SONS OF THE AMERICAN LEGION

A newsletter of Sons of The American Legion

THE MILLENNIUM

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Top Ten Detachments Membership Percentage

1.	Hawaii	91.79%
2.	South Dakota	80.15%
3.	Wisconsin	79.44%
4.	South Carolina	75.82%
5.	Iowa	72.70%
6.	Louisiana	72.34%
7.	Montana	71.98%
8.	Maryland	71.98%
9.	Illinois	71.56%
10.	Puerto Rico	70.00%

Statistics as of 02 January 2025

BE THE ONE

Happy 2025!
Inside this Month's Newsletter

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Ohio: The Party Before the Game

Sons on Social Media: Snapshots of the SAL at work over the Holidays

National Reports: VCF and Membership, Membership, Membership!

Wisconsin: Welcoming a Hero Home

Freezin' for a Reason

Joe Guidice (NY): National Publicity & Media Communication Commission Vice Chairman

Detachment of New York raises $66,481.37 for NY VA centers and Hope For Warriors

Submitted Photo: Detachment of NY

Every spring, the Detachment of New York, along with the Department of New York American Legion Auxiliary, runs a state-wide Walk A Thon Campaign. This year all of the proceeds benefitted the 13 VA Medical Centers, five New York state veterans homes, and Hope For Warriors. Each year since its inception, the program has grown and set a new fundraising record. This year's total donations hit a record-high at $66,481.37, surpassing last year's total by over $9,450.

Led by SAL Chairman PNC Christopher Cerullo and ALA Chairperson Marie Santacroce, the program asks squadrons, units and posts to either hold a traditional Walk A Thon in their community or raise funds by selling "Walk A Thon Boots" cut-outs in their communities and to their families, friends, and Legion families. The "Boots" are something similar to the shamrocks or hearts that are often seen near the checkout lines in stores. A person makes a donation in any amount (the suggested donation is $5), writes their name on the Boots flyer, and the flyer is then displayed. Many New York Legion posts are now wallpapered each spring with the Boots cut-outs for the duration of the fundraiser. When the fundraising period is over, squadrons and units send in a check to their department office, where the funds are totaled and then the individual checks are distributed to members in the fall to present at facilities in their local areas. This year, the VA Medical Centers and veterans homes in New York state are each being presented with a check for $1,850 from the Detachment of New York, plus the Hope For Warriors Foundation will be receiving $33,000 from the Department of New York Auxiliary. The VA centers are able to use the money for anything that directly benefits the veterans in the facilities.

Submitted Photo: Detachment of NY

The Boots cut-outs are available to the membership online, along with all of the other forms needed to run the Walk A Thon and flyers to explain the program. New York's detachment officers and district commanders along with other members hand deliver the checks to the VA staff often accompanied by Auxiliary members and Legionnaires. Pictures from the check presentations are featured in the Detachment of New York's newsletter, "The Liberty."

"For my first time being Detachment Walk A Thon chairman, I found it very exciting to see where all this money came from. Auxiliary units, squadrons, Riders, and Legion posts. Some of the stories are so great and being the 2025 chairman once again I hope that these stories continue!" said PNC Christopher Cerullo. "Don't just mail in the check, tell your local members how and why you raise this money and how they can be a part of it, too. They can go beyond the Legion post - they can go to their workplace, they can go to their families and friends, too. I know with the help that we had during this past year, 2025 is going to be an outrageous year for the Walk A Thon."

Russell "Rusty" Myers III (NJ), Editor, "The Millennium"

Editorial: Season of Giving

In putting together "The Millennium", I usually scour the internet and social media to see what the individual squadrons are doing throughout the country. Many of you report what you are doing to local media, or put pictures of what you've done up on Facebook … which is why social media is such a powerful tool, as it has such a large reach. Even if —as my teenagers tell me—Facebook is for "old people"….

In any event, this month's research was outrageously easy because there was so much content out there.

Sons of The American Legion from across the detachments, along with their Legion Family counterparts, went over the top doing good things this past month. Between toy drives, presenting major donations, spending Christmas with our vets at veterans homes, hosting Santa for kids, and of course Wreaths Across America, we as Sons go into overdrive doing good work over the holidays. We should all be proud—**you** as an organization truly turn it into a ***Season of Giving.***

My home squadron did a program with the same name last year—where we made substantive donations to a whole bunch of charities and programs, some of which qualified us for Past National Commander (PNC) "JR" Hall's "Four Pillars Award." PNC Hall, when asked on background about his hallmark program, said that "...the challenge was a way of getting our members to recognize and support all Four Pillars that the American Legion Family were built on." He made note that they received more money from smaller squadrons—and in his program alone, 128 Squadrons from 33 Detachments receiving the award.

