



Virginia Legionnaire

A Quarterly Newsletter for the Department of Virginia

August – October 2021

Volume #1 Issue 1

Hillyard sworn in as Department Commander

By David F. Wallace



Department Commander Frank Hillyard speaks to the Virginia Caucus at the National Convention held in Phoenix, AZ. (Photo courtesy David F. Wallace)



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- Lucian Butler Scholarship

After a long pandemic year led by now Past Department Commander Bill Feasenmyer, the Department of Virginia's delegation elected Frank Hillyard during the Department's Convention, that was held in July, as the new Department Commander for the 2021-22 membership year.

The convention was held at Department Headquarters, with limited guests in attendance due to the pandemic. Legion Family members were invited to view the event through Facebook Live.

"I will be focusing on four areas that I feel are very important to this organization," Hillyard stated.

"First, we need to talk about **member-**

ship," as he continued. "Membership is the lifeblood of our organization. Without our members, our mission to help veterans, their families, and our communities, would fail."

Commander Hillyard then introduced Scott Maddrea as the new Membership Chairman, and continued with his theme of "Back to Basics."

"Scott's hard work and attention to detail," continued Hillyard, "will help us to continue to grow as an organization, so we can fulfill our mission!"

The second talking point that was mentioned was **programs**. According to Hillyard and because of the pandemic,

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New Membership Theme: Back to Basics

By Scott Maddrea, Department Membership Chair

After a year of quarantine and social distancing, it is time we “Get Back to Basics” when it comes to retaining and recruiting members to The American Legion, Department of Virginia.

The last eighteen months have been difficult. From masks to social distancing, the pandemic has changed the way we live our daily lives. Our Posts have had to adjust as well. There were things that we simply have not been able to do during the pandemic that had been staples of our organization for years. We had to learn to do things differently and, in some cases, doing things differently came at a cost. Programs and activities had to be cut back or in some cases cancelled altogether. Financial resources were drained as bingo, facility rentals and other fundraisers were being impacted. Most importantly, membership declined.

Department Commander Frank Hillyard has been clear, “Membership is the lifeblood of our organization. Without our members our mission to help Veterans, their families, and the community would fail.”

This year we need to re-focus, re-engage and revitalize our members. Our foremost goal for the 2021-2022 Membership year is to stabilize existing membership and work towards getting back to our pre-pandemic numbers,

Every Post should begin with a simple goal – have at least as many members on your books on June 30, 2022 as you did to end this year. This means renewing current members, recruiting new member to replace those members we have lost, and re-engaging those former members that did not renew last year.

The number one reason why members don’t renew is they don’t see the value of membership. With many Posts have been closed and traditional activities cancelled, members may not have seen renewing as having the same value as in years past. But the needs of the veterans, children and families in our communities did not. If anything, the pan-

demic has only illustrated the importance of veterans’ healthcare – mental and physical. We have seen veteran’s families struggle financially due to job loss or a reduction in hours.

The need for The American Legion has never been greater! Nor has our ability to impact our veterans, their families, and our communities.

This year’s membership theme, “Back to Basics”, is focused on:

- ◇ **Recruiting, Retaining and Re-Engaging Our Members**
- ◇ **Levering Technology**
- ◇ **Improving Communication and Collaboration**

In order to meet our membership goals, we need to leverage our strengths – our people and our passion.

The strength of our Department is our great people. In order meet our 2022 membership goals will take not just engaged leaders but harnessing the passion of all 37,500 members. At Department, Region, District and Post level we must maximize our collective talents to re-engage those members who fell out of the habit of coming to our Posts and volunteering their time, energy and resources to the programs of the American Legion, and reach out to veterans in our community to remind why the American Legion is our nation’s largest and most impactful veteran’s service organization.

We must take to heart National Commander Paul Dillard’s theme “*No Veteran Left Behind.*”

We know The American Legion changes lives. We are enthusiastic about the programs, services, and benefits. This year we want to rededicate ourselves to our core purposes at every level.

103 Percent Membership Award

American Legion National Commander Paul E. Dillard will award his national commander “No Veteran Left Behind” membership incentive pin to any post, district, county, division, department commander or membership chairman who achieves 103 percent of their assigned membership goal for 2022.

Download the form at: www.legion.org/commander/103percent



Pictured in this photo are Past Department Commanders and the current Department Commander Frank Hillyard, who attended the 102nd National Convention in Phoenix, AZ. (Photo courtesy Dennis Madtes)

Campbell elected as ALA National Historian

By David F. Wallace



Carol G. Campbell, a member of Manassas Auxiliary Unit 10, was elected as a national historian of The American Legion Auxiliary during its national convention in Phoenix, Ariz., on Sept. 2.

Her eligibility for membership was through her father, James F. Gallagher Sr., U.S. Army, WWII veteran.

"It is indeed an honor to serve as the American Legion Auxiliary National Historian for the 2021-2022 administrative year," said Campbell. "As we begin our second century of service, ALA members are more than ever dedicated to carrying our legacy of service and preserving those records for our future generations."

Carol is a retired federal government employee: ATF 1985-2011; IRS 1979-1983. She has a bachelor of science degree in business administration from Fairmont State University, 1983. Other organizations she's part of include Freedom Museum vice president board of directors; Northern Virginia Veterans Parade (VETPAR INC.) Board of Directors; InterService Club Council of Greater Manassas vice president, board of directors; George Brent Council Knights of Columbus Ladies Auxiliary, president and past treasurer.

She is married to Vic, has three children: Jason, Greg, and Christine, and one grandchild.

