

KEYSTONE NEWS

A Publication of The Pennsylvania American Legion
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2015-2016 Department Commander Mike Stelacio Takes Office



Department Commander Mike Stelacio is a 35 year Paid up for Life Member of the Crest-Lawn Memorial Post 832. He came into the position with many qualifications that are listed below.

Pictured are Commander Mike Stelacio and his wife of 49 years, Pat, at the Department Convention in Harrisburg. They have four children and 11 grandchildren. The entire Stelacio family supports the American Legion and their programs.

AFFILIATIONS

- Fraternal Order of Police
- League of the Sacred Heart
- Eucharistic Minister 1980-2011
- Ancient Order of Hibernians
- Veteran Guard 3rd Infantry Regiment
- Pennsylvania Licensed Private Investigator
- Registered Nurse Pennsylvania
- DAV Life Member
- Member St. John Newman Holy Name Society and Holy Spirit Players

POST

- Post Historian 2014-2015 membership year
- Co-editor for the Crest-Lawn paper and is a member of PALPA
- County Commander for the 2011-2012 membership year
- Post Adjutant with 100% 2010-2011 membership year
- Post Finance Officer 2011-2012 membership year
- Post Commander 2007-2009 membership years
- Post Senior Vice and Membership Chairman for 2006-2007
- Post Jr. Vice 2004-2006 Membership year
- Post 810 Honor Guard

SECTION/DEPARTMENT/NATIONAL

- Eastern Section Vice Commander 2012-2013
- District Commander 2009-2011
- District Vice Commander 2007-2009
- Eastern Section Chaplain 2014-2015
- Philadelphia county Chaplain 2014-2015
- Department Chair Keystone Boys State 2013-2015
- Department PA Housing for Homeless Treasurer/Director
- Director for Al Pirolli Philadelphia Home
- Resolution Committee 2010-2011
- Department oratorical Chairman 2011-2012
- Convention Corporation member
- National Resolution Commission
- National Convention Commission



Pictured above are the 2015-2016 Pennsylvania Sons of the American Legion Mark Robbins the 2015 -2016 Pennsylvania Auxiliary Carol Harrison and the 2014-2015 Pennsylvania American Legion Department Commander Mike Stelacio. Missing from the photo is the 2015-2016 Pennsylvania American Legion Riders President Ed Dauch

We are looking for to a great year with our Department leaders!



COMMANDER'S COLUMN

Mike Stelacio, Department Commander

Legionnaires this is my initial correspondence to ALL members of the Pennsylvania American Legion. First of all, I thank all of you who supported me through the many months of the campaign up to and including the election. I am especially grateful to my wife, my love, for her support and encouragement. To the many Legionnaires in 5th District, my home District, who never wavered in their support and encouragement, to you I am eternally thankful.

My tour started with the jubilation of being elected and was quickly overshadowed with sadness. We entered convention with the passing of past Department Commander and Adjutant Stanley Reinhard. Many of us attended Stanley's services. Through this sadness, it was a blessing to see the Legion Family come together and pay their respect.

When I got to the Department Convention, on Thursday July 9th I was greeted by my good friend and brother figure, Stan Fabiszewski. Stan and I usually travel together to the DECs, Conventions, and other meetings. However because of scheduling, we arrived at the convention at different times. Stan's cheerful greeting lifted my spirits as soon as I saw him. Stanley was bubbling about "becoming Department Commander." Stan was ever ready, along with Joe Socha, Al Pirolli and Paul Kunst, with advice and guidance about our Legion.

Early Friday morning while preparing to attend our Pennsylvania American Legion Housing for Homeless Veterans Corporation meeting, Stan's roommate, Bob Coyle, called with shocking news. Stan had passed in the night. I was met in Stan's room by Past National Commander Ronald Conley. Ron and Stan had been friends and Legionnaires for many years.



Brothers and sisters, these men were pillars of our organization. Their love of Country, Family and Legion were unbounded. "Their footfalls now cause no sound." They are with the Great Commander in the sky.

They didn't get their knowledge through osmosis but rather regularly attending meetings. Meetings are the instrument of education to all members of policy, procedures and important issues affecting Veterans and The Legion. How can anyone expect to know what is happening in the Legion if you don't attend Post, District and Sectional meetings, the DEC and Convention?

These men all had many things in common. They believed in our programs. They believed in our membership. We are taught, "Work the programs and they will come." I have explained this many times. When I've defined our programs to Legionnaires and the general public, I get the response; "I had no idea the American Legion did all of that."

It is our responsibility to promote our Legion to the more than 700,000 Pennsylvania War time veterans, including over 63,000 female veterans that are not Legion members. This includes 183,500 Gulf War Veterans. Comrades we have a large membership team, over 160,000 strong. Think you can't recruit them? There is an article in the Keystone News about Tom Whitmore from Wyoming and Post 28; check it out about what he did to revitalized his post and helped his Legion grow. Yes, each and every one is responsible for membership. Sign up and bring a Veteran to your next meeting. Remember our "devotion to mutual helpfulness." God bless.

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**FROM THE DESK OF
Kit D. Watson, Department Adjutant**

Legionnaires, we have just finished the 97th Department Convention in Harrisburg. A new slate of officers is already out and about. E. Michael Stelacio has been elected Department Commander for the 2016 membership year. Commander Stelacio hails from the 5th District and has been very active in his post, district, section and department level. He is an Army veteran and retired from a career in law enforcement.

Commander Stelacio's theme is "Devotion to Mutual Helpfulness". We also have three new Vice Commanders, Robert Taylor representing the Eastern Section, Carl Olshefskie representing the Central Section and James Guiher representing the Western Section. Together these leaders will guide our organization for the 2015 membership year. Let's all get behind their efforts and keep our American Legion the leader in veteran service organizations! This team, along with the department staff, the numerous program committees, our District Commanders, County Commanders and certainly not last, our posts, will strive to keep the "Four Pillars" of our great organization as job one!

Upcoming in September is the annual POW/MIA ceremony at the State Capitol on the 18th at 10 a.m. We will shuttle all attendees from the department headquarters to the Capitol in Harrisburg and back. Shuttle service will run from



9 a.m. on to the conclusion of the event. Those attendees who bring their post colors will receive an event POW/MIA ribbon for their colors. In the event of rain, we will be in the Capitol Rotunda; otherwise we will be outside at the entrance to Soldiers Grove.

Also, right after the POW/MIA ceremony, the Pennsylvania American Legion Housing for

Homeless Veterans Corporation will hold a dedication ceremony for our Harrisburg home. We will dedicate it to John Metzger for his work and dedication to the homeless program. This is scheduled for 12:30 p.m. and the department will also be shuttling attendees to and from this event.

September 18 – 20, the Department Executive Committee will meet in Grantville at the Holiday Inn.

Our annual Legion College is fast approaching. This year we expect a record crowd as there are multiple subjects of interest for the Legion family scheduled for the curriculum. The IRS 990, tax exempt status for our posts, service officer training, Legion programs, a chaplain class, SAL, ALR, Auxiliary, the small games of chance laws pertaining to our posts and or club rooms, the importance of a strong veteran membership on our posts, and home association issues just to touch on a few. There is quite literally something of interest to all Legion family members. The Legion College East & Central will be October 31st at Cumberland Valley's Eagle View Middle School in Mechanicsburg, PA. Legion College West will be on November 7th at Latrobe High School in Latrobe. Both sessions will be from 8 a.m. till approximately 3:30 p.m. and will have a lunch break where both schools cafeterias do a great job in preparing the food. All this for the cost of less than \$20. Posts should make plans to send reservations in early as the classes will fill up quickly. The Legion College flyer has been mailed out to every post Adjutant. Additional applications can be found on our website at www.pa-legion.com



Don't forget to vote. Election Day is November 3rd. As a general rule, veterans consistently vote. We need to maintain that status for which we not only

earned the right to do, but for the service we gave to our Nation to maintain our right to vote!

It is not too early to plan Veterans Day festivities. November 11th is Veterans Day and posts across our Commonwealth will be participating in local observances. In addition to those services, posts might consider making the day a post open house. Posts could invite the community, the high school band, fire companies, and veteran guest speakers who do not frequent the club as much anymore, to visit the post. The cost could be minimal from free sodas, hotdogs and beans to as fancy as your membership would want to make it. The idea is to show our post home is more than a bar. You can most definitely use such an event to recruit members.

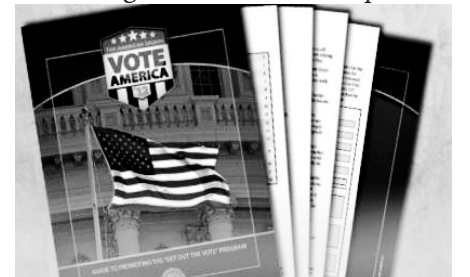
You always know membership is going to be mentioned in my article. Well yes, we need to talk membership, but here is a new twist for you. We have been told it is not if the IRS will look at our post membership, but when! Membership has always been important to our organization. The problem in some cases is that posts have placed emphasis on the club room and have drifted away from the post. With the IRS looking for additional revenues everywhere, it is absolutely imperative every post maintain the largest veteran membership they can! Legionnaires, regardless of whether they frequent the club room, are the lifeblood of our organization. Now they are also the lifeblood of all posts. The tax exempt status all posts have enjoyed is reliant on our posts maintaining a strong veteran membership. Discuss this with your membership. Both your Legion post and home association need to understand why we are here and why our club rooms exist. Any post that needs assistance on working on recruiting new members, revitalizing your post or needing guidance, please give us a call. We have a membership committee dedicated to working on these issues!

