Episode 5 of American Legion documentary available

The newest episode of the centennial documentary series “To Strengthen a Nation” is Episode 5: American Legion Baseball. Hosts Jeric Wilhelmsen and Lorna Duyn travel to Milbank, S.D., to learn the origin story of American Legion Baseball and explore how the organization has promoted citizenship through sportsmanship throughout the past century. Watch online at www.legion.org/legiontv under “To Strengthen a Nation” playlist.

Holiday blood drive

The annual American Legion Holiday Donor Blood Drive will take place Thanksgiving through Dec. 31. Legion Family members and posts are encouraged to give blood and host blood drives for this life-saving cause. For information about The American Legion’s Blood Donor Program or how to host a blood drive, visit www.legion.org/security/blood.

The 2018-2019 American Legion Consolidated Post Report showed that nearly 74,000 pints of blood was donated during the past year in post blood drives.

Legion centennial celebration ending

As The American Legion’s centennial celebration comes to a close on Nov. 11, Veterans Day, more than 3,100 Legion posts reported conducting an American Legion 100th Anniversary celebration event in the membership year that ended June 30.

Changes made to Preamble and Oratorical Contest

Resolution 1 changes “the Great Wars” to “all wars” in the Preamble and Resolution 2 increases Oratorical scholarship amount awarded at national level.

By The American Legion

The American Legion National Executive Committee (NEC) passed 19 resolutions during Fall Meetings in October. Two resolutions to make note of include changes to the Preamble and National Oratorical Contest.

Resolution 1

With the signing of the LEGION Act – Let Everyone Get Involved in Opportunities for National Service Act – into law July 30 by President Trump, the U.S. government now acknowledges that the military has been involved in at least 12 additional military conflicts not previously recognized. As a result of this, The American Legion National Executive Committee adopted to amend the organization’s Preamble to recognize the millions of U.S. military veterans from all of these wars and conflicts that have occurred since World War I and II.

Resolution 1 was adopted by the NEC Oct. 16 during Fall Meetings in Indianapolis, which amends “the Great Wars” in the Preamble to “all wars.”

The Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion now reads:

For God and Country, we associate ourselves together for the following purposes:

To uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America;

To maintain law and order;

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COMMANDER’S MESSAGE

My fundraising focus now and at the new year

The American Legion’s 100th Anniversary Commemorative Coin series was released on the Legion’s centennial birthday, March 14. However, the sale and production of the coins will cease after Dec. 31.

With “A Foundation for the Future” as my theme, preparing for the future should never mean we should forget who we are or where we come from. So let’s not forget what an honor this coin series has been. We should maximize the esteem and recognition that this country has bestowed upon our American Legion in honor of our centennial.

The centennial coins make a great fundraiser, a gift for the upcoming holiday season and a conversation-starter to share about the Legion’s Four Pillars, programs and advocacy efforts.

So don’t wait. Get your centennial coins now at www.legion.org/coin.

At the start of the new year, I will shift my emphasis from the centennial coins to The American Legion Veterans and Children’s Foundation, which has a fundraising goal of $25 million. Auxiliary National President Nicole Clapp made a significant contribution to the foundation during NEC Fall Meetings last month by handing me a $10,000 donation from the Auxiliary.

What a great life-changing resource this could be for future generations of veterans and their families. While $25 million is a lot, a goal of that nature was achieved by Legionnaires in 1924 with a membership of 800,000. And they raised $5 million for the Endowment Fund, which is about $30 million in today’s dollars.

As our Marketing Commission Chairman Mike Rohan of Wisconsin said to the NEC and Legion leadership about this fundraising goal, we can do this. And we owe this to our veterans and our children.

We are all stakeholders in our American Legion. We are the future of this organization. We hold the future for this organization. And we and all of our brother and sister Legionnaires are its foundation.

So let’s count on each other as we build a Foundation for the Future to ensure that The American Legion can have a second century that our founders would be proud of.

James W. Oxford
National Commander

MEMBERSHIP

Recruit three new members for ‘A Foundation for the Future’ pin

American Legion National Commander James W. “Bill” Oxford will award his national commander “A Foundation for the Future” membership excellence pin to any Legionnaire who obtains three new members into The American Legion.

