



The LEGION LINK

"Lil Leprechaun Fighting For Vets"



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Joe Magee
Department Commander
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Hello Legionnaires,

This month got off with a meeting at Department HQ prior to leaving for the 5th District (Jacksonville). Before I get into the narrative, I need to apologize for a snafu in last month's article. I listed the trip to the Western Area as the Eastern and, equally so, on the respective Commander. I also twisted the District Commanders, sorry guys and to all the members in the Western Area.

Now, back to the 5th District visit, which ran from Tuesday evening through Sunday. On Wednesday, Pearl Harbor Day, we attended a Ceremony at the Fleet Reserve Post in Atlantic Beach, it was very well done and impressive. In attendance was a Pearl Harbor survivor and a World War II veteran.

From then on it was on the road from Post to Post. We figure we put around 1000 miles on the car hitting approximately 13 Posts. I must say the reception of all Posts was above and beyond, however, lasting memories will be Post 137 having a Bagpiper there to greet me and Post 54 with a luncheon that consisted of Irish Stew (made the real way with Lamb) and Irish Soda bread, homemade. We attended Post 9 Christmas Party for the Children, it was so gratifying to watch those young ones interacting with Santa. We visited the Clara White Mission, what a complex and the work they are doing not only for the Local population but for the Homeless Veterans. It is hard to describe my admiration for the Director and her staff. We toured the VA Outpatient Clinic, the Clyde E. Lassen Retirement Center for Veterans in St. Augustine and

the Sulzbacher Center, a full-service rehab center for Veterans, their families and the Homeless. We completed our visit to the 5th with the Commander/President Banquet at Post 197, wow, what a dinner they treated us to. Congratulations to the Staff, members and Officers. We completed the visit at Post 129 and a District meeting, which as always was well done.

From this Commanders perspective, my visit to the 5th District will be one of the most memorable in time while looking back on the year. The reception and hospitality could not have been better. A special thanks to Fred Matthews for running me ragged, he did a super job putting the itinerary together. I would be remiss if I did not report during the 5th District visit we were joined by Auxiliary President Kelli and Sons of the American Legion Commander Steve.

I then returned to Department for a meeting and then off to Bay Pines for a tour. It was very informative and I would like to thank David Miller (an old friend), for putting that visit together. I would like to thank 16th District Commander John for treating us to lunch at Post 125 in Gulf Port. Next up was the 8th District Meeting at Bradenton Post 24, another job well done by Commander Dennis.

I do have to mention on my travels I collected checks for COTA (Children's Organ Transplant Association). A complete list of donors will be read at the Convention in June. Donations are going well but can always be better, so please help out.

Last, but not least, we are now in the holiday season, please be careful while attending parties, driving is a nightmare. Be safe and a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all.





JANUARY 2017	
1	Baseball Team Reg Opens
1	Hannukkah/Chanukah-Final Day
1	New Year's Day
2	Dept Headquarters Closed
4	Dept Membership Goal 85%
6	Renewal Notice Mailing
14	Southwestern Area Ball 🍀
15	Boys State Interviews Begin
15	SS Target Purchase Deadline
15	Post Oratorical Contests Complete
15	Legion Link Articles Due
16	Martin Luther King Day
16	Dept Headquarters Closed
20-23	ALR FL Summit
28	Southern Area Ball 🍀

🍀 - Commander Joe Magee's Attendance
Events are subject to change.



Steve Shuga
1st Vice Commander

Happy New Year to all Florida Legionnaires!

The holidays have nearly ended and our programs will begin to

kick in very soon, but we have a greater task before us that we must overcome and time is not in our favor.

Every Legionnaire needs to renew and recruit as our overall membership status is having a very hard time treading water. For those that have displayed encouraging results, I thank you. Those that are struggling need to reassess their membership renewal plan and re-energize the effort asap.

Now is the time to come to the aid of your American Legion. Do not ask what your American Legion can do for you, but what you can do for your American Legion! Membership is our bloodline and from what has been seen recently, our veins/arteries are drying up.

For those that have not renewed prior to December 31, 2016, your Post access cards won't work, a request to renew your membership by payment of your annual fee is expected otherwise no entry. There is no grace period. We can't stress

(1st Vice Commander - Continued)

enough that your active/renewed membership card carries so much weight. Besides the benefits that most take advantage of, you risk losing your Legion magazine subscription that keeps you educated on what our American Legion is doing worldwide.

It gives you access into your Post, the ability to attend Post and District meetings. It keeps a bunch of Leprechauns and those daring Legionnaire Kilted Irishmen from visiting. It also encourages you to stay on board, keep our American Legion healthy, happy, and gives you the ability to ensure your/our voices are heard throughout the legislative branches at all levels of government. Remember it is our strength in numbers maintains open communication with those that serve as elected officials on our behalf.

We can do this, it's not hard at all, but it appears presently to be that way. There are several Posts within our 16 Districts that are struggling to reach their membership goal. It should be easy to renew your members in a timely fashion. The sooner you reach your goal - 100 plus % then you can focus on other programs, activities, and plan for another successful year. We all must "Stop the Slide" backwards. Remember - Membership is everyone's responsibility. If we each recruited one (1) new member, our Department total would double.

We have enjoyed the bragging rights for being the largest veteran service organization of the Big 6 but we are sliding backwards rapidly each year. I can't imagine what our American Legion will look like if we drop to record lows and then lose those bragging rights that we have been accustomed to for decades. Please help each other to renew, regain and recruit! I hope that February's report will bring good news. Your Department Officers are available to assist - Just Ask!



Dianne Boland
2nd Vice Commander

Greetings,

For the last few months I have been talking about the Florida Legion College. Your time is running out if you have not already applied. The deadline for submitting you're your application,

(2nd Vice Commander - Continued)

including \$200 registration fee is February 1st, 2017. The Florida Legion College runs February 16 - 18, 2017. I hope to see you there. If you have any questions concerning the course, contact the Department Legion College Chairman Ton Gora (our current Department Sgt-At-Arms) or myself.

