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Questions? [legionlink@floridalegion.org](mailto:legionlink@floridalegion.org)



## A Message from the Department Commander

### Michael "Gambler" Raymond, Commander

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



It's very hard to celebrate our wins when we hear the devastating news of the loss of a loved one. Although the Department of Florida family is making great advances in areas such as programs, fundraising, and membership, our losses sometimes take away the joy and excitement we should be experiencing. For example, it was very difficult to celebrate our very successful Children and Youth picnic after hearing about the loss of a much-loved Legionnaire, Ray Perez, that very morning. In recent months, we have dealt with the loss of many of our dedicated Legionnaires, but amazingly, we have kept up the fight and continued our drive for a very successful year. Legionnaires like Tim, Joe, Bob, John, Frank, and Ray, among others, made us stronger and were our mentors. They expect us to "keep up the fight." Although we grieve over the loss of these great friends, we must continue the battle, enjoy the victories, and use what we learned from these men and women. That is how they will be remembered.

As we continue our banner year under the leadership of the best membership team in the country, I'd like to thank everyone from the smallest to the largest Post for the effort you have given so far this year. We recently received a request from National wanting to know just what our Posts are doing right! I guess when 3/4ths of our Posts are ahead of where they were last year, inquiring minds want to know. After visiting almost 200 Posts this year, I am getting the same answer. Most Posts believe it's their friendly atmosphere and dedicated membership. Legion families that work together as a team are the consensus among our most successful Posts. This year, there are many of these Posts, and it shows.

Finally, I'd like to thank two-time PDC and Children & Youth Chairman Rick Johnson and his Post 117 crew for an amazingly successful Children & Youth picnic. Preliminary estimates are approximately \$20,700 raised with the golf tournament yet to come. Thank you all so much for your hard work and dedication.

My Dad would always say, "Things will only get so bad that they can only get better". I believe he was right. **Keep up the fight, Legion Family. We're winning!**



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## COMMANDER'S CHARITIES

### Disaster Relief and C.O.T.A.

Commander's Goal: \$50,000 (Current funds raised **\$92,407.95**)

# GOAL!

### Working Hard to Finish the Year

**Chris Hamrick, 1st Vice Commander**

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



Fellow Legionnaires,

It's been a great year in membership, and it seems like we just started the year yesterday. The year has flown by so fast.

We recently completed Oratorical, and our other programs are in the final stages. All six Area Balls are over, and lots are still happening throughout the Department. This is our next-to-last Legion Link for the year, and it makes the head spin to think how fast we've used up the year.

Our membership has been rocking right along since the fall, and our momentum has been strong all year. We are staying ahead of National membership goals. But our momentum has slowed down tremendously in the last month or so. I want to ask that we dig a little deeper for a little longer and get through the flat spot. We... you are so close to breaking 100% that it would be a shame .. plain and simple, to not make it. If you haven't already, I suggest that you create a 3-person membership

team at your Post and spend 3 hours per week combined, making those phone calls for buddy checks and working the AD400 DMS list. Feel free to contact any of us on the Department Membership team.. (me, Bruce Carl, your area or District membership chairs). Try to sell the 3-year renewals hard for the rest of the year. Pass the savings on to the member while at the same time getting a headstart on membership for next year. If you're just a small handful short, maybe do 50/50 raffles and pay them up. Think outside the box. There are numerous ways to capture members.

Most Post nominations are complete. Good luck in your Post elections, and for those elections that are over at the time of this article, congratulations to the newly elected officers.

We've got work to do in the coming year and need to hit the ground running. Mentorship... Training and Continuity are the missions for next year. Let us know if you need assistance. We're here to help grow our organization.

**BE THE ONE... KEEP IT REAL. PEACE**

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### MAY

- 1-31 Month of the Military Caregiver
  - 1-31 Military Appreciation Month
  - 1 Loyalty Day
  - 1 Law Day
  - 1 May Day
  - 1 Chapter 136: ALR Monthly Meeting
  - 2 National Day of Prayer
  - 3-4 Department Commander Visits District 15 🗺️
  - 4 Chapter 316: ALR Monthly Meeting
  - 4-5 Firefighters Memorial Day (Half Staff)
  - 5-11 Public Service Recognition Week
  - 5-11 Correctional Officer Week
  - 5-11 Nurses Week
  - 5-12 National Spring Meetings - Indianapolis ★
  - 6 Nurses Day
  - 7 Teacher Appreciation Day
  - 8 Department Membership 100% Goal ✨
  - 8 VE Day (1945)
  - 8 End of Year Award Nominations Due ✨
  - 8 Special Olympics Reports / Q&A Due ✨
  - 8 CPR & Addendums Due ✨ ★
  - 8 Chapter 10: ALR Monthly Meeting
  - 10 Military Spouse Appreciation Day
  - 11 SAL Detachment Commander's Homecoming
  - 11 Children & Youth Golf Tournament ✨
  - 12 Mother's Day
  - 12 Chapter 8: ALR Monthly Meeting
  - 13-17 Armed Forces Week
  - 13 Children of Fallen Patriots Day
  - 15 Legion Link Articles Due ✨
  - 15 Peace Officers Memorial Day (Half Staff)
  - 17-19 National Oratorical Contest ★
  - 18 Armed Forces Day
  - 18 Commander's Homecoming 🗺️
  - 20 Emancipation Day (FL)
  - 22 Maritime Day
  - 24 Poppy Day
  - 25 Missing Children's Day
  - 27 Memorial Day (Half Staff)
  - 27 Department Headquarters Closed ✨
  - 27 Post 243: Memorial Day Remembrance
  - 31 Department Membership 100%+1 Goal ✨
  - 31 Baseball Reg. Ins, Fees, Backgrounds Due ✨
- \* See DCC Schedule on page 22 for more...

🗺️ Commander attendance tentative.

✨ Department of Florida event.

★ National event.

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

### Mentors

**Jessica Moore, 2nd Vice Commander**

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



We are fast approaching that time when we have our Legion Post officer elections and DCCs.

Many of us got involved because we had a great mentor who

encouraged and pushed us. Being a mentor requires a lot of time and work. It's a relationship between a more experienced person and a less knowledgeable person. Mentors should provide guidance, support, advice, and encouragement to help fellow members both personally and professionally. In order for the American Legion

*2nd Vice Commander continued on page 3 >>*



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<< 2nd Vice Commander continued from page 2

to continue to grow, Posts need to establish some type of formal mentoring program. Our mentors have a wealth of experience to share, including confidence building and allowing someone to reach their full potential. They can help offer fresh perspectives and see things from different angles. It requires active listening, communication skills, and setting goals. You need to offer resources and

support and know how to find tools and answers to their questions. It's a never-ending process that continually requires evaluation and adjustment. It's rewarding to pair a mentee based on their goals, interests, and personality to ensure a successful year.

Trust me, when you can mold a good leader, there's no finer feeling. I've been grateful to have had some awesome mentors. I look forward to meeting lots of

new people, and if I can help mentor in any way, I am always available.

If you mentored yourself out of a position to give that candidate that much-needed extra push in the right direction to get them on their way, you have helped them and this organization.

They may not have known they were ready or capable, but you sure did.

## Dues Increase and Three-Year Memberships

**Bruce E. Comer, Department Adjutant**

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



Wow, we are having an exceptional membership year, and our 100% goal is within reach. Let's keep up the momentum and aim to surpass this achievement next year. As we approach the next membership

year, I feel the need to discuss how the National dues increase, POTENTIAL Department dues increase, and three-year membership pilot program will affect the Posts in Florida.

First, the National per capita will increase by \$5.00. Florida Posts currently pay \$29.00 per capita, which includes \$18.50 for National dues and \$10.50 for Department dues. At the 2023 National Convention, delegates approved the financial report, which included a \$5.00 increase, raising the CURRENT PROJECTED per capita to \$34.00 effective July 1, 2024. Sixteen Florida Posts have dues lower than this amount, meaning the Post will pay a portion of their members' dues until their rates are adjusted accordingly.

Second, a resolution will come to the floor during the Department Convention in June to increase the Department per capita from 10.50 to 13.50, raising the total per capita to \$37.00. That would increase the individual per capita from \$34.00 to \$37.00.

Florida currently has 61 posts with dues at \$37.00 or less. As a result of this impending vote, National will delay printing our renewal notices until after the Department Convention to allow the Department and the Posts to adjust their dues accordingly. There are many arguments for and against a Department dues increase. I want to address a question that's been raised: given the success of the 50/50 raffle, why is the Department asking for a dues increase? While the raffle has been a valuable source of revenue, and we have had a successful first year, these are not funds you can continually budget. Future legislation may restrict such fundraising, and other revenue streams, like the specialty license plate program, face uncertainty. As I will discuss at the Department Finance Committee meeting in June, the specialty license plate program could encounter issues soon. The license plate program has been a significant income budget item for years, and the 50/50 has made a substantial impact in a year, but please remember that we started this year with a budget deficit.

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**IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT EACH POST INCLUDE THIS TOPIC IN UPCOMING MEETINGS FOR PLANNING PURPOSES.**

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I understand this is difficult without knowing if the Department will increase dues, but I encourage each Post to have a contingency plan ready to execute.

There's a way to mitigate increases for the next three years through National's three-year membership pilot program. Since its launch last December, over 16,000 members have taken advantage of it. This plan is being executed much in the same way as PUFL memberships. Under this program, if a member renews today (April 17, 2024) for the next three years, National receives \$18.50 per capita, the Department receives \$10.50 per capita, and the Post retains its CURRENT (as of April 17, 2024) per capita rate for each of the next three years. These rates are not affected by dues increases at any level (National, Department, or Post). Membership cards will be sent in the same fashion as PUFLs annually and only provided for the current membership year.

For example, if a current 2024 member of Post 400 (\$38.00 dues) renews today for three years (2025, 2026, and 2027), each of those three years, National will receive \$18.50, Department will receive \$10.50, and Post 400 will receive \$9.00 each year for the next three years, regardless of the \$5.00 National dues increase or the potential \$3.00 Department increase.



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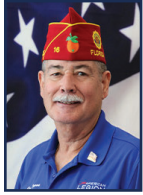
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## Getting Information and How to Look For It

**Jim Ramos, NEC**

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



Some information, you as leader, can get from the following:

1. Floridalegion.org
2. Legion.org
3. Officer's Guide and Manual of Ceremonies (updated one)
4. District/County Commander's Guide
5. Positions and Programs (Quick reference guide)
6. Be the One program (Legion.org)
7. Resolution information (Legion.org \*Digital Archive)

How do you know where and how? Just ask, but you can get it yourself and know if it is true or not. Also, if it is up-to-date information. Some things to look for are as follows:

How to Protect Your Post:

1. Incorporation Papers
2. Articles of Incorporation
3. Employer Identification Number (EIN)
4. Tax Exempt Status (Form 990)
5. Consumer's Certificate of Exemption for Sale and Use Tax
6. Reinstatement Procedures

The Officers' Guide and Manual of Ceremonies are available online at [legion.org](http://legion.org) for free. Officer's Guide is a good place to start reading up on how to run a Post/District meeting properly, how to use the Sergeant-at-Arms in a meeting, and how to set up the meeting room. Who can assist you with the meeting if you are not there? What is the job of the Chaplain? I know it is a lot of information. What do

I do? Start with the Officer's Guide and Manual of Ceremonies, your number one tool to become a Post or District Officer.

As you read this article, I will be at the National Headquarters in Indianapolis, IN. In the NEC meeting May 8-9, 2024, going over resolutions and updates on some of the following:

1. Programs (Be the One, Flag Amendment, and more)
2. Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
3. National Security (Pay the Coast Guard)
4. Americanism and Children & Youth
5. Membership (Revitalizing Post and District, Reconnecting, and Training members)

If you don't get answers, email me at [NEC@legionmail.org](mailto:NEC@legionmail.org) or call me at 352-226-4370.

