



## IN THIS EDITION

### Department Officers

- 1 Commander
- 2 1st Vice Commander
- 3 2nd Vice Commander
- 3 NEC
- 4 Historian

### Areas & Districts

- 5 Central Area
- 5 Eastern Area
- 6 District 12
- 6 District 13

### Membership

- 10 Membership
- 20 Weekly Report

### Programs

- 7 American Legion Riders
- 7 Americanism
- 19 Blood Donor
- 8 Florida Legion College
- 8 JROTC / JSSP
- 9 Law & Order
- 10 National Security
- 11 Oratorical
- 12 POW/MIA
- 15 PROJECT: VetRelief
- 13 Resolutions
- 14 School Medals
- 14 Youth Law Cadet

### Other

- 16 2025 Nat'l Convention
- 16 Child Welfare Foundation
- 18 Post 199
- 18 Post 331
- 19 Post Everlasting
- 21 Nat'l Con Volunteer Form
- 22 Southwestern Area Picnic
- 23 Commander's Homecoming
- 24 Central Area Ball
- 25 District 16 C&Y Picnic

Submit Articles at

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## Keep it Real

## A Message from the Department Commander

Chris Hamrick, Commander

[commander@floridalegion.org](mailto:commander@floridalegion.org)



Fellow Legionnaires,

My upcoming month will be filled with travels, events, and District visits. With the holiday season in full swing, let us remember to reach out to those who may be suffering from loss,

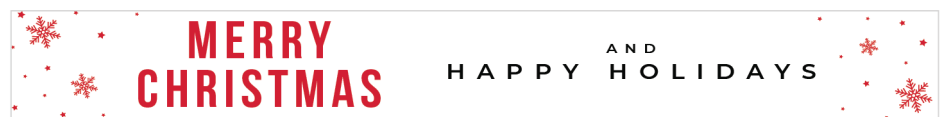
depression, loneliness, and other challenges. Members we haven't seen in a while should be contacted through our Buddy Checks. This time of year often sees an increase in Veteran suicides, so I'm asking all of us to do our part and **BE THE ONE**. Thank you in advance for your efforts.

On another note, as we continue to recover from the disasters of the past few months, many of us have fallen behind in our membership numbers. A significant number of our posts are "snowbird" posts or include many snowbird members. I ask, **"Have you reached out to those on your roster who haven't renewed yet?"**

During my recent travels, it was brought to my attention that some of our snowbirds aren't planning to return this year, while others may not return at all. I've also heard that some have sold their homes and moved back north. Regardless of the extent of this, there's only one way to know for sure: **call them**.

With December 31st approaching, now is the perfect time to hold membership drives and send out reminders—whether through the mail or displayed prominently around our Posts—encouraging renewals before January 1st. Consider creative solutions, like gifting a membership to someone struggling financially or allowing a member to barter volunteer hours for the renewal cost or part of it. **Thinking outside the box** is what I'm encouraging. Storms or no storms, our mission in the American Legion remains. Let's refocus and get back in the fight! I look forward to working the phones during my visits to Districts 5 and 1 this month.

In closing, I wish each and every one of you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Let's stay engaged, and most importantly, **Keep It Real**.



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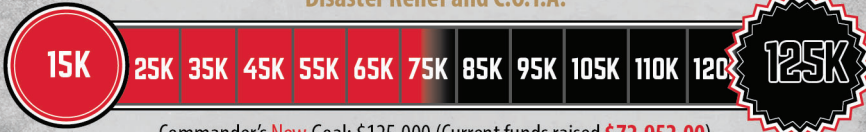
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## COMMANDER'S CHARITIES

Disaster Relief and C.O.T.A.



Commander's **New** Goal: \$125,000 (Current funds raised **\$72,952.00**)

## Returning Home

Jessica Moore, 1st Vice Commander

[1stvice@legionmail.org](mailto:1stvice@legionmail.org)



The American Legion was founded by military men who wanted a place for brothers to socialize after returning home from World War I.

It was a place where they didn't have to talk about the war—what they saw or what they were involved in—just a brotherhood of like minds.

Today, the American Legion continues to stand for that same principle: a "safe place," if you will, where brothers and sisters can socialize and be with others of like minds. It also extends to the families of our Veterans, allowing them to join and participate in service to the American Legion's mission alongside other families.

This mission, like the one we are recognizing today, reminds us that we still have brothers and sisters fighting internal battles and, tragically, taking their own lives. A Veteran is 50% more likely to take their life than someone who has never served in the military. This must stop. Challenge 22 serves as a reminder of how many we are losing every day. The American Legion National has launched the mission of **Be The One** to emphasize that it takes

each of us to "be the one" to ask someone how they're feeling, to check on someone who might be struggling, to listen when they need to talk, and to remind them that there is help available and that you care. The mission is simple: **Be the One** to save a life.

Here in Florida, we've faced the unfortunate impact of two hurricanes back-to-back. Some posts are just now reopening after Hurricane Ian over two years ago, while others that recently reopened have been flooded again and are rebuilding. Hurricanes Helene and Milton have also left posts flooded.

This is why the missions of **Challenge 22** and **Be The One** should be at the forefront of our minds. Our Veterans, who may no longer have a place to gather with their brothers and sisters, are the ones we need to reach out to. It's as simple as a "buddy check"—just saying hi, asking if you can meet for coffee, or even offering to bring them one. Starting a conversation is often all it takes.

I am honored to be here today, and I want to thank each and every one of you for being here as well. Please remember to **Be The One!**

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### DECEMBER 2024

- 28-1 Holiday Blood Drive
- 1 Be The One Day
- 1 U.S. Civil Air Patrol Birthday (1936)
- 1 District 3: Meeting
- 1 District 13: Meeting
- 3 #Giving Tuesday
- 4 Dept Membership Goal 75% 🌟
- 4 Chapter 136: ALR Meeting
- 7 Pearl Harbor Day (1941)
- 7 Flags at Half Mast
- 7 Chapter 316: ALR Meeting
- 7 District 6: Meeting
- 7 District 16: Meeting
- 8 Chapter 8: ALR Meeting
- 8 District 5: Meeting
- 11 Membership Renewal Cut Off Date ★
- 11 Chapter 10: ALR Meeting
- 13 U.S. National Guard Birthday (1636)
- 14 Wreaths Across America
- 14 District 12: Meeting
- 15 Bill of Rights Day
- 15 JSSP 1st Target Sales/Registration Closes ★
- 15 Award Nominations Due 🌟
- 15 Legion Link Articles Due for January 🌟
- 17 Wright Brothers Day
- 20 U.S. Space Force Birthday (2019)
- 21 First Day of Winter
- 21 District 8: Meeting
- 24-1 Department Headquarters Closed 🌟
- 25 Christmas Day
- 31 Post All-Time High Award ★
- 31 Post Honor Ribbon ★
- 31 General John J. Pershing Honor Award ★

🌟 Commander attendance anticipated.

🌟 Department of Florida event.

★ National event.

Events are subject to change. More details at [floridalegion.org](http://floridalegion.org).



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



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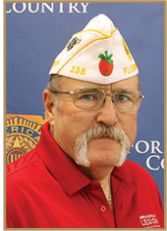
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## Let's "Be The One"!

Bob Matheson, 2nd Vice Commander

[2ndvice@legionmail.org](mailto:2ndvice@legionmail.org)



We are now in the middle of the holiday season, and I want to wish all of you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. During this time of year, we all hope to have family and loved ones close by to share

the holidays with us. I hope and pray that this is possible for everyone. Unfortunately, for many, that will not be the case.

We have just come through a very challenging time for many people. Those who endured Hurricane Ian also faced the impact of three additional hurricanes — Debbie, Helene, and Milton — which caused harm and destruction from Florida to North Carolina.

As we celebrate Christmas and move into the New Year, please remember those still suffering from the aftermath of these storms. Now is the time to reach out to our Veterans, families, and friends. Many may be experiencing the holidays for the first time without a home. This is also a time when those who have lost loved ones face particularly difficult

moments.

We have all heard about the importance of "Be the One." Now is the time to truly put it into action. It's time to "Be the One" who reaches out to those in need of help and a kind word. If there is one thing I know about the American Legion and the American Legion Family, it's that we always go above and beyond to help those in need.

Let us do everything we can to lift spirits by reaching out and making a difference. Once again, I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

## Legislative, National Security, VA&R, and Government Affairs

Jim Ramos, NEC

[nec@legionmail.org](mailto:nec@legionmail.org)



Department of Florida Legionnaires, Thank you for letting me serve you as your National Executive Committee Member.

### 1. Legislative Weekly Report (approximately ten (10) pages long.)

- The Legislative Council activities report summarizes the Legislative Council's grassroots lobbying efforts for each congressional session.
- It aims to assist other commissions and their staff in representing The American Legion before the United States Congress and its committees on all legislative matters in which The American Legion is officially interested.

