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## A Message from the Department Commander

### Jessica Moore, Commander

[commander@floridalegion.org](mailto:commander@floridalegion.org)



Happy April Team Florida!

March was a whirlwind of activity and accomplishment across the Department.

From showcasing youth leadership at the Department Oratorical Competition, to strengthening membership efforts during the National Vice Commander's visit to the 17th District, to investing in our future leaders through Legion College, our team showed up with purpose and pride.

Each event highlighted what makes Florida exceptional: dedication, teamwork, and a commitment to The American Legion's mission. Special shout-out to District 17 for the escorts, hospitality, and camaraderie shown to our National Vice Commander.

As we step into April, the momentum is already on our side, and it's exciting to see what we'll build next.

Our attention shifts to the essential work that closes out our Legion year. Across the Department, teams are gearing up for:

Post, District, and Area Elections to ensure strong leadership pipelines and smooth transitions.

District Constitutional Conferences (DCCs), a chance to review progress, set direction, and recognize outstanding service.

End-of-Year Reporting, including the all-important Consolidated Post Reports (CPRs) that capture the full impact of our posts' work in their communities.

These tasks may be administrative, but they're also a celebration of everything we've accomplished together. CPRs, especially, tell the story of our service: the hours volunteered, the veterans assisted, the youth supported, and the communities strengthened. When we report thoroughly, we honor the work

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### Submit Articles at

[floridalegion.org/submit](http://floridalegion.org/submit) or [legionlink@floridalegion.org](mailto:legionlink@floridalegion.org)

Questions? [legionlink@floridalegion.org](mailto:legionlink@floridalegion.org)

**#oneteamonedream**



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# UPCOMING EVENTS

## APRIL 2026

- 1-30 Children & Youth Month
- 1-30 Month of the Military Child
- 1-30 Military Saves Month
- 1-30 ALR Round Robin
- 1 Be The One Day
- 1 Medical/Nursing Scholarship Apps Due \*
- 1 JSSP 2nd Round Targets Due to the CMP \*
- 1 Department 95% Membership Goal \*
- 1 Chapter 136: ALR Monthly Meeting
- 2 Membership Dept Zoom Meeting
- 3 Good Friday
- 3 Dept Headquarters Closed \*
- 4 Southwestern Area Children & Youth Picnic
- 4 District 13 Children & Youth Picnic \*
- 4 Chapter 316: ALR Monthly Meeting
- 4 District 3: Meeting
- 4 Post 250: Easter Carnival
- 4 District 9: Meeting
- 5 Gold Star Spouses Day
- 5 Easter
- 6 US Entry into WWI (1917)
- 8-12 Commander's Tour - District 12 \*
- 8 Chapter 10: ALR Meeting
- 9 National Former POW Recognition Day
- 9 Baseball Recruiting Maps Due
- 10 Purple Up! For Military Kids Day
- 11 Dept Children & Youth Picnic \* \*
- 11 District 7: Working Reports & Training
- 12 Post 77: American Heroes Poker Run
- 12 Chapter 8: ALR Meeting
- 12 District 5: Meeting
- 13-6/2 DCCs to be Held
- 13 Thomas Jefferson's Birthday (1743)
- 14 Air Force Reserve Birthday (1948)
- 15 Legion Link Articles Due \*

<< Commander continued from page 1  
our Legionnaires put in all year long.

our great organization!

Thank you all for your commitment to **#OneTeamOneDream**

**COMMANDER'S CHARITY: *Special Olympics***

**\$76,054.51 RAISED**

80K	90K	100K	110K	120K	130K	140K	150K
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Go to [www.floridalegion.org/donate](http://www.floridalegion.org/donate) and choose support Commander's Charity: Special Olympics **\$150,000 GOAL**

### Advocating for Veterans in Washington, D.C.

**Bob Matheson, 1st Vice Commander**

[1stvice@legionmail.org](mailto:1stvice@legionmail.org)



Recently, I had the opportunity to participate in The American Legion's annual visit to Washington, D.C., an

event designed to strengthen the connection between veterans and their elected representatives. This trip offered a meaningful chance to speak directly with members of Congress or their staff about the issues that continue to affect veterans across the country. As part of the delegation, I joined fellow Legionnaires and Auxiliary members in advocating for policies that support those who have served, ensuring their voices remain heard at the national level.

During our visit, we met with Legislative Assistant John DeMarco from Congresswoman Anna Paulina Luna's office, as well as Dave Zeek, a War Fellow representing Congressman Cory Mills. Both individuals welcomed us openly, creating an environment where

honest and productive discussion could take place. Their willingness to listen demonstrated a shared commitment to understanding the challenges veterans face and exploring ways to address them through thoughtful legislation.

One of the primary topics we discussed was the Major Richard Star Act, a bill aimed at correcting long-standing inequities in how combat-injured veterans receive retirement pay and disability compensation. Many veterans believe this legislation is essential to ensuring fair treatment for those who sacrificed their health in service to the nation. Our conversation highlighted the importance of continued advocacy to move this bill forward and secure the benefits these veterans have earned.

We also addressed the persistent issue of veteran homelessness, a problem that remains far too common despite ongoing efforts at the federal, state, and community levels. We emphasized the need

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

**APRIL 2026** (Continued)

15 Tax Day

15 Law & Order EOY Award Apps Due

18 DCC: District 12

19 ALR Unity Ride Meet & Greet ★

20-24 ALR Unity Ride ★

22 Administrative Professionals Day

22 Earth Day

23 Army Reserve Birthday (1908)

25 Arbor Day

25 ALR State Rally ★

25 Post 321: Family Fun Day ★

25 Detachment Commander's Homecoming

25 Chapter 10: ALR Bike Night

26 District 13: Children & Youth Picnic

28-5/29 Call to Convention May be Issued

30 National Military Brats Day

★ Commander attendance tentative.

✦ Department of Florida event.

★ National event.

Events are subject to change. More details at [floridalegion.org](http://floridalegion.org).

<< 1st Vice Commander continued from page 2

for expanded access to housing programs, mental health services, and employment opportunities.

Ensuring that no veteran is left without stable shelter is a responsibility that requires sustained attention and collaboration.

Finally, we discussed the ongoing crisis of veteran suicide, a deeply troubling issue that affects families and communities nationwide.

We shared concerns about gaps in mental health care, barriers to treatment, and the need for improved outreach and prevention

strategies. Our goal was to reinforce the urgency of strengthening support systems so that veterans in crisis can receive timely and effective help.

Overall, the visit served as a powerful reminder of the importance of advocacy and engagement. By meeting with congressional staff and sharing firsthand experiences, we helped ensure that veterans' issues remain at the forefront of legislative priorities. It was an honor to contribute to this effort and to stand alongside others committed to improving the lives of those who have served.

### Don't Risk Losing Your Charter

**Bruce Carl, 2nd Vice Commander**

[2ndvice@legionmail.org](mailto:2ndvice@legionmail.org)



Welcome to April, Children & Youth Month! Deadlines for the remainder of the awards are fast approaching.

Please check the calendar and the administrative manual for the final dates to turn in your entries for the awards.

We are also nearing the time to fill out the Post CPRs. Why are these important? There are a couple of reasons, and there is no excuse for not turning them in. First, it is a compilation of your Post's activities for the year. National compiles the CPRs from every Post in the nation, and this information is sent to Congress to show what we have done. Every mile and volunteer hour has a monetary value that is added

to the actual donations given. These numbers show Congress what we have done and fortify our reasons for keeping our charter. It is also a National requirement to keep your charter.

Secondly, in order to get your new membership cards and be eligible to register your delegates for Department Convention, you need to complete the CPR, Addendum, Post Report, and New Officers Report. Please do not risk losing your charter simply because you did not fill out the required paperwork.

There is no reason the Department of Florida should not be at 100% compliance when it comes to turning in the CPRs. They are not that hard to fill out and can be done online! Should you need assistance, please

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# DO YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES?

## BECOME A DEPARTMENT CHAIR.

**SEE PAGE 30**



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<< 2nd Vice Commander continued from page 3

contact your District Commander. As we get closer to the deadline date, which will be sometime in May,

Department will also be reaching out to assist those Posts that have not turned them in. The Department of Florida will be at 100% reporting this

year. Thank you all for making sure this happens!

## Strengthening Our Posts Through Knowledge, Service, and Leadership

**Jim Ramos, NEC**

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



We need to learn more.

### Legislative Agenda:

Download the brochure at "[Legion.org/](http://Legion.org/)

[Advocacy/National Legislative Advocacy/Legislative Agenda & Point Papers.](http://Legion.org/Advocacy/NationalLegislativeAdvocacy/LegislativeAgenda&PointPapers)"

**1. Protect the U.S. Flag:** For me, this is number one. We should always protect our U.S. Flag, and this is still not done. We must protect our U.S. Flag, especially in the United States of America. Read more in the brochure.

**2. End Veteran Homelessness:** Veteran homelessness stems from complex, interrelated challenges requiring a comprehensive response.

**3. Improve Care for Women Veterans:** We have over 2.3 million nationwide, and many face age-related and service-connected health challenges.

### Volunteers at the VA or Post:

The American Legion has supported and actively participated in the Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) program since it began in 1946. Today, nearly 7,000 volunteers serve

900,000 hours annually at various VA medical centers, community-based outpatient centers, Vet Centers, nursing homes, state veterans' homes, and other facilities that support hospitalized veterans. In every VA medical center, Legion VAVS representatives and deputy representatives attend quarterly hospital meetings and coordinate volunteers and donation needs lists with their local posts.

Anyone can volunteer. For information about individual or post participation, contact the chief of voluntary service at any VA medical center, who can arrange initial screenings and help veterans choose the program that best meets their needs. Volunteers ultimately decide where they want to serve and how they want to do it. Service can be regular or occasional.

At the Post level, we need volunteers. In 1994, we at the Post had 10% or more participation. Out of 65 members, we had 15 volunteers consistently, and now we are lucky to have 5. What can we do? Ask for help. Let members know it is only for one hour and explain what you need them for, such as setup, guest sign-in, cleanup, and more. Let them know what is going to happen. You will be surprised how many will show up.

