



The LEGION LINK

"Lil Leprechaun Fighting For Vets"



Web Site: www.floridalegion.org

E-mail: mail@floridalegion.org

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Joe Magee
Department Commander
commander@floridalegion.org
407.247.5232

Hello Legionnaires,

Here we are again, these articles seem to be coming ways too fast. As I started last month with a congratulatory note to all the Department on reaching our National Membership Goal, we did it again!! It was, indeed, an honor to be able to announce that milestone from the Podium at Fall Conference. I would like to thank all of you who attended. What a great job by the Department Staff putting this event together and a thank you is warranted. I would, also, be remiss if I did not thank our Department Officers for participating in the Leprechaun and Kilt routine. How about Irene's outfit, was that appropriate or not?

Prior to the Fall Conference, some other business was at hand. Beginning the month was a trip to Tallahassee, in connection with one of our newest programs, Florida Youth Law Cadet program. We toured the Florida Highway Patrol Academy, wow what a campus, 1400 acres. I would like to thank Chairman Bob Brewster and all the FHP staff for being so courteous in showing us around and for their enthusiasm of this program.

Next up, the arrival of National Commander Charlie Schmidt and his Aide, Dirk. We toured the Western Area (the Panhandle) from November 2 thru November 8. We were received at 18 Posts, toured the Capital Building, met with the Director of the Florida VA, attended a memorial service at the National Cemetery in

Tallahassee. We toured the Naval Air Museum in Pensacola and were given a guided tour of the Aero Space Academy. What an experience that was. While we were traveling around, we were escorted by the Legion Riders, whom I would like to personally thank for their service and attention to detail in getting us around. Besides thanking the Riders, there are so many Legionnaires, Auxiliary and Sons members to thank in making the National Commander's visit to Florida a success. However, a special thanks to Eastern Area Commander Jim, 1st and 2nd Vice Commanders, James and Chuck for getting it done! I must, also say, there was some great food served and we, also, dined at some fantastic seafood restaurants...Love those oysters!!

Following the Panhandle trip, we attended the Veterans Day Ceremony in Sarasota, which, also, included a parade down Main Street which was lined with hundreds of families. Thank you to Don and Patty Murphy Post 30 for inviting us. The next day we were in Ft. Myers for their Parade. I would like to thank Post 38 for inviting us. We then went to Fall Conference, and then, off to Seminole Post 252 for the Veteran's Thanksgiving dinner. Prior to the dinner, there





DECEMBER 2016

7-11	5th District Visit 🍀
7	Dept Membership Goal 80%
7	Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day
13	National Guard Birthday
15	Legion Link Articles Due
16	Renewal Cut-Off
17	Wreaths Across America
19	Employment Nominations Due
21	First Day of Winter
23	Boys State Reg Fee Deadline
25	Hannukkah/Chanukah
25	Christmas
26-2	Dept Headquarters Closed
26-1	Kwanzaa
31	New Year's Eve
31	Renewal Notice Mailing

🍀 - Commander Joe Magee's Attendance Events are subject to change.

(Commander - Continued)

was a potato peeling chore which we met head on. We peeled 175 lbs of spuds and diced them in little over an hour. Once again, thanks to all who participated. While in Seminole, we made some side trips to Post 104, 273, 158 and the treat at Dunedin Post 275, where we met with Past National Commander, Dale Barnett (visiting family in area). A thank you to the afore mentioned Post Commanders and staff for seeing we we're well received. A special thank you goes out to Past Department President Ruth Proctor for inviting us to her annual 8/40 luncheon.

Back to the business side, please keep up the good work membership wise. Concentrate on your renewals and do what you can to bring in new members. Also, remember donations to COTA (got \$170 dancing with the guys!). Please keep them coming.

The Holiday season is coming, so please be safe, be extremely careful while driving and have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.



Steve Shuga
1st Vice Commander

As we prepare to close out 2016, remember to engage your membership, and remind them that they are requested to renew before the end of the year. As we begin to endure a steady 7 week of family events, giving a gift of membership to The American Legion is a great stocking stuffer.

National Commander Schmidt has requested all Legionnaires to "stop the slide of membership", requesting that each of us recruit one new member. We can do this. We can overcome our membership losses. Remember, membership is everyone's responsibility.

I thank the many Florida Legionnaires who attended our Fall Conference - Nov 18th, 19th, 20th at the Hilton Orlando Lake Buena Vista, Walt Disney World, Orlando. Legionnaires and hotel guests reported seeing Leprechauns appearing throughout the weekend.

I hope your Thanksgiving feast was spectacular. I wish everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. Rekindle that "can do spirit" for our veterans and families. We owe them our gratitude and support, especially during this time of the year. Let's kick off 2017 with a bang and make it the year that overcomes the many obstacles before us. Let's increase our membership, and be ever mindful of our American Legion, its pillars, principles, and programs.



Dianne Boland
2nd Vice Commander

Greetings: For the last few months I have been talking about the Florida Legion College and the American Legion Extension Institute Course (ALEI). I hope you have either taken them already or are at least planning to, in the near future. Now, I want to explain about the training cards that I have been passing out this year.

Last year the current 1st Vice Commander, Steve Shuga, created them. I am going to pass on the description of them that he gave me.

Any type of Legionnaire training qualifies

(2nd Vice Commander - Continued)
whether formal or informal. Legion magazines, newsletters, newspapers, websites, lounge trivia, courses, classes on related topics, training topic of the month discussed at meetings, attendance at Conferences, Conventions, seminars, recruiting events. Think outside the box – we train each other daily and don't realize it.

The card folds into a business card size, designed to be easily tucked away in a wallet or purse. The outside displays the American Legion Logo with the Title "Training Card" and the current Department Commander's Logo and Slogan. (This can be used for The American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary, Sons of The American Legion, and American Legion Riders). The concept is unique, simple and can be very effective.

Inside – the Legionnaire prints their name, Post number, and the Post Training Officer or designee signs the card.

The monthly/quarterly periods are set up and can be marked, colored, signed, etc. to show that some sort of Legionnaire training (formal or informal) has been completed for that particular month/quarter.

At the end of the Quarter, the Post would then provide a list of Legionnaire names (first and last) to The Department Trainer or Designee who would then complete a special certificate signed by the Department Commander and Department Trainer/ Designee.

The certificates would then be sent back to the Post to be presented as Immediate Recognition to the Legionnaire. Remember to list all completed training on your CPR or CPR Addendum. If you don't, nobody will know what you did and how successful your Legionnaires are.

I appreciate the opportunity to serve and support our American Legionnaires and the Family with a simple, effective product that provides a distinctive touch of class. For Duty, Honor, and Country we continue to serve and support each other daily.

"A trained Legionnaire is an educated member of the world's largest veteran service organization who can speak wisely about our American Legion, what we offer, why it is important to belong. This will assist with our membership woes, the need to retain our ranks and the ability to maintain the edge against all other Veteran Service Organizations, foreign or domestic."



(2nd Vice Commander - Continued)

As always, the Florida Department Website www.floridalegion.org and National's Website www.legion.org have a wealth of knowledge about the American Legion, our programs, our history, our people and a whole lot more. When you have the time, you should browse to see what's available.

If you have any comments, questions, concerns, or suggestions I would like to hear from you.



Rick Johnson
3rd Vice Commander

Hello Legionaries. I hope this finds you all well. Well, we are in December and getting ready for the holidays. November was a very busy month. I went to the dedication of the SW

Florida memorial wall in Punta Gorda. It was such a great turnout for a great event. There are only four of these walls in the country and our great state has one of them. They had over 400 bikes there as well to do a rolling thunder which was amazing.

Next was Veterans Day, which I was invited to be the key note speaker in Ft. Pierce and a great time was had by all who attended. Thank you Post 40 for the invite.

Then I attending the Dept. Fall Conference and I hope everyone learned a lot. What did you think of the kilts that we wore? What we do for our Department Commander is a great and we love thinking out side of the box.

For Thanksgiving, I will be on potato peeling patrol at Post 252 to feed the Veterans there. I was there last year and it's a great event that they do every year! As the holidays approach, let's think of all the good reasons why we belong to such a great organization and what we can do to make it better. Let's give the gift that keeps on sharing; "Membership to this great organization".

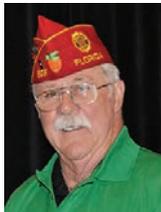
It will start getting busy in 2017 as many of the programs will be kicking in with different cut-off dates and reports to be turned in. If there is anything that I can do, please let me know, I'm very easy to get in touch with.

So, with that being said, I hope everyone has a safe and joyous holiday season and I look forward

(3rd Vice Commander - Continued)

to seeing you on the highways and by-ways out there. If there is a special event going on, please let me know and I will try to be there.

Thank you for all you do and continue to do for our veterans and their families. May God bless you and God bless this great country of ours.



Dennis Boland
NEC

Resolution 14, National Executive Committee, May 2012, designated Shelby, North Carolina as the permanent site for The American Legion Baseball World Series.

