



AUGUST 2020

# THE LEGION LINK

VOLUME 29 ISSUE 1

## From your Dept Commander Rick Johnson

**Rick Johnson, Commander**  
[commander@floridalegion.org](mailto:commander@floridalegion.org)



First and foremost, I'd like to send my sincerest condolences to NECA Art Schwabe for the loss of his wife, PDP Erna Schwabe. She was a very special lady to us all and will be sorely missed.

As we move forward in great uncertainty, during this difficult time in our country, we need to stay strong as a family. Your Department leadership is working tirelessly behind the scenes to keep everyone informed as much as possible. Please rest assured, any information received is verified from reliable sources, before released to you. Social media has been a valuable tool for us, and represents us to the general public, donors, veterans, potential members etc. As of late, some have chosen to focus on negative issues, often beyond our control. Please, let's flood with positive posts and encourage more support, which will ultimately benefit us all.

There are so many negative issues plaguing our country right now, and it is more evident now than ever before that we need to stay focused, positive and

continue living by our Preamble. The destructive culture we're suffering now, will not be alleviated anytime soon, and not without great change. Let us reflect on our history, and learn from past conflicts and strife, make better choices to strengthen our country as a united front.

Watching the news today, I am in shock of the civil unrest plaguing our nation. This is not who we are. We, as members of The American Legion, must stand and set the example within our communities for a better tomorrow. Let's flood our elected officials, with a positive stance on how we can enact change with our combined mission. I could truly rant on this subject for days, but we all know what we need to

do. Let's do it.

With all the trials of this past year, your membership numbers were only 414 behind last year's, an amazing achievement in the face of turmoil. We were unable to reach our goal, but a goal should also be attainable to be successful. Our traditional membership was stellar, with a retention rate of 92%. Please congratulate our 6th and 15th Districts as Race to the Top winners.

I applaud all of you who worked hard to make the 2019-2020 year successful. Our membership team have undergone training and have a

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### COMMANDER'S FUNDRAISING PROJECT

Commander Johnson has chosen to keep his fundraising efforts focused on veterans and children for the upcoming year. He will continue to support Children's Organ Transplant Association (COTA) and PROJECT: VetRelief (PVR) for his Commander's Fundraising Project and has increased his goal to \$225,000. We will keep the ball rolling from last year's efforts and include all donations that were submitted during the 2019-2020 Legion Year towards his goal.

Any donation marked as "Commander's Charity" will be divided equally between

his two charities, PVR and COTA. If you would like your donation to go towards a specific charity, please note that on the check. For example, write "Commander's Charity - PROJECT: VetRelief" in the memo line. All checks should be made payable to the American Legion.

To ensure the Commander receives credit, please mark donations according to the instructions below. Should you have any questions, please contact our Fundraising Director, Jennifer Cooper, at Department Headquarters.



**IN THIS EDITION**

**Officers**

- 1 Commander
- 2 1st Vice Commander
- 3 2nd Vice Commander
- 3 3rd Vice Commander
- 4 NEC
- 4 Judge Advocate

**Area Commanders**

- 4 Northern Area
- 5 Southern Area

**District Commanders**

- 6 District 11

**Membership**

- 6 Northern Membership
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**Chairs**

- 7 American Legion Riders
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- 10 Disaster Preparedness
- 10 Employment
- 11 Law and Order
- 12 Oratorical
- 15 PROJECT: VetRelief
- 13 Scholarship
- 13 Scouting
- 14 VA&R

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renewed understanding to prevent and efficiently attach any issues early. Please communicate with our membership team and allow them to HELP with anything you might need to operate your post at its full potential.

In an effort to put our members, veterans, and posts first, we have begun a series of webinars, focusing on issues involving veterans across the State of Florida on a local, state and national level. The first webinar featured Senator Marco Rubio, with updates on the COVID pandemic and other issues veterans are currently

facing. The second webinar I shared with you the latest information gathered and answered many of your questions. Both webinars were well attended. We hope to entice Governor Ron DeSantis to join us discussing many of these issues further. Let's flood his office with positive requests and sincere interests.

Please stay safe, healthy, and strong as we deal with the hand we've been dealt. From my wife, Reenie, and myself, God Bless you all and God Bless America.

Service, Honor, Sacrifice

Tank out!

**COMMANDER'S CHARITIES**

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



Commander's Goal: \$225,000 (Current funds raised \$179,288.33)

*Be Involved the Best Way You Can*

**Jerry Brandt, 1st Vice**

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



Here we go again, Posts open, Closed, Open, Closed and then Open and Closed again. Times like these can bring everybody down. We are starting a new year for the American

Legion, our new Post Commanders are planning out their path for the future of our Posts. What is not normal is the times we found ourselves in, with Coronavirus, Presidential Elections, riots on our streets, but these too will pass. Please keep focus on what the American Legion does

best, our Veterans, our Families and our Community.

Our Veterans, you don't have to look far for them, they are you, members of your Posts, friends and neighbors, are we ok? Do a buddy check, see if any of them need anything, and ask them if they can reach out to other Veterans. With the isolation due to the Virus, many of our Veterans do not know where to turn to. It is time we turn to them.

Our Families, will your children and grandchildren go back to school in a few days? Or will they still be at home? Will there be summer baseball for the children? How about soccer or football for the children to play? Find a way for the children to be children. Take them out to the park to play, take the fishing, and do

something. Children and young adults live with the stress of being isolated as well. And they are at the stage needing social connections. Help them. Our Community, many of our Posts find this part easy, they work with the city or county on an almost daily basis. Adopt a highway, have members start attending the City meetings. With September coming up, plan an event with your local city on POW/MIA day, 9/11, if possible, hold an open house on Labor Day and invite the Mayor to speak. Involve the Community with fund raising for a good cause, such as repairing a local Veterans home, repairing a playground or park.

Do not let these times bring you and your Post down, we have a year before us. Let us make the best of this year.



THE AMERICAN LEGION  
DEPARTMENT OF FLORIDA

**OUR HISTORY**

Celebrate 100 Years of Florida Legion history

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*Membership & Chain of Command*

**Eunice Butts, 2nd Vice Commander**

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



Thank you for a good year during the 2019 – 2020 year. As a zone, many awards were received by our posts. Overall, we had a good year given the hand we were dealt with the pandemic. Since many

will be speaking on the subject, I reserve the space to them. It is my prayer that all of you and your families are well and doing fine. If you should need help of any kind, please contact your post or district commander.

I have been tasked to be Commander for zone 2 again this year. I am looking forward to us working together as a team. District commanders, if you need any help in your district please contact your Area or Zone Commander. We will be more than glad to help. Always remember, I do not mind helping any member or post accomplish their task.

