



FEBRUARY 2023

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Submit Articles at

floridalegion.org/submit or legionlink@floridalegion.org

Questions? legionlink@floridalegion.org

A Message from the Department Commander

Eunice Butts, Commander

commander@floridalegion.org



It was an honor to attend an event sponsored by Veterans Counseling Veterans, Inc., held on December 17, 2023, at the DAV Chapter #83. The guest speaker was Rear Admiral Larry Chambers. The first

African American to command an aircraft carrier.

Wreaths Across America Ceremony was held in remembrance of Veterans who served and died during segregation.

Next, I journeyed to the Memorial Park Cemetery, Tampa, FL, where I was invited to place a wreath representing the American Legion, Department of Florida. This was at an African American Cemetery where soldiers from WWI to present are laid to rest. The next stop was America Legion Post 5 for their Annual Wreaths Across America Ceremony, held at the Post Cemetery. It is the only American Legion Cemetery as of today.

Visitations have been completed in the 5th and 8th Districts, and Thank you to the Post Commanders, District Commanders, District 1st Vice Commanders, and Area Commanders.

Thank you to Department 3rd Vice Commander Jessica Moore for your presence. By the time you read this article, I would have completed the 12th District visitation, attended the Southern Area Ball, and the Four Chaplains Ceremony. The Department Chaplain of Philadelphia will be present at this ceremony.

Thanks to the Department 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Vice Commanders for their insight in creating a fundraiser, "Hillbilly Hoedown." It was a wonderful affair and well attended.

My most incredible adventure and enjoyment for January 2023 was riding on the motorcycle to get to "The Memorial Wall." The following day I was able to participate in their program.

The National Vice Commander will be visiting the Western Area from February 2-6, 2023.

The Riders Summit, Valentine's Day, Legion College, Eastern Area Ball, Washington Conference, and the 9th District Visitation will occur this month.

We will have a whole month to love our life as volunteers. SMILE!

Let us become more involved in our memberships, Children & Youth, and Americanism programs. I would love for

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<< Commander continued from page 1

each Post to send a "Narrative" of your activities for the year 22-23 with your (CPR) Addendums to Department. I know that you do the programs and carry out the mission of The American Legion.

The Department Commanders' Homecoming will be held at Winter Haven Post 8 on April 22, 2023. Flyer can be found on page 13.

With Heartfelt and humble gratitude, Thank you for all you do for our Veterans and Communities.

COMMANDER'S CHARITIES
PROJECT: VetRelief and Jackson InAction 83

5K

10K

15K

20K

25K

30K

35K

40K

45K

50K

Commander's Goal: \$50,000 (Current funds raised **\$25,826.00**)

Hidden Gem

Michael Raymond, 1st Vice Commander
1stvice@legionmail.org



Most of us know that the American Legion is well represented in the city of Key West, and when visiting this southernmost city, we make it a point to stop by Post 28. What most of us didn't know was that there is another Post located in the center of Key West, conveniently located just two blocks from the Ernest Hemingway summer home. Although this Post has been through some rough times, the new leadership is going all out to revitalize and put the William Weech Memorial Post" back on the map.

A few months back, Commander Butts and I and other Dept. and District officers were invited to a very special dedication at this special Post. A large historical plaque was dedicated in front of the post commemorating it as a historical heritage site and listing it on the National

register of historic places. Following WWII returning African American Veterans faced segregation and were forced to establish their own Veterans Association posts. African American members of the American Legion and the VFW in Key West united to build one Post for both groups. This beautiful building still stands today.

Recently I and past Dept. Historian Ed Lewis returned to Post 168 for another amazing event. An award of a Purple Heart was presented by USCG personnel to the family of the Posts namesake, William Weech, in an amazing ceremony attended by a huge crowd of city dignitaries, residents, and Post members.

Commander Valerie, a retired Naval Officer, and her team are working hard to put Post 168 back on the map. With help from Post 28 and the community, they are doing just that. But they could use our help. When you are in Key West, make it a point to stop by and say hello. They are a full-service Post and are open on weekends. Tell them Gambler sent ya!



FEBRUARY 2023	
30-12	Oratorical Area Level Contests
1-28	Americanism Month
1-28	Black History Month
1	★ JSSP 1st Round Targets Due to CMP
1	🍊 Youth Law Cadet Application/Fees Open
1	Freedom Day
2	Groundhog Day
2-6	♥ ★ National Vice Commander Visitation
4	USO Birthday
4	District 12: Meeting
4	♥ District 14: Training
4	District 3: Meeting
4	District 3: ALR Meeting
4	Post K11 Relief Celebration
5	Four Chaplains Sunday
8	🍊 Department Membership Goal 85%
8-11	ALR Summit & Expo
12	Lincoln's Birthday
12	District 5: Meeting
14	Valentine's Day
15	★ JSSP 2nd Round Targets Mailed Out
15	★ Baseball Insurance Available
15	★ National Membership Goal 85%
16-19	🍊 Florida Legion College
19	US Coast Guard Reserve Birthday
20	President's Day
20	🍊 Department Headquarters Closed
22	Washington's Birthday
22	Ash Wednesday
23	Iwo Jima Flag Raised (1945)
24	Start of "Operation Desert Storm" (1991)
25	🍊 Oratorical Department Contest
25	District 13: Family Veteran Suicide Event
25	Eastern Area Ball
26-1	★ Washington Conference
28	End of "Operation Desert Storm" (1991)

- ♥ Commander Eunice Butts' Attendance Tentative.
- 🍊 Department Event
- ★ National Event

Events are subject to change. Additional details can be found at www.floridalegion.org. We share the information we are provided.

Re-Energizing our Spirits

Chris Hamrick, 2nd Vice Commander
2ndvice@legionmail.org



Hoping this writing finds each and every one of you in good health and spirit. December and January are behind us, and hopefully, we're all recovered from the busy holiday season. I hope

that we're re-energized.

