DUTY, HONOR, COUNTRY

Newly elected commander Dale Barnett urges Legionnaires to follow principles embodied in three-word motto.

By Steve Brooks

American Legion Family members will have no trouble remembering newly elected American Legion National Commander Dale Barnett’s motto. The Department of Georgia Legionnaire made sure to have it placed on this year’s membership shirt.

“Duty, honor, country – these three words have great meaning to my life, and I hope this year will have great meaning to you,” Barnett told Legionnaires on Sept. 3 at the 97th National Convention in Baltimore. He then broke down what each word means to him.

**Duty.** “The first lesson of basic training was to know your job and do your job to the best you could,” Barnett said. “Your life depended upon it, and the life of your buddies. In the American Legion, people depend on us each and every day to do the right thing. To get them to appointments. To mentor the youth. To help families in need.”

**Honor.** “It was an honor to wear the military uniform, and I’m sure many of you still have your uniforms and you’re proud to share those stories,” he said. “But I’m also proud to wear the uniform of The American Legion. It’s an honor to be in this organization and to serve alongside you. I guarantee you your communities respect what you do, and they understand what you do each and every day. That makes their communities a better place.”

**Country.** “Our country needs us,” he said. “It’s the greatest country on earth. I’m so proud to be an American, but I’m so proud to be standing before you today to say I’m part of the greatest organization that, since 1919, has been fighting for the principles that have made this country great. We will continue to fight for those principles. Our country needs us, and we must step forward now.”

“So this year, when you see those words, I want to challenge you. When you see them we must step forward now.”

See Duty, honor, country on Page 4
**COMMANDER’S MESSAGE**

**NEF goal: $1 million**

When I was elected your national commander during The American Legion’s 97th national convention in Baltimore on Sept. 3, I announced that the National Emergency Fund (NEF) would be my primary fundraising effort. And that was a decision made from personal experience.

A few years ago there was Hurricane Katrina that hit our Gulf Coast. The NEF was there to provide support. The NEF provides up to $10,000 in grants to Legion posts and $3,000 to individual Legion Family members impacted by natural disasters such as hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes and wildfires. Since its inception, the fund has provided more than $8 million in direct financial assistance; every cent donated goes directly to helping the fund’s recipients.

Legionnaires, posts and family members will need assistance as they recover from a tragedy. NEF grants help Legion Family members pay bills, such as temporary housing, food and clothes, while they wait for insurance money to kick in. NEF grants also help posts rebuild after disasters.

I want to ensure that we can raise $1 million or more for NEF. There’s money in the fund right now, but we need to make sure we have enough money there that when an emergency occurs – and I hope it doesn’t happen during my year as your national commander – that we’re there to help people in need because that’s what we’re about.

One hundred percent of donations to NEF go toward grants for Legionnaires, posts and family members who are dealing with the after-effects of an emergency situation. All marketing and promotional costs are paid out of a separate fund by National Headquarters.

For more information about NEF, visit [www.legion.org/emergency](http://www.legion.org/emergency). And visit [www.legion.org/publications](http://www.legion.org/publications) to download the NEF media brochures, found under Internal Affairs section, that provide department and post leaders on best practices to follow before, during and after an emergency.

![Dale Barnett
National Commander](image)

**MEMBERSHIP**

### National Commander Honor Ribbon

During the 2015-2016 membership year, American Legion National Commander Dale Barnett will award his National Commander Honor Ribbon to any American Legion Family that achieves 100 percent membership by May 30, 2016.

For this award, the Legion Family is defined as a post and any combination of an Auxiliary unit, Sons squadron or Legion Riders chapter. Each branch must achieve 100 percent membership to qualify for the award.

The National Commander Honor Ribbon incentive program will end May 30, 2016, or when supplies are exhausted.

Download the form online: [www.legion.org/commander/ribbon](http://www.legion.org/commander/ribbon)

### Recruiters to be honored with ‘Duty, Honor, Country’ pin

During the 2015-2016 membership year, American Legion National Commander Dale Barnett will award his national commander pin to any Legion Family member who obtains three new members into the Legion.

A new member is any eligible person joining for the 2016 membership year who was not a member of The American Legion during the 2015 membership year.

