



A Message from the Department Commander

Jessica Moore, Commander

commander@floridalegion.org



Thank you for electing me as your Department Commander for the coming year. I am deeply honored by the trust and confidence you have placed in me.

As this is my first official article, I want to begin by expressing my sincere appreciation to each and every one of you for your dedication, devotion, and passion for The American Legion. Your commitment to serving veterans, their families, and our communities is what gives our organization its enduring strength.

Our motto for the year is **"Honor Service, Inspire Future."** This

reflects not only our respect for those who have served but also our responsibility to build a stronger, more connected future through our membership efforts and the many outstanding programs we support.

We will continue to grow and strengthen The American Legion by working together—because we are one team, with one mission, one goal, and one purpose. Our slogan, **#OneTeamOneDream**, embodies that unity and shared vision.

I look forward to serving alongside you all this year as we carry our mission forward. Together, we will honor the past, serve in the present, and inspire the future.

Thank you again for this incredible opportunity!

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2024-2025 Commander's Charity Totals:

Disaster Relief: \$142,397.24

C.O.T.A.: \$17,611.78

Total: \$160,009.02

Submit Articles at

floridalegion.org/submit or legionlink@floridalegion.org

Questions? legionlink@floridalegion.org

#oneteamonedream

COMMANDER'S CHARITY: **Special Olympics**

\$1,979.50 RAISED



Go to www.floridalegion.org/donate and choose support Commander's Charity: Special Olympics

\$100,000 GOAL



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UPCOMING EVENTS

AUGUST 2025

- 1-31 Anti-terrorism Awareness Month
- 1 BE THE ONE Day
- 2 Invasion of Kuwait/Operation Desert Shield (1990)
- 2 Chapter 316: ALR Monthly Meeting
- 2 District 3: Meeting Post 83
- 2 District 11: Meeting Post 268
- 2 Town Hall with Congressional & Legislative Members ★
- 2 District 7: MyLegion Training
- 4 Coast Guard Birthday (1790)
- 6-10 Baseball Regional Tournament ★
- 6 Chapter 136: ALR Monthly Meeting
- 7 Purple Heart Day
- 8-9 National Membership Workshop ★★
- 9 District 15: Meeting Post 111
- 9 District 17: Meeting Post 120
- 10 District 5: Meeting Post 316
- 10 Dept of Defense Birthday (1949)
- 10 Agent Orange Awareness Day
- 10 District 5: Meeting Post 316
- 10 Chapter 8: ALR Meeting
- 13 Chapter 10: ALR Meeting
- 14 Navajo Code Talkers Day
- 14 V-J Day (1945)
- 14-19 American Legion Baseball World Series ★
- 15 Legion Link Articles Due for September ★
- 16 National Airborne Day
- 16 District 1: Meeting Post 392 ★★
- 16 District 14: Meeting Post 31
- 16 Post 138 Grand Re-Opening
- 17-21 American Legion Legacy Run ★
- 19 Aviation Day
- 21 Senior Citizens Day
- 22-28 106th American Legion National Convention - Tampa ★★
- 26 Women's Equality Day
- 29 Marine Corps Reserve Birthday (1916)
- 30 District 7: Meeting Post 3

★ Commander attendance tentative.

★ Department of Florida event.

★ National event.

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

Looking Ahead as Your 1st Vice Commander

Bob Matheson, 1st Vice Commander

1stvice@legionmail.org



I want to thank the members of the Department of Florida for allowing me the opportunity to continue my Legion journey by electing me as the 1st Vice Commander for the Department of Florida. It's hard to believe how quickly this past year has flown by.

With the Convention now behind us, I look forward to working alongside our District and Area Commanders

to ensure that membership remains one of our top priorities. But please remember—it's not just about the numbers.

As members of The American Legion, our mission is to be there for our veterans—to offer support, create a safe and welcoming environment, and provide a place where they truly feel at home. A place where they can rediscover the friendship and camaraderie they once shared during their time in the military.

As we move forward together, let's make this a momentous and meaningful year.

Building a Stronger Future Through Training

Bruce Carl, 2nd Vice Commander

2ndvice@legionmail.org



Welcome to the 2025–2026 Department of Florida American Legion year! I would like to congratulate all of the incoming officers and wish them great success in the year ahead.

As your 2nd Vice Commander, my primary responsibility will be training. As we all know, training and mentoring are vital parts of our organization. It is important that installations, meetings, and programs are conducted consistently, no matter where you are in the state.

I strongly encourage you to talk to

your members about completing the Basic Training course available on the national website, www.legion.org. The course is free and can be completed at your own pace—an easy and valuable step toward building knowledge and confidence.

We just wrapped up our Leadership Retreat, where Area, District, and several Vice Commanders spent three days learning about a variety of Legion topics. Our goal is for them to take this knowledge back to their Posts and share it—to help ensure things are done the right way, the same way, across the Department.

Many of us have traveled throughout the state and noticed far too many inconsistencies.

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<< 2nd Vice Commander continued from page 2

One of the most common issues is improperly run meetings. Nothing is more uncomfortable than having a Department or National Officer attend a meeting that isn't conducted correctly.

I look forward to traveling across the Department to see training in action. If you need training on any topic, please don't hesitate to contact me. And if you're hosting a training event at your Post or in your District, let me know—I'd love to attend and support

your efforts.

I'm honored to serve as your 2nd Vice Commander and look forward to a successful year of growth and unity through training!

For the New Legion Year 2026 – #OneTeamOneDream

Jim Ramos, NEC

nec@legionmail.org



Thank you to all the new Department of Florida officers, and especially those who attended the Leadership Retreat. It was a great event, bringing

together many new District and Area Commanders, along with our new Department officers. Leading the team this year is our Department Commander, Jessica Moore, and our Membership Chair, Lena Heredia-Perez, who brings fresh ideas for the 2026 membership year—more exciting updates to come, so stay tuned.

The Leadership Retreat agenda covered a variety of important topics to help strengthen our organization, including:

1. How to encourage Legionnaires to volunteer, help, and participate at the Post.
2. How to collaborate with the Legion Family.
3. How to improve communication with one another.
4. How to use the chain of command

effectively.

5. How to manage and support Post programs.
6. How to strengthen membership efforts (renewals, retention, and recruiting new members).
7. How to work together to reach 100% membership by May 2026.

Training Opportunities for Members

As a member, training is key to success. Here are some opportunities:

1. Take the American Legion Basic Training online at register.legion.org/alei. If you completed it more than three years ago, refresh your knowledge by retaking it.
2. If you are a Post officer, learn your responsibilities and duties for your role.
3. Attend the Florida American Legion College, scheduled for March 20–22, 2026.
4. Gain valuable insight and training by regularly attending Post meetings.
5. Explore www.floridalegion.org for a wealth of information on programs, resources, and more.

Understanding the Legion Family

1. Do you know what each branch of our Legion Family is?
2. What is the Sons of The American Legion (Squadron)?
3. What is the Auxiliary (Unit)?
4. What is the American Legion Riders (Chapter)?

If you are new to The American Legion, training will help you better understand our mission and structure. You can also attend District meetings for additional training and updates.

Be sure to get the [2025 Officer's Guide and Manual of Ceremonies](#) and start reading it. It's one of the best resources available if you want to learn. Don't be afraid to ask questions or reach out for help.

Further Reading

If you want to understand more about the NEC (National Executive Committee), I encourage you to read:

1. National Constitution and By-Laws
2. Rules of the National Executive Committee of The American Legion
3. Uniform Code of Procedure for the Organization of National

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Conventions of The American Legion

4. 2025 Officer's Guide and Manual of Ceremonies

You can download all of these for free at www.floridalegion.org and www.legion.org.

Thank you for allowing me to serve as your NEC for Florida. I am committed to helping you and supporting the Department of Florida as we move forward.

I am here to serve you, Florida Legionnaires. If you have any

questions, email me at nec@legionmail.org or call 352-226-4370 (please leave a message, as I do not have everyone's phone number).

Thank you!

Historian's Corner: Back on the Road and Ready to Serve

Edward Lewis, Historian

historian@legionmail.org



Well, fellow Legionnaires, it's that time again—I needed to write my monthly Legion Link article, so here it goes...

First, I want to sincerely thank everyone in the Legion Family for your support and encouragement over the past few months. I decided to run again because, quite frankly, I missed being on the road and visiting all the great Legion Posts out there. Whether large or small, I'm always amazed at the fantastic work you're doing in support of the

Four Pillars of our organization.

This past weekend, I had the privilege of attending the annual Leadership Retreat, where we visited a few outstanding Posts. I also had the opportunity to join Commander Jessica Moore at the Auxiliary Boot Camp and enjoyed a very nice—albeit brief—visit.

But this article isn't a travelogue. It's about you—the reader, the Legionnaire. So here we go...

The Department website has a dedicated page for Programs and Services, including the guidelines for our annual Yearbook Competition. Simply visit www.floridalegion.org, navigate to Programs and Services,

and look for the Historian category in the drop-down menu.

Remember, the Department Convention is only eleven months away. Now is the time to start gathering the information and materials you'll need for your Post History Books.

If you're a new Historian and missed the training session at Convention, don't worry—I'm here to help! You can reach me by email at historian@legionmail.org. I work for you. (Just don't tell Commander Moore... wink.)

Hope to see you soon!

How to Verify Your Post's Tax Exempt Status

Shirley Douglas, Finance Officer

finance@legionmail.org



As a Post Officer, it's important to ensure your Post is in compliance with the following IRS requirements:

1. Does your Post need to submit a new IRS Form 8822-B (Change of Address or Responsible Party – Business)?
If your Post's current Form 8822-B lists the outgoing Commander as the responsible party, a new form must be completed and submitted to the IRS. Note: the responsible party does not have to be the Post Commander.

2. What is your Post's fiscal year? Knowing your fiscal year is essential to ensure that the IRS Form 990, 990-EZ, or 990-N is submitted on time. The IRS requires these forms to be filed by the 15th day of the fifth month following the end of your fiscal year.

- If your fiscal year is January 1 – December 31, your form is due

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<< Finance continued from page 4

May 15th.

- If your fiscal year is July 1 – June 30, your form is due November 15th.
The specific version of Form 990 your Post must file depends on your annual gross receipts and total assets.

3. Are there three years of IRS tax forms on file for your Post?

Ask your Adjutant. If the answer is “No,” you should check the IRS website to verify your Post’s tax-exempt status:

- Visit IRS.gov
- In the search bar, type “Tax Exempt”

- Click on “Tax-Exempt Organization Search Tool (TEOS)”
- Select “Search All”, then choose “Employer Identification Number (EIN)” and enter your Post’s EIN
- Click “Search” to view filing history and submitted forms
You can also search by organization name. If you don’t know the EIN, enter American Legion and your Post’s city and state to locate the correct record.

4. Has your Post lost its tax-exempt status? If so, a Revocation box will appear in the TEOS results. Organizations that

lose their tax-exempt status due to failure to file Form 990 for three consecutive years can apply for reinstatement.

Refer to Revenue Procedure 2014-11 (PDF), which outlines the four methods for applying for reinstatement.

All of the above information can be found on the [IRS.gov](https://www.irs.gov) website. Hover over the “File” tab and select Charities and Nonprofits from the dropdown menu. There, you’ll also find FAQs that may answer additional questions you have.

Continuing My Commitment: A Case for Another Year as Central Area Commander

Rick Orzechowski, Central Area Cmdr
central@legionmail.org



I would like to thank all the members of The American Legion for allowing me to represent them as the Central Area Commander for another

year. Leadership is not merely a position; it is a commitment—a calling that demands both vision and steadfast dedication.

