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From Your Department Commander Steve Shuga

commander@floridalegion.org



Florida Legionnaires, we are attempting to beat the odds by meeting and exceeding our published membership goals and targets. Every renewal card and new membership application is vital in tackling our membership. This is a team effort and we can all do this. My appeal to every Florida Legionnaire is to renew your American Legion Membership now! We need all of you to remain in our Posts, support our programs, and to continue helping veterans in our communities.

With the holiday season surrounding us, strongly consider a gift of membership renewal or a new membership for those yet to become an American

Legionnaire. I have been meeting potential members for our American Legion family daily and I am promoting, teaching, and working on gaining those members into our Veteran Service Organization. Together we can achieve our membership goals. I encourage all to get onboard quickly so we can put this membership issue behind us and work on program support in our American Legion. Hurricane season ended on November 30th. We are wrapping up our Disaster Preparedness Program, reviewing those Posts who are engaged in rebuilding and determining if any further assistance is required. We will create a draft for a disaster plan from legionnaires around the state via the lessons learned concept. This will greatly assist us with future disasters on how to affectively prepare for and handle extreme weather emergencies in the years ahead.

District visitations are under way and the goal is for every Post to have a visit by the Department Commander. The 8th, 9th, 13th, and 14th Districts are next during December.

Our National Vice Commander Bobby Bryant (OK) is visiting our state Dec 3rd – 8th and is addressing various Posts about the importance of membership retention, renewals, and new applicants. Just ask yourself, who is going to fill your shoes!

We are engaged in our statewide holiday blood drive so those interested in donating the gift of life, coordinate your local blood drives and turn in your totals to the Department Blood Chairman, Donna Wallace.

Our National Commander Denise Rohan reminds us by her slogan "Family First". Taking care of our families is vitally important. Our families consist of our personal and American Legion families. Let's do our very best to take great care of our families over this holiday season. A healthy, happy family will encourage a successful outcome for our American Legion at all levels.

I and my wife Leonor, wish you all Happy Holidays, Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year! May the gifts of good health, happiness, and prosperity be blessed upon every one of you as we endure the festive occasions we are about to endure.



DECEMBER 2017

1	Civil Air Patrol Birthday
2	12th District Meeting, Post 40
2	15th District Meeting, Post 138
2	Tiki Hut Grand Opening, Post 142
3	Dept Commander Visits District 11
6	Membership Goal 80%
7	Pearl Harbor Day
10	Dept Commander Visits District 9
13	National Guard Birthday
13	Hanukkah
14	Homeless Veterans Outreach Award
15	Legion Link Deadline
16	National Wreaths Across America
17	Dept Commander Visits District 14
19	Employment Awards
20	Panama/Operation Just Cause (1989)
21	First Day of Winter
24	Christmas Eve
25	Christmas Day
26 - 1	Dept Headquarters Closed
28	Anniversary of the Army Chaplain Asst.
30	Florida Citrus Parade
31	New Year's Eve

Just as Important to Retain

*Dianne Boland, 1st Vice Commander
1stvice@legionmail.org*



Greetings:

I hope you all had a wonderful Veterans Day. Did you get many new members during the weekend? Now you have to mentor them or assign them a sponsor: someone who will invite them to meetings and events.

Remember, it is just as important to retain current members as it is to sign-up new members.

By now I will have finished all the training in my Zone. Is there a need for more? Whether it be a District meeting or a Post meeting; it can be arranged. Also remember about National having a Bi-Monthly Training Newsletter. You can sign up for it at www.legion.org/newsletters.

Your Post Administrative Manual for December - Homeless Veterans Outreach Award – Due to

Department by December 14th

Your Post Administrative Manual for January - Boys State Registration Fee Deadline – January 31st (\$450.00)

Also keep in mind the Florida Legion College is now taking place January 11 – 13. The prerequisite (the old ALEI Course) is now called "Basic Training". It is still being taught at the Fall Conference and you can still take it online thru National (www.legion.org). It is now FREE – no charge.

I want to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a safe and Happy New Year. During the holiday season, please remember our local veterans and the elderly; especially those who live alone. Try to take the time to send them a card, give them a call or pay them a visit. If you can, invite them to the Post for a meal or possibly deliver them a meal on Christmas. Our nursing homes could use a visit. Whether they are a member of the Legion family or not, everyone could use a smile! God Bless you all.

Stay Involved

*Rick Johnson, 2nd Vice Commander
2ndvice@legionmail.org*



Happy December Legion family.

I hope you all had your filling of turkey and left overs. It has been a very busy month and I want to send shout-outs to

the Posts and individuals who really stepped forward. Post 273 for doing an awesome job on the Americanism program they did for the St Petersburg High School Catholic Church. Such a great program and thank you Anthony from Post 273 for doing what you do.

Next was the Veterans Day boat parade at Madera beach we had a great turnout and a lot of great thought and time was put into the event. Thank you Commander White for allowing me to be a part of that and on the judge's yacht. It was a great day to be on the water and such a great

turnout at the Post.

I had a few meetings out there in the 15th and 16th Districts to discuss plans of actions for a few Posts out there. I attended Jim Burgess Funeral at Safety Harbor and he will be greatly missed. He was a great Legionnaire and was so involved in the Post and community. I will be heading to Post 252 for the annual Thanksgiving Day feast for our Veterans from Bay Pines. I will be on potato detail on the Wednesday before and such monotonous task will give me time to reflect on what they have done for us and within their community.

Well, the big jolly fellow will be coming soon and 2018 is right around the corner, and as we know from the past, membership slows down for a couple months. You need to have a plan in place to start the mailing now and maybe offer a special Christmas present to renew before Dec 31st. The Legion College is coming up in January so let's get signed up and learn more about our organization and how we can get more involved within your communities.

Continued on Page 3

- Commander Steve Shuga's Attendance Tentative. Events are subject to change. Additional details can be found at www.floridalegion.org. We share the information we are provided, please contact Program, Area, District and Posts for additional details and events.

All Legion Link articles are due the 15th of each month, and are made available on the 1st of each month.

JAN 11-13 2018
REGISTER NOW
floridalegion.org/flc

Continued from Page 2 (2nd Vice Commander)

So, I hope everyone has a great December and a very nice Christmas and you get everything you wished for. Let's remember our service men and woman who cannot be with their families due to their deployment. Have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year and I will see you out there in my travels.

Focus on Veterans' Needs

*Jerry Brandt, 3rd Vice Commander
3rdvice@legionmail.org*



Comrades,

We have just completed the busy month of November, with our Fall Conference, Veterans Day, Marine Corps Birthday, Thanksgiving and Black Friday, but as always, we need to focus on the

needs of our Veterans and their families. Reach out to the Marine Corps League to see if they need help with 'Toys for Tots'. Is your Post active with the Auxiliary in providing Christmas parties for the Children? This time of the year our Active

Duty Veterans would like to receive Christmas Cards.

