



National Convention Preview

NJ: Jersey Boys State, A Week That Changed My Future

Membership Resources

VA: SAL Honors America's 250th at Arlington

WI: ALF Dog Goes for a Ride

IL: News from The Prairie State

TN: Freedom Trail celebrating America's birthday

Remembering PNC Stillwell

Sons on Social: Snapshots from Around The Country

TCAVA: What to know



Top Ten Detachments 2026 Membership Percentage

1. Philippines 145.83%
2. Dist. Of Col. 135.96%
3. Utah 130.03%
4. Latin America 110.87%
5. South Dakota 108.62%
6. South Carolina 106.37%
7. Idaho 105.37%
8. New Hampshire 104.40%
9. France 104.19%
10. Wisconsin 104.02%

Statistics as of 29 July 2026, 105% Target date

BE THE ONE

www.legion.org—20 July 2026

Boys Nation 2026: Patriotism and Pride in the Nation's Capital

Weeks after America's 250th birthday, 100 rising high school senior boys from across the nation headed to the nation's capital to create their own nation of sorts.

As he stood on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, Tennessee's Charlie Russell said it was good to be in Washington to see "the good nationalism that comes from being proud of our country and having good conversations about policy."

The 80th session of American Legion Boys Nation began July 17 with the senators from 49 states — Hawaii does not have a Boys State program — and the District of Columbia arriving at the Arlington, Va., campus of Marymount University. There they were divided into two parties, the Federalists and the Nationalists, for a week in which they will engage in political discourse within the framework of a mock U.S. senate.

The Boys Nation senators joined their counterparts from American Legion Auxiliary Girls Nation on the National Mall Sunday night, posing for a picture on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial before fanning out to visit the Vietnam War Memorial, the Korean War Memorial, and other landmarks.

"Just being able to be in America's capital, especially 250 years after its founding, being able to see some of the main landmarks that make our country so great ... definitely means a lot to me," said Lincoln Laquidara, Pennsylvania's Nationalist senator who was sponsored to Keystone Boys State by Post 571 in Erie.



Facebook Photo

"The level of experience ... the schools they are bound for ... the stories—the kids here, these young men ... are exemplary."

-National Commander Bill Clancy via text at Boys Nation

"It's really incredible to see how far we've come as a nation, and it makes me really inspired to also be that change in the future," said Margaret Nunemaker, one of the Girls Nation senators from Ohio.

Closing the divide. The first Boys Nation senator to arrive on campus Friday morning was West Virginia Nationalist Amari Knights, who said his main goal for the "week that shapes a lifetime" was to find a way to bridge the gap when it comes to disagreements in the nation.

"Because any argument that you could point to about any hot topic debate, anything that gets remotely controversial, there's always two sides and then the gap in the middle. There's never any real attempts, at least in the general public, to reach an amenable agreement that is good

>>> **Continued on Page 2**

Boys Nation 2026*Continued from Page 1 >>>*

for everybody; it's always just like, 'We think we're right, and we have to prove you wrong,'" said Knights, who was sponsored to Mountaineer Boys State by Squadron 174 in Morgantown.

"So what I hope to accomplish at Boys Nation is either through legislation or just common practices, how we can start to talk to each other again, how we can repair and get back the ground that we've lost. And it comes from things like social media, things of that nature that feed into our own biases and give us what we want to hear. We've lost the ability to understand someone else's perspective and what someone else is, where they're coming from, why they're believing what they're believing and how



Facebook Photo

that affects what they're saying."

'Elite performers': By the time the final senator arrived on campus at dinner time Friday night, the brotherhood of Boys Nation 2026 was already forming. It's something that was reinforced by the messages this year's senators heard from alumni of the 2015 and 2016 sessions who visited the program on Saturday.

"What shaped the rest of my life, what has shaped every mode of my life since I left Boys Nation, was the relationships that I made with the gentlemen around me," 2015 alumnus Peter Hamilton told the senators. "One thing you'll realize as you get older is that being in the company of elite performers is naturally rare. ... This is an incredible opportunity to be surrounded by elite performers."

This is the second consecutive year that Boys Nation alumni from 10 years before have returned to the area for a reunion and a meeting with the senators from the current program. For 2016 Boys Nation senator Rob Pekarek, he said it was important to return to help impact the next generation.

"I think that it's really important that we as Americans and as patriotic Americans are giving back to the next generation because we've had so many before us that have given to us. So like when I was back at Boys Nation, class of 2016, we had counselors from the year or two before us. Having them mentor us and kind of pour into us and show us a path to go toward meant a lot to me and helped me chart my path forward," Pekarek said.

"The other thing is we need more patriotic young Americans to stand up and say, 'I do' in service academies, assume the highest roles of leadership, command, government, citizenship. So if I can be a part of helping mentor the next generation, that's something that's really important to me."

First elections. Prior to the alumni visit, the Boys Nation senators were officially sworn in by former National American Legion Legislative Chairman Matthew Shuman, who explained the meaning of the oath of office.

Then the senators voted in the first elections of the 2026 session. Georgia Federalist Brady Pace defeated North Carolina Federalist Krish Korrapati in the president pro tempore election, while Utah Nationalist John Alley Jr. won the secretary of the senate election over Arkansas Federalist Kemdi Ekeanyanwu.

"I served as the same position, president pro tempore, at Georgia Boys State. So being able to continue that work, being able to continue that journey, feeling very proud, feeling very happy, honoring the state, most of all, honoring the nation on its 250th year, I think this is very important," said Pace, who was sponsored to Georgia



Facebook Photo

Boys State by Rabun-Dodson-Pope Post 70 in Villa Rica. "These are the leaders, these are the people that are going to step in, these are the people who are going to be in charge, and being able to be a part of that charge and even be a part of some sort of change and presiding over it, I'm aghast. I mean honestly, it's just incredible."

Pace will oversee the senate until the vice president is elected and sworn in on Wednesday.

In his speech before the final vote in the secretary election, Alley, who was sponsored to Utah Boys State by Post 79 in Bountiful, mentioned the influence his father had on his life.

"My father served in the Air Force, he was in training in Pensacola and died on duty when my mom was pregnant with me. So it's just been me and her. His service in the military, everything he gave, has always driven me to be better, to do better for him. He sacrificed for me, and for our country, and I feel like I owe it to him to give it my all," Alley said after his election.



Legion.org Photo





**William "Bill" Clancy III (NY),
National Commander**

SAL Encouraged to Understand Support of TCAVA

Dear Sons of The American Legion members,

We have seen a lot of discussion and misinformation online about the Take Care of America's Veterans Act (TCAVA), which is a collection of more than 60 veteran-friendly bills.

I believe it is important that as Sons of The American Legion, we understand and acknowledge The American Legion's support of this vital legislation.