Enjoy the rest of your summer! Until next time. Kit



Get Out the Vote

In 1920, during The American Legion National Convention in Cleveland, the organization went on record urging all American Legion men to become qualified voters. Since then, the organization has passed countless similar resolutions advocating Legionnaires to not only exercise their constitutional responsibility to vote, but to also encourage others to do the same.



Elections are important to our republic. As citizens of this great nation, it is our duty and responsibility to exercise this right of franchise by casting our ballots on Election Day and to encourage others to do so as well. It was on this premise that The American Legion's "Get Out the Vote" program was initiated shortly after the organization's inception. Today it is as important as it was in elections past.

The Legion's "Get Out the Vote" program encourages all Americans to register and vote in all elections. In addition, Legionnaires, posts, districts and departments are encouraged to fully involve themselves in the electoral process by serving as poll volunteers, poll workers and by encouraging and assisting others to register and vote.

All Legionnaires are encouraged to renew their commitment for continued service to this country by being politically active as individuals. By working together as an organization we can make a difference by promoting an informed populace, participation in our government, and involvement in its electoral process. We cannot forget that in this country, our government is "of the people, by the people and for the people." It cannot survive as a democratic republic unless the people participate. That is our task.

VIETNAM COMMEMMORATION COMMITTEE

Chairman John C. Tomosky

East- Al Willis Central- Tim French West- Keith Mc Bride

This is the third and final Committee report of the VCC for the program year 2014-2015 covering activities which occurred during the period April 1, 2015 through to the Department Convention this weekend.

During this period, among other activities, Committee participation has been involved in the following:

April 10th - presented our second report of the program year to the Department covering activities occurring from the end of our first report through March 31st 2015. In addition, in view of the planned longevity of this Committee through to its expiration date on November 11, 2025 and on the recommendation of Western Section Vice Chairman Keith McBride recommended to Department the placement of the Committee on all Department forms soliciting recommendations for future Department chairman and vice chairman and also district chairman committee appointments.

April 18th - participated in the opening of the Wayne County Historical Museum's Vietnam War 50th anniversary commemoration that included a photographic display by a celebrated local photographer Stan Pratt titled "Vietnam - Looking Back 50 Years." Pratt was a 19 year old Army PFC when he was assigned in 1965 as a photographer with the 593rd Combat Signal Photo Company in Vietnam. Some of his cameras used in Vietnam were also displayed. "It's not only a salute to Vietnam veterans, but to all veterans," said Pratt who taught photography at Fort Monmouth in New Jersey after returning from overseas. The display also included memorabilia from another Vietnam veteran, Don Wilmont, who was a crew chief/door gunner with the Marines HMM-361 Helicopter Squadron. In attendance, among others, were Jim Carbone, Commander of Post 254; Jennifer Buckman, Commander of Post 807; George Schaeffer, Commander of Post 889; and Tim French, 15th District Commander and our Committee Vice Chairman for the Central Section. Schaeffer and French both served in Vietnam. April 19th - attended a Communion Breakfast for West Catholic Preparatory High School in Philadelphia where a plaque given to them previously was placed on display to allow our 12 Vietnam KIA to be remembered that day by those in attendance.

April 25th - provided support to Sons of The American Legion Squadron 21 in conducting a bingo at the veteran's nursing home at the VAMC in Philadelphia at which Vietnam veterans were present. These veterans were thanked for their service to our country and briefed on the upcoming renaming of the VAMC after Vietnam veteran Michael Crescenz.

May 2nd - attended ceremonies representing the Department of PA to rename the VAMC in Philadelphia after Corporal Michael J. Crescenz, the only recipient of the Medal of Honor from Philadelphia who was KIA on November 20th 1968 at Nui Chom, a mountain mingled with forbidding jungle where as a member of the united states army he was assigned as a rifleman to Alpha Company Fourth Battalion, 31st Infantry, 196th Brigade, American Division. After walking into an ambush, two men in his company went down quickly as machine gun fire broke out. The enemy was ensconced in countless bunkers on the mountain. Without regard for his own safety, he ran up the mountain with an M60 machine gun and took out three bunkers and was killed charging a fourth.

In attendance, among others, were Philadelphia County Commander Al Willis, 1st District Commander Hortense Toliaferro, 1st District Chairman Vernon Stith and myself as Chairman of the VCC and aide to Commander Haas. The affair moderator was former PA State Chief Justice Ron Castille, a Marine Corps Vietnam veteran who lost a leg in combat along with many other guests and dignitaries, Crescenz family members and members of his Army unit. It was a very moving day to say the least and now the deal is done.

May 9th - attended a major fundraiser for the planned Statue of Cpl. Michael Crescenz to be installed at the site of the Vietnam Wall in Philadelphia. The affair was held at the armory on Southampton Road in Philadelphia, adjacent to the Delaware County Veterans Home.

Funds were raised towards the fund raising goal of \$100,000 to finance the installation and endow the continued maintenance of this statue on the hallowed grounds of the Philadelphia Wall.

May 16th - under the leadership of VCC Vice Chairman for the East AL Willis and event committee Chairman Dave Adams of William P. Roche Post 21 conducted a "Hug a Vet Day" at Post 21 where 60 Vietnam veterans were recognized and presented with citations from the city of Philadelphia. Candidate for Mayor State Senator Anthony Hardy Williams and City Councilman Kenyatta Johnson presented these documents to the veterans in attendance. Various other dignitaries and politicians were present to thank these veterans for their service and sacrifices on behalf of our nation.

May 21st - the annual memorial service for the Edison 64 was held in Philadelphia. Edison High School had the highest casualty rate of any high school in the country during the Vietnam War. Special thanks go out to Latin American Post 840 and Dr. Darrell Clarke for all they do to maintain the yearly tradition of honoring these true American patriots who gave all for their country.

May 25 - in conjunction with the Ancient Order of Hibernians, Dennis Kelly, Division 1 from Havertown PA, and American Legion Post 959 from Philadelphia conducted a joint Memorial Day ceremony at the Delaware County Veterans Memorial in Newtown Square to recognize attending Vietnam and other veterans and to honor those from both organization that have passed to their final resting places.

May 30th - visited the site at 46th and Landis Avenue in Sea Isle City, NJ where a street sign has been placed marking it as the Cpl. Michael J Crescenz - Medal of Honor - Vietnam Street. This sign was placed on Veterans Day 2014 in view of the fact that Michael's parents owned a summer residence in the area where Mike enjoyed many summers as a kid before his untimely demise in Vietnam. The city has been fully supportive of all efforts to name the VAMC in Philly after Mike and to raise funds for the statue to be placed at the Vietnam Wall area in Philadelphia within the next few years.

June 25th - in conjunction with the West Catholic Preparatory High School Reunion themed "Burrs on the Beach" and the Southwest Football Coaches Association annual summer clinic held that same weekend, conducted a ceremony at the Vietnam Wall in Wildwood, NJ to honor the west 12 KIA's from Vietnam and other veterans. Also participating were the Disabled American Veterans Chapter 44 from Villas, NJ, the Vietnam Veterans of America from Wildwood and Wildwood American Legion Post 184.

The Committee has concluded its work for the 2014 - 2015 program year. We thank Commander Haas for the appointments as well as Adjutant Kit Watson, Richelle, Lisa and other Department staff who have assisted us during the year.

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ESSAY COMMITTEE

Chairman Tom Shumaker

Following the election of Dennis Haas as Department Commander for 2014-2015, the Commander appointed the following persons to serve on the Department Essay Committee:

Chairperson – Tom Shumaker, Western Section
Vice Chairperson, Eastern Section, Aaron Campbell
Vice Chairperson, Central Section, Linda Klutas
Vice Chairperson, Western Section, Herb Herman

The Committee first met on August 16, 2014 at Department headquarters to select topics for Grades 9 – 12 and 6 – 8. The Committee also discussed the need to revise some items on the essay brochure.

A number of potential topics were discussed and after consideration, the following topic for the 2015 contest for grades 9 - 12 was selected: **“WHAT IS THE AMERICAN LEGION AND WHAT DOES IT DO AS AN ORGANIZATION?”**

The Committee also reviewed potential topics for grades 6 - 8 and the topic selected was: **“SHOULD VIOLENT VIDEO GAMES BE BANNED AND WHY”**. This is a local contest and should be directed by the local post, including the date of the contest and types of awards to be presented.

The Committee also made some revisions, including but not limited to, the 2015 dates the essays need to be forwarded to each level and removing the stipulation that the total monetary award would only be presented if the winner attended a college or entered the military. The Committee discussed the possibility of an underclassman (grade 9-10-11) winning and the need for the award to be held until such time as the student entered college. Due to this possibly leading to additional monitoring of winners for up to 3 years, the Committee decided each winner would receive the face amount and the Comptroller would send a check directly to the winner, regardless of their grade. Perhaps this may encourage more participation in the future as word spreads on how much a student could win.

