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## Message from the Commander

### *The Challenge Ahead*

It is with humility and gratitude that I assume the role of your Department Commander for the year 2026-2027. In this article I will lay out my focus for the upcoming Legion year. If you have met me, or heard me speak, this will not be new. I have had the same focus with the Legion for the past 15 years here in Texas.



We will work on three areas over the next year. Programs, Community, and Members. To be a successful Post you need to be able to focus on all three. That does not mean you apply the same energy to all three, that depends on where the Post is. To really excel, you need to be competent in all three areas.

Almost all the programs of The American Legion began at a Post. Then the programs began to spread across the Departments. Once half of the Departments recognize the program, it becomes an official National Program. What is important is what Programs work in your Post. They will be the programs that your members have a passion for, and that your community needs. It is not important that every Post does every program. It is important that every Post does programs that fit into their culture and traditions. Once you find your programs, do them with passion, and do them well.

Next it is important that the Post gets outside of its walls and becomes involved in the Community. Attend City Council or County Commissioners' meetings regularly. When you do this wear your Legion head gear and apparel. Now you are not representing yourself as a citizen, but you will be looked at as representing all Veterans in the Community. Participate with the Schools, lead and participate in Veterans parades, events, and patriotic gatherings. Be visible in the Community and work to focus your Programs on the needs of your community. What is needed in Converse is different than what is needed in Alpine, which is different than what is needed in Houston. Ask yourself, is your Post a building in the community, or is your Post building Community.

The last area is Members. Please note that I did not say membership. You gain members by engaging their passion, to work and develop your Post Programs in your Community. Members build and improve programs, which assist Veterans in your Community, which brings in more Members with other passions which... And on and on.

(continued)

# THE LEGION TIMES VOLUME 108, ISSUE 1 AUGUST 2026

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Keeping in mind that the local Post is the most important part of The American Legion, The Department, The Divisions, The Districts and our Committees and Commissions are all here to serve, train, support, and mentor the Posts. We have built a great team of experienced, passionate, and energized Legionnaires to support the Posts this year. We can only do this if the Posts are responsive, communicative, and willing to work together for the betterment of our Local Posts. Voice your needs, passions, and areas of concern, and let the District, Division, and Department bring the necessary tools and resources to make the Post successful in their Programs, in Their Community.

So, the challenge for the year is to get better every day. Work together to support your Veterans in your community with your Programs. If you are not having fun doing this, then you may need to reevaluate your efforts. When you are fulfilling your passions, you will enjoy it. So have Fun.

*Danny Muth*  
*Department Commander*



## 2025-2026 History Book/Digital Competition at Department Convention July 2026

*Submitted by Shirley Platt, Department of Texas Historian*

We received 3 digital books and 3 hard copy books this year.  
Thank you again to the judges for taking the time to help with this endeavor.

Results for digital:  
1st place Post 593 – Converse  
2nd place Post 411 – Conroe  
3rd place – Carrollton

Results for hard copy:  
1st place Post 319 – Deer Park/Laporte  
2nd place Post 133 – Temple  
3rd place Post 828 – San Antonio

History is easily changed or forgotten if it is not written down. We may forget all of the great activities we accomplished throughout the year. Pictures never taken are never seen. Pictures not identified become useless.

You are the one who will make sure our history is not lost. We have so much to be proud of. We help our community, state, and nation. We make a difference. That difference we make will be forgotten if we do not share what we do with the local newspapers. We will never know how we influenced the children, but they will be affected and changed by what we do.

As a reminder, we are the ones that will make sure our history is not lost. We have so much to be proud of. No history book is perfect, but if we do not document our history, it will be forgotten.

If you are wondering what the guidelines and the rules are to submit a history book, either hard copy or digital, please don't hesitate to reach out and I will gladly send you the information.

# 2026–2027 DEPARTMENT OFFICERS

## Danny Muth, DEPARTMENT COMMANDER

Bret Watson, National Executive Committeeman  
Gene Toohey, Alternate National Executive Committeeman  
Richard Huntley, Immediate Past Department Commander  
William West, Department Adjutant  
Jimmy Mitchell, Department Chaplain  
Gary Sanders, Department Treasurer  
William Wallace, Department Judge Advocate  
Shirley Platt, Department Historian  
Michael Wheeler, Department Sergeant-at-Arms  
Roy Clark, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms  
Michael Simon, Director of Internal Affairs  
Michael Lacy, Department Service Officer  
Ron Peterson, Department Service Officer  
Allen Sharp, Department Service Officer

## DEPARTMENT VICE COMMANDERS

W.S. Turner, 1st Division  
Cheryl Williams, 2nd Division  
Eric Mayer, 3rd Division  
Jeff Meurer, 4th Division