December is also a big month, do not forget to send your Boys State registration fees to Department. Information should be coming in for the Oratorical Competition about your candidates for the January Post Contest. What about the 80% goal date on December 6th? (A little birdy informed me that 4th District will be beating 11th District in membership). Also, so everyone knows, ALL DISTRICTS ARE IN THE RACE TO THE TOP, some Districts are closer than others, but everyone has 4 months to reach the 100% goal. I would like every District in Zone 3, at the top.

We also need to start planning for the upcoming few months. Is training scheduled for your new Post Officers? Or, are you one of the Posts who wait for them to be elected, sworn in and then OJT? Be a leader in your Post, help train those who want to move up. Even if they are not elected, the training would still help the Post, after all, and they may want to seek additional training at the Summer Convention.

As you know, the American Legion College has been delayed, we are currently taking applications for January 11 – 13. NOW is the time to apply.

Applications are under 'News and Events' then 'Florida Legion College'.

For Northern and Western Area, these are the following dates you need to be aware of:

December 2nd
4th District Meeting at Post 58

December 7th
Pearl Harbor Day

December 10th
5th District Meeting, at Post 129

December 13th
Hanukkah, and National Guard Birthday

December 16th
17th District Meeting, at Post 6

December 16th
Wreaths Across America

December 20th
Panama/Operation Just Cause (1989)

December 21st
First Day of Winter

December 24th
Christmas Eve

December 25th
Christmas

December 31st
New Year Eve

Best Places to Work

*Dennis Boland, National Executive Committeeman
nec@legionmail.org*



These days, more and more companies are putting an emphasis on the social purpose of what they do, providing their employees with reasons to feel inspired by their jobs.

Given how much time we all spend at work, this is a positive trend. But there's also no question that nonprofits remain the clear leaders when it comes to a dedication to doing good. After all, these are the organizations which are immediately on the ground when a crisis strikes – and which continue to help out, long after the cameras leave.

Even though nonprofits are rich in purpose, their impact is deeper and wider still. While "volunteer" may be the first word to spring to mind when many people think about nonprofits, the truth is that they are also employers and account for 10.3% of all non-government jobs in the U.S. according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. That's 11.4 million people working for nonprofits every day – considerably higher than the entire population of New York City.

Out of the best nonprofits to work for in 2017, The American Legion comes in 7th place. Here is the Top #15 employers to work for.

1. Habitat for Humanity
2. AARP
3. Boys & Girls Club of America
4. Boy Scouts of America
5. Communities in Schools
6. YMCA

7. The American Legion
8. YWCA
9. The Salvation Army
10. Easter Seals
11. Girl Scouts of America
12. Teach for America
13. American Red Cross
14. Planned Parenthood
15. Pride Industries

In addition to organizing commemorative events, volunteer veterans operating through The American Legion support activities and provide assistance at Veterans Administration hospitals and clinics. The Legion is active in issue-oriented United States politics. Its primary political activity is lobbying on behalf of interests of veterans and service members, including support for veterans benefits such as pensions and the Veterans Health Administration.

A Little Clarification

Tom Gora, Sergeant-at-Arms
sgt-at-arms@legionmail.org



In the November 2017 issue of the 'Legion Link' I wrote about the NFL players national anthem protests in support of a press release issued by the National Commander. The article received criticism from a comrade whose opinion

is that I must not fully understand Americanism because the players have a right to peaceful protest and he also feels that the players are not protesting the flag. The article never expressed those opinions, it speaks only to protest during the playing of the national anthem. In the September 25th press release National Commander Rohan characterized professional athletes and other Americans who fail to show respect for the national anthem as misguided and ungrateful, and she also said, "there are many ways to protest, but the national anthem should be our moment to stand together as one UNITED States of America." The offer to provide flag education training to an NFL franchise by American Legion Post 54 reported in the November article is one possible solution to correct the conduct which led to the National Commander's comments. It is an example of how members of one Post, by offering training on flag etiquette which includes conduct during the playing of the anthem, instead of just sitting around the Post complaining about the protests.

At the recently completed Fall Conference, 27

members of The American Legion, and Sons of the Legion completed the Sgt.-at-Arms training class. I thank these participants for their interest, and choosing to take the class. As always during this class several questions arise about procedure and protocol. Questions and discussion about the placement of POW/MIA empty chair at meetings and events, proper position of the POW/MIA flag, and discussion about what Legion cover a post officer who may also be a District or Department Officer should wear at post meetings. I will address these issues in the January 2018 Legion Link.

Speaking of Sgt.-at-Arms training, when you come to one of the two annual Department meetings, you receive training by example, all you have to do is sit in attendance and observe. One of the main functions of a Sgt.-at-Arms is the proper set up of the meeting hall, and keeping order during the meetings. At the Fall Conference or Department Convention, while most delegates and guests are eating breakfast or are still in their rooms, the Department Sgt.-at-Arms and the Assistant Sgt.-at-Arms are already at work in the meeting hall well before the first rap of the Commander's gavel. We review the agenda and guest list, inspect the hall, inspect flags and equipment, assure all equipment is present and in working order. You often see me rise from my seat on-stage to speak with the Commander or Adjutant, and wonder what we talk about. You probably don't know I keep track of time to determine if we are "on schedule." When behind schedule we speak about how we can catch up. You will see me motion over one of the Assistant Sgt.-at-Arms to locate guests or others who are coming up

to speak, to either reposition them closer to the stage, or bring them on stage. I also rise to greet each person who comes to the stage. Besides being professional and cordial, most often I do this to offer some encouraging words to a person who may feel uncomfortable on the stage facing a large audience. I know all would agree that the work and professionalism displayed by our Assistant Department Sgt.-at-Arms at these events sets a great example, and we all should thank them for their dedication to duty.

I also participate as a chaperone for the annual Youth Law Cadet Program at which up to 25 high school boys and girls, aged 16-18, can spend a week at the Florida Highway Patrol Academy. The program for next year is July 8-13, 2018. At this program the cadets get a taste of law enforcement training including classes on various subjects, physical fitness, self-defense, and gun education. Florida State Troopers also use this opportunity to speak with our cadets to learn more from them about how teenagers view law enforcement, and ask them to write an essay on how law enforcement can relate better with younger people. The program chair, Bob Brewster, was passing out brochures for next summer's program and he also spoke about the program on stage at the Fall Conference. Both Bob and I would be happy to travel to any Post or District meeting to speak to you about the benefits youth in your communities can gain from attending this program.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all!
 Have a happy and SAFE holiday period, The American Legion needs your continued support after we ring in the new year of 2018.

Centennial Website Access

Gerry Kaufman, Historian
historian@legionmail.org



We are almost halfway through the Commanders Post visitation schedule. I am asking everyone who has pictures from his visitations to please email them to me in .jpg format and I will

get them into the history books. Also, if you have newspaper articles that you would like to submit for consideration in the history books please send them to me at:

Gerald Kaufman
 American Legion
 Department Historian
 6585 W Arter St
 Crystal River Florida 34429

Or you can send them via Department Headquarters.

As promised last month I am posting the user name and password for the Centennial website. I am hoping that by doing so it will make it easier for you to post what your history and timelines and photos that you would like on your page. Below you will find the user name and password. I wish you all the happiest of holiday seasons and hope to see all of you again soon.

