



Colorado Legionnaire Bulletin

February 2009



National Commaner's Incentive Awards For 2009

Post Excellence Award – This award is for those posts that show excellence in four of the main areas of concern to The American Legion. To qualify for the award, the post would be required to achieve a standard of participation in each of the four areas, those being; **membership, youth activities, community service and support to currently serving troops or veterans.**

The purposes underlying this award are membership growth, exposure of The American Legion values to the youth of the community and increasing visibility of The American Legion Family through service projects. It is anticipated that a post achieving this qualification will have involved a number of the post members in planning an achieving these goals. A number of posts will most likely already be active in these areas and qualify without extra effort. A significant number of others, however, will need to increase their efforts in one or more areas in order to qualify.

Criteria: The standard to be achieved in each of the areas is:

•**Membership** – Membership must be at least one member greater than the previous year

•**Youth Activities** – Must sponsor and actively participate in at least one of the primary youth programs; Boys State, Baseball, Oratorical, Boy Scouts or Junior Shooting Sports

•**Community Service** – Must accomplish a community service project that involves members of The Legion Family actively working in the community outside the post home. A large range of potential projects exists with some candidates being a project centered on one of the Children & Youth emphasis areas to fulfilling a strictly local need. A monetary donation may be part of the project but may not constitute the entire project.

•**Service to troops/veterans** – Must accomplish a project supporting troops or veterans in the community that involves activity by Legion Family members outside the post home. Ranges of projects from the Family Support Network or Heroes to Hometowns to simply helping a local veteran with needed updates to the home are candidates for this category. A monetary donation may be part of the project but may not constitute the entire project.

•**Certification:** The District Commander responsible for the post will accomplish Certification for a post as having achieved the four specified criteria. The District Commander will submit a list of posts meeting the criteria each month to the Department Headquarters. That list of posts should include the Post name, Post number, Post address and Post Commander's name. The last two criteria would ideally be accompanied with copies of press releases that were submitted to the local media concerning the projects. That method would ensure that the projects were not only accomplished but that an attempt was made to enhance the image of The American Legion locally through the media. The copy submitted should include a date-time stamp showing receipt by the media outlet. The Department Adjutant will transmit information each month on qualified posts to: National Headquarters, Internal Affairs, Attn: Membership

District Commander Incentive Award – Award For Post Visitation: Purpose: This proposal would create an incentive for personal visitations to posts by District Commanders and Vice-Commanders. The desired result would be a personal visit to each post in a given District by either the District Commander or in the bigger districts, one of the District Vice-Commanders. Personal contact at this level would create a stronger incentive and set the example for the post membership workers to make the personal contacts necessary for a successful membership program.

•**Criteria:** In order to qualify for the award, the District Commander and/or Vice-Commanders must visit each post in the District during their year. For those Districts with more than 30 posts, the District Vice-Commanders can be used to assist in making the visits but the District Commander must visit at least 30 of the posts personally.

•**Certification:** A list of posts in each District will be obtained with the assistance of the various Department Headquarters. The list will be mailed in spreadsheet format to each District Commander. The list will also be available to them in electronic format. Each quarter, the District Commander will submit a copy of the spreadsheet to Department and National Headquarters updating their progress and showing the date of the visit and the name of the District Commander of Vice-Commander making the visit. At the completion of the 100% visit requirement, the District Commander will send the completed spreadsheet to Department and National Headquarters.

•**Awards:** Each District Commander that achieves the 100% visit requirement will receive a framed certificate recognizing their achievement. For those District Commanders that achieve the 100% requirements, five categories will be created and five additional prizes awarded based on a drawing of the eligible District Commanders in that category. The categories will be for those Districts with up to 20 posts, 21-35 posts, 36-50 posts, 51-65 posts and over 65 posts. The Commander drawn from the group of 100% Commanders in each category will receive a gift certificate from National Emblem Sales. The amount of the certificate will recognize the increased difficulty in achieving the award in the larger districts. The amounts will be \$100 for the smallest category with an increase as the District size increases.

