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From Your Department Commander Steve Shuga

commander@floridalegion.org



Happy New Year! Time to put those festive occasions behind us and quickly get refocused on making our **Membership Retention a Priority!** Those currently delinquent with your membership renewal must be immediately addressed! Now's the time to Renew your Membership so we can retain all our members from last year (2017).

The first 6 months was a rapid ascent that raised our hopes and fears from meeting many legionnaire families, setting goals, participated in the National ALR Legacy Run, attended the National Convention in Reno, Nevada, and then dealt with a major hurricane that caused much damage, loss of power, that forced us all to once again show the world that Floridians are resilient to these types of tests that mother nature sends our way. Truck loads of relief aid, and recovery/rebuilding supplies arrived daily for roughly 2 months from all over the United States. We thank you all for the thoughtful and caring people that helped – assisted us during our time of need. Rest assured that Florida will have your back when the next disaster strikes.

I completed visits to the 3rd, 4th, 5th, 9th, & 12th Districts, and I hosted our National Vice Commander of the Southeast Region Bobby Bryant (OK) visiting Posts in the 6th, 8th, 13th, and 16th Districts to include memorials, national cemetery, state nursing home, and VA Medical Centers.

I am now preparing to launch into a very aggressive visit schedule amongst many other planned activities in the coming months. Reminder that American Legion Baseball Registration kicks off as of January 1st, Florida's American Legion College is 11th – 13th, Florida's ALR Summit II in Cocoa Beach is 19th – 22nd, visitations with Posts of the 6th and 12th Districts, an official visit of our National Commander Denise Rohan (WI), and Boy's State Registration Fees (\$450) due on the 31st to round out the month.

My New Year's Resolutions included:

- ◇ A 100% Plus Membership year for Florida!
- ◇ Fulfilling our Pledge to Support our Florida American Legion Programs.
- ◇ To end this term filling our shoes with the next generation of American Legion membership who are willing and able to carry our legacy forward as we prepare to end the first century of service to our communities, states, and nation.



JANUARY 2018

26-2	Dept Headquarters Closed	
1	Happy New Year!	
1	Baseball Team Registration OPens	
3	Membership Goal 85%	
11-13	Florida Legion College	🔴
14	Dept Commander Visits District 12	🔴
15	Dept Headquarters Closed	
15	Martin Luther King Jr Day	
15	Legion Link Articles Due	
19-21	2nd Annual ALR Summit	🔴
20	15th District Executive Board Meeting	
21	Dept Commander Visits District 6	🔴
21	Post Oratorical Contest Deadline	
27	Southern Area Ball	🔴
31	Boys State Delegate Fees Due	

It Can be Done!

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



Greetings:

I hope everyone had a chance to relax a little and enjoy the holidays with their families because now is the hardest part of membership; the last few months. The year seems to start out strong but as you get towards the end,

it gets harder and harder to reach your goal of 100%. But fear not, it can be done.

Have you been calling or sending out letters to your Post 400 members? Have you been calling your own Post members who haven't paid their dues yet this year? What about those who didn't renew last year or the year before? A phone call might do the trick. What about a membership rally? Remember, if you do one, be sure and get your Auxiliary, Sons of the American Legion and Service Officer involved. Keep your District Commander informed. Attend local community events, look for the Veterans – get a conversation going – “Just Ask”.

Need more help? Once again, “Just Ask”. There is your District Commander (of course), the Area Commander, the Zone Commander, your

Department Membership Chairman and last but not least, your Department Post Development/ Revitalization Chairman. All are here to help you attain your membership goal of 100%. National can also get involved with a Post Revitalization.

This year we have been asking you to try and get your members email address as well as their phone number. This will help in future years to contact your members when necessary however, there has been a misunderstanding. This information as well as their birthday is nice to have but, it is NOT mandatory. If you don't get this info, send the cards in anyway.

You also need to make sure you keep track of your programs; the paperwork side of them. You need to collect the cost and number of hours for each program as they progress monthly. That way it's a lot easier to fill out the CPR's and Addendums at the end of the year. These are due by May 5th.

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

Last chance this year - the Florida Legion College will take place January 11 – 13. The prerequisite (the old ALEI Course) is now called “Basic Training”. It is still being taught at the Convention and Fall Conference plus you can still take it online thru National (www.legion.org). It is now FREE – no charge.

🔴 - 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.

Do you have a special, program, area or district event you would like to share?

Send details to legionlink@floridalegion.org.

Keep Moving

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



Happy New Year my Legion Family, I hope that Santa was nice to all of you. A lot of great things have happened in December, by giving to our Veterans and the kids, once again have been taken care of with all

the family chipping in and doing their part. Our National Vice Commander visited Florida and had a great week visiting numerous Posts and facilities throughout the state. I want to thank the 13th District, 8th District, the Southwest

Area, Post 347 and 373 by showing him what we are about. I think he learned as much from us as we did from him. December is past us now and we have reached our half way point. This is the time when we have to work extra hard to obtain membership within our great organization. We have that special gift that keeps on giving year in and year out.

Legion College will be taking place this month and as of now looks like we might have a record breaking attendance. Thank you for stepping up to learn more about how the Legion works.

I have visited a lot of Posts these past six months and I'm amazed on what is going on out there.

There are so many great people stepping up and taking charge and doing the right thing. Taking care of our family is the best gift that we can give however, communication is still lacking between Posts and the Department. There are so many Posts doing great things, but no one knows until after the fact, so PLEASE let's get the word out. Contact Carrie at Department and she will be glad to put your information on the website, so we can be informed of all the great things that are happening out there.

MyLegion.org is still not being utilized like it should. We still have Posts out there who have not used it all year and we still have one District

Continued on Page 3



2nd Vice Commander continued from Page 2

that has never logged in. This is such a great tool National provides for us and by not using it, we are wasting a great opportunity to get expired members and 400 members to join local Posts.

So, with that being said, Happy New Year my Family and let's work even harder to make Florida #1 in the Nation and show the other 54 Departments the way it is supposed to be done. Until next month...TANK OUT!

Race to the Top

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



To Start with, Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. I hope you had a great time with your family and friends. Always remember, when we were young, we were often away from home, in places that are a threat to our country, family and friends, remember, the troops

who are now Standing The Watch.

The Beginning of the New Year is coming up, the Western Area and Northern Area Commanders are planning training for those who wish to move up in their posts and into the District in the next few months. District Commander's, please reach out to your Area Commanders to schedule training, this is important for the Officers for next year, even if they continue in the position they currently hold, and a good time to bring up those who someday will take over.

Membership, March 31st is coming up for the Race to the Top, this is what is seen as of December 7th.

- * 1st District is at 73.45% needing only 1,564 renewals for 100%, Already Renewed 4,307 members
- * 2nd District is at 72.79%, needing only 360 renewals for 100%, Already Renewed 952 members
- * 3rd District is at 61.38%, needing only 670 renewals for 100%, Already Renewed 1,062 members
- * 4th District is at 80.46% needing only 664 renewals for 100%, Already Renewed 2,728 members
- * 5th District is at 71.68%, needing only 2,162

renewals for 100%, Already Renewed 5,435 members
 * 17th District is at 72.51%, needing only 992 renewals for 100%, Already Renewed 2,610 members

Districts Commanders, please contact those Posts who are behind the curve ball and see if you can assist them. Get your Vice Commanders to assist, this is part of the Vice Commander's Training.

