Strengthen GI Bill by closing loophole

By: Bill Oxford, National Commander

Creation and passage of the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944 is one of the proudest moments in American Legion history. That pride compels us to correct any wrongs that might tarnish the GI Bill of Rights.

A recent Government Accountability Report examined how veterans are affected by school closures. It also broke down graduation rates of the top 50 schools receiving Post-9/11 GI Bill tuition and fee payments. While the average graduation rate among public institutions was 73 percent, the rate at for-profit schools was a dismal 22 percent. Even with a generous curve, most objective graders would consider that an “F.”

The American Legion has no issue with online learning or alternatives to traditional college classrooms. What we do have a problem with are companies that separate veterans from their benefits by failing to provide quality education and training commensurate with their advertising.

Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., pulled no punches in a 2018 op-ed on this subject for The Hill. “Time after time, many for-profit colleges sought out and targeted veterans who then used their hard-earned benefits, not to mention their time and energy, on a worthless program,” she wrote. “And that’s if they even were able to finish their coursework. When some for-profit schools abruptly shut their doors, veterans were left without a degree, and their GI Bill benefits used up. These corporations cut and run after receiving up to 100 percent of their revenue and profit from federal funding that taxpayers intended to help students, including our veteran and military-connected students, receive higher education and training.”

Enabling many of these schools is a well-intentioned federal regulation requiring them to obtain at least 10 percent of their revenue from sources other than Title IV education funds. The GI Bill and other military tuition-assistance programs fall within that 10 percent, making veterans particularly vulnerable to predatory marketing. We all know DoD and VA are funded mostly by federal dollars. Why the government allows schools to treat these revenue streams as private-sector dollars makes no sense.

In October, The American Legion’s National Executive Committee unanimously passed Resolution 15, which calls for legislation to support greater GI Bill outcomes by closing the 90-10 loophole.

While veterans who are scammed can sometimes recoup the benefits that were taken from them, the time and inconvenience required to do so can be major hardships for those trying to readjust to civilian life. It also adds significant costs for taxpayers.

The sudden closures of Corinthian Colleges in 2015 and ITT in 2016 affected more than 35,000 students. VA estimates that more than 7,000 were using Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits. Sadly, this pattern of failure has continued in 2019 with the closure of Argosy University and select Art Institutes. Many were surprised to learn that some of the credits they had earned were not transferrable to other schools. Moreover, exasperated students often turned to unnecessary student loans to undo the damage.

One of the major goals of the GI Bill was to help veterans transition to post-military careers by opening the doors for higher education and vocational training without incurring personal debt. The American Legion remains committed to this sensible goal.

Is Congress?
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Still Serving America

Do you have an ongoing program or activity that serves your community?
Do you have a friend or relative that goes above and beyond the call of duty to help others?
Drop us a line and tell us what your story is or how you or this person is demonstrating that they are Still Serving America, but must be received by the 10th of the month, the month prior.
In submitting your information, please be sure to include your full name, address and telephone number. There’s a good chance the information you send will make it into The Observer. Please send to: Still Serving America, The American Legion, 7465 East 1st Ave, Ste D Denver, CO 80230.
Mentorship creates effective leaders
By: James W. "Bill" Oxford, National Commander

In early November, I had the privilege to address the American Legion National Legion College Class of 2019. I asked them to deliver a message to their community upon returning home from National Headquarters in Indianapolis. And it’s the same message I want all of you to deliver: The American Legion is just as important and just as visible as we were 100 years ago. We are still the most valuable veterans organization to America’s veterans.

And we, as Legionnaires, are cementing the foundation for America through The American Legion’s Americanism programs such as Boys State, Legion Baseball, Oratorical Contest and more. The teaching, training, education and mentoring that we do for America’s youth are developing the future leaders of this country. We are deciding where the future of this organization is going. We are part of the future. We will be shaping the programs and policies of this organization for decades to come.

I hope you’re up to the task.

The shaping of The American Legion’s future is achieved through mentorship and leadership. American Legion College Chancellor and Past National Commander David Rehbein shared with the class what a leader is – “As a leader you have to be honest. You have to be confident. You have to be inspirational. You have to be visionary … you have to see the future and have a vision of what that future is.”

The success to becoming an effective leader is through mentorship. Rehbein shared what to look for in a mentor within The American Legion.

A mentor has to be someone who:

- Is familiar with the challenges you face;
- Is confident that you can overcome those challenges and have the initiative to take on those challenges;
- Gives advice and not commands (this goes for yourself as a mentor);
- You can confide in;
- You can trust; and
- Is working for your good and not using you to further their own career.

