

Department News

AMERICAN LEGION DEPARTMENT OF ILLINOIS

THE AMERICAN LEGION FAMILY



2015-2016 DEPARTMENT COMMANDER PAUL W. GARDNER

JUNE-JULY 2016



Commander Paul W. Gardner 2015-2016



Thank you for your LEADERSHIP



MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

CLOSE OF BOOKS
JUNE 24, 2016

TOP 10 DISTRICT AND DIVISION RANKINGS

District	Commander
4	WHEET
11	REECE, JR
12	D. JOHNSON
7	PIENTO
9	PIZARRO
10	R. JOHNSON
8	SERRANO
13	KRAUT
20	LAWSON
25	RAHLFS

Division	Commander
2	FISCHER
1	CARDER
3	GRANDBERG
5	HARRIS
4	VOGLER, SR.

From The Desk of Department Commander Paul W. Gardner



As of this writing there are six Districts over 100% and only one Division that has reached that figure.

I thank the following District Commanders, their officers and Posts for their efforts:

- ★ **Joe Piento, 7th Dist. - 1st Div. - (102.38%)**
- ★ **Al Pizarro, 9th Dist.—1st Div. - (101.89%)**
- ★ **John B. Reece, 11th Dist. 2nd Div. - (101.59%)**
- ★ **Michael Wheet, 4th Dist. - 1st Div.- (101.50%)**

- ★ **David E Johnson, 12th Dist. - 2nd Div.- (101.26%)**
- ★ **Ricky N Serrano, 8th Dist.- 1st Div. - (100.09%)**
- ★ **Wayne Fischer, Commander of the 2nd Division is – 100.99%**

A huge Thank you to you and your District Officers, and to those who worked hard to achieve this total.

There are four other Districts that should be at or over the 100% mark before the close of books June 24th. All are over 98%.

This has not been an easy year for membership but it's obvious that has not stopped many Post Commanders and the above mentioned from hard work and consistency. The Department of Illinois needs dedicated leaders. They're out there and it's time to step up. Find a

dedicated mentor who will guide you not hold you back.

The most important thing is believing in yourself. Set a goal and pick those who will help you reach it. The Legion needs such men and woman to step up.

Being a Commander at the Post level isn't always easy. It gets harder as you move up. If you believe in yourself and have good people with good advise around you there's little you can't accomplish. Step up.

I hope to see many of you at Department Convention in Springfield.

I want to thank ALA President Kathy Cisna and SAL Commander William Geary for working so well together the past couple of years.

From The Desk of Department Sr. Vice Commander Cheri L. Stanton



It is June and where has the year gone? I want to thank all the guys, and gals who have gone above and beyond to work on our programs and membership this year. You help to make the American Legion a working family organization.

The revitalization's have been helpful to pick up 2910 members **but each area that we worked with has to remember that next year they will need to continue to keep these members. Making contact with them is a must in order to keep the American Legion going in your area. Make a calling tree of new members to remind them of meeting nights or special activities that your post has planned. Maybe several older**

members who like to visit can do the calling tree- to give them a job they have lots of information about.

DON'T LET THE NEW MEMBERS DIE OUT BEFORE THEY EVEN GET STARTED. They might not want to go to meetings but a friendly voice telling them about the post that they joined lets them know they are thought about and it will encourage them to renew next year.

It is that time of the year again— Post Consolidated Reports. At my post we keep a big desk calendar with post activities and important info, so when events happen, we can put them on the calendar with all the numbers. At the end of the month, we slip it off and place it under the big calendar to keep for report time. It makes it so much easier to fill out the info on the report form when you have it in order. My firing squad guy keeps his info on separate sheets and we tally it up to

add to the report. I do mine on line, but if you are NOT A COMPUTER PERSON, YOU CAN SEND FOR A FORM FROM DEPARTMENT. Only 1/5 of our state sent in PCR's last year. **I find it hard to believe that 4/5 of our Legion posts didn't have ANY deaths or firing squad actions to report, no help with little league or baseball teams, didn't donate to ANY Children and Youth activities, and didn't send anyone to Boy's State or Girl's State, not to mention all the volunteer hours. Please get them in by June 9th so they can get tallied and sent to National. National tally's them up with all the other states and then it becomes a matter of Congressional Record. This helps Congress appropriate money to help Veterans Programs.** (This article may be seen past the PCR deadline, but you can always start fresh for 2016-2017. These reports truly matter.)

(Dept. SVC continued on page 5)



From The Desk of Department Auxiliary President Kathy Cisna



treated me with respect. I truly appreciate all the help you have all given me this year!

nois the Best American Legion Family in the Nation.

Wow!

*I cannot believe that this is the last article I will be writing to all of you! This year has really flown by. I would like to say **Thank You** to all of you for allowing me to speak to you through these articles all year. I hope they have been interesting and informative.*

Thank You to The American Legion Department Staff! You have always

I would also like to say Thank You for giving me such a Great Commander to work with this year. The first time I met Paul Gardner was about 3 days before he was elected as the Senior Vice Commander of The American Legion Department of Illinois. At that time we seemed to instantly click. We have had such a Great Year working together. I can't imagine spending the year with anyone else. For that I will always be grateful to all of you.

I would ask that you all continue to work with your Auxiliary and make Illi-



Legion Family presenting a wreath during the Truman Pilgrimage.



From The Desk of Detachment Commander William Geary



I would like to extend my final greetings as Commander to the Members of the American Legion Family. It has been a great year working with President Kathy Cisna and Commander Paul Gardner. We have worked together for the American Legion Family like a well oiled machine. From my election in June and Kathy & Paul's elections in July, we have seen each other and worked together at many events throughout this 2015 – 2016 year.

