

# The Legion Link

December 2010

Vol. 18 Issue 5



## STEERING FORWARD FOR VETERANS



Web Site: [www.floridalegion.org](http://www.floridalegion.org)

E-mail: [mail@floridalegion.org](mailto:mail@floridalegion.org)



Happy Holidays

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### **Al Porter**

**Department Commander**

**[albertporter@bellsouth.net](mailto:albertporter@bellsouth.net)**

**407.398.3021**

My Fellow Legionnaires:

My month began with the delivery of the colors to Christmas Post #328 that I presented at their meeting to Commander Diane Schmidt and the members. This post is also one of the first to reach 100% in membership. Great job Post 328!

Our quarterly membership meeting was held in Crystal River on the third of November as we discussed with our zone members all things membership.

On Friday, November 5th I spoke to the 11th Bombardment Group (H) association, The Grey Geese, on their 50th continuous reunion in Orlando. This group, which flew B-17 and B-24, was stationed at Hickam Field in Hawaii on December 7th 1941. Their motto became, "One Damn Island at a Time", which consisted of New Hebrides, Funafuti, Tarawa, Kwajalein, Guam, and Okinawa. Their memorabilia, stories and pictures brought to light that fateful day.

Sunday was our annual St. Jude's dinner and fund raiser. What a great time we had. There was a special tribute to our NEC, Robert (Bob) Proctor in the program. Welcome back Bob!

Moving along... we attended the Guardians of Freedom Celebration for Veterans, held at the Equine Heritage Institute for a six day tribute to Veterans. I attended the closing ceremonies where there was a Caisson presented along with a rider less horse. We were also treated to a concert by the Lady Lake Concert Band.



Veterans Day - Myself and Art Schwabe, along with our wives, attended the Veterans Day Service at Bushnell Cemetery. On Saturday we participated in the Orlando Veterans Day Parade riding in a Model-T. There were many persons participating including Irma & George Wehrli, Mike and Donna Dooley, along with many 6th



district members led by the District President, Dianne Anderson.

We attended the 9th District Ball on Saturday. It was very nice, thank you for the invitation.

Also during the month we visited the VA Hospital in Orlando and a Habitat for Humanity built home for a wounded warrior.

It was good to see such a great turnout at our Children & Youth Golf Tournament before the Fall Conference. It was good seeing everyone at the Conference. Happy Thanksgiving to all and your families.



**Fletcher Williams, Jr.**  
**Department Vice Commander**  
[fletcher.williams@cox.net](mailto:fletcher.williams@cox.net)

The National American Legion College is designed to train future Legion leaders within the American Legion. One such class just wrapped up in Indianapolis on 29 October 2010. During this College, the participants learned about Legion programs and engaged in various team-building exercises. I had the distinct honor of being a facilitator in the Jimmie L. Foster Class of 2010.

The Department of Florida had 6 graduates in this class and they are as follows:

Kathryn O. Ferrin – Post 139  
John M. Gibbons – Post 347  
Robert L. Brewster - Post 373  
Kenneth W. Foldy – Post 393  
Nancy L. Thomas – Post 8  
William “grandpa” Walsh – Post 347

The Class was given a charge by Chancellor Past National Commander Butch Miller, to take the job in your Department that no one wants and to excel at that. The Department of Florida can be proud of how these Legionnaires conducted themselves during this College. For God and Country



**Bob Vick**  
**Department Chaplain**  
[ravick311@yahoo.com](mailto:ravick311@yahoo.com)

Recently I saw a bumper sticker which read, “If you can read this, thank a teacher”. I think we should display bumper stickers to read, “If you have the freedom to display this sticker, thank a Veteran”.

This is the season when we pay special attention to our veterans and to our freedoms. Our freedoms were granted to us by Almighty God. But, it is the responsibility of us all to maintain them. We should jealously guard our freedoms all year long. The enemies to our way of life are not prone to a frontal attack. They chip away at our complacencies until they have undermined the foundation of our liberties.

