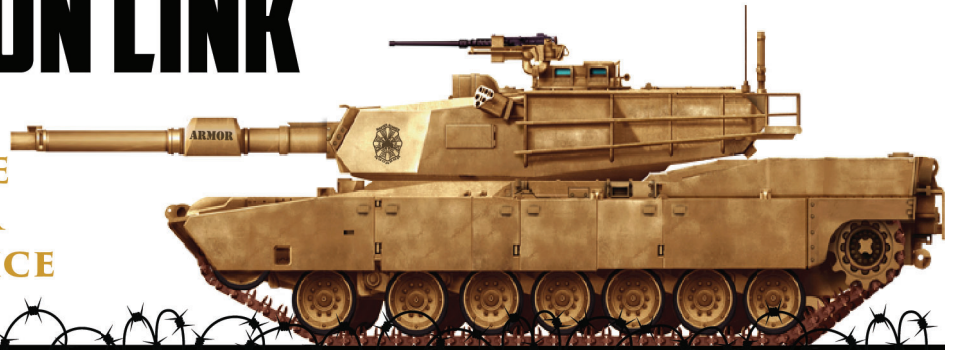




THE LEGION LINK

★ SERVICE
★ HONOR
★ SACRIFICE



MAY 2020

COMMANDER WILLIAM "RICK" JOHNSON

VOLUME 28 ISSUE X

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From your Department Commander Rick Johnson

Rick Johnson, Commander

commander@floridalegion.org



I hope this finds everyone safe and in place. April has been a very busy month for the Department and staff trying to do the right thing for the Legion family. I have been in contact weekly with the Florida Legion

Family leadership during these trying times that we have been facing. A lot of great information has been discussed and accomplished as a team.

National cancelled all activities that were scheduled up to October 2020. They also adopted Resolution Number 3, which included cancelling the 2020 National Convention and keeping National Officers in place until 2021. To download a copy of National's Resolution Number 3 go to <https://bit.ly/3d8k90C>.

The Department Executive Committee (DEC) has been communicating regularly to ensure Department functions safely and seamlessly throughout this process. First, the DEC voted on a motion authorizing the Department Adjutant to apply for the small business loan/grant, motion passed. At this

time of this article, the application is still pending.

The DEC also voted on a motion to cancel our 2020 Department Convention, motion passed. The Department worked hard with the hotel and finally got them to waive everything and charge us zero instead of having to pay the \$282,000+ cancellation fee. Thank you, Orlando World Marriott Center, for working with us and we look forward to 2021. All rooms that were reserved under the Legion Convention room block have been automatically cancelled. If you have any doubts or for verification, contact the Department Events Coordinator, Michael Bratsch, at mbratsch@floridalegion.org.

Next, the DEC voted on a motion to follow National's Resolution Number 3 and recommendation to keep all Department Officers in place until the next official Annual Convention in June 2021, and that motion passed. To properly solidify and document all of the Emergency changes resulting from the shutdown related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the DEC approved Department's Resolution 20-01 during a Special Executive Committee meeting held via Zoom on April 24th, 2020.

Continued on page 2 >>



<< Commander - Continued from Page 1

To download a copy of Resolution 20-01 go to <https://bit.ly/2KVDHj>.

Also, recommendations on how to hold Post elections were e-mailed and sent out by mail to all Posts. Again, these are recommendations only as the Posts are finding the right and safe way to accomplish what needs to be done. Department put out a buddy checklist to use as a guide to go by and check on your members. Such a great tool to have and do during these times to let our members know that we care. The District Commanders send me a buddy check report every Monday. Thank you to the District Commanders who have complied and sent your reports.

A lot more zoom meetings are coming up with the leadership to discuss on how we move forward for the following year. Please have patience as we are trying to move as fast as we can during these times. There are a lot of people working behind the scenes seven days a week to do the right thing. The Judge Advocate team are working tireless to get things done the right way as we move forward during these trying times. Thank you, Dick Mondro, Bob Sussan and John Dollinger, for all your help the past two months. Mike McDaniel and the Department staff has been working their tails off during this time also as they always do.

Please make sure your e-mail is correct and on file with Department as we will still be sending a lot of information as it is posted. With that being said, Social Media has been going crazy lately with a lot of rumors being posted out there I hope that stops as it causes nothing but problems for everyone. If you have any questions, please e-mail them to us and we will get you an answer. Questions will not be answered on Facebook. Official notifications of things happening will be posted on the website and/or e-mailed to you. CPR's still need to be done by June 15th and Post Certification of Officer forms and Post Officer Reports are due by June 30th. Congratulations to the 15th Dist., 6th Dist. and 12th Dist. for being over 100% membership as we are very proud of you.

Please be safe out there and as we will reopen soon, please use common sense and do not put anybody in jeopardy. Do the right thing in good faith and we will not have a problem out there. PLEASE stay safe as me and my wife are praying for this to end and get back to some normalcy in the future.

God speed to everyone and God Bless the World through these hard times. Way too many lives had been lost and prayers to all the families.

Stay calm and calm will follow you. I look forward to seeing everyone again real soon.

MAY 2020	
1-31	Month of the Military Caregiver
1	Silver Star Service Banner Day
1	Law & Loyalty Day
3	Escort of Vietnam Wall 🌟 ☆
5	Cinco de Mayo
6	Nurses Day
7	Day of Prayer
7-10	33rd Annual All Veterans Reunion ☆
8	VE Day (1945)
8	Military Spouses Appreciation Day
10	Mother's Day
13	Children of Fallen Patriots Day
15	Award Nominations Due
15	Legion Link Articles Due
15	Peace Officers Memorial Day
15	Defense Transportation Day
16	Armed Forces Day
16	Eastern Area Ball 🌟 ☆
22	Maritime Day
24	National Poppy Day
25	Headquarters Closed
25	Memorial Day

☆ - Cancelled or potential for postponement or cancellation, due to COVID 19 quarantine. Check Department website for updates, floridalegion.org.

🌟 - Commander Rick Johnson's Attendance Tentative.

