Vol. 24 No. 3

THE AMERICAN LEGION
Dispatch
November 2013 A National Headquarters Publication

MEMBERSHIP

Indianapolis NBC affiliate WTHR-13 films Indiana Legion Riders for a 15-second commercial spot. Photo by Tom Strattman

LEGION MEMBERSHIP HITS THE AIRWAVES

Indiana Legionnaires campaign on the radio, TV, at Colts NFL and baseball games.

By Cameran Richardson

The American Legion Department of Indiana's membership is on the upswing, thanks to its widespread presence on radio and television and at professional football and baseball games. The department recently launched an advertising campaign that brings the Legion's message to the airwaves and packed sporting venues.

The campaign is the focus of the department's five-year membership plan and the project of Department Commander Ed Trice during his tenure.

"The advertising campaign is not only about recruiting new members; it's also about educating the public on who we are," Trice said. "If our community has a better outlook on who we are and what we do, then that makes it better for our organization as a whole."

But before the project could begin, leadership had to give its vote of confidence.

"The advertising campaign is a very exciting project, but it's also a high-risk project that takes everybody's involvement," said Hugh Dagley, Department of Indiana adjutant. "Leadership has to get behind it, finance has to have a way to pay for it and the elected officers have to have the vision and courage. There was not a single piece of this advertising campaign that wasn't thought out before we put it in our five-year membership plan."

Future department commanders also bought in, agreeing to make it their project as well. "It took me 13 years to get here (as department commander), but in one year it's gone," Trice said. "If you don't have a plan for the next commander to carry on some of your projects, then you're just spinning your wheels every 12 months."

STARTING THE CAMPAIGN

The department first called WTHR Channel 13 — an Indianapolis television station. WTHR's original sponsorship package was too expensive, but the station lowered the

See Legion membership hits the airwaves on Page 5

NEWS ALERT

Host a blood drive

Last year, nearly 50,000 people donated blood through holiday blood drives hosted by American Legion posts. The Legion's 2013 holiday blood donor drive is Nov. 28 through Dec. 31; learn how to host a blood drive at your post:

www.legion.org/security/blood

Remember troops over the holidays

Many military personnel serving overseas will not come home for the holiday season. There are many ways Legion Family members can let these men and women know that they are thought of during a time of celebration and giving.

www.legion.org/troops/weblinks

Download Blue Star Families booklet

"Everyone Serves" is a handbook released by Blue Star Families that aims to help family and friends of a serviceman or woman cope with the stresses associated with a deployment. The Legion gave input on the handbook, which is available in PDF, eBook or Web form.

www.everyoneservesbook.com

Watch Oratorical Contest videos

The Legion created 11 videos that illustrate how to conduct an Oratorical Contest at the post and department level. There are also downloadable program materials, presentations and scripts for posts to modify and use.

www.legion.org/oratorical

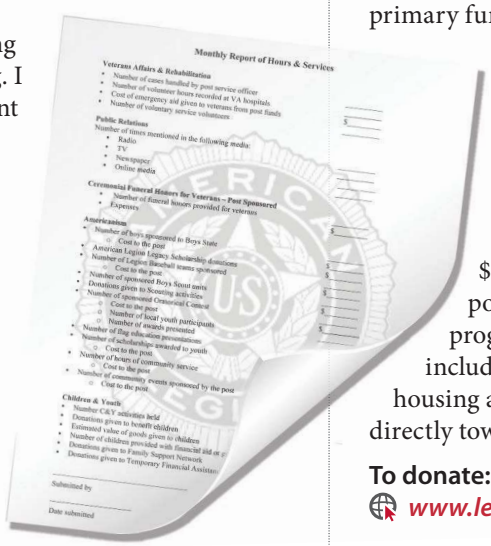
COMMANDER'S MESSAGE

Track volunteer hours

Dan Dellinger
National Commander

Only 57 percent of American Legion posts submitted their Consolidated Post Reports (CPR) for the 2012-2013 year, resulting in only 10 departments achieving 100 percent reporting. I want to see 100 percent reporting from all 55 departments.