- Category 1 (up to 20 posts) \$100
- Category 2 (21-35 posts) \$200
- Category 3 (36-50 posts) \$300
- Category 4 (51-65 posts) \$400
- Category 5 (over 65 posts) \$500

In addition, each Department Commander where all of the District Commanders achieve the 100% requirement will receive special recognition at the 2009 National Convention.

The Department Commander's Column

A Success

By: Gar Williams

Greetings,

We have just completed a very successful Mid Winter Conference, which started off with the presentation of a long overdue Purple Heart to Mr. John F. Toth, from Arvada, Colorado. Mr. Toth earned the Purple Heart for wounds received in 1950 in Korea. BG William E. Hudson, Assistant Adjutant General –Air – Colorado Air National Guard in the presence of LTG H Steven Blum, Deputy Commander of NORTHCOM, presented Mr. Toth's medal.

The Purple Heart Award Ceremony was followed by the induction of over 170 new soldiers into the United States Army by LTG Blum in the presence of the American Legion Family. The Induction Ceremony was followed by a reception for the new soldiers and their families and the opening of our third American Legion Family Expo where these new soldiers were introduced to the American Legion and its programs and services.



Gar Williams
Dept Commander

Saturday the conference was opened with a very informative and invigorating speech by SSG Joseph Caramillo, from the Lakewood Colorado Recruiting Station, who earned the Bronze Star for his bravery in Iraq. The day's events included Informative committee meetings, which were conducted in breakout sessions and very short reports.

The day concluded with the Jeffrey P. Luginbuel Media Awards Banquet where the Public Relations Committee members Anna Orgeron, Carol Kennedy, Joe Ross and chairmen Darrell Myers presented the following awards:

The Jefferson P. Luginbuel, Jr. TV Media Award was presented to the Channel 9 Northern News Bureau Reporter Adam Chodak and Cameraman Gary Wolfe, to recognize their accomplishments.

The Jefferson P. Luginbuel Jr. Radio Media Award was presented to KRAI, Craig Colorado, to recognize the outstanding support that this radio station gives to The American Legion in their community.

The Jefferson P. Luginbuel, Jr. Small Market Newspaper Award was presented to *The Mountain Mail, Salida Colorado*, to recognize the support they have provided The American Legion, their many programs, as well as the many patriotic events held during the year.

The Jefferson P. Luginbuel, Jr. Medium Market newspaper Award, presented *The Loveland Connection* to recognize the relationship built between the veteran and the community, by telling the stories of veterans and their families, their sorrows and their joys.

And, the Public Relations Committee Special Recognition Award was presented to Frieda Lynn Miller, started Mothers of Military, in Fremont County Colorado in 1990. And, has been dispatching food, and other goods to soldiers serving in foreign lands for the past 18 years.

Sunday morning saw the Memorial Service Chaired by Auxiliary Chaplain Renee Fenton Stone, assisted by Legion Chaplain Tony McCrary, Auxiliary Chaplain and SAL Chaplain Chris Palmer. After which Commander Williams, President Steranka and Commander McCrary adjourned the Conference.

I would like to thank Elaine Bock, Kristie Attarian, Robb Smith, Tony Du Mosch, Ken Romero, the Committee Chairs and everyone who worked so hard to make this, in the words of several attendees "The best Mid Year Conference ever." Thank you, without your help and hard work this could not have happened!

We Get Letters Too

Reunion Notice

US Army Medical Command Japan / Association, Camp Zama, Camp Drew, Camp Sendai, US Army Hospitals, clinics and labs in Tokyo, Osaka, Okinawa and many others.

Personnel who served with any hospital, medical or support units, in Japan or Okinawa between 1945 and the present, officers and enlisted, patients who were hospitalized in Japan including families and friends are invited to join the USAMC-JA and attend the 14th Reunion, 21-25 October, 2009, at the Holiday Inn Seattle-Renton, WA.