### 2. The National Security Division's Weekly Report (typically three (3) pages or more in length.)

- To stay informed about security threats to the United States, as defined by the U.S. Departments of Defense, State, and Homeland Security.
- To maintain a professional working relationship with all congressional oversight committees and their staff regarding the purposes of the commission.

### 3. The Veterans' Affairs & Rehabilitation Weekly Update (approximately three (3) pages long.)

- To oversee the effectiveness of The American Legion's programs serving war Veterans and their dependents in securing benefits administered by federal and state governments.
- The American Legion's legislative program (all resolutions requiring legislative action become part of The American Legion's legislative program immediately upon adoption. The Legislative Commission compiles such resolutions and includes the current compilation in its entirety as part of its report

to each meeting of the National Executive Committee. This is done solely to establish an orderly historical record of resolutions stating legislative policy and/or requiring legislative action, as per Rules of the National Executive Committee, 8b);

### 4. The Government Affairs Weekly Report

(approximately twenty-one (21) pages long) Serves as an all-in-one resource covering legislation, national security, Veteran affairs and rehabilitation, as well as Veterans' employment and education. This is the report you should share with your members, and it can also provide a basis for questions and discussions.

All the reports are designed to inform you and your members about what is happening at the national level and how those efforts support us across the four areas covered.

Each report provides specific information, such as legislative updates, including a grassroots

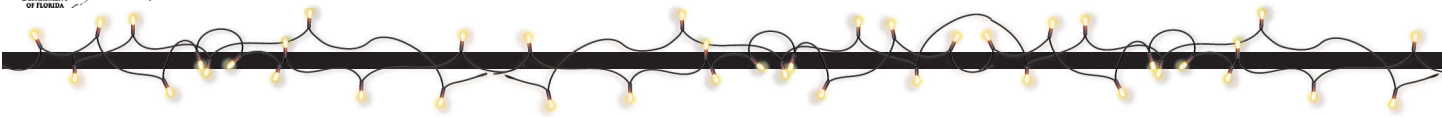
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<< NEC continued from page 3

newsletter detailing current developments in Congress. The American Legion’s legislative agenda for the 119th Congress is also available online. To review our priorities, you can explore the Advocacy Toolkit.

Additionally, be sure to check the calendar for the month to stay informed about upcoming events and activities.

### What does the NEC do, and why do we keep you informed?

- To recommend policies that ensure the national security of the United States of America.
- To understand the federal budget process and the budgets of the United States Departments of Defense, State, and Homeland Security.
- To maintain a professional working relationship with the United States Departments of Defense, State, and Homeland Security.
- To maintain a professional working

relationship with all congressional oversight committees and their staff regarding the purposes of the Commission.

- To monitor the hearings of these oversight committees and provide congressional testimony in cooperation with the Legislative Commission and staff.
- To stay informed about security threats to the United States of America as identified by the United States Departments of Defense, State, and Homeland Security.
- To carry out other purposes as assigned by the National Executive Committee. The Legion has released its legislative agenda for the second session of the 118th Congress.

The American Legion’s Washington Conference will be held from February 25 to 28, 2025, in Washington, D.C. Story and video coverage will be available on [legion.org](http://legion.org). In preparation for the conference, the Legion has released its legislative agenda for the second session of the 118th Congress. We are now transitioning to the 119th Congress.

*Download the complete legislative agenda from [legion.org](http://legion.org).*

### A few of the legislative agenda items include:

- Suicide prevention and mental health
- VA healthcare modernization
- PACT Act implementation and oversight
- Safeguarding Veterans’ benefits
- Military quality of life
- Guard and Reserve GI Bill parity
- Protecting the American flag (In 2016, when Jim Ramos was the Department of Florida Commander, this was the #1 issue for me, supported by Resolution No. 19, “Flag Code Amendment.”)

### How can you access this information?

Visit [legion.org/advocacy/legislative](http://legion.org/advocacy/legislative) and navigate to “Legislative Agenda & Point Papers.”

Be sure to download the Legislative Agenda Brochure and Handbook.

If you have any questions, please let me know and contact me at [NEC@legionmail.org](mailto:NEC@legionmail.org).

## Highlights from Veterans Day and Preparing for the Future

Elbert Ziegler, Historian

[historian@legionmail.org](mailto:historian@legionmail.org)



I hope everyone enjoyed a wonderful Veterans Day, filled with appreciation and camaraderie, and perhaps took advantage of some of the community- and business-sponsored events and free meals. These acts of kindness, alongside the parades and well wishes, serve as heartwarming reminders of the support our communities show to Veterans.

This Veterans Day weekend, from November 9th to 11th, Department Commander Chris Hamrick made a significant visit to District 13. His itinerary included stops at several Posts, such as attending the Cape Coral Veterans Day Parade, celebrating at Post 90’s Mortgage Burning Party, and the weekend highlight—Post 303’s Grand Reopening Party in Bonita Springs. It was a vibrant celebration, and witnessing the resilience and recovery stories from many Posts was truly moving. I sincerely hope we will see more such reopening celebrations in the future.

I had the privilege of traveling alongside Department Commander Hamrick, his grandchildren Travis and Madison, and District Commander Berres throughout the weekend. For a detailed recap of Commander Hamrick’s visits and experiences, you can check out this link: *Veterans Day Weekend Review*, <https://www.eztouse.org/cmdr-hamrick-13th-district-visit>.

After participating in Post 303’s reopening, I concluded my Veterans Day weekend with a visit to Post 274.

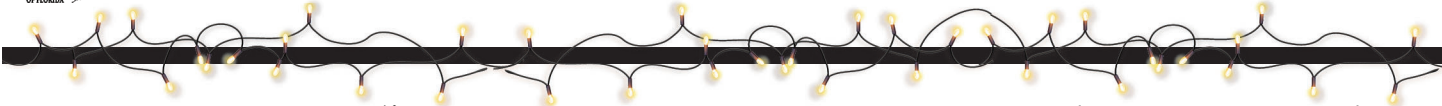
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<< Historian continued from page 4

As I write this article, we are just seven days away from the Fall Conference. By the time you read this, the conference will have concluded. I anticipate it will have been a productive gathering filled with valuable information and resources for all Post and District Historians. Notably, we will have held a Post Historian/Social Media Training session designed to provide guidance on record-keeping and archival best

practices.

I plan to video record this training session so it can be shared with Post historians who were unable to attend. This will ensure that both new and experienced historians receive the latest insights on contest documentation and reporting standards. To enrich my annual report, I kindly request that each of you share your key achievements, complete with

images and written summaries. Events involving Department and National Commander visits, as well as those featuring elected officials, are especially valuable.

I look forward to seeing and connecting with many of you during my travels and at the June 2025 Convention. Wishing you all a very happy and peaceful holiday season!

## Knowledge is Power

Rick Orzechowski, Central Area Commander  
[central@legionmail.org](mailto:central@legionmail.org)



The quote “knowledge is power” is often attributed to Sir Francis Bacon, who originally wrote “knowledge itself is power” in his 1597 work *Meditationes Sacrae*. The phrase was later shortened to “knowledge is power” by Thomas Hobbes, who worked as Bacon’s secretary.

For those of you considering running for office—

whether at the Post, District, Area, or Department level—it is essential to familiarize yourself with the office you are seeking before declaring your candidacy. This ensures that you understand the responsibilities and duties you will assume if elected.

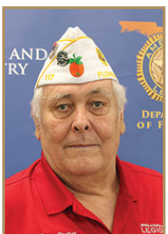
The Department of Florida simplifies this process by providing access to its Constitution and By-laws on their website ([www.floridalegion.org](http://www.floridalegion.org)). Article V of the Department’s By-laws outlines the responsibilities of Department Officers, including Area and District Commanders.

Posts also make it convenient by posting their Constitution and By-laws at their respective locations, with clear explanations of the duties associated with each position.

If you choose to run for office, it is highly recommended that you speak with past and current officers who have held that position. They are invaluable resources at your immediate disposal. You are fortunate to be part of The American Legion, where there are numerous role models—a veritable font of knowledge—ready to share their expertise and help you achieve your goals.

## Buddy Check Suggestions

Bruce Thurber, Eastern Area Commander  
[eastern@legionmail.org](mailto:eastern@legionmail.org)



Two hurricanes and numerous tornadoes have truly demonstrated what The American Legion is all about. Whether you are a regularly scheduled volunteer or someone who steps up for special events, your efforts make a significant difference. I want to personally thank the hundreds of Department of Florida volunteers who dedicated their time and energy throughout 2024.

With Fall Conference and Thanksgiving now behind

us, Christmas and New Year’s Day are just around the corner. Please note that both Department and National offices will have limited hours during the holidays. However, the systems will remain operational, so it’s important to process memberships frequently.

As members of The American Legion, our most sacred responsibility is to look out for one another and for our fellow Veterans. During the holidays, many members may feel isolated or alone. **Buddy Checks** can help prevent this and provide much-needed connection and support. Here’s how you can make a difference:

### 1. Gather a Team

Organize a group of volunteers to call or visit members and former members of The American Legion.

