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THE AMERICAN LEGION
Dispatch

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SPRING MEETINGS

Denise Rohan, chairman of the National Membership & Post Activities Committee, speaks during Spring Meetings. Photo by Eldon Lindsay

MEMBERSHIP PLAN LAID OUT

Departments will draft a comprehensive plan to be used at all Legion levels.

By Cameran Richardson

Resolution 64, passed during the 2012 American Legion Fall Meetings, charged the Legion's Internal Affairs Commission and Membership & Post Activities Committee to establish a five-year strategic plan to help the organization reach a record in total membership by 2019 — the Legion's centennial. And on May 8, during Spring Meetings, Denise Rohan, chairman of the Legion's National Membership & Post Activities Committee, announced the Legion's five-year strategic plan for sustained membership growth.

"We want to encourage all members, all members all the way down to the post level, to be a part of this plan," Rohan said. "It needs to be a grass-roots effort. We have to tell The American Legion story to our nation's military."

Each Legion department will be expected to draft a comprehensive plan for membership growth that can be used at all Legion levels and submit it to the membership committee before June 14. Then, during National Membership Workshop, Aug. 2-4, each newly elected department commander will discuss how his or her respective department is going to implement the five-year membership plan. The 2013-2014 elected national commander and national vice commanders will receive an update during the 2013 Fall Meetings on how each department is progressing.

The NEC passed 29 resolutions during Spring Meetings. Browse by publication date to read them: *http://archive.legion.org/browse*

The membership plan will include the following five strategies:

Brand awareness

- Create and promote a tagline that best describes the Legion.
- Develop a comprehensive marketing plan.

See Membership plan on Page 5

NEWS ALERT

Legion Riders e-newsletter

The Legion Riders free e-newsletter provides information on the upcoming American Legion Legacy Run, as well as links to external media stories on what Legion Rider chapters are doing across the country. Register online: *www.legion.org/riders*

Samsung Scholarship

Eligible youth interested in applying for The American Legion Samsung Scholarship should bring the application to either Boys State or Girls State. Download application: *www.legion.org/scholarships/samsung*

Child Welfare Foundation grants

The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation accepts funding proposals from nonprofit organizations for projects that contribute to the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual welfare of children. Applications must be postmarked by July 15 to National Headquarters. *www.legion.org/documents/pdf/grantapplication.pdf*

Youth Programs Alumni Association

Current and former Legion youth program participants are eligible to join The American Legion Youth Programs Alumni Association (YPAA) to share memories and volunteer. Download the YPAA flyer under Americanism: *www.legion.org/publications*

COMMANDER'S MESSAGE

Honor America's fallen every day

James E. Koutz
National Commander

Today, many Americans associate Memorial Day as the start of summer, or a day filled with barbeques and department store sales. We, as Legionnaires, need to change this way of thinking. We can start by educating our neighbors, community members and young people that Memorial Day is appropriately set aside to honor our fallen war veterans – those who made the ultimate sacrifice for this great country. We owe it to the heroes that died, and also the loved ones left behind, to make sure that their sacrifices will always be remembered and that their service to this nation will always be honored.

In 2012, more than 7,000 posts either hosted or participated in a local Memorial Day event, and more than 800 Legion Riders gathered in Virginia to participate in Rolling Thunder's Run to the Wall. But Legionnaires around the world honor our fallen war heroes every day – not just on Memorial Day. They do so by building or rededicating veterans memorials, serving as honor guards at funerals, fundraising to support children of military personnel killed on duty and much more. The responsibility of remembrance falls to all of us – not just The American Legion and other veterans organizations, not just those serving in uniform, but every man, woman and child who woke up this morning in the land of the free. In one more generation, most of us who knew those lost in Vietnam will be gone. Even now, we're holding fast to the few who have firsthand memories of those who died in World War II and Korea.

To ensure our fallen heroes are not forgotten on Memorial Day and every day, I have a challenge for you: start inviting your neighbors, community groups and youth to your honor and remembrance events. Bring them to your post to learn more about veterans and the mission of The American Legion. Ask Boy Scout troops to help place American flags at the gravesites of fallen heroes. Take families to a ceremony where an MIA/POW tribute is presented, Gold Star mothers are in attendance, the names of fallen servicemembers are read, a 21-gun salute is heard and Taps is played.

While it's unfortunate that we can't personally show our appreciation to these heroes, we can pay tribute to them in many other ways. Milt Heifner, past national vice commander of The American Legion from Iowa, said it was important for Americans to honor those who have fought and died in uniform because "everything that we have in America is a result of the sacrifices by our troops, by our veterans. And what they've given us is through what they fought for and the sacrifices that they've made."

