



FEBRUARY 2021

THE LEGION LINK

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Submit Articles at

floridalegion.org/submit or legionlink@floridalegion.org

Questions? legionlink@floridalegion.org

From your Dept Commander Rick Johnson

Rick Johnson, Commander

commander@floridalegion.org



January and February will be busy months as I have numerous visits planned around the state. January 31st at Post 137, I will be doing a polar plunge for COTA - I know it will be cold, and they will also add ice to the pool. I want

to thank Post 63 for the generous \$30,000 donation to PVR from their Challenge 22 event. We also have Post 359 raising funds all the month of January for PVR. They raised over \$15,000 last year. All these funds have been assisting the veterans in Florida during these challenging times.

Thank god for PVR and what the program does. From March through December of 2020, PVR assisted 273 families with over \$225,000 in COVID assistance claims.

The vaccine is finally out, and hopefully, this virus will be slowed to a crawl letting us get back to somewhat normal operations. During Post visits, I'm seeing great things that have been and continue to be done around the state. So many posts have found ways to move forward despite the ongoing health crisis. Many have remodeled, and they look great. Post 221 redid their whole post with significant changes. Please stop by and see them.

I'm very proud of the new leadership at Post 33; they have turned that post around in such a way that everyone in the community is looking forward to great things happening soon.

Our National Commander will be visiting Florida on February 3-11, 2021, and this time it will be in the Southwestern Area. Unfortunately, I have not been given the opportunity provide any input or assist with the coordination of the visit. The schedule is on the website for everyone to see.

The Legion Riders' Summit will be taking place with many mandatory procedures for everyone to follow to stay safe.

February is also the month to start to push more on membership. We have teams that are willing and able to assist in any way they can. So please use them. It will be a lot tougher to get new members as the months progress.

The Adopt a Highway program needs to be kicked up in high gear. Also, there are numerous rest areas out there that are also looking for sponsors. The sponsorships are a no-cost program and a great way to market the Legion Family. I see numerous posts that have adopted a highway, as it is a great tool to get the community involved, as we have seen in the pictures and posts on social media.

We had numerous posts that have achieved 100% plus in membership before December

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<< Dept. Commander Continued from page 1
31st, and I want to thank you for the hard work; let's keep it going as time moves forward. Numerous posts have found ways outside the box to do fundraising and get their community more involved with the post. Look at what is happening out there; we need to keep moving forward and not get caught up in the demonstrations that could affect us.

Post Constitution and By-Laws (CBLs) Amendments - I have put together a team with the District Commanders to get your CBLs completed. After numerous delays over that last year and a half, I felt it was necessary to initiate a process that could expedite the return of the CBLs to the Posts. All CBLs that have been submitted will be reviewed and returned with any needed corrections if applicable. I take full responsibility for them not being accomplished in a timely manner, and hope that we have taken the steps necessary to

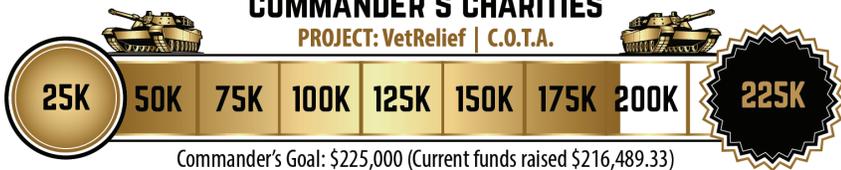
get back on track. Thank you, Stuart Scott some of the other District Commander and Vice Commanders, for volunteering to assist in this endeavor.

As far as our Department Convention in July 2021, we are still a go. We have a meeting scheduled with the hotel early in February to discuss the event(s). The Meeting will assist us in strategizing as we move closer to our convention. We will publish information as it becomes available. All posts, please make sure we have a good E-mail address on file as this is an effective way to communicate updated information.

I want to thank EVERYONE who has been giving 100% to our great organization every day and continue to serve our great nation. It is because of you that we are who we are as a great family. Have a great month, and I look forward to seeing you out there soon. God bless you all, and let's continue to let freedom ring.

COMMANDER'S CHARITIES

PROJECT: VetRelief | C.O.T.A.



Well Done with Membership

Jerry Brandt, 1st Vice

1stvice@legionmail.org



January has been an interesting month, with the Department Commander's visit to 1st, 2nd and 3rd Districts, the Polar Plunge at Post 137, and several meetings - we are starting to come back to life. Let's

continue to wear our masks and social distance. However, at the same time, try to get back to a normal life.

Did you happen to notice our membership is doing great, even with the COVID-19? On the report for January 7th, 2021, out of sixteen districts, nine exceeded the goal of 80%. Well done. Zone 3 has four of the six Districts above 80%, and the other two miss it by a

combine number seventy-five members needed. Seventeen posts have already exceeded the 100% mark as well. Again, well done.

Your posts should now be in the process of setting up an election date. This is your chance to step up and become an officer of your Post. Please, be a volunteer, be a leader in your Post.

Buddy Checks - those who have made the calls know that we have members who want to hear a friendly voice. Many of our members are still feeling the isolation of COVID-19, reach out to them to see if they need help or want someone to talk to. I would like to thank the Commanders of the 1st District, 2nd District and 3rd District for their help with the Department Commanders visit in January.

Several Legionnaires have asked me

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FEBRUARY 2021

1-28	Black History Month
30 - 1	District 5 Polar Plunge 🌟
1	Youth Law Cadet: Application & Fee Opens
2	Groundhog Day
3-8	National Commander Visit 🌟🌟
3	Membership Goal 85%
3	ALR Summit, Meet & Greet
4-6	ALR Summit
4	Post 99 Visitation
4	Post 186 Visitation
6	District 11 Meeting
6	District 4 Meeting: Your Last 10%
6	Southwestern Area Ball 🌟
7	Four Chaplains Ceremony
7	Oratorical : District Competitions Complete
7	Super Bowl Sunday
10	Membership Renewal Cut-off
10-13	District 9 Visit 🌟
13	Adopt-A-Highway Cleanup
13	Car & Truck Show
14	Valentine's Day
15	President's Day
15	Department HQ Closed
15	Legion Link Articles Due
16	Post 139 Visitation
17	Ash Wednesday
17	Post 167 Visitation
18-20	District 12 Visit 🌟
19	Coast Guard Reserve Birthday
20	District 6 Meeting
20	Blood Donation & Membership Drive Post 348
20	District 1 Meeting
20	Eastern Area Ball 🌟
21	Oratorical: Area Competitions Complete
23	Post 26 Visitation
24	Membership Renewal
24	Operation Desert Storm Began (1991)
24-27	District 6 Visit 🌟
27-2	Washington Conference 🌟🌟
27	District 15 E-Board Meeting
28	Operation Desert Storm Ends (1991)

🌟 - Commander Rick Johnson's Attendance Tentative.

★ - National Event

Events are subject to change. Additional details can be found at www.floridalegion.org. We share the information we are provided.



<<1st Vice Continued from page 2

about Chairmanship, if you want me to look at you as a Chairman, please use the Florida Legion Website, at www.floridalegion.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Dept_Chair_Interest_Flyer_2021-2022, this is the best way for me to choose new Chair for the various committees. While a lot of good Legionnaires ask for a position, it is often forgotten in the rush, please fill out the Chairmanship form.

As always, let me know what I can do to assist you, your Post, or your District. assist you, your Post, and your District.

Show Your Members Some Love

Eunice Butts, 2nd Vice Commander
2ndvice@legionmail.org



To those posts that achieved 85% to 100% plus, congratulations. February is the month of love. Let us show our fellow comrades who cannot drive, who are ill, who may need help or just to hear someone voice from their post call and say "Hello" some love. Let us utilize the "Buddy check". Some may not have paid their dues and perhaps they will pay because you thought enough of them to call. Start sending delinquent members letters for their post dues. Put into the letter some of the many activities that your post participates in. Some suggestions: Children and Youth; Americanism;

Patriotism and community activities These are just a few suggestions of many to help increase and retain your membership.

February 2nd is Ground Hog Day, the 14th is Valentine's Day and the 15th is Presidents Day. Plan an event whether virtual or in person.

I thank each of you for the for the hard work you continue to do. Do not forget to advertise to your local newspapers, radio stations, social media, etc. We must be considerate of those who do not do social media or computers, it is not their fault that they were born before this age and time. Some of these people are the ones who will support and contribute to our cause. They will work hard if they know what The American Legion does.

I wish each of you a very successful program and membership year. HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY.

Crunch Time

Michael Raymond, 3rd Vice Commander
3rdvice@legionmail.org



With the holidays and a very ugly year behind us, it's time to place max effort in at least two areas.

