



# THE LEGION LINK



*Full Speed Ahead for Veterans*

www.floridalegion.org | 407-295-2631 | [mail@floridalegion.org](mailto:mail@floridalegion.org)

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**JAY CONTI, SR.**  
**Department Commander**  
**[commander@floridalegion.org](mailto:commander@floridalegion.org)**  
**(407) 247-5232**



First off let me start the last LINK of the 2014 year by wishing all of you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! After the Fall Conference I attended many Veterans Day events; I was a

guest speaker at the Bonita Springs Veterans Day Ceremony where Retired Army CWO Mike Durant was the main speaker. If you remember the movie "**BLACKHAWK DOWN**" the Pilot who was captured and was a POW for almost 2 weeks before he was released.

I hope that everyone enjoyed the Fall Conference as it was truly a **TRAINING** Conference! There was a lot of positive feedback from all of these training classes with many said that they want more!!! So we will be working on the Department Convention schedule to hold Training with the 2015-2016 Plan included in it as it should be!

We held Graduation for the 1st Department of Florida Legion College since the 1990's on stage with ALL the Students received their graduation certificate and a Department of Florida Legion College Graduate Shirt. Congratulations again to all that attended and looking forward to seeing more attend the Department Legion College in the future. Congratulations also goes out to 5th District Commander Tom Gora for Graduation National Legion College.

I would like to thank all the Posts and individuals who donated to my **Breast Cancer Awareness Fundraiser** so far and at the Convention, We are approaching the \$20,000 mark in donations and I thank each and every one of you for your help.

I will have the pleasure of prepping, cooking and serving Thanksgiving Dinner at Post 252 where over 250 Veterans from Bay Pines VA



## Ball/Homecoming Schedule

Southwestern Area Ball  
January 24, 2015  
Post 271

Southern Area Ball  
February 7, 2015  
Location TBD

Eastern Area Ball  
February 21, 2015  
Post 1

Central Area Ball  
February 28, 2015  
Location TBD

Northern Area Ball  
March 7, 2015  
Location TBD

Legion Family Homecoming  
April 25, 2015  
Post 103

## Patriotic Coloring Books Now Available!

Department has Patriotic coloring books available for purchase and distribution to the elementary classrooms in your area. An order form is located on page 11 of the Post Administrative Manual. Supplies are limited - get them while they last! The cost is \$20 per 100 books. Send your orders to:

**American Legion, Dept of FL**  
**ATTN: Elizabeth Inherst**  
**P.O. Box 547859**  
**Orlando, FL 32854-7859**

*or by email:*

**Linherst@floridalegion.org**

Hospital for a great Thanksgiving dinner. I attended a few Veterans welcome parties throughout the state during the Veterans Day events where we entertained the Veterans from local nursing homes. December is a packed month with the 5th District visit and Pearl Harbor ceremony on Naval Station, Mayport. Visitation to the 14th District and a visit with the Commanding Officer of Naval Air Station Key West (I earned my Air Warfare wings there in 1989), Battle of the Bulge Ceremony in Boynton Beach, Helping the Hooters Girls serve wings to the Veterans at Broward VA; Hospital, Dressing as Santa Clause at the Gainesville VA Hospital as well as many Children's Christmas events throughout the State and will close out the 2014 year with the Legion Family at Post 274 for their New Year's Party!

Legionnaires let's re-look at your Legion Family plan for the year and don't forget about our 4-Pillars of The American Legion: **Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, National Security, Americanism, and Children & Youth.**

Everyone please have a very safe Christmas and New Years.  
**BRAVO-ZULU"**

### "FOR GOD AND COUNTRY"

Jay Conti Sr.  
Department Commander  
**"FULL SPEED AHEAD FOR VETERANS"**



**JIM RAMOS**  
**Department 1st Vice Commander**  
**1stViceCommander@legionmail.org**  
**(352) 226-4370**

With the holiday season upon us, you may find opportunities to ask a veteran to join us, but be sure you share your appreciation with your current members. Pearl Harbor Day, Friday, December 7<sup>th</sup>, is a great time to visit with and thank our WWII veterans and their families. Christmas day is one more day to do something special for your members and their families, Say thank you with a smile.

*Also use Project: Vet Relief to help our Veterans and their families.*

December standard goal is 80% (and the Bravo Zulu is 85%) upon us, the push now is for the January standard goal is 85% (and BZ is 90%). Working membership takes time and effort but by using the 2014-2015 Membership information and

Awards Manual- you'll be able to cut your time in half. Use the many especially designed forms and fliers to advertise your Post and the American Legion Programs. You can get everything you need to increase your membership!

Happy Holidays and a Happy New Year 2015, please continue to do membership (renewal, new members, and retention) is every member's job to keep work. If you need assistance please call 352-226-4370 or email [1stvicecommander@Legionmail.org](mailto:1stvicecommander@Legionmail.org) Have a safe holiday with "Legion Pride".

Jim Ramos  
Department 1st Vice Commander



**JOE MAGEE**  
Department 2nd Vice Commander  
[2ndViceCommander@legionmail.org](mailto:2ndViceCommander@legionmail.org)  
(941) 204-4914

I hope all enjoyed the Fall Conference, and for those of you who attended the training programs, I expect they were both enjoyable and informative. If anyone has any ideas on improving the programs, please let me know.

Shortly after the Fall Conference, Pat and I were off to Bushnell for Veterans Day Service. Wow, what an experience. I would like to thank Department Commander, Jay Conti, for having me represent the Department of Florida. I would recommend any and all Legionnaires, if possible, at some point to attend..so impressive.

During the course of November, I also attended the 13th and the 12th District meetings, mainly to introduce the multiple Florida Legion College Graduates, 3 from the 13th and 4 from the 12th. Even though the complete class was recognized at the General Session during Fall Conference, I felt it important and more personal, to introduce them within their own district. I shall continue that scenario within the remaining districts until all graduates are recognized. I hope all will have had a wonderful Thanksgiving and, if traveling, a safe one. Please remember, as the Department Training Officer, I am here to help in any way I can, just call.

For God and Country  
Joe Magee  
2nd Vice Commander

## AWARDS CORNER

The "BRAVO ZULU" award is the Department Commanders Version of the "Billy Award" and is awarded to a Legion Family member for Outstanding Service of Excellence!



In the United States Navy, it is a common practice for the Commodore or Fleet Admiral to signal ships that have performed exceptionally well with the "BRAVO and ZULU" flags. These two flags displayed together mean "Well Done"!

