

Special day/ *from Page 1*

veterans, active duty service members and their families. This is at the core of what our organization is all about. By reporting what each Squadron does, we can give ideas and information to others that will help to enhance this program and, in turn, enrich the lives of the veterans that we endeavor to serve.

I have been asked, "Why a special day?" and my reply has been just as simple as the program: It is something that we must do and should have been doing anyway. We Americans really do take a lot of things for granted and it's time to stop what we're doing and show the men and women who have given so much for our way of life how much we appreciate them. They deserve that much and more.

This is the first official year of the program but it is something that we should care about and make sure that it continues.

We are The Sons of The American Legion, we are The American Legion Family, and we are here to serve our veterans, their families and our country.

It's time to give back.

Peterson/ *from Page 1*

will serve as a key partner in this program to help mentor our youth and foster American values.

Besides visiting schools and speaking with students, Peterson also hopes to visit local VA outpatient clinics, veterans centers, and other VA facilities to gain a better understanding of veterans' needs. The *My Real Life* tour also focuses on how to incorporate the needs of combat veterans into community programs for transitional care. Another program being spotlighted is *Heroes to Hometowns*, which connects the U.S. Army with communities around the country, to

strengthen our efforts in fighting terrorism on the home front. Throughout the tour, Peterson is stressing the importance of unifying and supporting the military. He asks members of every community to do what we can "right here, right now, and with what we have."

From Knoxville, the *My Real Life* tour will wind its way through the South - with one stop in Evansville, Ind. - before ending up in Lincoln, Neb., for a final concert May 24. Peterson and his entourage would appreciate any help with their various activities from American Legion posts along the way.

Posts in these cities are encouraged to provide support for the *My Real Life* tour and its value-building activities: Greenville, SC; Charlotte, NC; Dothan, AL; Columbus, GA; Evansville, IN; Midland and Waco, TX; Lawton, OK; and Lincoln, NE.

The Sons of The American Legion

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**NATIONAL UPDATE**

Official Publication of the Sons of The American Legion

April 2008

**Special day set to assist vets**

by **Ronnie Grist**
National VA&R Chairman

This year, your National V A & R Commission has initiated a new program that we hope everyone will climb on board with; and there's already reason to believe that is happening.

This new program, dear to National Commander Giehl's heart (see Page 2), is the National Veterans Assistance Day. On May 17th, which also just happens to be Armed Forces Day, Sons will make a grand stand for veterans in each of our communities. Every squadron is being asked to do two things. First, assist at least one veteran in your area on that day in some way. Second, host a luncheon for your Post members who have paid their current dues. In each case, the idea is to say "Thank you for your service" and "Thank you for your support of the Sons." Those are the guidelines for this activity. Simple and effective.

When selecting a veteran to help, let him or her make the decision on what kind of assistance they need because they know best about their needs. You might consider cleaning and mowing their yard, cleaning the gutters, running them on errands, get their lawnmower fixed, change the oil on their car, provide lunch or dinner, etc. We just want to do something to help in some way.

My own **Squadron 51 in East Point, GA** has already made plans to select and invite three veterans to a spaghetti luncheon on National Veterans Assistance Day. We're all getting excited by what is being planned. I have heard of other squadrons planning activities on other days due to scheduling conflicts, and that's OK. We would like to see it done on the 17th, but it's most important just to see that it gets done.

One other thing; please let us know what your squadron winds up doing for Veterans Assistance Day this year. You can tell your Detachment and national officers or write up a short story and mail it in to the *National Update* newsletter. We intend to share those stories back with everyone so that next year's National Veterans Assistance Day can be even better. As Sons of The American Legion, we have a responsibility to take care of

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(Below) Music star and S.A.L. member Michael Peterson at Reno.



(Right) What began as an initiative by Sons in the Detachment of Maine last year has grown to involve the entire American Legion Family in the Department this year. Read more about the "Healing Field" on Page 4.