Later, after the Department Conventions Paul & I were at Kathy's Board meeting and Homecoming in August. At the end of August and the first week of September we were all together at the National Conventions and Sharon Conatser's election as National President and the party that evening. Then we were all together again September 19th at Paul's Homecoming. In October, we had the

fantastic adventure of attending the three day events of National President Sharon Conatser's Homecoming. Just about every month, there was an event we all attended. November was the Egyptian Past Commander's Jamboree; January was the Membership Caravan with National Vice Commander Gough & Past National Commander (& Department Adjutant) Marty Conatser. Kathy, Paul, & I had a great time visiting many Posts, meeting many Legionnaires, Auxiliary members and Sons. February was Lincoln Pilgrimage. As usual, we were blessed to have the National Commanders of the Legion and the Sons, as well as National President Sharon join us for this special event. Also in February was the Washington Conference; March, Oratorical Contest and Patriotic Conference; April, Junior Conference (lots of fun there); May, Armed Forces Day Dinner hosted by the 2nd Division; June, our Detachment Convention and my Commander's Homecoming at my home Post in Wauconda. Soon we will finish our year with the Department Convention in July and the National Convention in August. What a

whirlwind year. Thank you, Kathy and Paul, for making it a great year for us and for the American Legion Family.

We had to work hard this year toward our goals of 100% membership and increase in dollars donated and hours worked on service programs. I want to thank all of the great leaders in our SAL Organization. We could only do as good as we have done with everyone working together. Sr. Vice Commander Phil Shipley and I tried to keep everyone informed of the progress every week. In turn the Division Officers and District Officers encouraged the Squadrons to get the job done. I truly feel that we have done the best we could. That is all anyone can expect. Our year is done but our mission continues. Never forget that our mission is two-fold: Membership and Service. "Our Pillars – Our Purpose" Veterans – Defense – Americanism – Youth. Please continue to remember this and also National Commander Kevin Collier's slogan: **ROCKED – Remembering Our Commitment – Keeping it Every Day. Now let's get it started for next year.**



Did You Know?

Office: 312-980-4266 Email: Raymond.Toczec@va.gov

That at the close of our last American Legion membership year we had just over 88,600 members in Illinois! A lot of these members must read my monthly newsletter article because we are receiving a nice volume of calls and e-mails to our Chicago VA&R office. Our staff loves these communications. It gives us a chance to clear up rumors, get claims started for compensation and pension, or at least refer our comrades to the correct point of contact when their query falls outside of our expertise. But the most common positive feedback I hear is my "Rumors" articles. So with that in mind here are some more of those rumors floating around in the veteran community and the correct answers.

1. Veterans who use the American Legion as their Power-of-Attorney (POA) for VA claims purposes must be a member of the American Legion, pay a fee and give a percentage of their VA award to the Legion if granted a benefit.

False on all counts! There is absolutely no charge to the veteran or claimant for using the American Legion as their POA. If later their claim is favorably granted we do not get any percentage of anything, all monies awarded by the Veterans Administration go to the claimant. And membership in the American Legion is never required. Of course if they wish to join us, and have the correct eligibility dates, we would be happy to have them on board. We will even look up the addresses and phone numbers of local Legion Posts in their area if they want to get involved locally.

2. I was injured during surgery at a VA hospital but because the VA hospital is a government agency I can't bring a law suit against them for malpractice.

Again false. If a veteran patient suffered permanent damage due to an error by a VA doctor or staff they can sue the VA under the Federal Tort claims act. For instance the VA physician removes the wrong kidney, leaves a sponge in the body cavity or the nurse gives them the wrong medication and a complication arises. The veteran can, and many do bring suit. In these situations our office would not be able to assist them in any lawsuit. They would need to hire a private attorney. A simple GOOGLE search "attorneys for Veterans Administration tort claims" can locate attorneys who specialize in this field. Please note, separate from a tort claim the veteran can also file what is known as an 1151 Veterans Administration claim. Rather technical, so contact us for more info on that and see the next rumor.

3. I filed a law suit under the above mentioned Federal Tort Claims Act but my case was dismissed because I waited too long. I have no further recourse.

Wrong again. Although the Tort Act does have time limits there is no time limit to file a claim under a special provision of Title 38 USC. More commonly known as an 1151 hospital injury claim, this provision has no time limit for filing and since it falls under VA benefits our VA&R office can assist. In fact the veteran can actually file both ways, a law suit and an 1151 claim.

4. My husband served in Vietnam and later died of lung cancer due to Agent Orange. I receive my VA DIC benefits as a survivor and with my part-time job I am able to make ends meet. It has been 15 years since my husband died and I have been dating a man for over a year. He recently proposed. If I remarry I will lose my VA DIC benefits.

Depends. VA laws have been revised over the years. Our representatives in Congress felt it unfair to require a widow or widower to stay unmarried for the rest of their lives. Under current laws if a claimant receiving DIC benefits remarries on or after Dec. 16th. 2003 and is age 57 or more they can continue to receive that benefit.

Well this was fun. Looking forward to answering the telephone in our office and checking out more rumors. Remember no question or rumor is too silly or too small to check out. Give us a call or send us an e-mail. And if you are going to our state convention why not drop in on our Veterans Administration and Rehabilitation Commission meeting. It will be held Thursday morning of convention week and we will be going over all the resolutions submitted that deal with Veterans Administration benefits. We are expecting over 30 this year.

SOMETIMES THE QUESTIONS ARE COMPLICATED AND THE ANSWERS ARE SIMPLE

- DR. SEUSS

VETERANS HEALTH CARE—Hepatitis C Awareness

All year The American Legion has been alerting American Legion members about how serious hepatitis C (Hep C) is for the veteran population. The American Legion has launched a new social media page called “Thunderclap”, to engage the community and inform veterans about the risks associated with hep C. In addition, we will be encouraging all veterans to get tested for hep C antibodies. On May 19th National Hepatitis C Awareness Day thousands took the time to be tested. We hope that you joined in spreading the word or signed up on our Thunderclap page that can be found at www.thunderclap.it/projects/41040-hepaware-for-veterans.

What is Thunderclap?

