

# DEPARTMENT OF FRANCE

April 2026 - Vol. 24 / Nr. 4



## DEPARTMENT OFFICERS 2025 - 2026MY

<b>COMMANDER</b> <i>Dennis Owens NL01</i>	<b>ADJUTANT</b> <i>John Fleming CH01</i>	<b>NECMAN</b> <i>Hans Stockenberger CH01</i>	<b>ALT NECMAN</b> <i>Lee Preston GR42</i>	<b>VCAL</b> <i>Jim Brotherton NL01</i>
<b>VICE COMMANDER</b> <i>Valerie Prehoda BE02</i>	<b>VICE COMMANDER</b> <i>Ken Keckler GR20</i>	<b>VICE COMMANDER</b> <i>Kerwin L. Hester GR05</i>	<b>VICE COMMANDER</b> <i>Todd Johnson GR07</i>	<b>CHAPLAIN</b> <i>Brad Bell NL01</i>
<b>FINANCE OFFICER</b> <i>Larry Atkins CH01</i>	<b>SERVICE OFFICER</b> <i>Frank Phillips GR1982</i>	<b>JUDGE ADVOCATE</b> <i>James Settle GR42</i>	<b>SERGEANT-AT-ARMS</b> <i>James Dennis GR30</i>	<b>ADJUTANT EMERITUS</b> <i>Robert Fuelling FR01</i>

### DEPARTMENT COMMANDER



*Dennis Owens*

Greetings Department of France, I am glad our Third DEC is completed as I am sure many of you are too. Now I will be taking my wife to a well-deserved bit of R&R at our ranch in Colorado all of April.

By the time you all read this, 1 April will be here and gone, which is the same deadline for your Award Packages to be turned in.

The Awards Committee Meeting will be held on the 11<sup>th</sup> of April at 19:00 via Virtual. The results of our Award

Committee's decisions will be announced at our Department Convention Saturday Night Banquet in June. I wish every Post a lot of individual and Post level winners, I say that because I am so very impressed with so many of our Posts and so many individuals who are truly Veterans Helping Veterans. Let's not lose sight of that reason, that is why we are here.

I wish our Department Oratorical winner Sophia Wick the very best of luck and skill as she heads off to Michigan at the Hillsdale College for the National Oratorical Finals in May. Make us all proud of you Sophia!!! You Rock!  
Very best wishes to you all,  
Commander Dennis

### DEPARTMENT NECMAN



*Hans Stockenberger*

### NEC Hans Stockenberger Attends Internment of Gary Miller at Arlington National Cemetery

National Executive Committeeman (NEC) Hans Stockenberger attended the interment of Department Finance

Officer Gary Miller on 13 March 2025 at Arlington National Cemetery in Washington, D.C. Gary was laid to rest with full military honors.



A devoted Legionnaire, Gary was a longtime member of American Legion Post GR 06 in Stuttgart, Germany. He served as Post Commander from 1996 to 1999 and went on to serve as Department Finance Officer from 1999 until his passing in 2024. Following his departure from Germany in 2017, Gary was recognized for his dedicated service with the title of Honorary Department Commander.

Military honors were rendered by a nine-member funeral detail and an eight-member firing team from the United States Air Force. In addition to Gary's family, several former members of Post GR 06 were present, including Michael Sloan, Robert Lapham, Ken

White, and Rod Benipayo. Gary's final resting place is in Section 37, Grave 166, beneath a prominent white oak tree—an enduring symbol of strength and remembrance



### PNVC & PDC Doug Haggan, NECman Hans Stockenberger, and Alt NEC Lee Preston attended Washington Conference

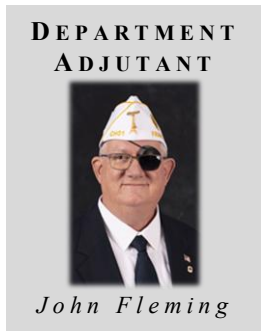
PNVC & PDC Doug Haggan, NECman Hans Stockenberger, and Alt NEC Lee Preston attended the annual Washington Conference held at the Washington Hilton from February 28 through March 5, 2026.

