

WORLD'S LARGEST VETERANS ORGANIZATION



# New Jersey LEGIONNAIRE



VOLUME 38, NO. 2

Official Publication of THE AMERICAN LEGION, DEPARTMENT OF NEW JERSEY  
TRENTON, NJ

Summer 2025

## Parade Hits the Boards



106th Convention Report Get ready to "Channel"

National Commander Candidate Endorsed

Award Winners Farewell & Thanks to Joe & Rich



## COMMANDER'S MESSAGE



Legionnaires and my Legion Family,

First and foremost, I want to extend my sincere thanks to those who supported and encouraged me on my journey to become the Department Commander for the 2025-2026 Legion year. I embrace the commitment to serve, to lead and to uphold the values that define us as veterans, as patriots and as an organization.

Over the years we have made a concerted effort to strengthen the bond of our Legion Family. I pledge to continue to work diligently to enhance that bond as we now see The Legion Riders embracing their role as part of the family. I firmly believe that if we support each other, communicate openly and learn from one another, we will have an exciting and successful year and a bright future.

As we may face unknown challenges and set new goals during the year, (Tune into the Membership Channel) I want to emphasize that my primary goal is "Channeling Our Energies to Helping Veterans". Ensuring that every veteran in New Jersey has access to the resources, benefits and the support they have earned and deserve. Let's continue to Be the One more than ever.

In closing, I want to thank the Legionnaires and those who have stepped up and are waving the Team Channel Flag. With the grace of God, I believe we will Rise Above, Aim High and have a great year.

## Adjutant's Column

John D. Baker  
Department Adjutant  
Tel. 609-695-5418



Navy veteran Charles "Andy" Jackson did a "swell" job (gotta watch those waves out on the ocean) this past year, guiding our ship throughout the waterways of NJ. He went along the coast, up the Delaware River, and traversed the state on various rivers and streams with his officer crew in tow. Spearheading the Dept. Project, with all your donations and assistance, he helped provide much needed gifts to our NJ veterans. His final mission this year will be as NJ Convention Chair at the National Convention, Tampa Bay, FL. A fine tribute to a fine Navy man.

In a grand show of comradeship between our Armed Force's branches at our 106th Dept. Convention, our NJ Legionnaires decided to go from the Navy to the Air Force and elected Air Force veteran Dan Channel as Dept. Commander for the 2025-2026 Legion year. Dan is a member of Community American Legion Post 209, Scotch Plains, Union County. He will be flying high over NJ and directing our ground troops in continuing to move forward. His theme this year is "CHANNELING OUR ENERGIES TO HELPING VETERANS", while directing all members to "TUNE INTO THE MEMBERSHIP CHANNEL".

The rest of our officers for the 2025-2026 Legion year are:

NEC: Eugene O'Grady (232-Ocean) (1st Year of Two-Year Term)

ANEC: Michael Wilson (19-Hudson) (1st Year of Two-Year Term)

DVC: Joel Bloom (211-Middlesex) Dist. 1: Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Passaic, Union

DVC: David Marciano (342-Morris) Dist. 2: Hunterdon, Morris, Sussex, Warren

DVC: John Warhurst (346-Monmouth) Dist. 3: Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, Somerset

DVC: Kerri Long (348-Ocean) Dist. 4: Atlantic, Burlington, Cape May, Ocean

DVC: Kevin Mitchell (133-Gloucester) Dist. 5: Camden, Cumberland, Gloucester, Salem

Adjutant: John D. Baker (120-Hunterdon)

Chaplain: Robert Horn (348-Ocean)

FO: Larry Platt (5-Union)

Historian: Michael Smith (174-Passaic)

JA: Daniel Dunn (87-Middlesex)

MAA: Earl Pavlik (209-Union)

SO: Kenneth Connors (23-Monmouth)

ASO: Judith Morales (227-Passaic)

The following dates and locations have been approved for upcoming DEC meetings at 9 a.m.:

Aug. 16 Post 346, Neptune

Oct. 18 Post 148, Hightstown

Dec. 13 Post 25, Milltown

Feb. 7, 2026 Post 414, Lawrenceville

Apr. 11 Post 25, Milltown

Jun. 10 Wildwoods Convention Center, 3 p.m.