## Membership Information

**Jerry Brandt, ANEC**

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Comrades,

This has been a slow month, with only a few notifications from National. One notification was interesting; National is indicating that the surge in membership seems to be widespread. And National is trying to understand all the reasons for this. This is a good thing; look at our rebound from last year; at this rate, we will exceed the 100,000 memberships again, back where we should be. I want to congratulate not only the Department Membership team but also all District and Posts Commanders

and their membership team for a job well done.

In the last session, the House of Representatives passed three bills the American Legion is pushing: the Elizabeth Dole Home Care Act of 3023 (H.R.542), the HOME Act of 2023 (H.R. 3581), and the COPE Act (H.R. 3581) bill. These bills are to provide indispensable support for our Nation's Veterans and their family caregivers. We are currently pending the Senate approval.

Many of you have already received the email from the Department, "Reminder: Plan Ahead." The Department Convention includes many things, and one of the most Important things is Training. Not

all the classes are listed in the email; please watch the website for updates. Why? Things change, especially in membership. Over the last three years we have moved away from mailing the information to JoAnn to input the information online. And how about renewing online for up to three years? What else is new and coming down the pike? Let us find out together.

Reminder: July 1st will bring an increase in dues. However, you can now renew online at the current rate up to 2027. Go to [www.legion.org](http://www.legion.org), click on the Renew tab, and fill out the information.

**The 2024 Youth Law Cadet Academy has been CANCELLED.**

*(Details on page 17)*



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## Memorial Day and the Red Poppy

**Joe Marcheggiani, Eastern Area Commander**

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



Memorial Day signifies the start of summer when we can wear white shoes, slacks, and dresses. The beginning of barbecue season and the opening of pools. The first parade of the year with military vehicles, fire trucks and baton twirlers. Right?

Memorial Day in the USA has lost its importance outside the Veteran and military communities. It is supposed to be a day of remembrance for those who have died in military service to the country. It's a time to honor the sacrifices made by members of the armed forces who have given their lives in defense of the nation. The significance of Memorial Day lies in its role as a solemn reminder of the cost of freedom and the debt owed to those who have paid the ultimate price. How can we, as Veterans, instill this important remembrance back into our society?

One answer: National Poppy Day.

National Poppy Day is the Friday before Memorial Day, as designated by Congress. The red poppy is to be worn "...to honor the fallen and support the living who have worn our nation's uniform. (Copyright © 2024 American Legion Auxiliary, <https://www.legion-aux.org/national-poppy-day>) The red poppy has become a symbol of remembrance for military personnel who have died in war. This tradition originated from the poem "In Flanders Fields" by John McCrae, which describes the poppies growing over the graves of soldiers in World War I. The red poppy serves as a powerful visual representation of the sacrifice made by these individuals and is often worn or displayed on Memorial Day and other occasions of remembrance.

In American society, Memorial Day and the red poppy serve to foster a sense of national unity and gratitude for the sacrifices of military personnel.

They remind us of the human cost of war and the importance of honoring and remembering those who have served. Additionally, they provide an opportunity for reflection on the values of freedom, service, and sacrifice that are central to the American identity.

So, how can you instill the importance of Memorial Day? Grab a handful or two of the red poppies, bring them to a park, shopping center, or family gathering, and hand them out. Bring along the poem *In Flanders Fields* to help you explain the relationship. Have fun reaching out to your community and making a difference. Oh, and don't forget to stuff a wad of bills in the can to pay for those poppies. The American Legion Auxiliary will appreciate your support.

Finally, THANK YOU, Post 286 Pine Castle, for making the Eastern Area Ball a success.

## Northern Area and Important Information

**Lena Heredia-Perez, Northern Area Commander**

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



It's hard to grasp that the 2023-2024 Legion year is nearly over. It feels like it just began, doesn't it? I know one thing is for certain, and that is I couldn't have wished for a more stellar team to work with!

As many of you know, the Northern Area membership numbers are steadily climbing! As of writing this article, the Northern Area has maintained the lead in membership since March 14, 2024, with 16,066 paid members, which is 99.31% of our goal. In fact, two of our four Districts in the Northern Area have won the

National Race to the Top competition for their respective categories. A huge shout out to Stuart Scott - the 3rd District Commander, and Jim Bowers - the 17th District Commander. To each Post Commander in these two Districts, thank you, your staff, and members for making this a reality! Please do not stop pushing membership until your Post has reached the National Commander's goal of 103%. To Miguel Garcia, 5th District Commander, and Doug Hockenberry, 4th District Commander, thank you for continuing to push your Posts to stay focused and dig down deep when it comes to membership. I know, at times, it has been a struggle and that we still have a lot of work to do, but WE will continue to fight until the very end!

As an Area, I challenge every Post Commander to

start evaluating our renewal rates and how we can significantly increase our renewal rates. You all know how I feel about membership and retention and that is, if we cannot retain our current membership other than the members who are moving out of the area or have transferred to Post Everlasting then we have no business recruiting new members until we figure out what it is that we are doing wrong.

In closing, I know our schedules are very busy for the next several weeks and all I ask is that we remain mission focused and aim to finish out stronger than when we started! Like you, I am eager to see where we stand as an Area when we close the books.

*Northern Area Commander continued on page 6 >>*



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<< Northern Area Commander continued from page 5

## Department Convention and Important Date Information

- End of the Year Awards  
May 8, 2024
- Consolidated Post Report (CPR)  
May 8, 2024
- Department Addendum  
May 8, 2024
- 2024-2025 Post Information & Officer Report  
June 1, 2024
- 2024 Certification of Service Record of Post Officers  
June 1, 2024

If you need help filling out any of these documents, please get in touch with your District Officers.

## District 3

**Stuart Scott, District 3 Commander**

[District3@legionmail.org](mailto:District3@legionmail.org)



Greetings from the Third District - Well, congratulations to each of you! Due to your efforts, the Third District has won the Race to The Top! With that being said, I want to thank all the Posts that achieved their 100%+ goals. We still have a few more to go, so please don't let up on those buddy checks. Now that the Third is shining brightly, we need to keep pushing so that The Northern Area and Department will shine with us!

If you didn't attend the District Picnic, you missed out. Post 83 went all out with the tropical theme all the way down to the meal. I hope our attendance was able to raise some money for their Post through donations for the meal they provided. We raised over \$900 in the basket auction, and we will decide at the next meeting on the amounts to donate to the Department Commander's charity and the National Commander's charity.

This is the election season, as you will probably read throughout this entire LegionLink, so please review YOUR constitution and bylaws for the proper way to run your elections. As new leadership is elected,

begin to look at when installation would be desirable for your Post. This is a perfect opportunity to make this a community event. Invite the local leaders to your installation. If you hold it on a weekend, it will make it possible for you to coordinate it around a meal, which is easier to have dignitaries attend. Showcase what your Post does for the community, and as the new leadership or current leadership takes their positions, they can communicate to those present what their goals will be.

Let's work together to make The American Legion stronger than ever before! **#Legionproud!**

## Retention Tips

**Bruce Thurber, District 12 Commander**

[District12@legionmail.org](mailto:District12@legionmail.org)



Immediately following Post elections, ensure that the Post Officer Report and Post Officer Certification are sent to the Department.

Adjutants, if you haven't already, it's time to finalize your CPR. It's on your myLegion page. Because we are not in the targeted time, membership and recruiting continue. Work our DMS and Buddy Check.

However, the most important thing in membership is retention.

### Here are some retention tips:

1. Have a program, not a campaign. Retention is a year-round priority and needs to be planned.
2. Recognize members who reach milestone membership anniversaries. If members stay in The American Legion for five, ten, twenty, or more years, they are probably not among those who are likely to drop out. When members reach one of these milestones, it provides two retention opportunities for your Post.
3. Provide and encourage the use of The American Legion Emblem. There are good reasons for members to want to display the Legion emblem or other Legion artwork. The emblem can be an effective membership and marketing tool.
4. When important issues come up, call some inactive members for their opinions. It's natural for Posts to contact their leadership people when a matter of importance arises, such as a legislative crisis, a local election, or the setting of a new standard. These issues and events are also opportunities to involve some of the Post's least active members simply by asking their opinions.
5. Accept credit and debit cards for dues payments. Credit and debit card payments have become the norm for almost all purchasing transactions.
6. Recognize your members as often as possible.

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<< District 12 Commander continued from page 6

- 7. Get members involved at SOME level. Involved members don't drop.
- 8. Publish an annual report in the local media. Thank the community for their support and send a copy to members. Publishing an annual report (Consolidated Post Report) allows your Post to summarize all the accomplishments from the previous year.
- 9. Get spouses active — it assures renewal. When you have multiple family members simultaneously belonging to the Legion, the Auxiliary, and the Sons of The American Legion, your chances of having them renew are much greater than the renewal rates of individual members.
- 10. Hold leadership training programs. Give your members the tools to be successful volunteers.

It is important for members who get involved to have a good experience during their involvement. Leadership training is becoming one of the best services that organizations can give their members. The skills developed through leadership training are transferred back to the members. At renewal time, members will remember where these skills were developed.

## End of Year

### Eric Loyd, District 13 Commander

[District15@legionmail.org](mailto:District15@legionmail.org)



As we approach the end of the elected year, it is time to complete the CPRs and Department Addendum by May 8, 2024. Also, it's time to complete the Post Officer Report and Certification of Officers by May 8, 2024. We are still pushing our Posts to get 100 percent membership renewals and to have Sons Squadrons in every Post in District 13.

We are still rebuilding Posts from Hurricane Ian. Posts 303, 123, 274, and 110 are moving forward.

I want to thank everyone who has donated to these Posts. A special thank you goes out to the District 7 Riders for holding a poker run to raise money for the Posts in District 13.

**The Oratorical is now completed.** Congratulations to the winners. Well Done. In District 13, our candidate placed 3rd, and we could not be prouder of him. I learned a lot about Oratorical this year and am really looking forward to it next year.

It's that time of year; I hope every Post is giving out school medals. In District 13, I know Posts 103, 351, 415, and 90 are. I hope others are as well.

The medals are expensive but worth it. We, as a Legion, are here to support our youth.

**Post BY-LAWS:** they are required to be updated and approved by the Department every three years. Make sure ALL your membership is aware you are updating the By-laws before sending them to the Department for Approval. When sending them to the Department, please send a letter stating membership is aware.

**REMEMBER: IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE WAY YOUR Post IS BEING RUN, THEN GET INVOLVED!!!**

## What a Great Year and a Look Ahead

### Jim Wineland, American Legion Riders Chair

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



Another great ALR Legion Family year is behind us. Bev and I want to thank everyone for their participation. More people are getting involved in the ALR Department operations, and that is great. People need to learn the back story of how all the pieces go together every year.

I cannot say enough about our Summit crew and the volunteer instructors. Without their support, it would not be much of a Summit. The same goes

true for "Good old Dave Campobasso," our favorite tuck-and-roll shirt merchandising expert. He has provided a mountain of relief with his expertise. Jeff Hawk provided the music again this year. Joe Marcheggiani and Dave Hulin were always there to help. Finally, the 129 crew members are there every year to help with the administration of the program.

We want to thank our three Road Captains, Jason, Joe, and Zane, for all their efforts in setting up the rides. I know from my own experience that it takes a lot of time and patience to do all the planning and legwork to get it done. It's not done until the last stop on the fifth day of the actual ride. Things have

a way of changing from day to day.

With the new motorcycle safety program, we have additional reporting requirements to support the program. It is simple: about four or five questions, name of the event, number of participants, and safety material handed out. You can email the questionnaire to me or the new Assistant Program Manager, Connie Koonce.

We have more committees coming on board to help us out. As I mentioned, we have grown into a professional riding organization, and we need to

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<< American Legion Riders Chair continued from page 7

delegate more responsibilities to other individuals which should make a smooth leadership transition in the future.

