National Commander Visit Slated for MidWinter Conference

Chamberlain American Legion Post #3 is hosting the 2020 Midwinter Conference at the Arrowwood Resort & Conference Center at Cedar Shores in Oacoma, SD, from February 21st-23rd, 2020.

The MidWinter Conference will feature a Joint Banquet, business sessions with multiple guest speakers, breakout training sessions, committee meetings, the Go-Getters banquet, and the Department Oratory Contest. In attendance and a featured speaker at both the Joint Banquet and Business Session is National American Legion Commander 2019-2020 James W. “Bill” Oxford.

James W. “Bill” Oxford was elected national commander of the nearly two million member American Legion on August 29, 2019 in Indianapolis, during the organization’s 101st national convention. He has been a member of the nation’s largest veterans organization since 1986.

A native of Lenoir, N.C., Oxford is a paid-up-for life member and past commander of Post 29 in Lenoir. He served as department (state) commander of the North Carolina American Legion from 2010 to 2011. A veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps, Oxford was an aviation electronic technician for the A-6 Intruder and served in Vietnam during his initial enlistment. After being discharged as a sergeant in 1970, Oxford joined the North Carolina National Guard.

He subsequently attended officer’s candidate school and transferred to the U.S. Army Reserve, where he ultimately retired as a colonel after more than 34 years of military service.

Oxford has served at every level of The American Legion. A former mayor and city council of Cajah’s Mountain, N.C., he has worked since he was a high school student, with most of his career choices being in the maintenance and engineering field. He earned a bachelor’s degree in environmental studies and multiple safety and environmental certificates.

Oxford has volunteered as a coach, umpire, referee and administrator in several youth athletic programs, including service as the public address announcer for the Post 29 American Legion Baseball team.

An active volunteer with several organizations, Oxford is a member of Masonic Lodge-York Scottish Rite and the North Carolina Army Retirees Council. His theme as national commander of The American Legion is “a foundation for the future,” as the organization enters its second century of service.

Oxford and his wife, Frances, have been married since 1967. They have a son, Charles (married to Deah Reid), and a daughter, Jackie (married to Mike Carr). They also have four grandsons, Isiah, Micah, Jagger and Dwayne.
February 2020

Early Bird Go-Getters Named for MidWinter Conference

Early Bird Go-Getters are entitled to attend the Midwinter Conference Go-Getters Reception at Chamberlain, SD.

2020 GO-GETTERS:
Aberdeen #24: Sidney Beckler, Larry Nupen, Sam Olson, Tom Perralto, Gene Schumacher, Melvin Volk, Pat Steele and Gary Warner
Alexandria #41: Darin Kayser, James Kayser, Raymond Thomas and Alfred Blankenship
Arlington #42: Rollly Quam, Terry Hanson, Everett Johnson, Leon Josephson, Tim Holzer, Guy Gronewoldt and Geneve Madsen
Balti #175: Larry Maxwell, Darold Diede, Larry Young, Philip Soulek, Abby Barton, Anthony Reed, Melissa Peterson, Daniel Horzempa and David Siemonsma
Beresford #72: Robert Haas, Ernest Wevik, Jr, Lyle Savoy, Charles Kunsle and Gregg Gettman
Box Elder #315: Joanna Merrill, John MacDonald, Skip Collier, Dan Merrill, Marvin Tisdall and Michelle Easson
Butte #80: Mike Kraft, Larry Buntrock and Dave Andrews
Brookings #74: Russell Mileham, Betty “Sam” Vaughn, Robert Hard, Gary Sackman, Roger Simmons and Christopher Gross
Bruce #202: Harlan Feldhus and Roger Bauman
Castlewood #250: Travis Filsrand, Larry Boner, Wendy Filsrand, Clayton Nei, Krisma DeWitt, Larry Dockter, Ryman Dockter, Ceci Wiarda, Warren Ruesink, Charles Greenfield, Clinton Davis and Cliff Ruesink
Centerville #43: Lawrence Austin, Mike Austin, Terry Clayton, David Fisher, Jerry Hult, Lanney Nelson, Matt Olson, Lee Rist and Allen Skotvold
Chamberlain #38: Kenneth Anderson, Tim Solberg, LaVaun Holan, Delores Arbach, Michael Sherman, Tim Thomas, Sr., John Payer, Alex Huff, John Donovan and Doug Feltman
Chester #136: Courtney VanZanten, Miranda Krumm, Rodney Smith, Kevin Hempel and Kevin Uthe
Clark #60: Dave Adam and Darin Lewis
Dell Rapids #65: Jerry Fox, Mike Geraets, Larry Hoyme, Jack Majores, Robert Risty, Joe Thorrill and Ron Welsig
DeSmet #138: Gary Wolkow, Gary Schumacher, Paul Hanson, Jim Pekar, Clifford Poppen, Lyle Richards Laird Beck, Jerry Hutchinsen and Dennis Helms
Ethan #261: Vilas Kurtenbach, Harry Huffman, Dan Schmidt, Delmar Mueller, Jim Pollesisz, Ray Sonne, Joe Puetz, Larry Buntrock, and Dave Andrews

Full story can be found at https://www.sdlegion.org.

