

Mandarin Post 372

WE ARE THE HEARTBEAT OF OUR COMMUNITY

Department of Florida Commander Steve Shuga visits Post 372



From l to r: Post 372 Past Commander Franklin Hunt, Legionnaire Ian Keane, Vice Commander Don Severns, Adjutant Sheri Rodriguez, Commander Alan Painter, Department of Florida Commander Steve Shuga, 5th District Commander Troy Horsley, Post 372 Finance Officer George Comeaux, 5th District Adjutant Sonny Kirkwood, Department of Florida 3rd Vice Commander Jerry Brandt.

Commander Shuga visited Post 372 on November 20th during his week-long visit to the Mighty 5th District.

Sons of the American Legion

Joe Maltese, Commander

Fallen Heroes Post 372 is happy to report that Squadron 372 is growing in membership and looking forward to their first meeting on the January 25th at 7pm. We will have a meet and greet prior to the meeting at 6:30pm.

The "Sons" have a membership of greater than 370,000 nationwide. Founded in 1932, Sons of The American Legion exists to honor the service and sacrifice of a veteran parent. S.A.L. members include males of all ages whose parents, grandparents, or step parents served in the U.S. military and were eligible for American Legion membership. In Florida, the 17,000+ Sons of The American Legion is active in supporting: Special Olympics Florida, Child Welfare Foundation, Child Organ Transplant Association (COTA), all children's hospitals, PROJECT: VetRelief,

See Sons, continued on page 2

Auxiliary, Unit 372

Sheri Rodriguez, Acting President

We've had a bit of turnover since our inaugural meeting. Our President relocated to another state and other members have transferred so we only have seven members at this time. We must have ten active members to remain a viable Unit.

The newly formed Riders Chapter has brought in new members and this is how our new President, June Crawford was recruited. June is highly energetic and excited to begin building an active Unit that will support The American Legion and honor the sacrifices of those who served by enhancing the lives of our veterans, military, and their families.

If you are interested in joining Unit 372 and helping Veterans in your community, please email Auxiliary_Post372@yahoo.com.

American Legion Riders

Joe Maltese, Director

Mandarin Fallen Heroes Post 372's newly formed American Legion Riders Chapter 372 is growing rapidly. We anticipate having our first meeting and Ride at 10:00am on Sunday, January 7th.

The 2nd Annual Florida Department ALR Summit is scheduled the weekend of January 19th through January 21st in Cocoa Beach. We plan to leave the Elks Lodge the evening of January 18th to arrive in Cocoa Beach at approximately 8:00pm.

Please be packed, fueled and ready for kickstands up by NLT 1730hrs. Please see our Post 372 webpage www.mandarinpost372.org under the Rider tab for links to register and make reservations.

Remember, all Legion, Auxiliary, and

See Riders, continued on page 5

Welcome to our Newest Members

Post 372 is growing by leaps and bounds! As of December 31st, we are 121.36% to goal. Please welcome our newest members.

Steve Avchin, Navy,	Shieryl Lahey, Navy
Eric Barnes, Navy	Kenneth Lebel, Air Force
Anthony Castilho, Army	Robert Nay, Army
Max Crocker, Air Force	James Snellen, Navy
Dennis Brown, Army	James Snyder, Navy
John Culley, Army	Howard Stein, Air Force
James Davey, Army	Steve Sullivan, Navy
Clifford Dozier, Army	Billy Swindler, Air Force
Joy Goff, Air Force	Neill Thaggard, Air Force
Michael Hazelip, Coast Guard	Theresa Thaggard, Air Force
Thomas Hopper, Army	Richard Tuten, Army
Ian Keane, Coast Guard	Rudolph Urban, Army
Eugene Kivett, Navy	Richard Wallace, Air Force

Naugle

Funeral Home & Cremation Services

The staff members of Naugle Funeral Home and Cremation Services will guide your family in creating a meaningful ceremony to honor the life and memory of a loved one.