The information concerning the essay contests was presented at the September DEC meeting and the three sections meetings. Emphasis was placed on the need for District Commanders to disseminate this information to each of their posts and for the posts to inform their school districts as to the topic, the dates for completion of the essay, the type of awards to be presented and the dates of the presentations. Despite this, most of the questions received were regarding the essays for 6 through 8th grade concerning the due dates.

The deadline for the 1st level was in January, with other deadline dates for the next levels due in each of the following months. Due to extreme weather conditions necessitating some school closures, the deadlines were extended, when requested, to enable maximum participation.

On May 1st, 2015, the final three essays from each section were forwarded to the Department Chairman with the following results: **1st Place, Grace Miller, Bloomsburg, PA. – Central Section; 2nd Place, Brian DeMarco, Jim Thorpe, PA. – Eastern Section; 3rd Place, Samantha Scherrer, Pittsburgh, PA. – Western Section.**

A special “Thank You” to all who helped make this a successful contest (Post Chairmen, District Chairmen, Inter-District Chairmen and Vice Chairmen).

Pictured to the right are 2014-15 Commander Haas, Essay Contest Winner Grace Miller, and Essay Chairman of the PA American Legion Tom Shumaker.



ORATORICAL COMMITTEE

Chairman Carl Olshefskie

Committee members: Chairman Carl Olshefskie; Vice Chairmen William Hardy (Central Section), James McGauley (Eastern Section), Robert Munhall (Western Section).



Pictured is Oratorical contest winner Mercy Harris, 2014 Department Commander Dennis Haas and Oratorical Chairman Carl Olshefskie.

One of the many programs that our Legion family offers to instill the spirit of Americanism in the youth of our great

nation is The American Legion Oratorical Contest.

The initial Committee meeting held in August adopted the suggestions from last year's Committee and changed the initial kick-off date to December 7th to allow the school/post's contests to set their own date in an effort to accommodate the schools and students with other scheduling dates. We also re-worded the contest incremental dates as “by” dates to allow some flexibility at those points.

The post/school participation was disappointing again this year. We all must strive to get the word out about this contest and like all our activities, alternate methods need to be developed. In my area, I used personal calling to schools and letters to the editor, but still with dismal results.

The rules of the contest from National down to the post level seem very difficult, but that is to assure the integrity of the competition. As you work through the process, you see and understand that they are not that complicated. My personal opinion is this is one of the main stumbling blocks to the local posts getting totally involved.

I must thank the wonderful people throughout the state that are involved with the program for their help in making the Oratorical Contest a success for those who participate: Julie Brennan, Communications Specialist; Rev. James Fox, Past Department Chaplain; Jason Oyler, DEP Lawyer; Barre Shepp, York County Veterans Court and Richard Wyckoff, retired teacher and historian participated as judges.

Many members of the Central Section contest team participated in the operation of the finals and without their participation, the contest would not have been a success.

Again the contest finals were held at the Forum in Harrisburg on March 14th. The three sectional finalists presented a wonderful and educational contest to the assembled Legionnaires, friends, judges and families. This year's attendance was up somewhat from last year.

The student contestants must appear on stage front and give an eight to ten minute oration pertaining to the United States Constitution. A random topic from a list of four topics also pertaining to the Constitution is then selected and each contestant must deliver a three to five minute oration on that topic after only five minutes of preparation. Public speaking is not the easiest thing for many students, but the ones that attempt, practice and master are rewarded by The American Legion Oratorical Contest.

Not all school systems have a forensic or speaking curriculum, but these are not a requirement to master the art. Our Department first place finalist Mercy Harris was home schooled and had no problem challenging the East and West contestants. The other two contestants were Stephen Aber from the Western Section and Joshua Gardner from the Eastern Section.

I wish to thank Commander Haas for the appointment to the Oratorical Chairmanship.

"Healing the Invisible Wounds of Military Conflict"

We had the pleasure of having Darlene Johnson from the Dog T.A.G.S. Program attend our convention in July to explain their program.

Dog T.A.G.S. (Train Assist Guide Serve) is a service dog owner training program for veterans suffering from PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) and TBI (Traumatic Brain Injury). The veteran trains his/her personal dog with the help of experienced dog trainers. We have veterans who have served in conflicts ranging from Vietnam to present day Iraq and Afghanistan.

Dog T.A.G.S. was incorporated on December 6, 2012. The Founders of the organization were veterans suffering from combat caused PTSD who knew the need for a program like this to help them heal. The program meets one day every week for two hours at the OTCH Dog Training Club located at 1 Souder Court, Mechanicsburg, PA 17050. The veterans have the opportunity to share their thoughts in a group setting with a social worker and then train their dogs to become their service dogs with qualified trainers to instruct and review training tasks.



The program meets one day every week for two hours at the OTCH Dog Training Club, located at 1 Souder Court, Mechanicsburg, PA 17050. The two hour training session consists of a support group where the soldiers/veterans have the opportunity to share in a group setting with a social worker and then trains their dogs to become their own service dogs.

Their mission is to train, assist, guide and serve veterans who have been diagnosed by the Veteran's Administration (VA) with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) through the operation of a Service Dog Program.

In support of this mission, to search out and qualify veterans in need of psychological healing through

a service dog program; to evaluate the dog that the veteran brings to the program for suitability to be a service dog; to provide qualified volunteer trainers and a training regimen in obedience, public access and tasks/work that the dog will perform in order to meet the individual needs of the veteran; to provide a facility suitable for this training; and to have available on staff volunteer professional social workers to help the veteran deal with psychological issues which may arise as they work through the program.

The Dog T.A.G.S. program is entirely staffed by unpaid volunteers. Along with qualified trainers, each training program has at least one certified Social Worker present to discuss any of the veterans needs. We are always accepting donations. Please contact us for more information.

We enjoyed meeting them during convention and appreciate the work they do for our veterans in need of service dogs.



A letter from our friend Andrew Adam

Dear Friends

I wanted to give you an update on Unity Park. I have been busy, extremely busy the last two weekends getting lots of work done. The week of April 27, Pyramid Construction began excavation work and completed the concrete work for the statue pedestal. They also finished the excavation process and delivered the stone for the sidewalks.

On May 2, 2015, I conducted my first workday and with the help of Mr. Mike Klinepeter and a few friends and scouts we spend a couple of hours digging the flagpole holes and spreading the stones to make the sidewalks even and get them ready for the concrete.

The week of May 4th, the concrete forms were set and on Friday, May 8th the concrete was finally poured. I also met with the Knisely Landscaping when they delivered the boxwoods and the mulch for the park.

Saturday, May 9th was a very successful day, one I will always remember. On this day 32 people, friends, scouts and scout leaders donated their time and effort to come and help me start building Unity Park.

It is very humbling to see all these people make the 45 minute drive to Gettysburg to get Unity Park ready. We prepared the area by spreading the top soil; we planted the boxwoods and spread the mulch. At the end of this day, it was a great experience to actually see the conceptual drawings of Unity Park actually come to life.

In the next few weeks, I will be working with many other people who will help me get the rest of the work to get Unity Park ready for the statue. I will work on getting the educational boards, the plaques that will go on the pedestal and installing the flags. I am also glad to inform you that the statue has been cast in wax and is now in the process of getting finalized at the foundry.



Please go to www.unitypark2015.org for a slide show of the pictures I have taken of the project.

To all of you, I wanted to sincerely tell you that this project is teaching me things that I know I will use for the rest of my life.

I will continue to provide updates and the project moves along.

Sincerely,

Andrew P. Adam
(717) 982-8600
BSA Troop 88 - Mechanicsburg, PA
Eagle Scout Candidate
www.unitypark2015.org

Pictured above is Andrew Adam and his family with Commander Haas during convention.

A comfort & a constant

To see the U.S. flag in Vietnam was to remember who we were, why we were there and the homes we longed to see again.

By Keith Nightingale

Many years have passed since the last uniformed American came home from the Vietnam War. Those of us who were there often have mixed feelings about our place and time in history. The distance between then and now is sufficient for historians to dissect the war and its many parts from a safe vantage point, from



presidential decisions to children left behind, the battles we fought to the quality of our C-rations. Schools barely mention the Vietnam War outside the context of visceral political dissent and demonstrations. As our number begins to diminish, we Vietnam veterans gather in the

warmth of our own memories, perhaps surrounded by friends and comrades at an American Legion post, joined by one common thread: the flag under which we fought.

That simply designed rectangular cloth with its universally understood patterns and meanings flew from the moment our troops set foot in Vietnam until the last of our era departed. The flag is a consistent and enduring memory in a war that had little consistency over the decade and a half we endured in Southeast Asia.

Among the millions of American men and women who served in Vietnam, there resides somewhere inside us the knowledge of what it's like to be far from home and how our memories can bring us back: a sport, a girl, a husband, family, friends, hamburgers, the farm, the city. Images of home rushed privately into our minds whenever we gazed upon the flag in Vietnam.

Our flag meant, and means, something. To us, it symbolized a place we left behind, the spirit of home, temporarily forfeited for a greater purpose and service someplace else. The comfort of a familiar neighborhood, family, friends or a special someone could emerge with emotional clarity after one quick, furtive glance at the flag. It represented what we were, where we were and what we were doing in the world, a comfort we would otherwise not have had. We would never lose our flag. It was us, serving there, and it was them, the people and things we left behind.