Speaking of re-energizing... this time of year is beginning to be the busiest with program deadlines, program starts, MEMBERSHIP drives, goals, and too many Post events to count. Lots of work to do and LOTS of fun to be had. I'm looking forward to getting over and visiting the 15th and 7th Districts. I'll be in touch with those District Commanders as the time draws near.

Please double-check your calendars for your membership deadlines and program dates. I'm looking forward to seeing you as I travel. Let's not forget our mission, and let's all BE THE ONE.

Keep It Real.

Veterans and Project Vet Relief

Jessica Moore, 3rd Vice Commander
3rdvice@legionmail.org



On January 7, a Veterans Expo was held at American Legion Post 69 in Avon Park. To witness the involvement of so many people coming together was fantastic. So many veterans and

their families took advantage of all the vendors present.

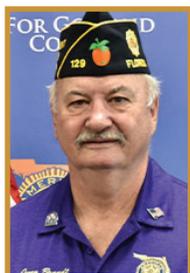
Everyone supported the mission of assisting people in need. Project Vet Relief supports veterans, active duty, military, and their immediate family members with financial assistance when dealing with a life emergency. We support our service members whether they have recently returned or have been home for years. All services provided by Project Relief are at no cost to those who serve. It truly is an honor when we hold these expos and see people taking advantage of these offered services.

The Department of Florida's Vice Commanders are sponsoring the Hillbilly Hoedown on Saturday, January 21. Again, all these proceeds will benefit Project Vet Relief. It should be a fun time!

I was able to attend District 5 Department Commander's visitation with Eunice Butts. We sure were well received with warm hospitality. As always, I look forward to upcoming visits and sincerely hope to connect with any and all of you.

National Commander's Visitation

Jerry Brandt, ANEC
anec@legionmail.org



National Vice Commander, Patricia A. Harris, will visit the Department of Florida from February 2nd through 6th in the Western Area. Commander Troiola extends his apology as he is unable to attend due to illness.

For National Vice Commander Harris's visitation schedule please visit the Department website at www.floridalegion.org and click under "News & Events".

National Vice Commander Harris will be accompanied by Department of Florida Commander Eunice Butts and several officers within the Chain of Command. Please, come out and greet the team and the National Vice Commander.

The Joint Session of Congress by the National Commander will take place on Wednesday, March 1st. Prior to that, the American Legion representatives will meet on February 27th in Washington, D.C., for additional information. On February 28th, our representatives will be knocking on the various House Representatives and Senators' doors to voice the American Legion concerns, mostly on the Health and Welfare of our fellow Veterans.

Please remember, The American Legion Charter was Chartered by U.S. Congress, and we are required to make an Annual Report to Congress. When our National Commander speaks to the Joint Session of Congress, he is not speaking only for the American Legion membership, he is voicing the Concerns of All U.S. Veterans, and yes, Congress listens.

Commander Triola will be voicing our concerns outlined by the Amendments that were approved at the October Fall NEC meeting. Hopefully, Congress will act on those concerns in the upcoming months.

As always, let me know if there is anything I can do to assist.



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legionlink@floridalegion.org

Preparing for the New Year

Jim Bowers, Northern Area
northernarea@legionmail.org



I recently visited District 5 with Commander Butts. We saw that posts were actively using Buddy Checks as a membership renewal tool and checking on their members' welfare. One adjutant stated they sent renewal notices this year (Legion Year) at the beginning of December. In the past years, they had only sent the notices in January. We were told they had a greater response this year than

in the past.

What works for your post is the best method. However, it does not harm to give your membership team other methods for them to consider. Look at what did not work in the past, make some adjustments to what was not successful, and keep trying. There is help available at District, Area, and Department levels. When it comes to membership, you do not have to do it alone.

End-of-Year Reports will soon be due. Now is the time to examine the works your post has completed and look at the ones that are

planned. Many posts are doing great work. But they do not see how they fit into the program of the American Legion. They do. There is no need to be creative just report what you have done.

I am asking all members to support when and where you can. Coming up, we have the Vice Commanders Hoe Down, Commanders Home Coming, Area Balls, and District and Post fund Raisers. All are fundraisers for programs in the American Legion. Attending or contributing will count toward your reports. I know many posts have small budgets, but members can give cash if they know what, when, and why.

Confidence

Randy Holeyfield, District 15
district15@legionmail.org



Let me start with gratitude to our Department Commander, who had confidence in me and appointed me to complete the remainder of the year as 15th District Commander.

I had to start out in a full run, starting with an Installation of Officer's at Post 246 following the DEC meeting on Sunday, November 20th, the post communication listing was lost, so I had to create new ones, including physical and PO Box information, as well as, getting a calendar set for the remaining year. Fitting in all official visitations, plus additional ones with only half a year to do so, but no problem. Additional post events, both locally and statewide, make for a full calendar, and I'm a Post Commander, still working full time, and I'm moving my business as well.

Time Management: Time is a matter of taking what items are mandatory, then fitting in everything else. And it is dedicated to maintaining the discipline to what is set; then, you can fit non-absolute line items. It took me (through mentoring) to learn to make time available after the essential blocks, then insert the other items in, and manage this continually. So when someone says: "I don't

have any time, but they will take counseling, mentor them on how to manage it."

Program Chairs: One of the most challenging District needs was; that most program chairs were not and have yet to be filled to date. I'm sure that is an annual item District Commander's have to overcome. The way I present it to my district is: There are 8,760 hours in a year, and district program chairs, unlike a post-level chair that requires more time than that of a district level, being more of an overseeing coordinator. District program chairs are the crossroads of all your posts, collecting information and data, plus giving advice and help if needed. Most District Chairs will have only a little of their time dedicated to that program, though some are time-consuming. Remember, there are 8,760 hours a year one has, and we all have the same amount. Returning to Time Management is how one uses their time to the most efficient means.

I have a great 15th District Team, who are dedicated not only to their district but to all veterans and the communities they serve. I have sent out this call for filling several chair positions; call me.