Department Adjutant News

Legionnaires let me start out by saying Thank You for the words of encouragement. We are looking forward to trying new things within the Department. The thing to remember is that if you hold an Office or Chairmanship within the Department, District or Post you have committed to give 100% of yourself, but also remember you are not alone. The leadership within our great department is second to none, if you need help, we are a phone call away.

We are working hard on the membership reporting through personify. Soon the Department will start processing membership online which will speed up the reporting time to National. I request everyone to be patient, the headquarters staff is working hard, and we are looking for ways to better assist all of you.

If you have any suggestions, ideas or even something as simple as identifying an issue on the website (as an example), please let us know.

David M Stein

Vienna, VA Holds 9/11 Commemoration Ceremony

By Anne Dellinger and David F. Wallace

American Legion Dyer-Gunnell Post 180 and the Town of Vienna, Virginia, held a Patriot Day Community Commemoration on the 20th Anniversary Remembering 9/11. Under bright blue skies and crisp morning air, Legion Family members, local and state dignitaries and people from the Town of Vienna started to gather at the Freeman House Lawn as the first set of bells chimed from the nearby Vienna Presbyterian Church, signifying the moment that American Airlines Flight 11, hit the World Trade Center's North Tower (8:46 a.m.)

The ceremony started at 9 a.m. and just as the presentation of the Colors was completed by Boy Scout Troop 345's Honor Guard, the church bells tolled again to mark when United Airlines Flight 175 struck World Trade Center's South Tower (9:03 a.m.)

The Town of Vienna's Ensemble, led by Director, Barbara Collins, played the National Anthem, followed by a solemn prayer delivered by Legion Post 180's Chaplain

Chris Gallagher. Amongst the more than 100 in attendance, you had multiple members of the Vienna Town Council, VA Del. Mark Keam, and state Sen. Chap Peterson. Past National Commander Dan Dellinger was the top Legion dignitary with the Department of Virginia's Northern Vice Commander Glenn Yarborough and 17th District Commander Mike Kimlick also present.

Mayor Linda Colbert read aloud "A Day to Remember" Proclamation, on behalf of the Vienna Town Council, that memorialized those whose lives were suddenly, without cause, and pointlessly taken from them on September 11, 2001. The proclamation's ending clause offers hope that 'they may forever rest in peace and abide in our memories.'

The Keynote Speaker, Anne Dellinger, a native of Vien-

na, Virginia, who graduated from James Madison High School in Vienna and received her undergraduate degree in literature at The New School in New York City, is the daughter of Past National Commander Dan Dellinger and Past Department of Virginia Auxiliary President Margaret Dellinger. She delivered a beautiful speech that reflected on her experience working as a digital content editor and resident storyteller for the 9/11 Memorial & Museum in New York City between years 2017 to 2021. In this role, she interviewed 9/11 family members, first responders, witnesses, and survi-

vors about their memories of 9/11 and their lives since and documented their accounts for others to experience.

Anne began her remarks by sharing where she was on that day, twenty years ago, vividly recalling, "I was in my second week of classes at Thoreau Middle School in Vienna, VA. I was in my second period history class when the school's

security officer came into my classroom, near the end of the period, to tell my class in a very serious, solemn voice, that a plane had struck the World Trade Center. At the time, I had no visual in my mind of what the World Trade Center was or even looked like, and took that information in stride, packed up my belongings, and moved to my third-period class."

Her speech was then momentarily interrupted with the ringing of bells for the third time, marking that moment in time, when United Airlines Flight 77 hit the Western Region of the Pentagon (9:37 a.m.) and, in all irony, it related to one of the three stories she told to the ceremony's audience.

Anne's story relayed what occurred at around the same



Pictured above: Anne Dellinger delivers her keynote address to the Town of Vienna's audience. (Photo courtesy David F. Wallace)

Vienna, VA Holds 9/11 Commemoration Ceremony

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time she was heading to her third-period class: about fifteen miles away, there were 58 passengers boarding through Gate D26 at Dulles International Airport, including a girl named Asia Cottom. "Asia was a year younger than I was at the time," said Anne. "But at that point in her life, she had accomplished more academically than I could have ever dreamed for myself. Her family, teachers, and fellow students all remember her as extremely bright, always positive, and always pursuing her own curiosity."

She continued describing Asia, "Achievement seemed to

come easy to her. At the time, Asia had won an essay contest and had been selected by National Geographic as one of three sixth-grade students in the Washington, D.C. area to visit the National Marine Sanctuary just off the Channel Islands on the Santa Barbara coast. It was an amazing opportunity for a young girl interested in science. That morning, she boarded American Airlines Flight 77 alongside her fellow students Rodney Dickens and Bernard C. Brown II, accompanied by their teachers, and a few National Geographic Society employees."

By Anne's third-period class, Asia's flight had hit the Pentagon, and the enormity of that day had become apparent not only to Anne but, to all her classmates.

"I never knew Asia Cottom personally," Anne remarked. "But I know her tragic story because it was one of the first, I learned during my time as a resident storyteller at the 9/11 Museum. My job was to tease out some of these unexpected stories, to interview family members, survivors, witnesses, and first-responders to contribute to a fuller, ever-evolving tapestry of the lives impacted

by 9/11."

"That Asia and I were so similar in age resonated with me, and it knocked loose an idea I had -- and that many people still have -- that the victims of 9/11 were a monolithic, mostly white-collar group. During my four years guiding the storytelling for the Museum, I became intimately familiar with the lives of many of the victims, who ranged in age from 2 to 79 and hailed from 90 countries."

