



EVERY DEPARTMENT HAS A STORY

THE AMERICAN LEGION OF

TENNESSEE

The American Legion, the world's largest veterans service organization, was founded by World War I veterans in 1919 on the Four Pillars of Americanism, children and youth, veterans affairs and rehabilitation, and national security. There are 191 local American Legion posts, organized into 10 districts and three divisions. Today, the American Legion Department of Tennessee has a family of over 50,000, consisting of more than 33,000 Legionnaires, and 17,000 Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion members. A number of those 50,000 are also members of the Legion Riders program, for motorcycle enthusiasts to fundraise, provide honors at funerals and more.

Tennessee Legionnaires



Howard Baker spent 18 years in the U.S. Senate, was a White House chief of staff and presidential candidate, and spent time as ambassador to Japan. He received the Legion's Distinguished Public Service Award in 1984, the last year of his Senate term. He was a member of Scott County Post 136 in Oneida.



Desmond Doss, who earned a Medal of Honor during World War II for rescuing approximately 75 soldiers during the Battle of Okinawa, was a member of Summers-Whitehead Post 14 in Chattanooga. Post 257 in Collegedale honored him as its namesake.



Luke Lea was both a U.S. senator and a founder of The American Legion, who served as co-chair of the first Legion Legislative Committee and helped the organization get its federal charter. He attended the first U.S. Legion organizational caucus in St. Louis. He was an initial member of Post 5 in Nashville, founded in 1919.

The hero of Pall Mall and the Legion

Tennessee's Alvin York, the most celebrated soldier of World War I, was also an early member of The American Legion. He attended an organizational meeting in Paris in 1919, and helped found Mark Twain Post 137 in nearby Jamestown, which got its charter in 1926.

And as York supported the Legion, the Legion supported him. Part of his massive number of speaking engagements on the importance of education involved addressing Legion conventions. The Department of Tennessee passed a resolution concerning the Pall Mall school York was attempting to stand up, recommending that local posts contribute funds to "establish this much needed institution." The department also vowed to assist with state cooperation and assistance, and gave money on its own.



The new **Tennessee State Veterans Cemetery** in Parkers Crossroads is estimated to have 5-7 funerals each day. Funeral honors will be performed by an honor guard from a new American Legion post, Post 286 of Parkers Crossroads.



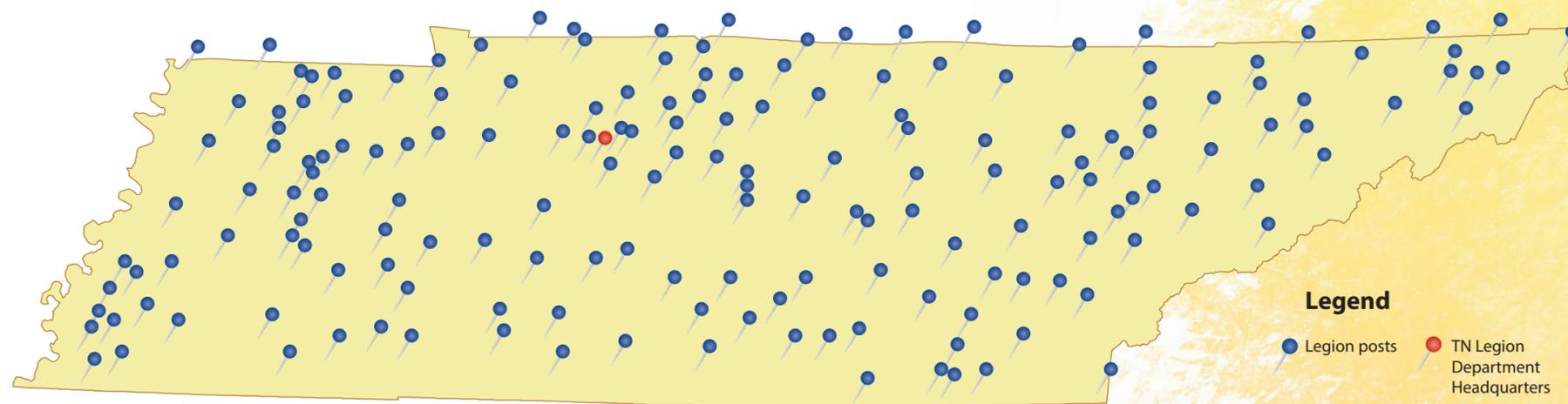
■ **Post 4 in Livingston** makes its home in a World War II-era Quonset hut that is on the state and national registers of historic places.