Last month I described the use behind the training cards that I am passing out. I am not getting many requests for certificates but I hope the District Commanders and/or the Area Commanders are still giving some training at each of their District meetings. At each meeting, you should be training on at least one topic. There may be a lot of old-timers attending the meetings but there also may be someone relatively new to our organization or someone who hasn't been involved in a while.

As always, the Florida Department Website floridalegion.org and National's Website legion.org have a wealth of knowledge about the American Legion, our programs, our history, our people and a whole lot more. When you have the time, you should browse to see what's available.

If you have any comments, questions, concerns, or suggestions I would like to hear from you.



Rick Johnson
3rd Vice Commander

Hello Legionnaires. I hope you all had a great Christmas and New Year's. Well, we have a lot going on in the next 6 months. Oratorical

is coming up soon and I hope your Post, District and Area Commanders have gotten these young adults together for the contest. There will be a lot of deadlines coming up the next few months so let's get those applications filled out and sent in. There will be a lot of events coming up as well, such as the Southwestern Area Ball and the Southern Area Ball in January. See the calendar on the Department website for the place and time. I need the Department Chairman to ensure that they are contacting at least down to District level on their programs. The programs are what keeps our organization strong and will get stronger in the future. When this article is out, we will have a new President and Congress. I hope the future of our great nation will come together as a family and not fighting back and forth all the time.





(3rd Vice Commander - Continued)

We will be marching on our State Capital this month on issues concerning the Veterans and their treatment that they have been getting, or not been getting.

It is also time to start planning for the Annual C&Y Picnic in Palm Bay April 1st 2017. The flyer is on the website. We need sponsors and gifts for the auction. So, anything you can do will be appreciated.

So, with that all being said, please have a great new year, and let's work together in making Florida the best in the Nation and thank you to all our family members on what you do and continue to do. Let's give the gift that keeps on sharing all the time; "Membership to this great organization". If there is a special event going on, please let me know and I will try to be there.

Thank you for all you do and continue to do for our veterans and their families. God bless you and God bless this great country of ours.



Dennis Boland
NEC

Immigration and Customs Enforcement estimates that there are 11.5 million illegal immigrants who currently reside

within the U.S. The Department of Homeland Security, Office of Audits stated that each year more than one million aliens attempt to illegally enter the United States without proper documentation or enter legally and violate the provisions of their visa. Aggressively tracking foreign nationals is a deterrent to terrorist activities and failing to effectively utilize the available systems and technology to track illegal aliens threatens the security and future of the U.S.

The American Legion urges Congress to adopt an immigration reform policy which emphasizes border security against those individuals attempting to enter this country illegally and internal tracking of all resident aliens and illegal immigrants

The American Legion opposes legislation that would result in the granting of amnesty and legal residency, in any form or by any name, to illegal immigrants currently in the United States.

(NEC- Continued)

The American Legion encourages the federal government to provide the needed resources to enforcement agencies tasked with curtailing illegal immigration in this country and encourage the Congress of the United States to mandate that the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Student and Exchange Visitor Information System continue and be aggressively administered by the responsible agency of the federal government.

The American Legion encourages the Congress of the United States to provide agencies of the federal government with the necessary resources to track the arrival and departure of foreign nationals to the United States.

The American Legion encourages a thorough background check and interview for each candidate for a U.S. visa prior to issuing said visa.

The American Legion encourages Congress to authorize and fund the securing of the borders and points of entry in the United States by: construction of physical barriers; hiring a sufficient number of U.S. Border Patrol Agents; federalization of National Guard troops to assist border security operations; searching all vessel and their cargo arriving at our seaports; enforcement of existing laws and passing of new laws to reduce the illegal immigrant population; and the funding of the Department of Homeland Security to ensure its effectiveness in securing borders of the United States.



Tom Gora
Sgt-at-Arms

"You will guard especially against the loss of one of The American Legion's greater possessions, our deep and abiding spirit of comradeship."

I wish to make one correction to the report on the 2016 Fall Conference published in the December 2016 Legion Link. The colors at the general session were advanced and retired by four Department Assistant Seargent at Arms, representing their various posts, and not by Post 286. At the 2017 Annual Department Convention, there will be a special category competition and award for color guard units of American Legion Posts that are located within a correctional facility in the state of Florida. These units can compete in either one, or both of the competition categories

(Sgt-at-Arms- Continued)

by video. The video file must be compatible with WMV (Windows Media Video), and submitted on a USB flash drive. ***Please note that as a Legion representative you should not attempt to bring a video camera in to the correctional institution without advance permission. These facilities do have video cameras that they use for multiple reasons, so the facility may choose to use their own camera to record the video, and you are advised to follow their rules. Deadline for video submission is Thursday, June 1, 2017.***

Thank you to the 32 members of the Legion and Auxiliary that attended the Sgt.-at-Arms Class at the recent 2016 Fall Conference. Among many questions raised during the class was the issue of wearing military rank by members of color guard units, or other Legionnaires wearing military rank on their uniform hat or shirt. As we all should know, the Constitution of both The American Legion, and the Department of Florida, in Article II, state; "rank does not exist in the Legion; no member shall be addressed by his military or navy title in any convention or meeting of the Legion." This I believe is intended as stated, to prevent addressing Legionnaires by the military rank they once held. The American Legion is a civilian organization and within the organization officer positions are recognized by titles, not ranks. A Legionnaire in good standing can run for any Legion office, regardless of what rank you previously achieved in military service; remember, there is no rank among us. However, many Legionnaires proudly wear the military rank they achieved in the form of a pin or a patch on their official Legion cover as a sense of pride and many also wear awarded decorations on their uniform shirt; and I believe there is nothing wrong with doing so.

American Legion rules for Color Guard Units allow for there to be a "Commanding Officer" of the unit as a functional leader of the unit. This does not mean the Commanding Officer assumes a military rank such as "Captain of the Color Guard." The title of "Commanding Officer" simply indicates that he or she is the leader of the color guard unit during ceremony. As I explained above many Legionnaires do wear the military rank they achieved on their cap or shirt as a matter of pride. When it comes to color guard units the term "Commanding Officer" of the unit is not a "rank," it is a functional title.

