

# Department News

AMERICAN LEGION DEPARTMENT OF ILLINOIS

THE AMERICAN LEGION FAMILY



2015-2016 DEPARTMENT COMMANDER PAUL W. GARDNER

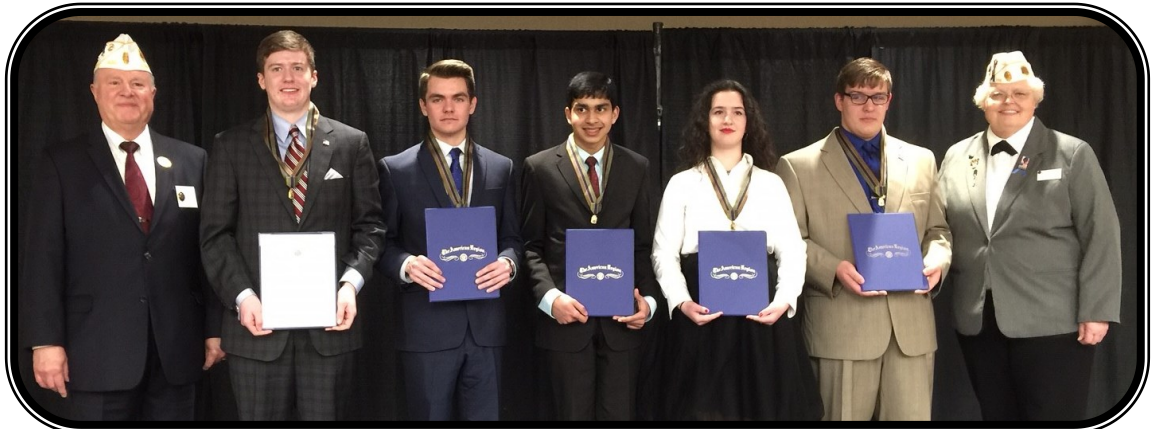
MARCH 2016



## Department of Illinois Announces 79th Annual American Legion Oratorical Winner and Finalists



## And the winner is...Thomas J. Kilcullen



The American Legion Department of Illinois Oratorical Semi-Finals and Final Contests were held March 5th at the Peoria Civic Center in Peoria, IL. Each year we have an amazing class of orators and the class of 2016 were truly impressive. Congratulations of every high student who competed. Pictured above is the Department Winner and Finalists. Complete contest results is located inside on page 5. **L-R: Department Commander Paul W. Gardner; 1st Place Winner Thomas "TJ" Kilcullen of Lindenhurst; Nicholas Fuentes 2nd Place of LaGrange Park; Regan Macwan 3rd Place of Naperville; Cait Redman 4th Place of Belleville; Reagan Tibbs 5th Place of Middletown and Department Sr. Vice Commander Cheri Stanton.**

### MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

AS OF FRIDAY  
MARCH 4, 2016

### TOP 10 DISTRICT AND DIVISION RANKINGS

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

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

## From The Desk of Department Commander Paul W. Gardner



**D**istrict and Division Commanders, are you satisfied with your current membership percentages?

District Commanders that were over 95% at the end of February should feel pretty satisfied because they're on a downhill run for the goal of 105%.

Out of 24 Districts only six (6) Districts are over 95%. Another six (6) aren't even at 90% and the remainder fall in between from 94.9% to 90.1%.

I personally want to congratulate and thank the six District Commanders who have achieved 95% and more at this time, job well done:

David E. Johnson, 12<sup>th</sup> District – 96.87%

John B. Reece Jr, 11<sup>th</sup> District – 96.53%  
Michael R. Wheat, 4<sup>th</sup> District – 96.10%  
Alfonso Pizarro, 9<sup>th</sup> District – 95.60%  
Leon A. Kraut, 13<sup>th</sup> District – 95.28%  
Matthew Lawson, 20<sup>th</sup> District – 95.03%

There's only one Division over 95%, the 2<sup>nd</sup> @ 96.11%.

Comrades the year isn't over. I've stressed leadership, motivation and pride all year. I haven't met one Division or District Commander that didn't have any of the above three. The responsibility to lead and motivate isn't easy but you took these positions because you believe in the American Legion and everything this great organization does. Achievement and pride in reaching goals is a great feeling and it helps set the stage for those officers

who look to you for guidance.

District Commanders who reach 105% before close of books will get two (2) free night's stay at the Department Convention. Next month I will again list District Commanders that are exceeding goals, be one of them, pride in your District, pride in yourself.

**105% can be done, you can do it.**

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



**W**hew, February just whizzed on by. I went to the Lincoln Pilgrimage in Springfield and membership awards were presented. Everybody has been working so hard and it shows. The last ones are the hardest!!! If each Post Commander would have a sit down drive one night at their post and several members could call the last few—others could partner up and pick up the dues for the ones they call. It not only takes a village to raise a child, it takes a post family to collect its dues.

I went to the Lincoln Museum for the first time and really enjoyed the history lesson. It is amazing how the theater presentations are so life like. Lincoln was a remarkable man. He showed a lot of respect for our veterans and put our country on the correct path to protect our servicemen and servicewomen's rights. I wonder what he would say now about our V A System?

I went to the Washington Conference for the first time. I was allowed to sit in on the V A and R Committee and heard many speakers talk about AC-COUNTABILITY" and the V A System. We need to get more Legionnaires in Congress to help figure out the problems in a timely manner. Too many of Congress are not veterans so they are unfamiliar with what the V A is really like. Until they have a family member try to get service, just visiting the V A one or two times isn't going to help. Thankfully the members of the Veterans Affairs Commission are veterans and they listened to the Commanders testimony. He asked how the American Legion can work along with them and the V A to help figure out how to work in a timely manner to get more claims put through. Everybody sounded ready to get the job done. Congress was impressed we had so many Legionnaires come to Washington to hear the Commander testify and to visit their offices. Several were late getting there because so many Legionnaires were packing the chamber, the outer

halls, and the slowing down the magnetometer's. It was truly a show of force for Congress to see!