Number one, like every year, is membership. Things are slowing down so we must

reach out to each member and find out the reason why they have not renewed. Our Southern Zone Chairman has come up with a rather novel idea. He has come up with a great message in the form of an e-mail that he (or you) can send via

e-mail to each one of your members that has not renewed yet. The first Post he sent it to actually got four renewals just with the push of a button. I highly recommend contacting Ray at his e-mail, teamperez@legionmail.org or call him at 727-412-5356.

Number two, you must begin to start looking for and mentoring your replacement. Elections will be coming up sooner than you think, therefore a smooth transition is a must. It would be a good idea to begin by reviewing your bylaws to be sure you are conducting your elections according to prescribed directives. Every

Post does it different so be sure you know your procedures. If you are unsure, please don't hesitate to ask for help. One of the most disturbing things that I find is a Post where the Commander is the acting Adjutant or Finance Officer. This is a recipe for disaster. Even if you find someone who can only work a few hours a week, it is better than none at all.

I'd like to finish by thanking all the Posts and membership for their hospitality during my visits. If there is anything I can do for you, please don't hesitate to call, e-mail or text. Be safe out there!

American Legion Amateur Radio

Dennis Boland, NEC
nec@legionmail.org



The American Legion Amateur Radio Club (TALARC) comprises nearly 4,000 members of The American Legion Family that possess federally issued licenses as amateur

radio operators. The club promotes The American Legion through the art and science of amateur radio; encourages posts to participate in local disaster preparedness and emergency communications operations; serves as a national emergency communications resource in conjunction with the Department of Homelands Security or state and local emergency management agencies; and encourages youth in the exploration of science and technology

through amateur radio.

The American Legion National Headquarters station was established in 2011. Under the FCC call sign K9TAL, the club operates as a "special-event" station on Veterans Day and The American Legions' birthday, trading shortwave calls with amateur radio operators worldwide. TALARC members also run regional and national practice radio nets over a

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<<NEC Continued from page 3

variety of bands and modes and actively participate in Jamboree-on-the-Air, the largest Scouting event in the World.

TALARC has a webpage, legion.org/

hamradio, where licensed amateur radio members of The American Legion Family can apply for free membership in TALARC. Post leaders can also learn how to form an active post program, joining the 40 American Legion posts and departments

around the nation with organized amateur radio activities.

For more information, email K9tal@legion.org.

Fellowship with Friends and Family

Barry Roberts, Chaplain

chaplain@legionmail.org



February has several observances including our Four Chaplains Ceremony, Religious Emphasis Week, Presidents Day, and Valentine's Day. We also have Ground Hog Day, Tater Tot Day, Bubble Gum Day, Ice cream for Breakfast Day, Fly a Kite Day, National Pizza Day, Plumb

Pudding Day, Cheddar Day, Cherry Pie Day and National Random Acts of Kindness Day to name a few. We have many things to be thankful for, so I pray you are blessed in your fellowship with family and friends as you celebrate special days.

As part of our Challenge 22 efforts, I have been in contact with the American Association of Christian Counselors and we are being offered a faith based Mental Health Life Coach Certificate through Legion Church. It is about 45 hours of online training and the \$2,400 tuition has been waived, so the only cost is a \$54.00 administration fee. I already have several

people from around the state enrolled in the program. If you would like to know more please email me at bwroberts@rocketmail.com or call me at 863-661-9999.

Let's be proactive together in preserving "For God and Country" and let's be proactive together in reaching out into our communities and serving our veterans and their families. Let's be proactive together and go help somebody.... I am here for you, feel free to join and participate on Facebook, www.facebook.com/floridalegionchaplains

Northern Area Ball & CPRs

Marie Conti, Northern Area Commander

northernarea@legionmail.org



Congratulations to everyone that has met or exceeded the 80% goal. The next membership goal is 90% before March 4th. Remember, the Northern Area membership goal is 100% before St. Patrick's Day, so each District can be in the running for National Race to The Top Honors.

There is still work to do for the 2020-2021 Legion Year. I suggest that you look where your Post is at this point and see if you need to catch up in membership (ask for help if you need it!). Remember, anyone without a 2021 card cannot attend meetings and should not be served in the lounge. Please remind your bartenders to check membership cards.

The Northern Area Ball will be held on March 6, 2021 at American Legion Post 129, Jacksonville Beach. This theme this year will be Legion Blue and Gold or Military. Attire will be semi-formal/formal, (optional) Military Service Dress uniform

(ribbons) or proper civilian equivalent. Tickets are extremely limited and selling very fast! See flyer for details. Please contact either me or PDC Jay Conti Sr. at 352-287-1400, for more information.

Now is the time get an early start on the end of year CPR Reports. Remember most of the end of year reports are now available online at floridalegion.org. Also, don't forget Awards for Boy Scouts, JROTC & Shooting Sports, School Medals, Americanism, Children & Youth Month (C & Y April) and many other Programs that we have. Let's finish what we started last year and go out with a BANG!

Western Area News

John Edens, Western Area Commander

westernarea@legionmail.org



When I spoke with various District and Post Commanders, they say that January has been a slow month. However, it really has been busier than they think. **Membership is**

our primary goal this time of year. Most of our Posts are showing steady progress in this year's membership. I will be working directly with the District Commanders to improve membership in the handful of Posts that are behind goals. This past year's "Buddy Checks", if done properly, should help us get our renewals up this year.

Secondly, the **Department Commander** visited our Western Area in mid-January. Commander Johnson visited our 1st and

2nd Districts over a four-day period. I want to thank our Post Commanders and staff that showed the Commander hospitality by showing up for his visit. One of Commander Johnson's priorities this visit was to visit the new Post 33 staff. This brand-new staff has raised money and worked extremely hard to re-build Post 33 after Hurricane Sally. The Western Area was very appreciative of his visit.

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<<Western Area Continued from page 4

I want to personally thank PDC Jim Ramos for his training and membership tutoring for our Western Area this past year. He has faithfully made at least four training

sessions for our Area this year. He also, made the extra effort to help mentor our Post 33 with their brand-new Officer staff, who had little-to-no Legion experience. **Thanks again PDC Ramos for a job extremely, well done.**

Everyone **stay healthy** and keep your distance. I look forward to seeing everyone soon. **Thanks again for everyone's hard work.**

Thank You

Jim Ramos, Northern Membership
teamramos@legionmail.org



First, I want to say Thank You to the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, and 17th Districts and all the Posts in the northern part of Florida for a job well done. Now is time to get back to work on

membership and here is a three-part plan that can help us do it as follows:

First, continue to communicate with your members (by ZOOM, conference call, email, and newsletter's) and if you must, go and visit them to see if they need some assistance. It works and it will help you with membership and making our 103% goal for 2021.

Second, February has a lot of events so be safe and careful with the programs you are going to do. Plan something for the Four Chaplains program, Presidents Day, Valentine's Day, and February is also Americanism Month. Look in the Americanism book for something to do. If you need some help email or call me. Our goal in February is 85% by Feb 3, 2021 we can do it.

Third, in March look to help our District get a 100% or more to win the "Race to the Top". Be PROUD of your District and your Post, do all you can to make it happen. Remember, we all are a big

membership team is the only way that we can do it together. This is how to have a membership DRIVE- have members go knock on doors and check out the membership manual (available on the Department website) for the membership PLAN. Email or call me for some ideas or help.

Last year was good with membership and thank you for all your hard work, but we cannot forget to ask our members to renew NOW. Yes, NOW is a great time to asks your members who have not renewed to pay for 2021. Please we need you NOW. We know this is a bad time with COVID-19, but the vaccine is out in some areas. Get your members informed and help them out if you can, they will appreciate a lot. Please check out the Department Membership Manual on the website (floridalegion.org) It is under resources, then go down to Forms & Documents (and touch or hit the learn more button) and then go down to Manuals & Guides and is the first manual that you will see.

Please download it to your computer, take some time and read it. It has a lot of great information for your membership team, also use the timetable for your next event. We need to stay on top of membership because we must meet the Goals from Department. The membership timetable is to help each Post make their new goal.

We all are recruiter some tips:

1. Recruit a friend, a neighbor or

somebody who is a veteran.

2. Just ask if they look like a veteran.
3. Show your pride by wearing your Legion gear (shirt and cap with the Legion logo).
4. Buddy Checks are working Please continue connecting with your members (Buddy Check FloridaLegion.org) to get it

The goal for February 3rd is 85% for the Department, how is your Post doing?

Setting the Goals: (specific dates and timetable) below:

1. February is Americanism Month, look at the Americanism book for ideas.
2. February 3rd - Four Chaplains Day, consider having a ceremony.
3. February 14th - Valentine's Day, have get together or a dance.
4. February 15th - President Day, plan something fun.
5. March 15-17 - The Legion's Birthday, have a celebration any day in March.
6. Make a BIG push in March to help your District and your Post.