Various activities, including Banquet, are planned. Contact Charles W. S. Jezycki, tel. 707-257-6818 or e-mail at www.charleswsj@msn.com, for more information.

Thank you very much.

Charles W. S. Jezycki, Secty/Treas
US Army Medical Command Japan / Association

Leadership Conference
April 24 – 25, 2009
Radisson Hotel
Quebec Street
Denver

Creating A Vision For The Future

By: Tom Bock, PNC

It is probably not necessary to say we are experiencing a depression the likes our country has not experienced in many years. Some of us may have heard about or perhaps even experienced the “Great Depression” during the 1930’s. Though economist may say that the current times aren’t as bad as way back then, it’s still pretty scary. Unemployment approaching 10%, the depressed housing market and a stock market at lows we haven’t seen in decades.

So, just what does this mean for The American Legion? Let’s take a look at what happened during the Great Depression.

In 1933 the annual membership dues for The American Legion was between \$2 and \$5. (Doesn’t sound bad does it?) In 2008 dollars, however, that translates to annual dues of between \$32.72 at \$2 and \$81.60 at \$5. Today, nationwide dues average \$30.00. So, in the heart of the “Great Depression” dues for The American Legion averaged much more than they do now. Yet the Legion held its own and even grew.

Yes, times are tough, that’s true. Yet the Legion has a prod-

uct to sell that is well worth the money, irrespective of the economy. If we have members in our Posts who have fallen on hard times, our “devotion to mutual helpfulness” should guide us in giving those persons assistance to ensure they keep their membership. In addition, we need to ensure they know about our Temporary Financial Assistance program and other benefits of veterans helping veterans and their families.

If we step up to our founding principles by serving our veterans, communities and each other we can experience some of the same results the Legion had during the great depression. From 1929 1942 The American Legion membership grew 43% nationwide. In Colorado our membership grew a whopping 75% during the same period.

So today’s opportunity of a depressed economy, declining participation in Legion meetings, convention and programs can be turned around. I believe there are more veterans and their families who are willing to come to their Legion Post for a \$5 spaghetti dinner instead of a \$50 meal at a local restaurant. We need only to reach out to them. Together we can work for the betterment of our communities, children and each other. That is the culture of The American Legion. That is the vision for the future.

Department Post Newsletter Contest

By: Darrell Myers, Committee Chairman

To enter the Post Newsletter Contest is easy. Just select three (3) consecutive months of your newsletters, your best three (3) consecutive months, and sent an entry packet to each member of the Public Relations Committee, to be received No Later Than April 15, 2009. Each entry packet must contain the same newsletters, from the same three (3) consecutive months. This insures that each judge is looking at the same newsletters from the post during judging.

The members of the Public Relations Committee will judge all entries using the criteria as listed below. Post will be placed into one of two categories, 1) no more than 400 members and 2) 401 members or more.

Newsletter Criteria

0-10 points **Commander’s Note** — should be one in every issue—brief (a few paragraphs to a short column—not pages and pages—gets boring and no one reads it). — should contain a message to the Post.

0-5 points **Calendar of Events**—meetings, activities of Post, Aux. and SAL—can be in form of calendar.

0-5 points **Articles of Activities**— should include photos and information about the event that has happened.(Dinners, yard

sales, etc.)

0-25 points **Four Pillars Reports**— must contain articles about the Post working in the of each -Americanism, VA&R, Children & Youth and National Security to obtain all 25 points.

0-10 points **Post Special Reports/Activities**— Veterans Day, Memorial Day, Active Duty/Guard/Reserve Troop functions, includes photos.

0-2 points **Charitable Activities**— i.e.-Kids Christmas projects, troop packages, fund raisers for vet widows etc.

0-5 points **Patriotic items**—-photos, snippets of any type. (i.e. flags, God Bless America, etc.)

