It's an unprecedented time!

By: Pat Smith, Guest Editor

Unprecedented! Unprecedented, a word that is on everyone’s lips. It is being spoken by all of the TV new channels pundits, radio stations, print media, spoken by our President and all of our governors and mayors in the country. This virus is truly unprecedented, much like the Spanish flu in 1918.

We can imagine that in the 1918 Spanish Flu the consensus was the same. It was unprecedented. Not too many people are alive today that have any memory of the Spanish Flu pandemic. It is estimated that over one-third of the world’s population at the time contracted the flu with over 675,000 deaths in the United States alone. Unbelievable! Where will this latest pandemic lead? When will it end? Certainly no one has the answers right now.

We can also imagine that the word unprecedented was used during the great depression. At that time The American Legion was about 10 years old. Again, very few of our citizens are alive today to tell their stories of that horrible period of time. But the American Legion was there as a community-based organization. We are sure our members banded together to take care of their fellow veterans and their families during the depression. We can be sure they used their post homes as a place of refuge for, not only their members, but the community at large. That is what the American Legion does. We are there for our veteran’s, our families and our communities.

But with this current crisis, the fact remains that our veterans and families will be going through a difficult time in their personal lives. We must be there to assist one another in this time of crisis. We can also imagine that the word unprecedented was used during the Great Depression. At that time, The American Legion was about 10 years old. Again, very few of our citizens are alive today to tell their stories of that horrible period of time. But the American Legion was there as a community-based organization. We are sure our members banded together to take care of their fellow veterans and their families during the depression. We can be sure they used their post homes as a place of refuge for, not only their members, but the community at large. That is what the American Legion does. We are there for our veteran’s, our families and our communities.

Last year our national commander recommended that we use the “Buddy Check” program to check on the health and welfare of our members. It was originally designed as a way to reach out to our members to find out if they were OK, but there was a “pay your dues” element to the program. While membership is necessary to financially manage this organization, the bigger picture is that our mission is to take care of the needs of veterans in our communities, whether they are members or not.

Our individual Legion posts must determine what is needed in their community. With so many restrictions in place that will be difficult. We know we have over 20,000 Legionnaires as members of over 160 Posts in communities all over Colorado. What we need to do is use the Buddy Check. Each of our post commanders needs to appoint a calling committee to reach out to their members. If your post has a physical post home, work with your local community leaders to determine if the post can be used as a staging area for distribution of supplies. Call the members you know who would be most vulnerable to this virus. Offer to do their grocery shopping, pick up their medication, deliver fast food, and anything that will keep them safe from acquiring the virus. If they need financial help determine what is needed. If the post doesn’t have the resources use the department and national resources available for veteran’s assistance, Colorado Veterans Kids Fund and the National Temporary Financial Assistance fund for members with kids under 18.

The government is promising many solutions to the many problems we are facing. Who knows when all that will materialize. ? We need to use the resources of our organization today, to help those that need help today. If the government catches up, fine, but The American Legion is here for you today. We were there for our communities during the great depression. We were there when our WWI and WWII veterans returned from war. We were there for the veterans returning from Korea and Vietnam and all other conflicts in the last 100 years. We need to stand strong together against this new enemy. With faith in our God, we will prevail.

Pat Smith, Department of Colorado Adjutant
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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It's an unprecedented time!
National Commander Oxford's Message
Veterans: Call before visiting your VA facility
Department Commander Noechel’s Call
Sr. Vice Commander Jackson’s Message
Jr. Vice Commander Force’s Message
Jr. Vice Commander Kassow’s Message
Department Chaplain Hamamoto’s Corner
Department Historian Davis’ Message
SAL Detachment Commander Arceo
Take a ‘smart’ approach to coronavirus
Department Update
Post 1992 Annual Easter Egg Hunt Flyer
Children and Youth Month Spotlight
LIT insurance Medicare supplement reply flyer
ID Resolve Flyer
You can make a difference flyer
75 years of continuous Legion membership
USAA Preferred Provider Flyer
VA national cemeteries to adjust operations
VA to suspend enrollment at four universities
Oxford presents legislative agenda to Congress
$54,516 raised by District 2 Kansas Legion Family
Safeguards to protect nursing home/spinal cord patients
2020 District Convention Schedule
Lawmakers approve emergency fix to GI Bill benefits
Mike Shaw Subaru supports all Colorado Veterans

Join The American Legion

Help Our Nation's Veterans

Index

April 2020

Page 2

April 2020

Page 2
The enemy we are facing isn’t hiding in the bush. Nor has it buried a roadside bomb unbeknownst to us. Yet the enemy is just as dangerous and deadly.

The coronavirus has been classified as a pandemic by the World Health Organization. The number of people who will test positive for the potentially fatal COVID-19 remains unknown, but there are steps we can take, and must take, to protect ourselves and help our fellow veterans and citizens.

I encourage you to use extreme caution and adhere to the best practices put forth by the health experts. Namely properly wash your hands frequently, use antibacterial rubs and practice “social distancing.”

Coronavirus is particularly dangerous for those over the age of 50 who contract it so please be cognizant of the risks when planning post activities and functions.

At the same time, this is an excellent opportunity to perform Buddy Checks. Check in with older veterans in your communities to make sure they have the supplies they need, are feeling healthy and help them acquire the resources they need. Of course, Buddy Checks can be done with phone calls and emails so as not to risk spreading or contracting coronavirus.

The coronavirus situation will be changing rapidly so we have to be nimble in our approach to serving our communities, states and nation. Among the best resources to follow are the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (cdc.gov) and the World Health Organization (who.int).

Let’s also keep our thoughts and prayers with our servicemembers especially those overseas, our National Guardsmen, first responders and others who will be taxed in coming months. They need our support now more than ever.

We have faced down enemies, foreign and domestic, throughout our nation’s history. While this threat is ominous, we will once again work together to overcome it.

Veterans: Call before visiting your VA facility

Got a fever, cold, cough or flu-like symptoms? Are you worried that you have a viral illness? The last thing you want to do is get out of the house to see the doctor, exposing yourself (and others) to more potential bugs and viruses.

VA can make it easier and safer to get back to health with virtual care through My HealtheVet and the VA Video Connect app on your smartphone, tablet or computer.

What is virtual care? Virtual care means you can contact your VA provider (and health care team) through secure messaging or receive treatment by telephone or video. Last year, Veterans had over 20 million virtual engagements with VA.

Any Veteran who qualifies to receive VA care and lives in the U.S. is eligible to use virtual care.

Staying home – easier for you, safer for the community.

Virtual care is personalized and can connect you with your providers more effectively than ever. Ask your health care team if virtual care can help meet some of your health care needs. Options include in-home health monitoring with tailored technologies, connection to specialists, or even remote scans and data.

Cold and flu care made easy

Virtual care is safe and effective. Imagine the benefits to you and to your fellow Veterans if you don’t have the hassle of going to the hospital or clinic with a cold, flu or other viral illness. You can stay at home and avoid battling for a parking spot and spending time in a waiting room. Most importantly, you won’t put other Veterans at risk of a highly contagious illness. Staying home can be easier for you AND safer for the community by helping contain the spread of infectious diseases.

