Spring is in the air for Sons and kids

At this time every year, we’ve finished digging out from winter, daffodils start to sprout out in the yard, and children seem to come out of the woodwork to enjoy the fresh spring air. It’s also a time when The American Legion Family gets deeply involved in youth-oriented programs. In addition to observing April as Children and Youth Month, Sons and others turn their attention to some very beneficial programs such as the Child Welfare Foundation, Children’s Miracle Network, and COTA (Children’s Organ Transplant Association). Many Legion posts sponsor Easter-related events and other types of spring-related activities. Posts that sponsor American Legion Baseball teams get down to the business of finalizing summertime plans.

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Welcome to Legiiontown

Members of the S.A.L. honor veterans, driven by their family connections and a desire to support their fathers, grandfathers and others.

The American Legion is now encouraging Sons to go online and take one more step to honor those who inspired them and their commitment to continued service. Sons are invited to share the stories of their fathers and/or grandfathers by going to www.Legiontown.org and clicking on “My Hero, Our Story” to share the memories and stories of the veterans in their lives. Entries published on www.legion.org will also be considered for publication in The American Legion magazine.
Putting passion into our work as Sons

By Jeff Frain
National Commander

I want to say thank you for all the hard word you all have been doing so far this year! I am excited to see what you, the blue cap members, can do for the rest of this year. Our numbers are coming in and it’s showing that the “Knowledge is Power” tour is in full swing!

Membership reports show that we are using the tools like social media, email, conference calls and the phone calls. They are working!

Child welfare donations are continuing to come in, recording new all-time highs every week. And speaking of Child Welfare, can you say bald is beautiful? Better yet, can you say the idea of seeing CWF president Dennis Boland bald headed will be beautiful? You may know that there is a little challenge on the table this spring, and if The Legion Family brings in more than $1,000,000 for CWF, Dennis has agreed to getting his head shaved. I know we can reach this shiny goal because we are Sons of The American legion and we are a “Cut above the rest.” Have you ordered your CWF Cut Above the Rest limited edition pin? (See photo Page 7)

During my travels this year I have spoken at many detachment gatherings and I’ve always asked Sons in the audience these two questions:

“Well did you join the Sons?”

“What is your passion?”

Elsewhere in this newsletter you will find some good reports and information about programs we support. Please read these articles and see if any of them matches your own PASSION. If so, contact the national chairman of that commission or committee and request information that you can share with other members of your detachment, district, or squadron. Feed your passion with the knowledge given.

This year’s membership theme is, “Be a Super Hero and Sign Up Three American Heroes Today.” Have you signed up your three yet? There are 20 million, yes million, eligible veterans out there. We need to help our parent organization grow and we know that, at the same time, we will grow our own. So let’s get out there and show our veterans we are here to help them and their families and give them the knowledge as to why they are needed to help preserve the great principles of The American Legion. Why? Because we are the S.A.L. and we are here to insure that the priceless heritage given to us will continue.

On a personal note, I was overwhelmed at the outpouring of support I received this winter when my mother passed away. All of the flowers that were sent to her funeral and the cards I received made a big impression on me and only serves to underscore why I love this tremendous organization. Thank you for the honor of allowing me to serve as your commander, and thank you for all you do for The American Legion Family. You are making a difference.

Springtime in Americanism

By Jim Borgman
Nat’l Americanism Commission

My wife will tell you that spring is daffodils, leaves on trees, and more daylight. While she may be right about that, I’d prefer to say this season of rebirth is a time of rejuvenating with so many great Americanism programs that should get all of us up and out to become involved. Just be cautious - it can be contagious.

Memorial Day is a day off work for many, a day in the park or forest preserve, a day for a backyard cookout. Of course, that’s for most but not for those dedicated individuals of The American Legion Family. For dedicated members of the Sons it’s a

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(Above) Sons lost a good friend when Larry Besson passed away in January. As long-time chairman of The American Legion’s Internal Affairs Commission, he had a profound and guiding influence on the S.A.L. that will last many years.
Let’s play ball!