Username: 100thannvdept@legionmail.org
P/W: melanie1969

A Soldiers Night Before Christmas

Barry Roberts, Chaplain

chaplain@legionmail.org



Through our Christmas, Holiday and New Year Season I pray God's many blessings upon you and your families. For some it is a glorious time filled with love, family, food and gifts. For others it can be a sad time mourning the loss of a family member or loved one. I pray God inspires us to

reach out in love to our family and friends that may be struggling. I pray that God gives each and every one of you a new and fresh revelation of Who He is with His love and His purpose and plan for your life and eternity.

Lord, we pray for all our military on deployment around the globe. Being separated from those we love is even more difficult during the Holiday season. We ask that You give these families a special peace and sense of Your love this season. Give them opportunities to spend time in communication with their loved ones. Surround them with friends and family who can support them in ways they need. Put people in their lives to be Your hands and feet during this stressful holiday season.

Lord we pray for our military and veterans that are struggling physically, emotionally and spiritually. Father we proclaim Your Word in Psalm 147-3 over them "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds." We ask that You love them and give them Hope for a new day. Encourage them and strengthen them. Father we ask that You show us how to serve them the way You would have us to.

A Soldiers Night Before Christmas

'Twas the night before Christmas, he lived all alone,
In a one bedroom house made of plaster & stone.

I had come down the chimney with presents to give
And to see just who in this home did live.

I looked all about a strange sight I did see,
No tinsel, no presents, not even a tree.

No stocking by the fire, just boots filled with sand,
On the wall hung pictures of far distant lands.

With medals and badges, awards of all kind
A sober thought came through my mind.

For this house was different, so dark and dreary,
I knew I had found the home of a soldier, once I could see clearly.

I heard stories about them, I had to see more
So I walked down the hall and pushed open the door.

And there he lay sleeping silent alone,
Curled up on the floor in his one bedroom home.

His face so gentle, his room in such disorder,
Not how I pictured a United States soldier.

Was this the hero of whom I'd just read?
Curled up in his poncho, a floor for his bed?

His head was clean shaven, his weathered face tan,
I soon understood this was more than a man.

For I realized the families that I saw that night
Owed their lives to these men who were willing to fight.

Soon 'round the world, the children would play,
And grownups would celebrate on a bright Christmas day.

They all enjoyed freedom each month of the year,
Because of soldiers like this one lying here.

I couldn't help wonder how many lay alone
On a cold Christmas Eve in a land far from home.

Just the very thought brought a tear to my eye,
I dropped to my knees and started to cry.

The soldier awakened and I heard a rough voice,
"Santa don't cry, this life is my choice;

I fight for freedom, I don't ask for more,
My life is my God, my country, my Corps."

With that he rolled over and drifted off into sleep,
I couldn't control it, I continued to weep.

I watched him for hours, so silent and still,
I noticed he shivered from the cold night's chill.

So I took off my jacket, the one made of red,
And I covered this Soldier from his toes to his head.

And I put on his T-shirt of gray and black,
With an eagle and a soldier patch embroidered on back.

And although it barely fit me, I began to swell
With pride, And for a shining moment, I was United States soldier deep inside.

I didn't want to leave him on that cold dark night,
This guardian of honor so willing to fight.

Then the soldier rolled over, whispered with a voice
So clean and pure, "Carry on Santa, it's Christmas Day, all is secure."

One look at my watch, and I knew he was right,
Merry Christmas my friend, and to all a good night!

May the Biblical meaning of the song "The Twelve days of Christmas" fill your hearts with joy and come alive in your life this season! Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah and Happy New Year!

District 11

Donna Artola, District 11 Commander

11thdistrict@legionmail.org



District 11 has had a great year so far. We have held the #2 place for most of the year. We even were #1 for one week. I know that District 4 was not happy with us. We have 2 Posts over 100%. Including the 2 Posts over

100% we have 10 Posts over the 66.55% goal as of 11/09/17.

Our District Roast for PDC /NECA Art Schwabe had a great turnout, and a great time was had by all. Great food and best of all great peeps. Those of you that were not in attendance missed a good time. Keep your eyes and ears open for next year's roast.

Veterans Day was well represented in different cities. West Palm Beach, Lake Worth, Delray Beach, Royal Palm, Boynton Beach, Boca Raton, Belle Glade, and Okeechobee.

We have another major event which will take place

on April 14, 2018 at Post 64 Okeechobee. It is District 11 Family Fun Day. A whole day of fun by the whole American Legion Family. Keep your eyes and ears open. There will be food, games, prizes, 50/50 and raffles.

Our next meeting will be held on January 11th at AL Post 164 at 1930 hours.

We now have a bi-monthly newsletter. If you would like to receive a copy of your newsletter, please email me with your email address and we will be more than happy to send you a copy.

Keep Pushing Membership

Fred Matthews, Membership Chair
membership@legionmail.org



Congratulations to those Posts, Districts and Areas that have achieved the 65% to 70% Goal this week. The efforts in Districts 4, 11, and 6 Commanders Van Buren and Artola(Wallace) and Seidel have helped to propel the Department of Florida

past the November Goal line!

Next in line are Districts 15, 16, and 7. Posts within the Districts led by Commanders Little, Perez and Tucker have all exceeded the 65% goal Post. Well done Legionnaires!

By the way, Commander Van Buren took back the number one spot in November from Commander Artola by .48%. These two District Commanders will be battling for Number 1 for the rest of the Legion year. Good luck to them and us.

As many of you heard, Membership was at the core of every major presentation at the Fall Conference. It's this year's major program. We

cannot shrink our membership this year.

Nationally, we are 1500+ members behind where we were last year at this time. Let's keep pushing at the Post level. I'll be making direct contact with those Posts having trouble. District and Area Commanders, we need you to work closer with those Posts who are having trouble.

The 12th and 5th District Commanders Bruce Thurber and Troy Horsley are showing the most success with DMS transfers so far. Commander Thurber asserts that actively working those lists with his Post Commanders and Chairmen has encouraged him to keep at it. The results have bolstered Membership by 14 in Post 406 and 12 in Palm Bay Post 117. The highest in the Department.

In almost every District the Posts that occupy the bottom of each District's list, have not a single DMS transfer. What makes this significant? The transfer requires personal contact, either over the phone, or a direct member visit. It requires recruitment. The good news is they are already members. We just want to bring them online to a Post home. Those "AD" marked members could be the key to taking us to 100% by March.

As a Department we are less than 10% from the next goal of 80%. We can do this!

Thanks to the 35 members who attended the Membership Workshop during the Fall Conference. Most of those in attendance were the leadership from several Posts across the state. I hope the information we shared was beneficial to you and the Posts you serve.

This month presents all of us with one of our best recruitment tools. Please upload pictures on your websites, Facebook, Twitter and SnapChat pages that show every aspect of the Family events, Dinners, Luncheons and other holiday events specific to your Post. Let's flood Social Media and share your Posts with the Department Facebook Page.

