Vol. 29 No. 4

THE AMERICAN LEGION
Dispatch
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100TH ANNIVERSARY

Legion to appear in Rose Parade on New Year's Day

By The American Legion

On March 15, The American Legion will celebrate its 100th birthday. To highlight its centennial nationwide during one of the biggest New Year's Day celebrations, The American Legion will have a presence in the 130th Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena, Calif., Jan. 1.

An American Legion centennial float will travel the 5 1/2-mile parade route filled with hundreds of thousands of spectators and millions of viewers watching live on television. The float will showcase The American Legion to parade viewers as several members of the Legion Family will ride the float, such as National Commander Brett Reistad, Sons of The American Legion National Commander Greg "Doc" Gibbs and Auxiliary National President Kathy Dugan. Also included will be an American Legion Rider, youth program alumni such as 2018 American Legion Boys Nation president and Auxiliary Girls Nation president, a Samsung American Legion scholar, and Olympic gold medalist and American Legion air-rifle champion Jamie Corkish.

A representative from each of the five military branches also will be on the float, along with a Medal of Honor recipient from each of the war eras. They include Hershel "Woody" Williams of World War II, Ron Rosser of the Korean War, Walter "Joe" Marm of the Vietnam War and Britt Slabinski of the Global War on Terror.

Visit *www.legion.org* for more details about The American Legion's presence in the parade.

The Rose Parade will be broadcast live beginning at 8 a.m. PST. The parade is televised on ABC, NBC, Hallmark Channel and others. Check your local broadcast listings for more information.

NEWS ALERT

Membership engagement survey

Your membership in The American Legion provides support and strength to the organization's many programs and services for America's veterans, their families and youth. The American Legion wants to hear from you about your membership experience in an effort to improve upon our programs, support services and membership retention.

Please take this quick survey at *www.surveymonkey.com/r/ZVG9HKB* to share your feedback with us.

Online membership renewal

To date, over 148,000 people have renewed their 2019 American Legion membership dues online at *www.legion.org/renew*.

Members can also renew through the Legion's Automatic Annual Renewal Program to safely and conveniently pay their post dues on an annual, automatic basis. Just visit *www.legion.org/renew* and click "Renew Now." Automatic renewal can also be set up by calling the toll-free American Legion customer service line at *(800) 433-3318*.

Members can cancel participation in the automatic renewal program at any time. Cancellation requests must be received by June 30 each year in order to ensure cancellation prior to the mid-July automatic renewal time.

COMMANDER'S MESSAGE

Renew your membership commitment for the new year

Brett Reistad
National Commander

My fellow Legionnaires, we are facing challenges concerning membership as we are currently about 70,000 members behind where we were last year. The new year is approaching so let's renew our commitment to increasing membership through recruitment and retention.

As we remain committed to the service we have provided for the past 100 years, it is time to change the downward turn in membership and it begins with our Team 100. And it begins by engaging members.

I'm asking you to focus on two areas: renewal and recruitment.

Contact members who have yet to renew for 2019 and let them know we care. We have to engage our members and ask them to renew their membership before it's too late. This engagement can be accomplished during the Legion's 100th birthday week, March 10-16.

As for recruiting, about 12 years ago we were consistently recruiting over 100,000 new members through traditional efforts. Now we are below 60,000. We cannot wait for new members to come to us. We have to ask them to join. To help in this effort, play the "Join The American Legion Today!" video where I ask potential new members to join and become a part of our ranks. You can play this from your mobile phone or during events held at your post or within your community. You can download the video at ***https://vimeo.com/299986964***.

To locate veterans in your area to join your post, use the "Find Members in Area" feature on ***www.mylegion.org*** or contact your department headquarters. If for any reason names cannot be acquired through these two channels, please request a list by sending an email to the Internal Affairs Division at ***ia@legion.org***.

Our veterans and our communities need us. America needs us. I am counting on you to help lead this effort in your department and post. Now there are new membership incentives that you will read on page 4 to help us go into our second century on a positive membership turn. Together we can accomplish anything because we are Team 100!

MEMBERSHIP

Recruit and receive 'Membership Excellence: Team 100' pin

American Legion National Commander Brett Reistad will award his national commander "Membership Excellence: Team 100" incentive pin to any Legion Family member who obtains three new members into The American Legion.

A new member is any eligible person joining for the 2019 membership year who was not a member of The American Legion during the 2018 membership year.

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

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. Reistad's pin incentive program will end June 30, 2019, or when supplies are exhausted.

Download the incentive pin form at ***www.legion.org/commander/pin***.