Our top goal will be MEMBERSHIP, “How do I attain membership”? 1.Utilize the Buddy Check. It was proven last administration that it really works. People love to hear from their organization and know that they are checking on them. Many cannot attend meetings, others work, etc. To hear a voice

on the other end say “Hello Comrade Smith, how are you? This is comrade John from post 000.”The individual who used this system found that many members were not going to renew their dues. They were so happy to be checked on that they volunteered and said “I will pay my dues now that you’ve shown interest in your members. Where do I send the check?” This individual did this for all his posts.

His reward was 1st place in his category for National Membership. I am proud to say that he is one of our own in Zone 2. District 15 commander, Bruce Carl. Sir on behalf of zone 2 we CONGRATULATE you.

This year I am requesting that everyone please use the chain of command: member, post commander, district commander, area commander, zone commander and adjutant/Department Commander. Many issues and concerns can be resolved before reaching Department. The zone commanders keep the Department Commander informed. Post and district commanders, please let the members of the post know not to send complaints to The American Legion National Headquarters. They will not be processed.

Please utilize your Zone 2 Commander to participate in activities of the post and Veteran activities in the community. If available, I will attend. During these

pen and on the other hand allow for-profit organizations like Disneyworld and cigar bars prosper and profit during this pandemic. And if I read the e-mail correctly, all American Legion Posts must remain closed! Look out Bob Brewster, they are coming to your house to board up your widows! I just find it incomprehensible that one person way down the food chain can shut down ALL private social and Veterans clubs with the stroke of a pen. Almost seems like no one had the guts to do it so they delegated to the low guy on the totem pole.

AUGUST 2020	
1	District 11
1	District 4 Meeting: Membership
4	District 11 Training: Commanders, 1st Vices & Adjutants
5	District 11 Training: Finance Officers
6	District 11 Training: Chaplain & Sgt-at-Arms
6	Post 147 Officer Installation
8	Post 24 Award Ceremony
9	District 5 Meeting
10	Post 278 Officer Installation
15	District 17 Planning Meeting
16	Post 248 Officer Installation
18	Post 334 Officer Installation
22	District 17 Training: Post Officer
22	District 15 Training: Membership

Events are subject to change. Additional details can be found at [www.floridalegion.org](http://www.floridalegion.org). We share the information we are provided, please contact Program, Area, District and Posts for additional details and events.

uncertain times we realize that nothing is normal at this time and activities may be cancelled, but we can still plan for an event, if it’s possible to have our activities.

I would like to thank Posts 14,24,139,138,238,25,110,103, and 254 for the wonderful hospitality and gracious greeting, shown to me. District Commanders Randall McNabb and Angelo “Skip” Felicita thank you for your time and assistance. Keep up the good works

So now what do we do? Well, we keep on keepin on! Stay in touch with your membership with buddy checks and networking. Some Districts have been utilizing “Zoom” meetings. Those seem to work very well. Have your exec board meetings at places other than your post. Maybe a restaurant or you can even meet at someone’s house for that matter. You can meet at my house! Remember, we are not locked down, so go out and spread the good word of the American Legion. I for one cannot stand still. I am here for you and will do everything in my power

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*Keep on Keepin On*

**Michael Raymond, 3rd Vice Commander**

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



As I sit here writing my first article of the year, I’m struggling to make sense of all that is happening around us. What concerns me the most is how our non-elected officials can take it upon

themselves to put Veterans organizations out of business by just the stroke of a



<< 3rd Vice - Continued from Page 3

to get us through this thing. It may not seem like it now, but this will not last forever.

Finally, please contact the Governor and let him know how you feel. Contact

your State representatives and House of Representatives. We have strength in numbers. Over 100,000 Legionnaires and 70,000 family members in the great State of Florida will make a difference! Take care and I'm sure I will see you soon.

*Child Welfare Foundation*

**Dennis Boland, NEC**  
[nec@legionmail.org](mailto:nec@legionmail.org)



In 1952, Dr. Garland D. Murphy Jr. gave to The American Legion a large contribution that would benefit children. The Legion and Murphy entered into a trust agreement that established the Foundation, approved by the National Executive Committee on Oct. 15, 1953.

Though created by the Legion, the Child Welfare Foundation, Inc., is a separate 501(c)3 corporation. CWF accepts funding proposals from nonprofit organizations for projects that contribute to the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual welfare of children. Grants are only given to entities that help U.S. children in a large geographic area; they are not awarded for day-to-day operating expenses or special operating expenses.

In 1955, the foundation made its first three grants, totaling \$22,500, to three organizations: the Delinquency Control Institute, the National Association for Retarded Children and the National Society for the Prevention of Blindness. To date, more than \$17 million has been awarded to assist our nation's children.

During CWF's annual board of directors meeting in Indianapolis on Oct. 13, 2019, The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation awarded \$811,282 in grants to 19 nonprofits.

American Legion posts, Auxiliary units, Sons of The American Legion squadrons and Eight & Forty salons are eligible for the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation 100 percent per capita banner for the program year (June 1, 2020-May 31, 2021).

To qualify for the banner, a post, unit, squadron or salon must donate at least \$1 per member based upon its official membership total for the 2020-2021 year.

*Northern Area News*

**Marie Conti, Northern Area Commander**  
[northernarea@legionmail.org](mailto:northernarea@legionmail.org)



First, I would like to thank everyone for all of their hard work during the previous year. As my Husband would say "BRAVO-ZULU"! Congratulations to all new Post Officers.

There are many unprecedented challenges that we are facing as we enter the year ahead. Two of these new challenges are face masks and social distancing. These are, of course, in addition to our normal challenges of supporting our programs and membership. Don't forget to PLAN this NEW Year like it was a regular, non-pandemic, Legion year. Program Chairman, please remember to plan fundraisers, and normal yearly Calendar year events.

When you are wearing a face mask you are protecting yourself, as well as others. Follow social distancing guidelines from the Center for Disease Control (CDC). <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>

Hopefully, we will be able to see each other soon. Take care of yourself & your family first. Oh By the Way you have me for another Year! SEMPER FI!

*Constitution & By-Laws*

**Clarence Hill, Judge Advocate**  
[judgeadvocate@legionmail.org](mailto:judgeadvocate@legionmail.org)

Thank you, Department Commander Rick Johnson for the appointment as the Department Judge Advocate. This will be a new experience for me. Fortunately, there are able, experienced, and smart assistants to keep me straight.

There is a revised Suggested Post Constitution and By-Laws (CBL) on the web site to serve as a guide when updating your Post CBLs. There is a backlog of Post CBLs that I have started working through.

The primary duty of a judge advocate at any level is to provide professional advice in the conduct of Post/District business or to procure proper counsel. He/she is the guardian of the constitutional form of Post/District government.

The Judge Advocate can also supply valuable assistance to other Post/District committees and Officers and should maintain contact with local government officials. The Judge Advocate commonly has the duty, with others, of auditing Post financial accounts. This is done annually, usually before the election of officers, or more frequently at their discretion.



*Southern Area Membership Bulletin***Paul Bosco, Southern Area Commander**

southernarea@legionmail.org



Another Legionnaire has reported to the Commander of us all. District 11 has lost Past District Commander and Past Southern Area Commander, David Knapp. He served in the Army in Vietnam.

