SONS OF THE AMERICAN LEGION

A newsletter of Sons of The American Legion

THE MILLENNIUM

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Thank You Past National Commander Bill Clancy for your service and dedication to the organization this past year.



Congratulations to the two Sons of The American Legion Detachments which achieved 100% Consolidated Squadron Reporting by convention:

Delaware

Wisconsin

BE THE ONE

www.legion.org—*31 August 2026*

Thom Skelley of Texas installed as the new SAL National Commander at Convention in Kentucky

Newly elected Sons of The American Legion National Commander Thom Skelley thanked the audience member who yelled, "Yay, Amy!" as Skelley addressed the 54th SAL National Convention on Aug. 30 in Louisville, KY.



Editor's Photo

Skelley was in the process of thanking his wife of 26 years, Amy, for her support when the yell came from the audience. It served as a fitting reflection of something he had said earlier in his post-election speech: the passion that drives is the emotion inside.

A 21-year member of the SAL, Skelley was elected as national commander for 2026-27 during the SAL national convention on Sunday, Aug. 30. The former Detachment of Texas commander has held numerous other leadership positions and earned his SAL eligibility through the service of his father William M. Skelley Sr., who served in the Pacific Theater during World War II from 1941 to 1945.

Skelley noted two things he carries everywhere with him: his father's dog tags and his father's 37th Division infantry patch.

The patch, a red circle with a white border, is reflected in the design for Skelley's commander's coin and pin.



Editor's Photo

"So my first thanks goes to my father, William Martin Skelley Sr. … I love you. Thank you for your service to our country, and raising me to love God, country and family," Skelley said.

The new national commander also thanked his 404,000 brothers in the SAL; the detachments

Continued on Page 2>>>

Thom Skelley of Texas Elected National Commander

Continued from Page 1>>>

whose activities he had been invited to participate in during his two years as trailing candidate and leading candidate; the Legion Family of Texas; his campaign team; the SAL commanders' advisory committee; and his national vice commanders.

"To my sons, Evan and Kieran. You are truly (choke up a bit) the best people I know," Skelley said.

"Lastly, to my beautiful wife of 26 years. Meeting you was fate. Becoming your husband was a choice. … But falling in love with you was beyond my control. Thank you for standing beside me, for making ordinary days feel special, and for never letting me face trials alone," Skelley said.

"If I could give you one thing in life, it would be the ability to see yourself through my eyes. Only then would you realize how special you are to me. I love you now, and I always will."



American Legion Photo: Skelley and wife Amy

The year ahead. Skelley reminded the audience that "every member matters."



Editor's Photo

"That's not just in the Sons, that's not just in the Legion, that's not just in the Auxiliary, that's not just in the Riders. Every member matters. They matter to somebody. They may not matter much to the organization, but that's our fault as leaders. We need to engage them more, ask what their passion is, bring that out of them, so that they're able to serve more," he said.

Skelley added that "sons are born, members are made," and noted the $6,000 in donations made at the SAL convention the day before.

"We know what we do. We recruit, we fundraise, we support The American Legion. That's what we do. We take care of our veterans, we take care of our children. That's what we do," he said.

Skelley's project for his year as commander is focused on POW/MIA recovery and recognition.

"I would like for each squadron to be able to put a POW/MIA table in one of their local restaurants," he said. "If they're not willing to do the POW/MIA, if your squadron can't afford to purchase the POW table, the team has created a POW/MIA poster. It has a beautiful picture of the table and the setting, it has the ceremony written on it, and on the bottom, it's been left blank … so it can be customized.

> ***"We take care of our veterans, we take care of our children. That's what we do."***
>
> ***-National Commander Skelley***

"I really hope this raises awareness of the thousands and thousands of POW/MIA's that are still unaccounted for."

Skelley also hopes that the project can aid recognition of what the SAL and the Legion Family do. "We always talk about we're our own worst enemy when it comes to tooting our own horn. 'We don't do it for the applause, we do it for the cause.'

"We've got to get out in front, folks, that's how we grow this family."



American Legion Photo



Louisville, Kentucky: The 2026 National Convention in Pictures
























Meet Your 2026-2027 National Vice Commanders

Henry Hasselhan III (NJ), NVC Northreast



Henry Hasselhan III gained his eligibility for the Sons of The American Legion through his father, Sgt. Henry M. Hasselhan, USMC, who served with the First Marine Division during the Korean War.

During his 21 years of membership in Squadron 311, Henry has held leadership positions at squadron and county levels.

At the Detachment of New Jersey level, Henry has served as Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms, Vice Commander, Commander, and currently as Alternate National Executive Committeeman (ANEC). He previously served as the SAL Media and Publications Chairman and currently serves on the joint Detachment and Department Veterans Employment & Education (VE&E) Committee as SAL Commissioner.

At the national level, Henry served as a member of the Veterans Employment & Education Committee and as the Northeast Regional Membership Representative for 2025–2026. He also served on the South Jersey Regional Stand Down Committee as Volunteer Coordinator.

Henry graduated from Stockton State College, now Stockton University, with a Bachelor's Degree in Marine Science, and from Camden County College with an Associate's Degree in Fire Science Technologies. He is a graduate of NJ SAL College Basic and Advanced courses and has completed NMI 1, 2, and 3, American Legion College Extension courses, SAL Commander and NEC training, and Be the One training.

Henry retired from the New Jersey Forest Fire Service as an Assistant Division Fire Warden. During his career, he became a certified Wildland Fire Instructor and oversaw fire suppression, prevention, and training operations throughout southern New Jersey.

Henry continues to serve in wildfire response operations in both New Jersey and across the nation as part of a Great Basin Complex Incident Management Team, serving as either a Logistics Section Chief or Supply Unit Leader. He has also deployed with the New Jersey State Police to Puerto Rico and with national response teams to New York and New Jersey for hurricane relief assignments.

Matthew W. Griffis (AZ), NVC Western



Matthew W. Griffis is a 15-year member of Squadron 109 in Vail, Arizona, joining on June 4, 2012. His eligibility is through his father, Alfred Wayne Griffis, a retired 28-year U.S. Air Force Chief Master Sergeant, E-9, and member of American Legion Post 109 in Vail, Arizona.

He previously served as the National Western Region Membership Chair and as National Sergeant-at-Arms under National Commander Joseph Navarrette for 2024–2025. His leadership experience includes Past National Executive Committeeman for the Detachment of Arizona, Past Detachment Commander of Arizona, Area "A" Vice Commander, and Squadron 109 Commander. In 2016, he was recognized as the Detachment of Arizona Sons Member of the Year.

He has also served for the past nine years as Director of the American Legion Law Enforcement Career Academy and is a member of American Legion Riders Chapter 109 in Vail, Arizona. Matthew is the founder and chairman of the C.H.A.M.P. Foundation, a nonprofit organization supporting the Fisher House of Southern Arizona at the VA Hospital, raising more than $500,000. He is also a graduate of National Management Institute Class 3, completing the program on April 30, 2022.

Professionally, Matthew retired from the Tucson Police Department after 27 years of service and previously served five years in law enforcement in Florida, totaling 32 years of police experience. Since 2012, he has worked as a federal contract employee supporting the Department of Homeland Security and the Drug Enforcement Administration in security operations. His combined law enforcement experience exceeds 45 years.

