

More Convention

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alternate and guest badges. Without official badges, individuals will not be allowed to enter the Sons, Legion or Auxiliary Convention sessions. Badges will also be required to gain admittance to the exhibit hall and National Emblem Sales.

There is no official dress code for the National Convention, but delegates are encouraged to wear a coat and tie, especially if receiving an award on the stage. The wearing of tank tops, shorts and shower clogs is discouraged. Many important speakers and guests will attend our sessions and we want to be at our best.

The Charlotte Convention Center does not allow smoking inside the building and the regulation is rigorously enforced. Raffles and Detachment fundraisers are prohibited inside the Convention Center. Only the host

Detachment Convention pin is allowed to be sold.

The National Convention Parade will step off at 4:00 p.m. Sunday afternoon. National Commander Smith has requested all Sons marching in the parade to wear light khaki pants and blue S.A.L. jerseys.

In addition to official business, National Conventions always provide plenty of opportunities for fun and tourism. On Saturday evening, young members of the Sons, those 17 and under, are invited to a pizza party with members of the American Legion Junior Auxiliary. The party will be held at the Adams Mark Hotel on South McDowell Street, from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. in the Carolina Rooms A & B.

Charlotte, also known as the "Queen City," is a tourist-friendly community. With more than a half million inhabitants, Charlotte is the nation's 26th largest city. There's plenty of shopping around town and in nearby communities. Paramount's

Carowinds Water and Theme Park is located in Charlotte. Auto racing enthusiasts will find themselves in the heart of NASCAR country, with auto museums, racing tracks and famous drivers all only a short drive from the Convention Center. There are museums, parks and tours. Charlotte also has a trolley system that moves visitors around town.

For more information about tourism and local flavor, contact the Charlotte Convention and Visitors Bureau on-line at www.visitcharlotte.org.

Deadline

If you have story ideas or photos for the next issue of *National Update* they must reach us by

October 1, 2002

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NATIONAL UPDATE

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Sons head for Carolina hills

Several hundred Sons will gather in Charlotte, North Carolina near the end of August for the 31st annual National Convention of the Sons of The American Legion.

This year's convention will be held in Hall C-1 (lower level) of the Charlotte Convention Center. National Commander Clifford Smith will gavel the Convention to order at 6:00 p.m. on Friday, August 23rd then preside over three days of meetings and ceremonies. The National Convention is the governing body of the Sons. Delegates will elect National officers, vote on resolutions, consider and/or make amendments to the By-Laws of the

National Constitution of the Sons and complete business of the Sons for the fiscal year 2001-02.

Registration of delegates, alternate delegates and guests will run



from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Friday and from 8:00 a.m. to noon on Saturday the 24th. Delegate and alternate delegate credentials will be provided to a single representative from each Detachment. Individuals may not pick up credentials separately. Detachments must register with National Headquarters prior to August 8th in order to allow time for staff to print official delegate,

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More \$\$ than ever

by Patrick Shea
National CWF Chairman

Sons continue to excel at raising money for The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. When the reporting year concluded at the end of May, it was apparent Sons had set a new all-time high level of contributions, raising more than \$268,000. That total represents an amount more than \$20,000 (8%) above the S.A.L.'s national goal. It was also the most money contributed to the CWF by any branch of The American Legion Family tree.

Leading the fundraising charge was the Detachment of Ohio with contributions of more than \$53,000. The Detachments of Colorado, Indiana and Maryland each raised over \$20,000. Other double-digit Detachments included Texas, Pennsylvania, Vermont and Alabama.

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S.A.L. gains members in record numbers

The Sons of The American Legion is now an organization of more than a quarter million members. There are now more than 255,000 Sons in the U.S. and abroad. That's another consecutive year of all-time high membership. So far, 39 Detachments have exceeded their 100% goal and 33 of those Detachments have registered new all-time high membership numbers in the process.