My point being that we as Sons—in squadrons large and small (and it seems like from many more smaller ones) who normally go big in running programs, this year over the holidays went into overdrive supporting those Four Pillars. All of you should be proud—especially those smaller squadrons—that **you are making a difference**. We try to give you a sampling of that from around the country every month in this newsletter. So enjoy reading what your fellow Sons are doing, and perhaps find inspiration in some of what others are doing and adapt it to what you do at your home squadron.

THE MILLENNIUM

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All information must be submitted no later than 12:00 noon the twentieth of each month and must be made electronically by emailing the editor at rusty.myers@ymail.com

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SONS OF THE AMERICAN LEGION

ANEC Mike Pook (WI), Staff Contributor "The Millennium"

"Mentoring Moments"

At SAL meetings, anything covering your head should be removed and placed over your heart during the prayer. When wearing the SAL cover, the SAL Emblem is placed over your heart with your hand placed inside of your cover.

Jeff Thorne Photography Photo: *Det. Commander Shane Lamer (SD) at the 2024 National Convention*

Anthony W. Wright (PA), National Adjutant

Volunteering Time and Talent

The American Legion is an organization that holds a special place in the hearts of many Americans. Since its founding in 1919, the American Legion has been dedicated to assisting veterans, their families, and the community. As we reflect on the sacrifices made by these brave men and women, we need to renew our pledge to support the American Legion in its mission. By doing so, we can ensure that those who have served our country are provided with the care and resources they deserve.

One of the key ways in which we can assist the American Legion is by volunteering our time and talents. Many American Legion posts rely on volunteers to help with various events, programs, and fundraisers. By giving our time, we can help to ensure that the American Legion remains a vital resource for veterans in need. Whether it is organizing a fundraiser, providing transportation to veterans in need, or simply lending a listening ear, there are countless ways in which we can make a difference.

In addition to volunteering, we can also support the American Legion through donations and fundraising efforts. The American Legion relies on donations to fund its programs and services for veterans. By making a financial contribution, we can help to ensure that the American Legion can continue its important work. Whether it is a one-time donation or a recurring contribution, every dollar makes a difference. By renewing our pledge to assist the American Legion in whatever way we can, we can honor the sacrifices made by our veterans and show our gratitude for their service to our country.

As we kick off another year, it's important to take a moment to reflect on our purpose and intentions. Whether it's personal goals, career aspirations, or simply wanting to positively impact the world, having a clear sense of purpose can help guide us in the right direction. Remembering our purpose can motivate us, keep us focused during challenging times, and ultimately lead to a more fulfilling life. So, as we start fresh in this new year, let's not lose sight of why we do what we do and strive to stay true to our core values and beliefs. Here's to a year filled with purpose, growth, and endless possibilities!

Daryl VerStreate, Jr (NY), Chairman

National Membership and Squadron Activities Committee

I want to congratulate and personally thank all members for the work they contributed to Membership and Squadron Activities over the past year. You have all set records since the founding of the Sons of The American Legion, and you broke milestones. PNC Cliff Smith set an all-time increase over the previous year in 2002 with an increase of 18,947 members - no short feat to say the least.

While we have not beaten Commander Cliff Smith, we did obtain second place for the highest increase over the previous year … a total increase of 16,336 as of December 22nd. Just shy of 2,921 of breaking the TEAM 400K Goal. We are currently 4,492 members ahead of last year.

We should not forget that numbers are always talked about. Remember that we would not have those numbers or membership without the squadron activities. I encourage everyone to reflect on what they do at the Squadron, Detachment, Regional, and National Levels. **How can we leave the organization and your position in a better place? What kind of legacy will you leave behind? How can we get back to the basics, attract new members, and be a focal point in the community?**

As a member of the Sons of The American Legion do you have a success story? Is there something or some way The American Legion family has set you up for success and helped you and or your family to succeed in your own lives? I would like to hear those stories if you are willing to share them with the entire membership of the Sons of The American Legion. When asked why I should belong, we belong to support The American Legion Pillars and our Veterans, why not also share with potential members your personal success stories? Show how The American Legion has affected you and your family. Thank You for all that you do.

