



# AMERICANISM

## *eBulletin*



An electronic update of the Americanism Commission

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### APRIL IS CHILDREN & YOUTH MONTH

**“A man who is good enough to shed his blood for the country is good enough to be given a square deal afterwards.”** This phrase from Theodore Roosevelt reflects the social climate of the United States during the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, a conviction that shaped the minds of those young citizens who would go on to serve in World War I and, as veterans, create The American Legion.

Roosevelt’s presidency championed a “Square Deal” domestic program framed by fierce nationalism and a sharp focus upon the improvement of the quality of life in America. It is no wonder, therefore, that Legionnaires reinforced the youth pillar of its new organization with the slogan “A Square Deal For Every Child.”

As we enter April and Children & Youth Month, we reflect upon what “a square deal” means today. When those combat-weary doughboys returned from years of trench warfare, machine-gun firefights, mid-air dogfights and mustard gas, they knew that not every soldier and sailor made it home. They knew that children were made orphans by the war. They knew that many had little chance to succeed without help.

In response, our founders formed the American Legion Endowment Fund, the original benefactor of our Temporary Financial Assistance program; a decade later, the Child Welfare Foundation was launched. Over the years, Legionnaires have raised millions of dollars and volunteered countless hours in order to help children who are sick, in need or simply looking for better opportunities. The American Legion has advocated on behalf of children across the country, fighting against such social ills as child pornography, teen suicide, drug abuse and violence at home.

Legionnaires demonstrate their commitment to providing “A Square Deal For Every Child” in their communities – not just in April but every day by:

- Representing military veterans in school events or town parades;
- Sponsoring youth or family events, such as picnics and carnivals, at their posts;
- Liaising with nearby military installations in order to grow the local Family Support Network;
- Submitting a story to the local media about an amazing child in the community;
- Raising monies for American Legion Child Welfare Foundation and/or American Legion Endowment Fund;
- Sitting alongside a veteran family in distress to help them complete a TFA application;
- Urging a congressman to push for support of a bill that will benefit American children;
- Inviting experts to present information about child safety/welfare at a post meeting; or
- Conducting a community service project with and for children.

When Legionnaires called their first caucus at Paris in 1919, they focused not on themselves but on the children and youth of America. Fast-forward nearly one hundred years and members of The American Legion continue to champion youth causes and programs throughout their communities, states and nation. Each of us has the opportunity to provide “A Square Deal For Every Child” – that balanced foundation for American children that our founders first envisioned.