



NATIONAL UPDATE

Official Publication of The Sons of The American Legion
December 1999



Getting things *stirred up*

by Kent Blanchard
National Membership Chairman

What's cooking with membership? For one thing, we have a new theme for the year, "*Stirring Up Membership.*" Based on the reception this theme received at the Fall N.E.C. meetings, 2000 should see the best showing in membership in our organization's history.

We all need to get out and *stir some things up*. There has to be an answer to the question of why 31,000 of last year's members did not renew this year. In fact, more than 180,000 members have not renewed over the past six years.

There's no doubt our membership would leap into the millions if we just *stir things up* and become more focused on membership.

The hardest question I've been asked

is "*What can I do?*" The answer is this: you can care. You need to care that this nation needs organizations like ours to help keep us strong and free. Our forefathers *got stirred up* and stood their ground to secure freedoms and rights for all of us. Now we are the ones who should *get stirred up* about remembering and respecting their sacrifices. Every single member is important to the well-being of the S.A.L. You need to care, and get stirred up,

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The hottest item at the Fall N.E.C. was a custom S.A.L. cooking

apron. More than 50 were sold.

Miss America crusades for homeless vets

When Miss America 2000 Heather French launched her homeless veterans platform, she had the men and women of the 2.8-million member American Legion by her side.

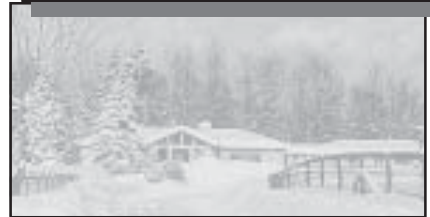
Flanked by members of the nation's largest veterans' organization, French announced on Capitol Hill that she will devote her reign to raising funds, volunteers and public awareness to help homeless veterans put their lives back together. French said her efforts ideally will help to break the cycle of homelessness for future veterans.

"Ms. French will log nearly a quarter-million miles in the next year, fighting for those who once fought for America and who now are in need of help," American Legion National Commander

Al Lance said from Brussels, where he attended a NATO briefing en route to meet U.S. troops in Bosnia and Kosovo. "Miss America's citizenship will complement The American Legion's long-standing advocacy for a solution to this tragic problem: homelessness, particularly among the veterans population."

Lance pledged his organization's full support of Miss America's agenda after French, whose father is a combat-disabled Marine Corps veteran of the Vietnam war, addressed the Legion's board of directors Oct. 12 at The American Legion's Indianapolis headquarters.

Season's Greetings



A look at the Sons from overseas

Bill West is a very cosmopolitan fellow. He lives and works in Germany and is a dual member of the *John Wayne Post and Squadron 79 in Heilbronn, Germany*. At the same time, he is Adjutant of, both, the S.A.L. Detachment and Legion Department of France and also serves as both groups' Alternate N.E.C.

Originally from Minnesota, Bill spent 11 years in the Army. His wife is a member of the Auxiliary and his two sons are both S.A.L. members. Bill's perspective on S.A.L. issues is understandably different than most. His Detachment/Department is made up of just 10 Squadrons/Posts, and just over 100 members strung out over France, Belgium, Greece and Germany. Three of his Squadrons achieved 100% membership this year.

Most S.A.L. members within the Detachment of France have ties to military

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It's Cook's turn

Oklahoma native Rick Cook is the new National Commander of the Sons. See story on Page 2.



Cook is newest Commander

Rick Cook was elected National Commander of the Sons of The American Legion at the organization's 28th annual National Convention held at Anaheim, CA.

The new Commander, his wife and their three children are from Owasso, OK. All are members of The Legion Family. Commander Cook is a charter member of Talala, OK Squadron 337 and was the first person ever elected Commander of the Detachment of Oklahoma.

His service at the National level includes holding the offices of National Vice Commander, National Executive Committeeman, and various National Commission and Committee chairmanships.

Membership recruitment and

retention adorn the top shelf of the new Commander's agenda. "Membership gives us the base on which we develop all of our programs," says the congenial Cook. "If we want to reach \$200,000 in Child Welfare, or be visual in the World War II Memorial Fund Drive, or provide a leadership role in youth programs to keep kids off the streets, we need to expand our membership."

Service is another area the Commander will focus on. "We owe our membership to the service of our fathers. It's our duty to do all we can to support veterans."

