

IT'S NEVER TOO LATE



Our youth program season is upon us. Boys State, being held for the first time at Northwood University in Midland, is exciting and it is not too late to become involved in our "Student Trooper" program.

Poor thinking patterns draw the joy from life. Break the hold that negativity has; explore, and encourage your posts to participate. "Challenge the Possibilities" and enjoy our young people's pride and enthusiasm.

As I have traveled throughout our great department, I have found that

American Legion posts are truly committed to their communities, as well as to veterans and their families because it is the right thing to do and they do them for the right reasons: "Service First." As long as we continue our dedication to this ideal, we will do well as an organization.

To carry our programs and our service, it takes membership. Right now at the time of this writing 143 posts, 5 districts, and 2 zones have achieved 100% of their 2008 membership goals while many more posts that are within 1 - 3 members have until May 15th to reach that milestone. Well done to each of you and thank you for your efforts for this has been no easy task in the first full year of an \$8.50 dues increase. It is

clear to me that you understand "the value of membership."

To you that have a small number of members left to achieve 100% of your goal, I know that at this time of the year thoughts are turning toward the 2009 membership year. But, make a personal contact or two and see what you can do in 2008.

To those who attended the American Legion Family Joint Testimonial Dinner, thank you. It is an evening I will remember with great affection. You proved that we can be and must remain a family unit.

Department President Deb Meskill and Detachment Commander Andre Svacha have been a true joy and inspiration to work with. I am honored to

have served with them.

State Committee Chairmen and their committees have performed outstanding tasks on behalf of the department of Michigan this year. I am grateful to them for their hard work.

This year started with great expectation and a true commitment. Adjutant Patrick Lafferty and this staff cannot be thanked enough for their assistance and guidance.

If this is starting to sound like my last article as your State Commander, well it may very well be! By June, your thoughts will be turning toward the convention in Grand Rapids and your new State Commander.



Commander's Review - Michael L. Williams, State Commander

No Changes – Just Keep Rolling

I thank everyone who is responsible for and has participated in several major functions of late.

The Upper Peninsula Association Mid-Winter Tour was cold, snowy with wind chills in the minus 20 degrees below zero; I would not have changed one part of it and look forward to doing it again one day.

The Legislative Reception hosted by our State Legislative Chairman Douglas Williams again brought out the best of the American Legion. The National Commander's Dinner was well attended as well as the Winter Meeting that followed.

I am impressed with the advances in our youth scholarship programs. In fact, many of our programs, like Heroes to Hometowns, are achieving national attention for their effectiveness thanks to the efforts of our State Reconnect Chairman Garry Tanner along with Eddie Brown and his Heroes to Hometown Team.

State Membership Director Larry Money and his team are diligently moving Michigan forward as they continue to demonstrate a commitment toward positive growth.

Now is the time to place a serious emphasis on our student programs such as Boys State and Student Trooper. Your efforts will once again shine through all the rhetoric about declining participation and fulfill my expectations and confidence in your abilities.

Doing good deeds is one thing; recognizing the need to tell someone is another story. For months now American Legion posts have been doing the business of the American Legion. Tasks such as providing for our veterans, their families, and their communities are accomplished daily. The Legion's Consolidated Post Report (CPR) form will soon be mailed to all posts by department headquarters.

Please fill in the sections that apply to your post and return the completed form to department headquarters by June 1, 2008. The information you provide as evidence to how important the American Legion post really is legislatively very valuable as we work with lawmakers both in Lansing and Washington and speaks well of your post and its participation in its community.

Thank you to each of you for your service and your membership as we carry out, grow, and continue to "Challenge the Possibilities" for the future enhancement of the Department of Michigan.



Commander's Review – Michael L. Williams, State Commander

Setting the Villa Record Straight

Let me set the record straight. A few years ago the Department of Michigan removed “**Legion Villa**” as a general program for liability reasons.

We still, however, remain committed to serving the veterans who reside at that facility and soon, our department website at www.michiganlegion.org will have a direct link to the **Legion Villa** website.

We have many of our most prominent and dedicated leaders of both the American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary who remain fully committed to providing the best possible care for the residents, as we all should. The **Legion Villa** is a care facility for veterans much like the Grand Rapids and Marquette Veterans Homes and most of the residents are members of the on-site American Legion post.

Meanwhile, the facility needs our financial support. Many posts and districts made generous contributions at one time, but some stopped when the **Legion Villa** was removed as a department program. Simply put, liability concerns and the eliminations of mileage and per diem costs were the only results of that action. Those dedicated souls who were committed to the Legion Villa and its residents remained strong, as should Michigan's American Legion posts and districts by resuming their financial support to the **Legion Villa**.

To obtain a needs list, simply phone 269-968-2524 or mail your donations to **Legion Villa**, 107 Evergreen, Battle Creek MI 49015. Please direct any questions you may have to me at department headquarters or to Michael Campbell at the Legion Villa.

I offer a reminder that National Commander Martin Conatser will hold a question and answer session at 3:00 p.m. on Thursday, February 14, 2008 at Lansing's Holiday Inn South as part of his official Michigan visit.

I am looking forward to seeing many of you who I have met during my travels around the state and thank you for your hospitality.



Commander's Review

"Challenging The Possibilities"

The Value of Membership

By Michael L. Williams, State Commander

The value of membership may be as simple to some as a place to buy an inexpensive beer at your local post. And, during one's entire year of membership you may choose to do nothing outside your local post.

The value of membership, however, goes far beyond your local post. Consider the fact that your dues dollars benefit children through our youth programs, provides member services, and allows for the assistance that the American Legion provides to veterans and their families as well as the same for today's young men and women who are serving in the Armed Forces and their families.

