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COMMANDER'S COLUMN

Kerrie Gill, Sr., Department Commander

I would like to thank all legionnaires for electing me as your commander and giving me the opportunity to serve you during this year. I also would like to thank you for all the hospitality you've showed and I received while campaigning. I am very humbled by this opportunity and my hope this year is to move our Department to another level where we stay motivated and we have much better lines of communications between our leadership and committees.

My project for the year which is the **NEF (National Emergency Fund)** and being in the Army I used the old Army theme "**TO BE ALL YOU CAN BE IN 2012**". My motto is **Motivation and Communication**. These two words cannot express more of what our needs are in this great department. I stayed with the NEF as my project that Past Commander Wasco had because of all our natural disasters that we are now witnessing. If we as a Department raise only .25 cents per member and be controlled by district commanders membership numbers we can accomplish this task easily. The Placards alone can accomplish this.

Membership seems to be going well now and we all know how important membership is in any organization. Membership is the life-blood of the American Legion. There has been a measurable decline in traditional renewals, and frankly, we're not sure why. One way we know that Posts can get more involved with its members is by calling or visiting with these members who have not renewed yet. Find out if our veteran needs assistance in these rough economic times or if they simply overlooked paying their dues. This also affords the Post the opportunity to "get in tune" with its members.

Programs are a very important part of the American Legion. Our forefathers had the foresight by our Four Pillars to address everything from Veteran issues, needs to cultivate our youth, our communities and National Security. Programs this year will be a high priority and I feel we can enhance our programs in every area. Working programs is the essence because membership revolves around what we do and how we are perceived in our communities and schools. Understand with no doubt that the American Legion believes that "**children are our most precious natural resource**" and our programs are an exact fit to build patriotism and a connection to our American Legion.

ALR (American Legion Riders) is a very important program of the American Legion and seem to be witnessing minor difficulties. We know as a Department that the makeup of the American Legion Riders comes from members of our legion family. We also know as a legion family that there are no difficulties encountered that we cannot resolve. First as a program of the American Legion we all must understand that we are guided by a Constitution and our By-Laws that we all must adhere to. We all must follow a process and be a responsible legion family member to carry out this process. As your Commander I want every Legion Rider understand that I am committed this year to get this important American Legion program functioning as we all are tasked to do.

I attended the **National Commander's Testimony** before the Senate and House Committees on Veterans' Affairs in September. This visit to our nation capital was very informative and covered many veteran issues. I'm sure our Legislative Chairman will enlighten our membership on what was covered at the hearings.

Legion College is fast approaching and I hope to see and meet many of you. I will see many of you at Cumberland Valley for Legion College East on October 29 and Latrobe High School for Legion College West November 5. Try and insure that our new members and officers attend and learn some of the important information that is taught and disseminated.

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I look forward to serving you this year and see many off you in my travels across our Department. I'm willing to help our legion family and our veterans in any way possible so feel free to contact the Department or my home anytime. I will try to make myself available for you. God Bless All Of You and To Be All You Can Be In 2012. FROM THE DESK OF

Kit D. Watson, Department Adjutant

“Motivation & Communication” & “Be All You Can Be in 2012” is our Department Commander Kerrie

Gill's battle cry this 2012 membership year. Declining membership is and should be unacceptable to each of you who are receiving the “Keystone News.” As leaders both past and present, the bottom line is crystal clear, we did not achieve 100% in membership for 2011, and “WE” need to address that shortfall! All that is required is to reach that 2011 membership number plus one! The task is everyone's responsibility. Together with your assistance we can increase our **membership** and participation in “OUR” American Legion programs. You should be an asset to the success of your post, county, district, section and our department. We implore you to be an **active** component in “OUR” American Legion. “If not now when; if not you then who?” Let's work together and keep “OUR” great organization second to none!

A **membership dues increase** was passed at our Department Convention this past July that will go into effect for the 2013 membership year. All posts need to discuss this dues increase to see if your post will raise their dues for the 2013 membership year. If your post chooses to raise their dues your adjutant will need to submit that change by filling out and returning the “Post Data Form.” This form will be mailed out to every post in February 2012. Should you have any questions please contact Department HQ.

Department Commander Kerrie Gill has picked the **National Emergency Fund (NEF)** as his project this year. Many of you know this fund is for our members who experience a loss due to flooding, storm damage and other catastrophes. With the flooding we have experienced this year in Pennsylvania, we have already had numerous applications for assistance. We have instituted the placards, which have been updated to reflect Commander Gill's office. These placards are exactly the same as the shamrocks for Muscular Dystrophy, the hearts for the American Heart Association, etc. The only difference is that they are supported by and benefit our members. In the past ten years Pennsylvania posts and Legionnaires have drawn from this fund. Selling these placards poses no real burden to any of our posts. Please make a concerted effort to assist in making this a successful campaign.

Legion College is here. All posts are encouraged to send their commanders, adjutants, SAL officers, Auxiliary, Riders and all interested members who may benefit from this day-long training/information session. The dates are October 29 (East) at Cumberland Valley High School in Mechanicsburg and November 5 (West) at Latrobe High School. The following courses will be offered: General, Adjutants, Auxiliary, SAL, Service Officer, Legion Riders and Chaplain. Registration is \$15. This year we will have experts in filing Form 990 and what to do if your post has lost their tax exempt status; small games of chance updates; a new membership tool that will be useful for the entire Legion family, as well as the information offered through each of the scheduled classes. We hope to have another great turn out this year.

The **Oratorical Contest** is coming quicker than you think! This is the time to get your local students/schools working on this great program. Every school should have a participant and should have an equal opportunity to compete for the more than \$16,500 in prize monies given by our Department. This is in addition to the contest money that can be won at the district, county and sectional contests. The student who wins our Department contest will advance to the National Oratorical Finals with a chance to win an additional \$18,000. With the cost of higher education on the increase I am sure many students in our communities and their parents would have an interest participating in this great program.

The **Pennsylvania American Legion Riders (ALR)** have passed a dues change, which has been approved by our Department Executive Committee. Effective

immediately each ALR Chapter will pay to the Department \$5.00 per member in each chapter. This is a change from the \$50 per chapter they were paying. Accordingly, each chapter will submit their roster of paid members along with a check (payable to American Legion Riders) for \$5.00 per member. If there are any questions please contact Department HQ.

Veterans Day is November 11th. This is an opportune time to reconnect with your community. Inviting prospective new members to attend an open house would be a great idea!

The annual **Holiday Hospital Tour** will take place December 2-8. The Department Commander, Adjutant, NECman, Auxiliary President and our Hospital Entertainment chairman will travel across our Commonwealth and visit each state veterans home and VA hospital. We encourage all interested members of our American Legion family to join us when we are in your area. The residents and patients truly appreciate our visit. Come out and help bring some joy to our veterans' lives.

Our **Department Executive Committee** meeting is January 13-15, 2012. The annual **Housing for Homeless Veterans Corp. dinner** will be held during this weekend. The dinner will be Saturday January 14th. Make plans to support this event by placing an ad in the program book and/or attending the dinner. Dinner tickets will be \$25.00; ads are \$70 for a full page, \$50 for a half page and \$40 for a quarter page.

The **National Commanders Tour** will begin in the East on March 19th. It will continue to the Central Section March 20th and conclude in the Western Section on March 21st. Make plans to attend the banquet in your area and hear the message from National Commander Fang Wong. Let's show him we are Pennsylvania Proud! And don't forget to place an ad in the ad booklet to support this visit.

Until next time ... Kit

EMBLEM AND POPPIES

Did you know that if you order your Emblem Sales through the Department of Pennsylvania, you help our Department? We are asking you to order all items from the Legion Emblem Sales Catalog through our Department Headquarters Emblem Sales Division. The price to the Post and/or individual will remain exactly the same (NO CHANGE IN PRICE). The advantages to you are the personal attention to all Pennsylvania members' orders and our Department will receive 5% credit for your order. We maintain the Pennsylvania Emblem Sales for the convenience of our Legion family. On your next order please make it with us! Call 717-730-9100 and ask for Debbie!

On another note, the Emblem & Poppy Committee would like to encourage your Post to support the Poppy program throughout the year. We all agree that the Poppy program should be important not only before and during the Memorial Day period but also for other patriotic holidays throughout the year including Patriot Day, American Legion Day and Veterans Day.

Every year the American Legion volunteers distribute millions of bright red poppies across the nation in exchange for contributions to assist disabled and hospitalized veterans. The Poppy program provides multiple benefits to the veterans and to the community. The hospitalized veterans who make the flowers are able to earn a small wage, which helps to supplement their incomes and makes them feel more self-sufficient. The physical and mental activity provides many therapeutic benefits as well. The donations are used exclusively to assist and support veterans and their families. THE IMPORTANCE OF A



NEWSLETTER FOR YOUR POST

A newsletter is an effective communication tool for your Legion members, community members, students, and trade organizations. And it is something you should ensure your Post produces to educate those individuals on American Legion programs. Since every American Legion is made up of people from the community and others are usually interested in knowing about their community activities, your Post American Legion Newsletter is certain to be a hit.