### 2. Access Membership Lists

If you don’t already have a list of members and former members, visit [MyLegion.org](http://MyLegion.org) to download the names of current members and those whose memberships have lapsed.

### 3. Divide the Call List

Assign members of your team specific individuals to contact. If someone has a personal connection with a member or former member, they should

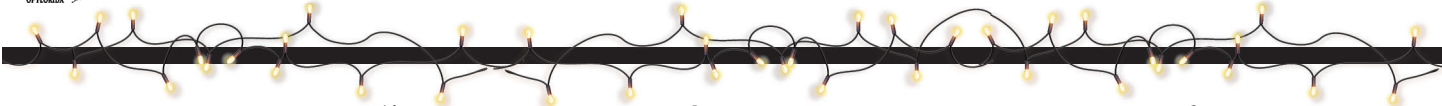
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<< Eastern Area continued from page 5

handle that particular Buddy Check.

#### 4. Start Making Connections

Begin reaching out from a quiet place, either at your post or from home. Check in to see how members and former members are doing, ask if they need assistance, and invite them to any planned events or activities celebrating the holidays.

#### 5. Express Gratitude

Be sure to thank the member or former member at both the beginning and end of the conversation.

#### 6. Facilitate Renewals

If a member or former member wishes to renew their membership, have your post's payment procedures ready. Provide the address to send a check, or offer to stop by in person to collect payment—another chance to connect personally.

#### 7. Leave Contact Information

If the member or former member cannot take your call or may need assistance later, leave your contact details so they know how to reach you.

By performing Buddy Checks, you can make a meaningful impact during the holiday season and remind our members and former members that they are not alone.

### A Lot of Work to Do

Daniel Martin, District 12 Commander  
[district12@legionmail.org](mailto:district12@legionmail.org)



There is a lot of work that needs to be done. Many American Legion Posts need to understand the distinction between the **Canteen** and the **American Legion Post**.

The canteen represents the business portion of the American Legion. When problems arise, the canteen committee should be responsible for addressing those issues.

Constitution and Bylaws should be posted so that

members can read and understand them. Similarly, make the House Rules accessible to members and guests to address any questions about the rules of your American Legion. Work collaboratively to ensure your American Legion Post is a welcoming and supportive space for Veterans and their families.

It takes a village to make the American Legion function like a well-oiled machine. As a district, we have significant work to do to ensure we provide accurate answers to members. If you don't know the answer, consult the Officer's Guide, or the National, Department, District, or Post Constitution and Bylaws to find the correct information.

When designing shirts for the American Legion, Sons, or Riders, ensure they are approved by the Department of Florida.

We need to get back to the basics of understanding what the American Legion name represents and what it stands for. In recent years, the focus has been on increasing membership, but we also need to educate our members about the organization they have joined. Teach them about the American Legion's programs and the opportunities for members to volunteer and make a difference. We are much more than just a canteen.

### Hurricane Relief and Recovery

Keith Berres, District 13 Commander  
[district13@legionmail.org](mailto:district13@legionmail.org)



District 13 continues to make great strides! It was an honor to have Department Commander Chris Hamrick visit the district over Veterans Day weekend. We began the visit by joining Post 90 for the Veterans Day Parade

on Saturday and met with members from seven Posts, with additional Posts coming to meet him as well. A special thank you to the District Riders for

providing an escort on Sunday. We concluded the weekend with the grand reopening of the John F. Murphy Post 303 in Bonita Springs. The event was well-attended by local dignitaries and Department representatives, all showing their support for the hard work and dedication it took to reopen.

By the time this article is published, the Department Fall Conference will have taken place. As always, we are grateful for the effort and dedication that so many put into making the event a success. I understand that several classes were restructured this

year, and I hope they provided valuable insights.

As we enter the holiday season, I want to remind everyone of the importance of conducting **Buddy Checks** to reach out to those who may be spending the holidays alone. Let's also support the various efforts and fundraisers being held to assist families and children during this special time of year.

Wishing everyone a joyful and blessed Christmas season!



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## Looking for Ways to Support Our Charities

Jim Wineland, American Legion Riders Chair

[legionriders@legionmail.org](mailto:legionriders@legionmail.org)



Merry Christmas to all, and wishing you a happy and prosperous New Year! What a year it has been. The weather tested us twice, but by God, we made it through. I understand that some are still piecing things back together. Having experienced hurricanes in Galveston, Texas, I know how challenging the rebuilding process can feel—as though everything is working against you. But take heart: the process does eventually come to an end, and life goes on.

We have some exciting plans for the Summit this year. One highlight is motorcycle skills training, which will take place at a nearby location from the hotel. The training will include classroom instruction and hands-on skill enhancement for motorcyclists. We're currently working on the cost structure and trying to get it as close to \$0 as possible by partnering with a few vendors to help cover the

expenses.

Another new offering is the first responders' course. As part of the new safety program, we've incorporated several innovative ideas into the Summit. Bev and I often hear, "If it weren't for the camaraderie, I wouldn't go; it's the same thing every year." Well, this year we're shaking things up! The first responders' course will focus on critical actions that can be taken at an accident scene to help save lives, based on research and practical safety advancements.

As I mentioned, we're still a little behind schedule due to the setbacks from the storms, but we're catching up quickly and will keep you updated.

Looking forward to seeing you soon. Ride safe!

### Your 2024 – 2025 Schedule

- Summit
  - Meet & Greet  
February 5, 2025

- Classes  
February 6-8, 2025
- "Round Robin"  
Month of April 2025
- Children and Youth Picnic  
April 5, 2025  
(Note, Holy Week April 13-19th; Easter April 20, 2025)
- In-State Unity Ride
  - Meet & Greet  
April 6, 2025
  - Ride  
April 7-11, 2025
- Rally  
April 12, 2025  
OCC Clearwater, FL

If you have any ideas or suggestions, please share them! Thank you for all that you do. We are proud to be part of such an outstanding leadership team!

**"For the Cause, Not the Applause"**

## Holiday Approaching

Wayne Mulligan, Americanism Chair

[americanism@legionmail.org](mailto:americanism@legionmail.org)



As the holiday season approaches, it can be easy to put off some of our Legion activities. However, we owe it to our fellow Legionnaires to do our best to help them enjoy the wide range of activities

that Americanism has to offer. **Get involved.** There is something for everyone—Scouting, Sea Cadets, Shooting Sports, and more. Find something you enjoy and make a difference for yourself, your post, and your community.

We are making progress in encouraging more Posts to appoint an Americanism Chair, adding 13 more in November. **Keep up the great work, Post Commanders!** This initiative helps the Department reach out to support more Posts with their activities.

Please remember to contact your District Chair if you are planning to hold any events, and encourage participation from your members and community. Lastly, don't forget December 7—**Pearl Harbor Day.**

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*plus*  
**BONUS 50/50 WINNER**

**11 WINNERS**  
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## Unplugging to Rejuvenate Ourselves

Lena Heredia-Perez, Florida Legion College Chair  
[falca@legionmail.org](mailto:falca@legionmail.org)

*"Almost everything will work again if you unplug it, including you, for a few minutes." ~ Anne Lamott*

Greetings, Legion Family.

Can you believe the end of the year is upon us? With the Legion College Application deadline having passed this month, I'd like to take this opportunity to stray from the usual updates and instead focus on you.

Over the last six months, I've learned a lot about myself as both a person and a leader. I'll be honest—some of these lessons have been positive, while others have been challenging. Ultimately, what matters most is how we choose to move forward in life.

As we enter this busy month filled with holiday parties and homes bustling with family and friends, I encourage you to take some time for yourself. By prioritizing self-care, you can enhance your overall productivity and effectiveness, both as a person and as a leader. When we're feeling

stressed and overwhelmed, slowing down can have a tremendous impact. It allows us to think more clearly, be innovative, and address the challenges causing us stress.

Research shows that taking breaks can help prevent decision fatigue, renew and strengthen motivation, increase productivity and creativity, consolidate memory, and improve learning. Even taking "micro-breaks" can improve focus and productivity.

Self-care starts with you. It comes in many forms, but when practiced intentionally and consistently, it provides the tools you need to become a happier, healthier person and a more effective leader. If your goal is to become the best version of yourself—and to inspire those around you to do the same—investing in your well-being is well worth the effort.

### Here are some ideas for self-care activities to consider:

- Read a book
- Binge-watch a show
- Cook something new

- Listen to music
- Watch or listen to comedy
- Order your favorite meal
- Go for a drive
- Sing out loud
- Sleep in
- Get a massage
- Bake something
- Pray and/or meditate
- Sit outside
- Take a nap and/or rest
- Journal
- Read and recite positive affirmations
- Listen to a positive podcast
- Write a gratitude list
- Practice mindfulness
- Take a walk
- Work out

I wish each and every one of you a joyous holiday season!

## Veterans Day and Upcoming Events

Loretta Young, JROTC/JSSP Chair  
[jrotc@legionmail.org](mailto:jrotc@legionmail.org)

We all had a very busy Veterans Day week, and I hope many of our Legion Posts were actively involved in the programs conducted throughout the state. It was an exceptionally busy time for me, as I received more invitations than I could attend, including school and city programs.

