

## The Sons of The American Legion

P.O. Box 1055  
Indianapolis, IN 46206



# NATIONAL UPDATE

Official Publication of the Sons of The American Legion

Summer 2013



8

## Still time for membership goal

Our bandwagon is still on the move and Houston is just around the corner.

Back in June we were needing approximately 32,000 members to achieve our goal of 105% of this year's membership goal. Now that we're counting down the hours before reaching Houston, we're only 20,000 shy of the goal.

The key to success is whether or not we are renewing our members. Has your squadron membership chairmen done a good job and have other members been helping him? Have they made phone calls, sent letters, post cards, or e-mails? Have you asked your family, your friends and your neighbors if they have paid their dues for this year?

Who will win the triple nickel award? We currently have eight Detachments that are in the hunt. Some are tantalizingly close to the prize; others still need to work a bit harder. We will find out in Houston.

There is still time to get your special recruiter pin for signing up five new members. The form is on the S.A.L. national web site. Fill it out and then send it to your area membership commission member and they will send you the pin.

## CWF year from Page 2

Michigan, and New Jersey. Top honors for the top contributor goes to the Detachment of Ohio for donating \$51,738.17. That's a fabulous effort and we thank all of you.

The Sons of The American Legion continues to be a leader in donations to the Foundation and we have also exceeded the \$5 million mark in donations since we began raising funds for this vital program.

Through your efforts, we will again provide grants through The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation during October 2013. Your untiring efforts and fund raising for the Sons of The American Legion is superb and have brought special meaning to "devotion to mutual helpfulness." Our CWF report will be used for computations of awards to be given at the National Convention in Houston in late August. I look forward to seeing you at the National Convention in Houston and hope we can continue a similarly high effort again next year for this very worthy cause.

## Another banner CWF year

By **Brian J. O'Hearne**  
*National Adjutant*

Congratulations to all of you for a very successful year working with The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. This has been a very special year and we have once again had a very tremendous year. On behalf of the National Commander of the Sons of The American Legion, Christopher J. Huntzinger, I thank each and every one of you for this outstanding achievement and your unwavering support. This year has been very exceptional and with all of the special donations made during the spring National Executive Committee meeting, we have achieved our goal. Once again, the S.A.L. is the highest contributor to the Foundation by raising just over \$453,599 for this very special year.

Special thanks are made to the following Detachments for donations exceeding \$10,000: Ohio, Pennsylvania, Arizona, Illinois, Florida, Colorado, California, Indiana, New York, Virginia,

*Continued on Page 8*

*(Below) Sons from **Stevensville, MI Sq 568** are a part of the post's Honor Guard and prepare to fire a volley on Memorial Day this year. The month of May is special to the S.A.L. In addition to Memorial Day, Sons from coast to coast are involved in activities that mark National Veterans Assistance Day. Read more squadron stories inside on Pages 4 and 5.*



## Destination Houston for the convention

The 42nd annual National Convention of the Sons of The American Legion is being held on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, August 23, 24 and 25 in Houston, TX inside the George R. Brown Convention Center, one of the city's largest buildings and located in downtown Houston.

Under rules adopted in recent years, S.A.L. delegate fees are no longer paid by individuals, but instead are paid in advance by each Detachment. The chairman of each Detachment's convention delegation may pick up credentials in the S.A.L. National Staff Office, located in Hall E (street level) of the convention center between 9am and 4pm on Thursday and Friday and between 8am and noon on Saturday.

Pre-convention committees and judging begins at 8:30am on Friday. The Pre-convention N.E.C. meeting will be at 10am on Friday. The schedule and location of meetings will be available in registration packets.

National Commander Chris Huntzinger will gavel the convention to order at 1pm on Friday, August 23 In the Grand Ballroom A and B on the convention center's Third Level.

All guests who are 18 years of age or older will be required to register prior to attempting to enter any venue

*Continued on Page 6*



# Still some goals to achieve

By **Chris Huntzinger**  
National Commander

It should come as no surprise to learn that the Sons of The American Legion have once again risen to the occasion and accomplished what we set out to do this year for The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. Donations for 2012-13 eased past the goal with \$453,599 raised by our Blue Cap members. GOOD WORK!!! "Just for Kicks, let's go for Six." There's no doubt we will soon see another milestone eclipsed as we race to the \$6 million mark in funding from the Sons for CWF.