Publishing a newsletter encourages you to keep in touch with your Post members; keeping them up to date on the American Legion programs.

If you don't have a newsletter yet or you want to improve your current newsletter first, define your purpose for the newsletter. What do you want to say? What are you promoting or selling? How do you want to say it? How are you going to distribute it? Email, hard

copy or both? Who will write it? How often will you distribute the newsletter? Monthly?

In addition to your members, be sure to send copies to your neighbors and vendors, community leaders, friends and relatives, local school districts, and your banker. The newsletter is typically thought of as an "internal communication device," but can also be used as a tool for advertising, public relations, client relations, and goodwill.

The frequency of newsletters can range from weekly to annually, with monthly or quarterly being the most common. In determining frequency, there are several factors to consider, including support, sources of information, quality of the publication, costs, and how well it will be received by those who read it. Some Posts experiment with the frequency before settling on a fixed pattern.

The biggest concern for those who are thinking about starting a newsletter usually center on the "source of information." Where will the stories come from and what should the topics be? Here are a few suggestions:

1. The Commander's message
2. The Adjutant's message
3. Legionnaires that should be recognized
4. Community members that should be recognized
5. Members' birthdays (without the year of course!)
6. Anniversaries of membership within the Legion
7. Achievement awards
8. Welcoming new members with a little bio about them
9. Feature a program, function or event
10. Human interest stories (Legionnaires or family hobbies and activities)
11. A touch of humor (avoid race, national origin, age, sex, religion and disability subjects)
12. American Legion leadership – such as training, picnics, construction, disasters, milestones, statistics, sponsorships or community involvement
13. Military news

The newsletter should be consistent in appearance, features, and stories, so readers will become accustomed to it and look forward to the publication. The same format and order of articles should always be followed.

Make the newsletter stand out as something desirable to browse. It needs to be attractive, as well as seasonal, so that readers will anticipate reading it. "Making it happen" on a consistent basis requires the assignment of one person to be editor, coordinator, or publicist.

Keep the newsletter simple, with a clear message that is easy to follow. Articles should be informative and create an interest in your Post. Give your members the information they will use and want to keep on file for future reference.



PENNSYLVANIA AMERICAN LEGION PRESS ASSOCIATION

The Press Association for the Pennsylvania American Legion elected new officers for the upcoming American Legion year. The Association has high hopes that during the coming year, we can convince all American Legion Posts within the Department of Pennsylvania to begin a newsletter to keep their members well informed. A newsletter can do wonders for our programs and our membership. If you are unable to provide a monthly newsletter then your post should consider a quarterly newsletter. The President of the Pennsylvania American Legion Press Association (PALPA), Wallace Keen Jr., says, "A Post *cannot* afford to NOT have a newsletter!"



The following are the new officers for PALPA for the 2011-2012 year

President, Wallace G. Keen Jr.,

15 South Wood Street, Apt 306, Nazareth PA 18064-1936 610-365-8307

Secretary – Treasurer, Frank Mallee 246 East Wubiba Ave, Norwood PA 19074

Vice President East, Al O'Rangers 57 Andrew Court, Upper Chester PA 19014

Vice President Central, Ron Cowan 524 South Market St., Selingsgrove PA 17870

Vice President West, Clement Stamsauskis 223 Dorsey Mill Rd, Pgh PA 15215

GIVING BLOOD IT SAVES A LIFE

The Blood Committee wants to remind all Post Adjutants to complete your blood donations on your reports!

As a whole, we are looking for more Posts to have blood drives or when you go to give blood, tell them your Post name and number.

There are many organizations that you can work with to organize a blood drive. One is the Red Cross. But, remember there are many organizations throughout the state.

Every minute of every day, someone needs blood. That blood can only come from a volunteer donor, a person like you who makes the choice to donate. **There is no substitute for your donation.**



When you make a blood donation, you join a very select group. Currently only 3 out of every 100 people in America donate blood.

From its beginning, the American Red Cross has formed a community of service, of generous, strong and decent people bound by beliefs beyond themselves. The American Red Cross blood donor embodies this principle. Please join us in our mission to maintain a safe and stable blood supply by donating blood.

Hosting a blood drive is a partnership where everyone wins; it is a rewarding experience

- The American Legion Post will gain goodwill through the community and build morale and camaraderie as our members work together for a good cause
- Blood donors feel good about giving back together with friends
- Work with many groups, organizations and/or people in the community
- Bring people together in a spirit of teamwork
- Energize your members to give back to the community
- Patients in the community and across the nation receive the gift of life because you promoted a cause that saves millions of lives each year

Donating blood is a completely safe and easy process. After donation, the individuals are asked to spend 20 minutes in the canteen, where they are offered cookies, soda and other refreshments. With our busy lives, in what other way can you give only an hour of your time to save as many as three lives?

AMERICAN LEGION BASEBALL GIVES BACK



On Friday, August 26, 2011 Lehigh Valley President Barry Detweiler and Schuylkill-Berks President Bob Davis presented Jolyn Swift, of the Voluntary Services group at Lebanon VA Medical Center with a check for \$800. It was the proceeds from the first Schuylkill-Berks Lehigh Valley All Star game, held on

June 28, 2011 at First Energy Field in Reading, PA. Ms. Swift stated that the money would be used to cover a portion of the expenses from the Hospital's upcoming performance by Re-Creation, which will be held on October 21st. Re-Creation is a non-profit organization whose main service is to America's Veterans Affairs Medical Centers and State Veterans Homes. Since 1983, Re-Creation has provided the only continuing, live, therapeutic entertainment presence in our nation's VA Medical Centers. The gesture was made on behalf of both leagues as a token of gratitude to the men and women who sacrificed so we can enjoy the freedom we have. Barry Detweiler, Lehigh Valley President (Left), Jolyn Swift, Lebanon VA Hospital (Center), Bob Davis, Schuylkill-Berks League President (Right)



DO YOU KNOW NATIONAL GUARD & RESERVE ELIGIBILITY IN THE AMERICAN LEGION?

The National Guard and Reserves are required to meet the same eligibility requirements as the full time federal active veterans. To be eligible, the National Guardsman/Reservist must have served at least one day on federal active duty during any of the delimiting periods set forth in Article IV, Section 1 of the National Constitution, and either have an honorable discharge or currently be serving either in the national Guard or Reserves on federal active duty.



The key to determining if a Guardsman/Reservist has been on or is currently serving on federal active duty is the "Authority Line" on the activation orders for the Guardsman or Reservist. In both cases "Title 10, Subsection 672 or 12301" are orders from the Secretary of Defense and are federal orders. Basic Training and Advanced Training on federal installations IS federal active duty.

The authority the Governor uses to activate the National Guard as an individual or unit is "Title 32" orders, i.e., Weekend Drills and Annual Training. These are not federal orders. The Reserves have similar reserve orders which are "Title 10, Subsection 270." This authority code gives the reserve component the authority to activate the reserves for Weekend Drills and Annual Training.

Use the information when determining eligibility for National Guard and Reserves. National Guard and Reserves Eligible Codes: Title 10, Subsection 672 or 12301*. National Guard Non-Eligible Codes: Title 32, Reserves Non-Eligible Codes: Title 10, Subsection 270. This information was taken from Military Law Chapter 39.

*Note: * denotes that this Subsection was created following Desert Storm to replace 672*

A DD-214 will be issued for the time on federal active duty or a DA-1059 for a completion of a school will be issued with a character type of discharge. All Reserve components send their serve members to "Basic Training" using Title 10, Subsection 672/12301 orders.

National Guard & Reserve Recruiting

New member acquisition is essential in order for us to grow and prosper as an organization. With this in mind, one market area that has gone virtually untouched is the National Guard and Reserve. These military organizations are laced with eligible veterans who may have an interest in becoming members of The American Legion, but have not done so because they have not been asked or are unaware of what we do, and have done, on behalf of all veterans. Many of these veterans have chosen to affiliate with reserve components due to the downsizing of the active military. The great majority of national Guard and Reserve personnel have served on federal active duty, and as a result, the membership potential is great. From the statistical information provided by the VA, we know there are over 27 million veterans and the challenge we are faced with is to make contact and recruit eligible veterans.

PA LEGION BASEBALL CHAMPIONS



2011 Pennsylvania American Legion Jr. Baseball State Champions
Northampton Bombers



2011 Pennsylvania American Legion Baseball State Champions
Bristol Legion

There are simply no words to express my heartfelt thanks for the sympathy you have extended toward our family during this time of loss. We are deeply grateful to each of you for the many ways you have expressed your sympathy.

~Dominic DiFrancesco & Family

Korean War Veterans Honored

The Haines-Stackfield American Legion Post 826 recently honored some of their Korean War Veterans. They were recently commemorated for their service that they provided during the Korean War.

Pictured from left to right are Daniel Jones, Mervin "Buster" Hodge, and Norman Johnson. Also pictured in the back of the photo is Post Commander Ronnie McFadden. Thank you for your service!



