



The New Jersey

SALute

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Do a "Buddy Check" today.

Make sure our members, family, and friends are okay. Even if you are staying home, a phone call, a text, or an email is all it takes. Keep in touch. Like the phone company used to say: "Reach out and touch someone".

For God and Country

30th Annual POW / MIA Watchfire

The 30th Annual POW-MIA Watchfire was held in Seaside Heights on September 19-20. The 12 hour vigil brought out many Legion Family Members to the event as well as the public. Many ceremonies were held, including the awarding of the New Jersey POW/ MIA Medal posthumously to the family of Air Force Major George J. Pollin of Lavallette, shot down on April 29, 1967. His remains were identified on December 17, 1990.



LEGION COLLEGE NEWS

Hello all,

The 2020 session of the New Jersey American Legion Leadership College was canceled, due to the ongoing efforts to contain the COVID-19 Pandemic.

NJ Governor Murphy is keeping us updated on restrictions on events, crowds, and social distancing.

It is unlikely that this event will be rescheduled for this year as the American Legion calendar and the Base Schedule will likely not afford us the opportunity.

However we will make every attempt to reschedule and refunds will be sent at a later date. I thank you all for your interest, and we look forward to seeing you in 2021.

On behalf of the Staff of the NJALLC, Thank you.

FROM COMMANDER MATT:

Greetings!

On Monday, March 16th, 2020, at 8pm our world changed. For the past several months we have had to adjust our lives to deal with our current health situation. I don't think any of us ever expected to have to live through this experience, but we are and we will persevere. First and foremost, keep yourself, your families and your extended families as healthy as possible.

I am *requesting* that each of us do a minimum of one "Buddy Check" call a day. Do not count talking to the same person twice in one week. You may want to reach out to someone you normally wouldn't call; it could mean something special to that person as we all cope with adjusting to this new life-style. *IF* you know of someone who has the corona virus and is in need of help to get supplies, start making phone calls to members in other areas to see if they can get supplies that you can't. We are all in this together. Chaplain Nick Wingler is also available for support and concerns if you need to talk.

Although our "busy season" has been cut short with activities and events that we typically run, we still have to keep moving ahead with those activities we can still maintain.

Detachment Officers and Committee Chairmen:

Have your reports ready for Adjutant Tom Marsden. I would like you to also send copies or a similar update to our SALute Editor, Gary Crawford, by then as well. Email to NJSALute@gmail.com.

Squadron Commanders:

We still have to bolster our membership, so I am also requesting all Commanders to take their list of unpaid members and give each of their Officers a portion of their list of members, along with their phone numbers, to contact. Approach those phone calls with a "buddy check" mindset—see how your member is doing and feeling. When you remind them that they need to pay their dues you could emphasize that we are still running our programs.

Detachment Vice Commanders:

Keep in constant touch with your Squadron Commanders and see if they need assistance with anything. Remind them that CSR reports are due "soon"; applications for awards such as Son of The Year, Young Citizen's Award and the Ernie Wilson, Jr. Memorial Scholarship are on-line and can be filled out and sent in. We are also still collecting donations for our programs:

Veterans: Commander's Project, VA and R and Veteran Homelessness Clothing Drive.

Children: CWF, COTA, and Special Olympics.

NEF

Remind them that they can still make donations and give them the contact information they need.

Finances:

One of my main concerns is the state of our finances. Finance Chairman Carl Albern, Jr. has worked diligently with his committee and Finance Officer Dave Page to get this straightened out. We are looking at revamping the existing allocations as well as a potential \$5.00 increase in dues, as \$3.00 is needed for National and a raise of \$2.00 for the State.

DEC

I have increased the number of DEC's from 8 to 15, but not everyone has filed their paperwork. I do not see the need for me to call you since you volunteered to step up. If you are having a problem getting your signatures, contact me for assistance. Please get that paperwork into the Adjutant ASAP; your input and votes will be needed shortly. If you don't comply you are putting your own county at a disadvantage.

Looking ahead:

Not knowing where we will be in regards to health regulations and social distancing affecting upcoming Conventions, I am looking to accumulate and assess ideas for alternatives to having a physical convention for a meetings in the future. If we wind up shifting our Conventions to other dates, then we won't have to worry about this; I just want us to be prepared.

One idea I am working on is having Zoom meetings on the internet. I don't believe a conference call by telephone would work as efficiently and would be harder to manage with the amount of personnel that would be involved. I can easily set up a free chat room or look into purchasing a different kind with audio capabilities.

I welcome any and all ideas for assessment. Please email me your thoughts.

Please be safe, continue to conduct yourselves in a health-conscious manner and be patient. We will get through this.

