New Year, New Legion Resolutions

Over the years, I have known my share of resolutions. I’m not talking about the usual ones people make this time of year — lose weight, quit smoking, stick to a budget — but American Legion resolutions, the marching orders our members adopt to improve the lives of veterans, U.S. military personnel, families and communities everywhere.

Few topics have so frequently found their way into the Legion’s portfolio of national resolutions as the backlog of undecided VA disability benefits claims. The problem is now counted in the hundreds of thousands. With veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars pouring home and re-entering civilian life, the backlog continues to grow in both volume and complexity.

Many of these veterans have multiple service-connected conditions that will follow them for the rest of their lives. Others are going to VA seeking long-awaited help for conditions linked to Agent Orange exposure, previously untreated combat stress, or service-related issues that have worsened with age.

VA and the Legion agree that all veterans deserve timely decisions about disability benefits, and that the current logjam is intolerable.

More than 2,000 American Legion service officers work every day to help veterans correctly file for their benefits. VA has piloted many promising programs to accelerate the process. VA and DoD are working together to streamline medical records management and make the most of online tools. Progress is being made, but — as VA Secretary Eric Shinseki explained last summer — nearly four million VA claims have been adjudicated since 2009, including about 1 million in 2012 alone. Claims are coming in faster than VA and our service officers can keep up.

The American Legion, VA and DoD are committed to solving this problem. VA has targeted 2015 as the year to have no claims pending more than 125 days, with 98 percent accuracy. To help, the Legion is working with VA to ensure that innovations such as the Fully Developed Claims program (www.benefits.va.gov/transformation/fast-claims) are a success. This program reduces the need for adjudicators to provide additional instructions or request more documentation after a claim is filed and certified as complete, allowing for speedier decisions.

The Legion will also continue to provide boots-on-the-ground intelligence to help VA identify processing hang-ups throughout the country and highlight best practices at regional offices.

Department service officers are working closely with VA and software programmers to strengthen technological solutions like the Veterans Benefits Management System. The Legion’s Claims Coach smartphone app (www.legion.org/mobileapps) offers veterans organizational tools, answers to questions about benefits and a directory of service officers who can help.

The claims backlog is VA’s biggest challenge, and the Legion is dedicated to helping bring it under control.

It’s going to take a concerted effort from everyone who cares about veterans and their families to keep us from having to make the same resolutions year after year.

— National Commander James E. Koutz, December 17, 2012

Oratorical Contest Looking for Volunteers

Set for Feb. 16 in Waterville

The contest will be held Feb 16, 2013 in the Thomas College Auditorium at 180 West River Rd., Waterville Maine 04901.

The Snow date is the following Saturday, Feb 23, 2013.

We request all Staff to be there by 8:00 AM and all participates to be there NLT 8:30 AM.

We need Staff Volunteers to help in several areas this year.

* Judges
* Holding Room Monitors
* Escorts
* Timers
* Tabulators
* Door Guards
* Luncheon Coordinators

If you would like to assist, please call Tommy L. Adkins at 469-2616 or email at tomadkins@myfairpoint.net.

Veteran’s Day:
Madawaska American Legion Riders Firing Squad at Northern Maine Veterans Cemetery in Caribou on Nov. 11.

U.S. Consulate’s Visit:
Legion Seeks Eagle Scouts

The American Legion, Department of Maine is seeking nominations for the 2013 Eagle Scout of the Year. The state winner will receive a $500 scholarship and is automatically entered in the national competition. Scouting units across the country. This is natural for Legionnaires who bring their service-learned skills and experiences as veterans to help build character and positive traits in our country's youth. Few other organizations at the national convention in 1919. Today, Legion posts sponsor more than 2,500 Scouting units across the country. This is true of Legionnaires who bring their service-learned skills and experiences as veterans to help build character and positive traits in our country's youth. Few other post activities generate more goodwill from the community.

The American Legion is dedicated to serving veterans, past, present and future,” said Daniel S. Wheeler, national adjutant of The American Legion, the nation’s largest veterans service organization with 2.3 million members. “The Warrior Appreciation Night is a great way to acknowledge and honor our heroes — those who have served and those currently serving to protect our nation and the communities where we live. The American Legion is truly honored to be the presenting sponsor of Warrior Appreciation Night.”

The trade show is also an opportunity to raise funds for The American Legion and seven other veterans charities organizations. One example is an online raffle by Patriot Promotions, which will donate a portion of proceeds to The American Legion’s Operation Comfort Warriors program. All donations to OCW go toward purchasing items for wounded servicemen and women that are not generally supplied by the federal government.

Past items include loose-fitting sweat-suits for burn victims, exercise equipment and entertainment in the form of DVDs, CDs and gift cards. The raffle is hosted by the United States Practical Shooting Association (USPSA) on its website (https://www.uspsa.org/ocw). For more information about the USPSA online raffle, please visit www.uspsa.com. For more information about Operation Comfort Warriors, please visit www.legion.org/OCW.

Time to Do It: Pay Your Legion Dues Today

Legion membership is annual, the Legion year running from Jan 1 to Dec. 31. If dues are not paid by Jan. 1 of each calendar year, the member becomes delinquent. If dues have not been paid by Feb. 1, the member is suspended, is not in good standing, and is not eligible for transfer.

The only method of transferring from one post to another so the continuity of the membership in the Legion is not broken is by formal transfer, which is available only to members in good standing.

If you do not have a membership card that reads “2013” then you are now a delinquent member. Your post tries so hard to get your dues collected prior to Jan. 1, so that you do not lose any benefits of your membership, including insurance coverage.

If you don’t have a “2013” card, please contact your local post today and pay them so your membership in The American Legion remains continuous.

Scholarship Apps Ready

Applications are now available for the Department of Maine Children and Youth Scholarships, the Daniel E. Lambert Memorial Scholarship and the James V. Day Scholarship. Any Post, individual or school who would like to receive a copy may obtain one by going online to www.mainelegion.org or under Forms/Applications, or by contacting us by mail at The American Legion, Department of Maine, P.O. Box 900, Waterville, ME 04903-0900, email: legionme@mainelegion.org, or Tel: (207) 873-3229.

The American Legion to Sponsor Warrior Appreciation Night

Set for Week of SHOT Show in Las Vegas

The American Legion is the presenting sponsor of the 6th Annual Warrior Appreciation Night (WAN), a premier event held Jan. 17, 2013, during the week of the “SHOT Show” (Shooting, Hunting and Outdoor Trade Show) in Las Vegas.

The event will give attendees and invited guests of the National Shooting Sports Foundation “SHOT Show,” the opportunity to reflect and honor their fallen brethren, veterans and law enforcement officers with special guests, decorated warriors and Medal of Honor recipients. WAN is expecting 800 participants to attend the 2013 event; the previous one had more than 500 in attendance.

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Legion, Scouts Go Back to ’19

The American Legion’s support for Boy Scouts of America began at the Legion’s first national convention in 1919. Today, Legion posts sponsor more than 2,500 Scouting units across the country. This is natural for Legionnaires who bring their service-learned skills and experiences as veterans to help build character and positive traits in our country’s youth. Few other post activities generate more goodwill from the community.

The Legion annually honors the Eagle Scout of the Year at the national convention. The winner of the competition receives a $10,000 scholarship, and the three runners-up are each awarded $2,500 scholarships. To obtain a copy of the 2013 Eagle Scout Nomination Form, please visit www.legion.org/scholarships/eaglescout or under Forms/Applications.

Further information is also available from department adjutants, or the Americanism and Children & Youth Division:
The American Legion
P.O. Box 1055
Indianapolis, IN 46206

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Defense Bill Benefits America’s Military & Maine’s Economy

As a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, I have always worked to support our troops, veterans, and their families. The 2013 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) not only will strengthen our military, but also will benefit Maine’s economy and help create good-paying jobs at a time when they are sorely needed. Maine’s contributions to our national security stretch from Kittery to Limestone and affect workers in every one of Maine’s 16 counties. The NDAA will provide essential training, equipment, and support for our troops. The legislation will provide critical force protection to our men and women in uniform; help restore our military’s readiness; and continue the development of technologies to counter existing and emerging threats.

The 2013 NDAA authorizes important funding for Navy shipbuilding, including $1 billion for the U.S. Navy’s DDG-51 program and $669 million for the DDG-1000 program, both of which are being built at Bath Iron Works (BIW). I am especially pleased that the bill includes a provision that I requested that provides multi-year procurement authority for up to ten DDG-51 destroyers, one more than the President’s budget request, which would help ensure the workload at BIW through 2017. In April, I was delighted when the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), Admiral Jonathan Greenert, accepted my invitation to visit BIW — his first visit to Maine since becoming CNO. During that visit, he not only saw the first DDG-1000 that is being built at Bath, but he saw first-hand the talent and dedication of the men and women who work at BIW. Admiral Greenert told me how impressed he was with the pride and professionalism of the workforce.

The bill also authorizes $8.5 billion for Navy ship repairs, which includes the overhaul, refueling, and maintenance of nuclear-powered submarines at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard (PNSY) in Kittery. During his visit to Bath, Admiral Greenert also spoke highly of the workforce at PNSY. It was extremely encouraging to hear him say that “Pembroke fills a critical need for overhaul of our submarines. I don’t see that need diminishing at all in the future.”

