

The Sons of The American Legion

P.O. Box 1055
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NATIONAL UPDATE

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Spring 2014



Sons have their own credit card The CSR: an annual rite of S.A.L. springtime

Here's another example of the benefits of membership in our organization. USAA has created a Sons of The American Legion credit card. Any member of the Sons who takes advantage of this card will help the S.A.L. strengthen the Four Pillars of The American Legion: preserving American traditions and values, improving the quality of life for our nation's children, caring for veterans and their families, and teaching the fundamentals of good citizenship.



USAA Bank will make a contribution to The American Legion based on the member's activity. This helps the Sons of The American Legion honor the service and sacrifice of Legionnaires.

One of the most important forms a squadron adjutant has to fill out each year is the official S.A.L. Consolidated Squadron Report. The 2014 CSR was shipped to all American Legion Department HQ's in March and should be in the hands of all S.A.L. squadrons by now.

One day soon, squadron adjutants will be able to access this form, fill it out and submit it electronically. But until that day arrives, we'll all just have to do it the old fashioned way.

What makes the CSR so important is that it is used by The American Legion to track what Sons are doing from coast to coast to help veterans, participate in community activities and raise money for many wonderful purposes. The forms are totaled and The American Legion's National Commander reports these numbers to Congress every year. The good news is that the numbers racked up by Sons are very large and impressive. The bad news is that far too many squadrons fail to submit the form and their efforts don't get included in The Legion's overall story. It's unfortunate that only a fraction of the S.A.L.'s total contributions to The American Legion Family get the recognition it deserves.

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Perhaps the biggest sticking point for adjutants is that the Consolidated Squadron Report form can seem very detailed, sometimes even confusing because a particular activity or fund raising effort might be counted under more than one heading.

The vast majority of adjutants across the country tend to wait until the last minute and try to compile all of the previous year's efforts and philanthropic numbers just in time to submit the CSR. If only more adjutants would get into the habit of compiling the specifics of events, volunteer hours and funds raised month by month, the task of filling out the CSR each spring would be much less arduous.

Several enterprising squadrons and detachments have come up

with novel ways of tabulating their activities monthly. For example, the Detachment of Massachusetts has designed an Excel spreadsheet to make it a breeze to keep track of these numbers. A copy of that spreadsheet can be downloaded from the forms section of the S.A.L. National website (*NOTE: the Massachusetts CSR spreadsheet available at www.legion.org/sons was designed for use last year and there are some differences between it and the official 2014 CSR*). The important thing about the spreadsheet is that it allows an adjutant to enter information monthly that is automatically tabulated and transferred to a pre-designed page that can easily be printed out at the end of the year. No more last minute late nights!

New manual is in the mail

The 2014 Administrative Manual has been printed and mailed to all Detachment Commanders, Detachment Adjutants, NEC's and National Officers.

A hard copy of this manual has also been mailed to each Department Headquarters. Any member of the S.A.L. is welcome to view and download a copy of the organization's official Administrative Manual by going to the Sons web page at www.legion.org/sons. You will find it listed along with many other Sons-related publications.

Michigan Sons show MIAP spirit

Back in December, Michigan Governor Jennifer Granholm signed into law House Bills 5245 & 5246. These bills went into effect immediately and allow funeral directors to release the information of unclaimed cremated remains that have been forgotten. The legislation has held importance for veterans because the remains of many veterans have silently occupied the shelves of funeral homes, mortuaries, and state hospitals around the country for years. S.A.L. leaders in Michigan have assisted their Legion Department in pushing for adoption of the cremains law. Sons were on hand in December when the governor signed the bills into law.

Part of the new law says funeral directors are now allowed to release information of unclaimed cremated ashes. If any of these ashes are identified as being an honorably discharged Veteran, they will be entitled to interment in a state or national cem-



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Accomplish with purpose, passion and pride

By Joe Gladden
National Commander

The year is flying by quickly now and so far many of my travels have been in cold and snowy states. While we have been "Shooting For The Moon In Membership" our country has been faced with some colder than usual weather and accumulations of snow that are just not normal. I hope your winter has not left you out in the cold.