Many schools held programs in their auditoriums, cafeterias, and classrooms. These events provide

special opportunities for our Legionnaires to engage with youth, serve as role models, and share stories and experiences from their time in the military, along with the history of our country.

I was fortunate to participate in breakfasts, assemblies, luncheons, and evening events at schools and city facilities, most of which included the presence of JROTC cadets. Spending time with our nation's youth and sharing experiences is not only rewarding but also deeply appreciated by these

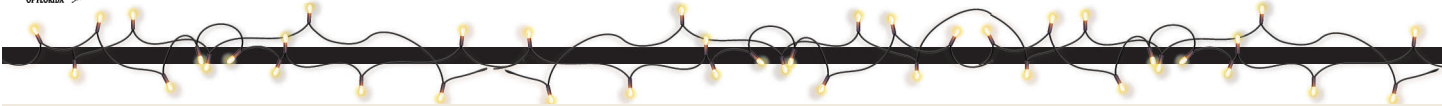
young people.

Events continue through the end of the year with area Raider Meets, Drill and Color Guard Meets, as well as Robotics and Drone exhibitions. Beginning in January and February, the JROTC Programs will conduct their JROTC Performance Accreditations and Formal Briefings from Division and Command Staff for each service branch.

*JROTC/JSSP continued on page 9 >>*







<< JROTC/JSSP continued from page 8

Schedules are currently being sent to the programs' senior instructors. Sending an email to the Senior Instructors now will give you time to plan a visit to a high school that you support. These briefings are an excellent opportunity to gain a comprehensive understanding of the value the JROTC Program brings to our youth.

If you have any questions regarding this part of the curriculum, please feel free to reach out to me.

The pictures in this article feature the AFJROTC Color Guard, who participated in the Coral Springs High School Veterans Day Program assembly, followed by a luncheon for Veterans prepared by the school's culinary youth department. Additionally, the Piper High School AJROTC Color Guard led the Tribute to Veterans Luncheon at the City of Sunrise event.

As an additional reminder, the deadline to order JSSP Postal Targets is December 15th. There are no exceptions, and waiting until the last minute will not leave enough time to complete the full application process.

Several marksmanship programs already have tournaments scheduled through the CMP (Civilian Marksmanship Program), so I know there are JROTC units actively competing in Florida. Let's aim for a strong turnout for this potential scholarship opportunity, which is awarded to the top winner and runner-up at the national level.

Thank you to everyone who supports our youth, and best of luck to all participants registering for the Postal Competition. Happy Holidays to our Legion Family and those you support!



Piper AJROTC Color Guard Tribute to Veterans Day



Coral Springs AFJROTC Color Guard Veterans Day Program

## First Responder Suicide/Past Military Service

Daryl Bass, Law & Order Chair

[laworder@legionmail.org](mailto:laworder@legionmail.org)

It goes without saying that one of the main goals of our American Legion Family is to understand and work to prevent Veteran suicide. Veteran suicide remains at an alarming rate of 22 per day, and there may be even more cases that go unreported. Many of these unreported cases involve first responders.

A 2023 report by the National Safety Council highlighted first responder suicide statistics, showing that first responders account for 1% of all suicides nationwide. Of that percentage:

- 58% were law enforcement officers,
- 21% were firefighters,
- 18% were paramedics, and
- 2% were public safety telecommunicators (dispatchers).

Notably, 11% of these first responders were also military Veterans. This overlap suggests that the number of Veteran suicides reported annually may not be entirely accurate. Additionally, 69% of first responder suicides were carried out with firearms.

Assumed contributing factors include family disputes (domestic violence), job-related stress, the death of close family members, alcohol and/or substance abuse, and health problems.

If you have a family member or friend who you believe may be contemplating suicide, reach out to them. Write down the phone number for your local suicide hotline or the VA Suicide Hotline and keep it in your wallet. This small step ensures you're prepared to help a Veteran brother or sister who may need to speak with a professional.

You could save a life.



# DIAL 988 then PRESS 1



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## Membership After the Disasters

**Bruce Carl, Membership Chair**

[membership@legionmail.org](mailto:membership@legionmail.org)



Hello Team Florida!

It's hard to believe we are approaching the end of the first six months of the 2024-2025 year. Mother Nature has certainly wreaked havoc on our state, but we continue to pursue our goals. While we may have fallen short as a Department on some objectives so far, many of our Posts have achieved their individual goals. We still have time to catch up and surpass our targets—we just need to work harder. I am confident we can still reach 100% by May 2025. I'd love to see as many Posts as possible hit 100% by December 31st.

Don't forget about the coins and pins available for

Posts that reach 100%! I am looking forward to handing those out to you. As of this writing, we have seven Posts that have reached 100%. Let's keep pushing!

Now is the time to make that final effort to get your members renewed. The 2024 cards will expire on December 31st, meaning members who haven't renewed will no longer have access to the Posts' canteens and other offerings. Make sure you continue performing Buddy Checks and remind members of the expiration date on their current cards.

If they haven't renewed for 2025 yet, consider encouraging them to opt for a three-year renewal. This approach not only simplifies your workload for the next three years but also ensures you're ahead of the curve for your future membership goals.

For those who attended Fall Conference, I hope you took advantage of the two membership training sessions that were available. If you missed them, they should be available on the Department website. Please take the time to review them and use that knowledge to grow your Post's membership.

Congratulations to everyone who received awards at the Conference! There are many more to be presented at the Convention, so keep up the great work.

I'm here to assist you in any way I can. Please don't hesitate to contact me by phone, text, or email. Thank you all for your hard work—it is truly appreciated.

**Wishing you a safe and happy holiday season!**

## TAL National Security UNCLOS Treaty Briefing

**Mike Sherman, National Security Chair**

[security@legionmail.org](mailto:security@legionmail.org)



In November, I had the honor of attending an exclusive National Security briefing on the American Legion's response to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

The briefing was led by American Legion Acting National Security Director Ariel de Jesus and Executive Director of Government Affairs Mario Marquez. Leading experts were also present to provide insights into the history of UNCLOS and the implications of the United States not being a party to the treaty.

Two experts were the primary speakers during

the briefing. The first was Ambassador John Norton Moore, who served as the U.S. Ambassador for the Law of the Sea Convention under Presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford and as an appointee to the National Advisory Commission on Oceans and Atmosphere under President Reagan. The second was Admiral Steve Abbot, former Deputy Commander in Chief of United States European Command (DCINCEUR) and former Deputy Homeland Security Advisor to President George W. Bush.

Other distinguished participants in the briefing included Admiral Thad Allen, former Commandant of the Coast Guard; former Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard Jason Vanderhaden; and Admiral Dennis Blair, former United States Director of National Intelligence and former Commander of U.S. Forces in the Pacific Region.

Admiral Abbot provided a brief history of UNCLOS, which was negotiated during the 1980s and 1990s. The United States led the negotiations for the treaty, and President Reagan successfully secured several changes related to seabed mining that were subsequently adopted. In 1994, enough countries agreed to the treaty for it to take effect. Although the treaty was submitted to the Senate in 1994, it was never ratified. Another attempt was made in 2012 to ratify it, but that effort ultimately failed. Admiral Abbot and others renewed the push in 2022 with the ultimate goal of having the United States join over 160 nations and the European Union as parties to the treaty.

For those unfamiliar with UNCLOS, the question

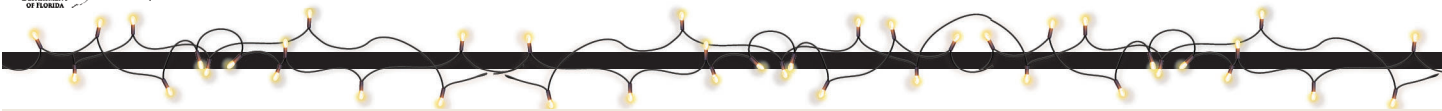
*National Security continued on page 11 >>*



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<< National Security continued from page 10

may arise: why would the United States need to join such a treaty when many argue that the world's greatest Navy can go wherever it pleases? UNCLOS would ensure freedom of navigation for U.S. ships and aircraft, particularly in international waters.

Notably, the People's Republic of China (PRC) has made attempts to impose additional restrictions under some provisions of UNCLOS regarding high-seas freedoms. The PRC seeks to enforce its "nine-dash line," which encompasses its claimed waters and islands in the South China Sea. This claim covers most of the South China Sea and overlaps with the exclusive economic zone claims of other countries.

Ambassador Moore continued the briefing by discussing deep-sea resources regulated by UNCLOS. There are numerous sites rich in strategic metals located on the deep seabed in the Pacific Ocean, within an area known as the Clarion-Clipperton Zone (situated between the Hawaiian Islands and the Baja Peninsula). Each of these sites is approximately the size of the state of Rhode Island and is estimated to hold minerals worth around \$1 trillion, including copper, nickel, cobalt, manganese, and rare earth elements. Licenses for these sites are granted by the International Seabed Authority

(ISA) under the provisions of UNCLOS. Initially, the United States held four of these sites but now retains only two, while China currently controls five and Russia holds three. Moreover, China has been attempting to acquire U.S. sites for "developing" nations.

