

THE AMERICAN LEGION

Dispatch

October 2013

A National Headquarters Publication

100TH ANNIVERSARY

SHARE YOUR POST'S LEGACY

Legion launches Centennial Celebration web page for posts to convey their legacies.

By The American Legion

In 2018, The American Legion will begin celebrating 100 years of service to veterans, military personnel, families and communities. To honor the Legion's centennial, many events at the national, department and post levels will occur starting at the 2018 National Convention in Minneapolis and continuing throughout the 2019 convention in Indianapolis. Planning for these celebratory events is currently underway by the Legion's 100th Anniversary Observance Committee, but help is needed at the post level to tell the larger story of The American Legion's first century.

All 13,000 Legion posts worldwide, whether chartered in 1919 or 2009, have histories and a legacies that have contributed to the overall identity of The American Legion. Each post can convey its legacy by sharing historical photos, videos and print material on the Legion's new Centennial Celebration web page:

www.legion.org/centennial

HOW TO GET STARTED

Posts are encouraged to form centennial committees now, made up of members who will collect historical artifacts and data on the post. For example, the centennial committee may identify:

- Who founded the post and when
- Who the post was named after
- Important dates in the history of the post
- Families involved with the post for multiple generations
- Notable members
- Notable alumni from youth programs such as Boys State, Oratorical Contest or Legion Baseball
- What makes the post special or unique
- Great things the post has done for its community

If this information isn't accessible from post

See *Share your post's legacy* on Page 4

NEWS ALERT

March in largest Veterans Day parade

Legion Family members are encouraged to march in New York City's America's Parade on Nov. 11. Those interested in marching 1.3 miles with the Legion Family delegation should send an email stating their intent to: parade@americanlegion.com

www.americasparade.org

Celebrate American Education Week

American Legion posts and family members can support America's youth by participating in the weeklong celebration, Nov. 18-22. For ways to get involved, download the Legion's American Education Week brochure, located under Americanism:

www.legion.org/publications

Follow the Legion on LinkedIn

Followers of the Legion's active LinkedIn page can view news stories of interest to veterans and the Legion Family, interact with National Headquarters and communicate with others who share similar interests.

www.linkedin.com/company/the-american-legion

Download Veterans Day speech

A suggested Veterans Day speech is available for download. Locate the speech under the PR section:

www.legion.org/publications

COMMANDER'S MESSAGE

Promote suicide awareness



Dan Dellinger
National Commander

The combination of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and traumatic brain injury (TBI) is defined as the “signature wound” from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Unfortunately, many of our servicemembers who have returned home from serving in Iraq and Afghanistan are afflicted, causing them to battle yet another war — a war within.

We have all read how those battling PTSD and TBI don't always receive the help they need, which oftentimes has a tragic result: suicide. Suicide rates for U.S. veterans are among the highest — an estimated 20 veterans commit suicide every day. We, the Legion, cannot stand for this.

As our servicemembers are deployed to protect and defend our freedoms, we must provide them with the compassionate care that they deserve. The Legion is helping in this effort with its new Suicide Prevention Web Center:

www.legion.org/suicideprevention

The center provides veterans and their families with life-saving resources and programs during their time of transition and need by building on several suicide-prevention initiatives launched in recent years by the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The center houses specific suicide-prevention data, statistics, programs and resources organized for veterans, families and the community.

Information on VA's Crisis Hotline (800)-273-8255 (TALK), chat service and video testimonials from VA's Make the Connection program also are accessible from the website. The Make the Connection program includes personal stories of veterans who were at risk for suicide, received help, and now are encouraging other veterans to come forward and receive proper treatment.

PTSD/TBI has been at the forefront of Legion concerns since 2010 when we established an ad hoc committee to study the science, treatment and best practices for PTSD/TBI. The Legion recently released a report titled “The War Within” that includes findings and recommendations based on comprehensive research conducted from January 2011 to February 2013 by the committee. I encourage you to read it online:

www.legion.org/documents/legion/pdf/american-legion-war-within.pdf

I have shared with members of Congress that I will spend the coming year personally meeting with veterans to share their concerns. I'm ready to make sure our voice is heard on veterans battling PTSD/TBI, because we cannot continue to lose our brothers and sisters to the often-invisible signature wounds of war.