SOUTH DAKOTA LEGION NEWS

“Carry on the Legacy”

Fred Nelson
State Commander

I hope everyone one had a Merry Christmas and wish our Legion Family a blessed and healthy new year. To “Carry on the Legacy,” each legionnaire, each post, each American Legion leader becomes critical in recruiting new members, retaining members, training and mentoring all members of the great accomplishments of the past and how to carry on the mission of our organization based on the four pillars: Americanism, Children & Youth, National Security, and Veteran Affairs and Rehabilitation.

As we approach the 101st birthday of The American Legion, posts should be preparing to conduct Buddy Checks. National Adjutant Daniel Wheeler calls for extending Buddy Checks beyond twice a year. “Our fellow veteran needs should be heard from us outside of Veterans Day and the Legion’s Birthday.” As your department commander, I extend this wish to all posts in South Dakota. By reaching out to our fellow veterans, we can learn about the many needs of our members. Post members could use a visit for camaraderie, checking if members need transportation to attend a meeting, or share what happened at a meeting when they are homebound. Reaching out by a phone call or a visit, also allows posts to share many American Legion programs that can provide assistance to the veterans and their families, whether that’s the American Legion’s Temporary Financial Assistance program if they have young children at home and are facing financial challenges, Operation Comfort Warrior program to aid wounded veterans with recovery, or connecting them with the Legion service officer for assistance and help with VA claims and benefits; not to forget our youth scholarships and programs.

As of writing this article, National has our membership at 16,113. We are at 86.470% of the goal. Remember to increase visibility in your community, promote the activities of your post in the press and media, including social media. If you schedule a special recruitment event, please feel free to contact our department membership chairman or myself with details of the event. We’ll make every effort to come and help.

The Midwinter Convention is upon us. One of the sessions will focus on training and mentoring. Training leads to understanding the programs offered by The American Legion and is a learning experience delivered to increase knowledge that can be passed onto others. By having discussions and other forms of interactions, the members attending the training will have the potential to be great mentors. One difference between training and mentoring is that the mentor develops an informal relationship with a fellow member, which may result in friendship and mutual support. This session will give you a chance to become a trainer in your post and a mentor for your members. As far as training, did you know that The American Legion has an online Basic Training course? The Basic Training course is for all members and leaders. I challenged all District Commanders to complete the Basic Training this year. Hopefully, by midwinter, many will have it done.

Incredibly, I have driven over 27,000 miles in the first half of my year. Some of the highlights of being your department commander include how much I enjoy visiting posts of all sizes, seeing how communities support the Legion activities and mission, and listening to our legionnaires’ stories.

In January, I went to the Nebraska Mid-Year Conference. I participated in a couple of forums along with Nebraska Department Commander Gary Wooten and National Vice Commander Bruce Feuerbach. There were some challenging questions. On Saturday night, instead of a banquet, they had the oratorical scholarship contest.

Our success depends on active membership, participation, and volunteerism. The annual consolidated post reports tell the story of each post and the great accomplishments of the past and how to carry on the Legacy of The American Legion. To my fellow legionnaires, thank you for your dedicated service to our organization and the communities in which it thrives.

For God and Country, we associate together!

Fred Nelson
Your Department Commander

EDITORIAL POLICY

The South Dakota Legion News is published six times a year to serve its members and interested parties by informing them about Department activities and other relevant issues concerning the veterans of South Dakota. The news and opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of The American Legion Department of South Dakota, its officers, members, or the Editor. The Editor has the right to edit all articles.

Please send all original photos and news materials to:
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P.O. Box 67
Watertown, SD 57201-0067
Email: dso@sdlegion.org

Congressional Contact Information


Representative Dusty Johnson (R-SD), 1508 Longworth HOB Washington, DC 20515; Phone: (202) 225-2801; Web site: https://dustyjohnson.house.gov/
Good Samaritan Award

The Good Samaritan Award serves to recognize those individuals or groups who give of themselves to help others. This award is designed to make the public aware of the many good deeds and acts of kindness that are going on around us each and every day.

A narrative with supporting documentation must be forwarded to the District Commanders ten (10) days prior to the Spring District meeting. District Commanders will forward the District’s nominee to State Headquarters in Watertown, SD, no later than May 1, 2020.

An information sheet listing all the criteria and purpose of the Good Samaritan Award can be found on the South Dakota American Legion website at www.sdlegion.org or you may contact the South Dakota American Legion Headquarters at PO Box 67, Watertown, SD 57201-0067 or by email at hq@sdlegion.org.

Once the Good Samaritan Award is announced, the award will be presented at a local venue to honor the recipient. Please take the time to consider submitting a nomination of a Good Samaritan in your community.

County Commanders Win Membership Awards

An award will go to the County Commander in each of the four goal size groups listed below that has enrolled the highest percentage of assigned membership goal for 2020 by the December 11th target date. The award is an armed forces flag desk set. The winners are:

- 15 to 199 goal size—Perry Keller, 83, DEWEY CO. 120.51%
- 200 to 349 goal size — Robert Condon, 154, McCOOK CO. 92.42%
- 350 to 549 goal size — Calvin Hove (50) ROBERTS CO. 84.37%
- 550 and Larger size — Sam Olson (24), BROWN CO. 78.34%

Congratulations to all the winners for their hard work in membership.