KOREA

Remembering the Korean War 1950-1953

60th Anniversary of the Korean War

The Department of Defense 60th Anniversary of the Korean War Commemoration Committee, on behalf of the American people, is dedicated to remembering and recognizing the selfless sacrifices of the Veterans who fought in Korea to ensure the freedom and prosperity we enjoy today. The Korean War was the first test of the United Nations' resolve to stand against tyranny in all its forms. Twenty nations joined the United States and the Republic of Korea in a display of solidarity to turn back naked aggression. These patriots halted the tide of communism that threatened to sweep over the Korean peninsula. Today the Republic of Korea stands as a modern, prosperous, vibrant democracy because of their courage and selfless sacrifice.

We Remember "The Forgotten Victory"

On June 25, 1950, North Korea launched a surprise attack as its troops crossed the 38th parallel and invaded the Republic of Korea. This act of aggression ignited an epic struggle between the forces of Freedom and Democracy and tyranny and despotism. Historians now recognize that the Korean War was the decisive conflict that marked the beginning of the end of the "Cold War." The Korean War was a victory for the United States and the United Nations. The Armistice ending the war was signed on July 27, 1953.

Korean War Historical Facts

- In 1948 President Harry S. Truman signed Executive Order 9981, integrating the US Armed Forces. African Americans were integrated into combat units in 1950, marking the first time America's Armed Forces would reflect the diversity of her people.
- The Korean War marked the first War in which the US Air Force participated as separate branch of Service.
- The first major conflict conducted by United Nations forces (an alliance of 21 countries).
- Combat forces from Australia, Belgium/Luxembourg, Canada, Columbia, Ethiopia, France, Greece, Netherlands, New Zealand, Philippines, Republic of South Africa, Thailand, Turkey and the United Kingdom joined the US and the Republic of Korea. Medical units were furnished by Denmark, India, Italy, Norway and Sweden.
- New mobile Surgical Hospitals (M*A*S*H) unit, stationed close to the fighting front, reduced deaths due to battle wounds by 60% of World War II figures.
- Helicopters were introduced and first used to evacuate the wounded and to supply and transport troops.

Join the DoD! Help them Thank All Korean War Veterans!

The DoD 60th Anniversary of the Korean War Commemoration Committee is committed to locating and recognizing Korean War Veterans. The Committee is partnering with various government departments and agencies and working with all of the Military Service components. The goal is to thank and honor Korean War Veterans and their families for their service and sacrifice.

For more information contact the 60th Anniversary of the Korean War Commemoration Committee in honoring Korean War Veterans, please contact them at 703-565-0522 or go online to <http://koreanwar.defense.gov>

If You are a Korean War Veteran or the Family of a Korean War Veteran



The Department of Defense is recognizing the 60th Anniversary of the Korean War, and honoring those who served in Korea during the war years. Often called the "Forgotten War", the Secretary of Defense wants those who served to know they are not forgotten. To that end, the Secretary of Defense has prepared a Certificate of Appreciation that is available to any veteran of any branch of service that served honorably in Korea anytime during the period June 25, 1950 through July 27, 1953.

Veterans eligible for this recognition may request a certificate by providing their full name, current mailing address, branch of service, rank at the time of service in Korea, and basic dates of Korean service (i.e. – May 1951 to August 1952). Once data is processed, the certificate will be mailed to them.

We are proud of those who served our nation during that critical period, and this certificate is a thank you for honorable service.

Requests are to be sent to:
KW60 Committee
526 Lafayette Avenue
Palmerston, PA 18071-1621

VOLUNTEER OF THE MONTH

Frank Homme

Gracedale Volunteer Recruitment Committee

It is with great pleasure that the Gracedale Volunteer Recruitment Committee announces the volunteer of the month for August 2011. The recipient of this honor is Frank Homme.

Gracedale, Northampton County's nursing home, is located on 365 acres of county owned property in Nazareth, Pennsylvania just off Route 248. It is a peaceful, rural setting surrounded by carefully landscaped grounds which include the beautiful Gracedale Gardens, a park like setting of trees, flowers, picnic tables, benches, and gazebos for residents and families to enjoy.

An extremely active volunteer services department allows for both, individual and group visitation, numerous worship opportunities, as well as for the popular pet therapy program.

Frank started volunteering at Gracedale in February 2005 shortly after retiring from the medical field as a Certified Nursing Assistant CNA. He has dedicated himself to the accumulation of over 939 hours during his 6

½ years of service. Frank is the faithful volunteer who works whenever and wherever he is needed, transporting the residents to social events, picnics, luncheons and parties. Frank also helps with field trips which is invaluable to the Therapeutic Recreation staff.

Frank is dedicated to the Volunteer Services Department. Along with his dedication, he is caring to the residents and works well with his coworkers, always willing to lend a helping hand. Frank also volunteers his time and talent in this community and church, recently receiving the Disabled American Veteran American legion Life member award and the American Legion Hospital award for volunteer work.

We are happy to send out our congratulations to Frank for his commitment to excellence in volunteering at Gracedale. We thank him for his valuable time and would like him to know how very much he is appreciated.



THIS IS YOUR OPPORTUNITY

WHO?



Is the next Blue Cap

"NOBODY"

*If you don't **NOMINATE***

How many of us recognize the men and women who work for the good of the Legion? Who are active in the community? Who serve our veterans? The most prominent award given by the Pennsylvania American Legion is the Blue Cap Award. Don't pass this opportunity up to nominate a deserving member from your Post.

The John C. "Ace" Mann Blue Cap of the Year award is designed to recognize a Legionnaire who exemplifies the meaning of being a Legionnaire.

Eligibility for this award requires that the candidate cannot have held, at any time, an *elected* position authorized to wear a half-white or a white cap; nor at the time of the award have been *elected* (through not yet installed) to any such position.

Any Post, District or County may recommend any qualified member. Submissions should include the Blue Cap application and supporting documents as necessary for the Public Relations Committee to judge the qualifications, character and dedication of the nominee. These supporting documents **MUST** be included. They may include letters from civic groups, churches, other veteran organizations, testimonials from fellow veterans, news clippings, etc.

The first deadline for this prestigious award is for the application to reach the District Commanders by April 1st. The District Commanders may only endorse the nomination of ONE application. It's then passed to the three sections in the state and the Vice Commanders may only endorse and submit three of the nominations received for his Section. This is a very tight application process.

Take the time to recognize those that support your Post!

POW/MIA Recognition Day Vigil

Greensburg, PA

The 31st District Pennsylvania American Legion participated in the September 16, 2011 National POW/MIA Recognition Day Vigil held at Greensburg U.S. Army Reserve Center- Westmoreland County. The 12 hour vigil, sponsored by the 14th Quartermaster Company (USAR) is one of the local events held along with other observances of National POW/MIA Recognition Day. Events are held across the country on military installations, ships at sea, state capitols, schools and veterans' facilities. It is traditionally observed on the third Friday in September each year. This observance is one of six days throughout the year that Congress has mandated the flying of the National League of Families' POW/MIA flag.

Pictured (left to right) Mrs. Dorothy Benyacko Carbisiero, 14th Quartermaster



Department of Veterans Affairs, Director, Westmoreland



Company (USAR), Unit Administrator & Family Readiness Group (FRG) Leader; James Sims, Adjutant 31st District, Pa American Legion; Mr. Matt Zamosky,

SCOUTING REPORT

Frank Abate

The Scouting movement and the American Legion share the same principles of Duty to God and Country. With this in mind, we of the American Legion encourage support of Scouting. This can be done by sponsorship of Scouting Units (Cub Scout, Boy Scout, or Girl Scouts).

We should encourage young people to join, and once in a unit, help them advance. The Department Scouting Committee has set up several programs and awards to do just that. To encourage Scouting units give better programs to its Scouts there are the Honor Unit Awards. These awards are given to outstanding cub or Boy Scout Units sponsored by the Legion, Auxiliary, or Sons. Outstanding Explorer Post or Varsity Units regardless of sponsorship are eligible for Honor Unit status.

For the Scouts, the Department has the Outstanding cub Scout Award. This is given to a boy who has received his Arrow of Light and Religious Award and has gone into Boy Scouts, and is the son, or grandson of a Legion member.

Another award is The Eagle Scout of the Year Award. This is given to a boy who has received his Eagle Award, Religious Award and is in high school. The boy must be in a Legion Auxiliary, or SAL sponsored Unit or the son or grandson of a Legion member. The winner will receive a \$1500.00 scholarship, and a trip to Department Convention. The boy's application will be forwarded to national Legion for further consideration. National will award three scholarships up to \$10,000.

The Department also gives recognition to outstanding Scout leaders. We have available three scholarships for Legion, Auxiliary, or SAL members wishing to receive Wood Badge Training. The scholarship award is up to \$175.

The Department also has available Legionnaire of the Year Award for those who render outstanding service to Scouting and Legion. We also have the Outstanding Scouter Award for those persons who give outstanding service to Scouting but not a Legion member.