As I have said before, the job is not done until the paperwork is filed — I will reinforce this message as I travel to departments this year. You can easily fill out and submit CPR forms online at *www.mylegion.org*; the forms are located under "Post and Department" options.



To help your post and department attain 100 percent reporting, Legionnaire Tammy Hamilton has shared a volunteer tracking form that she created. The form helps her post officers collect the information she needs to complete a CPR.

Hamilton, commander of Post 288 in Coinjock, N.C., gives every officer in the post a copy of the volunteer tracking form, and they are required to submit a completed form at monthly post meetings. "This has allowed me to compile the information throughout the year, and it's made it so much easier for me to complete the CPR online at the end of the year," Hamilton said.

Download Hamilton's volunteer tracking form:

www.legion.org/documents/legion/pdf/cprexample.pdf

FUNDRAISING PROGRAM

NEF goal: $1 million

The American Legion's National Emergency Fund (NEF) program is National Commander Dan Dellinger's primary fundraiser program this year.

A natural disaster can strike at any time, devastating the lives of men and women who honorably served their country. While we can't prevent a natural disaster, the Legion does provide relief to veterans and their families affected by devastation.

Since 1989, NEF has provided more than $8 million in direct financial assistance to posts, Legionnaires and their families. The program helps with out-of-pocket expenses, including but not limited to, food, temporary housing and clothing. All donations made to NEF go directly toward the program.

To donate:

www.legion.org/nef

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+): Illinois
- Category 3 (40,000+): Georgia
- Category 4 (25,000+): Tennessee
- Category 5 (10,000+): Montana
- Category 6 (9,999-): Wyoming

www.legion.org/emergency/challenge

MEMBERSHIP

Recruiters to be honored with 'Building for Tomorrow Today'

During the 2013-2014 membership year, American Legion National Commander Dan Dellinger will award his national commander pin to any Legion Family member who obtains five new members.

A new member is any eligible person joining for the 2014 membership year who was not a member of The American Legion during the 2013 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 Dellinger's "Building for Tomorrow Today" pin incentive program will end June 30, 2014, or when supplies are exhausted.

Also, National Commander Dellinger will award his "Building for Tomorrow Today" coin to any Legion Family member who recruits 15 new members.

www.legion.org/commanderpin

NATIONAL ADJUTANT'S MESSAGE

A diamond among Wisconsin Legionnaires

Camp American Legion provides rest, recuperation to local veterans and their families.

By Daniel S. Wheeler

For nearly a century, The American Legion Family has financially and emotionally cared for veterans and their families suffering from the wounds of war. This unconditional generosity can be seen and felt at Camp American Legion in Lake Tomahawk, Wis.

Since 1925, the Department of Wisconsin has maintained and operated Camp American Legion located on the shores of Big Carr Lake — a 213-acre lake in Oneida County, Wis. From early May until late September, the 74-acre facility provides rehabilitation, recuperation and rest to Wisconsin veterans, their families, active-duty servicemembers and – in some cases – surviving families of fallen servicemembers. Campers stay from 10 a.m. Monday to 10 a.m. Sunday.

The camp is open to any Wisconsin veteran or active-duty servicemember with a physician-documented physical or psychological illness, injury or disability, active-duty military who have returned from a deployment within the past nine months, and any surviving family member of a servicemember killed in the past year. When a veteran or servicemember requires a caregiver, the caregiver also is eligible to attend. The camp consists of:

- 22 fully furnished cabins (90 beds) complete with heat, air conditioning, full bath, sun rooms and decks
- A complete dining facility that serves three full meals a day
- A health and wellness center
- A craft shop
- A chapel
- Laundry services and provided toiletries

Stephen Parker – a 100 percent service-connected, combat-injured U.S. Navy veteran – visited Camp American Legion in 2010 to help deal with his post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). "Combat is not a cool thing," he said. "No good comes out of it. Some of those feelings you get from what you've experienced

never goes away. But when you can be around other veterans, you sort of feel safe. It's about healing and growing, and this place offers that."

The help that Parker sought at Camp American Legion has become the help that he delivers to fellow veterans. Parker is now a volunteer at the camp and has served as a boat captain and fishing guide for the past three years.

