Vol. 29 No. 6

THE AMERICAN LEGION
Dispatch
February 2019 A National Headquarters Publication

MEMBERSHIP

Department of Kentucky Legionnaires contact DMS members to transfer them into a local post during the department's mid-winter conference, Jan. 25-26, in Louisville.

350 DMS MEMBERS TRANSFERRED BY PHONE

The Department of Kentucky held its first statewide revitalization with a handful of Legionnaires effectively transferring members into local posts.

By Cameran Richardson

The Department of Kentucky's first-ever statewide revitalization led to the transfer of more than 350 DMS members into a local post. And it was the result of just a few Legionnaires making phone calls.

"Just ask," said Dr. Peter Trzop, executive director of American Legion Kentucky Boys State and a member of Post 42 in Bardstown. "We have to think about why are we not trying to connect these veterans back to the post."

Trzop, along with several other Legionnaires, contacted members from the Department Headquarters Post 200 list during Kentucky's mid-winter conference at the Crowne Plaza hotel in Louisville Jan. 25-26. The revitalization effort at the conference was part of a previous membership drive earlier in January when hundreds of phone calls were made in a single weekend that resulted in the transfer of more than 75 members. About half of the 4,300 members on the DMS list have been contacted by phone or email in January alone.

Jon Beach has made hundreds of those phone calls. During one call Beach connected with a World War II veteran who shared his story of why he joined the Army, of serving with the 101st Airborne in Japan and attending college at the University of Kentucky.

"It was nice to just sit and talk to him. It was definitely a neat story and that's another benefit of getting to do this," said Beach, an

See 350 DMS members transferred by phone on Page 4

NEWS ALERT

Legion birthday

March 15-17 will mark The American Legion's 100th birthday. American Legion posts nationwide are planning activities and events to mark the occasion, and are encouraged to share those events on the Legiontown website, *www.legiontown.org.*

A suggested centennial birthday speech for posts to use during their celebration event is available at *www.legion.org/publications* under Media & Communications.

Additionally, the 100th Anniversary Media Toolkit contains the centennial speech at three lengths of 15, 10 and 5 minutes of speaking time.

The 100th Anniversary Media Toolkit helps posts, districts and departments celebrate their history by sharing it with their community with easy-to-use media templates, event ideas and suggestions materials. The goal is to get the message out in front of the public, using all media tools available.

Download the centennial media kit at *www.centennial.legion.org* under "Tools." Also available in this section is the centennial logo for media usage.

American Legion centennial coins

The American Legion's three commemorative centennial coins are scheduled to go on sale March 14. To be added to the mailing list for updates, visit *www.legion.org/coin*. For ordering information, prices and other information as the coins become available from the U.S. Mint, visit *www.usmint.gov*.

COMMANDER'S MESSAGE

I'm calling on you to make 'Buddy Checks'

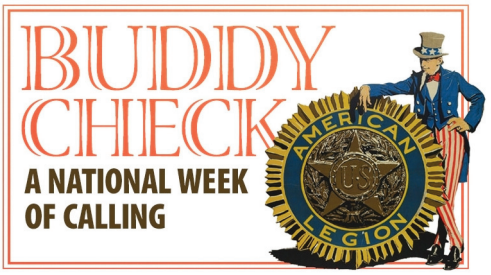
Brett Reistad
National Commander

As active Legionnaires, you and I have an important stake in our time-honored mission, services and programs. Compassionate care for disabled veterans. Wholesome development of youth. Advocacy for a strong and appreciated military. Employment and education opportunities for those who have served in the U.S. armed forces. Effective response after natural disasters. Respect for the colors of our country. Honor for the fallen. And influence to advance the needs of veterans – and of a strong America. Without strong American Legion membership, values such as these go unfulfilled. To keep them front and center, we must work together now to make personal contact.

I'm calling on posts, districts, counties and departments to coordinate a team and call Legionnaires and former members simply to see how they are doing.

Ask if there is anything The American Legion can do for them. Perhaps they have been sick, lost a spouse or just need to know someone cares. Perhaps they simply forgot to renew their membership because no one called.