District happening: I am glad to announce that Sunlake High School had the activation of a new Civil Air Patrol unit (# SER-FL-828) on December 6th. They are the Auxiliary of the US Air Force; in WWII, one unit sunk a German

U-Boat; oh Yea! Then we had the pleasure of having our Department Commander visit our district; it went very well, followed by the Wreaths Across America at Post 5. On January 6th & 7th, I attended the Veterans Expo at Post 69 in Avon Park, assisting at a Membership booth. Many vendors were giving out information for their group's various bits of help for PTSD, an issue at the front of The American Legion. I was able to help Post 69 get transfers and new members, making for a happy Post and Post Adjutant.

To date: I've had one District meeting, four post visitations, training at three posts (one was two days and 11 ½ hours), a post officer installation, and three events, one for two days. I look forward to not only helping my district's posts but being of service to each individual I have the pleasure of interacting with. We all need to **"Be the One"** as we come across veterans, whether they are Legionnaires or not; all veterans need our support and, sometimes, just a caring ear to talk to, one willing to be, if nothing else, a friend, even if just a ship passing in the night, where we may never see or hear from again. That is what The American Legion is, here for every veteran, helping by listening, to give advice for claims, or anything else. Just **"Be the One,"** and you can make a difference in their lives; they will remember that.



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legionlink@floridalegion.org

Summit and Year End Reports

Jim Wineland, American Legion Riders
alr@legionmail.org



Next on the list is the Summit! We have a few new instructors this year. Anyone that would like to be an instructor, please let us know so we can share the responsibility. We also enhance our Safety and Road Captain training. Ted Weider, Bobby Greer, and Wayne Parrot reviewed last year's program and changed a few things. We are also looking at a Road Captains Certification program for future classes.

You know how sometimes you feel like you're just inches away from getting something done, and you realize the last hurdle is the highest? I'm referring to our reports. The two reports I'm talking about are the Chapter Officer's Report and the Chapter documentation. When I look at these reports, we are so close to being completed for the first time in 6 years. That's right; we've been

working on this for that long. So, please take a few minutes and fill in the blanks; Beverly would be very proud of you!

As those who attended the Fall Conference, we voted to make a few changes in our SOP. Most changes involve updating the active resolutions, Assistant District, District, and Area Chair recommendations to the respective Commanders, and increasing the positions from one to two years. The reason for the term change is based on the growth of the organization; this would increase the time to learn each position. As we all know, there are only so many hours in a day based on our personal obligations and other volunteer work we do. It is hard to learn the ins and outs of a position in one year.

The districts should all have your Raffle Tickets by now. As you all know, the net dollars raised from the Bike Raffle go to a worthy cause. From PVR/SPI standpoint, we have made some fantastic strides with our Strategic Partners and record disbursements to the veterans needing assistance. Without

our continued commitment to the "Cause," we could never have met these goals, and for that, We say Thank You!

Thanks to all that participate; Ride Safe, looking forward to seeing you soon.

Your 2022 – 2023 Schedule

Summit

Meet & Greet, February 8, 2023
 Classes, February 9-11, 2023

"Round Robin"

Month of April 2023

In-State Unity Ride

Meet & Greet, April 16, 2023
Ride, April 17-21, 2023
Rally, April 22, 2023, Orange County Chopper Museum

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"*

Picnic Information and Schedule

Dianne Boland, Children & Youth
cy@legionmail.org



Greetings: February already, and April is right around the corner. Your C&Y Chairman, along with the Post family, should start planning what will take place this year during our Children & Youth month. I've started

- have you? The Department C&Y Picnic planning is in the works.

The following is our schedule so far; subject to change.

- Date: April 15, 2023
- Place: Post 323, Lehigh Acres, FL.
- Time: 11:00 am to 5:00 pm

- Lunch: BBQ Ribs and Brats by Outcasts with sides. Noon to 3:00 pm. \$5.00 per person
- Entertainment: Noon to 3:00 pm by Christian Rapp, in the tiki bar
- Adult games of skill: Noon to 3:00 pm, in the yard around the tiki bar.
- Baskets, Grill and 50/50 raffles are on display in the main building all day.
- Lee County Sherriff's Ice Cream Response Team will provide free ice cream to all present at 3:00 pm
- All raffle, games of skill, and 50/50 winners will be announced at 4:00 pm.

There will be a Military Child Table Presentation - during the picnic - presented by the Juniors. Please wear purple in honor of the Military Child. Purple is their color,

and April is their month.

See the attached flyer - at the end of the Legion Link - for information on the hotel, addresses, and phone numbers of the post, hotel, and point of contact - myself.

Just an FYI - if you read your "American Legion Online Update," - they mentioned this week about the Modernized 'Our Country's Flag' comic book now available. They describe it as a flag etiquette tool. It has gone through a recent overhaul to update apparel worn by the characters, diversity, representation of Legion posts, and more. They are available for purchase thru Emblem Sales, Item Number 755.300. The cost is 85 cents apiece or 100 for 69 cents apiece.



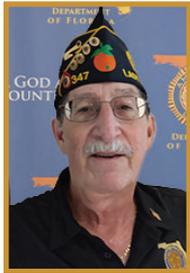
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legionlink@floridalegion.org

New Deadline for Hurricane Relief

Bill Hoppner, Disaster Preparedness
disaster@legionmail.org



New Deadline for Hurricane Relief is Approaching

National Headquarters has pushed back the National Emergency Fund (NEF) application deadline! Department Adjutant, Bruce Comer, petitioned an extension

due to the severity of the damage, the volume of applications, and obtaining appropriate documentation (i.e., insurance evaluations, repair estimates, etc.). As a result, the recommendation for a 45-day extension was granted.

The new cutoff date to submit NEF applications is Thursday, February 9th. If you were evacuated or displaced due to the storms, be sure to send your application and all required documents before the deadline. Remember, this is a benefit to your Legion membership. Therefore, membership is required during the time of the storm.

