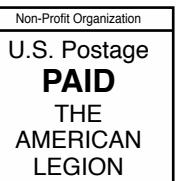


The Sons of The American Legion

P.O. Box 1055
Indianapolis, IN 46206



8

Oak Ridge Boys join in the commitment to veterans

The American Legion and the Grammy Award-winning Oak Ridge Boys are uniting to raise awareness and support for needs of U.S. military veterans, including better detection and treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), help with the VA benefits process, as well as education and career opportunities for those who served our nation in uniform. The Oak Ridge Boys will participate in a national fund raising and awareness campaign to support the detection and treatment of mental health issues among veterans, 22 of whom are lost each day to suicide.

As one of country music's longest-running groups, The Oak Ridge Boys' legacy extends back to the end of World War II. The current group - which consists



of lead singer Duane Allen, bass singer Richard Sterban, tenor Joe Bonsall and baritone William Lee Golden - recently celebrated more than 40 years performing together. In that time, The Oak Ridge Boys have produced more than 30 top 10 hit songs, 12 gold records, three platinum records, one double-platinum album and a double-platinum single, with combined sales totaling 41 million records sold.

Bonsall wrote an inspirational biography about his veteran par-

ents titled "G.I. Joe and Lillie: Remembering a Life of Love and Loyalty." Joe's father spent much of his life living with the wounds of war, both seen and unseen.

"I know firsthand the ongoing care of our nation's veterans is critical and how it impacts the entire family unit," Bonsall said. "Uniting with The American Legion to raise awareness of those who are suffering, as my father did, is work we are proud to champion."

NATIONAL UPDATE

Official Publication of the Sons of The American Legion
Winter 2015



Legion announces CWF grant recipients for 2015

The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation has awarded \$566,691 to 18 non-profit organizations. These grants, determined during the annual meeting of the Board of Directors, have been awarded to support youth-serving projects that seek to enhance the lives of children by addressing the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual needs of children. The Sons of The American Legion raised over \$300,000 for CWF during the past year and specifically requested sponsorship of the following grants:

Beads of Courage, Inc. (Tucson, AZ) \$40,000 for their project, "Beads of Courage." This grant will fund the purchase of beads to encourage ill children as part of the Beads of Courage program.

Children's Institute, Inc. (Rochester, NY) \$7,580 for their project, "Strengthening Military Family Relationships Through Play." This grant will underwrite the production and dissemination of instructional DVDs to educate Boys and Girls Club staff on the needs of military children.

Children's Organ Transplant Association (Bloomington, IN) \$43,595 for their project, "The American Hometown Heroes for COTA Campaign." This grant will fund an informational campaign that will connect Reserve and National

Continued on Page 6

Continued on Page 2

Sons elect Colorado's Mike Moss

"Getting prepared for this day has been two and a half years in the making. It's a very humbling experience," said Mike Moss, shortly before being elected National Commander of the Sons of The American Legion at the organization's 43rd National Convention meeting in Charlotte, NC back in late August.

Moss hails from the Detachment of Colorado. His eligibility is through his Father, a 54 year member of The American Legion, who served in the Air Force during the Korean War. One of Mike's earliest memories of American Legion activities was when he was 8 years old and going down to the local grocery store with his mother, also a 54 year member of the Legion Family, to sell poppies to raise money.

Membership will have the highest priority during his year as Commander. The theme he'll work under is "Building Bridges to the Future," a slogan that underscores the importance of bringing together more hands and legs to accomplish the important work within the programs of The American Legion Family.

Continued on Page 2



"Soldier's Wish" is new Legion charity

Soldiers Wish is a non-profit organization that grants wishes to active duty military and veterans. The group's mission is to identify the unmet needs of veterans of military service regardless of branch or rank and identify or provide resources to meet those needs so the veteran service members and/or his or her family can lead normal and productive lives.