More important than membership renewal – or retrieval of Legionnaires whose memberships have expired – is the personal contact to see how local veterans are doing and act accordingly if they need help. This is not a membership campaign. It's a comradeship campaign.



The week leading up the Legion's 100th birthday, March 11-16, is a perfect time to make the calls, but posts that have made other plans to celebrate the centennial at that time can choose another week in the centennial month if necessary.

A Buddy Check toolkit, including scripts for Legionnaires to use when making personal contact, is available online at ***www.legion.org/membership/buddycheck***.

Remember, this organization was formed a century ago around personal contact and engagemen. This "Buddy Check" is about seeing how veterans are doing.

To discover that, it takes personal engagement.

MEMBERSHIP

Recruit and renew to 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.

And as of Jan. 14, 2019, any Legion Family member who renews six American Legion members will be rewarded with the commander's pin. Renewals received prior to Jan. 14 do not count toward this incentive.

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.

Download the incentive pin forms 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

$1 million in American Legion assistance aided Coast Guard families

When the Coast Guard went unpaid during the government shutdown, The American Legion showed support through Temporary Financial Assistance grants and more.

By Daniel S. Wheeler

On Jan. 25, the longest government shutdown came to an end, stopping what had been more than a three-week gap since more than 41,000 active-duty members of the U.S. Coast Guard had been paid. The American Legion's Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA) program was able to provide more than $1 million in non-repayable grants to approximately 1,713 Coast Guard families with 3,170 children.

TFA grants, like the ones distributed to Coast Guard families affected by the shutdown, are made possible through donations to The American Legion Veterans and Children Foundation at ***www.legion.org/donate***. The foundation supports veterans and military families in need, as well as American Legion service officers who provide free VA benefits and health care assistance to veterans.

But across the nation, American Legion Family members also did their part to assist local Coast Guardsmen, raising funds, providing free meals and delivering much-needed household items and gift cards to those servicemembers. There were many Legion Family members who stepped up to help, and the following are a just a few of the many. See the entire list at ***www.legion.org/troops***.

California. In Vallejo, American Legion Post 550 presented $2,000 in $50 gift cards to members of U.S. Coast Guard Station Vallejo. Post 550 also helped facilitate 50 Coast Guardsmen applying for American Legion Temporary Financial Assistance.

Georgia. Post 184's Legion Family in Savannah collected funds and food for Coast Guardsmen, forming collection spots along the street using buckets and boots.

Maine. A breakfast fundraiser hosted by Post 36 in Boothbay Harbor raised $2,000 for members of the Coast Guard. And members of Post 35 in South Portland collected more than $800 for members of the Coast Guard's Sector Northern New England, which serves Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont.

Michigan. Post 217 in Wyandotte purchased 33 $100 Visa gift cards to distribute to all the personnel at Coast Guard Sector Detroit. Post 217's American Legion Family also helped provide food, laundry detergent, personal hygiene items, diapers, paper products, juices and other items.

The American Legion Temporary Financial Assistance program provided immediate grants to Coast Guard members during the shutdown. *Photo by Schelly Stone/The American Legion.*

In Marysville, Post 449 collected non-perishable foods and toiletries, and gift cards from Kroger, Meijer and gas stations to distribute to members of the Coast Guard.

Pennsylvania. Post 903 in Tannersville spent nearly $1,000 on clothing, toiletries, baby diapers and more for members of the Coast Guard in Philadelphia.

South Carolina. American Legion Post 114 in Georgetown teamed with other veterans service organizations to collect food, gift cards and monetary donations.

Virginia. American Legion Post 52's Legion Family in Newport News still hosted a free homemade meal on Jan. 27 for Coast Guard members and their families.

Washington. In Port Townsend, Post 26 hosted a meal for the crew of the U.S. Coast Guard cutter Osprey. And they have collected more than $2,000 to support the Coast Guard.

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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American Legion service officer and member of Post 12 in Richmond. "I know a lot of people don't always have the time, but when you have the time and you're making these contacts, even if you don't get an effective transfer, you still get to talk to people or leave a voice message, so you're getting your name out there as a personal contact and The American Legion's."