MEMBERSHIP

Team 100 Legion Family Ribbon

American Legion National Commander Brett Reistad will award his Team 100 American Legion Family Ribbon to any American Legion Family that achieves 100 percent membership by May 30, 2019. 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.

Download the form at ***www.legion.org/commander/ribbon***.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT'S MESSAGE

American Legion recognizes veterans in the classroom

American Legion members continue to serve following their time in the military. They share why.

By Daniel S. Wheeler

The American Legion has a long-standing commitment to American education and believes a strong education program is important to maintaining American traditions and instilling in our young people a sense of personal obligation and responsibility. Since 1921, The American Legion has supported American Education Week in November to recognize the contributions made by schools and teachers. This year, we wanted to bring awareness that veterans continue to serve long after they take off the uniform by serving in the classroom.

The following six American Legion members serve in the classroom, and they share why.

Air Force veteran Dean Hall of Gardiner, Maine.

- Member of Post 51. Middle school history and social studies teacher.

"My Math teacher in eighth grade was a World War II veteran. He encouraged me to serve and to help others."

Army veteran Jeremy Blevins of Double Springs, Ala.

- Member of Post 184. Adjunct computer information systems instructor.

"I serve in the classroom because I want to share my knowledge and experiences to help others be successful in cybersecurity."

Air Force veteran Melissa Fowle of Troy, Ohio.

- Member of Post 586. Education sign language interpreter.

"I love working with kids! ASL is a conceptual language so I'm always thinking of what people are actually saying. I love helping people understand each other."

Army veteran Tracy Hague of Elkton, S.D.

- Member of Post 198. Social studies teacher for grades 7-12.

"I teach to be part of something bigger. My students are fighting hunger, bullying and lack of support. I serve to help my students fight those enemies."

Air Force veteran Robert Stewart of Dover, Del.

- Member of Post 2. Seventh grade math teacher.

"While in the military I taught aircraft maintenance, loved teaching, and wanted to come back to teaching. I serve in the classroom for the kids."

Army veteran Nancy Harper of Memphis, Tenn.

- Member of Post 27. JROTC instructor.

"To help mold the minds of our future leaders. To instill in the students confidence and discipline. To watch the students grow and become better citizens."

Have a membership success story?

Share: *www.legiontown.org*

Dispatch

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MEMBERSHIP

New Team 100 rewards for departments and posts

As an incentive to reach 100 percent membership department wide in celebration of The American Legion's 100th anniversary, posts and departments have a chance to earn money. American Legion National Commander Brett Reistad has announced two new Team 100 membership awards that provide an opportunity for departments and posts to earn financial means to support their programs while growing membership at every level of the organization.

Departments:

- $2,500 will be awarded to each department that achieves 100 percent of its established 2019 membership goal by the Armed Forces Day (May 8, 2019) 100 percent target date.
- $5,000, in addition to the $2,500, will be awarded to each department that achieves 105 percent of its established 2019 membership goal by the delegate strength target date (30 days before start of the 101st National Convention in Indianapolis)

Posts:

- $5 for every expired 2014, 2015 and 2016 member that renews for 2019 will be awarded to posts.

The expired members can be found by following these four steps:

1. Sign into *www.mylegion.org*
2. Click on "Reports/Labels" on the left side of the page
3. Click on "Post Reports" folder
4. Open the "Revitalization" folder. Inside this folder you will find three reports where you can select expired members for letters, labels and rosters ("Unrenewed_Letters," "Unrenewed_Lables" and "Unrenewed_Roster").

If your post does not have access to MyLegion, please visit *www.mylegion.org* and click on "Authorization Form" at the bottom of the page and complete the registration process. If you need assistance, call *(800) 433-3318* or send an email to *mylegion@legion.org*.

To receive credit for renewing a 2014, 2015 or 2016 Legionnaire, they must renew in your post and you have to use their current membership ID number. The ID number will be on the expired listing downloaded through MyLegion or provided by your department. If the expired Legionnaire was not a member of your post, please transfer them into your post and then process their dues payment.

Adjutant John Haehn of American Legion Post 290 signs up Veronica Soria as a new member at the Long Family Market in Stafford, Va. *Photo by Lucas Carter*

Additionally, the national commander is designating the week of The American Legion's 100th birthday, March 10-16, as "Week of Personal Engagement." He is calling on Legionnaires to make contact with veterans in their community to ask them join and be a part of Team 100.

"The American Legion soared from zero to 685,000 members in its first eight months," Reistad said. That was without direct mail or internet. "The Legion was built on personal contact and engagement."

