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Submit Articles at
floridalegion.org/submit or legionlink@floridalegion.org

Questions? legionlink@floridalegion.org



A Message from the Department Commander

Michael "Gambler" Raymond, Commander

commander@floridalegion.org



As I traversed the grand stairway to the ultimate position of Department Commander, I felt confident that, yes, I was now qualified to hold this prestigious position. I learned from some of our best and most experienced leaders. I knew what to expect, and I really believed that we, as a team, could make a difference. I believe any issues that arise could be handled swiftly and efficiently as we stay on course and continue moving forward. But there are times when issues come up that take you completely by surprise. These are issues that, number one, should never have happened and, number two, should have been squashed immediately at the Post level. How do we do this, you ask? By being involved! By knowing what's going on at your Post. Status Quo is wonderful when things are going great, but when drama occurs, most run for the hills. But how do we fix this, you ask? A few years ago, I wrote an article in the Legion Link called "Using your toolbox". Your toolbox is very simple and only contains two items. Constitution/Bylaws and Officers manual. 95% of all issues that arise within your Post can be rectified

by utilizing these two documents. Also, keep in mind that if you have questions and/or concerns, your District Commander is only a phone call away. But remember, the key is to be involved. Know what's happening at your Post, and if you have questions or concerns, attend the meetings and ask questions. People who don't follow the rules hate to be questioned.

I want to comment on a recent issue that came up in one of our Posts concerning the ADA and service animals. **Resolution #357** was passed to make American Legion facilities accessible to and usable by disabled Veterans and their families. We will continue that long tradition of those who need it most. If an individual enters an American Legion Post with a service animal, the person cannot be asked about the nature or extent of the disability. Only two questions may be asked: 1. Is the animal required because of a disability? 2. What work or task has the animal been trained to perform? American Legion Posts should understand that service dogs are protected under the ADA and no Veteran should be denied access to a local Post, even if it has a "no pets" policy. The only exception is if the dog is not under the control of the Veteran and is a direct threat to others. It seems a bit hypocritical to

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<< Commander continued from page 1

me that an organization that fought so hard to get this law through our legislature would deny access. More info can be found at ada.gov/regs2010/service_animal_ga.pdf.

Finally, I'd like to thank all of you for working so hard on reaching our membership goals. As of this

writing, we have achieved our 65% National goal for November. Let's keep it going by continuing to do our Buddy Checks and spreading our message of "BE THE ONE" to everyone we come in contact with. I wish you all a wonderful Thanksgiving, and keep in mind those who are alone during the Holidays. God Bless, see you at the Conference.

COMMANDER'S CHARITIES
Disaster Relief and C.O.T.A.

Commander's Goal: \$50,000 (Current funds raised **\$43,951.05**)

Members keep us going!

Chris Hamrick, 1st Vice Commander

1stvice@legionmail.org



Hello, fellow Legionnaires, We've had a pretty decent first half of the year, and we're still building our momentum. Continuity... mentor and train others. Train on the same material, the same way... everywhere. Learn as much as you can about our organization. That's how you'll be more successful in recruiting new members. Membership is literally where the rubber meets the road here. Programs would not succeed, Posts would not succeed, and we as a whole would not succeed without members to work it. Our membership numbers are our strength when we need legislation passed to benefit our Veterans. We hear in our travels that there are not enough volunteers. Let's get new members and watch that issue go away. Many folks who have volunteered for years are getting older and tired. Or they don't have the energy anymore.

Retention.... Pick up the phone and seek out our members who haven't renewed by doing Buddy

Checks. Take notes when they speak. You'll be amazed at some of the things they have to say. Maybe it would be an awakening as well. Having a good retention rate is a challenge that each Post must face head-on. It's an individual Post issue. As a Post, you must ensure that you provide a reason for them to stay. Retention is crucial because you need experienced Legionnaires to help provide the training and mentorship to develop Leadership at your Post.

So, considering everything written here so far, you can see how it all ties together. We have a SUPER Membership team and Revitalization Chair. We Have an Awesome training team. All you need to do is pick up the phone and utilize them. Most issues can be solved with simple communication. Let's keep our momentum going strong. LET'S HAVE FUN DOING IT.

In closing, I want to wish everybody a safe and happy Holiday. Remember those who are deployed and their families. Remember that at this time of year, the depression and Suicide Rate soars. So please BE THE ONE. Especially this month. I love you all. Keep It Real. Peace... Out.

UPCOMING EVENTS

DECEMBER 2023

- 23-31 Holiday Blood Donor Drive ★
- 1 U.S. Civil Air Patrol Birthday
- 1 Post Oratorical Contests Start (12/1-1/21) ✨
- 2 ALR: Chapter 316 Monthly Meeting
- 2 District 12: Meeting
- 2 District 15: Meeting
- 2 District 8: Meeting
- 3 District 3: Meeting and Post Everlasting
- 6 Department Membership 75% Goal ✨
- 7 Pearl Harbor Day (1941)
- 7-15 Hanukkah
- 7 District 15: District Commander Visits Post 5
- 9 Post 108: Christmas Party
- 9 Army/Navy Cornhole Tournament
- 10 ALR: District 13 Teddy Bear Run
- 10 ALR: Chapter 8 Meeting
- 13 U.S. National Guard Birthday
- 13 ALR: Chapter 10 Meeting
- 14-17 Florida Legion College ✨
- 15 Bill of Rights Day
- 15 Legion Link Articles Due ✨
- 15 Homeless Veterans Outreach Nominations Due ✨
- 15 Employment Nominations Due ✨
- 15 JSSP: 1st Targets & Registration Closes ✨
- 16 Wreaths Across America
- 16 Post 5: Wreaths Across America Community Event
- 17 Wright Brothers Day
- 20 Panama "Operation Just Cause" (1989)
- 20 U.S. Space Force Birthday
- 21 First Day of Winter
- 22 Post 26: Christmas Party
- 25 Christmas
- 25-1 Department Headquarters Closed ✨
- 26 Boxing Day
- 26-1 Kwanzaa
- 30 ALR: Chapter 10 Bike Night
- 31 National Membership Awards ★
- 31 New year's Eve

★ Commander attendance tentative.

✨ Department of Florida event.

★ National event.

Events are subject to change. More details at floridalegion.org.



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Important Dates

Jessica Moore, 2nd Vice Commander

2ndvice@legionmail.org



As I have visited each post this year and attended District meetings and functions, I have engaged with many fellow Veterans on the importance of the many missions we have here in The American

Legion.

Although December is a month of celebration for The Civil Air Patrol Birthday (USAF Auxiliary) - on December 1, Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day - on

December 7. and the US National Guard Birthday - on December 13, it's vital we continue to carry out our important missions.

Continue to practice the initiative of Being the One. Legions everywhere are educating and raising awareness and funds for this crucial suicide-prevention program and de-stigmatizing asking for help.

Wreaths Across America is a mission to Remember, Honor, and Teach. Join them by sponsoring a wreath to be placed in honor or in memory of a Veteran this

December. Help us ensure that the sacrifices of our heroes are never forgotten.

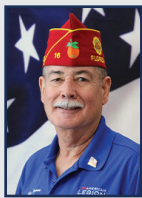
For many years, these approaching holiday seasons can be difficult, stressful, and even depressing. Believe me, I can relate. Always be sure to consider that and pay close attention to your buddy checklist this season.

I want to truly wish everyone a happy holiday filled with peace, relaxation, and merriment. I wish your last month of 2023 to be healthy and wise.

Three Important Books to Read

Jim Ramos, NEC

nec@legionmail.org



Florida Legionaries, Please read the following three Books:

National Constitution and By-Laws. (Book #1)

1. Article VI "National Officers" Section 1-4 and especially Section 3

Section 3. "The National Executive Committee at its first meeting following the National Convention shall appoint the National Adjutant, National Treasurer, National Judge Advocate, National Chaplain, and National Historian, such officers to hold office at the pleasure of the appointing power. All persons having the custody of funds shall give adequate bonds, which shall be approved by the National Executive Committee."

2. Article VII "National Executive Committee" Section 1-3, but especially Section 2

Section 2. "The term of office of such

National Executive Committee Member and Alternates shall be two years. The term of office of each National Executive Committee Member and Alternate shall commence immediately upon the adjournment of the National Convention next ensuing after their election and shall end at the adjournment of the second next succeeding annual National Convention."

Free download (go to legion.org) and Search "National Constitution and By-laws."

Rules of the National Executive Committee of the American Legion. (Book #2)

1. Please read Rule 1 (Self-Governing), Rule 2 (officers), and Rule 3 (Power and Rights) "A. To make decisions on all matters, executive or administrative, provided, however, that said action taken shall not be contrary to, nor in derogation of, action of the Convention, except as provided by the resolution adopted at the Cleveland National Convention in 1936, as follows:" Please continue reading it.
2. Rule 4 (Power of the Committee Over its

members) A and B Please read.

Free download (go to legion.org) and Search "Rule of the National Executive Committee."

Uniform Code of Procedure for the Organization of National Conventions of the American Legion (Book #3)

1. Call for National Convention: "We are hosting in 2025 the National Convention in Tampa, FL. Let's get ready for it." Please read!
2. Convention Program "order of business"
3. Officials of the Convention (delegate, going back to National by-laws Article II, Section 3) and Convention Committees as follows:
 1. Americanism
 2. Constitutional Amendment
 3. Credentials and Rules
 4. Finance
 5. Internal Affairs
 6. Legislation

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- 7. National Security
- 8. Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
- 9. Veterans Employment and Education

And it goes into the Duties of Convention Committees.

For a free download (go to legion.org), search "Uniform Code of Procedure for the organization of

the American Legion."

Thank You, and if you have any questions, please get in touch with me at NEC@legionmail.org.

PTSD and Service Dogs Information

Jerry Brandt, ANEC

anec@legionmail.org



Comrades, We just completed our Fall Conference. I am so happy that many of you attended the needed training, and hopefully, you met with the Leading Candidate for the Next National Commander.

A question came up about Service Dogs in Posts. The Following is the answer provided by National, and it is in the Officer's Guide about service animals and posts. Let me know if you have any questions. Thanks!

"Post-traumatic stress is the "signature wound" of the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, and VA estimates that up to 20 percent of U.S. Veterans suffer from it. As a result, there has been a dearth of new therapies and treatments to assist Veterans from all service eras in coping with PTSD.

In 2010, The American Legion created the TBI/ PTSD Committee to explore emerging treatments for mental health conditions and recommend those treatments to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Department of Defense (DoD). Among them is the use of service dogs. Many Legionnaires have said that a trained service dog has had a positive effect on their lives, and emerging research backs up those claims; thus, in 2016, during the 98th National Convention in Cincinnati, The American Legion passed Resolution No. 134, "Service Dogs for Injured Service Personnel and Veterans with Mental Health Conditions."

Veterans with PTSD use service animals to mitigate specific symptoms, such as recurring nightmares or anxiety attacks. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), passed into law in 1990, is a federal prohibition on discrimination against disabled individuals. According to the ADA, this includes those who utilize service dogs for a disability.

Most American Legion posts have been exemplary in their adherence to local, state, and federal disability laws, but a select few have not. Some local posts have failed to adequately recognize the value of service dogs for PTSD and have been in non-compliance regarding public access under the ADA. Care of disabled Veterans is one of the Legion's priorities, and through Resolution No. 7 – passed to make American Legion facilities accessible to and usable by disabled Veterans and their families – we continue that long tradition of supporting those who need it most.

