



Sons of the American Legion
Veteran's Memorial Squadron #347
Annual Report— June 20, 2018
Commander George Worton

I quote from Squadron #347 By-Laws in Article III Duties of Officers, Section #2 Duties of the Squadron Commander, "He shall act as Chief Executive Officer of the Squadron and file an annual report reviewing the past year's Squadron business and make recommendations for the coming year."

The following is my Annual Report to you, our Membership. I complete this report to the best of my knowledge of Squadron business for the fiscal year July 1, 2017 up to today. I will break this report down into brief summaries of the major areas of responsibility and concern.

Membership: Our Squadron achieved 100% membership in mid-January, 2018, well ahead of Detachment expectations. We are currently at 652 members, up from the previous year's total of 588. Our budgeting goal was 618, so we greatly exceeded that expectation. We gained 125 new and transfer members. Unfortunately, we have not renewed ~60 members from 2016-2017. For the coming year there needs to be a focus on member retention that I hope can be achieved through better new and transfer member orientation and inclusion, as well as the scheduling and conduct of at least one New Member Initiation Ceremony.

Kitchen: I felt a discussion of the kitchen is required since the majority of our charitable donation funds come from the dedicated work completed by our kitchen volunteers. We lost NFL Sunday due to the Post's decision to discontinue it. We replaced that with a new Sunday Bar Bingo in conjunction with the Auxiliary. This has turned out to be relatively successful and nearly made up for our loss of NFL Sunday. We now have Monday Burger Night, Thursday Italian Night, and Sunday Bar Bingo. Dave Callies on Mondays, George Worton and Angelo Speziale on Thursdays, and Matthew Duncan on Sundays lead a cadre of volunteers to bring high quality, reasonably priced, and satisfying food service to the 347 Legion Family on these days. Bernie Harchar stepped-up to coordinate our kitchen volunteer team and that has resulted in a huge increase, probably double, in those choosing to volunteer. During this year we recorded at least 83 individuals who decided to volunteer one or more evenings in the kitchen/lounge! These wonderful and reliable volunteers would welcome additional support from our members, and Bernie will continue to reach out to find willing members. With careful analysis, we've improved the kitchen ordering process, secured alternating weekly leadership, provided set and easy to follow recipes and procedures for operating the kitchen. A Committee was established to review food costs and menu item pricing. This COGS committee has achieved reasonable success so far and our 2018 YTD COGS is running 43%. This is good so far, and there will be more improvements to come. Please consider joining the kitchen staff for one night a month, or that occasional 5th night that pops up. Please respond to Bernie so he can keep the schedule accurate and to advise when you have conflicts, so he can ask for help to keep operations running smoothly!



Finance: Danny Adams has worked diligently with Ken DeMello in Post Finance Office and to align Squadron finance and accounting activities with Post procedures, and with generally accepted accounting principles. Danny continues to work with Ken and utilize our QuickBooks software for reporting and tracking. Additional requirements have been placed upon us when requesting checks or petty cash, but these changes coincide with Post Finance recommendations. With less than one month still to report on we have a YTD net income before donations for 2017-2018 of \$32,000. This compares with \$29,000 from last fiscal year. The major impacts this year were loss of NFL Sundays and loss of several weeks kitchen sales due to hurricane Irma.

Administration: Squadron Adjutant Doug White continues to update and enhance the website for Squadron #347. If you have not reviewed our new website, you should do so <<http://florida-legion.com/sons>>. Doug also continued to improve email address accuracy for members and we now use email for effective communications 2-3 times each month. Please help by keeping Doug current with email, address, and telephone information so we can be even more effective in the future!