"You're either in or you're out. You can be a card-carrying member and do nothing or you can be a participant and get results."

You can make a difference at home and elsewhere

by Lloyd Trimmer

National Community Service Chairman

What an opportunity we have today!

There's no better time than now to show America all of the many programs Sons are involved in. One good way to do this is to simply document the activities of your Squadron, District or Detachment and share that information with our *National Update* newsletter. Trust me when I tell you how satisfying it is for your members to read and see pictures about themselves and their efforts.

Also, be sure to construct a scrapbook. Yearbooks become treasures somewhere down the road, the kind of things you or your children will enjoy looking back on. Scrapbooks should also be submitted for judging at the National level. Rules for judging at next year's Milwaukee National Convention are spelled out in your handbook. Feel free to contact me or National Historian Clifford Smith if you have additional questions.

Here's a Year 2000 project of special concern: If the Legion Family in your area is involved in a highway clean-up, snap some pictures and rush them to me.

Lastly, Year 2000 is a milestone we want to take advantage of. It offers many opportunities for Sons to start new projects or resurrect old ones. It doesn't matter whether it's a membership drive pot-luck, a visit to vets in nursing homes, get-out-the-vote drive during the primary elections, or simply a fun Squadron BBQ. Just do something. Keep track of what you do. Write it down. Take plenty of pictures!

Child Welfare report

by David M. Ridenour

Nat'l Child Welfare Foundation Chairman

Were off and running in the Millennium Year. With over \$11,713 turned in at the Fall NEC meetings, which gives us a total of \$51.657 for the year, we are meeting the challenge of \$200K in Y2K. Now that we've joined the Millionaire's Club, our next target is to reach \$1 for every member each year. We're well on our way.

In October, The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation met and awarded \$312,900 to 15 non-profit organizations. The Sons of The American Legion sponsored three of the grants awarded this year. They include:

Access to Respite Care and Help of Chapel Hill, NC was awarded \$30,000 for their project entitled '*Respite Care National Public Awareness Campaign*.' The Grant will produce and distribute 1,000 respite public awareness promotion kits to state and local contacts to promote awareness of respite and its benefits.

Children's Organ Transplant Association of Bloomington, IN was awarded \$25,000 for their project entitled '*COTA Advocates Volunteer Network*' This grant will produce and distribute promotional materials for COTA Advocates Network to increase awareness of the need for organ donors.

International Rett Syndrome of Union, WA was awarded \$32,000 for their project entitled '*Do You Know Me?*' The grant will produce a video documentary about Rett Syndrome to be aired on public television.

We'd like to Congratulate our Top Five Detachments in donations so far for this year: **Detachment of Ohio \$7,075, Detachment of Indiana \$6,279, Detachment of Colorado \$3,810, Detachment of Florida \$3,675 and Detachment of Texas \$2,937.**

Some of our larger donations made from the Sons of The American Legion to the Child Welfare Foundation since the first of October are: **Detachment of Michigan \$2,000, Squadron 291 of California \$1,600, Squadron 17 of**

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Visit our S.A.L. Home
Page on the Web

www.sal.legion.org

Tough questions

by John Kerestan
National Headquarters Liaison

Two questions often received at National Headquarters are "What are the guidelines for an Honorary Membership?" and "What are the guidelines for a Paid-up for Life Membership?"

Honorary Life Membership exists in

the S.A.L. only where The Legion Department approves of it for Sons. An Honorary Life Membership is something a Squadron bestows on a member for any outstanding reason it chooses. However, that Squadron is then responsible for paying each year's membership for the life of that member.

One of the drawbacks of an Honorary Life Membership involves longevity. If a Squadron is responsible for a member's dues for the next 50 years or more, it's

likely records could get lost or the member could move away. Either way, if dues don't get paid, the individual feels hurt and we often lose them as a member.

At the present time, Paid-up For Life (PUFL) does not exist within the Sons, only in The Legion. Complicated legal and tax issues stand in the way. Currently, just six percent of The Legion's three million members belong to PUFL. At that same rate, just 16,000 Sons might belong. Although that's not enough to support the program right now, who knows? Things could change somewhere down the road.

Child Welfare

Continued from Page 2

Colorado \$1,500, Squadron 21 of Colorado \$1,000, Squadron 321 of Texas \$1,000, Detachment of Arizona \$750, Michael Valentine of Kentucky \$630, Squadron 150 of Indiana \$575, Squadron 502 of Indiana \$502.