Anne went on to express to the crowd how she wanted

to do justice to the victims and survivors, to unearth stories of those who often pass by each one of us without notice. She spoke on how she told stories through the museum's exhibitions and the museum's content because she was aware that it was speaking to a new generation: those younger than herself who have either slim or no living



Pictured above: 17th District Legion Family members saluting the colors during the commemoration ceremony. (Photo courtesy David F. Wallace)

memory of the attacks; those who know of 9/11 only through media coverage, or as a day that ushered in two decades of grinding war.

"There are those who denigrate or question the sincerity or patriotism of Millennials or members of Generation Z," she lamented, "but I witnessed countless school groups and young people coming through the doors of the museum to take in the solemn expanse of the place. More than anything, they were curious as to how it felt that day. What was it like to be a first responder, to climb those 110 flights of stairs, unable to breathe in the smoke, knowing full well you might never get out? What did it feel like to hear your husband's voice on your answering machine, the last time you would ever hear it,

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Middle School Essay Contest

The Middle School Essay Contest is underway and is open to all accredited Middle School Students at participating schools, Public, Private, or Parochial within the sponsoring jurisdiction of established American Legion Posts in the Department of Virginia.

This year's theme is **"I like living in America because..."**

Each participating Middle School/Home School should mail their winning essay and declaration form to the Post Level Chairman whose name appears on the form no later than the last day of the Middle School's classes prior to Christmas vacation on December 17, 2021.

The essay is to be written by the competing Middle School Student at their desk in school during structured class time if home schooled), not at home.

Additional information can be found at:
www.valegion.org/programs/middle-school-essay-contest-2/

The American Legion is non-political

By A.B. Brown, Department Judge Advocate

It is important everyone knows and understands the Department's position regarding politics. The Department of Virginia's Constitution and Bylaws clearly states that **The American Legion is non-political**. Article II, Section 2 reads as follows: "The American Legion shall be absolutely non-political and shall not be used for the dissemination of partisan principles nor for the promotion of the candidacy of any person seeking public office or preferment."

Stated differently, the Department does not condone any political activity or perception that may reflect The American Legion endorsing or supporting any candidate or political party.

Some examples are:

- Display of any and all political signs inside or outside of your Post...this is forbidden;
- Do not "rally" post membership within the post for political purposes;
- It is forbidden to wear any type of American Legion "gear" to political functions. Personal photos with prominent elected officials are fine as long as they are NOT posted on social media while wearing the American Legion gear...again, nothing to indicate The American Legion supports the candidate or political party.
- Depiction or demonstrating disrespect to a current elected official...this is not acceptable.
- If a candidate is invited to hold a 'veterans session', then all and opposing candidates must have same opportunity. Post membership must be notified timely to allow equal opportunity to engage.

We suggest Posts do not rent their Post to any political organization. Using the Post easily could lead to improper conclusions about The American Legion.

Chances are, that if a question arises if your Post is doing something that might be considered political, then you probably shouldn't do it.

We encourage individual participation in government activities, but leave the American Legion out of it.



Hillyard sworn is as new Commander

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the Legion's programs have been way down. "But with this crisis coming to an end, we have the opportunity to bring those programs back with fresh enthusiasm making them bigger and better."

"I would also like to challenge each post to start at least one new program this year. That would give us over 200 new programs. Add that to all of the programs we currently have and that would show a substantial growth in this area of our organization."

"We do all of these fantastic programs and if we don't report them, nobody will ever know about them."

The third area that was presented to the audience was **reporting**. Commander Hillyard continued saying, "Reporting is a tool we use to let people know how great The American Legion really is!"

"We do all of these fantastic programs and if we don't report them, nobody will ever know about them. That is why we must fill out and turn in all four of our reports 'on time' every year."

Those four reports that he was referring to are: Consolidated Post Report (CPR), Americanism, Children and Youth, and Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation.

"I know a lot of posts may not do something in eve-

ry area to report but, now is a great time to start a new program that will fall into that area and fill a need in our respective communities."

The fourth and final talking point was **awards and recognition**.

"After we accomplish all of these great things: build membership, start new programs, and turn in all four reports on time, we must remember to thank the people that have helped us achieve these goals."

"There are many ways of showcasing the recognition that I am discussing and you can lean into the Department's Award's Manual for the majority of them. You have everything from identifying criteria for the various membership awards to include Silver and Bronze Brigade awards to Post and District level awards criteria. Even a certificate of appreciation and a hand shake goes a long way!"



"No Veteran Left Behind" pin awarded for recruiting

American Legion National Commander Paul E. Dillard will award his national commander "No Veteran Left membership excellence pin to any Legionnaire who obtains three new members into The American Legion.

A New Member is any eligible person joining for the 2022 membership year who was not a member of The American Legion during the 2021 membership year. Transfers do not count as new members. Each member listed must be eligible for membership in The American Legion.

Only one pin will be awarded per individual. Upon receipt, national membership staff will confirm the names and mail the pin directly to the person who earned it.

Download the incentive pin form: www.legion.orgcommander/pin



Around the Department



The Sandston American Legion Post 242, participated in the Sandston Centennial Parade, on September 5th. Their float entry included Past Department Commander Bill Feasenmyer, 11th District Commander Skip Klaas, 11th District Adjutant Rick Oertel, with additional Legion members on the float from the Posts, 284, 144, 175 and Post 242. (Photo courtesy Temple Ancarrow)



American Legion Post 104 Appomattox, VA, held its 9/11 ceremony today in honor of the 20th Anniversary next to their "Wall of Honor," located at the Appomattox Courthouse. Their guest speaker, Retired 1Sgt Trina Hines, was in the Pentagon on that day and lost many of her Military and Civilian Office personnel. (Photo courtesy Unknown)

Employment & Education Commission Awards

The Veterans Employment and Education Commission is striving to award all possible pending awards that are available to The American Legion.

