



# NATIONAL UPDATE

Official Publication of the Sons of The American Legion

Spring 2016



*Sons at this year's American Legion Washington Conference placed wreaths at various monuments, including the Korean War Memorial.*

## Election season brings reminder

*Editor's Note: The Sons is a program of The American Legion and is bound by the same rules as our parent organization. The following information was prepared by the National Headquarters and, although written for dissemination to Legion Posts, applies equally to the S.A.L.*

The National Charter of The American Legion, approved by Congress, stipulates that the organization is nonpolitical, which has been interpreted by the National Judge Advocate as “nonpartisan” in modern lingo. Therefore, The American Legion as an organization is prohibited from contributing, helping or endorsing a candidate. However, a member, as a private citizen, and not representing the organization, can employ whatever legal and ethical means to advance his or her candidate.

The Legion cap is considered the official Legion uniform. It is not an individual Legion member's decision on the appropriate usage of the cap and emblem. If attending a political event, The American Legion cap, or any clothing with the emblem visible, should be removed so as not to imply endorsement by The American Legion. The problem is the assumption of endorsement by those who see the emblem or name worn at an improper location, such as a partisan rally.

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## Americanism and the Consolidated Squadron Report

*By Greg “Doc” Gibbs  
Nat'l Americanism Chairman*

Several key elements of Americanism are represented within the Consolidated Report that you will soon be completing to send on to national. National awards are given based upon the hours of service, funds raised, flags presented, scholarships awarded, color guard services, blood drives, and scouting involvement. These items and more are all measured by the data we receive from your Consolidated Report.

Over 40 items, more than half of the entire report, involve Americanism. Please make sure you get credit for the work you do at your squadron and detachment levels by filling out these reports. It is not a matter of “tooting your horn” about what you do but it helps categorize the time and money involved by all of us helping our veterans, our youth, and our active military. These numbers then go into the totals the The American Legion National Commander uses to create his/her annual presentation to Congress. The power of this data is unmatched and it is key to show

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## It's a season filled with fun programs **CSR** from Page 1

By **Kevin Collier**  
*National Commander*

Spring is such an exciting time of year for Sons. Few of us get to hibernate during winter, but a quick look at our Legion Family calendar is a real eye-opener and reminds us that it's never too early to start making plans for organized activities.

April is Children & Youth Month and also a time when we celebrate Child Welfare Foundation Week. Sons have been helping with The Legion's High School Oratorical Contest all year and a new national champion will be crowned this spring, which means it's time we started thinking about next year's contest.

Boys and Girls State participants are being chosen this spring. All of them are about to complete their junior year in high school and are some of the country's brightest future citizens. The S.A.L. will be involved in their programs throughout the country this summer. It's truly a week that can change a lifetime.

We're rapidly approaching May and our 100% membership deadline. It's time to remind Legionnaires who are eligible for the

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## We can show them who we are

By **Damon Bradtmueller**  
*Nat'l Vice Chair, Public Relations*

I hope I'm not the only one who has noticed there are more veterans wearing attire that lets the public know that they have served their country. This is also evident on the cars veterans drive with license plates showing which branch of service they were in. I'm glad to see that the men and woman who have defended our liberties are proud to show that commitment.

We, as "proud possessors of a priceless heritage," should be doing the same and wearing our Sons of The American Legion emblem on clothing and ball caps.

I know many detachments have their own designs for membership shirts and hats and the same goes for many squadrons. If you find an item you like in the Flag and Emblem Catalog, but it's emblazoned only with a Legion emblem, call and ask for the special order desk and they will assist you with changing your order to the Sons emblem.

Wearing our Sons emblem creates interest for those that don't know who we are. It can lead into a conversation that may result in participation and, possibly, membership.

Let's all be Proud Possessors and wear our Sons attire and bring attention to our organization.

ing Congress how important these efforts are and that someone must carry the mantle of service and aid our veterans; and we as The Legion Family are doing it daily!

Make sure you have membership figures at the top of your Consolidated Report. That's an important element in the tallying of data from the report. When you fail to report your efforts, all that we do becomes trivial, and not seen as important in the eyes of many.