Thunderclap is a tool that allows thousands of people to share the same message at exactly the same time on social media. People sign up on the Thunderclap website and give permission for Thunderclap to share a single message on Facebook and Twitter at a specified time.

If you and enough others support Thunderclap, The American Legion will reach out to thousands of people and let veterans know that they may be at a greater risk for hep C.

Hepatitis C (hep C) is a significant health concern for our nation’s veterans. Our proud men and women have done their part to ensure our safety, it is time we do ours and make sure they know the risks and symptoms of hep C. During Hepatitis Awareness Month (May) let’s make sure veterans are tested for hep C antibodies and know the importance of talking to their doctor.

Here are the facts:

- Several studies suggest veterans may be at greater risk for hep C than non-veterans.
- In 2013, over five percent of the 3.1 million veterans enrolled in the care of the Veterans Health

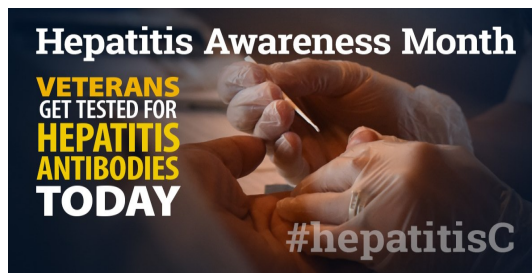
Administration who had at least one outpatient visit and an informative hep C test result were infected with hep C.

- Up to 75 percent of people with chronic hep C in the United States do not know they have it.
- Approximately 70-80 percent experience no symptoms following infection.
- Hep C is curable – which means the hep C virus is not detectable in the blood months after treatment ends.

Where can a veteran learn more and get tested for hep C antibodies?

- A doctor can administer the test and talk about confirmatory testing for those who test positive for hep C antibodies. It is important that the veteran ask specifically to get tested for hep C antibodies.

Veterans may be eligible for free hep C antibody testing through the VA. The VA also has a tremendous amount of [information](#) available about hep C.



May is Hepatitis Awareness Month

What can you do?

1. You can join our campaign and ensure that veterans get the message. By pressing one of the buttons at the top of the page, you can commit your Facebook and Twitter status. The American Legion will take care of posting the message at the top of this page for you at 10 a.m. on May 19, 2016.
2. Share this URL and encourage others to participate by telling a veteran about hep C.
3. Watch and “like” as everyone’s messages are blasted out simultaneously.

Follow The American Legion on Facebook and Twitter and visit Legion.org to learn more about The American Legion’s health care initiatives.

If you are a veteran – make an appointment to get tested for hep C antibodies the next time you see your doctor!

(Dept. SVC *continued from page 2*)

I hope you made time to attend Special Olympics at Normal on June 10th and 11th. We serve 4,000 athletes, their coaches, their families, and all the volunteers. That takes a LOT OF FOOD. If your Post, Auxiliary, SAL, or Riders helps in any way, THANK YOU. We went through 18 gallons of HOME MADE Ranch Dressing, 130 watermelon, 19 gallons of pickle spears, 1,900 dozen regular cookies, 1,500 dozen sugarless cookies (sent homemade or wrapped), 3,000 each pretzels and chips, and 7,000 popsicles---just to name a few items on the menu. Oh, and that’s not counting Urbana’s contribution each year of over \$3,000 worth of food! It takes the whole family to feed the athletes.

In June there are lots of division conventions to attend, Special Olympics, Boys State, Girls State, and Youth Police School. I go representing the American Legion, but I get so much out of them. Thank you for allowing me to serve.

If you haven’t already made your reservations to attend, please do, the 98th American Legion Department of Illinois Convention is July 13-16, 2016 in Springfield, IL. I look forward to seeing our Legion Family there.

USAA Poppy Display For Memorial Day

The USAA did a Memorial Day event this past Memorial Day and ask us to do 320,000 poppies for them and the VFW did the other 320,000. Here are some pictures from USAA on the poppy display. They did a poppy wall to honor the more than 640,000 service members who made the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom.



Field of Honor



Above: On May 27, 2016, Carpentersville hosted a Field of Honor—A Tribute to Vietnam Veterans at Elgin Post 57 where Commander Paul Gardner spoke and presented a wreath at the field of honor.

2016 Special Olympic Summer Games—Illinois



Department Commander Paul Gardner and Senior Vice Commander Cheri Stanton at the Special Olympic Summer Games—Illinois.

AMERICAN LEGION BASEBALL TOURNAMENTS

- ★ Senior Legion State Tournament @ Jerseyville (Post 492) - **July 27-30**
- ★ Junior Legion State Tournament @ Decatur (Post 105) - **July 28-31**
- ★ Great Lake Regional Tournament @ SIUE Baseball Complex (Alton Post 126) - **August 3-7**



County Fairs—How I can help

If any Post, District, or Division sets up a booth at their County Fair, and would like help please let me know. I will come for one day to help on membership providing my schedule allows.

In addition, Department of Illinois has joined in promoting a program with the Illinois AG Department encouraging our young veterans who have or develop an interest in Farming. Farming is a year round income now, and is found to be good for veterans who have PTSD. We have plenty of literature and info to share.

Please call the Dept. HQ to schedule your date.

—Gary Jenson, Department Assistant Adjutant



**HOME
OF ★ THE
FREE
BECAUSE
OF ★ THE
BRAVE**



THE AMERICAN LEGION
Centennial Celebration
1919 **100** **2019**
Years

PLANNING SEMINAR Presented at Department Convention

National Headquarters Staff will offer information on how to organize your community's American Legion Centennial event.

It is highly encouraged for each post to have a representative present.

Walk-ins are welcome, however it is preferred that you call in to Department HQ to reserve your seat.