On behalf of the entire Dept. of NJ, we thank you PDC Jackson for a great year. Let us now help Commander Channel get off the ground and soar to new heights.

*Cover photo: Led by new NEC Gene O'Grady (left), new Dept. Commander Dan Channel (center) and new ANEC Mike Wilson (right), dept. officers paraded up the Wildwood boardwalk, Saturday afternoon, June 14.*

### *New Jersey Legionnaire*

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[g.cooper@newjerseyamericanlegion.org](mailto:g.cooper@newjerseyamericanlegion.org), include phone number.

**\*\*Do not send anything in pdf format\*\***

*Statements contributed by individual writers may not agree with the endorsed position of the department or editor and will reflect the opinion of the contributor only.*

*Articles submitted may be edited for space and/or clarity.*

**Deadline for the fall issue is October 1, 2025**

## Service Officer's Report

Ken Connors  
Department Service Officer  
973-623-6298



With the close of the Dept. Convention and the election of Dan Channel as our commander for Legion year 2025-2026, we must continue to support Commander Channel and his initiatives

to promote our programs, and provide our veterans with the guidance and knowledge to be able to secure benefits and assistance for themselves and their families in time of need.

As everyone is aware, VA benefits and health care are going through many new challenges and proposed changes, which could affect how they deliver their services.

VA benefits (VBA) Newark operates with fewer personnel than in the past while maintaining high productivity. The Newark Regional Office consistently meets standards and provides veterans with the requested benefits, not always the case nationwide.

It is important that our veterans are aware of the events of today and support our organization. One way to assist with keeping VA strong is when applying for benefits, work with the Dept. Service Office. It saves time and can assist in getting the request properly filed.

On the matter of VHA (health care) it is important that our veterans enroll and use the VHA at least once or twice a year just to maintain a medical history. It is very important that our veterans maintain a volume in visits. As the saying goes, use it or lose it.

Community Health Care is another issue that continues to be brought up. The concept of being able to go to private medical care next door or around the corner is great and convenient. At the same time, we must also continue to have the brick-and-mortar buildings of the VA to ensure that veterans continue to receive the care that they earned. Remember, that the VAH was set up to provide exclusively for the health and well-being of veterans.

As a reminder to veterans who are receiving benefits for dependents: if the VA sends you a request to verify your dependents you must respond to avoid an overpayment of benefits. The same for educational benefits. You must report any changes in your status.

If you are active in the National Army /Air Guard or Reserves, you must report your drill pay and any recall to active duty.

The VA is sending more overpayment notices than in the past, as the computers are more efficient. Be the One and keep doing those Buddy Checks, possibly making a difference for someone.

## Affordable Housing for at Risk / Homeless Veterans

Jim Scanlon, Chair



All five of our projects on American Legion properties have made significant progress over the past 60 days. Our committee has successfully secured grants to cover key predevelopment costs and more. That said, we still need to raise an additional \$30

million to bring all of these projects to completion. While we anticipate most of the funding will come from federal and state grants, private donations—especially from organizations like The American Legion—are critical to our success.

To be eligible for the most substantial grants from major banks and foundations, we must demonstrate our own commitment—our “skin in the game.” These private contributions help unlock the larger sources of funding we’re pursuing.

We’re also actively working with county and municipal leaders who have a vested interest in building affordable housing for veterans. In Cape May County, we’re in discussions about an 82-unit facility for at-risk, homeless and aging veterans. A memorandum of understanding has already been signed by the developer recommended for this initiative.

Progress continues across our other sites as well:

**Montclair:** Jim Evers, our project manager, reports that a grant has been secured through a state senator to fully cover predevelopment costs. Local officials have also stepped in with valuable support and connections. Evers and his team have presented their mission at several public meetings throughout the year.

**Hoboken:** Commander and Project Manager John Carey recently met with one of our prominent U.S. Senators to explore opportunities for project-based vouchers, now under final review by HUD.

**Westfield:** Project Manager Alan Beteau reports: “All of the architectural and MEP drawings have been completed through Redcom and released for bid to several contractors. Funding has been procured through the efforts of Monarch Housing and the Foundation for Sustainable Veteran Housing.”

