The Department Oratorical Contest was held Saturday, March 5, 2022, at the War Memorial Building, Trenton. Competition began at 10 a.m. Three orators competed, representing three districts: Ruhi Kulkarni, a sophomore at Monroe High School, sponsored by Post 522, Middlesex County; Justin Del Valle, a senior at Leonia High School, sponsored by Post 1, Leonia; Benjamin Duvelson, a junior at Union High School, sponsored by Post 35, Union.

In photo, from left: Department Commander Dan Dunn; Justin Del Valle, third place; Ruhi Kulkarni, second place; Benjamin Duvelson, first place; Dan Channel, contest chair. Duvelson will be going on to the national competition in Indianapolis.
Hello, again, my fellow Legionnaires and Legion Family members.

It’s hard to believe this incredible year is almost over and what a great ride it is. As this will be my last column, I need to thank the incredible men and women who I have had the pleasure and honor to serve with and for. The entire office staff, who every year must help the new commander navigate the year, have been so helpful and welcoming that I cannot put into words the thanks, gratitude, appreciation and respect that I have for all of them. John, Keith, Tammie, Lois, Tricia, Ken and Judith, thank you, thank you, thank you.

This year, we had some obstacles to overcome after the previous two years of COVID protocols. Our officers, too many to list, have really stepped up their game. The men and women who continue to volunteer their time to make a difference in the lives of veterans, day in and day out, will be something that they should all be proud of. My dept. vice commanders, Fran, Jack, Sam, Bill and Tony, were tasked with changing some of the duties of the position. They stepped up with training sessions across their districts; and the training isn’t finished yet as we try to roll out KOVA sessions in each district. PDC Bob Looby has been a driving force to ensure we Keep Our Veterans Alive. Please continue to do “Buddy Checks”. A phone call, email, text message or a brief visit can go a long way.

Our year has seen us travel across the state and included a trip to Washington, DC. I had the honor of placing a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier on our visit to Arlington Cemetery. To be able to stand on hallowed ground, surrounded by heroes, is an honor I will always cherish. At the time I am writing this, we have visited 19 of 21 counties and have scheduled our visit to the last two (Salem & Hudson), soon. We have only attended a few testimonial dinners as many of our counties have switched to accommodate longer terms because of lack of help at the county levels; but we continue to do what we have to do.

Our membership is getting close to 90 percent. With a little more of a push, we can, finally, hit our goal of 100 percent for the first time in approximately 20 years. I am asking you to, please, push for those members to join your post. Show them the importance of the post in the community. If your post is involved, they will want to join. Maybe they just don’t know what we do or who we really are. You can show them; bring them into the organization and mentor them to make them an important part of helping veterans.

Because of all the hard work by Larry Bishop, project manager, our Legion Family project has surpassed our goal. That doesn’t mean we have stopped taking donations, as we can still utilize the monies to help our veterans on different levels. We can use the funds to support other Legion programs so we can help more veterans or their families in need.

So, while my term may be winding down, we still have a lot of things we need to accomplish with the help of all of you. I look forward to continuing to serve in the BEST veteran’s service organization, and will be ever grateful for this opportunity given to me by all of you.

We are almost done with the 2021-2022 Legion year. I bet that is music to your ears. There have been some ups, such as COVID trending better and exceeding Commander Dunn’s goal for the department project, to name a few. There have, also, been some downs, mainly the debacle from national with MyLegion/Personify. However, we have persevered through it all and are looking at bright skies ahead.

Speaking of bright skies, Commander Dunn, an Air Force veteran, flew the Dept. of NJ through all sorts of weather and handled his aircraft like a seasoned pilot. He traveled, and continues to travel, throughout NJ. Being in Middlesex County, central to most of our state, he has been all over this great state and represented you well.

As we enter the month of May, there is still a lot to do before Commander Dunn’s Legion year is complete. Even though membership is always at the forefront and we want you to keep those cards coming in, please don’t forget your Buddy Checks. It is of utmost importance to look out for our fellow veterans. Just a quick call to let someone know you are thinking about them will go a long way.

Cover photo taken at the Tomb of the Unknowns, Arlington, VA, Feb. 28, 2022, where Department Commander Daniel Dunn presented a wreath. A big thanks to Ken Pulchlopek for taking pictures in the cold.

New Jersey Legionnaire
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**Do not send anything in pdf format**

For submission guidelines refer to the Press Release 101 booklet on the department website in the Public Relations Forms section.

Statements contributed by individual writers may not agree with the endorsed position of the department or editor and will reflect the opinion of the contributor only.

Articles submitted may be edited for space and/or clarity.

Deadline for the summer issue is July 1, 2022
Headquarters is still in the process of transitioning with new technology, and I expect this coming year to show improvement from last year. I, along with the dept. staff, appreciate your patience and understanding this past year. Many changes were made as far as committees, policies and procedures, and we will be working with the Moving Forward Ad Hoc Committee with implementation of continued updates and changes.

I would like to thank Commander Dunn, the dept. officers, the Trenton staff and everyone for their support this year. Let’s complete Commander Dunn’s year on a high note as he prepares to land on a Naval ship anchored near Wildwood with leading candidate Steve Fisher at the helm.

What is Your “Why”?  
Anthony Gladden  
Dept. Vice Commander

From Dec 11 – 17, 2021, I had the humbling honor to represent the McKaig-Test Mullen American Legion Post 455; The GREAT County of Ocean—WHOOOP!; the Dept. of NJ; as well as our national organization at the highly acclaimed National American Legion College. This was a major highlight in my Legion career, not to mention my life. Since the re-boot of the National American Legion College in 1999, I am the 12th graduate from the Dept. of NJ. This weeklong course challenged me in ways that allowed me to demonstrate and use skills that I have learned, not just from The Legion, but my 21 plus years of service in the U.S. Air Force, as well as my life.

One of the lessons during National American Legion College, was about “MY WHY”. This struck me as profound, as I recalled that as my three terms as commander of Post 455, during nearly every installation I conducted during my three terms as Ocean County commander, and more recently as a dept. vice commander of NJ District 5 (Atlantic, Camden, Cape May, and Ocean counties), I ALWAYS asked WHY are you HERE? WHY are you, me, us, HERE? So, WHAT is your WHY?

