AMERICAN LEGION | Department of Florida

NOVEMBER 2026 ★ VOLUME XXXV | ISSUE 4



THE AMERICAN LEGION LEGION LINK NEWSLETTER DEPARTMENT OF FLORIDA

IN THIS EDITION

Department Officers
1 Commander
2 1st Vice Commander
3 2nd Vice Commander
4 Finance Officer
5 Historian
5 Chaplain

Areas & Districts
6 Northern
7 District 7

Membership
14 Membership
28 Membership Report

Programs / Committees
8 Blood Donor
8 Boys State
10 Children & Youth
11 Disaster Preparedness
13 Legislative
15 POW-MIA
27 PROJECT: VetRelief
17 Resolutions
18 School Medals
19 VA&R

Other
19 Creative Services
21 Child Well-Being Fdn
24 Detachment

Submit Articles at
floridalegion.org/submit or legionlink@floridalegion.org
Questions? legionlink@floridalegion.org

A MESSAGE FROM THE DEPARTMENT COMMANDER



Bob Matheson
Department Commander
commander@floridalegion.org

Leadership in The American Legion has never been about titles. It has always been about standards. This month, I want to speak directly to the leaders of our Posts, Districts and programs across Florida about the standard that defines us more than any other:

"Welcome Home." Not as a motto or a sentiment, but as an expectation we set and uphold every single day.

"Welcome Home" is the foundation of our mission. It reflects who we are, who we serve and how we carry ourselves as Legionnaires. But it only becomes real when leadership turns it from words into action. That is our responsibility and our opportunity.

Strong leadership begins with clarity. For Post Officers, that means ensuring your Post is a place where veterans feel respected the moment they walk in. A clean, organized space sends a message. A warm greeting sends another. The way we conduct meetings, communicate with members and manage our facilities all contribute to the culture we create.

Leadership also requires consistency. For District Commanders, this means

continued on page 2 >>

PROJECT: VetRelief
Emergency assistance, benefits support, and community engagement for veterans and their families across Florida.
floridalegion.org/donate
GOAL: $50,000 ***FUNDS RAISED: $13,248*** **26.5%**

DISASTER RELIEF
Providing immediate support when Florida communities are impacted by disasters.
floridalegion.org/donate
GOAL: $50,000 ***FUNDS RAISED: $18,733*** **37.5%**

UPCOMING EVENTS | NOVEMBER 2026

1	BE THE ONE Day
1-30	Veterans & Militray Family Month
1-30	Warrior Care Month
1-30	Family Caregivers Month
1	Start of Vietnam War (1955)
1	Football with Purpose ✪
2-6	Natl Veterans Small Business Week
4	Election Day
7	Post 273: Veterans Boat Parade ✪
7	District 2: Meeting
7	District 15: Boys/Girls State Picnic ✪
8	District 5: Meeting
8-14	Buddy Check Week ★
8	District 13: Meeting
10	Marine Corps Birthday (1775)
10	American Legion Auxiliary Birthday (1919)
11	Veterans Day
11	Dept HQ Closed ✪
11	End of World War I (1918)
11	Remembrance Day (Poppy Day)
11	Post 404: Vietnam Veterans Memorial ✪
11	Post 113: Veterans Day Ceremony
12-15	District 6: Dept Commander Visit ✪
14	District 7: Meeting
14	District 17: Quarterly Meeting
14	District 12: Meeting
15	Legion Link Articles Due for December ✪
15-21	American Education Week
20-22	Department Fall Conference ✪ ✪
23	Dept HQ Closed ✪
22-28	National Family Week
26	Thanksgiving Day
26-27	Dept HQ Closed ✪
27	Holiday Blood Drive Begins ★
28	Chapter 423: Rev Up for the Holidays

✪ Commander attendance tentative.
✪ Department of Florida event.
★ National event.
Events are subject to change. More details at floridalegion.org.

<< Department Commander continued from page 1

helping Posts evaluate their strengths and identify areas for improvement. A Post that excels in outreach can mentor one that struggles. A Post with strong family programs can share best practices with others. When leaders set expectations and follow through, the entire Department grows stronger.

Leadership also demands accountability. For program chairs, this means ensuring that every initiative, from youth programs to veterans' services, reflects our values. If something isn't working, we fix it. If something is working, we expand it. Leaders don't wait for change. They create it.

This month, I'm asking every leader in the Department of Florida to take one deliberate step to raise the standard of "Welcome Home." It might be improving communication, refreshing your Post environment, strengthening outreach or simply reconnecting with members who haven't been seen in a while. Small actions, taken consistently, build a culture worthy of our mission.

Leadership is not about being in charge. It's about taking charge of what matters. And nothing matters more than ensuring every veteran who enters a Florida Post feels one thing above all: Welcome Home.

A Month Full of Membership Opportunities



Bruce Carl
1st Vice Commander
1stvice@legionmail.org

November is here and what a full month of events and celebrations! We have Veterans and Military Month, Family Caregiver Month, and Warrior Care Month. The 2nd to the 8th is Veterans Small Business Week, the 9th to the 15th is Buddy Check Week, the 16th to the 22nd is American Education Week, and the 23rd to the 29th is National Family Week.

If that isn't enough, we have Election Day, Veterans Day, the Department-Wide Membership Incentive Drive, and Fall Conference, and Thanksgiving! Let's not forget the Auxiliary Birthday and the Marine Corps Birthday!

These are all in addition to your regular meetings, District meetings, and Post and District events. Hence, there are plenty of opportunities to increase your membership this month. We should also have many of our snowbirds back between the elections and the colder weather up North. Please take advantage of all these great opportunities!

This past month has been a busy one for me as I attended the Hernando County VetFest, the Post 155 Standdown, Women's Veterans Expo, and Alan Cohen's Celebration of Life. I also attended

continued on page 3 >>

<< 1st Vice Commander continued from page 2

a meeting with a non-profit called Military Family Support, which will most likely be one of my charities next year. They will have a table at Fall Conference, so please stop by and see what all they do! I was also honored to receive a Quilt of Valor. It was a very humbling experience for all of us who received one that day!

Even with the busy schedule, I managed to get in a vacation to Italy, Montenegro, Greece, Croatia, and London with the love of my life! It was a great journey and my last big hurrah for quite a while!

Continue the great job with membership, programs, and community involvement. As a team we will make all our goals! If you need assistance, please reach out by phone, text, or email. I look forward to seeing many of you at Fall Conference.

Thank you for all you do for the great Department of Florida and have a safe and Happy Thanksgiving!

Patrick Space Force Base Tour



Rick Orzechowski
2nd Vice Commander
2ndvice@legionmail.org

During my recent tour of **Patrick Space Force Base**, I had the privilege of witnessing firsthand the professionalism, precision, and absolutely unmatched ability of the United States Space Force to make even gravity feel like it needs to step up its game.

From the moment I arrived, the team demonstrated a level of expertise that left no doubt: if anything in the universe ever decides to misbehave, these are the people you want answering the call. Their operations were impressive, their technology was remarkable, and their hospitality was so seamless that I briefly wondered if they had engineered it in a lab—or maybe just bribed gravity to cooperate.

I extend my sincere appreciation to the leadership and personnel who guided the visit. Their commitment to mission readiness, innovation, and national defense is evident in every briefing, every demonstration, and every hallway lined with equipment that looks like it could either save the world or start a sci –fi franchise. Some of the staff who were instrumental in educating us on the multi day tour were: MSgt McCurdy, MSgt Williams, SMSgt Eaton, MSgt B. Banks, MSgt M Days, MSgt Scheepsma, MSgt Avila and a host of civilian program directors. Just a side note about the tour: I learned being in the military 50 plus years ago the language barrier was **REAL** as I had to ask many, many times what the phrases they were using meant. I will not bore you with the details but just an example is DFAC which I found out meant dining facility (we called it the "chow hall").

We learned how the Air Force and Space Force were working hand in hand to take care of not only the military staff but their families and retired staff. The last day of the extensive tour ended with a debriefing with Base Commander, Colonel Chatman, who thanked the American Legion for all the assistance and hospitality the local posts had given to the base



personnel.

We discussed what we had observed and how comfortable and trusting the staff were with leadership that they could speak freely about the positive and not so positive feedback from junior staff—reference dorm isolation, communication gaps regarding base events, and severe manpower shortages. We came away with a newfound respect for the mission of the bases.

Patrick Space Force Base stands as a testament to the extraordinary work being done to protect our nation's interests beyond the atmosphere. I am grateful for the opportunity to tour the installation, and I commend the men and women who serve there—proving daily that the sky

continued on page 4 >>

<< 2nd Vice Commander continued from page 3

is not the limit; it's just the starting point. And if you ever wondered who's keeping an eye on the stars, well, now you know it's these folks—probably with a coffee in one hand and a laser pointer in the other.

Employee and Independent Contractor Classification and Tax Filing Deadlines



Shirley Douglas
Finance Officer
financeofficer@legionmail.org

If you are not sure whether your Post has employees, independent contractors, or volunteers, the IRS has a slideshow course, Employment Issue Course, that walks you through what constitutes the difference between these three categories. To find the course, go to www.IRS.gov and type "Employment Issue Course" in the search box. You can also review IRS Form SS-8, *Determination of Worker Status for Purposes of Federal Employment Tax and Income Tax Withholding*, and Publication 15-A, *Employer's Supplemental Tax Guide*, which provide additional information on independent contractor status.

Your Post might pay an independent contractor and an employee for the same or similar work, but there are key legal differences between the two. It is critical for Post Officers to correctly determine whether the people providing services are employees or independent contractors. You need to know the difference so the proper taxes can be withheld and sent to the IRS within the specified time limits.

An employee is generally considered anyone who performs services if the business can control what will be done and how it will be done. What matters is that the business has the right to control the details of how the worker's services are performed. Independent contractors are normally people in an independent trade, business, or profession who offer their services to the public.

Whether a worker is an independent contractor or an employee depends on the relationship between the worker and the business. Generally, there are three categories to consider:

- **Behavioral Control:** Does the company control or have the right to control what the worker does and how the worker does the job?
- **Financial Control:** Does the business direct or control the financial and business aspects of the worker's job? Are the business aspects of the worker's job controlled by the payer? This includes how the worker is paid, whether expenses are reimbursed, and who provides tools and supplies.
- **Type of Relationship:** Are there written contracts or employee-type benefits such as pension plans, insurance, or vacation pay? Will the relationship continue, and is the work performed a key aspect of the business?

Reference: IRS Tax Tip 2022-117, Aug. 2, 2022.

