Greetings fellow comrades. By the time you read this message, the Labor Day Holiday will have come and gone, however, I wish our American Legion Family a safe and sound holiday. September 11th, the infamous World Trade Center Towers attack in New York will have passed too, but, our posts did a good job recognizing this historic day with ceremonies, remembrance walks and memorial services in commemoration of those who passed. We must continue to proudly support our troops fighting the war on terrorism.

Our Membership Director, Department Vice Commanders and District Commanders have attended training at the membership workshops at National Headquarters. This valuable training will assist our officers in meeting our membership goals. During the workshops, each Department was encouraged to return to our basics with pride and purpose. The objective is to work on the American Legion’s four basic core values: Veteran Affairs & Rehabilitation, National Security, Youth and Education, and Patriotism.

Have you committed to attending a training session? Membership Director, Jeri Strande, conducted training in Sierra Vista at Post 52, one in Chandler at Post 35 and one in Camp Verde at Post 93. My hope is for good dissemination of information and widespread attendance by members. There will be additional training at the Fall Conference on membership, programs and other areas. A special note in the membership race, Post 53, Buckeye, has surged to the front to reach 100% of their goal.

Thus far, we have completed three wonderful Legion events in August 2008. The first event was the State Legion Baseball Championships which were played at the Surprise Sports Complex in Surprise. Tucson High School won the state championship for the second successive season. Congratulations to the team and coaches and they are sponsored by Post 7 in Tucson. This concluded a great Legion baseball season.

Second, we hosted the Western Regional Legion Baseball Tournament at the same sports complex. It was a huge success, from the Opening Banquet to my second trip to Surprise. Tucson High Legion Riders!!

The baseball season is over and the tournaments are done. Now is the time to start planning for the 2009 season. Bob Longoni (Area “A”) and Tom Kusek (Area “B”) are already working on plans for the next season. It is also time at the post level to begin looking for a way in which your post can support the baseball program. The first step is to contact the local high school and see what their needs are and what they would need to play in the Legion program. There are many ways in which to secure funds to support a baseball team. Contact one of the area chairman and they will be more than happy to assist you in any way possible.

Commander’s Message

Training is the Key To A Sucessful Organization

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The 2008 season ended with the Department certifying 25 teams with more than 450 young men competing in friendly competition vying for the eight slots (4 from Phoenix and 4 from Tucson) to be filled in the Department throwing out the opening pitch for the final championship game. Nevada won the tournament with excellent play and moved on to Shelby, NC to compete in the Legion Baseball World Series. Hawaii was a hard playing runner up. The organizing team at hosting Post 29, Glendale, did an outstanding job. Congratulations and a big “high five” for a job well done!!

Third, we played a gracious host to the National Convention for 2008-2009 and the Department of Arizona national leadership and distinguished guest teams were up to the task. This national organization event was done with awesome flair under Director Dick Holmes. Numerous laudatory comments were received from the Legion Riders on over 250 motorcycles roaring into Post 2 in Tempe, to the Arizona Party’s Mexican food and Mariachi Band, to the Four Corners Party at Post 41, the excellent steak dinner during the National Commander’s Banquet, and the election of new National Commander Dave Rehbein.

Our Arizona American Legion Family can be proud and I am sure our guests from across the country enjoyed themselves. Again, thanks for your exceptional performance and “hat’s off” to our Legionnaires, Auxiliary, Sons of the American Legion and Legion Riders!!

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Commander continued on page 2
The Arizona Legionnaire

October 2008

DEPARTMENT OFFICERS

Commander
Henry Branch
(602) 418-0605

Vice Commanders
(A) Louie Romero (520) 798-7192
(B) Ariel Rodriguez (480) 897-2332
(C) Jim Strande (928) 649-3374