The Defense Authorization Act also includes funding for many other defense-related projects that will benefit Maine, our economy, and our national security. The bill authorizes $812 million for depot maintenance at National Guard repair sites, including the Maine Military Authority in Limestone; full funding for the procurement of 29 Joint Strike Fighter aircraft — components for the F-35 are built at Pratt & Whitney in North Berwick and at General Dynamics’ facility at Saco Defense; and $606 million in funding for research and development for the CH-53K marine helicopter. Huntington Ingalls in Furiousburg manufactures the rotor shaft for this helicopter. In addition to funding for procurement of the Common Remotely Operated Weapons System, or CROWS, portions of which are being built in Biddeford, South Paris and Arundel, the bill also authorizes $232 million for research and development of aerospace propulsion systems. The University of Maine conducts research on new propulsion and power technologies.

I successfully secured language in this bill that will require the Secretary of Defense to report to Congress regarding the growing threat of insider attacks in Afghanistan. Congress must understand the nature and scope of this problem. We must help ensure that the Pentagon and the Afghans are taking every possible step to prevent these attacks and ensure the strategy there is not undermined by their tragic occurrence.

The final bill also includes an amendment that I authored which allows the Army to conduct a study to examine the effectiveness of the Army’s Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Program intended to strengthen the mental and emotional resilience of soldiers facing the stress and trauma associated with combat.

Finally, the bill includes an amendment that I cosponsored to strengthen the Department’s treatment of those convicted of sexual abuse or sexual assault against a minor; and mandate that these individuals be automatically processed for separation; if the terms of their court-martial conviction did not include a dishonorable discharge.

The National Defense Authorization Act provides vital resources to our troops and our nation. It also boosts Maine’s economy by recognizing the enormous contributions made by our state to our national security.

On the Agenda

JANUARY DISTRICT MEETINGS

District 2 — Cumberland: Mar. 10, Naples Post 155, 2 p.m.
District 3 — Androscoggin: Mar. 10, Sabattus Post 135, 2 p.m.
District 5 — Oxford: Mar. 20, Norway Post 82, 7 p.m.
District 9 — Kennebec: Mar. 13, Waterville Post 5, 7 p.m.
District 11 — Waldo: Mar. 17, Stockton Springs Post 157, 2 p.m.
District 13 — Penobscot: Mar. 3, Newport Post 105, 12 noon lunch, 1 p.m. mtg.
District 14 — Piscataquis: Mar. 16, Dexter Post 53, 6:30 p.m. dinner, 7:30 p.m. mtg.
District 16 — S. Aroostook: Feb. 3, Caribou Post 15, 1 p.m. dinner, 2 p.m. mtg., Four Chaplains
District 17 — N. Aroostook: Feb. 3, Van Buren Post 49, 1 p.m. dinner, 2 p.m. mtg., Four Chaplains Service

MARCH DISTRICT MEETINGS

District 2 — Cumberland: Jan. 16, South Paris Post 72, Oratorical contest, 7 p.m.
District 9 — Kennebec: Jan. 9, Augusta Post 265, 7 p.m.
District 11 — Waldo: Jan. 20, Belfast Post 43, 2 p.m.

Legion Hospital Equipment Program Has Its Own Storage Space

By CHRIS DeBECK

Lincoln News — Nov. 1, 2012

IN COLN — For the past several years, American Legion Post 77 has offered free medical equipment, such as wheelchairs and the like, at no cost to area residents who need the equipment.

The local post has been paying $65 per month to store the items in a locker, or $780 per year. Thanks to help from Penobscot Valley Hospital, local businesses and post members themselves, the equipment has a new, and free, place to store the equipment on outer West Broadway.

The building was formally dedicated during a brief ceremony on Monday afternoon, culminating months of effort and collaboration.

Darrell Savage, commander of Carl Burrill Post 77, said he first approached Dave Shannon, the hospital’s chief executive officer, about the idea at a local supermarket. Later, Shannon came up to Savage during the Homecoming 2012 parade with a response, Savage related Tuesday.

“Dave walked beside me and said, ‘It’s a go,’” Savage recalled. PVH donated about half of the $3,400 needed to complete the storage building, located across from Cook’s Corner on land donated by Ron Porter, Savage explained.

Mallett’s Mill in Lee donated material and members of the post donated their time and talent to construct the building, Savage explained.

Others donated money to finish paying for the building and, as of Monday afternoon, it was fully funded.

“As of today, the building is all paid for,” Savage said after the brief dedication ceremony, which included a sign placed on an outside door of the building.

“It’s nice to partner with the American Legion to really benefit the community,” Shannon said in a brief statement after the ceremony. “It’s nice to be able to help in this way,” Shannon added. “I’m happy we were able to do it.”

Savage said the program has been in operation for about 10 years and has equipment such as wheelchairs, mattresses, lifts and walkers for free. There is only one stipulation, he added.

“It (the equipment) must be returned in good, clean condition,” Savage added.

For more information about the program, call Savage at 794-5400.
The Adjutant Speaks

Here we are 2013 already. Boy it is hard to believe another year has gone by and we are in an altogether new year.

As I look back on last year and think of some of the things that were accomplished and of those comrades that answered the final call, I think of all of those individuals whose lives were touched by those that have gone. As with all the POWs and MIAs, let us not forget them and all that they might have done for The American Legion and the Department of Maine. They were important to their friends, their families, their communities and surely to us.

Looking forward to the year coming up it makes complete sense to me that there are things and accomplishments that we will have to face and take care of. There will be challenges galore but if we work together and do so without personal agendas we will make the year 2013 a memorable one for all concerned.

This year we will have our Mid-Winter conference in Waterville and the agenda looks very good. We hope that many of the District Commanders, Post Commanders and both District and Post Adjutants attend as there will be presentations aimed at them and the duties. The National Vice-Commander for our region, John E. Neylon, from New Hampshire will be joining us and bring us information from National and from National Commander Jim Kutz.

Plans are still being made regarding this year’s annual Department Convention. It is scheduled to be held in Augusta June 14, 15, and 16, 2013. Our National guest at that time will be Mr. Daniel Dillinger, leading candidate for National Commander 2013-2014 from the great state of Virginia.

The reason for this move from Bangor to Augusta is that the new Bangor Civic Center will not be ready for use at the time of our convention. Thus, it was recommended we have another locale to hold the convention this year.

There will be some changes from the Bangor set up but it is believed all will be happy with the housing, meal arrangements and other agenda items pertaining to the convention. This will also be the time that we as Legionnaires will decide whom we will have to head up our department for the upcoming year and whom we choose or vote for.

The next event will be our National Convention to be held in Houston, Texas this year from August 23 through 29. I hope that anyone who wishes to attend will so that we will have a good showing of Legionnaires from our State of Maine.

National convention hotel for our delegation will be the Courtyard by Marriott Downtown Houston.

From the information I have available, it continues to be one of the finest hotels we have been assigned to over the past few years and close to the convention center. Hopefully our delegation size will be greater this year. I ask that everyone consider attending and being part of the Maine delegation.

As I have said on numerous occasions in the past, if there is anything I can do for you, your post or district please do not hesitate to contact me at anytime. I will do what I can and if I can’t answer your question(s) I surely know where I can get those important answers no matter how small they might seem. As a matter of fact, no question is small or not important.

Commander’s Comments

I hope everybody had a very nice Christmas Holiday and I hope you’re having Happy New Year. When I was younger I don’t remember the time going by so fast.

We now have gone more than halfway through our Legion year. We are coming into a very busy part of the year for the American Legion. We have Winter Conference in Waterville at Post 5, Department Oratorical in Waterville at Thomas College in February, State Convention on June 14th, 15th, and 16th in Augusta, and Boys State June 16th—20th at Thomas College in Waterville.

We also have Legion Baseball all over the state in June, July, and August. Then there is the election of officer at the Posts, Districts, and Department Levels. A very important job that requires the Legionnaires to elect the people that can and wants to do the job to advance the American Legion and programs.

Wreath Laying:

CN09 Post Commander John Walther, left, and Ray Reiser lay a wreath at the St. John’s War Memorial on Nov. 11.

Service Office Update

Sheri who is going to be great... accreditation that is still holding Sheri up should not be much longer, where she has access to VA programs within our computers.

Holiday season is here again, let’s all get together and recognize those in our veteran homes, hospitals, nursing homes etc. Just stop by and say hi.

They would appreciate it and welcome it. They would appreciate it and welcome it.

The appeals process has not changed four years plus, a vet can do a lot in four years to Justify his claim... I recommend no appeals work at the regional office.

To everyone out there, have a great holiday season.

See you on the road sometime, God willing and the creek don’t rise and keep smiling, it drives them crazy...

LEST WE NOT FORGET
A ‘Second’ Look

As of this writing, The Department of Maine is meeting its membership goal and number twenty-two in the National standing.

The economy is still struggling, money is tight and balancing of Department budget is going to be a difficult task as overall membership drops along with interest rates. It is very imperative that dues of present members be paid now so we can concentrate on new members. We are in a membership valley with WWII numbers decreasing, Vietnam veterans getting older and Persian Gulf veterans busy with schooling, working and young families. Eventually the Gulf Veterans life styles will allow them to participate in legion functions of the future mean while we are there for them.