David Passed Wednesday July 8th after battling a long bout with cancer. David

was instrumental in coordinating the first Memorial Day event at the then new South Florida National Cemetery. David will be missed throughout the American Legion and Palm Beach County.

We are all trying to wrap our heads around new and better ways to make money to keep our posts alive. We are in a new membership year. It is time to go out and get your members to pay for the 2021 year. The dues will help bring in enough revenue to help keep you in the black. Contact your membership and ask them to pay early which will help to alleviate some

of the cost. Give them an incentive, a free Dinner, or knock off \$5.00 from their dues if they are an early bird. Have fun with this, get creative. If you are having problems with your membership call your District Commander or Ray Perez our Southern Area Membership Chairman. Both their numbers are on the Department web site.

Please follow the CDC guide lines, keep safe from the Covid-19 virus. Call and make an appointment to have a test today in your county. They are free. Why take a chance.

*College Support for a Youth SAL Commander***Johnny Castro, 11th District**

11thdistrict@legionmail.org



As you all know, the COVID-19 Pandemic of 2020 eliminated the SENIOR EXPERIENCE for many high school students throughout the United States: Disruption of classes, final exams, sports and

no Prom and/or graduation ceremonies were sad and unknown to most was the loss of financial support needed to continue graduate studies. The loss of salaries from the inability to go to work, compounded by the elimination of scholarship sponsors and grant providers.

This is our opportunity to help one of our own, Commander Joshua Katz, who has provided military / veteran community service and leadership since he was 6 years old and was just accepted into a 4-year pilot-program for a bachelor's degree. During the Pandemic, Joshua's scholarships were greatly reduced.

Joshua is no stranger to excelling at new things like a new program...As some of you also know, on Memorial Day, 2014, while volunteering at the South Florida National Cemetery, for the Boy Scouts, Joshua noticed one penny on a headstone and wondered

why it was there. He took a picture of it and researched the meaning, to find that "leaving a coin on a headstone, each denomination had its own significance, representing that someone had visited the veteran's burial site". After learning the meaning of the coins, Joshua wanted to find a way to recognize every soldier in the cemetery, so that their families would know that their sacrifices have not been forgotten. He came up with an event that "Live Reads" the names of the interred, places a custom challenge coin and called it POW-MIA-OREE.

Joshua's POW-MIA-OREE event is the first and only event that "Live Reads" all the names of the Veterans interred at our National Cemeteries (annually) and when finished leaves a custom challenge coin on every headstone for the veteran's families. For the last 6 years, these coins have acted as a reminder that "No Soldier Should Ever Be Forgotten" as has grown to become a movement that spans our state and can grow around our country.

I am proud of what this young man has accomplished and believe we can help him eliminate some of, if not all of his remaining financial stress and giving him the opportunity to continue to support our community while concentrating on his studies.

Joshua's Awards and achievements include a 'Congressional Record', the 'Prudential Spirit of Community' award, being named

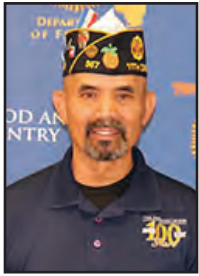
as our "National Legacy Keeper" and named as "Florida's 2020 American Legion Eagle Scout of the Year".

He has been recognized by: **Randy Reeves**, Under Secretary; **Ted Deutch**, Congressman; **Jeremy Ring**, Senator; **Steven Grant**, Boynton Beach Mayor and **Chuck Shaw / Karen Brill**, Palm Beach County School Board.

His military support includes: **Squadron Commander of the Sons of the American Legion Squadron 390** (2 years), **Honor Flight** (6 years), **Wreaths Across America** (6 years), **The Missing in America Project** (4 years), **Memorial and Veterans Day parades and ceremonies** (9 years) and his own **POW-MIA-OREE** (6 years). He also supports the Boynton Beach Soup Kitchens Holiday Toy Drive.

The following link is one of many acknowledging Joshua's work in the Veteran community. In this, Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs Randy Reeves presents Joshua with his Legacy Keeper Award two years ago.  
<https://www.sun-sentinel.com/community/gateway-gazette/fl-bbf-joshua-katz-0627-20180626-story.html>

**TO SUPPORT JOSHUA, CLICK THIS LINK TO OUR "GO FUND ME PAGE" FOR HIM:**  
[https://www.gofundme.com/f/k6hzwe-joshua-katz-college-fundraiser?utm\\_source=customer&utm\\_medium=copy-link&utm\\_campaign=p\\_cf+share-flow-1](https://www.gofundme.com/f/k6hzwe-joshua-katz-college-fundraiser?utm_source=customer&utm_medium=copy-link&utm_campaign=p_cf+share-flow-1)

*Medal of Honor Grove at Valley Forge***Johnny Castro, 11th District**[11thdistrict@legionmail.org](mailto:11thdistrict@legionmail.org)

The Medal of Honor is the highest distinction which can be awarded to a member of the Armed Services of the United States. It is approved by Congress and presented by the President of the United

States, to an individual who, while serving in the Armed Forces, "distinguished himself conspicuously by Gallantry and Bravery at the risk of one's life above and beyond the call of duty."

The Medal of Honor Grove is located at Freedoms Foundation in Valley Forge Pennsylvania and contains 42 acres of natural woodland and is designed as a living memorial to the 3506 recipients of our nation's highest military decoration, the Medal of Honor. The Medal of Honor Grove is the only location in the United States that honors all recipients.

A section of the grove is designated for each of the fifty states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia. The Ancient Order of

Hibernians or AOH is America's oldest Irish Catholic Fraternal, who also has a section dedicated to recipients who were born outside the United States. Each state has an Obelisk and each Medal of Honor recipient is identified by a stainless-steel marker with the names and organization of the recipient and the date and location of the act of valor. Each marker is mounted near a living tree where possible.

The Medal of Honor Grove also contain the general Henry Knox building which contains the citation and personal history of each recipient and various displays of medals and artifacts. The George Washington At Prayer statue and the Patriots Path shows various medals for service and heroism for each of the Armed Services.

There were many Florida recipients of the MOH including Staff Sgt. Melvin Morris who resides in Florida today. As a 17th year old soldier in 1969 assigned to a Special Forces strike force in the vicinity of Chi Lang when his company engaged a hostile force. Along with two of his men, Morris split off from his unit to recover the body of his commander as the enemy concentrated its fire on the three-man team wounding both men. After Morris assisted them to

safety, he charged into the enemy fire with his men's suppressive fire as cover. While the enemy machine guns fire were directed towards him, Morris destroyed the positions with his hand grenades and continued his assault, ultimately eliminating four bunkers and retrieving his commander's body. He was wounded three times during the engagement. SSG Melvin Morris received the Medal of Honor on March 18th, 2014.