Call 309-663-0361

Start Planning

- Get Organized
- Use the tools
- Share the Legacy
- Advance the Vision

THURSDAY, JULY 14, 2016

11:00 AM - 2:00 PM (Lunch provided)

PRAIRIE CAPITAL CONVENTION CENTER

ROOM B11 - B,C&D



*From The Desk of American Legion Illinois Premier Boys State
Chairman Christopher Benigno*

www.illinoisboysstate.org

We have just completed our 81st session of the American Legion Illinois Premier Boys State program. This has been a year of new leadership and a renewed direction. This year's goal and focus was to always have the right people in the right place at the right time and the staff really came together to do just that. Being my first year attending it was both an exciting and rewarding experience. I would like to thank everyone throughout the state that recruited, promoted, sponsored or volunteered, you all made this session a success. We had 469 boys attend which was lower than our goal, but larger than the previous two years, so congratulations.

Having the opportunity to take this journey with those 469 young men, through the mythical 51st state known as "Boys State", has been a real adventure. I understand that this is only one of our many programs within our

organization, but that being said, I believe it is our most rewarding. We are shaping our youth to become dedicated servant leaders, more caring citizens and better human beings. We are teaching them the importance of community involvement and responsibility. In the end we hope to have added value to their lives, a value that they continue to hold on to and share with others.

So, if you are not involved, why not? This is one of our four pillars, children and youth, and it must be embraced. We have 810 high schools in the state of Illinois and 768 posts. With every post charter comes the responsibility to support the programs of The American Legion, the organization in which your post is chartered under. Somehow, as an organization some of us have lost sight of that mission. It's not too late to lead the charge in your area! Thank you in advance for caring enough to step up.

2016 American Legion Illinois Premier Boys State Elected Officials

Governor

Kevin Mallady - Danville

Lt. Governor

Archit Dhar—Naperville

Secretary of State

Tejas Gajula—Naperville

Attorney General

Kuzivakwashe B. Zhou—Peoria

State Comptroller

Bernie Wang—Naperville

State Treasurer

Josh Patel—Naperville

President pro temp.

Senate

Shawn Park—Naperville

Speaker

House of Representatives

Doug McKissick—Naperville

Chief Justice

Supreme Court

Tyler Hodgett—W. Chicago

2016 American Legion Illinois Premier Boys State Leadership

Chairman

Nationalist Party

Karington Kim—Woodridge

Chairman

Federalist Party

Ryan Stark—Mapleton

2016 Award Winners

Samsung

Alexander Shura—Naperville

1st Place – Rohan Macherla

Kennedy—Plainfield, IL

1st Place – Alexander Shura

Stelle—Naperville, IL

Essay

3rd Place – Michael Petrik
Conatser—Elburn, IL

Oration

3rd Place – Adam Raso
Gleason—Dunlap, IL

John Geiger

3rd Place – Ryan Stark
Conatser—Mapleton, IL

2nd Place – Nicholas Schuster
Kennedy—Batavia, IL

2nd Place – Archit Dhar
Gleason—Naperville, IL

2nd Place – Kevin Mallady
Geiger—Danville, IL

Armed Forces Day Dinner

1st Place – Doug McKissick
Savage—Naperville, IL

Joe McCraith Model Citizen Award (Staff Selection)

3rd Place – Chailuv Gidwani
Hayes—Naperville, IL

2nd Place – Jack McCoy
Kennedy—Woodstock, IL

1st Place – Russell McCormic
Conatser—Bloomington, IL

Keith Lucas Model Citizen Award (Citizen Selection)

3rd Place – Benjamin Bertsche
Savage—St. Charles, IL

2nd Place – Antonio Escatel
Kennedy—Mendota, IL

1st Place – Mario Giannini
Conatser—Grayslake, IL

Paul Brown Officers Leadership Award

3rd Place – Archit Dhar
Gleason—Naperville, IL

2nd Place – Josh Patel
Geiger—Naperville, IL

1st Place – Kuzivakwashe B. Zhou
Savage—Peoria, IL

Boys Nation

2nd Alternate – Kevin Mallady
Geiger—Danville, IL

1st Alternate – Doug McKissick
Savage—Naperville, IL

Senator – Kuzivakwashe B. Zhou
Savage—Peoria, IL

Senator – Russell McCormic
Conatser—Bloomington, IL

Model County

3rd Place – Gleason
2nd Place – Kennedy
Overall – Savage



The Illinois American Legion Second Division hosted its annual Armed Forces Day dinner on Saturday, May 21, 2016 at Naperville Marriot.

2nd Division Commander, Wayne Fischer, was Master of Ceremonies.

Special invited guest was John Rose, D.O.D who spoke on the 50th Commemoration of the Vietnam War. Keynote speaker was PNC Tom Bock. **(Middle)** DuPage County Commander Don Lindsey presented Department Commander Paul W. Gardner with a special award on behalf of the men and women of the 14 American Legion posts in DuPage Co.

(Top) In Commander Gardner's address he emphasized LEADERSHIP, MOTIVATION and PRIDE on the American Legion. Our 2016 goal is 105%.

(Bottom) East Aurora High School NJROTC presenting our Colors during the Armed Forces Day Dinner.



**Senate Resolution Bill 838 has designated
October 27 as Combat Infantryman Day.**

A new license plate with Combat Infantryman badge is currently being designed.

Legacy Scholarship Fund to help more students in need

Dear Legion Family Members and Friends,

“To consecrate and sanctify our comradeship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness.”

That last line from The American Legion’s Preamble to the Constitution underscores much of what our organization represents in communities all across this great nation.



We can see the benefits of mutual helpfulness in the eyes of those who receive assistance from The American Legion. A resident at a veterans home attended to by a younger VA Volunteer Services Legionnaire. A victim of a natural disaster receives immediate financial assistance via the Legion’s National Emergency Fund. And a young man learns lifelong leadership skills at American Legion Boys State. The list goes on and on. But last week at Spring Meetings in Indianapolis, the National Executive Committee approved a very important change to the Legacy Scholarship Fund that will expand the roster of those receiving assistance. In simple terms, **the Legion is increasing the pool of scholarship applicants** to include children of post 9/11 veterans with disability ratings of 50 percent or higher.