**South Amboy:** Mary Szaro, project manager at Post 62, shares: “We are progressing steadily through the second phase of the Stars and Stripes Veterans Center of South Amboy project, with construction planning and fundraising efforts working in tandem with Redcom Design and Construction. This vision continues to take shape as ongoing funding efforts bring us closer to a highly anticipated groundbreaking celebration.”

**Emerson:** Bergen County Leadership reports that they hope to have a ground breaking in 2025.

Friends and comrades who wish to support our mission can contact me at [sajobsjds@aol.com](mailto:sajobsjds@aol.com).

## Boys State

The 79th session of American Legion Jersey Boys State has come and gone. The 79th Governor of American Legion Jersey Boys State was Zaydan Lalani. Elected Lieutenant Governor was William Capizzi. Elected senators were Christopher Kahwaty and Vincent Price.

## CONNECTIVENESS & VIABLE PROGRAMS – STILL THE NAME OF THE GAME!

PDC Bob Looby



Connectiveness should be the backbone of everything we do as, sometimes, a covert means to help end veteran suicide. Additionally, putting more emphasis on homelessness, unemployment, criminal justice involvement, mental health, food insecurity and VA registration are

explicit means to prevent that tragedy. The following quasi-AAR's (After Action Reports) will demonstrate some of our decade-plus projects and some newer, which meet those initiatives.

One major contributor of that “ultimate” is homelessness. We tackled that again through our initiated and managed eighth South Jersey Regional



Stand Down, Atlantic City on May 21, chaired by DEC and Dept. Vice Chair Pat Tatum, supported by Dept. Vice Chair Bernie Kofoet, SAL Chair Henry Hasselhan, other Legion, Auxiliary, SAL members, Camden Catholic Charities, NJ Casino Control Commission, ELKS, VA and strongly supported by the city. One hundred six veterans attended, with every conceivable related 24 service providers, including barbers, supported by 106 volunteers. Charter committee member Sam Alphin was recognized and honored for his efforts and facilitating massive donations. Prime donor Walmart presented another \$10,000 during the opening ceremonies! Next up is a Mobile Stand Down on Oct. 29 in Millville.

Our initiated, dedicated seventh Casino Control Fair was successfully executed on April 24 after months of planning, along with our partner the NJ Casino Control Commission's Chair Jim Plousis and team. Plousis has been with us (then NJ State Parole chair) throughout our career fairs initiated in 2011. Four hundred sixty-nine job seekers attended, with all nine casinos participating and other associated service providers. Most of those 469 are proceeding through the vetting process. Tropicana again provided 400 hot meals.

Physical connectiveness must continue by all posts, counties and our dept., including financial assistance for the highest priority need of homelessness and rent assistance for our at-risk veterans and their families. Buddy Checks are a start and initial contact for needs, but physical interaction is imperative. Fortunately, through the efforts of many partners we have assisted 102 veteran families this year with \$143,000 in housing, rental assistance, food, clothing, car repairs, furniture and VA registration, claims and retrieving their military records. As stated, numerous times, we cannot do this alone. We must reach out and partner with many other organizations and agencies, including the VFW, JWV, DAV, T2T, Semper Fi, VA providers, DCA's BVH program and many more. We will and must continue.

As part of our ongoing partnership since 2021 with our suicide prevention associates in the Wilmington, Philly and NJ medical centers, we met again with the current 60 medical hold soldiers in Sea Girt on June 21 to assess and remedy their needs. The team will continue to revisit to ensure their wellness and other physical needs.

1. The resurrected Boots to Business (B2B) Workshops were a success with the first three in a series of eight; the first completed at Post 372, Cherry Hill

in Camden County on April 23, facilitated by Bernie Kofoet; Post 310, Little Ferry, Bergen County on May 13, hosted by DEC Sophia Dmoch; Post 348, Brick, Ocean County, hosted Dept. Vice Commander Kerri Long on June 24; July 10, Post 12, Somerset County, DEC Andrea Adair; July 24, Post 28, Absecon, Atlantic County, DEC Patricia Tatum.

