

Two milestones for CWF in reach

Sons are currently leading The American Legion in donations to the Child Welfare Foundation, but only slightly. Sons have been in the forefront since 1994 and currently lead Legion contributions by less than a \$1,000.

Reaching this year's \$365,000 goal will require collecting contributions totaling only \$1.15 per member. This is also expected to be a special year because once Sons surpass \$332,000, they will have reached the \$4 Million mark.

East Region - \$29,548
Central Region - \$27,004
South Region - \$24,852
West Region - \$23,203
MidWest Region - \$21,241

CWF Detachment Leaders

Contribution \$\$'s	Per Capita
Michigan - \$11,347	Colorado - \$3.92
Virginia - \$10,840	Hawaii - \$3.75
Colorado - \$10,453	Virginia - \$2.57
Arizona - \$9,893	Arkansas - \$2.12
Pennsylvania - \$8,910	Arizona - \$1.79
New Jersey - \$7,680	Washington - \$1.78
Florida - \$7,350	France - \$1.44
New York - \$7,680	Kansas - \$1.19



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The devil lives in the details

Even though most Detachments tally their membership books each year in June, December 31 remains the official end of every membership year. At the end of 2008, there were 38 Detachments that achieved or surpassed 100% of their membership goals. That was six fewer Detachments than the previous year. Our grand total of 327,598 members was 6,137 more than 2007 (a 1.9% increase) and was yet another consecutive "All-Time High" in membership for the Sons. We attracted 48,731 new members into our organization in 2008.

While there is reason to celebrate, there are some statistics lurking between the lines of which we need to be aware...and wary of. The devil is always in the details.

Squadrons need to do a better job of renewing members from year to year. In 2008, we failed to renew the memberships of 42,594 members. Our renewal rate was just 86.75% last year, a drop from the previous year.

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(Above) Members of the Detachment of Michigan have helped provide a future for Joshua and Heather Hoffman. Read this soldier's story on Page 5.

Using airwaves to spread the word

What could be more supportive of veterans than to get on the radio every week and talk about veterans' issues? That's exactly what two Sons from New York are doing.

Ken Kraetzer and John Chuhran co-host a 30 minute radio show called "Sons of The American Legion Report" on Monday afternoons on AM station WVOX. Kraetzer is Commander of S.A.L. Squadron 50 in Pelham, NY. He is also Vice Commander of, both, Westchester County and the Detachment of New York. Chuhran is a Sons member and a New Rochelle-based public relations executive.

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New life for Operation Comfort Warriors

The nation's largest veterans organization will continue its fundraising to purchase comfort items for hospitalized troops recovering in U.S. military hospitals around the world after doubling its \$50,000 goal for the holiday season.

"The American Legion family and its friends have raised more than \$115,000 that we have used to purchase sweat suits, DVDs, puzzles, portable electronics and other gifts for the wounded heroes recovering at Walter Reed, Bethesda and numerous other military hospitals," said American Legion National Commander David K. Rehbein. "We delivered many of the items before Christmas. But even though the holiday season has long passed, the war continues. The military does a good job of taking care of its own at these facilities, but we want to do more. The need continues so therefore Operation Comfort Warriors will continue."

Donors can make online contributions by visiting www.legion.org/ocw or by sending a check to Operation Comfort Warriors, PO Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206. Administrative and promotional costs for Operation Comfort Warriors are paid by The American Legion, allowing 100 percent of the donations to be spent directly on the troops.

It's really an awesome journey for you

by **Tommie Cisna**
National Commander

Thank you for your membership in the Son's of The American Legion. You are part of The American Legion Family, over four million strong, making a difference every day. I am also thankful of the veteran who earned your eligibility, because he or she fulfilled a service to our country. They paved the way for us to get to work, and work is what we Sons are good at.

If you need any help with any aspect of Legion Family activities that inspire you, I suggest you get to our website (www.sal.legion.org) to see all of the fantastic information that the National Commissions and Committees have for you. These guys work very hard preparing this information and I, for one, appreciate that.