Even today, when veterans return to Vietnam, our flag is known to the Vietnamese, most of whom were not yet born when the last of us left their country. A veteran may have a small cloth flag in a book, or a piece of a uniform, or a magazine that shows our flag, and a Vietnamese local will look over his shoulder, see it and say – "*Hoa Ky* (U.S.), *yoi lam* (good)" – with a thumbs-up and a big smile. Even after 50 years, our presence and larger purposes there remain respected by many and, in some cases, revered. It is odd to U.S. veterans of this particular war that the former enemy can have more regard for our service than did our fellow citizens when we came home.

Wherever our uniforms went in Vietnam, so did the flag. In some cases, it was large and conspicuous, such as at our embassy or major base camps. In other cases, its presence was much smaller but perhaps more symbolic and meaningful. LZ X-Ray had a small flag by its anthill CP. Small U.S. flags were some of the first visual symbols planted at the top of Hamburger Hill – displayed by soldiers who didn't want to be there but were anyway and cared deeply about the outcome.

The constantly bombarded Marine bases along the DMZ all flew defiant flags that suffered the same indignities as those that rose over Fort McHenry and Fort Sumpter. Had Lincoln stood in the center of Khe Sanh, he would have seen our flag, smiled and understood. This is why we are here. This is what we are about.

During the Tet Offensive of 1968, small U.S. flags emerged on rooftops and windowsills, advancing the message that the United States was still there, not surrendering. You will have to take us to change this flag. It is ours, and we are keeping it.

In thousands of places and on thousands of things, the flag waved during our war. Whip antennas of vehicles. Stickers on the sides of 500-pound bombs. Colored fragments coursing in the wind behind the Brown Water Navy. At every temporary command post, a maneuver unit might stop for a moment. The U.S. flag, immediately identifiable, represented private thoughts and feelings each of us held. From the early 1950s until the middle 1970s, through the ebbs and flows of enthusiasm and attitude about Southeast Asia and America's use of military force there, the flag remained the one constant. It would be wherever our uniforms went. It was the same for all of us. It was the flag.

Ordinary people may navigate their lives and locations on the planet in studied ignorance about the evils that surround them. But those who serve and served in uniform know of evil's existence, its penalties and costs. We intuitively understand that "the only thing necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing." Good men and women have carried our flag wherever something had to be done to make the world a better place.

Millions of people who are not U.S. citizens understand what our flag symbolizes, and pay secret homage to its meaning. It transcends culture, religion, education or language to the world's inhabitants, more so than their own national symbols. It is a flag of hope and aspiration some enjoy only fleetingly.

Since Vietnam, on the shoulder of every service's uniform, is the flag. It carries a message far larger than the individual who bears it. It always has. It always will. Regardless of personal feelings, those who served under the flag understood that they were for some short time part of something greater than themselves.

They may have been a grunt, a gun bunny, a sailor, pilot or ammo handler, but they were there, and they served the nation and the flag. The several million who served in Southeast Asia, and those whose names are chiseled in black granite, could accurately say, "I served that flag and what it means to us all. It flew proudly because I made it so."

This story was featured in the Legion Magazine. The Legion Magazine is a great resource for you and your Legion Family.

Legion praises Mt. Soledad Memorial Association for saving cross

Calling for an end to a lengthy court battle, The American Legion is praising the Mt. Soledad Memorial Association for its recent purchase of land from the Department of Defense in order to preserve a 43-foot cross that was erected in 1954.

"I hope this ends it," National Commander Michael D. Helm said of the legal case that started in the late 1980s. "Frankly, it shouldn't have been necessary for the government to sell the land to a private group in order to preserve a memorial that is deeply significant to so many people. The American Legion believes in 'God and Country.' Unfortunately, some courts don't always see it that way." Helm commended Rep. Duncan Hunter, R-Calif., and Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., for writing and passing legislation that made the \$1.4 million purchase possible.

"The Liberty Institute has also been a fierce advocate for the memorial, which the Legion has supported through numerous national resolutions," Helm said. The ACLU and Jewish War Veterans have sued to have the cross removed because they believe it infringes on their constitutional rights. A 2012 court ruling permitted a cross owned by the National Park Service in the Mojave Desert to be transferred in a private sale to the VFW.

The Mount Soledad cross in La Jolla, Calif., is part of a larger memorial, which includes more than 3,700 plaques honoring veterans of various wars. The land purchase is for the one-half acre plot of land surrounding the memorial.

REPORT OF DEPARTMENT CHAPLAIN

The Reverend Richard Denison

This year the Religious Emphasis Committee and your Department Chaplain have continued to support the American Legion's mission "For God and Country." During the past year we have provided both Protestant and Catholic worship services for every DEC meeting. We especially want to thank Chaplain Lt. Col. (Ret.) Robert Humenay who traveled to each DEC meeting to provide Roman Catholic Mass. We also revised the criteria for the Chaplain of the Year Award. Two Legion College sessions were supported with a revised curriculum to train post chaplains in their responsibilities. In addition, the Department Chaplain spoke at several veterans' programs including the Veterans Day commemoration at the historic Letterkenny Army Depot Chapel. We look forward to continuing to support the mission of our Department and provide religious support to Department events.

Pictured is Chaplain of the Year Peter Gregory receiving his award at the 2015 Department Opening Ceremony in Harrisburg.



CHILDREN & YOUTH

Chairman William Harker

The Children and Youth Committee met at Department Headquarters on June 6, 2015 at 12:00 p.m. In attendance were Vice Chairmen Tom Radel, Bob Jartin and Adam Chase. After discussion, the following award winners were selected.

Pictured is Educator of the Year Robert Ardeno from the Jefferson-Morgan School District receiving the award from Commander Haas and



Chairman Harker.

Other Award Winners include

Membership Class 1: Post 567 – Oakley K. Cobb (D29W)

Membership Class 2: Post 764 – George A. Uhlinger (D33W)

Membership Class 3: Post 279 – Rockwood (D24W)

Membership Class 4: Post 114 – William Harry Davidson (D31W)

Membership Class 5: Post 105 – Lake Shore (D29W)

The Committee would like to thank Commander Dennis Haas for our appointment. God bless America.

If you're a blood donor, you're a hero to someone, somewhere, who received your gracious gift of life.

BLOOD DONOR

John Chalmers

The Blood Donor Committee consist of the following: Chairman John Chalmers, Vice Chairmen Bernie McGarity, Jim Heslop and Steve Molish. The Committee met at Department headquarters on June 6, 2015 to select the winners for the Blood Donor Awards. The winners are as follows:

Class 1 – Post 995 who donated 64 pints

Class 2 – Post 62 who donated 45 pints

Class 3 – Post 534 who donated 30 pints

Class 4 – Post 340 who donated 69 pints

Class 5 – Post 15 who donated 806 pints

Thank you to all the posts that participated in this program very important program.



HOSPITAL ENTERTAINMENT COMMITTEE

Edward Connell

We have recently been saddened by the loss of Committee members who have gone to Post Everlasting. They will be *missed* by all. As a Committee made up of volunteers with many varied backgrounds, it is refreshing to know that so many good people will give of their time and energy to do so much good for our hospitalized men and women in our state homes and VA facilities across our state.

With this in mind, it is imperative that we constantly seek out new members to assure that there is adequate representation at our VA and state homes. If you are able to volunteer in any way, shape or form, your services are more than welcome! Only you can determine how and when you can give of your time, but each facility can give you the information needed to fit your particular schedule. We will gladly assist you in any capacity to become a regularly scheduled or occasional volunteer. Please give it serious consideration, **as you are needed!**

The selection of those who can be chosen for awards by the Committee are given much consideration and it is important that the paperwork be filled out accurately and completely to ensure a proper and fair process of awards. Those forms are sent out early in the year by Department and we encourage all Posts to think about making submissions because good work deserves recognition, especially all which is done for hospitalized veterans.

The Department Christmas Tour in December is a large part of what Post and Units do for residents in our local facilities and when Legionnaires, Auxiliary, Sons, Juniors and Riders turn out to support our Department officials on their official visit. It is a sign of respect for our leadership and most definitely for our veteran men and women residing there. Thank you.

Our entire Legion family is to be congratulated for all the donations of goods and finances that are received at the various homes and hospitals as comfort items and clothing fare greatly appreciated by the veterans. What you do really matters for them, so *please* continue with your efforts as they are so much appreciated.

Thank you and my thanks to Commander Haas for this appointment.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

William Bowers

A meeting of the Community Service Committee was held at HQ on June 6, 2015. Present were Chairman William Bowers; Vice Chairmen, Tom Keener, Robert Bartosh and Walt Stelma. The Committee received 76 reports. After reading the reports the following posts were chosen:

Class 1: William Bauer Post 829 Willingboro, NJ

Class 2: Koch – Connelly Post 568 Scranton, PA

Class 3: James Farrell Post 330 Waynesburg, PA

Class 4: James G. Zimmerman Post 340 Duncannon, PA

Class 5: Conewago Post 329 Elizabethtown, PA

LAW AND ORDER COMMITTEE

Larry Maggi

The Law and Order Committee met several times this year. We have selected a fireman and a law enforcement officer for this year's annual award. We last met on June 8, 2015 to select the Law and Order awards for various posts.

Pictured is the Law Enforcement Officer of the Year.