## DISTRICT COMMANDERS

Johnny Norris, 1st District Commander  
John Vickery, Jr, 2nd District Commander  
Kim McCarthy, 3rd District Commander  
Kenneth Milburn, 4th District Commander  
Tynetta Runnels, 5th District Commander  
Scott Hines, 6th District Commander  
Terry Batson, 7th District Commander  
Stefanie Otto, 8th District Commander  
Deborah Waldrop, 9th District Commander  
Tim Moore, 10th District Commander  
John Potts, 11th District Commander  
Amy King, 12th District Commander  
Chris Garcia, 13th District Commander  
Willie Leal, Jr, 14th District Commander  
Edward Villafranca, 15th District Commander  
Tony Morgan, 16th District Commander  
Chris Grantham, 17th District Commander  
Reyna Ruiz, 18th District Commander  
Kevin Bright, 19th District Commander  
Billy Hill, 20th District Commander  
Don Gray, 21st District Commander  
Hector Hernandez, Jr., 22nd District Commander  
Jose Gamez, 23rd District Commander

## ARTICLE SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Do you have an article or news announcement to share with the rest of the Department of Texas? If so, please follow these guidelines for submissions.

- Submit text in Word format (.doc, .docx) or as a plain text file (.txt or .rtf). ONE ARTICLE PER EMAIL PLEASE.
- The ideal word count for our format is 200 - 500 words (maximum), with no double spacing.
- Give your article a TITLE! Create a HEADLINE and save with a proper file name so we can easily recognize it.
- Tell us who the author is, whether it's you or if you are just forwarding it to us.
- Attach any photos or artwork for your article separately in your email. DO NOT embed them in your Word or PDF file. Larger photos are best, and high resolution JPG files of 300 dpi or better are preferred. Please name these files accordingly so we can track them along with your article.
- Let us know in your e-mail or Word doc of any photo captions, the name of the photographer, etc. Please note that due to spacing and layout requirements, we might not be able to use every photo or caption submitted (preferably 2 - 3 photos per article).
- Please spell check everything! Especially people's names, web addresses, etc. We do our best to catch typos, and make corrections, but sometimes they still slip by. You can help us greatly by simply running the spell check function in your word processing software.
- We publish on our Website on the FIRST FRIDAY of the Month, with few exceptions. E-mail everything directly to [times@txlegion.org](mailto:times@txlegion.org) by the 20th of every month, for it to appear in the following issue. Submissions received after the 20th will be considered, but may be held over or discarded due to space and layout restrictions.

*We hope you enjoy this issue, and continue to help us grow and improve The Legion Times!*



## Converse Resident Elected Commander of The American Legion Department of Texas

Story by Texas American Legion Press Association

AUSTIN, Texas – (July 23, 2026) – During the 107th Annual Convention of The American Legion Department of Texas, held at the Renaissance Austin Hotel, members elected Legionnaire Danny Muth as their department commander, July 12.

The department commander is the highest-ranking elected officer at the state level. They are the chief spokesperson and administrative leader for all posts within their jurisdiction, and are vital for driving membership, managing budgets, and enforcing national policies.

Muth, a graduate of the University of Phoenix, served 23 years of honorable and faithful service in the U.S. Army, retiring in January 2006.

Locally, he serves the City of Converse as a six-year member of their Planning and Zoning Commission and is a member of the city's Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone Board.

Muth, a past commander of William M. Randolph American Legion Post 593, is a paid-up-for-life member of The American Legion for 32 years, and a paid-up-for-life member of the Sons of The American Legion, and The Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Previously, he served as a department vice commander for the 3rd Division and district commander of the 20th District, the largest district in the Department of Texas. Additionally, Muth has served as chairman of the Department of Texas Children and Youth Foundation.

A graduate of the National American Legion College, Muth serves on the Department of Texas' Finance Committee, on the national level as a health administrative consultant, and on the Internal Affairs Commission. He has been a member of the Texas American Legion Development Foundation since 2021, serving as vice president and president.

Currently, he is employed as an area operations manager for a national construction material sales company. He manages the operations, facilities and inventories across central Texas.



During the 107th Annual Convention of The American Legion Department of Texas, held at the Renaissance Austin Hotel, members elected Legionnaire Danny Muth (left), of William M. Randolph American Legion Post 593, for the high Office of Department Commander. The Department Commander is the highest-ranking elected officer at the state level. They are the chief spokesperson and administrative leader for all posts within their jurisdiction, and are vital for driving membership, managing budgets, and enforcing national policies (Photo by Burrell Parmer, TEXALPA)



Newly-elected Department Commander Danny Muth (593) chairs the Department Executive Committee (DEC) meeting at the conclusion of the annual convention of The American Legion Department of Texas held at the Renaissance Austin Hotel. The American Legion DEC is crucial for the effective functioning and direction of the organization at the state level. It serves as a governing body, overseeing the implementation of policies, managing finances, and handling administrative matters for the Department (Photo by Burrell Parmer, TEXALPA)

## San Antonian Installed as Texas American Legion Vice Commander

Story and photos by Legionnaire Burrell Parmer, Texas American Legion Press Association

AUSTIN, Texas – (July 12, 2026) – U.S. Army veteran Eric Mayer, a resident of San Antonio, was installed as a vice commander of the American Legion Department of Texas during the department's 107th Annual Convention held at the Renaissance Austin Hotel.