**'My Real Life' tour all about service and volunteers**

The *My Real Life* tour of country-music singer and songwriter Michael Peterson kicked off with a Feb. 23 concert in Knoxville, TN. Peterson's 10-city tour is designed to connect people serving in the U.S. military with communities across the nation to encourage volunteer service, and to strengthen American values for the future. The tour is focusing on high-school and college students, and aims to enhance social support for the tremendous burden placed upon our service members, and to rally community support to care for our returning veterans.

Throughout the tour, Peterson will speak with local media, community leaders, school administrators, and students of all ages. This outreach will teach students to make the right choices, build strong character, and learn the value of selflessness. Peterson, a member of the S.A.L. as well as the key spokesperson for The Legion's American Legacy Scholarship Fund, hopes The American Legion

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My year as your National Commander is more than half over. I have had a fantastic time representing all the member of the Sons of The American Legion. I met some great members who are doing great things for the Sons. Our members are out there working all the wonderful programs of The American Legion Family.

I want to remind you that the theme for this year is *Making A Difference*. I hope that every member of the Sons of The American Legion is making a difference this year. I am asking you to tell us about members you think are making a difference, taking a step further than the average member. I believe these members deserve recognition for their work. I have already seen several members in many Detachments that are going above and beyond to make a difference in their communities. I know every member of the Sons is *Making A Difference* everyday.

It is getting close to our big day in May. The first annual Veterans Assistance Day is coming up on May 17. Make sure you have plans to do something for one or more veterans on that day to thank them for their service to our country. You can do something on your own as a member or get involved alongside your entire squadron. Don't forget the families of those who have loved ones in harms way now. Remember, we owe our veterans a debt that we can never repay, but it will be fun and rewarding to try our best. So let's get out there and let those veterans know we appreciate them and we care about them.

I believe that the mission of the Sons of The American Legion is to survive. We must survive to be able to do all the things we do for our veterans, our children and our communities. To survive we must have members. If every member would make an effort to sign up one new member each year we would double our membership each year. Imagine what the Sons of The American Legion could do for our country with that many members. We could really *Make A Difference*. I believe this is truly a great patriotic organization and we need to spread the word.

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Tell them who, what and why

by Raymond P. Giehll, Jr.
National Commander



Promoting the 'Blue Cap 365'

by Jeff Frain
National CWF Chairman

This year's Child Welfare Foundation theme is called: *The Blue Cap 365* with National Commander Raymond "The CAT"

Giehll as the promoter of the race. Commander Ray has asked the blue caps to *Make a Difference* and together we are doing that one donation at a time (See chart on Page 3).

We are gaining on this goal set by the Child Welfare Committee and I know we can achieve, if not surpass, it if we all work together. This year's goal of \$365,000 is an amount not out of our reach and is very obtainable with some hard work. Don't forget that our CWF administrative year ends on May 31 and only the donations received by that time can be credited to this year.

Our goal of \$365,000 is not just some number picked out of thin air. It represents what we can contribute if just \$1.15 is raised for each member of The Sons organization. It makes no difference *Continued on Page 3*

Membership Leaders

Nevada	125%
District of Col	109%
France	101%
North Dakota	100%
Delaware	91%
S. Carolina	89%
Hawaii	89%
Alabama	88%
Virginia	87%
Florida	85%
Maine	85%
Illinois	85%
Pennsylvania	85%
Maryland	81%
Colorado	84%
Wisconsin	84%
Kansas	84%
Minnesota	84%
Arizona	84%
Georgia	83%
Michigan	83%
Montana	83%

Legislative/ from Page 3

Advocate of the Year Award, you will find the appropriate application form, score sheet, rules, and criteria in the S.A.L. Administrative Manual, on the National Legislative Commission Web Site and the National Sons of The American Legion Web Site (in the Administrative Manual). Please make copies of everything you submit and keep one copy for your own records. Mail the original application form, score sheet, and documentation to George B. Evans, Chairman Sons of The American Legion Awards Committee, 6600 West 87th Place, Oak Lawn, IL 60453. Applications must be received, regardless of the delivery method, not less than 30 days prior to the National Convention of each year. This will allow the awards committee to judge all submissions in a timely fashion.