The American Legion, and by extension, the Legion Family, has long supported the veteran priorities which TCAVA will help address. Among those that resonate the most with me are:

- Expanded suicide prevention programs.
- Improved care of traumatic brain injuries.
- Faster and more accurate claims through the Department of Veterans Affairs.
- Relief for combat-injured retirees.
- Stronger support for family caregivers, and fairer treatment for surviving spouses.

All of these benefits, which are supported by American Legion resolutions, will be addressed through passage of TCAVA.

I would especially like to highlight the ways in which this important legislation helps families, survivors and caretakers of our veterans. TCAVA includes the Love Lives On Act, which removes the disqualifier for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) and Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) benefits for spouses who remarry before the age of 55.

The legislation also raises DIC 3% over the cost-of-living adjustment across three years; speeds up burial benefits by requiring the VA to certify a veteran's death within two business days; extends health coverage, bereavement and workforce transition support for former family caregivers; and opens VA home loans to National Guard and Reservists who have served 14 days of active duty.

As descendants of veterans, we are committed to serving those who served. There are several ways in which you can fulfill this critical role when it comes to TCAVA. First, educate yourself about the facts about this legislation, what it would do, what it would not do and much more. [Visit this resource page](#) and share it with others. Additionally, I encourage you to use the [Grassroots Action Center](#) to contact your members of Congress to express your support for TCAVA. Our veterans and their families have earned these benefits. Let's make sure they receive them.



Mike Monserud (IA), Trailing Candidate for National Commander

Carry on for God and Country

July 4th every year seems to bring out the patriotism in all of us. We decorate our houses, vehicles, and yards with American Flags with pride, and then a few days later it is all taken down and put away until the next year.

I do not understand how we all claim to be such great patriots, but are only willing to show it one day a year. I am not saying it is wrong, but why can't we show it all year long. When the colors pass, we stand, render a salute, and then sit back down. We make sure the colors are not desecrated, and when it becomes worn they are properly retired. All things that make you a good patriot. The colors fly outside my front door, and only are lowered in inclement weather.

Like many others, I had friends who gave the ultimate sacrifice and returned home under those colors. I swore an oath to the flag of our nation, and took an oath that I would give my life to protect what it stands for. Does that make me a better patriot than the next guy? I guess it is up to the person who forms an opinion on it.

We are all Americans. Nobody is better than someone else because you do not agree with them on politics, religion, or their views on world affairs - because the ones who put on the uniform and deploy to foreign lands to defend what is stands for have protected your speech and point-of-view.

So fly those flags, stand a little straighter when our colors pass by, and provide that salute to honor the ones who went before us. I am asking you to display your flags year-round; be proud that you are an American, and support the ones who wear the uniform. We say in our Preamble that we are to foster and perpetuate a true spirit of Americanism. So let's live up to the words of our Preamble, and carry on for God and Country.



Bryan Hine (TN), National Vice Commander Southeast

Serving this Organization has been a Profound Honor

As my term as your Southeast National Vice Commander draws to a close at this August's National Convention, I am filled with immense pride and gratitude.

Serving this organization has been a profound honor. Over the past year, I have had the privilege of visiting five detachments, as well as New York City—home to National Commander Clancy. Additionally, standing in deep reverence at Arlington National Cemetery to represent our organization during the Memorial Day services at the Tomb of the Unknowns was the honor of a lifetime.

Traveling across our region, I witnessed firsthand the unwavering dedication, passion, and patriotism that define the Sons of The American Legion. Our mission to support veterans, their families, and our local communities remains as vital as ever. Together, we have raised critical funds for The American Legion Child Wellbeing Foundation, logged countless volunteer hours at VA medical centers, and stood proudly with The American Legion Family to promote the Four Pillars and advocate for those who served. Your hard work on the ground is the true driving force behind our collective success.

Thank you for your support, hospitality, and tireless efforts during my tenure. While my time in this specific office is ending, my devotion to our cause will never waver. Let us continue to grow our membership, honor our ancestors' legacies, and serve our veterans with the utmost respect. Remember: "If those of us who can don't, then nothing will be done."



**Have some news to share?
Monthly deadline is the 25th**

Email us at rusty.myers@ymail.com





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

August Editorial: Looking Towards Our Future

We sit within weeks of the National Convention, and this gives us a few moments to reflect on the accomplishments of the previous leadership year and the promises of the next.

National Convention is a fantastic opportunity to celebrate who we are and what we do as Sons. We're more than "Proud Possessors of a Priceless Heritage", dedicated to being stewards of the legacy of service which we are the beneficiaries of.

We're also committed to laying the roadwork of a strong future for our organization and our country, and that future is the topic of my editorial this month.

One of the first things I attended as the newly elected Detachment Commander of New Jersey was the Opening Ceremony of Jersey Boys State. I had never gone to this event before, and I had only a peripheral knowledge of what happens at Boys State.

To say I was impressed is an understatement.

Jersey Boys State had around 850 delegates participate - one of the larger classes from what I understand. But it wasn't just the sheer volume of participants I was stunned by, it was the stories that I heard from the handful of young men who were there I spoke to. Young men who were already overwhelmingly accomplished at age 17, who had set themselves up for a life where the sky is the limit. Truly exceptional people.

I was equally impressed by the Sons I had seen who worked as counselors and coordinators at Boys State, more so because they were Sons who I had never seen before.

Sons who were involved in just doing Boys State—not Sons who went to meetings, or were at the Detachment level, or were involved with committees and commissions—Sons who were so passionate about Boys State that this is what they funnel all of their efforts into. All they do is Boys State.

Sons who are dedicated to that one aspect of shaping the future—the future of the next generation. *Read Ethan's story about his experience on Page 5.*

We all could learn something from that. We

SPOTTED BY A SON

In July's newsletter, we asked if you could find the image of the Declaration of Independence. The Millennium went out on 15 July, and by 11:39am we had a winner...



Tim Fidler Squadron 169 Oneida, New York

Fidler joined the Sons in 2001, claiming eligibility for membership through his grandfather who fought in four major battles in WWI, and his father, who was a WWII veteran. Coming from a family with a legacy of service, two of his brothers and a sister served in Vietnam.

He is a Past Commander of Squadron 169, Past Commander of Madison County where he is currently First Vice Commander; he is also currently 1st Vice Commander for 6th District Detachment of N.Y. He is an honorary life member of the SAL.

all don't have to do everything, we can each commit ourselves to giving all we have to one facet of the SAL. In this case, the future.

The future though, particularly of this organization, is built each year on the shoulders of the immediate past.

On a National Membership and Squadron Activities call, where I represented my detachment, I learned of a statistic which PNVC Butch talks about in this month's "Butch's Bullet Points" on Page 9—the **retention rate**.

Our retention rate—nationally—is less than 90%. That means, by my math, we will be leaving around 40,000 2025 members behind this year.