A new member is any eligible person joining for the 2020 membership year who was not a member of The American Legion during the 2019 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.

Only one pin will be awarded per individual. Upon receipt, national membership staff will confirm the names and mail the pin directly to the person who earned it.

Download the incentive pin form online at www.legion.org/commander/pin.

MEMBERSHIP

Legion Family Honor Ribbon

American Legion National Commander James W. “Bill” Oxford will award his 100 percent American Legion Family Ribbon to any American Legion Family that achieves 100 percent membership by May 30, 2020.

For this award, the Legion Family is defined as a post and any combination of an Auxiliary unit, Sons of The American Legion 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.
NATIONAL ADJUTANT’S MESSAGE

Extend Buddy Checks beyond twice a year

Our fellow veterans should hear from us outside of Veterans Day and the Legion’s birthday.

By Daniel S. Wheeler

As American Legion posts prepare to conduct Buddy Checks during the week of Veterans Day, it’s also important to remember that we should be checking on our fellow brothers and sisters 52 weeks a year.

In the inaugural Buddy Checks last March, Legionnaires found many veterans who needed assistance. Post 101 in Connecticut learned of members who were in poor health, needed assistance with VA benefits, and wanted to attend meetings but had no means of transportation. Some of these members were home bound, lonely and could use a visit for camaraderie. These members learned about many needs of their members by making phone calls for one week. Imagine the many ways all of us can learn about how to help our fellow veteran in need, especially as the holidays approach, by making calls weekly.

By reaching out to our fellow veterans, we can share about the many American Legion programs that can provide assistance to them and their family. Whether that’s The American Legion’s Temporary Financial Assistance program if they have young children in the home and are facing a financial hardship; Operation Comfort Warrior program to aide wounded veterans with recovery; Legion service officer assistance to help with VA claims and benefits; or youth scholarship and programs.

The list goes on with the beneficial ways The American Legion can provide support. But if we don’t make phone calls or home visits, those members who have let their membership lapse or who don’t attend post meetings or events will never know what The American Legion can offer. And you will not know if they are in need.

And for those who conduct a post or district revitalization, these too can serve as a Buddy Check because you are making phone calls to former, expired or headquarters post members, as well as going door-to-door to bring back expired members. These phone calls and door-to-door visits is a way you are checking on your fellow veteran.

For Department of Arizona Commander Ken Queen, that’s what the department’s recent revitalization effort was able to accomplish. In addition to transferring more than 160 headquarters post members into local American Legion posts, the effort also provided an opportunity to check on current and former members.

“It says to them that we care about them as individuals, not just as members,” said Queen, a former department membership director. “It’s a good thing to share that feeling with them. They deserve our support in any way we can give it to them. It’s almost like a Buddy Check – just reaching out to them to see how they’re doing.

“Calling them like this … is a good opportunity for us to reach out and touch them and see what they’re concerns are and help them out.”

For more information on how to conduct a post or district revitalization, visit www.legion.org/membership.

With the holiday season upon us, it’s easy to find ourselves busy. So I challenge you to continue Buddy Checks in the weeks beyond this Veterans Day and call on members in the weeks leading up to Thanksgiving and Christmas to hear what needs they may have.

Share your results by uploading your successes on the Legiontown website at visit www.legiontown.org.
To foster and perpetuate a one hundred percent Americanism;
To preserve the memories and incidents of our associations in all wars;
To inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, state and nation;
To combat the autocracy of both the classes and the masses;
To make right the master of might;
To promote peace and goodwill on earth;
To safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom and democracy;
To consecrate and sanctify our comradeship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness.

Resolution 2

As American Legion posts begin to conduct the Oratorical Contest, they can now promote that scholarships awarded at the National Oratorical Contest have increased after remaining the same for the past 22 years.

Scholarships awarded starting with the 2020 American Legion National Oratorical Contest in Indianapolis are as follows:

- Up to 53 department winners competing in first round quarterfinals will receive $2,000 each.
- Up to 15 finalists advancing from first round to second round semifinals will receive an additional $2,000 each.
- Top three finalists receive $20,000 for first place; $17,000 for second place; and $15,000 for third place.