During his Tucson Police Department career, Matthew spent 17 years as a training officer, including his final five years assigned to the Arizona Peace Officer Standards and Training Board. His work included managing and instructing law enforcement training at all levels, from basic to advanced, as well as youth driver training and Police Explorer programs.

George Gray (GA), NVC Southeast



George Gray is a proud 22-year member of James T. Rayle Squadron 123 in Lexington, Georgia. His eligibility for membership is through his father, Marvin W. Gray, who served in the United States Army during World War II.

George has held numerous leadership positions within his squadron and the Detachment of Georgia. He currently serves as Squadron Adjutant and has previously served as Squadron Senior Vice Commander and Squadron Commander. At the detachment level, he has served as District Commander and District Adjutant, Detachment Junior Vice Commander, Senior Vice Commander, Detachment Commander, and Membership Chairman.

In addition, George has served for four years as both a consultant to and a member of the National Membership & Squadron Activities Committee. He is a graduate of the National Management Institute and has completed Columbia University's "Be The One" training program.

Beyond his work within the Sons of The American Legion, George remains active in his community. He currently serves his county on both the Board of Elections and the Board of Assessors.

Phil Stander (IL), NVC Central



Phil Stander has been a dedicated member of the Sons of The American Legion since 2005, when he joined Squadron 911 in Wauconda, Illinois. Since that time, he has remained actively involved at every level of the organization, demonstrating a lifelong commitment to the mission and values of The American Legion Family.

Phil's eligibility in the Sons of The American Legion is through his grandfather, Frank Stander, who honorably served as a Private First Class in the United States Army during World War I. His family's connection to The American Legion dates back to 1919 with the founding of Sesterhenn Post 166 in Glenview, Illinois. The post was named in honor of Joseph Sesterhenn, Frank Stander's brother-in-law, who was wounded in action on October 4, 1918, and passed away later that evening in a field hospital.

The Stander family has maintained a proud legacy of service and involvement within The American Legion Family for generations. Frank Stander served as Commander of Post 166 in 1939, while Catherine Stander remained an active member of the American Legion Auxiliary until her passing in 1979. Family gatherings were often filled with stories and memories centered around service, patriotism, and the importance of The American Legion.

Phil's family continues that tradition of service today. His significant other, Maureen Kuchta, and his three daughters, Mary, Courtney, and Tiffany, are members of the American Legion Auxiliary. His grandson, Jack, is a member of the Sons of The American Legion. Courtney's husband, Cody Gardenier, currently serves in the United States Army and is stationed at Fort Carson in Colorado Springs, Colorado. He is also a member of Post 911 in Wauconda.

In 1985, Phil founded Stander's Landscaping, where he developed strong leadership, project management, and organizational skills through years of successfully operating and managing a business. His professional experience has reinforced his ability to motivate teams, manage complex projects, and achieve goals in a timely and professional manner.

Throughout his years of service, Phil has held numerous leadership positions at the Squadron, District, Division, and Detachment levels. He served as Detachment Commander for the Detachment of Illinois from 2019 to 2021 and has also served on the National Child Welfare Foundation Committee as a consultant. Most recently, he served as the Central Region Membership Chairman.

Honoring the service and sacrifice of our nation's veterans and supporting the Four Pillars of The American Legion remain central to Phil's lifelong dedication to the organization. He remains committed to continuing his service in any capacity that helps strengthen and advance the mission of the Sons of The American Legion.

Casey Hanson (SD), NVC Midwest



Casey Hanson currently serves as National Vice Commander for the Midwest Region of the Sons of The American Legion. A proud charter member of Arlington Squadron #42 in Arlington, South Dakota, he has been a dedicated member of the SAL for over 12 years. Casey is also a charter member of the Kingsbury County American Legion Riders Chapter. His eligibility stems from his father, Terry L. Hanson, a United States Army veteran who served during the Vietnam War.

At the squadron and detachment levels, Casey has demonstrated strong and consistent leadership. He has served as Squadron Adjutant since the squadron's chartering and remains in that role today. At the detachment level, he served as Vice Commander from 2017 to 2021 and as Detachment Commander for two consecutive terms from 2021 to 2023. Since 2023, he has served as Detachment Liaison.

On the national level, Casey has been an active contributor to several key committees. He has served on the National Membership and Squadron Activities Committee since 2022, including as Vice Chairman from 2023 to 2025. He also served as Vice Chairman of the SAL Veterans & Children Foundation Ad Hoc Committee from 2024 to 2025.

Casey's dedication to membership growth and veteran advocacy has earned him national recognition. In 2022, he was the inaugural recipient of the National Recruiter of the Year Award. He is a two-time Blue Brigade award recipient, and in 2024, he was honored as the National George B. Evans Grassroots Veterans Advocate of the Year.

A lifelong resident of Arlington, Casey graduated from Arlington High School in 2001 and earned an Associate of Applied Science degree in Sales, Marketing, and Management from Lake Area Technical College in 2003. He is employed by Badger Oil as a bulk fuel delivery driver.

Beyond the SAL, Casey is deeply committed to his community. He has served on the Badger Fire Department since 2007 and has been a member of the Arlington School Board since 2021. He also dedicated a decade to youth athletics as head wrestling coach from 2015 to 2025. A longtime dirt track racer, Casey spent 26 years competing across the Midwest, earning multiple track championships before retiring in 2020.

2026-27 National Appointed Officers

National Adjutant:	**Anthony Wright (PA)**
Assistant Adjutants:	**Robert Avery (NY)**
	Scott Thornton (OH)
	Seth Rippe (NE)
	Tim Brower (NY)
National Chaplain:	**Nick Arceo (CO)**
National Historian:	**Jeff Thorne (MD)**
National Sgt-at-Arms:	**Tom Arista (TX)**
Assistant Sgt-at-Arms:	**Brian Waters (PA)**
	Bob Bascou (NJ)
	Cliff Barker (IA)
	Greg Falco (NY)
National Parliamentarian:	**Chris Cook (OK)**



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

Editorial: Together, Like Legion Family Should Be

Mike Arner sitting next to me says the title for this should be "Trains, Planes, and Automobiles."

Sometimes I struggle to come up with a topic to write about for these editorials, and sometimes the topic is sitting in front of me screaming to be written about. I try to make them lighthearted, entertaining, and relatable. The comedy of errors I'm writing about now basically writes itself.



Editor's Photo: Carl and Rusty, front. Mike and Lisa, back.

I'm writing this month from the back seat of a Toyota Altima, somewhere between Columbus and Louisville at about 8am. We'll make it to the National Convention, hell or highwater.

Rewind to yesterday afternoon, when my wife Meghan was dropping me off at Newark -Liberty International Airport (EWR). We drove from home on Route 21, when torrential thunderstorms hit – dumping a good deal of rain in Newark, turning the highway into a river. We got to the airport around 3:30p, for a 5:30p flight.

That then became a 6:15 flight, then 8:00pm, then 10pm, then 11 and 11:30pm. The weather was that bad that EWR was not letting any planes land or take off.

Finally, a little after 11pm, we got the dreaded notification on the app – ***FLIGHT CANCELLED***. Ugh. Worst part – no flights available until 8pm the next night.