You probably already know My HealtheVet is a great way to manage your care – with online Rx Refills, VA Appointments, and your labs and tests, radiology reports, and images.

With secure messaging and video appointments, reaching your providers while at home can be easy, too. While not for use in emergencies, a secure and private session begins with a simple request with a Secure Message for a video appointment. Sign in and request one next time you need to see your doctor or other providers.

Your health care team can also set up an in-person appointment, if needed. Call your VA health center if you have symptoms.
Colorado American Legion Family,

As always, your safety and the safety of all of our members is our top priority. We know there are questions and concerns about how COVID-19, commonly known as the coronavirus, could affect all of us and our mission. Please know that we are monitoring developments regarding COVID-19 both locally and through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html.

We will continue to update you on relevant developments, and we appreciate your understanding of any necessary adjustments in the interest of health and safety of our members.

Where does The American Legion stand? What should your reaction be? The membership of The American Legion is about 60% of those that are most vulnerable to the disease, those over 65 years of age. Decisions on whether to cancel your individual American Legion Post meetings and events will need to be made on a case by case basis. You will need to look at any upcoming events your post may be holding. The department does not have the expertise to advise your posts on cancelling or holding meetings or events. Pay close attention to what is happening in your community with the virus and make the right decision for your members. As to the department headquarters, we will continue to run on a business as usual basis. We will continue to maintain our office hours Monday thru Friday at our Lowry campus. The VA Regional Office will make the decision on whether to keep our service office open. As of this date and time the Regional Office is still open for business. We will keep you informed of that situation. We have a department leadership conference scheduled for May 15. A decision on that event will be made later, same with the department convention. Tom Bock has been in touch with the University for Boys State. No decision on the status of this program at this time. This is an excellent opportunity to perform Buddy Checks. Check in with our older veterans in your communities to make sure they have the supplies they need, are feeling healthy and help them acquire the resources they need. Of course, Buddy Checks can be done with phone calls and emails so as not to risk spreading or contracting the coronavirus. Now is the time to take care of our buddies. We can only hope and pray that this virus will be short lived, and we can go about our main mission of helping veterans and their families. In the meantime, observe all of the suggestions by our medical professionals to keep yourself safe, hand washing, covering your cough and sneeze, staying home if you feel sick, etc. Please communicate with department on the status of any cancellations you may have so that we can communicate that to our wider American Legion network in Colorado.

Everyday Preventive Measures

Even with those important policies in place, it is critical that we all take these everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases:

• Stay home when you feel sick or if you think you could have been exposed to someone who is sick or may have been exposed to COVID-19.

• Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

• Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.

• Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth. When necessary to touch those areas, wash your hands thoroughly both before and after doing so.

• Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash. If you don’t have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve/elbow, not your hands. Again, wash thoroughly afterwards.

• Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.

• Do not share personal items such as cups, water bottles, eating utensils, etc.

• Avoid shaking hands, hugging or close physical contact.

• If you are considered high risk under CDC guidelines, conduct your own risk assessment and consider avoiding public venues (https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/high-risk-complications.html).

If you have a fever, cough, or other symptoms associated with COVID-19, or if you believe you may have been exposed to COVID-19, you should isolate and not attend any ALR, Legion events. People who think they may have been exposed to COVID-19 should contact their healthcare provider immediately.

(Continued on Page 6 See Expired)
Spring Showers Bring Fresh Ideas

By: Greg Jackson, Department Sr. Vice Commander

Have you ever heard the saying, “April Showers, Bring May Flowers”? Now let’s take that and say, “Spring Showers bring Fresh Ideas”. Let’s all step out of our comfort zones and brush the dust off that has been accumulating this winter. I would like to address Programs, but I also ask and encourage you to think beyond and outside the box looking at things you don’t normally think of or see day to day in every program we have. I am going to discuss very briefly each of the major ones. But, also, some ways to meet these items.

I am thinking now is a great time to start working on doing an oratorical competition in your community and districts for next year. Start talking with parents, students and even local educators. The sooner we start getting the word out, the better the kids will learn and perform in this program. We can start organizing to have Post and District competitions early and finding the support to assist in making next year’s State Oratorical the best.

It will also get students and their community directly involved in this great program about our Constitution supporting one of our American Pillars. If you start now to organize this program and involve your local educators and businesses to assist in planning and funding this event in the community, we are better able to advance a great American Legion program. Community leaders that get involved with our Programs will promote The American Legion values and that will generate unsolicited membership and often an active member. You knew I would have to address membership at some point in this article… right.

Boys State is coming soon, and registration needs to be submitted on-line before May 1st. Please get out and talk to the young men in your community and get those interested students ready to go on a life changing experience. These are also great opportunities to hold a community BBQ to explain these (and in my opinion the best) Americanism programs and how our community can help support.

This is also the best time to work and develop other Americanism events such as sports programs. If you can’t afford a Legion Baseball program, consider sponsoring a little league type team. Maybe start a shooting event. There is so much we can do to promote Americanism from April through November that we should take advantage of every idea and opportunity. Also remember, as in any major election year, it isn’t a question of your party affiliation but rather how constitutionally important it is to exercise your right to get out and vote. Our civic duty is to help promote our communities to get out and vote.

We have a serious obligation to all our Veterans both The American Legion Members and those who are not. Veteran Affairs and Rehabilitation Programs. Most posts will raise funds and distribute those to veterans needing help. Often posts have inadequate funds to assist a veteran. For those times the Department of Colorado has a Veterans Assistance fund to help. Information on how to access this help can be obtained by a simple phone call to our department staff or any Department Officer. We live in a modern world today with many advancements in technology. Technology can be a tremendous benefit to our posts and communities. It is no longer a viable option to continue avoiding learning and utilizing the power of these tools. Think of these concepts, Tele-health, Tele-psych and Tele-claim. These are technology-based programs for visiting with a VA doctor from the privacy of your own home. Visit a mental health specialist or even file a VA claim locally with one of our VA claim Service officers without the hassle of traveling for an office visit. These make it possible to have professional help anytime, anywhere. This can be a big post asset as well. You can help sponsor and establish these programs by having a post service officer work towards facilitating at your post or even a community center location that offers discretion and privacy. I know this may sound vague, but these are options that can be explored further if there is enough interest. If we harness technology, then our local American Legion posts can become recognized as a leader in taking care of veteran needs locally and remotely with efficiency.

It is a very important time of the year to take care of our future. Children and Youth should be an everyday vigilance. April is Children & Youth Month. What is your plan to support this program? Will it be to be raise money for Temporary Financial Assistance, Colorado Child Welfare fund or Colorado Veterans Kids Fund or conduct local events to ensure their wellbeing throughout the year? Think about maybe setting up a way to sponsor some days at the park and maybe teach kids a topic about a president or other historical event to help promote Americanism. Educate them on a safety subject. You can also help feed those that may not get a regular lunch in the summer months while they are out of school. Maybe sponsor a tour at a local historical site and offer them some food to take home like a backpack meal program that provides a couple of meals for the children throughout the week. Many events that we organize for our youth can also assist in helping to identify families that could use a hand in our community with TFA or CVKF or CFA

As you can see from above there are many things, we can do that will help our Veterans and Communities and still market our brand, The American Legion. We all must be vigilant and if we think something needs attention then it is important to address the problem. But also think of a viable solution that can be reasonably and efficiently implemented. I remember a Past.