The National Commander's Project for this year is the Legacy Scholarship Fund. This is a foundation that The American Legion started after our country was attacked on September 11, 2001. Since then, The American Legion Family has been raising money to fund scholarships for the children of our fallen soldiers since 9/11/2001. The only requirement is that the soldier's passing occurred while serving on activity duty, whether in combat, on a training mission or any other cause. The goal of the foundation is to raise \$20 million to be able to take care of the growing number of children that are, unfortunately, losing one or both of their parents. Every year, our armed forces lose well over a thousand soldiers from various accidents and training mishaps. They leave behind several thousand children who will need our help one day in the not too distant future!

Those who joined our all-volunteer armed forces have willingly answered the call of duty and some have given their lives so that we can live free. Don't we owe it to their families to make sure that their children are taken care of? During my travels this year I have been offering detachments and departments an opportunity to donate to this cause and, in return, receive one of my Commander's Challenge coins or T-shirts. So far, I have received over \$5,000 in donations for the Legacy Fund. Before I leave office this summer, I intend to raise over \$10,000 through these donations. My overall nationwide goal is for the S.A.L. to raise at least \$250,000 for the Legacy Fund. But this can only happen if you and your squadron or district or detachment step up and accept the challenge and raise money for this purpose. If we only apply a small amount of the effort that we do for CWF, we will easily reach my goal. With your help, I know we can make it!

As I mentioned above, our membership this year is "Shooting For The Moon In Membership." I have set a lofty goal of 106.3% (375,000 members). To achieve this goal we are doing two things: 1) We are racing to the moon and the first National Vice Commander to hit the Moon with 106.3% in membership will be crowned the "National Membership Captain of The Year." Each target date is being called a space station on the way to the moon. So far, we have done very well making most space sta-

Reporting name and address changes easy

The National Headquarters receives many, many requests for name corrections and changes of mailing addresses throughout the year. Often, we receive mail and telephone inquiries informing us of frustrations in trying to get these changes made. There are many ways to correct this data.

Each Squadron should obtain these changes and send in a Member Data Form. Another way to make changes is through the S.A.L. web page at www.legion.org/sons under "contact us." Yet another way is to have your Squadron Adjutant make the changes on MySAL.org. Members can email us at sal@legion.org. We can even take information on questions, name changes, and address changes by writing to us at The American Legion, PO Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206.

Please include this contact information as well as the Sons' national web URL (www.legion.org/sons) in all of your local newsletters and bulletins.



Important upcoming dates:

- May 31 - Last day of the administration year for donations to Child Welfare Foundation
- May 17 - Natl S.A.L. Veterans Assistance Day
- May 17 - Armed Forces Day
- May 26 - Memorial Day
- June 1 - Story/photo deadline for summer edition of *National Update* newsletter
- June 6 - 70th anniversary of D-Day
- June 14 - Flag Day
- July 4 - Independence Day
- July 21 - Deadline for reports and award entries for National Convention
- August 22/24 - 43rd Natl Convention of the S.A.L. in Charlotte, NC

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tion targets with our quota of members on board. Space Station #6 was in February (the goal was 75% membership). We fell short by fewer than 500 members -- an average of only 10 members from each detachment. This is why it's so important to transmit all membership cards as quickly as possible. You may think just a couple of cards won't matter, but it can!

To help of reach our goal of 375,000 members before July, I am asking everyone to create their own Family Tree. Start by writing the name of the first person in your family who was eligible to be a member of The American Legion. Create your "Family Tree" by writing down all of the members of your family who are the descendants of that first person who was eligible. After you have created the "Family Tree," identify those on your list who are not

members of one of the branches of Legion Family. Those are the individuals I want you to contact and ask to join whichever branch of The American Legion Family Tree they are eligible for. By doing this, you will find members not only for the Sons, but for The Legion and Auxiliary. Let's see who can create the largest Legion Family Tree. Submit your "Family Tree" to National Headquarters by July 24, 2014 and the largest "Family Tree" will receive a special prize and recognition at the National Convention in Charlotte this August. In addition to names, list individuals' membership numbers for verification purposes.

