

The American Legion, Department of New York  
112 State St., Suite 1300, Albany, NY 12207

JANUARY 2009



# LEGION-EARS

“NOW HEAR THIS”



Volume 3 Issue 1

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Department Adjutant

Available on-line at  
[www.ny.legion.org](http://www.ny.legion.org)

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## COMMANDER'S MESSAGE

First of all, I want to wish everyone in our American Legion Family a Very Happy New Year and, hopefully, you all enjoyed the Holiday Season.

Our visitation trip to Westchester County in December was truly enjoyable and we want to thank everyone for the hospitality that you've shown us. Each of these visits seems to provide us with memories that we will never forget.

It's the start of a new calendar year but we still have plenty of hard work to accomplish in the current American Legion year. Another Membership Target Date is coming up on January 14<sup>th</sup> and I've been assured that we will meet the 80% target with time to spare. Congratulations to all of you and THANK YOU for your efforts. But, please don't let up now – we still have a long way to go.

We now look forward to meeting many of you at the Mid-Winter Conference on January 23 – 25 at The Desmond in Albany. While you're there, gather up all the information you can to take back to your Posts.

Please remember to keep our troops in your prayers --- God Bless!!!

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## CHILDREN & YOUTH MEETING

1/24/09  
1:00 PM

It is very important that all 10 Districts have a representative at the Children & Youth meeting

during our Annual Mid-Winter Conference. If your District Chair is not available, please send a representative to sign-in and pick up the packages. These packages contain information from the National Children and Youth Conference in Indianapolis along with minutes and notes from other conferences and meetings in 2008. In addition to the packages, there will be a couple of guest speakers with some great ideas to impart.

The meeting will be held on Saturday – 1/24/09 at 1:00 PM in Orange St. 9 at The Desmond. See you there!!!

John E. Konkol, Chairman  
Department Children & Youth Committee

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### MEMBERSHIP CORNER

Everyone is doing a great job on Membership having achieved 77.3% by the December Target Date of 12/10/08. Our next Target Date is January 14, 2009, and we are within reach of the 80% goal. Your continued efforts are making all things possible, and I thank you again for all that you do for Membership and The American Legion.

During the month of December the Membership Team and I were invited to an 8<sup>th</sup> District Meeting in Leroy. We presented portions of the revitalization program and answered questions pertaining to membership and other Legion programs. Any Districts that would like to have an individual of the Membership team visit to discuss membership programs with you, need only contact your Department Membership Team.

The Annual Mid-Winter Conference in Albany is fast approaching and I hope to see everyone there. Our Membership meeting will be held on Saturday at 9 AM. Information will be available and a question and answer period will follow. There will be break out sessions with Our National Representative Billy Johnson and another one with Department Membership Manager Kandi Desrosiers on form preparation. The membership meeting will be

very informative and prepare all of us for the second half for the year, with all of the tools needed to achieve our 100% goal

There are still dates in March and April that National Representative Michele Steinmetz would be able to present the revitalization program to a local post.

Again our next Target Date is JANUARY 14<sup>TH</sup>, WITH A GOAL OF 80%. Please continue to SEND IN THOSE TRANSMITTAL FORMS EARLY enough to be counted for this target date. Your continued support and enthusiasm will ensure your success and the Department Goal of 80%.

Thank you in advance for your continued service. I Wish Everyone A Happy and Healthy New Year.

And may God Bless our Troops and all of You!

W. Michael Bowen  
Department Membership Chairman

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Legion members: Robert Hill & Haley James along with Kendal James and Zacchary King

Members of the Burns M<sup>c</sup>Cauliffe Post 465 Family, Homer (Cortland County) spent December 13<sup>th</sup> volunteering for the Salvation Army. The collective efforts of the members provided 128 hours of service by manning all of the local Salvation Army Christmas Kettles.

According to Captain Scott Dorchak of the Salvation Army, the Post Family set a one day record with their fund raising effort for the Christmas season and he expressed their appreciation that the Post Family provided and coordinated the volunteers for the entire day at all kettle locations.

Post Commander Francis Riter stated that everyone who participated was very enthusiastic and felt rewarded by providing their services to an organization that does so much for the local community.

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**LEGION  
LAUNCHES  
VETCAM FOR  
FAMILIES OF  
MILITARY, VETS**

The American Legion comes through again!! Military troops deployed overseas can now use their webcams to talk with their families back home without having to download software packages that might not pass muster with command cybernet security requirements.

