From the Chairman’s Bunker

The busy summer youth program season is behind us and many of you are already planning next year’s programs. If your department does not have a Youth Cadet Law Enforcement Program, I strongly urge you to start laying the groundwork needed now to start one.

The American Legion Youth Cadet Law Enforcement Program serves to introduce youth to the field of law enforcement, law enforcement principles, build discipline, instill ethics, increase physical fitness and develop teamwork and confidence. Programs are conducted in cooperation with local and state law enforcement agencies, and are usually held during the summer at the various law enforcement training facilities. The program is typically made available to high school students who have completed their junior year, are in good academic standing and possess good moral character and the desire to learn more about the law enforcement profession.

Our Youth Cadet Law Enforcement program is an excellent vehicle through which young people are empowered to realize early on that peace officers stand as staunch supporters for legal and moral rights, and that the dedication and impact they have in community, state and nation should be regarded with respect and appreciation. The Youth Cadet Law Enforcement Program also serves as an influential stepping stone for those high school students considering a career in law enforcement.

Program content varies from state to state however, most programs include classroom law enforcement training, hands-on police training, and physical fitness training.

Currently only 19 American Legion departments have a Youth Cadet Law Enforcement Program: Arizona, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Kansas, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota,
Family Support Network

The Americans Legion’s Family Support Network (FSN) has had to change with the times since it was first created in 1990 to aid military families who were experiencing difficulties during the deployment of their family’s service members as part of the nation’s call-up of forces for Operation Desert Shield/Storm. These deployment support problems were more prevalent in 1990 in the Reserve and National Guard units who had activated members with little notice. Issues such as delayed pay and benefits were compounded with the service member’s need to request assistance from the Department of Defense while they were deployed to Southwest Asia. Local posts and Legionnaires stepped into the gap in order to help their local military families when the request for aid came through.

Fast forward more than 15 years to the present where assistance can be requested with the speed of the internet, an email or a phone call from a mobile phone to their service member while they are deployed; however, that still doesn’t mean that the mission of The American Legion and FSN is not just as vital as ever—it is! An offer to help a pregnant spouse of a deployed service member in raking leaves or shoveling snow is just as vital as helping them when a pay issue occurs within their life. Legionnaires know their communities and local resources that can often help a military family.

But how does the service member’s family know about the assistance that Legion family members or a post can offer? Unless the local Legion family steps forward to provide the local military unit or military family with an opportunity to know what your post can offer in assistance, they may never know unless they happen to run across a reference to our programs on an internet search.

Take the opportunity to knock on the door of the nearest military facility and military families in your community and introduce yourselves. Become the resource for when they have a problem that could be solved by the FSN program. Provide a copy of our Troop & Family Support handout which lists several easy links to providing troop assistance: A copy can be found here (www.legion.org/publications). For additional information on assisting servicemembers and their families download Access Granted here (www.legion.org/publications).

More information on the Family Support Network may be found at www.legion.org/familysupport.

To request assistance visit www.legion.org/fsn or call toll-free 800-504-4098.
# Americanism Calendar

**November 20-26, 2016**
National Family Week

**November 25, 2016**
Thanksgiving Day

**February, 2017**
Americanism Month

**February 5, 2017**
Four Chaplains Sunday

**February 5-11, 2017**
Religious Emphasis Week

**February 20, 2017**
Presidents Day

**April 2017**
Children & Youth Month

**April 14, 2017**
Good Friday

**April 16, 2017**
Easter

**April 21-23, 2017**
National Oratorical Contest Finals

**May 8-11, 2017**
Spring Meetings

**May 29, 2017**
Memorial Day

**May 31, 2017**
2016-2017 Program Year Reporting Ends

**June 14, 2017**
Flag Day

**July 4, 2017**
Independence Day

**July 18-22, 2017**
Junior Shooting Sports National Tournament

**July 21-29, 2017**
Boys Nation

# New Troop & Family Support Resource

A new Troop & Family Support information card is now available for use by posts and departments. The information card replaces the *Troop Support Services (TS2)* and *Operation Outreach* publications and is designed to be handed out to servicemembers and their families by the local post in conjunction with troop outreach events. The new card has informational web links and toll-free phone numbers that can be used to request assistance from The American Legion while the servicemember is serving, as well as information that will help them with their post-service lives when they return to their communities and families.

An electronic copy available for download may be found [here](www.legion.org/publications). Hard copies are available in limited quantities by contacting Bruce Drake, Assistant Director at 317-630-1255 or email bdrake@legion.org.

# Chairman’s Bunker (continued from page 1)

Missouri, Nebraska, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Vermont and Virginia.