James E. "Jim" Koutz

FUNDRAISING PROGRAM

OCW goal: $750,000

Operation Comfort Warriors is National Commander Jim Koutz's primary fundraising program. At the Spring Meetings, Koutz raised the goal to $750,000. Donations go directly toward the purchase of comfort items for wounded warriors.

Donate:
www.legion.org/ocw

NEF Commander's Challenge

American Legion department commanders are challenged to assist in fundraising efforts for the Legion's National Emergency Fund. The departments currently in first place for their respective membership category include:

- Category 1 (100,000+): Florida
- Category 2 (65,000+): California
- Category 3 (40,000+): Maryland
- Category 4 (25,000+): Arizona
- Category 5 (10,000+): Louisiana
- Category 6 (9,999-): Rhode Island

www.legion.org/emergency/challenge

MEMBERSHIP

Recruiters to be honored with 'Every Day Is Veterans Day' pin

During the 2012-2013 membership year, National Commander Jim Koutz will award his national commander pin to any Legion Family member who obtains a minimum of three headquarters post transfers, and also obtains an additional combination of 10 new members, renewals and headquarters post transfers to equal a combined number of 13.

A new member is any eligible person joining for the 2013 membership year who was not a member of The American Legion during the 2012 membership year.

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

To maintain the integrity of the national commander's pin program, only one pin will be awarded per individual.

Upon receipt of the certification form, national membership staff will confirm the names and mail the pin directly to the person who earned it. Commander Koutz's "Every Day Is Veterans Day" pin incentive program will end June 30, or when supplies are exhausted.

Also, Legionnaires who recruit one new member from each eligible war period will receive a certificate.

www.legion.org/documents/pdf/LUCKY13PININCENTIVE.pdf

NATIONAL ADJUTANT'S MESSAGE

Protecting America's most powerful symbol

Legionnaires teach youth flag etiquette to ensure traditions are not lost, and fallen heroes are not forgotten.

By Daniel S. Wheeler

As Flag Day, June 14, approaches, I think back to when I recited the Pledge of Allegiance every morning in school and how we continue to do the same at the start of every American Legion meeting.

However, nowadays, most schools don't require students to recite the pledge, let alone require a flag in the classroom. Many people fear the tradition of honoring our American flag is gone forever, leaving today's youth the inability to show patriotism, flag etiquette and respect.

But Legionnaires are taking action to ensure the traditions of Old Glory are upheld, and in doing so ensuring that then men and women who gave their lives in defense of it are remembered.

Joseph Piazza, a member of Holbrook Post 615 in New Caney, Texas, acquired vast knowledge on the American flag through the Legion's "Let's Be Right on Flag Etiquette" booklet and "For Which It Stands" DVD. He shares his knowledge by teaching local junior and senior high school students how to properly carry, display and fold the American flag. Piazza also gave each school a copy of the Legion's "For Which It Stands" DVD, as well as "America's Veterans" to help students understand who veterans are, what they have done, and why they should be honored.

"Our flag represents a living country," Piazza said. "So therefore it is a living object."

Members of Milwaukee Post 18 recently visited a local elementary school to share their military experience, quiz the students on flag etiquette and show the children how to properly fold an American flag. The post gave each student their own small flag and donated a new flag to the school, which was raised outside with the students in attendance.

It's also important that young people know how to retire an American flag according to the U.S. Flag Code. Legion Post 181 in Lake Stevens, Wash., sponsors two flag decommission ceremonies a year and involves youth groups in the process. On Flag Day in 2012, local Boys Scout and Cub Scout troops led Post 181's decommissioning ceremony by presenting a faded, torn flag to the post commander who laid it on a bed of coals. Once the flag was burned, the Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts took turns laying a flag onto the coals until all 264 flags collected were retired.

Post 181 collects the worn, tattered flags by placing two specially retrofitted U.S. mailboxes in prominent locations within the community. More than 2,500 flags have been retired over the past few years.

The American flag is the most powerful symbol in our nation – it's a symbol of freedom, pride and hope. And even though the flag may not be raised in every classroom, we as Legionnaires must educate our young people – America's future – on its traditions to ensure Old Glory is protected, and the men and women who sacrificed their lives for their country are not forgotten.

