



# The LEGION LINK

*LEGION PRIDE: We Fight for Veterans*



## In this issue...

### Page 1-2:

- Dept. Commander Report

### Page 3:

- 1st Vice Cdr. Report

### Page 4:

- 2nd Vice Cdr Report

### Page 5:

- 3rd Vice Cdr Report

### Page 6:

- NEC Report
- Judge Advocate Report

### Page 7:

- NECA Report
- Western Area Cmdr Report

### Page 8:

- Membership Report

### Page 9:

- Sgt-at-Arms Report
- ALEI Instructor Report

### Page 10:

- Department Chaplain Report

### Page 11:

- PROJECT:VetRelief
- Historian Report

### Page 12:

- SAL Advisory Report

### Page 13:

- ALR Chairman Report
- Homeless Vets Report

### Page 14:

- VA Entitlements Report

### Page 15:

- Blood Donor Report
- Children & Youth Report

### Page 16:

- Social Media Report
- Law & Order Report

### Page 17:

- School Medals Report

### Page 18:

- Jr. Shooting/ROTC Report
- Women Veterans Report

### Page 19:

- Public Relations Report

### Page 20:

- 12th District Adjutant

### Page 21:

- Sea Cadets Article

### Page 22:

- Cracker Trail
- Oratorical/Americanism Report



## Jim Ramos

*Department Commander*

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(407) 247-5232

## The Legion Family:

Let's start with **Commander's Charity of Choice** is **The Fisher House** is "a home away from home" for families of patients receiving medical care at major military or VA medical centers. The homes are normally located within

walking distance of the treatment facility or have transportation available. There are 64 Fisher Houses located in the United State and Germany. Families do not pay to stay at a Fisher House.

**Commander's Car** is a Model: **Ford Escape** and theme of car is "**For God and Country**" We as Americans love our God and our Country so we wants to show it 365 days a year!

**Commander's Shirt color** is **Infantry Blue** (light blue). Why, because I served 20 years for our Country in the U.S. Army "Airborne Infantry".

**Commander's Moto** is "**Legion Pride**" and "**We flight for Veterans**". We should have pride in ourselves, we are leaders in Florida, we should have pride in our organization, The American Legion, and pride in all that we do to serve veterans. Collectively, "we flight for veterans" (for their benefits and we lobby in Capital Hill), and this is what we do each day.

**Let's make this year a great one. Let's achieve 100% in membership and in all programs. Let's show our state that we support our veterans, we have love for God and Country, and that we have "Legion Pride".**

**July 1<sup>st</sup>** meeting with all Dept. vice Commander and Dept. Adjutant Mike McDaniel.

**July 2<sup>nd</sup>** in the 13<sup>th</sup> District: stop by Post 110 (Port Charlotte) for lunch and the color guard was going out to do funeral detail. After to Post 103 (Punta Gorda) for Post installation very good time.

**Next:** Yes, we are family Department President Pearl McIntyre and I can make a difference with the Auxiliary and Legion. I welcome Pearl and already we have been in a parade together on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July in Safely Harbor, Post 238. We will continue to help our Veterans and their families and Pearl and I make the Fisher House our charity of choice what a difference we make for our Veterans. Thank you for the Auxiliary.

*(continued on page 2)*



That was the weekend and Monday morning back to Department HQ to do some paperwork. Tuesday visit the Gainesville Fisher House for some update on how and why?

**July 10<sup>th</sup> through the 12<sup>nd</sup> the Leadership Retreat in Department HQ for all Area's and District Commander on How to do following:**

Brief on how to work Membership for the year 2015-2016

Planning the District events and meeting

Doing good Legion programs

Department email and New website

Brief on some programs: ALR (by Jim Day Dept. Chairman), SAL advisory (by SAL PNC James K. Roberts III), Americanism and Oratorical (by Joe McNeil Dept. Chairman) with a program brief by Elizabeth Douglas (Dept. programs) and more.

**July 16<sup>th</sup>**, meeting at the Orlando VA Medical Center in Lake Nona Campus and on the 17<sup>th</sup> at Department HQ for more paperwork and meeting with Dept. adjutant Mike.

**July 18<sup>th</sup>**, in the 6<sup>th</sup> District for some Post installations: Post 183 (Fern Park) at 6pm.

**July 19<sup>th</sup>**, at Post 19 installation at 2pm and after to Post 331 installation at 6pm.

**July 21<sup>st</sup>**, back at Dept. HQ more meeting and schedule updates.

**July 24<sup>th</sup>**, again back to Dept. HQ, but after to the Auxiliary Boot Camp to say Hello and to let them know we support the Auxiliary always. Department President Pearl is the first to get **the "Team Player" Award** only 6each.

**July 25<sup>th</sup>, at the 12<sup>th</sup> District installations:** of Post 81 (Melbourne) for installation and Post 406 (is the University Post in Melbourne) at 10am and after to Post 318 (Port St. Lucie) for installation with Post 358 (Ft. Pierce a small Post) at 4pm.

**July 26<sup>th</sup>**, to Post 39 at noon for installation in Vero Beach and after to Post 40 in Ft. Pierce with Post 171 (a small Post also in Ft. Pierce) at 2pm.

**July 31<sup>st</sup>**, in the 7<sup>th</sup> District for the 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Banquet of "Carter Mather" American Legion Post 201 name is "Education make a Difference" at 7pm with members of Post 201, Auxiliary, SAL, friend and family of the Legion. The 7<sup>th</sup> District president Mary and Central Area Commander Eunice Butts.

**Let me just say it a very good start for just one month, Thank you all for doing an excellent job at what will do for our Veterans, their families and our community. Let's do the year with Legion Pride.**

**"For God and Country"**

**Jim Ramos**  
Department Commander



**Joseph Magee**  
 1st Vice Commander  
 1stvice@legionmail.org  
 (561) 315-0672



My fellow Legionnaires,

I would like to take this time to Thank You for electing me Dept. 1st Vice Commander for 2015-2016.

The year got started with a staff meeting at Dept. Headquarters where the upcoming year was discussed. In attendance was the Department Commander, Dept. 2nd Vice, Dept. 3rd Vice, Dept. Adjutant and myself. Following the staff meeting, Dept. Commander hosted the Leadership Retreat. The retreat consisted of the District Commanders, Area Commanders, Dept. Adjutant and various Dept. Program Chairmen. This was extremely informative with constructive comments from the Program Chairmen. There were breakout sessions where an array of topics were discussed and a myriad of ideas shared by the participants. An additional value of the Leadership Retreat was that the District Commanders and the Area Commanders got to interact and get to know each other, which is an important aspect for the upcoming year. Now they can put a face behind that phone number or e-mail address.

Of course, July and August consisted of many District Installations. I believe I attended thirteen and conducted one at Post 274, Ft. Myers Beach. Along with the Installations is the side effect of all that food, there goes the waist line for anyone watching it.

Along with the fun time, there was a couple of somber events I attended.

Palmetto Post 309 dedicated an add-on to their post in honor of Mario Fernandez, their long time Adjutant, who passed away. There was a moving ceremony at Post 110, Port Charlotte, in honor of the "Nashville Five". This was one of those ceremonies that would bring tears to the eyes of the toughest of the tough. I was invited to another moving ceremony at the Sarasota Bayfront, the 70th Anniversary of VJ Day. It was well represented by the American Legion; in addition to myself, the 8th District Vice Commander, Bob King, Post 266, Post 30 Sarasota, Post 312 Oneco and Post 159, Venice.

This month, I, also, attended the National Membership workshop in Indianapolis. As always, this event was informative, consisting of an open forum with talented and knowledgeable members of the National Staff.