Over the past year, I have had the honor of serving the Central Area in this role. It has allowed me to support our posts and members, address critical challenges, and work toward a more unified and resilient Legion. While we’ve made

meaningful progress, our journey is far from over. The coming year promises both new opportunities and complex challenges. My vision for the Central Area builds on the foundation we’ve laid and is guided by experience and an ambitious outlook for what we can achieve together.

Diversity remains one of our greatest strengths. My leadership goals will continue to focus on encouraging inclusive participation in decision-making throughout the Central Area. We must ensure that all Legionnaires—regardless of background or circumstance—feel seen, heard, and valued. The future belongs to our members. That’s why I propose the development of mentorship programs and expanded training opportunities. By investing

in our youth, we can cultivate the next generation of leaders who will continue to guide and enrich the Central Area.

Leadership is most effective when experience meets adaptability. Over the last year, I’ve developed a deeper understanding of the Central Area’s unique needs, strengths, and aspirations. This insight enables me to respond to challenges with both agility and wisdom. Allowing me to serve another year as Commander would provide crucial stability at a pivotal time. The relationships and trust I’ve built with our post leadership and members are the foundation upon which further progress can be made. Consistency in leadership ensures that ongoing projects are not only sustained but

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also refined and expanded for maximum impact.

As always, my approach is rooted in openness and accountability. I invite

continued scrutiny of my decisions and welcome feedback from every corner of our community.

Let us move forward—together, as one community—toward a future

defined by hope, opportunity, and the enduring spirit of service. Our Department Commander says it best: “One Dream, One Team.” And as always, let’s have fun while doing what we do best!

Working Together

Doug Hockenberry, Northern Area Cmdr
northern@legionmail.org



Let me start by saying thank you—thank you for the opportunity to serve as your Northern Area Commander for Legion Year 2025–2026. I am

both honored and humbled, and I look forward to working for you and beside you.

Over the past few weeks, I’ve had the pleasure of attending several installations and speaking with many of you. Based on the enthusiasm I’ve witnessed, I am confident we are going to have a fantastic year.

Our Department Commander’s theme this year is “One Team, One Dream.” In that spirit, I ask one thing of each of you: renew your

commitment to The American Legion and work in harmony. By working together, we can accomplish any task put before us.

The Legion Family—Legion, Auxiliary, and Sons—shares a common cause: to ensure we take care of our veterans and their families. Think about that for a moment—take care of our veterans and their families. That may sound like a monumental task, but I am confident that together, we can accomplish it with ease and do remarkable things in the coming year.

I have one more request: please share your upcoming events with me. I would love to join you for as many as possible and look forward to doing so.

I would be remiss if I didn’t address membership, which is the lifeline of

our great organization. Remember, membership encompasses both recruitment and retention. Speaking of retention, for those of you who are not PUFLs, don’t forget about the 3-year membership renewal program. This is a wonderful way to lock in your membership at the current rate for a three-year period, and I strongly encourage everyone to take advantage of it.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to serve as your Northern Area Commander for Legion Year 2025–2026. Should you have any questions, feel free to email me at northern@legionmail.org.

Thank you for all you do for our veterans, their families, and your communities.

Hang tough!

Hitting the Ground Running in the Southern Area

Geo Bograkov, Southern Area Cmdr
southern@legionmail.org



First, allow me to extend a big THANK YOU to the members of the Southern Area for the confidence of your vote in electing me as

your Southern Area Commander for 2025–2026. This is a responsibility I do not take lightly, and I truly appreciate the opportunity you’ve given me to work for you!

With 41 years as a proud Legionnaire, along with the valuable experience I’ve gained serving three years as District 9 Adjutant and two

years as District 9 Commander, I feel well-prepared to take on this role.

So, here’s how we plan to hit the ground running in the Southern Area this year:

Our four main objectives will

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<< Southern Area continued from page 6

be: **Membership (of course), Communication, Training, and Mentoring.**

1. Membership

Our goal is for every post in the Southern Area to reach at least 100% membership for 2025–2026. All three of our District Commanders have plans in place to assist any post that may need a little help. Department Post Development Chair and Southern Area Membership Chair, Judith Richards, is also standing by to help! Please don't wait—reach out and schedule assistance sooner rather than later.

2. Communication

Improving communication is key to creating unity within our four Legion families. Use Facebook, email blasts, and Buddy Check calls to spread the word. Host monthly meetings with the other Legion families in your post to coordinate events and avoid scheduling conflicts.

Have tips or techniques that work for you? Let us know! To help support this effort, we've created the first-ever Southern Area Facebook page for everyone to share post and district events and updates.

Please visit and LIKE the page:
<https://www.facebook.com/SouthernAreaFL>

3. Training

We're bringing Area Training back to the Southern Area! What's different? This year, we plan to host four separate, centrally located PowerPoint trainings within the three districts:

- One in District 11
- One in District 9
- Two in District 14 – one in Miami-Dade County and one in the Florida Keys

Training content will be tailored to the needs of each district and post. We'll be polling posts to find out what you need—and we'll deliver based on those responses, not just what we think you might need.

4. Mentoring

It's time to revisit the important practice of mentoring. We encourage all leaders to praise publicly but correct privately. Public praise encourages positive, repeat behavior and builds a supportive environment. Be a mentor—share your knowledge with new members as others once did for you.

District Meetings – Don't Miss Out!

If you're in District 9, 11, or 14, please plan to attend your district meetings. Be sure your post is represented when the Roll Call is announced. These meetings offer valuable insights—and a chance to have your voice heard on key district matters.

Upcoming Events

- Southern Area Ball – Sock Hop

Theme

Date: Saturday, January 31, 2026, at 1800 hrs
Location: Post 222, 4250 NE 5th Ave., Oakland Park, FL 33334
Dress Code: 50s & 60s casual
Rumor has it a '57 Chevy will be inside the building for photo ops!

- **District 9 Four Chaplains Ceremony**
Date: Sunday, February 1, 2026, at 1400 hrs
Location: I.T. Parker Center, 901 NE 3rd St., Dania Beach, FL 33004

I am honored once again to serve as Master of Ceremonies for this meaningful event. And yes—rumor has it that Reverend Cynthia Johnson will return to deliver the narration of the events of February 3, 1943.

- **Four Chaplains After Party & Dinner**
Immediately following the ceremony, Post 304 Commander Kevin "Gunny" Savage invites you to attend the Official Four Chaplains After Party and Dinner
Location: American Legion Post 304, 41 NE 1st Ct., Dania Beach, FL 33004

In conclusion, I wish all the posts in the Southern Area the very best for a successful year. Remember—we are here for you.

Let's hit the ground running—together!



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Make A Difference

Eric Loyd, Southwestern Area Cmdr

southwestern@legionmail.org



I want to start by thanking all the members of the 8th and 13th Districts for allowing me the honor of serving as your Southwestern Area Commander.

This year, I'm focusing on Membership, Children & Youth, and Helping Our Fellow Veterans. Membership is the key to our continued success. The 2026 membership cards are in, and now is the time for posts to push renewals, plan membership drives,

and schedule events to recruit new members.

Isaac White, our Area Membership Chairman, and I are here to support every District Commander and post in achieving their goals. If your post needs assistance, please reach out to Isaac or me—we are happy to assist with post revitalization efforts and more. We are here to make a difference.

Misty L. Brehm, our Area Children & Youth Chairperson, has hit the ground running with plans for our Children & Youth Picnic. More details will be shared soon, but she will need volunteers. If you'd like to help,

please contact Misty or me.

Dr. Deana Hall, our Area Boys State Chairperson, brings valuable experience from the school system and is ready to help every post recruit delegates. Please begin your efforts for Boys State now.

Laurene Flower, District 13 Commander, is also serving as our Area Oratorical Chairperson for the third consecutive year. I hope every post is actively reaching out to schools to secure candidates for this incredible program.

Let's make 2026 count.
Let's all make a difference.

Honored to Serve as District 1 Commander

Robert Osmon, District 1 Cmdr

district1@legionmail.org



I feel very honored to serve as the District 1 Commander. We have a strong team in place, and I'm looking forward to a great year in 2025–2026.

Our primary focus will be membership, in alignment with our Department Commander's motto: "One Team, One Dream." Let's face it—it takes all of our Legion Families working together to make The American Legion the greatest

Veterans Service Organization there is.

It was a true honor to attend the Commander's Leadership Retreat. I had the opportunity to sit with fellow comrades—both new and seasoned—as well as Department Officers and staff. It gave me a better understanding of how we function as a Department, Area, District, and at the Post level. The Commander and her team made it an enjoyable and educational experience. Thank you!

I'm still getting my feet wet and working on planning District events like training sessions, a picnic, and other activities. I'm quickly finding out that it's a bit like herding cats! With

so much already happening at the posts throughout District 1, it's tough to find dates that don't conflict with ongoing events. But we'll make it work. Our goal is to schedule multiple events to ensure every post has an opportunity to attend at least one.

Wish me luck—and I welcome any advice you're willing to share!

My home post is Post 75, located at 898 E. James Lee Blvd., Crestview, FL. If you're ever in the Panhandle, let me know—I'm only five minutes from the post (if I'm not already there)!



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New Year, New Energy

Kalvin Thompson, District 7 Cmdr

district7@legionmail.org



Thank you to the entire 7th District for a wonderful year, and for allowing me the honor of serving another year as your District Commander.

A new Legion year always brings change—and with it, renewed energy. There is excitement in several of our posts as we welcome

new leadership and a refreshed dedication to The American Legion, our communities, and our veterans and their families.

To support our new leaders, we're inviting all Commanders and Adjutants to **Lakeland Post 4 on Saturday, August 2nd at 11:30 AM** for a comprehensive **MyLegion training session**. You asked for this training, and we're here to help. Bring your laptop, any membership you need to process, and your questions—we'll assist you right there

on the spot.

Our **first District Meeting** of the year will take place on **August 30th at Bartow Post 3, with registration at 9:00 AM and the meeting starting promptly at 10:00 AM**. We'll have some exciting guests to help us kick off our programs for the year.

Thank you for your continued support—I look forward to another wonderful and productive year ahead!

Welcoming New Officers and Renewing Our Commitment: The American Legion's Mission and Vision

Daniel Martin, District 12 Cmdr

district12@legionmail.org



Building a Stronger Post for Our Members, Our Community, and Our Nation

The American Legion stands as a beacon of service, community, and patriotism. With the installation of our new officers, we now embark on an energized path toward growth, engagement, and lasting impact. As we look ahead, we reaffirm our dedication to the vital pillars that define our legacy and shape our future.

New Goals: Membership and Community Connection

Our foremost goal is to strengthen our membership. We are committed to ensuring that every

eligible veteran and supporter understands the value of joining our ranks. Membership isn't just about numbers—it's about creating a vibrant, supportive family where every member feels seen, valued, and empowered.

We also want our members—and the wider community—to clearly understand what we do. Through service projects, outreach, and advocacy, we strive to be a pillar of support and a source of pride. We encourage every member to share ideas and get involved, because the strength of The Legion lies in our collective action.

Your American Legion: A Place for You

Inside our post, you'll find more than camaraderie—you'll find resources, programs, and events designed to enrich your life and uplift our community. Whether it's a place to connect with fellow veterans, access support services, or simply enjoy

a meal and good company, your American Legion is here for you.

We invite you to look around, ask questions, and take advantage of all we offer:

- Social gatherings and special events
- Veteran outreach and support programs
- Community service opportunities
- Educational initiatives and scholarships
- Family-friendly activities

Events to Engage, Inspire, and Unite

This year, we're planning a calendar full of events aimed at bringing our members together and welcoming new faces into our fold. From holiday celebrations and community cookouts to educational workshops and service projects, there's

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something for everyone. We want events that not only honor tradition but also inspire future generations to join us in service.

