

Legion 'pledges' allegiance

With the Supreme Court announcement that it will decide whether it is constitutional for public-school teachers to lead students in the Pledge of Allegiance because of the words "under God," the nation's largest veterans organization has pledged its commitment to the legal battle. The 2.8 million-member American Legion is prepared to fight this at the highest judicial level for the right of public-school teachers and students to voluntarily observe the time-honored tradition.

"This case is bigger than the Pledge," says American Legion National Commander John Brieden. "What is really at stake here is the moral direction of the nation."

The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco ruled 2-1

in June 2002 that reciting the Pledge in public schools is unconstitutional. The court reaffirmed its decision in February, amending the ruling to say that "teacher-led" recitation of the Pledge is unconstitutional. The rulings came after Michael Newdow, an atheist and father of an elementary school girl, filed the case against the United States, Congress, California and two school districts. Newdow's daughter lives with her mother, who has sole custody of the young girl. The daughter attends public school in Elk Grove, Calif., near Sacramento and according to reports regularly attends church.

Newdow's complaint alleged

If you have story ideas or photos for the next issue of *National Update* they must reach us by **February 1, 2004**

that, "his daughter is injured when she is compelled to 'watch and listen as her state-employed teacher in her state-run school leads her classmates in a ritual proclaiming that there is a God and that ours is one nation under God.'"

In 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed legislation inserting "under God" after the words "one nation." The American Legion supported the addition.

The Sons of The American Legion

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NATIONAL UPDATE

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A grateful nation honors its 'greatest generation'

It has been ten years since President Clinton signed legislation authorizing the American Battle Monuments Commission to construct a memorial dedicated to all who served in World War II. Construction is about to end and the National World War II Memorial will be dedicated in Washington, D.C on

Saturday, May 29, 2004. Members of the Sons of The American Legion are invited and encouraged to play an important role on that special occasion. It is being called "National Dedication Day - A Grateful Nation Remembers." At the same time a three-tiered event takes

place in the nation's capitol, it will be mirrored in countless communities across the United States. Sons are encouraged to participate in two ways: come to Washington, D.C. and join activities surrounding the new monument, or help plan and execute a *National Dedication Day* in your own community.

No Matter Where

No matter where you are on May 29, the same three events should be taking place:

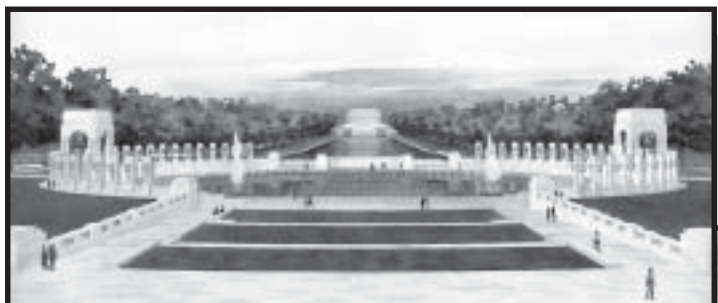
A Prayer Breakfast begins the day at 7am, conducted by The American Legion Chaplain and should include clergy of all denominations and faiths. All citizens are invited. A guest speaker should provide insights of faith and its impact on World War II veterans. It can be conducted at the Post in smaller towns or larger venues in more populated places.

The American Legion - Children's Miracle Network Walk-a-thon should start around 8:30am and help raise funds for today's

hospitalized children who are the legacy of the "greatest generation."

The World War II Exposition/Celebration should be a day-long festival in which the entire community can participate. A large outdoor park, fairground or similar location should provide enough space to accommodate a wide array of activities. Official

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The National World War II Memorial will be the first national memorial dedicated to all who served during World War II. It will honor all military veterans of the war, the citizens on the home front, the nation at large, and the high moral purpose and idealism that motivated the nation's call to arms.



Terrible reminder

Sons along the nation's eastern seaboard are still picking up the pieces following Hurricane Isabel. Many Legion Family members found themselves at the mercy of one of nature's most destructive forces. Many are also glad they belong to The Legion Family and qualify for benefits through the National Emergency Fund.

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Together we will build a better tomorrow

by Neal Warnken
National Commander

I'd like to thank each and every one of you for the confidence you've placed in me by letting me serve you as your National Commander.

"Building a Better Tomorrow" will be our key phrase for the year. I believe it is within our grasp to make a better future by building on and supporting the programs that we already have in place. We can accomplish this by growing our membership and renewing our commitments to our various programs.

