

THE AMERICAN LEGION

# Dispatch

April 2016

A National Headquarters Publication

CHILDREN &amp; YOUTH MONTH



Julia Edie, 5, of Zephyr Cove, Nev., shows off her hearing aids on March 25, 2016. Photo by Lucas Carter.

## NEVADA LEGION HELPS CHILDREN HEAR

*Hear Today - Learn Tomorrow program provides financial grants to Nevada families that cannot cover the cost of hearing aids for their hearing-impaired child.*

By The American Legion

Tears fell from the eyes of Brooke and Robert Edie as they watched daughter Julia's face light up. She was fitted for hearing aids on March 25 in Reno, Nev., thanks to The American Legion.

It was the first time the 5-year-old girl could hear her parents' voices clearly, having lived up to that moment with 45 percent hearing loss in both ears.

"I was excited about this moment ... it was very emotional for me," said Brooke of Zephyr Cove, Nev. "Just asking (Julia) if she could hear me more clearer was very touching."

The family's joy was likewise shared by Harold "Hal" Sherwood, Children & Youth chairman for The American Legion Depart-

ment of Nevada. The hearing aids for Julia were made possible by the department's Hear Today - Learn Tomorrow program, which was initiated by Sherwood.

After he was elected the department's Children & Youth chairman in 2008, Sherwood questioned who provides financial help for families with children who need hearing aids. The answer was "nobody." A hearing aid user himself, he discovered many insurance companies do not fully cover the cost of hearing aids for children. The discovery prompted Sherwood to write a resolution in 2009 to create Hear Today - Learn Tomorrow, which provides financial grants to Nevada

## NEWS ALERT

### 2016 Legion College applications online

The 18th session of American Legion College will be conducted at National Headquarters in Indianapolis Oct. 23-28. Legionnaires interested in attending can apply online at [www.legion.org/college/application](http://www.legion.org/college/application). Legion College focuses on leadership, mentorship, resolution writing, parliamentary procedure and how to conduct post meetings.

### Access CPR forms on mylegion.org

The 2015-2016 American Legion Consolidated Post Report forms are available on [www.mylegion.org](http://www.mylegion.org) for posts to fill out and submit. The forms are located under "Posts and Department" options. After completing the form online, click the "submit" button to send the report to National Headquarters; a copy will automatically be sent to your department headquarters.

### Apply for CWF grant

The American Legion's Child Welfare Foundation is accepting grant applications starting May 1, and they must be postmarked to National Headquarters by July 15. CWF accepts funding proposals from nonprofit organizations for projects that contribute to the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual welfare of children.

For more information on the grant guidelines and to download an application, visit: [www.cwf-inc.org/publications](http://www.cwf-inc.org/publications)



## COMMANDER'S MESSAGE

# Legion's 'commitment to community service'



**Dale Barnett**  
National Commander

I recently received a letter from Gloria Williams who lives in Powder Springs, Ga. She was unaware of The American Legion's "range of positive influence and the extent of the organization's commitment to community service" until a local family experienced an unfortunate tragedy – their 14-year-old son drowned while on a school trip overseas.

The young boy was a Boy Scout and his troop met at American Legion Post 294 in Powder Springs. According to Gloria, Post 294 members provided support to the boy's family by hosting a dinner for their loved ones after his funeral service.

"The generosity, kindness and support of Jerry Johnson (Post 294 commander) was amazing and greatly appreciated," Gloria said. "The actions of American Legion Post 294 were a spotlight on the mission and grand purpose of your fine organization. This caring action is an example to the rest of the Metro Atlanta community. Commander Barnett, I write this letter to commend Jerry Johnson and Post 294 for so humbly and significantly carrying out the mission of one of the most outstanding service organizations in our great country, The American Legion."

Gloria's letter is testament to the positive impact Legion posts have on their communities and why my awareness walks are important – they serve as a reminder to everyone that the Legion is here to support veterans, servicemembers, their families and the communities where they live.

With warmer weather on the horizon for many states, I encourage you to host a Walk for Veterans event in your community to spread awareness about the Legion's mission and support at the local, state and national level. Remember, National Headquarters staff can assist you with planning and promoting an awareness walk. For more information, contact Matt Herndon, deputy director of the Legion's Membership Division, by email [mherndon@legion.org](mailto:mherndon@legion.org) or phone [\(317\) 630-1406](tel:317-630-1406).