### BRAVO ZULU AWARDS to Date:

Larry Sheets, Jim Ramos, Steve Newman, Mike Seidel, Ruth Burgess, Mike McDaniel, Richard Izzy, Tom Gora, Post 238 Family, Bill Hamblin, Rene Stachelrodt Jr., John Dollinger, Dusty Douglas, Shirley Douglas, Jim "Radar" Henry, Karen Henry, Sherry Hayes-Luzader, SAL PNC Jim Roberts, Doug Deierlein, Larry Roberts, Sandy White, Eunice Butts, MaryLou Hamblin, Andy Anderson and the entire Department of Florida American Legion College Class of 2014, Larry White, Jimmy Roberts, Kirk Miller, Squadron 72 CDR & JJ Jennings.



**BOB BREWSTER**  
 Department 3rd Vice Commander  
 3rdViceCommander@legionmail.org  
 (904) 635-4492



I hope everyone had a great Thanksgiving with family and friends, and I hope you remembered all of our vets who are serving and those at home coping with personal problems. Our vets deserve the very best. To those of you who attended the Fall Conference several weeks ago, I think you will agree with me that it was one of the best ever, with lots of training to be had by those in attendance. To Area Commanders, District Commanders, Post Commanders, please make sure

that all your Program Chairmen have the material they need to make our programs much more successful this year.

Rapidly coming up is our Oratorical Contests, which must be completed at Post level by January 18, 2015. District Contests must be completed by February 1, 2015. Area Contests must be completed by February 22, 2015. The State Contest will be held in Orlando at Department on March 14, 2015. One of our 4 Pillars is Children & Youth. If your Post is not getting into the local schools to find contestants for your Post contest, you are cheating today's youth out of a golden opportunity to win scholarship money.

You also should be looking for your Boys State attendees. I am sure that all the Boys State Chairmen from Post level and up are working on this. Let's not put off for tomorrow, what should be done today. I know that the Christmas holidays are rapidly approaching, and they will take up a lot of your time, but to be a good Post, we must all work the programs. By getting your members involved in these and all other programs you promote, this will make your retaining membership much easier. Remember, our Posts are not just bars, but veterans helping veterans.

We are at the beginning of the hard part of being successful in membership. Now is the time to communicate with all those members who have not renewed as of this date. Write letters telling them how important their membership is, not only to your Post and Department of Florida, but that it is extremely important for our National Commander and others while they are addressing members of Congress and the President.

If I can be of any help whatsoever with any of your programs, or for that matter, anything else where you might need help, do not hesitate to contact me at 904-272-1619. Like the old western that used to be on TV, "Have Gun Will Travel," I have a car that will travel. Sincerely, I am here to help you.

**For God and Country,**  
**Bob Brewster Department 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice Commander**

**STEVEN NEWMAN**  
 Department Chaplain  
 Chaplain@legionmail.org  
 (954) 865-1026



Greetings my fellow legionnaires. I know everyone is having a very busy and successful year. This time of the year is a good time to give thanks and praise

for our country and the things that we have. Its always a great time to enjoy the christmas season with family, friends, and neighbors etc. It is also that time of year that we should take a couple of moments in our busy lifestyles to give thanks and praise for the things that we have truly been blessed with. I would like to take the opportunity to thank all those who attended my four chaplains and post everlasting class at the fall conference. It was a great success and if anyone needs some information on those two subject areas by all means please let me know. I have some information that i can distribute that can help you which includes additional changes to my chaplain course book. Praying that everyone will have a blessed holiday season especially at christmas and the forth coming new year. Adriana and my thoughts and prayers go out to all of you and your families. So be on the safe side.

Enjoy yourselves and always have fun.

### For "God and Country" and have a blessed month of December.

Steven Newman  
Department Chaplain



**JERRY BRANDT**  
Children & Youth Program Chairman  
CY@Floridalegion.org  
(904) 910-5201

Commanders, there will be a Department of Florida Children & Youth Golf Tournament on April 18th, 2015. This will be hosted by American Legion Post 129, in Jacksonville Beach, FL. All proceeds will go to the Department of Florida Children & Youth Fund. Information flyers will be forward to All District and Area

Commanders once the final information is publish.

### Legionnaires Insurance Trust

Good news! Online enrollment is now available. Any Legion member can go to the LIT website to enroll. To sign up online, go to: <http://www.thelit.com> and follow the the links.

Commanders, we are also looking to keep American Legion Baseball alive and well in the State of Florida. Please stress to your membership, if Commander Conti does not get 18 Volunteers from the state of Florida to help keep American Legion Baseball going, by December 31st, we will not have it for 2015. Please step up and assist, we need to bring it back to the forefront for everyone to see.

At this time you should have a lot going on, besides Christmas parties, you should now be looking at the Oratorical Contest and Boys State candidates. Information for American Legion Baseball and local Little League team should be review. At the first of the new year School Medals, ROTC Certificates need to be order for schools in your area.

#### Important Dates in December

7th - Pearl Harbor Remembrance  
12th - National Children's Memorial Day  
15th - Bill of Rights Day  
16th - 1773 Boston Tea Party  
21st - Humbug Day  
23rd - Boys State Funds at Department  
25th - Christmas Day

#### Important Dates in January

1st - Happy New Year  
19th - Martin Luther King Day

Please let me know if you have any Ideals or suggestions to make this year a great year for our program.

**Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.**

*Yours in Service*

**Jerry Brandt**  
**Department of Florida**  
**Children & Youth Chairman**  
**2014 - 2015**



**DENNIS R. BOLAND**  
**National Executive Committeeman**  
**[NEC@Legionmail.org](mailto:NEC@Legionmail.org)**

**FLAG PROTECTION AMENDMENT**

"The Congress shall have power to prohibit the physical desecration of the flag of the United States."

A proposed amendment to the United States Constitution; which The American Legion fully supports.

President Abraham Lincoln once remarked, "...If the policy of the government on vital questions affecting the whole people is to be irrevocably fixed by decisions of the Supreme Court the people will have ceased to be their own rulers..."

The U.S. Supreme Court's 1989 decision in *Texas v. Johnson* held that the physical desecration of Old Glory was "protected speech." In this case, the Court struck down existing flag desecration laws in 48 states and the District of Columbia.

The American Legion believes the final say should be with the People, as expressed through the Congress and the 50 state legislatures. All 50 state legislatures have passed memorializing resolutions asking Congress to pass this proposed amendment and send it to the states for ratification. The proposed amendment returns the power to protect Old Glory to the People. This is the true essence of the amendment and why it must prevail.

On June 14, 2013, Senator Orrin Hatch (UT) introduced a companion bill, Senate Joint Resolution (S.J.Res.) 17. The resolution was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary at introduction. The Judiciary Committee is chaired by Senator Patrick Leahy (VT), and the chairman of the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Human Rights Subcommittee is Sen. Dick Durbin (IL). Both are outspoken opponents of the flag amendment. As in past years, this will be an uphill fight in the Senate. Nevertheless, we intend to persevere until we prevail.

There are currently 21 cosponsors of the bill.

