

# And the winners are....

## Membership

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

Houghton Award (*greatest % increase in membership*)

Category 1 - Rhode Island      Category 2 - New Mexico  
 Category 3 - Arizona            Category 4 - Florida  
 Category 5 - Pennsylvania

Highest Renewal Percentage by Region

East - Rhode Island            South - Virginia  
 Central - Iowa                Midwest - Nebraska  
 West - Utah

Largest Squadron - Shiloh, PA Squadron 791

First in Each Region to Reach 100%

East - France                  South - Mississippi  
 Central - Iowa                Midwest - Ok  
 West - Washington

## Americanism

Atwood/Beyea/York Memorial Award

Detachment - Georgia  
 District - Ninth District, Georgia  
 Squadron - Alpharette, GA Sq 201

NEF Per Capita

Largest in Nation - Montana  
 West - Washington      East - Connecticut  
 South - Virginia          Central - Iowa

## National Emergency Fund

Largest Donations Per Capita in Nation - Montana

East - Connecticut      Central - Iowa  
 South - Virginia          West - Washington

## Child Welfare Foundation

Garland Murphy Award (*largest donation*) - Ohio

Udie Grant Award (*top Legion Family combined*) - Ohio

Excellence Award (*largest per capita*) - France

Largest Per Capita by Region

South - Virginia          Central - Ohio  
 MidWest - Colorado      West - Arizona

Largest Donations by Region

East - Pennsylvania      Central - Ohio  
 South - Virginia          Midwest - Kansas  
 West - Arizona

## Children and Youth

Detachment - Georgia

District - Tenth District, Texas

Squadron - Round Rock, TX Sq447

South - Dunedin, FL Sq 275

East - La Plata, MD Sq 82

Central - Chillicothe, OH Sq 62

West - Mesa, AZ Sq 26

## Legislative

Grassroots Veterans Advocate of the Year  
 Sanford "Sandy" Lipman, Detach of Michigan

## Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

Charles B. Rigsby Award (*Volunteer of the Year*)

Earsel King - Olive Hill, KY Sq 138

Kirby Kepler Award (*best squadron rehab report*)

Sheridan, OR Sq 75

Allen I. O'Brian (*best District rehab report*)

Fourth District, Georgia

Earl Webster Award (*best Detach rehab report*)

Georgia

## Historian

History Book Award

Squadron - Evans, GA Sq 192

Detachment - Maryland

## Color Guard

Clyde Stillwell Award and Guideon

Detachment of California Color Guard



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Some of the special Legion Family guests who addressed the 38th S.A.L. National Convention:

1-Dan Wheeler (*American Legion National Adjutant*)

2-Jimmie Foster (*2nd Leading Commander Candidate*)

3-George West (*S.A.L. Committee Chairman*)

4-Larry Besson (*Internal Affairs Chairman*)

5-Clarence Hill (*Leading Commander Candidate*)

6-S.A.L. Commander Tommie with Kaylee Horan

(*Auxiliary Honorary Junior President*)

7-Desiree Stoy (*Auxiliary National President*)

8-Mary Buckler (*Auxiliary National Secretary*)

9-Dennis Boland (*CWF President*)



# NATIONAL UPDATE

Official Newsletter of the Sons of The American Legion

Special Convention Edition - August 23, 2009



## Sons invade Louisville

Sometimes, you just want to save the best for last. That was certainly the case this weekend at the 38th National Convention of the Sons of The American Legion.

On the third and final day of the convention, not only did Sons elect a new National Commander to lead them into 2010, but they were treated to a show-stopping visit from Miss America.

Because delegate strength is based on membership, and because the S.A.L. continues to set all-time membership levels, this year's potential delegate strength was its highest ever. National Assistant Adjutant Harold Thompson says this year's 854 registered delegates were the most since convention registration rules were changed several years ago. All 50 states and the Detachment of France attended this year's Louisville convention, the highest number of registered Detachments ever.