By Ernie Laberge
Vice Cmdr - Detach of MA

What says more about spring-time than the sound of, “Play ball!”?

American Legion Baseball held its first national tournament in 1926 and has been teaching good sportsmanship, citizenship, and loyalty ever since. Respect for the rules, fair play, and physical fitness all are learned during participation.

American Legion Baseball depends upon its posts and other Legion Family organizations, such as The Legion Riders and the Sons of The American Legion, to promote the activity. Teams can be found in many communities where an American Legion post is located. More information can be found regarding rules and eligibility by going to The American Legion national website.

Though some support comes from corporate sponsors, funding for the program is also derived at the department and detachment levels. With today’s economy it has become necessary to solicit funds to help with the expenses of sponsoring a team. Team organizers can do this by publishing a booklet with the team schedule, profiles of the players, team alumni, and more. Additional information for each game can be published on your post website or Facebook page, which is very cost effective. Some possible donation formats could be: Sky Box Club ($100) - Box Seat Club ($50) - Bull Pen Club ($25) - On Deck Circle ($20) - Booster ($10) - Fan ($5)

American Legion Baseball is known as one of the nation’s most successful youth athletic leagues. Today the program registers teams in all 50 states plus Canada and Puerto Rico. Each year young people ages 15 to 19 participate. Since its inception in 1925, the league has had around 10 million players. Almost 60 percent of current college players are program graduates. Countless numbers of Legion Baseball alumni have played in the major leagues and 68 of them can be found in the Baseball Hall of Fame.

An education that keeps on giving

By Don Allisot
Nat’l Americanism Comission

When I became involved with the Detachment of Maine in 1989, one of the burning issues at the time was flag desecration. The attacks on this symbol of our country were many, varied and relentless. At the time, I felt I could assist by developing a flag education program and make it available to our squadrons. I set out on my own mission to see how the program might work and what the response might be. I had tremendous support from my Squadron and, with their help, we tried to educate as many people as we could.

The youth of our country are an important piece of this puzzle. We need educate each generation over and over. It may have been a success once, but we won’t be successful in the long run unless we continue that program in perpetuity. We have a network in place and squadrons can reach out in their communities to achieve this goal.

There are assorted publications available for a modest fee at The American Legion Flag & Emblem Sales: “Let’s Be Right on Flag Etiquette” ($1), “Our Country’s Flag Comic Book” ($.75), “Light of Liberty Comic Book” ($.75), “Pledge of Allegiance Comic Book” ($.75), “The Flag Code “ ($0.20), and the DVD “For Which It Stands” ($9.95).

The 20 minute DVD includes a teacher’s guide and is broken into segments. There is special pricing available for all of these items when purchased in bulk of 100 or more.

One idea for teaching flag etiquette would be to use the “Let’s Be Right on Flag Etiquette” booklet, but pick out just those areas you feel are important to the group you’re teaching. Give your students just enough to whet their appetites for more knowledge. Depending on their age, give everyone a copy of a publication to take home so that the class is really just the beginning of their flag education. It would be important to include some hands-on training such as the folding of the flag, too.

Let’s give our communities an educational experience that will definitely keep on giving.

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
June 1, 2017
Jason Sethre is the owner and publisher of the Fillmore County Journal, a weekly newspaper covering Southeastern Minnesota. His father, grandfather and great-grandfather were all veterans, so it should come as no surprise that Jason is a member of Preston, MN Sq 166. In the spring of 2014 Jason put his newspaper staff to work on a project he thought would benefit the community. It took two years to complete, and the final product is a beautiful 172 page, hard bound book entitled Boots and Bridges that recognizes more than 3,400 Fillmore County veterans from the War of 1812 to the present day. In addition to photos and lists of names, the book contains interesting stories and personal recollections of wartime eras told by the veterans themselves or their families. Not only it the book a keepsake for families, but it’s also a treasure trove of information that will serve as an important historical reference book for generations to come. (Above)