I was on the same flight as a number of other New Jersey Legion Family members, including PDC's Carl Albern, Jr., our Detachment Adjutant, ANEC PDC Mike Arner, and Auxiliary Department President Lisa Natale.

Lisa said enthusiastically, let's just get a rental car and drive to Louisville – a 10-and-a-half hour drive.

Carl said lets go; Mike said "Why did we wait so long?", and I – the one who doesn't drive – said sure, I'll hop in. We left in an airport rental a little after midnight.

And here is the meaning of this story – the four of us having a blast in the car ride. Some snoozing to be sure (the ones not driving), talking, laughing, and enjoying each other's company. Making the best of a not-so-best situation .. and doing it together. ***Together, like Legion Family should be.*** As my friend Ravi says, "One Team, One Fight."

PNC Chris Cerullo (NY), someone I consider a mentor, has showed me over the conversations we've had that this organization is more about the stories you can recall and the friendships you make. It's about the human element – the personal relationships – as much as it is about the Four Pillars, the service, and the legacy. As immediate PNC Clancy says – *it's about fun with purpose.*

Lisa was like Iron Man – starting the first leg of the relay, and ending it as well. Not an easy drive, especially being overnight and in bad weather – but they did it.

We're within 100 miles of Louisville now … and I can't wait to see the rest of my brothers and friends from around the country. This will no doubt be fodder for conversation, as I wait to see my "Dirty Dozen" brother SAL Leading Candidate Thom Skelley be elected to the high office of National Commander.

Just as Maryland PDC Jason Miller writes in his article "From the Blue Cap Up" on Page 11, these are the stories we tell. This is how we upsell the brotherhood, and how we engage squadron members … by fostering an environment where we are more then a service organization … **we are family.**

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A newsletter of Sons of The American Legion
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Have some news to share?
Monthly deadline is the 25th
Email us at rusty.myers@ymail.com



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SAL NATIONAL COMMANDER
Thom Skelley (TX)
SAL NATIONAL ADJUTANT
Anthony W. Wright (PA)
SAL NATIONAL VICE-COMMANDERS

Northeast:	Henry Hasselhan III (NJ)
Southeast:	George Gray (GA)
Central:	Phil Stander (IL)
Midwest:	Casey Hanson (SD)
Western:	Matt Griffis (AZ)

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SONS OF THE AMERICAN LEGION

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14 October 2026
11 November 2026
09 December 2026
13 January 2027
10 February 2027
10 February 2027



Nick Arceo (CO), National Chaplain

Chaplain's Corner: *"Use the gifts God gave you wisely"*

Dear Sons of The American Legion,

I am Nick Arceo from the Detachment of Colorado, and it is an honor to introduce myself as your newly appointed National Chaplain for 2026-2027. I have been a PUFL SAL member for the past 14 years. My eligibility is through my father, Greg Arceo Jr., a United States Army veteran of WWII.

As we begin this year, September brings many significant opportunities for the Sons of The American Legion to engage with our communities:

- **September 11 (Patriot Day): Honoring the victims and first responders of the 9/11 attacks.**
- **September 16 (American Legion Day): Commemorating the date in 1919 when the U.S. Congress granted our original Federal Charter.**
- **September 18 (National POW/MIA Recognition Day): Dedicated to honoring prisoners of war and those missing in action.**
- **September 17-23 (Constitution Week).**
- **September 18-20 (Americanism Conference): Focusing on youth and community programs.**

As you participate in these events, I encourage you to keep this quote from Medal of Honor recipient Jefferson J. DeBlanc USMC in mind: "Use the gifts God gave you wisely. Be positive, have self-esteem and reflect patriotism when dealing with your fellow man."

As your Chaplain, my purpose is to support your spiritual growth and your relationships with one another. I would be honored to pray for you; please feel free to forward any needs or prayer requests, and I will keep them in my prayers.

As you continue your dedicated work on behalf of our Veterans, please remember that God thinks of you, looks after you, and cares for you every moment of every day.

Let's pray together,

Heavenly Father, we thank you for our many blessings, especially for the United States and our spiritual gifts. Help us never to take them for granted. As we begin this new year, we ask for a special blessing for our newly elected Commander, Thom Skelley. Please grant him wisdom and safety as he travels across this great country on behalf of The Sons of The American Legion. We also ask for your guidance over all our new officers as they lead our organization. We pray for the entire American Legion family. May we be the beacon of light you intended us to be for our veterans. Please bless and heal all those in need. Bless our troops around the world, keep them safe, and grant them the strength to carry on.

In your Holy Name Lord God, we pray. Amen

Thank you for everything you do. I look forward to seeing you all soon

God Bless,
National Chaplain Nick Arceo
nicrco@gmail.com





Tyler Vanice (VA), National SAL 100 Anniversary Chairman

Preserve Your History

Every squadron has its own history and its own story to tell. That history is often closely tied to the American Legion Post it calls home, the community it serves, and the people who stepped forward over the years to make the squadron successful. Regardless of where that story began, it started because a group of people had passion and a reason to serve. After all, why should doing good work for our veterans and our communities be limited only to the veterans themselves?

The Sons of The American Legion does have its own story to tell, and that history is worth preserving.

As we look toward important anniversaries in the history of our organization, now is an excellent time for every squadron to look through its closets, filing cabinets, display cases, storage rooms, old hallways you don't venture into, and computer files and ask a simple question: "What are we doing to preserve our squadron's history for the next generation?" The likely answer is not much. No better time to start than the present.

Put Your History on Display. Some squadrons may still have old lapel pins, ribbons, caps, membership cards, convention badges, photographs, scrapbooks, marching corps uniforms, banners, flags, or other memorabilia from decades past. If your squadron has these items, why not show them off? Instead of leaving an old uniform folded in a box or a historic banner sitting in a closet, consider creating a small display at your Post home. A curio cabinet, shadow box, framed display, or mannequin can become a simple squadron history exhibit. Take pride in what your squadron had accomplished. Update it with a photo of your current officers even!

Include photographs and captions explaining what visitors are looking at (if you know the names and dates). Who wore the uniform? What year was the photograph taken? What event was being celebrated? Who are the people pictured?

An artifact or photo without a story is cool and interesting but an artifact with content, a story behind it, becomes history.

And remember: if we do not tell our own story, who will?

Some squadrons may not even know the names of all their Past Squadron Commanders. If that is the case, that is okay. The important thing is to start looking.

Look through old Post newsletters, meeting minutes, annual reports, banquet programs, photographs, newspaper clippings, membership records, convention programs, and scrapbooks. Longtime members of the Post can also be invaluable sources of information.

If you don't have success there, look elsewhere. If you have a SAL District, contact your District officers or historian to see what records may have survived. Your Detachment may have newsletters, convention proceedings, membership reports, photographs, officer rosters, or other material that can help fill in missing pieces. Your American Legion Department may also have records that provide useful information. There may not always be an answer, but it is worth asking.

The best approach is usually to start locally and work your way outward. Your squadron and post are much more likely to have detailed information about your local history than National Headquarters.

Keeping your History. If your squadron does not already maintain a list of its officers by year, start one now. Better yet, take a group photograph of the officers every year. A future Squadron Historian will thank you.

Consider also keeping a short biography of your Squadron Commander. It does not need to be extensive. A paragraph about how long they have been a member, their eligibility connection, offices held, employment or community involvement, and their goals for the year can provide tremendous historical value decades later.