The Four Pillars of The American Legion

At the heart of everything we do stand the Four Pillars, guiding our mission and shaping every action:

- **Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation:** Supporting the health, welfare, and transition of veterans and their families through dedicated programs and guidance.
- **National Security:** Promoting

a strong national defense, advocating for military readiness, and supporting our active-duty service members at home and abroad.

- **Americanism:** Fostering patriotism, respect for the flag, and civic responsibility through ceremonies, educational efforts, and outreach.
- **Children & Youth:** Investing in the next generation through scholarships, mentoring, and programs that promote leadership and character.

Empowering Youth: Scholarships, Oratorical Contests, Boys State, &

Scouting

We believe in shaping tomorrow's leaders. Our post proudly sponsors and supports a range of youth programs:

- **Scholarship Programs:** Providing financial assistance to deserving youth pursuing higher education and vocational training.
- **Oratorical Contest:** Encouraging public speaking and civic understanding as young participants develop confidence and leadership skills.
- **Boys State:** Offering hands-on experiences in government and citizenship that foster teamwork

See You at the National Convention!

Angela Glover, District 14 Cmdr
district14@legionmail.org

This is a message to all Legionnaires attending the National Convention:

Keys Memorial Post 145 (Islamorada) is proud to be a vendor at this year's event! Legionnaires from our post will be in attendance, and you'll find us at Post M-37, beautifully decorated with poppies.

Be sure to stop by and say hello—we'd love to see you!



Memorial Day 2025 - Murray Nelson Government Center: (Back) Tim Linck, Brian Sayre, Randy Hetherington, Steve Morris, Brian Wojciechowski, Michael Ehlers (Front) David Dipre, Kim Dipre, Chris Hogue (Not Pictured) Ed Cale, Priscilla Johnson, John Izanec, Roy Bogue, John Donnelly

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Americanism: The Cornerstone of The American Legion

Joe Marcheggiani, Americanism Chair
americanism@legionmail.org



My fellow Legionnaires,

It is an honor to serve alongside you in upholding the cornerstone of The

American Legion: Americanism. Our mission—established at the very first National Convention—is vital: to perpetuate American ideals, instill love of country, and educate our communities and youth about the principles of American democracy and good citizenship.

This responsibility includes fostering patriotism, teaching flag etiquette, and encouraging civic engagement—all essential to the future of Florida and our nation.

You are the vital front line of this effort. You have the closest connection with our Posts, our Auxiliary, our Sons of The American Legion, our youth, and the public. You reach those who can be most influenced by our message of Americanism. Your dedication holds the entire program together, and your efforts are key to its continued success.

This year, I challenge each leader and member to embrace their role with renewed energy and creativity. Below are a few core areas where we can rise to the occasion:

1. Own and Expand Your Efforts

Strive to achieve more than before—do not rest on past successes. The Florida American Legion encourages each post or district to take on at least one new Americanism project or event this year. Explore fresh ways to promote Americanism: host flag presentations, organize oratorical contests, support scouting, or create community-based patriotic events. Tailor your projects to the unique needs of your community.

2. Communicate Effectively

While meetings are useful for internal coordination, we must also promote our programs beyond the meeting room. Use both print and electronic media to reach the general membership and the public. Without consistent outreach, interest may fade and the importance of our programs may be forgotten. Spread your enthusiasm—share the value of Americanism widely and often.

3. Collaborate and Delegate

No one person can do it all. Delegate responsibilities and make full use of the talents within your committee and membership. Partner with the Auxiliary and the Sons of The American Legion. Remember, there is one Americanism program for the entire Legion Family—and collaboration is what makes it most effective.

4. Be Knowledgeable and Available

Know the principles, purpose, and structure of the Americanism program. Familiarize yourself with

key contacts at the Department, Area, and District levels. Be responsive—return calls, answer questions, and provide support to those working alongside you.

5. Believe in the Cause

Have confidence in your role and let your passion for Americanism shine. Your energy will inspire those around you and strengthen the spirit of service in your community.

With dedicated effort and a united front, our Americanism program will continue to be a powerful force for good in the State of Florida.

Thank you for your unwavering commitment to our communities, our youth, and our nation.

God Bless America.



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Plan on Holding Blood Drives

Jamie Grinis, Blood Donor

blooddonor@legionmail.org



Convention has ended, and now all our posts are busy planning their program schedules. As you build your calendar of events, be sure to include Blood Drives.

This past year, we collected over **3,800 pints, saving three times as many lives** along the way. And that incredible impact came from just over 30% of posts participating.

Imagine what we can accomplish if every post joins in! Let's set a bold goal: 7,600 pints of the Elixir of Life collected this coming year.

When you host a Blood Drive, please don't forget to file a report and tell us all about it. Every effort counts—and every pint makes a difference.

I look forward to being part of *One Team, One Dream*—let's save lives together.

Your Year to Adopt Our Newest Program!

Rico Thomas, Civil Air Patrol Chair

civilairpatrol@legionmail.org



First, I would like to take this opportunity to thank our Department Commander, Jessica Moore, for appointing me as Chair of our department's newest initiative—the Civil Air Patrol (CAP) Cadet Program. I'm looking forward to a great year under her leadership. It is truly an honor and a privilege

to lead this exciting and growing program.

As we move through the year, my team and I will work to inform and inspire you about the CAP program, with the hope that your post will adopt a local squadron and show our young men and women that we support their growth, discipline, and commitment to service.

If your post has already adopted a local squadron, please reach out to me so we can recognize your efforts

and share how you're supporting your cadets through community involvement.

If you're still searching for a squadron to partner with, visit the link below to find one in your area: <https://flwg.cap.gov/join/unit-locator>

Let's make this the year we support and uplift the future leaders of our communities.

#childrenareourfuture
#veteranshelpingveterans





VA Announces Expanded Burial Benefits

Terry Caton, FL National Cemeteries
cemeteries@legionmail.org

WASHINGTON — The Department of Veterans Affairs announced today that it has temporarily expanded burial benefits for certain Veterans, in accordance with the **Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act**.

Under this new law, eligible Veterans include those who are discharged from VA-provided medical or nursing care to receive VA-provided hospice

care at home and who pass away between July 1, 2025, and October 1, 2026.

Previously, Veterans who died at home under VA hospice care following discharge from VA facilities were not always eligible for the full VA burial allowance. The Dole Act addresses and closes that gap.

"VA is working hard to fully implement the many provisions of the Dole Act," said VA Secretary Doug Collins. "We're excited to offer this expanded benefit, which better supports Veterans who choose to spend their final days at home, surrounded by their loved ones."

Families and caregivers of Veterans receiving hospice care at home after discharge from VA-provided medical or nursing care are encouraged to contact their local VA office for eligibility details and assistance with applying for burial benefits.

For more information, visit [VA Burial Benefits](#) or call **800-827-1000**. You can also review the full legislative language authorizing this [change here](#).

Immigration Information

Gene Smith, Immigration
immigration@legionmail.org

I wish to thank Department Commander Jessica Moore for allowing me the opportunity to serve another year as the Department Immigration Committee Chair.

Under the current political climate, I have not received any new requests for assistance from foreign-born, undocumented U.S. veterans or their family members. Additionally, the Marine's case I have worked on for more than five years remains in the federal immigration court system.

Our partnering immigration attorney, Elizabeth Ricci, Esq., of Tallahassee, has appeared on the Fox News Network and other media outlets to explain immigration

law as it pertains to the ongoing mass deportation efforts. These individuals do have certain rights under the U.S. Constitution and Rule of Law. There are important distinctions between how ICE can operate versus local law enforcement, such as police or sheriff's departments. While I am not an attorney and won't delve into legal interpretations in this article, I encourage you to consult program listings for Fox News or other outlets—Ms. Ricci's name will appear when she is featured on an informational segment.

I understand that facilities like "Alligator Alcatraz" and others detaining undocumented immigrants are currently being challenged in court. As the Immigration Committee Chair for the Department of Florida, I eagerly await the court's ruling. I believe when the dust settles, we'll

gain a clearer understanding of what "due process of law" truly means for undocumented immigrants and other foreign nationals living within our borders.

Unfortunately, during this time of unrest, many undocumented, foreign-born U.S. veterans have gone into hiding, further delaying their naturalization process. Many live in fear of being rounded up by ICE and deported—separated from their families and denied due process—even though they served honorably in the U.S. military.

I strongly encourage any undocumented, foreign-born veteran who served honorably in the U.S. military to contact Elizabeth Ricci, Esq., of Rambana & Ricci, P.L.L.C. in Tallahassee at (850)

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<< Immigration continued from page 13

224-4529, or another qualified immigration attorney. These veterans deserve proper legal guidance and due process.

Undocumented, foreign-born U.S. veterans who were honorably discharged—but never completed the naturalization process—deserve both due process of law and The American Legion's support. A

veteran is a veteran—regardless of their branch of service, the era in which they served, or their country of origin. Many of these veterans came to the U.S. legally, joined the military, and assumed that their service alone granted them citizenship. Sadly, somewhere along the line, our system failed them—no one advised them to follow up with immigration services upon discharge.

Legionnaires, I ask you to stand up and support these veterans. Help ensure that undocumented, foreign-born, honorably discharged veterans have the opportunity to become naturalized U.S. citizens. Write to your national legislators—your senators and representatives—and ask them to support legislation that protects and honors these individuals for their service.

THE AMERICAN LEGION, DEPARTMENT OF FLORIDA INVITES YOU TO

FLORIDA PARTY DINNER CRUISE

SUPERHEROES AND VILLAINS

DETAILS ON PAGE 35

MENU

House Salad,
Seasonal Chicken,
Pasta of the Day,
Seasonal Vegetables, and
Dessert

AUG 25TH

YACHT BOARDING AT TAMPA CONVENTION CENTER MARINA

TICKETS \$75 3-minute walk from FL delegate hotel | Boarding: 6:00 PM | Sail: 6:30 PM | Return: 8:30 PM
Visit floridalegion.org/party for additional information and online tickets.



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JROTC Color Guard Competition for National Convention and JSSP National Marksmanship Meet

Loretta Young, JROTC/JSSP Chair

jrotc@legionmail.org



I would like to thank Commander Jessica Moore for the opportunity to once again serve as the Department ROTC/JSSP Chairman for 2025–2026.

After a busy semester ending with year-end awards and JCLC Summer Leadership Camps, it's now time to begin preparations for the new school year starting in August. For many months, we've been working with the JROTC Color Guard teams on registration and fundraising for the upcoming Legion National Convention in Tampa, scheduled for August 22nd at the Convention Center, East Hall, Third Floor, at approximately 4:00 PM EST.

Details for the competition were sent out to all Departments earlier this year. As of this writing, National has confirmed 10 teams from Florida, 1 team from Mississippi, and 1 team from Tennessee registered. Registration officially closes on July 25th, and these numbers may increase, as a few more teams are still hopeful to meet the deadline.

When schools return to class in mid-August, it will be the ideal time for local posts to have their chairmen reach out to JROTC programs. These programs move quickly, with packed schedules throughout the year. Now

that JROTC has expanded its focus to include STEM education (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) along with traditional drill and ceremony, time becomes even more limited.

The most effective way to make contact is by emailing the Senior Instructor. Additionally, making time for a visit to the classroom or attending one of their events is an excellent way to introduce your post and demonstrate support. Schools don't always know what posts are nearby, so taking the initiative to connect is key to building a strong relationship.

JSSP National Marksmanship Competition

The JSSP National Marksmanship Competition is scheduled to take place July 24–26 at Hillsdale College in Michigan. Winners will be named in both the Sporter and Precision categories. The first-place winners will each receive a \$5,000 scholarship, and runners-up will receive a \$1,000 scholarship.