The law requires the animal to be under the control of the handler at all times by harness, leash, or voice control. In complying with the ADA, American Legion posts should understand that service dogs are protected under the ADA and no Veteran with one should be denied access to a local post, even if it has a "no pets" policy. The only exception is if the dog is not under the control of the Veteran and is a direct threat to others.

If an individual enters an American Legion post with a service animal, the person cannot be asked about

the nature or extent of the disability. Only two questions may be asked:

1. Is the animal required because of a disability?
2. What work or task has the animal been trained to perform?

These questions should not be asked if the animal service's tasks are obvious, such as guiding an individual who is blind or has low vision, pulling a wheelchair, or providing stability. Furthermore, the ADA does not protect an "emotional support" or "comfort" animal, but state laws may differ. Post leadership should review all house rules and its constitution and by-laws to ensure compliance with federal, state, and local laws per service dogs, and Legionnaires should be briefed."

Answers to frequently asked questions about service animals and the ADA are online at ada.gov/

A reminder: the National Commander will be visiting Florida from January 21st to January 30th. He will be visiting the Southern Area. More information will be available once the final route is determined.

I wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a safe and Happy New Year. I will see you soon.



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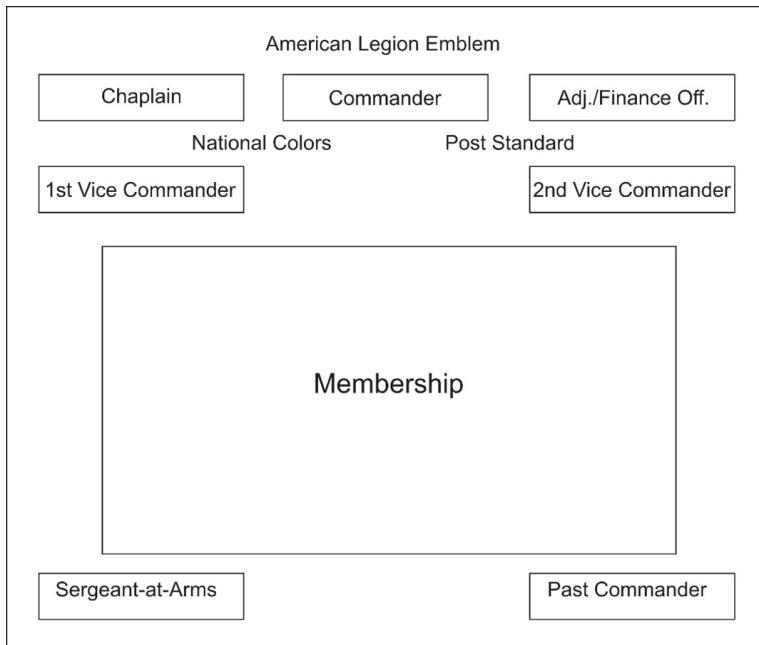
Sergeant-At-Arms Training

Les Martin, Sergeant-at-Arms

sgtatarms@legionmail.org



Continuing with the use of this platform to provide training to our Post and District Sergeant's-at-Arms. Setting up the meeting room is another essential role of the Sergeant-at-Arms. Below is a diagram of the proper way to set up your meeting room. In my travels around the state, I see that many Posts follow this diagram, but there are still several Posts that do not. Remember, protocol is very important in our organization.



penalties for violating the Code. Also, some folks think that if a U.S. Flag touches the ground, you must destroy it. Not True. As long as the flag is serviceable and suitable for display, the flag may continue to be displayed. Can a town Mayor or Post Commander order a U.S. Flag to be flown at half-staff? No, only the President of the United States or the Governor of a State can request a flag to be lowered to half-staff. Any others who order the flag to half-staff erode the honor and reverence of lowering the flag for the appropriate reasons. Did you know that the Flag Code does not have any provision against washing or dry-cleaning the

American Flag?

The stars on the blue field on the U.S. Flag represent our States and that they are indivisible. That is why you should not cut the stars from the flag. The unserviceable flag should be retired as a whole, either by burning or shredded for synthetic flags.

You Know, some people think that The American Legion wrote the Flag Code that was adopted by Congress. In fact, it was The American Legion and 68 other patriotic, fraternal, civic, and military organizations that met in Washington to draft the Flag Code that was adopted by the 77th Congress on June 22, 1942. Did you know that a flag used to drape a casket can be used for other purposes? It can even be used to display from a staff or flagpole. How about the Flag Code? It does not have any

"On March 26, 2012, the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Chairman Jeff Miller unveiled the empty chair draped with the official POW/MIA flag to honor America's Prisoners of War and those Missing in Action." "In 1970, Mrs. Michael Hoff, an MIA wife and member of the National League of POW/MIA Families, recognized the need for a symbol of our POW/MIAs. Prompted by an article in the Jacksonville, Florida, Times-Union, Mrs. Hoff contacted Norman Rivkees, Vice President of

Annin & Company....He and an Annin advertising agency employee, Newt Heisley, designed a flag to represent our missing men." Since no trademark or copywriting was asked for, there is no restriction on its use.

The Pow/Mia Table:

The **table** is small, symbolizing the frailty of one prisoner, alone against his or her suppressors."

"The **tablecloth** is white, symbolic of the purity of their intentions to respond to their country's call to arms."

"The **single rose** in the vase signifies the blood they may have shed in sacrifice to ensure the freedom of our United States of America. The rose also reminds us of the family and friends of our missing comrades who keep faith while waiting for their return."

"The **red ribbon** on the vase represents an unyielding determination for a proper accounting of our comrades who are not among us."

"A **slice of lemon** on the plate reminds us of their bitter fate."

"The **salt** sprinkled on the plate reminds us of the countless fallen tears of families as they wait."

"The **glass** is inverted. They cannot toast with us at this time."

"The **candle** is reminiscent of the light of hope, which lives in our hearts to illuminate their way home, away from their captors, to the open arms of a grateful nation."

"The **American flag** reminds us that many of them may never return — and have paid the supreme sacrifice to ensure our freedom."

"The **chair** is empty — they are not here."

Until Next Month, stay safe and healthy.



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National Children & Youth Committee Report

Dennis Boland, Past Department Commander

pdcboland@legionmail.org



Our Boys State programs had 12,470 participants this year at the Department programs, showing continued growth since the 2020 pandemic.

- Samsung Scholarships awarded this year included:
- 10 National Scholars receiving \$10,000 each
- 10 National Scholars Runners up receiving \$5,000 each

- 71 Department Finalists receiving \$1,250 each
- Total of all Samsung American Legion Scholarships, 2023, \$238,750
- 2023 is the first year on record that all eligible Departments submitted a finalist.

Scout certificates, 9 Summit Award certificates, and 9 Square Knot awards since our last scout meeting in September 2022.

Troops and Posts can download these certificates at:

- www.legion.org/scoutin/certificates
- www.legion.org/scouting/award
- www.legion.org/scouting/nominee

The National Oratorical finals are contemplating moving from Indianapolis to Hillsdale College in Hillsdale, Michigan. This will be at no cost to the American Legion.

The American Legion has issued 1,217 Eagle Scout certificates, 185 Gold Award certificates, 17 Sea

We received 22 packets for Eagle Scout of the Year. Our winner received \$10,000, and the three runners up each received \$2,500

Eastern Area Events

Joe Marcheggiana, Eastern Area Commander

eastern@legionmail.org



I am writing this on November 9th. October was a busy month. The Eastern Area Legion Riders road a lot of miles during Merry-Go-Round month, raising funds for Children and Youth. I'm still decompressing. But it just gets busier and better as we move forward into the holiday season. The giving season is upon us. It starts with Halloween, and hundreds of pounds of candy are collected at the posts and given to the kids at various events. We immediately move into November with Veterans Day Parades and activities that span the whole week. Since I was a kid, the Veterans Day Parades have been my favorite. And, of course, let's not forget Wreaths Across American fundraisers and the Laying of the wreaths, "Lest we forget."

Then, one of our greatest giving periods is Thanksgiving, and our posts support our Veterans, friends, and neighbors by helping to fill their pantries and refrigerators for the holidays. And the

Toys for Tots collection boxes appear to let us know what is immediately around the corner. It is time to collect and donate to put a smile on a kid's face and let them feel loved and cared for. Times are tough out there. If you do not normally do it, make a trip to your local big box store, walk the toy aisles, and grab some toys for the kids. If your post is lucky enough to have Legion Riders, they will know what to do with the toys. For your closest Toy For Tots drop, use this website: <https://www.toysfortots.org/find-your-local-chapter/>. You can even request a box for your post.

During all of this, do not lose sight of our purpose and mission. There will be Veterans and their families feeling the pinch. It is great to help the community, we must, and we love it. But Be the One to put a smile on a Veteran's face during this time of feasting and

celebration wherever they may be. You do not have to look far. We are in every corner of our society.



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Northern Area Activities

Lena Heredia-Perez, Northern Area Commander

northern@legionmail.org



As I am writing this article, I am beyond proud of the hard work that each of our Districts is doing not just in Veterans' lives but also within their prospective communities. In the past month,

I have attended not only District and Post meetings but I have also been honored to be able to participate in various events to include/not limited to:

- American Legion Post 57's Toys for Tots Poker Run, where they raised over \$16,200.00 in donations/toys for children in need
- American Legion Post 236 3rd Annual Snowball Express, where they raised over \$8,800.00 for Gold Star Children for Christmas
- American Legion Post, 291 Night with Elvis, was a great opportunity for the members to relax and dance the night away after recovering from Hurricane Idalia.
- American Legion Post 83's Grand Opening –

This has been a long time coming. A lot of blood, sweat, and tears have gone into making sure that this American Legion is a pillar within the community again!

- American Legion Post 57's Halloween Party, where they opened their doors to over 300 children from the community for a safe, fun-filled Halloween Experience

I firmly believe that it is one thing as an Officer of The American Legion to attend meetings, but it is completely different when we get out within the ranks to support the Post's efforts to raise awareness/money for various organizations that are important to them. Like many of you reading this, I thoroughly enjoy being the hands and feet of The American Legion, making a difference in someone's life one at a time. But remember, we cannot experience this if we are not invited to your events. Please contact me if you have an event you would like me to attend/support, please get in touch with me. I promise that I will do everything I can to support your post/District if it is within my ability.

If that is not enough, over the past month, the Northern Area has stayed steady in either the middle of the pack when it comes to our numbers or bumped back up to 2nd place in the Department. A special shout out to the 3rd, 4th, and 17th Districts for being within the top 5 of the Department for their current membership numbers. Keep up the outstanding work!

While we all know that this can change at any given time, we also know that as long as we are actively engaging our Post body and community, we, as The American Legion Family, can and will continue to build a stronger foundation for the future of our organization. Over the past 11+ years of being actively involved in The American Legion, I have kept hearing the statement, "We need the younger Veterans." Well, I am here to tell you, just like you and I, when the time is right for them, our brothers and sisters coming up in the ranks behind us will seek a safe place of refuge for not only themselves but their families. It is our responsibility to see that the place of refuge still exists!

Don't Let Time Slip away

Doug Hockenberry, District 4 Commander

District4@legionmail.org



Hello, Department of Florida American Legion Family. My heavens, it is December already; it is funny how time flies. On that note, let me start by wishing each of you, your families, loved ones,

and friends a joyous and blessed Merry Christmas and Happy Holiday Season. Please be safe out there for those of you who will be traveling over the holidays. Whether driving, flying, taking a train, or cruising – be vigilant of your surroundings and return safely.