<http://www.nauglefuneral.com>
San Marco (904) 396-1611 Riverside (904) 683-9288

Post Sponsor

Commander's Corner

Alan Painter

It is hard to believe that I have already been the Commander of Post 372 for 6 months. We have accomplished a lot and I am super excited about the next 6 months and what we can accomplish as a team. There is a lot to do. Our membership is growing, and we are focused on making sure that everyone is made to feel welcomed and needed. Our members are the heartbeat of the Post and we should never lose sight of that.

Another area of focus for this year is to build a foundation that is built on a rock, not sand. In order to someday have our own post we must continue to lay the foundation of programs and procedures that are clearly defined and can be passed to the next Command in a duplicatable fashion. Our branding committee is working on defining and finetuning who we are as a post and the direction we are heading.

As we continue to grow and add members and programs like the Sons of the Legion and the Legion Riders it is extremely important that we keep our Spirit of Comradeship and keep focused on our purpose. Our purpose is to promote the American Legion's Spirit of helpfulness to our fallen soldiers' families and to provide a place for those that are still alive and on active duty to have a place to continue to serve their Country and their community in such a way that we will continue promote

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Sons, continued from page 1

The American Legion Scholarship Fund, Fisher House, and many other Legion programs as assigned by their sponsoring post.

Since 1988, the S.A.L. has raised more than \$16 million for The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation, S.A.L. members have volunteered over 320,000 hours at veterans' hospitals and have raised over \$1,000,000 for VA hospitals and VA homes nationally.

Our 2018 goal for Squadron 372 is to grow our membership to 40 members and begin getting our SAL members involved in assisting our post with post branding, oratorical program, and any other activities with which the post requires assistance. Additionally, we will work on beginning a SAL color guard squad.

We appreciate our post and SAL members helping to build Squadron 372. All sons, step-sons, grandsons, etc. of any age are eligible for membership in the Sons of The American Legion. Can you think of a better way to get our young men acquainted with the principles of Americanism and service?

If you have questions or a nominee for membership, please contact Joe Maltese at (904) 434-2901, or email: sonsofthelegionsquadron372@gmail.com

Oratorical Competition

Arthur Bides

Greetings Fellow Legionnaires, my name is Arthur Bides and I will be the Chairman for the 2018 Oratorical Competition. I am honored to lead a very worthwhile event that gives young students the opportunity to develop a deeper knowledge and appreciation for the U.S. Constitution.

Since 1938, the program has presented participants with an academic speaking challenge that teaches important leadership qualities, the history of our nation's laws, the ability to think and speak clearly, and an understanding of the duties, responsibilities, rights and privileges of American citizenship. Young orators earn some of the most generous college scholarships available to high school students. Over \$138,000 in scholarships can be awarded each year.

The 2017-18 Post 372 Oratorical Competition will be held Saturday, January 20th from 1 PM to 4 PM at the Northeast Florida Conservatory, 11363 San Jose Blvd, Bldg 200, Jacksonville, FL 32223.

We are looking for volunteers to be: Timekeepers (2),

See Oratorical, page 3

Vice Commander's Note

Don Severns

We have reached our goal of over 100% membership way ahead of schedule. We were able to do this through membership renewals, transfers from Post 400 (Florida's Virtual Post) and the American Legion Project Stay Active list. This is awesome, and our Post should be proud.

I am frequently asked "When will we have our own Post?". In my mind there are certain milestones that we have to achieve. These are:

- Membership - about 300 total;
- Active Membership - about 60 people. These are the people actively participating in the life of the Post; and
- Money - \$50,000 is the recommended amount to have in the bank

We are making progress in all 3 areas, but it ultimately will be decided by the Post membership!



