LEGION FLAG PROGRAM EARN POSTS REWARDS

Over 1,900 American Legion posts earn 10 cents for each dollar spent on the purchase of American flags from Emblem Sales.

By The American Legion

American Legion Post 44 in Newburgh, Ind., made the No. 3 spot in The American Legion’s Flag Rewards program last year, earning $400 in Emblem Sales merchandise credit to spend in 2019. Post members have plans to purchase more flags from the money earned, which they then resell to community members and donate all proceeds to The American Legion’s Operation Comfort Warriors (OCW) program.

More than 1,900 American Legion posts participate in the Flag Rewards program. As a participant, posts receive a 10-cent credit for each dollar spent on the purchase of American flags from Emblem Sales. Purchases include those made by the post, as well as by the post’s members, friends, neighbors, local schools and businesses that choose to sponsor the post by buying their flags from The American Legion.

Credit earned from participating in the Flag Rewards program is good toward the purchase of any item from the Emblem Sales catalog or website. Posts can spend the money on medals, Boys State shirts, Oratorical Contest awards, Legion Baseball supplies, color guard uniforms, flags and much more.

Buckey Honaker, past Post 44 commander and Blue Star Committee chairman, created a flyer where the front lists the sizes and costs for American, state and POW/MIA flags that are available for purchase through Post 44, or by calling Honaker. The back of the flyer is a write-up of what OCW is and how proceeds from flag sales benefit ill and wounded veterans. Anyone can come to the post to purchase a flag, or Honaker said Legionnaires will deliver flags, remove old ones for proper

See Legion flag program earns posts rewards on Page 4
American Legion University of Akron Post 808 in Ohio recently participated in an Out of the Darkness Campus Walk. There were 20 sets of combat boots lined up near the walk start to represent the 20 veterans a day who die by suicide, according to the most recent statistics from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

Post 808, the Student Veterans of America chapter and the university’s Veterans and Military Service Center co-chaired the walk, one of some 150 suicide awareness walks taking place this spring across the country.

“I think one of the things we can do as individual posts is get into our CBOCs and our hospitals and get a presence known, show them, ‘Hey, we’re here for you. You need something, we’re here for you. You want my phone number, you want my email?’ Whatever we can do to help in our local communities, our local areas, that’s what we need to do,” said Post 808 Commander Daryll Mauder, who can speak firsthand on the dark emotions that can lead one to contemplate suicide.

“I struggle daily, and that’s my whole goal, because I’m in these boots, I’ve walked these boots and I can maybe help a fellow brother or sister out or even a civilian at this point, if they’re struggling, I just want to be there to help because I’ve been right there with them.”

May is National Mental Health Awareness Month. And with suicide being a nationwide health issue, especially among our veterans, The American Legion and the VA have teamed up to adopt a public health approach to suicide prevention.

Preventing veteran suicide is a top priority for VA, but they need help from dedicated partners like the American Legion Family to reach veterans outside the VA health-care system.

Last year the VA released a long-term strategy for preventing suicide among all veterans. Read the National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide at [www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention/strategy.asp](http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention/strategy.asp). To take action, review the suicide prevention strategy, adopt and promote the principles, and contact your local VA Suicide Prevention Coordinator to collaborate and explore potential partnership, education and training opportunities. Even look into participating in a suicide awareness walk in your community.

By working together, we can save veterans’ lives.

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**MEMBERSHIP**

**Recruit and renew to receive ‘Membership Excellence: Team 100’ pin**

American Legion National Commander Brett Reistad will award his national commander “Membership Excellence: Team 100” incentive pin to any Legion Family member who obtains three new members into The American Legion.

And as of Jan. 14, 2019, any Legion Family member who renews six American Legion members will be rewarded with the commander’s pin. Renewals received prior to Jan. 14 do not count toward this incentive.

A new member is any eligible person joining for the 2019 membership year who was not a member of The American Legion during the 2018 membership year.

Each member listed must be eligible for membership in The American Legion. Forward names of Sons of The American Legion members or Auxiliary members to your detachment or unit for use in their respective incentive programs.

Download the incentive pin forms at [www.legion.org/commander/pin](http://www.legion.org/commander/pin).