Fans set the attendance record for the sixth straight year at the ALBWS with approximately 120,000 paid attendees in 2016. Attendance has increased 40% since the ALBWS moved to Shelby in 2011.

The 2016 ALBWS featured six games broadcast nationally on ESPNU, with the addition of three Sunday games to go along with the semifinals and championship. Over 3000,000 people watched the broadcasts over the three days. The first nine games of the tournament were featured online via ESPN3.

American Legion Baseball received over one million impressions on social media over the course of the 2016 National tournament. The American Legion Baseball website had just shy of one million hits in August.

Since 1925, American Legion Baseball has taught hundreds of thousands of young Americans the importance of sportsmanship, good health and active citizenship.

In 2016 over 67,000 players participated in American Legion baseball with over 3,700 teams having registered.

American Legion Baseball graduates have gone on to great things after leaving the program. In addition to the countless number of players who have gone on to play collegiate and professional baseball, a total of 68 graduates have been inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York. Hall of famers include Johnny Bench, Ryne Sandberg, Wade Boggs,

(NEC - Continued)

Whitey Herzog, Yogi Berra and Reggie Jackson. Current stars such as Albert Pujols, Alex Gordon and Bryce Harper also played American Legion Baseball.



Art Schwabe
NECA

Well, another election has passed. There are winners and losers, some will be happy and some will be sad. We as the American Legion must move on, and work with the winners.

In the U S House of Representatives, 12 seats have changed. We need to go and remind them of the Legion's history from 1919 to now. The Veterans Bureau, later changed to Veterans Administration to the GI Bill in 1946, the Post 911 Bill and to the Removing of the Secretary of the Veterans Administration. The Legion was on the ground floor doing all these things for veterans. The newly elected members must know who we are and what we stand for.

So, I am asking you to go out and let your elected Representative know who THE AMERICAN LEGION OF FLORIDA is, and tell them what we do for our Veterans. In addition to this, we will be making moves in Florida House and Senate as well. We can get more accomplished in the State than we can in US House and Senate. I will be asking for help from all Districts and Area Commanders to seek out State and House Representative to help veterans and the communities we live in. We will be developing 4 to 5 points on a State level that we would like to see passed in Florida.

We are planning a walk on Tallahassee to talk with the House and Senate. This is being planned for Jan or Feb before Bills will be coming to the respective floors for vote. If you want to be part of the action committee let me know.

LEGION LINK
ARTICLE LINK SUBMISSION
NEXT DEADLINE
December 15, 2016





Tom Gora
Sgt-at-Arms

This is the December issue of the Legion Link and I will write about Christmas, but first a few other comments before I "jingle the bells." It was great seeing so many at the 2016 Fall Conference, and thank you to those who attended the Sgt.-at-Arms Class and those who took the ALEI course. One of the other presentations at the Conference was about the Youth Law Cadet Program. As one of the counselors for the Youth Law Cadet Program in 2016, I can verify this is a great program for deserving teenagers who want to learn what law enforcement is truly all about. What a great Christmas present; a trip to the 2017 Law Cadet program, for a lucky teen or two sponsored by your Post to receive this year!

At the 2017 Annual Department Convention, there will be a special category award for color guard units of American Legion Posts that are located within a correctional facility in the state of Florida. These units can compete in either, or both of the competition categories by video. The video file must be compatible with WMV (Windows Media Video), and submitted on a USB flash drive. Deadline for video submission is Thursday, June 1, 2017.

Is there any truth to the rumor that Santa Claus is a veteran? Consider the following. It is rumored he is stationed at a secretive base near the North Pole, and when we do see him he does wear a "uniform," with a nice polished belt, buckle, and boots. His beard might violate regulations, and he may not meet weight standards, but then again he does have isolated duty, only stands inspection once a year, under his "MOS code," he reports for duty one day a year! When he does report for duty, Ho-Ho-Ho must be code for "sir, yes sir." He gathers a great deal of pre-mission intelligence, he always knows who has been naughty or nice before he deploys. On Christmas Eve his reindeer engine powered sled has a flight plan that circles the world making billions of stops in record time! He does that with the help of a flight crew named: Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, Vixen, Comet, Cupid, Donner, and Blitzen. The crew chief, you know the one with the big red nose, Rudolph, is so well known there is even a song written about him we all sing! Santa refuels using only a very special fuel, cookies and milk! Talk about building entry strategy he may have learned in training, forget the doors, he has mastered chimney entry. After

(Sgt-at-Arms - Continued)

thinking of all that, I believe if Santa is a veteran, he would make one heck of a Sergeant-at-Arms in The American Legion. He's always in uniform, gets everything set up for the mission, he monitors who is naughty or nice, he makes everyone feel welcome by his hearty Ho- Ho-Ho, and everyone feels good after they meet him! Santa knows that we as members of this American Legion Family are nice all year, as we continuously strive to do something good for fellow veterans, those in need in our communities, and to support our nation. You see Santa, as The American Legion Family, we are some of your hardest working elves! Ho-Ho-Ho, Merry Christmas!

Christmas has become so commercialized we sometimes forget its true meaning, celebrating the birth of Christ. The celebratory customs observed at Christmas are a mix of Christian and secular themes and origins. Among Christmas tradition are family gatherings, exchange of gifts, cards, sharing a good meal, singing carols, attending the church of your choice, etc., etc. Unfortunately, there are many veterans who don't always have that family to celebrate with. There are troops in faraway places from home, there are homeless veterans sleeping on the streets or in the woods, there are incarcerated veterans, veterans hospitalized or in nursing homes, and veterans suffering from PTSD or TBI, all of whom may face a lonely Christmas. Seek them out, share the Christmas spirit with them, let them know they haven't been forgotten and that they do have family in The American Legion who they can celebrate with. Joy to the world! Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all! Enjoy this joyous time but please be safe while celebrating!



Andrew Nagy
Centennial Chair

This is the kickoff for the American Legion Centennial (100th) Anniversary, with the anniversary in 2019. Department is asking all Area and District Commanders to appoint a member to be part of this committee. We want to start now, as it will take time to accomplish our many goals.

Our first goal is to have 100% participation on the Post level, having an entry on the National and Department Centennial web site for every Post.

(Centennial Chairman - Continued)

We anticipate this will take anywhere between 12 and 24 months. Posts need to have a photo of their Post, the charter date, how the Post was named with a brief history of the named persons, and any major events the Post participates in. We have over 400 Posts but only a hand full have made a full entry on these sites.

We will be doing events in stages. The national kick off is at the National Convention Minneapolis, Minnesota - August 24 - 30, 2018, then the 100th National Convention of The American Legion Indianapolis, Indiana - August 23 - 29, 2019.

I will be available 24/7 to answer questions and give you any help I can.



George Wehrli
Boys State Chair

Thank you to all the District Boys States Chairman who attended our Fall Meetings. It was great to spend time with you.

Post Chairman, please remember the \$450.00 registration fee per Boys Stater is due into Department by December 23, 2016. Your over-quota fees of \$450.00 is also due into Department by December 23, 2016 in a separate Post check.

Around January 15th, 2017, the Boys State Delegate and Alternate packets will be mailed out. Once you have received these packets you may select your Delegates and Alternates. Please make sure the online registrations are received at Department by March 16, 2017. To assist your Boys State Delegates and Alternates with their online registration it is the Post Chairman's responsibility to make sure the registration went through to Department. It is a good idea to have a computer available so that you can witness your Delegates and Alternates complete their registration.

By having online registration, we have less mistakes in spelling of names, addresses, email addresses, etc. Medical waivers must be mailed by the Post Chairman and returned to Department Headquarters by March 16, 2017. District Chairman will work with you at post level to accomplish getting your Boys Staters to



(Boys State Chair - Continued)

Tallahassee on a District Bus or your post may provide other transportation to arrive by 9:30 AM on Sunday June 18, 2017. Your District Chairman will set up the date and location of the Boys State District Orientation. Delegates, Alternates, and parents should attend this meeting. If your Boys Stater is not able to attend the Orientation in your District, please check with another District about available dates. When you need to replace a Delegate, please contact Programs Director, Elizabeth Douglas, at 407-295-2631 ext. 235 and advise the name of the registered Alternate and who they are replacing.

Meeting deadlines is very important to keeping the program moving forward. I am looking forward to working with everyone. Please call or text me with your questions at 386 397-9366.



Sid Damsgard
Children & Youth Chair

This month has seen little reported activity for Children and Youth from any of the Area and Post commanders. District 15 held a picnic for their Boys,

Girls State bus trip but there were no other reports. If there are events planned in your area, please let us know so they may be included in this report next month.