Flag Day speech

Download the 2013 Flag Day speech online.

www.legion.org/publications/160983/flag-day-speech

Dispatch

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Agnes Rieger with National Commander Jim Koutz. *Photo by Eldon Lindsay*

AMERICANISM

Missouri youth wins 76th Oratorical Contest

On April 21, Agnes Rieger of Kansas City, Mo., was crowned the 2013 champion of The American Legion's 76th High School Oratorical Scholarship Program, "A Constitutional Speech Contest," in Indianapolis. Rieger's winning oration, "Let's Talk About Pennsylvania," earned her an $18,000 scholarship; she was sponsored by Post 95.

"I want to thank Post 95 for sponsoring me from the very beginning," said Rieger, a 2012 Girls State alum.

Second place went to Elizabeth Scannell of Goose Creek, S.C., who was sponsored by Post 166 and earned a $16,000 scholarship for her oration, "The Constitution: An American Position Description." And third place was awarded to Rachel Schartz of Humboldt, S.D., who was sponsored by Post 62 and earned a $14,000 scholarship for her oration, "Sewing Freedom."

In her oration, Rieger said that in a poll conducted by the National Constitution Center, "it was revealed that only 5 percent of the American population could correctly answer 10 simple questions about our Constitution — a pathetic cry for help. After all, how do we take ownership of something that we don't even know that we have?"

Rieger implored Americans nationwide to study the Constitution because if Americans don't know the Constitution, "we leave our government in the hands of others, and we exclude ourselves from developing the future of our great nation."

Rieger said she always respected the Constitution, but "I never had such a keen appreciation of what we have until this (American Legion) competition. It has helped me raise awareness (about the Constitution) and speak to my peers about what I'm doing."

Watch all three contestants' orations on *www.legion.org/legiontv*

Cajun Comeau
Department Service Officer, North Carolina

ASK A SERVICE OFFICER

Spouse compensation

Q. Will my spouse still receive money from VA when I die?

A. The money that is currently paid to the veteran for either VA pension or VA compensation will not continue. However, there may be an entitlement for the surviving spouse or dependent based on the service of the veteran.

Dependent Indemnity Compensation (DIC) is a monthly benefit paid to eligible survivors if his or her spouse was one of the following:

- Military servicemember who died while on active duty.
- Veteran whose death resulted from a service-related injury or disease.
- Veteran whose death resulted from a non service-related injury or disease, and who was receiving, or was entitled to receive, VA compensation for service-connected disability that was rated as totally disabling for at least 10 years immediately before death, or since the veteran's release from active duty and for at least five years immediately preceding death, or for at least one year before death if the veteran was a former prisoner of war who died after Sept. 30, 1999.

The surviving spouse is eligible for DIC if he or she meets one of the following requirements:

- Validly married the veteran before Jan. 1, 1957.
- Married to a servicemember who died on active duty.
- Married the veteran within 15 years of discharge from the period of military service in which the disease or injury that caused the veteran's death began or was aggravated.
- Married to the veteran for at least one year.
- Had a child with the veteran and cohabited with the veteran continuously until the veteran's death.
- If separated, was not at fault for the separation and is not currently remarried.

Note: A surviving spouse who remarries on or after Dec. 16, 2003, and on or after attaining age 57, is entitled to continue to receive DIC. The surviving child(ren), if he/she is not included on the surviving spouse's DIC unmarried and under age 18, or between the ages of 18 and 23 and attending school.

Have a claims question? Email it to: ✉ *askso@legion.org*

TAPS

John S. Brukner

Houston

John S. Brukner of Post 560 (Department of Texas) passed away March 29 at 85. He was a World War II Navy and Korean War Air Force veteran. Mr. Brukner served as department commander from 1993-1994, National Distinguished Guests Committee vice chairman from 1987-1993 and National Law and Order Committee Advisory Board member from 1981-1983 and 1986-1990.

James B. Coleman

Columbia, S.C.

James B. Coleman of Post 6 (Department of South Carolina) passed away March 26 at 80. He was a Korean War Air Force veteran. Mr. Coleman served as department commander from 1995-1996, National Child Welfare Foundation member from 1996-2008, National Distinguished Guest Committee vice chairman from 1993-1996, and National Finance Commission member from 1996-2007.

Ben B. Halterman

Kinston, N.C.

Ben B. Halterman of Post 10 (Department of North Carolina) passed away April 9 at 88. He was a World War II Navy veteran. Mr. Halterman served as department commander from 1961-1962, National Americanism Council vice chairman from 1964-1965, National Education & Scholarships Committee member from 1956-1957, National Foreign Relations Council vice chairman from 1965-1966, National & Homeland Security Council vice chairman from 1974-1975 and 1976-1984, and National Resolutions Assignment Committee member from 1984-2008.