We do great at recruiting, but we leave something to be desired in renewing members. As Butch writes, "*Membership isn't about numbers on a report. It's about people who believe in the same mission*" - so buddy check those lapsed members, ask them where they've been, and ask why they didn't renew—it could be something as simple as "I forgot."

Arizona came up with the "Briefcase Pro-

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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Distribution Schedule:

Check your email inboxes for the SAL Newsletter / *Millennium* on the second Wednesday of the month (subject to change):

09 September 2026

14 October 2026

11 November 2026

09 December 2026

gram" on Page 10. *Illinois the "5-Year Membership Program"* on Page 10. Each detachment has developed some sort of strategy at renewal and retention. Educate and collaborate—if nowhere else then within the pages of *The Millennium*—with other squadrons and detachments, to see how they succeed in keeping members.

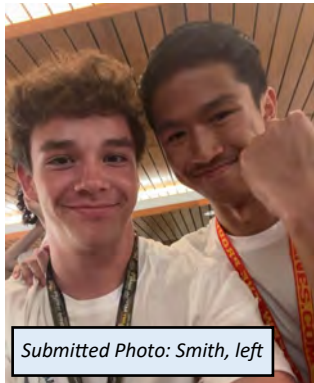
Both stories here—Boys State and membership retention—show two ways with a huge rate-of-return where we as Sons can shape our future.



Ethan Smith, Jersey Boys State Delegate

A Week That Changed My Future: My Journey to NJ Boys State and the Sons of the American Legion

Before a few months ago, I had never heard of Boys State, much less considered applying. However, I caught wind of the program through friends who had attended previously and family who are active members of The American Legion. High praise was often tossed around, setting my expectations for a "week to remember" and a few days worth years of value. I took this praise lightly at first, because I had yet to understand one seemingly simple question: *What is Boys State?*



Submitted Photo: Smith, left

After doing some research and asking around, I didn't find a simple answer. That unknown only heightened my interest and curiosity,

prompting me to take the next steps to get involved. I learned that to attend American Legion Jersey Boys State (ALJBS), I needed to connect with my local American Legion post. Through this process, I discovered the rich history of The American Legion Family and realized I was eligible to join the Sons of The American Legion (SAL) through my family's legacy of military service. Becoming a member of the Sons not only honored my family's heritage, but also opened the door to the premier youth leadership program in New Jersey.

Submitted Photo



Submitted Photo

Reflecting on it now, I still struggle to neatly define my experience there. It is not just a leadership program or a week of political workshops; it is a simulation of something real. Boys State creates an environment of healthy competition, where young men take risks to gain the support of their high-achieving peers. The volunteers and Legionnaires acted as guides rather than instructors, giving us the free range to create multiple levels of self-sustaining government.

"Get involved early" was the motto that Legion members reinforced in emails, at orientation,



AMERICAN LEGION
**JERSEY
BOYS STATE**

"...you are giving us the confidence to stand on a stage, the environment to discover our true passions, and the guidance to become the leaders of tomorrow."

**-Ethan Smith,
Jersey Boys State Delegate**

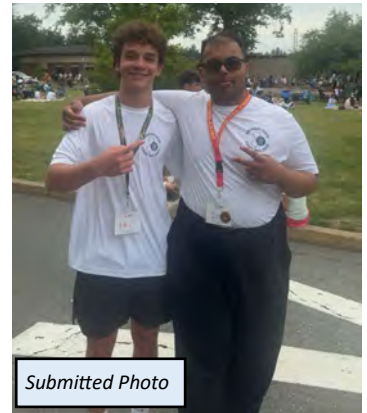
and at every opportunity they could. I took that advice to heart. Bright and early on the first day, I was thrown into elections — looking out into a sea of unfamiliar faces and

pitching why I was the right person for the job. I won the first election of the day against eight other capable candidates, taking on the position of Election Board Official (EBO). After barely processing that win, I immediately had to run the next round of elections in front of the staff and 50 unknown boys. I held this position throughout the week, growing more comfortable in the role and earning the respect of my peers.

I also served as a City Councilman, advising our mayor and completing our city's manual — a strategic plan to solve the problems assigned to our city. My favorite role, however, was one I did not win: Boys Nation Senator. I collected 55 signatures from my peers, ran around campus at 6:00 am, and delivered a speech in front of 400 delegates — the largest test of public speaking in my life. I was nervous, overthinking, and stressed; but at the end of the day, I had the guts to get up on that stage.

I came into Boys State a prospective engineering major. Boys State

changed my mind fast. Talking with people, networking, and having the honor to serve my Boy's State community shifted my entire outlook. I realized that I love socializing, and nothing beats the human connection I made while marketing myself to my peers. Because of that week, I now plan on majoring in business — and I owe the clarity of that decision entirely to my time at ALJBS.



Submitted Photo

To the members, future delegates, or curious minds reading this: the impact of the American Legion and the Sons of the American Legion on young men like me cannot be overstated. By supporting Boys State, you are not just teaching us about government — you are giving us the confidence to stand on a stage, the environment to discover our true passions, and the guidance to become the leaders of tomorrow.

In the end, Boys State truly was a week that shaped my future.



The Annual *Millennium* National Convention Preview

28—30 August 2026 - Louisville, Kentucky

The National Convention is in just a few days!

This is an amazing experience with members of The American Legion Family from across the 55 departments.

The main hub for information on The American Legion's annual national convention can be reached at legion.org/convention; the 107th will be held in Louisville, Kentucky, 28 August– 03 September. The [Information for Attendees page](#) includes an ever-growing list of resources for attendees.

Also included are exclusive savings for attendees. Department hotel assignments were posted in January; those planning to attend must go through their department headquarters to register and secure lodging.

Download the App

Access all of the information you need to navigate the convention and the host city. Go to your app store and search "*American Legion National Convention*"



Alerts



Schedule



Information



News



Hotel/Resour...



Maps



Videos



Legion Family



City Guide

National Children & Youth Academy

SATURDAY, AUGUST 29, 2026 9 AM- 5 PM

Kentucky International Convention Center L002-Lower Concourse

Calling all school-aged American Legion Family members. Join us for the 2026 National Children & Youth Academy. Class will include flag etiquette program, flag retirement ceremony, and history of United States of America. The earlier we involve our youth, the brighter our future will be!

Walk-ins the day of the event will be accepted; you can also get an application via email at jefftrout65@gmail.com.