★ - National Event

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.

Washington D.C. Conference

Eunice Butts, 2nd Vice Commander

2ndvice@legionmail.org



I hope that this article finds you and your families well and in good health. The Department Commander has sent communication down every chain of command to filter to every member of The American Legion Department of Florida.

1. The Commander requested all members to do the "Buddy Check".
2. Department Commander sent the forms for members and officers to do the "Buddy Check".

District Commanders please send/email information to Post Commanders and or Adjutants to forward to Membership and follow up with them to make sure they are adhering to the information or if they need your help to accomplish the goals set by the Department Commander.

Special thanks to Posts 273 and 186 for the extensive calls you made and the results.

Members appreciate being thought about with a call or an email.

Special thanks to Post 38 for the outstanding job you're doing in feeding veterans; to our area's FMFD, FMPD, Lee Memorial Hospital, Lee County Sheriff's Jailhouse, Gulf Coast Hospital and the Rescue Mission. They also provided food to the Health Park Hospital and the Florida Highway Patrol. Commander Kevin Boyd stated "It is so important that The American Legion and Legion Family stands out above all other veteran

Continued on page 3 >>



<< 2nd Vice - Continued from Page 2

organizations and be the leaders of today. Respectfully." I commend you Commander Kevin Boyd and the Post on a job well done.

I encourage each of you to stay safe and take care of your families and yourselves. As we come through this, we should all be better than before, for we are learning what it is to survive in the face of an

epidemic.

Please get your CPR's in.

Trying Times

Michael Raymond, 3rd Vice Commander

3rdvice@legionmail.org



I'll never forget what my dad told me a long time ago. "Things can only get so bad that they can only get better!" Words to live by from a very wise man. As many of you know I lost a very good friend recently.

He was a WWII vet who lied about his age to get in the Army at 15 1/2. Other than

a nephew in NJ, I basically was all he had when he was admitted with his wife to a nursing home a little over a year ago.

I've been visiting him regularly until the recent pandemic when I was not allowed to enter the nursing home. To make a long story short, this is the reason we put so much effort in doing our "Buddy Checks." No Veteran should ever be forgotten in a nursing home somewhere with no friends or family. I would really like to believe that he made it to the ripe old age of 92 with my help.

I realize that a lot of you are concerned about our upcoming elections, both local

and Department. More information will be forthcoming for both these issues very soon if not already. A lot of local posts' will be re-electing officers, but those whose are contested should consider coming up with an alternative way to have their election.

I've seen some posts having drive-up polls which I believe is a great idea. But you must notify every member if that is your plan. Remember these are trying times and they will not last forever. If there's one thing we learned in the military, it's patience, perseverance and the ability to adapt. Before you know it, we'll be back in business. Stay healthy, stay safe.

Pay our Coast Guard

Dennis Boland, NEC

nec@legionmail.org



On a daily basis our brave Coast Guard personnel carry out missions that are vital to our national security, yet the military branch working without pay during a government shutdown. The repeated and ubiquitous threat of government shutdowns brings server hardship on our Coast Guard men and women who do not have the same assurance of being paid as the members of the other armed services.

In order to conduct operations as normal, Coast Guard members need to understand that they will receive pay and allowances during government shutdowns. This assurance will ensure that servicemember charged with securing out homeland can concentrate on the task at hand.

KEY POINTS

- In January of 2019, over 41,000 active-duty Coast Guard servicemembers experience a 3-week long pay gap.
- The American Legion's Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA) program was able to provide more than \$1 million in non-repayable grants to approximately 1,713 Coast Guard Families with 3,170

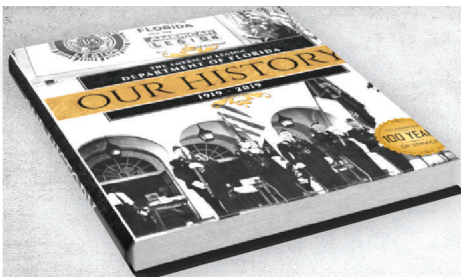
children.

- The American Legion distributes one-time cash grants of up to \$1,500 to the minor children of eligible active-duty military and American Legion members in need.

WHAT CAN CONGRESS DO?

Supports bills and provisions that will ensure the Coast Guard is paid during government shutdowns. IS.21, H.R. 367, Section 221 of S.2297 Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2019.

We need your voice heard by contacting your Congressman and Senators and express your feelings that this is unfair to our brothers and sisters.



THE AMERICAN LEGION
DEPARTMENT OF FLORIDA
OUR HISTORY
Celebrate 100 Years of Florida Legion history

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floridalegionstore.org



*Social Media... A blessing and a curse...***Edward Lewis, Historian**historian@legionmail.org

As many if you know, I am a huge supporter of social media and digital technology. Over the past month I have used social media to keep in touch with friends and family. Just last week the

Department conducted I believe the first all-encompassing meeting via the Zoom application.

We were able to not only discuss Legion matters, we were able to have a little social interaction while maintaining our safe "social distancing."

However, it is important to know a few things. On social media you represent yourself on your personal page. Your opinions are your own. As a former journalist, I support and defend the first amendment with all my being. I may not

agree with what you say, but will defend your right to say it.

With that being said..., If you are using a page that represents the post, district, area, zone, etc., you are representing the American Legion. It is irresponsible to post anything on these pages that has not been disseminated by Department or National headquarters.

For instance, if you host a Department event on social media, then that event should not be labeled cancelled UNTIL the Department or National cancels the event. Over the course of the last few days, there has been so much confusion regarding the Department convention because a certain district cancelled their Department convention event. The hell-storm that has been going on has been seen by many, and as of this writing, Department has not cancelled the event. By the time this is published things might have changed, however this is still a perfect example and learning opportunity.

I have also seen some very disturbing

"in-fighting" at a certain post. I have asked that this Post's Facebook posts be removed as they do nothing to spread the good word of the Legion. As I have said many times during social media training, "NO ONE wins a fight on Facebook." The idea of social media and the Legion is to publish the great things a post is doing, not for bickering and fighting. Do you believe that a potential new member is going to see social media wars on a post page and think to themselves, "this is a post I want to join." It is not a coincidence that the same post is also struggling with membership numbers.