- God has granted us freedom from fear – II Timothy, 1:7
- God has given us liberty – II Corinthians, 3:17
- God has given us strength – Psalm 27:1
- God gives victory over sin – I John, 1:7
- God gives us the ability to overcome temptation – I John, 5:4
- God gives us victory – II Corinthians, 2:14
- He gives us freedom from worry – I Peter, 5:7

December is the month when posts all over the state participate in the “Wreaths across America” celebration. If your post does not do this service, please find one which does and offer your support by volunteering to assist.

Remember, one of the ways you serve God is by serving your fellow man.



## December Fun Facts

- 2, 1982 - First successful implant of a permanent artificial heart
- 5, 1964 - First Vietman soldier to receive the U.S. Medal of Honor
- 9, 1878 - Joseph Pulitzer bought his first newspaper
- 12, 1899 - the golf tee is patented
- 14, 1911 - the South Polk is ‘discovered’
- 15, 1939 - Gone with the Wind is released
- 23, 1823 - The Night Before Christmas is published
- 31, 1909 - Ellis Island opens

### FALPA

President - Mark Johnson, 5430 Friendly St, Port St John, 32927, 321-690-0791, [msj\\_military@msn.com](mailto:msj_military@msn.com)  
Secretary/Treasurer - Pat Johnson, 5430 Friendly St., Port St. John, 32927, 321.690.0791, [falpa@live.com](mailto:falpa@live.com)  
Vice President - Bonnie Carter, 4211 Helena St NE, St Petersburg, 33703, 727-521-4049 home, 727-430-5808 cell, [dincwaz2@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:dincwaz2@tampabay.rr.com)



### Program Reminders

- Boys State** - Registration Fees due December 23, 2010. The registration fee is \$300.00 per boy.
- Oratorical** - Post Contests must be held no later than January 9, 2011.
- Blood Donor** - Holiday Drive begins Thanksgiving Day, ends New Year’s Day.
- JROTC/Shooting Sports** - Have you contacted your High School JROTC to find out if they are interested in participating in the Shooting Sports program?? Targets are due to National January 15, 2011
- Boy Scouts** - Camporee will be held January 14-16.

**Art Schwabe**  
**Membership Chairman**  
*schwabeartur@yahoo.com*



## January 5, 2011 - 85% Goal

*District/Area Membership Report as of Nov. 29, 2010*

\*DO YOU REALLY CARE ???

December 1st is the 80% Goal for the Department. What is your Posts percentage in membership? How do you stand in the District? The Area? Is your Post one of the weakest links in the District? It's a reflection on your Post! Just ask yourself the following: Does your Post have:

- Pride in the Legion?
- Pride in your Post?
- Pride in the Programs the Post does in the community?
- Pride in Helping Veterans?
- Does it require more effort to reach the goal of 100% and if so by who?
- ARE YOU ATTAINING YOUR GOALS?
- Do you have to AIM HIGHER!!!

If you can answer YES to all the above; Thank You for being a great Post!

If the answer is yes to most, thank You for being a good Post. If the answer is no to most, why don't you care?

We are talking about caring for Veterans by being part of the greatest organization in America, being part of them when they may need our help. Being there when their family may need help. Being there for the veteran when he passes away instead of reading about it in the newspapers, "Military Honors to follow; not a member of American Legion Post XYZ." This could mean no Legion member will remember his service to the greatest country in the world.

Our strength is in Membership, 2.4 million worldwide; 115,000 veterans in the State of Florida. What if it were 200,000 in the state of Florida? What kind of message would we be able to send to Congress? AIM HIGHER!

I want to remind everyone about the following:

### AMERICAN LEGION BY-LAWS

Article XI, Paragraph 4. "The failure on the part of any Post for more than thirty (30) days to remit Department and National dues collected from members shall be a cause for the suspension or revoking of the charter of such Post."

