Legion supported Memorializing Veterans Act signed into law

The American Legion

An American Legion-supported bill that will help honor the lives of the men and women who have served our nation was signed into law Jan. 17 by President Trump.

The Memorializing Veterans Act is a bipartisan bill that was introduced early last December by Sens. Jon Tester, D-Mont., and Mike Rounds, R-S.D. The signing of the legislation will allow the Department of Veterans Affairs to establish a grant program for cemetery research and production of educational materials for the Veterans Legacy Program to create a greater awareness of the service and sacrifice of America’s veterans.

“The American Legion is proud to support efforts to properly memorialize America’s veterans and educate future generations on the legacy of our nation’s heroes,” said Ralph P. Bozella, chairman of The American Legion Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission, in a press release about the bill being signed into law.

“It is imperative that we continue to invest in programs that honor and preserve the memory of America’s veterans.”

The Memorializing Veterans Act will broaden the reach of the Veterans Legacy Program to other institutions of higher learning, local educational agencies and nonprofits engaged within the community that wish to support the VA in memorializing veterans.

Tester said the legislation will allow students, teachers and researchers to “focus on what’s at the core of this nation: memorializing those who served our armed forces and inspiring future generations to do the same.”

Photograph courtesy of The American Legion

Program awards contracts to universities, colleges and institutions to develop educational materials that teach students and others about the history of the veterans interred in national, state or tribal cemeteries. Transitioning to a grant-based program through the Memorializing Veterans Act will broaden the reach of the Veterans Legacy Program to other institutions of higher learning, local educational agencies and nonprofits engaged within the community that wish to support the VA in memorializing veterans.
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Join The American Legion
Help Our Nation’s Veterans

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.

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Happy New Year American Legion Family! It’s hard to believe that it’s already been a year since the American Legion’s Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA) program provided more than $1 million in non-repayable grants to Coast Guard families affected by the longest government shutdown.

TFA grants, like the ones distributed to the Coast Guard families, are made possible through donations to The American Legion Veterans & Children Foundation. Grants from the foundation not only provide vital support for military and veteran parents in unexpected financial crises, they also support American Legion service officers in their tireless efforts to obtain care and benefits for disabled veterans and families. These service officers provide free expert assistance to more than 700,000 veterans, widows and families as they navigate the complexities of VA benefits and services they have earned through their service.

The Veterans & Children Foundation improves lives for veterans, servicemembers and their families. It is essential that the foundation remain a resource for our comrades in need in communities throughout the nation. Whether funds are used to assist Coast Guardsmen who are missing paychecks, a veteran and their family who lost their home to a fire, or a military family struggling to make ends meet, the Veterans & Children Foundation needs your support.

For the remainder of my term as your national commander, I will be focusing on my fundraising goal of $25 million for the Veterans & Children Foundation. I am confident that with your kind contributions, we will indeed assist veterans, support military families and build a strong foundation for the future.

To donate to the foundation, please visit legion.org/donate. You also may download the Veterans & Children Foundation brochure at legion.org/publications.

Maine Legion post takes unique approach to battling homeless issue

American Legion Past National Vice Commander John Hargreaves says there are approximately 100 identified homeless veterans in Maine on any given night. Of those, approximately 10 have reached out to a local or state agency about housing options but have yet to be placed somewhere.

It’s that second group that raised the concerns of a group of Legionnaires at Hargreaves’ post, Charles E. Sherman Jr. Post 36 in Boothbay, and has led to what could end up being a short-term solution for veterans needing to get off the street immediately.

Ed Harmon, a member of Charles E. Sherman Jr. Post 36, where he is a service officer and the commander of Sons of The American Legion Squadron 36, came up with the idea to convert a cargo trailer into a temporary residence for veterans in between applying for housing and being placed in some kind of residence. He and fellow Post 36 member Arthur Richardson, who has an electrical license and a background in carpentry, teamed up to build a prototype that the pair hope will become the first of many such trailers throughout the state.

Harmon said that he attends various meetings with other veterans service organizations, and state and local agencies, where he “kept hearing about the lag time on paperwork” for homeless veterans looking for immediate housing. “They’re still sleeping on the street, in a car or under a bridge. How do we resolve this?” Harmon wondered.

Post 36 Commander David Patch attended many of the meetings with Harmon, where they started to understand “what was missing,” in housing homeless veterans, Patch said. “To add to that, just a few months ago we
Colorado American Legion Family,

**WOW!!** We had a great Mid-Year Conference in Colorado Springs, CO. There was over 200 members attend this year and that is a great turn out for Mid-Year, I want to say **THANK YOU!** Your participation in our meeting and trainings lets us know that this is what you want to see, if you have suggestions for training please let me know, you can send me an email at d.noechel@coloradolegion.org We had a great Media Awards Banquet on Saturday night and recognized small print media Mountain Mail from Salida, CO. Large print media was awarded to The Colorado Springs Gazette and Rachel Stovall, TV Media Award to Fox21, Colorado Springs.

As we are talking about training, our annual Training and Education Conference will be held May 15-17, 2020 in Colorado Springs, CO hosted by American Legion Post 209. We hope that you will plan to attend and will watch for the flyer, I will let you know that we have some special guests coming to be with us this weekend. Leading Candidate for National Commander Paul Dillard will be training with us and also returning for some more fun and games will be PNC Denise Rohan and National Marketing Chairman Mike Rohan.

Colorado is rocking in so many ways membership, programs, community involvement and **RE-IGNITING PATRIOTISM**.

Within these next 6 months we will be out on the road again traveling and visiting Posts and Districts across our great state, like in the past if you have an event or project that you would like me to attend please let me know.