Effective in 2021, the scholarship award for the first place National Oratorical Contest winner will increase to $25,000; second place will increase to $22,500; and third place will increase to $20,000.

www.legion.org/oratorical

CENTENNIAL

Bookazine captures 100 years of American Legion accomplishments

“Century of Service: An Illustrated History of The American Legion” is now available for $9.95 per copy, plus shipping and handling, through Emblem Sales. Dozens of never-before-published photographs take readers on a colorful 124-page journey filled with voices, images and reflections about what would become the nation’s largest and most influential veterans service organization.

The anchor feature is the story of newly chartered Shawna Morrison Collegiate Post 2019 on the campus of the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, named for a soldier who was killed in a 2004 ambush in Iraq, whose spirit inspires a new generation of student-veteran Legionnaires. Running parallel to Morrison’s story is an exploration of The American Legion’s founding values and figures, specifically the principle that a veteran is a veteran, regardless of rank at discharge, gender, race, education level or economic status.

Bridging sections on the pillar interests of The American Legion – care for veterans, Americanism, national security, youth and disaster relief, for instance – are sections that go into the origins of the Legion cap, the organization’s place in popular culture, places named for The American Legion and more.

The bookazine – in high-quality, heavy stock paper – is the second in an American Legion 100th Anniversary Observance Committee series. “Century of Service” and “Indivisible: The Story of Our Flag” may be purchased together at the discounted price of $15.90, plus shipping.

Order online at www.emblem.legion.org.

TRAINING

Membership tools on Legion.org

The American Legion’s 56th annual National Membership Workshop was held in early August in Indianapolis.

During the workshop, attendees broke out into three sessions – long term membership planning, district commander and department membership chairman. During the sessions, attendees will focus on recruiting and retention; training initiatives; post operations; revitalization; the responsibilities and challenges of district commanders; and more.

PowerPoint presentations from the National Membership Workshop, as well as District Training in a Box - Phase 1, are available on The American Legion website at www.legion.org/training.

Scroll down to Tools & Resources and click on District Training in a Box. Issues of the training newsletter are accessible on the training page as well.

Phase 1 of the district training discusses membership development, recruitment and retention; role of post adjutant and commander; MyLegion.org; post leader development; the online transmittal process; parliamentary procedures; mentorship; resolution writing; and more.
POST ACTIVITIES

Legion Family Play Day kits available for posts

Now available for American Legion Family members is a toolkit to assist them in hosting Legion Family Play Days.

The concept for American Legion Family Play Days was outlined in Resolution 20, approved by the National Executive Committee at the Spring Meetings in May 2019.

Family Play Day activities expand on American Legion Past National Commander Denise H. Rohan’s “Family First” message to promote membership and strengthen renewal by uniting the American Legion Family around activities for all ages as a way to welcome younger veterans and their families into the organization.

Posts are encouraged to create their own visions of Legion Family Play Days, based on their available resources, community needs and other factors. For example, a post in a warm-weather state with an outdoor area may want to include games such as bean-bag toss or cornhole, a parent-child kickball game, a dunking tank or others. A post that does not have its own home may want to work with a community center, library or similar facility to host an event featuring board games, face-painting, karaoke and other activities.

The kit contains useful information and downloadable resources that posts can adapt to their own specific events. The resources include a customizable flyer, media advisory and social media posts.

Download the kit at www.legion.org/publications under Media & Communications.

AUXILIARY MEMBERSHIP

First male spouse joins Auxiliary unit in St. Louis

American Legion Auxiliary President Nicole Clapp shared with members of The American Legion National Executive Committee last month during Fall Meetings in Indianapolis that as of Oct. 16, 157 male spouses of veterans have joined the Auxiliary. During The American Legion’s 101st National Convention, delegates approved changes to the Constitution and Bylaws to replace the word “wife” with “spouse,” related to the membership criteria for the American Legion Auxiliary.

One of those new members is AJ Detzler-Cox, who joined Auxiliary Unit 404 in St. Louis on Sept. 21. AJ is the husband of U.S. Army veteran Shanna Detzler-Cox, a dual member of St. Louis Service Women’s Post and Auxiliary Unit 404.