Please comply with the above Article. In other words; remit the money that belongs to Department. Don't wait or hold money!!! It's not worth 47 cents to become suspended or possibly have your charter revoked. There seems to be a few posts that think they can use this money or hold it till the end of the year. They are totally wrong. Please don't be one of them. You can be playing with the Posts future.

The end of 2010 is just around the corner which means 2010 cards will have expired. Members will need 2011 cards to enter your Post for meeting or for canteen privileges. Thank you "Ole" for that bit of information!!

THANK YOU for the effort and willingness to attain a goal by Aiming High! "Effort, with results, creates pride in the Post." Doing what is right for the right reason. Caring about it's veterans, Community and Children & Youth.

Have a great Holiday Season!! On behalf of Ole and Lena, "See ya in da near Future"



District/ Area	Commander	Goal	Rec'd	% Goal
4	Jay Conti	3,983	3,243	81.42
6	William Walsh	9,445	7,555	79.99
17	James Baker	4,256	3,394	79.75
2	Ralph Camp	1,373	1,064	77.50
9	George Rafajko	4,513	3,480	77.11
16	Charlie Wing	12,208	9,357	76.65
15	James Zipler	5,508	4,183	75.94
1	Lawrence Carpenter	6,197	4,689	75.67
12	Wayne Smith	8,471	6,333	74.76
14	Angela Glover	3,170	2,353	74.23
7	Nancy Thomas	4,221	3,127	74.08
11	Paul Bosco	4,447	3,283	73.83
8	Gregory Putman	8,621	6,338	73.52
3	Ira Westbrook	1,660	1,208	72.77
13	Steven Slachta	8,895	6,467	72.70
5	Jerry Brandt	7,894	5,392	68.31
Eastern	Carl Schneider	17,916	13,888	77.52
Western	Stephen Shuga	7,570	5,753	76.00
Central	George Paradise	21,937	16,667	75.98
Southern	John Farrington	12,130	9,116	75.15
Northern	James Troupe	17,793	13,237	74.39
SW	John Ebling	17,516	12,805	73.11
<b>Department</b>			<b>71,466</b>	
<b>Post 400</b>		<b>17,306</b>	<b>11,756</b>	<b>67.93</b>
<b>Post 208</b>		<b>1,682</b>	<b>1,279</b>	<b>76.04</b>
<b>Totals</b>		<b>115,000</b>	<b>84,501</b>	<b>73.48</b>

**Jim Ramos**  
**Department of Florida**  
**Children & Youth Chairman**  
**[jramos149@bellsouth.net](mailto:jramos149@bellsouth.net)**

Hi! We have some suggestions for the month of December.

December 7, 2010 is Pearl Harbor Day. President Franklin Roosevelt said, "Yesterday, December 7, 1941 was a date that will live in infamy". Remember the WWII Veterans and honor them at your Post. Support activities that bring Holiday cheer to needy families. How about a Christmas party? Plan for Christmas events like a parade or be in one. Oh, continue to work membership toward an all-time High in the Post. All this is to thank all your members who have worked hard in 2010. Also, think about having a Christmas party or dinner for your members and /or New Year party. Have a safe Holidays and Happy New Year to All my Legion Family.

Do you know where some of this information comes from?

I'm sorry to tell you that The American Legion Children's Home founded in 1928 and established as an orphanage for children of veterans who could not care for their young, is closing.

January is the time to start back by checking with schools for Oratorical, School Medal, and Boys State. Also, go back through some Children & Youth program like Play it Safe Child Safety (Brochure stock # 24-030). Work alongside a firefighter to assist with Safety in the Home "Fire Prevention". Also give out some Guides For Parents and Students (Brochure stock # 23-004 or order from Emblem sale #755.209 \$0.10 each or 755.209A for \$3.95 for a pack of 100).