Becoming a signatory to the treaty would also position the United States as a global leader in ocean policy. The U.S. is entitled to the only permanent seat on the UNCLOS governing body, the International Seabed Authority, which includes veto power over any proposed changes to the treaty. This seat would also allow the U.S. to influence environmental regulations related to deep-seabed mining. However, securing this seat requires Senate advice and consent to the treaty, as well as full U.S. membership in UNCLOS.

As mentioned earlier, the United States played a pivotal role in the creation of UNCLOS and secured everything it negotiated for. Our strategic allies have been strongly urging the U.S. to ratify the treaty and join the 168 member nations (including all NATO members except Turkey). However, we are in a difficult position when it comes to pushing back against China's aggression using the provisions of UNCLOS, as we are not a signatory.

Additionally, UNCLOS regulates and protects undersea

cables, and companies involved in laying these cables are strongly advocating for the U.S. to join the treaty.

Admiral Abbot concluded the briefing by outlining how the American Legion could contribute to the effort. He expressed the opinion that strong engagement by the American Legion and its members could be a decisive factor in moving UNCLOS through the Senate during the November 12 to December 20 lame-duck session. He proposed that the American Legion initiate a call-in and email campaign and that its leadership engage in discussions with senior Senate officials.

Director Marquez agreed, noting that the American Legion would explore the matter further and could potentially release a media statement or story soon, possibly followed by future grassroots actions.

If you haven't already, please consider signing up for the American Legion's Grassroots Action Center by visiting:

<https://www.voterve.net/AmericanLegion/home>

For more information on UNCLOS, visit:

[https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention\\_agreements/convention\\_overview\\_convention.htm](https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/convention_overview_convention.htm)

## Coming Around the Corner, Heading to the Finish Line

Doug Hockenberry, Oratorical Chair

[oratorical@legionmail.org](mailto:oratorical@legionmail.org)



Hello, Department of Florida American Legion Family,

Let me start by wishing everyone a blessed and Merry Christmas and a happy holiday season.

Last month was chaotic, to say the least. Dealing with the remnants of Hurricane Helene and then Hurricane Milton on October 9 certainly disrupted many of our lives and programs, including the Oratorical Program. However, if there's one thing I've learned, it's how resilient the Department of Florida Legion Family truly is. I have faith and confidence in

your ability to ensure all our candidates are prepared and ready for their upcoming presentations.

Remember, the Post-level contests begin on December 1 and run through January 19, 2025. These will be followed by the District and Area contests, culminating in the Department-level contest

*Oratorical continued on page 12 >>*



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<< Oratorical continued from page 11

on March 15, 2025.

Since August, I have discussed various elements of this program and used the analogy of building a structure in each of my articles. We poured our foundation, set our cornerstones, and erected our walls. Well, ladies and gentlemen, it's time to put on the roof and finish the interior. Yes, we are "coming around the corner, heading to the finish line." In other words, it's time to ramp up our personal interactions with our candidates.

How are they doing with rehearsals? Have you had them speak to a group? How about having them recite their speech at one of your membership meetings? Not only does this help them feel more comfortable speaking to an audience, but it also builds their self-confidence. While students have been refining their prepared speeches—which is wonderful—we must not forget about their 3-5 minute speeches for the Assigned Topics. This month is the time to really focus on the details with your

candidates, helping them deliver jaw-dropping speeches. Remember, your interaction and support with the students and their families make a significant difference on this journey. Let's set every student up for success.

Now, how many of you are taking advantage of Toastmasters? Last month, I provided information about Toastmasters, an organization dedicated to helping young people become successful public speakers. Many past competitors have benefited greatly from Toastmasters' expertise. Simply visit [www.toastmasters.org](http://www.toastmasters.org) and find a chapter near you.

**Training:** We can never have enough training! On that note, I hope you attended my class during Fall Conference. I provided additional information about the program that you can take back to your Posts, Districts, and Areas. Additionally, addressed questions about the Oratorical Program.

I also hoped you were able to attend the Programs Fair. This event will showcased a variety of programs

within The American Legion. From Veterans' assistance and youth scholarships to Americanism activities, it was a great opportunity to meet Department Chairs and learn more about programs such as Baseball, Blood Donor, Boys State, Children & Youth, Civil Air Patrol, Disaster Preparedness, JROTC, Oratorical, Project Vet Relief (PVR), Sea Cadet, Shooting Sports, and Youth Law Cadet. It's was a fantastic chance to expand your knowledge of the many wonderful programs available right here in the Department of Florida.

In closing, I wish you a very Merry Christmas and a happy holiday season. Keep up the excellent work, and best of luck with your upcoming Post-level contests. As always, if you have questions, feel free to call me at 727-514-3742, text me, or send an email to [oratorical@legionmail.org](mailto:oratorical@legionmail.org).

One final question: **Will your Post candidate be representing the Department of Florida at the National Oratorical Competition?** Hang tough!

## POW/MIA Update

Denny Luke, POW/MIA Chair

[powmia@legionmail.org](mailto:powmia@legionmail.org)



How many of you knew we had DoD personnel stationed in China during WWII? In my April 2024 newsletter, I wrote about a meeting held in Hawaii between the DPAA, South Korea, and China to restart recovery missions for unaccounted-for Americans in mainland China. Those talks were successful, and the DPAA recently completed its first recovery mission in China in the last 13 years. Since 1994, when both countries agreed to work together, there have been approximately 10 recovery missions, including the most recent one in

Hunan Province.

From early August to mid-September, a team of 12 military personnel and specialized Department of Defense civilians formed a recovery team tasked with locating and recovering the remains of a pilot lost 81 years ago. In total, there are still 678 unresolved cases in China. The DPAA continues to collaborate with mission partners and foreign governments to reduce the number of unaccounted-for individuals and bring answers to the families of missing personnel.

Another recent milestone for the DPAA is the 100th identification from the WWII Cabanatuan prison camp in the Philippines. In April 1942, following

the surrender of Bataan, thousands of Filipino and U.S. troops were forced to march over 60 miles to Camp O'Donnell in Tarlac Province. The primary detention center for American POWs was Camp Cabanatuan, located in Nueva Ecija Province, which originally consisted of three separate prison camps. The number of POWs at Cabanatuan reached approximately 10,000. When the camp was liberated on January 30, 1945, more than 2,700 POWs had already been buried in the Camp #1 cemetery. Following postwar identification efforts, over one-third of these service members remained unidentified.

The Department of Florida has a POW-MIA

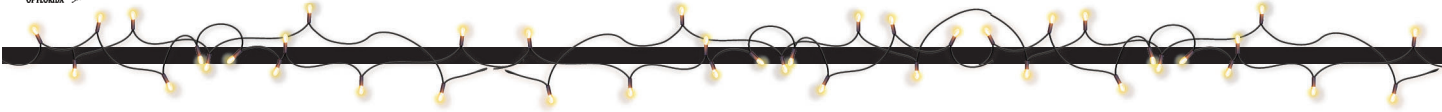
*POW/MIA continued on page 13 >>*



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<< POW/MIA continued from page 12

Facebook page. Search for FL Legion POW-MIA, or visit it directly at <https://www.facebook.com/falpowmia/>. I encourage everyone to Like and Follow the page.

The Defense POW-MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) <https://www.dpaa.mil/> as of 31 October 2024, has identified the following number of MIA personnel for FY 2025:

### WW II - 2, Korean War – 1, Cold War – 0, and Vietnam War - 0

During the month of October 2024, the following 37 personnel have been accounted for.

October 31, 2024

- Soldier Accounted for from Korean War (Colby, W.)
- Soldier Accounted for from Korean War (Godwin, H.)
- Soldier Accounted for from WWII (Ulrich, E.)
- Soldier Accounted for from WWII (Cook, B.)

October 24, 2024

- Soldier Accounted for from WWII (Mahoney, J.)

October 21, 2024

- Soldier Accounted for from WWII (Larson, G.)

October 18, 2024

- Soldier Accounted for from WWII (Moss, T.)

October 17, 2024

- Soldier Accounted for from Korean War (Miller, J.)
- Airman Accounted for from WWII (Bradner, W.)
- Pilot Accounted for the Vietnam War (Trudeau, A.)
- Airman Accounted For From World War II (Huff, M.)
- USS California Sailor Accounted for from WWII (McMurtrey, A.)
- Airman Accounted for from WWII (Curran, B.)
- Soldier Accounted for from Korean War (Carrino, F.)
- Airman Accounted for from WWII (Nyberg, H.)

October 16, 2024

- Soldier Accounted for from Korean War (McDuffie, C.)

October 15, 2024

- Soldier Accounted for from Korean War (Hardy, D.)