The membership goal is 300,000 members. This is less than a ten percent increase of our present membership. How do we reach it? By "harvesting our membership for the future," by recruiting, retaining and reinstating. We must remember that membership is everyone's responsibility.



We have set a goal for The Sons of The American Legion to raise \$500,000 for Children and Youth projects. This includes the Child Welfare Foundation, Children's Miracle Network, Special Olympics and many other youth programs that we now support and will continue to support in the future. Please remember that this is the 50th Anniversary of The Child Welfare Foundation, a philanthropic body which was born inside The American Legion. Let's continue to be the frontrunner in donations to this worthwhile organization.

A great deal of information can be found in this issue of the *National Update* newsletter dealing with activities surrounding the dedication of the World War II Memorial in May. American Legion National Commander John Brieden, Auxiliary National President Katherine Morris and I will

be in Washington together to publicly honor our "greatest generation" and make a concentrated effort to promote The American Legion Family. I strongly encourage you to join in this important effort. You and I enjoy the rights and benefits bequeathed to us by our forefathers' service to God and country. Together, all branches make our American Legion Family tree stronger.



The Sons' newest National Commander hails from the heart of America. A lifelong Midwesterner, 35-year-old Neal Warnken's hometown is Hutchinson, KS, where he joined the Sons in 1991 as a charter member of Squadron 68. Neal's father, Dave, is a Vietnam vet and a Past Commander of The Legion's Department of Kansas. Mom, Lorraine, wife, Patti, and stepdaughter, Lani, are active members of the Auxiliary. The guys all belong to the Sons: brother Troy, sons Adam, Taylor and stepson Jake. Lani and Jake have attended Girls'/Boys' State s.

Neal attended Hutchinson Community College. He and his dad operate the family farm and a diesel repair shop. His service to the Sons has been at every administrative level. Asked about his most memorable experiences, Neal will tell you about opportunities he's had laying wreaths at the Viet Nam wall, the Tomb of the Unknowns, and taking part in the dedication of the Soldier's Home in Winfield, KS.

"Talking to veteran's as I have traveled during my campaign has given me a new awareness of their diverse needs," he says. "I've enjoyed working with children and teaching them flag etiquette and working on the Five Star and Ten Ideals programs. One of my favorite things is meeting veterans and listening to their stories."

Holiday gift idea: Legion Family

Just in time for the holidays, The American Legion Family is set to offer a gift-giving service that can provide a lifetime of opportunities: a gift membership for someone serving in uniform, a fellow veteran or their family members. This special holiday gift membership service will be available on-line only until Christmas Eve.

"When you walk into the room of a veteran and see his face light up just because you have taken the time to be there, it's unbelievable," said S.A.L. National Commander Neal Warnken.

New online applications for The Legion, Auxiliary (Senior and Junior) are now available on the Web at www.legion.org. Anyone wishing to join or purchase a membership for a family member in The Legion or Auxiliary can pay dues with a credit card through the on-line service. Those wishing to join the Sons can use the Sons' Web site at www.sal.legion.org to make membership connections with a Squadron near them. Membership eligibility requirements are provided on the sites. The program offers a holiday welcome letter and options for attractive holiday e-cards to announce the gift membership purchase to the recipient.

S.A.L. can join NALPA

Sons who are involved with the publishing of newsletters (hard copy or electronic) within The Legion Family are eligible to join NALPA, the National American Legion Press Association.

Founded 75 years ago as an adjunct to the Legion's early Publications Committee, NALPA was established to facilitate communications from the National organization to the Post level within The American Legion. Through a network of active members, NALPA fulfills the mission by encouraging idea exchanges among members, promoting the development of local communications, advancing training through information dissemination, enhancing professional development, promoting the Legion's goals and

acting as a voice of the association's membership.

"We like to think of NALPA as the image makers of The American Legion," explains George Hooten, Executive Director of NALPA and a 70-year member of the S.A.L. "We strive to let people know what The American Legion is, especially on the Post level."

Hooten describes NALPA as a professional association of Legion Family public relations officers, editors and staff members of publications who come together to enhance their trades. NALPA helps Posts and Departments get their message out.

"We have found that Posts, Squadrons and Units with newsletters have a more active membership, and membership that is greater in numbers," says Hooten. "People get that newsletter in their hands, they know what is going on in their

Weaving the Web for P.R.

by Gary Winters
Nat'l P.R. Chairman

The S.A.L. National Public Relations Commission oversees the upkeep of our National Web site. The Commission works in concert with other National Commissions and Committees and assists them in achieving goals associated with public, media, internal, and external relations.