To date, National has given out \$343,809.75 to 118 members and 7 Posts. Additionally, this past month our Department started to supplement National's funding to provide additional support to NEF applicants who experienced major damage. Department also issued grants to applicants who were not eligible through NEF due to not being evacuated or displaced or because their membership expired at the time of the storm.

As a result, Department has granted \$265,525 to 115 individuals and 7 Posts.

The Department Headquarters Staff is here to help and is fully dedicated to assisting members through the application process. Please contact 407-295-2631 or relief@floridalegion.org for any questions or additional information.

DONATE
floridalegion.org/aid

VOLUNTEER
floridalegion.org/volunteer

RESOURCES
floridalegion.org/relief

JSSP First-Round Postal

Loretta Young, JRTOC / JSSP
jrotc@legionmail.org



The JSSP Postal First Round Targets had to be submitted by Dec. 14th. There were five teams completed: Sarasota Military Academy (Precision) and Sarasota Military Academy (Sporter), Vanguard NJROTC, Paul J Hagerty JROTC, and Mariner JROTC. Three (3) pending registrations at the deadline: Atlantic Community JROTC, Manatee JROTC, and East Lee County JROTC. Notices were sent out to offer assistance to the team coaches;

however, I did not receive any responses. The teams that completed the registration process by the deadline received the Postal Targets, which are due back to Civilian Marksmanship Program (CMP) by Feb. 1st for the First Round Qualifications. There are no extensions given.

The Individual State Champion in each category (Precision and Sporter) will each receive distinctive awards. The Team State Champion in each category will receive a team award for the members of the team listed. Based on the First-Round scores, the overall top ten (10) teams and overall top twenty-five (25) individuals (to include tie scores) in each category will receive

distinctive Shooting Sports embroidered sew-on patches from the American Legion and entry into the Second Round Postal Match. The CMP distributes Target Sets to all Second Round Individual and Team Tournament qualifiers. State Champions do not receive an automatic entry into the second round. The Second Round Qualifiers will be the top fifteen (15) competitors in each category to be invited to the National Competition held in Colorado Springs in July 2023 in the Shoulder-to-Shoulder Competition. Good luck to all our competitors, and hoping everyone had a pleasant Holiday Season. All the best for the New Year for our members and Youth Programs.

Reaching New Goals

Bruce Thurber, Membership
membership@legionmail.org



Reaching New Goals On February 19, 1945, the United States invaded Iwo Jima as part of its strategy to defeat Japan. Let's make history again in February 2023, with the Department of Florida hitting 105% in

membership. When you joined the military, you learned nothing was impossible if you put your mind to it. As a veteran of the United States Military, you earned your right to join the American Legion. I ask your help as you continue to serve your country honorably as a member fighting for veterans' rights. Each year The American Legion National Commander addresses the United States Congress to fight for veterans' rights. Today, the No. 1 issue facing the

veteran community is suicide, according to the National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report. It is estimated that between 17 and 22 veterans or servicemembers take their lives each day. That's more than 6,000 annually. The rate of suicide for veterans is more than 50% higher than that of non-veteran adults. As the War on Terrorism continues, there will be more veterans facing mental health issues such as post-traumatic

Membership continued on page 7 >>

<< Membership continued from page 6

stress disorder. At its core, The American Legion is activating a national platform to reduce the rate of veteran suicide. The Be the One campaign will:

Destigmatize asking for mental health support, creating opportunities for those with mental health issues to speak freely and get the support they need.

Provide peer-to-peer support and resources in local communities.

Deploy FDA-approved therapeutics for veterans to identify issues and find resources for support.

What you can do as a veteran

While this program is designed to help all veterans, we know that everyone responds differently to stresses, has different life experiences, and has varying results in types of treatment. The American Legion encourages you to Be the One to:

Talk with others about how you are feeling.

Ask for help when you know you need it.

Know that there are millions of people ready to help you.

Remember your family and friends care.

We need to work together and improve the quality of life for the men and women who have defended our nation through

military service.” By doing buddy checks and recruiting new members, you bring at-risk veterans closer to those who understand. You, the members of the Dept of Florida, are the best of the best, and I ask you to bring us 144,067 or more.

TO REACH THAT GOAL Be ready with a 2-3 minute ‘elevator pitch” on the importance and benefits of Legion membership.

Get some door hangers and modify them with Post information. You’re now ready to reach out to potential members even if you’re not face-to-face.

Keep a few membership applications handy. Have a supply of ‘Why You Should Belong” and ‘This Is The American Legion’ for informational events.

Work your Post’s Expired listings found on www.mylegion.org.

Build and maintain a relationship with military installations and the person in charge of veteran admissions and/or veteran student organizations that may be on college campuses.

Network with first responders, civic and community organizations, as well as other veteran service organizations to expand your pool of potential members.

Ensure your Post is building its brand. Send a localized version of the Post’s CPR to the media outlets in your area, and this same information is published in the Post’s newsletter.

Make sure your Post is actively participating in at least one program and that it is done well.

Make sure your Post is an asset to the community; inform them of your Post’s programs, participation in parades, service activities, etc.

Be seen in your Legion apparel. Don’t narrow your focus to veterans in only one or two war eras. Any veteran may be eligible, but you won’t know if you don’t ask!

Don’t let all your hard work go to waste - RETAIN THE MEMBERS YOU HAVE. Each of our Area Commanders is an experienced recruiter; pick their brains - they have been there. You also have your Department Revitalization Chairman, Past Department Commanders, and District Commanders to help. Another great resource we have is the American Legion Department of Florida Auxiliary, Detachment of Florida Sons of the American Legion, and the American Legion Riders. Another bit of February History: One of the First to Fight for Soldiers’ Rights Emperor Claudius II banned marriage because he thought married men were bad soldiers. Valentine felt this was unfair, so he broke the rules and arranged marriages in secret. When Claudius found out, Valentine was thrown in jail and sentenced to death.