From Membership plan on Page 1

- Encourage new corporate partnerships with veteran friendly organizations that have the same values as the Legion.

Communication

- Develop a media relations team within each department.
- Collect all members' email addresses to disseminate information on any calls to action.
- Increase public service announcements in local media channels.
- Increase presence in social media.

Training, education and leadership development

- Develop membership training teams.
- Encourage growth of the Leadership Education and Development program, The American Legion Extension Institute and department Legion colleges.

Post creation, development and revitalization

- Conduct post evaluations to identify areas that may need post revitalization, consolidation or new post development.
- Use the proper membership tools at all levels to achieve growth, like "Why You Should Belong" and "How We Help" brochures, Post Officer Guide and Public Relations Toolkit.

Membership recruiting and retention

- Establish membership teams at all levels. Develop and implement a strategy for transferring members from the department headquarters' post into traditional posts.
- Evaluate current reward and incentive programs at all levels and make recommendations for change if needed.
- Develop a working relationship with military senior leaders to offer an opportunity to join the Legion to all eligible members of the active military, National Guard and reserve.
- Make all new members feel welcome.
- Offer participants in the Legion programs, and their families, the opportunity to support such programs through membership in The American Legion Family, if eligible.

"We need our community to know that we are not just a bar — that we are about service to our veterans, their families and our communities," Rohan said. "We need to be seen as service first.

"We need to continue to work with our Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion (members) to welcome them into our complete American Legion Family. And with their help, we will welcome our veterans and their families into this great organization."

National Commander Jim Koutz announces the OCW goal has been raised to $750,000. *Photo by Eldon Lindsay*

Also during Spring Meetings, National Commander Jim Koutz raised his OCW goal from $500,000 to $750,000. "Whether we are showing our appreciation today at a warrior transition battalion or tomorrow at a VA center, the financial support for these heroes must continue."

In other business:

- Legion departments donated more than $54,000 to OCW, $6,000 to the Child Welfare Foundation and $7,000 to Temporary Financial Assistance.
- Mark Chmielewski of Salem, Conn., was named The American Legion Eagle Scout of the Year for 2013. Chmielewski will receive a $10,000 scholarship.
- The Legion Legacy Scholarship awarded $49,980 to 28 students. Each student will be awarded a $1,785 scholarship.

Charles H. Manson

Helena, Mont.

Charles H. Manson of Post 2 (Department of Montana) passed away April 15 at 90. He was a World War II and Korean War Air Force veteran. Mr. Manson served as department commander from 1984-1985, department vice commander from 1983-1984, National Executive Committee alternate member from 1985-1987, National Executive Committee member from 1987-1989, National Legislative Commission member from 1990-1999, National & Homeland Security Council vice chairman from 1978-1985, National Security Commission Liaison Committee member from 1988-1989, and National Public Relations Commission Liaison Committee member from 1987-1988.

Did you know?

The Big Twelve Competition award recognizes American Legion departments that meet or exceed their pledged membership goal percentage by the March target date. The winner in each of the six department categories will be reimbursed for computer equipment purchases of up to $2,000, and runners-up will be reimbursed for computer equipment purchases of up to $1,000. The winners are:

- Category 1 (100,000+ members): Florida, New York
- Category 2 (70,000+ members): Michigan, Minnesota
- Category 3 (40,000+ members): Texas, Georgia
- Category 4 (25,000+ members): Kansas, Arizona
- Category 5 (10,000+ members): Delaware, Colorado
- Category 6 (9,999 or fewer members): Utah, Rhode Island

The District Commander Race to the Top award is given to district commanders who attain at least 100 percent of the district's assigned membership objective by March 31. The winning district commanders will receive a trip to National Convention in Houston. They are: Thomas Florez of District 1 in Colorado; Michael Christensen of District 7 in Colorado; Patricia Liddell of District 3 in Georgia; John Arant of District 9 in Georgia; and Robert Kiley of District 6 in Florida.

EMBLEM SALES

Flag program rejuvenates Iowa post

About eight years ago, American Legion Albaugh-McGovern Post 42 in Ankeny, Iowa, was nearing bankruptcy. Today, Post 42 is on solid fiscal ground. A major factor in the turnaround is the post's participation in the Legion's Flag Rewards program.

Gerald R. Ballard (pictured below), a member of Post 42, has been selling American flags to businesses in the Ankeny community. Ballard, 91, keeps a meticulous spreadsheet of his 105 customers and the more than 400 flags he sells annually.

