

CWF donations result in real grants

Sons' efforts to raise money for the Child Welfare Foundation have resulted in \$639,875 in grants this year to 18 non-profit organizations. The grants will support worthwhile projects through the dissemination of information to the general public and specific target groups. The S.A.L. sponsored six of this year's 18 grants.

Caring Kids Television of Dana Point, California (\$45,000) for their project titled "Dewey's Teacher's Kits." This grant will produce and distribute, through PBS television stations nationwide, Teacher's Kits that work in conjunction with The Doo-it Show.

Children's Organ Transplant Association of Bloomington, IN (\$40,000) for their project titled "Miracle Makers: COTA Volunteers in Action." This grant, through an improved website, CDs and supporting materials, will provide opportunities for COTA patients across the country to

raise awareness of the need for more organ and tissue donors.

KidsPeace of Orefield, PA (\$57,610) for their project titled "Improving Foster Care for America's Kids: KidsPeace's Radio Public Service Campaign." This grant will produce a national radio public service awareness campaign to be aired in local communities throughout the United States where KidsPeace has established foster care services.

National Autism Association of Nixa, MO (\$15,000) for their project titled "Autism Outreach." This grant will produce and distribute outreach materials to local and state autism organizations nationwide. The recipient organizations will use the materials to enable families affected by autism to access the most current, up to date information on autism interventions and medical

care.

Our Military Kids of McLean, VA (\$48,800) for their project titled "Our Military Kids Informational Materials III." This grant will produce a newsletter that will be sent to program supporters, directors, advisors, the Pentagon and members of Congress, and a five-year anniversary yearbook and keepsake package that will be distributed to Our Military Kids throughout the United States.

ZERO TO THREE of Washington, DC (\$50,000) for their project titled "Coming Together Around Military Families." This grant will produce and distribute 20,000 copies of the video Young Children on the Homefront: Family Stories, Family Strengths to military support professionals throughout the United States.

A complete list of all awards can be viewed on The American Legion's national web site.

The Sons of The American Legion

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Peterson honored by U.S. Army

Award-winning country music artist Michael Peterson, a special friend of The American Legion Family, has been honored with the prestigious Spirit of Hope Award. The award, named in honor of the late radio,



(Above) Michael Peterson, a proven people mover, receives the Spirit of Hope Award at a ceremony held inside the Pentagon in late October.

Teeing off for membership

by Mike Moss
Nat'l Membership Chairman

This year's Greater Mattoon Open teed off at National Convention. Commander Cisna has chosen this theme because he loves the game of golf because of his love and dedication to our organization. All Detachments and Squadrons throughout the country should already have their membership teams and plans in place. Membership and renewals of membership are the keys to success in any Squadron. Working together as a team within your Detachments will significantly increase your membership throughout the year. It is through membership

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television and film star Bob Hope, is bestowed upon Americans who, like Bob Hope, have demonstrated, in the words of award creator, the USO, "tireless dedication to our country and to U.S. troops both in times of peace and war."

Songwriter and recording artist Peterson was nominated for the award by the United States Army in recognition of his youth-motivating "My Real Life, Strong for America" nationwide tours as well as his many visits to entertain troops at military venues. The "My Real Life - Strong For America" tour, which is being presented by the Army and supported by sponsors such as The American Legion, challenges students, civic and business leaders and other community members to engage in building their communities through initiatives and programs employing what supporters consider traditional American values.

The American Legion maintains a close association with Peterson, a multiple Grammy and Country Music Association award nominee. Peterson has performed at annual national conventions of The Legion and acts as spokesperson for the veterans service organization's Legacy Fund. The Legacy Fund provides scholarships for children of military personnel who have lost their lives in post-9/11 conflicts.

The Spirit of Hope Award was created by the USO in 1997 and presented to Michael Peterson during a ceremony at the Pentagon on October 28.

Cisna is newest Sons National Commander

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 mailman. 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.

In late August, delegates to the 37th National Convention of the

Continued on Page 2

2009 will be a year of special records

by Jeff Frain
Nat'l Child Welfare Chairman

I hope everyone is enjoying the holidays and spending time with family and friends.

