Americanism is an ideal of loyal patriotism, religious tolerance, righteous freedom, fearless courage, honest integrity, abiding faith in the commanding destiny of the United States, and a fathomless love for the principles that led our forefathers to found this country. During the past year, the Americanism Commission continued to offer a variety of programs and activities to give recognition to the ideal of human values and the dignity and worth of the individual. These programs and activities embrace many aspects of an individual’s relationship to his or her community, state and nation.

Following is a summary of the commission’s activities:

**Youth Activities**

Programs for our nation’s youth continue to help thousands reach their potential by building physical, mental and moral alertness while cultivating strong character and fostering civic responsibility. Activities and events of the past year included the following:

- Ashwath Kumar of Columbia, Mo., won the 2014 National High School Oratorical Contest and an $18,000 college scholarship. Brandon Posner of Doylestown, Pa., placed second and received a $16,000 scholarship. Ellen Densmore of Denver placed third and received a $14,000 scholarship.

- Joseph Blaisse of Newtown Square, Pa., is the 2014 American Legion Eagle Scout of the Year and the recipient of a $10,000 scholarship. Runners-up and recipients of $2,500 scholarships are Luke Littman of Fredericksburg, Texas; Corey Castillo of Vinton, La.; and James Heuser of Towson, Md.

- In the preliminary postal rounds, 1,704 athletes entered the individual competition and 203 teams entered the team competition of the 2014 American Legion National Junior Air Rifle Championship. At the 2013 national championship, the Francis Redington Sportsmanship Award was presented to Cathy Lutz of Meridian, Idaho, shooting for the Post 113 marksmanship unit. Alan Rodriguez of Carl Hayden High School in Phoenix, and Rachel Martin of Valencia County 4-H, Peralta, N.M., Post 62 and Post 85, captured the 2013 Precision and Sporter championships respectively.

- Departments are encouraged to work with their state police or other law enforcement organizations to develop a Youth Cadet Law Enforcement Program. A promotional video urging departments to establish a Youth Cadet Law Enforcement Program can be found on the www.legion.org website. The following 17 departments currently sponsor a junior cadet law enforcement program: Arizona; Connecticut; Delaware; Illinois; Kansas; Massachusetts; Minnesota; Michigan; Missouri; Nebraska; North Carolina; Ohio; Pennsylvania; South Carolina; South Dakota; Vermont; and Virginia.
• American Legion Boys State, one of the most respected and selective educational programs of government instruction for high school students, celebrated its 79th anniversary this summer. In 2013, over 20,012 young men participated in the 49 Boys State programs.

• Simeon Toronto of Andover, Minn., and Zachary Faircloth of Longs, S.C., were elected president and vice president respectively of American Legion 2013 Boys Nation.

• Just over 513 American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion members have been awarded The American Legion and Scouting Square Knot Award since its inception in 2003, recognizing active involvement in The American Legion’s Scouting programs.

American Legion Baseball (ALB)

This year marks the 88th season for American Legion Baseball. The 2014 World Series was played Aug. 14-19 at Veterans Field at Keeter Stadium in Shelby, N.C., home of the American Legion Baseball World Series hosted by Post 82.

• As in previous years, games 1-14 were streamed live online via ESPN3. In 2014, Championship Tuesday was aired live for the first time on ESPNU. A new agreement with ESPN to broadcast the ALB World Series Championship Game live for the next five years was reached earlier this spring.

• The American Legion Baseball team from Brooklawn, N.J., sponsored by Post 72, won the 2013 American Legion Baseball World Series. As national champions, the team was invited to attend the 2013 Major League Baseball World Series and was honored on the field prior to Game 2 in Boston as guests of The American Legion and Major League Baseball.

• Anthony Harrold, playing for the Brooklawn team, is the 2013 George W. Rulon Player of the Year. Harrold is the 65th American Legion Baseball player to be honored by the National Baseball Hall of Fame. Sixty-three members of the National Baseball Hall of Fame played American Legion Baseball.

• The annual American Legion Baseball All-Academic Team, sponsored by Diamond Sports, provides eight $2,500 scholarships awarded to deserving American Legion Baseball players and one $5,000 scholarship awarded to the team’s captain. The 2013 All-Academic Team Captain is Matthew Attig from York, Pa.

Troop and Family Support

The purpose of Operation Comfort Warriors (OCW) is to provide items, activities and events to wounded, injured and ill servicemembers and their families which afford aid and comfort, empowerment over their condition and transitional assistance.

During 2013, OCW disbursed $239,078 in grants that provided comfort to wounded warriors. Despite drastic reductions in activations and deployments, wounded warriors still have special needs that The American Legion continues to address through Operation Comfort Warriors.
Citizenship and Naturalization

With oversight of Illegal Immigration issues having fully transitioned to the National Security Commission, the Americanism Commission focuses its attention upon promoting an understanding, appreciation and active participation in the rights and responsibilities of American citizenship and American government. The Americanism Commission strongly urges grass-roots involvement at the post level in initiatives such as Get Out The Vote, and in assimilating prospective citizens and legal immigrants into local communities.

