

And the winners are....

Membership

Hartline Award (*Detach w/ most squadrons*) - Pennsylvania

Houghton Award (*greatest % increase in membership*) -

Category 1 - Arkansas Category 2 - Iowa
Category 3 - Georgia Category 4 - California
Category 5 - Pennsylvania

Highest Renewal Percentage by Region

East - Maryland (90.81%) South - Arkansas (93.45%)
Central - Wisconsin (91.12%) Midwest - South Dakota (100%)
West - Idaho (88.83%)

Largest Squadron - York, PA Squadron 791 (1,314)

First in Each Region to Reach 100%

East - France South - Arkansas
Central - Iowa Midwest - North Dakota
West - Arizona

Americanism

Atwood/Beyea/York Memorial Award

Detachment - Indiana
District - Fifth District, Georgia
Squadron - Dallas, TX Sq 453

National Emergency Fund

Largest Donations Per Capita in nation - Virginia

East - Maryland Central - Missouri
Midwest - Colorado West - Washington

Child Welfare Foundation

Excellence Award - Arizona
Nation's Largest Per Capita - Arizona

Largest Per Capita by Region

East - France South - Virginia
Central - Ohio West - Colorado

Garland Murphy Award (*largest donation*) - Arizona

Largest Donations by Region

East - New Jersey South - Virginia
Midwest - Colorado Central - Ohio



Big Winners - The Detachment of Arizona raked in several awards this year after raising massive amounts of money for Child Welfare. PDC Jeff Frain (left) had trouble balancing all of the hardware. The hardest-working lobbyist in our organization, Roger Dees (right), is flanked by Michigan PDC Andre Svacha and National Vice Commander Mike Moss.



Children and Youth

South - East Point, GA Sq 51
Central - Adel, IA Sq 464
Midwest - Houston, TX Sq 578
West - Arlington, WA Sq 76
Detachment - Georgia
District - Fourth District, Georgia
Squadron - La Plata, MD Sq 82

Community Service

Scrapbook Winners
Squadron - New Roads, LA Sq 248
Detachment - Louisiana

Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

Kirby Kepler Award (*best squadron rehab report*)
Dalton, GA Sq 112
Allen I. O'Brian (*best District rehab report*)
Fourth District, Georgia
Earl Webster Award (*best Detach rehab report*)
Georgia
Charles B. Rigsby Award (*Volunteer of the Year*)
Gary Barnes - East Point, GA Sq 51

Historian

History Book Award
Squadron - Baltimore, MD Sq 183
Detachment - Maryland

Color Guard

Clyde Stillwell Award and Guideon
Detachment of California Color Guard

Legislative

Grassroots Veterans Advocate of the Year
Roger Dees, Detachment of Michigan



NATIONAL UPDATE

Official Newsletter of the Sons of The American Legion

Special Convention Edition - August 24, 2008



Sons march into the Valley of the Sun

Detachments registered 98% of their total possible delegates to the 37th annual National Convention of the Sons of The American Legion held in Phoenix, AZ this weekend. Only the Detachments of Vermont, Nevada and the District of Columbia were missing.

Oddly enough, also missing was S.A.L. National Commander Raymond P. Giehll, Jr., who was forced to forego the convention while recuperating from a serious illness. Only days before he was to arrive in Phoenix and conclude a year at the helm of the Sons, Commander Ray was rushed to an Indianapolis hospital where doctors found blood clots in his lungs. Doctors believe the clots formed as a result of Ray's heavy travel schedule on behalf of the Sons. Ironically, it was that hefty travel schedule that wound up preventing him from traveling to Phoenix for the National Convention.

During opening ceremonies on Friday, presided over by the five National Vice Commanders, National Sergeant at Arms Raymond P. Giehll, III read a message from his father, thanking everyone for their concerns, well-wishes, get well cards and phone calls. He also thanked officers and chairmen for their hard work throughout the year.

"Have a great Convention and don't forget to have some fun at the end of the day," wrote Commander Ray.

A legacy to be proud of

The official route spanned 1,800 miles. Yet, many Sons rode hundreds of miles more than that just to get to the start line in Indianapolis and join with Legionnaires, Legion Riders and others in the 3rd annual American Legion Legacy Run to Phoenix, AZ. The Run was a grueling five day motorcycle ride designed to raise money for the Legacy Fund, which provides college scholarships to the children of servicemen and servicewomen killed defending our freedoms since September 11, 2001.