This will be an exceptional year for all of us because when we raise \$365,000 (\$1.15 per member) we will hit four goals:

- We will surpass the \$4 million mark in all time contributions
- We will have raised \$1 million for children in just three years
- We will surpass our all time high in donations
- We will, again, lead The Legion Family in Child Welfare donations

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The journey begins: a busy year ahead

by **Tommie Cisna**
National Commander

What an honor you have given me! Thank you for electing me your 2008-2009 National Commander. What a great organization we belong to. Many times at Convention it was brought up about how much work we do for the veterans. It was also said that the Sons have become such a valuable organization to The Legion, that they depend on our hours and donations each year. These were just some of the compliments made by past American Legion National Commander Conatser.

We know we are out there doing the work and collecting those donations. Now we really have The Legion's attention. Speaking of donations and Convention, Dennis Boland, President of CWF for The Legion, has issued a challenge. He challenged the Sons to attain the \$4 million benchmark in donations to CWF this year. This is something that the Sons can do. If you have any doubt about this, you need to talk to Sons CWF Chairman Jeff Frain. Oh yeah. When we make that milestone, Dennis has said that he will take your Sons National Commander and his wife out to eat; to a place of my choosing.

We have a busy year ahead of us starting with membership. We have a golf theme going, so have some fun with it. If you need any help with membership talk with the Sons National Membership Chairman, Mike Moss.

You can tell from our name, S-O-N-S (Serving Our Nation's Soldiers), that veterans are a top priority with us. The Sons VA & R National Chairman, Bruno Williamson, has a plan of action that will aid in the work that we do.

It was a privilege and an honor to accompany National Legion Commander Rehbein and National Auxiliary President Stoy in Washington D.C. on Sept. 11, 2008 for testimony before the Veterans Affairs Committee. It was also an honor to have the Sons of The American Legion name read into the Congressional record.

Our web-site has a new look this year and it's a great one. It is easier to use and navigate, thanks to Webmaster Gary Winters. The chairmen and members of our Commissions and Committees are a wealth of knowledge. Please contact them for any help you may need.

Members/ from Page 1

that we will be successful in our continuing efforts to support the many programs of The American Legion.

One important data form that is often overlooked is the National Birthday Data Form. It's a simple sheet of paper, but an important one because we need to track and understand the demographics of the Sons if we are to adequately communicate with our members and develop programs in the future. Presently, we have dates of birth only for about 10 percent of our members. It's easiest to collect date of birth information at the same

time a new member is signed up. It's also easiest to collect dates of birth for existing members at the time they are renewing their membership each year. Doubling the number of dates of birth on file is a realistic goal. Adjutants can get copies of the National Birthday Data Form by requesting it or by downloading it from our S.A.L. National web site.

Help your region stay in the fairway and out of water and sand traps by recruiting, renewing and reinstating members. It cannot be overstated that membership is everyone's responsibility.

Tommie/ from Page 1

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 run Bingo games at the Illiana Veterans Hospital.

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

"You have to have warm bodies to do the work," says Cisna. "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.

Records/ from Page 1

Commander Tommie's love of golf helped create this year's theme "Swinging 4 (million) the Children" and together we can reach all four records. But an effort this great will take a lot of hard work. Commander Tommie has asked the S.A.L. blue caps to get together and form a "golf team" and get ready to Swing 4 (million) the Children.

Child Welfare President Dennis Boland has challenged the Sons to reach the \$4 million mark. So, WHEN we hit the four goals, National Commander Tommie and his wife Kathy will get a dinner of their choice at a restaurant of their choice.

The Child Welfare Committee has reluctantly agreed that, WHEN we hit



(Above) Can you spot the National Commander? Hint: He's the fashion conscious golf lover.

Racing/ from Page 6

sent to U.S. military members serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. Every shipment will contain a letter of appreciation, and a list of all the American Legion posts or individuals who contributed \$100 to the Operation Freedom Car project.