## MEMBERSHIP

## National Commander Honor Ribbon

During the 2015-2016 membership year, American Legion National Commander Dale Barnett will award his National Commander Honor Ribbon to any American Legion Family that achieves 100 percent membership by May 30, 2016.

For this award, the Legion Family is defined as a post and any combination of an Auxiliary unit, Sons squadron or Legion Riders chapter. Each branch must achieve 100 percent membership to qualify for the award.

The National Commander Honor Ribbon incentive program will end May 30, 2016, or when supplies are exhausted.

Download the form online:

[www.legion.org/commander/ribbon](http://www.legion.org/commander/ribbon)



## MEMBERSHIP

## Recruiters to be honored with 'Duty, Honor, Country' pin

During the 2015-2016 membership year, American Legion National Commander Dale Barnett will award his national commander pin to any Legion Family member who obtains three new members into the Legion.

A new member is any eligible person joining for the 2016 membership year who was not a member of The American Legion during the 2015 membership year.

Each member listed must be eligible for membership in The American Legion. Forward names of SAL

members or Auxiliary members to your detachment or unit for use in their respective incentive programs.

To maintain the integrity of the national commander's pin incentive program, only one pin will be awarded per individual.

Upon receipt, national membership staff will confirm the names and mail the pin directly to the person who earned it. Commander Barnett's pin incentive program will end June 30, 2016, or when supplies are exhausted.

[www.legion.org/commander/pin](http://www.legion.org/commander/pin)





## NATIONAL ADJUTANT'S MESSAGE

**'Boys State puts men on a track to succeed'***Congressional aide Rontel Batie credits Legion program as steppingstone to political career.*

By Daniel S. Wheeler

American Legion Boys State programs will be getting underway next month, giving rising high school seniors the opportunity to learn the rights, privileges and responsibilities of franchised citizens. Legion post select students to attend the program, and for Rontel Batie, he will be forever grateful to Post 194 in St. Augustine, Fla., for giving him the exposure he needed to leave his rough neighborhood and earn a full tuition college scholarship.

Now, the 2006 Florida Boys State alum is a legislative aide for Rep. Corrine Brown, D-Fla., who serves as the ranking member on the House Veterans' Affairs Committee.

"I didn't know what I wanted to do after high school, but I knew I wanted to get out of town," Batie said. "Boys State got me out of town for the first time; that was the exposure I needed."

He "didn't know anything" about politics, but upon arrival to Boys State, Batie saw other young men campaigning for mayoral positions.

"I watched guys get up there and do these one-minute speeches and I knew I could do that too," he said. Batie ran for, and won, election as police chief and judge for his "city" at Boys State, and added duties as chief financial officer.

After high school graduation, Batie attended Florida A&M University in Tallahassee. There, he was freshman class president and president of the university's chapter of College Democrats. And he interned for Brown in 2010 through the Congressional Black Caucus intern program.

"I applied for this program three times, didn't get in three times," Batie said. "But I just busted my butt, tried to show how talented I was... she stayed in contact with me, visited my family."

Batie worked in Brown's office as an aide before earning a full-time job in her office as an advisor on veterans affairs, housing and higher education issues all because he got a chance



through Post 194 to attend Boys State.

"A lot of guys in my neighborhood took to other means to help their families, they sold drugs ... I was surrounded by people getting in trouble every day," Batie said. "We had no one telling us, you can go to college."

"I think (Boys State) is life-changing, especially for young men that come from underserved communities. Boys State puts men on a track to succeed."

As one of the most respected and selective educational programs of government instruction for high school students, Boys State is more than a training for future politicians. Distinguished program alumni include Michael Jordan, Jon Bon Jovi, Bruce Springsteen, Tom Brokaw, Garth Brooks and Neil Armstrong.

The program is often described as "a week that shapes a lifetime" and has had a remarkable influence on this country since two Illinois Legionnaires established the first Boys State in 1935. I'm proud that through Boys State and Boys Nation, The American Legion has been a part of the forging of the next generation of American leaders.