The American Legion has launched "VetCam," a free webcam service that enables US military service members to talk face-to-face on their personal computers with friends and family by simply registering as a user. Once registered, each user can connect with two webcams and use the service 24/7 from any place with an internet connection.

"Webcam technology has been around for awhile, but many required downloading software to make them work," said National Commander Rehbein. "We want our troops, our veterans, and their families to be able to enjoy the pleasure of talking face-to-face with their loved ones anywhere in the world, with just a couple of mouse clicks. Next to actually being there, seeing and talking with your

spouse and kids, mom and Dad, and best friends are morale boosters prior generations of veterans never had."

To initiate the service, a user will need a webcam or a computer with a built-in webcam. Go to [www.legion.org](http://www.legion.org) and click on VetCams, register and start communicating. Once registered, simply log in at any time to connect.

All members of the United States Armed Forces (active duty, Reserve, and National Guard), members of The American Legion, and their families and friends are welcome to use this complimentary technology.

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Master Sergeant Mike Samuel, leader of the Syracuse University Army ROTC is greeted by his daughter

**THANKING OUR VETERANS**

With cheers and salutes, thousands said "thank you" to local veterans at the Central New York Veterans Parade held on 11/8/08 in Syracuse (Onondaga County). Sixteen American Legion Posts from throughout Central New York participated.

Assemblyman William B. Magnarelli, D-120, and the Onondaga County Veterans Council partnered to organize this event as a way of returning to the days when the whole community turned out to thank our veterans. The streets were lined with spectators who cheered on the brave Americans who made sacrifices and served our country in times of need. Military personnel and veterans from all branches of the armed forces, both active and reserve, drew loud applause and many salutes as they marched past spectators.

Girls and Boy Scout troops handed out flags and programs. Several area bands participated.

The 2009 CNY Veterans Parade has been tentatively set for Saturday, November 7, 2009 with step-off at noon in Clinton Square. The parade committee is looking for veterans' groups from throughout Central New York as well as active duty and reserve units to participate. For more information and to get your organization registered to participate, go to [www.cnyveteransparade.org](http://www.cnyveteransparade.org) or call 315-428-9651.

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**ADOPT A PLATOON**

MEMORANDUM FOR: Potential Sponsor

SUBJECT: Invitation to Sponsor Bravo Company Soldiers in Afghanistan

Greetings! As the commanding officer of Bravo Company "Bulldogs," I would like to thank you for your interest in supporting my Soldiers who are deployed to Afghanistan for twelve months, January 2009 to January 2010.

I have 88 men and women serving in my command. They are Military Intelligence professionals who provide intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance support to the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division (Light Infantry) from Fort Drum, New York. We are broken down into four platoons; Headquarters Platoon, Human Intelligence Collection Platoon, Unmanned Aerial System Platoon, and the Signals Intelligence & Analysis Platoon.

My Soldiers will conduct intelligence support operations to improve the governance, economic, and infrastructure development within Logar & Wardak Province to establish a safe, secure, and self-sustaining Afghanistan. I will also have four Soldiers serving in Konar Province.

My Soldiers will be located on nine different Forward Operating Bases (FOB) in Logar, Wardak, and Konar Provinces. If you are interested in supporting my Soldiers, please send me an email at [christopher.sievers@us.army.mil](mailto:christopher.sievers@us.army.mil) or my 1SG [Alexander.lashendock@us.army.mil](mailto:Alexander.lashendock@us.army.mil) to let me know if you would like to support all my Soldiers, a single platoon, or smaller sub-elements within my platoons. I will most likely not be able to respond until late January since we will be conducting combat operations to establish and secure our FOBs.

Once we are established, please send any letters or packages to my headquarters:

Chris Sievers  
B CO, 3<sup>rd</sup> BSTB  
3/10 MTN DIV, FOB SHANK  
APO AE 09354

Thank you again for your interest in supporting my Soldiers.

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JOHN B  
HANDE  
POST 89

Several Posts have stepped “up to the plate” to sponsor our service members. John B. Hande Post 89, Vestal (Broome County) shipped 180 boxes of school supplies to the 4<sup>th</sup> Stryker Brigade, 2<sup>nd</sup> Inf. Div. between April and June of 2008. Total weight was 2, 385 lbs, shipping cost alone was \$2,000. \$5,200 was collected from Vestal businesses and individuals to help defray expenses. Vestal school children, their parents, and teachers contributed the bulk of the school supplies shipped. Walmart was the largest financial contributor.