One of the big responsibilities of this Committee is the State Police Youth Week. This is a premiere camp for young men and women. Potential cadets, male and female, must be between the ages of 15 and 17 years of age prior to entering the camp and must not have turned 18 before or during the camp. This program is for young men and women who are interested in a career in law enforcement or the military. The program is not a recreational camp, nor is it a disciplinary camp for problem youth. It is a physical, mental, rigorous training camp, run like a military boot camp. This year's camp was again held at York College, York, Pennsylvania from June 7-13, 2015. We started out with approximately 80 cadets. This week was a good week with a lot of team work from all involved. The camp is one of the best programs that the Department runs. It is recognized nationally, and we have had numerous inquiries from other states about it. I believe this is one of two programs run by American Legions nationally.

The Department sponsors State Police Youth Week in conjunction with the Pennsylvania State Police and the Pennsylvania Army National Guard. All entities put numerous resources into this camp, which makes it so successful. The cadets spend a day at the Pennsylvania State Police Academy and a day at Fort Indiantown Gap military base. They get a real feel for life in the military or law enforcement. A lot of success for this program is due to the dedication of the staff at Department headquarters and their hands-on approach. This is the second year that we used Facebook to keep the parents of the cadets informed as to what was going on with their child while at the camp. It is a huge success.

American Legion/State Police Youth Week camp plans are being coordinated now for next year and will again be held at York College in York, Pennsylvania in early June, 2016.

"We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give."

- Winston Churchill

PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Morganna vonHaeger

The Public Relations Committee met on Saturday, June 6, 2015 to pick the Public Relation award winners. The Committee consists of Chairman Morganna vonHaeger, Vice Chairmen Bernard Halvorsen (Central Section), Ben Spickler (Eastern Section), and Anthony Luskoski (Western Section). The Public Relations Representative is Shannon Kyle. Pictured is Department Commander for 2014-15 Dennis Haas, Blue Cap of the Year Award winner Ed Baranski, and Chairman of the Public Relations Committee Morganna vonHaeger.



JOHN C. "ACE" MANN BLUE CAP OF THE YEAR

Ed Baranski from Post 739 – Jones-Quigg in Whitehall, PA

VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION

Thomas L. Lawson of Post 674 – South Mountain in Mt. Holly Springs, PA

POST PUBLIC RELATIONS AWARD

Post 537 – Colonel Jacob Morgan in Morgantown, PA

MEDIA AWARD – DAILY NEWSPAPER

Meadville Tribune in Meadville, PA

MEDIA AWARD – WEEKLY NEWSPAPER

Town Talk Newspapers in Holmes, PA

MEDIA AWARD – TELEVISION

WTAJ TV 10 in Altoona, PA

MEDIA AWARD – RADIO

Forever Broadcasting in Hollidaysburg, PA

MEDIA AWARD – INTERNET

No Nominations

SCOUTING COMMITTEE

Frank Abate

Congratulations to Post 16 Slatington, District 14, for being the longest continuous sponsor of a Boy Scout Troop in Pennsylvania. They started Troop 66, 90 years ago. KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK!

This year's awards are as follows:

WOOD BADGE SCHOLARSHIPS: Christopher Kotch, Post 343, District 26; Joseph Krampy Post 400, District 25.

OUTSTANDING SCOUTER OF THE YEAR: Norbet Sonnie, Post 960, District 9; Richard Alan Barringer, Post 106, District 26; Ansi Tomlin, Post 11, District 29; Lisa Wagner, Post 11, District 29.

OUTSTANDING EXPLORER POST OF THE YEAR: Post 7 Erie Police Dept., Post 11, District 29

OUTSTANDING BOY SCOUT TROOP OF THE YEAR: Troop 66, Post 16, District 14

CUB SCOUT OF THE YEAR: Morgan Shaffer, Post 381, District 29

LEGIONNAIRE SCOUTER OF THE YEAR: William D. Douglass, Sr., Post 933, District 9

EAGLE SCOUT OF THE YEAR: Devin Anderson, Weedville, PA, Post 103, District 28

Take note of soon to be Eagle Scout Andrew Adam's Eagle project in the Keystone News or go online and look at Andrew's website "UNITY PARK PROJECT". This is the young man that spoke at last year's Convention. He is erecting a statue in Gettysburg, PA, honoring Civil War drummer boys and musicians.

Please continue your support of local Scout Councils and Troops. Your help and sponsorship help build the leaders of tomorrow.

| 2015 | Post Commander of the Year | Post Adjutant of the Year |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 st District | no submission | no submission |
| 5 th District | Post 735, Patrick O'Brien | Post 735, Francis Dean |
| 8 th District | Post 926, Cy Yost | Post 214, Lisa Kelly |
| 9 th District | Post 210, Jack Strollo | no submission |
| 10 th District | Post 185, Skip Walsh | no submission |
| 11 th District | no submission | Post 966, Michael Miskell |
| 12 th District | no submission | no submission |
| 13 th District | no submission | no submission |
| 14 th District | Post 934, Donald R. Moatz | Post 191, Kevin Kasten |
| 15 th District | Post 254, James A. Carbone | Post 486, Francis Lemon, Jr. |
| 16 th District | Post 104, Shannon Reynolds | Post 104, Mark Von Budda |
| 17 th District | no submission | no submission |
| 18 th District | no submission | no submission |
| 19 th District | Post 883, Ira Fisher | Post 674, Thomas Lawson |
| 20 th District | no submission | no submission |
| 21 st District | Post 835, Mitch Gruff | Post 835, James Maley |
| 22 nd District | Post 606, Donald Harvey | Post 606, Ray Hawbaker |
| 23 rd District | Post 489, William Blouser | Post 887, Frank Cochran |
| 24 th District | Post 762, Robert L. Walker | Post 762, Audrey Baker |
| 25 th District | Post 377, Stanley Hughes | Post 949, Alan Hupchick |
| 26 th District | Post 778, Gary L Kuhn | Post 641, Thomas Stachura |
| 27 th District | no submission | no submission |
| 28 th District | no submission | no submission |
| 29 th District | Post 494, Dennis E. Bensus | Post 439, Harry Glunt |
| 30 th District | Post 927, Thomas W. Franklin | Post 379, Kenneth Nichol |
| 31 st District | Post 941, Roger Pospisil | Post 401, James Sims |
| 32 nd District | no submission | no submission |
| 33 rd District | no submission | no submission |
| 36 th District | no submission | no submission |

Congratulations to all of the Commanders of the Year and Adjutants of the Year. Your Department and the American Legion appreciates your dedication to our veterans. You make this department #1.

AWARDS PRESENTED AT THE DEPARTMENT CONVENTION

Post Chaplain of the Year Award, Rev. Neal Smith Department Chaplain
2015 Chaplain of the Year **Chaplain Peter Gregory, Post 79**

Public Relations, Morganna vonHaeger, Chairman
Blue Cap of the Year **Ed Baranski, Post 739 Jones-Quigg, Whitehall, PA**
Volunteer Recognition **Thomas L. Lawson, Post 674, Mt. Holly Springs, PA**
Media Award – Daily **Meadville Tribune, Meadville, PA**
Media Award – Weekly **Delco News Network, Holmes, PA**
Media Award – Television **WTAJ TV 10, Altoona, PA**
Media Award – Radio **Forever Broadcasting, Hollidaysburg, PA**
Media Award – Internet **No Submission**
Post Public Relations **Post 537 – Colonel Jacob Morgan, Morgantown, PA**

VA&R Employer Awards, William Smith Chairman
Large Employer of Veterans..... **Hovis Auto & Truck Supply, Inc.**
Medium Employer of Veterans **No Submission**
Small Employer of Veterans **No Submission**
Employer of Older Workers **Hovis Auto & Truck Supply, Inc.**
Employment Service Award (LVER) **No Submission**

Distinguished Service Awards, Kerrie Gill, Chairman
John S. Prichard, Butler, PA
Sedric Melidosian, Philadelphia, PA

Blood Donor, John Chalmers Chairman

Class 1 **Post 995 Dayton Memorial, Dayton, PA**
Class 2 **Post 062 John Jacob Fisher, Punxsutaney, PA**
Class 3 **Post 534 Wyalusing, Wyalusing, PA**
Class 4 **Post 340 James G Zimmerman, Duncannon, PA**
Class 5 **Post 15 Joe Stickell, Waynesboro, PA**

Community Service, William Bowers Chairman

Class 1 **Post 329 William Bauer, Willingboro, PA**
Class 2 **Post 568 Connolly, Scranton, PA**
Class 3 **Post 330 James Farrell, Waynesburg, PA**
Class 4 **Post 340 James G. Zimmerman, Duncannon, PA**
Class 5 **Post 329 Conewago, Elizabethtown, PA**

Americanism, Jim Guiher Chairman

Class 1 **Post 829 William Bauer, Willingboro, PA**
Class 2 **Post 764 George A. Uhlinger, Springdale, PA**
Class 3 **Post 564, Arthur Bardo, Millville, PA**
Class 4 **Post 473 Freeland, Freeland, PA**
Class 5 **Post 273, Valley of Bloomsburg, Bloomsburg, PA**

New Post/Post Home, Robert Taylor Chairman

Class 1 **No Winner**
Class 2 **No Winner**
Class 3 **No Winner**
Class 4 **No Winner**
Class 5 **No Submission**

Essay, Tom Shumaker, Chairman

2015 State Champion **Grace Miller, Bloomsburg, PA**

Oratorical, Robert John Chairman

2015 Oratorical Winner **Mercy Harris, York, PA**

Scouting, Frank Abate Chairman

Eagle Scout of the Year **Devin Anderson, Weedville, PA**
Scouter of the Year **William D. Douglass, Sr., North Wale, PA**