In his role as a department vice commander, Mayer, a former Army judge advocate officer, aims to lead the 3rd Division's regional efforts in membership growth, public relations, and the promotion of The American Legion's programs and services.

"This is an opportunity to help American Legion posts to become the best version of themselves, a family for all veterans, and a vital part of their communities," said Mayer, a Boys State alum and native of Ozawkie, Kan. "I will never shy away from an opportunity to change lives and save lives."

Initially an Army infantry officer, Mayer deployed in support of Operation Desert Falcon (Southwest Asia) in 1998 and Stabilization Force 6 (Bosnia-Herzegovina) in 1999-2000.

A member of Business and Professional American Legion Post 10, Mayer has served as the Americanism chairman for the 20th District and subsequently as district commander, overseeing 17 American Legion posts.

In May 2026, he was elected as the department vice commander for the 3rd Division at the division's annual convention held at Alamo American Legion Post 2.

Mayer's motto for the ensuing year is "Let there be Legion."

"Whenever there is a veteran in need of a family, 'Let there be Legion.' When a voice is needed for those without their own, 'Let there be Legion.' Whenever our communities need a helping hand, 'Let there be Legion.' And when an example is needed for all to follow, 'Let there be Legion,'" said Mayer. "My goal is to help posts to be the Legion that is prepared to answer all of these calls."

The American Legion is the largest U.S. veterans organization, with nearly 2 million members in more than 12,000 posts across the nation and in foreign countries.

Chartered by Congress in 1919, The American Legion is dedicated to the motto of "Veterans Strengthening America."

Legionnaires accomplish this through the organization's four founding pillars of mentoring youth and sponsoring wholesome community programs, advocating patriotism and honor, promoting a strong national security, and continued devotion to servicemembers and veterans.

Follow the 3rd Division, Department of Texas on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/txlegiondiv3/>



U.S. Army veteran Eric Mayer, a resident of San Antonio, was installed as a vice commander of the American Legion Department of Texas during the department's 107th Annual Convention held at the Renaissance Austin Hotel



U.S. Army veteran Eric Mayer (center) was installed as a vice commander of the American Legion Department of Texas' 3rd Division during the department's 107th Annual Convention held at the Renaissance Austin Hotel. Standing with Mayer are his subordinate district commanders from surrounding counties



## South Houston Post 490 Legionnaire Honored with 10th Gold Brigade Award

*Submitted by Rene Sanchez, Commander, Post 490*

David Witucki of South Houston Post 490 has earned the Gold Brigade Award for his dedication to community and country. The prestigious honor was presented at the Department of Texas American Legion Annual Convention on July 11, 2027, marking his 10th time receiving the award.

Witucki set an impressive benchmark in 2026 by recruiting over 100 new members to the organization.

Legionnaires who recruit 50 or more members in a year are inducted into the elite Gold Brigade, a distinction that reflects exceptional achievement. Witucki has earned this honor ten consecutive times. He previously received the title of Master Recruiter, a distinction he proudly displays on his Legion cap.

In 2018, David was named National Recruiter of the Year after recruiting an unprecedented 578 new members, setting a new standard for excellence.

Witucki recruits with confidence, knowledge, and a commitment to service. He guides prospective members, answers questions, corrects misinformation, and models professionalism and patriotism while thanking veterans for their service.

His recruiting has strengthened South Houston Post 490 and the wider veteran community by expanding support for veterans' healthcare, troops, and children's education.

South Houston is proud of Witucki's lasting impact through dedicated service.



## Post 592 and Post 593 Honor a Fallen Member

*Written By Paul Goymerac, 20th District Historian*

The bond between military veterans stretches far beyond the walls of any single building. This truth was vividly demonstrated through a recent act of comradery between two San Antonio-area American Legion posts, culminating in a memorial dart tournament on July 25, 2026. The story began with a shared vision. Months ago, Jess Agnew, a young veteran and passionate member of American Legion Post 592, set out to enhance his post's community space. Known as one of the best dart players in the area, Jess wanted to bring in a second competition dart machine to attract new members and foster fellowship. To fund the project, local players agreed to donate a percentage of their weekly tournament winnings. Tragically, Jess passed away and was called to Post Everlasting before that goal could be realized. The dream, however, did not die with him.