For suggestions or questions, please contact me at Phone number 352-226-4370 or email at jramos149@bellsouth.net.

I am here to help you and your Post be the best in Florida.

Getting Better

Richard Smith, SAL Advisor
sal@legionmail.org

We are into 2021 and so far seems to be getting a little better. Posts and

squadrons are doing more and more. As we get into February remember to keep working on the SAL membership to get renewals. Have the squadrons start preparing for the end of year reports which

will be out before we know it. Everyone stay healthy.



Membership Goals

Ray Perez, Southern Membership
teamperez@legionmail.org



The remaining goals set by Department:

- 85% February 3rd
- 90% March 10th
- 95% April 7th
- 100% May 5th
- Race to the Top 100% (National)
- 100% +1 May 31st (Department) This is also Memorial Day.
- The only 100% goal that is over is the award of a Department Membership Gold Coin. You can now get the Silver Coin for reaching 100% before March 31st. Remain focused, WE can do this!

Out of ideas and need to try something new? Call me so we can discuss it. Check out the items below to help think of ways to attract members to your Post.

February is Americanism Month

- Educate members on the Americanism Program.
- Youth Law Cadet Apps Fee Open (1st)
- Membership Goal 85% (3rd)
- National Commander's Visit (3rd – 8th)
- ALR Summit (4th – 6th)
- Four Chaplains Day (7th)
- District Oratorical Comp Complete (7th)
- Super Bowl Sunday (7th)
- Valentine's Day (14th)
- President Day (15th)
- Coast Guard Reserve Birthday (19th)
- Area Oratorical Comp Complete (21st)

March is Military Caregiver and Woman's History Month

- Navy Reserve's Birthday (3rd)
- Seabee Birthday (5th)
- Department Oratorical Contest (13th)
- This is a good time to build events around the American Legion Birthday (15th)
- Medal of Honor Day (25th)
- Post elections Open (26th)
- Children and Youth Golf Tournament Post 275 (27th)
- Palm Sunday (28th)
- Vietnam Veterans Day (29th)

Continue your Buddy Checks at the Post and District Level.

MOBILITY SCOOTERS AVAILABLE

Jennifer Cooper, Dept Fundraising Director
jcooper@floridalegion.org



Do you or a veteran you know need a mobility scooter?

The American Legion, Department of Florida received seventeen mobility scooters earlier this year from generous donors, Jack

Kump and his wife, Joan Wheeler. Their donation has already made an impact on veterans who have received one of these high-end scooters. We still have a few mobility scooters remaining that need to be distributed to well-deserved veterans.

If you, or a member of your Post, are a disabled Florida Veteran, who could greatly benefit from one of these mobility

scooters, we would like to hear from you.

Requirements:

- Must be for the use of the veteran applying.
- Veteran must be a Florida Resident.
- Provide proof of military service.
- Have the capability to arrange pick up of the scooter at Department Headquarters in Orlando, Florida.
- Written explanation of need.

The American Legion, Department of Florida asks that you write a letter or email explaining why you, or a known Legionnaire, should receive one of these scooters. Briefly discuss why you feel you, or they, should be chosen. Please include a copy of your DD214 to verify your veteran service and be sure to include contact information. **All letters and DD214 forms must be received in our office no later than February 26, 2021 for consideration.** Late and incomplete

submissions will not be considered. Please do not call for inquiries, recipients will be decided by a Department Committee based on the written entries received by the deadline, and on a first come first serve basis.

All entries should be mailed to: The American Legion, Department of Florida, Mobility for Veterans, PO Box 547859; Orlando, FL 32854-7859 or via emailed to jcooper@floridalegion.org. Selected recipients will be notified in March to start arranging pickup of their mobility scooters.

The American Legion, Department of Florida would like to extend a debt of gratitude to Jack and Joan, on behalf of all Florida Veterans. It is this type of compassion and kindness that we wish for all our veterans.



Upcoming Summit & Other Events

Jim Wineland, American Legion Riders
legionriders@legionmail.org



We hope everyone has a great new year and that it is going in the right direction. We have had a lot to overcome - the pandemic and all the D.C. Drama. If you let it, it will drag you down. It has been a real struggle

to keep all the pieces to the puzzle in place, but when you read this Bev & I will be at the Summit wondering what we forgot.

I mentioned the donor car in the last article, we made a few dollars at the Mecon auction and we came out on the positive side. I would like to thank Ocean Beaches Post 129 for the donor car and again thanks to Jeff and Joe from Post 10, and their leadership team for all their help.

Post 10 has the gun raffle tickets together and they will be ready to go at the Summit. This raffle takes the place of the Harley that we were going to raffle,

but because of the pandemic their plans changed. We would like to see each District take at least 100 tickets and will have more available.

We have a new activity starting to gain momentum in Department and that is the Challenge 22 that helps support PVR/SPI. Ocean Beaches Post 129 along with the 5th District will be sponsoring an event on March 27th at the Purple Heart Park in Jaxs Beach. If you have been following Facebook, Post 63 in Winter Garden raised \$30,000 during their Challenge 22 event, great job!

Get ready, the hotels will be opening for reservations soon after the Summit is over. We have the Unity Ride and Rally to put the final touches on. Once again, Post 10 will be deeply involved finding a new location for the Rally.

As I have mentioned before, Bev and I are looking for a little help. We are a little ahead of the schedule because we moved unused plans from last year to this, but we need more individuals to get involved and ready to step up as the needs of the program change. Please plan

on attending our "Succession Planning Class" at the Summit, come see what it is all about.

Again, Thank You for all your Efforts! Here is our tentative schedule for the balance of the year for your review and comments.

- **February 3**, Summit - Meet & Greet 6PM – 8PM
- **February 4, 5, & 6**, Summit - Classroom, we will have AM Sunday for Road Captain Training
- **April 3**, Children & Youth Picnic at American Legion Post #1, Titusville, Florida, 12P to 6PM
- **April**, all month, Round Robin, PVR/SPI
- **April 18**, Meet & Greet - Marathon & Pensacola FL
- **April 19-23**, North & South - In-State Unity Rides
- **April 24**, In-State-Rally - TBA
- **July 1-4**, Department Convention

Beverly and I would like to thank each of you for the support we received this last year! Thank You for what you do, and we are proud to be part of your Leadership Team of such a great group!

Retiring Flags and Brass Grommets

Kurt Gies, Americanism
americanism@legionmail.org



Americanism: Nothing more signifies Americanism to me than the flag of our country. Flying proudly, it represents so much - including the symbolism of freedom, our way of life, and a

reminder of the sacrifices and bloodshed by those who serve to defend her. Wouldn't it be great to see every house on your street or business in your town flying it proudly? This is where you at the Legionnaire can play a significant role.

After a while of flying proudly and working so hard to represent the USA, our

flags become tired, tattered, and torn. It then comes time for the flag to be retired. The US flag code dictates that the flag must be destroyed by burial or by burning in a dignified manner. Does your American Legion Post retire flags? Many Posts offer this type of service to your community. Do you collect them from the community and/or have others retire them for you? Or do you retire them yourselves? Do they need to stop by when you're there or can they drop them in a mailbox outside your Post? If so, great! If not, please consider doing this today. Whatever you are doing, I ask that maybe you take two extra steps.

The first step is an additional service to the community, but also can turn in to a money-maker for your Post. Here's how! Ask yourself the question, "**if someone is willing to go to the effort of driving to**

your Post to drop off a retired US flag, then wouldn't they be more than willing to buy a new US flag from you if you could offer it to them easily?"

Through Emblem Sales, we have American flags that are very high-quality, made in the USA and where all the proceeds go directly towards supporting veterans who have served. A little-known fact is that Emblem Sales will give your Post a credit in the amount of 10% for all sales made each year. Use those funds to buy more flags. Then apply the proceeds from those sales towards American Legion programs.



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<<Americanism Continued from page 7

For example, if in 2020 you sold \$4,500 worth of flags, your Post would get a \$450 credit at the end of the year. This is the same amount it cost to send one Delegate to Boys State each summer. So why not attach an order form to the collection box so that those who are dropping off can place an order for a new one? Then 1-2 times a month you can hand-deliver the new US flag to whomever bought it.

This way you can personally thank them for supporting the American Legion and possibly recruit a new member.

The second step happens when you retire a flag by burning. You see, once the fire is out, all that is left behind are the ashes and the brass grommets that once held the flag to the pole. Typically, these are swept up and thrown away. But here in the Dept of Florida, we have a campaign to collect all the burned/retired flag grommets. The idea

is to gather as many of these as we can each year, so that they can be ultimately be melted down into something of value. Imagine a beautiful brass piece of art made of retired US flags that can be awarded each year as a traveling trophy to the Post with the Best Americanism program or maybe a beautiful brass monument to be displayed at our Dept HQ made from the melted grommets. Please start collecting those grommets from your fire pits today!