(Continued on Page 7 See Department)
Veteran legislative progress notes

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 60th American Legion Washington Conference was held the second week of March. The following links are to share with you the 2020 Legislative Agenda brochure and Legislative Point Papers which support the agenda items.


The Pay our Coast Guard Act (H.R. 367 & S. 21) continue to wait Congressional floor action. Veterans Burn Pit Act (S. 2950) has been assigned to the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee. 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. Veteran’s mental bill (S. 785) has been reported out of the Senate Veterans Affairs committee and is waiting for Senate floor action. The Protect the GI Bill Act (H. R. 4625) passed the House and has been sent 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. The United Veterans Coalition of Colorado Legislative Committee has taken a position of support the following Colorado bills. HB20-1051 ‘Identification of Veteran Remains for proper Military Burial’ concerning final disposition of the abandoned cremated remains of persons eligible for interment in a nation cemetery has passed both the House and the Senate and is waiting for the Governor’s signature. HB20-1190 – Disabled Veteran Registration Fees and ownership Tax has been referred to Appropriations. HB-1220 – Veterans community Living Center Services Assessment has been referred to Appropriations. HB20-1222 – Veterans Hiring Preference is scheduled for action by the House State, Veterans, & Military Affairs Committee.HB20-1275 – In-state Tuition at Community College for Military Families is assigned to House Education committee. SB20-069 ‘Disabled Veterans Free State Park Access’ concerning the documentation required for a disabled veteran to receive a free transferable annual park pass has been sent to the Governor for his signature. SB20-122 – Mobile Veterans Support Unit Grant Program has been referred to Appropriations. SB20-148 – Property Tax Exemption Value Adjustments has been postponed indefinitely. To find the current status of a bill go to https://leg.colorado.gov/bills and enter the bill number in the Search by Bill box.

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. Select State Legislation then 2020 Bills to Watch.

In closing, if there is anything that we can do to assist you or your Post please reach out to us you can email me directly at d.noechel@coloradolegion.org or call our Department Headquarters at 303-366-5201.

I would like to ask for your support as Greg Jackson and I seek re-election to the offices of Department Commander and Department Senior Vice Commander.

WILL YOU STAND WITH US IN 2020-2021?

A Message From Department Jr. Vice Commander Force

Gary Force
Department Jr.
Vice Commander

Please work your expired members, expired members are those that have not renewed for 2020, as of this date there are approximately 4500 members here in Colorado that have not renewed for 2020. Please contact them and ask them to renew on line at www.legion.org/renew. We have so many Posts and Districts that are close to 100% and we need these members in our Posts. If you need your expired lists emailed to you please contact Tom Bock at mnebock@coloradolegion.org

In closing, if there is anything that we can do to assist you or your Post please reach out to us you can email me directly at d.noechel@coloradolegion.org or call our Department Headquarters at 303-366-5201.

I would like to ask for your support as Greg Jackson and I seek re-election to the offices of Department Commander and Department Senior Vice Commander.

WILL YOU STAND WITH US IN 2020-2021?
(Department Continued from Page 5)

Department Commander’s slogan of B.P.O.T.S. (Be Part Of The Solution). It is the responsibility of every Legionnaire to help this Great organization become better. If we expend energy to finding problems of personal issue with no benefit to our Programs, then that is time not efficiently utilized to uphold our commitments to our Preamble.

I feel that we had a great presence at the Nation’s Capital this last month and the conversations on our Legislative priorities were well received by both the House and Senate. For updates, please check in on our Facebook Pages for those and other items I discussed in this article.

Now that I have said all that, I would like to Congratulate TEAM Colorado for your efforts with membership this year. Who is TEAM Colorado? That is each and every member, post and district. Together we have been able to rise to an amazing #6 in National standings. We have also reached our 90 percent membership target date with our next one in a few short days of 95%. I encourage everyone to keep working towards that goal of 100% membership this year. If every post attains a 100% membership, we will have some fun, as the Commander and myself will dress as cheerleaders for the annual Convention. After all we are not only your biggest fans but also your biggest cheering section.

A Message From Department Jr. Vice Commander Kossow

Training and Education
By: Chip Kossow, Department Jr. Vice Commander

Knowledge is good! Many times, Legionnaires are hesitant to step up into Post leadership positions because they feel they don’t know enough to do so. While this isn’t a good excuse because District and Department are here to help your Post succeed, there are two great locations to learn a bunch about our great organization. The American Legion Basic Training and Colorado American Legion and Auxiliary Training and Education Conference. TAL Basic training covers the history of TAL and is free on-line at legion.org. Colorado American Legion and Auxiliary Training and Education Conference costs a mere $40. The fee covers 3 meals and all materials for the 3-day event.

Chip Kossow
Jr. Vice Commander

The Colorado American Legion and Auxiliary Training and Education Conference will be held 15 – 17 May 2020 at Post 209 in Colorado Springs. Registration can be accomplished on the Department website at coloradolegion.org. The agenda is also included there so you can see exactly what will be covered, by whom, and when. As I write this, the conference is still scheduled, but Covid 19 may have other plans for us. Keep an eye out for updates.

The conference will include presentations by two Past National Commanders, Denise Rohan, and our own Tom Bock, as well as the Leading Candidate for the next National Commander, Paul Dillard. Other presenters include Mike Rohan, the National Chairman of the Marketing Commission, and most of our current Department Officers.

The conference is intended to strengthen the knowledge level of the blue hat Legionnaire and give them the confidence to take their turn at running their Post and possible ideas on how to make the Post better. Everyone should do their part to help run our organization, even at the committee level and this conference will help you understand how. There will also be opportunities to talk with the sages about other questions you may have.

Do not be intimidated by the words training or education. Be encouraged that we all want to help you be an asset. The main purpose of the training is to make you and in turn our organization better to carry on the mission of serving our veterans and their families in our communities.

Feel free to contact me with any questions.

Join The American Legion

And, Help Our Nation's Veterans
Chaplain's Corner - Patience

By: Stanley Hamamoto, Department Chaplain

Has God Been Good to You!!!!!!!

First, I need to let you all know that I have been nominated to be the American Legion National Chaplain for the 2020 – 2021 year. I have waited for this for four years and I am so very excited about being nominated. I was informed that the only way I would not get it is if I refuse it, and that will never happen.

Being the first National Chaplain from the State of Colorado in 100 years means a lot to me and to our State. Maybe I can lead the way so others will follow me someday later. This means that if we have our Department Convention in June of this year, I will not be running for re-election as Department Chaplain. I think that after 5 years you had enough of me anyway. Change, many times, can be good. Allow it to happen and allow it work, you may be surprised as to the outcome of it. It’s just like church, the people that have been there for a while, will say, “We have never done it that way before.”