### Fisher House:

The Fisher House Foundation provides lodging and other support for families visiting military and VA hospitals for extended periods while their loved ones receive care. Donations of paper goods, linens, food, books, and videos are needed. Fundraising efforts support existing Fisher Houses and build new ones. For more information or to get involved, ask your VA hospital's chief of voluntary service. [www.fisherhouse.org](http://www.fisherhouse.org)

**It is time for Post Elections:** Use the [2025 Officer's Guide](#).

1. Please go to page 128, "Nomination and Elections." Get a nominating committee together first, determine how your Post is going to vote, and follow your Post Constitution and By-laws.
2. The nominating committee should have a list of recommended candidates and can make nominations from the floor during the Post meeting. Please read, understand, and be clear on how your Post elections work.
3. Please select Legionnaires who are going to do the job and make your Post better than it is now. A great Post is one where the Legion family wants to come

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<< NEC continued from page 4

to consecrate and sanctify our comradeship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness.

4. The Sergeant-at-Arms is one of the most helpful positions

at the Post. They do many important things when they know their role. They serve as the welcome committee, encourage members to attend meetings, and communicate with the Post

Commander and Adjutant to support the meeting. Check out more in the Officer's Guide.

Thank you so much, and if you have questions, please email me.

## Understanding Florida Sales and Use Tax for Nonprofit Organizations

**Shirley Douglas, Finance Officer**

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



Florida law grants certain nonprofit organizations that meet the criteria described in section 212.08(7), Florida Statutes (F.S.),

an exemption from Florida sales and use tax. To be eligible for the exemption, Florida law requires that nonprofit organizations obtain and maintain a sales tax exemption certificate (Consumer's Certificate of Exemption, Form DR-14) from the Florida Department of Revenue. This form grants 2 types of tax relief:

### 1. Tax-free purchases and leases.

Organizations holding a Florida Consumer's Certificate of Exemption may present a copy of the certificate to a selling dealer to purchase or rent taxable items or services tax-exempt as authorized

by Florida law. Payment for the purchase must be made with the organization's funds (Post debit/credit card or from the Post's checking account). **IMPORTANT NOTE:** When payment is made with the personal funds of an authorized representative, the purchase is subject to tax, even if the representative is subsequently reimbursed with the organization's funds.

### 2. Exempt from sales tax for sales of food or drink

by qualified veterans' organizations in connection with customary veterans' organization activities to members of qualified veterans' organizations. **IMPORTANT NOTE:** Only sales to Post members are free from sales tax. Example: If your post has open Bingo nights where the local community is invited, all sales need to be identified as either

sales "to members" or "non-members." Sales tax is required on all sales or rentals to non-members.

With a few exceptions (religious institutions with an established physical place for worship and organizations benefiting minors), when a nonprofit organization sells taxable items or services, or leases or rents transient rental property to others in Florida, the organization must register with the Department to collect, report, and remit sales tax. An important thing to remember is the Sales and Use Tax Return (Form DR-15) must be filed for each reporting period, even if no tax is due.

To find out how to register, calculate, file, and pay Florida's Sales and Use Tax, you can go to [https://floridarevenue.com/taxes/taxesfees/Pages/sales\\_tax.aspx](https://floridarevenue.com/taxes/taxesfees/Pages/sales_tax.aspx)

## Investing in America's Future Through Children and Youth Programs

**Rick Orzechowski, Central Area Cmdr**

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



The American Legion is deeply committed to supporting children and youth across the United States through

a variety of impactful programs. These initiatives focus on promoting citizenship, leadership, academic excellence, and well-being among young people.

- **American Legion Boys and**

**Girls State:** Leadership and citizenship training programs for high school juniors, where participants learn about government, civics, and the electoral process.

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<< Central Area Cmdr continued from page 5

- **American Legion Baseball:** Nationwide youth baseball program fostering sportsmanship, teamwork, and healthy competition.
- **Oratorical Contest:** A speech contest that encourages high school students to develop a deeper understanding of the U.S. Constitution while enhancing public speaking skills.
- **Junior Shooting Sports Program:** A safe and educational firearms training and marksmanship program for youth.
- **Scholarship Programs:** The American Legion offers several scholarships, including the

Legacy Scholarship and others that support the educational aspirations of children of veterans.

- **Children & Youth Month:** Every April, posts and units across the country engage in special projects and events to improve the quality of life for young people in their communities.
- **Child Welfare Foundation:** This foundation awards grants to projects that contribute to the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual welfare of children.

I had the privilege of attending the Department's High School Oratorical Contest on Saturday, where five exceptional young individuals

demonstrated remarkable skill and poise. The event was expertly organized by Northern Area Commander Doug Hockenberry, supported by a dedicated team of distinguished members of The American Legion. Listening to these participants deliver speeches on the Constitution was both insightful and rewarding. I encourage all members to attend this contest, as it reinforces confidence in today's youth and their potential to become tomorrow's leaders. Through such initiatives, The American Legion maintains its longstanding commitment to supporting and investing in the future of America's youth.

## The Future of the Legion Depends on Younger Veterans

**Geo Bograkos, Southern Area Cmdr**  
[southern@legionmail.org](mailto:southern@legionmail.org)



April is Children & Youth Month, where we focus on the programs that primarily support youth. This is not only to provide assistance to today's children and youth, but to educate them early on about the benefits of The American Legion.

Young veterans are critical to the future of The American Legion to ensure its longevity and to maintain a powerful advocacy voice for modern military issues. With the average member age currently at 67, the organization needs a new generation to "carry on the legacy" and prevent local, aging posts from fading away.

Younger veterans typically have families. Some posts may even need to rethink their membership strategies to address these younger veterans. Creating a child-friendly atmosphere and/or events to bring families together is one idea.

### Why Young Veterans Are Essential:

- **Political Influence:** A large and growing membership provides the Legion with the "voice" needed to influence the President and Congress on veteran advocacy.
- **Modernizing Perspectives:** Younger members bring essential insight into 21st-century military life and the specific challenges of transitioning to civilian life today.

- **Technological Advancement:** They offer "vibrant new forms of communication," such as social media and digital tools, to modernize how the organization operates and reaches others.
- **Advocacy for New Issues:** Younger veterans are needed to push for reforms related to contemporary service issues like toxic exposures (PACT Act), PTSD, and traumatic brain injuries.
- **Community Service:** They provide the energy and "spirit" required to sustain the Legion's local programs, including youth sports, scholarship contests, and honor guards.

### Key Membership Facts (as of

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<< Southern Area Cmdr continued from page 6

### March 2026)

Metric	Value
Current Average Age	67 years old
Members of Age 80	400,000
Post-9/11 Membership	Nearly 100,000 (and increasing)
Total Membership	Approx 1.3 - 1.5 million

While many young veterans feel they lack the time for active participation, Legion leadership emphasizes that even a "paper membership" is valuable because it strengthens the organization's collective bargaining power in Washington, D.C., as well as directly benefiting their own local community.

Surprisingly, many veterans STILL do not know of the benefits The American Legion offers to veterans:

### Free Assistance for All Veterans

- **VA Claims Assistance:**

Accredited American Legion Service Officers provide expert, no-cost help with disability benefit applications, appeals, and navigating the VA medical system.

- **Homeless Veteran Support:** The Legion provides dedicated outreach, counseling, and housing assistance through its Homeless Veterans Task Force.
- **Education & Career Guidance:** They offer resources to help veterans access federal education benefits (like the GI Bill) and find employers who value military experience.
- **State-Specific Benefits:** The Legion maintains a state-by-state directory that details unique local benefits, such as property tax exemptions or free state park passes.

These resources explain how younger veterans can benefit from and

contribute to The American Legion's future by offering fresh perspectives, modern communication skills, and energy for community service. We NEED them.

Finally, if you have not already done so, please visit and 'FOLLOW' the first-ever Southern Area Facebook page, where you may share all your Facebook posts of your events with everyone in Districts 9, 11, 14, and beyond: <https://www.facebook.com/SouthernAreaFL>

Or just use this QR code to take you right to the page:



### Boys State at 82: Securing the Future of a Life-Changing Program

Darcy Bockman-Wright, District 4 Cmdr  
[district4@legionmail.org](mailto:district4@legionmail.org)



In 1940, the Florida Boys State program was created to provide young men with hands-on experience in citizenship, leadership, and government. This June 21 – 27, we will proudly celebrate the 82nd session of this life-changing program.

But let's be clear, Boys State is not simply a week away from

home where boys meet new lifelong friends. It is a program that changes lives. It shapes young men into leaders, teaches them the responsibilities of citizenship, and gives them the confidence to believe in their own potential.

Every June, hundreds of male and female delegates gather in Tallahassee on the beautiful campus of Florida State University, just blocks away from the Florida State Capitol, where real laws are written, influential court hearings take place, and the decisions that shape our

state are made. It is the perfect environment for young men and women to experience how the government truly works.

But many people ask: WHO REALLY MAKES THESE TWO PROGRAMS POSSIBLE?

Is it the American Legion and Auxiliary with their registration fees?

The honest answer is NO.

While the American Legion &

*continued on page 8 >>*





<< District 4 Cmdr continued from page 7

Auxiliary proudly operates and supports the program, the truth is the \$495 for Boys State and \$400 for Girls State does not even come close to covering the cost of the week that changes lives.

Each delegate receives shirts, a backpack, a water bottle, meals, updated manuals, and access to one of the premier leadership programs in the nation. And anyone who has ever hosted teenage boys knows one thing for certain, BOYS EAT A LOT.

Transportation alone can exceed \$16,000 for delegates traveling from areas like Miami. Housing on the campus of Florida State University costs over \$60,000 for the dormitories we rent. So the legislation for Boys and Girls State doesn't even go to the Legion, it goes directly to the University.

For decades, we have relied heavily on the support of our legislature in Tallahassee to help make this program possible and affordable at the post level.

Unfortunately, as I write this today, there is currently no funding allocated to Boys or Girls State in the Senate, and only \$100,000 total in the House for both programs to share. In previous years, we have received \$200,000.

If that funding does not get allocated to our programs, the future

of these programs is uncertain. In fact, there is a real possibility that there may not be another Girls State session without additional support. Thanks to the dedication of Andrew Satterlee and other committed alumni, the Boys State Alumni Foundation may be able to help us push through this year and perhaps the next, but we cannot rely on that alone.

These programs do more than create future voters and community volunteers. They help develop executives, pastors, teachers, leaders, and public servants. Some will lead in Florida. Some will lead across the United States. Some will even lead somewhere else in the world.

But they all begin here.

That is why we need your support for the May 9 Alumni Dinner at Department Headquarters.

If you cannot attend the dinner, there are still ways to support the program. We will be having several live auction items available, including two FSU Seminoles football tickets in skybox seats, including parking and food, hosted by our very own Past Boys State Governor Palmer Williams and his generous wife. There will be other exciting auction items as well. But most importantly, your support ensures Boys State will continue to exist.