**Share your  
post-related  
success story**

Email: [dispatch@legion.org](mailto:dispatch@legion.org)

# Dispatch

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families that cannot cover the cost of hearing aids for their children.

The Department of Nevada approved the resolution, and the first grant was issued in December 2010, providing hearing aids to a 7-year-old in Las Vegas. Since then, 21 Hear Today – Learn Tomorrow grants of up to \$3,000 have been provided to help families with hearing impaired children throughout Nevada.

“I get very emotional about children who need hearing aids because they are our future,” said Sherwood, a member of Post 37 in Fernley. “The program ensures that children are not excluded from their peers or any educational opportunities at school. Hear Today – Learn Tomorrow goes hand in hand with the Legion ... because it gives these kids an opportunity to maybe participate in an Americanism program such as Legion Baseball or the Oratorical Contest.”

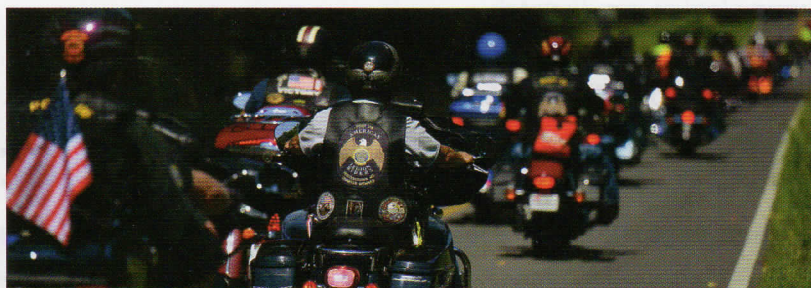
The program received a \$3,000 American Legion Child Welfare Foundation grant in 2009, which provided promotional flyers to audiologists and ear, nose and throat doctors statewide. A parent’s veteran status is not a requirement to receive a Hear Today – Learn Tomorrow grant. Hearing specialists inform parents about the grants and put them in contact with Sherwood to fill out applications and discuss payment needs. Sherwood then speaks with the patient’s hearing specialist to see what type of hearing aid the child needs, and if approved, a grant is issued directly to the audiologist or the specialist.

“The American Legion has been a blessing to us and we are so thankful,” said Brooke. “I was surprised to find out that insurance didn’t cover something that’s just as everyday as eye glasses. Hearing is imperative for Julia’s education.”

Hear Today – Learn Tomorrow is financially supported by donations from the Nevada Legion Family, as well as some private donations. “The Legion Family cares about these kids,” Sherwood said. And that compassion is illustrated in the positive impact the program has had children.

For example, one 15-month-old girl needed a special head unit until she could receive cochlear implants at age 7. The program provided a \$1,500 grant for the head unit and now “the child can say words because she can hear,” Sherwood said.

A 13-year-old boy had been wearing used hearing aids; they kept breaking. A Hear Today – Learn Tomorrow grant provided the boy with new hearing aids and the “look on his face when he received them makes all the work of Hear Today – Learn Tomorrow worth the effort that I have put into it,” Sherwood said. “This is where our future is.”



## LEGION RIDERS

# Register for 2016 Legacy Run

Online registration for the USAA-sponsored 2016 Legacy Run is now open and will remain so until Aug. 1.

Register at [www.mylegion.org/riders/registration](http://www.mylegion.org/riders/registration).

This year’s Legacy Run will leave Kenneth N. Dowden Wayne Post 64 Indianapolis at 9 a.m. on Aug. 21 and travel more than 1,300 miles through Indiana, Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia and Ohio.

On Aug. 25, the ride will conclude at Post 199 in Harrison, Ohio, on the eve of the 98th American Legion National Convention in Cincinnati. From Aug. 25-28, Post 199 and other Ohio American Legion Rider chapters will host Rider events, meals and runs.

More than 500 riders are expected to participate in the Legacy Run, which raised more than \$1.2 million for The American Legion Legacy Fund in 2015. The Legacy Fund provides college scholarships for the children of parents who died while on active-duty military service on or after Sept. 11, 2001; in 10 years, the Legacy Run has raised more than \$6 million for the fund.