Touring our great nation this year along with American Legion National Commander Jim Koutz and National Auxiliary President Peggy Thomas provided me with enough proof that what we do as The American Legion Family makes a difference in so many lives. I'd like to share my experience with a USMC veteran I met in Denver, Colorado.

"Jim" was receiving medical treatment while residing at Fisher House this spring. His road to recovery was improving each day. But it's when he told me, "Fisher House has given me the will to live," that I witnessed whatever programs we choose to support provide for the needs of our veterans and touch their loved ones.

It's great to see many of our younger members involved in the works of our Detachments. We have seen youngsters doing what they like to participate in as Sons - marching in parades, placing flags on the graves of our deceased veterans, raising funds for certain projects while serving at meetings and conventions. Indeed, if our youth are our future, the future looks bright for our organization.

We have time left in the S.A.L. Membership Bandwagon year to succeed in our goals. A 5,000 member increase can be attained with 90% membership renewals. Hard work has gotten us to where we stand today and a little more effort can get us over the top. Many Detachments have achieved all time highs this year in membership. Let's fill the Bandwagon as it rolls into Houston for the National Convention.

As we conclude another banner year for the S.A.L., remember that each of us is a voice, a strong force for the veterans, our military men and women serving today, the children and youth. We promote our advocacy with a message of purpose dedicated to serve. Make your membership in the Sons of The American Legion what you want it to be as we continue "Forging Our Future Together."

Thank you for allowing me to serve and represent you as your National Commander.



## You helped put the smile on their face

By **Larry "Bear" Weinzirl**  
Nat'l Children/Youth Chairman

Philanthropist Andrew Carnegie once said, "Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision. The ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results."

Henry Ford, another historical giant, once stated, "Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success."

These famous gentlemen were not speaking of the Sons of The American Legion, but they certainly could have been. Working as a team, we accomplished many of the goals set forth at the beginning of this year for our Children and Youth programs. Your support of the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation was once again outstanding: \$453,599.

Sons also raised tremendous amounts of money this year in support of Operation Military Kids, Temporary Financial Assistance, Children's Miracle Network, Ronald McDonald House, Child Safety Program, Special Olympics, Children's Organ Transplant Association, Family Support Network, Josh Dogs and all of the other programs that benefit youngsters throughout the nation.

Having great Blue Cap members who support these programs makes the job an easy one.

Please keep up the great work.

I am a firm believer in one other statement: "The only thing better than seeing a look of joy on a child's face is knowing that *you* helped to put it there."

## How prepared are you for a twister?

By **Harl "Butch" Ray**  
Nat'l Homeland Security Chairman

Every state is at some risk of tornadoes. During this calm before the storm, it's a good idea to take a little time and plan a strategy to deal with twisters and their aftermath.

Every family should have an emergency kit and an emergency plan in case of a disaster. A couple of very important items to have include a battery operated radio and a flashlight. Visit [www.ready.gov/build-a-kit](http://www.ready.gov/build-a-kit) to get a good list of items that belong in such a kit.

Pay attention to weather alerts including watches and warnings. If a tornado would strike in your area, it's important to be aware that more bad weather could follow it. You should also be aware of the dangers of insecure structures. Use extreme caution before reentering a damaged home.

- Check for loose power lines, gas leaks and structural damage
- Listen to the radio for emergency updates and news reports
- Use a flashlight when inspecting a damaged house or building
- If you have any doubts about safety, have your residence inspected by a qualified building inspector or structural engineer before you or your family enter
- Use whatever social media you have available to let friends and family know you're OK
- Avoid making cell phone calls - keep phone lines and cell frequencies clear for use by first responders
- Remember that children affected by disasters can have trouble coping with the effects and aftermath of disasters - even children not directly affected by a disaster can have fears
- Don't forget that The American Legion National Emergency Fund can help Legion Family members who are victims of natural disasters

## Sons among those getting help in OK

The bad news is that S.A.L. members are just as likely to suffer losses as anyone else whenever large storms and tornadoes do their worst across the countryside. The good news is that Sons are eligible to receive assistance through The American Legion National Emergency Fund alongside all other Legion Family members whose memberships are in good standing.