Veterans may be those who have served only a short time and are still on active duty, those who served a single enlistment, those who were discharged due to their wounds, and those who retired from active duty. In addition, Soldier's Wish will educate the public

Continued on Page 2

Building bridges with a purpose

**By Mike Moss
National Commander** Yes, the construction phase of our organization has begun.

A bridge can be defined as something that provides a link, connection, or means of coming together; a structure that is built above an obstacle to allow people to cross. This year we are going to build bridges that will accomplish both.

Our membership theme is "Building Bridges To The future." We will construct links to our own membership as well as membership for The American Legion, Auxiliary and Legion Riders. We want to build a bridge that will take us well into the future.

Our membership goal this year is 370,000 members. With your hard work and dedication we can achieve this. Our organization depends on local squadrons for success; you are the one that will turn those wrenches to make our bridge secure.

Our bridge already has a strong foundation - the Four Pillars of Service on which The American Legion was founded. Sons must continue to do our part and put the finishing touches on bridges that will link all branches of The American Legion Family together, and more importantly, the bridge that will take us into the future.

As our membership becomes stronger our programs will become stronger as will the promotion of our programs. This year I have chosen to promote the National Emergency Fund which assists Legionnaires and Sons who are displaced or evacuated from their primary home due to damages sustained by a declared natural disaster. Our hope is to raise \$50,000 for this great program.

As always, I'd like to see Sons lead the way in donations to the Child Welfare Foundation. Our goal of \$400,000 is well within reach and your fund raising efforts will benefit a great many children.

In 1925 The American Legion established the American Legion Endowment Fund. This Endowment fund supports TFA (Temporary Financial Assistance) for the children of veterans eligible for The American Legion. It directly benefits children's health and welfare. This fund has been around for 90 years. We would like to raise \$1,000 for each year of its existence -- \$90,000 is our goal.

Please continue to support all of our programs. I know you will. Let's build those bridges together and take the Sons of The American Legion into a bright future.

Right - Commander Moss at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy with Legion National Commander Helm and Auxiliary President Janet Jefford. In addition to a photo op, the trio took part in the cadets' pass and review parade.



Wish from Page 1

lic about the needs of the veteran's and active duty communities and encourage the public to participate in meeting those needs by volunteering and other means.

The American Legion has embraced Soldiers Wish and encourages Legion Family members to get involved by nominating recipients, raising money and organizing events.

Types of wishes that have been granted vary greatly. In one case, a combat-injured soldier's home was made wheelchair-accessible. Another wish involved arranging for the mother of a soldier killed in Afghanistan to make a cross-country trip to see her grandchildren. In one instance, American Legion Post 1 in Tulsa, OK was given an extreme make-over in an effort to make it more attractive to young veterans and their families.

More information about Soldiers Wish is available at its web site: www.soldierswish.org.

Moss from Page 1

He also has a goal of raising awareness and funds for The Legion's National Emergency Fund and its Endowment Fund, especially the Temporary Financial Assistance program. It provides cash grants to veterans with minor children in need.

By the time he hands the reigns over to his successor next year in Baltimore, Moss is convinced Sons will be able to raise \$50,000 for N.E.F., another \$90,000 for the Endowment Fund's Temporary Financial Assistance program, several hundred thousand dollars for the Child Welfare Foundation and see the ranks of the S.A.L. swell to over 370,000 members.

Welcome to Legionville, MN

**By Jeff Stoffer
Dir., AL Media/Communications**

Welcome to Legionville, MN with a population of just one.

Roy Kruger, a Vietnam War veteran and full time manager, is the only resident, but he's never really alone. A mama bear and her cub appear from time to time. Signs of wolves can be found along the trails. Deer and Canada geese are always milling about the fringes of the acreage.

And on this particular early-October weekend, Kruger has plenty of human company. It's the John Zgoda Memorial Disabled Veteran Deer Hunt, a Sons of The American Legion event that for the last seven years has helped expand Legionville's identity, which for over a half-century has been that of a respected summer camp for school safety patrols administered by the Minnesota Highway Patrol.