### Your 2024 – 2025 Schedule

- Department Convention  
June 13-16, 2024
- National Convention  
August 23-29, 2024, New Orleans
- POW/MIA Ceremony  
September 21, 2024, Jacksonville

- “Merry Go Round”  
Month of October 2024
- Fall Conference  
November 22-24, 2024
- Summit
  - Meet & Greet, February 5, 2025
  - Classes February 6-8, 2025
- “Round Robin”  
Month of April 2025
- Children and Youth Picnic  
April 12, 2025, Post 117
- (Note: Holy week April 13-19, Easter April 20, 2025)

- In-State Unity Ride
  - Meet & Greet, April 6, 2025
  - Ride April 7-11, 2025
- Rally April 12th Location OCC Clearwater, FL.

If you have any ideas, please share!

Thank you for what you do, and we are proud to be part of your leadership team, which is such an excellent group!

**“For the Cause, not the applause”**

### Emergency Blood Drives Needed

**Jamie Grinis, Blood Donor Chair**

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



Hurricane season is fast approaching. Let’s not forget how valuable a pint of blood can be after the storm passes. District Commanders, it’s time to push hard for all Posts to provide space for the blood bus to park. The Blood Banks are running

low on stock and need an emergency inventory replenishment.

This past month has been a whirlwind with Districts in the center of the state. They are outperforming the rest of all the other Areas. It is well worth the effort to call Blood One or the Red Cross and set up a regular program at your Post.

Remember to go to the Department’s website and navigate to “Programs” and then “Blood Donor”. Choose the fill-in-the-blank form and send in your report electronically to receive credit for your Blood Drive.

Thank you for supporting the Blood Donor Program this year. Pat yourselves on the back for a job well done.

### Military Funeral Honors

**Rico Thomas, Florida National Cemeteries**

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



#### “Honoring Those Who Served”

Overseen by the Department of Defense (DOD), the Military Funeral Honors Program establishes procedures for requesting and rendering military funeral honors. By law, an honor guard detail for the burial of an eligible Veteran shall consist of at least two members of the armed forces. One member of the detail shall be a representative of the Veteran’s service branch.

The honor detail will, at a minimum, perform a

ceremony that includes the playing of Taps and the folding and presentation of the American flag to the next of kin. Taps will be played by a bugler, if available, or by a ceremonial bugle.

The DOD program calls for funeral home directors to request military funeral honors on behalf of the Veteran’s family. However, the Department of Veterans Affairs National Cemetery Administration cemetery staff can also assist with arranging military funeral honors at VA national cemeteries.

Veteran Service Organizations (VSO) and Authorized Provider Partnership Programs may also assist in providing military funeral honors, such as detail elements for funeral honors such as rifle detail,

pallbearers, or escort services.

The DOD began the implementation plan for providing military funeral honors for eligible Veterans on January 1, 2000. Upon the family’s request, Public Law 106-65 requires that every eligible Veteran receive a military funeral honors ceremony.

Questions or comments concerning the DOD military funeral honors program\* may be sent to the address listed below:

Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense

*FL National Cemeteries Chair continued on page 9 >>*



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<< FL National Cemeteries Chair continued from page 8

(Military Community and Family Policy)  
1500 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20380-4000

For assistance, please contact Military OneSource at (800)-342-9647.

Information shared is from National Cemetery

Administration (nca.gov). <https://www.cem.va.gov/>. If I may be of any guidance, do not hesitate to contact me at [cemeteries@legionmail.org](mailto:cemeteries@legionmail.org) or 954- 822-0897.

## Year-End Award Ceremonies and CMP National Championships

**Loretta Young, JROTC/JSSP Chair**

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



There are many year-end ceremonies already completed, and there is still more to be done before the end of the semester by next month. I've had many requests to attend both the award ceremonies and the military balls during these two months. The range of the Award Ceremonies has varied from some during the school day to some events in the evening. I am still finding schools that are having difficulties reaching out to the Legion Posts that support their program. By now, all Posts should have reached out to the senior Instructors to get the recipients' names for the certificates. The medals should have been ordered at the beginning of the year due to National Emblem Sales having a backorder on some of the medals. As a reminder, high schools can only be given the Bronze Medals for Military Excellence and Scholastic Excellence. Also, the Universities and Colleges are given the Gold Medal for the 4-year programs and the Silver Medal for the 2-year programs. The rules are listed on the department website if you have any questions.

The Central Area Ball held in Spring Hill was a very successful event, and we were honored by the Central High School NJROTC Unit for the Color Guard Presentation. They did an outstanding job, and I was happy to be able to meet them as well as their Senior Instructors. Always remember that using the JROTC Cadets is a benefit to the Posts as well as to the cadets. They are able to get service hours for their participation, and the Posts are able

to have a Color Guard presentation, assistance with servers, and help with the events for our Veterans. The military balls are always in the evenings and are set up and organized by the cadets. Most have a theme and honor the POW/MIA Table with a ceremony. These are always followed by the DJ with music and dancing for the cadets for social time. The instructors and cadets are honored to have the Veterans attend, so I urge you to accept, if possible when you get an invitation.

The JSSP Postal Competition results are listed on the National website through the CMP tracker. The second Round Postal Target has been sent to all the top 25 cadets who will be moving on to receiving targets, which have already been sent out to the winners. The Florida state team coming in first place in the Sporter Category was Mariner AJROTC, and the second-place Sporter Team was Sarasota Military Academy. The Florida State Team coming to First Place for Precision Category was Sarasota Military Academy, and second place was Vanguard NJROTC. Congratulations to our Florida State Winners, and much luck for the individual moving on to the Second Round Postal Competition. Also, congratulations to the Mariner AJROTC Team, which was the National First and second-place Sporter Category Winner for the CMP Competition that was held at Camp Perry, OH, in March. This is quite an accomplishment for our Florida Marksmanship Team, coming in First and Second Place for the Nation. The most junior athlete, Elyssa Vazquez, earned the CMP Gold Junior Distinguished Badge. Thanks so much to MAJ Williams, SAI, for the Mariner AJROTC, and also Coach Williams for your dedication as well. I

also want to thank Post 90, Cape Coral, for all the support that they have given to this program throughout the years. They have been there for this program for many years and are an example of what the Legion Programs have to offer our youth. Thanks so much for all your hard work, from the Post chairman and Cmdr. to all the volunteers who gave your time and energy. Success comes through hard work, and this is proof of all of your efforts. Please enjoy the pictures.



Central NJROTC Color Guard - Central Area Ball



Mariner AJROTC CMP 1st and 2nd Place Winners



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## Florida Carry Concealed Requirements

**Daryl Bass, Law & Order Chair**

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



As of July 1, 2023, Florida residents no longer need a concealed carry permit to carry a concealed weapon or firearm. Florida is a shall-issue, permitless carry state with concealed weapons licenses issued at the state level by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS). Bill SB150/HB543 eliminated the need for a concealed weapons license, which required a mandatory background check and a firearms training course before you carry hidden weapons or firearms on your person or in a vehicle in Florida, provided

you still meet other gun ownership requirements.

Concealed carry-carrying a legally owned firearm that is hidden from view. This is one of the few states that currently allow this without a permit. You may not be within your legal right to carry concealed in other states. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the laws of other states if you plan to travel. Here are some of the restrictions you should adhere to.

Any nuisance or place of illegal activity: police, Sheriff, correctional facilities, courthouses or courtrooms, places that consume alcohol, schools and college campuses, government complexes (city halls,

school boards, etc.), and Airport terminals.

These are just some of the restrictions listed in the Bill. It is my request that if you, my brother/sister Legionnaire, meet the requirements as a legal gun owner, you apply for a CCW permit anyway if you have not already done so. As a Veteran, the DD-214 submitted with your permit application is enough for you to receive your permit. It's better to be safe than sorry. Make sure you carry that permit with you when you travel. Follow gun safety rules and keep them away from children.

Honor your First Responders.

## Moving Forward to 103% and Getting the Awards You've Earned

**Bruce Carl, Membership Chair**

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



Welcome to May Team Florida! Only two months left before this year comes to a close. Florida has been working hard on the membership, but we need to continue pushing to get to 103%.

As of the writing of this article, we had 110 Posts at 100% and 65 Posts at 103% or higher. Our number of Posts at 100%+1 for the plaques is standing at 98. We are in 4th place Nationally, at 96.66%, and our retention rate is 91.52%. Congratulations to the following Districts for qualifying for the Race to the Top competition: 3rd and 17th. Kudos to everyone for the outstanding job this year. We had District 2 falling 34 members short of the 100% goal and District 7 at 40 short. Great job trying to get there!

The deadline for Posts to get the 100% coins and pins is only one week away (May 8th), so if you have not gotten there yet, please "git 'er done".

All Posts achieving 100% membership by May 8th will receive a certificate, a 100% Department ribbon, up to four (4) 100% Department pins, and up to four (4) 100% Department coins. All Posts achieving 100+ 1 by May 31, 2024, will receive a plaque.

There are many other deadlines coming up this month. The Recruiter of the Year deadline is May 8th. The certification forms must be turned into the Department on or before that date. It is also the deadline to submit the forms for Silver Brigade and Gold Brigade winners. These forms can all be found in the Department Membership Manual on pages 43-54.

All Post Commanders and Post Adjutants of the Posts achieving 100% membership by May 8th will receive a 100% Commander Pin and 100% Adjutant Pin.

**Post Membership Retention Award** – This award recognizes Posts for their ability to renew their previous years' membership. To qualify, the

Post must have at least the minimum number of members to maintain their Post charter and retain at least 90% of their previous year's membership by the May target date. The accompanying certificate for this award will reflect retention categories of over 90, 95, and 100%. Department will certify eligible Posts to National.

The Post with the highest percentage of membership in each of the five categories by May 31, 2024, receives \$200. The District and Area Commanders who achieve 100% +1 by May 31, 2024, will receive a check for \$125.00 at the Department Convention. The District and Area Commanders with the highest percentage will also receive two tickets to the Commander's Banquet.

For any Posts with 100% family (Legion and Auxiliary, or Legion, Auxiliary, and SAL), here is the link to download the form for your ribbon. Please fill out the form and send it to the Department for verification. They will forward it on to National. The

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deadline is May 31st. <https://www.legion.org/sites/legion.org/files/legion/documents/2024American%20Legion%20Family%20Ribbon.IXWTXEKHTA2BJsXyNBm1A3JQUOmSBCLl3MJgldfNO>.

As of this writing, the Department is still 3372 members short of 100% and 6389 members short of 103%. Our ultimate goal is to achieve 103% before the end of the year, so let's keep the train rolling forward to get there. I am here for any assistance

your District or Post may need to get to their 100% or higher goal. Please email, text, or call me. Together, we can do this! Remember to get your members to renew for the three-year period to avoid the price increase on July 1st!

## Preparing for the Future

**Ray Olsen, National Security Chair**

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



REST IN PEACE

This will be a short Legion Link Article. I apologize, but I have been in and out of the hospital for the entire month of February due to my failing heart and kidneys.

Thoughts and prayers are welcome, and they really work. Lots of national security news is going on around the world. There are still programs that need to be completed, like Blood Donor programs, school medals, and Boys State and Girls State programs. DCCs and elections are coming up over the next few weeks. Training Officers should be looking at

getting Legionnaires ready for new offices, and Post commanders should be training their officers to move up through the chairs. Push through these last two months and make sure you have a good year for your Posts. Fill out your CPRs and addendums so that you have the info for the article and talking points for your Post over the next year.