At the Fall Meetings in Indianapolis, Vice President of the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation, Peggy Moon, provided the Children & Youth Committee with an update its 62nd year. Children and Youth has awarded \$618,606 to twenty non-profit organizations for the 2017 calendar year. These grants were determined during the annual meeting of the board of directors for the foundation. Of the twenty grants approved only one had impact in Florida. This grant was awarded to National Meningitis Association Inc. of Fort Myers. The grant of \$29,000 supported project "Get Vaccinated" raising awareness and aid in the distribution of informational CD packages throughout the country. This grant was supported by The Sons of The American Legion. Another grant of note was awarded to The American Legion National Headquarters for their project American Legion National Oratorical Contest 2017. This grant provides half of the funds necessary for awarding academic scholarships to fifty -four youth competing as national finalists.

(Children & Youth Chair - Continued)

The American Legion Endowment Fund which provides funds through TFA (Temporary Financial Assistance) and DSO (District service Officers) schools are Commander Charles Schmidt selections for his Commanders Projects. There were two Sons of the American Legion Squadrons recognized for the endowment contributions. I'm happy to report The Harry W. Colmery award was given to the Detachment of Florida with the highest overall donation of \$7,500 to the Endowment Fund.

To update the Children & Youth programs, during the 2015-2016 program year the National organization approved grants for TFA totaling over \$798,000. This provided for the needs of 1,379 children throughout the nation. For the first three quarters grants totaling \$563,181 have been awarded to 422 families benefiting 992 veteran's children.

Department staff and myself have the C&Y coin design completed and will have them available soon. Contact Ann King Smith C&Y chairperson from the Auxiliary, Kirk Miller from the Sons of The American Legion, or me for details. We hope to have them available before the C&Y picnic in April.



Tom Gora
Legion College

A Florida Legion College Class (FALC) has been scheduled for February 16-18, 2017. The class agenda and application are posted on the Department of Florida web site under the "News and Events" tab. There is a \$200 registration fee for applicants to help cover the cost of lodging, lunches and refreshments.

The Florida Legion College is a leadership class modeled after course recommendations published in The American Legion Administrator's Guide for Department College. The deadline for applications is February 1, 2017. What a great Christmas gift for those up and coming Legion leaders of the future at your Post as well as a trip to the FALC Class of 2017 sponsored by your Post! If you can't make it a Christmas gift, and you are the spouse or significant other of an up and coming Legionnaire, a leader of today or tomorrow, and want to do something nice for him or her, what a great Valentine's Day gift! (Some chairmen will do anything to sell their program!)



Loretta Young
JROTC/Shooting Sports Chair

The focus now for the Jr. Shooting Sports Program has been sent out from the Legion National Organization. The competition began on

November 1, 2016 with a Postal Match; a match in which competitors fire on their home ranges using targets that have been marked for identification. The fired targets are then returned for scoring and ranking for awards.

Annually more than 1,500 individuals and 200 teams participate. The tournament is divided into three rounds of exciting competition. The First and Second Round of the team tournament is a postal match and will be comprised of the top four athletes' individual tournament scores. A club with at least four individuals enters one team. You can have multiple teams. The First and Second Round of the Individual Tournaments are also postal matches, whereas the Third Round of the Individual National Championship is a Shoulder-to-shoulder Competition. The winners in both the Precision and Sporter category will each receive a \$5,000 Scholarship provided in part by the American Legion and the Sons of the Legion.

Additionally, a \$1,000 college scholarship will be awarded to the second-place finishers in both Sporter and Precision categories provided by the American Legion Auxiliary. Teams and Individuals can register online: www.legion.org/shooting/postal-match. I would like our District Chairmen to check with the Posts in your area and get an account of the teams that the Posts are sponsoring. If there are any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. Let's all pull together to make the State of Florida #1 in getting teams registered for a most worthy program. Please advise me of the names of the teams you have in your area. Thanks to all who help make our Department the best in our Youth Programs.



Roy Havekost
Social Media Chair

Well the Christmas, Hanukkah, and Kwanzaa Holiday Season is upon us. On behalf of myself and my entire family I would like to wish all of my Legion Family a happy and healthy Holiday Season and a happy



(Social Media Chair - Continued)
and safe New Year.

Just a reminder, Facebook is free advertising and, when used correctly can be one of the best membership recruitment tools that we have today. Keep your community informed of the events that you run at your Post that help to support the American Legion programs.

This year, upload a holiday greeting card on your Post Facebook page or group. A picture is worth a thousand words. Show your community, friends, neighbors, veterans and Legion family that you care.



Larry Roberts
VA Entitlements Chair

A lot of Veterans do not know if they are eligible for VA benefits. All Information is from the Federal Benefits For Veterans, Dependents and Survivors 2016

Edition

Basic Eligibility:

A person who served in the active military, naval, or air service and who was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable may qualify for VA health care benefits including qualifying Reserve and National Guard members.

Minimum Duty Requirements:

Veterans who enlisted after Sept. 7, 1980, or who entered active duty after Oct. 16, 1981, must have 24 continuous months or full period for which they were called to active duty to be eligible. This minimum duty requirement may not apply to Veterans discharged for hardship, early out, or a disability incurred or aggravated in line of duty.

Enrollment:

For most Veterans, entry into the VA health care system begins by applying for enrollment. Veterans can now apply and submit their application (VA Form 1010EZ), online at www.va.gov/vaforms/form_detail.asp?formno=10ez. If assistance is needed for the online enrollment form, an on-line chat representative is available to answer questions Monday – Friday, between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. EST, or at any VA health care facility or VA regional office. Once enrolled, Veterans can receive health care at VA health care facilities anywhere in the country.

(VA Entitlements Chair - Continued)

The following four categories of Veterans are not required to enroll, but are urged to do so to permit better planning of health resources: but are urged to do so to permit better planning of health resources:

1. Veterans with a service-connected disability of 50 percent or more.
2. Veterans seeking care for disability the military determined was incurred or aggravated in the line of duty, but which VA has not yet rated, within 12 months of discharged.
3. Veterans seeking care for a service-connected disability only.
4. Veterans seeking registry examinations (Ionizing Radiation, Agent Orange, Gulf War/ Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation, Iraqi Freedom/ Operation New Dawn (OEF/OIF/OND) depleted uranium, airborne hazards and Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry).

Priority Groups:

During enrollment, each Veteran is assigned to a priority group. VA uses priority groups to balance demands for VA health care enrollment with resources. Changes in available resources may reduce the number of priority groups VA can enroll. If this occurs, VA will publicize the changes and notify affected enrollees. A description of priority groups follows:

Group 1: Veterans with service-connected disabilities rated 50 percent or more and / or Veterans determined by VA to be unemployable due to service-connected conditions.

Group 2: Veterans with service-connected disabilities rated 30 or 40 percent.

Group 3: Veterans who are former prisoners of war (POWs). Veterans awarded the Purple Heart medal. Veterans awarded the Medal of Honor. Veterans whose discharge was for a disability incurred or aggravated in the line of duty. Veterans with VA service-connected disabilities rated 10 percent or 20 percent. Veterans awarded special eligibility classification under Title 38, U.S.C., 1151, "benefits for individuals disabled by treatment or vocational rehabilitation."

Group 4: Veterans receiving increased compensation or pension based on their need for regular aid and attendance or by reason of being permanently housebound. Veterans determined by VA to be catastrophically disabled.

Group 5: Nonservice-connected Veterans and

(VA Entitlements Chair - Continued)

noncompensable service-connected Veterans rated 0 percent, whose annual income and/ or net worth are greater than VA financial thresholds. Veterans receiving VA Pension benefits. Veterans eligible for Medicaid benefits.

Group 6: Compensable 0 percent service-connected Veterans. Veterans exposed to ionizing radiation during atmospheric testing or during the occupation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Project 112/SHAD participants. Veterans who served in the Republic of Vietnam between Jan. 9, 1962 and May 7, 1975.

Group 7: Veterans with incomes below the geographic means test income.

Group 8: Veterans with gross household incomes above VA national income threshold and the geographically – adjusted income threshold for their resident location and who agree to pay copayments., Veterans eligible for enrollment: Noncompensable 0-percent service-connected



Sid Damsgard
Central Area Commander

This past month I had the pleasure of representing the Central Area at the dedication of Punta Gorda's Viet-Nam wall. It is a 1/3 scale of the wall in

Washington and is set in a beautiful park in historic down-town Punta Gorda. The ceremony was well attended by members of every VSO, rider groups and the community. 13th District Vice and Post 110 Port Charlotte Commander Michael Raymond was a member of the board of directors that made this tribute to our fallen comrades a reality. Many long meeting and hours of planning made this event a memorable one. This is the fourth permanent scaled version of the wall in the country. Anyone traveling to this part of the state should make a point of visiting this monument I think you will find it will move you much like the original.

In the 16th District I attended the renaming of the post office in Elfers Florida. There were several local dignitaries, members of American Legions Posts 79, 238 and 275 and friends of the Veteran Killed in action during the Viet-Nam conflict. PFC Felton R. Fussell lost his life in a fire fight exactly one year after his enlistment in the USMC. He was



(Central Area Commander - Continued)

nineteen years old and could not wait to be able to serve his country. Those who knew him described him as a true patriot. Congressman Gus Bilirakus gave the address about the life and times of this local American hero.