A special thank you to my 4th District Legion Family. I wish each of you a joyous holiday, and I thank you for the overwhelming support you have provided me since taking over as your District Commander. I am grateful to be a part of the fabulous Fourth District, and I look forward to our continued success.

It is hard to believe that we are hitting the halfway mark of our American Legion Year, and before we know it, we will be having our annual convention. Time does have a habit of flying by, especially during the Christmas holiday season. With so many events and activities, we tend to let our membership

numbers slip. It is not intentional; it is just that we become busy looking out for our members, more so during the holidays, making sure that our senior members and those members who may be alone are taken care of. Combine that with holiday parties from work, schools, or church, plus those of our posts and communities; it is easy to see how time can slip away before we know it.

I mention time slipping away for a reason as it relates to Membership. We all know Membership is critical to our future and our success as an organization. Sure, it would be impressive if

District 4 Commander continued on page 8 >>



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<< District 4 Commander continued from page 7

we could all be at 100% by 31 December, but realistically, I know that is unlikely to happen. As such, I ask all Commanders, 1st Vice Commanders, and Adjutants, along with your membership committees, to ensure you make time throughout December to continue working on your Membership

Program at your post. As I stated earlier, we are all busy with events and activities, but please do not lose sight of our membership processing targets and goals. Once we get behind, it becomes more of a challenge to make up that lost ground, so please do not fall prey and become a victim of time passing you by.

In closing, once again, I want to extend my best to each of you over this holiday season. May you be blessed with good health and enjoy the love and company of those around you this holiday season.

“Proud to be Legion”

District 12 Membership Information

Bruce Thurber, District 12 Commander

District12@legionmail.org



Now that we have passed Thanksgiving, it's time to bring our membership to an end. The most expensive holiday of the year is upon us, and we need to also

close our membership year. Membership this year is one of the most essential programs that we have, and we need to end the year with 100%. We need to call all our non-renewed and find out if they have problems. As you now know, the economy is growing, and wages are not. We need to finish up this year early.

We have our District meeting on the 2nd; this meeting will be important as we will cover our District Constitution and By-Laws. We also have some events to prepare for the SAL District Meeting, Christmas, Chanukah, Kwanza, and the fast of Tevet 10. We also have things coming in January that we need to prepare for in December.

The Future of The American Legion

Eric Loyd, District 13 Commander

District13@legionmail.org



We ask ourselves, what is the future of the American Legion? There are numerous Veterans who are not members of the American Legion. Daily, I talk to people who are Veterans, and they have no idea what the American Legion is about; when I tell them all the programs we are involved in, they are overwhelmed at all the American Legion does for the Children and Youth. The scholarships

and programs we support. How the American Legion got the VA system going, and how the American Legion started the Boy Scouts. Every day, people say how do we get young Veterans into the Legion. Times have changed. Younger Veterans play video games; they watch more television. They work, they have families to go to soccer, football, baseball, basketball, cheerleading, etc. When you are on active duty, you are not told about anything about any of the organizations you should be involved in when you get out of the service. Do we advertise in the Army Times, Navy Times, Airforce Times, and

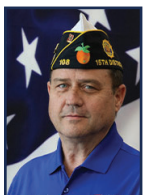
Marine Times Papers? How do we reach active duty to show them what we are all about? If we, the American Legion, could get those Veterans, would the suicide numbers go down? Would Veterans realize they are not alone? Would our membership numbers increase drastically?

District 13 just had our Children and Youth Picnic and raised over \$2000.00. A special Thank you to Dennis and Diane Boland for such a well-organized event.

Official Visitation and the Report

Randy Holeyfield, District 15 Commander

District15@legionmail.org



District Commanders' official visits are not "The Department getting into our business" but rather ensuring a post maintains its minimum requirements. If a post does not have sufficient coverage,

documentation, or reports, it could cause the post in several ways. Inefficiencies in post operations, suspension, revocation, paying extra taxes, theft of post funds, loss of the Non-for-Profit status, or worse, a lawsuit that ruins the financial stability of their post and possible closure. The Visitation report has several areas: What programs and other things the post is engaging their community and Veterans,

as well as member counts for their Legion Family groups, and is the post following the Officer's Guide for various leadership businesses or running their post-General Membership meeting IAW the manual. This one is one of our Department Commander's initiatives to have "Back to the Basics training," where it has been observed that some posts are not following either Department or National

District 15 Commander continued on page 9 >>



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<< District 15 Commander continued from page 8

recommendations. By doing it their way, it actually creates the situation where the post-meeting does not run smoothly, or worse, even becomes bizarre or out of control, causing it to run too long, making members leave, and, in some cases, never wanting to come to another meeting. Also, it looks at how the post engages their community at different levels and attributes.

But the most important items on the report are when the post filed their last 990, corporate report, sales tax certification, liability insurance, and how up-to-date their CBL (Constitution & By-Laws) is. Let's look at these:

990s; What or Why: **If a post does not file its 990** (no matter how large or small, including Homeless posts), it will lose its Non-for-profit status (though it could take a couple of years, it will happen). So which one should the post file? First of all, a post could file it on their own behalf, but when you have a complex financial post business, you should consider getting advice or employing an accountant (CPA). Therefore:

990s are filed when gross receipts are greater than \$200,000 or total assets are greater than \$500,000 at the end of the tax year.

990-EZ, known as the short form, is for

organizations exempt from income tax with gross receipts less than \$200,000 and total assets no more than \$500,000

990-N (e-Postcard) is for organizations with gross receipts of less than \$50,000

Moving on, **Sales Tax Certification**, which allows the post to purchase items exempt from sales tax, renews in 5-year periods. **Corporate Report** (www.sunbiz.org): Your post is a not-for-profit corporation, and the Secretary of State **requires all corporations to file an annual report** by May 1st. I have observed the post's corporation being suspended, and it can cost the post a \$500 fine as well as reinstatement (which also has other fees). In fact, in District 15, there are six posts that, at some point, have been suspended (public records) for not filing their report. On that note, you should not file it too early; you say why. Well, on that report, you list the officers of the corporation, but you are having elections, and if you file early and new officers take office, you are required to send an amended report with the changes; yes, that's the law. This is also why you should have elections by April so you can file your report by May 1st. There is no reason to delay the election to the last minute; the new officers do not take office until they are officially installed. The **Posts CBL** is vital to "How the post is run and governed," to which the Department recommends reviewing them every three years and

submitting them by the 4th year; some posts are ten or more years out of date, offering "we are going to work on that" but years go by. With that, if you are in leadership positions, "Do you have a current copy, and do you read it?" Lastly, let's look at **Insurance:** Having Insurance is critical, as well as coverage levels and who is covered. It would be best if you also had Fiduciary Liability, which covers theft within the post. Posts have seen \$25,000 or more stolen and were unrecoverable; with this insurance, the post would have recovered their loss, and the insurance company "Would seek the party to the fullest of the law." Safeguard your posts' assets and get the coverage.

I have done a complete review of my District, and all of my posts have not provided one or more of these (in paper form for records). Not that the post does not have or submitted them in a timely manner; they just have not given me a paper copy for the District records. These documentation verifications help make sure your post does not fall through the cracks or worse. The Department is only looking out for your post.

Explanations of Programs

Kurt Gies, Americanism Chair

americanism@legionmail.org



Americanism

Commission: Each year at the National Convention, students from across the nation are honored as the National Champions

for several American Legion Americanism

programs. We hear from the Boys Nation President, the Eagle Scout of the Year, the JROTC Cadet of the Year, the Law Enforcement, Firefighter, and EMT of the Year, the Boys Baseball National Champion team, The National Oratorical Champion, Junior Shooting Sports Champions and so many more.

My first thought was, "How impressive are these

Americans!" My second thought was, "Is there someone like this in my community who deserves to be standing on that stage next year but was never given the chance because my Post didn't find them?" What a shame if there is. They deserve the chance to shine and be recognized, and it is our job as Legionnaires to make sure that happens.

Americanism continued on page 10 >>



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<< Americanism continued from page 9

Imagine if your Post or District can reach out to your community to shine a bright light on these amazing Americans and then have them represent your hometown on the National stage next year. How cool would that be for everyone involved? So please step up and get involved in today. There is a young boy or girl who has amazing capabilities ready for you to call their name.

Boys State and Oratorical Contest deadlines are rapidly approaching.

American Legion Boys State: Can you honestly say that \$495 is too much to change a young man's life for the better? The deadline to pay your fees and select your Delegates is Jan 3rd, 2024. Send in your money ASAP and reserve your quotas. The cost of Boys State to the Legion is basically

the same whether we fill it up or send 85% of what we are allowed (which has been the case the past couple of years). If you have money to send more than your quota, please request extra quotas, as we probably have space for them. But act now and be part of something that changes lives.

American Legion Oratorical Contests: The deadlines for the post-level Oratorical Contests are rapidly approaching. Over the years, we've noticed that most posts have elected not to host these competitions. But I guess it's because many don't recognize what this contest is about and how easy it is to host one. All you need is 2-3 contestants, 4-5 volunteers, and a place to hold it. The booklet guides you through the rest.

By not hosting one, you are potentially denying a local high school student from your community the chance to collect over \$28,000 in scholarship

money by winning at all the levels on their way to becoming the national champion. Some children from some community, representing some American Legion post, will walk across that stage at the National Convention to be honored. Wouldn't it be cool if they represented your post?

If you are planning to host an event, tell your other posts in your District so they can come out, watch, or possibly even help, but also direct kids from their areas who are interested in competing. If you're not holding a contest this year, find out who is (post, District, or Area-level) and volunteer to help them. This way, you can see what it is about and be ready to host one next year. We promise it will be an amazing experience for you and the kids and potentially be the first step to giving one of your local kids a chance at "Greatness" and some significant scholarship money!

Survey Information and Children & Youth/Charity Rides

Jim Wineland, Legion Riders Chair

alr@legionmail.org



ALR, Recognized by the Division of Motor Vehicles

This is the December Legion Link; wow, Christmas already!

The Wineland Family and the Leadership of your ALR, we wish each of you and the families of our organization a Very Merry Christmas and a Happy and Prosperous New Year. This year went way too fast. Looking back, we have accomplished a lot and provided much-needed help to the Suicide Prevention Initiative. The Challenge 22 events and the individual fund-raising efforts across our organization provide the support needed for our Veterans. And well done!

Personally, I can't tell you how much your support has meant to the program. We have grown into a professional organization, and I, for one, applaud your efforts, Thank You!

For those who haven't heard, we are one of the three organizations the "Division of Motor Vehicles," selected to help reduce motorcycle accidents in Florida. We will talk more about it in the future, but for every motorcycle registration made in Florida, \$2.50 is allocated to the program. This amounts to approximately 8 million dollars over the five-year program, shared by the three motorcycle organizations. The dollars come with many restrictions. It can be spent on billboards, bumper stickers, key chains, and support programs at events like Daytona Bike Week, Poker runs, and any event that would draw motorcycle enthusiasts. We will be

looking for individuals who want to get involved in Rider Safety! We already have one individual who stepped up, Ted Wieder, our Road Captain and Safety officer, and he will be looking for more help.

We have more committees coming on board to help us out. As I mentioned, we have grown into a professional riding organization, and we need to delegate more responsibilities to other individuals, which should make a smooth leadership transition in the future.

All the scheduled activities are coming together, and at this point, we are on schedule.

Ride Safe; I am looking forward to seeing you soon!