Sons from all over the nation poured into Washington, D.C. just a few days ago to participate in this year's American Legion Washington Conference. Sons took part in meetings that spell out The Legion's legislative and program goals for the coming year. They accompanied Legionnaires to Capitol Hill to meet with members of the Senate and House of Representatives. On April 1, National Commander Raymond Giehll, Jr. led a delegation of Sons to place a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington National Cemetery. The delegation also made stops at the World War II Memorial, the Vietnam War Memorial and the Korean War Memorial.

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

National Update newsletter
c/o Mike Pipher, Editor
612 S. State Road 446 #35C
Bloomington, IN 47401

or send via e-mail
mpipher@indiana.edu

More information on the 2008 Washington Conference can be found on the S.A.L. web site www.sal-legion.org. You can also contact National Legislative Commission Chairman George B. Evans (GBESAL@aol.com) or any of the National Legislative Commission members.

Have you moved?

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

www.legion.org

Filling out the new Consolidated Report

by Gerald Hammerschmidt
Nat'l Americanism Chairman

It's very important to The American Legion Family that all squadrons fill out this report each year. The form is still relatively new, only in its second year of use. When we report what Sons have done for Americanism, The American Legion's leaders use these numbers when they go before Congress and report about activities on behalf of veterans throughout the country.

"What donations and hours can I put on the annual Americanism Report?"

This is a question often asked when Sons fill out the Americanism portion of the Consolidated Squadron Report Form. A fairly good, in depth, explanation of this subject has been added to my report on our S.A.L. web site in the hopes it will be available at any time of the day or night and will help everyone when they are filling out the Americanism report form.

Plans firming up for Phoenix

by Steve Allen
Nat'l Convention Chairman

The 2008 National Convention will be held in Phoenix, AZ on August 22-24. Meeting agenda and times will be pretty much the same as what we had at Reno last August.

The Detachment of Arizona will be hosting a golf scramble on Thursday, August 21 at the Pointe Hilton Tapatio Cliffs Resort. Check-in will be at 6 a.m. followed by a shotgun start at 7:15 a.m. Cost for the event will be \$70 per person to cover green fees, cart rental and lunch plus one raffle ticket for a cash drawing. All prizes will be determined closer to the event. All of the day's proceeds will be split between Child Welfare and The Spinoza Bear Project.

Once the tournament fliers have been finalized I will be posting them on our S.A.L. web site next to my report. We will be accepting donations from those who wish to sponsor holes. Signs with sponsor information will be posted throughout the course.

Also, a block of 500 tickets have been reserved for Legion Family members for the Arizona Diamondbacks vs. Florida Marlins baseball game on Aug 22. Cost of tickets will be \$15 & \$20. Seating will be behind the Arizona dugout and along the baseline. Fliers will be posted soon.

You need to keep our Arizona Heat in mind. Most people are not used to the high temperatures normally found at that time of year, typically around 105-110 degrees with humidity at 70-80%. If you decide to play golf, be sure to drink a lot of water and stay hydrated.

Keep an eye on our S.A.L. web site for updates and new developments that may crop up between now and summertime.

V.C. travel notes

National Vice Commander - Midwest Mike Moss reports Sons helped pay to send a mother to Texas just before Christmas to greet her son on his return home from a combat tour of duty in Baghdad, a tour that included surviving two IED's, earning a Purple Heart, and receiving several commander coins and a promotion. Not a bad resume for a soldier who is just 19 years old and the youngest member of his brigade.

National Vice Commander-West Bob Jones is happy about the ingenuity of S.A.L. leaders from Arizona, California and Utah. The three Detachments have arranged to set up a booth in the middle of the Big Bass Days fishing tournament near Phoenix, proudly display information about many of The Legion's programs and actively recruit new members to The Legion Family from nearly 45,000 anglers taking place in the tournament.

National Vice Commander-East Tom Marsden says he travels from place to place and sees a boy and a girl no longer homeless, a child bound to a wheel chair smiling. He hears a toddler with leukemia playing with a Spinoza Bear, a baby hearing its Daddy's voice through a Military Bear. He reads about a college student whose parents died on 9/11, and POW/MIA families who know they do not stand and wait alone. Tom says all of these people have hope because of programs that the S.A.L. helps to support.