“The American Legion is a place to take care of family, and the Auxiliary helps take care of the military,” AJ said. “Shanna was already doing Legion things, and I was helping out. I saw (joining the Auxiliary) as an opportunity to officially help. I want to support the military any way I can.”
There were 56 American Legion posts chartered during 2018-2019. If you are chartering a new American Legion post for 2019-2020, we want to hear your why. Please send an email to dispatch@legion.org.

Tony Berenotto, commander of Post 205 in Clay-Trussville, Ala., shares why the post was chartered this past March.

“Our post is proudly named after a local U.S. Army hero that we lost in Afghanistan in 2011, while I was still in Iraq myself. The community has proudly rallied around this young man and his family. We have even recruited his family as members, and his father and an Executive Committeeman.

“We started American Legion SSG M.W. Hosey Post 205 because we identified the need for a strong, dedicated veterans service organization in our community. We wanted all four components of the American Legion Family immediately, or as soon as we were allowed, because we knew the impact the entire Legion Family can have on the success of the post from our previous experience. Our team included those family members in the planning of the post from day one and it took us over three years to bring it to fruition.

“We wanted to hit the ground running and we have. We received a great response from the elected leaders in our cities, and they have been instrumental in us establishing a post home and in providing meeting spaces for all of our activities, which include four meetings a month and numerous additional events. We couldn’t do it without them and we are very grateful.

“We wrote a resolution that created a department award for emergency 911 communication professionals on the same level as law enforcement and firefighters. And our Firefighter of the Year won the department-level award. Additionally, we are establishing an award for Volunteer Lawyer of the Year for those that provide pro bono assistance to the veteran community.

“Our Oratorical, Boys and Girls State, Baseball, junior shooters and veteran outreach programs are all in various stages of development.

“All of this could not be possible without the formation of a great team of Legionnaires, Sons and Auxiliary members.”
MEMBERSHIP INCENTIVES AND AWARDS

103 PERCENT MEMBERSHIP AWARD

American Legion National Commander James W. “Bill” Oxford will award his national commander “A Foundation for the Future” membership incentive pin to any post, district, county, division, department commander or membership chairman who achieves 103 percent of their assigned membership goal for 2020.

Download the 103 percent membership goal form online: www.legion.org/commander/103percent

POST EXCELLENCE AWARD

The American Legion’s Post Excellence Award has added new criteria for the 2019-2020 membership year. To qualify for the Post Excellence Award, a post is required to achieve excellence in four areas: membership, submission of the Consolidated Post Report (CPR), attaining a 90 percent renewal rate and community activity.

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. A post achieving this qualification will have had numerous post members involved in planning and achieving these goals. Many posts are most likely already active in these areas and will qualify without extra effort. Others, however, will need to increase their efforts in one or more areas to qualify for the award.

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

Membership: An American Legion post must attain at least 103 percent of their membership goal. And at least one post officer attends 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.

Renewal rate: The post must renew at least 90 percent of their members that were on the 2019 roster.

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 community projects to show that the projects were not only accomplished but that an attempt was made to enhance the image of The American Legion through local media. Copies submitted should include a date and time stamp showing receipt by the media outlet.

The department adjutant will transmit information as posts qualify to:

The American Legion National Headquarters
Attn: Membership
P.O. Box 1055
Indianapolis, IN 46206-1055
Legionnaire collects centennial coins for ‘historical value’

For 20 years now, David Goodman of American Legion Horry Post 111 in Conway, S.C., has collected every commemorative coin the U.S. Mint has made. So when the U.S. Mint released The American Legion 100th Anniversary Commemorative Coin series in March, “I had to have one.”

Then once Goodman was informed that many of the departments also were issuing a state centennial coin, he began the process of collecting every one. Goodman wanted to collect the department centennial coins and the ones issued by the U.S. Mint “for the historical value,” he said. “This only happens once in a lifetime and is something to pass down to future generations.

“The first coin in my collection was, of course, my own state of South Carolina.”

From there, he contacted every American Legion department that issued a centennial coin. “The quest was long, and took over a year to complete, but it was worth it in that not only are the coins excellent representation of each department, but I got to meet many people throughout our country and areas like Puerto Rico, Mexico and (Washington) D.C. I also received a gift of a coin from Paris.

“The coins are all unique and beautiful.”