Mentorship is essential to the success and future of The American Legion. My leadership philosophy is that a leader provides direction that the group is going to take. And creates the excitement and enthusiasm to move in that direction.

Will you be the leader that I think you can be? Set the course and make it happen.

Bruce McCandles Veterans not forgotten at Christmas

Department of Colorado Auxiliary President Elect Theresa Brandt, presents a checks for $850, goody bags, and blankets to Residents Council President Jack Herzog of Bruce McCandles Veterans Community Living Center. Photo and caption courtesy of PDC Tim Grabin.
Happy New Year American Legion Family,

As we get into the start of 2020, I ask that we continue to conduct our “BUDDY CHECKS” for all of our Veterans in our communities. Buddy Checks work and we can see how the results in our membership growth. You can share your “Buddy Check” success stories with the National Media and Communications Staff by sending your stories to Steve Brooks sbrooks@legion.org

Don’t forget that we have our annual Mid-Year conference coming up at the Hotel Elegante in Colorado Springs January 17-19, 2020. I hope that you plan to attend and stay at the Hotel, cause, we are going to have training, food and fun. I look forward to a RE-IGNITING PATRIOTISM Rally on Sunday Morning. Will you join me for this fun event? We will have Candidate for National Commander Randall Fisher (KY) with us for the weekend, come meet your Candidate.

Colorado Legionnaires you are rocking the membership for 2020, we have maintained 500+ members ahead of last year and continue to grow. Thank you all for your hard work in getting our members to renew their commitment and getting new Veterans to join our ranks. As you know we have a tall order of a 2020 membership goal to achieve by May 13, 2020, our goal is 21,119 members for 100%. I know with your dedication to our great organization that we can count on you and your Posts to achieve 100% prior to May 13, 2020. When the Department of Colorado reaches 100% Membership by May 13, 2020, the Department Commander and Senior Vice Commander will have something special for our Department Delegation at the Convention June 25-28, 2020 in Colorado Springs at the Hotel Elegante.

Don’t forget to support our Veterans in need, the Colorado Veterans Assistance Fund needs our support. This last year we have helped over 400 Veterans in need with almost $50,000.00 in direct aid in a time of need. This has helped these Veterans with basic needs such as housing, food, clothing, water, electric and heating gas. Please bring any donations that you have to the Mid-Year conference to make a difference in the lives of our brothers and sisters.

We had a couple raffles and the drawing the winners are?
1st Raffle 1911 .45ACP Commemorative Pistol celebrating 100 years of The American Legion,
Rex Huir- Walsh, Colorado.
2nd Raffle - 1 Proof Set of 3 Centennial Coins,
Doug Wooddell- Aurora, Colorado

Congratulations to the winners, thank you for your support!!

VA announces proposal to increase access to dental care

Today, December 13, 2019, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced it has submitted to Congress a waiver request and pilot program under Section 152 of the VA Maintaining Internal Systems and Strengthening Integrated Outside Networks Act of 2018 (MISSION Act) to improve access to dental care for Veterans.

The MISSION Act authorizes VA to submit statutory waivers to Congress for the purpose of testing innovative service delivery models to improve the quality of care for America’s Veterans. Under existing statute, VA has limited authority to provide dental services for Veterans. With this waiver request, VA is submitting a proposal to increase access to dental services for enrolled Veterans ineligible for dental services through VA by connecting them with community-based, pro bono or discounted dental service providers.

“The MISSION Act gave Veterans real choice over their healthcare decisions,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert L. Wilkie. “Through this pilot proposal, we want to ensure Veterans have access to quality dental care through a network of providers who are proud to serve America’s heroes.”

Poor oral health can have a significant negative effect on overall health. Clinical research has found possible connections between gum problems and heart disease, bacterial pneumonia, and stroke. Upon approval of this pilot, VA will work with groups such as the American Dental Association and Federally Qualified Health Centers across the U.S. to offer pro bono and discounted dental services to Veterans.

“This waiver submission opens the door to years of groundbreaking innovation under the MISSION Act to improve care for our Veterans, who are top of mind for this President and this Administration every single day,” said Director Joe Grogan of the White House Domestic Policy Council.

Section 152 of the MISSION Act led VA to establish a Center for Care and Payment Innovation to test payment and service delivery models, with the goal of reducing expenditures while
preserving or enhancing the quality of care for Veterans. In implementing this section, the Secretary was granted authority to waive statutory requirements that may impede innovative approaches upon notification of and approval from Congress. The dental care proposal, titled the Care Coordination for Dental Benefits demonstration project under the Community Provider Collaborations for Veterans Pilot Program, is the first waiver request and pilot program submitted to Congress under this authority.