When I travel, our emblem travels and that means you travel. The travels have been many and all have been historic.

On the morning of Sunday, December 7, we stood together on the U.S.S. Arizona Memorial at Pearl Harbor. We were in Washington, D.C. together on January 20 and witnessed the historic swearing in of our 44th President (nice seats, too - about 120 yards from the podium!). On February 12 we stood together in the tomb of our 16th President, Abraham Lincoln, and participated in a nationwide radio broadcast on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of his birth. We have been to many children's hospitals and sighted Josh Dogs bringing smiles to kids that really need it. We have been to many Detachments and seen first hand the enormous amount of work that is getting done and the huge amount of money being raised in the name of The Legion Family. We have made many good friends and their covers bore the same emblem as ours.

I invite you to follow this awesome journey at (www.legionpost88.com/tomcisna). It's really your journey so I hope you enjoy it.



National Commander Cisna

Into the home stretch of our membership year

by **Mike Moss**
Nat'l Membership Chairman

Reminder postcard will be sent on April 13. Membership cards for 2010 will be printed in May, so any changes that need to be made (name spelling, years of continuous service, etc) must be received at National Headquarters by the beginning of May.

The Detachment of Pennsylvania needs to be singled out and congratulated for leading the nation by chartering seven new Squadrons. This is one area in which we are lagging behind last year. By the end of December 2008, there were 34 new Sons Squadrons chartered. By the end of December 2007 we had already chartered 47.

Where's my paper?

by **Mike Pipher**
National Update Editor

Back in December I received a cordial e-mail from a Detachment Commander wanting to know why he doesn't personally receive a copy of the *National Update* newsletter.

"I am the 2008-2009 Detachment Commander of ___ and I have a question," he wrote. "My son receives the *National Update*, but I do not. My question is, WHY?"

The short answer is that there is a computer at National Headquarters that decides who receives the newsletter. But a longer answer is the better one.

About five years ago, the decision was made to send only one newsletter to any given household in an effort to save money (the *Update* is the S.A.L.'s single largest expense - about half of our annual budget). The computer at National Headquarters selects the name of the person at each address who will receive it.

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In late January, National Headquarters mailed out over 146,000 renewal postcards to unpaid members. The final reminder postcard will be sent on April 13. Membership cards for 2010 will be printed in May, so any changes that need to be made (name spelling, years of continuous service, etc) must be received at National Headquarters by the beginning of May.

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Radio/ *from Page 1*

Each week, the show focuses on relevant issues facing veterans. They also interview special guests who happen to be in the New York City area.

One recent show featured two interviews, one with Lt. Andrew Baldwin, MC, USN, a physician who has served as an Undersea Medical Officer including three years with a Mobile Diving and Salvage Unit. He is an avid tri-athlete and starred in the ABC television show "The Bachelor: Officer and a Gentleman." He also started "Got-Your-Back," to provide opportunities to the children of fallen servicemen. Dr. Baldwin is stationed in Washington, D.C. at the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery.

The second interview was with Master Chief Raymond Kemp, a twenty year veteran of the US Navy who served his most recent tour at sea aboard the amphibious assault ship USS Kearsarge stationed in Norfolk, VA. The Master Chief and the crew of his ship have been New York City Fleet Week guests and have visited Pelham in Westchester County for a Memorial Day parade. Master Chief Kemp has been assigned to the Office of Chief of Naval Operations in Washington, DC. He led a delegation of US Navy members who participated in the Inauguration in Washington, DC.

Kraetzer's and Chuhran's radio report can be heard live on WVOX 1460 AM in Westchester County. It's also carried on the web at www.wvox.com. The show is heard on the first, third, fourth (and fifth) Mondays of each month from 2:30 to 3:00 p.m. Recordings of past editions of the show are available at www.legionpost50ny.com.

Devil/ *from Page 1*

There will always be some natural attrition in membership due to death and migration. But we're losing members almost as fast as we're signing up new ones. Just about one out of every six members in the S.A.L. this year is brand new.