■ **Post 19 in Columbia** has a restored M41A3 Walker Bulldog tank outside its post home.

■ **Post 34 in Waverly** is located in a former Presbyterian church; the post bought the building in 1934 from the church, which moved across the street.

■ Former **U.S. Sen. Lamar Alexander** attended Tennessee Boys State.

■ The uniform cap worn by Legionnaires in the Department of Tennessee features an image of **Andrew Jackson**. He was chosen because of his stature as a president of the United States – and because they couldn't get permission to feature Elvis Presley.



1920

Post 78 in Manchester is established. They name the post after the Gold Star Mothers of Coffee County.

Gold Star Post 78

1925

When 168 acres near Pressmen's Home is donated for a children's home or trade school, the department donates funds for building construction.

1932

Tennessee Legionnaires secure 4,000 jobs for the unemployed.



1937

Both the department and posts render assistance and relief in the major floods of the Ohio, Tennessee and Mississippi rivers.

1942

Roane Waring is elected national commander of The American Legion, the only Tennessean to hold that office. He was also the department's first commander.



1955

The predecessor of today's Post 73 in Erin builds a roller skating rink for area children in the old high school gym.



FUN FOR A GOOD CAUSE

Since 2011, the Department of Tennessee has used a unique way to raise funds and bring together the entire Legion Family during the department's meetings. The weekend is opened with a bowling tournament open to bowlers of all ages and abilities.

The formation of the Tennessee American Legion Bowling League Rules and Fines Team, made up of Legionnaire, came about to raise funds for the national American Legion commander's project each year.

The team creates rules that Department Adjutant Dean Tuttle says "randomly pop into their heads. They have no guidelines or bylaws to follow. They just do it. The rules and fines are haphazardly done and, again, for fun."

Those who violate the rules are fined. Some of the rules broken over the years include having a birthday, wearing a Legion cap, not wearing a Legion cap, being too quiet or talking too much, throwing a gutter ball, coming to the tournament late (the department is known to have published multiple start times) and not cheering for your team.

All Legion Family members and spectators are subject to the rules and fines. But that hasn't scared the crowd off. Tuttle says that since the initial tournament in 2011, the spectator gallery has more than doubled.



Traditions of youth excellence

The care and development of children and youth in the United States – the next generation of citizens and servicemembers – is one of the four pillars of service that The American Legion was founded on in 1919. To that end, the Department of Tennessee conducts several programs, many offshoots of national Legion programs, intended to help mold responsible leaders for tomorrow.

American Legion Baseball, a national mainstay of youth sports since 1925, includes 16 teams in Tennessee. A significant number of today's professional players and members of the Baseball Hall of Fame played Legion ball. The Post 1 team in Memphis won the national American Legion Baseball World Series in 1968, and was runner-up in 1963, 1972 and 1973. The Post 19 team in Columbia won the World Series in 2007.

Tennessee Boys State is the department's version of a national Legion program instituted in 1935 to promote an understanding of, and appreciation for, representative democracy. As the department puts it, their program is "designed to help youth gain an understanding of the structure and operations of state government, and to impress the importance of teamwork." Each year, an average of 620 high school juniors from across the state spend a week at Tennessee Tech University in Cookeville, forming and

maintaining a mock government. Two participants are chosen to attend Boys Nation in Washington, D.C., with their counterparts from other states, to learn the workings of national government; in 2016, Anighya Crocker of Springfield was elected president. The Tennessee American Legion Auxiliary runs a similar program for girls.