There, he fell in love with the jailer’s daughter, and when he was taken to be killed on 14 February, he sent her a love letter signed "from your Valentine."

Halfway done - Let's get it wrapped up and ready for CPRs

Raymond Olsen, National Security
security@legionmail.org

This is the first Legion Link of the new year for me. The January Link was typed in December. This one is in January. Now is the time to put the final touches on all your Programs for the Year and get your information together to give to your Post Commander and Adjutant so they can include it in the annual CPR. I would

like to hear what is going on as well. My email is Security@legionmail.org. I would like to get your post the recognition that it deserves for the programs that it operates. Does your post have a National Security Chairman? If it does not, maybe your post is still doing National Security Programs like Blood Donor Events, Participating in Disaster Preparedness, and providing Disaster Relief. ROTC Medals is a National Security

Program, but it is often combined with School Medals. Law and Order Programs, Law Enforcement Person of the Year, EMT of the Year, and Fire Fighter of the Year fall under National Security. And the last big category is color guard and rifle team and ceremonies performed at wakes and funerals.

National Security continued on page 8 >>



<<National Security continued from page 7

As I said, I would like to hear about all your programs. Send me an email, and I will get the word out for you and hopefully get your post some recognition at the Department Convention. This brings me

back to where I started. CPRS are due in early May, so you still have time to complete these programs and get the reporting done. Don't let the American Legion remain the best-kept secret in America. As a former Post, District, and Area Commander, I always asked on my visitations, "If your Post closes

tomorrow, will anyone notice? Word on the street is getting better, but it can get better still. Take care of your volunteers, get your reports done, nominate your people and Posts for rewards, and have a physical presence in the community.

New Year - New Beginnings

Judith Richards, Post Revitalization
revitalization@legionmail.org



February already! Time for new beginnings, revitalization, and an 85% membership goal! Bruce Thurber, our Department Membership Chair, keeps us all informed on the Facebook page.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1371922886305166>

As of this writing, he posted that Florida is 29th overall and needs just above 4,000 to be in front of Pennsylvania, putting us at #1 in our category!

Have you called your non-renewals, welcoming them to the New Year and back to the Post? Have you signed family members in support of all of our Family Groups?

Post 321 in Cooper City has four generations of TAL, SAL, and ALA. The youngest SAL member is ten months old!

If you are interested in assistance with reports, training, and member outreach, please do not hesitate to ask!

Thank you to each and every one of you. Remember, each one renews one!

Many blessings to all of you in this New Year!



SAL Renewal

Richard Smith, SAL Advisor
sal@legionmail.org

You should have all received the news that the Sons can now renew their dues online via MyLegion.org. This can be great news, or it can be a nightmare. First, each member needs to sign up for a MyLegion.

org account. As we all know, or should, it is not difficult to set up an account. Help the members get an account if they need to. Set aside some time at the monthly meeting to get the members at the meeting to sign up. Second, give some guidance on how to work in the MyLegion account. Don't assume

everyone can "figure it out" on their own. Third, train the Adjutant how to go in and look up who did pay by computer. This can be an excellent tool for the Sons. Help them get started. If any help is needed, you can contact me or Bruce Thurber, Department Membership, for assistance.

Boy Scouts of America Growth and Eagle Scout

Chris Ragusa, Scouting
scouting@legionmail.org



One million and growing: Boy Scouts of America (BSA) membership is on the rise: BSA membership exceeded its year-over-year numbers by more than 3% from 2021 to 2022.

Around mid-December, the BSA's youth membership surpassed 1,025,000, which was the organization's goal for 2022. By the end of the year, the BSA was serving more than 1,042,000 members. Coming off the COVID-19 pandemic and the bankruptcy proceedings, BSA officials knew that the 2022 recruiting numbers would go a long way toward determining the future of the organization. So, they set a lofty goal: 1,042 million members resulted from nine

consecutive months of membership growth and a retention rate of more than 70% across the board. One hundred seventy-six (176) councils exceeded their year-end growth, which would not have been possible without the dedicated efforts of Scouting professionals, chartered organization partners like The American Legion, the thousands of volunteer leaders, enthusiastic parents, and all of the Cub Scouts, Scouts

Scouting continued on page 9 >>



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<<Scouting continued from page 8

BSA members, Explorers, Sea Scouts and Venturers who invited their friends to join them on their Scouting adventures. Cub Scout youth membership grew by 10.24% over the year. Most notably, the BSA's Exploring program grew by 17.35%.

Congratulations to Eagle Scout Hannah Hewett:

I had the pleasure of representing The American Legion at January 7, 2023, Eagle Scout award ceremony of Hannah Hewett. Hannah was one of the first girls to join Cub Scouting when membership was extended to them in 2018, one of the first to earn the highest award in Cub Scouts – the

Arrow of Light – and part of the first group of young women to achieve the highest rank in Scouts BSA – Eagle Scout! Hannah is the daughter of two veterans and American Legion members, Rick and Julie Hewett, and is their fourth child who has earned the Eagle Scout rank.

Scouters... please begin to consider your Outstanding Post Scouting Program applications. While not due until May, you want to start to document the service, achievements, and post/community involvement by the BSA units that you charter and sponsor between May 1, 2022, and April 30, 2023.



Improvements of Healthcare

Alan Cohen, VA&R
var@legionmail.org



It almost seems like last week was the beginning of the new year because the past couple of months have flown by, and so much has been accomplished.

As of the close of the Fall Conference, we have 52 new Post Service Officers, and they're hard at work helping veterans in a variety of ways.

Between the Camp Lejeune Justice Act and the PACT Act, our veteran brothers and sisters can now qualify for a greater range of health and compensation benefits than ever before. The VA launched a major toxic exposure screening program at the beginning of the year and, as of this writing, has screened well over 1 million veterans, affording many with additional healthcare. This program was enhanced by the VA conducting what they called "Week of Action" events at our VA hospitals and many CBOCs. At the very least, you are encouraged to register for VA healthcare so you can take advantage of this benefit.