ATTENDEE RESOURCES

- [2026 Convention Hotels Map](#)
- [2026 Department Hotels](#)
- [2026 Shuttle Bus Schedule](#)
- [2026 Posts to Host Functions](#)
- [Campground Information – Louisville](#)
- [2026 Louisville Scooter Rental Information](#)
- [Airport Transportation](#)
- [Additional Parking Options](#)
- [Medical Services & Emergency Information](#)
- [On-Site Registration & Information Hours](#)
- [Blood Drive Flyer](#)
- [Official Dress Code](#)
- [Emblem Sales Flyer](#)



Additional information regarding the City of Louisville, attractions, dining, and activities can be found through Louisville Tourism at: <https://www.gotolouisville.com/>

WHERE FOUR STATES MEET,
Friends Unite!

UTAH THE BEEHIVE STATE

COLORADO THE CENTENNIAL STATE

4 CORNERS PARTY!

GOOD PEOPLE ★ GREAT FOOD
★ COLD DRINKS ★
One Great Time!

AUGUST 31ST, 2026

ARIZONA THE GRAND CANYON STATE

NEW MEXICO THE LAND OF ENCHANTMENT

★ LOCATION ★
AMERICAN LEGION POST 193
2800 W MAIN ST
LOUISVILLE, KY

★ TIME ★
NOON
til
4PM

FOUR STATES ★ ONE LEGION ★ STRONGER TOGETHER





54th NATIONAL CONVENTION AGENDA FLYER

KENTUCKY INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTER (KICC)

LOUISVILLE, KY | AUGUST 28 - 30, 2026

SAL National Convention Registration For Delegates, Alternate Delegates, and Guests

National Staff Offices - KICC, Hall A, Upper Concourse

- 8:00 AM - 4:30 PM - Wednesday, August 26 - Friday, August 28
- 8:00 AM - 12:00 PM - Saturday, August 29 (hours subject to change)

Wednesday, August 26 - Monday, August 31

SAL Staff Offices - KICC, Hall A, Upper Concourse

- 8:00 AM - 4:30 PM (hours subject to change)

Friday, August 28, 2026

SAL Training - KICC, L009, Lower Concourse

- 8:00 AM - 8:45 AM SAL Communications/Public Speaking
- 9:00 AM - 9:45 AM SAL Squadron/Post Relationships
- 10:00 AM - 10:45 AM SAL Resolutions
- 11:00 AM - 11:45 AM SAL Effective Networking

SAL National Convention Committee Meetings

KICC, L011, Lower Concourse

- 8:00 AM Internal Affairs
- 9:30 AM Membership and Squadron Activities (M&SA)
- 11:00 AM Finance

KICC, L002, Lower Concourse

- 8:00 AM: Children and Youth (C&Y)
- 9:30 AM: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation (VA&R)
- 11:00 AM: Constitutional Amendments

KICC, L012, Lower Concourse

- 8:00 AM Americanism
- 9:30 AM Scrapbook / History Book Contest
- 11:00 AM Legislation & Rules

KICC, Ballroom C, Main Concourse

- 11:00 AM Credentials

Saturday, August 29, 2026

SAL Youth 250 - KICC, L002, Lower Concourse

- 8:00 AM - 5:00 PM (hours subject to change)

SAL National Executive Committee and General Sessions - KICC, Ballroom C, Main Concourse

SAL Pre-Convention National Executive Committee

- 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM - Friday, August 28 (hours subject to change)

Sons of The American Legion National Convention General Sessions

- 1:00 PM (Opening) - Friday, August 28
- 9:00 AM - Saturday, August 29
- 8:00 AM - Sunday, August 30

SAL Post-Convention National Executive Committee

- 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM - Sunday, August 31 (hours subject to change)

Monday, August 31, 2026

SAL Transition Meeting - KICC, L003, Lower Concourse (National Officers & Chairmen Only)

- 8:00 AM - 10:00 AM (hours subject to change)





Division 2 Commander Darryl Robinson and PDC Gene Bellando attending the Department Division 2 meeting in Wilmington, NC.



New York DVC James Prime, left, presenting Commander Nate of Post 1092 (Niskayuna, NY) the charter paperwork for their Sons of The American Legion squadron.



Squadron 135 (Susquehanna, PA) members cooking for the veterans at Perry Point VA Medical Center.



Past National Sgt-at-Arms Matt Griffiths, right, with District 2 at American Legion Baseball game night in Tucson AZ.



The Auxiliary with the help from the Sons of The American Legion of Unit and Squadron 252 (Seminole, FL) having a great day raising funds for Suncoast Voices for Children.



The American Legion Hackler-Wood Post 145 Family (Bristol, TN) all contributed funds to fill backpacks with school supplies for kids. Squadron Chaplain Tony Simmons used the funds to purchase the backpacks, which the SAL packed at their monthly meeting. They filled 20 backpacks for the kids.



Squadron 1520 (Albany, NY) Commander John Trong and Vice Commander Wayne Peplowski presenting a check for \$500 dollars on behalf of the Sons to the Veterans Miracle Center.



TEAM IOWA SPOTTED - At their convention, Minnesota's Shawn and Jill Davis sporting their Team Iowa gear.



Squadron 178 (Agusta, GA) presents the Tommy Lamb Scholarship Award on Tommy's birthday to their very own American Legion Auxiliary member, Gracelyn Stewart.





Harl "Butch" Ray (IL), National Membership & Squadron Activities Chair

Butch's Bullet Points

The Last Mile...

Have you ever noticed that the closer you get to finishing something, the harder it seems to become?

Whether it's mowing the lawn on a 95-degree July afternoon, finishing a home improvement project that was supposed to take "just one weekend," or trying to lose those last five pounds that somehow fight harder than the first twenty... the last little bit always seems to take the most effort.

Membership campaigns are no different.

As America begins celebrating her 250th birthday, I can't help but think about the men and women who pledged their lives, fortunes, and sacred honor to a cause they believed in. They didn't know how the story would end. They just knew quitting wasn't an option.

George Washington said it best: *"Perseverance and spirit have done wonders in all ages."*

I'd say 250 years of freedom proves he knew what he was talking about.

This year also marks 94 years of the Sons of The American Legion. For nearly a century, generations of SAL members have carried the torch of service, patriotism, and devotion to our veterans. None of them built this organization by saying, "Good enough."

Neither should we.

Today, we stand at 98.28% of our membership goal.

That means we're only 7,047 members away from reaching—and hopefully surpassing—100% before we gather at the National Convention in just six short weeks.

Now before anyone says, "Butch, finding 7,000 members is easier said than done," let me beat you to it.

You're right. If they were easy to find, we'd already have them. The low-hanging fruit has long since been picked. Now we're climbing the ladder.

But here's the good news.

Our biggest opportunity isn't hiding in some secret membership forest. It's sitting in our

records.

Our current retention rate is 87.40%.

That means there are thousands of former SAL members who already understand who we are and what we do. They don't need a sales pitch.

They need a reminder.

A phone call, A text message, A handshake, A cup of coffee.

Or maybe just someone saying, "We've missed seeing you around the squadron. We'd really like to have you back."