In closing, Thank you all for your support as we continue to grow our programs and membership here in Colorado. I would like to ask for your support again for 2020-2021, Dean Noechel for Department Commander and Greg Jackson for Senior Vice Commander. **NO NEED TO CHANGE A WINNING TEAM!!**

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**Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act claims now being determined**

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will begin deciding claims for the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019 at 12:01 a.m., Philippine Standard Time, Jan. 1, 2020. The Philippines is the farthest east VA regional benefits office.

The Act extends the presumption of herbicide exposure, that include toxins such as Agent Orange, to Veterans who served in the offshore waters of the Republic of Vietnam during the Vietnam War.

Signed into law Jun. 25, the law specifically affects Blue Water Navy (BWN) Veterans who served no more than 12 nautical miles offshore of the Republic of Vietnam between Jan. 6, 1962 and May 7, 1975, as well as Veterans who served in the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) between Jan. 1, 1967 and Aug. 31, 1971. These Veterans can now apply for disability compensation and other benefits if they have since developed one of 14 conditions that are presumed to be related to herbicides. Veterans do not need to prove that they were exposed to herbicides. The specific conditions can be found by searching the term “Agent Orange” on www.va.gov.

“For six months, VA worked diligently to gather and digitize records from the National Archives and Records Administration to support faster claims decisions,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “These efforts will positively impact the claims process for Veterans filing for these benefits.”

To be eligible a Veteran must have served in the identified locations during the specified time period and currently have a condition(s) associated with herbicide exposures, such as Agent Orange. Blue Water Navy claims are being processed under current prioritization criteria; however, special priority is being given to Veterans who are over the age of 85 or have a terminal condition. Qualifying recipients include affected Veterans who are still living and certain survivors of deceased BWN and Korean DMZ Veterans.

Survivors can file claims for benefits based on the Veteran’s service if the Veteran died from at least one of the 14 presumptive conditions associated with herbicides such as Agent Orange. The law also provides benefits for children born with spina bifida if their parent is or was a Veteran with certain verified service in Thailand during a specific period.

The Act includes provisions impacting the VA Home Loan Program. Veterans have more access to obtain no-down payment home loans, regardless of loan amount, and the home loan funding fee is reduced for eligible Reservists and National

(Continued on Page 7 See Guard Borrowers)
Let’s Think Outside the Box
By: Greg Jackson, Department Sr. Vice Commander

Hoping everyone had a great and safe trip home from the Mid-Year. Now, with that over let’s get back to work with focus on programs and membership.

First of all, let’s have a discussion about that box that we always talk about. That box is what we do as norm, we do it because that is always the way it has always been done, and if it isn’t broken, don’t fix it… Many Post and Districts have those boxes. They are not the same box as others. If we continue to think in that norm then we may miss the big picture. The truth of the matter is that every member in every post regardless of how large or small that post is, or how far that post is from everyone else, they matter. And by the way they often live on the outside of most boxes. It reminds me of the funny, yet appropriate definition of insanity; doing the same thing over and over, expecting different results. How can we continue operating in the same manner and expect different results?

One and half year ago we tried membership round ups visiting with posts all over the state. Many post had not seen a Department level officer. This was not a practice of the normal way. We saw an increase in membership and program involvement. See, when our members know you care about them all the way, they will work the programs harder. Sometimes those programs are outside our normal box. But it works for those posts in those communities. I believe it is simple to tell someone to work the programs and oh by the way we are listed in the book and if you need help call. Hmm but didn’t they just call? And that is all the help we offered? We assume that what we think is all that matters. Often, we don’t truly understand those challenges many posts and communities have until we personally visit and engage with those posts outside the normal district meetings. Often trying to help a post takes more than a phone call. When posts receive this type of help they will understand how to make the post more efficient and can offer programs that will help their community. When this happens, recruiting new and engaged members will occur. But understand, a good membership base and good programs go hand in hand.

Please encourage ALL members to get involved in The American Legion at all levels.

I have and always will travel to any corner of the state to visit with any post and community. I will be glad to discuss the many facets of The American Legion.

Though many times we may not agree with stepping out the normal box we should always take the chance if the opportunity and momentum are there. After all that is our vision for the next 100 years?

We Get Mail Too!!!

Note from the Editor: The below was taken from the Christmas card that came with the check and was typed by the Editor as written by the author. The name of the individual was not provided to honor their privacy.

December 2019

Dear American Legion,

A year ago, I came to your office in desperate need. I was given food gift cards and bus token tickets and it saved me. No question about it.

I am grateful for and humbly sending this check in the amount $350, to help another veteran. I am ending 2019 better and stronger because of your kind help in 2018.

Thank you with all my heart.
A Message From Department Jr. Vice Commander Kossow

Programs are the Post's Lifeblood

By: Chip Kossow, Department Jr. Vice Commander

The American Legion is a grassroots organization. The Post is what makes this organization strong. Districts, Departments, and National exist because and for the Post. The Posts purpose is to serve our communities through our programs following the 4 pillars. When you look at the strong Posts, you see they have programs that are working to fulfill the needs of their local area and the members are providing support. The opposite is also true, in Posts that are struggling you'll usually find they don't work the programs or have let the programs go stale and little used or supported. Strong Posts are usually gaining in membership as other veterans and family members want to be in on the good thing.

The list of programs is endless. A few notable programs are Veteran's Assistance (in its many forms), children education and financial assistance, Oratorical, Junior Shooting Sports, Boys State, and Blood Donor Program. Obviously, no Posts can or is expected to do all the possible programs, but a Posts should determine what their community needs and find a way to help out. As the programs grow, so does the reputation of the Post within their local area and so does the membership.

Everything has a life cycle and our programs are not immune. It takes periodic reviews to assess and adjust the programs as necessary to keep them relevant. The Post must also realize when a program has completed its service and file it away. However, don’t throw it totally away, but keep it in the back of your mind as it’s need may come around again.