February - Plan for the "Four Chaplains" service. Have the community come and see what is the Four Chaplains? Remember observances of George Washington our 1st President and Abraham Lincoln our 16th President birthday. You could also follow the example of the 8th District and hold a Children & Youth Fundraiser Bash on February 5, 2011. And start planning for March. Looking forward and plan for April is Children & Youth month.

There is a new baseball for sale with the Legion and Children & Youth Logos on them. It is just \$10.00 each.

I will have more plans (suggestions) for you and your Post next month. Thank you for your support with Children and Youth programs.

My program push for this year is, once again, for the Child Welfare Foundation. If you or your Post, Auxiliary, Squadron and ALR can give just \$25.00 it will help our Children and Youth Program. I have a hand full of Children and Youth pins for sale just \$5.00 each. I will be going out to see you at your District meetings. Again, thank you and please keep working Children & Youth programs. If you or your Post needs help or if you have any questions just e-mail me. To ALL please have a Safe Holiday.



*Happy  
Holidays*

*From your  
Department  
Staff*



**Legislative Report**  
**Stanley Gold, Chairman**  
**786-423-2458**

Well the midterm elections are over and we do have a lot of work to do in Veteran's Legislation. There are eight new members of the House and a new Senator for the State of Florida. We must all make sure they will vote for our goals along with the others.

The American Legion is pressing the prospective leadership of a politically realigned Congress to address several long-standing veterans' issues. "The dramatic midterm election that just concluded was a referendum on ideals and policies," American Legion national Commander Jimmie Foster said. "But not on issues related to the care of America's veterans. The 111th Congress was moving in the right direction, and the 112th should continue on this course."

Foster recently praised the current session's Capitol Hill lawmakers for passage of the Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act of 2009 (guaranteeing appropriations for VA health care one full year in advance), as well as the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2010 that included substantially increased fiscal 2010 funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs.

"As laudable as these measures were – and other such as broadening eligibility for relief from certain service-connected health problems, more must be done to provide our nation's heroes with the benefits they deserve," Foster said. "About 20 new representatives are veterans, and 14 of those belong to The American Legion, so we're hoping they will lend their strong support to our legislative problems."

Of special concern to the Legion is the so-called "disabled veteran tax" or "concurrent receipt" practice, which offsets veterans' retirement pay with the amount of disability pay they are receiving. "Both retirement pay and disability benefits are well and truly earned, and both should be awarded fully. To do otherwise is shameful," Foster said.

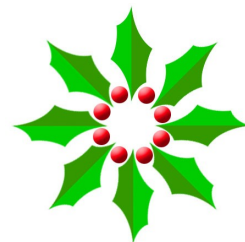
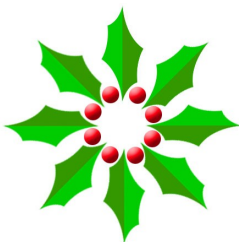
While acknowledging the recent, unprecedented increase in VA funding (\$125 billion), The American Legion is requesting additional monies for the agency, mostly to support improved medical care, research and facilities. But the Legion is also offering Congress a suggestion that, if enacted, would help to offset any VA budget increase.

Legion leaders point to the fact that more than half the veteran population served by VA is eligible for Medicare benefits. Yes VA is not authorized to collect third-party reimbursement from Medicare (or Medicaid) for health services provided to veterans that have no connection to their military service.

"In a society that's trying to improve health care, reduce deficits and serve veterans, allowing VA to bill Medicare for its non-service connected care is a win-win" said Tim Tetz, legislative director for The American Legion. "Veterans pay into the Medicare system, so why shouldn't they be allowed to take advantage of it?"

Among other items of concern to The American Legion are deficiencies in the Post-9/11 GI Bill. Improvements can be made, the Legion says, by broadening eligibility for benefits to members of reserve units and the National Guard, as well as expanding the list of VA-approved institutions to include vocational schools and those offering online and distance learning curricula.

Peter Gaytan, executive director of The American Legion in Washington, sums up the organizations view. "Realistically, the new Congress may be hard pressed to find a non-partisan agenda that all its members can agree on. But, why not try to bridge that chasm by agreeing to honor our nation's veterans, not only by maintaining their current benefits but improving them as well?"



