THE AMERICAN LEGION
Dispatch
June 24, 2010 • Vol. 19, No. 10
A National Headquarters Publication

MEETINGS

Hitting three of the four pillars in two days

Legion's PCAG covers a lot of ground during June meeting.

By Steve B. Brooks

The American Legion is based upon four pillars: National Security, Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, Americanism, and Children & Youth.

During the recent meeting of the Legion's Policy Coordinating and Action Group at the organization's Washington Office, three of those pillars were highlighted in presentations during a busy two days of reports and discussions involving both inside and outside sources.

The PCAG – which included National Commander Clarence Hill, leading candidate for 2010-2011 National Commander Jimmie Foster, various commission chairmen, and former and current national staff – heard reports involving three of the organization's four pillars.

National Security – a briefing from the chief of staff of the Army's working group on the "don't ask, don't tell" policy, and reports from the program director for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, the director of the Army Suicide Prevention Task Force and a military spouses advocate.

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation – reports from the director of operations for the Department of Labor's transition assistance programs, the legislative director of Student Veterans of America, and representatives from the Department of Defense's Office of Wounded Warrior Care and Transition Policy.

Koby Langley of the Office of Wounded Warrior Care & Transition Policy addresses the Legion's Policy Coordinating and Action Group. He was one of several speakers to go in front of the group during the two-day meeting June 16-17. *Craig Roberts*

Children & Youth – a presentation from the government relations director for the National Military Family Association.

The group also received an overview on the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act from the Department of Labor's chief investigator for USERRA and veterans preference.

On the Legion side, national staff briefed the group on the Heroes to Hometowns program, U.S. Army end strength and the 2011 National Defense Authorization Act, and Operation Military Family Outreach. And Past National Adjutant and Past National Commander Robert W. Spanogle brought up the Legion's Reconnect program and expressed a desire to see the program reinvigorated.

The PCAG was formed during Past National Commander James Dean's tenure from 1986 to 1987 in response to issues arising in Central America. The group's mission is to examine problems worldwide that pose a threat to U.S. security and monitor issues facing the U.S. Armed Forces.

For more in-depth PCAG coverage, visit *www.legion.org*

VETERANS BENEFITS

Legion: VBA must improve work quality

The American Legion told Congress in June that, while the Veterans Benefits Administration has made some recent progress, it believes "there are clearly areas for improvement" in the way VBA processes disability claims for veterans.

"VBA has, to be fair, made many strides forward in recent history, but there are still many areas that must be addressed," said Ian de Planque, deputy director of The American Legion's Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Division, in his written testimony before a House subcommittee. "VBA struggles with the quality of work and timeliness, not only in the adjudication of claims but also in the implementation of internal regulatory changes and those directed by Congress."

In addition, de Planque said, the accuracy of VBA's work is suffering from the pressures of moving a high volume of disability claims through its own system, which has serious flaws, according to a March 2009 report from the Department of Veterans Affairs Office of the Inspector General.

The OIG report found that VBA has been remiss in reviewing and analyzing its own systemic problems: While 20 reviews were planned for the grant/denial rates for veterans' disability claims, only two were conducted. "Furthermore," the report said, "VBA officials did not initiate either of the two planned evaluation reviews to analyze and improve the consistency of disability compensation ratings, and to reduce the variances between states."

The American Legion testimony's main theme was that VBA needs to pay greater attention to detail in processing disability claims for veterans who have earned their benefits through honorable service in the military.

THE AMERICAN LEGION
P.O. BOX 1055 • INDIANAPOLIS, IN 46206

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT NO. 719
INDIANAPOLIS, IN 46206

COMMANDER'S MESSAGE
Veterans can revive economy PAGE 2

NATIONAL ADJUTANT'S COLUMN
H2H: A concept 90-plus years old PAGE 3

TROOP SUPPORT
A week of memories PAGE 4

REVITALIZATION
A 'Huge success story' PAGE 5

VETERANS BENEFITS
Veteran to veteran PAGE 7

PLANNER

JULY

1 Department Children & Youth reports due to National Headquarters

4 Independence Day

15 Child Welfare Foundation grant applications due to National Headquarters

17-24 Auxiliary Girls Nation, Washington, D.C.

23-31 American Legion Boys Nation, Washington, D.C.

AUGUST

3-8 Junior Shooting Sports National Championship, Colorado Springs, Colo.

5-9 American Legion Baseball regional tournaments, various sites

5-7 National Membership Workshop, Indianapolis

5-7 Department Service Officers School, Indianapolis

13-17 American Legion Baseball World Series, Spokane, Wash.

22-26 2010 Legacy Run

27-31 92nd American Legion National Convention, Milwaukee

27-31 90th American Legion Auxiliary National Convention, Milwaukee

27-29 39th Sons of The American Legion National Convention, Milwaukee

COMMANDER'S MESSAGE

Veterans can revive our economy

Let's turn back the clock to a pivotal moment in American history. World War II was winding down. Millions of young veterans were coming home from the great theaters in Europe and Asia. Many of them entered service as their family farms were failing. Foreclosures were rampant, and jobs were scarce. America had yet to recover from the Great Depression. During the war, families rationed food, gas, metal and other materials for the effort, maintaining vigilance and austerity.

Clarence E. Hill
National Commander

The first generation of Legionnaires had a masterful plan to absorb the shock of so many veterans re-entering the civilian economy. They pushed through a GI Bill of Rights that sent millions to college, made home ownership affordable and offered job-training initiatives that replaced uncertainty with prosperity. Around the same time, another measure to help bridge the economic gap between war and peace was passed: the Veterans Preference Hiring Act of 1944.

The spirit behind that law was clear. Those who risked their lives in uniform for our nation deserved a better shot than others at getting jobs in the federal government. In practical terms, that means veterans were to receive bonus points when their applications were graded for positions in federal agencies or offices.

We all know what the GI Bill meant for the U.S. economy. It fueled a half-century of growth and created the middle class. And while it has needed updating at times, it remains a prominent reason for joining the military and a viable contributor to the U.S. economy.

Not so with the Veterans Preference Hiring Act. It disturbs me to hear that only about 30 percent of the Department of Veterans Affairs work force is composed of veteran employees.