Most recently, Sergeant First Class Paul R. Smith-Operation Iraqi Freedom, who grew up in Tampa and Staff Sergeant Robert J. Miller- Operation Enduring Freedom, who joined the Army in Oviedo were posthumously awarded the Nation's highest award.

All three soldiers are identified on the State of Florida Obelisk.

As President of the South Florida Freedoms Foundation Chapter, it was my honor to present a check on behalf of the American Legion, Department of Florida this pass March to the Friends of the Medal of Honor Grove in Valley Forge for the continual maintenance of our Florida monument.

*Moving Forward to make 103%***Jim Ramos, Northern Membership**[teamramos@legionmail.org](mailto:teamramos@legionmail.org)**2020-2021  
Membership Plan**

Thank you, thank you, and thank you all for helping with membership we did a particularly good job last year, but now we are at the start of a new membership year. So Please keep pushing!

To ALL the Districts in the Northern part of Florida which are the District's 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 17, thank you District

Commanders. Thank you for your continuous support throughout 2019-2020 year. I hope we can continue working together this year to make an even better membership team. Again, many thanks!

Now we need to start all over again with membership 2020-2021 (you will see it as 2019-2021), because we are the Department Membership Team and each member is a Recruiter and able to help with retention to make our goals as Posts and Districts. We must start with a plan to move forward and get every goal on time. Below is some ideas to start with, but remember Training isn't everything. A good membership timetable can work with every Post.

**Membership Committee at Post (need training)**

1. Post Commander get the Adjutant and 1st vice CMDR and 1 or 2 move people to make up the Post membership team
2. A general plan for the entire year
3. With Legionnaires who are go-getters
4. With goals of getting renewal, reinstatements, and new members

**Post membership campaign to reach your Goals:**

1. A) How are your present members contacted to get their dues for next year and who is responsible for doing it? And How are drop-outs to be reinstated!
2. B) How are you going to get usable

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<< Northern Membership - Continued from Page 6

information on prospective members; how are they to be contacted; by whom; and how are those selected to be taken into your post?

- 3. C) What publicity will be needed?
- 4. D) What special events will be tied in with membership, such as veterans Day, team competition, contest with other Posts, Legion Birthday observance, etc.?

**Key Points to get membership Back:**

- 1. Reinstatements Team
- 2. Renewal team
- 3. Prospect team

4. New Membership team

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

- 1. Early what do you get? Dinner, gift, discount, or some king raffle drawing
- 2. September free dinner if you have new membership card (send them in before Sept 3, 2020)
- 3. October, please send them in before Oct 8, 2020
- 4. November Veterans Day turn out and come with a new member (send them in before Nov 6, 2020)
- 5. Christmas party (who will contact

- prospective new member?)
- 6. December 31, 100% for the Post or work for March 31, 100%
- 7. New year renew by Dec 31 (How about the dropouts from previous years?), as the new year's Party

If you have any question Please contact me at Phone number 352-226-4370 or email at [jramos149@bellsouth.net](mailto:jramos149@bellsouth.net) I'm here to help you and your Post be the best in the state.

*Southern Membership Memo*

**Ray Perez, Southern Membership**  
[teamperez@legionmail.org](mailto:teamperez@legionmail.org)



I want to thank the entire Southern Membership Area for their dedication and hard work this past year. I have already established a strategy and priorities for this next year. I expect it to be the toughest in Florida's history, but we have been in tough situations before.

On to my favorite subject, Post 400 Members. Department was aggressive and sent close to 6,000 invitations to Post 400 members throughout the Department earlier this year. Your Posts should have

received those requests for transfers already. By the time you read this, if you haven't reached out to these members by now, it is probably too late. Working the Post 400 members for my own Post I can tell you as soon as they get their renewal notice from National, they renew but don't let that stop you. It takes emailing them, writing them by snail mail and calling them. I also reached many by text. Do not wait until the end of the year to work these members. Districts 11th, 12th and 15th have been highly successful. Give them a call to see how they did it.

On the subject of training, District meetings may not be the right place to conduct these training sessions. Many attendees are ready to leave after a lengthy meeting. In a COVID-19 environment we're in, think out the box. Use Zoom or one on

one classes in smaller groups. Also think about training the trainer concept. Take a person that really excels at computer applications and make them the subject matter expert for the District.

You should have the new Commander's Membership and Awards Manual by now. Look at the timetable PDC Ramos developed and try to stick to it. It is a proven success. I look forward to seeing everyone again at as many meetings as I can schedule. If you look at the Department Membership Facebook page there are already many Districts that have meetings on the same day. I will be placing an emphasis on the certain Districts first.

Good luck to all of you and I'm looking forward to another great year.

*A Successful Virtual Ride & Future Events*

**Jim Wineland, American Legion Riders**  
[legionriders@legionmail.org](mailto:legionriders@legionmail.org)



What frustrating times, no regulatory consistency from county to county. Hang in there, we will all get through it together as a family. I hope everyone is doing fine getting through the pandemic. I know it has not

been easy on some of are older folks, I wish the best for you and your families.

Wow, who would of ever thought the results of the "Virtual Ride" would exceed our Unity Ride goals by \$10,000 for total of +60k. Beverly and I can't thank Jennifer Cooper, Fundraising Director for PVR/ SPI, enough for all of her hard work, and dedication on this project, she was the one that made this all work.

Another individual that is trying his

hardest is Sonny Decker. The 1st District won the Round Robin trophy last year and he is trying like heck to get the Trophy to its new home in District 15. Between Sonny and Wayne Wooten, they had it all planned out to move it the week of the 13th of July to Post 138 in Tampa to make the exchange. They were going to escort the trophy through several districts to Tampa and have a Trophy Exchange Celebration at Post. We have now had to postpone

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<< *American Legion Riders - Continued from Page 7*

the trophy transfer because of the growing numbers being affected by the pandemic. There's always next month.

Many of you will be receiving incentive prizes to acknowledge your efforts during the program. We are going to forward the incentive prizes to your District Chair for distribution. We are still working on the patch; we will have that ready at Fall Conference.

Many have asked me where the money has been distributed. Our Coalition presently has (6) six organizations that we have been working with: 22 Zero, Veterans Counseling Veterans, SOF Missions, K9 Line, Beach Warrior Retreat, Research and Recognition Program.

All the above organizations provide

different types of support for our veterans. All of which is especially important to the over-all success of the program.

**Again, Thank You for all your Efforts!**

We already have our schedule put together for next year. More info coming. Here is our tentative schedule for next year for your review and comments

- October – all month, Merry Go Round – For Children & Youth
- November 5-8, Fall Conference
- Summit - February 3, Wednesday - Meet & Greet 6P – 8P
- Summit - February 4, 5, & 6 – Classroom, we may add AM Sunday for Road Captain Training
- April – all month, Round Robin, PVR/SPI
- April 18th Meet & Greet at Marathon & Pensacola Fl.

