

**JANUARY 2026**  
**ISSUE NUMBER 3**

**Wreaths by Nicole**

**Commandant's  
Message**

**Spotlight  
Series**



# **Boots Across Texas**

**Forged by the Corps! Hardened by Texas!**



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# Boots Across Texas

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## From the Editor

As we step into a brand-new year, we do so with gratitude, pride, and a renewed sense of purpose. Boots Across Texas continues to stand strong because of the people who believe in the mission—our supporters, partners, volunteers, and the communities we serve across this great state.

The new year brings fresh opportunities to grow, give back, and strengthen the connections that make Texas special. Whether through service, outreach, or simply showing up for one another, every step we take together leaves a lasting footprint. This year, we look forward to expanding our reach, creating meaningful impact, and continuing to honor the values that define Boots Across Texas: commitment, compassion, and community.

Thank you for walking this journey with us. Your support fuels everything we do, and we're excited for what lies ahead. Here's to a year filled with purpose, progress, and boots firmly planted in Texas soil. Wishing you a safe, successful, and inspiring new year.

*German C Garza*  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Semper Fidelis,  
German C. Garza  
Boots Across Texas  
Editor-in-Chief



# Boots Across Texas

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Hello all and Happy New Year,



Tony Poletti  
34th Dept Commandant



As 2025 comes to an end, let us reflect on some of the Department achievements that include the various 250th anniversary activities related to our beloved Marine Corps. Various individuals and detachments were involved in the planning and execution cycle that produced numerous events to include a very successful 2025 National Convention. We were all busy with Cake Cutting ceremonies and Marine Corps Balls throughout Texas. The centerpiece event was the cake cutting ceremony in the Rotunda of the State Capital hosted by Governor Abbott. In addition to, the Memorial Herman Hospital in Katy Texas, the Harris County Proclamation from the Commissioners Court of Houston, numerous Detachments, JROTC units, Young Marine Units, Reserve Centers across Texas to say a few. Numerous Birthday Balls in Collin County, Galveston, San Antonio, and other cities. Finally, I say thank you to the thousands who attended and participated and those Detachments that made all this happen.

Now we begin another New Year which means new opportunities for the Members, Detachments, and the Department to excel. It allows us to reset our detachment compass by reviewing the primary resource document the 2025 published National/Dept Conventions Bylaws and Administrative Procedures to update your Detachment Bylaws and or Administrative Procedures. Email them to the Department Judge Advocate for compliance and approval.

In addition, it allows us to review our philanthropy objectives as we look beyond the traditional supporting nonleague agencies and look within the League. The subsidiary organization known as the Marine Corps League Auxiliary has numerous programs that help our local communities such as "Operation Little Angels". In addition, there are other great programs such as local JROTC units, Youth Physical Fitness Program, Young Marines, the Marine Corps League Foundations, and other opportunities can be researched by visiting the National Library and Dept of Tx weblinks.

*Tony*

# Detachment Spotlight



The Heart of Texas Detachment #975 of the Marine Corps League is a proud and active veteran service organization based in Waco, Texas. Like all Marine Corps League detachments, its core mission is to preserve the traditions and promote the interests of the United States Marine Corps, foster fellowship among Marines and FMF Corpsmen, and voluntarily render assistance to Marines, Corpsmen, their widows and orphans. Through these efforts, the detachment ensures that the legacy and values of the Corps continue long after service ends.

At Heart of Texas Detachment #975, members come together in camaraderie and fellowship, embracing the League's purpose of supporting American freedom and democracy while strengthening the bonds that Marines share. The detachment actively participates in community engagement and service projects that reflect both the heritage of the Marine Corps and the needs of the Central Texas veteran community.



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The detachment's activities are as diverse as they are impactful — from supporting local charitable events to participating in community service efforts such as the Miracle Match Marathon and Polar Plunge fundraising initiatives. These events not only raise awareness and resources for worthwhile causes, but also bring local Marines and supporters together in a spirit of unity and purpose.



Heart of Texas Detachment #975 has also demonstrated strong leadership within the Marine Corps League by successfully hosting the 2025 Department of Texas Marine Corps League Fall Conference in Waco. The conference was a tremendous success, bringing together League leadership and members from across the state for fellowship, collaboration, and the conduct of important League business. The event showcased the detachment's organizational strength, hospitality, and commitment to advancing the mission of the Marine Corps League at the department level.