The largest Detachment in the S.A.L. is still Indiana with more than 33,000 members (103%), but the Detachment of Pennsylvania is closing the gap and currently boasts more than 30,000 members (110%). The Detachment of Ohio has surpassed 26,600 (100%). Other large Detachments include New York (20,500 - 102%), Michigan (15,000 - 103%), Maryland (12,900 - 100%) and Illinois (11,700 - 100%).

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Onions run wild

Adventure Racing has come to The Sons of The American Legion.

The S.A.L. sponsored a team in last month's Wild Onion Urban Adventure Race in Indianapolis. The Concept is simple; a two man and one woman team race around the city of Indianapolis, run up and down the stairs of a 52 story building, in-line skate, bicycle, scooter, canoe, orienteer and rappel down a 140 foot building. All of this activity takes

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Reports worth their weight in gold

by Clifford Smith
National Commander

What a great year it has been! Membership is at another all-time high. Our Child Welfare donations have set another record. New Squadrons are being established every week. I want to congratulate all the members of our great organization for an exceptional job this year. We are certainly "Focusing on the Future".

Many Detachments have already held their conventions and some are still to come. I want to thank all of the officers and committee chairmen in every Detachment for all of their hard work this year. I also want to wish the best of success to all newly elected officers throughout the Sons.

In the midst of our celebration, please remember that the programs for

our veterans and the children of this great country do not end at your convention. There is no summer vacation for veterans or ailing children who are in the hospital. Our commitments to God and Country are a continuing process.

The key word of the month of August is REPORTS. I have been amazed as I traveled around the country this year at all the incredible accomplishments of our organization. It is time we let our communities, our states and our nation know about all we do. Historically we only get about six percent of the Squadrons to send in reports of all their hard work.

There are over 5,200 Squadrons in the Sons of The American Legion. I would love to see our National Chairman receiving boxes and boxes of reports to tabulate. It is time to toot your horn. Let's tell the world this

year has been one of the most successful ever. REPORT! REPORT! REPORT!

The National Convention is only a few short days away. I would love to see every Detachment, every District and every Squadron winning some type of National award. You and your fellow Sons work very hard all year long, so I'm asking you to give the National Organization a chance to honor you and them for all that has been done.

It has been an honor to serve as your National Commander this year. I will be forever grateful for all that's been done for me, but more importantly, for all you have done for the betterment of the Sons of The American Legion. Continue to keep your "Focus on the Future" and may God bless all of you.

More CWF

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By far, the Detachment of Colorado was the most efficient fundraising machine, contributing an average of \$9.57 per member, more than nine times the national goal of \$1 per member. The Detachment of Alabama averaged \$7.46 per member. North Dakota's total averaged \$6.60 per member. Vermont's total averaged \$4.73 per member. Other outstanding averaged included the Detachments of Texas (\$2.86), Washington (\$2.25), Louisiana (\$2.1*), Ohio (\$2.02) and Wyoming (\$2.02).

Convention in July. *Kissimmee, FL Squadron 10* donated \$1,000.

If your Squadron or Detachment sponsor CMN fundraisers, be sure to report your donations on your Children & Youth report form. You may also e-mail me at dpssalpnc@earthlink.net. Help us surpass Commander Smith's goal of \$100,000 before National Convention. Don't forget the Flag icons. This is an easy way to raise additional funds.

Smith were in attendance at Bristol. Danny Hurt, referee of the Harlem Globetrotters, was on hand to sign autographs. Local Police, Fire, and Sheriff's Departments contributed displays and support. A medivac helicopter paid a visit, as did McGruff The Crime Dog.

The *Detachment of Texas* has nearly 20 walkathons



planned and has sold over 300 "Josh" dogs. The *Detachment of Indiana* also had walkathons in Terre Haute and Cambridge City and raised nearly \$10,000 this spring. More walks are planned. The *Detachment of Florida* has raised over \$1,800 with more expected from their Detachment

We all help make miracles happen

by David P. Stephens
National CMN Chairman

The American Legion Family has been making miracles happen since the Sons of The American Legion became a partner with The Legion and The Legion Auxiliary in the children's Miracle Network. Sons have already received National attention, not only within The Legion Family, but also from CMN headquarters in Salt Lake City, UT.

