Vol. 28 No. 5

THE AMERICAN LEGION
Dispatch
January 2018 A National Headquarters Publication

LEGACY SCHOLARSHIP

2017 American Legion Legacy Scholarship recipient DeAndre Johns and his mother, Sheryl Johnson. Photo by Lucas Carter

A COLLEGE MILESTONE FOR SINGLE MOM, SON

DeAndre Johns said he can make a place in this world because of The American Legion's Legacy Scholarship, which he was a recipient of in 2017.

By Henry Howard

Sheryl Johnson was the first one in her family to attend college. She passed her love of education on to her two children, including DeAndre Johns.

As Johns' high school career wound down last spring, they were unsure how to pay for college — until he discovered a life-changing email in his junk folder.

Johnson, a 10-year Army veteran with an 80 percent VA disability rating, knew The American Legion would soon be announcing the recipients of its Legacy Scholarship. She kept asking her son if he had heard anything and encouraged him to keeping checking his email, especially the junk folder.

That's where Johns found the email. "It was the greatest feeling in the world," remembered Johns, who received $12,000 for his freshman year at Texas Tech in Lubbock, Texas. "College is here; it's coming and I am going to be ready for it."

He called his mom, and a celebration ensued. "As I was talking with him, I was standing on the deck screaming at him and he was screaming at me," Johnson said. "I said, 'Yes, you are going to college now.'"

"When I got the scholarship, it did feel like a jump start," Johnson said. "It made it feel like this is real. I can make my place in the world because of the scholarship."

The Legacy Scholarship is available for children of veterans who died on active duty since Sept. 11, 2001, or have a combined disability rating of at least 50 percent. Recipi-

See A college milestone for single mom, son on Page 4

NEWS ALERT

NEF deadline extended for hurricane victims

More than 100 National Emergency Fund (NEF) grants have been distributed to American Legion members, posts and Sons of The American Legion members following the series of devastating hurricanes last fall. Individuals can receive grants up to $3,000, while Legion posts can receive up to $10,000.

Due to the severe damage caused by Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria, the deadline for applying for grants has been extended to Feb. 1. To apply for a grant, please visit www.legion.org/nef.

2018 Legion Baseball registration

Team registration for the 2018 American Legion Baseball season is now underway. Register online at www.baseball.legion.org.

Post Honor Ribbon certification forms due Jan. 31

Honor ribbons are awarded to posts whose membership for the current membership year (as of Dec. 31) achieves an advance membership (for the year about to begin) equal to or greater than the final membership for the year ending. Certification forms must be submitted to the National Headquarters Membership Division by Jan. 31.

Download the form online at www.legion.org/membership/awards.

COMMANDER'S MESSAGE

Continue hosting Legion Family dinners

Denise H. Rohan
National Commander

For nearly 100 years, The American Legion has served veterans, their families, communities, states and the nation. And last year I called on the Legion Family nationwide to serve up the biggest and best Veterans Day dinner in history by inviting the whole community to join them at the dinner table.

Although we have entered a new year, Legion Family dinners can still be held in conjunction with special events. These events include the Legion's upcoming birthday (March 15), your post's birthday, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, Christmas and more. Healthy families enjoy dinner at the same table together, and we consider the entire community to be members of the American Legion Family.

A Legion Family Dinner Kit is available to help posts, squadrons and units with promotion efforts. Download the kit at ***www.legion.org/nalpa/resources***.

Resources in the kit include:

- A suggested timeline for planning the event, tips on getting local sponsors involved, and a set of message points that can be presented, and localized, at the dinner or to the press.
- Sample letters of invitation to local groups to attend and participate in the dinner, a press release, a sample media advisory, a downloadable flyer with fields for posts to provide local information, social media posts and a radio PSA.

Remember to use the hashtag #LegionFamilyDinner when promoting your event. I always want to see The American Legion trending on social media.

The Legion Family dinners are a great opportunity to tell the story of your post namesake in advance of our centennial. Let's make sure the whole community can understand who we are, what we do and our vision for the future.

The dinners can also serve as a way to promote the benefits of membership and participation in the American Legion Family.

Because we are about Family First!