When Daniel Riggs, an active member of American Legion Riders Chapter 593 in Converse, Texas, listed a competition-grade dart board for sale, the timing was providential. Post 592 was still searching for a board to fulfill Jess's vision. Upon learning about Jess's goal and the post's ongoing search, Daniel realized this transaction was about much more than a simple sale.

Demonstrating the true spirit of the Legion, Daniel agreed to sell the high-end board to Post 592 for pennies on the dollar. The only real condition was a heartfelt one: that both posts collectively recognize Jess's life and dedicate the inaugural tournament on the new board to his memory.

Both Chapter 593 and Post 592 belong to the 20th District of the American Legion. In this district, support crosses post lines. Members take immense pride in showing up for fellow veterans, regardless of where they hold their membership. That solidarity was on full display for the memorial tournament. A field of 16 players — comprising members from Post 592, Post 593, and the surrounding local community — gathered to compete, remember, and honor a brother-in-arms. It was an evening of high spirits and sharp throws, exactly the kind of atmosphere Jess had hoped to build.

The successful event stands as a testament to legacy and brotherhood. Special thanks go to Daniel Riggs for his generosity, and to Post 592 Commander Robert Corbitt and his entire leadership team for hosting. Jess Agnew may have been called to Post Everlasting, but his impact remains firmly rooted in the hearts, minds, and now the shared traditions of his fellow Legionnaires. God bless Jess Agnew.



## Post 828 Legionnaire Installed as 20th District Commander

Story and photos by Legionnaire Burrell Parmer, Texas American Legion Press Association

AUSTIN, Texas – (July 12, 2026) – U.S. Navy veteran Billy Hill, a resident of New Braunfels, Texas, was installed as the 20th District commander of the American Legion Department of Texas during the department's 107th Annual Convention held at the Renaissance Austin Hotel.

In his role as district commander, Hill, a former vice department commander for the Department of Maryland, aims to lead the district's efforts in membership growth, public relations, and the promotion of The American Legion's programs and services.

"I am aware of the main mission and purpose of The American Legion, and my previous experience has prepared me for the role of district commander," said Hill, a Chicago native. "The American Legion has offered me an opportunity to serve and support veterans and their families. This is an extension of the commitment I had to this country while in uniform."

Hill served in numerous billets from drill instructor and master training specialist to command master chief detailer and command master chief at the Office of Naval Intelligence. He has served on numerous ships forward deployed to Japan, Korea, and the Philippines to include serving with expeditionary units in the South China, Mediterranean, Adriatic, Gulf of Oman, and the Red Seas. Serving a total of 16 years at sea, Hill retired with 30 years of honorable and faithful service as a force master chief.

Hill's goals for the next two years include:

- To improve the relationship between members of the American Legion and the community, law enforcement, public, and political figures.
- To be the premier Veterans Service Organization in the State of Texas which will put the American Legion in a better position to help Texas veterans and their families.
- To increase the district's member population by 500 Legionnaires during his term.

A member of Fred Brock American Legion Post 828 in San Antonio, Hill has served as the first vice commander and continues to serve as chairman of the Board of Trustees.

On April 11, 2026, he was elected as the district commander at the district's Spring Convention at Gene Ramirez American Legion Post 443 in Somerset, Texas.

At the Department Convention, Hill was recognized as the department's top recruiter by recruiting 125 veterans into The American Legion. The American Legion is the largest U.S. veterans organization, with nearly 2 million members in more than 12,000 posts across the nation and in foreign countries.

Chartered by Congress in 1919, The American Legion is dedicated to the motto of "Veterans Strengthening America."

Legionnaires accomplish this through the organization's four founding pillars of mentoring youth and sponsoring wholesome community programs, advocating patriotism and honor, promoting a strong national security, and continued devotion to servicemembers and veterans.



U.S. Navy veteran Billy Hill, a resident of New Braunfels, Texas, was installed as the 20th District commander of the American Legion Department of Texas during the department's 107th Annual Convention



Legionnaire Billy Hill, a resident of New Braunfels, Texas, was recognized as the Recruiter of the Year during the 107th Annual Convention of the Department of Texas held at the Renaissance Austin Hotel. Presenting the award was Department Commander Richard Huntley



Legionnaire Billy Hill, a resident of New Braunfels, Texas, has received a consecutive Gold Brigade Recruiting Award during the 107th Annual Convention of the Department of Texas held at the Renaissance Austin Hotel. Presenting the award was Department Commander Richard Huntley



## Harris County Precinct 4 Reel Connect

*Submitted by Sandy Krum, District 22 Vice Commander*



On July 11th, Post 164 and Unit 164 were honored to be invited to participate in the 1st Annual Reel Connect event sponsored by Harris County Precinct 4. The event provided area veterans with the opportunity for area veterans and their families to come out do a little fishing, grab a bite to eat, and see what services are offered for them and their families by area agencies and veterans groups.