American Legion Riders continued on page 11 >>



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<< American Legion Riders continued from page 10

Your 2023 – 2024 Schedule:

- **Summit**
Meet & Greet
January 31, 2024
Classes
February 1-3, 2024.
- **Round Robin**
Month of April 2024

- **Children and Youth Picnic**
April 6, 2024
- **In-State Unity Ride**
Meet & Greet
April 21, 2024

If you have any ideas, please share!

Thank You for what you do, and we are proud to be part of your Leadership Team of such an excellent group!

“For the Cause, not the applause.”

Record High Collection for the Blood Donor Program

Jamie Grinis, Blood Donor Chair

blooddonor@legionmail.org



Last year, The American Legion Blood Donor Program exceeded 92,000 units collected, a 15-year high. According to the newest American Legion Consolidated Post Report – recording local performance in a number of areas of the

organization between June 1 and May 31, 2023 – collections are still soaring.

With 8,292 of the Legion’s 12,267 local posts submitting their year-end reports, 102,013 units of blood were collected from 60,702 donors.

The American Legion Blood Donor Program originated in 1942 when members were asked to give blood

locally to fulfill domestic needs as much-needed plasma was shipped overseas to supply U.S. military troops in World War II.

Over the years, The American Legion grew to become the nation’s top organizational donor of blood for the Red Cross.

Learn How to Be a Good Leader

Jim Ramos, Florida Legion College Chair

falc@legionmail.org



Florida American Legion College is for you to **learn how to be a good leader** in the American Legion **Department of Florida** and to help your Post, District, and Area by teaching you to become better at helping our Veterans and our Community.

Seven ways to help accomplish this are listed below. Check each that you currently do.

I make an effort to:

- Treat all members equally and give each personal attention as required.
- Keep the promises I make to all team members.
- Be consistent and act positively, even if you feel

negatively.

- Set a good example and support organization policies and procedures.
- Stay calm, I understand that others tend to imitate a leader’s reactions under pressure.
- Provide opportunities to meet and exchange ideas with my team members.
- Make sure all my goals are clearly communicated and understood.

To assist our members in becoming better helps with our Legion family as we move forward in teaching. How to make it easier for them to learn by the following:

1. Officer’s Guide and Manual of Ceremonies
2. Constitution and By-laws
3. The American Legion Legislative Agenda

4. National Membership Awards Program Manual
5. The future of Credentialing of Servicemembers and Veterans
6. Service Officer Code of Procedures
7. All American Legion Programs

One more list to follow:

1. BE HONEST (own self be true)
2. BE AMBITIOUS (merely wanting better things for everyone)
3. BE ENTHUSIASTIC (A person who enjoys life)
4. BE CURIOUS (ability to distinguish right from wrong and make a stand for the higher qualities)
5. BE POISED (A poised person is tactful, kind, and considerate)

Florida Legion College continued on page 12 >>



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<< Florida Legion College continued from page 11

- 6. BE SELF-CONFIDENT (A self-confident person leads a good life, is proud of it, and is an individual, not a carbon copy; they are reasonable and tolerant.)
- 7. KNOW YOUR ORGANIZATION AND ITS PROGRAMS (History and all Programs)

- 8. LOOK THE PART (Our leaders represent our organization in the community. What the community thinks of our leaders, they quite often think of our organization. Common sense will often tell you what is right and what is not.)

Happy New Year 2024, and continue to be the best you can be in the American Legion Department of Florida. If you have questions, please get in touch with me at 352-226-4370 or email at FALC@legionmail.org.

Headstone and Restoration Information

Rico Thomas, Florida National Cemeteries Chair
cemeteries@legionmail.org



Did you know that you can apply and possibly get a headstone for any honorably served Veteran, even if they have had one given or do not live in your state?

The National Cemetery Administration (NCA) provided links below will give you more understanding to help you with this process.

In most cases, you can apply for one of these memorial items if you represent the deceased Veteran, service member, or family member in any of these relationships or professional roles.

Have you seen a Veteran's headstone that NCA gave that looks disgusting, and you wanted to clean it?

Cemetery Restoration

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and National Cemetery Administration (NCA) are launching a nationwide initiative to acknowledge

and collaborate with community-led efforts to restore Veteran gravesites within historic private cemeteries.

Together, NCA and community members will share experiences and best practices for obtaining the necessary documentation for Veterans to receive burial benefits, how to safely clean Veteran headstones and markers, and other restoration-related work.

This initiative complements community-led volunteer efforts nationwide that identify, restore, and preserve historic private cemeteries to respect and honor Veterans and others who may be buried there. <https://www.cem.va.gov/hmm/cemetery-restoration.asp>

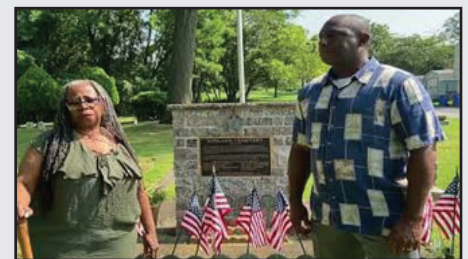
The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Veterans Cemetery Grants Program was established in 1978 to complement VA's national cemeteries. The program assists states, territories, and tribal governments in providing gravesites for Veterans in those areas where NCA cannot fully satisfy their burial needs.

VA has awarded grants totaling \$992 million

to establish, expand, improve, operate, and maintain 122 Veterans cemeteries in 49 states and territories, including tribal trust lands, Guam, Saipan, and Puerto Rico. In fiscal year 2022, NCA grant-funded state cemeteries provided more than 47,000 interments.

Grants may be used only to establish, expand, or improve Veterans cemeteries that are owned and operated by a state, territory, or tribal government on trust land. Aid is granted only to states, U.S. territories, and federally recognized tribal governments, not to private organizations, counties, cities, or other government agencies. <https://www.cem.va.gov/grants/index.asp>

If I may be of any guidance, do not hesitate to contact me at cemeteries@legionmail.org or 954-822-0897.



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NEWS, FORMS, VETERAN RESOURCES, UPCOMING EVENTS, AND MORE



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New Partnership

Jim Burk, Homeless Veterans Vice

homelessvetsvice@legionmail.org



I am excited to announce a new partner for us to work with. Recently received an email from Lorenzo Lockett, Operations Program Manager for St Vincent de

Paul CARES. They are a nonprofit that operates in 19 counties. They work with Veteran families to provide housing and staff eviction. They provide beds and household items for Veteran families in need. I will be providing more information in our class at Fall Conference. REMEMBER, HE AIN'T HEAVY HE'S MY BROTHER



JROTC Veterans Day Participation and JSSP Deadline

Loretta Young, JROTC/JSSP Chair

jrotc@legionmail.org



Veterans Day is an excellent opportunity to see the many different JROTC Units in your areas and appreciate all that they can offer to your Posts and the community. I know that there

were many different programs throughout the state, and I'm sure there were many Color Guard Units and Cadets assisting in ceremonies and serving dinners and other activities at Posts. I had more invitations than time allowed and, therefore, had a very busy few days since Veterans Day was on Saturday and schools were closed on Friday, giving everyone the opportunity to spread out their time. Piper AJROTC, which I attended, had the largest turnout for one Unit as their Senior Instructor

invited as many as could attend in one group. They were seated in the Theater balcony to get a good view of their peers leading the program with the Presentation of Colors. As a reminder, please order your JROTC Medals for the Year End Ceremonies, which some schools already have the dates for March and April. National has already had backlogs, so waiting until the spring will be a problem. All orders are through National Legion Emblem Sales.

Another reminder for the JSSP Online Registration deadline is Dec. 14th. Since this process takes time, please do not wait until the

last minute. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me. I look forward to hearing from the Posts about your programs and would like to feature articles about what your post is doing. Thanks so much to all who support our JROTC and JSSP programs; this is our future.



Piper AJROTC Cadets at Veterans Day Program at the Sunrise Theater

When Cops Retire

Daryl Bass, Law & Order Chair

laworder@legionmail.org



When a good Cop leaves the job and retires to a better life, many are jealous; some are pleased, and yet others, who may have already retired, wonder. We wonder

if he knows what he's leaving behind because we already know. We know, for example, that after a lifetime of camaraderie that few experience, it will remain as a longing for those

past times. We know in law enforcement life, there is a fellowship that lasts long after the uniforms are hung up in the back of the closet. We know that even if he throws them away, they will be on him with every step and breath that remains in his life. We also see how the very bearing of the man speaks of what he was and, in his heart, still is.

These are the burdens of the job. You will still look at people suspiciously. Still, I see what others do not see or choose to ignore and always will look

at the rest of the law enforcement community with respect for what they do, only grown in a lifetime of knowing. Never think for one moment you are escaping from that life. You are only escaping the job' and merely being allowed to leave "active" duty.

So what I wish for you is that whenever you ease into retirement, in your heart, you never forget for one moment that 'Blessed are the peacemakers

Law & Order continued on page 14 >>



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<< Law & Order continued from page 13

for they shall be called the children of God,' and you are still a member of the greatest fraternity the World has ever known.

Author Unknown: After reading this, I realized that

much of this also applies to those who retired from Military Service.

Law & Order Chairs, please honor your local Law Enforcement Officers, Paramedics, Fire Fighters and Hospital Personnel.

If you have any concerns or need assistance, please call me at (407) 738-3357 or e-mail laworder@legionmail.org

2023 Cards Expiring

Bruce Carl, Membership Chair

membership@legionmail.org



Since my last article, the Fall Conference has come and gone. I hope that many of you attended and gained some knowledge you may not have known before. I also hope everyone had a wonderful Thanksgiving holiday!

As of this article's writing, our membership numbers look wonderful. We are definitely on the right track and heading towards making our 100% goal. It was a rough start for us, hanging around number 50 in the Nation (which is typical), but as of this writing, we are up to 42nd place. We have met the past two National goals. I know we will only continue to rise to meet all the challenges and our remaining goals. Everyone is hard at work producing the numbers we need weekly! I want to thank all the award winners from the Fall Conference and look forward to having a bigger list for the Convention. I also want to thank the

Florida membership team, which is all of you, for making our Department successful!

Phase two of the membership plan will continue through the end of this month. Phase three will begin in January, and more information will be forthcoming in the following newsletter. So for now, keep working on those renewals and DMS lists, and continue your "buddy checks"

We will soon be coming to the end of our first six months, and the 2023 cards will be expiring. Please ensure you are informing your members that their cards will expire on Dec.31st so they renew before that. Remind them they will lose their canteen privileges, access to games, post events, and all the benefits of being a member.

There is also a state law that members must show a valid membership card (2024) after Jan. 1 in order for them to be legally served. Please train your canteen staff to always check a person's ID card, especially in January. Should ABT come into your

establishment and not be carded, they will hold you accountable. Also, if they see the bartender not checking the ID cards of others coming in, they will also get a violation. We do not want to see any Post in the Department risk the chance of getting fined (or worse), such as losing their liquor license. It can be costly and difficult to get it back, and sometimes, they do not give them back.

Remember, the Department membership team is here to assist you with whatever you need. Please feel free to contact me if you need to. Also, remember that I am willing to travel to you to help your Post. You need to let me know!

In closing, I wish everyone a safe and Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, Happy Kwanza, or whatever you might celebrate. Enjoy the time with family and friends, and safe travels there and back!

Remember to "Be the One" to prevent suicide, and "Be the One" for membership!

