallas, TX; Orlando, FL; St. Louis, MO; Cleveland, OH; Ann Arbor, MI; and Denver, CO.

A System Worth Saving book will be compiled once these visits are completed. A copy will be presented to the President, all Senators and all Congressmen along with the VA.

To learn more about the System Worth Saving Task Force, please visit [Http://www.legion.org/systemworthsaving](http://www.legion.org/systemworthsaving)

**Paul Martel**  
**Department Sgt at Arms**  
**[pmartelco@bellsouth.net](mailto:pmartelco@bellsouth.net)**  
**561-389-3765**

I would like to start by thanking our Department Commander, Art Schwabe, for appointing me as your interim Department Sgt-at-Arms. It is my honor to help in any way I can. As you may have seen on the Department Link, we will have the American Legion Color Guard competition at our up-coming State convention, June, 12-15, 2014. I am so glad that the competition is back. What a great way to show all of the posts in Florida what your post team can do.

As of right now, we have 8 posts that have shown interest, and 6 of those will be in competition of who will be #1, bragging rights and all that goes with it. We are very fortunate to have Tracey Bullard, the Assistant Chief Judge from National, to guide us in the correct procedure of advancing/retiring of colors. The event will start at 5:30 P M, promptly, Thursday June 12 at the convention hotel. Your team must be in the hall by 4:30 PM for the inspection, REMEMBER ALL OF YOUR TEAM MUST BE IN THE SAME UNIFORM. Cut-off date is June 1, 2014. If you are interested in being part of the fun, call Carol at Headquarters and she will send/e-mail you the rule book. If you don't try, you will never know.

**Steve Newman**  
**Department Chaplain**

Greetings and Blessings my fellow Legionnaires. You all would have to agree that we could not ask for better weather. Bright sunshine, nice evenings, makes everything worth the more while. May, hopefully, will bring us just as nice days and evenings as we had in April. This month I am going to talk a little on friendship.

Friendship...a wonderful experience that we all should seek and cultivate. You will be amazed how much it will enrich your life and make your heart lighter. Friendship is a natural part of life. After all, we're social animals. Plus, having friends around makes everything more fun. You have someone to talk to, someone you can trust, and someone who will be there for you when you need a helping hand. A friend, compadre, amigo, chum, pal and buddy. No matter how you say it, they will have your back, will always look out for you as you will always look out for them. A friend goes on adventures, has a cup of coffee ready, and shares a meal, road trips and snack runs. A friend never judges. A friend gives the best hugs. He or she tells you if you have food in your teeth. Friends know that two heads are better than one. There's a song that culminates all this. It is called 'You're my best friend, my Soul Friend'. It's about a relationship with God Almighty.

This month nurture your friends. I wish for you a joyful and blessed Mother's Day. Remember to reflect and keep in your thoughts and prayers all veterans who have passed on and those who have given the ultimate sacrifice in defense of our nation on Memorial Day. Many blessings to all of your EVERY DAY, EVERY DAY EVERY DAY! For God and Country

**Michael McDaniel**  
**Department Adjutant**  
**[mmcdaniel@floridalegion.org](mailto:mmcdaniel@floridalegion.org)**

The American Legion Department of Florida regularly received questions regarding the relationship between American Legion Rider chapters and their sponsoring Posts. The following FAQ was developed to help answer some of the most common questions we receive:

**Q. Does The American Legion officially recognize The American Legion Riders program?**

A. Yes. The National Executive Committee officially adopted The American Legion Riders (ALR) as a national program with Resolution 35 (October 2007) and Resolution 32 (May 2011).

**Q. Is there a national or state Constitution and By Laws for ALR?**

A. No. However, a suggested Constitution and By Laws template is available at <http://www.legion.org/riders/resources> for anyone interested in developing a local chapter. The template is based on and fully complies with Resolutions 35 and 32.

**Q. Are there many restrictions on how we can set up a chapter constitution?**

A. As a subordinate organization of The American Legion, all rider chapters must take certain steps to protect their right to wear the trademark patch and to use the words "Legion Riders" as a description of their activity. Federal trademark law requires subordinate organizations and entities to follow certain rules, which include:

All ALR officers must be confirmed or named by the hosting American Legion post. In actual practice the Riders elect their own officers, who are then "installed" (confirmed) by the post at an appropriate ceremony. Another way to accomplish this is for the chapter to report the election of officers during a normal post meeting. The election is valid after the report is duly accepted by the post.