Public relations is a priority of National Headquarters and they have provided numerous publications, videos and just about everything you need to get the word out on what you do as Individual Legionnaires, Posts, Districts and Department. The more we do the more non-members will want to be a part of it and will join us.

Some members feel there is a lack of communications within the Department of Maine.

As someone who still doesn't have the VCR down, I am now entering the new method called cyber space, computers, cell phones and Wi-Fi. I can now get information instantly instead of waiting a week; I receive e-mails daily keeping me up to date with Department and National.

The Department issues a newsletter weekly called the Smile that can be obtained by given the Department Adjutant your e-mail address. Otherwise you may or may not be on the mailing list which by the way is very expensive to continue. The only document that every Maine member receives is the Legionnaire newspaper that is becoming very expensive to mail out and can be read online at no cost.

I agree that nothing beats face to face communications and many of our most active members prefer this method, however with the size of the State and the cost of travel, plus reaching smaller numbers it may lead to more use via the internet in the future. We are asked to provide training sessions but almost impossible to travel to all that need the training. A training session can be recorded and presented to all via the internet just like our universities provide courses on line. Like it or not it is the way of the future and we all need to work together through these changes for the good of the Legion. I can be reached at dick.graves58@yahoo.com or by cell at 299-4308. I welcome your questions and comments.

Historical Bulletin

Every Legionnaire Is a Historian

Everyone is a Historian - From the time you first answered your mother’s question, “What Happened?” you have been a historian. You mentally recorded and verbally reported the events so that your mother might assess the situation and take appropriate actions. The more complete the history the better the decisions to be made from it.

In my Sept-Oct article I recommended that certain documents be collected and placed together as part of each unit history. Those items come from many different members of the organization such as the unit Adjutant, property managers, committee members, Treasurers, membership rolls, attendance records, the unit consolidated report, meeting minutes, community correspondence and announcements, newspapers, television and radio input etc.

As the Historian you should ask for those documents, collect them into a cohesive body, properly labeled, stored and then summarized. These records, along with your unit’s stated goals and objectives allow for an assessment on the effectiveness of your Legion year.

A periodic review of these documents will help keep your unit focused and remind you of where your unit has been and these records help others who are responsible for larger programs to make determinations as to the success and failures of their programs.

Without the historical records of the units of our entire Department of Maine we can never truly evaluate the effectiveness of the Department as a whole in achieving The American Legion Four Pillars.

Please remember that unlike you answering your mothers question as to “What Happened?” no one person will be able to reveal the events that lead to the success or failure of an organizational goal or objective.

It is only by being able to go back through unit histories that we can determine the events or lack of that contributed to the success or failure. We can only make it better if we know where we are and that can only be done by documenting what we do.

Those unit histories are important; please don’t overlook their importance to the Department as a whole and to your members.

Eligibility Information to Join The American Legion

If you have served federal active duty in the United States Armed Forces during any of the war eras listed below, and have been honorably discharged or are still serving, you are eligible for membership in The American Legion!

August 2, 1990 to date of cessation
(Operation Desert Shield/Storm)
December 20, 1989 to January 31, 1990
( Operation Just Cause — Panama)
August 24, 1982 to July 31, 1984
(Lebanon/Grenada)
February 28, 1961 to May 7, 1975
(Vietnam)
June 25, 1950 to January 31, 1955

(Korea)

Because eligibility dates remain open, all members of the U.S. Armed Forces are eligible to join The American Legion at this time, until the date of the end of hostilities as determined by the government of the United States.

U.S. Merchant Marine eligible only from December 7, 1941 to December 31, 1946 (WWII).

Americanism Corner

I hope the Legion family had a great time over the Christmas and New Year’s holidays. I was very saddened to hear about the loss of two fine Legion family members to Post Everlasting. They will be greatly missed but not forgotten, Mickey Boutilier and George Seeley. They were my mentors when I joined the American Legion. They both worked so hard for the Special Olympics. I cannot say enough about them.

Time is running out for the Oratorical Contests. Let’s hope we have more contestants this year. Let’s remind the students about the scholarship money they can earn at the post level, district level, department level and national level.

Mid-Winter Conference is coming up in Waterville, Jan. 18-20. Hope to see you all there.

It has been my honor to be appointed National Vice-Chairman of The Americanism Council, Oct. 2012 — Oct. 2013 by the current National Commander. I will put any news of importance I receive from them in the Maine Legionnaire.

I have a great Department Americanism Committee and I am sure they are doing their job.

I am asking every American Legion member to call your Congressmen and Senators to pass the amendment for protection for Old Glory, the American flag.

God Bless every one of you.

I am entering the new millennium.

Keep smiling.

See you soon.

Past Department Commander Larry Dearborn at the Dedication Ceremony of the Battle Cross Monument on Veterans Day at the Mount Vernon Veterans Cemetery in Augusta on Nov. 11.

Winning . . . with Teamwork

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President’s Message

W

With the holidays behind us, we start off with our National Security and Legislative month of January. Please look at our Chairman Margaret Johnson and Lois Hubbard’s articles in the Pine Tree News and respond to their pleas. As Peggy Thomas, our National President said her overall theme is “Soaring to New Heights,” as we reach far and wide to welcome in new members and to expand our services. We strongly feel that by demonstrating Service not Self and engaging members in meaningful mission delivery, the American Legion Auxiliary will be appealing to everyone who shares our passion for veterans.

This being said, one of the best ways to support our Veterans is through the Creative Arts Festival. Plans are in the works to hold one at Togus Theater. We are hoping that some of our readers will attend and participate in the form of attendance, checking to see if help is needed, or more important, if you are a Veteran that has some form of art you would like to share check the Creative Arts on the web under alafavors.org.

Has your Unit reached 100% membership yet? If not, how about you helping the membership chair to get those last few members to renew and help your Unit. Department membership is at 67.4% as of December 20, 2012. We can make the next milestone of 75% by February 14; I know WE CAN!

February is Americanism Month and Chairman Donna (Bunny) Greenlaw has a test for all who would like to take it. Check this out in the Pine Tree News October issue. Bunny would like tests back by Mid-Year Conference on January 19, 2013. Now if you don’t have the Pine Tree News, ask your Unit President or Secretary to share this valuable information with your Members. So much time is spent creating the news and so few see it. Please share the information, communication is so important.

Judge Advocate’s Office

H

Happy New Year! Seems the Mayans were wrong! Or is Congress just taking a little longer than they counted on. C’mon, that’s a bipartisan joke!! I hope that you enjoyed a wonderful Holiday with family and friends, and that the New Year finds you healthy, and ready to face all the challenges and adventures this old world has to offer. We start off with a BIG one.

One that has seemed to lose a lot of energy over the last few years, and for the life of me, I don’t understand why. February 16th, Department is holding its annual Oratorical contest at Thomas College. I’m willing to bet that 15% of the people reading this just blinked, and skipped to someone else’s article, because who wants to hear about speeches, anyway. What was that LAST joke about, Steve? For this speech (Oratorical) contest is about our Constitution. The young folk have to take a small portion, an Article of our Constitution, and not only stand in front of us, talk about it, and smile. They have to do it so well, that they convince us that what they are saying is the correct interpretation, or at least make us think!

That’s how they win. Back to my joke. If more of our children knew more about our Constitution, and took the time to take a stand on the issues, we wouldn’t have to worry so much about Mayan Apocalypses….or Fiscal Cliffs? Have a wonderful New Year! Yours in Service.

Yarmouth Post 91 Adjutant Jennifer Bohr-Tydl and Post Commander Bert Kendall at Post membership meeting held at Yarmouth Post 91 on Dec. 4. (note: Adjutant taking minutes).

Yours in Service.
Legion Riders — Riding Into the Winter?

No, not really, although we have a few Riders that might. We are talking about the Maine Legion Riders — Winter Meeting. By popular demand we will be heading to the Sunset Room - 702 by y American Legion Post-21 in Bath. The Legion Riders have received the OK from the Post Commander, Ed Morton and the Officers and members of Post-21 and will welcome the Riders from all points of Maine. It will be held on Saturday, Feb. 9, with social time starting at noon. Lunch will be served at 1:00 p.m. with the areas best prepared meal provided by the American Legion Auxiliary. At 2:30 p.m. the Post Commander, Ed Morton will welcome and thank the Riders for the attendance. The Riders will then open the meeting with normal business as well as election of officers for the coming year. Also on the agenda will be input on the location of the 2013 Summer Rally. The Riders have enjoyed our different destinations because they have had the opportunity to not only visit local Legion Posts but meet the heart and souls of the members that make that Post successful and everything that they do.

The riders will also welcome our newest Rider Chapters from Lisbon Post-158, Berwick Post-79 and Sanford Post-19. To all Riders who need any information on this event, as well as any Post or guest that might want to attend, please contact me or any of the State officers of The Riders or visit our web-site for current information. We all look forward to seeing you in Bath on February 9th, 2013. Thank you all for your continued support of this great program.

— Paul L’Heureux
Executive Director

Nominate Worthy Law, Firefighter Candidates for Awards

The Department of Maine American Legion is now recommending all posts to commence consideration of local Firefighter of the Year Award to be awarded at Department Convention as well as local Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award. Both of these awards should be for a firefighter and law enforcement officer who has exceeded the requirements expected of his/her position and has shown a distinct pattern of community service and professional achievement.