Legion Baseball Buzz

Terry Phillips, Baseball
baseball@legionmail.org



2021 Team Registration is open and the buzz for Legion Baseball Program has begun early. The Baseball Committee has met and we are preparing for a great season.

The Baseball Website page is now available for information and communications.

Please visit the floridalegion.org site, scroll to programs and click Baseball to check out the available information. My contact information and all your Area Commissioners information is located there as well as the Florida Baseball Manual.

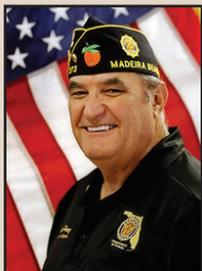
We are preparing for the Sr. and Jr. State

Tournaments in July that will be hosted in Jacksonville.

Please help and support your teams and when the top eight teams play for a state championship it could be your team.

Blood Donor Testimony & Margaret Skaggs Memorial Award

Ray Perez, Blood Donor
blooddonor@legionmail.org



What better way to start out than to show you a testimonial about a Mother and her Daughter, Selena, from St. Cloud, FL.

"I have been a blood donor since 2009, when my soon-to-

be mother-in-law passed away from Leukemia and I began donating blood to honor her. I discovered at that time that I have one of the rarest blood types, so blood donation became a necessity for me, not an option.

But the reality of just how much blood donation can change lives didn't really sink in until April 2020, when my 5-year-old daughter was diagnosed with A.L.L. Leukemia. After about her fourth

transfusion, it hit me hard: my child needs this blood to survive, and if she doesn't receive it, she will die.

I stared at the bag and realized it came from OneBlood and marveled at the fact that some stranger had donated that blood just a few days ago, and now here it was, saving my child's life.

The tangibility of that donor's sacrifice, as well as my own when I donate, was not at all lost on me: blood donation LITERALLY saves lives, and I got to see firsthand just how important of an act this is in the case of saving my own daughter's life".

That could be any of us one day!

COVID Update!

On a personal note, I got my 1st shot of the Moderna Vaccine which I'm very fortunate to have, now the second one comes 21 days after. This was not only important to me for my family's sake but for my work to the American Legion at my Post and as

your Chairman.

Without getting political about the whole thing, this is a massive operation in the State of Florida. Releasing the authority to run the vaccination distribution down to the County level has created quite a cluster. Out of state visitors receiving vaccinations ahead of our residents. Long waiting lines, website and call-in sites breaking down. All I can tell you is be persistent if you want the vaccine. Of course, in Florida you have to be 65 years old unless you're a frontline worker or law enforcement among others.

Please don't forget the Covid-19 Convalescent Program that takes the plasma from recovered Covid-19 patients and is used to treat new patients. Two of my friends made it out of the hospital that were given this treatment. You can ask One Blood if you are a candidate to give if you have already contracted the virus.

Continued on page 9>>



<<Blood Donor Continued from page 8

So, here is a reminder about the Margaret Skaggs Memorial Award 1st place and runner-up that is for the Post that has the best Blood Donor Program. The criteria are:

- (1) Must have a CPR and Addendum on file
- (2) Period of donations are May 1st, 2020 thru April 30th, 2021 only.

(3) A letter from your local blood bank listing the units of blood within that period of participants from your post attached to your report.

(4) Include a narrative containing information or comments concerning the Blood Donor activities of your post such as how many donations were collected from legion, SAL Auxiliary or the community, how these units were utilized and any special activities for the Blood Donor Program.

Nominations must be received no later than May 12, 2021 at Department.

After two consecutive years as your Blood Donor Chairman, it is my last. I challenge anyone to apply to volunteer for this great program. Those applications are on the resource page of the floridalegion.org website. Please feel free to call me if you're interested and have any questions.

Children & Youth Bulletin

Les Martin, Children & Youth

cy@legionmail.org



I am sorry to say that The American Legion Children & Youth Golf Tournament is cancelled for this year. With the Sons of the American Legion holding a Golf Tournament for the charitable organization COTA on the same day

as we had the Legion C&Y Tournament scheduled, there is just no other date available to hold our tournament. So that means that we must work that much harder to make our Children & Youth Picnic, a very successful event. We must raise funds to support the Programs of The American Legion's Fourth Pillar, Children & Youth. The Picnic will be held at Post 1 in Titusville on April 3rd, and we will need a lot of participation from ALL our Posts. We will need as many gift baskets as our Posts can provide. I would like to fill as many tables as we can with baskets of cheer or whatever you might have. If your Post can't get a basket together, consider making a donation of \$500 or \$1,000. Make your checks payable to

"The American Legion Dept. of Florida, C & Y Picnic" and mail to Department Headquarters.

Each Post and District should look ahead at what they will be doing during April. Remember, April is Children & Youth month.

I have again attended several District meetings this past month and will be attending many more after the Riders Summit in February. The big push for our Posts in each of the Districts is to get out and approach your local school districts and seek out your candidate for the American Legion Department of Florida, Teacher of the Year. With close to 300 Posts in Florida, we shouldn't have only a small handful of applications. Come on, make our job difficult and get your applications in. The deadline is April 21st. I know there are many qualified teachers in your local school districts that can earn this award. We also need more of our Posts submitting applications for "Best Post Children & Youth Program" and "Children & Youth Chairman". Again, with nearly 300 Posts in Florida, we should be receiving quite a few applications. Let us know that your Post's Children & Youth Committee

is active. So come on, flaunt what your Post is doing for the kids. Be proud of your accomplishments.

Our Children & Youth coins are now available. They are available through the Department Emblem Sales or you can purchase them from me when I visit your District meeting or Post, along with other events I plan on attending.

With both of our major fundraisers cancelled last year and now the Golf Tournament for this year, we need your help. We would like to see each Post, Unit, Squadron and Chapter, hold at least one fundraising event this year for the Department Children and Youth Committee. It could be a bike poker run or a months' worth of bar poker receipts, or a bake sale or garage sale or anything else that your group may be doing.



Until Next Month, stay Safe and Healthy.

Florida Career Source Center

James Douglas, Employment

employment@legionmail.org

I want to start off by thanking all the posts that submitted Employment Award packages. The winners will be announced during the July 1st through 4th, 2021 Department of Florida 102nd Convention.

The Florida Career Source Center website <https://careersourceflorida.com> is a very good site for people whose careers/jobs have been impacted by the Covid-19 Pandemic. The site is constantly being updated as new programs and funds are received. The website is not only for Employees looking to retrain or find a new

job but is also for Business Owners who need to recruit specialized talent, hire new team members, train existing employees, or all three.

If you are looking for a job - don't forget to reach out to family members, friends, or former teachers/bosses to see if they are aware of available job positions.



ROTC/JROTC/JSSP News

Loretta Young, ROTC/JROTC/JSSP

jrotc@legionmail.org



The Broward County JROTC Program Accreditation (JPA) Annual Reviews were held the second week in January. These reviews are held every three years on a rotating basis in Broward County by the 6th Brigade Command. Due to the COVID-19 restrictions in Broward County, this was a virtual event conducted by the higher headquarters administrator, Max Denniston. I had the opportunity to be in attendance for three of the interviews. The review covers the program goals throughout the semester to keep the cadet programs on track. The Cadet Battalion Command under the leadership of the Cadet Battalion Commander, gives the Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) Brief to the Review Panel. The first review was at Cypress Bay JROTC and the Cadets were very well prepared and did an outstanding job on showing the program advancements during the semester and the focus on "Winning Colors" designed to help each individual cadet understand their own personality strengths and weaknesses and that of others that they are dealing with.

The Cadets are very active in the community with parades and volunteering

and gain community service hours as well as recruitment with middle schools with a video promoting focus on robotics, STEM, mentoring and tutoring. The motto of the JROTC Program is "to build better citizens" which is the foundation of the Cadet Program. Kudos to the Battalion Commander, Justin Torres and his leadership and may he be successful with his career and appointment to West Point. Another segment of the JPA is the Service Learning Project Briefing. The basis of the program is what you learn by personal growth and a better respect of what someone else is going through. To see through someone else's "eyes". In this time of the COVID-19 pandemic, this can be shown to enhance personal growth and an empathy for others. I had the opportunity to attend two programs and was very impressed with the Cadets' selections.

Plantation JROTC Cadets chose a "Harvest Drive" for the community. The Cadets planned, shopped, collected, packed, sorted, and distributed food and hygiene products for 180 families. The experience demonstrated learning goals of leadership and self-improvement along with time management to conduct the massive effort. This was a team effort and was under the organization of two Cadets who coordinated the project.