Through the untiring efforts of Commander Butch Berlin, *Bristol, IN Squadron 143* successfully organized an American Legion Family-sponsored walkathon for the Children's Miracle Network this spring. Nearly \$64,000.00 was raised when 125 walkers completed a four mile walk. LaMar Williams, Associations Director with Children's Miracle Network, Deanna Pucci, School and Associations officer with the Riley Children's Hospital Telethon, and our own *S.A.L. National Commander Cliff*

running onions

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place over a grueling 130 mile course during a non-stop 24 hour period.

The American Legion has sponsored an adventure racing team made up of military personnel each of the past couple of years, using its "Team American Legion" sponsorship to promote support of the military, the Reconnect program and the Family Support Network.

Sons were asked to sponsor a second team specifically for the Wild Onion race. "Team S.A.L." consisted of Captain Steve Kreis, who is an S.A.L. member, Molly Jones-Hershey and Doug Hershey. Both Hersheys are Legionnaires.



"Team S.A.L." and "Team American Legion" were the most enthusiastic of all 44 teams participating. They worked together the entire race and tied for 5th place in 20 hours and 45 minutes. Both teams crossed the finish line arm-in-arm shouting "Team American Legion! Team Sons of The American Legion!"



The Teams' banners were prevalent at several checkpoints including The American Legion National Headquarters Checkpoint #12. That checkpoint was manned until 3:30 a.m. by Bill Sloan and Jack Querfield of National Headquarters, Sons

Past National Commander David Stephens and

Dorothy Stephens, Past Indiana 6th District President of The American Legion.

"This was the most positive community awareness promotion for The American Legion that I've seen in a long time," said PNC Stephens, who also serves as this year's National Children's Miracle Network Chairman.

Both Legion Teams were very popular throughout the race and the teams received cheers and a long round of applause when presented with their medals.

"Team American Legion" consisted of Mary Van Dyke, Vytenis Benetis and Jason Cappello. Captain Steve Kreis of "Team S.A.L." and Captain Mary Van Dyke of "Team American Legion" will be special guests at the National Convention in Charlotte.

More members

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The Department of France has gone the farthest over goal this year - 147%. Other Detachments doing an outstanding job of recruiting this year include Wyoming (129%), Oklahoma (117%), Vermont (116%), Philippines (114%), Utah (112%), Georgia (111%), Louisiana (111%), Tennessee (111%), Alabama (110%) and Florida (109%).

Record high membership rates continue in spite of a national renewal rate of only 84%. Just about one member in six did not renew his membership in the Sons this year. Detachments that have renewed higher percentage of members include France (98%), Hawaii (94%), Vermont (93%), Wisconsin (92%) and North Dakota (91%).

Fall N.L.I.C. dates/places

Now is the time to begin making plans to attend one of The American Legion National Leadership and Information conferences in your area. These two Regions will host meetings this fall:

September 19-21, 2002

Region 8 - Boise, Idaho

**DoubleTree Hotel
Boise Downtown**

1800 Fairview

Boise, ID 83702

\$84.00 S or D Occupancy + taxes.

Call 1 (800)-222-TREE or (208) 344-769

Region 4 - Dallas, Texas

**DoubleTree Hotel
at Lincoln Centre**

5410 LBJ Freeway

Dallas, TX 75240

\$99.00 S or D Occupancy + taxes.

Call (972) 934-8400

Ask for group rate for AMERICAN LEGION

Squadron news of note

Members of **Lakeland, FL Squadron 4** participated in the annual Lakeland Veterans Day Parade (right). The Squadron found a banner that was used by its members for parades in the 70's. It was a banner day for the Lakeland Squadron. Adjutant and Alt-NEC Jim Roberts was the keynote speaker for the Veterans Day Ceremony that followed.