For God and Country,

Matthew C. Thalasinis, Commander

Sons of the American Legion

Detachment of New Jersey

2019-2021

You are probably aware that the Detachment Officers serving their 2019-2020 terms will also serve the 2020-2021 terms. Elections were cancelled as was the Convention, so the current Officers will continue on in their respective positions. This applies to County and Squadron Officers as well, although elections and appointments can still be done for those who need to step down. As always, their support is needed.

Yes, there is some old news in this issue. Due to various issues, the NJ SALute has been on hold until now. Much had gone on before the lockdowns from the pandemic, so they are featured here to show what various Squadrons and Officers have been up to. Activities have picked up again and some Posts have reopened, although most are limited by mask requirements and social distancing. Stop by, they need your support. If your Post hasn't reopened, stop by any other nearby Post. Little or no income has affected us all. Being an Early Bird and paying your dues will certainly help.

How many times, at a meeting, have you heard someone say, "YOU should do this. YOU should do that"? Well, we are a WE organization. Many hands make light work. WE make things work. YOU are part of it.

As we give thanks for our many blessings, we wish everyone a joyous holiday season and hope for the best in the coming year.



A Visit to the Lyons NJ VA Hospital

By Patrick Gallagher PDC, Sq. 346

On 30Nov2019, the Veterans Assistance and Rehabilitation program had the honor of providing a Pizza and Bingo Party for the Veterans at the Lyons VA Hospital. Around 80 Vets attended, including 10 lady Vets, along with staff and family members. The Detachment budget provided for the pizza party, as well as purchasing wool hats and gloves, along with paper plates, cups, soda, and other items for the party.

SAL members on hand were Detachment Commander Matt Thalasinis Sq. 232, Detachment Vice Commander Mark Natale Sq. 338, William Odom Sq. 321, Carl Alber Jr. PNEC PDC Sq. 346, Patrick Gallagher PDC Sq. 346, and a resident of Lyons, a Past Commander from Sq. 338. Also involved were ALA Unit 346 members Melinda Gallagher, McKayla Alby, and Doreen Gallagher PNEC PDP.

Total preparation took about 30 hours in the planning, purchasing, traveling, and setting up the party. The Veterans on hand were surprised and grateful for the gifts and time from the Detachment.®

The Commander's Message

By Matthew Thalasinis, Detachment Commander

I have met a lot of good, dedicated people from our entire American Legion Family just by going out and visiting posts and attending events throughout our counties. I'm extremely pleased at what our squadrons are doing; you should be proud of what you do as well. I want to share some of my thoughts, and progress with you; please read below:

MY PERSONAL GOALS: My main priority coming into my term was to improve our communications structure; we were only operating at a level of a little over 33% efficiency for the amount of DEC's in the state. We should be at 67% once the paperwork for those that have stepped up to assume their county DEC position is filed. I am working diligently by traveling throughout the state to recruit the remainder. If you live in a county that does not have a DEC and are interested in the position, please contact me as soon as possible.

The other problem we have is that the amount of Sons of The American Legion County Executive Councils also started this year at the 33% mark. Once the DEC's are in place the opportunity to form more county organizations increases as well.

DETACHMENT COMMANDER'S PROJECT: We are working in conjunction with the entire American Legion Family to improve our veteran care facilities in many ways at Paramus, Vet Haven's North, Vineland, Menlo Park and Doyle's Cemetery. The project goal is in the neighborhood of \$115,000. Our goal is to contribute \$25,000. Please consider donating to the reason why we're here and help support our parent organization in helping them.

MENTORING AND MEMBERSHIP: We are almost half-way through this year's 2020-2021 term and we are lagging behind in membership. Regional Membership Revitalization calls are being set up to follow the Regional Mentoring sessions set up by Committee Chairman PDC Bob Phillips, Jr. Our first Mentoring/Membership date was Saturday, January 18, 2020 at Pemberton Post 294. The Mentoring session was from 10 am to 12 pm, followed by the Membership Revitalization Calls Session from 12 to 1. I look forward to helping individuals needing help and those squadrons who need assistance with their membership. If possible, I would like us to go out to lunch together afterwards.

VETERAN AFFAIRS: Committee Chairman PDC Pat Gallagher has reported that the last Detachment Veteran's Affairs event was Saturday, January 25 at Menlo Park.

AWARDS: I am seeking candidates for review for a Performing Arts Award and Civil Service Awards. If you know a teacher, fireman or policeman that goes "above and beyond" in their profession please contact me at mrthal@yahoo.com

I've been having a lot of fun and meeting many good people and am looking forward to meeting many more. Hope to see you soon!

For God and Country, Matthew C. Thalasinis, Commander, Sons of the American Legion Detachment of New Jersey 2019-2021®

Squadron 105 Donates to Susan G. Komen Foundation



SAL Squadron 105 of Belleville made a donation in January of this year to the Susan G. Komen for the Cure Foundation. Presenting the check were Detachment Vice Commander / Sq. 105 Commander Steve Sangemino and Essex County DEC / Sq. 105 Adjutant Rusty Myers.