There are 9 awards to include: Small, Medium and Large Employer of Veterans award, DVOP Award, LVER Award, Older Workers Award, Enhance the Lives of Disabled Veterans Award and the Michael Guty Homeless Veterans Outreach Award.

To be considered for the National Award, the deadline for submittals to the Department will be January 4th. The deadline for award submissions to the Veterans Employment and Education Commission in Washington, D.C. is January 15th.

For more information please reach out to Veterans Employment and Education Chair Adam Martinez at: a_martinez1@outlook.com.

Nomination forms can be found on the Department's website.

Around the Department



Members of Post 1799 Haymarket, VA, and their family, initiated a special walk on September 11th, in honor of those lost that day. (Photo courtesy Unknown)



American Legion Post 37, in Portsmouth, VA, recently donated 20 cases of individually wrapped lunches to the "Homeless Tent Shelter Program." Pictured on the left is Alonzo Scott. (Photo courtesy Unknown)



Around the Department



Sons of the American Legion Squadron 67 Hampton, Virginia, participated in their Annual Book Bag giveaway. Those who participated included Squadron Commander James Logan, Adjutant Richard Hall, 2nd Vice William Washington, Purcell Robinson, Eddie Nichols, Ed Bellamy, Past Squadron Chaplain Darnell Donald who are pictured stuffing bags with the materials. (Photo courtesy Willie Morgan.)

Youth Cadet Law Enforcement Program

Since 1989, The Virginia American Legion and the Virginia State Police have conducted a week-long hands-on event for rising high school seniors (male & female) at the VSP Training Academy. Those interested in a law enforcement career get a small glimpse of the varied training a trooper experiences. For more information, use the contact form at: www.valegion.org/programs/youth-cadet-law-enforcement-program/

Norfolk American Legion Post hosts job fair for transitioning military

By Angela Bohon, WTKR.com/news

The American Legion Post 327 is hoping to help with the nationwide employment crisis.

On Wednesday, August 25, 2021, the organization held a job fair at their facility located at 704 Lesner Avenue in Norfolk. Employers such as Hampton Roads Transit, Hampton VA Medical Center, Car Masters, Top Guard, Averitt, CMA CGM, and multiple law enforcement entities attended.

The Job Fair is geared towards active-duty personnel about to transition out of the military, spouses of active duty military personnel, reservists, veterans and their families. The American Legion says even though the job fair is geared towards people with military affiliations, everyone is welcome.

“We look for people that like structure. We’re a paramilitary organization. So people that come from the military, it kind of eases them as they come out of a military setting into civilian life,” said Sgt Rhiannon McFerren with the Norfolk Sheriff’s Department. “We actually do have a program called hire vets now. It’s something they can get involved with six months before separation.”

Applicants were encouraged to bring an updated resume and be dressed to impress.

American Legion Post 327 held another job fair on September 29.



*Virginia Boys State Governor Aryan Hamdard, center, with Robert Meyers, left, and Gavin Senger.
(Photo courtesy Unknown)*

Virginia Boys State governor worried over homeland’s “stark future

By The American Legion from Legion.org

The summer of 2021 has been an overwhelming one for Aryan Hamdard.

In June, he became the first immigrant to be elected governor at Virginia Boys State. In August, he watched from afar as his homeland of Afghanistan fell to the Taliban.

“The recent unfortunate and tragic developments in my homeland, Afghanistan, have been extremely overwhelming and heartbreaking and has forced me to constantly think of that beautiful country and be worried about the stark future of millions of innocent Afghans who are once again faced with an uncertain future,” Hamdard said.

Growing up in Afghanistan, Hamdard had to change schools several times due to security threats against his father, who worked in IT for the Afghan government and with U.S. forces.

“In 2019, the security situation in Afghanistan deteriorated to a point where actually my dad’s colleagues and the U.S. government informed him about an imminent threat against our lives and advised us to leave Afghanistan and resettle in the U.S.,” Hamdard said.

Through the Special Immigration Visa (SIV) program, the Hamdards were able to relocate to the U.S. They moved here in November 2019; a few months later, they — like everyone else — had to adjust to life in a pandemic.

“We were in a new country with almost no experience with anything, locked inside our house and scared for our lives,” Hamdard said. “After we arrived here, I only went to school for a couple of days shy of a month and then we were virtual. Which was the craziest and most difficult year of my life

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Virginia Boys State governor worried over homeland's "stark future"

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'academics wise.' Because I did not know how the educational system in the U.S. worked and I joined school towards the end of the school year."

With guidance from his counselor, teachers and school, Hamdard was able to finish the 2019-20 school year with a 4.0 GPA. But the family needed to find a bigger house to accommodate virtual learning and a room for Hamdard, his younger brother and his parents. Unfortunately, the house they found was almost an hour away from Hamdard's school.

"So every time we had an in-person meeting, I had to personally drive all the way over there because I didn't want to change schools anymore and I wanted to leave something behind for my current school before I graduate. So, during the school year that just ended, I created my own club to help new and international students with their integration to the American educational system and ways of life in high school. It is mostly run by students in order to improve their leadership skills and skills with people while helping others. But I will also help the new students with feeling more comfortable to make new friends and ask questions which they would not normally do with an adult counselor," Hamdard said.

Hamdard was also told about The American Legion's Boys State program.