In a twist of irony, this year's convention was made special by the absence of two people. On Friday afternoon, delegates unanimously adopted a resolution dedicating this year's National Convention to Past National Commander Royce Doucet of

Louisiana, who died in March following surgery intended to correct some problems left over from a bout with cancer. Royce's photo and a lit votive candle presided on stage throughout the convention. In another stirring move, all Past National Commanders in attendance gathered on stage Friday to proclaim Patrick Shea an honorary PNC. Pat was expected to be elected National Commander

of the Sons next August in Milwaukee, but died unexpectedly in January while attending the Detachment of Ohio Mid-Winter Conference. Pat's family was on stage Friday to receive his Commander's flag, a gold Commander's cover and lapel badge.

Throughout the course of three days, S.A.L. delegates were repeatedly praised for a year of record-breaking activities related to fundraising, volunteerism and membership recruitment. A long list of Legion Family dignitaries and special guests graced the stage each day. None was more warmly received, however, than Katie Stam. The beautiful, reigning Miss America 2009 - and Legion Family member - drew cheers from delegates and guests when she stepped up to the podium Sunday morning.



National Conventions are an odd mixture of endings and new beginnings. Successes touted in Louisville set a high standard for next year's gathering in Milwaukee.

## Molded in Excellence

On Sunday, S.A.L. convention delegates elected Mark Arneson as their National Commander for 2009-10. Mark is a 20-year member of the Sons who hails from Buford, GA Squadron 127 and derives his eligibility from his father's U.S. Army service in the Korean War followed by 55 years in The American Legion. Mark's wife, Catherine, is an active Auxiliary member and the couple's three daughters are all Junior Auxiliary members.

It should come as no surprise that the new National Commander's administration will be run with private sector perspective. He holds business degrees from The Citadel and from the University of Georgia and is a certified public accountant employed as an assistant vice president of one of the largest road construction and building product manufacturers in the U.S.



At the top of his agenda will be "Operation Proud Sons" - an initiative designed to grow Sons membership to 350,000 and raise \$500,000 for CWF. One way to increase membership will be a program called the "Triple Nickel" in which every Detachment will be pushed to retain 85% of their current members, reach 105% of their membership goal, **Continued on Page 2**



American Legion Youth Champions represent the very best

## Arneson/ from Page 1

and charter at least five new Squadrons. Commander Mark will also use a new incentive program called "Sons that Shine" to identify and reward blue cap Sons across the country who excel in their efforts to assist veterans and promote programs of the S.A.L.

Commander Mark will use the slogan, "Molded in Excellence - Embodied by Tradition" through the year. He wants to use the images and traditions of The American Legion to help make the S.A.L. stronger, which will, in turn contribute to a stronger American Legion Family.

Serving alongside National Commander Arneson will be five National Vice Commanders who were also elected on Sunday: East - Keith Murdough (NH), South - Clint Bolt (VA), Central - Dennis Theobald (IA), Midwest - James Gelwicks (CO), West - William Lewis (OR).



American Legion National Commander David Rehbein and his wife, Ann, carved time from their busy convention weekend schedule to spend time with Sons on Friday afternoon.

## "I thought everybody knew a Peal Harbor survivor..."

Carl Browning was a Scoutmaster in Mattoon, IL who pushed and prodded Tommie Cisna into earning an Eagle Scout badge, not realizing the young man would one day become National Commander of the Sons of The American Legion. Likewise, Tommie grew up thinking everyone knew somebody who was stationed at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

Most S.A.L. National Commanders have an opportunity to participate in Pearl Harbor Day ceremonies, and when Tommie's chance came last December he arranged to have a flag flown over the U.S.S. Arizona Memorial. During Friday's convention session, Commander Tommie fulfilled a life-long dream of presenting that flag to his dear friend and mentor.

(Right)



**The Knickers Brigade** - Children and Youth committee members who spearheaded efforts that raised \$343,976 appeared on stage this year in antiquated golf attire to spoof Commander Tommie's love of the links.