While posts across the state are working hard recruiting delegates

and preparing their paperwork and orientations, there is another challenge on the horizon, ensuring the program itself can continue.

These funds from the Legion, posts, and the Florida legislative bodies support:

- Scholarships for delegates
- Housing and facilities
- Program enhancements
- Shirts, backpacks, water bottles, and delegate supplies
- Meals for over 850 girls and boys for the entire week

Just imagine what that grocery bill looks like.

After 82 years of transforming young lives, I would hate to see this program face an uncertain future after the 83rd.

Please take a moment to review the flyer below and use the QR code to visit Givebutter and donate if you can.

If you would like to provide any additional support, please reach out to Bekki, Sonny, or myself. We are here to advocate for what is truly one of the premier leadership programs in the nation, a program that:

- Takes boys and helps shape them into men
- Turns average citizens into

*continued on page 9 >>*





<< District 4 Cmdr continued from page 8

leaders

- Gives confidence to a young man who doubts himself
- Gives a quiet boy on the wall a

voice to speak

Please help us continue this mission, and we hope to see you at the Alumni Dinner May 9, 2026.



## Finishing Strong: Membership, Elections, and Reporting

**Calvin Thompson, District 7 Cmdr**

[district7@legionmail.org](mailto:district7@legionmail.org)



We have finally reached the homestretch of the Legion year. Let's continue focusing on membership so we can finish the year strong

and ensure the 7th District reaches its goals.

With April approaching, it is also time for Post elections and annual reports. Are you ready?

One of the most important reports each Post completes is the Consolidated Post Report (CPR). This report is critical because it is used by National Headquarters when reporting to Congress on the

work being done by The American Legion across the country. Every program, event, volunteer hour, and act of service your Post performs helps demonstrate the impact we are making for veterans, their families, and our communities. Every detail matters.

To assist Posts in completing these reports, the 7th District will be hosting a Reports Working Session on April 11 at 10:00 AM at Gordon M. Crothers American Legion Post 15 in Dade City.

This will be a hybrid session, allowing participation both in person and via Zoom. We encourage Commanders, Adjutants, and anyone interested in learning more about the reporting

process to attend. Our goal is to help Posts complete their reports accurately and on time while ensuring everyone understands the importance of the data being submitted.

If you plan to attend, please RSVP to me at [kalvin763@gmail.com](mailto:kalvin763@gmail.com) so we can ensure we have adequate materials and refreshments available. Those attending virtually will receive the Zoom link after RSVPing.

Let's continue the strong work being done across the 7th District and finish this Legion year with the same dedication and commitment that defines our organization.

## Record-Breaking Summit and Momentum Ahead

**Jim Wineland, American Legion Riders**

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



This year's Summit set a new benchmark for success. We broke our all-time attendance record, increasing participation by 31%

with 400 registered attendees. Even more encouraging, 35% were first-time participants, showing that our reach and impact continue to grow.

Feedback from the week was overwhelmingly positive.

- 85% of attendees said the instructors did an excellent job
- 100% reported they found real value in the program
- 90% plan to return next year

These results speak directly to the dedication and passion of our

volunteer team. I want to extend my sincere appreciation to our entire volunteer group, to Beverly for her tireless support, and to Jason for stepping up and getting involved in the program. Their commitment is a major reason this Summit continues to thrive.

What's next? The In-State Unity Ride & Round Robin, our final

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<< American Legion Riders continued from page 9

Department activity of this Legion year. We're already off to a strong start. Riders are signing up, donations are coming in, and the excitement is building.

We've got a big number to hit, and the potential is there. But I'll leave it at that. If I talk too much about it, I might tempt fate and give us a little automatic bad luck. So, for now, let's just keep the momentum rolling and let the results speak for themselves.

We value your perspective on Seminole Harley-Davidson and ask that you share your feedback

through the survey. Their support included food, live music, and a share of merchandise and motorcycle sales during the event, making the decision to change locations an easy one.

### Safety

We are available to support your upcoming events and to promote motorcycle safety throughout the year. If you'd like to schedule our participation or request safety materials, please reach out so we can add your event to the calendar and prepare the resources you need.

If you have ideas or suggestions, we welcome your input. Your feedback

helps us strengthen our programs and continue serving riders across the state.

### 2025-2026 Schedule

- **Round Robin**  
April 2026
- **Children & Youth Picnic, Post 117**  
April 11, 2026
- **State Unity Ride**  
April 20-24, 2026
- **Rally**  
April 25, 2026

Thank you for your continued dedication. Bev and I are proud to be part of such an outstanding leadership team.

## April: Honoring Youth, Families, and Service

### Joe Marcheggiani, Americanism

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



April is a significant month for The American Legion and The American Legion Department of Florida as posts

across the state and nation place special emphasis on supporting young people and military families. Through community events, recognition ceremonies, and outreach programs, we reaffirm our dedication to the organization's mission of service.

A primary focus of April is Children & Youth Month, a long-standing observance within the Legion that highlights programs designed to support the well-being and development of young people.

Posts often partner with schools and community organizations to host youth activities, promote leadership and citizenship, and provide educational programs such as flag etiquette and Americanism initiatives.

We also recognize nationally the Month of the Military Child, honoring the resilience and sacrifices of children whose parents serve in the armed forces. Many Legion Family members observe Purple Up Day on April 15, wearing purple to show appreciation and support for military children who often experience frequent relocations and long separations from deployed parents.

Another important observance during the month is Gold Star Spouses Day on April 5, which recognizes the

surviving spouses of service members who made the ultimate sacrifice. Many of our posts mark the day with ceremonies or acknowledgments that honor the strength and devotion of these families.

Toward the end of the month, we celebrate American Legion Family Day, typically held on the last Saturday in April. We recognize the combined efforts of the entire Legion Family, including Legionnaires, the Auxiliary, the Sons of the American Legion, and Legion Riders, whose volunteer work strengthens our communities and supports our veterans.

Across Florida, local posts observe these events through youth activities,

*continued on page 11 >>*



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<< *Americanism continued from page 10*

scholarship presentations, school outreach programs, and family-centered gatherings. These efforts reflect the Legion's enduring commitment to the next generation and to the families who stand behind those who serve.

As April unfolds, Legionnaires throughout Florida continue to demonstrate that service to veterans also means investing in the future of America's youth and honoring the families who share in the sacrifices of military life.

And let's not forget the FALR In-State Unity Ride in support of the VetRelief Suicide Prevention Initiative. Get those checks ready, we are coming to collect. Be the One.

## American Legion Family Day: Celebrating Service and Support

**Rico Thomas, Civil Air Patrol**

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



The National Executive Committee of The American Legion, in regular meeting assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, on October 12-13, 2022, established that a special day known as "American Legion Family Day" be observed annually on the last Saturday of April, when all American Legion posts throughout the nation would open their doors to their members and the members of their local communities with the intent of celebrating all great deeds and works of The American Legion Family, with the intent to educate, recruit, recognize, and give back to those members that continually support the gift of giving.

The American Legion Family shall place special emphasis and awareness on the "Be the One" program on American Legion Family Day.

As we openly recognize The American Legion Family on "American Legion Family Day," keep in mind and pray for our fellow brothers and sisters who are in or going into harm's way. Also reach out to the family members who may need us to come alongside them and support them. Remind them; we are here for them as our families and neighbors were for us.

Support your local squadron, which may also have association with members serving in the military. This is also a seasonal time for the cadets' awards. Therefore, posts can order

certificates and medals through Emblem Sales: <https://emblem.legion.org/>

Locations | Civil Air Patrol's Florida Wing <https://flwg.cap.gov/> locations

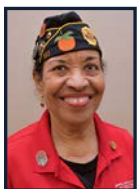
As always, contact me with any questions or concerns.



## JROTC: The Lives We Touch

**Loretta Young, JROTC/JSSP**

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



We are now approaching the end of the year for the JROTC Programs, with the school semester just a couple of months away. The year-

end wrap-up is very busy with Legion Cadet of the Year applications, that were due March 1st, numerous Military Balls, year-end award ceremonies, and other activities.

Through the many years that I've devoted to the JROTC chairmanship

since 2003, I have had many cadets return and share thanks for lessons learned, friends met, leadership, JPA's and activities attended, and other memories shared. This last event I attended this week, the Cypress Bay JROTC Lightning Battalion, was one of the most memorable.

*continued on page 12 >>*



<< JRTOC/JSSP continued from page 11

The Military Balls are usually planned and executed by the Cadet Battalion Staff with assistance from the Senior and Assistant Instructors and the Booster Clubs, if the school is fortunate to have one. There's usually a keynote speaker from the community, a school official, or another dignitary. The speaker for the Lightning Battalion was the recently hired new Cypress Bay Principal, Mr. Jorge Souza.

He gave quite a different speech, as he began by first thanking his SAI, Army Instructor CWO3 (Ret) Ludzen Thelusma, and Assistant Instructor Sergeant First Class (Ret) James Jackson, a longtime JROTC Instructor, and then myself, Loretta Young, as a longtime American Legion JROTC supporter. It had been two decades since he was a former JROTC

cadet and attended the program at Plantation High School.

He advised the cadets and attendees that the program had changed his life. In addition, he also gave thanks that he was the recipient of the Runner-Up Cadet of the Year Scholarship, and that it was that funding that allowed him to attend a junior college that set him on his path to where he is today, the principal of a school in the same area where he grew up two decades ago, doing something that he truly loves.

We may never know the lives we touch, but what we do is important, and the youth are our future. Don't miss an opportunity to change a life for the good and for all our futures. I want to thank all the posts that supported the Cadet of the Year program and wish much success for

the year's end.

The JSSP Postal Marksmanship Targets are now in progress, and the top 15 winners in each category of precision and sporter will advance to the National Competition, an in-person match in Hillsdale, Michigan. The deadline to return the fired targets is April 1st, with no extensions. Good luck to all our competitors, and thanks to all the posts that have supported these teams. Please reach out to me with any questions or concerns.



## Florida Legislative Session Recap

**Stuart Scott, Legislative**

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



As the Florida Legislative Session concludes, it is important to take a moment to review what occurred over the past several weeks and

what it ultimately means for our organization, our programs, and the communities we serve.

Like every legislative cycle, this year brought a mixture of progress, challenges, and lessons learned through the process. From veteran-focused legislation and state budget

discussions to charitable fundraising issues and national advocacy efforts, The American Legion Department of Florida remained actively engaged throughout the entire session.