The Riders must render an activity report and financial report at the regular post meetings.

A post or department officer (typically the finance officer or treasurer) must be designated as signatory on all chapter bank accounts.

The chapter constitution and By Laws (or other organizational documents) must be approved by the host post. Any subsequent changes made to such documents must also be approved by the host post.

Note that these trademark rules apply to all subordinate programs and activities of The American Legion, not just The American Legion Riders.

**Q. Can we have members who do not own motorcycles or are not spouses of owners?**

A. Program guidance from Resolutions 35 and 32 grants the local chapters the authority to allow an existing ALR member to remain a full member of the chapter if he or she has involuntarily given up motorcycle ownership due to age, injury, or other medical condition outside the control of the rider. This is a decision left to the local chapter members who may optionally require all members to be owners at all times.

**Q. Can girlfriends, friends, cousins, mothers, fathers, etc. join as regular members even if they are ineligible under the By Laws?**

A. No. Membership eligibility requirements are clearly stated in the program guidance defined by Resolutions 35 and 32: "All members of The American Legion Riders shall be current members of The American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary or Sons of The American Legion". Membership criteria is established not to exclude family and friends, but to comply with the constitutional requirements of the supporting post or department which must adhere strictly to American Legion constitutional requirements as well as local, state and federal laws regarding veteran, civic and fraternal organizations.

**Q. Is ALR recognized as a nonprofit organization?**

A. Each chapter is supported as a subordinate entity by a post and generally enjoys the same nonprofit status as every other post or department program. However, some activities might not be considered nonprofit, so you should always refer to your post or department for guidance.

**Q. Can our local chapter change the suggested Constitution and By Laws?**

A. Yes. The Constitution and By Laws template is a starting point. Chapters are extended the same courtesy given to every Legion Post since 1919: an autonomy and trust that members will make the right decisions based on local conditions. Chapters must adhere to the minimum program guidance defined by Resolutions 35 and 32 and to the existing constitutions of the post and department in order to protect their right to wear and display The American Legion Rider trademark emblem. Remember that any change to your existing Constitution and By Laws must be approved by your post or department.

The Department of Florida also has a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) in which all Florida ALR Chapters are required to adhere to. The SOP is available at: <http://members.floridalegion.org/resources/guides-manuals/program-manuals>

For more questions and answers regarding The American Legion Riders program please visit <http://www.legion.org/riders/faq>

# 100% Goal

## May 7, 2014

Membership Report as of May 2, 2014

District/ Area	Commander	Goal	Rec'd	% Goal
6	Thomas Biddle	10,741	11,258	104.81
13	John Dollinger	8,782	9,130	103.96
12	Kenneth Wakefield	8,442	8,557	101.36
3	Randall White	1,715	1,718	100.17
5	Thomas Gora	7,810	7,777	99.58
2	Willie Jackson	1,373	1,354	98.62
15	Eunice Butts	5,329	5,214	97.84
1	Jimmy Martin	6,288	6,124	97.39
8	Joseph Magee	8,255	7,950	96.31
16	Sidney Damsgard	12,028	11,538	95.93
14	Gary Decker	3,026	2,881	95.21
7	Charles Giffin	3,911	3,716	95.01
17	Dorothy Moore	4,152	3,940	94.89
11	Frank Maitland	4,168	3,869	92.83
4	Charles Ferguson	4,198	3,803	90.59
9	John Vazquez	4,349	3,910	89.91
Eastern	Robert Kiley	19,183	19,815	103.30
SW	Debra Roush	17,037	17,080	100.25
Western	Verna Joyce	7,661	7,478	97.61
Northern	Michael Wolohan	17,875	17,238	96.44
Central	James Burgess	21,268	20,468	96.24
Southern	William Johnson	11,543	10,660	92.35
<b>Department</b>			<b>92,739</b>	
<b>Post 400</b>		<b>12,067</b>	<b>12,197</b>	<b>101.08</b>
<b>Post 208</b>		<b>3,181</b>	<b>3,011</b>	<b>94.66</b>
<b>Totals</b>		<b>111,525</b>	<b>107,947</b>	<b>96.79</b>