The highest percentages of those who fail to renew their memberships in the Sons tend to be those who have been members for just one or two years. This would suggest we need to do a better job of getting people actively involved in our Squadrons as soon as they join, otherwise they are likely to lose interest rather quickly.

Addresses continue to be a big mailing issue on the membership register when members renew each year. Personal contact with members is a key to success. So is good record keeping. Squadrons need to stay in contact with their members through mailings of bulletins, fliers, telephone calls, and e-mail.

The importance of establishing a "Squadron Membership Team" cannot be overstated. This team should be made of up two groups - one that specializes in the renewal of current members and one that seeks out new members. Every Squadron should set a goal of reaching at least a 90% renewal rate each year. If we did that, it would mean adding another 10,000 members to the rolls of the Sons of The American Legion.

At right are some of the S.A.L.'s recent renewal rates:

Service/ *from Page 6*

a Legion Family, you would be amazed at the great things that can be accomplished.

The truly interesting aspect of community service is that it is contagious. When you provide help to someone or something, other members will catch the bug and start working too. And if you really want to spread the community service bug, let your community know what you are doing by getting articles in your local newspapers and stories on your local radio and TV stations. By letting others know what you are doing, you are not patting yourself on the back, your spreading the bug.

Make sure you keep track of what you are doing and put it on your year end Consolidated Report Form. This information is just too important to not share. Just think what our communities would be like if everyone caught the community service bug!

Find successful stories and new ideas. Check out "Tools You Can Use" www.sal.legion.org

2001	-	86.69%
2002	-	88.07%
2003	-	87.13%
2004	-	86.52%
2005	-	87.45%
2006	-	87.64%
2007	-	86.89%
2008	-	86.75%

Americanism totals '08

by Gerald Hammerschmidt
Nat'l Americanism Chairman

2008 was a banner year for involvement in Americanism projects. Sons of The American Legion sent 504 boys to various Boys State programs at a cost of \$114,135. We had 6,399 color guard appearances at a cost of \$82,802. At least 143 American Legion Baseball teams were sponsored at a cost of \$156,765. Other types of baseball teams were sponsored at a cost of \$122,252. In support of Scouting we donated \$29,027. The Oratorical program had \$5,630 in donations and 13,317 service hours. Sons devoted 3,187 hours and \$81,474 to Junior Shooting Sports. Flag education programs were presented at a cost of \$13,187 with volunteer hours of 3,400. We spent \$93,345 to hand out at least 260,382 flags at ceremonies and parades. Scholarships were sponsored with funds exceeding \$254,783. We devoted 16,738 hours to conduct educational programs. We funded 129 Five Star/Ten Ideals programs at a cost of \$2,951. Various Community Service project activities accounted for 436,812 hours and \$841,732. Donations to the National Emergency Fund totaled \$32,726.

The Grand Totals for 2008 were: \$1,857,474 given in cash and 491,529 given in hours of service to support Americanism programs.

We are looking for even better numbers to support all of these programs in 2009. Remember to keep track of Americanism activities you and your Squadron are involved in so it can be reported on the 2009 Consolidated Report Form.



Left: Sons from Williamsville, NY Squadron 622 delivered a full Thanksgiving dinner to the family of a National Guard veteran who suffered a severe back injury in October. The feast included a 16 pound turkey and all the fixings.

Rich histories of helping others

by Joe Gladden
Nat'l Community Service Chairman

As Americans and as members of the Sons of The American Legion, we are fortunate people. This country was formed by individuals that felt there was a greater cause than just them. They realized, if they were to survive and flourish, they would have to reach out to their neighbors, and equally or more important, reach out to people they did not even know. To them it was just survival.

Since that time, we have come to call it community service. The American Legion was founded by individuals that sacrificed themselves so we could have a free nation. The American Legion founders realized the greatness of America is our willingness to help others in times of need. The founders also realized The American Legion would have to promote the ideals that make America great in order to help her flourish. With this thought in mind the American Legion formed many commissions and committees to oversee and foster these ideals. Through the process, the Community Service Committee was formed.

