SONS OF THE AMERICAN LEGION

A newsletter of Sons of The American Legion

THE MILLENNIUM

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Inside YOUR SAL Newsletter this Month

National POW/MIA Recognition Day

FAL NEC Wrap

National Chaplain: "Chaplain's Corner"

National Historian: Brick-by-Brick: "For the Families who carry their Legacy"

PA: Florida Son plays TAPS at Gettysburg National Cemetery

MN: Wreaths Across America unveils Monument

Meet the new Emergency Preparedness Ad-Hoc Committee

Americanism Committee: Flying Flags For Heroes

Top Ten Detachments 2027 Membership Percentage

1.	Hawaii	68.98%
2.	Phillipines	60.00%
3.	France	53.11%
4.	Louisiana	50.05%
5.	Georgia	42.85%
6.	Utah	40.44%
7.	Wisconsin	39.39%
8.	Puerto Rico	39.33%
9.	Dist. Of Col.	36.89%
10.	Idaho	36.59%

Statistics as of 05 October 2026

BE THE ONE



Special to *The Millennium*—*Thom Skelley (TX), National Commander*

"This year, the message is simple… EVERY MEMBER MATTERS"

As we begin the 2026-2027 administrative year, I am humbled to be able to address you as your National Commander. Truth be told, the position really has not sunk in. To those that know me, our membership in the Sons has never been about titles, gold covers, or recognition. We are who we are and do what we do to honor the legacy of certain veteran(s) that gave us our eligibility.

This year, the message is simple…EVERY MEMBER MATTERS. Every member of our Armed Forces, past and present; those who are still amongst our ranks, those who have answered the final call, and those who are still missing and unaccounted for. Every Legionnaire, Son, Auxiliary and Rider…EVERY MEMBER MATTERS.



Editor's Photo: NC Skelley at the NJ POW/MIA Watchfire

My first official visitation took me to New Jersey where that simple theme could not be more evident. The main focus of the weekend was the 36th Annual POW/MIA Watch Fire in Ocean County. While this event was sponsored by the Sons of The American Legion, it was a true family affair as it was attended by hundreds of members of THE AMERICAN LEGION FAMILY. When we come together, the results are astonishing. Earlier that day, I had the opportunity to enjoy some time at American Legion Post 321 in Union Beach, who put on a pig roast/BBQ with live music that was open to the public in order to spread the message of The American Legion. While there, I learned of the heart wrenching story that was uncovered by then Squadron Chaplain Bob LaCour that although veteran's headstones are paid for by the V.A., the cost to install them in a private cemetery falls upon the family. Bob found multiple grave markers in an office closet that were simply tagged, "NOT PAID, DON'T PUT". I encourage you to **read the full story on The American Legion website**.

Before heading to the opening of the watch fire, NEC Joe Korba suggested we make a stop at The American Legion Leonardo Post 338 who were holding a fundraising auction and BBQ. While speaking with the Post Commander, I learned that the Post survived a complete closure just a few months ago. By bringing the "family" dynamics back to the Post and embracing both the Squadron and the Unit, the doors remained open and Post 338 is on its way back to its former glory days.

I am certain that as my travels take me from coast to coast this year, there will be many more stories to share. These stories will not be about what I did, but the accounts of how we are making a difference. Stories that are coming from within our family; stories that are coming from our members. Why? **Because EVERY MEMBER MATTERS.**



Bob LaCour Photo: L to R—NJ NEC Joe Korba, Squadron 321 Commander Bob LaCour, and NC Skelley at Post 321 Union Beach, NJ.



Nick Arceo (CO), National Chaplain

Chaplain's Corner

Dear Comrades,

Has God been good to you? Have you had a prayer with Him today?

Prayer is simply a conversation. Many of us avoid it, convincing ourselves that it is too difficult, that we are unqualified, or that we lack the time. Today, I challenge you to pray. Just have a chat with God—share how you are feeling, ask for help where you need it, and thank Him for your blessings.

Thank you all for your incredible support of our veterans. As we continue the work of the Sons of The American Legion under the leadership of Commander Skelley and prepare for the upcoming holiday season, I encourage you to establish a daily prayer time.

In Psalms 145:18, we read, "The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call upon him in truth." The Psalmist reminds us that God is close and ready to listen when we reach out with a sincere heart. Furthermore, 1 John 5:14-15 assures us, "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us." We can come to God openly and without fear, knowing He always listens. Please take the time to set aside a moment for prayer; you will not be disappointed.

Please join me in a prayer right now:

God of the universe, as we come before you for "God and Country," we thank you for all that The American Legion Family has accomplished on behalf of our veterans across this great country. Continue to use us as we move forward under the leadership of Commander Skelley and his team. I ask for a double portion of your strength, leadership, and wisdom for him and his entire team. Lead us in service to our veterans and communities. Bless our troops around the world, keeping them safe from harm, and have mercy on those in need or suffering.

Keep in mind that every day God thinks of you, every hour He looks after you, every minute He cares for you, and every second He loves you.

Please send me your prayer requests. May God bless you with His peace and happiness.



Facebook Photo: 2026 participants in the National Children and Youth Academy



Mike Monserud (IA), Leading Candidate for National Commander

Supporting our Youth

Children and Youth is one of our Four Pillars. Being one of the Pillars means we should always keep that at the heart of all we do for The American Legion Family. This past National Convention in Louisville had that on full display at the Children and Youth Room.

Under the leadership of Past Children and Youth National Chairman Jeff Trout and Committee Member Brian Shedd, a last-minute program was pulled together and left the children of our future wanting more! Not just the kids, but an American Legion member from Florida as well stated that this is what his young family had been looking for since they the got out of the military. When he saw what was going on, he had nothing but positive things to say.

New year and our new leadership is now in place. Chris Casey is now the Children and Youth National Chairman, and after the first Zoom call they had, I was impressed with the ideas on moving forward and how Chairman Casey will lead the Committee. As far as our Youth, they are in good hands!

This is important because these children at these Youth Academies are this organization's tomorrow. The knowledge we instill in them during the Youth Academy and what we are teaching back home at the local level are what they will have to build on when it comes to their time to become leaders. **Membership Through Mentorship** is going to be my theme and this is exactly how we can achieve this.

We must continue to support our youth, from sponsoring programs like Boys State, American Legion Baseball, and promoting this Youth Academy that is held at the National Convention. The class size has grown in the last two years, and we must keep this trend going. Most importantly, we need the support of the SAL members to bring their children to the National Convention. Current members can participate in meetings while their kids attend the Academy and begin the process of training to build our leaders for the future.



Robert Crevelli (CA), National Media and Communications Cmsn.

Fall NEC Sets Priorities for the Year Ahead

National Commander Thom Skelley (TX) led members of the SAL from across the country during the Fall 2026 National Executive Committee (NEC) meetings in Indianapolis, where national leaders outlined priorities for the coming year centered on veterans, Americanism, children and youth, membership, communication, and service.

NC Skelley emphasized accountability, participation, and the importance of getting information from the national organization into the hands of members at the detachment, district and squadron levels.

American Legion National Commander Jay Bowen (CO) addressed the Sons and shared his theme, **BPOTS: Be Part of the Solution** while emphasizing the Legion Family's commitment to the Be the One veteran suicide prevention mission. American Legion Auxiliary National President Dr. Coral May Grout (MA) also encouraged continued cooperation across the Legion Family and highlighted priorities including military spouse scholarships, education, membership, Wreaths Across America and youth recognition.

The weekend demonstrated the continued growth and impact of the Sons. SAL membership reached approximately 405,000 members, continuing a historic period of growth for the organization. Members were encouraged to renew before December 31 and to share SAL accomplishments as a tool for recruitment and retention. The Membership and Squadron Activities Committee is also working toward transitioning the History Book Contest to a digital format, in coordination with the National Historian.

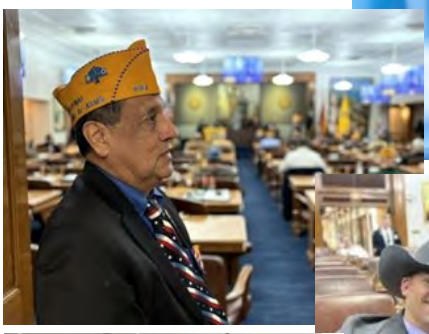
PNC JR Hall addressed membership messaging and encouraged the organization to focus on the value of belonging to the Sons of The American Legion. Hall advocated for a “Why Would You Leave?” campaign that highlights what the organization accomplishes and demonstrates how membership dues are put to work.