Beyond specific events, the detachment embodies the League's timeless values — providing support for Marines and their families, preserving Marine Corps history, and observing the anniversaries of important Marine milestones. Through these ongoing commitments, Heart of Texas Detachment #975 stands as a cornerstone of veteran service and community engagement in Central Texas, dedicated to the principle of "Once a Marine, Always a Marine."

# Southern Division Conference

🇺🇸 Attention Marines and League Members! 🇺🇸

The 2026 Southern Division Conference of the Marine Corps League is coming to Paris, Texas!

 Dates: March 13–15, 2026

 Location: Paris, Texas

Join Marines, Corpsmen, and League members from across the Southern Division for three days of fellowship, leadership workshops, official business, and camaraderie. This is your opportunity to:

- Participate in division meetings and official League business
- Attend training sessions and leadership workshops
- Network with members from other detachments and departments
- Celebrate Marine Corps League accomplishments and awards

Whether you're a veteran, a League officer, or an associate member, the Southern Division Conference is where we come together to strengthen our mission, share ideas, and honor our Marine Corps legacy.

 Check out our website for conference details and registration.

[Information Link Here](#)



Sean Downey  
Senior Vice Commandant

Hello Department, I hope you all had a great Thanksgiving, a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

The holidays signaled the end of a great year but also annual required reports. First, the Detachment Annual Report is due to the Department Commandant by February 10. You can easily create this report by utilizing the data your Senior Vice has submitted to me via the required Monthly Activity Report. If you are not participating, you should begin to as this is one of the main sources we use for Department awards for your members. Second is the Toys for Tots Report, which is due by February 15 to qualify for a TFT Streamer from National for the Detachment colors. You can find all the required reports in the Resources section of the Department website, or by using this link: [txmcl.org/reports](http://txmcl.org/reports)

If you attended the Department Conference in Waco this past October, you would have heard me talk about the new training resource initiative I have undertaken. I have implemented an education application to the Department website where my goal is to have various courses you can take online. I plan to have the basics about roles, etc. but if you have a subject you need help with and think would be a good addition, please contact me so that we can discuss: [seniorvice@txmcl.org](mailto:seniorvice@txmcl.org).

On a personal note, I continue to be a member of the National Bylaws Committee and recently appointed to the National Convention Committee as the official convention Webmaster. I will be developing the new central convention website that will debut for the 2027 national convention in Buffalo.

I continue to be devoted to being of service to all of you, however. If you need any assistance, don't hesitate to contact me: [seniorvice@txmcl.org](mailto:seniorvice@txmcl.org) or 956-566-0382.

Semper Fi!



# Boots Across Texas

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**SOLDIERS' ANGELS**

*Valentines for  
Veterans*



# Boots Across Texas

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Every year we receive thousands of Valentine's Day cards addressed to Service Members and Veterans. Sadly, since the cost to distribute these cards is so high, we are not able to provide enough funding to get these cards to our Military and Veteran heroes so they can feel the love.

But now you can help us spread the love!

All you need to do is include \$1 per Valentine you send! This will help us cover the cost of packing & mailing boxes of Valentine's Day cards to deployed troops overseas and VA Hospitals!

Mail your cards and \$1 per card to:

Soldiers' Angels Valentines for Veterans

2895 NE Loop 410, Suite 107

San Antonio, Texas 78218

## Quick Tips Before Sending Your Valentines for Veterans

- The deadline is February 14
- Cards can be store-bought or handmade
- Individually wrapped candy can be included if it is attached to the card
- Include \$1 per card, cash, check, money order, or payment via credit card on our website
- You can include an envelope if you want, but not necessary.
- If you include an envelope, do not seal
- At your discretion, you are welcome to include your return address in the event the recipient may write back to you. However, it is also okay if you do not include any personal information.
- If you would like a donation receipt mailed to you, make sure to include your name and mailing address somewhere on or in the box, otherwise we will not know where it came from!



“BECAUSE NO HERO  
SHOULD FEEL FORGOTTEN  
ON VALENTINE’S DAY.”