Next up is the National Convention in Baltimore, Md. This event will be reported in my next Link article. Please remember the Legion License Plate is now available for purchase.

## For God and Country

**Joseph R. Magee**  
 1st Vice Commander

### Patriotic Coloring and Halloween 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 Admin Manual. Supplies are limited - get them while they last! The cost is \$20 per 100 books. Send your orders to:

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

or by email: [Linherst@floridalegion.org](mailto:Linherst@floridalegion.org)



**Stephen Shuga**  
*2nd Vice Commander*  
[2ndvice@legionmail.org](mailto:2ndvice@legionmail.org)  
 (407) 394-5534

Training is a vital necessity that we all endure on a daily basis. Today's Florida American Legionnaire has endured a training evolution empowering every member to learn from each other, exchanging roles as a trainee - trainer in a seamless manner.

This role playing identity occurs daily and at all levels. We have been stereotyped over the decades to believe that only training is accomplished in a formal or informal setting designed to teach each other a form of continuing education standards, policies, and procedures.

Beyond the formal or informal training classroom mentality, today's training emphasis goes beyond "outside the box" and breaks down the barriers of what is considered essential subjects training versus the formal instructor led collaborative course of instruction.

American Legionnaires train one another daily, unknowingly and that information is passed to others. There are a variety of flexible activities that we use to discuss, express, teach, and inform each other regarding essential topics, current events, planned activities, and references important to each of us.

Our planning prepares us to provide dissemination of products, activities during events that engage open dialog with other members or with folks interested in learning more about who we are, what we do, why it is important for us to belong to The American Legion.

Remember to report/pass up what you have done, held, discussed, and planned so we can ensure that all social media options are being considered if not used!

With the recent imposed communication limits that have a direct impact on how we stay in tune – in touch with our American Legionnaires, we must remain flexible, think outside the box, seek out solutions to the complaints or problems aired, and fulfill our mission.

We can overcome these obstacles, together!

**Stephen Shuga**  
*2nd Vice Commander*

## **SIGN UP TODAY TO ATTEND THE FLORIDA AMERICAN LEGION COLLEGE!**

The Department of Florida, American Legion College enhances knowledge and appreciation of The American Legion, and teaches the core values and contributions of the organization. This year it will be held September 10th-13th at Department Headquarters: 1912A Lee Road, Orlando, FL 32810. Students are required to fill out a application and submit a \$200 registration fee to cover rooms, coffee, donuts, and lunches. **For more information and application, visit the Department's website!**



## **Dianne Boland**

*3rd Vice Commander*

[3rdvice@legionmail.org](mailto:3rdvice@legionmail.org)

(561) 315-0672

Greetings,

Let me begin by thanking all who supported and voted for me as 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice Commander. I look forward to working with the entire legion family to make this a banner year.

Now that school is back in session, you should be thinking ahead and making contacts for Oratorical, Boy's State, Flag Etiquette, Flag Day, Veterans Day, School Medals, and coloring books. If you are the chairman for these programs, don't forget to keep track monthly of all time, miles and monies spent on the program. This makes filling out the Consolidated Post Report (CPR) at the end of the year much easier. Send your information monthly to the district chairman.

As you may know, the department web site has a new look. For many it should be familiar. It was remodeled to resemble the national web site. I consider it more user-friendly and the URL is the same ([www.floridalegion.org](http://www.floridalegion.org)). Since the Legion Link will be coming out every three months, they have given the vice commanders the ability to keep you informed more often. I will be updating my space every month with key points on what is to come. Please check it out monthly.

What I have for August and September are:

- Post Program Chairmen forms were due by the end of August
- Still time to order Halloween Coloring Books – deadline is October 18, 2015
- Department Legion College – September 10 -13, 2015
- Patriots Day – September 11, 2015
- The American Legion Day – September 16, 2015
- Citizenship Day – September 17, 2015
- National POW/MIA Recognition Day – September 18, 2015
- Employ the Older Worker Week – September 20 – 25, 2015
- Gold Star Mother's Day – September 27, 2015
- National Disaster Preparedness Month – Entire month of September

In October your Boys State material will start getting sent out to all the posts who reported back to department with a Boys State Chairman and you can start sending in Boys State money to department (\$350 per boy this year). Also October is National Disability/Employment Awareness month.

Some of these programs (such as National POW/MIA Recognition Day) can be accomplished without cost. If you don't do one already, think about having one this year. Inform your members about the day through your newsletter or a flier on the wall. At a specific time, have a POW/MIA remembrance service ceremony (as described in the Officer's Guide and Manual of Ceremonies). Always remember to remove your cap for this service.

Need help? Give a call. Is your post having a function that supports one of our programs? Ask. I'd love to help and attend (if possible). Have you already had a big function? Write. I'd love to hear about it.

**Dianne Boland**

*3<sup>rd</sup> Vice Commander*



## Dennis Boland

NEC

paratrooper@embarqmail.com  
(239) 641-1224



### ENGLISH AS THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

The American Legion Strongly urges Congress and State Legislatures to designate English as the official language of government in the United States. As of 2013 thirty-one states have adopted English as their official language of government. (Source: [www.us-english.org](http://www.us-english.org))

The American Legion believes naturalized citizens should have the ability to speak and understand the English language. It also believes bilingual programs and ballots printed in another language are counterproductive, costly and tend to discourage immigrants from entering the mainstream of American Life.

The American Legion urges Congress to encourage and fund alternative bilingual education programs to serve, as was originally intended, as a short intermediate step to achieve a proficiency in the English language. Bilingual education programs that provide primary instruction in the student's native language relegates English to secondary status.

The American Legion believes all election ballots should be printed in the English language and that all Citizenship Naturalization Ceremonies also be conducted in the English Language.

The American Legion believes that the promotion of another language over English in the United States contributes to separatism rather than unification of purpose. It believes that legislation designating English as the official language of this country would help unify the different cultures and facilitate the learning of English by immigrants.

The American Legion recognizes the desire of immigrants to maintain a cultural link with their native country by speaking their native language. This is understandable and appropriate when the individual also possesses a proficiency in the English language at a level conducive to normal conversation. The American Legion encourages immigrants to achieve a proficiency in multiple languages.

Ninety-two percent of the world's countries (178 of 193) have at least one official language. English is an official language in 51 nations (26 percent). The United States is one of the only 15 nations that does not have an official language policy. (Source: [www.us-english.org](http://www.us-english.org))

### Dennis Boland

National Executive Committeeman



## Larry Sheets

Department Judge Advocate

judgeadvocate@legionmail.org  
(305) 467-7713

Hardly a day goes by that I do not receive a phone call or email from a Post or District regarding a problem they are having. Most of those questions deal with a problem in the Post Lounge. I would like to remind all of you that the Post Lounge is a separate entity from the Post. The American Legion does not recognize the Lounge as being a part of The American Legion.

Posts should have a section in their By-Laws that relates to the Post Lounge and is usually a Canteen Committee, Lounge Committee, House Committee, etc.

The proper procedure to follow to get help from Department is to first contact your respective District Commander, if he/she is unable to help, contact the Area Commander, then the Department Commander. I am unable to get involved unless directed to do so by the Department Commander.

I would also like to thank those Posts who have amended and updated their Constitution and By-Laws. There have been quite a few, each Post who has not done this in the past three years, should do so. One thing to remember, if a Post changes something in their Constitution and By-Laws, make sure it does not conflict with either the Department or National Constitution and By-Laws.

### Larry Sheets

Department Judge Advocate



**Art Schwabe**  
 NECA  
 3rdvice@legionmail.org  
 (561) 315-0672



Greetings American Legion Family

Erna and I would like to thank everyone that donated to COTA (Children's Organ Transplant Association) to help our Florida children. With your very generous donations over the last two years, YOU raised over \$155,000.00 for our Florida kids.