Upcoming Important Dates

1. **Employee Forms W-2 and W-3:** The due date for filing employees' 2026 Forms W-2, W-2AS, W-2CM, W-2GU, W-2VI, W-3, and W-3SS with the Social Security Administration (SSA) is **Feb. 1, 2027**, whether you file using paper forms or electronically.
2. **Independent Contractor Forms 1099-NEC and 1099-MISC:** The due dates can be found on Page 1 of the Instructions for Forms 1099-MISC and 1099-NEC. The instructions require you to file Form 1099-NEC on or before Jan. 31, using either paper or electronic filing procedures. File Form 1099-MISC by Feb. 28 if filing on paper, or March 31 if filing electronically. If any date falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or legal holiday in the District of Columbia or where the return is to be filed, the due date is the next business day.

Have a Happy Thanksgiving.

Capturing the Moments That Tell Our Legion Family's Story



Seven Beebe
Historian
historian@legionmail.org

Showcasing Your Photography on Social Media

Whether you're a Post or District Historian, involved in Social Media or Public Relations, or simply a member of our American Legion Family, if you have a camera phone, you have the opportunity to capture incredible moments worth sharing!

Great photography starts with showing up, being present, and looking beyond the posed pictures!

Some of the BEST photographs are the candid moments!

The genuine smiles, unexpected hugs, laughter between friends, a helping hand, or members simply enjoying time together.

Candid photos are some of the best at capturing the true spirit of our American Legion Family!

Get creative! Move around, try different angles, and capture the natural interactions that bring our stories to life.

And remember, taking the photographs is only part of the process!

Take time afterward to look through your pictures. You don't need to post every photograph you take.

Choose the photos that capture emotion, highlight connections, and tell a story!



Our photographs do more than fill a social media page. They preserve the friendships, camaraderie, and memories that make our American Legion Family special.

Because sometimes the most meaningful photographs aren't the ones we pose for. They're the moments we didn't even realize someone was capturing!









Prayerfully Remembering Those Who Serve



Eric Linthicum
Chaplain
chaplain@legionmail.org

As I write this article, it seems to me that the theme is very much given to us this month. It is time to write about veterans. As your Department Chaplain, a significant amount of my responsibility is prayer. So, let's put veterans and prayer together. This month (and especially in the year we celebrate the 250th anniversary of our Declaration of Independence), let us:

Prayerfully Remember those patriots who risked life and fortune, family and friendships to stand firm to bring about independence from Britain and to establish these United States of America. This is a little personal for me, as my third great-grandfather did just that. He risked everything for our independence!

Prayerfully Remember those who fought in the many wars and conflicts that followed. Those who raised their right hands to put themselves in harm's way so that we may continue

continued on page 6 >>

<< Chaplain continued from page 5

to be a nation of free people!

Prayerfully Remember those who raised their hands in what is often called peacetime, but I believe Cold War is the better term, because in a single moment, we can move from no active conflict into an intense time of conflict. I like the words Cold War better as well because it is the presence of those in uniform and ready to go that often discourages those who would start a war, because they know we are ready.

Prayerfully Remember those who waited, watched and prayed for them as they served. Our loved ones served as our support team and have throughout all these years.

Prayerfully Remember those who wear the uniform today, those who have stood up to all others so we can sit down at home in peace, knowing we are protected by America's best. And those who are loving, watching and praying with them today.

Let us pray.

Lord God, we acknowledge that You are the Supreme Commander of the Universe. We ask You to bring to our remembrance with gratitude all who have served You by serving this nation, from the beginning until now. We ask a special prayer of protection over the men and women serving today. No matter where they are serving and regardless of branch or position, we place them into Your care. We also ask for Your comfort, peace and protection over all of the loved ones who have supported and are now supporting our veterans. In Your most holy name. Amen.

Make the Most of Fall Conference: Develop Your Training Plan



Miguel Garcia
Northern Area Commander
northern@legionmail.org

Hello, Northern Area, and welcome to fall. Over the past month, the Northern Area has hosted a wide range of training tailored to the needs of individual Districts and Posts. It has been especially encouraging to see Posts request training specific to their members. From Post officer, program, and suicide prevention training to family roundtables, the response from Districts and Posts to members' needs has been eye-opening.

That brings me to Fall Conference, scheduled for Nov. 20-23. Unlike the Department Convention, Fall Conference focuses primarily on training. Although it includes a general session and a DEC meeting on Sunday, training remains its central purpose.

These sessions are designed to strengthen leadership knowledge and support program success. To get the most from them, Posts should plan around their own needs and those of individual members. Random selections and last-minute decisions are unlikely to produce the best results.

At the Post level, Commanders and leadership teams should develop a clear plan for the members they send. Decide in advance who will attend each class, considering both the attendees' interests and the Post's priorities. Members should still explore unfamiliar classes and programs; the goal is simply to make the best use of the opportunities available.

After the conference, set aside time for attendees to share what they learned with fellow participants and other Post members. Shortly after they return, hold a Post training session to pass along that knowledge. Knowledge is invaluable, so share it. Cross-train your leadership teams whenever possible. The more we understand the various Post leadership positions and programs, the more value we bring to the organization.

District Commanders, remember to send your officers to the conference. Many District officers also serve, or have served, at the Post level and can benefit from broader training. Expanding their knowledge will better prepare them for future leadership roles.

Please remember to encourage all your Post members to attend. Fall Conference, like the Department Convention, is open to all American Legion Family members. Encourage

continued on page 7 >>

<< Northern Area Commander continued from page 6

attendance and help each member create a training plan based on their interests. Members are the lifeblood of our organization and should be included.

I am fully aware that the cost of attending the conference for three days can be a costly proposition. I still encourage individual members to attend, even if it's just for the day. I know members of my Post who have carpooled to Orlando for the day, attended their classes of interest, sometimes joined us for a meal in the hospitality suite, and returned home. If you really have an interest in attending and taking a class but times are tight, speak with your Post. They may be able to assist you.

Fall Conference offers networking opportunities equivalent to those at the Department Convention. Attendees can connect with past Department Commanders, leaders at the Area, District, and Post levels, and other like-minded members. This gathering brings together extensive institutional knowledge, and participants are readily available to share their experiences and answer questions.

Develop your plan, arrive with an open mind, and join us at Fall Conference.

Giving Thanks for Our American Legion Family



Karen Warren
District 7 Commander
district7@legionmail.org

November is a season of gratitude, a time to gather with family and friends, reflect on our blessings, and appreciate those who enrich our lives. As Thanksgiving approaches, I encourage everyone to remember another family deserving of our thanks: our American Legion Family.

You might ask, "What do I have to thank The American Legion for?" I am glad you asked!

Are you receiving care through the Department of Veterans Affairs? Thank The American Legion for its longstanding advocacy for veterans' health care and benefits.

Have you or a loved one used the GI Bill? Thank The American Legion for helping champion legislation that opened doors to education, homeownership, and new opportunities for generations of veterans.

Yet our reasons for gratitude extend far beyond benefits and legislation.

Have you made new friends this year? Has someone at your Post made you laugh when you needed it most? Have you shared a meal, enjoyed a conversation, or received a helping hand from a fellow Legionnaire? Perhaps you were the person who brightened someone else's day.

That is what family is all about.

Like any family, our American Legion Family experiences difficulties. We may disagree or face challenges, but we remain united for a common purpose: serving veterans, supporting their families, and strengthening our communities.

Our mission rests on four pillars that guide our work and remind us why service matters.

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation: Advocating for veterans, helping them access earned benefits, and supporting their health, recovery, and well-being.

National Security: Supporting a strong national defense and honoring those who protect our country and freedoms.

Americanism: Encouraging patriotism, honoring our flag, and passing along the values and traditions of citizenship.

Children & Youth: Investing in young people through programs that encourage education, leadership, opportunity, and good citizenship.

These pillars are not simply words on paper. They represent commitments we fulfill through our time, compassion, and willingness to help

continued on page 8 >>

<< District 7 Commander continued from page 7

others. Every volunteer hour, every act of kindness, and every veteran supported brings our mission to life.

As we gather around Thanksgiving tables, remember those serving far from home, families missing loved ones, and veterans who may spend the holiday alone. A phone call, a friendly visit, or an invitation to share a meal can make an enormous difference.

Let us also thank our officers, volunteers, Auxiliary members, Sons of The American Legion, Legion Riders, and everyone who gives their energy to keep our Legion Family strong. Their dedication reminds us that service does not end when the uniform comes off.

This Thanksgiving, I am grateful for the friendships we have built, the laughter we have shared, the veterans we serve, and the opportunities we have to make a difference together.

We truly have so much to be thankful for. Throughout the year, let gratitude inspire continued service. May your Thanksgiving be filled with gratitude, friendship, laughter, and the warmth of family. God bless our veterans, God bless The American Legion, and God bless America!

Every Post, Every Month: The Gift of Giving Blood

Corelene Ziegler
Blood Donor Chair
blooddonor@legionmail.org

November is a time of reflection and thanksgiving. We give thanks for the men and women who serve in our military, first response, and the little guy. Yes, I said "the little guy." That's all who go out each day intending to do good in their community. They are the ones who open doors, smile at strangers, and give their time to hospice, food banks, hospitals, and Legions. They are the ones who look for ways to help.

I'm looking for the little guys in your Post. The ones who show up and serve.

Donating blood is a powerful statement of service. In about 30 minutes, you can impact three lives in a most amazing way. Giving someone another day is an immeasurable gift.

If you have ever sat next to a hospital bed praying for a miracle, you know! No explanation needed. Blood, platelet, and plasma donations can be that miracle.

If you are physically approved to donate, just do it! If you are ineligible to donate, be the one who makes it happen at your Post.

To set up monthly blood drives, contact the Red Cross at 1-800-733-2767 or OneBlood at 1-888-936-6283. Once you have your dates set, the rest is showing up and being thankful.

The OneBlood bus will be at Fall Conference. Let's max them out over the weekend!

Clear Communication Builds a Stronger Boys State



Darcy Sisson
Boys State Chair
boysstate@legionmail.org

Misunderstandings happen when messages go unspoken and assumptions fill the gaps. Let's communicate early and often to set our young men up for success!

Our next Florida American Legion Boys State session is June 20-26, 2027. Although it may seem far away, the work starts now with a phone call, school visit, application, and chair willing to invest in a young man's potential.

Finding the Right Delegate: Look Beyond the Obvious!

Connect with ROTC instructors, guidance counselors, civics and debate teachers, coaches, and leaders of organizations such as Key Club, chess club, and student government. Look beyond students already in the spotlight. Sometimes

continued on page 9 >>

<< Boys State Chair continued from page 8

the greatest opportunity is the young man in second or third place, waiting for someone to recognize his potential.

We are not recruiting walking history books. Knowledge of the Bill of Rights, presidents, or Congress matters, but those facts can be learned. We want to discover the young man behind the answers.