The Fall NEC demonstrated that the strength of the SAL extends well beyond membership numbers. Through service, advocacy, communication and participation, members at every level carry forward the legacy of the veterans through whom they are eligible.

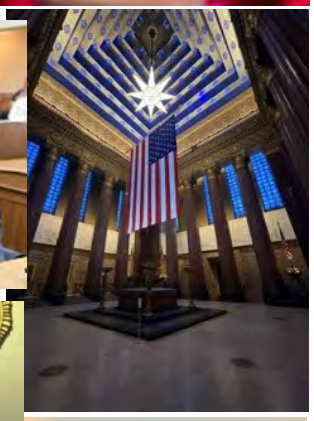




Headshots Today Photo









Detach. Of Ohio Photo







Brandon Curry (KY) Photo



Mark Nave (PA) Photo



Chris Balsley (AZ) Photo



Headshots Today Photo

Fall NEC Committee and Commission Calls To Action

Americanism Commission

- **Flying Flags for Heroes:** Work toward 100% detachment participation and help reach the national goal of 750,000 flags placed, up from approximately 560,000 last year. Visit flyingflagsforheroes.org.
- **POW/MIA:** Promote POW/MIA remembrance tables in public locations.

Children and Youth

- **COTA:** Help SAL exceed $300,000 in donations to the Children's Organ Transplant Association (www.cota.org).
- **Veterans Children's Foundation:** Reach participation from more than 80% of detachments.

Child Well-being Foundation (CWF)

- **Increase Detachment Participation:** Encourage additional detachments to contribute; 34 of 50 had donated at the time of the report.

Internal Affairs

- **Regional Calls:** Local leadership should participate in regional calls.
- **Pass Information Down:** Detachments are expected to ensure information from the national organization reaches Blue Cap members at the local level.

Membership Training and Development

- **NRIC:** Promote participation in upcoming NRIC training events.

Membership and Squadron Activities

- **Renewals:** Encourage members to renew before December 31, 2026.
- **Tell the SAL Story:** Share 2025–2026 accomplishments as a recruitment and retention tool.
- **Membership Resources:** Utilize and promote the national membership toolkit.

National Conventions and Meetings

- **Photos and Videos:** Detachments are asked to submit pictures and videos of their activities for use during national convention reports.

Legislative Commission

- **Commission Appointments:** Detachments should submit commission membership paperwork in early spring.
- **George B. Evans Veterans Award:** Submit deserving members for consideration.

Media and Communications

- **Detachment Historians:** Detachments should submit their Historian's contact information to the Media & Communications Commission.
- **Social Media:** Identify and catalog SAL-related social media accounts that are not currently known at the national level.
- **Share Your Why:** Encourage members to submit "Share Your Why" videos for potential use in national convention materials.

Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

- **SAL VAVS Representation:** Help expand SAL VAVS representation at VA medical centers, with a national goal of representation at 60 VA medical centers.
- **Wreaths Across America:** Support the December 19 wreath-laying effort; wreath orders are due December 1.
- **Report Accomplishments:** Improve reporting of VA&R donations and volunteer hours; only 44% were reporting at the time of the meeting.

Veterans Employment and Education

- **Hiring Our Heroes:** Support events connecting veterans with employment opportunities.

SAL 100th Anniversary Committee

- **Historical Material:** NEC members are requested to submit at least one photograph or article by the end of 2026 for the "Blast from the Past" feature.
- **Squadron Histories:** Prepare to contribute photographs, captions and historical information for the developing SAL history website.

Emergency Preparedness

- **Detachment Representatives:** Detachments are encouraged to appoint Emergency Preparedness representatives, preferably members with emergency-management or public-safety experience.

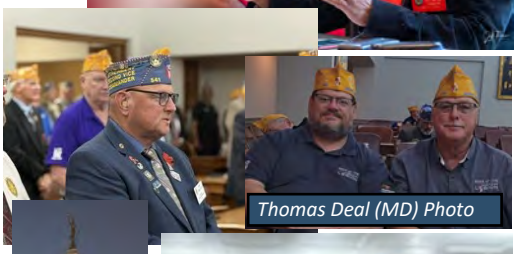
-Photos not credited are the Editor's Photos

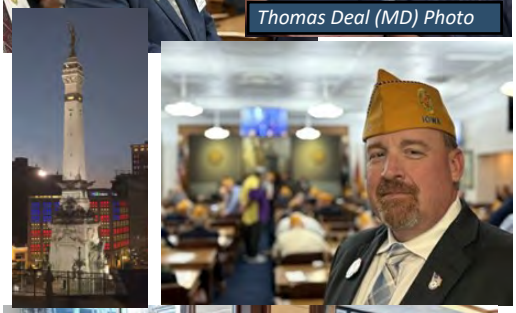
Video of the Fall NEC Meetings

Day 1—Sat 03 Oct
Day 2– Sun 04 Oct


Steven Cox (PA) Photo


Headshots Today Photo


Thomas Deal (MD) Photo




Mike Vozar (IL) Photo




Jesse Limanek (MA) Photo


Jesse Limanek (MA) Photo



Jeff Thorne (MD), National Historian

Brick-by-Brick: *"For the Families who carry their Legacy"*

Some moments are difficult to fully express.

On October 3, 2026, the Sons of The American Legion gathered in downtown Indianapolis during their Fall National Executive Committee meetings with the Indiana War Memorials to dedicate 18 newly placed memorial bricks surrounding the Soldiers & Sailors Monument.

Eighteen bricks. Eighteen names. Eighteen veterans.

Their service and sacrifice became part of the legacy carried by their families.

Each brick represents a father or grandfather whose service made membership in the Sons of The American Legion possible. But these bricks represent more than eligibility. They represent lives of service, families shaped by sacrifice, and memories that continue from one generation to the next.

Many veterans returned home from war and went on to build quiet lives. They worked, raised families, planted gardens, repaired what needed fixing, and watched their children grow.

But the war did not always leave them completely.

It remained in the memories they rarely shared. In the stories told only once. In the photographs, medals, and uniforms carefully preserved. In the moments when a son began to understand that the father he knew had once stood far from home in the uniform of his country.

Their sons grew up with that legacy.



Facebook Photo: Headshots Today

When they were young, they may not have understood all that their fathers experienced or sacrificed.

With time, these Sons see it differently.

On October 3, the Sons came together to honor the men whose service made their own legacy possible. Brick by brick, their names were placed around the Soldiers & Sailors Monument—a lasting reminder in the heart of Indianapolis that these veterans served, sacrificed, came home, and helped shape the families who followed them.

For Sons of The American Legion National Commander Thom Skelley, the dedication held a deeply personal meaning. One of the newly dedicated bricks honors his father, Army veteran William M. Skelley Sr.

And that legacy continues.

Thom's son, Evan, served six years in the Navy.

That is the power of a veteran's legacy.

It does not end with the veteran.

It moves from father to son.

From one generation to the next.

We inherit more than the freedom they fought to protect. We inherit their stories, their example, their sacrifice, and the responsibility to remember.



Facebook Photo: Headshots Today

One of the greatest ways a Son can honor his father is to make sure his name is never forgotten.

On October 3, 18 names were honored.

Eighteen veterans remembered.

Eighteen legacies permanently marked in downtown Indianapolis.

And beneath the Soldiers & Sailors Monument, those names will remain for generations to come.

SAY. THEIR. NAMES.

Lyndol R. Abrams, Gary O. Crossno, Marshal K. Edwards, Marvin W. Gray, David T. Harvey, Terry Hanson, Henry M.. Hasselhan, Melvin W. Heintz, Joseph J. Timanek, Daniel J. Manzo, Sr., John C. Maxwell, Terence McDonnell, John B. Oliver, William M. Skelly, Sr., Alred W. Griffis, J. Rickard Stillwell, Willie T. Winklemann

For the fathers who served.

For the families who carry their legacy.

For the Sons who came after them.

And for the freedom their service helped secure.