Expand your knowledge of the nation's largest veterans service organization online!
Take The American Legion Extension Institute's Basic Training Course
https://register.legion.org/alei

Todd Bidlack (OH),
Detachment 2nd Vice Commander

The Party Before the Game

Every year Squadron 541 in Continental, Ohio hosts a charity auction and music night called "The Party Before the Game", referring to the night before the Ohio State/Michigan football game. The party is always the night after Thanksgiving. The event was born of an idea to have a pregame party because many diehard OSU/Michigan fans like to watch the game without interruption. We decided to have a party before the game rather than a "party for the game", so members and guests could do their own thing on gameday. It started as a DJ/Karaoke night several years ago. After the first or second year, we had some signs that were donated by a distributor that delivers to our Post Canteen. We found that these signs were worth something to our members and guests. We began to designate a Legion Charity for each of these "auction items" and it grew from there. After about the third year, one of our Squadron Past Commanders had an idea. People were being so generous with their money that he decided to auction off 1 can of beer ... he chose Stroh's. The single can amassed over $500 for CWF. Each year the event continues to grow with dozens of items being auctioned off. Some of the items are donated by our Auxiliary who designated one of their charities as the beneficiary.

This year we were able to raise over $9,000 to donate to local and Legion Charities. The can, which is always auctioned off at the end of the evening, was designated for Christmas for Kids and sold to the highest bidder for just under $4,000.

Commander Denny Ordway, Squadron 541 (Continental, OH) , and Todd Bidlack, SAL 541's Adjutant, present the donation to Packs for Pirates

Our local charities include Packs for Pirates; an organization that sends food home with school children who may not otherwise get meals while not in school. Continental Blue and Gold Club; Athletic Boosters for the High School (the only school system in the small community). Continental Senior Connection; a new organization in our community for our older citizens. Continental Fire Department, Continental Parents of Pirates; our local PTA organization; Continental Lions Club, Continental High School Cheerleaders, Continental Police Department, and Continental High School Band Boosters. The Continental Sons of The American Legion, part of the Post 541 American Legion Family, are a very active squadron made up of over 230 members and donate over $30,000 annually to local and Veteran Organizations.

Facebook.com

South Dakota Sons help feed students after school is out

Squadron 71 Adjutant Jace Thomas (Battle Mountain, SD) presented a check to Hot Springs Elementary School for their school food program. The school hands out 92 bags weekly on Thursdays to students, so those kids have enough food for meals over the weekend. The school has a grocery store that serves parents of elementary students that provides extra meals for the week if needed, with cereals, spaghetti with meat sauce, soups, and lots of vegetables. They also provide three holiday meals for families that can't afford a Christmas, Thanksgiving, or Easter meal.

Facebook photo

SONS OF THE AMERICAN LEGION

NEXT MEETING JANUARY 21ST

NATIONAL MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

JANUARY 2025

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RENEW NOW!

2024 MEMBERSHIP CARDS ARE NOW EXPIRED.

SCAN ME

LEGION.ORG/SAL-RENEW

Randy Timms (WI), Staff Contributor "The Millennium"

Welcoming a Hero Home

On September 27, 1944, an Army Air Corps B24-H Liberator was returning from its mission when it was hit by hostile forces and shot down over Kassel, Germany. Several crew members were able to bail out, but later reported they did not see the 20 year-old tail gunner SSGT Ralph H. Bode. It was uncertain at that time whether SSGT Bode had been able to leave the plane.

Photo, Sturino Funeral Home: SSGT Ralph H. Bode, USAAC

The downed Liberator was discovered in 1951 and human remains and articles of clothing were also found. Then, in late 2023, due to improvements in DNA identification and other modern miracles, some of those remains were confirmed to be SSGT Bode.

On September 20, 2024, SSGT Ralph H. Bode was returned to Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He was flown into Billy Mitchell International Airport and met by a niece he had never met, along with her husband. Also awaiting his long overdue arrival were a full military honor guard, numerous police, and many others to pay their respects.

As the First District SAL Commander and Legion Rider, it was my honor to help in arranging just some of the details for the motorcycle escort from the airport to the funeral home in Racine, WI.