The next Department Conference Call is January 22, 7pm. Its open to all Post level and above officers. The Department Commander looks forward to hearing your plans to take your Post, District and Area to 100% by the deadline. Dial-in Number:(701) 801-1211 Access Code:915-221-336

Each One, Bring Five!

Great Job, Keep it Up

Jay Allen, Central Area Commander
centralarea@legionmail.org



This past month of October was an interesting month. Central Area Districts are all together in the listing 4,5, and 6 places in the Department Listing for membership. I would also like to thank the

post that has made the 70% or better to that 100% mark. Those Posts are: 3, 4, 15, 23, 26, 34, 75, 99, 104, 119, 147, 173, 186, 246, 252, 275, 278, 334, 339, 343, 396. For all the Legionnaires doing and hard working on membership keep up the great work.

I would like to thank the Posts that had Safe Trick or Treat events-a job well done.

Upcoming Deadlines & Events

Jeff Durden, Northern Area Commander
northernarea@legionmail.org



Congratulations to Commander Vicky VanBuren and the 4th District for staying on top for membership.

The 17th and 5th Districts are in the middle and rising and the 3rd District needs to open there can of Nitrous and jump to the top as they have done before.

Commanders, contact your post and remind them to send in their Boys State monies as soon as they can. Deadline is January 31st. Please don't wait to the last minute. Please also take a few moments on December 7th to remember Pearl Harbor Day.

December 2nd is the 4th District meeting at Post58 in Dunnellon at 1000. December 16th is the 17th District meeting at Post 6 in Deland at 1200.

It is also National Wreaths Across America, so please support our veterans at this time of the year. I hope all have a safe Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Did you attend Fall Conference? If so, we want to hear your thoughts.

floridalegion.org/fcfeedback



Give the Gift of Life

Donna Artola, Blood Donor Chair

blooddonort@legionmail.org

As we are coming to the end of the calendar year let's give the gift of life. Blood is needed more this time of the year than any other. We have the holiday season coming; this is when blood is needed. If you are O- you need to keep giving

your blood. You are the universal donor.

I look forward to hearing from you about your Post and the state-wide blood drive which was held from November 23- November 30th.

Remember if your Post does not have a blood chair, and you are a person who gives blood, let them know when you give blood that you are a

member of the American Legion, give them your Post number and they will get credit for your pint. Let's get your blood numbers on your CPRs. Every program counts. Let's make this one count.

I am only a phone call, text or email away. 561.312.3616 11thdistrict@legionmail.org.

Children & Youth Planning

Bruce Carl, Children & Youth Chair

cy@legionmail.org



Greetings everyone from your Children and Youth Chairman. What an exciting Fall Conference we had in Orlando last month! For those of you who did not or could not attend, you missed plenty of exciting new information. I held the

first C&Y training class that we have had in a long time. Although there were not many in attendance, those that did come were excited to be there, and learned a lot of information they did not previously have. I have been asked if I would do another class at the June Convention, and gladly accepted.

It is time for planning all your events for the first 6 months of 2018. As you are planning your events, please keep in mind that in March, we begin our 100th Anniversary Celebration. Also, April is Children & Youth Month. Try to plan activities that will include our youth! The finalized flyer has been

attached to the link on the Children & Youth page, as well as the link for the Department Calendar. Please make plans to attend this big event. I have sent an E-mail with the flyer attached to all the District Commanders to send out to the Posts. Also, the Department Golf Tournament will be held on May 4th. I should have the flyer ready to put on the website in the next few weeks.

As we enter the holiday season, I would like to wish everyone very safe and happy holidays.

Legion College Coming Up

Tom Gora, Legion College Chair

dept@legioncollege@legionmail.org



The logo you see with this article is the logo of FALC, and is on the shirt graduates will receive upon completion of FALC. I

apologize for any inconvenience caused by the re-scheduling of the Florida American Legion College (FALC) which has been re-scheduled for January 11-13, 2018. The class was re-scheduled due to the approaching Hurricane Irma in September. Applications for the next FALC class are now being accepted by the Department. In this article I address the transition from ALEI to Basic Training; completion of either one of them is one of the

pre-requisites for applying to attend FALC.

Training is a strong focus of any successful organization, especially those organizations with a large volunteer base. Lack of effective training leads to inconsistent outcomes and divergence from overall mission. Conversely, effective training leads to increased program participation, adherence to organizational values, and identification of potential leaders. The American Legion Extension Institute has been a critical part of this training.

To qualify for FALC applicants must have completed what we previously knew as "The American Legion Extension Institute (ALEI)," or the new on-line ONLY "Basic Training." Basic Training is offered by The American Legion on-line, free of charge but they have not released an off-line version for use. In the Department of Florida since 2015 we have trained over 300 members of the Legion, the Sons, and Auxiliary in ALEI at

the Fall Conference and Annual Convention. Hundreds more graduated during the years PDC Jim Ramos instructed the course at those department functions.

So how does this change to Basic Training affect YOU? The Department of Florida presented a 'hybrid' of ALEI and Basic Training and graduated 25 students the November 2017 Fall Conference, congratulations to them! If you have completed ALEI at one of our conferences, or complete the new Basic Training on-line you will qualify for enrollment in FALC. Those who completed the class at Fall Conference received a Basic Training Graduate Hat Pin, and will receive credit on the Department training record.



Oratorical - Essential Skill

Meri West, Oratorical Chair
oratorical@legionmail.org

"Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it Almighty God! I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me liberty or give me death."

Patrick Henry, Delegate, Virginia House of Delegates and Founding Father, speaking at the St. Johns Episcopal Church in Richmond, VA on March 23rd, 1775. Henry was encouraging the Convention to raise militias in every VA County to support the American Revolution. Henry did not write a speech...he simply stood up from the church pew and gave an impromptu speech.

"We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

The Preamble to the Constitution. May 25th – September 17th, 1787, Constitutional Convention, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

"Fourscore and seven years ago our Fathers brought forth upon this continent, a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal."

Abraham Lincoln, Nov. 19th, 1863 giving the Gettysburg Address at the dedication of the Soldier's National Cemetery, Gettysburg, PA, four and a half months after the Union armies defeated the Confederacy at the Battle of Gettysburg.

"It was we the people; not we the white male citizens, nor yet we the male citizens; but we the whole people who formed the Union. And we formed it, not to give the blessings of liberty, but to secure them; not to the half of ourselves and half of our prosperity, but to the whole people—women as well as men."

American Voting Rights Activist, Susan B. Anthony, November 18, 1872, upon being arrested for having voted in the Presidential election. Incidentally, she voted a straight Republican ticket, and for Ulysses S. Grant for President. Anthony was fined 100.00 for the offense which she refused to pay. Forty-eight years later, on August 18, 1920, the Constitution was amended, and women were granted the right to vote. Wyoming was the first territory to allow women to vote.