**MEMBERSHIP**

**Team 100 Legion Family Ribbon**

American Legion National Commander Brett Reistad will award his Team 100 American Legion Family Ribbon to any American Legion Family that achieves 100 percent membership by May 30, 2019. For this award, the Legion Family is defined as a post and any combination of an Auxiliary unit, Sons squadron or Legion Riders chapter. Each branch must achieve 100 percent membership to qualify for the award.

Download the form at [www.legion.org/commander/ribbon](http://www.legion.org/commander/ribbon).
**NATIONAL ADJUTANT’S MESSAGE**

**A day of honor and remembrance**

*On Memorial Day we reflect on those who have paid the supreme sacrifice, including the son of a fellow Legionnaire.*

By Daniel S. Wheeler

From the American Revolution to the current global war on terror, 1 million American men and women have made the ultimate sacrifice while serving in wars and conflicts. They died so we can continue to cherish the things that we love – freedom, country and family.

On Memorial Day, American Legion Family members across the country will gather to honor the memory of our fallen warriors who have given everything for their country. It’s a day of remembering that brave men and women continue to take the oath of allegiance to fight, and if necessary, die for the sake of freedom.

On Memorial Day in 2010, U.S. Air Force Maj. Charles A. Ransom spoke at his First Baptist Church in Midlothian, Va., about how the holiday isn’t for outdoor barbeques but to honor veterans who have made the ultimate sacrifice for their country. Less than a year later, Charles, 31, was killed in action in Afghanistan.

"Not a day goes by that we don’t have Charles on our minds. I wake up with him on my mind," said Willie Ransom, father of Charles and The American Legion’s national sergeant-at-arms and Department of Virginia’s Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Committee chairman. "When you serve in the military you're serving for a purpose – to serve your country. He served his country and died for his country because he was a patriotic person."

Upon graduating from high school, which Willie said Charles was voted “most likely to succeed,” he attended Virginia Military Institute (VMI) where he was elected vice president of the Class of 2001. After graduating from VMI, Charles served with the 83rd Network Operations Squadron out of Langley Air Force Base in Virginia. While there, Charles shared with his father, a retired Army master sergeant, that he was going to make a career out of the Air Force.

“He was a go-getter. He was dedicated to the military. And he was unselfish,” Willie said.

Willie spoke with personnel that worked for Charles at Langley Air Force Base and said on holidays, such as Thanksgiving and Christmas, he would let his servicemembers spend dinner with their families. “He would work in their place. It was really honorable of him to do that,” Willie said. “Charles was an all-around good guy.”

Charles was among those shot and killed on April 27, 2011, by an Afghanistan pilot at Kabul International Airport. Two years later, American Legion Post 186 in Midlothian was named in his honor. Charles was a member of Post 186, which Willie also belongs to, and became the first servicemember of the post to be killed in action.

Charles was posthumously awarded the Meritorious Service Medal, Purple Heart and Bronze Star. Those medals, among many other items such as his Virginia Military Institute diploma, pictures of him while deployed, U.S. burial flag and even the first living room suite he purchased in 2001, are in a memorial room dedicated to Charles at the home of Willie and Marysue, his mother.

“Once you lose a child like that, and when you lose someone that you really love, (the memorial room) is just something that we have to keep him going and his memory alive,” Willie said. “By being in the church like we are, we keep his memory alive when we think about verses in the Bible. We have no problem keeping him alive because he will always be in our hearts No. 1.”

We should all remember that freedom isn’t free. It’s only possible because our fallen heroes, like Charles Ransom, have paid its high price.
HONOR & REMEMBRANCE

The man who wasn’t there

Editor’s note: American Legion Past National Chaplain Robert A. Vick delivered the following message of remembrance at the Patriotic Memorial Service of the 100th American Legion National Convention on Aug. 26, 2018.

When I was a boy there was a popular art form. Men and women carried different colored sheets of artist’s paper around with them and a pair of scissors. You would pose, and they would cut your profile from this colored paper. It seemed the most popular color was black.

Many of those artists were very good and at the time the pictured person would be easily recognized. Everyone who knew him would know whose profile it was. But as time passed, the person portrayed either moved on or died, and there’s no one left to identify that profile. There are millions of these profiles still in existence moldering in trunks and attics, or languishing on basement shelves in albums. And the question is asked, “Who is this person?” Generally, the answer is, “I don’t remember” or “I don’t know.”