During the 2016 Fall Meetings, the National Executive Committee created the Youth Cadet Law Enforcement Committee under the Americanism Commission. The committee is charged with helping to grow and guide the program. This new committee is ready to assist your department’s efforts in establishing and/or strengthening this program.

For more information and helpful resources, view the “How to Start a Youth Cadet Program” video, and brochure located at [www.legion.org/youthlaw/resources](http://www.legion.org/youthlaw/resources) or email youthlaw@legion.org. In addition, consider contacting one of the departments listed above to discuss their resources, best practices and challenges.

I am pleased to support this Americanism program, and I can personally attest to the success our youth participants, staff volunteers and partnering state law enforcement representatives will experience with it!
Operation Comfort Warriors

The American Legion’s Operation Comfort Warriors (OCW) program is dedicated to meeting the needs of wounded, injured or ill military personnel by providing them with comfort items not usually supplied by the government. OCW ensures that patients at U.S. military and Veterans Affairs hospitals and warrior transition units are given items like sweat suits, DVDs, puzzles, electronic devices, books, calling cards and more. OCW also provides larger items such as ping pong tables, entertainment centers, computers, kayaks and other recreational goods for use by wounded warriors in common areas.

Through the generous donations of Legion family members, OCW provided over $295,000 in aid through 34 grants around the United States and Europe, impacting an estimated 7,732 wounded warriors and family members during 2015.

OCW Grant requests can be initiated by anyone online here (www.legion.org/operationcomfortwarriors/assistance).

Donate online here (www.legion.org/donate). Mail donations to Operation Comfort Warriors, PO Box 361626, Indianapolis, IN 46236.

OCW Online Resources

For more information on how your post or department can get involved OCW booklet here (www.legion.org/publications) or email ocw@legion.org.

OCW trifold brochure is available for download here (www.legion.org/publications).

Download a customizable event poster here (www.legion.org/publications).

The American Legion & Scouting Square Knot Award

The American Legion & Scouting Square Knot award recognizes American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary or Sons of The American Legion members who are actively involved in the Scouting program, their dedication to the Scouting program and work to assist in furthering the Scouting program in The American Legion. This award is not meant to be a selective or limited award, but one that is available to any American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary or Sons of The American Legion member who completes the requirements for the award.

At the end of 2015, a total of 588 awards have been issued to Legionnaires, American Legion Auxiliary members and Sons of The American Legion members since the award’s inception in 2003.

More information about the Square Knot Award is available here (www.legion.org/publications/160903/scouting-square-knot-award-brochure).
The 90th edition of the American Legion World Series (www.legion.org/baseball/worldseries) was, once again, a tremendous success featuring record-setting attendance numbers, online impressions and television viewership on ESPNU. Breaking a tremendous drought, the team from Post 58 in Texarkana, Arkansas, became the first team from its department to win the American Legion World Series. Members from the Texarkana team were rewarded with a trip to the Major League Baseball World Series games one and two in Cleveland, as has been a tradition for the ALWS champion.

The Texarkana team was able to see former Legion Baseball players Kris Bryant and Jason Kipnis dominate the World Series, while seeing fellow Arkansas Legion alum and All-Star Travis Wood take the mound.

“It was an awesome time,” said Texarkana second baseman Nick Myers. “To see guys who were once in my position make it to the biggest stage in baseball shows that if you have the right mindset you can make it anywhere in life. It has been a tremendous experience being able to play Legion Baseball,” Myers further added. “It has taught me to appreciate the little things in life that not everyone gets to do. I have learned to appreciate those who are fighting for us overseas even more for allowing us the opportunity to do things like play baseball.”

Looking forward, the 2017 American Legion World Series will take place August 10-15, once again in Shelby, North Carolina.

The 2017 and 2018 regional tournament sites were announced (www.legion.org/baseball/234454/2017-18-legion-baseball-regional-tournament-sites-announced) with the following cities hosting: Shrewsbury, MA; Leesburg, VA; Asheboro, NC, New Orleans, LA; Napoleon, OH; Dickinson, ND; Missoula, MT; Denver, CO. Regionals take place August 2-6, 2017, and August 8-12, 2018.

Teams may begin registering for the 2017 season on January 1.

New for next year will be a department website network (www.legion.org/baseball/232671/legion-baseball-create-department-website-network) which is set to be launched as registration opens for 2017. The network will allow each department to opt in to having a ready-made and powerful website for its baseball program.

