Record CWF contributions turn into real life benefits for children

Once again, the Sons of The American Legion has been recognized as the nation’s largest single contributor to The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. Sons raised just under $600,000 on behalf of the CWF this past year. Contributions by Sons allowed the Foundation to award $636,467 to 28 nonprofit organizations in the coming year. The grants support youth-serving projects that seek to enhance the lives of children by addressing the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual needs of children. Seven of the 28 grants were recommended by the S.A.L. including:

- **CJ First Candle of New Canaan, CT** was awarded $16,440 for their project, “Safe Infant Sleep in Childcare Settings.” This project will update their current brochure to include new “Safe Sleep” recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics.

- **Hope Flight Foundation- of Castro Valley, CA** was awarded $8,000 for their project, “Free Medical Flights for children with cancer and other life threatening illnesses…” This project will transport children with serious illnesses and their families from remote areas and fly them to inner city hospitals for treatments.

- **Injured Marine Semper Fi Fund of Oceanside, CA** was awarded... Continued on Page 3

2017 has been another very good year

Sons of The American Legion are wrapping up a big year for contributions, both financially and in the number of hours our members have logged. Other outstanding achievement recorded this year include:

- $2.1 million in fundraising and 269,475 volunteer hours in support of American Legion Children & Youth programs.
- 407,971 VA volunteer hours, including 27,225 visits to facilities, and $1.7 million in cash donations and gifts.
- 20,103 volunteer hours and $64,691 in support of The American Legion’s Family Support Network, to help wartime military families with children at home keep up with household details.  

Continued on Page 3
Meet the Sons’ new National Commander

The newest National Commander of The Sons of The American Legion is Danny Smith. He is the first-ever S.A.L. National Commander from the Detachment of Nebraska.

Smith is a 44-year continuous member of the Sons. His eligibility is through his father, Daniel, a Korean War Air Force veteran. His parents were both charter members of their respective American Legion Post and Auxiliary Unit. He and his wife, Donna, have been married 42 years. Their children and grandchildren are all American Legion Family members.

Smith has worked in the construction industry for over 46 years. He and his family have all served as volunteers at their nearby veterans home and he has been active in several other community organizations, as well.

The new commander hits the ground running, wanting to pull closer together with other branches of the Legion Family tree.

“We’re all brothers and sisters in this organization,” says Smith. “I would really like to see us come together as an organization and work together with those common goals we all share. We can do it. I’ve always wanted to run the Legion’s Endowment Fund and also the National Emergency Fund as my big share. We can do it. I’ve adopted The together with those common goals we all share several common bonds. We are direct “male descendants of veterans of The Great Wars” as stated in our Preamble to the Constitution of the Sons of The American Legion. As such, we are all "Proud Possessors of a Priceless Heritage," also stated in our Pre- ample. We also share the bond of wanting to make a difference in our community, state, and nation. Our heritage has made us the individuals, and brothers, that we are today. We were molded and shaped by our fathers, mothers and grandpar- ents, and it is in their image and with their spirit, that we feel compelled to serve.

Although we all serve in our own unique way, the basic beliefs that were instilled in us by those that have served this country lead us on the road of life. We follow in their footsteps of service down a path which includes serving and assisting the veterans of this country’s armed forces, developing the children and the youth of this country, while fostering and perpetuating "a true spirit of Americanism." Working together we "conse- crate and sanctify our friendship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness." Yes, all of these common characteristics, which just happen to be included in and a part of our Preamble to the Constitution of this great organization, make us who we are, "brothers." So reach out your hand in friendship and service to your brothers in the Sons of The American Legion.

Our theme for the year “Following their Footsteps….Making History” has already begun with the historic election of the first female national commander of The American Legion. With your help, we will continue to make history throughout this coming year. The history that we make as an organization is up to you, the blue cap members, those who serve this organization at the squadron and detachment levels. At the national level, we will provide the tools and resources to assist you, but we cannot do the work for you. Each of our national commissions and committees have been asked to develop material which will assist you in educating your members and provide you much needed administrative tools to make your job easier.

