



NATIONAL UPDATE

Official Publication of the Sons of The American Legion

Winter 2017



Above - Sons elected Jeff Frain as National Commander at their National Convention in Cincinnati in August. In his first few energetic months at the helm, Jeff has been commending Sons for their enthusiasm and involvement. (See stories Page 2)

Where's the email?

For the past year, National HQ has been sending out electronic copies of our National Update newsletter to everyone whose e-mail address is on file. One significant problem is that, out of nearly 400,000 members, only 12,000 e-mail addresses are on file at headquarters. Only three percent of S.A.L. members worldwide have registered their e-mails.

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Sons' \$7M mark plays important role making CWF grants possible

When the administrative year of the Child Welfare Foundation closed last May, Sons were a mere \$75,000 short of topping the \$7 million mark in all-time contributions. However, that milestone was eclipsed in August when more than \$100,000 in contributions were turned in at the National Convention.

Those funds have helped enable The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation, now in its 62nd year, to award more than \$618,000 this fall in grants to 20 nonprofit organizations. Grant recipients were selected during the CWF's annual fall meeting in Indianapolis. Recipients have been awarded the grants to support youth-serving projects that seek to enhance the lives of children by addressing their physical, mental, emo

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Help us help you

*By Larry "Bear" Weinzirl
Nat'l VE&E Chairman*

The S.A.L. National Veterans Employment and Education Commission is requesting that all detachments establish their own VE&E commissions/committees to assist us in getting information out on job fairs, benefits available and other information that can be valuable for our Veterans. Districts and squadrons are asked to follow suit and establish VE&E committees, as well.

These commissions and committees can assist by going online and finding local job fairs being held in your states and communities. Then simply take this info, as

well as info received from National HQ, and place it on your websites and Facebook pages as well as in your newsletters. You can also print out fliers that advertise these jobs fairs and post them on the bulletin board at your Posts and in other locations around your community where veterans are likely to see them.



Above - Don't let his good looks fool you. We should all want to be like this man. Gabe Cinquegrana has done more for veterans in the past year than most members of the Sons and has received one of our highest awards. (See story Page 3)

Join in on the “Knowledge is Power Tour”

By **Jeff Frain**

National Commander

I have two questions for all of you:

- 1) Why did you join the Sons of The American Legion?
- 2) What is your passion in this organization?

The reason I joined was for bowling. How about you?

I did not know what The American Legion was or know about their program called the Sons of The American Legion. How about you?

The reason we are calling this year the “Knowledge is Power Tour” is because I have been a member for 33 years and I am still learning about what we do. But we don’t want new members to have you wait for 33 years, so this year we plan on working really hard with training on the programs, administration, fund raising, membership, and of course, the Consolidated Squadron Report form. So please contact your squadron, district, or detachment leaders, or National Vice Commanders for any information needed to help you succeed because you joined for a reason. Let us help you fulfill that purpose.

Warning!!! Helping veterans and their families will become a PASSION. My Passion for helping veterans (past, present, and future) has changed my life. Please read the story of Gabe Cinquegrana, this year’s winner of the Charles B. Rigsby Award as the nation’s most outstanding S.A.L. volunteer for veterans. **(See Page 3)** Gabe is a stunning example of someone who pitched in one day because he thought he could help. From that one simple step, he found a passion in helping veterans that has touched and enriched many lives. When you look a veteran or their family in the eyes and see the tears welling up because you cared enough to help... priceless! So as you continue to volunteer, start working into your passion. Find it! Excel in it! Most of all, enjoy your PASSION!

I stated this has become a passion for me and some of the programs I love are all of the Children and Youth programs, Legion Baseball, Junior Shooting Sports, Boy Scouts and many more. Helping our youth and veterans’ families is very fulfilling. With the help of so many blue-cap members, we now excel in these area as a national organization. The number one program Sons support is the Child Welfare Foundation. We just broke the seven million dollar mark and now we are working to surpass eight million dollars. The new motto is, “Let there be no debate, we will hit eight!” My number one project for this year is the Child Welfare Foundation. This year I am asking, along with your normal donation, please consider holding an additional one or two extra events



New Commander full of new ideas

“I make plastic injection molds. I sit in the shop all day cutting and grinding steel and thinking up the world’s greatest ideas on how I can help this organization. This year I want to help The American Legion grow. I want to see the Sons each sign up three brand new Legion members to help increase the size of our parent organization.”