Are you a RAT? (Regional Action Team member). If you are, we thank you for all the work that you do. You are the backbone of the Child Welfare Foundation. We have RATs in 73% of our Detachments. Detachments still needing RATs are Arkansas, Delaware, District of Columbia, France, Mexico, Mississippi, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Philippines, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, and South Dakota.

The members of the National Child Welfare Foundation Committee this year are Chuck Yunker of Kansas, Clyde Ferguson of Virginia, Kurt Yoder of Pennsylvania, Bill Towns of Ohio, and David Ridenour of Indiana, Chairman. We look forward to your ideas and suggestions through out the year. If there is anything we can do to help please let us know.

We would like to thank Jeff Sunday for his many years of dedicated service to the Child Welfare Foundation and wish him the best in the future. Just one of his achievements was leading the Child Welfare Foundation of the Sons of The American Legion to over \$1 million donated to the Foundation.

We are very pleased to announce this year's membership recruitment award. To receive the award, all you need to do is recruit five (5) new members for the Sons of The American Legion. The five can include reinstatement of individuals that haven't renewed since 1998. All you need to do is complete the official certification application below and mail it to the National Membership Chairman. Your recruitment award will be sent upon receipt of your properly completed application form.

This year's award will be a pin suitable for wearing upon your cover or jacket. This is a special award and the first time a pin has been offered.

2000 NATIONAL RECRUITMENT AWARD 2000
print or type all information

Recruiter's Name _____ Member ID# _____

Recruiter's Affiliation S.A.L. Legion Aux Post _____ State _____

Recruiter's Address _____ Phone _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

NEW/REINSTATED MEMBER INFORMATION

#1 Name _____ Sequential Card # _____

#2 Name _____ Sequential Card # _____

#3 Name _____ Sequential Card # _____

#4 Name _____ Sequential Card # _____

#5 Name _____ Sequential Card # _____

CERTIFICATION SIGNATURES

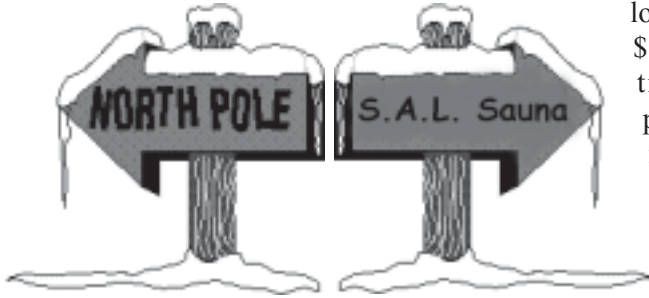
Squadron/Post Commander _____ Date _____

Squadron/Post Adjutant _____ Date _____

Squadron Advisor _____ Date _____

RETURN COMPLETED FORM TO:

Kent Blanchard 2449 Baywood Street Dayton, OH 45406-1408



More than 60 motorcyclists revved their engines on a warm August morning and roared off to deliver hundreds of toys to sick kids at the Connecticut Children's Medical Center. It was the fourth time the 'Toy Run' has been sponsored by *Mayotte-Viens, CT Squadron 13*, from the small community of Putnam nestled in the state's northeastern corner. Many of the participating bikers saw the Toy Run as a way to shed their "bad boy" image, but maintained that the primary purpose was to help children in need.

"No one thinks of the kids in the summertime," says Squadron Commander Dale Currier. Currier and many of the riders sported bright orange tee shirts marked, 'C.I.A. - Christmas In August.' One participant even came dressed as Santa Claus, complete with St. Nick tattoo and a Harley-Davidson with a license plate that read "SANTA".

During the weeks leading up to the event collection boxes were placed in local stores and businesses. Then, armed with money raised throughout the year, members of Squadron 13 literally emptied the shelves of the local Wal-Mart toy

department. After loading approximately \$5,000 in toys into a tractor trailer provided by a local independent trucking company, Squadron Commander Currier led the fleet of bikers along a 50-mile ride to the capitol city. They were greeted there by hospital staffers and camera crews from two statewide television stations. And, in the hospital's central atrium the booty was finally distributed to the smiling faces of child patients, many of whom are terminally ill.