Phone calls during the conference were made in the main hallway of the hotel with American Legion "Join Today" signage, which was successful as two veterans joined. And it showed conference attendees the benefit of working as a team and the results of delivering a simple message to DMS members – that connecting to a local post allows them to meet face-to-face with another Legionnaire if they would ever need assistance, like filing a VA claim, and that some of their dues will stay at the local and state level to help other veterans.

Trzop said the revitalization effort is a way to work as a team, build friendships and engage DMS members with their local post.

Kentucky Boys State alum and staffer Jeremy Dodson was onsite at the conference to locate missing phone numbers from the DMS list through the website Anywho, as well as to fill out transfer forms. DMS lists also don't feature suggested posts for the member to transfer to. Post 42 Commander Chris Gootee created an extra column on the DMS list and located by ZIP code posts that were within 10 miles of the DMS member's home to make the transfer process easier for both the caller and Post 200 member, who may not know what Legion post is nearby. Gootee fulfilled this through "Find A Post" on www.legion.org.

"That way when you're on the phone you can say, 'You're in Post 200, a virtual post, we want to get you connected with other veterans. We want to get you into a post and here is what's around you if you don't already have a post in mind,'" Gootee said.

Beach said 95 percent of the people he spoke with were receptive to transferring their membership into a local post. For those who didn't answer the phone, Beach left his name and cell phone number in a voicemail asking if they would like to transfer their membership into a local post and ending with "I appreciate your time and your service, God bless you, your family and the (member's military branch)." His message was well-received and effective as his phone rang throughout the conference as a result.

MYLEGION

Benefits of the membership transmittal processing feature

The American Legion's online transmittal processing feature through MyLegion.org allows posts to process their membership in batches and pay for membership online through e-checks. This electronic payment method eliminates the need for post officers to send the national/department portion of the three-part membership cards and paper checks to department headquarters.

Since July 2018, about 190,000 members have been processed through this feature.

A few key benefits to using the online transmittal processing feature include:

- Membership counts are added to the National Target Date membership report.
- Membership counts are immediately added to the MyLegion Post/District Membership reports and available for departments to add to their membership reports.
- Members are immediately suppressed from any renewal notices, such as direct mail and email.
- Once post officers submit payment it prevents members from renewing online or duplicating payments.
- Posts save money by not having to pay shipping costs for a paper transmittal to department .

COMMUNITY AWARENESS

Hawaii post cleans up while raising visibility

The American Legion Family of John R. Rowe Post 17 in Honolulu recently adopted a stretch of highway on Oahu for their January clean-up effort. And the Legion Family made sure passersby knew who they were.

A large sign with both The American Legion and American Legion Riders emblem, along with the words "American Legion Post 17" and "Ask Why You Should Belong," hung on the back of Post 17 Commander Pete Provencio's truck for the duration of the effort.

Post 17 has used the sign in the past as part of its outreach efforts, using it with recruitment tables, during Legion Riders events and rides, and for fundraisers.

Provencio said the idea to adopt the highway came from Post 17 service officer Steve Painter. The clean-up effort itself included members of the post, Auxiliary Unit 17 members and members of Chapter 17's Legion Riders.

Provencio said bringing the sign to the clean-up was a good way to let the community know Post 17 is "out there. We're trying to get the message out about what The American Legion is."

MEMBERSHIP

National Legion College graduate engages new members through training

American Legion Post 100 in Royse City, Texas, has been running strong ever since receiving its temporary charter in January 2017, and permanent charter that December. In its first year the post grew from 25 to 67 members. This membership year the post has grown to 80 members and currently leads the 4th District in membership at 115 percent, said Post 100 Adjutant and 4th District Vice Commander Jason Castleberry.

Castleberry said post members understand that membership growth is the result of engagement. "Members who do not get involved or find their niche eventually quit renewing their membership," said Castleberry, a 2018 National American Legion College graduate.