The conference featured comprehensive reports from national **Commissions, Councils, and Committees**, covering key focus areas including **Veterans Employment and Education, Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation, Finance, Legislative Affairs, and National Security**. Attendees received in-depth briefings on **legislative priorities for the 119th Congress**, with particular emphasis on the **Major Richard Star Act**. This proposed legislation seeks to ensure that combat-injured military retirees receive both their earned retirement pay and disability compensation, recognizing the full measure of their service and sacrifice.



On **March 4**, National Commander **Wiley** testified before a **joint session of the House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees**, reinforcing the organization's legislative priorities and advocacy efforts on behalf of veterans nationwide.





Department Adjutant's Corner

Greetings Comrades,

**Annual Post Data Report 2027 Membership Year** – The forms were sent out on 30 March 2026. Please review your data listed on the Left-Hand side of the form. Make any necessary changes on the Right-Hand side of the form. Do not cross out data on the Left-Hand side of the form. The suspense date is **7 April 2026**. Contact me if you have any questions.

**Consolidated Post Report (CPR)** – is now available on myLegion.org, so please log in and start adding the 2025-2026 Report. This report covers the period 1 June 2025 to 31 May 2026. You can also download a copy of the

form if you would like to use it to keep notes of your Posts activities. [CPR](#)

**Certification of Officers:** Thank you to the Posts who have recently held elections and sent in the Notification forms. I can add all Post Officers to the Post Officers Roster on myLegion.org. Reminder, after Post elections or a change in the Post Officers, it is required to send two forms to the Department Adjutant.

1. Notification of Post/Squadron Commanders & Adjutants: This form must be sent to the Department Adjutant immediately (within 24 hours) after Post elections. The form should be dated the date of the elections/appointment.

2. Post Officer Certification of Service Form: This form has been revised and sent to all Posts. It needs to be forwarded to the Department Adjutant as soon as possible after the Post elections (within 15 days). The Effective Date of Election of Appointment is the date of the original election or appointment. For example, if an Officer was elected on 1 May 2023 and reelected on 1 May 2024, the Effective Date block will show 1 May 2023.

These forms are critical to keep the current Post Officer informed of Department news. If I do not have the correct information, your Post may not receive vital information.

Please contact me for any questions or if you need the forms.

Dates to Remember:

~~5 April 2026~~, 12 April 2026, 1400 CET, Commanders and Adjutants meeting. (The meeting has been changed from Easter Sunday.)

7 April 2026, **Annual Post Data Report 2027 Membership Year are due to the Department Adjutant**

4 May 2026, 1900 CET, Commander's Advisory Committee meeting.

7 June 2026, 1400 CET, Commanders and Adjutants meeting.

18-21 June 2026, 4<sup>th</sup> DEC/Convention/1<sup>st</sup> DEC, Location TBA

Thanks, and best wishes.

John Fleming

**PHOTOGRAPHS FROM OUR THIRD DEPARTMENT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING ON 21 MARCH 2026**

*Provided by our Department Historian Carlos Gonzalez*





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**DEPARTMENT  
VICE  
COMMANDER**



*Valerie Prehoda*

Greetings from blustery northern France to all our DFR comrades, with special shout-out to the great posts "under my cog".

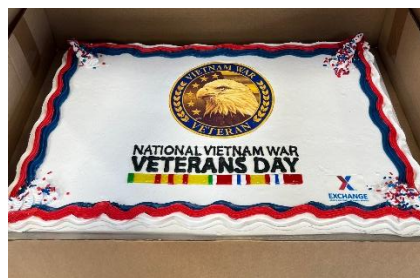
The 3DEC is now behind us, and I am looking forward to our big June round-up! For those of you who did not attend our 3rd DEC, you missed out on a great venue with good chow!

Kudos to the organizers, as it was super.

As I reported at our meeting, I took the opportunity to visit "our place" in the Hotel de Ville of St Avold. I was pleased at its elegance and cleanliness - obviously the good folks at the city hall are being good stewards. I was surprised not to see our national flag

there, but that will be soon changed, thanks to our DEC.