We are members of The American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary, and Sons of the American Legion for a reason. A WHY! WHY did you join? WHY do you renew your membership? WHY did you take an office or committee to chair? WHY did you not run for office? WHY do you try to get potential members to join? Does your membership fulfill you? WHY or WHY not? Do you understand the mission of The American Legion? WHY or WHY not? I am sure you get where I am going. Merriam Webster Dictionary defines WHY as “the cause, reason, or purpose “. We must understand that we all have our own WHYS, and often our WHYS can change as our situations change.

WHY did I, Tony Gladden, join The American Legion? I joined to get a discount on a hall rental for my retirement party when I retired from the Air Force. That’s right. I was told that members got a discount, so I filled out an application. In Aug. 2009, I was voted and included in the Post 455 membership rolls. Funny thing is, we never had the party at the post due to a scheduling conflict.

WHY did I stay and get involved? You can thank Charline, my wife, for that. She told me that I could help my post in some way with my experience from the military.

See—my WHY changed.

WHY did I run for post commander? Many Legion Family members at the time convinced me that I could make a difference. I was very pensive, but nevertheless I ran and held the office for three years straight.

AGAIN, my WHY changed.

We all have our cause, reason, or purpose - our WHY. We must keep asking ourselves WHY, as our WHYS can and may often change as we learn more about the principals of our organization. Is it true that our cause, reason or purpose, may have been motivated by others around us? Absolutely. This begs us to understand that our WHY may not be an individual WHY. Hmm... wait; what... yes, the cause, reason or purpose, for your WHY may be due to the need or wants of a group of others around you. Your WHY can change due to the WHYS of others. It is important for us all to be aware that our WHY can change the WHYS of others around us, as well as be changed by the people around us. You may have an insight, or a skill and ability to influence others’ WHYs. Others around you could influence the cause, reason or purpose of the WHY for you.

As a member of this great organization, it is important for us to continue to challenge, not only ourselves, but others around us; to ask what the cause, reason or purpose is for what we are working together to achieve

So... WHAT IS YOUR WHY?

Membership
Rich Godfrey, Chair

Spring is here and before you know it, we will be celebrating our 103rd year at our convention in Wildwood in June. As of this writing, NJ, is in 38th place nationally with 31,484 paid and at 87.24 percent our goal for 2022 of 36,089, with 4,605 to go to make our goal by the end of June. So, any Legionnaire who has not submitted their dues, please send in what you can. The American Legion, Dept. of New Jersey needs your help so that we can keep up all the good things that we do for our veterans, their families and the communities in which we live. Help us to continue to support the Four Pillars in which The American Legion was founded. We cannot do this alone; we need your help and support.

As the National Commander stated, we simply cannot let the challenges of COVID make us complacent. Our veterans, youth and communities need us. For example, how would our members maintain shelters or our posts recover from severe damage caused by a national disaster if we did not have programs and assistance like the National Emergency Fund or Temporary Financial Assistance programs? When wildfires ravaged the west and tornadoes struck the south, The American Legion was there providing vital assistance to our members and the communities. The only way we were able to do this is through a strong and committed membership.

We must ensure there is ‘No Veteran Left Behind ‘and that means growing our numbers in every dept. Our country needs a legion of forces to serve our veterans and communities. So, let us renew our commitment, renew our efforts and renew our membership to make 2022 a very prosperous year. We cannot do it without you. Stay safe and I hope to see you all in Wildwood.

VA Medical Centers
Lyons, NJ 908-647-0180
East Orange, NJ 973-676-1000
Candidates’ Profiles

Steven Fisher
Candidate for Department Commander

Steven Fisher was born and raised in Philadelphia, entering active duty in the U.S. Navy after graduating Saint John Neumann High School in 1989. He was stationed in Orlando, FL, and then Groton, CT, to complete his training. He then served onboard the USS Seahorse (SSN-669) stationed in Charleston, SC, as a FTD3 (SS) until Nov. 1993 when he left active duty.

He entered the U.S. Naval Reserve in Jan. 1994, and served onboard the USS Monterey (CG-61), home port Mayport, FL, as a FT2 (SS) until the reserve unit was dissolved. He then continued his remaining reserve service attached to Hospital Security Group out of Fort Dix.

He moved to NJ in 2001 with his wife, Geraldine, and their children. He has worked for the Gloucester Township Public School District and the Gloucester County College in technology. He has been in his current position as the director of campus technology for the Gloucester County Special Services School District and the Gloucester County Vocational Technical School District since 2011.

He has been a member of The American Legion for seventeen years, having joined Pine Hill American Legion Post 286 in 2005. He has served the post in various positions, such as commander, adjutant and judge advocate. He also served on post committees such as: public relations; Boys State; house; golf and fundraising. He has attended New Jersey American Legion College completing basic, advanced, membership, service officer and club management.

At the county level, he has served Camden County as: commander from 2013-2014; service officer in 2011-2012; and as vice commander from 2008-2013. He served on the following county committees: Americanism, 2008-2010; Boys State, 2008-2012; Children and Youth, 2009-2013; testimonial, 2015-2021; Camden County Veterans Advisory Committee, 2008-present; convention, 2015-2019; and liaison to the Camden County Sons of The American Legion, 2008-2013.

He is currently serving as the Department Executive Committeeman for Camden County (2015-Present). He served as Department Vice Commander, 2014-2015 under PDC Mike Wilson. He has served on various department committees such as: Americanism, 2008-2010; membership, 2008-2012; retention, 2014-present (chair); Boys State, 2015-present (trustee); Legion College, 2012-present (instructor and provost); oratorical 2016-2021 (chair); Locustwood, 2013-present (chair); convention 2015-present; convention parade, 2015-present (vice chair) and on the Ad-Hoc Moving Forward Committee, 2019-present.