To ensure new members of Post 100 are engaged, Castleberry created a new-member orientation training seminar covering topics that apply to integrating new members into The American Legion. A few topics include:

- History of The American Legion
- Four pillars and programs associated with each pillar
- Meeting protocols
- Officer roles
- How to order and wear The American Legion cap
- How posts, districts, divisions and departments interact
- How you can help your local post

"Integrating these new members into a post is vital for the success of the organization and will help improve the retention rate," Castleberry said. "Part of implementing the training is to plant the seeds of membership renewals for future years by showing our members what The American Legion is about. Most members who don't renew have never been taught about The American Legion or were never asked to be involved. We want to

integrate the members into our post and get them involved even when they don't think they can help. There is something for everyone!

"Members that didn't attend (training) are now taking The American Legion Basic Course. The new member orientation is planting seeds in many different ways."

Post 100 has received several Department of Texas membership and national membership awards. Castleberry said the post gives out backpacks and school supplies during the local back-to-school bash, has a table at a parent-teacher organization kids carnival, participates in the town's festival, and conducts Veterans Day events. "All these events puts us in front of thousands of people which has helped us recruit new members."

100TH ANNIVERSARY

Legion centennial Fatheads now available

Seven Fathead wall clings are now for sale to help The American Legion celebrate its centennial and share its story in local communities. The clings, which adhere to wall surfaces without damaging them when they are moved and reused, range from a 120-by-48-inch display of the four pillars of American Legion service to new and vintage constitutional preambles and logos in a variety of sizes.

The wall hangings include a 78-by-31-inch decade-by-decade timeline and a single 19-by-48-inch display that celebrates 100 years of service to community, state and nation.

The items come in a variety of prices and can be ordered through American Legion Emblem Sales by visiting *https://emblem.legion.org/Fatheads/products/1362/*.

DID YOU KNOW?

- The American Legion National Headquarters has started publishing a monthly report that presents key impact numbers, voices, activities and history of the nation's largest veterans organization. The report, which includes statistics that can be used in membership recruitment or to otherwise explain the organization's role in the nation, reflects on November and December 2018 accomplishments, and looks ahead. View the impact reports at ***www.legion.org/membership***.

- The American Legion has a one-page guide that highlights the organization's primary website, ***www.legion.org***, and provides links to other online digital resources. These links include direct access to The American Legion's membership, centennial and memorial database web page, e-newsletters, social media channels, brochures, smartphone apps, videos and more.

  Download The American Legion's digital media resource guide under Media and Communications at ***www.legion.org/publications***.

- John "Hammer" Hanzlik, an American Legion Rider from Post 1 in Omaha, Neb., has been writing safety tips for the Legion Riders web page for a few years. And now, Hanzlik has taken those pieces of advice and turned them into a book. "Highway 34: Motorcycle Riding Tips for Riders and Grasshoppers," now available via ***www.amazon.com***, covers group riding, sharing the road, avoiding road rage and evasive moves, among other topics.

MEMBERSHIP

Team 100: Why I joined and renew

"Growing up in New York City I was blessed to have a dad who was a World War II Army Air Corps veteran. He told me early on, when I went into service in 1970, to listen to my NCOs.

Fast forward 23 years . . . Sgt. 1st Class Marty Rhyne at Fort Belvoir told me I needed to join the Legion . . . and I did. One of the best decisions in my life. My Virginia Legion Family was there for us as our boys grew up, was there to celebrate when I got Commander of the Year . . . and were there to hold me as we buried our son. The Legion is family and that legacy of tradition, service and love is alive and well in Texas, too! Faces change, but the message doesn't, and we grow in God and Country."

– Gerry Hince, Bryan, Texas, Post 159

"It's the right thing to do. Being a member is a great way to support and continue to serve our military."

– Todd Frye, Marshalltown, Iowa, Post 46

"After spending time with my father during my childhood at American Legion Post 174 in Wayne, N.J., and learning about Americanism, patriotism and camaraderie, it has always stayed with me. My father, who is 90 years old, is still a member. As for myself, I retired from the Army in 1997 after 22 years of service and I'm going on my 19th year as a member of Post 174."