I would also like to thank the 20 members who sat for the American Legion Extension Institute Class and to Nancy Thomas for co-instructing the class with me.





Steve Newman
Chaplain

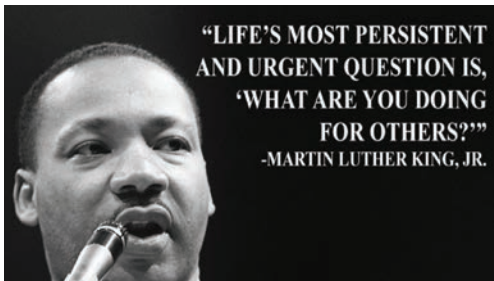
Greetings and a big hello to my American Legion Family.

First of all, I want to express my sincere appreciation for all your thoughts and prayers on my behalf during what was a very difficult time for me. I would like to say that I am doing much better now. I really appreciate all your prayers that you all have given me.

I hope everyone had a very joyous, blessed, and wonderful holiday season with your family and friends. At some point we should stop what we are doing and take a break and remember what the holiday season is really about. Sometimes we get caught up in the hustle and bustle of everyday routines and really don't spend a moment on what everything really means. We have to remember that God plays a major role in all our lives. It is because of Him that we have those things that are important to us. He is with us always through thick and thin, good and not so good times. All we have to do is ask Him for His love and guidance and to be with us.

Now, with it being a new year it would be a great time to start anew. I want to let you know this will be my last year serving as your Department of Florida Chaplain. I pray and encourage each one of you to search in your heart for some of you to serve as Department Chaplain. It has been a great honor and blessing to serve as your chaplain for the past four years. You can always count on me to assist you whenever I can.

May God shower you with His grace, love, and blessings in your dealings with the many challenges that I am sure will come your way during this upcoming year always remember this: *be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go. Joshua 1-9.*



Larry Sheets
Judge Advocate

Thank you to all of those who attended the two-hour session with National Judge Advocate, Phil Onderdonk. Phil Onderdonk spoke on various subjects and answered numerous questions from attendees. It was very apparent that he really, knew the material and will be an excellent resource of information. Attendance for the session was great and we hope to do this again in the future.

Post Constitution and By-Laws are finally coming in for approval, as well as the SOP's for the American Legion Riders Chapters. Please note ALR Chapters: moving forward you need to adopt your own Chapter SOP, and mold it around the Department SOP. Remember that the American Legion Riders are a program of the American Legion, not their own organization, therefore Chapter Constitution and By-Laws will no longer be accepted, you will need to create a Chapter SOP.



Jerry Brandt
Membership

Comrades,
To start with, Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. May all your wishes for the upcoming New Year be granted.

We are currently down in membership this year by 7,000 members. As of December 7th, the 80% goal, we have 60 Posts that have achieved this goal. Last year we had 87 Posts making the 80% goal on time. Please reach out to your membership and remind them what the American Legion does and that we need their membership to continue our good work. If you need assistance with your membership, please reach out to me.

Also, work with your SAL and Auxiliary members to bring the family in. The next Renewal Notice will be mailed out on January 1-6.

I would like to thank the following Posts for achieving the 80% goal. Well done. **These are the 60 Posts making the 80% goal.**

(Membership - Continued)

1st District, 3 Posts
Post 402, Panama City
Post 378, Gulf Breeze
Post 66, Panama City

2nd District, 2 Posts
Post 172, Hosford
Post 272, Blountstown

3rd District, 3 Posts
Post 215, Jasper
Post 68, Madison
Post 234, Monticello

4th District, 6 Posts
Post 166, Homosassa
Post 58, Dunnellon
Post 236, Williston
Post 354, Ocala
Post 230, Hawthorne
Post 237, Beverly Hills

5th District, 4 Posts
Post 372, Jacksonville
Post 102, Hastings
Post 202, Keystone Heights
Post 194, St. Augustine

6th District, 5 Posts
Post 409, Avalon Park
Post 76, Tavares
Post 330, Leesburg
Post 347, Lady Lake
Post 243, Oviedo

8th District, 2 Posts
Post 254, North Port
Post 69, Avon Park

9th District, 5 Posts
Post 142, Pompano Beach
Post 209, Dania
Post 310, Hallandale
Post 308, Hollywood
Post 223, Davie

11th District, 3 Posts
Post 367, Royal Palm Beach
Post 141, West Palm Beach
Post 268, Riviera Beach

12th District, 6 Posts
Post 177, Cocoa
Post 200, Satellite Beach
Post 181, Gifford
Post 189, Sebastian
Post 394, Palm Bay
Post 1, Titusville





(Membership - Continued)

13th District, 4 Posts

- Post 397, Fort Myers
- Post 405, Punta Gorda
- Post 404, Marco Island
- Post 38, Ft Myers

14th District, 7 Posts

- Post 145, Islamorada
- Post 29, Miami
- Post 144, Miami Lakes
- Post 32, Hialeah
- Post 133, Palmetto Bay
- Post 31, South Miami
- Post 43, Homestead

15th District, 5 Posts

- Post 108, Lutz
- Post 246, Sun City Center
- Post 389, Ruskin
- Post 111, Tampa
- Post 186, Spring Hill

16th District, 1 Posts

- Post 275, Dunedin

17th District, 4 Posts

- Post 187, Deland
- Post 259, Debary/Orange City
- Post 127, Lake Helen
- Post 293, Interlachen

My upcoming schedule:

- January 7th, 14th District Meeting
- January 14th, S.W. Area Ball
- January 21st - 22nd ALR Summit
- January 28th, Southern Area Ball
- February 2-4, Western Area Revitalization
- February 4th, 3rd District Meeting
- February 9-11, 5th District Revitalization
- February 11th, 1st District Meeting
- February 16th – 18th, Florida Legion College,
- February 17th, 15th District Dinner
- March 2-4, Central Area Revitalization

Please let me know if you need assistance with your District.

