

THE AMERICAN LEGION

Dispatch

July 2013

A National Headquarters Publication

MEMBERSHIP



ATTRACT NEW MEMBERS

Share with qualified veterans why they should belong, and register them, whether you're using a pencil or a computer.

By Cameron Richardson

New recruiting materials and online services make joining and renewing easier than ever are now available to help The American Legion grow to an all-time high in numbers by the organization's 100th anniversary in 2019.

Most prospective members do not realize all that The American Legion does for veterans, servicemembers, their families and communities at the local, state and national levels. With the "Why You Should Belong" brochure, it's much easier to share that information with prospective members.

The brochure is a one-stop recruiting tool that provides information on dozens of Legion programs, as well as the impact of those

programs. It's a valuable asset for any Legionnaire on the recruiting trail.

For example, let prospective new members know that each year the Legion:

- Helps thousands of veterans receive VA benefits they earned through service to their country.
- Conducts, promotes and supports hundreds of career fairs for veterans and transitioning servicemembers, bringing employers face to face with job hunters.
- Lobbies Congress for better quality of life for U.S. military personnel.
- Provides more than \$138,000 in scholar-

See *Legion membership* on Page 6

NEWS ALERT

Legacy Run hotel listings

Hotel options are available for participants in this year's American Legion Legacy Run. Participants are asked to book their own rooms using personal credit cards, and to make sure to look for military retiree, American Legion, AARP and other discounts to reduce costs. See hotel listings: www.legion.org/riders/hotels

Watch Legion World Series games live

The 2013 Legion Baseball World Series, Aug. 16-20, will be live streamed on ESPN3. www.ESPN3.com

Free admission to Blue Star museums

Museums across the country designated as "Blue Star Museums" are offering free admission for active-duty military personnel and their families through Labor Day. Find a participating museum in your area: www.arts.gov/bluestarmuseums

Follow the Legion on social media sites

American Legion National Headquarters has a presence on Facebook and Twitter to provide updates on what the organization is doing to lobby for veterans and military personnel, to announce upcoming military career fairs, and to provide other information valuable to Legion membership.

Follow the Legion on Facebook: www.facebook.com/americanlegionhq

Follow the Legion on Twitter: www.twitter.com/AmericanLegion

COMMANDER'S MESSAGE

Share your story



James E. Koutz
National Commander

Since The American Legion launched its Honor & Remembrance web page three months ago, I have read hundreds of stories of bravery, courage and sacrifice on www.legion.org/honor. These stories are not always about war — they are also about humbling acts of kindness and patriotism toward our veterans and active-duty military personnel. The stories take place on the battlefield, the homefront and sacred places commemorating those who fought for the freedoms we enjoy today. I would like to share a few of them with you.

Marseilles, Ill., is a small town with fewer than 6,000 residents, yet it has the first memorial in U.S. history that honors men and women by name who have lost their lives in worldwide conflicts since 1979. The Middle East Conflicts Wall Memorial has more than 7,000 names etched in granite on 12 panels that overlook the Illinois River. The names represent fallen heroes from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as those killed in the USS *Cole* attack, Panama, Grenada, Somalia and elsewhere. Gold Star families across the nation visit the memorial every year to honor their loved ones and to connect with others who understand their loss.

Then there are love stories. For example, a young couple was torn apart shortly after

World War II but reunited, and married, more than 60 years later. And an Indiana woman visited the National World War II Museum in New Orleans hoping to find photos of her high school sweetheart, a Marine who was killed in the war. Instead, she happily discovered the diary that her sweetheart wrote to her.

There are many stirring stories from families with strong military connections. One that stands out to me is the Lucht brothers of Wisconsin — all Legionnaires — who served together on the same ship during the Korean War.

We also receive many stories from veterans recounting their days on the battlefield during the Korean or Vietnam War, and the stories are humbling. They remind me why I am able to continue to live in the land of the free, and it's because of this freedom that I believe our nation's most powerful symbol — the American flag — should be flown proudly everywhere.

The new web page and accompanying Facebook page also include stories of achievements by Legionnaires. 'Like' the Facebook page: www.facebook.com/TheAmerican-LegionHonorRemembrance

I know each one of you has a story to share. Please share your stories for us to enjoy, and for many more generations to come.