All award applications are due to Department by March 1st of each year.

American Legion national Headquarters has created the Square Knot Awards. This award is designed to recognize American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary, or Sons of The American Legion who are actively involved in the Scouting program. This award is not meant to be a selective or limited award, but one that is available to any Legion family member who completes the requirements for the award. The award is meant to recognize deviation and work required by an American Legion, Auxiliary or Sons of the American Legion member to assist in furthering the Scouting program in the American Legion.

All of the award applications are available on line at the Department web site. www.pa-legion.com

Department Emblem Sales has a wide variety of certificates (Free or at minimal cost) for Boy and Girl Scouts who have received their Eagle or Gold ranks. We also have certificates for those who support Scouting.

SOLDIERS AND SAILORS HOME

Harry Stewart

I would like to introduce Laurie Stevens, the new Activity Director for the Pennsylvania Soldiers and Sailors Home in Erie PA. This veterans home is a 207 bed Domiciliary Personal Care, Intermediate/Skilled Nursing & Alzheimer's Home for veterans and spouses of veterans. This facility is dedicated to providing the best quality care for all of our veteran residents & their spouses as well we are committed to making their stay with us as enjoyable as possible. Activities and events play an important role in ensuring that our residents enjoy their time spent at the PA Soldiers and Sailors Home.

The home offers a variety of both in-house activities and special events to the residents. Thank you to the Legion Family who already donates time and money to our veteran homes. If you are currently not donating and would like to, whether as a volunteer, sponsor a dinner, a bingo, or if you would just like to donate toward the residents' activity fund, it would be greatly appreciated.



NATIONAL SECURITY BUDGET RESOLUTION

Resolution No. 31: The Department of Defense Military Retirement System
Origin: Resolution No. 106 (Conv Cmte on National Security) 2011 National Convention. Submitted by: National Security Commission

WHEREAS, One of The American Legion's founding principles is National Security; and

WHEREAS, The primary function of government is to insure the security of its people and infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, Spending on national security did not create the current budget crisis and further cuts to national defense will not solve it; and

WHEREAS, Leadership within the Department of Defense has continually warned that significant reductions in defense spending pose serious risks to the future security of the United States; and

WHEREAS, The force structure of the United States Armed Forces has been in steady decline since the end of the Cold War, and

WHEREAS, A number of the most vital assets to the United States Armed Forces were procured prior to the end of the Cold War and are in desperate need of modernization; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. military has been at war for over 10 years causing equipment shortages and the extension of equipment useful life span to dangerous levels; and

WHEREAS, Redeploying National Guard and Reserve Component units, due to Department of Defense equipment shortages, left unit equipment behind in Iraq and Afghanistan, which has not been replaced for future mission requirements; and

WHEREAS, There has been virtually no Research and Development conducted for new generation weapons systems; and

WHEREAS, Defense spending, as a percentage of total federal spending, is approaching historic lows not seen since before World War II; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense has already conducted program reviews which have cut \$178 billion dollars from its future budget requests; and

WHEREAS, Under the Budget Control Act of 2011 (P.L. 112-25), the defense related budgets have been reduced by \$350 billion over the next ten years; and

WHEREAS, If the Congress fails to reduce the deficit by \$1.2 trillion, further defense cuts totaling \$650 billion would be enacted; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense has been directed to further reduce their 2013 budget by 10% from the 2011 enacted levels; and

WHEREAS, Without a proactive effort by Congress to protect the Department of Defense, their budget will be reduced by more than \$1 trillion; and

WHEREAS, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta stated a \$1 trillion cut in national defense could increase unemployment by one percent; and

WHEREAS, Even if this unemployment increased by only one-third of one percent, it would equate to approximately 500,000 jobs lost, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, By the National Executive Committee of The American Legion in regular meeting assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, on October 12-13, 2011, that the American Legion encourages Congress and the Administration to cease all efforts to reduce the defense budget from its current level.

ADDENDUM A

(Analysis of America's Current Military Readiness)

Military leaders have described U.S. forces as on the "ragged edge." What does this mean?

The United States has a shrinking force.

In 1990, the U.S. had a 546-ship Navy; today we have 288. The U.S. had 76 Army brigades in 1990; today we have 45. Two decades ago, the Air Force had twice as many fighter squadrons and bombers as today.

Courtesy of the House Armed Services Committee.

The United States has a strained force.

In the last four years, inspection failures for Navy ships have nearly tripled. Currently, 1 of 5 ships inspected is either unfit for combat or severely degraded, and a majority of the Navy's deployed aircraft is unable to accomplish all assigned missions. Navy Adm. Jonathan Greenert indicated that "the stress on the force is real, and it has been relentless." Marine Corps stockpiles of critical equipment such as radios, small arms and generators face severe shortages. Over a third of active Army units do not have sufficient personnel to perform their missions; an even higher percentage of units in the Reserve face similar challenges. Gen. Philip Breedlove provided his candid assessment: "Some portions of the Air Force are right at the ragged edge."

The United States has an aging force.

Navy ships and light attack vehicles, on average, were built 20 years ago; bombers average 34 years in age. Our tankers are nearly 50 years old.

ADDENDUM B

(Potential Super Committee Scenario)

DEFICIT REDUCTION TO DATE

Figure 1 shows two funding scenarios. Each bar reflects the annual funding requested in the FY 2012 President's Budget Request, submitted in February 2011 (or appropriated for past years). Current funding, as a result of deficit reduction efforts, is shown as the sum of amounts in blue and red. The funding shown in red could be eliminated if sequestration occurs.

National Security Budget Resolution cont.

Figure 2 describes the effects of the Budget Control Act including sequestration in historic terms. Funding is expressed as a share of the total budget authority of the federal government.

Major Consequences of Sequestration or Additional Cuts
End Strength

Nearly 200,000 soldiers and Marines are separated, falling well below pre 9/11 levels that were insufficient to respond to current contingencies. Finding employment for these veterans will be difficult. The national unemployment rate is 9%, but the unemployment rate for young Iraq and Afghanistan veterans is 22%. For wounded veterans it is 41%. The Navy and Air Force will not be spared. These services are already smaller than they were 10 years ago, but will likely be further reduced. Service members will have to worry about keeping their jobs, as they put their lives on the line for the nation.

Please note that savings as a result of reductions to end strength is minimal in the near term. For example, CBO estimates that returning to pre 9/11 levels yields only \$4.1B in FY 2013 (of which, only \$2.6B is in MILPERS). Savings increase in out-years, but the services' procurement and research and development accounts (modernization) would likely be reduced disproportionately to achieve desired savings in the near term.



Defense Workforce and Industrial Base

Expect at least 25% of the civilian workforce to be furloughed, or a minimum of 200,000 jobs. Large impacts likely in Virginia, Texas and California, where workforce is currently concentrated. According to Secretary Panetta, at least 1,000,000 jobs would be lost in a sequestration scenario. This includes military and defense civilians, but also includes hundreds of thousands of jobs within the defense industry. Anticipate additional contraction/consolidation within the defense industry, reducing competition, and eliminating entire sectors of the industrial base. Shuttering of U.S. shipyards. Inability to rapidly reconstitute critical skills in response to emergent threats.

There are charts that coincide with the Resolution both on National's website at Legion.org and Department's website pa-legion.com

VETERANS CHARGED INCORRECTLY?

Republican Rep. Jeff Miller wants to know whether thousands of veterans were improperly charged legal fees when they refinanced their home loans.

Miller, chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, has told his staff to review allegations in a recently unsealed whistle-blower lawsuit that several banks illegally charged veterans attorneys' fees.

Miller, R-Chumuckla, took that action in response to a request from a Democratic colleague, Rep. Bruce Braley of Iowa.

In a letter sent Friday to Braley, Miller said he shares his colleague's concerns about the allegations but "will reserve judgment on the appropriate next course of action" until his staff reports back to him, probably next week.

Sen. Jon Tester, a Montana Democrat who sits on the Senate Committee on Veteran's Affairs, has expressed the same concerns.

He sent a letter to U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder last week urging the



Justice Department to take a lead in investigating the claims.

"More than to 1.2 million of these loans have been issued over the past 10 years, and as much as 90 percent may involve some degree of fraud," Tester wrote.

Because the loans to the veterans were backed by the federal government,

"More than to 1.2 million of these loans have been issued over the past 10 years, and as much as 90 percent may involve some degree of fraud"

Tester wrote, if the veterans defaulted, "it was ultimately American taxpayers who were on the line."

Lenders are not allowed to charge attorneys' fees or settlement closing costs on VA-backed

loans, Braley said in his letter to Miller. The letter outlines allegations that mortgage brokers were told by their employers not to show the attorney's fees on their estimates but to add them later to the title examination fee.

Other Resolutions the NEC approved includes:

Resolution No. 31 which opposes changes to the current military-retirement system that lessen incentives to either enlist or remain in the military.