"I clearly remember hesitating when first applying to the program because I simply did not know much about it," he said. "After I got nominated by my school and got selected as a primary delegate at our

post, I had a lot of people tell me that this is going to be a life changing experience, but I didn't really believe it."

Hamdard didn't initially plan to run for office at Virginia Boys State. "But after I had a conversation with a few people from my group they suggested that I should really consider running for governor. ... I was scared, but then I said to myself, if I really want to change something, I should at least give it a try," he said.

In addition to being the first immigrant elected governor in Virginia Boys State's 78-year history, Hamdard took pride in his city's achievements. "We were the first ever city/group to not only win the best city award but also get all three of the major statewide offices, the senate pro tem, the senate minority leader, the chief justice of the supreme court, two color guard members and a Boys Nation Representative. We set new standards at Boys State and made history forever to come. On the last day I really did realize that it was truly a life changing experience, as I will never doubt my ability to do something after this.

"Now I really believe that I can make a difference and fight for our country, people and values. I am trying to get involved with more programs like these and eventually actual politics, because I think we all bear an equal responsibility to leave something better behind for the generations to come."

2021-2022 Department Membership Standings

Current as of: October 21, 2021

Western Region: 67.26%

Northern Region: 64.24%

Eastern Region: 61.78%

Overall: 61.30%

Next Goal: 65% of 2022 goal on November 3, 2021

Needed to meet 2022 100% goal: 14,915



Third District holds training day

By William Chan

The Third District held a day of training on August 14, 2021. The training included topics on The American Legion, Post Commander, Adjutant, forms, manuals, membership, and MyLegion.org with 32 attendees present.

Special guests included the Eastern Region Vice Commander Joe Garlitz (pictured in the photo to the left) along with Membership Chairman Scott Maddrea.

“The training was to the point,” stated Garlitz. “This was needed and done extremely well. It was a needed effort particularly for our Adjutants and Commanders to aid in their new membership year.”



Legion Family represented at Travis Manion Heroes Run

By David F. Wallace

Legion Family members from Post 284, Colonial Heights, VA, were in full force at the Travis Manion Heroes Run held in Richmond, VA, on September 11, 2021. In this picture is a piece of steel from Tower 1, courtesy of the Freedom Flag Foundation. “We were literally touching history,” commented Lisa Chaplin.

To learn more about the Freedom flag foundation go to: www.freedomflagfoundation.org

Pictured from left to right: Unknown, Auxiliary Member Sue Oertel, Past Department Eastern Region Vice Commander Rick Oertel, Auxiliary Member Rita Feasenmyer, Immediate Past Department Commander Bill Feasenmyer, Detachment Adjutant Kevin Chaplin and Past Auxiliary President Lisa Chaplin. (Photo courtesy Unknown)



Starting a new Auxiliary year on the right foot

By Staci King, Department Auxiliary President

When the second annual American Legion 100 Miles for Hope Challenge was announced, I couldn't think of a better way to kickstart the new administrative year of serving as Department President for The American Legion Auxiliary (ALA). The Challenge encourages physical fitness and wellness among American Legion Family members and friends while raising funds for the Veterans & Children Foundation. The Challenge also signified to me that this will be a year of focusing on wellbeing and reconnection – for coming back together as The American Legion Family doing what we do best – serving veterans, families and the community.

I am pleased to share that the ALA Department of Virginia is adopting the National ALA President's theme, "Caring for Those Who Care for Others" which focuses on veteran caregivers. An important tenet of caregiving is that the caregivers themselves have needs which include staying healthy, staying informed, having strong networks of resources, and feeling empowered to ask for help. Translating those caregiver needs up to the Auxiliary as an organization and we see that we need our membership to be healthy – both growing in number and in goodwill; we need to implement strategies to communicate early and often; and provide the best available tools and resources to empower our Districts, Units and Individual members.

Throughout the pandemic we have discovered new ways to achieve our mission virtually and have many success stories to share. However, like most of you, I

am eager for the American Legion Family to get back out into communities in-person to show that there are opportunities to serve and to have some fun along the way.

Let's keep stepping forward in our mission, stay healthy and safe, and have an amazing year together.



Celebrating the completion of her second annual 100 Miles for Hope Challenge is Staci King pictured above. (Photo courtesy Kay Sisson)

About the Veterans & Children Foundation

-Since 1925, the Veterans & Children Foundation has provided more than \$30 million in financial assistance to disabled veterans and military families in need. The foundation covers training for accredited American Legion service officers who assist any disabled veterans, at no charge, with their VA benefits and claims. Additionally, the foundation funds the Legion's

Temporary Financial Assistance program, which delivers grants to military families with financial needs.

TURN UNCERTAINTY INTO
HOPE
FOR FAMILIES IN NEED



THE AMERICAN LEGION
VETERANS & CHILDREN
FOUNDATION

DONATE TODAY



“Tis Lucky to be a Son of The American Legion”

By Joe Gallagher, Detachment Commander



Comrades, I want to thank each of you for placing your confidence in me to be your commander for the 2021-2022 Sons of the American Legion year. I am humbled and honored. I want to let you all know that this is a year of trying new things in the way we operate within the Detachment of Virginia.

We certainly aren't doing away with the tried-and-true methods that have worked for years, but we are looking hard at those things that need some attention, updating, and brought into the digital world etc. One of those areas is membership transmittals. We can now perform this task online if we desire and can pay online and its all direct to National. National then sends the Detachment/Department their share. It makes it much easier to send in our membership. We can still use the paper transmittal and send it to department and go through the tried-and-true method, however, we will still have those delays and our ability to track quickly is a challenge at best.