Do not forget the upcoming events, Post Oratorical Contests and Boys State Delegate Fees are due this month.

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

- January 1st, New Year Day
- January 1st, American Legion Baseball Team Registration opens
- January 3rd, Membership Goal of 85%
- January 11th – 13th, Florida Legion College
- January 15th, Martin Luther King Jr Day
- January 19th – 21st, ALR Summit,
- January 21st, Post Oratorical Contest Deadline
- January 27th, Southern Area Ball
- January 31st, Boys State Delegate Fee due to Department

Temporary Financial Assistance

Dennis Boland, National Executive Committeeman
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The American Legion's Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA) program provides non-repayable grants to children of service members currently serving on active duty or to children of veterans who are members of The American

Legion. These grants help maintain the basic needs of those children, such as shelter, utilities, clothing, food and medical care, when their parents or guardians are facing financial challenges. It can only be granted after all other forms of financial assistance available to them have first been applied for, or have already been denied. As the name implies, the TFA program is designed to give a temporary lift to children adversely affected by circumstances in the home.

A landmark program created through The American Legion's Endowment Fund, TFA was established as a means for The American Legion to provide direct aid to children of qualifying veterans. Through TFA, a Post can call upon the national organization to lend a helping hand to children for maintenance or medical needs.

It is the responsibility of the Legion Post or Department involved to make every effort to secure assistance for the children from its own resources, or from other organizations or agencies within the community. The Temporary Financial Assistance programs provides a safety net when all other means have been tried and exhausted.

Payments from the program may be made to, or on behalf of the family to pay a variety of expenses necessary to maintain the health and welfare of the children involved.

Maintenance grants may not be used for debt incurred prior to the date of application, unless

the debts are utility or shelter expenses. Maintenance grants may be used for:

- Food
- Shelter – rent or mortgage payment
- Utilities
- Clothing

Medical grants must be approved prior to any debt being incurred. These grants may be used for:

- Medical care
- Surgery
- Dental care
- Pharmaceuticals
- Hospitalization
- Nursing and convalescent care

Since January 1, 2017 through December 1, 2017 The American Legion Temporary Financial Assistance program has helped 49 Florida families in the amount of \$68,951.86.

**Applicants must also have a qualifying child (under age 17), that resides in the home.*



Guidelines

Tom Gora, Sergeant-at-Arms
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HAPPY NEW YEAR AND BEST WISHES FOR HEALTH AND HAPPINESS IN 2018!

In this article I will respond to questions received during the Sgt.-at-Arms Class conducted at the 2017 Department Fall

Conference. At all classes I inform those present that I present "guidelines" while also cautioning that every guideline does not necessarily work the same at every Post. A "guideline" is defined as a rule, principle, or piece of advice. The physical difference in the size and configuration of all post meeting halls is the best example why guidelines are used so that necessary adjustments can be made based on local conditions to set up a meeting. The American Legion, and the Department of Florida recognize that each Post is unique, and leaders have different management styles. To accommodate these differences leaders are given some latitude provided they adhere to National, Department, and Post Constitution and By-Laws. As a Department Officer I do appreciate when members pose questions about why we do the things the way we do, this helps us review and research to ensure our documents, lesson plans, and procedures are current and accurate. Questions asked at class means our members are attentive, and always looking for ways to make sure we're doing things the right way. Before we go through the questions, please be reminded what Department By-Laws say about meetings and ceremonies.

DEPARTMENT OF FLORIDA BY-LAWS, ARTICLE X, SECTION 18: "Each Post shall use and follow The American Legion Post Officers Guide in conducting its meetings, initiation of members and other ceremonies prescribed therein."

I often hear this is the way we did it in the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Coast Guard, etc. WELL, NOW YOU ARE IN THE AMERICAN LEGION, we have our own Officers Manual and Ceremonies Guide, our own protocols. The Department of Florida Sgt.-at-Arms manual is based on research, national requirements such as Resolution 288, the U.S. Flag Code, and what

practices are observed at the posts, and districts, here in Florida.

Question 1. Which way does the POW/MIA empty chair face when being draped with the POW/MIA flag, or chair back cover, at meetings?

Resolution 288 requires "designating a POW/MIA empty chair at all official meetings." The resolution does not address the direction which the empty chair should face. The 2017 "Post Officers Guide and Manual of Ceremonies" states the crest of the POW/MIA faces the audience when placed on the empty chair. I have watched this ceremony performed at the National Convention several times, and the empty chair is placed as if a person sitting in the chair would face the audience. In majority of post and district meetings I have attended the past few years the chair faces the audience. I recommend the chair face the assembly or audience at all Posts in the Department of Florida whether a POW/MIA flag or the chair back POW/MIA drape is used.

Question 2 – When displaying a POW/MIA flag on a pole inside the post, where should it be placed, immediately to the right of the American Flag, or in line with the organizational flags? The diagram on page 3 of the Sgt.-at-Arms handbook has it next to the American Flag.

The Legionnaire who posed this question also provided the regulations concerning the POW/MIA Flag passed by Congress and addresses display of the POW/MIA flag over federal buildings on six national observance days. Departments and agencies of government as well as other non-profits have their own unique way of doing things or "protocols". The practice of flying the POW/MIA flag on the same pole outside is followed by posts that I have visited; i.e., the POW/MIA flag smaller in size, is below the American Flag.

Okay, Sarge, we get that, but what about the POW/MIA flag on a pole, inside the post at times other than meetings? Where does it go? Inside the American Flag, or in line with our organizational flags? The American Legion organizational flags take precedence in display over other non-American Legion flags and banners, such as the POW/MIA flag in the same flag line. Don't get upset, I am not saying the message of the POW/MIA flag is not important, only saying that it does not take a position of precedence over American Legion organizations flags at our ceremonies. The

American Flag of course has the highest priority when on display with other flags. A correction will be made to the illustration on Page 3 of the Sgt. at Arms Manual. And remember, The American Legion Resolution 288, requires a POW/MIA flag to be placed on an empty chair at all meetings of The American Legion. Great question, I hope the answer does not disappoint.

Question 3 – A bible at meetings, open or closed, can we drink or not?

THIS IS A MYTH. The American Legion Post Operations Guide states no beverages are to be consumed at any official meeting. A bible, open or closed, has nothing to do with determining whether alcohol can be consumed at any meeting of The American Legion, or its' subsidiary organizations. The National Officer's and Ceremonies Guide, the Department of Florida Sgt.-at-Arms Handbook, and the Chaplain's Handbook do not require a bible as part of a meeting's opening or ending ceremony. I believe the only mention of a bible is for presentation of a bible to a deceased veteran's family. (For the record, I have no personal objection to a bible being present at a meeting, many Chaplains carry one, it is just not required, and has nothing to do with determining whether you can drink at a meeting).