Resolution No. 31: The Department of Defense Military Retirement Submitted by: National Security Commission

RESOLVED, By the National Executive Committee of The American Legion in regular meeting assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, on October 12-13, 2011, That The American Legion oppose any changes to the current military retirement system which reduces the incentive for enlistment or re-enlistment.

Resolution No. 33 seeks a law to keep benefit packages agreed upon at enlistment the same throughout a servicemember's career, and at the same value.

Resolution No. 33: Earned Military Benefits Submitted by: National Security Commission

RESOLVED, By the National Executive Committee of The American Legion in regular meeting assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, on October 12-13, 2011, That The American Legion encourage Congress to ensure by law that any benefit in force at the time of initial enlistment cannot be reduced in value, and that benefit is to be valid through the entire career of a servicemember.

Resolution No 32 Also from the National Security Commission, arose from National Commander Fang Wong's recent discussions in Washington about the Legion's troop-and-family support programs. It calls for the creation of a coordination and public awareness.

Resolution No. 32: Family Support Outreach Program/ Adopt a Unit Submitted by: National Security Commission

RESOLVED, By the National Executive Committee of The American Legion in regular meeting assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, on October 12-13, 2011, That The American Legion in keeping with one of its founding principles, a strong national security, reestablish a strong relationship with the Department of Defense (DoD) in order to enhance military readiness by increased support to currently serving personnel and their families; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion shall establish a proactive Family Support Outreach Program, designed to enhance participation, coordination, and public awareness on a national level; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That a national staff member be assigned the responsibility of coordinating The American Legion, DoD, and community assistance for service members and their families; collect best practices from the departments; and coordinate and disseminate information to DoD leadership currently serving members and their families on The American Legion activities, resources and assistance available; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the assigned staff member will publish at a minimum on a monthly basis via internal and external media, National Convention meetings, and other forums, identified best practices and activities conducted to help service members and families; the target audience of this effort is the membership of The American Legion with the intent of increasing membership participation in programs to enhance the partnership with DoD; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That American Legion posts are encouraged to develop continual relationships with local military units, in effect adopting them for the purpose of offering assistance to servicemembers



For more information on these Resolutions please check out National's website at <http://legion.org/library/159544/fall-meetings-produce-new-resolutions>

COMMANDER GILL'S MOTTO: COMMUNICATION AND MODIVATION

Being a leader requires an understanding of what motivates people. While leaders can't really motivate someone else, they can create an environment where people can motivate themselves. To create that type of environment leaders have to understand what will motivate the members of their Post. The question is: how do you do that? One way is to have great communication.

One of the best things a leader can do to create an environment where people can motivate themselves is to understand each member of the team. People volunteer for an organization because they believe in it. They want to feel as if they are contributing to something that is bigger than they are, worthwhile and are accomplishing something. If you as a leader don't know what each Post member is looking to get out of being a part of the American Legion team, you cannot effectively lead them.

Have a conversation with each of your members and find out what they like about the work we do. Find out how and why they find it rewarding. Having these kinds of conversations



will not only let your member know that you are interested in them, but it will allow you to see how you can best help them achieve what they want to achieve out of the American Legion. Keep in mind that what motivates one person will not necessarily motivate another person. Trying to figure and sort this out for everyone can seem like a big hassle, but it will pay off for your Post and the community in the long run.

Just as the individual communication is vital, so is the group communication. Consider that communication is the glue that keeps the American Legion team together. The Post members need to be informed of how well or not so well the Post is doing with each program. It is very difficult to be motivated about something and you don't know the current status of that thing.

Communicate often and use various channels. Some information is best communicated one-on-one. Other communication needs to be delivered in a group setting such as a Post or District meeting. Yet other communication needs to be written. Each of these communication channels requires different skills. Make sure you are continually developing your leadership communication skills.

Leadership communication is a big key to creating the right environment for people to be productive and engaged in the American Legion. Keep in mind these tips and watch your programs and Post grow.

Pictured above is Commander Kerrie Gill and his wife Jeanne.

VETERANS DAY

Many Americans mistakenly believe that Veterans Day is the day America sets aside to honor American military personnel who died in battle or as a result of wounds sustained from combat. That's not quite true. Memorial Day is the day set aside to honor America's war dead.

Veterans Day, on the other hand, honors ALL American veterans, both living and dead. In fact, Veterans Day is largely intended to thank LIVING veterans for dedicated and loyal service to their country. November 11 of each year is the day that we ensure veterans know that we deeply appreciate the sacrifices they have made in the lives to keep our country free.



AMAZING WATERCOLOR

At a recent meeting of the Brooks-Crago American Legion Post 816 in Rices Landing, Legion member Frank R. Melega, right, presented commander Scot Lippencott with a painting created by his late father, Frank L. Melega. The watercolor painting created in 1947 depicts the Rices Landing Military Honor Roll, which was originally dedicated on May 26, 1947.

Frank L. Melega, a local artist whose work mostly focused on life in Western Pennsylvania, also designed and built the original honor roll.

Frank R. Melega is a Korean War veteran and 40-year member of the American Legion. He is also a retired teacher from Jefferson-Morgan School District. The post plans to display the painting in the post home.

History of the artist Frank L. Melega

Frank L. Melega (1905-1997) born in Diamond, Indiana, moved with his family to West Brownsville in 1917. Melega's father was employed with the Lilley Mine of the Valley Coal Company. This coal miner's son was destined to become the most famous artist to depict the Southwestern Pennsylvania Coal and Coke Era. His paintings, sculptures, and drawings are in museum, corporate, and private collections throughout the United States.

At an early age, Melega was recognized as having artistic talent. The self-taught artist began his career working at various jobs including commercial art and sign lettering. By the age of twenty-three, Melega owned the Art Sign Shop located at the present site of the Brownsville Post Office on Charles Street. Later he operated his sign business from his home where he was able to enjoy his family and spend many hours in his studio.

In 1933, Melega started exhibiting his fine art. He began exhibiting with the Associated Artists of Pittsburgh, the nation's oldest art association, in 1936. In 1952, he was invited to exhibit in the Carnegie International, one of the art world's most prestigious honors. Also exhibiting in the show were Georgia O'Keeffe, Jackson Pollock, Andrew Wyeth, and Wilhem deKooning. Other art organizations to which Melega belonged include the Pittsburgh Society of Sculptors and the Uniontown Art Club. Throughout his career as an artist, Melega also taught art classes and painting workshops.

In 1954, the Second National Bank commissioned Melega to create a mural to be located in the Uniontown branch titled "The Spirit of Service". The twelve by forty-two foot mural is one of the largest in Western Pennsylvania. "The Spirit of Service" is currently installed at PennState Fayette, The Eberly Campus.

***"In my world I feel the greatest moving
and compelling force is art..."***

-Frank L. Melega

The last major commission for the artist was for the historic St. Peters Church in Brownsville. Mr. Melega was in his early nineties. He is remembered as a fearless artist, always trying the latest materials and technologies, including the photocopy machine. He was not content to stay in the genre for which he became famous, depicting the Coal and Coke era. Instead, he continued to explore different style from realism to abstraction to non-objective art. The museum is dedicated to present all types of styles, media, and philosophies in honor of Frank L. Melega's life in art.



BEAUTIFUL COMMUNITY

American Legion Post 105 Commander Dick McIntosh congratulates Terry

Youngs, the Post gardener, and member of the Post for his accomplishments in the beautification of Lake Shore Post 105. Due to his expertise and efforts, the Post won the "North East in Bloom Business of the Month" award for August, 2011.

Commander McIntosh said, "That



it's a good feeling to receive recognition for the Post but it shows the community that we are doing our best to keep it looking good."

Many cities all over the U.S. encourage community participation in beautifying their environments with special awards programs.

Have you ever wondered how you get a beautification award? How a neighborhood is selected for a block award, or who determines who gets a holiday lighting award? It's easy.

You decide. You simply nominate a friend or neighbor for an award and the Beautification Commission does the rest!

For community beautification programs in your area, contact your local chamber of commerce – a likely source of information. Other possibilities for starting or participating in community projects include your local gardening and horticulture associations and community action groups.



The goal of most beautification programs is to improve the landscaping and appearance of places in the community. It shows a sense of pride in your establishment, your community and your neighbors.

You want your neighborhood to be lookin' good, don't you? Just one community beautification project, such as a massive tulip planting or new park benches, creates buzz for your Post.

Television and social media love visual tidbits. A pleasing community appearance adds to home values, helps attract business, and generally gives you a positive reputation. Research shows that beauty is one of the top three factors in creating community attachment, or loyalty, to your particular town or city.

The American Legion concerned by weak congressional stand against vets budget cuts

The American Legion is disappointed with the "tepid" stand taken by House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committee leaders against federal budget cuts that would compromise the welfare of military veterans.

A letter to the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction (the "supercommittee") signed by the chairmen and ranking members of the House and Senate panels was released that has disturbed leaders of the nation's largest veterans service organization. While the letter opens with the statement, "Never before in times of fiscal crisis have we balanced the budget on the backs of America's veterans, and we should not do so now," attachments to the letter propose a number of budget cuts directed at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), some of which, according to the Legion, contradict that statement.