Seven Posts Earn All-Time High Membership Numbers

The following Posts have achieved an All-Time High Membership:

- District 1: Box Elder #315, 136
- District 2: Hermosa #303, 150
- District 3: Polo #299, 52
- District 4: Stratford #207, 47
- District 5: None
- District 6: None
- District 7: Harrisburg #45, 91; Chester #136, 81; Two Rivers #319, 52
- District 8: None

Congratulations to these Posts for their hard work!

Early Bird Go-Getters Continued...

- Klumb, Brad Huffman and Roxie Peterson
- Eureka #186: Delmar Metzger, Gary Oster, Perry Thompson, Melvin Kary, Jim Mulder and Ken Kunz
- Gann Valley #16: Kenneth Wulf, C.J. Wulf and Richard Wooldridge
- Garretson #23: Rob Meyer, Owen Wies, Gary Lyngen, Ronald Reklst, Marty Luebke, Andy Lyngen, Paul Evenson, Steve Warren, Reid Christopherson and Steve Kirton
- Hermosa #303: Rick MacDonald, Jim Preston and Curtis Halverson
- Humboldt #62: Charles Dubbe, Charles Beck, Jeff Corey and Fred Lee
- Huron #7: Lloyd Timperly, Jake Salathe, Steve Oetken, Jerry Mence, Sharon Reno, Keith McMilian and Steve Martens
- Irene #193: Christopher Olson, Wesley Rye, John Johnke, Darrell Hansen, Donald Richelieu and Colin Reisner
- Lake Preston #63: Brett Anderson, Rodney Anderson, Crystal Larson, Jason Taylor, Scott Longville, Dave Casper, Lanny Olson, Robert Johnson, Mel Ness, Dave Guetzer, Scott Ingalls, Blaine Miller and Jana Guetzer
- Milbank #9: Noel Cummins and Tim Jurgens
- Montrose #154: Scott Binder, Bob Condon, Dean Kuetter, Cliff Hallem, Ken Katzer and Dale Johnston
- Newell, Nisland, Vale: Russell Edwards
- Platte #115: Clarence Blunck, Ronald VanDriesen, Richard Hoppie, Thomas Jaeger and Robert Westra
- Rapid City #122: John Schneider, Lyle Tolm, Doug Harris, Chris VanDell, Dan Fuller, Mike Dall, John Fleming and Danene Fink
- Redfield #92: James Beckrich, David Durfee, James Huckabay, Perry Schmidt, Jason Wurtz and Larry Price
- Roscoe #259: Ron Hoffer, Kenneth Vilhauer, Eugene Conn, James Flannery, Ricky Hauck, Ronald Kadlec, Jerome Friske, Mike Barondeau and LeRoy Saueer
- Salem #140: Brian Havard, Patricia Mayrose, David Hoyten, Jacobydmonton, Myron Eich, Wayne Krempepps, Bill Eichacker, Joshua Blindert and Keith Aden
- Sinai #133: William Buck, Donald Weiss and Donald Langam
- Spearfish #164: Fred Nelson, Brian Hambek, Doug Henwood, Ron Schuttler, Brian Dean, Rodney DeWese, Patrick Lewellen and Barney Wagner
- Sturgis #63: Darrel Barry, Craig Sanderson, Paul Haedt III, Jerry Lolley, Ken Sabers, Randy Kieffer and Doug Katchmark

Membership Turn-in MidWinter Conference Saturday, February 22, 2020

All Posts are encouraged to bring their Memberships to turn into State Commander Fred Nelson on stage during the 2020 MidWinter Conference at the Arrowwood Convention Center in Oacoma, SD.

Department Adjutant Thoughts

Travis Flisrand
Department Adjutant

Legionnaires,

In previous columns, I have written on the importance of programs at the Post and the positive impacts upon the community, veteran and the youth. This edition I want to highlight some of the benefits that are often overlooked from the National and State American Legion entities. I have seen some members struggle to remember when speaking to new members, what the American Legion does for them for services and benefits. This should provide a condensed list of some of the those.

National:

- Lobbying in Washington D.C. to advocate resolutions passed at National Convention and at National Executive Committee
- VA appeal representation in D.C. in front of the VA board. (it is important to make the American Legion your POA when filing a claim)
- Educational scholarships. Legacy Fund and Oratory scholarships.
- Operation Comfort Warrior. Provide to veterans’ items to aid quality of life.
- Membership Discounts.
- Volunteer / Leadership opportunities on National Committees / Commissions.

Department/State:

- Lobbying in Pierre to advocate resolutions passed at National Convention, State Convention, or by Dept. Exec. Committee / Legislative Committee.
- Representation on South Dakota Veterans Council – additional voice to Legislators.
- State Service Officer to provide assistance to American Legion members as needed. Members are encouraged to use a local CVSO, face to face interviews help exponentially with claims.
- Department Emergency fund (similar to National, but on a state level).
- Temporary Financial Assistance (for veterans with dependent children)
- Educational scholarships (Oratory / Boys State / Youth Trooper / or new Education Scholarship fund)
- Volunteer / Leadership opportunities on State/Dept. Committees / Commissions.