0-15 points **Department or District Reports**— summary of information sent or pertains to Dept &/or Dist. Post resides in.

0-5 points **Info**— reads well (makes you want to read more of the paper), attractive, NO typos(with computers -should have no typos).

0-5 points **Officer/Programs Report:** for article from Sr. Vice; Chaplain; Auxiliary; SAL; Legion Riders (I know that not all Posts have some of these programs, but those that do, and report on them, should get some credit.)

MAX TOTAL =100

From The Department Adjutant

Important

By: C. Pat Smith, Department Adjutant

District Conventions

Here is the schedule for the District conventions so far. District Commanders and Adjutants please send in your information ASAP.

- District 2 - April 26
Genoa Post #31-1 pm -potluck lunch before
- District 4 - April 25
Boulder 10 - 1 pm - lunch before
- District 6 - May 3
Denver Post #87 - lunch \$5.00 -12-5pm
- District 7 - May 2
Post 209, 3613 Jeannine Dr, Co Spgs -11am-3pm
- District 11 - March 2
Paonia Post 97 - Lunch \$5 -10 am



Pat Smith
Department Adjutant

Resolution

The policies of this organization are set by the delegates to the District, Department and National conventions through resolutions. If you want to change anything about this organization you must do so in writing. At the post level put your ideas and thoughts in writing and vote upon those ideas at your post meeting. If approved send the resolution to your district convention so they can discuss the merits of

your idea. If the District passes it they will send it to the Department convention for consideration. If the idea has national implications it will then go to our National convention in August in Kentucky. We normally have only 8 to 10 resolutions each year. Let's see if we can increase that amount this year. If you need help putting your ideas into words contact your District Commander or other District or Department officer for help.

Leadership Conference

Plans are underway for a brand new, exciting and innovative Leadership and Information Conference to be held April 24-25, 2009. This will be the same weekend that our National Commander will make his official visit to Colorado. Current plans call for the conference to be held at the Radisson Hotel, 3333 Quebec St in Denver and the same hotel where we conducted our successful Mid-year. Although the complete agenda has not been completed the conference will focus on information and skills needed to successfully manage this organization at the post and district levels. If you are contemplating running for an office at the post or district level or you are an officer in this organization at any level you need to attend this conference. If you are not contemplating such a move but would like to know more about this organization you probably need to

attend this conference. The hotel rate for this event will be \$79.00 plus tax if you decide you need a room for either Friday or Saturday evening. There will be a working lunch and the registration fee, to include lunch, will be \$20.00. We would encourage the Posts and Districts to offer scholarships to help defray the costs so your prospective officers can attend. We know that this date may be before your elections but in many cases you already know who you will be electing to your top offices. A \$100 scholarship would help a lot. Post Commanders; bring this up to your meeting next month. We will publish the complete agenda on line when it becomes available and will include it in the next Observer and Bulletin. Plan on it!

Membership

As of February 10th we stand at about 85% of our national membership goal of 24,200 members. Our membership committee has sent out delinquent lists to our posts and have mailed out postcards that they asked the post to mail to those delinquents. The committee made a special effort in getting those members of post 211 with less than 4 years of continuous membership to renew their dues. The committee continues to transfer members to local posts from the headquarters post to try and get those members active at the post level. This last 15% will be the toughest members to renew. The best way now is personal contact, either with a phone call or face-to-face visit. Look at your membership roster. Maybe you have a member or two that has been a member for a long time but has not renewed. It could be they can't afford to pay in the current economic climate. If that is the case make an effort to find the money to take care of that member. It the least we can do for loyalty.

Membership awards

Elsewhere in this Bulletin are several awards and incentives for membership from the National Commander Dave Rehbein to include the "Pride and Purpose" pin, the Post Excellence Award, the 2009 District Commander Incentive Award and the Belt Buckle Incentive award. The first date for our Department awards that you need to be aware of is the April national target date. This will be the date that our Department Membership committee will award the 100% post plaques. These awards will be mailed directly to the District Commander for his presentation at the District convention. We will accept membership postmarked through April 10th for these awards.