NEC
D.M. “Joe” Aguilar (520) 385-2142
Alternate NEC
Paul Griffin (602) 938-0918

Dist 1 Commander
Date Hiller (928) 210-7766

Dist 2 Commander
Kenneth Dowse (520) 384-0443

Dist 3 Commander
John Taylor (520) 384-4311

Dist 4 Commander
Jerry Boales (520) 836-2705

Dist 5 Commander
Robert Cress (928) 349-8284

Dist 6 Commander
Thomas Altstatt (928) 409-9008

Dist 7 Commander
S. Ann Seney (928) 753-3555

Dist 8 Commander
Joseph J. Duggan, Bl (928) 567-5540

Dist 11 Commander
Robert Hicks (832) 486-5192

Dist 12 Commander
Thomas Will (480) 726-0991

For the Latest Legion Info
www.azlegion.org


This past year’s program was rather unique in that we had to utilize a facility that was different from past years. For the first time, in many years, we were not able to utilize Camp Navajo because of the National Guard demands on that site.

The installation we finally found that could accommodate the program was a church camp, Emmanuel Pines Camp, located a couple of miles outside of Prescott. This camp, surrounded by Natural Forest, has turned out to be an ideal location for the training of our young people in various aspects of law enforcement.

Being the first year in a new site, it was a learning experience for the staff as well as the cadets. The greatest problem for this encampment was not the new site, but rather the flu-like illness that was brought in by one cadet which rapidly spread especially through the staff including both the Camp Commander and the Assistant Commander. Even with that problem, however, the program was a success given the fact it was shortened to only five days.

Thirty one cadets were graduated. I should note that of that number, 15 were paid for by the parents, 10 by various Legion family posts, units and squadrons, 4 police Explorer groups and 2 police agencies. Thus, the program was well supported.

Next year’s program will again be at Emmanuel Pines Camp with the dates set for the arrival of the staff on Friday, June 19th and the cadets on Saturday, June 20th. Graduation will be on Friday, June 26th with the camp being totally cleared by that afternoon.

In 2008, we dropped the allowable age down to 13. The 12 year old cadets performed just as well as their older counterparts. This year we may go even younger, but that remains to be seen.

The tuition fee for this coming year has been raised to $225. This is necessary given the additional costs incurred with the new site. If this program is to continue, we must be able to keep up with rising costs of providing a unique experience for the young people of our State.

This coming year, I will be visiting Posts and several of the Districts in an effort to raise funds for the program. In addition, our Camp Commander (a fellow Legion member) and I will seek to find other sources of support.

We are able to start everything early this year, because we have a contract in force with the Camp and have the dates firmly set.

I would like to thank all of the Legion Family for the support shown for this program over the years. Without that support, The American Legion Law Enforcement Career Academy (A.L.L.E.C.A) would not be possible.

Frank Whitten, Director
623-872-0886
fwhitten@cox.net

David K. Rehbein
New American Legion Commander

Dave Rehbein of Ames, Iowa, was elected National Commander of the 2.7 million-member American Legion on Aug. 28, 2008 in Phoenix during the 90th National Convention of the nation’s largest veterans organization.

A U.S. Army veteran of the Vietnam era, Rehbein served as an infantryman with the 4th and 1st Armored Divisions in Germany from 1970 to 1971. After leaving the Army, he attended Wayne State College and graduating with a bachelor’s degree in physics and a master’s degree in metallurgy. Following graduation, he accepted a position as research metallurgist at the Ames Laboratory, U.S. Department of Energy, where he remained until his retirement in July 2008.

Rehbein served on the National American Legion Commission 1989-99, with service as an instructor on the National Information Conference staff, conducting the judge’s briefing for the National Oratorical Contests and as Match Director of the Junior Shooting Sports national finals. He has served as chairman of the National Foreign Relations Commission, Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission and the Legislative commission.

Cndr. Rehbein resides in Ames with his wife, Ann. His son Chris, and his wife Beth, and daughter, Jennifer, are all active members of The American Legion family. Ann is a past department president of Iowa; Chris is a past squadron commander and Jennifer is the current Unit President and holds dual membership in The American Legion and The American Legion Auxiliary. The commander and his wife have two grandchildren, Greyson and Devin.
Legislation to End Delays in Veterans Health Care Funding

New National Poll Shows Large Majority Supports Funding Reform

WASHINGTON (Sept. 18, 2008) -- Nine of the nation’s largest veterans service organizations, representing a combined 8 million members, today praised Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee Chairman and House Veterans’ Affairs Committee Chairman Bob Filner (D-Calif.), and a group of bipartisan cosponsors for introducing legislation to reform the budget process to assure sufficient, timely and predictable funding for veterans’ health care programs.