When you do send in that Consolidated Report you are acknowledging and validating that the work we all do on behalf of veterans is important. If everyone sent their reports in we are sure that the numbers would be staggering. It would send a clear message that veterans and the military need these services and these funds, they have earned this level of service, and it is simply not being addressed – so we as The Legion Family are addressing it. The Consolidated Report sends a very powerful message and your efforts are needed to keep the level of this data close to the true figures that we know exist.

Americanism is at the heart of the Consolidated Report. Let yours reflect the importance of serving our veterans, our children and youth, and our active military. Help us keep our message to Congress strong – let it show in the details and the filing of your Consolidated Report.

## Politics from Page 1

When using post facilities to host candidates, post should remove emblem and Legion flag to avoid any impression of endorsements. Candidates for all parties must be presented equal opportunity at the same time to use the facilities on the same terms and conditions as other competing candidates.

If financial contributions are offered by candidates for political office, campaigns, political action committees or political parties, The American Legion should politely decline. Accepting these contributions may be perfectly legal, but The American Legion must avoid any perception of supporting any candidate or political party.

The American Legion values its independence and effectiveness on veterans' issues. This stance is best maintained by neutrality on individual candidates or political parties. The American Legion by legal definition is non-partisan and supports only issues which impact your Four Pillars.

“The American Legion shall be absolutely nonpolitical and shall not be used for the dissemination of partisan principles nor for the promotion of the candidacy of any person seeking public office or preferment.”

- *American Legion Constitution*  
*Article II, Section 2*

## Reminder: Veterans Assistance Day slated for May

Has your squadron set a date yet in May to observe National Veterans Assistance Day?

Ever since the S.A.L. first created its National Veterans Assistance Day in 2008, the pages of this newsletter have been filled with photos and stories of Sons doing special projects to benefit our veterans during the month of May. Even though the very foundation of the S.A.L. is built on service to those who have served in military uniforms, the idea of picking one special day each year to underscore our support seemed especially important.

It's no coincidence that May 16 was originally chosen as the target date for this event. The third Saturday of May is Armed Forces Day in the U.S. While it's always handy to have a specific target date for any official activity, squadrons throughout the Sons are welcome to choose any day during the month of May on which to carry out one or more good deeds for veterans.

It's not unusual for squadrons to look around and find disabled veterans who could use some repair work done inside their house or out in their yard. Some squadrons have used this as an opportunity to conduct a luncheon for a group of veterans or have an organized outing, like a picnic or a road trip to a ball game.

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*As part of this year's Washington Conference, Commander Kevin Collier and S.A.L. National officers placed a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns in Arlington National Cemetery.*



# Perpetuating our Priceless Heritage

Sons from *Mountain, PA Squadron 781* held a Christmas raffle this year that benefitted a pair of area food banks. Each received a check for more than \$1,000. In the past year the squadron has donated close to \$7,000 toward programs benefitting veterans, children and the community. The guys will be holding a car show and auto swap meet this summer. They're also active in their local VA hospital. **(Right)**

It's quite a compliment that the Sons of *Osmond, NE Squadron 326* can hold a holiday fundraising event in a town of 700 that brings in more than \$10,000 each year. It's called a "Christmas Wishes" program that provides a little extra money for families that need it and also honors veterans.

Sons in *Gladstone, MI Squadron 71* made a \$100 **(Above Right)** The pantry and Gladstone's Legion Family have a strong relationship. When the pantry burned down back in 2001, it operated out of the local Legion post for two years while a new facility was being constructed.

Folks who live

around Winona, MN know they can drop off tattered flags at their local American Legion post and Sons from *Winona, MN Squadron 9* will take care of things. The squadron has held two public flag retirement ceremonies and a handful of private ceremonies this year, honorably destroying more than 400 U.S. flags. **(Right)**

The oldest public cemetery in Delaware County, PA has a new flag pole thanks in part to the ef-



forts of the Sons of *Glenolden, PA Squadron 761*. Many Civil War veterans and early pioneer settlers are buried in Graceland Cemetery located near Philadelphia.