January 4, 2017

85% GOAL

DEPARTMENT MEMBERSHIP



Sid Damsgard
Central Area Commander

There are a couple of events upcoming in the Central Area, beginning with a grand

reopening of Post 104 Pinellas Park's canteen. Post 104 is located at 7550 60th St. N. Pinellas Park Fl. 33781. After extensive remodeling of the Post they are ready to unveil their new look. If you have been to the Post in the past you will find that now there is a bright and friendly atmosphere. With windows, a new coat of paint, and redone flooring, the social area has become a place where you will feel welcome and right at home. Job well done by the entire Legion Family.

Next, there will be a District Commander and President's Dinner and auction to benefit Boys and Girls State transportation. This event will be held at American Legion Post 139. Post 139 located in the 15th District at 3818 W. Bay Vista Ave. Tampa Fl. 33611. Save February 18th to attend this dinner. Ticket price is \$13.00 per person cocktail hour starting at 1800hrs. Auction and door prizes to begin after dinner. These events may be found on the Legion web site under calendar of events.



John W. Rose
Northern Area Commander

Hope you all had a great holiday season. We have some programs that we need to focus on. Oratorical Chairman will be

having their local contests. Boys State will be conducting their interviews and selections. We all need to help one another continue our membership efforts to meet and exceed the goals. Use the Legion Family at your Post to assist one another.

Congratulations to the following for achieving the recent membership goal

3rd District

- Post 215 Jasper 96.552%
- Post 68 Madison 96.429%
- Post 234 Monticello 95.238%

4th District

- Post 166 Homosassa 112.727%
(Northern Area Commander- Continued)
- Post 58 Dunnellon 89.085%
- Post 236 Williston 86.400%
- Post 354 Ocala 86.335%
- Post 230 Hawthorne 85.185%
- Post 237 Beverly Hills 84.646%

5th District

- Post 372 Jacksonville 123.288%
- Post 102 Hastings 100.000%
- Post 202 Keystone Heights 97.260%
- Post 194 St. Augustine 83.333%

17th District

- Post 187 Deland 100.000%
- Post 259 DeBary/Orange City 84.444%
- Post 127 Lake Helen 81.176%
- Post 293 Interlachen 81.053%

District Commanders are now visiting your Posts. Commanders, please let them know of problems and let them assist. The entire Department Membership team is here to assist in helping you to reach the 100% goal. Continue to use social media to let others know of events and the great work Posts are doing.

Again, working together we will let all know how great we can be.

Thanks for your continued support.



Andy Burkett
Southwestern Area Commander

Hello from the Southwestern Area

I hope everyone had a great Holiday, but now it is time to go to work on membership. As everyone is aware, membership is what we need to keep our Legion strong. We need to start making phone calls to talk to our member and see why they have not renewed yet, maybe they need help. Let's start talking about membership. If you need help, your District Commanders and I are here to help.

SOUTHWESTERN AREA BALL

January 14, 2017

5:00 PM
POST 323



Jim Brennan
2nd District Commander

The American Legion Family 84(Post, Auxiliary, Chapter) hosted a Christmas Dinner for at risk Veterans and their families on Dec. 11, 2016. The local Elks Lodge donated their hall for the event. The VA Clinic arranged the transportation for about 130 individuals. The menu consisted of turkey, ham, mash potatoes/gravy, stuffing, dinner rolls, string beans and deserts. The VA handed out boots, back packs and other goodies.



Frederick Matthews
5th District Commander

November and December were active months for the Posts in the 5th District. Posts 197, 244, 137 with their respective Units, SAL's and Riders, marched or drove in the Annual Veterans Day Parade in Jacksonville. Following the parade each of these Posts held an open house to welcome veterans, active duty, and the community to our American Legion family.

For both the Thanksgiving and Christmas Holidays, several Posts in the 5th District prepared meals for homeless veterans, sponsoring Thanksgiving events at the Post home, such as the annual event at Post 197 for Veterans and Seniors, which took place on November 20th. As well as the Children's Christmas Party at Post 9 where, Department Commander Joe Magee participated in handing out candy and toys with "Santa" on, Saturday, December 10th.

Speaking of Commander Magee, December began with the annual Commander's visit to the 5th District. Accompanied by his "aide" Pat Magee, the Commander visited 17 of 19 Posts in the 1,000 mile range of the 5th District in 5 days. The Commander was able to meet directly with Post membership who would openly talk about their issues and offer suggestions directly to him.

The week began at Fleet Reserve Branch 529 for the Annual Pearl Harbor Remembrance Ceremony in Mayport, Florida. Over the next 4 days, Commander Magee visited the new apartment

(5th District Commander - Continued)
complex under construction for homeless veterans at the Clara White Mission, the medical care available for homeless veterans at the Sulzbacher Center, both in Jacksonville, and the Clyde E. Lassen Nursing Home in St. Augustine.

Notable on the Post visit trail for the Commander was the multi-million reconstruction of American Legion Post 37 in St. Augustine. This facility, when completed in late 2017, will be a showcase and a "must stop" visitor location for the American Legion in Florida.

The Commander's visit to the 5th District was capped off with the Commander's and President's Ball at Post 197, a breakfast gathering at Post 233 in Ponte Vedra Beach, and the monthly meeting of the 5th District at Post 129 in Jacksonville Beach.

The 5th District includes four counties with 19 Posts and attached Auxiliary Units and ALR Chapters and SAL Squadrons containing more than 8,000 members.

Our monthly District meeting for January will be hosted by Post Commander Dick Rowe of Post 250 in Middleburg, Florida. Look for pictures of this visit on the 5th District Facebook page.



Commander Magee visited the Clara White Mission in Jacksonville, where the members of Post 197 presented a check for \$800.00 to furnish a new apartment for homeless veterans in the District. Mission Director JaCoby Pittman welcomed the members from the 5th District.