I do hope that historians are still working on their history books. It is understandable that there has not been a lot going on. I have seen some posts still accomplishing many good deeds while still following our President's stay at home orders. I have also seen a few post's that have basically done total remodels on the canteens and social quarters. Hopefully, if anything of that nature has been going on during these times, there has been someone to document it.

*CPRS***Sid Damsgard, Central Area Commander**centralarea@legionmail.org

With the pandemic on everyone's mind there are a few positives we can look at in these trying times. In the Central Area the district commanders are hard at work getting their membership numbers up to department standards. Most notably in the 15th District Commander Bruce Carl

has reached the 100% goal. This is the first district in Florida to achieve this milestone. Congratulations to Bruce for all his hard work. Every week he updates the progress and keeps his posts notified on what they need to reach each deadline.

With the cancellation of convention, we all still need to complete our CPR's for this year. This is an important report that is needed by National as well as Department.

It only takes a few minutes to fill it out. We are all struggling to complete these forms in the absence of monthly meetings and a proper post-election but do the best you can, it is crucial.

Be safe, keep your distance from one another and we will see you on the other end of this situation.

*Northern Area News***Marie Conti, Northern Area Commander**northernarea@legionmail.org

Congratulations to All Posts that have reached, or exceeded, 100% Membership!!

During this difficult and confusing time, please remember that end of

year reports, and awards, are due soon. Remember to Recognize and Thank those Legionnaires who have done a Great Job this year.

As of 14 Apr 2020, both the National Convention and the Department Convention have been cancelled. By the time you read this, Guidance from Dept HQ as far as how to handle Post / District elections, should have already been posted.

Please remember Buddy Checks are about checking on the welfare of your members. Social distancing, caution, common sense, and frequent hand washing are suggested with the Coronavirus. For more information on the Coronavirus, go to www.cdc.gov/coronavirus.

Southern Area Information

Paul Bosco, Southern Area Commander

southernarea@legionmail.org



The southern area would like to thank those men and women who have supported The American Legion for over 70 years of continuous membership. They are...

- Mr. Edward Winslow Post 32 District 14 75 years of Continuous membership
- Mr. Wayne Reinhardt Post 321 District 9 75 years of Continuous membership
- Mr. Edwin Cresap Post 321 District 9 76 years of Continuous membership
- Mr. Roy Brandow Post 321 District 9 75

- years of Continuous membership
- Mr. Lowell Ryan Post 321 District 9 74 years of Continuous membership
- Ms. Maxine Bodman Post 12 District 11 75 years of Continuous membership
- Mr. Robert Grafton Post 12 District 11 76 years of Continuous membership
- Mr. Edward King Post 47 District 11 75 years of Continuous membership
- Ms. Margaret Lorenzen Post 47 District 11 76 years of Continuous membership
- Mr. John Brindisi Post 164 District 11 72 years of Continuous membership
- Mr. William Kapler Post 164 District 11 74 years of Continuous membership
- Mr. Raymond Sapyta Post 164 District 11 75 years of Continuous membership

Post Commanders and Adjutants, your

District Commanders have sent you information on the buddy checks. Check on your members and see how they are doing and their families and talk to them. This is a time see how they are doing. Being cooped up for weeks, as you know, is no fun and very lonely. Some may need help with food and other assistance. You need to reach out and help them. You should have received a buddy check report form. Please fill it out and return or email it to your district commander.

Check your emails twice a day for changes and cancellations of events. There are updates and changes coming soon.

To our Legion family stay home and stay safe.

Western Area Bulletin

John Eden, Western Area Commander

westernarea@legionmail.org



Well, the last report was just prior to this International Pandemic which has changed the world we live in. **Events, Legion and otherwise**, have been canceling by the numbers due to the "social distancing" requirements—even 3 - 4 months in advance. Most states have instituted "stay at home" mandates for 1 - 2 months except for medical or food requirements. **Most experts believe the "social distancing" will continue for months to come**, even if they do allow a gradual increase of relaxing restrictions

and more people going back to work.

We, the **American Legion family**, have been doing what we can using the phone and video chat programs to talk to our members (**Buddy Checks**) and finding out who needs help or assistance. I have talked to our 33 Posts in the Western Area by phone and it seems like every Post that can, is helping out the community with donations of funds or volunteer hours (**Red Cross, Food Banks, Blood Donations**). I cannot emphasize enough the need to keep working on the Buddy check system: to not only talk to current members but to those that did not sign back up the past couple years. We still need to remember that our membership has been decreasing each year and we need to reverse that trend - **ASAP**.

There is a lot more to figure out right now with State and Post elections quickly approaching. **The National Executive Board voted to keep their current officers and Chairmen for the next year.** This decision, due to the Pandemic emergency situation, was recommended for the Departments of each state. Our Dept. of Florida Executive Board will be making their decision in the upcoming weeks. **For now, start brainstorming how your Post can possibly hold elections and still verify membership for voters.**

Everyone stay healthy and keep your distance for now. I look forward to seeing everyone as soon as this national emergency pandemic has eased up to the point of allowing small groups to meet again. **Thanks again for everyone's hard work.**



Southern Membership News

Ray Perez, Southern Membership
temperez@legionmail.org



It is apparent that National Headquarters has not heard the cries from the leadership in the Posts and Departments regarding the acceptance of members into a private organization without a vetting process. In the past four weeks the renewals of Post 400 members back to that Post were 240 members. Not new members, renewals. The information you see below is National's application to the American Legion from their website.

Join Now!

Please select appropriate option before continuing:

Yes! I would like to join and am not currently a member.

I am a current or former member and would like to renew or rejoin.

Eligibility Information

If you have served federal active duty in the United States Armed Forces since December 7, 1941, and have been honorably discharged or are still serving - you are eligible for membership in The American Legion!

*Because eligibility dates remain open, all active duty members of the U.S. Armed Forces are eligible to join The American Legion at this time, until the date of the end of hostilities as determined by the government of the United States.