The award also takes into account heroic acts. Local posts should contact their local police/fire departments for recommendations and background of individuals they would like to nominate for this award that will be awarded at Department Convention this coming June in Augusta. Nominees must be U.S. citizens and living, active, full-time and paid, sworn law enforcement officers entrusted with full authority and the powers of arrest. The nominees for firefighter must be active firefighters and U.S. citizens.

Emergency medical technicians (EMTs) are eligible only if they are certified firefighters. Posthumous awards will be acceptable only if the nominee’s death occurs after the department’s selection.

Nominees for law enforcement officer must also reside and be assigned or attached for duty in the nominating department. To obtain copies of the forms necessary to nominate individuals for these awards, you may go to mainelegion.org web site and under “Forms/Applications” scroll down until you see the respective award listed.

— Lloyd Woods
Department Adjunct

Dispatch Takes on a New Look for the New Year

Dispatch is not going away, but it is taking on a new form starting with the January issue. Instead of its current newspaper style, Dispatch will be reformatted into a succinct, colorful newsletter that informs readers on important Legion news, and guides them to Digital Dispatch at www.legion.org/dispatch for more in-depth content. While Dispatch will still be mailed monthly, Digital Dispatch provides high-quality information faster and more frequently to post, district and department leaders. It also allows leaders to have access to materials that will help them manage their posts, fulfill consolidated posts reports, increase members, submit award entries and communicate with one another, as well as with National Headquarters.

— Digital Dispatch

Scholarship Recipient: CN09 Post Commander John Walter presents Laura Howells, granddaughter of CN09 member Dave Stinson, with a scholarship at the Thanksgiving Day dinner held at Post CN09 on Nov. 22.

NEC Report: Many Dedicated to Our National Organization

Since elected as your National Executive Committeeman (NEC) for the State of Maine, I have spent most of the first few months reading over 60 Resolutions that were dealt with this past fall as well as many hours spent with other NEC people from other States. With so much information and procedures to learn and being assigned to The Public Relations Commission Liaison Committee as well, it has been a busy few months.

Back here in Maine we have already made some changes in the way that I work with the NEC Alternate, Brenda Dearborn. Because of working so well together in the past, we decided that we would share some of the work load and knowledge of the job so if I was not available to attend a meeting or felt that she was in a better position to make a difference for the veterans in Maine we could make it happen.

Well I am very pleased that we did this because she filled in for me to represent the female veterans at a special meeting with our National Staff. “Thank you Brenda for a great job.” We hope to make a few other changes in the near future that will give these positions some structure within the Department of Maine.

As far as the National workload, I am one of 22 new members elected and we were told that it was a change that has not been seen in a while. We spent 2 hours with the staff and had the opportunity to meet the Chairman of many of our National Committee’s. There are many dedicated people at our National Office, I can assure you all of that.

The one topic that was discussed many times over was the Resolution on the Risk Management Policies concerning the children and youth programs of the American Legion.

For those who are not aware, it concerns background checks of individuals working with the Legion Baseball teams, because youth programs have proven they can be a high risk environment for misconduct by adults in positions of authority and leadership. Representatives for the insurance agents that cover these teams for liability coverage advised that implementation of risk manage policies would be necessary in order to continue the coverage.

While The American Legion has confidence and trust in its volunteers, our changing society reflects what we needed to do to secure the safety and welfare of our youth as well as to cover the needed liability needed for our programs. This will be an ongoing process and I am sure we will discuss again in the near future. As always change does not always come easy.

In closing, thank you to those who take the time to ask questions about our organization and how it works. Remember that we are here for you and not ourselves.

Forward & Focused

—Paul L’Heureux
National Executive Committeeman
Calais Post 3

I would like to thank the members and staff of the Calais High School for their great Veterans Day Ceremony on Friday. It was a truly Remembrance’s Day Ceremony. I marched with the St. Stephen Legion for their Veterans Day Ceremony on Sunday, a great turnout. Captain Commander Mike The Calais Police Dept. and local Law enforcement had a nice “Operation Christmas Card” ceremony last week. They transported gifts and Christmas cards to the Calais Post Office, which will be distributed to our troops overseas.

Gardiner Post 4

Unit 4 donated $100 to the VA home to buy presents for the patients at Christmas. They also gave a Thanksgiving basket to a needy family.

Fairfield Post 14

Fairfield Post 14 donated $1,500 to the Town of Fairfield for the playground maintenance. They also provided gifts for two veterans at the VA Hospital in Togus totaling $296.64.

South Portland Post 35

South Portland Post 35 put together 33 food baskets. Half were delivered for Thanksgiving and the other half were delivered for Christmas.

Winthrop Post 40

Approximately $335 worth of gifts was purchased for the Togus Gift Shop and donated by Alfred Maxwell Jr Auxiliary Unit #40 in Winthrop. Along with this donation, the Unit has donated $200 to the Homeless Vets Program, $200 for Christmas gifts to four veterans at the Veteran’s Home in Augusta, and are adopting a Military Family for the Christmas Across Maine program at a donation of $500 for three children of a deployed soldier. They also donated $100 towards the Post’s ten Thanksgiving Food Baskets.

Damariscotta Post 42

Damariscotta Post 42 has been collecting items for the hurricane relief effort in New York and New Jersey. We have filled a tractor trailer truck from Yankee Pride with items such as clothing, outer ware, food, water, cleaning supplies, etc. In addition, we received donations from several area merchants, such as shoes, hammers and other construction and clean up supplies. Even the fuel for the truck to drive down was donated. The truck leaves early Saturday morning. We also received over $2,900 in cash donations. Thanks to all of those who helped!

Old Orchard Beach Post 57

Old Orchard Beach Post 57 for their donation of $1,000 to the Food Pantry for Thanksgiving, $300 to York County Shelters, $200 to Ronald MacDonald House, $200 to Sweetser, $400 for Hugs of Love, $900 for The Huot House & Veterans’ Career House and $9,000 to the OOB FD to be used for the purchase of the SMART STAT MAINIKIN.

Lincoln Post 77

Lincoln Post 77 donated $100 to the Toys for Tots program.

Berwick Post 79

Berwick Post 79 sponsored another Blood Drive with the American Red Cross on Nov. 17 at the Berwick Town Hall. The drive netted 46 units of blood on a very cold day. Next Drive will be in January.

Millinocket Post 80

All WWII veterans of the Donald V. Henry Post of the American Legion in Millinocket have been awarded a free membership to our Post. This was voted by the membership on Oct. 24, 2012.

Dixfield Post 100

The winners of this year’s Valve Cover Race are Victoria Barre, Car 54 with 43 points, 2nd place to Trevor Wright, Car 73 with 39 points. 3rd place to Jordan Barre, Car 66 with 38 points, and 4th place to Trivas Wright, Car #3 with 32 points. A new track will be built this winter for the coming year. The post would also like to thank Rumford Post 24 for the fun of allowing them to house their track for the season and to collaborate with them on such a fun season. Thank you, Director Gene Towlie and Treasurer Roland Patneaud, Post 24.

Winterport Post 138

Argonne Post # 138 of Winterport has voted free membership to WWII vets who are residents of Frankfort, Monroe and Winterport.

Madawaska Post 147

Madawaska Post 147 donated $300 to the American Red Cross for super storm Sandy victims.

Harpswell Post 171

Harpswell Post 171 voted to donate $500 to the Hurricane Sandy victims.

‘Need A Lift’ to Be Discontinued

For 62 years, The American Legion “Need A Lift?” handbook and CD-ROM served as a comprehensive financial aid reference guide to veterans, veterans’ dependents and members of the Legion Family. However, the Legion has decided to discontinue production of the “Need A Lift?” handbook and CD-ROM as it is no longer possible for individuals to easily search the Internet on our own for available scholarships and college information.

The decision to discontinue the financial aid handbook was made by the National Americanism and National Finance Commissions during the 2012 Fall Meetings in Indianapolis. “Need A Lift?” will be available online at www.legion.org/needalift until Jan. 1.

Communication about the discontinuation is being delivered to the department, district and post level by the Americanism and Children & Youth Division, but the Legion asks that you too please help spread the word.

— The American Legion — www.legion.org

Request for Honorable Service Certificate

1. Certificates: a. Certificates are issued for honorable service during a specific period: World War II, Korean War, Vietnam War, etc.; b. Certificates have, as a minimum: the Veteran’s name: wartime service displayed such as World War II, Korean War or Vietnam War; and a standard recognition of honorable service.

c. Certificates issued for World War II, Korean War, and Vietnam War have the likeness of the corresponding plaque imprinted on the certificate.

2. Eligibility: Members of the Armed Forces of the United States who served in World War II, Korean War, and Vietnam War have the likeness of the corresponding plaque imprinted on the certificate.


b. Honorable Discharge (General Discharge under Honorable Conditions does not qualify) * Served during a recognized war period (dates listed below) * Only living veterans will receive certificate

3. Application: Qualifying individual’s request a presentation ceremony, he/she will receive a letter notifying them of the date and time of the next ceremony in their region.