The Detachment of Pennsylvania recognizes the importance of recognizing those who are doing outstanding work on behalf of the S.A.L. (below) Elizabethtown, PA Squadron 329 member Steve Kravic is presented the "Blue Cap Award" by Activities Director Skip Carnes. The award is patterned after The Legion's own "Blue Cap Award."



Members of **Belle Plain, MN Squadron 144** joined forces with other members of The Legion Family and local veterans groups to develop a Veterans' Memorial Park for the city. They acquired and restored a surplus military helicopter which is on display. More than 1,000 hours were spent working to ready the grounds last year. This year, flags, signs, lighting and benches have been installed and the park is now open.

Shortly after the events of 9-11-01, members of **Halfmoon, NY Squadron 1450** raffled off an afghan and turned over \$750 to disaster relief efforts. The afghan had been made by the girlfriend of one of the members and she donated her profits, too. The Squadron was also honored this year to have a past Commander, Rick Tremblay, chosen to run with the Olympic Torch. As a result of the run, Rick persuaded a member of the U.S. Olympic luge team to come to the Post and sign autographs for the many young kids who attended.

Young Juan Rosales thought he would have a chance to meet his favorite TV star, Bart Simpson, when he traveled to Springfield, IL for this year's Lincoln Birthday Pilgrimage. Instead, he met **National Commander Cliff Smith**. (below). The young Squadron adjutant sent Cliff a letter shortly afterward saying, "My future is brighter because I have a National Commander like you." D'ohhh!



Warwick, RI Squadron 43 held a "Benefit For Heroes" fundraiser. The money they raised was matched by a local transport company. Meanwhile, North **Kingston, RI Squadron 12** also raised money for the disaster relief and matched it with other funds. In all, the two Squadrons were responsible for raising close to \$4,500 to help out in the wake of the 9-11-01 attacks.

Sons from **Blaine, WA Squadron 86** have been putting flags on the graves of veterans for more than a decade. It wouldn't be the "rust belt" if it didn't rain in the Pacific Northwest, and that's just exactly what it did this year as the flags were being placed (below).



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

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

or send via e-mail to: mpipher@indiana.edu

Oh brother where art thou?

by Mike Pipher, Editor
National Update Newsletter

Editor's Note: In the spring edition of this newsletter, I posed a challenge to find the S.A.L.'s oldest members, those who have held membership in the Sons the longest, and the families that have the most brothers who are all members.

To put it mildly, the response has been overwhelming! In fact, we couldn't begin to print all of the people and pictures received in the past few months. So what I plan to do is make this an on-going effort. You keep sending in names, pictures and stories. I'll keep printing them until the well runs dry.

James Armstrong (right) is a Sergeant at Arms of **Philadelphia, PA Squadron 385**. At age 74 he is believed to be the oldest active S.A.L. member in the city.



Arthur Wells, Jr. (right) turned 78 this year. In 1933, at the age of eight, he became a charter member of **East Orange, NJ Squadron 73**. He has been a continuous member of the S.A.L. for 69 years. He was also one of the first members of a Sons drum and bugle corps (top left). Because of his service in the Combat Coast Guard during WWII (top right), Arthur also holds an American Legion card with 56 continuous years proudly stamped on it.



Mrs. Bernadette McKenzie of New Baltimore, MI sent us a letter telling about her family's proud support of veterans. Her grandmother was a widow with 10 children. Six of her sons marched off to WWII, possibly the most of any family. One of the family's daughters is still alive and has logged over 30,000 hours of volunteer work for vets. Mrs. McKenzie's husband, Daniel is a member of the **Peck, MI S.A. L. Squadron** and his father was a Korean war vet.