Include these biographies in your newsletter, installation program, or meeting minutes so that they become part of the permanent record.

One of the most important things your squadron can do save your meeting minutes.

Minutes provide the basic documentary history of an organization. They tell future members what decisions were made, what programs were conducted, where money was donated, who served as officers, and what issues were important to the squadron at the time.

In my professional work, I have heard far too many stories of an organization's records being kept entirely by one Secretary, Adjutant, Historian, or longtime member. When that individual passes away, moves, or becomes unable to continue serving, nobody knows where the records are.

Sometimes the family does not know the material belongs to the organization. Sometimes they simply see boxes of old papers and throw them away. Your squadron's historical

records, whether minutes or officers reports, belong to the squadron, and should not live in someone's basement, attic, or on their 1995 Windows PC that's still "operational." Establish a central place at your post for permanent records whenever possible. Hopefully your squadron has a room, or at least a filing cabinet. Documents like these should just be filed monthly when you meet, or at least annually, so the history is kept locally.

Digital records are incredibly useful, but they can disappear just as easily as paper records.

Computers fail. Passwords are forgotten. Email accounts are closed. Cloud services change. USB drives get lost. For important permanent records, consider maintaining both a paper copy and a digital copy.

Digital folders should be clearly organized. Instead of files named:

IMG_00427.jpg or *Minutes Final FINAL 2.docx*

use descriptive names such as:

2026-05-14_Squadron_Meeting_Minutes.pdf or *2026-07-04_Independence_Day_Parade_Group_Photo.jpg*

Organize folders by year and subject so someone unfamiliar with your system can still understand it.

And most importantly, make sure more than one officer knows where the records are located and how to access them. We are in the 21st century, so please consider using

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Preserve Your History:
Continued from Page 8>>>

cloud storage. Google emails are free and offer free cloud storage up to a certain amount of GBs, and you can share folders with multiple people! It is always good practice to have more than one person having access to anything.

Saving Your Media. One of the easiest things to lose is the information associated with a photograph.

A picture of twenty Squadron members standing at a banquet might be easy to identify today. Thirty years from now, there may be nobody left who remembers who they were.

When possible, record:

- Who is pictured?
- What was the event?
- When was the photograph taken?
- Where was it held?
- Why was the event significant?

For printed photographs, write the information lightly on the reverse using an appropriate archival pencil, or place the photograph in a sleeve with a separate identification sheet. For digital photographs, include the information in the file name or in a document stored with the images. Do not assume someone will remember later. You are the change we need.

If your Squadron publishes a newsletter, save every issue.

Newsletters are often among the best historical records an organization produces because they document events that may never appear in formal meeting minutes. They may include photographs, Commander messages, membership drives, community service projects, obituaries, awards, election results, convention reports, and personal stories. Keep a permanent set arranged chronologically, and save a PDF copy whenever possible. The same applies to event programs, flyers, banquet booklets, convention materials, and special publications.

Old documents and photographs do not need complicated conservation treatment to survive, but they do need reasonable care. Avoid storing important records in damp basements, hot attics, garages, or areas where water leaks are possible, and please keep documents away from direct sunlight.

Avoid ordinary pressure-sensitive tape on historic documents and photographs. Do not laminate original historical documents simply to protect them. When possible, use archival-quality folders, sleeves, and boxes. For recent years and filing purposes, its fine to use manila folders.

For valuable or fragile material, consider contacting a local museum, archive, historical society, or library for advice.

Today, much of our organizational history happens online. Facebook posts, websites, email newsletters, and other social media platforms document an enormous amount of Squadron activity, but those platforms should never be considered permanent archives. Facebook will not be around forever (remember Myspace?).

Periodically save important photographs, posts, newsletters, announcements, and other digital content outside of social media. When the option allows, always save the file with the highest resolution possible.

Record the Stories of Your Members. Some of your Squadron's most important history may be sitting across the table at your next meeting. Ask longtime members how the Squadron began. Ask them about memorable fundraisers, conventions, parades, Legion Family events, community projects, and members who made a difference. This is great content for newsletters!

"The Sons of The American Legion does have its own story to tell, and that history is worth preserving."

A Squadron Historian can record an interview using a phone or digital recorder. Even a thirty-minute conversation with a longtime member can preserve stories that otherwise might disappear forever.

Ask questions such as:

- When did you join?
- Why did you join the Sons of The American Legion?
- Who were the leaders when you became involved?
- What events do you remember most?
- How has the squadron changed?
- Who are the people future members should remember?

These are some methods your squadron can do to showcase and preserve their history. Each squadron has their own limitation, but if you don't invest in yourselves, no one else will. Be proud that you are making a difference in your community. Flaunt it even! Good work needs to be remembered, and that starts with good record keeping, doing work, and showcasing what you have done.

The Sons of Illinois



Submitted by Mike Vozar (IL), Contributor to *The Millennium*



Squadron 20 in Newton, Illinois held a Jeep Run fundraiser to benefit the Newton Post 20 Veterans Assistance Fund. This fund is used to help veterans in need with medical bills or obtaining household or personal items.



Several Sons from the Detachment of Illinois First Division enjoying the Chicago White Sox and Houston Astros baseball game on July 26th. This is an annual fundraiser event by the First Division Sons to support Illinois American Legion Baseball.

Legion.org—*10 August 2026*

Legion National Commander Shares Theme: "BPOTS"



Jay Bowen of Colorado Springs, Colo., is the 2026-2027 American Legion National Commander.

Bowen is a member of Neal Thomas Jr.-Centennial Post 209 in Colorado Springs and has held leadership positions in the organization at the post, department and national level, including chairman of the National Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission, Veterans Employment & Education Commission and Membership & Post Activities Committee.

During his address to attendees of the National Membership Workshop in Indianapolis on Saturday, Aug. 8, Bowen shared that over the past several years, the theme for national commanders has been Be the One, The American Legion's veteran suicide prevention mission.

The past national commanders "have done such an amazing job of getting that (Be the One) word out, getting the conversation going, getting it started talking about the education, talking about ways to identify a veteran in crisis, and where to go for help once we do," Bowen said. "They have done so well at that, that it is no longer a theme. It's a mission now. It's the number one mission of The American Legion, and it needs to be the number one mission of The American Legion. We need to continue that conversation. We've got to continue letting veterans know that it's okay not to be okay."

While Be the One will not be Bowen's official theme if elected national commander, it is closely connected, he said of his theme.

BPOTS – be part of the solution.

"I know you've heard you're either part of the problem or you're part of the solution. If you can be part of the solution, and you choose not to be, then you're part of the problem. It's just that simple," Bowen said. "You're here because you want to be part of the solution. That's why you continue to serve. That's why you continue to pay your dues, and you keep coming back, you want to learn more and hear more. Because you want to be part of the solution.

"So let's be part of the solution and be the one to help reduce veteran suicide. Let's be part of the solution and be the one to take care of our veterans and their family. Let's be part of the solution and be the one to help educate and mentor our youth. Let's be part of the solution and be the one, be the first ones out there, waving that American flag and showing our patriotic spirit. And let's be part of the solution to help advocate for a very strong national security."