This also demonstrates that we are still The Legion lead with at least this type of education for our veterans and families, as our previous 16 sessions. The other workshop now confirmed with the SBA and their sponsors is:

September 17, Post 170, Rochelle Park, Bergen County, Commander Dennis Duddie.

As you know from our first announcement for this second round of B2B Workshops on Feb. 13, the SBA has requested one session per county. Since the above are the only volunteers, we will now go to other sources for their support and hosting. Thank you all for your support.

The Keep Our Veterans Alive (KOVA) movement, with the Be the One details embedded, was recognized by the Jewish War Veterans on May 4 at their annual legislative breakfast for their statewide veteran suicide awareness program. Additionally, a senate and general assembly Joint Legislative Resolution was presented at the event, acknowledging "KOVA for its immeasurable contributions on behalf of veterans and their families regarding veteran suicide awareness and prevention statewide program."

So, what do we do to continue our battle against veteran suicides and contributors such as homelessness, unemployment, criminal justice involvement, ongoing mental health issues and food insecurity? That answer is simple: we continue and increase our connectiveness through all media, outreach, public, private, within veteran organizations and our communities, especially physical contact. This includes encouraging all veterans to register with VA, despite many excuses of why they should not (see <https://www.va.gov/find-forms/about-form-10-10ez>).

VA reports that 2/3 of the suicides are committed by those not connected with them, a staggering statistic. When we sign new members, offer to facilitate their VA registration.

It will take all of us to combat these tragedies, including following the steps in the Be the One Program, the statewide KOVA movement with our three VA partners and the Governor's Challenge to end homelessness. Be the One to be effective for our vets and their families' health and lives.

## Convention & Legislative Report

PDC Joseph M. Gugliuzza, Chair



I am writing this column in my hotel in Wildwood, on Saturday, June 14, also Flag Day. Our 106th Dept. Convention is now recorded history. By all indications, it was a huge success. We saw the passing of the baton from outgoing Commander Charles "Andy" Jackson to incoming Commander Dan Channel.

It would appear that Commander Jackson had a great year. Mmm. He hit the ground running and was on the move right up to the final day. Congratulations Commander Jackson on a job well done. Now Commander Channel will begin his journey into Legion history. We wish you well, commander.

We did a bit of history making ourselves this year, with moving the Be the One Buddy Check Walk to Saturday from Wednesday and we added National Commander James LaCoursiere in for good measure. Add to that a sit-down breakfast for nearly 300 Legion Family members and a good time was had by all!

Our annual parade was held on Saturday, June 14, and the theme was "Celebrate Old Glory, Red, White and Blue". There were some outstanding entries and we all celebrated our beautiful flag. This year, the DHS, for security purposes, had the parade moved to the boardwalk. While there was much angst, the whole event from start to finish was a success. A special thank you to the S.A.L. and, especially, past detachment commanders Kent Hehl, Jeff Hicks and Bob Basco for helping out as marshals and our other volunteers. The parade went off on time and with vigor.

For those who attended The Legion Convention, you heard my resignation as convention chair. Thanks to all over the past three years for assisting me in getting the conventions over the finish line. A special shout out to Vice-Chair Wil Fetherman for all his help. I hope we made you proud, Cliff!

As, also, announced at the convention, I will resign my position as Dept. Legislative Chair, effective at the close of the National Convention in Tampa. I will also resign as the Dept. of NJ Legislative Council Vice Chair, effective at the close of the National Convention. And, lastly, I will tender my resignation as a

member of the National Legislative Commission, a position I have held for 20 years.

It has been the honor of a lifetime to hold the aforementioned positions and to represent the Dept. of NJ at the national level for all these many years.

I owe the last five NECs a big thank you for having the confidence in me to have appointed me to these posts. Thank you.

## Membership

Sophia Dmoch, Chair



I'm truly honored to serve as your new Dept. Membership chair. While I know I have big shoes to fill, I want to acknowledge the fantastic work Richard Godfrey did as our previous chairperson. Over the past 10 years, he dedicated himself tirelessly, always striving to

reach the top. Although we came close many times, we didn't quite get there, but Rich's unwavering dedication kept us motivated. I am excited to follow his inspiring lead, continue to work hard and aim to achieve great things, together.