Squadron 13 plans on doing it all over again next year, hoping to recruit more bikers to join in the Toy Run and to deliver an even larger cache of

Kehler says he was just "hangin' with the big boys" when he joined Legion National Commander Butch Miller, Texas Dept. Commander Dan Whealen, Vice Cmdr. Jim Pendergast and Division Comdr. Chuck Donalison on a tour of the Longhorn State last spring (*Photo #1*).

S.A.L. members are good at helping others. Sometimes, there is a need to help our own. Last April, fire destroyed *Parma, OH Legion Post 703*. Insurance coverage was minimal. Local businesses and other Legion Posts have been asked to help rebuilding efforts. Squadron Commander Dale Anderson II says about \$5,000 has been raised thus far and wants Sons to know that any assistance would be greatly appreciated. Help can be sent to American Legion Post 703, 7667 York Road, Parma, OH 44130.

Visitors to the Iowa State Fair are likely to spot an S.A.L. membership/information booth next year. In addition to a flag giveaway, Sons will collect names of prospective members, which will be passed along to District and Squadron commanders for follow-up contacts.

Indiana Detachment Commander David Siggers and Department Commander Richard

Tonkel shared a moment during "Legion Day" at Knightstown Children's Home (*Photo #2*). This year marked the first time Sons were called upon to run all of the carnival games at the day-long Legion-sponsored annual event.



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toys for the hospitalized children. Currier notes that his Squadron also annually donates \$500 to the Child Welfare Foundation, which is nearly \$5.00 per capita. *Texas S.A.L. N.E.C. Jim*

Merrillville, IN Squadron 430 members received front page newspaper coverage for their summer blood drive this summer. June was selected for the annual effort, because donors are in short supply during the summer months.

Cary, NC Squadron 67 Commander Carl

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the bottom of this group picture (**Photo #5**).

Once again,

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the nation's best S.A.L. color guard hails from **Easton, MD Blake-Blackstone**

McConnell

presents Squadron member Brad Hudson with a check for \$6,000 (**Photo #3**). Hudson and his wife were injured in an auto accident last spring. Fellow Sons, all 33 members of Squadron 67, jumped into action and raised the money by raffling off a camping package, leather jacket and a variety of other donated items.

Several attempts were made during this year's National Convention to arrange a visit to the popular panda display at the San Diego Zoo by National Commander Robichaux. When it was apparent the visit could not be made, young Ryan Harper of **San Carlos, CA Squadron 585** donned a panda suit (**Photo #4**) and visited the National Convention. Here, Ryan is flanked by National Membership Chairman Kent Blanchard and son Matthew (*left*) and Past National Commander Doug Bible and son Geoffrey.

Looking for a worthwhile

weekend project for your Squadron? For the past six years, members of **Edgewood, MD Squadron 17** have been a part of their community's Adopt-A-Road Program. The 'fruits' of their labors are piled up at the bottom of this group picture (**Photo #5**).

Once again,

the nation's best S.A.L. color guard hails from **Easton, MD Blake-Blackstone Squadron 77**. Guard members and Commander Robichaux posed with the champion's pennant (**Photo #6**) during the Anaheim National Convention.

But marching isn't the only thing Squadron 77 is good at. Squadron members also visit local schools to find special people like **Petty Officer Christen Yarbrough**. She has Spina Bifida and is confined to a wheelchair, but that hasn't kept her from graduating from Junior ROTC and excelling at life (**Photo #7**). She's an outstanding student at Easton High School, takes part in school dances as well as military drills.

Everyone talks about increasing membership but **Detachment**

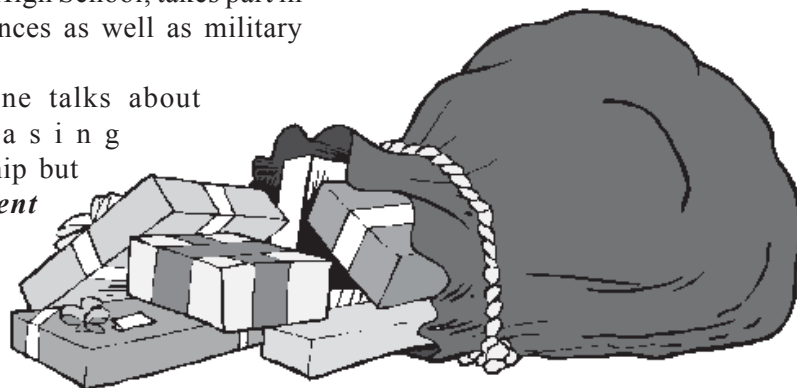
of Michigan Commander Dan Wall thinks education is part of the solution. One of Commander Dan's top goals this year is to conduct a school at the Detachment's Spring Conference. The thinking is that Sons who know more about the purpose, programs, awards, officer duties and benefits of our organization will be more effective at recruiting new members.