Share online: www.legiontown.org

James E. "Jim" Koutz

OPERATION COMFORT WARRIORS

Your donations at work

The American Legion's Operation Comfort Warriors program has been donating needed items to injured servicemembers and their families for the past several months. A few highlighted stops include:

- **Fort Jackson, S.C., March 6.** National Commander Jim Koutz and other Legionnaires presented the Warrior Transition Unit at Fort Jackson with \$6,500 worth of sports (archery, baseball, basketball and golf) equipment.
- **Fort Drum, N.Y., June 12.** Legion Family members dropped off more than \$5,200 worth of goods, donated by OCW, to the adaptive sports program at Fort Drum. The items included five sets of kayaks, paddles and personal flotation devices; as well as fishing equipment, such as poles

and fully loaded tackle boxes.

- **Fort Knox, Ky., June 28.** Representatives from the Department of Kentucky and National Headquarters staff helped feed hundreds of Warrior Transition Battalion (WTB) servicemembers and their families during Organization Day — a day filled with family activities, such as a dunk tank, jump house and face-painting. OCW provided 135 pounds each of cole slaw, macaroni salad and potato salad, around 500 cookies and 300 bags of potato chips for the lunchtime cookout.
- **Fort Bragg, N.C., July 8.** OCW donations provided kitchen necessities, such as pots, pans, dishes and silverware to more than 80 WTB rooms.

FUNDRAISING PROGRAM

OCW goal:
\$750,000



Operation Comfort Warriors is National Commander Jim Koutz's primary fundraising program. At the Spring Meetings, Koutz raised the goal to \$750,000. Donations go directly toward the purchase of comfort items for wounded warriors.

Donate:

www.legion.org/ocw

NEF Commander's Challenge

American Legion department commanders are challenged to assist in fundraising efforts for the Legion's National Emergency Fund. The departments currently in first place for their respective membership categories include:

- Category 1 (100,000+): Florida
- Category 2 (65,000+): California
- Category 3 (40,000+): Maryland
- Category 4 (25,000+): Arizona
- Category 5 (10,000+): Mississippi
- Category 6 (9,999-): Nevada

www.legion.org/emergency/challenge

NATIONAL ADJUTANT'S MESSAGE

Convention news for department adjutants

Sergeants-at-arms recommendations due; see official credentials for national convention.

By Daniel S. Wheeler

As the 2013 American Legion National Convention in Houston draws near, department adjutants are asked to e-mail recommendations for national convention assistant sergeants-at-arms by Aug. 5 to Jeff Brown, executive director of National Headquarters in Indianapolis, at:

✉ pjackson@legion.org. Include the complete mailing address of each recommendation since a letter of appointment is sent to each nominee.

Official credentials for National Convention

The following credentials are considered acceptable official credentials for admittance to all national convention venues, including the convention floor, exhibit hall, shuttle bus transportation, etc.:

- National Headquarters staff badge
- Distinguished Guest badge
- Commission & Committee Visitor badge
- The American Legion Convention badge
- American Legion Auxiliary Convention badge
- Sons of The American Legion Convention badge
- News media credential
- Special ID card for past national commanders
- Exhibitor's badge

The following are not acceptable for admittance to a national convention venue, including the convention floor,

exhibit hall, shuttle bus transportation, etc.:

- White ribbon with blue lettering marked "Delegation Chairman"
- White ribbon with blue lettering marked "Delegation Secretary"
- Delegate (blue), Alternate (yellow) or Guest (red) ribbon
- National American Legion Press Association (NALPA) pass
- National American Legion Press Association (NALPA) button

These credentials are merely used as forms of identification. For entrance to convention venues, all of the above must be worn in conjunction with a national convention badge.

All delegates and alternates, as well as guests to the respective national conventions of The American Legion, must register prior to, or during, the national convention. Proper registration will ensure each attendee has the necessary credentials to enter the venues of the national convention. Without the proper credentials, access to the various venues of the national convention, including shuttle bus transportation, will be denied.

All guests of The American Legion Family who are 18 years of age or older will be required to register just as delegates and alternates are required to register. Guests who are younger than 18 years of age, and who are not delegates or alternates to the SAL or Junior Auxiliary National Conventions, will be provided guest credentials at no charge.

Per resolution No. 4, May 4-5, 2011, the



registration fee for delegates, alternates and guests 18 years of age or older attending the national convention will be increased to \$25 per person effective with the 2012 National Convention.