Community service can happen in so many different ways and in so many different places that it is almost mind boggling. Just a few ways you can provide community service: volunteering at your local school, organizing a blood drive and donating blood, helping a veteran with yard work, donating food to the local food bank, and more. Almost anything outside your Post home that benefits someone in your community is considered community service.

I give a right hand salute to those of you that work so hard in your Post home, but I challenge you to go outside that Post door and help your neighbors. Help that elderly neighbor that needs their grass cut. Help those children that need a coach on the local sports team. Help that local volunteer fire company that needs either your time or your money. Help out with anything you might see that you know in your heart needs help.

The greatness of our organization is that you don't have to do it all yourself or by yourself. Ask your Squadron, your District or your Detachment to take up causes in your community. Working together as

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This can be the Year of Responsibility

by Damon Bradtmueller
Nat'l Public Relations Chairman

Being guys, we have a tendency to express every achievement we have ever made. As an organization, we attempt to do the same. Each year we collect data on forms that we compile to let everyone know our accomplishments for that year. This starts with the Squadron and proceeds on through Districts and Zones all the way to the Detachment level.

The greatest breakdown in this chain of progress is caused by the number of members who do not participate in the Squadron meetings. As a rule of thumb, if you have 10% participation of your membership, you are very fortunate. That means that we do not receive information from approximately 90% or 300,000 members of the Sons of The American Legion.

Our second downfall is that we only receive reports from 20% of our Squadrons. For the last few years there has been a Consolidated Report Form that has simplified the way we now report our hours and cash donations. We are seeing an increase in the return of these forms each year since their beginning.

Let's make this year the *Year of Responsibility*. Let's make sure that we let our Squadrons know how we have helped our communities, our veterans, and our children - the future of our nation. Let's also make sure our Squadron officers do their jobs and fill out the Consolidated Report Form and pass this information on.

Can you imagine what kind of numbers we could produce if we take a few minutes to accept our responsibility?

After all, we are guys!

Newsletter/ from Page 2

Timing can play an important part in delivery of the newsletter, too. The *National Update* is mailed three times each year and the mailing list is parsed just before it gets sent. If a person's membership is received at headquarters after the mailing list is parsed, that person won't receive a newsletter until the next mailing cycle.

It may sound odd that a Detachment Commander gets left off the list, but consider this: I'm the editor of this publication and in my home our one copy is addressed to my youngest son!

Membership/ from Page 2

There is so much potential out there for new members. Each of us need to work to fulfill our obligation regarding membership, even promoting the creation of new Squadrons whenever possible. Personal contact is the best tool we have, so be sure to utilize it. Our S.A.L. website (www.sal.legion.org) has an example of a personal welcome letter to new members that anyone is welcome to use. There is also an example of a renewal letter, written by our National Commander Tommie Cisna, that can be copied and sent out to members.

All members are encouraged to strive for individual membership awards. One of them is the Blue Brigade Award. This is given to members who recruit 30 new members. The form used to apply for the Blue Brigade jacket (or chevron, if a repeat winner) must be sent to National by May 1. Another opportunity is the Individual Recruitment Award, given to those who recruit five new members. When you submit an application for this award, the National Vice Commander's Membership Chairman in your region will send you the recognition pin. Both of these forms can be obtained from the national website or from your Detachment Adjutant.

When the 2008 card year ended on December 31, we had 38 Detachments that achieved 100% of their goal. Another seven Detachments reached 99%.

Membership never stops.

The real winners of our 'golf tournament' will be our veterans and the youth we support. Without membership, we cannot support their programs.