Photo by Eldon Lindsay

"It (selling flags) is for the support of my Legion post," he said. "I'm not bragging, but I make the post $6,000 to $7,000 per year and that feels pretty good."

Through the Flag Rewards program, Post 42 also earned more than $1,100 in rewards in 2012 to spend in 2013. When posts buy American flags from Emblem Sales, they earn free credit to purchase items from the Emblem Sales catalog or website – including, but not limited to, awards, uniforms, shirts, caps, pins, coins, patches, flags and baseballs.

The Flag Rewards program is a way for posts to earn financial support to fund post activities, and many posts are earning hundreds of dollars in free credit.

Get started in the Flag Rewards program by calling Emblem Sales at *(888) 453-4466* or go online to *www.emblem.legion.org*. Once registered, organize a Flag Rewards committee to strategize ways to identify and obtain customers within the community.

"Gerald has become the resource for people who want a quality flag, want to support The American Legion and our community," said Mitchell Arney, Post 42 adjutant.

Watch a video on Post 42:
www.legion.org/dispatch/215083/flag-program-rejuvenates-iowa-post

DATELINE: CAPITOL HILL

DoD seeks health-care increases

Kenneth F. Governor
Chairman, National Legislative Commission

The Department of Defense (DoD) is asking Congress in the fiscal year 2014 defense budget to increase cost sharing for military retirees on TRICARE, despite being refused in previous years.

Health care costs account for almost 10 percent of the total DoD budget, which is expected to reach $49.4 billion in FY 2014. Last year, Congress did allow increases to TRICARE Prime enrollment fees for military retirees under age 65, as well as to some adjustments to pharmacy co-payments. The DoD claims it could save $297 million in FY 2014 with the following new proposals.

Many of the proposals, such as tying increases to retired pay levels, were recommended by the 2007 Task Force on the Future of Military Health Care. For example, instead of a set dollar amount for TRICARE Prime, the premium would be set at 2.95 percent of retired pay with a minimum payment of $594 per family and a maximum of $750 in FY 2014. And for general and admiral retirees — who earn more retired pay percentage-wise compared to other ranks — the ceiling would only be set at $900 per year. These fees would increase annually until they reach 4 percent of retired pay in FY 2018. Then the minimum would be $594 and the maximum would be $1,226. And for general and admiral retirees, the maximum would be $1,840 per year. Fees for individuals would be set at 50 percent of the family fee.

New enrollment fees would be introduced for TRICARE Standard and Extra of $70 for individuals and $140 for families. Those fees would increase to $125 for individuals and $580 for families by FY 2018. In addition, enrollees would be responsible for deductibles of $160 for individuals and $320 for families. Those deductibles would rise to $290 for individuals and $580 for families by FY 2018.

Another new proposal is the creation of a $3,000 catastrophic cap for all TRICARE enrollees per family. The cap will exclude enrollment fees.

TRICARE for Life (T4L) enrollees would also be required to pay a fee for the first time, equal to 0.5 percent of gross retired pay up to a maximum of $150 ($200 for generals/admirals). That fee would increase by a quarter of a percent a year until it reaches 2 percent in FY 2018, with a ceiling of $613 ($818 for generals/admirals). The fee would be applied per person, not per family. And there is no discussion of Medicare premiums; retirees must enroll in and pay the premiums for Medicare before they are eligible for T4L.

And for the first time, President Barack Obama would exclude those who were medically retired from the military, as well as the families of servicemembers who fell in the line of duty.

DoD is also proposing additional changes to the pharmacy program. For prescriptions filled in retail outlets once a month, co-pays would be $6 in FY 2014 and rise to $9 in FY 2017. For brand name prescriptions, copays would be $28 in FY 2014 and rise to $34 in FY 2017. Co-payments for three-month refills from the mail-order pharmacy with generic drugs would have no co-payment until FY 2017, when a $9 fee would be implemented; co-payments for three-month refills on brand name drugs would increase from $28 in FY 2014 to $34 in FY 2017. The fees for non-formulary drugs would be $54 in FY 2014 and rise to $66 in FY 2017. Prescriptions filled in military treatment facilities would continue to have no co-payment.

MEMBERSHIP INCENTIVES AND AWARDS

GOLD AND SILVER BRIGADE

Renamed "Koutz Scouts" for the 2013 Membership Year, the Gold and Silver Brigade program will honor 2012 Gold and Silver Brigade Award recipients who bring an increased number of members in 2013. For every additional member, a 2012 Gold or Silver Brigade recipient obtains in 2013 over their 2012 total, they will receive a monetary award. Gold Brigaders will receive $3 per member they obtain over last year's total; Silver Brigaders will receive $2 per member they obtain over last year's total.