Make no mistake: the children of post 9/11 veterans who made the ultimate sacrifice will remain the top priority for Legacy Scholarship aid. But by expanding the eligibility requirements, the Legion will continue to provide for the children of the men and women who face the harsh realities of war wounds every day of their lives.

While the changes are immediate, in practical terms, they will not take place until the 2017 scholarship year. The 2016 Legacy Scholarship winners were selected at the recent Spring Meetings. Those who qualify under the new rules have until the application deadline of April 20, 2017, to apply.

The expansion of this program is occurring, thanks to its success and to the dedication of our American Legion Riders. Throughout the years of the Legacy Run, the Riders have shown a tremendous commitment to aiding students in need.

Among those students who received assistance from the Legion’s Legacy Scholarships is Eva Marie Witt of Ohio. “The scholarship pays honor and tribute to my father, and I am just so thankful that I’ve been able to pay for my college and not have that extra worry and stress on top of everything I’m already dealing with.”

Thanks to the Riders, donors and everyone else who contributes to this rewarding program, there will be more deserving students receiving scholarships in the future.

Duty. Honor. Country.

Dale Barnett
National Commander

MARK YOUR CALENDAR



CLOSE OF BOOKS

June 24th

~ ~ ~

SAL Detachment Convention

June 24th--26th

Wauconda, IL

~ ~ ~

Independence Day

Dept. Office Closed

July 4th

~ ~ ~

Department Convention

Springfield, IL

July 13th--16th

~ ~ ~

Jr. Shooting Sports Natl. Championship

Colorado Springs, CO

July 19th--23rd

~ ~ ~

Boys Nation

Washington, D.C.

July 22nd-30th

~ ~ ~

State Baseball Tournament

Jerseyville, IL

July 26th--30th

~ ~ ~

National Membership Workshop &

DSO School

July 28th--30th

Indianapolis, IN

~ ~ ~

American Legion Baseball

Regional Tournaments

August 3rd--7th

(Alton Post 126 Host)

~ ~ ~

American Legion Golf Tournament

August 6th--7th

Danville, IL

~ ~ ~

ALA--Fall Board Meeting

August 6th--7th

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Honoring an American Legion Legend



Dear Legion Family Members and Friends,

It's been a long time since many of us have donned caps and gowns for graduation ceremonies. Still, as a retired history teacher, this time of year summons special memories.

Millions of young people have recently gone through commencement exercises, both for high school and college graduations. Many of those with diplomas in hand have Harry Colmery to thank.

The past national commander of The American Legion is, of course, the architect of one of the greatest pieces of legislation in U.S. history: [the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944](#).

When Colmery sat down at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington, D.C., to draft the legislation, the White House and Congress were well aware of the impending issue. The U.S. government was unprepared to handle the massive economic jolt that would come when the GIs of World War II came home.

Hundreds of bills had already been introduced to address the needs and problems faced by servicemembers who had already returned home. But none had provided what the World War II veterans needed after defeating evil in Europe and the Pacific. There were still no tangible benefits for those returning home who had given years of their lives to defend American and liberate millions of others around the world.

Opponents of the legislation were easy to find at the time. Critics

argued that a full year of unemployment benefits would turn veterans into slackers. Colmery remained firm: "The American Legion has not lost faith in the veterans."

And thanks to Colmery, the GI Bill came to be.

It's hard to precisely quantify the impact of the GI Bill. But for starters, we know that millions of U.S. servicemen and women have used the benefit, or updated versions that are helping today's newly minted veterans. The GI Bill has helped launch countless small businesses. It made college educations affordable for veterans. And it improved health-care services and benefits for disabled veterans.

Our nation owes a great deal of thanks to Colmery for his efforts.

And, this week his contributions will be commemorated in Topeka, Kan., with [the dedication of Harry Colmery Memorial Park](#).

The ceremony will be held on June 22, fittingly the anniversary of the signing of the bill that changed so many lives.

Keith Howard-Streicher, who served four years in the U.S. Army, is among post 9/11 veterans who have used the GI Bill. "If I didn't have the GI Bill, honestly I wouldn't be where I am today. If I didn't have that money for school, I wouldn't have these opportunities. I thank God for the GI Bill. It really has changed my life."

Duty. Honor. Country.

Dale Barnett
National Commander

Colmery Memorial Park honors GI Bill architect

American Legion Past National Commander Harry Colmery assembled into one proposition what has been described as the most important social legislation of the 20th century: the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, better known as the GI Bill.

On June 22, his contributions to American society will be immortalized with the dedication of Harry Colmery Memorial Park in Topeka, Kan., where he lived, worked and served veterans for most of his life. The dedication ceremony starts at 2 p.m., with comments from American Legion National Commander Dale Barnett, Past National Commander and current Department of Kansas Adjutant Jimmie Foster, and Pat Michaelis, chairman of the Colmery park project for the Downtown Topeka Foundation.



The setting, one block from the Kansas State Capitol building on South Kansas Avenue, includes a statue of Colmery, a World War I veteran who served as American Legion national commander from 1936 to 1937, along with one bronze panel that depicts U.S. military personnel in World War II uniforms. Another bronze panel shows the same World War II servicemembers as they transition to civilian lives with help from the GI Bill. On the back of each panel is an inscription, one describing the GI Bill and its legacy and another telling Colmery's story as a veteran, Legionnaire and community servant. Six benches are positioned in the area, which is designed to serve as a venue for ceremonies.

The GI Bill is credited for lifting the United States out of the Great Depression, preventing economic catastrophe upon the return of troops from World War II, democratizing higher education, improving health-care services and benefits for disabled veterans, and launching thousands of small businesses across the country.

The American Legion's Department of Kansas worked with volunteers and the Colmery family to raise funds, design and construct the memorial park. It occupies much of the 900 block of South Kansas Avenue in Topeka.