Sons in Midlothian, TX Sq 388 have become very proficient at conducting flag retirement ceremonies. They average three such events each year and are now the local go-to guys who can properly retire garrison-sized flags, the giant ones you might see flying above a large car dealership. One recent flag that was properly disposed of had just 48 stars, evidence of the age of its Legion Rider owner. On top of that, our hats are off to squadron adjutant Robert Sonnier, a 47 year cancer survivor who donated 14 inches of his hair to Locks of Love, an organization that provides wigs for cancer patients. This is the second time Robert has taken a little off the back for cancer. He donated another 18 inches of hair back in 2009. (Left)

Sons will be busy all around the country this year when Memorial Day rolls around at the end of May. The featured speaker at last year’s services at Isle Cemetery was Monte Fronk, 1st Vice Commander of Onamia, MN Sq 395. His words focused on volunteer services veterans perform throughout their communities even after they’re out of the military. (Left)

Detachment of Kansas Vice Commander Michael Saindon involved his grandsons Michael and William King dur
Hepatitis C is a contagious liver disease transmitted through blood. Before it was discovered in 1992 donor blood supplies carried the disease, a fact directly impacting those who served in the military and received blood transfusions before then. Nearly 17% of all U.S. veterans are believed to be infected with “Hep C,” a number nearly twice as high as the general population. Hep C can lie dormant in the human body for decades before becoming a deadly illness.

Luckily, Sons have the opportunity to play an important role in combating this lethal disease. Hep C can be detected through a simple rapid blood test. Our organization has a lot of tools at its disposal that can be used to spread the word and inform veterans about the importance of being tested. Sons could even work with their posts and local or state health officials to offer special screenings. For those who test positive, the good news is that treatments have a 95% cure rate with minimal side effects. At least 65,000 veterans are known to have been cured of Hep C.
Youth from Page 1

Dozens of Sons and many of the organization’s national officers attended this year’s American Legion Washington Conference in late February. (Below) A group picture in front of the Lincoln Monument. Commander Frain and his Aide, Charles Treat place a wreath at Arlington’s Tomb of the Unknowns. More wreaths were placed at the Vietnam Wall.

Helping vets stay afloat with dignity and honor

By Larry “Bear” Weinzirl
Nat’l VE&E Chairman

The Veterans Employment and Education Commission is asking all detachments to form their own VE&E Committees and, in turn, encourage districts and squadrons do the same. These committees can assist by going online and finding local job fairs being held in your state’s communities and promoting it on your websites, Facebook pages, and in your newsletters. You can also print out flyers that advertise job fairs and post them on the bulletin board at your post and in other locations around town where local veterans will see them.

No veteran should ever be homeless. However, veterans homelessness does exist everywhere. First Responders are often in contact with down-on-their-luck veterans. The VA has created a brochure to assist First Responders in dealing with and assisting homeless vets. Print out and make copies of the two-sided brochure at: www.va.gov/homeless/docs/VA_Homeless_Brochure_FirstResponder.pdf. Then make contact with your local police, fire and EMS officials to see if they would be willing to place a copy in each of their vehicles.

We can ensure that our veterans are never homeless and given the opportunity to provide themselves and their families with economic necessities.

time to wear your color guard uniform and take part in ceremonies and parades. If your post or squadron doesn’t have a color guard, that’s no reason for you to not to have a uniform. I promise there are others in your district who do and I’m sure you would be welcome to join them. Emblem Sales can provide everything you need to look sharp and make a good public appearance along with other Sons members to let the public know who we are while we all pay tribute to those who have gone before and served our nation to help keep us all a free people. Take pride in who we are, what we do, and who we honor for our freedom. Cook-outs can happen another time.

For most detachments, mine included, late spring brings Boys State. I started promoting this program in high schools looking for students to participate. Any salesman (which I am not) can tell you, if you want to sell something, you need to know it inside out. So, when I received an invitation to participate as a counselor, I jumped at the opportunity and I’ve been going ever since. Each year I have spent at Boys State, I know for a fact that I have helped, tutored, assisted, or otherwise given guidance to a young man that I know in my heart has used that knowledge to help shape his life and guide it in a positive direction. You don’t have to be a counselor by profession, you simply have to care and share.