(below) Arch Bishop William Francis Forbes, at age 83, is the oldest member of the Sons in the Detachment of Tennessee. He has 22 continuous years of membership, has held various offices and is currently the Detachment chaplain

Fred Grau is now 81 years old. His father was a member of **Norwood, OH American Legion Post 123** but had to sign up the boys at Cincinnati, OH Squadron 480, "The Outpost." He started playing the bugle in high school and wound up in a Legion drum and bugle corps (see Page 8). He's a WWII veteran and an honorary Life Member of the S.A.L. (above).



This is what an S.A.L. card looked like when Richard Bennett was four years old. His original cards from 1941 and 1942 have been lost over the years. He's still a member of **Elgin, IL Squadron 57**. Richard's father served, not once, but twice in WWI and had two separate honorable discharges. His late mother and late sister both served as Presidents of the Elgin Auxiliary Unit.

The inside scoop on a sweet deal

Dairy Queen stores all over the country have partnered with The American Legion to raise money for the Children's Miracle Network. As a result, Legion Family members were the beneficiaries of a sweet deal last month. Proclaiming July 6th as "American Legion Family/Military Day," Dairy Queen stores served free five ounce sundaes to Legion Family members and military personnel in uniform.



The give-away was just a promotional beginning to a month-long campaign designed to honor our troops fighting the war on terrorism, our veterans who fought in past wars and also to raise \$1 million for the Children's Miracle Network. Dairy Queen has dubbed it their "Red, White and Blue" promotion, featuring an appropriately colored All American Blizzard.

Many stores allowed Legion Family members to set up information booths and sign up new members.



Important VA & Reports

by Thomas R. Milligan
National VA & R Chairman

For more than 50 years, the Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) Program has provided assistance to hospitalized veterans through the hard work of its volunteers. Established in 1946 with eight charter members, the VAVS program today comprises national veteran, civic and service organizations. It is the largest volunteer program in the federal government. As a member of the National Advisory Committee of the VAVS, the Sons of The American Legion can help set policy for the VAVS volunteer. In fiscal year 2000, the VAVS program had more than 13 million contributed hours of volunteer service and an estimated \$40 million in gifts and donations, and yet it is impossible to quantify the importance of the VAVS volunteer.

I want to thank everyone who has helped in "our" service to the veteran and I would ask you to encourage others to do likewise. I also want to encourage you to take some time and fill out a VAVS report form.

Get involved with Banner presentations

Sons have played an active role in presenting the Blue Star Banner to families of the U.S. Military. Pictured below is *Past National Commander, David Stephens* presenting Leslie and Paul Spencer a banner. Paul is a member of *American Legion Post 34 in Indianapolis* and has just reenlisted for six years in the U.S. Army Reserves. He completed his 20th year last March and feels it is his duty to re-enlist. Paul has seen active duty during three separate hostilities and is now in Afghanistan for a nine month tour. His wife Leslie, daughter Kristen and son J.P. are all supportive of his service. Blue Star Banners are available through National Emblem Sales.

Proud presentation. Past National Commander David Stephens recently presented a Blue Star Banner to this Indianapolis Army Reservist and his wife. Sons have assisted with similar banner presentations all around the country.

Last year I a little over 400 reports, which represents less than 10 percent of all S.A.L. Squadrons. Incredibly, that 10 percent generated over 160,000 volunteer hours and over \$1.6 million in donations of cash and goods. Just think what the other 90 percent did!

If you think the reports gather dust and wind up in a circular file, you'd be wrong. Volunteer hours are tabulated and monetary values are given to donations. Results are turned over to The Legion and combined with their and the Auxiliary's totals. The resulting numbers give us buying power; when The American Legion speaks, elected officials listen. When The American Legion goes before Congress to fight for our nation's veterans, they are respected because leaders know our members put action and money where our mouths are. This is why one little Squadron report, maybe a list of \$25 and 25 hours, is so important. Even an ocean is made up of tiny drops of water.