- April 19th through 23rd North & South In-State Unity Rides
- April 24th In-State-Rally, Harley South Kissimmee Fl.
- June 16th – 19th, Department Convention

Need your help, do we want to move the Summit? Let us know.

Bev and I have been kicking around some ideas on how to take the riders to the next level, but to do that we are going to have to have designated committees. Please share your ideas and let us know.

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

*Flying Flags to Get Down to Brass*

**Kurt Gies, Americanism**

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



**Americanism:**

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

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

After a period of flying proudly and working so hard to represent the USA, our flags will become tired, tattered, and torn. It then comes time for the flag to be retired. The US flag code dictates that the flag must be destroyed by burial or by burning in a dignified manner. Does your American Legion Post retire flags? Many posts offer this type of service to your community. Do you collect them from the

community and/or have others retire them for you? Or do you retire them yourselves? Do they need to stop by when your there or can they drop them in a mailbox outside your post? If so, great! If not, please consider doing this today. Whatever you are doing, I ask that maybe you take two extra steps.

The first step is an additional service to the community, but also can turn in to a money-maker for your Post. Here is how! Ask yourself the question, **"if someone is willing to go to the effort of driving to your Post to drop off a retired US flag, then wouldn't they be more than willing to buy a new US flag from you if you could offer it to them easily?"** Through Emblem Sales, we have American flags that are very high-quality, made in the USA and where all the proceeds go directly towards supporting veterans who have served. Even though the cost of a flag from Emblem Sales maybe slightly higher than what you can get in the local discount store, those cheap, foreign made flags don't last very long and the proceeds do not go towards our veterans. Plus, a little-known fact is that Emblem Sales will give

your Post a credit in the amount of 10% for all sales made each year. Use those funds to buy more flags. Then apply the proceeds from those sales towards American Legion programs.

For example, if in 2019 you sold \$4500 worth of flags, your post would get a \$450 credit at the end of the year. This is the same amount it cost to send one Delegate to Boys State each summer. So why not attach an order form to the collection box so that those who are dropping off can place an order for a new one? Then 1-2 times a month you can hand-deliver the new US flag to whomever bought it. This way you can personally thank them for supporting the American Legion and possibly recruit a new member.

The second step happens when you retire a flag by burning. You see, once the fire is out, all that is left behind are the



*Continued on page 9 >>*





<< *Americanism - Continued from Page 8*  
**ashes and the brass grommets** that once held the flag to the pole. Typically, these are swept up and thrown away. But here in the Dept of Florida, we are starting a campaign to collect all the burned/retired

flag grommets. The idea is to gather as many of these as we can each year, so that they can be ultimately be melted down into something of value. Imagine a beautiful brass piece of art made of retired US flags that can be awarded each year

as a traveling trophy to the Post with the Best Americanism program or maybe a beautiful brass monument to be displayed at our Dept HQ made out of the melted grommets. Please start collecting those grommets from your fire pits today!

**AMERICANISM AWARD WINNERS**

We would like to formally recognize and properly congratulate our 2019-20 Americanism Award winner and nominees.

**Best Overall Americanism programs:**

- Winner: Post 117 Palm Bay
- Runner up: Post 24 Bradenton
- Nominee: Post 273 Madeira Beach
- Nominee: Post 318 Port St Lucie
- Nominee: Post 63 Winter Garden (not eligible; Americanism Chair is from Post 63)

**Best School Medals Program:**

- Winner: Post 137 Jacksonville
- Runner-up: Post 273 Madeira Beach

**Best Four Chaplains Program:**

- Winner: Post 255 Deltona
- Runner-up: Post 63 Winter Garden

**Outstanding Scouting Program:**

- Winner: Post 273 Madeira Beach
- Winner: Post 138 Port Tampa City
- Winner: Post 79 New Port Richey

**Dept Youth Champions:**

- Boys State Governor: Andrew Taramykin, Post 286 Pine Castle
- Oratorical Winner: Conrad Hellwege, Post 27 Ocala
- Shooting Sports Best Precision & Sporter Team: Sarasota Military Academy
- Eagle Scout of the Year: Joshua Katz
- ROTC Cadet of the Year: Lauren Conner, Post 24 Bradenton

**Best Shooting Sports Program:**

- Winner: Post 273 Madeira Beach

**Best ROTC Program:**

- Winner: Post 24 Bradenton
- Runner-up: Post 250 Middleburg

Finally, on July 15th, the Florida Department formally was nominated to be considered for the 2019-2020 **National Daniel J O'Connor Americanism** Trophy. This award will be presented to the Department attaining the greatest number of percentage points which are derived from the activities reported on the annual Consolidated Post Report form and the best narrative statement supporting the claim of points shown. This year our Florida posts donated just under \$1 million and spent 1000's of man hours for our various Americanism programs and it is the first time in many years we have been nominated.

*OneBlood Blood Donations*

**Ray Perez, Blood Donor**  
[teamperez@legionmail.org](mailto:teamperez@legionmail.org)



OneBlood is testing all blood donations for the COVID-19 antibody. The antibody test is authorized by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA)

and will indicate if the donor's immune system has produced antibodies to the virus, regardless of whether they ever showed symptoms. Appointments to donate are required. Masks are required to be worn by all blood donors. You may wear your own or we will provide one for you if needed.

Please DO NOT present to donate if you have a fever or experiencing flu like symptoms. You MUST be symptom free for

14 days prior to donating.

Continue with your Blood Drives in the parking lots of your Posts!! The Red Bus Team just needs to access your post for the restrooms. The Blood Donor Chairmen booklets should be out soon. If you need assistance please contact me anytime at [blooddonor@legionmail.org](mailto:blooddonor@legionmail.org)

**Stay safe, Wear a Mask & Keep Your Distance**

Find us on: **facebook**

**facebook.com/floridalegion**



*Children & Youth is a Year-round Program***Les Martin, Children & Youth**

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



I hope everyone is having a wonderful and healthy summer. I will be starting my District meeting visits in September. It will be nice to see all the fabulous legionnaires again, doing what they do best, HELPING VETERANS.

We again, need your help this year with our Children & Youth Programs. We need your help this year more than ever. Our only two fundraisers were both cancelled due to the COVID-19 virus last year. We currently have the picnic scheduled for April 3rd at Post 1 in Titusville. Mark your calendars and hopefully there will be no other major event scheduled for that date.

Please remember why we have our Children & Youth Committee. We are here to help the kids of Florida through our Temporary Financial Assistance program, helping to keep our kids safe through our awareness programs of warning sign for youth suicides, Gateway to Drugs and Halloween safety programs. We encourage all Posts in Florida to take part in these programs throughout the year, not just during Children & Youth month in April. I'm sure most of you have seen the Department's "Operation – Six feet Apart" with the awards for the various Department programs and activities. Please don't wait until April and May to think about your programs to decide if you want to submit a candidate or Post program for an award. Start now. Think of your programs and what you want to accomplish this year. Make your programs meaningful. Make them worthy of an award. Our Children & Youth Committee

has awards for Teacher of the Year, Best Post Children & Youth Program, and Post Children & Youth Chairman of the Year. I would like to congratulate Timothy Smith from Miami who teaches at the Center for International Education, for winning the Teacher of the Year Award for 2019-2020. Also, congratulations to Lakeshore Post 137 in Jacksonville for winning the award for Best Post Children & Youth Program. Unfortunately, no Post submitted a Post Children & Youth Chairman of the Year candidate. I am sure there were many Chairman who did great jobs in their Post, but you need to take the time to nominate them.