October 10, 2024

- Soldier Accounted for from WWII (Cocco, J.)
- Soldier Accounted for from Korean War (O'Brien, T.)
- Airman Accounted for from WWII (Kelly, T.)
- Soldier Accounted for from WWII (Karwacki, L.)

October 9, 2024

- Merchant Marine Accounted for from WWII (Spotts, E.)

October 8, 2024

- Pilot Accounted for from Vietnam War (Kilpatrick, L.)

October 7, 2024

- Soldier Accounted for from Korean War (Bowman, J.)

October 4, 2024

- Soldier Accounted for from WWII (Sundstad, H.)
- Soldier Accounted for from WWII (Burgess, K.)
- Soldier Accounted for from Korean War (Pierce, C.)
- Soldier Accounted for from WWII (Mitchell, J.)
- Airman Accounted for from WWII (Murray, J.)

October 3, 2024

- Soldier Accounted for from WWII (Hennessey, H.)
- Tanker Accounted for from WWII (Loterbaugh, J.)
- Soldier Accounted for from WWII (Corvin, E.)
- Soldier Accounted for from Korean War (Edwards, W.)
- Airman Accounted for from WWII (Hodak, G.)

October 2, 2024

- Soldier Accounted for from WWII (Zarifian, J.)
- Soldier Accounted for from WWII (Andrews, R.)

## Explanation of Legal issues for a Resolution

Clarence Hill, Resolutions Chair

[resolutions@legionmail.org](mailto: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 that might be 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 or 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

Resolutions continued on page 14 >>



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<< Resolutions continued from page 13

a resolution to be written. Before rushing to write a resolution, a number of fundamental questions should be asked about the subject matter. The importance of good writing technique and proper attention to grammar and spelling is essential. It may mean the difference between an easy passage of the resolution at your Post meeting or needing to stand up in front of your Post members to attempt to clear up misunderstandings as to what it is that you are presenting.

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 consider such a position within the mandates as outlined in its preamble, i.e., is it germane?
- Does The American Legion already have a current position on the subject?

- 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 intent of the resolution can be realistically attained?
- Does the resolution deal with a politically sensitive issue?
- Should The American Legion be involved in this issue?

## Start Planning for School Medals

Eric Loyd, School Medals Chair  
[schoolmedals@legionmail.org](mailto:schoolmedals@legionmail.org)

I know not many Posts currently participate in the school medals program, but we all need to be promoting school medals. I have recently taken custody of my 14-year-old grandson and have been receiving valuable input from him about **The American Legion** and **school medals**. Youth see these medals as meaningful recognition of their efforts and achievements.

My grandson values being a Son of The American Legion and has been asking me a lot of questions about my time on active duty. Just last night, he asked if I knew how to shoot a gun. When I showed him my Expert Rifle Medal, he was in awe. He then asked how he could earn medals of his own.

I understand that school medals can be expensive, but they are worth it in the long run. Consider asking your Post to donate money, holding 50/50 raffles,

or organizing fundraisers to ensure you can provide a few school medals to students in your local schools. **BE THE ONE** to make a difference in just one student's life.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.

## Youth Law Cadet Program

Bud Boyer, Youth Law Cadet Chair  
[youthlawcadet@legionmail.org](mailto:youthlawcadet@legionmail.org)

Hello All,

Wow, this article is for the December edition of the Legion Link—where has the time gone? I hope and pray that all our Legion Family members are doing well after the Helena and Milton hurricanes.

I was hoping to attend the Conference to give a report on the Youth Law Cadet Program, but unfortunately, due to a

personal matter, I will not be able to attend.

I know it will be another powerhouse of a Conference. Good luck to everyone!

Now, onto the Youth Law Cadet Program. The last time I had any correspondence with anyone from the Florida Highway Patrol was back in August.

The Florida Highway Patrol informed me via email that someone would be in touch with me or another American

Legion staff member "in the near future."

I still have hope that it may happen. After all, it's December, and December is a magical month. We have Christmas, and we have Santa, so I'm still holding out hope!

Merry Christmas to all, and may your holiday season be full of mirth and cheer!

**VOLUNTEERS  
NEEDED**

Want to volunteer to help with **2025 National Convention** in Tampa?

**SIGN UP AT** [floridalegion.org/volunteer2025](http://floridalegion.org/volunteer2025)



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December 2024

# PROJECT: VETRELIEF

## REMEMBER PROJECT:VETRELIEF THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

PROJECT: VetRelief recently helped a disabled female veteran, who is a single mother of two children, by providing financial assistance for her rent. With this support, we were able to keep her and her children from being evicted. Today, they are safe, warm and on their way to being self-sufficient.

**Every day, the support from the Legion Family makes stories like this disabled female veterans possible.**

However, in order to keep supporting Florida's veterans and their families, we need your support. We are asking that you help ensure that we can continue our mission by

making a donation or hosting a fundraising event. As you plan the rest of your Legion year, please consider the immediate, and in some cases life-altering, impact you can make on Florida's veterans, active duty military members, and their families.

Donations can be made online ([www.projectvetrelief.org/donate](http://www.projectvetrelief.org/donate)), or mailed into the Department Headquarters. We simply cannot provide this level of support without you!

Best wishes for a bright and beautiful holiday season, from our family here at PROJECT: VetRelief.



### Coming Together

To support Florida's veterans

During the Legion's Fall Conference last month, PROJECT VetRelief hosted a networking event. We invited some of our VetRelief Advocates, our Board of Directors, and the Suicide Prevention Initiative Strategic Partners.

The event opened with our Board President and Vice President, Bob James and Jim Wineland, speaking on PROJECT VetRelief's progress and future goals.

But the real magic happened when our SPI Partners got up one by one to share information on their individual organizations and how the PVR funding creates a real impact on our veteran community. It became apparent that, when we are combined, we make a larger impact and meet the true needs of our veteran community.

The photo above is most of the group who attended. We are so honored to partner with these folks as we all continue to work towards supporting our veterans and their families!

Check here every month to see our combined impact!

ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT  
July 2024 - June 2025

**72**  
Veterans Received Financial Support

**\$80,657**  
Provided as Emergency Assistance

**14**  
Suicide Prevention Strategic Partners

**\$92,500**  
Given towards Veteran Suicide Prevention



## 2025 National Convention, Tampa

Clarence Hill, 2025 Tampa Con Corp President  
[pnhill@legionmail.org](mailto:pnhill@legionmail.org)

By the time this is published, we will have had the meeting at the Fall Conference and finalized the committee chair appointments, along with the liaisons and drivers. We have provided National with their names and contact information. The chairpersons can now begin assembling their teams, and we will continue to provide them with volunteer contact information for those signing up on the websites.

Remember the importance of contacting your state representatives to lobby for transportation funding from next year's budget for this convention. It's not too early to make that contact, and we need to push

hard to secure it. The one-page information sheet we developed for last year's session will be posted on the website for your use. Transportation costs for the New Orleans convention this year were \$200,000, so we really need your help in influencing the Florida legislature.

The Memorial Service Committee will coordinate with the National Chaplain to organize the memorial service, make any required rooming arrangements, and provide volunteers to assist with seating attendees. So far, we have received no recommendations for well-known groups in the Tampa area that may be willing to perform during the Memorial Service on Sunday. We need to provide National with a list of options by January,

and they will pursue booking them. If you have any suggestions, please submit them to Bruce or me.

This is an immense project that Florida has taken on, and your support and volunteering will be critical to its success. We will likely need between 50 and 100 volunteers. Deadlines will approach quickly as we enter 2025. Hosting a National Convention is no easy task; it requires significant funding, and every member from all other Departments will scrutinize our efforts. However, this is a great opportunity to showcase Florida.

If you can help in any way or have ideas, please share them. If you can volunteer, we need you!

## Child Welfare Foundation Gets a New Name

Dennis Boland, Child Well-Being Foundation President  
[pdcboland@legionmail.org](mailto:pdcboland@legionmail.org)



On behalf of the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation Board of Directors, I express our deepest gratitude for your dedication to our nation's youth. Your commitment to the foundation is not just making a difference; it is the difference. You are not just supporters; you are integral to our success, and we thank you for your invaluable contribution to the lives of thousands of children nationwide every day.

During the October 2024 board of directors meeting, the Foundation awarded \$852,593 to thirteen child-serving nonprofit organizations for the 2025 year. This funding will directly impact the lives of countless children, and you, our esteemed supporters, have made this possible. You will

find a complete listing of these organizations and a summary of their projects within this newsletter.

Another notable outcome of the meeting was a motion to change the name of the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation to doing business as the Child Well-Being Foundation (CWF), which was seconded and passed. The negative connotation brought about the change to the name of the word welfare. The outside public was confused about CWF's purpose, thinking it only provided financial assistance to families or organizations. Well-being is defined the same as welfare but in a more positive light. When thinking about the mission and purpose of the Foundation, it is to contribute to the betterment of children in this country through the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual welfare of children by aiding progress in the field of child well-being through research, studies, surveys, or supporting programs and activities benefiting the well-being of the children and youth.

Thank you for being a valuable member of the Children's Action Team and for your continued support of the American Legion Child Well-Being Foundation. We truly appreciate your commitment.