Question 4 – When do we address the flag when leaving or entering a room during an official meeting or ceremony?

Addressing the flag (salute) is required when leaving or re-entering a session in which the American flag is addressed during the opening and closing ceremony, such as a Legion meeting. National guidelines call for the Legionnaire to go to the center of the room to address the flag when leaving or re-entering the room. Again, common sense must prevail here. Some address the flag at their chair, some do this at the door, or you can go to the center of the room, all are correct, common sense prevails as long as you respect the flag.

In closing, I will share some advice I received from a Past 5TH District Commander when I first became a Post Commander some 10 years ago. That District Commander, Bob Brewster, advised me; "Past Post commanders and many others will tell you their way of doing things. I recommend you first read the Officers Guide and other manuals and then determine whether the advice you have been given is correct." Ten years later, that is still good advice and I pass that same advice to you.



Battling PTSD

Barry Roberts, Chaplain
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Happy January and New Year! It is hard to believe that 2017 has ended. So many things to reflect upon. Irma paid us and unwanted visit, but The Department of Florida received and distributed many supplies food and relief!

We had our first ruck sack Vet Relief event at Post 63 in Winter Garden and it was a huge success in fund raising and reaching out to the community. Our National Chaplain Robert Vick opened the ceremony with a powerful prayer and Vice Commander Kirk Gies and his team did an

amazing job! I have hopes of our American Legion Family embarking on this new outreach for our veterans and communities through out the state.

In 2014, the latest Veterans Administration study available, indicates more than 7,400 veterans took their own lives, accounting for 18 percent of all suicides in America.

Those with PTSD experience one or more of the following: major depression, mood disorders, anxiety and manic episodes. This is due to trauma and long term exposure of the stress hormone cortisol. Many lack in normal coping skills and feel helpless and they see suicide as a coping mechanism. Even with our first event at Post 63 I have had several veterans tell me "I cant tell the VA or employer counselor how I feel, I don't want my name on a list or have the government come after

my guns".

This is a serious problem and I am on a mission to bring forth outreach through the American Legion that will allow our veterans to experience the camaraderie of support they feel is missing.

Please join with me in this outreach , lets have an event in your area and follow up with a PTSD seminar and workshop support!!!

We have also created a new The American Legion, Department of Florida Chaplains' @floridalegionchaplains page on Facebook. This is a work in progress but designed for ministry outreach on social media. Please join us in devotions, prayer requests or spiritual inspirations we can share with each other to encourage you and lift you up! God Bless you! I am here to serve you!

Centennial

Gerry Kaufman, Historian
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Welcome to 2018!! We now have twelve months until our 100th birthday party. Last month I posted the user name and password for the Centennial website in an attempt to make it easier for individual Posts to add their information to the website. You can do a lot with the Centennial

website, like post your historical pictures, old and new news articles pertaining to your Post or add historical documents and add time line events both old and new. If you are having a hard time with the website, please do not hesitate in calling me. I will walk you through it. If you do not have access to a computer, please let me know. Most times we can coordinate with your District Commanders to get you access to a computer or I can handle some of it for you. We still have 146 posts that have no pictures or history on the website.

This year at the National Convention in Memphis will be the beginning of our 100th anniversary and

the Department of Florida would like to be well represented not only on the Centennial website but also in how our Posts are celebrating this momentous event. The Post Historians are the front line in maintaining and documenting our history. If you have never put an annual Post history book together I can get information to you with examples, but the final product is up to you as the Post Historian. Please do not forget that there is an award giving by the Department of Florida at our annual Convention for the best Post history book. Those entries are due in June. I hope all of you have a fantastic 2018 and I look forward to seeing you in June.

The Magic Number is 20

Fred Matthews, Membership Chair
membership@legionmail.org



That's right, as you read this The Department of Florida is 20 percentage points away from 100%! Thanks in a big way is due to the 4th and 11th Districts who have continued to set the pace for the Department by hitting the 80% -plus mark on time. They are separated by 0.17 percentage points.

In 3rd position is 6th District Commander Michael Seidel at 77%. Michael and his 11,000 plus members are pacing themselves to move into 1st or 2nd place as Posts 21, 330,63,52, 219,35, 112, 347 and 243 have all hit better than 80-plus % and climbing. We are awaiting the (AD)DMS returns from National that will give an even bigger bump

to their numbers in the coming weeks. By the way, Groveland Park Post 239 is on a "Mission from G..." as they have now doubled their membership in just 5 months! Small Post, Great Future of Service ahead!

20% separates us from the 100% goal. District and Area Commanders, we need to take another look at those Posts that are struggling and find out what we can do to help them. We've discussed and trained on the Membership and Revitalization tools available. Along with the programs that our Posts are now in the process of carrying out, increasing their membership strength is at the top of the list. One possibility: a District Membership Team. Its purpose would be to take a look at the one or two Posts in your District that are struggling to get their numbers up and assist them with letters and calls to those delinquent members and get them to re-up.

The 100+ Posts are as follows:
 1st District: 78 and 33 | 2nd District: 84, 114 and

172 | 4th District: 56,166,314 | 5th District: 372 and 102 | 6th District: 239 | 7th District: 34 and 396 | 8th District: 74 | 9th District: 233 | 11th District: 62, 188, and 367 | 12th District: 406 | 14th District: 168 and 145 | 17th District: 187

By the time you read this 5 Posts in the state should have reached the 100% mark: 215-Jasper, 390-Wellington, 299- Moore Haven, 99-Brooksville, and 115- Bunnell.



Congratulations to the members of Post 271 in Tequesta on reaching their 70th Anniversary as a Post in the American Legion of Florida. Post Commander Jimmy Josko and Vice Commander Dave Pietrafese lead a great team of Legionnaires!



Thanks and Well Wishes

Jay Allen, Central Area Commander
centralarea@legionmail.org



I would like to thank all the Posts that had a Thanksgiving Dinner for all the veterans in their communities. We're keeping the Legion in front of everyone's mind by showing that The American Legion is here serving the Community, Veterans and the homeless. We are even signing up new members.

We here in the Central Area want to wish everyone very Happy Holidays, keep it safe, keep it fun and most of all keep in the spirit of helping the less fortunate in the community. Remember to make time to support the local Food Banks, Toys for Tots and plan those Christmas dinners for the Community, Veterans and the homeless.

Lego & Play-doh Drive

Donna Artola-Wallace, District 11 Commander
11thdistrict@legionmail.org

As the Holiday season approaches, we have been doing a Lego and play-doh drive for St. Mary's Children's Hospital. So far we have collected from Legion Families Post 20 and 277. This drive is for the Children and Youth program. We are collecting for the holiday season and all the way till April, which is Children and Youth month.



Post 277 Donation

Again, April is Children and Youth month, this is when we will be having our family fun day, which is open to the whole Legion family. There will be food, games, raffles, 50/50, and prizes.



Post 20 Donation



Palm Beach Children's Hospital

I want to congratulate Posts 62, 188, and 367 for being at 100% +. GREAT JOB!!!! All other Posts are on their way. Keep up the good work!