National Vice Commander-Central John Kailunas says he was visiting Wisconsin and listening to American Legion National Commander Marty Conatser speak when the Commander reached into his pocket and pulled out a small envelope containing membership applications for the Sons, the Auxiliary and The Legion. John was wondering how many of us carry all three forms and are ready to sign up new members wherever they may be found.

Consolidated report forms in your mailbox

Detachments have begun distributing the 2007-2008 version of the S.A.L. Consolidated Squadron Report forms. Remember, this is a three-page carbon paper report that is modified each year. Squadrons should not use the previous version if they have one left lying around.

Every squadron in the country is expected to fill out this form, keeping the blue page for the squadron's files and sending the green and gold pages to Detachment HQ.

While the CSR may look complicated at first, it is really quite simple to understand and fill out. Not every blank or line has to be completed (not all squadrons participate in all Legion programs). Instructions on the front of the form are easy to read and are very helpful.

Although the final deadline for submitting the CSR to National HQ is July 24, most Detachments require squadrons to turn it in by early June so numbers can be compiled.

Sons eligible for NALPA membership and awards

Sons have the opportunity to belong to the National American Legion Press Association. NALPA is made up of Legion Family members who serve as newsletter editors, writers, business managers, historians, public relations officers, or webmasters in our organization.

Annual dues are just \$10 and that provides several important perks. First, all NALPA members receive a quarterly newsletter filled with ideas and information that will help them do a better job of communicating throughout The Legion Family. Membership makes one eligible to participate in the annual "Best Papers" Contest," which has categories covering newsletters, editorials, and web pages. NALPA members are also able to subscribe to The Legion "Dispatch" newsletter and The American Legion Magazine for just \$6 each. Get an application from a NALPA member or go to www.nalpa.legion.org.

Veterans Day poster design sought

Artists, graphic designers and photographers! The Veterans Day National Committee is seeking submissions for the 2008 national Veterans Day poster. The poster is distributed to more than 110,000 schools nationwide, military installations around the world, and to federal agencies in the nation's capital. It also graces the cover of the official program booklet for the Veterans Day ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery. The committee will convene in May to review all submissions and select a finalist. The final poster must be 18x24" at 300 dots per inch, but please scale down submissions to 9x12" and submit electronic versions as jpg images or PDF files via e-mail to: vetsday@va.gov. Alternatively, send copies of artwork or a CD with artwork files to: Department of Veterans Affairs (002C), 810 Vermont Ave., NW, Washington, D.C., 20420.

Please do not send originals. The deadline for submissions is May 1. To view Veterans Day posters from previous years, please visit www.va.gov/vetsday and click on "Poster Gallery." Submissions should include sufficient information to demonstrate that the image is the work of the artist and is not copyrighted material (i.e. photos and concepts).

The committee may select a particular submission but ask the artist to make modifications to the original design. Additional changes may be required prior to printing.

'Grassroots' award nominations being sought

by **George B. Evans**
National Legislative Chairman

All members of The Sons of The American Legion are reminded that the National Legislative Commission is seeking Nominees for the Grassroots Veterans' Advocate of The Year Award. The National Legislative Commission is looking forward to presenting the Grassroots Veterans' Advocate of The Year Award on stage at the 2008 National Convention in Phoenix, AZ. It is not too early to start preparing for this award, one that recognizes a member who has performed outstanding service and made significant contributions of time and effort when advocating on behalf of veterans. It will be presented each year to a member who displays an aggressive leadership role by building relationships with elected officials that directly impact public policy; by actively taking the message of the National Sons of The American Legion to key media outlets; and by developing strong grassroots initiatives. It is possible that this award

may not be given every year, but in no instance will more than one award be given in a year. During the 2007 National Convention in Reno, NV, the Grassroots Veterans' Advocate of The Year Award went to David Lee of the Detachment of New York.