It was truly wonderful to see everyone at The American Legion 106th Convention in Wildwood, June 11-13. After such a challenging year, coming together and sharing some joyful moments meant a lot to all of us. Our dept's. final numbers as of July 1, stood at 29,471, reaching 91.26% of our 2025 goal of 32,294. While we fell short by 2,823, placing us 43rd out of 55 departments nationwide and 10th in the Northeast, it's still an achievement of which to be proud. Somerset County was the only county to surpass its target. A big congratulations to our two Gold Brigade award winners and our Silver Brigade winner — your accomplishments inspire us all!

Looking ahead, our path is clear: we have the potential and the spirit to climb even higher. This year gives us a fresh opportunity to bridge the gap and surpass our goals. Every member, every new recruit, and every dedicated volunteer plays a vital part in our shared success. Together, we can build on our strengths, learn from our challenges and elevate our dept. to new heights. Let's celebrate what we've achieved, but let's also set our sights on the possibilities that lie ahead.

July 1 marked the official commencement of the 2026 membership year — let us initiate our efforts

promptly. Kindly commence processing applications promptly with your honorary life members and new members without delay. Additionally, this is an opportunity to contact your members and inform them that their membership cards are ready for processing and to see if they require any assistance. Let us collaborate to ensure the success of this year. If you have any questions, require guidance or need assistance, please don't hesitate to tune into the Membership Channel — we're here to support you. Let us proceed with our tasks diligently.

On Saturday, August 2, a department-wide membership workshop will be held. The idea behind this workshop is to share ideas among ourselves about what works and what doesn't work when recruiting and retaining new members. We hope to see numerous post and county chairpersons in attendance. The information you will share with your comrades is invaluable. Please join us at American Legion Post 23 in Keyport, address: 81 W Front Street, Keyport, NJ. The workshop will commence at 9 a.m.

Remember: Be the One to break the chain of veteran suicide:

To ask a veteran in your life how they are doing.

To listen when a veteran needs to talk.

To reach out when a veteran is struggling.

It takes just one person to help save a veteran's life. You can Be the One. To learn more, go to [www.betheone.org](http://www.betheone.org).

## 2025 Convention Report

On Thursday, June 12, at 8:39 a.m., Commander Charles "Andy" Jackson opened, what would become, a historic 106th Dept. of New Jersey Convention; historic, in that, for the first time in over 57 years, delegates would be asked to endorse a candidate for National Commander.

After opening ceremonies, Louis Belasco, director of the Greater Wildwood Tourism Improvement & Development Authority, gave his usual welcome address, this time with a twist: he recounted his son's experience as a 2024 Boys State Delegate. "My son is off to West Point this summer. Thank you for all you do."

Representing National Commander James LaCoursiere, who would not be arriving until Friday evening, was New Jersey's own National Vice Commander Charles "Chuck" Robbins, who brought greetings from Commander LaCoursiere and thanked

Commander Jackson for his honorable service as dept. commander.

"We are the protectors, the servers, the patriots. Our commitment to The American Legion is never more important as it is now. Our programs show that commitment.

"When you disrespect our flag, you disrespect every life given for it. Disrespecting a veteran isn't just wrong, but un-American. When our elected leaders forget our veterans, The American Legion reminds them...and reminds them loudly."

He stressed the importance of the Consolidated Post Report, and urged everyone to check out The American Legion Impact Report on the national website.

"Twenty-one billion dollars were received in VA benefits thanks to American Legion service officers. The veterans we serve are counting on us."

The report of the Public Relations & Publicity Committee followed in short order. PDC Steven Fisher, chair, announced the winning post newsletters: Continental Post 228, Springfield, Union County for color, single page; Livingston Post 201, Livingston, Essex County for black & white.

Vincent Solomeno, deputy commissioner, NJ Dept. of Military & Veterans Affairs, then introduced the new Adjutant General of NJ, BG Yvonne Mays. Solomeno noted that the state of NJ is working to bring the number of homeless veterans to zero. "The njvet2vet.com network (866-838-7654) can immediately help a homeless veteran." The mission of NJ Vet2Vet is to provide 24-hour support to active military personnel, NJ National Guard members, veterans, their families, and caregivers, statewide. Call, text, chat or email.

