

# CONNECTICUT AMERICAN LEGION COLLEGE

## BASIC AMERICAN LEGION HISTORY



## THE AMERICAN LEGION

A LOOK INTO THE PAST  
THE NATIONAL ORGANIZATION

# THE NATIONAL ORGANIZATION

HOW DID IT ALL BEGIN  
WORLD WAR I  
AFTER THE WAR WHAT?

# WORLD WAR I



- ▣ GROUPS OF MEN SENT OVERSEAS
- ▣ COMRADSHIP AND NEW EXPERIENCES
- ▣ A SENSE OF BELONGING
- ▣ CONCERN FOR THEIR FELLOW SOLDIERS
- ▣ LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE
- ▣ A SENSE OF PATRIOTISM

# 1919 THE BEGINNINGS

- ▣ MARCH 15-17 MEMBERS OF AEF CONVENE CAUCUS IN PARIS
- ▣ MAY 8-10 ST LOUIS CAUCUS
  - AMERICAN LEGION NAME
  - DRAFT PREAMBLE AND CONSTITUTION
- JUNE 9 NEC ADOPTS LEGION EMBLEM
- SEPT 16 US CONGRESS CHARTERS THE AMERICAN LEGION
- NOV 10-12 FIRST CONVENTION MINNEAPOLIS
  - --RESOLUTION SUPPORT FOR BOY SCOUTS



# ACHIEVEMENTS OVER THE YEARS

- ▣ AUG 1921 EFFORTS RESULT IN CREATION OF US VETERANS BUREAU LATER THE VA
- ▣ JUL 1925 LEGION CREATES AMERICAN LEGION BASEBALL PROGRAM
- ▣ JUNE 1935 FIRST AMERICAN LEGION BOYS STATE IN ILLINOIS
- ▣ JUNE 1938 FIRST NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL ORATORICAL CONTEST
- ▣ DEC 1943 DRAFT OF GI BILL OF RIGHTS BY NATIONAL COMMANDER HARRY COLMERY
  - LEGIONS SINGLE GREATEST LEGISLATIVE ACHIEVEMENT

- ▣ JUNE 1944 PRES ROOSEVELT SIGNS SERVICEMEN'S READJUSTMENT ACT/GI BILL OF RIGHTS
- ▣ JULY 1954 AMERICAN LEGION CHILD WELFARE FOUNDATION FORMED
- ▣ AUG 1969 NEC ESTABLISHED NATIONAL EMERGENCY FUND
- ▣ JAN 1989 VA ELEVATED TO CABINET-LEVEL STATUS
- ▣ OCT 1990 LEGION CREATES THE FAMILY SUPPORT NETWORK

- ▣ JUNE 1991 LEGION HOST FIRST JUNIOR SHOOTING SPORTS NATIONAL AIR RIFLE CHAMPIONSHIPS
- ▣ JUNE 2008 PRES BUSH SIGNS INTO LAW POST 9/11 VETERANS EDUCATION ASSISTANCE ACT



# KEY ELEMENTS

- ▣ PREAMBLE TO THE CONSTITUTION
  - TELLS WHAT WE ARE ALL ABOUT
- THE AMERICAN LEGION EMBLEM
  - SYMBOLIZES WHAT WE DO

# 21ST CENTURY KEY CHALLENGES

The key challenges facing The American Legion in the 21st Century, as outlined by the National Executive Committee in October, 1997, have a common denominator to success -- personal involvement of Legion Officers.

# VISION

Every American Legion member must focus on service to the veteran, to their families and to the communities as their number one priority. Legion officers at every level must lead the way in reinforcing this vision.

# GOALS

**Goals:** We must have goals to fulfill our vision of service. A mission statement should be in place that includes these goals and spells out a direction of where you and The American Legion at every level should be in one, three, five and seven years.

# IMAGE

We must be aware at all times of our image and how others perceive us and our work in the community. We must remain the champions of service to our veterans and their communities. Everyone in a Legion leadership position must set the example for all members to follow.