Denise H. Rohan

MEMBERSHIP

Legion Family members eligible for 'Family First' incentive pin

American Legion National Commander Denise H. Rohan is extending her "Family First!" membership incentive pin to the entire American Legion Family.

Rohan will award her national commander incentive pin to any American Legion Family member who obtains any combination of three eligible new members into the Legion Family (The American Legion, Sons of The American Legion or American Legion Auxiliary).

A new member is any eligible person joining for the 2018 membership year who was not a member of the American Legion Family during the 2017 membership year.

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

Upon receipt, national membership staff will confirm the names and mail the pin directly to the person who earned it. Rohan's incentive program will end June 30, 2018, or when supplies are exhausted.

www.legion.org/commander/pin

MEMBERSHIP

National Commander Honor Ribbon

American Legion National Commander Denise H. Rohan will award her National Commander Honor Ribbon to any American Legion Family that achieves 100 percent membership by May 30, 2018.

For this award, the Legion Family is defined as a post and any combination of an Auxiliary unit, Sons squadron or Legion Riders chapter. Each branch must achieve 100 percent membership to qualify for the award.

The National Commander Honor Ribbon membership incentive program will end May 30, 2018.

Apply for the award online at ***www.legion.org/commander/ribbon***.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT'S MESSAGE

Keep The American Legion in communities

Years ago a Legion post closed its doors in a small Texas town, but veterans saw a need to charter a new one.

By Daniel S. Wheeler

The American Legion has nearly 13,000 active posts in communities across America. And while over the years posts' have closed due to various reasons, there are veterans who see the need to bring The American Legion back into communities as a way to serve their fellow veterans, their families and community members. Such is the case for American Legion Laramore-Osborne Post 100 in Royse City, Texas.

A Legion post was once active in Royse City, which is about 45 minutes east of Dallas. The town is experiencing tremendous growth and veterans in Royse City saw this as an opportunity to revitalize a post once again.

Post 100 received its charter on Dec. 4, but has been going full speed for the past year. Since its temporary charter was issued in January 2017, the post has been focused on growing its membership, implementing Legion programs, volunteering in the community, participating in town festivals, joining the Chamber of Commerce and creating social media accounts.

With 59 active members, the post's motto is "Every member matters."

"We believe that The American Legion is a family. That means that no matter the age, gender or war ear of the veteran, every veteran is welcomed at our post," said Post 100 Commander Jason Castleberry. "But more than that, members want to look after each other and help each other in their times of need. The post truly exemplifies a family first atmosphere."

Castleberry said that from day one the post wanted to integrated itself into the community. And it has.

Post 100 members have helped local veterans find employment, supported food pantries, adopted a highway, visited veterans at the VA, helped homeless veterans receive assistance, and provided assistance with beautification projects throughout Royse City.

The post members also helped hand out 50 backpacks and more than $400 in school supplies during the town's Back to School Bash; supported Texas Boys State and a local Scouting unit; participated in the Legion's School Award program; and honored a high school graduate who left for basic combat training with The American Legion's Military Commitment to Service certificate.

Christy Castleberry, Jason Castleberry and Steven Lowes of Royse City American Legion Post 100 gave out over 51 backpacks and $400 in school supplies.

"The future feels bright for the new American Legion Post 100," Castleberry said.

In 2017, more than 29 posts were chartered and 1,711 revitalized. This resulted in 166 new members and the transfer of 9,348 Direct Membership Solicitation program members into local posts.

If there are communities that do not have a post within it, post development is a great way for The American Legion to become an asset in the local community. There are times when membership in a local post has declined and interest in the programs is non-existent.

A revitalization effort can help re-energize and breathe life back into a post so the post can become viable once again.

The membership staff at the National Headquarters, with the help of department leadership, can help with any district wide or post development and revitalization efforts.

Contact your regional membership liaison at ***www.legion.org/membership/contactus*** to discuss ways to accomplish this task.

Have a membership success story?

Share: ***www.legiontown.org***

Dispatch

Published monthly.
Printed by PRINTING PARTNERS, Indianapolis, 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.

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ents of the needs-based scholarship can receive up to $20,000 each year.