Website

We are continually evolving the Department website to better inform our membership. We would encourage you to go to the website www.coloradolegion.org and fill out the member profile form. Check out our merchandise page. We have a wide assortment of Army, Air Force, Navy, Marines and Coast

Guard specific jackets, caps and t-shirts at excellent prices. Check out the LIT (Legionnaire Insurance Trust) button. Sign up on our social network.

Honor Flight

Honor Flight of Northern Colorado will be escorting about 100 WWII veterans to Washington, D.C. to visit the WWII Memorial on April 28th, 2009. They will be leaving from the Combs Executive Terminal at DIA. They are looking for lots

and lots of people to show up at 9:30 am that day see them off. They hope to have a high school band and a color guard in attendance. The trip is free to the WWII veterans and U S Airways will be providing the chartered airplane at cost so donations will be accepted. For more information contact Honor Flight of Northern Colorado at 970 324-1153. Donations can be made to Honor Flight Northern Colorado, 711 8th Ave Greeley, CO 80631. Check out their web site at www.honor-flightnortherncolorado.org.

SAL NEC Report

The Annual Child Welfare Dinner

By: Jim Gelwicks

Remember! You're Invited Sons, Legionnaires, Auxiliary Members and Friends, to the Sons of The American Legion, Detachment of Colorado Fifth Annual Child Welfare Dinner.



Jim Gelwicks
Detachment NEC

On Saturday, April 4, 2009 with Social Hour beginning at 5:00 pm and Dinner beginning at 6 pm.

Pork Roast and entertainment and for those who need it there is a special diet available to fill those needs and then the Silent Auction Cost: Donation to CWF At Aurora Post 23, located at 2323 Dayton Street., Reservations are necessary, seating is limited to 100 so make sure that you reserve you spot by

calling 303 364-2300 and wear things that are casual.

This is our state wide celebration of Children and Youth Month and the Child Welfare Foundation. All proceeds support The American Legion's Child Welfare Foundation. Each year this event has grown. If you participated in the past, come again the fun is just begun. If you missed the previous years, come see what you've missed. This is a great event. All we need is you.

Jim Gelwicks
NEC

PS If you have an item for our silent auction. Bring it! Thank you.

We Get Letters Too

Reunion Notice

US Army Medical Command Japan / Association, Camp Zama, Camp Drew, Camp Sendai, US Army Hospitals, clinics and labs in Tokyo, Osaka, Okinawa and many others.

Personnel who served with any hospital, medical or support units, in Japan or Okinawa between 1945 and the present, officers and enlisted, patients who were hospitalized in Japan including families and friends are invited to join the USAMC-JA and attend the 14th Reunion, 21-25 October, 2009, at the Holiday Inn Seattle-Renton, WA.

Various activities, including Banquet, are planned. Contact Charles W. S. Jezycki, tel. 707-257-6818 or e-mail at www.charleswsj@msn.com, for more information.

Thank you very much.

Charles W. S. Jezycki, Secty/Treas
US Army Medical Command Japan / Association

Don't Foget
Sign-up For
The Post Website
Awards
Must Enter Before
1 April 2009

An Event To Remember!

By: C. Pat Smith, Department Adjutant

WOW! What an event! I am talking about the 2009 Mid-Year Conference held in Denver January 23-25, 2009. The annual Mid-Year Conference is an event designed to look at where we are as an organization in the management of our programs and make positive decisions about the next six months.

The importance of the conference is as much a motivation session as it is a flow of information. But this year the enthusiasm was over the top.



Pat Smith
Department Adjutant

Commander Gar Williams put together a program that will be hard to top in future years. If you have been reading the bulletin and the Observer you know that the American Legion sponsored, in conjunction with the U S Army, a new soldier induction ceremony.