General National Security Information

Raymond Olsen, National Security Chair

security@legionmail.org



I wrote this in mid-November to be read at the beginning of December. Hopefully, this finds you all in good spirits; the Government has not shut down, talks with China and the President went well, and the border crisis is settling down. Missi

was watching the News with me this morning and asked me a question. "If they all come over in a big bunch like that, how can the border patrols tell the ones who are really bad or carrying drugs?" I agree 100%. How can we tell? This group on TV was from Venezuela. Later on in the news, or maybe in a hearing on CSPAN, I heard testimony from some security type that the chatter on Domestic Acts of terrorism is way up, and the activities that have

taken place are way ahead of last year. I know it is going on. My second thought is that while all the Congressional fighting was taking place to get a new Speaker elected, many members of the Republican Caucuses spoke and said that they needed to start voting the minds of their constituents and not those of a particular group who may or may not have the

National Security continued on page 15 >>



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<< National Security continued from page 14

backing of any constituents. I tend to agree. I want Matt Gaetz to vote for the things I think we need in D1 Florida. Same with Senators Rubio and Scott. So should we all. I recommend we all contact our three representatives and any potential candidates and let them know we are concerned about elections, top secret documents, women's rights, and judicial accountability by the Supreme Court. Still, there is

far more serious stuff like the economy, supporting Ukraine and long-term effects, supporting Israel and getting US Hostages returned to the United States, protecting our borders from human trafficking, drug smuggling, illegal entry, and deportation and adjudication of those who do not belong here. We cannot stand fast as the American Legion if we fail to give support to our Pillar of a strong National Defense. We must become knowledgeable about

issues that affect National Security, voice our issues to the National American Legion DC Staff about what we need through correspondence and the NEC through Resolutions, and volunteer for service on Legislative teams or committees or national security committees and programs. We have the biggest voice in the United States. Let's take it out for a drive and put it to work.

Repetition and Communication!

Judith Richards, Post Revitalization

revitalization@legionmail.org



You may have read some of this previously, and sometimes it helps to read several times!

The year is in full swing! Thank you to each of you who are working with your posts and communities to communicate the importance of the American Legion.

According to Anthony F. C. Wallace, Revitalization movements are deliberate, organized, conscious attempts by some or all of the members of a society (organization) to construct for themselves a more satisfying culture.

As mentioned in the previous articles (go back through the Legion Links), this organized effort does not need to be a monumental undertaking.

I continue to offer any guidance, assistance,

and training for the Posts, Districts, and Areas requested. I am available to run reports for your zip codes to meet with those who are interested in holding a revitalization. Recall the previous articles and relax into the task.

I am available to be of service to every Post, District, and Area Commander. All you need to do is call or write!

Please contact me if you have any questions!

Updates on Museum and DPAA Findings

Denny Luke, POW/MIA Chair

powmia@legionmail.org



On 4 November 2023, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) held a virtual Family Member Update. Those of us who were able to view the live stream were updated on their most recent efforts in specific conflicts, DNA advances, and DPAA lab findings. I must say it was very informative. The various presenters outlined how they will target an area for recovery efforts, the preparation of the site, and procedures for the proper excavation of the site. They then explained the lab work involved in the identification of those remains that were recovered. I encourage everyone to log onto the DPAA website <https://www.dpaa.mil/Livestreams/> and watch the Livestream to learn more. The next Family Update

Meeting will be held on February 24, 2024, in Phoenix, AZ. Anyone who plans to attend normally starts at 11:00 AM; please check the DPAA website for possible changes/updates.

I do want to advise any POW/MIA Chair who reports to their post, District, or community on the status of POW/MIAs who have been recently identified by the DPAA to go to the "OUR MISSING" tab on the DPAA homepage. Open the tab and then click on "Recently Accounted For." Doing so will take you to the "Current Identifications by Conflict for FY 2024" page. Do not use the "NEWS & STORIES" tab, then the "News Releases" tab, as that will be the date of the Press Release for an individual repatriated. For instance, under News Releases, the top Press Release pertains to Airman D. Sexton, who was captured and died as a prisoner of war during WWII.

His actual identification date was 13 July 2023, not 26 October 2023, which was the date of the Press Release announcing his identification. I know it may seem small and trivial; however, our job is to be as accurate as possible when making reports. The DPAA has identified 2 MIA DoD personnel for FY 2024. Their press release announcing their identification and circumstances surrounding their status will probably be made public in mid-2024.

I want to remind everyone that we have a solemn day approaching. It was on 3 February 1943; four Chaplains sacrificed their own lives to save others as the military transport ship USAT Dorchester was torpedoed by a German submarine. To my knowledge, their remains have never been recovered, making them MIAs who will likely never be recovered

POW/MIA continued on page 16 >>



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<< POW/MIA continued from page 15

and repatriated. Now is the time for your Post to plan a Four Chaplains Ceremony if they have not already.

I want to encourage all to visit The American Legion Department of Florida website, <https://www.floridalegion.org/programs-services/powmia-remembrance/about/> to learn more about the POW-MIA program. Under the resources tab, you will find

a link to the Defense POW-MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) <https://www.dpaa.mil/>, Library of Congress Vietnam Era POW-MIA Database, National League of POW-MIA Families, National Alliance of Families for the Return of America's Missing Servicemen, and the POW-MIA Chairmans Manual. The National American Legion website link is under the Media tab: <https://www.legion.org/honor/powmia>.

I also encourage you to visit the National POW-

MIA Memorial and Museum website, <https://powmiamemorial.org/> to follow the progress being made to complete this wonderful and only National POW-MIA Memorial being built here in Florida. As of the end of August 2023, Phase 1 lighting work is almost complete. Overhead lighting has been installed along with lighting of the aircraft and pads. Lights have been added to the replica of the Cicel Field runway, and all looks great.

Public Relations Packets

Kathryn Hockenberry, Public Relations

pr@legionmail.org



Department Headquarters has been busy sending out program packets to those identified as chairs of various programs. As Public Relations Chair, I have received a copy of the packet

for this program, so I hope that you, as your Post's Public Relations Chair, have received your packet as well. Please take the time to go through the material that was provided to you. There is a lot of helpful information included. Make sure that you gather all the information required throughout the year so that you are not scrambling at the last minute. The deadline for nominations is no later

than May 8, 2024. The reporting period is from May 1, 2023, through April 30, 2024.

Again, please be sure to follow all the instructions provided. If you have any questions or need clarification, contact me at pr@legionmail.org.

Resolution Training

Clarence Hill, Resolutions Chair

resolutions@legionmail.org



Legal issues: a resolution is a device by which a corporation formally grants authority to act in its name or to function. Hence, it needs to be absolutely clear and precise in the authority that is

granted.

A resolution should not use the words "partner" or "partnership." All those in a "partnership," whether individuals or entities, are liable for each other. The American Legion has no desire to become liable to anyone or any organization associated with a common interest or program. Use the word "relationship" instead.

The facts upon which a resolution is based should be

very thoroughly researched and verified.

A resolution should NOT defame or cast aspersions. This can lead to significant liability for defamation of character, libel, and slander. It is always appropriate to add documentation. This is especially true if the facts or the issue might be unfamiliar to commission members, a resolution subcommittee of the NEC, or the members of the NEC. This becomes even more appropriate at a National Convention.

Should I write a resolution or not? Subjects for resolutions should be carefully considered. What are the facts? Are you just angry at a situation, and later, the "mountain" becomes a "molehill?" Or are others upset and wondering what to do to change the situation? Does the issue affect the whole community? Is the situation based on hearsay or fact? There doesn't have to be a controversy for

a resolution to be written. Before rushing to write a resolution, several fundamental questions should be asked about the subject matter. The importance of good writing technique and proper attention to grammar and spelling is essential.

The preamble to the constitution of The American Legion can be used as a guide as to the boundary within which subject matter should be kept. One should be wary of becoming a channel through which non-Legion organizations seek to achieve their own goals. Some things to consider:

- Ensure that the subject matter is relevant to the principles of our organization before submitting them.
- Does The American Legion already have a current position on the subject?

Resolutions continued on page 17 >>



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<< Resolutions continued from page 16

- Can the subject matter be taken care of administratively without a resolution?
- Does the resolution involve a local issue?
- Is legislation involved?
- Is it reasonable that the resolution's intent can be realistically attained?
- Does the resolution deal with a politically sensitive issue?
- Should The American Legion be involved in this issue?

Holiday Season and Florida Legion College Information

Lena Heredia-Perez, Resolutions Vice Chair
resolutionsvice@legionmail.org



By now, Thanksgiving is behind us, and many of us are looking forward to the Christmas / New Year's Holiday. I think I can speak for many of us that our bank account balances are a little lower than usual, with the anticipation of spending quality time with our friends and family. As we go about the holiday season, please be mindful of your Legion Family that are shut in or those that have little to no friends and family nearby. I strongly encourage you to personally invite them to the Post for the holiday celebration and extend an invitation for them to join you and your loved ones if you so desire. No one deserves to be by

themselves for the holidays!

Secondly, as many of you should already be aware, the Department of Florida Legion College is only two weeks away from commencing. Currently, we have 23 applicants from all over the Department (4 – Western Area, 9 – Northern Area, 4 – Eastern Area, 2 – Central Area, 4 – Southwestern Area) that have taken the step in the hope to become a more knowledgeable/effective leader for our organization. It is their choice to use the education & tools that they have received during this intense 3-day training course to take back and put into action what they learned to positively build their Posts and/or Districts. Without a doubt, we have future leaders in this year's class, and we look forward to watching them spread their wings with the knowledge that

they have gained.

In closing, if you did not submit your application this year for whatever reason and have the desire to learn more about The American Legion, I challenge you to make sure that your application is submitted for the 2024 class. Remember that The American Legion Department of Florida Legion College is open to the entire American Legion Family, so we encourage you to invite your Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion members to submit their applications as well so that they can learn more about our organization.

Merry Christmas & A Happy New Year!

Preparation for School Medals

Deveron Reaves, School Medals Chair
schoolmedals@legionmail.org



To all of The American Legion Family, I wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! Hopefully, everyone will be safe and blessed this holiday season and throughout the New Year.

Hopefully, all District and Post Chairmen have been identified and have received your packets to carry on

the tradition of being a School Medals Chairman. Just remember, go to the local schools and talk to the principals and guidance counselors about the School Medals program. A Legionnaire normally presents school medals at the school's end-of-year awards program to recognize their outstanding achievements.

If your local Post does not have a School Medals Chairman, your District Chairman should contact as many schools as possible to let them know what the

School Medals Program is about.

If you need assistance or have never done this at your Post, please get in touch with me; I will gladly help. Make sure you submit your information to me if you are a new Chairman to get the proper information to continue your outstanding role within The American Legion. Resources are available on the Department website, www.floridalegion.org, or I can send you a starter package.





Board Members, VetRelief Advocates, and SPI Strategic Partners gather for a fun activity during Fall Conference

Critical Funding Needed

www.ProjectVetRelief.org

Our program has been grateful to be able to support Florida's veterans with financial aid for almost 10 years now. Our program is certainly proven to be viable and becoming a known resource to our veteran community. However, as the awareness and familiarity of our program grows, the importance for funding becomes even more critical!

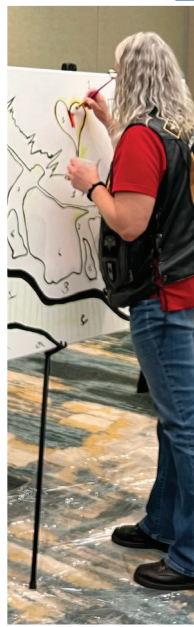
In fact, PROJECT VetRelief's financial assistance applications keep multiplying and the amount needed has significantly increased. Not only are more people needing help, but the total dollar amount needed has also increased (*i.e. increased cost of living, such as food, rent, and utilities or failed government assistance programs*).