**U.S. Merchant Marine eligible only from December 7, 1941 to December 31, 1946 (WWII).

Nowhere will you find on that application a comment about requiring to show or send a copy of that individual's DD Form 214 or Honorable Discharge. Why is that? Yet these members come into the Posts pay a lower membership fee, most of the time, and benefit from a members only establishment. I'm not directing this to individuals that are legitimate veterans who have a DD Form 214 or Honorable Discharge but how do we know? When our Posts contact these members, and this year we made it a concerted effort in trying to transfer these members from Post 400 into a community closest to their homes, we get a few responses some of which I will share with you now.

- a. Ask the member to bring a copy of his/her DD Form 214, they respond with, "What's a 214?"
- b. Why would I want to pay a higher membership fee when I can pay \$25.00?
- c. Do you know of the many programs we offer to our communities? NO IDEA

Yet this year National Headquarters added 11,000 DMS/Post 400 members to our quota. Am I whining, maybe, but I ask you this, does that seem even remotely an

attainable goal? Are they not supposed to set our Posts and Departments up for success? Or for failure? This year, to date, PDC Ramos and I have taught membership classes focusing on transferring these members by any means possible including email with the stipulation that they agree to the transfer first. Getting these members back into the community serves as a vital role for the success of all our programs.

Now I will turn my focus to what has become the most difficult times of our American Legion in history, the COVID-19 pandemic. This comes at the height of our year affecting all of programs and the hardest hit is Americanism, mainly Baseball, Boys and Girls State and Children and Youth. Not to mention our elections process and conventions and conferences once that has been decided. With the guidance set by the Department Commander we have set out on a Buddy Check Program likes of which we have never seen before. Posts conducting deep cleaning and remodeling trying to keep employees and volunteers involved around the social distancing guidelines. As far as membership, already we have heard from members that they will not renew until Posts are reopened.

WE will survive this!! As a team we can survive anything. Keep your hearts and minds open and work together. Stay focused.

"FOR GOD AND COUNTRY"

Collect, Replace, Retire & Transform a US Flag!

Kurt Gies, Americanism
americanism@legionmail.org



Never has there been a time in our country's history where Americanism and the ideals it represents have been so important. As we become more and more isolated

from others during this era of COVID-19, there has never been a time where it is so important to reach out and engage your fellow Americans via any means possible while still maintaining safe social distancing requirements.

If you or your post is not conducting "buddy checks", please start today. If you don't know how to get started using the MyLegion.org system, send me a note and we will get you in touch with the

right people to get you started. It's that important!

Are you flying your American flags at home? If not, please consider starting today. If you need help with mounting or install a pole, send your post leadership a note and I am sure they can find somebody to help you.

Are you engaging your members at

Continued on page 7 >>



<< Americanism - Continued from Page 6

the local post-level via "virtual" or "technology" media is to keep everyone informed of what is happening, while offering a quick and easy means to let members know your plans for when things start opening back up? There

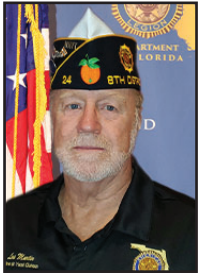
are numerous free or very inexpensive systems out there to use, like Zoom, Free Conference calling or Go to Meeting, etc. These are not difficult to get set up and will allow you to engage those who have been cooped up at home for weeks now. Finally, as Americans, we can use this time as a period to grow and excel in areas that

we don't normally ever consider. Let's take advantage of it Florida. Let's not let this virus win!

PS: please don't forget to start saving those flag grommets from your retired USA flags.

Children & Youth Cannisters

Les Martin, Children & Youth
cy@legionmail.org



Well my April Link Article was a complete disaster. Almost everything that was in it never happened. (Thank You COVID-19). We have to have our articles in by the 15th of the month and just after that date everything changed in all

of our lives. I sure do hope that all of you are healthy and safe. I don't know what is going to happen between the time I am writing this article and the date it is published I will try to give you information that I currently know and anticipate what is needed.

Since our two fundraisers were canceled last month, our Department Children & Youth Programs are taking a BIG hit. We are going

to need your help now more than ever. For those Posts that have not yet collected your Children & Youth Canisters, please get out and start collecting them. Count the money, deposit it into your account and then send me your checks made out to the Department of Florida American Legion, and in the note section put Children & Youth. (309 9th Ave. E., Palmetto Fl. 34221). If we could get the \$100 per canister that we were expecting, it would be a great help. Right now, only 4 Posts have sent me their checks.

Carrie Kolze from the Department has set up a link for donations. Donations can come from Individuals, Posts, Businesses or other groups. Please use this link to make your donation. We can not help the Children of our Veterans and active service members without your help. I know you are probably tired of seeing and hearing me asking for your donations, but unfortunately, with the current situation with our fundraisers being canceled, this is what is needed. The donation link is <http://www.floridalegion.org/cydonate>. Please help.

[org/cydonate](http://www.floridalegion.org/cydonate). Please help.

We still have other programs going on through May. Our Teacher of the Year and Post Best C&Y Program of the Year nomination forms are due. The Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA) is still going on for those children of American Legion members who are in need. Now with so many out of work, this program is more crucial than in the past.

Remember folks, with this stay-at-home order, (if still in effect) many of our veterans and their children have no place to go. News organizations are reporting that suicide rates are climbing. Prior to this shutdown, Children suicide rate was 16-17 per day. Veterans were at 22 per day. Please keep in contact with those who you know or think may need to hear your kind voice. Give them a call.



A Day of Pandemic as told by NYPD Officer

Daryl Bass, Law & Order
laworder@legionmail.org



I recently received this in my E-Mail from one of my brothers from The Blue Knights Law Enforcement Motorcycle Club. It is fairly long but a great read and applies to all of our First

Responders.

What a mess in NYC.

Please pray for our Brothers & Sisters in NY.

Stay safe!