98th Annual Department Convention

July 12 – 17, 2016 Springfield, Illinois



FREEDOM FEST

Friday, July 15, 2016

6:00 PM - 11:30 PM

*Everyone is invited to help
Commander Paul
and President Kathy Celebrate their
Conventions and Year of Service.*



*DOWNTOWN SPRINGFIELD IN THE ROADWAY
BETWEEN THE TWO CONVENTION HOTELS*

700 Block of E. Adams

BEER, SODA, FOOD

LIVE MUSIC 7:00 PM – 11:00 PM

\$\$\$ NO COVER CHARGE \$\$\$

Featuring the band

“OUT OF THE WOODS”

Party In Honor of

Department Commander Paul W. Gardner

Thanking Commander for His Year of Service!

Thursday, July 14, 2016 6:00 PM – 12:00 AM

Springfield Post 32

1120 Sangamon Avenue 217/523-3415

Everyone Welcome

The Mess Hall Restaurant



(The Mess Hall Restaurant is inside of and operated by Springfield Post #32, The American Legion)

The Mess Hall Restaurant open for

Lunch Monday—Friday: 11:00 am—2:00 pm PLUS

Open Thursday & Friday 11:00 am—8:00 pm

And Saturday 4:30 pm—8:00 pm

Complete Bar Service at Post 32 Everyday, open at 10:30 a.m.

(VIDEO GAMING AVAILABLE)

FREE CONTINUOUS SHUTTLE BY HARMONY SERVICE

Operates Thursday and Friday from 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 a.m.

between the hotels, Post 32 and Post 809.

7th Annual Department Convention Bike Show Hosted By The American Legion Riders

**American Legion Riders
Hosting Bike Show
Saturday, July 16th**

Department Convention at entrance to
convention center

Signup 9:00AM -10:00AM

\$10.00 entry fee

Register at the ALR Booth
inside the convention hall



Judging is by attendees 10:00AM –NOON

Classes will be -

- Touring
- Sport
- Custom
- Cruiser
- Trikes



There will be a Commanders Choice selected by the outgoing and incoming Commander along with the Ladies Auxiliary President.

CONVENTION PARADE

Friday, July 15th

There will be a parade as a kickoff to the Freedom Fest.
All Legion Riders are encouraged to attend!

- Line up at Horace Mann parking lot at 5:00 p.m.
- Step off at 5:25
- Head South on 7th St. to Adams
- Turning between 2 hotels heading the wrong way
- Disband at PCCC

Entry Fees will
support the
Legacy

Scholarship Fund.



Veterans' History Project Volunteers Needed

Once again it is time to start gathering volunteers for the Veterans' History Project booth at the Department of Illinois American Legion Convention held in July in Springfield. The booth on Thursday, July 14th, will be just to sign up Veterans for their interview and to share information about this rewarding project. Court reporters will be available on Friday and Saturday to record the interviews. Volunteers are needed to work booth Wednesday afternoon Thursday and Friday and also to serve as interviewers (the questions are written out for you) or Friday and Saturday. Please email Jill Layton at Jill.LaytonALA@gmail.com or call her at [217-849-3653](tel:217-849-3653) if you are available to volunteer or if you would like more information! **Attn: Veterans!!** Please stop by the Veterans' History Project (VHP) booth and sign up for your interview. You will receive a verbatim transcript of your story, your piece of history, and a copy will be sent to the Illinois State Library and to the Library of Congress in DC. It is a wonderful way to pass down to your family your part in American history.

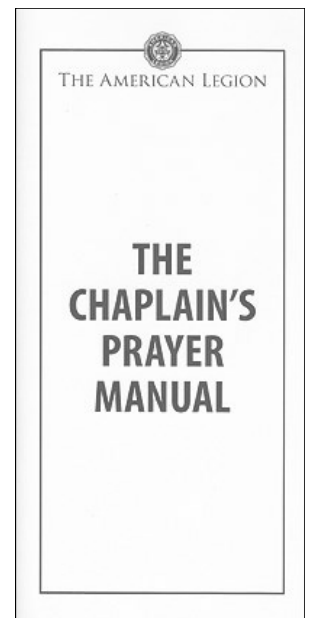
Chaplain's Conference

**Thursday, July 14, 2016
10:00 AM ~ 11:00 AM**



Presentation by
Department Chaplain
Virgil Oikion

Prairie Capitol
Convention Center
Springfield, IL
Room B-6 East





The American Legion Department
of Illinois Publication Project
is about to begin!



Starting soon, Publishing Concepts (PCI) will be contacting you via mail, phone, and email to request that you update your information.

We understand security and privacy are concerns, but please know that PCI is a trusted partner of the American Legion Department of Illinois. Don't miss out on the opportunity to be included!

PCI not the **big** company

www.publishingconcepts.com

VETERANS HELPING VETERANS FIND A JOB



2016 AMERICAN LEGION HIRING EVENT

The Prairie Capital Convention Center
1 Convention Center Plaza, Springfield, IL 62701

July 15, 2016 Veteran Preview: 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM
General Public: 11:00 AM - 2:00 PM

The American Legion is organizing a Hiring Event for veteran job seekers and military spouses. The event will be held at The Prairie Capital Convention Center at 1 Convention Center Plaza, Springfield, IL on July 15, 2016.

This will be a FREE hiring event for employers, job seekers and military spouses.

This Hiring Event is being conducted by The American Legion, Department of Illinois and is being supported by The Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES), The Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs (IDVA), The Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), and Hero 2 Hired (H2H).