## Josh and CWF cap a great year at Louisville

This year's National Convention quickly took on a party atmosphere, capping a year of record-setting proportions.

Once again, there are more S.A.L. members being reported than ever before. There are now 331,636 Sons belonging to 5,748 Squadrons scattered throughout 52 Detachments.

The S.A.L. has once again been acknowledged as the single-largest contributor to the Child Welfare Foundation, contributing more than \$343,000 this year and reaching the \$4 million mark in all-time CWF contributions.

National Commander Cisna made the Josh Dog program a cornerstone of his Children and Youth programming this year and S.A.L. members across the country embraced it wholeheartedly. Dr. Randy Lang, a Knoxville, TN veterinarian who founded the Josh Dog program and wrote the "I'll be OK" book that accompanies each Josh Dog, spoke to Sons during Saturday's session, thanking them for efforts that have benefitted many children this year. S.A.L. members purchased 80% of all Josh Dogs distributed throughout the country this year (181 of them acquired by the Detachment of California alone).

Joining Dr. Lang on the stage Saturday were his wife, Christy, and the couple's Golden Labrador Retriever, Josh II. Dr. Lang explained how the Josh Dog program began as a way to help his own young daughter face medical difficulties. He calls the program an adventure in getting well and says the most moving tribute he's ever heard about Josh Dog was from a small child who said, "Mommy, Josh helps to make me un-cry."

A new program kit has been developed and will be made available to Sons late this fall. The packets will include sample press releases and suggested instructions for working with hospitals and doctors in an effort to reach more children.



## Working on behalf of vets at race tracks and in recording studios

Jerick Johnson and Michael Peterson, both S.A.L. members, are climbing to the top and winning support for programs that support veterans.

Johnson is the driver of the now-familiar #76 Freedom Car. Currently ranked ninth in a field of 59 ASA Challenge Series teams, Jerick has climbed into second place in rookie driver points this year with three races remaining. He won the race at Indianapolis this summer and will run at Memphis on November 7 in a race that will be carried live on TV.

When Team Johnson hits the road for a race, they make stops at Legion posts along the way, raising awareness for membership and raising money for veteran-related projects. Funds that keep #76 on the track come from Legion Family members through donations, the sale of racing merchandise and associate sponsorships.

On Friday afternoon, Country music star Michael Peterson delighted convention delegates and guests in the convention hall by appealing to them to help find ways to involve him in S.A.L. programs that can raise awareness and money that will benefit programs for veterans.

"This is a wonder opportunity for us to grow The American Legion and Sons of The American Legion," said Peterson.

"I'm making a commitment right now in front of you that, if you'll contact my office, let's find ways this year together to touch your community, to use music or use an event. Use me! I'm a member of the Sons of The American Legion because I understand the value of it. But I want your neighbors and your friends to experience that, too, and I want to help you do that." People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care."



## 2008-09 by the numbers

252,055 hours of VA facility volunteer service logged during 14,270 visits, plus \$1,245,504 in cash and gifts

\$70,795 and 3,660 hours donated to Fisher House

\$131,419 and 11,903 donated to Special Olympics

\$97,351 and 8,685 service hours donated to Children's Miracle Network

\$1,817,766 and 112,618 donated to all Children and Youth programs

\$1,669,027 and 549,224 hours donated in support of all Americanism programs

\$671,711 and 482,159 hours donated to various Community Service projects

\$287,825 given in scholarships

278,140 flags presented at cemeteries and parades

586 Boys State representatives sponsored at a cost of \$134,221

7,666 S.A.L. color guard appearances

190 American Legion Baseball teams sponsored at a cost of \$116,241

5,790 flag retirement ceremonies

Only two months into the 2010 membership year and the Detachment of Mississippi is already at 100%

2009 S.A.L. Color Guard Champs  
The Detachment of California's finest