If you plan to nominate someone for the Grassroots Veterans'

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Blue Cap 365/ from Page 2

whether each member of a squadron donates that amount out of his own pocket or if the squadron raises and donates the money through a fundraising effort.

This is why we call on you to rally the blue cap members; hold some raffles, dinners, or any fund raiser and let's work together to show that Sons of the American Legion, will lead, not follow, in our commitment to our Children and Youth programs.

We are continuing the "365 Club" and asking each member to participate by placing just one penny a day into a container. At the end of the year, members will turn in their \$3.65 contributions to their squadron or Detachment and ask that it be credited to the Child Welfare Foundation.

CWF donation envelopes, cans and our Annual Report are available at CWF Headquarters. We've asked all Detachment Children and Youth Chairmen to distribute these tools to their squadrons along with letters and information about CWF.

Successes are being recorded every day and if you want to see the results of your hard work, please get on the S.A.L. web site and look under the committees/CWF link to review the grants you have supported.

Tell them/ from Page 2

In your community go out and *Tell them Who We Are; Tell Them What We Do; Tell Them Why We Do It!* I think when eligible members hear that, they will want to belong.

Another thing that Sons of The American Legion need to be charged with is to see that the sacrifices of our soldiers are never forgotten. No one wants to see any new wars and the best way to avoid them is to not let history repeat itself. As members of The American Legion Family we have access to the veterans of our nation. We can learn from them about the history of our great nation and share that history with our members and with our children. In this way we can honor the sacrifices that our soldiers have made for this nation and help keep America safe for generations to come.

As your National Commander, I am just another blue cap member of the Sons of The American Legion. I am out there representing you when I travel. I will always strive to be the best representative that I can be and make all our members proud to be involved. If there is anything I can do to make you feel more welcome as a member of the Sons of The American Legion please contact me and I will do what I can.

I really appreciate your membership in the Sons of The American Legion. I am grateful for all the work our members do everyday. Just remember we are all volunteers and when the work is done it is time to have a little fun. I have told my wife Debbie for years that when we quit having fun in The American Legion Family we're going home. We're still here and having fun doing what we do. I hope you are having fun being a member of the Sons of The American Legion.

Child Welfare Leaders

Michigan	\$11,464
Colorado	\$10,330
Virginia	\$10,296
Arizona	\$ 9,940
Florida	\$ 8,195
Pennsylvania	\$ 7,103
Ohio	\$ 5,600
New Jersey	\$ 5,580
California	\$ 5,398
New York	\$ 5,025
Indiana	\$ 4,634
Kansas	\$ 3,329
Washington	\$ 2,524
Vermont	\$ 2,125
Massachusetts	\$ 1,910
Minnesota	\$ 1,781
Maryland	\$ 1,775
Oregon	\$ 1,575
Alaska	\$ 1,470
South Carolina	\$ 1,342
Alabama	\$ 1,327
Nebraska	\$ 1,119

Maine's Healing Field

The American Legion Family of Maine registered a *Healing Field* event in the state in 2007. Phase 1 of this extraordinary event took place on Veteran's Day and was duplicated simultaneously in five locations within the state: Lubec, Rockland, Augusta, Bath and Portland. More than 2,600 3x5 American Flags (*Right*) were flown on eight foot staffs as Veterans Day services were performed.

It was the culmination of a year's labor involving many individuals and countless hours. Each of the sites was left standing for one week and admired by many visitors. It also provided a wonderful photo opportunity for our veterans, many whom had never seen anything like it before.

This started out as a project of the Detachment of Maine, but it was soon evident that many more hands were needed to ensure a quality product. The scope and depth of the program demanded the full attention of The Department of Maine American Legion Family.

This program is still soliciting flags as well as financial contributions. All proceeds will directly benefit the veterans of Maine. They will also ensure there will be a Phase 2 that will assemble these flags into another *Healing Field* at Togus Veteran's Hospital in Augusta, ME. The flags will fly again on Memorial Day 2008 and remain in place for a week. The field will be set in military rows, five feet apart, and the plan is to have more than 3,000 flags this time.