Each member listed must be eligible for membership in The American Legion. Forward names of SAL members or Auxiliary members to your detachment or unit for use in their respective incentive programs.

To maintain the integrity of the national commander’s pin incentive program, only one pin will be awarded per individual.

Upon receipt, national membership staff will confirm the names and mail the pin directly to the person who earned it. Commander Barnett’s pin incentive program will end June 30, 2016, or when supplies are exhausted.

[www.legion.org/commander/pin](http://www.legion.org/commander/pin)
Riders surpass Legacy Run donation record

This year more than $1.2 million was raised for the children of fallen servicemembers.

By Daniel S. Wheeler

American Legion Riders are a force to be reckoned with – they surpassed their Legacy Run donation record from last year by more than $1 million.

Hundreds of American Legion Riders took part in the four-day Legacy Run – which left Indianapolis on Aug. 23 and covered more than 1,000 miles through Kentucky, Ohio and Pennsylvania before arriving in Maryland. They collected more than $436,000 prior to and during the ride.

On Sept. 1, more than $812,000 was donated to the Legacy Run during the Legion's national convention in Baltimore. That brought the total for this year's Run to a record $1,249,684.13 for The American Legion Legacy Fund, which provides college scholarships for the children of fallen military personnel who died on active duty on or since Sept. 11, 2001.

On the convention stage, donations poured in from the Department of Florida, which donated $173,000, including $93,000 raised by the collaboration of Post 323 (Lehigh Acres) and Adam Sandoval and his “Scootin America” cross-country trip where he visited Harley-Davidson posts.

Another $103,754 came from the Department of Minnesota, $59,050 from the Department of Missouri, $54,000 from the Department of New York and $52,512 from the Department of South Carolina.

American Legion Post 593 in Converse, Texas, donated $50,000, and in doing so surpassed $300,000 in total donations made to the Legacy Run since its start.

When the first Legacy Run left Indianapolis and headed to Salt Lake City 10 years ago, its participants had a goal of raising $50,000. That ride netted more than three times the goal. And that was just the start. In 10 years, the Legacy Run has raised more than $6 million for the Legacy Fund.

“The Riders are the only program that encompasses the American Legion, the Sons of The American Legion and Auxiliary,” said Bob Sussan, chairman of The American Legion Riders Advisory Committee. “From the onset, the Riders have adopted the Legacy Scholarship Fund, and annually we ride for the children of our fallen brothers and sisters.”

I am proud of our Legion Riders, and they deserve a big applause for ensuring college scholarships are awarded to children whose parents made the ultimate sacrifice. To be a part of the more than 106,000 Legion Riders, find a chapter in your area by visiting www.legion.org/riders/chapterlocater.
In 1937, American Legion Post 216 in Milford, Mich., purchased rain coats and hats for the Milford Schools Safety Patrol members and displayed four American Legion Welcome Safety signs throughout the town.

"For many of you, you put your name on there," he said. "You put your name on something, it should be personal. It should mean something to you about your responsibilities to this great organization of The American Legion." Barnett stressed the need to build membership as a family. "The (Sons of The American Legion), the Legion Riders, the Auxiliary – we are in this together," he said. "We need to push membership in all aspects because we are a team."

Barnett told members of the Legion’s membership team that they are “the heart and the soul of this organization, and the success of this organization depends on how well you perform your duties and your responsibilities this next year. It should be very, very personal to each and every one of you.”

Oregon National Executive Committeeman Charles Schmidt, a consultant to the National Legislative Commission, told the workshop that membership falls on the entire organization’s shoulders. "I look at the meeting here in Indianapolis as a meeting of stakeholders: stakeholders in The American Legion," Schmidt said. "If you don’t think you’re a stakeholder, look at your membership card. With these cards come a voice and a vote. But also with these cards comes a responsibility to grow membership. Our voice needs to be strong because there are veterans everyday that need The American Legion. There are communities everyday that need The American Legion. And our country always needs The American Legion."

During his time as national commander, Barnett wants to focus on membership growth. His own Legion post has grown from 81 to 307 members in the past 20 years. “All of us need to encourage growth,” he said. “We need to capture our histories. We need to tell our stories to our communities. Our communities want to know more about the history of The American Legion and how your post fits into it. And of course, always ask them to join this great organization.