I call this the man that wasn’t there.

Look at the average cemetery and how many gravesites have no flag or flowers of remembrance displayed. Each one represents a man who isn’t here (I use the word “man” generically; I refer also to women). Many of these are veterans, but because their gravestones don’t identify them as veterans, the interred at the grave is often overlooked. I’ve often asked myself, “Are we justified in fighting a war, and if so, why?”

The answer is a resounding yes.

The answer is found in Psalms, the 18th chapter, 34th verse, and this is just one of many verses that make war sometimes a necessary thing. David said, “God taught my hands to war.” If you fight for freedom to defend someone who cannot defend themselves for freedom to worship without coercion, freedom to assemble without fear and freedom from tyranny, then your fight is just and it’s often necessary. God understands our resolve.

Remember what we do here on earth is temporal, but in serving our fellow man, we perform an eternal service. God teaches us that we are our brother’s keeper.

The book of Genesis, Chapter 4, teaches us the lesson presented by brothers Cain and Abel. Cain slew Abel because of his jealousy, and the blood of Abel cried out to God from the ground. When God asked Cain where his brother was, he said, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” And God informed him that he was.

When on the battlefield, from the beginning of history, each army rallied to the standard which represents their country or king. It indicates that there are protections and people of like mind near that flag.

When we see Old Glory, we immediately know that this is the symbol of freedom, democracy, justice, loyalty and friendship. We memorialize those warriors who made the ultimate sacrifice to provide us with these blessings. The flag represents much more than a country, a people or an ideal. It represents the very heart of man and remembers the man who isn’t here. And I think that The American Legion is the embodiment of the very heart of man in service to his fellow man. I don’t know many organizations who dedicate their entire existence to the service of others in need, as does The American Legion.

In ancient Greece, mothers sent their sons off to war with the admonition that they either come home carrying that shield, or they come home carried on that shield. We don’t do that today. We don’t admonish our sons and daughters to carry or be carried on their shields, but one of our former presidents, Theodore Roosevelt, spoke for all of us when he said, “Speak softly, but carry a big stick.”

As long as we have warriors willing to carry the big stick, and we rightly recognize and honor them, we will continue to be a free nation because of that sacrifice. The New Testament tells us that when we see a brother in need and we only wish him well, or we fail to inquire if we can be of help to him, the Lord asks the question, “What good have you done him?”

Thank a veteran. Never fail to recognize one of the men who are not here. Never let him just be another man who’s not here.

To my precious brothers and sisters who have paid the price, I say rest easy, sleep well, my brother. Others have taken up where you fell. The line has held.

We are still free, thanks to God and you.

U.S. Navy veteran Robert A. Vick, who served during the Korean War, is a member of Paradise Post 79 in New Port Richey, Fla.
A brief history of The American Legion

The American Legion built its legacy with a vision to make the nation prouder, stronger, smarter and more respectful of those who have sacrificed some, or all, in defense of the nation. A new brochure highlights some The American Legion’s achievements during its first century.

“A Brief History of The American Legion” is a four-page brochure for American Legion posts, districts and departments to share with community members. The publication is designed to be printed on 8.5x11 standard paper or taken to a local print-shop to be made into a one-fold booklet for handout at American Legion activities, including membership tables and centennial celebrations.

Download "A Brief History of The American Legion" at www.legion.org/publications.

Big Twelve winners

The American Legion’s Big Twelve Competition recognizes departments that meet or exceed their pledged membership goal percentage by the March target date. The percentage does not include members gained through DMS. The winner in each category will be reimbursed for computer equipment purchases of up to $2,000. Runners-up in each category will be reimbursed for computer equipment purchases of up to $1,000. For missing categories, a department winner was not named.

Big Twelve category winners:
- Category I – departments of 100,000 or more members: Ohio
- Category III – 40,0000 - 64,999 members: Michigan
- Category V – 10,000 - 24,999 members: South Dakota
- Category VI – 9,999 - or fewer members: Delaware

Runners-up:
- Category V – 10,000 - 24,999 members: Connecticut
- Category VI – 9,999 or fewer members: Utah
DID YOU KNOW?