Can he express an opinion, listen to disagreement, work with others, face challenges, and learn from mistakes? Is he willing to step outside his comfort zone?

Ask a potential delegate: "Tell me about your biggest failure. What did you learn from it, and what would you do differently?"
His answer may reveal more than a dozen trivia questions. Boys State helps young men strengthen their voices, build confidence, collaborate, and understand that leadership requires courage, humility, and perseverance.

There are no wrong answers in interviews when we are genuinely seeking a young man's potential. We are not looking for perfection. We are looking for potential!

Applications, Deadlines, and Relationships

December and January are critical for gathering applications, interviewing candidates, and selecting delegates. Online registration begins in January and continues through March. Do not wait until the end of February to visit schools. Allow time for interviews, packets, questions, and registration.

For some delegates, this may be their first largely independent registration process, with parents or guardians completing required portions. Give them time and encouragement to take ownership.

After selecting your delegate, establish an email or text thread. Share expectations, deadlines, registration reminders, orientation dates, and transportation details. Check in and invite questions. Silence does not always mean understanding.

We are not simply sending delegates to Tallahassee to build relationships and shape them into great leaders; we are entrusting young men with an opportunity that could change the trajectory of their lives. Selecting the wrong delegate, someone who is unwilling to engage, embrace challenges, or step outside their comfort zone, may unintentionally discourage a young man who could have thrived with the right opportunity.

Florida American Legion Boys State is designed to challenge, develop, support, and empower young men to recognize their potential and become tomorrow's leaders. Our responsibility is to select delegates who are willing to trust the process, embrace the experience, and take full advantage of the opportunities this extraordinary week has to offer.

District Communication Matters: We're a Team!

Post chairs, stay in regular contact with your District Boys State chair. District chairs assist Post chairs in coordinating transportation to Tallahassee and help ensure a smooth transition for delegates.

This is a shared responsibility. Posts should communicate how many delegates they are sending, share transportation needs early, and work with their District chair to address challenges and coordinate assistance.

Post and Area Commanders, please support your designated Boys State chairs in leading orientations. You are welcome to attend, but give your chairs the opportunity to fulfill their responsibilities. Encourage other Legion Family members to participate as well. Today's volunteer could become tomorrow's Boys State chair!

Mark Your Calendars! Key Dates!

- Nov. 8, 2026, 6 p.m. | Boys State Chairs Zoom: All registered Post, District, and Area chairs and assistant chairs are encouraged to attend. Invitations will be sent at the beginning of November. If you have not submitted your Post chair information to Bekki Boarman, please do so immediately. No information means no invitation.

continued on page 10 >>

<< Boys State Chair continued from page 9

- Nov. 20, 2026, 8:30-10 a.m. | Fall Conference Boys State Class: We'll share the classroom with Oratorical, highlighting two youth programs that build confidence, leadership, civic understanding, and communication skills.

- April 3, 2027 | Boys State Alumni Dinner: Join us at Department Headquarters. Tickets go on sale in December. Watch for the flyer in the December Legion Link.

Communication Is More Than a Message!

Let's prevent confusion about delegates, deadlines, orientations, and transportation. If you are unsure, ask. If something changes, communicate it. If someone needs help, reach out. The only dumb question is the one left unasked!

Together, we are creating more than a weeklong program. We are helping young men find their voices, challenge assumptions, build relationships, and recognize their leadership potential.

Thank you for the school visits, phone calls, and personal connections you make on behalf of Florida American Legion Boys State. Your efforts matter, and the young men you encourage today may become the leaders we proudly stand beside tomorrow.

Let's communicate clearly, support one another, and work toward the same mission, for Community, State and Nation!

Here's to finding potential, building confidence, and sending Florida's next generation of leaders to Tallahassee ready to rise to the challenge!

Building tomorrow's leaders, one delegate at a time!

Supporting Special Olympics Through Children & Youth Programs



Toni Sutherland
Children & Youth Chair
cy@legionmail.org

Are you aware that The American Legion is a major supporter of Special Olympics (SO) under its Children & Youth Programs? In Florida, SO is the largest sports organization for people with intellectual disabilities. Is your Post supporting Special Olympics? If not, why not?

Special Olympics Florida provides year-round sports training and competition in Olympic-type sports for people with intellectual disabilities. This provides opportunities for them to develop physical fitness, live active, healthy, fulfilling lives, and become productive and respected members of society. They are offered a fair opportunity to develop and demonstrate their skills and talents through sports training and competition while increasing the public's awareness of their capabilities and needs. All activities are inclusive, there is no discrimination based on any factor, and there is no fee to participate in the program.

Various programs serve children and families at different levels, from the youngest child through adulthood, providing foundations in health, friendship, and a strong sense of community. They also provide year-round athletic training and competition at the local, regional, and state levels, 365 days a year. There are also opportunities for competition in prestigious events such as the World Games and the Boston Marathon, with the Foundation helping to ease the financial burden.

There are several levels at which a Post can become involved.

SPORTS empower SO athletes to prove to themselves what they can do in life and teach them how to train, how to strive, how to be determined, how to get up and try again when they fail, and the joy of success. Sports also bring athletes, families, supporters, coaches, volunteers, and communities together.

HEALTH & FITNESS are supported through an emphasis on eight Healthy Athletes disciplines (foot

continued on page 11 >>

<< Children & Youth Chair continued from page 10

health, physical therapy, hearing, general health, eyes, dental, sports physicals, and strong minds). These programs need health care professionals to serve as volunteer Clinical Directors for each discipline.

UNIFIED CHAMPION SCHOOLS promote social inclusion. They bring young people with and without intellectual disabilities together on sports teams (Special Olympics Unified Sports®) through inclusive school or community-wide initiatives. Special Olympics Florida partners with the Florida High School Athletic Association (FHSAA), which recognizes bowling, flag football, basketball, tennis, and track participants as varsity athletes at their schools. These students represent their schools by competing at the FHSAA State Championships in their own Unified Division.

YOUTH & ADAPTIVE SPORTS are innovative introductory sports programs for children ages 2-7 with intellectual disabilities and their peers. These programs help them improve physically, cognitively, and socially while raising awareness of the SO program, its resources, and support. Activities can be offered in the home or through a site-based program at a school or other centralized organization.

ATHLETE LEADERSHIP encourages self-directed, meaningful participation in any aspect of the program and empowers SO athletes to develop leadership skills and use their voices and abilities to take on meaningful leadership roles, influence change in the SO movement, and create inclusive communities through virtual and in-person training. Athletes in Florida currently fill each of the applicable Athlete Leadership roles: council members, global messengers, health messengers, coaches, officials, volunteers, donors, management team members, games evaluation team members, newsletter contributors, employees of SO Florida, board committee members, and members of the state board of directors.

CAMP SHRIVER was established by SO's founder, Eunice Kennedy Shriver, in the 1960s and emphasized interaction between children with special needs and typical children. Special Olympics Florida offers Camp Shriver in our state.

Curious about how your Post can become more involved in Special Olympics? Watch their General Orientation presentation. Their website contains more specific information about all the initiatives discussed above.

To find the SO Florida representative in your area, what SO sports are offered there, a list of upcoming events, and where volunteers are needed, visit the Get Involved section of the Special Olympics Florida website. Scroll to the bottom of the page and either click the interactive map or type in the name of your county. A page with links to these different topics will display.
If your Post cannot volunteer man-hours or time but wants to make a monetary donation, visit the Ways to Give section of the Special Olympics Florida website.

If you have general questions about Special Olympics and American Legion involvement, please contact George DeAngelo, the Department 2026-2027 Special Olympics Chair, at 954-801-5543 or specialolympics@legionmail.org.

It's very easy to support Special Olympics Florida! Why isn't your Post doing it?

When the Storm Isn't Coming to You

Joe Humet
Disaster Prep Chair
disaster@legionmail.org

Preparedness Doesn't End at the Edge of the Cone

Originally published in the October 2026 Central Area Disaster Preparedness Newsletter. Reprinted with permission.

There is a storm in the Gulf.

For many of us in Central Florida, one of the first things we do when

continued on page 12 >>

<< Disaster Prep Chair continued from page 11

a new forecast cone is published is find our community on the map. As the forecast becomes clearer and the track moves away from us, there is an understandable sense of relief.

But being outside the cone doesn't mean our role in preparedness is over.

This storm gives us an opportunity to think about preparedness from two directions: Are we ready if conditions change? And are we ready to help if someone else is impacted?

Stay Prepared

A forecast cone is not an "all clear." Conditions and forecasts can change, and impacts can extend well beyond the center of a storm.

Continue monitoring information from the National Hurricane Center and your local emergency management officials. Keep your Post's communications plan current, know how you will reach your members, and make sure the people responsible for your disaster plan know their roles.

National Hurricane Center: www.nhc.noaa.gov

This isn't the time to become complacent simply because the current track favors our area.

And remember: Hurricane season isn't over yet.

Look Beyond Your Post

Preparedness isn't only about protecting our own building or our own members.

Somewhere else along the Gulf Coast, another American Legion Post may be looking at that same forecast cone very differently.

Behind that Post are Legionnaires, Auxiliary members, Sons of The American Legion members, veterans, families, and communities that may need assistance after the storm passes.

If another Post needs help, what can we provide?

Maybe the answer is volunteers. Perhaps it's supplies, transportation, communications assistance, Buddy Checks, a collection point, or connections with community organizations.

No individual Post needs to do everything. But every Post should know what it can do.

Be Ready to Help

This is where preparedness before the storm matters.

Know who your Post can contact. Know what resources you have available. Maintain communication with your District and Area leadership. And if assistance is requested, work through established Legion and emergency management channels rather than simply deploying people or supplies into an affected area on your own.

Last month, we talked about Preparedness Through Partnership, knowing which organizations in our communities can provide capabilities our Posts may not have.

This month, turn that idea around: Are we prepared to be the partner when someone else needs us?

Preparedness isn't just about being ready for the disaster that comes to our community. It's also about maintaining the people, relationships, communications, and plans that allow us to serve when the need is somewhere else.

This Month's Preparedness Challenge

As you look at the storm currently moving through the Gulf, ask your Post two questions:

- *If the forecast changed tomorrow, are we ready?*
- *If another Post or community is impacted, are we ready to help?*

If either answer is "we're not sure," that's a good place to start.

Post disaster-planning resources, previous newsletters, communications guidance, MOU information, and other preparedness materials are available on the Central Area Disaster Preparedness Resource Page at flpost15.org/dp.

Stay prepared. Stay connected. And be ready to serve.

The Election Is Almost Over. Now, the Work Begins!