The four pillars of The American Legion connected to Bowen's theme – Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, Children & Youth, Americanism and National Security – should be the why for veterans to join the organization he said. And they should be a part of the elevator speech.

"Veterans have to understand that there's value in their membership. We all know the value in The American Legion. That's why we're here. That's why you continue to serve," he said. "We've got to get out and communicate that. We've got to share that value. We got to have that elevator speech so when a veteran asks, 'Why should I belong to The American Legion?' Then in about 60 to 90 seconds, you can tell them your why. You can share with them the value you find in membership."

What is Bowen's elevator speech that he said works because veterans believe in it?

"When a veteran asks me why should I join The American Legion, I tell them, 'Well, we believe in God and country. We believe in taking care of our veterans and their families. We believe in educating and mentoring our youth. We believe in waving that American flag and showing our true patriotic spirit. We believe in advocating for a very strong natural security. Now are these things you believe in? You need to join the American Legion.' I've never had a veteran not believe in any of that. Because that's why we serve.

"It's about giving. It's about paying it forward. That's why you join The American Legion. It's about giving back. It's about continuing to serve."

Bowen has visited about 46 American Legion departments over the past few years while campaigning for national commander. During his visits to the posts within those departments, he has seen the Legion's programs at work, as well as support for veterans, their family and community. And he encourages all posts, no matter how big or small, to "do something that supports the community, that supports our pillars, that supports the programs.

"People will join The American Legion if they see that there's something in it for them," Bowen said. "They don't want to sit in a meeting and hear a report. But if we're out in the community, if we're supporting funeral honors, if we're walking in a parade, if we're doing a cookout, if we're doing those things in the community, that's what they're interested in doing. And they will do it."



Jason Miller (MD), National Membership Sqdrn. Activities Chair

From the Blue Cap Up

Now comes a question every level of our organization eventually has to answer: ***Who comes next?***

Every Squadron needs future officers. Every District or Region needs members willing to serve. Every Detachment needs future leaders, committee members and Executive Committeemen.

And our National Organization needs experienced members willing to accept responsibilities beyond their local communities.

None of those leaders simply appear.

They all begin as Blue Caps. Leadership Development Starts Locally

Think about the people serving throughout our organization today. A Detachment Commander was once simply a Squadron member. A Region or District officer started locally. A Detachment Executive Committeeman came from the membership he represents.

National officers, National Executive Committeemen and National committee members began their SAL journey in local Squadrons.

Before the titles, committees, conventions and responsibilities, there was a Blue Cap who became involved.

That's why leadership development isn't something that belongs only to Detachment or National.

It begins in our Squadrons.

Look Beyond Who Is Already Serving. One of the easiest habits for any volunteer organization to fall into is relying on the same people.

The same members attend the meetings.

The same members work the events.

The same members serve on committees.

The same members eventually rotate through leadership positions.

Those dedicated members are incredibly valuable.

But we should also continually ask: ***Who else can we bring into the conversation?***

Maybe there's a newer member who asks good questions.

Maybe someone has strong organizational skills. Maybe another member is comfortable speaking in front of people. Someone may understand finances. Someone else may be excellent with technology or communications.

Another member may simply be dependable and willing to learn.

Leadership development doesn't begin by handing someone a title. It begins by recognizing potential and providing an opportunity.

Invite Someone to Participate. Sometimes the next leader isn't stepping forward because nobody has ever asked him.

Start small. Invite a member to attend a Region or District meeting with you.

Ask him to help with a Squadron project. Invite him to serve on a committee. Let him give a report.

Ask him to represent the Squadron at an event. Encourage him to attend a Detachment meeting or convention. Let him see more of the organization.

Then explain what he's seeing.

Exposure creates understanding. Understanding can create interest.

A member who has never attended anything beyond his squadron may have no idea what opportunities exist elsewhere in the organization.

We can't expect members to become interested in something they've never experienced.

Mentor — Don't Just Recruit. Finding someone willing to accept a position is only the beginning.

We also need to prepare him to succeed.

Too often in volunteer organizations, someone accepts an office and is essentially told: *"Congratulations. Here's the binder. Good luck."*

We can do better.

If you've served in a position before, share what you've learned. Explain the responsibilities. Introduce the people he'll need to know. Show him where to find resources. Explain deadlines and procedures.

And perhaps most importantly, explain why the position matters.

Don't just teach someone how to complete a task. Help him understand how that task connects to the larger mission.

That's how we build confidence and capable leadership.

Leadership Doesn't Always Mean Becoming Commander. We should also broaden our definition of leadership.

Not every strong member wants to become Squadron Commander. Not everyone wants to stand behind a podium.

And not everyone needs to.

Our organization needs people with many different abilities. We need membership workers. Finance-minded members. Historians. Adjutants. Committee members. Executive Committeemen. Program chairmen. Mentors. Communicators. Members who understand parliamentary procedure. People who can organize events.

And members who simply know how to bring people together.

Leadership isn't one position. It's using your abilities to help move the mission forward.

When we recognize that, we create many more opportunities for members to contribute.

Give People Room to Learn. Developing leaders also means allowing people to learn.

A new officer isn't going to know everything on his first day. Neither did the person before him.

Questions should be encouraged. Training should be available. Experienced members should be resources, not obstacles.

And when someone makes a reasonable mistake while learning, the goal should be to help him understand it and become better prepared for the next time.

If we expect new leaders to already know everything before they serve, we will eventually run out of people willing to try.

Experience has to begin somewhere.

Don't Hold on Too Tightly. There is another responsibility that comes with leadership: Preparing someone else to eventually do the job. Serving an organization isn't about making ourselves indispensable.

Continued on Page 12>>>

From the Blue Cap Up:
Continued from Page 11>>>

It's about making the organization sustainable.

A successful leader shouldn't only be able to say: *"Look what we accomplished while I was here."*

He should also be able to say: *"I helped prepare someone to continue it after me."*

That doesn't diminish the service of the current leader. It strengthens his legacy.

Institutional knowledge shouldn't disappear when someone's term ends.

Pass it along. Share the contacts. Explain the history. Provide the records. Introduce the next person. Remain available when appropriate.

Then give the new leader room to lead.

Participation Builds Future Leaders. This is why the previous chapters connect so closely.

Communication keeps members informed. Education helps them understand the organization. Understanding encourages participation. Participation exposes members to new opportunities. And those opportunities help develop future leaders.

It is a cycle.

A member who receives information may attend his first squadron meeting.

That meeting may lead him to a region or district meeting.

He may eventually serve on a committee.

Then perhaps as a delegate.

Maybe later as an Executive Committeeman or officer.

And someday he may be the person encouraging another new "Blue Cap" to take his first step.

That's how an organization sustains itself.

Who Comes Next? Leadership development shouldn't begin when an officer announces he isn't running again.

By then, we're already behind.

It should happen continually.

Look around your Squadron. Who hasn't been asked?

Who has a skill we're not using? Who shows interest? Who asks questions? Who could benefit from a mentor? Who might attend the next Region, District or Detachment meeting if someone simply invited him?

And perhaps most importantly: ***Who can you help prepare?***

Our organization has been passed from one generation of members to another for decades.

Those serving today are temporary stewards of something much larger than any one of us.

Eventually, every position changes hands. Every committee gets new members. Every Commander becomes a Past Commander.

And another Blue Cap gets an opportunity to serve.

