

## **AMERICANISM COMMITTEE FRANK LANDIS, CHAIRMAN**

I would like to start off by thanking Commander Channel for the appointment to chair the Americanism Committee and committee members for their work to make this year a success.

The committee met multiple times throughout the year using Microsoft Teams. The committee reviewed the annual awards and debated the picture for the coloring contest. The Americanism Committee discussed the importance of highlighting additional Americanism activities that are happening throughout the Department such as *Wreaths across America*, flag placements, youth flag edict, and The American Legion's USA 250 Challenge.

The committee met for the final time in person on March 28, 2026, at Post 455 New Egypt, Ocean County for the annual Americanism award judging. Thank you to everyone who submitted awards this year; it was great to see all the participation. Four awards will be presented by the Americanism Committee this year.

The first award is the Department Coloring Contest. In celebration of America's 250<sup>th</sup> birthday this year's picture depicted some iconic images that represent America along with a festival of fireworks. This picture not only celebrates America's 250<sup>th</sup> but was also created by a member of our New Jersey Legion family! This year's coloring contest winner, Julianna, was sponsored by Ocean County Post 129, Toms River, from Walnut Street Elementary School.

The Department Community Service Post Award is being presented to a post that is helping to feed senior Legion members and their spouses, widowed members, widows of deceased members and needy seniors in their community. This is a Legion Family of Legionnaire, Auxiliary and Sons drivers who deliver freshly prepared meals from Cousin's Restaurant throughout Ocean City, Upper Township and Atlantic County. This year alone this program has delivered 1,090 at a cost of \$19,620. Since this program began in 2020 there have been over 7,000 dinners delivered at a cost of over \$120,000. The 2026 Department Community Service Post Award goes to Cape May County, Morvay-Miley-Cruice Post 524, Ocean City.

The Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award this year will be presented to an off-duty officer whose actions saved a man's life. On the evening of August 11, 2025, this officer witnessed a motor vehicle crash involving a motorcycle. The motorcycle rider was ejected and sustained serious injury. The off-duty officer immediately ran over to find the motorcycle rider unresponsive and began to perform emergency first aid. The officer used a cloth to pack the heavily bleeding wound on his leg and removed his own belt to use as a tourniquet until more help could arrive. The motorcycle rider was transported to the hospital where he has undergone eight surgeries and is reported to be on the road to recovery. If not for the swift actions of this off-duty officer, the outcome for this motorcycle rider surely would have been much different. The 2026 Law

Enforcement Officer of the Year is Roselle Park Police Officer Theodore Kot, sponsored by Union County Post 328, Clark.

This year's Department Medal of Valor Award goes to a recipient submitted by Union County, Post 228 Springfield. It is United States Air Force Master Sergeant José A. Galera. His actions earned him the Bronze Star Medal for meritorious achievement as Air Mobility Flight Chief, 443<sup>rd</sup> Air Expeditionary Squadron, 387<sup>th</sup> Air Expeditionary Group, Al-Asad Air Base, Iraq. While under persistent threat of attack and being personally exposed to grave danger from 66 multiple one-way attack unmanned aerial vehicles and indirect rocket attacks, MSgt Galera led 24 personnel to operate the largest aerial port in the Combined Joint Operations Area. They successfully moved 7,000 tons of cargo and 12,000 passengers on 1,400 missions. MSgt Galera additionally mentored 12 Iraqi government officials on the diplomatic clearance process, forging a vital partnership. His efforts enabled Host Nation collaboration with the Base Operating Support-Integrator and Military Police to uncover multiple insider threats and support the overall mission of Operation Inherent Resolve. MSgt Galera coordinated with Air Mobility Division for the delivery of two Patriot Missile Batteries on twelve C-17 aircraft. This was Task Force Panther's first successful missile engagement in over 32 years, safeguarding 2,900 coalition personnel. We are honored to present the 2026 Department Medal of Valor Award to United States Air Force Master Sergeant José A. Galera.

It has been a pleasure being the Chairmen of the Americanism Committee this year as we celebrate America's 250<sup>th</sup> birthday. As I close my report I would just like to remind everyone to report on your activities in your Consolidated Post.