There are two public service announcements from Reistad about these new membership incentives and personal engagement week at *www.legion.org/legiontv*. Click on "National Commander" on the left side of the page.

CENTENNIAL

Iowa post has flagpole ring from every convention

American Legion Post 298 in Marion, Iowa, was chartered in 1919, and has a flagpole ring from every national convention parade that post members marched in. The rings are mounted on a board next to the post commander's name for that year. Post members said they are "very proud of this piece of our history and hope the parades continue into our next 100 years." And on Nov. 8, with Post 298 members in attendance at a city council meeting, Marion Mayor Nicolas AbouAssaly signed a proclamation naming 2019 as American Legion Centennial Year.

POST MARKETING

PR tool highlights what your post does well

The 2019 Consolidated Post Report is available through www.mylegion.org and online at www.legion.org/publications under Internal Affairs. The reporting period runs from June 1, 2018, to May 31, 2019. While the national commander uses information from the CPR during testimony before a joint session of the House and Senate Committees on Veterans' Affairs, the report should also be used to show your community all the great things your post does.

To support this effort, there is a Consolidated Post Date news release template in section 14 of The American Legion's Public Relations Toolkit, available under Media & Communications at www.legion.org/publications. Once your post inserts data from its CPR, the release can be sent to local media.

"Pick fields from the CPR that your post does well," said Mike Rohan, chairman of The American Legion's Marketing Commission. "Celebrate what you're good at. Show your community your lane in the community. Show them what you do and do well."

MEMBERSHIP

Engage new members with these five questions

David Wallace of Post 180 in Vienna, Va., spoke to the 2018 National Legion College Class about membership engagement. As a 2016 Legion College graduate himself, Wallace shared that "engagement starts with knowing your members. If you're going to engage, especially in today's Legion life, Legion Family life, you need to focus on every Legion Family entity. If each of your entities are growing, so are you."

Wallace shared five questions to ask when engaging a new member:

- What is their family life? This creates potential for Legion Family membership if they are married or have children. And show them opportunities at the post for family involvement.
- What is their vocation? Identify their skill set and where that may apply within the post.
- What is their passion or hobby? This helps identify what programs or events they may want to be a part of.
- What did they do while in service? This is an opportunity for mentoring. Pair them with a current post member who shares the same service history to initiate mentorship and to show the common bond they will have with other Legionnaires.
- Why are they interested in The American Legion? They joined for a reason, so learn why and how they want to further their American Legion experience.

"The big thing – no matter if you're asking these questions or anything else – when you're engaging somebody, the most important thing is to just ask. If you don't do the just-ask part, no matter what the question is, you're not going to engage that person," Wallace said.

Other ways to start the engagement process include:

- sending out a thank-you letter after a new member joins
- hosting an initiation ceremony or new-member orientation
- having a welcome brochure about your post home

"There's nothing worse than signing somebody up and that's it," Wallace said.

David Wallace of Post 180 in Virginia.

Photo by Clay Lomneth

Legion College student James Talaska of Post 100 in Illinois said his post has new members fill out a survey to know "what they're interested in, what they're good at, what they like and what they don't like." Then the post mentors the new member by pairing him or her with a seasoned Legionnaire who explains how The American Legion operates and what they do as a post. "We engage them," Talaska said.

But engagement isn't just for new members – it must continue with those who are renewing, looking to transfer posts, and with the longtime Legionnaire.

"Engagement is art. You are creating a landscape as to what The American Legion is to a new member, or why they should come to your post, or why they should continue to be a part of the Legion Family," Wallace said.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Have you shared the national commander's American Legion public service announcements (PSAs) available to you? National Commander Brett Reistad calls on veterans to join the organization, shares why Legionnaires serve, how donations support The American Legion, and more in PSAs that are available on the Legion's Vimeo channel and LegionTv for promotional efforts. To share the commander's PSAs on Facebook and Twitter, visit ***www.legion.org/legiontv*** and click on PSAs on the left side of the page.

  For additional American Legion PSAs and promotional videos that highlight Team 100, Legion programs and more, visit ***https://vimeo.com/album/4174471***. These short PSAs and videos on the Legion's Vimeo channel can be shared via mobile devices or downloaded onto a computer hard drive and shared without the need for Internet connection. Use these videos to tell the Legion's story, as well as aid in membership recruiting, fundraising efforts, support for programs and events, and more.

- Are you traveling during the holidays? Hotel discounts are available at ***www.legion.org/benefits/travel***.

