

The Sons of The American Legion

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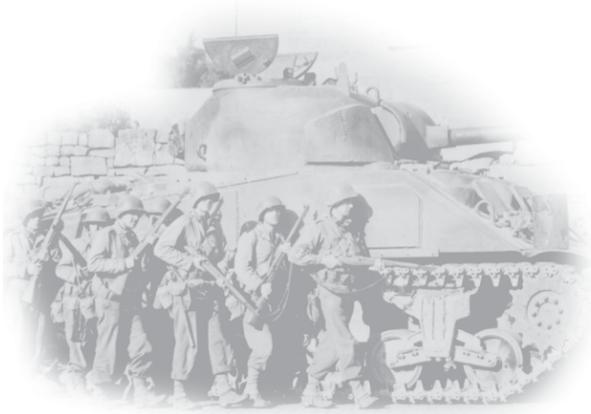
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NATIONAL UPDATE

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Spring 2015



Washington Conference is a Legion Family affair

Record snows and wind chills made travel difficult and sometimes impossible, as members of the Sons of The American Legion joined thousands of other Legion family members on their yearly trek to Washington, D.C. in February. With many flights cancelled or delayed, members reverted to buses, trains and automobiles to reach the nation's capitol.

Coping with even colder temperatures than previous years, S.A.L. members were out in force throughout the weekend, presenting wreaths and showing respect for the sacrifices made by our nation's military. Stops were made at Arlington National Cemetery, the World War II Memorial, the Korean War Memorial and the Vietnam Veterans Wall Memorial. Watching sentries shoveling ice and snow at the Tomb of the Unknowns was unique.

Sons attended numerous meetings and informative sessions during the four day conference. Most of those who attended trekked up to Capitol Hill on Tuesday to meet with elected officials and push for adoption of American Legion initiatives.



Courtesy Detachment of Maryland/SMD District



May 16 is our day to assist vets

Sons have always worked on behalf of veterans; it's at the heart of our very existence. But in 2008, the S.A.L. established the National Veterans Assistance Day in an effort to underscore the importance of our work on behalf of those who have

served in uniform. While May 16 of each year is officially designated National Veterans Assistance Day within the S.A.L., it's understood that squadrons are free to choose any date during the month of May on which to carry out a good deed

on behalf of one or more veterans.

It's not unusual for squadrons to look around and find disabled veterans who could use some repair work around the house or out in their yard. Similarly, some

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CHILD WELFARE FOUNDATION

2015 Per Capita Leaders

Wyoming	\$4.68
Colorado	\$4.02
Oregon	\$2.27
North Carolina	\$1.58
Washington	\$1.56
Florida	\$1.55
Arkansas	\$1.50
Virginia	\$1.17
Alabama	\$1.15
Nevada	\$1.03
Arizona	\$.89
Texas	\$.88
Louisiana	\$.82

NOTE: The administrative year for CWF donations ends on May 31. All donations need to arrive at the National Headquarters by that date.

"Snapshots of Service" contest

At the urging of the National Executive Committee's Public Relations Commission, The S.A.L. has created the "Snapshots of Service" photo contest to help showcase the activities of Sons as they support the Four Pillars of the American Legion: Americanism, Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation, Children and Youth and National Defense.

The contest helps us collect photos that highlight activities of Sons throughout the country and also allows the national organization to develop a data base of photos that will be used to promote the many programs and outstanding work of Sons. Information regarding the submission of photos for the "Snapshots of Service" contest can be found on the S.A.L. national website at www.legion.org/sons/files/snapshotform.pdf. Photos must be submitted by individual squadrons and each squadron may submit up to three photos per category each year. Each photo must include one or more members of the S.A.L. who are wearing Sons covers or identifiable clothing.

Plaques will be awarded to the two best entries in each category. Judging will take place at the National Convention and will be based on the quality of each photo and which photo best symbolizes S.A.L. support for the Four Pillars. Send photos in digital .jpg or .tif format to w16wills@prodigy.net and include a brief description of the activities being shown in each photo.

Raising money and raising future leaders

By **Mike Moss**
National Commander

Here we are, just past the half way point of the Sons' administrative year.

There's still a lot of work ahead in order to complete our bridge to the future.

Membership this year is progressing nicely throughout all of our regions. There seems to be a bit of healthy competitiveness this year to see who's going to finish on top. Your hard work and dedication to the membership program will pay off and we all will succeed.

The door was opened to a new program this year and Sons have embraced it well; The American Legion Endowment Fund (*see story on Page 3*). This is the first time the S.A.L. has made a coordinated national effort to raise funds for this program. I'm sure we'll all look forward to supporting this in the future, too. Let us continue to strive toward this year's goal of raising \$90,000.