But do the guys in Michigan know this...? S.A.L. member Dieter Panzer lives in Grand Rapids, MI. Each year he hops into his plane and flies off to the east coast for a couple of days. While there, Dieter pays his annual dues to **Maywood, NJ Squadron 142**. Are the dues really that high in Michigan or really that low in New Jersey?

Recognizing that there is a never ending need for a supply of blood, **Staten Island, NY Squadron 316** organized their first blood drive this year. Squadron Commander Mike Ranieri showed he had the 'right stuff' to donate (**Photo #8**). This is a year of firsts for the Squadron, including the first time they've organized a Halloween dance.

Speaking of family involvement, **Maywood, NJ Squadron 142** Commander Bill Grunewald had help at a recent Paramus Veterans' Home Bingo Night. He was accompanied to the event by his wife. The sight of a young volunteer couple opened the eyes of the vets. Chances are the eyes of Sons would

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More S.A.L. notes

Continued from Page 5

be opened a bit if they involved their own families in S.A.L. activities.

Being a good volunteer sometimes means being a guinea pig. When the Pennsylvania Auxiliary needed to practice escorting dignitaries to and from the head table at The Legion Department's annual convention, they enlisted Bill Snyder from **Christiana, PA Squadron 865**.

Whoever first said 'no news is good news' must not have read many newsletters. More and more Detachment newsletter editors are printing the words 'No Report Submitted' when committee chairmen and District Commanders fail to turn in news for their respective publications. Members expect their leaders to keep them informed. Failure to file timely reports leaves everyone in the dark and a growing number of editors don't mind letting readers know who the slackers are.

The Detachment of Nebraska uses its newsletter to print the names of Squadrons which received awards at the National Convention.

The Detachment of Ohio knows how to draw a crowd. They held their state convention at the Kings Island theme park in Cincinnati. If

we want to be known as a family organization, makes sense to combine business and family activities whenever possible.

Former Detachment of West Virginia Commander Bob Blazer may have said it best in writing in the Detachment's monthly bulletin, *'Remember that you did not join the Sons of The American Legion for yourself. You joined this organization out of respect for the vets in your family. We're not in it for the pats on the back or an atta-boy. We joined because it was a way that we*



11.

could say thanks to the veterans

for what they did. We joined so we could give a little back to our community and our Post. Our commitment to this organization allows us to express our love for this country and respect to our veterans.'

What a sight! More than 150 kids took part in this year's American Legion Kid Fishing Derby held in West Virginia's Robert C. Byrd State Park. The event was organized by **Pine Grove, WV Squadron 81**. In addition to prizes for winners, every child who participated received a cap, a tackle



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the Fort's picnic pavilion (**Photo #10**).

A pair of Oregon Squadrons have overcome distance obstacles in more ways than one. **Crook County Squadron 29 and F & J Ravin Squadron 134** are located more than

150 miles apart, yet they got together to raise money by putting together and selling a cookbook. Proceeds from the book sales paid for a telescope and tripod which were donated to the Oregon Veterans Home (**Photo #11**). As Squadron 29 Adjutant John Close says, *'Working together works!'*

We've written before about a program administered by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs which provides grave markers to qualified veterans. Earlier this year, Richard Ayars (**Photo #12**) was

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able to place such a marker on the grave of his grandfather, a veteran of World War I. Legion Family members from **Bridgeton, NJ Post and Squadron 95** were on hand for the event. The effort to place a marker on his grandfather's grave prompted Ayars to learn about his family's history.

How many fools will fit on the head of a golf club? **The Detachment of Ohio's Fightin' Fifth District** holds its annual 'Fool's Open' golf



scramble in early April of each year. This isn't your average golf outing. Players use baseball bats and putters to tee off, then pool cues, brooms and hockey sticks to putt (**Photo #13**). Oh yeah, the outing is held each year in early April.

At this year's **Detachment of Maryland Convention**, a Junior Convention was held for the first time. As you can see (**Photo #14**), the idea was a huge success. The Juniors were treated to instruction in Americanism and flag etiquette. Members of Police Explorer Post 1986 provided computerized photo identification and fingerprinting for the youngsters.