This year, Florida is proud to have one competitor in the Sporter Category: Cadet Zoe Enslin from the Mariner AJROTC Team in Cape Coral. Congratulations to Cadet Enslin on this outstanding achievement, and sincere thanks to Post 90 in Cape Coral for their continued support of this program over the years.

Online registration for the JSSP Postal Competition will open September 1st,

with details available on the National Legion website. Flyers are also available on the Legion Department of Florida website, and packets will be mailed to post chairmen in early September.

There will be two Postal Matches prior to qualification for the national competition. In addition, the JSSP Conference will be held in conjunction with the Americanism Conference at the Sheraton Indianapolis City Center Hotel. This conference is open to all Legionnaires, and registration closes on September 5th.

Thank you all for the outstanding work you do to support our Youth Programs—an investment in our shared future. Wishing you all a very successful upcoming season!



JCLC Summer Leadership Camp at NSU Broward County



JCLC Summer Leadership Tigertail Recreation Center and Water Sports



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Teamwork Drives Results: Let's Keep the Momentum Going!

Lena Heredia-Perez, Membership Chair
membership@legionmail.org



We've kicked off the year with great momentum, and I encourage everyone to keep that energy going strong through the end of the year. Our focus for 2025–2026 is shining a well-deserved spotlight on the Posts, recognizing your incredible hard work and unwavering commitment. Simply put—without your dedication, our Department wouldn't be where it is today.

This year's theme, *"Teamwork Drives Results,"* pairs perfectly with our Department Commander's motto: *"One Team, One Dream!"* While last year opened new opportunities in reaching our membership goals, I am confident that with the continued enthusiasm and determination across the Department, we will rise to the occasion.

Let's show the National Organization that the Department of Florida is a powerhouse of commitment and camaraderie!

A Few Important Reminders:

Email Updates

All communications from me will come from membership@legionmail.org.

If you haven't received recent updates, please check your spam or

trash folders and mark the messages as "not spam" to stay informed.

2025–2026 Department of Florida Membership Goal Dates:

Target Date	Percentage
September 4, 2025	50%
October 1, 2025	55%
November 5, 2025	65%
December 3, 2025	75%
January 7, 2026	80%
February 4, 2026	85%
March 4, 2026	90%
April 1, 2026	95%
May 6, 2026	100%
May 31, 2026	100%+1

Utilize Your Resources

Before contacting "The Bruce's" or JoAnn, please reach out to your District, Area, or Department Membership Chairs. JoAnn recently shared that when she arrived on Monday, there were 60 voicemails waiting—a sign of how overwhelming the workload can be. Your Chairs are here to support you and help relieve that pressure. If we don't have an immediate answer, our goal is to find it quickly and get you what you need.

Reconnect with Past Members

Although we've entered the 2026 membership year, don't forget to reach out to members who haven't renewed for 2024 or 2025. Re-engaging these members is key to strengthening our Legion family and welcoming back valued comrades.

Start Planning Your Membership Drive(s)

Mark your calendars for November 1, 2025, the date of our Department-wide Post Membership Drive. This is a fantastic opportunity to reconnect with lapsed members during your Veterans Day activities.

The Post in each of the five membership categories with the highest percentage increase will receive a \$150.00 award from the Department!

Post Categories

Category	Membership Range
I	15–199 members
II	200–499 members
III	500–999 members
IV	1,000–1,499 members
V	1,500+ members

Your Membership Team is here to help you succeed. Please don't hesitate to reach out—we're in this together!



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Let's Get Started

Doug Hockenberry, Oratorical Chair
oratorical@legionmail.org



Hello, Florida American Legion Family,

I want to extend my sincere thanks to our Department Commander for allowing me the opportunity to serve as your Department Oratorical Chair for Legion Year 2025–2026. I will make every effort to promote the program while providing guidance, support, and assistance throughout the Department—to Area and District Commanders, their appointed Chairs, and to our Posts.

For those who may not know, the High School Oratorical Constitutional Speech Contest, founded in 1938, is one of the oldest and most prestigious programs in The American Legion dedicated to youth—and it comes with substantial financial rewards. With that in mind, I respectfully ask each Area and District Commander to take an active role in promoting this program and to support the posts in your districts that participate.

All right—"Let's Get Started."

As you know, most high schools will reopen their doors in just a couple of weeks, and those hallways will soon be filled with potential candidates. That means now is the time to gear up and be ready to visit your local high schools. Request meetings with school administrators, guidance counselors, and career counselors to educate them about this incredible scholarship opportunity.

Also, let's not forget about home-schooled students. By law, each school district must maintain a list of home-schooled students. Request a meeting with your local school board so they can share information about the Oratorical Scholarship Program with these families as well.

Marketing the Program

Many of you may be asking:
How can we market this program effectively?

The answer: Social media. Promote the program on your Post's website, Facebook page, Instagram, and Twitter/X (if available). Today's youth are tech-savvy and rely heavily on social platforms—we must capitalize on these tools to reach as many

students as possible.

We simply cannot afford to let a deserving high school student miss out on this life-changing opportunity because they didn't hear about it.

Don't Forget the Parents & Caregivers

In addition to students, make sure you reach parents and caregivers. We have an incredible product to promote—and that product includes substantial financial benefits. Let's spread the word among school staff, administrators, and everyone who supports our youth. They can help us identify and encourage promising participants.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to serve as your Department Oratorical Chair.

That being said—"Let's Get Started" and make this year's Oratorical Program even better than last year's.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 727-514-3742 or email oratorical@legionmail.org. Stay tuned for more updates in upcoming editions of the Legion Link.

Revitalize & Grow

Judith Richards, Post Development
revitalization@legionmail.org



We've already seen amazing growth in membership—and we're just getting started!

Membership Early

Bird incentives are an excellent way to revitalize your post and retain members. Consider sending a communication to your membership encouraging them to renew now through September 30th. Let them know how their dues support the Post and remind them they're part of something meaningful in the

community.

Here are a few incentive ideas:

- Offer \$5 off membership dues for those who renew by July 30th (or another date of the post's choosing).

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<< Post Development continued from page 17

- Host a Member Renewal Day at the post. Serve a free lunch or spaghetti dinner to members who renew that day.
- Send out renewal letters, reports, or mailing labels using the available online tools—it's never been easier!

Boost Visibility and Community Engagement

Getting involved in your community is a great way to revitalize your post and grow your membership. Consider:

- Partnering with your local Chamber of Commerce
- Advertising in community newspapers, local forums, and social media
- Participating in school programs like:

- School Medals (Elementary, Middle, High School, and College)
- JROTC, Oratorical Contests, and Boys State
- Sponsoring Scouting Troops

Make your presence known:

- Use car tags and staple your post business card over the 800# or add it to the bottom of the card to help direct veterans to your post.
- Carry membership applications with you—either in your vehicle or on your person. Use the long form, which collects all the information you'll need.

Collaborate and Grow

Work with your local Active Duty, Reserve, and National Guard Armories. Recently, the Southern Area participated in Family Day with Quartermaster Unit 356—check out the photos!

We're also collaborating with several Districts on post revitalizations and development. If you're in an area that may benefit from a new post, ask yourself:

Don't Wait—Start Now!

It's vital to get your revitalization efforts on the calendar as early as possible. Waiting until the end of the year means competing with holidays, vacations, the November Conference, and year-end time crunches.

Let's plan now—not later—so we can keep the momentum going strong!

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

Changing Lives – Saving Lives
Let's make this year count!

Honoring Our POW-MIAs

Denny Luke, POW/MIA Chair

powmia@legionmail.org



Let me introduce myself. I am Denton "Denny" Luke from Dewitt B. Tilden Post 316 in Atlantic Beach, Florida. First and foremost, I want to thank

Commander Jessica Moore for the honor of appointing me as your 2025–2026 Department of Florida POW-MIA Chairman. I will strive to keep you informed on the status of any POW-MIAs, the progress of the National POW-MIA Memorial and

Museum being built in Jacksonville, and any known POW-MIA-related events.

I also want to introduce your two fellow POW-MIA Committee Members: Lance Maiden and Doug Mobley, both from the Central Area. Together, we are a strong Florida team.

I encourage everyone to visit the American Legion Department of Florida website at <https://www.floridalegion.org/programs-services/powmia-remembrance/>

[about/](#) to learn more about the POW-MIA program. Under the Resources tab, you'll find links to:

- Defense POW-MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA): <https://www.dpaa.mil>
- Library of Congress Vietnam Era POW-MIA Database
- National League of POW-MIA Families
- National Alliance of Families for the Return of America's Missing Servicemen
- The POW-MIA Chairman's Manual

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<< POW/MIA continued from page 18 >>

You can also find the National American Legion POW-MIA page at <https://www.legion.org/information-center/honor-remembrance/pow-mia>.

I also invite you to visit the National POW-MIA Memorial and Museum website at <https://powmiamemorial.org> to follow the progress of this meaningful project—the only official National POW-MIA Memorial in the United States, being built right here in Florida. I encourage you to visit the Memorial and watch it grow. While there, please take a moment to sign the petition urging Congress to pass H.R. 3057, which would designate the site as an official “National Memorial.”

At all official Legion meetings, we pay tribute to POW-MIAs, as directed by Resolution 288, adopted at the 67th American Legion National Convention. However, I ask you to reflect: what have you done personally—or as a post—to further this cause? If you or your post is planning an event related to POW-

MIA awareness or remembrance, please send us the details. We would be honored to help promote your efforts, join your event, and highlight it in the Legion Link or on our Department Facebook Page at <https://www.facebook.com/falpovmia>.

The Department of Florida American Legion Riders has taken meaningful action beyond words. They have created what is becoming a premier POW-MIA event in the Southeast: the Seven Bridges POW-MIA Remembrance Ride, held annually in recognition of National POW-MIA Recognition Day. Although the official day is the third Friday of September, we’ve partnered with the National POW-MIA Memorial Committee to hold the event on the third Saturday, allowing for greater participation by the working public. This year marks the fifth annual ride, culminating in the ceremony at the POW-MIA Memorial. This is a Department event, and I strongly encourage your participation.

During the 2023 ceremony, Florida

made history. We remain the only American Legion Department to have had the Department Commander, Vice Commanders, Auxiliary President, Squadron Commander, numerous Department Officers, and the POW-MIA Chairman all attend the National POW-MIA Memorial Ceremony together.

I hope to see you at this year’s ceremony—and if you’re a Rider, we hope to see you on the Seven Bridges POW-MIA Remembrance Ride as well. Please check the Department website for updates and additional event information.

Lastly, the 2025 POW-MIA Recognition Day Poster has been released. To order yours, visit <https://dpaa-mil.sites.crmforce.mil/dpaaFamWebPosters>. Posters are free, but quantities are limited—so place your order soon and display it proudly at your Post or other community locations.

Thank you for your continued dedication to this sacred mission.

Your Voice, Your Resolution

Clarence Hill, Resolutions Chair

resolutions@legionmail.org



This past Department Convention featured several excellent resolutions for consideration. Authors began submitting early, allowing time for thorough review and thoughtful revision—either by

incorporating suggested edits or applying their own improvements. Thank you for a job well done. I look forward to another successful year ahead.

Any Legionnaire can influence the priorities and positions of The American Legion at any level, because the organization’s direction is shaped by resolutions. A resolution

is a position-driven initiative written by members and voted on by the body. Resolutions can be introduced and passed at any level, starting with the Post, and have the potential to impact the entire organization.

The best time to begin writing a resolution is during the winter and early spring, ahead of the

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<< Resolutions continued from page 19

Department Convention held in the summer. If you plan to submit a resolution, please start early and stay in touch with me so we can collaborate to develop a strong, well-prepared document.