I pray that our brother and sister officers and their families stay safe. Unfortunately, we know we are going to lose more. Please share for those that don't use FB. It is a grim eye-opening experience of what they are living:

Sent in by an NYPD Officer.

What it's like being a police officer in NYC on 4/10/2020

You start the tour like any other. Standing roll call waiting for your assignment. You look to your left and right and realize today that even more of your coworkers

are not here. More friends out with the sickness. You think to yourself; they are strong. they'll be ok. You listen to the sergeant give out assignments. Half of the platoon is being assigned to relieve the earlier tour who are taking reports for DOA (dead on arrival). This is common during tour change now as it's been taking the Medical examiner anywhere from 6-10 hours to come to collect the bodies. It used to be a 1-2 hour wait. Now it's you're whole tour. In my patrol area we used to get maybe 1 DOA a month during midnight tour. Now we get 5-8 every night. You head out for patrol with your partner. The streets are eerily quiet. You make your normal rounds and

Continued on page 8 >>



<< *Law & Order - Continued from Page 7*

find a place to park and wait. Your job phone goes off with notification after notification of ambulance calls for people with corona virus. Most of them start the same, person with cough, fever, tested positive or symptomatic for Covid -19, awake and conscious having difficulty breathing. You've been instructed not to respond. Let EMS handle it they are properly trained and have better PPE. Once an hour the phone goes off with a code change. That last ambulance call, CPR being performed. 1/2 hour later another CPR, 1 hour after CPR again. They died in their homes. Units get assigned to go take the reports. It's not a lot of paperwork but we know they'll be out for the remainder of tour awaiting the medical examiner. More units assigned to DOAs. We're being spread thin. Trying to console grieving families with a mask on your face is no easy task.

You cover jobs out of your sector as well as your own. You get a 911 call for

someone having a violent mental episode. Great, now you need to transport them with EMS for psychological evaluation at the hospital. The last place you want to be. You don't want to use the EMS and hospital resources if you can help it because they are busy trying to save lives. Sadly, you have no choice. Now you're at the hospital with an irate emotionally disturbed person in custody. Stop. Look around. Everyone is coughing. You're in the emergency room. The same room all Covid patients enter. Doctors and nurses are in full head to toe PPE. Gowns, goggles, head cover, n95 masks and gloves. You don't even have the right n95 mask because you were not supplied properly. Should I wear 2 surgical masks? I think one of them is new. Hard to tell I've been rotating the same few masks for weeks. Will it matter? We'll be out of the hospital soon. Phew back in the car. Sanitize. Wait did I get any virus on my uniform from the ambulance ride? I sure hope EMS had enough wipes to clean the ambulance I rode in.

You spend the rest of the night answering jobs. You touch door handles, elevator buttons and people who need help. You never realized how many things or people you touch throughout your tour. You wash your hands every chance you get. Your knuckles are cracked. The Sanitizer burns your open skin. Doesn't matter though. Have to stay healthy. Have to slow the spread. Have to come to work. Have to help people. It's 7 am now. You hand the keys off to the day tour and say good luck. You know how many people will be waking to check on their loved ones and find them unresponsive. The day tour will be stretched even thinner. As soon as you get home it's time to shower. Shoes off outside. Uniform in a garbage bag or right into the laundry if you're lucky enough to have the amenities. Finally, at home, clean and safe. Just don't get too close to the spouse, kids or pets. I definitely don't have it, you tell yourself..... I probably don't have itI hope I don't have it. Have to get to bed so you can wake up and do it again tomorrow.

Oratorical

Cherie Korn, Oratorical
oratorical@legionmail.org

As I sit here and reflect on the way that the Oratorical Scholarship Program went this year – I am so proud to say that I am a part of such a wonderful group of Legionnaires. We had all six areas represented this year and the Department competition went well. Thank you Commander Rick Johnson for all the support this year.

Not all the judges showed up, so recruitment the day of was the key to

success. Mike McDaniel's wife jumped right in (after Mike volunteered her). I would like to thank all the judges for a job well done. Thank you to the timekeepers, escorts, and especially Bekki Tibbs. Bekki is a great coordinator and Legionnaire. Her attention to detail and making sure that the Oratorical Program functioned well is an asset to The American Legion, Department of Florida. Thank you, Bekki.

Our winner was Conrad Hellwege from Post 27, Ocala. Yep, Brian Voge did it again. Your post can do it too. Contact Brian Voge and find out how!

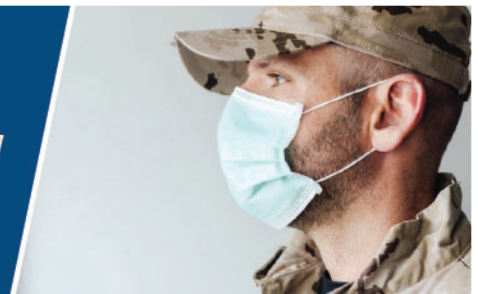
Unfortunately, the National Oratorical Scholarship competition has been cancelled. A disappointment for sure. But now is the time to look ahead to when we are all released back to our daily lives and start the recruitment process for next year. If you have any of the teacher's email addresses, now is the time to let them know that we are here for them and would love to have some of their students in our program next year.

Thank you everyone for such a great year. Stay healthy. Can't wait to see and hug you all soon.

The **LATEST**
information on
COVID 19

We've put together the latest news and resources for our Legionnaires and Posts.

VISIT
floridalegion.org/pandemic





FLORIDA LEGION RIDERS • NOW RIDING VIRTUALLY TO #ENDVETERANSUICIDE

The coronavirus, or COVID-19, is not going to stop the Florida American Legion Riders from raising awareness and much needed funds to end veteran suicide. The annual Unity Ride was scheduled to kick off Sunday, April 26th for a week-long journey through the entire state of Florida. However due to the current pandemic, Riders Chairman, Jim Wineland, was forced to take the ride VIRTUALLY.

This was not an easy decision, as this event is something the Riders look forward to every year. However, they are doing their best to accommodate and support PROJECT: VetRelief's Suicide Prevention Initiative (SPI) in these uncertain times. Their goal is to **still** raise \$50,000 for the program.