“I challenge all our posts, (Auxiliary) units and (SAL) squadrons to grow this year, to know and execute our five-year strategic plan.”

In closing, Barnett asked members to make the most of their time as Legionnaires. “I challenge each of you today to dedicate yourself to the principles of duty, honor, country. Don’t count the days. Make the days count.”
**Support VA’s suicide prevention awareness efforts**

While September is suicide prevention month, The American Legion is helping the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) raise awareness about its mental health resources that are available to support veterans in crisis year-round.

The American Legion spoke with Dr. Caitlin Thompson, VA’s deputy director of suicide prevention, about VA’s suicide prevention awareness resources and awareness efforts.

**Q: What happens when a veteran contacts the Veterans Crisis Line, chat service, or sends a text?**

**A:** The veteran gets connected to resources local to them. There are suicide prevention coordinators (more than 300) located at every VA in the country. We are able to connect veterans with their local suicide prevention coordinator who can then ensure they are getting the treatment and resources they need, like getting enrolled in VA care. I want to really stress that even if you don’t use VA care, these are services (the crisis line, online chat service and texting option) that are available to all veterans in crisis or having thoughts of suicide.

It’s a confidential service so people can call, and they don’t even have to say who they are. We respect where everybody is coming from and who everybody is. And we respect what the crisis is that they are calling about. Our primary motivation is to get them the help that they need.

We have the most caring and compassionate people who are going to answer the phone, answer the text, answer the chat – who can listen and really think through what the next steps are in terms of getting them through the crisis. We are there to listen, we are there to care, and we are there to help.

Some of our responders are veterans themselves and many are family and friends of veterans and the rest are just people, including me, who are so passionate about this work and about serving those who served our country.

Veterans and their loves ones can connect with VA responders 24 hours a day, seven days a week by:

- Calling the toll-free hotline (800) 273-8255, and then pressing 1
- Texting the number 838255
- Chatting online at www.veteranscrisisline.net/chat

Over the past four years, VA responders have answered more than 39,000 texts, engaged in more than 240,000 chats, and answered more than 1.86 million calls.

Additionally, veterans and family members can visit VA’s Veteran Crisis Line at www.veteranscrisisline.net for suicide prevention resources, including gun safety material. We are finding that gun safety is becoming more important. Gun safety locks are available through the VA to any veteran who wants one, no questions asked. A veteran can visit his or her local VA and ask for one; it’s usually provided by the suicide prevention coordinator.

**Q: How is VA raising awareness about suicide prevention year-round?**

**A:** Our awareness campaign “The Power of 1” is building off of last year’s success. The idea is to think about one small act that can really make a difference in a veteran’s life. Our public service announcement “1 Act,” which is part of The Power of 1 campaign, talks about how one person’s simple act can have a profound impact on a veteran’s life.

**Q: How can Legionnaires support VA’s suicide prevention efforts?**

**A:** American Legion posts members and service officers can connect with their local suicide prevention coordinators for materials, training in suicide prevention, and to learn about outreach events. There is an opportunity for Legion members and service officers to connect and see how they can get involved.

For additional suicide prevention resources, visit: www.legion.org/suicideprevention

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**Did you know?**

**During the 97th American Legion national convention in Baltimore:**

- More than $179,000 was donated to the National Emergency Fund
- More than $133,000 was donated to Operation Comfort Warriors.
- National Recruiter of the Year was awarded to Edgar J. Johnson of Columbus, Ga., for the second consecutive year. A member of Post 267, Johnson recruited 725 new members into the Legion, one more than last year.
- The Oak Ridge Boys received the Patriot Award for teaming up with The American Legion on a series of public-service announcements raising awareness and support for needs of U.S. military veterans.
- Former Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel received the highest honor that The American Legion can bestow, the Distinguished Service Medal, for his dedication and support of veterans.
- Home Depot received the Employer of the Year Award for Hiring Veterans.
- Steven R. Brune, a 21-year emergency medical technician and volunteer with West Point Rescue in West Point, Neb., received the National Firefighter of the Year Award.
- Ben Adams, a deputy sheriff with the Marion County Sheriff’s Office in Ocala, Fla., received the National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award.
A foundation of healing, reconnection

The abduction of then-11-year-old Jaycee Dugard 24 years ago in Lake Tahoe, Calif., still resonates in the minds of many. After 18 years of enduring physical and emotional abuse, Dugard was released from her captors and reunited with her family in 2009.