Submitted Photo: Honorguard at Graceland Cemetery in Racine, WI

The Sons of The American Legion were there to show support and to honor SSGT Bode's service and sacrifice. We were blessed to have roughly 40 motorcycles participate in this 18 mile escort. Members from the American Legion Riders, the Patriot Guard Riders, the Combat Veteran Riders, and the VFW Riders all came together to insure SSGT Bode would be well cared for on his second to last journey. We were also joined by Candace Rothering, the Legion's First District Commander, and Corey Doehrmann, the State Director of the American Legion Riders, together with numerous mounted police officers and squads.

Submitted Photo: Members of the motorcycle escort, among others, at Graceland Cemetery in Racine, WI

During the escort, it was heartwarming to see one Fire Department displaying the American Flag high above the highway as we drove by. Numerous other departments stood along the roadside paying tribute to this soldier. Several smaller groups of citizens stood at driveways and parking lots with hands over hearts and a few salutes as we drove past.

SSGT Bode was buried on Friday, September 27, 2024. He will be in his final resting place next to his parents, who never received the closure they so richly deserved.

Once again, the Sons of The American Legion and all the groups that provided the initial escort were there to escort him from the funeral home to the cemetery. How fitting that exactly 80 years to the day we are able pay tribute to this young man. And, at the exact time his B 24 Liberator came down to earth, a military fly-over will mark this solemn occasion.

After all this time, not many family members remain, though his niece and her husband were there to say goodbye. And we all had an opportunity to be reminded of the sacrifices paid in full by so many of our military.

Being a Son of The American Legion is an honor. Performing acts of kindness like this, being able to present ourselves as a living testament of the sacrifice, courage and honor of those that served is indeed a very high honor. I would encourage every member – whether Legion, SAL, Auxiliary or Rider - to consider how you can make a difference.

Rest in Peace SSGT Ralph H. Bode. Home at last.

LEGIONTOWN USA

Write up your story, and tell the world what you're doing! Submit a release with photos to Legiontown, USA.

Casey Hanson (SD), VCF AdHoc Committee Vice Chairman

VCF

The Veterans and Children Foundation (VCF) AdHoc Committee has been hard at work on trying to promote the program and raise awareness for National Commander Navarrete's Challenge. While we know what the VCF does, we thought it would be good to hear first hand from a Veteran Service Officer on how the VCF has impacted them and played a role in their job. When Courtney Steffen, a past VSO for South Dakota was asked on some key points for the Veterans and Children Foundation, she wanted it known that the VCF funds the training for the VSO's, both online and in person … over 5,000 VSO's trained in 8 years. She also mentioned the VCF is responsible for the Temporary Financial Assistance, which grants families $1,500 in times of need.

During her time as VSO, Courtney has seen first hand the positive impacts of The Veterans and Children Foundation. She stated that "the training I received from Bergmann & Moore was top notch. I was a better service officer because of it, and because I had the training in person, I had an incredible network of other VSO's to reach out to if needed for advice or support." The amount of good things that come from the Veterans and Children Foundation are unimaginable. Without the VCF and its support, our Veteran Service Officers wouldn't have that continual training that is crucial. The VA law is constantly changing, Congress passes new laws, and court cases can mean current laws get interpreted differently. Having VCF support VSOs with that up-to-date training keeps us at the forefront, helping Veterans navigate their claims to the finish. Without it, you fall behind fast!

With hearing firsthand how the VCF helps our veterans and children, now you know what your donations go to when you help support the VCF. Without your donations and support, our Veteran Service Officers will fall behind on the training they need to properly represent our veterans; children's homes would not be stabilized, and our veterans would not have the advocacy needed to resolve their claims. This is why we encourage our Sons of The American Legion members to donate $1 per member, and have each Detachment try and raise a minimum of $9,100 to try and achieve National Commander Navarrete's goal of $500,000 for the VCF. Remember, it's not a goal, it's our mission! Support the Veterans and Children Foundation.

Want to donate to VCF?

https://mylegion.org/PersonifyEbusiness/Give/Donate-Online/Donate-Now?CashProductId=134419

Correction: *In the December 2024 issue, Millennium credits author Casey Hanson as the chairman of the VCF Committee; he is vice-chairman. The VCF Chairman for 2024-25 is Jeffrey Trout (IL).*

NVC Harl "Butch" Ray (IL) Contributor, "The Millennium"

Series: What's in a Name?

Fellow Sons, here is article # 4 of "What's in a Name?" We must always remember that we stand upon the sacrifice of those veterans from which our eligibility has come.