Our responsibility isn't simply to lead while it's our turn. Our responsibility is to make sure someone is prepared when his turn comes.

So identify potential. Invite participation. Teach the process. Share your knowledge. Mentor someone. Give new leaders room to grow.

And continue looking for the Blue Cap who might someday be ready to take the next step.

Because the future leadership of our Squadron, Region or District, Detachment and National Organization isn't somewhere out there waiting to be found.

It's already sitting within our membership.

We simply have to recognize it, encourage it and help develop it.

Today's Blue Caps are tomorrow's leaders. Let's make sure we're preparing them today.



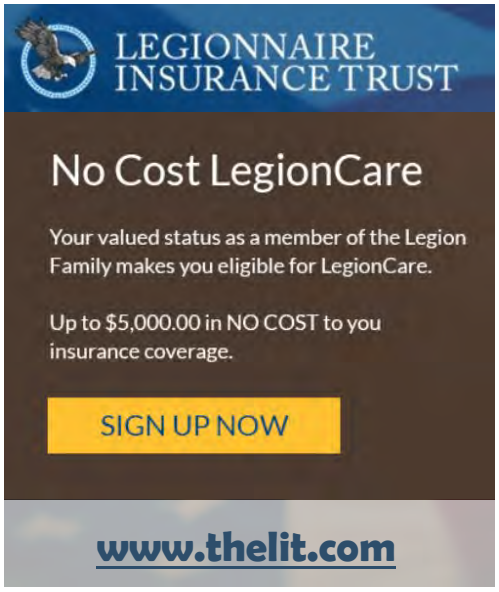
SAVE THE DATE

for

NATIONAL WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA DAY

SATURDAY, DEC. 19, 2026

WREATHS across AMERICA



SPOTTED BY A SON

In August's newsletter, we asked if you could find the image of the Louisville Skyline. This month's winner is:



Woodie Woodward
Squadron 46
Yuma, Arizona

Woodward is a dual member, with 33 years membership in the Sons and 36 years as a Legionnaire. He served in the US Army, and is an Honorary Life Member. He has served as District 1 Representative, Detachment District Development Chairman, Past Squadron Adjutant (14 years), and SAL Advisor (12 years).

He is eligible for SAL membership through his father's service, who was also in the US Army from 1949-51 with 101st Airborne Division in Korea.



Jason Pepe (PA), National Membership and Sqdrn. Activities Cmte.

Attending the 63rd National Membership Workshop

On August 7-8 2026, I had the honor to represent the National Membership and Squadron Activities Committee and attend the 63rd Annual National Membership Workshop in Indianapolis. Even though this is geared towards the Legion, the message of the workshop is a shared one, to build a stronger American Legion. The attendees worked through one of four tracks, Growing Membership, Strengthening Relationships, Supporting Success Through Systems, and Lead the Future.

As this was my first time at the Workshop; I was tracked in the Red Track, Growing Membership.

My group had a mixture of Legionnaires from around the country, with a few Auxiliary as well.

The tracks were led by members if the National IA Membership team. They classes were informative, but the real heart of the workshop is the interaction of the attendees with each other. Hearing what works and doesn't work in other posts around the organization was amazing. This interaction is what helps our great organization grow and prosper. Granted some ideas are the same across the board, membership drives, Buddy Checks, fundraisers, but we all get blinders to things in our own areas. "We have always done this" or "Everyone else around us does this so we know it works". This workshop made the attendees step outside that comfort zone and listen to new ideas.

This also applies to Squadron/Post Activities, the second half of our committee name. It is also the more overlooked part of the committee. Over two days, I heard so many great ideas from different attendees about what they do to keep and grow membership, along with how they make a community impact. Community impact is key. Not only does it help grow membership when we get out in the community, it showcases that The American Legion is more than just a canteen. Community involvement is something that is necessary for the Legion Family. Not only does it fully intertwine with the 4 Pillars, but making your local Post/Squadron an integral part of the community is key. One of the best things I heard was how some Posts open up their hall or meeting areas to all the local groups in town (Rotary, Lions, Boy/Girl Scouts, etc), giving them a free place to meet and connect. This goodwill only strengthens the bonds in the community.

Not every impact to the community needs donations or volunteers. In all, the workshop was one of the most informative things I have attended in my 16 years in the organization. The facilitators were well informed and engaging. They truly have a passion for this and passion is necessary to grow and strengthen our organization. The whole training can be summed up in one question that was asked. "If your Post shut its doors tomorrow, would the community notice?" If the answer is anything other than yes, then there is many opportunities for the Sons and the entire Legion Family to make an impact in peoples lives.



Facebook Photo: NC Skelley addressing the workshop

Legiontown, USA: *06 June 2026*

AZ: SAL 62 presents $40,000 in donations between two charities

At their June meeting, the John J. Morris Post 62 (Peoria, Ariz.) Sons of The American Legion presented two checks to charities. Each check was for $20,000! The squadron commander and Arizona detachment commander presented one to Melissa McQueen and the Children's Organ Transplant Association. They provide support for transplant-related expenses for patients and families. With this check it makes $42,000 donation over two years. The squadron commander and finance officer presented a check to Tom Sheets, executive director of Southwest Veterans Foundation. They provide for veterans and their families through higher-education scholarships, veteran suicide prevention initiatives and community grants. Kudos to our SAL team for supporting the community.



Legiontown Photo: Squadron Commander Parkinson and Finance Officer Justin Smitch present check to Tom Sheets of Southwest Veterans Foundation.





Mike Monserud (IA), Leading Candidate for National Commander

Legacy Run in Iowa

When the National American Legion Legacy Run hit Iowa on Day 1, they found out what we in Iowa refer to as Iowa Nice. We crossed the river into Iowa after Blair, Nebraska welcomed us into town along with National Vice Commander Chris Casey and his whole family holding a flag line. Iowa welcomed us at the first stop with Flags and cheers. As we left that stop and headed towards Carroll County, nobody could anticipate what Iowa Nice means. Every small town we went through had people lined up with flags, honking their horns and showing the patriotic pride we have in our state.

Then it happened, we entered Carroll County Iowa. The County Deputies gave us an escort from County line to County line. As we came to the first town of Westside, population about 300 on a good day, poured along the highway as we entered. I would be willing to bet all 300 were there cheering and waving flags and giving us a welcome that would rival most. It did not stop there, every little town in the county did the same. The local Volunteer Fire Department came out with lights and sirens, and the town welcomed all of us. They even stopped a local tractor pull and told the audience we were coming and to head to the side of the road to welcome the American Legion Riders.



Small town after small town did the same. It made you sit up a little bit higher in the seat and made you remember why this is important and why we do what we do. Then I saw it. An elderly gentleman standing holding a salute with 2 people holding him up. The man held the salute for the whole procession to come through which at 250 plus motorcycles and chase vehicles is a long time.

If you ask why we do this, then I could not think of a better example than that man. At the stop everyone was saying what Carroll County did, and all the other small towns did have such an impact on them. I even heard one person say that must be the best moment on a ride he has ever seen.



This is why the Legacy Ride is so important. We touch the small towns with a huge impact, but what they do not realize is the impact they have on us. We do this for them, the ones who came before us, the ones serving now, and the whole American Legion Family. National Riders Chairman David Heredia leads with passion and after talking to him for any amount of time you will see his passion and know the Riders are in good hands.