At a time when veteran unemployment is outpacing that of the general population, the U.S. government must do a better job of fulfilling the spirit of the Veterans Preference Hiring Act. The percentage of veterans working at VA should be 75, not 30. Likewise, laws that require just 3 percent of U.S. government contracts to be awarded to disabled veteran-owned businesses can no longer be ignored, as they currently are.

There are many reasons for the breakdown. Foremost is communication. Veterans are not adequately notified about job or contract opportunities available in the federal government. Some agencies have failed to publicize job opportunities, as required by law, that could be filled by veterans. Contract procurement is too great a mystery for too many veterans. In today's environment of instant mass communication, there is no reason veterans should be left in the dark about opportunities.

The American Legion testified before Congress in May that programs must be provided to better train veterans for government employment, and to reach out on contract procurement (***www.legion.org/careers).***

President Obama has established task forces to close these gaps. VA Secretary Eric Shinseki has made economic recovery – particularly for homeless veterans – among his highest priorities. And I have created a special American Legion committee to accelerate the effort – as partners, not adversaries – to help bring the federal government into compliance with its own laws and finally fulfill the spirit behind them.

Clarence E. Hill

Memoranda

LEGACY RUN 2010:

Registration is now open for those wishing to participate in The American Legion's fifth annual Legacy Run, a nearly 1,400-mile motorcycle caravan looping from Indianapolis through the heartland of America, arriving in Milwaukee in time for the 92nd American Legion National Convention. Registered riders can join the run at any point. Supporters can meet participants at American Legion posts along the way and deliver their contributions to the Legion's Legacy Scholarship Fund, which provides college assistance for the children of military personnel who lost their lives on duty after 9/11. To learn more, see the route map or register, visit **www.legion.org/riders**. Follow this year's Legacy Run with daily updates on Facebook, Twitter and The American Legion's Web site.

www.legion.org

CONVENTION TIME:

Milwaukee is the home of the 92nd American Legion National Convention, Aug. 27 to Sept. 2. A dynamic schedule of speakers, workshops, entertainers, exhibitions and a veterans job fair are among the many attractions.

www.legion.org/convention

Dispatch

Published monthly.
Printed by HNE Printers, Columbus, Ind.

All American Legion publications are entitled and encouraged to reproduce all staff-written stories within, but please credit *Dispatch* as the source.

A proud member of The National American Legion Press Association.

Correspondence and letters to the editor:
The American Legion Dispatch
P.O. Box 1055
Indianapolis, IN 46206

Subscriptions or customer service:
(317) 630-1298

Annual subscription rate: **$15**

Editorial office: **(317) 630-1352**

Fax: **(317) 630-1280**

Online: **www.legion.org**

STILL SERVING AMERICA

Does your post have a unique community program, an innovative recruiting method or a creative way of spreading the Legion message that could be implemented at posts across the country? Tell us how your post and its members are ***Still Serving America.***

In submitting your information, include your full name, address and telephone number. Send your items, labeled ***Still Serving America****, to the correspondence address at left.*

EDITOR
Steve B. Brooks

CONTRIBUTORS
James V. Carroll
Matt Grills
Jeff Stoffer

DESIGNER
Carolyn R. West

ACTIVATION

Want to get involved in one of The American Legion's many national programs? Do you have a question about veterans affairs, national defense or what is going on in Washington? All you have to do is pick up the phone or send an e-mail.

American Legion Divisions

Americanism/Children and Youth
(317) 630-1203
acy@legion.org

Finance
317-630-1222
finance@legion.org

Internal Affairs
(317) 630-1330
ia@legion.org

Legislation
(202) 263-2981
leg@legion.org

National Convention
(317) 630-1292
dholmes@legion.org
bwilliams@legion.org

National Emblem Sales
(888) 453-4466
emblem@legion.org
emblem.legion.org/

National Security/Foreign Relations
(202) 861-2700
nsfr@legion.org

Public Relations
(317) 630-1253
pr@legion.org

The American Legion Magazine
(317) 630-1298
magazine@legion.org

The American Legion Library
(317) 630-1366
library@legion.org

Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(202) 861-2700
var@legion.org

Programs

American Legion Baseball
(317) 630-1249
jquinlan@legion.org
http://legion.org/baseball

American Legion Child Welfare Foundation
(317) 630-1202
www.cwf-inc.org

American Legion Endowment Fund
(317) 630-1202

Boys Nation
(317) 630-1207
acy@legion.org

Family Support Network
(317) 630-1395
(800) 504-4098
familysupport@legion.org

Junior Shooting Sports
(317) 630-1249
mbuss@legion.org

Legion College
(317) 630-1265
mherndon@legion.org

National Emergency Fund
(317) 630-1321
ia@legion.org

National Oratorical Contest
(317) 630-1249
mbuss@legion.org

NATIONAL ADJUTANT'S MESSAGE

H2H: A concept 90-plus years old

Program true to mission of veterans helping veterans.

By Daniel S. Wheeler

The American Legion was founded under a simple auspice: veterans helping veterans. A group of World War I veterans saw the issues facing their comrades and decided to do something about it. The other three pillars of the Legion were formed during those early meetings, but "veterans helping veterans" remains our mission to this day.

Our Heroes to Hometowns (H2H) program was created to help severely injured or ill servicemembers transition from military to civilian life. Putting it simply, it's veterans helping new veterans.

It's doing things Legionnaires are doing in their communities every day, even if they don't know it falls under H2H. It can be helping recently discharged servicemembers find employment or housing. It can be helping them learn about their VA benefits, including education, housing and health care.

It can be working Temporary Financial Assistance requests. It can be helping with child care. It can be one of many things you are already doing within your town or city.

During the recent Policy Coordinating and Action Group meeting in Washington, the Legion's H2H coordinator, Catherine Trombley, gave a briefing on the program. She noted that some Legion departments have exceeded initial H2H expectations, providing feedback and outreach while helping veterans at the local level through a community of volunteers and stakeholders who make the program work.

Other departments are referring veterans needing assistance to their department service officers. And some departments have financial concerns regarding implementation of the program. Some departments have established H2H funds; others have not. But not every H2H request requires funding. And sometimes, when funding is needed, simply reaching out to others in your community can make it work.