AMERICAN LEGION POST # 21 – Moorhead, Minnesota

Moorhead American Legion Post #21 is named after a local WWI hero, Melvin E. Hearl. Melvin Elmer Hearl was born in 1895 and was raised in Moorhead, Minnesota. He was better known to his close friends and family as "Babe, the boy with a smile." They said his smile was contagious and uplifting. He carried that smile throughout high school at Moorhead High, his years as a backfield member of Litz Rusness,' and throughout his career as a member of the United States Military.

Although Melvin enlisted into the US Military voluntarily, it wasn't until the summer of 1918, when the draft was called up, that Melvin joined with the other hundreds of young Moorhead soldiers. Melvin was sent to Camp Grant in Rockford, Ill, and Camp Upton, New York, for training.

In September of 1918, hundreds of young soldiers, including Melvin, were given their first assignment by receiving notice they would be stationed in France. According to letters sent from Melvin to his mother back in Moorhead, Minnesota, Melvin was "fine as ever." His humble nature and positive attitude constantly reminded his mother to "look on the bright side of life and trust in God." Even at the time of his death in early November 1918, Melvin still had hope in his heart and a smile upon his face.

Melvin was injured by shell fragments that damaged his stomach and lower limbs on November 1, 1918, while in his dugout in France. He was treated and sent by ambulance to a nearby hospital, still conscious. Although his spirits were high and his smile was big, Melvin Elmer Hearl passed away a few days later. The exact date of his death is still uncertain, but one thing is for sure - his smile touched the lives of many including family, friends, and his comrades.

On April 27th, 1921, the Moorhead American Legion recognized and honored PVT Melvin E. Hearl by choosing his name for their Post. To date, Melvin E. Hearl Post #21 still strives to honor Melvin and the other soldiers who lost their lives in conflicts all over the world, defending the United States of America by continuing to touch the lives of many through a positive attitude and a warm smile.

This series will over time tell brief stories of some of these posts that honor our legacy. If your post home has a story to share about the veteran for which it is named, please email NVC Ray at butch.ilsal@gmail.com.

The Sons On Social Media: A snapshot of the SAL around the country

Squadron 17 (Shipman, VA) Bugler Mason Bryant on Wreaths Across America Day

Squadron 408 (Derby, KS) welcomes aboard Ol' Saint Nick as a new member.

The Detachment of Indiana spending the holiday with our vets at the Indiana Veterans Home

Squadron 581 (Columbia, IL) handing out to veteran families 200 hams at JB Patriot Pantry

American Legion Post 282 Family (Woodsboro, MD) running a Children's Christmas Party, making a donation to the Commander's Playground Project, supporting building a playground for the Southern Maryland Youth Camp

Squadron 71 (Battle Mountain, SD) participating in a Flag Retirement Ceremony

Unit and Squadron 57 (Fairbanks, AK) made donations to the new Warming Center of Fairbanks

Squadron 503 (Calabash, NC) present $1,000 checks to the Wings Ministry and to the Jessie Mae Monroe Elementary School. This is a twice annual fundraising program run by the SAL to support the food insecurity programs of the schools.

Squadron 155 (Colton, CA) working a Christmas event at US VET'S Homeless Village at March AFB

Squadron 113 (Frenchtown, NJ) making their annual donation to their post's Holiday Fund

The Sons of New Port St. Richey, FL helping to treat the residents of The Pavilion of New Port Richey , a retirement & assisted living facility, to a Christmas Celebration.

The Detachment of Maryland, as they do each year, sponsoring the Special Olympics Maryland Bowling Tournament

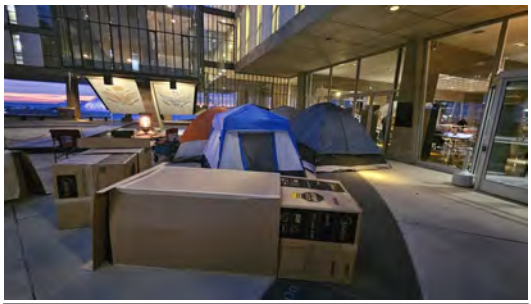
ANEC Mike Pook (WI), Staff Contributor "The Millennium"

Freezin' for a Reason

The night of December 6, 2024 in Milwaukee, WI was 24 degrees with little wind. 18 people choose to camp and sleep outside in either cardboard boxes or camping tents instead of sleeping in their warm beds at home. These people were both males and females of varies ages. Many, but not all of them, are members of the American Legion Family. They came together to "Support the Cause" as Andy Werner of the Sons of The American Legion (SAL) Squadron 67 of Lake Mills, WI put it. In Wisconsin, several times a years, the event is called "Freezing for a Reason." These campouts occur throughout the state to raise awareness for veteran homelessness and mental health issues. They generally occur during the colder months.