We remember. We honor. We carry it for-



Facebook Photo: Headshots Today





Thom Skelley (TX),
SAL National Commander

Fall NEC Meetings: THANK YOU

Sometimes it's easy to get caught up in a moment. The responsibility of conducting a National Executive meeting for the Sons of The American Legion can be a daunting task. However, knowing that you have the support of your friends, your brothers, makes it much easier. No one should ever get so busy that they forget to offer two simple words, THANK YOU! First and foremost, to every member of our armed forces, past and present, THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE. To those that attended their first meeting and to those "seasoned pros" that have been around the block more than a few times, thank you. To the National Adjutant Anthony Wright and his staff, to National Parliamentarian Chris Cook and National Chaplain Nick Arceo, National Sargent at Arms Tom Arista and his staff, National Commander's Aide Jean "Max" Maxwell and the five National Vice Commanders; George Gray, Matt Griffis, Casey Hanson, Henry Hasselhan III and Phil Stander, thank you. To National Historian Jeff Thorne and National Liaison Mark Woodsmall and all the staff at Headquarters, thank you. To all the Commission and Committee Chairman and their respective members, to the National and Alternate National Executive Committeemen and all those in attendance, thank you. To American Legion National Commander Jay Bowen, American Legion Auxiliary President Dr. Coral May Grout, TAL Leading candidate for National Commander Matt Shuman, Sons leading and trailing candidates Mike Monserud and Jeff Hicks, American Legion Internal Affairs Commission Chairperson Patricia Harris and Child Well Being Foundation President Dennis Boland…thank you. Your participation in the Sons of The American Legion National Executive Committee 2026 Fall Conference was greatly appreciated.



Terry Harris (KS),
Past National Vice Commander

KS: Vigil to Bring Awareness to Veteran Suicide



On November 22 and 23, members of the American Legion Family across Kansas will come together for a solemn 22-hour vigil designed to bring attention to one of the most serious challenges facing America's veteran community — suicide.

The 22-Hour Vigil will begin at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, November 22, 2026, and continue until 12:00 pm on Monday, November 23.

During the vigil, members of the Kansas American Legion Family will stand watch in 22-minute increments over a flag-draped casket, symbolizing the veterans who are lost to suicide and the need for their fellow veterans, families and communities to stand watch over one another.

The number 22 is significant. For years, estimates of veteran suicide have commonly been represented by the figure of 22 deaths a day, although current estimates vary. The American Legion emphasizes that regardless of the exact number, one veteran lost to suicide is one too many.

The vigil is more than a remembrance. It is a call to action. The event is being held to promote The American Legion's "Be the One" initiative, a national effort to reduce veteran and service-member suicide by encouraging people to recognize when someone may be struggling, reach out, listen and help connect them with support.

"Be the One" reminds us that saving a life does not always require special training or knowing exactly what to say. Sometimes it begins with simply asking a veteran, "Are you OK?"

The American Legion encourages its members and the public to Be the One to act, to call, to listen and to reach out when a veteran is struggling. The initiative is built around ending the stigma surrounding mental health treatment and empowering Legion Family members, veterans, military families and members of the community to take action.

The 22-Hour Vigil is intended to involve the entire American Legion Family of Kansas — The American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary, Sons of The American Legion, The American Legion Riders, First Responders as well as members of the community.

Continued on Page 7>>>

Vigil to Bring Awareness to Veteran Suicide: *Continued from Page 6>>>*

Members will take their places beside the casket in 22-minute shifts, ensuring that the vigil continues without interruption for the full 22 hours.

Each person who stands watch will represent more than a number. They will represent a veteran who served. A family who misses someone. A friend who wishes they had known what to say. And the countless veterans who are struggling today and need someone to notice, listen and care.

The quiet hours of the vigil are particularly significant. While much of the community sleeps, members of the Legion Family will remain standing watch — a visible reminder that the responsibility to look after our veterans does not end when the uniform comes off.

Veteran suicide can be difficult to talk about. The Be the One initiative seeks to change that by encouraging open conversations and helping people recognize warning signs and respond appropriately.

The American Legion encourages its members to ask veterans how they are doing, listen when someone needs to talk and reach out when a veteran is struggling. It also provides suicide-prevention training to help Legion Family members become better prepared to respond when someone may be at risk.

The Kansas 22-Hour Vigil is intended to turn those words into action. Those attending are encouraged not only to stand watch, but also to learn about Be the One, suicide-prevention resources and ways they can help veterans in their own communities.

The message is simple: Ask. Listen. Act. Be the One.

Each 22-minute shift during the vigil will carry a special meaning.

For those 22 minutes, the person standing watch will be asked to think about the significance of the mission. The goal is not simply to mark time, but to remember why the vigil is taking place.

When one person's 22-minute shift ends, another person will step forward.

And then another. And another.

For 22 hours, the Kansas American Legion Family will demonstrate what it means to stand together for those who have served our nation.

The vigil also serves as a reminder that veterans should never have to face their struggles alone.

A conversation can make a difference.

A phone call can make a difference.

A friend who refuses to give up can make a difference.

One person can make a difference.

Be the One.

The American Legion's Be the One initiative is a national mission to reduce the number of veterans and servicemembers lost to suicide. The organization encourages everyone — veterans, family members, friends, caregivers and community members — to become part of the effort.

The Kansas 22-Hour Vigil will give the American Legion Family an opportunity to remember those who have been lost, honor those who served and, most importantly, reach out to those who are still here.

Because the ultimate goal is not simply to remember the 22.

The goal is to save the next one.

Vigil 22 will be held at 101 West Commercial Street, Lyons Kansas at the Rice County Courthouse on November 22, 2026 at 2:00 PM.

For more information contact: Terry Harris @ 620-910-7998 or Angela Evans @ 719-659-0837

Facebook: Tony Orona Jr. (CA), Aide-de-Camp to the Detachment Commander

CA: Becoming part of the Sons of The American Legion Family

Congratulations to the newest members of Sons of The American Legion Squadron 43 at Hollywood Post 43 on their official installation into our organization.

At the invitation of Brian Patton, First Vice Commander, and William "Bill" Hernandez, Commander of the Detachment of California, had the honor of conducting the installation ceremony for the new members of Squadron 43.

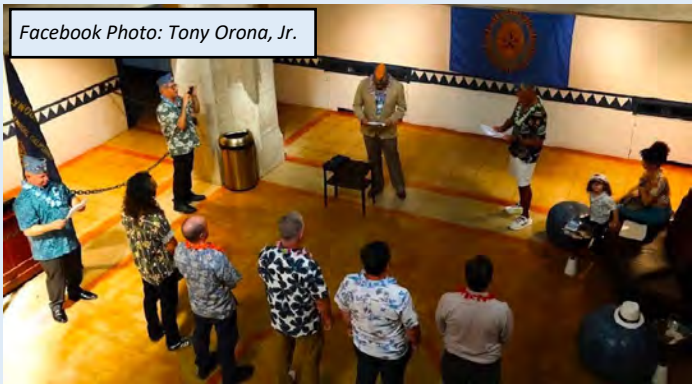
Squadron officers were in attendance to welcome and support the newest members as they took this important step in becoming part of the SAL family.

A meaningful part of the ceremony was the recitation of the official S.A.L. Preamble. When new members are brought forward during an initiation ceremony, they affirm their dedication to the principles and mission of the Sons of The American Legion.

The Preamble reminds every Son of our commitment to uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States, maintain law and order, foster and perpetuate Americanism, preserve the memories of those who served before us, promote peace and goodwill, strengthen our bonds through mutual helpfulness, and continue the work of The American Legion for God and Country.

These words are more than part of a ceremony. They represent the responsibility each Son accepts to honor the veteran through whom they are eligible and to continue that legacy through service to veterans, their families, our communities, and our nation.

To our newest Sons, may your membership be filled with fellowship, service, leadership, and a lasting commitment to honoring our veterans and preserving their legacy.



Facebook Photo: Tony Orona, Jr.

National POW/MIA Recognition Day throughout the Detachments

Don Bailey (TN)
Commander, Dover Squadron 72

TN: Squadron conducts POW/MIA Ceremony, Creates Flag Display

Stewart County Prisoners of War and Missing in Action Ceremony was conducted by Dover Squadron 72 at First Christian Church, Dover TN. A short narrative of the ceremony is below. SAL 72 Commander Don Bailey was the master of ceremonies, and SAL 72 Chaplain Brian Gelande performed the opening and closing prayers. Squadron 72 members Jody Batton, Hoyt Morrow, and Heiko Edelhauser assisted with the display set up and ceremony.