**ROTC/SHOOTING SPORTS**  
**Loretta Young**  
**JROTC/Shooting Sports Chair**  
**lorettayung@yahoo.com**

I attended the Broward County Color Guard Meet held at Coral Springs H. S. last month.

There has also been several local Marksmanship Meets that I attended. There will be the Commander's Cup Marksmanship Meet to be held in Titusville Jan. 29th. So far there are four or five teams from Broward that will be attending and they are sponsored by the Department for their bus transportation.

There are formal inspections to be held in Broward for Dec. and Jan. I will be attending as many as time will allow. There will be other inspections throughout the state and it is the best opportunity we to see our cadets give these formal briefings that will some day bring us our leaders for tomorrow.

The National Postal Match Target Order Form is on the National website. It is due to be returned by Jan. 15, 2011. The cost is \$8.00 per shooter and \$8.00 for the team entry. Please follow up with the schools to make sure these forms and the fired targets are returned in a timely manner. The deadlines are very strict. If they are not followed the post will be losing the entry fees.

As we are approaching the Holidays, I wish you all the best and always remember to pray for our troops serving at home and abroad. For God and Country

## **ATTENTION ALL POST COMMANDERS**

Has your Post Boys State Chairman, Oratorical Chairman, or Blood Donor Chairman received their manuals from Department?? Have any of your Post Chairmen received the most updated information on their program from Department?? If not, please send pages 12-14 from the Post Administrative Manual to Department. If you cannot find this manual, email [cpolk@floridalegion.org](mailto:cpolk@floridalegion.org).



**Ride Safe**  
**Mike "Smiley" Amig**  
**American Legion Riders Chairman**  
**flalr@comcast.net**  
**904-742-0841 (c)**



National American Legion Commander, Jimmy Foster, gave a moving speech at the Fall Conference and mentioned how important the Riders are to the American Legion. He also presented "Right Hand Salute of Respect and Admiration" awards to Chapters and Posts who donated \$500 or more to the American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund. There were over 26 awards presented, next year I hope to have more.

The Legion Rider's meeting was held Saturday November 20th at 2:30pm during the Fall Conference. We had great attendance and the following items were discussed

- End of Years reports are due 31 May
- ALR Chapter of the Year and Runner up
- Florida Guideline changes
- Next year's Legacy Run

Congratulations to Mike Kirchoff for his selection as one of 5 members of the ALR committee to the National Internal Affairs. Florida's voice will be heard.

### **Safety**

One of the American Legion Riders goals is to promote motorcycle safety. Each Chapter's Safety Officer is encouraged to provide training and/or reminders during each meeting. There are plenty of websites with motorcycle safety information (ie Motorcycle Safety Foundation, ABATE, etc). Here are a few General Guidelines for Riding a Motorcycle Safely for the Month of December:

- Get trained and licensed
- Wear protective gear -- all the gear, all the time-- including a helmet manufactured to the standards set by the DOT
- Ride unimpaired by alcohol or drugs
- Ride within your own skill limits
- Be a lifelong learner by taking refresher rider courses

### **ALR Chapter Community Charity Spotlight**

On Sept. 25, 2010 ALR Chapter 283, Arlington held their 3rd annual PedsCare poker run, over 250 riders with 165 bikes participated in this event. The final attendance was around 400 with 370 meals being served. Big Engine Band got everyone up and dancing and having a good time. Of course the main reason for the poker run was to generate money for PedsCare. Community PedsCare is a pediatric palliative and hospice program for children with life-limiting and life-threatening conditions. The program offers in-hospital and in-home medical, nursing, psychosocial, spiritual, volunteer and other services to support, comfort and care for children and their families. The program was established in 2000 by Community Hospice of Northeast Florida, in collaboration with Wolfson Children's Hospital, Nemours Children's Clinic and the University of Florida. Nearly 35 % of the children's parents are Veterans. The proceeds from this run allowed Chapter 283 to donate \$11,400.00 for PedsCare program. The American Legion Florida Chapter 283 Riders THANK each and every one of you for your support.