Post 164 was further honored by being the lead supporting agency for this event. Unfortunately, the event was cut short by about an hour due to weather.

### Post 164 Celebrates the 4th of July

The combined Honor Guard from American Legion Post 164 and VFW Post 9182 were honored to be asked to help the Lone Star Symphony celebrate the 4th of July.

The Honor Guard presented the colors and service flags during their salute to the services.





## Post 828 Legionnaire Recognized as Chaplain of the Year

Story and photos by Legionnaire Burrell Parmer, Texas American Legion Press Association

AUSTIN, Texas – (July 12, 2026) – During the 107th Annual Convention of The American Legion Department of Texas held at the Renaissance Austin Hotel, Legionnaire Patricia Wimberly was announced as the 2025 -2026 Chaplain of the Year.

Wimberly, a former U.S. Air Force Reserve clinician flight nurse, is a member of Fred Brock American Legion Post 828 located within the 20th District in San Antonio.

Wimberly's contributions, made throughout her 18 years as post chaplain, include providing prayer and support to families, representing the post during funeral and burial services, leading Four Chaplains Sunday, organizing charity events, participating in post Americanism programs, membership drives, fundraising, and Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation activities.

In addition to service as post chaplain, Wimberly serves as the chairwoman for the post's Texas Boys State Committee, Socks and Pajamas Program, and Thanksgiving Food Drive as well as serve as a judge for the post's annual High School Oratorical Contest.

"I am deeply humbled and honored to receive this prestigious award," said Wimberly. "Being a chaplain is not about recognition, but about being a steady presence for our veterans, their families and our community with hope, strength and compassion for others."

Wimberly shares the award with her fellow Post 828 legionnaires and thanks 20th District Commander Billy Hill for her nomination.

"I am grateful for the opportunity to serve as a legionnaire and I give all the praise and glory to the Almighty for strength to continue the work that is needed for our veterans," Wimberly said.

American Legion chaplains play a vital role in supporting the spiritual and moral well-being of Legionnaires and their communities.

They serve as spiritual leaders, offering comfort, guidance, and support during times of joy and sorrow, and fostering a sense of unity and service within the organization.

Their presence is particularly important during ceremonies, funerals, and times of illness or distress among members.



Department Chaplain Jimmy Mitchell presents the Chaplain of the Year Award to Legionnaire Patricia Wimberly of Fred Brock American Legion Post 828 during the 107th Annual Convention of The American Legion Department of Texas held at the Renaissance Austin Hotel



Pictured with Wimberly is Department Chaplain Jimmy Mitchell (left) and Department Commander Richard Huntley



Legionnaire Patricia Wimberly of Fred Brock American Legion Post 828 was announced as Chaplain of the Year during the 107th Annual Convention of The American Legion Department of Texas

## Thugs with Mugs: Where the Coffee is Hot, the Stories are Questionable, and Everyone is Welcome

*Submitted by Patricia A. Zuczek, Post 21 Adjutant*



Every Friday morning, before most of The Colony has hit the snooze button a second time, a familiar group of veterans and friends gathers at The Colony Café. They call themselves the “Thugs with Mugs,” although no one has ever accused them of being particularly threatening — unless you’re going after the last piece of bacon.

For the past three years, this unofficial men’s breakfast club has met every Friday with one simple mission: enjoy good coffee, good food, and even better company.

The idea was started by American Legion Post 21 Service Officer Dan Ivey, who understood something many men don’t often say out loud — sometimes, guys just need guy time.

As many as sixteen men from Post 21 and SAL Squadron 21 have gathered around the breakfast tables on a single Friday morning. Their headquarters is family-owned and operated The Colony Café, where they’ve become regulars. Like the old television show Cheers, it’s the kind of place where everybody knows your name — and probably how you like your eggs.

The Thugs unanimously agree on one thing: the food is great, the coffee is hot, and the staff at The Colony Café welcomes them with genuine warmth and hospitality, making everyone feel like part of the family. On Friday, July 24, the Thugs presented The Colony Café with a Certificate of Appreciation in recognition of its outstanding support of the veteran community and for creating a place where veterans feel welcomed, valued, and at home.

Conversations at a Thugs gathering are as varied as the breakfast menu. One minute they’re discussing world events. The next they’re talking about happenings at Post 21, family milestones, spirituality, or the latest weather forecast. Wives, grandchildren, vacation spots, favorite eating places, and old military stories are all fair game. Need a plumber, electrician, insurance advice, or handyman? Chances are, “they’ve got a guy for that.”