*Are You Prepared?***Bill Hopner, Disaster Preparedness**  
[disasterprep@legionmail.org](mailto:disasterprep@legionmail.org)

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Department Commander Rick Johnson for appointing me to serve the Department of Florida as the Disaster Preparedness Chairman for 2020-2021. As we enter hurricane season June 1 to November 30 we must prepare for the possibility of storms. The 2020 National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) predicts 13 to 19 name storms (winds of 39 mph or higher) of which 6 to 10 could become hurricanes (winds of 74 mph or higher), including 3 to 6 major hurricanes (category 3, 4 or 5 with winds of 111 mph or higher). Since the beginning of hurricane season June 1st we have had 6 six named storms. It is important that we are all PREPARED if and when a storm hits. When each post sends in their chairman report it's important that each post has a chairman for disaster prep. This will make it easier to communicate with each post and help with their needs. In the past I have asked all zone, area, and district commanders to

send me a list of posts that can be used as shelters and distribution points for supplies.

Since the pandemic, this time has given us the opportunity to do a checklist around our homes. This could include checking hurricane shutters, generators, and insurance policies. Also, most of us have cell phones, take videos of your property inside and out for insurance purposes. Have a portable file box for your important papers that cannot be replaced if you must evacuate. Besides local news updates there are websites to help in preparation. [Fema.gov](http://Fema.gov) and [floridadisaster.org](http://floridadisaster.org) also there are two sites I found for kids that have games and explains what hurricanes are. [Weatherforkids.org/](http://Weatherforkids.org/) and [weatherwizkid.com](http://weatherwizkid.com).

With the pandemic upon us there will probably be certain procedures to follow to ensure everybody's safety. I will do my best to inform and keep everyone abreast of changes. I am also available to give classes to areas, districts and post if requested. You may email me at [gonepost1@aol.com](mailto:gonepost1@aol.com) or telephone 305-968-7979

*Applying for Jobs - Tips***Dusty Douglas, Employment**  
[employment@legionmail.org](mailto:employment@legionmail.org)

The job market has drastically changed the last four months going from having more job openings than potential employees to over 13% unemployment caused by the massive layoffs during the Covid-19 lockdowns.

Unemployed veterans now must struggle with the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) website in order to verify their unemployment and search other websites to find and apply for jobs. I have listed a few of the websites below.

- <https://www.indeed.com/l-Florida-jobs.html>
- <https://www.monster.com/jobs/l-florida>
- <https://www.careerbuilder.com/jobs-in-fl>
- <https://jobs.myflorida.com/joblist.html>

*Continued on page 11 >>*

<< Employment - Continued from Page 10

When applying for jobs on these websites the veteran uploads their resume and then waits hoping they will get a phone interview. According to an article on [www.zipjob.com](http://www.zipjob.com) "Why Is It so Hard to Find a Job in 2020? (+ What You Should Do)" Written by Caitlin Proctor Career Expert, ZipJob <https://www.zipjob.com/blog/why-is-it-so-hard-to-find-a-job/> each job

posting will receive 250 resumes. 75% of these applications will be rejected by computer Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS). Only 4-6 people will receive a phone interview.

It is very important to have a resume that will get past the ATS to be reviewed by the employer. The [www.ZipJob.com](http://www.ZipJob.com) website has a free resume check that will help the veteran create a better resume. Make sure the veteran is applying for a

job that matches their skills. Employers want employees that are able to instantly benefit the company.

Remind veterans that some of the best jobs are found by networking. Talk to friends, family and former work associates to see if they know of any opportunities. I recommend everyone looking for a job go to the [www.Zipjob.com](http://www.Zipjob.com) website to review all of the different free tools that are available.



*This Badge*

**Daryl Bass, Law & Order**  
[laworder@legionmail.org](mailto:laworder@legionmail.org)

Considering what we have all witnessed going on in our great Country of late regarding Police misconduct I felt it worthy to Post this article that I came across. Hopefully, we can someday move forward in a much less violent attitude toward our Police Officers.

- Let me tell you about the badge and the thousands of good men and women it represents.
- This badge ran toward certain death as the towers collapsed on 9-11.
- This badge ran into the line of fire to save the people in the Pulse Night Club.
- This badge sheltered thousands as bullets rained down from the Mandalay Hotel in Las Vegas.
- This badge protected a BLM rally that left five officers dead in Dallas.

- This badge ran into the Sandy Hook School to stop a school shooter.
- This badge killed the Oregon District mass shooter in seconds.
- This badge has done CPR on your drowned child.
- This badge has fist fought the wife beater who left his spouse in a coma.
- This badge has run into burning buildings to save the occupants.
- This badge has been shot for simply existing.
- This badge has waded through flood waters to rescue the elderly trapped on the roof.
- This badge has intentionally crashed into the wrong way driver to protect innocent motorist.
- This badge has helped to find the lost child so their mother would stop crying hysterically.
- This badge has helped the injured dog off the road and rushed it to the vet.
- This badge has escorted the elderly woman across the street because she couldn't see well and was afraid to cross.
- This badge has bought food for hungry kids because they had been abandoned.
- This badge has been soaked in blood and tears.
- This badge has been covered by a mourning band to honor those who have sacrificed everything in service.
- You may hate me because I wear it. But, I wear it with pride. Despite your hate and your anger, I will await the next call for help. And, I will come running without hesitation. Just like the thousands of men and women across this great nation.
- This Badge.
- Author-unknown

In the coming days, weeks, and months I see a serious need for us as American Legionnaires to support our men and women behind the badge. Police, Fire, Paramedics, and hospital personnel of our community require our support and praise. Let's all do what's right this coming year and each of our American Legion Post and Post family come together and recognize the extraordinary and dedicated people behind the badge.

**Attending Fall Conference?**  
**sign up** for TEXT ALERTS  TEXT **FLCONF** to **6622004303**



*Oratorical Program Information*

**Meri West, Oratorical**  
[oratorical@legionmail.org](mailto:oratorical@legionmail.org)

Here are the important contest dates for 2020-2021 for the Oratorical Contest:

- Post Contests completed by:  
Jan. 17th, 2021
- District Contests completed by:  
Feb. 7th, 2021
- Area Contests completed by:  
Feb. 21st, 2021
- Department Contest:  
Mar. 13th, 2021
- National Contest:  
Apr. 9-11, 2021

These are some crazy times, my friend. There is the obvious Corona Virus, economic recession, loss of jobs, extreme political division, civil unrest, record sexual harassment cases, heat waves, murder hornets, wild fires all over the world and we are moving into a busy hurricane season. It's like a collective, worldwide existential crisis.