Sunny Farrand, the Department of California's H2H chairman, is an example of what establishing contacts can do for a successful H2H program. Farrand was able to arrange the distribution of nearly $60,000 in gift cards to severely injured servicemembers last Christmas. To date, Farrand has assisted 500 wounded servicemembers or veterans through H2H in California and another 100 in other parts of the country.

He attends military events such as job and resource fairs to establish contacts, and maintains a close relationship with local, state and federal government entities to assist his efforts.

"I did not want our warriors from OIF to be treated like the veterans that served in the Vietnam era," Farrand says. "This new warrior is a volunteer and should be honored for their sacrifices for our nation."

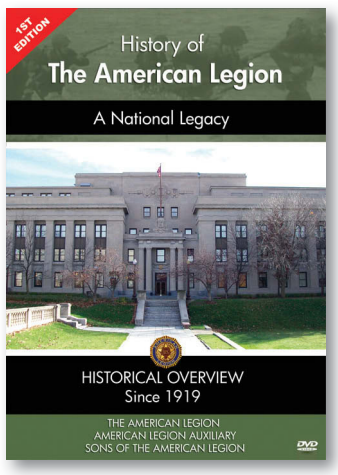
Heroes to Hometowns may have been formalized in the past decade, but it's something we've been doing since our founding in 1919. It's what we do. And it's something everyone can do, in some form or another.

On the Web: *http://www.legion.org/heroes*
Cat Trombley: *(202) 861-2700*
ctrombley@legion.org

MULTIMEDIA

Legion documentary now available on DVD

Portion of proceeds from sale of DVD will benefit Legacy Scholarship Fund, Child Welfare Foundation and NEF.



A new documentary detailing the 91-year history of The American Legion has just been released and is currently available through the Legion Web site and Emblem Sales.

"History of The American Legion: A National Legacy" was produced by Blackhorse Productions, a California-based company that specializes in military documentaries. Narrated by actor Neal McDonough ("Band of Brothers"), the movie traces the World War I roots of the Legion and follows its history, from its founding to its support for the military during the global war on terrorism.

"The American Legion has been the leading voice for veterans and the military since 1919," National Commander Clarence Hill said. "While many people know that The American Legion played a pivotal role in the creation of the GI Bill, they don't necessarily know the fascinating history behind it. From the elevation of the VA to Cabinet status to the administration of some of the most successful youth programs in the country, The American Legion has too many noteworthy accomplishments for me to mention here. I am pleased that we now have a DVD that brings the illustrious history of The American Legion to life. This would make a great gift for any Legionnaire and a great educational tool for the general public."

The National Executive Committee passed Resolution 6 during its October 2008 meetings, which authorized the Legion to cooperate with Blackhorse Productions in the creation of the documentary. The project was completed at no cost to the Legion, with a portion of the sales proceeds being allocated to The American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund, the Child Welfare Foundation and the National Emergency Fund.

"Preserving history and teaching viewers about the contributions and sacrifices made by our veterans is a passion for Blackhorse Productions," said Jason Heit, Blackhorse's executive producer and CEO. "We were extremely excited to not just tell the great story of The American Legion, but to include the American Legion Auxiliary, Sons of The American Legion and the American Legion Riders."

The DVDs cost $19.95 each and are available online at ***http://emblem.legion.org/History-of-The-American-Legion-DVD/productinfo/755.906/*** or by calling (888) 453-4466.

YOUR WORDS

'Why I Love My Post'

The Dispatch *wants you to tell us, and the rest of The American Legion, why you love your post. Send your 200- to 300-word submissions and related photos to* ***legionnews@legion.org.***

PARKER COUNTY POST 163, WEATHERFORD, TEXAS

I moved to Weatherford, Texas, 10 years after getting a divorce. I was in the Air Force Reserve at the time and had four years until retirement. Not knowing anyone in the area, I called Post 163 and was given directions to the post by a lady who was extremely friendly and courteous. Upon entering the post, I received a warm welcome from all the veterans and the Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion members. I believed in what the post was doing, so I joined both the post and the Auxiliary. It was like having a "second family."

We are privileged to send participants to Boys and Girls State almost every year. Our Sons squadron is sponsoring one of its junior members to travel to Europe this summer as an ambassador in the People to People program. For the last nine years, we have hosted a group of approximately 500 Vietnam veterans known as "Run For The Wall." They ride motorcycles from the West Coast to Washington, D.C., where they become known as "Rolling Thunder." Our members and commander work hard preparing and smoking 30 briskets to feed the group. The Auxiliary and Sons members prepare all the side dishes. Community businesses donate drinks and desserts.

At Christmas, we honor the veterans in nursing homes with gift bags full of goodies – it does put a smile on their faces. We eat with them and sing Christmas carols. Several members get involved with Toys for Tots in December, delivering toys to children who otherwise would have no presents under their tree.

We honor our fighting troops by sending packages of needed items that help make their lives a little easier in a time of turmoil. We greet returning military at the airport with flags waving and big "thank yous" for serving our country and keeping us free.

For the past eight years, our commander, Ron Chandler, has been in charge of or helped put on a Veterans Day parade. Even though he works full time, he always makes sure we all serve the community when called upon, in areas of conducting funeral honors for veterans or attending Chamber of Commerce functions. We also teach flag etiquette to local youth.

During one period, several years back, our post had to close for about two weeks for financial reasons. All the concerned and dedicated members gathered at the post, and everyone donated at least $200. We paid our bills and slowly rebuilt our bank account. Our post has a canteen that is now run by volunteer members. Our profits are used to sponsor Legion programs and help the community.

A group of concerned citizens who believed in us donated a van so that we could transport veterans to the Dallas and Fort Worth VA facilities for their medical appointments. We have 10 volunteer drivers; they never complain when they have to get up at 3:30 a.m. to make a trip.

Our chaplain and flag chairman, Chuck Katlic, is 87 and a survivor of the Battle of the Bulge. He makes sure that flags are placed on every veteran's grave in Parker County. Our commander is very passionate about The American Legion, and all his officers share in his patriotic belief. Because of the outstanding leadership our post enjoys, we are well known and respected in both the community and all of Parker County.

I have made lifetime friends at my post, and I'm so proud of our service to others.