Stuart Scott
Legislative Chair
legislative@legionmail.org

Depending on when you are reading this, our nation will either be preparing to decide—or will have already decided—its political direction through the 2026 Mid-Term Elections.

Before sharing your opinions about the outcome, ask yourself one important question: **Did you vote?**

As veterans, we understand the value of the freedoms we once stood ready to defend. Voting is one way we continue to participate in our nation's future. If you chose not to vote, you left an opportunity unused—an opportunity made possible by the freedoms you once served to protect.

Regardless of whether your preferred candidates won or lost, the election is only one part of the process. Now is the time to build relationships with your newly elected members of Congress and the Florida Legislature.

Your Voice Makes a Difference

Why does your personal connection matter when The American Legion already has a capable Legislative Team working on our behalf?

Because advocacy is about more than legislation. It is about relationships, trust, and the personal stories that bring our issues to life.

Our Legislative Team works hard to develop priorities, communicate with lawmakers, and prepare appropriate bill language. But you are the person who can bring that message directly to your elected officials at home.

You live in their district. You know your community. You may share mutual friends or understand a local concern that matters to that legislator. You can explain firsthand how an issue affects veterans, military families, and the people in your community.

Our Legislative Team brings the policy and preparation. You bring the local connection and personal story. Together, we make our voice stronger.

Don't wait until a bill is being debated to introduce yourself. Request a meeting, attend a town hall, and let your elected officials know who you are, what The American Legion represents, and why veterans' issues matter to your community.

Preparing for 2027: Tallahassee and Washington

Your Department Legislative Team has been working diligently to prepare for the 2027 Florida Legislative Session, which begins in March. We are developing priorities, preparing legislative language, and getting ready to advocate for issues affecting Florida's veterans, their families, and our American Legion programs.

At the federal level, we are closing out the 119th Congress and preparing for the 120th Congress in Washington, D.C. Veterans' issues require attention at both the state and federal levels, and we must be ready to engage with our elected representatives in both places.

The coming months are an important opportunity to establish relationships and communicate our priorities before legislative sessions get underway.

Coming to a District Meeting Near You

We plan to visit District meetings throughout Florida to discuss our legislative priorities, answer questions, and help members prepare for the upcoming year. Our goal is to reach every District, although scheduling and travel constraints may prevent us from attending them all. If we cannot make it to your District, please accept my apologies. We remain committed to keeping our membership informed.

I will also conduct a legislative training session during the Department of Florida Fall Conference on **Friday, November 20, at 4:00 p.m.** We will discuss pending legislation, priorities for the upcoming sessions, and ways Legionnaires can participate in

continued on page 14 >>

<< Legislative Chair continued from page 13

grassroots advocacy. I encourage everyone who can attend to join us.

The Work Continues

Elections determine who represents us, but advocacy continues long after the ballots are counted. Regardless of the outcome, our elected officials are responsible for representing their constituents. We must ensure that veterans' voices are heard.

You do not need to be a legislative expert to make a difference. Start by introducing yourself, learning where your elected officials stand on veterans' issues, and sharing the concerns that matter to your Post and community.

Our greatest strength is our membership! When Legionnaires build relationships locally and our Legislative Team works with lawmakers on the details, we create a stronger voice for veterans. The election may be over, but our mission continues.

Stay engaged. Build relationships. Tell your story. Make our voice heard!

Gaining Altitude: Exceeding Membership Goals and Overcoming Challenges



Doug Hockenberry
Membership Chair
membership@legionmail.org

Hello, Team Florida! Congratulations are in order. Thanks to your continued support, commitment, and dedication, we not only met the 55% goal on Oct. 14 but exceeded it by reaching 55.49%. Outstanding work, Team Florida!

Several statistics are worth highlighting. Ten Districts, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 15, and 17, exceeded the 55% goal. In addition, 160 of the Department of Florida's 274 Posts met or surpassed the goal, representing 58.39%. This is an exceptional accomplishment, and each of you should take pride in the result.

Our next goal is 65% by Nov. 4. Because we surpassed the 55% milestone, I am confident that we can continue leading the way and gaining altitude. At the time of this writing, 62 Posts have already reached 65% or higher, further evidence that Team Florida is ready for the challenge.

October brought both shared success and an unwelcome visitor: Hurricane Isaias, which caused considerable damage and loss within our Legion Family in the 1st and 2nd Districts. Please keep those affected in your thoughts and prayers as they rebuild their lives and Posts. Our Legion Family has rallied around them and will continue to provide support during this difficult time. We recognize that membership may not be their immediate priority. I therefore ask everyone else to strengthen their membership efforts so that, together, we can continue gaining altitude toward the upcoming 65% goal.

Last month, I discussed the importance of first impressions and creating a welcoming environment for both current and prospective members, the individuals who walk through your doors looking for a place to belong. One effective way to promote your Post during the fall and introduce it to the broader community is to host an open house. This provides an excellent opportunity to highlight your Post and all it offers while supporting membership growth across the entire Legion Family. By coordinating the efforts of Legionnaires, the Auxiliary, the Sons, and the Riders, you can strengthen and expand your Post family. This approach aligns with our Department Commander's theme of "Veterans. Family. Friends." and promotes unity and growth.

As November progresses, we must remain focused on our membership programs despite the demands of the Thanksgiving holiday. Many of us will travel to visit family or welcome guests into our homes. Please account for these commitments by planning ahead and designating backup members to make calls and follow up with those who have not yet renewed.

continued on page 15 >>

<< Membership Chair continued from page 14

Many Posts also host Thanksgiving dinners and invite members of the community to share a meal. These events offer another opportunity to introduce your Post to the community and engage potential members. Consider having representatives from across the Post's Legion Family available to welcome prospective members and assist current members with renewals.

Posts may also consider giving back to members during the Thanksgiving season by holding a raffle that covers the membership dues of senior members or those with the longest tenure in The American Legion. This is a meaningful way to demonstrate appreciation and reinforce how much their service and continued membership are valued.

As I conclude this month's article, I again congratulate everyone on exceeding the 55% goal and offer my sincere thanks for your support. Together, we are a formidable team, capable of overcoming the challenges before us. Keep up the excellent work, and have a blessed and happy Thanksgiving. Remember, we are **#StrongerTogether**.



Seven Bridges Ride Brings Legion Family Together to Honor POW/MIAs



Denny Luke
POW/MIA Chair
powmia@legionmail.org

2026 POW/MIA Seven Bridges Remembrance Ride & Ceremony

If you missed the 2026 POW/MIA Seven Bridges Remembrance Ride & Ceremony, you missed one of our best rides yet.

Attendees began checking in at the TownePlace Suites by Marriott near Mayport early Friday morning. Many were pleasantly surprised to discover that the suites offered efficiency-style accommodations with full kitchens. Our reserved room block sold out quickly, and thanks to the tremendous participation this year, we will need to increase the number of rooms reserved for next year's event.

The Meet & Greet was held Friday evening at American Legion Post 316, just a couple of miles from the hotel. The event was very well attended. I do not have an exact attendance figure, but I do know that more than 130 dinners were presold.

I want to extend a special thank-you to Post 316 and the kitchen and bar staff for their outstanding support in making the evening a success.

We were also honored to have a strong showing of American Legion Department of Florida leadership on hand for the Meet & Greet. In attendance were Department Commander Bob Matheson, Department ALA President Linda Knowblach-Harkness, Detachment Commander Michael Nigbor, Department ALR Chairman Jason Skobel, and Department NEC Member Michael "Gambler" Raymond, along with many other

continued on page 16 >>

<< POW/MIA Chair continued from page 15

Department officers and chairmen.

It is not often that we see so many Department leaders gathered in one place outside of Convention or Conference. Their presence was a tremendous show of support and a testament to the importance The American Legion Department of Florida places on the POW/MIA mission.

Honoring Those Who Never Came Home

The purpose of this event is simple: to honor and remember America's prisoners of war and those who remain missing in action, while raising awareness and financial support for the National POW/MIA Memorial.

Once again, the event successfully brought together members of The American Legion Family, motorcycle organizations, volunteers, law enforcement, veterans, and supporters of the POW/MIA mission for a weekend dedicated to remembering those who sacrificed so much.

The event has become one of the largest POW/MIA Recognition Day events held in the great free State of Florida.

This year, the National POW/MIA Memorial hosted two days of events beginning on the third Friday of September, designated by President Jimmy Carter in 1979 through presidential proclamation as National POW/MIA Recognition Day. The Memorial held a 24-hour Remembrance Vigil during which members of the community, military, POW/MIA families, veterans, and various organizations carried the POW/MIA flag in remembrance of those who were prisoners of war and those who have not yet returned home.

The Seven Bridges Ride

On Saturday, Sept. 19, more than 235 motorcycles and trikes gathered at Adamec Harley-Davidson Baymeadows for a 10:30 a.m. departure.

During the registration process, we were honored to have Jacksonville Sheriff T.K. Waters address the riders. Sheriff Waters expressed his support for what we were doing and shared that, although he is not a veteran himself, he grew up on military bases because his father was a retired U.S. Army Command Sergeant Major.

His remarks demonstrated a clear understanding of the importance of honoring our POWs and MIAs and keeping the commitment to account for and return our missing service members at the forefront.

Following the pre-ride ceremony, we began our journey. The ceremony included the blowing of Reveille by Jim Steele, the singing of the National Anthem by Melanie Bergeson, a prayer by Zane Koonce, the Pledge of Allegiance, and a safety briefing.



We then departed for a scenic 95-mile, approximately two-hour ride across the seven bridges spanning the St. Johns River in Jacksonville.

Upon our arrival at the National POW/MIA Memorial, we were greeted by a flyover from the Dreamland Squadron. The Memorial grounds then came alive with activities, including a BBQ meal provided by the Rotary, food trucks, Veterans United Brewery, and live entertainment from the Matt Altman Band.

Supporting the National POW/MIA Memorial

Following the Remembrance Ceremony, a donation drive was held in support of the National POW/MIA Memorial's building fund.

The final totals are still being tabulated, but current figures indicate that we generated more than $10,000 in donations. Great job, American Legion Department of Florida!

This accomplishment represents more than a dollar amount. It demonstrates what can happen when members of The American Legion Family, motorcycle organizations, businesses, law enforcement,

continued on page 17 >>

<< POW/MIA Chair continued from page 16

volunteers, and individual supporters come together behind a common mission.

The Word Is Getting Out

It was also noteworthy to see riders from outside Florida participating again this year. I personally saw riders from Alabama, Illinois, North Carolina, Kentucky, and Virginia. There may have been participants from additional states whom I did not see.

The word about our commitment to the POW/MIA mission is spreading.