The final tally will be announced on Tuesday, but it's expected this year's ride has raised close to \$400,000.

S.A.L. PNC Earl Rutkofsky (below) was one of scores of Sons participating in the Legacy Run. Logistics for the Run was Hurculean, requiring coordinated fuel stops and overnight lodging. Riders braved highway speeds and



averaged nearly 400 miles each day.



Best friends - After his release from the hospital, Commander Ray was able to join Legion Commander Marty Conatser for the start of the 1,800 mile Legacy run as cyclists left Indianapolis.

Cisna starts out focused

Tommie Cisna played trumpet in the school band when he was a teenager. He was often called on to play Taps at military funerals in his hometown of Mattoon, IL. His dad, a Korean War veteran, worked as a postal carrier. Tommie would meet him at the post office after school and the pair would cross the street to spend time at The American Legion post.

Today, delegates to the 37th National Convention of the Sons of The American Legion elected Tommie Cisna to the office of National Commander. A 25 year member, Cisna belongs to Mattoon, IL Squadron 88, where Kathy, his wife of 23 years, is also an active member of the Auxiliary Unit.

A quick look at Commander Tommie's lifelong activities explains his rise to the top of the Sons. As a Boy Scout, he earned the rank of Eagle Scout with Bronze Palm. He also earned the Ad Altari Dei (God and County) Medal. He has taught flag etiquette to grade school classes and Boy Scout Troops. He has distributed poppies and helped

Continued on Page 2



Tommie/ from Page 1

run Bingo games at the Illiana Veterans Hospital.

As he takes charge of an organization of more than 320,000 Sons, Tommie already knows there are a handful of programs he'll be pushing hard. At the top of the list is membership.

"You have to have warm bodies to do the work," says the newest Commander. "That's a given. But right after that come VA&R, Child Welfare and Community Service. I want to focus on care for veterans and also for their families. I hear story after story about soldiers stationed overseas calling The Legion's Family Service Network. Legion Family members have responded in a matter of hours and helped solve many problems here on the home front with money, with manpower and with friendship."

Child Welfare fundraising is already an art form within the Sons. In addition, Cisna is about to unleash his "Where's Josh?" campaign, expecting Sons to distribute at least 2,500 Josh Dogs to hospitalized children over the next 12 months.

"If anyone goes into a hospital and does this, it will provide them a lifetime of memories," says Commander Tommie.

Much of Tommie's help this year will come from the five National Vice Commanders who were also elected Sunday. They include David Downey of New York (East), Lester Crosby of Mississippi (South), Dennis Blue of Minnesota (Central), Ed Magers of Texas (Midwest) and Jerry Hjelle of Washington (West).



Calls for constitutional change

Two attempts were made Saturday to amend the National Constitution of the Sons of The American Legion. One attempt failed. One succeeded.

A resolution originating inside the Detachment of Colorado called for a \$1 increase in national dues for the S.A.L. If it had passed, it could have meant dues would rise to \$3 beginning in 2009. The Convention Resolutions Committee urged rejection of the measure and it was overwhelmingly dismissed on a voice vote.

A second resolution offered by National Adjutant Brian O'Hearne sought to bring the organization's constitution up to date and into the electronic age. The resolution noted Article 7 Section 2 of the Sons' National Constitution makes several references to the use of the "telegraph." O'Hearne sought to replace those references with words like "e-mail" and "fax." The resolution passed without dissent.

'Operation Freedom Car'

Racers turn a corner

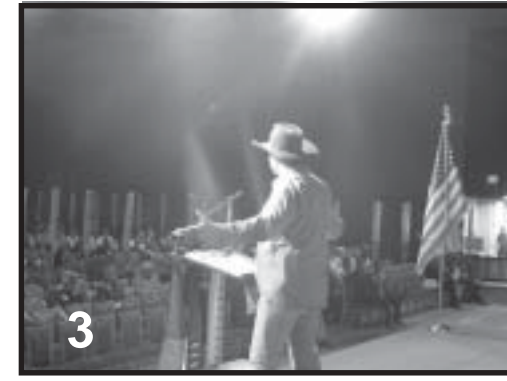
Johnson Motorsports has teamed with The American Legion Family to race the #76 car in Busch/Nationwide events in recent years. Car driver and S.A.L. member Jerick Johnson has used the races as an opportunity to travel the country, visit VA and children's hospitals, and to meet Legion Family members in their home posts.