### Gambling and Charitable Fundraising Legislation

One of the most closely watched issues this year involved legislation related to gambling and charitable fundraising. Ultimately, the gambling bills introduced during the session failed to reach concurrent language between the House and Senate, which means the legislation officially died at the close of the regular

session.

So what does that mean moving forward?

In practical terms, nothing has changed. Under current Florida law, illegal gambling activity remains a misdemeanor offense, and the regulatory structure governing these activities stays exactly as it was prior to the session.

Two bills that many organizations were hopeful about—HB 609 and SB 1282—which would

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<< *Legislative continued from page 12*

have addressed issues related to charitable gaming and fundraising tools, never made it to committee hearings and therefore did not receive consideration during the legislative process this year.

However, the process did provide some important insight. Through conversations with legislators and staff, it became clear that there is legislative interest in addressing this language moving forward. While the proposals did not advance this session, the discussions opened the door for continued work on the issue.

During the legislative off-season, efforts will focus on identifying the right bill sponsors and refining the language so that a stronger proposal can be introduced in a future session.

### **Budget and Appropriations**

As is often the case, the final weeks of the legislative session were dominated by budget negotiations. The House and Senate entered conference attempting to reconcile two different spending plans—a \$115 billion proposal from the Senate and a \$113.6 billion proposal from the House—leaving lawmakers with the task of closing a \$1.4 billion gap between the chambers.

Despite ongoing negotiations, the Legislature was unable to reach a final agreement within the

constitutionally mandated 60-day session window, meaning budget discussions will continue into April as leaders work toward finalizing the state’s spending plan.

For The American Legion, one of the key areas of focus during the budget process involved funding for Boys State and Girls State, two of our most impactful youth leadership programs. These programs continue to receive strong support thanks in large part to the grassroots advocacy efforts of our members across the state.

The phone calls, emails, and outreach made by Legionnaires played a significant role in keeping these programs part of the budget conversation.

### **Washington Conference: Florida Delegation in Action**

Advocacy for veterans extends beyond Tallahassee. Earlier this year, a 22-member delegation representing The American Legion, the Sons of The American Legion, and the American Legion Auxiliary traveled to Washington, D.C. to participate in the annual legislative conference.

During the visit, our delegation worked to ensure that Florida’s veterans had a strong voice at the national level. Through meetings and coordinated outreach, all 28 of Florida’s congressional offices were contacted, allowing the delegation to communicate directly with members of Congress and their staff regarding

federal issues affecting veterans and their families.

The professionalism and dedication displayed by our delegation reflects the strength of our organization and the commitment our members have to advocating for those who served.

### **A Grassroots Victory for Veterans**

One of the most encouraging developments during this time came at the federal level. The Department of Veterans Affairs recently announced that it would rescind a proposed rule that had raised significant concerns among veterans and advocacy organizations.

This decision was influenced by strong grassroots advocacy and coordinated outreach from veteran service organizations, including members of The American Legion who made their voices heard.

It serves as a powerful reminder that engaged citizens and organized advocacy efforts can make a real difference in shaping policy that affects veterans across the country.

### **Looking Ahead**

While the regular legislative session has concluded, the work of advocacy never truly stops. Budget negotiations will continue as lawmakers return to Tallahassee to finalize the state spending plan, and discussions surrounding charitable fundraising legislation will continue

*continued on page 14 >>*



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<< Legislative continued from page 13

during the off-season.

The American Legion will remain engaged in these conversations, working to ensure that policies

affecting veterans, youth programs, and nonprofit organizations move in a direction that benefits the communities we serve.

To every member who made calls,

attended meetings, participated in advocacy efforts, or supported these initiatives—**thank you**. Your dedication ensures that the voice of Florida’s veterans remains strong at both the state and national level.

## We’ve Crossed the Finish Line: Celebrating Our Oratorical Champions

**Doug Hockenberry, Oratorical**

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



“We’ve Crossed the Finish Line - and the Winner Is”

Hello, Department of Florida American Legion Family. I hope everyone is doing well as we prepare to welcome spring.

Now down to business, and let me start by saying thank you, Team Florida. Thank you for all the support with this year’s Oratorical Program. Over the past year, Posts across our great state have been actively working with schools, guidance counselors, students, and parents to ensure this program was successful, and I’m here to tell you we achieved success.

On 14 March 2026, the Department Oratorical Contest was held in Orlando to a room filled with members from the entire Florida Legion Family, guests, and a special VIP, National Vice Commander JD Larsen, as we prepared to hear from five amazing high school students.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am here to tell you that these five competitors came to win. We were truly in awe

as each student delivered their speeches. They were articulate, spoke with conviction, were poised, and demonstrated excellent oratory skills. Each of them was on point as they spoke on a variety of subjects pertaining to the U.S. Constitution. I, for one, did not envy the judges in having to pick a winner. In my book, each of them was a winner.

After all was said (literally) and done, the winner was Brianna Pe Aguirre, a junior who attends the Academy of the Holy Names in Tampa, representing the Central Area, and the runner-up was Samantha Gonzales Marchan, a junior who attends Olympia High School in Orlando, representing the Eastern Area. Brianna will represent the Department of Florida at the National Oratorical Competition on 16-17 May 2026 at Hillsdale College in Hillsdale, Michigan. Let’s all wish Brianna success at the National Competition.

Our remaining competitors were Cole Rewis, a senior at Fort Walton Beach High School, representing the Western Area; Noah Stoehr, a senior at Bradford High School, representing the Northern Area; and Kyle Ni, a junior at

Parrish Community High School, representing the Southwestern Area. As I mentioned earlier, I did not envy the judges one bit, as each of these students came to win. Let’s all congratulate these five amazing high schoolers and wish them success in their future endeavors.

Next, I mentioned in previous articles that we have had a record number (51 to be exact) of student and parent inquiries this year, and 18 of those came in January and February. That is both good and bad at the same time. Good in the fact that our advertising is reaching students and parents via social media, as well as school announcements. The downside is that the inquiries we received in late January and February were simply too late, as many Posts had already had their contests. Despite the late notice, this pool of students, many of whom are freshmen, sophomores, and juniors, means they are eligible to compete next year.

As such, I will send out lists of these students with their contact information to the District Commanders, who can work in concert with the Oratorical Chairs to get the students linked

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<< Oratorical continued from page 14

up with the appropriate Post. This is a fantastic opportunity to start working with these students for the coming year. Just think, they will have more time to select a topic, prepare their speeches, and practice while refining their oratory skills. But this can only happen if the District and Post Commanders, along with the Oratorical Chairs, reach out to these students. This truly is a wonderful

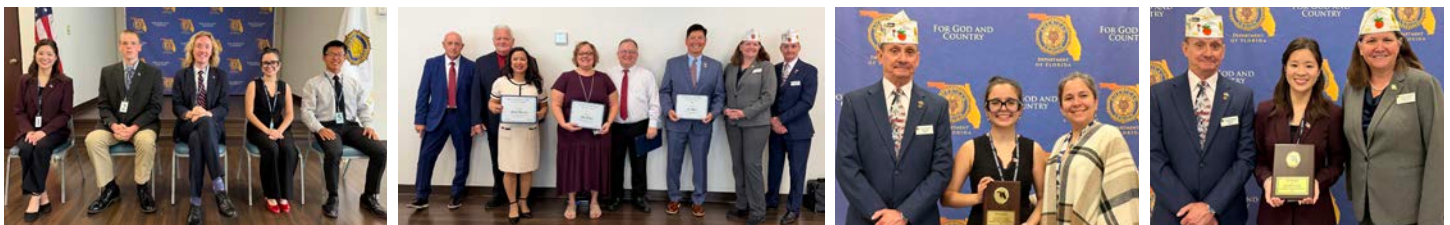
opportunity to get a head start on next year's program.

In closing, I want to thank all the Post, District, and Area Oratorical Chairs who have actively supported and promoted The American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program. As you know, I am a staunch supporter of this program, as it directly supports Children & Youth, which is one of our Four Pillars. This

program not only provides students with a scholarship, it also builds self-confidence while positively influencing their future. Again, thank you...

As always, if you have any questions, please email me at [oratorical@legionmail.org](mailto:oratorical@legionmail.org) or call me at 727-514-3742. "Hang Tough"

**#OneTeamOneDream**



## Honoring the Past: POW/MIA Memorial Progress and Remembrance

**Denny Luke, POW/MIA**

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



The American Legion Riders, Department of Florida, were onsite for the official groundbreaking ceremony of the Cecil Field POW/MIA Memorial on 18 January 2020. In 2021, they organized a police-escorted motorcycle ride across all seven bridges that cross the St. Johns River in Jacksonville, which ends at the Memorial for the POW/MIA Recognition Day Service. It has now become an annual event, with members from all of our Legion Family in attendance.

It has been an amazing journey watching the Memorial and Museum grow. For the

groundbreaking ceremony, someone had cut the weeds, but not much else was done, with the exception of refurbishing the Chapel of the High Speed Pass. Since the groundbreaking ceremony, visitors have had the pleasure of watching the progression of the massive project. Phase 1 is now complete, and Phase 2 is just beginning.

Throughout the past couple of years, the Memorial has acquired, refurbished, and placed on display an A-7 Corsair, F-18 Hornet, and the S-3 Viking, which are now permanently mounted in Legacy Plaza. The last plane, the A-4 Skyhawk, is expected to arrive sometime within the next year. Currently, the Museum is open from 10:00 AM until 2:00 PM every third Saturday of the month.

Personally, I'm looking forward to the 2026 Seven Bridges POW/MIA Remembrance Day Ride on 19 September to see what else is new.



The most significant POW/MIA event during the month of April is centered around recognizing former prisoners of war and commemorating the start of the Bataan Death March, one of the most brutal periods of captivity

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<< POW/MIA continued from page 15

for U.S. forces. National Former Prisoner of War Recognition Day is a day to honor captured wartime service members who eventually came home. It is observed annually on April 9th and commemorates the surrender of between 60,000 and 80,000 U.S. and Filipino service members to the Imperial Japanese Army at the Bataan Peninsula, Philippines, in 1942.