With good programs, the Posts needs people to guide it every year. This is the time of year when elections take place to select those people to carry the Post through the year. Think of these positions as a necessary chore that must take place. The best way to tackle any task is to work together as a team. Determine your strength and take your turn at a position that you can be an asset. Lean on previous members for their experience.

Everyone can contribute with the leadership and the programs. Keep The American Legion Strong!

A Message From Department Jr. Vice Commander Force

The National Suicide Hotline (S. 2661)

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 legislation (H.R 553 & S. 622) has been folded into the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) that funds the military for 2020. The NDAA (S. 1790) was signed by President Trump on 12/20/19.

Also of interest is the Retired Pay Restoration (S 208 & H.R. 303) also referred to as VA offsets. These bills are still in committee. The VA Accountability Act (S. 221) has passed the Senate and is assigned to the House Veterans Affairs Committee. The National Suicide Hotline (S. 2661) Sponsored by Senator Gardner has been passed out of committee to the Senate. The Deborah Sampson Act on women veterans’ health care (H.R. 3224) has passed the House and has been sent to the Senate and assigned to the Senate Veterans Affairs committee. If you would like to be added to The American Legion Nation Legislative Committee Call to Action email, sign up at www.legion.org. To track the progress of any Congressional bill along with Colorado co-sponsors, go to www.congress.gov and enter the Bill number. Bill description, status, co-sponsors and other information is available.

January 8th began the Colorado General Assembly 2020 session. At the time of my writing this article none of the Untied Veterans Coalition of Colorado 2020 State Legislative Goals had been sponsored by state Legislators. As it is early in the session I anticipate bills will be drafted and submitted soon.

During the Colorado Legislative session other bills effecting veterans may be introduced and the UVC legislative committee will review these bills and determine if they will support, monitor or oppose that bill. The goals can be found at the UVC web site www.UVCOC.org.
A Message From Department Jr. Vice Commander Jones Sr.

Let’s All Work to Prevent Suicide

By: Anthony Jones Sr, Department Jr. Vice Commander

Each year, September is designated as Suicide Awareness Month. There has been a joining of governmental, non-governmental, private, public, and academic organizations to thwart this pernicious enemy. Alarmingly, veterans comprise less than 9% of the U.S. population; however, they account for about 18% of all suicides.

While the Suicide Awareness Month has passed, we must all consider every day as a day that we should work to help those that are struggling and need a friend or professional. Think about what you can do and the American Legion can do to aid in suicide prevention. There are many things the American Legion, working with the VA and other organizations can do.

One of the primary goals we should commit to and endeavor to meet is to raise funds for support of awareness training about the warning signs of suicide. Furthermore, the Legion should put a strong emphasis on helping veterans by having compassion for them when they may be experiencing mental health feelings of distress, and most of all, have a sanctuary for them when they need one.

As a Legionnaire, we should be keenly aware of the warning signs of suicide. Some include having extreme feelings of hopelessness, despair, and self-doubt; making end of life plans, preparing wills, giving away valued possessions; discussing suicide methods, purchasing weapons or acquiring large quantities of medication; drug or alcohol use which can cause impulsive behaviors; and isolation or the cutting off social connections with friends, family, and quitting a job.

More emphasis needs to be made by the American Legion and perhaps funds set-aside for a dedicated program that reaches out to the veteran population at all times. Yes, there is the Veteran Suicide Hotline number (713–970-7000) and the number will soon be changed to a three-digit number. If a veteran is unaware of the number, doesn’t know where or how to get help, and most of all, has a feeling that no one cares, that all-important call by a veteran to the suicide prevention hotline may not be made.

Our new National Commander, James W. Oxford, has made his theme “A Foundation for the Future.” The rate of suicides by veterans must be changed through awareness of the theme and make the younger veterans a part of our future. Without a strong base being established to make all veterans aware, their future cannot be one of help when dealing with thoughts of suicide.

We as Legionnaires need to work on this paramount issue. If you would like to help, have suggestions or questions, please contact Anthony (Tony) Jones, The American Legion, Department of Colorado, Vice Commander, at anthonysljones@yahoo.com, or phone (720) 388-9101.

Guard Borrowers

Guard borrowers who use their home loan benefits for the first time. VA’s website describes the eligibility of certain Purple Heart recipients who do not have to pay a funding fee as well as other benefits.

Veterans who want to file an initial claim for an herbicide-related disability can use VA Form 21-526EZ, Application for Disability Compensation and Related Compensation Benefits or work with a VA-recognized Veterans Service Organization to assist with the application process. Veterans may also contact their state Veterans Affairs Office.
Has God Been Good to You!!!!!!!

I hope that many of you got to attend the midyear conference last month. There were many changes from what we have been doing in the past and I think that many of them were good changes. Many times, we get stuck in our ways of doing things the way we always do it, and when change comes, we object to it before we even see it happen. As a minister, I have experienced this many times, when the board wants to make changes, and then an older member who is an outstanding member of the church will say, we have never done it that way in the past. Then the matter gets dropped. It’s a shame for changes can be good and YES! It can be bad. But you must be able to give it a chance before you make a judgment on it. I always say to the congregation, let it work for a few months, if you still don’t like it, you can always go back to the way it was done in the past. Anyway, this is a matter that I can talk about, maybe in one of the next issues I will.