In addition, posts or individuals who donate \$100 or more will see their names displayed on the hood of the Freedom Car in 2009. All posts and individuals who participate will receive a certificate as an honorary associate sponsor of the car.

the \$4 million mark, we will dress just like our poster picture - in knickers - for the National Convention in Kentucky, with one exception. I have agreed to let our National Adjutant Brian O'Hearne pick out my Knickers outfit...(groan!!).

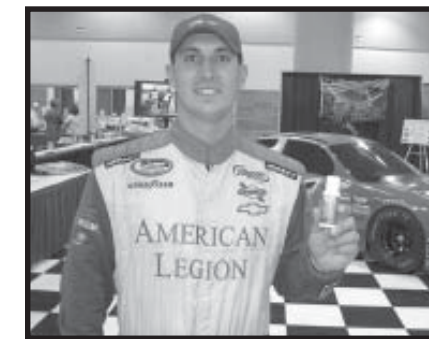
We are Sons of The American Legion and we lead in our commitment to children! All we are asking for is a contribution equaling \$1.15 per member. Please help us by (Swinging 4(million) the Children. Kids are the real winners in all of this.

We are half way thru this administrative year and are gaining on our goals. Please get your donation made by the May 31 deadline.

CWF donation envelopes, cans and annual report are available through the National Headquarters and it is recommended that all Detachment Children and Youth Chairmen request and distribute these tools to their Squadrons with letters and information about CWF.

Please check out the Child Welfare web site www.cwf-inc.org or the SAL National Web site www.sal.legion.org for updates throughout the year.

Always remember that the Sons of The American Legion are dedicated to the betterment of all children.



(Above) Jerick Johnson and his Legion Racing teammates have taken on "Operation Freedom Car" - a plan to send hygiene products to troops in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Support for children

Using Department of Defense figures from May 2008, it's estimated that 10,000 children have lost a parent since the war on terrorism began. Over 4,000 members of our Armed Forces have died in Operation Iraqi Freedom alone, including combat and non-combat deaths.

To ensure that we keep our promise to "provide for those left behind" The Legion Family needs to continue building The American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund. If your Squadron is looking for a way to raise funds, consider using the Legacy Card Kit. The Kit contains 400 cards, a fund-raising guide, an accounting package and return mailing envelope. The cards are designed to be signed by the donor and displayed in the business. Kits are free, but there is a \$5 shipping fee. To order your kit or receive more information, contact the Americanism and Children & Youth Division at 317-630-1212 or ACY@legion.org.

The American Legion's Temporary Financial Assistance Program (TFA) continues to provide for the basic needs of children of eligible veterans through cash grants, made possible by the generosity of the Endowment Fund Corporation. As of September, 2008 TFA has granted over \$494,737 to assist 813 children throughout the United States to maintain shelter, utilities, food, and clothing in 2008.

Have you moved?

Did you know you can submit your own change of address at:

www.legion.org

Growing list of ways Sons help vets

by Bruno 'T' Williamson
Nat'l VA & R Chairman

The V.A. Volunteer Service goal this year is to have one S.A.L. representative in every V.A. medical center throughout the country. Currently, 36 states are represented with 47 registered VAVS representatives. While this is a good start, more work needs to be done until all 50 states are fully represented.

The commission programs that we are promoting for this year are: **Heroes to Hometown** - helps transition soldiers from hospitals to their hometowns; **Creative Arts Festival** - a rehabilitation program for veterans involving the arts; **Bowl for Veterans League** - a fund raising organization for therapeutic recreation for veterans; **Homeless Veterans Initiatives** - encourage active participation with The American Legion and Auxiliary; **V.A. Suicide Hot Line** -

helps veterans with emotional needs; **Missing in America Project** - helps identify and intern the remains of veterans with a proper burial; **U.S.O.** - providing a home away from home for our active duty troops and families with morale, welfare and recreation-type services; **N.E.A.D.S.** - trains dogs from shelters to help veterans with physical disabilities or various degrees of deafness; **Fisher House** - provides a home away from home for our veterans and families as they deal with medical issues; **National Veterans Assistance Day** - May 16 is the official date for 2009, but any day in May will work - start planning your activities now. Just under 5,000 veterans were served during 10,941 hours of activities on National Veterans Assistance Day last May and we hope to see those numbers skyrocket this year.