Commander Magee with Post 37 Commander Michael Barnes, Department President Kelli Becraft, District President Robbin Walker and District Commander Matthews, tour the multimillion dollar renovations underway in St. Augustine, Florida.

(5th District Commander - Continued)



Post Commander Hugh Harris and the members of Post 401 in Hilliard, Florida welcomed Department Commander Joe Magee to their Post home.



Post Commander Harold Sanders and the members of Post 202 in Keystone Heights, Florida welcomed Department Commander Joe Magee to their Post home.



Bruce Thurber
12th District Commander

American Legion Post 117 entered a Float in the Health First & The City of Palm Bay Light Parade Honoring our Veterans.

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS



On December 3rd, this true life American Legion Family re-enacted the feeling of a Veteran Coming home unexpectedly for the holidays. As they repeated their performance at the many stops along the route crowds cheered beyond belief. The soldier in the doorway is a combat wounded veteran and a member of Post 117.

facebook.com/floridalegion





Alan Cohen
VA&R Chair

Greetings fellow Legionnaires. It's with great pleasure that I begin this article with special recognition and thanks to

our own Robert Schmidt, member of Post 58 in Dunnellon. Bob is a 40 + year member of the American Legion and has been a volunteer at the Gainesville V.A Hospital since the 1980's. Even now, despite having lost much of his eyesight, you can find Bob at the hospital sitting with veterans, joking and chatting about their times in the military. Thank you for your continued service and unselfish contribution, Bob.

On another note, I'm pleased to share with you that at our recent Fall Conference we graduated 57 Legion Service Officers, a large percentage of whom were first timers. With the growing Veteran population in the State, they will be so valuable in having a positive impact on the lives of our brother and sister Veterans and their families.

Lastly for this month, I'd like to reach out to everyone, especially those Legionnaires in the 15th District. We're still looking for a full-time VAVS rep for the James A. Haley V.A Hospital in Tampa. Having spoken with several people, the "right" person has yet to be found. Please take a moment and if you know or know of someone who has the spirit of volunteerism ask them to reach out to me or to Jay Allen, 15th District Commander.



Andrew Nagy
Centennial Chair

Department is asking all Area and District Commanders to appoint a member to be part of

the Centennial Committee. As of right now, our Western Area Chairman is Chuck Olsen from Post 347 and at large member, Tim Tierney of Post 347. National has tasked us with an additional responsibility. They are asking that we also find and post any memorials from any era. We are asking that the Legion Riders help us out as they ride all over the state and might see or know of some memorials that we are unaware of.

I have checked the Centennial site in the last few

(Centennial Chair- Continued)

days and more photos are coming in, now we just need to add more history to the site. Posts need to provide a photo of their Post, charter date, how the Post was named with a brief history of the named person(s). Also, any major person or events the Post participates in and Post history.

We have approximately 296 Posts with only a hand full having a full entry on these sites. Let me tell you about a few Posts with a very nice history.

Post 14 in Sarasota in 1926 established a children's hospital for crippled children. Our Department for many years helped Post 14 hold a TV Telethon to raise funds for the hospital. Post 14 has a perpetual seat on the board of directors for the hospital. John Hopkins now owns that facility.

Post 252 in Seminole has for many years fed over 200 hospitalized veterans from Bay Pines VA. This takes over 100 volunteers to put organize, including Department Officers. The Post starts preparing about a week in advance. One of the fondest memories they have comes right out of basic training with the peeling of potatoes.

This is not bragging, it's our history. How proud am I to be a member of this great Department that gives back so much to our community. Let us all be proud and let the world know what a fine job we do.

I will be available 24/7 to answer question and give you any help I can.



Sid Damsgard
Children & Youth Chair

A reminder, April is Children and Youth month with the Children and Youth picnic on April 1st at

Post 117 in Palm Bay. Fliers are available on the Department web site. We hope this year's event will be as successful as last year. Any help you can give is greatly appreciated. To date we have \$11,000 to be divided between all the groups to support the charity of their choice. This year The Auxiliary will be donating their portion to Beads of Courage, Sons of the American Legion to Special Olympics and Legion to COTA. Your sponsorship will help these worthy causes.

(Children & Youth Chair- Continued)

Our Children and Youth coin design has been completed and should be ready any day. As soon as they come in we will make them available to those who want them. Thanks to everyone for your continued support of The Children and Youth programs. Keep doing the things you do for the Legion, together we are strong; divided we fail.



Tom Gora
Legion College Chair

At the Executive Committee meeting held on November 20, 2016, a motion was made and carried to create a Florida American Legion College Committee. This committee will be responsible for developing the curriculum for the annual college class, monitoring the class, and selecting instructors. Members of the committee will consist of the Department Adjutant, the current Department Commander and 2nd Vice Commander, rotating on an annual basis, and two Legionnaires appointed to five year terms.

The next Florida American Legion College Class is scheduled for February 16-18, 2017, and further information including applications can be found at the department website at <http://www.floridalegion.org/news-events/florida-legion-college>.



Arnold Makovsky
Finance Chair

Report on Department finance audit

A Department audit was conducted by a professional outside agency at the request of the Finance Committee and top officers of the American Legion. It's been many, many years since an audit of this magnitude has been performed. The audit came out very well. It took over six weeks, working five days a week, to be completed and I would like to give a personal thanks to Mike Speck, Dept Comptroller and naturally Bobbi Halle, our Finance Director, for putting in many extra hours.

LEGION LINK ARTICLE SUBMISSION DEADLINE - JANUARY 15, 2017



Jim Day
Legion Riders Chair

What a busy 2016 we have had. The Legion Riders started out strong with the 2016 Florida Legacy Run and finished out the year with the PVR Round Robin. I am humbled and amazed at the strength and support of our Legion Riders and Legion Family.

Congratulations to District 5 for winning the PVR Round Robin Trophy. The organized multiple rides and pushed the online registrations and pulled in an amazing amount of points. District 1 by far raised the most \$\$ and put up a valiant effort, and have vowed to take not only the PVR Round Robin trophy back but the C&Y MGR (Merry go Round) trophy in the Spring. Good luck to both, however, I think you may have some competition, as the smaller Districts were right on your tailpipes.