"I'm hoping that out of the 600 acres here, each (hunter) will come away with a decent deer," Kruger says. "There's a lot of things we can do here. Next year, we're really going to try to expand it."

Among the disabled veterans whose names were drawn for the special hunt Saturday at Legionville were one whose leg was shot off in combat during Operation Desert Storm, another who suffered permanent shoulder and arm damage after an incident with a Humvee in Kosovo, and a Korean War veteran who lost most of his hearing.

"I find it the best therapy I could ever have," says Robert Donaldson, a Little Falls Legionnaire whose 26 years in the Army started with two tours in Vietnam and ended with a prosthetic right leg. "I love coming out hunting. If I get a deer, that's just an added bonus. I feel safe ... there's a brotherhood here."

The S.A.L., which has built five deer stands and placed them around the property, plans a December muzzle loader hunt for disabled veterans at Legionville as well.

Zimmerman Post 560 Legionnaire Wayne Gilbertson, president of the non-profit organization that runs Legionville, says the property has recently attracted astronomy classes and Civil Air Patrol activities. The site also is used for an S.A.L. spring conference, a Junior Auxiliary conference and a September fund raising "camp-o-ree."

"This place is an icon in the state of Minnesota," Gilbertson says. "All the districts take advantage of that. I think it has unlimited possibilities."

Legionville is situated north of Brainerd, Minn., along the shore of 6,000 acre North Long Lake. It's across from a Webelos camp, which presents opportunities because of the Legion's long association with Boy Scouts, says Minnesota Department Commander Don Pankake, who has made Legionville his main fund raising project this year.

None of the disabled veteran hunters at Legionville this weekend had ever been to the property before the special hunt. After their applications were accepted and their names were drawn, "the only cost they had was getting here and making sure they had some warm clothes," says Lloyd Schaeffer, S.A.L. member and event organizer from Chaska, Minn. "We wanted to utilize all of this property and give something back to the disabled veterans."



"I love it up here," says hunter Tim Siebsen of Montgomery, Minn., who served in Kosovo with the National Guard in 2003 and 2004. "It's just a great opportunity to speak with other veterans and to learn about the experiences other veterans have had. Good camaraderie."

"They can't do enough for you," Korean War veteran Harry Swanson adds, referring the SAL members who put the hunt together. "It's fun."

"We love it so much we can't ever give it up," adds SAL Detachment Chaplain Robert Benjamin.

Left - Tim Siebsen of Montgomery, MN, takes aim from a deer stand during a disabled veteran hunt over the weekend.

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

Bloomington, IN 47401

or

mpipher@iu.edu

Next deadline is February 1, 2015



Sons from **Sebastian, FL Sq 189** jumped in to help fix up veterans' graves at nearby Fellsmere, FL just in time for Memorial Day this year. In addition to planting markers and flags, the guys brought buckets and scrub brushes to improve the looks of some headstones. (**Right**) Somebody had the good sense to snap a few pictures of the work in progress. Then someone had an even better idea of taking those photos and making a short music video that was uploaded to the squadron's Facebook page.

The **Detachment of South Carolina** has decided to give out an annual Americanism Medal that will recognize an individual who inspires love of country and good citizenship through patriotic observances, flag etiquette, civic instruction and community service. The very first person ever to receive the award is Kenneth Frank, Detachment Historian and the Commander of **Boiling Springs, SC Sq 200**. There's plenty of patriotism in Pennsylvania, too. Pennsylvania Camp #1739 of the Scottish American Military Society recently presented its President's Volunteer Service Award to several members of the **Detachment of Pennsylvania** Sons of The American Legion. The honor was bestowed for the individuals' volunteer support with the Scottish American Military Society, their community and their service to the Sons of The American Legion.