What anchors many of us during these trying times is a tradition. We may pray and meditate with more mindfulness during turbulent times. Some folks exercise. Some step up their efforts to help those less fortunate. I get satisfaction from cleaning. Some of us drink more than normal - if you can believe that. Our homes, usually a place of solace and refuge have now become detention centers while we wait out the pandemic. For all the good in the world that the American Legion does, it is not immune from these troubles.

Military members and veterans may suffer more in turbulent times because we often crave ritual, steadfastness and structure. Now more than ever, finding or creating a tradition that supports your mind, body and spirit is essential. And it is never too late to check on your fellow Legionnaires, SAL members, Riders and Auxiliary members.

One place many people look to for guidance is our Constitution. It can be an unwavering anchor.

Attorney William A. Kitchen, past Department Commander of Missouri is the founder of the Oratorical program and encouraged the American Legion to adopt it as a national program in 1938. Its purpose is to instill a deeper knowledge and appreciation of the US Constitution in high school students and to give them a forum to hone their public speaking skills.

This program supports two of the four American Legion pillars.....Americanism and Children and Youth. It is no secret that it is my most favorite American Legion program.

This year, according to the 2020-2021 National Oratorical manual, the prizes have been bumped up considerably for winning students. This is the first increase in awards since the inception of the contest.

First place was \$18,000 and is now \$25,000.  
 Second place was \$16,000 and is now \$22,500.



Third place was \$14,000 and is now \$20,000.

National finalists used to get \$1,500.00 but it's now \$2,000 and another \$2,000 if they make the Semi-finals.

This year with many students going all virtual because of Covid-19, Oratorical Chairmen may have to do things differently but I will help you adapt and learn to use social media and technology to help you reach your students, teachers and parents.

My email is [meriwest454@gmail.com](mailto:meriwest454@gmail.com). My cell is 904-704-0936. I prefer texting over phone calls because I own a house cleaning business and we usually have our hands busy cleaning. If you call, please leave a detailed message and your contact number and I will get back to you within a day. Many thanks in advance for all you do for the community and the American Legion.



**LOTS OF NEW ITEMS**

All proceeds support  
 The American Legion, Department of Florida.

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



### General Scholarship End of Year Report

**Shirley Douglas, Scholarship**  
[scholarship@legionmail.org](mailto:scholarship@legionmail.org)

It was my honor to service as the Florida Department General Scholarship Chairman this year. The Department received 60 General Scholarship applications this year. The applications were reviewed and ranked by the committee members.

The 1st place winner of \$2,500 was Alexander Dyer. He was eligible for the scholarship due to his father Anthony Dyer is a Navy Veteran. Alexander attended Newsome High School located in Lithia, Florida and graduated with a 4.0 unweighted GPA. Some of Alexander's achievements are:

- S. Presidential Scholar Candidate by U.S. Department of Education for 2020.
- American Legion Florida Eagle Scout of the year 2nd place for 2019.

- American Legion Boys State Delegate for 2019.
- President and founding Officer of his High School Robotics Club.

Alexander has received admission into the Harvard Class of 2024. He plans to major in chemistry with a minor in economics.

The 2nd place winner of \$1,500 was Rebecca Mangum. She was eligible for the scholarship due to her grandfather Dwight Shuman is an Air Force Veteran. Rebecca attended Terry Parker High School located in Jacksonville, Florida and graduated with a 3.90 unweighted GPA. Some of Rebecca's achievements are:

- Platoon Commander for her school's Navy Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps.
- National Honor Society President.
- Haiti Mission trip to orphanage in Canaan, Haiti where she provided

Christmas gifts to the children.

Rebecca plans to major in Biological Medical/Biological Chemical/Pre-Med her goal is to become a Doctor and help people in disadvantage communities.

A total of 7 scholarship's were given out. The 3rd place scholarship of \$1,000 was given to Kimberly Slinkosky from Cooper City High School Cooper City, FL, Four \$500 scholarships were given to the 4th -7th winners: Samantha Griffin from Eau Gallie High School Melbourne, FL., Mark Motsch II from Santa Fe Catholic High School Lakeland, FL, Zachary Ross from Hagerty High School Oviedo, FL, Alayna Dean from Apopka High School Apopka, Florida.

This concludes my end of year report that I normally give during the Department's Summer Convention

### Scouting Update

**Chris Ragusa, Scouting**  
[scouting@legionmail.org](mailto:scouting@legionmail.org)

This is my first communication as the Department of Florida Scouting Chair, and I would be remiss if I didn't sincerely thank the immediate past Scouting Chair, Chuck Weber, and his predecessor, Rick Hewett, for their service in this capacity. I will endeavor to keep an even keel and our sails trimmed (you can guess in which branch I served) in the Department Scouting Program. To do this, I need to know the challenges that our District Scouting Chairs are facing, and any perceived ambiguities in guidance from BSA National and the Florida councils as we navigate the uncharted territory that the COVID-19 pandemic has created.

Communication will be key here, as the Cub Scout packs, Scouts BSA troops, Venturing crews, and Sea Scout boats (referred to as units) chartered by the American Legion will need our help in sorting out the myriad of speculation and

conjecture surrounding our ability to conduct traditional operations. Stay informed as to the local, county and state guidance as it relates to social distancing, gathering sizes, and the use of personal protection equipment during activities. BSA National and your local councils will align with those, and if you have been following the news, you know that this can differ significantly on a regional basis.

There have been recent changes to the Unit Online Registration process, and an emphasis on using the tools on My.Scouting.org to manage both Scout and Scouter (adult) registration through on-line applications. You can find out more about Unit Online Registration, as well as access a Checklist to help in setting this up, at the following link: <https://www.scouting.org/resources/online-registration/>

On that subject, the Chartered Organization Representative (COR) can now delegate or share their authority to a



Chartered Organization Designee (COD) to help in reviewing and approving/rejecting adult leader applications. This decision should be a very deliberate one, as the COR serves as both Human Resource Manager and Quality Control Manager of the unit, and bears ultimate responsibility for the quality of the program and the unit leadership. Your Post Commanders (the Institutional Head in Scouting terms) should make a very

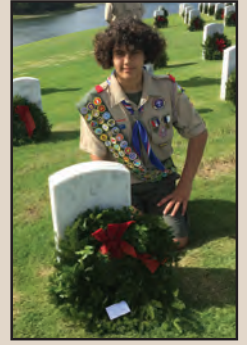
*Continued on page 14 >>*

<< Scouting - Continued from Page 13

informed decision about this critical COR position, as he or she serves not only as one of the Unit Key 3 (along with the Unit Leader and Unit Committee Chair), they represent the Post at Scouting District Committee meetings, and have voting privileges at the Scouting Council Annual Meeting. Information about this role can be found here: [https://filestore.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/511-421\(16\)\\_WEB.pdf](https://filestore.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/511-421(16)_WEB.pdf)

My apologies if this is redundant information for any of you long-tenured Scouters. I look forward to communicating good news about the resumption of Scouting as we knew it in September. I stand ready to help any District Scouting Chair who desires it when it comes to explaining the abundant community benefit to chartering a Scouting unit for

those posts that are considering it, and what that commitment to our youth entails at the Post level. Yours in Scouting...Chris Ragusa



VA&R News

Alan Cohen, VA&R  
var@legionmail.org



Since we continue under the restrictions imposed on all of us due to COVID-19, I will try to supply you with some additional and related information.