LOVE that is the theme for the month of February, because that is when Valentine’s Day comes. And Valentine’s Day is a day of love. There are many scriptures that talks about love and I would like to quote a few for you. The most popular is from 1 Corinthians 13: 1 – 13: I may speak in different languages of people or even angles. But if I do not have love, I am only a noisy bell or a crashing cymbal. I may have the gift of prophecy, I may understand all the secrets things of God and have all knowledge, and I may have faith so great I can move mountains. But even with all these things, if I do not have love, then I am nothing. I may give away everything I have, and I may even give my body as an offering to be burned. But I gain nothing if I do not have love. Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous, it does not brag, and it is not proud. Love is not rude, it is not selfish, and does not get upset with others. Love does not count-up wrongs that have been done. Love is not happy with evil but is happy with the truth. Love patiently accepts all things. It always trusts, always hopes and always remains strong. Love never ends. There are gifts of prophecy, but they will be ended. There are gifts of speaking in different languages, but those gifts will stop. There is the gift of knowledge, but it will come to an end. So, these three things continue forever; faith, hope and love. And the greatest of these if love. Then John 15: 12-14, 17 says: This is my command; Love each other as I have loved you. The greatest love a person can show is to die for his friend. You are my friends if you do what I command you. This is my command; love each other. This is one version from one Bible, there are many other versions from different Bibles. Look them up and select the one that you like.

My good friend Max Lucado says it best. An Everlasting Love: Psalms 103:11: “As high as the sky is above the earth, so great is his love for those who respect HIM.” Then Max says this: “The big news of the Bible is not that you love God, but that God loves you; not that you know God, but that God already knows you! He tattooed your name on the palm of his hand. HIS thoughts of you outnumber the sand on the shore. You never leave HIS mind, escape his sight, and flee his thoughts. HE sees the worst of you and loves you still. Your sins of tomorrow and failings of the future will not surprise HIM; HE sees them now. Every day and deed of your life has passed before HIS eyes and been calculated in HIS decision. HE knows you better than you know you and has reached his verdict; HE loves you still. No discovery will disillusion HIM, no rebellion will dissuade HIM. HE LOVES YOU with an everlasting LOVE.”

When we speak at meetings, speak with love in your hearts. Say things in a way that will not hurt someone or your other legion members. Think, before you say anything, and this will help you to be sure that what you say will not hurt anyone. Like John says; the Lord said: Love one another as I have loved you. Do this and you will honor my commandment. No matter what we do, we must always keep in mind that we must love each other, no matter who that other person is. Are you willing to die for your friend? Our Lord did and HE forgave us all our sins. HE loves us that much. Are you willing to die for a friend?

My last three words to all of you are: GO TO CHURCH!!!!!!
Don’t complain, just make a change

By: Pat Smith, Department Adjutant

By the time you read this Puxatawny Phil will see his shadow and prophesize six more weeks of winter (or not). While we are still in the winter months, now is not the time sit back and wait for spring. Now is the time to take action. The action I am talking about is having a vigorous debate on the future of this organization.

Our founders did that in the spring of 1919 when they decided to band together as an organization to take care of those veterans returning from war, their families and children. They built our foundation on four very important pillars, National Security, Veterans Affairs, Children and Youth and Patriotism. Nothing has changed for the last 100 years. As we enter the next 100 years, we still must rely on the four pillars to support us as the largest, and greatest, veteran’s organization on earth.

What has changed over the years is how we implement and carry out our missions. This organization grew from a handful of men in Paris, France to over 800,000 men and women in just a short 18 months. They did this without cell phones, email, Internet, twitter, social networking, texting and all the other electronic forms of communication available to us today. So, our vigorous debate today gets more interesting and more complex. How can we improve this organization? How can we position it for the rest of this century? What will it look like 10 years from now on our 110th Anniversary? Will we still be around to celebrate a 150th anniversary? How can we best serve the needs of our returning OEF and IOF veterans and all future veterans? How can we integrate them into our organization? Many questions! The answers must, and will, come from you.

Now is the time to begin this discussion because we are entering the time period in March and April for our District Conventions. The best way to influence the policies of this organization is through resolutions. Actually, the only way to influence policy is through resolutions.

If you, or your post, has a great idea on any subject germane to this organization put it in writing, have the debate at the post level. If it is worthy and passes muster at the post level, send it to the district convention where the debate will continue. If the District passes the resolution the Department Convention delegates will continue the debate this summer. If the delegates pass your great idea it will be forwarded to our national convention delegates this fall, and the debate will continue there. Bottom line is that your great idea could become the solution to a problem.

So, your task, if you choose to accept it, is to look around you and find a problem that needs a solution. Use all forms of communication to express yourself and your ideas. Things move at light speed today, so turn on the light, come out of the shadow of winter and make a difference, before next winter. You can, if you will.

Department of Colorado's Law Enforcement Officer of the Year for 2019

The Law Enforcement Officer of the Year 2019 for the Department of Colorado 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.
had a homeless veteran who was in his car. We saw firsthand problem was. And following that veteran, we had a local veteran who ended up passing away in his sleeping bag alongside the railroad tracks. So, we had the understanding what the problem was academically, if you will, and then we saw it and experienced it firsthand.”

Harmon already was in the business of retrofitting campers for use by veterans, and that prompted the idea that “why don’t we build something that’s temporary (so) that they can survive?” Harmon said. “Get them out of the cold. Get them horizontal. Give them some heat. Give them some hope. So that’s how it developed. Seeing the plight that’s been going on, I couldn’t take it anymore.”

He and Richardson went to work on a cargo trailer that Harmon had purchased, insulating it, lining the inside walls with fiberglass-reinforced plastic, and providing the trailer with LED lights and heat rated at 99.9-percent efficiency. The trailer has a bed, nightstand, end table, chair, microwave and refrigerator. The heat and electricity in the trailer is powered by plugging the trailer into a regular electrical outlet located outside of a home.