Writing a resolution is not difficult, but it does require attention to detail. The rules are simple—but must be followed carefully.

General Guidelines for Writing a Resolution:

1. A resolution should include supporting documents, if needed, and have a clearly defined intent.
2. It must be free of factual and legal errors.

3. The subject matter should be materially relevant to the purposes and programs of The American Legion.

Importantly, each resolution should address only one topic. Resolutions covering multiple subjects are difficult to process—especially when different committees would be involved. These may be rejected or amended to limit them to a single topic, meaning some of your intended points may have to wait until next year.

Every resolution has two major parts: the preamble and the resolving section. Each part consists of one or more clauses. The entire resolution is read as one continuous complex sentence, with only a single period

placed at the end of the last “Resolved” clause.

- The preamble outlines the reasoning and background for the resolution.
- The resolving section clearly states the action or position being proposed.

In the coming months, I will provide detailed guidance on writing effective resolutions—starting with the resolving section, which should always be written first.

Let’s continue building strong resolutions that reflect the goals and values of The American Legion.

Expanding the Impact of the School Medals Program

Randy Holeyfield, School Medals

schoolmedals@legionmail.org



With the year just getting started, I want to hit the ground running.

The School Medals Program is far more expansive than the typical medal we’re all familiar with—the one awarded for excellence in Citizenship and Americanism, which recognizes qualities such as Courage, Honor, Leadership, Patriotism, Scholarship, and Service. While that medal is important, it is often the only one promoted to our schools.

But what about the 18 other medals and awards available? Not to mention the two JROTC medals? While the JROTC program is technically separate from School Medals, in many cases it’s promoted by the same chair—and since you’re already working with the school, it’s a “two-for-one” opportunity.

This year, I want to help deeply engage school staff and expand awareness of the full range of awards The American Legion offers. Our mission is to recognize and commend youth where they excel—and there is a wide variety of medals that allow us to do just that.

I encourage your Post’s Program Chair to actively promote these

School Awards. I know from experience—and from conversations with many Posts over the years—that one of the biggest challenges is getting the program information into the right hands within a school. Fortunately, a principal friend of mine in Clermont gave me this advice: go directly to the principal (or their secretary). As he put it, “Everyone works for me.” When information comes from the principal’s office, staff pays attention and responds. This is a strategy I recommend across the board—it works.

To make your job easier, I’ve created:

- A scripted cover letter for the principal, which can accompany each packet you deliver.

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<< School Medals continued from page 20

- A summary sheet that outlines some of the awards/medals and provides short, clear descriptions of the qualifications for each.

School staff are busy, and this summary allows them to understand the program without being overwhelmed by too much reading.

In the September issue, we'll take a closer look at each of these awards and how Posts can engage their local schools more effectively. Most importantly, building a strong rapport early in the school year is key. When that connection is established, you

can introduce the full list of awards and medals, and plan ahead to place your medal orders around January—avoiding the last-minute rush that too often leads to high postage costs or, worse, medals not arriving in time for ceremonies.

I plan to attend as many District meetings as possible to help spread the word about the School Medals and Awards Program. In the Northern Area, Shelby Windam will be assisting me as a Committee Chair. He will help communicate through District meetings, District School Awards Chairs, or directly with Posts.

I'm also still looking for a volunteer to assist in the East-Southeast area of the state. If you're interested, please email or call me at (813) 716-0318.

Finally, thank you—not only to our Department Commander for her confidence in me—but to all of you across the state for your ongoing dedication. Your time and effort make a difference in recognizing and honoring the outstanding youth of our communities.

Let's make this year a strong one.

2025 Outstanding Post Scouting

Chris Ragusa, Scouting Chair

scouting@legionmail.org

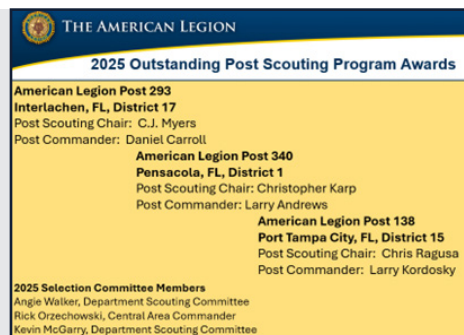


At the Annual Department Convention on Friday, July 13, 2025, I had the honor and privilege of recognizing three

Florida posts with the Outstanding Post Scouting Award. This award is designed to honor those posts that have furthered the Scouting movement by chartering and sponsoring Scouting America units within their communities.

This year, we proudly recognized:

- Post 293 in Interlachen (District 17)
- Post 340 in Pensacola (District 1)
- Post 138 in Port Tampa City (District 15)



We don't refer to these posts as "winners." The real winners are the Scouting participants, the communities that benefit from the confidence and skills this outdoor-based educational program instills, and our society, which gains from the moral and ethical leadership developed through Scouting.

These recognized posts made that possible by providing structure, sponsorship, and leadership to the units they charter and support. We received outstanding applications from posts in Milton, Destin, Pensacola, Panama City, Niceville, Jacksonville, Winter Garden, Cape Coral, Port Tampa City, and Interlachen. Bravo Zulu to all who submitted!

The next time you visit a post proudly displaying one of these plaques, take a moment to thank their leadership for investing in our future—and for helping shape the leaders of tomorrow.





FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT

AUGUST 2025 EDITION

FINAL FIGURES : Year 11 (2024-2025)



**VETS
RECEIVED
FUNDS**



\$195,539
PROVIDED AS
EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE



13
SPI PARTNERS



\$186,000
GIVEN TOWARDS
SUICIDE PREVENTION

REFLECTING ON OUR SHARED IMPACT

We officially closed the books on our 11th year as a program of the American Legion, Department of Florida, proudly serving Florida's veterans and their families. Despite operating without a caseworker for half the year, we continued to see a remarkable number of requests for support; which is a true testament to the need for our services and the dedication of our team.

Thanks to Shenicia, our new caseworker who hit the ground running, we're already seeing an uptick in impact. With her leadership, we're on track to hit two major milestones this year through our Emergency Assistance efforts:

- » **2,000** veterans served
- » **\$2 million** in financial aid distributed

These funds help keep roofs over heads, lights on, and food on the table for veterans in crisis.

Meanwhile, our Suicide Prevention Initiative has made significant strides by forging deeper relationships with our Strategic Partners. These nonprofits are focused on veteran's mental health and allow us to sponsor veterans through

established, proven systems that aim to reduce, and ultimately prevent, veteran suicide.

Our success and growth wouldn't be possible without the unwavering support of the Florida Legion Family. You continue to see the value in this mission and chose to champion it. Thank you!

Of course, with growth comes increased responsibility and a renewed focus on future sustainability. PROJECT: VetRelief is entirely funded by the generosity of individuals, Legion Posts, corporate sponsors, and community partners. Without your ongoing support, we simply cannot meet the demands of our veteran community.

As we begin a new Legion year, we ask that you keep PROJECT: VetRelief top of mind while planning your fundraising efforts. Your commitment ensures we can continue meeting critical needs for veterans across Florida.

Be sure to check our Legion Link articles each month for updated impact stats. We'll keep them posted at the top of each article.

Together, our impact is greater than ever.



STEP UP FOR PROJECT: VETRELIEF!

If you're interested in supporting PROJECT: VetRelief in a bigger way, contact PVR Chairman Stan Brown at projectvetrelief@legionmail.org.



CONGRATULATIONS, JESSICA MOORE

Best wishes for a successful and impactful year ahead. Safe travels as you lead and represent the Department across the state!

EVENTS / DATES TO REMEMBER

**SEPT
13**

VETFEST
PUBLIX FIELD (LAKELAND)
HOSTED BY: CONGRESSMAN
SCOTT FRANKLIN

**SEPT
22**

ANNUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT
GOLDEN BEAR CLUB AT KEENE'S POINTE
HOSTED BY: RL JAMES, INC (BOB JAMES)

**SEPT
27**

TRAINING: VA AND BENEFITS
LEGION POST 113 (ROTONDA WEST)
CONTACT: LARRY ROBERTS



Supporting Florida Sea Cadets

Jeff Hawk, Sea Cadets Chair

seacadets@legionmail.org

Building Tomorrow's Leaders

Across Florida, while most teens are still asleep on Saturday mornings, young men and women in crisp uniforms are assembling for drills, community service, and leadership development. They are members of the U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps—a youth program backed by the U.S. Navy and Coast Guard, and increasingly supported by the Florida American Legion.

Through mentorship, financial aid, and shared values, Legionnaires are playing a critical role in building the next generation of patriots and public servants. But as program costs rise and funding becomes more limited, many Sea Cadet units now face serious financial challenges—and they need our help.

What Is the U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps?

The Sea Cadets are a federally chartered nonprofit that provides military-style training, civic education, and leadership development for youth ages 10 to 17. Cadets train monthly and participate in advanced summer courses in fields such as seamanship, firefighting, cybersecurity, and medical response.

The Sea Cadets' mission promotes honor, respect, commitment, and service—all without requiring future enlistment. In Florida, the program is thriving, with more than thirty active

divisions, including:

- Lone Sailor Division in Windermere
- Boca Delray Division in Boca Raton
- Franklin D. Roosevelt Squadron in Jacksonville

How the Florida Legion Helps

The American Legion's long history of youth outreach makes its support of the Sea Cadets a natural extension of that mission. Across the state, Legion Posts are stepping up in meaningful ways:

Providing Space

Legion halls have opened their doors for monthly drills, awards ceremonies, and training sessions. This saves units hundreds—or even thousands—in rental costs each year.

Mentorship

Veterans serve as guest speakers, mentors, and instructors, sharing firsthand stories of military life, leadership, and integrity.

Financial Support

Posts have helped cover costs for uniforms, training fees, and travel—especially for cadets whose families otherwise couldn't afford the expenses.

The Growing Challenge

Despite the Legion's vital support, many Florida Sea Cadet divisions are struggling to stay afloat. Consider the following costs:

- Uniforms: \$300–\$500 per cadet

- Advanced training: \$200–\$400, not including travel
- Equipment (radios, first aid kits, flags): must be replaced annually
- No federal funding supports local operating costs

Volunteers keep the programs running, but rising expenses are limiting access and participation—particularly in lower-income communities.

Why It Matters

Sea Cadets aren't just learning how to salute—they're learning how to lead.

They perform color guard duties, honor veterans at local cemeteries, serve meals at post events, and speak at civic ceremonies. They are also gaining skills that translate into real-world careers and community leadership.

"The Sea Cadets taught my son more in a year than I ever imagined," said one Windermere parent. "He's more respectful, responsible, and goal-oriented—and he wouldn't have this opportunity without Legion support."

How You Can Help

Here are five simple ways individuals or Legion Posts can support their local Sea Cadet division:

- Sponsor a Cadet or Unit – Help cover uniforms or training costs
- Offer Your Post – Host drills, ceremonies, or training events

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<< Sea Cadets continued from page 23

- Volunteer – Speak at events or mentor cadet leaders
- Donate Supplies – Radios, flags, office materials, first aid kits
- Promote Their Work – Feature cadets in newsletters, parades, and civic events

A Call to Action

Imagine if every Legion Post in Florida informally adopted a local Sea Cadet unit. We could ensure no young person is turned away due to

financial hardship, and that every cadet has the support they need to thrive.

Conclusion: Our Legacy, Their Future

The relationship between the American Legion and the Sea Cadets is more than symbolic—it's essential. When veterans support cadets, they pass on a tradition of service that doesn't just honor the past—it shapes the future.

In the Sea Cadets, we see our values

carried forward.

In the Legion, they see what service truly looks like.