Delegate, alternate and guest certification forms were e-mailed to all departments in early July.

Identification information

The following is identification information for the 2013 National Convention in Houston:

- National sergeant-at-arms and special assistants wear red arm bands.
- Assistant sergeants-at-arms wear blue arm bands.
- Convention badges worn by commission and committee visitors have a purple ribbon with gold lettering marked "Commission & Committee Visitor."
- Convention badges worn by delegates have a blue ribbon with gold lettering marked "Delegate."
- Convention badges worn by alternates have a yellow ribbon with blue lettering marked "Alternate."
- Convention badges worn by guests have a red ribbon with gold lettering marked "Guest."

POW/MIA recognition

How does your post plan to honor POW/MIA heroes on Sept. 20?

✉ www.legion.org/dispatch

Dispatch

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Correspondence and letters to the editor:
The American Legion Dispatch
P.O. Box 1055
Indianapolis, IN 46206

Subscriptions/Customer Service:
(317) 630-1221

Email: dispatch@legion.org

Fax: (317) 630-1280

Online: www.legion.org/dispatch

EDITOR

Cameran Richardson

CONTRIBUTORS

Andy Romey

Eldon Lindsay

Matt Grills

Jeff Stoffer

Henry Howard

DESIGNER

Jason Reed

NATIONAL CONVENTION

Special workshops offered in Houston



Three American Legion career-building events and a digital media workshop will be held during the 95th National Convention in Houston. Each event is free of charge.

■ **Digital Media Workshop**, Aug. 26.

Posts, district and department webmasters, editors and public relations specialists will learn how to focus on membership promotion using the web and social media. This year's session is broken into three groups: beginner, intermediate and advanced. Participants can attend any or all of the breakout sessions.

Attendees will learn how to build awareness and improve communications at their post; build community and strengthen their post's brand identity through Facebook and Twitter; and learn how to use free online tools to collect membership dues.

Register for the workshop:

🌐 www.legion.org/convention/workshop

■ **Women's Small Business Workshop**, Aug. 26-27. The workshop is specifically designed to help women veterans identify opportunities, write business plans and launch their enterprises.

■ **Employment Transition Workshop**, Aug. 26-27. The workshop will include expert insights from companies such as General Electric, 1st Command Bank, Sallie Mae and Nextstar. They will provide training opportunities for jobs available at their companies.

■ **American Legion Empowering Conference Career & Benefits Fair**, Aug. 26-27. The event will provide veterans with information on how to obtain careers in a variety of industries and understand veterans employment benefits.

Register for the career events online:

🌐 www.legion.org/convention/economic/register

ASK A SERVICE OFFICER

Calculate compensation rates



Cajun Comeau
Department Service
Officer, North Carolina

Q. How does VA calculate compensation rates?

A. VA makes a determination about the severity of your disability based on the evidence you submit, your military records, and compensation and pension medical examination reports. VA rates disability from 0 percent to 100 percent in 10 percent increments.

If VA finds that a veteran has multiple disabilities, VA will use the Combined Ratings Table to calculate a combined disability rating. Disability ratings are not additive, meaning that if a veteran has one disability rated 60 percent and a second disability rated 20 percent, the combined rating is not 80 percent.

Visit the Combined Ratings Table to understand the steps VA takes to combine ratings for more than one disability — the degree of one disability will be read in the left column and the degree of the other in the top row.

Combined Ratings Table:

🌐 www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/rates-index.asp

For example, if a veteran has a 50-percent disability and a 30-percent disability, the combined value is 65 percent. The 65 percent must be converted to 70 percent because the combined value is rounded to the nearest 10 percent to represent the final degree of disability. Similarly, if a veteran has a 40-percent disability rating and another disability rating of 20 percent, the combined value is 52 percent. The 52 percent must be converted to the nearest degree divisible by 10, which is 50 percent.

Have a claims question? Email it to:

✉ askso@legion.org

TAPS

C. Marcelle Williams

Faith, N.C.

C. Marcelle Williams of Post 327 (Department of North Carolina) passed away May 30 at 92. He was a World War II Navy veteran. Mr. Williams served as department vice commander from 1962-1963, department commander from 1968-1969, National Foreign Relations Commission member from 1994-1998, National Foreign Relations Council vice chairman from 1975-1989, National Internal Affairs Commission consultant from 1969-1971, and National Security Council vice chairman from 1966-1968.