Meanwhile, we can't forget the National Emergency Fund. This important fund raising effort continues to gain momentum just as it continues to assist those members of our Legion Family who find themselves in emergency situations.

Everywhere I go this year I am trying to shine a light on our more youthful members. It should go without saying that our younger members are the future of the Sons of The American Legion. The photos sitting just off to the right help illustrate what I'm talking about. It was my pleasure to recognize these three young men when I visited their Detachments recently. That's Kollin Humphrey in the top photo. It was a pleasure meeting up with him when I visited the Detachment of Pennsylvania's D.E.C. meeting. Kollin was willing to have his picture taken with me, but it cost me a commander's pin, my official coin and a cover bag! The middle photo was taken on the weekend I traveled to Maryland. At one point I joined in with leaders of that Detachment as we presented D. J. Price with a nice plaque to commemorate his completion of the S.A.L.'s 5 Star 10 Ideals Program. I would love to give away many more of those plaques. I don't often get to stay in my own Detachment of Colorado, but when I do, I love handing my pin out to our younger guys, like James Norre of Pueblo, CO Squadron 2. And although I don't have a photo of the moment, I met young Austin and Layne Miller when I traveled to the Detachment of Montana and am proud to know the S.A.L. is mentoring good young men like them. Keep up the good work, gentlemen.

Let me take a moment to mention and promote American Legion National Commander Mike Helm's "4 by 4" fund raising project. The Commander has asked each Post, Squadron, Unit and Chapter to participate by donating to their favorite charity. Any member of The Legion Family who donates \$100 or more is eligible to receive a "Stay on Course" Commander's pin. This is just one example how we can all make a difference in the lives of veterans and children in our future.

Please continue to strive for success in everything we do; to make that bridge stronger and to link our Legion Family together.



Legacy Run finishes first decade

By **Joe Gladden**
Past Nat'l Commander

Each year, members of The American Legion Family and some others ride their motorcycles to Wayne Post 64 in Indianapolis, IN to start a journey that lasts over 1,000 miles and four days to help the children of our active duty soldiers killed since September 11, 2001. This event is called the Legacy Run. It exists to benefit The American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund.

After terrorists attacked our Nation back in 2001, The American Legion realized that there was going to be a need to help the children of our soldiers that answered the final call, and so the Legacy Scholarship Fund was formed. While the name was changed a couple of

times in the early years, the beneficiaries of this fund have not. Children of soldiers

killed while on active duty since 9/11 can apply for a college scholarship from the fund each year they are in college for undergraduate studies. Since the fund was started, more than 6,000 soldiers/sailors have been killed leaving thousands of children that will one day need our help.

While the route itself has not been finalized, we know the 10th Legacy Run will start on Sunday, August 23 in Indianapolis and end on Wednesday, August 26 Towson, MD. We know that hundreds of motorcyclists will once again be riding that thousand mile route and we know that many hundreds of thousands of dollars will be raised to help these children.

While The American Legion Riders has taken this on as
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Do you have a story to share?

Send ideas and pictures to:

National Update
c/o Mike Pipher, Editor
612 S. State Road 446 - #35C
Bloomington, IN 47401
or
mpipher@iu.edu

Next deadline is
June 1, 2015

Renewal 2015 Leaders

Dist of Columbia	100 %
Maryland	80 %
Minnesota	79 %
Iowa	78 %
Louisiana	78 %
Wisconsin	77 %
Illinois	77 %
Kansas	76 %
Vermont	76 %
Pennsylvania	76 %
Delaware	75 %
Virginia	75 %
Montana	75 %
Florida	75 %
Nebraska	75 %
Idaho	74 %
Indiana	74 %
Wyoming	73 %
New Jersey	73 %
Michigan	73 %
North Dakota	72 %
Ohio	72 %
South Carolina	72 %
Nat'l Avg	74 %

MySAL *from Page 3*

all of that information in 'real time.'

With access to *MySAL*, your Squadron can better maintain its membership records. Ask your members to fill out a Member Data Form and use that to go online and clean up everyone's records as you type. By maintaining these records in *MySAL* you'll be able to better communicate with your members and it will even help our national organization deliver the *National Update* newsletter to those who have been missing it!

One thing *MySAL* is not set up to process is transfers. The Member Data Form is still needed for those. But you can update other information: birthdates, phone numbers, continuous years of membership and e-mail addresses. With this information available to you online, your squadron can keep its members informed about your own squadron and post activities.

I encourage you to sign up for *MySAL.org* today.