Committee on Youth Education
Mike Bredeck
Minnesota
Chairman

Since our founding in 1919, The American Legion has continuously advocated greater program activity in the area of education. The American Legion believes that education is the cornerstone upon which the future of our nation is built. In keeping with this credo, activities during the past year have focused on improving and maintaining a stronger relationship between American Legion posts and schools in their communities.

Widely recognized throughout the country as the premier authority on issues concerning the flag of the United States, The American Legion has produced “For Which It Stands,” a DVD about the history, significance and meaning of our flag, and proper respect and care for it. “For Which It Stands” is designed primarily for students in upper elementary, middle or junior high schools. The DVD is available from Emblem Sales (Stock No. 755.400) for $9.95 plus shipping and handling.

The Americanism Commission continues to actively promote and solicit contributions to the American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund, established by The American Legion to assist the children of U.S. military personnel who die while serving on active duty on or after Sept. 11, 2001. This year, 23 American Legion Legacy scholarships were awarded totaling $49,250. Recipients are: Sebastian K. Almanzar, Walden, N.Y.; Alexander Bauer, Pipestone, Minn.; Christina Beeler, Sparta, Wis.; Michael Beeler, Sparta, Wis.; Daniel Bertolino, Murrieta, Calif.; Karina Bertolino, Murrieta, Calif.; Stephen Bertolino, Provo, Utah; Taylor Curry, APO, AE; Emily Harper, Columbus, Ohio; Haley Hartwick, Leander, Texas; Kelsey Hobart, Naples, N.Y.; Page Hobart, Naples, N.Y.; Sean Johnson, San Diego; Chris Kimmerly, Moreau, N.Y.; Jacob Martin, McEwen, Tenn.; Sean McVey, Oak Hill, W.Va.; Olivia Murphy-Sweet, Mechanicsburg, Pa.; Katelyn Nelson, Alexandria, Ky.; Khalia Paige, St. Clair Shores, Mich.; Corey Sexton, Fuquay-Varina, N.C.; Shane Sexton, Fuquay-Varina, N.C.; Craig Thurber, Mayetta, Kan.; and Madison West, Chesapeake, Va.

Contributions may be sent to The American Legacy Scholarship Fund, PO Box 361626, Indianapolis, IN 46236-1626, or online at www.legion.org/donate/legacy_scholarship/donate.

Other events during the past year:

- The Samsung American Legion Scholarship Program continued to make awards, distributing more than $4.9 million to students since its inception in 1996.
Committee on Children & Youth
Herbert Petit Jr.
Louisiana
Chairman

The American Legion has been a strong advocate for the children and youth of our nation since our founding in 1919. To date there is no area of child welfare that has gone untouched by the collective hand of The American Legion.

By action of the 2013 National Convention, the Commission on Children & Youth became a committee under the supervision and coordination of the Americanism Commission. At the fall meeting in October 2013, Herbert J. Petit Jr. from Louisiana was appointed chairman of the Committee on Children & Youth.

The Children & Youth program of The American Legion has two main objectives:

- To strengthen the family unit;
- To maintain a well-rounded program that meets the physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual needs of today's young people.

Youth Suicide Prevention: The American Legion is very concerned about the welfare of our nation’s youth and a major problem that threatens them. Among adolescents 10-24, suicide continues to be the third-leading cause of death. Over 4,800 young people take their own lives every year. Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem and is completely preventable.

Halloween Safety: As long as Halloween activities are sponsored and promoted in our various communities by duly appointed and elected officials, The American Legion believes children and parents should know how to make this observance as safe as possible. To assist with this effort, the Legion distributes a brochure, entitled “Make Halloween a Safe and Fun Night,” to educate children and parents about trick-or-treat safety.

Family Support Network: Since Sept. 11, 2001, National Guard and Reserve units have been activated in record numbers. The families of these men and women often find themselves unable to meet normal monthly household obligations. The American Legion maintains a nationwide Family Support Network toll-free telephone number, 1-800-504-4098, for service personnel and their families to call for assistance. The Legion can also be contacted through our website at www.legion.org/familysupport. All requests are referred to community posts. The post contacts the military member or family to determine and address their specific needs. As the nation’s largest veterans organization, our commitment to the men and women of our armed forces and their families is absolute.

Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA): Through our Temporary Financial Assistance program, a post may call upon The American Legion for cash assistance to help meet the basic needs (shelter, food, utilities and medical) of veterans' children when the parents are unable to do so. It is important to note that while the veteran must have served honorably on active duty during a designated war period, the veteran does not have to be a member of The American Legion to receive assistance. Last year we granted $1,058,858 to veterans' families and touched the lives of 2,230 children. These funds afforded veterans’ families with food, clothing and shelter, thus preserving the integrity of the family home.
The American Legion is proud of its accomplishments on behalf of our country's youth. Dedication to improving the lives of children has never wavered, and will continue with the Committee on Children & Youth, to ensure that The American Legion will do everything possible to perpetuate “A Square Deal For Every Child.” This remains the ultimate goal and definitive challenge for the years ahead.

Summary

This year-end report reflects only a small part of the work carried out by The American Legion’s Americanism Commission. Posts, districts and departments expend much more time, effort and money as they accept the challenges of sponsoring and conducting Americanism activities that foster wide-ranging community service, youth development and educational advancement.