When we first started talking about the event it was to induct 30 brand new troops. The final number was over 170.

When you walked in the front door of the Radisson you were immediately struck with the vision of an American Flag hanging from the fourth floor of the hotel to the basement. What a magnificent picture. You knew something special was going to happen. And it did.

On Friday evening the Army marched 170+ young men and women, ready to take the oath to defend our country, in the uniform of the U S Army, cascading down the stairs, six abreast, wearing Army Strong black T-shirts. At the bottom of the stairs looking up at the atrium and the overflow crowd of spectators and immediately below the bottom of that beautiful flag was the inducting officer, Lt General H Steven Blum from Nor-Com at Peterson AFB and next to him was City of Denver Mayor John Hickenlooper and General William Hudson from the Air National Guard.

U. S. Army banners and flag bunting hung from the balconies up to the fifth floor and the audience hung over the balconies waving American Flags. The American Legion John Philip Sousa Band provided the patriotic music. Just prior to the induction Auxiliary Chaplain Renee Fenton-Stone sang a rousing rendition of our National Anthem. What an impressive sight and sound.

Also in the distinguished guest line was our own Past National Commander Tom Bock and his wife Elaine and our NECman Ralph Bozella and his wife Susie. A very special guest in the distinguished line was John Toth of Arvada who had just received the Purple Heart from his wounds received in Korea, 58 years ago. Rounding out the distinguished guest line was Lt Col William Medina and Sgt Maj. Atencio from the Army Recruiting Command and Department Adjutant Charles Pat Smith.

Mayor Hickenlooper spoke to the new recruits and thanked

them for their commitment to serve their country. He was impressed by the “theatre” atmosphere of the ceremony. Our Commander Gar Williams delivered a well prepared, well delivered speech. Gar hit the nail on the head when he told the troops The American Legion would be here for them and their families, now and in the future. General Blum provided a short history lesson to the troops about our freedoms and the price it takes to preserve them. He spoke of the journey before them and how important their service was to our country. At the end of his speech he formally inducted them into the Army with their oath to “preserve and protect” our country and our freedom.

To say that the ceremony was impressive is an understatement. You had to be there to catch the excitement and enthusiasm that permeated the audience and the building. If you wanted to be proud to be an American you needed to be there.

After the ceremony the Army treated the new recruits and their families, to a reception. The American Legion held its third annual Program Expo, put on by the “Queen of Expos,” Kristie Attarian. Our business partners, Legionnaire Insurance Trust, Bellco Credit Union and Automotive Avenues were on hand to explain the benefits of their programs. Our Legion programs were highlighted to include Boys State, Jr Shooting and the Oratorical contest.

Jin Kong from our national organization greeted the new troops and encouraged them to sign up for the Vet Cam program. Our membership committee displayed all of the tools necessary for a good membership recruiting effort. The Auxiliary was on hand with their programs. It was an exciting and productive evening from start to finish.

Saturday started with a breakfast hosted by the Boys State Committee. It was an overflow crowd, probably because the breakfast was cheaper than the hotel buffet breakfast. Saturday continued with an opening session of the Legion, Auxiliary and SAL. We were treated to an inspirational and motivational speech by a young Staff Sgt Joseph Caramillo from the Lakewood, CO recruiting station. Sgt Caramillo took us through his time in Iraq, from a “boots on the ground” perspective, and told of the bravery and commitment of the troops under his command. He had the audience captured during his whole speech, with his words being adsorbed by all. If you had any doubt about the bravery of our young men and women in uniform, his speech dispelled those doubts. He has promised The American Legion his full support in all of our efforts and there is even a rumor he will be a counselor at Boys State this summer.

We also heard from a spokesman from American Military Families and the work they do for the families of those deployed and those who return in need of assistance. And rounding out the joint session in the morning was a presentation from the Huey 091 Foundation and the status of the IBOT wheel chair for spinal cord injured veterans.