When terrible storms raked large swaths of the Midwest this spring, whole towns were impacted and damage was widespread. Since that time, More than \$1 million in assistance has been paid from the fund to Legion Family members,

including Sons. In the town of Moore, OK alone, nearly 200 families of Legionnaires have received \$200,000 in assistance. Similar examples of emergency financial help were recorded in the wake of storms like Hurricane Sandy, Hurricane Katrina and other natural disasters. Since its founding, the National Emergency Fund has provided more than \$6 million in assistance to Legion Family members and to posts that have been damaged by natural disasters.

The NEF Hotline is 317-630-1376.

S.A.L. squadrons throughout the country have a proven record of

fund raising efforts to help building the National Emergency Fund. The phone number to call to make donations is 800-253-7000. Additionally, checks can be mailed directly to The American Legion NEF, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206.

## Traveling Sons can benefit from price cutting programs

Members of the Sons are eligible to join The American Legion Member Discount Travel Program offered through Government Vacation Rewards. All members of The American Legion Family, including Sons, can take advantage of vacation packages and individual savings on cruises, resorts, hotels, flights to over 15,000 popular destinations. There is no cost to subscribe to the program. There are no booking fees.

Members of the plan earn one point for every dollar spent on travel purchases. A total of 2,500 points allows a member up to \$150 in savings. A total of 5,000 points provides up to \$300 in savings.

To join, call (866) 691-5109 or go online to [www.govvacationrewards.com](http://www.govvacationrewards.com).

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  
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or  
[mpipher@iu.edu](mailto:mpipher@iu.edu)

Next deadline is October 1, 2013

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# SQUADRON NEWS CLIPS



Just about everyone loves to get out on a lake and do some fishing in the summertime. But that's not always possible for fish-loving veterans who are elderly or disabled. Sons from **Scottsville, NY Sq 1830** helped solve that problem for ten veterans again this year. **(Right)** The guys hooked up with a nearby bass fishing club and provided all of the fishing poles, tackle and bait for the vets, all patients of the Canandaigua VA Medical

Center in North Central New York. After four hours out on the lake, Squadron 1830 also donated the lunch.

It's hard to find an S.A.L. squadron that doesn't help out in some fashion with their post's Memorial Day activities. Such was the case again this year when Sons from **Columbia, MO Sq 202** joined with a local Boy Scout troop and local vets to put flags on all of the military graves in the Columbia City Cemetery. The following week, they were back out there picking them up, as well.

Three Northeast Indiana squadrons have brightened the lives of a lot of kids. Sons from **Butler, IN Sq 117** joined with Sons from **Auburn, IN Sq 97** and **Garrett, IN Sq 178** to raise enough money to purchase 30 Josh Dog kits and donate them to the nearby Dekalb Health Hospital. The kits are given to children to help make their hospital experience more relaxing.



Out on the west coast, **Detachment of California** Sons helped with opening ceremonies for the new Welcome Center at the Jerry L. Pettis VA Hospital in Loma Linda. N.E.C. John Mejia was on hand to help with the annual recognition luncheon for volunteers. The fellow wearing the S.A.L. cover and a special "Ambassador's vest" is Ray Sandoval of **Colton, CA Sq 155**. Not only was Ray being honored for his 300 hours of service, but he gets to wear the vest, a coveted item because it can only be worn by the select few who have the right personality to help the vets who come into the hospital. **(Left)**

Although the official date of the S.A.L.'s National Veterans Assistance Day is in May each year (Armed Forces Day), there's no reason why Sons can't be assisting veterans every day of the year. In April of this year, Sons from **Delafield, WI Sq 196** got into the spirit. Harry Sobocinski was an army reservist from 1960 to 1966 and has lived at his Delafield residence for 25 plus years. Because of some recent health problems, he needs a transport van to take him to and from doctor and hospital visits. On top of that, his gravel driveway was rutted and in general disrepair. Delafield's Sons conduct three major fund raisers throughout the year which raise money for projects such as Harry's. The guys spread gravel, raked it and then packed it. With the help of a nearby landscaper and the Delafield Sons, Harry has a usable driveway once again.