Sometimes that's all it takes.

Membership isn't about numbers on a report. It's about people who believe in the same mission. Every renewal strengthens a squadron. Every squadron strengthens a district. Every district strengthens detachment. Together, we strengthen The American Legion Family.

I've heard every reason in the book for why someone hasn't renewed. Life gets busy. Kids grow up. Grandkids arrive. Jobs change. Health changes. Sometimes that membership card simply gets buried under a stack of mail that was going to be sorted "tomorrow."

Tomorrow has a funny way of turning into next year.

Thomas Jefferson once wrote, "Determine never to be idle." That's good advice for membership, too. Every day we wait is one less day to reconnect with someone who already believes in our mission.

And speaking of missions...

America didn't reach 250 years because generations before us chose the easy path. They accepted sacrifice, worked together, and stayed focused on something bigger than themselves.

Likewise, the Sons of The American Legion have spent 94 years building a legacy one member at a time. That legacy now rests in our hands. The SAL has never just been about collecting dues.

It's about honoring the sacrifices of those who wore our nation's uniform.

It's about supporting veterans, mentoring our youth, strengthening our communities, and ensuring that the legacy of The Ameri-

can Legion Family continues for generations to come.

Every renewed member helps make that happen.

Benjamin Franklin reminded us, "We must all hang together, or assuredly we shall all hang separately." Thankfully, our challenge today isn't quite that dramatic—but the principle still fits.

We succeed together.

No one Detachment..., No one district..., No one squadron..., Gets us to 100%!

Every call made, every letter, email, text, every conversation started, every renewal received, They all count.

As we celebrate America's 250 years of perseverance and prepare to honor 94 years of SAL history, let's remember that both milestones were built one person at a time.

One patriot. One veteran. One volunteer. One member.

Six weeks from now, we'll either be talking about how close we came...; or we'll be celebrating that we finished the job.

I know which conversation I'd rather have.

So, dust off those membership lists. Call that former member you've been meaning to contact. Visit someone who hasn't been around for a while. Remind them that they're still part of this family.

Because the last mile is never the easiest...; but it's always the one worth finishing.

Let's celebrate America's 250th by showing the same perseverance that built this great nation.

Let's celebrate 94 years of the Sons of The American Legion by adding another successful chapter to our history.

And when we arrive at the National Convention, let's not just reach 100%.

Let's blow right past it. After all, 100% isn't the ceiling. It's just another milestone.

Let's honor the sacrifices that built this nation. Let's honor the veterans we serve. Let's honor the generations of SAL members who came before us by finishing what we started.

We've already done the hard work.

See you at the finish line.



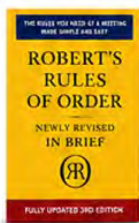
SAL MEMBERSHIP OUTREACH BRIEFCASE PROGRAM

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*Actual pricing may vary based on current Amazon pricing, taxes, shipping, product availability, and any optional equipment substitutions. Scan the QR code to view the current recommended equipment list.

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SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTS



GARY MANWELL



Gmanwell2021@gmail.com



MATT GRIFFIS



MattGriffis.azsal@gmail.com

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SQUADRON ACTIVITIES
COMMITTEE

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**Sons of
The
American
Legion**



For God and Country

DETACHMENT OF ILLINOIS
P.O. Box 2910, Bloomington, Illinois 61702-2910
2720 E. Lincoln Street, Bloomington, Illinois 61704-6010

Detachment of Illinois 5-Year Membership Card Program

Squadron 5-Year Membership Program Overview

The 5-Year Membership Program is designed to strengthen the Squadron by fostering long-term commitment and simplifying the renewal process for members. This initiative not only supports retention but also enhances the overall member experience by reducing administrative hassle and offering consistent value year after year.

Key Benefits

For Squadrons:

- ☐ *Improved Retention*: Encourages long-term engagement and reduces churn
- ☐ *Operational Efficiency*: Fewer annual renewals to manage, freeing up resources
- ☐ *Stronger Community Bonds*: Builds continuity and deeper relationships within the Squadron

For Members:

- ☐ *One-and-Done Enrollment*: No need to worry about annual renewals
- ☐ *Locked-In Benefits*: Enjoy consistent access to services, events, and perks
- ☐ *Recognition & Rewards*: Milestone acknowledgments and exclusive incentives over time

Why It Works

By offering a 5-year option, Squadrons signal trust in their members and a commitment to long-term growth. Members, in turn, feel valued and supported—making it easier to stay involved without the yearly paperwork. It's a win-win model that prioritizes connection, convenience, and continuity.

How It Works

The Squadron offers their members this plan. Most Squadron will offer a 5-year option at a cost of 4-years. The per capita price remains at the 5-year overall cost. This option is not available to the member who chooses to renew online. It must be handled internally. When submitting our per capita for the member to Department, mark on the returned portion of the membership form **5-year card**. Then each year the members is in their 5-year automatic renewal, when new cards are received by Department, they will go through each Squadron's cards and pull the 5-year members. They remove the Department portion of the renewal form and put all those cards together, notating they are part of that program.

Example: Squadron's yearly dues are \$20. Yearly per capita is \$13. When submitting the renewal (or new member) portion of the card to Department, with payment, note this will be a 5-year card and include \$65 for that card. On the Squadron level, you would charge either \$100 or a discounted rate if you wish.





**Tyler Vanice (VA),
Past Detachment Commander**

Virginia SAL Honors America's 250th at Arlington

The American Legion was Detachment Commander Tyler Vanice, who joined American Legion Department Commander Scott Maddrea, American Legion Auxiliary Department President Carol Campbell, and Past Department Commander and Department Administrator Linden Dixon.

The ceremony served as a fitting conclusion to Commander Vanice's year under the theme "Honoring America's History." By placing the wreath on Independence Day, the Virginia American Legion Family paid tribute to the generations of servicemembers whose courage and sacrifice made the nation's 250-year history possible.



Submitted Photo

Representing the Sons of The American Legion was Detachment Commander Tyler Vanice, who joined American Legion Department Commander Scott Maddrea, American Legion Auxiliary Department President Carol Campbell, and Past Department Commander and Department Administrator Linden Dixon.

"It was an incredible honor to represent the Sons of The American Legion at Arlington National Cemetery on such a historic day," Vanice said. "As we celebrate America's past, we must also remember those who gave everything to protect its future."



Submitted Photo

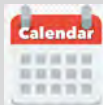


**Mike Pook (WI), Staff
Contributor to The Millennium**

"Mentoring Moments"



Each Squadron exists through sponsorship of the individual Post of The American Legion and is subject to such rules, regulations and supervision as shall be created by the sponsoring Post. The Sons of the American is a program of The American Legion and can not stand alone without a sponsoring Post. Legion members can also be SAL members, and are known as dual members. Legion members can wear their Legion cover in lieu of a SAL cover if they choose to. However, American Legion Riders members who are SAL members first, should wear their SAL cover to all squadron meetings.