The American Legion touches 240 communities across South Dakota. We are over 18,500 strong, making us one of the largest non-profits in the state. Be proud of what we accomplish as an organization, locally, statewide and nationally. We are veterans’ advocates, community caretakers and civic leaders. Use that pride to get others to join our cause and get involved.

For God and Country,

Travis Flisrand
State Adjutant

Tabor #183: Alvin Stemhagen and Richard Horvorka
Thunder Hawk #279: Quentin Benson, Del Campbell, William Ericsson, John Goeres, Donald Tomac, Thomas L. Tomac, Joe Warfield, John Ebert, Bruce Kimmes and Dani Kling
Veblen #76: Hans Nelson, Dave Geyer, Aaron Anderson, Richard Halbert and Harlan Hillson
Volga #114: Philip Egebier, Russell Bortnem, Verne Hansen, Roger Anderson, Lyle Strande, Joanna Sykora, Blaine Hoff, Kim Chase, Rebecca Tryggstad, Chester Vanderzee and Gary Olson
Watertown #113: Jim Logue, Paul Jensen, Darrell Vogt, Don Lyso, John Haver, Jim Williams, Tom Larsen, Evan Peterson, John Peterson, Ron Prusa, Mike Hesman, Robert Logue, Marlin Renolds and Richard Andersen
Wawona #170: Joe Romer, Shellie Romer, Roger Papka, Paul Kraai, Gerald Zang, Dennis Breden, Byron Callies, Allison Keeler, Mark Stolp, Larry Bohns, Dana Jones, Mark Sunner, John Harper, Wolfgang Migea, Joseph Sande and Hilmer Moen
Wentworth #161: Ted Linholm, Tom Leisinger, Dan Lindholm and Jeremy Lindholm
Wessington #110: Jim Major, Marvin Matthews, Matthew Palmer and Jerold Zerfoss
Hats In The Ring: 
Department Officer Candidates

Ed Stringer 
Post #15, Sioux Falls 
State Commander Candidate 
2020-2021

Doug Feltman 
Post #3, Chamberlain 
State Vice Commander Candidate 
2020-2021

Eugene IronShell, Jr. 
Post #125, Rosebud, SD 
State Vice Commander Candidate 
2020-2021

Greg Geiman 
Post #11, Wagner, SD 
Department Sergeant-at-Arms 
2020-2021

Legislation From Pierre

The 2020 Legislative Session in Pierre kicked off on Tuesday, January 14, 2020, with the Governor’s State of the State Address and the House and Senate in session. This session has a 38 day calendar; below are the current bills The American Legion is monitoring:

SB 35 
revise the appropriation for the State Veterans' Cemetery and to declare an emergency.

HB 77 
make an appropriation for certain costs related to the commissioning of the USS Pierre

HB 1030 
revise certain provisions regarding the Board of Technical Education.

HB 1034 
make an appropriation to fund tax refunds for elderly persons and persons with a disability

HB 1036 
revise provisions regarding the issuance of certain military specialty plates.

HB 1050 
provide for voter registration through an online voter registration system provided by the Sec of State.

HB 1062 
increase the financial empowerment of state residents.

HB 1069 
authorize certain veterans to attend courses offered at postsecondary technical institutes without payment of tuition.

HB 1073 
authorize special event alcohol licenses for full-service restaurant licenses.

HB 1083 
rename the postsecondary technical institutes as technical colleges.

HC 8001 
To honor Chief Justice David Gilbertson for his dedicated services to his community and state.

HC 8007 
Commending the South Dakota Army National Guard's Ellwein family of Rapid City for being awarded the Association of the United States Army Volunteer Family of the Year Award for 2019.

HC 8008 
Recognizing and honoring the Veterans Honor Park in Madison, South Dakota.

Visit https://mylrc.sdlegislature.gov/ to track legislation and view up-to-date press releases

Veterans Affairs 
and Rehabilitation

Courtney VanZanten 
Department Service Officer

Greetings Legionnaires!

On this episode of explaining muddy VA concepts, I’m going to tackle the Power of Attorney and what it means to be an accredited representative. To begin, the legal fun: Under the authority granted in section 38, United States Code, VA may recognize organizations for the purpose of assisting claimants for VA benefits in the preparation, presentation, and prosecution of their claims. These organizations are Veterans Service Organizations, and are congressionally-chartered organizations such as The American Legion.

An accredited representative, a.k.a. your Veterans Service Officer, is an individual who has undergone a formal application and training process and is recognized by VA Office of General Counsel as being capable of assisting claimants with their affairs before VA. Veterans Service Officers (VSOs) are your local resource for dedicated and professional assistance in obtaining federal and state veterans’ benefits. They provide the expertise and advocacy that veterans need to optimize access to benefit programs. In South Dakota, the American Legion Power of Attorney has been delegated to the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs, who then assures that county and state VSOs receive the proper training and continuing education to hold American Legion accreditation.

When you start on a VA claim, one of the first forms you will be asked to fill out is a 21-22, Appointment of Veterans Service Organization as Claimant’s Representative. With this form, you’re giving the Veterans Service Officer Power of Attorney in regards to your VA claim, under the umbrella of the Veterans Service Organization you select. So, if I were to walk in, choose The American Legion as my Veterans Service Organization, their Power of Attorney will represent my claim from start to finish, with most cases starting and ending with my local VSO.