What does a VIRTUAL event mean? Riders are encouraged to still ride, but only individually. They have been challenged to ride 22 miles for the 22 veterans who take their lives every day sometime before May 22nd. Once they complete their ride, they are asked to document on their social media accounts with a photo and using #iRideforthe22. Every registration, dollar raised, and photos posted using the hashtag will give their District points towards the coveted District Trophy.

Additionally, all participants have been asked to create a fundraising page to share with their friends and family to collect donations. The more funds they raise, the more prizes they earn.

Join the Florida Legion Riders and make an impact on Florida's veteran community and help save lives! You can either sign up to participate in the virtual event or make a donation to their campaign.

REGISTER OR DONATE HERE: <https://give.floridalegion.org>

VETRELIEF INTRODUCTORY CLASS AND ADVOCATE NETWORKING EVENT HAVE BEEN POSTPONED UNTIL THE AMERICAN LEGION FALL CONFERENCE IN NOVEMBER.

SUPPORTING VETERANS THROUGH COVID-19

As many organizations are being forced to close their doors, our veterans are unable to work and provide an income to support their families. PROJECT: VetRelief has teamed up with the **Florida Veterans Foundation** to support those who are affected by this pandemic. We have been able to **fund over 50 cases for April** alone, which is three-times our monthly average. We are expecting May and June to be very similar.

The application process has been adjusted to assist veterans who are experiencing loss of income due to the virus. A new condensed form was created and additional documentation is required to show proof of loss in income. Funds at the present time are covering shelter and food expenses only.

HOW YOU CAN HELP: PROJECT: VetRelief and the Florida Veterans Foundation are counting on individuals and corporations to help us meet this increased demand. Please donate so that together we can assist all those who need our support.

DONATION LINK: <http://www.helpflivets.org/covid-19-support/>

HOW TO SUBMIT: Please send the application, DD-214 (member 4 copy), proof of temporary/permanent layoff due to coronavirus, and the bill for which you are requesting assistance to: or by fax (407) 299-0901. For the safety of our staff and volunteers, our office is closed to outside visitors. Therefore, we will not take any walk-in appointments or applications that are hand-delivered.



SUPPORT CASES

*Numbers reflect PVR Cases ONLY

JULY 2019 - MAR 2020

127

families helped

\$143,261.81

amount distributed

Quilts of Valor, Cadet of the Year, JSSP 2nd round Qualifications

Loretta Young, ROTC/JROTC/Shooting Sports

jrotc@legionmail.org



I would like to thank Piper HS, JROTC Color Guard for their presentation of Colors for the Opening of the Quilts of Valor Ceremony held at the Sunrise Theater last month. This is a non-profit organization that has a mission to cover service members and veterans with comforting and healing Quilts of Valor that are all handmade by their organization and each has a special meaning for each recipient. This event was very well attended and had 50 quilts to present to the local veterans. The program had the Color Guard lead the Grand Opening followed by the presentations with each individual and pictures with the quilts for lifelong memories.

I would also like to thank the posts supporting our JROTC Program with the

Cadet of the Year Application submissions which were due 01 March. We did not have as large a response as in past years, but our candidates continue to demonstrate the motto of our JROTC Program, "to build better citizens". They are the best of the best with their scholastic accomplishments, community involvement, sports and activity abilities. The First Place Winner will receive a \$2,500 scholarship, Second Place, \$1,500, Third Place \$1,000 and Fourth Place, \$500. Many thanks to the Department of Florida for their continued support for this worthwhile program.

The JSSP 2nd Round Postal Tournament was completed on 01 April and the results are posted on the website. Congratulations to the top Precision Category National winner Kaylene Castillo from Eldorado MCJROTC in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Top Sporter Category National winner was Maya Cameron from Nation Ford in Fort Mills, South Carolina. The top Precision Team was Lincoln Rifle Club, Jr. Division in the State of CA. The top Sporter Team was Nation Ford JROTC in Fort Sill, SC. The top Dept. of Florida shooter was Thomas

Reisinger with the Sarasota Military Academy in Parrish FL who placed 15th in the Sporter Category. The National Commander sent out a letter on 24 March that due to the uncertainties of the current coronavirus, the 2020 American Legion JSSP 3 Position Air Rifle National Championship scheduled for July 21-26 at the USA Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs is cancelled. Kudos to all our competitors and good luck to our seniors who may continue in this sport at the higher education level or in future careers.

Another cancellation is the Lee County JROTC Regional American Legion Marksmanship Meet and the Army JROTC State Marksmanship Meet that was scheduled in Cape Coral, Lee County for 24 & 25 April. The Army Commanding General and the Air Force Command have also cancelled all activities and events for the balance of the semester to include summer leadership encampments. I would like to thank all our posts who have supported these youth programs for this past year and encourage all to "Stay Safe".

Uncertain Days

Richard Smith, SAL Advisor

sal@legionmail.org



With everything that is going on we can all agree that life as we know it is not the same, and perhaps, may never be the same again. I know that Department is working hard to solve a great number of issues and questions we all

have. In this time let's not forget about the squadrons and the need for information. The Post Commander should be in contact with the SAL Commander and keeping them up to date. I know the Detachment is doing a great job in keeping everyone informed of what is going on and what may take place. Please make sure your squadrons are getting all the reports done and sent into Detachment. Everyone be safe and I will see you all when this is over.

Your Special Olympics Donations Matter

Diane Schmidt, Special Olympics

specialolympics@legionmail.org



Your donation makes a difference. These athletes do not pay to enter and compete. What they get is a new world of self discovery. With each new skill they perfect, they gain confidence. However, the

opportunity for your Post to receive your rightful recognition for your donation is upon us.

The Deadline is Now!

Don't delay. If you want to receive award recognition, you must send the American Legion Special Olympics Report and Questionnaire with supporting documentation (copy of check) to

Department Headquarters. Our athletes are on the top of their game. They make us proud. Your members deserve the same kind of shout out. They voted to donate to Special Olympics so they deserve to get recognition for their handout. Whether a plaque or certificate, Legionnaires always like to see where their money went to. In addition, we want to know about your volunteer participation at the events including interesting stories.