Here is the breakdown of how the money is being spent:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 06/14— Cayden, Plantation - \$1,500.00  | 12/14— Dominic, Miami - \$1,414.61       |
| 10/14— London, Margate - \$1,490.00     | 12/14— Brandon, Hollywood - \$247.25     |
| 10/14— Ian, Orlando - \$1,408.56        | 06/15— Ian, Orlando - \$1,500.00         |
| 10/14— Roman, Pembroke - \$450.41       | 06/15— Tristan, Cold Spring - \$2,600.00 |
| 10/14— Adonis, Tampa - \$1,228.01       | 06/15— Donald, Chase - \$2,500.00        |
| 10/14— Cayden, Plantation - \$3108. 21  | 06/15— Chloe, Tallahassee - \$2,500.00   |
| 10/14— Anna-Rose, Gainesville - \$60.67 | 06/15— Zac, Pointe Verda - \$2,500.00    |
| 12/14— Skii, Belle Glade - \$166.28     | 06/15— Dylan, Bernard - \$2,500.00       |

We will keep you updated on monies spent for our Florida Kids. The list of children keeps growing. Your support is always welcome.

Art and Erna Schwabe



**Mike Kirchoff**  
 Western Area Commander  
 WesternArea@legionmail.org

I want to thank everyone in 1st and 2nd District for your support in electing me Western Area Commander. It's going to be my job to visit each and every Post in the two Districts and I'm looking forward to each visit. I will let the Post Commander know when the visit will be, so we don't take anyone by surprise by just showing up. I want to also thank our Department of Florida Legion Riders Chairman for selecting me as his Vice Chairman, so when I visit Post that have Legion Riders Chapters we will try and do a combined visit if possible. Always remember the Legion family is all of us, we cannot do it without the support of our Auxiliary Unit, Sons of the American Legion Squadron or the Legion Riders Chapter. The Family is what makes each Post a success. I'm looking forward to a very successful year in both District 1 and District 2, we have a couple of challenges ahead, the first and most important one is the increase in Membership Dues starting in January 2016. Between now and January 2016 we need to really push to get our members in each Post to renew. I will be talking about this during each Post visit. It's important that we get the word out and let our membership know what the increase is going to be. It's better to renew early so that each Post still receives the same amount of money for each member. Right now if your Posts membership dues are \$30.00 the Post receives \$9.00 for each member. Starting in January 2016 if your Posts dues are \$30.00 the Post will receive \$1.00 for each member, this is a big difference. You also must understand the membership dues for National and Department have not been raised in 7 years, but the cost of doing business has increased 10 fold. We as American Legion Members need to keep pace with the demands, we are the largest Veterans Organization out there and we make a difference in Washington, our National Commander and his staff have a very big voice within Washington and they can make improvements to help our Veterans just like each Post can make improvements at the local level, but it takes funding. Enough of my ranting, thanks again for electing me as Western Area Commander and I promise you this position means a lot to me and my goal is to do it right.

**Mike (Goat) Kirchoff**  
 Western Area Commander



**Jerry Brandt**  
*Membership Chairman*  
[membership@legionmail.org](mailto:membership@legionmail.org)

It is my honor to serve as your Department Membership Chairman for 2015-2016 and I will help and assist to the best of my abilities. I want to thank you for your support of The American Legion and its membership goals, our objectives and programs we have for our community. We have some hard work to do, so where do we start to assure that we meet our 100%+ goal. The following information is provided to help your Post make 100%+.

First, I hope each Post has a plan in place to coordinate and direct membership development. The Post Commander is ultimately responsible for the success or failure of the Post to meet its membership goals for the year 2015-2016. Often the Commander is assisted by the Post Membership Chairman and or the Adjutant, who helps by selecting membership team members, planning membership rallies and events, and assisting the Commander and Adjutant with the processing of new and renewed members. This year, it will be easier than ever before, to achieve 100+ by December 31. Let your members know about the per capital increase, set for 20 January 2016. This will raise the funds National receives by \$5 and Department by \$3 for each Renewal and New Member. When you explain this increase to your membership, they will sign up early, so the Post can save the funds that your Posts will normally be paying out. You may or may not know, our goals for this year is out. The Department Commander was able to obtain a goal of 113,100, to achieve this, we only need a 1% increase in membership rounded up or down on each hundred, with all post less than 100 needing 1 member.

**Example a Post:**

- Between 16 – 149 members, need only 1 new member,
- Between 150 – 249 members, need only 2 new members,
- Between 250 – 349 members, need only 3 new members,

Etc. Let me know if you have any questions on the goals.

Commanders, along with the Post Public Relationship Team, you must ADVERTISE scheduled Post events in a convenient and timely manner. Establish a sense of community awareness about the Post, the physical location, and the Post's positive contributions. Instill a willingness in the community to help boost Post membership through poster and countertop displays, public-service announcements, and local advertising buyers, etc. Don't let your Post be the best kept secret in the Community.

Initially I hope you plan a Membership Drive Open House at your Post for September, to remember or celebrate Legion Birthday, POW/MIA day, 9/11, etc. if you did, thank you. Now plan for another open house in the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> week of October. Look at the Unpaid Members listing of your Post from 2013, 2014 and 2015, write them, ask them down to the Open House, and ensure your membership team greet them and speak with them. Find out why they did not renew. To obtain a listing of those members go to MyLegion.org for this listing.

When you plan these open houses, also incorporate an American Legion Program as well. Do a Blood Drive, Indicate you are raising funds for Boy/Girl State, get the Boy Scouts involve, or celebrate a winning season of the American Legion Baseball Team Your Post sponsor. By planning ahead for Open House you can show off the Programs your Post is involved with. Use the informative flyers in the membership CD that is available from your District and/or Area Commanders. If you need assistance in obtaining a membership CD, please contact me directly. Focus your efforts on 'Legion PRIDE' as you and your membership team work: Public Relations, Implement, Develop, Educate!

Should you have any questions, please contact me at [jerry.brandt@comcast.net](mailto:jerry.brandt@comcast.net) or [membership@floridalegion.org](mailto:membership@floridalegion.org) (please write membership on the subject line.). I work for you and it is my honor to assist Veterans helping Veterans. It is what we do!

Thank you for being a Florida Legionnaire.

Yours in Service

**Jerry Brandt**  
*Membership Chairman*





**Tom Gora**  
*Department Sergeant-at-Arms*  
 Sgt-at-Arms@legionmail.org



***“You will guard especially against the loss of one of The American Legion’s greater possessions, our deep and abiding spirit of comradeship.”***

Those words are from the oath of office for the Sgt.-At-Arms, a tremendous responsibility! In reality, this a responsibility of every single Legionnaire. Sergeants-At-Arms across the Department are among some of our most dedicated Legionnaires, serving as great ambassadors for this organization! The Sgt.-at-Arms is often the first post officer new members have significant contact with and the relationship between post members and the Sgt.-At-Arms is critical to the education and indoctrination of new members. In every issue of the ‘LINK’ I will publish an article concerning American Legion protocols and I start the year with the “general instructions,” first adopted by The American Legion in 1921, and still current today.