This is where I feel that patience can come in. We all need to be patient and allow things to work out before making any kind of judgment. I have seen where many times at church those that have been there for a long time, hate to see changes made. They are very comfortable the way things have been going, so why rock the boat. I for one am a very impatient person and my wife knew this. She bought me a very large sign that I hung in my church office to remind me to have patience. The sign read: “PATIENCE” and it really works for me. Every time I see that sign, I try to excurse patience. It’s not easy when you are a very impatient person like I am.

Here are some scriptures about patience: Romans 5: 3-5 says: “We also have joy with our troubles, because we know that these troubles produce patience. And patience produces character, and charter produces hope, and this hope will never disappoint us, because God has poured out his love to fill our hearts.” Then from James 1: 2-4 it says: “My brother and sisters, when you have many kinds of troubles, you should be full of joy, because you know that these troubles test your faith and this will give you patience. Let your patience show itself perfectly in what you do. Then you will be prefect and complete and will have everything you need.”

Here are a few prayers that may help you also: “Lord, I ask for a quiet heart as I wait for YOUR promise, trusting YOUR timing is always best. Help me also develop a habit of patience with all those around me just as YOU have been so patient with me, Amen” And another that will help you: “Father God, I’ve noticed that my children don’t know how to wait. They were born into a world of instant everything. But learning patience is the difference between waiting for the best and settling for something less. I want my children to learn to wait before YOU, to listen for YOUR voice. Show me ways to wait to introduce the joy of waiting into my children’s consciousness and teach them its merits. AMEN!”

My last three words to all of you are: GO TO CHURCH!!!!!!
A Message From Department Historian Davis

History Book Competition
By: Deb Davis, Department Historian

Fellow Post Historians:

How are your Post History Books coming along? Need some help? Call me 720—771-0344. Those submitting a History Book for competition at the State level need to get them to Department by May 1, 2019. The winner will be announced at Convention in June.

Those post wanting their History Book to go forward to the National Level must comply with the guidelines in the Officer’s Guide. I will work with you to ensure everything is correct. Those books will be sent to National on August 1, 2019. They will be judged in October and returned to you by December.

This month is the American Legion Birthday! Has your post planned a celebration? If so, send photos of the event to Observer@coloradolegion.org.

Any Historians out there that would like to be the Department Historian? Stand up at the Convention and volunteer or get with me prior to elections and I will nominate you for the position!

Deb Davis
Department Historian

WORDS OF WISDOM

"It is better to keep your mouth closed and let people think you are a fool than to open it and remove all doubt."

MARK TWAIN

2020 Washington Conference

Department Commander Dean Noechel, far left, PDC Tim Grabin, left and Sr Vice Commander Greg Jackson, far right, met with Colorado 5th District Congressman Doug Lamborn, standing between Grabin and Jackson.

Department Commander Dean Noechel, far left, Sr Vice Commander Greg Jackson, right and PDC Tim Grabin, far right, met with Colorado 3rd District Congressmen Scott Tipton, standing between Noechel and Jackson.
Greetings fellow Son’s

Thank you for your efforts to assist our Veterans and their families. April is children and youth month. In 1938, April was formally designated as Child Welfare Month (now called Children & Youth Month) and has continued each year. During this month, I want to challenge each Squadron to join Their sponsoring Post and reach out to the Children & Youth in your area. Did you know that The American Legion has a Children & Youth Committee? Each year at the Legions Spring meetings, this committee meets and focuses on three important areas, Child Health, Child Safety and Family support. Share these focus points with your Post and Squadrons, come up with an action plan to reach out and make a difference in your communities. Here are just a few areas that you and your members can support our Children & Youth, American Legion Baseball, Boys & Girls State, Junior Shooting Sports, High School Oratorical Program and Scouting.

Other important dates this month Sunday April 5, Palm Sunday, Thursday April 9, Passover, Friday April 10, Good Friday, Sunday April 12, Easter and April 17-19 is the 83rd Annual High School Oratorical Contest, Indianapolis, IN. By the way, Colorado will be well represented by Emily Tuttle a Home-Schooled student from Colorado Springs, sponsored by Falcon Post 2008. Other students finished as follows, 2nd place winner Sophie Swartz, Colorado Early Colleges, sponsored by Parker Post 1864 and 3rd place winner Jaxon Mawhiney , Air Academy High School, sponsored by Colorado Springs Post 209. Keep Emily and family in your thoughts and Prayers for a safe and successful trip to the finals.

My homecoming will be on Saturday April 11, 2020 at the Lakewood Post #178. Please visit our website for details. (salcolorado.org).

Thank you all for your efforts on membership! Keep up the good work! Get that membership turned in quickly. May 13, 2020 is our 100% target goal! Can we get there? I believe we can because “You can make a difference”. Please join me on my monthly conference call, the 2nd Thursday of the month @ 7 p.m. call in number 605-313-5111 access code#526231. Hope to hear from you all. Let me know of events that you are hosting; I would love to attend.

God Bless

The SAL Detachment of Colorado has announced the cancellation of the Child Welfare Banquet scheduled for April 4th and the homecoming for the SAL Commander Nick Arceo scheduled for April 11th because of the Coronavirus. Nick has indicated he may reschedule his homecoming.
National Commander Oxford: Take a ‘smart’ approach to coronavirus

By: James W. "Bill" Oxford, National Commander

The nature of the coronavirus pandemic is unprecedented in our lifetimes. We are all learning here, and I ask that you be patient, flexible and strong as we get through this. And we will get through this because our American Legion Family has proven our toughness throughout our first 101 years.

We must be smart about how we approach this. I have suspended all official travel for all American Legion national officers and staff unless it is absolutely imperative. This policy pertains to me as well and will last at least through the end of April. Travel beyond that date will be reassessed in a timely fashion. While I do not have the authority to mandate that departments take action, I would like to share with you how your national headquarters will be operating for the temporary future. Keep in mind, these policies are also recommended by medical professionals at the Center for Disease Control and other experts throughout the health care and emergency response communities.

We are providing a liberal leave policy for employees who are ill or who have family members who are ill. We are also providing liberal leave or telework options for those experiencing daycare issues because of school cancellations. The workplace at national headquarters will be even cleaner than its usual high standards and there will be plenty of hand-sanitizers available for workers and visitors to use. We have also temporarily halted public tours of the headquarters.

We have many national youth programs, meetings and other events scheduled for the weeks and months ahead. Some will likely be cancelled or postponed. These decisions will not be easy to make but will be thought out with safety being the number one priority. Cancellations and postponements of national American Legion events will be announced promptly on our national website, www.legion.org, and by email to all departments once such decisions are made. I will keep you advised of any new measures at the national level as they occur.

I am asking every department to respect their local civil authorities as well. Different states have different measures in effect. Like veterans, they are risking their health and wellbeing in order to keep us safe. This is a new kind of crisis for them as well.