Marjorie Stoneman Douglas JROTC Cadets, Continuous Improvement Plan Brief had a focus on the Retainability of the two Cadets. Their goal is to increase participation and retention for the growth

and future increase in the numbers for the program for future years. For the Service Learning Project the Cadets choose care packages for the Alexander "Sandy" Niningger Veterans Nursing Home. This program was coordinated by two Cadets with a team effort to plan, shop, gather, and deliver items to the Nursing Home for their goal of 84 residents. This number however increased as they were able to get more than the planned items. The Cadets also included personal handmade cards for each package. This demonstrated the idea of the Service Learning Program which taught the Cadets empathy for the veterans who at this time are isolated and lonely and not able to go out as some normally do, or have the busy schedule of the Nursing Home with guests and entertainment during the Holidays. I would encourage our Legionnaires to get an opportunity to attend one of these Annual Briefings and see how well the Cadets coordinate and present this very important part of the Legion Four Pillars. You will not be disappointed.

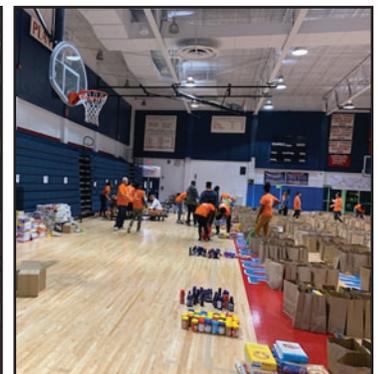
JSSP final Postal Target Teams deadline was December 15th and for the State of Florida 2021 there were only three teams registered who received targets. Many thanks to: Cooper City NJROTC sponsored by Post 321, Sarasota Military Academy sponsored by Post 266 and Vanguard NJROTC sponsored by Post 27. Deadline to return targets to CMP is February 1st. All the best for these teams and thanks for all the hard work for the teams and the coaches during these difficult times.



Junior Shooting Sports



Plantation JROTC Service Learning Project



Plantation JROTC SLP with Cadets



2020 Was a Bad Year for Law Enforcement Officers/First Responders

Daryl Bass, Law & Order
laworder@legionmail.org



The coronavirus pandemic has been responsible for more police officers' deaths in the line of duty than any other cause combined, according to a nonprofit dedicated to fallen police officers.

According to the Officer Down Memorial Page, 101 police officers across the country have died after contracting COVID-19 while on the job. Eighty-two other police officers have been killed by other causes in the line of duty in 2020.

A second nonprofit, the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund (NLEOMF), lists 110 officer deaths linked to COVID-19.

Both Officer Down and NLEOMF only count officers who were known to have

contracted the virus while in the line of duty and they review each case before adding it to their count. Officer Down says it is reviewing an additional 150 fatal cases of COVID-19 that may be added to the count in the future.

"By the end of this pandemic, it is very likely that COVID-19 will surpass September 11th as the single largest incident cause of death for Law Enforcement Officers", Officer Down executive director Chris Cosgriff told The Washington Post.

Officer Down reports that seventy-three police officers died on September 11, 2001 in the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center, and more than 300 have died of Cancer linked to recovery efforts in the years since.

According to NLEOMF, the state with the most police officer deaths linked to COVID-19 is Texas, where twenty-four officers have died since the pandemic began. Another twelve have died after contracting the virus in nearby Louisiana. Officer Down also reports that non-

coronavirus related police officer deaths in the line of duty are down in 2020, despite widespread civil unrest. Thirty-one police officers have died from gunfire this year, the second-leading cause of death among officers in the line of duty. Another four officers have died as the result of "Inadvertent" gunfire.

President Donald Trump earlier this year, signed the Safeguarding America's First Responders Act of 2020, which offers federal benefits to the families to police officers/first responders killed by COVID-19.

Legionnaires, please pray for these police officers, sheriff deputies, fire fighters, paramedics, and their families and thank them for their sacrifice. Remember many of these who have passed were military veterans and many still with us today still doing the job where who knows what 2021 holds for them.

Sources:
Officer Down Memorial Page
National Law Enforcement Officer Memorial Fund (NLEOMF)
Channel 7 Denver

The Power of Great Oratory

Meri West, Oratorical
oratorical@legionmail.org

Important Information about the Department Contest!
Due to current health guidelines, we will be conducting the Department Contest with only contestants, their parents/guardians, and the bare minimum of volunteers necessary to run the competition to allow for social distancing. Unfortunately this means we are unable to invite prestigious guests, Legion family members and friends to attend as normal. Videos of each contestant's prepared speech and assigned topic oration will be available on the Department of Florida's website after the completion of the National Oratorical Contest in Indianapolis, IN, 09-11 April 2021.

Volunteer at Nationals

The National Oratorical Contest is still accepting volunteers to help run the contest. They also are requiring masks at all times and social distancing, but the venue is huge. If you would like to volunteer, at your own expense, you can follow this link. Note, the National office does background checks on volunteers at no cost to you for this event. Here is the link: <https://www.legion.org/oratorical/volunteer>

Volunteer at the Home School Convention

For the first time that I am aware of, the Department bought a space at the Florida Home Educators Association Convention to be held on May 27-29th, 2021 in Orlando.

Home School students have been Department finalists for at least the last seven years or more. Sometimes, two of the six finalists are home schooled

students. We bought a booth at the Convention so we can promote the contest there.

In 2020 Florida had over 106,000 home school students. That is a lot of potential contestants.

The convention starts on Thursday May 27th at 8:00 am and ends Saturday, May 29th at 6:00 pm. Bekki Tibbs and I will be there but would like to line up a couple of more people to help cover the time. Also, I don't think we can have too many volunteers because attendance at the convention is usually 15,000 to 18,000. If you are interested, please let me and Bekki know so we can make arrangements to pay for the badge of the volunteer.

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<<Oratorical Continued from page 11

Here is a link to the Convention information: <https://fpea.com/events/5376/2021-fpea-homeschool-convention>

During times of political upheaval and unrest, we often fall back on our Constitution to help make sense of what is going on around us and what action to take.

Certainly, the Coronavirus pandemic has raised a host of constitutional questions such as:

- **How states and the federal government respond in a crisis.**
- **How far reaching should emergency presidential powers be.**
- **How and if voting procedures should be changed.**
- **How and when we should sacrifice personal freedom for the common good.**

In colonial America, quarantines were frequently used to isolate people with malaria, typhoid, yellow fever, and cholera. One reason there were so few Supreme Court cases about it is because most people accepted that it was for the good of society and did not think to challenge it.

Generally, states were left to figure out and manage the quarantines and other public health issues. In 1904 though, the Supreme Court weighed in on a case, *Jacobsen vs. Massachusetts* where the state was requiring a smallpox vaccination to protect its citizens. The court ruled that the danger of smallpox to the community greatly outweighed the individual dangers that a vaccine might cause.

The court affirmed the right of the state to endanger individuals for the benefit of society.

Faced with our current public health

epidemic, the Supreme Court decision about the government's power to protect citizens by quarantine and forced vaccinations will likely receive renewed interest in the coming year.

I wanted this article to have a focus on how understanding the Constitution is relevant today, even though it was written in 1787. The pandemic was a good example of showing how the interpretation of the Constitution affects our daily lives. I wanted to remind the Legion Family that the purpose of the Oratorical contest is to encourage students to have a greater understanding of our governmental processes, a more thorough understanding of the Constitution and a forum to practice and hone their public speaking skills. Aside from winning money for college, the experience of participation in this contest is priceless.

Then there was a siege on the Capitol on January 6th, 2021.

But wait...was it a siege? Was it a protest? A riot? An insurrection? An attempted coup? A rally? An assault? A storming? Was it a rebellion? Or an uprising? Or a revolt? Was it domestic terrorism?

Words matter. We may not agree on what to call the January 6th event, but we can agree that our choice of words matter.

If you are a fisherman out on your boat, you need to know if the motion of the ocean you are feeling is a wave, a current, a tide. You need to know is it a high tide, low tide, neap tide, spring tide. If the movement is a storm surge, an upwelling or down welling, a rip current or longshore current. Is it a capillary wave, gravity wave, deep water wave, trans tidal wave? Or worse, is it a cyclone, tsunami, gyre, or seiche? Your life may depend on knowing the precise word to describe your situation so you can take the best action to prevent disaster.

If you live in Los Angeles and you feel

a rumbling under your feet but the man on the news said there is a herd of bison storming Rodeo Drive, you might continue shopping. But if the man on the news says it's an earthquake, you will take a whole different course of actions. Words matter. Be precise.