The deadline to finish the application for the 2018-19 school year is April 9. To learn more about the scholarship, visit www.legion.org/scholarships/legacy/about. To apply, visit www.legion.org/legacy-scholarship-application.

After hearing the news from her son, Johnson called her mom to share the big news.

"College to me is everything," said Johnson, noting that she received her bachelor's and master's degrees thanks to the GI Bill. "I have always told my kids, 'Anyone can take everything from you except your diploma. The diploma has your name imprinted on it and you can take it everywhere with you.' I am so thankful that he got this scholarship because it helps us tremendously."

Johns is a motivated teenager, thanks in part to his mother's encouragement and visioning.

"College is a major milestone for me because it has been a huge part of our family," said Johns, whose sister is a junior in high school. "I know that it means so much to my mom. I know that she wants me to have a great life and to succeed in everything I do. It's a huge milestone for both of us."

The scholarship is not only a point of pride for the family, it is a relief to offset the cost of college.

"It was a big lift off our shoulders so that he does not have to work a part-time job or take out a loan," Johnson said. "As a single mom with two kids, it was difficult for me. I tell my kids all the time you have to apply for scholarships because they pay for so much. The American Legion Legacy Scholarship provided so much for him."

Johnson takes pride in being a member of The American Legion. "The American Legion does so much — not just for the community — but for students who can't afford to go to college," she said.

Each year, American Legion Riders help raise at least $1 million for the scholarship. The time and effort are not lost on Johns and his mother.

"I would like to say to The American Legion: Thank you so much for creating this opportunity for me because I know that you will do everything that you can and you are doing it with a good heart to make other people successful," he said. "Without this, I don't know if (college) would be possible for me right now. And I know that it helps more people than just me."

AMERICANISM

Legion Boys State toolkit available for download

Photo by Miranda Harple

An American Legion Boys State Communications Toolkit has been developed to help Legion Family members at the department, post and district level to raise program awareness and increase participation.

The goals of the toolkit are to create further awareness about American Legion Boys State; develop and maintain interest among high school students and identify those who should attend and why; grow participation in the program; provide cohesive branding and messaging framework with easy to understand talking points and program definitions; and create a consistent look and feel for the program nationwide.

The toolkit includes instructions, website and social media tips, a PowerPoint deck, sample emails and letters, a sample media alert and press releases, and a selection of articles about Boys State for review.

The toolkit is available for download at www.legion.org/boysnation/resources. Email boysnation@legion.org for the password.

CENTENNIAL

California Post 421 rededicates 48-star American flag

American Legion Post 421 in Highland, Calif., recently rededicated a 48-star U.S. flag.

The flag was presented to George W. Scott III when he was serving in the Navy during World War II aboard the USS Bootes. Scott was a longtime Post 421 member and is the late husband of Auxiliary Unit 421 member Jody Scott.

USS Bootes was responsible for delivering troops, goods, ammunition and equipment to locations in the Asiatic-Pacific theater. According to Jody, after the USS Bootes claimed two kills during a Japanese air attack, a sailor handed the ship's 48-star flag to George.

"Jody remembers that (George) was especially proud of that flag at home," said Post Adjutant Paul Pfeifer. "And being a Unit 421 Auxiliary member, she donated it to the post several years ago, and we have proudly displayed it ever since."

MEMBERSHIP

Legionnaire delivers The American Legion's message to military personnel and their families

American Legion Department of Georgia Vice Commander Mark Shreve recently had the opportunity to deliver the keynote address at the 1st Brigade 98th Training Division's Military Ball in Columbus, Ga.

In his address to the 250 military personnel and their family members, Shreve said his three objectives were to:

- Recognize the importance of the reserve component to America's national defense;
- Educate on the programs of The American Legion that support veterans, servicemembers and their families; and
- Reiterate that The American Legion and the 98th Training Division are serving together and share the same goals.

"It is imperative for our post members to get in front of the decision makers and leaders in our communities to tell the story of The American Legion," Shreve said about his address to the 98th Training Division. "Reservists have been activated on a record pace during the War on Terror and there are many more reservists eligible to join The American Legion than in previous years. Reports show that 2.5 million Americans have served in the War on Terror with over 400,000 reservists who have deployed at least three times."