To request an Honorable Service Certificate, please follow the instructions listed above; fill out the Request for an Honorable Service Certificate form available online at http://maine.gov/dvem/bvs/Honorable%20Service%20Certificate%20Request%20Form.pdf and mail to: The Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management Maine Veterans’ Services 117 State House Station Augusta, Maine 04333-0117

For more information on how to request the certificate, please contact your local American Legion Post or visit the Legion’s website at www.legion.org.
Legion Ball Has Many Good Things to Offer

By DAN WARREN
Special To The Maine Legionnaire

Here is an American Legion baseball quiz for you today. It is multiple choice. Choose your answer:

a) American Legion baseball is a horrible creation, lousy for all involved, featuring terrible quality competition, unqualified coaches, and weak players;

b) American Legion baseball has served Maine and the nation well for more than 75 years, has a long list of distinguished professional ballplayers as alumni, and offers a busy June and July schedule, regional, state and national playoffs, and high caliber coaches made up of former pro and college players and coaches;

c) none of the above;

d) all of the above.

Here is my answer — I am not sure! I like American Legion baseball. I think all the good things said above are true. I also hear grumbling from some families that Legion ball will not do what they need done to get their son a pro contract, Division I college scholarship, or adulation of college coaches and professional scouts.

There is some truth to it all, I suppose.

Here is a set of questions and answers that come from discussions I have had with players, coaches, scouts, families, umpires, Legion officials and parents the past 5 years since I have been working with Libby-Mitchell Post 76 baseball in Scarborough.

QUESTION ONE — WHY SHOULD ANYONE PLAY AMERICAN LEGION BASEBALL?

The schedule is good with 20 to 30 games for each team against qualified, reliable opponents who will compete seriously and show up.

There are trained umpires. Good fields. Publicity in local papers for the efforts by the boys the Posts.

Play Legion ball, and you will get better.

QUESTION TWO — IS LEGION BALL LACKING ANYTHING THAT PLAYERS CAN GET IN A.A.U. BASEBALL?

Yes. Probably. After 15 years, here is my conclusion — Legion has everything that A.A.U. or other privately funded leagues have except one thing — lots of out of state competition. If you need to play doubleheader- ers in Fitchburg, Mass. or Laconia, N.H. to be athletically content, do not play Legion. We are by Maine, about Maine, in Maine!

Sundays you will go waterskiing at the lake, or be selling french fries at your local Harry's Clam Shack 10 to 2, not driving turnpike to turnpike.

QUESTION THREE — DOES LEGION HAVE ANY ACTIVE DRAWBACKS?

Yes. There has been a trend toward kids playing on a Legion roster—and on one or more other baseball team rosters. This spreads kids thin. This has coaches constantly doing “head counts”—Johnny, will you be there Thursday? Okay, how about Saturday? Etc. etc.

Forfeits have occurred from time to time. No good. Sign up a team, make sure your team shows up—every time.

( Remember, your league is sponsored by guys who had to show up for military battles with enemies—or you might not be free to day to be playing baseball!)

QUESTION FOUR — IS LEGION BASEBALL DOING ANYTHING ABOUT THIS PROBLEM?

Yes. Libby Mitchell now restricts its players to just one roster — play for us and us alone, or play for others, but not us.

We are in year three. It has been a good policy. Teaches kids loyalty and dedication. Allows coaches to coach baseball—and not spend all their time texting and emailing players!

QUESTION FIVE — ANYTHING ELSE IN LEGION BASEBALL FOR THE FUTURE FOR IMPROVEMENTS?

Yes. The junior level division will get bigger and better. This will keep young kids in the junior division longer—and allow the senior division to be made up mostly of older kids — juniors, seniors and college frosh — and therefore be better teams.

This will make the competition at all levels better. This will provide incentive for the 5 percent of kids who now go out of state to play, to remain here, play with Maine Legion teams, and allow the leagues to get better.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Legion has survived and flourished for more than 75 years because it has many good things to offer — and still does.

The grass will always be greener on the other side of the fence for some, and the fact is, for some it IS greener. If we keep working to improve our quality of play, however, we will keep getting stronger and stronger.
In an article published in the Smile concerning the American Legion Post 49 and Ladies Auxiliary as they hosted my 100th birthday party. To walk into the hall and be greeted by so many family, friends and fellow veterans gathered together to celebrate both Veterans Day and this milestone in my life was simply overwhelming.

I felt honored by the kind and thoughtful words of each and every speaker and the heartfelt congratulations expressed by everyone who took time out of their busy lives to share this most special day with me.

In this day and age, when we are unfortunately reminded on a daily basis of the terrible evil around every corner, it is good to know that there is still much love and goodness in the world.

It was an amazing evening that I will keep in my heart and thoughts forever.

— Adrian J. Cyr
Van Buren

Plenty to Do for Posts During the Winter

Harpstown AL Post 171 sponsored its 6th Togus VA Christmas Pizza Party for long-term care patients on Dec. 14, and donated a flat screen TV for the Day Room and 40 individual gifts. Santa, aka Roy Knight, assisted by service members, passed out the gifts. Left to right, patient VANCE USA, Roger Dumont USN (Ret), Post 171 Cdr. Bob Webber USAF, Trish DeFranco, Togus Recreation Therapist Liz Comaras-Marrone, Topsham Best Buy Manager Ray Poulin, who was extremely helpful, and Best Buy’s Steve Spaulding. Seated in front of Steve at far right is patient Larry USA. Members from all five services were present! Army National Guard: LTC Diane L. Dunn, Maj. Phillip G. Trevino, SFC John Knoblach, SPC Elysia E. Robinson; Marine Corps: SGT Brent Seawright, LCpl Kenton Weigelt, HM1 Jill Osborne; Navy SUPSHIPS (Bath) GSMC(SW) Eric Esancy, FC1 Jeremy Spencer; Air Force Recruiters TSgt Jason Moore, A1C Robert Cameron; Air Force National Guard MSgt Michael D. Smith and SrA Jade Peterson; Coast Guard: LT Kevin Rousseau, MST1 Sheridan McLeinan, FS2 Aldo Navarro, YN3 Leah Brett. The service members really connected with the patients, and a good time was had by all!

In Caribou:
Commander Ken Bouchard at Northern Maine Veterans Cemetery, Caribou on Nov. 11 as guest speaker.

Post 153 Hunters’ Breakfast Attracted Many

In an article published in the Smile concerning the American Legion, William J. Rogers Post 153 November Hunters breakfast, it stated: “plus an old Beaulieu family recipe for crepes that has been passed down for generations from Quebec and earlier from France. Don Beaulieu, Sergeant-at-Arms for the post, is the keeper of the secret recipe.”

At the breakfast, we had a legion member with his wife drive from Frenchville, Maine for the 8:00 am breakfast. Bertrand Michaud, Maine National Guard Family Readiness Volunteer who had read the Smile newsletter presented Don and Denis Beaulieu with the family crest, and materials on the Beaulieu Family History. Marc Beaulieu, a brother and member of the SAL’s will also receive the crest and family history. “I’ve been serving as an officer of the post for 10 years and this is a first time something like this happened,” said Don Beaulieu, Sgt-at-Arms. “That shows how public relations work is needful today and the surprise it can bring to the post and members, and today it made our family happy to be serving,” said Denis Beaulieu, Chaplain. Left to right, Sgt-at-Arms Don Beaulieu, Chaplain Denis Beaulieu, and Maine National Guard Family Readiness Volunteer Bert Michaud.

Commemorative Coin:
Holly Warner, U.S. Navy Veteran, Persian Gulf, received a Commemorative Coin and Certificate from Maine Director of Veterans Affairs Peter Ogden at Brunswick Post 20 meeting held at Topsham Post 202 on Dec. 9.

Photo by William Cicotte
Cross Memorial Dedication: NECA Brenda Dearborn, Congressman Mike Michaud, and NEC Paul L’Heureux meet at the Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Augusta for the Cross Memorial Dedication held on Veterans Day, Nov. 11.

First Vice Commander John Hargreaves speaks to members at the District 11 meeting held at Palermo Post 163 on Nov. 18, 2012.

Damariscotta Post 42 Hurricane Relief Drive.

Larry Sidelinger (S.A.L.) of Yankee Pride Transport, Damariscotta, and Russ Williams of Damariscotta Mills (whom are friends with many NYFD members in the Rockaway Beach area and Staten Island, NY) asked Post 42 American Legion and Auxiliary members Gerry and Gayle Gifford if they would like to be involved in another Hurricane relief drive as they did for Florida in 2005. They gladly agreed, and a box trailer was delivered to the Post on November 7.

The truck left 9 days later on Nov. 17, totally packed with clothes, winter wear, blankets, shovels, food, toiletries and many cash donations which will be given to “Towers to Tunnels” (a non-profit organization started by NYFD to help people in need).

The donations came from many businesses and people around the community. It was a big success! A big thank you goes out to the community, AL, S.A.L., Auxiliary and AL Riders of Post 42, and to Yankee Pride for delivering to NY.

Membership Is KEY!!!