### Grant Updates

Florida Atlantic University, a 2023 award recipient, was granted an amended project schedule by the Board of Directors in December 2023 to run concurrent with the 2024 calendar year for their project titled "Pet Dogs, Resilience and Well-Being in Military Adolescents."

### Contributions

As of 10/25/24, donations for the June 1st, 2024, through May 31st, 2025, program year stand at \$205,789.54.

### The top 3 family contributors are:

1st - Florida - \$24,691.58

*Child Well-Being Foundation continued on page 17 >>*

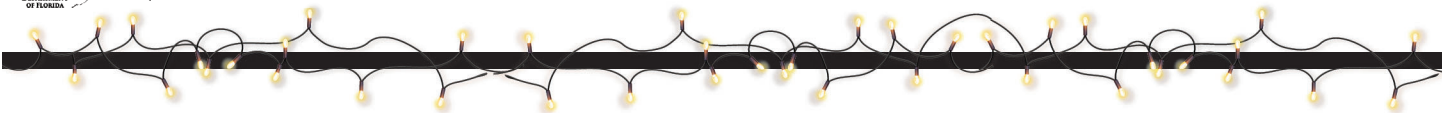


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<< Child Well-Being Foundation continued from page 16

- 2nd - Massachusetts - \$24,353.40
- 3rd - Pennsylvania - \$15,479.71

### 100% Per Capita Banner Program

Once again, the 100% per capita banner program will be offered for the 2024 – 2025 program

## Child Welfare Foundation Report

Created by The American Legion in 1954, the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation, Inc. (CWF) is a separate 501 (c)3 corporation. Its philanthropic priority is to support worthwhile youth-serving projects and to assist in the dissemination of information to the general public and specific target groups. From 1955 to date, the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation, Inc., has awarded more than \$20 million to organizations to assist children in this country.

At the May 2024 meetings of the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation, Inc., a motion to change the name to the American Legion Child Well Being Foundation, Inc. was made, seconded, and passed.

During the October meeting, grants for the 2025 calendar year were reviewed. A total of \$852,593 was granted to 13 organizations.

### The following organizations received grants.

- American Kidney Fund - \$25,000
- ASXL Rare Research Endowment Foundation - \$10,500
- Briggs & Barrett Project - \$15,000
- Camp Corral - \$25,000
- Children’s Hospital and Medical Center Foundation - \$20,000

year. Each post, unit, squadron, chapter, or salon donating at least one dollar for each member during the American Legion Child Well-Being Foundation’s award year will receive a beautiful banner/streamer.

To qualify, a post, unit, squadron, or salon must donate one dollar per member based on its official membership total as of June 1, 2024. The post, unit,

squadron, chapter, or salon has from June 1, 2024, to May 31, 2025, to complete its donation to the Child Well-Being Foundation.

Banner request forms are available online or by contacting the CWF office.

- Cleveland County ALWS Baseball, Inc. - \$125,000
- Father Flanagan’s Boys Home - \$25,000
- Gift of Adoption - \$20,919
- LifeCamp USA - \$25,358
- Southeast Missouri Network Against Sexual Violence - \$5,000
- Spectrum Sailing - \$3,500
- The American Legion National Headquarters was awarded \$525,000 for their project “The American Legion Children and Youth National Program-2025
- The National Children’s Cancer Society - 27,266
- Florida Atlantic University was granted an amended project scheduled by the Board of Directors in December 2023 to run concurrent with the 2024 calendar year.

Donations for June 1st, 2024 through May 31st, 2025 stand at \$205,789.54 as of 10/25/24.

### The top 3 family contributors are:

- 1st, Florida - \$24,691.58
- 2nd, Massachusetts - \$24,353.40
- 3rd, Pennsylvania - \$15,479.71

### HERITAGE CIRCLE GIFT CLUB AWARDS FOR DEPARTMENTS:

- Benefactor (Gold) \$5,000
- Patron (Silver) \$2,500
- Sponsor (Bronze) \$1,000

### “CHILDREN FIRST” GIFT CLUB FOR POST

- Guardian (Gold) \$1,500
- Advocate (Silver) \$1,000
- Caretaker (Bronze) \$750

### “CORNERSTONE” GIFT CLUB FOR INDIVIDUALS

Foundation Ambassadors - \$1,500  
Dated gold logo pin with five diamonds

President’s Circle - \$1,000  
Dated gold logo pin with one diamond

Foundation Partner - \$500  
Dated gold logo pin with one blue sapphire

Century Club - \$250  
dated gold logo pin with one amethyst.

### Send your donations to:

The American Legion  
P.O. Box 361626  
Indianapolis, IN 46236  
Earmark check: Child Well Being Foundation.

Or donate online, [legion.org/donate](https://legion.org/donate)





## The American Legion at Its Best

Edna Frazier, Post 199

On October 26, 2024, the Inaugural Commander's Ball was proudly hosted at the Marriott West Palm Beach and featured the presentation of the **President's Lifetime Achievement Award**.

In 2003, President George W. Bush established the **President's Council on Service and Civic Participation**, which created the President's Volunteer Service Award to recognize the significant role of volunteers in America's strength and national identity. This award honors individuals whose service has positively impacted communities across the

nation and inspires others to take action as well.

The event brought together dignitaries and Legionnaires from across the state, along with a dedicated community, to honor more than 20 volunteers from diverse backgrounds, each with over 4,000 hours of volunteer service across various fields. The event attracted a sold-out audience of over 200 guests.

From the very beginning, this memorable evening radiated excitement and camaraderie. Post Commander Miller opened the event by announcing

the marching in of Legionnaires from across the state into the ballroom, followed by the posting of the colors. The overwhelming sight of Legionnaires saluting the flag exemplified their pride and dedication.

Among the distinguished guest speakers were District 11 Commander Toni Sutherland, Shalonda Warren (Commissioner of District 2, West Palm Beach), and the Honorable Congresswoman Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick.



## 6th Annual Pearl Harbor/ Doris "Dorie" Miller Remembrance Day Ceremony

George McZeal Jr., Post 331

The 6th Annual Pearl Harbor/ Doris "Dorie" Miller Remembrance Day Ceremony will take place at Post 331- address listed above, at 11:00 AM, Saturday, 7 December 2024. (PEARL HARBOR DAY).

The Commander and Veterans of American Legion Post 331, Doris Dorie Miller Memorial Post, respectfully request your presence at the aforementioned Ceremony. This is the Fourth official

honoring of Patriot Doris (Dorie) Miller in the 40+ years that Post 331 has been in Orlando, Florida. Your presence and contribution to the program would be much appreciated by our Veterans and Community.

In Ref. to - Doris "Dorie" Miller (November 24, 1943) was an American Messman Third Class in the United States Navy. During the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 - Miller operated

anti-aircraft guns (despite having no formal training in their use) and attended to the wounded. For his actions, he was recognized by the Navy and awarded the Navy Cross. He was the first African American to be awarded the Navy Cross, the third highest honor awarded by the US Navy at the time, after the Medal of Honor and the Navy Distinguished Service Medal. The Navy Cross now precedes the Navy Distinguished Service

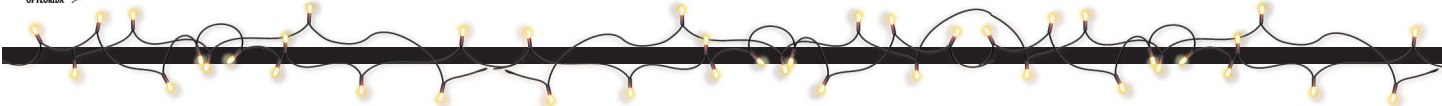
Post 331 continued on page 19 >>



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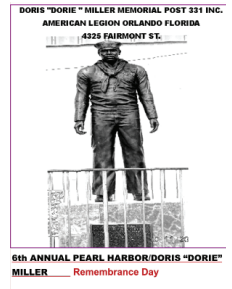
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<< Post 331 continued from page 18

Medal. Miller's acts were heavily publicized in the black press, making him an iconic emblem of the war for black Americans. Nearly two years after Pearl Harbor, he was killed in action when his ship, The USS Liscome Bay, was sunk by a Japanese submarine during the Battle of Makin. The U.S. Navy is naming an aircraft carrier after Doris "Dorie" Miller as a result of his heroism on

December 7, 1941. It marks the first time an aircraft carrier has been named for an African American and the first time a sailor has been honored for actions taken as an enlisted man.



## Helping Out in Time of Need

### Jamie Grinis, Blood Donor Chair

[blooddonor@legionmail.org](mailto:blooddonor@legionmail.org)

By now, everyone is safely home from our annual Conference. Many of you stopped by our booth to chat and learn about the importance of blood drives. Now, more than ever, blood donations are critically needed. The recent hurricanes left many people with injuries requiring blood for medical procedures.

Hosting a blood drive at your Post requires very little effort. Simply call your local blood bank or the Big Red Bus (OneBlood) to arrange a time and place—it's that simple! Some Posts are still looking

for programs to support in order to maintain their charters. This program might be just what you need to get involved.