Law & Order, Larry Maggi, Chairman

Class 1 **Post 385, Henry Hill, Philadelphia, PA**
Class 2 **No Nomination**
Class 3 **Post 445, Harry Fisher, Berlin, PA**
Class 4 **Richard White Memorial, Philadelphia, PA**
Class 5 **Post 105, Lake Shore, North East, PA**
Firefighter of the Year **Gerald Glose III, Whitehall, PA**
Law Enforcement Officer of the Year **Robert E. Fyock, Indiana, PA**
Post Sending the Most Cadets to State Police Youth Week
..... **Post 341, Ambridge, PA**
District Sending the Most Cadets to State Police Youth Week **District 19C**

Children & Youth, William Harker, Chairman

Educator of the Year **Robert Ardeno, Amity, PA**
Class 1 **Post 567 Oakley K. Cobb, Albion, PA**
Class 2 **Post 764 George A. Uhlinger, Springdale, PA**
Class 3 **Post 279, Rockwood, Rockwood, PA**
Class 4 **Post 114 William Harry Davidson, Vandergrift, PA**
Class 5 **Post 105 Lake Shore, North East, PA**

Keystone Boys State, Mike Stelacio, Chairman

KBS Governor **Justin Cooper, West Chester, PA**
Post Sending the Most Boys to KBS **Post 201, Doylestown, PA (10 students)**
District Sending the Most Boys to KBS **District 9 (40 students)**

Hospital Entertainment, Ed Connell, Chairman

Samuel F. Naples Award **no winner**
Hospital Volunteer of the Year **John Massaro, Post 602, Spring City, PA**

Norman L. Streicher Award by class:

Class 1 **Post 823 Green Tree, Pittsburgh, PA**
Class 2 **Post 764 George A. Uhlinger, Springdale, PA**
Class 3 **no winner**
Class 4 **Post 114 William Harry Davidson, Vandergrift, PA**
Class 5 **no nominations**

It's a Good Thing You Do

Central Section **Post 192 Potter, District 16, Coudersport, PA**
Eastern Section **Post 626 Birdsboro Memorial, District 14, Birdsboro, PA**
Western Section **Joseph Isacks, Post 11 Rogers Israel, District 29, Erie PA**

Pennsylvania American Legion Press Association (PALPA) Awards

Wallace Keen Jr. President

| | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Crest-Lawn Memorial Post 832 | District 9 Newsletter |
| Harold V. Knecht Post 415 | George A. Uhlinger Post 764 |
| Lancaster Post 34 | Plum Boro Post 980 |
| Department HQ – Keystone News | Rhawnhurst-Castor Memorial 754 |
| The Loose Cabooes | Roland Ritter Post 268 |

Membership Awards, Paul Kennedy Chairman

Gold Brigade

50 or more new members

James Vollrath – Post 34 District 10E – Eastern Vice Commander
82 Members (Sixth Consecutive Year)

Michael Heckman – Post 273 District 17C – 57 Members

Silver Brigade

25 to 49 new members

James Heslop – Post 185 District 10E – 31 Members
Cherryl Ranta – Post 109 District 19C – 35 Members
George Dextrax – Post 51 District 24W – 26 Members
James Stuchell – Post 981 District 31W – 25 Members
Christ Gettel – Post 791 District 22C – 31 Members
Jere Axe, Jr. – Post 34 District 10E – 25 Members
Michael Wenrick = Post 779 District 23W – 28 Members

Top New Member Recruiter

James Vollrath – Post 34 District 10E Eastern Vice Commander – 82 Members

Post Excellence Award – National Award

Excellence in 4 areas: Membership, Youth Activities, Community Service and Support to Currently Serving Troops or Veterans
George A. Uhlinger Post 764 District 33W

Congratulations to all of the program winners. Our Legionnaires, your communities, children & youth, veterans, their families and current servicemen and women are better because of what you do. Thank you and continue to work our American Legion programs.

“It is time for us all to stand and cheer for the doer, the achiever – the one who recognizes the challenges and does something about it.” – Vince Lombardi

CALANDER OF EVENTS
2015 - 2016 Membership Year
(Dates Subject to Change)

August 2015

Aug. 5 - 8 National Membership Workshop, Indianapolis, IN
Aug. 5 - 8 Department Service Officer School, Indianapolis, IN
10 VJ Day
13 - 18 American Legion Baseball World Series, Shelby, NC
14 - 15 Department Committee Meetings
28 - Sept. 3 National Convention, Charlotte, NC

September 2015

7 Labor Day (Dept. HQ Closed)
11 Patriot Day
12 Youth Baseball Meeting
16 American Legion Day
18 POW/MIA Remembrance Ceremony – Harrisburg, PA
18-20 Department Executive Committee, Grantville Holiday Inn
18 - 20 National's Children & Youth Conference, Indianapolis, IN
25 - 27 National's Americanism Conference, Indianapolis, IN



October 2015

10 - 11 Activities meeting (Baseball), Department Headquarters
12 - 15 National Fall Conference, Indianapolis, IN
12 Columbus Day (Dept. HQ Closed)
31 Legion College East, Cumberland Valley Middle School, Mechanicsburg, PA
25 - 30 National's Legion College, Indianapolis, IN

November 2015

1 Daylight Savings Time Ends
3 Election Day
7 Legion College West, Latrobe Senior High School, Latrobe, PA
11 Veterans Day (Dept. HQ Closed)
27 Thanksgiving Day (Dept. HQ Closed)

December 2015

4 - 10 Christmas Tour
6 - 14 Hanukkah
7 Pearl Harbor Day
25 Christmas Day (Dept. HQ Closed)
31 New Year's Eve

January 2016

1 New Year's Day (Dept. HQ Closed)
15 - 17 Department Executive Committee, Double Tree Hotel, Moon Township
18 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (Dept. HQ Closed)

February 2016

15 Presidents Day (Dept. HQ Closed)
21 - 24 Washington Conference, Washington, DC
21 - 24 Department Service Officer Conference, Washington, DC

March 2016

21 - 23 National Commanders Tour
12 Department Oratorical Contest
25 Good Friday (Dept. HQ Closed)
27 Easter

April 2016

TBD Department Executive Committee Meeting
TBD Department Commander's Testimonial Dinner

May 2016

2 - 5 Spring Meetings, Indianapolis, IN
30 Memorial Day (Dept. HQ Closed)

June 2016

12 Round Up/Flag Day at Department Headquarters
12 - 18 State Police Youth Week
TBD Keystone Boys State

July 2016

14 - 17 Department Convention, Harrisburg Hilton Hotel



Please mark your calendars to attend Legion events!

A wise woman said

“Patriotism is not what it was when I was growing up. During Memorial Day, you attended big celebrations to honor the veterans. They’re not honored like they were back then. Now, we have veterans on the street. That breaks my heart. It’s sad. We need to turn this around.”

- Goldie Ball, 92, Member of the American Legion Auxiliary for 71 years

Goldie Ball doesn’t recall a time when the American Legion Family didn’t figure prominently in her life. She grew up as the daughter of an injured veteran, suffered as the young widow of a soldier killed in action, and now advocates for veterans as a 71-year member of the American Legion Auxiliary.

“It’s always been a part of my life,” said Ball, now 92. During an interview, Ball, who recently visited ALA National Headquarters in Indianapolis, shared her personal experiences and the need to raise awareness about patriotism and support for veterans.



My earliest memories of my father were of him walking on crutches. He was wounded in World War I. His left leg was nearly shot off with shrapnel. He couldn’t do a lot of things without a cane or a crutch. We didn’t have much. My father received \$49 a month in total disability to support five kids and my mother. He and five other American Legion guys in this little town of Atlanta, Illinois, were very, very close. They were all veterans of World War I. When one needed something, the other guys were right there. To us, The American Legion was a way of food, sometimes treats, and a way of survival almost at times.

I’ll never forget the time we had a blizzard in 1931. It was horrendous. We were snowed in for

five days and had no more food and no more coal in the house. My mother was eight months pregnant; my father was sick in his room with pneumonia in one lung, and my grandfather was sick in his room with pneumonia in both lungs. We didn’t have cars at the time. We were kind of desperate. Three of those American Legion guys came down with the doctor in a horse and buggy. They were the first faces we saw as little girls during that storm. The American Legion guys also brought us apples and oranges for Christmas. They’ve always meant an awful lot to me. That was the beginning of me loving the American Legion and the Auxiliary.

My membership in the Auxiliary started in 1944. Freddy Snow and I got married four days before I got out of school. I graduated on a Monday, and he left for military service on a Tuesday. He was able to come home three months after he left. Later, our little girl was born. She was about a year old before he saw her. He got papers to come home again because I was pregnant. He signed the papers on a Sunday morning. He thought he would be home by that Tuesday afternoon. That’s when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, and he had to go to the Pacific. On Dec. 17, 1944, he was killed. Our second daughter was born 22 days later. From the time we were married until he was killed, we were only together 81 days. We never got to have a house, never got a chance to live the life we wanted to live. I remarried nine years later and had three boys.

The American Legion guys helped out again. They paid for my membership dues for the Auxiliary after Freddy died. Over the years, I became very active in the Auxiliary.