It is entirely possible that, in the next few years, we could see as many out-of-state participants as we currently see from within Florida. That would be a tremendous testament to the importance of this mission and the reputation this event is building.

Most importantly, however, this event is not simply about motorcycles, bridges, food, or entertainment. It is about remembering.

It is about the service members who became prisoners of war.

It is about those who went missing and never returned home.

It is about their families, who carried the burden of uncertainty for years and, in some cases, generations.

And it is about our nation's continuing commitment to account for every service member whose final resting place remains unknown.

To everyone who registered, rode, volunteered, donated, sponsored, worked behind the scenes, or simply showed up to support the mission, thank you.

Without your support, we have nothing.

With your support, we have a growing annual event that keeps the POW/MIA mission at the forefront and helps ensure that we never forget those who have not yet come home.

Until they are home, we will remember.

Stay Connected

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

DPAA Update

Fiscal Year 2026, as of Sept. 29, 2026

- World War II: 190 accounted for
- Korean War: 47 accounted for
- Cold War: 0 accounted for
- Vietnam War: 1 accounted for

During September, the DPAA accounted for the following service members from World War II. These brave Americans are now being returned to their families with the honor and dignity they deserve.

Sept. 2, 2026

- Adolph P. Aguirre, WWII

Sept. 22, 2026

- Owen M. Norris, WWII

Sept. 24, 2026

- Weber S. Underwood, WWII

The Power of Resolutions: Giving Members a Voice



Clarence Hill
Resolutions Chair
resolutions@legionmail.org

Resolutions are vital to the Legion's mission and are serious business as we are a resolution-based organization. Without the resolution process, the Legion would have no guidance in developing programs, allocating funds to help veterans or targeting Congress concerning issues that affect you, me, our families and the rest of this great country of ours.

Resolutions tell those in leadership roles what the members want. As adopted by your membership, a resolution represents a formal expression of the official opinion of your Post, District, Area, Department or the National organization. When approved by the local membership, resolutions could proceed to the next step—either District, Area or the

continued on page 18 >>

<< Resolutions Chair continued from page 17

Department level. At the Department level, resolutions are dealt with at a Department Executive Committee (DEC) Meeting or by the General Assembly at the Department Convention.

With formal authorization by adoption at the Department level, the resolution may be sent to National Headquarters where it is registered for either the Resolutions Subcommittee for the National Executive Committee (NEC) or the Resolutions Assignment Committee of the National Convention. The resolution is then forwarded by the National Adjutant to the appropriate national-level commission or committee for study. Finally, either the National Executive Committee members or the National Convention delegates vote upon the recommended action.

Upon adoption at the national level by either the NEC or the National Convention, the resolution becomes the position of The American Legion.

The September 2024 monthly training session of the Internal Affairs and Membership Division was a discussion of how to write a resolution. The training session was recorded and is available on legion.org/training. The American Legion's Resolutions and Reports Booklet can also be downloaded from the National website. The Legion's Digital Archives on the National website contains resolutions dating back to 1919, so it's easy to see if any resolutions on your topic are included. Existing resolutions may be modified, updated or replaced as necessary and as conditions change.

Where Does the Time Go? Preparing for School Medal Awards



Randy Holeyfield
School Medals Chair
schoolmedals@legionmail.org

Though it is fall, the holidays are just ahead, closing a window of more fluid communication with schools. Thanksgiving is a few weeks away, and from Christmas through New Year's, both staff and children are thinking of festive things. This is also a time for your family and friends. Once schools are back in session, you'll be able to continue steering your committee's course.

You will need a couple of volunteers when it comes to distributing awards because of the time of day and multiple schools simultaneously having their awards events on the same day and at the same time. Plus, it is very helpful for any program or committee to have volunteers to fulfill your Post's goals.

Right now, taking inventory of any awards or medals will get you off to a good start, and reviewing last year's numbers can give you a good estimate of what you'll need to serve the same schools. You may be inclined to offer additional school medals, like Scholastic, a very easy one to identify by GPA, or Music or Athletic awards.

I know of two events that slipped through the cracks (not intentionally). First was an athletic state title. The American Legion offers an Athletic Award in Gold, Silver, and Bronze. Look and listen for these sorts of moments in time. Or how about a State Band Contest? We have a Music Award, again in Gold, Silver, and Bronze. By having better communication with your schools, you would find out about these opportunities.

You don't have to provide all 15-plus medals, just the ones you are able to support financially and have the help to distribute. Recognize our youth and boost their self-esteem. Yeah, it's not a bad thing to encourage our youth. They are our future, and our Nation is resting on their shoulders. Pat them on the back while you can. You see how I feel. It is really encouraging to present awards to youth and see their sincere appreciation.

Thank you, for you are in the Army of volunteers, with different Divisions: School Medals, JROTC, Oratorical, Boys State, etc. Each of those has different needs and requirements. I have all the confidence that you will

continued on page 19 >>

<< School Medals Chair continued from page 18

do great. I am just a phone call or email away. Don't hesitate to contact me for any information or advice.

Always aim high, and you'll never fall short.

Honored and Grateful to Serve as VA&R Chairman



Larry Roberts
VA&R Chair
var@legionmail.org

First, I would like to thank the Commander for appointing me as the new VA&R Chairman. I am honored by the opportunity and grateful for his confidence in me. I know I have some very big shoes to fill, and I accept this responsibility with respect, humility, and enthusiasm for the work ahead.

For the past 10 years, Alan Cohen was a tremendous mentor to me. Alan and I have done a great deal of work together at the National and State levels, including traveling to Washington, D.C. Along the way, he guided me, shared his experience, and taught me so much of what I know. His leadership and example have helped prepare me for this role, and I am deeply thankful for his friendship and mentorship.

I am looking forward to working with all our VA&R committees and building on the important work already underway. I am especially eager to collaborate with the VA&R Area Commission chairs and the VA&E, Homeless, National Cemeteries, PVR, VA Entitlements, and Women Veterans chairs. I am also looking forward to working closely with the FDVA and the VAVS Volunteers. By staying connected and supporting one another, we can continue strengthening the service we provide to veterans and their families.

Thank you again for this opportunity. I look forward to listening, learning, and working with each of you as we move forward together.

Post Service Officer (PSO) Training

Post Service Officer registration is open. If you have a PSO in your Post, please make sure they have the opportunity to attend the class. Encourage them to sign up and take advantage of this important training.

Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS)

We are also in dire need of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) volunteers at VA facilities. If you are interested in volunteering, please give me a call at 850-718-7771.

"I've Been Hacked!" Or Have You?



Carrie Kolze
Creative Services Manager
ckolze@floridalegion.org

Understanding phishing, impersonation, and how to protect yourself online

We've all seen it on Facebook: **"I've been hacked! Don't accept any friend requests or messages from me!"**

Or perhaps you've received a strange email that appears to come from a friend, coworker, or even someone in your American Legion Family.

It's understandable to be concerned, but here's something important to know: **Just because someone is using your name, photograph, or email address doesn't necessarily mean your account has been hacked.**

In many cases, you're dealing with phishing, spoofing, or impersonation rather than an actual account breach. Understanding the difference can save you unnecessary panic and help you respond appropriately.

So, What's Really Happening?

Cybercriminals don't always need to break into your accounts to pretend to be you.

continued on page 20 >>

<< Creative Services Manager continued from page 19

Think about how much information is publicly available online. Your name, profile picture, email address, friends list, organization, and even your position within that organization may be easy to find.

Scammers can collect this information from social media, websites, public directories, previously exposed data, or other online sources.

With just a name and photograph, someone can create a convincing duplicate Facebook profile. With an email address, they may be able to send messages that appear to come from you through a technique called **email spoofing**.

Neither situation automatically means they've accessed your actual account.

Here's the Difference:

Phishing: A scammer sends fraudulent emails, texts, or messages designed to trick someone into clicking a malicious link, revealing personal information, sending money, or providing login credentials.

Spoofing: Someone disguises an email address, phone number, or other identifying information to make a message appear to come from a trusted source.

Impersonation or Cloning: Someone creates a fake social media profile using your name, photographs, and publicly available information. Your real account may remain completely secure.

Actual Account Compromise: Someone gains unauthorized access to your real account, potentially allowing them to read messages, send communications, change settings, or steal information.

These scams can overlap. Phishing, for example, may be the method someone uses to steal your password and actually compromise your account.

How Can You Tell if You've Really Been Hacked?

Before announcing you've been hacked, investigate a little.

If someone reports receiving a friend request from you, search for the duplicate profile. If your original profile is still functioning normally, someone may simply be impersonating you.

However, there are warning signs that deserve immediate attention:

- You can no longer access your account using your usual credentials.
- Your password, recovery email, or phone number was changed without your knowledge.
- Your account shows unfamiliar logins or devices.
- Messages, emails, or posts appear in your actual account that you didn't create.
- Your email account contains forwarding rules you didn't establish.

These are stronger indicators of unauthorized access, although they should still be verified.

Seven Simple Ways to Protect Yourself

1. **Change Your Passwords When Something Seems Suspicious.** Even if your account wasn't compromised, changing your password is a sensible precaution when you suspect suspicious activity. Use strong, unique passwords for each account. Never reuse your email password elsewhere.
2. **Enable Two-Factor Authentication (2FA).** This is one of the most effective protections available. Even if someone obtains your password, they'll generally need another verification method to access your account. Use an authenticator app, passkey, or security key when available.
3. **Don't Click First and Ask Questions Later.** Scammers create urgency. "Your account will be suspended!" or "You must verify immediately!" are common tactics. Instead of following a suspicious link, visit the organization's official website directly.
4. **Verify Unexpected Requests.**

continued on page 21 >>

<< Creative Services Manager continued from page 20

If your Department Commander, Post officer, coworker, or friend suddenly requests gift cards, money, confidential information, or immediate assistance, contact them through a trusted phone number or another established communication method.

5. **Review Your Privacy Settings.** Limit who can view your friends list, personal details, and public posts. The less information scammers can collect, the harder it becomes to impersonate you convincingly.
6. **Never Share Verification Codes.** A legitimate representative shouldn't ask you to provide a one-time login code sent to your phone or email. Scammers frequently request these codes to gain access to accounts.
7. **Report, Block, and Warn Others.** If someone creates a duplicate profile, report it for impersonation. Ask friends to report it as well. If your real account was compromised, change your password, sign out of unfamiliar sessions, review account settings, and notify your contacts.

A Special Reminder for Our Legion Family

Scammers frequently exploit trust and familiarity. A message appearing to come from a fellow Legionnaire, Department officer, or familiar organization may seem legitimate simply because you recognize the name.

Remember: A familiar name doesn't guarantee a legitimate message.

And if you receive a suspicious email, don't assume the person whose name appears in the sender field actually sent it.