IDES CONTACTS:

Sheila Cutright-LVER
Phone: 217-524-7837
Sheila.Cutright@Illinois.Gov

Randy VanVickle-LVER
Phone: 217-442-0296 X-102
Randy.Vanvickle@Illinois.Gov

Donald Niebruegge-LVER
Phone: 618-277-8938
Donald.Niebruegge@Illinois.Gov

Equilla Simms-BSC
Phone: 217-782-1296
Equilla.Simms@Illinois.Gov

Danita Lust-BSC
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Danita.Lust@Illinois.Gov

Tory Davis-BSM
Phone: 309-671-4976
Tory.Davis@Illinois.Gov

The American Legion
Department of Illinois
2720 E. Lincoln St.
Bloomington, IL 61704
Office (309) 663-0361
Fax (309) 663-5783
Web: www.illegion.org



IDES
ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF
EMPLOYMENT SECURITY



ESGR
EMPLOYER SUPPORT OF
THE GUARD AND RESERVE





98th Annual American Legion Department of Illinois TENTATIVE CONVENTION AGENDA

Wednesday, July 13, 2016

- 1:00 PM Standing Committee Meetings – PCCC
 ⇒ Internal Affairs – Room B-10
 ⇒ Economic – Room B-7 W
 ⇒ Finance – Room B-4 W

- 2:00 PM Standing Committee Meetings – PCCC
 ⇒ Constitution & By-Laws – Room B-9

- 6:30 PM DEC Photo – Buddinger Room, PCCC

- 7:00 PM Department Executive Committee Meeting
 Buddinger Room, PCCC

Thursday, July 14, 2016

- 9:00 AM Convention Committee Meetings – PCCC
 ⇒ Rules – Room B-1
 ⇒ Americanism – Room B-4 E
 ⇒ Children & Youth – Room B-4 W
 ⇒ Economics – Room B-6 W
 ⇒ National Security – Room B-8
 ⇒ Nomination of Delegates-at-Large – Room B-9
 ⇒ Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation – Room B-10
 ⇒ Resolutions – Room B-3
 ⇒ Judiciary – Room B-7 E

- 10:00 AM Convention Committee Meetings – PCCC
 • Credentials, Contests & Internal Affairs – Room B-2
 • Legislation – Room B-7 W

- 10:00 – 11:00 AM—Chaplains Seminar – B-6 E

- 11:00 AM—2:00 PM—Centennial Celebration Seminar
 Buddinger Room, PCCC

- 3:00 PM District Caucuses – PCCC
 14 – Room B-9
 15 – Room B-1
 16 – Room B-2
 17 – Room B-6 E
 18 – Room B-6 W
 19 – Room B-7 E
 20 – Room B-8
 21 – Room B-7 W
 22 – Room B-4 W
 23 – Room B-10
 24 – Room B-3
 25 – Room B-4 E

- 5:00 PM District Caucuses – PCCC
 1 – Room B-8
 2 – Room B-7 E
 3 – Room B-7 W
 4 – Room B-9
 5 – Room B-6 W
 7 – Room B-3
 8 – Room B-6 E
 9 – Room B-10

- 10 – Room B-1
 11 – Room B-4 E
 12 – Room B-4 W
 13 – Room B-2

- 6:00 PM – 1:00 AM- Commander's Party – Post #32

Friday, July 15, 2016

- 7:30 AM Past Department Commander Breakfast
 Wyndham City Centre- Springfield– Capitol Room,
 Mezzanine
- 9:00 AM Convention Session opens, Prairie PCCC – Main Floor
- 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM Veterans Hiring Event – PCCC Lower Level
 Rooms B11 BCD

- 5:30 PM Legion Riders Parade – Leave Horace Mann parking lot
 at 5:00 PM

- 6:00 PM -Midnight Freedom Fest – 700 block of East Adams St.

Saturday, July 16, 2016

- 8:00 AM Legion Family Memorial Service –PCCC– Main Floor
- 9:30 AM Convention Session – PCCC – Main Floor
- 10:00 AM Bike Show – PCCC - \$10.00 entry fee, judging ballots
 available at Legion Riders booth
- 6:00 PM Commander and President Dinner— Cocktails
 Wyndham City Centre- Springfield—Ballroom
- 7:00 PM Commander's & President's Dinner, Wyndham City
 Centre- Springfield—Ballroom

*** Free shuttle 11:00 AM to 1:00 AM Thursday & Friday
 between hotels, convention center, Post 32, Post 809 and
 Illinois State Military Museum

*** Post #32 and Post #809 will be open from 10:00 AM-1:00 AM
 every day for convention

*** Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum discounted rate of
 \$7.00 (must show convention badge for discounted rate
 – July 13-16)

*** Free admission to the Illinois State Military Museum at
 Camp Lincoln

Department Headquarters Office Hours

Wednesday, July 13, 2016	8:00 AM – 5:00 PM
Thursday, July 14, 2016	8:00 AM – 5:00 PM
Friday, July 15, 2016	8:00 AM – 4:00 PM
Saturday, July 16, 2016	8:00 AM – 3:00 PM

Emblem Sales & Exhibits Hours

Wednesday, July 13, 2016	11:00 AM – 7:00 PM
Thursday, July 14, 2016	8:00 AM – 5:00 PM
Friday, July 15, 2016	8:00 AM – 4:00 PM
Saturday, July 16, 2016	8:00 AM – 12 Noon



American Legion State Golf Tournament

Danville, IL

August 6 & 7, 2016

Entry Deadline: July 15th

(Late entries accepted if availability)



Harrison Park
GOLF COURSE

Brock Burton, GCSAA
1300 W. Voorhees St.
Danville, IL 61832
(217) 431-2266

Opening Ceremonies

Saturday, August 6

8:00 AM

Harrison Park Golf Course

American Legion Riders, Presentation of Colors,
Fly-Over, National Anthem, Marine Corps
League & Post Honor Guard

All Golfers need to register/check-in
at Harrison Park Golf Course
on Saturday!