In the last two months, we saw record-breaking submitted applications and provided more financial support dollars. For reference, we typically have 30 approved cases and provide roughly \$30,000 in assistance per month. Our caseworkers received over 400 inquiries and issued more than \$46,000 in aid for September and October!

We are doing our best to meet this increased demand, but **if we do not receive future funding, our program will be forced to make a difficult decision; how to prolong our funding and reduce the level of support provided.**

We ask that you continue to contribute to our cause, as we continue to grow and evolve with the new demands. We hope that you keep PVR in mind as you determine what your Post will support during the rest of the Legion year.

Networking Event *United by Art*



During the recent Fall Conference, we held our 2nd Networking Event where our Board Members, VetRelief Advocates, and Suicide Prevention Initiative Strategic Partners came together for fellowship, learning, and a little bit of fun!

Those who attended were able to take part in a "paint by numbers" activity that resembled the importance of camaraderie and working together for our veteran community. We are thankful to our SPI partner Paint22 for encouraging us to use our creative side, and all those who attended this wonderful event!

Current Year: July 2023 - October 2023

137
Veterans Received
Financial Support

\$175,696
Provided as
Emergency Assistance

16
Suicide Prevention
Strategic Partners

\$60,000
Given towards
Veteran Suicide Prevention



Resolution No. 21 Scouts BSA

Chris Ragusa, Scouting Chair

scouting@legionmail.org



American Legion Scouters:

Resolution No. 21 Scouts

BSA: By the National Executive Committee of The American Legion, May 10-11, 2023 Indianapolis, Indiana Origin: Americanism

Commission Submitted

WHEREAS, The American Legion affirmed its support for the principles and achievements of the Boy Scouts of America in the organization's first National Convention in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in 1919; and

WHEREAS, The Boy Scouts of America's focus on the development of youth as responsible citizens and future leaders of the United States align with the values and pillars of The American Legion and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has encouraged Legionnaires to adopt Scout troops and assist in the mission of the Boys Scouts since 1920 at the community level; and

WHEREAS, The Boy Scouts of America has been an independent non-profit organization since 1910 with

its own governing rules not subject to the oversight or influence of other organizations; and

WHEREAS, The Boy Scouts of America has never been a youth program of The American Legion subject to national oversight, investigation or investment; and

WHEREAS, In February 2019, the Boy Scouts of America rebranded their organization as Scouts BSA upon the inclusion of girls into the program; and

WHEREAS, In 2020, Scouts BSA was subject to bankruptcy court following years of investigation and litigation involving allegations of the sexual abuse of minors; and

WHEREAS, In response to allegations of sexual abuse and subsequent litigation, Scouts BSA developed youth protection training as a requirement for those who participate in the development of Scouts and

WHEREAS, Scouts BSA is making efforts to preserve the proud history and legacy of their organization for the benefit of our nation's youth; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By the National Executive Committee of The American Legion in regular meeting assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, on May 10-11, 2023, that The American Legion reaffirm its longstanding support for the mission of Scouts BSA; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That posts and Departments who sponsor or charter a Scout troop should comply with the training requirements of Scouts BSA; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That posts and Departments who sponsor or charter a Scout troop should require annual background checks be completed by Legionnaires and Legion Family members affiliated with Scouts BSA; and, be it further

RESOLVED That posts and Departments who sponsor or charter a Scout troop are encouraged to have legal liability insurance and, be it finally

RESOLVED That resolution No. 103 "Boy Scouts of America" approved by the 1920 National Convention, resolution No. 390 "Boy Scouts" approved by the 1923 National Convention, and resolution No. 57 "Boy Scouts of America" approved at the 2012 Fall National Executive Committee meeting be rescinded by reason of being superseded.

2023 Fall Conference General Session Program notes, and the class syllabus will be posted to the Resource link on the Scouting website.

Judy Casey and I were invited to set up the Project Vet Relief Booth at the Bay Pines VA Hospital for a Breast Cancer and Domestic Violence awareness After the Bay Pines event, we stopped by



My Warrior's Place and presented them with a donation. The hurricane hit my Warriors Place. My

VA Entitlements continued on page 20 >>

SOF and MOVS Recognition

Larry Roberts, VA Entitlements Chair

benefits@legionmail.org



I want to give a huge shout-out to some people who are definitely an example of "BE THE ONE"

Shield of Faith (SOF): I want to thank Shield of Faith (SOF)

Missions for giving the 1st Vice Commander Chris Hamrick, 2nd Vice Commander Jessica Moore, American Legion Department of Florida Women's Vice Chair Judy Casey, myself, and Peer to Peer Support worker Kim Freine from the Sebring VA

Clinic a VIP tour of your facility. SOF Missions provides Veterans resources and assistance for warriors struggling with PTSD and challenges from military service.

For more information about SOF Missions, please call (813)920-0012 or visit sofmissions.org.





<< VA Entitlements continued from page 19



Warrior's Place is a Retreat Center for our Veterans, Military Service Members, Law Enforcement Officers, Fire Fighters, Gold Star, Blue Star, and Silver Families; additionally, My Warrior's Place offers several amazing programs for those who have put their lives on the line for our safety and well-being, endured the death of a Fallen Warrior, and/or experienced the horrors of war. Each program offered by My Warriors plays an important role in the healing and coping process, and the support obtained through these programs is priceless! For more information on MY WARRIOR'S PLACE Phone: (813)321-0880 or Mywarriorsplace.org

On Oct 28th, American Legion Post 69 Had the honor to have the Mothers of Veterans Suicide visit.



However, we had a special gift for the mothers and the Auxiliary South Beach Beauty Academy provided free deep facials and manicures.



of Veterans Suicide and The American Legion Department of Florida Women's Vice Chair (863) 238-3674. February 24th, 2024. Chapter 69 Riders will be doing a fundraiser for the Mothers of Veterans Suicide. Everyone is welcome to participate.

Mothers of Veterans' Suicide

501 C3 faith-based organization providing HOPE and Healing to Mothers and families of Military and Veterans Suicide.

Formerly National Veteran Resources, the founders have traveled the country with the HERO and HOPE Mobiles. They raise awareness and hope to prevent Military and Veteran Suicide by attending events and sharing the stories of the families left behind. MOVS Mommas never want another family to experience the pain of losing their hero to suicide. Support includes MOVS SOULFUL Retreats, Peer to-Peer Grief Support, No Child Left Behind Special Occasion Program Awareness Events with survivor families, and Grief Counseling MOVS4Vets. For more information about the Mothers of Veterans Suicide Contact: Michele Ladd (585)729-0966 E-mail: michele@nationalveteranresources.com Or Contact: Judy Casey, The Vice President of Mothers

More details will follow.

Please come out to the Veterans Expo. and meet the SOF Missions, My Warrior's Place, and the Mothers of Veterans Suicide.

This event I call the Veterans Benefits Super Bowl. If you want to know anything about VA, State, Project VetRelief, and Local Benefits, this event is where you need to be.

This event is a 2-day event. On Friday, January 5th, we are escorting the Mobile Vietnam Wall and the Global War of Tear to Post 69. Everyone is welcome to be part of the Escort. The 12 Strategic Partners teamed up with Project Vet Relief will be on sight, plus the FDVA, which makes the disability claims. Saturday, January 6th, the main event is the Vietnam Wall and the Global War of Tears, Thunder the Bald Eagle live band, and 60 Organizations that help Veterans.

America Legion Post 69
1301 W Bell St Avon Park FL 33825
presents
Jan 5th, & 6th 2024 9th Annual
Veterans Expo
Your one stop for Veterans resources
Counseling and therapy resources, Veteran Jobs, health Care networking and much more
VA representatives will be onsite for Benefits
Fundraiser
All proceeds benefit Project: Vet: Relief
Donations accepted

Day 1 Fri. Jan 5th
Traveling Memorial Wall Escort
From 1750 Longleaf Blvd Lake Wales FL 33859 to AL Post 69
10AM Staging (post 69)
10:15AM Sharp KSU
11:00 AM Staging (longleaf)
11:15AM Briefing
11:30AM KSU

Day 2 Sat. Jan. 6th
Veterans Expo
10am to 5pm
Veterans suicide awareness
Come see the Traveling Memorial Wall
Children's activities
Live music Food trucks
Raffle items and 50/50
PROJECT: VET RELIEF
They Fought for Us. We Fight for Them.

Post 69 Commander
Larry Roberts
850-718-7773

Please check www.ALpost69avonpark.com
for accurate times and details

Legion Riders Post 69
Mike Pollock
419-549-0478



Healthcare Services

Alan Cohen, VA&R Chair

var@legionmail.org



Greetings once again, Legionnaires!

November was once again a busy month in many ways, not the least of which was that the Department conducted yet another Fall

Conference. Classes were conducted and attended, Department business was well conducted, and the camaraderie of enjoying our American Legion family brought us together again.

In the lead-up to the Conference, I had the honor of being asked to represent the Legion family at a 3-day panel at the Lake Nona VA hospital. Medical staff of all levels and design engineers from VA facilities throughout the country were brought together for a series of simulations to better the overall experience of healthcare delivery not only for Veterans but also for their families. It allowed me to see things from the "other side," so to speak, and I'm proud to have been part of this effort.

An issue that's been ongoing for quite a while is same-day outpatient surgical care for our fellow Veterans living in the northernmost part of the state. That's now been addressed, and some 37,000 Gulf Coast Veterans can receive this care. A new VA clinic is located in the Naval Hospital in Pensacola. Essentially, this means those Veterans who live in

this area will no longer need to travel to Biloxi, Mississippi, for minor procedures.

I'm happy to tell you that while no-cost healthcare and nursing home services were mandated by Congress over a year ago, they are finally being implemented. They will not face co-pays, registration fees, or monthly premiums. Let's reach out to that great generation of Veterans to ease any financial burdens we can handle.

In line with the idea of reaching out..while a week in October has been designated as a time for Buddy Checks, we can't stop there. Our connection to brother and sister Veterans lasts throughout the year. So, I encourage each of you to make a few phone calls to members of the Veteran community. They'll appreciate it, and you may very well be making a big difference in someone's life.

This is a piece of information for those involved in lawsuits connected to the Camp LeJeune Justice Act. The Justice Department has ruled that attorneys representing Veterans cannot charge more than 25% of any judgments won. Until this decision, law firms charged as much as 65% of any money received. Finally, for now, for those Veterans who are thinking about filing claims for service-connected disability/compensation, DO NOT PAY ANYONE TO FILE THESE CLAIMS! Only accredited VSOs can legally file claims, and the Veteran is never charged for that service. Any group or individual who offers "help" for a fee is doing so in violation of Federal Law.

So, this month's observation about life: Isn't it interesting that the idea of living a long life appeals to everyone, but the idea of getting old doesn't appeal to anyone?



Challenge Accepted!!

Joan Suelter, Women Veterans Chair

womenvets@legionmail.org



I am happy to report that several posts accepted my challenge regarding reaching out to our female Veterans in their area. From holding open houses to

planning symposiums, we can make a difference if we keep this focus in our daily conversations at the post levels.