The VA Innovation Center, led by Michael Akinyele, is implementing Section 152 of the VA MISSION Act under the Office of Enterprise Integration. VA published a proposed rule (RIN 2900-AQ56) establishing the Center for Innovation for Care and Payment on July 29, 2019 (84 FR 36507). VA published a final rule implementing its authority on October 25, 2019; this rule became effective on November 25, 2019. “This pilot program enables us to explore leading practices across the U.S. health care system to meet Veterans needs today and into the future,” said Dr. Melissa S. Glynn, Assistant Secretary for Enterprise Integration.

VA will publish details of the Community Provider Collaborations for Veterans pilot program for public comment in the Federal Register, which can be found at https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2019/12/13/2019-26901/pilot-program-for-dental-health-care-access

**A Message From Department Sr. Vice Commander Jackson**

**Working the Programs for Great New Year**

*By: Greg Jackson, Department Sr. Vice Commander*

hoping everyone had a great and safe holiday season. Now, with the holidays over let’s get back to work on our programs. If you are finding that you need a way to help increase membership to better accomplish our mission, then maybe the programs are your answer.

TEAMwork is “Together Everyone Achieves More”. Often, we can become stale and struggle with how to increase our memberships. Often, we have our Post or self pride and refuse to ask for help. We will often refuse any ideas or help as well, since we want to do it ourselves. Or… worse we just don’t like the idea of new members and like the way we have always done it, after all why change what isn’t broke. The reasons are many why we struggle with memberships, but I would wager that if Posts worked with neighboring Posts in recruiting and retention as well as DMS then every post will grow in a positive direction.

How this works is simple. Working with each other to promote and assist in programs regionally means the programs will have a bigger impact on the communities they serve. We all have limited volunteers that show up and work the programs and often this leads to burn out and often what seems like a waste of time, effort and energy. Your neighboring posts are feeling these troubles equally. Why not team up and increase your manpower and reach more. What may be a weakness to you, may be a strength to another! So, when we can combine together, we Adapt, Overcome, Conquer, and Win together. One post may have a boy to attend Boys State but not the money, another post may have the money, but not a boy. Together a boy will attend and both posts have provided that opportunity together. A couple of small rural post may not have the manpower for a funeral detail but working together can form one that represents The American Legion in the region will speak volumes.

District Commanders and Post Commanders have regular meet and greets with posts throughout your areas and find ways to combine forces and reach the school kids promoting Boys/ Girls State and our Oratorical. Work with your Posts and have them work together on the Law Enforcement Officer and Media Awards. Having regional awards lets everyone within miles know about our programs.

Lets always be team players with each other regardless of how close or how far we are.

Training is a wonderful way to become familiar with our programs as well. Where can I find some of this training? The Mid Year Conference at the Hotel Elegante in Colorado Springs January 17th and 18th. There will be Training covering several of our Programs and how to manage those. I encourage everyone to attend. So please get the word out to all your members. Also, I would love to see a representative from every post in the state of Colorado attend. What a Great way to unify and help make The Department of Colorado American Legion very Strong in our support of the four pillars.

We continue to increase our membership well on target. I cannot express my appreciation to all posts enough. I personally extend a heartfelt thank-you to each and everyone for your membership efforts and encourage you to keep the great work up.

Hoping to See you at the Mid-Year as there will be many exciting things that you won’t want to miss.
A Message From Department Jr. Vice Commander Kossow

2020 Will Be a Great Year!

By: Chip Kossow, Department Jr. Vice Commander

The Department of Colorado Commander Dean Noechel, and the National Security Committee have the honor of awarding the Law Enforcement Officer of the Year for the Department of Colorado at the Mid-Year Conference. He is Commander Patrick Long of the Thornton Police Department. Commander Long is a 27-year veteran of the Thornton Police Department and served in many capacities for the police Department in Thornton and in Redlands California. Congratulations Commander Long.

With the Christmas and New Year’s decorations all packed up, it’s time to get back to our programs. The start of the new year is time to initiate your new members into the family. Show your pride in the traditions and ceremony of our great organization by passing it along to our new members.

Elections are right around the corner. The current executive board should already have decided if they will move up, stand fast, or step aside for the young bloods. Foster the next generation of leadership. This shouldn’t be a popularity contest, but members taking their turn to guide the Post to work the programs. It is your organization, take a turn and help lead it. District and Department positions are also required to lead us along.

Encourage all members to take the basic training to get a good understanding of where and how The American Legion started. That will give them a basis to figure out where we need to go. If it has been a few years since you took the course, take it again. Lord knows I forget stuff all the time. Just ask Bettina.

Membership is always important, but I’ve found that making the Post fun and interesting through well executed programs will cause members to come to you. The program reminders are:

- Americanism for February.
- Community Service for March. The Paris Caucus anniversary is 15 March.
- Children and Youth for April.