And finally, I was honored to participate in BE02's Vietnam Veteran's Day ceremony at the Chievres Air Base (Chievres, Belgium), on Sunday 29 Mar 26. Big kudos to Cmdr Joe Schram, who put together a stellar commemoration - from the venue, to the backdrop, to the guest speakers, and the cake, I do believe we did right by our Vietnam Vets, who deserve every moment of the day in their honor. Semper Fi"

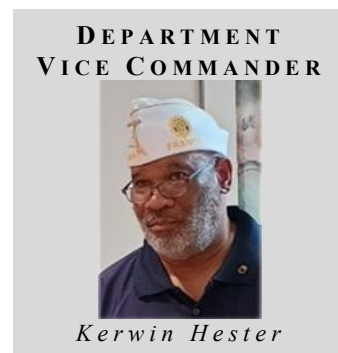


Hello, comrades. First, I want to thank the people who put together the third DEC from GR05. They performed exceptional work, and I am grateful. I am a member of GR05, which is my home post, and I am incredibly proud of it.

However, let us return to the subject at hand. GR03 and GR30 have achieved 115% and 90% of the 2026 objectives, respectively. Kudos to them.

On the Friday preceding the DEC, I would also like to commend the Department VSO for conducting a POST Service Officer training class. I have a single term to describe the course: BOOMBASTIC. The purpose of the training course was to offer the PSO guidance on how to more effectively inform veterans about the VA benefits claims process and

benefits. The information provided was advantageous to both the general membership and the post service officer. Additionally, it was clarified that a post may have more than one service officer. This course is offered at the 3rd DEC. I am eagerly anticipating the forthcoming training.



In conclusion, I extend my best wishes to all for a joyful Easter. For God and Country.



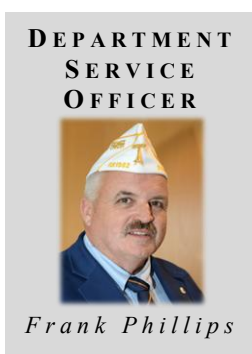
Good day everyone. On behalf as a Department Officer, I would like to thank American Legion GR05 for hosting the 3rd DEC. You could see a lot of hard work went into the arranging this event, a great venue. I can honestly see this location being used

again to support future Department events.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all who showed up, supported and volunteered to make this year's Department Oratorical competition a success. This was my first one that I attended and I look forward to attending next year. I won't go into all the details of this year's contest and leave that to the Oratorical organizer Department Vice Commander Ken Keckler. I know a lot of hard work went into planning this event, events such as this are never easy, but you pulled it off and it was a success.

By the time this newsletter hits the presses we will have reached the cutoff date for submitting your Post award packages. I hope to see several submissions come across our desk. All packages submitted will be reviewed by our Awards Committee around mid April and the winners and in some cases, the runners up, where allowed, will be announced at our DEC/Convention banquet to be held 20 June at the Best Western Hotel in Polissina in Ochsenfurt Germany. I hope to see as many of you as possible at this event. May sure you make your reservations in early.

I wish you all a safe and happy month of April and take care. VCAL.



### Successful Post Service Officer Training 2026

The American Legion Department of France recently conducted a comprehensive, all-day Post Service Officer (PSO) training, bringing together both new and experienced

officers in a collaborative and highly productive learning environment.



A total of nine students attended the training in person, while four additional participants joined virtually, demonstrating the Department's continued commitment to accessibility and inclusion. In addition, four accredited service officers were

present, contributing valuable experience and insight to the sessions. Posts represented at the training included GR1982, GR05, GR07, EG01, NL01, and TH02 from Thailand, reflecting the wide geographic reach of the Department.



The training covered a broad range of essential topics critical to effective veteran advocacy. Key materials

included the Post Service Officer Guide, updates on the PACT Act, and instruction on Benefits Delivery at Discharge (BDD). Participants also received detailed guidance on presumptive conditions and best practices for assisting veterans in need. The curriculum emphasized practical knowledge, ensuring that attendees are better equipped to support veterans and their families in navigating benefits and services.



Instruction was led by Director Department Service Officer Frank Phillips, alongside Timothy Litherland, Robert Chung, and David Fredlund. Their combined expertise provided attendees with both foundational knowledge and real-world application.

Feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive, with many

highlighting the depth of information, clarity of instruction, and the opportunity to engage with fellow service officers from across the region. The interactive format encouraged discussion and knowledge sharing, further enhancing the learning experience.