Past precedent has shown that constitutional amendments can take a long time, but they can be accomplished. The successful effort to change constitutional law, and in particular to overturn a Supreme Court decision, is dependent on a sense of conviction. Thus, we have a great advantage, because the American people love their flag. And that, in the end, is our treasure on which we can, should, and will draw.

**Florida American Legion  
 Specialty License Plate**

Don't forget to purchase your Florida American Legion specialty license plate. We need your support to reach our goal of 1,000 pre-sales by July 1st.



Visit <http://members.floridalegion.org/> and click on the license plate link.

**THE AMERICAN LEGION  
DEPARTMENT OF FLORIDA  
SCHOOL AWARDS**

Remember, ROTC Awards also are part of this program, our goal this year is to have each district increase by 1 post doing this program. It can be accomplished; will take a little work, time and effort.

Most post has at least 1 school in their AOR. This should make it easier. I have done school awards for many years, it is not difficult, and many schools you can leave right after your presentation.

I am here to help you. If you're not sure how to work the program just reach out to me. I can be reached anytime by either email or phone.

ANDREW W. NAGY  
813-782-5032

amerlegp118\_oratorical@yahoo.com

**ROY HAVEKOST  
Social Media Chairman  
904-287-6909**

First, I would like to thank those members who attended the Social Media training at this years' Fall Conference in Orlando. Many good ideas and information were exchanged during the session. I cannot stress enough the importance of having an internet presence for your Posts and Districts, especially on *Facebook*™ .

As of this writing, American Legion **Posts** in the Department of Florida now have a **52.43%** presence on *Facebook*™ . This percentage increases to **53.98%** when the Department of Florida pages are included. Posts that do not yet have a presence on *Facebook*™ are missing the opportunity to recruit the younger generation of veterans. Posts need to show that, the American Legion does exist within the State; need to show, where we exist in the State; need to show the programs that we are involved in that help veterans and children & youth. We need to get all Posts signed up and get this number to 100% ... **"Full Speed Ahead for Veterans"**.

Once your Post, is established on *Facebook*™, send me an invite to your page so you can be properly registered with Department, receive your official registration graphic, and be entered in a Social Media prize drawing. Here are the current **Post & District** percentages on *Facebook*™ :

\*Credit is applied to percentages for entity pages within each Post & District

I have already emailed each District Commander a list of their respective Posts and District entities that do not yet have a presence on *Facebook*™ . Commanders, contact them and light a fire to 'Git Er Done' ! One asset that you already have is that most districts already have a presence on Auxiliary, Sons and Riders *Facebook*™ pages. Request your Legion family members to give you some help in getting started and creating your page on *Facebook*™ .

If you own a cellphone, then you are experienced enough to create a *Facebook*™ page. Let's get these percentage numbers up before the

Standing	District #	District Presence %	Post Presence %
1 <sup>st</sup> Place	5	100.0	136.84*
2 <sup>nd</sup> Place	4	0.0	57.89
3 <sup>rd</sup> Place	1	50.0	56.52*
4 <sup>th</sup> Place	12	50.0	52.17*
5 <sup>th</sup> Place	17	0.0	46.67*
6 <sup>th</sup> Place	8	50.0	43.75*
7 <sup>th</sup> Place	11	0.0	42.86
8 <sup>th</sup> Place	3 / 9	25.0 / 25.0	40.0* / 40.0*
9 <sup>th</sup> Place	6	75.0	35.71*
10 <sup>th</sup> Place	16	25.0	33.33*
11 <sup>th</sup> Place	2	0.0	33.33*
12 <sup>th</sup> Place	13	25.0	31.58*
13 <sup>th</sup> Place	14	25.0	25.0*
14 <sup>th</sup> Place	7	0.0	25.0
15 <sup>th</sup> Place	15	25.0	5.88*

years end. For answers to any questions, my home office number is 904-287-6909. Leave a message, I will get back to you.

Roy Havekost  
Social Media Chairman  
[socialmedia@legionmail.org](mailto:socialmedia@legionmail.org)

**The American Legion, Department of Florida Announces the Official Launch of PROJECT: VetRelief**

The American Legion, Department of Florida made an important announcement on November 8<sup>th</sup> at the 2014 Fall Conference - *PROJECT: VetRelief is off and running!*

Over the span of two very full days, the PROJECT: VetRelief team gave multiple presentations, unveiled a brand new website, released two original video productions, trained the first round of VetRelief Advocates, and distributed a substantial amount of marketing materials.

PROJECT: VetRelief strives to reach Florida's service members and their families through Emergency Assistance, Benefits Support, and Community Engagement. The tremendous enthusiasm demonstrated by members of The American Legion promises to move PROJECT: VetRelief one step closer to accomplishing the vision of a nation where no service member stands alone.

**Western Area Oratorical**

The Western Area Oratorical Contest will be held on 21 February 2015 at the Ft Walton Beach Library, located at 185 Miracle Strip Parkway, SE, Fort Walton Beach, Florida 32548. The phone number is (850) 833-9590.

This event will start promptly at 2:00 PM CST. Contestants need to be in place NLT 1:15 PM. POC is PDC Fletcher Williams Jr, Area Oratorical Chair.



**LARRY SHEETS**  
Department Judge Advocate  
[Judgeadvocate@legionmail.org](mailto:Judgeadvocate@legionmail.org)

On behalf of Assistant Department Judge Advocate Mike Addis and myself, I would like to thank those who attended the Judge Advocate Training at the recent Fall Conference. Mike did a great job in preparing the information, and a big thank you to the Department Staff who put it into the order for presentation.

It seems like every day I receive phone calls and emails from Legionnaires complaining about something that happened in the Post Lounge, Club Room, Social Quarters, etc. The American Legion does not recognize the above mentioned places as being a part of the American Legion. Simply put, problems in these areas are not an American Legion Problem.

I also receive calls and emails asking my opinion of something that someone said, something that happened at a meeting, etc. The proper procedure is to contact your District Commander first. If the District Commander cannot resolve the problem, he will contact the Area Commander. If the Area Commander is still unable to resolve the problem, he will contact the Department Commander for further handling of the problem.



Most problems in a Post can be handled by sitting down and talking them out. You just have to remember that there are two sides to every situation. By following the procedure above, things can be handled more quickly than by calling me first.

I cannot stress enough that Posts should update their Post Constitution and By-Laws every three years. This is because at times the Department as well as National Constitution and By-Laws are amended, and a Post needs to amend their Constitution and By-Laws to be in accordance with Department and National. Once a Post has amended their Constitution and By-Laws, they are to be sent to Rachel at Department Headquarters. She will scan and email them to me, and I will go through them recommending any changes that need to be made, and email Rachel with the findings.

If they are OK as amended, the Post will receive a letter from the Department Commander advising you of that fact, and the date which they were approved.

If they are not approved, the Post will receive a letter advising them of that, and what changes need to be made. Normally I will follow that up with a phone call to the Post Commander to explain the changes, and answer his questions regarding those changes.