## Explanation of how DPAA obstacles

**Denny Luke, POW/MIA Chair**

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

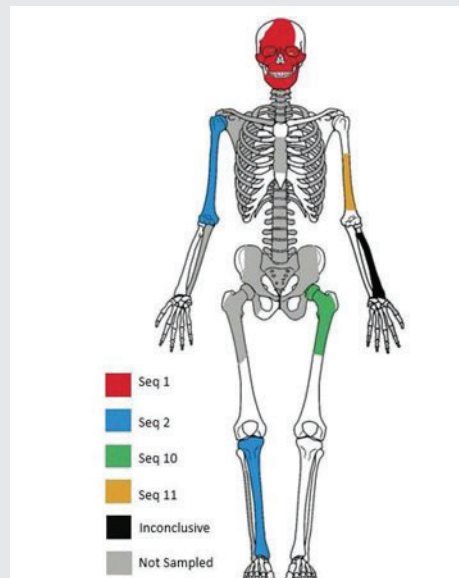


We all know the DPAA works diligently to identify all missing DoD personnel and repatriate them as soon as their next of kin is notified. This job is not made easy due to several factors.

Obviously, geopolitics plays a big role in the ability to access suspected sites. Then, when access is gained, there are a plethora of obstacles to overcome. Each day, an MIA is not recovered, and the elements degrade not only the site but also its contents.

Here is one example of the difficulties the DPAA faces. This example is from the recovery site of the Tokyo Military Prison in May 1945. This project faces considerable forensic challenges due to the burned and fragmentary condition of the remains and extreme commingling. Commingling is attributed to the initial burial of the remains in a common grave and investigations in 1946 and 1950 that lacked the methodologies available

today. The skeletal diagram illustrates commingling within just one casket. Each color represents a unique mtDNA sequence.



The burning of the remains that occurred during the incident makes current attempts to obtain DNA and perform anthropological analyses difficult.

Despite these scientific obstacles, ongoing DPAA efforts persist, including correlation through odontological comparison, DNA sequencing, and anthropological analysis, all in pursuit of identifying the individuals involved in the Tokyo Prison Fire incident.

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) <https://www.dpaa.mil/> has currently identified for FY 2024, 39 personnel from WW II, six from the Korean War and one from the Vietnam War. If you know of any descendants of an MIA individual, please encourage them to contact a Service Casualty Officer and provide a DNA sample for their library.

The DPAA released the following 20 News Releases for the month of March 2024.

PRESS RELEASE | March 6, 2024

<https://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/PressReleaseArticleView/Article/3697945/uss-oklahoma-sailor-accounted-for-from-wwii-overley-l/>

POW/MIA Chair continued on page 12 >>



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2023-2024 COMMANDER MICHAEL "GAMBLER" RAYMOND

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### USS Oklahoma Sailor Accounted for from WWII (Overley, L.)

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) announced today that Navy Fire Controlman 2nd (F2c) Class Lawrence J. Overley, 21, of Los Angeles, California, killed during World War II, was accounted for on July 16, 2021.

PRESS RELEASE | March 7, 2024

<https://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/PressReleaseArticleView/Article/3699337/soldier-accounted-for-from-wwii-mccartney-j/> **Soldier Accounted for from WWII (McCartney, J.)** The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) announced today that U.S. Army Pvt. James B. McCartney, 22, of Ridgeway, Colorado, killed during World War II, was accounted for Sept. 21, 2023.

PRESS RELEASE | March 11, 2024

<https://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/PressReleaseArticleView/Article/3702737/uss-oklahoma-sailor-accounted-for-from-wwii-thornton-c/> **USS Oklahoma Sailor Accounted for from WWII (Thornton, C.)** The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) announced today that Navy Seaman 2nd Class (S2c) Cecil H. Thornton, 21, of Rogersville, Alabama, killed during World War II, was accounted for on April 16, 2019.

PRESS RELEASE | March 12, 2024

<https://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/PressReleaseArticleView/Article/3704455/uss-oklahoma-sailor-accounted-for-from-wwii-winfield-s/> **USS Oklahoma Sailor Accounted for from WWII (Winfield, S.)** The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) announced today that Radioman Third Class (RM3c), Starring B. Winfield, 22, of San Rafael, California, killed during World War II, was accounted for on June 24, 2019.

PRESS RELEASE | March 12, 2024

<https://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/PressReleaseArticleView/Article/3704625/soldier-accounted-for-from-wwii-schlamp-r/> **Soldier Accounted for from WWII (Schlamp, R.)** The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) announced today that U.S. Army Pfc. Raymond U. Schlamp, 28, of Dubuque, Iowa, killed during World War II, was accounted for on March 21, 2022.

PRESS RELEASE | March 13, 2024

<https://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/PressReleaseArticleView/Article/3705860/airman-accounted-for-from-wwii-kasten-r/> **Airman Accounted for from WWII (Kasten, R.)** The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) announced today that U.S. Army Air Force 1st Lt. Richard J. Kasten, 24, of Kalamazoo, Michigan, killed during World War II, was accounted for July 18, 2023.

PRESS RELEASE | March 14, 2024

<https://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/PressReleaseArticleView/Article/3706654/soldier-accounted-for-from-wwii-wolfe-j/> **Soldier Accounted for from WWII (Wolfe, J.)** The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) announced today that U.S. Army Cpl. Julius G. Wolfe, 20, of Liberal, Missouri, killed during World War II, was accounted for Aug. 21, 2023.

PRESS RELEASE | March 14, 2024

<https://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/PressReleaseArticleView/Article/3707087/airman-accounted-for-from-wwii-porter-r/> **Airman Accounted for from WWII (Porter, R.)** The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) announced today that U.S. Army Air Force 2nd Lt. Robert L. E. Porter, 23, of Chicago, Illinois, killed during World War II, was accounted for Dec. 20, 2023.

PRESS RELEASE | March 15, 2024

<https://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/PressReleaseArticleView/Article/3708080/tanker-accounted-for-from-wwii-hammond-r/> **Tanker Accounted for from WWII (Hammond, R.)** The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) announced today that U.S. Army Sgt. Richard G. Hammond, 24, of Northwood, New Hampshire, killed during World War II, was accounted for Sep 5, 2023.

PRESS RELEASE | March 15, 2024

<https://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/PressReleaseArticleView/Article/3708362/airman-accounted-for-from-wwii-barbour-j/> **Airman Accounted for from WWII (Barbour, J.)** The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) announced today that U.S. Army Air Forces Staff Sgt. Jackson M. Barbour, 19, of Memphis, Tennessee, killed during World War II, was accounted for Sept. 22, 2023.

PRESS RELEASE | March 15, 2024

<https://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/PressReleaseArticleView/Article/3708495/soldier-accounted-for-from-korean-war-lilly-r/> **Soldier Accounted for from Korean War (Lilly, R.)** The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) announced today that U.S. Army Corporal Ray K. Lilly, 18, of Matoaka, West Virginia, killed during the Korean War, was accounted for Sep. 26, 2023.

PRESS RELEASE | March 18, 2024

<https://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/PressReleaseArticleView/Article/3709933/uss-oklahoma-sailor-accounted-for-from-wwii-malek-m/> **USS Oklahoma Sailor Accounted for from WWII (Malek, M.)** The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) announced today that Navy Seaman 2nd Class Michael Malek, 17, of Chicago, Illinois, killed during World War II, was accounted for on Feb. 24, 2021.

PRESS RELEASE | March 18, 2024

<https://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/PressReleaseArticleView/Article/3710164/soldier-accounted-for-from-wwii-reeves-n/> **Soldier Accounted for from WWII (Reeves, N.)** The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) announced today that U.S. Army Sgt. Richard G. Hammond, 24, of Northwood, New Hampshire, killed during World War II, was accounted for Sep 5, 2023.

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announced today that U.S. Army Pfc. Noah C. Reeves, 26, of Moulton, Alabama, killed during World War II, was accounted for Sept. 12, 2022.

PRESS RELEASE | March 19, 2024

<https://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/PressReleaseArticleView/Article/3711052/airman-accounted-for-from-wwii-eshelman-p/>

### **Airman Accounted for from WWII (Eshelman, P.)**

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) announced today that U.S. Army Air Forces Tech. Sgt. Paul F. Eshelman Jr., 21, of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, killed during World War II, was accounted for Sept. 27, 2023.

PRESS RELEASE | March 21, 2024

<https://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/PressReleaseArticleView/Article/3713709/soldier-accounted-for-from-wwii-poulter-h/>

### **Soldier Accounted for from WWII (Poulter, H.)**

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) announced today that U.S. Army Pvt. Harold O. Poulter, 23, of Charleston, Illinois, killed during World War II, was accounted for on January 17, 2024.

PRESS RELEASE | March 22, 2024

<https://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/PressReleaseArticleView/Article/3716188/soldier-accounted-for-from-korean-war-smith-j/>

### **Soldier Accounted for from Korean War (Smith, J.)**

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) announced today that U.S. Army Pvt. 1st Class Jimmy D. Smith, 21, of Muskogee, Oklahoma, killed during the Korean War, was accounted for Sept. 11, 2023.

PRESS RELEASE | March 25, 2024

<https://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/PressReleaseArticleView/Article/3717607/airman-accounted-for-from-wwii-allen-t/>

### **Airman Accounted for from WWII (Allen, R.)**

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) announced today that U.S. Army Air Forces Tech. Sgt. Robert Allen, 20, of Oakland, California, killed during World War II, was accounted for Sept. 19, 2023.

PRESS RELEASE | March 25, 2024

<https://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/PressReleaseArticleView/Article/3717746/soldier-accounted-for-from-wwii-herrick-j/>

### **Soldier Accounted for from WWII (Herrick, J.)**

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) announced today that U.S. Army Sgt. John O. Herrick, 19, of Emporia, Kansas, killed during World War II, was accounted for Aug. 21, 2023.

PRESS RELEASE | March 28, 2024

<https://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/PressReleaseArticleView/Article/3723614/soldier-accounted-for-from-wwii-benak-f/>

### **Soldier Accounted for from WWII (Benak, F.)**

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) announced today that U.S. Army Cpl. Frank V. Benak, 24, of Scottsville, Michigan, killed during World War II, was accounted for on February 2, 2024.

PRESS RELEASE | March 28, 2024

<https://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/PressReleaseArticleView/Article/3723643/uss-california-sailor-accounted-for-from-wwii-walker-d/>

### **USS California Sailor Accounted for from WWII (Walker, D.)**

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) announced today that Mess Attendant 3rd Class (Matt3c) David Walker, 19, of Norfolk, Virginia, killed during World War II, was accounted for on November 27, 2023.

In closing, I want to share some good news. It appears the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office has agreed to support our 4th Annual Seven Bridges POW/MIA Remembrance Ride & Ceremony for the year 2024. I am also exceptionally pleased to report that the National POW/MIA Memorial and Museum Board Chairman will give a briefing on the progress being made at both the facility and with H.R. 3670 during the General Assembly of our Department Convention on Friday morning.

## Public Relations Nominees

**Kathryn Hockenberry, Public Relations Chair**

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



Commanders, you have a few days left to submit your nominee for the Public Relations Award. The deadline is 8 May, but remember, in order for your nominee to be

considered, you must have submitted your Post CPR and Addendum. Doing this simple act is a way to recognize your Post members who have stepped up and volunteered. It's always nice to receive an award, but more important to these individuals is that you recognize their dedication to the Post and its membership by submitting them for such an

award. Recognizing their efforts and doing this simple act is how you will continue to get members to volunteer.

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FLCON to 41372

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Florida American Legion Riders who participated in the Western Route on the In-State Unity Ride.

## WE SALUTE OUR LEGION RIDERS!

During the month of April, the Florida American Legion Riders (ALR) rode to end veteran suicide. They hosted rides, dinners, and other activities to raise funds and earn points for the coveted District Trophy. The In-State Unity Ride and State Rally also took place: all of which the proceeds benefit our Suicide Prevention Initiative (SPI).

Last year, they brought in an impressive \$165,000 net proceeds and set a mission to beat that total for this year. We are still calculating totals, so we do not have the final results, yet. But we know they have already surpassed that amount and are tracking for another record-setting event!