In a unanimous vote at their January general meeting, the SAL 105 membership voted to donate \$100 to the foundation which, per their website, "addresses breast cancer on multiple fronts in order to make the biggest impact against this disease". This donation was made to a fundraiser held by the Millville Fraternal Order of the Eagles, via one of our Legionnaires who is a member of both organizations. The fight against breast cancer is one which is very near and dear to many Sons and Legionnaires at Post 105, affecting many of our mothers, sisters, daughters, and friends.

With its ultimate goal being to find a cure for breast cancer, the Susan G Komen foundation is one of the largest non-profits dedicated to that end, "saving lives by meeting the most critical needs in our communities and investing in breakthrough research to prevent and cure breast cancer."

Throughout the year, in coordination with its parent organization The American Legion, the SAL runs various fundraisers benefiting both the local Legion Post in Belleville, The American Legion on a state and national scale, and other national and international charities. One of the SAL's largest missions is to raise funds for programs benefiting veterans and their families.

GOT NEWS? What have you and your Squadron been up to? Have you reopened? **LET US KNOW** what's going on. Pat yourself on the back if you must. Send along info and pics to SALute Editor Gary Crawford at NJSALute@gmail.com.

Murray-Troutt Post and Squadron 262 Flag Retirement Ceremony on February 22.

The Murray-Troutt American Legion Post and Squadron 262 were contacted by Ms. Joyce Miller of the Volunteers of America, Delaware Valley. Ms. Miller is the Veterans Services Coordinator for Home of the Brave. She asked if the Veteran Service Organization would be available to conduct a flag retirement and replacement of ceremony at their location in Camden NJ. The current US Flag, POW-MIA Flag and State of New Jersey Flag had succumbed to the outside elements and needed to be replaced.

A dual member of 262, Post Commander and Squadron Adjutant Doug Catts advised his fellow Legionnaires and Squadron Comrades of the request. Past Detachment Commander, ANEC and Squadron Commander Robert Phillips Jr. and Doug formed a detail of members from the Post family.

The flag retirement and replacement of the United States Flag, the POW-MIA Flag and State Of New Jersey Flag was conducted on February 22, 2020 at 1pm.

The ceremony was witnessed by over 100 people from several organizations, both Veteran Service Organizations and non VSO groups. The Legion Riders of 281, Dual Legion members from Post/Sq. 68, 286, 262, and 311 were on hand to assist with the raising of the 3 flags. A non-VSO group, Rolling Badges MC of Westville NJ, were in attendance as well. The motorcycle club is made up of police, fire, and EMS professionals and many of them are veterans.

As those in attendance moved forward to bear witness to the flag retirement, 20 veterans from the Home of the Brave were in the front of the ranks and stood at attention as the flags were lowered, replaced, and re-flown.

After the flags were secured, Post Chaplain George Cain came forward and offered a special prayer for the retired flags as well as a prayer for four residents of Home of the Brave who had passed away this past year.

Home of the Brave is part of the Volunteers of America Delaware Valley Homeless Shelter in Camden NJ. The veterans who currently reside here are transitioning from the shelter to more permanent housing in the Delaware Valley.

Post 262's Facebook page has a video of the event. www.facebook.com/MTpost262/

Organized group events were prohibited early during the lockdown, but nothing prevented unorganized volunteers from digging in. Many veterans' graves were nevertheless decorated this spring in time for Memorial Day. Pictured are Neptune Sq. 346 Members Connor and Murphy Izquierdo after placing Flags at the grave of Joseph Brinley, a Veteran of the Revolutionary War at Glendola Cemetery, Wall NJ. (The editor's grandsons)



Subject: The SALute

We're looking for updates and articles to be published in the SALute. Things had been changing on an almost daily basis, and hard to keep up with, as far as putting together a current newsletter.

Important news, such as not having a convention nor elections this year and a few other changes due to COVID-19, have put the brakes on so many events and programs. We follow the orders of The American Legion at all times.

As things open up and some programs return, updates need to be shared with the members. Emails can be sent to me at njsalute@gmail.com. Stay safe, check on a buddy or two or three, and we'll make it through.

Gary S. Crawford, SALute Editor, PC Sq 346.

30TH ANNUAL POW / MIA WATCHFIRE 2020

Special thanks to the town of Seaside Heights, Mayor Anthony Vaz and his committee for allowing us to host our event in Seaside Heights for nearly thirty years.

Special thanks to Sons of The American Legion Squadron 348 for sponsoring the Watchfire T-shirts this year.

Thank you to The American Legion Department of New Jersey and The American Legion Auxiliary Department of New Jersey for their years of support.

The American Legion Family of New Egypt Post 455 coordinated and provided refreshments for all those attending. They have provided these for several years and do an outstanding job. It is much appreciated by all.