Chapters - continue to send me your charity of choice to be included in future articles.

Remember, Riders are Legionnaires, Aux and SAL first and if there is a problem in the POST it is not always a Rider problem. If anyone has questions please e-mail or call me. We need to keep the lines of communication OPEN..... Everyone have a safe and joyful holiday season. "MERRY CHRISTMAS" Ride Safe and pray for our troops

*You cannot build a reputation*

*On what you are going to do. ~ ~ Henry Ford*

## **WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA**

**Dennis R. Boland**

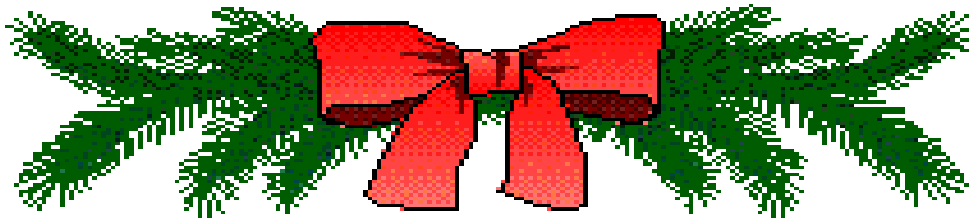
### **Alternate National Executive Committeeman**

On Saturday, December 11, 2010 at 12:00 noon EST, this ceremony will take place at all National Cemeteries and monument. These wreaths are donated by the Worcester Wreath Company of Maine. A wreath will be placed for each of the following branch of service: Army, Marines, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard and Merchant Marine. All graveside wreaths will be placed prior to the ceremony

By 2008 over 300 locations held wreath laying ceremonies in every state, Puerto Rico and 24 over seas cemeteries. Over 100,000 wreaths were placed on veteran's graves. Over 60,000 volunteers participated

This year the service will take place at the following places in Florida:

Columbia County Veterans Memorial – Lake City  
St. Augustine National Cemetery – St. Augustine  
Daytona Memorial Gardens – Daytona  
Edgewater-New Smyrna Cemetery – Edgewater  
Jacksonville National Cemetery – Jacksonville  
Barrancas National Cemetery – Pensacola  
City of Miami Memorial Cemetery – Miami



South Florida VA National Cemetery – Lake Worth  
Royal Palm Memorial Gardens – West Palm Beach  
The American Legion Cemetery – Tampa  
Bay Pines National Cemetery – Bay Pines  
Florida National Cemetery – Bushnell  
Lake Country Courthouse - Tavares  
Forest Lawn Memorial Gardens – Pompano Beach  
Live Oak City Cemetery – Live Oak  
Florida Hills Memorial Gardens – Spring Hill  
Mount Peace Cemetery – Saint Cloud  
Sarasota National Cemetery - Sarasota

The Wreaths Across America story began over 17 years ago when Worcester Wreath Company (a for-profit commercial business from Harrington, Maine) began a tradition of placing wreaths on the headstones of our Nation's fallen heroes at Arlington National Cemetery during the holidays.

Over that period of time, Worcester Wreath has donated well over 100,000 wreaths, which were placed by volunteers in a wreath-laying ceremony each December. But as word spread, the mission to REMEMBER; HONOR; and TEACH about the sacrifices made by our veterans has captured the

hearts and minds of many communities across the country.

I would hope that all Post Commanders, District Commanders and Area Commanders try to be involved with this ceremony. I know that our Department Sergeant-at-Arms, Mike Addis along with American Legion Post 252, Post 104 and the Legion Riders are planning on participating at the Bay Pines Cemetery.

For more information you can go to [www.wreaths-across-america.org](http://www.wreaths-across-america.org)

