National Update

Official Publication of the Sons of The American Legion

Summer 2016

Queen City hosts National Convention

Cincinnati is known as the Queen City. Hundreds of Sons will flock to this thriving Ohio River town in late August for the organization's 45th National Convention of the Sons of The American Legion.

The convention gets underway on Friday morning, August 26 with committee meetings and the pre-convention National Executive Committee meeting Room 232. Promptly at 1pm, S.A.L. National Commander Kevin Collier will call delegates to order in the Duke Energy Convention Center's Grand Ballroom B. General sessions will continue throughout the afternoon Friday, then start up again early on Saturday and Sunday. Year-end reports and visits from a variety of Legion and non-American Legion special guests will take place throughout the three day convention. On Sunday, convention delegates will elect the organization's newest national officers, including the next National Commander of the Sons.

Also on Sunday, The American Legion Family is encouraged to attend the annual Patriotic Memorial Service. This year's memorial service starts at 11am on the first floor of the convention center in Exhibit Hall A.

The S.A.L.'s 45th National Convention will conclude on Sunday afternoon in time for Sons to participate in the annual American Legion Convention Parade that will run through downtown Cincinnati on Fifth Street. The parade route and Department line-up schedules

Continued on Page 3

Seven would've been a slice of heaven

When Kevin Collier was elected National Commander of the Sons last summer he set a goal of raising $600,000 for The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. The reason behind that goal was the fact Sons have, since 1988, raised more than $6 million for CWF. Collier wanted to top the $7 million mark during his administration and as he traveled around the country all year, he could be heard saying at each stop, "Wouldn't it be a little piece of heaven when we reach seven?"

We came oh-so-close.

By the end of the business day on May 31, S.A.L. contributions delivered to The American Legion's National Headquarters totaled $360,299 for the 2015-16 year. It was another banner year that now guarantees S.A.L. donations for next year will, indeed, put the organization over the $7 million mark in all-time contributions.

National Commander Collier and National Adjutant Brian

Continued on Page 3

You guys really know how to ROCK on

By Kevin Collier
National Commander

Fellow members of the Sons, each of us made a commitment when we chose to become members of the Sons of The American Legion, to always honor our veterans through duty, honor and service to The American Legion's four pillars of Americanism, Veteran's Affairs & Rehabilitation, Children and Youth and National Security.

This year we chose a theme of "R.O.C.K.E.D." which stands for "Remembering Our Commitment, Keeping it Every Day." As I traveled across this great nation visiting with various Detachments it was evident that we have not forgotten that commitment. During my travels I was able to witness some of the accolades the Detachments were able to bestow upon their districts, counties, areas, squadrons and members for all the hard work they have done for their communities, their veterans, our youth and our membership. It has been a great honor for me to see and hear about the accomplishments achieved.

Looking forward to the future of the Sons of The American Legion, we have established a Strategic Planning Initiative Committee. This committee is similar to the one that The American Legion had about six years ago and the one The American Legion Auxiliary had about three years ago. The Strategic Planning Initiative Committee has been asked to look at the future of our organization, to establish a vision and goals of where we want our organization to be moving toward. They will perform a S.W.O.T. (Strength, Weakness, Opportunities, Threat) analysis of the Sons of The American Legion. They will be looking for any strategic issues that we must ad

Continued on Page 7

Service to God and country at our core

By Tom Chebro
Nat'l Americanism Commission

America was founded upon the idea that The Great Creator of Man endowed each and every human being with certain inalienable rights, including life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Our brave men and women have served around the world protecting those God-given rights.

Every Post, Unit, and Squadron has a Chaplain. Ask yourself this, "Were they given the position because there was nobody else? Are they able to give spiritual help? Are they there just to give a prayer before and after our meetings?"

Religious emphasis has taken a back seat in America for some time now. The American Legion Family needs to help bring it back.