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As part of the larger Young Marines organization — founded nationally in 1959 — the Space City Young Marines uphold a mission to strengthen the lives of America's youth by promoting self-confidence, academic achievement, good citizenship, a healthy drug-free lifestyle, and respect for veterans and country. Through structured activities, uniformed training, and community engagement, members learn values rooted in honor, commitment, and service.

Youth members begin their journey by completing a foundational orientation known as Recruit Training, where they learn the basics of leadership, teamwork, physical fitness, customs and courtesies, and community service. Upon graduation, they continue advancing through ranks, earn award ribbons in areas like leadership and academic excellence, and participate in meaningful service projects that benefit local organizations and veterans alike.



The Space City Young Marines are a proud local unit of the Young Marines, a national youth education and service program dedicated to developing leadership, discipline, character, and community service in boys and girls ages 8 through high school graduation.

Located in Cypress, Texas, and serving the broader Space City/Houston area, the Space City Young Marines were officially established in May 2025, bringing the premier youth development program back to the region for the first time in over two decades. Meeting at the local VFW, this unit has quickly become a vibrant hub for youth who strive to grow in confidence, responsibility, and service.



Beyond regular unit meetings, Space City Young Marines have opportunities to participate in national programs and special events that expand their horizons, build resilience, and deepen their commitment to service. Through these experiences, they grow into confident, responsible young adults prepared for future success in school, leadership roles, and civic life.

Whether it's providing color guards at local ceremonies, volunteering in community projects, or supporting veteran appreciation efforts, Space City Young Marines embody a spirit of dedication and pride — representing a powerful example of youth making a positive impact right here in Southeast Texas.



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William A Sterlig - Chaplain

Each of us has brothers and sisters by another mother, we have a family into which we were born or born to us. We have our nation, state, and perhaps most importantly our personal community. Your home is where your heart is.

Holy Scripture from the book of James says: 1:27) "Religion (faithfulness) that is pure and undefiled before God, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction,... 2:14) "What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? ...17) ... faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead."

Marines go to work, exercise their faithfulness, win battles, and there are those among us and others near us who could use our help. Many veterans live as orphans in our society. They feel alone. Broken families need support. People need to be reminded what good looks like. If nothing else they need the example of good people, good Marines, to help them remain good, or become good, and carry on.

People often need Warriors to fight for them. They need warriors when they don't know how or can't fight for themselves. Some people are battle weary and just need a little help. Maybe someone to show them what faith looks like and keeps faith with them.

We can celebrate who we are - by doing what Marines do. Win battles - get things done -. I started by writing about the First Warrior. I submit to you: "WE ARE THE FIRST WARRIORS."

Keep it clean Marines. Don't ask me what 'it' is. (We can talk later if needed.) Maintain a good diet. Limit your adult beverages.

Semper Fi! God Bless!

## FIRST WARRIORS

Let me visit with you about the 'First Warrior'. A warrior from the distant past. But it applies to our present.

A question: "What did the First Warrior say to the Great Spirit, Almighty God?"

The First Warrior looked out across the land that was his home. He saw the purple mountains majesty, the fruitful plains, the waterways, the hills, and the stars above. He was thankful; - 'joyful' over the richness of the blessings God had given him.

For the gift of all his blessings, the First Warrior told the Almighty, the Great Spirit, that he would fight and win many battles in His honor.

But the Almighty said; "No." Do not fight for me. Fight for your tribe, your community/your nation. Fight for the family born to you. Fight for the brothers - sisters you find along the way. Fight for them. The Great Spirit, the Almighty said; fight for them for 'they' are your true home.

Semper Faith

# Member Spotlight



**Leopoldo Garza Jr.**

Rio Grande Valley Detachment #1456 – Commandant

Polo Garza, Jr. serves as the Commandant of the Rio Grande Valley Detachment #1456 of the Marine Corps League, where his leadership has significantly strengthened the detachment's mission of camaraderie, service, and community engagement. As Commandant, Garza has played a central role in building and sustaining a vibrant detachment that honors Marine Corps heritage and provides meaningful support to veterans and local residents throughout the Rio Grande Valley.