Busy New Year

Jeff Durden, Northern Area Commander
northernarea@legionmail.org



I hope everyone had a great Christmas and Happy New Year. Now is the time to start working on the members that did not renew due to the date on their card. Call them and remind them that they are now delinquent,

and we need them to renew as soon as possible. You should have sent in your Boys State monies to Department by now but if you have not, the cutoff date is the 31st of January. The Northern Area Ball will be on March 3rd, 2018 at Post 129 in Jacksonville Beach. Information is on the Department website. Check the calendar for upcoming events such as District, Area and Department Oratorical contest. The block of rooms for Department Convention is now open.

Good Reports

Raymond A Perez, 16th District Commander
16thdistrict@legionmail.org

On December 9th we held our first family meeting which included the Legionnaires, Auxiliary, Sons of American Legion and Riders. We had a great turnout with many VIPs including Wayne Wooten the Central Area Riders Director, Jay Allen the Central Area Commander, Kirk Miller the Past Detachment Commander of FL and Past NECA. Tom Klinger the SAL Central Area Commander, Randy Collingsworth, Detachment of FL Chaplain, and George Steger the Detachment of FL Sergeant At Arms.

From the Auxiliary we had Michelle DeGennero, 1st Vice President. Dee Bell Department Legislative Chairman, Jane Hardacre, Department Americanism Chairman, Marge

Reed Department Girls State Chairman, Cheryl Adams Department Assistant Sergeant At Arms, Marion Vick, Past District Chaplain, Past District President and our Legion National Chaplain Bob Vick who is also our 16th District Chaplain.

It was good to hear the positive reports coming from our Posts. Leading in membership is Post 275 with Post 104, Post 119 and 173 breathing down their necks, all over the 80% mark.

Post 343 and Post 252 are closing in and will be there next report.

Post 7, Post 14, Post 46, Post 79, Post 119, Post



ALR Summit and Other News

Jim Day, American Legion Riders
legionriders@legionmail.org



Welcome to Winter and cooler weather. The Florida American Legion Riders have a very busy schedule the next few months. The 2nd Florida ALR Summit is rapidly approaching, the PVR Round Robin Trophy has found a new home for a year, the MGR Trophy will be up for grabs in April and the FALR Unity Ride is in April as well.

I want to say THANK YOU to Mike "Goat" Kirchoff for his service to not only the FALR but the National ALR. His knowledge and support are invaluable. It was announced at the Fall Conference that I will be taking his place on the National ALR Committee as a member and representative of the Southern Area. I have big shoes to follow and will do my best to continue our FALR roll and keep working "For the Cause, not the Applause".

January is rapidly approaching and the deadline for the ALR Summit hotel is coming soon. Reservations will still be accepted based on availability. If you have not booked your rooms, you may want to get on it.

International Palms Resort and Conference Center in Cocoa Beach: group code of AMR18. The cutoff date for reservations is December 18, 2017. The number for reservations is 1-800-206-2747.

This year we have added some extra classes and are happy to announce PDC Jim Ramos will be teaching a CPR class geared to ALR members and gear we can pack to help in an emergency. Also, coming back will be the National ALR Chairman Bob Sussan. We have many guest speakers and some great new classes. The new tracking sheet will be introduced by Beverly Wooten (who has worked many hours to perfect it), Department Commander Shuga will be onsite and helping teach core Legion principles, and many others eager to step up and share their enthusiasm and programs. The registration is once again \$10, this covers the manual and cost of the meeting rooms. Registration is open at: <https://www.floridalegion.org/programs-services/legion-riders/special-events/1st-alr-summit/>. Please register before January 15th, 2017.

The PVR Round Robin was very tight this year. District 5 had to give up their bragging rights and pass the trophy on to District 1 (which now has both the MGR and PVR trophies) District 5 was proud to point out they will always be the 1st District to host both at the same time. District 6 was a dark horse that came in 2nd place and has vowed to steal the MGR in April. Awesome job riding and raising funds

for Project Vet Relief: miles 5,000+, hours 1250 and \$3,400. Congratulation District 1, you better watch out for that six!

I also want to thank Jim Wineland and Jim Bowers for jumping in with both feet to help plan the 2018 FALR Unity Ride. In 2018 we will be taking the Florida In-State Legacy Run to new levels and expanding into other states. The ride planning is almost complete, and the hotel list will be released soon. We will be riding to Georgia to Andersonville for Korean War remembrance, over to Alabama for a USS Alabama visit, then on to Mississippi (surprise visit to a military museum), down a portion of the Natchez Trace, then on to Louisiana. While in Louisiana riders will have the opportunity to visit New Orleans. Then back into Alabama and the panhandle area ending in Panama City. We will have riders from all states joining and hosting lunches and dinners. It's going to be a great adventure out spreading our FALR motto, "For the Cause, Not the Applause". As with the past ride, ALL are welcome to join in, for any time you have available. Come out and support and help us promote The American Legion and our great programs. This year the funds raised will be split between the National American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund and Florida American Legion Programs.

Let's keep that roll going and keep building the Florida ALR.

1 Pint Saves 3 Lives

Donna Artola-Wallace, Blood Donor Chair
blooddonor@legionmail.org



As the holiday season approaches let us think about giving the gift of life. By donating just 1 pint of blood you will save the life of 3- yes 3!

This is such an easy program to work, if you don't have a chair for the blood program, now is the time to appoint someone.

Donor's Blood Type

	0-	0+	B-	B+	A-	A+	AB-	AB+
AB+	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
AB-	✓		✓		✓		✓	
A+	✓	✓			✓	✓		
A-	✓				✓			
B+	✓	✓	✓	✓				
B-	✓		✓					
0+	✓	✓						
0-	✓							

Patient's Blood Type



Scouting

Rick Hewett, Scouting Chair
scouting@legionmail.org



Hello, Legionnaires! This time of year is amazing; Family, friends, food, festivities- there is always something going on. It seems like time speeds up from November to the first of the New Year. Same for the Scouting

program! In December, your Legion Scouts were well represented at the BSA Central Florida Council Jamboree in Kissimmee, FL December 1st-3rd. There were at least five American Legion-chartered Scouting Units there throughout the Jamboree. This was the first Florida Jamboree and it will occur every two years. There were several Army and Air Force static displays with vehicles, helicopters, weapons, EOD gear, and drones as well as county sheriff SWAT vehicles, first responders, etc. There were 3-gun (airsoft) shooting competitions, Native American dancing, obstacle courses, zip lines, zoo exhibits, live alligators, climbing/repelling walls, and STEM zones. The STEM zones allowed kids to build and program robots and do chemistry and physics experiments. "BattleBots" (Comedy Central and ABD TV show) was there with their lead engineer bot teams. There was an epic tournament all day long ranging from "ant weight" all the way up to the big guys. It was a day of clashing carnage buttressed by young engineer minds. Families also witnessed a lumberjack show sponsored by Duluth Trading Co and Stihl. The lumberjacks had competitions including pole climbing, log rolling, and ax and chainsaw skills. The Jamboree had

a concert with a national billboard artist and a professional fireworks show as well. Our Legion Scouts were there with approximately 6,000 other people. It was a good time had by all.