"You ask, what is our policy? I can say: It is to wage war by sea, by land and air, with all our might and all the strength God can give us; to wage war against a monstrous tyranny, never surpassed in the dark, lamentable catalogue of human crime. You ask what is our aim? I can answer in one word: Victory. Victory at all costs. Victory in spite of all terror. Victory however long and hard the road may be. For without victory there is no survival."

Winston Churchill's first speech as Prime Minister, House of Commons, May 13, 1940.

"Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few."

Winston Churchill, August 20th, 1940, referring to the ongoing efforts of the Royal Air Force crews who were at the time fighting the Battle of Britain.

"And so my fellow Americans: Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country."

President John F. Kennedy giving his inaugural speech on Jan. 20, 1961

"I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of it's creed—we hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal."

American Civil Rights Activist Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., August 28, 1963 speaking at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC at the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.

"That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind."

American Astronaut Neil Armstrong upon landing on and being the first human to walk on the surface of the moon, July 20th, 1969

"I know it's hard to understand, but sometimes painful things like this happen. It's all part of the process of exploration and discovery. It's all part of taking a chance and expanding man's horizons. The future doesn't belong to the fainthearted; it belongs to the brave. The crew of the Challenger Space Shuttle honored us by the manner in which they lived their lives. We will never forget them, nor the last time we saw them, this morning, as they prepared for their journey and waved goodbye and slipped the surly bonds of Earth to touch the face of God."

President Ronald Reagan, Jan. 28th, 1986 speaking to the nation about the explosion of the Challenger Space Shuttle, killing Crista McAuliffe, the first school teacher in orbit and six other courageous crew members whose shuttle mission lasted a mere 73 seconds. The speech was written by Peggy Noonan (who also penned the famous "read my lips, no new taxes" for President George H. W. Bush.) The last sentence is from the poem "High Flight" by John Gillespie Magee, Jr.

"You know they said this day would never come. They said we set our sights too high. They said this country was too divided, too disillusioned to ever come together around a common cause. But on this January night, at this defining moment in history, you have done what cynics said you couldn't do."

Then Senator Barack Obama, Jan. 3rd, 2008 addressing the Iowa Caucuses as the first black Presidential candidate.

Great speeches lift our hearts in times of darkness. Give us hope in times of despair. They inspire courageous feats, honor the dead, celebrate the living, and very often change the course of history.

Words are singularly the most powerful force

Continued on Page 9

Continued from Page 8 (Oratorical Chair)

available to humanity. The simple choice of a word can make the difference between someone accepting or denying your message says Mohammed Qahtani, the 2015 World Champion of the Toastmasters. The words you choose influence how others perceive you, what decisions they make about you. They can build up or destroy relationships in an instant.

Consider the child who is eager to show his father that he has mastered the bike with no training wheels and the father says, "Not now, son, I'm busy." Or the mother who tells her daughter "You have a very pretty face" implying that all areas south of that are, well, downright disgusting. Ever overhear your girlfriend talking to her best friend and comparing you to a former lover? That generally stings. Or stabs. Or crushes. Words can be cruel or kind, but we can all agree they are powerful. Hence the adage, "The pen is mightier than the sword."

In an age where words are spilling out of us onto Facebook, in presentations, in casual

conversations, on blogs, in emails, in texts, Twitter, Instagram, to our neighbors and yes, even to our dogs, are we giving our words enough thought?

This is why I am passionate about the **American Legion's Oratorical Contest**. We encourage and give students a forum to practice the art and craft of public speaking. Not only that, we reward them richly! Unlike many other public speaking contests, we focus solely on the Constitution with an emphasis on a citizen's duty to their country. It's incredibly relevant and meaningful to our Legion family.

Some of the finest orators were not naturally great public speakers. Winston Churchill, arguably, one of the best and most prolific orators, said he usually spent one hour writing one minute of a speech. He, unlike many, wrote every word of every speech he gave, earning the Nobel Prize for Literature, in part, for his mastery of speechwriting.

Public speaking and oratory are skills are essential to great leaders. We look to our leaders to effect

change. To set the direction of our nation and build a vision for our future. The hardworking students who accept the challenge of the American Legion Oratorical Contest are likely to be leaders in the near future. Politicians, policy makers, lawyers, judges, doctors, great business leaders, educators, philanthropists.

Support your Post, District or Area Oratorical contest by volunteering even just a little time, talent or skills, or contributing money so that we can continue to reach as many students as possible. Last year, Florida had 99 students participate from 47 different Posts. Let's aim to increase those numbers so that our Florida Department is reaching out far and wide to as many students as we can stand...knowing full well we will never have too many! Too much of a good thing is wonderful, yes!

Initiate contact with me! Ask me anything. Tell me anything. Just keep in touch so we can get to know each other better and support each other's efforts. It is NOT too late to get students involved in the contest for this year. Keep on keepin' on!

New National Cemetery Director

Diana Hook, Florida National Cemetery Chair
floridationalcemetery@legionmail.org



Things are looking up at Florida National Cemetery, in Bushnell, FL. That nasty hurricane made a mess on the grounds, but thanks to the dedicated staff, who takes such great care of every detail, the beauty is no longer hidden under debris.

It was my pleasure to meet the new Florida National Cemetery Executive Director, Tony Thomas, who is retired after 21 years in the

U. S. Marine Corps. He attended the JOINT VETERANS COMMITTEE meeting along with myself and several members and guests. Director Thomas has some exciting plans for the Cemetery to improve the comfort in the shelters and security. He is also in the process of recruiting veterans to work at the cemetery, so keep that in mind if you or someone you know who is looking for work

VETERANS DAY PROGRAM is always a big event at the Florida National Cemetery, and this Nov. 11th was no exception. There was the great Sumter Correctional Institute Color Guard for openers and Rifle Salute. Steve Jerve, chief meteorologist at WFLA-TV Tampa, was the event MC, Florida State Representative Don Hahnfeldt USN Ret. was the Keynote speaker, South Sumter H.S. Band entertained with some patriotic tunes

(well done SSS!) and Bagpiper John Earl brought tears to my eyes with his solemn rendition of "Amazing Grace". All this and more was brought together and sponsored by the Florida National Cemetery Joint Veterans Committee.

For all who payed your respects, one way or another, to your Veteran brothers and sisters of the past and present, I salute you!

PS-FYI, the next Service for the Unattended will be Wednesday, Dec. 13, 2017 at 3PM under Shelter A, Florida National Cemetery, Bushnell.

Hope y'all have a fun Holiday Season.



facebook.com/floridalegion

Time to Revitalize

Unice Butts, Post Development Chair
postdevelopment@legionmail.org



I want to give special thanks to Rick Johnson, Fred Matthews, Troy Horsley, Jay Allen, Dick Little, Ray Perez, Bruce Thurber and Dave Tucker for utilizing the Revitalization and Post Development program.

On December 4-4, Revitalizations will be held at Posts 199, 268 and 271. A Revitalization was held at Post 81 on October 14th.

On October 21st I was invited by Central Area Commander to do a lecture on membership and I spoke to the Seminole Heights Community Association on "The importance of the American Legion to the Community and the importance of the Community to the American Legion" on October 24th courtesy of an invite from Post 111.