The American Legion and the 98th Training Division share a time in history – they were both formed in 1919 with a tradition of service.

During his address, Shreve spoke on key points in the Legion's nearly 100 years of existence. A few message points included:

- March 1919, members of the American Expeditionary Force convene in Paris for the first American Legion caucus.

- The organization's single greatest legislative achievement is the GI Bill. And today, with the Post-9/11 GI Bill, the Legion remains at the forefront of efforts to improve education and other benefits for all veterans.
- August 1921, the Legion's efforts result in the creation of the U.S. Veterans Bureau, forerunner of the Veterans Administration, and today's VA. Today, the Legion continues to lobby for adequate funding to cover medical, disability, education and other benefits for veterans.
- August 2017, the Legion assists in the creation and passage of the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act.

"I wanted to build the bench of our organization and recruit new members. This will be their organization in a few years and they will be fighting to keep my benefits when I can't," Shreve said.

To see a timeline of The American Legion's history for upcoming presentations your department, district or post may have, visit *www.legion.org/history*.

DID YOU KNOW?

- In 2017, The American Legion's Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA) awarded $574,538 in cash grants, benefitting 906 children of 421 veterans. The grants help eligible veterans, with minor children, meet the cost of shelter, utilities, food, clothing and medical expenses. Of the TFA grants awarded last year, $15,500 aided 68 children of 31 veterans who were affected by Hurricanes Irma, Harvey and Maria. TFA grants are made possible by the support and generosity of the Legion Family and the America Legion Endowment Fund Corporation.

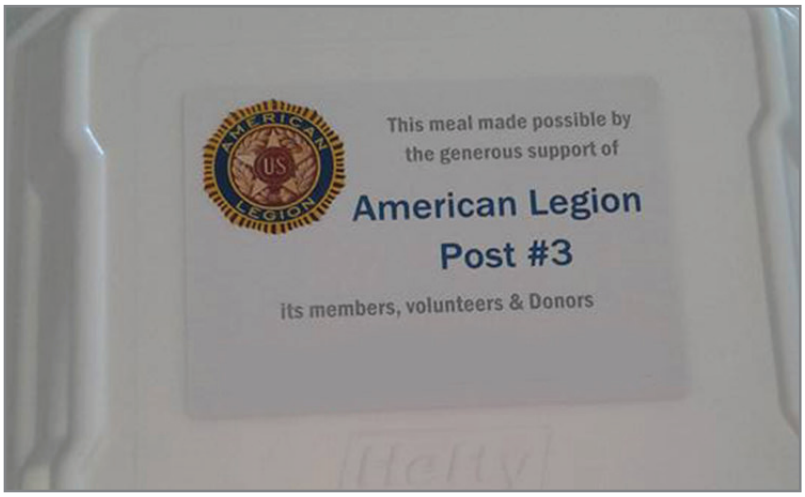
  TFA is National Commander Denise H. Rohan's fundraising project. ***www.legion.org/financialassistance***

- In 2017, The American Legion's Operation Comfort Warriors (OCW) program provided $149,000 in grants that aided 8,679 veterans and their immediate family members across the nation and overseas.

  OCW is a program dedicated to meeting the needs of wounded, injured and ill military personnel by providing recreational, rehabilitative, therapeutic and comfort items. ***www.legion.org/ocw***

- In 2017, The American Legion's National Emergency Fund awarded $338,810 in grants to Legion Family members and posts nationwide who suffered from natural disasters. Of the amount awarded, $283,540 in grants was awarded to Legion Family members and posts affected by Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria, and the wildfires in California. ***www.legion.org/nef***

  To donate to TFA, OCW and NEF, please visit ***www.legion.org/donate***.



COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Massachusetts post delivers 445 meals on Christmas Day

American Legion Family members of Capt. Lester S. Wass Post 3 in Gloucester, Mass., spent their cold, snowy Christmas Day spreading warmth to veterans, the elderly, shut-ins and those staying in a local homeless shelter.