This weekend I get to lead a training for Jr. & Sr. Vice Commanders coming in for next year. I hope they will bring ideas for incentives for mentoring posts, districts, and divisions. We need to step up and use our former officers as mentors to train the new people. Spend 5 minutes at each of these meetings to give suggestions for improvement or explaining things.

On Sunday afternoon, I have a date with several scouts who want to work on a Community Service badge. They are going to help paint the big hall of my Legion. All they did was ask about how they could help the veteran's of our Community, and I gave them several suggestions. The scout that is the leader is also working on EAGLE SCOUT. It is a WIN-WIN for my post. How about yours?



## From The Desk of Department Auxiliary President Kathy Bisna



It is hard to believe that it is already March and my year as the Department President is 2/3 over. Anytime someone asks me how the year is going, I always answer "Fantastic."

Speaking of Fantastic, February had to be the absolute meaning of Fantastic. It was such an honor to have Our National President Sharon Conatser, American Legion National Commander Dale Barnett, and Sons of The American Legion National Commander Kevin Collier in Illinois for the Lincoln Pilgrimage. The Springfield American Legion Family again outdid themselves with this event. Special Thanks to the Sons of The American

Legion for including Sharon & I in their tour of the CMN Hospital. We took a tour and passed out some Josh Dogs. It was amazing. It was such a Special Honor to bring remarks at Abraham Lincoln's tomb on the 207<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of his birth. Thank You to all who participated!

Also in February was the Washington Conference. A High Light for me was the opportunity to present National President Sharon a check from the Department of Illinois for the Auxiliary Emergency Fund (her special project) in the amount of \$15,000.00. Our Members & Units certainly came through!!! I also attended the National Commander's testimony to Congress and had an appointment with Senator Dick Durbin to advocate for Veterans. It was a Great Conference.

I am looking forward to attending the Oratorical Contest. I am always blown away by the abilities of the contestants. If you have never attended one I would urge you to do so. You will love it!

Our Patriotic Conference is just around the corner on March 18<sup>th</sup>. I know our Americanism & National Security Chairmen have lined up some great speakers. We are all looking forward to having National President Sharon present for her official visit. It will be an Awesome Day!

As always we can use your help to help us help you. We are here to support you The American Legion. We need members to keep up that support. Please make sure all of your eligible family members belong to the American Legion Auxiliary. Thank You so much.



## From The Desk of Detachment Commander William Geary



Greetings from the Detachment of Illinois. The American Legion Family recently completed a great tribute to our greatest President, Abraham Lincoln. Gathered in Springfield, IL along with our SAL National Commander, our National and Department Auxiliary Presidents, and our National and Department American Legion Commanders, I and a host of other Legion Family members attended the 82nd annual Lincoln Pilgrimage. Thank you Springfield Post 32 for continuing this great tradition.

More recently, the American Legion Family from across the Nation gathered in Washington DC. On February 21st, the National Sons paid their respects to our fallen military at three National sites, laying wreaths at each location. We first visited the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington National Cemetery. This is a moving site, especially witnessing the changing of the guard.

Our second stop was the Pentagon 9/11 Memorial. I am most impressed by the design of this memorial paying respects to the 189 victims of the Pentagon attack on September 11, 2001. We placed our Illinois Wreath there.

Our third stop was the Korean War Memorial. This also is very moving, reminding us of the sacrifices of our Military in that "forgotten war".

During the rest of that week, our American Legion Family members visited with members of Congress. American Legion National Commander, Dale Barnett, testified before Congress concerning the lack of accountability of the Department of Veterans Affairs. He expressed his and our extreme disappointment in the VA.

OUR PILLARS - OUR PURPOSE. That's this year's slogan for the Detachment. "Remembering Our Commitment - Keeping it Every Day" R O C K E D. This is National SAL Commander Kevin Collier's slogan this year. As members of the American Legion Family we have a purpose and a commitment to that purpose. The four pillars show us our

purpose. Veterans, Defense, Americanism, and Youth. All of our American Legion programs fall under those pillars and it is our goal this year to bring those pillars, and our commitment to our purpose, to the forefront in everyone's mind. It is already March, only four months left in this SAL year. If you haven't had a fundraiser or are planning a fundraiser for one or more of our American Legion Programs, please let's get it done.

The Sons need to help fund our American Legion programs. The National Emergency Fund (NEF) is one that is important to Illinois because of all the natural disasters we have been having in recent years. The National Endowment Fund helps veterans with families in times of need. The Child Welfare Foundation (CWF) is the Sons' favorite program and we have donated more than the Legion and Auxiliary combined. The Legacy Scholarship Fund is the favorite of our Riders and we can help in that great cause. Comfort Warriors helps give needed comfort items to

*(SAL Detachment Cmdr. continued on page 7)*



# Did You Know?

Office: 312-980-4266 Email: [Raymond.Toczec@va.gov](mailto:Raymond.Toczec@va.gov)

As I mentioned last month, I first published my article on “rumors” way back in 2008 and this topic has received the most comments and compliments. I went into my archives and updated these common rumors. Part one was in last month’s newsletter. Here is part two.