Just a few years ago, at The American Legion's 2014 Chaplains Conference, they came up with an action item called "Operation: Back to God." During that conference, three working groups were organized for the purpose of placing this initiative before all members of The American Legion Family. What they proposed included:

1) Developing a training curriculum for future Chaplains
2) Awarding and recognizing the work of Chaplains
3) Publicizing what Chaplaincy does and how it can affect the very nature of what The American Legion Family stands

Continued on Page 8

Getting involved in VEE at the ground level and up

By Larry "Bear" Weinzirl
Nat'l VE&E Chairman

The Mission Statement of the newly formed SAL National Veterans Employment and Education Commission is "To assist The American Legion in ensuring that America's veterans have the opportunity to provide, with honor and dignity, the economic necessities of life for themselves and their families."

We need your help to accomplish this.

We are requesting that all detachments, districts and squadrons form their own VEE subcommittees under VAVS to help get the word out on "Hiring Our Heroes" job fairs. Members of these subcommittees can assist by going online and finding local job fairs being held in your communities. Then, take that information, as well as information received from National or Detachment HQ, and place it on your own websites, Facebook pages, and in your newsletters. You should also print fliers advertising the jobs fairs and post them on the bulletin board at your post and in other locations around your community where veterans will see them. Also, possibly request that your post e-mail this information out to all members.

When a person leaves the military, the biggest question is, "What's next?" You can help provide the answer to that question by distributing job fair information to our veterans.

Please help as we work at all levels of the S.A.L. to assist the "Heroes" who have kept America and everyone in it free and safe.

Convention *from Page 1*

and much more information can be found at ***www.legion.org/convention***.

Delegates and guests to the convention are registered in advance through their respective Detachments. Representatives of each Detachment can pick up credentials in the S.A.L. Convention Office located in the Junior Ballroom (3rd floor) of the convention center beginning Thursday, August 25.

No specific dress code is required during the convention, however, there are some guidelines. Delegates who expect to be on stage to receive awards are expected to wear a coat and tie. Otherwise, trousers, shirts and shoes always look nice when dignitaries and special guests pay a visit. Shorts, tank top shirts and flip-flops are discouraged.

Nearly all official convention hotels are located in downtown Cincinnati within a few blocks of the convention center. Shuttle busses will move delegates between their hotels and the Convention Center. On Friday, the shuttles will run from 7am to 8pm, until 5:30pm on Saturday and until 2:30pm on Sunday.

Delegates and their families will have much to see and do while attending the convention. Golf enthusiasts will be glad to hear the Detachment of Ohio is sponsoring a golf tournament Thursday morning, August 25. Nearby ***Mason, OH Squadron 194*** is offering a homemade pizza dinner and entertainment Thursday evening. The Detachment of Ohio will be serving a dinner featuring popular Cincinnati foods on Friday evening at Milford Post 450. Shuttle busses will be offered from a downtown location for both dinners.

Cincinnati is home to two major sports teams, the Cincinnati Reds, the oldest franchise in Major League Baseball, and the Cincinnati Bengals of the National Football League. The Queen City is also famous for its Cincinnati style chili. More than 140 chili restaurants can be found here.

Cincinnati is known for its historic architecture, commonly referred to as "Paris of America" a century ago. The John A. Roebling Suspension Bridge spans the Ohio River between Cincinnati Covington, KY and was once the longest suspension bridge in the world at 1,057 feet. Pedestrians use the bridge to get between the sports venues in Cincinnati and the hotels, bars, restaurants, and parking lots in Northern Kentucky, known as Roebling Point. If the bridge looks familiar, there's a good reason. Roebling also designed New York's famous Brooklyn Bridge.

Above - National Commander Collier and CWF Chairman Pete Sierminski present American Legion Child Welfare Foundation President Dennis Boland with donations from the spring N.E.C. meetings totaling an incredible $101,163.

CWF *from Page 1*

O'Hearne provided a pat on the back to the Detachment of Ohio for contributing $50,966, the most of any state. Other Detachments that contributed more than $10,000 each included Indiana ($42,670), Arizona ($23,820), California ($18,187), Colorado ($17,162), Florida ($25,600), Nevada ($10,028), and Pennsylvania ($31,754).