Posters were displayed at all local post offices and city hall offices, the Visitor Center, library, courthouse, business bulletin boards, shared by our local chamber of commerce, and copies made for distribution at all post offices.



Submitted: Jamie Morrow Photo

Yet, it is in remembering our fallen comrades that we are reminded of those whose fate is still unknown, those still listed as Prisoners of War or Missing In Action. 4,422 Americans are still unaccounted for from World War I; more than 71,000 from World War II; 7,353 from Korea; and 1,565 from Vietnam. These courageous Americans, who dedicated their lives to preserving and protecting our freedom, will never be forgotten.

History reflects WWI ending in 1918, WWII Ending in 1945, Korea ending in 1953, and Vietnam ending in 1975. 108 years later, more than 84,000 American families are missing loved ones from these wars. The missing loved ones are not forgotten on birthdays, Thanksgiving, or Christmas; the missing loved ones are classified in military terms as Prisoners of War or Missing in Action.

Tennessee has a total of 1,478 POW/MIAs; 92 WWI, 1,196 WWII, 165 Korea, and 25 Vietnam. Through the Dover Legion's research, nine names have been identified as POW/MIA on the Stewart County War Memorial. Three from WWI, three from WWII, two from Korea, and one from Vietnam. In the past years, we have honored the families of the two Korean War POW/MIAs—Donald Earl Wallace and William Cornett Mann— and a Vietnam POW/MIA John B. Causey. Today, we would like to honor all of them who have not returned home to their loved ones and community.

Roll call was performed and the information and photos (some photos were not available) were displayed to honor and remember each of the nine POW/MIA service men; Judson W. Dennis, SGT, U.S. Army, WWI, Tharp, TN; William E. Largent, PVT, U.S. Army, WWI, Ft. Henry, TN; Austin R. Whaley, PFC, U.S. Army, WWI, Model, TN; Geoffrey D. Outland, PVT, U.S. Army, WWII, Model, TN; Chester E. Stafford, CPL, U.S. Army, WWII, Dover, TN; Harley W. Coulter, PVT, U.S. Army, WWII, Dover, TN; William C. Mann, CPL, U.S. Army, Korea, Indian Mound, TN; Donald E. Wallace, CPL, U.S. Army, Korea, Dover, TN; and John B. Causey, CPT, U.S. Air Force, Vietnam Dover, TN. We closed the ceremony in prayer and remembrance. Nine POW/MIA flags are being flown in front of the Stewart County Visitors Center. Each flag has a tag attached to it with the information of one of those still missing.

The families of those listed as POW/MIA are remembered each day. It is our hope that one day each and every POW/MIA shall be returned home, and those families could finally have closure. Until then let us remember those still missing and unaccounted for, and their families who have continued to keep the faith that their loved one's homecoming will finally be a reality.


Submitted: Jamie Morrow Photo

National POW/MIA Recognition Day throughout the Detachments



Russell "Rusty" Myers III (NJ), Detachment Commander

NJ: Detachment holds 36th Annual POW/MIA Watchfire

The Detachment of New Jersey held their 36th Annual POW/MIA Watchfire on the beach of Seaside Heights on September 19th and 20th, the weekend of POW/MIA Awareness Day. The 12-hour vigil includes a bonfire stoked throughout the night "shining the way home for our Prisoners of War and Missing in Action."

National Commander Thom Skelley, one of the first speakers of the night, began by quoting a toast said everyday at 7pm throughout the Department of Arizona - *"To those who went, to those that are there still, to those who never returned, and to those who never will … we honor you."*



Submitted: Jeff Golden (NJ) Photo

This watchfire, started in 1990, is an event held annually by the state-level Sons to remember those serviceman who are still Prisoners of War (POW) and Missing in Action (MIA) abroad.

"Nothing speaks more to our core values as Sons of The American Legion than this Watchfire event", stated Detachment Commander Rusty Myers in speaking to those present. "On the flag next to me is written 'You Are Not Forgotten'. Those powerful words speak volumes about our commitment [as Sons] as 'Proud Possessors of a Priceless Heritage.'"

Attended by around 200 people, the event started at 7pm with a series of speeches. The POW/MIA table was also displayed, and was explained by Watchfire Chairman Rich Hodum.

"We call your attention to the small table which occupies a place of dignity and honor", recited Past Detachment Commander Carl Albern, Jr. in the scripted ceremony. "It is set for one, symbolizing the fact that members of our armed forces are missing from our ranks." The table was then explained – the white table cloth symbolizing the purity of the POW's intentions, the single rose the blood that is sacrificed, the slice of lemon representing the bitterness of the missing's fate, the salt representing the tears of their families, and the inverted glass symbolizing the POW's inability to toast with us.

Standing behind the POW/MIA Table were wooden honor rolls listing all the names of NJ's missing since 1941.

Following the ceremonial lighting of the bonfire by PDC Amel Balega, Jr, veterans also placed wreaths in honor of each of the armed services.

After a dinner provided by the Detachment, the remembrances continued, concluding with the reading of New Jersey's POW's and MIA's by the Legionnaires. The reading of 2,322 names from World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and the Cold War took about a half hour - an incredibly solemn remembrance.

The vigil continued throughout the evening, with members placing donated pallets on the bonfire, keeping lit that "beacon of hope shining the way home for the missing." Members of the community along with Legion Family members passing by dropped in throughout the evening to join those who stayed overnight to place a pallet or two on the fire - some just because they saw the event happening and wanted to be a part of it, and some in honor of a relative.



Submitted: Jeff Golden (NJ) Photo

The evening was attended by National Commander Skelley of Texas, on his official visit to New Jersey that weekend. Of note is that his national project this year is focused on POW/MIA awareness through promoting the Missing Man Table in local businesses.

The vigil concluded at 7am with a closing ceremony, attended by those who stool sentinel all evening and Legion Family members who returned. In a fairly emotional end to the 12-hour event, the group ends by singing "God Bless America."

In no better way can The American Legion remember the sacrifice of those who never made it home. As noted earlier in the evening by PDC Albern, "The sweetness of enduring peace has always been tainted by the bitterness of personal sacrifice."

Submitted: Rusty Myers Photo



National POW/MIA Recognition Day throughout the Detachments

Facebook.com—*18 September 2026*

MA: Department Family of Massachusetts Remembers

On September 13, 2026, Past Dept. of MA Commander and POW/MIA Chair Tony Dias hosted a ceremony at Swansea Post 303.

Past Department Commanders Scott Conner and Nelson Blake, Department Adjutant Lisa McPhee, Assistant Adjutant Grace Conner, and other Dept. Officers attended.

The guest speaker was Vietnam Veteran Combat Medic Bruce Cotta from VFW Post 4487. Department Auxiliary President Lisa Gauthier, SAL Detachment Commander Jesse Limanek, and a AL Rider Rich Larson made opening remarks.


Facebook: Lisa Borges Photo

A Missing Man Table Honor Guard presentation was made. Names of missing service members were read by District Commanders and Department of Massachusetts officers. South Coast Community Choral sang, "God Bless America" and other hymns.



Facebook.com—*20 September 2026*

VA: Squadron holds POW/MIA Memorial Car Show



Squadron 159 of Chincoteague, VA thanks Riders Chapter 159, Auxiliary Unit 159, our sponsors, vendors, participants, and attendees for the biggest Memorial Car Show yet with 94 vehicles. Rides came from Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, and as far as Pennsylvania.



Facebook.com—*20 September 2026*

OH: Squadron 257 POW/MIA Ceremony


Facebook Photo: OH Squadron 257

Squadron 257 (Loudonville, OH) members Bruce Karcher, Tim Conway, Bill "Buster" Sutterlin, Chaz James, and Richard "Legs" Zickefoose participated in a POW-MIA recognition at the Loudonville Redbirds football game prior to raising the American flag.

American Legion National Headquarters

SAL National Commander's Project for 2026-2027 Announced

In order to promote The American Legion Family and to bring awareness to the thousands of POW/MIA's still unaccounted for, a Commander's Appreciation Certificate will be awarded to squadrons that are able to place a POW/MIA Table or a customizable POW/MIA poster in a local restaurant.