The Bottom Line: Don't Panic. Verify!

Not every fake profile, suspicious email, or unusual friend request means someone has broken into your account.

Sometimes, scammers are simply using publicly available information to make their deception more convincing.

That doesn't make the threat harmless, but it does mean the appropriate response may be reporting impersonation rather than recovering a stolen account.

Stay alert. Verify before you trust. Secure your accounts. And remember: **Not sure? Don't click!**

Child Well-Being Foundation Awards More Than $1 Million in Grants for 2027

Dennis Boland
Child Well-Being Foundation

American Legion Child Well-being Foundation, Inc.
Meeting of the Board of Directors
Sheraton Hotel Circle Centre, Panorama A, 21st Floor
Sunday, Oct. 4, 2026

Dennis Boland (FL), President, called the meeting of the Board of Directors of The American Legion Child Well-being Foundation (CWF) to order at 5 p.m. EDT.

The Foundation received 308 grant applications for the Board's consideration for a 2027 CWF grant. Following a review, the Board approved 23 grants totaling $1,040,181 to nonprofit organizations for the 2027 calendar year:

American Kidney Fund, Rockville, Maryland, $35,000
Project: American Kidney Fund Camp Connection for Pediatric Patients

This grant will fund themed virtual camps for youth suffering from kidney disease. The camps provide an environment for young people to interact with others who suffer from kidney diseases, thereby reducing feelings of isolation and loneliness. The American Legion Auxiliary, Sons of The American Legion, and Eight & Forty support this grant.

Cancer Kids First, McLean, Virginia, $6,000

continued on page 22 >>

<< Child Well-being Foundation continued from page 21

Project: Patient Interaction Programming – 2027

This project provides children battling cancer with opportunities to reduce isolation, build meaningful peer connections, and develop lasting friendships through organized in-person events.

Compass to Care, Chicago, Illinois, $20,000
Project: Removing Transportation Barriers for Children with Cancer

This project will provide transportation assistance to help ensure children with cancer can attend critical medical appointments without interruption or added financial burden on their families.

Cornelia de Lange Syndrome, Avon, Connecticut, $10,000
Project: Cornelia de Lange Syndrome (CdLS) Foundation Reaching Out Education Project

The project will print and distribute valuable educational materials that provide families, caregivers, and health care providers with critical information, resources, and support for children living with rare genetic diseases.

Gift of Adoption, Northbrook, Illinois, $25,000
Project: Adoption Assistance for U.S. Born Children

This project will fund the final needs to complete the adoption of vulnerable children in the U.S., giving them permanent families and the chance to thrive.

Hope Loves Company, Inc., Pennington, New Jersey, $12,000
Project: Hugs of Hope: National Care Package Program for Children Impacted by ALS

This project will provide care packages, educational materials on ALS and grief, and age-appropriate support resources to children and young caregivers in families affected by ALS, helping them build resilience, manage the emotional impact of the disease, and face the challenges of caregiving, loss, and bereavement. The American Legion Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion support this grant.

Levi's Love, Fargo, North Dakota, $25,000
Project: FrostBlade Courage Kits for Children in Medical Crisis

The program will produce and distribute FrostBlade Courage Kits, each containing the FrostBlade storybook, superhero cape, mask, and comfort items, to children experiencing a medical crisis. The kits provide emotional support, inspire courage and resilience, and help children cope with the challenges of serious illness, treatment, and recovery.

Little Red Door Cancer Agency, Indianapolis, Indiana, $25,000
Project: 2027 Camp Little Red Door

This grant will support camping experiences for children diagnosed with cancer, providing a safe and supportive environment for recreation, peer connection, and respite from the challenges of serious illness.

Make-A-Wish Foundation of Idaho, Boise, Idaho, $7,500
Project: Wish Granting in Idaho

The funds will support a once-in-a-lifetime trip to Walt Disney World for children battling cancer and their families. The experience gives the child a chance to create joyful memories, reduce the emotional stress of serious illness, and strengthen family bonds during a challenging time.

National Bleeding Disorders Foundation, New York, New York, $15,000
Project: National Bleeding Disorders Foundation 2027 Summer Camp Program

The program is a specialized, medically supervised camping program for youth with bleeding disorders, providing a safe environment where participants can engage in recreational and outdoor activities, build self-confidence, and explore their abilities while managing the unique challenges of their condition. The American Legion Auxiliary supports this grant.

Nature's Oasis, New Bern, North Carolina, $5,000

continued on page 23 >>

« Child Well-being Foundation continued from page 22

Project: Nature's Oasis

The project will create meaningful opportunities for children to connect with nature, build environmental awareness, and develop a lifelong appreciation for natural resources.

Our Military Kids, Oakton, Virginia, $50,000
Project: Improving Physical, Social and Emotional Well-being in Military Kids

The grant provides scholarships that enable military-connected children to participate in extracurricular activities, including sports, arts, music, academic enrichment, and other youth development programs. The American Legion Auxiliary, Sons of The American Legion, and Eight & Forty support this grant.

Scouting America, Irving, Texas, $25,000
Project: Scouting America's Military Families Waiver

This project will provide scholarships for military-connected youth to participate in the Scouting America program. Scouting participants develop leadership abilities, teamwork skills, self-confidence, and resilience while building positive relationships with peers and mentors.

Social Good Fund, Inc., Richmond, California, $20,100
Project: Mayu: Sound for the Beginning of Life

This project will provide customized therapeutic soundscape recordings for infants in neonatal intensive care units (NICUs), combining music with the voices of parents and family members, as well as familiar home sounds. The recordings are designed to promote bonding, provide comfort during hospitalization, support infant development, and help families remain connected.

Songs of Love Foundation, Forest Hills, New York, $24,900
Project: Free Personalized Songs for Children Facing Serious Illness Nationwide

This grant will help create personalized songs for seriously ill children. The customized recordings offer comfort, encouragement, and a meaningful connection for children and their families, helping reduce feelings of isolation and stress. Sons of The American Legion support this grant.

Southeast Missouri Network Against Sexual Violence, Jackson, Missouri, $5,000
Project: The Green Bear Printing Project

The project will print and distribute age-appropriate educational materials designed to help school-aged children recognize unsafe situations, understand personal safety boundaries, and identify trusted adults and support resources.

Spectrum Sailing, Isle of Palms, South Carolina, $4,200
Project: Spectrum Sailing Autism Sailing Camps

This grant will provide hands-on sailing camp opportunities for youth with autism, creating a supportive environment that encourages social development, self-confidence, and teamwork. The American Legion Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion support this grant.

Swimming to Save Tiarah & Crowns Foundation, Denham Springs, Louisiana, $7,000
Project: Swimming to Save Tiarah & Crowns Foundation

The program provides free swimming lessons for children to reduce the risk of drowning while promoting water safety skills. The program integrates literacy development through age-appropriate reading activities and educational materials. By combining swimming instruction, reading enrichment, and wellness education, the project aims to improve children's physical safety, academic engagement, and overall well-being.

The American Legion National Headquarters, $675,000
Project: The American Legion Youth Programs – 2027

Grant funding will support The American Legion's national youth programs. The programs give young people valuable opportunities to develop leadership skills, strengthen civic knowledge, promote responsible citizenship, and

continued on page 24 »

<< Child Well-being Foundation continued from page 23

compete in educational and athletic competitions. The American Legion Auxiliary supports this grant.

The RecoverED Project, Lancaster, California, $500
Project: Cards with Courage: A Peer Support Initiative for Youth in Eating Disorder Recovery

The project supports a youth-led community service initiative that engages volunteers in creating and distributing handwritten cards with messages of encouragement, hope, and kindness for children and teens receiving treatment for eating disorders. Sons of The American Legion support this grant.

The Top Mountain Adaptive Sports Foundation, Mercersburg, Pennsylvania, $22,981
Project: Kids on the Mountain: Opening Adaptive Sports to Children of Veterans

This project will provide adaptive sports and recreational opportunities for children and their disabled veteran parents, helping strengthen family connections while promoting physical activity, confidence, and social engagement. Sons of The American Legion support this grant.

Variety-The Children's Charity of Illinois, Chicago, Illinois, $15,000
Project: Variety@Play: Inclusive Recreation for Illinois Children of All Abilities

This project will provide youth activities that promote recreation, social connection, and emotional well-being for children with disabilities. Such programs include adaptive ice skating, sensory-friendly movie screenings, and therapeutic horseback riding experiences designed to accommodate a wide range of physical, developmental, and sensory needs.

Young Marines of the Marine Corps League, Amarillo, Texas, $5,000
Project: Strengthening the Lives of America's Youth

This grant will provide youth with mentorship, positive peer interaction, and opportunities to develop emotional resilience through structured programming that promotes healthy, drug-free lifestyles. Participants will engage in physical activities, educational workshops, leadership development, and community-based experiences designed to build self-confidence, strengthen decision-making skills, and encourage personal responsibility.

Working Together to Strengthen Our Detachment and Support Our Communities



Michael Nigbor
Detachment Commander
commander@floridasons.org

First and foremost, prayers for the communities seriously impacted by the recent hurricane. There is plenty of information being circulated on how you can help. Please do. Our impacted communities urgently need food, water, cleaning supplies, and camping essentials. Collect the items and deliver them to the designated staging areas. Gift cards for businesses like Home Depot and Walmart are good choices.

Effective disaster relief requires coordination, cooperation, and a willingness to serve. Many of us have been through this situation in our own areas, so we know the value of volunteering. If you can, show up as needed for the work parties to assist in the cleanup.

Last month, I was reaching out to our leadership team and any member who wants to help with our communication issues. Thank you to the TWO Area Vice Commanders who got back to me. We do not have a strong means of interacting with each other. Positivity is a key concern.



We have G.O.A.L.S. to reach. We need everyone to get into

continued on page 25 >>

<< Detachment Commander continued from page 24

the game, get on base, and knock it out of the park. We are a team, and a great one at that. Let's keep the momentum of being the Greatest Veterans Organization in the World moving forward. I am looking forward to hearing from you.



This is obviously a good time to concentrate on our Buddy Checks. Especially as officers in the Detachment of Florida, we have an obligation to support our veterans and their families, our communities, our members, and children. We hold ourselves to a high standard as members of a veterans organization.

What motivated you to want to be a member and go on to be an officer? What were you hoping to accomplish? One of the toughest challenges we face in the Detachment is keeping our members engaged and informed. That responsibility starts with US.

It's been a very busy month since the last publication, and I did attend many events that I wrote about last month.

Bartow Squadron #3 had an amazing golf outing on Oct. 10 supporting C.O.T.A. and is presenting us with a check for $2,000. I really appreciate their generosity and hospitality.