# PARTNERSHIP

The American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary, and the Sons of The American Legion need to be partners in providing service to our veterans, their families and their communities. Legion officers again must set the example for inner-organization dialogue and cooperation. Our work of service to our veterans is a *“family affair.”*

# PUBLIC RELATIONS

We can amplify our commitment of service to the veteran through an aggressive and consistent public relations program. It allows us to maintain visibility in the community. Technology in the media has made it possible for every one to become accessible to print and broadcast media. Likewise, Community Service Committees, the Chamber of Commerce(s), and Business Associations have doubled in number over the past 10 years. These are excellent opportunities to network. Become involved in the community as a good neighbor. Public relations opportunities to tell the Legion story should be pursued.

# PROGRAMS

Our service to veterans and their communities is manifested in our programs and there are many outstanding programs to choose from. Single theme or service Posts can be drawing cards for starting new Posts. Legion officers at every level should be coaches, motivators and consultants in helping Posts develop and maintain programs.

# TRAINING

Every officer and staff member needs training. Through training we gain knowledge to help better serve our veterans. Whether it is a Department Legion College, a conference, an annual convention, the Extension Institute or National Information Conferences, education of our officers and staffs at every level should be an on-going process. One of the most ideal and effective training methods lies in **mentoring**.

# MENTORING

Is an “hands-on” approach to training that has proven to be the best investment in nurturing future Legion leaders. Mentoring can be tailored to accommodate any learning needs of your members. It can be in small group or done one-on-one. Through the individualized coaching by a seasoned Legion officer, new officers and members can receive the training and reap the benefits of experience, which may be lost in a classroom setting. Mentoring allows one to learn at their own pace and in their own locality. It allows ample room for positive motivation and stimulates new ideas for improving Legion business.



# MEMBERSHIP

Service to our veterans begins with our membership base. Without members we would have no voice on Capitol Hill nor could we achieve the entitlements and support to our veterans, their families, their communities, our state and nation. **Membership is everyone's responsibility --especially Legion officers.** Post revitalization and new Post development should be on every Legion Officer's mind. Resolution 28, Disenfranchising, reaffirmed that the Department Commander or Department Executive Committee is the final decision maker on establishing Posts within the Department, not another Post or District. The National Executive Committee established, by the same resolution, an objective of one Post for each high school in the community. The focus is presence in the community and the objective is growth. Over the next five years the goal is to increase the number of Posts to over 16,000. Therefore, every Department must focus on Post development/ revitalization

# 21ST CENTURY OUTREACH PROGRAM

This program encourages Legion officers to aggressively seek support from the Active Duty military, Guard and Reserve organizations in your Department to identify eligible veterans. Since January 1998, several active duty bases and guard units have agreed to allow The American Legion to address veterans separating from the service. The potential for membership is unlimited. Two initiatives to identify veterans in the community are listed below:

# 21ST CENTURY OUTREACH PROGRAM

**Jobs** – *American Legion Members and Posts* can help job seekers from the military community find good jobs with good employers! Help your employer/business in recruiting Veterans, transitioning military, and working spouses! Find out how referring employers will benefit your Post and the Legion by visiting The American Legion web site at [www.Legion.org](http://www.Legion.org).

**Internet** - Several of our members have shown leadership initiative by thinking outside the box when it comes to finding new sources of eligible veterans. Tapping into webrings and getting on veteran service organization chat lines has proven to be highly successful in initiating interest in The American Legion. It is also a new frontier to promote the Legion through new public relation opportunities.

# COMMUNICATION

This is a must! Legion officers must set the example in establishing clear and concise lines of communication with members and nonmember alike. Through communication and personal contact, The American Legion can cross all race, gender and age barriers on its way to providing quality service to our veterans and their communities. District and county Commanders should visit every Post within their jurisdiction. This provides you with an awareness of their needs and growth potential. Communicate, educate and support one another through all mediums available to you whether its newsletters, bulletins, television, radio, newspapers, E-Mail and/or direct contact.



# CONCLUSION

The essence of the 21st Century Plan is personal involvement through demonstrated leadership.

Our blueprint for success was laid out for each of us by our founding fathers----it is:



*“Service to our veterans, their families and to  
their communities, states and nation”*