However, should my case need to appeal to the highest level, the Board of Veterans Appeals—that’s where Veterans Service Organizations truly get to flex their muscles. It is in these cases where organizations, such as The American Legion, prosecute claims on a veteran’s behalf, at no cost to the veteran. Not to brag, but Bergmann & Moore, the law firm who represents The American Legion, had 96% favorable court results from cases in 2018, compared to a 77.4% favorable rate from assigned board attorneys. These American Legion lawyers truly hold the “power of attorney.”

In short, the Power of Attorney gives accredited representatives the ability to work your claim from beginning to end. You can find a list of accredited Veterans Service Officers on the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs website: https://vetaffairs.sd.gov/veteransservice/cofficiersto locatevso.aspx or through the VA OGC website: https://www.va.gov/ogc/apps/accreditation/index.asp

Always here to help,
Courtney VanZanten
Department Service Officer

National Executive 
Committeeman

Jim Huls 
NEC

National Commander Bill Oxford will attend the Mid-Winter Conference at Arrow Wood Resort near Chamberlain. He and aide Larry Kline will arrive on Thursday the 20th and depart on Sunday the 23rd. Please make a point to meet with the National Commander for a short visit, you will find that he is a regular guy who loves to visit with Legionnaires. The Commander is our speaker for the joint Banquet on Friday evening.

The Washington Conference is March 8-11 in Washington, DC. Several Legionnaires from the Department of South Dakota will receive Call-Ins for this event. On Wednesday March 11, National Commander Oxford will testify before the Joint Veterans Affairs Committee to deliver the American Legion's Legislative Priorities. The South Dakota delegation will meet with our Congressman and Senators on Tuesday to review the American Legion's legislative priorities. VSO Courtney VanZanten will attend the Service Officer School in Washington at this time as well.

National Vice Commander Feuerbach from the Dept of Iowa will attend our Congressman and Senators on Tuesday to review the American Legion’s Legislative Priorities.

For God and Country
Jim Huls 
NEC
SDDVA Funeral Honors Program

The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs (SDDVA) reminds congressionally chartered veterans’ organizations of the department’s Military Funeral Honors program. SDDVA pays $50 each time an honor guard detail is conducted at the funeral of a deceased veteran. The program first started in the fall of 2015 and over $185,000 has been awarded to posts since that time. Payments are made quarterly. Each application submitted must include information on the veteran, the signatures of a funeral director and post honor guard commander or leader; among other details. If your unit’s honor guard is interested in applying for the stipend, you can acquire a Military Funeral Honors form by contacting Jeri Smith at the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs at 605-773-7251 or by visiting the website http://vetaffairs.sd.gov.

Above: Members of Chester Post #136 provide funeral honors for a local veteran

2020 Eagle Scout of the Year

The American Legion annually honors The American Legion Eagle Scout of the Year at its National Convention. The winner of the competition receives a $10,000 scholarship and the three runners-up are each awarded a $2,500 scholarship. Forms for nominating Boys Scouts for The American Legion 2020 Eagle Scout of the Year award are now available from State Headquarters. State Headquarters must receive nominations no later than March 1, 2020. A panel will select the Department Eagle Scout of the Year. Nomination forms may also be downloaded from the internet on The Department American Legion webpage at: www.sdlegion.org/programs/scouting/

Mark Your Calendar

February 2020

1: 2020 Eagle Scout of the Year Nominations due at State HQ’s
2: Boys / Girls State Governor Commemoration, Capitol in Pierre
10: Department Legislative Committee Meeting, Pierre Post Home
10: American Legion Legislative Reception, Pierre Post Home
14: Department Legislative Committee Meeting, Pierre Post Home
17: PRESIDENT’S DAY, State Headquarters office closed
20-23: MIDWINTER CONFERENCE – Arrowwood Resort, Oacoma
21: SDAL State Oratorical Contest Finals, Arrowwood Resort
26: Ash Wednesday

March 2020

1: 2020 Eagle Scout of the Year Nominations due at State HQ’s
8: Daylight Saving Time Begins (turn clocks ahead)
11-13: Department Service Officer School, Washington, D.C.
12: South Dakota 93rd Legislative Session Ends.
15: American Legion Birthday
17: St. Patrick’s Day
19: First day of Spring!
22: Valentines Day
22: Deadline for Boys State Registration
22: District 7 Spring District Convention
22: Deadline for Youth Trooper Academy Applications
28: District 1 Spring District Convention
29: District 2 Spring District Convention

April 2020

1: American Legion CHILDREN & YOUTH MONTH
1: Deadline for SD American Legion Boys State Registration
3: District 7 Spring District Convention
4: District 8 Spring District Convention
5: District 6 Spring District Convention
6: BH National Cemetery Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service
10: Good Friday
12: EASTER SUNDAY
17-19: National Oratorical Contest Finals, Indianapolis, IN
17: District 3 Spring District Convention
18: District 4 Spring District Convention
19: District 5 Spring District Convention
22: Earth Day
24: Arbor Day

Join us as we conduct military honors for Veterans already laid to rest without honors. Questions? Please call (605)347-3830 or (800)743-1079 ext. 7290.