Area 5 Representative Richard Bowden speaks to members of District 13 during the meeting held at Hermon Post 200 on Nov. 4. Bowden suggested an Area 5 conference for Districts 12, 13, and 14.
Legion
System Worth
Saving Task
Force Visits
Togus VA

By RALPH P BOZELLA
SWS Chairman

From November 13-15, 2012, a team of Legionnaires representing the National System Worth Saving Task Force (SWSTF), comprised of National VA&R Commission Chairman Ralph P Bozella (Colorado), VA&R Division Deputy Director Jacob Gadd, and VA&R Field Representative Roscoe Butler, both national staff from Washington D.C., conducted a site visit at the Togus, Maine VA hospital. They were joined by American Legion Department of Maine Commander Kenneth Bouchard and Alternate NEC Brenda Dearborn.

The SWSTF is comprised of seven volunteers from across the country, and staff members from the national office in Washington D.C. SWSTF members and staff select relevant topics of VA health care, plan and conduct site visits at specified VA health care facilities across the nation to evaluate VA process and procedures in meeting the health care needs of veterans. The topic for this visit is Women Veterans Health Care.

The SWS team met and interviewed Togus VA executive leadership, the women veterans program manager, business office staff, OIF/OEF program manager, mental health staff to include primary prevention and homeless veterans, and the facilities management.

They interviewed the staff on subjects affecting women veterans health care to include enrollment and access to care, level and type of care provided, culture change, health care needs, treatment of quality of care, VA benefits, staffing allocations, mental health initiatives and communications with other Togus VA clinics, and facilities. The site visit included a facility and environment tour and an update on the newly planned Women Veterans Clinic.

A town hall meeting was held at American Legion Post 206. Several Maine women VA patients and leaders including Maine Women Veterans Commission Chair Terry Moore attended the town hall meeting to provide their feedback regarding the treatment of women veterans through the Togus VA medical system.

A report will be completed within a few weeks, and become part an American Legion national publication of the 15 site visits to be conducted between November 2012 and April 2013. Commander Bouchard and ANEC Dearborn will work to draft some resolutions for the Department of Maine to consider and send to the National Executive Committee or the National Convention for consideration. If passed, the resolutions may be sent to congress for consideration as public law, or to VA Central Office for consideration as national policy.

The SWS team members were pleased with level of cooperation of Togus VA leadership and staff, and the participation of the department officers and local veterans. For more information regarding this site visit, please contact Jacob Gadd at the American Legion national office, 202-861-2700.

High School Students Can Participate in Speech Contest; Earn Scholarships

The American Legion National High School Oratorical Scholarship Program is once again underway. It is a Constitutional Speech contest providing winners with scholarships.

High school students, grades 9-12 of public schools, private schools, parochial schools, military schools and homeschooled are invited to compete in the 2012/2013 contest.

The usual procedure is for contestants to compete in a local Legion Post contest, progress to a District contest, and winner of each District advances to the State Finals.

The Department winner will represent Maine in the National Contest in Indianapolis in April 2013, with the National organization funding round-trip tickets, two nights at the hotel, and daily allowances for both the contestant, and a chaperone over 21 years of age.

The primary purpose of the contest is to instill in our students a better knowledge of the Constitution of the United States, emphasizing the duties and obligations of a citizen to the United States government. This is an opportunity for the student to pick a subject that interests him or her, whether it is what is wrong or right with our society/government and to express his/her ideals in relation to the US Constitution.

This portion shall not be less than eight (8) minutes or more than ten (10) minutes in length. The Assigned Topic Discourse will be one of the 4 listed in the Rules and Regulations, selected from the Articles and Sections of the Constitution, and presented in no less than three (3) or more than five (5) minutes. Contestants may use one of the four Assigned Topics as the basis of his/her Prepared Oration.

The State Oratorical Contest will be held on Saturday, February 16, 2013 at Thomas College in Waterville, Maine. A tentative snow date of February 23, 2013 has been scheduled.

The American Legion is anxious for parents and teachers to urge their children and students to be a contestant and be on the inside, be part of life and their government, not on the outside looking in and wishing to be part of life. This is their opportunity.

For more information about the Oratorical Contest in Maine, please visit us on the web at www.mainelegion.org, contact your local Legion Post, the American Legion Department Headquarters at 873-3229, or e-mail Department Chairman Tommy Adkins at tommyadkins@myfairpoint.net.

— Tommy L. Adkins
Chairman Oratorical Committee

Volunteers Are Key to Legion Baseball’s Success

The American Legion relies heavily upon dedicated Legionnaires and Legion family members to support and donate countless hours to the success of one of its premier youth programs: American Legion Baseball.

So in an effort to first and foremost strengthen the protection of children and youth, as well as continue to enhance the Legion Baseball program and meet insurance requirements, the Legion’s National Executive Committee adopted Resolution 16 during the 2012 Fall Meetings.

The resolution mandates a background check screening for coaches, managers and volunteer staff of junior and senior American Legion Baseball teams.

This policy goes into effect Jan. 1, 2013, and requires background checks each season prior to any meetings, events, practices or games that involve youth participants.

During the annual online baseball registration process, each coach, manager and volunteer staff of an American Legion Baseball team will have to have been verified as passing the mandated background check screening requirements for the upcoming season.

The Legion has teamed up with Protect Youth Sports, Inc., to exclusively conduct background screenings of staff and volunteers for the Legion’s national programs, including baseball.

www.legion.org/baseball

— Dispatch

Remember Your Valentine: Feb. 14th
VA, SSA & IRS Cut Red Tape for Veterans & Survivors
New Policy Eliminates Paperwork, Allows More VA Staff to Focus on Eliminating Claims Backlog

WASHINGTON — The Department of Veterans Affairs announced today it is cutting red tape for Veterans by eliminating the need for them to complete an annual Eligibility Verification Report (EVR). VA will implement a new process for confirming eligibility for benefits, and staff that had been responsible for processing the old form will instead focus on eliminating the compensation claims backlog.

Historically, beneficiaries have been required to complete an EVR each year to ensure their pension benefits continued. Under the new initiative, VA will work with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and the Social Security Administration (SSA) to verify continued eligibility for pension benefits.

“By working together, we have cut red tape for Veterans and will help ensure these brave men and women get the benefits they have earned and deserve,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki.

VA estimates it would have sent nearly 130,000 EVRs to beneficiaries in January 2013. Eliminating these annual reports reduces the burden on Veterans, their families, and survivors because they will not have to return these routine reports to VA each year in order to avoid suspension of benefits.

It also allows VA to redirect more than 100 employees that usually process EVRs to work on eliminating the claims backlog.

“Having already instituted an expedited process that enables wounded warriors to quickly access Social Security disability benefits, we are proud to work with our federal partners on an automated process that will make it much easier for qualified Veterans to maintain their VA benefits from year to year,” said Michael J. Astrue, Commissioner of Social Security.

“The IRS is taking new steps to provide critical data to help speed the benefits process for the nation’s Veterans and Veterans Affairs,” said Beth Tucker, IRS Deputy Commissioner for Operations Support.

“The IRS is pleased to be part of a partnership with VA and SSA that will provide needed data quickly and effectively to move this effort forward.”

All beneficiaries currently receiving VA pension benefits will receive a letter from VA explaining these changes and providing instructions on how to continue to submit their unreimbursed medical expenses.


HUD Homeless Survey Brings Money Into State, Agencies

On January 30, 2013, the 2013 HUD Homeless Survey will be conducted in the following counties of Maine. If you or someone you know is homeless, your help is needed.

Government funds are sent to states and agencies based on the number of homeless that live in each community. There are two ways to be counted. One is to visit the following Town Halls between 9 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. on Wednesday January 30 or call Jerry Dewitt at 576-0376 between January 23 and January 30 and take the survey via telephone.


Legion in Search of Catch Phrase That Will Be Recognized By John Q. Public

Part of every company’s identity is its tagline. What company do you think of when you read: “Semper Fidelis”; “Where’s The Beef?”; “Don’t Leave Home Without It”; “No One Does More For Veterans” (yes, even VFW has a tagline); “We’ve Got Your Back”; or “The Un-Cola”? Please visit the link http://www.taglineguru.com/survey.html and you will be able to read the “100 Most Influential Taglines Since 1948.”

During the next few years, and thereafter, as part of The American Legion’s strategy for continuous growth we will have to concentrate much more on marketing our name and what we do than we’ve ever had to in the past. Thousands of “veterans service organizations” have popped up all across the country.

All are competing for the membership of veterans and the donations to help support their good works. Some do great things in a niche market. Some raise millions of dollars to support their programs. Some may actually do very little.

None do as much for active-duty military, veterans, military retirees and their families as does The American Legion. And, yet, we have no consistent tagline that readily tells people who we are, what we do, or who we do it for. Each national commander has a slogan and they are well thought out and well themed, but they don’t lend a permanent identity to the Legion.

Through the years we have had many slogans such as “Marching Together Again”; “Veterans Serving Veterans”; “Every Day is Veterans Day”; “Still Serving America”; “For God and Country” which will never go away but doesn’t serve as an effective tagline.

The Membership and Post Activities Committee will meet in January to draft a strategic plan for growing membership year after year; for inculcating into our corporate culture the idea that “growth is a prerequisite to everything we do.”

Another of the committee’s tasks is to suggest a corporate tagline, which after approval by the NEC, will be used for the foreseeable future in all of our advertise-

ments, letterheads, publications, press releases, and so forth as a description of who we are and what we do.

