

Stephen “Chris” Hamrick
Department Commander
The American Legion, Department of Florida
2024-2025



Stephen “Chris” Hamrick, a Legionnaire from Charles F. Thomas, IV Post 117 in Palm Bay, FL, was elected Department Commander on June 15, 2024, during the 105th Department Convention in Orlando, Florida. Commander Hamrick is a ten-year continuous member, earning his eligibility through his honorable service in the U.S. Army from 1984 to 1991.

Commander Hamrick was born in Ironton, Ohio. He attended Coal Grove High School, where he excelled in Cross Country and Track, setting records that still stand today. In 1984, Commander Hamrick joined the U.S. Army straight out of high school with the MOS of 11BC (2), an Infantryman Dragon Gunner. Upon release from active duty, he joined the local Volunteer Fire Department in Micco, Florida, and later in Sebastian, Florida. During this time, he became certified in Vehicle Extrication, specializing in the Jaws of Life. Shortly thereafter, he attended Indian River Community College class #35 to become a Florida State Certified Firefighter.

In December of 1988, Hamrick re-entered the United States Army and was stationed in Bamberg, Germany (then West Germany), serving in the Mechanized Infantry with the 3rd Brigade, 1st Armored Division. In the late fall of 1990, He was deployed to Saudi Arabia with the Division Advance Party for Operation Desert Shield, which later became Desert Storm, Desert Sabre, and the Liberation of Kuwait, earning Campaign Stars for each.

On February 27, 1991, approximately 9 hours before the cease of ground combat operations, Hamrick was wounded in combat by a landmine, sustaining life-threatening injuries to his carotid and femoral arteries, abdomen, eye, and both legs. After several operations in three different hospitals, he survived, ultimately losing his left leg below the knee, the lens in his right eye, and approximately 6 feet of his intestine. He was discharged from Walter Reed Army Hospital on August 31, 1991, and placed on medical retirement on October 5, 1991.

Commander Hamrick has been active in his local community since his discharge in 1991, involving himself with several veterans’ organizations, including the VFW, DAV, Military Order of the Purple Heart, and The American Legion, Department of Florida. Over the past ten years, he has served in numerous post, district, area, and department positions, including 12th District Vice Commander (2017-2018), 12th District Commander (2018-2019), Eastern Area Commander (2020-2021), Department 3rd Vice Commander (2021-2022), Department 2nd Vice Commander (2022-2023), and Department 1st Vice Commander (2023-2024).

Commander Hamrick was married to Penny Lane Hamrick for 26 years until her sudden passing in April 2023. He has three sons, Eric, Justin, and Christopher; one daughter, Brittannie; and six grandchildren: Sophia, Madison, and Melanie (granddaughters) and Carson, Travis, and Conner (grandsons). Commander Hamrick has permanent guardianship of Travis and Madison. He greatly enjoys spending time with his six grandchildren, who are involved in the Sons of The American Legion and the Auxiliary.

Commander Hamrick’s mission statement is “Mentorship, Training, and Continuity,” and his slogan is “Keep It Real.” His fundraising projects include the Florida Disaster Relief Fund and the Children’s Organ Transplant Association (COTA). The Florida Disaster Relief Fund, a program of The American Legion, Department of Florida, provides aid to Legion Family members in disaster-stricken areas. COTA is a nonprofit organization that supports children and young adults needing life-saving transplants by providing fundraising assistance and family support.

The American Legion, Department of Florida boasts over 106,000 veterans still serving their country and the State of Florida. With 1.5 million members at the National level, The American Legion is the Nation’s Largest Veterans’ Service Organization. The American Legion was founded in 1919 on the four pillars of National Security, Veterans Affairs, Americanism, and Youth Programs. For more information on how you can be involved with the American Legion or for an interview with Commander Hamrick, please contact The American Legion, Department of Florida at 407-295-2631, ext. 239, or through email at rcastleberry@floridalegion.org.