Once those changes are made, and approved by the membership of the Post, They need to be mailed back to Rachel who will email them to me. When I am assured that all the needed corrections have been made, I will approve them. The Post will receive a letter from the Department Commander advising them of this and the date they were approved.

We are averaging about a ten (10) day turnaround on Post Constitution and By-Laws being returned either approved, of disapproved, and the changes that need to be made.

*Larry Sheets*

Department Judge Advocate

**JOHN DOLLINGER**  
**Department Blood Donor Chairman**  
**BloodDonor@legionmail.org**  
**(941) 661-8086**

### **Blood Donor Plan**

Did you know the Veteran Administration Hospitals are one of the significant users of blood products in Florida? The American Legion Department of Florida is sponsoring a Statewide Blood Drive January 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> to meet the needs of these Veteran Administration Hospitals, and all Hospitals across Florida. Although we must meet the needs of our veterans, we also have strong commitments to our communities. We plan to meet both these needs.



The American Legion Auxiliary and The Sons of the American Legion are participating making this a real "Family" event. We will be encouraging Legion families to participate. We will also be reaching out to all non- American Legion veterans encouraging them to participate. Over the next 6 weeks Posts/Units/Squadrons will be receiving a great deal of additional information. Please watch for it.

### **Am I able to be a blood donor? Here are the eligibility requirements;**

- If you are 16 years of age or older, you are eligible to donate (if you 16 you need a permission slip signed by a parent or guardian). **There is no upper age limit to blood donation.**
- You must weigh at least 110 pounds to donate

- If you are pregnant or have been pregnant in the last six weeks, you are not eligible to donate.
- If you have had a body piercing in the last 12 months, you are not eligible to donate.
- If you received a tattoo at a licensed and regulated facility in Florida after January 1, 2013, or in another state with licensed and regulated facilities, you are eligible to donate after 4 months. If you received a tattoo in Florida before January 1, 2013, or in an unlicensed facility, you are eligible to donate after 12 months.
- If you have had a blood transfusion in the last 12 months, you are not eligible to donate.
- If you have had cancer in the last 12 months, you are not eligible to donate.
- If you have visited or lived in the United Kingdom for more than three consecutive months between 1980 and 1996, you are not eligible to donate.

If you meet the above criteria, chances are that you are eligible to donate blood. However, there are other reasons why you may not be able to, including certain medicines you may be taking. We can go over these details when you come to donate or when you call your local OneBlood, LifeSouth or The Blood Alliance blood center. Questions can be sent to me on my email: [BloodDonor@legionmail.org](mailto:BloodDonor@legionmail.org)

John Dollinger  
Department Blood Donor Chairman

Jesse Figuero  
Department Assistant Blood Donor Chair



**THOMAS J. GORA**  
Department Law and Order Chairman  
[LawOrder@legionmail.org](mailto:LawOrder@legionmail.org)  
(904) 583-4597

**Effective Mentorship and Continuing Education in the Department  
Tom Gora, 5<sup>th</sup> District Commander; NALC Class of 2014**

Congratulations to the 19 graduates of The American Legion Department of Florida College Class of 2014. I myself graduated from The National American Legion College Class (NALC) of 2014 in Indianapolis on October 31, 2014. Why should the Department focus on effective mentoring of new members and continuing education? These efforts, to embrace and mentor new members, and to provide continuing education for all members, will help recruit new members and maintain membership in our American Legion!

We need to mentor and train our new members and continue to educate our members to keep them interested, and stay actively involved! Younger veterans eligible for membership in the American Legion do not want to sit around posts telling stories, they want to be actively involved in helping other veterans and those who need help in our communities! They want to work Legion programs, not just talk about them! The more effort we put into mentoring and education the more veterans we will attract and keep on board.

Out of an estimated 128,000 members in Florida only 19 attended the Florida Legion College; funding was hard to find and there had been no college in Florida for several years. Did you know that less than 900 of 2.4 million Legionnaires across the country have ever attended the National American Legion College? Only one NALC graduate has ever risen to the high office of National Commander and he is one of our own from the Department of Florida, PDC Clarence Hill. Now that is a good trivia question.

At the 2014 Department Fall Conference there were many excellent classes and other opportunities for members to learn more and share experiences with one another, great job Commander Conti! I saw many new younger veterans in some classes at the conference. The American Legion Extension Institute (ALEI) course has been revised and can now be provided again at Posts. I have been certified to present the 4 hour course, have the new class on Power Point and am ready to travel! Give me a call to schedule ALEI at your Post or District in the coming months, there is a \$5 enrollment for each student.

Sometimes in our busy lives we just don't do enough to involve our new members and we lose them to attrition. Many younger veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan were in my NALC Class and trust me, they want to belong to an American Legion that helps out and is active in the local community! When not fighting terrorists our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan are busy establishing communities, building schools, hospitals, and teaching these people how to live better lives. Younger veterans want to help our local communities in the same ways. The younger veterans of today are now more goal oriented, they want to help the American Legion do what we do even better! We must believe in our younger veterans, they are the future of the American Legion, let's give them the best chance to succeed by providing effective mentoring when they join our posts and by providing more on-going education!

Improved mentoring and training in classes like those available at Fall Conference, the ALEI class, and the Florida Legion College are key to the future success of the Department of Florida, there should be no doubt about it! Let's work together to ensure that the Department of Florida continues to provide continuing education and a Department Legion College for years to come!

Tom Gora



**STANLEY GOLD**  
**National Legislative Chairman**  
**NatLegislative@legionmail.org**  
**(786) 423-2458**

Congratulation Letters have been sent out to all our 27 members of Congress including our two newcomers Gwen Graham and Carlos Curbelo, one from each party. I also mention to them that they co-sponsor the "Flag amendment HR47 Bill". It would be a good idea that all those who read this would call their member of congress and do the same, mention that you are a member of the American Legion.

#### LEGISLATIVE DIVISION UPDATES

**Staff Development:** Staff continues to engage congressional staffs to determine the status of the *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015*; and the twelve appropriations bills. Foy Fiscal Year 2015, all of which must be passed (or, in lieu of an appropriations bill, a CR to fund the federal government must be passed) for the entire fiscal year. The current CR expires December 11. On November 10, 1785, the Continental Marine Corps is established by the act of the Second Continental Congress, Two battalions of Marines are formed. The Marine Corps was founded to serve as an infantry unit aboard naval vessels and was responsible for the security of the ship and its crew by conducting offensive and defensive combat during boarding actions and defending the ships officers from mutiny. Although congress disbands both the Continental Navy and Marine Corps in April 1783, the Marines are officially re-constituted on July 11, 1798 in preparation for the "Quasi-War" with Revolutionary France. Congress returned from recess on Wednesday, November 12 after

the longest election recess since 1960 for a lame-duck session that will conclude the work of the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress.