Dual member Joe Leone (l) accepts a $10,000 donation from Co-Coordinator SAL Dave Hodgson (r)

The December 6th event lasted for 24 hours at Milwaukee's War Memorial, centered around the Eternal Flame. It was sponsored by the Department of Wisconsin; the three coordinators were Joe Leone, (dual member) who is the Department of Wisconsin Membership Chair, Gene Hembrook, TAL Fundraising Committee Vice Chair, and Dave Hodgson, SAL Detachment Vice Commander.



Submitted Photo: The camp, with tents and boxes

During the event several resource tables were set up offering support and resources for veterans and their families. Bobbie Zerfas is the Assistant Program Manager of the Homeless Prevention Program at the Milwaukee VA, and explains that the mission of the VA homeless programs is to help prevent and end homelessness among veterans. They seek to empower veterans to lead their own recovery process towards independence and a full life. The National Call Center for Homeless Veterans provides 24 hour 7 days a week staff coverage. (1-877-4AID VET) … contact your local VA to find out what programs are available in your area.

Submitted Photo

Detachment of Wisconsin SAL Vice Commander Dave Hodgson has experience with coordinating "Freezing for a Reason" events, as his home Squadron 522 in Hubertus along with the SAL 2nd District hosted this event a few years ago. Back then, Joe Leone was very active within the Sons, and SAL 522 was his home squadron. It was Dave and Gene who put the boxes together for sleeping in. Matt Seidl stopped by and used packing tape to extend the box length, so this six foot tall man could sleep. He choose to sleep underneath an outdoor staircase. He was hoping the structure would help to keep the elements out of his cardboard box.

Dual member Joe Leone collected the donations, and said by the end of December 7th it had taken in about $27,000. He further said that their goals were for Legion Family participation to bring more awareness to the community about homeless veterans and to raise awareness that veterans are in need of mental health care. Three major news stations covered the event, and Joe was on camera saying "We are sleeping in these boxes tonight to bring awareness to homeless veterans and homeless people who sleep outside, irrespective of what the elements are. It can be very brutal! We are trying to something. We are trying to make a difference."

Russell "Rusty" Myers III (NJ), Editor, "The Millennium"

Washington Conference

The 65th Annual Washington Conference will be held 22-26 February 2025, at the Washington Hilton Hotel, 1919 Connecticut Ave, Washington DC. The Annual Washington Conference brings together Legionnaires for critical discussions with lawmakers, informative sessions with members of Congress and VA leadership, and insights on legislative priorities from the National Commander.

The Sons of The American Legion participate in the weekend as well, laying wreaths throughout Washington, DC "... to show our respect for the sacrifices made by our nation's military in the defense of liberty and freedom", writes SAL National Legislative Commission Chairman Bernie Kessler (OH).

National Commander Joseph Navarrete (NM) will be placing a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington National Cemetery on Sunday 23 February 2025 at 1:15pm. The ceremony is open to anyone to observe, and members and their families are encouraged to attend.

"When we go up to Arlington and we lay that wreath its extremely moving", noted leading candidate for SAL National Commander Bill Clancy at the Fall NEC meeting. "But what's even more moving is if you can do that with your children or grandchildren. It's the best family vacation … your kids will really benefit from it."

Following the Arlington event, participants will bus over to the National Mall to place as detachments wreaths at the Vietnam Wall and World War II Memorial.

If you are interested in participating in this event, reach out to your detachment leadership for more information on how to register.

Editor's Photo: Members from the New Jersey Squadron 105 at Arlington National Cemetery

Taps: PNC John T. Dietz (KY)

"This moment is sacred with the almost visible presence of the one who has gone before. Let us not enshroud his memory with mournful tears, but let us remember with solemn pride his service to God and country."