JoAnn Cassidy, adjutant, Post 163

Read more about Post 163 online:
www.americanlegionpost163pc.org

TROOP SUPPORT

A week of memories

American Legion Post 2001 and New York City open their arms and hearts to thousands of Navy, Marine and Coast Guard personnel during annual Fleet Week.

By Steve B. Brooks

Derrick Johnson has made a career of 21 years in the U.S. Navy. Currently a master chief electronics technician, Johnson is stationed on the USS *Iwo Jima* and has traveled all over the world.

But one of Johnson's favorite docking destinations is New York City at the end of May. That's when the city opens up its arms and heart to thousands of U.S. Navy, Coast Guard and Marine personnel as part of Fleet Week. Fleet Week started in 1984, and allows servicemembers to tour the city as honored guests, while civilians get the opportunity to tour many of the ships.

American Legion Post 2001's home is on the USS *Intrepid* Sea, Air & Space Museum, which is a big part of Fleet Week, hosting receptions and dinners, and providing tickets to various iconic New York activities like Yankees games and Broadway shows.

For Johnson – a 15-year member of Post 327 in Norfolk, Va. – 2010 was his fifth Fleet Week. On June 1, the final day of Fleet Week activities, Johnson joined 74 other Navy personnel and 15 Coast Guardsmen during Post 2001's NCO Reception at The Water Club restaurant.

"If our ship gets selected for Fleet Week, I get so excited," Johnson said. "This is the second time I've been to (Post 2001's) event, and they really treat us well. What people do for us during Fleet Week shows us that people recognize what we're doing, and that they care about what we're doing. They're willing to open up their places of business to us and shell out some of their own money. It makes us feel like we're doing something – something good. And that the public sees we're doing something good."

Master Chief Machinery Repairman Rich Smith, stationed on the USS *Philippine Sea*, is coming to the end of a 30-year Navy career, but this was his first Fleet Week. He also attended Post 2001's NCO Reception.

"Seeing all of this gives each of our sailors a chance to see what we're fighting for," Smith said. "It's really been a great experience for me personally."

At the same site ater that evening, 75 officers from the Fleet Week ships attended Post 2001's Commanding Officers Reception. Shrimp cocktail and fresh oysters, carved beef tenderloin, and an impressive array of meats and cheeses lined the serving tables, thanks in part to the generous donations of James G. Kennedy & Co., Inc., a multimillion-dollar construction-management and general-contracting firm based in New York City. Roger M. Norton, CEO of the firm, is a past Post 2001 commander. Norton says Post 2001's involvement goes back much further than his tenure as CEO of the firm – back to when Post 2001 was known as Post 1870 and was based out of the Downtown Athletic Club in lower Manhattan.

James G. Kennedy & Co., Inc.'s founder, James G. Kennedy Sr., was also one of the founders of Post 1870, which was forced to relocate following the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. Kennedy's son and successor at the firm, James Kennedy Jr., also became heavily involved in the post, and Norton said that through their various business contacts, they were able to help it prosper financially. Hosting the receptions during Fleet Week, Norton said, is simply a continuation of the Kennedys' involvement.

U.S. Navy Rear Adm. Michelle Howard, commander of Expeditionary Strike Group 2, was one of the guests at the evening reception and took the time to publicly thank everyone involved with Fleet Week. "We truly have a wonderful week. We literally have people coming up to us, patting us on the back. It's like coming home the first weekend of college and mom's taking care of you," Howard said. "Fleet Week has been that way, and it's because of every single one of you. You represent all of the citizens of New York and New Jersey. We get on the way tomorrow, but we take away terrific memories, and that's because of you."

Above: U.S. Navy Rear Adm. Michelle Howard thanks members of Post 2001 for their hospitality during the Commanding Officers Reception during the final day of Fleet Week. To the right of Howard are Post 2001 Commander Sean Powers, Post Adjutant Joel Viders and Department of New York Commander William R. Kearsing. Left: Roger Norton, past commander of Post 2001, chats with Navy officers during the reception. *Steve Brooks*

TROOP SUPPORT

OCW shows more support for Fort Lewis

In March, The American Legion's Operation Comfort Warriors program was announced as the overall winner of the Pepsi Refresh Everything Project contest for February. Pepsi awarded a $250,000 grant to OCW, a program dedicated to meeting the needs of wounded military personnel by providing them with comfort items not usually supplied by the government.

The money is already being put to good use. Legion staff members visited Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Washington state for an OCW distribution effort in late May. The Legion announced that it will provide nearly $29,000 in wounded-warrior support items to Fort Lewis. It was OCW's second showing of support for Fort Lewis, which was given biofeedback equipment by the Legion about a year and a half ago. The devices aid in the recovery of PTSD and TBI victims.

The Legion will also provide a comprehensive kiosk-based information system to benefit the wounded warriors and their family members and caregivers, allowing access to all the data needed to take full advantage of appointments, therapy opportunities, unit events, social events and community events.

Legion staff members also participated in a family forum discussion, which gave wounded warriors and their family members an opportunity to raise issues that face them and their families. Legion officials were able to address those issues with Fort Lewis staff later in the day as they toured the facility.

"The gut feeling is that this was a terrifically successful visit," said Phil Riley, director of the Legion's National Security and Foreign Relations Division. "We were welcomed and before we actually started the business end of the trip, we were thanked for the gift from a year and a half ago when the Legion's OCW provided a gift of biofeedback equipment, which is very effective therapy for PTSD and TBI victims."

Additionally, it was announced that the Legion will receive office space at Fort Lewis' Soldier and Family Assistance Center. There, the Legion can install a service officer who will work on medical evaluation board cases and physical evaluation board cases for wounded warriors. The service officer will also work on Department of Defense Disability Evaluation System cases for servicemembers, and represent them before and during their Physical Evaluation Boards and with making appeals of disability determinations when required.

Department of Washington Commander Robert W. Schwartz presents an OCW check to Lt. Col. Daniel Dudek, commander of the Warrior Transition Battalion at Fort Lewis. Also pictured are Legion National Security and Foreign Relations Division Director Phil Riley and Command Sgt. Maj. James Davis. *Steve Brooks*

POST REVITALIZATION

‘A huge success story’

A three-day revitalization effort in New York brings in 50 recruits.