During the last few years, he has worked to modernize the technology around our dept., from the initial audits; to designing system upgrades; and then deploying those approved upgrades. The dept. now has modern systems, including the telephone system which connects the Trenton and Newark offices and staff under one platform. There is much more coming over the next several years.

He is a graduate of The American Legion National College (2017), and has served as a legislative delegate to the Washington Conference (2018-present); Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Counsel (2017-2018); and Aerospace Committee of the National Security Commission (2018-present).

He also serves as a board member for the U.S. Selective Service System representing Camden County since 2020 and has been appointed by Gov. Murphy to the Veterans Haven South Council.

He is a big proponent of American Legion Family: his wife is a member of The American Legion Auxiliary; their children and grandchildren are members of The Sons of the American Legion and The American Legion Auxiliary, as well. His father, a U.S. Army veteran, was a Legionnaire. His older brother, who is both a U.S. Air Force Reserve veteran and current U.S. Army Reserve Officer, is also a Legionnaire.

“We are Legion Family,” he said. “We will accomplish so much more working together and supporting each other than we can separately. Our Legion Family must continue the work to strengthen our communities.”

“The future, as always, is unknown. The challenges that face us are more complex, and the available resources are strained. The need has never been greater in this generation than what we are all experiencing in our daily lives. We have all experienced various losses over the past couple of years. In many cases, those losses were significant. Our Legion Family continues to be there: from coordinating industry partners and donors to build suitable housing for homeless veterans; to providing groceries to families that cannot afford it; to having a safe environment for a cup of coffee surrounded by fellow veterans; to covering a heating oil delivery; to resolving a transportation issue; to just picking up the phone and performing a Buddy Check.”

“Our Legion Family has been there for over 100 years being a positive, supportive resource to our veterans, our children and our communities. We have made so many positive contributions, and no matter how difficult our daily lives are, we are still here as that powerful resource, and we accomplish our mission. For God and Country!”

Dennis Duddy
Candidate for Department Vice Commander

Dennis Duddy originally hails from the Bronx. He is a member of a very unique group of veterans who served in two branches of the military. He proudly served in the U.S. Navy from 1992 to 1994 as a Damage Controlman. His duties included ship stability, firefighting, fire prevention and chemical, biological and radiological warfare defense.

After his enlistment in the Navy, he went on to serve in the NJ Army National Guard from 1994 to 2001 as a Combat Medical Specialist in the 2nd Battalion, 113th Infantry Regiment, based in Riverdale. After a four-year break in service, he returned to the Army National Guard from 2006 to 2010 as a Combat Medical Specialist in the 1st Battalion, 114th Infantry Regiment based in Woodbury.

While serving in the National Guard, he worked as a police dispatcher for the Borough of North Arlington from 1998 to 2003 and the Borough of Fair Lawn from 2000 to 2004. He also served as an Emergency Medical Technician with the North Arlington Volunteer Emergency Squad from 1994 to 1999. He has always accepted the challenge of a demanding career in EMS and the combat medical service. He is known by many as a “first responder’s first responder” for his outstanding service to his community and for putting the needs of others over his own.
Most recently, he was nominated to serve a second term as commander of Rochelle Park American Legion Post 170. He is also the Bergen County American Legion senior vice commander and adjutant. The Legion post has thrived under his leadership and is constantly collaborating with other organizations for the mutual benefit of Bergen County veterans and their families. He assists veterans with benefit claims and helps homeless veterans find a permanent residence. He is always in the community trying to see how he can improve the lives of his fellow veterans.

**Brian Hagal**

**Candidate for Department Vice Commander**

Brian Hagal served in the U.S. Navy from May 1965 to May 1971, serving on the USS Truxton DLG(N)35 from May 1966 to June 1967; USS O’Hare from June 1967 to April 1968; April 1968 at the Reserve Duty Navy Reserve Training Center, Clifton, where he was promoted to Boatswain Mate 2nd Class. In March 1969 he served at the Navy Instructor Training School, and in Jan. 1970 at Recruiter Training School.

In March 1978, he joined the Rutherford Police Dept., where he served in many capacities including, patrol, traffic safety, patrol supervisor, traffic division supervisor, certified accident reconstructionist, court certified accident reconstruction expert, and was assigned to Bergen County Prosecutors Fatal Accident Investigation Team. He is a life member of the Police Department of NJ Honor Legion and past president Rutherford PBA Local 300. He retired July 1, 2003.

He is a life member of the Rutherford First Aid Ambulance Corps since Oct. 1963, having held the following positions: squad captain, squad first lieutenant, corporation president, vice president, treasurer, trustee, first aid instructor, EMT instructor.

He has 20 years continuous membership, transferring from Post 139, Lyndhurst, to Post 232, Barnegat, in 2010, serving as trustee, second vice commander, adjutant and post commander. He has chaired the following committees: ABC, canteen, COTA, publicity, Memorial Day parade, WEB master, assistant finance officer and member of the finance committee. He is a dual member of Squadron 232. At the county level, he has served as Ocean County commander, vice commander and chair of the ABC/games of chance committee, a position he also holds at the dept. level.

Currently residing Waretown, he has been married for 36 years to Diane Hagal, an Auxiliary member of Unit 232. They have one son, who is a Navy veteran, one stepdaughter, two granddaughters and two grandsons.

**John Hanson**

**Candidate for Department Vice Commander**

John R. Hanson grew up in the San Francisco area, moved to Lake Tahoe in 1960, and graduated from South Lake Tahoe High School in 1966. He entered the U.S. Air Force in the fall of 1967; went through basic training at Lackland AFB, San Antonio; followed by Tech School on Lowery AFB, Denver. He served as a 99125-B (Special Reporting Identifier) assigned to HQ Command through 1035th Field Activities Group (Redesignated 1035th Technical Operations Group 1972-1980), Patrick AFB, Florida. He had operating assignments in Wyoming; Attu IS., Alaska; Spain; and Denver as instructor until separation in 1974. His last position was an electronics instructor, mobile training team chief, with a rank of E5.