Let's keep this partnership alive. Let's keep showing up. Because the legacy of service doesn't end with us—it begins with them.

To support your local Sea Cadet unit or learn more, contact Sea Cadets American Legion Chairman and volunteer Jeff Hawk.

Email: seacadet@legionmail.org

Updates, Advocacy, and a Touch of Humor

Alan Cohen, VA&R Chair

var@legionmail.org



It never ceases to amaze me how quickly time passes. It seems like just yesterday we were navigating the hotel snafu at our Department

Convention—and yet, we came together and made the most of it. Despite the challenges, we enjoyed another great gathering and elected a strong new leadership team. Let's do all we can to support them in the year ahead.

Recently, I had the honor of participating in the VA's Simulation-Based Healthcare Design Testing Program. Providers from across the country were brought together to help redesign specialty care exam rooms, improving how healthcare is delivered to our veteran community. I've been invited to participate

again—this time just before the National Convention later this month.

Here's a link if you'd like to learn more about how the program works: [VA Simulation-Based Design Testing Program](#)



Alan Cohen and Dr. Paul Lawrence

I also had the opportunity to spend time in Tallahassee, where I met with Dr. Paul Lawrence, the second-highest official in the Veterans Administration. We conducted two Veterans Town Hall events. One question raised during the events was about potential reductions in staffing.

Dr. Lawrence made it clear: there will be no reduction in essential personnel, meaning that healthcare and benefits delivery will not be impacted.

Southern Area Women Veterans Expo – Save the Date

I'm proud to announce that on Saturday, November 1, 2025, the Southern Area will host a Women Veterans Expo at Post 142 in Pompano Beach. This will be a first-of-its-kind event for our area—more details to come soon!

A Word on Predatory Claims

Once again, I want to raise awareness about predatory claims companies and individuals. These groups prey on veterans by making promises they can't deliver, requiring illegal contracts, and charging outrageous fees for services that veterans can get for free from accredited County or

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<< VA&R continued from page 24 >>

FDVA Service Officers.

If you—or any veteran you know—needs help, do not go through outside, unaccredited sources. Contact a qualified Service Officer instead.

Recent VA Updates

- **Cannabis Policy Change:**
In a recent amendment to the VA budget bill, VA doctors are now permitted to recommend cannabis (where legal) if a veteran has proper documentation. This does not mean they can prescribe it, but it's a major step forward in allowing open discussions between providers and patients.
- **Survivor Assistance Improvements:** The VA's Office of Survivors Assistance has

created a "white glove" outreach team to help eligible survivors with Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) claims—and to re-examine past claims that may have been decided incorrectly.

Be the One: Suicide Prevention Training

I strongly encourage all members to take part in the American Legion's Be the One training. This online session, led by suicide prevention experts, uses the Columbia Protocol—a proven tool in identifying and supporting those at risk. While we may never completely eliminate veteran suicide, together we can reduce it and save lives.

Looking Ahead: National Convention in Tampa

I look forward to seeing everyone at the National Convention in Tampa—

just a few weeks away! It's an exciting time for the Department of Florida and for all of us.

While attending meetings and classes, I also recommend visiting the vendor booths—especially:

- Cell Phones for Soldiers, whose work has helped countless homeless veterans reconnect and rebuild their lives
- Neurolumen, whose pain-relief devices have been instrumental in helping many veterans recover from chronic pain

A Little Humor to Close

Getting older isn't easy, my friends. I asked Siri about my life expectancy, and she changed the subject. I went to an antique furniture store—and they wouldn't let me leave.

Follow me for more life lessons. Out here.

2025 Tampa Convention Update

Clarence Hill, 2025 Ntnl Con Corp Pres
pnchill@legionmail.org



The Chairpersons for the various convention committees are as follows:

- Badges and Packets – Keith Berres
- Distinguished Guests – Dennis Boland
- Information/Registration – James Burk
- Memorial Service/Special Events – Karen Warren

- Liaison – Don Hinst

These Chairpersons are finalizing their teams, which has proven to be a challenge. While we initially had nearly 90 volunteers sign up, many withdrew after being contacted by the committee chairs. With the convention quickly approaching, these committees must complete their assigned tasks to ensure a smooth and successful start.

The Florida State Legislature has passed the budget, and we are set to receive \$125,000 toward transportation costs, which

were contracted at \$236,000. Contributions from Posts, Auxiliaries, SAL, and Riders—whether through donations or fundraisers—are still very much needed and greatly appreciated.

All Chairpersons and their committees will meet with The American Legion National just before the start of the National Convention to finalize their responsibilities and ensure everything is in place.

I want to emphasize again that this is a massive undertaking for Florida.

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<< National Convention continued from page 25

Your continued support, donations, and volunteer efforts are crucial to making this event a success. The deadlines are here, and it's time for all of us to step up and make Florida proud.

Hosting a National Convention is no small task. It's costly, highly visible, and every member from every Department becomes a critic. But it's also a tremendous opportunity to showcase the very best of what Florida has to offer.

If you're able to volunteer in any capacity, we would be grateful for your help. The volunteer form is available at www.floridalegion.org.

Let's make this convention a success—together.

Supporting the Child Well-Being Foundation

Dennis Boland, Child Well Being Fdn Pres
pdcboland@legionmail.org



One meaningful way to support the American Legion Child Well-Being Foundation is through its Memorial Contribution

Envelope. With a donation of \$25.00 or more, the Foundation will notify the next of kin that a contribution has been made in memory of their loved one. You can also designate the organization to receive credit for your donation.

Filling out the memorial card is simple:

- Include your name and address as the sender.

- Provide the name of the person being honored.
- Fill in the next of kin's name and address.

The Foundation will send a letter to the next of kin acknowledging your thoughtful gift.

To request memorial envelopes, contact Stacy Cope at scope@legion.org.

100% Per Capita Banner Program

Another impactful way to support the Foundation is by participating in the 100% Per Capita Banner Program. Each American Legion Post, Auxiliary Unit, Sons of The American Legion Squadron, American Legion Riders Chapter, and Eight and Forty Salon

that donates at least \$1 per member during the award year (June 1 – May 31) is eligible to receive a commemorative banner/streamer.

To qualify for the 2025–2026 award year, donations must be based on your membership total as of June 1, 2025, and submitted between June 1, 2025, and May 31, 2026.

The required donation form is available at: www.cwf-inc.org

Thank you for your continued support of the American Legion Child Well-Being Foundation and its mission to serve the children and youth of our nation.

Kicking Off a Strong Year with the Detachment of Florida

Michael Nigbor, Detachment Cmdr
commander@floridasons.org



Greetings from The Detachment of Florida,

Thank you to everyone who attended our 53rd Annual Convention. A lot of exciting things have happened! Congratulations to Assistant

Detachment Adjutant John Jennings for being selected as the Sons Member of the Year. John is always dedicated to helping us be the best we can be for ourselves and for the organization.

Congratulations to PDC Rocky on your fantastic year—and wow, accomplishing the "Triple Nickle Award"! Absolutely amazing. The R.A.C.E. theme was a wonderful

program for our veterans. We reached over 105%. Great job to all of our dedicated volunteers!

Right after Convention, I was invited to attend Boys State in Tallahassee. What an awesome event for these young men. It was inspiring to see their patriotism and support for the legacy of civic duty. I witnessed young Americans speak passionately

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<< SAL continued from page 26



about the U.S. Constitution and the responsibilities of citizenship. After I gave my speech, eight young men wearing their S.A.L. covers

approached me for a group picture—an unforgettable moment.

I've traveled the state—from Navarre to Panama City, Madeira Beach, Treasure Island, Palm Bay, Melbourne, St. Petersburg, Winter Haven, all of Districts 8 and 13, and many places in between. It has been an absolute pleasure meeting with the incredible leaders in our squadrons.

As I prepared for this role, the Commander's Advisory Committee was exceptional. Their guidance and expertise made this a smooth transition for me.

Several of us were also invited to the Safety Harbor Fourth of July parade, where we rode in some awesome

custom Jeeps. A great time was had by all. Nearly every child waved an American flag—along with their parents. Thank you to everyone who volunteered to make it a success.

I've had the honor of installing officers at several squadrons and attending many others. Great job to our District Commanders for sharing our 2025–2026 mission: C.A.R.E. (Communicate, Action, Recruit, Educate), and supporting our charity: C.O.T.A. (Children's Organ Transplant Association).

I've been invited to speak at the Department's annual Leadership Retreat in Orlando. I'll be sharing a general overview of the Detachment, including accomplishments, donations, membership, and a look ahead to our goals.

By now, most of your installations are complete and SIR reports are being consolidated. Let's keep the momentum going and help each other stay on track throughout the year. We can and must do better. We have a great team of advisors ready to assist your area—because we C.A.R.E. Please log in to floridasons.org

and get familiar with the valuable information available.

Continue to work your membership. Call your members and check in. Thank them for their continued support and tell them about our membership challenge. I would love to see every member recruit at least one new member this year. Recruit, renew, rejoin, and retain—this is vital to our growth and survival.

If you'd like me to attend your events, feel free to reach out. I look forward to visiting EVERY SINGLE District in Florida this year. With your help, I know it will be a fantastic one. We are The American Legion Family—Florida Strong.

Don't forget to use #SALCares in your social media and event promotions so I can follow your great work.



2025 Florida Boys State

Our 2025 Boys State session in Tallahassee was a tremendous success! A heartfelt thank you goes out to everyone who participated, volunteered, and supported this incredible program. Your dedication is what continues to make Boys State one of the premier youth leadership experiences in the country.



District 7
Headed to
Tallahassee



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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."*

In Memoriam: Past Department Commander Warren Post

It is with deep sorrow that we announce the passing of Past Department Commander Warren Post of Lady Lake, Florida. Warren passed away on July 12, 2025, at the age of 86.

A proud U.S. Air Force and Vietnam War veteran, Warren served 20 years before retiring in 1977. He later worked as a corporate hotel Controller in Atlanta until 2001. A dedicated Legionnaire for 54 years,

he served in Idaho, New York, and Florida, eventually leading as Department Commander of Florida in 2007–2008, during which membership reached a record 144,078.

Warren was preceded in death by his wife, DeLoris, and son, Michael. He leaves behind a legacy of leadership and service that inspired countless members across the Legion Family.

Funeral services will be held Tuesday, August 12 at 2:00 PM at Bushnell Florida National Cemetery (6202 SW 102nd Ave., Bushnell, FL).

Condolences may be sent to:
Dedra DiNicola & William Dyer
c/o Post 219
P.O. Box 1
Fruitland Park, FL 34731

Updates will be shared via email and posted on our website.

In Memoriam: Past 2nd District Commander Ralph W. Camp, Jr.

With deep sorrow, we share the passing of Past 2nd District Commander Ralph W. Camp, Jr. of Cape Coral Post 90. Ralph passed away on July 11, 2025, at the age of 78. He is survived by his wife, Barbara, his son Ralph, and daughters Christine, Brianna, and Heather.

A proud U.S. Navy veteran, Ralph served from 1964 to 1992. He continued his service through 26 years with The American Legion, holding key leadership roles at the Post, District, and Department levels.

Service details will be posted on the Department website as they become available.

Condolences may be sent to:
Barbara Camp
1302 SE 34th Terrace
Cape Coral, FL 33904

Please keep his loved ones in your thoughts.