Hildred Rena Chaplin

Canada

Hildred Rena Chaplin of Post CN01 (former Department of Canada) passed away June 23 at 91. He was a World War II Air Force veteran. Mr. Chaplin served as department commander from 1981-1982, National Executive Committee member from 1986-1990, National Foreign Relations Commission Liaison Committee member from 1986-1989, and National Security Council vice chairman from 1980-1985.

Honor loved ones on Legion website

The American Legion's Honor & Remembrance web page (www.legion.org/honor) is dedicated to honoring and remembering those who served in the U.S. Armed Forces. Families are encouraged to submit obituaries by going to the web page and clicking on "In Memoriam." Fill in the deceased's name, the obituary and upload a photo (optional), and hit the save button. Those who knew the deceased are encouraged to leave their condolences in the comments section of the obituary.

🌐 www.legion.org/honor

TROOP SUPPORT

The flower of remembrance

The poppy flower adorned the battlefields of Flanders Field in France during World War I, and was looked upon by those serving as a living symbol of their fallen comrades' sacrifices. In 1920, after World War I, the poppy became the official flower of The American Legion Family to memorialize the soldiers who fought and died during the war, and distribution of poppies became a Legion national program in 1924. To this day, the poppy is nationally recognized and worn by Americans as a symbol of sacrifice made by the men and women who served and died for their country during a time of war.

Millions of red-crepe paper poppies are handmade every year by veterans and distributed across the country by Auxiliary and Legion members in exchange for donations. Until recently, 100 percent of funds derived from the distribution of poppies went toward assisting disabled and hospitalized veterans. However, due to the mounting needs of active-duty servicemembers, Resolution 20 was passed during the Legion's Spring Meetings to allow donations collected as of May 9, 2013, to not only assist veterans, but also active-duty military personnel and their families with medical and financial needs. Resolution 20 also states that poppy donations collected after May 9 can no longer be used toward Legion Family volunteer travel, conferences or apparel. And a post, district or department can only use the funds as outlined in the resolution; they may not be used in a general-funds account that's used for routine expenses.

Additionally, the Auxiliary is experiencing a growing demand for poppies, yet there's an inability to fulfill that demand due to a lack of active poppy programs within Legion departments. To help meet the demands, Resolution 20 now allows the use of a reputable commercial vendor to manufacture poppies, as long as they "conform with the restrictions on the use of The American Legion or the American Legion Auxiliary name and emblem."

Visit the Auxiliary's Poppy Program web page for downloadable poppy kits, promotional materials, media fact sheets, recruitment ideas and contest forms:

www.legion-aux.org/Programs/Poppy

Visit Emblem Sales to purchase poppy merchandise, such as charms, pins, magnets and apparel: emblem.legion.org/Poppy-Program/products/746



Photo by Holly Sara

MEETINGS

Register for Legion youth conferences

Legion Family members can now register for the 2013 American Legion National Children & Youth Conference, Sept. 20-22, and the Legion's National Americanism Conference, Sept. 27-29. Both conferences will be held in downtown Indianapolis at the Sheraton Indianapolis City Centre Hotel.

Registration is free and open to all interested American Legion Family members. However, all other costs associated with attending the event including, but not limited to, travel, lodging and food is the attendee's responsibility.

The Children & Youth Conference will feature presentations from outside organizations, including Young Marines, National Future Farmers of America, National Sportsmen's Alliance Foundation, American Academy of Pediatrics and Civil Air Patrol. Sons of The American Legion and Auxiliary members will also be speaking. Register for the Children & Youth Conference: www.legion.org/cyconference

The Americanism Conference is an opportunity for Legion Baseball chairmen, Oratorical chairmen, Boys State directors and department chaplains to network and brainstorm with each other about their respective programs in an effort to keep the Legion's Americanism programs successful and thriving. Those attending the conference must register online, regardless if planning to stay at either of the conference hotels.

Discounted room rates are available at the Sheraton Indianapolis City Centre Hotel and others nearby. Hotel information will be provided for each conference following registration.

Register for the Americanism Conference: www.legion.org/cacregistration

Did you know?