By Steven B. Brooks

At first glance, American Legion Post 1451 in Wheatfield, N.Y., didn’t appear to be a candidate for a revitalization effort. The post, chartered in 1946 and just a short drive from Niagara Falls, has more than 400 members, along with 240 members from the Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion. There are nearly 20 American Legion Riders in the post.

But simple numbers don’t tell the story.

“I can’t get any officers, and I can’t get anyone to fill any committees,” two-term Post Commander George Kralick said. “We have a lot of World War II veterans – we lost 15 last year – and no one really wants to get involved in post activities.

“Commanders used to last one year here and then move on to a position in the county. But this is my second term. I can’t get people interested. And I don’t want to turn into a social club. I want this to stay an American Legion post. But I can’t get it up and running.”

Kralick said the post still sponsors students to Boys State, mostly because he pushes for it. The post also provides scholarships, has Memorial Day and Veterans Day ceremonies, and puts flags on graves. But that was about it for the post, which is why Kralick put in a request for a revitali-zation effort.

In late April, local and department Legionnaires, along with national staff, spent three days going door to door in the Wheatfield area to renew former members and transfer headquarters-post members to Post 1451. Divided into groups, the membership teams made more than 250 contacts and added a total of 50 members to Post 1451, either through transfers, renewals or reinstatements. Another two members were added to a nearby post in what was the Legion’s most successful revitalization effort in recent history.

“I’m so pleased with this effort; it’s by far the best revitalization effort I’ve been on,” said W. Michael Bowen, New York’s department membership chairman. “Membership is the hardest easy job, as our national commander says. It’s not that hard. All you have to do is ask.”

Bowen makes a point of asking about Legion membership everywhere he goes. Through the April revitalization effort, he had personally brought 63 new members into 16 different posts within the Legion, from 18 to 84. “What I’ve learned is that every veteran wants to belong, but you have to ask them first,” Bowen said. “Every member counts. The more members we have, the more they’ll listen to us in Washington, D.C., and across the country. Our membership impacts every aspect of our organization.”

Before the first door was knocked on, groundwork was laid with letters and phone calls to current headquarters members and former members in the area. Meeting up at Post 1451, the membership team used membership-delinquent lists, a department DMS list, and a national DMS list to plot out a course of action. Mapping out addresses, the team then broke into three groups and started knocking on doors.

But any questions about joining, renewing or transferring were prefaced by questions like, “We noticed you hadn’t renewed, and we just wanted to check on you and make sure everything is OK.” Offers to help in filing claims with the Department of Veterans Affairs were made. Sometimes, the membership teams simply listened to the veterans and the stories of their service. Tears came to the eyes of one World War II vet as he recalled losing his best friend while in combat in the Pacific theater of operations. Another talked about wanting to belong to an organization that could make a difference.

“You need to ask, but you also need to listen,” Bowen said. “Listen to what they want. Find out what their needs are. You end up finding the Legion has a lot of what they need or want.”

While the initial effort was successful, the key to maintaining any revitalization effort comes with following through. Efforts were made to encourage Legionnaires at the county level to stay in contact with Kralick, and perhaps attend future meetings, to keep the momentum going.

“Membership, like anything else, can be contagious. New, active members can benefit the post, the county and the district,” Bowen said. “It’s not just the quantity of the numbers; it’s the quality. I really think we got some people in who are going to be leaders and active in this post.”

That possibility is what pleased Kralick the most.

“I couldn’t be happier with the results,” Kralick said. “Now we can get back to doing what our post used to do.”

Top: Art Forman (foreground) visits Richard Friedline during a revitalization effort for Post 1451, Wheatfield, N.Y., in April. **Bottom:** Post 1451 Commander George Kralick leaves a flier at the home of a veteran during the revitalization effort. *Amy C. Elliott*

TAPS

John E. Kelly

Ambler, Pa.

John E. Kelly of Post 308 (Department of Pennsylvania) passed away May 1 at age 61. He was a Vietnam War Air Force veteran.

Mr. Kelly served in several department positions, and also served as National & Homeland Security Council vice chairman from 1991 to 1994, National Foreign Relations Council vice chairman from 1997 to 2001, and National Americanism Council vice chairman from 2003 to 2006.

Louis A. Trundy

Rochester, N.H.

Louis A. Trundy of Post 47 (Department of New Hampshire) passed away May 8 at age 74. He was a Korean War Air Force veteran.

Mr. Trundy served as National Foreign Relations Council vice chairman from 2001 to 2002.

Walter G. Miete

Alna, Maine

Walter G. Miete of Post 54 (Department of Maine) passed away May 12 at age 90. He was a World War II Navy veteran.

Mr. Miete served in several department positions, and also served as aide to National Commander Anthony G. Jordan from 1997 to 1998.

He was a member of the National Merchant Marine Committee from 1982 to 1985, and the National Naval Affairs Committee from 1986 to 1998.

Max E. Julian Sr.

Angola, Ind.

Max E. Julian Sr. of Post 31 (Department of Indiana) passed away May 28 at age 83. He was a World War II Army veteran.

Mr. Julian served in several department positions, including department commander from 1981 to 1982. He also served as National Americanism Commission national commander’s representative from 1979 to 1980, National Distinguished Guests Committee vice chairman from 1982 to 1992 and from 1994 to 2005, and National American Legion Insurance Committee national commander’s representative from 2005 to 2010.

James R. Carden

Centennial, Colo.

James R. Carden of Post 19 (Department of Nevada) passed away May 30 at age 86. He was a World War II Army veteran.

Mr. Carden served as department commander from 1961 to 1962.

Paul J. Andrejewski

Waseca, Minn.

Paul J. Andrejewski of Post 228 (Department of Minnesota) passed away June 4 at age 84. He was a World War II Army veteran.

Mr. Andrejewski served in several department positions, including department commander from 1989 to 1990. He also served as national vice commander from 1992 to 1993, National Americanism Council vice chairman from 1990 to 1991, and National Homeland Security & Civil Preparedness Committee vice chairman from 1995 to 2003.

He was a member of the National Homeland Security & Civil Preparedness Committee from 1991 to 1992 and from 1993 to 1995.