"When I saw the other veterans here, I thought I could help them," Parker said. "The thing about veterans is we are a family. Most veterans are very quiet about where they've been and what they've done. But when they sit around with other veterans and integrate with them, it helps them drop their guard."

Throughout the camp season, a variety of weeks have themes that focus on a specific condition or situation. For example, a week's theme may be about families of fallen servicemembers, veterans dealing with PTSD and traumatic brain injuries, blind or vision-impaired veterans, homeless veterans, women veterans, substance abuse and peer support.

"Three or four years ago, when we started doing all these new programs, all of those were just a dream," said Kevin Moshea, camp director. "They've all become reality. Dreams do come true if you work hard enough."

More than 1,000 veterans or family members attended Camp American Legion during the 2013 season, all for free. The Department of Wisconsin allocates $250,000 a year for the camp; donations also account for 30 percent of its operating budget. And posts, counties and districts "adopt" cabins and are responsible for the upkeep.

www.wilegion.org

Legion College

Read coverage online:

www.legion.org/college

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

Subscriptions/Customer Service:
(317) 630-1221

Email: **dispatch@legion.org**

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

Online: **www.legion.org/dispatch**

EDITOR
Cameran Richardson

CONTRIBUTORS
Steve Brooks
Andy Romey
Matt Grills
Jeff Stoffer
Henry Howard

DESIGNER
Jason Reed

POST ACTIVITIES

Membership competition has only winners

The departments of Missouri and Kansas conducted a membership challenge for three days in September, but in the eyes of everyone involved, there were only winners: Kansas, Missouri and The American Legion.

Legion Family members from both states made phone calls and went door to door, working alongside Legion national staff to transfer headquarters post members into local posts, renew former members and sign up new ones.

Dennis Woeltje, Missouri's membership chairman, hopes that similar competitions develop throughout the country. "Membership is important, and this really makes it fun," he said. "We had people from the Auxiliary, the Legion Riders, dual members and the Sons all putting in effort to make sure this was a success. The hope is that this escalates to the point where other states are doing it."

Revitalization efforts were based out of Post 153 in Olathe, Kan., and Post 21 in Independence, Mo. Legion Family members from both departments made phone calls to a list of expired and DMS members, resulting in 442 DMS transfers into local posts. Teams of Legionnaires and national staff divided up similar lists and traveled throughout neighborhoods in both areas, selling the importance of being a part of a local Legion post.

"It's getting a Legionnaire into a local post where they can see what their dues are doing," Department of Kansas Commander Gaylord Sanneman said. "Once they're in a local post, they can help financially support Legion programs — that's a big selling point."

ASK A SERVICE OFFICER

Reduced VA compensation

Tracy L. Davis
Department Service Officer, Missouri

Q. I am receiving 100 percent disability for prostate cancer that's Agent Orange related. If my cancer goes into remission, can VA reduce my compensation?

A. Yes, VA may reduce your compensation. Prostate cancer ratings are determined by VA regulation 38 CFR 4.115b. This regulation states, in part, "Following the cessation of surgical, X-ray, antineoplastic chemotherapy or other therapeutic procedure, the rating of 100 percent shall continue with a mandatory VA examination at the expiration of six months. Any change in evaluation based upon that or any subsequent examination shall be subject to the provisions of 38 CFR § 3.105(e). If there has been no local reoccurrence or metastasis, the disability is to be rated on residuals as voiding dysfunction or renal dysfunction, whichever is predominant."

Once your cancer is in remission, VA will not be able to compensate you at 100 percent disability based on treatment for cancer. If you have residuals from the cancer treatment, VA needs to separately rate them. Common secondary conditions from prostate cancer treatment include urinary problems, rectum or bowel issues, erectile dysfunction and depression.

You should make a new claim for any secondary conditions by submitting evidence that shows cancer-related complications. VA will make a new decision to match your symptoms with the rating schedule. This is often a separate decision from the proposal to reduce the cancer rating.

Ask your medical providers to assist with providing evidence. For example, Disability Benefits Questionnaires (DBQs) may be used as medical evidence for VA to rate your condition and any additional conditions associated with your service-connected cancer.