Many Riders created a fundraising page to collect donations and earned COOL PRIZES! Those items were ordered in May and will be delivered at the Department Convention. For those of you who are eligible to receive items and will not be at the Convention, your items will be given to your ALR District Chairman to distribute afterward.

We are extremely grateful to our Board Vice-President, Jim Wineland, who is also the ALR Department Chairman, and ALR Adjutant, Beverly Wooten, for all their hard work and effort that goes into this type of event!

A few of our SPI Strategic Partners attended the State Rally in Clearwater to show their appreciation. This gave the

Riders an opportunity to learn more on the impact they are making within the veteran community.

The Florida Legion Riders are our major contributor to the Suicide Prevention Initiative. It is because of them that we are able to support our Strategic Partners and support our veteran community during their darkest hours. Hopefully, one day, because of the combined efforts of the Riders, our Partners, and the entire PROJECT VetRelief Team, we can together put an end to veteran suicide!

### Did you know? - Our Legion Riders Rock!

In-State Unity Ride participants not only volunteer their time, but also come out of pocket for their lodging, fuel, and some food costs, too. Not to mention that they have a registration fee to cover, and oftentimes make a additional donation to the cause.

Many of these Riders plan and save all year long just so they can be a part of this event. **We are extremely grateful for their generosity and are humbled by their selflessness!**



### Current Year: July 2023 - March 2024

**247**  
Veterans Received  
Financial Support

**\$334,240**  
Provided as  
Emergency Assistance

**16**  
Suicide Prevention  
Strategic Partners

**\$102,000**  
Given towards  
Veteran Suicide Prevention



## Internal Affairs and 2025 National Convention Update

**Clarence Hill, Resolutions Chair**

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



### Explanation of Internal Affairs meeting

The Internal Affairs Committee will meet on Thursday afternoon, June 13, at 12:30 PM in the International Ballroom. Internal Affairs receives

reports from Constitution and By-Laws, Credentials, Disaster Preparedness, POW-MIA, Resolutions, Time & Place, and Special Rules. When it comes to the Resolutions report portion, only the **RESOLVED clauses** of each resolution will be read prior to a vote being taken, so it is important that the entire resolution be reviewed prior to the meeting. Each Post can have **one** delegate at this meeting to vote on all matters to be decided. All **voting members must have the appropriate black ribbon** received by the delegation chair with the convention registration package. We ask that voting members please sit in the center section. **Attendees without the black ribbon have no voice and no vote.** We ask that non-voting members do not sit in the center section. The results of any vote taken at this meeting become a recommendation to the General Assembly when the Internal Affairs Committee report is presented. **Every delegate to the Convention** has a vote on the convention floor for the final disposition of these resolutions.

### 2025 National Convention Update

Deadlines for the Tampa Convention will be upon us in no time, and things will start moving fast. At the Department Convention next month, we'd like to start compiling a list of those who would like to volunteer, particularly for the committee chairperson. A lot will rely on the Legionnaires, Auxiliary members, SAL members, and Riders volunteers to make the Convention a success, and we need members of each organization to contribute. I would like to have a member of the Legion as the Chairperson of each committee and a member of the Auxiliary, Sons, and Riders as Vice-Chairpersons to coordinate the volunteers from their organizations. Events will start moving

faster after the Convention. Again, the Committees are Badges and Packets, Distinguished Guests, Memorial Service, Information/Registration, and Special Events. I would also like to consider volunteers for the Tampa Liaison position, which can be more than one person, and for the National Commander's and National Adjutant's drivers. There will be a sign-up at the Legion Department HQ Office for those interested.

I expect the Convention to cost \$400,000 or more, with the largest cost being the bus transportation. This year, Legislative Chairperson Stu Scott worked hard to get budget money from the Legislature to help offset the transportation cost but was unsuccessful. We will try again next year and will need a lot of lobbying help from the grassroots, making contact and supporting the effort. More will come later.

There are Five National Convention committees (Badges and Packets, Distinguished Guests, Information/Registration, Memorial Service, and Special Events) that are required by National, plus a Tampa Liaison and National Commander/Adjutant drivers. Chairpersons and their contact information are due later this year.

The Liaison is someone with political connections locally and perhaps statewide. They may be asked to assist with agencies such as police, fire, public works, parks and recreation, the mayor's office, and airport officials. The individual should also be familiar with local businesses such as retail stores, restaurants, recreational facilities, transportation companies, and other businesses that could impact convention activities.

The Badges and Packets Committee is responsible for setting up the Office located in the Convention Center. Badges and Packets for The American Legion, Auxiliary, and Sons of The American Legion are shipped from National Headquarters to this office. The bags must be assembled for each delegate for each Department, and then delivered to the Departments as they arrive. The estimated number of assistants needed is 28-30.

The Distinguished Guests Committee has a Chairperson and two Vice-Chairpersons. The Vice-Chairpersons are the Distinguished Guests Registration Chairperson and the Distinguished Guests Holding Area Chairperson. The Committee will also need two full-time drivers for the National Commander and the National Adjutant. The estimated number of assistants needed is 2-6 for each committee.

The Information/Registration Committee mans the desks set up in the convention center to answer questions from the attendees and to register attendees and guests not registered with their Departments. National will provide binders with lots of information in them. The estimated number of assistants needed is 8-10.

The Memorial Service Committee coordinates with the National Chaplain to set up the service, provide rooming arrangements that may be required, and provide volunteers to assist with seating attendees. We also need to identify a well-known local group willing to perform at this event. We need to provide National with a number of options for this group, and National will pursue booking them. If you have any suggestions, submit them to Bruce or I. The estimated number of assistants needed is 3-5.

The Special Events Committee coordinates meeting the requirements for all special events scheduled, whether it be obtaining permits or coordinating with city agencies (police, fire, sanitation, emergency management, etc.). Members must be residents of the city. The estimated number of assistants is 30 or more.

This overview gives you an idea of the immensity of the project Florida has taken on and how important your support and volunteering will be to its success. Hosting a National Convention is not an easy task, and every member of all the other Departments is a critic. If you can help in any way or have any ideas, please provide them. If you can volunteer in any way, we need you.



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## Repetition and Communication

### Judith Richards, Post Revitalization

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



Revitalize by reaching out to your non-renewed members. Utilize the online reports, letters, and labels!

As mentioned in many communications from Department Staff, the Florida 50/50 Raffle is a way to bring in new members! Are you sharing the information in

your communities? Work with your media contacts, your city council, and the chambers of commerce to have the flyer shared throughout the community! Work with Jennifer Cooper to get your Post's personalized URL and QR Code.

<https://www.florida5050.org>

We are working with several Districts on Post-revitalization and development. Are you in a location

that needs to develop a new Post? What are the criteria for development or revitalization? Please refer to the link below!

<https://www.legion.org/membership/newPosts>

Please get in touch with me if you have any questions!

## Scouting Awards

### Chris Ragusa, Scouting Chair

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



### Outstanding Post Scouting Program Award

**Recognition:** Reminder that the Outstanding Post Scouting Program applications are due to the Department Programs Director

NO LATER THAN MAY 08, 2024! The Post must have submitted its Consolidated Post Report to be eligible for consideration. Up to three Florida Posts will be recognized with this distinction. That application and criteria can be found here:

<https://www.floridalegion.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Scouting-Award.pdf>



**2024 Eagle Scout of the Year:** This year's recipient is Thomas "Tre" Peterson III of Ponte Vedra, FL (District 5). His application contained

several noteworthy elements, including the fact that Tre earned all 138 merit badges offered by the Boy Scouts of America. His Eagle Scout Service project consisted of the planning, blueprint drafting, fundraising, and building (construction, roofing, and painting) of eight large doghouses for the Jacksonville, FL, Animal Control & Protective Services Division. He raised over \$2000 worth of cash and building supplies to enable this project, and he oversaw a team of sixteen youths and eight adults. Tre received a \$2,500 higher education scholarship and will be recognized at the Department of Florida annual convention on June 15th. His application has been forwarded to National for consideration at that level. Second place and a \$1,500 scholarship was awarded to Egan Hammond of Jensen Beach, FL (District 12), and third place to Jack Garry from Odessa, FL (District 15). The Eagle Scout of the Year selection committee consisted of Angie Walker/District 1 Scouting Chair, Doyle Combs/District 2 Commander, and Rick Orzechowski/District 7 Commander.

**Blue and Gold Celebration:** On March 16th, Cub Scout Pack 632, chartered to Pensacola Post

240 (District 1), celebrated the birthday of the Boy Scouts of America during their Blue & Gold Banquet. Pictured are Pack 362 Scouts with their Cubmaster Janet Fletcher Moles. During the banquet, special recognition was given to their guest speaker, Christopher Faber, who serves the Legion as 3rd Vice Commander of Post 240 and Scouting as the Pack 632 Chartered Organization Representative.







## Youth Law Cadet Academy Canceled

**Bekki Boarman, Programs Director**

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



I, unfortunately, need to let you know the bad news that the Youth Law Cadet program for 2024 has been canceled. We were contacted by the Academy on 22 April 2024

to inform us that they would be unable to support the event this year.

Posts, please inform any young men and women who were interested in participating this year that we will try again next year. For those that have sent in registration fee checks, they will be mailed back

to the Posts or, if deposited, refunded.

I'd like to thank you all for the work you've done for the program this year. Department Chair Bud Boyer put a lot of time and effort into getting Youth Law Cadet back off the ground after being on hiatus, but regrettably, our enthusiasm wasn't enough.

## More than \$60 million for Children and Youth

**Dennis Boland, Child Welfare Foundation**

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



*The American Legion - APR 10, 2024*

The American Legion's commitment to children and youth can be counted in the tens of millions. Under the organization's two major grant programs (Child Welfare Foundation and Temporary Financial Assistance) and its portfolio of youth scholarships, more than \$60 million has been invested in young people by the nation's largest Veterans organization.

While April is Children & Youth Month in The American Legion, that support runs year-round, with programs, activities, grants, and scholarships that make a difference for tens of thousands of young people each year.

The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation, which awards grants to organizations that contribute to the physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being of children facing challenges beyond their control, has provided \$20,683,892.50 in funding since its inception in 1954.

The Legion's Temporary Financial Assistance program, which provides cash grants to qualified military and Veteran families facing financial emergencies, has delivered \$17,980,894.43 since

1926, including more than \$5.4 million over the last decade alone. TFA grants are awarded to qualified families with minor children at home who are facing financial crises that threaten the stability of their homes.

National American Legion scholarships have been awarded to no less than 6,941 young people pursuing higher education — most of which have been presented over the last 25 years.

The American Legion Samsung Scholarship, awarded to descendants of U.S. military Veterans who have gone on to participate in American Legion Boys State or American Legion Auxiliary Girls State, tops the list with \$7,206,500 in scholarships awarded since 1996 to 2,333 students.

National American Legion Oratorical Contest competitors have received \$6,424,500 in scholarships since 1938, when the contest went national. Nearly 3,000 students have earned that college assistance by learning the U.S. Constitution and demonstrating their ability to speak fluently about its meaning to the nation.

American Legion Eagle Scout of the Year scholarships have been awarded to 149 recipients to the tune of \$622,500 since 1983. American Legion Baseball scholarships since 1986 have amounted to \$262,500, plus another \$295,000 for American

Legion Baseball Academic Team scholarships.

American Legion Boys Nation scholarships: \$201,544.50 to 92 participants since 1978.

National American Legion Junior Shooting Sports competitors have earned \$155,000 in scholarships since 1996.

Altogether, the amount of American Legion national grants and scholarships for youth has come conservatively to \$60,071,174.43 over the years, and that does not count the millions in financial assistance provided at the local level by American Legion Posts each year. In 2023, that came to \$12,752,340.35, assisting 3,359 young people in local communities, according to the most recent Consolidated Post Report.

**Funding for the grants and scholarships comes almost entirely through individual contributions.**

For the Temporary Financial Assistance Program, donations can be made to the American Legion Veterans & Children Foundation. Donors can select youth programs of their choice for contributions through American Legion Charities. Contributors to the Child Welfare Foundation can make their gifts safely and securely online.