The last two items are very important to Commander Cisna. New posters for Fisher House contain Commander Cisna's slogan and the S.A.L. logo. Similarly, new NVAD posters can be downloaded from our national web site. You can also download this commission's action plan and learn more about all of the programs sponsored by VA&R Commission.

With the holidays fast approaching, please remember that care packages to the troops need to be mailed early if they are to reach soldiers in time for Christmas.

Sons reported 277,782 volunteer hours, 14,474 hospital visits and \$1,460,135 in cash and gifts in 2008. Amazingly, only about one fifth of the nation's 5,600 Squadrons turned in reports. Can you imagine the message we would send to Washington if more Squadrons would report their activities?

Involve your Squadron in Americanism activities

by Gerald Hammerschmidt
Nat'l Americanism Chairman

Americanism is involved with a wide variety of programs. Flag education programs promote the flag to youth. Some of these flag education programs are presented at schools using the "For Which it Stands" DVD. We also educate youngsters about the Pledge of Allegiance using American Legion book markers and comic activities books. Flag retirement programs and flags presented at schools, at parades or placed on graves are the kind of activities that can involve your squadron in Americanism.

Scouting, American Legion baseball and junior shooting sports are also Americanism programs in which your squadron can get involved in. Getting involved in Americanism programs is easy. Check out our many programs and start promoting Americanism.

4-in-1 creates two good opportunities for Sons

Sons who love auto racing have a rare opportunity to see their names or Squadron names, on The American Legion 76 Freedom Car, and at the same time lighten the load on U.S. troops.

American Legion Racing is sponsoring "Operation Freedom Car" by sending bottles of "4-in-1" hygiene care to our troops overseas. The extremely concentrated liquid is actually four products in one - a shampoo, conditioner, body wash and shaving cream - in one convenient travel-sized bottle.

It's easy to become both a part of the Freedom Car team and to support the troops. For every \$100 donated, a case of "4-in-1" will be

Legislative issues facing Sons at local, state, national levels

by George Evans
Nat'l Legislative Chairman

The next American Legion Washington Conference will be held from Sunday, March 1 through Wednesday, March 4, 2009. Bus transportation to the various national monuments will be on a first come, first served basis. The deadline to order memorial wreaths and/or box lunches will be February 1. The tentative schedule for the National Commander's Memorial Wreath Laying Ceremony at the Tomb of The Unknowns is Sunday, March 1, 2009 at 3:00 PM. In addition to the Tomb of The Unknowns, National Commander Tommie Cisna will be presenting memorial wreaths at the National Nurses Memorial, National Air Force Memorial, and the National Korean War Memorial. Make plans now to join us in Washington to fight for the rights and benefits of our veterans.

All members should review the National Legislative Commission Information Booklet and Plan of Works on the Legislative web site. These documents were distributed to both the Detachment Commanders and National Executive Committeemen during the Fall National Executive Commission meeting. Both of these documents offer a great wealth of information to run productive and efficient legislative programs from the Squadron level to the Detachment level. If you have any question regarding either of these two documents, or any other question regarding the Sons of The American Legion Legislative Program, please contact the Legislative Commission or any of the members.

Josh Dog project highlights national agenda

by Bill Towns
Nat'l Children/Youth Chairman

The Children and Youth Commission has challenged themselves and all Sons to make this a record setting year. One such challenge involves donating 2,500 Josh Dogs to children's hospitals throughout the country. That's an attainable goal if Squadrons and Districts/Zones donate at least 50 Josh Dogs. Commander Cisna has said he will have a special award citation for the Detachment and Squadron that donate the most Josh Dogs.

Another fundraising effort that Sons excel in involves the Children's Miracle Network. This year goal for donations to CMN is \$100,000.