I had the opportunity to visit the Lake Nona VA hospital at the Veteran's Experience

building, where I spent the day learning about yet another method of healthcare that can be delivered, Virtual Reality. No, it's not the headset that allows us to experience games but rather a whole collection of methods to treat PTSD, as well as an expansive list of other illnesses and diseases. I've begun working with VISN8, the governing authority, to expand this broadly.

Additionally, in connection to more and better treatments afforded to veterans, at the recent Veteran's Expo, I once again spent time with the principals of Neurolumen, which the VA has for a while approved as a treatment for neuropathy, chronic pain, arthritis, sciatica as well as MANY other illnesses with a proven success rate of up to 90%. While there, I witnessed firsthand the positive results of this treatment and learned that veterans no longer need meds in many cases. If you fall into one of those categories, I encourage you to speak to your provider or contact Neurolumen directly at 405-463-6525.

At that same event, I met and spoke with Ms. Veteran America, Liliana Joie Byrd, a strong and visible advocate for "Final Salute, Inc.," whose mission is to provide homeless women veterans and their children safe and suitable housing. This organization does great things for our sister veterans and is

yet another valuable resource. Still, with women veterans in mind, our Women Veterans Chairperson has continued conducting Women Veterans Forums at several Districts throughout the state. At these forums, women veterans have an opportunity never presented before.. to voice concerns that have been long overlooked so we can address them and make them welcome. Let us remember that they served too.



The last piece of information I'd like to share is one of paramount importance. As you know, the American Legion's voice continues without stopping to address the issue of veteran suicide. We have helped and will continue to do so, and the VA has agreed that beginning Jan 17, 2023, veterans who are in acute suicidal crisis can go to any VA or non-VA healthcare facility for treatment at no cost. The veteran does

VA&R continued on page 10 >>



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<< VA&R continued from page 9

not have to be registered for VA healthcare to receive this emergency treatment, including inpatient and/or residential care. We all need to remain vigilant and do all we can to get between our fellow

veterans and suicide. Please help get the word out regarding this additional avenue of prevention.

I'm anxious to attend the Washington Conference at the end of the month and do

all I can to encourage our elected officials to address legislation that will improve the lives of those who have served our great nation.

Challenges on the Minds of Women Veterans

Deanna Hall, Women Veterans
womenvets@legionmail.org



Our debt to the heroic men and valiant women in the service of our country can never be repaid. They have earned our undying gratitude. America will never forget their sacrifice.—President

Harry S. Truman

Our hearts and prayers continue to go out to the Veterans, their families, and all the communities affected by hurricane Ian. We have 165,000 women Veterans in the state of Florida, and most of these women do not know they are veterans.

After conducting seven Women Veterans Forums through the state of Florida, the women Veterans have spoken about their challenges. I will briefly discuss two of the challenges these brave women Veterans discussed.

Most women in the forums stated they did not report their Military Sexual Trauma (MST). They feared retaliation from their coworkers and were concerned that their accusations would not be believed. Some of the women stated they just wanted to forget the situation even happened. While some did not want others to know about the case for fear of shame or embarrassment. However, what all these women had in common was that they could not forget and that they kept the guilt for years. Most of these women did not have close friends and did not know how to trust.

The women in the forums stated that while on active duty, they felt a bias against them as working military mothers. They think that even today, societal norms are still more accepting of fathers than mothers being away from their families due to deployment.

Some women are struggling with guilt from deployments or unaccompanied duty station assignments.

The VA now considers women the fastest-

growing group of veterans, but their challenges are not discussed often. We need to do better for our Women Veterans. We have 165,000 reasons why we must do better!

WOMEN VETERANS' MANTRA: "JUST BREATHE"

When you feel angry, sad, frustrated, anxious, depressed, or need a moment to "JUST BREATHE."

Please repeat your mantra as many times as needed:

- You are "Brave"
You are "Resilient"
You are "Essential"
You are "Amazing"
You are "Timeless"
You are "Heroic"
AND YOU ARE "ENOUGH"

"Just BREATHE"! Thank you for supporting Women Veterans!

ENTER TO WIN A NEW 2023 HARLEY DAVIDSON® STREET GLIDE®!

BERT'S RIDING TO END VETERAN SUICIDE



DEPARTMENT OF FLORIDA

BENEFITING: Net proceeds to PROJECT: VetRelief - Suicide Prevention Initiative

DRAWING: April 22, 2023, 5:30 PM, OCC Road House & Museum in Clearwater, FL

TICKETS: Available with ALR District and Area Chairs, also at the Summit

Tickets are \$20 each or six (6) tickets for \$100. Purchase is not necessary to enter.

Details at floridalegion.org/riders



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PVR/SPI EVENTS... ENDING VETERAN SUICIDE!

Our Suicide Prevention Initiative focuses on working with our verified Strategic Partners by training or mentoring veterans through their existing mental health treatments, programs or processes to avoid suicide. There's no shortage of opportunities to alert our communities through our PVR/SPI events on this serious issue our veterans are facing.

Events are designed to encompass fundraising, create awareness and educate our communities on the importance of mental health within our veteran communities so they understand the severity of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

>>RECENT SPI EVENTS

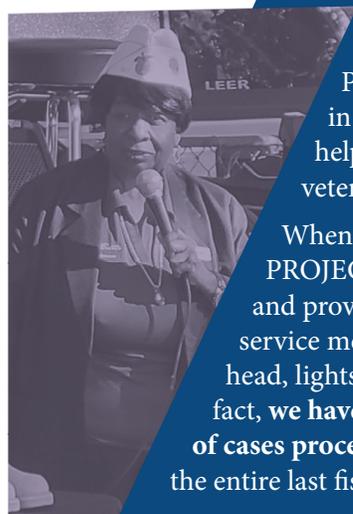
American Legion Post 69 in Avon Park hosted their Veterans Expo in early January. Not only were they able to raise funds for our SPI program, but they engaged their local community to give veterans the opportunity to see all resources within their area. Our Board Member, Larry Roberts, will be announcing the final results very soon.