### Stay Connected

- Florida POW/MIA Facebook Page: [facebook.com/falpowmia](https://facebook.com/falpowmia)
- Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA): [dpaa.mil](https://dpaa.mil)
- National POW/MIA Memorial & Museum: [powmiamemorial.org](https://powmiamemorial.org)

### DPAA Missing Personnel Identified in FY 2026 as of February 10, 2026

- World War II: 61

- Korean War: 14
- Cold War: 0
- Vietnam War: 0

### Accounted For During February 2026

#### February 23, 2026

- Towner, L. — World War II
- McNeil, W. - Korean War
- Reed, M. - World War II

#### February 17, 2026

- Fatur, S. — World War II

## Resolution Submission Deadline Approaching for Department Convention

### Clarence Hill, Resolutions

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



The deadline is this month for submitting resolutions to be considered at this year's Department Convention.

All resolutions must be received by Department in time to be compiled, reproduced and distributed to all Posts 40 days prior to convention. Department should have them this month. In particular, those members who will represent their Posts at the Internal Affairs Committee meeting should read and review the resolutions prior to the meeting, and the Post should decide on what position they want taken on

the resolutions so their representative knows how to vote.

I haven't seen the agenda yet, but the Internal Affairs Committee is usually scheduled to meet on Thursday afternoon around 2 PM. The meeting will receive reports from Constitution and By-Laws, Credentials, Disaster Preparedness, POW-MIA, Resolutions, Time & Place, and Special Rules. When it comes to the Resolutions portion, only the RESOLVED Clauses will be read, so it is important that the entire resolution be reviewed prior to the meeting. Each Post can have one delegate at this meeting to speak about and to vote on all matters to be decided.

All voting members must have the appropriate black ribbon received with the registration package. Attendees without the ribbon cannot speak or vote. The results of the vote taken at this meeting are only a recommendation to the General Assembly when the Internal Affairs Committee report is presented. At the General Assembly, again only the RESOLVED clauses will be read and I will make a motion based on the Committee's decision. Every delegate to the Convention has a vote on the final disposition of the resolution.

Resolutions that do not meet the 40-day deadline will not be considered until the Fall Conference.

## DEPARTMENT MERCHANDISE

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## Recognizing Support for Scouting and Upcoming Award Opportunities

**Chris Ragusa, Scouting**

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



### Citation of Appreciation for Support to Scouting:

On Sunday, February 22, 2026, the Tampa Benevolent and Protective

Order of Elks 708 hosted the annual Blue and Gold birthday of Scouting celebration for Cub Scout Pack 1381. During that birthday of Scouting celebration, American Legion Post 138, represented by their Adjutant and Chaplain Vince Torres, awarded Tampa Elks 708 an American Legion Citation of Appreciation for support of Scouting. Specifically, the Elks lodge was lauded for outstanding service to the youth of our community through the programs of Scouting.

American Legion Post 138 (Port Tampa City) is the chartered organization for Cub Scout Pack 1381, and Post 138's Scouting Chair, Chris Ragusa, in addition to serving Scouting as the Department of Florida Scouting Committee Chairman, is also a 38-year Elks

member. Because Post 138 does not have a venue suitable for Courts of Honor, special occasions, or large pack meetings, Cub Scout Pack 1381 has relied on the generosity of Tampa Elks 708 and their policy of allowing Scouting America units to use the banquet hall free of charge.

Pictured with Legionnaire Vince Torres and the Department Scouting Chair is Tampa Elks 708 Exalted Ruler T-Michael Boyle.

The American Legion Scouting Citation of Appreciation (Item No. 733.121) can be purchased online at The American Legion Flag & Emblem site.

### Outstanding Post Scouting Program Nominations,

**due May 7, 2026:** Up to three Department of Florida posts will be recognized with the "Outstanding Post Scouting Program" award at the Department of Florida Convention in June. This award focuses on and recognizes the engagement of the Post with the

Scouting America program, those Posts chartering, sponsoring, and otherwise supporting Scouting units in their communities, rather than the success of any individual Scouting unit. The reporting period is from May 1, 2025, to April 30, 2026. Details of the award nomination are posted on the resource page of the Scouting Program portal: <https://www.floridalegion.org/programs-services/scouting/resources/>.

Details of the award nomination are posted on the resource page of the Scouting Program portal: <https://www.floridalegion.org/programs-services/scouting/resources/>.

**Give your Post a shout-out, complete the application and submit it by May 7th. Per the application guidance, please limit your application to two pages, including photos.**



## The Power of a Photograph: Preserving the Story of The American Legion

**Seven BeeBe, Social Media**

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



Social media is often viewed as a tool reserved for influencers and major brands. However, for the American Legion

Family, it is one of the most valuable communication tools available to us

today.

Whether the goal is to grow membership, engage current members, or remain visible in an increasingly crowded digital space, social media platforms provide an effective solution. They offer something that was once difficult to achieve: daily, real-time access to

our audience.

Instead of waiting for newsletters or annual events, members and potential members can stay connected to the American Legion as events, updates, and stories unfold. This consistent access delivers several important benefits.

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<< Social Media continued from page 17

First, regular posts help members feel connected to the organization and to one another. Social media creates opportunities for interaction through likes, comments, and shares, fostering a strong sense of community and belonging.

Second, active-duty service members, veterans, their families, and our broader community want to be involved in organizations that reflect their values and commitment to continued service. When our social media presence highlights the core values of the American Legion, it strengthens credibility, encourages membership growth, and reminds current members why they joined. It

also invites others to become part of our extraordinary American Legion Family.

Third, social media is an effective way to promote events, causes, and Post activities. It allows important information to reach a wider audience quickly, while also enabling members and followers to help amplify the message through sharing.

Additionally, social platforms allow for timely communication. Announcements, updates, and important news can be shared efficiently, ensuring members stay informed and engaged.

Finally, social media provides an opportunity to highlight the people behind our mission. Showcasing members, volunteers, and community involvement strengthens trust and deepens personal connections within the American Legion Family.

When used effectively, social media increases visibility, builds trust, and keeps members—and potential members—engaged throughout the year.

Ooh Rah & Semper Fi, American Legion Family. Keep being extraordinary.

## April in Action: Supporting Children, Youth, and Special Olympics

### George De Angelo, Special Olympics

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



April is Children and Youth Month, and all Posts should be scheduling an event at their Post this month.

Please have some kind of fundraising event for Special Olympics, which is Department Commander Jessica Moore's charity of choice.

Try to get Riders to host a poker run, the Auxiliary can host a bake sale or raffles, and the Sons can have

a BBQ, cornhole, or horseshoes. Place a jar on the bar, and you will be surprised to see how much you collect.

Let's all get an event on the schedule and help support Special Olympics. It is a great cause. Thank you all.

## From Advocacy to Action: Voices That Make a Difference

### Alan Cohen, VA&R

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



Greetings Legionnaires,

By the time you read this, I will have conducted a first-of-its-kind Veterans Town Hall at American Legion Post 240, Pensacola. I mentioned this in last

month's article, and the purpose was to address necessary improvements to the delivery of healthcare to the veteran community in the northern part of the state. In attendance were representatives of our state senators (thanks for your help with this, Stu Scott), as well as local elected officials and Dr. Stephanie Repasky, who is Medical Center Director for

the Gulf Coast Veterans Health Care System, representing the Pensacola VA Outpatient Clinic. Once again, a sincere "thank you" to all the members of Post 240 whose efforts contributed to the success of this event.

We're just back from yet another

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<< VA&R continued from page 18

successful Washington Conference, where Legionnaires' voices were heard by our elected officials. I had a wonderful experience in that I met with the Legislative Assistant to the Congresswoman whose district I live in. Along with other Legion priorities, we discussed the scourge of veteran suicide. I addressed this issue in human terms rather than just statistics, and she was so moved by the conversation that she rewrote the Congresswoman's address to center around this issue, which was presented on the floor of Congress the next day. The point of this story is that our voices count!

Moving along to share a bit of

health-related information. Not long ago, I had a need to correct an extremely painful skeletal problem caused by an auto accident. Rather than opt for surgery to replace a joint, I opted to try PRP, or Platelet-Rich Plasma injection. Within a very short period of time, I was well on the road to recovery. Since then, I've done a fair amount of research into this form of treatment, and for those of you who deal with chronic skeletal-related pain, I recommend that you speak to your doctor about it.

Lastly for this month, allow me to remind you that registration is open for our Post Service Officer class at the upcoming Department

Convention in June. Class will be held on Thursday, June 11, and Friday, June 12. Our Post Service Officers act as a bridge not only to the VA but also to a great number of non-VA resources that are helpful to our veteran brothers and sisters. Registration for this valuable class is required, and you can click on the link below to register:

<https://www.floridalegion.org/news-events/department-convention/classes/>

**Chuckle for the month:** *many years ago, my neighbor's dog bit my then mother-in-law. You can imagine how upset my ex-wife was when she learned I'd offered to buy the dog. Out here.*

## Using AI as a Tool: Working Smarter in Today's Legion

**Carrie Kolze, Creative Services Manager**  
[ckolze@floridalegion.org](mailto:ckolze@floridalegion.org)



As technology continues to evolve, new tools are becoming available that can help you work more efficiently and effectively in your roles

as Legionnaires. One of those tools is Artificial Intelligence, such as ChatGPT and similar platforms.

AI can be a valuable resource for Posts, Districts, and Departments. It can help draft emails, create newsletters, write social media posts, develop event flyers, and even assist with reports like CPR narratives. What might normally take hours can often be completed in minutes. For busy volunteers balancing Legion

responsibilities with work and family, this can be a significant advantage.

In addition to saving time, AI can help improve the overall quality and professionalism of our communications. It can assist with grammar, spelling, formatting, and organization, helping ensure that what we present to our members and communities reflects the high standards of The American Legion. Whether you are writing an article, preparing a speech, or promoting an event, AI can help you polish your message.

However, while AI is a powerful tool, it is important to understand its limitations.

AI is not always accurate. It can occasionally provide incorrect information, outdated details, or assumptions that are not specific to your situation. Dates, names, locations, and statistics should always be verified before being published or shared. Think of AI as a helpful assistant, not a final authority.

For this reason, it is critical that anything generated by AI is carefully reviewed and proofread. Take the time to ensure that the information is correct, relevant, and appropriate for your audience. A quick review can prevent the spread of misinformation and protect the credibility of your Post or organization.

When using AI to create flyers,



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graphics, or other visual materials, special care must also be taken to properly represent The American Legion. Our name, emblem, and branding carry a long and respected history. Always ensure that logos, emblems, and language are used correctly and in accordance with established Legion guidelines. Misuse or incorrect representation can unintentionally diminish the

professionalism and integrity of our organization.

AI should be viewed as a tool to support your work, not replace your judgment or experience. The values, mission, and voice of The American Legion come from its members. Technology can help us communicate more effectively, but it is our responsibility to ensure that what we produce remains accurate, respectful,

and aligned with who we are.