The Partnership for Veterans Health Care Budget Reform (www.fundingforvets.org), which worked closely with the bill sponsors in drafting the legislation, is comprised of The American Legion, AMVETS, Blinded Veterans Association (BVA), Disabled American Veterans (DAV), Jewish War Veterans (JWV), Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH), Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA), Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), and Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA).

“For almost two decades, veterans health care funding has either been insufficient or late, and usually it is both,” said PVA President Randy Pleva, speaking on behalf of the Partnership. “While funding bills have increased in recent years, especially the last two years, they are still consistently late. We must reform the funding system if we are to assure comprehensive and timely health care services for current and future generations of veterans,” he said.

American Legion National Commander David K. Rehbein, also speaking for the Partnership, praised the bill’s bipartisan cosponsors, Senators Olympia Snowe (R-ME), Russ Feingold (D-WI), and Mary Landrieu (D-LA), and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) and Congressmen Walter Jones (R-NC), Michael Michaud (D-ME), and Phil Hare (D-IL). “We applaud all of the bill’s sponsors who have taken the lead in Congress to create a lasting legacy for our veterans by reforming the budget process to ensure that veterans health care funding is sufficient, timely and predictable,” Rehbein said.

The new legislation, called the “Veterans Health Care Budget Reform Act”, would authorize advance appropriations for Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care programs one year in advance of the start of the fiscal year, an idea favored by more than 80 percent of American voters, according to a survey released today by the Disabled American Veterans.

The Veterans Health Care Budget Reform Act would also require the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to audit VA’s budget forecasting model and report to Congress and the public on the integrity and accuracy of the model. With these estimates in hand, Congress would be greatly enhanced in their ability to develop and enact sufficient funding levels for VA health care.

“The while funding levels have increased in recent years, particularly over the past two years, Congress has failed to approve a new VA appropriation bill on time for 19 of the past 21 years,” said DAV Commander Ray Dempsey. “Our polling results show that the American people overwhelmingly support a proposal to have Congress approve VA’s health care funding one year in advance to once and for all end these delays,” Commander Dempsey said.

The poll released by DAV this morning, which was conducted by Belden Russonello & Stewart, found that Americans believe veterans health care funding is at the top of our national priorities; strongly believe that the government is not doing enough to support veterans; and overwhelming favor requiring Congress to determine the budget for veterans’ health care one year in advance to prevent delays. The nationally representative telephone survey of 827 adults was conducted between August 20 and 24, 2008 and has a margin of error of ± 3.4%. Full details of the survey are available at www.dav.org/voters/documents/veteran_survey_memo.pdf.

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• Up to 12% discounts on Dell’s award-winning consumer PC line that includes Inspiron & XPS desktops and laptops.
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National Editor’s Note: I recently helped purchase a Dell laptop for my daughter who will begin college this fall. I can attest to the courtesy and professionalism of the representative who assisted by phone when we called Dell’s toll free number 1-800-695-8133.
Yahoo for a Job Well Done!

Kudos and congrats to the entire state for hitting the 50% target date - with time and membership to spare! Our next target of 55% is on October 8th, and as you know, the further we get into the “membership process” the more difficult it seems – please hold steady and continue to “rustle up” even more folks.

In the past two months, I’ve been on the road providing training to Area A, B, and C – all of the classes have been a big success and I want to thank each and everyone who took time to attend them. As the year progresses, I plan to visit district meetings in order to report any membership challenges, program changes or just pass out a few “pats-on-the-back!”