1. The ceremonial services of The American Legion must be conducted with the solemnity befitting the dignity of this organization.
2. No one shall be admitted during opening, initiation or closing ceremonies of a meeting.
3. Comrades shall be careful never to pass between the flags and the station of the commander.
4. A member entering the hall after the meeting has begun shall advance to the center of the room, salute the colors and be seated.
5. Any member desiring to be excused from the hall while the meeting is in progress – except during a prayer, the obligation or period of silence – shall advance to the center of the room, salute the colors and leave.
6. It shall be the duty of each officer to memorize that portion of the ritual assigned to that particular office, and the printed ritual should not be read during any ceremony.
7. The national colors and post flag, when in position, should be in position at either side and just in advance of the commander’s station. The national colors are on the right of the commander and the post colors on the left when facing the audience, even though the commander is on a platform and the flags are posted on the ground level.
8. Each officer shall be equipped with the official overseas cap and with the proper official badge of the respective office. Such badges may be purchased in sets by the post or singly by the individual officer through Emblem Sales.
9. Legionnaires standing in silent tribute in memory of departed comrades during meetings or ceremonies will face the U.S. flag. According to Resolution No. 33, passed by the National Executive Committee in May 1971, The American Legion “shall, at functions within Legion buildings and at all levels, cease all activities whatsoever” for a period of 60 seconds as a tribute to comrades who have passed on and in honor of those now serving. The minute of silence shall be preceded by an appropriate announcement and message, if desired.
10. In addressing an officer of The American Legion, preface the title with the word “Comrade.”

While at the National Convention I will observe and study the Color Guard competition so that we have a “top-notch” competition at our 2016 Department convention. Thank you to all Legionnaires for providing me the **honor** to serve you as the Department of Florida Sergeant-at-Arms for 2015-2016. A special thank you to my predecessor, Bill Hoppner, for his comradeship, all the materials and the valued advice he has provided me.

**What is ALEI?** The acronym stands for American Legion Extension Institute. This is a great history course about how The American Legion was formed and also provides basic information on development of The American Legion ‘Four Pillars.’ This 4 hour training session is open to all members of The American Legion Family. The class includes a power point presentation, several entertaining vintage videos, and interactive discussion. Throw in some popcorn and we will have a nice training session! It should be a goal of at least every officer to take this course, and you should graduate from ALEI before you think of becoming a district or department level officer. There is a test required to complete the course and each ALEI graduate will earn a lapel/hat pin and certificate from The American Legion after graduation. If tests worry you, relax, this one is as “open book” as a test can be. I would ask that if a post, district, or area determines they would like to schedule the class to notify me at [sgt-at-arms@legionmail.org](mailto:sgt-at-arms@legionmail.org). If I provide the course locally for you there is a small fee to pay for the graduation certificate and hat/lapel pin. Please note that ALEI is also available as an on-line course from The American Legion, you can take it there anytime. Just remember, you can’t ask an instructor like me questions when taking the on-line course. The off-line course will also be provided at the Department Fall Conference 2015 and the Department Annual Convention in June 2016.

Congratulations to the 48 members who graduated from ALEI at the 2015 Department Convention! Your certificates and pins will come directly to you from The American Legion. A special thanks to Nancy Thomas for assisting with this class.



## FALL CONFERENCE—November 12-15th

Fall Conference held at the Hilton, Walt Disney World is sure to be a great experience for first time attendees as well as seasoned officers. With the professional staff at the Hilton, along with your Department Headquarters team, our goal is to make Conference a successful and enjoyable experience.

Each year the Fall Conference is geared toward the needs of our members and officers. As a Department staff we look forward to your participation and insight into making each aspect of conference a value for you and the members of local posts you are representing.

**For more information, visit the Department Website:  
[Www.floridalegion.org](http://www.floridalegion.org)**



**Steve Newman**  
*Department Chaplain*  
[Chaplain@floridalegion.org](mailto:Chaplain@floridalegion.org)

Chaplain Steve's Spiritual Corner:

Greetings and a very big hello to all you American Legion Family members. I am truly honored and feel very blessed that I will be your department chaplain for the upcoming year. All of you have been truly supportive and I am ready to serve you to the best of my abilities once again. As I have previously said I plan to continue my chaplain training especially to those couple of districts which I have not had a chance to visit. I also plan on updating my department prayer book with new prayers that I will have for distribution to those who would like to

have a copy. I know that with god's blessing this will be a very exciting year full of hope and wonderful times. God is our strength and wisdom. Without god our lives would be more incomplete and less promising. With God's grace many things our possible in our daily and busy lives. All we have to do is ask for it. Many people wonder where we can find God. God is with us, in us, and with all our neighbors. God is everywhere. God is with us always. He is with us to guide us through the good times and the difficult ones. All we have to do is ask for his guidance, love, and understanding. Remember with god all things are possible. I would like to talk a little on mentoring. Mentoring is an important function in our daily lives. There are many mentors who surround us and impact our daily lives. We all need and can use a few good mentors. Mentoring is an art and it needs both time and energy. Counseling and setting a good example is a form of mentoring. We can all learn something new and valuable each and every day of our lives. In the American Legion we have some great mentors who take time to coach, lead, and set great examples for our fellow legionnaires. Mentoring is a blessing indeed for the ones who give it and the ones who receive it. Have a blessed day every day.

**Steve Newman**  
*Department Chaplain*



### THANKS FOR VISITING PROJECT VET:RELIEF!

Many of you seized the opportunity to learn more about PROJECT: VetRelief at The American Legion, Department of Florida Annual Department Convention...thanks for joining us!

PROJECT: VetRelief's Convention Successes:

- 87 VetRelief Advocates trained during two classes
- 56 attendees learned the Keys to Fundraising
- 100% positive feedback from class attendees
- Nearly \$1,000 in merchandise sold
- Distributed nearly 1,000 packets of information
- Gave out more than 8,000 brochures
- Signed up 70+ individuals for the PROJECT: VetRelief Bulletin
- Noted a dramatic increase in awareness of PROJECT: VetRelief
- Awarded the first ever Meritorious Service Award
- Provided recognition & awareness during General Sessions



If you missed the chance to participate in training, don't worry! Additional classes will be offered at Fall Conference. Until then, feel free to order informational material and stay tuned for more details.



### Shelli Romeu

*Department Historian/100th Anniversary Chair*  
[historian@legionmail.org](mailto:historian@legionmail.org)

It has been quite a year, and I truly appreciate your support and confidence in re-electing me as your Department Historian for this coming year. It is a privilege to serve you – and I am committed to doing so in the best way possible. The Convention offered me an opportunity to meet more of you and to provide two workshop classes on the History Books and Centennial. I will be doing another workshop at the Fall Conference, and I want to make this more relative to your needs/questions/etc. Please send me any feedback and suggestions – even if negative, we can turn it into a positive to benefit everyone. The History Book submissions this year were fantastic – I am so inspired by the Historians out there and how they capture their Post and ALR Chapter histories! It was really a challenge judging the contest entries because they were all amazing and there were 16 of them!

Congratulations again to Remona Knight (Post 8) – her Post Yearbook will be entered into the National Contest; and also to John Gibbons (Post 347) runner-up. Another round of congratulations to our Open category winners: 1<sup>st</sup> - Pete Romaniello (Post 17), runner-up – Chuck Andrews (Post 237); 1<sup>st</sup> – Dawn Hanner (ALR 117), and runner-up Rebecca Peters (ALR 392). I thank every Historian who submitted their yearbooks to this contest - your Post or Chapter benefits greatly from your dedication of time and effort in preserving these important memories and histories. I will be providing feedback to each of the entries that will give suggestions on how to improve minor details to meet the Contest criteria – but always remember that this is YOUR History book and there is absolutely no right or wrong way to capture this as long as you are recording history or memories in the manner that is meaningful to your Post or Chapter and will be remarkable for future members to gain insight from. Logistic note: if you did not pick up your entry, this will be mailed to you by Department (BIG thanks to Elizabeth! She is incredible!) I will say this fully knowing that it means more work for myself (LOL) – but it would be great to have more History Book Contest entries at the next Convention in 2016. I'm up for the challenge... are you? If you had the chance to look at the Centennial Sites' status display in the Emblem Sales at Convention you saw a quick view of your Post's site. We are quickly approaching our 100-year Anniversary so we need more Posts updated on this site to share and be part of our Florida Legion History. History is not just the past, it is today, and it is tomorrow - it is never ending, but always has value. I have lots of ideas for Florida's Centennial and I am seeking your assistance in forming a "Centennial Committee" so we can brainstorm and get Florida prepared for a big celebration on our 100<sup>th</sup>! Please contact me if you would like to be part of this committee – Florida needs YOU to make this successful. We are Team Florida, let Florida lead the way!