THIS IS HOW WE ROLL

The Detachment of New York gave a \$2,500 donation to the National Memorial Day Museum in Waterloo NY. The money will be used for building repairs. In turn, the Museum gave the Detachment a plaque to thank them for their efforts. **(Right)**



Here's an interesting before-and-after story. **LeMars, IA Squadron 241** Vice Commander Ray "Rayme" Wilkens has worn a beard for over 40 years. He let his hair grow out all of last year in the hope of getting a chance to meet some "Duck Dynasty" celebrities at the state fair. When that didn't pan out he came up with another idea: take donations from people who would see him lose that 40 year old beard as well as most of the hair from atop his head. So, back in November, folks lined up and ponied up cash to watch as Rayme sat in the chair and got a fresh face, courtesy of retired barber and military veteran Don Curry. When all the cutting was done, Rayme had \$2,800, nearly double his original goal. All of the money was donated to Post 241. Some of it was used to paint a POW-MIA mural on the outside of the building. The rest was used on various improvements around the post. **(Left)**



The psychiatric unit of the VA Medical Center in Wilkes-Barre, PA has been given more than a dozen pairs of "Croc" shoes by **Mountain Top, PA Squadron 781**. Money used to buy the shoes was raised last year through a car show the squadron sponsored. In addition to the shoes, some of the money was used to help build the post's new playground. **(Right)**

2014 was a great year to be a member of the Sons in **St. Genevieve, MO Squadron 150**. They

were able to provide \$500 scholarships to both local high schools to be used by graduating seniors as well as \$800 in support for the local food pantry. Money was raised through hole sponsorship at a golf tournament and they were able to provide golf balls to each member of the winning team that was closest to the pin. Some of the squadron's own members played in the tournament and managed to take first place in the championship flight. **(Right)**



Must be nice. **Port Tampa, FL Squadron 138** is housed in the Hugh Gilbert Strickland American Legion Post, which just happens to sit a few feet from the edge of Tampa Bay. We salute the guys for running effective events and raising money that benefits the Four Pillars of The American Legion. Last year, Squadron 138 donated more than \$23,000 to various charities. They were #1 in the Detachment for Children and Youth activities, 2nd in Americanism and 3rd in VA&R. Check out this list of fund raising activities: fishing tournament, sea-food fest, car shows, golf tournaments, chili cook-offs, Sunday dinners, and more. Oh, and don't forget sitting on their recently rebuilt deck enjoying those sunsets!

Sons from the **Rockaway, NJ Squadron 344** made sure one local family had a better Christmas this year. Members donated a Christmas tree from their Christmas tree sale to a deserving Rockaway Township family.



Gladstone, MI Squadron 71 Sons made a \$500 donation just before Christmas that helped restock the shelves of the town's St. Vincent DePaul Food Pantry. Squadron Adjutant John Pickard say his guys had looked around for something to do that would help the community and thought this was a good idea. We would agree. **(Left)**

Each month, members of **Livonia, MI Squadron 32** select a "Veteran of the Month" and invite them to the squadron meeting where they are presented with a plaque that features the veterans' photo and his or her service information. A duplicate plaque is placed on display in the lobby of the post. Of course, not everyone has been able to attend the meetings. In those cases, Sons go out to the vet's homes and interview them about their experiences. They make DVD's of the interviews



which are shown at the next meeting. The guys also share their selections with the local newspaper, which has been printing them each month.

Not far from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, S.A.L. members belonging to **New Windsor, NY Squadron 1796** have been showing Boy Scouts and Girls Scouts visit area cemeteries and place flags on the graves of veterans. **(Right)**



The Sons of **Croghan, NY Squadron 1663** hosted a Vietnam War 50th Anniversary Commemoration Picnic back in August to honor all members of their Legion Post who served from 1961 to 1975. The event featured a speech and a slide show prepared by the Squadron Historian. It featured local veterans who served in Vietnam and elsewhere around the globe. Gifts were provided to veterans and a picnic lunch was served to 275. **(Above)**



The Detachment of Maryland has become a community partner in the annual Maryland State Police/Special Olympics Polar Bear Plunge. On a decidedly frigid Friday in late January, dozens of S.A.L. members, including Sons National Commander Mike Moss, joined thousands of other warm-hearted folks for a pretty quick dip in Chesapeake Bay, just up the road from the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis. This was the 19th year for the Plunge, an event that has raised more than \$2 million since it began. **(Below)**

Impacting lives of homeless vets in Vermont

The Detachment of Vermont regularly supports several entities within their state that works with veterans and military. One such facility is "The Veterans' Place" in Northfield, which is in central Vermont (vermontveteransplace.org). It is a refurbished home that currently houses 23 men who were previously homeless. This is a non-profit organization that is dedicated to reducing the homeless veteran population in Vermont, one veteran at a time.

"The Veterans' Place" is a two-year transitional home and program for displaced veterans. They are located in a house that allows for full handicapped accessibility, gives their residents stable living conditions that includes food, clothing, transportation, as well as access to medical, dental, and legal assistance. They also offer help with substance abuse and PTSD counseling.