FUNDRAISING PROGRAM

NEF goal: \$1 million

The American Legion's National Emergency Fund (NEF) program is National Commander Dan Dellinger's primary fundraiser program this year.

A natural disaster can strike at any time, devastating the lives of men and women who honorably served their country. While we can't prevent a natural disaster, the Legion does provide relief to veterans and their families affected by devastation.

Since 1989, NEF has provided more than \$8 million in direct financial assistance to posts, Legionnaires and their families. The program helps with out-of-pocket expenses, including but not limited to, food, temporary housing and clothing. All donations made to NEF go directly toward the program.

To donate:

www.legion.org/nef

MEMBERSHIP

Recruiters to be honored with 'Building for Tomorrow Today'

During the 2013-2014 membership year, American Legion National Commander Dan Dellinger will award his national commander pin to any Legion Family member who obtains five new members.

A new member is any eligible person joining for the 2014 membership year who was not a member of The American Legion during the 2013 membership year.

Each member listed must be eligible for membership in The American Legion. Forward names of SAL members or Auxiliary members to your detachment or unit for use in their respective incentive programs.

To maintain the integrity of the national commander's pin program, only one pin will be awarded per individual.



Upon receipt of the certification form, national membership staff will confirm the names and mail the pin directly to the person who earned it. Commander Dellinger's “Building for Tomorrow Today” pin incentive program will end June

30, 2014, or when supplies are exhausted.

Also, National Commander Dellinger will award his “Building for Tomorrow Today” coin to any Legion Family member who recruits 15 new members.

www.legion.org/commanderpin

NATIONAL ADJUTANT'S MESSAGE

Camp teaches youth to be leaders

Department of Alabama's Leadership Camp instills patriotism and honor in today's youth.

By Daniel S. Wheeler

Many young people today are not afforded the opportunity to learn about the meaning of patriotism, community service, citizenship, leadership and volunteerism. It's therefore an important responsibility of The American Legion Family to teach them these aspects of life, and the Department of Alabama and the Auxiliary are fulfilling this commitment.

For the past 51 years, Alabama Legionnaires and Auxiliary members have been helping youth become future leaders of our country with its annual four-day Leadership Camp. The camp is hosted at Rolling Hills Conference Center in Calera, Ala., and it's open to young people ages 8 to 18. Cost of the camp per child is \$160, which is paid for by Alabama posts and units, or by donations.

Alabama Legion Family members promote the Leadership Camp during department meetings and through newsletters that are sent to all Legion, Auxiliary and Sons members. Nearly 75 youth attend the camp each year to participate in an array of educational and interactive activities that are taught by Legion and Auxiliary members, including Alabama's department commander and Auxiliary president.

"Through cooperative efforts and service, the members and officers of the Legion Family show personal involvement to this program which makes it a success," said Gloria Haygood, a mem-



Leadership Camp participants attend classroom activities. Photo courtesy of the Department of Alabama.

ber of Auxiliary Unit 255 in Fultondale, Ala., and Alabama's 1992-1993 department president.

Leadership Camp teaches young people about:

- Patriotism
- Leadership
- Flag etiquette
- The story of TAPS
- The history of the Legion and the Auxiliary
- The meaning of Blue Star and Gold Star Mothers
- Legion youth programs such as Boys State, Girls State and Legion Baseball

They too learn how to properly fold the U.S. flag and dispose of it, conduct a Legion meeting and host a small convention. And for fun, they participate in a talent show. The youth also venture off site for a field trip to American Village in Montevallo, Ala., to learn about American history, civics and government.

"The American Legion Family has a vision for involvement of our youth in our local communities and throughout our nation," said Alabama Department Commander Ron Haygood. "The goal of this camp is to help develop our youth and teach them patriotism, volunteerism, service, image, partnership and family.

"The Legion Family can help this vision be realized as we teach the youth of today to be the leaders of our country in the future."



Leadership Camp participants enjoy activities outside. Photo courtesy of the Department of Alabama.

Department commander's motto

Share your motto for the 2013-2014 year. Email:

✉ dispatch@legion.org

Dispatch

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From *Share your post's legacy* on Page 1

archives or members, speak with the local library or media outlets (newspapers, radio, TV) that have covered events about your post.

SHARE YOUR STORY

Once your post's centennial committee has collected photos, videos and print material related to its history, share it on the Legion's new Centennial Celebration web page.