Learn more about DBQs online:
www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/dbq_disabilityexams.asp

Find an American Legion accredited service officer in your state:
www.legion.org/serviceofficers

DATELINE: CAPITOL HILL

House passes five veteran bills

On Oct. 28, the House of Representatives passed five veteran-related bills that have been sent to the Senate for further action. The measures are:

Brett P. Reistad,
Chairman, National Legislative Commission

H.R. 1405. The bill requires the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to include an appeals form in any notice of decision issued for the denial of a benefit sought.

H.R. 1742. The bill deducts in-home care expenses from income when determining housing benefits to veterans.

H.R. 2011. The bill extends the committee through the end of 2015.

H.R. 2189. The bill will require VA to create a commission or task force to evaluate the backlog of veterans' disability claims and make recommendations for reducing the backlog.

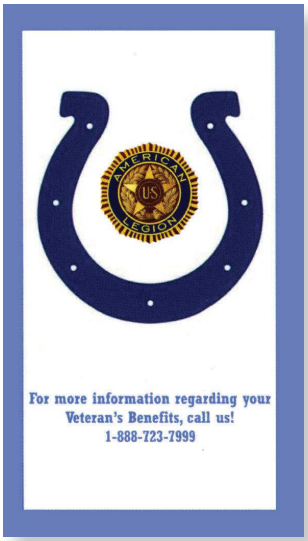
H.R. 2481. The bill ensures federal education benefits get to the families of veterans.

On Nov. 4, the Senate passed **S. 893**, Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act. The bill increases the rates of disability compensation, compensation for dependents, clothing allowance for certain disabled veterans, and dependency and indemnity compensation for surviving spouses and children. A House companion measure was approved in May; the two bills must be reconciled before a clean bill can be sent to President Barack Obama for his signature.

From Legion membership hits the airwaves on Page 1

price considerably when Legion officials highlighted their outreach programs and services to veterans. From there, WTHR put the department in contact with the Indianapolis Colts marketing team, which also offered special pricing.

"Because we started developing relationships with WTHR and the Colts, they dropped their prices because they knew that whatever they were going to work with us on, the community would benefit from," said Bruce Drake, communications director for the department.



REAPING THE BENEFITS

The department's year-long sponsorship package with WTHR Channel 13 includes:

- 540 15-second TV commercials. Five commercials have been filmed that feature local Legionnaires sharing why they joined. The department retains ownership of each commercial, and districts that don't have Channel 13 coverage receive copies of the commercials to send to their local news stations.
- Advertising on WTHR's Support our Troops and Faces of War web page.
- Banner ads on website. The first Legion membership banner ad on WTHR's website received a .21 hit rate, which is three times the site's normal hit rate. The ad linked to Legion.org's "How to Join" page.

The department's year-long sponsorship package with the Indianapolis Colts at Lucas Oil Stadium includes:

- Membership booth at Colts training camp in Anderson, Ind.
- Two game-day membership booths. One membership booth is located outside the stadium in the Colts' tailgate area, and one is inside the stadium. Legion volunteers hand out organizational literature.
- Six game-day radio commercials. The 30-second commercials run before, during and after the game. The Colts radio network reaches 45 statewide affiliates.
- Six game-day banner-scroll ads. A 30-second membership ad runs inside the stadium before, during and after the game.
- Raffle items. The department has 12 jerseys of Colts quarterback Andrew Luck to raffle off at each home game. Names are drawn from lists of booth visitors who request more Legion information.
- Use of Colts emblem. The Legion's and the Colts' emblem appear on magnets and promotional materials handed out.

The department's two-year sponsorship package with the Indianapolis Indians baseball team at Victory Field includes:

- 288 radio commercials. The Legion receives two 30-second commercials each game.
- Game tickets. As a partner of the Indians Community Pinch Hitter Program, the department gives tickets to underprivileged groups or charities. The recipients are notified that tickets were provided courtesy of the Department of Indiana. The department receives recognition on the scoreboard.
- Legion-sponsored game. The department sponsors a "Legion night" at Victory Field which involves distribution of Legion information and custom co-branded items, banners and an opportunity to throw the first pitch. The department receives recognition on the scoreboard.