Aside from capsizing on the rough seas or getting trampled by a herd of bison looking for sales on Rodeo Drive, language is a critical component for an effective leader. How we structure a question, make a statement and word choice has meaningful impacts on the people who we are speaking to.

The Oratorical contest helps us teach students the craft of speech writing where they can practice their choice of words and get constructive criticism from the experienced and skilled public speakers who are judging the contest.

I watched an Oratorical contest once where one of the students was using the term "illegal aliens" to refer to people trying to enter the United States. He used the word repeatedly. One of the judges was a woman of color. (Here is an example of a word choice I have to make, I could say she is bi-racial, a woman of color, black although she is light skinned.

To me it is not important what her skin looks like but if you are giving a public speech you should know your audience.

If all you see are alabaster faces in your audience, you may use different language than if you see a variety of skin tones in your audience. Turns out this lady was the child of a black father who was a civil rights icon and a white socialite mother from Russia).

After the contest, she was giving feedback to all the students and I overheard her tell him she felt his use of "illegal aliens" could be construed as offensive and that she thought going

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<<Oratorical Continued from page 12

forward with this speech he should use other terms such as undocumented person or undocumented migrant. We don't expect students to know all of this but taking note of who your audience is can help you decide on the best words so that you have a winning speech as opposed to a mediocre one.

That student might end up being the mayor one day or a physician, but I feel certain that he will be more cognizant of his choice of words because of our Oratorical contest. It's a big thing and as chairmen, you should feel proud of your efforts in supporting this contest.

When I started this article for the

Legion Link, my focus was primarily on the pandemic and Constitutional questions that arise from the public health standpoint.

The siege on the Capitol raises a whole other list of questions we look to the Constitution to answer.

- **Can the Vice President invoke the 25th Amendment to remove the President from office?**
- **Were the President's words and actions or lack of action inciting violence?**
- **Is the Twitter and Facebook ban an infringement on his 1st Amendment rights?**
- **Can the Senate convict an**

impeachment after the President leaves office?

- **Are the digital photos and selfies taken at the riot tantamount to virtual confessions to law enforcement?**

Again, the Oratorical contest provides students with an opportunity to study the Constitution as a living document and in a contemporary way. And then they can showcase their knowledge and understanding in a contest. It is truly inspiring. It's been a rough year for chairmen with the pandemic. It's hard to reach all the students in a good year, but we managed and soon you can enjoy the fruits of your labor at the Department contest! Many thanks all around!

4th District January 30, 2021 Post 155 in Crystal River FL 10:00 am	8th District February 6, 2021 Post 24 Bradenton FL 11:00 am	11th District February 6, 2021 Post 268 Riviera Beach FL 1:00 pm
15th District January 23, 2021 Post 148 Riverview FL Time unknown	16th District January 30, 2021 Post 252 Seminole FL 10:30 am	Northern Area February 13, 2021 Post 155 Crystal River FL 10:00 am
Central Area February 13, 2021 Post 275 Dunedin, FL 9:00 am	Southern Area February 20, 2021 TBD in Broward County 10:00 am	Eastern Area February 21, 2021 Post 359 Titusville, FL 3:00 pm
Department Contest March 13, 2021 Department Headquarters Orlando 9:00 am	National Contest April 9-11, 2021 Indianapolis Wyndham West Hotel	

Cub Scout Camporee Postponed

Chris Ragusa, Scouting
scouting@legionmail.org



As COVID-19 infection rates trend upward and many Florida residents are just now receiving their initial vaccines - we have decided to postpone the February 2021 American Legion Cub Scout Camporee

on MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, FL. Originally scheduled for February 5th through the 7th, we will evaluate dates in the fall when MacDill Air Force Base has returned to Force Health Protection Condition (HPCON) Alpha. This will be a great event for American Legion Posts and Sons of the American Legion Squadrons - chartered Cub Scout packs. It will feature a full weekend of camping at Lewis Lake Scout Camp, a marina beach cookout, and tours of the air traffic controller tower, flightline fire and rescue station, maritime

patrol station and dock, armory, and K9 Dog Handling unit.

I encourage you to read an article posted on the Social Networking site LinkedIn. The article is entitled Putting Boy Scouting's Sex-Abuse Scandal into Perspective, and one of its main themes... and a good talking point with our Legion leadership at all levels... is the fact that the total number of abuse victims represents far fewer than 1 percent of the

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<<Scouting Continued from page 13

130 million young men and women who have safely participated in and benefited from Scouting since 1910. Please give this article a gander for more insight. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/putting-boy-scoutings-sex-abuse-scandal-perspective-gordon-g-andrew/?trackingid=xdMrxH4yStiwKNinVX6kHg%3D%3D>

I had the honor and privilege of representing the American Legion's Department of Florida at a double Eagle

Scout Court of Honor on December 19, 2020 in Riverview, FL. The two Eagle Scouts, Asher and Nathan, are the sons of former Department of Florida Scouting Chair Rick Hewett and his wife Julie. Both Rick and Julie are US Army veterans and PUFL members of the American Legion. The future is bright for these two young men.

Please send me Scouting articles and/or pictures of interest for inclusion in these monthly messages. I know that we have

Legion BSA units doing and achieving great things!



VA Vaccine News

Larry Roberts, VA Entitlements
veteransbenefits@legionmail.org



The VA is beginning COVID-19 vaccinations at 128 additional sites. VA will begin Moderna and Pfizer COVID -19 vaccinations this week at those additional sites. **The process for getting appointments for vaccination are**

ever changing so pay attention to county and municipal news regarding the process.

On Dec.18, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued an Emergency Use Authorization of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine, which is the second COVID-19 vaccine to be authorized.

"Having a second COVID-19 vaccine will enable us to reach more facilities and vaccinate more health care personnel and veterans in additional parts of the country"; said VA Secretary Robert L. Wilkie. "We continue to implement our COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Plan and are grateful to be one step closer to seeing the end of this pandemic."

Per Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations, the VA will continue to vaccinate health care personnel, as well as community living center residents and spinal cord unit residents.

113 VA Medical centers (VAMCs) and outpatient clinics will receive limited Moderna COVID-19 vaccine supplies this week. Here are the ones in Florida:

- Lee County VA Health Care Center
- Jacksonville VA Outpatient Clinic
- Sergeant Ernest I. "Boots" Thomas (Tallahassee) VA Outpatient Clinics
- The Villages VA Outpatient Clinics
- New Port Richey VA Outpatient Clinic
- William V. Chappell, Jr. (Daytona Beach) VA Outpatient Clinic
- South Hillsborough (Riverview) VA Outpatient Clinic
- Viera VA Outpatient Clinic

This information was taken from Vantage Point Official Blog of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs on December 23, 2020.

Eligibility

When vaccines become available, we plan to offer a free COVID-19 vaccine to all Veterans receiving VA health care who want one. Your team will contact you when

a vaccine is available to you. If you decide to get the vaccine, your team will help you schedule your appointments.

This information was taken from Bay Pines VA Healthcare System Face Book Page January 1, 2021

I want to start off by thanking a couple of people, Michael Raymond "Gambler", Department 3rd Vice Commander, for inviting me to set up an information booth at the Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans 2020 event and Jessica Moore for allowing me to set up an information booth at the American Legion Post 110 Challenge 22 event.

Both events were a great success, the booths were able to assist many veterans and their family members with information on suicide awareness, VA, State and Project VetRelief benefits. We were also able to make several referrals for counseling.

I would also like to say thank you to Jim Winland the Riders Director for inviting me to give class on VA, state and local benefits at the Riders Summit in February.

Please continue to do Buddy Checks, I am finding more and more veterans that are needing our assistance because of COVID-19.

Find us on:
facebook

facebook.com/floridalegion



PROJECT: VETRELIEF BULLETIN

AN OFFICIAL PROGRAM OF THE AMERICAN LEGION, DEPARTMENT OF FLORIDA

CHALLENGE 22 EVENTS... RAISING FUNDS AND AWARENESS TO END SUICIDE

It is PROJECT: VetRelief's goal to raise awareness about the staggering statistic on veteran suicide through various Challenge 22 events. Whether it's a ruck walk, educational seminar or speaking engagement, there's no shortage of opportunities to alert our communities on this serious issue our veterans are facing.

These Challenge 22 events are designed to encompass fundraising, creating awareness and educating our communities on the importance of mental health within our veteran communities and understanding the severity of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Over the past couple of years, we have had several Posts host events to further our mission and join our efforts to put an end to veteran suicide. In fact, a check for \$30,350 was presented to the Suicide Prevention Initiative (SPI) earlier this month from various

Challenge 22 events, including contributions from Post 63, Post 243, Post 22, and Post 110. Kudos to Board Member Kurt Gies and their team for a successful Challenge 22 event, even with overcoming new obstacles pertaining to the virus!

