



# THE LEGION LINK

*Full Speed Ahead for Veterans*



www.floridalegion.org | 407-295-2631 | [mail@floridalegion.org](mailto:mail@floridalegion.org)

## In this issue...

**Page 1**

- Dept. Commander Report

**Page 2**

- Dept. 1st Vice Cdr. Report
- Ball/Homecoming Schedule

**Page 3**

- Dept. 2nd Vice Cdr. Report
- Dept. 3rd Vice Cdr. Report
- Bravo Zulu Awards Corner

**Page 4**

- Dept. Adjutant Report

**Page 5**

- Dept. Chaplain Report
- Northern Area Cdr. Report

**Page 6**

- Dept. Veteran Benefits Chairman Report
- TAPS

**Page 7**

- PROJECT: VetRelief Message
- Dept. Blood Donor Chairman Report

**Page 8**

- Dept. Law & Order Chairman Report

**Page 9**

- Natl. Legislative Chair. Report
- Ride to Margaritaville

**Page 10**

- Dept. Legion College
- Post Excellence Award

**Page 11**

- Dept. Post Revitalization Chairman Report

**Page 12**

- Rise-n-Shine w/ Membership!
- 70% Membership Report

**Page 13**

- POW/MIA DOD Update

**Page 14**

- Southwestern Area Reports

**Page 15**

- Florida American Legion College Report 2014

**Page 16**

- Dept. Roster Changes



**JAY CONTI, SR.**  
**Department Commander**  
[commander@floridalegion.org](mailto:commander@floridalegion.org)  
 (407) 247-5232



**HAPPY THANKSGIVING AND  
 HAPPY VETERANS DAY!**

**WOW!** Time is sure flying by! We are getting ready to start our Fall Conference, the Fall Conference is supposed to be a **TRAINING** Conference and this year it will be just that! Please take a look at the

Training schedule as we will have training on EVERY Office for the American Legion. In addition there are many classes for The American Legion Riders. You don't have to be the Commander to sit in the Commanders Class, Adjutant for the Adjutants Class, etc. Broaden your knowledge of The American Legion and its programs. Each Class will be set up for at least 100 students, it will also be open to the entire Legion Family so please come and learn.

Speaking of learning, I want to thank PDC Fletcher Williams Jr. for being my Chairman for the 1st Department of Florida Legion College since the 1990's. Instructors included your Department 1st Vice Commander Jim Ramos, 2nd Vice Commander Joe Magee and Department Membership Chairman Steve Shuga. ALL the Students went away with a better understanding of The American Legion, its programs and the duties and responsibilities of Department and National Officers as well as organizing a District writing an Amendment or Resolution. Each student paid their own way to learn more about The American Legion as it was not funded by the Department, my hat off to those attended for spending their **own \$\$** to learn more about our great organization.

**POST EXCELLENCE AWARD:** This is a National Award, NOT a competition award between Posts, but an Award for achieving excellence in four areas: **membership, youth activities, community service and support to currently serving troops or veterans.** Besides the National Award every Post that submits for this award will receive a Department Commanders "**BRAVO-ZULU**" Streamer. Guidance for this award is located on the Department website and in this Legion LINK.



*(Continued on page 2)*

## Ball/Homecoming Schedule

Southwestern Area Ball  
January 24, 2015  
Post 271

Southern Area Ball  
February 7, 2015  
Location TBD

Eastern Area Ball  
February 21, 2015  
Post 1

Central Area Ball  
February 28, 2015  
Location TBD

Northern Area Ball  
March 7, 2015  
Location TBD

Legion Family Homecoming  
April 25, 2015  
Post 103

## Halloween and Patriotic Coloring Books Now Available!

Department has Halloween and Patriotic coloring books available for purchase and distribution to the elementary classrooms in your area. An order form is located on page 11 of the Post Administrative Manual. Supplies are limited - get them while they last! The cost is \$20 per 100 books. Send your orders to:

**American Legion, Dept of FL**  
**ATTN: Elizabeth Inherst**  
**P.O. Box 547859**  
**Orlando, FL 32854-7859**

*or by email:*

**Linherst@floridalegion.org**

**BREAST CANCER AWARENESS:** Fundraiser is on its way. You have raised well over \$10,000 towards the \$50,000 goal that I had set. We still have more coming in; I want to thank the entire Legion Family for helping to find the **CURE!** If your Post has donations to turn in, please write a check to the Department of Florida and in the memo of the check state for Breast Cancer Awareness or state so in a letter that accompanies the check. If I am there, or one of the Department Officers, we will gladly accept it and turn it in. **We will be accepting donations on the stage at the Fall Conference.**



## BRAVO-ZULU FOR GOD AND COUNTRY

Jay Conti Sr.  
Department Commander  
**FULL SPEED AHEAD FOR VETERANS**



**JIM RAMOS**  
Department 1st Vice Commander  
1stViceCommander@legionmail.org  
(352) 226-4370

Congratulations to all of the new Florida Legion College Graduate. There were just 19 Legionnaire who wanted to know more about the American Legion (History of the organization, the 4 Pillars, and all the program of the Legion) superb job. Graduation will be held at the Fall Conference at the General session.\*\*Florida Legionnaires let's do Membership and let's get our members to renew today and not tomorrow. We need to get some new members and younger one, too. How can we do this? November is National Disaster Preparedness month, the Marine Corps Birthday is November 10th and Nov 11th is Veterans Day, American Education Week and Family week (Thanksgiving) so do something to get members in your Post and remind them to pay their dues now. Now, in December DON'T let Dec 7 go by without an acknowledgment of Pearl Harbor, "a day that will live in infamy". Christmas cheer and/or party with the members and have a good time (remind them to pay up their Due). Our Department of Florida can be the best if we work as aTEAM.Thanks to all of you Florida Legionnaires.If you or your Post need's assistance PLEASE just let me know. My cell is (352) 226-4370 and my email is above.