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### Post 84 Fund Raiser for Veterans Project

**James Brennan, Post 84**

“Custom Designs by JB,” a nonprofit company arm of American Legion John W. Shaw Post 84, has available custom stainless steel coffee cups and lid. We can customize (etch) your cup with your Post name/ number, location, and the individual’s

name. We can also engrave on glass drinkware. We can also laser your message on wood. If you have an idea, please call (850 212 8677) or email ([james.brennan@earthlink.net](mailto:james.brennan@earthlink.net)). For your review, a temporary website is available (Custom Designs by JB | Custom Engraving & Carving | Havana

[custom-designs-by-jb.com](http://custom-designs-by-jb.com)) to review other products. All proceeds are donations to support the Post 84 projects to help Veterans At Risk in our Area. If you are interested, I can email you a copy of our catalog.

### Florida’s Fallen Memorial

**Charles Hedge, Post 243**

If you haven’t seen it before, now is the time! The Florida’s Fallen Memorial is being installed in the Oviedo Cemetery, right across the street from Post 243. The memorial has over 400 crosses representing Floridians who have died in military service for our Country since September 11, 2001. The individual crosses have names, military branches, ranks, hometowns, casualty dates, ages, photographs, and awards. The Memorial also includes flags of our military branches and large crosses representing the major campaigns from American history, the dates of those conflicts, and the total number of deaths incurred.

The Memorial is staffed daily from 0800-2000 starting Sunday, May 19th and it will remain in place for two weeks through May 31st.

A Memorial Day Remembrance service is planned for 1100 on May 27th with special guests Dr. Daniel Middlebrooks, MAJ, USA, Retired, providing the Memorial Day Address, acclaimed Tenor Aaron Odom, providing patriotic performances, and the Oviedo High School JROTC, providing the Color Guard and Post 243 and Central Florida Marine Corp League Rifle Line. To see more about Florida’s Fallen Memorial, please visit <https://oviedolegion.org/fl-fallen-memorial>

### Memorial Day Remembrance

May 27, 2024

11:00 am

Oviedo Cemetery

### Taps

May 27, 2024

7:00 pm

Oviedo Veterans Tribute at Oviedo on the Park



Oviedo Memorial Post 243

### Florida’s Fallen Memorial

May 19 – May 31

8:00 am – 8:00 pm

Oviedo Cemetery

<https://oviedolegion.org/fl-fallen-memorial>

COMMANDER’S AND PRESIDENT’S BANQUET

**goodwill gowns**

*Glam*

DETAILS ON PAGE 27

JUNE

FRI 14 2024

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## Chief Oliver Kennedy of Post 331 Recognized

### Doris Dorie Miller, Post 331



Orange County Mayor Jerry Demings recognized Chief Oliver Kennedy (US Navy retired) of Doris "Dorie" Miller Memorial Post 331 of the American Legion Department of Florida by proclaiming February 20, 2024, as "Oliver Kennedy Day" in Orange County, Florida.

The proclamation was presented after colors presented by the Color Guard from Post 331.

Chief Oliver Kennedy, USN Retired (E7) is a Vietnam Veteran, who currently is a member of American Legion Post 331 Dorie Miller. Born in New Orleans in 1936, he entered the US Navy 19 years young in 1955 and went to boot camp at NTC San Diego. But this young man, like so many of us, had a song that always stayed with him in a nostalgic way. When he was just thirteen years old, the song "Far Away Places" by Bing Crosby was a top hit in 1949 and it had always given him moments to pause, thinking that someday he could experience those 'far away places' himself. He is quoted as saying, "That song piqued my interest in travel, long before joining the Navy. That song recruited me."

Having served on six different ships, on two oceans and the South China Sea, and shore duty in places as far as the Aleutian Islands in Alaska and the North Atlantic in Iceland, to NH 2433 US Naval Headquarters London to his last sea duty tour aboard the USS Ly Spear (AS-26). The ships as part of his sea duty included many different vessels: The Navy's first helicopter carrier, two destroyers,



a combat support ship, amphibious ship and finally a sub tender.

Then in 1985, after 30 years of service, he retired from his last shore duty station at the Orlando Administrative Command in 1985. During his career, he had been awarded the National Defense Service Medal - Good Conduct Award (five times) - Navy Achievement Medal - Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal W/Bronze Star and the Vietnam Service Medal.

Immediately upon retiring from the armed forces, he began working for the city of Orlando as a property clerk. However, the very same year he retired and began working for the City of Orlando, he joined the American Legion at Post #331 in 1986. He has served in the capacity of Commander, Second Vice Commander (2 terms), 6th District Sergeant-at-Arms, 1993-1995, 2009 6th District Boy's State Committee Chairman (15 years), Post 331 Boys State Committee Chairman and Captain of Dorie Miller's Honor Guard who are the American Legion National Honor Guard Champions for the third straight year (2021, 2022, 2023) and state champs American Legion Florida, back to back in 2021 and 2022. He was most instrumental towards the commissioning and installation of Dorie Miller's statue, which is displayed on the south lawn of Post 331.

In his own words, Chief Kennedy stated that one of the proudest moments of his life was during his tenure as the 6th District American Legion Boy's State chairperson, when, two young men from Evan's High School went to Tallahassee to compete to attend Boy's State. After attending Boy's State, these two young men were selected from their school to attend two of our nation's military academies, Annapolis and West Point. One of the young men is currently serving aboard a nuclear submarine.

The other proud moment for Chief Kennedy, has been the many years he has worked with Post 331 in the honor guard. In that he says, "He is honored to work with this group of women and men" who truly have the same commitment to service and duty as the many fine people he has served with in the Navy. These being retired military who have segued from the service to our nation, but who now serve our nations Veterans with equal dedication, commitment, and honor, voluntarily. And for that he said he is forever grateful to his fellow members at Post 331.

THE "OLIVER KENNEDY," LEGIONARE OF THE YEAR AWARD FOR DORIS "DORIE" MILLER, MEMORIAL Post 331, AMERICAN LEGION OF FLORIDA.

POC, this event, Post Chaplain George McZeal JR. and Post Commander Larry Colleton.



## Post 331 Chaplain, George McZeal JR. Recognized

### Doris Dorie Miller, Post 331



Orange County Mayor Jerry L. Demings, Orange County Mayor's Veterans Advisory Council, Orlando VA Healthcare System, and local, state, and national dignitaries to thank and honor all United States Armed Forces

Vietnam Era Veterans and their families with active-duty service between November 1, 1955, and May 15, 1975, regardless of location. All eligible Veterans and surviving spouses will receive the Vietnam Veterans 50th Commemoration Pin.

Orange County, Florida, Mayor Jerry L. Demings pinned Chaplain George McZeal JR. of Doris Dorie Miller Memorial Post 331, Orlando Florida.

Pictures of Comrade George McZeal JR. who served 26 years in the Army and Vietnam, 14 Years as the Army Instructor, Giessen High School, DOD School System and is now Doris "Dorie" Miller, Post 331, Orlando Florida, Chaplain.





## Communication: How, Who, What, Where and When?

**Randy Holeyfield, District 15 Commander**

[District15@legionmail.org](mailto:District15@legionmail.org)



Do you use email, texting, Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, TikTok, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Snapchat, or YouTube? There are older forms of communication, like the traditional telephone and handwritten/typed letters. We also have new stuff; internet-based comms like forums and social media. The question is: Which method will best reach the group or groups you are targeting? Are you targeting a diverse group, either by their age or interest? If you only use a few of these, you may not reach much of your intended audience because you didn't use the specific platforms that they frequent. When only using Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn, you just might have missed the chance to communicate within the entire spectrum.

A case in point: We are planning and publicizing our inaugural Boys State Alumni Dinner on June 1, 2024. So far, the forms of communication we are using are some of the social media types. Only younger Boys Staters might see the announcement for the event. We may have missed the chance to reach our targets using the standard forms like

email and texting. We may also connect with a substantial segment of alumni by using the old reliable telephone. There are very few RSVPs to date, and this event is just around the corner. I have been working directly with our Department Commander, who is excited to get this up and running.

Again, we need to understand that we are a diverse group; we access our world in different ways. So, choosing only some of the popular social media platforms will directly keep many from knowing about events or other happenings throughout the state. Let's be more aware of these differences when we market events and put information out.

The Boys State Alumni is having its first gathering for the purpose of creating an association.

Here is the information below:

Boys State Alumni Dinner, American Legion Post 26 (Plant City) on June 1, 2024, at 5:00 pm. Please arrive around 3:00 pm to get your name tag and mingle—dinner at 5:00 pm. Hors D'oeuvres and beverages will be served during the meet and greet.

To learn more about the Boys State Alumni Dinner or if you have any questions, please feel free to call me at (813) 716-0318.

**Get your  
Convention  
Book ads in!**

**Deadline is May 15<sup>TH</sup>!**

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# Post Everlasting

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



## John P. Bell

With a heavy heart, we inform you of the passing of Past 16th District Commander John P. Bell of St. Pete Beach, Florida. John passed away on Sunday, March 31, 2024, at the age of 79. He is survived by his wife, Department Auxiliary President Denise "Dee" Bell, and their children: daughters Renee, Nicole, and Samantha, and son John Jr.

The Interment Service was held April 23, 2024 at Bay Pines National Cemetery. A Celebration of Life was also held at Treasure Island, Post 158.

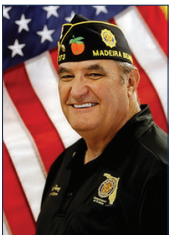
John proudly served his country as a United States Navy Vietnam War Era Veteran.

John, a member of Treasure Island Post 158, served as a dedicated member of the American Legion for 27 continuous years. He held various leadership positions throughout his membership, including Post Commander from 2003-05, 2009-10, and 2012-14. Additionally, he served as District 16 Vice Commander from 2013-15, followed by District 16 Commander from 2015-16.

If you wish to extend your condolences, please do

so through his wife, President Dee Bell, at 326 72nd Ave., St. Pete Beach, FL 33706-1913. In lieu of flowers, President Dee is requesting donations be made to Bay Pines Hospice or American Legion Boys State.

Please keep John's family and loved ones in your thoughts and prayers during this difficult time. His memory will live on in the hearts of all who had the privilege of knowing him, and he will be dearly missed.



## Raymond "Ray" A. Perez

With deep sorrow, we inform you of the passing of Past 16th District Commander Raymond "Ray" A. Perez of Madeira Beach, Florida. Ray passed away on Sunday, April 7, 2024, at the age of 70. He is survived by his fiancé, Maryellen Waskiewicz.

A Celebration of Life was held April 16, 2024 at Post 273.

Ray served his country proudly for 35 years in the

United States Army, spanning from 1971 through 2007. He also served as a dedicated member of the American Legion for 15 continuous years and was a member of Madeira Beach Post 273. He held various leadership positions throughout his membership, including Post Commander from 2016-2019, District Commander from 2017-2019, and Department Blood Donor Chair from 2019-2021. On a National level, Ray served on the National Security Council from 2018-2019, the National Legislative Council from 2019-2024, and the National Membership Committee from 2022-2024.

If you wish to extend your condolences, you may do so through his fiancé, Maryellen Waskiewicz, at 230 Medallion Blvd., Apt. D, Madeira Beach, FL 33708-1958.

Please join us in keeping Ray's family and loved ones in your thoughts and prayers during this difficult time. His memory will continue to inspire us, and he will be dearly missed by all who had the privilege of knowing him.



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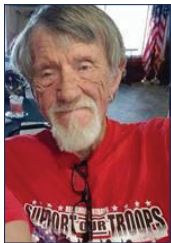
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# Post Everlasting

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



## **Francis "Frank" H. Maitland, Jr.**

It is with a heavy heart that we inform you of the passing of Past 11th District Commander Francis "Frank" H. Maitland, Jr. of Stuart, Florida. Frank passed away on Friday, April 5, 2024, at the age of 75. He is survived by his wife, Jo Ann, and their children, Sara and Jason.