Post and Rider Chapters: Report all information to Diane Schmidt, Special Olympics Chairperson: Specialolympics@legion.org

SAL Squadron report all information to: Detachment Chair Bernie Wildrick: bwildrick@cfl.rr.com

Just know that what you contribute in time and money does matter and means a lot. Thank you so very much. If you need further assistance, please text me at 321-217 6699.



Buddy Check Monday

Larry Roberts, VA Entitlements
veteranservices@legionmail.org



Everyone is struggling with this COVID-19 virus in this nation. Veterans were already facing a staggering rate of approximately 22 suicide deaths a day.

Lets start a "Buddy Check Monday". This is the time for all American Legion Members to step up and

make at least Two Buddy Checks per week this should make a difference and show that at-risk Veterans they are not alone. This can be done ether by Phone or E-mail.

I would also like to say thank you to Tony Williams and Veterans Counseling for doing live Facebook Podcast with Veterans who suffer from PTSD, MST and suicidal ideations.

If you are a veteran in Crisis and have Suicidal thought please call **Veterans Crisis 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1**



Rising to the Challenge

Alan Cohen, VA&R
var@legionmail.org



What can I say that's not already been said? Beginning around the time of the Washington Conference in early March we faced the onset of COVID-19 and have been put in a defensive position. That said, we've been fortunate in that while Department leadership has provided information-

based guidance with our best interests in mind we've also, in typical American Legion fashion, risen to the challenges before us. Although for the time being, Post Service Officers aren't able to meet face- to- face with our fellow veterans and their families we can still consult and help by directing them to County and FDVA Service Officers via telephone for help with claims. Additionally, I'm comfortable in saying that Service Officers as well as other Post and family members have information regarding food banks, financial assistance where qualified and other services for those in need.

These things said, as you're no doubt aware our June Convention has been cancelled. Along with the many things that are affected is the FDVA-conducted Post Service Officer 2-day class. While no determination has been made to compensate and adjust to that as of this writing, you can rest assured that one will be forthcoming.

In closing this brief article let me be what I'm sure is the next to say to everyone: stay safe, be wise and stay healthy. We will come out of this stronger for the experience because that's what we do.

Our Devotion to Mutual Helpfulness

Deborah Wheeler, Women Veterans
womenveterans@legionmail.org



I am writing about our brothers and sisters. For decades our Posts have been a place of a fellowship, socialization and comradeship. With our Posts closed, these souls (our membership) are feeling more isolated and depressed especially - our aging members. Please do your buddy

checks and reach out. It only takes a few minutes of our time to give them a lifeline to our Great American Legion and lift the veil of helplessness and doom. This will reduce the numbers of suicide and death by loneliness.

Our needy veterans, both men and women, are really struggling. Calls continue and help requests are still received. Let's keep the assistance going. Start a food pantry, deliver meals, anything to help our veterans in need. Our works continues in this time. We do not want to to reopen our Posts to less members due

to our possible lack of helpfulness. Our commitment never takes a holiday or a break due to a pandemic.

I will continue to be of service to our Women Veterans first and foremost. I am assisting our sisters with their personal struggles to include homelessness, claims, HUD Vash delays, divorce issues, and the list goes on and on. We all continue to our jobs ever after this crisis is over.

Till we all see each other again, God speed, be safe!

For the latest Legion information regarding the Coronavirus (COVID 19) Pandemic go to:
www.floridalegion.org/pandemic/





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

POST EVERLASTING



Charles "Chuck" Weinberg

It is with deep regret that we report the passing of Past 13th District Commander, Charles "Chuck" Weinberg, of Port Charlotte, Florida on Monday, April 20, 2020 at the age of 72. There are no details regarding services at this time, but any new information will be communicated to you through email as well as posted on the website.

Chuck was a U.S. Marine Corps Vietnam War Era Veteran and a member of Port Charlotte Post 110 with 11 continuous years of membership. Chuck served as Post Commander (2012-2013) and District Commander (2016-2017).

Please keep his family and friends in your thoughts and prayers in their time of grief. If you would like to send your condolences you may do so through his significant other, June Habor, at 3146 Lockwood St., Port Charlotte, FL 33952.

April 30, 2020 95% Target Report (Currently 96%)		
15	Bruce Carl	104.27%
12	Chris Hamrick	100.73%
6	Robert Suelter	100.28%
11	Johnny Castro	100.23%
16	Randall McNabb	98.31%
1	Lamar Carroll	97.02%
4	Cherie Korn	96.74%
17	Hank Mangels	95.77%
8	Skip Felicita	95.49%
9	Arthur Barber	94.42%
5	Troy Horsley	93.95%
13	Brian Gehling	93.07%
3	Stuart Scott	89.16%
7	Rick Orzechewski	88.25%
2	Roger Hewitt	87.85%
14	Rocco LaPace	86.43%
Eastern	T.C. Biddle	100.48%
Central	Sid Damsgard	98.11%
Western	John Edens	95.39%
Northern	Marie Conti	94.47%
Southern	Paul Bosco	94.32%
Southwestern	Jerry Faight	94.17%
Post 400		92.66%
Post 208		86.48%



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NEXT MEMBERSHIP GOAL
95% 5/6/2020

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The American Legion, Department of Florida is proud to announce the 2020 Scholarship Winners

The General Scholarship:

1st Place, receiving a \$2,500.00 scholarship is Alexander Dyer of Lithia.

2nd Place, receiving a \$1,500.00 scholarship is Rebecca Mangum of Jacksonville.

3rd Place, receiving a \$1,000.00 scholarship is Kimberly Slinkosky of Cooper City.

4th -7th Place, receiving a \$500.00 scholarship each:

- Samantha Griffin of Melbourne.
- Mark Motsch II of Haines City.
- Zachary Ross of Winter Springs.
- Alayna Dean of Apopka.

The JROTC Cadet of the Year Scholarship:

1st Place, receiving a \$2,500.00 scholarship is Lauren Conner of Bradenton.