This is the end of the year and it is time to do activities to increase our membership. If you plan to do a Revitalization, start setting your dates now. Call the Membership or Revitalization Chairman.

I wish each of you and your family a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Remember Our POW-MIA's

Kathryn Bower, POW/MIA Chair
powmia@legionmail.org



This month would be the perfect time to remember our POW-MIA's. Bring your POW-MIA table front and center as your Post joins together at this special time of the year. Please do not forget them.

DPAA has been working hard on bringing them home. In the first 14 days of November ten (10) of our brothers have been found, identified, and return to their families. Thank you, DPAA members.

Please remember in your prayers the families of the POW-MIA's as well as our lost brothers and sisters.

National Scouting Conference

Rick Hewett, Scouting Chair
scouting@legionmail.org



This year marked the 5th annual American Legion National Scouting Program Conference. Unlike previous years with telephone conferences, this year was the first ever conference with all Departments invited to

participate in person. It was held in Dallas, TX at Boy Scouts of America (BSA) National Headquarters. The American Legion's National Americanism Commission Chairman and other professional American Legion National staff ran the event in conjunction with the BSA National Alliance Team. This year's American Legion National Scouting Program Conference focused on what it meant to be an American Legion Charter Organization Representative (COR) for a BSA Unit and the new membership policy decision by BSA to include girls in all its youth programs.

The Americanism Commission Chairman surveyed all of the Department Scouting Chairs at the conference and those who called in

via telephone. Of those surveyed, it was 100% unanimous support for the decision to include girls. In keeping with the National Commander's motto of "Family First", incorporating girls will allow entire families to participate in the program. Congress chartered BSA before they chartered the American Legion. Congress's charter to BSA was to develop youth, not just boys. In the same fashion that both men and women serve our nation today, BSA is dedicated to shaping the next generation of leaders in both boys and girls. This is a good thing for the Legion, BSA, and the nation.

BSA provided a new online training course at the conference that both BSA professionals and BSA volunteers would take to become COR-certified. In the American Legion, once the Post charters a BSA Unit, the BSA Unit becomes a subordinate program of the Post like an SAL Squadron or ALR Chapter with the same IRS tax-exempt EIN. For the BSA Units chartered by the American Legion, the COR is the Unit Commander. The COR must be a member of the chartering Post of the BSA Unit.

Other miscellaneous topics discussed were the Department of Florida's proposed National American Legion Eagle Scout pin, BSA uniform

epaulettes (shoulder loops), and how to use the Scouting program to incorporate all other programs of the Post. The Americanism Commission announced that Florida's proposed Eagle Scout pin would be tabled for further discussion, but also insinuated that they were inclined not to designate any national award and would prefer each Department adopt their own awards. It was not set in stone though. Discussion ensued about what color shoulder loops American Legion chairmen are supposed to wear on their BSA Uniform. The conference agreed that Department and Area Scouting Chairmen would wear gold, District Chairmen and Unit CORs would wear silver. The American Legion Unit CORs had the option to wear the individual unit color shoulder boards (e.g. blue for Cub Scouts and green for Boy Scouts) when attending BSA Unit meetings versus BSA District or Council level meetings.

The Department of Florida played a significant part in this first in-person National Scouting Program Conference. We were given ample time to speak on a variety of topics ranging from how to incorporate the Scouting program into all other Legion Post programs, using Scouting for membership, explaining the new federal court

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rulings related to EINs and how to include the Scouting unit financials with the Post IRS Form 990s, and demonstrated our new Department of Florida Scouting Manual and SOPs.

Because of the Department of Florida sharing its new BSA Program Manual and BSA Unit-level SOPs, many other Departments decided to adopt Florida's manual and design on using

BSA as a membership growth mechanism.

The following weekend, I attended the Department of Florida Fall Conference where I provided a Scouting report and taught a seminar on the American Legion's Scouting Program. Many Posts stated they were interested in developing a Scouting Program. We also identified additional ways how existing Scouting Programs within a Post could initiate new Legion Programs such as Junior Shooting Sports. Likewise, I

solicited assistance for a steering committee to create a Scouting event in each Zone within our Department. ATTENTION ALL LEGIONNAIRES: I need your help. In 2019, we need to have one Scouting event in each zone. Scouting was the Legion's first program in 1919 so in addition to the Legion being 100yrs old, so is the relationship between the Legion and BSA. We want to have big events. Please contact me if you are interested.

Getting the Word Out

Bob Colbert, Social Media Chair
socialmedia@legionmail.org



The Fall Conference was great! Many Legionnaires attended our session and the comments were favorable. Now it is on to the holidays. Is your organization planning any

holiday events? How will you get the word out? I know, it sounds like I am preaching to the choir, but are you taking full advantage of the resources that are available?

Remember, you should have a Facebook Group to keep members up to date and a fan page so the others can see you activities. Also, don't forget a WEB page to show your long range plans as well as the immediate events.

Then there is the local media for both a future event plus shouting out what actually took place (especially on the evening news).

Use them all! Our them is "Getting the word out!"

Legislative Committee Formed

Art Schwabe, State Legislative Chair
statelegislative@legionmail.org



Happy belated Thanksgiving and Merry Christmas!

State Legislation is moving in a new direction. We have started a Legislative Committee, comprised of two people from each Area. They will bring your suggestions and resolutions to be discussed, approved, rejected, or sent back for more clarification.

This is where the bullet points will come from when we speak to your State Senators or State Congressional representatives. This is a change from just the chairman making the decisions. Legislative meetings will be at the Fall Conference and Department Convention.

At the first meeting we had over 60 plus people to hear from National Legislative Director Matt Schuman discuss the 'do's and don'ts' when talking to the State Rep. or an aide. Two different approaches are needed.

The following are on the Legislative Committee;
 Chairman Art Schwabe, Vice Chairman Ray (Chuck) Olson

Members: Dave Proch, Jim Brennan, Gene Smith, Jim Ramos, Bob Bobber, Bill Hamblin, Tim Tierney, Barry Roberts, Robert Miller, Art Angelica, Jerry Faight, and Robert Krannig.

Consultants: Ray Nazareth and Larry Roberts. NOTE: Consultants are non-voting members.

We will also have a Legislative council. Two members from each District appointed by the District for voting purposes. If you have ideas on legislative items, please contact your Legislative member in your Area. If you have a resolution, please submit it early, so if corrections are needed it can be done before the dead line. Looking to move forward on State Legislative. We will need your help.



Thank You

Alan Cohen, VA&R Chair
var@legionmail.org



Greetings, fellow Legionnaires. I'd like to start this month's article with a personal and deeply sincere "thank you" for the support I received during what was a bit of a difficult time health-wise. Family; there nothing like it.