With those words, Jeff Frain begins a year-long journey across the country as National Commander of the Sons of The American Legion.

Frain hails from **Apache Junction, AZ Sq 27**. He’s a 33 year member of the S.A.L. and a certified journeyman mold maker in his private life.

His theme this year is “Knowledge is power.” Frain wants to emphasize the importance of training S.A.L. members from the squadron level all the way up through the national level.

“If we all know what we have to do and how to do it, we’ll be an unstoppable force. Together we’ll be making some great strides in helping veterans and their families,” he says.

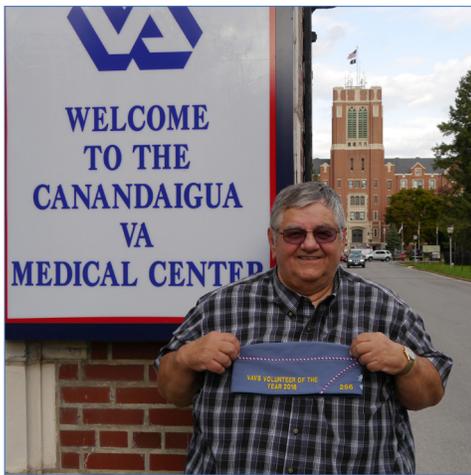
The newly-minted commander is a Legion Family man. His wife, two children and three grandchildren are all Legion Family members. When not working on American Legion matters, he enjoys hunting, fishing and golf. Jeff’s eligibility in the Sons was established through his father, William, a U.S. Army veteran of the Korean War who died in 1973. His stepfather, Earnest Pierson, is also a U.S. Air Force Vietnam veteran.

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A day in the life of the top volunteer in the country

Each year at its National Convention, the S.A.L. presents the Charles B. Rigsby Volunteer of the Year Award to an individual judged to have done the most volunteer work in the country on behalf of veterans. This year, that award was given to Gabe Cinquegrana who is, understandably, a very active member of *Canandaigua, NY Sq 256*. Gabe has been a member of the S.A.L. for only a decade but, in that short time, has made a world of difference for in-patients and out-patients and left his mark at the Canandaigua VA Medical Center.

Gabe first learned of the Sons when he helped a friend find the local Legion post in order to transfer their membership. Someone told him about a group known as the Sons. Once he joined he began to help with events, then became an officer, then found out about County and District levels of the S.A.L. That's when he heard about opportunities to volunteer at the local VA hospital. It wasn't long before he was helping out regularly at the hospital, first as a wheelchair escort, then in the Human Resources office, and now spends at least two days (and some nights and weekends - he has his own key) helping in the Public Affairs Voluntary Service Office. He's also the Sons' VAVS hospital representative.



"I'm not sure I inspire anybody, but I can tell you what motivates me," says Gabe. "The original motivation was my father because I never got to talk to him about his military service."

"Gabe is a part of our team," says Robin Johnson, Voluntary Services Community Relations Manager and Gabe's boss, one of ten current or former staff members and friends who wanted to be interviewed about him.

"I wasn't surprised he won the award," says social worker Emily DiSalvo. "He's been so helpful - my knight in shining armor. Anything I need, he's

just a phone call or e-mail away."

"He's an organizer," says Recreation Therapy Supervisor Hank Riegel, a reference to Gabe's strong administrative background. Now retired, Gabe has held several careers in life. Most required the kind of business sense and organizational skills he now lends to the VA. He records all donations of cash or goods, tracks hours for as many as 600 volunteers, and has developed computerized reports used to notify groups about their contributions of time and money. He organizes two storerooms and makes sure patients get something they want on their birthdays. On Tuesdays, he helps with Bingo on the dementia ward.

"I probably should've been a promoter," says Gabe. "I'm always coming up with new things to try, finding the money, coordinating it, and finding people to run it."

VA budget cuts for administrative help had robbed Supervisory Chaplain Robert Searle of time he spent with vets until Gabe offered to take over things like publishing the church bulletins.

The VA takes up much of Gabe's time but his talents are spread across the rolling Northern New York State countryside. His wife has MS, so he has organized large MS Task Force fundraisers. He is the *Detachment of New York* Public Relations Chairman, their newsletter editor, webmaster and runs the detachment's Facebook page.