Coming soon in 2017:

- The 1st Florida ALR Summit & Expo will be Friday the 20th of January to Sunday the 22nd of January. Registration is coming in and classes are getting organized. Vendors are lining up to support our first year. Space Coast



Harley Davidson has stepped up with amazing support and is giving us a leather jacket for every 50 registrations. Congrats to our ALR Chaplain Diane Tucker for winning the 1st jacket. Agenda will be out soon on the floridalegion.org under Legion Riders and ALR Summit.

- Summit will be followed by the 2017 Florida Legacy Run. Starting near Lady Lake on the 25th of February and ending in Jacksonville on Friday the 3rd of March. We will be riding around 250 miles per day and stopping at 2 or 3 Posts per day. Everyone is welcome to participate for the whole ride or just a portion. This year we will be cutting down the Post stops and encouraging all Posts nearby to come and support the Legion Riders and the Legacy Scholarship, by coming to one of the Post stops. Route and registration will be up soon on the webpage under 2017 Florida Legacy.

(Legion Riders Chair- Continued)

- 2017 Florida ALR Rally. Will be at the end of the 2017 Florida Legacy Run in Jacksonville. The last day of the Legacy Run will kick-off the Rally. District 5 has great things in the works. One of the plans is to ride down to St. Augustine and spend the day touring and visit the remodeled Post in downtown. Registration and t-shirt order forms will be online under 2017 Florida ALR Rally.

Communication has been a little light this year. Chapter Directors should be communication with the District ALR Chairman who need to relay the information to the Area ALR Chairman who need to pass that information on to the ALR Vice Chairmen and the ALR Chairman. This is vital to keeping everyone informed on events and rides. The current list of Florida ALR Officer can be found floridalegion.org under Legion Riders.

Directors, if the officers have changed or have not been updated since the last elections: please go online and get the officers updated. The form can be found on floridalegion.org under Legion Riders and Officer Report.

Due to the increased volume in Department ALR Events statewide the ALR Vice Chairman position will be increased to 2 members. The Northern half of the state will be Jim Wineland (Northern Area Chairman) and the Southern half will be Manny Ayala. I believe this addition will help with communication and strengthen the growth of the Florida ALR.

The Florida ALR SOP will have some changes coming. Per the recommendation of the ALR Committee the following officers must be Legion Riders as defined by The American Legion National Resolution #32: Director, Assistant Director, Sgt-at-Arms and Road Captain. What does this mean? It means that these offices must be occupied by: a licensed/endorsed owner/operator of a motorcycle of no less than 500cc. Exception is made for the following reasons: the owner/operator has given up motorcycle ownership due to medical reasons or reason beyond their control. The person is a spouse of a owner/operator. The survival of the Chapter is in jeopardy. In the event the survival of the Chapter is in jeopardy the minimum owner/operator officer requirement will be lowered to 3. The Chapter must notify the ALR District Chairman immediately if they drop below the officer requirement.

The end of November I had the pleasure of getting up to Panama City to wish our very own

(Legion Riders Chair- Continued)

“Goat” Mike Kirchoff a happy 70th Birthday. Jim Wineland, JD Givens, Julie “Ziva”, Buddy and Jenn made the run with me. The idea was to make the run from Melbourne to Panama City and back to Melbourne in 1 day. Well, we made it to Panama City (460+ miles) and got to say Happy Birthday. The trip back however turned out just a little too cold (40* @ 70mph) so, we overnighted in Madison about 1:30am and made the trip home in the morning. I want to thank you guys for attempting this with me. Next crazy idea will be when it’s warmer.

I hope everyone has a great Christmas and safe New Year. I look forward to seeing many of you in January at the Summit.



Eunice Butts
Post Development Chair

Happy New Year to all and I hope that you had a very Merry Christmas.

May this year bring all the best to everyone in their personal and American Legion life. We have three Revitalizations schedule for 2017. Tallahassee/ Pensacola February 2nd thru 4th, Ft. Lauderdale Post 222, February 24th thru 25th and Central Area which includes the 7th, 15th and 16th Districts on March 2nd thru the 4th. I encourage each of you to please submit the requires information that the Membership Chair shared with you. If you have any questions, please contact me at 813-247-4267 or Jerry Brandt





David Miller
POW / MIA Chair

I hope everyone had a very Merry Christmas and have a Happy and joyous New year. Due to some medical issues, I didn't get my December link article in so I will combine it with this issue.

Our Pow-Mia program is very strong in the Department of Florida, almost all of our Posts have a Pow-Mia table setup in their Post home and display a Pow-Mia flag as well. We must still get involved in the issues of bringing all our missing troops back as well as any POWS from any war or conflict. That is our responsibility as Legionnaires and proud Americans. I visited several families of former POWS and families who have no idea where their loved ones are over the holidays. It really opens your eyes as to how strong these families are to keep up the faith and hope to find their missing or captured spouse, daddy or grandpa. Tears will come to your eyes as you speak with these families. I would appreciate if everyone would hit their knees at the beginning of the New Year and say a short prayer to give these families hope and compassion.

Once again, I am available for any ceremonies or flag dedications at your Posts, Districts or Area events. We are still working on our Pow-Mia black and white dinner programs that will be held at several of the Area Balls this year. Please contact me if you are interested. My info is listed in the Department roster. Keep safe and I hope everyone is ready for a great and productive New Year for yourselves and your families.



Diane Schmidt
Public Relations Chair

"Local Heroes at Christmas."
How safe are you and your family this holiday season? You

just never know when or where tragedy will occur. Are you prepared? Have you communicated to your family and friends what to do in the event of a disaster? Is your Post really ready? Are you prepared to handle these mishaps or accidents?