After the ceremony, I meet with the Congressman for a chat on many veteran issues. He has always been an advocate for veterans and hopes that after elections he will be appointed to a committee for veteran affairs.

Plans are underway for the Central Area Ball which that will be hosted by Post 114 in Pinellas Park. They have just completed the renovation of their Post with many new features including a designated smoking room, a new game room, redesigned meeting room and improvements to the lounge. If you are in the 16th District, please visit them at 7550 60th St N. Pinellas Park. You will find a fresh look to an old Post that now has much to offer any new members.

December 18th American Legion Post 275 will again hold in partnership with The Suncoast Brotherhood their 36th annual toy run. This event has been one of the premier toy runs in the area. Last year's event brought 3,500 motorcycles to Post 275 located at 360 Wilson St. Dunedin FL. The actual ride to the Post is only two miles from start to finish and has been the safest run with no injuries in 36 years. Over \$10,000 in cash and enough toys to fill two large U-Haul trailers were donated to the Pinellas foster children.



John W. Rose
Northern Area Commander

The Northern Area is working membership but we have a long way to go. Special thanks to those Posts who have met or exceeded the goals. To those of us that are still not there keep working. We can do it. Use your membership teams to reach out to those who haven't renewed. If you could use some assistance ask your District Commander, myself or Jerry Brandt.

Use our social media tools such as Facebook to post events and programs as well as the Department website, so others know the great work we are doing. By the time you get this we will have had the Fall Conference and the Posts will

(Northern Area Commander - Continued)

be getting the information presented to you.

Hope you had a great Thanksgiving and have a good and safe Holiday Season. If you have an event you would like me to attend, let me know so I can be there. Thanks again for the honor and trust you have placed in me.



Jimmy Martin
Western Area Commander

We are working hard on membership in the Western Area, we still have a ways to go to get all of our numbers up, but I am confident the 1st and 2nd District Commanders and Post Commanders will be able to reach all of our membership goals.

12 years ago, I was involved with the last National Commanders Visit to the Panhandle. I just completed a 7 day visit with the National Commander Charlie Schmidt. I was tasked with setting up a schedule showing him around the Western Area from November 3 – 7, 2016. I couldn't have done all we did without the help of my 1st District Commander Chuck Olsen, 2nd District Commander Jim Brennan, Post 13 Commander John Folsom and Post 240 Commander John Edens.

We started out Thursday with a tour of the Tallahassee VA clinic. Then we went to the Capital Building for a meeting with our Executive Director of Florida Department of Veterans Affairs, Col. Glenn Sutphin. After lunch we drove to Havana, FL War Memorial for Charlie to receive a proclamation from the City Manager of Havana. We then drove to the Tallahassee National Cemetery for burial services for three Veterans who had no family to represent them. Both the National Commander and State Commander received an American flag from the service. This is a service provided by a group of Veteran from Post 13 and 84 that do this once a quarter for service members with no family or with none able to attend their burial. Post 13 put on a very good dinner that evening hosted by Commander John Folsom. Everyone was very impressed with everything.

Friday, we left Tallahassee heading west. Our first stop was Post 82 Lan Ark, FL where we were greeted by the entire Post 82 family. ALR 82

(Western Area Commander - Continued)

escorted our entourage to lunch in Apalachicola. Then we preceded down US 98 to the East side of Tyndall AFB where we stopped and met up with the Western Area ALR Chairman, Jim Bowers who had brought ALR riders from Chapters 356, 375, 392 and 402. They escorted us to Post 375 in Southport, FL. Thanks to Post Commander Kevin Remedies for a great turnout. We attended a great dinner put on at Post 356 in Lynn Haven, FL. My thanks to Post Commander Sam Spice for the great time.

Saturday, we left the hotel and were escorted by ALR 392 to their Post for a presentation to the National Commander. Kudos to Post 392 Commander Chris Batastini and his entire Legion Family. What a great Post. The ALR 392 riders escorted us on to Post 402 for another Presentation. Thanks to Post 402 Commander Jim Bowers for a great lunch. Keep up the good work on Membership Jim. We were joined by the Riders of ALR 382 who escorted us the rest of the day. Next stop was at Post 296 Destin where Charlie gave a speech to the Post membership. We then left for Post 221 in Niceville, FL where the National Commander presented a 70 year membership award to a Charter Member of Post 221 when they were chartered in 1946. Wow, what an honor to be there for that presentation. Thanks to Post 221 Commander Ronnie Grover and his Legion Family. Next we went to Crestview, FL Post 75 for a brief visit with Commander John Marshall. Then we headed to Fort Walton Beach Post 235 for a great visit with Commander Mark Horn and the great people of Post 235. We got to visit with long time Auxiliary member Olga Terrel. It was great to see her again.

Sunday morning were escorted again by ALR 382 to visit their Post first thing. Commander Schmidt gave a speech to the entire Legion Family at Post 382. Thanks to Ty Beach, Post 382 Commander for his presentation to the National Commander. We were joined by ALR 240 and 340 riders for an escort the rest of the day. Next stop was Post 378 Gulf Breeze, FL (The Little Legion as it is known in 1st District) for a visit with Post Commander Chuck Olsen. Next stop was Post 193 in Pensacola, FL. Many thanks to Commander Byron Long and his Officers for a great visit. Then on to Post 33 where Post Commander Doug Burleson gave us a tour of his Post. We then went to Visit Post 340 and Commander Rudy Brown.

Last stop for Sunday was a visit to Post 240 where Post Commander John Edens and his



(Western Area Commander - Continued)

staff provided a prime rib dinner for National Commander Charlie Schmidt, Florida State Commander Joe Magee and his wife Pat, NEC Dennis Boland and his wife Department 2nd Vice Commander Dianne Boland, NECA Art Schwabe and his wife Erma, Western Area Commander Jimmy Lee Martin and my wife DJ Martin and the National Commander Aide, Dirk Levy. Charlie gave a great speech and everyone enjoyed the evening. Thanks again to Commander Edens.

Monday, The National Commander had a radio talk interview until 10:00am. We left the hotel and headed to Pensacola Beach for lunch. Then we drove to Naval Air Station Pensacola for a 2 and ½ hour tour of the Naval Flight Academy and the Aviation Museum. Thanks to Michelle for a great tour. The last stop of the National Commanders visit was at Post 340 where Commander Rudy Brown put on a nice food spread. Thanks to Rudy and his great Legion Family. The National Commander then returned to his hotel to rest before his Tuesday morning flight to Birmingham, AL to do this all over again.

We had some long days but visited as many Posts in the 1st and 2nd District as possible. He was especially impressed with the ALR escorts. We didn't get to visit some Posts and I'm sorry, but I think the members of our Family: Legion, Auxiliary, SAL and Riders in the Western Area impressed him very much. I was so proud of all the Posts we visited and the fact that they showed him the pride we have in our Posts and the Legion.



Frederick Matthews
5th District Commander

October was a tough month for the Posts in the 5th District. The monthly meeting and annual picnic had to be cancelled due to the presence of Hurricane in the area. Fortunately, none of our Posts sustained damage. The homes and property of our members was a bit different story but no fatalities were reported.

Post 194 served as a water and food distribution point for citizens in the St. Augustine area where power and water shortages continued for more than a week after the storm. Kudos to Commander Joe Logan and his crew for their service to the community.

(5th District Commander - Continued)

The Legion Riders of Post 283 spearheaded the Zombie Ride on Halloween weekend raising funds for Legion charities.

The first round of visits by the District Commander were completed during October with promising reports on Americanism, Boys State, Boy Scout, Oratorical and, of course, Membership. Direct help was extended to Post 174 with membership and land issues will continue with a special report to the Department Executive Committee in November.

At the top of the 100%-plus list are Posts 272 with no Post home, and 102 in Hastings, Florida where Commander Jim Wright continues to work at bringing that Post back to life. This could be the come-back story of the year. At Post 272 Commander Myra Jowers and husband Carl, Post Adjutant, have doubled meeting attendance in less than six months at the helm. At Post 273, Past District Commander Bob Brewster, with a group of very dedicated officers and members works with the area Veterans Council and the surrounding Orange Park community to support Legion programs such as the Highway Patrol Cadet Academy and NJROTC.

The 5th District includes four counties with 19 Posts and attached Auxiliary Units, ALR Chapters and SAL Squadrons containing more than 8,000 members.

Our monthly District meeting for November will be hosted by Post Commander Harold Sanders of Post 202 in Keystone Heights, Florida for the first time in more than 3 years. Look for pictures of this visit on the 5th District Facebook page.



Jay Allen
15th District

Boys/Girls State Picnic

15th District held its annual Boys/Girls State Transportation Fundraiser Picnic hosted by Hugh Gilbert Strickland Post 138 Family. This year we managed to have one of the largest turn-outs for this affair and raised over \$3,000.00 for our cause, this also includes the Bake Sale led by 15th District Auxiliary President Georgia Mackenzie.