**Doug Deierlein**  
**Department of Florida**  
**Membership Chairman**

Hello Legionnaires, SAL and Ladies

Well it's already May and as of this write up we sit at 96.36 % on Membership. We only have 3.64% left to achieve 100% with national, "We will do this!" I would like to thank each of you for working hard on your membership this year, but there is still work to be done! Getting new members is always great, however what would be even greater is to retain the members we already have. So, I am asking that each post membership team take out the remaining printed 2014 cards and make personal contact with each of the members either by phone or in person. We want to make sure that they continue their years with the Legion, but if they decide that they do not want to continue please send us the feedback on their reason so we can address these issues in the future. I want to CONGRADULATE District's 6, 13 and 12 for being 100% for Membership. I would also like to congratulate the Eastern Area for being 100% in membership. While still on a roll we have 19 Posts that are 100% family posts. They are: Posts 5, 52, 69, 80, 82, 90, 120, 136, 138, 158, 163, 194, 252, 275, 283, 323, 340, 347 and 375. Great Job! I am sure by Convention we will have many more 100% Family Posts and you will be able to proudly display the banner at your Post home. Well until next month let's "Shoot for the Stars" and Get-r-Done!



**Jim Burk ALR**  
**Dept of Florida Chairman**

The 2nd Annual Florida In State American Legion Legacy Ride has just been completed (that's a mouth full). The ride started in Jacksonville Beach and did a series of crisscrosses across the state. Total registration was 139 Riders, with 19 Riders and passengers riding the entire ride. Stops were made at 37 Legion Posts and the entire ride was over 1400 miles. The total raised was just under \$ 20,000.00. Many other chapters will be presenting more monies at the state convention. My hat and helmet are off to Mike "Goat" and Tina Kerchoff for doing the planning and leading this worthy cause.

*Do good, Have fun, Ride Hard*

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

The Legionnaire family are making their summer plans to support the variety of Children & Youth activities within their communities and within their American Legion Post local areas. This is another opportunity to put valuable information into the hands of the parents so they can ensure that the little people have a safe summer. Load them up with materials that will provide hours of fun for the children and youth when they need it most. Ensure that you stamp all the materials provided so they remember where they received them. Provide a copy of your activities schedule in the package. Gives them something to plan with and who knows, they might bring others who you would otherwise not have seen.

Remember to always have a membership table/booth at all events. This can be decorated to support your event – just be creative and you would be surprised of how it will draw others to learn more about and eventually sign up to be part of our American Legion.

Children & Youth Program materials that may assist families and friends during the summer include: *Child Safety, Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect, Suicide, Missing and Abducted Children, Accidents (automobile, drowning, firearms), Substance Abuse, Play it Safe, and Family Support Network.*

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.

Sometimes we choose or want to help others in need but don't want our hard earned monies to be used frivolously. To prevent that from happening, please consider making your donation, no matter what the amount, to The American Legion Department of Florida Children & Youth Fund or earmark your donation for the Children Welfare Foundation. These two programs use the monies collected to support Children & Youth programs in the state of Florida.

The *Florida Team* effort continues to shine upon The American Legion's Fourth Pillar, promoting our continuing core purpose of "A Square Deal for Every Child".

**AMERICANISM**

**Steve Barentine - Chairman**

Here we are, it's May already! This Legion year has gone by fast. I guess the old adage, "Time goes fast when you're having fun" is so true. It has truly been a fun and rewarding experience for me to meet with you as I've traveled to your District meetings and Posts.

We have a couple off opportunities to display our Americanism Pillar to the public and our membership during the month of May. Saturday, May 17th is Armed Forces Day. It is an opportunity to welcome any Active Duty personnel from your area into your Post and Honor them!

And of course, Monday May 26th is Memorial Day. Many Posts will have programs and/or services to mark the day as well as Honor those who have served and died. Many Posts will open their doors to the public that day to share their Americanism with their community.

Keep working through May on MEMBERSHIP - Wednesday, May 28th is the date for 100% + 1. Let's ALL make it!

For God & Country

**Special Olympics**

**Dianne Thibodeau, Chairman**

**Young Athletes Program, Autism & You**

Physical activity is essential for children with and without special needs as it promotes a healthy lifestyle, but it can also benefit children with autism in extraordinary ways. April is Autism Awareness Month; be aware how the Young Athlete Program impacts the physical, cognitive and social development of all children.