DATELINE: CAPITOL HILL

Agent Orange compensation included in supplemental funding bill

James E. Koutz
Chairman, National Legislative Commission

On May 27, the U.S. Senate by a vote of 67-28 passed **H.R. 4899**, a fiscal 2010 supplemental appropriations measure. The House passed the original bill – which only funded disaster-relief programs – on March 24 by a recorded vote of 239-175. The measure now goes to a House-Senate conference committee to reconcile the differing versions.

The Senate version of the bill contains $58.8 billion in further funding for the current fiscal year, mainly for prosecution of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, in addition to disaster relief. The bill would provide $33.5 billion for the Department of Defense for the addition of 30,000 troops in Afghanistan, $4.9 billion for procurement of equipment, $2.6 billion for Afghan security forces, and $1 billion for Iraqi security forces. In addition, the measure provides $5.1 billion to pay for the costs of disaster relief, money that the Federal Emergency Management Administration needs.

Two provisions in **H.R. 4899** are directed at the Department of Veterans Affairs. First, the bill would transfer $67 million from the major construction account to pay for the Filipino Veterans Equity Compensation Fund. This fund, created by **P.L. 111-5**, makes a one-time lump-sum payment to Filipino veterans who served during World War II in the liberation of the Philippines.

A second VA provision would provide $13.4 billion in mandatory funding to compensate Vietnam veterans who have been diagnosed with certain illnesses that have a direct link to exposure to Agent Orange. These conditions include B cell leukemias, Parkinson's disease and ischemic heart disease, and would be added to the list of other disabilities already recognized as having a link to Agent Orange exposure. VA Secretary Eric Shinseki announced last October that these conditions would be added to the register of Agent Orange-presumed disabilities.

However, some senators are concerned that, with the addition of these three disabilities, VA will experience a large number of claims applications for compensation. VA anticipates an additional 67,500 applications will be filed for these three conditions. After Type 2 diabetes was added to the presumption list in 2001, more than 263,000 veterans were receiving compensation for that disability by 2009.

As a result of these concerns, Sen. Jim Webb, D-Va., introduced an amendment to **H.R. 4899** prior to its Senate passage to address the projected claims-application increase. The Webb amendment would invoke a provision of the **Congressional Review Act (P.L. 104-121)** that puts funding of major new agency initiatives on hold for 60 days to allow Congress the opportunity to review them.

The House Appropriations Committee began work on a separate supplemental appropriations bill prior to the Memorial Day recess. This measure includes $37.5 billion in military, security and foreign-assistance aid for Afghanistan and Iraq; $24.7 billion in jobs funding; $13.4 billion for Agent Orange benefits payments to affected veterans; $3 billion in disaster relief for Haiti and the Gulf of Mexico in the wake of the oil spill; and $677 million in funding for U.S.-Mexico border security. Further action on this measure in the House is ongoing.

U.S. Air Force

Disabled Veterans Tax update

The American Legion continues to support legislation allowing military retirees to receive both their full military retired pay and their service-connected VA disability compensation, without the dollar-for-dollar offset commonly referred to as the disabled veterans tax.

The origin of the disabled veterans tax dates back to 1891, when Congress passed a law prohibiting active-duty or retired personnel from receiving disability pensions.

Military retired pay is compensation for longevity of honorable military service. VA service-connected-disability compensation is for medical conditions incurred or aggravated while on active duty. These payments to veterans are made for two very distinct and different reasons.

For the past several years, Congress has taken steps to resolve this problem. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., has taken the lead in the process. Usually, language is included in the annual National Defense Authorization Act, though that language does not always survive to be a part of the final version signed into law.

On May 28, the House passed **H.R. 4213**, the "American Jobs and Closing Tax Loopholes Act." One of the provisions in the bill addresses the disabled veterans tax. The provision allows the full concurrent receipt of military retired pay and VA disability compensation to former servicemembers who were forced to prematurely leave their military careers due to disability retirement under Title 10, Chapter 61, U.S. Code. These people are sometimes referred to as "Chapter 61 retirees."

The legislation ends the disabled veterans tax, and provides full retirement and disability benefits to 77,000 of these disabled servicemembers for two years, in anticipation of extending it to all 136,000 medically retired veterans over the next four years. The measure now goes to the Senate for consideration.

House passes veterans legislation

Prior to the Memorial Day recess, the House of Representatives approved three bills that would improve benefits and services to veterans provided by VA. These measures were approved by the House Veterans' Affairs Committee on May 12, prior to action by the full House.

The first bill, **H.R. 1017**, the "Chiropractic Care to All Veterans Act," was introduced by House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Chairman Bob Filner, D-Calif. It would require VA to expand veterans' access to chiropractic care and services at their local VA facilities. The bill would require VA chiropractic care to be available at no fewer than 75 VA medical centers by Dec. 31, 2011, and then at all VAMCs two years later. This care is intended to help veterans get necessary treatments, especially those who served in Iraq and Afghanistan and continue to report musculoskeletal ailments. The House passed **H.R. 1017** on May 24 by a vote of 365-6, sending it to the Senate for further action.

A second bill is **H.R. 3885**, the "Veterans Dog Training Therapy Act," was introduced by Rep. Hank Brown, R-S.C. This legislation requires VA to conduct a five-year pilot program for relieving veterans' post-deployment mental health and post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms through training service dogs for veterans with disabilities. The program would be available in at least three and up to five VA medical centers for veterans who volunteer to participate in training, and who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder or post-deployment mental health issues. The bill passed the House on May 25 by a recorded vote of 403-4.

Finally, the committee approved **H.R. 5145**, the "Assuring Quality Care for Veterans Act." Introduced by Rep. Jerry McNerney, D-Calif., **H.R. 5145** would increase the reimbursement for continuing professional education for all board-certified health-care professionals employed by VA from $1,000 a year to $1,600 a year. Current law limits the reimbursements to physicians and dentists. On May 25, the House passed this bill by a vote of 413-2, sending it to the Senate for action.

Rep. Filner said of these measures: "As a country, we must do more to provide for returning veterans. These bills address the emerging needs of our veterans by offering expanded health-care services and establishing an innovative program for combating post-traumatic stress. We can never fully repay our brave troops, but we can continue to thank them by providing the care they need as they return home."