(**Left**) This year's American Legion Eagle Scout of the Year is also a member of the S.A.L. Meet 17 year old Joseph Blaisse of **Aston, PA Sq 926**. Joe was invited to The National Convention and given an opportunity to speak to thousands of Sons and Legionnaires. Meanwhile, folks in southern Indiana have an opportunity to see a sculpture Austin King created for his own Eagle Scout project and dedicated to all soldiers from all wars. King is a member of **New Albany, IN Sq 28** and his sculpture, entitled "Gone But Not Forgotten" sits in front of Post 28. (**Right**) During his bus tour of Indiana, American Legion National Commander Michael Helm had a picture taken there with Irvin Thomas, the oldest member of Post 28.



(**Left**) People throughout Nebraska are getting an opportunity to view a popular traveling exhibit thanks to the fund raising efforts of the Sons of **Omaha, NE Sq 374**. "Remembering Our Fallen" was created to honor Nebraskan soldiers who lost their lives in Iraq and Afghanistan. Squadron 374 partnered with other Legion Family members to raise money so the exhibit can travel around the state thru September of 2015.

They're Number 1, 2 and 3! Let's give a pat-on-the-back to Sons at **Port Tampa City, FL Sq 138** for finishing first among the state's 170 squadrons in fund raising for Children and Youth activities, then finishing second in Americanism activities and third in Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation. They sure know how to have fun when it comes to raising money, using deep sea fishing tournaments, seafood fests, car shows, golf tourneys, dinners and more. Their contributions to various Legion charities this year included a record \$7,000 check for Special Olympics. It doesn't hurt, of course, to be part of a post that overlooks Tampa Bay and offers spectacular sunsets each evening!



(**Left**) Few squadrons support the Josh Dog program as well as the guys at **Colton, CA Sq 155**. That's Commander John Mejia delivering a check for \$11,300 to a lot of smiling staff members at Loma Linda Children's Hospital. Most of the money buys stuffed Josh Dogs to serve as therapeutic tools for youngsters during their treatments. But the Sons also work to donate other toys, money and plenty of their own time. Every summer, they put on "Summer Claus Night" outside the hospital and Mejia plays you-know-who while wearing a blue Hawaiian shirt.

There are 13 food pantries helping people make ends meet in and around Michigan's Upper Peninsula community of Powers. The Sons of **Powers, MI Sq 244** have given \$1,000 to the food pantry in each of the past three years.

Sons from **Colonial Beach, VA Sq 148** sponsor a band contest each year known as the "Battle at the Beach" that's been growing in popularity. During the Battle, they raise money by selling food platters, beverages and T-shirts. A local high school student wins \$100 for coming up with the best shirt design. The rest of the money is donated to the EOD Warrior Foundation, an organization that provides ongoing support for Explosive Ordnance Disposal technicians and their families.

The American Legion Department of New Hampshire conducts a POW/MIA 24 hour vigil each year. Sons from **Newmarket, NH Sq 67** stood from the **Detachment of New Hampshire** and watch alongside other Legion Family members this year. (**Right**)

The S.A.L. from **Dania Beach, FL Sq 304** has raised close to \$30,000 this year through four charity dolphin fishing tournaments. Those funds have been donated to the Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital. Several dozen anglers competed for more than \$4,000 in prizes. There was also a post-tournament party held that attracted close to 200 people and raised even more money.



Grants from Page 1

Guard COTA families to Legion posts that support COTA.

CureSearch for Children's Cancer (Bethesda, MD) \$31,500 for their project entitled, "Cure-Search 2014 Educational Video Series." This grant will produce and distribute videos on staying healthy while on chemotherapy, eating healthy and information on clinical procedures such as biopsy and ultrasound.

Marfan Foundation (Port Washington, NY) \$30,000 for their project "Parent's Toolkit: Your Child and Marfan Syndrome." This grant will provide informational toolkits for parents of children with Marfan Syndrome.

Mercy Medical Angels (Virginia Beach, VA) \$44,000 for their project, "Child Health Pro-



Left - Sons in Minnesota sponsored their eighth annual deer hunt for four disabled veterans this fall. Three of the four went home with a deer. In addition to providing lodging and meals, the Detachment pays to have the deer meat processed for the hunters. See the full story on Page 7.

gram – Info Dissemination Upgrade.” This grant will update and disseminate information on the organization’s child health program.