Commander Painter hangs Post 372's 100% Membership Ribbon for 2017-18

Officers & Executive Board

Alan Painter, *Commander*
 Don Severns, *Vice Commander*
 Sheri Rodriguez, *Adjutant*
 Dr. Buck O'Connors, *Chaplain*
 Historian, *vacant*
 George Comeaux, *Finance Officer*
 Dan Hemsall, *Judge Advocate*
 Brian Lawn, *Sergeant-at-Arms*
 Barry Litsky, *Service Officer*
 Sheri Rodriguez, *Service Officer*

Executive Committee

Franklin Hunt, *Past Commander*
 Jim Hughes, *At-Large*
 Frank Nichols, *At-Large*
 Sheri Rodriguez, *At-Large*
 Steve Sullivan, *At-Large*

Programs & Committees

Americanism, *Dan Hemsall*
 Blood Drive, *Brian Lawn*
 Branding Committee, *Frank Nichols*
 Boys' State, *Tom Schneider*
 Canceled Stamp Program, *Marty Kaufman*
 Children & Youth, *vacant*
 Executive Board, *Alan Painter*
 Flag Education, *Alan Painter*
 Law & Order Awards, *Barry Litsky*
 Meals, *Sheri Rodriguez*
 Oratorical, *Arthur Bides*
 PROJECT: Vet Relief, *Sheri Rodriguez*
 School Medals, *Alan Painter*
 Social Media, *Don Severns*
 Teacher of the Year Award, *Sheri Rodriguez*
 Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, *Service Officers*

New Executive Board Members

Please welcome Steve Sullivan and Jim Hughes to the Executive Board as At-Large members.

Steve served in the Navy and has been a member of the American Legion for a year and is eager to make a difference by joining the Board to help shape our Post's future.

Jim Hughes served in the Navy and has been a member of the American Legion for six years. He has served as Post 372's Chair of both the JROTC and Junior Shooters Committees.

If you interested in joining the Executive Board, please contact the Adjutant at Adjutant@MandarinPost372.org.

Oratorical, continued from page 2

Tabulators (1), Escorts (2), and Chaplain (1).

Last year, Post 372's candidate, Logan Smith, went on to win Third Place at the District-level competition.



From l to r: 2016-17 Oratorical Chair Dr. Buck O'Connor, Post 372 Winner Logan Smith, Post 372 Past Commander Myra Jowers

Please contact me at artbides@gmail.com or (904) 580-0899 if you are interested in volunteering to support local high school students.

News from Your Service Officers

Decision Ready Claims

www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/drc.asp

What is the Decision Ready Claim (DRC) Program?

The DRC Program allows you to submit VA compensation claims that are decision-ready so you can get your claim processed as fast as possible.

To submit a DRC, you must:

- Appoint and work with an accredited Veterans Service Organization (VSO),
- Gather all relevant and required evidence to support your claim, and
- Attend a VA claim exam, if needed, before submitting your claim.

When you work with an accredited VSO and provide all the necessary evidence with your application, you can get a decision on your claim in 30 days or less.

How do I find an accredited VSO?

Accredited VSOs are fully trained on the DRC Program and can help you determine if a DRC is right for you. To find an accredited VSO near you, go to the eBenefits page: www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/vso-search.

Currently, the DRC Program is available for the following types of compensation claims:

- **Direct Service Connection Claims:** Claims for conditions that began during your military service or were caused by an event while serving.
- **Presumptive Service Connection Claims:** Claims for conditions that are presumed to have been caused by an event during your military service, even if there is no specific evidence showing a connection between your condition and your military service in your service records. This includes conditions related to Agent Orange, chronic disabilities, and the following conditions tied to service during the Gulf War:
 - fibromyalgia,
 - chronic fatigue syndrome, and
 - functional gastrointestinal disorders.
- **Secondary Service Connection Claims:** Claims for conditions that were caused or aggravated by a service-connected disability.
- **Increased Disability Claims:** Claims for existing service-connected conditions that you have medical evidence to show have gotten worse.
- **Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) Claims:** Claims for surviving spouses of Veterans whose death resulted from a service-related injury or disease or who was rated 100% disabled due to service-connected conditions (including entitlement to Individual Unemployability) for 10 years prior to their death.