Make Note of these Important dates on The American Legion Calendar

- 28-30 Aug. National Convention in Louisville**
- 11 Sept. Patriot Day – 25th anniversary**
- 16 Sept. American Legion Day**
- 17 Sept. Citizenship (Constitution) Day**
- 18 Sept. Air Force Birthday**
- 19 Sept. POW/MIA Recognition Day**
- 27 Sept. Gold Star Mothers Day**
- 03-04 Oct. Fall NEC Meetings**
- 13 Oct. Navy Birthday**
- 04 Nov. Election Day**
- 09 Nov. Buddy Check Week**
- 10 Nov. US Marine Corps Birthday**
- 07 Dec. Pearl Harbor Day**
- 19 Dec. Wreaths Across America Day**



Facebook Photo



Mike Pook (WI), Staff Contributor to *The Millennium*

WI: ALF Dog Goes for a Ride

The American Legion Riders in the State of Wisconsin have an annual ride that "cruises" around the state to raise funds for The American Legion. ***Cruising for a Cause, Family First***, in 2026 benefited Veterans & Children Foundation (VCF), Wisconsin Auxiliary Badger Girls State, and Operation A.L.F. by the SAL. The three-day ride made stops along the way to receive donations, which were accepted by the "top dogs" of each part of the family. Yes, the top person of The American Legion Family in Wisconsin rode motorcycles to raise awareness on American Legion programs.

Operation A.L.F., or American Legion Family supports our active-duty military by participating in pre-deployment ceremonies and to provide their children with comfort plush puppies to keep them company while mom or dad is away. The A.L.F. dogs are Wisconsin's answer to the Josh Dog program that previously existed. In the Detachment of Wisconsin Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation (VA&R) chair, Robert Sirovina heads up the program and coordinates the inventory and distribution of said dogs. The Detachment of

Wisconsin expects several more deployments yet this year. The program is operated only through donations, so it is very important to get the word out to the American Legion Family, Posts, Squadrons, Units and local business for their support.

There were about 80 motorcycle enthusiasts that participated in the cruise, many of which attached an ALF dog to their motorcycle. Most participants were members of The American Legion Family, however several riders were members of the public. The ride started on the Wisconsin/Illinois border and headed north to Green Bay before turning west ending in central Wisconsin ... about 500 miles, spanning three days and two nights for the cruise. The annual ride has always been on the last week of June. This year it was June 26-28.

When the American Legion Riders in Wisconsin took on fundraising for ALF, they designated \$3,000 with the additional donations for ALF dogs, which totaled \$1,720. Or, \$4,720 in a total donation. The overall week-end total for Cruising for a Cruise brought in about \$68,017. But not all the raffle ticket monies had been turned in as of that date. So, yes, ALF Goes for a ride!

For more information about Operation A.L.F. contact the [Detachment of Wisconsin](#).



Casey Hanson (SD), Midwest Regional Membership Chairman

SD: Volga Post 114 Receives their Squadron Charter

Post and Auxiliary Unit 114 (Volga, SD) welcomed in their newly established Sons of The American Legion Squadron!



Facebook Photo

State officers were on hand to present the Volga SAL with their official charter, flag, desktop set, POW/MIA flag, and gavel. Squadron officers were also elected and sworn in.



Facebook Photo

The Volga Post and Auxiliary Unit are very active and do so much, and adding the SAL to their family will compliment them in every effort.

We really look forward to the amazing things that will come from the Volga American Legion family!

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Facebook Photo





Mike Vozar (IL),
Staff Contributor to *The Millennium*

Illinois: SAL News from The Prairie State



Shawn Morecraft from Squadron 90 (Marshall, IL) is the Detachment 2026 Member of the Year. Detachment Commander Wayne Madson (L) and Trailing Candidate for National Commander Mike Monserud (R) making the presentation.



Squadron 673 in Huntley, Illinois has created a patriotic tribute called "Flags for Heroes" to celebrate the 250th Anniversary of the United States and 175 years of Huntley history. A total of 425 American flags have been placed at a visible local intersection (Route 47 and Reed Road) honoring veterans, first responders, healthcare workers, teachers, community leaders, family members, and others who have made a difference. The flags will remain up through Veterans Day. This beautiful tribute includes a silo with mural painted by artist Lexi Mangieri which reads "God Bless America" Each flag sponsorship will be used to support veterans programs. The Huntley community will gather here on September 11th for a 9/11 25th Anniversary remembrance ceremony (Photo Credit to Huntley American Legion Post 673 - Auxiliary - SAL Facebook Page).



Squadron 755 (Manteno IL) members visiting with veterans and serving lunch at the Manteno Veterans Home.



Squadron 615 (Tinley Park, IL) Finance Officer Mike Yucuis and Adjutant Glenn Kraemer present donations to Tinley Park Fire Chief Steve Klotz on behalf of Project Fire Buddies & Tinley Wish Foundation.



National Children and Youth Chairman Jeff Trout with his two grandsons at the 2026 Illinois Detachment Convention.



Submitted Photo: This is first time playing Taps for Stephen Brester from the Detachment of Wisconsin, nervous but proud and honored.

National Regional Information Conferences (NRIC) Dates Announced

Save the dates for the next three American Legion National Regional Information Conferences (NRIC):

- 14 November in Omaha, NE
- 30 January 2027 in Albany, NY
- 06 February 2027 in Las Vegas.

The conference is designed for any American Legion member or Sons of The American Legion member to learn informative training on the organization's mission, vision and programs, and to connect with other American Legion Family members. Attendees do not need to hold an officer position.

Registration for the conferences opens 02 September. More information at www.legion.org/information-center/training.



Legion.org Photos:
2026 NRIC Sessions





Three generations of Squadron 45's Sons (Manchester, IA) at the Delaware County Fair Parade.



Right: Past Detachment Commander Scott Douglas, Sr. presenting a check for over \$10,000 for his Detachment Commander's Project to Director Jeff Ladeau for Camp Resilience during the Green Beret SWAM Event at Ladd Farm in Bridgewater, NH.



Past 16th District Commander Gary Sanderson of Squadron 238 (Safety Harbor, FL) accepted an award from Hero to a Child naming the Sons of The American Legion 16th District as a Hero of Promise for their over \$118,000 of donations.



The San Angelo, TX Squadron 572 Commander dropped off some flood relief supplies that went to Sutton County Sheriff's Office for their recent flood victims.



Beth from Honor Flight Columbus was on hand at the Party in the Park to receive a donation for their cause, made possible by the Spanky Memorial Golf Outing run by Squadron 535 (Belleville, OH).