American Legion Central Area chartered Boy Scout Units put on a traditional campfire program for the long-term residents at the James A. Haley VA Hospital in Tampa on December 9th. There were several Post-chartered Cub Scout Packs and Boy Scout Troops. These units brought their unit flags proudly announcing their American Legion charters for display. The Central Area Boy Scout Chairman and myself ran the event. The Department of Florida POW/MIA Chair assisted with the opening ceremony by incorporating our Resolution 288, POW/MIA flag, and empty chair. We had a campfire in their dining room (stacked wood, battery operated lights/fan for fake fire) and performed skits, songs, and run-ons like we would at any outdoor evening campfire event. I shared with the residents our Legion legacy of veterans leading Scouting units for nearly 100 years and the programs contributions to our enduring national security and generations of leaders and productive citizens. We ended the program by presenting the VA Hospital a plaque from the American Legion Central Area and BSA Greater Tampa Bay Area Council and singing "God Bless America."

On December 16th, American Legion-chartered BSA Units dispersed across the state, along with the rest of the nation, to place wreaths on the grave markers of our veterans. This is a longstanding tradition. Our Scout Units do just that for our Posts-they are out front serving in the community. Seeing a young man in uniform, honoring our fallen, learning to serve his country, invokes powerful emotions from parents, Post

members, and the community.

REMINDER: Posts that charter BSA Units, please have each of your BSA Units submit a copy of their BSA Journey to Excellence (JTE) reports to scouting@legionmail.com. Just like the American Legion, BSA has annual membership requirements. Every BSA Unit submits for re-charter every year with their membership rosters. BSA also has a similar unit performance tracking report called JTE. JTE (similar to the Post's CPR) is rolled-up by BSA National and briefed to Congress, just like our American Legion CPRs are briefed to Congress. Congress chartered both our organizations and we, in many respects, are the father units of most BSA Units. The American Legion is the largest non-religious charter organization of BSA Units nationwide.

REMINDER: American Legion Eagle Scout of the Year packets are due in March. Applications are at the www.legion.org/scouting website. A Boy Scout must have earned their faith's religious emblem award as a Boy Scout to qualify. If your Eagle Scout does not have their emblem at this time, use January and February to knock it out! Spread the word!

REMINDER: I need volunteers from each zone to assist me with organizing a centennial Scouting event at a military base/National Guard Camp/ BSA Camp in their zone in 2019. I'm specifically looking at Eglin AFB, Camp Blanding, and something down south near Homestead, but I'm open to any suggestions. We need to start early. I have requested help since July and have not received one volunteer. Many hands make for light work and teamwork makes it happen.



"Service for the Unattended"

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

I want to tell y'all about the "Service for the Unattended" that was sponsored by the Florida National Cemetery Joint Veterans Committee. Personally, I had heard little about the generous people who pay for a ceremony honoring a veteran who had no known family members able or available

to bury him or her. So now that I have personally attended this deeply

moving service, I must say, I became aware of the need for such an event. A combined feeling of joy and sorrow came over me watching the Honor and Respect given to 14 veterans who gave a part of their life to defend our country, people, and our freedom. Now that they have passed, they will be forever remembered in one of the most beautiful and peaceful parts of earth.

By the time you read this, the holidays will have passed us by and a new year has begun. I hope everybody had a great time and stayed healthy and safe throughout it all.



Children & Youth Events

Bruce Carl, Children & Youth Chair
cy@legionmail.org



Happy New Year to everyone! The holiday season is over and a new year has begun. I hope everyone had a wonderful and safe holiday. What an exciting year this should be, especially with the beginning of the American

Legion 100th Anniversary! As the planning for the next six months of this year starts, please keep the Children and Youth of your community in mind, Deadlines will be approaching for many of the awards, grants, and scholarships that

the American Legion has available. If you are a chairman, please check the Department website for those deadlines and advise those persons that are responsible for the submissions to make sure they are aware of the dates and submit the paperwork on time.

Planning for the C&Y picnic is well under way and going well. Mark your calendar for April 7th and plan to attend this wonderful event at Post 117 in Palm Bay. For more information go to the Department website calendar and open up the flyer. It is also available on the C&Y website. Click on the link on the left-hand side of the page to open it.

The Golf tournament planning is also going

well. I have blocked off 40 rooms for the event at a discounted price, and the golf course is providing many prizes and a breakfast for us. The golf outing will be on Friday, May 4th in Lady Lake Post 347. For more information please go to the Department website calendar or click the link on the C&Y website.

I am looking forward to an exciting next six months, and planning get to get out to more of our districts to promote the Children & Youth programs. I will start out the new year by attending the ALR summit this month. I also have plenty of the 2107-2018 coins available and will be selling them everywhere I go. Please help support the C&Y by purchasing the coins for a donation of \$10.00 each.

Serving ≠ Citizenship

Gene Smith, Immigration Chair
immigration@legionmail.org



I hope everyone enjoyed the holidays. Now it is time to return to work helping our fellow veterans. As many of you know from following the news, Immigration Laws and Polices are constantly changing. These changes many times play havoc with

our foreign-born US veterans who served this country exposing themselves to the dangers associated with military service. Many served or are serving in the hostilities of Afghanistan and Iraq.

Many came to this country as children with parents who may have entered illegally. As a child, they

were protected under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). As they grew older and into adulthood, some volunteered to serve in the US military because this country that provided a better quality of life for them than their home country, and they chose to payback that quality of life by serving in the US military. Unfortunately, after their service to our Nation many thought they were automatically a citizen by serving, are now find they are at risk under current administration immigration policies. Serving in the US military does not bring citizenship. He or she must apply to the Immigrations services to becomes a Naturalized Citizen.

Unfortunately, many are being deported without even a "Thank you for your service". I am asking each of you who read this to help me and more importantly, help our brothers and sisters who have are foreign born immigrants who have served or are serving in the US military become Naturalized

Citizens. I do not want this to go political because my intent is to help people in need, not make a political issue out of it. The current Administration has stated numerous times they are there for the military. By this statement, I would hope the Administration means ALL military/veterans.

If you know of a foreign-born US veteran who is not a Naturalized citizen, please get in contact with me or have the individual get in contact with me and I will direct them to the legal professionals who want to advise and work with them to become citizens and/or advise them of their status. We, as Legionnaires, owe it to the foreign born non-citizens that have served or are serving in the US military the opportunity to become a citizen of this great Nation. I am available to come to your Post and/or District to address the topic further. You can reach me at Immigration@legionmail.org.



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

First, I want to thank all of you who I talked to at the Fall Conference about this program. From the amount of interest that we have received so far this year, I believe we will reach our

maximum goal of 25 cadets. Literature is available at the Department of Florida and through Tom Gora and me. You can contact me at 904-272-1619 (home) or 904-635-4492 (cell) or mr.bobbrewster@gmail.com. I had to change my email due to the fact my previous email address got hacked.

I also have an email at Department which is youthlawcadet@legionmail.org.