Past Department Commander Jim Ramos just announced Wilderness and C.P.R. training available to Legionnaires beginning in January/February. Christmas Post #328 learned just this

(Public Relations Chair- Continued)

week that their own Sgt-at-Arms, Dave Lockhart is very aware of importance of such training. His son, Derrick, and another boat Captain from Midway Airboat Rides responded to a frantic call from another Airboat. It had capsized in the St Johns River- a river of alligators. They quickly responded and provided emergency care to a victim who was unconscious. They knew the area; they had training.

Do we always know what to do? Training is knowledge. Knowledge gives us the confidence to respond quickly to what could be a tragic situation. You can't afford not to be well informed. Sometimes things are out of our control; unknown territory is difficult to navigate. What would you do? When we served in the military, we took care of our buddies. We were trained; we knew what to do. We had a plan. Let us now be there for our family and friends. We are still serving. We are their heroes.



Paul Martel
Legislative Chair

I have been remiss in not having my reports to all of you, I have been traveling, and as

many of you know, I am not a computer guy so on the road I have a problem. I want to remind all of you that with the election there may be NEW congressman in your districts, either in state or in Washington. As soon as you can, please get in contact with your local office, make an appointment with the congressman/representative or their legislative aide. Get to know them or reaffirm your friendship, be the person they will call when they need a question explained, be a friend.

There will be a lot going on in our state very soon, you will be asked to assist, I will keep you all informed and beg you to get on the train when it starts rolling. I am sure your Post is all set up for January 1st 2017, tax freedom for food and beverages at your Post.

May I say, (rather late) Have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year and May God Bless.

CONGRATULATIONS, PAUL MARTEL
NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER



Larry Roberts
VA Entitlements Chair

A lot of Veterans do not know if they are eligible for VA benefits. All Information is from the Introduction to Veterans' Benefits School FDVA Gulf War, Agent Orange Registry Programs.

Veterans who served in the Gulf War (August 2, 1990 to a date not yet established) or, who claim exposure to Agent Orange during the Vietnam War (between 1962 and 1975), or atomic radiation, or Veterans treated with Nasopharyngeal (NP) radium during military service, are provided with free, comprehensive medical examinations, including laboratory and other diagnostic tests deemed necessary by examining physician to determine health status. Eligible Veterans do not have to be enrolled in VA health care to participate in registry examinations. Results of the examinations, which include review of the Veteran's military service and exposure history, are entered into special computerized databases, called registries. These databases assist VA in analyzing the types of health conditions being reported by Veterans. Registry participants are advised of the results of their examinations in personal consultations and by letters. Veterans wishing to participate should contact the nearest VA health-care facility for an examination. The VA operates a toll-free hotline at 800-749-8387 to inform Gulf War Veterans about VA programs, their benefits, and the latest information on Gulf War Era benefits.



Bob Brewster
Youth Law Cadet Chair

I hope that all of you had a very blessed Christmas and wishing everyone a Happy New Year. Now, let's talk about the FL American Legion, Youth Law Cadet Academy.

All of the paperwork you need is on the Department of Florida website under Programs. You can find the program's information under the Youth Law Cadet tab, which is the last program on the dropdown menu. You can get brochures explaining this program from Department. I will



(Youth Law Cadet Chair- Continued)

talk to Department this week about sending out these brochures to every Post, and if not, at least to the Districts. The actual applications can be downloaded off the Department's website, or you can request them from Department.

At this past Fall Conference, both Tom Gora and I talked about this program from the podium, and we showed off our slightly bright counselor shirts at that time. I am not sure, but I think these shirts glow in the dark.

This year we must have a minimum of 15 cadets, and we will cut it off at 25 cadets. It looks very likely that the 5th District will have some cadets attending this program. If your Post is interested, let us know as soon as possible. The cost is the same (\$350.00 per cadet). The family or post personnel are responsible for transportation to and from the academy.

Registration is Sunday, July 9, 2017, from 4:00 PM to 5:00 PM. I will be there no later than 3:00 PM, so if any of you want to get there early, it will be OK, but do not arrive before 3:00 PM.

Where do you find kids for this program? Answer: Talk to your local police force and the highway patrol officers in your area, and then the schools, churches, and youth groups. This program was very well received by those who attended last year. In fact, two of those students who attended last year have already asked if they could attend again this year. We will only let them attend if we need them for our initial 15 cadets. All of us who attended last year were really impressed by the way the cadets, who had never met before, suddenly became a cohesive unit. We, the counselors, also learned a lot from the teachings of the staff. I am so impressed with this program that I will continue to work for this program for as long as I am asked to.

One last comment, our kids did so well during the firing phase of the program that our instructor took the cadets' targets down the range to where the Florida Highway Patrol candidates were firing because our cadets were out shooting them (this really happened!).

If you have any questions, please contact me at 904-272-1619 (home) or 904-635-4492 (cell).

Bert Hodge Post 45
Supports Early Voting



Four members of Bert Hodge Post 45 in Palatka, FL supported the early voting poll site in Putnam County on multiple days. They also worked at various county polls on election day, Nov 8th. They are Lester Sheppard, Stan Owens, Greg Andries and Chuck Gauthier. Also pictured is Charles Overturf Jr, director of the Putnam County election polls.



Visit Your Local Tax Office and get yours today!

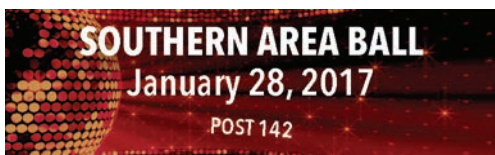
Proceeds benefit Veterans and their families in the State of Florida.



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USE BOOKING CODE:
AMLR or AMERICAN LEGION RIDERS

Visit floridalegion.org
for more information.





"If they are remembered, they are not gone truly, they simply change duty assignments and are amongst the best."

POST EVERLASTING

Edward Joseph Miller
Past Southern Area Commander

Ed was a Korean Army Veteran and a member of Tomas P. Johnston Post 222, with 34 years of continuous membership.

Ed also served as a Department of Florida Past Southern Area Commander. He was from Ft. Lauderdale, FL and 86 years of age.