The goal is to adopt a tagline which is so significant that all of the public will recognize it, associate it with The American Legion, and know what is our “reason for being.” Even though it must be short and pithy, it must be filled with content and phrased in a memorable and catchy way.

You can help us craft an American Legion tagline by submitting your ideas by email to tagline@legion.org. Submissions may be submitted by individuals (membership is not required), posts, districts, counties or departments; there is no limit to the number that may be submitted but each submission must be contained in a single email. We encourage Departments and Posts to give this information the widest dissemination, as we will do in your national publications. All submissions must be received no later than April 19, 2013, in order to be considered.

The National Adjutant will be the final reviewer of submissions, and will draft a resolution recommending a permanent tagline. The decision of the National Executive Committee is final.

If your tagline is the one recommended to the NEC, and adopted exactly as submitted, you will receive a $500 check, and a Certificate of Appreciation plaque signed by the National Commander in recognition of your winning entry. The winning entry will be posted on www.Legion.org after the NEC meets in mid-May 2013. In the event of duplicate winning entries, the earliest received will be declared the winner.

Remember, April 19, 2013, is the deadline, and the email address is: tagline@legion.org. Please include your name and phone number on each entry. Only one entry per email submission. All entries will be acknowledged by a return email. Save that return receipt as proof of your submission.

— Daniel S. Wheeler National Adjutant

Brunswick Post 20

Americanism Officer Joe Donahue conducts Table for One POW/MIA Ceremony on Veterans Day, Nov. 11. A crowd of 80 participated in the ceremony held at the downtown park in Brunswick. Families were recognized with Blue-Star Service Flags and ten local veterans were recognized with State of Maine Appreciation Awards to honor their military service. Looking on is Post Commander Dan Lindsley.

Photo by William Ciciotte

Awards to honor their military service.

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The Internal Affairs Commission will be the final reviewer of submissions, and will draft a resolution recommending a permanent tagline. The decision of the National Executive Committee is final.

If your tagline is the one recommended to the NEC, and adopted exactly as submitted, you will receive a $500 check, and a Certificate of Appreciation plaque signed by the National Commander in recognition of your winning entry. The winning entry will be posted on www.Legion.org after the NEC meets in mid-May 2013. In the event of duplicate winning entries, the earliest received will be declared the winner.

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Photo by William Ciciotte

Awards to honor their military service.
Federal legislation designed to help protect the interests of student veterans is one step closer to enactment. H.R. 4057 - the Improving Transparency of Education Opportunities for Veterans Act of 2012 - passed the U.S. Senate on December 19, after major lobbying efforts from The American Legion. The original bill — of which four versions eventually appeared — was introduced in the House of Representatives by Rep. Gus Bilirakis, R-Fla., in Feb. 2012. Bilirakis is vice chair of the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs. 

According to Legion Economic Division Director Joe Sharpe, the legislation was influenced heavily by concerns voiced to Bilirakis’ office by The American Legion. The Legion had noted what it considered shortcomings in educational counseling and quality of education being afforded to GI Bill beneficiaries. Bilirakis’ legislation, with contributions by the Legion, called for greater transparency by institutions with regard to the schools’ quality of instruction, accreditation, recruiting practices and post-graduation employment records.

In the coming weeks, the Legion’s concerns were brought to the attention of President Barack Obama. On April 27, he signed an executive order designed to help protect students and prospective students. President Obama’s executive order.

Meanwhile, after rounds of discussion, debate and amending, H.R. 4057 was received by the Senate in September.

The Legion then took what it had learned to the office of Sen. Richard Burr, R-N.C., ranking member of the Senate Committee on Veterans’ Affairs. The Legion’s input was employed, in part, to fine tune the final bill.

“I can say without hesitation,” Sharpe said, “that The American Legion played a major role in the creation and acceptance of this important piece of legislation.” H.R. 4057 now returns to the House for a final vote.

The Legion expects swift passage and a presidential signature.

— The American Legion

www.legion.org

‘How to’ Welcome New Members

Staying connected is key to retaining and recruiting American Legion members. So don’t sign up or renew a Legionnaire only to never make contact again. Try the following tips:

* Welcome new members by sending a “thank you” letter for becoming a part of the Legion family and include information on upcoming post meeting dates and times, and other post or community events.

* Send a packet of Legion brochures.

* Host a special dinner with prizes for early renewals.

— Dispatch

Student Veteran Protection Passes Senate

Want Your Post to Host a Blood Drive? Here’s How!

The American Red Cross estimates that more than 44,000 blood donations are needed every day in the United States to meet the demand for blood. That equates to, roughly, one donation every two seconds. Through The American Legion Blood Donor Program, departments, posts and Legionnaires everywhere are encouraged to help in the fight to meet this enormous demand.

Founded in 1942, The American Legion Blood Donor Program honors departments that excel in two categories: overall participation and blood donation within the department, and most posts participating in the department.

Due to varying membership sizes, departments are split into six categories:

* Category 1 (100,000-plus members)
  - California, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota, New York, Ohio and Pennsylvania

* Category 2 (50,000 to 99,999 members)
  - Maryland, Michigan, Texas and Wisconsin

* Category 3 (40,000 to 69,999 members)
  - Arizona, Georgia, Iowa, Kansas, Massachusetts, Missouri, Nebraska, New Jersey, North Carolina and Virginia

* Category 4 (25,000 to 39,999 members)

* Category 5 (10,000 to 24,999 members)
  - Arkansas, Colorado, Delaware, Idaho, Mississippi, Montana, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Dakota, Utah and Vermont

* Category 6 (less than 10,000 members)
  - Alaska, District of Columbia, Hawaii, Nevada, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island and Wyoming


Posts that want to host a blood drive should visit the Red Cross’ blood drive registration page at www.redcrossblood.org/hosting-blood-drive. www.legion.org/security/blood

— Dispatch
Kenneth H. Dolloff, 92, of Scarborough, passed away Nov. 1, 2012. He is pictured here this summer visiting with Scarborough HS kids, and Police Chief Rob Moulton. The group with Dolloff, left to right: Police Chief Rob Moulton; Dolloff; Ryan Mancini, SHS 2011 grad and current Bowdoin College sophomore who won the Ken Dolloff Legion baseball scholarship in 2011; Conor McCann, 2012 SHS grad and current Boston College sophomore who won the Dolloff scholarship in 2012; Adam Cohen, who was chosen by Libby-Mitchell Post 76 to represent Scarborough at Dirigo Boys State in summer 2011.

(Ken) Dollof Scholarship Will Continue to Help Kids

Ken Dolloff, age 91, of Scarborough, visited with several SHS kids this summer, along with Scarborough Police Chief Robert Moulton. The youths went to visit Dolloff to thank him for different awards they had won in the past that were affiliated with Dolloff and/or Libby-Mitchell American Legion Post 76 in Scarborough.

Moulton, a childhood friend of the Dolloff family, said he joined the group in a visit to the Barron Center in Portland “in case things got out of hand—you never know with a group of 90 year olds—things can get pretty wild!”

“It was great having the kids get together with Ken,” said Dan Warren, GM of the Libby-Mitchell Legion baseball team, who chairs the selection committee of the Dolloff Scholarship. “Ken always made a great connection with young people — they always traded stories about attending Scarborough High — him with Class of 1940; the boys more recent. And sports is the great conversation piece of our time.

The boys were interested to hear what it was like for Ken to be at D-Day June 6, 1944 off the coast of Normandy, France.”

For information on the Dolloff scholarship, contact Dan Warren at 883 4167 or by e mail at: jonesandwarren@gmail.com.

Skowhegan Post 16 had a flag retirement ceremony on Nov. 11. Leo Himes is pictured here throwing flags in the burn bin.

North East Harbor Post 103 receives 100% Membership Award on Nov. 11. Left to right, Adjutant Robert Moore, Commander Ralph Tracy, Dept. 1st Vice Commander John Hargreaves.

Post 24 American Legion Riders Director Gene Towle, right, presents a check to support building expenses to Post 24 Commander Kirk Thurston at the Post meeting held on Dec 2. Also shown is Post 24 Americanism Officer/Legion Rider member Fred Milligan.

Post 107:

Director of Veteran Affairs of the State of Maine, Peter Ogden, presents a Certificate of Appreciation to Jeannie Carter, whose husband, now deceased, was a POW during WWII. The Veterans Recognition Ceremony was held at Etna-Carmel Post 107 on Nov. 3.

Photo by William Ciciotte
Make Time to Register on ‘My heathevet’ Website

www.myhealth.va.gov

Highlights of what is currently available on MyHealthVet:

Pharmacy: (under PHARMACY tab)
- Order VA prescription refills online by selecting Refill My Prescriptions
- View VA prescription history, by selecting Prescription Refill History
- Self-enter non-VA prescriptions, by selecting My Medications and Supplements

Appointments: (under GET CARE tab)
- View VA Appointments on-line (appointments at any VAU)
- View past VA Appointments
- Subscribe to appointment reminders (Health Calendar Preferences)
- Print a monthly calendar of your VA Appointments

Wellness Reminders: (under GET CARE tab)
- You can view VA Wellness Reminders. These are the same Wellness Reminders that your VA provider will discuss with you at your visit. Reviewing these reminders will give you an opportunity to think about questions you may have for your healthcare team prior to your appointment.