One closing point is that even if you are small town like so many in Iowa, that does not mean the American Legion Family can not make a difference. Open your doors and get out and support your community and they will return the favor. It will make your Post better. You don't need a larger membership; you just need a large heart to make a difference.

From Team Iowa and I, come by some time and let us show you what Iowa Nice is about. God Bless the American Legion Riders and remember that Riders Lead The Way.



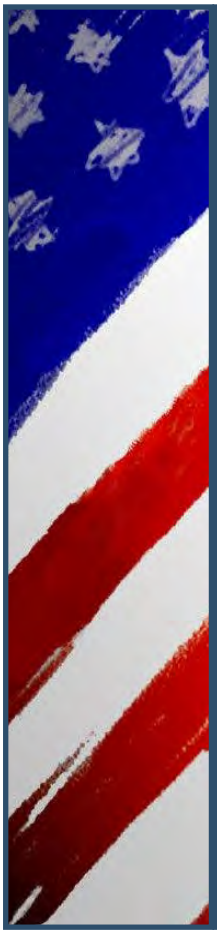


Mike Pook (WI), Staff Contributor to *The Millennium*

"Mentoring Moments"

Minutes prior to a start of a meeting, the person in charge, the Commander, announces "The meeting is about to Start." This is the audience's cue to get settled and become quiet as the meeting is about to begin. This is also your cue to silence your cell phone. Some Squadrons/Districts/ Detachments fine their members with a dollar amount if they are caught with a phone going off. The fines collected are set to go to one of their charity donations. So make sure you silence your phone before the meetings.





Make Note of these Important dates on The American Legion Calendar

13 Oct.	Navy Birthday
26 Oct.	National Day of the Deployed
November	Veterans and Military Family Month
04 Nov.	Election Day
09 Nov.	Buddy Check Week
10 Nov.	US Marine Corps Birthday
11 Nov.	Veterans Day
07 Dec.	Pearl Harbor Day
19 Dec.	Wreaths Across America Day
26 Dec.	250th Anniversary of Washington Crossing the Delaware

Have something you think should be included? Email rusty.myers@ymail.com





Casey Hanson (SD), National Vice Commander Midwest Region

SD: Volga Post #114 had a historical night



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



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



John Davies (MD), National VE and E Commission

VE & E Report

The VE&E Commission is committed to helping preventing homelessness among our veterans. To this end, the VE&E commission is promoting VA endorsed job fairs. Below is a list of job fairs for September. Other listings can be found at: **https://www.vaforvets.va.gov/vaforvets/events/pages/Upcoming_hiring_event.asp**

9/15/2026: Hiring Our Heroes (HOH) will be holding at Buckley Space Force Base in Colorado. Registration information can be found at https://app.brazenconnect.com/a/hiring_our_heroes/e/WQeY7?_gl=1*ksow4k*_ga*Njg3NzI3OTEzLjE3NzkzMDM3ODA.*_ga_S6ZRRWR0NY*czE3ODE1NTE1MTUkbzQkZzEkdDE3ODE1NTIxOTkkajYwJGwwJGgw

9/17/2026: Corporate Gray will be holding a Virtual Military Friendly Job Fair. The event brings together top employers who actively recruit veterans, military spouses, and transitioning service members. Registration information can be found at https://www.corporategray.com/event/virtual-military-friendly-job-fair-9/

9/16/2026 to 9/17/2026: HOH will be holding a Fort Carson Career Summit & Peterson SFB Networking Reception. Registration information can be found at https://app.brazenconnect.com/a/hiring_our_heroes/e/db6ld?_gl=1*1ybopwn*_ga*Njg3NzI3OTEzLjE3NzkzMDM3ODA.*_ga_S6ZRRWR0NY*czE3ODE1NTE1MTUkbzQkZzEkdDE3ODE1NTIxOTkkajYwJGwwJGgw

9/22/2026: HOH will be holding Fort Knox Career Summit. The event will connect world-class military community talent with American employers. Registration information can be found at https://app.brazenconnect.com/a/hiring_our_heroes/e/NpW8E?_gl=1*v6ro55*_ga*Njg3NzI3OTEzLjE3NzkzMDM3ODA.*_ga_S6ZRRWR0NY*czE3ODE1NTE1MTUkbzQkZzEkdDE3ODE1NTIxOTkkajYwJGwwJGgw

9/22/2026: HOH will be holding a virtual SkillBridge Fellowships Information Session. Transitioning service members are invited to learn more about our SkillBridge fellowships, which offer professional training and hands-on experience in the civilian workforce. These programs are designed to help you transition smoothly into a meaningful civilian career. Registration information can be found at https://uschamberfoundation.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_1qRqhT7kS9KJ81DBaF7wrQ#/registration

9/24/2026: HOH will be hosting a Fort Campbell Career Summit. Registration information can be found at https://app.brazenconnect.com/a/hiring_our_heroes/e/qNKld?_gl=1*tdfpiy*_ga*Njg3NzI3OTEzLjE3NzkzMDM3ODA.*_ga_S6ZRRWR0NY*czE3ODE1NTE1MTUkbzQkZzEkdDE3ODE1NTI1NDQkajYwJGwwJGgw

Stand Down events are also helpful to veterans and their families. Stand Downs are typically one- to three-day events during which VA staff and volunteers provide food, clothing and health screenings to homeless and at-risk Veterans. In addition, Veterans also receive referrals for health care, housing solutions, employment, substance use treatment, mental health counseling and other essential services. These events are held throughout the country. A complete list of these events can be found at: https://department.va.gov/homeless/stand-down-events/

If you know a veteran in need, pass this information on to them. You could Be The One!

Travis "Gator" Haas (AZ), SAL Squadron 36 and ALR 36 Director

AZ: Lost Cover Returned

On July 4, 2026, Christy Gans and I were down in Bisbee, AZ celebrating our nation's 250th birthday and her birthday as well. After breakfast we decided to hit some thrift shops and an outdoor thrift sale down the street in Warren, AZ. Upon our arrival at the outdoor sale, we were looking around at all the different vendors when something caught our eye. There, on a table full of miscellaneous old items, was someone's American Legion cover, from Post 109 (Corona De Tucson) in a frame FOR SALE! I asked the gentleman if the cover was his or if he knew the person it belonged to or if he knew the history of it. His response was no; he knew nothing of it, just selling it. His response kind of got under my skin a little bit.



As I looked closer at it, I realized the cover also showed that this person was a past Vice Commander, and a Past Adjutant. The pins on this cover also stated that this person was a Vietnam Veteran, and I believe one pin was a USAF pin. I knew right then what needed to be done. I told Christy we were paying for the frame it was in, not the cover, and we would be returning it to its home at Post 109.

Christy and I did not serve. She is the President of the Auxiliary, and I am a member of the SAL Squadron 36 and the ALR Director at Post 36 in Tucson, AZ. Even though we are not veterans, we recognize the significance of what that cover means. You don't just buy a cover. This cover was earned by the individual it belonged to. It was earned through their service to their country and to our American Legion. There was absolutely no way That I was going to leave that cover on that table.

I am pleased to say that now, this cover is at its home. On 07/19/2026, I was able to present this to the Post 109 Commander during our District meeting. Hopefully they can determine who wore it and maybe display it in honor of this American Veteran.