If you need help or guidance with anything, District and Department are standing by.

What are you and your Post doing to build The American Legion’s foundation for the future?

A Message From Department Jr. Vice Commander Force

The American Legion Legislative Commission in action

By: Gary Force, Department Jr. Vice Commander

The American Legion Legislative Commission continues to work on national veteran’s legislation that is listed in The American Legion Legislative Agenda. Refer to the Agenda issues by going to www.legion.org and selecting ‘Legislative’ under the ‘Programs’ tab. From there select the Legislative Agenda.

The Military Widows Tax Elimination (H.R. 553 & S. 622) legislation has been folded into the National Defense Authorization Act that funds the military for 2020. As I am writing this article the NDAA (S. 1790) is currently in the U.S. House of Representatives where the Conference Committee report was agreed upon and passed. I expect the NDAA to be passed and signed by the President by the time this is published. The Widows tax elimination as written will be phased in over three years as follows:

* 2020 - no SBP changes
* January 1, 2021 - surviving spouses receive 1/3 of SBP
* January 1, 2022 - surviving spouses receive 2/3 of SBP
* January 1, 2023 - surviving spouses receive SBP in FULL - changes for surviving spouses with child option go into effect when you may permanently reselect SBP in your name - if children previously aged out you will still be able to reselect in your name - there will be no child option after January 1, 2023

Many of you contacted your Congressional Representatives concerning this issue and your efforts showed the importance for this legislation, good job.

Also of interest is the Retired Pay Restoration (S 208 & H.R. 303) also referred to as VA offsets. These bills are currently in committee. The American Legion National Legislative Committee recently sent out a call to action concerning the passage of the Pay
The Chaplain's Corner - Happy New Year – Joy to All
By: Stanley Hamamoto, Department Chaplain

Has God been good to you!!!!!!!

I pray that you all had a great Christmas and a very Happy New Year.

Again, I hope that you prayed for all of those that are not able to sit at a table like what you have and be in a warm home like what you were in. Many times, we do take too much for granted and I too am of blame. When my wife died, I lost 48% of our monthly and annual income. It has not been easy for me to adjust to less income with all the expenses that were there. God had given me the way to see things in a different light. I always ask HIM what I should do and where should I go. He always leads me in the right path. I trust HIM with all of my heart and soul. I pray that each one of you will have a great 2020 year and that it will bring you much joy and happiness.

I trust the faith in HIM and you will not regret it. I pray that all our post will grow and that they will all be able to help many veterans throughout the state of Colorado. This is our goal, to be able to help and assist as many veterans and their families as we can. The main thing is to keep the faith in HIM and never forget that, then you will receive joy in your life.

What is JOY!!!! Some people think Christians should always be smiling and happy, and something is wrong if they aren’t. But this is not necessarily true. Our Lord stood outside the tomb of HIS friend Lazarus, and we read that the Lord wept. As he approached Jerusalem, HE saw the city and wept because of its spiritual blindness and guilt. HE knelt in the garden of Gethsemane and was in agony—and his sweat became like great drops of blood. Don’t confuse happiness with joy. Happiness comes with happy circumstances; joy wells up deep inside our soul’s as we learn to trust our Lord. Joy does not mean that we are never sad or that we never cry. For joy is a quiet confidence, a state of inner peace that comes from God himself. Life’s troubles will rob us of our happiness, but they can never rob us of the joy that God gives to us as we turn in faith to HIM and seek HIS face. These are words from Billy Graham.

Reason for JOY: How’s life? Someone asks. And we who’ve need resurrected from the dead say, “Well things could be better.” Or “Couldn’t get a parking place.” Or “My parents won’t let me move to Hawaii.” Or “People won’t leave me alone so I can finish my sermon on selfness.” Are you so focused on what you don’t have that you are blind to what you do? You have a ticket to heaven that no thief can take, an eternal home no divorce can break. Every sin of your life has been cast into the sea. Every mistake you’ve made is nailed to the tree. Your blood brought and heaven made. A child of god—forever saved. So, be grateful, joyful—for isn’t it true? What you don’t have is much less than what you do. These are the words of Max Lucado.

Here is a prayer for you: Dear God, thank you for teaching me the difference between joy and happiness. Circumstances cannot steal the steady, abiding joy I find in YOU. While happiness depends on the ever—changing conditions of my life, YOUR joy flowing freely through me, is part of my constant oneness with you.

I pray that all of you have found the joy in your life and may the New Year bring much joy to you and your family. Trusting and keeping the faith in God than things will not go wrong in your life.