### Shelli Romeu

*Department Historian/100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Chair*

## **James K. Roberts, III**

*SAL Advisory Committee Chairman*

[SAL@legionmail.org](mailto:SAL@legionmail.org)



I would like to thank Department Commander Jim Ramos for appointing me to serve this year as the Department SAL Advisor. I am truly humbled and honored to serve in this capacity as it is the first time that an S.A.L. member has held this position. Thank you Commander.

You all know all too well that your Sons here in Florida continue to work hard and they do. Last year your Sons with 17,165 members contributed over \$902,000 and also volunteered over 275,000 hours to the various programs of The American Legion Family, their local communities and back to The American Legion. These numbers are absolutely outstanding with only 74 reports turned in. 74 out of 181 active Squadrons in Florida. Just imagine what those numbers would be if all of 181 Squadrons reported. These numbers could easily be doubled.

This is where a good Legion Advisor or Liaison comes in to support the Sons and give them guidance based on their experience as a member of The American Legion. A good advisor is one that has an interest in the Sons and can represent and be the voice of the Sons to The American Legion Executive Committee and General Membership and at each level. Trust me when I say that this can help strengthen The American Legion Family in your post.

One of the things I would like to accomplish this year is to bring the advisor's from across the state together. It has been a really long time since the S.A.L. Advisors and Liaisons have had an opportunity to get together. I have been working with Department Commander Ramos to schedule an Advisor's Course and Meeting during the upcoming Fall Conference in Orlando. We are working to hold this session on Friday, November 13<sup>th</sup> from 1:00pm to 3:00pm. This will be the very first delivery of the SAL Advisor's Course (FSCS-04) which was created by the Detachment Member Training & Development Committee.

This training session is for those members that have been appointed to serve or have an interest in serving as an Advisor or Liaison to the Sons of The American Legion at the Post, District or Area level. This session is intended to give those Legionnaires an overview of the Sons of The American Legion, overview of the responsibilities of the S.A.L. Advisor/Liaison and an opportunity to have an informal roundtable discussion with Detachment Leadership and the Department S.A.L. Advisor.

The room assignment will be published as we get closer to the Fall Conference. If you are interested in attending this training session and meeting please register on line at the Sons of The American Legion Website at [www.floridalegion.org/sons](http://www.floridalegion.org/sons). On the homepage there is a link to the on line registration form. I hope to see you there.

Thanks again for this opportunity and I look forward to working this year with the best Legion Family in the country...The Florida American Legion Family.

Honoring All Who Serve with Pride,

**James K. Roberts, III**

*SAL Advisory Committee Chairman*





## Jim Day

*ALR Chairman*

[legionriders@legionmail.org](mailto:legionriders@legionmail.org)

I cannot say thank you enough for the warm welcome at the 2015 Florida Convention. I consider this appointment by Commander Ramos both an honor and a privilege. I am humbled that I have been entrusted with the responsibility of Chairman for the Florida American Legion Riders. I truly believe the ALR is the glue that binds the Legion Family together. This was proven at this year's Convention, while visiting with Commander Ramos in his hospitality suite it was brought to the attention of the Commander that a small, new college Post had overlooked paying fees, preventing the delegates from voting. Within minutes ALR members passed around a hat and came up with the funds. It was absolutely amazing.

A believe strongly in the Legion Family. My wife and both daughters are American Legion Auxiliary members and my grandsons are members of the Sons of the American Legion. In addition my wife and youngest daughter are both motorcycle owner/operators and Legion Riders.

The plan for this year is simple. I will be working closely with Vice Chairman Mike Kirchoff, the Area Chairman, and the District Chairman to "tighten the spokes and true up the wheel". We are going to first work on building communication and getting information out. This will be accomplished by the new online Officer report form. Next we have 3 big Department ALR Events, the 1st Project Vet Relief Round Robin, the 2016 In-State Legacy ride and the 2016 ALR Rally. We have streamlined the End of Year Report to a Quarterly report, which is also submitted online.

I had the privilege of attending the SMART advanced rider training class held by the Osceola Sheriff Office in August. Although the course is very challenging, it is also very rewarding. I quickly learned that as the officers say "anyone can ride in a straight line, but can you handle your bike in a slow speed maneuver"? We have partnered with the program to hold a special class just for ALR this October. Also, we will have a day full of classes for general operation of a chapter and safety classes.

[http://www.osceolasheriff.org/sheriff/113-24255-0/smart\\_motorcycle\\_safety\\_course.cfm](http://www.osceolasheriff.org/sheriff/113-24255-0/smart_motorcycle_safety_course.cfm)

I have had meetings with the Northern, Southern, Eastern and Central Area Chairman since July, and I am overwhelmed with the support from each area. I will getting to the Western the end of September.

I look forward to meeting members and working hard building the Florida ALR.

**Jim Day**

*ALR Chairman*



## Al "Gunner" Dudley

*Homeless Veterans Chairman*

[HomelessVets@legionmail.org](mailto:HomelessVets@legionmail.org)

I want to thank everyone who gives their time and effort towards ending homelessness amongst our veterans. If anyone is in need of supplies, contact me to arrange a date and time to pick them up! Following is a list of supplies available for Stand Downs: ☐ ☐ First Aid Kits, Bug Spray, Sanitary Wipes, Sanitary Lotion, Sun Screen, Blankets, A-Pack Meals, Sleeping Bags, Hygiene Kits which contain shampoo, soap, razor, comb, lip balm, toothbrush and toothpaste. ☐ ☐ Upcoming Stand Downs: Oct. 2-4th Hudson Fl. Oct. 3rd North Brevard, Titusville, Fl. And again, thank you for the voodoo that you do!

**Al "Gunner" Dudley—Past Dept. Commander 2012-13**

*Homeless Veterans Chairman*

**"WORLD'S LARGEST VETERANS ORGANIZATION"  
"EVERY DAY IS VETERAN'S DAY"**



## **Dennis Bruland**

*VA Entitlements Chairman*

[Veteransbenefits@legionmail.org](mailto:Veteransbenefits@legionmail.org)

Before selecting a service officer, you, the veteran, must have an idea what a service officer is and isn't. First things first, a County Service Officer or a Post Service Officer is not a representative of the VA. Service Officers are a veterans' advocate and it doesn't matter between County Service Officers or Organizational Service Officers (DAV, VFW, American Legion, VVA etc.). At the end of the day every veterans service advocate desires to help each veteran receive all the individual benefits and opportunities earned by honorable military service to this country. In its most basic form, a veteran's advocate is someone who cares about veterans and supports their causes.

With respect to the claims process through the Department of Veterans Affairs, the veterans advocate takes a greater role and responsibility; it's the advocate's obligation to present the veteran and his or her claim in the most concise, accurate and complete manner to give the VA rating officer a complete package on which to base a decision.

The service officer must work directly with the veteran or family to identify all the possible benefits the claimant may be entitled. This often involves hours of interviewing and analysis of medical and military records to ascertain the status of the veteran's health or financial situation.