Applications for the American Legion Baseball Scholarship, sponsored by Diamond, are available now (www.legion.org/documents/baseball/baseball_scholarship.pdf).
Samsung American Legion Alumni Association

The American Legion and Samsung have teamed up to establish the Samsung American Legion Alumni Association in order to engage recipients of the Samsung American Legion Scholarship. The mission of the association is to engage alumni while advocating the ideals of continued freedom, learning, and service, while also fostering life-long relationships between recipients and the organizations.

The Samsung American Legion Alumni Association is in its development phase. The current focus is to locate and engage alumni in order to build excitement and interest in the alumni association. The Samsung American Legion Scholarship started in 1996, and all national winners and state finalists are encouraged to join the Samsung American Legion Alumni Association groups on popular social networking sites Facebook and LinkedIn. There are approximately 2,000 scholarship alumni that are eligible to join the alumni association. Recruitment of members has been almost entirely online and over social media.

An Executive Advisory Committee consisting of representatives from The American Legion family and Samsung and a National Alumni Board of Directors, which consists of nine scholarship alumni from across the country has been established to guide the growth and development of the association. Through the creation and implementation of a strategic plan, the board and committee will work together to lead the organization.

In 2017, alumni will be invited to officially join the alumni association through a dedicated web page. Next year will also bring alumni association programs, including a mentoring program to connect Samsung Scholars who are still in college with scholarship recipients who have established themselves in careers across the globe.

Samsung American Legion Scholarship recipients wishing to keep informed on activities of the association should join the Samsung American Legion Alumni Association LinkedIn group here (www.linkedin.com/groups/8466591) or the Samsung American Legion Scholars group on Facebook here (www.facebook.com/groups/SamsungScholars). For more information, contact Brittany Yoder at byoder@legion.org or 317-630-1208.
The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation, in its 62nd year, has awarded $618,606 to 20 nonprofit organizations. These grants have been awarded to support youth-serving projects that seek to enhance the lives of children by addressing the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual needs of children. The following is a brief summary of select grants awarded for 2017.

Angels & Doves of Indianapolis, Indiana, was awarded $19,900 for their project, “Reduce School Bullying and Youth Violence.” This grant will provide live anti-bullying programs for high-risk school districts.

Childhood Leukemia Foundation of Brick, New Jersey, was awarded $60,000 for their project, “Hope Binder.” This project will offer 12 sections of templates and resources to help families begin to feel a degree of control over their circumstances.

Children’s Brain Tumor Foundation of New York, New York, was awarded $20,000 for their project, “Finding Your Way- A Guide for Childhood Brain Tumor Families from Diagnosis & Beyond.” This project will help families understand that the emotions they are feeling are not uncommon and assist in alleviating the isolation often felt by families.

National Autism Association of Portsmouth, Rhode Island, was awarded $59,375 for their project, “Big Red Safety Box.” This project will educate, raise awareness and provide tangible tools that may assist in preventing and responding to dangerous wandering-related incidents in the autism community.

Our Military Kids of McLean, Virginia, was awarded $56,055 for their project, “In Their Own Voice: Military Children Tell Their Stories.” This grant will enhance outreach and marketing efforts of the organization.

The complete list of approved grants can be found here (www.cwf-inc.org/news/current).

Send your tax-deductible donation to: American Legion Child Welfare Foundation, PO Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206 or donate online here (www.legion.org/donate).

National Family Week

The American Legion has long recognized the family as the foundation of this nation. A guiding principle of The American Legion’s Children & Youth programs continues to be maintaining the integrity of the family. To demonstrate our resolute belief in the importance of strong families,

The American Legion’s Committee on Children & Youth, by resolution, advocates the passage of federal legislation that would establish the Thanksgiving holiday week as National Family Week. All members of The American Legion Family are encouraged to initiate and engage in local activities during National Family Week that promote, encourage and celebrate healthy families and communities.

Download the National Family Week brochure here (www.legion.org/publications).
Know the Warning Signs of Youth Suicide

The American Legion is concerned about the welfare of our nation’s youth. It is difficult for adults to understand what would motivate a young person to take his or her own life. Changes in the behavior of a child are often seen as a phase they are going through and just a part of adolescence. This may or may not be the case. As parents and adults, we need to be able to talk openly with our youth. Some youth in emotional pain see suicide as their only option. It is important that adults are able to recognize signs of concern and know how to react and get professional help if needed.

While youth suicide rates have been down the past several decades, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta has noted that there is a seven-year rise in middle school suicides, from an annual rate of 0.9 to 2.1 per 100,000.