Criteria: place a POW/MIA Table or poster, have a dedication ceremony, document the ceremony with time, date, location and photos (while wearing Sons branded apparel), submit the documentation to National Liaison Mark Woodsmall via email at mwoodsmall@legion.org, and submit pictures and details to The Millennium at rusty.myers@ymail.com POW/MIA Table Kit can be purchased through Emblem Sales - American Legion Flag & Emblem POW/MIA poster can be downloaded from the Sons website.

An example of the poster is on Page 11.

Facebook.com-*19 September 2026*

NH: Department Family conducts a 24-hour Vigil in Honor of the Missing

Starting at 11:00am, the POW/MIA Vigil began at the New Hampshire Veterans Home in Tilton.

Through the day, through the night, and to 11am the next morning, members of the Legion Family stand watch to honor our Prisoners of War and those still Missing in Action. Every moment of this vigil is a reminder that we have not forgotten those who served and never came home.


Facebook Photo: Department of NH

The POW/MIA Table

We call your attention to this **small table**, which occupies a place of dignity and honor. It is **set for one**, symbolizing the fact that members of our armed forces are missing from our ranks. They are referred to as POWs and MIAs.

We call them comrades. They are unable to be with their loved ones and families, so we join to pay humble tribute to them, and to bear witness to their continued absence.

The **table** is small, symbolizing the frailty of one prisoner, alone against his or her suppressors.

The **tablecloth** is white, symbolic of the purity of their intentions to respond to their country's call to arms.

The **single rose** in the vase signifies the blood they may have shed in sacrifice to ensure the freedom of our beloved United States of America. This rose also reminds us of the family and friends of our missing comrades who keep faith while awaiting their return.

The **red ribbon** on the vase represents an unyielding determination for a proper accounting of our comrades who are not among us.

A **slice of lemon** on the plate reminds us of their bitter fate.

The **salt** sprinkled on the plate reminds us of the countless fallen tears of families as they wait.

The **glass** is inverted. They cannot toast with us at this time.

The **chair** is empty. They are NOT here.

The **candle** is reminiscent of the light of hope, which lives in our hearts to illuminate their way home, away from their captors, to the open arms of a grateful nation.

The **American flag** reminds us that many of them may never return — and have paid the supreme sacrifice to insure our freedom.



Presented by your local American Legion Family of Post ####.

For more information contact XXXXXXXX.



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

Editorial: Remembrance is at the core of what the SAL is

As included in Page 5 of this month's newsletter, New Jersey held their 36th Annual POW/MIA Watchfire where I spoke on our core commitment to the missing, illustrated by the story of a young man who's name was written on our honor rolls of the missing. This month's editorial is that speech.

As it says on the POW/MIA flag, "you are not forgotten."

Those powerful words speak to our commitment as "Proud Possessors of a Priceless Heritage."

It is our commitment to honoring our past. A commitment to honoring those who have served and sacrificed… Those who gave their tomorrow's to secure our today's.

This past March, I had the opportunity to go on vacation to the island of Oahu in Hawaii. While we were there, my family and I made certain to make a visit to pay honor to those at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific at Punchbowl.

For those of you unfamiliar with that cemetery, it is in many ways the Arlington of the Pacific. Placed in an extinct volcano above the city of Honolulu, the cemetery is the final resting place of 53,000 men and women who bravely served our country, along with their families. It is the eternal home of the remains of many of those unidentified from the attacks on Pearl Harbor.

When you drive in, you drive to the far side of the crater and park. You walk through an amphitheater with mosaics of the War in the Pacific, operations in Korea, and of those in the Vietnam War.

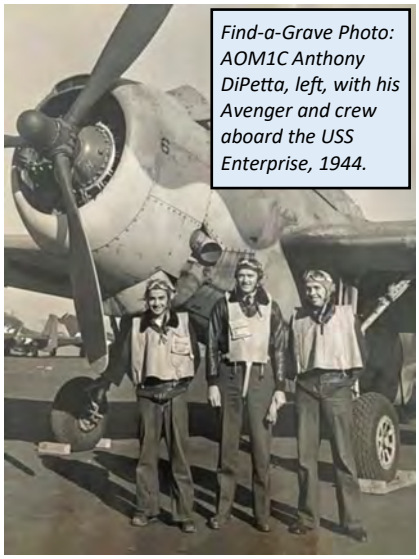
Turning with that at your back, you overlook the cemetery…. And look out over fourteen collections of marble columns, perhaps 15 feet high, called the Court of the Missing with names listed on all four sides.

From the ground to the top of the massive columns list the names of the missing from World War II in the Pacific, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War… **28,788 names in total.**

Just think about that number. It is impossible to conceptualize the amount of names until you see them, all written on marble slabs reaching towards the heavens.

Almost 29,000 men and women… all with mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, children…

All who went missing in the service of their country, with their families receiving no final answer except a telegram from the war department.



Find-a-Grave Photo: AOM1C Anthony DiPetta, left, with his Avenger and crew aboard the USS Enterprise, 1944.

A stone at the base of the memorial states:

"IN THESE GARDENS ARE RECORDED THE NAMES OF AMERICANS WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES IN THE SERVICE OF THEIR COUNTRY AND WHOSE EARTHLY RESTING PLACE IS KNOWN ONLY TO GOD."

At our visit, I made sure that I searched the columns for one name in particular… A young man from my hometown of Nutley.

Anthony DiPeta was born in 1923 in Italy. He emigrated to the US, settling in Nutley where he would attend high school.

At 18 years old, he joined the United States Navy after Pearl Harbor… Eventually being assigned as an Aviation Ordinanceman First Class aboard the USS Enterprise.

In 1944 along, with a crew of two others in his TBM Avenger, he was shot down somewhere in the vicinity of the Palau Islands. He was not recovered.

His parents received only a telegram – *"The Secretary of War Desires Me to Express His Deep Regret That Your son AOM1 Anthony DiPetta Has Been Reported Missing In Action Since 10 September. If Further Details Or Other Information Are Received You Will Be Promptly Notified."*



DPAA Photo: AOM1C Anthony DiPetta

In 2019, his Avenger with the remains of the three crew members was located about 200 meters from the shore of Malakal Island. DiPetta was identified, and returned home in 2024.

He was given a hero's return, a funeral at his home parish in Nutley, and was buried at Brigadier General William C. Doyle Cemetery. I was humbled to pay honors upon his return by participating in the colorguard.

Unfortunately, only a great nephew was there to welcome him home – which is all that remained of his family.

Aviation Ordinanceman DiPetta would return home over 70 years after his parents death.

Like so many other families, they would never received an answer as to what happened to their son. They lived the rest of their lives, distraught and heartbroken by the fact that their little boy would never return home.

It is as I've heard it said, **it is not just the serviceman who serves… or in this case, pays the ultimate sacrifice… It is his family as well.**

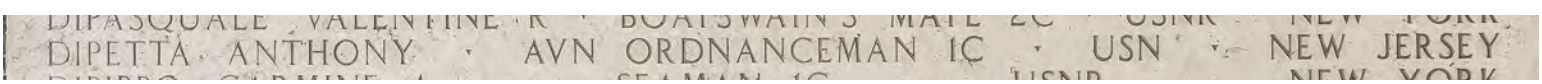
DiPetta is one of the fortunate few who has returned home. Many of those from our state – on these boards behind us – will never receive that finality.

They are not forgotten.

We stand here today, lighting this fire as a symbolic beacon to light the way home for those who are still prisoners of war and for those who are still missing in action abroad.

We dedicate ourselves, not just today, but every day, to preserving their memory.

You are not forgotten.





John Davies (MD), Detachment Commander

MD: Be The One

I think if I say that "Be The One" is one of the most important programs of The American Legion, I will find a great deal of agreement throughout the Legion Family.

Recently, I had the privilege of attending the "Champions of Hope United for Life Musical Festival," hosted by Michael Watts, Detachment of Maryland Be The One Chairman, and the Overlea-Perry Hall Post 130 American Legion Family. This was much more than a day of music and entertainment. It was a day dedicated to supporting veterans, raising awareness, and most importantly, letting veterans know that they are not alone.

It took 80 volunteers to make the event possible. Five bands donated their time and performed free of charge. There was a dunk tank and a bounce house for the children, making it a true community event. Best of all, the festival was free and open to the public.