On Memorial Day, the U.S. flag should be displayed at half-staff from sunrise until noon, then raised to the top at full staff. [www.legion.org/flag](http://www.legion.org/flag)

Episode two of the newly produced centennial documentary on the history and influence of The American Legion, “To Strengthen a Nation,” is available. “Episode 2: Mutual Helpfulness” focuses on The American Legion helping its fellow veterans through service officers, the GI Bill, Agent Orange benefits, and more.

Watch Episode 2, as well as “To Strengthen a Nation: Prelude” and “Episode 1: Formation of The American Legion,” on The American Legion’s YouTube channel at [www.youtube.com/user/americanlegionHQ](http://www.youtube.com/user/americanlegionHQ).

Does your post, district or department have events planned this summer where a message about who The American Legion is and its 100 years of service will be shared? National Headquarters has resources available to help you deliver this message. Download and share the “This is The American Legion” PowerPoint at [www.legion.org/membership/tools](http://www.legion.org/membership/tools) and the brochure is available at [www.legion.org/publications](http://www.legion.org/publications).

A “This is The American Legion” video, along with videos about The American Legion’s four pillars, also are available on the Legion’s Vimeo channel at [https://vimeo.com/album/4174471](https://vimeo.com/album/4174471).

Flag Day is June 14, and The American Legion is a proud supplier of American-made U.S. flags through its Emblem Sales website, selling more than 1 million every year. To purchase a flag, visit [https://emblem.legion.org](https://emblem.legion.org).

MEMBERSHIP

Team 100: Why I joined and renew

“In preparation for retirement from the U.S. Army in 1989, I considered being an ROTC instructor but changed my mind. Once I retired, I desired to be connected to an organization that would assist my family, if and when needed, and I wanted to share my experiences and participate in youth programs and community activities as I did in the military. Now, 27 years as an active member, I began to attend post meetings just in time to be nominated and installed as the adjutant. I have goals and visions to enhance our membership, establish programs for our youth and communities, and to support my commander and fellow comrades in a manner that we all can benefit from. I am confident that with a positive attitude, teamwork, being constantly reminded of our commitments and my motto, ‘We are here on business or we have no business here,’ our visions and goals will be accomplished.”

– Harvis Mathis, Statesville, N.C., Post 217

“I am a disabled veteran and I don’t work. I felt I was losing my sense of purpose. After moving to Texas, some of the first folks we met were veterans (a Marine veteran) and me to their next meeting. Unfortunately, my husband travels for work and was not able to go, but I was. I did and I joined at the first meeting. Although I have been out of the Army for 11 years, I have only been a Legionnaire for one year. I wish I had joined sooner. The American Legion and the folks I surround myself with now has given me back that sense of purpose, as I was voted in as vice commander of Post 462 for the 2018-2019 year. It has provided me a way to keep my sons involved and active in the community. I have found that comradeship ... that kinship ... I had been missing so much from my time in service. It is a great feeling to feel you belong again and be able to fellowship with like-minded individuals, regardless of age or race or any other restrictions. I am honored to be part of Team 100 as we march into our centennial.”

– Angela Conway, Glen Rose, Texas, Post 462

American Legion National Commander Brett Reistad wants to know your reasons of why you joined The American Legion. And, equally important, why you renew.

As part of his Team 100 campaign, the centennial commander is assembling the thoughts of American Legion members to use in promotional materials to increase membership. Emails to provide your reason for joining and renewing in the nation’s largest veterans service organization may be sent to [dispatch@legion.org](mailto:dispatch@legion.org).

Ask your friends and fellow Legionnaires. Think of your own reasons. Most important, share with us as we remind everyone the importance of membership and retention.
MEMBERSHIP INCENTIVES AND AWARDS

National Recruiter of the Year

The Legionnaire certified with the highest number of new members recruited from among all the departments will be declared The American Legion’s National Membership Recruiter of the Year. The award includes a trip to the 101st National Convention in Indianapolis with six days and five nights for the Legionnaire and guest, round-trip air transportation, hotel accommodations and reserved seating tickets to the National Commander’s Banquet for Distinguished Guests. Monetary awards will be presented to the next highest 26 Legion department recruiters.

Department adjutants must nominate top recruiters on or before May 31 by using the form on page 17 of the National Membership Points Award Manual at www.legion.org/publications under Membership.

Recruiter awards

Legionnaires who recruit 50 or more new members (transfers do not count) into The American Legion by the 100 percent membership target date (May 8) qualify for The American Legion’s Gold Brigade award.