Photo courtesy of Anna Fesmire - "Captured by Anna"



Here's one about "the small squadron that can." For the second year in a row, **Capon Bridge, WV Sq 137** teamed with the Auxiliary members of the post and raised over \$12,000 that gets put to good use in their local community. Some of the money helps purchase school supplies. Some of it buys food and clothing for needy families. Some of it is donated to the nearby police and volunteer fire departments. They have good reason to be proud of their small group of highly active members - guys who do the work to make these kind of things happen.

That's S.A.L. National Americanism Chairman Bill Towns on the left helping to sell poppies when **Cuyahoga Falls, OH Sq and Unit 281** celebrated Poppy Days this summer. **(Below)**

Sons from **Warren, NJ Squadron 293** have been actively participating and giving back to the community during these most recent months. Super Storm Sandy left Warren Township without power for a significant period of time. Sons brought in generators and gasoline from far away. S.A.L. members welcomed family members and friends of the community to a warm fire, a bite to eat and a place where they could forget about their troubles, if only for a brief period of time. More recently, the S.A.L. donated \$1,000 to the Sandy, NJ Relief Fund knowing that communities and fellow neighbors were in need during a difficult time. They also recently made a donation of \$500 to the Hope For Warriors campaign, a program designed with a mission to enhance the quality of life for post-9/11 service members, their families, and families of the fallen who have sustained physical and psychological wounds in the line of duty.



**(Above)** Like so many others, S.A.L. members from Mountain Top, PA Sq 781 help out right alongside other Legion Family members at their post, including the Honor Guard. This is what this year's Memorial Day observation program looked like. Prior to this event, the rifle squad had performed services at four local cemeteries.

**The Detachment of Arizona** does a good job of coordinating fund raising efforts on behalf of Fisher House. By sharing information with squadrons, their combined efforts have raised more than \$14,000 this year that will be used to purchase items needed by those veterans and their families who use the house.

Sons from **Nappanee, IN Sq 155** decided to raise \$10,000 between January and Memorial Day of this year and donate the money to the Homes for Wounded Warriors Program. They used projects like trivia nights, a Valentine's Day dinner and a golf outing. They also designed and sold "Believe in Heroes" T-shirts. At the end of five months they totaled their efforts and found they had not raised \$10,000. Instead, the grand total was \$15,000.



# Convention from Page 1

of the National Convention, including shuttle bus transportation and the exposition hall. Guests younger than 18, who are not delegates or alternates to the S.A.L. or Jr. Auxiliary National Conventions, will be provided a guest pass at no charge. Proper credentials are required to access the convention hall floor, ride shuttle buses, and enter the Exhibit Hall.

Delegates should be in proper dress attire while attending convention sessions. Coat and tie is preferred, especially when receiving awards on the stage. However, casual dress (trousers, shoes and shirt) is acceptable. The wearing of tank tops, short shorts, and shower clogs should be discouraged by your delegation except for small children.

This year's American Legion National Convention Parade is scheduled to begin at 4pm on Sunday. The parade route is in the Skyline District of the city and starts at Louisiana and Clay Streets, heads north on Louisiana, west on Walker, south on Smith and ending at Dallas Street.

On Friday night, Sons are invited to participate in American Legion Family Night at Houston's Minute Maid Park, just two blocks from the convention center. The Astros play the Toronto Blue Jays. American Legion National Commander Jim Koutz will throw out the first pitch at 7pm. Discounted tickets are available but must be purchased in advance.

Another annual event tied to each National Convention is The American Legion Legacy Run. Hundreds of American Legion Riders, passengers and others will gather in Indianapolis on Saturday, August 17 for training sessions. Early the next morning, they will depart on a five-day, 1,500-mile journey to Houston and, in so doing, will raise as much as a million dollars that will be donated to The Legion's Legacy Scholarship Fund. The fund supports college scholarships for the children of military personnel who have lost their lives since September 11, 2001 while on active duty.