Another way to measure Nevada's contribution is to consider that it amounted to $28.57 for each S.A.L. member in the state. The next closest per capita amount was delivered by the Detachment of Colorado ($5.54). Other sizeable per capita amounts included Oregon ($5.42), Mississippi ($4.10), Wyoming ($3.83), and Arizona ($3.57).

Ever wonder what Legion programs your squadron could be involved in to help veterans? To have fun? Youth programs? Take a look at:

www.legion.org/programs

Back in February, when the ***Detachment of Indiana*** started planning a July ceremony to honor members of the Indiana State Police who lost their lives in the line of duty, ***(Above Right)*** they had no way of knowing their intimate ceremony would wind up being covered by regional and national news organizations. In an awful coincidence, five Dallas police officers were killed the night before and one of the scheduled speakers at the memorial was Indiana's governor, Mike Pence, who was about to be named the running mate of U.S. presidential hopeful Donald Trump. Unfortunate circumstances actually led to the S.A.L. being shown in a very positive light. ***(Right)***

A few years ago, Sons in ***Bethel Park, PA Squadron 760*** came up with an idea that has received good results. They appointed S.A.L. member John Dunbar as their School Liaison Officer to help promote Legion programs to youth in the community. He has worked tirelessly overseeing two scholarship programs and distributes educational materials to local schools. The idea has paid off. In the past year the post has held its first Oratorical Contest, entered essays into the National Essay Contest, and sent students to the Allegheny County Youth Achievement Dinner.

Oakville, CT Squadron 195 held its first annual Game Dinner this year and raised enough money to donate $1,000 each to Fisher House Connecticut and K9's for Warriors.

Sons in Michigan know what an honor it is to earn the 5 Star and 10 Ideals medals. When ***Hudson, MI Squadron 180*** had two young members earn their medals, the squadron invited Detachment officers to come in and make the presentations.

That's a lot of noodles! Sons of ***Ohiowa, NE Squadron 193*** held a beef and noodle dinner this year and raised $1,400 that was given to Quilts of Valor project and a Fillmore County military support group.

Our hats are off to two Sons making us proud in Michigan. ***Iron Mountain, MI Squadron 50*** has two members, Dennis Larson and Steve Podgornik, who have each served the past 17 years as VAVS Reps in the Iron Mountain VA Medical Center.

The S.A.L. encourages its members to participate in its National Veterans Assistance Day each year in May. Sons from ***Wiloughby, OH Squadron 214*** multiplied that idea. They completed a four-day, 70 mile walk from their post to the Ohio Veterans Home in Sandusky. Their efforts raised over $7,000 for the home. ***(Below)***

When the ***Indio, CA Post 739*** color guard won First Place in the Riverside County Fair and National Date Festival Parade this year, they were led by their four 12 year old grand

sons, each of them members of the S.A.L., another example of how Sons of all ages can support their parents, grandparents, The Legion and their community. ***(Above)***

Sebastian, FL Squadron 189 has started an Operation: Remember Our Heroes program. Squadron members and local high school JRROTC make sure every veteran buried in the area has a bronze grave marker and has a flag placed twice each year. They've taken care of nearly 400 veteran graves, cataloging each of the names, ranks, service branch and locations. It's all been paid for through private donations. ***(Right)***

Can you guess which member of ***Norfolk, KS Squadron 16*** has been named Volunteer of the Year for the Norfolk Veterans Home? None other than our very own National Assistant Adjutant (Emeritus), Harold E. Thompson, Jr. For more than 25 years, he has called bingo, assisted with horse racing, and baked delicious pies and brownies for suppers and activities. ***(Right)***

Napa, CA Squadron 113 holds a golf tournament each year in May and gives the proceeds to the Pathway House, a non-profit residential recovery program for service members suffering from Post Traumatic Stress and Traumatic Brain Injury.