These past couple of months have also been challenging due to the severe damage many of our Posts and communities suffered from Hurricane Irma. True to form, the American Legion stepped up without hesitation and went above and beyond in many cases to help in every way possible. At the same time, our various committees continued their hard work. You'll hopefully also read an article written by our Women's Veteran Committee, which has been pro-active in finding ways to reach out to, highlight and assist that segment of our population. The same is true of our Entitlements chairman who has persevered under some

difficult circumstances. It should be noted that the 15th District has organized a dedicated group comprised of both Legionnaires and "civilians" who are aggressively addressing the issue of veteran suicide. I look forward to seeing their successes. While I usually try to make special mention of at least one of our outstanding VAVS hospital reps, this month's congrats go to the Broward County Outpatient Clinic. They received a letter of commendation from the National Deputy VAVS Representative for their outstanding contributions both in volunteer hours and non-cash donations. Way to go, all.

Instruction Offered

Larry Roberts, VA Entitlements Chair
veteransbenefits@legionmail.org

I would like to give a class on why there's a need to help veterans.

- 25% of the homeless are combat veterans.
- Suicide rate for active duty and veterans is 4 x greater than that of civilians.
- 200 + Veterans become disabled every day.
- Over 2 million veterans live without insurance.
- 22 Veterans Commit Suicide a day (8,030) a year.

I would also like to teach about basic eligibility for VA Benefits such as:

- Enrollment into VA health care
- Important Documents for VA Benefits
- What is a "Well-grounded Claim" for Disability Compensation
- Doctors supporting letter

Family and Friends supporting letter

There are countless other topic that can be discussed including:

- Suicide Awareness
- Agent Orange Symptoms
- Death and Burial Benefits
- Florida Veteran's Benefits
- Veterans Preference
- Project VetRelief
- Military and Veterans Discounts

These Class are most affective if the whole Legion Family is there
If you are interested in me coming to your Area/District/Post meetings, please give me a call or E-mail me.



Women Veterans Day Plans

Susi Martinez, Women Veterans Chair
womenveterans@legionmail.org



The American Legion Department of Florida Women Veterans Chair will advocate for Women Veterans by identifying the unique needs Women Veterans face in Florida and ensuring effective solutions are in place. Please join me

in welcoming onboard a valuable new partner in

this endeavor, Co-Chair Celeste Ellich from our 9th District, Post 222 in Oakland Park.

We intend to seek increased access to safe homeless shelters where Women Veterans are provided adequate time and assistance in finding permanent housing especially in areas where affordable housing is scarce. Ensuring these residents are constantly treated with proper dignity and respect while caring for their needs. Adequate accommodations for mothers with children who may also be dealing with domestic violence must be found.

Since Women Veterans are at higher risk for Military Sexual Trauma (MST), Post Traumatic Stress (PTS), unemployment and homelessness, major depression and suicide, these issues must be addressed by providing more information and effective programs designed to assist them with these struggles. Ensuring better care for Woman Veterans will also bring better programs for all veterans.

On the agenda is a plan to create an annual celebration of Women Veterans Day in Florida beginning June 12, 2018, which will commemorate

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the 70th Anniversary of the passage of the "Women's Armed Services Integration Act" signed by Harry Truman on June 12, 1948. This will be introduced as an annual event as a venue to provide information to Women Veterans and bring

awareness to the general public on the valuable contributions Women Veterans make while serving in the United States Armed Services. The American Legion will participate in programs and conferences for Women Veterans to increase awareness while providing information and education on the benefits earned while serving

already available to them while listening to their concerns to identify needs not already being addressed. If you have recommendations for solutions for any of these issues, please contact WomenVeterans@legionmail.org. Continue to Remember the Honorable Service of Women in our Nation's Armed Services, past and present.

Brochures Available

Bob Brewster, Youth Law Cadet Chair
youthlawcadet@legionmail.org



I am back from the Fall Conference. Tom Gora and I spoke about this Program at the General Session. We announced that this year's dates for this Program will be July 8 through July 13, 2018.

The Department of Florida has 1,000 brochures

ready for you, and all you have to do is ask. I also have brochures at my home, and I will have them with me wherever I go. The cost is the same - \$350.00 for each cadet. The application is on-line under Programs on the Department's website. The Post check for each cadet and application should be sent to me directly. My home address is: 2872 Circle Ridge Drive, Orange Park, FL 32065.

Upon receipt of these applications, Tom Gora and I will go over them carefully, and if everything is

OK, we will enter them at Department. If for some reason the application is not correct, we will send the check and application back to the Post from which it came with a letter explaining what is wrong. I have been asked about the cadet driving their own car to Tallahassee. No can do! This is the Highway Patrol's rule, not The American Legion's. To find candidates for this Program, contact your local police or sheriff's office. Many of them will have an Explorer Program. This is where your best kids will come from.

Flagler Veteran of the Year

Post 115



It is with great pleasure that Post 115 announces that Sisco Deen, a 51-year Post member, was presented the Flagler County "Colonel Gary E. DeKay" Veteran of the Year award during the Veterans Day celebration held Friday November 10 in front of the county administration building in Bunnell.

The award is presented each year to an individual who not only served in the military but has also made significant contributions to the community after leaving the Service.

During his years in Post 115, he served as Post Commander, Boy Scout Chairman, Boys State Counselor and was a member of the Boys State Board of Directors. In addition, he has written and

published several books about Flagler County, created a website, and was instrumental in the establishment of a Flagler County Museum and archive collection.

Further, he was involved in the creation of the Flagler County Historical Society's scholarship, in which \$1000.00 is awarded each year to a graduate of one of our county's two high schools. He is presently the Vice Chairman of the Flagler County Centennial Committee, and contributed largely to the Centennial Celebration planning.

Going back to the Revolutionary War his family has served in all the wars with, Sisco having served two tours in Viet Nam. His three sons all served during the Gulf War.

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FLORIDA DEPARTMENT CENTENNIAL COIN





Governor's Awards

Recognizing Paul Martel

Paul Martel receives Medal of Merit award from Florida Governor Rick Scott. Presented in Tallahassee on November 7, 2017.



The News

The American Legion

ORLANDO, THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2017

Department of Florida

EXTRA

Holiday Spirit · Santa's Elf · Office Mischief

EXTRA

LUTHER THE ELF TO VISIT HEADQUARTERS



Department Headquarters received a special letter from the man in red himself, Santa Claus. Turns out Santa has been pretty impressed with all the hard work The American Legion, Department of Florida has been doing for our Florida Veterans. He sends a special thank you to you all for your continued service.

Santa has a very special, scout elf, Luther, whom he will be sending to spend the Holidays with us. Luther will arrive December 1st and stay until December 24th. Luther is special, because he too is a Veteran, and resides in Florida, when he is not working for the big man.

Follow us on Facebook for daily snapshots of his visit, [facebook.com/floridalegion.org](https://www.facebook.com/floridalegion.org).