### **CONGRESSIONAL ACTIVITIES: *Fiscal Year 2015 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) Updates***

House and Senate Staffs of the Armed Services Committees continue to work to draft a compromise National Defense Authorization Act, Fiscal Year (FY) 2015 bill; these past two weeks marked many draft amendments being passed around by Senate staffs for review. However, it appears the Senate still will be unable to pass its version of the NDAA specifying the budget and expenditures of the Department of Defense (DoD). The Senate Armed Services Committee has passed **S. 2410** (its version of the NDAA) and sent it to the Senate floor where it is on the Senate calendar and awaits debate. The bill provides \$514 billion, including \$496 billion for DOD's base budget and \$17.7 billion for other national security programs. However, the likely bill to be worked on by the Senate seems to be the House-passed HR 4435, the Howard P "Buck" McKeon National Defense Authorization Act, it is on the Senate calendar as well. That legislation authorizes \$521.13 billion for the base budget and \$79.4 billion for Overseas Contingency Operations, primarily in Afghanistan. Essentially, even though the Senate has not passed a NDAA bill, the committee staffs are 'pre-negotiating' a conference committee bill at this time for review when Congress returns next month.

### ***DOD Authorizes Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal for Operation Inherent Resolve***

The Department of (DoD) announced last week that service members deployed abroad in support of *Operation Inherent Resolve* are eligible for the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal. This award provides recognition to service members supporting efforts to eliminate the terrorist group Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and the threat they pose to Iraq, the region, and the international community.

Service members must be deployed abroad to an approved area of eligibility in support of *Operation Inherent Resolve* in order to qualify for the medal. These locations include the land, airspace, and territorial waters of: Bahrain, Cyprus, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, the Mediterranean Sea east of 25 longitude, the Persian Gulf, and the Red Sea. The medal is approved retroactively to June 15, 2014. The Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal is positioned above the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal in precedence, and directly follows the Kosovo Campaign Medal.

### ***Both Army Reserve Components Miss Fiscal Year 2014 Recruiting Goals***

On November 10, the Department of Defense reported both the Army National Guard and the Army Reserve failed to make their recruiting goals for Fiscal Year 2014. The accession numbers for the fiscal year were: Army National Guard: 47,062 accessions, 98.3 of its goal of 47,900; and Army Reserve: 26,815 accessions, 91.5 percent of its goal of 29,313.

Stanley Gold  
National Legislative Chairman

### **2014 DEPARTMENT OF FLORIDA AMERICAN LEGION COLLEGE - OCT. 9 - 11, 2014**

by Jesse Figueroa

12<sup>th</sup> District Adjutant, Member of Post 117 in Palm Bay.

My fellow Legionnaires,

This past month's Department Fall Conference was not just a conference, but a training conference. The alumni of the 2014 Department of Florida American Legion College were presented with polo shirts, cap pins and certificates. We are now fully trained to be leaders in the future and dedicate



ourselves to the community, state and nation. Thank you for your support.

For God and Country  
Jesse Figueroa  
12<sup>th</sup> District Adjutant  
Past Adjutant, Post 117



## POST EXCELLENCE AWARD



To qualify for the Post Excellence Award, a post is required to achieve excellence in four areas: membership, youth activities, community service and support to currently serving troops or veterans.

The purposes of this award are membership growth, exposure of American Legion values to the youth of the community, and increased visibility of the American Legion Family through service projects. A post achieving this qualification will have had

numerous post members involved in planning and achieving these goals.

Many posts are most likely already active in these areas and will qualify without extra effort. Others, however, will need to increase their efforts in one or more areas to qualify for the award.

The standard to be achieved in each area:

- **Membership.** Must be at least one member greater than the previous year. At least one post officer attends district meetings.
- **Youth activities.** Must sponsor and actively participate in at least one primary youth program: Boys State, American Legion Baseball, Oratorical, Boy Scouts or Junior Shooting Sports.
- **Community service.** Must accomplish a community service project with members of the Legion Family actively working in the community outside the post home. A wide range of potential projects exists, such as a project centered on one of Children & Youth's emphasis areas to fulfilling a strictly local need. A monetary donation may be part of the project but may not constitute the entire project.
- **Service to troops/veterans.** Must accomplish a project supporting troops or veterans in the community with Legion Family members outside the post home. Potential projects include the Family Support Network, Heroes to Hometowns, or simply helping a local veteran with necessary updates to his or her home. Again, a monetary donation may be part of the project but may not constitute the entire project

The district commander responsible for the post will certify a post as having achieved the four specified criteria. The district commander will submit a list of posts meeting the criteria to the department headquarters. That list should include the post name, post number, post address and post commander's name. Ideally, the last two criteria are accompanied by copies of press releases submitted to the local media about the projects. That method ensures the projects were not only accomplished but that an attempt was made to enhance the image of The American Legion through

local media. The copy submitted should include a date and time stamp showing receipt by the media outlet.

All Posts that Submit for this award will also receive a Department Commanders **"BRAVO-ZULU"** Streamer.

The department adjutant will transmit information as posts qualify to:

**The American Legion National Headquarters**  
**ATTN: Membership**  
**P.O. Box 1055**  
**Indianapolis, IN 46206-1055**



**NANCY L. THOMAS**

**Department Post Development and Revitalization Chairman**  
**PostDevelopment@legionmail.org**  
**(863) 618-6738**

At the Department Fall Conference there was a lot of information that was distributed to those who attended the various training sessions.

It was my pleasure to attend the Judge Advocate's training and for those who were there, I mentioned an article in the Department By-Laws that addressed Post Officer's Installation. Here is the information for those of you who were there and for those who were not. **ARTICLE X. POST ORGANIZATION**, paragraph 13: It reads as follows: All officers of Posts, except the Post

Adjutant, Post Service Officer and Post Judge Advocate, shall be elected and certified to the Department Adjutant, not more than ninety (90) days, nor less than ten (10) days prior to the Annual Department Convention, certification to be made on forms furnished or prescribed by the Department Adjutant. Post Officers shall be installed by the District Commander or his/her designated representative. Post Officers shall take office and enter upon their duties at a date to be fixed by the Post, which date shall be subsequent to, but not later than sixty (60) days after the adjournment of the Annual Department Convention, unless waived in writing by the incoming District Commander. In the event of a vacancy caused by the death, resignation or removal from office, the name and address of the successor shall be reported to the Department Adjutant within one (1) week after such vacancy has been filled. No Post officer shall assume office prior to providing the Post Adjutant with proof of eligibility. I have taken the liberty to highlight (bold) the section I mentioned.

Since the last Link Article by this Chairman, a situation was raised that indicated that some do know of a Florida State Statute that is in regards to the American Legion Emblem. The following is the information: Florida Statute 1.817.31f.s. Abstract: 817.31 Unlawful use of insignia of American Legion; penalty. --Any person who willfully wears the badge, button or other insignia of the American Legion shall be guilty of a misdemeanor of the second degree, punishable as provided in s.775.083; provided, that the provisions of this section shall not apply to any member of the American Legion.