BG May thanked The American Legion for its service to veterans and the community. She presented Commander Jackson with the NJ Civilian Commendation Medal.

Before hearing from the VA directors, Service Officer Kenneth Connors reported the value of benefits recovered for veterans by the office was \$21,450,175.

From the VA, Karen Flaherty-Oxler, director, Philadelphia, assured that Philly was open for business and offered great care. Vamsee Potluri, director in Wilmington, encouraged all veterans not enrolled in VA healthcare to do so. "Atlantic City will be getting a new, expanded facility to include optical care and physical therapy. We are focused on four areas," he noted, "people, quality, culture, stewardship."

Following brief remarks from Edna Long, commander, Disabled American Veterans, and Selina Kanowitz, commander, Jewish War Veterans, Luddie Austin, commander, Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), presented Commander Jackson with a certificate of appreciation and a VFW cap. (Jackson is a member).

The ever-ready David Corbin, chair of the National Security-POW/MIA Committee, was asked to give his report a full day early. He reported there were 93 repatriations, so far, with 1570 still unaccounted for.

After a project update from Commander Jackson, Berley Hanna, Jr, National Executive Committeeman, introduced Dave Bagatelle, director of NJ Boys State. “Our 2024 session had 767 delegates, a seven percent increase over 2023,” he reported, “604 sponsored by a post; 163 self-sponsored. NJ Boys state is one of the largest and most successful in the country and our fee of \$300 is one of the lowest. We expect over 800 delegates for 2025.” He then introduced 2024 Lt. Gov. Joel Abraham, who was sponsored by Post 522, Monroe, who recounted his experience running for Lt. Governor and noted he was going to West Point.

Auxiliary President Charline Gladden then addressed the assembly and introduced her officers.

PDC Frank Calandrillo, chair of the Baseball Committee, reported the \$4000 David C. Goodwin Scholarship was earned by Andrew Bechtel and the \$4000 Ernest Zardetto Scholarship was earned by Grant Fournier. Both attend Cherry Hill West High School and played for Cherry Hill Post 372, Camden County.

Joel Bloom, chair of the Education & Scholarship Committee, announced the following scholarship winners:

**\$4000**

Taryn Dolka, Trenton, sponsored by Post 1000, Mercer County.

Julia Knuth, Jackson, sponsored by Post 504, Ocean County.

**\$2000**

Angelina George, Manasquan, sponsored by Post 529, Monmouth County.

Mackenzie Brotherston, Toms River, sponsored by Post 129, Ocean County.

Katelyn Rose McQuade, Saddle Brook, sponsored by Post 415, Bergen County.

Kyrsten Horn, Brick, sponsored by Post 348, Ocean County.

**\$1000**

Matthew Richard Egar, Rahway, sponsored by Post 5, Union County.

Hailey Arnold, Iselin, sponsored by Post 471, Middlesex County.

**John Casey Scholarship \$1500**

Peter John Velcheck, Jr., Metuchen, sponsored by Post 65, Middlesex County.

**Thomas Ryan Scholarship \$5000**

William David Morrison, Jr., Burlington, sponsored by Post 79, Burlington County.

Joseph Becker, chair of the Safety Committee, followed, announcing the following winners:

**George Diem Safety Essay**

First: Stella Brown, Freehold, sponsored by Post 54, Monmouth County.

Second: Olivia Sirianni, White Township, sponsored by Post 528, Warren County.

Third: Alexander Lopez, Westampton, sponsored by Post 509, Burlington County.

**Dr. Richard Stockton Safety Poster**

First: Hunter Nieves, Westampton, sponsored by Post 509, Burlington County.

Second: Madelyn Kiser, Stewartsville, sponsored by Post 456, Warren County.

Third: Alyssa King, Westampton, sponsored by Post 509, Burlington County.

Fourth: Jeremy Alipio, Stewartsville, sponsored by Post 456, Warren County.

Frank Landis, chair of the Americanism & Community Service Committee announced the following awards:

**Coloring Contest**

First: Lucy Tayler, Eastampton Community School, Mt. Holly, sponsored by Post 11, Burlington County.