**7. I’ve been out of the service over ten years and can’t use my education benefits to go to school.** This is partially true. Veterans are usually only given ten to fifteen years from the date they were released from active duty to use the education G.I. Bill. However there are several major exceptions. First, a veteran who files a claim for service-related compensation and receives a rating (usually 20% or more) has twelve years from the date they **received their award letter** to apply for educational benefits under the Vocational Rehabilitation program. For example, a Vietnam vet discharged in 1972 first files for compensation in 2009. He or she is granted 30% for Agent Orange related diabetes. They now have 12 yrs. from 2009 to see if they qualify for that program. Another way to get education benefits is under our state program called the “Illinois Veterans Grant”. Any honorably discharged vet who entered service from Illinois and returned to our state soon after discharge can have their tuition and most fees waived if they go to one of our state schools or universities. And there is NO TIME LIMIT. A Korean vet, for example, who meets the above criteria, gets downsized at his company. They can go back to school under the IVG!

**8. A person who served in the National Guard for eight years, went to weekend drills and summer camp and was then discharged isn’t entitled to any VA benefits.** This is also partially true. Most soldiers in this category would only be eligible for some education benefits under the selective reserve programs. However some could get quite a bit more. Remember the Martin Luther King riots in 1969 and the Post Office strike? If a soldier is “Federally” activated by the President this normally makes them a veteran and they can use the VA hospital and other services. Or if this same soldier goes to their summer camp for two weeks and during that time is hurt on a field exercise they can apply for and get service-related compensation from the VA. This in turn opens up additional education benefits, health care and life insurance. We have even had cases where a soldier is hurt on their weekend drill meeting (was in a car accident returning home after his drill) and becomes eligible!

**9. I’ve waited too long and now can’t get dental care from the VA.** Again, partially true. While most veterans only have 180 days from discharge to use the VA for dental care there are many exceptions. For instance all former P.O.W.’s have life time dental. Also those veterans rated 100% service-connected disabled (including those with less than 100% but qualify for individual unemployability) can see the VA dentist. And those veterans training under the Vocational Rehabilitation program or in the Veterans Administration homeless program can get dental care. Finally if a VA doctor recommends it so as to not make an existing service-related condition worse. For instance a veteran has ulcers and if he doesn’t chew his food properly his ulcers will get worse. Or the medication prescribed to treat the ulcers causes the veterans’ teeth to deteriorate. You get the picture.

**10. A veteran with a bad discharge cannot receive VA benefits.** Although most veterans benefits are contingent on having a good discharge there are many exceptions to the rule. For instance a veteran serves during the end of World War II and gets out with an honorable discharge. The Korean Conflict comes along and they are recalled and that period of service ends with a dishonorable discharge. The veteran is still fully eligible based on his World War II service. Or a veteran is drafted during the Vietnam War and during his two years he thinks the Army is a good career move so he re-ups for four more years. Everything is going fine until the tail end of his next four years he goes AWOL and he gets out on an “Other than Honorable” discharge. He is still eligible based on completing his initial two years of service. So if you know of someone who has what we call “bad paper” you might want them to contact us for advice.

**11. Only veterans who have service-connected disabilities can use the VA hospitals.** Wrong again. Over sixty percent of veterans getting treatment and/or their medications from the VA have no service-connected problems. I am a good example. I was drafted and served two years in West Berlin and never got a scratch. But my retirement income is low enough to put me within the means test and qualify me for care.

**12. It’s been over a year since I was released from active duty, I can’t file a claim for VA compensation benefits, I blew the time limit.** Again incorrect. Although you must file within one year of discharge to receive benefits retroactive to the date you were released other than that there is no time limit for filing. If you file more than one year from discharge and found eligible, you will receive benefits only back to the date of your filing. We have many Vietnam era veterans filing for the first time and they are getting benefits. They simply won’t get paid back to the date they got out of the service.

**13. And finally, don’t worry honey when I die the VA will take care of my burial.** False. Although there are some VA burial benefits available like a government headstone, free plot in a National Cemetery, burial flag, honor guard and a small stipend for burial expenses the bulk of the funeral expenses like the casket, embalming, wake, hearse, etc. must be borne by the family.

**Hope you found these rumors and the real truth enlightening. If you have any questions contact our office at the above telephone number or e-mail address. Or if you have heard another rumor and want it checked out let me know.**

# 2016 Semi Final Oratorical Contestants

## AMERICAN LEGION DEPARTMENT OF ILLINOIS



**CONTEST ROOM #1:** *Contestants Pictured L-R:* **Bhavana Ravala**, 2nd Place (4th Div., Bloomington, IL); **Christiana Wang**, 3rd Place (4th Div., Bloomington, IL); **Evan Fitzgerald** 5th Place (5th Div. Swansea, IL); **Nicholas J. Fuentes** 1st Place (1st Div., Lagrange Park, IL); **Christel Thompson** 4th Place (2nd Div., Glen Ellyn, IL).



**CONTEST ROOM #2:** *Contestants Pictured L-R:* **Abinaya Ramakrishnan**, 2nd Place (2nd Div., Lisle, IL); **Thomas J. Kilcullen**, 1st Place (2nd Div., Lindenhurst, IL); **Courtney Smith** 4th Place (5th Div., Belleville, IL); **Abdul Fanous**, 3rd Place (5th Div., O'Fallon, IL).



**CONTEST ROOM #3:** *Contestants Pictured L-R:* **Emily Brickey**, 4th Place (5th Div., Waterloo, IL); **Ryan Zunker**, 2nd Place (2nd Div., Round Lake Beach, IL); **Regan Macwan** 1st Place (2nd Div., Naperville, IL); **Sheila Kennedy**, 5th Place (4th Div., Pana, IL); **Sam Clement**, 3rd Place (4th Div., Normal, IL).



**CONTEST ROOM #4:** *Contestants Pictured L-R:* **Jacob Martin**, 2nd Place (5th Div., Swansea, IL); **Zaakirah Mujid**, 4th Place (2nd Div., Villa Park, IL); **Tanya Shahi** 3rd Place (2nd Div., Grayslake, IL); **NAME**, 4th Place (5th Div., CITY, IL); **Reagan Tibbs**, 1st Place (4th Div., Middletown, IL).