-SAL Manual of Ceremony and Prayer

John Thomas Dietz, 59, passed onto Squadron Everlasting on December 6, 2024. He was born February 17, 1965. He was a long time member and Past National Commander of the Sons of the American Legion (1995-96). John was preceded by parents: Fred & Betty Dietz Jr., sister: Dianne Dietz, brothers: Fred Dietz III & Jerry Dietz. Survived by: nieces & nephews: Michelle Dietz, Chelsea Stacy, Jake Dietz, Eric Dietz, Christine Dietz, Bryan Morgan, and numerous family and friends.

Past National Commander Joe Mayne (MN) wrote a eulogy for PNC Dietz, with excerpts as below:

"The depth of his knowledge and the heights of his expectations were both dizzying. He had a working knowledge of the SAL membership levels and history of each of Detachment (state). He also knew how the Departments worked. Often better than the SAL representatives from that state. He expected you to know it as well.

He had a relentless drive for excellence. Not for show but because he knew his efforts directly impacted our ability to help Children and Veterans and their families.

John was truly a Pillar. In the sense that you don't always think of a load bearing pillar in a building. You walk past it daily and it becomes a fixture. You don't ponder on what its purpose is. Or the load it carries with quite strength. The builders used it to support the building. And you are able to function and thrive because of it. "

Wreaths Across America

American Unity on Display on Wreaths Across America Day

National Wreaths Across America Day took place on 16 December 2024 at 4,909 participating locations nationwide. Millions of volunteers — a third of whom were children — remembered our nation's heroes as they said their names out loud, with the placement of over three million sponsored veterans' wreaths. At Arlington National Cemetery, over 32,000 volunteers helped place wreaths at more than 260,000 gravesites.

"The wreaths placed today are a catalyst; they bring together communities, families and strangers to learn about those who have served and sacrificed for our freedom," said Karen Worcester, executive director of Wreaths Across America. "Thank you to all the volunteers across the country for their gift of time and for living the year-round mission to Remember, Honor, Teach every day."

For centuries, fresh evergreens have been used to symbolize honor and a living tribute renewed annually. Wreaths Across America believes the tradition represents a living memorial that honors veterans, active-duty military, and their families. When volunteers say the name of a veteran aloud while placing a wreath, it ensures they live on in our hearts and memories and are always remembered.

"In the spirit of the upcoming theme for 2025, it was wonderful to see communities all across the country come together for a common cause in unity to keep moving forward," added Worcester.

Wreaths Across America would like to thank the communities, dedicated volunteers, and generous sponsors for supporting those who have protected our freedom. Each person has played a part in the year-long mission to Remember the fallen, Honor those who serve, and Teach the next generation the value of freedom.

For more information about the year-long mission and ways to get involved in your own community, please visit www.wreathacrossamerica.org. **Next year, National Wreaths Across America Day will be held on Saturday, December 13, 2025.**

SAL's around the country on Wreaths Across America Day

Sons of District 12 in Pennsylvania at St. Mary's Cemetery in Hanover, PA.

Squadron 96 (VT) at Bennington Vermont Veterans Home

Squadron 186 (Little River SC) at North Myrtle Beach Memorial Gardens

Carl Nelson Squadron 324's Rory Cain holding the SAL colors at Osseo Cemetery in Wisconsin

Squadron 105, Belleville, NJ

Wreaths Across America at the Passaic County Vietnam Veteran Wall

Inscribed on the memorial are the words ***"FREEDOM IS NOT FREE … YOU WILL NOT BE FORGOTTEN".***

On no day is this more impactful then on Wreaths Across America Day, when the American Legion Family of Post 105 in Belleville – veterans, Sons, and Auxiliary members – participated in the annual nation-wide event honoring our deceased serviceman by placing wreaths at graves throughout New Jersey. One location which the group from Post 105 honored this year was the Passaic County Vietnam Veteran Wall in Wayne.

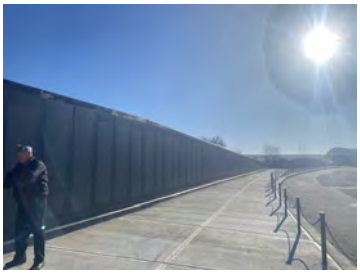
Submitted Photo: SAL 105 3rd Vice Cmdr Steve Donald

Nationwide, over 2 million wreaths are placed each year on Wreaths Across America Day, where their goal is "offer[ing] a small gesture of gratitude for the freedoms Americans enjoy".

Submitted Photo: Members of the 105 Family at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall

The 105 Family has been participating in the event held each year on the third Saturday of December since 2020, visiting Brigadier General William C. Doyle Cemetery in Wrightstown, NJ. This was the first year the group visited the Vietnam Veteran Wall in neighboring Wayne on the way down to Wrightstown.