Under his leadership, the RGV Detachment has firmly established itself within the region as a trusted veteran service organization, participating in activities that preserve traditions, support service members, and provide fellowship long after active duty. These efforts include veteran outreach, participation in community service projects, engagement in Marine Corps League programs, and regular detachment meetings that foster unity and purpose among members.

A noteworthy accomplishment during Garza's tenure was the detachment's outstanding performance in membership recruitment. Due in large part to his efforts, the RGV Detachment led the way in recruitment among detachments of its size — a success that resulted in Garza being recognized as a National Recruiter of the Year in the Marine Corps League community. This achievement reflects his commitment to growing and sustaining the detachment's impact and ensuring that Marines, Corpsmen, and supporters have a strong and active network in the region.

Garza's leadership also extends to representing the detachment within the wider Department of Texas Marine Corps League. His role helps ensure the RGV Detachment has a voice in statewide Marine Corps League activities, conventions, and collaborative initiatives, further amplifying the reach and effectiveness of the organization's service.

Through his dedication, strategic vision, and passion for preserving Marine Corps values, Polo Garza has helped transform the RGV Detachment into a dynamic force for fellowship, service, and community support — ensuring that the motto "Once a Marine, Always a Marine" is lived out in meaningful ways throughout the Rio Grande Valley.



# Member Spotlight





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Longhorn Detachment 1069, Marine Corps League



Alamo Detachment 315 ~ Marine Corps League



Ellis Co Det Marine Corps League #1452







**Heart of Texas Marine Corps League 975**



**Marine Corps League Sgt MJ Marty Gonzalez Detachment 1485**



The Marine Corps League extends its sincere gratitude to all detachments that participated in Toys for Tots this past year. Your time, dedication, and commitment helped bring joy to countless children and families across our communities. Through your collective efforts, the true spirit of the Marine Corps—service, compassion, and teamwork—was proudly on display. Thank you for making a meaningful difference and for continuing to support this important mission year after year.





Wreaths by Nicole is more than a small business—it is a mission of remembrance, service, and honor. Founded in 2020 by Nicole Pompei, a United States Marine Corps and United States Air Force veteran, Wreaths by Nicole was born from a desire to continue serving the military community in a deeply personal and meaningful way.

After serving her country in uniform, Nicole sought a way to preserve the stories, sacrifices, and memories tied to military service. What began as a single handcrafted wreath made from her own uniform quickly gained national attention. Families, veterans, and supporters across the country recognized the power behind transforming worn uniforms into lasting tributes. Today, Wreaths by Nicole has created thousands of custom wreaths that honor service members from every branch of the Armed Forces.

Each wreath is meticulously handmade using authentic military uniforms, with every fold and detail treated with respect. Customers may choose from uniforms provided by Nicole or submit their own uniforms, allowing deeply personal pieces to be created for veterans, retirees, fallen heroes, and military families. These wreaths are not merely decorative—they serve as tangible reminders of duty, sacrifice, and pride.



As both a Marine and Air Force veteran, Nicole understands firsthand the significance of the uniform and what it represents. That understanding is reflected in every piece she creates. Her work bridges generations, preserves legacy, and ensures that stories of service are never forgotten.

Wreaths by Nicole proudly supports veteran-focused initiatives and organizations, including efforts tied to remembrance and honoring those who served. Through craftsmanship, community involvement, and unwavering dedication to veterans, Wreaths by Nicole exemplifies the spirit of continued service beyond the uniform.

We are proud to recognize and support Wreaths by Nicole and grateful for their commitment to honoring America's heroes. Their work stands as a powerful reminder that service does not end when the uniform comes off—it lives on through remembrance, respect, and community.





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Adding to the moment's significance was the presence of the guest of honor, a 104-year-old Colonel whose remarkable longevity and service embody the very essence of the Marine Corps spirit. His attendance reminded all present of the lasting legacy and resilience that define Marines, past and present.

The ceremony at the Capitol stood as a powerful reminder that while uniforms and eras may change, the principles of Honor, Courage, and Commitment remain timeless.

Semper Fidelis.

# Boots Across Texas

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BY PHYLLIS SCHWAIGER  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JIN AE SOO

On November 10th, representatives from across the state gathered inside the historic Texas State Capitol Rotunda to celebrate the 250th Birthday of the United States Marine Corps. The event carried a deep sense of pride and tradition as Marines, veterans, and supporters came together to honor two and a half centuries of service, sacrifice, and brotherhood.