Used wisely, AI can help us save time, improve our communication, and strengthen our outreach. Combined with the dedication and commitment of our Legion Family, it can be another way we continue to serve veterans, our communities, and our nation with excellence.

**AI is a tool, you are the standard.**

### President's Message: Supporting the Future of Our Nation's Children

**Dennis Boland, Child Well Being Fdn Pres**  
[pdcboland@legionmail.org](mailto:pdcboland@legionmail.org)



On behalf of the Board of Directors of the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation (CWF), now doing business as the

American Legion Child Well-being Foundation, thank you for your interest in learning more about the Foundation.

Your commitment to help raise awareness and funds on behalf of the American Legion Child Well-being Foundation is vital to its success. Donations raised each

year directly impact the amount of money and grants the Foundation may award. Those grants help youth-serving nonprofit organizations in their mission of providing information, assistance, and opportunities that support the health and well-being of children, including life-saving services. Your CWF awareness and donations can give them knowledge and hope!

One way you can help CWF's mission is by becoming part of our Children's Action Team (CAT) family. The high-value impact you can have as a CAT member for the Foundation cannot be overstated. The mission

of the American Legion Child Well-being Foundation cannot be accomplished without the proactive efforts of our Children's Action Team members across the country.

Intrigued to learn more? The enclosed newsletter contains details about the CAT program, its mission, requirements for becoming a certified CAT member, and much more.

Remember, this is not just another worthy cause, this is YOUR CAUSE. I thank you for all that you have done, and will continue to do, on behalf of our nation's children.

### Stronger Together: Building Membership, Service, and Impact Across Florida

**Michael Nigbor, Detachment Cmdr**  
[commander@floridasons.org](mailto:commander@floridasons.org)



Greetings from your Detachment of Florida Commander!

Thank you to everyone who is working so hard on our membership. The renewals have

been coming in very well in all of the Districts. Area Vice Commanders and District Commanders, please get in touch with me and let me know who some of the star performers are in your area for getting renewals and recruiting new members.

As we all know, membership is crucial to the future of our organization. Keep

reaching out to those who have yet to renew. Text, email, and, especially important, call your members. Get them engaged and interested in coming to your meetings and events. Let them know you appreciate their continued support. This is a great way to work your "Buddy Checks." Remind them they are a team member

*continued on page 21 >>*



PLEASE SUPPORT  
**Special Olympics**

**HONOR SERVICE** **INSPIRE FUTURE**

[www.floridalegion.org](http://www.floridalegion.org)  
[legionlink@floridalegion.org](mailto:legionlink@floridalegion.org)



<< Detachment Commander continued from page 20 of the World's Greatest Veterans Organization, The American Legion. Get them enthused to get involved. Visit the Legion's "Buddy Check" web page to download a toolkit, door hanger, and FAQ sheet. As American Legion Family members, we must continue our "Buddy Checks." Resources are available to help show veterans and their families that we C.A.R.E. about their well-being.

As proud possessors of a priceless heritage, we continue to honor our forebearers' legacy by serving veterans, supporting youth programs, and promoting patriotism across our state and nation. Our dedication ensures that the values and sacrifices of America's veterans are remembered and respected for future generations. Our membership will affect our future service to these ideals. Success is the result of hard work and dedication. Our job is to bring in those last few members to reach our goals. We can and will set new membership records this year.

Remember our challenge to get each Squadron member to recruit at least one new member. This is part of your "WHY." Why did you want to join The American Legion? What were you hoping to accomplish? Now is our chance to give back, to help secure our future. We will show The American Legion Family that we believe in their mission and that we will continue to "honor our heritage" of supporting our veterans and communities.

March was another great month for events and travel. Congratulations to Central Area Vice Commander

Michael Sherman and his team for a fun-filled event, the Central Area Ball at Post 7 in Clearwater. I attended the District 9 Family Picnic at Post 180 in Plantation, a wonderful event on Saturday the 7th, with a generous donation to our charity, C.O.T.A. Sunday the 8th was the return of Squadron 303's horseshoe and cornhole tournament. It has been a year and a half in the planning since the destruction from Hurricane Ian. It ended up being a very successful event. Saturday the 14th was the Oratorical National Contest in Orlando. Wow, talk about some amazing young people, all presenting their take on the U.S. Constitution, its meaning, and influence on our rights as a nation. Thursday the 19th through Sunday the 22nd, I will be attending American Legion College. I'm looking forward to receiving a lot of useful information from the dedicated instructors. Knowledge is strength. April will be filled with a lot of events that I will talk about in the next article.

I hope that all of my travels and meeting you at your events will inspire you and your family, all Legion Family members, and everyone in your circle of community to our mission, "Supporting all of our veterans and encouraging our nation's youth to be good citizens." We are challenging all Americans to service to their community, state, and nation. April 25th is American Legion Family Day. I hope there are many Posts, Squadrons, and Units having open house events to welcome their communities, children, and youth. This would be a great day to pass on the knowledge of flag respect, American history, and citizenship. With America's 250th

birthday fast approaching, educational outreach is more important than ever. Teach our fellow Americans the proper protocols of flag etiquette and our country's heritage, and about all the good we do with our volunteerism. Again, call your members and get them engaged to help on this day. Let them know they are important to the success of our program.

This is an exciting time of year with elections for new and returning officers. Remember to send in your SIR report after your elections. You should all be receiving the packet with all of our report criteria. Let's work hard on getting 100% reporting this year. The Consolidated Squadron Report (CSR) is one of the most important documents we need to turn in. The information on this report is combined with other squadrons in creating a final report used by The American Legion, forwarded to the U.S. Congress, showing our volunteer hours and donations, and used to apply for and verify awards at National Convention.

Get together with your neighboring Squadrons and get these reports done. Help each other, we are a team, and one of the greatest ones. Remember, if your Squadron only does one thing, it needs to be reported on the CSR. What our squadrons do every day matters. It needs to be documented. Every volunteer hour and every dollar donated turn good intentions into verifiable proof of impact. The CSR shows how we support our veterans, youth, military families, and our communities. This is essential when facing audits, regulatory reviews, and public scrutiny. Service that is not

*continued on page 22 >>*



PLEASE SUPPORT  
**Special Olympics**

**HONOR SERVICE**  **INSPIRE FUTURE**

[www.floridalegion.org](http://www.floridalegion.org)  
[legionlink@floridalegion.org](mailto:legionlink@floridalegion.org)

<< Detachment Commander continued from page 21  
documented cannot be defended,  
validated, or verified.

Communication and teamwork are the foundation of our success. The time is now to show our mission is cemented in service, patriotism, kindness, and community engagement, honoring all those who served and continue to

serve.

Always keep in mind, the dignity of being a Son of The American Legion is non-negotiable. Duty, honor, and country are what we stand for. It's what we do and are about.

Thank you for all you do to prove the Detachment of Florida is an

unwavering force. Please send me invitations to your meetings and events. As you can see, I like to meet all of our members and will make every effort to attend. Get out and keep the lines of communication thriving. Help promote each other's events. We are a team. We are stronger together.



### Dorie Miller Memorial Post 331 - Celebrates Oratorical and Black History Month

Darrell Gray, Post 331, PR

[degeagle7@gmail.com](mailto:degeagle7@gmail.com)



Samantha Gonzalez accepts her 2nd Place Award from Department Commander Jessica Moore at the 2026 American Legion Department of Florida Oratorical Contest on Saturday, March 14, 2026.



Ms. Gonzalez stands with members of her sponsoring Post, Doris "Dorie" Miller Memorial Post 331 Inc., Orlando, Florida.



The Doris "Dorie" Miller Color Guard presented the Colors, and Darrell Gray, Post 331 Public Information Officer, presented a "Black History Month Moment" in word and song at the ASALH Dorothy Turner Johnson Branch Breakfast in Orlando, Florida, on Saturday, February 28, 2026. The event celebrated 100 years of Black History Month, founded by Dr. Carter G. Woodson in 1926.



# FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT

APRIL 2026 EDITION

CURRENT YEAR FIGURES : SINCE JULY 2025

**131** VETS RECEIVED FUNDS

**\$219,277** PROVIDED AS EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

**14** SPI PARTNERS

**\$153,500** GIVEN TOWARDS SUICIDE PREVENTION

## FLORIDA LEGION RIDERS RIDING FOR A LIFE-SAVING MISSION

PROJECT: VetRelief is dedicated to ending veteran suicide, and this April, the Florida American Legion Riders are taking that mission on the road. Throughout the month, Riders will raise critical funds and awareness across the state, highlighted by the In-State Unity Ride spanning all of Florida.

### Ways to Get Involved:

**Join the Ride** – There’s still time to register for a route or participate as a Virtual Rider. However you ride, you’ll be part of a meaningful experience supporting a vital cause.

**Fundraise & Earn Prizes** – The more you raise, the more exciting rewards you can earn. Explore the full lineup of incentives and see what you can achieve.

**Donate** – Every contribution helps in the fight to end veteran suicide. Your support directly fuels our shared mission.

**Visit a Post** – Cheer on the Riders as they arrive at stops along the route. Your support along the way makes a lasting impact.

For full details and to get involved, visit:  
<https://give.floridalegion.org/2026UnityRide>

## ★★★ COOL PRIZES ★★★

**LAPEL PIN** — RAISE **\$50** RAISE **\$100**

**EMBROIDERED PATCH** — RAISE **\$250**  
\*Plus lapel pin

**T-SHIRT** — RAISE **\$500**  
\*Plus lapel pin, patch

**TRAVEL MUG (30oz)** — RAISE **\$500**  
\*Plus lapel pin, patch, shirt

**POLO** — RAISE **\$1,000**  
\*Plus lapel pin, patch, shirt, mug

**STANDARD ROOM NIGHT AT 2027 SUMMIT** — RAISE **\$1,500**  
\*Plus lapel pin, patch, shirt, mug, polo

## FUNDING GUIDELINES

### Emergency Assistance

- MILITARY / VETERAN AFFILIATION**
  - ▶ **Veteran** with Honorable Discharge Status
  - ▶ **Active-Duty Military** on Title 10 Orders
  - ▶ **Immediate Family Member** Receiving Benefits
- FLORIDA RESIDENCY**
  - ▶ **Minimum of 120 Days**
- FINANCIAL STABILITY**
  - ▶ **Ongoing income and expenses must be in balance**
- UNFORESEEN EMERGENCY**
  - ▶ **Recent and unpredictable** situations
  - ▶ **Verified by supporting documentation**

## WELCOME TO THE TEAM, CAITLIN!

Caitlin joined the team in late February and brings a strong background in communications and community engagement to her work. She is passionate about supporting veterans and their families by connecting them with critical resources and assistance. Known for her approachable and professional style, Caitlin is dedicated to making a meaningful impact in the communities she serves.