Here are two examples of S.A.L. members who know the importance of scholarship. Patrick and Sean Coyle are members of ***Oxford, CT Squadron 174***. Back in 2013, Patrick was Valedictorian of his high school class. He's gone on to college with a full NROTC scholarship and was recently promoted to the rank of Midshipman. This year, Sean graduated as Valedictorian of his class and has accepted an appointment to West Point, his high school's first-ever USMA appointment. ***(Below Left)***

Over the past eight years, ***Riverview, MI Squadron 389*** has awarded over $4,000 in college scholarships to graduating high school students. The interesting twist is that the recipient must have an immediate family member in the armed services, conduct an interview with that service member and write an essay about it.

Harry Warren is a member of ***Berlin, MD Squadron 123***. He became the 64th member of his Boy Scout Troop to earn the rank of Eagle Scout and even received a congratulatory letter signed by President and Mrs. Obama.

Wisconsin's Legion Department operates Camp American Legion along the shores of Big Carr Lake. The camp serves more than 500 disabled and recently active duty veterans and their families each summer. ***Hartland, WI Squadron 294*** has a tradition of sending four of its members to the camp in late April each year to help get it ready for summertime. It's challenging work because they don't know what has to be done until they get there. Chores this year ranged from fixing bat houses atop 12 foot poles and installing a retaining wall around a playground. Before leaving, the guys presented the

Continued on Page 6

Do it Well *from Page 5*

camp director with a $1,000 donation.

Although not officially sanctioned, supporters of Americanism activities have been contributing photos and stories to their "SAL Americanism" Facebook page for the past year. They use it as a bulletin board to post events, activities, and squadron or Detachment information related to Americanism in any way. The site has been averaging about 900 hits each week and that number has been growing. Members of the S.A.L. National Americanism Commission have been volunteering to serve as administrators. To post something there, send it to ***ggibbs@sbu.edu***.

Des Plaines, IL Squadron 36 may be new but they don't act like it. Less than three months after holding their first election of officers, the squadron gathered together more than 60 volunteers, including seven Boy Scout Troops, and placed flags on more than 4,000 graves at the largest cemetery in Cook County. The Sons purchased those flags with $3,000 in donations they collected and, for the first time ever, all veteran graves at All Saints Cemetery had its own flag. When Squadron Commander Kevin O'Connell was interviewed for a newspaper story he said he started the program to honor the service of his father, a WWII veteran and Legionnaire. ***(Below)***

Membership
2016 Leaders

Philippines	163 %
Nevada	154 %
Hawaii	122 %
South Dakota	113 %
Idaho	113 %
France	109 %
Utah	107 %
North Carolina	105 %
Montana	104 %
Puerto Rico	103 %
Wisconsin	103 %
North Dakota	103 %
Oregon	102 %
Florida	102 %
Indiana	102 %
Michigan	101 %
Pennsylvania	100 %
Alaska	100 %
Wyoming	100 %
Illinois	100 %
Minnesota	100 %
Arkansas	100 %
Massachusetts	100 %
California	100 %
Nat'l Total	99 %

The logistics involved in printing close to 400,000 S.A.L. cards each year is pretty staggering. In May, National Chaplain Mike Lawler (WI) was visiting Indianapolis and had an opportunity to tour The Legion's printing facilities out on the edge of town. He and his Josh Dog look pretty small compared to the massive rolls of blank S.A.L. cards ready to be loaded onto the oversized computer printers. (Right)

Collier *from Page 2*

dress within the next five years to continue to grow and become even more of a vital part of The American Legion Family.

As we all prepare to gather at the National Convention in Cincinnati, Ohio to complete this year's business, I want to thank every member of this great organization for your service to our veterans, our communities and our youth. You have made this an amazing year and I thank for your hard work and dedication through duty, honor and service to all the great principals The American Legion Family stands for! Across the Nation, we have had an outstanding year in membership, too! Everyone was swinging for the fences and hitting home runs, bringing membership in. All year long, our membership has been anywhere from 1,000 to 15,000 members higher than last year. Thank you for all of your hard work and Congratulations on such an outstanding year! Congratulations, too, to the ten Detachments that have achieved new all-time highs in membership!