Legionnaires who recruit 25-49 new members (transfers do not count) into The American Legion by the May membership target date qualify for the Silver Brigade award.

Both the Silver Brigade and Gold Brigade awards cannot be awarded to a recruiter during the same membership year.

For more information about the award, please download the National Membership Points Award Manual at www.legion.org/publications under Membership. The Gold and Silver Brigade certification forms are on pages 20-22. Department adjutants must submit all certification forms to National Headquarters by May 31.

MEMBERSHIP

POST EXCELLENCE AWARD

To qualify for the Post Excellence Award banner, a post is required to achieve excellence in the four criteria’s below. The purposes of this award is membership growth, exposure of American Legion values to the youth of the community, and increased visibility of the American Legion Family through service projects.

The standard to be achieved in each area is as follows:

- **Membership.** Post membership must be at least one member more than the previous year. A post officer must attend district meetings.
- **Consolidated Post Report.** CPRs must be submitted by July 1. The American Legion’s federal charter requires the submission of an annual report to Congress on activities for the year. MyLegion.org has made it simple for a post to submit its CPR in a timely manner.
- **Sharing of post history.** The American Legion’s Centennial web page (www.centennial.legion.org) allows posts to convey its legacy by sharing historical photos, videos and print material. Starting a post profile will suffice.
- **Community activity.** The post must conduct an event that connects the local community with The American Legion post. The objective is to open your doors, welcome the community in, and educate them on what The American Legion is all about and how the post is an asset to the community. Posts do not need to have a physical building to accomplish this. This activity can be held in a park, a community center, or anywhere the post can welcome and interact with the local community.

The district commander responsible for the post will certify a post as having achieved the four specified criteria. The district commander will submit a list of posts meeting the criteria to department headquarters. That list should include the post name, phone number, address and commander’s name. If possible, accompany the last two criteria with copies of press releases submitted to the local media about the projects to show they were accomplished and the image of The American Legion was enhanced through local media. The copy submitted should include a date and time stamp showing receipt by the media outlet. The department adjutant will transmit information as posts qualify to: American Legion National Headquarters, Attn: Membership, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206-1055.

THE AMERICAN LEGION'S IMPACT

Number of American Legion district membership revitalization campaigns executed in March, in the Departments of Arkansas, California, Maine, Maryland, New Hampshire and Washington.

Number of veterans memorials and monuments photographed, described and posted on The American Legion Memorials Database at www.legion.org/memorials.

For the full report visit: www.legion.org/membership/impact

MEMBERSHIP

Three district commanders earn trip to 101st National Convention

Three American Legion district commanders will receive an all-expense paid trip to the 2019 National Convention in Indianapolis, and will be honored on stage, for winning their respective categories in the Race to the Top competition.

The contest honors district commanders in five categories who attain at least 100 percent of the district’s assigned membership objective, and have the highest percentage of membership over the previous year.

For the 2018-2019 membership year, there was not a category III or IV winner.

The 2019 Race to the Top winners are:

- Category I (districts with 15,1,499 members) – District 1 Commander Richard F. Devlin III of Colorado
- Category II (districts with 1,500-2,999 members) – District 24 Commander Benjamin D. Gibson of California
- Category V (districts with 7,500 or more members) – District 12 Commander Stephen C. Hamrick of Florida

Second place winners will receive a $500 check. They are:
- Category I (districts with 15,1,499 members) – District 4A Commander George M. Wooden of Oklahoma
- Category II (districts with 1,500-2,999 members) – District 12 Commander Curtis R. Humphrey Jr. of Georgia
- Category V (districts with 7,500 or more members) – District 10 Commander Bradley A. Teis of Ohio

Third place winners will receive a $375 check. They are:
- Category I (districts with 15,1,499 members) – District 1 Commander Andrew E. Lowen of Texas
- Category II (districts with 1,500-2,999 members) – District 11 Commander Melvin O. Weaver of Georgia
- Category V (districts with 7,500 or more members) – District 11 Commander Bradley A. Teis of Ohio

For the full report visit: www.legion.org/membership/impact

PLANNER

May
24 National Poppy Day
27 Memorial Day

June
6 75th anniversary of D-Day
14 Flag Day
22 75th anniversary of GI Bill signing