The cuts proposed in the joint letter include elimination or reduction to a number of benefits, including pension, disability compensation and education payments. Under pressure from The American Legion and other veterans' advocates, many of the measures have been defeated in the past. Others, says the Legion, fail to generate enough savings to be worthwhile.

"Everyone appreciates the financial difficulties our nation is enduring and the hard economic choices our lawmakers must make," American Legion National Commander Fang A. Wong said. "However, as I said in congressional testimony on September 21st Congress must also realize that veterans and military benefits must not be the first stop in the search for budget cuts. Surely our nation's defenders deserve a more vigorous defense of the benefits they have earned through their hard service and sacrifice. "Frankly, I am shocked by the apparent ease with which our veterans' advocates have compromised on the promises they made to me personally during our recent talks," Wong added, referencing recent private meetings he had with House Veterans' Affairs Committee chairman Jeff Miller and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee chairman Patty Murray, both signatories to the letter in question.

"Admittedly, a few of the waste-eliminating proposals make sense, but from our point of view, hard budget cuts or reductions in or eliminations of current benefits do not," Wong said.

"The tepid statement that 'we should not balance the budget on the backs of veterans' simply does not square with some of the harsh, cost-cutting measures the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee leaders suggest."

Legion leaders say they plan to draft a strong and detailed response to the proposals submitted to the "supercommittee." Recently, The American Legion's board of directors warned that proposed fiscal cuts to the Department of Defense and VA would not only hurt the economy, but would also do "irreversible and irreparable harm to the military capability of the U.S. to defend the nation..."

On Oct. 12, The American Legion's National Executive Committee unanimously passed an official statement that the Legion "encourages Congress and the administration to cease all efforts to reduce the defense budget from its current level."

At the time, Legion officials indicated that they were extremely concerned about the work of the congressional "supercommittee," which is charged with identifying \$1.2 trillion to \$1.5 trillion in overall federal deficit reductions over 10 years. If the bi-partisan group does not agree to a plan by Nov. 23, automatic spending cuts are triggered, including \$1 trillion in defense spending.

DEPARTMENT CALENDAR

Nov 5	Legion College West
Nov 6	Daylight Savings Time ends
Nov 8	Election Day
Nov 10	Marine Corps Day
Nov 11	Veterans Day
Nov 20	Eastern Section Meeting
Nov 24	Thanksgiving
Dec 1	Hanukkah
Dec 2-8	Holiday Hospital Tour
Dec 7	Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day
Dec 22	Winter Solstice
Dec 25	Christmas
Dec 26- Jan 1	Kwanzaa
Dec 31	New Years Eve
Jan 1	Welcome 2012
Jan 13-15	DEC
Jan 14	Housing for Homeless Veterans Banquet
Jan 16	Martin L. King Jr., Day
Jan 22	Central Section Meeting
Jan 26-29	Washington Conference
Jan 29	Eastern Section Meeting

Johnny Get Your Textbook

September 30, 2011 by Colby Buzzell



With a half empty bottle of cheap wine in one hand (my third of the evening) and a DVD remote in the other, I sat on the sofa—eyes glazed over—numb. I was watching Taxi Driver, pressing the rewind button over and over again, replaying the same scene.

Wearing a Marine Corps shirt while doing pushups and sit-ups in his apartment, Travis Bickle narrates, “I gotta get in shape. Too much sitting has ruined my body. Too much abuse has gone on for too long. From now on there will be 50 pushups each morning, 50 pull ups. There will be no more pills, no more bad food, no more destroyers of my body. From now on there will be total organization. Every muscle must be tight.”

I don’t remember much after that. The next morning with bloodshot eyes raised at half staff, I stared at my beat-up reflection in the mirror. I looked like a retired punching bag—killing myself slowly every night was taking its toll. Not only that, when I took my shirt off, I looked pregnant. After splashing cold water on my face, I wondered how difficult the first day of sobriety was going to be. Somewhere in that drunken fog the night before I promised myself I was done drinking and I intended to keep that promise.

Our unofficial unit motto when we deployed to Iraq in 2003 was “Punish the Deserving,” and shortly after we came back, I was discharged—like an expended 7.62 brass shell casing. From there, I guess you could say I was a functioning alcoholic. One of my inspirations for cleaning up was Sergeant Todd Vance. We served together in Iraq, and after getting out, he was a day laborer. He worked for minimum wage, laying brick all day, which he quit to attend community college courtesy of the GI Bill. After getting through that, Vance was accepted at a university—all while hitting the gym every day and becoming a competitive kick boxer. During all this time, I opted to self medicate.

What pains me now is the realization of how I’ve wasted away, perhaps the best years of my life, by drinking heavily with nothing to show for it. The first thing I had to do to quit drinking was to hate everything there was to hate about it. I began to hate myself for drinking so much for so long, and to look with disgust at bars and those who wasted away inside them.

To help reinforce this, I would go to bars and order water, then I’d sit there and observe those totally inebriated, those who were like me—who drank heavily, all the way to last call. I watched how they acted and listened to their conversations. I couldn’t do this initially. It took a couple months for me to be able to walk inside of a bar and walk out without any alcohol on my breath. My first goal was to lose all the pregnancy weight. I began to look at a beer as 150 calories, which meant I’d have to run a mile to burn it off. I don’t like running more than I have to, so I skipped the beer.

After being a drunk seven days a week, I began waking every morning at sunrise to hit the gym. Conducting PT (Physical Training) and weapons maintenance (weightlifting) reminded me of my time in the Army—running around the airfield at Fort Lewis and lifting weights at the gym with guys in my platoon. In three months I lost 30 pounds in empty calories and went from barely bench pressing to 275. With no rods.

Next I targeted my mind. With happy hour over, it was time for Johnny to get his textbook. The long string of students across from the Veterans Counseling Center at the City College of San Francisco stretched down the hallway and wrapped around the corner. I asked some girl what the line was for and she told me financial aid. After thanking her I walked right on by the have-nots. There was no need for me to wait with them since my college was paid for by Uncle Sam’s GI Bill. All of it.



I asked my school’s counselor what classes I would need to transfer into some fancy University of California school, like UC-Berkeley. He asked for my major, but I couldn’t think of any. He said pick one. Silence filled his office as I sat there dumbly. He then asked what I liked to do. I told him, “Writing.”

Minutes later he drew up a two year plan for me so that I could someday transfer to a university. And then he told me to go to class, apply myself, and get good grades. Checks would arrive in the mail. Thanking him, I could instantaneously feel my spirits being lifted, and it’s been a long while since I felt this good. My country was sending me a thank you card by taking care of me since, in a way, I took care of it eight years ago. I threw back on my sunglasses and thought to myself this is how life should be.

But that feeling was short lived. The first day on campus brought back flashbacks. Not of the war, but of high school and my first day of basic training where I was absolutely convinced that I had made the biggest mistake of my life. I found myself spending the majority of my free time asking god please: “Turn me into a bird so I can fly far, far away.”

Making my way thru the Vaudeville on City College’s main campus, young students—I’d imagine many from the older generations would write off as walking examples of the decline of western civilization—began to overrun my position. A brain cell deficient stoner asked if I had rolling papers, another welcomed me with a “yo dog” when trying to bum a cigarette, a girl passed by screaming into her cell phone about beating another girls ass, a burnout from the ‘60’s was yelling Bob Marley quotes thru a megaphone, and an Asian lady was finding her Zen by doing



Tai Chi. To top it off, not far away was a tiny table set up by anti-war activists; no interest whatsoever shown at their lonely table, none whatsoever.

The VA hospital has me clinically diagnosed with PTSD and none of this was making it any better. I felt like the old, un-hip creepy mid-thirties guy who somehow got dragged by his friends to Coachella in a sea of pre-pubescent teens. In an effort to block this out of my head, I reminded myself of how my father—a Vietnam vet—remembers seeing Korean War Vets on his campus. He recalls them being a bit older, more mature, many with families to support, but being good students. This gave me hope.

Most students on campus, I imagine, are oblivious to Veteran students. To the untrained eye they blend in quite well in their civilian attire, but like sharks smelling blood in the water, other vets can do the same. There are little clues that only we can pick up on, such as: the way you carry yourself, language you use, the high and tight, the dog tags, digital camo back packs, a PT shirt or t-shirt with your old unit crest, or the green 550 cord bracelet.

Sprinkled within this mosh-pit of students, I noticed other Veterans. I’m not talking just one or two, or even five or 10, but many, to the point where it literally felt like I was back on post again.

Everywhere I looked or turned I saw one, and they’d spot me. We’d exchange a subtle nod or even strike up the typical conversation most Vets have: What unit were you with? MOS? When were you over there? None would ask, what’s it like over there? Or my personal favorite, did you kill anybody?