See DRC, continued on page 5

Vets May Now Be Able To Get Higher Disability Ratings For Service-Connected Injuries

Adam Linehan, taskandpurpose.com

The U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims issued a decision last month that could make it easier for veterans with injuries to the back, neck, and joints to obtain higher disability ratings, even in cases where veterans are already receiving disability benefits for such injuries.

The recent case, called *Sharp v. Shulkin*, reviewed the Department of Veterans Affairs' current system for assessing the origin and extent of a veteran's disability and clarified the responsibilities of Compensation and Pension examiners and the Board of Veterans Appeals when it comes to giving an opinion on pain flare-ups caused by musculoskeletal disabilities. The court ultimately ruled that the system was inadequate, because not all C&P examiners consider flare-ups and pain when determining what disability rating a veteran should receive.

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So, if a C&P examiner doesn't witness the flare-up, how can they form a non-speculative opinion about it? As Military 1 reported, the court decided that veterans themselves can submit evidence for consideration, such as their own description of the flare-ups and pain they experience, or "buddy statements" – written statements from people who know the veteran and can testify to the extent of their suffering.

All of which will make it a lot easier for veterans to secure higher disability ratings for injuries they sustained in the military. Meanwhile, the *Sharp v. Shulkin* case, which ruled that Sharp was entitled to another C&P assessment consistent with the new guidelines set by the court provides a precedent for other veterans who want to challenge their disability ratings. If you think this applies to your case, then we recommend you reach out to a veteran service officer to help you navigate the appeals process.

DRC, *continued from Page 4*

- **Pre-Discharge Claims:** Claims for disability compensation filed by Servicemembers who have less than 90 days remaining before their separation from military service.

To file a DRC, you must have previously filed a VA claim and received a rating decision from VA on that claim (this does not include DIC and Pre-Discharge claims).

How do I file a Decision Ready Claim?

Gather all relevant and required evidence to support your claim, including federal and medical records and completed Disability Benefits Questionnaires (DBQs).

As part of the DRC Program, your VSO can also request a claim exam for you, if needed. You will then work with a VA partner to quickly schedule an exam at a time that works best for you. The results of your exam can then be included along with your application.

Your VSO will check to make sure all of the necessary information is included and help you electronically submit your claim to VA. Giving VA all the relevant evidence when you submit your DRC allows your claim to go directly to a VA Rating Specialist for a decision.

Am I eligible to file a claim through the DRC Program?

To file a DRC, you must have previously filed a VA claim and received a rating decision from VA on that claim.

Exclusions

For a list of DRC exclusions, please go to:
www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/drc.asp

Pre-Discharge DRCs

Your Pre-Discharge claim will be disqualified from the DRC Program if you are:

- A Servicemember participating in the Benefits Delivery at Discharge (BDD) Program
- A Servicemember participating in the Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES) Program
- Filing a claim with 90 days or more remaining on active duty

DIC Decision Ready Claims

Your DIC claim will be disqualified from the DRC Program if you are:

- Filing a claim for Parents Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)
- Filing a burial claim (unless it's submitted with a DRC-eligible DIC claim)

Where can I get more information?

Have more questions? Reach out to your local VSO or call the VA toll-free number at 1-800-827-1000.

Corner, *continued from Page 2*

the American Values that this country was founded on.

I want to thank everyone for all that you do and for those that can, I want to encourage you to do even more over the next six months to make this an even better year. We are making a difference in our community, in our state and in our Country. Well Done!

Riders, *continued from Page 1*

SAL motorcycle owners in good standing are eligible for membership in the American Legion Riders. If you know someone interested in becoming a Legion Rider, don't miss the opportunity to recruit them to the Legion, SAL, or Auxiliary!

Some of the ways the Legion Riders support our community is by:

- Participation in the annual POW/MIA Rally held each Memorial weekend in Washington D.C. known as "Rolling Thunder".
- Sponsoring or participating in local Charity events and providing Community Service.
- Raising money for such organizations as local VA Hospitals, Battered Women and Children's Center, Varied Children and Youth programs, a School for Blind Children, Veterans Relief, Needy families and many, many others.
- Sponsoring or participating in motorcycle "Runs" to benefit numerous charities, including charities for underprivileged children and medical research, just to name a few.
- Participation in memorial ceremonies and community parades.