Vestal High School conducted a “kick-off” ceremony on April 17, 2008 consisting of Posting the Colors by their Eagle Scouts and the National Anthem sung by the Vestal Chorus.

The District Superintendent and his staff were very instrumental in making the program a success by announcing the program at staff and teacher meetings, authorizing flyers to be sent home with the children, and making daily PA announcements at each school.

The 4<sup>th</sup> Stryker Brigade returned to Ft. Lewis, WA in July.

This should give all of you out there an idea of how to get your community involved in supporting our military personnel.

Also, check with local merchants about putting collection boxes for items badly needed by our

troops. The economic crisis is hitting everyone very hard, but if every person puts in one item, you’ve got a “comfort box” to ship over.

The message is plain and simple - no matter how you feel about the war, we MUST SUPPORT OUR TROOPS!!!

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MESSAGE  
FROM  
NATIONAL  
COMMANDER  
REHBEIN

I know that all of you took a well-deserved break with your families for the holidays. I hope you had a joyous Christmas and have the happiest of New Year’s.

With the economic problems in this country, please be sure your posts watch out for our members who have problems and do what you can to help them in every way.

Our membership actually grew during the Great Depression in the 1930’s because our posts had the reputation of helping their members and the veterans of their community. People wanted to be part of that help. They still do. If nothing else, the gift of a membership to a member with problems keeps them eligible for a number of programs such as NEF. If the problems become severe and there are children involved, don’t forget the Temporary Financial Assistance program.

I’m not going to take up your time with a long motivational message for this next target date on January 14<sup>th</sup>. This is the time of year that the only motivation that counts is that which comes from within us. If we are going to be successful, it will happen because we have decided to be successful and are working to be

successful, NOT because we are just hoping to be successful.

Today is the day to look at your membership report and find those posts that have not transmitted any membership in the past several weeks. Those are the posts that one of your membership team should contact ASAP! The best New Year's resolution we can make is to work to ensure that when a target date arrives, NO Post Adjutant ANYWHERE has cards sitting on the desk waiting to be transmitted. Organize that effort and get them all in.

I am having a great year and am confident you are having the same. Together we can make this year the best in a long time.

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### VA ASSISTING VETERANS WITH HEALTH CARE COSTS

For veterans struggling financially due to a job loss or decreased income, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) offers an assortment of programs that can relieve the costs of health care or provide care at no cost.

“With the downturn in the economy, VA recognized that many veterans will feel the effects,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake. “Therefore, it is important that eligible veterans learn of the many ways VA has to help them afford the health care they have earned.”

Veterans whose previous income was ruled too high for VA health care may be able to enter the VA system based upon a hardship if their current year's income is projected to fall below federal income thresholds due to a job loss, separation from service, or some other

financial setback. Veterans determined eligible due to hardship can avoid co-pays applied to higher income veterans. Qualifying veterans may be eligible for enrollment and receive health care at no cost.

Also, eligible for no-cost VA care are most veterans who recently returned from a combat zone. They are entitled to five years of free VA care. The five year “clock” begins with their discharge from the military, not their departure from the combat zone.

Each VA medical center across the country has an enrollment coordinator available to provide veterans information about these programs. Veterans may also contact VA's Health Benefits Service Center at 1-877-222-VETS (8387) or visit the VA health eligibility website [www.va.gov/healtheligibility](http://www.va.gov/healtheligibility).

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Back (l to r) CPT Christina Mouradjian, Commander, 152<sup>nd</sup> Military Police, Fort Hamilton; Doyle Coffman, chaplain, Fort Hamilton; NYC Comptroller William C. Thompson, Jr.; Paul Rieckhoff, Executive Director and Founder, Iraq & Afghanistan Veterans of America; LTC Ed Monore, President, Claude B. Govan Chapter, Tuskegee Airmen, Inc.; Thomas C. Triumph, Vice President of Marketing & Operations, USO of Metropolitan New York  
Front (l to r) Providence Mendolia, Adjutant, Women Veterans of America; CPL Lawrence H. Smith, Co-Founder, Black Veterans for Social Justice; and Andrew Affrunti, Commander, Floyd Bennet Post 1060, The American Legion, Department of New York (Photo by Marla Maritzer)

NYC Comptroller William C. Thompson, Jr. honored five New Yorkers at his seventh annual Veterans' Recognition Ceremony on November 17, 2008. Among those honored

was Andrew Affrunti, Commander, Floyd Bennett Post 1060, Brooklyn (Kings County).