**Always with "Legion Pride".**

Jim Ramos  
Department 1st Vice Commander





**JOE MAGEE**  
 Department 2nd Vice Commander  
 2ndViceCommander@legionmail.org  
 (941) 204-4914

Wow, is this year flying over. It seems like yesterday I was calling the Florida Legion College Candidates with classroom instructions. Now, low and behold, the College is behind us.

After the College, the schedule slowed down, somewhat, with a wonderful break by visiting Post 252 in Seminole.

They had a fantastic clam bake, can't wait for next years.

Next it was on to Ft. Lauderdale and the 9th District Revitalization Program hosted by Post 222.

Finishing off the month by ensuring all lesson plans are in order for the Fall Conference. See you all there. Please remember as the Department Training Officer, I am at your beck and call.

Joe Magee  
 2nd Vice Commander



**BOB BREWSTER**  
 Department 3rd Vice Commander  
 3rdViceCommander@legionmail.org  
 (904) 635-4492

Well, another month has gone by, and I hope everyone is working hard with their programs. You should have your Halloween coloring books out to all the schools, churches, etc. You should also be winding up your Post's Oratorical Contest. Our first Department Legion College is over, and from what I hear, it was a great success. Hopefully, we will

keep this program going on from now on. The 19 students from this year's class will be out sharing their new knowledge with everyone they come in contact with. Make sure that you do all the paperwork for your ROTC program and shooting sports. As Donald Duck says, "no program is done until all the paperwork is finished." Many Posts throughout our Department are working hard on making sure that all members have a nice meal for Thanksgiving. Also, all the Posts who have Boy's State and Girl's State Programs should be in the selection process as to who their candidates will be this year.

All of our Posts should share one goal in particular, and that goal should be to improve their Programs each year and try to include a new Program every year or so. Blood drives are very important, and every Post should have this Program. Membership is very important Program, and we must all work this Program so that we will have

## AWARDS CORNER

The "BRAVO ZULU" award is the Department Commanders Version of the "Billy Award" and is awarded to a Legion Family member for Outstanding Service of Excellence!

In the United States Navy, it is a common practice for the Commodore or Fleet Admiral to signal ships that have performed exceptionally well with the "BRAVO and ZULU" flags. These two flags displayed together mean "Well Done"!

**B R A V O  
 Z U L U  
 AWARDS to  
 Date:**



Larry Sheets,  
 Jim Ramos,  
 S t e v e  
 Newman, Mike  
 Seidel, Ruth  
 Burgess, Mike  
 M c D a n i e l,  
 Richard Izzy,

Tom Gora, Post 238 Family, Bill Hamblin, Rene Stachelrodt Jr., John Dollinger, Dusty Douglas, Shirley Douglas, Jim "Radar" Henry, Karen Henry, Sherry Hayes-Luzader, SAL PNC Jim Roberts, Doug Deierlein, Larry Roberts, Sandy White, Eunice Butts, MaryLou Hamblin & Andy Anderson and the entire Department of Florida American Legion College Class of 2014.

successful Posts. Communicate with your members and find out what Programs they are interested in and get them involved. When you find out a member interested in a Program that you do not have, get that Program started. Sitting at the bar and drinking is not a Program. Discussing and complaining at the bar is not a Program. This should be done at your Post meetings.

Our Program packets have been very slow getting out to the Posts this year. This is because Carol Polk is in the hospital. Let's all send her our prayers and good wishes and thank her for all the hard work she has been doing for us over the years. Every Program that we have here in the state of Florida has a Department Chairman who is responsible to you for your needs. As 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice Commander, I am here to help you with any and all Programs. To be able to do this, we must be able to communicate.

One last comment – the best way to retain members in your Post is to have members involved in Programs of their choice. Looking forward to seeing many of you at the fall Conference.

**For God and Country,**

Bob Brewster  
Department 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice Commander



**MICHAEL McDANIEL**  
Department Adjutant  
MMcDaniel@floridalegion.org  
(407) 295-2631

Greetings Legionnaires,

I write today to express my gratitude to all of you. You volunteer your time, energy, and sometimes even your resources to make a difference in your community, state and nation.

What you do for the American Legion is a labor of love. You volunteer, not for recognition, but out of a heart full of grace. The American Legion has lost a lot of its volunteers over the years because of age and health issues. Our organization once had 10% of its population volunteer, now we are fortunate if 1% volunteer. Please know that your participation is greatly appreciated!

I ask that all volunteers please be mindful of your capabilities. Do not accept any task that may place you beyond your capabilities. We can always find a position that you can do to make a big difference in our veterans lives.

I cannot thank you enough for what you have done for our great Country and The American Legion. As our “boots on the ground”, you are the ones the make the difference everyday for our volunteers.

**For God and Country,**

*Semper Fi*

Michael McDaniel  
Department Adjutant





**STEVEN NEWMAN**  
**Department Chaplain**  
**Chaplain@legionmail.org**  
**(954) 865-1026**

Hello again my fellow veterans. This past month was exciting for me. At the end of September I attended the annual National Chaplain Conference in Indianapolis, Indiana. It was a very rewarding and blessed time. There were many department chaplains from across the nation in attendance. We discussed many issues facing the Chaplains arena. We all felt its time to bring back God to For God and Country. This is something that has been part of our American Legion since its founding back in 1919. There were different initiatives discussed and implemented to do just that. I was humbly selected to serve as the National coordinator for National Chaplain training. I feel this is an honor

for me as I want to do my best in implementing a worthwhile chaplain training program for the entire nation. I am happy to have the following Department Chaplains on my team. They are the Chaplains from the Departments of Louisiana, Oregon, Washington, France, South Carolina, Maryland, and Ohio.