Members are encouraged to visit the National Legislative Commission web site at <http://www.sal.legion.org/legislative> for updated information. To receive email alerts on important legislative matters affecting our veterans, our youth, and the values of The American Legion Family, please sign up for the Sons of The American Legion National Legislative Commission E-Group. Any member can do this by going to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/legislativesal>. Both of these sites are great resources to all members who participate in the legislative program.

It is never too early to start putting together your application for the Sons of The American Legion National Legislative Commission Veterans' Advocate of The Year Award. This award is given annually at the National Convention. This past year's recipient was Roger Dees of the Detachment of Michigan. Forms and information sheet are available in the National Administrative Manual and on the web site.

When Sons' total donations to Child Welfare Foundation exceed \$365,000 before May 31, this will push the S.A.L. total lifetime donations over the \$4 million mark.

How many Detachments will step up and donate over \$50,000 to CWF this year? Only two Detachments have donated that much in a single year. Only one Detachment has ever donated that much in two consecutive years.

As part of the commission's action plan, different commission members are taking the lead on a variety of projects. If you have a question about support for Special Olympics, contact Harrell Sorrels (harrellsorrels@aol.com). Brad Pack (bpackdzb@yahoo.com) is promoting Operation Military Kids.

Steven Blank (saladjutant@azlegion.org) can provide you with information on the Spinoza Bear. James Gelwicks (jgelwicks@western.edu) is leading our partnership with "Covering Kids and Families." Chris Huntzinger (huntz57@att.net) can inform you on how children of veterans can receive Temporary Financial Assistance (see Page 6).

Every effort to register a Children and Youth Chairman or contact point in each detachment will help us educate the membership on the C&Y goals and programs. We also encourage each Detachment Chairman to contact and work closely with their Department Legion and Auxiliary Chairmen to share ideas.

Perhaps the most effective way to increase volunteer hours and donation totals is to promote the Consolidated Squadron Report. We know everyone is doing the work. Be sure your Squadron is reporting it.

Membership Leaders

France	60.7%
Hawaii	57.5%
Georgia	56.2%
Louisiana	54.6%
Wisconsin	47.0%
South Dakota	47.0%
Tennessee	45.6%
Minnesota	45.0%
Virginia	43.8%
Maryland	42.0%
Florida	42.0%
Montana	42.0%
Kansas	41.1%
Alabama	39.0%
Mississippi	38.4%
Indiana	35.2%
Nevada	35.1%
Delaware	35.0%
North Carolina	35.0%

Total this year - 93,549
Total last year - 84,421
Difference - +9,128

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Mover over Jerick Johnson....

Ben Nile is a member of **Madison, ME Sq 39** and at the ripe old age of 11 is already a winning stock car driver. The Detachment of Maine has joined with American Legion Post 39 to sponsor Ben's car. The youngster (**Above Right**) has held his own against the big boys and never finished lower than 4th place this year, earning himself the track championship. When he's not driving the car, Ben has been using it to raise lots of money for a variety of American Legion programs.



was best known for sinking an entire enemy convoy then returning to Pearl Harbor with an upside down broom tied to its mast. The widow of the Wahoo's skipper moved to Pelham after the war.

Hyde Park, MD Sq 78 knows how to raise money, too. In just their second year of activities, the Squadron used donations, a live event and raffles to bring in \$15,000 that was donated to the soon-to-be-built Fisher House of Boston. Last year, they raised \$7,000 and used the money to purchase personal care packages for all 152 members of a local military unit when it was deployed to Iraq.



Sons from **Pelham, NY Sq 50** joined in to present colors at Shea Stadium (**Below**) prior to a Mets - Phillies game this summer. Last month, Squadron members planned and carried out a special ceremony honoring the crew of the famous WWII submarine USS Wahoo. It was the 65th anniversary of the sub's loss in a battle off the coast of Japan. One of the key speakers for the event was a retired local teacher who had been a submariner during WWII. The Wahoo



Battle Creek, MI Sq 298 Sons have continued some phenomenal fundraising efforts. This year's 8th Annual Car, Truck and Bike Show (**Right**) and Squadron activities brought in a whopping \$13,000 that was donated to the Make-A-Wish program. Over the past few years, they've raised and donated nearly \$100,000.