HEALTH CARE

Veteran to veteran

World War II Navy combat veteran, honored in Indianapolis 500 parade, has a message for young veterans coming home with PTSD.

By Jeff Stoffer

No one was talking about post-traumatic stress disorder at the time of Paul Kennedy's medical discharge from the Navy near the end of World War II. Nearly four decades would pass before the condition would be defined, acknowledged and commonly diagnosed among combat veterans.

Kennedy, a signalman on a destroyer, had nearly been killed by a Japanese warplane at Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941. He watched in horror as sailors aboard USS *Oklahoma* were propelled to their deaths when the first torpedo hit. He sailed in 28 round-trip convoys across the North Atlantic and helped escort landing craft crossing the English Channel into Normandy on D-Day, fully aware of the fate awaiting those who would storm the beaches. Kennedy was later shot by an enemy submariner forced to surface right next to his ship. "The first guy to come out, came out with a machine gun and started strafing us," the Legionnaire from Greenwood, Ind., explained. "I am standing up there, and I caught a little lead … it wasn't serious, but it hit me. But that's not what put me in the hospital. What put me in the hospital was PTSD."

Kennedy, now 89, has spent nearly 70 years coming to terms with his combat experiences and helping other veterans get through theirs. "The way I got over it was talking about it with my fellow veterans," said Kennedy, who joined Legionnaires from three other war eras on The American Legion's float in the IPL 500 Festival Parade, part of the celebration surrounding the Indianapolis 500, in May. Also on the float were Indiana Army National Guard Master Sgt. John Madden (whose wife and children make them a seven-Blue Star Family) along with sons Cayce and Tim; Vietnam War veteran Larry White of Post 500, in full Legion Riders regalia; and John Thomas, a Korean War veteran and adjutant of Post 249 in Indianapolis.

Kennedy said it's vital for veterans of different war periods to make connections, especially with those coming home from Iraq and Afghanistan. He spends an hour every Tuesday evening in a "vet-to-vet" session of peer therapy that transcends war eras. "We've got these young guys coming in now with a monkey on their back," Kennedy explained. "I can tell them how to get rid of it. Others can, also. We've got several there from the Vietnam War – which was a terrible war. They know."

Before the parade, the World War II veteran recollected some of the experiences that would shape the rest of his life. One – while serving on the USS *Sacramento* on Dec. 7, 1941 – would alter the course of Western civilization.

"After I was relieved at 4 a.m., I stayed up and drank coffee until 5:30 a.m. with the fellow who relieved me. I was going to sleep all day Sunday. At about five minutes until 8, the alarm went off, and I thought it was a drill. I wrapped the pillow around my head. I thought, this is one drill I'm not going to. Half our crew was on liberty anyway.

"Then a buddy of mine pulled me out of my bunk, and he said, 'Come on, Paul! The Japs are bombing the hell out of us. Get your gas mask and your helmet. Get to your battle station!'"

The first thing he saw after passing through the hatch, Kennedy said, was a Japanese torpedo plane directly overhead. "The pilot had his canopy back. He was looking down at me, and I was looking up at him, and I can remember his face clearly. He dropped that torpedo in the water and I watched it. It went across and hit the *Oklahoma*. There were three men on the side of the *Oklahoma* that were standing right above where the torpedo hit. They went flying up in the air like rag dolls, and back down into the water. I went on to my battle station.

"There were torpedo planes coming in left and right. We got hit with 350 planes, and every plane had either a 500-pound bomb or a torpedo. Each one of those battleships caught seven or eight torpedoes apiece. While they were doing that, these bombers were dropping bombs on everything. One bomb was meant for our ship but hit on a dock beside us."

Kennedy soon had a brush with death. "I went up to my signal station, and there was a hoist on the tower – a flag hoist – so I'm busy running that flag up in the air, which is what I am supposed to do, and a Jap zero drops a 500-pound bomb on the *Pennsylvania*, which is in dry dock, which is where we were a week before, and immediately heads our way and starts strafing. I thought, 'Do I want to get shot in the back or the belly?' I elected to face him. I won't tell you what I said. He missed me by an elbow length. He didn't hit anyone on our ship. But from that time on, it was just chaotic.

"The *Oklahoma* was over on her side in 20 minutes. Those guys were scrambling for their lives. Guys were abandoning ship. So it was complete chaos. The first wave left, and we thought, 'Well, it's all over.' And here the next wave came in. They continued to bomb and do damage, but the thing that really bothers me is these sailors were in the water – dead, in their white uniforms, in the oil, in the water – and the boats were picking them up. They would get a boatload of dead men, and some live guys, and these Jap planes would come down and strafe them. Absolutely defenseless. That hurt. That still bothers me today. It took me a long time to forgive the Japanese. I didn't want to go to my grave hating anybody, so I forgive them."

His experiences in the North Atlantic were similarly harrowing, including the machine-gun wound and the D-Day assault. The weight of the war eventually became too much to bear.

"I got to the point where I'd had it," Kennedy explained. "I got to a point where I didn't care about anything, anybody. I didn't care who won the war. I was that bad. I got into the hospital, and I wouldn't eat. They said, 'We will force-feed you.'

World War II veteran Paul Kennedy overcame his own battles with PTSD and now works with other veterans to help them deal with it. *Jeff Stoffer*

"I said, 'Go ahead – I don't care.' I didn't want to go on liberty. I just wanted to get out. So they gave me a discharge and enough money to get home, and they said, 'Don't talk about it.' That was the wrong thing. It took me a long time before I got over it."

The only treatment that worked for him, he said, was talking about the experience with other veterans. A member of multiple veterans service organizations, the Pearl Harbor survivor now embraces his wartime memories, one in particular:

"That night at Pearl – about midnight – the *West Virginia* was anchored right in front of the *Arizona*. The *Arizona* was burning and burning. Smoke was pouring off of it. The *West Virginia's* flag was still up on her stern. From our perspective, it looked like the flag was right in the middle of the fire, the flame and the smoke. Today, when I hear 'The Star-Spangled Banner,' I get a cold chill up my back because I can still see that site. It inspired all of us to see that flag still flying."