**CONTEST ROOM #5:** *Contestants Pictured L-R:* **Abril Hunter**, 2nd Place (5th Div., Belleville, IL); **William Svob**, 2nd Place (4th Div., Bloomington, IL); **Ciclali Dominguez** 3rd Place (2nd Div., Island Lake, IL); **Cait Redman**, 1st Place (5th Div., Belleville, IL); **Olivia Thomson**, 5th Place (4th Div., Palmyra, IL).

**WE'RE  
HIRING!**

## Employment Opportunities

American Legion Department Headquarter Positions available:

- ★ Finance Secretary
- ★ Membership Director

Please contact Marty Conatser, Department Adjutant for an employment application or for more information.

# Veterans Awareness Walk 22

## Walk 3.2 miles for Veterans Suicide Awareness



The walk is to make awareness within our Community, State and Nation that "22" Veterans "END" their lives daily in the United States.

The walk will consist of; 5K (3.2) miles through Milan, IL. On April 30th, 2016 time; 10:00 am, Location: Milan American Legion, 515 1st Ave West, Milan, IL 61264. The walk includes; T-shirt, Water, fruit and a really good time. All proceeds will be given to the Department of Illinois American Legion to support all veterans in Illinois, Let's walk together so that we can make our Communities, State and Nation aware of what "22" Means. Thanks Rick Schomer

All donations and Registration for walk can be mailed to:

**P.O. Box 1066, Milan, IL 61264, Attn: Awareness Walk**

Registration and donations for the walk can be done early or at walk site.

A lunch will be provided by Milan American Legion for a fee.

Pledge cards and T-Shirt Form or more Information can be obtained on Face Book "Veterans Awareness Walk 22" or by calling; Rick Schomer (309) 558-0712 or E-Mail: rrschomer@gmail.com



## ***Veterans Awareness Walk 22 Milan, IL Registration Form***

Date: April 30<sup>th</sup> 2016  
Time: 10:00AM  
Place: Milan American Legion, 515 1<sup>st</sup> Street West, Milan, IL 61264

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Your mailing address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

T-Shirt Size: \_\_\_\_\_

Circle one (will walk) (Mail T-Shirt)  
Please note; T-Shirt mailed will cost \$4.00 in addition to your request, please include with your donation. (\$24.00)

Make your Check or Money order out to; **American Legion and in memo write; Awareness walk 22.**

Mail your registration or donation money to; **PO Box 1066, Milan, IL 61264 (attn.: Awareness Walk 22)**

\*\*\*Fill one registration form per person.

Thank you very much for your support.



From The Desk of  
American Legion Illinois Premier Boys State

[www.illinoisboysstate.org](http://www.illinoisboysstate.org)

It is time to hit the recruiting trail for young men for the 2016 session. March and April are key months to sign the young men up for Boys State. I hope you have contacts in the local schools. If not please contact an administrator or counselor to set up an appointment to explain the program and meet with the young men. Remember to explain that the program is a leadership and government program. Also explain that \$2,000.00 scholarships are available for college. Besides the hands on government part of the program there are a number of other activities available for the young men to participate in. There are also athletic activities and a quiz bowl competition in the afternoon. If you are not very familiar with the Legion program please go to our [website--illinoisboysstate.org](http://www.illinoisboysstate.org) to find out more. As always if you have any questions or suggestions do not hesitate one of the committee members or Joy Wilson at Dept. HQ. She will answer any questions or contact one of the committee. We want to get our numbers back to where they used to be. To do this we need your help in recruiting.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bRnYSr7f39E&feature=youtu.be>

*(SAL Detachment Cmdr. continued from page 3)*

our wounded Troops. On February 11th

we toured St. John's Children's Hospital in Springfield to give Josh Dogs to the children in the CMN (Children's Miracle Network) ward. Please give to these two causes, Josh dogs and CMN. Boys State, Boy Scouts, Junior Shooting Sports, American Legion Baseball, High School Oratorical Contest, Gifts to the Yanks Who Gave, and more. These are our American Legion Programs. We have a purpose and a commitment to assist with these programs. Pick one or two and do your best to promote and fund these programs.

These are the Pillars of service of our American Legion Family. Let's get the job done. Please bring your donations to the DEC March 12th, or mail them to our Finance Officer Bob Tharp. This Detachment Executive Committee Meeting will be our next opportunity to meet many of you. At the "DEC" reports are given on all of our programs.

In fact, in the morning, there are Committee and Commission meetings that everyone can attend and learn everything you ever wanted to know about our American Legion and SAL programs. Please attend this next DEC meeting on Saturday, March 12th at the Mt. Vernon Post. Please put it on your calendar. You can make your hotel reservations now if you will stay overnight on the 11th. Just call the Mt. Vernon

Holiday Inn at 618 -244-7100. Only \$60 + tax. Legionnaires and Auxiliary members are always welcome at SAL meetings. The official meeting starts at 1 PM.

Next month, in April, Squadrons & Posts will receive two very important documents that must be filled out and sent to Headquarters: The Consolidated Report form and the Certification of Officers form. Unfortunately, many Squadrons have been lax in doing this in a timely manner. You will not receive your membership cards for the following year if you do not certify officers. There is no punishment for not completing the Consolidated Report but the consequences are heavy. The Department and National American Legion need to know all that our Squadrons and Posts are doing. This information is combined with all other Squadrons and Posts in the Country, taken to Washington D.C. and shown to our Congress and our Administration. This information shows our politicians how hard our American Legion Family is working for our Veterans, our Troops, our Youth, and our Communities. These reports prove our Commitment to our Purpose, our Pillars. Please complete both of these forms in a timely manner and get them sent to headquarters ASAP. Thanks.