Since the deadly tornado that swept through Moore, Okla., in May, The American Legion's Temporary Financial Assistance program has provided 249 families affected by the storm with \$259,500 in aid to help pay for shelter, food and health expenses.

www.legion.org/financialassistance

Since July 1, 2012, nearly 200,000 Legionnaires have renewed their membership online. Members can safely and conveniently pay their dues online and sign up for the Automatic Renewal Program. www.legion.org/renew

From *Legion membership* on Page 1

ships through its High School Oratorical Contest.

- Raises hundreds of thousands of dollars a year for its Legacy Scholarship, helping ensure children of U.S. servicemembers killed on or after Sept. 11, 2001, have a chance at a college education.
- Helps nearly 100,000 young men experience teamwork and competition through its nearly 5,000 Legion Baseball teams.
- Collects more than 80,000 pints of blood through donation drives.

Download the “Why You Should Belong Brochure” by visiting:
 www.legion.org/publications

Sign Up New Members

The traditional way to join the Legion is to fill out a simple form, but prospective members may also join online. Here’s a look at both methods, and how to use them:

Paper form. After a new member completes the application form, a Legion representative needs to sign it and provide a membership card on the spot or send one shortly thereafter.

Regardless of where a recruit is signed up, the post adjutant or membership chairman must log the new member’s information and then transmit the form to department headquarters.

Online form. Prospective members also can sign up online at:  www.legion.org/join. This information will be processed by National Headquarters. Once processed, a membership card will be sent.

Once members are registered, encourage them to take advantage of the Automatic Renewal Program. Members can go to  www.legion.org/renew and click “Renew Now” to safely and conveniently pay their dues. Automatic renewal can also be set up by calling the Legion’s customer service line:

 (800) 433-3318



DATeline: CAPITOL HILL

House approves defense funding



Kenneth F. Governor
 Chairman, National
 Legislative Commission

In late June, the U.S. House voted 315-108 to pass **H.R. 1960**, the fiscal year 2014 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). The measure now goes to the Senate.

H.R. 1960 provides the budgetary blueprint for the upcoming Department of Defense (DoD) fiscal year, which begins Oct. 1. It also contains policy pronouncements that will guide DoD for next year and, in most cases, for several years to come. **H.R. 1960** also seeks to keep our nation’s Armed Forces strong, while making wise choices facing congressionally mandated sequester targets.

The FY 2014 NDAA authorizes:

- \$552.1 billion in spending for national defense;
- \$85.8 billion in spending for Overseas Contingency Operations;
- \$17.8 billion in spending for defense-based programs under the jurisdiction of the Department of Energy; and
- \$7.7 billion for mandatory defense spending.

Highlights of H.R. 1960 include:

- Automatic 1.8-percent pay increase for all military personnel;
- Rejection of Obama administration proposals to increase some TRICARE fees or establish new ones;
- New policies, including modifications to the Uniform Code of Military Justice to combat sexual assault in the military;
- Restoration of funds for vital readiness accounts, including flying hours, facilities sustainment, ship depot maintenance and stabilization of fuel rates;
- Prohibition of DoD proposing, planning or initiating another round of base closures or realignments;
- Prohibition against the transfer of detainees from Guantanamo Bay to the United States;
- Oversight of various DoD acquisition programs, including the Littoral Combat Ship and the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter;
- Retention of seven Navy cruisers and two amphibious ships proposed for early retirement, in addition to prohibiting the Navy from retiring certain ships that have more than 10 years of hull life available; and
- An amendment supported by The American Legion that would direct the DoD secretary to make service treatment records, personal records, unit records and medical records of each member of the Armed Forces available to VA in an electronic format. It would also provide post-discharge or release timelines for such availability, and it would further require each service record provided to include a DoD certification of the record’s completeness. This amendment is aimed at reducing the burgeoning VA benefits claims backlog.

Congressional action on the appropriations bills will take place prior to the August recess. Final action on the NDAA is not expected to occur in the near future.

MEMBERSHIP INCENTIVES AND AWARDS

GOLD AND SILVER BRIGADE

Renamed “Koutz Scouts” for the 2013 Membership Year, the Gold and Silver Brigade program will honor 2012 Gold and Silver Brigade Award recipients who bring an increased number of members in 2013. For every additional member, a 2012 Gold or Silver Brigade recipient obtains in 2013 over their 2012 total, they will receive a monetary award. Gold Brigadiers will receive \$3 per member they obtain over last year’s total; Silver Brigadiers will receive \$2 per member they obtain over last year’s total.