As a team, we will step up to support National Commander Rohan with her projects by adopting the Endowment Fund and National Emergency Fund as our premier programs for the year. Doing this will bring us in line with National Commander Rohan’s theme, “Family First,” assuring that our servicemen and women, veterans, their families, and our mem- bers have the assistance they require when and if warranted. We have set some very realistic fundraising goals for both of these programs, along with maintaining our support of the Child Welfare Foundation. Think of this; for less than the cost of a designer cup of coffee or bottle of soda from a vending machine, you can make a difference in someone’s life by providing much needed funds in a time of need or catastrophe.

Our membership theme, “Pioneering Spirit,” embodies those charac- teristics that made the early pioneers successful; Courage, Faith, Team- work and Perseverance. We will use those very traits to have a history making membership year. A very attainable goal of 400,000 members has been established, with a 95 percent renewal rate.

It is imperative that we get busy retaining and retaining 100 percent of our membership within our squadrons. We do that by recruiting members correctly, informing them that we are a part of a veterans service organi- zation, and proud possessors of a priceless heritage honoring the service of a parent or grandparent. Once we get them within our ranks we must make them feel that they are a part of the team and their membership is important. We must communicate with all of our members throughout the year and not just send them a renewal notice and membership card.

The national membership committee has been tasked with developing new material which should aid everyone with recruitment, renewal and retention. Fillable form-type letters will be developed and placed on the web page for your use. We will also be looking into some short videos that can be placed on your Facebook pages to reach out to prospective members. We must continue to seek out new members and work hard to retain those that we currently have within our squadrons. You do that through education, communication and involvement. There are a wide variety of programs within The American Legion that we can be engaged with and many ways to serve our organization.

We have the opportunity to experience a fantastic year as we move for- ward “Following Their Footsteps…. Making History.” Together we can, and together we will make a difference!

Footsteps from Page 2

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

www.legion.org/membershipmanagement

Download these pamphlets share them around town

by Larry “Bear” Weinigirl National V&E Chairman

The National Veterans Employ- ment & Education Commission believes that no veteran should ever be homeless. The commis- sion is encouraging everyone to distribute copies of a new brochure created by the VA for first respond- ers (www.va.gov/HOMELESS/). It is the emergency workers who are often in contact with home- less veterans on a daily basis. The brochure gives first responders information on assistance that is available that they can provide to these down-on-their-luck veterans. Why not make copies of this bro- chure and distribute them to your local police, EMS and fire depart- ments, and request that they place a copy in each of their vehicles?

Our commission has also devel- oped a Power Point program (www. legion.org/sons/files/vpe.pptx) de- tailing many other ways that you can assist our homeless heroes. The Power Point is also available now on the national website. Please con- sider downloading it and presenting it at one of your detachment, district or squadron meetings.

We are continuing to request that all detachments form their own V&E commission or committee and then, in turn, encourage your districts and squadrons to do the same. Please consider assisting us as we assist The American Legion in ending veteran homelessness.
In September, the Kids In Need program. Last year those donations helped 32 local families.

This year’s hurricanes in Texas, Florida and Puerto Rico played host to about 100 Legion Riders.

Here’s another holiday tradition worth mentioning. Members of Mount Vernon, IA Sq 480 collect scrap metal all year then turn it into cash to purchase Christmas meals for the Kids In Need program. Last year those donations helped 32 local families.

In September, Calabash, NC Sq 503 played host to about 100 Legion Riders by throwing and end-of-summer BBQ to thank the guys and gals for all of the miles they put on their autism and their families for a fun day in the sun, complete with a BBQ. It’s the second year for this event.

The holidays may still be in the headlights for most of us, but for the members of Colton, CA Sq 155, they are used to celebrating Christmas in July. This year they celebrated by dedicating a new conference room at Lorna Linda’s Ronald McDonald House. The ceremonial check was signed by residents staying at the house. A plaque recognizing their efforts now hangs in that room. Oh, and Detachment of California Children and Youth Chairman John “Santa” Mejia also makes an annual visit to Tutor Time School and delivers gifts, smiles, and love to all of his little angles.