I'd like to thank Department 1st Vice Commander

(15th District Commander - Continued)

Steve Shuga for attending and helping our Boys/Girls Transportation picnic, Department Chair for Post Development Ms. Eunice Butts and the whole 15th District Family. I have to apologize for running out of food, we did increase the amount from the past 5 years of this event but even more people than we could have hoped for attended.

The 15th District came together to make it an outstanding year for this fundraiser. We could not ask for a better family turnout than what we have here in the 15th District.



VA Stand Down

Thanks to the 15th District Family, the VA Stand down spearheaded by Ms. Mary McColgan, Unit 248 President and VA&R Chairman. Without her dedication to the veterans and the help of the rest of the 15th District family, we could not have served over 400 homeless veterans. Thanks are also in order to the Hillsborough County Sheriff's office, HCSO Cadets, the Tampa Hillsborough Homeless Initiative, Frontier and all of the other companies and organizations for their assistance in the Stand-down. A big thank you to all the 15th District Family for their help, volunteering their time and money. The 15th District Family donated more than \$3000.00 and Frontier Communications





(15th District Commander - Continued)

donated \$1000.00 for this effort. We had three Post Service officers there to assist with any veterans needing assistance. We gave away 35 bicycles to the homeless, numerous haircuts, shoes, socks, clothes, toiletries and a hot lunch.



American Legion Riders

Zombie Ride



(Post 32- Continued)

During his years in school, George participated in sports and helped other Latin students that had language problems.

George always remembered receiving the American Legion School Award Medal, and to this day keeps that medal at his home. He is now a member of Sullivan-Babcock Post 32 in Hialeah, Florida.

In 2016 George and his wife presented the American Legion School Award Medal at Kinlock Park Elementary School, the same school at which he received the award some 66 years previous, as well as other Elementary and Middle Schools in Hialeah, Florida.



*Amelia Earhart Elementary School
American Legion School Award*

Post 32 Sullivan-Babcock

In 1950 George Gordon was 15 years old when he graduated from the 9th grade at Kinlock Park Junior High School in Miami, Florida, and received the American Legion School Award Medal.

George had a Cuban Mother and an American Father, and was born in Cuba. During the second World War, George's father served in the armed Forces of the United States.

The family moved to the United States, and when the selective service found out that George's Father had 5 children, he was reassigned to the Army reserves. George's Mother wanted him to speak Spanish at home but encouraged him to learn English as well. George picked up the English language quickly and became fluent in both languages.



*Hialeah Middle School
American Legion School Award*

Employment Award NOMINATIONS

DEADLINE
December 19, 2016



Post 136**News****Pine Island Elementary Honors Veterans**

By Ed Fanks, Pine Island Eagle

Under sunny skies and with a cool breeze blowing, Pine Island Elementary students, teachers, faculty and staff assembled to honor Pine Island veterans Thursday. Members of the American Legion, VFW and other veterans sat beneath a large tent at the pavilion.

After the Pledge of Allegiance and the national anthem, Principal Steven Hook kicked off the event as the veterans were escorted by "student ambassadors" from the library to their seats.

"Good morning and welcome to our Pine Island Elementary School Veteran's Day program. I've been doing education for 38 years and I don't think I've ever been prouder to watch you sing and to have the crowd we have here today," he said. "It is indeed a privilege to have our honored veterans, families, friends and guests with us today. At our school we strive for academic excellence and yet we want our students to clearly understand and respect the sacrifices that have been made for us to enjoy our freedoms. We celebrate and pay tribute to those who have served our great country and so proud that you are here today. Thank you and God Bless the United States of America."

Several hundred parents and grandparents were in attendance as each grade, starting with the kindergarteners, sang a song about America. Several veterans had tears in their eyes.

Particularly moving was the White Table Ceremony. The White Table is set in many mess halls and veterans organizations as a symbol for and remembrance to service members fallen, missing or held captive in the line of duty.

One by one students placed each missing part: a white tablecloth representing honor; a slice of lemon placed on a bread plate as a reminder of the bitter fate; salt symbolizing tears; a single rose symbolizing blood and the families; an inverted glass signifying the inability to be home; a candle representing the light in the hearts of their families; and an empty chair representing the missing veteran placed at the table.

Several students recited, "This represents so much more than just a little white table. Thank you soldiers for your sacrifices for our freedom. I will

(Post 136 - Continued)

always remember and we will always remember."

More than 40 veterans were present as each was handed the microphone to state their name and branch of service. Every branch of the service was represented including veterans who had served from 1941 through 2008. Many Vietnam veterans were present with a few World War II, Korean War and Gulf War veterans.

Johnny Agnew was introduced as a student that wrote a thank you letter to veterans:

Where would we be without Veterans?

"We would be an unsafe and not a free country if veterans didn't protect us from all the terrible enemies we have faced. They have risked their lives for other civilians and many other things to form the country we live in. No one can name all of the courageous, brave and fearless things that Veterans have done. Veterans have done an amazing job. They continue to do the right thing no matter where they are or how old they are. They are kind and helpful people. These Veterans have given everything they have. They certainly don't have to do what they do, but they do it because of their patriotic love for their country.

There are many Veterans that have helped out in some way to protect the United States. Some more well-known Veterans include General Eisenhower, George Washington and Teddy Roosevelt. Think about who taught them how to do all the cool things they did and think about who worked side by side with them as they defeated our enemies. Anyone can make as big a difference as they did; if they have all the things they had ? patriotism, bravery and fearlessness. If you believe, you can make an even bigger difference.

Compare the U.S. to other countries. Don't you see a huge difference between us and many other ones? We have freedom and good people-most importantly, brave Veterans that have stood up and continue to stand up for our country. We are a great country because of them and what they have done. Veterans are the best. So, I stand here today on behalf of Pine Island Elementary, to say THANK YOU."

At the conclusion of the outdoor portion of the program, the entire student body sang "I'm Proud to be an American" as the veterans were escorted to the cafeteria for lunch.

(Post 136 - Continued)

John Carley served in the U.S. Navy from 1966-1972.

"I served on troop transport ship USS Cambria bringing guys home from Vietnam," Carley said. "I've been a member of the American Legion Riders and wanted to be involved. This has been a very moving experience and think very educational for the kids."

Rocky Alacastro served in the U.S. Army airborne.

"Something occurred to me while I was sitting outside listening to the kids," Alacastro said. "It's wonderful that they honor veterans for their service but I think the real honor goes to those that didn't come back. Everybody sitting here, we were the lucky ones. The honor has to go to those that didn't return."

**Happy Birthday USMC**

Pine Island Eagle

Marine Corps at the American Legion at 2 p.m. The celebration was organized by Terry and Elaine Roberts with 40 guests in attendance. It



(Post 136 - Continued)

was a beautiful birthday with the cutting of the Marine cake with swords by the youngest (Bernie Black) and oldest (Jim Clark) Marines that live on the Island. Pictured with the cake are Tony Papillo, left, and Terry Robert's. "Semper Fidelis."



Legion Holds Veterans Day Ceremony on Island

By Ed Fanks, Pine Island Eagle

Well over a hundred people attended the annual Pine Island American Legion Post #136 Veterans Day ceremony. Commander Tom Lewis greeted people as they arrived.

"This is a special day for all of us at the Legion," Lewis said. "We have people here today that served in World War II and have served in every war since."

Once Lewis called the ceremony to order, the Honor Guard marched in and took position. Following the prayer and Pledge of Allegiance, Lewis addressed the crowd.

"On this day, Veterans Day, we are commemorating the service of veterans of all wars. We believe our strength on the field of battle, on the supply lines which nourished our armed might, lay in the justice of our cause against the forces of evil," he said. "We believe our determination made us better warriors because we fought with our minds and our hearts as well as our bodies.

"We recognize service to our country and her cause does not end with the termination of military service," he continued. "We continue our endeavors in behalf of an honorable world peace with a feeling of profound gratitude to God, and to

(Post 136 - Continued)

the men and women who gave their lives as part of the cost of this noblest of causes.

"Out of blood and sweat we learned of purpose, sacrifice, tolerance, bravery and discipline. These are solid foundation stones upon which a great nation is built. In our continuing quest for an honorable world peace we must cultivate these virtues."

Lewis was followed by Linda Lewis, representing the Auxiliary; Austin White, representing the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW); Tom Larkin, American Legion; and Patricia LaCour, American Legion.

The Honor Guard closed the ceremony with a gun salute.

The Honor Guard and Color Guard consist of current members of the Legion Post, Sons of the American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary. They participate in veteran funerals, parades and more. The decision to make the Honor Guard available is at the discretion of the post commander.

"I'd like to thank every veteran for their service and everyone that came today," Lewis said. "These ceremonies are very important to remind people that these men and women served our country and that there are thousands serving today."



Winners Selected in T-Shirt Contest

By Ed Fanks, Pine Island Eagle

Saturday morning the Pine Island American Legion Post 136 demonstrated its appreciation to the staff and students of Pine Island Elementary School for participating in its first annual T-shirt Art Project. About 50 teachers, students and parents attended the ceremony and enjoyed a hot dog lunch.