In 1963, I was president of the Auxiliary in Bloomington, Illinois. Later, I moved in with one of my sons in Eureka, Illinois, so I changed my membership. I now belong to Unit 263 in Lincoln, Illinois. I drive 50 miles to Lincoln once a month for the meetings. I also drive south to winter in Orlando, Florida, by myself. I’m in very good health. I don’t know how long the good Lord is going to let me do that.

It used to be that anyone who served in the military belonged to this organization. The Legion Family could be so helpful to this group of people if they just would let us. It’s so hard to know that we have so many disabled veterans. More people, if they became involved in the American Legion and the Auxiliary, could be such a comfort to our veterans. I’m more than happy to help. It’s been a long part of my life. We’re here to help those who have been in the military. For the ones who didn’t come home, we need to help the ones they left behind.

This article was in the American Legion Auxiliary Magazine.

Brady’s Bend American Legion Bishop-Madden Post 488 Elementary School Essay Contest winners

The Brady’s Bend American Legion Bishop-Madden Post 488 held their spring annual essay contest. Any 6th grade student could enter *The Jennifer Hogan-Hicks Memorial Essay Contest*. The topic is: Name three life changes you would have to make if you found out today that you now have juvenile diabetes. Essays were scored on content, facts, effort, spelling and organization.

Jennifer Hogan-Hicks was a resident of East Brady and was diagnosed with juvenile diabetes at the age of 7, and it eventually took her life at the young age of 34. There are as many as 3 million Americans with type 1 diabetes and more than 15,000 children are diagnosed each year. This essay was created in honor of Jennifer and her loving memory. Its purpose is to provide awareness to the community about juvenile diabetes and award students with a monetary prize for their educational future.

The winners of the essay contest are as follows:

From Chicora Elementary School:

Members of the American Legion went to the six grade promotion ceremony to present the awards.

Larry Hogan, Bob Loose and Shawn Denham presented the awards to:

Left to right
1st place winner and receiver of \$125 Clare Bishop
2nd place winner and receiver of \$75 Emily Parker
3rd Place winner and receiver of \$50 Matthew Griffiths



From Sugarcreek Elementary School:

Members of the American Legion went to the six grade promotion ceremony to present the awards. Larry Hogan and Bob Loose presented the awards to:

Left to right
1st place winner and receiver of \$125 Mira Codispot
2nd place winner and receiver of \$75 Katelyn Grazioli
3rd Place winner and receiver of \$50 Alex Conley



“You only live once, but if you do it right, once is enough.” — Mae West

Riders joining William Shatner to raise awareness about American Legion

To celebrate the creation of Rivet, a never-before-seen vehicle created by William (Bill) Shatner and American Wrench, a cross-country ride from Chicago to Los Angeles via iconic Route 66 will take place beginning June 23. Bill will be joined by select members of The American Legion Riders and the team from American Wrench on this epic journey, designed to test the newly minted Rivet and raise awareness around The American Legion's services for veterans and their families.



The entire journey will be filmed for television broadcast at a later date.

You can be a part of this opportunity by designing a Mission for Bill and his fellow riders in your city/town. Where should he go? What should he do? The Mission for Bill should consist of the people, places and things you feel are the absolute, must-see experiences unique to your city/town.

The focus should be on the exciting, the unusual and the locally crafted. A Mission for Bill should be something only a local would know and a tourist would typically never experience.

Bill Shatner will choose his picks from suggested missions and they will be basis of the video footage collected for the produced television show.

American Legion Posts in and around the following towns are urged to suggest a Mission for Bill. While the cities listed will serve as hubs for his adventures and the media, the ride is also interested in stopping at American Legion Posts anywhere along the route if it provides interesting activities. Mission for Bill ideas should be in or around the following cities:

1. Chicago, IL
2. St. Louis, MO
3. Kansas City, KS
4. Oklahoma City, OK
5. Amarillo, TX
6. Albuquerque, NM
7. Flagstaff, AZ
8. Las Vegas, NV
9. Hollywood, CA

Once the route and missions are selected, additional communication will be provided so American Legion members can come out and experience the event in some way.

Our country is not the only thing to which we owe our allegiance. It is also owed to justice and to humanity. Patriotism consists not in waving the flag, but in striving that our country shall be righteous as well as strong.

SONS OF THE AMERICAN LEGION COMMITTEE

John Eisler, Jr.

Detachment Commander James A. Bradley and his staff have been working diligently to continue the success of the organization with membership as we all know this is the life blood of our organization. The Detachment achieved 99.57% membership as of "Round Up" June 14, 2015 at 58,774 with 5,676 new members. Western Vice-Commander William Anchors achieved 99.82% membership at 22,170 with 2,242 new members. Central Vice-Commander Mark Robbins achieved 99.47% membership at 26,279 with 2,298 new members. Eastern Vice-Commander Scott Baker achieved 99.27% membership at 10,307 with 1,136 new members. Remember "RENEWALS" are the key to success.

The Pennsylvania's S.A.L. license plate rolled out this year and is an impressive looking plate with the colors matching the SAL emblem. The Department of Transportation is also offering a vanity plate with lettering with up to five letters on a first come first serve basis. These plates are a print on demand product and applications can be received from our department. Completed applications must be submitted to the American Legion Dept. of Pa which must verify your eligibility and forward to Penn DOT. The plates are \$25.00 payable to The American Legion and the lettered vanity plates come at an extra cost.

The American Legion was chartered by Congress in 1919 as a patriotic veteran's organization. The Four Pillars of the organization: Americanism, Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation, Children and Youth and National Defense. Their 100th anniversary is fast approaching and our S.A.L. is going to be available to assist in the celebration. We will be available to assist wherever needed. Sons have always worked on behalf of veterans; it's at the heart of our very existence. But in 2008, the S.A.L. established the National Veterans Assistance Day in an effort to underscore the importance of our work on behalf of those who have served in uniform. While May 16 of each year is the officially designated National Veterans Assistance Day within the S.A.L., it's understood that squadrons are free to choose any date during the month of May on which to carry out a good deed on behalf of one or more veterans. Remember to include this information on the annual S.A.L. Consolidated Squadron Report. Last year, nationally Sons reported these numbers relating to Veterans Assistance Day activities: Assisted 11,239 veterans, Logged 11,239 hours of service and spent \$37,187 on those projects.



MySAL.org is a free and secure web portal that allows Squadron Adjutants access to some important and extremely helpful day-to-day membership tools. It links local Squadrons directly with the computers at National Headquarters. Every Squadron in the SAL is eligible to register one individual to access MySAL.org on behalf of that squadron. It is a secure internet site linked to the membership data base for the sons. The portal site provides officers with access to the membership data and member-management tools.

I would like to thank The American Legion and Department Commander Dennis Haas for giving me the opportunity to serve on such a distinguished committee. I would

also like to thank Department Adjutant / SAL advisor Kit Watson and our staff, vice-chairman; Ray Woof, Manuel Griffin, John Amole, Brad Simpson, Roger Pospisil and Leonard Clawson and everyone who helps with the continued success of our organization.

Pictured above is the 2015-2016 Pennsylvania Sons of the American Legion Commander Mark Robbins.

AMERICAN LEGION POST 548 BAKERSTOWN, PA

Our Honor Guard has traditionally been the American Legion Post 548's number one priority in our community, providing services at Veteran's funerals and community events.

Unfortunately, our Honor Guard has become inactive in the last year. This is primarily due to members' aging, deaths, geographical relocations, and available experience.

It is now our intent to revitalize this prestigious group under the leadership of Mr. Ryan Mack. Ryan recently served in the U.S. Army participating in formal military funerals and other military activities. He is well versed in the formal protocols and regulations required for these services. In support of this revitalization, we will be reorganizing our communication flow with local funeral directors and establishing procedures to be more visible in the community. We will also be changing some procedures regarding Honor Guard uniforms and protocol.



In order to get this program started, we need additional members willing and available, on a rotating basis, to join the American Legion Post #548 Honor Guard.

If you are willing to join the Honor Guard or would like more information, please call:

Mr. Jerry Gogolin 724-443-0049
Mr. Bob Schleiden 724-444-3981
Mr. Bob Purdue 724-443-1205

Veteran's Still Serving,
Jerry Gogolin, Commander
American Legion Post 548

Do you have news at your Post that you would like to share with other Legionnaires? It's easy to share.

Send a picture and a little write up of who, what, where, when, why to Shannon Kyle at pa_legionpr@msn.com.

Get your news in the Keystone News!

LEGION RIDERS COMMITTEE

William Carr

Accomplishments of the American Legion Riders

- Membership is at 3,369 as of the last report dated May 29, 2015. This put us at 360% increased membership since last year at this time.
- On September 20, 2014 at the DEC in Grantville, a resolution was passed to restructure the current Regions to better represent the membership. This will take effect after Department Convention. The new Regions will be as follows:
 - Region 1 - Allegheny, Westmoreland, Cambria, Blair, Washington, Green, Fayette, Somerset, and Bradford
 - Region 2 - Mercer, Lawrence, Beaver, Butler, Clarion, Armstrong, Indiana, Jefferson, and Clearfield
 - Region 3 - Erie, Crawford, Venango, Forest, Warren, McKean, Elk, Potter, and Cameron
 - Tioga County will be placed into Region 4
- National Northeast Regional Bob Sussman was a guest at the American Legion Riders D.E.C. in April and asked the Department Legion Riders for help with the Legacy Ride in Pennsylvania. The Legacy Ride this year is a four day ride from Indianapolis to Baltimore. The ride will be in Pennsylvania for 2- 1/2 days on August 25th and 26th. Vice Committee Chairman Charles Oakley and I will take the lead on this effort.
- I would like to commend the American Legion Riders on their leadership in the past years. We have overcome a lot of hurdles and challenges since reorganization and have become a valuable asset of the American Legion.