He attended the University of Utah, 1976-1979, graduating with a bachelor of science degree in electrical engineering and earned a masters degree in systems engineering from Stevens Institute of Technology, Hoboken, in 2013. He worked for DRS as manager of systems engineering from 1991 through June 2001. He transferred to DRS, Oakland, NJ, as senior staff systems engineer, director of systems engineering from 2001 to 2006, then as principal systems engineer from 2006 through 2011. He is presently employed as lead safety engineer for WheelTug, LLC, working on e-taxi system for narrow body commercial aircraft.

He has been a member of Post 213, Sussex, for seven years, serving as post commander; county 1st vice commander; county commander; chairman of High Point Committee; dept. membership committee member.

He believes the key to his Legion experience is that “one only gets out of an organization what one is willing to put in. The Legion offers a chance to give back to all veterans some level of support and assistance. It is enormously rewarding, and I think the rewarding part is exponentially related to what one is willing to contribute.”

**Will Kramer**

**Candidate for Department Vice Commander**

Will Kramer, of Post 43, was born in Brooklyn, and grew up in Perth Amboy. He attended Perth Amboy public schools and was a delegate to American Legion Jersey Boys State in 1973. Two weeks after graduating from Perth Amboy High School, he began his Naval service at the U.S. Naval Academy.

After graduating and being commissioned in 1978, he was a member of the commissioning crew of USS Arkansas CGN-41, where he served as the gunnery and missile officer. After achieving the Surface Warfare Qualification, along with deployments to the Caribbean and South America, he transferred to USS Raleigh LPD-1, where he served as navigator. His tour aboard Raleigh included deployments to the Caribbean, North Atlantic and Mediterranean, including six months in Beirut, Lebanon, during the Lebanese Civil War. Following that, he transitioned to the Naval Reserve with his first assignment in Western Massachusetts. During the following 20 years he served as XO of two reserve units, CO of two reserve units and a variety of joint and NATO staffs, with a final tour as staff at the Naval War College. During this time, he deployed to the North Atlantic several times for NATO exercises, the Western Atlantic to hunt Soviet subs and to the Persian Gulf aboard USS George Washington CVN-73, in support of Operation Southern Watch. He retired from the Navy Reserve in 2005 as a commander; during his career he received a number of awards including the Navy Commendation Medal (2), Navy and Marine Corps Expeditionary Medal (Beirut), Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal (Persian Gulf).

He has worked for a number of major aerospace companies, including GE, Lockheed, BAE Systems and Textron in the areas of program management, marketing and proposal management. The majority of his career supported military systems including missile systems, shipboard gunnery, airborne electronic warfare, communications systems, unmanned aircraft and unmanned underwater systems.
After joining The American Legion in 2006, he has served in many positions at the post and county level, and has been the Morris County DEC since 2018. He has served on many committees on the county and state level including Boys State, Boy Scouts, dept. finance and legislative committees, and served as a judge for the scholarship committee. A graduate of several courses at NJ American Legion College, he is now an instructor in the post management course, and is a member of The American Legion National Marketing Commission.

In his civic life, he served on zoning boards in several communities and is currently a member of the zoning board in Morris Township. The son of a career Navy enlisted man and the father of a current submariner, he is extremely proud that his family’s three generations have accumulated 89 years of Navy service.

This active Legionnaire strongly supports The American Legion and would appreciate your support for the office of dept. vice commander.

**Patricia Tatum**

**Candidate for Department Vice Commander**

Patricia Tatum is a Vietnam Era veteran, serving as a material facilities specialist, administrative specialist and a crypto equipment systems specialist during her nine years in the Air Force. She currently serves as the Atlantic County commander, commander of Kenneth B. Hawkins Post 61, Atlantic City, vice chair of the Dept. Employment, Homeless and Education Committee, county chair for Boys State, and District 5 Oratorical Contest chair. She, also, hosts the Marshall “Ted” Behr Golf Tournament and chairs the Atlantic City Regional Stand Down.

She was born in New York City, but attended public school in Detroit. The youngest of three daughters, an age gap and family dynamics had her raised by an aunt and uncle until her senior year. She, then, lived with her mother and grandmother before entering the U.S. Air Force two years after graduating from high school.

Her duty rotated through several states and southern Italy before being honorably discharged. She relocated to Washington, D.C., after separation to attend Howard University, where she earned a bachelor of science degree in electrical engineering. She worked as a government contractor for the FAA in D.C., which ultimately brought her to NJ.

She joined Kenneth B. Hawkins Post 61 in 2007, holding several positions at the post and county levels. It is sufficient to say she has a heart for service which keeps her busy throughout The American Legion, her church and community.

She was born in New York City, but attended public school in Detroit. The youngest of three daughters, an age gap and family dynamics had her raised by an aunt and uncle until her senior year. She, then, lived with her mother and grandmother before entering the U.S. Air Force two years after graduating from high school.

**Thomas Adams**

**Candidate for Department Finance Officer—Year 2**

Tom Adams was recruited by an Auxiliary member of Unit 372 to join The American Legion in 2000. His eligibility is a result of his service in the Army between August 1968 and April 1970, with service in Vietnam from April 1969 to April 1970.

After a year as a plain ‘Blue Hat’, Post Commander Tom Goldy recruited Adams to become a trustee in Post 372. In 2011, he became finance officer. During this time, he started going to county meetings, where PDC Bob Phillips and his brother-in-law, Bill, picked up on Tom’s interest and asked him if he was interested in becoming a county vice commander.


He has been on the Locustwood Memorial Committee since 2008 and is currently one of the two co-chairmen. In addition, he has been on the Dept. Finance Committee since 2009, stepped up as dept. finance officer for 2013-2015 and continues to serve on the Finance Committee. He also stepped in to fill Bill Breen’s unexpired term as Boy’s State Trustee for 2012-2014, and has been nominated for three additional three-year terms as Boys State Trustee through 2023.

Prior to becoming a Legion member, Adams had a busy personal and professional life. He has been in public practice as a CPA since 1974 (retired in 2010); served in all the officer positions and was president of the Southwest Chapter of the New Jersey Society of CPA’s in 1991-1992; mentor and chaperone for the NJ Society’s Scholarship Institute; member and treasurer of the South Jersey Vietnam Veterans Association; member of his church’s Endowment Committee; is a past board member of the Camden/Burlington County Red Cross and has served on their Finance and Audit committees.