Post 3 Legion Family members and other community members braved the adverse weather conditions and delivered more than 445 ham dinners to residents in need living in the communities of Gloucester, Rockport, Manchester, Ipswich, Essex and Beverly. And they cooked and served another 45 meals at the post home. The post has been sponsoring this free Christmas dinner for decades.

"Sadly, for many residents on Cape Ann, especially our 'golden age' citizens, Christmas is, at best, just another day on the calendar," said Post 3 Commander Mark Nestor. "They have nowhere to go or no one to share Christmas with them. That's why the Capt. Lester S. Wass American Legion Post 3 sponsors the Christmas Holiday Ham Dinner.

"We at Post 3 want our fellow citizens, especially shut-ins, elderly and veterans, to know that you don't have to be alone on Christmas Day. You have Legionnaires and fellow citizens who care and want to make a difference. The holiday meal is about those we are able to reach out to in a small way and brighten their lives."

Nestor said the credit of cooking, serving and delivering the meals goes to the more than 65 volunteers. Nestor said one volunteer took a train from Rockport to Gloucester and was standing outside the Legion post at 7:30 a.m. in the cold ready to help and serve the meals.

"The volunteers exemplified in so many ways the true spirit and meaning of Christmas, and especially of this community that I am proud to call home," Nestor said. "Giving unselfishly of themselves for the benefit of others.

"I cannot begin to express to these many volunteers how proud I am of them and how they rose to the occasion to ensure that American Legion Post 3 kept its promise on this cold and wintry Christmas Day."

Post 3 is the only organization on Cape Ann that delivers meals during the holidays, according to Nestor. The post fulfills the same efforts for Thanksgiving and Easter.

MEMBERSHIP INCENTIVES AND AWARDS

Randy Goodman,
Membership Chairman
Department of Georgia

PREPARE FOR THE LEGION'S CENTENNIAL

The American Legion will turn 100 in 2019. The Legion's 100th anniversary is designed to observe history, celebrate our legacy and move forward into the next century. The American Legion's centennial web page at ***www.centennial.legion.org*** offers posts an opportunity to share your American Legion legacy.

I encourage you to develop your post history on the web page and share that with your local media. Sharing your story will draw attention to the success of The American Legion.

BIG TWELVE COMPETITION

The American Legion's 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 into six categories. The winner in each category will be reimbursed for computer equipment purchases of up to $2,000. 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:

- Departments of 100,000 or more members
- Departments of 65,000 to 99,999 members
- Departments of 40,000 to 64,999 members
- Departments of 25,000 to 39,999 members
- Departments of 10,000 to 24,999 members
- Departments of 9,999 or fewer members

The competition is featured in the National Membership Points Awards Manual at ***www.legion.org/publications***.

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, 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

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The American Legion
P.O. BOX 1055 • INDIANAPOLIS, IN 46206

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MEMBERSHIP

Leave it better than you found it

By Terri Clinton, Department of Colorado commander

There was one thing my father, a Marine veteran, always told me – leave something better than you found it.

The American Legion was chartered in 1919, when the doughboys came back from World War I. Weary, and with nowhere to turn for medical care, education and other benefits, they were able to form one of the most influential nonprofit organizations in the United States. In a short time, they grew the organization to over 1 million members. And, hold your hearts, all without cell phones, computers and the Internet! It's surprising what you can accomplish with the right motivation.

It might have seemed a little self-serving, but I think that was when our guiding principles were formed. It wasn't just about them helping themselves, it was about them helping each other and, there you have it – "Veterans Helping Veterans" which inspires us today. Over the years, The American Legion has influenced considerable change not only in the lives of veterans, but social change in America.

Although I've heard some attribute the success of our organization to those doughboys, I think the Legionnaires who followed them understood the mission. Because, of course, the torch was passed. The legacy was left for future generations to keep alive, and we've done that.

With almost 100 years of service under our belts, I'd like to think that our forefathers would be proud of the significant contributions we continue to make. I know until my last breath, I'll always hear my dad's words – leave it better than you found it. Help me leave this organization better than we found it.

PLANNER

February

1	Department submissions due for National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year and National Firefighter of the Year
4	Four Chaplains Sunday
25-28	Washington Conference, Washington, D.C.