The rest of the morning was dedicated to breakout sessions

of various committees and by all accounts they were very successful. Lunch was hosted by the Past Commanders Club and they elected Rick Friend as their new President for the coming year. After lunch all of the committees reported to the delegates on their activities.

The banquet that evening was very special. Last year our long time Public Relations Chairman Jefferson P. Luginbuel passed away and the banquet was dedicated in his honor. All of the annual Media awards were re-named the “Jefferson P. Luginbuel Media Awards.”

Loveland Post 15 nominated Channel 9 News Northern Bureau’s Adam Chodak and Gary Wolfe for the TV award and they were selected by the committee members to receive this award. Both Gary and Adam were present to receive the award.

Craig post 62 nominated radio station KRAI in Craig for the Radio award and they were selected. Frank and Tammy Hanel, owners, accepted the award.

Salida Post 64 nominated *The Mountain Mail* as the small market newspaper award and they were selected. Editor/Publisher Merle Baranczyk accepted the award.

Loveland Post 15 nominated *The Loveland Connection* as the medium market newspaper award and they were selected. Senior Editor Kelly King accepted the award.

Canon City Post 13 nominated Frieda Miller as “The Military Mom of the Year,” a very special award for her commitment to our troops for the last 18 years by providing comfort items and gift packages to troops while deployed. Frieda was on hand to accept the award with her husband Jerry at her side.

Our Public Relations Chairman Darrell Myers, who took over from Jeff, did an outstanding job making the presentations.

The banquet continued with another inspirational speech

from an outstanding veterans advocate, Mr. Artie Guerrero. Artie is a Vietnam Vet; wheel chair bound and appeared on the podium with his lovely wife Cathie and his faithful dog, Sierra. Artie talked about his travels from a gung-ho Vietnam Veteran in country, to a disabled veteran to a veterans advocate. He has literally traveled the world on behalf of veterans to include a trip back to Vietnam. He is a frequent visitor to the State House testifying on veteran’s bills. We were extremely lucky to have Artie in our presence and he left us feeling renewed in our commitment to our country and our troops.

The banquet concluded with the entire audience holding hands as Renee Fenton-Stone sang God Bless America. The conference concluded on Sunday morning with a moving memorial service conducted by Chaplains Tony McCrary and Renee Fenton-Stone.

Many of the pictures of the weekend will be available on our web site at www.coloradolegion.org. Check it out.

PS. For those of you reading this that did not attend, you must realize it is difficult to put into words the excitement that exists at one of these events. Our membership has told us that they wanted something different in our Conferences and Conventions and this was certainly different. Our convention this summer in Grand Junction will be just as exciting and just as different.

If you quit coming to our conventions because it was the same old thing you will be surprised this year. Commander Gar appointed a special Ad-Hoc Committee to make recommendations for changes and many of those changes will be implemented this summer.

There is much work to do in this organization. If you are not involved, get involved.

Rifle Memorial Veterans Wall

American Legion Post 78 in Rifle is planning to erect a new wall on the existing Veterans Memorial located in West Garfield County. They hope to dedicate the new wall on November 9th, 2009.

The wall contains the names of veterans from the county who have served their country, both living and deceased. They

will need to raise \$40,000 for the project.

If you can help with any financial assistance or can assist in any way, please contact District 13 Adjutant Dean Wells at 970-319-4579 or mail to 5033 CR 335, New Castle, CO 81647.

Belt Buckle Offered As Recruitment Prize

During the 2008-2009 membership year, National Commander Dave Rehbein will award 100 Legionnaires with an American Legion Belt Buckle. Any Legionnaire who recruits 8 new members into The American Legion will be eligible for this drawing.

There will be 20 winners drawn from each of the five regions based on the National Vice Commanders. The certification coupon for this program may be submitted at any time after August 28, 2008. National Commander Dave Rehbein’s Belt Buckle incentive will end on April 30, 2009 and the winners will be drawn during the Spring NEC Meetings.