Sons support all of the programs of The American Legion. However, I have asked those who chair our National Commissions to focus extra attention on a couple of programs. The Children and Youth Commission is emphasizing Special Olympics and Josh Dogs. The Americanism Commission is focused on the Legacy Scholarship Fund and Boys State. Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation is giving added attention to the Fisher House Foundation and the "Missing In America Project" (MIAP). To find out more about these programs, please visit our website at www.legion.org/sons.

My theme for this year is "United In Service." This simply means that when we work together, we can accomplish anything that we put our minds to. Working together with The American Legion, Auxiliary and the Riders, the Sons will be truly effective. We will reach our membership goals. We will raise the funds for all of our charities. We will come together as one family "United In Service."

If you are interested in helping me out on my Commander's Project (Legacy Scholarship Fund) or any of our commissions programs, please contact us. With Purpose, Passion and Pride we can accomplish great things.

Is your squadron
signed up for
MySAL.org?

Don't forget...
**The next deadline
is June 1, 2014**

National Update
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or
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Send us snapshots and selfies

By Damon Bradrmueller
National PR Chairman

No doubt you've heard that a picture is worth a thousand words. Using our mind, a picture will tell us who, what, where, when, and why. If we add a caption to a picture, it becomes even more clear what we want to express.

Our organization has a photo contest called "Snapshots of Service." It is based on the Four Pillars of The American Legion, which as Sons we strive to emulate. Taking pictures of your squadron's activities not only gives you a fantastic record of the things your squadron has been engaged in. It also provides the material needed to build a scrapbook or history for future members to read and enjoy. Most of us have a camera or phone capable of both photos and video which can be converted to a CD or DVD for easy storage.

The National Public Relations Commission would like to invite your squadron to participate in our "Snapshots of Service" contest. Rules can be found on the National website at www.legion.org/sons or can be obtained from your Detachment Adjutant.

If you still have questions, feel free to contact me at djbradt-mueller@att.net. You are doing the work; record it for yourselves and share it with the nation.

When they ask, “What have you done for me lately?” just tell ‘em....

The **Detachment of New York 7th District** held a Benefit Jamboree and Music Show last fall. Close to \$6,000 was raised to support a number of District projects for veterans and military families, including the 47 bed Cadence Square, a combined halfway house and supportive living facility exclusively for Veterans who may be at risk, in recovery, homeless, or in need of low-income housing.

The Sons of **Swainsboro, GA Sq 103** dedicated a Veterans Memorial Wall at Pine Brook Park in Swainsboro on Veterans Day this year. Dedicated in memory of all veterans from Emanuel County who made the ultimate sacrifice in wartime since the town’s founding in 1812. (Right)



During the fall semester, St. Bonaventure University sponsored a veteran’s panel discussion that was moderated by the S.A.L.’s own Greg “Doc” Gibbs. The school currently has about 80 undergraduates who are vets. The panel was made up of a psychologist, a military chaplain, retired military, current military, and a veteran student. The evening was spent discussing the needs of veterans and available resources. One veteran student pointed out that veterans need help getting back into a normal society after being deployed for any length of time.

The Sons of the **Florence, KY Sq 4** recently donated \$200 to the USO which will be used to make military personnel more comfortable when they are passing through the Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport.



(Left) One more highway in Michigan is looking good because the Sons of **Gladstone, MI Sq 71** joined with a local Boy Scout Troop for a highway pickup. After you count the smiling faces, you can count the 32 bags of garbage that no longer clutter the side of the roadway.

Sons from **Tyrone, PA Sq 281** made this year’s Christmas a little brighter when they helped collect boxes of clothing and toiletries for the Hollidaysburg Veterans Home. (Right)

Veterans’ graves at two nearby cemeteries will get ongoing attention and upkeep thanks to the work of Sons from **Girard, PA Sq 494**. The guys held a corn and wiener roast last summer to raise money for the Honor Project.