One of our goals is to provide each Detachment, District and Squadron with news about what's going on and information that is useful. If you have articles and pictures of events from your community activities, please send them to us. If you have ideas of things you would like *your* National Web site to include, please let us know that, too. We're here to help. You can e-mail me from the link on-line.

www.sal.legion.org
Your Home on the Web

organization, and they share it with other potential members."

Membership has its privileges. Sons who are paid-up members of NALPA (\$15 annual dues) have an opportunity to subscribe to The Legion's Dispatch newsletter for only \$6 annually, a two-thirds savings. Members are also eligible to submit their publications to the annual Best Papers contest. Several Sons publications have won NALPA national awards in recent years. For more information, go to www.nalpa.legion.org.

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dedication of the World War II Monument will be televised live across the country beginning at 2pm (Washington, D.C. time). President Bush has been invited to accept the memorial on behalf of the nation.

Come to Washington

Those who are able to travel to the nation's capitol will find a tribute made up of events spread out over four days.

The Smithsonian Institution's Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, in partnership with the American Battle Monuments Commission, will produce a National World War II Reunion on the Mall. The four-day event (May 27-30) will provide a venue for members of the World War II generation to gather together, meet former comrades, record oral histories, and enjoy 1940's music and World War II equipment displays. The open-air and tented attractions will be exhibited from late morning to early evening and will be open to the public at no charge. An important goal of the reunion is to educate all generations on the importance of World War II to our nation and the world.

Candlelight Walk-a-thon

A National Candlelight Walk-a-thon will be held Friday evening, May 28. While the walk-a-thon is designed as a Legion Family activity, it is open to the general public. Posts, Units and Squadrons throughout the nation are encouraged to send at least one representative to Washington, D.C. to participate in the National Candlelight Walk-a-thon. Each representative will carry a completed scroll with the names of persons within their community who served during World War II. The entire listing will be given to the World War II Memorial Committee

for entry into the World War II Registry. The walk-a-thon route will be less than two miles and end near the new World War II Memorial. Advance registration forms are available through Legion National Headquarters, department offices and on-line. Adult registration is \$25. Youth (under 25) registration is \$15. All registered walkers will receive a commemorative T-shirt. All funds raised will serve sick or traumatized children.

A candlelight memorial service will immediately follow the

walk-a-thon at 9pm Friday. The theme for the service is gratitude for the sacrifices of the past and hope for the possibilities of the future, linking the service of the World War II veteran with the needs of children.

Saturday's events will be evident in Washington and in thousands of communities all across the nation.

ABMC will also present a "Salute to World War II Veterans" at the MCI Center in downtown Washington. The Salute will feature Armed Forces personnel in a musical and narrative tribute to veterans. Three performances are planned: an afternoon matinee and an evening show on Friday, May 28, and an evening performance on Saturday,

May 29. The performances will be free and open to the public.

A two-hour television special featuring patriotic music by nationally famous choirs, major

symphonies and military music groups will be broadcast on Sunday the 30th. A host of top name music, screen and sports celebrities will anchor the program.

The Whole Weekend

National Dedication Day falls, by design, on Memorial Day weekend and is intended to be a happy celebration of service. It should not

replace solemn services of Memorial Day. In fact, all participants should be invited to commemorate our fallen heroes at appropriate ceremonies on Monday, May 31.

What can I Do?

Sons will play a vital role in all of these events by assisting their Legion Post in whatever capacity they are needed. Mobilize your Squadron and begin notifying members of these events. Share information about these events and start now to assign responsibilities to those who are willing to help.

Young people are the recipients of the freedoms bought with blood by our World War II veterans. One way to get a community's youth involved in National Dedication Day is to coordinate

a contest allowing area students to pay tribute to the "greatest generation" in their community. Work with local school authorities and perhaps some business sponsors to conduct a contest in which students can use various forms of expression to honor them. Schools will not be in session on May 29, so encourage school authorities to promote attendance of both the children and their parents at these events.

Registry of Remembrances

Any U.S. citizen who helped win the war, whether a veteran or someone on the home front, is eligible for inclusion in the Registry of Remembrances. Names in the Registry will be accessible on the site at the World War II Memorial and will forever be linked to the memorial's bronze and granite representations of their sacrifice and achievement. Names are already available on a searchable directory located on the memorial's Web site.

It's also possible to add a photograph of the individual. A Certificate of Enrollment can also be purchased. Visit the memorial's Web site for specific information regarding the Registry of Remembrances.