This article will be short due to the fact that everyone's mind is on the Christmas/New Year's holiday, so let me extend my wishes to all of you to have a very merry Christmas and a fantastic New Year.



JSSP Postal Targets Available

Loretta Young, JROTC/Jr Shooting Sports Chair
jrotc@legionmail.org



Our JROTC Cadet Program continues to shine and I have had the opportunity to attend some of the functions where our Cadets are a very valuable asset to our Posts and our Veterans. I attended the Virtual Honor Flight conducted at the BB&T Arena

in Sunrise where the Deerfield Beach MCJROTC Cadets were there to perform the Color Guard for the Program and also assisted our WWII and Korean Veterans throughout the program. They continue to shine and be available to honor and assist these Veterans during a program that brings joy and tears to so many who have served our country honorably.

This is also the time of year where the Legion is having many District and Area Balls to honor our Veterans and the Cadets are here to assist with the meal service and the clean-up that would

ordinarily be done by our veterans or hired help. It's not only that they are there to assist but they also enjoy helping our veterans and enjoy the party themselves. We had the privilege of having the Northeast AFJROTC Cadets as servers for the 9th District Ball. We had the honor of having in attendance our NEC, Dennis Boland and our 1st Vice Commander, Dianne Boland, PDC and Dept. Judge Advocate Larry Sheets and other honored guests. This is also a way the Cadets can earn Community Service points and the District also took up a collection which was presented to the Cadets which helps in getting them some additional funds for things which are not provided by the program. Remember to reach out to your JROTC Cadets when planning these events.

The National JSSP Postal Targets were available to order online on Nov. 1st. Last year the Dept. of Florida had 59 teams that participated in the competition. As of this writing, there has only been 5 Teams registered for the state. That is very low, and we only have until Jan. 15th, 2018 to have the teams/individuals go online to get the order in to National Headquarters. The teams

must order before the deadline even if the Post reimburses them for the price of the targets. Remember, the targets are only \$12.50 each and a team is only 4 shooters. There are no minimum and no maximum targets that can be ordered. The top 15 shooters in each category after the 2nd Qualification, Sporter and Precision, will go on to the 28th National Marksmanship Competition on July 24 - July 29, 2018 at the expense of the National organization. Each team must be sponsored by an American Legion Post and the Affiliation Form that only has to be filed once, can be downloaded online at: www.legion.org. Fax or email to the National Legion JSSP Coordinator that is registered on the form. Thanks to all who support our Youth Programs and may you all have a successful New Year.



Legion College This Month

Tom Gora, Legion College Chair
deptlegioncollege@legionmail.org



The next FALC Class is scheduled just a few days from the release of this January 2018 issue of the 'Legion Link.' As I write this article in mid-December

2017, we have 19 enrolled in the January 11-13, 2018 class. This is the 4th consecutive the Department of Florida has conducted a college after a long absence, and I thank the Department Commander and Adjutant for keeping the streak going. I also thank all applicants for your interest and sacrifice to attend, and I hope we meet your training expectations.

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. This is what we aim to do by conducting the Florida American Legion College. Here is a quick look at the agenda for the FALC Class:

Thursday, January 11-Day #1 is a half day starting in the afternoon, and includes a welcome from the Department Commander, Adjutant, and the FALC Chairman. Enrollees then take a tour of the Department and meet department staff. After the tour FALC students are introduced to the relationship between the national HQ and departments, and instructed on writing RESOLUTIONS. Students work in groups on RESOLUTION writing all three days at FALC, and make their presentation the final day. It is vitally important for Legionnaires to understand the RESOLUTION process which is the primary mechanism for CHANGE in the organization.

Friday, January 1 -Day #2, RED SHIRT FRIDAY, is full of interesting sessions regarding leadership, programs and public relations, fund raising,

department awards, and legislative priorities. We usually take the class photo today, so wearing a red shirt is considered the "uniform of the day."

Saturday, January 13-Day #3 is graduation day, but before students graduate they attend more classes on veterans' affairs and rehabilitation, internal affairs and complaints, and consolidated post reports. We also demonstrate mock meetings and elections. Students present their RESOLUTIONS to the Department Commander and faculty before graduation.

The FALC is all not just work, it's also fun! You expand your personal horizons by meeting and working with others from all over the state. Students reside in a comfortable hotel a short distance from Department HQ. Meals and snacks are provided to students while at training, with a graduation dinner on Friday night at Old Glory Post 183 in Fern Park. Students also like to socialize at Post 19, just down the road from the Department HQ. YES, family and friends can attend graduation Saturday afternoon.



Access Granted

Jim Ramos, Military Liaison Chair
militaryliaison@legionmail.org



Access Granted:
 Assisting our Troops with Transition and Benefits, but how do we do this? We need to get in and talk with the Base Commanders and see how we can help, for example:

1. Reconnect: The best way for renewed engagement is at the grassroots level. Using this publication
(The American Legion Access Granted,

Stock # 82-001) available at Legion.org, Post, District and Department Commanders should establish good working relationship with installation Commanders.

2. The Legion is allowed to host informational events geared toward educating servicemembers about the American Legion history and what we do- such as career guidance, benefits and health care assistance.

Some restrictions we should know are as follows:

1. Recruiting is NOT allowed.
2. We may NOT offer services that require fees.
3. Access to installation services, such as the Exchange or Commissary, is NOT granted.

We also have a "CHECKLIST: OBTAINING

ACCESS" on page 7 of the booklet.

We have Templates and tools we can use to get Access Granted as follows:

1. Request letter template
2. MOU template
3. DoD approval letter
4. DoD disapproval letter
5. Checklist for installation commanders

Get our new generation of Veterans to know about the American Legion and how can the Legion help them.

If you or your Post needs help just call 352-226-4370 or email me at MilitaryLiaison@legionmail.org

Be Social

Bob Colbert, Social Media Chair
socialmedia@legionmail.org



We are all praying that 2018 is better than 2017 was, and you can help your Post become better by paying special attention to your Facebook and webpage. Remember that Facebook is a GREAT medium but sometime the postings escape without notice by some of your less active members, so be sure to also post the items of

interest to your webpage. In fact, you can post the items/pictures/article/flyers to your webpage and place the link in your Facebook page or Twitter account and kill two birds with less typing.

The Department Convention is coming up in July, so don't forget to check the FALPA (Florida American Legion Press Association) webpage for the contest rules on submitting copies of your Post's newsletters. The categories are set so Posts can compete with similar sized Posts, and it is open to the **ENTIRE LEGION FAMILY**, so get everyone involved. The deadline for entries is May 1, 2018, so you still have time. The winners

will be announced at the FALPA meeting at the Department Convention.

Finally, if your Post or Legion Family has a website, is it being kept current? A webpage is only as good as its last update, and you would be surprised at the number of people and where they are located who look at your pages. The same goes for Facebook and Twitter as far as updating them on a regular basis.

Until next month, if you have any questions or comments, send them to me at socialmedia@legionmail.org and I will reply as quickly as I can.