**Service Officer’s Report**

Ken Connors
Department Service Officer
(973) 623-6298

Here we are moving into spring and nearing the end of another Legion year. One must appreciate the fact that even though everyone has experienced a lot of ups and downs there seems to be some light at the end of the tunnel.

VA has been able to maintain some stability in operations and continues to move ahead in addressing the volume of claims that have been submitted, and are close to maintaining their goal of having a claim developed in a timely manner. Even through it is not as perfect as it should be, it is a lot better than in the past.

As VA and the veterans organizations have become more familiar with the formats in place, it allows for a straighter forward development process for all parties involved. Therefore, everyone is reminded that when you want to apply for benefits, it is to your benefit to work with a service officer.

The days of just applying for benefits is passe. Today, along with the application, it is to the veterans benefit to submit all the related VA Forms and/or information with the request for benefits. The process of filing a claim may take a little longer, but it can cut the time to receive a decision.

This is also true with the new appeal process. Where appeals under the old system seemed to be on the proverbial hamster wheel, today, when you request to appeal a decision, you have op-
Americanism
Theodore Howarth, Jr., Chair

The Americanism Committee met on Saturday, March 26, at American Legion Headquarters for the purpose of selecting our Americanism winners. They are as follows:

Coloring contest was of The Guard at the Tomb of The Unknown Soldier. First place and winner of a $300 cash prize and a gold medal was Mason Cooke, sponsored by White Township American Legion Post 528, Warren County.

Second and third place winners will be presented on the county levels: second place winner of a $200 cash prize and silver medal was Samuel Hamilton, sponsored by Brick Township American Legion Post 528, Ocean County. Third place went to Isabella Estrada, winning $100 and a bronze medal, sponsored by Lyndhurst American Legion Post 139, Bergen County.

The Firefighter of the Year Valor Award must be for actions of heroism, safety or extraordinary performance in a real-life situation. The award was given to Captain Kenneth Walters, Firefighter Brendon Guray, Firefighter Christopher Fields of the Trenton Fire Department, sponsored by Mitchell A. Davis Post 182, Mercer County.

The Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award is given to a law enforcement officer who is a well-rounded member of the dept., who has exceeded above and beyond the duty requirements and demonstrated a distinct pattern of community service and professional achievement. The award was given to Lt. Nick Coviello of the Lyndhurst Police Department, sponsored by the Barringer-Walker-LoPinto American Legion Post 139, Bergen County.

The Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award is given to a nominee’s submission for actions of heroism, safety or extraordinary performance in a real-life situation. This year’s winners are Staff Sgt. Cisko, Trp. Brad Cosh, Tpr. William Weiss and Tpr. Matthew Rizzo sponsored by Pvt. Peter S. Hotalen American Legion Post 157, Branchville, Sussex County.

Educator of the Year Award is given to an educator, based on leadership and participation in promoting American Legion programs, civic responsibilities, flag etiquette and patriotism. Recipient was Laura Vuono of Lyndhurst Public Schools sponsored by the Barringer-Walker-LoPinto American Legion Post 139.

The Spirit of Americanism Award is presented to a person/organization that embodies the spirit of our great nation and for outstanding service to veterans at the local, state and national levels. The award will be presented to William Sweeney sponsored by the Kearny American Legion Post 139, Bergen County.

Congratulations to all the winners.

Employment, Homeless and Education
Bob Looby, Chair

“The Mission of The American Legion, Department of New Jersey’s Veterans Employment, Homelessness & Education Committee is to take actions that affect the economic wellbeing of veterans, including issues relating to veterans’ education, employment, home loans, vocational rehabilitation, homelessness and small business.”

1. Core Mission:
   a. employment for veterans and spouses
   b. veteran homelessness
   c. education (GI Bill)

2. Cause & Effect behind our Core Mission is four-fold: mental health issues and leading to suicide, unemployment, homelessness & criminal justice involvement.

WE ADAPTED AND OVERCAME!

Other Stand Down providers (Cherry Hill and Newark) cancelled their events because of COVID, but we adapted and overcame. We fully knew that our homeless and at-risk brothers and sisters still needed our assistance whatever the societal excuse, so we adapted, they did not! This is how we started our 2021 – 2022 Legion year, or really continued and improved for the past 10 years.

When we realized this dreaded virus’ restrictions were not going away, we designed two other methodologies to get the job done. The first was a hybrid of a mobile scenario and the “pop-up” type event previously used in the northern counties. The mobile scenario is simple – we go to the vets vs. them coming to our indoor Atlantic City and other facilities. These regional events were conducted in southern and central counties.

Continued on page 9
Legislative Report
Joseph M. Gugliuzza, Chair

As our administrative year winds down and we prepare for another dept. convention, it is time to take a look back at our year. We have been actively working behind the scenes to be sure that our veterans, their spouses and children are receiving the benefits that they promised.

Our annual Washington conference was, once again, held virtually. We can only hope that next year we will, again, journey to our nation’s capital and meet with our Congressional delegation face to face.

Our most pressing issue for the NJ liaisons was to ask for support for the Cathedral of the Air, which is located at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, on Lakehurst property. As some of know, the cathedral was built by The American Legion, Dept. of New Jersey, in 1936. The edifice has served as our venue for our annual “For God and Country” service when we commemorate the sacrifice of the infamous “Four Chaplains”. The cathedral is also used for weddings of military personnel and other events. The support we are seeking is for the Congressional delegation to take any necessary steps to ensure that the cathedral is cared for and remains useful. The Air Force has stated that it can no longer afford the upkeep of the building. Hopefully, after bringing this situation to the attention of our elected officials, this will be resolved.

Thanks to Chaplain Shaeffer for bringing this to our attention.