I encourage all Squadrons to give the online method a try. If you need help, please let me know and we will help you walk through the process. Our Vice Commanders stand ready to help as does our adjutant and myself.

Each year the Commander chooses a project and asks all squadrons in the Detachment to support the project. This year my project is one that combines Children and Youth with Americanism. I am asking each Squadron in the Detachment of Virginia to raise a few bucks and buy small American flags on a pencil size sticks, **Note:(Only Flags made in the USA.)**, Then reach out to an elementary school close to your post home, contact the Principal, and ask if your squadron can come in and do a program for the entire first grade class on Flag Etiquette and Education, while doing so, leave one of the flags with each 1st grader.

The goal is to build and shape respect for our flag, and in doing so, to mold our next generation starting with these first graders. I would ask that we give them info

as well about the SAL and how they might consider joining our ranks. Please just drop me a quick email telling me that your squadron has made this happen. If you need to know where to get the flags and handout booklets on Flag Etiquette, just go to Emblem Sales.com. If you need help let me know. You can reach me at anytime via email at SALJGallagher@gmail.com, or call me at 804-741-4680.

Please join me in molding our next generation and also filling our ranks with the next generation. We as the Sons of the American Legion need to emulate the values that are so lacking in our Country at the present time, and I know that all of you in the Detachment of Virginia can set this example.

Hopefully, many of you will have considered joining us at the Fall Conference being held this October and around the time of this newsletter coming out. I encourage you in helping us to turn the corner on embracing the future. If you don't know already, my theme this year is, “Tis Lucky to be a Son of the American Legion”, that's what we need to convey to the first graders and on up to all who could join our ranks as a member.

Let's stand shoulder to shoulder and bring the Detachment of Virginia forward and let it be seen as the Detachment to model after as “we get it done”. Remember please it all starts with getting our membership turned in. Please give it a hard push and let's get our membership numbers up via renewals ,and just as important recruiting new members.

We will be getting reports soon as the bugs are being worked out of the new system. However, as we work the bugs out of the system at National, let's remember that membership should be tracked at the squadron level.

I wish all a fantastic beginning to the Fall quarter as well as a fantastic kick off to our SAL Year of 2021 -2022.



2021 Legion Riders Rally Held

By Randy "BB" Gunn, Virginia Legacy Run Founder

On October 1-2, 2021, The American Legion Riders of Virginia held their 11th Annual Rally. This year's host was Chapter 325, Danville, where Rider's from across the Department came together as a group to renew their efforts with no business being held on this particular weekend.

There were approximately 150 attendees from the 16 Chapters that attended. Department Commander Frank Hillyard, Past Department Commander A.B. Brown, were honored guests in attendance.

"American Legion Riders are the largest and fastest growing program in the American Legion," remarked Department Commander Hillyard. "We raise more money and donate more time than anyone else. The A.L.R. State Rally gives us the opportunity to relax and have fun with our fellow riders from throughout the state."

"Now that the state rally is over, it is time for us to get back to work," Hillyard continued saying. "We need to recruit new members, so that we may continue to grow and to serve our communities, state and nation! Thank you for everything that you do, and God bless!"

The American Legion Memorial Post 325's Legion Family all chipped in preparing three meals to keep everyone nourished. On Friday night, there was a fish dinner sponsored by their SAL Squadron. On Saturday, their ALR Chapter sponsored lunch with bologna sandwiches and burgers and that evening, the Post sponsored a fried chicken dinner. Special thanks to Don Mitchell and his

secret family recipe for the hushpuppies.

On Saturday morning, Chapter 325 Ride Coordinator Phelps led a beautiful ride to the North Carolina border and back. After lunch, The bike show and bike games were held. Best looking bike was won by Rick Siler, Chap-

ter 93. There were four new bike games were introduced and everyone enjoyed them thoroughly. The new games were: Ride the Plank, Get Your Boots On, Gutter Ball, and Potato Hunt.

Door prizes were given out throughout the day, along with a silent auction where approximately 25 items were awarded.

The Virginia Legacy Run provided two American Legion Rider belt buckles to be raffled and auctioned off. This netted the Virginia Legacy Run \$1,050.00 for the first fundraiser for the 2022 membership year.

A shuttle bus was provided by W & W Limousine and the ultimate prize was the success in keeping everyone safe to and from the motels all weekend.



Department Commander Frank Hillyard presents one of the ALR belt buckles raffled off to winner Bill Daniele, Chapter 2 Rider. (Photo courtesy Randy Gunn)

"This has been one of, if not the best Rally's I have been to," said Don Forshey, ALR Department Adjutant. "I thank everyone at the Post for allowing us to be there for the weekend. Everyone treated us as family. In my opinion we should look at this at the benchmark for all future Rallies."

The ALR Western Region Director, Phil Shepard commented, "I want to thank everyone at Post 325, the was one of the best rallies I have been a part of and can't wait until next year."



Air Force veteran Carroll “Ziggy” Levinson, left, is honored by immediate past Department Commander William S. Feasenmyer, Jr., at the “Ziggy Rocks Ride,” July 25. Ziggy passed away July 29. He had been fighting cancer for several months. (Photo courtesy David F. Wallace)

Virginia Legion Family honors fellow comrade

By David F. Wallace

Comradeship. Honor. Respect. These three words instantly came to my mind as I observed the outpouring of support from approximately 300 participants in the “Ziggy Rocks” Ride By held on July 25, 2021, in the Department of Virginia.