Second: Neymar Diaz, Park Avenue School, Freehold, sponsored by Post 54, Monmouth County.

Third: Braden Gilmore, Midstreams Elementary School, Brick, sponsored by Post 348, Ocean County.

**Educator of the Year**

Travis Thomas, Haddonfield Middle School, sponsored by Post 38, Camden County.

**Law Enforcement of the Year**

Lt. Michael Blondin & Officer Christopher Lupo, Mahwah Police Dept., sponsored by Post 31, Bergen County.

**Firefighter of the Year**

Capt. Nicholas Luciano, Sayreville Fire Dept., sponsored by Post 211, Middlesex County.

**Americanism Post Award**

Mitchell A. Davis Post 182, Trenton, Mercer County.

**Dept. Community Service Award**

Lt. John Farnkopf Post 401, South Brunswick, Middlesex County.

PDC Joseph Gugliuzza, chair of the Legislative Committee, announced he would be stepping down as chair of the committee.

Dennis Duddie, chair of the Employment, Homeless & Education Committee presented awards to the following: Bob and Ellen Papa of The Patriots of Valor; Mark Savino, Bergen County Police Chiefs Foundation; Tiffany Beaubien, NJDOL Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist; Ingrid Macias, NJDOL and Development; James Marchioni, CamouflageLLC/DBA Camo Vets; Viviana Mastrobuoni, Bergen American Job Center.

Before nominations for the 2025-26 slate of officers, James Scanlon, chair of the Affordable Housing for At-risk Homeless Veterans Committee and Joe Mindak, from the Foundation for Sustainable Housing, showed a short video presentation. Awards were given to Bruce Buckley, CEO of Soldier On; Brian Hagal; Vamsee Potluri, director of VA Wilmington; Kathy Tweed, Quilts of Valor; JoAnn Weber, Unit 524.

At 12:45 p.m., Adjutant John Baker opened the floor for nominations.

Commander: Dan Channel

Vice Commander: Kevin Mitchell (Gloucester)

Vice Commander: Joel Bloom (Middlesex)

Vice Commander: John Warhurst (Monmouth)

Vice Commander: David Marciano (Morris)

Vice Commander: Kerri Long (Ocean)

National Executive Committeeman: PDC Ray Miller nominated Eugene “Gene” O’Grady

Alternate National Executive Committeeman: PDC Daniel Dunn nominated Michel Wilson.

At 1:16 p.m., Adjutant Baker opened the voting for the delegates to endorse either PDC Eugene “Gene” O’Grady or PDC Steven Fisher as a candidate for National Commander. (Note: NJ has had one National Commander in The Legion’s 106-year history: BG William C. Doyle, Post 79, elected 9/12/1968).

At 1:27 p.m. by a count of 381 to 93, O’Grady received the endorsement.

Day two of the convention was opened by Commander Jackson at 8:40 a.m. First report was by Douglas Herrin, chair of the Children & Youth Committee, who introduced Rich Lofgren of the Chil-



dren's Organ Transplant Association (COTA). A family helped by COTA was present to address the assembly, Chris Martell (at podium), and Moira (center), the parents of Sheila (right) who needed a liver transplant, told how important the aid of COTA was to their family.



Contributions to COTA amounted to \$53,530. Commander Jackson announced there would be a COTA fundraiser at the National Convention in Tampa, FL. A COTA cruise is also in the works.

Richard Godfrey, chair of the Membership Committee, announced that he would be stepping down as chair, and that Sophia Dmoch would become chair. Godfrey received the award for Top Dept. Recruiter; Tom Coviello and Richard Godfrey received Gold Brigade Awards. Mercer County received the Golden Bowl Award for worst in membership.

At 10:50 a.m., Adjutant Baker opened the floor for nominations and election of officers for 2025-2026. With no contested races, motion was made, seconded and approved for Adjutant Baker to cast one vote for all nominees. New officers were sworn in, receiving their new caps and pins.



National Vice Commander Charles Robbins administered the oath to NEC Gene O'Grady (left) and ANEC Mike Wilson (right).