National Headquarters will continue to accept submissions for the traditional Gold and Silver Brigade award program, but hopes that those trying for either award will push themselves extra hard to get new members into The American Legion with this cash incentive. National Headquarters will also offer certificates, coins and lapel/cap pins to those who exceed last year’s goals.

The program will be continued through 2019, so any Legionnaires who want to participate in next year’s enhanced Gold and Silver Brigade can participate in 2014 for the new members they signed up during the 2013 membership year.

For more information, contact the Membership Division:

☎ (317) 630-1327 or ✉ ksingleton@legion.org



DISTRICT LEADERS REWARDED FOR POST VISITS

The District Commander Post Visitation Award is an incentive for personal visits to posts by district commanders and vice commanders. Personal contact at this level sets the example for post membership workers to make the personal contacts necessary for a successful membership program.

Criteria. The district commander and/or vice commanders must visit each post in the district during their year. For districts with more than 30 posts, the district vice commanders can assist in making visits, but the district commander must visit at least 30 of the posts personally.

Certification. A list of posts in each district can be obtained with the assistance of department headquarters. At the completion of the 100 percent visit requirement, the district commander will send the completed spreadsheet to the department, which will forward it to National Headquarters by Aug. 2.

Awards.

- Category 1 (up to 20 posts), \$100
- Category 2 (21 to 35 posts), \$200
- Category 3 (36 to 50 posts), \$300
- Category 4 (51 to 65 posts), \$400
- Category 5 (65 or more posts), \$500

🌐 www.legion.org/commander/districtpost

POST EXCELLENCE AWARD CONTINUES

The Post Excellence Award program honors posts that show excellence in membership participation, youth activities, community service, and support to veterans and U.S. troops.

Criteria

- **Membership.** Post membership must be at least one member more than the previous year. A post officer must attend district meetings.
- **Youth activities.** The post must sponsor and actively participate in at least one primary youth program: Boys State, Legion Baseball, the Oratorical Contest, Boy Scouts of America or Junior Shooting Sports.
- **Community service.** The post must organize a community service project that involves members of the Legion, Auxiliary or Sons of The American Legion. A monetary donation may only be one part of a project.
- **Service to troops or veterans.** The post must organize a project supporting troops or veterans (e.g., Family Support

Network or Operation Comfort Warriors), that involves members of the Legion, Auxiliary or SAL outside the post. A monetary donation may only be one part of a project.

Certification. District commanders must certify posts as having fulfilled the four specified criteria, and submit a list of the post’s name, number, address and commander’s name to department headquarters. If possible, accompany with copies of press releases submitted to local media that raise awareness for the projects and enhance the Legion’s public image.

Awards. Each qualifying post, as well as district commanders whose districts have at least 50 percent of posts reach certification, will receive a certificate of recognition.

🌐 www.legion.org/commander/postexcellence

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POST ACTIVITIES

Kentucky post turns trash into dollars

Members of American Legion Caswell Saufley Post 18 in Stanford, Ky., have found a rigorous, yet rewarding, way to earn funds for the several charities it supports. For the past few years, post members have participated in the local "Adopt-A-Highway" program, earning \$100 per mile.

"We are about service to our nation, service to our fellow veterans, and service to our community," said John Bradshaw, Post 18 member.

In the past, Post 18 adopted five miles of highway to clean up, but this year Bradshaw increased it to 10 miles, earning \$1,000 for the post. After two eight-hour days of picking up trash, there was talk among the 20 Legion volunteers as to "who made the motion to increase the amount of highway cleaning to 10 miles, and what the fate of that person might be," Bradshaw said. "This is to say that there were several tired Legionnaires after each of the two days it took to complete the task, but as a true Legionnaire and a true veteran, each did their part so that the post could reap the treasures and continue the post motto, 'Old Soldiers At Work.'"



PLANNER

AUGUST

- 2-4 National membership workshop
- 6-10 Junior Air-Rifle Shooting Sports Competition, Colorado Springs, Colo.
- 16-20 Legion Baseball World Series, Shelby, N.C.
- 18-22 Legacy Run
- 23-29 National Convention, Houston

SEPTEMBER

- 20 POW/MIA recognition day
- 20-22 National Children & Youth Conference, Indianapolis
- 27-29 National Americanism Conference, Indianapolis

 www.legion.org/dispatch/calendar