Register Online for Boys State TODAY!

www.southdakotaboysstate.com/
Americanism
Doug Harris
Department Americanism Chairman

Welcome to 2020!

By now the Post and District Oratorical Contests are complete and we are preparing for the Department Level contest during the Midwinter Conference on February 23rd. I look forward to seeing you and your winners there. The competition starts at 10:30 A.M. and your competitors should be there no later than 9:45 A.M., so they have an opportunity to settle in, get a tour of the venue and get themselves mentally prepared for the contest. I’m still seeking volunteers to help with all the logistics, so email me at doughnut@gmail.com or call me at 970-231-8556 if you would like to help.

Now that we’ve worked our way through the Oratorical portion of the “Big 3”, it’s time to get back in the schools to recruit for Boys/Girls State and Youth Trooper Academy, all taking place in June of 2020. I honestly believe our best chances for success on recruiting for these programs, will be to follow a 3 step process:

1) work with the school counselors/principals/debate coaches/civics and history teachers to find the students;
2) get the parents involved by letting them know The American Legion would like their sons/daughters to attend and that there is no cost to the parent or student – mention the scholarship opportunities and
3) complete numerous “follow-up” contacts with each and every applicant/parent to make sure they stay informed and are present for the District orientations. The more information the applicants have, the more likely they are to stay on track and attend. As I’ve stated in past articles: Don’t be afraid to be annoying!

Also, as I mentioned in my last article, don’t limit your recruiting efforts to just the schools. Contact your Scout Troop leaders, 4-H organization leaders and local church youth group leaders and ask to attend one of their meetings where you can tell their members about the outstanding programs we offer and the scholarship opportunities that each program has available.

Finally, I thank all of you who’ve helped this year and in the past, to bring our programs to the youth of your communities. It’s a never-ending job, but the rewards are also never ending. Make a difference in the lives of your local youth.

Doug Harris
State Americanism Chairman

District Oratorical Winners Announced

The 2020 District contests for The American Legion High School Oratorical “Constitutional Speech Contest” have been held at seven of the eight South Dakota American Legion Districts. Below are the 2020 District Oratorical Winners.

District 1 Winner:
Eliaa Grimsley of Spearfish, SD

District 2 Winner:
No Contestant

District 3 Winner:
Samantha Tinnan of Gregory, SD

District 4 Winner:
Fiala Herzog of Aberdeen, SD

District 5 Winner:
Dorian Sikink of Castlewood, SD

District 6 Winner:
No Contestant

District 7 Winner:
Jayden Clark of Garretson, SD

District 8 Winner:
No Contestant

Congratulations to all the District winners. The District winners will now compete at the Department Oratorical Finals scheduled on Sunday, February 23, 2020 at approximately 10:30 a.m. in Chamberlain.

The first place winner will advance to the National American Legion Oratorical contest that will be held in Indianapolis, Indiana, April 17-19, 2020.

2020 Youth Trooper Academy

Do you know of a student that is interested in applying for the 2020 Youth Trooper Academy?

The Youth Trooper Academy is a partnership between the South Dakota Highway Patrol and the South Dakota American Legion. The Academy provides an intensive paramilitary approach to fireams safety, defensive driving, crash investigation, traffic stops, leadership, defensive tactics, and criminal law.

The 2020 Youth Trooper Academy will be conducted in Pierre, SD, on June 22-26, 2020. The Academy will be limited to 24 applicants, 2 each from the 8 American Legion Districts plus 8 others. Applicants must be a high school junior or senior in good academic standing. The program utilizes a paramilitary approach and is therefore physically and mentally demanding.

Application deadline is March 21, 2020. To apply, find more information and print application at https://www.sdl legion.org/sd-youth-trooper-academy

Milbank, Home of American Legion Baseball, Sets Sights On New Complex

Milbank is on a mission: build a new ballpark. In a town where baseball is stitched into their history, it’s almost a given to go big.

For those unfamiliar, the American Legion Baseball league was first proposed at an American Legion state convention in Milbank, South Dakota. More than 90 years later, American Legion Baseball continues to be an investment in America’s youth. It enjoys a reputation as one of the most successful and tradition-rich amateur athletic leagues and today, the program registers teams in all 50 states plus Canada. Since its inception in 1925, countless Legion Baseball players have gone on to play college and professional baseball, with 68 inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame. More than half of current major-league players played Legion Baseball and so did almost every working MLB manager, along with several former commissioners.

Legion Baseball also has a reputation for serving the young people who play for it. Annually, the league awards a total of $500 – $25,000 in college scholarships for a player selected from each department based upon leadership, character, scholarship, and financial need. Recently, the organization passed a resolution allowing corporate sponsorship, with the goal of creating more financial aid for college. Diamond Sports funds $25,000 in scholarships for the Legion Baseball Player of the Year who receives a $5,000 scholarship and the eight regional players of the year who receive a $2,500 scholarship.