The registration fee is \$50 for riders and \$25 for passengers. Non-riders may also register in support of the Legacy Run.

All supporting registrations of \$25 or greater will receive the full map book set and 2016 American Legion Legacy Run Patches through the mail.

All map books, patches and other registration material will be mailed to all pre-registered riders, passengers and supporters on or before Aug. 12.

## CENTENNIAL SPOTLIGHT

# Post 65 in Metuchen, N.J.

In 1940, every past commander of Fugle Hummer Post 65 in Metuchen, N.J., had to dress as a woman. This was part of a traditional “roasting” according to the post’s Centennial page.

## SHARE YOUR POST’S LEGACY

Upload photos, print materials and videos of your post’s history on the Legion’s Centennial Celebration website:

[www.legion.org/centennial](http://www.legion.org/centennial)







Photo courtesy of Post 554 in Morley, Mich.

## POST ACTIVITIES

# Michigan post's victory garden feeds local veterans

A few years ago, Tom Roesly read a magazine article about World War II victory gardens. During the war, people planted and grew their own vegetables so canned goods could be saved for the soldiers. This inspired Roesly to plant a victory garden at his American Legion post to feed area veterans.

"It's made me feel good that I could do something for the community," said Roesly, a member of Post 554 in Morley, Mich. "And it's brought members of the post together by everybody getting involved and going out in the garden to plant."

A wrought iron trellis welcomes veterans into Post 554's victory garden, which is 120 feet by 32 feet. Starting in April, Legion Family members prepare the garden's soil for the planting and harvesting of vegetables, which include tomatoes, squash, potatoes, peppers, cucumbers, snow peas, onions, cauliflower and cabbage. During harvesting season, vegetables are placed on tables in the post daily for any veteran – not just members – to take.

The victory garden's vegetable supply is made possible by donations from members, post visitors and local garden shops. Roesly keeps a jar next to the freshly picked vegetables for donations, but they are not required.

"We have fed a lot of veterans since we started the garden in April 2013," Roesly said. "It's great seeing veterans coming and get fresh vegetables; especially those who can't afford them or don't have the means of planting themselves."

## OPERATION COMFORT WARRIORS

# Hoosier post donates \$50,000 to OCW

American Legion Post 64 in Indianapolis held its fourth annual Operation Comfort Warriors (OCW) fundraising event



April 3, surpassing last year's OCW donation total by nearly \$20,000. A \$50,567 check was presented to Past National Commander Jim Koutz during the event, which was open to the public.

"They work hard here at Post 64; they believe in the Operation Comfort Warriors program," Koutz said. "We have to keep taking care of our wounded, injured and ill troops."

Post 64 Adjutant Danny Rice initiated the fundraiser when Koutz was elected national commander in 2012 and made OCW his primary fundraiser, raising more than \$1 million for the Legion's flagship wounded warrior support program.

"I love supporting our wounded veterans and Koutz is the one who got me started with the (OCW) fundraising event," Rice said.

Legion Family and community members who came to support the cause enjoyed a \$5 bean and ham dinner, a 50/50 and candy raffle, and were able to bid on auction items such as a homemade quilt and hammock, autographed PNC Koutz memorabilia and a gold plated Jeff Gordon collector's race car. All proceeds went to OCW.

The fundraiser was advertised in the local newspaper and on Post 64's Facebook page, drawing non-members like Jerry and Jane Greenlee out to the post to "support them."

"By opening our doors to the community, it lets them see what we do here," said Post 64 Commander Kenny Hoffman. "We are proud to do this; we want the community to know that we are here for the veterans and their families."

Besides the OCW fundraiser, Post 64's Legion Family members (Auxiliary, Sons of The American Legion and Legion Riders) have been donating proceeds from their 50/50 raffles and other community fundraising events to bring the OCW contribution total to more than \$50,000.

"We support Operation Comfort Warriors with open arms because we love our veterans, and we want to help out with their needs," Hoffman said.

Donations to OCW can be made online:

 [www.legion.org/ocw](http://www.legion.org/ocw)



## DID YOU KNOW?

- The United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration symbol is the watermark for the 2017 American Legion and Sons of The American Legion membership cards.