National Autism Association (Attleboro Falls, MA) \$58,075 for their project, “Big Red Safety Box Program.” This grant will enable the continuation of the Big Red Safety Box program that addresses dangerous wandering incidents.

Our Military Kids (McLean, VA) \$31,350 for their project, “Our Mission Continues: Moving into the Next Decade of Supporting Our Kids.” This grant will enhance outreach and marketing efforts of the organization.

United States Association of Blind Athletes (Colorado Springs, CO) \$20,000 for their project, “USABA Mobile Coach.” This grant will expand the number of sports offered on Mobile Coach to assist blind youth athletes compete.

Additional grants that are being funded this year by CWF include:

Angel Flight West (Santa Monica, CA) \$10,000 for their project, “Promoting Fly-Anthropy – the charitable use of aviation to help children in need.”

Birth Defect Research for Children (Orlando, FL) \$22,650 for their project, “National Outreach for Birth Defect Prevention.”

Children’s Cardiomyopathy Foundation (Tenafly, NJ) \$25,400 for their project, “7 minute video to answer genetic testing questions as it relates to Pediatric Cardiomyopathy.”

Children’s Craniofacial Association (Dallas, TX) \$10,000 for their project, “Wonder-Choose Kind.”

Diabetes Education & Camping Association (Florence, AL) \$39,640 for their project, “Optimizing Outcomes at Diabetes Camp – Integrated HER System.”

JAYC Foundation, Inc. (Santa Rosa, CA) \$50,540 for their project, “Creating Protected Spaces.”

Mercy Flight Southeast (Leesburg, FL) \$21,761 for their project, “Project Outreach SE USA 2014.”

Spina Bifida Association (Arlington, VA) \$25,000 for their project, “Educating Children with Spina Bifida on Staying Healthy.”

The American Legion (Indianapolis, IN) \$55,500 for their project, “2015 American Legion National Youth Programs Scholarships.”

On the road with the Big Boss

**By Raymond Giehll, Jr.
Past Nat'l Commander**

(Editor's Note: Like so many American Legion National Commanders before him, Michael Helm spends a great deal of time on the road visiting states, communities and even foreign countries. He is, perhaps, the most visible symbol of the nation's largest veterans service organizations, the three and a half million men, women and children who make up The American Legion Family. One of his recent road trips involved a four-day bus tour throughout the State of Indiana. Department and Detachment representatives from all four branches of The Legion Family were invited along on the trip.)



Above - Anyone who has seen the Oscar-nominated movie “Hoosiers” will recognize the Knightstown, Indiana gymnasium that served as home court of mythical “Hickory High School.” After a tour of the building, National Commander Helm shot hoops with Cambridge City, IN Sq 169 member David Sigers, and won!

C & Y Conference gaining traction

The American Legion's annual Children and Youth Conference is held in Indianapolis, IN each year in September. A growing number of Sons have been attending the meetings. This year's presentations included reports from Legion national headquarters staff and others involved in youth-related programs. For example, a representative from the FBI talked about the agency's Internet Crimes Division on Internet Crimes Against Children. Several organizations that have received Child Welfare Foundation grants spoke about the good that has been done by Legion Family contributions. Sons have been encouraged to send each Detachment's Children and Youth Chairmen (or other representative) to sit in on next year's event.

Membership 2014 Leaders

Utah	121 %
Philippines	115 %
South Dakota	110 %
Oregon	106 %
Alabama	105 %
New Mexico	105 %
Missouri	104 %
Arizona	104 %
Iowa	104 %
Nebraska	103 %
Florida	103 %
Delaware	103 %
California	103 %
Rhode Island	103 %
Nat'l Total	100 %

The Department of Colorado American Legion Family is inviting one and all to take part in the activities and events celebrating the Homecoming of Sons National Commander Mike Moss on the weekend of March 20 thru 22. Please go to www.legion.org/sons for further details.