"Very outgoing guy - always stepping up to do what nobody else

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Collaborations do work. Just ask the guys in the **Detachment of New York 7th District**. They stitched together a day-long Welcome Home event that brought together at least 30 local community organizations, all for the purpose of aiding veterans. Close to 250 people attended the Welcome Home, which was intended not only to celebrate the return of our military from deployment, but to provide information and assistance to make the transition back for them and their families much easier. It was no coincidence that May 21st was also Armed Forces Day, and the S.A.L.'s National Veterans Appreciation Day. (Right)



This year's 4th of July was festive and patriotic thanks to color guard work performed by the members of **Mountain, PA Sq 781**. They marched in the parade then presented colors during ceremonies at the park. (Below)



Here's a town with streets lined with U.S. Flags courtesy of Little Fall, MN Sq 152. Squadron members put the flags up just before Memorial Day and leave them there, sometimes all the way up to Veterans Day. It's a project the squadron has been involved with for the past decade. (Right)

Seems a bit odd talking about warm weather activities here in the early days of winter, but we have to believe the Sons in **Hamburg, NY Sq 527** are already busy planning for their next appearance at the Erie County Fair. With more than a million visitors, the Erie Fair is even bigger than the New York State Fair. Not only that, but the S.A.L. teams with the Auxiliary to host a free food and beverage tent dedicated to veterans.



Look! Is it a reindeer? Is it an elf? Is it Santa Clause? No, it's just **Detachment of California** Children and Youth Chairman John Mejia doing a radio interview for the 9th annual "Christmas in July" program to benefit Loma Linda Children's Hospital. (Below Left) "Summer Santa had some help with the young patients when he made his visit. (Below)



The way folks in Georgia see it, 18 year old Phillip Daniels is a hero. When a neighbor's house burst into flames last July, Phillip, who is a member of **Dublin, GA Sq 17**, ran in with another young friend and pulled 57 year old Korean War veteran Gene Kosten from the flame-engulfed building. Kosten was airlifted to a hospital with severe burns.

We all know how much the fine folks in Texas love their chili. The Sons of **Austin, TX Sq 83** held a CASI (Chili Appreciation Society International) Chili Cook-off back in the warm month of July and raised \$2,500. The money was donated to help pay for a kidney transplant for the 15 year old grandson of a local veteran.

Back in May, **Detachment of Ohio District 14** Sons joined with other Legion Family members to present 50 Josh Dog Kits to the Akron Ronald McDonald House. Chessie Haley, who was being treated at Akron Children's Hospital, received the first one from Detachment Judge Advocate Bill Towns and District 14 American Legion Rider liaison Brent Herring. **(Right)**



Sons are fond of welcoming home men and women of the military who served in the Middle East. Casey Jaworski, of **Jensen Beach, FL Sq 126, (Right)** has been honored by the U.S. government for his work as a civilian contractor for several years following the invasion of Iraq. He worked as a utilities expert, providing clean drinking water to the Iraqi people.



This has been a banner year for the guys inside **Evanston, IL Sq 42**. They achieved several membership goals, including growing to a new all-time high and by increasing membership by the largest percentage of squadrons in the state. They run an annual golf outing that brought in over \$1,000 that will be used to benefit their Legion Post home.

The Iowa State Fair recognizes one day each year as Veterans Day. This year, veterans from six different Legion posts in Northwest Iowa were given a free bus ride to the fair where they marched in the parade and enjoyed day-long events. It was all sponsored by **LeMars, IA Sq 241** S.A.L. members, who also joined in on the parade.



Gladstone, MI Sq 71 Sons have donated another \$500 to the next U.P. Honor Flight. They raised the money during a Croatian chicken dinner held at The Legion post. There have been 11 U.P. Honor Flights so far, carrying World War II, Korean War and Vietnam War veterans to Washington, DC to visit memorials and other landmarks. More than 700 Upper Peninsula veterans have made the flights since they began, at no cost to them.



Power Tour *from Page 2*

and increase what you would normally donate. I heard a rumor - If The Legion Family reaches a combined total of one million dollars by May 31, 2017, CWF President Dennis Boland will shave his head. Trust me, he loves his hair, and I do mean loves it. So let's see if we can shave it for the kids.

Membership theme: "Be a superhero and sign up three American Heroes today."