The process of reconnecting with her family and healing from her past led Dugard to create The JAYC (Just Ask Yourself to Care) Foundation. Dugard’s foundation helps families that endured a traumatic experience, such as military deployment, heal and reconnect. Dugard spoke to members of The American Legion’s Americanism Commission Aug. 29 during national convention in Baltimore about her foundation – a 2014 Child Welfare Foundation recipient.

Q: How is the foundation working with military families?
A: We work with families of returning veterans, with a focus on reunification and helping their spouses and children understand and respond to the specialized needs of the veterans. During deployment, all the responsibility lies with the parent at home. After return, military members struggle not only with what they have experienced while deployed, but with the adjustment to a different and evolving role in the family and the community. We use equine-assisted therapy as a tool for understanding subtle behavioral cues. Other activities of daily living are included to reintegrate the returning family member. We are also excited to support the training of professional coaches to assist returning veterans. We hope to provide services for more military families in the coming year. Our focus is to provide a protected space for a successful family reintegration, or a space for families to sort out emotions and grief related to the loss of a fallen soldier.

Q: How can Legionnaires support the foundation?
A: Proceeds from our JAYC T-shirts, tank tops and necklaces with our pinecone symbol (the last piece of freedom she felt before being abducted) go to the foundation.

Learn more about The JAYC Foundation’s programs: www.thejayfoundation.org

DATELINE: CAPITOL HILL

Arming troops at U.S. bases

Department of Defense Secretary Ashton Carter has given his authority to allow more troops to carry weapons at U.S. bases, with a focus on recruiting stations, reserve centers and other “soft” military targets.

In a memorandum released July 30, Carter gave his service chiefs and regional command heads until Aug. 21 to submit action plans for increased security of personnel, buildings and other physical facilities. However, Carter has decided against the idea of arming every servicemember assigned in the United States the authority to carry a firearm.

He noted in his memorandum that existing Department of Defense (DoD) policy gives commanders at U.S. installations “the option of (employing) additional armed personnel.” He said Defense Directive 5210.6, issued April 1, 2011, “allows for the arming of qualified DoD personnel (not regularly engaged in law enforcement duties) based on the threat and the immediate need to protect DoD assets and lives.” That directive says military personnel “shall be appropriately armed and have the inherent right to self-defense.”

At the same time, however, the directive says: “Arming DoD personnel with firearms shall be limited and controlled.” Attempting to balance competing needs of self-defense and safety, the policy states that “evaluation of the necessity to arm DoD personnel shall be made with the consideration of the possible consequences of accidental or indiscriminate use of those arms. However, the overriding factors in determining whether or not to arm are the mission and threat.”

WORLD WAR I MEMORIAL FINALISTS ANNOUNCED

On Aug. 19, the World War One Centennial Commission selected five finalists to design a memorial to honor the World War I generation in the nation’s capital. The five finalists were selected from more than 350 proposals sent to the commission. The winning design will be selected in January 2016.

The finalists are: “Plaza to the Forgotten War,” by Andrew Cesarz of Johnsen Schmaling Architects; “World War One Memorial Concept” by Devlin Kimmel; “The Weight of Sacrifice” by Joseph Weishaar; “An American Family Portrait Wall in the Park” by Luis Collado, Jose Luis de la Fuente, Jose Luis Perez-Grillo, Ignacio Espigares, Marta Bueno and Shoko Nakamura of STL Architects; and “Heroes’ Green” by Maria Counts.

The proposed site for the World War I memorial is Pershing Park, only one block from the White House with a clear view down Pennsylvania Avenue of the U.S. Capitol.

The five finalists will now work in consultation with the commission, public agencies and other stakeholders to develop and refine their initial design concepts.