Membership Leaders

Louisiana	93.4%
Mississippi	89.8%
France	89.2%
Virginia	85.5%
Georgia	85.4%
Iowa	85.3%
Washington	85.3%
Wisconsin	84.4%
Nebraska	83.9%
Florida	83.4%
Missouri	82.8%
Minnesota	82.8%
Maryland	82.6%
Delaware	82.4%
Kansas	81.2%
Indiana	80.7%
California	79.2%

Jan-Mar '09	255,298
Jan-Mar '08	252,306
Difference	+ 2,992

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

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or send via e-mail
mpipher@indiana.edu

The statue of a civil war soldier was stolen more than 40 years ago from a cemetery in Sinclairville, NY. In an effort to celebrate, both, the community's bicentennial anniversary and the centennial of the statue's original placement this spring, Sons from **Cassadaga, NY Squadron 1280** are trying to raise the \$40,000 needed to replace the statue. They have raised a lot of money so far, but are still far short of their goal and are reaching out for help wherever they can get it. In addition to raising money, the S.A.L. has been able to track down information about the statue and the Ohio company that handcrafted it. They even located a replica of their statue in northeast Pennsylvania.

Josh Dogs are hoppin' all over...and that's a good thing. Up north, **Mazomanie, WI Squadron 437 and Black Earth, WI Squadron 313** recruited Alice in Dairyland to help them deliver Josh Dogs to the American Family Children's Hospital in Madison, WI. (**R i g h t**) Meanwhile, the guys from **Worcester,**



MA Squadron 435 presented 10 Josh Dogs (**Above**) to the Pediatric Ward at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center in Worcester right before Christmas.

Sons down in **Marshall, TX Squadron 267** have been handing out money just about as fast as they've been raising it. Between September and January, they conducted an auction, a raffle, and curled a few tongues with a chili cook-off fundraiser. They presented



dedicated to providing assistance to military personnel returning from Iraq and Afghanistan.



Jeffersonville, PA Squadron 901 was just "born" in January, so it's fitting that it has a strong group of very young members. As they grow, so will the spirit of The American Legion Family in this Philadelphia suburb. Everyone is beaming in this photo (**Above**) because it was taken a few minutes after their initiation ceremony.

Santa's Sons of **Harford, MD Squadron 39** purchased 31 bicycles (**Above**) and presented all of them to members of the Marine Corps League for distribution by this year's Toys for Tots program.

A sizable donation was presented last month on behalf of the Child Welfare Foundation at the S.A.L. 19th District meeting in New Cumberland, PA. **New Cumberland Squadron 143** presented a check in the amount of \$10,000 to CWF Chairman Dana Lahr, Detachment of Pennsylvania.



checks totaling more than \$4,000 to a special fund at Overton Brooks VA Medical Center in Shreveport, LA. The fund is

Soldier gets a new home

Just a few days into 2007, Marine Corporal Joshua Hoffman was on patrol in the streets of Fallujah, Iraq when he was hit by a sniper's bullet.

Josh has spent the last 20 months away from his friends and family, most of that time lying in a hospital bed 800 miles from home. For 14 months he lay in the same bed, staring at the same ceiling, praying to wake up and be back in Iraq having all this be a bad nightmare. This young man who once had a life many dream of now can hardly speak, barely see, and cannot move even to lift a finger to scratch his nose. Yet, he still says he is lucky - lucky to be alive, and lucky it's not worse.

"Homes for our Troops" - www.homesforourtroops.org - is a non-profit organization based in Maryland that is strongly committed to helping those who have selflessly given to their country and have returned home with serious disabilities and injuries. They assist severely injured servicemen and women and their immediate families by raising donations of money, building materials and professional labor and then coordinating the process of building a new home or adapting an existing home for handicapped accessibility.



"Homes for Our Troops" arranged to build and outfit a new home in Middleville, MI for Josh and his wife, Heather. It was presented to the couple at the end of January of this year. The Detachment of Michigan, plus many American Legion Posts and Units, donated money and manpower to this project. Many of the people seen in these pictures are members of the Detachment who have worked diligently on this project since the groundbreaking. Al Liebau, membership Chair for the Detachment, presented Josh with a lap blanket from the Detachment. Josh now has a home that he can call his own and will allow him to move freely and become more independent.