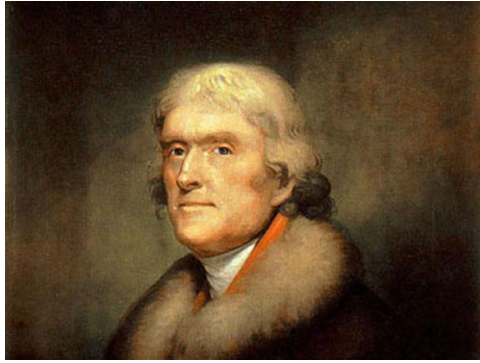
At the conclusion of the training, all participants were awarded certificates in recognition of their successful completion of the course. The event stands as another example of the Department's dedication to strengthening its network of service officers and improving support for veterans worldwide.

## KAISERSLAUTERN POST GR01 KAISERSLAUTERN, GERMANY

American Legion Post GR01, made a donation to the Sembach Pantry, with the help of the vendors from the Vogelweh Commissary, Commander, Garcia and Vice Commander Cole, presented to Chaplain (Major) Peter Bhang, close to \$2,000 in needed items on behalf of Post GR01, 40 & 8 Locale 1467 and the Vogelweh Commissary Vendors.



14 March 2026, Commander David Garcia presented Certificates of Appreciation to Girls Scout Troop 1920 and Boys Scout Troop 69 Scout Master Nick Long accepted the Certificates of Appreciation for both Scout Troops. Their unwavering support and energy was evident while assisting Post GR01 prepare for relocation to Sembach Kaserne. Thanks for the job well done!



Thomas Jefferson Birthday for the year 2026 is celebrated/ observed on Monday, April 13th.

Thomas Jefferson's birthday is held on April 13 each year. He was the third president of the United States and one of the principle authors of the Declaration of Independence. He was one of the founding fathers of America and had many interests including music, astronomer, farming, making of wine, economist and owned a very large library of books.

**COMMODORE JOHN BARRY POST IR03**

*MAYO, IRELAND*



**Mayo Day: Mayo Military Heroes**

*Lt Noel Carey & No 3 Platoon with UN helicopter which landed on their positions during the Battle of Jadotville. Image courtesy of the Military Archives*

**Learn about Mayo's military heroes at home and abroad through a special Mayo Day event taking place from 10:30 to 16:00 on Saturday, 2 May 2026.**

The event is organized by O.N.E (the Organization of National Ex-Service Personnel) and will be hosted at the National Museum of Ireland in Turlough Park, Castlebar, Co. Mayo.

The day will feature a talk by Captain Noel Carey - the last surviving officer

from the Battle of Jadotville in the Congo in 1961; a display of military vehicles; and an outdoor performance by the Foxford Brass and Reed Band from 11am to 1pm. There will also be a career information desk about the Irish Defence Forces.

**11:50 - 12:30**

**Famous Irish Military Men and Women with Commander Ron Howko**



Commander Ron Howko was born in Flint Michigan and served in the US Army for 27 years. He has been 29 years in the American Legion Branch in Co. Mayo. His military career

involved being a small arms gunsmith and 18 years as a visual information specialist and TV producer/director in North Carolina,

Frankfurt, Los Angeles and Washington. He has presented 44 US burial flags to families of Irishmen buried in Ireland who

served with US forces and lectures frequently on this research.

## RHEIN NECKAR POST GR03

HEIDELBERG, GERMANY



Photo of Post Commander Gerdeman together with our new member, Rich Sossamon. Rich is pictured wearing his American Legion pin and cap. The photo on the right shows GR03 post members in Germany. From left to right: Henry Johnson, Ed Sherman, Rich Sossamon, John Gerdeman, Abraham Cruz, and Carl Arnold. Not pictured: Don Kienlen.”



## RHEIN MAIN POST GR05

MORFELDEN-WALLDORF, GERMANY



GR05 presented Georg (Schorschi) Fischer, the owner of the Golfpark Bachgrund restaurant, with an American Legion Eagle plaque for our appreciation for all he does for our Post. George does great work and provides excellent service to the American Legion, Department of France, Post GR05.



**Subject: A Standing Ovation for Our Volunteers |  
Department Oratorical Contest Success**

Dear Volunteers and Supporters,  
They say it takes a village to raise a child, but it takes an entire community of dedicated volunteers to pull off a Department Oratorical Contest with this much heart. As the Oratorical Director, I wanted to take a moment to step away from the podium and send a sincere thank you to everyone who helped make our March 14th event a resounding success. Whether you were judging, timing, organizing the hall, or simply offering a supportive smile from the audience, your presence was the "secret sauce" that made the day run smoothly.