GI Josh was officially deployed on February 22, 2014 at a ceremony for 65 members of the Wisconsin Army National Guard’s 32nd Infantry by members of the **Detachment of Wisconsin**. Sons

presented a GI Josh Dog to each child in attendance. During the ceremony, which was the last time these families were to be together for a while, many children were clutching Josh to their chest with tears streaming down their faces. The kits include a plush dog, a book and a letter for adults to explain how GI Josh can be therapeutic for children dealing with a deployed parent. Through a compelling story as shared by Josh, the Golden Retriever, who is going through his own difficult situation, a child can find comfort that they are not going through their difficulty alone. Southern Wis-

consin Sons Squadrons and The Legion Family were able to secure enough donations to sponsor the GI Josh Dogs at the send off. (Right)

Wong Suey Lee, joined The American Legion following his U.S. Army service during Korean War. He should have won a Medal of Valor for his actions on the battlefield in 1951 but the paperwork was lost. More than 60 years later, a trio of S.A.L. members from **Green Valley, AZ Sq 66 and the Detachment’s 2nd District** worked to resubmit that paperwork, which was approved. Unfortunately, Mr. Lee passed away one day before he was to receive the award.



Even though we’re the descendants of veterans, there are plenty of Sons who are, themselves, the parents of vets. Louis Perez of **Fontana, CA Sq 262** is, understandably proud of his newly minted tank-driving son, Pvt. Paul Perez. (Left)

With summertime just around the corner, cook-



outs are gaining in popularity. **The Detachment of Maryland** has had a lot of experience in front of a smoky grill. They hold an annual cookout for 70 Fisher House family members, wounded warriors and veterans at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center. Dedicated volunteers prepared steaks, BBQ chicken, hot dogs, potato salad, macaroni salad and all the fixin’s. Oh, and they also left behind donations totaling \$2,500.

Randy Anderson is an S.A.L. member who is bringing plenty of credit to **Milaca, MN Sq 178**. Randy has donated more than 1,500 hours to the community’s schools. His actions brought praise from the schools’ principal and superintendent.

Sons and other Legion Family members from **Rock Springs, WY Sq 24** provided a haunted house for the children of that community last October. They have also helped out with a breakfast for vets on Veterans Day, a Thanksgiving dinner and a Santa Claus children’s party at Christmas.

Savannah, MO Sq 287 has had a charter for just three years but look at just some of what they’d been able to accomplish: original 13 members has tripled, more than 2,000 volunteer hours in 2013, many fund raising

events to raise thousands for troop care packages, Children and Youth programs, kitchen equipment for the post, various community projects, Boys State and scholarships. They have collected clothing for veterans’ homes and help out with funerals.



Not only did the Sons of **Kerrville, TX Sq 208** build a mobile deep fry trailer, they gave it a baptism by driving it to the local VA medical center and served fried fish, french fries and coleslaw to the patients and staff. The mobile cooker is a beauty with a pair of nine gallon cookers and folding tables. (See top of Page 6)

It wasn’t too long ago that the fine folks of Quincy, MA woke up one morning and found the Sons of **Quincy, MA Sq 294** plastered all over their local newspaper. That notoriety was due in large part to the efforts of one man, Squadron Commander Paul Moody, Sr. He received the community’s outstanding citizen award for long-time contributions to youth and veteran programs around town.

Detachment and District leaders in Ohio cooked a steak dinner and managed to help raise \$1,800 for the “Dream Field” – a baseball field for the community’s special needs children.

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etery with full military honors.

The sponsor of one of these Bills was State Representative Gino Polidori, an American Legion member from Fort Dearborn Post 364. Polidori gave credit to the Sons of The American Legion. He said they and the Missing In Action Plan were instrumental in keeping this issue in the forefront.



A different kind of "war wagon" built by the guys of Kerrville, TX Sq 208.