- A booklet is available to help you craft an American Legion resolution. Download the booklet online: [www.legion.org/resolutions](http://www.legion.org/resolutions)
- The South Carolina State House recognized the 2015 American Legion World Series champions Chapin-Newberry (S.C.) Post 193 on March 16. The team was invited to the State House for a reading of a concurrent resolution that recognized the young men for their Legion Baseball accomplishments. They received a standing ovation from members of both the House of Representatives and Senate. [www.legion.org/baseball](http://www.legion.org/baseball)
- Indiana Legionnaire Paul Norton found a 39-star U.S. flag at a rummage sale while on travel in Florida. Read more online: [www.legion.org/flag](http://www.legion.org/flag)



**DATELINE: CAPITOL HILL**

## VA launches Airborne Hazards and Burn Pit Registry



**Brett P. Reistad,**  
Chairman, National  
Legislative Commission

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) launched its Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry for veterans and servicemembers who may have been exposed to airborne hazards such as burn pits, oil-well fires and dust storms.

The registry is open to anyone who served in:

- Operations Enduring Freedom/Iraqi Freedom/New Dawn
- Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm
- Southwest Asia theater of operations after Aug. 2, 1990, to include Djibouti, Africa, or Afghanistan after Sept. 11, 2001.

Many veterans have reported respiratory symptoms and health conditions that may be related to exposure to burn pits. The long term health effects of exposure to burn pits and other airborne hazards are not fully understood; VA set up the registry to better understand these health effects.

The registry gives participants the opportunity to document any concerns they may have about deployment-related exposures, and it provides the opportunity to obtain a free health evaluation by the VA or a Department of Defense provider. The evaluation can identify and document any problems potentially related to the exposures and ensures ongoing follow-up for any existing health conditions, or any additional conditions that could emerge in the future.

The burn pit registry, and all other VA registries, are unrelated to the service-connected disability compensation rating process. While a registry note in your medical record summarizing your exposure concerns and related medical treatment may serve as evidence to support a claim, it is not a necessary document or step in the claims process.

Visit the registry at <https://mobile.va.gov/app/burn-pit-registry>.

### Legion testimony

On March 15, The American Legion presented testimony to the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee hearing on pending veterans legislation. Legislation discussed included:

- **S. 2473:** Express Appeals Act of 2016. The bill will direct the VA Secretary to carry out a pilot program to provide veterans the option of using an alternative appeals process to more quickly determine claims for disability compensation.
- **S. 2633:** Improving Veterans Access to Care in the Community Act. The bill will improve the ability of the VA Secretary to provide health care to veterans through non-VA health-care providers.
- **S. 2646:** Veterans Choice Improvement Act. The bill will amend title 38, United States Code, to establish VA's Veterans Choice Program in effort to improve health care provided to veterans by the department and for other purposes.



# MEMBERSHIP INCENTIVES AND AWARDS

## RECRUITER OF THE YEAR SUBMISSIONS, 2015-2016

American Legion post commanders or adjutants must submit their top membership recruiter for the 2015-2016 membership year by May 11 to department headquarters. Department headquarters will supply certification forms to be completed by the post commander or adjutant. Department adjutants will determine the top new member recruiter for their respective department and certify the winner to National Headquarters by May 31.

The Legionnaire certified with the highest number of new members recruited will be declared the National Membership Recruiter of the Year. The award entitles the winner and a guest to attend National Convention, Aug. 26 - Sept. 1, in Cincinnati, with round-trip airfare, hotel accommodations for six days/five nights and tickets to the National Commander's Banquet.

Monetary awards will be presented to the next 26 top recruiters.

The Recruiter of the Year form can be downloaded online:

[www.legion.org/recruiting/forms](http://www.legion.org/recruiting/forms)

And remember, during the 2015-2016 membership year, National Commander Dale Barnett will award his National Commander pin to any American Legion Family member who obtains three new members into The American Legion. A new member is defined as any eligible person joining for the 2016 membership year who was not a member of The American Legion during the 2015 membership year. For more information, go to: [www.legion.org/commander/pin](http://www.legion.org/commander/pin)



## GOLD AND SILVER BRIGADE

Legionnaires who recruit 50 or more new members (transfers do not count as new members) into The American Legion by the May target date qualify for The American Legion's Gold Brigade award.