Left: A visit to Squadron 62 (Peoria, AZ) by Detachment Commander Manwell, PDC Bryant, and Finance Officer Cleary. They were joined by new COTA representative Melissa McQueen, who accepted a most generous donation of \$20,000 from Squadron 62—supporting the detachment commander's project.



Below: Squadron 488 (Monroe, NY) Scholastic Awards, presented to this year's recipients Keira and Caitlyn Thau.





Detachment Commander Scott Douglas of New Hampshire handing National Commander Leading Candidate Thom Skelley of Texas a keepsake from The Granite State at their convention.



Newly installed Illinois Detachment Commander John Nemanich receiving his new cover.



Squadron 15 (Sioux Falls, SD) putting their 2026 100% Membership Ribbon on their squadron colors.



National Commander Bill Clancy (NY) installing the newly elected officers of the Detachment of Texas at their convention.



Congratulations to the Detachment of Virginia for a wonderful year! Seated, center, newly installed Detachment Commander Jay Rarick and next him is outgoing Commander Tyler Vanice, now appointed as Adjutant. Behind are the Detachment Officers: David Boggs, NEC; PDC Joe Gallagher (acting Chaplain); Linwood Jones, Detachment Vice Commander; Timothy Fincher, Detachment Vice Commander; Ted Kilby, Detachment Vice Commander; Bradley Harris, Historian; Kevin Chaplin, ALT NEC; David Vernon, Sergeant-at-Arms.



The 2026-2027 elected Officers for the Detachment of NY.



Detachment of Illinois—31 July 2026**TAPS: Past National Commander J. Richard “JR” Stillwell, 1935-2026**

J. Richard “JR” Stillwell, born February 6, 1935 was transferred to Post and Squadron Everlasting on Friday, July 31, 2026. A member of The American Legion for 52 years. A member of The Sons of The American Legion for 72 years. This is not an official obituary, just my own feelings on JR. The official obituary will come soon.



A Past National Commander for the SAL. JR was the SAL. He helped organize it to what it is today and has been involved with it since those early days. On the Detachment level, he has held pretty much every position imaginable. He was very involved with TAL, especially in the 4th Division and 19th District.

JR was the epitome of The American Legion Family. He devoted his life to it. He often said, “the SAL is the best kept secret in the American Legion.” Members visited JR in July in his “new” home located in Breese, Illinois. He didn’t like the mattress of his bed; however he mostly slept in his chair even before arriving at that place. He couldn’t see out the windows very well, having to look “up” from his chair, with trees and shrubs blocking his view across the highway. He gave a list of tasks to make sure were to be completed, saying “I am telling you because I know you will make

sure it gets done.” On that day, JR was JR. The person we all adored. The one who rambled on and on about a story, not losing track of the timeline, details, etc. He looked good, probably better than he had in the past couple of years. He was the same old JR. have been the Detachment Adjutant for over 15 years. The role has changed dramatically with technology, and the importance of Legion Family. I know at times it frustrated him, but he also knew that the direction we were on was justified and needed. He never really questioned me on things. He was always there if I needed advice or direction. When he did bring something up, you knew “it needed to be done this way” and you didn’t question it.

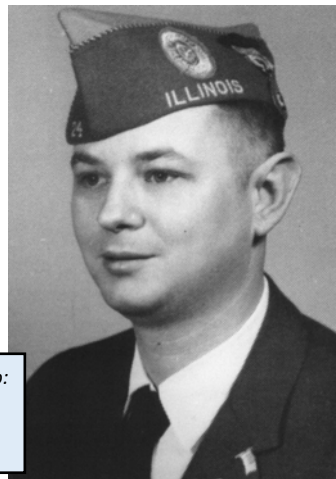
JR knew he was slowly going downhill. In Milwaukee, he asked if he could talk to us. He realized it was time to “turn the reigns” of our Detachment Judge Advocate over and he wanted Jeff to become that person.

When JR wanted something, he had his reasons and we made sure they went that way. Jeff told me recently that JR said one of the reasons why he wanted him to be the JA was to “keep an eye” on me. JR alluded to me over the past few years, but never came out and directly said it.

I am not speaking for Trout, but I truly feel that he was honored that JR held him so highly in his thoughts.

So, I ask each of you to not feel sadness but instead remember the 91 years of the life JR Stillwell led. His “devotion to mutual helpfulness” has not only inspired but influenced many people.

We will always be grateful for his legacy and leadership.



Facebook Photo:
JR Stillwell in
the 1950's



**Casey Hanson (SD), Midwest
Regional Membership Chairman**

Presence Matters

Having a presence matters. This has been a priority in our detachment leadership for a few years now. It shows the blue cap members who are out there doing the work, that they are recognized and appreciated, that no squadron however big or small, matters.

We preach this in hopes of passing the same motto down to our squadrons and their individual members. Why is it important one may ask? Squadrons having a presence at District meetings, Midwinter Conferences, and State Conventions get the first hand information of what is being asked of them, changes coming in the future, and most importantly, a say in those changes, both for and against. Squadrons across the state are doing great things. From membership, supporting children and youth, to community involvement, great things are being accomplished! This is a time for them squadrons to be recognized for their efforts. Some times squadrons don't want the recognition, but showing the community and everyone else the good you are doing can help you recruit new members and solidify bonds with other organizations in the community.

Members showing up for meetings in their squadron help that squadron stay alive. They play an active role in the decision-making process, for the betterment of that organization. They ensure that the proper steps are taken for the organization, the community, and everyone involved. Everyone may not agree, but this is where meaningful discussion comes into play and as a group, the best path forward emerges.

At our state convention this past June, we had a representative from 12 squadrons in attendance out of the 56 squadrons total. There were 27 squadrons who had awards waiting for them at the convention.

We understand everything is voluntary. But when all of the volunteers stop volunteering, who's left? This post isn't meant to cause any hard feelings. We truly appreciate everyone who shows up and has a presence, at every event or just a few. This is for mere encouragement and awareness than anything.

Having a presence matters.





PA Immediate Past Commander Mark Nave American Defenders Post 968 Family (Philadelphia, PA) helping with food distribution in the community.



Detachment of Wisconsin Elections were held on July 18. Newly installed officers are Detachment Commander Jeremy Mason, Detachment Vice Commanders Shawn McCrary, Terry Barrington, Bob Seide, and Steve DuBoi; Sgt at Arms Ray Dzieciol and Rick Helms, NEC Chris Sherman, ANEC Mike Pook, and Chaplain John L'Hullier.



Squadron 178 (Murrells Inlet, SC) hold their Sweat For A Vet 5K race, where they were able to donate money to the Blue Star Mothers of Coastal Carolina, American Legion VCF, American Legion Child Well-Being Foundation, ECHO - Eastern Carolina Housing Organization, Wounded Warriors Project, Myrtle Beach Vet Center, Nam Knights MC, and Vest Up



American Legion and the Sons of The American Legion 1009 (Yorktown, NY) gave money to different organizations within the town—recipients being United for the Troops, the Yorktown, Teen Center, and St. Mary's Community Food Pantry.