Frank was a U.S. Navy Vietnam War Era Veteran and a member of Stuart Post 62. Frank was also a retired Fire Lieutenant with the City of Lynn, Massachusetts, and a dedicated member of the American Legion for 21 continuous years. He held various leadership positions throughout his membership, including Post Commander from 2009-2011 and 2012-2018. Additionally, he served as District Vice Commander from 2011-2013, followed by District Commander from 2013-2014.

so through his wife, Jo Ann Maitland, at P.O. Box 1710, Stuart, FL 34995-1710.

Please join us in keeping Frank's family and loved ones in your thoughts and prayers during this difficult time. His memory will live on in the hearts of all who had the privilege of knowing him, and he will be dearly missed.

A Celebration of Life was held April 27, 2024 at Post 62.

If you wish to extend your condolences, you may do



## **Raymond "Chuck" Olsen**

With deep sorrow, we inform you of the passing of Department National Security Chair Raymond "Chuck" Olsen of Gulf Breeze, Florida. Chuck passed away on Friday, April 19, 2024, at the age of 65. He is survived by his longtime partner, Missi Dyess, and his sons, Brian and Sean Olsen.

Chuck was a U.S. Navy Veteran who served during the Panama-Lebanon-Grenada War Era and was a member of Navarre Post 382. Over 17 continuous years with the American Legion, he held numerous leadership positions, including Post Commander from 2011-2013 and 2014-2017, Post Judge Advocate from 2022-2024, 1st District Vice Commander from 2014-2016, 1st District Commander from 2016-2018, Department Americanism Chair from 2018-2019, Western Area Commander from 2018-2019, and Department National Security Chair since 2022. On a National level, Chuck served on the National

Legislative Council from 2016-2021 and the National Security Council from 2017-2024.

Condolences can be sent to the Olsen Family C/O Post 382, at 1850 Luneta St., Navarre, FL 32566.

Please keep Chuck's family and friends in your thoughts and prayers during this difficult time.

A memorial service is scheduled for Saturday, May 4, 2024, at Post 382, located at 1850 Luneta St., Navarre, FL 32566 at 2:00 p.m.



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## 2024 District Constitutional Conferences

Information available as of April 25, 2024

DATE	District	LOCATION	TIME
18-May	1	Post 75, Crestview	Registration: 11:00 am Start: 12:00 pm
18-May	2	Post 100, Marianna	Registration: 10:00 am Start: 11:00 am
1-Jun	3	Post 57, Lake City	Registration: 10:00 am Start: 11:00 am
20-Apr	4	Post 149, Newberry	Registration: 9:00 am Start: 10:00 am
25-May	5	Post 137, Jacksonville	Registration: 8:30 am Start: 9:30 am
11-May	6	Post 35, Mount Dora	Registration: 9:15 am Start: 10:00 am
11-May	7	Post 8, Winterhaven	Registration: 12:00 pm Start: 1:00 pm
18-May	8	Post 24, Bradenton	Registration: 11:00 am Start: 12:00 pm
4-May	9	Post 321, Cooper City	Registration: 12:00 pm Start: 1:00 pm
19-May	11	Post 268, Riviera Beach	Registration: 1:30 pm Start: 2:00 pm
11-May	12	Post 163, Melbourne	Registration: 9:00 am Start: 10:00 am
19-May	13	Post 103, Punta Gorda	Registration: 9:00 am Start: 10:00 am
18-May	14	Post 31, South Miami	Registration: 9:30 am Start: 10:00 am
11-May	15	Post 111, Tampa	Registration: 9:00 am Start: 10:00 am
1-Jun	16	Post 273, Madeira Beach	Registration: 9:00 am Start: 10:00 am
11-May	17	Post 115, Bunnell	Registration: 10:00 am Start: 11:00 am

\*All dates subject to change without notice.

## 2024-2025 Endorsements On File

Information available as of April 25, 2024

### Officers

Department Commander \_\_\_\_\_ Chris Hamrick  
 1st Vice Commander \_\_\_\_\_ Jessica Moore  
 2nd Vice Commander \_\_\_\_\_ Lena Heredia-Perez  
 2nd Vice Commander \_\_\_\_\_ Joe Marcheggiani  
 2nd Vice Commander \_\_\_\_\_ Robert "Bob" Matheson  
 Nat. Exec. Committee Member \_\_\_\_\_ Dennis Boland  
 Nat. Exec. Committee Member \_\_\_\_\_ Jerry Brandt  
 Nat. Exec. Committee Member \_\_\_\_\_ Jim Ramos  
 Nat. Exec. Committee Member Alt. \_\_\_\_\_ Michael Raymond  
 Sergeant-at-Arms \_\_\_\_\_ Johnny Castro  
 Sergeant-at-Arms \_\_\_\_\_ Troy Horsley  
 Chaplain \_\_\_\_\_ Willie W. Branch Jr.  
 Chaplain \_\_\_\_\_ Barry Roberts  
 Historian \_\_\_\_\_ Gerald "Gerry Kaufman"

### Area Commanders

Eastern Area Commander \_\_\_\_\_ Bruce Thurber  
 Central Area Commander \_\_\_\_\_ Brian "Randy" Holeyfield  
 Central Area Commander \_\_\_\_\_ Rick Orzechowski  
 Northern Area Commander \_\_\_\_\_ James Bowers  
 Northern Area Commander \_\_\_\_\_ Bruce C. Howe  
 Southern Area Commander \_\_\_\_\_ Teddy Pomerantz  
 Southwestern Area Commander \_\_\_\_\_ John Rauh  
 Southwestern Area Commander \_\_\_\_\_ Larry Roberts  
 Western Area Commander \_\_\_\_\_ Shelby Windham

### District Commanders

District 1 Commander \_\_\_\_\_ Jason Skobel  
 District 4 Commander \_\_\_\_\_ Doug Hockenberry  
 District 5 Commander \_\_\_\_\_ Miguel Garcia  
 District 6 Commander \_\_\_\_\_ Melanie Caputo  
 District 6 Commander \_\_\_\_\_ Peter Gregory  
 District 7 Commander \_\_\_\_\_ Kalvin Thompson  
 District 8 Commander \_\_\_\_\_ Charlie Magnus  
 District 11 Commander \_\_\_\_\_ Toni G. Sutherland  
 District 12 Commander \_\_\_\_\_ Daniel D. Martin  
 District 13 Commander \_\_\_\_\_ Keith Berres  
 District 15 Commander \_\_\_\_\_ Andrew Davis  
 District 16 Commander \_\_\_\_\_ Bonnie Fisher  
 District 16 Commander \_\_\_\_\_ Michael G. Harley  
 District 16 Commander \_\_\_\_\_ Ginny Shephard  
 District 17 Commander \_\_\_\_\_ Stuart Bryant Thorpe, Jr.



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

**INTEGRITY ★ LOYALTY ★ PURPOSE**

www.floridalegion.org  
legionlink@floridalegion.org



# MEMBERSHIP TARGET REPORT

April 25, 2024 (X%)

District 3	Stuart Scott	107.37%
District 17	Jim Bowers	103.48%
District 15	Randy Holeyfield	101.30%
District 7	Rick Orzechowski	100.85%
District 1	Shelby Windham	99.22%
District 5	Miguel Garcia	99.09%
District 12	Bruce Thurber	98.85%
District 8	John Rauh	98.49%
District 13	Eric Loyd	97.82%
District 9	Rico Thomas	97.77%
District 2	Doyle Combs Jr.	97.64%
District 11	Toni Sutherland	97.49%
District 6	Peter Gregory	96.45%
District 14	Thomas Frank	95.52%
District 16	Eric Nestler	95.43%
District 4	Doug Hockenberry	95.29%
Northern	Lena Heredia-Perez	100.09%
Western	Sonny Decker	98.99%
Southwestern	Harold "Bud" Boyer	98.12%
Central	Bob Matheson	97.78%
Eastern	Joe Marcheggiani	97.51%
Southern	Johnny Castro	97.07%
Post 400		95.88%
Post 208		100.19%

**NEXT GOAL:** May 8, 2024

**100%**

## TRAVEL WITH CONFIDENCE

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

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.

**Secure your EA+ protection today!**

1-888-293-4008    [www.TheLIT.com/Emergency-Assistance-Plus](http://www.TheLIT.com/Emergency-Assistance-Plus)

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 ★ ★ ★

**50/50 RAFFLE** VETERANS

WIN BIG & SUPPORT VETS

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

AMERICAN LEGION Department of Florida

FLORIDA SAMPL

SHOW YOUR SUPPORT

The American Legion official license plate.



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

**INTEGRITY ★ LOYALTY ★ PURPOSE**

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





**The American Legion, Department of Florida  
is proud to announce the  
2024 Scholarship Winners**

**The General Scholarship:**

- 1<sup>st</sup> Place, receiving a \$2,500.00 scholarship is Aurora Mendenhall of Niceville.  
2<sup>nd</sup> Place, receiving a \$1,500.00 scholarship is Trentonn Olsen of St. James.  
3<sup>rd</sup> Place, receiving a \$1,000.00 scholarship is Madison Long of Oakland Park.  
4<sup>th</sup> -7<sup>th</sup> Place, receiving a \$500.00 scholarship each:
- Eden Price of Palm Beach Gardens
  - Casey Nathanson of Lade Lake
  - Samuel Bernbaum of Maitland
  - Thomas Peterson of Ponte Vedra

**The JROTC Cadet of the Year Scholarship:**

- 1<sup>st</sup> Place, receiving a \$2,500.00 scholarship is Hayden Wilding of Sarasota.  
2<sup>nd</sup> Place, receiving a \$1,500.00 scholarship is Joseph Lavdas of Ocala.  
3<sup>rd</sup> Place, receiving a \$1,000.00 scholarship is Kaylee Sandell of Tallahassee.  
4<sup>th</sup> Place, receiving a \$500.00 scholarship is Victoria Beckworth of Baker.

**The Junior Shooting Sports Scholarship:**

- Individual Sporter, receiving a \$500.00 scholarship is Eryka Vazquez of Cape Coral.  
Individual Precision, receiving a \$500.00 scholarship is Emrie Fast-Clarke of Sarasota  
Team Sporter, receiving a \$500.00 scholarship is Mariner High School JRTOC of Cape Coral.  
Team Precision, receiving a \$500.00 scholarship is Sarasota Military Academy of Sarasota.

**The Eagle Scout of the Year Scholarship:**

- 1<sup>st</sup> Place, receiving a \$2,500.00 scholarship is Thomas Peterson of Ponte Vedra.  
2<sup>nd</sup> Place, receiving a \$1,500.00 scholarship is Egan Hammond of Jensen Beach.  
3<sup>rd</sup> Place, receiving a \$1,000.00 scholarship is Jack Garcy of Odessa.

Aurora Mendenhall, Trentonn Olsen, Hayden Wilding, Eryka Vazquez, Emrie Fast-Clarke, and Thomas Peterson, will be invited to The Department Convention in June to receive their scholarships. Everyone else will receive their scholarship via mail within the next few weeks.

Many thanks go out to all who applied for The General, JROTC Cadet of the Year, and Eagle Scout of the Year. The Scholarship Committees had a very hard time judging the entries as they were all excellent. We wish each of you tremendous success in your future endeavors.