SEEING POSITIVE RESULTS

Since the Department of Indiana's advertising campaign began July 1, numerous veterans have walked in to posts with their DD214's; two female Legionnaire commercials were aired on Queen Latifa's (singer-actress) show; more than 1,000 contact cards have been collected from membership booths at Colts games; and the department's Facebook page has received 4,500 "Likes." Other departments have also reached out for help in starting similar campaigns.

Drake attributes much of the campaign's success and Legionnaire support to the five-year membership plan.

"The department owes its districts and posts a strategic-level thought of what the big picture is and that's what our five-year membership plan is," he said. "We didn't say, 'This is what we're thinking about doing.' We said, 'This is what we're doing.'"

LEGION EVENTS

News from Fall Meetings

During The American Legion's Fall Meetings, Oct. 14-17, scholarships and grants were awarded, history contest winners were announced, resolutions were passed and donations poured in. Highlights include:

Samsung Scholarship. The Samsung American Legion Scholarship awarded nine youth with $20,000 each to be used toward undergraduate studies. An additional 89 finalists were awarded $1,100 each.
www.legion.org/scholarships

Child Welfare Foundation. In its 59th year, The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation awarded $644,005 to 21 nonprofit organizations whose mission is to care for the overall well-being of youth.
www.legion.org/childwelfare

Centennial Celebration website. Since its launch in late August, 36 out of the 55 Legion departments and 78 posts are represented on the website.
http://centennial.legion.org

Operation Comfort Warriors. The Department of Indiana donated nearly $3,000 and Sons of The American Legion Detachment of New York donated $3,410.
www.legion.org/ocw

National Post History and National Department History contests. There were 37 total entries among four categories, down from 47 last year. Four departments and six posts won in their respective category.
www.legion.org/library

Resolutions. The National Executive Committee passed 32 resolutions. View them in the Legion's digital archive.
www.legion.org/library/digitalarchive

MEMBERSHIP INCENTIVES AND AWARDS

BIG TWELVE COMPETITION

The Big Twelve Competition recognizes departments that meet or exceed their pledged membership goal percentage by the March target date. The percentage does not include members gained through DMS.

The competition is broken down into six categories. The winner in each category will be reimbursed for computer equipment purchases of up to $2,000, while the runners-up in each category will be reimbursed for computer equipment purchases of up to $1,000.

The six categories in the Big Twelve Competition are:

- Category I – departments of 100,000 or more members
- Category II – departments of 70,000- 99,999 members
- Category III – departments of 40,000- 69,999 members
- Category IV – departments of 25,000-39,999 members
- Category V – departments of 10,000-24,999 members
- Category VI – departments of 9,999 or fewer members

Read more about the Big Twelve Competition by downloading the online National Membership Points Award Manual publication located under Internal Affairs.

www.legion.org/publications

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. 1, 2014.

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 (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

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Make Your Voice Count.

www.Vets4Energy.com

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POST ACTIVITIES

61 years of membership cards framed

For Lloyd Vollmer of Mankato, Minn., the 2013-2014 American Legion membership year marks 61 continuous years with Post 108 in Le Center, Minn. When his No. 61 membership card expires, he won't toss it in the trash and wait to be issued a new one. Instead, Vollmer will add it to his framed collection of his previous 60 American Legion membership cards — a collection he didn't know existed until 10 years ago.

Vollmer's wife had always been a collector, and when she passed away 10 years ago, he found a small box in her closet. He opened the box and found that she had saved his Legion membership cards. Vollmer has been saving them ever since.

Vollmer built the frame that houses his 60 membership cards, which now hangs in Post 108 for all to see his Legion dedication.

PLANNER

DECEMBER

7 Pearl Harbor Day

25 Christmas

JANUARY

15 Nomination deadline for Employer of Veterans Award, Employ the Older Worker Award, Employment Service Award and National Organization on Disability Award

15 80 percent membership target date

www.legion.org/dispatch/calendar