The name of our initiative is "Back to God". At this time I would like to invite you all to my November Chaplain class at the Department Fall Conference. I will be discussing the Four Chaplains Memorial and Post Everlasting. These are two (2) events that are very important to the American Legion Family. If you attend you will receive an updated Chaplain Course Training Book that includes most requested topics. Additionally, If anyone has input for my arena please let me know as I would love to hear from you.

**For "God and Country" and have a blessed month of November.**

Steven Newman  
 Department Chaplain

**Legionnaires Insurance Trust**

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Good news! Online enrollment is now available. Any Legion member can go to the LIT website to enroll. To sign up online, go to: <http://www.thelit.com> and follow the the links.



**JERRY BRANDT**  
**Northern Area Commander**  
**NorthernArea@legionmail.org**  
**(904) 910-5201**

Fellow Legionnaires,

We have a lot going on within the Area, Re-dedication of Posts and Eternal Frames, District and Post Picnics. Plans for Veterans Day Celebration, (Our Day) with parades and cookouts.

**Upcoming events:**

November 7 - 9 Fall Conference

November 10, Eternal Frame, donated in 1972 to the City of Jacksonville by the 5th

- District, will be moved to Evergreen Cemetery
- November 11, Veterans Day Parade
- November 14 - 16, 3rd District Visit
- November 15th, 3rd District Meeting Post 244
- November 16th, 5th District Meeting Post 373
- November 16th, 17th District Meeting

**Florida American Legion  
Specialty License Plate**

Don't forget to purchase your Florida American Legion specialty license plate. We need your support to reach our goal of 1,000 pre-sales by July 1st.

Visit <http://members.floridalegion.org/> and click on the license plate link.



**TAPS**

It is with deep regret that we report the passing of 16th District Commander, Thomas Zbikowski, of Safety Harbor FL on Saturday, October 25, 2014. Thomas is survived by his wife, Liz. There will be a service on Saturday, November 15, 2014 at American Legion Post 238, 900 Main St., Safety Harbor, FL 34695.

It is with deep regret that we report the passing of Past Department President, Geraldine "Gerrie" Bailey, of Pensacola FL on Friday, October 24, 2014. Gerrie is survived by her husband, Past District Vice Commander, Benny Bailey, and eight children, Benny, Robert, Sherry, Dennis, Jimmy, William, Karen and Reuben.

and records are getting hard to find. A good way to help is with buddy statements. A buddy statement is from a friend assigned to your unit that has personal knowledge of the incident that is causing the disability.

Others items that can help in your claim are pictures, police reports, divorce papers, etc. to add information to your claim. One item I forgot to mention in the previous letters is that in order to file a claim a diagnosis has to be current and traceable to your time in service, except in the cases of presumptive problems. In many cases, a service member might hurt a leg, arm, knee etc. and take a few aspirin and forget the problems until much later in

The 5th District will hold a District Re-vitalization during the week of November 17-21.

Team, please keep striving for membership, we all should be above the standard Membership numbers, of 70% by November 5th. If you are not, reach out to your District Commander or myself.

District Commanders should now be visiting your Posts. Commanders, please open up and let them know if there is any problems within your Posts that you need assistance with.

3rd District now has a Face Book Page, please reach out to them at <https://www.facebook.com/floridadistrict3>

Jerry Brandt  
Northern Area Commander

**DENNIS R. BRULAND**  
Department Veterans Benefits Chairman  
[VeteransBenefits@legionmail.com](mailto:VeteransBenefits@legionmail.com)  
(941) 276-1842

**VA CLAIMS PROCESS CONTINUED**

In the last letter, I started on the VA Claim Process by showing a five-step claim. I will continue with more information to file a better claim. Thus far, the claim has been adjudicated but how did the claim arrive at this position? By the process of claim development. When preparing your claim you will yourself a huge favor by gathering information to be used by your Service Officer. Collect all you medical records from your civilian doctors. It is much faster for you to provide this information then to ask VA to retrieve your records with a VA Form 21-4142. VA is responsible for obtaining any government records such as military or even VA medical records, but if possible provides these records because it can be a very slow process. Ensure your service record is complete and correct and shows that you had "combat stressors" while in service. You can request a copy of your DD Form 214 to show proof of service by submitting a SF 180 to the Nationals Records Center in St. Louis, MO.

Another source of information for your claim is the internet. Medical sites often have information regarding your condition and it can be a good idea to provide additional information to the VA. It can help when you make other people's job easier for them. In addition, at VA.GOV, there are references to previous cases that had been submitted and you can read the outcome and find ideas to assist in your filing. Some of us are getting older



life when the problem returns to cause a disability. The VA feels that if the problem is not documented the problem never existed.

If the VA denied your claim, your case is not yet finished. An individual may submit a Notice of Disagreement within one year from the date of decision letter. The VA has a specific form for the NOD that can easily be completed and submitted. More information can be sent as long as it is new information. You can ask for a De Novo review with a Decision Review Officer rather than a traditional appeal process. If your claim is still not approved a VA Form 9, Board of Veterans Appeals, can be submitted within 60 days from the receipt of the Statement of the Case. New information may also be submitted at this time.

The next step is the Court of Veterans Appeals which must be submitted within 120 days from the BVA denial (at this stage you cannot add any information to the claim).

In the next letter, I will discuss widows' claim and other general information.



### **A Message from The American Legion, Department of Florida Commander in Support of PROJECT: VetRelief.**

Care of our veterans and their families has been the primary focus of The American Legion since our inception in 1919. Today, it should be no different. As Legionnaires, we need to think "outside the box" just like our forefathers did when they formed our great organization. We need to find new and inventive ways to support and care for our brothers and sisters – this can be accomplished through PROJECT: VetRelief.