2nd Place, receiving a \$1,500.00 scholarship is Lindy Gostage of St. Johns.

3rd Place, receiving a \$1,000.00 scholarship is Rebecca Mangum of Jacksonville.

4th Place, receiving a \$500.00 scholarship is Haley Olsen of Palm Coast.

The Eagle Scout of the Year Scholarship:

1st Place, receiving a \$2,500.00 scholarship is Joshua Katz of Lake Worth.

2nd Place, receiving a \$1,500.00 scholarship is Alexander Dyer of Lithia.

3rd Place, receiving a \$1,000.00 scholarship is Kolby Crist of Sarasota.

4th Place, receiving a \$500.00 scholarship is Alan Cutler of Shalimar.



THE AMERICAN LEGION

For God and Country

April 20, 2020

American Legion Post Commanders and Adjutants,

A statewide stay-at-home order that Gov. Ron DeSantis announced on March 24, 2020 in response to the coronavirus pandemic is now in effect. Executive Order 20-83 urges the public to avoid all social and recreational gatherings of ten or more persons. The executive order also directs all Floridians to limit movements and personal interactions outside the home to only those necessary, to obtain or provide essential services or conduct essential activities.

Due to this order our posts are closed and we find ourselves seeking for a way to conduct our annual post elections.

The attached document contains suggested ideas for posts to conduct nominations and elections during this period. The posts must decide what is best for you.

I urge you to complete this in a way that is fair and that takes into account the needs of all members. Every member in good standing has the obligation and the right to vote for officers of the post. Every effort should be made to not dis-enfranchise any member.

I also urge everyone to be mindful of the preamble to our constitution, "TO CONSECRATE AND SANCTIFY OUR COMRADESHIP BY OUR DEVOTION TO MUTUAL HELPFULNESS." This is how we can hail The American Legion today as an unparalleled force in these United States for social betterment. American Legion concepts and its ideal of devotion to mutual helpfulness warmed up the whole social climate of America. Let's not forget that tradition by doing all we can to help each other.

Stay safe during this crisis and be mindful of those that need our help.

For God and Country.

Department Judge Advocate

THESE ARE POTENTIAL OPTIONS AND ARE ONLY SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS. POSTS NEED TO MAKE THEIR OWN DECISIONS BASED ON WHAT IS BEST FOR THEIR MEMBERSHIP.

POST NOMINATIONS AND VOTING

The biggest issue in this entire process is fairness and communications.

A Post **must** make a good faith effort to reach their **entire** membership and inform them of the steps to both nominations and elections. *Those steps are:*

NOMINATIONS: When will nominations process start and how that gets done and a cut-off date.

ELECTIONS: The date when elections will take place, how it will be done, when it begins, when it ends.

Also, it is strongly suggested depending on how you do elections, that if you are actually counting physical ballots and not using an online method that they be secured and opened at a separate time when all members can come and watch the count from their cars (depending on the restrictions currently in place) if desired. Some of your members you can reach by email, others by phone and all the rest by mail. However, you choose to do nominations, elections and posting of the results the procedure must be reasonable and fair to all Post members.

Under the COVID 19 crisis the methods of running elections should be decided by the following procedure.

NOMINATIONS

- nominations are required, even in this crisis. Self-nominations are acceptable (Write In). Seconds of nominations are not required per Roberts Rules of Order, Newly Revised.
- Not required to be read at one, two or three meetings prior to election!
- In all situations nominations are allowed at the time of election *using the write in space.*

Therefore, there are several options which a Post can use to take nominations, but the membership must know the start and cutoff date for nominations.

A Post can take Nominations and can be made by:

- email from the member to the Adjutant or the nominating committee if you so advise your members of the Adjutant's email address.
- by a phone call to the Adjutant or the nominating committee, if his phone has voice messaging and the members have his phone number and extension.
- by a sign-up sheet on the front door if you have informed the membership that the signup sheet is there.

BALLOT

- After the cutoff date for nominations, review the nominees to insure each one is a member in good standing of your Post
- Once you know the candidates that are in good standing, you will prepare a ballot listing each office and the members who are running for that office. That ballot must include a space under each office so that a member can "write-in" a candidate that may not have been nominated through the nomination process.
- Make certain you put a space for every officer even if there are no nominations because each will have a "write-in" space any member could write themselves in for that open position

ELECTIONS – you have several options available

- Simply Voting (www.simplyvoting.com) is an online application which is low cost, provides for the Post Adjutant or whomever else the Post appoints to administer the election to input the membership data and an election ballot. You would go to the Application on-line, members could perhaps use their 9-digit membership number for authentication, after authentication, ballot comes up, vote, release your ballot, your done. You can't vote again.
- Next option could be a drive-in ballot where members pull up in their car to a location, Adjutant or whomever checks to make sure they are a member, provides them a ballot, they vote the ballot and place it in a ballot box the Adjutant or whomever collects ballot boxes and then on another day at a predetermined time and place the ballot boxes are opened and counted.
- Open the Post, for 5 or 6 hours to allow members to come in for voting only. Member comes in, maintaining social distancing, check-in to ensure

they are a member in good standing, get a ballot, vote the ballot and place ballot in a ballot box and leave.

REPORTING RESULTS: To maintain transparency we strongly recommend that the results of the election be reported in a separate meeting, possibly in the parking lot where members could watch the opening and counting of ballots from their cars. After the count is complete and verified the results of the votes announced and then post the results. If you use an online tool or other means you could mail, email or simply report the results at a separate meeting. Just make sure that you afford all members the opportunity to vote and give all of them the results of the election. Just make sure that you afford all members the opportunity to vote and give all of them the results of the election.

PLEASE REMEMBER No matter which of these options you choose, the option must be communicated to your entire membership, everyone must know when, where and times so everyone has the opportunity to participate.

QUESTIONS Still have questions contact JudgeAdvocate@legionmail.org

THESE OPTIONS ARE ONLY SUGGESTIONS OR RECOMMENDATIONS.