American Legion Baseball is a national institution, having thrived through a world war, several national tragedies, and times of great prosperity as well as great despair. The league still stands behind the traditional values upon which it was founded in 1925. The program’s history proves that on the baseball diamond, America’s youth receive a thorough understanding of the value of sportsmanship, leadership, good health, active citizenship, and individual character building. The program also promotes equality, making teammates out of young athletes regardless of their income levels or social standings. American Legion Baseball has been and continues to be, a stepping stone to manhood for millions of young men.

Milbank is the home of American Legion Baseball and since its beginning, more than 1 million young people have participated. States in the Upper Midwest, including South Dakota, boast the most consistent Legion Baseball participation. This summer, 80 teams registered in South Dakota. Because Legion Baseball began in Milbank in 1925, many programs have been established for decades and have been intertwined in small-town communities. In towns with smaller populations, Legion baseball is one of the most consistent forms of activity and entertainment, which lends itself to a greater interest in participation.

Milbank’s Legion Baseball Facility was located adjacent to an expanding school campus. In order to allow the growing school to continue expanding, it was determined that the best course of action was to tear down the baseball facility and rebuild it on a new site. The new complex will include two youth fields, a Legion field, a grandstand, and a centralized building with restrooms and a concession stand. This project will not only build a new baseball complex. It will build upon the legacy of Milbank and Legion Baseball and create a memorial that pays respect to the thousands of young men that have participated in the program since Legion Baseball’s conception in 1925.

Sponsorship Opportunities

| American Legion Baseball Complex Naming Sponsor | $1,000,000 |
| American Legion National Scholarship Sponsor | $75,000 |
| AAU Legion Baseball Field #1 Sponsor | $70,000 |
| AAU Legion Baseball Field #2 Sponsor | $70,000 |
| American Legion National Scholarship Fund Sponsor | $100,000 |
| Half Fare Community Room Sponsor | $40,000 |
| Officers’ Lounge Sponsor | $20,000 |
| 1st Base Corner Room Sponsor | $5,000 |
| Sideline Locker Room Sponsor | $10,000 |
| Press Box Sponsor | $7,000 |
| Home Team dugout Sponsor | $5,000 |
| Away Team Dugout Sponsor | $5,000 |
| Baseball & Softball Complex Name Sponsor | $100,000 |
| All-Star Sponsor | $5,000 |
| Student Sponsor | $5,000 |
| Uniform Sponsor | $5,000 |
| Veterans’ Hall of Fame Sponsor | $500,000 |
| Complete Grand Entry Gate Sponsor | $100,000 |
| Championship Trophy Sponsor | $25,000 |
| Legion Legue Mill of Champions Grand Memorbial Marker Sponsor | $10,000 |
| Legion Mill of Champion Players: #1-5/25/57-55/75/105/215/225/E / Legion Baseball Poster: $2,000 Unit | $5,000 |
| Legion Children’s Play Area Sponsor | $75,000 |
| Legion Baseball Field 1 Sponsor | $10,000 |
| Legion Baseball Field 2 Sponsor | $10,000 |
| Legion Baseball Field 3 Sponsor | $10,000 |
| Legion Baseball Field 4 Sponsor | $10,000 |
| Legion Baseball Field 5 Sponsor | $10,000 |
| Legion Baseball Field 6 Sponsor | $10,000 |

Total: $4,456,800
How My American Legion Boys State Experience Shaped Me

The following is the work of Ben Garcia, California Boys State Alum, originally published on Studybreaks.com. It provides excellent insight on the student perspective.

What do Bill Clinton, Neil Armstrong and Michael Jordan all have in common? Though it might sound like the opening line of a joke, I first heard the question when I was sitting alone in the center of a conference room in the La Habra City Hall, staring at a panel of individuals. Resting on the table in front of them was an ominous collection of manila folders and clipboards stacked full of charts, questions and graphs. With a slight quiver in my voice, I answered, “They all went to Boys State.”

The American Legion was first founded exactly 100 years ago, when a group of World War I veterans banded together to create an organization that would later brand itself as “one of the most influential nonprofit groups in the United States.” Today, the American Legion offers a number of services, ranging from a Youth Cadet Law Enforcement program to an Amateur Radio Program. Perhaps their most widely recognized programs, however, are Boys State and Girls State. Per the California Boys State FAQ page, “American Legion Boys State is among the most respected and selective educational programs of government instruction for U.S. high-school students.”

I arrived at California State University, Sacramento, early on a Sunday morning the summer before my senior year of high school, the age demographic of American Legion Boys State. Immediately, I was separated from the young men I had arrived with and sorted into a random “city” (Bidwell, in my case), which turned out to be half a floor of a dorm building. The 50 young men that comprised Bidwell were part of a county, one of five counties spread around campus. Then the work began.

Campaigns took off like jets on a runway, and it wasn’t long before many of them came crashing down to a cold reality: Only a little over a third of the boys hold an office during the week-long program’s run. The soon-to-be-seniors have the opportunity to run for a city, county or state position, the last of which is the most lucrative. Boys State is not an experience that the idle will enjoy. It’s tiresome and grueling, with very little down time. For the delegates, it’s more than just a run-of-the-mill summer camp: It’s a chance to test your mettle against the top competitors of your age. I don’t jest when I say that some of the most impressive people I’ve ever encountered walked the halls of CSUS that week.