(Post 136 - Continued)

The purpose of the project was for PIE 3rd, 4th and 5th grade students to design a T-shirt logo "What a Veteran Means to Me" for the Pine Island American Legion's 2017 T-shirt. Post #136 Commander Tom Lewis welcomed the PIE staff, teachers, students and parents to the event.

"This is our first T-shirt design contest and it was proposed by Sharon Smith," Lewis said. "We went to the school, met with Principal Hook and Sharon is really the person that made this happen. Thank you very much Sharon for all your hard work."

Smith announced the winners.

- 1st place: Joshua Hyde,
- Mrs. McCaan's 3rd grade class.
- 2nd place: Meagan Kunkle,
- Mrs. Dooley's 4th grade class.
- 3rd place" Chris Dressel,
- Mrs. Kunkle's 3rd grade class.

"I would also like to thank everyone for participating and working so hard to make this happen," Smith said. "The 1st place winning design will be on our official American Legion Post #136 T-shirt for 2017. And everyone please remember to take home an American flag."

"The American Legion stands on four pillars," Lewis said. "1. Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, 2. National Security, 3. Americanism and 4. Children & Youth. We have an obligation to teach our children why we live in such a wonderful country. If it wasn't for our veterans we might be speaking another language. God Bless America."



(Post 136 - Continued)



(Post 136 - Continued)

Flag-folding Ceremony
By Ed Fanks, Pine Island Eagle

The American Legion Post #136 Honor Guard recently visited Pine Island Elementary School to present a flag folding ceremony for the students. Approximately 150 students were assembled in the cafeteria.

Post Commander Tom Lewis opened the ceremony by welcoming everyone.

"Thank you for allowing us to come here today," Lewis said. "We are Pine Island's American Legion Post #136 and with us today we have Pat and Nancy McCarn from the Coast Guard Auxiliary and we're here to present this flag folding ceremony to you."

The U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary is the uniformed, all-volunteer component of the United States Coast Guard. The McCarns are with Flotilla 9-10 in Cape Coral.

As the Honor Guard marched into the cafeteria, Nancy McCarn read the "Meaning of Flag-Folding Ceremony."

"The flag-folding ceremony represents the same religious principles on which our great country was originally founded," he read.

"The portion of the flag denoting honor is the canton of blue containing the stars representing states our veterans served in uniform. The canton field of blue dresses from left to right and is inverted only when draped as a pall on the casket of a veteran who has served our country honorably in uniform.

"In the U.S. Armed Forces, at the ceremony of retreat, the flag is lowered, folded in a triangle fold and kept under watch throughout the night as a tribute to our nation's honored dead. The next morning it is brought out and, at the ceremony of reveille, run aloft as a symbol of our belief in the resurrection of the body."

Once the Honor Guard was in position the flag folding ceremony began. Nancy McCarn explained the symbolism of each of the 13 folds.

"The first fold of our flag is a symbol of life.

"The second fold is a symbol of our belief in eternal life.

(Post 136 - Continued)

"The third fold is made in honor and remembrance of the veteran departing our ranks, and who gave a portion of his or her life for the defense of our country to attain peace throughout the world.

"The fourth fold represents our weaker nature; as American citizens trusting in God, it is to Him we turn in times of peace, as well as in times of war, for His divine guidance.

"The fifth fold is a tribute to our country, for in the words of Stephen Decatur, 'Our country, in dealing with other countries, may she always be right, but it is still our country, right or wrong.'

"The sixth fold is for where our hearts lie. It is with our heart that we pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

"The seventh fold is a tribute to our armed forces, for it is through the armed forces that we protect our country and our flag against all enemies, whether they be found within or without the boundaries of our republic.

"The eighth fold is a tribute to the one who entered into the valley of the shadow of death, that we might see the light of day, and to honor our mother, for whom it flies on Mother's Day.

"The ninth fold is a tribute to womanhood, for it has been through their faith, love, loyalty and devotion that the character of the men and women who have made this country great have been molded.

"The 10th fold is a tribute to father, for he, too, has given his sons and daughters for the defense of our country since he or she was first born.

"The 11th fold, in the eyes of Hebrew citizens, represents the lower portion of the seal of King David and King Solomon and glorifies, in their eyes, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

"The 12th fold, in the eyes of a Christian citizen, represents an emblem of eternity and glorifies, in their eyes, God the Father, the Son and Holy Ghost.

"When the flag is completely folded, the stars are uppermost, reminding us of our national motto, 'In God We Trust.'

"After the flag is completely folded and tucked in, it



(Post 136 - Continued)

has the appearance of a cocked hat. The cocked hat reminds us of the soldiers who served under Gen. George Washington and the sailors and Marines who served under Capt. John Paul Jones. It also reminds us of the soldiers and sailors who followed in the U.S. Armed Forces, preserving for us the rights, privileges and freedoms we enjoy today."

After a brief question-and-answer period, Commander Lewis addressed the students.

"We are very proud to be here today," Lewis said. "This is a solemn ceremony and you all were very quiet and respectful. Thank you very much for inviting us."

"We are very honored to have hosted this flag folding program," PIE Principal Steve Hook said. "We hope our students gain new respect for the flag and for the flag folding ceremony and we are very honored to partner with the Legion."



The American Legion
National Department



Legion Family called upon to document, upload local memorials

The American Legion's Veterans Memorial Identification Project is now open to submissions.

Set in motion by Resolution No. 10 at the Fall National Executive Committee Meetings in October, the project encourages American Legion Family members to locate, document, photograph and upload onto a national database information about veterans memorials and monuments in their local areas. "The American Legion is uniquely positioned to collect and document memorial information through its vast grassroots organization," the resolution states.

The database, which will be maintained at National Headquarters, has been designed to identify locations, document histories and share photographs of U.S. military and veterans monuments and memorials. Once information has been gathered and a photo taken, go to www.legion.org/memorials and click "Add a memorial." The page will ask for information about its installation and condition, as precise an address as possible, who maintains it, a photo (or multiple photos) to upload, and contact information for the submitter. Entries will be made public soon after review.

The page is designed to be easy to upload memorial photos and information via smartphones, even while on site of the memorial itself. This

(National / Memorials - Continued)

makes it easier to do multiple submissions at one time as Legion Family units and associated community groups comb an area for sites. The database can be used to buttress the Legion's historical relationship with the Alliance Defense Fund and the First Liberty Institute, which provide legal assistance to communities dealing with challenges to memorials that have religious language or symbolism.



The American Legion
Department of Florida

Attention Posts: We Need Your Help

The American Legion Centennial is coming up quickly, over 100 years of Veterans serving America. As a Department, we have many projects underway to celebrate and pay tribute to this special time in our history.

We are working closely with your Centennial Chairman, Andrew Nagy, on many of these projects. We have one project that we are sure will be a treasure to us all, a history of the Department and all our dedicated Florida Posts. We need your help to make this project successful. (Please note this is a separate project from the Post History Book Competition.)

Attached is a form that we ask that you complete and return as soon as possible. If you have access to internet, this form is also available online, and is our preferred method. In this form, we will ask you general information about your Post's involvement, amenities, etc. Then we will ask you questions about your post history, any significant stories, etc. The information provided will serve two purposes: update your roster and post locator information; and submission for the post history book.

We hope that you will take great pride in your post and this project. Take your time with this assignment, dig deep, and complete as much of the form as possible. We want to hear about your memorials, history of your building, history of your post, how you got started, special historical events your posts took part in, special members, statistics, interesting facts, anything you feel is significant about your post. It doesn't all have to be "ancient" history, anything you feel would be



(Dept of FL / Attn: Posts - Continued)

interesting to know for future generations. Send us your photos as well, at minimal a photo of your post building/location. We prefer photos be sent digitally, or copies be sent, but if you need your photos returned we will happily oblige.

We thank you in advance for your participation. Please have your history questionnaires completed and returned to us by the Department Convention in June/July. We look forward to learning more about your Post's history.

Please note, all submitted information may not be published. Each post is responsible for providing its own information to be included.

For online submissions, please go to www.floridalegion.org/posthistory/.

For questions, please email Carrie Kolze, ckolze@floridalegion.org.

Mail written forms to:

The American Legion, Dept of Florida
RE: Centennial Project
1912 A Lee Rd
Orlando, FL 32810



The American Legion *Department of Florida*

Welcome Bruce Comer

Please help us in welcoming Bruce Comer, as our Department Assistant Adjutant.

Bruce joined us in September and is already proving himself as a valued staff member for the department.