“Tonight we pay tribute to five individuals who work tirelessly on behalf of all the military veterans across this country,” Thompson said. “I am equally honored to stand here among the hundreds of veterans in attendance to say ‘thank you’ for all you do and have done to provide us with the freedoms we enjoy as Americans.”

Commander Affrunti was the second honoree. “In addition to commanding the American Legion Post at Floyd Bennett Field, Mr. Affrunti has served as a military chaplain and has worked to help our children understand the dangers of drugs,” Thompson said. “For his continuing efforts and selfless acts, it is my honor to present him with this award.”

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Past Seventh District Commander George I. Tripp, Jr. (88) passed away on November 29, 2008. George was a WW II Veteran of the Army Air Corps. He served as a fighter pilot and retired from the USAF as a Lt. Colonel.

George was a teacher and principal in the Greece (Monroe County) Central School District. He was very active in the Springwater Fire Department and was a life member of the Springwater American Legion Post 905 and its SAL Squadron. He was a Past Livingston County Commander.

He is survived by his wife of 64 years, Nora, and their four children.

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**MID-WINTER  
CONFERENCE  
DINNER**

Tickets are still available for the dinner to be held Saturday evening, January 24<sup>th</sup> at the

Mid-Winter Conference. The cost is \$30. Reservations can be made with Barbara Kerr by phone (800-253-4466) or e-mail [barbara@nylegion.org](mailto:barbara@nylegion.org).

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**NATIONAL CONVENTION  
LOUISVILLE, KY  
AUGUST 21 – 27, 2009**

As information comes to us from the National Convention staff, we will pass it on to you. The next page contains information on paddleboat lunch and dinner cruises available in Louisville. This company also offers sight-seeing cruises. They are already selling out for some cruises and have added additional cruises.

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The offices of The American Legion, Department of New York and National Headquarters will be closed on Monday, January 19<sup>th</sup> for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.

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**YOU DON'T WANT TO MISS THIS**

Have you made your reservation yet for the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner Celebration honoring Department Adjutant Richard M. Pedro on Sunday March 15, 2009? Tickets are going fast and there is limited seating so reservations should be made as soon as possible. Tickets are \$45.00 each (check made out to The American Legion, Department of New York). Meal choices are Roast Prime Rib of Beef, Lemon Thyme Chicken or Salmon au Poivre. Send your request to: Robert L. Morrill The American Legion Department of New York, 112 State Street Suite 1300, Albany, NY 12207. This is an event that you will not want to miss and will be talked about for years to come, so order now and show your appreciation to Dick for what he has done for The American Legion during his twenty-five years as Department Adjutant.

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*Belle of Louisville & Spirit of Jefferson*  
 401 W. River Rd  
 Louisville, KY 40202  
 Phone: 502-574-2992  
 Fax: 502-574-3030  
 www.belleoflouisville.org



**Prices: Lunch \$27 Dinner \$37**

***Belle of Louisville & Spirit of Jefferson  
 Welcomes American Legion  
 2009 National Convention August 21-27***

***CRUISE SCHEDULE***

<b><i>Friday, August 21</i></b>	<i>Belle of Louisville</i>	<i>Lunch 12-2pm</i>	<i>Dinner 7-9pm</i>
<b><i>Saturday, August 22</i></b>	<i>Belle of Louisville</i>	<i>Lunch 12-2pm</i>	<i>Spirit of Jefferson Dinner 7-9pm</i>
<b><i>Sunday, August 23</i></b>	<i>Belle of Louisville</i>	<i>Lunch 2-4pm</i>	
<b><i>Monday, August 24</i></b>	<i>Belle of Louisville</i>	<i>Dinner 7-9pm</i>	
<b><i>Tuesday, August 25</i></b>	<i>Spirit of Jefferson</i>	<i>Dinner 7-9pm</i>	
<b><i>Wednesday, August 26</i></b>	<i>Spirit of Jefferson</i>	<i>Lunch 12-2pm</i>	
<b><i>Thursday, August 27</i></b>	<i>Spirit of Jefferson</i>	<i>Lunch 12-2pm</i>	<i>Dinner 7-9pm</i>

*Lunch boarding time 11:30 am  
 Dinner boarding time 6:30pm*

**502-574-2992 1-866-832-0011**

**Call to make reservations and ask for military discount. Cruises are filling up fast so call soon.**

*\* If the Spirit of Jefferson sells out we will move the cruise to the historic steamboat the Belle of Louisville.*