The Sons reached their 100% membership goal this past year and are continuing to grow, which is fantastic. We also continue to meet or exceed goals and donation and this is why I am asking all Sons to step up and help The American Legion with its own membership goals. There are approximately 20 million veterans eligible to join The American Legion and if we can get even a small percentage of that number each year, not only will we grow The Legion, but also The Legion Family because we would also be getting sons, grandsons, daughters, and granddaughters of the new Legion members. I am putting out a call to action for all Sons members: The American Legion family needs our help. I am asking that all Sons "Be a superhero and sign up three American Heroes today" and help our family, The American Legion Family, grow!

I would not be your commander if it wasn't for the help and support of so many American Legion Family members, so thank you for the support and trust you have in me. We will have a great year and I look forward to seeing all of you during the "Knowledge is Power Tour."

Sons learn to spot signs of trouble

By **Jim Borgman**
Nat'l Americanism Commission

The American Legion conducts its annual National Americanism Conference each year in September in Indianapolis. Sons are invited to participate in these sessions and have been doing so in increasing numbers in recent years.

In keeping with National Commander Jeff Frain's theme of "Knowledge is Power," this year's conference was certainly packed with power. It opened with a home run on Friday night when we heard a report from Brian Parker, the Director of the Taylor Hooten Foundation. His presentation covered APEDs - Appearance and Physically Enhancing Drugs. We learned that 17% of adolescents today use these dangerous drugs at a point in their lives where they are largely experiencing their first major challenge, peer pressure. They are used by both young men and women so that they can look and perform at high levels when they think that is what matters most. The big problem that taking these drugs at that age is they are destroying the natural hormonal process the human body goes through with adolescent development. In other words, their hormones should be telling their bodies to develop, but with the introduction of the drugs, that never happens naturally and their bodies are subject to detrimental developmental problems at a later time. I have served for the past several years as a counselor at my own Legion Department's Boys State. As I look back, I'm sure I've seen some of the symptoms that were described. This was an eye-opening problem and I found it to be valuable information to consider when interacting with the citizens of Boys State.

There were many other great presentations at the conference. Anyone interested in Boys State programs can review those presentations at www.legion.org/boysnation/resources.

Gabe *from Page 3*

wants to do," says American Legion Post 256 Commander Don Grundke.

Although he won't tell you, it's readily apparent that Gabe is also a man of faith.

"He won't talk about that," says Chaplain Searle. "It's an oxymoron not to be loving and accepting and still be a person of faith."

Human Resources Manager Sheila Jones really likes Gabe's funny sarcasm but is quick to remember, "When he went on vacation, he sent us oranges."

"It's one thing to tell people to get out and volunteer," says Human Resources Assistant Sherry Palmer. "It's better to see first-hand what someone like this does on a daily basis."

Do you have a story to share?

Send ideas and pictures to:

National Update
612 S. State Road 446 - #35C
Bloomington, IN 47401
or
mpipher@iu.edu

Next deadline is
February 1, 2017

CWF grants *from Page 1*

tional and spiritual needs.

Among the list of recipients were organizations specifically sponsored by the Sons:

- *Angel Flight West of Santa Monica, CA*, was awarded \$10,000 for their project, "Promoting Fly-Anthropy

- *Bethany Christian Services of Grand Rapids, MI*, was awarded \$25,000 for their project, "Post Adoption Support for Military Families Awareness Campaign."

- *Books Aloud of San Jose, CA*, was awarded \$10,000 for their project, "Books Aloud Youth Program."

- *Building Better Days of Edgewater, MD*, was awarded \$11,230 for their project, "Benefits of Building."

- *Child Find of America, Inc. of New Paltz, NY*, was awarded \$40,500 for their project, "In Safe Hands Information Kits."

- *Childhood Leukemia Foundation of Brick, NJ*, was awarded \$60,000 for their project, "Hope Binder."

- *Children's Brain Tumor Foundation of New York, NY*, was awarded \$20,000 for their project, "Finding Your Way- A Guide for Childhood Brain Tumor Families from Diagnosis & Beyond."

- *KEYS of Sherrill, NY*, was awarded \$5,362 for their project, "KEYS Music Toolkits: Delivering Music, Hope and Smiles to Kids Battling Cancer."

- *National Meningitis Association, Inc. of Fort Myers, FL*, was awarded \$29,000 for their project, "Get Vaccinated."