Bruce Comer was born and raised on the west side of Orlando, FL. Bruce began working at the age of 13 years over the summers for a local indoor shooting range. At 15 years old, he began working after school and on weekends in the hotel industry working his way from bellhop to night auditor. In 1985, Bruce joined the United States Marine Corps where he served as a Military Police Officer until being accepted into the Criminal Investigation Division eventually becoming the Chief Investigator at Marine Corps Base, Camp Bulter, Okinawa, Japan. In July of 2004, while contemplating retirement, he answered the call to transfer to Military Police Company B, Pittsburgh, PA and joined the Inspector-Instructor staff and

(Dept of FL / Bruce Comer - Continued)

deployed to Iraq within two days of checking in. After completing his combat tour, Bruce served his last three years of active duty and retired in Pittsburgh, PA in 2008.

After his retirement, Bruce worked as the Director of Operations for a security firm in Pittsburgh, PA and attended Seton Hill University and earned his Bachelor of Science in Business with a minor in Information Management. In July of 2016, he moved from Pittsburgh, PA back to Orlando, FL to assist with the care of his parents. Bruce has four children; Daniel (28), Amanda (26), Nicholas (18) and Rebecca (16). In his spare time Bruce enjoys hiking, camping, golf and mountain biking.

The American Legion *Department of Florida*

Fall Conference a Great Success

The American Legion, Department of Florida 2016 Fall Conference kicked off November 18th – 20th. The event was held at the Hilton, Walt Disney World Resort in Lake Buena Vista, FL, where guests were greeted with cookies and a friendly smile upon check-in.

We estimate that more than 500 legionnaires attended this year's Department Fall Conference, a great turn out and show of support. Thank you to all who were in attendance.

Headquarters was stationed in the hotel's South Ballroom offering Department Emblem Sales, Membership assistance, Program Information, General Information, Photo Sessions, Project: VetRelief booth and new additions of "Legion Online" and Centennial History show case. "Legion Online" featured laptops which guests could utilize to view the Department website, National website and MyLegion, with staff members on hand to offer assistance. The Centennial History show case featured historical relics from our Legion history. Last minute tickets sales for the 2016 Fall Raffle were also sold, along with discounted parking vouchers. Our friendly and dedicated Department staff and volunteers were eager to help Legionnaires with their Legion needs and questions.

During this Conference, Service Officer School trained 57 new Service Officers to serve our communities. Many classes such as Legion Institute, Post Training, Officer Training,

(Dept of FL / Fall Conference - Continued)

Membership Training, etc. were also in high attendance.

General Session was held Saturday and kicked off with Post 286 Color Guard's Presentation of Colors. We took pause to honor our POW-MIA and five lost Legionnaires this year: Rene Stachelrodt Jr., Past Dept Scholarship Chairman; Ed Miller, Past Southern Area Commander; Cauleen Dolan, Past 9th District Commander; French Shannon, Past 9th District Commander, and Charles Johann, Past 1st District Commander.

During the opening ceremonies, Department Commander, Department Adjutant and several other Department Officers entered sporting kilts and leprechaun attire in good spirit with Commander Joe Magee's Irish-American heritage. Many laughs were had watching these well-respected men struggle with kilt etiquette. Membership Director, Irene Graham also made a splash with leprechaun attire while assisting Jerry Brandt during the Membership Awards portion of the program.

National Judge Advocate, Phillip Onderdonk, joined us in a short and spirited speech as a special guest speaker. Wendy Jo Bost, Public Service Administrator at the Orange County Library System and Mimi Coenen, Chief Operations Officer at CareerSource of Central Florida also gave a heartfelt address and shared a short video on a joint program they have implemented with our veterans, military personnel and our youth. The Son's of the American Legion and Auxiliary also stopped by for a quick hello and special guests of their own.

NEC Dennis Boland, presented this year's Child Welfare Awards. Bronze Plaques/Emblems for donations ranging from \$500 to \$749 were awarded to: District 13, Tampa Bay Post 152, Tequesta Post 271, Key West Post, Palmetto Post 309 and Fort Pierce Post 40. Gold Plaques/Emblems for donations exceeding \$1,000 were awarded to: Largo Post 119, Spring Hill Post 186, Dunedin Post 275, Belleview Post 284, Lehigh Acres Post 323, Lady Lake Post 347, Tampa Post 5 and the Department of Florida. Eunice Butts and Dianne Boland were each presented with the 1 Diamond CWF Lapel Pin and Dennis R Boland was presented with the 5 Diamond CWF Lapel Pin. Department of Florida received: the Excellence Award; U.S. Udie Grant Award for most donations by the Florida legion Family in the amount of \$86,784.33; Garland Murphy Award for Legion Department contributing the



(Dept of FL / Fall Conference - Continued)

most donations to the CWF. PDC Jim Ramos was awarded a Diamond Lapel Pin.

Department Adjutant Mike McDaniel followed, delivering a brief report on Department business, and sharing an inspirational piece of our history and the importance of The American Legion. Our Candidates then presented a brief speech on why they would best serve our Department. A list of these candidates and their endorsements can be found on our department website: <http://www.floridalegion.org/news-events/department-convention/endorsement-letters/>.

After a brief break for lunch, the General Session resumed with the drawing of the 2016 Fall Raffle Winners, with the grand prize of \$10,000 up for grabs. Those lucky winners are:

- **Grand Prize (\$10,000)**
Jamie Knapp of New Port Richey, FL
- **2nd Prize (\$5,000)**
Robert Wrobel of New Smyrna, FL
- **3rd Prize (\$2,400)**
Thomas Blaney of Jupiter, FL
- **4th Prize (\$1,500)**
Joseph Wagoner of Fort Pierce, FL
- **5th Prize (\$1,000)**
Richard Stewart of Gilford, NH
- **6th Prize (\$1,000)**
Howard Weingrow of Palm Beach Gardens, FL
- **7th Prize (\$500)**
Rudy Panganiban of Orlando, FL
- **8th Prize (\$500)**
Dwayne Enos of Jacksonville, FL
- **9th Prize (\$500)**
Stephen Benner of Leesburg, FL
- **10th Prize (\$500)**
Florenda Nicoloff of Melbourne, FL

Following reports from our Program and Committee Reports, Department Membership Chairman, Jerry Brandt, presented numerous posts with awards for meeting/exceeding their membership goals. Membership awarded 117 posts for meeting the 55% Goal, 101 whom met 60% Goal, 64 whom met 70% Goal, 10 posts whom met the 100% Goal. Also among Membership Awards were the Pioneer Awards, awarded to Edward Butcherine, Leo Kiffner, Gary Barton, Bobbie Jo Dino, Bob Deutsch and Thomas Listy. A warm welcome to our newest Post 410 in

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Rochledge, FL.

Membership was an important focus of this General Session as numbers have been on a decline over the last few years, due primarily to an aging demographic. Posts were encouraged to continue recruiting efforts and find new ways to attract members and appeal to the younger demographic. The American Legion is a legacy that we hope to pass from generation to generation, so long as there is an America. Increasing communication efforts among Posts, Department, Officers and Chairman was also an area where improvement was encouraged.

The General Session closed with final remarks from Commander Joe Magee and closing ceremonies.

Saturday's events closed with the President & Commander's Banquet that evening. Sunday concluded the Fall Conference, with a Religious Service that morning and a Department Executive Committee Meeting immediately following.

Overall, the 2016 Fall Conference was a great success. The Conference was well-organized and ran fairly, smoothly, although there were a couple of unforeseen hitches along the way. We sincerely apologize for the last-minute change of class locations to the Palm Building, which caused some confusion. This was due to an error by the hotel, in which they profusely apologized for, and treated our guest with an endless cookie buffet, enjoyed by many in the Headquarter's Ballroom. This was the final year for Department events at this hotel, unrelated to this instance. Future Fall Conferences will be held at the Renaissance SeaWorld Orlando and Conventions will be held at the Marriot Orlando World Center.

Florida Legion College will be held February 16 – 18, 2017, more information is available on our department website: <http://www.floridalegion.org/news-events/florida-legion-college/>.

We hope that you will also join us June 28th – July 2nd, 2017 for the Department Convention to be held at the Marriot Orlando World Center.

WE NEED TO KNOW: If you attended our 2016 Fall Conference please take a moment to complete our feedback questionnaire. We're constantly striving to improve and your feedback will be instrumental.

We want to know exactly what works and what

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isn't working. What can we do better? Give us the good, the bad and the ugly!

Please complete our online form at <http://www.floridalegion.org/news-events/fall-conference/fcfeedback/>. A printed version is also included, if you are unable to complete online.

The American Legion Department of Florida

Department Staff Opportunity

The American Legion Department of Florida is in search of a new PROJECT: VetRelief Case Worker on a part-time basis.

Candidates for this position should be highly knowledgeable in veteran affairs, services and programs; possess good networking skills with other service organizations; intermediate computer skills with Microsoft Office, scanning and printing; excellent communications skills; and must have a compassionate and enthusiastic drive to help veterans. Former caseworkers and/or service officers are preferred.

All candidates must be able to work at least 3 days per week in our Headquarter's Office located in Orlando, Florida. Dependable transportation with a valid Florida Driver's License is required.

If you meet these requirements and are ready to make a difference, please send resume to Jennifer Cooper, jcooper@floridalegion.org.