Legion Survey

The American Legion is conducting a national online survey of veterans and their families through Aug. 16 to assess quality, timeliness, access and type of care the Department of Veterans Affairs is providing for those coping with post-



traumatic stress disorder and/or traumatic brain injury.

The 59-question survey – www.surveymonkey.com/s/9JJKVQ9 – will be used to guide The American Legion's PTSD/TBI Committee and provide an understanding of veteran satisfaction about VA

mental health care for a national American Legion PTSD/TBI Symposium in Washington Sept. 26-27. Questions are mostly multiple-choice and can be answered with a single click from a dropdown menu.

All information obtained through the survey will be kept confidential and will be used for no other purpose than to better understand VA performance in this area of care.

The survey focuses on veteran satisfaction and levels of perceived benefits with VA's PTSD/TBI programs, including alternative and complementary treatments. Survey questions include veteran status; gender; era of service; number of times deployed; diagnosis of TBI, PTSD and/or TBI and PTSD; availability of appointments; time and distance to care facilities; treatment type (therapy, medication and complementary and alternative medicine); reported symptoms; efficacy of treatment; and side effects.

Personal information will not be used or made available to identify any individual who has completed the survey.

The Resurrection of Green River

This is the story Commander Stelacio wrote about in his article on page 2

Tom Whitmore Post 28 in Green River, Wyo., never had a building to call home, and its ceremonial rifles and scrambled archives had been donated to a museum 45 years ago. But a crew of young veterans had a vision to rebuild it as a non-smoking facility with a family section twice the size of the bar area and a community center open to public use.

Two years later, they've converted a rundown bingo hall into a vibrant American Legion post that buzzes with patrons on a weekday night, some of whom shoot the breeze or watch the ball game, while a couple of kids play pool upstairs and another works on math homework downstairs.



"Right up to the soft opening, we got a lot of criticism," said Marshall Burt, a post-9/11 Marine combat veteran who helped in Post 28's transformation. "They told us we weren't going to be able to make it because people like to have a drink and a smoke. I'm hoping to say we proved them wrong."

In less than 18 months, Post 28 went from 18 to 183 Legion members, purchased and renovated a defunct VFW-turned-bingo-hall, started a Legion Auxiliary unit, a Sons of the American Legion squadron, and what is now the third largest American Legion Riders chapter in Wyoming. They are sponsoring a baseball team, working with a local Boy Scout troop, starting a Junior Shooting Sports group and supporting the high school rodeo program – a hallmark of the Department of Wyoming American Legion. Equally impressive are Post 28's membership numbers: 45 percent of them are post-9/11 veterans.

"We average one new Legion family member a day, whether it's Legion, Sons or Auxiliary," said Post Commander Tony Niemiec, who returned to his hometown of Green River after retiring from the Marine Corps. The Post was originally chartered Dec. 23, 1919, and renamed for Civil War veteran Tom Whitmore in 1924. Much of Post 28's subsequent history is lost. There is evidence a Legion Auxiliary was started in 1926 and the post once had a female drum and bugle corps. Rumor has it that Legion meetings were held at a building across from the Union Pacific railroad depot. But Post 28 never had a home of its own. Until a year ago.

Post 28 began holding regular meetings in the Sweetwater County Library in late 2013. The members launched a rifle raffle that raised more than \$30,000. With that money, a \$5,000 grant from the Home Depot Foundation, \$1,000 from Wal-Mart and non-interest bearing bond sales to members and families, they came up with a down payment for a one-story white building at 38 N. Center St. in Green River.

Post 28 closed on the purchase of the building on June 2, 2014, and demolition started the next day. "We put elbows to it," said Burt, who went directly to the rundown building after work each evening and often stayed past midnight. "We wanted a place for veterans to call home and it didn't exist in this town." Families are actively engaged. "This is something we can do together," said Auxiliary President Tammy Harris, whose husband, Shane, is a Marine veteran and stalwart Post 28 volunteer. And the renovated building is a nice boost for a part of Green River that has struggled for years. "It's probably the most active place in the community on a social level," said Auxiliary member Kaye Tyler, an artist who painted "Welcome Home" in red, white and blue letters in the post entryway and put together the color scheme for the interior of the post.

As the post grows, members focus on doing more for the community. Post 28 has already distributed more than \$3,000 in financial assistance to everyone from a stranded trucker to a veteran's family who was \$250 short of replacing a broken hot water heater. It also offers two college scholarships to high school seniors who have a family member associated with the Legion.

But the best part is hearing the reaction of people who discover Post 28 for the first time.

"People come in here every day and say, 'I belong here,'" post member Tony Niemiec said. "That's the greatest accomplishment."

The 15th District shares their installation

The members of the Montrose Gardner-Warner American Legion Post 154, was proud to host a special meeting of the 15th District of the Department of Pennsylvania American Legion. The 15th District includes 28 American Legion Posts in five Pennsylvania counties: Susquehanna, Bradford, Pike, Wayne and Wyoming.

Recently elected 15th District Commander, Fred Baker, installed 15th District Officers, who will serve for the next two years. Pictured below is 15th District Commander installing the District Officers - Joel Ostro, Chaplain; Charles Baker, Adjutant; James Saxon, Judge Advocate; Steve Hakes, Parliamentarian; Everett Benedict, Sergeant at Arms; Bruce Newman, Ass't Sergeant at Arms.



Commander Baker then appointed Deputy District Commanders for the 15th District, and announced the names of the operating committees, and their Chairpersons. The former 15th District Commander, Tim French, gave a report on Boy's State – a program of the American Legion.

Finally, the newly elected officers who were in attendance from any of the 15th District Posts were installed; including Commanders, Vice Commanders, Adjutants, Finance Officers, Sergeants at Arms, Chaplains, Parliamentarians, Service Officers, Historians and Judge Advocates. Pictured below are the officers from the various Posts taking their installation oath.



Pictured below are the newly installed Commanders Harry Shaver, Rought Hall Post 510, Black Walnut; Charles Stockage, Dennis Strong Post 457, Tunkhannock; Judith Potts, Nicholson Memorial Post 953 Nicholson; Past Commander Wayne Wikoski, Rought Hall Post 510, Black Walnut looking on.



Some Posts preferred to have their new officers installed at their own Posts in a separate ceremony.

The next meeting of the 15th District American Legion will be held in September at Wall-Sebring Post 274 in Gouldsboro.

KEYSTONE NEWS



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AMERICANISM COMMITTEE

James Guiher

The Americanism Committee met on 6 June 2015 at 12:00 p.m. for the purpose of reviewing the Americanism Reports submitted and determining the winners by Class for the 2015 Membership year. Those attending were Committee Chairman Jim Guiher, Vice Chairmen Jesse Ritz, Dan Dreese, Steve Crano and Scot Lippencott.

There were 123 reports submitted out of the 747 in the Department as follows:

| CLASS | EAST | CENTRAL | WEST | TOTAL |
|-------|------|---------|------|-------|
| 1 | 10 | 3 | 19 | 32 |
| 2 | 6 | 19 | 7 | 32 |
| 3 | 3 | 4 | 14 | 21 |
| 4 | 3 | 7 | 12 | 22 |
| 5 | 6 | 6 | 4 | 16 |
| | 28 | 39 | 56 | 123 |

All applications were reviewed by a Committee member and then verified by another member to insure accuracy. It was determined that the following would be the recipients of the Americanism Awards for 2015:

| CLASS | DISTRICT | POST | CITY |
|-------|----------|-------------------------------|--------------|
| 1 | 1E | William Bauer Post 829 | Philadelphia |
| 2 | 33W | George Uhlinger Post 764 | Springdale |
| 3 | 17C | Arthur Bardo Post 564 | Millville |
| 4 | 12C | Freeland Post 473 | Freeland |
| 5 | 17C | Valley of Bloomsburg Post 273 | Bloomsburg |

That concluded the business for the day and the meeting was adjourned. The members of the committee would like to thank Commander Hass for our appointments.



Pennsylvania American Legion Past Department Commanders

The picture above is the Past Department Commanders that attended the 2015 Department Convention in Harrisburg. Pictured in the back row from left to right along with the year they were commander is: Joseph Glazier 1995, Joseph A. Cocco, Jr. 2013, Terry D. Lewis 2001, Robert D. Shalala 2004, William Cleveland 2013, Robert C. Miller, Jr. 2008, Jasper Stouffer 1996, James Hales, Jr. 2006, Dennis Haas 2014.

Pictured in the front row from left to right is: Eugene Eichelberger 1978, Kerrie Gill 2012, Richard Coccimiglio 2000, Ronald F. Conley 1988, Dominic D. DiFrancesco 1987, Pete Wasco 2011, John Gasper 2005.

Past Department Commanders are recognized on the stage during the last day of convention. Even after they reach the high office of Department Commander, they continue to serve the American Legion and our programs.