As your Department Commander, I fully support PROJECT: VetRelief, its mission, and services. Together, we can help our fellow service members as we consecrate and sanctify our comradeship through our devotion to mutual helpfulness, by uniting our existing services and expanding them with PROJECT: VetRelief.

Thank you for your support of this very important initiative!

Jay Conti Sr.  
American Legion, Department of Florida  
Department Commander



P.S. - Look for the launch of [www.ProjectVetRelief.org](http://www.ProjectVetRelief.org) in early November 2014 with a full rollout to our Members at Fall Conference!

**JOHN DOLLINGER**  
Department Blood Donor Chairman  
[BloodDonor@legionmail.org](mailto:BloodDonor@legionmail.org)  
(941) 661-8086

I recently assumed this position and wanted to see why The American Legion found this program important. I learned everything I needed in the opening of the program page which states "People have held blood drives and

given blood since community service became an American value. It's only natural that The American Legion - with community service as one of its pillars - be heavily involved in blood donation efforts". The American Legion Blood Donor Program has existed since 1942. Participation in the program is simple, donate blood and report it to your Post. The Post can collect the information and use it when they prepare the Post Consolidated Report. Additionally, Posts can host Blood Drives within your communities and report that on their Consolidated Report. I would suggest each Post have a Blood Donor Chair and develop a Post Blood Donor program. We will have more information in the coming months.

John Dollinger  
Department Blood Donor Chairman

Jesse Figueroa  
Department Assistant Blood Donor Chair



**THOMAS J. GORA**  
**Department Law and Order Chairman**  
**LawOrder@legionmail.org**  
**(904) 583-4597**

The Law and Order program will have an information table at the Fall Conference "Programs Fair" so stop by and get some information. A reminder to all Law and Order District/Post Chairs the applications for Law Enforcement and Firefighter/Paramedic Officers of the year are due May 7, 2015. The applications are on-line at the Department of Florida web site. We will also have information about the Youth Law Enforcement Cadet Program which is a program in 17 other Departments and we would like to get this program going in Florida.

Don't forget security both around your post and your home. Safe and secure environments don't happen by accident, it takes planning, practice, and training. It is always a good idea to have a security plan or checklist in place at the post and at home. Do the kids at home know what to do, who to call in an emergency? What should they do if they answer the door to a stranger, that guy who says he is there to "check something" in your house, condo or apartment? Does your post review and revise your post rules and regulations or just keep what has always been in place? Cyber security, identity theft may not have been issues in the 70's and 80's but they are today. Are those DD214's kept in a place secured by at least two locks (door and cabinet)? It is suggested that routine mass e-mails to members should be sent "blind copy" to avoid displaying members e-mail addresses. Remember, the Post Membership Roster is for "official business only." Are all the items designed to provide security around the post or your home functioning the way they are supposed to? Sometimes we take these things for granted because we pay for them, we assume they work correctly. It is always prudent to check and make sure all alarms, locks, security cameras are all functioning as designed. Do you have enough light in the Post parking lot so members can see their vehicle and surroundings and get to them safely? And don't forget fire safety! The holidays are coming, all kind of lighted decorations that require electricity, real Christmas trees that can burn (keep it watered and away from heat producing appliances), etc., make sure everything is in a safe working order and check them regularly! When we stay in large hotels at the annual convention and conference, do you study the floor your room is on and the emergency exit routes? If you don't, you should, after all it is a place not familiar to you, you need to know how to get out when there is smoke in the air, or no lighting in the dark.

We live in a world in which our desire to lead safe, peaceful, productive and happy lives are at times challenged by those who prey on the innocent. One of the best things we can do is to simply be OBSERVANT, be aware of what is going on around your post, your home and community. If someone or something does not look right, seems out of the ordinary, help is only a phone call away. Call the authorities and have them check these things out for you. Remember, law enforcement and your local fire fighters are there to serve and protect you, they are well trained, experienced and equipped, call them. That is why we in the American Legion recognize and honor our first responders, they serve their communities and the nation.

**STANLEY GOLD**

**National Legislative Chairman**  
**NatLegislative@legionmail.org**  
**(786) 423-2458**



While in Israel two weeks ago, I saw on CNN, the burning of the American flags in St. Louis riots. Now is the time to call your member of congress and tell them to co-sponsor House joint resolution 47. This legislation is a proposed constitutional amendment to protect the American flag from physical desecration. The text states simply "The congress shall have the power to prohibit the physical desecration of the flag of the United States." The house measure currently has 29 co-sponsors, only one from Florida, John Mica. The senate has a companion bill to house joint Resolution 47.

The senate has 23 co-sponsors. Get your family members to call. Senator Rubio has signed on. Beginning January 2015 millions of older Americans who rely on federal benefits will get a 17 percent cola increase. This includes disabled veterans, military, and federal civilian retirees. Last month I spent two days visiting Normandy, France. I saw about where my brother got wounded on the beach. I had my 14<sup>th</sup> birthday on June 6, 1944. I visited the American cemetery where over 7000 are buried. There is a wall with over 2500 MIA's there. After I went to Israel, I was a volunteer for the 7<sup>th</sup> time. You pay the way over and the Army picks you up at the airport and they take you to a base. I have been to five different bases since 1993. They give you a uniform to wear on base only. You start on Sunday and work till Thursday noon doing odd jobs around the base from 8:15 to 11:45, lunch, and then again from 1:15 to 4:30. They freed you, and at nights they had speakers with no religion ever mentioned. This time I was at an Army supply medical base and we repackaged fifty pound sacks full of medical supplies and we packed over 200 sacks. Thursday afternoon they take you on a US tour to some interesting place. Friday and Saturday you have off until Sunday 11 am. If you don't have plans they will put on a good cheap tour. You do not need to be Jewish, only English is spoken at camp. One of the first timers with me was Major General David Bocker US Army retiree from Atlanta, GA. He was commander of the 90<sup>th</sup> Division in the 1990's doing the same work I did.