"Bravo Zulu" to Post 273 Madeira Beach for the opportunity afforded me to participate in their 27th Annual Veterans Day Boat Parade. What made this

year's parade different is the first ever "Female Veterans Boat ". Post Commander Mike Haygood and 2nd Vice Commander Susan Kohler, along with several of their other "special elves" outside of the legion community advocating our female Veterans, made this event incredibly special. Their next step

Women Veterans continued on page 22 >>



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<< *Women Veterans continued from page 21*

from the information gathered will aid them in their open house forum for all female Veterans in the area on December 2, 2023.

Another shout-out to Commander Kevin Michael, Post 418, one of our newest posts.

Thank you all for your service to the American Legion

and your focus on our female Veterans.

Youth & Law Cadet

Bud Boyer, Youth Law Cadet Chair

youthlawcadet@legionmail.org



Sorry for not getting an article out last month. Florida Highway Patrol was very busy, and our correspondence back and forth was at a standstill.

We are back on track and having discussions about the curriculum. FHP has stated to me that because of the age of the Cadets/Students, they want to “steer

clear of vehicle operations and firearms.” However, they have access to virtual reality headsets. They have also expressed putting all the Cadets/Students through a modified CPR course and much more.

We are still working on a date for the class. FHP suggested a June date. We are asking for the 1st week in July to help with our paperwork.

I have asked FHP to check and verify a list that was made up of the information they sent to ensure that

all the information on the list is correct.

I hope that FHP and we here on the Legion side can have a date for the class by the start of the Fall Conference. I am keeping my fingers crossed.

As soon as FHP decides on a date and confirms all the information, I, with the assistance of the wonderful folks at the Department (Bekki), will get all the paperwork out to you all.

Proud to be Legion!

A Detailed Week at Boys State

Martin Seals, Miami Herald



Florida Boys State is the experience of a lifetime. God, Honor, and Country — this is what drove us for seven very intense days this summer. I am a senior at Christopher Columbus High School in Westchester and took part in the brilliant experience that is Florida Boys State, a program of The American Legion that was founded in 1935. Boys State is considered Florida’s premier youth leadership program. It happens each year at the Florida State University campus in Tallahassee. American Legion posts across the peninsula nominate two male rising seniors per school or area; about 500 boys from the Panhandle to the Keys descend upon the state’s capital to

participate in this prestigious program. I had the honor of being nominated to attend on behalf of American Legion Post #31. Participants are some of the most successful boys in Florida. We excel in JROTC, debate, and student body government. We have founded and led clubs, captained sports teams, become entrepreneurs, and been valedictorians. Boys State puts many of the skills developed from these leadership roles to the test. While at FSU, we built a mock state replica of Florida from the ground up, forming city, county, and state legislatures. By the time we were finished, we had created a fully functional state government. Boys State’s motto is to learn by doing — and that’s exactly what we did. Elections were held every day. Delegates are given a randomly pre-established city, county, and political party. Everyone in your dormitory hallway is part of your assigned city. Everyone on your dormitory floor is part of your assigned county. Each county consists of two cities. The Federalists and the Nationalists are the two mock political parties governing the state. I

was a proud Nationalist. Delegates already had to worry about whether they might win a preferred position, but there’s a second dynamic of possibly winning the position for your party. As a cherry on top, your roommate will always be a member of the opposite party. So, you’re basically “living with the enemy.” There are all kinds of ways to represent yourself as a leader. Whether by giving a speech, engaging in a debate, or helping form a group consensus, we had to be ready to argue for ourselves and what or who we each believe in, regardless of how uncomfortable it might feel. Participating in elections is one of the biggest components of Boys State. The process for electing leaders in all branches of government is detailed and immersive. While competitions for elected seats began, Boys State complemented the program by continuing to educate the delegates on how their state and county work. Participants attended mini-workshops on the vital things, such as how a bill becomes a law, how to create an effective bill, and

“A Detailed Week at Boys State” continued on page 23 >>



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<< "A Detailed Week at Boys State" continued from page 22

how to create a winning campaign. The revered Bob Knight's Florida School of History provides every delegate with a deep dive into our state's history and how it affects us today. The Boys State School of Law prepares participants for the program's bar exam. If you pass, you can attain a position in the Boy's State Judiciary, most likely on the Supreme Court. The courses hold weight and create a gateway to obtaining other high positions at Boys State. All this makes the Boys State experience like no other. All of the rigor, including getting into, preparing for, and participating in the program, is worth it once you have contributed to the machine that is the mock state. Newly appointed Supreme Court judges conduct judicial reviews and make

rulings in high-level cases. The legislature holds its session, passing, negating, and debating bills created and drafted by fellow delegates. The governor merges everything together by implementing laws and managing the state with the help of his trusted cabinet. I, surrounded by some of the smartest boys in the state and with the support of my cabinet, had the honor of being elected governor, the highest elected office at Boys State. My rise to this coveted position could not have happened without them. For all of the intense competition, I have never seen such an amazing, unbiased example of teamwork, camaraderie, and support as I saw at Florida Boys State. As a bonus, it all happens in the very seats where the actual lawmakers work — in Florida's Capitol. And there's another wildcard: Boys State's

very own "Fourth Estate," its news team, the PressCorp. The team was dedicated to bringing the truth and news of the mock election process to our dorm doorstep daily. The greatest part is that we do all this while making friends, creating a network, and synthesizing Florida's greatest future leaders. We hope to see you here! Martin A. Seals, a Christopher Columbus High School student, was elected Florida Boys State 2023 Governor. For more information about the organization, go to falbs.org/boysstate/ This story was originally published October 18, 2023, at 7:50 AM.

Read more at: <https://www.miamiherald.com/opinion/op-ed/article280674380.html#storylink=cpy>

Post 33 - Frank R. Marston:

Jim Rensburg, District 1 Historian

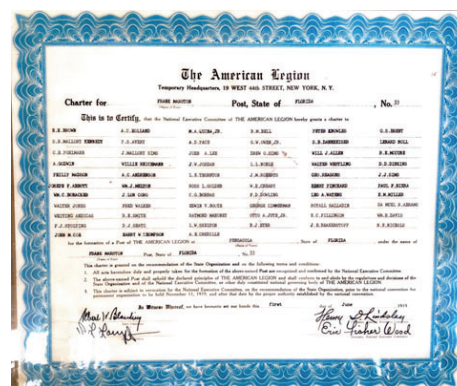
District One's "Phoenix Post" with a passion for Veterans, Community, and the Arts

Pensacola, FL, is a city steeped in the history of the United States of America. The history of Pensacola, Florida, begins long before the Spanish claimed the founding of the modern city in 1698. The area around present-day Pensacola was inhabited by Native American peoples thousands of years before the historical era. Often referred to as "The City of Five Flags," Pensacola is known for having changed ownership several times. In 1821, under the Adams-Onís Treaty, Spain ceded all of Spanish Florida to the United States in exchange for payment. The American Legion was chartered by the United States Congress in 1919 as a patriotic Veteran's organization that focused on service to Veterans, service members, and communities and adherence to its Four Pillars:

- Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation,
- Americanism,
- Children and Youth, and

- National Security

Before the Department of Florida received its permanent charter, Post 33 was chartered by National at its Temporary Headquarters in New York City, NY, on June 1st, 1919.



So... Frank R. Marston, Post 33, has been an American Legion Post from the beginnings of the American Legion and continues today. Its history is as varied as Pensacola's, and as such, the space allotted for this article prohibits further elaboration here. The current Commander of Post 33, Nicole

Dickson, along with her tireless Historian, Dave Meron, maintains a detailed history of Post 33 and is proud to offer it to any Legionnaire who wishes to see it. One further historical incident remains to be illuminated. In 2019, The Department of Florida pulled the Charter of Post 33, and the Post was closed.



In August of 2020, Richard Hunter was joined by his daughter Carrie; they recruited a group of Veterans, including the current Commander, Historian, and Dan Woodcock, the current Building Manager and Sergeant-at-Arms. Richard then went to Sonny Decker (Western Area Commander) and Lamar Williams (District One Commander), and an

"Post 33 - Frank R. Marston" continued on page 24 >>





<< "Post 33 - Frank R. Marston" continued from page 23

agreement was formed to resurrect Post 33 under the condition that it was to be run strictly as a post should be operated. The charter was re-established under the supervision of District One, and limited operations began; the charter was reinstated in July 2021. Post 33 leadership was contacted by the Community Redevelopment Agency in November 2022, and a grant for the restoration of the post exterior, \$140,000.00, was awarded in February 2023. Under the CRA grant, we restored the roof, repainted the exterior, fixed some exterior doors & windows, reconstructed both exterior awnings, installed all new exterior lighting, and Richard Barlow designed decorative railings in the 30's era style to further compliment the building.



New northern and eastern exposure.



Current eastern exterior at night

Previous efforts to restore the beautiful wooden ceiling were completed after the roof restoration was accomplished. The latest addition to the interior was a patriotic-themed mural on the north wall. Dickson credits the members of the Pensacola Mural Fest 2023 (artist-in-residence Monty Welt) for the beautiful mural that was painted this year.



Future of Post 33 (excerpted from an article in MyLegion.org: <https://www.legion.org/membership/258468/Veterans-bring-life-back-historic-florida-post-33>)

The vision of what Post 33 members want to see inside the post walls is endless because they have the space. Besides the stage, there's a kitchen with an original stone fireplace, a ballroom, and several large meeting rooms upstairs and in the basement. "The potential for the building is enormous," Dickson said. It can even be rented out for events, which is how David Henderson and his wife joined. They were looking to rent the hall, and after speaking with Dickson, they joined Post 33 "and jumped in with both feet." "I'm excited to be a part of something that is moving forward," said Henderson, Post 33's past Judge Advocate and Public Affairs officer. Henderson is looking into establishing programs at the post, such as helping feed homeless Veterans, hosting craft fairs, and re-establishing the school program where kids come to the Post to do their homework with the help of Veterans. "In rebuilding the history of Post 33, we want to rebuild the school program part and let people know that we are here and that we can help," he said. "We are focusing on the four pillars of The American Legion and trying to get back to being an American Legion post and service to the community through that first and then as a venue second. "I want to see the American Legion post be that service back to the community. To bring back that reminder that Veterans are still helping in the community long after our service ended, we still serve where our hearts have been. I would like Post 33 to become that shining example of a place where service happens." Overall, creating

a supportive, safe place for Veterans, youth, and the community is a passion for the Veterans of Post 33. "My husband is a 20-year retired Veteran," said Dickson, an Army Veteran. "We have seen the difficulty that Veterans can have firsthand. For example, navigating the VA or knowing where to go to get VA benefits to have a point of contact for something they might need. Many of us at (Post) 33 feel very strongly about (Post) 33 becoming a place where Veterans can go; younger Veterans sometimes don't feel they have a place to go, and Post 33 wants to be that place. It's really hard when you get out to find the people to build a community with, and Post 33 wants to be there for those Veterans who are just getting out, who don't really have a community of their own, and we want to be able to support them.

"That's really why we all stuck around ... we are that younger generation. When we found each other, we found a little family, and we just got together and was like, 'OK, we're going to do this together.'" The post currently has around 50 members and is actively getting a Sons of The American Legion squadron and Auxiliary unit underway. Rick Cusimano (a past Post 33 Commander) believes once the exterior of Post 33 is complete, it will drive people to join. "As soon as the outside of the building starts looking nice again, that's where the draw will come in," he said. "It's going to start attracting more members, but it's also going to start attracting the community we belong to, and that's where we're going to start accelerating in the things we want to get done."