For full details and updates visit www.floridalegion.org



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MEMBERSHIP TARGET REPORT

July 31, 2025

District 4	Darcy Bockman-Wright	48.31%
District 9	Jim Tewes	42.70%
District 1	Robert Osmon	42.15%
District 2	Roxann Dressel	41.18%
District 15	Drew Davis	40.80%
District 5	Miguel Garcia	39.99%
District 6	David Musser	39.71%
District 12	Daniel Martin	38.45%
District 3	Rick Cabrera	37.99%
District 16	Michael Harley	37.82%
District 13	Laurene Allen-Flower	37.68%
District 11	Stanley Brown, Jr.	37.07%
District 8	Charlie Magnus	36.98%
District 7	Kalvin Thompson	36.96%
District 17	Jim Bowers	36.67%
District 14	Angela Glover	35.99%
Western	Shelby Windham	42.02%
Northern	Doug Hockenberry	40.83%
Eastern	Joan Suelter	39.14%
Central	Rick Orzechowski	38.53%
Southern	Geo Bograkovs	38.52%
Southwestern	Eric Loyd	37.37%
Post 400		48.59%
Post 208		38.50%

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2025 Department Convention Summary

Department

mail@floridalegion.org

Approved Constitution & By-Laws Amendments

Constitution:

- Amendment #1 – Article X, Section 18 (Post Organization)

By-Laws:

- Amendment #8 – Article II, Section 8 (Department Executive Committee)
- Amendment #9 – Article III, Sections 1(c) & 16 (Commissions and Committees)

Updated Constitution and By-Laws are available on the Department website under "Resources, Forms, Official Documents."

Approved Resolutions

- #1: Support for boarding kennels for service animals at VA hospitals
- #2: Endorsement of Barry Roberts for National Chaplain
- #3: Support for adoption and promotion of the Red Star Service Banner
- #5: Endorsement of the Cecil Field POW/MIA Memorial & Museum
- #8: Approval of a Department per capita dues increase from \$34 to \$37, effective January 1, 2026

Election of 2025-2026 Department Officers

- Commander: Jessica Moore
- 1st Vice Commander: Robert Matheson
- 2nd Vice Commander: Bruce Carl
- Historian: Edward Lewis
- Chaplain: Barry Roberts
- Sergeant-at-Arms: Troy Horsley

2025 End of Year Awards

Americanism Best Post Program

- Winner: Post 318
- Runner-up: Post 83

Blood Donor – Margaret Skaggs Awards

- Winner: Post 296
- Runner-up: Post 90

Children & Youth Post Program

- Winner: Post 117
- Runner-up: Post 318

Children & Youth Post Chair

- Winner: Kevin Heisler, Post 137

JROTC Post Program

- Winner: Post 8
- Runner-up: Post 419

Shooting Sports Post Program

- Winner: Post 90

Public Relations Best Post Program

- Winner: Post 273
- Runner-up: Post 117

Outstanding Post Scouting Program

- Winners:
 - ◇ Post 138
 - ◇ Post 293

- ◇ Post 340

Religious Emphasis Best Post Program

- Winner: Post 107
- Runner-up: Post 137

Four Chaplains Memorial Service Best Post Program

- Winner: Post 155
- Runner-up: Post 243

School Medal Best Post Program

- Winner: Post 137
- Runner-up: Post 8

Social Media Best Post Program

- Winner: Post 273
- Runner-up: Post 117

Best History Book Narrative

- Winner: Post 35

Best Yearbook

- Winner: Post 117

Best Legion Riders Yearbook

- Winner: Chapter 117

Tracy Taylor Award

- Winner: Susan Kohler, Post 273

Eddie Humer Award

- Winner: Brian Chetwynde, Post 78
- Runner-up: James Lance, Post 394

Best Outstanding Adjutant of the Year

- Winner: Bethany Eller, Post 419

Wilson Timmons Memorial Award

- Winner: Post 103

Legionnaire of the Year

- Winner: James Middlekauff, Post 112

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<< Dept Con Summary continued from page 30

2025 Department Champions

Boys State Governor (2024)

- Winner: Terry Shen

Eagle Scout of the Year

- Winner: Nicholas Storm

Oratorical Contest

- Winner: William Kiker

JROTC Cadet of the Year

- Winner: Adrielle Costa

Junior Shooting Sports – Precision Individual

- Winner: Irizarry Jagrieliz

Junior Shooting Sports – Precision Team

- Winner: Sarasota Military Academy

◇ Irizarry Jagrieliz

◇ Mallory Edwards

◇ Josephine Jamison

◇ Giada D'Auria

Junior Shooting Sports – Sporter Individual

- Winner: Tyler Dennard

Junior Shooting Sports – Sporter Team

- Winner: Mariner High School

◇ Tyler Dennard

◇ Zoe Enslin

◇ Elyssa Vazquez

◇ Jakobe Changasie

General Scholarship

- Winner: Robert Owens

Veterans Service Officer Association

Scholarship

- Winner: Nicholas Storm

Nursing School Scholarship

- Winner: Haley Luzader

Law Officer of the Year

- Winner: Detective Robert Padron
Sunrise Police Department

Firefighter of the Year

- Winner: Engineer Henry Helwig
Citrus County Fire & Rescue

EMT/Paramedic of the Year

- Winner: Paramedic Loren VanDruff
Citrus County Fire & Rescue

Teacher of the Year

- Winner: Julie Austin
Pineapple Cove Classical Academy

Employer Awards

- Employer of Veterans
Employer of the Disabled
Employer of Older Workers

◇ Winner (All Three): Bass Pro Shops

Employment Service – Local Office

- Winner: CareerSource Gateway

Membership Awards

Early Bird 50% Membership, by September 5, 2024

1	32	57	111	137	173	235	284	365
3	36	59	112	142	187	236	286	385
11	37	66	114	144	202	243	293	389
16	38	68	115	145	210	248	302	392
19	43	78	118	149	220	252	304	404
22	45	92	119	153	221	255	328	413
23	51	96	121	155	222	259	340	416
26	53	98	123	157	224	270	354	418
27	54	99	127	166	230	271	357	419
29	56	100	129	172	234	272	358	420

75% Membership, by December 4, 2024

3	43	77	123	172	215	284	361	416
16	44	98	127	187	230	293	380	418
26	45	112	145	192	234	302	392	419
27	51	114	149	194	241	328	403	420
29	54	118	153	202	243	354	404	421
42	68	121	154	210	255	357	413	

80% Membership, by January 8, 2025

2	42	92	123	181	236	284	356	404
3	43	96	127	183	237	286	357	413
9	44	98	129	187	238	293	358	416
11	45	100	137	194	241	302	359	418
13	51	103	145	200	243	303	361	420
16	54	108	149	202	252	309	371	421
18	56	110	153	210	254	314	372	
22	57	112	154	215	255	321	373	
26	58	114	155	219	259	328	380	
27	62	115	157	221	267	336	385	
29	68	117	166	225	270	340	389	
31	77	118	171	230	271	348	392	
35	78	119	172	234	272	351	394	
36	90	121	173	235	275	354	402	

90% Membership, by March 5, 2025

2	43	90	123	168	215	254	316	373
3	44	92	127	171	219	255	318	380
11	45	96	129	172	221	259	321	389
13	51	98	130	173	224	267	328	392
17	54	100	137	181	230	269	336	394
18	56	103	139	182	234	270	340	402
22	57	108	145	183	236	271	348	413
26	58	109	147	187	237	272	351	416
27	62	112	148	194	238	275	354	418
28	68	114	149	197	239	284	357	419
31	72	115	153	199	241	285	358	420
34	77	117	154	200	242	302	359	421
35	78	118	155	201	243	303	361	
36	80	119	157	202	246	309	371	
42	83	121	166	210	252	314	372	

95% Membership, by April 2, 2025

3	22	29	36	45	58	78	96	108
11	26	31	42	51	62	80	98	109
16	27	34	43	54	68	90	100	112
18	28	35	44	56	77	92	103	114

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<< Dept Con Summary continued from page 31

95% Membership, by April 2, 2025 (Continued)

117	148	172	201	238	270	328	373	418
118	149	173	202	239	272	333	380	419
121	153	181	210	241	284	336	385	420
123	154	182	215	242	302	348	389	421
127	157	183	221	243	303	354	392	
130	165	187	224	246	309	357	394	
137	166	194	230	254	312	361	402	
145	168	199	236	255	314	371	413	
147	171	200	237	267	318	372	416	

100% Membership, by May 7, 2025

3	34	68	114	148	194	237	303	380
9	35	72	117	149	195	238	304	385
10	36	75	118	153	199	239	312	392
11	42	77	120	154	200	241	314	394
16	43	78	121	157	201	243	321	402
18	44	80	123	166	202	244	328	413
22	45	92	126	168	210	254	333	416
26	51	96	127	171	215	255	354	418
27	54	98	129	173	221	267	357	419
28	56	100	133	181	222	272	361	420
29	57	103	137	182	224	284	371	421
30	58	108	144	183	230	285	372	422
31	67	112	145	187	236	302	373	

100%+1 Membership, by May 31, 2025

3	36	77	120	155	202	246	314	392
9	43	78	123	157	210	252	321	394
11	45	79	126	166	215	254	325	402
16	46	80	127	168	221	255	328	413
18	51	83	129	171	224	258	331	418
22	54	92	133	173	230	266	333	419
26	56	96	135	181	233	267	336	420
27	57	98	137	183	236	272	348	421
28	58	100	144	187	237	284	354	422
29	62	103	145	194	238	285	359	
30	67	108	148	197	239	302	361	
31	69	114	149	199	242	303	371	
34	72	117	153	200	243	304	372	
35	75	118	154	201	244	312	373	

Post Honor Ribbon Recipients

3	68	145	210	314	380	420
42	118	153	215	328	413	
51	123	172	234	357	416	

Highest Percentage of Membership by May 31, 2025

Category I	Post 421, Lake City	206.67%
Category II	Post 373, Orange Park	246.53%
Category III	Post 54, Fernandina Beach	116.19%
Category IV	Post 103, Punta Gorda	106.51%
Category 5	Post 318, Port St. Lucie	99.77%

Post All Time High Award

- Otto M. Walker, Post 49
- Bryant Phillips, Post 215
- Ernest M. Schultz, III, Post 351
- Stephen H. Dorr, Jr., Post 413
- Farris H. Davis, Post 416
- All American Veterans of Bevard County, Post 420

Post Retention Awards, by May 7, 2025

90%	8	114	144	194	328	357
	56	118	153	230	333	374
	112	127	154	255	346	
100%	42	109	165	210	241	385 422
	51	123	172	215	314	416
	68	145	195	234	322	421

100% Legion Family Ribbons

3	42	75	118	166	215	267	328	413
9	43	77	120	171	221	272	333	416
10	44	78	121	173	222	284	357	419
11	45	96	123	181	230	285	361	420
18	51	100	126	182	236	302	371	421
22	54	103	145	187	238	303	372	422
26	56	108	148	195	239	304	380	
29	57	114	153	199	243	314	385	
34	68	117	155	210	254	321	394	

District Commander New Post Achievement

- Stuart Scott
District 3, Post 421
District 3, Post 422

District Commander Achievement Award & Honor Ribbon

- Doug Hockenberry, District 4
- Angela Glover, District 14

District Commander Race to the Top Award

Category II	Angela Glover	District 14
Category III	Doug Hockenberry	District 4

Congratulations, Doug Hockenberry, on placing 1st in the Nation and Angela Glover 2nd in the Nation, in their categories!