Drawing in new members is an on-going process that requires your diligence and, your efforts are recognized at the highest level. For that reason, the National Commander, Dave Rhebien, has set forth his membership target of 55% is on October 8th, and as you know, the further we get into the “membership process” the more difficult it seems – please hold steady and continue to “rustle up” even more folks.

Navy NMCB 128 Reunion

Navy NMCB 128 will hold its reunion April 14-17, 2009 in Biloxi, Mississippi at the IP Casino, Resort & Spa in Biloxi. Phone: 1-888-946-2847.

For more information, contact George McDanel (618) 259-4694 or email McDanelGK@aol.com. This event is open to all MCB 128 Seabees.

For God and Country,
Jeri Strande, Membership Director
American Legion Riders Host Picnic for Prescott VA Hospital

Begun three years ago, the Veterans Picnic has become an event eagerly anticipated by both the American Legion Riders and the guests and staff of the VA Hospital in Prescott. Post Commander and event coordinator Mel Vinson explained that “three years ago Riders from Post 40-Chino Valley, Post 79-Yarnell, Verde Valley (Post 25-Cottonwood/Post 93-Camp Verde), Post 3-Flagstaff and Post 22-Golden Valley joined together to sponsor the first picnic”.

This year, 97 motorcycles left Post 40 in the procession to the hospital. At the hospital they were joined by riders from Maricopa County who came to show their respect and support. Over 125 motorcycles, and an estimated 150 riders and passengers attended the event. In addition, there were vehicles from Flagstaff and Verde Valley that brought over 150 gift boxes with an estimated value of $3,750 in clothing, toiletries and gift cards for the guests of the hospital. The American Legion Riders from Yarnell brought $1,000 in coupon books for the hospital’s canteen for the guests.

Over 400 guests, hospital staff and Riders enjoyed a Bar-B-Que hosted by Post 40. This was made possible by generous donations from businesses in the Chino valley area. The band “Sky Daddy” donated their time to play at the event. American Legion representatives showing their support included Jim Strande, Vice Commander-Area C, Department of Arizona, Jeri Strande, Membership Director, Department of Arizona, Joe Duggan, Commander-District 8, Mark Ware, Commander Post 93-Camp Verde, and Mel Vinson, Commander Post 40-Chino Valley. We were also honored to have State Senator Tom O’Halleran and State Representative Andy Tobin in attendance to honor our veterans.

But the important guests at the picnic were those in the hospital, nursing home, hospice, domiciliary and US Vets. Two unexpected, but very welcome guests were a Navajo Code Talker who were at the hospital and joined us at the event. These are the men and women who have given their all to this country, and deserve our respect and support. Everyone enjoyed the day, the camaraderie and the chance to meet other veterans. The goal for next year according to event coordinator Mel Vincent, “We will be back larger and better. This is a privilege for the American Legion Riders to host this event to honor our brothers and sisters who are at the VA Hospital. We look forward to next year’s picnic.”

The American Legion Riders from Post 41 presented Department Commander, Henry Branch, with an Honorary ALR Vest because of his support to the program.

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Proud to be a Legionnaire

Scenes From the 90th National Convention in Phoenix

Branch Honorary Rider

The American Legion Riders from Post 41 presented Department Commander, Henry Branch, with an Honorary ALR Vest because of his support to the program.
PR Begins at the Post

To all Legionnaires – Public Relations begin at your Post, the most basic unit. It starts with how your post looks to the public. So let’s start there. Legionnaires – look around your post, how does it appear? Can it be improved? The American Legion is recognized nationwide as a respected Veteran’s organization. That’s why it’s important that each Post be neat.

Next, we should look at the ceremonies we perform. Do we look sharp? There is nothing worse than Legionnaires looking disheveled. Do we know the ceremonies we are performing? Do we practice the ceremonies? Do we know what we are going to say? If we don’t know and we try to wing it, we’re going to look bad. Be precise on what you are going to say and do.

Now we’re ready for the public. Call or e-mail the newspapers, radio and T.V. stations. Always tell them who you are and how to get in touch with you in case they have questions. Remember the four “w’s” Who, What, Where and When! Let them know what your Post is doing. Invite your neighbors to your Post functions. Make an effort to get to City Hall and invite the Mayor and Council members or a representative from their office to attend your functions. They want P.R. too, so by going to your Post, you both get recognition.