This is the time of year when presents sit under the tree and joy fills the air. Why not give the gift of love that saves lives? You never know when you or someone close to you might be the next person in need of this vital resource.

Take the time to organize a blood drive. Believe it or not, you might even recruit a new member or two for the Legion Family—or at the very least, make

a new friend. A blood drive is also a wonderful way to showcase your Post to a stranger and share what we're all about.

A member of my family recently needed blood during a hospital stay. It was deeply rewarding to know that someone had taken just 30 minutes out of their busy schedule to donate a pint of blood, helping to save a life.

### Won't you get involved in this lifesaving program?

## Post Everlasting

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

### Kelton D. Sweet, Jr.

It is with deep sorrow that we inform you of the passing of Past Department VA&R Chair Kelton D. Sweet, Jr., of Orlando, Florida. Kelton passed away on November 11, 2024, at the age of 90.

At this time, service information is not available. If service details are provided, they will be shared via email and on the Department's website. Kelton was a proud U.S. Air Force Veteran who

served during the Korean War Era and a devoted member of Pine Castle Post 286. Throughout his 32 years of continuous membership with the American Legion, he exemplified dedication and service.

At the Department level, Kelton served as the VA&R Chair from 2005 to 2016. His commitment extended to the National level, where he served on the Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Committee from

2006 to 2016.

Please keep Kelton's family and friends in your thoughts and prayers during this difficult time. His contributions to The American Legion and his unwavering support for Veterans will not be forgotten.



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## MEMBERSHIP TARGET REPORT

November 21, 2024 (75%)

District 4	Doug Hockenberry	72.43%
District 2	Doyle Combs Jr.	66.76%
District 14	Faustino Benitez	66.41%
District 17	Bryant Thorpe	66.19%
District 9	Jim Tewes	65.84%
District 5	Miguel Garcia	65.42%
District 7	Kalvin Thompson	64.58%
District 3	Stuart Scott	64.40%
District 1	Jason Skobel	63.69%
District 6	Peter Gregory	63.49%
District 12	Daniel Martin	63.41%
District 11	Toni Sutherland	61.49%
District 13	Keith Berres	59.72%
District 8	Charlie Magnus	59.58%
District 15	Andrew Davis	59.15%
District 16	Michael Harley	57.97%
Northern	Jim Bowers	66.95%
Western	Shelby Windham	64.13%
Southern	Teddy Pomerantz	64.10%
Eastern	Bruce Thurber	63.46%
Southwestern	John Rauh	59.66%
Central	Rick Orzechowski	59.25%
Post 400		63.06%
Post 208		49.81%



## TRAVEL WITH CONFIDENCE

Learn How the Legionnaire Emergency Assistance Plus (EA+<sup>®</sup>) Helps You Handle Travel Emergencies.



LEGIONNAIRE INSURANCE TRUST PROGRAM

Any time you have an accident or sudden illness while traveling away from home, Emergency Assistance Plus provides a crucial safety net that helps coordinate and provide for emergency medical transportation your health or travel insurance generally will NOT cover. EA+ steps in to provide Medical Evacuation, Transportation Home, Medical Assistance, Travel Assistance, and Assistance for Companions.

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Emergency Assistance Plus<sup>®</sup> (EA+<sup>®</sup>) is not insurance, it is a membership plan. This is only an outline of the plan's features. Hospitalization (admitted as an inpatient) is a requirement to be eligible for some services. All services must be arranged and provided by EA+. Please read the EA+ Member Guide carefully to understand all the services available to you, as well as any rules and regulations. Visit [www.TheLIT.com/Emergency-Assistance-Plus](http://www.TheLIT.com/Emergency-Assistance-Plus) to view a sample of the EA+ Plan details.

★ ★ ★ FREQUENT WINNERS ★ ★ ★

ENTER ONLINE [florida5050.org](http://florida5050.org)

SHOW YOUR SUPPORT  
The American Legion official license plate.



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[www.floridalegion.org](http://www.floridalegion.org)  
[legionlink@floridalegion.org](mailto:legionlink@floridalegion.org)



# National Convention Volunteer Interest Form

August 22-28, 2025 in Tampa Bay, FL

Return to Department or email to [resolutions@legionmail.org](mailto:resolutions@legionmail.org)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

When is the best time to contact you?  Anytime  Morning  Afternoon  Evening

What is the best way to contact you?  Email  Phone  Either Method

## VOLUNTEERING

How would you like to volunteer? (Select all that apply)

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Badges and Packets Committee   | <input type="checkbox"/> Information/Registration Committee | <input type="checkbox"/> National Commander's Driver |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Distinguished Guests Committee | <input type="checkbox"/> Special Events Committee           | <input type="checkbox"/> National Adjutant's Driver  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Memorial Service Committee     | <input type="checkbox"/> Tampa Liaison                      | <input type="checkbox"/> General Tasks               |

Are you interested in serving as Chair for any of the committees you selected?  Yes  No  Undecided

Are you a member of any of the following? (Select all that apply)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> The American Legion         | <input type="checkbox"/> American Legion Auxiliary  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sons of The American Legion | <input type="checkbox"/> The American Legion Riders |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not a member                |   |

Do you have any special skills or experience that would be beneficial? (Please explain)

\_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Are you able to attend the 2025 National Convention?  Yes  No  Not Sure

*\*Lodging and travel expenses will be the responsibility of the volunteer. Parking will be provided.*

# SUPPORTING FLORIDA DISASTER RELIEF

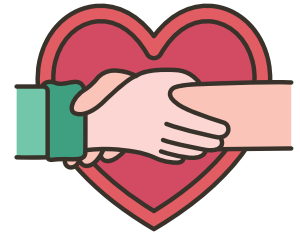


## ***SOUTHWESTERN AREA PICNIC***

January 18, 2025

11 am - 5pm

2124 American Legion Drive  
Arcadia, FL 34266



---

Competitive games - entry fee

\$10 per couple -

Trophy's for 1st, 2nd & 3rd  
Baskets, 50/50, live music -  
donations gladly accepted



Checks written out to  
AL K Post 11

Memo - SW Area Picnic



AL K Post 11  
C/O Tammie Clifton  
PO Box 835  
Arcadia, FL 34265





DEPARTMENT COMMANDER'S



# HILLBILLY HOEDOWN

COME DRESSED AS A HILLBILLY!  
JEANS - OVERALLS - STRAW HATS

SATURDAY APRIL 26, 2025  
STARTING AT 12:00PM



RAFFLES DURING THE DAY  
MAIN AUCTION 4PM  
DINNER INCLUDED

ENTERTAINMENT BY  
DJ DOC HOLIDAY  
THE LAST CALL BAND

TICKETS:  
\$30/PERSON \$50/COUPLE

CONTACT COMMANDER HAMRICK FOR TICKETS  
(321) 313 - 3469  
SGTHAMRICK@HOTMAIL.COM

AMERICAN LEGION POST 117  
189 VETERANS DRIVE PALM BAY, FL

PROCEEDS BENEFIT  
COMMANDER'S CHARITIES



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**LEGION**  
AUXILIARY

AMERICAN  
**LEGION**

SONS OF THE  
AMERICAN  
**LEGION**

THE CENTRAL AREA LEADERSHIP

*Presents*

*The Central Area*  
**CASINO  
ROYALE**

**SATURDAY  
MARCH 8**

**AT WINTER  
HAVEN POST 8**

COCKTAILS/GAMES AT 5:00PM  
DINNER SERVICE AT 6:00PM

**TICKETS:**

**\$45**

PER PERSON  
OR  
\$80 PER COUPLE

Tickets include dinner and casino "cash" that can be used to play your favorite casino games.

Dress like 007 or your favorite Bond girl or villain!

*Highlights:*

**CASINO GAMES - LIVE DJ - RAFFLES - DOOR PRIZES**

**PROCEEDS BENEFIT: C.O.T.A, OPERATION 300, AND  
OPERATION COMFORT WARRIOR**

**MENU: 1905 SALAD - STUFFED MUSHROOMS - BEEF TENDERLOIN  
- POTATOES - DESSERT -**

RSVP /Make checks payable to: Michael Sherman  
(813) 541-3452 - vccentral@floridasons.org  
Mail to: 7519 Winging Way Dr, Tampa, FL 33615





**American Legion  
16th District  
Children and Youth Picnic  
April 12, 2025  
12 pm - 5 pm  
Post 125  
6440 - 5th Ave. S  
St. Petersburg**

**Proceeds go to**

 **Children's Organ  
Transplant Association.**



**Food,  
Prizes, &  
Games  
&  
The District  
Commander  
Dunk Tank**

**We're expecting  
a surprise visit  
from  
Dennis Boland  
&  
Dianne Boland  
PDC**

**For More Information Contact:  
Eric Nestler, 16th District Vice Commander  
[16thdistrictvicecommander@gmail.com](mailto:16thdistrictvicecommander@gmail.com)  
727-999-1711**