Our hope is to have at least 12 Challenge 22 events this calendar year to promote the mission of SPI, and since next year will be 2022, we are shooting for 22 events!

Take a look at the upcoming opportunities we have coming up for you to make your impact on ending veteran suicides.



MARCH

13 Post 69 Challenge 22 Event Avon Park, FL

2 Mile Walk, Vendors, silent auction, 50/50, door prizes, raffles and crafts to raise awareness for veteran suicide.

27 District 5 Challenge 22 Event Jacksonville Beach, FL

2.2 Mile walk on the Jax Beach, followed by food and entertainment at Post 129

APRIL

19 ALR Unity Ride Kick Off Entire State of Florida

Week long event with two Ride Routes (North & South) travelling to raise awareness for veteran suicides. Anyone can participate, and there will be a virtual element again this year!

EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE CASES STILL CONTINUE TO CLIMB

PROJECT: VetRelief continues to be in high demand, which means we are helping more and more of Florida's veterans each year.

When the coronavirus pandemic hit in March 2020, PROJECT: VetRelief was able to take action and provide *life-saving assistance* to our service members by keeping a roof over their head, lights turned on, or food on the table. In fact, we have been able to help 169 veterans and their families avoid an eviction so that they could focus on staying healthy during this deadly pandemic!

Truth is, since COVID-19 our funding has gone out a lot faster than it has come in. **We will not be able to continue this level of support without your help!**

The American Legion, Department of Florida Commander, William 'Rick' Johnson has recognized the true impact the emergency assistance program has on our veteran community and chose to extend his efforts to support the program.

We hope that you will participate in his Challenge to the Legion Family and

help him raise \$225,000 by the end of June. **He's almost there, as he only needs \$8,510.67 more!**

Donations can be made online (www.projectvetrelief.org/donate), mailed into the Department Headquarters, or given through the Commander's Charity.

Our veterans are counting on us working together to be there for them!



SUPPORT CASES
*Numbers reflect PVR Cases ONLY

JULY 2020 - DEC 2020

165 families helped

-\$153,596.62 amount distributed

National Defense Authorization Act

Alan Cohen, VA&R
var@legionmail.org



Now that the holiday season has passed, let's look forward to what we hope will be a better and healthier new year. Let us remember that the COVID-19 pandemic is still with us and that we need to

continue to take every safety precaution. In line with that and as you probably know, the VA (as well as private facilities) have already begun administering vaccinations. By the time you read this there may be many of you who have received one or both shots. I urge you to take advantage of this protection.

At this point our hospital and CBOC reps still aren't able to resume their normal volunteer duties. While only some volunteer positions are being phased back in, some of our VAVS reps have joined with their respective facilities and are

participating in Buddy Check programs. I'm proud to say that even under current conditions our Post Service Officers continue to team up with County and FDVA Service Officers and continue to help our fellow veterans with claims and benefits information as well as a host of other services.

December and January brought the enactment of two pieces of legislation that will have a major impact on thousands of veterans. The National Defense Authorization Act was signed into law and after years of effort included the addition of three presumptive illnesses affecting Vietnam veterans who have and still suffer from Parkinsonism, Hypothyroidism and/or Bladder Cancer. Also, Congress passed, and the President signed into law, what is thought to be the most far-reaching veteran-oriented legislation in decades.

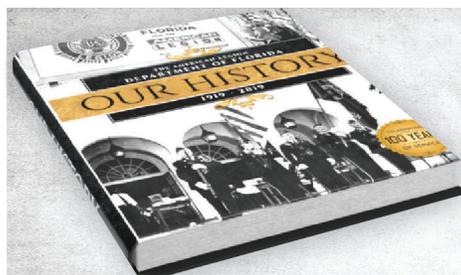
While all its provisions are too numerous to mention here, I will address only two.

First, the Deborah Sampson Act, which

directly addresses a host of major issues related to our sister veterans. Let's take advantage of this opportunity to reach out to more women veterans, offering them assistance and welcome. Another part of the legislation affects Vietnam veterans by expanding the inclusive dates, rolling back the begin-date from February 1961 to November 1955.

The Department of Florida has been the beneficiary of the generous gift of several motorized scooters. If you or a veteran you are in contact with needs one of these, please read this month's Legion Link article entitled "MOBILITY SCOOTERS AVAILABLE" for the requirements, how to submit an application, and deadline for mail and e-mail (no phone applications.)

In closing this month's article, I'm once again asking everyone to remain mindful of not only the pandemic we face but that we're all in this together so continue to reach out to all who need some help getting through it all.



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 DEPARTMENT OF FLORIDA
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POST EVERLASTING

**John A. Burroughs**

It is with deep regret that we report the passing of Past Department Sgt-at-Arms, John A. Burroughs, of Jacksonville, Florida at the age of 86 on Friday, December 25, 2020.

John was a U.S. Air Force Korean War Era Veteran and a member of Ocean Beaches American Legion Post 129, Jacksonville, FL with 40 continuous years of membership. John serviced as Post Commander (1999), 5th District Commander (2002/03), Department Children & Youth Chairman (2005-06) and Department Sgt-at-Arms (2007-09).

Please keep his family and friends in your thoughts and prayers in their time of grief.

**Richard "Dick" W. Little**

It is with deep regret that we report the passing of Past Central Area Commander, Richard "Dick" W. Little, of Tampa, Florida at the age of 88 on Saturday, December 26, 2020. Dick is survived by his wife, Louise.

Dick was a U.S. Navy Korean War Era Veteran and a member of Hugh Gilbert Strickland American Legion Post 138, Port Tampa, FL with 35 continuous years of membership. Dick serviced as Department Blood Donor Chairman (2005-07), 15th District Commander (2000-01, 2004-05 & 2017-18) and Central Area Commander.

Please keep his family and friends in your thoughts and prayers in their time of grief. If you would like to send your condolences, you may do so through his wife, Louise Little, at 4851 W. Gandy Blvd., Lot B218, Tampa, FL 33611.

**Betty J. Hunt-Beckwith**

It is with deep regret that we report the passing of Past Northern Area Commander, Betty J. Hunt-Beckwith, of Lewiston, New York at the age of 96 on Wednesday, September 23, 2020. Betty is survived by her children, Alfred M. (Paula) Hunt, Jr., Robert L. Hunt, Philip E. (Rose) Hunt, Sandra Granieri; her sister, Colleen (Dennis) Dey; seven grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren.

Betty was a U.S. Army WWII Veteran and a member of American Legion LaSalle Post 1142, Niagara Falls, NY with 48 continuous years of membership. Betty joined The American Legion in 1972 at Portage Post 1465, Niagara Falls, NY, where she became the first woman to serve as Niagara Co. Commander in 1981. She moved to Florida in 1984 and became a member of Holly Hill Post 120 and then Ormond Beach Post 267. Betty served as 17th District Commander (1988-1989) and Northern Area Commander (1994-1995). Betty returned to Niagara Falls in 1999 and became the first woman Commander of the LaSalle Post 1142 in 2001.

Please keep her family and friends in your thoughts and prayers in their time of grief. If you would like to send your condolences, you may do so through her son, Alfred M. Hunt, Jr., at 736 Powell Ln., Lewiston, NY 14092-1132.

**Alan P. Hall**

It is with deep regret that we report the passing of Past Department Commander Alan P. Hall of Lakeland, FL, on Friday, January 22, 2021, at the age of 74. Alan is survived by his wife, Joy Hall, and his daughter, Shelley.

Alan was a U.S. Army Vietnam War Era Veteran (1966-69) and a member of Mulberry Memorial Post 72, with 50 continuous years of membership. Alan joined the Legion shortly after being honorably discharged from service. He served in every capacity within the Post, most predominately having served as Post Commander for five consecutive years from 1986 through 1990. During his five years as Post Commander, Alan achieved five consecutive all-time highs, and post membership more than doubled.

Under his leadership Post 72 was named the Most Improved Post in the Department in 1986. He would again serve as Post Commander in 2003-05. Alan served as 7th District Commander in 1989-90. He led the 7th District to 100% membership and established an all-time high. He served as Central Area Vice Commander in 1990-91. During 1991-92, Alan served as Department Membership Chairman. Under his leadership, the Department attained the earliest 100% membership in its history and was awarded the General Henri Gouraud Trophy for being the first Category 1 (Departments over 100,000 in membership) Department in the National Organization to reach 100%. Most importantly, Alan led the Department to its 27th All-Time High. In April of 1991, Mulberry Memorial Post 172 Instituted "The Alan P. Hall Legionnaire of the Year Award" in honor of Alan's dedication and service to his Post, community, state and nation. Alan served as Department Commander in 1993-94.