## ✓ BEFORE YOU GO

More information at [www.floridalegion.org](http://www.floridalegion.org)

### 01 Register ahead

Post Delegate/Alternate Registration  
Register for Service Officer School  
Food Handler's Class

### 02 Give support

Florida Spring Raffle  
Vendor Exhibition  
Convention Book Advertising

### 03 Know before you go

DCC Meeting Schedule  
Post Materials Request  
Rules of Procedure  
Voting Guidelines  
Endorsements  
Convention Deadlines  
Accommodations  
Parking

### 04 Special events

Legion Family Kick-Off Party  
Commander's & President's Banquet

### 05 Show your Legion pride

Convention T-Shirts  
R.E.D. Friday T-Shirts  
2024-2025 Department Commander's Polo  
2024-2025 Detachment Commander's Polo

## ✓ WHEN YOU'RE THERE

More information at [www.floridalegion.org](http://www.floridalegion.org)

### 01 Day 1: Thursday

#### On Arrival

Parking  
Mobility Scooter Rentals  
Accessibility Needs  
Property Maps  
Emblem Sales  
Nearby Attractions  
Dining

#### Classes

Service Officer School Part I\*  
Post Membership Training  
Food Handler's Class\*  
Buddy Check Training  
Fundraising Class

#### Meetings & Business

Finance Committee Meeting  
Internal Affairs  
Executive Committee Meeting  
Legion Riders District Chair Meeting

#### Special Events

Legion Family Kick-Off Party (Poolside)

### 02 Day 2: Friday

#### Classes

Service Officer School Part II\*  
Adjutants Training  
Women Veterans Outreach Training  
Historian Training  
Watch Stander Training  
Chaplain's Training  
Sgt-at-Arms, Color & Honor Guard Training  
Post Operations Training

#### Meetings & Business

Legion General Session Part I  
Area Caucuses  
20/4 Echelon 30 Meeting  
FALMA Executive Board Meeting  
FALMA General Meeting

#### Special Events

Cocktail Hour\*  
Commander's and President's Banquet\*

### 03 Day 3: Saturday

#### Classes

Post Commander's Training  
Finance Officer Training  
Judge Advocate Training  
Legislative Training  
Baseball Training  
Homeless Veteran Training  
Veterans Benefits

#### Meetings & Business

Legion General Session Part II  
Electronic Voting\*  
Election Results  
Legion Riders General Session  
Installation of Officers

#### Special Events

Installation of Officers Reception

### 04 Day 4: Sunday

#### Special Events

Religious Service

#### Meetings & Business

Executive Committee Meeting

#### Heading Home

Check-out  
Drive Safely  
Submit Feedback

### Headquarters

Post Registration  
Agendas  
Membership & Program Materials  
Florida Spring Raffle Tickets  
Drop off Post History Books  
General Inquiries

### Emblem Sales

Shopping  
Emblem Sales Orders Pickup  
Banquet Tickets Pickup

\*Check our website at [floridalegion.org](http://floridalegion.org) for deadlines, pre-registration requirements, tickets, and additional information.

All Information is subject to change.

407.295.2631

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



PO Box 547859  
Orlando, FL 32810

[www.floridalegion.org](http://www.floridalegion.org)





CHEERS

BEERS

105TH ANNUAL DEPARTMENT CONVENTION, HILTON ORLANDO LAKE BUENA VISTA



**DJ MJ** JUNCTION88 PRODUCTIONS

**06.13.2024**  
**06:30 PM**

**POOL SIDE PARTY**

FREE ADMISSION. FREE BEER AND REFRESHMENT, WHILE SUPPLIES LAST. CASH BAR AVAILABLE. EVENT ENDS AT 8:30 PM.

BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE FLORIDA AMERICAN LEGION FAMILY



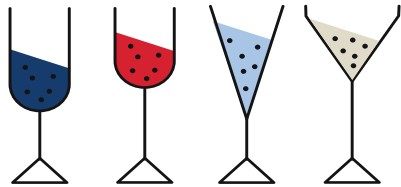
THE AMERICAN LEGION, DEPARTMENT OF FLORIDA

COMMANDER'S AND PRESIDENT'S BANQUET

# goodwill gowns & Glam



ORLANDO



**COCKTAIL HOUR**  
STARTS 6:30 PM

JUNE  
FRI **14** 2024

**OUTRAGEOUS TIE  
COMPETITION**

Fellas, wear your most outrageous tie with your second-hand formal wear. We will judge you!



7:30PM - 9:30PM

TICKETS **\$60** EACH

HILTON ORLANDO LAKE BUENA VISTA  
INTERNATIONAL SOUTH BALLROOM

Dress in your best second-hand formal wear!

 **AMERICAN  
LEGION**

Department of Florida

—   [floridalegion.org/banquet](http://floridalegion.org/banquet)



THE AMERICAN LEGION, DEPARTMENT OF FLORIDA

▲ COMMANDER'S AND PRESIDENT'S BANQUET

# goodwill gowns & Glam



## DINNER MENU



### STARTER

Classic Caesar Salad - Romaine lettuce, shaved parmesan cheese, garlic breadstick with our house-made Caesar dressing.



### MAIN COURSE

Mediterranean chicken breast, with garlic and herb, served with rice pilaf, green beans, over roasted tomato.



### DESSERT

Your choice of New York cheesecake or strawberry confit with vanilla whipped cream.

**GET TICKETS ONLINE:** [www.floridalegion.org/banquet](http://www.floridalegion.org/banquet)

Join us, June 14, 2024, 7:30 PM - 9:30 PM, Department Convention at Hilton Orlando Lake Buena Vista.

**Yes, I would like to attend the Commander's & President's Banquet!**

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

# of Tickets: \_\_\_\_\_ x \$60 each = Total Due \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Payment Type:  Check  Money Order  Visa  Mastercard  Discover  American Express

Yes, I authorize my card to be charged for the total amount above.

Credit Card #: \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration: \_\_\_\_\_ Security Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

All tickets must be purchased in advance, quantities are limited. Tickets will be available for pickup during Convention located in the Headquarters Office.

**Please mail to:** The American Legion, Dept of Florida, Attention: Events, P.O. Box 547859; Orlando, FL 32854



Department of Florida

PROGRAM ADVERTISING  
LEGION FAMILY

**\*Deadline May 15, 2024\***

**105<sup>th</sup> Annual Department Convention, June 13-16, 2024**

Hilton Orlando Lake Buena Vista – Disney Springs Area, 1751 Hotel Plaza Blvd; Lake Buena Vista, FL 32830

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

Name of Member, Post, Unit, or Squadron

Contact Person

Title

Email

Phone

**PROGRAM ADVERTISEMENT OPTIONS FOR LEGION FAMILY MEMBERS, POSTS, UNITS, AND SQUADRONS ONLY**

<p><b>FULL PAGE</b> \$175</p> <p>7.5" X 10"</p>
---

<p><b>HALF PAGE</b> \$100</p> <p>7.5" X 5"</p>
<p><b>HALF PAGE</b> \$100</p> <p>7.5" X 5"</p>

<p><b>QUARTER PAGE</b> \$50</p> <p>3.75" X 5"</p>	<p><b>QUARTER PAGE</b> \$50</p> <p>3.75" X 5"</p>
<p><b>QUARTER PAGE</b> \$50</p> <p>3.75" X 5"</p>	<p><b>QUARTER PAGE</b> \$50</p> <p>3.75" X 5"</p>

- Full Page (7.5" x 10") \$175   
  Half Page (7.5" x 5") \$100   
  Quarter Page (3.75" x 5") \$50   
  Custom Design Fee \$25

**Program advertisements must be submitted no later than May 15, 2024 to be included in the program.** Please submit your advertisement artwork via email in one of the following image file types: .ai, .eps, .psd, .pdf, .tif, .jpeg, .jpg, .png. All artwork must be digital: no scanned or printed artwork will be accepted. All advertisements are printed in grayscale. All imagery must be legally licensed. For an additional \$25 Custom Design Fee, we will design your advertisement for you. You'll be contacted for details at the email provided. Please email artwork to: [events@floridalegion.org](mailto:events@floridalegion.org).

**PAYMENT METHOD**

- Credit Card   
  Check # \_\_\_\_\_ Make checks payable to *The American Legion, Dept of FL*

**CREDIT CARD INFORMATION**

- Visa   
  Mastercard   
  American Express   
  Discover   
 Total to Charge: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Credit Card #

Cardholder Name

Expiration Date

Security Code

I authorize The American Legion, Department of Florida to charge the amount listed above to the credit card provided herein. I agree to pay for this purchase in accordance with the issuing bank cardholder agreement.

Signature

Date

**Submit to:** The American Legion, Department of Florida, Attention: Event Coordinator; PO Box 547859, Orlando, FL 32854-7859.



**LIVE BAND • DANCING**

**POST 103**

2101 Taylor Rd; Punta Gorda FL 33950  
(941) 639-6337

**\$40 EA**  
MAIL CHECKS  
TO POST 103

**MAY**  
**18** 2024

**5:00 PM**

COCKTAILS THEN  
DINNER AT 6:00 PM

YOUR CHOICE OF

**PRIME RIB • FISH • SHRIMP**

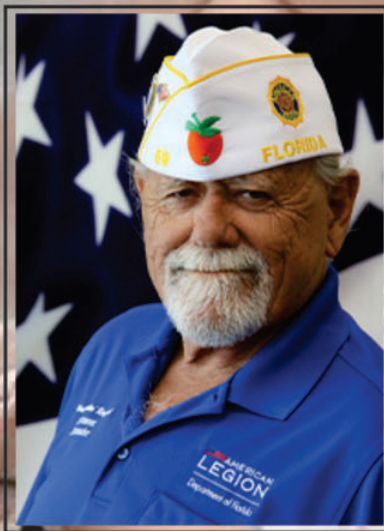
• Dress in Island Casual •

**Accommodations at Sleep Inn & Suites (941) 613-6300**

Rate: \$120+tax | 806 Kings Highway, Port Charlotte, FL 33980

Proceeds to benefit Disaster Relief fund and C.O.T.A.

Ponytail cutting to support Commander Raymond's Charity Children's Organ Transplant Association.  
\$25,000 raised at the event for the hair cutting to take place  
Bring your Donations to the Commander's Homecoming  
on May 18, 2024 at American Legion Post 103  
Punta Gorda



Commander  
Mike "Gambler" Raymond



Look who's getting their hair cut



Sgt-at-Arms  
Les Martin



Eastern Area Comm.  
Joe Marcheggiani



Blood Doner Chair  
Jamie Grinis



# BE THE ONE

TO PUT VETERANS 1<sup>ST</sup>



★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
DETACHMENT OF FLORIDA COMMANDER

## GERARD SAMBETS HOMECOMING

★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
**SATURDAY, MAY 11, 2024**

### LOCATION

AMERICAN LEGION POST 275  
360 WILSON ST  
DUNEDIN, FL 34698

### ATTIRE

"BE THE ONE"  
OR  
LEGION CASUAL

### TIMES

START TIME: 5PM  
DINNER SERVED  
6PM TO 8PM

#### TICKETS

GERARD SAMBETS  
29250 US HWY 19 LOT 142  
CLEARWATER FL 33761  
MEMO: HOMECOMING  
VENMO: @ERIN-CROSS-10

**\$30**  
SINGLE  
**\$50**  
DOUBLE

YOU MAY PAY AT THE DOOR.. PLEASE EMAIL ERIN YOUR **RSVP BY APRIL 28** IN ORDER SO WE HAVE AN ACCURATE HEAD COUNT

IF PAYING BY CHECK, PLEASE PROVIDE THE NAMES OF THE GUESTS THAT YOU ARE PAYING FOR.

#### HOTEL

HAMPTON INN DUNEDIN  
2641 MICHAEL PLACE  
DUNEDIN, FL 34698

CAILAN MASON  
(727) 733-1400 EXT 1400  
**MENTION GERARD'S HOMECOMING**



SCAN THE QR CODE TO BOOK ROOM ON HOTEL WEBSITE

ANY QUESTIONS OR TO RSVP, CONTACT ERIN SAMBETS AT [ERINLCROSS@AOL.COM](mailto:ERINLCROSS@AOL.COM)

**ALL PROCEEDS FROM  
THIS EVENT BENEFIT**