I had no way of knowing prior to my arrival that my American Legion Boys State experience would be one of the most important of my life. So much of who I am today was the result of that seven-day experiment. First and foremost, Boys State refined me as a leader. Surrounded me at every turn were the best male leaders my age that the Golden State had to offer; to stand out, I had to differentiate myself from others. Decisiveness separated the successful from the disappointed.

The most impactful lesson I learned about leadership, however, wasn’t how to take over a situation. With a thousand high school students vying for limited positions, being leader and more assertive wasn’t my key to success—it was becoming the kind of person other leaders would willingly follow. At Boys State, my public speaking skills likewise blossomed. During my campaign for a position within the State Assembly, I gave formal and informal speeches before my city and county, engaged in debates and met with more people than I care to remember. Maintaining a polished image was paramount for my eventual election to office.

Moreover, it was during this time that I learned more about teamwork than I ever had before. I was already a captain of my high school’s soccer team and had grown up playing as many sports as I could, but all of that paled to American Legion Boys State. There were nights when I and my fellow Bidwell citizens would voluntarily forestry sleep, congregating secretly in one of the small dorm rooms. There, the small group from Bidwell would scheme and plot through all hours of the night, determined to finish as the highest-ranked city of the 22 (Bidwell earned third-place honors). There were pacts and negotiations wagered with other cities, and alliances were quickly formed. Bartering, arguing and deals were commonplace—in just a week, the thousand students had become politicians. He American Legion program was especially influential for my personal development, as I collaborated with people who held fundamentally different views and ideologies from me. A more diverse net of individuals could not have been cast. With limited adult supervision, differences had to be solved maturely amongst the delegates themselves. Disorder was a hindrance, and drama was a hindrance, and drama was.

Moreover, there was never a sense of rivalry between me and my city-mates. Personal success was a ubiquitous goal that bound the group together, so encouragement was widespread. For an achiever like me, it was a perfect microcosm for success. When I walked out of my CSUS dorm for the last time, I felt far older than I had when I’d arrived. Learning was bittersweet, as I was exhausted and ready for home, but I also knew I’d seen incredible young people again.

So if you ever get nominated for the American Legion Boys State or Girls State programs, run with it. Even if you don’t become a delegate, the interview process is great preparation for job applications in the future. But if you do get to go, a word of advice: Give it your all. After all, you never really know who you’ll be when you walk away from it.

American Legion Department of South Dakota

For God and Country

Greetings Legion family! I hope this article finds everyone in good cheer. A lot of great things are happening this year, so let’s start with membership. Every Sons member who recruits a new member is eligible to attend the Midwinter and State Convention Go-Getters Banquet—all free for signing one new member. At Midwinter, the squads that have been at no members or under the minimum of 10 members for the past couple of years will have their charters reviewed for termination. A letter of the process will be sent to all squads below the minimum of 10 members before Midwinter, and they will be reviewed during the Detachments DEC meeting at the Convention (Friday, February 21 at 10:00 a.m.). The SAL of South Dakota now has its own emblem! Purchase jackets or shirts at Sign Design & Labeling in Colton, SD via https://american legion.signedesign1776.club/ or 605-446-3353. This company has the right to print the emblem for the state.

“I don’t jest when I say that some of the most impressive people I’ve ever encountered walked the halls of CSUS that week.”

Greetings to all our American Legion Family in the New Year 2020.

It’s a new year and a new decade. And that reminds me of my new years resolution I made to myself some years back. Well isn’t it really a new years resolution but a word for me to focus on in the new year. As I am writing this article, Montrose Post 154 has begun to form a squadron and already has 29 Charter members. Great job! It would be great to see every Squadron of the Sons have a representative or two at Midwinter on Saturday, February 22, for the SAL general meeting. Hope to see you all there. That evening is also the go-getter dinner, so please come on down and enjoy.

THANK YOU FOR ALL YOU DO FOR VETERANS.

Terry Hanson
Detachment Commander

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Wow year went to the history books. I hope every one had a good year and has a better one in 2020. Looking back on 2019 there is a nation wide increase in membership. That comes from all the efforts put forth by dedicated Legion Members.

I started this year as membership chairman with a lot of hopes that I would get calls from District and Post Commanders for help making their membership grow. I have gotten a few. Some of the districts are doing great and some seem to be struggling a little. I would like to have each district commander to send me a schedule of their upcoming visits. That way I can come help with them and talk about how membership is so important to the programs we support, and the benefits they can and do receive. NO ORGANIZATION CAN RUN ON MEMBERSHIP ALONE , but they do not exist without it. If there is a post that is having problems, I would like the District Commander to schedule a meeting and let me know when. I do not work miracles but outside help is sometimes needed to motivate the members to help themselves. As of Jan. 3 2020 we have 31 posts over 90% exist without it. If there is a post that is having problems, I would like the

Leadership from the Legion to the troops. They will your CELL PHONE to call. Or GOOGLE the number and call. JUST MAKE have phone books ,LET YOUR FINGERS DO THE WALKING. Then use first week end of the month. If you try and can not get hold of a guard unit ,let setting information tables up and where they are most effective. Because let every one know what it is. Talk to each other and get ideas for care. A few District Commanders have sent in a schedule of what they are want to join but do not know how. We need to find them and show them we

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