Again, may 2020 bring you all the joy that you are looking for and may God be there to help you in any way that you may need. HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!!!!

My last three words to all of you are: **GO TO CHURCH!!!!!!**
A Message From Department Adjutant Smith

Expectations

By: Pat Smith, Department Adjutant

The world enters the New Year with hope and expectations. Expectations for a year better than last; expectations for peace and harmony in the world; Expectations for positive results for our efforts, both for our professional lives and our family life.

The American Legion enters this New Year with many expectations. Since 1919 we have worked tirelessly to improve the life of our nation’s veterans and their families. The year 2020 will be no different. We expect positive outcomes from our President and our Congress when it comes to taking care of our warriors after they return to civilian life. The cost of war does not end when the war ends.

As we write this article the President has announced the withdrawal of some troops from Afghanistan. As many of these veterans return home we must remember they will need help in their transition to civilian life. We know many will face complex medical issues.

On a daily basis we see and hear from veterans attempting to understand the complex system of government assistance programs. Many of those veterans are immediately enrolled into the VA system upon their discharge and expect the VA to solve their problems. Many expect a caring government to reach out to them and say, “come my brothers and sisters, enter into the house of the VA, and we will forever take care of you.” Guess what, it doesn’t happen that way.

Veterans need to be proactive when it comes to their medical issues with the VA. They need to be proactive when it comes to their continuing education and their employment. They need to be proactive when it comes to their family matters. They expect a lot, but expectations will not be fulfilled without careful thought and subsequent action.

In their structured military environment they had someone to look to for direction. They took orders without hesitation. They completed their task as assigned, all which goes away when they take off the uniform.

For over 100 years now, The American Legion has been the one that steps in to assist these veterans achieve what they expect. We are the guiding light. We have been there, done that. Our experience is valuable and must be shared. We have the resources to guide them through the maze of government. We know the right people, we know the right words to say, we know the right words to write on those pesky government forms, we just know.

For The American Legion to achieve positive results in this New Year we, as an organization, must be proactive. We must seek out these veterans and be with them when they need us. We must connect the dots for them. We must be a teacher, a counselor, a mentor and most of all, a friend. For 2019 in Colorado we disbursed over $45,000 for our Veterans Assistance and Colorado Veterans Kids Fund. We expect to continue this advocacy for 2020 so we must keep our membership strong to continue this work.

So, I expect The American Legion to continue to be the voice for veterans in this New Year. I expect The American Legion to do what we have done for over 100 years. We have been successful so why change. We just need to look for new solutions for old problems.

Seek out the veterans in your communities. Offer them the gentle hand of The American Legion. Do this and our expectations for 2020 will be fulfilled. Welcome 2020, The American Legion is still here.
History Book 101

By: Deb Davis, Department Historian

How are your History Books coming along? Stuck? Confused? Need help? Here are some suggestions:

• In the event that your post records are missing and there is no history, the post historian may search the local newspaper files and interview past commanders, adjutants and older members. Many important post events can be found using these methods.

• Information about the post charter can be obtained by writing to the Charter Clerk, The American Legion, and P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206.

• Have you asked your District what they may have on your Post? How about checking with the Department Historian to see what might be filed away at Department Headquarters.

• The serious post historian will find informative and interesting any one of the following published histories about The American Legion: Michael J. Bennett’s “When Dreams Come True: The GI Bill and the Making of Modern America” (Brassey’s, 1996); Thomas A. Rumer’s “The American Legion: An Official History” (M. Evans, 1990); Raymond Maley’s “The American Legion Story,” (Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 1966); Richard Jones’ “A History of The American Legion” (Bobbs-Merrill, 1946); and Marquis James’ “A History of The American Legion” (William Green, 1923).

• Where possible, use digital voice recorders or video cameras to record oral histories and interviews of American Legion Post founders and leaders to capture firsthand information about the post’s history.

VA Walmart open telehealth locations to serve Veterans in rural areas

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Walmart cut the ribbon in Asheboro, North Carolina, Dec. 10, for a new VA-led Accessing Telehealth through Local Area Stations (AT-LAS) services pilot location.

The public-private affiliation provides convenient health care to Veterans in their communities.

“This type of collaboration is the way of the future,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “Veterans need the expansion of choice, and this partnership is vital to affording them convenient access to VA health care services where they live.”

Walmart has donated equipment and space at five sites as part of a pilot initiative allowing Veterans to meet with a VA provider in a private room via video technology. VA telehealth clinical services vary by location and may include primary care, nutrition, mental health and social work.