MEMBERSHIP

Post start-up/revitalization successes

Post 1876, Centennial, Colo.; Post 9, La Junta, Colo.; Post 207, Pueblo West, Colo.; and Post 2011, Calhan, Colo.: The Department of Colorado conducted a busy membership effort that included chartering a post in Calhan and revitalizing three other posts. The effort brought participation from the national, department, district and post level.

Calhan is a growing community with a population that comprises cattle ranchers, civilian defense-contract personnel, and active-duty and retired military personnel. The chartering team, among other activities, visited City Hall for input on community meeting places and activities provided by other volunteer organizations; and put out a follow-up press release to alert local veterans of the opportunity to become charter members of a Legion post. They also conducted a door-to-door sign-up drive that involved using expired and active headquarters-membership lists. A total of 17 charter members for Post 2011 were signed up during the initial drive. Considering the interest shown by those who signed during the charter drive, prospects for continued membership growth and Legion activities look great for this new post.

The revitalization effort for Pueblo West Post 207 brought its membership to an all-time high of 115 members, with 26 being renewed or added during the revitalization activity.

La Junta Post 9 increased its membership by 12 during the revitalization effort. The team used expired and active headquarters-membership rosters for a door-to-door recruiting drive that netted the majority of the new members. In addition to receiving an increase in membership, the post found a new meeting place, along with new officers in place who have an interest in developing the Legion's presence in the community.

Centennial Post 1876's revitalization effort made use of an expired membership roster and active headquarters-membership lists for leads to conduct a door-to-door membership drive. This helped Post 1876 increase its membership rolls by 17. A post Web page is planned, and new leadership is stepping forward.

MEMBERSHIP

Incentives remain for district commanders

National Commander Clarence Hill has continued a program that honors district commanders and district vice commanders who make regular visits to their posts.

Personal contact at this level sets an example for post membership workers to make the personal contacts necessary for successful membership programs.

In order to qualify for the award, district commanders and/or vice commanders must visit each post in his or her district during the year.

For districts with more than 30 posts, district vice commanders can assist in making post visits, but the district commander must visit at least 30.

A list of posts in a district can be obtained with the assistance of department headquarters. The list is mailed in spreadsheet format to each district commander.

At the completion of the 100-percent visit requirement, district commanders will send the completed spreadsheet to the department, and it will be forwarded to National Headquarters by Aug. 1.

www.legion.org/commander
Click on Post Visitation Award

Awards

District commanders who achieve the 100-percent visit requirement receive certificates recognizing their achievements. Additionally, qualifying districts will be split into five categories and given special prizes, based on drawings. Categories will separate districts by number of posts.

The district commander drawn from each category will receive a gift certificate from National Emblem Sales. The certificate amount will reflect the increased difficulty for larger districts.

Category 1 (up to 20 posts) – $100
Category 2 (21-35 posts) – $200
Category 3 (36-50 posts) – $300
Category 4 (51-65 posts) – $400
Category 5 (over 65 posts) – $500

Additionally, department commanders whose departments have all districts achieving the 100-percent requirement will receive special recognition at the 92nd National Convention.

MEMBERSHIP

Post Excellence Award continues

Purpose

National Commander Clarence Hill has continued the Post Excellence Award program, which honors posts that show excellence in membership participation, youth activities, community service, and support to veterans and U.S. troops.

The award promotes membership growth, demonstrates Legion values to youth, and increases the Legion family's visibility through community-service projects. Many posts may already qualify for a Post Excellence Award because of their programs and activities.

Criteria

Standards to be achieved in each area include:

- **Membership** – Post membership must be at least one member greater than the previous year. Post officer must attend district meetings.
- **Youth Activities** – The post must sponsor and actively participate in at least one primary youth program: Boys State, Legion Baseball, Oratorical Contest, Boy Scouts of America or Junior Shooting Sports.
- **Community Service** – The post must organize a community-service project that involves Legion family members. Potential projects abound; for example, a post could focus on a Children & Youth service or fulfill a strictly local need. A monetary donation may be part of the project, but it does not constitute an entire project.
- **Service to Troops or Veterans** – The post must organize a project supporting troops or veterans, involving Legion family members outside the post. Projects could include Legion programs such as the Family Support Network or Heroes to Hometowns. Or they could simply help a local veteran with needed improvements to a home. A monetary donation may be part of the project, but it does not constitute an entire project.

www.legion.org/commander
Click on Post Awards

Certification

District commanders must certify posts as having fulfilled the four specified criteria. District commanders will submit a list of posts meeting the criteria to department headquarters. The list should include the post name, post number, address and commander's name. Ideally, the last two criteria are accompanied with copies of press releases submitted to local media that raise awareness for the projects. This ensures the projects were not only accomplished but that an attempt was made to enhance The American Legion's image. The copy submitted should include a date-time stamp showing receipt by the media outlet. The department adjutant will transmit information as posts qualify.

Each qualifying post receives a certificate of recognition, mailed to the department and awarded to the post. District commanders whose districts have 50 percent or more posts reaching certification receive framed certificates recognizing their achievements. District commanders whose districts achieve the highest percentage of recognized posts will receive additional awards. In the event of a tie within a department, all district commanders with the same percentage will receive recognition.

MEMBERSHIP

Hill awarding 'challenge' pin

National Commander Clarence Hill will award his "I Met T.H.E. Job Challenge" pin to any Legion family member who signs up at least five new members. A new member is defined as any eligible person joining for the 2010 membership year who was not a member during the 2009 membership year.

Hill's goal is to recognize those in the Legion family who actively recruit new members. To maintain the integrity of the national commander's pin incentive program, only one challenge pin will be awarded per individual.

www.legion.org/commander
Click on Incentive Program

The certification form may be submitted immediately. Upon receipt, national membership staff will confirm the names and mail the pin directly to the Legionnaire. Hill's "I met T.H.E. Job Challenge" pin incentive will end June 30, or when pin supplies are exhausted.

"I MET T.H.E. JOB CHALLENGE" PIN CERTIFICATION FORM

*Send to **The American Legion, National Membership Division, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206,** or fax to **(317) 630-1413***

Name _____ Date _____

Department _____ Post _____

Street address _____

City/state/ZIP _____

Phone number _____

FIVE NEW MEMBERS (include full name, post and membership number)

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____