Badminton anyone..? Sons at **Arlington Heights, IL Sq 208** have raised money in recent years to help sponsor a local gal



in her quest to become one of the world's best badminton players. It's been paying off. Last month Shannon Pohl placed third in the Pan American Championships held in Lima, Peru. The Squadron has maintained a web site so members can follow Shannon's globe trekking.

Detachment of Indiana 4th District Sons helped the Bluffton Elks Lodge conduct a Flag Day ceremony on the Bluffton Court House Plaza this summer. District Commander Greg Spaulding and **Bluffton, IN Sq 111** Commander John Barnes replaced the Court House Flag (**Below**) with one purchased by the Elks. The old Flag was folded and then given to Legion Post 111 for retirement. The Post color guard also participated.



Dan Kessinger is the legislative chairman for the **Detachment of California**. Last month he was one of two S.A.L. members invited to take part in a signing ceremony for the state's new Blue Star Families

Bill (SB 1455). The experience was enough to get him fired up and now he's ready to attend house and senate hearings and maintain contact with key leaders in the state.



In September, Squadron Commander Dave Paul of **Cuyahoga Falls, OH Sq 281** helped man a Legion Family tent as part of the community's "Welcome Home Celebration" (**Above**) for troops returning from Iraq.

It can get pretty cold up in Wisconsin's Northern Highlands-American Legion State Forest. Members of **Mazomanie, WI Sq 437** are raising money to supply their own Dane County Cabin with six new quilts that each depict emblems from the five service branches of the armed services, as well as a list of all Squadrons in District 3.

Sons all over the country help with worthwhile community projects like Habitat for Humanity. On a recent Saturday, these S.A.L. members from around the Indianapolis area (**Below**) represented the **Detachment of Indiana** to work on this new Habitat home. One reason Sons got involved with this house is because it's being built for a woman who is a Gulf War veteran and a single parent looking forward to putting a decent roof over her children.

A few darts can go a long way. Just ask the fellows from **Saint Joseph, MO Sq 359**. Twice in the past year they've conducted dart tournaments that raised nearly \$17,000. The money was used to help the Marine Corps Toys for Tots campaign and also

aided a local family dealing with cancer treatment costs.

Sons from **Millard, NE Sq 374** used a silent auction, raffles, donations and a special dinner to raise \$12,000 that was used to send a band of local WWII veterans on an Honor Flight to Washington, DC this fall. The governor, a Congressman and many other dignitaries joined with 600 dinner guests to provide a heart warming send-off celebration. Once the vets land in DC, they tour the National World War II Memorial, as well as memorials to the Vietnam War, the Korean War, the Marine Corps and Arlington Cemetery.

LaGrange, IN Sq 215, Sons recently sponsored a dinner to benefit the local high school Show Choir and Musical Theater. The dinner, featuring a music revue put on by the students, raised \$1,700.



Central Indiana Legion Family members (**Above**), including members of the **Detachment of Indiana**, joined in on a mid-September walk-a-thon that began outside The American Legion National Headquarters and made its way through downtown Indianapolis to raise money and awareness for The Legion's Legacy Fund. The Legacy Fund provides scholarships to the children of

men and women who have lost their lives since 9/11/01 while serving in the nation's armed services. Since 2004 the fund has distributed \$74,000 in critically needed scholarship assistance to students enrolled in college level courses. Half of that amount was distributed just last year.



There's nothing like a big, soft, cuddly stuffed animal to bring cheer to a child who has been hospitalized. That's why these Sons (**Above**) from the **Detachment of New Hampshire** went to Children's Hospital Boston (a CMN facility) to give a Spinoza Bear to a two year old boy who underwent multiple organ transplants.

In August, Sons from **Houma, LA Sq 31** manned the phone banks and helped raise \$90,000 for an annual Cerebral Palsy telethon. They've been working this event for the last 15 years.

If you have story ideas or pictures to contribute, send to:

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or send via e-mail
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