For more information

www.wwiimemorial.com

1-800-639-4WW2

also

www.legion.org/dedication/

www.loc.gov/vets



Squadron News

One popular component of the World War II Memorial will be its Registry of Remembrances. **Christiana, PA Post 865** already has its own Book of Remembrances thanks to 20-year S.A.L. member Bill Snyder. He collected the pictures of more than 350 Post members (all ages/wars) and published them in a complimentary book.

The Stars and Stripes are shining deep in the heart of Texas because **Plano, TX Sq 321** was instrumental in erecting this 80-ft flag pole. They also provided lights and landscaping, all made possible through donations and over 650 hours of labor. (Left)



Members of **Venango, NE Sq 270** have plenty to smile about

having just presented the Omaha's Children's Hospital with a Spinoza Bear. Because they're such good neighbors,

they donated a second Spinoza Bear to the Children's Hospital in

Denver. (Above)



On July 21 members of **Susquehanna, MD Sq 135**

presented six "Josh Dogs" to the Johns Hopkins Children's Center. The Josh Dogs will be given to the children who are in the center for a serious operation or illness. The purpose of the Josh Dogs (Above) is not only to provide comfort during a difficult time but also to help explain to the children some of what they are experiencing.



The **Detachment of Illinois' 1st Division** is helping with plans to honor WWII veterans in Chicago. A new memorial is being built in front of the historic control tower of the Glenview Naval Air Station (closed in 1993). Sons were there for the ribbon cutting and they also purchased a memorial brick in the new park remembering naval pilot and war hero **Butch O'Hare**.

A record crowd of 150 braved gusting winds and flood threats to attend the

service. (Above)



Detachment of New Jersey's National POW/MIA Recognition Day Watchfire. Threats from the wake of Hurricane Isabel did not stop the 12th Annual Watchfire. Flames of freedom burnt throughout the night. At dusk, songs, poems, prayers, and the reading of names

of those from, New Jersey still not home from WWI through the present, began. It was followed by a Flag Retirement ceremony removing 6,000 patriotic banners from service. (Above)



The guys at **Kenova, WV Sq 93** have good reason to be proud: 1440 volunteer hours on fundraising projects, 305 hours

assisting the Post, contributing \$4,000 to vets and their families...and more! (Above)

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

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or send to: mpipher@indiana.edu

How we gonna keep 'em down on the farm...?

by Gary Swanlund
National Membership Chairman

Congratulations to all of the 100% Detachments for the just ending membership year; a job well done. Membership is a year round "crop" in the Sons of the American Legion and the work starts again. We continue to reach all time highs every year in membership thanks to work that is done within the Detachments. "Harvesting Our Membership for the Future" is now the 2003-04 membership theme. Membership continues to grow each year and with the help of our "farmers," this year will yield a "bumper crop."

Our focus, our "seed," will be renewals. Become educated on the programs for which the Sons of The American Legion stand. Reach out to your members, and invite them to become active. Informed members are active members. Work membership early and stay ahead throughout the year by setting goals to meet all of the target dates.

The end of December is also the official end to last year's membership totals and it's worth noting that 40 Detachments met or exceeded their membership goals for the past year. At least 34 Detachments set new all-time highs.

Updated Recruitment Pin forms will again be available on the S.A.L. Web page. Each Detachment will also be mailed a copy. Membership Committee members from each region will be responsible for distributing the pins. Please contact me if you have problems receiving your pins. Provide your members the recognition they deserve and use these pins as a membership tool. American Legion and Auxiliary

Sons by the Numbers (as of November)

Membership Goal 300,000
Current Status 65,000 (22%)
Leading Detachment Wisconsin (51%)
Renewal Rate 87%
CWF Contributions \$47,428 (17%)

Sons take part in "Operation Crayon"

Sons are very good at responding to calls for help with American Legion programs. The newest call-to-action is called "Operation Crayon." The program solicits school supplies, toiletries, and some types of children's garments so that American troops can distribute them to children in need in the countries where the troops are deployed.

More information about "Operation Crayon" can be found on the Web at www.allamericansoldiers.com/operation_crayon.php, including an address where donations can be sent. Links to other troop support initiatives are also found on the site.

"This is a great way for Posts, Units and Squadrons to support our troops as they promote goodwill in war torn countries," says

Joe March,
Director of
Public
Relations
for The
American
Legion.

members are also eligible to earn Recruitment Pins.

For those doing an outstanding job of recruiting, you have the opportunity to win a Blue Brigade jacket. To be eligible you must sign 30 new members by next summer. Renewed and reinstated members are not counted. You must also submit the appropriate award form before July 1st.

Until next time...plant, grow and harvest our 2003-04 membership.