This will be the first time that the Sons, as a national organization, has reached 100% in membership prior to the National Convention. Again, you guys are simply amazing!

This year we have not only talked the talk about working together as a family, we have walked the walk of working together as a true American Legion Family!

Thank you for taking on the commitment of Remembering Our Commitment, Keeping it Every Day! Keep up the great job you have been doing and ROCK on!

Sons OK for Legion Extension Institute

The American Legion's official training program is now available online. To register and take the course, visit ***www.legion.org/alei.***

The program is designed to take less than two hours to complete. Upon completion, a participant must pass a final online exam to receive a digital certificate of recognition, and a cap pin.

The online course is $4.95 for Sons of The American Legion. Payment can be accepted securely and conveniently on the course registration page.

Below - National Commander Collier had an opportunity to thank this soldier for his service while visiting Indianapolis early this year.

Do you have a story to share?

Send ideas and pictures to:

National Update
612 S. State Road 446 - #35C
Bloomington, IN 47401
or
mpipher@iu.edu

Next deadline is
October 1, 2016

Help needed to get out the vote

By Doc Gibbs
Nat'l Americanism Chairman

The American Legion initiated its "Get Out the Vote" program a number of years ago. The Legion has a brochure available on its website at ***www.legion.org*** that provides the framework needed for planning a "GOTV" program.

The most important thing to build into any program is the fact that The Legion Family's involvement must be nonpartisan in nature, favoring no particular political party or candidate. You can get involved a little or a big way, whatever your resources and volunteer strength may dictate.

Every action is helpful, even small groups of people organized to help voters get registered, help them get to the polls on voting days, or sign up to work at a polling station. If your post is used as an official polling place, that provides opportunity for you to be involved in many ways; making the facilities accessible to all, providing assistance for disabled voters, provide refreshments for voters or and/or poll workers, providing transportation for voters, etc. Even before an election, you can help arrange absentee ballots for military personnel deployed overseas.

Our duty as citizens is to exercise the right to vote and truly participate in the democracy that our forefathers set up. Voting ensures future freedoms.

You can help make vote totals reach new highs this November, both, in total numbers of votes cast and with high percentages of eligible voters actually casting ballots.

The Sons of The American Legion
P.O. Box 1055
Indianapolis, IN 46206

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
THE
AMERICAN
LEGION

God *from Page 2*

for

We need to use all resources at our disposal to get behind these groups and help them succeed. However, it is not just the duty of our Chaplain to bring God back into the lives of our community. It takes everyone to join together and get involved with our youth and Community Service programs and with memorial services that include the community. Take it one step further during the typical holiday times of year, a time when most everyone thinks of helping those less fortunate than ourselves. We could do Thanksgiving baskets for the needy, Christmas parties for children, stocking stuffer programs, visitations to VA hospitals and to the homes of vets who can't get out.

What's important about this kind of work is that it should not be focused on just one time of the year. We need to bring forth the presence of God year round.

We can take a page from another Americanism program as a good resource. The Boy Scouts of America have a program called Duty to God in which every participant can earn a badge of the religious emblem for their own faith. You can go to any Scout office or go onto the web for more information about that program.

The American Legion Family should take a leading role in showing our children how and why we need to have God in our lives. Taking time from our busy lives, we can bring God back into our lives and into our community.

New Handbook for Americanism ready

The Sons of The American Legion Americanism Handbook has been updated and is available to download from our national web site at ***www.legion.org/sons***. The nine page booklet contains a wealth of information about many of the programs that fall under the Americanism pillar of service and serves as an adjunct publication to the much larger American Legion Americanism Manual, which is available from The Legion's own web site at ***www.legion.org***.

The S.A.L. Americanism Handbook provides suggestions for activities that cover community service projects, youth programs, patriot observances, and much more.