What drives Cusimano to continue the path forward with Post 33 is "the memories the building has with people" and the possibility of helping the community again through financial assistance. A visitor stopped by the post and reminisced with Cusimano when their grandparents did ballroom dancing there 40

"Post 33 - Frank R. Marston" continued on page 25 >>



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MEMBERSHIP TARGET REPORT

November 23, 2023 (68.31%)

District 2	Doyle Combs Jr.	73.49%
District 3	Stuart Scott	72.94%
District 17	Jim Bowers	72.04%
District 7	Rick Orzechowski	71.04%
District 4	Doug Hockenberry	70.65%
District 9	Rico Thomas	70.57%
District 6	Peter Gregory	69.54%
District 1	Shelby Windham	68.92%
District 12	Bruce Thurber	68.90%
District 11	Toni Sutherland	68.59%
District 15	Randy Holeyfield	68.24%
District 8	John Rauh	67.93%
District 14	Thomas Frank	67.84%
District 5	Miguel Garcia	66.42%
District 16	Eric Nestler	65.36%
District 13	Eric Loyd	64.77%
Western	Sonny Decker	69.58%
Northern	Lena Heredia-Perez	69.27%
Eastern	Joe Marcheggiani	69.26%
Southern	Johnny Castro	69.02%
Central	Bob Matheson	66.94%
Southwestern	Harold "Bud" Boyer	66.19%
Post 400		69.30%
Post 208		66.95%

NEXT GOAL: December 6, 2023

75%

DEPARTMENT TRUSTED. LEGIONNAIRE APPROVED.

The Legionnaire Insurance Trust has been protecting Legionnaires and their families for over 50 years.



LEGIONNAIRE INSURANCE TRUST

www.thelit.com



"JUST BECAUSE I LIVE DANGEROUSLY DOESN'T MEAN SHE HAS TO."

Service often takes you away from family. USAA is always there for them when you can't be. We deliver the financial peace of mind and support you deserve. Checking. Savings. Credit cards. Loans. Auto & life insurance. Mutual funds. Even free financial advice. Get all you've earned. Visit usaa.com today.

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★ ★ ★ BI-WEEKLY DRAWINGS ★ ★ ★

50/50 RAFFLE 4 VETERANS

WIN BIG & SUPPORT VETS

HUGE PRIZES

ENTER ONLINE florida5050.org

AMERICAN LEGION Department of Florida

RAFFLE

FLORIDA SAMPL

THE AMERICAN LEGION FLORIDALEGION.ORG

SHOW YOUR SUPPORT

The American Legion official license plate.



PLEASE SUPPORT DISASTER RELIEF & C.O.T.A.

INTEGRITY ★ LOYALTY ★ PURPOSE

www.floridalegion.org
legionlink@floridalegion.org

SAVE THE DATE

CHILDREN & YOUTH PICNIC



SATURDAY APRIL

6, 2023

12pm - 5pm

**Music by
Doc Holiday**

**Food
Raffle Baskets
50/50
Carnival Games
+ More!**

**Location:
American Legion Post 117
189 Veterans Drive
Palm Bay, FL 32909**

More Details Coming Soon

**Questions: Contact AL Dept C&Y Chaiman
Rick Johnson 954-242-4496**



DEPARTMENT VICE COMMANDERS'



HILLBILLY HOEDOWN

COME DRESSED AS A HILLBILLY!
JEANS-OVERALLS-STRAW HATS
USE YOUR IMAGINATION!

SATURDAY JAN 20, 2024
STARTING AT 12:00PM



LIVE MUSIC BY LAST CALL BAND

RAFFLES!
DINNER!
& MUCH MORE!

TICKETS:

\$25/PERSON \$40/COUPLE

CONTACT A VICE COMMANDER FOR TICKETS

CHRIS: (321) 313 - 3469

JESSICA: (239) 839 - 0602

AMERICAN LEGION POST 117

189 VETERANS DRIVE PALM BAY, FL

PROCEEDS BENEFIT



Children's Organ
Transplant Association



DEPARTMENT OF FLORIDA
EMERGENCY RELIEF FUND

There's No Place Like Home



Northern Area Ball

Jan **13** 2024
Saturday 6:00 PM



American Legion Post 57

2602 SW Main Blvd Lake City, FL

RSVP: 904.449.6318 or use the QR code to prepurchase tickets/ Ads.

Activities: Best Costume Contest, Fratello Classic Rock Live Band, Raffles,
& Silent Auction for 1 week stay at Westgate Resort

Hotel Reservations:

Holiday Inn & Suites 386.754.1411

Ask for the Northern Area Room Rate \$149.99

Dress Attire:

Semi Formal OR Come dressed up as a character
from the **Wizard of Oz Movie**

Tickets:

Program Ads:

\$40.00 Per Person or \$70.00 Per Couple

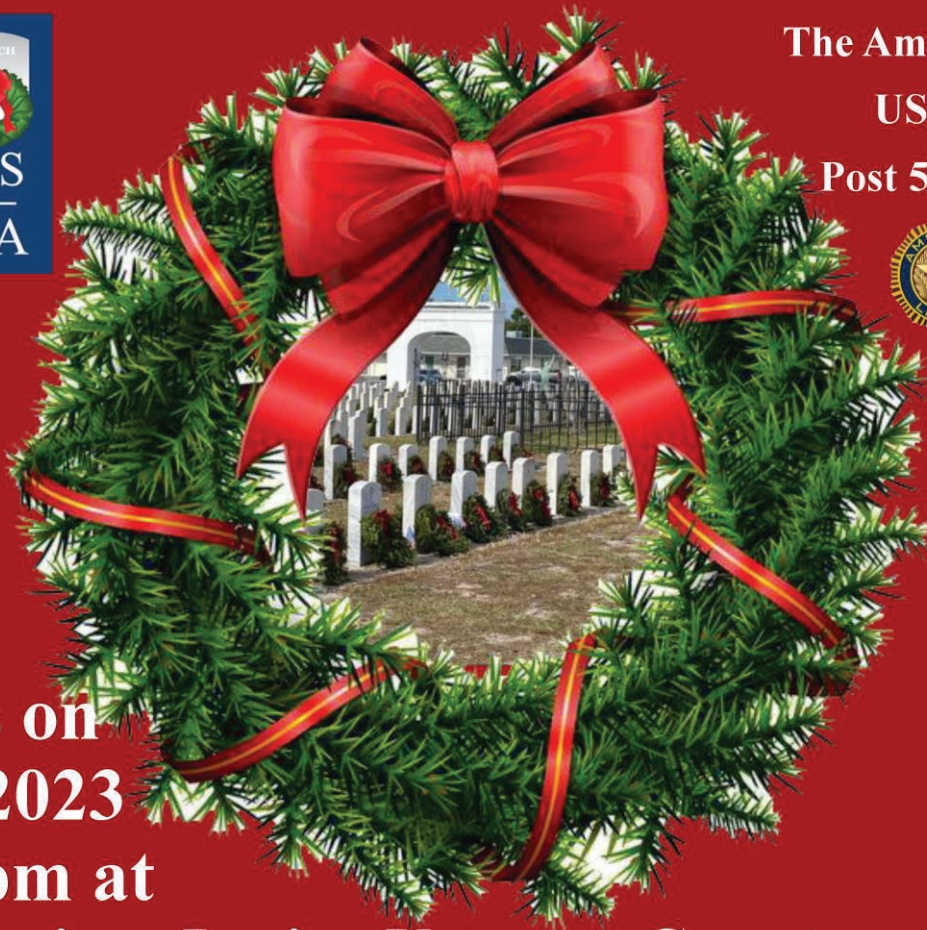
\$30.00 Half Page or \$50.00 Full Page

All Proceeds go toward Boys & Girl State Scholarships





The American Legion
USS Tampa
Post 5, Tampa FL



Join us on
12-16-2023
12:00 pm at
The American Legion Veterans Cemetery at Post 5



We welcome all to participate in the National Wreaths Across America program in Tampa, FL (over 4,000 locations participate). Please consider sponsoring a wreath for \$17. All donations appreciated and go to the program. Find out more at Post5Tampa.org



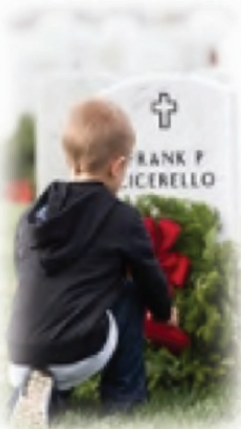
Join Us in Our Mission

Remember ★ Honor ★ Teach



★ **December 16, 2023** ★

National Wreaths Across America Day



**Help American Legion Arthur R Lanni
Memorial Sunrise Post 365 honor local
heroes!**

Sponsor a wreath today to be placed on a
Veteran's grave this December at South Florida
National Cemetery.

Scan the QR code to make a donation online or
visit www.wreathscrossamerica.org/FL0484P



#ServeAndSucceed



AMERICAN
LEGION

Western Area Commander's
BALL

Come have a Nip of Kentucky
Bourbon with Sonny Decker

Smooth as
Kentucky Bourbon

SATURDAY, APRIL 13, 2024

Post 235

105 Hollywood Blvd NW, Fort Walton Beach, FL 32548

Meet & Greet 5pm | Dinner 6pm

Wear your Sonny Decker Shirt, all proceeds go to
Project: Vet Relief/Suicide Prevention!
Don't forget your Jeans and Boots!

*We will have a staff attended buffet, live music
& comedy roast*

TICKETS: \$35 EACH./\$60 COUPLES IN ADVANCE

(Online tickets & shirt slaes coming soon)

CALL JEANIE HENSON AT 850-445-9186 FOR MORE INFO



Southwestern Area Ball

Date: February 10th, 2024

Cocktails 4:30 pm till 5:30 pm (cash bar)

D.M. McQueen American Legion Post 103

Dinner served @ 5:45 pm Music 6:30pm till 9:00pm

Prime Rib or Fish and Shrimp Combo, Cost \$35.00 per person

All proceeds to be presented to COTA

For Tickets and Information

*Contact Joann Boyer @ koba1424@yahoo.com or
(609) 425-3805*

Lodging:

Four Points By Sheraton / Harborside Punta Gorda, (941) 637-6770 (1mile)

*Springhill Suites by Marriot / 101 Harboeside Ave Punta Gorda Fl 33950
(941) 347-4224 (1mile)*

*Wyvern Hotel / 101 East Retta Esplandae Punts Gorda Fl 33950
(941) 639-7700 (1mile)*

Holiday Inn Express / 9075 Mc Drive Punta Gorda Fl 33950 (941) 205-8002 (3m)

*Country Inn & Suites / 24244 Corporate Ct Port Charlotte Fl 33954
(941)235 1035 (9mile)*

Hampton Inn / 22480 Sanhill Blvd Port Charlotte Fl 33983 (941)627-5600 (9m)

*LaQuinta Inn& Suites / 812 Kings Highway Port Charlotte Fl 33980
(941) 979-4200*



Southwestern Area Commander's Ball

DENIM AND DIAMONDS

**Prime Rib
or
Fish and Shrimp**



February 10th, 2024

D.M. McQueen American Legion Post 103

2101 Taylor Road, Punta Gorda, FL

Cocktails 4:30 to 5:30 pm (Cash Bar)

Dinner Served at 5:45 pm

Music from 6:30 to 9:00 pm

Wear Your Best Denim



Cost is \$35 per person

All Proceeds to be Presented to COTA
For Tickets and Information Contact

Joann Boyer at (609) 425-3805

or via email koba1424@yahoo.com



PLEASE RSVP BY FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 2