The value of your membership also gives us a credible and powerful voice in the legislative halls of Lansing and Washington as we work to insure the continuation of our earned veterans rights.

I sincerely hope you see the value of your membership and choose to continue your involvement in these most worthwhile undertakings because you are one, and with one, begins the efforts of the sum total to continue our work on your behalf.

In a similar vein, remember several facts: (1) Quality programs equal membership retention and go far toward attracting new members, (2) Quality programs do not just happen; they take some effort, (3) The key is to "Keep it Simple" and decide what you want to do and then do it, (4) Failure to act is often the biggest failure of all, and (5) Program planning is not rocket science.

If you think back to your childhood and remember that the games during recess, which were just simple group dynamics. Impromptu decisions were made by you and your friends based on what you wanted to do and what resources you had at your disposal. That formula, with just a little tweaking, can work wonders.

However, learn to walk before your run and do not fall into the trap of trying to make "one size fits all." Many conditions affect your program's capability. Nevertheless, do not use this as an excuse for doing nothing.

Do not become discouraged as you strive to honor your commitments, as the stakes are too high. "Don't let what you can't do interfere with what you can do." And lastly, younger veterans, who we must attract, must be considered in the basic first steps of a viable program that our members will support.

As we enter this traditional holiday season, I offer my best wishes for a safe and joyous time of the year.



Commander's Review for October 2007

A Work In Progress Continues

By Michael L. Williams, State Commander

As we enter the fall season, many positive things have taken place. I have been able to visit many of our district, the Veterans Service Officer School at Higgins Lake is successfully completed, and our Fall Conference at Boyne Highlands in Harbor Springs went very well. I am confident from all this that many participants have returned to the respective posts where some fine and truly dedicated volunteers are ready to carry our programs to the veterans in their communities.

Membership is coming in very well thanks to the Post, District, and Department Membership Teams. You have met and exceeded our first two membership target dates, which is crucial to a successful membership year.

I would be remiss if I failed to thank the Michigan Delegation that attended the National Convention in Reno, Nevada. Much was accomplished on behalf of the Legion and our nation's veterans.

Serious work continues in earnest to improved participation in our youth programs. Each post will receive a program guide in the mail this month. The same is being sent to all Michigan High Schools. Program success is critically tied to local Legionnaires visiting the schools to review our youth programs.

Our Fall Conference provided many informational Schools of Instruction, including Membership, Website, Identity Theft and Internal Revenue Service to name a few. I for one am very pleased with the outcome and thank all who so willing participated.

Please remember that posts that work closely with other organizations for the betterment of their communities should write their accomplishments to my attention at your headquarters in Lansing for consideration of my Community Service Awards. To date, I have presented three well - deserved awards and look forward to doing more.



Commander's Review -September 2007

“Challenging the Possibilities” is Working

By Michael L. Williams, State Commander

I am very pleased with the efforts by so many to have such a positive input on the programs of the American Legion, Department of Michigan.

We are moving in the right direction but there still remains much to be done. But, do it, we will. We have removed some of the old walls of resistance, like, “We can’t do it that way,” or “It has never been done that way.” Your ideas and cooperation is much appreciated as we continue to “Challenge the Possibilities” in enhancing our great program base.

Membership is coming in very well and I am sure through your efforts the 50% goal set for September 10th will be achieved. Remember to always pay attention to the 3M’s of membership – “Moved, Mad, or Mortality.” In virtually all instances of why a member has not renewed his or her membership is due to one of these three reasons; two of them, we can address.

I enjoyed attending the 2007 State Baseball Tournament hosted by Midland Post 165 and congratulate our state champions, the team from Blissfield Post 325. They now go on to represent Michigan in the Great Lakes Regional Tournament hosted by Michigan.

I am looking forward to a fun and informative Fall Conference and having the opportunity to greet many of you for the first time at this event. Please see the Adjutant’s Perspective below for complete Fall Conference details and program agenda.



Commander's Review for July/August 2007

“Challenging The Possibilities”

By Michael L. Williams, State Commander

During the campaign as I visited posts and districts throughout our state, I stressed my beliefs in the Principles of the American Legion, along with the importance of effective public awareness.

Many of our programs are suffering due to the lack of participation and in some cases awareness. Our Baseball, however, is doing well and growing under the leadership of its chairman and committee.

With the involvement of our various committees it is our goal to improve and enhance programs and attract more participation.

I quote Robert F. Kennedy, “I see things as they are, and ask why?, I see things as they could be and ask why not?”

The productive approach will be undertaken to develop programs of interest and alternate sources of obtaining participants because it appears our local posts lack either the information or the willingness to take part in the future of our young people.

Having said that, this is my pledge: That the staff at state headquarters is here to serve you and supply you with the required materials and assistance for you to become involved in one or all of our four major youth oriented programs, Boys State, Student Trooper, Baseball, and our Oratorical Scholarships.

The time is now to start gathering information to work into the fall months and the beginning of the school year.

In an effort to serve you better, contact me personally at my home: 517-663-1081 if your post has a perceived problem in obtaining program information.

Enough about that. The future of the American Legion is bright and, in fact, this coming year could well be our finest. With a simple, but aggressive approach to our Veterans Affairs and Membership Programs, there will be an increase in the number of Post Service Officer Schools held at district meetings throughout our state.

I am continuing “Heroes to Hometowns” as my special project for the year as I firmly believe we must continue to support the Michigan troops who are critically wounded and facing a long recovery period.

I will be visiting many posts and district this year and will use those opportunities to personally thank you for your support and confidence in electing me as your State Commander