When we met with our Representatives and Senators, we presented The American Legion Legislative Agenda for the second session of the 117th Congress. Among the topics discussed were:

- VA Health-care Modernization
- Suicide Prevention & Peer Support
- Address Toxic Exposure and Burn Pits
- Improve Health Care for Women Veterans
- Concurrent Receipt
- Guard & Reserve G.I. Bill Parity
- G.I. Bill for Honorable Service
- Address The Forever Wars & Restore Congressional War powers
- Pay the Coast Guard
- Protect the American Flag.

We asked each Congressman/woman for their support on these issues and, if necessary, to sponsor or co-sponsor legislation that will make these things happen.

Interestingly enough, as we were preparing our agenda in early March, the House passed H.R. 3967, Honoring Our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act of 2021. This Act, when passed in the Senate, will
1. create a list of presumptive illnesses based on scientific evidence
2. require VA to presume exposure for veterans deployed to areas with known environmental hazards
3. mandate VA toxic exposure studies.

The bill codifies 23 new service presumptions to make it easier for veterans to prove their illnesses as service connected. It will, also, expand VA’s research in this area, standardizes data collection in both the VA and DoD, and requires more training of medical providers caring for veterans both within the VA and in the community.

In New Jersey, several bills are seeing the light of day; with any luck at all, they could become law in this session. A1591 makes $2.5 in federal funds available to the EDA to support veteran-owned businesses in need. This passed the Assembly 76-0. A1455 permits county clerks or registrar of deeds and mortgagees to issue identification cards to Gold Star Family members. Passed Assembly 72-0.

In March, 27 bills were introduced in the Assembly. Let’s see how many cross the finish line. Thirty-five have been introduced in the Senate. Let’s see how that goes.

I want to thank Commander Dunn for my appointment and his steadfast support this year. He has been proactive and, in being so, has given The American Legion a voice in a prompt manner. I also offer my thanks to my long-time vice chairman, John Chechello, who is my right-hand guy. Thanks, John!

Baseball Report
Frank Calandrillo, Chair

We are looking ahead to our 2022 baseball season, but we have one item left from the 2021 season. It’s what makes our program unique from other baseball programs. A benefit of playing NJ American Legion Baseball is that we offer two $4,000 scholarships to players graduating from high school. Each scholarship affords two players to have $1,000 in each year of their college enrollment paid toward their tuition by the Dept. of New Jersey. Besides financial need, we look at the player’s character attributes, their volunteer activities and leadership abilities, among other criteria. It’s always exciting to announce this.

DAVID C. GOODWIN MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

The winner of the David C. Goodwin Memorial Scholarship is Gavin Kincs, who played for the 2021 American Legion Department Baseball Champions from Allentown. Gavin is graduating from New Egypt High School in June. He plans to attend West Chester University in Pennsylvania. He plans to pursue a business degree with a focus on finance.

Some of his community service includes helping seniors secure appointments for COVID vaccines and doing grocery shopping for them; working with Samaritans Purse “Operation Christmas Child;” making blankets for chemo patients for the Susan B. Komen Cancer Foundation and volunteering at local blood drive events.

He is also a classroom volunteer and a volunteer coach with the Warrior Baseball Camp, teaching baseball skills to children.

ERNEST ZARDETTO MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

The winner of the Ernest Zardetto Memorial Scholarship is Anthony Iacono, who played for the Wood-Ridge Blue Devils American Legion team. Anthony is graduating from Wood-Ridge High School in June. While he hasn’t made a final decision, he plans to attend either the universities of New Hampshire or Rhode Island, or Salve Regina University, also in RI. He plans to pursue a major in history (pre-law) with a minor in business management.

Some of his community service includes coaching the Wood-Ridge Junior Football program; working as videographer for all football games and providing scouting reports to the coaches; volunteering at community-wide events such as Senior Citizens Day, Wood-Ridge Town Day and assisting Santa during the town tree lighting.

He also assisted in the USMC Veteran Home Donation program, where he helped to build a home that was donated to a veteran by the Pulte Group Builders.

We congratulate these fine young men on their scholarship awards. They will receive their plaques at the dept. convention.
Employment continued

The second methodology was intentionally designed for more localized veterans in need, with events conducted in three northern counties. We planned and conducted five of these events, via both scenarios, serving 181 at-risk and homeless veterans, and, yes, women with children. We had 237 service providers and volunteers to serve their immediate and ongoing needs. The dept. now serves the homeless needs for the entire state, as no other provider.

We are profoundly grateful for the enduring and long-lasting, resolute partners we have had since our Stand Down genesis in 2017. They include the NJ depts. of the VFW and DA; our backbone, the Wilmington VA; American Red Cross; Camden Catholic Charities; DMAVA; the NJ Casino Control Commission and State Parole; the City of Atlantic City and The American Legion Family. Most of these partners have also joined us for our northern local events. This is in addition to the 15 – 20 veteran-related service providers who, also, make things happen at every event.

VANC has now joined with us for our last several local stand downs. There is no other dept. in The American Legion who directly manages and conducts homeless veteran Stand Downs to this extent and quantity as NJ. This surely has been substantiated by our 4 of 5 consecutive years for receiving national’s first place Homeless Outreach Award!

Our other successful start was the organization and leadership of “Veterans Row” at the Atlantic City Air Show on August 18, 2022. This was the massing of eighteen veteran-affairs related organizations at “Show Central” to provide pertinent information to the thousands of veterans attending the show.

Our National Homeless Veteran Outreach submittal was sent in early Jan. The input from individual posts and counties was again disappointing and dismal, with only the Atlantic and Camden committees submitting activities. (This statement does not include the seven Stand Downs conducted in 2021, and the respective hosts, which were included in the submittal by the chair) Some say “we/they conduct the programs, but don’t submit reports”. This attitude is so pervasive and with the Consolidated Post Report, is a bogus excuse, and puts our dept. again “at the bottom of the pile.” This attitude could equate to: no reports = no local team spirit = no Department support and attitude = no esprit de corps = no visible and external PR = no branding = membership loss, as so unfortunately demonstrated. There were also no employers submitted for national recognition, but we will still have dept. awards submitted by others.