However the role of the Service Officer doesn't start with the veteran walking through the door. It begins long before, in our attempts to educate the public and veterans on services we offer and the benefits they have earned. Although the veteran may realize how military service ultimately affected their health, talking about wounds or injuries has never been something people hide. For example, when a veteran received compensation for Agent Orange exposure and resulting conditions caused by that exposure, every veteran he runs across is quickly informed of conditions that may be caused by exposure or service, and urged to follow the appropriate claim. In contrast, financial status or well-being is not often discussed outside the family. This coupled with an overwhelming pride not to take advantage of programs such as welfare brings about relative obscurity of the VA pension benefits.

Once a veteran or his family member comes to a Service Officer for assistance, it is the service officer's responsibility to determine eligibility for compensation, pension or other benefits through the VA. Like our entire counterparts throughout the nation, we must develop the case, review the pertinent information, and prepare a claim for the veteran to submit. We are often able to facilitate the compilation of additional information when it is necessary, thereby limiting the longer waiting times. In addition, state service officers, receive a complimentary copy of the notice of decision for their records, so they can be proactive in reviewing the decision and determining a course of action before the veteran has received the same letter.

### **Problems for Service Officers:**

**Claims jumping:** Service Officers inherit many claims that he/she did not initially develop and did not submit to the VA. This is often more time consuming than the establishment and development of the case from the beginning. Jumping from Service Office to Service Officer usually gets you into more trouble, causes more delays and confusion because the Service officer does not have a clear picture of the case from the beginning and might resubmit information that is unnecessary for the case.

### **Worthless Claims:**

There are approximately 800,000 working claims across the United States. Many of these claims are what Service Officers call worthless claims. Worthless claims are those that have NO MERIT, no evidence of a service connection and in most cases is wishful thinking on the part of the veteran. These claims are some of the problem within VA creating major back log issues.

Next month I will start discussing the claims process and in following months I will discuss other benefits available to veterans.

**Dennis Bruland**  
*VA Entitlements Chairman*





**Donna Artola**  
*Blood Donor Chairman*  
**BloodDonor@legionmail.org**

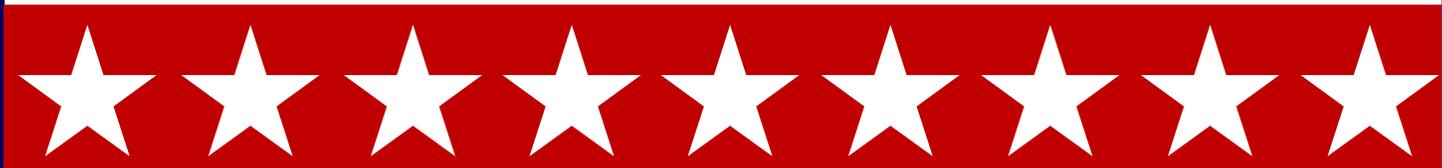
Let me introduce myself, I am Donna Artola, your Legion Blood Chair for Legion year 2015-2016. It was an honor to take this chair when Commander Jim Ramos asked me. I am a US Navy Veteran.

Every Post should have a blood chair, this is one of the easiest chairs to fill. The only thing you have to do is make a phone call to your local blood bank. Let them know you are having an event. They will provide the post with fliers and table tents.

If your members donate blood at a non legion event, they need to let the blood bank know that they want their donation to be credited to the legion post.

If there is anything I can help you out with please contact me, I am here to help you and your post out.

**Donna Artola**  
*Department Blood Chair*



**William "Rick" Johnson**  
*Children & Youth Chairman*  
**CY@legionmail.org**



Hello Legion family. Well it is a New Year and time to get started doing what we do best, our programs. Now is the time to get with the schools and get involved within your communities. Let them know that the Legion is out there and what we can do for them. Halloween and Veterans Day is coming soon and get the coloring books ordered now in time for those special days. Let's not remain a secret out in your communities and let's get visible. Let's remember what the

Children and Youth Pillar stands for. If your Post

or District has a function going on, please let us know so we can get the word out and get participation within the State.

We have a golf tournament planned for September 26<sup>th</sup> 2015 at Post 323 in Lehigh Acres for Children and Youth. The flyer was sent out within the Department and is on the C&Y website. Look forward to seeing everyone there. Let's continue to give our kids a "Square Deal" and continue working the programs. I will be attending the National workshop in September in Indy and will get more information out. Chairman, we have all the handouts that you need for a great year. So until the next article comes out, have fun and remember we are a family and we all have the same goals. Have a great year and most important, have fun.

**William "Rick" Johnson**  
*Children & Youth Chairman*

**Legionnaires Insurance Trust**

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 links.

## Roy Havekost

*Social Media Chairman*

[SocialMedia@legionmail.org](mailto:SocialMedia@legionmail.org)



Greetings Legionnaires;

This will be my second year as chairman for Social Media. Last year the Department of Florida attained about an 86% presence on *Facebook*™. This year I would like to see Florida make 100%, with all Posts in the state having a presence.

I want to refer all District Commanders to review the official American Legion District/ County Commanders Guide, particularly the sections regarding creating a *Facebook*™ page and appointing a social media chairman. This also needs to be done at all individual Posts to connect members from the Post level to District and Department.

This past year, Social Media Awards were presented at convention and we will again present awards this year, not only for presence but also for group and page membership. As Department Chairman, I will again ask that each Post and District have their individual chairperson for social media, email me with the *Facebook*™ url for all pages or groups. Send the email to [socialmedia@legionmail.org](mailto:socialmedia@legionmail.org). As the year progresses, I will be posting the status of presence by district in the Legion Link publications.

The 2014-2015 award recipients were:

1. The 5<sup>th</sup> District with over 152% *Facebook*™ presence, with 4 district pages ie Legion, Auxiliary, SAL and Riders + a 100% Post presence for Legion pages, with Auxiliary, SAL and Rider presence adding to the overall percentage.
2. The 12<sup>th</sup> District with over 108% *Facebook*™ presence, with 3 district pages ie Legion, Auxiliary and Riders + a 78% Post presence for Legion pages, with Auxiliary, SAL and Rider presence adding to the overall percentage.

These were the top two districts in the state this past year.

3. Also presented with an award for best event advertising was Post 303 Bonita Springs, 13<sup>th</sup> District.

I am planning on revising the course content for the social media training for the fall conference. If your Post or District still doesn't have a presence on *Facebook*™ I would strongly recommend you attend this class. New Social Media Chairperson(s) should also attend. I will be emailing all district commanders in the near future with a reminder to appoint social media chairperson(s) not only in the district but also at the Post level.

## Roy Havekost

*Social Media Chairman*



## Brian "Taz" Gehling

*Law & Order Chairman*

[LawOrder@legionmail.org](mailto:LawOrder@legionmail.org)

First, I would like to thank Commander Ramos for the chance to serve as your Department Law & Order Chairman for this year. I want to thank Tom Gora for his dedication and hard work that he had done while serving as the Law & Order Chairman for the past several years. I have some big shoes to fill and I hope I can live up to them.

Secondly, I would like to remind all the posts that the Law & Order program is a great program to have in your post. It builds relationships with your local police and fire departments. Department, and myself, are here to help. Please do not to hesitate to contact myself or department if you have any questions or concerns.

**Brian "Taz" Gehling**  
*Law & Order Chairman*



## Troy Horsley

*School Awards Chairman*

[SchoolMedals@legionmail.org](mailto:SchoolMedals@legionmail.org)

Greetings to my fellow Legionnaires. My name is Troy Horsley and I have been selected to be the School Awards Chairman for 2015/2016. I am out of Jacksonville Florida in the mighty fifth district and am here to help make this program a priority for each of the posts around the state. Hopefully by now, all of our District Commanders and Post Commanders have selected their representatives for school awards. This is a program that provides great returns for our country as well as the American Legion. If you have been selected, please take the time to get out and see what schools are in your area and start assigning posts to schools in your respective district.