Dick Perry, Public Relations Chairman

USMC Birthday Ball

East Valley Marines will host a USMC Birthday Ball on Saturday, November 8 at the Oakwood Country Club, Sun Lakes Boulevard in Chandler at 5:30 PM. All active duty Marines, their spouses, and Navy corpsmen serving with the Marines are welcome to attend free of charge. For all other Marines, young and old, cost is $40 for a served prime rib dinner, with dancing, bagpipes, masquerade, ceremony and tradition.

Individual and business sponsors for these young warriors are appreciated. A portion of the funds will go to the Wounded Warrior program.

See Eastvalleymarines.org for ticket and sponsor forms or call Rich Hippen at 480-883-9393.
Housing Problems A National Concern

There is an ongoing housing problem endangering families in our Community, State and Nation; specifically Military Members and Veterans within these same demographics. We believe that the times and circumstances that the housing problem may be out of their control. The Department of Veterans’ Affairs, Arizona Department of Veterans’ Services and The American Legion are committed to mutual helpfulness whenever and wherever possible. The Temporary Financial Assistance Program is very helpful and understandingly limited.

Commander Branch asked me to attend an informative meeting regarding a solution to this problem at the Neighborhood Housing Services of Phoenix, AZ, in August 2008. The Project Manager is Mr. Thomas Wilson III, an In-Country Vietnam Veteran and longtime American Legion Member. Mr. Wilson is very active within the Community and very good Point of Contact for similar contacts within Arizona. Mr. Wilson’s Phone Number is: (602) 258-1659. Questions and Answers (Q&A) follow:

Q: What activity is your Organization engaged in to help Military Members and Veterans currently within the Community?

A: We are moving forward with efforts to expand their outreach to Veterans. Veterans who are facing foreclosure, seeking to become homeowners, need credit counseling, or want financial and home education can get those services at no cost. We also have ADDI funds (maximum $10,000) and HOME funds (up to $400,000) available for down payment and closing cost assistance. These HUD funds that pass through the City of Phoenix can be used in conjunction with VA mortgage insurance programs.

Q: Is there a prominent class of Military Personnel that has come to your attention?

A: It has come to our attention that military personnel serving overseas have been hit with foreclosure notices. If any of you know of affected families please have them call our office to schedule a meeting with one of our counselors. This is a real hot issue. Some lenders are not complying with the law, and some Reservists returning from overseas assignments are returning home to find their families have abandoned homes that they worked hard to purchase.

Q: May individuals contact you directly and what sampling of services is expected?

A: We provide the following services: Counseling, Orientation, Homebuyer Education, Financial Fitness, Down Payment/Closing Cost Assistance and Flexible Mortgage Programs.

Thomas Wilson III-Project Manager Neighborhood Housing Services of Phoenix 1405 East Mc Dowell Road, Suite 100 Phoenix, Arizona 85006

Teleph: (602) 258-1659
The American Legion Family's Tribute to Service was recently held at the US Airways Center on August 24th during the 90th National Convention hosted by the Department of Arizona. Representatives from each Department marched with their officers and delegates before a huge crowd. The parade was held inside this year because of the high temperatures here in Arizona.

The Mariachi Tierra Del Sol band performed in the main lobby as people came into the ceremony. Once everyone got into their seats, there was a mass enlistment/re-enlistment ceremony. There were over 600 young men and women who took the oath administered by Col. Michael Colangelo, Assistant Adjutant General of the Arizona National Guard and Commander of the Arizona Air National Guard. You could feel the pride and patriotism of everyone in the Center.

The U.S. Marine Corps Silent Drill Platoon performed after the swearing in and gave a spectacular performance. The Temptations Review came out and sang some Motown tunes followed by Country Western singer Michael Peterson. They both had people dancing and really enjoying the music.

Thanks to “Bubble” for the photos.