Additionally, the CDC statistics show the following:

- The suicide rate among U.S. middle school students doubled from 2007 to 2014, surpassing for the first time the incidence of youngsters aged 10 to 14 who died in car crashes, a federal report released on November 3, 2016 said.

- Suicide remains the SECOND leading cause of death for ages 10-24 and is the SECOND leading cause of death for college-age youth and ages 12-18.

- More teenagers and young adults die from suicide than from cancer, heart disease, AIDS, birth defects, stroke, pneumonia, influenza and chronic lung disease, COMBINED.

- Each day in our nation, there are an average of over 5,240 attempts by young people grades 7-12.

- Four out of five teens who attempt suicide have given clear warning signs

To assist with this combating this problem and educating adults and youth about the warning signs of youth suicide, the Americanism’s Committee on Children & Youth publishes Warning Signs (www.legion.org/publications) that is free to download.
Scholarships and Education

Though the weather is cooling down, our scholarship and education efforts are warming up. Beginning with the 2017 award year, the Samsung American Legion Scholarship’s award structure will change. Ten national scholars (two from each region) will receive $10,000 each. Ten national runners-up (two from each region) will receive $5,000 each. The remaining department finalists will receive a guaranteed $1,250 scholarship. The online application will open no-later-than February 1, 2017 and is available here (www.legion.org/scholarships/Samsung).

Also for the 2017 award year, The American Legion Legacy Scholarship application will go completely online. While children of fallen Post-9/11 servicemembers remain the primary beneficiaries of the scholarship, children of Post-9/11 veterans having been assigned a VA-rated disability rating of 50% or greater are now eligible to apply. Awards are completely needs-based, and an applicant may receive up to $20,000 per year for applicable education expenses. Proof of eligibility and financial need will be required as part of the application process. Look for the new application in December 2016 here (www.legion.org/scholarships/legacy).

Your help is critical to the success of these scholarships! Encourage the young men and young women attending various American Legion Boys State and American Legion Auxiliary Girls State programs to apply for the Samsung American Legion Scholarship, if they are the direct descendant of a wartime veteran. Seek out the eligible children of Post-9/11 servicemembers and veterans to submit their applications for The American Legion Legacy Scholarship. Keep in mind: all scholarships may now be used for undergraduate or graduate higher education at nonprofit and regionally-accredited institutions!

Volunteer for 2017 National Oratorical Contest

The Americanism Division is looking for volunteers to assist with the 2017 National High School Oratorical Contest Finals in Indianapolis, April 22-23.

The contest is held is at the Wyndham Indianapolis West hotel where more than 50 youth from across the country will deliver speeches on the U.S. Constitution to compete for $48,000 in scholarships: first place $18,000, second place $16,000 and third place $14,000. All department finalists receive a $1,500 scholarship. Contestants advancing out of the first round receive an additional $1,500 scholarship.

Volunteers will be provided with specific contest details, a job responsibility and training. All expenses related to volunteering with the contest, such as travel, housing and food, are paid for by the volunteer.

To volunteer, fill out the form online here (www.legion.org/oratorical/volunteer/form).
Flag Respect

The American Legion is concerned about the blatant disrespect for our National Anthem, the flag and everything it stands for. It has become fashionable among professional athletes and we have seen this spill over to college and high school athletics, as well.

To address this concern during American Legion programs, the National Executive Committee passed Resolution No. 16, *Expectations for Rendering Proper Respect When Participating in Programs of The American Legion*, brought forth by the Americanism Commission, during the 2016 Fall Meetings. This resolution encourages all post and department program chairmen or directors of any American Legion program to make clear to all participants, in advance of program participation, that The American Legion has the expectation for rendering proper respect to the Flag of the United States, at all times, including during the National Anthem, and that if any participant of any program of The American Legion cannot, or will not, live up to this expectation, the individual should not be a participant in American Legion programs.

For individuals participating in American Legion programs at the national level, the resolution states that those who “cannot or will not” meet the organization’s expectations for proper flag respect “will be removed from the program and not be allowed any further participation.”

Through our Americanism programs, Legionnaires have an extraordinary opportunity to continue to lead by example and to help raise this, and future, generations to show proper respect for our nation and for all who have fought and died for our way of life.

We can do this by continuing to be steadfast examples of what it means to be proud Americans and to perpetuate 100% Americanism by: teaching youth about American values; encouraging new citizens to assimilate into one American culture; teaching veteran appreciation and flag etiquette in schools; upholding respect for law enforcement and the rule of law; practicing good citizenship by voting and encouraging others to exercise their civic duty; and the list for leading by example could go on and on.

Read the full text of Resolution No. 16 by clicking [here](www.archive.legion.org).