To create a post history page, follow these seven steps:

1. Go to the Centennial Celebration web page, www.legion.org/centennial.
2. Register (in the upper-right hand of the page) to be an administrator. The administrator of a post's page allows him or her to monitor all content submitted to the page before it appears to the general viewing public.
3. Click "Share Your Post History" located under "History" on the left hand navigation column.
4. Enter your department and post number.
5. Click "Yes, create post x."
6. Complete the required fields needed to start; you only need your post number, city and charter date. If you don't know when your post was chartered, put in an estimated date until you find the answer; you can add/change information as you receive it.
7. Click "Save" when finished.

When your post page is created, members — and those whose lives have been touched by the post — can add historical photos, timeline events (significant moments that helped build the chronology of your history) and upcoming events celebrating your history and the Legion's centennial.

And for step-by-step instructions on how to share your post's legacy and vision, download the Legion's Centennial Celebration Workbook:

www.legion.org/publications/217073/centennial-celebration-workbook

If your post does not have access to the technical tools or expertise needed to create a Centennial Celebration history page, the workbook features paper forms of timeline events, photo galleries and upcoming events. The forms can be submitted to a third party who is willing to create the web page and act as the post's administrator.

For more information, please email:

✉ ledwards@legion.org

ASK A SERVICE OFFICER

Income affects VA eligibility



Tracy L. Davis
Department Service
Officer, Missouri

Q. Can VA deny me if my income is too high?

A. All systems have limits, and VA had to close open enrollment when they had too many veterans to care for at the standards required. The American Legion continues to advocate for VA to resume open enrollment, and VA is incrementally lowering the income limit to allow more veterans into the system without overwhelming it. The overall goal is to achieve open enrollment again.

VA health-care eligibility is determined by the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), and VHA rules are constantly changing. If you were previously denied VA health care because your income was too high, I suggest you reapply because you may be eligible for Priority Group 8: Veterans with gross household incomes above the VA national income threshold and agree to pay co-pays.

If you are now below the income limit, but your last year's income was too high, you can ask them to enroll you based on your current need. You can also use your own and your spouse's medical expenses to show your income is below the enrollment limit. Income is not the only issue; net worth is also a consideration for enrollment based on means test. If your health-care eligibility is based on financial need, your family net worth (if more than \$80,000) can prevent you from qualifying for VA health care.

To reapply for enrollment of your health-care benefits or to update your information, visit: www.1010ez.med.va.gov/sec/vha/1010ez

Find an American Legion accredited service officer in your state:

www.legion.org/serviceofficers

TAPS

Charles E. Haas

Norwich, Conn.

Charles E. Haas of Post 4 (Department of Connecticut) passed away Aug. 21 at the age of 84. He was a Korean War and Vietnam War Navy veteran. Mr. Haas served as department commander from 1989-1990, National Employment Committee member from 1979-1981 and National Veterans Preference Committee member from 1981-1987.

Wesley R. Wharton

Sonora, Calif.

Wesley R. Wharton of Post 83 (Department of California) passed away July 12 at the age of 77. He was a Korean War Marine Corps veteran. Mr. Wharton served as department vice commander from 1993-1994, National Executive Committee alternate member from 2006-2008, National Economic Commission member from 2001, and National Foreign Relations Council vice chairman from 1999-2001.

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

Concrete truck honors POW-MIAs

Tony Scott, an American Legion member of Post 1977 in New Lenox, Ill., realized the great opportunity his employer had to prominently display honor to U.S. prisoners of war (POWs) and those still missing in action (MIA). With approval from his boss at Prairie Material — a provider of performance concrete, ready mix and aggregate construction materials — Scott had POW-MIA and Support Our Troops decals placed on one of the company's concrete mixer trucks.

“Being a (Vietnam) veteran and an American Legion member, and working for a company that supports past and present military personnel, is an honor to me and all who benefit from it,” Scott said.

The POW-MIA truck is driven daily by a Vietnam veteran, and two other concrete mixer trucks are currently being prepped for the same POW-MIA treatment. The truck also travels to military events and Legion posts, and it was recently the lead vehicle during Prairie Material's fourth annual Run for the Vets motorcycle ride.

The 50-mile motorcycle ride featured 265 riders, including Legion Riders, traveling from Prairie Material headquarters to the Manteno (Ill.) Veterans Home. The riders received monetary and toiletry donations along the route, bringing their total donations in four years to more than \$17,000 for the Manteno Veterans Home.