The Buddy Check program is perhaps more important now than ever before. Rely on telephone, email or social media to communicate since person-to-person contact is not the safest option. Please be particularly attentive to seniors, a population that is especially vulnerable to the harmful effects of this virus.

I do realize that some of the measures we have taken will inconvenience many of you. Nobody wants this to last any longer than necessary. And once it is determined that the conditions are safe, operations will return to normal. I thank you in advance for your patience, resilience and continued service to our great organization and country.

Department COVID19 Update

By: Pat Smith, Department Adjutant

The Department headquarters staff will be rotating their working from home and time in the office. When we are not in the office, the phone will be forwarded to one of our cell phones. The Colorado Boys State Committee will be will make a final decision about whether to cancel Boys State. Colorado Baseball Committee will also be making a decision in the near future. You will be informed when that decision is made.

Our Department Service officers, Dean Casey and Will Davis, will be working from home as much as they can. If you have a claim pending you can call Will Davis or Dean Casey at 303 914-5585 and leave a message. They probably will not be able to take new claims but will be able to access the VA computers to check on the status of your existing claim. If you just need to talk to someone about your situation don't hesitate to call one of them.

We have not cancelled the Education and Training conference set for May 15th at Post 209 in Colorado Springs. You can register on our webpage. No money necessary but we would appreciate your registering so that we can get a count of how many are interested. Should we need to cancel you will get ample notice.

The Department Convention is still scheduled for June 25-28 at the the Elegante Hotel in Colorado Springs. We will be publishing the room rate and proposed agenda by April 1st.

There are questions about post meetings and elections. If your post elections take place in either April or May and you are not able to run those meetings you need to consult your own constitution and by-laws to see what your options are. Normally you remain in office until your "successor is elected and qualified" for the position. So, if you can't have an election you will remain in office until the post can hold an official election.
Check with Post 1992 to make sure that this event is taking place!

AMERICAN LEGION POST 1992 PRESENTS:

ANNUAL EASTER EGG HUNT

EASTER BUNNY • CANDY • PRIZES • SCOUT TROOP 375
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8 BICYCLES BEING RAFFLED OFF • & MUCH MORE!

SUN 12TH APRIL

EGG HUNT AT NOON!
HERO’S PIZZERIA & MEADOWOOD PARK
11AM - 1PM

DONATIONS NOW BEING ACCEPTED!
VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT
BRAD SINDT, POST 1992 COMMANDER
(720) 369-7844
Since 1988, The American Legion Family has assisted the Children’s Organ Transplant Association (COTA) and our patients throughout this nation. During that period gifts and grants from every level of the national, department, post, squadron, unit and riders, Legionnaires have helped COTA kids with more than $1 million. For the coming year, The American Legion Family will help transplant families in several departments and ensure that no child is denied a life-saving transplant due to a financial barrier.

Mission Statement
The mission of the Children’s Organ Transplant Association (COTA) is to provide fundraising assistance and family support for children and young adults who need a life-saving transplant. The most successful organization of its kind in the country, COTA provides a lifetime of support to transplant families.

About the Children’s Organ Transplant Association (COTA)
COTA was founded in Bloomington, Indiana in 1986 following a fundraising drive to assist a local toddler. A group of concerned area citizens joined together to raise more than $100,000, which enabled this child to be placed on the organ waiting list. Unfortunately, the child did not survive the wait for a donor liver, but his courageous struggle inspired this group to organize what today is COTA.

More than 32 years later, COTA continues to help children and young adults who need a life-saving transplant by providing fundraising assistance and family support. During this period we have grown from a small regional organization assisting families in Indiana to a national one with families and volunteers in all 50 states.

COTA has children and young adults in every department across the country. As a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization funds allocated are not considered income for families.

Since 1986, more than $110 million has been raised across the country for thousands of children and young adults needing an organ, bone marrow or stem cell transplant. In the past three years, COTA has grown by 22 percent with the number of new families served annually going from 176 to 225. COTA has served families and raised funds to meet transplant-related expenses from coast-to-coast paying more than $12 million and raising approximately $15 million during that period, with the balance of funds waiting to pay future transplant-related expenses.

Thank you for your service, and generous and faithful support of our life-saving work!

C&Y Chair Spotlight: Currently, in Colorado there are 47 children and youth on a transplant journey. The road does not end when diagnosed or post-transplant. Speaking with the team at COTA, I have learned the transplant journey is filled with a lifetime of doctor visits, possible additional transplants, blood work, rejection monitoring, medications and the added health implications of common illnesses and other health consequences that may arise. There are many additional transplant related expenses. For one, parking at hospitals can add up to hundreds of dollars a month. Additionally, families, or a part of the family, may be need to relocate to be closer to a transplant center which means maintaining two households. In these situations, one parent will maintain the primary home while the other cares for their child in need of a transplant. This is where COTA steps in. Once a child becomes a COTA Kid the funds raised on their behalf stays with them for their lifetime.

For these reasons and many more, the Children and Youth Team would like to welcome COTA to the Colorado Legion Family. Beginning this year, we are asking for Posts to choose a COTA Kid to support throughout their transplant journey. Where to begin: Start by collaborating with the C&Y and COTA Team Members to learn about COTA, fundraising ideas and resources. As Legionnaires we can begin by expanding the buddy check system. Check in with the family, ask questions, be available to offer support, offer to assist with a home project, take over a dinner, share a coffee break, many Posts conduct a spaghetti fundraisers and if you do not have a kitchen send around a coin canister at meetings, put on a car show, schedule an ALR ride or maybe a summer carnival. Every penny counts and these kids need our support; will you donate your change for children?

For Posts, Auxiliaries, SAL and ALR’s who choose to adopt a fundraising effort contact C&Y Chair Annette Johnson at annettephd@comcast.net to receive your coin canister, information about a child and COTA Team member information. If you are interested in becoming an organ donor please see the insert in this publication.
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 its prompt, personal, responsive service.

Other features include:
- The freedom of choosing your own doctors and hospitals
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- Hassle-free claims processing in about 7 days
- Excellent service from a company with an A+ (Superior, 2nd out of 16 ratings) A.M. Best rating for financial stability as of 4/27/11

Make sure you can pay for the expenses that Medicare doesn’t cover and help protect your family’s retirement savings. Apply today for the peace of mind you want, at affordable Legionnaire Insurance Trust member rates.

Complete and Return the Reply Card. Or, Call 1-800-247-1771
(Wednesday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. EST)

Underwritten by Transamerica Life Insurance Company and Transamerica Financial Life Insurance Company (NA)

Legionnaire Insurance Trust Members Medicare Supplement Reply Card

For your FREE information kit on the Medicare Supplement Insurance Plans complete and return this coupon.

Name: ___________________________ Date of Birth: ___________________________

Spouse Name: ______________________ Spouse’s Date of Birth: ______________________

Address: ____________________________

City: ____________________________ State: __________ ZIP: __________

Telephone: ______________________

Send to: Medicare Supplement Processing Dept.
 P.O. Box 1341
 Valley Forge, PA 19482-9946
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 Legionnaires’ 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
On the evening of March 5, 2020, during the regular post meeting Post 4 member Curt Cameron celebrated receiving his 75 years of continuous membership certificate from the American Legion.