Nobody Does It Better

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



As we come to the beginning of the new year we can look back with pride at all we've accomplished in 2017. As you know, we were faced with some overwhelming challenges and yet through it all the Department of Florida

stepped up every time. Our wonderful VAVS hospital reps barely missed a step all year in

providing care and assistance to those of the Veteran community who faced health issues and found ways to do even better what they do every day, including helping the families of hospitalized vets. We remain aware and grateful for the thousands of hours these dedicated reps give so freely.

I'm also happy to announce that at the Fall Conference we graduated yet another class of 60 Post Service Officers. We encourage them to be visible and available not only at their individual Posts but to the overall Veteran community. Our brother and sister Vets need your valuable help. Also, in line with the Fall Conference, our VA

Entitlements Chair conducted a very well attended and received seminar covering a range of Veteran-related issues. You should be able to see his article here in the Legion Link and I will add that he is available to conduct these seminars at Legion Posts throughout the state. Contact him or me for details.

In closing I'd just like to say that as much as we welcome 2018, I personally welcome the opportunity to continue working with all the people I do. Nobody does it better and it's an honor to serve with you.



Timing is Everything

Meri West, Oratorical Chair
oratorical@legionmail.org

December and January are the months when the Oratorical Contest Program really starts to get busy!

Here are important dates for the Oratorical Contest:

- Post Contests should be completed by January 21, 2018.
- District Contests should be completed by February 11, 2018.
- Area Contests should be completed by February 25, 2018.
- Department Contest will be held March 10, 2018.
- Nationals are from April 13th to April 15th, 2018 in Indianapolis.

Districts and Areas---Elizabeth Douglas just mailed out forms asking you to respond with your District and Area Contest dates. These will be added to the website, so return them as soon as you can. I would like to attend some contests that are within driving distance for me just to meet more of you in person. And I will send emails to other Oratorical chairmen all over the state so those close to you may also want to attend.

Now to the nitty gritty....if your Post has only one contestant, you don't have to hold a full Post Contest. You should give the student an opportunity to practice their speech in front of an audience and with the time keepers, but you do not have to have judges since there is only one contestant. You can have them meet you at the library or the Post but choose a place that

is relatively quiet. It's helpful if you can have a few people who will give constructive feedback to the student---such as teachers, other Legion members, spouses, Auxiliary members, friends and family.

Give the student a chance to practice the Assigned Topic speeches. Often they have spent less time on the Assigned Topics so they can always benefit from the practice. If they want to just do one or two that is fine, but if they are willing to try to do all four that is better. If they botch one try, let them start over and try again. This will help them be better prepared for a contest that is being judged. Even in practice I think it's a good idea to use the time cards just so they get used to seeing the numbers and learn how to pace themselves.

In September, at the National Americanism Conference, we were encouraged to try to get the Posts, Districts and Areas to hold their respective contest as close to the cut-off date as possible. This is to give students the Christmas break to work on their speeches and to minimize the time between contests.

If a Post has their contest on Dec. 2nd, and the District contest isn't until February 10th, that is over 60 days in between. We want to minimize that time so the students get the full benefit of the Christmas break.

The typical Christmas break is about 16 to 20 uninterrupted days. That is a huge amount of time for a student to buckle down and focus on their speeches.

Many students also enlist professional coaches. They can craft and practice a speech in those two weeks that can often be a winning speech. Some students are just that determined and we don't

want to rule them out because they are starting later in the game.

The National Headquarters sends me an email every Friday with any new inquiries and requests about the contest. Last Friday, December 8th, I had a new student contact us for the first time. He is experienced in public speaking and debate and he is ambitious. He is still a contender, even though he is starting much later than other students.

If you want or need to hold your contest the day before forms are due at the District or Area, rest assured that is fine. You can scan and email the forms, or even text an image of them to me and still meet the deadline if needed. Please don't feel rushed to have the contest before the holiday break.

Elizabeth will be updating the website as we get the contest dates from each District and Area!

One last thing....we want you to stick to the script once your contest gets underway. I usually revise the script so the font is bigger and easier for me to see. If you need a copy of the script that you can edit, let me know. I will try to get one put on our Resource Page.

Many thanks for all the effort you have put into contacting schools and teachers and promoting the contest. Email or call me if you have any questions or concerns. If you have information you want to share about your Post feel free. I encourage you to connect with another Post or District close to you and to attend their contests. If you need contact information, just ask me or Elizabeth. I think it's a great way to connect and support each other, share ideas and information.

Keep Working Goals

Eunice Butts, Post Development Chair
postdevelopment@legionmail.org



Happy New year to all and I hope that you had a thankful Thanksgiving, Merry Christmas and are looking forward to a blessed, healthy, and safe New Year. May this year bring all the best to everyone in their personal

and American Legion life!

First, I would like to thank Area Commanders Jay Allen, District Commanders Troy Horsley, David Tucker, Richard Little and Ray Perez for utilizing the Post Development and Training in their Districts and Area. I would also like to thank Rick Johnson and Fred Matthews for having me on your training team. Last, but not least, I would like to thank the many Post members, Commanders, and Officers for having the confidence in me to serve you as the Post Development Chairman.

It is now time to work on your 100% membership

goal. If your Post has not achieved this goal, and you need assistance, please contact the Department and ask for help or call me directly. Remember, publicity is a valuable tool for your Post. Utilize newspapers, radio, flyers and an online presence to show yourselves to your community. Think outside of the box and try different ideas.

To all members of the American Legion from Posts to the Department, have a good year! Remember, as Legionaries, we should all know that our positions, whether elected or appointed, are there for the good of the American Legion.



Point of Contacts

Larry Roberts, VA Entitlements Chair
veteransbenefits@legionmail.org

The best way to help veterans is by knowing where to get help. Here is a list of point of contacts.

- American Legion Department of Florida: (407)295-2631 www.floridalegion.org
- Project VetRelief: (407)270-9204 www.projectvetrelief.org
- Veterans Crisis Line: (800)273-8255 (Press 1) / Text: 838255
- Homeless Call Center: (877)424-3838 Arlington National Cemetery: (877)907-8585 www.arlingtoncemetery.mil
- Armed Forces Retirement Home: (800)422-9988
- Army Retirement Services: [//soldierforlife.army.mil/retirement](http://soldierforlife.army.mil/retirement)
- Army Lodging Program: (877)711-8326 www.pal.army.mil
- Death-Report a Retired Soldier's Death: Call HQDA Casualty Operations Center, (800)626-3317; www.hrc.army.mil/TAGD/Reporting%20A%20Death

- Veterans Service Records- Replace DD Form 214, awards: Retired 4/1/1996 or later; Log in to www.ebenefits.va.gov/ Click " Access My Documents" then Request Official Military Personnel File." Retired 3/31/1996 or earlier: Call Human Resources Command at (888)276-9472 or visit [//vetrecs.archives.gov](http://vetrecs.archives.gov) National Personnel Records Center (Military Personnel Records)
- Veterans Affairs (VA) Information: www.va.gov
- Burial & Memorial Benefits www.cem.va.gov/
- Benefits and Services: (800) 827-1000 www.benefits.va.gov/benefits/
- GI Bill: (888)442-4551 www.gibill.va.gov
- Graves Information: (877)907-8199 www.cem.va.gov/index.asp
- Health Care Benefits: (877)222-8387 www.va.gov/health
- Florida Department of Veterans Affairs: (727)319-7440 www.floridaVets.org



Woman Veterans' Conference

Susi Martinez, Women Veterans Chair
womenveterans@legionmail.org



Every New Year ushers in great hopes for a better tomorrow with a sense of revitalization. The changing calendar creates opportunities to begin again by overhauling your aspirations purposely to reach your objectives. Share your goals with others to assist you in becoming accountable for your progress in achieving your dreams. Look for inspiration from those you admire. "Your success and happiness lies in you.