The Veterans Emergency Temporary Shelter (VETS) is intended to meet a need for “those veterans who are in that limbo between contact with an agency and actual placement in temporary transitional housing,” Hargreaves said. “A lot of times on weekends they call, they walk (into a homeless shelter) and there’s no beds. And they have to vet those veterans and there’s nobody to call and check. The veteran is back in his car or under the interstate, wherever. The intent is that these (trailers) are located in places where the agency can put them directly in (the trailer) for two or three days, or maybe a couple weeks. We’re looking at 12 or 13 units for the state of Maine probably. Maybe more. But that also depends on who can take them and who can provide the services.”

Harmon said he and Richardson will “build as many of these as we can get money for and send them around the state.” Over the next few months members of Post 36 plans to work with VA, the state and other organizations involved with the homeless population in Maine to create a process for making the trailers available to those entities assisting homeless veterans.”

Getting the word out about the efforts of Post 36 hasn’t been a problem. “(In Maine), this project is probably known by every organization that deals with homelessness, including the (Department of Veterans Affairs) and the state of Maine,” Patch said. “Visibility in the state right now is not a problem.”

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(Homeless Veteran Continued from Page 3)

**A Message From The SAL Detachment Commander Arceo**

**On our way to obtaining the big prize**

*By: Nick Arceo, Commander, SAL Detachment of Colorado*

Good day Sons of The American Legion. I trust that each of you had a safe and Blessed New Year spending time with family and friends. As we move into the New Year, let’s keep our focus on “Making A Difference” in the lives of Veterans.

Thank you all for your hard work and dedication to The Detachment of Colorado.

Please continue to get membership in ASAP, don’t hold onto it. Your hard work is paying off! I’m happy to report to date we have started two new Squadrons! Congratulations to Delta 65 and Palmer Lake 9-11. We have two more with the paperwork in process and three more in the works WOW! Now, let’s get our 105% membership & 85% renewals by July 29, I believe in you! That will give us a Triple Nickle!

The 12th is Lincoln’s Birthday, 17th Presidents day, 22nd Washington’s Birthday. February 26th is Ash Wednesday. With the observance of Presidents Day, this month would be a great to revisit the Ten Ideals & Five Point Programs. Does your Squadron have someone taking on these two important programs?

February is also Americanism Month. I would challenge you and your Squadrons to get involved in one of the Americanism programs. The High School Oratorical Speech Contest is coming up the end of the month, Saturday February 29, 2020 @ Metro State University. Come volunteer and listen to these students give their speeches on The Constitution of The United States, you will be amazed.

I hope everyone had a great time at our mid-year conference. It was great seeing many of you there. I trust that you came away with a fresh awareness of the exciting things that The Detachment of Colorado is doing. Get involved, stay involved. Let me know of any events that your Squadrons are having; I would love to attend. What can I do for you? I look forward to having a strong finish to this year, with your help it will happen!

God Bless
Inspired by your service.

As a veteran who has received an Honorable discharge, you’re eligible for membership in USAA. With advice, tools and products to aid you with insurance, banking, investments and retirement, USAA is committed to stand alongside you wherever life takes you.

Explore the benefits of USAA membership now.

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Thank Vietnam Vets by hosting event as commemorative partner

By: Adam Stump

Organizations who want to thank Vietnam Veterans for their service can join the Vietnam War Commemoration Commemorative Partner Program.

Many organizations host events around March 29, which is Vietnam War Veterans Day.

“Anyone wanting to host a March 29 event should become a partner in the coming weeks to host an event,” said Army Lt. Col. Shawn Butler, Vietnam War Commemoration events chief. “These ceremonies are excellent programs to thank our Vietnam Veterans.”

The commemoration recognizes all who served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces at any time during the period of November 1, 1955 to May 15, 1975, regardless of duty location; and their families.

Becoming a partner

For those who aren’t already a member of the Commemorative Partner Program, joining is easy. Organizations must submit an application and a signed Statement of Understanding. Applications are available at www.vietnamwar50th.com under the Commemorative Partner Program tab.

The approval process is usually less than 30 days after submission of a complete application and Statement of Understanding. Partners are kept informed through electronic notifications. Once approved as a Partner, the Commemoration will provide organizations with a starter kit of materials for developing and implementing their programs. Questions regarding the Commemorative Partner Program application process can be directed to: whs.vnwar50th_cpp@mail.mil.

Creating an event

Once a group becomes a partner, they receive a partner portal login. This allows the partner to create an event that is searchable on https://www.vietnamwar50th.com/events/.

The Vietnam War Commemoration provides several items for an event. These include:

- Lapel pins for both Vietnam Veterans and surviving spouses.
- Presidential proclamations.
- Program brochures.
- “We Heart” and “I Served” bumper stickers.
- Tin pins for family members and the 50th anniversary.

Search for an event

More than 11,000 commemorative partners conduct events in their local communities throughout the year to recognize Vietnam Veterans and their families. People can learn about events in their local community by visiting https://www.vietnamwar50th.com/events/. Visitors can search for event by name, date, country, zip code and category. The site also allows visitors to search within a 1, 5, 10, 25, 50 or 100 mile distance of a zip code.

Objectives

The commemorative partner program will include activities and ceremonies to achieve the following objectives:

- Thank and honor Veterans of the Vietnam War, including personnel who were held as prisoners of war (POW), or listed as missing in action (MIA), for their service and sacrifice on behalf of the United States; and to thank and honor the families of these Veterans.
- Highlight the service of the Armed Forces during the Vietnam War and the contributions of Federal agencies and governmental and non-governmental organizations that served with, or in support of, the Armed Forces.
- Pay tribute to the contributions made on the home front by the people of the United States during the Vietnam War.
- Highlight the advances in technology, science, and medicine related to military research conducted during the Vietnam War.
- Recognize the contributions and sacrifices made by the allies of the United States during the Vietnam War.