*P.S. Work that membership, time is running out. Still too many Squadrons under 10 members; they are in danger of losing their Charters. District Officers, check the membership reports & get this fixed.*

## “YOUR HOUSE”

As I travel the state from one post to another, I hear people talking about the places I go to. So I decided to write about what I hear so here goes. Your house was built way before my time, my house was built by our fore fathers. Your house was built to house a Family. People watch movies from pictures when your house was built. And family saying that my Father/Grandfather built this House. Family lives in your house. Your house was built in the early 1900's to house a family. Your house is the **HOME** of the American Legion.

So this house is for our Veterans Living or Passed, this house is for all of us. Veteran, Auxiliary, Sons and Riders. This is our **HOME** The American Legion Post.

Thanks,  
SAL Detachment Senior Vice Commander, Phillip S. Shipley



 **Have you sent your photo's in yet?**  
**PHOTO CONTEST RULES**

The Department Photo Contest, as you know, coincides with Calendar Program. The Calendar Program is a fund raising project which has been very well received and is being continued. The Department would like to thank everyone for their photo submissions and we look forward to seeing the new photos entered this year.

**RULES:**

- Each photo MUST be accompanied by the Official entry form. (Photo copied entry forms are acceptable)
- All photos must be of Legion events, supportive of Legion programs, or patriotic in nature.
- We will now accept digital photo images, however the photos must have excellent clarity (300 dpi) and need to be printed on photo paper (NOT COPY OR TYPING PAPER).
- **Calendar Program photos must be HORIZONTAL OR LANDSCAPE. NO PORTRAIT OR VERTICAL photos will be chosen or used in the Calendar Program.**
- All photos entered should be no smaller than 5x7 to be used in the Calendar Program.
- All photos will become the property of the Department of Illinois and will not be returned.
- Failure to comply with all the preceding rules may disqualify an entry from winning any prize.

**ELIGIBILITY FOR PRIZE MONEY:** ALL Legion Family members are eligible, but must be current, paid-up members. Entry forms MUST have the Post, District, and Division number and the entrant's membership I.D. number. Each photo must have the name of the subject, location of where the photo was taken, approximate date of the photo, name of individuals in the photo (reading from left to right)

**DEADLINE:** Entries submitted must be received (**not post marked by**) at Department Headquarters the Friday **prior** to the State Convention. Entry forms can be found at <http://illegion.org/forms.html>

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR**

*Important DATE!*

SAL Spring DEC  
 March 12th  
 ~ ~ ~

American Legion Birthday  
 March 15th  
 ~ ~ ~

Department Office Closed  
 Good Friday  
 March 25th  
 ~ ~ ~

Easter  
 March 27th  
 ~ ~ ~

Spring D.E.C  
 April 9th  
 Bloomington  
 ~ ~ ~

National Spring Committee & Commission Meetings  
 May 2nd--4th  
 Indianapolis  
 ~ ~ ~

Mother's Day  
 May 8th  
 ~ ~ ~

Armed Forces Day  
 May 21st  
 ~ ~ ~

Department Office Closed  
 Memorial Day  
 May 30th  
 ~ ~ ~

American Legion Illinois Premier Boys State  
 June 11th--17th  
 EIU Charleston  
 ~ ~ ~

Flag Day  
 June 14th  
 ~ ~ ~

Father's Day  
 June 19th  
 # # #



# Legion Conducting Gun Safety Courses

## Hello Fellow Legionnaires!

There has been a great deal in the news lately about guns and whether or not we need them. The debate also continues about your 2nd Amendment Rights. With all that has been happening, what better time to get out in front of the issue and train the public – especially our youngsters – about gun safety and to have that program sponsored by a Local American Legion Post. As a suggestion on how to be more involved in your community, you might consider sponsoring a gun safety class for everyone. This would not be a gun shooting safety class, but rather a class on what do you do if you find a gun, and if and how you should pick it up. Since the primary concern for someone who knows very little about guns, this class would address how to safely check and see if the gun is loaded, followed by how to store the gun safely until the Police come. Every year we hear of gun accidents involving a child shooting another child, or themselves, because they did not know a weapon was loaded or how to handle a weapon. So the need for a class focusing on safety is clearly evident, especially for youngsters.

Many Posts already sponsor classes on concealed carry; this would be another great offering in your community/district. Try to involve your local Police Department to teach this, or support it with a qualified instructor. Once you get that accomplished, you could expand on the safety theme and perhaps start a class on hunting safety.

By the way, did you know that the American Legion National has a program for kids on Junior Shooting Sports with air rifles? A pamphlet is available with guidelines on how to start a club at your post for Junior Shooters.

With all that has been happening, what better time to get out in front of the general public and train the public – especially our youngsters – about gun safety and to have that program sponsored by a Local American Legion Post!



**BLUESTAR**  
HONORCARE

APPROVED BY YOUR DEPARTMENT  
OF ILLINOIS AMERICAN LEGION



- ★ Owned by vets, and led by a two-star admiral
- ★ Services vets, their families and patriots
- ★ Hires veterans to provide those services
- ★ Donates to veteran causes



## Medical Alert Systems

- ➔ NO UPFRONT COSTS
- ➔ NO LONG TERM CONTRACTS
- ➔ MONEY-BACK GUARANTEE
- ➔ LOWEST PRICES IN INDUSTRY

[WWW.BLUESTARHONORCARE.COM/LEGION](http://WWW.BLUESTARHONORCARE.COM/LEGION)

PRICES AS LOW AS  
**\$23.95/MONTH**

Call Toll Free:  
**1-800-590-8751**

We look forward to answering your questions



AMERICAN LEGION  
MEMBERS GET  
**15% OFF**  
MONTHLY MONITORING









**"If you've EVER thought about a medical alert for your family, we're here to help..."**

Robert Wray, Rear Admiral, US Navy (ret) CEO



## Legion family please remember to renew your License Plates



In the latest twist in Illinois' financial crisis, the state is getting a windfall of \$1.2 million-and growing-thanks to its decision to stop mailing reminders to motorists to renew their license plate stickers.