Sunday, Oct. 11, was the Squadron #8 meeting in Winter Haven. They presented us with a check for over $1,800 because of their annual car show.

Backing up a little bit, the Breast Cancer Awareness event on Oct. 3 at Lehigh Acres Post 323 was another fantastic event, and some wonderful speakers shared their emotional reasons for supporting this cause.

On Monday, Oct. 5, an Oktoberfest-style dinner event supporting Babcock Ranch Post 415 was a success, as Lehigh Acres donated the use of their kitchen. Babcock Ranch does not have its own Post yet.



Oct. 6 was the final installation in District 13. A very good turnout for Fort Myers Beach American Legion Family 274.

The support for C.O.T.A. across many Detachments and The American Legion is increasing. C.O.T.A.'s mission is to provide fundraising assistance and family support to children and young adults



who need a lifesaving transplant. C.O.T.A.'s services are provided to families at no cost, helping reduce some of the financial burdens that can accompany a transplant. At its heart, C.O.T.A. is about giving its patients a chance at a healthier future while supporting the families who stand beside them. We, as the American Legion Family, by supporting C.O.T.A., are saving the lives of our future leaders.

It has become increasingly important to the success of the S.A.L. that District Commanders take a more active role in the leadership of the Squadron and the Detachment while also working on membership throughout their District.

The District Commander can accomplish more than any other member or officer throughout the Detachment. They have the ability to help individual Squadrons with their programs, especially membership, where they can ultimately help the Squadron reach its 100% G.O.A.L.S.

If good Sons are elected as District Commanders, and the time is taken to teach and train them in the responsibilities of being a good District Commander, our membership will continue to rise. With good

continued on page 26 >>

<< Detachment Commander continued from page 25

training and communication, the success of our programs and leadership will increase.

Lead by example. Ask. Invite. Encourage. Engage. And listen. Listening builds loyalty.

Call someone. Teach someone. Mentor someone. The member sitting next to you today may be the leader of your Squadron tomorrow. Every member matters.

Our success depends on members who care enough to take part, leaders who are willing to listen, and Squadrons that understand why we belong in the first place. We're here to support The American Legion's mission and support veterans, our communities, our youth, and our nation. Let's make sure everything we do moves that mission forward.

As always, thank you for all you do to support our great organization. Work on our G.O.A.L.S. daily and keep the momentum moving forward in a positive way. Support your neighboring Squadrons, and please invite me to your events.

Every day is a new learning experience, and tomorrow is never promised.





FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT

NOVEMBER 2026 EDITION

YEAR 13 (July 2026 - June 2027)

Emergency Assistance

56
VETERANS RECEIVED FUNDS

$100,590
PROVIDED IN FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Suicide Prevention

14
SPI PARTNERS

$56,800
GIVEN TOWARDS SUICIDE PREVENTION

A Partnership That Makes a Difference: *Florida Veteran Foundation*

As we enter this season of gratitude, PROJECT: VetRelief (PVR) would like to recognize and extend our heartfelt appreciation to one of our most dedicated partners, the Florida Veterans Foundation (FVF).

Since 2017, the Foundation has contributed ***more than $1.4 million*** to support our Emergency Assistance Program, helping us provide financial relief to Florida veterans and their families facing unexpected hardships.

But this partnership represents far more than financial contributions. It reflects a shared commitment to ensuring those who have served our country have somewhere to turn when life takes an unexpected turn.

The Florida Veterans Foundation continues to demonstrate its trust in our mission and the processes we've established to responsibly serve veterans in need. Our program is designed to do more than simply pay a bill. Through careful case reviews and eligibility requirements, we ensure assistance reaches those facing genuine financial hardships, helping them regain stability and move forward.

FVF recognizes the importance of our approach and has continued to invest in its success. Their trust in our program allows us to remain focused on what matters most: *helping veterans and their families navigate difficult times with dignity and hope.*

FLORIDA VETERANS FOUNDATION

As the need for Emergency Assistance continues to grow, partnerships like this are more important than ever. Every contribution represents an investment in a veteran's well-being, a family's stability, and a community that refuses to leave those who served behind.

We are extremely grateful for their leadership, staff, and supporters of the Florida Veterans Foundation! ***Thank you*** for believing in our mission, trusting our team, and standing alongside us year after year.

We are incredibly proud of what we've accomplished together and look forward to continuing this meaningful partnership for years to come.

Together, we're not just providing financial assistance. We're helping Florida's veterans find their footing and move toward a brighter future.

Honoring and Supporting Those Who Served

This Veterans Day, PROJECT: VetRelief proudly honors the courage, sacrifice, and dedication of the men and women who have served our nation. To every veteran, we extend our heartfelt gratitude: *not just today, but every day*.

We believe honoring their service means being there when they need us most. Through our Emergency Assistance Program and Suicide Prevention Initiative, we remain committed to providing quality services, meaningful support, and a trusted network of organizations dedicated to the well-being of veterans and their families.

Our mission goes beyond providing financial relief. It's about building a strong, collaborative network of resources veterans can confidently turn to during life's most challenging moments.

To our veterans: ***Thank you for your service.*** It is our honor to serve you in return. And to our donors, SPI Strategic Partners, and American Legion Family, thank you for helping us turn gratitude into action.

www.projectvetrelief.org (407) 295-2631 (407) 299-0901 1912 Lee Rd, Orlando facebook @ProjectVetRelief

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Oct 26, 2026
TARGET: 65%

District 2	Roxana Dressel	65.83%
District 9	David Hurst	62.87%
District 5	Ken White	62.29%
District 17	Jim Bowers	61.04%
District 4	Darcy Sisson	60.94%
District 3	Shelley Jefferson	60.71%
District 7	Karen Warren	60.45%
District 1	Donald Westfell	58.73%
District 6	Alan Adams	58.06%
District 15	Stephen Tyler	57.84%
District 13	Laurene Allen-Flower	57.50%
District 8	Robert Patierno	57.04%
District 14	Angela Glover	56.87%
District 11	Stanley R. Brown, Jr.	56.85%
District 12	Daniel Ciesielski	54.97%
District 16	Michael Harley	54.35%
Western	Robert "Oz" Osmon	62.28%
Northern	Miguel Garcia	61.25%
Southern	Geo Bograkos	58.86%
Central	Kalvin Thompson	57.55%
Southwestern	Doug Deierlein	57.27%
Eastern	Dennis Mallon	56.51%
Post 400	-	59.06%

CURRENT PERCENTAGE: 52.03% (9/24/26)









Benefits that help veterans maintain a healthy lifestyle.

A Wellcare Medicare Advantage plan can complement your VA coverage and provide benefits that matter to you like:

- Dental coverage
- Vision coverage
- Hearing coverage
- Prescription drug coverage
- Telehealth, online doctor visits
- Free fitness benefits
- Dario: Digital mental health and social support resources.
- My Wellcare Rewards: This program pays you for your healthy choices. Complete an eligible activity and get rewarded with funds you may redeem toward your American Legion membership dues.

The Annual Enrollment Period starts Oct. 15.
Choose your 2027 health plan today.

Call today to discuss your health plan options.

844-974-0081 (TTY: 711)
8 a.m.-8 p.m., 7 days a week

thelit.com

AMERICAN LEGION | wellcare

THE OFFICIAL MEDICARE ADVANTAGE PROVIDER OF THE AMERICAN LEGION

Endorsed by your American Legion Department

Benefits and allowance amounts vary by plan. Please call for more details.

Wellcare is the Medicare brand for Centene Corporation, an HMO, PPO, PDP plan with a Medicare contract and is an approved Part D Sponsor. Our D-SNP plans have a contract with the state Medicaid program. Enrollment in our plans depends on contract renewal. Wellcare is a DSNP with a Florida Medicaid Contract. The benefit information provided is a brief summary, not a complete description of benefits. For more information contact the DSNP. Limitations, copayments, and/or restrictions may apply. Benefits, preferred drug list, pharmacy network, premium and/or copayments/coinsurance may change. Washington residents: "Wellcare" is issued by Coordinated Care of Washington, Inc. Washington residents: Health Net Life Insurance Company is contracted with Medicare for PPO plans. "Wellcare" is issued by Health Net Life Insurance Company. Louisiana D-SNP prospective enrollees: For detailed information about Louisiana Medicaid benefits, please visit the Medicaid website at https://ldh.la.gov/medicaid or https://www.louisianahealthconnect.com. To request a written copy of our Medicaid Provider Directory, please contact us. Wellcare By Allwell (HMO and HMO SNP) includes products that are underwritten by Superior HealthPlan, Inc. Wellcare (HMO and HMO SNP) includes products that are underwritten by WellCare of Texas, Inc., Superior HealthPlan, Inc., and SelectCare of Texas, Inc.

Y0020_WCM_6878883E_M FINAL2 CMS Accepted 09152026 NA7WCMDML6878883E_0002 ©Wellcare 2026

DO YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES?

BECOME A DEPARTMENT CHAIR!

MAKE AN IMPACT

2027 2028

You can complete online at floridalegion.org/**become**a**chair**

YEARS IN LEGION

DISTRICT

POST

AREA

AMERICAN LEGION | Department of Florida

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: Bruce Carl, P.O. Box 547859, Orlando, FL 32854


AMERICAN LEGION
US
AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY
DEPARTMENT OF FLORIDA
LEGION AND AUXILIARY
VICES EVENT
Fundraiser for
PRESIDENT AND COMMANDERS PROJECTS
JANUARY 23, 2027
NOON - 4 PM
POST 8 WINTER HAVEN
RAFFLES
FOOD
LIVE MUSIC
FUN
RSVP - to Bruce Carl
brucel1955@yahoo.com.
or
352-942-7948

DISTRICT 6

FAMILY PICNIC

SAVE THE DATE

ALL POSTS, UNITS,
SQUADRONS AND CHAPTERS
FULL PARTICIPATION IS NEEDED

MORE INFORMATION TO COME

SUNDAY, MARCH 14, 2027
NOON – 5PM

HICKORY POINT PARK
27341 SR 19, TAVARES, FL

MORE INFO:
DISTRICT6PRESIDENT@ALAFL.ORG

Highlands Post 69

The American Legion Family

Presents the

12th Annual Veterans Expo

Honoring and supporting those who have served

Friday January 29th 2027, 9 AM – 4 PM

Saturday January 30th 2027, 9 AM to 5 PM

Veterans Benefits, Services and Resources available all day both days for all veterans and family members

We invite the whole community to come out for some fun and to support local Veterans

See the Traveling Vietnam and Global War On Terror walls and more: Displays, Music, Food Trucks, Fun, Raffles, 2-day 50/50, Vendors, Information for all, Kids Zone, Free admission and parking

Come out to help escort the walls to the Expo 9 AM on Friday January 29th

Proceeds benefit: ***Local Veterans*** And

PROJECT VETRELIEF

1301 W. Bell St.
Avon Park, FL. 33825

For more info, contact:
ROY TEFFT 301-481-3690, ROYTHLSPHC@GMAIL.COM
Or
LARRY ROBERTS 850-718-7773, GUNHUNTER1966@YAHOO.COM



SERGEANT LEONARD J. MCNEILL

★ HOMECOMING & REMEMBRANCE ★

VETERANS DAY ★ NOVEMBER 11, 2026 ★ ORLANDO, FLORIDA

After more than 81 years, U.S. Army Air Forces Sergeant Leonard J. McNeill is finally coming home.