**Celebrating Our Champion**

While all our participants showed incredible poise and talent, we are thrilled to officially congratulate Sofia Wick on winning this year's contest. It is no small feat to stand before a crowd and deliver a powerful message with such conviction. We wish Sofia the very best of luck as she moves on to represent us at the American Legion Oratorical Finals in Hillsdale, Michigan. We know she will do us proud!

**Looking Ahead**

Programs like these are vital for fostering the next generation of leaders and thinkers, and quite frankly, we couldn't do it without you. The success of this year has already set a high bar, and I'm already looking forward to what we can achieve next time.

I truly hope I can depend on your continued support and expertise for next year's Department Oratorical Contest.

Thank you again for your time, your energy, and your commitment to our youth.

Best regards,



Ken Keckler  
Oratorical Director  
[Eifelpost.gr20@gmail.com](mailto:Eifelpost.gr20@gmail.com)



**Arbor Day for the year 2026 is celebrated/ observed on Friday, April 24th.**

Arbor Day is observed in spring for the United States but globally dates vary depending on the region's climate and planting season. It is a holiday to encourage people to plant and care for trees.

**Arbor Day and the World**

Close to around 50 countries around the world celebrate Arbor Day with the holiday celebrated during tree planting season (spring) depending on where the country is located geographically and weather is in the Northern or Southern Hemisphere.

**REMINDER...ALL NEWSLETTER ARTICLES SHOULD BE TURNED IN BY THE END OF THE MONTH. I WOULD PREFER IF YOU SENT IT IN WORD FORMAT, PDF WOULD ALSO DO. GET THE WORD OUT!**

[Davidg1959@t-online.de](mailto:Davidg1959@t-online.de)

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**DEPARTMENT  
NEWSLETTER  
EDITOR**



*David N. Greaux*



THE AMERICAN LEGION  
DEPARTMENT OF FRANCE  
JOHN WAYNE POST GR 79



GREETINGS TO ALL - YOU ARE CORDUALLY INVITED TO OUR

**EASTER PARTY FEST**

When April -4- 2026

Where **Gartenfreunde Klingenberg;**  
74081 Heilbronn—Klingenberg IM Bruch

Time **14.00**



POC Commander Charlie Brown H-01701888034 EMAIL [vcalbrow50@gmail.com](mailto:vcalbrow50@gmail.com)

Easter Early Ticket 20 Euro if purchased by March 21 2026 At the Door 25 Euro  
Kids 1 to 10 Free



Annual Elections with Past Department Commander James Settle



Annual Elections members

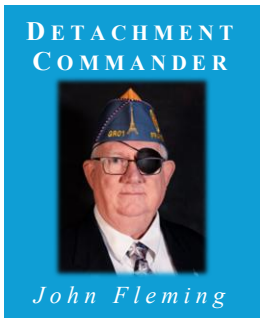


Members outside the Post Home

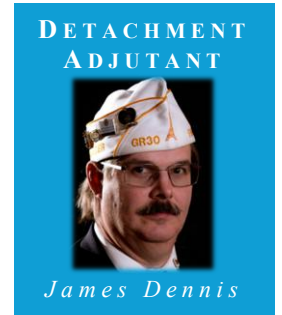
The National Executive Committee passed [Resolution No. 7, American Legion Family Day](#) at its Fall Meeting in October 2022. The resolution established an American Legion Family Day to be observed annually on the last Saturday of April.

This year for Legion Family Day on April 25, posts are encouraged to open their doors to members of their community for the day to recognize and celebrate the accomplishments of Legionnaires, Sons of The American Legion members, Legion Riders and American Legion Auxiliary, and to bring awareness to the organization's ["Be the One" initiative](#) to reduce the rate of veteran suicide.





# DETACHMENT OF FRANCE



Sons of The American Legion,  
Detachment of France

Detachment Commander

Hello Comrades,

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download a copy of the form if you would like to use it to keep notes of your Posts activities. [CSR](#)

**Membership:** According to the 23 March 2026 SAL Membership report I received, we are at 101.20% of our 2026 Goal of 167! **CONGRATULATIONS on reaching the 100% goal!** Let's not stop now, please talk to your expired Squadron members and ask them to renew. Please talk to your Post members to see if they are eligible. If your Post does not have a Squadron, contact the closest Squadron or the Squadron of your choice and sign up. Talk to family members and sign them up. The Department has over 3000 Members. The Detachment should have at least that many.