Detachment of Ohio Commander Rob Brewer was treated to a pleasant surprise during his Mid-Winter Conference. U.S. Army Sergeant and proud S.A.L. member Larry Frantz paid a visit to the meeting and presented Brewer with this *Freedom Flag* (*Left*) which has flown over Iraq. Frantz attended the meeting while on leave from his most recent deployment to the Middle East.

There are a number of e-mails floating around the Internet these days telling the story of how an adviser to Winston Churchill organized a group of people to pray during World War II. As the story goes, everyone would stop whatever they were doing at a prescribed time

each night and spend one minute praying collectively for the safety of England, its people and for peace. The moral of the story is that the prayers worked because Germany's bombing raids over England stopped.

Whether or not you believe the story to be true, there's certainly no harm in organizing a similar prayer movement here in the U.S. In fact, the same e-mails touting the WWII story are calling on Americans to stop in their tracks each evening at 9 p.m. Eastern (8 p.m. Central – 7 p.m. Mountain – 6 p.m. Pacific) and spend just one minute praying for the safety of the U.S., our troops around the globe, and our political leaders.

Who's to say it will do any good? On the other hand, who thinks it can hurt?

Santa's elves are beginning to look a lot like **Akron, OH Squadron 19** Adjutant Tom Johnston and his wife, Tina (*Right*). They were just two of the many Legion Family members who bundled up and manned Salvation Army Red Kettles around Akron a few days before Christmas this year.

For the past six years, members of **Binghamton, NY Squadron 1254** have had a 9/11 remembrance dinner with all proceeds going to the nearby Fairy Godmother Brigade. It's a local group made up of caring people who collect supplies for active duty troops, box them, and send them overseas. The boxes are filled with the kinds of things Uncle Sam doesn't provide for troops. This year's spaghetti dinner raised \$1,000 - a record high. It's an annual event that has been very successful, is gaining in popularity and is the reason the squadron even made the local news.

Members of **Loudonville, OH Squadron 257** poured into a local nursing home recently and presented each veteran (*Below*) residing there with a small American Flag on a wooden stand and a card expressing their appreciation for those veterans' service. Squadron members say this is part of the Detachment's S.A.V.E. (*Sons Assisting Veterans Everywhere*) program.



Minneapolis, MN Squadron 1 hosted a special event for Blue Star Mothers in conjunction with Veterans Day this year. It was a smashing success and drew nearly 250 people (*even though it occurred at the same time as the squadron's monthly omelet breakfast*). Not only was the event impressive, it resulted in several new Auxiliary memberships. It should come as no surprise that the Sons are already thinking about a repeat next November.

The first U.S. battleship sunk during World War II was the U.S.S. Oklahoma. On December 7, 1941, 413 sailors and 16 marines died aboard the Oklahoma during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. To help mark the 100th

anniversary of Oklahoma's statehood, and to mark the first-ever official memorial ceremony for the battleship and its crew, the Claremore, OK High School Naval Junior ROTC color guard was invited to Hawaii to participate in the ceremony and to spend four days escorting the ship's 96 survivors to a variety of events. Because those same color guard members have helped with flag retirement ceremonies at their local American Legion Post, members of **Claremore, OK Squadron 141** were only too happy to donate \$500 to help send the students to Hawaii.

The Detachment of Kansas is conducting a contest among its own members to find a new name for the state's monthly S.A.L. newsletter. The winning idea will receive a shiny new gold Presidential Dollar coin from Adjutant Wes Wills and something else (*not yet thought up*) from Liaison Chuck Yunker. Kansas Sons have until the Detachment Convention on May 17th to write their entry on a piece of paper and send it to Chuck at the HQ in Topeka.

The Detachment of New York is teaming with the Department Auxiliary to promote and conduct walk-a-thons all over the state on one day this month. They hope to raise \$100,000 that will benefit 13 VA centers and one Fisher House in their state. The theme is an appropriate one: *They Marched for Us, Let's Walk For Them*.

Members of **Waltham, MA Squadron 156** help serve a special dinner (*Below*) to World War II vets at the post. Although the first course was Spam, things rapidly improved to include turkey, trimmings and big desserts.