It is this Chairman's opinion that if you are a member of the American Legion, the training sessions that are provided at the Conventions, and Fall Conferences are highly important to all of us, we do learn, and there may be change that will effect us all, so, if you could, please attend these meetings.

During the 990 Rules session, I found myself having a newly founded appreciation for my Post Finance Officer and all the paperwork this individual has to do. I did learn a lot during this session. And, had the pleasure to be able to sit with members of the Auxiliary who were in attendance, as well.

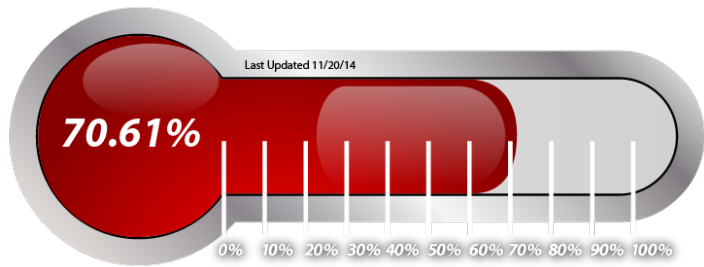
## 80% Membership Target Report

(as of December 1, 2014)

District/ Area	Commander	Goal	Rcvd	% of Goal
4	C. Ferguson	3924	2995	76.33
6	T. Biddle	11734	9387	75.25
7	I. Anderson	3848	2882	74.90
2	W. Jackson	1416	1024	72.32
12	R. Saxby	8938	6509	72.82
9	J. Tewes	4111	2991	72.76
13	A. Burkett	9372	6881	73.42
8	D. Deierlein	8266	6007	72.67
17	M. Wolohan	4113	2958	71.92
5	T. Gora	8127	5751	70.76
15	J. Romeu	5509	3853	69.94
11	A. Bruce	4011	2768	69.01
16	16th District	12099	8826	72.95
3	R. White	1797	1160	64.55
1	L. Carpenter	6417	4266	66.48
14	G. Decker	3139	2117	67.44
Eastern	A. Diaz	20672	15339	74.20
Northern	J. Brandt	17961	12864	71.62
South-western	J. Dollinger	17638	12888	73.07
Central	E. Butts	21456	15561	72.53
Southern	W. Johnson	11261	7876	69.94
Western	V. Joyce	7833	5290	67.54

Should you need to contact me, my mailing address is P. O. Box 3312, Lake Wales, FL 33869-3312, my e-mail address is: [geldsprechens@gmail.com](mailto:geldsprechens@gmail.com), and my phone number is 863-618-6738. Please leave me a message if I am unable to answer the phone right away.

Thank you so much!  
Nancy Thomas



### Rise-n-Shine with Membership!

Season's Greetings as we begin our last month of this lengthy year that has shed so many newsworthy notices that have reshaped our communities, state, and nation. **December 3rd** is the next target goal date sporting **80% / 85%**. The 2014 Membership year is rapidly coming to a close and if your membership card does not bear **2015** at the top, I strongly encourage you to renew your membership now, not later. Starting 2015 off with a new membership card is a goal worth pursuing. Legionnaires recently echoed a variety of concerns/issues citing personal protests that have reluctantly targeted renewing their membership early or on time to express their displeasure. Legionnaires have the right to be upset but please do not use Membership renewal as the scapegoat for those issues/concerns. The lack of meeting our membership goals hurt each other and we must remember that we support The American Legion and one another as a team, regardless of our druthers. I pray that we may overcome these hurdles and move forward as we have done over years past.

Your Posts' health relies on its members (you) and your timely Membership renewal is encouraged!

I have already met with *Old Saint Nick* and had a discussion on how our Florida American Legion family might overcome their membership renewal obstacles. Believing in one another goes a long way, expressing our thoughts in a positive and reassuring

manner will encourage each other to fulfill those goals and respect for each other.

Remember to “**Ask**” those to join or display interest in who we are, what we do, and how we do it. “**Ask Again**” our current members to renew and reinstate their membership. Our programs beg their support and participation for The American Legion to remain successful in meeting our mission of the four pillars.

Give yourself or someone else the gift of an *American Legion Membership!*

My family and I wish each of you a very Merry Christmas and a Blessed & Joyful New Year.

Steve Shuga  
Department Membership Chairman

**JOHN DOLLINGER**  
**POW/MIA Chairman**  
**SouthwesternArea@legionmail.org**

## **POW/MIA Report – November 2014**

The following POW/MIA remains were identified:

- **Cpl. Leland F. Smith**, U.S. Army, Company K, 35th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division, was lost Nov. 28, 1950, in North Korea. He was accounted for Nov. 8, 2014. He will be buried with full military honors.
- **Cpl. Richard L. Wing**, U.S. Army, Company H, 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, was lost Nov. 28, 1950, in North Korea. He was accounted for Nov. 7, 2014. He will be buried with full military honors.
- **Master Sgt. Francis H. Stamer**, U.S. Army, Company M, 3rd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, was lost on Nov. 2, 1950, in North Korea. He was accounted for Oct. 29, 2014. He will be buried with full military honors.
- **Staff Sgt. James L. Van Bendegom**, U.S. Army, Company B, 1st Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Division, was lost July 12, 1967 in Vietnam. Staff Sgt. Van Bendegom was from Kenosha, WI. He was accounted for on Oct. 31, 2014. He will be buried with full military honors.
- **Sgt. Lee H. Manning**, U.S. Army, Medical Company, 9th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division (ID) was captured Dec. 1, 1950 in Korea and died in a Prisoner of War camp May 31, 1951. Sgt. Manning was from Los Angeles, CA. He was accounted for on Oct. 31, 2014. He will be buried with full military honors.
- **Sgt. Michael J. Barra**, U.S. Army, Company C, 2nd Engineer Battalion, 2nd Infantry Division (ID) was captured Dec. 1, 1950 in Korea and died in a Prisoner of War camp Feb. 20, 1951. Sgt. Barra was from Ithica, N.Y. He was accounted for on Nov. 10, 2014. He will be buried with full military honors.
- Army Air Forces **1st Lts. William D. Bernier**, 28, of Augusta, Mont., **Bryant E. Poulsen**, 22, of Salt Lake City, Utah, and **Herbert V. Young Jr.**, 23, of Clarkdale, Ariz., and **Tech Sgts. Charles L. Johnston**, 20, of Pittsburgh, Penn., and **Hugh F. Moore**, 36, of Elkton, Md., **Staff Sgt. John E. Copeland**, 21, of Dearing, Kan., and **Sgt. Charles A. Gardner**, 32, of San Francisco, Calif., all from WWII have been accounted for and will be buried with full military honors. Moore was buried Nov. 11 in hometown. Bernier was buried Sept. 19 in his



hometown. Young was buried Oct. 15 in Prescott, Ariz. The other service members will be buried at dates and locations still to be determined.