We were doing what we thought was right. We were also, without even thinking of it, "Being the One"

2026 National Snapshots of Service Contest Winners

Each year, the National Media Communication Commission (MCC) holds a competition where photos which represent the SAL's commitment to "The Four Pillars" are judged. This Snapshots of Service contest is open to any squadron or detachment, and photos are submitted throughout the year. Below are this year's first and second place winners for each pillar. Keep your eye out for announcements on next years' contest, and continue to snap those photos.

Americanism



1st Place: *Leon Beatty Squadron 29 – Washington, Iowa*

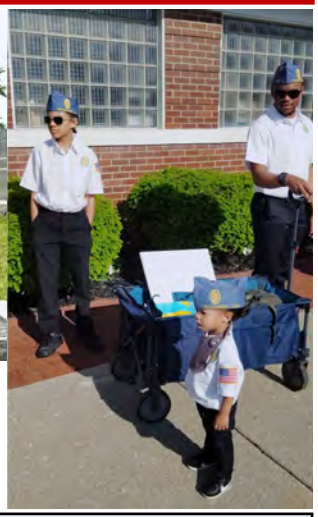


2nd Place: *Nutley Squadron 70 – Nutley, New Jersey*

Children and Youth



1st Place: *Port City Squadron 260 – Warsaw, Indiana*



2nd Place: *Underwood - Ore Squadron 34 – Tecumseh, Michigan*

Veterans Affairs



1st Place: *Greendale Squadron 416 – Greendale, Wisconsin*



2nd Place: *Murrells Inlet Squadron 178 – Myrtle Beach, South Carolina*

National Security



1st Place: *Leon Beatty Squadron 29 – Washington, Iowa*



2nd Place: *Robert G. Durgin Squadron 67 – Dover, New Hampshire*

Keep an eye out for announcements and applications for next year's contest, and for information about the companion contest to Snapshots of Service, Videos of Service.



Greg Shaffer (NJ), National COTA Liaison

COTA Corner

Well, I can't believe that August is over already and we're going into September. I just came back from our Sons of The American Legion National Convention. What a wonderful time I had seeing and spending time with many of my brothers.

The highlight of the weekend was "The Hearts for Heroes" event which COTA put on Saturday night. There was a very good turnout from The American Legion Family. Through the American Legion Family over $400,000 was raised this year for the COTA children and their families. I would like to give a shout-out to the following states that had a major emphasis on raising money for COTA this year: Florida, New Jersey, Georgia, Arizona, and Delaware. Another shout-out to Arizona for raising over $150,000 this year. As a Legion Family, this is what we do to help the COTA families and to give these children a new life. Don't forget, any money raised in your state, stays in your state. This year California and Idaho are getting started to help support the COTA children as well.



Submitted Photo: Arizona making a $151,151.27 COTA Donation.

Once again, I am sending out my challenge asking for $1.00 per member from each American Legion Family. Imagine what this could do to help these COTA children.

Also, please send me any pictures or flyers you may have from a COTA event. We will put them in *The Millennium* to help get the word out to other Legion Families throughout the United States.

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.

Legion.org—*03 August 2026*

NY: SAL Member Walks Across the State to Raise Money for Post

As Don Pupke puts it, if it weren't for American Legion Post 44 in Malverne, N.Y., he might not be here today.

It was at the post hall in 1947 where Pupke's parents met at a school dance. Nearly 80 years later, Pupke is doing what he can to raise funds to renovate the post.

Pupke will complete a fundraising walk across New York state this Friday, having walked some 750-plus miles in just over a month.

"I've always wanted to walk across New York state, just as a tribute to the soldiers and people who, in the old days … (you had to walk to get where you want)," Pupke said. "(I decided) I'd love to do this just as a way to show my love for the state and make it a fundraiser for the Legion."

Beyond his parents' fortuitous meeting at the post, Pupke said the Legion and Post 44 have been a big part of his family. They helped his grandparents after his uncle was killed in World War II, then welcomed his father into the Legion after he served in Korea when other veterans service organizations would not admit him because of eligibility.

"The Legion's always been part of our lives. It's been an important part of our village (of Malverne)," he said.



Facebook Photo



As Pupke noted, the post has served as Malverne's only meeting hall for years. "It's been the site of countless birthday parties, dances, elections, shows and public meetings," Pupke wrote on the website he created for the fundraiser, empirestatewalk.org.

While serving as a poll worker at the post during the 2024 presidential election, Pupke noted the building's poor lighting. He and Legionnaire Dan Kerning approached post leadership to ask what they could do to help with renovating the nearly century-old building, which needed new lighting, kitchen upgrades and more.

That's where the idea to raise money through donations via the statewide walk came from. Pupke began walking the Empire State Trail in Buffalo on July 3. He plans to finish on Long Island on Aug. 7.

Pupke's goal is to raise $25,000 for the post, with all the proceeds he raises going to Post 44's general fund. Those interested in donating can access his GiveSendGo page via empirestatewalk.org.

"We're all part of the Legion, and we're trying to make something happen," Pupke said.





Post 372 (Cherry Hill, NJ) dedicated a new POW/MIA Table donated by Squadron 372. Pictured are Post 372 Commander Joe Merimonde, right, and Sons Squadron 372 Commander Josh Seib, left.

The small black book on the table is a WWII seaman's Bible reused from a local thrift store.



The Post Family of Oscar M. Hykes Post 223 (Shippensburg, PA) receives the prestigious 100% American Legion Family Ribbons, recognizing 100% membership renewal across the Post, Unit, and Squadron.



The Post 668 (Vandalia, OH) Legion Riders and SAL Squadron got to make a special trip to the Dayton VA Medical Center Fisher House to hear about the great things they do for our veterans families, and to present a donation where the Riders and SAL jointly wiped out the Fishers Houses entire Amazon wish list.



Squadron 40 (Plymouth, MA) installation of officers; Senior Vice Squadron Commander Christopher Grant, Junior Vice Squadron Commander Duane DeGowin, Chaplain Peter Alsheimer, SGT at Arms Parker Betters, Historian Kerry Martin (not present), Adjutant John Hefferan and Finance Geoff Pawlowski (not present).



Squadron 102 (Morristown, IN) making a generous donation to their home post.



Installation of SAL officers at Brown and Lynch Post 9 (Easton, PA).



Congratulations to Squadron 27 (Apache Junction, AZ) member Phillip Coleman for receiving the Honor Graduate Award for the highest score in this year's Arizona American Legion College class.



Squadron 235 (Brighton, MI) Sons of The American Legion Chaplain Kirk Powell sets up a membership drive tent and table at The St. Mary Magdalene Church Annual Car Show.



At American Legion William/Burgess Post 68 (Manning SC) Past Detachment Commander Tom Keyrouze and American Legion Department 3rd Vice Commander Lou Morse present to Squadron 68 their new charter, and swear in new members and officers.

SONS OF THE AMERICAN LEGION
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To:

This Month, On The Back Cover …..

The 2026-27 National Leadership Team:

American Legion National Commander Jay Bowen (CO), ALA National President Coral Grout (MA), and SAL National Commander Thom Skelley (TX).



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 COTA (Children's Organ Transplant Association Logo) in the newsletter this month