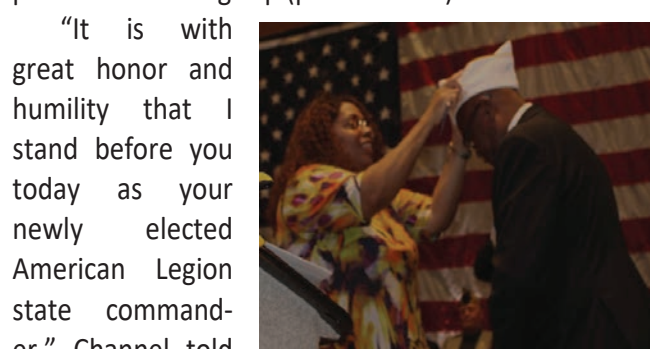
Commander Jackson thanked his home post, Post 493, Mystic Island, for their support for the past 30 years, as well as all the posts of Ocean County. "My appreciation to all in the state and the office staff.

Your friendship, leadership and guidance has been invaluable." He thanked his vice commanders, and, especially, his family and wife, Debi. He concluded by saying: "My job is not done."



As is tradition, PDC Joe Gugliuzza, as senior Past Dept. Commander in attendance, placed the "heritage" cap on incoming commander Channel.

His wife, Dawne, put on his working cap (photo below).



"It is with great honor and humility that I stand before you today as your newly elected American Legion state commander," Channel told the delegates. "This role carries with it a profound responsibility to represent the values, needs and aspirations of our dedicated community of veterans across this great state. I'm filled with an overwhelming sense of gratitude for the sacrifices that each one of you has made in the service to our country. The American Legion stands as a testament for our commitment to serving our veterans, their families and our communities. It will be a privilege to lead this esteemed organization alongside all of you." Theme is Channeling our energies to help our veterans.

For complete Convention coverage go to our YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BvINIimPBnY>

Following the Annual Buddy Walk at 8 a.m., Saturday (photo below), history was made again, as for the first time, due to security concerns, the annual parade kicked off at 2 p.m. on the Wildwood Boardwalk, celebrating the "Red, White & Blue." Starting on the Juniper Ave. ramp, posts, units, squadrons, riders, floats, bands and cars paraded south, passing the reviewing stand in front of Convention Hall.



## Army Honors Chaplain Michael Schaffer

From the 250 Birthday Gala Program conducted June 26, 2025

"It is with great respect and admiration that our Northern New Jersey Chapter of the Association of the United States Army (AUSA) recognize you for your extraordinary leadership and compassion in addressing food insecurity among active-duty service members at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst.



"In April 2020, when others may have looked the other way, you took immediate and decisive action upon learning the base pantry was out of food. With the words, 'That wasn't going to happen on my watch,' you ensured food was delivered by April 14 and you have never missed a distribution day since.

"Your founding of the *Food Warriors* initiative and partnership with the New Jersey Military Support Alliance has grown from serving 100 individuals to now supporting over 500 people monthly, never turning a single person away. Through your selfless efforts, more than 300,000 pounds of food, equating to 750,000 meals have been distributed, \$250,000 raised for food purchases, and over 5000 miles driven to meet the needs of our military community. Your personal commitment, including covering over \$40,000 in operating expenses, is a testament to your deep sense of duty and integrity.

"Mike, your work reflects the very best of service, sacrifice, and heart. On behalf of a grateful community and our Northern New Jersey Chapter of AUSA we salute you and thank you for ensuring that no servicemember under your watch ever goes hungry."

### 14th ANNUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT

Thursday, Sept. 25, Sunset Valley Golf Club,  
47 West Sunset Rd., Pompton Plains 07444

**\$135 a person**

**8 a.m. registration, 9 a.m. shotgun start**

**More info call:**

**Berley Hanna 908-489-6703**

**Harold Liberatore 973-229-0841**





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**Deadline for fall issue is October 1, 2025**

**New Officers Installed June 13, 2025**



*From left: Department Commander Dan Channel, Department Vice Commander Kerri Long, Department Vice Commander Joel Bloom, Department Vice Commander David Marciano, Department Vice Commander John Warhurst, Department Vice Commander Kevin Mitchell.*