“As both a Veteran of the Air Force and a father whose son and son-in-law are serving, I know firsthand how important support and access is for our military, especially when it comes to health care,” said Chief Growth Officer for Walmart U.S. Health and Wellness, Daryl Risinger. “Walmart is committed to making quality health care affordable and accessible and is working with VA to expand its ability to serve Veterans through technology. This is another way we are helping our communities live better.”

This new option makes VA care easier to access and eases the burden of long travel times to appointments. VA leads the nation in telehealth services. Last fiscal year, there were more than 1.3 million video telehealth encounters with more than 490,000 Veterans. Other telehealth pilot sites are in Wisconsin, Michigan and Iowa.
A Message From The SAL Detachment Commander Arceo

What can I do for you?
By: Nick Arceo, Commander, SAL Detachment of Colorado

My fellow Sons,

Ready or not here comes 2020! I trust that you had a very joyous Christmas and took time to spend with family and friends. As we enter into the new calendar year, let's continue to do what we are best at. Everything we do falls under these three areas; supporting Veterans & their families; promoting patriotism that benefits the youth of our Country; supporting a program that benefits the youth of our country. Let's continue to focus on growing our membership, get those cards in to Scott ASAP.

We have three new Squadrons, congratulations to Delta Squadron 66, Palmer Lake Squadron 9-11, Simla Squadron 77. We have three other new Squadrons in the works! Great job everyone. As we grow our membership, let's reach out to these new Squadrons and make sure they are successful, offer help and support where needed.

Some important dates in January, New Year’s Day January 1, Mid-Year Conference January 17-19, January 20, Martin Luther King JR. Day. As we move into the new year, start planning your Squadron activities, get out into your communities, start volunteering at a VA facility and continue to “Make a Difference” in the life of a Veteran.

Work closely with your sponsoring Post, join them in activities. I hope to see you all at the Elegante’ Hotel in Colorado Springs for our Mid-Year Conference. There are many events planned and a great time for everyone. The New Year is a great time to “Get back to the Basics”. Thank you for everything you do for The Detachment of Colorado.

What can I do for you? Please let me know of your planned activities and events, I would love to attend and see what you are up to! My prayer for you is to have a safe and prosperous New Year. Let's move forward and have a great year!

God Bless

By: Kennth Taylor

The American Legion State Championship was held at Doherty High School in Colorado Springs on November 9, 2019. Participants came from Widefield, Mesa Ridge, and Doherty High Schools as well as 4H and The American Legion. This was a CMP sanctioned 3X20 Match which included shooters in both Sporter and Precision Class.

American Legion Awards were given for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place in all positions, Prone, Standing and Kneeling as well as 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place overall for both classes. Captain Greg Thomas of Doherty High School presented ROTC Medals to shooting teams from Widefield, Mesa Ridge and Doherty.

This was a well-run Match that went smoothly, and we plan to make it an Annual Event. Special Thanks go out to Mr. Ron Nokes of Post 2 who helped organize the Match, Mr. Bob Tyler of the CMP who ran the Range, David Hall, Becky Hall, Jeraud Stuart, and Chuck Sorrels of Post 209 who set up the range and scored the match.

Photographs can be found on Page 12.

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Photos of State American Legion Jr. Shooting Championships

1st Place Team
Doherty HS
Captain Greg Thomas
Senior Chief Gregg Zoppa
Ethan Noss
Logan Hassell
John Leyba
Stephen Kelley
Bob Tyler
Ken Taylor

2nd Place Team
Widefield HS
Major Mark Davis
Edward Frazer
Haley Escalante
Nathaniel Chick
Mark Baham
Ron Noakes
Bob Tyler
Ken Taylor

3rd Place Team
Mesa Ridge HS
Sr Chief Tony Cook
Gage Powell
Scott Wing
Jesse Terrazas
Mya Hunt
Bob Tyler
I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of our Legion family for giving so generously of their time, talent and treasures to our organization during this holiday season. Your contributions to the VA Gift Shop, holiday food baskets, and for the monetary gifts to veterans assistance fund has been invaluable.

I urge our members to continue to reach out to our elderly, homebound, those struggling financially, and especially those who are alone. Give the gift of your time. Let our veterans and his/her families know that they are not alone.

At our Mid-Year Conference, the Auxiliary is hosting a ‘Willie Wonka’ themed 100th Birthday party. The Auxiliary would like to extend a very special invitation to those who have children or are a ‘child at heart’. In the community of Colorado Springs and surrounding areas, we have Fort Carson, Air Force Academy, Peterson Air Force base, the VA Clinic, and a very large public-school system. Reach out to these entities and INVITE them to a part of our MISSION IN ACTION! Watch for details via email blasts and social media posts.

Blessings,
How will you pay for expenses that Medicare doesn’t cover?