While smoking a post-U.S. History class cigarette outside of Cloud Hall, a voice curiously asked me if I was a Veteran. I looked up, he’s about my age, from San Diego, Navy Vet, and worked in EOD (Explosive Ordinance Disposal). He talks with a laid back So-Cal drawl as if he’s maxing and relaxing back on the beach. He tells me that he was in the Middle East early on in the war around the same time I was. A job brought him up to the bay area and when he saw how much money he could receive by going back to school, he jumped on it. I asked him if he misses the military, and with a slight hint of regret he reminisces, “Oh yea, I thought it was going to be a career but...”

Cont. to page 13

Johnny Get Your Textbook cont.

“What happened?”

“My second Tour.”

Though I’ve only done one tour I nodded with understanding.

“I mean, I miss the professionalism of the military,” he tells me, “I mean we’re in that class, right, and I see homeboy sleeping on the f***ing desk and if I was the teacher I would have kicked that desk and been like, get the f*** out! You don’t want to be here? Fine, don’t waste my time. You know, people all texting in class, and I’m just like what the hell is this, man?”

Hearing this from him made me laugh out loud since I knew exactly what he was talking about. His advice to me, “Just don’t give up, no matter how much bullsh** you run into. So yea—that, and tenacity. You can accomplish anything if you try hard enough, you know?”

Academics have never been my strong suit. My final high school transcript has me rank at number 332 out of 344 students, which is nothing to brag about. But one of the many things I learned while serving in the Infantry are the phrases; “I can’t” and, “I’m not good enough,” or “I can’t do it” don’t exist. Especially while under fire.

I applied the lessons I learned while in the Army to my schooling. I hit the books hard my first semester and for the first time in my life, I made the Dean’s List. I fell in love with my two U.S. history classes and spent hours in the library reading on my own—General MacArthur’s landing at Inchon, General Sherman’s “March To the Sea,” and Patton in the Battle Of The Bulge.

For the first time since being out of the military, I now have a routine. I stay on this routine by forcing myself to stay focused and goal driven by immediately hitting the gym in the morning, and then taking Bart to school. While waiting for BART at the Balboa station one morning, I ran into a guy from my math class who, like many asked me if I was an Iraq War veteran (he had spotted my camo backpack). I noticed he had one of these black and white Shemagh Arab scarves (in Iraq we called them “Haji Scarves”) tied onto his rucksack. Due to their vogue-ness you can buy them at Urban Outfitters, I’ve seen too many hipsters rock them around their necks. Curious if there was any personal or sentimental meaning behind his scarf, he smiles and tells me it’s his personal reminder to himself on

what he’s done, how he got here, and how he’s able to be go back to school.

It’s been awhile since I’ve hung out with my sister and when she saw me, she couldn’t believe how different I looked, or the story of how

when I was sifting through the numerous English department textbooks, I saw an article that I had written was now published in the Norton Reader.

I also told her, that for the first time since being back from Iraq, I felt like I was finally home. School has been somewhat therapeutic for me and I intend to finish that two year curriculum my counselor drew up for me.

During a pause in the conversation she brought up our mother, which cast a dark cloud over things since she passed away from cancer the year before. All she got to witness towards the end were the years I spent as a drunk.

“Mom always wanted you to quit drinking,” my sister reminded me. “And she always wanted you to go back to school.”

It then hit me, since it didn’t even occur to me before that, I was doing everything my mom always wanted me to do. I finally quit drinking and was going to school. Realizing this filled my heart with regret since I should’ve done all of this much sooner. My sister then added, “Mom would be proud.”

Perhaps.

Colby Buzzell served as a government trained trigger puller in the United States Army Stryker Brigade Combat Team during the Iraq War 2003-04. He is also the author of My War: Killing Time in Iraq and Lost In America: A Dead End Journey.

ESSAY CONTEST FOR YOUNGER STUDENTS

As American Legionnaires, we fully believe that education is the cornerstone upon which the future of America is built. Education becomes the first requisite of good citizenship and the relationship of The American Legion to Pennsylvania citizens is of prime importance as a means of keeping us a free civilization.

Our approach to supporting solid educational principles is direct and positive. We agree with the current PA Department of Education initiative of “writing across the curriculum” and reward the efforts of involved students through our annual essay scholarship program.

Since the inception of the Department of Pennsylvania state Essay Contest in 1935, The American Legion has awarded well over \$500,000 in scholarships, while local American Legion Posts, counties, Districts and Sections have also offered suitable awards and prizes for their respective best essay winners as well.

Through the annual Department of Pennsylvania American Legion Essay scholarship contest, students are provided an opportunity to showcase their talents and abilities in English by using originality, accuracy and research as evidence, while learning that the responsibilities and duties of good citizenship can be both rewarding and fun.

This year, the Department of Pennsylvania is supporting an Essay Contest for 6th through 8th graders. The Essay Committee decided that year’s Essay Contest topic for these younger grades are: *“WHAT MORE CAN AMERICANS DO TO SHOW THEIR PATRIOTISM?”*

Any student enrolled in grades 6 through 8 in a public, private or parochial school or who is home schooled in Pennsylvania is eligible to participate.

All essays MUST have a cover page containing the following information:

- Essay topic/title
- Name, address, telephone, & email address (if applicable) of contestant
- Sponsoring American Legion Post number, name & location
- Parent or guardian name

The topic/title MUST appear on page one (1) of the essay, as well as the cover page. The essays must be no less than 500 words and no more than 1,000 words. It is preferred that the essays are typed but it’s not required.

Judging of the essays is always difficult. So, we set up some guidelines. The essays will be judged on proper English structure, accuracy, extent of information and originality. (Any material not original must be cited in a bibliography for the information of the judges, stating publication, volume, page, date, publisher and author.)

This essay program is to work hand in hand with our original Essay program that’s designed for High School aged students. The topic for 9th through 12th graders are *“SHOULD AMERICA’S PRESIDENTIAL ELECTORAL PROCESS BE CHANGED?”*

Help the students in your area receive scholarship money and tell them about the American Legion Essay Program. For more information on the Essay Programs please check out Department’s website at www.pa-legion.com

DEPARTMENT AWARDS

This is the time that you need to start getting prepared for Department Awards. Most of the deadlines for the awards are in the spring but, if you start now getting organized then it will be easy. Department gives out awards for Americanism, Blood donor, Children & Youth, Community Service, Essay, Hospital Entertainment, Law & Order, Membership, New Post Home, Oratorical, Public Relations, Scouting, VA&R. We also have programs like Legion Keystone Boys State, Legion State Police Youth Week, and Housing for Homeless Veterans. For more information on these programs please check out our website at www.pa-legion.com.





Pennsylvania American Legion
Housing for Homeless Veterans Corporation



ANNUAL FUND RAISING DINNER

SATURDAY, JANUARY 14, 2012
Holiday Inn Pittsburgh Airport
8256 University Blvd., Moon Township, PA
5:30 PM - Cash Bar/7:00 PM - Dinner
Cost: \$25.00/person

Ads for Program Book
Full Page \$70
½ Page \$50
¼ Page \$40

(Please include payment with dinner ticket and/or ad order)

Mail check (payable to PA American Legion Housing for Homeless) to:

Ron Conley
709 Hope Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15220
(412) 279-3982

**TOUCHING
THE LIVES
OF
HOMELESS
VETERANS**

Deadline for ads: **December 24, 2010**
Deadline for dinner tickets: **January 7, 2011**



**TOUCHING
THE LIVES
OF
HOMELESS
VETERANS**

The official registration and financial information of Pennsylvania American Legion Housing for Homeless Veterans Corp. may be obtained from the Department of State by calling toll-free within Pennsylvania 1-800-732-0399. Registration does not imply endorsement.

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
CITY/STATE/ZIP _____
OF TICKETS _____ SIZE OF AD _____
POST _____ UNIT _____ DISTRICT _____ OTHER _____
AMOUNT ENCLOSED _____

(PLEASE NOTE THAT ALL TICKETS WILL BE MAILED TO THE ABOVE LISTED ADDRESS)

ROTC Programs Back on Ivy League Campuses

by Donna Miles
USO On Patrol

With the fall semester busily under way at colleges and universities across the United States, some of the most prestigious among them are charting a new course with the return of ROTC programs to their campuses.

Navy Secretary Ray Mabus, left, and Harvard President Drew Faust sign a memorandum of agreement re-establishing the Naval ROTC at Harvard on March 4, 2011. Navy photo by Petty Officer Second Class Kevin S. O'Brien
ROTCs are making a comeback at Ivy League schools after being banned from many of them for decades. With both objections now history, ROTC programs are returning to more campuses, including the Ivies.

The University of Pennsylvania, Princeton and Cornell universities and Dartmouth College never dissolved their long relationships with ROTC. Cornell hosts Army, Navy and Air Force ROTC detachments. Princeton and Dartmouth sponsor Army ROTC. Penn has a Naval ROTC program.

More of their sister schools are following suit. Harvard, Yale and Columbia universities approved the reintroduction of ROTC programs to their campuses earlier this year.

Harvard President Drew Faust called Naval ROTC's return to the Cambridge, Mass., campus "an important new chapter in the long and storied history of military service by members of the Harvard community."