First-time Gold Brigade members will receive a Gold Brigade patch, a special Gold Brigade cap pin, a Gold Brigade certificate, and a



designer jacket or polo shirt or sweater with a Gold Brigade logo. Second time/repeat Gold Brigaders will receive a Gold Brigade patch and certificate, a hash mark for a jacket sleeve, and a designer jacket or polo shirt or sweater with a Gold Brigade logo. A Gold Brigader who has won the award for five consecutive years is eligible for a distinctive Gold Brigade blazer. And a Gold Brigader who has earned the award for at least six consecutive years or more is eligible for a \$150 check and a Legion cap with the inscription "Master Recruiter."

A Legionnaire who recruits 25-49 new members (transfers do not count as new members) into The American Legion by the May target date qualify for the Silver Brigade award.

Download the National Membership Points Award Manual: [www.legion.org/publications](http://www.legion.org/publications)

## POST EXCELLENCE AWARD CONTINUES

The Post Excellence Award program honors posts that show excellence in membership participation, youth activities, community service, and support to veterans and U.S. troops.

### Criteria

- **Membership.** Post membership must be at least one member more than the previous year. A post officer must attend district meetings.
- **Youth activities.** The post must sponsor and actively participate in at least one primary youth program: Boys State, Legion Baseball, Oratorical Contest, Boy Scouts of America or Junior Shooting Sports.
- **Community service.** The post must organize a community service project that involves members of the Legion, Auxiliary or Sons of The American Legion. A monetary donation may only be one part of a project.
- **Service to troops or veterans.** The post must organize a

project supporting troops or veterans (for example, Family Support Network or Operation Comfort Warriors) that involves members of the Legion, Auxiliary or SAL outside the post. A monetary donation may only be one part of a project.

**Certification.** District commanders must certify posts as having fulfilled the four specified criteria, and submit a list of the post's name, number, address and commander's name to department headquarters. If possible, accompany with copies of press releases submitted to local media that raise awareness for the projects and enhance the Legion's public image.

**Awards.** Each qualifying post, as well as district commanders whose districts have at least 50 percent of posts reach certification, will receive a certificate of recognition.

[www.legion.org/commander/postexcellence](http://www.legion.org/commander/postexcellence)



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ALL FOR AADC 553

## MEMBER DISCOUNTS

# Defense Mobile offers discount to Legion members

The American Legion formed an alliance with Defense Mobile to offer Legion members a discounted rate on their cell phone service. The Connecticut-based company is delivering 4G LTE wireless coverage on the nation's largest networks for less to veterans, military servicemembers and their families.

American Legion members are eligible to receive a special discount on their mobile service from Defense Mobile for a limited time.

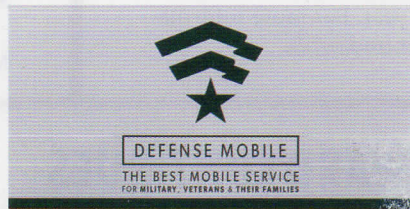
### Defense Mobile is offering Legion members two options:

- The Alpha plan for \$19.98 per month. This plan includes 300 minutes of talk time, 300 texts and 300MB of 4G LTE data a month. Use the promo code TALALPHA at checkout.
- The Bravo plan for \$24.98 per month. This plan includes unlimited talk, unlimited text and 1GB of 4G LTE data. Use the promo code TALBRAVO at checkout.

To claim either offer, American Legion members will need to activate service with Defense Mobile by June 30, 2016. This special pricing includes the 10 percent discount available to all members of The American Legion.

Legion members can learn more about Defense Mobile and how to start receiving discounted cell service by visiting <http://weare.defensemobile.com/tal>.

Legionnaires will need to provide the appropriate promo code at checkout and verify military service using their Legion member number when activating Defense Mobile service. This offer is only available to Legion members who buy and activate service, and sign up for AutoPay.



## PLANNER

### May

- 2-5 NEC Spring Meetings, Indianapolis
- 11 100 percent membership target date
- 30 Memorial Day

### June

- 6-8 Samsung American Legion Scholarship recipient recognition, Washington, D.C.
- 14 Flag Day