The Detachment of Vermont regularly assists this home in providing personal care items and funds for all the veterans' needs. One of the residents stated that living at "The Veterans' Place" gave him a sense of personal accountability for his actions and helped push him to gain employment and stay on a path toward self-improvement.

This is just another example of things that S.A.L. Detachments and squadrons across the country do regularly and often go unnoticed. Yet these are things that are important to our veteran community.



Above - Sons National Vice Commander Greg "Doc" Gibbs pays a visit to "The Veterans' Place" in Vermont.

Legacy from Page 7

their predominant charity program, many ALR members are also Sons and many squadrons support this program, as well. Last year the S.A.L. raised almost \$200,000 for the Legacy Run.

N.E.C. Bob Brown from Georgia is now one of a very small group of riders that has ridden in every Run since this first started in 2006 and Bob's wife Martha has ridden along with him on many of these Runs. This will be my 3rd Legacy Run. For me, the ride will start in Indy but will end up in my backyard. I hope to see you there!

Membership 2015 Leaders

Dist of Columbia	130 %
Oklahoma	95 %
Mississippi	94 %
Idaho	91 %
Wyoming	90 %
Florida	89 %
Minnesota	88 %
Maryland	86 %
Iowa	86 %
Kansas	86 %
Louisiana	86 %
Montana	85 %
South Carolina	84 %
Wisconsin	84 %
Illinois	84 %
Georgia	84 %
Virginia	84 %
Pennsylvania	82 %
Nevada	82 %
Indiana	82 %
Delaware	82 %
Vermont	82 %
California	82 %
Nat'l Total	81 %

Why Sons support the Endowment Fund

*By Clint Bolt
Nat'l VA&R Chairman*

The Endowment fund was established in 1925 to provide assistance to veterans and their children through programs such as Department Service Officers School, National Veterans Legal Services and Temporary Financial Assistance.

Department Service Officer Schools teach 3,000 Department Service Officers and accredited representatives the latest changes in regulations, procedures and laws.

In an agreement with National Veterans Legal Services Program, The American Legion provides training for service officers and American Legion staff assigned to the Board of Veterans Appeals to represent Veterans, whose claims have been denied, on their appeals process.

The Endowment also provides needed help for children of military and veteran families in the form of Temporary Financial Assistance. Through these grants, local posts can call on the national organization for cash assistance to help maintain the basic needs of children. TFA grants assist with shelter, food, utilities, clothing, medical care, surgery, medications, hospitalization, dietary needs and dental care.

This year, S.A.L. National Commander Mike Moss has established the Sons' Endowment Fund goal at \$90,000.00 -- \$1,000 for every year that the Endowment Fund has been in existence.

MySAL can work for you as well as it did for us

*By Scott Williams
Assistant Nat'l Adjutant*

My squadron, **Purcellville, VA Squadron 293**, signed up for MySAL in 2013. Our renewals for 2014 were falling short so we downloaded some information from MySAL and used it to print mailing labels and create a Membership Invoice in which we promoted some of the squadron's accomplishments and explained what everyone's dues money is used for, including donations to CWF and NEF. The invoices and renewal notices were sent out and our unpaid members all responded. We reached our 100% goal and we also received a lot of updated information on many of our members. We went back into MySAL and updated

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Assistance from Page 1

squadrons have used this as an opportunity to conduct luncheons for a group of veterans or have organized special outings like picnics or road trips to ball games.

In Colorado, where winter can easily creep into May, one squadron used a snow blower last year to clean the driveway and sidewalks of a retired Master Chief. In one particular Illinois town, squadron members used a single Saturday afternoon to accomplish a number of fix-up and landscaping projects on the home of one particular veteran.

Although most S.A.L. National Veterans Assistance Day activities continue to go unreported, a number of squadron adjutants have remembered to keep track and include their efforts on the annual Consolidated Squadron Report form. Last year, Sons reported these numbers relating to Veterans Assistance Day activities:

- Assisted 11,239 veterans
 - Logged 11,239 hours of service to those veterans
 - Spent \$37,187 on those projects
- As Veterans Assistance Day continues to grow, so will those numbers and the real payoff will be in the knowledge that Sons have found yet another effective way to say "Thank you" to those whose service.

Consolidated Squadron Reports

The new 2015 S.A.L. Consolidated Squadron Report forms were mailed to all Department Headquarters and Detachment Adjutants in February. All Sons squadron adjutants should have received them by now. Completed forms should be returned to respective Department HQ's by June 30.

It's imperative that every squadron fills out its report. The information collected is used by The American Legion in its annual report to Congress about our support for veterans across the country.