The World War One Centennial Commission was established by the World War One Centennial Commission Act, part of P.L. 112-272, passed by the 112th Congress and signed by President Barack Obama on Jan. 16, 2013. The commission is responsible for planning, developing and executing programs, projects and activities to commemorate the centennial of World War I.
MEMBERSHIP INCENTIVES AND AWARDS

BIG TWELVE COMPETITION

The Big Twelve Competition recognizes departments that meet or exceed their pledged membership goal percentage by the March target date. The percentage does not include members gained through DMS.

The competition is broken down into six categories. The winner in each category will be reimbursed for computer equipment purchases of up to $2,000, while the runners-up in each category will be reimbursed for computer equipment purchases of up to $1,000.

The six categories in the Big Twelve Competition are:
- Category I – departments of 100,000 or more members
- Category II – departments of 70,000-99,999 members
- Category III – departments of 40,000-69,999 members
- Category IV – departments of 25,000-39,999 members
- Category V – departments of 10,000-24,999 members
- Category VI – departments of 9,999 or fewer members

Read more about the Big Twelve Competition by downloading the online National Membership Points Award Manual publication located under Internal Affairs.

GOLD AND SILVER BRIGADE

Legionnaires who recruit 50 or more new members (transfers do not count as new members) into The American Legion by the May target date qualify for The American Legion's Gold Brigade award.

First-time Gold Brigade members will receive a Gold Brigade patch, a special Gold Brigade cap pin, a Gold Brigade certificate, and a designer jacket or polo shirt or sweater with a Gold Brigade logo. Second time/repeat Gold Brigaders will receive a Gold Brigade patch and certificate, a hash mark for a jacket sleeve, and a designer jacket or polo shirt or sweater with a Gold Brigade logo. A Gold Brigader who has won the award for five consecutive years is eligible for a distinctive Gold Brigade blazer. And a Gold Brigader who has earned the award for at least six consecutive years or more is eligible for a $150 check and a Legion cap with the inscription “Master Recruiter.”

A Legionnaire who recruits 25-49 new members (transfers do not count as new members) into The American Legion by the May target date qualify for the Silver Brigade award.

Download the National Membership Points Award Manual: www.legion.org/publications

POST EXCELLENCE AWARD CONTINUES

The Post Excellence Award program honors posts that show excellence in membership participation, youth activities, community service, and support to veterans and U.S. troops.

Criteria
- Membership. Post membership must be at least one member more than the previous year. A post officer must attend district meetings.
- Youth activities. The post must sponsor and actively participate in at least one primary youth program: Boys State, Legion Baseball, Oratorical Contest, Boy Scouts of America or Junior Shooting Sports.
- Community service. The post must organize a community service project that involves members of the Legion, Auxiliary or Sons of The American Legion. A monetary donation may only be one part of a project.
- Service to troops or veterans. The post must organize a project supporting troops or veterans (for example, Family Support Network or Operation Comfort Warriors) that involves members of the Legion, Auxiliary or SAL outside the post. A monetary donation may only be one part of a project.

Certification. District commanders must certify posts as having fulfilled the four specified criteria, and submit a list of the post’s name, number, address and commander’s name to department headquarters. If possible, accompany with copies of press releases submitted to local media that raise awareness for the projects and enhance the Legion’s public image.

Awards. Each qualifying post, as well as district commanders whose districts have at least 50 percent of posts reach certification, will receive a certificate of recognition.

www.legion.org/commander/postexcellence
MILITARY RECOGNITION

Department of Washington honors members of the armed forces

For the past 15 years during national convention, The American Legion has presented the Spirit of Service Award to a representative from the five armed services in recognition of their exemplary efforts in volunteering in their local communities. Two years ago, the Department of Washington replicated the award in an effort to honor “outstanding military professionals” within the state of Washington.

The department notifies the five (Army, Marines, Navy, Air Force and Coast Guard) local military commands about its award and asks them to select a recipient for it. The chosen servicemembers must be active volunteers in their community and be an E-6 military rank or below.

The award recipients receive travel and lodging to the Department of Washington’s convention where they receive the Spirit of Service Award on stage by the state commander.

“The award has been met with enthusiasm and great success,” said Jake Cabuag, past department commander and chairman of the department’s Spirit of Service Award Committee. “Each command is very appreciative of The American Legion Department of Washington in recognizing their chosen enlisted person of the year for the Spirit of Service Award.”