**RIDE TO MARGARITAVILLE**

*by John Vincent III*

*Department Legion Riders Vice Chairman*



I have lived in Florida for most of my life and I finally got the chance to make it to the Keys for the Peterson Run this year. For the past few years either my mother or Phoenix had some issues and kept me from making the trip to the Keys. So this year, I stuck my mother in a nursing home and told Phoenix I was going with or without her!!! Just kidding folks, don't anyone call protective services on me!!! LOL!! It just happened to work out this year. Phoenix and I had a great time thanks to my brothers from the American Legion Riders from Post 28 in the Keys. Yeah, Phoenix went with me!! However, I still haven't ridden my motorcycle to the Keys, yet. For those who don't know me, I am a Vice Chairman of the Riders for the Southwest Area. I ride with greatest group of Veterans in the world with

the American Legion Riders. This year I had the pleasure of driving a beautiful Jeep Wrangler compliments of the Department to promote our newest program to help Veterans called "PROJECT:VET RELIEF". The "Project:Vet Relief" program assist active duty personnel to transition from military to civilian life and beyond as well as helping our Veterans.

The "Project :Vet Relief jeep was a great hit at the Peterson Run. Post 28 under the leadership of Dan "BREAKDOWN" Dedeo and his Riders did a fabulous job. The Legion Riders plan on using the jeep for more upcoming motorcycle events. However, the jeep would be a powerful tool to use to increase awareness of the mission of the American Legion and membership for any post. So, if your community is having a large event and you want to help promote The American Legion programs while increasing your membership contact Department (No, the girls don't come with the Jeep!!). While we were in the Keys with the jeep we generated thirty-nine (39) leads statewide with fifteen of these lead from Veterans or active duty personnel stationed in the Keys. The other leads were sent out to the Department Vice Chairmen for the Riders. Contact them and follow up on potential members.

With Veteran Day coming up this month please remember our active duty personnel and "ALL" of our Veterans that have given us the freedoms we enjoy today. Let us "NEVER FORGET". FULL SPEED AHEAD FOR VETERANS.

## 2014 DEPARTMENT OF FLORIDA AMERICAN LEGION COLLEGE - OCT. 9 - 11, 2014

by Jesse Figueroa

12<sup>th</sup> District Adjutant, Member of Post 117 in Palm Bay.



Fellow Legionnaires, a whole new era in leadership took place at Department Headquarters as 19 Legionnaires and I graduated from the 2014 Department of Florida American Legion College on Saturday, October 11, 2014. This school of instruction was spearheaded by Past Department Commander Fletcher Williams, Jr. with the support of Department Commander Jay Conti, Sr., Dept. 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Commander Jim Ramos, Dept. 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Joe Magee and Dept. Membership Chairman Steve Shuga. We were taught in about the Robert's Rule of Order, Meeting Protocols and leadership. 5 Legionnaires per table were broken up by "4 Mock Districts": 1<sup>st</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup>. I was chosen by my group mates as the 11<sup>th</sup> District Commander! We were tasked to amend Article V of the Dept. Constitution & By-Laws, Duties of the NEC and the NECA; also drafting a resolution. I appreciate of the support of the Instructors, we presented them with certificates as we will earn ours at the Department Fall Conference. This

training is an excellent experience for us all. The 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the American Legion is upon us as the present leaders begin to transition their leadership to the younger membership.

## POST EXCELLENCE AWARD

To qualify for the Post Excellence Award, a post is required to achieve excellence in four areas: membership, youth activities, community service and support to currently serving troops or veterans.

The purposes of this award are membership growth, exposure of American Legion values to the youth of the community, and increased visibility of the American Legion Family through service projects. A post achieving this qualification will have had numerous post members involved in planning and achieving these goals.

Many posts are most likely already active in these areas and will qualify without extra effort. Others, however, will need to increase their efforts in one



or more areas to qualify for the award.

The standard to be achieved in each area:

- **Membership.** Must be at least one member greater than the previous year. At least one post officer attends district meetings.
- **Youth activities.** Must sponsor and actively participate in at least one primary youth program: Boys State, American Legion Baseball, Oratorical, Boy Scouts or Junior Shooting Sports.
- **Community service.** Must accomplish a community service project with members of the Legion Family actively working in the community outside the post home. A wide range of potential projects exists, such as a project centered on one of Children & Youth's emphasis areas to fulfilling a strictly local need. A monetary donation may be part of the project but may not constitute the entire project.
- **Service to troops/veterans.** Must accomplish a project supporting troops or veterans in the community with Legion Family members outside the post home. Potential projects include the Family Support Network, Heroes to Hometowns, or simply helping a local veteran with necessary updates to his or her home. Again, a monetary donation may be part of the project but may not constitute the entire project.

The district commander responsible for the post will certify a post as having achieved the four specified criteria. The district commander will submit a list of posts meeting the criteria to the department headquarters. That list should include the post name, post number, post address and post commander's name. Ideally, the last two criteria are accompanied by copies of press releases submitted to the local media about the projects. That method ensures the projects were not only accomplished but that an attempt was made to enhance the image of The American Legion through local media. The copy submitted should include a date and time stamp showing receipt by the media outlet.