The 2008 National Defense Authorization Act authorized the Secretary of Defense to conduct a program to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War and, “in conducting the commemorative program, the Secretary shall coordinate, support, and facilitate other programs and activities of the Federal Government, State and local governments, and other persons and organizations in commemoration of the Vietnam War.”

To learn more about the program visit their site at https://www.vietnamwar50th.com/ or the Facebook page at https://www.facebook.com/VietnamWar50th/.

About the Author: Adam Stump is a public affairs specialist with VA’s Digital Media Engagement team. He is a retired Air Force Veteran who served 20 years, including two deployments to Afghanistan for detention operations and special operations.
Auxiliary's C&Y News

By Debra Jackson

The Groundhog may see his shadow but we don’t have to worry. The American Legion Post and Units are always up to something. Cupid will soon be in the air. Valentine’s Day can be a great opportunity to show your community that you are there and able to help when needed.

Children pass out cards in school and as a Unit you can send out cards to your Juniors. Let them know they are appreciated. As you involve your Juniors, they will invite others to participate and when they participate, their families participate. Keep in mind Valentine’s Day is not just for the children, but the parents also.

Some Units have a special activities, dinners and family events. Other Units have a restaurant help in providing a special dinner for the couples or families to come out and enjoy the atmosphere.

President’s Day will make many school activities come available to The American Legion. Talk to your local schools to see if you can’t come in and talk about Americanism, Flag etiquette, The Constitution and the many programs we have to offer our youth.

Ash Wednesday will be February 17, 2020.

In all things that are happening throughout the month February, please keep our children’s SAFETY first and foremost in mind.

Respectfully

VA tackles medical device vulnerabilities and cyberthreats

VA health care systems and medical devices by going to https://www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/medical-device-cybersecurity-what-you-need-know increasingly rely on internet features that improve Veteran health care services and increase VA’s ability to treat Veterans. That’s why VA has been vigilant with its responsibility of mitigating potential cyberthreats.

According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, the health care environment is complex, and manufacturers, hospitals, and facilities must work together to manage cybersecurity risks.

As such, VA recently signed partnerships with Massachusetts General Hospital and Shepherd University. This collaboration’s research will address cybersecurity and compatibility measures needed in devices used for VA patient care. It will also refine existing and emerging cybersecurity standards and practices for network connectable medical devices, medical data systems and other related technology.

Beyond VA, the agreements could have a broad impact in standardizing cybersecurity and safety requirements within the larger public health sector. VA is contributing to industry-wide awareness of both medical device vulnerabilities and threats, while applying further tests of the Underwriters Laboratories criteria and other emerging standards.

Without question, Veterans deserve to have the best medical technology available to them to help improve their standards of living. At the same time, we also owe it to them to make sure the devices we use are free from modern day cyberthreats.

Dr. Carolyn Clancy is the Deputy Under Secretary for Discovery, Education and Affiliate Networks at the Veterans Health Administration
How will you pay for expenses that Medicare doesn’t cover?

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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 167 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 U.S., 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
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Thanks for everyone’s support of SCBS!
Veterans at the Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center received a special gift on Dec. 18 when Daryl Thomas, owner of Diamond T Woodcrafts, presented 50 hand-crafted wooden flags to inpatients.

Army Veteran Richard Casteel (right), holds back tears as Daryl Thomas, owner of Diamond T Woodcrafts, presents him with a hand-crafted wooden flag as a token of appreciation for his service.

Muskogee is the first VA medical center to receive such a donation from Thomas, but he says he hopes to add others to the list as the project grows.

Thomas received many different reactions as he made his way across the inpatient floors personally delivering flags and expressing his gratitude to each Veteran along the way.

Coast Guard Veteran Joy Neal was brought to tears as he was handed his flag.

“I’m 96 and to have someone come in here to show their appreciation in this way just makes me feel good,” said Neal. He went on to say, “The improvements I’ve seen at the VA are unbelievable. I was so surprised that since I have been here, everyone has worked as a team. What I see is wonderful and I tell it like it is,” he said with a chuckle.

Army Veteran Kenneth Baker’s face lit up when Thomas presented him with his flag and shook his hand. He stared at it in silence for a moment, running his fingers across the stars and stripes and said, “This is beautiful, I’m going to hang it above my bed.”

“I was humbled and in shock and will never forget that moment.”

Army Veteran Kenneth Baker (left), admires the hand-crafted wooden flag presented to him by Daryl Thomas, owner of Diamond T Woodcrafts. Thomas presented all inpatient Veterans with a flag on Dec. 18 to show his appreciation to them for their service to our country.

After visiting the medical center, Thomas has now had the honor of presenting 220 flags to our nation’s heroes and has no plan of stopping.

“I do this as a ‘no strings attached’ presentation and I ask for nothing in return, except that I be able to personally hand them out and say thank you,” said Thomas. “My goal is to convey appreciation through the ministry of presenting flags, and this project has been one of the greatest experiences of my life. Words cannot explain the joy I receive when I get to thank our Veterans, young, old, male and female, it is just a tremendous honor.”

Even though he has always had a fascination with woodwork, the flag project did not come about until a year ago when his son’s school asked the students to invite Veterans to their Veterans Day Program. Thomas wanted to make something special for those his son invited and made each of them a wooden flag.

Making a difference

When he witnessed their reaction and how well the gift was received, he knew he wanted to keep the project going. A Veteran friend, who believed in what Thomas was doing, encouraged him to continue and even offered to help support the project financially.

“This has been a fun ride so far and I am looking forward to more experiences as this ministry grows,” said Thomas. “This project means a lot to me and I think I have found something unique that I can contribute to society and use to make a difference.”