100%+1 Highest Percentage of Membership Commander Achievement , by May 31, 2025

District

- Doug Hockenberry, District 4
- Miguel Garcia, District 5
- Angela Glover, District 14
- Bryant Thorpe, District 17

Area

- Jim Bowers, Northern Area

Aea & District Highest Percentage of Membership

- Doug Hockenberry, District 4, 106.22%
- Jim Bowers, Northern Area, 103.07%

Silver Brigade Membership

- Michael Mason, Post 323
- Deveron Reeves, Post 137
- Mark Cowan, Post 36

Gold Brigade Membership

1st Year

- Renea Bohnen, Post 392
- Catherine Butler, Post 240
- Bill Niemiec, Post 250
- Kelly Valliere, Post 57

2nd Year

- John Holbert, Post 273
- George Stern II, Post 103

3rd Year

- Binion Williams, Post 137
- Toshiko Moultrie, Post 197
- Susan Kohler, Post 273

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2025-2026 COMMANDER JESSICA MOORE

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<< Dept Con Summary continued from page 32

Gold Brigade (Continued)

9th Year

- Anthony Torregossa, Post 273

10th Year

- Daniel Koker, Post 273

25th Year

- Clarence Hill, Post 316

Recruiter of the Year

- Kelly Valliere, Post 57, Lake City

Department Executive Committee (DEC) Meeting Summaries

Thursday, June 12, 2025 – Regular Session

- Time: 3:00 PM
- Presiding: Department Commander Chris Hamrick
- Attendance: 45 DEC Members Present

The following is a summary of the major items discussed and decisions made by the DEC, in the order they were addressed:

1. **Ratification of Permanent Charter**
A request was presented for a permanent charter for Columbia County Post 422 in Lee, Florida, established to serve the eastern side of Madison County following the closure of Post 131. With strong community support and active leadership, the DEC voted to ratify the charter.
2. **Charters Discussed**
 - Post 208 (Cyber Post):
With no active officer structure or operational activity, and functioning identically to Post

400, the DEC approved a motion to cancel the charter. Members will be transferred to Post 400 to support better member access for local posts.

- Post 389 (Ruskin):
Although the Post indicated interest in turning in its charter, an investigation revealed that several members wish to remain active. Due to leadership and logistical challenges, the DEC approved a motion to investigate further and revisit at the Fall Conference.
- Squadron 389:
Experiencing similar inactivity, the Post voted to turn in the squadron's charter. However, the DEC voted to suspend the squadron's charter rather than dissolve it, allowing for potential revitalization pending the outcome of Post 389's review.

3. Department Finance Committee Report

Finance Officer Shirley Douglas presented the Department's financial report as of March 31, 2025, and shared budget proposals for the upcoming fiscal year. Current Financials (as of March 31, 2025):

- Total Income: \$3,372,860
- Total Expenses: \$3,169,158
- Net Income: \$203,701
- Total Assets: \$5,394,813
- Total Liabilities: \$361,515

2025–2026 Budget Approvals:

The Department Executive Committee approved the following proposed budgets:

The American Legion, Department of Florida

- Budgeted Income: \$4,226,700
- Budgeted Expenses: \$4,332,250
- Deficit: \$105,550

Sons of The American Legion, Detachment of Florida

- Budgeted Income: \$281,750
- Budgeted Expenses: \$281,750
- Balanced Budget

American Legion Riders

- Projected Income: \$383,730
- Projected Expenses: \$112,900
- Amount Allocated for Donations: \$270,830

4. Proposed ALR SOP Amendment

Department ALR Chair Jim Wineland presented a proposed amendment to Article V, Section 2(c) of the Department American Legion Riders Standard Operating Procedures (SOP). The amendment aims to prohibit members of Headquarters Post 400, Unit 400, or Squadron 9999 from joining an ALR Chapter. The DEC voted to approve the amendment.

5. Proposed Amendment to the Rules Governing Trials

Department Judge Advocate David Pleasanton presented a proposed amendment to the Rules Governing Trials, which was approved by the DEC. (The updated version of the Governing

continued on page 34 >>





<< Dept Con Summary continued from page 33

Trials is available on the
Department of Florida's website)

Sunday, June 15, 2025 – Regular Session

- Time: 9:30 AM
- Presiding: Newly Elected
Department Commander Jessica Moore
- Attendance: 55 DEC Members Present

The following is a summary of the major items discussed and decisions made by the DEC, in the order they were addressed:

1. 14th District Commander & First Vice Commander Appointments
Commander Moore appointed Angela Glover to fill the vacancy of 14th District Commander and Thomas Frank to fill the vacancy of 14th District First Vice Commander. Both appointments were ratified by the DEC.
2. Second Vice Commander for the 9th District Appointment
Commander Moore appointed Dave Hurst to fill the vacancy of 9th District Second Vice Commander. This appointment was ratified by the DEC.
3. Department Commander's Appointments:
Commander Moore presented the following appointments for the 2025-2026 term, all of which were ratified:
 - Judge Advocate: David Pleasanton

- Assistant Judge Advocate: R. Curtis McNeil
- Membership Chair: Lena Heredia-Perez
- Finance Committee Chair: Kurt Gies
- Finance Committee 5-year appointment: Bill Mitchem
- Legion College 3-year appointment: Stuart Scott
- Time & Place 5-year appointment: Chris Hamrick
- Children & Youth Fund Committee 3-year appointment: Thomas Johnson
- Religious Emphasis Committee 3-year appointment: Bill Musto

The DEC also approved Commander Moore to make necessary appointments throughout his term.

4. Department Adjutant's Briefing:
Adjutant Bruce E. Comer gave a brief overview of key administrative items and responsibilities:
 - All Department Officers, Area Commanders, District Commanders, and District Vice Commanders must provide their DD214 with a current Distinguished Legionnaire Form.
 - Accidental Death and Dismemberment Insurance coverage is provided while conducting official Legion business on behalf of the Department of Florida.
 - Roles and responsibilities of

Department Officers, Area Commanders, and District Officers.

- Submission of Expense Reports and Monthly Activity Reports.
- Important dates for the upcoming year:
 - ◇ Leadership Retreat: July 11-13, 2025
 - ◇ National Membership Workshop: August 8-9, 2025
 - ◇ 106th National Convention: August 22-28, 2025
 - ◇ Department Fall Conference: November 21-23, 2025

Did you attend classes at our 2025 Department Convention?

If so, we want to hear from you.

Please take a moment to complete our survey:
<https://www.floridalegion.org/news-events/department-convention/feedback/>



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AMERICAN LEGION POST 8

CAR & MOTORCYCLE SHOW

PRESENTED BY
SONS OF THE
 **AMERICAN
LEGION**

SATURDAY, SEPT. 27

9:30 AM - 3 PM

REGISTRATION STARTS
AT 8:00 AM

GREAT FOOD BY
LEGIONARY GRILL

TROPHIES PRESENTED
AT 3:00 PM



\$25

ENTRY DONATION

TROPHIES INCLUDE:

1ST PLACE
2ND PLACE
3RD PLACE
COMMANDERS CHOICE

CONTACT DAN HEIER FOR MORE INFO
heierh@aol.com | 863-212-6327

FRIERSON-NICHOLS AMERICAN LEGION POST 8
300 AVE. M NW, WINTER HAVEN, FL 33881

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Support Florida's veterans by donating products, services, gift cards, experiences, or bundles to our online silent auction.

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Department of Florida

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- ✓ Nationwide exposure
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AUG 2025



Department
of Florida

Veterans Serving Since 1919



Dear Patriot,

We're proud to announce that Florida has been selected to host the **2025 National American Legion Convention** this August in Tampa! This major event is expected to welcome over 8,000 attendees from across the country, including veterans, their families, and patriotic supporters.

As the host Department, we are taking on a significant financial commitment to ensure a successful and memorable event. To help offset these costs and highlight the vibrant local business community, we're organizing an **online silent auction** and would love you to be part of it!

Why Participate?

- Prominent recognition: Your business name, logo, and item description will be featured alongside your donation.
- Nationwide visibility: The auction is open to all, with no residency restrictions, offering your brand broad exposure.
- Meaningful impact: Your support helps fund essential programs and services for Florida's veterans and their families.

By contributing, you'll not only showcase your products or services to a nationwide audience but also demonstrate your support for those who have served our country. Our attendees are passionate about supporting veteran-focused causes, and your donation helps make that possible.

We anticipate the auction will go live in the first part of August, and you'll also be able to browse and bid on items yourself. Full details will be available soon at www.floridalegion.org.

If you have any questions or would like to contribute an item, please contact us at (407) 295-2631 or support@floridalegion.org.

Thank you for considering this opportunity to partner with us and make a lasting difference.

Sincerely,

Jessica Moore

Department Commander



(407) 295-2631 Office
(407)-299-0901 Fax



www.floridalegion.org
support@floridalegion.org



P.O. Box 547859
Orlando, FL
32854



Department
of Florida

Silent Auction Item Donation Form

Hosted during The American Legion National Convention
in Tampa Bay, August 22-28, 2025

★You can complete it online at floridalegion.org/auction★

CONTACT INFORMATION

Official Name of Business or Organization

Contact Person

Job Title

Email

Phone

DONATED ITEM DETAILS

Item Type: ☐ Product ☐ Service

Detailed description of item (will be used to promote on site)

List any restrictions, blackout or expiration date(s)

Item retail value

Other instructions or comments

DELIVERY / PICK UP INFORMATION (PLEASE CHECK ONE OF THE FOLLOWING)

☐ Will **deliver** by August 1, 2025 ☐ Need item **picked up** by Legion representative ☐ Item is **enclosed**

SUBMIT FORM AND/OR ITEM VIA

Fax:



(407-299-0901 Fax

Email:



support@floridalegion.org

Mail:



1912 Lee Rd
Orlando, FL 32810

QUESTIONS?: Contact Jennifer Cooper at 407-295-2631 or jcooper@floridalegion.org

The American Legion, Department of Florida is a 5019©19 nonprofit organization. TAX ID: 59-0142062

***PLEASE INCLUDE BROCHURES, PHOTOS, MENUS, OR PROGRAMS TO HELP PROMOTE ITEM**

THE AMERICAN LEGION, DEPARTMENT OF FLORIDA INVITES YOU TO

FLORIDA PARTY DINNER CRUISE

SUPERHEROES AND VILLAINS



MENU House Salad, Seasonal Chicken, Pasta of the Day, Seasonal Vegetables, and Dessert

YACHT BOARDING AT TAMPA CONVENTION CENTER MARINA

 **AMERICAN
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Department of Florida

TICKETS \$75 3-minute walk from FL delegate hotel | Boarding: 6:00 PM | Sail: 6:30 PM | Return: 8:30 PM
Visit floridalegion.org/party for additional information and online tickets.

THE AMERICAN LEGION, DEPARTMENT OF FLORIDA INVITES YOU TO

FLORIDA PARTY DINNER CRUISE



SUPERHEROES AND VILLAINS



Dressy casual is the code, but if you're feeling bold... channel your inner hero or unleash your inner villain – dress to impress and have some fun!

Attire Options:

- Full Superhero or Villain Costumes – Capes, masks, and spandex welcome
*with limitations – see notes below.
- Hero/Villain-Inspired Formal Wear – Think elegant with a heroic twist (e.g., Wonder Woman colors, Captain America suit, Poison Ivy accessories, or a sleek Loki-inspired ensemble).
- Dressy Casual with a Pop of Power (or Evil!) – Superhero/villain tees paired with blazers, comic-themed dresses, or accessories like crowns, utility belts, or dramatic capes.

Important Notes:

- Masks that fully cover the face are **NOT** permitted.
- Please ensure costumes are tasteful and appropriate.
- No real or replica weapons permitted.
- Be creative, be comfortable, and enjoy the evening!

GET TICKETS ONLINE: www.floridalegion.org/party

Join us, August 25, 2025, 6:00 PM - 8:30 PM, Florida Party during National Convention in Tampa.

Yes, I would like to attend the Florida Party Dinner Cruise!

Name: _____ Phone: _____

of Tickets: _____ x \$75 each = Total Due \$ 0.00

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 delegate registration at National Convention or at boarding.

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