All Posts that Submit for this award will also receive a Department Commanders "**BRAVO-ZULU**" Streamer. The department adjutant will transmit information as posts qualify to:

**The American Legion National Headquarters**  
**ATTN: Membership**  
**P.O. Box 1055**  
**Indianapolis, IN 46206-1055**



**NANCY L. THOMAS**  
**Department Post Development and Revitalization Chairman**  
**PostDevelopment@legionmail.org**  
**(863) 618-6738**

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month (wear your pink shirt on Wednesday's, please), it is also Domestic Violence Awareness Month (please wear purple to support this effort), and it is also the month that we should be thinking about our children for Halloween. If your Post is able to purchase the coloring books that are available on [emblemsales.org](http://emblemsales.org), please do so, it is also a way to educate children.

Thanksgiving is coming up. May all of you have something to be thankful for, if not, be thankful for our freedom. In my home, we are thankful for our health, for the health of our children, and their children, having a good job, being able to get up each morning and placing our feet on the ground and able to have the freedom to do so.

December is also coming up, this is the month that we should be having our Post Oratorical Contest for the fine young high school students to go onto the District Oratorical, and hopefully your contestant will go onto National. And, it is my hope that everyone will have a Merry Christmas (Happy Holiday).

## 70% Membership Target Report

(as of October 30, 2014)

District/ Area	Commander	Goal	Rcvd	% of Goal
4	C. Ferguson	3924	2803	<b>71.43</b>
6	T. Biddle	11734	7949	<b>67.74</b>
7	I. Anderson	3848	2591	<b>67.33</b>
2	W. Jackson	1416	942	<b>66.53</b>
12	R. Saxby	8938	5905	<b>66.07</b>
9	J. Tewes	4111	2696	<b>65.58</b>
13	A. Burkett	9372	6062	<b>64.68</b>
8	D. Deierlein	8266	5277	<b>63.84</b>
17	M. Wolohan	4113	2612	<b>63.51</b>
5	T. Gora	8127	5088	<b>62.61</b>
15	J. Romeu	5509	3441	<b>62.46</b>
11	A. Bruce	4011	2505	<b>62.45</b>
16	16th District	12099	7526	<b>62.20</b>
3	R. White	1797	1079	<b>60.05</b>
1	L. Carpenter	6417	3734	<b>58.19</b>
14	G. Decker	3139	1826	<b>58.17</b>
Eastern	A. Diaz	20672	13854	<b>67.02</b>
Northern	J. Brandt	17961	11582	<b>64.48</b>
South-western	J. Dollinger	17638	11339	<b>64.29</b>
Central	E. Butts	21456	13558	<b>63.19</b>
Southern	W. Johnson	11261	7027	<b>62.40</b>
Western	V. Joyce	7833	4676	<b>59.70</b>

We have a lot going on in the next few months, to include the Department Fall Conference. It is a good place to learn about the policies, and about the American Legion. Please, plan on attending some of the meetings that are available to you. And, if you send a representative from your Post, encourage that individual to take back the information that they received to share it with your members.

At this time, it is important to advise you that all of you have access to all kinds of information, I.e.: The National Constitution and By-Laws, The Department of Florida Constitution and By-Laws, the Area Training Guide, the Officers Manual, and many other manuals. There are also forms that are available to you on the Department's web site ([floridalegion.org](http://floridalegion.org)). Please, use those resources to assist you in your daily activities.

Please, also utilize the knowledge of your District Commanders, Area Commanders, and Department Staff if you have questions. Some of you are lucky enough to have past officers and please, make use their knowledge.

If you have not paid your dues, or you know someone who has not paid theirs, please do it prior to December 31<sup>st</sup>. **Let's see 100% in every Post this year!** Use [mylegion.org](http://mylegion.org) to contact members who are in your area who are not members of your Post yet.

Should you need assistance in making your 100%, you have allot of individuals from the Department who are more than willing to visit with you and help. So, feel free to contact the Department Commander, Jay Conti, Sr. and ask for help! He will see that we help you!

Should you need to contact me, my mailing address is P. O. Box 3312, Lake Wales, FL 33869-3312, my e-mail address is: [geldsprechens@gmail.com](mailto:geldsprechens@gmail.com), and my phone number is 863-618-6738. Please leave me a message if I am unable to answer the phone right away.

### Rise-n-Shine with Membership!

November 5<sup>th</sup> is the next target goal date sporting **70%/75%**. Post incentives begin to appear during November with several opportunities thereafter to gain Bravo Zulu ticket chances for a variety of drawings. New members are being sought by many of our American Legion Posts and its dedicated members. Turn 2 new members into our largest veteran service organization – The American Legion and be credited to receive a Bravo Zulu Pin.

Have you received your Membership Pin for the 2014-2015 term? If not, you must attend a district meeting or Fall

Conference to request one. We gave them to those in attendance at the Area Trainings and have begun to pass them to members of Posts as we make our visits. Florida has a 3-pin set. The front pin is the Department Commander's, the middle pin is the Bravo Zulu (this is awarded based on a credit of 2 new members into the American Legion), and the third pin is Membership. This pin set can be sought by any of the American Legion family.

Are you carrying a concealed permit package? I hope every member has one on their person at all times. This equates to a small envelope, zip lock that sports a membership application for the Legion, Auxiliary, Sons, and even a Gift membership application. If ever asked to display it by the Dept Membership Chairman, Area Commander or District Commander, your Post receives 25 BZ tickets. These Legionnaires will be informed when to fulfill that search, discover and share activity at the appropriate time.