USO Welcome Center at Orlando Int'l Airport United Service Organization

USO Welcome Center Needs your Help

The USO Welcome Center at Orlando International Airport is asking for your help. They are in desperate need for volunteers and donations.

The USO Welcome Center operates 7 days a week, 365 Days, from 6:00 AM to 10:00 PM. Volunteers would work in 4 hour shifts. Volunteers are needed to check IDs, perform housekeeping, track inventory, etc.

Donations of snacks, microwaveable items (i.e.



(USO - Continued)

hot pockets) are requested. Monetary donations are always graciously appreciated. Checks should be made payable to Central Florida USO with "USO Welcome Center Orlando" in the for section to receive proper credit to the Welcome Center.

The USO will also be displaying military/veteran challenge coins and shoulder patches, if you would like to submit either for display.

The USO (United Service Organization) is a non-profit 501 (c)(3) that has been operative since 1941, standing by our troops through every step of their service. From deployment to rehabilitation and reintegration, the USO has been there for soldiers and their families. For more information about the USO, please visit their website at www.uso.org.

For more information, to donate or volunteer with the USO Welcome Center at Orlando International Airport please contact Annamae Cascandi at 407-483-4855 or Manny Gomes at 407-451-7183 or by email to manny112@msn.com.



**Visit Your
Local Tax
Office
and get
yours
today!**



PROJECT: VETRELIEF

A PROGRAM OF THE AMERICAN LEGION, DEPARTMENT OF FLORIDA

Fall Conference Recap

Thank you to everyone who stopped by our booth during the Fall Conference! We hope you were able to ask us questions and get materials to take back with you to your Post.

A special thank you goes out to the VetRelief Advocates who helped man our booth: Loretta Young, Larry Roberts, Mike Beaven, and Sheila Buell.

If you're interested in becoming a VetRelief Advocate, our next round of training will be during the Department Convention in June 2017. Once class days and times are finalized a class registration link will be distributed for you to sign up. We are anticipating a large turn out since there were not classes during Fall Conference, so be sure to reserve your spot!

WE CHALLENGE YOU!

The PROJECT: VetRelief Board of Directors and Department Commander, Joe Magee, are challenging The Florida Legion Family to raise \$1.00 per member. We are asking that you encourage everyone to get involved and help us raise funds for PROJECT: VetRelief.

It's simple! The PVR Challenge Goal is based on the Membership Goals provided by National. For example, **Post 208's** Membership Goal is **2,507**, therefore the PVR Challenge Goal is **\$2,507**. This goal can be reached by a Post making a one-time donation for their goal amount, or several donations given throughout the year. All individual donations submitted from your Posts between **July 1, 2016 and May 31, 2017** will automatically go towards your PVR Challenge Goal.

- ★ Present the PVR Challenge to your membership during meetings
- ★ Encourage and educate your membership to participate
- ★ Donations can be sent to: PROJECT: VetRelief, 1912A Lee Road, Orlando, FL 32810
- ★ Donations must be turned in by **May 31, 2017** to count towards recognition awards
- ★ Money raised during Post fundraising events will also count

We hope you choose to participate in the PVR Challenge and help support PROJECT: VetRelief! Post 59 has already turned in a donation and has achieved their PVR Challenge Goal! **Way to go Post 59!**

For more information and PVR Challenge materials, contact Jennifer Cooper at jcooper@floridalegion.org

For more information visit our website: www.ProjectVetRelief.org



“We are very grateful for the time, care and sacrifice that went into helping us. We are forever grateful to each of you.”

- Army Veteran

CASE REPORTING:

July 2016 - October 2016

- ★ TFA - 12 families
\$16,713.20
- ★ PVR - 38 families
\$27,077.48



2016 FALL CONFERENCE FEEDBACK

We're constantly striving to improve and your feedback is important. Please take a few minutes to complete the survey below. All questions are optional, we thank you for your time.

I. Location and Facility

Please rate the hotel and location only in this section. All information is optional. The more feedback you provide, the better we can improve.

- Overall, how would you rate your visit to the Hilton Orlando at Walt Disney World Resort?
 Poor Below Average Average Above Average Excellent
- Did you stay overnight at the Hilton Orlando at Walt Disney World Resort?
 Yes No
- If yes, how would you rate your accommodations at this hotel?
 Poor Below Average Average Above Average Excellent
- How would you rate the professionalism and friendliness of the hotel staff?
 Poor Below Average Average Above Average Excellent
- How would you rate the amenities of this hotel?
 Poor Below Average Average Above Average Excellent
- How likely would you recommend this hotel to others?
 Not Likely Somewhat Likely Likely Very Likely
- Any additional feedback you would like provide regarding this hotel?

II. Classes

Please rate the classes offered at this Conference. All information is optional. The more feedback you provide, the better we can improve.

- Did you attend any classes while attending the 2016 Fall Conference? (If not, skip to next section III.)
 Yes No
- Which classes did you attend? (Check All that Apply)
 Service Officer School Legion Institute Post Operations Training Post Commander Training Historian/Centennial Class
 Post Chaplain Training Post Revitalization Training IRS 990 Rules / Finance Class Homeless Veteran Outreach Training Post Adjutant Training
 Post Sgt-at-Arms Class Post Membership Training Oratorical Training Judge Advocate Training Boys State District Chairman Training
 Boy Scouts Training Other _____
- How would you rate the classroom setup and environment?
 Poor Below Average Average Above Average Excellent
- How would you rate the overall efficiency of your instructor(s)?
 Poor Below Average Average Above Average Excellent
- How would you rate the subject matter of the class(es) you attended?
 Poor Below Average Average Above Average Excellent
- How would you rate the class materials, if applicable? (Skip if not Applicable)
 Poor Below Average Average Above Average Excellent
- Any additional feedback you would like to provide regarding classes, instructors and/or class materials?

8. Did you visit the Programs Area? *(If not, skip to question 10.)*
 Yes No
9. How would you rate the quality of program materials available?
 Poor Below Average Average Above Average Excellent
10. Did you shop Emblem Sales? *(If not, skip to question 19.)*
 Yes No
11. How would you rate the friendliness and helpfulness of Emblem Sales staff?
 Poor Below Average Average Above Average Excellent
12. How would you rate the quality of items in Emblem Sales?
 Poor Below Average Average Above Average Excellent
13. How would you rate the variety of items available in Emblem Sales?
 Poor Below Average Average Above Average Excellent
14. How would you rate the pricing of items available?
 Poor Below Average Average Above Average Excellent
15. What branches of service would you like to see more items for?
 Airforce Army Coast Guard Marines Navy
16. Did you purchase any items from Emblem Sales? *(If not, skip to question 19.)*
 Yes No
17. Approximately how much did you spend in Emblem Sales? \$ _____
18. How would you rate your overall transaction in Emblem Sales?
 Poor Below Average Average Above Average Excellent
19. Did you utilize "Legion Online"? *(If not, skip to question 21.)*
 Yes No What is that?
- Legion online is a computer station setup where you can access the National and Department websites and MyLegion. A staff member is available to guide you and assist you with any questions.*
20. Do you think you would ever utilize "Legion Online" at an event?
 Yes No Maybe
21. Did you view the History Display area?
 Yes Not Interested Oh no, I missed it?
22. Please provide any additional feedback regarding Headquarters and Department Staff.

V. Other Comments

Any other general comments or feedback you would like to provide?



100th Anniversary Posts History Book Questionnaire

Please complete as much as possible that applies to your post. This information will be used in a special 100th Anniversary Post History Book, and to update your online Post information. You may also complete this form online at www.floridalegion.org/posthistory/

Post Number: _____ Post Official Name: _____

Physical Address: _____

Mailing Address (if different): _____

Email: _____ Website: _____

Phone: _____ Alternate Phone: _____

Annual Member Dues: _____ District: _____ Social Media (check all that apply): Facebook LinkedIn Twitter Other

Does your Post have a Service Officer? yes no Service Officer Name: _____

Post Amenities: Lounge Food Bingo Non-Smoking Auxiliary Sons Riders Veterans' Support Program

Active Military Support Program Active Americanism / Patriotism Program Active Youth Support Program Activities Above Post Level

Active Community Participation Programs Other _____ Post Activity Level (5 – Very Active) to (0 – Not Active): _____

Post Hours: _____

Post Meeting Times: _____

Post Name Reason or Significance (if any): _____

Post Membership By-Law Restrictions (if any): _____

Post Established Date: _____ First Post Commander: _____

Post Founding Members: _____

Post History, Highlights, Memorials, etc: _____

Post Building/Location History, Highlights, Memorials, etc: _____

Anything else you would like to share? _____

Current Post Commander, Post Officers and/or Post Chairmen: _____

Name of Person Completing Form: _____ Date: _____

Please send all completed forms and any photos to ckolze@floridalegion.org with the subject "100th Anniversary" or mail to Department Headquarters, 100th Anniversary: 1912 A Lee Road; Orlando, FL 32810.