Sergeant Leonard J. McNeill of Orlando, Florida, served in the U.S. Army Air Forces during World War II as a B-29 tail gunner. In 1945, his aircraft was struck during a mission over Japan. Sgt. McNeill survived the crash but was captured and later died as a prisoner of war during the Tokyo Military Prison fire on May 26, 1945. After more than eight decades, he has now been identified and is returning home to Orlando.

★ HOMECOMING SCHEDULE ★

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2026

VISITATION
4:00 – 7:00 p.m. EST
Colonial Funeral Home
2811 Curry Ford Road
Orlando, FL

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 2026
VETERANS DAY

FUNERAL SERVICE
9:30 – 10:45 a.m. EST
Colonial Funeral Home
2811 Curry Ford Road
Orlando, FL

BURIAL
Greenwood Cemetery
1603 Greenwood Street
Orlando, FL

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 2026

CELEBRATION OF LIFE
4:00 – 8:00 p.m.
World of Beer
431 E. Central Boulevard
Orlando, FL

★ THE MCNEILL FAMILY HAS GRACIOUSLY INVITED EVERYONE TO ATTEND ★
SERGEANT MCNEILL'S HOMECOMING CEREMONY ON VETERANS DAY, NOVEMBER 11.



★ MOTORCYCLE ESCORT & FLAG LINE

Legion Family members and supporters are encouraged to line the procession route with American flags. Please bring a 3' x 5' U.S. flag on a 6-foot pole if you have one — or any U.S. flag you can bring. Participation is what matters most.

The procession is expected to include a motorcycle escort and will travel past Sgt. McNeill's original home before continuing to the World War II Memorial inside Greenwood Cemetery, where he will be carried to his final resting place, accompanied by a bagpipe band.



★ ATTIRE GUIDANCE

- American Legion Riders ceremonial dress: black pants, white shirt, ALR vest, and cover.
- Legionnaires and Sons of The American Legion are encouraged to wear their cover.
- Please do not let concerns about attire prevent you from attending. Your presence and your flag are what will make this tribute meaningful.

Let us honor the McNeill family's wishes by lining the roadway holding an American flag as this American hero is escorted to his final resting place in his hometown of Orlando, Florida.

★ *Never Forgotten. Never Abandoned. Never Left Behind.* ★

PLEASE SHARE WIDELY THROUGHOUT THE LEGION FAMILY AND BEYOND.

REV UP FOR THE HOLIDAYS!

AMERICAN LEGION RIDERS ★ CHAPTER 423 ★

TOYS FOR TOTS®

★ ESCORTED ★ BENEFIT RIDE ★

LET'S RIDE TO MAKE A CHILD'S CHRISTMAS BRIGHTER!

Calling all bikers, riders, passengers and supporters! Join American Legion Riders Chapter 423 for an incredible day of motercycles, fellowship, fun, and giving back to the children and families of Columbia County!

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 28

START & FINISH: COOPER'S HIDEOUT

Cooper's Hideout
Hangout Club

REGISTRATION OPENS AT 8:00 AM
Enjoy complimentary coffee and donuts while you register!

KICKSTANDS UP AT 10:00 AM SHARP!

RIDE REGISTRATION

- Riders: $20 + 1 new, unwrapped toy
- Passengers: $10 + 1 new, unwrapped toy

All registration proceeds go directly to Toys for Tots!

MORE FUN • MORE PRIZES • MORE GIVING!

RAFFLE BASKETS TO SUPPORT AMERICAN LEGION RIDERS 423.
Enter for your chances to win awesome prizes!

50/50 RAFFLE
Try your luck while supporting a great cause! Proceeds benefit Toys for Tots, too!

LUNCH AVAILABLE AT COOPER'S HIDEOUT!
After the ride, return to Cooper's Hideout, grab some lunch, enjoy the fellowship, and celebrate a great day of riding and giving back!

LET'S FILL THE STAGING LANE!

Bring your toys, bring your riding buddies, and show Columbia County what bikers with **BIG HEARTS** can do!

TOYS FOR TOTS

Every toy makes a difference.
Every donation brings a smile.
Every mile helps spread holiday cheer!

★ RIDE WITH PURPOSE. GIVE WITH HEART. MAKE CHRISTMAS MAGICAL! ★

SHARE THIS POST ★ INVITE YOUR RIDING BUDDIES ★ SPREAD THE WORD!

#ALR423 #AmericanLegionRiders #ToysForTots #ColumbiaCounty #BenefitRide #BikersGiveBack #CoopersHideout #5050Raffle #RideForTheKids #ChristmasGiving

DEPARTMENT OF FLORIDA

★ JUNIORS ★

& Young SAL Members

SERVE
LEAD
COMMUNITY
GROW

YOU'RE INVITED TO

★ MISSION: ★ JUNIOR BANQUET

OPERATION: PIZZA

A Junior Night of Service, Camouflage & Fun!



PIZZA
GAMES ★
★ MUSIC
★ FRIENDS
FUN!

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 21ST AT 6:00 P.M.

CARIBE ROYALE ORLANDO

PIZZA!

KARAOKE!

SAME MISSION. DIFFERENT UNIFORM.
JUST MORE FUN! ★

CONTACT DEPARTMENT JUNIORS CHAIR

ANDREA O'NEAL

AT JUNIORS@ALAFL.ORG
TO RSVP AND FOR FURTHER INFORMATION.

RSVP Today!

★ CAMOUFLAGE IN ACTION ★

NOT SURE? DON'T CLICK.

A Quick Guide to Avoiding Email Scams

For Florida American Legion Posts, Leadership & Members

Email scams are becoming more convincing. Scammers may pretend to be Department leadership, Post officers, staff, vendors, fellow members, or even friends and family. Spam filters help, but they cannot catch everything. That means you are one of the best defenses.

RED FLAGS

- "Are you available?" or other vague messages
- Urgent requests for gift cards, money, or banking information
- Unexpected links, attachments, or QR codes
- Messages telling you not to call
- Requests to keep the matter confidential
- Email addresses that look almost right

Always check the full sender address – not just the display name.

STOP & VERIFY

- Do not reply to the suspicious email
- Call the person using a number you already know
- Send a separate text message
- Start a brand-new email from your contacts
- Ask: "Did you send this?"

PROTECT YOURSELF

- Use strong, unique passwords
- Turn on multi-factor authentication
- Go directly to websites instead of clicking email links
- Be cautious with attachments and QR codes
- If you clicked something suspicious, change your password immediately

NOT SURE? DON'T CLICK.

A 30-second phone call can prevent a major problem.

Think before you click. Verify before you trust. Protect our Legion family.

2026 FALL CONFERENCE

NOVEMBER 20-22 | CARIBE ROYALE ORLANDO

FRIDAY / NOVEMBER 20

TIME	CLASS / EVENT	LOCATION
8:00 AM - 5:00 PM	Legion Headquarters Office	Grand Sierra A
8:00 AM - 5:00 PM	Emblem Sales	Antigua 1-2
8:00 AM - 4:00 PM	Service Officer School - Day 1	Grand Sierra B
8:00 AM - 9:00 AM	Homeless Veterans Outreach Training	Grand Sierra G
8:00 AM - 9:30 AM	Post Adjutant Training	Grand Sierra H-I
8:30 AM - 10:00 AM	Boys State / Oratorical Training	Grand Sierra F
9:30 AM - 10:30 AM	Conflict Resolution Class	Grand Sierra G
10:00 AM - 11:00 AM	Membership Basic Training	Grand Sierra H-I
10:00 AM - 11:00 AM	Legion Riders Meeting for District & Area Chairs	Antigua 3-4
10:30 AM - 12:00 PM	Post Historian / Social Media Training	Grand Sierra F
11:00 AM - 12:00 PM	Fundraising Class	Grand Sierra G
11:30 AM - 12:30 PM	Post Judge Advocate Training	Grand Sierra H-I
12:30 PM - 1:30 PM	Department Finance Committee Meeting	Curacao 3-4
1:00 PM - 4:00 PM	Programs Fair	Palms Atrium
1:00 PM - 2:00 PM	Membership Advanced Training	Grand Sierra H-I
1:00 PM - 2:00 PM	Women Veterans Outreach Training	Grand Sierra F
2:30 PM - 3:30 PM	Post Sgt-at-Arms, Color Guard & Honor Guard Class	Grand Sierra G
2:30 PM - 3:30 PM	Food Handler’s Class	Grand Sierra F
2:30 PM - 4:00 PM	Post Commander’s Training	Grand Sierra H-I
4:00 PM - 5:00 PM	Legislative Training	Grand Sierra G
4:30 PM - 5:30 PM	20/4 Echelon 30 Meeting	Antigua 3-4

SATURDAY / NOVEMBER 21

TIME	CLASS / EVENT	LOCATION
8:00 AM - 3:00 PM	Legion Headquarters Office	Grand Sierra A
8:00 AM - 3:00 PM	Legion Emblem Sales	Antigua 1-2
8:00 AM - 1:00 PM	Service Officer School - Day 2	Grand Sierra B
8:00 AM - 12:00 PM	General Session	Palms 3
1:30 PM - 2:30 PM	Post Operations Training	Grand Sierra H-I
2:00 PM - 3:00 PM	Post Chaplain’s Training	Grand Sierra F
2:45 PM - 3:45 PM	Veterans Benefits	Grand Sierra G
2:45 PM - 3:30 PM	Records Retention	Grand Sierra H-I
3:30 PM - 5:30 PM	ALR General Session	Palm 3
4:00 PM - 5:00 PM	Post Finance Officer Training	Grand Sierra H-I
6:00 PM - 7:00 PM	Cocktail Hour	Palm 2 Foyer
7:00 PM - 9:00 PM	President & Commander’s Banquet	Palms 2

SUNDAY / NOVEMBER 22

TIME	CLASS / EVENT	LOCATION
8:30 AM - 9:15 AM	Religious Service	Grand Sierra D
9:30 AM - 11:30 AM	Department Executive Committee Meeting	Grand Sierra B