All VSO’s have been asked to participate in a statewide, county by county initiative entitled “Veterans Making a Difference in Our Community”, at the idea of Luddie Austin, VFW dept. commander. This inter-VSO collaboration and all veteran project was approved at our Dec. 2021 DEC meeting and reaffirmed in Feb. Hopefully, all counties will participate for the welfare of our veterans and great PR for all. The Vineland/Bridgeton area in Cumberland County has been on our Stand Down radar for many months and, now, will be conducted as another mobile event on April 22. The Camden County Veterans Group, now led by our vice chair Bernie Kofoot, is planning a Resource Fair in the spring. We are always thinking of the Newark area, especially since their Stand Down has been cancelled twice; therefore, Kearny has been on our planning table. The VFW and Legion posts are adjacent to each other and could present a good opportunity. Other confirmed events include April 22 in Vineland (Cumberland) combined with our mobile event, April 23 in Passaic, April 28 in Glen Gardner (Hunterdon), April 30 in Mt. Laurel (Burlington), April 30 in Hamilton Twp. (Mercer) and May 7 in Bayville (Ocean). Monmouth, Cape May, and Glassboro (Gloucester) are in progress.

Our fourth dedicated Casino Career Fair will be conducted in Atlantic City on April 28, 2022, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Tennessee and the Boardwalk. Again, as in prior years, there are over 1,300 job openings for all positions, licensed and managerial.

The annual Atlantic City Regional Stand Down will be conducted on May 25 serving Camden and Ocean counties south, but we are always limited by transportation. Ongoing donations can be sent to and payable to the Atlantic City Regional Stand Down, PO Box 1071, Atlantic City, NJ 08404.

Our 2021—2022 Homeless Veteran Outreach Awards include the following for their continuing partnership to help end homelessness among our veterans and families:

1. Cynthia Murray, VA Wilmington Head Nurse
2. Atlantic City Fire Chief Scott Evans, Atlantic County Executive Director Dennis Levinson, and Chief James A. Sarkos, Atlantic City Police Department
3. Ivy Leaf Chapter No.18, Order of the Eastern Star, PHA
4. Jacqueline Grace, Tropicana, Senior Vice President & General Manager
5. Other internal Legion Family awardees will be announced in conjunction with the Wildwood Convention.

Our 2021—2022 Employer Awards include the following:

1. Veterans Advocate of the Year – Kelly Brozyna, State Director & CEO, NJSBDC
2. NJ State Agency Supporting Veteran Businesses – NJ Turnpike Authority
3. Prime Vendor of the Year Supporting Veteran Businesses – Volters Construction
4. Prime Vendor of the Year Supporting Veteran Businesses – Skanska Koch
5. Veteran Owned Business under $3 Million – Ken Tays, CEO, MinuteMan Press
6. Veteran Run Business over $3 Million – Timothy Kerner, President, The Millennium Group
7. Disabled Veteran Owned Business under $3 Million – The Sctroc Group

NJ Vietnam Veterans Memorial
Come Visit YOUR Memorial

In 1982 a group of New Jersey veterans attending the dedication of the Vietnam Memorial in Washington D.C. were inspired to create a memorial honoring New Jersey’s Vietnam Veterans.

The idea gained the support of legislators, veterans and community groups.

There were more than 400 entries for the memorial design. On July 7, 1988, the design submitted by Hien Nguyen, a refugee who left South Vietnam in 1975, was unveiled. The 200-foot diameter pavilion contains 366 panels. Engraved on the polished panels are the names of the 1,563 New Jerseyans killed or reported missing. The NJ state tree, a red oak, proudly stands in the center, shading three bronze statues
representing those who died, those who returned home and the women who served.

Another historic event occurred in 1989, when the Last Patrol of 15 NJ Vietnam Veterans and three nurses traveled from Washington to Holmdel. The marching veterans returned with 1,486 known rubbings of NJ veterans on the memorial.

Our memorial was successfully funded and dedicated on May 7, 1995, coinciding with the 20th anniversary of the end of the war. The museum and educational center were dedicated on Sep. 27, 1998. It is the only such facility supporting a Vietnam Memorial in our country. In it we provide appropriate materials and exhibits to help our visitors understand the significance of the memorial, the reality of the conflict, and the social, political and complexities of the Vietnam Era.

Tours are given for groups of veterans, community groups, school children, scouts and individuals. Our veteran tour guides lead every tour. We strive to be respectful, inclusive and to convey an unbiased historical perspective through our programs, exhibits and ceremonies.

As a self-sustaining not-for-profit, donations ensure that present and future generations will appreciate and honor our veterans. Planning has begun for a significant addition to the museum, providing the space for improved educational resources, larger exhibits and meeting rooms.

This is your memorial. Come and visit.

Post Scripts
Post 310 Teaches Flag Etiquette

On Veterans Day 2021, Memorial School students and staff in Little Ferry were presented a program on flag etiquette by Paul Weiss, a member of Post 310. After a brief introduction, including the definition of a veteran and ways people might thank them for their service, the 45-minute program included proper respect when the Pledge of Allegiance is recited or the National Anthem is played.

Other topics included the naming of public buildings and other places where the American flag is hung; raising and lowering the flag; illumination of a flag displayed at night; repair or replacement of a weathered flag; respect for the flags of the armed forces, such as when seen in a parade; the meaning of why flags are flown at half-staff; and the proper method of folding a flag.

Two teachers at the school, Mr. Aponte, an Army veteran, and Miss Wedral, an Air Force veteran, helped students properly fold the flag.

Post 369 Digs Into the Past

For years, spanning generations, rumors abounded in the Oakland, NJ, area that Continental Army soldiers from the Revolutionary War were buried in unmarked graves in Ponds Reformed Church Cemetery.

“It was rumored three or four soldiers were buried there,” said John Beattie, Oakland Post 369 commander. Rumors were not good enough for Beattie, but fate intervened when he happened to meet Peter Sarandinaki, president of the SEARCH Foundation, which had conducted a series of expeditions to Russia to locate and identify remains of members of Czar Nicholas II family assassinated during the 1918 Revolution.