To raise funds for veterans and Be The One projects, dozens of donated items were raffled off. Among them was the opportunity to win a Be The One trip aboard a Carnival cruise ship with the Detachment of Maryland in April 2027.

But the heart of the event went far beyond the entertainment and fundraising.

Fifteen representatives from eight different organizations that provide assistance to veterans were there to offer information, resources, and a helping hand. The organizations included the VA, suicide prevention coordinators, legal advisors, primary care social workers, and mental health providers.

That is what Be The One is all about.

Sometimes, being the one doesn't require special training or the perfect words. Sometimes, it simply means noticing when someone is struggling, taking the time to ask, "How are you doing?" and being willing to listen.

We all know veterans who have carried the weight of their service long after they took off the uniform. Some struggles are visible. Others are hidden behind a smile, a handshake, or the simple words, "I'm doing fine." We cannot always know what someone is going through—but we can make sure they know that someone cares.



Submitted Photo

Events like the Champions of Hope festival help bring that message to our communities. They remind veterans and their families that help is available and that there are people willing to stand beside them.

I encourage other Detachments, Posts, Squadrons, and American Legion Family members to consider holding an event like this in their own communities. Bring people together. Raise awareness. Provide resources. Support our veterans.

Because somewhere in our community, there may be a veteran who needs someone to reach out.



Submitted Photo

Submitted Photo: Pictured left to right—Detachment Commander John Davies, Chairman Michael Watts, Commanders' Project Jerry Hudson, Bonnie Hudson, Chairman Watts' number one supporter Christina Carr.



Facebook Photo

Facebook: 100 Nights of Taps

PA: Florida Son plays TAPS at Gettysburg National Cemetery

On the evening of August 28, 2026 at 7 pm, the Lincoln Fellowship of Pennsylvania, the Gettysburg National Military Park, and the Eisenhower Historic Site was honored to welcome Jim Steele, the bugler for the sounding of Taps in Gettysburg National Cemetery.

Jim hails from Jacksonville, FL and serves as a Bugler with the American Legion Lakeshore Post 137 Honor Guard, Sons of the American Legion Detachment of Florida Squadron 137, Taps for Veterans, and Bugles Across America. Jim is a multi-year participant with 100 nights and the bugler for the American Legion Department of Florida Annual Conventions and Fallen Conferences. He was the Bugler for the 2025 American Legion National Convention Memorial Service. Jim also serves in leadership roles with the American Legion Riders Florida 5th District and Chapter 137; the Sons of the American Legion Florida Squadron 137, Scout Master for Troop 522, Sabol District Advancement Chair, and Sabol 1 Eagle advancement coordinator of North Florida Council Scouting America, where he is avidly recruiting young up and coming buglers. Jim also volunteers with the Missing in America Project, TALARC The American Legion Amateur Radio Club, and Wreaths Across America. The son of a career Navy man, Jim was born in Bethesda Naval Hospital.



Facebook Photo

George Rice (MN), Detachment NEC

MN: WAA unveils Williams Gold Star Families Memorial Monument



Submitted Photo

On September 12, 2026, under clear downeast skies, Wreaths Across America (WAA) hosted the deeply moving dedication of the Woody Williams Gold Star Families Memorial Monument at its national headquarters in Columbia Falls, Maine. This monument stands as a permanent tribute to the families whose loved ones made the ultimate sacrifice in service to our nation.

Honoring Gold Star Families. The new monument, crafted in striking black granite, features symbolic panels representing Homeland, Family, Patriotism, and Sacrifice—a design created by the late Medal of Honor recipient Hershel "Woody" Williams. His foundation continues to champion the creation of Gold Star Memorials nationwide, ensuring families are never forgotten.

The Columbia Falls monument now joins more than 100 others across the country, each serving as a place of reflection, remembrance, and gratitude.

A Ceremony Filled With Meaning: The dedication ceremony included remarks from Wreaths Across America leadership and Gold Star Family representatives. Speakers emphasized the importance of remembering not only the fallen, but also the families who carry their legacy forward.

Attendees placed wreaths, saluted the monument, and shared moments of quiet reflection. The atmosphere was reverent, patriotic, and deeply personal.

The ceremony brought together veterans, Gold Star Families, community leaders, The American Legion, The Sons of The American Legion, the American Legion Auxiliary, and national officers from across the American Legion Family. I had the honor of attending this historic event alongside American Legion Auxiliary National President Dr. Coral May Grout, whose presence underscored the unity and shared mission of our organizations.

Dr. Coral Mae Grout spoke with the Gold Star families present delivering heartfelt words on behalf of the American Legion Auxiliary, highlighting the Auxiliary's longstanding commitment to supporting military families and honoring their sacrifice.

Columbia Falls: A Place of National Honor. As the home of Wreaths Across America, Columbia Falls has become a national center for remembrance. The new monument stands a mile from the organization's museum and headquarters, where thousands of volunteers and supporters visit each year. The location is fitting—every December, millions of volunteers across the country lay wreaths at veterans' graves, ensuring that "We Remember" is more than a motto; it is a mission.

A Personal Reflection. Attending this dedication was an honor I will never forget. Standing beside Gold Star Families, Legionnaires, Auxiliary members, and SAL leaders reminded me why our work matters. The monument is more than stone—it is a promise that their loved ones' service and sacrifice will always be remembered.

The Sons of The American Legion remain committed to supporting Gold Star Families, honoring our veterans, and strengthening the American Legion Family through service.



Submitted Photo



SAVE THE DATE

for

NATIONAL WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA DAY

SATURDAY, DEC. 19, 2026

WREATHS *across* AMERICA

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

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





Joe Guidice (NY), Chair, Natn'l Emergency Preparedness Ad-Hoc Cmte.

Meet the new Emergency Preparedness Ad-Hoc Committee

Sons Members,

At last year's National Convention, then National Commander Bill Clancy appointed an ad hoc emergency preparedness committee for the Sons of The American Legion. At this year's convention, Commander Skelley reappointed the committee to continue its work. Its members bring experience in police, fire, emergency medical services, public health, and emergency management.

Our purpose is to help organize and prepare SAL volunteers to support their communities through Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs), in coordination with local emergency management agencies and established CERT programs. These teams can assist with disaster response and recovery through assignments such as supply distribution, shelter support, and light search and rescue. Traffic control and other specialized duties should be performed only when volunteers are appropriately trained and authorized.

Building a team takes planning, training, and cooperation. Squadrons interested in participating should begin by contacting their local emergency management office or existing CERT program to discuss community needs, sponsorship, training, and activation procedures. Local partners can also help identify required agreements, equipment, and volunteer participation requirements.

Volunteer safety must remain central to this effort. Members must follow established activation procedures, stay within their training and assigned duties, and work under the appropriate local coordination structure. Volunteers should never self-deploy to disaster areas.

Training and opportunities to serve. Several introductory FEMA courses are available at no cost through online independent study. These courses provide a foundation in emergency management, but completing them alone does not qualify a volunteer for CERT deployment. Members must also complete CERT Basic Training, including hands-on skills and exercises, and meet the requirements of their local sponsoring program.

Public safety experience can be valuable, but interested members should not assume that only first responders have a role. Squadrons can work with local partners to identify suitable opportunities in communications, volunteer administration, supply distribution, and other support duties based on members' abilities and training.

Recommended introductory FEMA courses are listed below. Confirm any additional requirements with your local CERT coordinator or emergency management office.

IS-100.c — Introduction to the Incident Command System, ICS 100

IS-700.b — An Introduction to the National Incident Management System

IS-800.d — National Response Framework, An Introduction

For printed copies, visit **training.fema.gov/is** and search by course number.

Detachment participation and next steps. As with so much of our organization's work, success begins at the squadron level, with support from our detachments and the national organization. We are asking each detachment to appoint a representative with relevant experience to participate in the committee's online meetings. Meetings are held every other month at 8:30 p.m. Eastern Time and generally last an hour or less. Any interested member may attend.

When requesting an invitation, please provide your name, detachment, contact information, relevant experience, and any current involvement with a local CERT program. Meeting invitations will include the date, access link, and platform information.

Our goal this year is to begin establishing and training SAL-based CERT teams in all five regions, in partnership with local authorities. Deployment will depend on community needs, volunteer readiness, and authorization through the sponsoring agency.

Please contact me at k9bigdog@gmail.com to request a meeting invitation or additional information about forming a team. Regional contact information will be shared as it becomes available.