With the high cost of healthcare today, Medicare Supplement insurance is becoming a necessity for more and more Americans. That’s why it’s good to know that you now have a choice of Standardized Medicare Supplement plans at affordable group rates, offered to members like you. And, all plans are underwritten by a company known for it’s prompt, personal, responsive service.

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Here are Group Medicare Supplement Plans especially for Legionnaire Insurance Trust Members.

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Send to: Medicare Supplement Processing Dept.
P. O. Box 1341
Valley Forge, PA 19482-9946

1-800-247-1771 299-94720
ID RESOLVE
A New Program to Help Legionnaires Fight Back Against Identity Theft

Identity theft is the fastest growing crime in America and has affected more than 16.7 million victims, with veterans being especially vulnerable targets. Data breaches are becoming more frequent and, when an identity thief strikes, most victims are left to clean up the mess themselves, unsure of where to turn to first. We’ve heard Legionnaire’s concerns around the growing threats of identity theft and are proud to provide a new service to address this concern.

ID Resolve focuses solely on the aftermath of identity theft and resolving the issue. With call centers located in the US, Legionnaires can activate an important set of services to fix the situation and restore their name. ID Resolve’s Identity Resolution Specialists are certified in identifying and repairing any type of identity theft such as medical fraud, Social Security identity theft, and financial theft.

ID Resolve is available to Legionnaires at a special member-only rate and provides resolution services for a full year. Plus, Legionnaires can take up to 30 days to review ID Resolve and decide if it’s right for them; if not, a full refund is available as long as the services have not been used.

There are two annual memberships available:

Member: $79/year
Couple: $99/year

To learn more or enroll in ID Resolve, visit www.thelit.com/IDResolve

ID Theft by the numbers
Claims a new victim every 2 seconds
16+ mil. victims targeted in the U.S.
$16 billion in losses
Veterans are 50% more likely to be the victim of identity theft
There were 1,579 data breaches last year
40+ hours spent resolving an identity theft case
Department Mid-Year Conference  
Elegante’ Hotel  
January 17-19, 2020  
Colorado Springs, Colorado

Friday January 17, 2020
2:00 pm               Legion DEC Meeting  
2:00 pm               Auxiliary DEC Meeting  
7:00 pm -10:00 pm    American Legion Auxiliary Family Fun Night

Saturday January 18, 2020
7:00 - 8:00 am        Americanism Breakfast – Open to all  
7:30 am – 8:00 am      Registration – Lobby  
8:30 am                JOINT OPENING SESSION – Elegante’ Hotel

Call to Order  
Introductions

SAL Detachment Officers and Guests  
Auxiliary Department Officers and Guests  
Legion Department Officers and Guests

Children and Youth Awards  
Law Enforcement of the Year Award  
Break to separate sessions

10:00 am              Break to separate sessions
10:15 am - 5:00 pm   Auxiliary Session  
10:15 am - 5:00 pm   Sons of The American Legion

Legion Session
10:15 to 11:15 am     Leadership -Jay Bowen  
11:15 to 12 noon  Engaging the Programs – Chip Kossow  
12:00 pm 1:15 pm     Past Commanders Club Lunch  
1:00 pm             Legion Riders Meeting  
1:30 pm - 2:00 pm    Membership Awards - Greg Jackson  
2:15 pm - 4:30 pm    Boys State Training

2:00 pm - 3:15 pm    Breakout Sessions

Chaplains – Stan Hamamoto  
Service Officer – Dean Casey  
Adjutant/Membership – Pat Smith  
Oratorical – Tom Florez

3:30 pm – 4:00 pm

3:30 pm - 4:30 pm    CO-ALPA meeting  
4:00 pm – 4:30 pm    CPR Training  
6:30 pm - 7:00 pm    Social Hour

Jeff Luginbuel Media Awards Banquet  
Media Award Recipients

Print Newspapers; Radio Stations; Television Stations

Sunday January 19, 2020
8:30 am – 8:50 am       Re-Ignite Patriotism - Commander Dean Noechel  
8:50 am – 9:00 am       Auxiliary Conference Adjournment President Trujillo  
9:00 am - 10:00 am      SAL Conference Adjournment Commander Arceo  
                        Go to Church - Four Chaplain’s and Department Memorial Service  
                        Pastor Stan Hamamoto
Grand Junction Colorado's All Service Ball Photo

Post 1882 All Services Ball 2019! A photo that did not make it into the December 2019 Observer shows from left to right: Commander Dezaray Woessner, Commander of newly formed Grand Junction All Womens Post 1882; Guest Speaker Kristie Ennis, and other guests. Photo courtesy of Carolyn Schneider, Post 1882 Adjutant.