**Team Florida's Journey to New Jersey**

In less than 80 days, 3,500 athletes from around the United States will travel to New Jersey to compete in 16 sports at the highest national level. Special Olympics Florida is proud to have 180 athletes and coaches who will compete at those games. Realizing that the road to the 2014 USA Games is paved with dedication, perseverance, and triumph, each athlete has diligently trained to earn the opportunity to compete on the national stage as Special Olympics continues its campaign to challenge the world to recognize the gifts of people with intellectual disabilities

**It takes all of us** — athletes, volunteers, families, sponsors, coaches, the general public — who are willing to open our minds and hearts and accept people with intellectual disabilities, to make up the Special Olympics Florida "community."

<http://specialolympicsflorida.org/> - Where you need to go for more information.

It is getting close to reporting time. Please remember to account for your time and monies spent. If you have any questions or comments, you can contact me by phone or email. diannethib@bellsouth.net (321) 733-4951 (home) (561) 315-0679 (cell).

**Stanley Gold, Department National Legislative Chairman**  
**Paul Martel, Department State Legislative Chairman**

Our report from the Florida American Legion Legislative delegation who attended the Washington conference from March 23-26, 2014. Legion members: Dennis Boland, Arthur Schwabe, Michael McDaniel, Jay Conti, Sr., Gerald Clark, Stanley Gold, Thomas Gora, Clarence Hill, William Johnson, Ronald Musselwhite, Kelton Sweet, Jr., George Wehrli, Fletcher Williams, Jr, James Zipler, Susan Mason, Paul Martel and Dyke Shannon. Auxiliary members: Gerrie Bailey, Peggy Hearlson, Dorothy Walsh, Nancy Anderson, Irma Wehrli.

The American Legion, Department of Florida, had their Eighth Annual Legislative Luncheon in the gold room of the Rayburn House office Building on March 25<sup>th</sup>. We had sent letters, emails, faxes and made phone calls to our Florida elected officials inviting them to attend. This way we could share our Legislative Priorities with them and they could explain their views. The Florida delegation is proud to say that out of 26 Congressmen/women and two Senators, 24 Congressmen/women or their aide and one Senators aide was in attendance. The ones who could not be there were seen at their office by prior appointments.

**LEGISLATIVE DIVISION UPDATE**

On April 14 The American Legion submitted a statement to the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Military Personnel. The testimony addressed proposals in President Obama's fiscal year (FY) 2015 budget for the Defense Department relating to military compensation and the retirement system. The American Legion has steadfastly opposed any changes to the military compensation and retirement system that negatively impacts uniformed service members of the armed forces, military retirees, veterans, and their families. We will remain steadfast in protecting against any efforts to balance the national budget on the backs of those who have stepped forward to serve this nation, as well as to those who will serve in the future.

After nearly forty-one years of the all-volunteer force, it is important to reflect on the tremendous sacrifices this country asks of our men and women in uniform. The hardships of military service are unlike anything encountered in the civilian world. Therefore, The American Legion is troubled by recent attempts to cut vital programs and benefits that help recruit and retain the best and brightest men and women from across the country to serve in the armed forces. Our organization addressed two key areas of concerns in particular: the President's proposal to reduce funding to the defense commissary system; and the many proposals which will increase costs to TRICARE programs users and beneficiaries.

Commissaries are a valued component of the military pay and benefits system. Commissaries contribute to family readiness and enhance the quality of life for America's military, retirees, veterans, and their families. Currently, shoppers save an average of more than thirty percent on their purchases compared to commercial store prices – savings that amount to thousands of dollars annually when shopping regularly at a commissary. The proposed change in funding policy would raise commissary prices, thus reducing these savings. These changes would effectively be a cut to the paychecks of all patron using the commissary system.

Likewise, TRICARE is an earned health care benefit that provides low-cost world-class medical care to its beneficiaries. The American Legion stands strongly against any proposal that degrades the TRICARE benefits earned by our nation's active duty and reserve component service members, military retirees, and their families. Our organization strongly opposes all of the President's proposals and urges Congress not to support any increases in TRICARE fees; this opposition includes prescription drug fee increases, increases in co-payments, and any other increases that effectively reduce the financial benefit of these plans.