The newly installed officers of Squadron 154 (Tybee Island, GA).

Because of local support, SAL Squadron 357 (Ashby, MN) in March was able to donate to the 4th grade class trip to Wolf Ridge where the kids were able to spend three days in an outdoor learning environment. In appreciation they made them a poster.





Greg Shaffer (NJ),
National COTA Liasson

COTA Corner



Children's Organ
Transplant Association.

They gave us a big thank you for running this event and raising money for all of the COTA children. Once again, I am asking all of you to help support this wonderful organization. Each dollar you raise stays in your state to help the children and their families.

40 years with many more to follow. We are helping them to live a better life. You can get more information on COTA.org.

You can also reach out to me at, shiftyshaff@gmail.com. I will do whatever I can to help you out or put you in touch with the proper people. COTA is near and dear to my heart.

It's a new year for the SAL Detachments all over America. It is also a new year to help support the COTA children and their families. To do this, you can run many types of events such as BBQ's, Golfing for Life, Bowling for Life, Walk-a-Thon, Bike-a-Thon and Benefit Dinner and Auction. One of the things we do in New Jersey is give out fines for eating with your cover on or your phone going off during a meeting. These are just a few of many things you can do to raise money and you can find more on the COTA website.

I would like to share an event that was held in New Jersey back in June. Squadron #70, Nutley and Squadron #310, Little Ferry both in New Jersey, got together and held an event to raise money for COTA. The event was a huge success. Many people came out to support both the Squadrons and the COTA family. Below is a photo of the COTA family, Jamie and her son Raymond, that joined us for this event. They enjoyed the event and spoke to us about Raymond's journey.



Submitted Photo

Hickman County Times—03 August 2026

TN: American Legion, Auxiliary, Sons Squadron host Freedom Trail to celebrate America's birthday

The Richard Graham American Legion Post 36 of Centerville was joined by Sons Squadron 36, and the Ladies Auxiliary Unit 36 to bring something unique to Hickman County's Independence 250 in River Park event. Hosted by the Hickman County Chamber, the event celebrated America's 250th birthday on Friday, July 3.

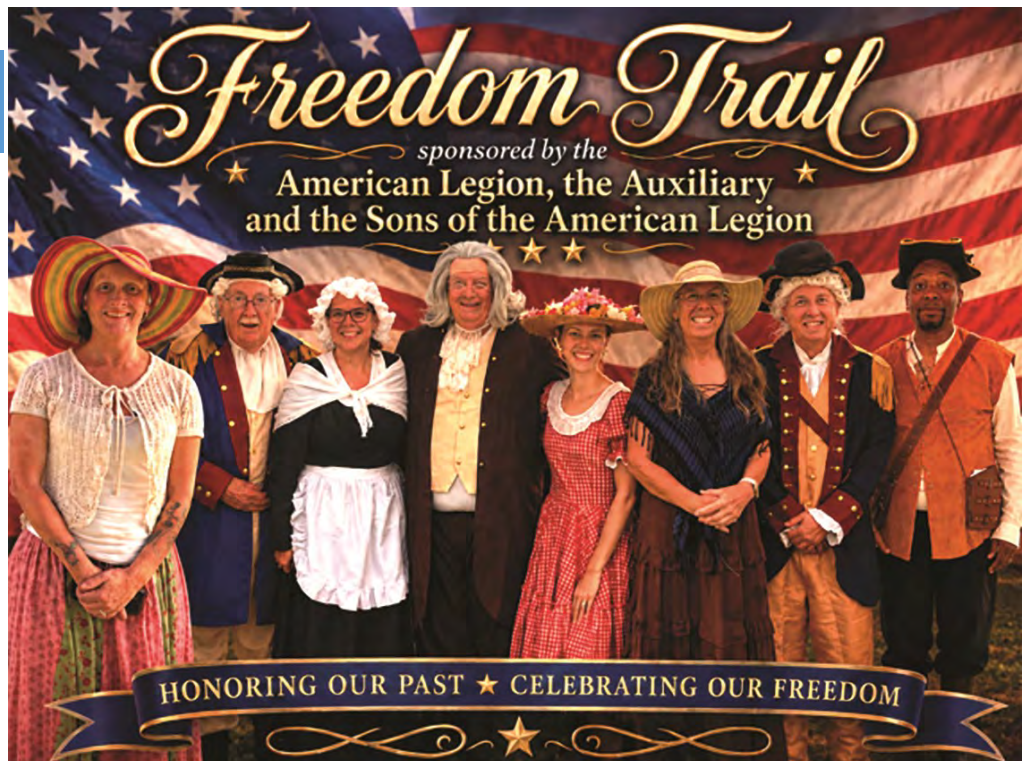
Even though the event had more than its share of weather delays and challenges, the American Legion and friends were able to successfully present the Freedom Trail to all those in attendance.

The Freedom Trail provided a brief patriotic history of some key characters who played a big part in the history of our country, state and county.

Costumed actors portrayed George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Paul Revere, Betsy Ross, Rachel Stockley Donaldson, Charlotte Robertson, Edwin Hickman, and Minnie Pearl.

Each character shared a short talk on their role in history to the delight of young and old alike. They also gave out a token that related to their character, and were happy to pose for photos with those visiting the Freedom Trail.

"We were elated that we had awesome participation from each part of the Legion family. We want to thank the Hickman County Chamber of Commerce for giving us the opportunity to present this program about Americanism," said Debbie DePaul, American Legion Auxiliary Unit 36 president.



SONS OF THE AMERICAN LEGION THE MILLENNIUM

A newsletter of Sons of The American Legion

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To:

This Month, On The Back Cover

Facebook: Benson's Sons tour the Moving Veterans Forward facilities

Benson Sons of The American Legion Squadron 112 (Omaha, NE) members toured the Moving Veterans Forward facilities during the visit from our Leading Candidate for SAL National Commander Thom Skelley (TX). We had a great discussion about the mission of Moving Veterans Forward and how SAL members can help support them. This is an exceptional Nebraska non-profit that should be modeled across the nation. Sons of The American Legion - Detachment of Nebraska Commander Todd Kabella selected Moving Veterans Forward as his 2025-2026 Commander's Project. He presented them with a donation during our visit.



Be on the look out for "Spotted by a Son"

Every month, The Millennium will hide a small picture or graphic inside the newsletter—first one to find it who email's rusty.myers@ymail.com will get their name published in the next newsletter and will receive a prize!

Find the Louisville Skyline—
the location of the National
Convention this year—in the
newsletter this month.