Flag Day 1999 was, indeed, special for **the Detachment of Kansas**. A new bronze casting of the S.A.L. Emblem joined those of other Legion Family emblems adorning the front of the Kansas Legion Department

Headquarters (**Photo #15**). Additional copies of the S.A.L. Emblem are still possible from the same mold used to cast this bronze one. (*left to right*) Detachment Adjutant Vail Henninsen, National Commander Robichaux and Kansas N.E.C. Neal Warnken pose for photos beneath the just-placed emblem.

Golden, CO Squadron 21 has joined a growing list of Squadrons taking part in the Adopt-A-Highway Program in their communities. The Squadron also deserves a citation for pressing National Commander Robichaux into service with a road gang (**Photo**

#16).

Emporia, KS Squadron # 5 members once again helped future nurse Amy Applegate with a \$500 scholarship at Emporia State University's School of Nursing. The Squadron has also purchased Canteen coupon books for the VA hospitals. And the Squadron sponsored a little league baseball team through the local recreation commission.

The Keystone State continues to grow and improve. Two new things have happened recently in the **Detachment of Pennsylvania's 17th District**. For the first time, the District actually has officers this year! They were installed in August. Meanwhile, newly formed **Danville, PA Squadron 40** elected and installed officers this fall, as well.

Send story ideas and pictures to: **National Update Newsletter**

c/o Mike Pipher
612 Knightride Road #35-C
Bloomington, IN 47401

or e-mail materials to:

mpipher@indiana.edu

European Sons

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bases and embassies. Turnover rates are high because many servicemen and family members are rotated back to the States every few years. "We're working on a program that will help us hand-off members to Squadrons in the U.S. when they are transferred," says Bill, who was in the U.S. in October to attend Legion and S.A.L. N.E.C. meetings.

Members of the Detachment of France are proud of their annual five day "Sacred Torch" trip during which they visit most of the U.S. cemeteries in Germany, France, Luxembourg and Belgium. The



Detachment places a wreath at the Flanders Field cemetery each year. Work is also underway to raise money for a new Fisher House, soon to open at Landshut Army Hospital in Germany.

One seemingly unusual aspect of the Sons' work overseas involves the low key manner in which activities are undertaken, in light of security concerns. Few activities are publicized. "We try not to worry about security," says West. "We're here to put the needs of the community before personal concerns. At a memorial service near Heilbron recently (a Pershing Missile fuel explosion killed three and injured 14 in 1985), even the local Greenpeace activists turned out in support of the service, in spite of their opposition to the missiles."

Deadline

If you have articles/photos for the next issue of the **National Update**, they must reach us by:

February 15, 1999

Membership menu Plan now to attend N.I.C. this spring

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because veterans in our society today are being shuffled around, forgotten and dishonored.

You should *get stirred up* knowing that your contribution to the Child Welfare Foundation helped produced materials that saved a child from being abused or hurt.

You should *get stirred up* realizing that money contributed to the National Emergency Fund is often the first assistance to arrive in the wake of a devastating storm.

Our nation has always been seen as the world's melting pot, sometimes simmering quietly, other times almost boiling up over the rim. A good cook *stirs* the pot from time to time and savors the aroma. If we do a little *stirring* ourselves, sharing the bounties of the Sons of The American Legion, then more people will taste this nation's freedoms and walk around fulfilled.

Now is the time for making plans to attend Year 2000 National Information Conferences in your region of the country. S.A.L. members are welcome and encouraged to attend the workshops, and special S.A.L. programs are offered at the N.I.C. sites.

Half of all regions now conduct their N.I.C. in the spring. The other half are held in the fall. Here are the dates and places for this spring:

Region 2

March 31 - April 2, 2000
Charleston, WV
Holiday Inn Charleston House
(304)344-4092

Region 1

April 7 - 9, 2000
Burlington, VT
Radisson Hotel - Burlington
(802)658-6500

Below, midwest Sons gather for a picture following the Region 5 Workshop held in Evansville, IN in early October. More than two dozens Sons attended the day-long workshop.



Region 8

March 31 - April 2, 2000
Pendleton, OR
Doubletree Hotel - Pendleton
(541)276-6111

Region 6

April 7 - 9, 2000
Sioux Falls, SD
Holiday Inn - Sioux Falls City Centre
(605)339-2000

The Sons of The American Legion

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