Members of *Sault Ste. Marie, MI Squadron 3* can sit out on the deck of the post and watch as ships pass through locks that connect two great lakes. Or, they can have as much fun as this squadron member who played Santa Clause at a local school right before Christmas. **(Left)**

Hey – they have Santa in California, too! Here he is arriving just in time for the *Colton, CA Squadron 155* children's



Homeless veterans benefitted from a winter coat drive organized this year by **Lewisburg, PA Squadron 182**. Squadron members coordinated their efforts with the Lebanon Valley Veterans Hospital.

For the second consecutive year, **Grand Haven, MI Squadron 28** helped make the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays a bit brighter for others. Right before Thanksgiving, the squadron delivered 5,000 cans of soup and vegetables to Love, Inc. and The Salvation Army. Then right before Christmas, they delivered another 7,500 cans of fruits and soups.

Greensburg, KY is a town of about 3,000 people and a very active American Legion Family. **Greensburg, KY Squadron 124** has about 150 members who take great pride in their annual Holiday Benefit Event that provides gifts for veterans and disadvantaged families. The squadron has raised and donated more than \$23,000 in the past four years and is excited about doing even more now that the post is in a new home. (Left)



In the past three years, Sons from **Leesburg, VA Squadron 34** have managed to raise \$200,000 support of the EOD Warrior Foundation. This year's event was held over Veterans Day weekend and raised more than \$100,000. (Below)



The guys in **Lima, OH Squadron 96** rated a really nice newspaper article this year at Christmas time because of their successful Community Christmas Dinner. This was the 13th year the squadron has provided a bountiful, free holiday meal for veterans and others in town, at least 400 people in all. Squadron members have always dug into their own pockets to purchase



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## Squadrons from Page 5

food for the dinners. When word of their generosity spread, local businesses and others began chipping in donations of their own.

Congratulations to Ernest Brown, a 14 year old member of *West Philadelphia, PA Squadron 292*, who earned the rank of Eagle Scout at a Court of Honor convened in December. Ernest becomes the 40th Scout from his troop to earn the Eagle rank since it was organized in 1938. Perhaps more importantly, he is also his troop's first-ever African American Eagle Scout. To earn the highest rank in Scouting, Ernest did a service project called "Pack Away Homelessness." He collected 66 backpacks and filled them with over 700 essentials such as toothbrushes, toothpaste, wash cloths, hand sanitizer, etc. that he donated to the Philadelphia Veterans House. Ernest says he came up with the project because he wanted to give back to the men and women who protect this country and have nowhere to go. **(Right)**



Legion Family members are proud of their Sons in Worden, IL Squadron 564. It's a similar story in many squadrons across the country: a handful of S.A.L. members are always ready to help when they are asked. Back in October, the guys gave up their day to dig ditches and install a drainage system in the village cemetery. Weather that day wasn't very good but they still did an outstanding job and fulfilled a long overdue need.

## Collier from Page 2

Sons that it's "cool to be dual." Will you be the Top Recruiter this year?

Sons have plenty to do every year in May. At the same time we're celebrating Mother's Day, we find ourselves involved in activities connected to Memorial Day and, especially our own S.A.L. Veterans Assistance Day. It's a month when adjutants start filling out Consolidated Squadron Reports and we rush to get those last few Child Welfare donations collected and turned in by the May 31 deadline.

We should pay tribute to our veterans by celebrating our freedoms as well as the men and women who fought to secure them. They have given of themselves so that we all may live in peace and enjoy all the rights and privileges we have being an American Citizen. All veterans gave something of themselves;

some even gave all to ensure our blessings of life, liberty, freedom and the pursuit of happiness. Take a moment out of your day to say "Thank You!!" to our veterans.

Let's show The American Legion how we R.O.C.K.E.D. this year in our service for our veterans, our youth and our communities.

***Do you have a story to share?***

**National Update**

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## 30 years saving childrens' lives Room for growth in MySAL.org

The Children's Organ Transplant Association (COTA) was founded 30 years ago when residents of Bloomington, Indiana, rallied around a toddler who needed a life-saving liver transplant. In only a few weeks, the community raised \$100,000 to place the boy on the organ waiting list. But the child died before an organ was found. Those community volunteers, along with his parents, turned tragedy into triumph by using the funds they raised to help other transplant families. That was the beginning of COTA, and those volunteers were our first Miracle Makers.