This medal is *the highest honor awarded American youth by The American Legion*. It is a medal that proclaims to the world that this boy or girl is the kind of young person we believe worthy of such an honor. The recipients (one boy and one girl) are selected from the graduating class of elementary, junior high or middle schools, senior high schools and college. In schools where there are many graduates or where students are grouped (such as sixth grade centers or special interest schools), special arrangements may be made to cover the situation. This is up to the discretion of the Post Committee in conjunction with the school authorities.

Youth are often awarded for their scholastic achievements, but The American Legion believes they should also be praised when they demonstrate strong qualities of character and good citizenship. That's why, since 1926, the Legion has recognized such students with its School Award Medal Program. Candidates for the award are voted upon by a school's faculty and members of the candidates graduating class through a secret ballot casting. The local Legion post involved with the school makes the final selection upon receiving recommendation from students and faculty. Each awardee receives a certificate and a medal with the six qualities listed on the face of the medal, as the back bears the Marine Corps motto, "Semper Fidelis" ("always faithful").

The program's success for the past 90 years has been prominent. In its first year, 145 students received medals and in 2009, more than 30,000 were awarded medals. And every year the department with the strongest activity in the School Award Medal Program receives the Ralph T. O'Neil Education Trophy, named for The American Legion's 1930 national commander.

In 1921, the Department of Pennsylvania created the School Award Medal Program for the purpose of instilling character and helping perpetuate the ideals of Americanism among youth. Those who receive a medal must exemplify six qualities that define character:

**Courage** - Bravery in the face of opposition and danger; determination and force to do right without public applause and regardless of personal advantage: a quality of the intellect.

**Honor** - Highly-developed moral character; moral excellence; strength and stability of character; high standards of conduct; devotion to duty; adherence to truth; keen sense of what is right; practice of clean speech and thoughts.

**Leadership** - Ability to lead and to accomplish through group action; ability to work in harmony and in unison with other leaders in accomplishing group results; desire and ability to fill the voids in the lives of others caused by timidity, illness and other handicaps.

**Patriotism** - An ideal of loyal Americanism, religious tolerance, righteous freedom and the willingness to defend our Flag against all enemies - foreign and domestic.

**Scholarship** - Attainments in school studies; quality of school work reflecting the fine traits of industry; perseverance; efficiency and intelligence,

**Service** - Kindliness; unselfishness; fellowship; protection of the weak; promotion of the interests and the welfare of associates and constructive aid for the support of schools and community.

Now is the time to start to get organized and approach the guidance counselors and school principals in your area. Introduce to yourself and let them know what post you are from and tell them about the School Awards program. This is a great opportunity for teachers to recognize students with these admirable qualities and gives them someone to look for to recognize during the school year. You may even find the teacher, counselor, or principal you are talking to may be a fellow veteran. If you are in need of assistance please feel free to contact me.

**Troy Horsley**

*School Medals Chairman*



**Loretta Young**  
*ROTC/Shooting Sports Chairman*  
[ShootingSports@legionmail.org](mailto:ShootingSports@legionmail.org)

It is now the beginning of another school year and our ROTC/JROTC/Shooting Sports Program will be getting underway. It's now time for the Post Chairmen to meet with the Instructors and offer to support our Cadets. Personal contact is a key to meet and plan on giving them the guidelines to our programs for the coming year. The first events are usually the shooting sports and the application is posted online by National by the fall. Registration and payment is all online as of last year. Cost is only \$10 per shooter. This is an excellent program that teaches skill and promotes gun safety. It also teaches concentration and self reliance and enhances individual self-esteem. The schools who already have a marksmanship program in place is the easiest way to support our National Postal Target Program but not the only way to support a team. It

could also be a team from a 4-H Club or Boy Scout Troop or other organization that has a youth program. The post can contact the American Legion National Headquarters, Attn: Shooting Sports, P. O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN, 46206 or call: 317-630-1200 and ask for a Junior Shooting Sports Brochure to fill out the "Affiliation Form" or it is available online. We are still in need of knowing what posts are supporting the schools in your area. Please advise either the Department or myself with this information. It would be greatly appreciated.

I would like to thank our Department Commander Jim Ramos for allowing me to be able to chair this most worthy program for our youth. Many thanks to all of you who support the youth of our future.

**Loretta Young**  
*ROTC/Shooting Sports Chairman*

**Deborah Wheeler**  
*Women Veterans Chairman*  
[womenveterans@legionmail.org](mailto:womenveterans@legionmail.org)

It is with great Legion Pride I am writing this article. The Women Veteran Chair is a great honor in which I will strive to make the Department of Florida proud. This a very new position and we are trailblazers in this area. After research I found that WE are the only Department in the top 10 that have such a program so I would like to take this opportunity to make this a pilot program that other Departments will want to emulate. We can only do this by changing our way of thinking. Currently there are over 2.5 million women veterans and the American Legion only has a small percentage of this total as members. This is a great opportunity to increase our membership but we have to think outside the box, we have to change the way a woman veteran is treated. 1<sup>st</sup> and foremost is a female veteran entering a local post and the first person they encounter asks "Can I help you?" and completely by instinct that answer is "here is an application for the Auxiliary", you have lost a potential new member and most likely never get that member again, they have been insulted. To be perfectly honest this happened to me. Education is the key, instruct your officers, lounge staff and even your members that we welcome and encourage all members to join the American Legion and your local post. If each post would attempt to recruit at least one sister the numbers will tell the truth. Once you recruit them tell them all about the American Legion and our many programs, we will benefit from the contribution. Again education is the key we can invite them to your next meeting and in the future give them an opportunity to assist in a committee, you will not be sorry.

Statistically women veterans have higher rates of family homelessness, suicide, unemployment, PTSD (MST) and divorce than that of our male veterans and therefore need help for claims and assistance. Again educate your service officers if they have a female veteran who may feel more comfortable with a woman find one!! I am encouraging each District to have at least one Woman Service Officer who will be of assistance to help. Secondly if each District would have a Women's Veteran Chairperson that would be wonderful!! Please try to find the suitable person asap send their contact info to me asap so I can help them before your 1<sup>st</sup> District meeting.

Lastly try to remember each female veteran you encounter is most likely someone's mother, grandmother, sister, aunt, etc. Try to treat them with the respect you would give your own relative. We are in 2015-2016 and we are all veterans regardless of sex. We are brothers and sisters in arms. Do not hesitate to call me I am here to serve the American Legion!!

**Deborah Wheeler**  
*Women Veterans Chairman*





**Diane Schmidt**  
*Public Relations Chairman*  
**PublicRelations@legionmail.org**

What I know for sure is that many Posts do not get enough media coverage. How many times have you said to yourself: "I would have gone if I had known" or even "The event was last week and I just learned about it today!" It takes planning so right now I want you to map out the rest of the year on a calendar and together we can make a difference. Publicity is free; by

following these "tips" you might just open the door for some great P.R. You could be rewarded with new members, community support and even donations.

Tip #1 is the **event announcement** through the TV Community Events Calendar on local stations, day by day/week blurb in local newspaper, and/or voice overs on radio. TV and radio need at least 30 days' notice and newspapers need 2 weeks' notice. They are looking for "fillers" and will accommodate you if possible. They can't promise anything. They always need articles for Memorial Day and Veterans Day. Remember this is free. To assist in this process, I will personally assist you and to do this I need 5 days' notice on top of the media requirement. I need the following: what, when, where, time, who benefits, other if it applies such as "free parking," "children welcome," contact name and phone number and if known the media name/call number. Advise me if you want a photographer. Remember the announcement must be correct, concise and to the point.