Tiffani Mathews is a public affairs TCF intern at the Eastern Oklahoma VA Health Care System
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You can help stop scams targeting Social Security
How to recognize a scam and report it

By: Beth Lamb

The Social Security Administration’s (SSA) Inspector General (IG), Gail S. Ennis, is warning the public that telephone scammers may send faked documents by email to convince victims to comply with their demands. With SSA’s help, you can learn to spot and report these scams.

SSA reports that victims receive emails that appear to be from SSA or the Social Security Office of Inspector General. The letters may use official letterhead and government terms to convince victims they are legitimate; they may also contain misspellings and grammar mistakes.

This is the latest variation on Social Security phone scams, which continue to be widespread throughout the country. Using robocalls or live callers, fraudsters pretend to be government employees and claim there is identity theft or another problem with one’s Social Security number, account or benefits. They may threaten arrest or other legal action, or may offer to increase benefits, protect assets, or resolve identity theft. They often demand payment via retail gift card, cash, wire transfer, internet currency such as Bitcoin or a pre-paid debit card.

Inspector General Ennis urges continued vigilance against all types of phone scams no matter what “proof” callers may offer.

**The Social Security Administration will never:**
- Threaten you with arrest or other legal action unless you immediately pay a fine or fee;
- Promise a benefit increase or other assistance in exchange for payment;
- Require payment by retail gift card, cash, wire transfer, internet currency, or prepaid debit card; or
- Send official letters or reports containing personally identifiable information via email.

If there is ever a problem with your Social Security number or record, in most cases SSA will mail you a letter.

If you do need to submit payments to SSA, the agency will send a letter with instructions and payment options. You should never pay a government fee or fine using retail gift cards, cash, internet currency, wire transfers, or pre-paid debit cards. The scammers ask for payment this way because it is very difficult to trace and recover.

If you receive a call or email that you believe to be suspicious, about a problem with your Social Security number or account, hang up or do not respond.

Veterans and their families are encouraged to report social security phone scams using this dedicated online form, at https://oig.ssa.gov.

Please share this information with your friends and family, to help spread awareness about phone scams. For more information, please visit https://oig.ssa.gov/scam.

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Graphic courtesy of the Social Security Administration.

Truck Pull brings awareness to suicide prevention
Pulling 10,000 pounds to save lives

A North Carolina VA health care system and its bighearted partners held a “Pull for Prevention” truck pull Sept. 7. The event expanded community outreach efforts to reduce the number of Veterans who die by suicide.

The Fayetteville VA Coastal Health Care System suicide prevention team hosted the event. Members of the Fort Bragg Harley-Davidson and the Fort Bragg Suicide Prevention Program groups participated. Also participating were members of the Rick Herrema Foundation and the Steven A. Cohen Military Family Clinic at Cape Fear Valley.

"Pull for Prevention” began with a four-person parachute jump by the All Veteran Parachute Team of Raeford, NC.

“Veterans are an integral part of this community. Effective outreach to Veterans requires outreach in diverse settings. For example, at a motorcycle dealership,” said Patricia Glenn, Suicide Prevention Program supervisor.

Glenn further added, “Holding the event in in collaboration with DOD and community partners creates access and awareness to the community, service members, Veterans and their families.”

More than 40 community public and private organizations came together during the event. They shared information about mental health, wellness and resources.

**Combat Veteran offered encouragement**

Retired Army Master Sgt. Chris Corbin was the guest speaker. During his speech, he provided insight and encouragement for
those facing obstacles and mental health challenges. Corbin is a former Army Ranger and Green Beret who was wounded in Afghanistan.

The kids tent provided free snacks, games and passports to encourage interaction with the vendors. In addition, kids enjoyed seeing local race cars and service dogs. Even more highlights included Jeep displays, Veteran outreach organizations, free food and live music.

The human truck pull and car dead lift were the main attractions. As a result, more than 200 attendees had the opportunity to flex their muscles. Many challenged themselves physically and mentally to “Pull for Prevention” across the parking lot. The truck weighed 10,000 pounds and the car dead lift approximated a hefty 300-pound lift from the ground.

Hope

More than 40 community public and private organizations provided information at the event.

“Our hope for this event,” Glenn said, “is that attendees left with education, information and contacts. As a result, they have support in times of distress, crisis, recovery and postvention.”

“We recognize that to reach all Veterans we must build effective networks of support, communication and care across this community. This means being where our Veterans live and work every day.

“With resources, services and events like these, we can raise awareness about suicide. We can reduce the stigma and encourage prevention. Also, we can work together as a community to prevent these tragic deaths by suicide among Veterans and service members.”

If you or someone you know is having thoughts of suicide, contact the Veterans Crisis Line. When you do, you will receive free, confidential support and crisis intervention. The service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Call 1-800-273-8255 and press 1.

Jeff Melvin is a public affairs officer in the Fayetteville NC VA Coastal Health Care System Public Affairs Office.

‘Nobody stood-up so I did’ — Army combat medic saves unconscious airline passenger

By: Haley Britzky, Task & Purpose, December 26, 2019

An Army combat medic recently gave new meaning to being in the right place at the right time.

Sgt. 1st Class Teresa Prupis was on a Dec. 14 flight from Portugal to Germany when the flight crew began asking if there was a doctor on board.

“Nobody stood up,” Prupis, who has a 17-year career behind her, said in an Army news story. “So I did.”

There was a 24-year-old man unconscious in his seat. She checked his airway and breathing, according to the story, and asked for medical equipment on the plane while her husband helped get the man onto the floor.

“I asked the flight attendant to get his legs elevated so more blood would circulate to his vital organs and I applied an oxygen mask,” she said. “Eventually he came to, we got him back in his seat and I was able to ask questions through an off-duty airline employee who was able to translate for me.”