>>UPCOMING SPI EVENTS

District 13 is having a Fundraiser Dinner and Veteran Suicide Awareness Event on **February 24-25th**. The Dinner will be held on that Friday at Post 38 in Fort Myers from 5-9pm. On Saturday, the event will be from 10am-4pm at Post 136 in St. James City. Contact Michael Turner for more info: fld13VeteransuicideAevent@yahoo.com

Ocean Beaches Post 129 is hosting a PVR Challenge 22 Walk & Event in Jacksonville Beach on Saturday, **March 25th**. Registration is open to join. For more details, visit: <https://give.floridalegion.org/ch22jax>

The Florida Legion Riders is gearing up to Ride for the 22 during their Round Robin and In-State Unity Ride events. Chapters are encouraged to put together a Unity Ride during the **month of April** for the cause. Then, from **April 17-21**, Riders will join forces on three-routes raising funds and awareness to End Veteran Suicide.



EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE CASES AT ALL-TIME HIGH!

PROJECT: VetRelief continues to be in high demand, which means we are helping more and more of Florida's veterans each year.

When Hurricane Ian hit in September 2022, PROJECT: VetRelief was able to take action and provide life-saving assistance to our service members by keeping a roof over their head, lights turned on, or food on the table. In fact, **we have already surpassed the total number of cases processed** in the first 6-months as we did the entire last fiscal year.

Department Commander, Eunice Butts, has recognized

the true impact of the emergency assistance program and chose to support our efforts as one of her charities of choice.

We hope that you will participate in her challenge to the Legion Family and help her raise \$50,000 by the end of June. She needs \$23,147 more to reach her goal!

Donations can be made online (www.projectvetrelief.org/donate), mailed into Headquarters, given to the Commander during her visits, or at the Department Convention in June.

Our veterans are counting on us working together to be there for them. - *So, let's show them we are here!*

EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE STATS: YEAR 9 JULY-DEC 2022

193 VETERANS ASSISTED

\$198,071 FINANCIAL AID AWARDED

January 26, 2023 Membership Target Report (80%)		
4	John Bennett	84.19%
16	Eric Nestler	83.40%
8	John Raugh	82.62%
3	Stuart Scott	82.20%
1	Ronnie Grover	81.57%
17	Bruce Howe	80.72%
7	Burl Thomas	79.99%
6	Joe Marcheggiani	79.73%
5	Lena Heredia-Perez	79.71%
13	Harold "Bud" Boyer	77.82%
11	Harry Malecki	77.41%
15	Randy Holeyfield	76.32%
2	Roger Hewitt	76.32%
12	Wayne Mulligan	76.24%
9	George "Geo" Bograkos	75.62%
14	Angela Glover	74.17%
Northern	Jim Bowers	81.19%
Central	Bob Matheson	80.94%
Western	Sonny Decker	80.79%
Southwestern	Skip Felicita	79.95%
Eastern	Dennis Mallon	78.18%
Southern	Johnny Castro	76.02%
Post 400		70.15%
Post 208		69.55%

Next Membership Goal 2022-2023:
February 8, 2023
85%

PLEASE SUPPORT
PROJECT: VETRELIEF

POST EVERLASTING



PDC Reginald Beverly

It is with deep regret that we report the passing of Past Department Commander Reginald C. Beverly of Bear, Delaware, at the age of 89. Reginald is survived by his wife, Evelyn C. Beverly; son, Reginald C. Beverly, Jr.; and daughter, Larita R. Mason. The service will be held on Saturday, February 4, 2023, with time and location TBD. Any new details regarding services will be communicated to you through email and posted on our website.

Reginald was a U.S. Air Force Korean War Era Veteran and a member of Port Orange Post 270, with 37 continuous years of membership. He served in every capacity within the Post, most predominately having served as Post Commander for four consecutive years from 1994-98. Under his leadership, the Post increased its membership and achieved an All-Time High. He served as 17th District Commander from 1997-99. During 2000-01, Reginald served as Department Membership Chair. He led the Department to achieve an All-Time High and was awarded the General Henri Gouraud Trophy for being the first Department to reach 100% in its category. Reginald served as Northern Area Commander from 2001-02, Department Vice Commander from 2002-03, and Department Commander from 2003-04. At the National level, he served on the Americanism Council from 1999-01 and the Foreign Relations Council from 2001-09.

The Memorial Service for Past Department Commander Reginald C. Beverly, Sr., will be held at 1:00 PM on Saturday, February 4, 2023, at Scarlet Note Church, 20 East Commons Boulevard, Suite 100, New Castle, DE 19720.

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www.thelit.com

DEPT OF FLORIDA
COMMANDER

Eunice Butts

HOME COMING



ENTERTAINMENT BY:
Tony Knight and Friends

BENEFITTING:
PROJECT: VetRelief &
Jackson In Action 83

TICKETS
\$50

SATURDAY, APRIL 22, 2023

6:00 PM SOCIAL
7:00 PM DINNER



JOIN US

For dinner, entertainment and
lots of fun! Space is limited.
Dress casual, or in your best
50s/60s sockhop style.

AMERICAN
LEGION

Post 8
Winter Haven, FL

300 AVE M NW | WINTER HAVEN, FL 33881



APPETIZERS

Stuffed Mushrooms

Shrimp Cocktail

DINNER



Half Baked Chicken
or
Prime Rib

Baked Potato
Green Beans Almondine
or
Broccoli, Cauliflower, & Carrot Mix
and Small Salad

DESERT

Cake or Sundae Made to Order

HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS:

Hampton Inn Winter Haven | 202 Cypress Gardens, Blvd; Winter Haven, FL 33880
(863) 299-9251 | Book Code: "ALB" | Rate: \$119 | Cut-off: April 3, 2023

PRE-ORDER YOUR TICKETS TODAY

Join us April 22, 2023 at American Legion Post 8, Winter Haven.