The certificate was presented by Fort Collins Post 4 Commander, Gary L. Bishop. Department Senior Vice Commander Greg Jackson presented a Memorial coin.

The ceremony was also attended by District 4 Commander Harry Fisher, Department Jr. Vice Commander Gary Force and Post 4 members.

Publicity was provided by Channel 4 News it (was aired following morning) and the Coloradoan newspaper.

Seated in blue jacket is 75 year continuous Legion member Curt Cameron. Standing from left to right: District 4 Commander Harry Fisher; Department Jr. Vice Commander Gary Force; Post 4 Commander Gary Bishop and Department Sr. Vice Commander Greg Jackson.
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.

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Purchase of a product other than USAA auto or property insurance, or purchase of an insurance policy offered through the USAA Insurance Agency, does not establish eligibility for or membership in USAA property and casualty insurance companies. Use of the term “member” or “membership” does not convey any eligibility rights for auto and property insurance products, or legal or ownership rights in USAA.
Membership eligibility and product restrictions apply and are subject to change. To be eligible for auto and property insurance, separated military personnel must have received a discharge type of Honorable. Eligible former dependents of USAA members may purchase auto or property insurance if the member obtained USAA auto or property insurance. USAA means United Services Automobile Association and its insurance, banking, investment and other companies. Banks Member FDIC. Investments provided by USAA Investment Management Company and USAA Financial Advisors Inc., both registered broker dealers. Financial planning services and financial advice provided by USAA Financial Planning Services Insurance Agency, Inc. (known as USAA Financial Insurance Agency in California, License #0E363120) a registered investment advisor and insurance agency and its wholly owned subsidiary, USAA Financial Advisors, Inc., a registered broker dealer. The American Legion receives financial support from USAA for its sponsorship.
VA national cemeteries to adjust operations in response to COVID-19

All U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) national cemeteries are open and will continue to provide interments for Veterans and eligible individuals. However, effective March 23 — as part of the agency’s response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) — committal services and the rendering of military funeral honors will discontinue until further notice.

Immediate family members (limited to no more than 10 individuals) of the deceased may witness the interment if requested.

“We are committed to the safety of our Veterans, their families and employees, and have implemented an aggressive public health response to COVID-19,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “At the same time, we continue to take steps to provide flexibility to Veterans and their loved ones, where possible.”

Families choosing to continue with interment may schedule a committal service for a later date. Families wishing to postpone an already scheduled interment to a later date should contact the cemetery as soon as possible to convey their wishes.

Although VA national cemeteries remain open to visitors, guests are strongly urged to obey local travel restrictions and avoid unnecessary travel. Certain portions of a cemetery typically open to the public, such as public information centers or chapels, may be closed to the public. Contact your local cemetery for updates regarding closures.

For more information, contact NCA at 202-891-9987. Veterans can call the National Cemetery Scheduling Office at 800-535-1117 or schedule a burial arrangement online.

VA intends to suspend enrollment of new GI Bill students at University of Phoenix, Career Education Corporation, Bellevue University and Temple University

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), acting within its required approval authority under the law limiting certain advertising, sales, and enrollment practices, notified the University of Phoenix, Career Education Corporation (Colorado Technical University, American InterContinental University), Bellevue University and Temple University, March 9, of the agency’s intent to disapprove the enrollment of new GI Bill students at these institutions.

After careful review and consideration of findings provided by the Federal Trade Commission and State Attorneys General Offices, VA has concluded there is sufficient evidence to support a finding that these schools have utilized advertising, sales, or enrollment practices that are erroneous, deceptive, or misleading either by actual statement, omission, or intimation against GI Bill beneficiaries, in violation of the law.

VA intends to suspend enrollment of new students for all programs in 60 days unless the schools take corrective action.

This decision only applies to new GI Bill students, and to the extent allowable under current law, the department will afford current students at these institutions the opportunity to continue their programs of study, provided they have maintained continuous enrollment. Schools may also be prohibited from submitting enrollment certifications for new students or students returning from a break in attendance during the suspension.

Additionally, while VA’s action will not impact current students that maintain continuous enrollment, the state approving agencies responsible for approving courses at these schools may also take independent actions based on VA’s decision. If such action occurs, a decision by the relevant state approving agency to withdraw program approval would remove VA’s authority to issue benefit payments to currently enrolled students as well as new students. However, VA will take appropriate actions to keep beneficiaries informed of any developments that would impact them.

VA is working closely with Congress, Veterans Service Organizations, State Approving Agencies, VA-approved Institutions of Higher Learning, other federal agencies and school associations to ensure GI Bill students are provided the best options to continue their educational pursuits.

“Our aim in taking this action is to protect Veterans and their dependents’ GI Bill benefits and comply with the law,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “The department is committed to helping beneficiaries avoid any negative consequences that may result.”

VA has notified all affected GI Bill students of their options moving forward. Any GI Bill students impacted by these suspensions may contact VA’s Education Call Center at 888-442-4551 between 7 a.m. - 6 p.m. Central Time, Monday-Friday or go to https://gibill.custhelp.va.gov/ to submit any questions they may have.
Oxford presents American Legion legislative agenda to Congress

By: John Raughter


The theme is the logical follow-up to landmark legislation passed in recent years such as the VA MISSION Act, the Blue Water Navy Act and the Harry W. Colmery “Forever” GI Bill.

“Between Vietnam and 9/11, The American Legion and Congress worked together to reinvent the VA – one that is now described as quote, ‘the best care anywhere,’” Oxford said. “Today, so many of these issues, and new ones for a new generation, continue to occupy The American Legion’s priority list.”

That list went largely unchallenged to receptive members of Congress that attended the hearing.

“Reading today’s testimony, it is clear that we share many of the same priorities,” Chairman of the House Veterans’ Affairs Committee Rep. Mark Takano, D-Calif., said. “We must address the national crisis of veteran suicide. Veterans must receive high-quality healthcare. We must understand the full impacts of toxic exposures, and make sure that another generation of veterans don’t have to wait for the benefits and care they need and deserve.

“In addition,” Takano continued, “as our veteran population grows increasingly more diverse, we must support our women, LGBTQ, minority, and Native-American veterans. The legislation we pass must improve access to culturally competent care for all veterans.”

Though The American Legion recognizes that VA care isn’t always the best option for veterans living in remote areas, Sen. Jerry Moran, R-Kan., emphasized the point while trying to assuage Legion concerns about privatizing the system.

“In my view the MISSION Act is nothing to replace the VA (but is) providing care and services for those who in their best interest need another venue,” said Moran, the chairman of the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee. Moran mentioned that many Kansans would have to travel great distances in order to obtain care from a VA facility.

Another major concern for The American Legion is the high suicide rate among veterans. Most of the veterans who have taken their lives were not receiving care in the VA system. Sen. Jon Tester, D-Mont., announced that the Commander John Scott Hannon Veterans Mental Health Care Improvement Act, which was supported by The American Legion, passed the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee 17-0 by unanimous consent.