Spring is a time to put it in gear and go. Go get involved and learn about our great Americanism programs. But again I will caution – Be careful, it may have contagious effects on you. They certainly have on me!
Spring from Page 1

As it says in The Legion’s Children and Youth Program pamphlet, “Children represent the future of our nation and it is up to us to equip them with knowledge, leadership skills and a commitment to service that they will use as productive adult citizens of the United States.” This is a good time of the year to dust off a copy of the pamphlet and reacquaint yourself with it.

Family Emphasis

Programs include, but not limited to: Family Support Network and Temporary Financial Assistance. Both programs assist the financial situations of the child in the home directly.

Child Safety

Programs include: Gateway Drugs: harmful effects of drugs; Warning signs: suicide; Halloween Safety: warning of personal safety; Missing Children: identification programs to help ID children that have gone missing for whatever reason.

Children’s Charities

One program handled through National Headquarters is The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation that issues grants for educational and research studies on children’s health concerns. Another is The American Legion Endowment Fund which has been making money available since 1925 to assist veterans and their families to adjust while struggling to return to a normal life.

The role of the Children and Youth Committee is to formulate, recommend and implement plans, programs and activities designed to: assume care and protection for children of veterans; improve conditions for all children and youth, with due concerns for maintaining the integrity of the family home; prevent social and physical ills of children and youth where possible; and maintain a balanced program that provides for the physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual needs of children. Thanks to your work and that of your squadron, our children will be better off.

Sons get invited to the VA table

By Clint Bolt
Nat’l VA&R Chairman

This year will mark the first time The S.A.L. will have a sitting member on the Executive Committee of the Veterans Administration’s National Advisory Council. This is a two year appointment and VA&R Vice Chairman Doug Murphy will sit on this important committee along with The American Legion and The American Legion Auxiliary and other service organizations. The primary duty of the NAC is to make recommendations to the VA, calling for improvements in and delivery of voluntary services to VA patients.

The S.A.L.’s most prestigious individual award is the Charles B. Rigsby Volunteer of the Year Award. It recognizes the very best of those within our ranks who gives of himself on behalf of our nation’s veterans. Who will be this year’s recipient? Will he be from your Detachment? Applications and guidelines are on our national website and should be shared with your squadron.

National Veterans Assistance Day

Sons recognize this day each year during the month of May. Every squadron in the country is asked to pick out one or more veterans and do something nice for them on that day. It’s the squadron’s choice of which day of the month.

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
This is a great time of year to cultivate membership

By Seth Rippe
Nat’l Membership Chairman

As Spring turns to Summer the days get longer, the weather gets warmer, and our calendars quickly fill up with activities and vacations. By this point in the year we are often on autopilot and relying on those last few renewals to carry us over our final membership mark. However, we should see every event or activity as an opportunity to recruit new members and get our existing members involved.

Ask the coach of your local American Legion Baseball team for 10 minutes with the players before practice to discuss who we are and what our eligibility requirements are. We should make sure that we ask every young man we send to Boys State about his eligibility. Ask the guys in your golf league if they are eligible. Ask the guy wearing the armed services hat that you are camping next to at the lake. There are potential members all around us just waiting to be asked!

And don’t stop there - Get current members involved, too. There are a number of programs in this organization. Find out what your members are interested in and get them involved in an activity that fuels that passion. An active member is a vested member and renewals become a lot easier when a member is vested in our organization. I know that at some point you have been at an American Legion Family event and looked around only to see the same five guys that helped at the last one. It’s easy for us to continue to do the work because that’s why we belong. But why not ask other members to participate, help out, or get involved? Ask members who haven’t participated in the color guard to march in that parade with you. Ask members who like sports to help out at Legion Baseball game. Ask the member who is active at your squadron if he wants to attend the detachment convention with you.

You won’t know if you don’t ask. Remember that membership is everyone’s responsibility!