Outside of work she enjoys visiting theme parks, playing soccer, and spending time with her family, friends and most importantly her dog, Melody Pond.

We’re honored to have Caitlin on the team and look forward to all the great things she’ll accomplish. **Please join us in giving her a warm Legion welcome!**





## 2026 District Constitutional Conferences (DCC Meetings)

Date	District	Location	Time
May 16	1	Post 75 Crestview	Registration: 12:00 PM CST Start: 1:00 PM CST
May 16	2	Post 241 Sneads	Registration: 8:00 AM CST Start: 9:00 AM CST
May 16	3	Post 57 Lake City	Registration: 4:00 PM Start: 5:00 PM
May 16	4	Post 155 Crystal River	Registration: 9:00 AM Start: 10:00 AM
May 2	5	Post 137 Jacksonville	Registration: 8:30 AM Start: 9:30 AM
May 9	6	Post 80 Saint Cloud	Registration: 9:00 AM Start: 10:00 AM
May 9	7	Post 8 Winter Haven	Registration: 12:00 PM Start: 1:00 PM
May 17	8	Post 113 Rotonda West	Registration: 9:00 AM Start: 10:00 AM
May 16	9	Post 142 Pompano Beach	Registration: 12:30 PM Start: 1:30 PM
May 2	11	Post 268 Rivera Beach	Registration: 9:00 AM Start: 10:00 AM
April 18	12	Post 81 Melbourne	Registration: 9:00 AM Start: 10:00 AM
May 17	13	Post 103 Punta Gorda	Registration: 12:30 PM Start: 1:30 PM
May 16	14	Post 31 South Miami	Registration: 8:30 AM Start: 9:30 AM
May 2	15	Post 111 Tampa	Registration: 8:30 AM Start: 9:30 AM
May 16	16	Post 273 Madeira Beach	Registration: 9:00 AM Start: 10:00 AM
May 9	17	Post 17 New Smyrna Beach	Registration: 10:00 AM Start: 11:00 AM

*All dates are tentative and subject to change without notice.*

If you are an authorized Post representative, and need to make a change, please email [events@floridalegion.org](mailto:events@floridalegion.org).

## 2026-2027 Endorsements On File (As of March 27, 2026)

### Officers

Robert "Bob" W. Matheson.....	Dept Commander
Bruce Carl.....	1st Vice Cmdr
Troy Horsley.....	2nd Vice Cmdr
Rick Orzechowski.....	2nd Vice Cmdr
Michael A. Raymond.....	NEC
Jessica Moore.....	ANEC
Joseph "JC" Kelleher.....	Chaplain
Diane Schmidt.....	Chaplain
Kimberly Ann "Seven" Beebe.....	Historian
Sonny Decker.....	Sgt-at-Arms

### Area Commanders

Kalvin Thompson.....	Central Area Cmdr
Dennis Mallon.....	Eastern Area Cmdr
Miguel Garcia.....	Northern Area Cmdr
George "Geo" Bograkos.....	Southern Area Cmdr
E. Fred Pierce.....	Southwestern Area Cmdr
Robert "Oz" Osmon.....	Western Area Cmdr

### District Commanders

Donald "Don" Westfall.....	District 1 Cmdr
Roxana "Roxann" Dressel.....	District 2 Cmdr
Enrique "Rick" Cabrera.....	District 3 Cmdr
Darcy Bockman-Wright.....	District 4 Cmdr
Ken White.....	District 5 Cmdr
Alan Adams.....	District 6 Cmdr
Karen Warren.....	District 7 Cmdr
Robert Patierno Sr.....	District 8 Cmdr
David "Dave" Hurst.....	District 9 Cmdr
Daniel J. Ciesielski.....	District 12 Cmdr
Laurene Allen-Flower.....	District 13 Cmdr
Michael G. Harley.....	District 16 Cmdr
Robert Ordner.....	District 16 Cmdr

For endorsement letters and updates, visit our website at <https://www.floridalegion.org/news-events/department-convention/endorsement-letters/>



PLEASE SUPPORT  
**Special  
Olympics**

**HONOR SERVICE**  **INSPIRE FUTURE**

[www.floridalegion.org](http://www.floridalegion.org)  
[legionlink@floridalegion.org](mailto:legionlink@floridalegion.org)



# MEMBERSHIP TARGET REPORT

March 26, 2026 (95% Target)

District 3	Rick Cabrera	99.24%
District 2	Roxann Dressel	97.08%
District 5	Miguel Garcia	96.44%
District 13	Laurene Allen-Flower	96.40%
District 4	Darcy Bockman-Wright	96.29%
District 12	Daniel Martin	95.08%
District 1	Robert Osmon	95.04%
District 16	Michael Harley	94.96%
District 17	Jim Bowers	94.52%
District 9	Jim Tewes	93.13%
District 15	Drew Davis	92.69%
District 6	David Musser	92.49%
District 8	Charlie Magnus	91.85%
District 11	Stanley Brown, Jr.	91.70%
District 7	Kalvin Thompson	90.55%
District 14	Thomas Frank	89.38%
Northern	Doug Hockenberry	96.34%
Western	Shelby Windham	95.33%
Southwestern	Eric Loyd	94.38%
Central	Rick Orzechowski	93.67%
Eastern	Joan Suelter	93.66%
Southern	Geo Bograkos	91.51%
Post 400		83.62%

**DEPARTMENT TRUSTED. LEGIONNAIRE APPROVED.**

The Legionnaire Insurance Trust has been protecting Legionnaires and their families for over 50 years.



LEGIONNAIRE INSURANCE TRUST

[www.thelit.com](http://www.thelit.com)



**"JUST BECAUSE I LIVE DANGEROUSLY DOESN'T MEAN SHE HAS TO."**

Service often takes you away from family. USAA is always there for them when you can't be. We deliver the financial peace of mind and support you deserve. Checking. Savings. Credit cards. Loans. Auto & life insurance. Mutual funds. Even free financial advice. Get all you've earned. [Visit usaa.com](http://www.usaa.com) today.




**50/50 RAFFLE** 4 VETERANS

[www.florida5050.org](http://www.florida5050.org)

WIN CASH      WIN MORE CASH      WIN LOTS OF CASH

**More Chances. More Winners. More Cash!**

Questions: 1-800-393-3378. Florida participants only.

AMERICAN LEGION Department of Florida

ONE OF DEPARTMENT'S LARGEST FUNDRAISERS!



FLORIDA SAMPL

SHOW YOUR SUPPORT

The American Legion official license plate.




PLEASE SUPPORT  
**Special Olympics**

**HONOR SERVICE**  **INSPIRE FUTURE**

[www.floridalegion.org](http://www.floridalegion.org)  
[legionlink@floridalegion.org](mailto:legionlink@floridalegion.org)



# 2026 STATE ORATORICAL WINNERS

14 March 2026

## Congratulations to all of our State Oratorical Contestants!

*1<sup>st</sup> Place - \$2,500*

*Represents Florida at National Oratorical Contest*

*Brianna Pe Aguirre*

Central Area, Post 5

*\$500 Winners:*

*Noah Stoehr*

Northern Area, Post 56

*2<sup>nd</sup> Place - \$1,500*

*Samantha Gonzalez Merchan*

Eastern Area, Post 331

*Kyle Ni*

Southwestern Area, Post 24

*3<sup>rd</sup> Place - \$1,000*

*Cole Rewis*

Western Area, Post 296

## *Special Thank You To:*

**All the Posts, Districts,  
and Area Chairs that  
helped support these  
students with their  
journey to the State  
Contest.**

**Department  
Oratorical Chair Doug  
Hockenberry for his  
dedication and  
support for the  
Oratorical Program.**

**The Judges,  
Tabulators,  
Timekeepers and  
staff for your help  
and support at the  
State Contest.**



# 107<sup>th</sup> Annual Department Convention, June 11-14, 2026

Hilton Orlando Lake Buena Vista – Disney Springs Area, 1751 Hotel Plaza Blvd; Lake Buena Vista, FL 32830

## CONTACT INFORMATION

Name of Business or Organization

Contact Person

Job Title

Email

Phone

Website

## PREMIER SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Choose one or more (optional):

- Delegate Bags \$3,000
- Delegate Badges \$3,000
- Kick-Off Party \$2,000
- Commander's and President's Banquet \$1,000
- Service Officer School \$1,000

## EXHIBITOR PACKAGES

Choose one (optional):

- General's Exhibitor \$800
- Colonel's Exhibitor \$550
- Lieutenant's Exhibitor \$300
- None

Banquet Door Prize / Raffle Item and Approximate Value - **\*Required for all levels.**

## EXHIBITOR PROGRAM ADVERTISEMENT UPGRADE

Advertisements are included with sponsorship; upgrades available for Lieutenant's and Colonel's levels.

**Colonel's:**    Upgrade to Full Page \$150    No Upgrade

**Lieutenant's:**    Upgrade to Full Page \$250    Upgrade to Half Page \$100    No Upgrade

**Program advertisements MUST be submitted no later than May 8, 2026.** Please submit your advertisement artwork via email in one of the following image file types: .ai, .eps, .psd, .pdf, .tif, .jpeg, .jpg, .png. **All artwork must be digital:** no scanned or printed artwork. Advertisements are printed in grayscale. All imagery must be legally licensed. Please email artwork to: [events@floridalegion.org](mailto:events@floridalegion.org).



Department of Florida

SPONSOR AND EXHIBITOR APPLICATION

\*\*\* Deadline May 8, 2026 \*\*\*

Register online at [floridalegion.org/flcon](http://floridalegion.org/flcon)

PAYMENT METHOD

Credit Card  Check # \_\_\_\_\_ Make checks payable to *The American Legion, Dept of FL*

CREDIT CARD INFORMATION

Visa  Mastercard  American Express  Discover Total to Charge: \$ 0.00

Credit Card # \_\_\_\_\_

Cardholder Name \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_

Security Code \_\_\_\_\_

I authorize The American Legion, Department of Florida to charge the amount listed above to the credit card provided herein. I agree to pay for this purchase in accordance with the issuing bank cardholder agreement.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

See our website at [floridalegion.org/flcon](http://floridalegion.org/flcon) for detailed benefits and deadlines.