Additionally, the truck was the lead vehicle during the recent 10th annual Motorcycle Freedom Run in Illinois, which features tens of thousands of riders who raise money for the Middle East Conflicts Wall Memorial in Marseilles, Ill. Scott said having the POW/MIA truck at the event was an honor, especially when a Black Hawk pilot, who was severely wounded when the helicopter was shot down in 2010, asked if he could have his picture taken with the truck. The pilot was one of two who survived out of a crew of seven. “That is what this (POW-MIA truck) is all about,” Scott said.



Did you know?



The American Legion Department of Mississippi elected its first female commander – Senior Master Sgt. Angela M. Baughman. Baughman currently serves as the personnel superintendent for the Mississippi Air National Guard, and she's a Legion Rider and a paid-up-for-life Auxiliary and Legion member of Post/Unit 71 in Bay Springs. Her father Pat pinned her with the 2013-2014 department commander's pin, and her motto for the membership year is “Aim High for Our Veterans.”

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Support America's future leaders

Legion Family members who attended the National Children & Youth Conference last month in Indianapolis heard from the following organizations on how they are advocating for, and supporting, young people.

U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance Foundation (USSAF). USSAF is a 2013 Child Welfare Foundation (CWF) grant recipient of \$43,000 for its Trailblazer Adventure Program, which helps youth understand wildlife conservation and exposes them to outdoor activities — target shooting, archery, live fishing, casting, trapping demonstrations and hunting.

<http://trailblazeradventure.org>

American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). The organization consists of 62,000 pediatrician members who are committed to the physical, mental and social health of children. AAP is a 2013 CWF grant recipient of \$12,180 for its Connected Kids program, which provides materials to pediatricians on how to address violence-related topics, such as bullying and cyberbullying, with families.

www2.aap.org/connectedkids

National FFA. With nearly 558,000 members, ages 12 to 21, and 7,500 chapters across the nation, FFA is helping its members learn about the more than 300 diverse career opportunities in the agriculture industry.

www.ffa.org

Civil Air Patrol (CAP). CAP's Cadet Program introduces aviation to 26,000 young people, ages 12 to 21, each year. The program's summer camps, held at military installations, teach aerospace education and leadership training to help cadets explore careers in aviation, space and technology.

www.gocivilairpatrol.com



POST ACTIVITIES

Share stories during Legiontown campaign

The American Legion's Legiontown campaign serves as a platform for posts to share their stories. The campaign runs now through the end of November, but posts are encouraged to share stories throughout the year online at:

www.legiontown.org

A Legiontown is where Legion Family members come together to conduct activities that support their posts, veterans, military personnel and their community. They visit patients in VA hospitals; convert their post into a makeshift emergency shelter; conduct successful youth programs such as Boys State, Girls State, Oratorical Contests and Legion Baseball; host fundraisers that support the Legion's Legacy Scholarship Fund so the children of our fallen heroes can afford college; and they teach patriotism and flag etiquette to today's youth.

Legiontown is a community where Legion Family members welcome home returning servicemembers from war, hang Blue Star banners in their home windows, support Gold Star Mothers and build memorials to honor fallen heroes.

For assistance with the campaign, download the Legion's Legiontown booklet online under Public Relations:

www.legion.org/publications

Legion Family members may also submit related stories and news to the Honor & Remembrance web page:

www.legion.org/honor



DATELINE: CAPITOL HILL



Brett P. Reistad,
Chairman, National
Legislative Commission

Armed Forces paid during shutdown

On Sept. 30, President Barack Obama signed H.R. 3210, the Pay Our Military Act. This bill's passage was necessary to avoid any interruption of military pay due to federal government shutdown.

The legislation ensured that salaries and allowances were paid to members of the Armed Forces, including active-duty reservists, the Coast Guard and Department of Defense civilian employees and contractors who provide support to members of the Armed Forces. Spending authority under the bill ends Jan. 1, 2015, or with the enactment of a regular or stopgap appropriations measure that includes military pay. The law's provisions are valid for the entirety of FY 2014 and will go into effect in any instance of a lapse in government funding affecting military pay during the fiscal year.

Expiring Authorities Act

On Sept. 30, President Obama enacted H.R. 1412, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Expiring Authorities Act of 2013. This measure would extend VA's authority to provide grants and assistance to several veterans programs.