“We got everyone from Blackburn to Bernie to vote for that bad boy, so now all we got to do is get Sen. (Mitch) McConnell to take it up on the floor,” Tester said, informally referring to Republican Sen. Marsha Blackburn of Tennessee and Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, an independent who refers to himself as a “democratic socialist.”

It was likely the last opportunity House Veterans’ Affairs Committee Ranking Member Rep. Phil Roe, R-Tenn., will hear an American Legion national commander present congressional testimony. The physician and longtime Legionnaire will retire from Congress at the end of the year.

Roe reflected nostalgically on recent and historic Legion accomplishments. “It would be impossible for me to detail all the work that The American Legion has performed throughout your more than a century of service or the value that the Legion continues to bear on matters of military, veterans and national security policy,” Roe said. “Even now it is with the help of the Legion and working with our committees and partners in the Trump administration that the Department of Veterans Affairs has undergone such a positive transformation over the last few years. Thanks to our mutual efforts, I’m proud to report that veterans today have great access to care (and) greater control of their care than ever before. Veterans can use their GI Bill benefits whenever they choose. Veteran unemployment reached near lows.”

Photo by Ben Mikesell/The American Legion
$54,516 raised by District 2 Kansas Legion Family for homeless veterans

By: Cameran Richardson

District 2 Kansas American Legion members are a testament to what can be accomplished by working together for a common purpose. In 36 months, they have raised nearly $103,000 for the Kansas City-based Veterans Community Project (VCP) to aid in its mission of ending veteran homelessness through the building of tiny homes and onsite resource assistance. Of those funds, a check for $54,516 was presented to VCP during the recent fourth Hold ‘Em for Heroes charity event.

“Everything we do … it’s an American Legion Family event because it takes a group to do something like this,” said Jeremiah Bull, founder of Hold ‘Em for Heroes and senior vice commander of LeRoy Hill American Legion Post 19 in Gardner, Kan. “We created a fun product for everybody to enjoy and get behind. It’s a fun time for a great cause.”

The Hold ‘Em for Heroes charity event gathered nearly 400 Legion Family, veterans and community members under one roof at Linden-Tripkos VFW Post 6654 in Desoto, Kan., on Feb. 22 to support VCP and four other Kansas-based nonprofit veterans organizations – The Battle Within, FISH (Friends in Service of Heroes), Handy-Cappin’ and Sapper Association. All proceeds raised from the event’s poker tournament, all-you-can-eat taco bar, raffle drawings, live auction, 50/50 cash drawing, drinks and camaraderie benefited the veterans’ groups.

“(The Hold ‘Em for Heroes event) is the American Legion Family, it’s the veterans community, it’s Kansas City,” said Vincent Morales, co-founder of VCP and member of Post 19. “America wants to give back, even more than just say thank you for your service. People want to help out veterans in a more robust way. And this is the power of it. This is the proof of it.”

Before doors opened at 1 p.m., donations had already surpassed last year’s overall total of $34,000 thanks to sponsors and donors.

“I tell people all of the time … (Hold ‘Em for Heroes) started for my birthday,” Bull said. “When it was just me organizing it we raised $1,500. As an American Legion Family, we’re walking into this event with $37,280.”

That number was then followed by more than $17,200 raised in seven hours at the VFW. There, eight tables housed about 80 poker players who paid $50 each to partake in the tournament. While poker tournaments were underway, other attendees conversed and ate unlimited tacos for $10, met representatives from the veterans organizations, listened to live music from Aaron Lucero, put their names in raffle drawings, played 50/50, purchased Hold ‘Em for Heroes shirts where a portion of proceeds went back to the cause, bid on auction items and honored Stephen Traglio, who Bull served two years with in the Kansas National Guard. He passed away in February 2015 of brain cancer.

“We are honored that this is happening in the great state of Kansas,” said Department Commander R.C. “Chuck” Shoemaker. “They (poker players) may lose a little bit of money, but they know every bit is going to a great cause.”

The beginning to now

Feb. 13 is Bull’s birthday. Three years ago he threw his own party at Post 19 with about 50 of his military buddies and friends from work at Pipe Fitters Local 533. They played Texas hold’em – a card game Bull played with his fellow Army soldiers while deployed to Iraq twice, between 2004-2008. He also cooked chili dogs, spent his own money on door prizes, and through Facebook found a veterans organization – VCP – to donate the $1,500 raised.

“We saw (VCP’s) mission and (Post 19) wanted to get behind it,” said Bull, who now serves in the Kansas National Guard.

For the second event, Bull connected with Sons of The American Legion Squadron 19 member Robert Carver and raised $12,268 for VCP. “The success of this event I think comes from the pride Post 19 has in the first two events when it was not too big to hold at that post,” said Carver, COO of veteran-owned Retirement Solutions Group. “They are the cornerstone that really pushes this thing. And it’s all four groups (Post 19 Legion, Sons, Auxiliary and Riders).”

Bull reiterated that it is “a full American Legion Family event.”

Morales personally accept the second VCP check at Post 19. It was then that he and Bull realized they were deployed together in Iraq. The same realization happened when they met Justin Hoover, executive director of The Battle Within, which provides PTSD and suicide prevention healing for veterans and first responders. Bull, Morales and Hoover all served in the same Army brigade and deployment in 2004-2005.

“This (Hold ‘Em for Heroes event) is therapy,” Morales said.

With the goal to build upon what was accomplished with the first two, the event outgrew Post 19 by its third going. So Post 19 connected with District 2’s Earl Collier Post 153 in Olathe, Kan., where together they raised $34,000 for VCP.
April 2020

As everybody sees the event, they see what we’re able to do and they want to get on board and support our efforts,” Bull said.

Post 19 members visited other posts in District 2 for support, which proved successful. The relationship-building is what led Post 19 to host the fourth Hold ‘Em for Heroes with District 2 American Legion Family and VFW Post 6654. District 2 Vice Commander Jeffrey Barber, a Gulf War Army veteran, played a huge role in getting the 24 posts on board. For him it wasn’t a difficult cause to get on board with because he “loves the camaraderie” the event boasts.

Support for the cause

With 30 volunteers, planning and fundraising for this February event got underway just last October. For four months, “it’s just hustle; 210 hours of volunteer time each,” Bull said. And to make it successful, Bull added that it’s about creating relationships with sponsors and donors so you can count on them to continue donating every year to the cause.

“People are really excited to get behind it,” said Kristy Harrison, an Air Force veteran of Desert Storm and a dual Legion and Auxiliary member of Post 19 who coordinates the sponsors. That excitement resulted in four title sponsors who paid $5,000 or more, including District 2, Retirement Solutions Group and Christmas Lights Hung 4 U. As well as $14,000 donation from local labor unions in Kansas City; and $17,000 in donations for raffle prizes.

A consisten question asked when the volunteers are fundraising is if the funds stay local to serve veterans.

“We earmark that all money will stay right here in Kansas City,” Bull said.