Prupis told the pilot they could land in Germany as scheduled. When they touched down, there were medical professionals ready to assist “as soon as they opened the door to the plane,” according to the release. Prupis said this isn’t the first time she’s assisted another passenger on a flight: “My family says they don’t want to fly with me anymore.”

Originally a police officer, Prupis decided to become a combat medic after being “taken back” by the care her dad received during his fight with cancer. She currently works as a liaison officer to the U.S. Army Europe Office of the Command Surgeon.

“Being an Army combat medic is beyond rewarding and I have no regrets about picking this career field,” Prupis said. “I think the U.S. Army does such a great job training personnel and it’s an honor to assist anywhere.”
American Heart Association praises VA genetic research

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) earned national recognition for its impact on heart disease and stroke science in VA studies published in 2019.

The American Heart Association (AHA) lauded the research as top examples of how gene studies expand knowledge.

The studies were based on VA’s Million Veteran Program (MVP) landmark research effort. MVP is a national research program to learn how genes, lifestyle and military exposures affect health and illness.

“This acknowledgment is a testament to the scientific and medical impact of VA research,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “More than 30 studies are underway that use MVP data, and the work is expected to lead to many advances in health care for Veterans and all Americans.”

One of the studies focused on peripheral artery disease, a common circulatory problem in which narrowed arteries reduce blood flow to limbs. The other study looked at venous thromboembolism, in which a blood clot forms in the deep veins of the leg, groin or arm and travels in circulation, lodging in the lungs.

Both studies pinpointed gene targets that could lead to new drugs to treat the conditions, which affect millions of Veterans and other Americans.

MVP-based studies focus on topics including PTSD, suicide prevention, heart disease and diabetes. Findings from several studies have appeared in high-impact medical and scientific journals. More than 800,000 Veterans are already enrolled in MVP, and the recent launch of online enrollment has made it easier for more Veterans to take part.

AHA has recognized other major advances in which VA played a role. They included a major finding on blood pressure control and a study using smartwatches to warn of irregular heartbeats.

VA releases updated DOD list identifying Agent Orange sites outside of Vietnam

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) released in January an updated Department of Defense (DOD) list of locations outside of Vietnam can be review by going to https://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/locations/tests-storage/index.asp where tactical herbicides were used, tested or stored by the United States military.

“This update was necessary to improve accuracy and communication of information,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “VA depends on DOD to provide information regarding in-service environmental exposure for disability claims based on exposure to herbicides outside of Vietnam.”

DOD conducted a thorough review of research, reports and government publications in response to a November 2018 Government Accountability Office report PDF can be gotten by going to https://www.gao.gov/assets/700/695490.pdf. “DOD will continue to be responsive to the needs of our interagency partners in all matters related to taking care of both current and former service members,” said Defense Secretary Mark T. Esper. “The updated list includes Agents Orange, Pink, Green, Purple, Blue and White and other chemicals and will be updated as verifiable information becomes available.”

Veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange or other herbicides during service may be eligible for a variety of VA benefits, including an Agent Orange Registry health exam, information can be found by going to https://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/benefits/registry-exam.asp health care and disability compensation for diseases associated with exposure. Their dependents and survivors also may be eligible for benefits.

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VA guides Veteran out of darkness
VA professionals help blind Vet learn to live and work independently

Standing in front of a long stainless-steel table in the inpatient kitchen at the VA Salt Lake City Health Care System, Army Veteran Arthur Saenz prepared salads for the lunch rush, topping each bowl with cherry tomatoes.

You wouldn't know from watching him work, but 25-year-old Saenz is blind.

“It basically took an army to get me to where I’m at now,” he said.

Saenz joined the military shortly after high school. While still at basic training, he noticed something going “wonky” with his sight.

“I just assumed I was tired because, you know, they like to tire you out in basic,” he said. “But the next day, I woke up with the sight I have today.”

Saenz received an irregular discharge and went back home to Iowa where he and his wife lived for several dark and confusing years.

“I was alone and felt like no one was there for me. I was consistently told I wasn’t good enough or that I couldn’t support my wife because I was blind. That was very difficult. Very difficult.”

The meeting that changed everything
A chance meeting in a parking lot changed that.

“We ran into someone from DAV (Disabled American Veterans). And they were like, ‘It can’t hurt. Let’s put in a claim for you and let’s get it figured out.’”

With the help of DAV and the local VA, Saenz received a service-connection for his disability. More important, he gained access to VA professionals who could help him learn to live without sight.

During a three-month intensive living and mobility course at the Hines VA Medical Center in Chicago, Saenz learned basic skills, such as using a knife, cooking, reading Braille and using adaptive technology to navigate the world. He also learned how to hike unassisted. He was able put those skills to good use when he and his wife moved to the mountain town of American Fork, Utah.

At nearby VA Salt Lake City, Saenz met recreation therapist Heather Brown, who introduced him to low vision clinic instructors Thomas Wolf and Darren Lindsay.

“He’s skills were really good when he came to us,” Wolf said. “He just needed to get familiar with his new neighborhood.”

Still, something was missing for Saenz: a job. Vocational rehabilitation counselor Mari Hanson connected him with the position he has today with the hospital food service.

“You know there is hope”
Saenz plans to attend culinary school and eventually open his own restaurant.

He’s eager to give credit to everyone who helped him get where he is today. And he has a message for visually impaired people who are struggling to find their place in the world.

“Please don’t give up, because you know there is hope. Get help, find someone that’s willing to take the time and help you get through these obstacles.”

Jeremy M. Laird is a public affairs specialist for the VA Salt Lake City Health Care System

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