Tip #2 is the **article**. It can be about your Post, an outstanding Legionnaire, Veterans issues, the list is endless. If you are lucky, you can get an article about an event. A local newspaper did a full page write up with photos of an event and the result was standing room only. To start this process, I want you to think of 3-4 words that describe your Post. How is your Post different from others? What makes your Post special? Good examples are: "We have WiFi," "We fight for Veterans," "Local Emergency Shelter." You don't write the article; just provide filler information for the actual writer. The article may appear before or after the event; so remember to provide information on future events.

The time is now to let others know about what you are doing to support Veterans. Send your information to me at [publicrelations@legion.org](mailto:publicrelations@legion.org). Always leave a contact name and phone number and the best time to return your call.

**Diane Schmidt**  
*Public Relations Chairman*

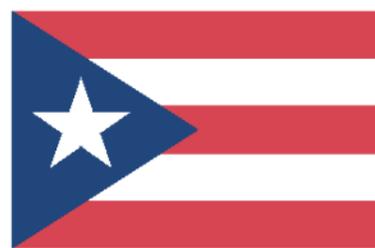
District/ Area	Commander	Goal	Rcvd	% of Goal
2	W. Jackson	1,337	732	54.75
4	K. Deschamps	3,837	2,057	53.61
9	J. Tewes	3,997	2,062	51.59
16	J. Bell	12,007	6,014	50.09
6	D. Bass	12,137	6,057	49.91
1	C. Johann	6,149	3,063	49.81
15	G. Hamblin	5,378	2,661	49.48
13	M. Adcock	9,774	4,692	48.01
8	D. Walsh	8,149	3,910	47.98
12	R. Fashano	9,203	4,392	47.72
14	G. Decker	2,963	1,397	47.15
17	B. Howe	4,076	1,913	46.93
5	L. Dukes	8,074	3,786	46.89
7	I. Anderson	3,973	1,759	44.27
11	A. Bruce	3,798	1,665	43.84
3	H. Perry	1,799	749	41.63
Western	M. Kirchoff	7,486	3,795	50.70
Eastern	T. Biddle	21,340	10,449	48.96
Central	E. Butts	21,358	10,434	48.85
SW	D. Deierlein	17,923	8,602	47.99
North- ern	J. Durden	17,786	8,505	47.82
South- ern	J. Motes	10,758	5,124	47.63



**Jesse Figueroa**  
 12th District Adjutant  
[adjutant@fal12thdistrict.org](mailto:adjutant@fal12thdistrict.org)

It is now a new year, new beginning with our programs! The 12<sup>th</sup> District has progressed very well with its installations so far. My challenge this year is the success in Leadership as stated in the Army Values of Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity and Personal Courage - **LDRSHIP**. An informal rap session took place on Tuesday August 18<sup>th</sup>, 2015 at the American Legion Post 189 in Sebastian with a great turnout.

The 12<sup>th</sup> District Staff has provided lots of brainstorming and many ways to communicate and assist Posts on anything. I take membership very seriously, especially the dues increase that takes effect on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016. Please renew now before December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2015. If you have questions or concerns on membership, then please feel free to contact Bruce Thurber, 12<sup>th</sup> District Vice Commander and Membership Chairman at (321) 750-1067 or at [meenkittypalmbay@aol.com](mailto:meenkittypalmbay@aol.com) and he will assist you. I also have the opportunity to serve on the Department Baseball Committee to support the State Baseball Tournament and Championship Game from July 29<sup>th</sup> to August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2015 at Tradition Field in Port St. Lucie. I'm ready to head out to the 97<sup>th</sup> Annual National Convention takes place from August 29<sup>th</sup> to September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015 in Baltimore, Maryland to reunite with the entire American Legion Family. The 2016 Florida American Legion College takes place at Department Headquarters from September 10<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup>. Have a happy and safe Labor Day Weekend.



## Florida American Legion Specialty License Plate

**Congratulations!** The Department of Florida has reached the 1,000 pre-sale of the specialty license plates! Those who preordered should have been notified by the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (FLDHSMV). Plates are now in all local Tax Collector's Offices, for \$35.00. Proceeds from the plate will go towards the programs of The American Legion, Department of Florida. Help support our programs and get your plate today!



**For more information, visit the Department Website:  
[www.floridalegion.org](http://www.floridalegion.org)**



One year ago American Legion Post 219, Fruitland Park started U.S. Naval Sea Cadet program know as Thomas R. Norris Battalion.

On August 16<sup>th</sup> we had our first Annual Awards Ceremony. In that 1 year we have 18 Cadets join the program. They meet one weekend a month at the Post to go through their training. One of the highlights of their year was their Honor Guard Presenting The Colors at the Tampa Bay Baseball game in Tampa.

This program could not have been made possible without the volunteers of the Post. Member LTJG Rob Robbins and his staff have devoted countless hours to make sure this program was a success and the PRIDE of the Post. Also all the parents of the Cadets have shown great support and pride in these Cadets. When I attended the Awards Ceremony several parents talked to me about how grateful they were for what the Post was doing for their child.

We had several Distinguished Guests from the Navy, National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution and all the Parents.

Two of the many awards that were given out, one of which was presented by Peggie Shore of the DAR to SN Matthew Largent for Outstanding Cadet and the other one was presented by Mike Motko, President of the Central Floirda Council, Navy League of The United States to SN Sean Hicks, Navy League Youth Medal which is their highest award.

Post 219 has submitted a Resolution which was passed at the Department Convention and forwarded to National for approval at the National Convention "To establish The American Legion Patriotism Award for all American Legion Posts to Award to selected Cadets

If any Post is interested in this program please contact Rob Robbins at email: [rrob.13@comcast.net](mailto:rrob.13@comcast.net)

Source: Warren Post, Finance Chairman





**Kenneth Nichols**  
*Cracker Trail Chairman*

The Cracker Trail is a timed skill competition hosted by The American Legion, Department of Florida. The "Cracker Trail" theme was inspired from the Florida Cracker Trail when the early cowboys ran their cattle from coast to coast in northern Florida. It is an action-packed weekend that challenges each scout on all they have learned in scouting, leadership, team skills, problem solving, and personal strength.

**We hope to see ya'll on the Trail!**

For more information & to register for the event, please visit:

<http://www.floridalegion.org/programs-services/boy-scouts/cracker-trail/>

Source: *Gulf Stream Council Newsletter, August 2015*



**Joseph McNeil, Jr.**  
*Americanism/Oratorical Chairman*  
[Oratorical@legionmail.org](mailto:Oratorical@legionmail.org)

A new year! New dreams! New Challenges, Commander Ramos you have assembled a heralded team of men and women that have the American Legion Department of Florida at heart. We all are excited to meet these challenges and to be a part of your leadership team.

I trust my appointment to both the Americanism and Oratorical chairmanship will leave you with the same persona at the end of our

tenure as you currently possess. Rest assured the level of professionalism displayed by previous chairman will not be diminished but hopefully exceeded.

As we embark upon the New Year, it is essential that we start with a bang. That bang begins with Area, Districts and Post Commanders ensuring their respective organization have a chairman. Whether you are appointed chairman of your respective organization as Oratorical, Boys State, Legion Baseball, Teacher of the Year Awards, Junior Shooting sports or any other chairmanship the Department of Florida America must be informed. Bang! Bang! Bang! Begins with you chairman, let's go to work.

**Joseph McNeil, Jr.**  
*Americanism/Oratorical Chairman*