There's a new twist to this year's racing. 'Operation Freedom Car' is tapping one of its major sponsors to assist soldiers stationed around the world. For every \$20 donation, the team will donate a bottle of "4-in-1" to troops overseas. It's a combination shampoo, conditioner, body wash and shaving cream in a travel-size bottle. For every \$100 donation, a case of "4-in-1" will be sent to troops overseas and donors will have their name painted on the race car. The goal this year is 5,000 cases - 60,000 bottles of a personal hygiene product proving very popular among soldiers in the field.

Jerick and the 'Operation Freedom Car' ran in a Nationwide event at Milwaukee in June. They have also turned out for some ASA races this summer. On September 20, Jerick will be on the track at Hickory, NC for a race that will be carried live on Sports South TV.

Racing for victory on many fronts - The man behind the wheel for The Legion Racing Team is calling for a win (left above). Jerick Johnson, Legion PNC Butch Miller and National Vice Commander John Jones all flash victory signs from the stage Saturday.

(left) Sons intermingled with other riders to make the American Legion Legacy Run from Indianapolis to Phoenix to raise money for the Legacy Scholarship. (left below) Some spectacular scenery punctuated the southwestern scenery along the 1,800 mile trek from Indianapolis to Phoenix



Images from the 37th National Convention

Leaders of The American Legion Family took turns addressing Sons on Friday and Saturday. (1) Honorary National Junior Auxiliary President Lindsey Dolan of South Dakota, National Auxiliary President Jan Pulvermacher-Ryan of Wisconsin, American Legion National Commander Marty Conatser of Illinois and National S.A.L. Vice Commander Robert Jones of Utah. (2) American Legion National Commander candidate Dave Rehbein told Sons he remembers what it was like before the S.A.L. grew and energized Legion projects in Iowa. (3) Country music star and S.A.L. member Michael Peterson compared Sons to famed aviator Charles Lindbergh, "It would be a shame to land." (4) Auxiliary National Secretary Pamela Gilley of Indiana said it's gratifying when sons and daughters adopt the values of their parents, as the S.A.L. has adopted the goals of our forefathers. (5) American Legion National Adjutant Robert Spanogle used scripture to pass along his thanks spanning more than 30 years of working with Sons, "When you do this for the least of me, you do it for me."



Bragging rights for Sons

This has been another incredible, successful, record-breaking year for Sons across the country. For starters, there are now more Sons than ever before, extending an unbroken chain of growth that stretches back many decades. Membership in the S.A.L. has grown to more than 323,000 in 5,673 Squadrons spanning 52 Detachments.

Sons continue to be the largest contributors to the Child Welfare Foundation, donating \$332,426 and 34,227 hours. More than \$117,716 was donated and more than 12,000 hours of service were committed to Special Olympics. More than \$70,000 and 6,566 hours of service were given to the Children's Miracle Network. In all, nearly \$1.5M and 200,000 hours were given to Children and Youth programs this year.

Sons recorded nearly 278,000 hours on behalf of veteran rehabilitation projects. Close to 15,000 visits and \$1.5M in cash and gifts were donated to veterans' hospitals and homes. There are now 47 Sons serving as VAVS representatives and we have a Son sitting on the National VAVS Board.

Nearly \$2M and a half million hours of service were given in support of Americanism programs this year.

Sons paid to send more than 500 high school students to Boys State. S.A.L. color guards made more than 6,000 appearances at a cost of more than \$80,000. Sons held almost 3,000 flag retirement ceremonies, placed almost 250,000 flags in cemeteries and conducted more than a thousand flag education programs in schools. Sons sponsored 143 Legion Baseball teams at a cost of \$156,000 and added another \$122,000 for other kinds of ball teams. Nearly \$30,000 was given to support Scouting.

Talk about putting your money where your mouth is, S.A.L. members contributed more than 13,300 hours and more than \$5,000 to National Oratorical Contests. They have given a quarter of a million dollars in scholarships. They have labored nearly a half million hours while conducting various community projects that had price tags totaling more than \$800,000.

Over the past 20 years the S.A.L. has donated more than \$3M to the Child Welfare Foundation. Sons need to raise only

\$330,000 this year to surpass the \$4M mark.

All of this good news is in spite of the fact many Squadrons throughout the country are not reporting their activities each year.