The Thugs also enjoy sharing their many accomplishments, admitting with a grin that “some of them are even true.” According to reliable — and completely unverifiable — sources, they have already solved world hunger, climate change, rising gas prices, and the proper placement of the bunker on the 17th hole of their favorite golf course.

Real victories are celebrated just as enthusiastically. After twenty-two years of trying, Bill Swink finally won two tickets to a Masters Tournament practice round, earning enough congratulations to make anyone think he’d just won the green jacket itself.

New Post 21 and Thugs member Tim Speaks summed up why he keeps coming back: “I needed activities and to be around people, even if it means getting up at 6:15 while I’m still a little stiff.” That sentiment is one everyone around the table understands.

Perhaps the most meaningful tradition is also its simplest. Every man shakes hands with every other Thug when he arrives and again before he leaves. It’s more than a greeting - it’s a way of saying “I see you. You matter. You belong.” If someone misses breakfast for a couple of Fridays, somebody notices. Before long, a phone call is made to make sure everything is okay.

What began as a few veterans and Sons sharing breakfast has quietly become something much more. And while they may never actually solve world hunger, they’ve already accomplished something every community needs. They’ve built a place of friendship, fellowship, support, and laughter even before sunrise.



## Fred Brock Post 828 Family Sponsor Annual CWB Back-to-School Jamboree

Story and photos by Legionnaire Burrell Parmer, TEXALPA

SAN ANTONIO – (July 24, 2026) – In support of their Children and Youth Program, Fred Brock American Legion Post 828 and Sons of The American Legion Squadron 828 served as sponsors of the 21st Annual Back-to-School Jamboree at the Claude W. Black Community Center.

Hosted by the Claude W. Black Center Advisory Board, in cooperation with H-E-B and Dreambuilders of Texas Charitable Foundation (501(c)3), the event distributed more than 500 supply-filled backpacks to children from the city's Eastside. Additionally, the children and their parents/guardians were treated to a hotdog luncheon.

Vendors provided free-resource information while the Prince Hall Masons of San Antonio Lodge No. 1 and Shriners of Moussa Temple No. 106 conducted Voter Registration & Education for adults.

"It's very important for our citizens to be registered to vote," said Booker Arradondo of San Antonio Lodge No. 1, also a member of Post 828. "Last year, we registered six and this year we registered 16."

According to Advisory Board President Tavarus Glover, there are many families struggling to make ends meet.

"With the current price of gas and rising cost of groceries, some families are having to make tough decisions on what to spend their limited funds on," said Glover, a Post 828 Legionnaire. "We, at the Claude W. Black Center Advisory Board, recognize the need and are here to bring supporters together to provide some assistance."

The Back-to-School Jamboree, along with other events hosted throughout the year, is the Claude W. Black Center Advisory Board's way of accomplishing its mission of enhancing life, one family at a time.

Additional sponsors and supporters included H-E-B Volunteers, VIA, Frost Bank, WestCare, Noble Gentlemen of San Antonio, Moussa Temple No. 106 (Prince Hall Shriners), Moussa Court No. 119 (Prince Hall Daughters), Alpha Pi Zeta Chapter of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., 19th Masonic District (Prince Hall Masons), San Antonio Lodge No. 1, Star Tom Lodge No. 100, City of San Antonio Human Services, Kiolbassa Smoked Meats, and the San Antonio Observer.



Hundreds of children received a backpack and school supplies during the 21st Annual Back-to-School Jamboree held at the Claude W. Black Community Center



Paul Harris, treasurer of Fred Brock Sons of The American Legion Squadron 828 with H-E-B volunteers during the 21st Annual Back-to-School Jamboree held at the Claude W. Black Community Center. Harris also serves as the assistant manager of the community center



H-E-B annually supports the Claude W. Black Back-to-School Jamboree as the lead sponsor and provides dedicated volunteers



Prince Hall Masons of San Antonio Lodge No. 1 conducted Voter Registration & Education for adults during the 21st Annual Back-to-School Jamboree held at the Claude W. Black Community Center



## Troop 593 - American Legion Post 593 Eagle Scout Court of Honor

Submitted by Shirley Platt, Post 593



On July 3, 2026, at Wm. M. Randolph Post 593, Converse, TX, an Eagle Scout Court of Honor was held to recognize Dante Baker for his accomplishments in obtaining the rank of Eagle Scout. This young man is a huge asset to the Scouting community. Dante's scouting history and life awards tell of his journey.