The Legion Riders program is a great tool to use for legion branding by providing exposure in our local community through the ALR events and programs.

For questions or to join the Legion Riders, call Joe Maltese at (904) 434-2901 or email: joeroadglide1@gmail.com.

Mandarin/St. Johns Elks Lodge #2866

4280 Oldfield Crossing Drive
Jacksonville, FL 32223
Office - 904-268-4974
Exalted Ruler - Donna Royall

<https://www.elks.org/lodges/home.cfm?LodgeNumber=2866>

**Post
Sponsor**

Post Boosters

David Hague, Navy
Myra Jowers, Past Commander, USAF
Carl Jowers, Past Adjutant, Navy
Don Severns, Marines

Recruiting Incentive Program

Did you know that you have a chance to win \$25 or \$50 from Post 372?

If you recruit at least one new member, you are entered into a drawing to win \$25. If you recruit five new members, you are entered into a drawing to win \$50. All drawings are done quarterly, and we want to congratulate **Terry Lahey** for winning \$25 at our December 14th meeting.



Vice Commander Don Severns awarding Terry Lahey \$25 for winning the quarterly drawing

American Legion Basic Training

The American Legion's Extension Institute Course is now called, "Basic Training" and is free to Legion and SAL members in good standing. It is the American Legion's official training program for officers, members, Legion College applicants, and for those who simply want to expand their knowledge of the nation's largest veterans service organization. The new and improved course is now available online.

At the December 14th meeting, we held the drawing for a 43" Vizio HDTV. The "cost" to enter was a completion certificate from the course. To date, twelve members have taken the new course. Congrats to Don Severns for having the lucky ticket!



Commander Alan Painter awarding Don Severns the 43" Vizio HDTV

Contact Post 372

Phone: (904) 297-8344
Email: Adjutant@MandarinPost372.org
Website: www.MandarinPost372.org

Auxiliary: Auxiliary_Post372@yahoo.com
SAL: sonsofthelegionsquadron372@gmail.com
Riders: joeroadglide1@gmail.com

Mailing Address - For all Programs

American Legion Mandarin Post 372
Attn: *Whichever program you are writing*
11250-15 Old St. Augustine Rd, PMB #138
Jacksonville, FL 32257

Location

Mandarin St. Johns Elks Lodge #2866
4280 Oldfield Crossing Drive
Jacksonville, Florida 32223*

*If you rely on your phone for directions, it will bring you to an apartment complex. For accurate directions and a map, go to: www.mandarinpost372.org/directions-to-post-372

Meetings

Legion:

Executive Board

Tuesday before General Meeting
12443 San Jose Blvd #104, Jacksonville, FL 32223

General Meetings

2nd Thursday of each month
Mandarin St. Johns Elks Lodge #2866
4280 Oldfield Crossing Drive
Jacksonville, Florida 32223

6:00pm social hour with light refreshments

7:00pm Meeting

Sons of the American Legion:

General Meetings

Fourth Tuesday of each month.
Mandarin St. Johns Elks Lodge #2866
4280 Oldfield Crossing Drive
Jacksonville, Florida 32223

6:30pm Meet and Greet

7:00pm Meeting

Vice Commander & Service Officer Office Hours

Tuesdays, 4:30 - 6:00pm - Service Officer not available
1st Tuesday of each month.

Upcoming Events

Executive Board Meeting, Tuesday, January 9th 6:00pm

General Meeting, Thursday, January 11th 7:00pm

Sons of the American Legion, Thursday, January 25th at 7:00pm

2018 Florida Legion Riders Summit, January 17th-21st

Hot Dog Giveaway, Monday, February 19th 11:00am-2:00pm

Information about events is available online under their respective programs at: www.MandarinPost372.org.