November 30, 2017 80% Target Report (Currently 71.34%)		
4	Victoria VanBuren	79.72%
11	Donna Artola	79.29%
6	Michael Seidel	75.69%
7	David Tucker	74.25%
16	Raymond Perez	72.81%
2	John Folsom	72.56%
15	Richard Little	71.98%
8	Jerry Faught	70.96%
17	Michael Wolohan	70.84%
1	Raymond Olsen	70.51%
5	Troy Horsley	70.40%
12	Bruce Thurber	69.63%
13	Micahel Raymond	68.59%
9	Donald Schwiesow	67.09%
14	Gary Decker	62.66%
3	Frederick Hutto	60.98%
Eastern	Daryl Bass	73.07%
Central	Jay Allen	72.85%
Northern	Jeffrey Durden	71.43%
Western	James Brennan	70.89%
Southwestern	Dennis Walsh	69.66%
Southern	James Tewes	69.80%
Post 400		74.28%
Post 208		70.18%



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- Cash benefits sent to Legionnaire members diagnosed with cancer
- We send you money – even if you don't have cancer

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"We are truly blessed and thankful for the help! And looking forward to the future so I may pay it forward."
 - Jeff, Army Veteran (pictured above)

LEGION FAMILY Spotlight: POST 63 Challenge 22 Event



American Legion, Post 63 in Winter Garden successfully completed its inaugural event, *Challenge 22*, and raised more than \$12,000 for PROJECT: VetRelief! The event was held on Saturday, November 18th, 2017, with the hopes to bring greater awareness to their community of the alarming 22 veteran suicides that happen every day. Backed by the motto, #22 Until Zero, this fundraiser/5k walk and concert was derived from the popular silkies-ruck walk that have been helping younger veterans cope with post war loss.

Although recruiting and renewing membership is always a goal, the volunteered event committee, led by Ms. Ashley Moir and Mr. Kurt Gies, decided that the event must highlight the epidemic of veteran suicides; which personally impacted their members. The goal was to reach the younger veteran community, and offer help and hope to those struggling with PTSD and life off the battlefield.

"Hopefully this is just the beginning of a nationwide movement of the American Legion to bring awareness to the community behind solving this crisis", said Vice Commander Kurt Gies. "The VA does a good job fixing the broken bones and putting a bandage on the wounds, but because their government, they can't touch the sole or spirit. It's time we put God back into the equation, as our Preamble states 'For God and Country', and God comes first".

They chose PROJECT: VetRelief as the beneficiary of *Challenge 22* and their HOPE is that we can *maybe* deter a veteran suicide by providing financial assistance during their time of need. Ms. Moir and Mr. Gies, along with the committee, have made sure this event can be duplicated by creating a template and established resources so that other Legion Posts could hold a similar event.

If you would like to host a *Challenge 22* or want more information, contact Kurt Gies at americanlegion63@cfl.rr.com

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

As you may or may not know, PROJECT: VetRelief has seen a tremendous increase in the number of financial assistance applications. In fact, when comparing the first 4 months of the fiscal year, we have already seen a 21% growth rate and have given an additional \$11,610.44 in emergency assistance. Those numbers are only going to increase as we continue through the Legion year.

Additionally, the American Legion National Headquarters changed their financial assistance guidelines for their Temporary Financial Assistance program. Now, applicants **must be** an American Legion member in good standing or serving on activity duty orders to be eligible. An applicant must also have a child 17 years or younger and have exhausted all military options for assistance before applying.

The result of these changes will impact PROJECT: Vetrelief significantly by creating an additional financial strain to our program.

We are asking that you help ensure that we are able to continue our mission by making a year-end contribution. As you make your final 2017 tax-deductible donations, please consider the immediate, and in some cases life altering, impact you can make on Florida's veterans, active duty military members, and their families.


Your year-end gift will move us one step closer to reaching our goal of helping one veteran or military family for every work day - that's 260 families. Best wishes for a bright and beautiful holiday season, from our family here at PROJECT: VetRelief.

P.S. You will make a difference with your tax-deductible donation of any amount.



UPCOMING EVENT:

FEB
17 ALR Coral Head
Music Fest - Marathon, FL

	
SUPPORT CASES	
JULY-OCT 2017 TOTALS	
families helped	amount distributed
46	\$42,765.70
*Numbers reflect PROJECT: VetRelief Cases ONLY	

FALL CONFERENCE WRAP-UP

Thank you to everyone who took advantage of the many PROJECT: VetRelief opportunities during The American Legion, Department of Florida Fall Conference. Take a look at *all* of the exciting things that happened!

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Held *very first* Introduction to Post Leadership class
- Trained several NEW VetRelief Advocates
- Hosted inaugural Networking Event for trained Advocates
- Presented during Service Officer School and Legion's General Session
- Received \$13,771.00 during Legion's General Session donation call
- Updated Legion Family membership on changes to National's TFA program
- Awarded Board Vice-President, Bob James, for recent upgrade to Gold Sponsorship Level
- Distributed NEW marketing materials at the PVR Booth

For more information visit our website: www.ProjectVetRelief.org



The American Legion, Department of Florida
would like you to join us for the

Annual Children & Youth Picnic

Saturday, April 7, 2018

12:00 PM *until* 6:00 PM

Live Entertainment **BY D.J. Doc Holiday!**

Activities

Carnival Games
Safety Finger Printing
Bounce House
Vendors
Chinese Auction
50/50 Raffle
Dunk Tank

Food

Cotton Candy
Candy Apples
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Hot Dogs
Hamburgers



Poker Run

Registration starts at 8 AM
Kick stands up at 9 AM
\$10 per Rider
\$10 per Passenger

Cars are Welcome!!
\$10 per Car
\$10 per Passenger
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Fun Carnival Atmosphere for All Ages!!

Picnic Hosted **BY Post 117**

189 Veterans Drive, Palm Bay, FL 32909

For More Information Contact:

Bruce Carl – bruce1955@yahoo.com; (352) 942-7948
Gene Baker – erbaker1957@gmail.com; (321) 693-5178
Or visit www.floridalegion.org

Admission:
\$10 per Person
(Children
under 12 years
old are free!)

Sponsorship Levels:

- _____ Bronze \$25 – Name on Sponsorship Board
- _____ Silver \$50 – Name on Sponsorship Board and Two Tickets to Annual Children & Youth Picnic
- _____ Gold \$100 - Name on Sponsorship Board, Two Tickets to Annual Children & Youth Picnic, and Children & Youth Shirt with Name on it (Cut-off Date for Gold Sponsorship March 9, 2018)

Size Shirt (please circle): Small, Medium, Large, X-Large, 2XL, 3XL

Make Checks out to Post 117, in the memo put C&Y Picnic
Mail Checks to Post 117 – 189 Veterans Dr. Palm Bay, FL 32909

**We need Basket Donations for our Chinese Auction.
Any gifts will be appreciated**

Poker Run Registration:

Post Number: _____

Number of Riders: _____

Hotel Information:

Holiday Inn Express – 1206 Malabar Rd. S.E., Palm Bay, FL
(321) 220-2003
Room Price: \$99 per night

Comfort Suites – 1175 Malabar Rd. N.E., Palm Bay, FL
(321) 369-1234
Room Price: \$117 per night

Mention Post 117 Picnic before March 9, 2018

For More Information Contact:

Bruce Carl – brucel1955@yahoo.com; (352) 942-7948
Gene Baker – erbaker1957@gmail.com; (321) 693-5178
Or visit www.floridalegion.org