Duty to God and Country, Duty to Others, Duty to Self. These are the three parts of the Scout Oath that all scouts subscribe to and in this instance, Duty equates to Service. Eagle Scout Dante Baker holds this ideal close to his heart. In the last six years he has worked on 73 service projects accumulating over 245 hours. He helped with two other Eagle Scout Projects at the Nature Center, however for his own he wanted to give back to the elementary school he graduated from, Copperfield Elementary. He designed, and built, two "Buddy Benches" for children who are new to the school or who felt they were lonely and wanted someone to play with or talk to. Children going to the benches indicate to other children or adults that someone needs something or someone. Additionally, he built four benches for outside of the Converse Senior Center. Dante worked with Copperfield Elementary Administration and the Converse Mayor and City Manager to approve the projects. He received donations from the local McCoys Lumber Store and some Legionnaires which added to the funds he raised using the troop's Flag Subscription program. He gathered other scouts and friends and went to work building the benches. They amassed a total of 265 hours working and installing these six benches. Dante has held numerous leadership positions in the troop, including Senior Patrol Leader, Patrol leader, and Quartermaster. Outside of Scouts, he was the Head Driver on the 7th and 8th Grade Robotics Teams.

Dante's Awards earned thus far are: Rank of Eagle Scout, National Outdoor Achievement Award (Camping) with devise, Messenger of Peace – Cleaned historic cemetery helping to discover unmarked graves, one was a mass grave with an estimated 100 children in it, Arrow of Light (highest rank in Cub Scouts), and the Catholic Scouting Award Parvuli Dei. Dante has also earned many awards outside of Scouting in robotics, coding, and golf. He is an Innovation STEM Grant recipient (individual) of \$250 in both 8th and 9th Grade.

He thanks the adult leaders and American Legion Post 593 for giving him the ability to participate in this outstanding youth program. Dante is looking forward to a future in Coding and Artificial Intelligence (AI) but will always keep in mind what he learned as a Scout... Duty to God and Country, Duty to Others, and Duty to Self.





## Post 174's Troop 1096 Summer Activities

*Submitted by BJ MacMillan, Adjutant, Post 174*

Troop 1096 started the summer with summer camp at Bear Creek Scout Camp near Hunt, Texas. Eleven Scouts and five adults attended the camp. The food was incredibly good with ample servings to keep the boys going all day! They enjoyed fishing, swimming, ziplining, gaga pit playing, shooting sports, archery, and basketball during free time. The merit badge opportunities were great. Our Scouts completed thirty-three merit badges and eight partial merit badges. The Troop came in third place on the Scoutmaster cooking contest.

They were able to spend a day fishing at a Florence citizen's stocked tank. The Scouts enjoy fishing a great deal. They caught some good-sized fish as well!

Troop 1096 assisted Post 354 in Florence, Texas with their 4th of July celebration by Posting the colors of all the military services and the U.S. Flag. Afterwards, they enjoyed a lunch of chili dogs with all in attendance.

On July 18th, they spent most of the day at Florence Field Day. The Troop was there to help and recruit. The Scouts spent the first hour and a half playing in a kickball tournament which they won! They then helped kids at our station shooting rockets and hatchet throw. They finished the day swimming in the city pool.





## Third Eagle Scout for Post 593 - Converse

Submitted by: Shirley Platt Post 593

Wm M. Randolph is proud to announce another Eagle Scout.

Eli Collett became our 3rd Eagle Scout at Post 593 (the 2nd one in July).

His parents, grandparents, and other relatives were there and presented him with memoirs from his distant relatives, including Eagle sculptures, a flag, and a pocket knife.





## Post 174 Pack and Troop 151 Summer Activities

Submitted by BJ MacMillan, Adjutant, Post 174



Pack 151 had their annual bottle rocket launch on the evening of July 18. They had about six scouts participating and had a grand time. The Pack leaders spent an evening completing fall recruiting training to get ready for the year to begin.

Troop 151 traveled to South Dakota to complete summer camp at Medicine Mountain Scout Ranch and Adventure Camp. The Troop was able to visit Mount Rushmore while in the area and tour Devils Tower and Deadwood. This Troop has a history of attending summer camps a longer distance from home and taking time to visit other historical or interesting sites along the way and when traveling to high adventure camps.

Troop 151 had a group attending Sea Base High Adventure, sailing off the Florida coast. While in the area they were able to visit the Naval Air Museum in Pensacola and the USS Drum at the USS Alabama Battleship Park. In addition, they toured the WWII Museum in New Orleans and the Oak Alley Plantation. They got to sit on the flight line and watch the Blue Angels practice.





## Post 828 Legionnaire Earns Honors from The American Legion Media & Communications

*Story by Texas American Legion Press Association*

AUSTIN, Texas – (July 11, 2026) – Legionnaire Burrell Parmer, a past commander of Fred Brock American Legion Post 828 in San Antonio, was presented with National Media Awards from Department Commander Richard Huntley at the 107th Annual Convention of The American Legion Department of Texas held at the Renaissance Austin Hotel.