The words homeless and Veteran should never be used together.
Call VA’s toll-free hotline: 1-877-424-3838 (1-877-4AID-VET)
or visit our website.

Department Mid-Year Conference
January 16-18, 2020

Elegante' Hotel and Conference Center
2886 S. Circle Dr.
Colorado Springs, CO 80906
719-576-5900

MID YEAR CONFERENCE
Thursday January 16, 2020
Friday January 17, 2020
Saturday January 18, 2020

All rooms are: $93 + 10.25%--9.53 tax = $102.53 per night

Check in time is 3 pm – check out is 11 am.
Cut off date for this rate is January 2, 2020.

Pool rooms inside or out are an additional $10. Hotel policy is a $75 fee for checking out early. If you are changing your check out date, advise the check-in desk upon arrival.

Please use the information above and call the hotel directly for reservations or you can also call 800 981-4012 and mention The American Legion to receive the rates quoted.

Arrival Date: ___________ Departing Date: ___________
Amount of Deposit: $_____________
Check #_______ Credit card: Visa _____ Master Card _____
Card # ____________________ expiration date _______
Name: ____________________ Phone # (___) ____-_____
Address: __________________
City: ______________________ Zip: ___________
Signature: __________________
VA FARMS program trains hands, heals minds

By: Thomas Klobucar, Ph.D.

According to VA's Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention (OMHSP), more than 60,000 Veterans died by suicide in the last decade. For those of us who serve our nation’s Veterans, that number is more than a statistic – it is a reminder that failing to address mental health needs carries real and tragic consequences.

OMHSP highlights that mental health challenges and suicide are affected by many factors, including lower income, unemployment and reduced social connection. Many of these factors are also prominent in rural communities, where Veterans have a 20% higher suicide rate than their urban counterparts.

Pilot pivots to FARMS

To address these and other challenges, in 2018 Congress directed VA to create a pilot program that provides Veterans with agricultural vocational training and mental health care services from licensed providers.

In response, VA’s Office of Rural Health (ORH) partnered with several VA program offices to establish the VA Farming and Recovery Mental Health Services (VA FARMS) program at nine designated VA medical centers.

VA FARMS uses agritherapy, an approach that incorporates mental health care and services with agricultural vocational training, to support Veterans’ behavioral and mental health needs. ORH partners with a variety of stakeholders, including non-profit organizations, academic organizations and state governments to offer these services to rural Veterans.

By providing occupational skills, social connection and clinical care, VA FARMS addresses several of the factors that impact rural Veterans’ overall well-being.

You can learn more about the VA FARMS program by watching the video below. We also encourage you to visit our website at http://www.ruralhealth.va.gov/ to learn more about how ORH programs support the health of rural Veterans nationwide.

Colorado American Legion honored by MEPS Station

By: Pat Smith, Department Adjutant

About 5 years back the Department got a call from the USO, located at the MEPS center in downtown Denver. It seems that since they are located in a government building the government would not provide any Internet service to the troops that are getting ready to raise their hand and recite the oath of a soldier.

I am sure you are all aware of the MEPS center. This particular center has been in the building at 18th and California streets for as long as anyone can remember. It was the place I entered the US Army in April of 1965. Had my physical there, was sworn in, got on a bus and ended up in Fort Leonard Wood, MO for my basic training.

Now I don’t exactly remember, but I don’t think we had this thing called Internet back then. But we have it now and our young troops depend on it for their communication with their family and friends.

Presentation of the plaque honoring the Department of Colorado for providing Internet services to the MEPS station for parents and inductees shows from left to right: Department Adjutant Pat Smith; PNC and Deputy Adjutant Tom Bock; Department Commander Dean Noechel; MEPS Battalion Commander Lt. Col. Blackman; and Senior Vice Commander Greg Jackson.

After discussion with the Finance Committee it was decided we would provide that service to the USO at no charge to them. We contacted a cable provider and they installed the service for us and they send us a bill every month, which we gladly pay to support our warriors.

We sought nothing in return. Recently the Commander of the MEPS center called and wanted to recognize us for providing the service. We attended a ceremony where they recognized us by placing a plaque with our name on for all to see as the organization that was responsible for the free service. After that we got to witness a swearing in ceremony of about 20 new troopers.

It was an honor to be recognized for something we do day in and day out in The American Legion, supporting our veterans, then, now and in the future.
Unwanted Bicycles Needed!

We are looking for any of your unwanted bicycles for donations to Veterans, Homeless and Kids.

We can pick up bikes in Metro Denver Area or can be dropped off at our shop in Aurora. Please call Ernie Clark for pick up details etc. @ 720-270-5731.
Address: 4122 S Parker Road Aurora 80014
Hours: Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday 8-3 pm
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