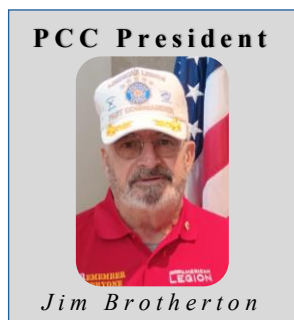
**4<sup>th</sup> DEC/Convention/1<sup>st</sup> DEC:** I ask that all Detachment Officers and all

Squadrons plan to attend the 4<sup>th</sup> DEC/Convention/1<sup>st</sup> DEC on 13 June 2026. New officer elections will be held during the Convention, so please plan to attend and **run for an officer position**.

We have changed the date of the 4<sup>th</sup> DEC/Convention/1<sup>st</sup> DEC due to some conflicts. The meeting will be hosted by Squadron GR01, in the Kaiserslautern Post/Squadron home, in building 368 on Rhine Ordnance Barracks.

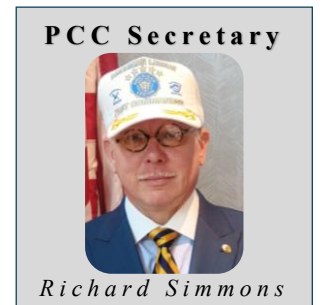
Upcoming Events:  
~~6 June 2026~~ 13 June 2026 – 4<sup>th</sup> DEC/Convention/1<sup>st</sup> DEC, hosted by Kaiserslautern Squadron GR01

John Fleming  
Detachment Commander



## Department of France Past Commanders Club 2026MY

**Who is eligible to join the Department of France  
Past Commanders Club?**



Past and Present Department Commanders, Department Vice Commanders At Large, Department Vice Commanders, Post Commanders, SAL Detachment Commanders, SAL Squadron Commanders, Auxiliary Department Presidents, Auxiliary Unit Presidents... so if you were just voted into the office, you are eligible to join

**Initial dues for the Past Commanders Club is only \$25.00 / Renewal dues for the Past Commanders Club is only \$10.00**

GRAND CHEF DE GARE

# GRAND DU GERMANY

GRAND CORRESPONDANT



DAVID GARCIA



DAVID GREAUX

LA SOCIÉTÉ DES QUARANTE HOMMES ET HUIT CHEVAUX (THE SOCIETY OF FORTY MEN AND EIGHT HORSES) IS AN INDEPENDENT, BY INVITATION, HONOR SOCIETY OF AMERICAN VETERANS, MORE COMMONLY KNOWN AS “THE FORTY & EIGHT”.

THE FORTY & EIGHT IS COMMITTED TO CHARITABLE AND PATRIOTIC AIMS. OUR PURPOSE IS TO UPHOLD AND DEFEND THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES, TO PROMOTE THE WELL-BEING OF VETERANS, THEIR WIDOWS, WIDOWERS, AND ORPHANS, AND TO ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE IN SELECTED CHARITABLE ENDEAVORS, WHICH INCLUDE AMONG OTHERS, PROGRAMS THAT PROMOTE CHILD WELFARE AND NURSES TRAINING.

MEMBERSHIP IS BY INVITATION, AND OPEN ONLY TO HONORABLY DISCHARGED VETERANS AND HONORABLY SERVING MEMBERS OF THE UNITED STATES ARMED

<http://www.fortyandeight.org/>

**DATE TO REMEMBER: 23 May 2026 – Grande Elections – GR01 Post Home, Kaiserslautern**



15 March 2026, Mike Young was elected as Chef de Gare Locale 1467. Chef Young praised Past Chef de Gare, John Gerdeman for his excellent leadership contributing to the noticeable comradeship in 1467. Thanks John Gerdeman, I know I have large shoes to fill and I am looking forward to working with all Voyagers.



For more than 80 years, The American Legion has supported today's young people as we observe April as Children & Youth Month. During this month of celebration, American Legion Family members are encouraged to show their local communities our dedication to young people by hosting youth activities or by becoming involved in programs and organizations that support young people. [See the Legion's Children & Youth programs.](#)

*This Newsletter approved by the American Legion, Department of France, Department Commander*

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