"As the son of a Vietnam veteran, and growing up in the American Legion around Vietnam veterans, it was important to me personally that we visited this memorial", noted Sons of The American Legion (SAL) Detachment of NJ Adjutant Rusty Myers who organizes 105's participation in the event each year. "I had never been here before – I've only been to 'The Wall' in Washington, DC – and this site was equally moving. It was more emotional than I thought it would be."



The Passaic County Vietnam Veteran Wall is 368 feet long, and is an 80% size replica of the original in DC. The apex of the wall is nine-feet at the center – this is where the two wings of the wall meet, and those wings taper in height down to 2.5-feet at each end. The over 58,000 killed-in-action and missing-in-action serviceman are listed on the gloss black panels from the conflict in Southeast Asia that lasted from 1956-1975.

The only ones at the memorial when they visited at 9am on the 35 degree Saturday morning, the eight members from American Legion 105 visited the memorial, located at the Passaic County Public Safety Academy at 300 Oldham Road in Wayne, performing a ceremony. A brief prayer was recited, ending with "…we acknowledge in humble gratitude, those who sacrificed or who gave their life's blood to obtain and secure Liberty". Myers then placed the wreath, followed by a moment of silence and salute from the group.

American Legion Auxiliary (ALA) Unit 105 President Debbie Hall, a first time attendee to Wreaths Across America Day, walked away moved by the experience. "To see the names and realize how many men and women gave themselves to protect our country is something that can't be explained. It's emotional, heartwarming, and heartbreaking to know many died fighting to defend our freedom, and an honor that we are able to place a wreath in their memory."

Share with us what you are doing!

"The Millennium" is always looking for engaging content geared to the individual squadron member.

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Facebook.com

Florida's SAL District 16 is "Hero to a Child" and helps hurricane affected posts in their state

On 30 November, The Detachment of Florida's 16th District held their Fall Picnic at Post 125 in Gulfport, with beautiful weather and lots of Detachment and Department attendance.

This event was held to benefit the 16th District's charity "Hero to a Child", as well as to show support for Post 273 (Madeira Beach) & Post 158 (Treasure Island) which were decimated due Hurricane Helene.

Thanks to everyone who showed up to enjoy good food, support the charity, and enjoy the American Legion family and friendship.

Facebook photos

Facebook.com

Massachusetts Post Family holds program to highlight what The American Legion is

Facebook photos

In December, they kicked off a special twelve day series highlighting membership and why the public should join Cherry Valley American Legion Post 443 (Cherry Valley, MA). Over the next twelve days, they showcased the programs, events, and camaraderie that make the Legion Family so special.

Facebook.com

Virginia Post Family does good by rehabbing a veteran's house

The incredible volunteers from the American Legion Post 327 Family (Tidewater, VA) lend their hard work and dedication in helping clean up and tidy up the yard and house of one of our veterans.

"These individuals went above and beyond, not only showing up with tools in hand but also with unwavering patience and compassion", noted member Derrick Johnson on Facebook. "Their teamwork was truly inspiring as they worked through some challenges. You [they] exemplify what community service is all about—selfless service, dedication, and the ability to rise above any challenge with grace and determination. Your [their] support means the world to our veterans, and your [their] work today will make a lasting difference in this veteran's life."

Important Web Links

The National Public & Media Communications Committee has created this Important Web Links document for our members, as well as for all members of the American Legion Family, to use to get to some of our most important websites.

SAL National Web Site
https://www.legion.org/sons

Publications and Forms (SDR, Handbook, Awards and much more)
https://www.legion.org/about/american-legion-family/sons-of-the-american-legion/publications-and-forms

Subscribe to Newsletters (requires signing into MyLegion.org)
https://mylegion.org/PersonifyEbusiness/My-Account/Opt-In-Out

Newsletter Digital Archives
https://www.legion.org/library/258352/50-years-sons-american-legion-newsletters-now-available

Be The One
https://www.legion.org/betheone

Voter Voice
https://www.votervoice.net/AmericanLegion/home

Membership Reports
https://www.legion.org/about/american-legion-family/sons-of-the-american-legion/membership-reports

Future Meetings
https://www.legion.org/about/american-legion-family/sons-of-the-american-legion/sons-of-the-american-legion-meetings

Facebook photos

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