National Headquarters will continue to accept submissions for the traditional Gold and Silver Brigade award program, but hopes that those trying for either award will push themselves extra hard to get new members into The American Legion with this cash incentive. National Headquarters will also offer certificates, coins and lapel/cap pins to those who exceed last year's goals.

The program will be continued through 2019, so any Legionnaires who want to participate in next year's enhanced Gold and Silver Brigade can participate in 2014 for the new members they signed up during the 2013 membership year.

For more information, contact the Membership Division:
(317) 630-1327 or *ksingleton@legion.org*

DISTRICT LEADERS REWARDED FOR POST VISITS

The District Commander Post Visitation Award is an incentive for personal visits to posts by district commanders and vice commanders. Personal contact at this level sets the example for post membership workers to make the personal contacts necessary for a successful membership program.

Criteria. The district commander and/or vice commanders must visit each post in the district during their year. For districts with more than 30 posts, the district vice commanders can assist in making visits, but the district commander must visit at least 30 of the posts personally.

Certification. A list of posts in each district can be obtained with the assistance of department headquarters. At the completion of the 100 percent visit requirement, the district commander will send the completed spreadsheet to the department, which will forward it to National Headquarters by Aug. 2.

Awards.

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

www.legion.org/commander/districtpost

POST EXCELLENCE AWARD CONTINUES

The Post Excellence Award program honors posts that show excellence in membership participation, youth activities, community service, and support to veterans and U.S. troops.

Criteria

- **Membership.** Post membership must be at least one member more than the previous year. A 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, the Oratorical Contest, Boy Scouts of America or Junior Shooting Sports.
- **Community service.** The post must organize a community service project that involves members of the Legion, Auxiliary or Sons of The American Legion. A monetary donation may only be one part of a project.
- **Service to troops or veterans.** The post must organize a project supporting troops or veterans (for example, Family Support Network or Operation Comfort Warriors), that involves members of the Legion, Auxiliary or SAL outside the post. A monetary donation may only be one part of a project.

Certification. District commanders must certify posts as having fulfilled the four specified criteria, and submit a list of the post's name, number, address and commander's name to department headquarters. If possible, accompany with copies of press releases submitted to local media that raise awareness for the projects and enhance the Legion's public image.

Awards. Each qualifying post, as well as district commanders whose districts have at least 50 percent of posts reach certification, will receive a certificate of recognition.

www.legion.org/commander/postexcellence

Dispatch

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OPERATION COMFORT WARRIORS

Coins raise OCW donation total

Fundraising for and donating to The American Legion's Operation Comfort Warriors program is an ongoing effort for Legion Family members. The following two OCW stories show how change can add up quickly.

American Legion Post 57 of Grandview, Wash., collected a total of 304,701 pennies for OCW as part of its penny-a-day fundraiser in February. "We thought asking people for a few pennies rather than larger cash donations might help raise larger amounts," said Jim Davidson, Post 57 adjutant. "I kept the coin machine at the bank very busy during the month."

The post also challenged the local schools to help, and Davidson would stop by the schools each week to pick up the donations.

"This far exceeded what we hoped to collect," said Robert Gates, Post 57 commander. "We hoped for a $500 response for the month, but had that before the actual campaign began on Feb. 1."

The post sent a check for $3,047.01 to The American Legion National Headquarters.

Meanwhile, students at Oak Hill Middle School in Sabattus, Maine, organized a fundraising drive for OCW and collected more than $400. The students decorated and distributed empty yogurt containers to every classroom and then gathered them up and counted all the coins collected.

And on Feb. 15, during a ceremony at the middle school, student Chris Campbell presented Ron Caron of American Legion Sabattus Post 135 with a check for $439.24.

"The staff and students at Oak Hill Middle School are humbled and honored to be a part of such a worthy charity, which seeks to give back to those who give so much of themselves for others," said Aimée N. Lanteigne, teacher at Sabattus Middle School.

PLANNER

JUNE

6 D-Day 1944

14 Flag Day, pause for the pledge at 7 p.m. (EDT)

JULY

1 Department Children & Youth reports due to National Headquarters

4 Independence Day

15 Child Welfare Foundation grant applications due to National Headquarters

19-26 Boys Nation, Washington, D.C.

www.legion.org/dispatch/calendar