Winona, MN Sq 9 has at least two members who are retired firefighters. In a show of appreciation, the squadron recently donated $1,000 toward the purchase of infrared equipment that mounts inside firefighters’ helmets.

Bob Fratino and his wife, Susan, host a weekly show on Cleveland, OH radio stations WINT AM and FM.

This year’s hurricanes in Texas, Florida and Puerto Rico brought out the best in many Sons and Legion Family members. Just one of hundreds of examples would be the efforts of Alabama’s Legion Family to collect two large U-Haul trucks full of supplies that were delivered to four Houston, TX Legion posts by Detachment of Alabama Commander Blair Miles and a group of Sons. Their four day adventure was uncomfortable but rewarding, and helped many. One of their more memorable moments was when they were unloading at Houston, TX Post 1. Two teenagers did much of the work unloading the truck. When asked if they were members, their reply was, no, they were Boys State delegates and thought this would be better than a thank you note to the post that had sponsored them. Yes, Commander Miles handed them S.A.L. membership applications.

Bob is a member of Willoughby, OH Sq 214 and Susan is an Auxiliary member. Their show is called “They Sacrificed for Us” and addresses topics related to veterans. Their show is also streamed live on Tuesdays evenings at 8:30 p.m. Eastern on WINTRadio.com.

Knoxville, TN Sq 2 handed out $1,000 checks to three deserving youth organizations this year. It was the result of their sixth annual golf tournament.

Back in April, Pearl River, NY Sq 329 was invited to participate in Camp Shanks’ 75th anniversary of the Bataan Death March. They served as parade marshals and placed a wreath at a monument built 12 years earlier by Squadron 329 member Kevin O’Rourke. The squadron also hosted a detail of soldiers from Camp Shanks’ 31st Infantry for lunch at the post. During WWII, the 31st Infantry Regiment served in the Philippines and lost nearly 75 percent of its soldiers in the infamous Bataan Death March.

It’s a scene that, thankfully, gets repeated in hundreds of towns across the country every month – Sons handing over donations to worthwhile local charities. In this case, it was Gladstone, MI Sq 71 presenting a $100 check to the local food pantry.

Bob Fratino and his wife, Susan, host a weekly show on Cleveland, OH radio stations WINT AM and FM.

Here’s an idea more squadrons could copy: Glen Burnie, MD Sq 40 members hopped a bus one day and took a little road trip to visit several of the veteran memorials in Washington, D.C. The nation’s landscape is dotted with worthwhile points of interest and a bus trip to an historical landmark or a ballgame is a great way to enhance morale among squadron members.

Mountain Top, PA Sq 781 helps sponsor a Boy Scout troop. Recently, a few of the scouts wanted to return the favor, so they reconditioned three old post office mailboxes and turned them into drop off boxes for unserviceable flags that will now be placed throughout the community. The squadron also recently sponsored a free Hunter Safety Class that was taught by game commission instructors and graduated 39 kids and adults. The class is required to obtain a Pennsylvania hunting license.

Here’s an idea more squadrons could copy: Glen Burnie, MD Sq 40 members hopped a bus one day and took a little road trip to visit several of the veteran memorials in Washington, D.C. The nation’s landscape is dotted with worthwhile points of interest and a bus trip to an historical landmark or a ballgame is a great way to enhance morale among squadron members.
Operation North Pole - In the middle of the USA

By Terry Harris
Vice Commander
Detachment of Kansas

The Kansas American Legion Family holds its annual Big Red 1 Operation North Pole each year in December and Sons play a major role. The program has furnished gifts for many children at Fort Riley, KS for the past five years. Last year the Detachment of Kansas contributed $10,000 toward the effort.

The idea of Operation North Pole is to insure that each child gets at least one good gift and it gives each member of The American Legion Family the chance to be there and work with service members and their families and bring some Christmas joy to a lot of little kids. Last year, Operation North Pole provided toys to about 1,300 children.