This legislation would allow VA to:

- Provide grants to disabled veterans requiring housing modifications.
- Verify incomes of pension recipients.
- Set policies for addressing defaults on home loans guaranteed by the department.
- Continue collecting co-payments from veterans for hospital and nursing home care.
- Provide 30 additional specially-adapted housing grants to veterans who have lost – or lost use of – one or more lower extremities.
- Keep the many child-care centers open at VA medical centers that are currently being used as pilot projects to see if child care makes it easier for veterans to keep their appointments.
- Provide grants to organizations that offer transitional housing to homeless veterans with special needs, including women, single parents, the elderly and those with severe mental illnesses.
- Provide allowance, through the end of 2013, to disabled veterans who have been invited by the U.S. Olympic Committee (USOC) to participate in the U.S. Paralympics.
- Provide grants, through Dec. 31, to the USOC to plan, develop, manage and implement integrated adaptive sports programs for disabled veterans and servicemembers.

Under the bill, the Department of Labor would maintain authority to run the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program, which provides employment assistance to homeless veterans. And VA would be authorized to use FY 2014 funding to continue the Grant and Per Diem Program to provide increased transitional housing assistance for homeless veterans and to continue the Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program, which provides rapid re-housing and homelessness prevention assistance to at-risk veterans.

MEMBERSHIP INCENTIVES AND AWARDS

BIG TWELVE COMPETITION

The Big Twelve Competition recognizes departments that meet or exceed their pledged membership goal percentage by the March target date. The percentage does not include members gained through DMS.

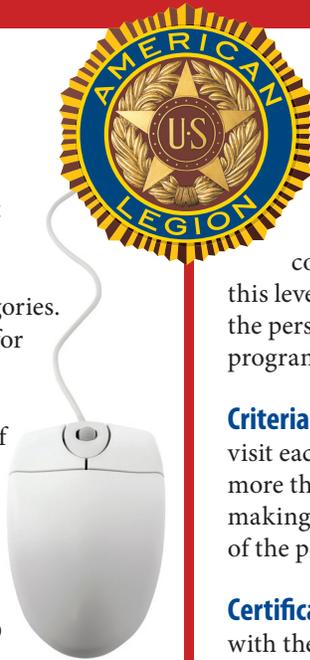
The competition is broken down into six categories. The winner in each category will be reimbursed for computer equipment purchases of up to \$2,000, while the runners-up in each category will be reimbursed for computer equipment purchases of up to \$1,000.

The six categories in the Big Twelve Competition are:

- Category I – departments of 100,000 or more members
- Category II – departments of 70,000- 99,999 members
- Category III – departments of 40,000- 69,999 members
- Category IV – departments of 25,000-39,999 members
- Category V – departments of 10,000-24,999 members
- Category VI – departments of 9,999 or fewer members

Read more about the Big Twelve Competition by downloading the online National Membership Points Award Manual publication located under Internal Affairs.

 www.legion.org/publications



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. 1, 2014.

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 (example, 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

Bet leads to 114 new members

Members of American Legion Post 731 in San Diego recently enjoyed a free steak dinner after winning a membership bet against nearby Post 365 in Vista, Calif.

For the 2012-2013 membership year, Post 731 and Post 365 bet that the post with the highest membership percentage on opening day of the Legion's National Convention in Houston would receive a steak dinner from the losing post.

Post 731 won the bet with membership at 120 percent; Post 365's membership was 113 percent. And in late August, Post 365 honored the bet. The picture shows Post 731 Commander Chuck Camarato enjoying his steak dinner, which was served by Chris Yates (blue hat) of Post 365.

"The dinner was a fantastic event with great camaraderie from all officers," said Sharyn Camarato, Post 731 adjutant. "The true intent was to inspire the other 26 American Legion posts comprising the 22nd District to be creative when working membership. The true winner is The American Legion, as proven with the finishing membership percentages."

Combined, both posts recruited 114 new Legionnaires. And Post 731 rewarded Post 365's great sportsmanship with a \$300 check for its wounded warrior fund.



PLANNER

NOVEMBER

Membership retention month

- 1 National Legion College, Indianapolis
- 11 Veterans Day
- 17-23 American Education Week
- 28 Holiday donor blood drive

DECEMBER

- 7 Pearl Harbor Day
- 25 Christmas

 www.legion.org/dispatch/calendar