As always, American Legion Post Service

Officers continue to be an invaluable resource in the community. They use all the means at their disposal to guide veterans and their families through the claims process and act as Project: VetRelief contacts. Today's economic environment has also placed them in the position to direct those veterans who need additional help to the proper sources. While we're tentatively planning for our usual Fall Conference Post Service Officer class we're at the same time working on what'd be called Plan "B". More to follow as necessary.

Now regarding a benefit that's rarely promoted: Veteran Directed Care. While this is primarily geared to "more matured" veterans it's available to all those who require nursing-home level care. The veteran must be enrolled in the VA Healthcare system and require assistance with 2 or more usual activities of daily life such as bathing, dressing, meal preparation etc. Working through his or her VA Social Worker the veteran is given a budget through which they can hire caregivers to assist with those activities, therefore enabling the veteran to continue living independently. Again, this can

be made available to veterans in need regardless of age. Questions? Contact me.

While our VAVS volunteers haven't been able to serve in person since mid/late March they've still assisted the hospitals and CBOC's whenever possible. They and I have remained in communication with hospital personnel to keep updated on procedures. Suffice it to say that there have been many changes in the delivery of healthcare. For example, many routine visits have been handled remotely using the internet. In most cases, if a veteran requires in-person attention an appointment can be arranged and where warranted, community care is arranged. To a great extent, surgeries considered to be elective have been postponed but many are still being performed. Veterans who feel they're experiencing COVID symptoms can call and be expeditiously seen for testing by appointment at the hospitals and/or CBOC's. A screening process has been instituted for those entering VA medical facilities as an additional layer of protection for all.

Lastly for this issue, Florida is home to approximately 160,000 proud women veterans and their voices are being heard by the VA. In June the VA held it's first virtual Women Veterans Forum. Discussed were the many increases in the range of services made to benefit women veterans, making VA healthcare more accessible and comfortable. This has become an ongoing high-priority project for the VA and will continue to be so.

In closing, let me add my voice to those who send wishes for all to stay safe and healthy.



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Monday - Friday 8AM - 7PM (EST)



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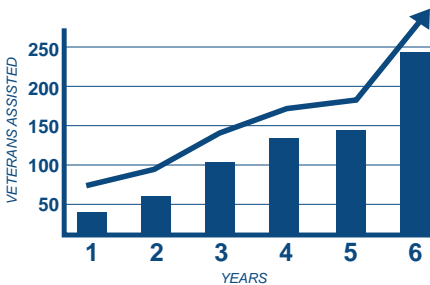


# PROJECT: VETRELIEF BULLETIN

AN OFFICIAL PROGRAM OF THE AMERICAN LEGION, DEPARTMENT OF FLORIDA

## COVID-19 CAUSED A SPIKE IN SUPPORT CASES

Since the end of March, PROJECT: VetRelief has seen a tremendous increase of financial assistance cases for veterans and their families due to the coronavirus pandemic. Businesses were forced to shut their doors resulting in many people losing their jobs, both permanently and temporarily.



As we officially closed the books on our 6th year, we are proud to report that PROJECT: VetRelief provided 241 veterans and their families support and gave out \$216,882.26! **That is a 40% increase from last year's figures.** Of the total support cases awarded, 117 of those cases were related to the

coronavirus; *which is almost half.*

It is very apparent that our veteran community needs us to get them through these difficult times! However, our funding is quickly going away and many of our fundraising events have been cancelled in order to remain compliant to safety orders from local and state governments.

**Our program will not be able to keep up with the necessary demand of providing support if we do not secure future funding!**

Now, more than ever, we are relying on the entire Legion Family to do what they can to support our program. Whether you are able to hold a socially-distanced fundraiser or make a personal donation, ***it will take us all working together to provide the help our veterans need!***

Donate now:  
[www.projectvetrelief.org/donate](http://www.projectvetrelief.org/donate)

## GOLF TOURNAMENT IS STILL ON

On Monday, September 21st at approximately 8:30AM, the shotgun for the 7th Annual Golf Tournament hosted by RL James, Inc. will still go off despite the coronavirus pandemic. The tournament is PROJECT: VetRelief's largest fundraising event and would be a huge financial strain if it were cancelled!

Golfers will enjoy a premier experience at the Bella Collina Golf Course, located in Monteverde, FL and should expect a day filled with fun and many chances to win some cool prizes while staying safe.

During the awards banquet and luncheon, there will be a silent auction and a tasty buffet equipped with delicious BBQ.

There are opportunities to join in on this exciting event. If you are interested, please contact Jennifer Cooper at 407-295-2631 to reserve your spot or foursome today! There are also a few volunteer positions available, if you'd like to come and help out. Hope to see you there!

## CHAPTER 152 RAISES OVER \$10,000 FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION *By Bob & Bonnie Lehmiller*

As the COVID-19 pandemic caused businesses to close, many Americans out of work, donations to dry up, and fundraising events were cancelled or altered, Florida American Legion Riders Chapter 152 was adamant they would still make an impact during the Virtual Unity Ride. They were initially faced with several questions: How do they spread the word for the cause? How do they raise funds? And how do they find more donations?

Chapter members began conversations and focused on thinking outside the box. The first \$1,200 quickly originated from an idea created on a Friday night from Bob & Bonnie Lehmiller's hot tub. They

challenged members to match their initial donation of \$100. From there, they decided to set the team's fundraising goal to \$5,000.



The Chapter quickly organized drive-thru dinners in the American Legion parking lot, donated when riding the 22-miles, challenged each other with matching

funds, and had 50/50 drawings. They were so successful that they expanded their drive-thru dinners and challenged other Chapters within the District to raise \$500 for them to match.

A surprise donation of \$2,600 spurred them on to increasing their goal to \$10,000. They worked every angle they could to reach their new goal and every member pitched in to help. They are so thankful and proud of their donors and members for **making Chapter 152 the top fundraising group and putting District 15 on top along the way!** Best of all, they managed to do this all in their first year of being American Legion Riders Chapter!



**SUPPORT CASES**  
\*Numbers reflect PVR Cases ONLY

JULY 2019 - JUNE 2020

**241** families helped

**\$216,882.26** amount distributed