Alternate Executive Committeeman Doug Evans plays Santa Claus to all 1,300 children who come on stage and sit on his knee to get their toys. His elves have consisted of other Legion Family members including former Detachment Commander Tom Wallsmith and Vice Commander Mike Saindon. One little girl was carrying a little pillow with a picture of her daddy on it. She was hugging that thing for all she was worth and wasn’t going to let it go.

Another youngster really brought us all back down to earth when she came on the stage and made her way to Santa. When Santa asked her what she would like to have for Christmas, she instantly started to cry and told him she wanted her daddy back. None of us who were working the stage heard this. As she made her way from the stage she was really crying. Commander Wallsmith asked me what was going on. We thought maybe she had got a toy she didn’t care for and was upset about it. We weren’t able to speak with Santa about what was going on. I was at the side of the stage helping the moms and little ones down the steps and couldn’t leave my post. So, Tom took off to catch her and see what we could do. We found out that this little girl’s father had been killed in action and, of course, she wanted him more than any toy. We all shed some tears with this little lady. She has a tough road ahead of her but all of us sure do understand why we do what we do. If you ever get the chance, maybe you can start a program like this. You will never be able to imagine how fulfilling it is to share the smiles along with the tears of our service members’ families.

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, 2018

CWF from Page 1
$20,000 for their project, “2017 Semper Fi Fund Kids Camp.” This project will send military kids to camp whose parent’s suffer from PTSD. The camp will have fun activities along with emotional support for the children.

Kansas Braille Transcription Institute of Wichita, KS was awarded $11,919 for their project, “Red Sights for Red,” which is to provide a "$10,000 toward the cost of shipping the American flag and the patriotic ideas behind our great nation.

Saint Francis Community Services, Inc. of Salina, KS was awarded $20,000 for their project, “A Family’s Awareness of Child Sexual Human Trafficking in the Heartland.” This grant will create a video on human trafficking that will show individual stories of children and how they are coerced into that lifestyle.

The American Legion National Headquarters of Indianapolis, IN was awarded $55,500 for their project “2018 American Legion National Youth Programs Scholarships.” This grant will provide academic scholarships to the following youth programs: Boys Nation, Junior Shooting Sports, Baseball and Eagle Scout of the Year.

The American Legion National Headquarters of Indianapolis, IN was awarded $75,000 for their project “The American Legion Temporary Financial Assistance Program-2018.” This grant will provide temporary financial assistance to children of veterans in need of shelter, food, utilities and clothing.

CWF will remain one of the premier programs Sons participate in. Squadrons and detachments continue to be challenged to raise and donate an average of $1 per member.

2017 from Page 1
- $594,414 in contributions and 71,565 in volunteer hours to the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation (CWF), making SAL the largest single contributor to the CWF.
- 14,315 color guard appearances.
- 152 American Legion Baseball team sponsorships.
- 44,038 U.S. flag presentations and 2,202 flag education programs conducted.
- 13,938 flag retirement ceremonies.
- 528,414 flags placed at veterans cemeteries and handed out at parades.
- Sponsorship of 1,018 American Legion Boys State participants.

By the end of December, membership in the Sons is expected to exceed 368,000 members who will continue working their good deeds in more than 6,000 squadrons spread throughout 55 state and foreign detachments.

Some important changes made to the new Sons membership cards

If you are one of more than 6,000 S.A.L. adjutants, chances are you have noticed a few welcome changes have been made to the three-part form that tells the folks at National Headquarters who and where we all are. The rest of us may not notice anything different, but the new changes will definitely have a positive impact as we all move into the future.

While the members’ portion of the card remains unchanged in size, the national and detachment spaces have been enlarged by two inches to capture more information. New fields for phone, date of birth and email have been added. Adjutants can update or add information for renewing members placing an “X” in the appropriate box.

The impor- tance of having accurate access to contact information for our members cannot be overstated. Date of birth data will help national leaders develop future recruitment programs and discount programs from vendors. The gathering of demographic data holds the possibility of a Paid Up For Life membership for Sons one day.

Looking for a few good writers

How would you like to be a contributing writer for the National Update newsletter and help us tell the good stories of the S.A.L.? If interested, contact:
mpipher@iu.edu or
foxy5112@yahoo.com