The income from the \$20 late fines has more than doubled for the first two months of this year, according to figures provided to The Associated Press by the secretary of state's office, which collects the fines. Drivers paid more than \$2.7 million in fines from January 1 through February 22. Last year, the state collected about \$1.5 million in fines for those two months.

The secretary of state's office stopped mailing renewal reminders in October as a way to save an estimated \$450,000 on postage during the state's budget stalemate, which has gone on for eight months.

Because of a 30-day grace period, the first fines for those who didn't get reminders were levied in January. The agency is required to fine people who fail to renew their plate stickers after the grace period expires, and the money goes into the state's general revenue fund.

"I know Illinois is broke, beyond broke, so I'm sure they're trying all these underhanded ways to get money out of people," said 32-year-old Evan Larson, a Glenwood resident who had to pay up.

The number of people who've already been fined this year illustrates just how much Illinois residents depend on the government for routine tasks. Last year 63,147 people were fined for late renewals from January through February 22. This year, it was 136,101 during the same span.

Democrats who control the Legislature and Republican Gov. Bruce Rauner are in the middle of an epic standoff over the budget, which stems from their failure to agree on how to finalize a spending plan that should've taken effect July 1. As a result, government agencies have been squeezed without support from the state to pay for basic necessities like utilities.

"We were forced to make the difficult but necessary decision to suspend mailing courtesy reminder notices to save on postage because of the budget impasse," agency spokesman Henry Haupt said.

Haupt added that the office prioritized mailing the actual plate stickers, as well as vehicle titles, plates, and other paperwork for businesses.

The fines behind the sudden windfall have irritated both motorists and some lawmakers. One Democratic legislator told the AP that the state should consider returning the money to motorists.

"They shouldn't have to be penalized for our ineptitude," said Rep. Jack Franks, a Democrat from Woodstock who is co-sponsoring legislation to suspend the late fines until the state has a budget and renewal reminders can continue.

Some car owners who were stuck paying the tardy fee said they were angry at the state, while others shook their heads at how much they relied on the mailed reminders.

"I was aggravated more than anything else, \$20 is \$20. It's not going to kill me," said Leon Fields, a 68-year-old retired Chicago Transit Authority manager who lives in Woodstock. "As far as the government, one of the things they've supposed to do is keep people informed."

Haupt says the secretary of state's office supports the legislation to suspend the late fines.

The proposal will also require police to issue warnings rather than tickets when they see a car with an expired plate, which is another consequence that motorists face for being late with their renewals.

In the village of Schaumburg, 816 people received \$50 tickets in January for having expired plates, according to an investigation by the (Arlington Heights) Daily Herald--a 23 percent jump from January last year.

# Special Olympics

I am Cheri Stanton, Sr. Vice Commander from the American Legion. In June we help Special Olympics State Games over Father's Day Weekend in Normal, IL. The American Legion supports a Big Circus Hospitality tent for the athletes. We furnish shade, fruits, vegetables, cookies, and popsicles for 3,700 athletes, coaches, their families, and all the volunteers. We could always use extra people to pass out the food.

All our people are volunteers but they put in a big work day. On Friday night, the athletes have opening ceremonies just like the BIG OLYMPICS. The police have a torch run and the athletes march in, with their sponsors.

If you would like to be a part of that day, you are welcome to help at the American Legion Hospitality Tent.

## ATTENTION: Children and Youth Chairman

~ Please read at your post meeting ~

## Special Olympics Fund

Each year Special Olympics State Games are held at Normal, IL. For those of you who can't attend, that means a lot of preparation for the American Legion and Auxiliary Hospitality Tent. We feed over 4,000 athletes and their families each year. Posts donate lots of items to help out each year.

### Could your post help too?

We need:

\_\_\_\_\_ Country Time Lemonade

\_\_\_\_\_ Napkins

\_\_\_\_\_ 9 inch plates

\_\_\_\_\_ Ziploc Sandwich Bags

\_\_\_\_\_ Family Size Lipton Tea Bags

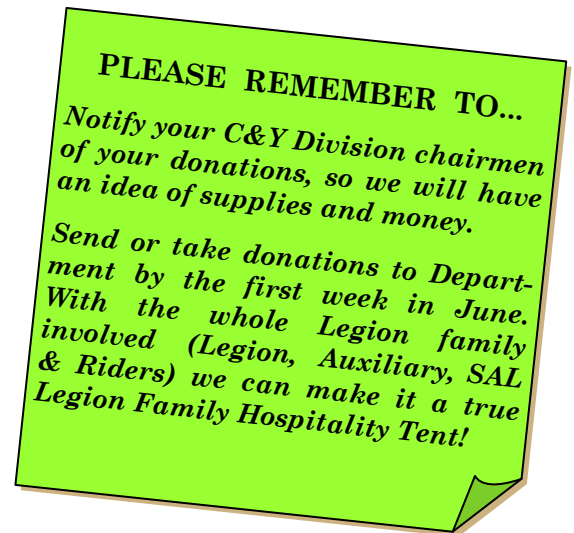
\_\_\_\_\_ 8 oz. plastic cups

\_\_\_\_\_ Money donations: *Money donations are used for the renting of the tent, (\$900 alone) popsicles, groceries (to make dip, veggie trays, gallons of olives, gallons of dill pickles), and crackers.*

\_\_\_\_\_ Volunteers to be there:

Friday - From \_\_\_\_\_ To \_\_\_\_\_.

Saturday - From \_\_\_\_\_ To \_\_\_\_\_.