YES, I WOULD LIKE TO ATTEND THE COMMANDER'S HOMECOMING!

Name: _____ Phone: _____

of Tickets _____ X \$50 each = Total Due \$ _____

of Half Baked Chicken _____ # of Prime Rib _____ *Sides can be chosen at dinner.*

Check's payable to: **American Legion Post 8**

Mail Payment to: **American Legion Post 8**

Only 150 spaces available. Tickets will not be mailed, your name will be added to the list at the door. **RSVP: APRIL 12, 2023**

Attn: JoAnn O'Callaghan
300 Ave M NW
Winter Haven, FL 33881-2406



DEPARTMENT Children & Youth Picnic Fund Raiser

April 15, 2023

11 am - 5 pm

American Legion Post 323

1124 Ashlar Ave, Lehigh Acres FL

(239) 369-3178



Games, Food, Baskets, 50/50, (Military
Child's Program - by our Juniors)

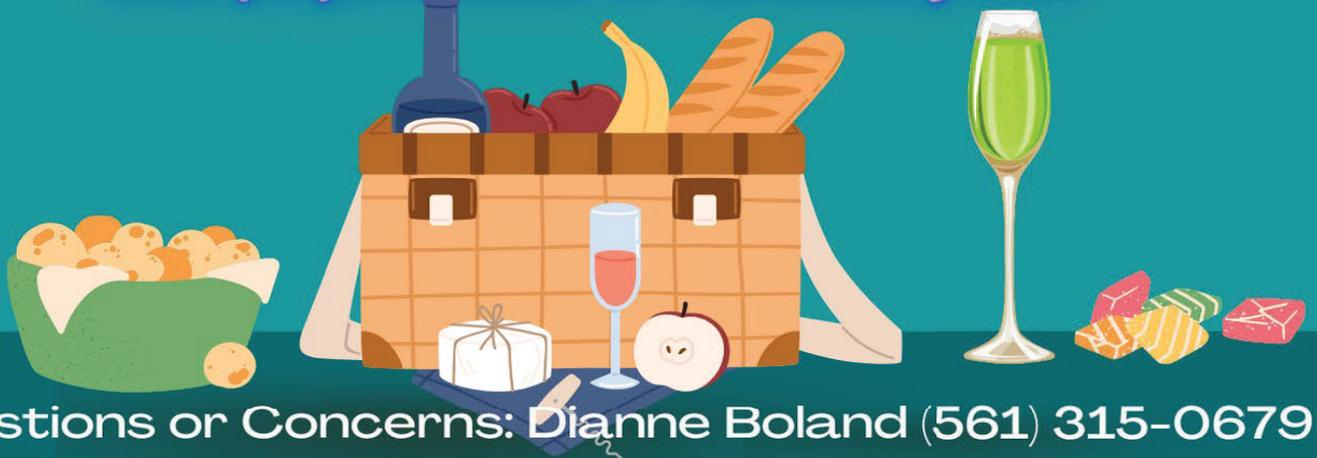
Quality Inn - 1320 Business Way, Lehigh Acres FL

(239) 369-2121

Price - \$127.25. Ask for American Legion -

Dianne Boland

Wear purple in honor of the Military Child



Questions or Concerns: Dianne Boland (561) 315-0679



Commander Jim Bowers

invites you to attend the

Northern Area Ball

MARCH Saturday
25
at 6 pm

American Legion **Post 57**

2602 SW Main Boulevard
Lake City, FL 32025
(386) 752-7776

Dress in your 1920's best!

Tickets

\$40 per person
\$70 per couple

Program Ads

\$30 half page
\$50 full page

Dinner

Choice of Roast Beef *or* Chicken Cordon Bleu; served with salad, mashed potatoes & gravy, roasted green beans, dinner roll, and cake.

Please indicate beef or chicken on all ticket requests/payments.

Accommodations

Hampton Inn & Suites

450 SW Florida Gateway Drive
Lake City, FL 32024
(386) 487-0580

Holiday Inn & Suites

213 SW Commerce Drive
Lake City, FL 32025
(386) 754-1411

For reservations, call the hotel directly and mention the American Legion to receive the group rate.

Checks, for tickets and ads, should be made payable and mailed to:

Jim Bowers
6 Oak Brook Drive
Ormond Beach, FL 32174

Email program ads (in jpeg or word format) to **jbowers500@cfl.rr.com**, no later than **February 25, 2023**.

Call **(407) 484-6020** with any questions.



The American Legion Post
266 is proud to host the



Southwestern Area Commander's Picnic

March 4th 1pm - 5pm



LUAU

&



50/50 RAFFLES

MUSIC PROVIDED BY:

CAPTAIN CARL

FIRING UP THE GRILL FOR
BURGERS AND HOT DOGS WITH
OR WITHOUT SIDES FOR A
\$3-\$8 DONATION BASED ON
SELECTION.

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DEPARTMENT OF FLORIDA

AMERICAN



LEGION RIDERS

STATE RALLY

SATURDAY, APRIL 22ND

**RAFFLE TICKET SUGGESTED PRICE: \$20 DONATION
OR 6 TICKETS FOR \$100 DONATION**

*THE WINNING TICKET WILL BE PULLED ON 4/22/23 AT 5:30PM
AT OCC ROAD HOUSE & MUSEUM IN CLEARWATER, FL.
WINNER NEED NOT BE PRESENT!*

*NET PROCEEDS TO PROJECT VET RELIEF/
SUICIDE PREVENTION INITIATIVE.*

BERT'S

RIDING TO END VETERAN SUICIDE

**ENTER TO WIN A
NEW 2023
H-D® STREET GLIDE®!**

LIVE MUSIC BY

RUSTY WRIGHT AT 1PM

BRIGETTE KELLY AT 2:30PM

ALEX LOPEZ XPRESS AT 4PM