Louis Berrios
Past Post 243 Commander

It is with deep sadness, love and respect that Post 243 announces the passing of their Past Post Commander Louis Berrios on November 11, 2016.



Rene H. Stachelrodt, Jr.
Past Dept Scholarship Chair

Rene H. Stachelrodt, Jr of Ocoee, FL passed away on November 17, 2016, at the age of 82. Rene was a Department of Florida Past Scholarship Chairman. Rene is survived by his wife, Lois.

Rene was a Korean Air Force Veteran and a member of Post 19, with 46 continuous years of membership.



Joseph C. McKinney
Past Post 88 Chaplain

It is with extreme sadness that Post 88 reports the passing of beloved Post 88 Chaplain (Padre), S1c Joseph C. McKinney, USN WW2.

James E. Graves III
Post 372

James E. Graves, III passed away Wednesday, October 19, 2016, in Jacksonville, Florida, at the age of 89. Born in Apalachicola, Florida to the late J.E. Graves, Jr. and Verna Eloise Marks, Jim moved to Jacksonville at an early age and it was home for most of his life. He is survived by his sons Jim, Frank and E.A. (Lynda), six grandchildren, three great grandchildren and his beloved Yorkie, Tebow. He was predeceased by his wife Betty, brother Harry and one granddaughter. Jim was a graduate of the University of Florida and a life-long Gator fan.

He served in the U.S. Army in Korea and in various capacities as a reservist for 30 years earning the rank of Colonel. He was a graduate of the Army War College and the Naval War College.

While Jim served as a leader for several civic and social organizations during his life, he was most honored to serve as a Lay Leader and Sunday School teacher at Lakewood United Methodist Church for many years.





THE AMERICAN LEGION

DEPARTMENT OF FLORIDA

2017 PROGRAM CALENDAR

DECEMBER

- 19 Employment Award Nominations Due to Department
National Employer of the Disabled Nominations
Employer of Older Workers Award
Employer of Veteran Awards
Employment Service Awards
- 23 Boys State Registration Fee Deadline

JANUARY

- 1 Baseball Team Registration opens
- 15 Posts Boys State Chairman receive Boys State
Registration Material/begin conducting interviews
- 15 Shooting Sports Target purchase Deadline
- 15 Post Level Oratorical Contests must be completed
- 20-23 ALR Summit

FEBRUARY

- 5 District Level Oratorical Contests must be completed
- 11 Special Olympics Florida Polar Plunge - Statewide
Fundraiser
- 24-26 Boy Scout Cracker Trail
- 26 Area Level Oratorical Contests must be completed

MARCH

- 1 JROTC Cadet of the Year Scholarship Application
due to Department
- 1 Eagle Scout of the Year Scholarship Application
due to Department
- 1 FL American Legion General Scholarship Applications
due to Department
- 6 End of Year Forms mailed out to Post Commanders
(CPRs, Officer Reports, Award Info)
- 11 State Oratorical Contest at Department
- 16 Boys State Delegate / Alternate Online Registration Closes

APRIL

- 1 Medical & Nursing School Scholarship Applications
due to Department
- 15 Teacher of the Year Nominations due to Department
- 22-23 National Oratorical Finals in Indianapolis
- 25 Firefighter / Law Enforcement of the Year Nominations
due to Department
- TBD ALR Legacy Ride

MAY

- 1 National CPR & Department Addendum CPR
due to Department
- 1 Children & Youth Fund Requests due to Department
- 15 Baseball Insurance Purchase deadline
- TBD Florida ALR State Rally

JUNE

- 6 Post Officer Report due to Department
- 18-24 Florida Boys State
- 20 Baseball Official Team Roster deadline

JULY

- TBD Baseball State Tournament
- 9-14 Youth Law Cadet Academy



PROJECT: VETRELIEF

A PROGRAM OF THE AMERICAN LEGION, DEPARTMENT OF FLORIDA



THE CHALLENGE CONTINUES...

During the Fall Conference in November, the PROJECT: VetRelief Challenge was revealed. **If your Post has not received your packet, please contact your Area and District Commander.**

The Challenge is simple - raise \$1.00 per member of your Post!

The PVR Challenge Goal is based on the Membership Goals provided by National. For example, **Post 208's** Membership Goal is **2,507**, therefore the Goal is **\$2,507**. This goal can be reached by a Post making a one-time donation for their Goal amount, or several donations given throughout the year. All individual donations submitted from your Post between **July 1, 2016 and May 31, 2017** will automatically go towards this Legion Family Challenge.

- ★ **Donations can be sent to:** PROJECT: VetRelief, 1912A Lee Road, Orlando, FL 32810
- ★ **Donations must be turned in by May 31, 2017** to count towards recognition awards
- ★ **Money raised during Post fundraising events** will also count

Each month we will post a leader board of all donations received and which District is leading the way. Looks like the Sons 15th District is out ahead! **Thank you to the following Posts and Squadrons for jumping on board and participating during our Challenge!**

	DISTRICT	POST	CITY	DONATION	PVR GOAL	GOAL %
SAL	15	148	Riverview	\$1,000	142	704%
	14	29	Miami	\$3,000	476	658%
	1	221	Niceville	\$1,000	333	300%
	1	382	Navarre	\$1,000	406	259%
SAL	12	117	Palm Bay	\$476	196	243%
	3	59	Branford	\$70	41	171%
	9	92	Hollywood	\$300	254	118%
	9	385	Pembroke Pines	\$233	233	100%

For more information and Challenge materials, contact Jennifer Cooper at jcooper@floridalegion.org

CASE REPORTING:

July 2016 - November 2016

- ★ **PVR** - 50 families
\$39,574.25
- ★ **TFA** - 17 families
\$24,512.91*

*Monies given through the TFA Program are raised and distributed through The American Legion National Headquarter's Children & Youth Program. Department only facilitates the paperwork.

"I want to express my admiration for your local service officer Loretta Young who walked through the debris of a hurricane to conduct a personal interview and went to extraordinary lengths to expedite my request."

- Army Veteran



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

