

By Traci Chapman
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One of Mustang's own has been elected to American Legion's top Oklahoma office. Don Kuntze took over as state Commander during the Legion's recent state convention in Shawnee. Kuntze has served as commander and adjutant for Mustang Post 353 for several years; he was last year named to the vice commander position – at a time the Legion was facing internal upheaval and negative press.

"We had a terrible situation with the legal issues our former leadership caused and it frankly could have given the Legion a black eye, but I think we've come out better and stronger since that time," Kuntze said.

Those issues involved alleged criminal activity by former state Commander David Kellerman, also a Mustang resident, who was charged with embezzlement and other felonies. Prosecutors were forced to drop those charges after it was discovered a Department of Veterans Affairs investigator had committed perjury.

That is all in the past, Kuntze, immediate past Commander Bobby Bryant and Post 353 Commander Paul Ray said. After working for a year as vice commander, where he focused much of his efforts on membership, the Mustang Legionnaire will work to strengthen ties across the state, while remaining active in Post 353, he said.

"This is my home," Kuntze said.

Kuntze joined the post in 1998, after moving to Mustang from Texas. It was there

he began serving his country, joining the Navy in 1966. Kuntze served for four years, and then joined the Naval Reserves for four more years. He then transferred to the civilian workforce at Naval Air Station Dallas. In 1987, Kuntze moved over to the Federal Aviation Administration at Dallas Fort Worth International Airport.

Kuntze is a past post commander and has served as adjutant several times. He said he loves being a part of the Legion, which gives so much to the community.

"It's a great way to give of yourself, to have that feeling of service and community," Kuntze said. "It's something that means more than you can really explain."



Mustang's Post 353 former Commander/adjutant was recently elected as Oklahoma American Legion State Commander. (Staff Photo by Traci Chapman)

As the post on July 14 celebrated Kuntze's election, it also marked the swearing in of this year's 353 officers, as well as its own accomplishment – named Oklahoma American Legion Post of the Year. Mustang's Sergeant at Arms John Traffanstedt was also named to state level, as Oklahoma Sergeant of Arms. One of the post's most active members, Traffanstedt is active in community efforts and is a member of Mustang's honor guard. American Legion membership is open to any veteran; anyone who has a parent or spouse who has been in the military may apply to be a part of its auxiliary. Post 353 meets at 7 p.m. the second Thursday of each month at Mustang Senior Center, located inside Town Center.