Legion Participates In Community Covenant Program

The American Legion announced its support Jan. 30 for the nationwide Community Covenant program, which fosters effective state and local partnerships that improve the quality of life for U.S. servicemembers and their families. Cities and towns pledge their support at signing ceremonies for military families with written covenants, which often have included specific programs and initiatives designed to make life easier for warriors and their loved ones.

Craig Whelden, a retired Army major general, leads the Community Covenant effort. He said the program began as an Army-only operation, but quickly expanded to include all branches of the armed forces - including reserves and the National Guard.

“We’re in the seventh year of this war, and it’s the longest war in our nation’s history with an all-volunteer force,” Whelden said. “So the secretary of the Army thought this would be an opportunity to engage the American public in their communities, and raise the level of visibility of the dedication and sacrifices of our servicemembers.”

Whelden said the Community Covenant aims to inspire the leadership in cities, towns and states to conduct signing ceremonies that visibly demonstrate their support for military families. “It’s an opportunity for the military to also thank the community for the support they provide.”

Last year, 85 signing ceremonies took place at state capitols, fairgrounds, colleges, high schools, town halls and sports stadiums. They were often attended by mayors, members of Congress, governors, National Guard adjutants general and other military officials. Fifty-two additional ceremonies were conducted in communities near military installations across the United States, from Fort Lewis, Wash., to Fort Stewart, Ga. So far, 11 Community Covenant signings are scheduled for this year and dozens more are in the planning stages.

Whelden’s organization has identified more than 1,500

“best practices,” from national initiatives to local programs, that offer effective community support for troops and their families. For example, 35 states provide full tuition to military families for higher education. Many nonprofit organizations help military families with their financial needs, such as The American Legion’s Temporary Financial Assistance program (for families with children who are minors). Other groups focus on assistance to children and youth who experience trauma and loss, such as the Legion-endorsed Operation Military Kids.

“I’m a Legionnaire,” Whelden said. “And The American Legion seems to be a very good fit for the kind of support we’re looking for. The Legion doesn’t need to spend any money on this. We’re just asking its members to help us with our outreach efforts to the mayors and other civic leaders in their communities.”

While Community Covenant provides a basic text for documents that are signed, states and communities have added their own unique pledges, with specific references to programs and activities that will help them achieve their outreach to military families.

A sample covenant text reads, “We, the Community, recognize the commitment Soldiers and their Families are making every day. The strength of Soldiers comes from the strength of their Families. The strength of Families is supported by the strength of the Community. The strength of the Community comes from the support of Employers, Educators, Civic and Business Leaders, and it Citizens.”

The **Community Covenant Web** site has a wealth of information, including a list of state and local “best practices,” an event schedule, media and press coverage, and a step-by-step guide for organizing a community signing ceremony. Their website address is <http://www.legion.org/national/supportroops/covenant>.

Important Legion Dates

January 23-25	Mid-Year Conference	Denver	
February 28 - March 4	Winter Meeting	Washington D.C.	
March 2	District 11 Convention	Paonia Post 97	Lunch \$5 -10 am
March 7	Oratorical Contest	Denver	
April 4	SAL Child Welfare Dinner	Squadron 23 Aurora	5:00 pm
April 10	100% Membership Awards Cutoff Date		
April 24, 25	Leadership Conference	Denver	
April 25	District 4 Convention	Boulder 10	1 pm - lunch before
April 26	District 2	Genoa Post #31	1 pm -potluck lunch before
May 2 - 5	Spring Meeting	Indianapolis, IN.	
May 2	District 7 Convention	Post 209, 3613 Jeannine Dr, Co Spgs	-11am-3pm
May 3	District 6 Convention	Denver Post #87	Lunch \$5.00 -12-5pm
May 8	Cutoff Date for National Membership Awards		
June 7 - 13	Colorado Boys State	Pueblo	
June 18-21	Department Convention	Grand Junction	