The event paid tribute to a fellow comrade who has been battling cancer and was recently placed in hospice care, Carroll Levison. Known to all as Ziggy, he created something that re-defined what a true tribute would become known for, with his Veteran Recognition and Veteran Suicide Awareness truck (Tribute Truck).

“This event was an awesome tribute to an awesome man,” remarked Randy Gunn, Virginia Legacy Run founder and the Eastern Region director. “We put this together in five

days and brought together all areas of the American Legion Family, along with additional friends, family and supporters. This event proves that when we get back to the basics, we can do anything.”

About 100 motorcycles, 51 cars, 30 bike passengers, 60 car passengers and 40 American Legion volunteers, law enforcement officials, sign makers, breakfast workers, parking lot flaggers, others participated in this event. That made it one of the first big get-togethers within the Department of Virginia’s American Legion Family in 2021. Many in attendance were seeing each other for the first time since the pandemic took hold more than 16 months ago.

“It was a great turnout today,” said Department (Continued on Page 18)

Virginia Legion Family honors a fellow comrade

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of Virginia Commander Frank Hillyard. "Our comrade has not only been a very important part of The American Legion Riders, but also, an important part of our department. Ziggy's hard work, dedication and commitment exemplifies what our organization is all about."

Ziggy, a member of American Legion Post 247 in Remington, Va., is a disabled Air Force veteran. He retired from Special Operations at Hurlburt Field in Florida and eventually found his way to Virginia. While he has suffered from his own PTSD issues (non-combat related), it was the experiences with his son and a friend that really started Ziggy on the path to creating the Tribute Truck.

His first experience with veteran suicide was when a friend had been reported as missing. His friend had not exhibited any outward signs of struggling with suicidal thoughts but had been experiencing serious medical issues and was on a plethora of medications prescribed by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to help with depression. Unfortunately, his friend was found several states away where he had driven his vehicle until it ran out of gas and then walked into the woods with a shotgun and ended his pain.

Later, Ziggy's son was in Iraq when his MRAP was struck by an IED which seriously damaged the vehicle. The blast caused TBI and PTSD issues for his son, which led to his own mental health struggles and a dark slide into suicide attempts.

Around the same time his son was struggling, Ziggy began working with Terry Sharpe from North Carolina, better known as "The Walking Marine." Ziggy met Sharpe on his first walk from Stokesdale, N.C. to Washington, D.C., a 300-mile walk. Sharpe and his team focus on the larger issue of veteran suicide and PTSD awareness with several walks to the White House. On one of those walks, Sharpe connected with Ziggy's son and provided him a model to help him overcome PTSD and turn his life around.

One of the major themes related to suicide awareness is also a general lack of veteran recognition and appreciation for their sacrifices. While there has been little change, it has been limited to just a few events each year. Ziggy wanted to do more to recognize our veterans every day and educate others on the veteran suicide rate. So, he

came up with the concept of the Tribute Truck that would serve as a reminder to others of these issues.

The Tribute Truck has been used as a parade vehicle around northern Virginia for several years. In addition, it has been used as a static display for events such as air shows, military museum open houses, National Cemetery ceremonies, recruiting events, and of course providing support for the Walking Marine while he traversed Highway 29. It has also been the lead vehicle for several Amer-



Ziggy's theme truck that brought attention to veteran suicide. (Photo courtesy David F. Wallace)

ican Legion Riders events providing visibility and recognition that motorcycles alone cannot provide. The truck has been a labor of love and was fully funded by Ziggy without donations from others.

Upon completion of the Ride By, all participants met at the Walmart parking lot in Warrenton for a special presentation by the immediate Past Department Commander Bill Feasenmyer. Ziggy's son and daughter, James Levison and Ann Levison-Pineda, were there as well and very appreciative of the love and support.

"Ziggy not only dedicated his own time and money in his endeavor to ultimately change the suicide toll to zero, but he also inspired others to have the same level of involvement and compassion for his mission that he has," said Feasenmyer. "What better tribute can we give a man that has given so much of himself than to give of ourselves just

Virginia Legion Family honors a fellow comrade

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a fraction? I have never met a man who was so genuinely concerned for all veterans and this event today confirms and ratifies his legacy."

In the end, another word comes to mind regarding this event: Friendship. I, for one, am thankful for the friendship, as others shared with Ziggy. Thankful for our multiple discussions, advice and even a few "agree to disagree moments." The longer you are involved in The American Legion, the more you will experience loss but, celebrating a life well-lived like Ziggy's makes it a bit easier.

Word came four day later, on July 29, that Ziggy lost his battle with cancer and passed in hospice. "Please keep his and his immediate family in your thoughts and prayers," said immediate Post 284 Commander Adrian L. "Skip" Klaas. "Goodbye my friend."

To learn more about "Terry the Walking Marine" please go to: <https://www.walkingmarine.com/>

Ask for help: Do not be afraid to let your friends know what you need when they ask; they want to help. You can also reach out to confidential 24/7 services like the Veteran Crisis Line: <https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/>



One last ride in the Tribute Truck on the way to the Walmart parking lot. (Photo courtesy Kim Atkins)

PDC Mitrione elected as National Vice Commander

By David F. Wallace

Past Department Commander (2010-11) Michael F. Mitrione, a member of American Legion Post 55, was elected as a national vice commander of The American Legion during its national convention in Phoenix, Ariz., on Sept. 2.

"I am very grateful to the Legionnaires of Virginia," stated Mitrione, "for allowing me to represent them on the national stage. I think of the people who have held this position before and will do my best to live up to the standards they set."

Michael retired from the U.S. Army in 1984 as a lieutenant colonel. His awards include the Legion of Merit, Bronze Star Air Medal (three awards), Meritorious Service Medal (two awards), Army Commendation Medal (five awards), and Combat Infantry badge.