If you would like to send your condolences, you may do so through his wife, Joy Hall, 6479 Bristol Oaks Drive, Lakeland, FL 33811.

January 21, 2021 80% Target Report (Currently 86.95%)		
11	Johnny Castro	94.24
15	Bruce Carl	94.19
12	Dennis Mallon	91.13
4	Cherie Korn	89.50
6	Kurt Gies	87.98
1	Lamar Carroll	87.04
17	Jim Bowers	85.77
5	Troy Horsley	83.38
13	Brian "Taz" Gehling	83.32
16	Randall McNabb	83.21
8	Skip Felicita	83.03
9	Arthur Barber	82.98
3	Stuart Scott	81.58
7	Burl Thomas	81.19
2	Roger Hewitt	78.72
14	Thomas Frank	75.73
Eastern	Chris Hamrick	89.35
Central	Sid Damsgard	85.72
Western	John Edens	85.56
Southern	Paul Bosco	85.27
Northern	Marie Conti	85.08
Southwestern	Jerry Faught	83.18
Post 400		95.61
Post 208		80.81



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- We send you money – even if you don't have cancer

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85% 2/3/2021

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EASTERN AREA



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FEBRUARY 20TH 2021

POST 117

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Country Vittles



**Tickets \$20
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Live Music



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Local Hotels

**Holiday Inn
Express & Suites Palm Bay
1206 MALABAR ROAD SE
PALM BAY, FLORIDA 32907
321-220-2003**

\$ 99.00 plus tax

Per night

Mention: Eastern Area Ball

AL Post 117



The American Legion



**NORTHERN AREA BALL
COMMANDER**

MARIE K. CONTI

Saturday, March 6, 2021

**Legion Blue & Gold /
Military Theme**

American Legion Post #129 JAX BEACH

Tickets: \$25.00 per person

Dinner: Chicken, Mashed Potatoes, Green Beans, Dinner Roll, Salad and American Legion Birthday Cake!

DRESS: Formal / Semi-Formal Social hour 5:00-6:00, 6pm Program/Dinner. **Entertainment after Program**

Hotel is less than 5 minutes from the Post at a very reasonable rate of \$109.00 per night Rooms can be reserved through Hotel (Please call Hampton Inn @ 904-280-9101 for Reservations & mention The American Legion (Group Rate).

THE AMERICAN LEGION DEPARTMENT OF FLORIDA
SOUTHWESTERN AREA BALL



Commander

*Jerry Thomas
Faught*

Requests the pleasure of your company

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 6

Thank You America!

COCKTAILS: 5PM

DINNER: 6PM

PRIME RIB OR FISH & SHRIMP

SHOW: 7:30PM

CAHAL DUNNE, IRELAND'S PIANO MAN

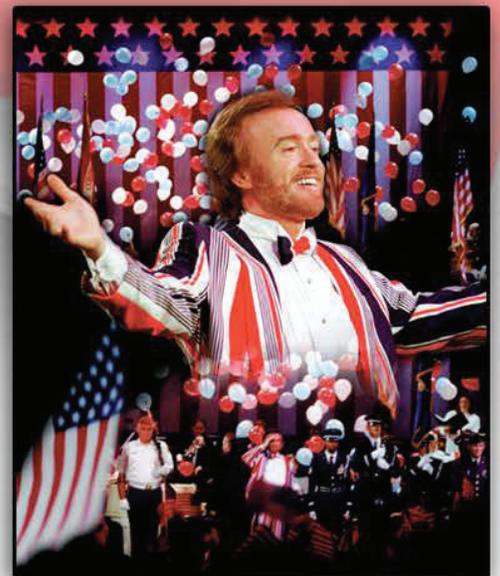
TICKETS: \$30 PER PERSON

DRESS: SEMI-FORMAL

LOCATION: AMERICAN LEGION POST 103

2101 TAYLOR ROAD

PUNTA GORDA, FL 33950



HOTEL INFO

SPRINGHILL SUITES PUNTA GORDA HARBORSIDE

101 HARBORSIDE AVE | PUNTA GORDA, FL 33950 (941) 347-4224

ROOMS: \$149 / NIGHT

ASK FOR AMERICAN LEGION SW AREA BALL RATE

American Legion Department of Florida 11th District Annual Roast



March 13, 2021

5:30p : Reception

6:00p: Dinner

6:45p: Program

American Legion Post
268

1690 Avenue H West
Riviera Beach , Florida
33404

RSVP NLT
MARCH 8, 2021



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Guest Of Honor– Past Department Commander Joe McGee

Past Department Commandeer 2016-2017

St. Patrick's Day Parade Palm Beach Shores

Dinner Corned Beef and Cabbage with a Cash Bar

Music by D.J Lenny

Tickets: \$25.00

Payment Zille or Credit Card

**Credit Card Payments by phone to Johnny Castro:
561-290-9980**

Hotel rooms are available locally if needed.

“RED, WHITE AND BLUE AUCTION & Silent Auction





POST 275



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PER PERSON

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SIGNUP

- ✓ 18 HOLES OF GOLF
- ✓ FREE LUNCH
- ✓ FREE DRINK TICKET
- ✓ FREE RAFFLE TICKET
- ✓ PLAY AGAIN FOR \$20

MARCH
27

COME JOIN US FOR A

FUN DAY ON THE COURSE

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TARPON SPRINGS, FL 34688

CONTACT RICHARD GEILS

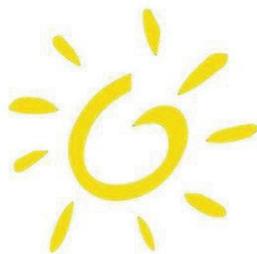
📞 518.312.7426

✉️ RICHARD.GEILS@GMAIL.COM

SUPPORTING C.O.T.A.

C.O.T.A. helps children and young adults who need life-saving transplants by providing fundraising assistance and family support.

The Sons of The American Legion Squadron 275 Hosts a Charity Golf Outing for C.O.T.A.



Children's Organ Transplant Association®

Saturday, March 27th, 2021

- 7:00am: Sign-In and Registration
- 8:00am: Shot Gun Start
- Lunch to Follow after golf at The American Legion -Post 275
- After lunch: Raffles, Prizes, Auction & Gifts
- All Golfers will receive a raffle ticket & drink ticket at registration

Hotels listed in Order closest to The American Legion Post 275: 360 Wilson St Dunedin, FL 34698

****Please contact hotels for availability and rates ****

Beso Del Sol Resort: 1420 Bayshore Blvd, Dunedin, FL 34698 ph # 800-331-2548
Advertised at \$ 209/nt

Hampton Inn Dunedin: 2641 Michael Pl, Dunedin, FL 34698-1804 ph # (727) 733-1400
Advertised at \$254/nt

Holiday Inn Express Clearwater North/Dunedin: 975 Broadway, Dunedin, FL 34698-5717
ph# 877-424-3664

Meranova Bed & Breakfast: 458 Virginia Ln, Dunedin, FL 34698-4970 ph # (727) 261-1728
Advertised at \$165/nt

Comfort Suites: 1941 Edgewater Dr, Clearwater, FL 33755 ph # 844-224-1310
Advertised at \$153/nt

National Commander, Bill Oxford

Tentative Schedule

February 3-11, 2021

Wednesday, February 3

Post	Arrival	Departure
347	5:00PM	7:30PM

Friday, February 5

Post	Arrival	Departure
69	11:45AM	1:15PM
74	1:35PM	2:35PM
25	2:55PM	3:55PM
K-II	4:55PM	6:30PM

Saturday, February 6

Post	Arrival	Departure
325	10:00AM	11:00AM
309	11:15AM	12:15PM
24	12:45PM	2:15PM
30	2:55PM	3:55PM
103	4:55PM	8:00PM

Sunday, February 7

Post	Arrival	Departure
404	10:15AM	11:15AM
135	11:50AM	1:20PM
303	1:55PM	3:00PM
323	4:00PM	6:00PM

Monday, February 8

Post	Arrival	Departure
136	10:45AM	11:45PM
90	12:30PM	2:00PM
123	3:15PM	4:15PM
274	5:30PM	7:00PM

Tuesday, February 9

Post	Arrival	Departure
266	10:30AM	11:30AM
312	11:50AM	1:20PM
159	2:00PM	3:00PM
113	3:35PM	4:35PM
254	5:15PM	7:00PM

Wednesday, February 10

Post	Arrival	Departure
SW FL Vietnam Wall	9:15AM	10:00AM
110	10:15AM	11:15AM
336	12:15PM	1:30PM
38	1:45PM	2:45PM
351	3:00PM	4:00PM
LaBelle Veterans Park	4:30PM	5:15PM
130	5:30PM	7:00PM