Americanism: In keeping with Sons' core values, Squadron #347 accomplished much in this area. Once again we sponsored one young man from the Post's selection process to Boy's State. This sponsorship costs \$500. The Squadron gave 40 small flags away to new initiates, along with a flag etiquette manual. Many members of our Squadron assisted in refurbishing, placing, and removing ~140,000 small flags for the Florida National Cemetery in Bushnell. Our Squadron has again awarded \$8,000 in college scholarships to students at Lake Weir and Belleview High Schools. We provided \$1,100 in funding and meals to the Junior ROTC of Lake Weir High School. Our Squadron sponsored local Scout troop #244 for \$500. Both the JROTC and the Boy Scouts presented colors for us with their respective Color Guard teams at some of our monthly meetings. Our members reported 29 pints of blood donated, and Danny Adams organized a monthly blood drive associated with the Post's Saturday breakfasts. We provided \$750 each to the food pantries at Village View and St Theresa's. Finally our members volunteered a massive 18,863 hours of their time to help our many sponsored Veterans and community causes! This is a 35% increase over last year's volunteer hours. However, I am sure our members contributed even more to our communities than we reported.

Community Service: Members of the Squadron participated in and raised money for The MS Society that resulted in a donation of more than \$1,400 to the MS Walk. 4 Squadron members and one member of the Auxiliary solicited donations and "Walked the Walk" to raise money to help the treatment and research to battle this disease.

Children & Youth: In this area our Squadron provided \$2,000 to the Child Welfare Foundation. We donated \$3,005 to Special Olympics in the tri-county area. We donated \$500 to the Legacy Scholarship Fund. In addition, we hosted a Children & Youth Golf Tournament at the Harbor Hills Country Club that netted \$3600 split between the Child Welfare Foundation and Special Olympics, and cooked & served a post-game meal at the Post hall. We also cooked and served two entrees at the Lake Weir HS JROTC annual Cadet Ball for over 500 attendees that was much appreciated by everyone there.



Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation: Squadron members conducted wellness visits to ailing veterans, wrapped and delivered Christmas gifts to the Gainesville VA Hospital, and hosted monthly coffee and donuts at the local Villages VA Clinic. Our donations were valued at over \$12,000 and included 252 volunteer hours; and thanks to Summerfield WalMart for their generosity by heavily discounting the food costs for us. We donated \$2,500 to Gainesville Fisher House, \$2,500 to Habitat for Humanity earmarked for Veterans Village, \$1,000 to Operation Shoebox, and \$1,000 to Combat Veterans to Careers.

Entertainment & Activities: As 2nd Vice Commander, David Booth helped to further our support for Veterans and our 347 Legion Family as our Squadron ran several events during the year both to provide a social outlet for our Family membership as well as an effort to raise donation funds. Mike Hicks continued his successful running of the Valentine's Day Dance. Richard Duncan coordinated the Halloween Dance. Gary Blanchard organized two Crab Races. Finally, our inaugural Casino Night event on June 8 was a huge success. The Squadron can improve these events by improved advance advertising and better handling of tickets. The crab race events didn't end up drawing continued crowds, so we've decided to end that for now.

This, That, and Other: A few miscellaneous comments to conclude my report. Other officers not specifically mentioned provided steady support throughout the year. I recommend that the incoming Commander name and announce to the membership all known committee chairmen in July, so that interested members can contact chairmen directly and build their committees. Attendance at monthly General Membership meetings needs to increase, we experimented with pre-meeting pizza and that may have helped a tiny amount. We got an average of 27 members attending our monthly General Membership meetings this year, not a great showing for a 650 member organization. On a related topic, general volunteer participation levels increased tremendously this year and we need to continue that trend with the help of Bernie Harchar and others reaching out to members for their help. We have fun in the kitchen and at our events! Come and see for yourself. And finally, I am sure our new Commander and other Officers will welcome other recommendations you may have and are willing to bring forward. Bring ideas and a willingness to execute them. This year we've made some beginning strides in working with our fellow Post family members: The Legion, the Auxiliary, and the Riders. Please do your part in having open, unbiased, and respectful conversation with all of our Family members and amongst our own members. Mutual cooperation will undoubtedly increase our success in helping Veterans, their families, and our Community and Youth.

In Closing: Squadron #347 has had a very successful year. Your efforts resulted in donations of nearly \$32,000. Many positive changes have occurred across our organization and our future looks bright. You should be very proud of your accomplishments and proud of your organization. Thank you for all you have done and all you will do in the future for The Sons of The American Legion Veteran's Memorial Squadron #347.

Respectfully Submitted: June 20, 2018,



Yours in God and Country,
George Worton
Commander, Squadron #347

cc: Al Varrone, Commander, American Legion Post #347