The ceremony featured remarks from Governor Greg Abbott, who issued a formal proclamation recognizing the United States Marine Corps for its enduring contributions to the defense and values of our nation. Following the proclamation, Governor Abbott participated in the time-honored cake-cutting ceremony—an iconic Marine Corps tradition symbolizing the passing of experience and wisdom from one generation of Marines to the next.



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Rio Grande Valley Detachment #1456



Alamo Detachment 315 ~ Marine Corps League

This past December, as part of Wreaths Across America, several detachments took the time to honor our fallen heroes by placing wreaths at their final resting places. Through your dedication and selfless service, the memories of those who served our nation continue to live on.

Despite busy schedules and seasonal commitments, your willingness to participate ensured that no veteran was forgotten. Each wreath placed was more than a gesture—it was a symbol of gratitude, respect, and an unwavering commitment to remember the sacrifices made for our freedoms.

We extend our sincere thanks to every detachment and volunteer who answered the call. Your actions reflect the true meaning of service, honor, and remembrance. Because of you, the legacy of our fallen heroes remains strong and their sacrifices will never be forgotten. Thank you for standing in remembrance and for keeping their memories alive.



WREATHS  
— across —  
AMERICA



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Dee Sanchez joined the RGV Detachment 1456 in 2022 as an Associate Member and immediately became an active force within the organization. She volunteered her time and talents across numerous committees and events, including the Marine Corps Birthday Ball, the 5K Committee, and the Americanism Committee.

Dee also took the lead in revitalizing the Detachment's public relations efforts, which directly contributed to a significant increase in membership. In recognition of her outstanding dedication and service, she was named Associate of the Year for both 2022 and 2023. She has continued to chair that committee in subsequent years.

As her involvement grew, Dee went on to serve as the Department of Texas Americanism Chair and became a valued member of the National Public Relations Team. Wearing many different covers, she has consistently excelled in every role she has undertaken.

Dee is a Licensed Vocational Nurse (LVN) and is married to PDD Eddie Sanchez.  
Contact: [dflores8df73@gmail.com](mailto:dflores8df73@gmail.com)



Meet The Americanism Chair

---

The Americanism Book Project is a Marine Corps League initiative dedicated to promoting patriotism, civic pride, and respect for our nation's history and values. Through this project, books and educational materials are provided to schools, libraries, and community organizations to help educate young Americans about citizenship, service, and the sacrifices made by our Armed Forces.

By investing in education and outreach, the Americanism Book Project strengthens community connections and helps ensure that the principles of freedom, responsibility, and service to country are passed on to future generations.

**[Americanism Procedures Manual](#)**

**[Click Here to Download Manual](#)**

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## Got Bike Rally?



The month of November was a very busy one for the Galveston County Marine Corps League Detachment 668. We had two Fallen Marine ceremonies and a burial at sea. While on a veterans fishing trip members of the detachment had a ceremony scattering the ashes of a Fallen Marine into the bay of the Gulf. Two of our members caught nice sized redfish.

The detachment participated in the Lone Star Bike Rally selling beer and sodas. The following Saturday, the 15th, the detachment, area Marine veterans, and the Reserve Marine Unit the Littoral Craft Company C 4th Assault Amphibious Battalion as special guests.

The detachment had a special service at the local VFW Post 880, to celebrate the birthday and to present all Vietnam Veterans a commemorative pins to those present. A Marine Corps League members wife was also presented a special pin honoring her service as a veterans wife during his time in the Marines.

The Harris and the Galveston County Commissioners Courts presented resolutions proclaiming November 10th as the Marine Corps birthday.

It was a very busy but fun month and we are going to rest until Mardi Gras in February and March. Semper Fi! 24

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**DON'T FORGET TO FOLLOW US ON  
OUR SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS!**



**SCAN  
ME!**



[HTTPS://HIHELLO.COM/P/BCAC6C99-260A-4E46-960B-CAF93A373B7A](https://hihello.com/p/BCAC6C99-260A-4E46-960B-CAF93A373B7A)

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