– Richard N. Zalusky, Aberdeen, Md., Post 174

American Legion National Commander Brett Reistad wants to know your reasons of why you joined The American Legion. And, equally important, why you renew.

As part of his Team 100 campaign, the centennial commander is assembling the thoughts of American Legion members to use in promotional materials to increase membership. Emails to provide your reason for joining and renewing in the nation's largest veterans service organization may be sent to ✉ ***dispatch@legion.org***.

Ask your friends and fellow Legionnaires. Think of your own reasons. Most important, share with us as we remind everyone the importance of membership and retention.

#Team100

MEMBERSHIP INCENTIVES AND AWARDS

90 percent membership target date

March 13 is target date No. 7 for 90 percent membership. This target date is worth 9,000 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.

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 (March 13). The percentage does not include members gained through DMS. 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:

- Category I – Departments of 100,000 or more members
- Category II – Departments of 65,000 to 99,999 members
- Category III – Departments of 40,0000 to 64,999 members
- Category IV – Departments of 25,000 to 39,999 members
- Category V – Departments of 10,000 to 24,999 members
- Category VI – Departments of 9,999 or fewer members

Race to the Top Competition

For the District Commander Race to the Top Competition, district commanders will compete in five categories based on final membership year totals. Membership cannot be less than 100 percent to qualify.

A top district commander will be selected from each category, as well as a second and third place winner.

Race to the Top categories:

- Category I – Districts of 15 to 1,499 members
- Category II – Districts of 1,500-2,999 members
- Category III – Districts of 3,000-4,999 members
- Category IV – Districts of 5,000-7,499 members
- Category V – Districts of 7,500 or more members

First place: The top district commander in each category whose district membership on March 31 represents the greatest percentage over the final previous year's membership. The winners in each category, along with a guest, will receive an all-expense paid trip to Indianapolis for the 101st National Convention as a distinguished guest of National Commander Brett Reistad. The trip includes round-trip airfare, tickets to the National Commander's Banquet, and hotel accommodations for six days and five nights. The winning district commanders also will receive a Legion cap that signifies they are Race to the Top winners, and awarded on stage at the national convention with ribbons for each of the district's posts.

Second place: The district commander in each category whose district membership on March 31 represents the second highest percentage over the final previous year's membership will receive a $500 check.

Third place: The district commander in each category whose district membership on March 31 represents the third highest percentage over the final previous year's membership will receive a $375 check.

Dispatch

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

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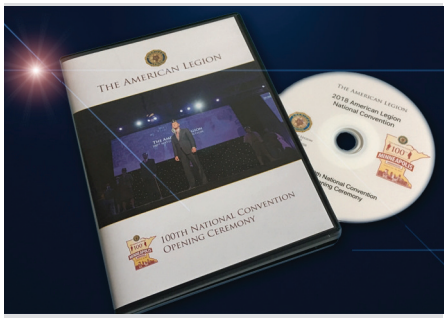
VETERANS AND CHILDREN FOUNDATION

Donors to receive limited edition 100th National Convention DVDs



Donors who contribute $19 a month to the tax-deductible American Legion Veterans and Children Foundation, and those who make a one-time donation of $125 or more, will receive limited-edition DVD videos of the spectacular opening ceremony of the 100th American Legion National Convention in Minneapolis.

The opening session featured music, dancing and a journey into The American Legion's roots – as performed by Troupe America and a re-enactor portraying organization co-founder Theodore Roosevelt Jr. Described by many attendees as the best national convention opening in recent memory, the performance included vintage footage from World War I, past American Legion conventions and program activities.

The American Legion Veterans and Children Foundation – a new name for the 1925-established American Legion Endowment Fund – provides resources to help military and veteran families facing financial crises and helps train American Legion service officers who provide free, expert benefits assistance for veterans and their families worldwide.

To make a gift to the foundation and receive a limited-edition 100th National Convention opening DVD, visit ***www.legion.org/convention***.

PLANNER

March

1	Eagle Scout of the Year applications due to department headquarters
13	90 percent membership target date
15-17	American Legion's 100th birthday
18	Department certification of Oratorical Contest winner due to National Headquarters