Mitrione also served as the national executive committeeman (2017-21), and alternate national executive committeeman (2014-17). Additionally, he has served on a number of national committees to include the Na-

tional Security Committee/Council, Committee on Committees, and NEC Liaison to the Finance Commission, as well as numerous positions at the regional, district and post levels.



Official Photo courtesy of The American Legion National HQ

Eagle Scout of the Year nominations

The American Legion Eagle Scout of the Year nomination window is from November 1st to March 1st, annually.

Nomination packets must be received by each applicant's respective American Legion department (state) headquarters no later than March 1st.

Then each respective American Legion Department (state) Selection Committee will determine the Eagle Scout judged to be the best in their department (state) and the department will send that packet, along with a list of the members serving on that Selection Committee, to The American Legion National Headquarters no later than April 1st.

For more information contact Program Chairman Lowell Badgley at (434) 295-5952.

The application link can be found at:
www.valegion.org/programs/boyscout/



American Legion National Commander Paul E. Dillard addresses the National Executive Committee on October 6, 2021. (Photo courtesy Ben Mikesell)

Buddy Checks: a commitment to no veteran left behind

By The American Legion

As Veterans Day nears, the week of Nov. 11 is a perfect time to conduct Buddy Checks on post members and veterans in the community. American Legion National Commander Paul E. Dillard called upon posts, districts and departments to conduct Buddy Checks in his opening remarks to the National Executive Committee on Oct. 5 in Indianapolis during Fall Meetings. Buddy Checks serve as an opportunity to check on the needs and well-being of veterans, but also as a suicide prevention initiative.

“We must reach out to our Afghanistan veterans who are experiencing a whole range of emotions due to recent events,” Dillard said. “We need to ensure that they are not isolated and that they know that they have a home and friends in our American Legion Family. Buddy Checks are for all veterans, but suicide prevention is perhaps the greatest benefit that can come from a Buddy Check,” he said.

Dillard asked members of the NEC to “memorize, publicize and emphasize” the Veteran Crisis Line at 800-273-8255 then press 1. Or text 838255. Or chat online at veteranscrisisline.net/chat.

The American Legion will grow in membership “by committing ourselves to the proposition of No Veteran Left Behind. And by ‘no veteran’ I include their families as well. Because most veterans will tell you that if you are helping their family, you are also helping that veteran.”

VIENNA, VA HOLDS 9/11 COMMEMORATION CEREMONY

(Continued from page 5)

Saying 'I love you,' on the day that his plane went down in a field in Pennsylvania? These young people show an enormous capacity for empathy and a maturity to consider these difficult questions."

"People are so concerned that twenty years removed from the attacks, we'll forget. But I don't see it that way. I'm encouraged by this younger generation. Especially throughout this pandemic. Like the selflessness of the first responders on 9/11, we have been inspired by the service of our health care workers. Mutual aid networks are cropping up all over cities, towns, and college campuses, made up of motivated individuals."

Anne finished her keynote speech stating that, "Seeing the legacy of these events borne out in these very difficult years, I don't think we will forget 9/11. I think the bravery, compassion, and empathy felt by all in the days following the attacks are found all around us still. This is always what we have the potential to be. And that is what I hope we don't forget."

The ceremony concluded with the Town of Vienna Ensemble playing "America the Beautiful" followed

by the playing of taps by the Town of Vienna Ensemble's Bugler, Tom Cooper. The Benediction was delivered with perfect timing, as the fourth bell ringing signaled the collapse of the World Trade Center South Tower (9:59 a.m.)

After the ceremony, many started gathering to speak to one another with some pausing, as the church began to ring for a fifth time: the moment United Airlines Flight 93 crashed in Somerset County, Pennsylvania (10:07 a.m.) The crowd slowly dissipated from the Freeman House Lawn, but I'm sure everyone from Vienna, and across the country, either heard a sixth set of bells ringing, or just looked at a clock or watch being reminded of 10:28 a.m., the moment when the World Trade Center North Tower collapsed.

Twenty years ago, the 9/11 attacks resulted in the deaths of 2,977 civilians, first responders and military personnel and thousands more suffered injuries and illnesses both visible and invisible. Twenty years later, they are still being remembered and, we pray that they will not be forgotten when another twenty years pass.

Lucian Butler American Legion Scholarship Fund



Eligibility:

- High school boys and girls who are sons, daughters, grandsons, granddaughters of members of the Virginia American Legion family who exemplify the spirit and true American values and have been admitted to an accredited four year college or university.
- Current scholarships are limited to those entering the freshman class. Awards in follow on years will be considered as funds are available.

Deadline:

If mailed, it must be postmarked no later than 1 March. If submitted via email, deadline is no later than midnight 1 March. Call our Department of Virginia Headquarters at 804-353-6606 for the proper email address to use.

The application can be found on the Department's website at: valegion.org/scholarships/Lucian-butler-scholarship/

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Being prepared can help save a life. Save the Veterans Crisis Line contact to your phone and encourage others to do the same.

The Veterans Crisis Line is available by phone (1-800-273-8255 and Press 1), text (838255), and chat 24/7, 365 days per year.



If you are interested in joining the Virginia American Legion Media Association (VALMA), please reach out to VALMA President Dave Wallace at:

David.f.wallace09@gmail.com



Then National SAL Commander Clint Bolt visited American Legion Boys Nation to present scholarships to president pro tempore Eddy Gonet, pictured, and secretary of the senate Andrew Iskander. (Photo courtesy Unknown)

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