Resolve to keep happy, and your joy and you shall form an invincible host against difficulties." – Helen Keller. This year may be filled with many challenges, how you overcome them is up to you.

Our goal for the coming year will be to reach out to more Women Veterans across Florida from all eras to ensure they are aware of the benefits available to them after serving their country. The Florida Department of Veteran Affairs (FDVA) will be conducting the State of Florida 5th Annual Woman Veterans' Conference in June 2018 to provide a wide variety of information on many issues relating to their service. More information regarding the date and location of this two-day event will be provided when available. Women transitioning

from military to civilian life face different challenges than those of their male counterparts. Women Veterans face higher rates of unemployment, homelessness, and PTSD symptoms as well as very different physical needs than men. We need strong advocates to reach our goal of improving the system that cares for Women Veterans to ensure they have equal access to all benefits. If you are interested in assisting Women Veterans in your area but need additional information, please contact your Women Veteran Chair at WomenVeterans@legionmail.org.

May this year give you the opportunity to follow your dreams, love like there is no tomorrow and smile unconditionally. Happy New Year!





Honoring WWII Vets

Post 115

American Legion Post 115 Commander Dave Hammond presents a commemorative victory medal to World War II veterans retired US Army Sgt. Michael "Mickey" Owens, and retired US Army Air Corps Corp. Hal Mettee during Palm Coast's Veterans' Day ceremony at Heroes Memorial Park.



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December 17, 2017 85% Target Report (Currently 77.10%)		
11	Donna Artola	84.19%
4	Victoria VanBuren	83.52%
6	Michael Seidel	80.82%
16	Raymond Perez	80.00%
7	David Tucker	79.86%
15	Richard Little	78.35%
1	Raymon Olsen	76.44%
8	Jerry Faught	76.13%
12	Bruce Thurber	75.30%
2	John Folsom	75.28%
17	Michael Wolohan	75.22%
5	Troy Horsley	74.67%
13	Michael Raymond	74.38%
9	Donald Schwiesow	73.35%
3	Frederick Hutto	67.20%
14	Gary Decker	65.84%
Central	Jay Allen	79.57%
Eastern	Daryl Bass	78.44%
Western	James Brennan	76.23%
Northern	Jeffrey Durden	75.84%
Southwestern	Dennis Walsh	75.17%
Southern	James Tewes	74.65%
Post 400		82.11%
Post 208		77.26%



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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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- Steve, Army Veteran.



"[Being a member] now, all of the sudden, I have my own little gang behind me."
- Steve, Army Veteran (pictured above)

LEGION FAMILY Spotlight: Legion 5th District 2-Liter Bottle Challenge



The Mighty 5th District fully understands the needs of Veterans and embraces PROJECT: VetRelief's mission to fill these needs. We looked around for a way to raise money and have fun at the same time. Our "Bottle Challenge" was what we finally came up with.

We started with a 2-liter bottle; which can hold approximately \$700 in dimes. Our thought was that with our 16 Posts within our District, we could potentially raise \$11,200! However, our members decided to take it a step further to make a larger impact; they wanted to donate

more than just dimes! Some Posts have simply cut off the tops of the bottle and other Posts redesigned the bottle altogether. To date, the 5th District has raised about \$2000 so far!

Additionally, we have sent two bottles to the 15th District; of which one has already been filled. Since the 5th and 15th Districts are already filling bottles, **we challenge you**, or those in the other Districts, to see if you can catch up to us and raise more!! - **Are you up for the challenge?**

Article submitted by: Sheri Rodriguez, Post 372 Adjutant & Service Officer

DID YOU KNOW? - Things you should know!

- ▶ **Michael Beaven will be out of the office** beginning January 3rd and will be undergoing surgery. He will be gone for approximately two months. If you'd like to send words of encouragement, please send to Department Headquarters with attention to Jennifer Cooper.
- ▶ PVR **does not fund** security deposits when moving into a new place of residence.
- ▶ An applicant must live within the state of Florida for **120 days** in order to be eligible for assistance.
- ▶ The PVR **office was closed** from December 23rd and reopened on January 2nd. Be patient as we work through calls received during that time.

UPCOMING EVENT:

FEB 17-18 ALR Coral Head Music Fest - Marathon, FL
2 Day Pass: \$45-Before event | \$60-At Gate

SUPPORT CASES JULY-NOV 2017 TOTALS

families helped | amount distributed

56

\$52,541.57

*Numbers reflect PROJECT: VetRelief Cases ONLY

THE CHALLENGE CONTINUES...

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 their goal is to raise \$2,507. This goal can be reached by making a one-time donation for their goal amount, or providing several donations throughout the year.

All individual donations submitted from between July 1, 2017 and June 15, 2018 will automatically go towards the Challenge. Also, any donation submitted through the Commander's Project earmarked for PVR will also count.

- Donations can be sent to: PROJECT: VetRelief, 1912A Lee Road, Orlando, FL 32810
- Donations must be turned in by June 15, 2018 to count towards recognition awards
- Money raised during Post fundraising events will also count

Starting next month we will post a leader board of all donations received and which District is leading the way. Awards will be given at Department Convention based on percentage of goal met, not by the total dollar amount given.

WELCOME TO THE TEAM, JEREMY!

Jeremy recently joined the PVR Team as a Case Worker. He is a Navy veteran who served for 11 years, stationed primarily in Hawaii, and had two tours in Africa.

Transitioning back into the civilian lifestyle was not easy for Jeremy, but he thankfully had a support system to get him through his trying times. He is very passionate about helping his fellow comrades through the similar struggles he overcame.

Please help us welcome him to the team!



HOLDING AN EVENT? - tell us about it!

Don't forget to tell us about your PROJECT: VetRelief fundraising events! We want to help you promote it in our monthly newsletters, on Facebook, and on our website. There are also promotional materials that we can send to you.

Also - Commander Steve Shuga's primary charity of choice is PROJECT: VetRelief. Any donation turned in and marked as "Commander's Project" will count towards his goal and deposited into the Legion bank account. During the Department Convention in July 2018, one large check, or donation, will be issued to PROJECT: VetRelief.

However, you can still write donations directly to PROJECT: VetRelief and write Commander's Project in the memo line to count towards his goal of \$50,000! All donations from Posts, whether to the Commander's Project, or made directly to PROJECT: VetRelief, will count towards the PVR Challenge!

Make sure to contact Jennifer Cooper by sending an email to jcooper@floridalegion.org with all of your fundraising details!

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