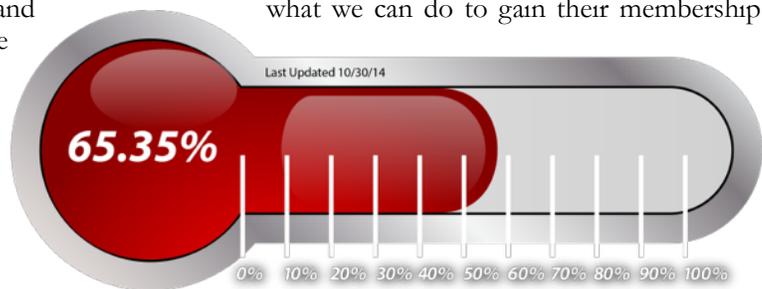
**Remember:** The **BZ Ticket Voucher** will be the only form used for the purpose of crediting Posts with Bravo Zulu Tickets used towards drawings and activities beginning 1 October 2014.

Florida has continued to struggle with its overall membership footprint for the past 4 months. We began with a major leap of faith then our membership appeared to slide into a slumber state. The giant has not awakened and I hope you and I can get the state roaring again with vengeance to take a commanding lead and be successful once again as we have shown in the past.

There are plentiful amount of reasons that one can justify why we are not performing as we could or should but I am asking each and every one of you to cast those aside and get all Legionnaire memberships in good standing and to assist Posts to achieve their 100%.

Our goal is to seek out those that we can "Ask" or "Ask Again" to renew and reinstate their membership. Members that have discovered the back door unlocked and have snuck away or have disappeared because Post programs are not as effective as before that enlisted their assistance or support keeping them active in the Post must be asked what led them astray and back. There could be other reasons, but we must do our part to keep all members involved so they can give back to the community, state, and nation.

Steve Shuga  
Department Membership Chairman



### POW/MIA DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE UPDATE - OCTOBER 2014

The Defense Department has announced the creation of a new agency replacing the troubled POW/MIA accounting community in charge of recovering and repatriating the remains of troops killed or missing from past conflicts. This new group will be in place by January of 2015 but not completely operational until the end of 2015.

This new Agency will bring together the work of the Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office and the Joint Personnel Accounting Command which the Secretary of Defense ordered earlier this year.

These past organizations efforts to recover approximately 83,000 Americans still missing from past conflicts have fallen far short of the goal set be Congress of 250 recoveries a year and has been dogged by incompetence and dysfunction, including claims agencies ignored leads, desecrated and mishandled remains, and failing to keep proper records, not to mention the misleading return of remains services held by the military personnel.

Back in August 2013, the Defense Department, at the urging of Congress ordered the Defense Inspector General's Office to undertake a complete investigation review of the POW/MIA recovery operations.

The interim report from the IG's Office outlines just some of the problems:

- Extremely low number of identified recoveries each year, just 61 in last year
- No central database or standard operating procedures for any of the existing organizations
- Many leadership and management problems resulting in an over controlled, hostile and dysfunction workplace environment.

The most concerning item in the interim report is a statement that included in the 83,000 Americans still missing from past conflicts is approximately 50,000 lost at sea most during World War II, which the likelihood of recovery is almost 0. The admission of this fact greatly reduces the overall scope of the POW/MIA program. Additionally, we have yet to determine how many POW/MIA are interred in mass graves that we are already aware of the locations and existence. This again could be a very significant number and further reduce the overall scope of the program.

The preliminary plans for the new agency include:

- The creation of a new position a policy Undersecretary whose primary responsibility will be the recovery effort
- A Chief Medical Examiner responsible for all identification and scientific operations and programs
- The development of a central database and creation of a case management database system containing all POW/MIA case information
- An significant effort to improve the manner in which the DOD and various department treat the families of those POW/MIA still missing in action.

Only time will tell us how these new efforts will impact the POW/MIA efforts but the changes are needed to bring credibility back to the program.

John Dollinger  
Department POW/MIA Chairman

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## SOUTHWESTERN AREA REPORTS

### 8th District:

Welcome from the 'GREAT EIGHT': Well the month of October has come and gone, now we are all getting ready for Fall Convention which is always a great time and very educational. I hope to see as many of you at Convention as possible, because you always leave there knowing more about the American Legion. Well things here in the "GREAT EIGHT" are going well and hopefully with our Northern Members returning we will once again be on the top of the membership list, I KNOW WE CAN DO IT' and WE WILL. We are working on opening 3 new post this year in the 8th District. One Post 370 in Sarasota that closed in 2001 wants to reopen and has many old and new young members, One at South Florida State College and One at Avon Park Correctional Facility. This just shows you that the "GREAT EIGHT" is leading the way. Well until next month please remember that Membership start with YOU!

*Doug Deierlein*

*8th District Commander "Great Eighth"*

### 13th District:

Hello from District 13. I have been at this for about 4 months now and I'm still having fun Ha Ha. Membership is not where they want us to be I know it. Hang in there it will come keep trying to get new and renewal. If you need help please let me know we will get it for you.

*Andrew Burkett*

*13th District Commander*

**Southwestern Area:**

October renewals have been mailed from National to your membership and should be coming into your Posts. It is extremely important that these incoming renewals are processed immediately and sent to Irene at Department. The Southwestern Area is ahead of last year in number of cards received at Department but because of the increased goals we are in fact behind in percent of goal. The only way this gets improved is for every Post in the Southwestern Area to focus on MEMBERSHIP, MEMBERSHIP, MEMBERSHIP. All of us working together is what makes the Southwestern Area strong. If you have any questions or concerns talk with your District Commander.

The Fall Conference is coming November 7 – 9 at the Hilton, Walt Disney World. The Conference is packed with options for every Post Officer to gain more knowledge on their responsibilities and those of all Legionnaires.

The SOUTHWESTERN AREA BALL will be held on January 24th at Post 103 in Punta Gorda. For more information please contact me at [jdolly@comcast.net](mailto:jdolly@comcast.net) and I will get you the material you request.