So sit back and think about the past year. Has anyone in your Squadron helped a veteran in any way? Call your VA&R chairman and tell him you want to be a part of the complete process. I'd be more than happy to review 800 reports or more this year.

National history project

by Joe Mayne
Past National Commander

We hold parades and salutes on the right days with the proper amount of respect. War Memorials have been built. The battles have been commemorated in stone. The names and the dates all correctly engraved.

Yet, only part of the job is done. As Sons of The American Legion we are not only proud possessors of the Priceless Heritage, we are actually the trustees. Marking dates and erecting grand stone walls and malls cannot convey the lessons of history contained in the first hand accounts.

Two years ago, *La Crosse Wisconsin Congressman, and Squadron 52 member, Ron Kind* authored, and Congress unanimously passed, legislation to create the Veterans History Project at the Library of Congress. The goal of the Project is to collect the oral histories of our war veterans and those who served to support them.

In addition to audio or video recordings, the Veterans History Project accepts photocopies of any written material such as letters, clippings and official papers as well as photographs.

This material is sent to the Library of Congress and preserved in a digital on-line collection. Future generations and researchers will have access to these important, firsthand accounts of our nation's Wartime history.

I join Congressman Kind in encouraging our membership to take an active role in the Veterans History Project by interviewing a veteran. Start with the members of your local American Legion Family. Start the interview by asking about their experiences knowing that our goal is to transform those memories into a permanent historical record.

Start by raising the office of Historian to a new level, or appoint an official Archivist to spearhead this undertaking.

Visit www.loc.gov/folklife/vets/ for the details on how your Squadron can start now. There is no other organization better suited for this project than the Sons. We know about the price of freedom. We know the value of applying the lessons of history. Congressman Kind's Veterans History Project is a call to action.

We hold parades and salutes on the right days with the proper amount of respect. War Memorials have been built. The battles have been commemorated in stone. The names and the dates all correctly engraved.

Legion Magazine price cut for Sons

Here's another way Sons can use their membership to save money. Sons, Auxiliary members and widows of Legionnaires are eligible to subscribe to The American Legion Magazine for only \$6 a year, less than half the \$15 regular subscription. Legion Magazine is devoted to covering issues important to veterans and their families. Legion Posts, Auxiliary Units and S.A.L. Squadrons are also eligible to acquire Legion Magazine at the special price.

In addition to news, upcoming editions of the magazine will include a series of advertisements promoting benefits available to members of The American Legion Family. The ads focus on five important areas; travel services, financial services, life and health insurance, home services and health services.

To take advantage of this special offer, send a letter (include your nine digit member number) and \$6 check or money order to The American Legion P.O. Box 1954, Dept: MAG02S, Indianapolis, IN 46206.

www.legion.org/publications/subscrnew.htm

Promote your Home Page on the Web

www.sal.legion.org

Sons Connect in Georgia

The Department of Defense has initiated what is known as the "Reconnect Program." It's an open invitation from the military for groups like The American Legion to establish stronger ties between military and civilian communities.

When a National Guard/Reserve unit returned to the U.S. from a tour in Bosnia earlier this year, members of *Winder, GA Post 53* held a big homecoming for them. Although the party was a success, not many members of the unit chose to join The Legion.

Then something unusual happened. A group of Georgia S.A.L. Squadrons, led by *Duluth Squadron 251*, took a motorcycle ride. The ride lasted all day and was called "Operation Reconnect." The cyclists visited six Legion Posts and raised enough money to pay for 253 memberships in The American Legion for the Guard/Reservists. Through the efforts of Squadron 251, *Buford Squadron 127, Snellville Squadron 232, Monroe Squadron 64* and other members of The American Legion Family, there are now 253 new members at Winder, GA Post 53.

Detachment Junior Vice Commander and Squadron 251 Commander Bob Brown presented a check to Department Commander Joe McDonald at the Department's Spring Conference.

It would be hard to find a better example of Squadrons and Posts working together for a better Legion.