**Thank you for your consideration...  
and Especially for your Donation!**

Hours:

Friday 10:00– 4:00

Saturday 9:30– 3:30

***Helpers are needed to set-up and take down additional tents used as well as load and unload the trailer and trucks.***

# SWEEPSTAKES WINNERS

**Drawing February 12, 2016**

1st PLACE	\$10,000	David Phillips
2nd PLACE	\$5,000	Walter C. Austin
3rd PLACE	\$2,500	George C. Dowle
4th PLACE	\$1,500	George J. Masterson
5th PLACE	\$1,000	Larry Gruszkowski
6th PLACE	\$1,000	Gerald Staudt
7th PLACE	\$750	Timothy R. Tomljanovich
8th PLACE	\$750	George E. Laster
9th PLACE	\$500	Steve Ritch
10th PLACE	\$500	Marvin W. Schiess
11th PLACE	\$250	Jaye Quimby
12th PLACE	\$250	Sam P. Magdalinos
13th PLACE	\$100	Kirk C. Daniels
14th PLACE	\$100	Thomas J. Gilmore
15th PLACE	\$100	James Bernhardson
16th PLACE	\$100	Charles P. Wallace
17th PLACE	\$100	Arlene Holtgrave
18th PLACE	\$100	Vivian Hallett
19th PLACE	\$100	Thomas R. Yokley
20th PLACE	\$100	Emil W. Kromat
21st PLACE	\$100	Arthur W. Rossi
22nd PLACE	\$100	William J. Smith

**\$25,000**

# Public Relations/Information Exchange

## Public Relations/Information Exchange Recognition Award Form

Fellow Legionaries, last year, the Public Relations/Information Exchange Committee, unveiled its Annual Recognition Award honoring Posts and Local Media Sources that excel in telling Our Department of Illinois American Legion Story.

I am very sure that every Post, throughout the entire Department in some way shares with their local community and media, who we are and what we do every day throughout the year for fellow Veterans and their families. This means getting the Legion's image out there. We all do it, just let us know how you do it! This is Public Relations/Information Exchange at work!

Awards will again be available to all posts based on your Membership size as outlined in the Brochure and includes: Basic Entry Background, Awards Criteria, Details and Submission Instructions. The "fillable" form is available for your convenience on the Department's Website under the Forms Tab. All winning Posts will be notified and receive their Recognition Awards on state at the Department Convention. Please make sure that all submissions are sent to Department Headquarters no later than June 1st for consideration.

Last year, there were only two posts out of nearly 800 that submitted applications. This year we are looking for as many Posts as possible to submit them. We should be consistently telling the great American Legion story and what we all do for Veterans, Children and Youth, their Families and the Programs that help support them.

Good Luck and keep telling our Great Story!

Thanks for all you do.

Tom Marciciak, Chairman Public Relations/Information Exchange Committee.

Post# \_\_\_\_\_ Post Name: \_\_\_\_\_ District# \_\_\_\_\_ Division# \_\_\_\_\_

Local Media Source: \_\_\_\_\_

BRIEF SUMMARY OF PR/IE ACTIVITY:

---

---

---

---

PLANNING (Identify primary audiences and list them in order) :

---

---

---

---

EXECUTION (Describe the PR tools that were used to accomplish the goals) :

---

---

---

---

---

RESULTS (Describe the Public Relations goals that were met) :

---

---

---

---

---

**3RD ANNUAL**

## SWING INTO ACTION GOLF SCRAMBLE



**HOSTED BY:  
TAZEWELL COUNTY  
AMERICAN LEGION RIDERS  
TO BENEFIT CENTRAL ILLINOIS VETERANS**

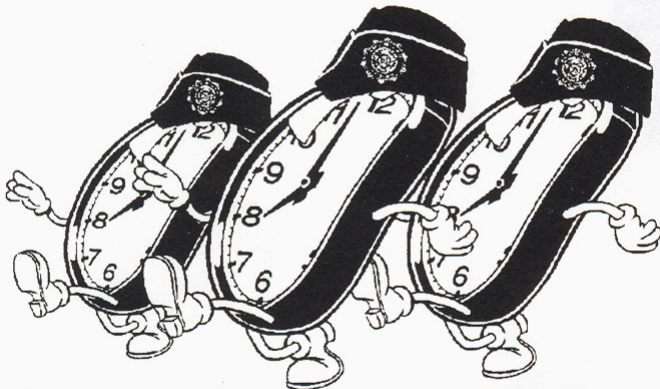
**8 AM August 6th 2016**  
**\$75.00 / person ♦ \$300.00 / team**  
 includes green fees, cart and meal  
**At Quail Meadows Golf Course**  
 East Peoria, IL

Questions / Registration  
 Contact Andy "Sly" 309-922-5569

Shotgun Start / Four Man Scramble  
 Longest Drive ♦ Closest to Pin ♦ 1st Place  
 Silent Auction ♦ Gun Raffle



**Don't Wait Until  
The Last Minute...**



**Re-new Your  
Membership TODAY!**

**DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME:**

**Don't forget to Spring ahead on March 13th**

## First Division Leadership Seminar

Comrades;

The First Division is hosting a Leadership Seminar on April 23rd, 2016 at Franklin Park Post 974 located at 9757 Pacific Avenue in Franklin Park, Illinois.

The seminar will start at 9 AM (doors will open at 8:30 AM) and the program will be completed by 2 PM. A lunch will be provided at approximately 11:30.

We will have four programs, Leadership for Commanders, Sr. and Jr. Vice Commanders, an Adjutant's workshop and a Service Officer workshop.

**Every Post is encouraged to send at least one (1)  
or more members to this workshop**

The Department Leadership will present the programs. This is a great opportunity to learn from the best and take your knowledge back to mentor your legionnaires. Business casual (blues & greys) or Legion casual (Legion Polo & slacks), bring your Legion caps.