Donating to Fisher House is always a great S.A.L. idea

A donation to the Fisher House serves our military and their families in times of need. Providing shelter and support during medical crises, Fisher House's many "homes away from home" provide a comforting environment to injured service members, veterans, retirees and their families. While a loved one is undergoing medical treatment in an unfamiliar town, city or state, the offer of a welcoming refuge to help families stay close together is appreciated by the brave men and women who serve our nation with valor.

Become a hero to someone special by contributing to the Fisher House today. For more information, call toll-free (888) 294-8560 or visit www.fisherhouse.org. The Sons of the American Legion support the fund raising efforts of the Fisher House, visit www.legion.org/sons for more information.

Through the generosity of the American public, you can find Fisher House facilities in the following states: California, Colorado, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Kentucky, Maryland, Minnesota, Mississippi, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Texas, Virginia, Washington and in Europe.

From the greatest generation to today's great generation..... you've helped America...now let us help you...

- Visit with our veterans at the V.A.
- Entertain at VA with games or cookouts
- Sponsor a group of veterans to a local attraction like museum or sporting events
- Take to store, visit at home, invite to dinner
- Take treats to local nursing homes
- Till and plant garden, do house repairs,

National Veteran's Assistance Day
May 17, 2014

Veterans how can we help...

For Assistance please call: _____

Sons attend 2014 Washington Conference

Dozens of Sons from around the country joined hundreds of other Legion Family members in the nation's capitol last month for the organization's annual Washington Conference. S.A.L. attendance at the event got a shot in the arm this year because National Commander Joe Gladden scheduled his Homecoming party to coincide in nearby Maryland.

The Washington conference is an annual event. Legion Family members descend on Washington and use the occasion to meet with their elected representatives to discuss support for issues important to veterans. It's also an opportunity for The American Legion leadership to roll out new legislative and program initiatives.

This year's Washington Conference came just a little later in the calendar than previous years. That slight change caused a small departure from previous schedules. Commander Gladden and the S.A.L. were not able to place a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington National Cemetery this year. But that was only a slight hiccup because Commander Joe and officers representing many of the detachments simply shifted their sights and wound up placing their wreaths at the World War II Memorial, the Korean Memorial and elsewhere.



Above and Left - National and Detachment officers laid wreaths at the Vietnam and World War II Memorials as part of this year's Washington Conference.

CWF Leaders Highest Per Capita Contributions by Detachment

Colorado	\$3.64
Nevada	\$3.37
Oregon	\$2.45
Washington	\$2.09
South Dakota	\$1.44
Mississippi	\$1.39
Florida	\$1.31
France	\$1.04
Virginia	\$0.97
North Carolina	\$0.90
Utah	\$0.82
Louisiana	\$0.73
New Mexico	\$0.70
Vermont	\$0.70
New Jersey	\$0.68
Michigan	\$0.56
National Avg	\$0.38

Membership Renewal Leaders

Montana	83.8%
Nebraska	83.3%
Louisiana	81.3%
Maryland	81.3%
Iowa	80.0%
Vermont	79.7%
Delaware	79.4%
Minnesota	79.1%
Ohio	77.7%
Rhode Island	77.4%
Wisconsin	77.4%
Pennsylvania	77.3%
Kansas	77.1%
Michigan	77.3%
Indiana	76.8%
National Avg	74.8%

Taking advantage of discount programs

Members of the S.A.L. often overlook benefits that their membership card entitles them to. Many of the same benefits that are available to Legionnaires are also available to Sons.

USAA is a company that offers a variety of auto and property insurance coverage and financial services to Legionnaires and their eligible adult family members. Membership in USAA is free. Much information is available

from their web site at www.usaa.com.

Sons are also eligible to take advantage of discount travel deals through GOV Vacation Rewards. The program offers savings on flights, hotels, over 40 cruise lines and more than 4,000 different resort properties to all major destinations worldwide. Access to the program is free. More information is available at www.govvacation-rewards.com.