Jesse Limanek (MA), National Americanism Commission

Flying Flags For Heroes

On September 1st, 2026, the administrative year for Flying Flags For Heroes (FFFHs) was renewed. Over the course of this past year, we have seen unprecedented participation and support for the program. It is the hope of the Americanism Commission to maintain this momentum as we move forward.

For those who are not aware, FFFHs started with the work done locally by Preston Sharp, then a member of Squadron 521 in the Detachment of California. His idea was simple: show respect for all those who served and have been called to Post Everlasting by placing fresh flags at the graves of our veterans in advance of Veterans Day and Memorial Day. PNC Michael Fox learned of Preston's efforts and made FFFHs one of his goals when elected to serve as our National Commander in 2021. Throughout his term, PNC Fox led by example. He personally assisted in the placement of flags in many cemeteries across the nation and encouraged all to participate.

Due to its initial success, FFFHs received the overwhelming support of our National Executive Committee during the 2022 Spring meetings. It formally adopted Resolution VI, which originated from the Americanism Commission. It was resolved that the Commission be granted the authority to "support" Flying Flags For Heroes as an official Americanism Program “on an ongoing basis” in order to "honor the service of our veterans who gave 'the last measure in defense of liberty." And, that the Sons of the American Legion should use "the Flying Flags for Heroes program to help inspire true patriotism within our communities and help promote national pride in our country, its ensign, its military, and veterans throughout the entire Legion family."



American Legion Photo

In 2024, I was assigned the task of overseeing the FFFHs website. Initially, I was hesitant to make any changes out of fear crashing the website, so it remained unchanged for the time being. But, I started recording the placements that had gone unreported since the previous admin last did so, and started processing all new submissions that came in thereafter. The numbers from this twenty-month period were shockingly low. As reported in Tampa, submissions came from 29 Detachments totaling only 156,157 placements. At the time, it appeared that FFFHs was no longer a priority and the Commission had failed in its mandate.

Since September, 2025, there have been many changes that have impacted the program. The websites for both the computer and cellphone versions have been refreshed in an attempt to fix some of the lingering issues that affected usability. FFFHs also received a new URL - flyingflagsforheroes.org. More importantly, each member of the Commission fully embraced the program and worked diligently to raise awareness and participation. We included it in our reports on the regional calls, reached out to the Detachment Americanism chairmen, and shared fliers at both the Fall and Spring meetings.



www.flyingflagsforheroes.org Photo

As the Louisville Convention neared, it was soon apparent that the efforts of the Commission had paid off. Word of FFFHs was once again trickling down from National through the Detachments to the Squadrons. From April to July 2026, traffic to the website skyrocketed and multiple placements were frequently submitted on the same day. Even before Memorial Day, the number of both submissions and placements eclipsed those from the previous year. And when submissions were closed, it was clear that this program was once again regarded as having value by many within our organization.

To ensure that these efforts were recorded in the minutes of Convention, I reported on our progress from the floor during For the Good of Sons.

Fifty Detachments reported at least one placement (42% increase)

- Total placements = 559,715; (359% increase)
- Eleven Detachments reported over 10k placements;
- Eight Detachments had at least ten submissions from within their state;
- And 219 individual submissions were reported by Squadrons, Posts, Districts, Units, private groups, & individuals.

Of course, we can do better! Five Detachments (Latin America, Montana, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island and Utah) did not report a single placement and we only reached 56% of our goal of 1,000,000 flags placed.

It is the sincere hope of the Commission that the Sons of the American Legion will sustain this program in perpetuity. We also recognize that this can only happen if we do better in the coming year. To do so, we need the help of every blue capper across the country. We need you to participate and report any placements made by your Post Family.

Continued on Page 17>>>



Chris Reachard (DE),
Vice Chairman, National Children and Youth Committee

So …. What is COTA?



The Children's Organ Transplant Association (COTA) is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to helping children and young adults who need or have received a life-saving transplant. Founded in 1986 in Bloomington, Indiana, COTA began when community volunteers came together to raise money for a young child who needed a liver transplant. That effort became the foundation for an organization that has spent decades helping transplant families face the financial and emotional challenges that come with the transplant journey.

COTA's mission is to provide fundraising assistance and family support to children and young adults who need a life-saving transplant. The organization helps families raise money for expenses associated with transplantation, which can include transportation, lodging, prescription medications, household expenses, and living-donor costs. COTA's services are provided to families at no cost, helping reduce some of the financial barriers that can accompany a transplant.

One of the important things that makes COTA unique is its partnership with communities and volunteers. When a family becomes a COTA family, community volunteers can organize fundraising campaigns to support that patient. COTA provides the training, resources, guidance, and administrative support needed to help volunteers conduct successful campaigns. Funds raised in honor of COTA patients are available for eligible transplant-related expenses throughout the family's transplant journey, including before, during, and after transplantation.

COTA also provides support beyond fundraising. The organization works with families throughout their transplant journey and helps them navigate eligible transplant-related expenses. According to COTA, it has assisted thousands of patients since its founding and has raised more than $160 million since 1986. COTA is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, and contributions are tax deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law.

At its heart, COTA is about giving children and young adults a chance at a healthier future while supporting the families who stand beside them. A transplant can change a child's life, but the journey can place tremendous financial and emotional demands on an entire family. Through fundraising, volunteers, donors, and ongoing family support, COTA helps families focus on what matters most—their loved one and the hope of a second chance at life. COTA's work demonstrates what can happen when communities come together to support a family during one of the most challenging times of their lives.

Flying Flags For Heroes:

Continued from Page 16>>>

Why? Why should the Sons of the American Legion continue to maintain FFFHs as a unique program? Well, for several reasons. First, it simultaneously fulfills two of the mandates articulated within our Preamble – fostering and perpetuating a true spirit of Americanism and preserving the memories of….our forefathers in all Wars. Participation places no financial hardship upon our Squadrons, beyond the cost of the flags, and it requires no training. Thus, every Squadron large and small can do their part. And, since this is work in which the majority of American Legion Post Families already engage, it is not an additional burden!

If you reported last year, please do not forget to do so again this year when your Post Family places flags at any point in the year. Also, participation in FFFHs in not limited to members of the Legion Family - it is open to public. Anyone may report placements. If your Post Family no longer is able to place flags and another group within your community has taken up the mantel, reach out to them and encourage their participation. Alternatively, if your Post Family is part of a placement event made up of multiple organizations, the total flags placed by the entire group should be included in your submission. For example, if you assist in the placements at a Veteran's Cemetery with the VFW or a local troop of Scouts, every flag, not just the ones placed by Legion Family members, should be reported.

When you report, at a minimum: identify your group, include both the city and state where you placed flags so your Detachment can receive credit, and submit the total number of flags placed. Once you submit your placements, you will receive an auto-response from FFFHs. If you do not see it, check your spam folder. Then, once the placements have been recorded, you will receive a manual message, which might also end up in spam.

Finally, do not be afraid to toot your own horn! Take pictures while your group is out and submit them to FFFHS. It is just as fast and easy are reporting placements. Also, draft a write-up and share it with both your local newspaper and the Commission. And, please give consideration to helping the Commission inspire our brothers by submitting a story to The Millennium.

If you have any questions about FFFHs, feel free to email me personally at jlimanek@gmail.com.





Squadron 111 of Flintville, TN receiving their Squadron Charter.



At center, Sargent-At-Arms Gryffin (Squadron 711 in Blue Grass IA) was honored at his elementary school as a "Wildcat of the Month" and allowed to give a speech about his experience at the National Convention. He represented the SAL well and made a recruitment speech to his elementary school for both the squadron and auxiliary. He and his mother invited Detachment Commander Glen Johnson IV and his wife Sally to attend the event.



PNC Joseph Navarette, left, and Arizona ANEC Chris Balsley having a great time playing golf, raising money for veterans in the Detachment of Arizona.



The newly installed 2026-2027 officers of Squadron 120 (Effingham, Il).



Squadron 18 (Bloomington, IN) had the honor of presenting a check to this Army Veteran and his family. They had a fire a couple of weeks ago that was a total loss. They lost everything they owned including their pets. The SAL donated a total of $1,050.00 to this family.

At right, Sons at one of their Living History Nights at Living History Night at Ronald Reagan Post 283 (Palisades, CA).