Please RSVP to Al Coughlin

By phone at (773) 852-5561

By Email; [alc-legion@comcast.net](mailto:alc-legion@comcast.net)

By mail; 812 Elm Street, Park Ridge, IL 60068.

We would appreciate knowing of your reservation by April 21st in order to have enough supplies and food for those in attendance.

Respectfully, Mike Carder Commander, First Division



# 2015 – 2016 DIVISION & DISTRICT MEETING DATES

DATE	DIST./ DIV.	TIME	POST	CITY
3/9/2016	2ND DISTRICT	7:30 PM	FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT POST 923	CHICAGO
3/13/2016	3RD DIVISION	1:00 PM	LIMESTONE POST 979 (POPPY SEMINAR @11AM)	BARTONVILLE
3/13/2016	17TH DISTRICT	1:00 PM	CHATSWORTH POST 613	CHATSWORTH
3/13/2016	19TH DISTRICT	1:00 PM	SULLIVAN POST 68	SULLIVAN
3/13/2016	4TH DIVISION	1:00 PM	CLINTON POST 103 (POPPY SEMINAR @10:30AM)	CLINTON
3/13/2016	25TH DISTRICT	1:00 PM	HERRIN POST 645	HERRIN
3/16/2016	7TH DISTRICT	7:30 PM	MORTON GROVE POST 134	MORTON GROVE
3/18/2016	10TH DISTRICT	7:30 PM	ROUND LAKE POST 1170	ROUND LAKE
3/19/2016	14TH DISTRICT	1:00 PM	ALEDO POST 121	ALEDO
3/20/2016	15TH DISTRICT	10:00 AM	FAIRVIEW POST 644	FAIRVIEW
3/20/2016	22ND DISTRICT	1:00 PM	GEORGE E HILGARD POST 58	BELLEVILLE
3/23/2016	9TH DISTRICT	7:30 PM	PALATINE POST 690	PALATINE
3/24/2016	5TH DISTRICT	7:30 PM	ROBERT E COULTER JR POST 1941	LAGRANGE
3/24/2016	8TH DISTRICT	8:00 PM	EDWARD SCHULTZ POST 697	LANSING
4/13/2016	2ND DISTRICT	7:30 PM	FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT POST 923	CHICAGO
4/15/2016	10TH DISTRICT	7:30 PM	LIBERTYVILLE POST 329	LIBERTYVILLE
4/20/2016	7TH DISTRICT	7:30 PM	EVANSTON POST 42	EVANSTON
4/21/2016	5TH DISTRICT	7:30 PM	FOREST PARK POST 414	FOREST PARK
4/27/2016	9TH DISTRICT	7:30 PM	SCHILLER PARK POST 104	SCHILLER PARK
4/28/2016	8TH DISTRICT	8:00 PM	TINLEY PARK POST 615	TINLEY PARK
5/1/2016	18TH DISTRICT	1:00 PM	THAWVILLE POST 700	THAWVILLE
5/13/2016	2ND DISTRICT	6:00 PM	KLAS RESTAURANT	CICERO
5/14/2016	14TH DISTRICT	10:00 AM	MONMOUTH POST 136	MONMOUTH
5/15/2016	12TH DISTRICT	1:00 PM	PECATONICA POST 729 (CONVENTION)	PECATONICA
5/15/2016	13TH DISTRICT	1:00 PM	ROCK FALLS POST 902 (CONVENTION)	ROCK FALLS
5/15/2016	15TH DISTRICT	10:00 AM	ABINGDON POST 381 (CONVENTION)	ABINGDON
5/15/2016	17TH DISTRICT	1:00 PM	SPRING BAY POST 1115	SPRING BAY
5/15/2016	22ND DISTRICT	1:00 PM	LEIGHTON EVATT POST 365 (CONVENTION)	COLLINSVILLE
5/17/2016	21ST DISTRICT	1:00 PM	CARLINVILLE POST 554	CARLINVILLE
5/18/2016	7TH DISTRICT	7:30 PM	MORTON GROVE POST 134 (POST EVERLASTING)	MORTON GROVE
5/19/2016	5TH DISTRICT	7:30 PM	BELLWOOD POST 500	BELLWOOD
5/20/2016	10TH DISTRICT	7:30 PM	LAKE REGION POST 703 (CONVENTION & POST EVERLASTING)	FOX LAKE
5/22/2016	19TH DISTRICT	1:00 PM	CHAMPAIGN POST 24 (CONVENTION)	CHAMPAIGN
5/24/2016	16TH DISTRICT	10:00 AM	TREMONT POST 1236 (CONVENTION)	TREMONT
5/25/2016	9TH DISTRICT	7:30 PM	FRANKLIN PARK POST 974	FRANKLIN PARK

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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

PUBLISHED MONTHLY \*

Phone: 309-663-0361 Fax: 309-663-5783  
Email: hdqs@illegion.org Web: www.illegion.org

Department Commander Department Editor  
PAUL W. GARDNER MARTY CONATSER

*Now Is The Time To Stand Together For Our Flag*

PRESORTED  
FIRST-CLASS MAIL  
US POSTAGE PAID  
BLOOMINGTON, IL  
PERMIT No. 18

\* 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

## MARCH TRIVIA DID YOU KNOW?

1. What marked the first time since the Revolution that the U.S. accepted direct financial aid to fight a war?
2. What U.S. military base was won in the last major battle against Japan?
3. What opportunistic country declared war on Japan five days before its surrender in 1945?
4. What U.S. war broke out the same year the federal government first printed paper money?
5. New Illinois Law 2016 HB 208/ PA99-0364 recognizes what about Illinois.

## ANSWERS:

1. The Persian Gulf War.
2. Okinawa.
3. The Soviet Union.
4. The Civil War.
5. With 90% of pumpkins grown in the nation produced in Illinois making pumpkin pie the official state pie.



Visit our website!  
Scan Here