Using electromagnetic equipment, Sarandinaki located the graves very quickly. Following that, GPRS Inc. conducted a second study of the plot using 350 MHz ground-penetrating radar, enabling them to mark the areas as potential graves of 12 unidentified bodies, presumed to be the soldiers’ remains.

Post 82 Supports Toys for Tots

American Legion Post 82, Trenton, received special recognition from Kenneth M. Douglas, director of the Trenton Dept. of Fire and Emergency Services, for partnering with the dept.’s first Christmas toy giveaway, helping gather over 10,000 toys for the Marine Corps Toys for Tots program.

“In these strange times during the era of COVID, communities are impacted by lack of resources, food and financial assistance,” noted Douglas. “But with your help we were able to make Christmas a less worry for struggling families.”

Post & Squadron 105 Donate Cookies

American Legion Post 105 and Sons of the American Legion Squadron 105, Belleville, made this year’s ultimate donation to feed the sweet tooth of current and former service personnel from the 105 Family ended up being $600.
Consolidated Post Reports Due

It was a hard lesson learned for many posts when not submitting a Consolidated Post Report (CPR) made them ineligible for the Mission Blue Post Assistance Program for a $1,000 grant from national. Of the 12,637 American Legion Posts throughout the world, 8,840 or about 70 percent completed the Consolidated Post Report for 2019, meaning the officers of 3,797 posts did not think that what they were doing for veterans or in their communities was significant enough to let the national office or Dept. of NJ know.

National Commander Bill Oxford challenged and encouraged departments to hit 100 percent reporting. One hundred percent reporting is one of four requirements to achieve the Post Excellence Award. Nine departments answered Oxford’s challenge and achieved 100 percent reporting – Florida, Idaho, Indiana, Maryland, Montana, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oklahoma and Oregon.

The CPR shows the many ways Legionnaires are making differences in their communities and beyond. American Legion posts around the world gave millions of hours, raised millions of dollars and influenced millions of lives each year. The American Legion CPR attaches numbers to The Legion’s acts of advocacy and outreach.

We have heard the same old refrain for years: “We don’t do things to get credit or publicity.” Well, if a pat on the back, a plaque or an article in this newspaper was your only reason for supporting The American Legion’s Four Pillars, and contributing to the well-being of your comrades and your community, then I would question your motives. You may not seek credit or publicity, but public knowledge of your actions will give a positive image to your post, creating an interest, making unaffiliated veterans, especially those eligible through the LEGION Act, want to join you.

The CPR is a synopsis of your community involvement; it reflects your post’s impact on your community and how important you are to your community. Combined with the report of all the other posts, it shows how important we are to our communities in NJ and nationwide. It allows our state and national commanders to go before our legislators, and give them hard statistics about The American Legion’s impact on our state and nation.

Legionnaires donated 4,512,886 hours of community service at a cost of over $5 million; participated in 7,132 Memorial Day programs, 6,929 Veterans Day programs; sent 16,667 boys to Boys State; sponsored 10,505 participants in the Oratorical Contest; assisted 5,187 schools at a cost of $1,058,375; donated 73,952 pints of blood; performed funeral honors for 125,318 of our comrades; and with 915 job training programs and 983 post sponsored career fairs, placed 2,426 veterans in jobs.

The CPR isn’t just a public relations vehicle; it isn’t for “atta boys” or pats on the back; it isn’t for recognition; it is to show the strength of The American Legion and the effort every Legionnaire puts in every day to support or veterans, our troops, our communities and our great nation, and to ensure that every elected official knows it.

The form may be completed either online at legion.org or by paper copy. It’s not rocket science. So, why didn’t your post submit it and qualify for $1,000?

Suicide Prevention

- Call toll-free at (800) 273-8255 and then press 1
  - Text the number 838255
- Chat online at www.veteranscrisisline.net/chat

According to the VA’s website, since launching the Veterans Crisis Line in 2007, more than 2.8 million calls have been answered; since 2009, the anonymous online chat service has engaged in more than 332,000 chats; and since November 2011, the Veterans Crisis Line has responded to more than 67,000 texts. The responders at the Veterans Crisis Line are specially trained and experienced in helping veterans of all ages and circumstances. The VA’s Suicide Prevention Site also features other resources such as a self-check quiz at www.veteranscrisisline.net/quiz and access to local support facilities.

Dates to Remember

May
14—Morris County Testimonial Dinner, Post 279, Lincoln Park
20—Dept. Commander’s Official Visit, Hudson County
25—Atlantic City Regional Stand Down, All Wars Memorial, 1510 Adriatic Ave., 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

June
5—Locustwood Memorial Service, Locustwood Memorial Park, 1500 Route 70 West, Cherry Hill, 1:30 p.m.
8—DEC Meeting, Wildwood Convention Hall, 3 p.m.
9-11—Department Convention, Wildwood Convention Hall
19-24—New Jersey American Legion Boys State, Rider University, Lawrenceville
25—American Legion Auxiliary & Sons of the American Legion Testimonial Dinner honoring Dept. President Jane Babli & SAL Detachment Commander Henry Hasselhan, Elizabeth’s Ballroom, 419 Highland Blvd., Gloucester, 2—6 p.m.
26—High Point Memorial Service

July
22—American Legion Night at the Blue Claws
22—Baseball Finals begin, Wood-Ridge Athletic Complex, 100 Johnson Dr., Wood-Ridge
27—Baseball Championship Game
28—Rain date for Baseball Championship Game

August
26—National Convention begins in Milwaukee
The Department Oratorical Contest was held Saturday, March 5, 2022, at the War Memorial Building, Trenton. Competition began at 10 a.m. Three orators competed, representing three districts: Ruhi Kulkarni, a sophomore at Monroe High School, sponsored by Post 522, Middlesex County; Justin Del Valle, a senior at Leonia High School, sponsored by Post 1, Leonia; Benjamin Duvelson, a junior at Union High School, sponsored by Post 35, Union.

In photo, from left: Department Commander Dan Dunn; Justin Del Valle, third place; Ruhi Kulkarni, second place; Benjamin Duvelson, first place; Dan Channel, contest chair. Duvelson will be going on to the national competition in Indianapolis.