Labs: (under TRACK HEALTH tab)
- Select Labs and Tests
- Select VA Chemistry and Hematology and select the View More tab
- This allows you to view your VA Labs within your personal health record. The results will be posted seven calendar days after the results are verified by the lab.

**Secure Messaging: (under SECURE MESSAGING tab)
Send a non-urgent message to your healthcare team. You will receive a response within three business days. Please visit this section and sign in.

DoD Military Service Information: (under VA BLUE BUTTON tab)
- Some Veterans may see key portions of the Department of Defense (DoD) Military Service Information. This feature is offered to military retirees and/or Veterans discharged after 1979.
- Eligible Veterans may be able to view their Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) codes, pay details, service dates, deployment periods and retirement periods.

Please note: The entire VA health record is not available on MyHealthVet, the tools listed are available. More features continue to be added annually.

If you need assistance to register or need help with a forgotten password, call toll free number, 1-877-327-6022 or contact Mike L’Abbé, VA Maines coordinator, (207) 512-6888.

Post 153 Baskets Bring Joy

Officers of the William J. Rogers Post 153 prepared 10 baskets for families of the 619th Transportation Company, U.S. Army Reserve based in Dexter and Auburn. Many have already served two to three tours in Iraq. Commander Dave Richardson, 1st Vice Commander Colby Dill, Adjutant Clair Poirier, Finance officer Tibby Dupuis, Judge Advocate Don Beaulieu, Chaplain Denis Beaulieu, Service officer George Bernier, Public Relations officer Paul Bernard, Trustees Ken Winter, Jim Smyth, Cari Douglas and Fern Labbe all agree that it is a wonderful change to see our troops greeted when they return home, however many of our troops are not making it by and need our support and providing a Thanksgiving meal to these families hopefully will remind them that the American Legion Family is there for them. The American Legion supplies troop support through various programs nationwide and believes there is no separating the warrior from the war. “Those who put their lives on the line in defense of their country - and their fellow citizens - deserve America’s total support,” stated Public Relations Officer Paul R. Bernard. “The American Legion also wants to recognize Mark and Lynn Cassavant of “In His Name Food Pantry” for their contribution to the troops.”
Flags Should Be Removed Before Winter Arrives

As Sergeant-at Arms of the American Legion, William J. Roger’s Post 153, Don L. Beaulieu, pictured here, is concerned about the standards and respect of the United States Flag code. The Flag Code, which formalizes and unifies the traditional ways in which we give respect to the flag, also contains specific instructions on how the flag is not to be used. They are: The flag should never be dipped to any person or thing. It is flown upside down only as a distress signal. The flag should not be used as a drapery, or for covering a speaker’s desk, draping a platform, or for any decoration in general. Bunting of blue, white and red stripes is available for these purposes. The blue stripe of the bunting should be on the top. The flag should never be used for any advertising purpose. It should not be embroidered, printed or otherwise impressed on such articles as cushions, handkerchiefs, napkins, boxes, or anything intended to be discarded after temporary use. Advertising signs should not be attached to the staff or halyard. The flag should not be used as part of a costume or athletic uniform, except that a flag patch may be used on the uniform of military personnel, fireman, policeman and members of patriotic organizations. The flag should never have placed on it, or attached to it, any mark, insignia, letter, word, number, figure, or drawing of any kind. The flag should never be used as a receptacle for receiving, holding, carrying, or delivering anything. When the flag is lowered, no part of it should touch the ground or any other object; it should be received by waiting hands and arms. To store the flag it should be folded neatly and ceremoniously. The flag should be cleaned and mended when necessary. When a flag is so worn it is no longer fit to serve as a symbol of our country, it should be destroyed by burning in a dignified manner. Beaulieu would like to remind all members of veteran organizations, Boy Scout Troops, Girl Scout Troops to remove the flags from cemeteries before inclement weather hits and they become frozen on the ground buried in snow.

Post 153 presentation: The American Legion, William J. Rogers Post 153 Commander Dave Richardson presented its 2012-2013 Scholarship Award of $500.00 to Chelsea D. Hebert of Lewiston. “The William J. Rogers Post chooses Chelsea Hebert with an impressive record of achievement,” said Bernard. Chelsea is a member of the Lewiston High School graduation class of 2009 where she was a member of the Tennis Team, the Environmental Club and Key Club President. Her civic activities included volunteer work at Big Brothers, Big Sisters, service as a Youth Council Advisor on the Board of Directors of New Beginnings and the Shaw’s Children’s Cancer Program. Chelsea was also a student at Kennesaw State University in Georgia from 2009 to 2012 when she transferred to the University of Southern Maine where she is completing her academic studies. She has been on the President’s Honor’s List for two semesters and has received the President’s Award for Educational Excellence. She has maintained a 3.65 grade point average in College, and has been inducted into the National Honor Society. The American Legion Family wishes her much success as she completes her academic studies, stated Judge Advocate John Conley. Chelsea is the daughter of Don and Kelly Hebert and the granddaughter of Fern and Pauline Labbe.

Service recognized: Longtime member of The American Legion Joe Gray receives Certificate of Appreciation to recognize his military service from Director of Maine Veteran Services Peter Ogden on Nov. 7 at Princess Pt. Assisted Living Facility in Damariscotta, Me. Damariscotta Post 42 member Jerry Miller organized this event. He and the members of Post 42 hold a program for residents at the Princess Pt. Assisted Living Center, monthly.

Post 107: Director of Veteran Affairs of the State of Maine, Peter Ogden, presents a Certificate of Appreciation to Post 107 Commander Julia Pike for her military service in Vietnam at Etna-Carmel Post 107 on Nov. 3. Pike also received a letter of thanks from First Lady of Maine, Ann LePage. Twelve veterans and their families were recognized at the ceremony.

All of Us at The American Legion State Headquarters

Wish Everyone a Safe and Fun-filled President’s Day Weekend
Feb. 16-18
## Taps Column

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<td>Arthur F. Bonin</td>
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**Donated gifts:** The Officers of American Legion Auxiliary, William R. Bold Unit #181 pose with donated gifts for our Veterans and their families. The ladies stayed after the auxiliary meeting Nov. 10th to get them ready for delivery to Togus and the Maine Veterans Home. Standing, left to right, Fay Smith, Mary Stoddard, Florence Lancaster, Carol Thayer, Carol Hatch, Patty Harvey, and Millie Hatch, Unit President. Many of these gifts were hand-made by the ladies: cloth bibs, shoulder throws, afghans, knitted mittens and hats, and scarfs.

**American Legion Auxiliary Unit #181** met at the Post home in Litchfield, Maine to gather and sort toys and gifts for our Veterans and their families. The Christmas presents will be divided among the Togus VA Center and the Maine Veterans Home, Augusta, Maine. Gifts also will go to the Litchfield Food Bank to be given to small children, especially knitted warm mittens and stuffed animals. Members, left to right, Mary Blen, Gerda Sheldon, Florence Lancaster, Carol Thayer, Barbara MacFarlane, Patty Harvey, Millie Hatch, Pauline Chase, Carol Hatch, Fay Smith, and Mary Stoddard.

**Alfred Maxwell Jr. Auxiliary Unit #40,** Winthrop, donated approximately $335 worth of gifts (shown here) for the Togus Gift Shop. Along with this donation, Unit #40 has donated $200 to the Homeless Vets Program, $200 for Christmas gifts to four Veterans at the Veteran’s Home in Augusta, and is adopting a Military Family for the Christmas Across Maine program at a donation of $300 for three children of a deployed soldier. They also donated $100 towards the Post’s ten Thanksgiving food baskets.
THE MAINE LEGIONNAIRE, JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2013

The deadline for material, stories and/or pictures to be submitted for consideration for use in the March-April, 2013 issue of The Maine Legionnaire will be Feb. 22, 2013.

Please be reminded that only those articles and/or pictures which are sent in proper form will be considered for publication.

Ineligible stories or pictures that cannot be reproduced will be returned to you. A reminder that stories must be in story format, we are unable to compose your information for you.

As always, the editorial staff may edit all submissions at its discretion.

We are once again asking for input from all posts, auxiliary units, S.A.L. squadrons, individuals, etc. To make this paper informative for you, it is imperative that we receive submissions from the membership.

Photos should be clearly marked as to who’s who in the picture as well as who took the picture.

Anyone interested in submitting a guest editorial should contact The Maine Legionnaire business office at (207) 873-3229.

Attention: Next Deadline Is Feb. 22

As Bureau of Veterans Services — MVMC
163 Mt. Vernon Road
AUGUSTA, ME 04330
(207) 287-3481

MAINE VETERANS MEMORIAL CEMETERY ELIGIBILITY APPLICATION

Complete the items listed below and return so that eligibility may be determined:

1. Name of Veteran_________________________________Tel. # ______________
2. Address____________________________________________________________
3. Date of Birth_________________________________________________________
4. Service/Serial Number_________________________________________________
5. Social Security Number_____________________/ County ____________________

Please submit this application along with a copy of your Military Service Discharge (Form DD214). * If more than one period of service, please submit a copy of each DD214 you were issued.

Signature allowing the Veterans Administration to release verification of service information_________________________________________________________

To update your address: Complete all sections of the above form and mail it to The American Legion, Department of Maine, P.O. Box 900, Waterville, Maine 04903-0900.