Since that time COTA, with the help of The American Legion Family, has assisted thousands of children and young adults by helping to raise funds for transplant-related expenses. Extensive volunteer networks across the nation are working to ensure that no child or young adult needing an organ or tissue transplant is excluded from a transplant waiting list due to a lack of funds.

Sadly, 22 people die each day waiting for an organ transplant. Every 10 minutes, someone is added to the national transplant waiting list. One organ donor can save eight lives. COTA is asking everyone within The Legion Family to register to be a donor by going to *donatelifenet* where each state's registry can be found.

MySAL.org debuted in October of 2013 as a secure portal that allows squadron adjutants to access important and extremely helpful day-to-day membership tools. It links local squadrons directly to the computers at National Headquarters. The number of squadron adjutants using MySAL.org has doubled in the past two years, but there is still a great deal of room for more growth. Currently, just over 1,100 adjutants are registered to use the service. That's about 25 percent of all squadrons in the organization.

The service is free. Every squadron in the S.A.L. is eligible to register one individual to access MySAL.org. Once logged in, the features that can be accessed allow that individual to view and edit squadron membership data (CSV file format allows users to work with data in other applications such as Microsoft Excel and Access), generate reports, conduct membership database searches and much more.

One new feature that has been added is access to an electronic copy of the Consolidated Squadron Report Form.

"You don't have to be the Squadron Adjutant to get access to the system," say Joe Gallagher, Deputy Director of Information Technology for The American Legion. "But in many Squadrons, the Adjutant is the guy who does most of the paperwork involving membership, so it just makes sense that he would be the one with access. It's completely up to the Squadron and its Legion Post to choose the one person who is authorized."

It's easy to get signed up to use MySAL.org. The first step is to go to the site and print the form on the entry portal. That form must be signed by, both, the S.A.L. squadron and American Legion post adjutants. The form is then faxed, mailed or e-mailed to National Headquarters where it will be checked and processed. Once a squadron adjutant (or whomever) has logged into the system, he can change his password to whatever he wants. For security purposes, passwords must be changed every six months thereafter.

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### Veterans *from Page 3*

Although most National Veterans Assistance Day activities continue to go unreported, some squadron adjutants have remembered to keep track and include their efforts on the annual Consolidated Squadron Report Form. As numbers grow, the real payoff will be in the knowledge that Sons have found yet another effective way to say "Thank you!" to those whose service provided their eligibility in The Legion Family.

# The Sons of The American Legion

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## Make plans now for National Convention

*By Jon Coakley II  
Nat'l Convention Chairman*

Planning is well underway for the 45th Annual National Convention of the Sons of The American Legion. Sons will gather in Cincinnati this year and hold their convention on August 26, 27 and 28.

As always, there are fun opportunities for those who arrive early and stay after the official meetings. Cincinnati and surrounding Ohio River communities are filled with facilities and events that will appeal to all members of any family.

An unusual golf outing will be held on Thursday morning, August 25 at the Stittwood Country Club in Mason Ohio. Golfers won't need to bring their clubs. The course is suitable for a nine iron or a pitching wedge, which will be provided. Breakfast and lunch will be served. Those who participate are encouraged to sponsor individual holes. Monies collected during pre-convention golf tournaments in recent years have benefitted the CWF.

A Thursday evening dinner is planned at **Mason, OH American Legion Post 194**, home of Past Honorary National Commander Pat Shea. A full course of homemade pizza will be available starting at

5:00pm.

Convention delegates and their families will be welcome to attend an event on Friday evening at **Milford, OH American Legion Post 450**. Details are still being finalized but initial plans include serving Cincinnati's famous Skyline Chili as well as Mettwurst and Bratwurst and more. There will also be live entertainment. Transportation plans are in the works.

Information about additional activities and specifics about the convention itself will be available in the summer edition of this newsletter. Details will also be made available and updated on the S.A.L. national web site.