We also strongly opposed the proposed creation and implementation of enrollment fees to retired service members and their families for their TRICARE for Life coverage. In order to qualify for TRICARE for Life, these retirees must first enroll in the Medicare B program; this program is already subject to periodic increases in premiums to beneficiaries. This, these military retirees and their families are already subject to further increased health care costs and enrollment fees would only serve to unfairly erode their earned benefit.

Finally, The American Legion respectfully asked the committee to note our organization has provided its recommendations to the Military compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission (MCRMC). The MCRMC was established by Congress to conduct a review of military compensation and retirement systems and to make recommendations to modernize such systems in order to ensure the long-term viability of the All-Volunteer Force. The Commission is required to submit a report, containing a comprehensive study and recommendations, by February 1, 2015, to the President and Congress. The report will contain detailed findings and conclusions of the Commission, together with its recommendations for such legislation and administrative actions it may consider appropriate in light of the results of the study. It would be appropriate for congress to study the report at that time and after consultation with The America Legion and other stakeholders, take needed action, if any, on its recommendations.

If congress amends military benefit program now, and in a piece meal fashion, the nation will lose the costly and important in-depth work provided by the commission; and its report will simply be added to an ever growing pile of military compensation studies and reports that will never be properly considered for action. Thus, The American Legion respectfully asks the committee to halt any further consideration of any compensation and retirement benefits changes until the MCRMC has completed its work.

**Paul Martel**  
**Chairman, Florida Legislative**  
**pmartelco@bellsouth.net**  
**561-389-3765**

We have been very busy in and out of state. The most recent was the trip to Washington D.C. for our National Commanders report to the joint Veterans Affairs Committee. Commander Dillinger did a great job of explaining the most important points of what our Veterans need and why. He told them that the veterans were not receiving their entitlements, they are not receiving what was promised them when they raise their hands, and took the oath. The veterans wrote a blank check to protect our country including giving the ultimate sacrifice, their lives.

In attendance were your Florida Delegation, (names and information of who was there and who we saw will be in Stanley Gold's report). The only name I will mention is that of, Erna Schwabe. In my report to National Legislative I omitted her name. Erna is 2nd Vice President of the Auxiliary who represented Florida with the same grace and mannerism that you experience every time you see her. I would like to thank all of the delegation for taking time out of your busy schedule to attend and be the leader that you are, THANK YOU.

In state, the pace does not slow down, we have been to Tallahassee two times to meet with some of our representatives and conduct meetings about our own veterans, here in our state. The last meeting held by me and 16 other veterans was with Rep. Smits, author of the Florida G.I. Bill. He informed us on issues currently pending on the floor and committees. Rep. Smits is looking for ways to connect with younger veterans. Bobby Carbonell, Assistant Director of the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs, spoke to us about Rep. Smits Florida G.I. Bill, and explained the details of the bill. From combat arenas or on the home front veterans are now eligible for rights in the V.A. to educational opportunities for them and their families. Florida is indeed veterans friendly.

As a side bar, I was appointed by The Florida Department of Veterans Affairs to sit as a voting member on nursing homes that has been on a lot of peoples mind. The ball has started to roll. We had our first meeting two weeks ago. Although I cannot go into details right now, a very important part of our veteran's lives is being address and is moving.

I hope the e-mails and information that is being sent out is useful. Please, if you receive the information, pass it along to your post members. If you want to be on the list just e-mail me and I will add your name. This is our first year and it has been fun. If you would like to be part of the Legislative Committee (thank you to the present members) you are more than welcome, you are needed. Send me your name, what district you are in and the name of your rep. and you will be a point of contact. You will be a direct link to your rep...don't stand by and say, "Let the other guy do it." Stand up and YOU BE THAT GUY. For God and Country

**Gary E. Cardenas**

**Vice Commander, Post 144-Miami Lakes**

Andy Alfonso is the Boys State Delegate for Post 144

The 2014 Florida Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) State Leadership Conference proved to be very successful for Mater Academy Charter High School junior Andy Alfonso, who was elected state president.

During the four-day conference from March 21 to 24 in Orlando, which over 3,500 middle and high school students attended, Alfonso participated in a two-day screening and campaigning process that involved a speech, multiple interviews and activities to demonstrate his leadership skills.