## S.A.L. Member Discounts

Did you know that as an S.A.L. member you are entitled to all the same member discounts as Legion members? Don't miss out on all the money saving discounts! Update your preferences today and opt-in to e-mails for special member discount offers. Visit [www.legion.org/discountsoptin](http://www.legion.org/discountsoptin), to let us know what categories of discounts most interest you. For a complete list of discounts including travel, hotels, car rentals, discount prescriptions, electronics, appliances, and much more, visit [www.legion.org/discounts](http://www.legion.org/discounts).

Membership Renewal Leaders	
France	100 %
Oklahoma	93.3%
Nebraska	92.5%
Iowa	92.1%
North Dakota	90.7%
Wisconsin	90.0%
Ohio	89.9%
Maryland	89.1%
South Dakota	88.6%
New Hampshire	88.2%
Illinois	87.7%
Minnesota	87.5%
Virginia	87.5%
Florida	87.5%
Pennsylvania	87.4%
New Jersey	87.3%
Colorado	87.2%
Michigan	86.6%
New York	86.6%
Indiana	86.2%
Vermont	85.9%
Kansas	85.8%
Montana	85.4%
National Avg	85.9%

# It all began with a simple parade plan National Americanism Conference dates set

By **Bill Towns**

Nat'l Americanism Chairman

"I don't see any reason to march in the parade."

Imagine my shock in hearing these words at an American Legion Post!

But then I gave it some thought, and realized this is a common response. Many members do not see the big picture and just do not want to march in parades. However, it is more than just a parade. It is your showcase!

Let's just take a quick look at what a parade entails.

At the very least it is **community service**; working with other community groups to develop and present an organized activity to be enjoyed by everybody in the community.

Throw in some **public relations** as you build relationships with individuals who will undoubtedly become resources for other events down the road.

Add in **baseball**, as your sponsored team carries your post banner in front of them. Not to mention your **scout troop** doing the same.

How about that float carrying your **Boys State** delegates, the **Junior Shooting Sports** champion, a few **Oratorical** contestants and even the **Poppy Princess and Prince**?

Oh, and don't forget the younger members pulling their wagons along the parade route, collecting canned foods and items for **shelters and the homeless**.

All this is being lead by your **color guard**, holding our nation's flag high in the air - seeing everyone stand as it approaches. Everyone is reading the name of your town's Sons of The American Legion squadron flying in the breeze.

But the list of Americanism programs don't stop there because this parade ends at the cemetery. You all fall out and folks from around your community gather in closer to pay tribute to our **honored veterans**.

Just before the ceremony ends you invite everyone back to the local Legion post for an open house where everyone enjoys the meal which other S.A.L. members have spent the morning preparing. You can bet I will be there offering visitors a **membership packet**.

Why march in the parade? Because it's your...well, you know the rest.



(Left) California's Boys State program was featured throughout the San Francisco area last month. KTVU-2 Fox aired an interview with 2010 Boys State alumnus Kevin Miller and Chief Counselor Tim Aboudara, who just happens to be a member of **Rohnert Park, CA Sq 338**, and also serves as an Assistant Legislative Director for Boys Nation.

The American Legion Americanism Conference will be September 27-29, 2013 in Indianapolis, IN and is open to all members with the desire to learn more. This conference brings together the most experienced members right down to first time attendees wanting to enhance their Baseball, Oratorical, or Boys State program. There is also a program directed at becoming an effective chaplain. You must be preregistered. Check the national website [www.legion.org](http://www.legion.org) for more details.

CWF Leaders Highest Per Capita Contributions by Detachment	
Mississippi	\$9.53
Colorado	\$7.34
Arizona	\$6.53
Wyoming	\$5.35
Nevada	\$5.09
Oregon	\$4.31
Alabama	\$3.16
Virginia	\$3.04
Washington	\$2.50
S. Carolina	\$2.21
France	\$2.11
Illinois	\$2.04
North Dakota	\$1.91
California	\$1.83
Ohio	\$1.67
Florida	\$1.61
Arkansas	\$1.50
Idaho	\$1.41
New Jersey	\$1.39
S. Dakota	\$1.25
Texas	\$1.25
National Avg	\$1.28