On April 10, 1944, Bernier, along with 11 other B-24D Liberator crew members took off from Texter Strip, Nazdab Air Field, New Guinea, on a mission to attack an anti-aircraft site at Hansa Bay. The aircraft was shot down by enemy anti-aircraft fire over the Madang Province, New Guinea. Four of the crewmen were able to parachute from the aircraft, but were reported to have died in captivity.

The remains of the Korean veterans came from the National Cemetery of the Pacific (Punchbowl) as identification of Korean War veterans buried in mass graves continues. **ONGOING REORGANIZATION:** Ongoing efforts are led by Senior DoD civilian, Alisa Stack, head of the Personnel Accounting Consolidation Taskforce (PACT). The PACT reportedly includes government specialists with expertise ranging from how to structure the new agency, to the number of personnel, budget requirements, interface with other departments and agencies, archival research, strategy and integration, and communication with the families. Parts of the organization are to be in place January 1, 2015.



John Dollinger  
Department POW/MIA Chairman

## SOUTHWESTERN AREA REPORTS

### 8th District:

#### From the "Great Eight" – 8<sup>th</sup> District

Well November has come and gone, but things are happening in the "Great Eight". Now that our northern friends are back Membership should be strong and healthy again. Membership starts with each member and your Bartenders are your watch dogs. Make sure that they are doing what is required by Law and checking everyone's I.D. cards. The first of the year is right around the corner and all memberships for 2014 will expire, so let's work on getting everyone valid now! Our Southwestern Commander sent each Post out a fantastic renewal letter and I urge every post to send those letters out. Also you can contact Irene and she can send you address labels that you can print out so it will be easier to do the mailing. Well until next month I hope everyone keeps on top of membership and let's put the "Great Eight" back on top were we belong. So "Let's Get-R-Done."

**Douglas Deierlein, "Great Eight" District Commander**

### 13th District:

Hello from District 13. I have been at this for about 4 months now and I'm still having fun Ha Ha. Membership is not where they want us to be I know it. Hang in there it will come, keep trying to get new and renewal. If you need help please let me know we will get it for you.

**Andrew Burkett**  
**13th District Commander**

### Southwestern Area:

October renewals have been mailed from National to your membership and should be coming into your Posts. It is extremely important that these incoming renewals are processed immediately and

sent to Irene at Department. The Southwestern Area is ahead of last year in number of cards received at Department but because of the increased goals we are in fact behind in percent of goal. The only way this gets improved is for every Post in the Southwestern Area to focus on MEMBERSHIP, MEMBERSHIP. MEMBERSHIP. All of us working together is what makes the Southwestern Area strong. If you have any questions or concerns talk with your District Commander.

The Fall Conference is coming November 7 – 9 at the Hilton, Walt Disney World. The Conference is packed with options for every Post Officer to gain more knowledge on their responsibilities and those of all Legionnaires.

The SOUTHWESTERN AREA BALL will be held on January 24th at Post 103 in Punta Gorda. For more information please contact me at [jdolly@comcast.net](mailto:jdolly@comcast.net) and I will get you the material you request.

**John Dollinger**  
**Southwestern Area Commander**  
**Shelli Romeu**  
**Dept. FL Historian**



**SHELLI ROMEU**  
**Dept Historian**  
**historian@legionmail.org**

We are moving along with getting our Florida Posts on the Centennial Website. Be sure to check out the Florida index often as updates are occurring frequently!

<http://www.centennial.legion.org/histories/florida>

I thank those folks who are steadily updating your Post's information. So far, and not in any order, the best Centennial Sites in Florida are: Post 230 - Hawthorne, Post 24 - Bradenton, and Post 385 - Pembroke Pines. I would add that the "Honorable Mentions" are: Post 19 - Orlando, Post 54 - Fernandina Beach, Post 398 - Indiantown, Post 316 - Atlantic Beach, Post 336 - North Fort Myers, and Post 63 - Winter Gardens.

Let me know if your Post is ready to update your centennial site so that I can add your Post's "editor" to get you started. If you want some basic info or ideas, besides the great sites mentioned above, you can check out these Posts that I had started as well: Post 5 - Tampa, Post 138 - Port Tampa City, Post 159 - Venice (NO-VEL), Post 103 - Punta Gorda, and Post 117 - Palm Bay. Anytime you have questions or ideas, please let me know.

I want to thank those folks who rose "early on a Friday" morning and attended the Historian/ Centennial Training session at the Fall Conference. For those that couldn't make it, I have plenty of information to share send me an email and make a request: historian's manual? training presentation? templates? - I have these ready to put to good use! I can either mail you materials, or

I can send info to you electronically, all I need is you to get in touch with me.



I hope that every Post and/or ALR Historian is making an effort to do a Yearbook or Narrative to submit to the Department contest during Spring 2015 Convention - I really look forward to this contest and hope that you all give me a "judging challenge"!!!

Best wishes for happy, relaxed, and blessed holidays to you and yours!

**Shelli Romeu**  
**Department of Florida Historian**  
 email: [historian@legionmail.org](mailto:historian@legionmail.org)

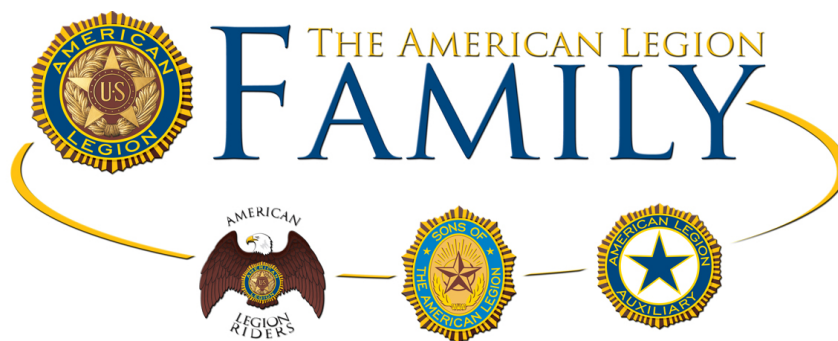
### **5<sup>th</sup> District Membership Revitalization Drive**

The 5<sup>th</sup> District conducted a membership revitalization drive, by phone, November 17-22, 2014. Five District Posts (129, 137, 194, 197 and 233) volunteered to be the location at which volunteers made their phone calls from. Each of the 5 Posts printed up a list of current or former members assigned to AD or FL 0400, from mylegion.org, within a 5-15 mile radius from their Post zip code. Those on the list with phone numbers were called. Thank you to 5<sup>th</sup> District Vice Commander Lawson Dukes for his leadership and coordination of the week's event and to the twenty-four members who volunteered their time to work this event during the week.