Don't hold that pose - send it in

By **Michael Fox**
Nat'l Public/Media Chairman

the National Public and Media Communications Commission has created "Snapshots of Service," a photo contest open to all squadrons. Awards will be presented at the 2017 National Convention in Reno Nevada. A full list of the rules and criteria is available at www.legion.org/sons/publications, but some important points include:

- Entries are due no less than 30 days prior to the convention.
- Photos must be based on The Legion's Four Pillars (Veterans Affairs and Rehab, Americanism, National Defense, Children & Youth).
- Photos must contain members of the Sons with their covers or identifiable clothing on during the activity or event and a brief history of the event.
- Photos must be in digital .jpg or .tiff format.
- Photos must be only from August 2016 thru July 2017.
- Maximum of three photos per category may be submitted by squadron.
- Entries must be e-mailed to Sandyipman95@hotmail.com.

Emails *from Page 1*

When the summer edition of the newsletter was e-mailed, Legion officials ran some internet diagnostics. The results were surprisingly disappointing.

- *Of the original 12,000 e-mails sent, more than 1,000 were returned as undeliverable.*

- *Of the 11,000 that landed safely, only 7,000 were opened.*

- *Of the 7,000 that were opened, only 3,000 clicked on the link to view the newsletter.*

- *Of the 3,000 that viewed the newsletter, only about 1,000 moved beyond the first page.*

We live in a world that is moving away from the high cost of printing newsletters. Any organization as large as ours needs to be able to

In order to bring an emphasis to the efforts that our members do for our veterans and our communities,

the National Public and Media Communications Commission has created "Snapshots of Service," a photo contest open to all squadrons. Awards will be presented at the 2017 National Convention in Reno Nevada. A full list of the rules and criteria is available at www.legion.org/sons/publications, but some important points include:

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communicate with its members. Registering your e-mail and keeping it updated will only become more important in the years ahead.

When the 2018 S.A.L. membership cards are printed this spring, there will be space dedicated to collecting new and renewed members' e-mail addresses. This is an important first for the Sons.

There are already several ways members can report their e-mail addresses.

- 1) You can go online at www.legion.org/membershipmanagement and enter the information yourself
- 2) Squadron adjutants who are signed up to us www.mySAL.org can enter the information there.
- 3) Adjutants can send written lists of members' e-mails directly to S.A.L. National HQ.
- 4) Anyone can send their own e-mail directly to National HQ.

Regardless of how it gets done, the importance of collecting members' e-mails and keeping them updated cannot be overstated.

Did you know you can manage and update your own address, phone number and e-mail address on the National HQ computer?

www.legion.org/membershipmanagement

The Sons of The American Legion

P.O. Box 1055

Indianapolis, IN 46206



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Do you have what it takes to be a superhero?

By **Seth Rippe**
Nat'l Membership Chairman

Commander Frain's Challenge for the year is "Be a superhero and sign up three American Heroes today!" We are challenging each member of the Sons to sign up three new members into The American Legion this year. If they are eligible to be a dual member, sign them up for the Sons and then take the next step: sign up their sons and grandsons, as well. By helping our parent organization grow we are growing our own recruiting base. And don't forget to sign up new and renewed Auxiliary members, too. We are a family!

As a program of The American Legion, Sons should be knowledgeable about not only our own activities but also have a working knowledge of the many different and wonderful programs offered by The Legion. If knowledge is power then The American Legion's membership page www.legion.org/membership/tools will give anyone the power to be a superrecruiter. One of the tools outlined on the website is the "Why You Should Belong" brochure. This handout outlines the organization's four pillars (Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, National Security, Americanism, and Children & Youth), who makes up The Legion Family, benefits, and the membership application with eligibility dates. If you do not already carry one of these with you I would encourage you to download it today. This tool makes recruiting as easy as just asking.

Washington Conference set for late February

The next American Legion Washington Conference will be held in late February this year. Sons will conduct wreath laying ceremonies on Sunday February 26, first at the Tomb of The Unknowns at Arlington National Cemetery followed by similar ceremonies at the Korean War Memorial and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. The Conference itself will be located at the Washington Hilton Hotel, running from Sunday February 26 through March 1. Members of The Legion Family will be briefed on the organization's legislative priorities and then fan out across Capitol Hill and spend a day meeting with elected representatives in the U.S. House and Senate.