As president, Alfonso will preside over all state officer meetings and sit on the Florida FBLA Board of Directors. This summer, he and other state officers will attend a

training summit, where they will prepare a program of work. In addition, he will meet with elected officials, lobbyists and business representatives next February during the annual state officer Tallahassee trip.

As a sophomore, Alfonso was elected to serve as Region V Vice President during the 2012-13 year, making this his second term as a state officer for the organization. He is looking forward to beginning his duties as state president and is thankful for the opportunity to lead Florida FBLA. Alfonso was one of 58 students from Mater Academy who attended the state conference.

Students attending the conference this summer include Marilyn Figueredo, Rogelio Dieguez, Brandon Uria, Allison Gonzalez, Maria Alba, Arlette Gomez, Gabriela Gonzalez, Claudia Diaz, **Andy Alfonso**, Liz Betancourt, Nathali Demien, Andrea Hernandez, Brian Estradella, Gabriela Pedrido, Jennifer Blanco, Grethell Martinez, Barbara Marin, Darlyn Dela Rosa, Astrid Lopez, Samantha Moreno, Christian Rodriguez, Yanisbel Ruiz, Stephanie Cabrera, Allison Gonzalez, and Ashley Gomez.



**John Dollinger**  
**POW/MIA Chairman**

On May 23<sup>rd</sup> thru 25<sup>th</sup> one of the largest showings of support for the POW/MIA movement will take place in Washington, D.C. when "ROLLING THUNDER" takes to the road for the "Ride for Freedom".

**WHAT IS ROLLING THUNDER?** This is a non-profit organization with over 90 chapters, 8 in the State of Florida, dedicated to POW/MIA issue. Many of their members are veterans and many ride motorcycles but neither is a requirement for membership. Members are of all age groups, veterans and non-veterans, men and women everyone is welcome as a member. Your only commitment as a member is to donate time because you believe in the POW/MIA issue that Rolling Thunder is dedicated too. Rolling Thunder's Mission Statement defines clearly their dedication to "educate the public that many American Prisoners of War were left behind after ALL previous wars and to help correct the past and to protect the future Veterans from being left behind should they become Prisoners of War – Missing in Action".

**WHAT IS THE HISTORY OF ROLLING THUNDER?** Rolling Thunder grew out of the dedication of two (2) individuals Artie Muller and Ray Manzo, both Vietnam veterans, who felt those left behind during the Vietnam War were being ignored by our government and the news media.

The first Rolling Thunder gathering was held in Washington D.C. on Memorial Day weekend in 1988. Muller and Manzo reached out to friends, family, fellow veterans and veteran advocates and gathered 2,500 motorcycles to march on our nation's Capital. The roar of these motorcycles was "not unlike the 1965 bombing campaign against North Vietnam dubbed *Operation Rolling Thunder*". This was the root of the name "Rolling Thunder".

The destination each Sunday of Memorial Day weekend is the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial Wall and the ride is referred to as the "Ride to the Wall". The estimate for this year's participants/spectators in the "Ride to Freedom" is between 975,000 and 1,100,000 people.

Last year, on the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Rolling Thunder the American Legion, with over 600 Legion Riders participated. Post 177 in Fairfax is the center of activities for this year's American Legion participation in Rolling Thunder. There will be vendors at American Legion Post 177 and several events are planned as part of The American Legion's participation in "Rolling Thunder". I know several American Legion Riders from the Department of Florida are planning the trip to Washington. Travel safe...



My wife Betty Sussmann passed away last March. She was one of those unknown heroes that for 30 years she helped every veteran and military organization everywhere. A PATRIOT GOOD WIFE, GREAT MOTHER AND HUMANITARIAN. I forever love her, she was the better part of me. My heart and soul are dark for her departure. Thank you and God bless you and all our veterans. by Oscar Sussmann



**TAPS**

It is with deep regret that we report the passing of Past 11th District Commander Joseph P. Anderson. Joseph passed away on Monday, April 21, 2014 at the age of 77. He is survived by his wife Marilyn and three children; Deb, Kathy and Tim. Joseph was a Korean Air Force Veteran and a member of American Legion Post 399, with 23 continuous years of membership. When funeral arrangements are known, we will send another email and post it on the Department website. Condolences may be sent through his wife, Marilyn, at: 1722 SW Waterfall Blvd., Palm City, FL 34990.

Kindness is a language that the deaf  
can hear and the blind can see.

~ Mark Twain ~