*John Dollinger*

*Southwestern Area Commander*

### FLORIDA AMERICAN LEGION COLLEGE REPORT 2014

On October 11th, The American Legion Department of Florida Legion College program graduated its 2014 Class of 19 Legionnaires from its 16 Districts. This was the first Department of Florida Legion College Class since the 1990's. Students were taught on how to form a District, plan the year, solve Post problems, assist Posts in need, Revitalization, write Amendments and Resolutions, Legion programs, Protocol and other very useful information to be a well-rounded Legionnaire!

During the Opening session of the Department of Florida Legion College; Department Commander Jay Conti Sr. offered some advice to the graduates. "I want you to think of my slogan when you are in this Class: "FULL SPEED AHEAD FOR VETERANS"; think about our veterans and their families and go back home and tell the people at your posts, districts and areas what you learned here this weekend," he said. "Don't keep it to yourself; teach others and use the skills you have learned. All the Students received the Department

Commanders Challenge Coin for graduating and will be presented with their Diploma, Legion College Graduation Pin and Shirt at the upcoming Fall Conference on November 7-9, 2014 in Orlando, FL.

**This year's graduates were:**

Andrea Grady Post 192 / 13th District  
 Arthur "Art" Cousineau Post 267 / 17TH District  
 Willie "Buster" Branch Post 267 / 17th District  
 Tracy "Stretch" Spence Post 81 / 12th District  
 Danny Rodriguez Post 129 / 5th District  
 Ronald "Buddy" Stamm Post 81 / 12th District  
 Troy Horsley Post 283 / 5th District  
 Wayne Schorr Post 43 / 14th District  
 James "Jim" Day Post 81 / 12th District  
 Jesse Figueroa Post 117 / 12th District  
 Gerald "Gerry" Kaufman Post 183 / 6th District  
 Brian "TAZ" Gehling Post 90 / 13th District  
 Christopher "Todd" Emmert Post 90 / 13th District  
 IRA "Andy" Anderson Post 71 / 7th District  
 VanBuren Victoria Post 16 / 4TH District  
 Kiser Tom Post 164 / 11TH District  
 James "Dusty" Douglas Post 357 / 6th District  
 Henry "Radar" James Post 357 / 6TH District  
 Thomas "TC" Biddle Post 347 / 6TH District



## DEPARTMENT ROSTER CHANGES - as of October 31, 2014

Post #	Last Name	First Name	Change Made	Additional Info Provided
49	Slik	Ronald	Adjutant info Change	Address: 180 Bluebird East, 32344-5728 Phone: 850.997.8104
49			Post Address Change	1065 S Water St. Monticello, FL 32344
152	Cannon	John	Adjutant of Post 152	Address: 17709 Jamestown Way, Apt. D, Lutz FL 33558 Phone: 813.237.6473 Email: JCANNON1956@gmail.com
344	Hill Jr.	Kenneth	Cmdr. Phone # Change	Phone:321.480.1439
344			Post Service Officer Added	Robert Doyle   Phone: 321.453.1776
321	Barber	Arthur	Adjutant of Post 321	Address: 1720 NW 111 Terr. Pembroke Pines FL 33026-2263 Phone: 954.290.0240 Email: buz8210@bellsouth.net
81	Stamm	Ronald	Adutant of Post 81	Address: PO Box 500358 Malabar, FL 32950-0358 Home:732.539.2189 Work: 772.770.1995 Email: r.stamm@verizon.net
22			Meeting Time Change	2nd Wed 7:00 pm
22	Perkins	Donald	Commander of Post 22	Address: 641 N. Range Rd. Cocoa, FL 32926 Phone: (321) 639-2338 Email:donperki1@yahoo.com
22	Butcherine	Edward	Adjutant of Post 22	Address:135 Oyster Pl. Rockledge, FL 32955-5629 Phone: (321) 480-0026 Email:EJButcherine@gmail.com
30	Ecklyn	Charles	Cmdr. Phone # Change	Phone: (941) 266-6090
39	Doane	John	Cmdr. Phone # Change	Home Phone: (772) 519-3763
90			Email Change	ALPost90Cape@yahoo.com
111			Email Change	seminol@post111.org
111	Martino	Richard	Cmdr. Info Change	Work: (813) 236-2281 Email:rmtimetogolf@gmail.com
111	Ciccarello	Rene	Adjutant of Post 111	Address: 3355 Hidden Haven Ct. Tampa, FL 33607 Home:(813) 876-3969 Work: (813) 236-2281 Email: renecciccarello@yahoo.com
117	Fournier	James	Cmdr. Info Change	Phone: (321) 729-8089 Email: alpost117@aol.com
117	Podhola	Duane	Adjutant of Post 117	Address: 243 Brightwater Dr. SE, Palm Bay, FL 32909-2308 Work/Cell: (321) 698-7382
138	Wester	Richard	Adjutant of Post 138	Address: 5535 W. Prescott St. Tampa FL 33616 Phone: (585) 250-5784 Work: (813) 839-5119 Email: rwester@floridacfe.com
138	Carter	Daniel	Cmdr. Info Change	Address: 5535 W. Prescott St. Tampa, FL 33616 Work:(813) 839-5119
Nat./Dept.	Boland	Dennis	Contact Info Change	Phone: (239) 641-1224 Email: paratrooper@embarqmail.com
Dept.	McNabb	Randall	New 16th Dist. Cdr.	
Dept.	Sloat	John	New 16th Dist. Vice Cdr.	
Dept.	Ferguson	Charles	New 4th Dist. Cdr.	
Dept.	Anderson	Ira	New 7th Dist. Cdr.	
Dept.	Perkins	Edward	New 7th Dist. Vice Cdr.	