Parmer won first place in the Editorial/News Category for Department/District for the 20th District's submission titled, "20th District Oratorical Contest held at St. Mary's University School of Law." Additionally, he won first place for Legion Posts up to 250-749 titled, "Fred Brock Post 828 honored at San Antonio NAACP Freedom Fund Dinner."

He previously one first place in the Editorial/News Category for Posts up to 250-749 in 2023.

Parmer, a retired U.S. Marine Corps public affairs officer, serves as the chairman of the Texas Department's Marketing, Media & Communications Committee and is an active member of the Texas American Legion Press Association.

The American Legion Media & Communications contest is open to all current members of the American Legion Family (Legionnaires, Sons of The American Legion, Auxiliary and Legion Riders).

The contest recognizes the communication efforts American Legion Family members do at the post, district and department levels to promote the good of the organization.

The contest has seven categories for submissions: websites, publications, visual media, social media, editorial/news writing, editorial/informational writing and public relations/community outreach.

Since its founding in 1919, The American Legion has been a key advocate for veterans' benefits, children and youth, patriotic American values, a strong national defense and quality-of-life issues for those serving in today's armed forces.



## Post 472 Honors Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans with a Luncheon

*Submitted by Natividad Corona, Post 472 Historian*

On September 22, 2025, I met with our Texas State Commander Rich Huntley. I let him know that Post 472 had its 2nd anniversary luncheon honoring Iraq and Afghanistan veterans on September 13, 2025. I asked Commander Huntley if he knew of any other post in Texas that honored Iraq and Afghanistan veterans with a luncheon. His answer was no. I said to Commander Huntley, "We are claiming to be the 1st in Texas to honor our Iraq and Afghanistan veterans with a luncheon".

On June 22, 2026, I visited Michael Walker, member engagement coordinator for Texas at American Legion National Headquarters in Indianapolis, Indiana. I let him know of our upcoming 3rd anniversary of honoring Iraq and Afghanistan veterans with a luncheon on September 12, 2026. I asked Michael if he knew of any other post in Texas to honor Iraq and Afghanistan veterans with a luncheon. He said, "I haven't heard anything like this". I said, "I am claiming that Post 472 is the 1st Post in Texas to honor Iraq and Afghanistan veterans with a luncheon".





# Building Better Posts with MOPA — Preparing for Membership Year

By Ventura "Ace" Tounsel, MOPA Commission Chair, Department of Texas

As another American Legion membership year begins, many of us immediately turn our attention to one number, membership. While membership is essential for the future of our organization, it is important to remember that membership is not the mission. Membership is the result of a healthy, active Post that provides value to veterans, their families, and the community it serves.

That is where the Membership, Organization, and Post Activities (MOPA) Commission comes in.

The purpose of MOPA is not simply to oversee programs, but to help build stronger Posts throughout the Department of Texas. Whether through Membership, Uniformed Organizations, Constitution & By-Laws, or Awards & Trophies, our goal is to provide resources, share ideas, and encourage practices that help every Post succeed. Throughout this membership year, this column will focus on practical leadership lessons and proven ideas that can help Posts of every size continue to grow and thrive.

As your Post prepares for the new membership year, consider asking four simple questions.

## **Do we have a plan?**

Successful Posts don't wait until the end of the year to focus on membership. They establish goals early, identify who will lead various efforts, and regularly measure their progress. Membership is not the responsibility of one chairman; it is a responsibility shared by every Legionnaire.

## **Are we prepared to welcome new members?**

First impressions matter. A warm greeting, a clean Post, introductions to fellow members, and opportunities to get involved can make the difference between someone who simply pays dues and someone who becomes an active volunteer and future leader.

## **Are we taking care of the members we already have?**

Retention is just as important as recruiting. A phone call, handwritten note, birthday greeting, or sincere thank-you reminds members that they are valued. People are far more likely to remain involved when they know they belong.

## **Are we visible in our communities?**

Veterans want to be part of organizations that make a difference. Whether supporting youth programs, honoring our nation's heroes, assisting fellow veterans, or partnering with local organizations, meaningful community involvement strengthens both our mission and our membership.

No two Posts are exactly alike, and that's one of the strengths of The American Legion. Every community has different needs, different traditions, and different opportunities. Our objective is not to make every Post the same, it is to help every Post become stronger.

In each issue of Building Better Posts with MOPA, we'll explore ideas that can be adapted across the Department of Texas, highlight successful programs from our Posts, and share leadership lessons that help us fulfill our mission of service to veterans, our communities, and our nation.

Together, we can ensure that our Posts remain places where veterans are welcomed, families are supported, and future generations see the value of continuing the proud legacy of The American Legion.

## **Building Better Posts isn't about doing more, it's about doing what matters most, together.**

*Until next time, let's continue building better Posts, one idea, one leader, and one Legionnaire at a time.*



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