The American Legion Oratorical Contest – a speech contest where high schoolers talk about selected topics related to the U.S. Constitution, to promote a deeper understanding of it – is conducted at both the department level and the national, where the state winners compete to crown a national champion. It has happened for Tennesseans three times: Albert P. Smith Jr. of Hendersonville in 1942, Daniel A. Duckworth of Cleveland in 1956, and Nicholas Elledge of Knoxville in 2006. \$7,000 in scholarships is given each year at the department level alone.

Local posts throughout the state sponsor Boy Scout units, and each year the department presents an award and \$1,500 scholarship to the Eagle Scout of the Year. That name is submitted to National Headquarters for consideration for the national award; Scott Moore Jr. of Clarksville won in 2017.

The department also awards a yearly \$3,000 scholarship to a Junior ROTC cadet.

Did you know?

Country music star Johnny Cash was a member of the former Ray Cash Memorial Post 245 in Hendersonville, which was named for his father. The revitalized post now has the number 290.

Post-9/11 TN LEGION

Serving one's country in the armed forces means sacrifice, putting others in the nation ahead of one's self. Being ready to be placed in harm's way, regardless of personal or political thoughts, feelings or leanings is part of what is required. Being a part of The American Legion, like the military, is also a form of service we Legionnaires volunteer for. The fact that those in the military don't have a voice politically means it's up to us in The American Legion to be their voice. They stand up for us, and we stand up for them.



Todd McKinley, adjutant (administrative head) of Hammond Post 3 in Kingsport. McKinley's 20 years in the Army Signal Corps (1996-2016) took him to active duty in Iraq, Afghanistan and more. A 10-year member of The American Legion, he plans to pursue elected offices on the post and district levels.

- Except for two years during World War II, Post 2 in Knoxville has sponsored the city's annual Veterans Day Parade since 1921.
- Post 77 in Lexington works with the community to plant a massive field of flags each November that flies during the entire month.
- In 1981, three Tennessee posts – Post 88 in Donelson, Post 5 in Nashville and Post 3 in Kingsport – boasted more than 2,000 members each.
- Forty posts founded initially founded between the spring 1919 formation of The American Legion and late 1920 are still in operation today.
- In 1938, the Sons of The American Legion squadron attached to Post 90 in Jackson included as members nine brothers from the Lawson family of McMinnville.
- In the run-up to U.S. entry into World War II, Gov. Prentice Cooper put a Legionnaire on each of the state's 133 draft boards; 360,000 young men of draft age were enrolled in one day.
- During World War II, Sons members collected scrap metal for the war effort.

Contact The American Legion of Tennessee

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Join The American Legion

www.legion.org/join

1965



The entire Tennessee delegation to Washington (two senators and nine representatives) are Legionnaires.

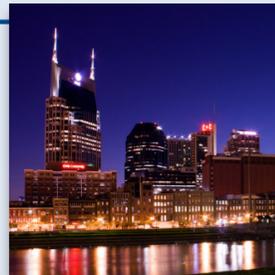
1966

The department receives the national Legion Daniel J. O'Connor Americanism Trophy.

1987

The department receives the national Legion William F. Lenker National Service Trophy for excelling in welfare and rehabilitation work for war veterans and their dependents.

2004



Nashville plays host to the Legion's national convention.

2009

The department Legion Family sends 16 webcam-equipped laptops to soldiers in Afghanistan, to enable them to communicate with their loved ones.

2011



Country music artist and Nashville resident Michael Peterson receives the Legion's National Education Award in recognition of several years of support for Legion scholarship programs.

2013

The department receives the national Legion O.L. Bodenhamer Trophy for membership.