This Watchfire is dedicated to the brave men and women who sacrificed their freedom in the service of our country. In honor of all former American Prisoners of War, those still missing, and those Americans who may still be held prisoner: **YOU ARE NOT FORGOTTEN.**

Thanks to the POW / MIA Watchfire Committee: Richard Hodum, POW / MIA Committee Chairman, C. David Page, Patrick Gallagher, Tony Clappsy, and Carl Albern Jr.

There's a YouTube video of the event:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=gtG0uJuvaTY



19 SEPTEMBER 2020 – BELLEVILLE, NJ – On Saturday 19 September-2020, American Legion Post 105 and Sons of The American Legion (SAL) Squadron 105 in Belleville held their annual picnic in the parking lot behind the Post, under clear blue skies, which ended up being the largest picnic in Post 105 history. Following what is held as a regular event each year, the picnic is the Post's single largest fundraiser.

With over 200 supporters of the American Legion in attendance at this sold out event, Post members and volunteers grilled and BBQ'd , as well as shucked over 1,000 clams. Attendees, maintaining all of the social distancing measures required by the state, enjoyed the food and the refreshments while listening to the doo-wop group "The Jersey Tones". Folks in attendance also enjoyed playing corn hole, which is a staple at the patio at Post 105.

"It was a beautiful day and picnic and great turn out!" posted Kim Romano, bartender at the Post and volunteer at the picnic, referring to not only how much everyone enjoyed the event, but on the amazing 70 degree weather we had for the day. The Post Legionnaires and SAL volunteers for the day not only spent the week setting up for this bigger-than-ever crowd, but helped out in every aspect of what was needed for the day – serving food, shucking clams, cooking over the grill, selling shirts, and raffling off 50/50 tickets. In reacting to how well the day went, Detachment Vice-Commander / Squadron 105 Commander and Event Coordinator Steve Sangemino sent "A huge 'THANK YOU' to all the volunteers [at the picnic]. Too many to name. You can't do this without a GREAT Team."

One of the larger money-makers of the day is always the gift certificate raffle, where the Post raffles off cards and baskets donated by businesses and organizations throughout the area. With an excess of 40 cards and baskets generously donated by Belleville-area businesses, supporters of the Legion at the event also enjoyed our 50/50, which generated over \$750 for the winner who ended up being a Post 105 Legionnaire. Businesses and organizations also were overly generous donating food, beer, and monetary donations for the picnic. We cannot thank those places enough for supporting our Post and Belleville's veterans (these lists will be posted on our Facebook page)



*Is your Post open for business? Many are featuring light menus to go along with the canteen or lounge being open. Masks and social distancing are required. After being locked down for so long, it's sure nice to get out again. **PLEASE LET US KNOW!***



Audubon Post and SAL Sq 262 at Flag Retirement Ceremony at Home of the Brave in Camden NJ on Feb. 22.



Post and Squadron 346 of Neptune hosted the Detachment-sponsored Comedy Night on Feb.29. "Laugh It Up For CWF" featured comedians Scott Baker, Vinnie Mark, and Al Isaacs for a night of all-age family fun. \$1,756 was raised for Children's Welfare Fund. SAL Detachment Commander Matt was there to support the event, as well as American Legion Commander Robert Newell and American Legion Auxiliary President Ruby Cramer.

Contributors to this issue:

**Commander Matt Thalasinis, Sq 232
Thomas Marsden PNVC Sq 348
William Odom, Sq 321
Patrick Gallagher PDC, Sq 346
Carl Albern Jr. PDC, Sq 346
Doug Catts, Cmdr Post 262 and Dual Member
Rusty Myers Sq 105**

Proud Possessors of a Priceless Heritage...



SAL Squadron 105 of Belleville ran a fundraiser in December which donated \$500 to the Fisher House Foundation, an organization which provides Veterans housing on-site at VA medical facilities.

A 50/50 raffle ran for two weeks. The SAL sold \$1,000 worth of tickets with the winner being picked at the Post 105 Christmas Party on 21 December 2019. The winner of the raffle was Post 105 Legionnaire Tommy D'Angelis, with the other half going directly to the charity.

The SAL picked this as a charity to raise money for because it directly impacts not only veterans, but their families. The Fisher House Foundation builds comfort homes where military & veteran's families can stay free of charge, while a loved one is in the hospital. These homes are located at military and VA medical centers around the world.

Fisher Houses have up to 21 suites, with private bedrooms and baths. Families share a common kitchen, laundry facilities, a warm dining room, and an inviting living room. Since inception, the program has saved military and veterans' families an estimated \$451 million in out of pocket costs for lodging and transportation.

Throughout the year, in coordination with its parent organization The American Legion, the SAL runs various fundraisers benefiting both the local Legion Post in Belleville, The American Legion on a State and National scale, and other national and international charities.