At Yale, university and military officials agreed to establish Naval and Air Force ROTC programs next year. University President Richard Levin welcomed the return, citing the contributions the graduates will make to the military, and the opportunities the new relationship will offer for those who choose to serve.

Air Force Secretary Michael B. Donley, who joined Levin on Sept. 12 in signing an agreement to establish an Air Force ROTC detachment at Yale in the fall of 2012, called the decision a "win-win."

"First, a permanent presence for Air Force ROTC will make it easier for Yale students who are interested in military service to access ROTC education and training ceremonies," he said. "Second, a Yale presence will give the Air Force a way to connect and engage with some of the brightest and most diverse students in America."

Navy Secretary Ray Mabus signed similar agreements to establish Naval ROTC detachments: in March with Harvard, in April with Columbia, and in May with Yale.

In announcing the Columbia University Naval ROTC program, Mabus called the decision a renewal of a long and rich history between the university and the Navy.

Air Force Secretary Michael B. Donley and Yale University President Richard Levin shake hands September 12, 2011, after signing an agreement to establish an Air Force ROTC detachment at Yale. Air Force photo by Scott M. Ash
'Columbia's tremendous support to our men and women in uniform returning from the recent wars is overwhelming, as are the growing numbers of veterans who are woven into the fabric of this great institution," he said. "The return of Naval ROTC to campus will only serve to enhance and strengthen our institutions and contribute to the success of this great country."

Other elite schools appear to agree. For example, the faculty senate at Stanford University voted in April to invite ROTC to return to its Southern California campus. University officials reportedly are in "serious discussions" with the military branches about setting up an on-campus ROTC program, but no agreements have yet been reached.

Meanwhile, Brown University in Providence, R.I., the last Ivy League institution to ban ROTC from its campus, is studying the issue. University President Ruth Simmons invited discussion on inviting ROTC back to the campus before her report to the university corporation this month.

Former Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates, a longtime educator himself, was a staunch advocate of restoring ROTC to the nation's elite schools. During his visit in September 2010 to North Carolina's Duke University, which sponsors three ROTC programs, Gates called for other prestigious universities to follow Duke's example.

"Over the past generation, many commentators have lamented the absence of ROTC from the Ivy League and other selective universities -- institutions that used to send hundreds of graduates into the armed forces, but now struggle to commission a handful of officers every year," he told the Duke assembly.

Gates applauded efforts to restore military recruiting and officer training programs to these schools, and encouraged some of the country's most gifted students to consider joining them.

"A return of ROTC back to some of these campuses will not do much good without the willingness of our nation's most gifted students to step forward -- men and women such as you," he told the Duke students.



POST 807 WORKING IN THE COMMUNITY



Hamlin American Legion Post 807 conducted an Independence Day ceremony for the residents of the Julia Ribaldo Senior Center in Lake Ariel. The ceremony included the parading and posting of the American flag by the Sons of the American Legion, Squadron 807. The Post Chaplain, Stan Frey, provided prayers

and an explanation of the American Legion crest.

Pictured above: American Legion Post 807 member Boni Miracle presents American flags to new members John Borowski, William Stahl, and Patricia Muszik

The well known explanation of the Pledge of Allegiance by Red Skelton was read by Manuel Mirailh, followed by the reciting of the Pledge by all the audience. Manuel Mirailh and Tanner Gillette shared John Adam's story of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

Seven new members of the American Legion were sworn in by Tim French, the Post Commander (elect) and were presented individual American flags after the induction. The new members were given a summary of the Post's activities for the past several months which included several fund-raising events and donations to well deserving local organizations and individuals in need. An award was presented by the Post to the Ribaldo Center, recognizing their work with special-needs youths from the community. The American flag was retired, and the new members were welcomed by the attending Post members.

Pictured to the right: American Legion Commanders James English and Tim French presented an Achievement Award to the staff of Julia Ribaldo.



SCHOLARSHIP/ENDOWMENT PROGRAM



The Scholarship/Endowment Program offers scholarships for eligible students. The requirements listed are for students attending college in 2012/2013 and beyond. The student's parent or guardian must be at least a 6 year member of the Pennsylvania American Legion. Their family income may not be over \$65,000 with exceptions (i.e. larger family, number in college, etc.)

The student's SAT score needs to be at least 1500 points on the 3 part exam. (The Scholarship Endowment Committee will consider scores close to this number if money is available.) The student must have a good high school record plus participation in extra curricula activities. We also insist on the student attending a Pennsylvania college, university, or two year trade school.

The number of scholarships is limited to money available. The Applications must be received at Department Headquarters by the established deadline.

Students already receiving scholarships must maintain a 2.5 grade point average on a 4.0 point scale in order to continue receiving scholarship monies and whenever the 2.5 average isn't maintained, that student will be issued a warning letter to bring that average up within one () semester or lose the scholarship.

For more information on the Scholarship Endowment Program please look at Department's website or call 717-730-9100.



On behalf of Operation Military Kids (OMK) and myself, I would like to thank all Legion Family members who participated in our Hero Pack Project this past year.

Not only did we raise enough money and awareness to purchase 2,000 of the blue "Thank You" bears to place in the backpacks for the kids, we also received generous donations of other items to put into the backpacks. Monetary donations were also given so that we could go out and buy other supplies that were needed to put into these Hero Packs for our Military Kids.

The Junior members of the American Legion Auxiliary filled 200 backpacks at our Spring Conference this past year and then in June the citizens at Girls State filled another 200.

The state OMK team gives these backpacks to the children of deployed military at family events that are held throughout the year across the state. The smiles and hugs that we receive from these great kids are the best part of the giving.

The need for items to put into the backpacks with the bear is ongoing until we have filled the remaining 1,600 and placed them into the hands of our Hero Children whose lives have been affected by the deployment of a parent.

Yours in Service to our Veterans and Military,

BJ Lysic
American Legion Auxiliary
VA&R Chairman

Military Humor

There's an Air Force guy driving from McChord to Ft Lewis, and an Army guy driving from Ft Lewis to McChord. In the middle of the night with no other cars on the road they hit each other head on and both cars go flying off in different directions.

The Air Force guy manages to climb out of his car and surveys the damage. He looks at his twisted car and says,....."Man, I am really lucky to be alive!"

Likewise the Army guy scrambles out of his car and looks at his wreckage. He too says to himself, "I can't believe I survived this wreck!"

The Army guy walks over to the Air Force guy and says,..... "Hey man, I think this is a sign from God that we should put away our petty differences and live as friends instead of archrivals"

The Air Force guy thinks for a moment and says, "You know, you're absolutely right! We should be friends. Now I'm gonna see what else survived this wreck"

So, the Air Force guy pops open his trunk and finds a full unopened bottle of Jack Daniels.

He says to the Army guy, "I think this is another sign from God that we should toast to our new found understanding and friendship"

The Army guy replies, "You're damn right!" and he grabs the bottle and starts sucking down Jack Daniels. After putting away nearly half the bottle the Army guy hands it back to the Air Force guy and says, "Your turn!"

The Air Force guy twists the cap back on the bottle and says, "Nahh, I think I'll wait for the cops to show up.

James H. Hales Jr., Northeast Region National Vice Commander

The American Legion is led by its national commander, five national vice commanders and six national constitutional officers. The national commander and vice commanders help compose the National Executive Committee (NEC) and play vital roles during the national convention, the Legion's annual meeting to establish programs and make changes to the organization's constitutions and bylaws.

Elected at the national convention, five vice commanders act as representatives of the national commander. They may preside over meetings of the National Executive Committee or the national convention, and perform other duties for the commander. No two vice commanders can be chosen from the same department during the same year.

A Marine Corps Vietnam War veteran from Blairsville, Penn., James H. Hale Jr. is a member of Post 343 in New Castle and has held numerous leadership positions at the Legion's post, department and national levels. He previously served as department commander for Pennsylvania in 2005-2006, and as a Pennsylvania state deputy constable. He enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1964 and retired as a captain in 1985.

We are proud of you Vice Commander James Hales. Thank you for all the work you do for the good of the American Legion and our veterans.



PENNSYLVANIA PAST DEPARTMENT COMMANDERS

Our Pennsylvania leadership in the American Legion. These gentlemen inspire us with their knowledge, skills and guidance of the American Legion programs and the general good for all veterans.

This picture of the Department of Pennsylvania Past Department Commanders was taken at the 2011 Department Convention in Valley Forge, PA.

They have all lead the largest Department of the American Legion and let's continue that tradition!

Back Row (l to r): W.J. "Sandy" Sandell 2009, Jeff Seler 2002, Robert C. Miller, Jr. 2008, James H. Hales Jr. 2006, Jasper Stouffer 1996, Terry D. Lewis 2001, Joseph Glazier 1995, Richard Coccimiglio 2000, Robert D. Shalala 2004

Front Row (l to r): R. Raymond Lenz 1991, Stanley Reinhard Jr. 1986, Ronald F. Conley 1988, Eugene Eichelberger 1978, Dominic D. DiFrancesco 1987, John Gasper 2005