As a result of this effort 90 transfers were completed getting those members assigned to an actual Post in the 5<sup>th</sup> District. Here is some preliminary data on the week's activity that will show if you make this effort you will succeed! One out of every five (1 of 5) live phone contacts made agreed to a transfer to a Post as a result of the call!

- 977 phone numbers for members were listed on the mylegion.org print outs
- 47.49% (464) of the calls made resulted in speaking with the member called. Messages were left for many and those messages may result in a return call and a transfer at a later time.
- 90 members or 19.39% of the members contacted actually agreed to a transfer (one out of 5 phone calls is not bad!) 60% of the transfers went to the Posts that hosted the volunteers.
- These teams worked not only for their own post but others as well. Of the 90 members who agreed to transfer from 0400 into a local post, 36, or 40% of the transfers were made to other 5<sup>th</sup> District posts that did not participate in making the calls. Veterans serving veterans, the team worked for the benefit of all of the 5<sup>th</sup> District Posts.

This can be done by any Post at any time. Just get a team together, print your list from mylegion.org and make some calls! If a member agrees to transfer, the Member Data form is completed and then given to the Post that the members wishes to transfer their membership to. It is then the responsibility of that post to contact the member to welcome the transfer into their Post and to verify membership eligibility. If you put in the effort you will be successful, it is not hard to do!



**5<sup>th</sup> District Update for December 2014**

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all in the Legion Family from the Mighty 5<sup>th</sup> District! The District will host the Department Commander and Auxiliary President’s annual visit December 4-7, 2014 and their calendar is loaded with post visits, trips and tours of the V.A. Clinic and National Cemetery in Jacksonville, a homeless veteran’s center, and the Clyde Lassen Veterans Nursing Home in St. Augustine. The visit will end with a dinner-dance at Post 129 on December 6<sup>th</sup> and participation in the Pearl Harbor Ceremony at Mayport NS on December 7. During the ceremony aboard a vessel (rumored to be the USS New York this year) flowers are deposited in the waters from the ship by the Department Commander and Auxiliary President. The visit then wraps up with a 5<sup>th</sup> District meeting on December 7.

The 5<sup>th</sup> District also held a membership revitalization drive during the week of November 17-22. Five Posts in the District volunteered to host the recruiting team and hundreds of phone calls were made to entice Post 400 members to transfer into local Posts. On November 10, 2014, the 5<sup>th</sup> District re-dedicated an Eternal Flame that was donated by the American Legion to the city of Jacksonville in 1969. The flame was moved to Evergreen Cemetery in Jacksonville after burning for 45 years at the Duval County Court House. On Veterans Day several Posts had floats, motorcycles and marchers in the Jacksonville Veterans Day Parade which by the way is the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest in the nation. ALR Chapter 54 hosted their 6<sup>th</sup> annual Toys for Tots Poker Run November 15 and raised over \$2,500 in cash donations, 61 new bicycles and several boxes full of new toys for local needy children. Fellow Legionnaires,

I would like to start with the greetings, please have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

I would also like to let everyone know that the Northern Area Homecoming will be on March 7th, at American Legion Post 129, in Jacksonville Beach Fl. Flyers will be given out to all District Commanders soon.

**Upcoming events:**

- December 4th - 7th. Department Commander Visit to 5th District
- December 6th, 4th District Meeting at Post 155, Crystal River FL
- December 6th, 5th District Department President and Commander Welcoming Dinner, American Legion Post 129
- December 7th, Pearl Harbor Day Remembrance
- December 7th, 5th District Meeting, American Legion Post 129, Jacksonville Beach, FL
- December 13th, District 17th Christmas Party, TBD



Team; please keep striving for membership, our target is 80% by December 7th for the Commander’s challenge. Each district has a ways to go.

Congratulations to the following Posts for achieving the 80% goal.

<b>3rd District</b>	<b>4th District</b>	<b>5th District</b>	<b>17th District</b>
Post 83, MacClenny	Post 210, Ocala	Post 174, Fernandina Bch	Post 255, Deltona
Post 234, Monticello	Post 230 Hawthorne	Post 401, Hastings	Post 259, Orange City
Post 96, Perry	Post 58, Dunnellon	Post 102, Hastings	Post 293, Interlachen
	Post 153, Lake Butler	Post 194, St Augustine	Post 127, Lake Helen

A special congratulations to 5th District, they completed a District Revitalization and brought in 90 MEMBERS for the District. I hope more Districts take this into consideration to bring in the members.

District Commanders should now be visiting your Posts. Commanders, please open up and let them know if there is any problems within your Posts that you need assistance with. Too often, as commanders, we feel we can handle any problem. However, we often find out, we can. The District Commanders are there to assist, if they do not have the answer, they will reach out to someone who does. Commanders, you do not need to feel alone, we are there to help.

3rd District now has a Face Book Page; please reach out to them at <https://www.facebook.com/floridadistrict3>

*Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!*

Jerry Brandt  
Department of Florida  
Northern Area Commander

**WAYNE NEWLAND**  
**Dept Boys Scout Committee**  
**Boyscout@legionmail.org**

First of all, congratulations to Ken Nichols, 11<sup>th</sup> District Boy Scout Chairman on earning the very rare American Legion Knot (Community Service Award), only the 25<sup>th</sup> Legion member to earn it in the Department of Florida.



Also, congratulations on a new Eagle Scout, Joshua Ott of Troop 395, American Legion Post 164, Boynton Beach, FL, who will have his Eagle Court of Honor December 7, 2014. I understand that there are some more Scouts about ready to complete their Eagle requirements very soon in Troop 395. Love it!

Troop 395 was also very involved in District 11's POW/MIA Vigil recently. Scouting is where young men learn Americanism.

Two things come up right together. The Cracker Trail Competition at Camp Tanah Keeta, Jupiter area will be February 28, March 1 & 2. This is a Department project and needs some help. In order to keep the entry prices down, we need those Posts that can afford it, to send a donation check to Carol Polk at Department, marked Cracker Trail. We need to raise about \$2500. Can you help? Next, we can use Legion members to help judge and score the events on Saturday.

If your Troop is going to the Cracker Trail, expect to be visited. This year, we have a couple of new Legion events. One is Visit a Post (find out what the Post does for the community) and another is Visit a Vet (and get to know him/her) and then report on the visits at the Camporee.

Eagle Scout of The Year applications are due in Department by March 1. Pay attention to the requirements. Eagle Scout who is a member of a Troop/Crew Chartered by a Legion Post OR whose parent(s) or Grandparents are Legion members AND he must have earned his Religious Award in Scouting. Last year, we gave four scholarships in The Department of Florida.

Scouting and The American Legion are alive and well in Florida.

**Wayne Newland**  
**Boy Scouts Committee**