Submit completed application, with full payment to:

The American Legion  
Department of Florida  
Attention: Event Coordinator  
PO Box 547859  
Orlando, FL 32854-7859

**DEADLINE REMINDER:** To ensure inclusion of your advertisement in the convention book, all final artwork must be submitted no later than **May 8, 2026**. Discounts or credits will not be issued for missed deadlines or applications received after this date.

Exhibitor registration will close once available space is filled or shortly before the Convention, whichever occurs first. Exhibitor placement is assigned and determined by the exhibit level selected.

**We reserve the right to deny sponsor/exhibitor participation at our sole discretion if a sponsor/exhibitor does not align with our mission, values, or event relevance.**

P.O. BOX 547859  
ORLANDO, FL 32854-7859

[www.floridalegion.org](http://www.floridalegion.org)

TOLL FREE 800-393-3378  
FAX 407-295-2631



Department of Florida

PROGRAM ADVERTISING

LEGION FAMILY

\*\*\* Deadline May 8, 2026 \*\*\*

107th Annual Department Convention, June 11-14, 2026

Hilton Orlando Lake Buena Vista – Disney Springs Area, 1751 Hotel Plaza Blvd; Lake Buena Vista, FL 32830

CONTACT INFORMATION

Post, Unit, or Squadron Name

Name of Member

Member ID #

Email

Phone

PROGRAM ADVERTISEMENT OPTIONS FOR LEGION FAMILY MEMBERS, POSTS, UNITS, AND SQUADRONS ONLY

**FULL PAGE**  
\$175  
  
7.5" X 10"

**HALF PAGE**  
\$100  
  
7.5" X 5"

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**HALF PAGE**  
\$100  
  
7.5" X 5"

<b>QUARTER PAGE</b> \$50  3.75" X 5"	<b>QUARTER PAGE</b> \$50  3.75" X 5"
<b>QUARTER PAGE</b> \$50  3.75" X 5"	<b>QUARTER PAGE</b> \$50  3.75" X 5"

- Full Page (7.5" x 10") \$175    Half Page (7.5" x 5") \$100    Quarter Page (3.75" x 5") \$50    Custom Design Fee \$25

Program advertisements must be submitted no later than May 8, 2026 to be included in the program. Please submit your advertisement artwork via email in one of the following image file types: .ai, .eps, .psd, .pdf, .tif, .jpeg, .jpg, .png. All artwork must be digital: no scanned or printed artwork will be accepted. All advertisements are printed in grayscale. All imagery must be legally licensed. For an additional \$25 Custom Design Fee, we will design your advertisement for you. You'll be contacted for details at the email provided. Please email artwork to: [events@floridalegion.org](mailto:events@floridalegion.org).

PAYMENT METHOD

- Credit Card    Check # \_\_\_\_\_ Make checks payable to *The American Legion, Dept of FL*

CREDIT CARD INFORMATION

- Visa    Mastercard    American Express    Discover

Total to Charge: \$ 0.00

Credit Card #

Cardholder Name

Expiration Date

Security Code

I authorize The American Legion, Department of Florida to charge the amount listed above to the credit card provided herein. I agree to pay for this purchase in accordance with the issuing bank cardholder agreement.

Signature

Date

Submit to: The American Legion, Department of Florida, Attention: Event Coordinator; PO Box 547859, Orlando, FL 32854-7859.

**DO YOU  
HAVE WHAT  
IT TAKES?**

**BECOME A  
DEPARTMENT  
CHAIR!**

**MAKE AN  
2026**



**IMPACT  
2027**

\_\_\_\_\_  
YEARS IN LEGION



Department  
of Florida

\_\_\_\_\_  
DISTRICT

\_\_\_\_\_  
POST

\_\_\_\_\_  
AREA

\_\_\_\_\_  
NAME

\_\_\_\_\_  
POSITION INTERESTED IN

EXPLAIN YOUR QUALIFICATIONS FOR DEPARTMENT CHAIR \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

LEGION SCHOOLS ATTENDED:  ALEI     Florida Legion College     National Legion College     Sgt-at-Arms     Chaplain  
 National LEAD Classes     \_\_\_\_\_     \_\_\_\_\_

POSITIONS HELD	YEARS AT POST LEVEL	YEARS AT DISTRICT LEVEL	YEARS AT AREA LEVEL	YEARS AT DEPT LEVEL
Commander				
Vice Commander				
Adjutant				
Sgt-at-Arms				
Historian				
Chaplain				
Membership				
Americanism				
Baseball				
Blood Donor				
Boy Scouts				

POSITIONS HELD	YEARS AT POST LEVEL	YEARS AT DISTRICT LEVEL	YEARS AT AREA LEVEL	YEARS AT DEPT LEVEL
Boys State				
Children & Youth				
JROTC				
Shooting Sports				
Law & Order				
Oratorical				
POW/MIA				
School Medals				
Women Veterans Advocate				
Youth Law Cadet				
Other				

PLEASE RETURN TO: The American Legion, Dept of Florida, Attention: Bob Matheson, P.O. Box 547859, Orlando, FL 32854

# Join us for the 3rd Annual Florida American Legion Boys State Alumni Dinner

**Saturday, May 9, 2026, at 5:00 PM**

Department of Florida American Legion Headquarters  
1912 Lee Road, Orlando, Florida 32810



\$35 for (1) Ticket  
\$65 for (2) Tickets

Your support—through buying tickets or donating—helps  
fund Delegates:

- Housing • Scholarships • Program Enhancements • Leadership Development • and More!

Room block available at Marriott Courtyard Orlando Altamonte Springs/Maitland starting at \$109.00. For more information, please call (407) 659-9100

American Legion  
Department of FL  
Presents

## CHILDREN & YOUTH PICNIC

Music by  
Doc Holiday

Raffle Baskets  
50/50  
Carnival Games  
+ More!



Poker Run

Registration  
10am  
KSU 11am

Location:  
American Legion Post 117  
189 Veterans Drive  
Palm Bay, Fl. 32909

# Saturday April 11th 2026 12-5PM

1/3 Pound Burger or, 1/4 Hot Dog \$10

Kids Under 12 1/4 Burger or Hot Dog \$5

All Meals Served with Sides

Questions: Contact

AL Dept C&Y Chaiman Chris Hamerick 321-313-3469

MaryAnn Spellman 917-834-5763

All Proceeds go to  
Commander Charites



Questions: Contact

AL Dept C&Y Chaiman Chris Hamerick 321-313-3489

MaryAnn Spellman 917-834-5763



# Special Olympics

## Fundraiser

## American Legion

## Family Fun Day

**Fun  
Food  
Games  
and  
Vendors**

PLEASE JOIN US ON

APRIL 25, 2026

11:00 to 6:00

*Hosted by*

American Legion Post 321  
9081 SW 51st Street  
Cooper City, Florida 33328

**Raffle Baskets  
Silent Auction**

All proceeds  
benefit the Special  
Olympics



**MUSIC:  
Southern Blood  
Plays from 1:00 to 5:00**



**Special Olympics  
Florida**





# 7<sup>th</sup> DISTRICT AMERICAN LEGION

## WORKING REPORTS & TRAINING SESSION

**APRIL 11, 2026**  
*Starting at 10:00am*

**In-Person & Zoom Hybrid Event**

**Gordon M. Crothers American Legion Post 15 — Dade City**

**Reviewing & Completing Annual Reports**

*Please bring your laptops and annual reports package*

**Join Us In Person!**



**Email District Commander *Kalvin Thompson* at [kalvin763@gmail.com](mailto:kalvin763@gmail.com)  
to request the Zoom link or to RSVP to attend in person**



# Cabana Boy's Island Bash

Homecoming Celebration & BBQ



***The Beach Is Coming Indoors!***

CELEBRATE OUR DETACHMENT COMMANDER **MICHAEL 'CABANA BOY' NIGBOR** AT CABANA BOY'S ISLAND BASH, A TROPICAL HOMECOMING FILLED WITH BBQ, ISLAND VIBES, AND AMERICAN LEGION FAMILY FELLOWSHIP.

TROPICAL ATTIRE ENCOURAGED.  
FLIP-FLOPS OPTIONAL. **FUN REQUIRED.**

***Saturday April 25, 2026 12pm - 4pm***

AMERICAN LEGION POST 323 | 1124 ASHLAR AVENUE | LEHIGH ACRES, FL 33936



## ***Event Highlights***

Entertainment by A Lil' Mixed Up  
Raffles / Games  
BBQ & More  
Dress: Tropical / Casual

*Proceeds Benefit*  
 **Children's Organ Transplant Association.**

## ***Payment Info***

**Cost: \$25 Per Person**  
Checks Payable to Squadron 323  
(mailed to the above address)  
Venmo: @Christian-Rapp-3  
**Contact:**  
Christian Rapp  
adjutant@floridasons.org  
(239) 243-2205



## ***Hotel Information***

**Quality Inn & Suites**  
1320 Business Way  
Lehigh Acres, FL 33936  
(239) 491-0049



PROUD SPONSOR OF THE

# Sunshine State



# 250 Showdown

**1 NATION INVITES AMERICAN LEGION POSTS ACROSS FLORIDA TO LEAD MEANINGFUL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN RECOGNITION OF AMERICA'S 250TH ANNIVERSARY.**

**OUR GOAL IS TO INSPIRE POSTS TO COMPETE, INNOVATE, AND ENGAGE THEIR COMMUNITIES SO FULLY THAT PEOPLE WAKE UP ON JULY 5 AND SAY IT WAS THE BEST INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATION EVER AND WHAT MY LOCAL LEGION POST DID WAS REALLY COOL.**



**REGISTRATION  
OPEN!**

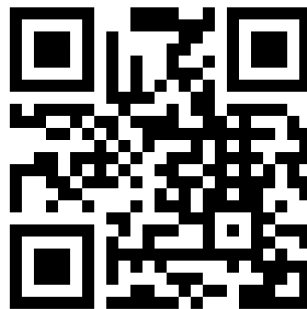


**VOLUNTEER SUPPORT  
FOR PARTICIPATING POSTS**



**HUGE PRIZES FOR  
TOP PERFORMING POSTS**

**REGISTER. PARTICIPATE. LEAD.**



**SCAN OR VISIT [1NATION.ORG](http://1NATION.ORG) or EMAIL [CHARLES@1NATION.ORG](mailto:CHARLES@1NATION.ORG)**