Detachment Vice Commander Ted Kilby conducted the installation ceremony for Squadron 74 (Keswick, VA).





Squadron 14 (Vergennes, VT) 1st Vice Commander Sean Dye and Finance Tim Dowdy presented a check to the Commodore Club for $1500. This year's Car Show raised $3,000, half of which was earmarked for a local youth program with the other $1,500 going to the Dodge House in support of all their great programming assisting veterans in need.



Squadron 927 (Green Island, NY) had the honor of presenting a donation check to the Vagabond Club to help with repairs and improvements around the club.



Spotted by a Son

In September's newsletter, we asked if you could find the image of the COTA logo. The Millennium went out on 16 September, and by 11:56am we had a winner…



Peter T. Puzzo
Squadron 189,
Sebastian, FL

Puzzo is eligible for membership through his father, Sgt Peter Piacenti, a World War II veteran of the Battle of the Bulge who received a Purple Heart.

Currently, he serves as Chairman of Membership Training & Development for the Detachment of Florida, as well as Finance Officer at his home squadron.

He previously served as Area Vice Commander of the Eastern Area for the Detachment of Florida, as well as District 12 Commander. A member of the Sebastian Honor Guard and Chapter 189 American Legion Riders, he is a Past Commander-Squadron 189 and has received the Son of the Year Award twice.



Harl "Butch" Ray (IL), Past National Vice Commander

Butch's Bullet Points

Our Members Move the Mission. A new membership year is here.

The goals are set, the calendars are filling up, and once again we have an opportunity to do more than simply add names to a membership report.

We have an opportunity to move the mission.

Because the truth is simple: Every Member Matters.

Not just the Commander. Not just the Adjutant. Not just the Membership Chairman. EVERY MEMBER.

The Sons of The American Legion exists to strengthen the Four Pillars of The American Legion: Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, National Security, Americanism, and Children & Youth.

Those aren't simply words in our constitution. They represent the veterans we serve, the nation we defend, the values we uphold and the young people who will carry our legacy forward.

Our members make those pillars stand.

A Membership Card Is Only the Beginning. A membership card doesn't visit a veteran. It doesn't place a flag on a veteran's grave. It doesn't support a youth program. It doesn't teach a young person about patriotism and citizenship.

Members do.

That's why membership isn't just about numbers. It's about people taking action.

As President Theodore Roosevelt reminded us: *"The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena."*

That's where our members belong—in the arena.

Showing up. Serving. Leading. Making a difference.

Each One – Teach One. One of the greatest opportunities we have is mentoring.

When a new member walks through our doors, don't just give him a membership card and tell him when the next meeting is.

Show him. Show him what your Squadron does. Explain why you do it.

Introduce him to the people you're serving. Invite him to participate. Tell him about the stories behind the traditions. And then give him an opportunity to contribute.

That's how we turn a new member into an involved member—and an involved member into a future leader.

If you've been around for twenty years, teach someone who has been around for two.

If you know the history, share it. If you know how to lead, teach someone else how. If you learned something the hard way, help the next person learn it the easy way.

The future of our Squadrons depends on what we are willing to pass along.

Be a Commander – Not a Demander. Leadership isn't about telling people what they have to do.

It's about showing them why the work matters and then standing beside them while they do it.

Be a Commander, not a demander.

Ask. Invite. Encourage. Lead by example.

And remember: ***Listening builds loyalty.***

Listen to the longtime members. Listen to the new members. Listen to the members who haven't been around lately. Listen to the person who has a different idea.

People don't have to get everything they ask for to know they matter.

Sometimes they simply need to know someone listened.

Our Members Move the Mission. Every time a Son visits a veteran, the mission moves.

Every time a member supports a youth program, the mission moves. Every time we teach respect for our flag and our Constitution, the mission moves. Every time we support our military and their families, the mission moves. Every time we welcome, mentor and develop a new member, the mission moves.

And when all of us move together, something powerful happens.

The Sons of The American Legion moves forward. So, as we begin this new membership year, don't ask only: *"How many members do we have?"*

Ask: "How many members are we helping become involved?"

Call someone. Invite someone. Teach someone. Listen to someone. Thank someone. Mentor someone. And remember that the member sitting beside you today may be the leader your Squadron needs tomorrow.

EVERY MEMBER MATTERS. Each One – Teach One. Be a Commander – Not a Demander. Listening Builds Loyalty. And above all: OUR MEMBERS MOVE THE MISSION.



John Davies (MD), National Veterans Employment and Education

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 October. Other listings can be found at: https://www.vaforvets.va.gov/vaforvets/events/pages/Upcoming_hiring_event.asp

10/21/26: Hiring Our Heroes (HOH) will hold Camp Lejune Career Summit: Transportation and Logistics. Information can be found at: https://app.brazenconnect.com/a/hiring_our_heroes/e/0JOwr?_gl=1*1y2heqf*_ga*Njg3NzI3OTEzLjE3NzkzMDM3ODA.*_ga_S6ZRRWR0NY*czE3ODk0MTE3ODEkbzEzJGcxJHQxNzg5NDEyODU3JGo2MCRsMCRoMA

10/21/2026: HOH will hold a Virtual Hiring Fair: Financial Services. Information can be found at: https://www.vaforvets.va.gov/vaforvets/events/pages/Upcoming_hiring_event.asp

10/27/2026: HOH will hold a virtual SkillBridge Fellowships Information Session. Information can be found at: https://www.vaforvets.va.gov/vaforvets/events/pages/Upcoming_hiring_event.asp

10/28/2026: HOH will hold a Virtual Hiring Fair: Logistics, Skilled Trades and Transportation. Information can be found at: https://app.brazenconnect.com/a/hiring_our_heroes/e/KEOBN?_gl=1*1q7j6ef*_ga*Njg3NzI3OTEzLjE3NzkzMDM3ODA.*_ga_S6ZRRWR0NY*czE3ODk0MTE3ODEkbzEzJGcxJHQxNzg5NDEyOTA4JGo5JGwwJGgw

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/



Kevin Winkelmann (TX), Past National Commander

District Commander: His Role

In serving as the State Adjutant for the Detachment of Texas, one can learn an enormous amount of information concerning all aspects of the organization.

One of the most important areas is membership. Over the last 5 years as i have watched the detachment either grow or struggle with membership; one area that i have been involved in more than any other is the role of the district commander.

It has become increasingly more important, to the success of the SAL that District Commanders take a more active role in the leadership of the squadron and the detachment, while also working on membership throughout their district. The District Commander by himself can accomplish more than any other member or officer throughout the detachment.

They have the ability to help individual squadrons with their programs, especially membership—where they can help that squadron ultimately reach their 100% goal. They can and will be the hardest working members of the detachment, however their ability to lead and adjust is without end.

I personally believe that if each detachment elects good Sons as District Commanders, and then takes the time to teach these members the responsibility of being a good District Commander, our membership in the detachments and at national will continue to rise to unheard-of numbers.

Furthermore, with the District Commander's dedication to the detachment, the success of our programs will substantially increase to heights we have never seen before.

As a Past National Commander, Past Detachment Commander and as Present Detachment Adjutant, i welcome the challenge every day to find these new and dedicated leaders. i hope each detachment takes a step back and looks at your district commanders to see what they can do for your own detachment.

Always remember, success is not given, it is earned.

PNC Winkelmann originally published this article in the SAL Newsletter in October 2015.

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

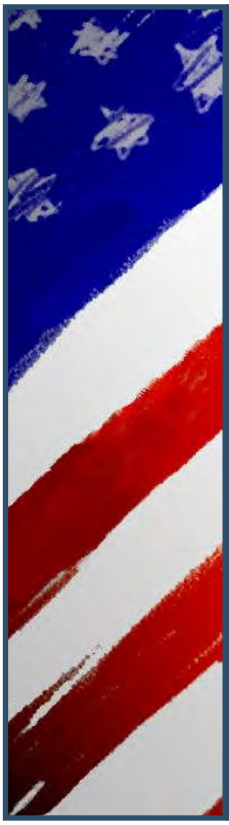


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To:

This Month, On The Back Cover …..



Make Note of these Important dates on The American Legion Calendar

26 Oct.	National Day of the Deployed
November	Veterans and Military Family Month
03 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

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!

Look for the leaf this month!!