- If you're planning to visit Columbus, Ohio, the new National Veterans Memorial and Museum is now open. The 53,000-square-foot museum allows visitors to trace the service and sacrifice of U.S. veterans from the Revolutionary War through the war on terrorism through the words of the veterans themselves. A 2.5-acre Memorial Grove, created as a place for reflection and remembrance, is on the seven-acre campus in downtown Columbus. Learn more at ***www.nationalvmm.org***.

MEMBERSHIP INCENTIVES AND AWARDS

Membership target date No. 5

Jan. 17 is target date No. 5 for 80 percent membership. This target date is worth 8,000 points.

The department commander and department membership chairman may earn checks up to $1,000 based on a points system for meeting national target dates and other target areas. Each department must accomplish at least 98 percent of its goal by the 100 percent membership target date (May 8, 2019), using traditional methods, to be eligible for awards. DMS totals are not included. An additional $1,000 is awarded to the department for meeting all target dates.

Transmittals for all target dates must be received and processed at National Headquarters during normal business hours on or before the target date.

All-time high membership by Dec. 31

The American Legion's Certificate of Meritorious Service All-Time High Award is given to all posts that have, by Dec. 31, enrolled an advance membership for the membership year equaling or surpassing the post's previous all-time high membership.

The report form is on page 14 of the 2019 American Legion National Membership Awards Points Manual available at ***www.legion.org/publications*** under Membership.

And departments that have an all-time high in membership (DMS included) by Dec. 31 for the current membership year that represents five or more consecutive years will receive a special plaque.

Criteria for Post Excellence Award has changed

The American Legion's Post Excellence Award criteria has changed. To now qualify for the Post Excellence Award, a post is required to achieve excellence in four areas: membership, submission of the Consolidated Post Report (CPR), sharing of post history and community activity.

The purposes of this award are membership growth, exposure of American Legion values to the community, and increased visibility of the American Legion Family through service projects. A post achieving this qualification will have had numerous post members involved in planning and achieving these goals. Many posts are most likely already active in these areas and will qualify without extra effort. Others, however, will need to increase their efforts in one or more areas to qualify for the award.

The standard to be achieved in each area is as follows:

- **Membership.** Post membership must be at least one member greater than the previous year. At least one post officer attends district meetings.
- **Consolidated Post Report.** CPRs must be submitted by July 1. The American Legion's federal charter requires the submission of an annual report to Congress on activities for the year. MyLegion.org has made it simple for a post to submit its CPR in a timely manner.
- **Sharing of post history:** The American Legion's Centennial web page (***www.legion.org/centennial***) allows posts to share their history with the intent of collecting pieces to tell the larger story of The American Legion's first century.
- **Community activity.** An event must be conducted that connects the local community with The American Legion post. The objective is to open post doors and welcome the community in and educate them on what The American Legion is about and how the post is an asset to the community. Posts do not need to have a physical building to accomplish this. This activity can be held in a park, a community center, or anywhere the post can welcome and interact with the local community.

The district commander responsible for the post will certify a post as having achieved the four specified criteria. The district commander will submit a list of posts that meet the criteria to department headquarters. That list should include the post name, phone number, address and commander's name. If possible, accompany the last two criteria with copies of press releases submitted to the local media about the events to show that the events were not only accomplished but that an attempt was made to enhance the image of The American Legion through local media. The copy submitted should include a date and time stamp showing receipt by the media outlet.

The department adjutant will transmit information as posts qualify to:

The American Legion National Headquarters
Attn: Membership
P.O. Box 1055
Indianapolis, IN 46206-1055

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MEMBERSHIP

Arkansas post recruits and retains through community awareness

Membership in the Charles E. Brown American Legion Post 54 in De Queen, Ark., has increased from three to 40 in the last few years.

Post Commander Jessie Horton credits recruitment success by inviting veterans in the community to post events, letting them help out and have the opportunity to "get to know who we are. That's how we've started getting a lot of our membership is by letting them see us out in the community. Then the veteran is invited to a post meeting. Once we get them in (to the post), we try to retain them."

Horton helps retain members by providing light refreshments at the beginning of every meeting to encourage socialization. "I don't try to hurry them up into the meeting," she said. And she doesn't hurry them out the door following the meeting.

"I think that's what has kept a lot of them at the post."

Jessie Horton is photographed in De Queen, Ark., on Saturday, Oct. 6, 2018 *Photo by Lucas Carter*

PLANNER

January

1	New Year's Day
11-12	Membership and Post Activities planning session, Indianapolis
17	80 percent membership target date
21	Martin Luther King Jr. Day