AJ Shannon, PGA
332 E. Liberty Lane
Danville, IL 61832
(217) 442-8876

Entry Fee: \$125 per player

Includes: Sat & Sun rounds, cart fees, golf shirt, Saturday
Meal and Prize money

Meal for Significant Other is \$12 each

Format: 4-person scramble

(2 of 4 must be American Legion member in good standing)

Flighted after 1st day

Starting Times: Tee times begin at 9:00 AM (Sat & Sun, both courses)

Tee times will be arranged by preference and geographic distance

Days Hotel & Conference Center
77 N. Gilbert Street
Danville, IL 61832
(217) 443-6600

Tournament Rate: \$72.50 per night

Sleep Inn & Suites
361 Lynch Drive
Danville, IL 61832
(217) 442-6600

Tournament Rate: \$79.49 per night

American Legion
State Golf
PO Box 894
Danville, IL 61832



Tournament Director:

Gregg Alpers
(217) 274-3763

**For the Golf Tournament Registration Form go to: www.illegion.org
- or - contact Department Headquarters at 309-663-0361**



*The American Legion,
 Department of Illinois
 Cordially Invites You to the
 Annual Commander and President Dinner
 Honoring
 Department Commander Paul W. Gardner
 and
 Auxiliary President Kathy Cisna
 On Saturday, July 16, 2016
 Wyndham Springfield ~ Main Ballroom
 Cocktails at 6:00 p.m. Dinner at 7:00 p.m.*

Menu Selections: Choice of: Chicken Breast w/mushroom sauce, wild rice pilaf & broccoli sauté; – OR – Grilled Salmon w/ champagne dill sauce & corn risotto; – OR – 6oz Grilled Beef Tenderloin w/ herbed red wine sauce, au gratin potatoes, green beans. All are served with Classic Caesar Salad and Dessert.

Reservation Deadline: To guarantee your reservation, mail your check and dinner reservation form no later than **June 30, 2016**. Those that desire a table for eight (8) should list their names on the dinner reservation form provided below.

Questions: Contact Dinner Chairman, Tina Abdelnour (815) 721-0124 or email: tabdelnour1@yahoo.com

Make checks payable to: The American Legion Department of Illinois

Mail Reservation to: Dinner Chairman: Tina Abdelnour ~ 815 Van Buren St. ~ Belvidere, IL 61008

Name: _____ Division# _____

Address: _____ District# _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone # _____ No. of Person(s) _____ or Table(s) _____

Chicken Breast Dinner @\$40 _____ / Grilled Salmon Dinner @\$40 _____ / Grilled Beef Tenderloin Dinner @\$54 _____

Check Total \$ _____ *Make checks payable to: The American Legion Department of Illinois*

Please list names of each person when reserving a table of 8: _____,

_____, _____,

_____, _____.

Meet Our Department of Illinois Membership Director



Chad Woodburn—The American Legion Department of Illinois welcomes new Membership Director, Chad Woodburn. Chad is an 18 year Legion member. Chads family is currently very involved with the Indiana Legion family, and looks forward to transferring to the Illinois Legion Family. Chad served a 24 year military career, retiring as a Senior Master Sergeant Air National Guard. He also served active duty Marine and Army National Guard. Chad begins his new role as Membership Director July 1st and looks forward to meeting with the Illinois Legionnaires and hopes to see many of you at the Department Convention.

Photo (L-R) —Chad's wife Michelle, Chad, their daughter Deanna, in front, their son Logan.

Toni Hernan—The American Legion Department of Illinois welcomes our new Finance Secretary, Toni Hernan.

After Karen Henry retires at the end of September, I will be the new Finance Secretary. Karen is sharing her vast array of knowledge as she prepares me to fill the position. I am an Auxiliary member of American Legion Post 44, and my husband Nick is an SAL member. We are both members and officers of the Tazewell County Legion Riders. I am starting my second term as Treasurer and he will soon transition from Sgt.-At-Arms to Vice President.

We both have a deep appreciation and respect for those who served our country. Together we support fundraising activities for local organizations who respect and honor local veterans.

I look forward to and hope to meet many of you next month at the state convention in Springfield.

Photo: (L) Toni (R) Nick



1ST ANNUAL



**VETS FOR VETS
RIDE**

DATE: JULY 30TH 2016

TIME: 10:00AM

REGISTRATION: 10:00AM - 11:00AM

**AT EAST PEORIA BASS PRO PARKING LOT
CEREMONY TO BE HELD AT
EAST PEORIA RIVERFRONT MEMORIAL**

**\$10.00 PER PERSON
LAST BIKE IN BY 17:30 (5:30PM)**

50/50 Drawings
AR15 Raffle Tickets \$5.00 or 5 for \$20.00 (Drawn @ 19:00 (7pm))
MUST HAVE FOID CARD TO TAKE POSSESSION

To keep up on developing details follow:
<https://www.facebook.com/TazewellCountyAmericanLegionRiders/>

• ALL RIDERS AND PUBLIC WELCOME •
OUR VETS HAVE SACRIFICED SO MUCH FOR US - LET'S RIDE FOR THEM



ZACHARY LEE CRAWFORD
FOUNDATION
All proceeds will go to
Zachary Lee Crawford
Foundation
in effort to fund
Service Dogs
for Local Veterans
with PTSD

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

THE AMERICAN LEGION
DEPARTMENT OF ILLINOIS
P.O. BOX 2910
BLOOMINGTON, ILLINOIS 61702

PUBLISHED MONTHLY *

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Department Commander Department Editor
PAUL W. GARDNER MARTY CONATSER

Now Is The Time To Stand Together For Our Flag

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* One year Subscription to the Department News
\$10.00 for 11 issues

Newsletter articles must be at Department Headquarters by the
15th of each month for it to be in the next months issue.

Department of Illinois ~ Official Member of The National American Legion Press Association

JUNE-JULY TRIVIA DID YOU KNOW?

1. What historic structure was saved from a real estate syndicate by a donation from a Texas cattle heiress?
2. Who's letter to Ronald Reagan read: "I'm very sorry....I thank God no one died"?
3. How many people were killed in 1979 at the Three Mile Island nuclear disaster?
4. What British prime minister defined a fanatic as "one who can't change his mind and won't change the subject"?
5. What Japanese war cry meant "May you live forever"?

Visit our website!
Scan Here



THE AMERICAN LEGION **FAMILY**



ANSWERS:

1. The Alamo.
2. John Hinckley Jr.
3. Zero.
4. Winston Churchill.
5. Banzai.