Immediate Past Department Commander Dan Wiley added, “When people can see where the money is going, that it’s going locally first off, then they can see the tangible benefits. People can understand that’s where the money will benefit, see it with their own eyes, they can go visit (VCP). So they know it’s staying local and it’s helping homeless veterans … that really encourages people to contribute to the project and donate.”

The raffle prizes included up to 10 items for both the men and women’s package, travel and experience package, and tour of Kansas City package. Some of the live auction items included:

- a shotgun donated by Up In Arms that sold for $825 to benefit The Battle Within.
- a wooden American flag art piece donated by Eddie Bernall that sold for $1,100.
- a seat at the final poker table.
- a 14-week-old German short-haired pointer puppy that sold for $625 to benefit FISH. The dog was donated by dog-breeder Coulton Landreth, an Air Force veteran of Iraq/Afghanistan who won second place in the poker tournament. “It was the best thing I could think of to help out,” Landreth, a friend of Bull’s, said. “You tell me what I can do for you, and I’m going to do it.”
- a McCormick Distillery 1969 Chiefs Super Bowl Bourbon decanter that sold for $2,700 and donated by Post 19 Legion Rider Robert McClelland, a former Army Black Hawk mechanic who had tears in his eyes when it was auctioned for that price and then when it was donated back to the post.

The grand prize raffle drawing was a bottle cap art piece of the American flag with a servicemember saluting that was created by Zeke Crozier, a medically retired Army staff sergeant and founder of Handy-Cappin’. Crozier’s Chinook helicopter crashed in 2011 during his second combat tour in Afghanistan. He sustained a traumatic brain injury, had to learn how to walk and talk again, and continues to work through PTSD. After retiring from the military at 27 years old, he “had to find a new purpose.” He found art therapy through bottle caps and with it is helping other veterans find healing and purpose.

Everyone who has a hand in the Hold ‘Em for Heroes event wants to serve and help their local veterans.

“As a deputy (with the Johnson County Sheriff’s Office), I see a lot of homeless veterans coming into our jails and it’s sad because maybe they’re dealing with mental illness or they can’t find a job or keep down a job,” said Corinna Sander, a Post 19 Auxiliary member and Legion Rider, and coordinator for the event. When Corinna’s husband, Mark, a Post 19 Legion Rider, asked his business clients with Christmas Lights Hung 4 U to match him in donations for Hold ‘Em for Heroes they did – $4,000.

“A lot of veterans want to give back and I think that’s why this is such a success … they want to help, the community wants to help,” she added.

About VCP

On any given night, more than 200 veterans are on the streets of the Kansas City metro area, Morales said. So he and several of his combat friends founded VCP in order to be proactive and help these men and women.

“In the military, you are always taught to be proactive instead of reactive,” Morales said. "Now veterans are like you can’t get help until you’re about to swallow that last pill. Where was the help before you were sinking? So that’s why we’ve really taken that model of being proactive instead of reactive. And it’s been successful.”

VCP’s 49 tiny homes sit on 5,000 square feet of land and come fully furnished with new furniture, appliances and household goods that become the personal property of each resident once they transition out. Donations from the American Legion’s Hold ‘Em for Heroes event helped build a tiny home and has provided means to purchase the items needed to refurbish the homes for new occupants. Morales said while VCP is known for its tiny homes, there are many other onsite services that they provide to address the underlying cause of the veteran’s homelessness and get them back on their feet.

Morales tells the veterans living at VCP “every day that you are here we are pushing you forward. Every day you are going to put your best foot forward just like in service. I’m going to be here to

(Continued on Page 24 See Help)
help you, I’m going to push you through it, and we are going to do this together.

“Our veterans see us every day. And they see the support of the community.”

The finale

Bull, Carver, Harrison and KCTV-5 evening news anchor Ellen McNamara presented Morales with the big $54,516 check in a roaring applause. But donations to the check didn’t stop there – an additional $200 was given from the poker player’s winnings; and VFW Post 6654 gave $500 from tips earned at the bar.

“If we can support other veterans service organizations, absolutely we are going to do that,” said VFW Post 6654 Commander Chris Ruff, an Army Chinook helicopter pilot who served three tours in Afghanistan.

The money from the VFW served as a reminder to Bull that “when you see 30-plus volunteers and the local community get behind something like this … we are going to be able to help more veterans by working together among the veteran community and veterans service organizations. As this continues to grow, we’re going to be able to do more for veterans in Kansas City.”

VA announces safeguards to protect nursing home and spinal cord injury patients

While the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) still considers COVID-19 to be a low threat to the general American public, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced, March 10, new safeguards aimed at limiting COVID-19 exposure risk for two of its most susceptible patient populations: nursing home residents and spinal-cord injury patients.

VA’s 134 nursing homes are home to more than 41,000 Veterans across the country annually. The residents are predominantly older, and many have multiple complex health conditions, making them particularly vulnerable to infection. To minimize the risk of exposure, effective March 10 and until further notice, VA is taking the following actions:

- All VA nursing homes will adopt a “No Visitor” stance, meaning no outside visitors will be permitted to see residents.
  - The only exceptions will be in compassionate cases, when Veterans are in their last stages of life on hospice units.
  - In those cases, visitors will be limited to a specific Veteran’s room only.
- All VA nursing homes will suspend new admissions.
- VA nursing homes will continue to welcome resident transfers from VA facilities once medical personnel have determined patients are not at risk for infection from COVID-19 or transmitting COVID-19.
- Nursing home staff will be actively screened daily and dedicated to working at Community Living Centers.

VA’s 24 major spinal cord injury and disorder centers (SCI/Ds) across the country serve the needs of a unique patient population of more than 24,000 Veterans who are also vulnerable to infection. To minimize the risk of exposure, effective March 10 and until further notice, VA is taking the following actions:

- All VA SCI/Ds will adopt a “No Visitor” stance, meaning no outside visitors will be permitted to see inpatients.
  - The only exceptions will be in compassionate cases, when Veterans are in their last stages of life.
  - In those cases, visitors will be limited to a specific Veteran’s room only.
- All VA SCI/Ds will limit inpatient admissions to addressing acute clinical needs.
  - This means all VA SCI/Ds will avoid inpatient admissions for routine matters, including annual exams and respite, which will now be done on an outpatient basis.
- VA SCI/D staff will be actively screened daily and dedicated to working at SCI/Ds.

“While the COVID-19 risk to average Americans remains low, these commonsense measures will help protect some of our most vulnerable patients,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “VA will make every effort to minimize the impact of these policies on Veterans while putting patient safety first.”

For more information about Coronavirus and COVID-19 visit CDC coronavirus disease 2019.
2020 District Convention Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Lunch</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>District 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>District 3</td>
<td>Saturday, April 18, 2020</td>
<td>10:00 AM</td>
<td>Akron Post 66</td>
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<tr>
<td>District 4</td>
<td>Saturday, May 16, 2020</td>
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<td>District 12</td>
<td>Saturday, May 02, 2020</td>
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<td>Salida Post 64</td>
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<tr>
<td>District 14</td>
<td>Saturday, April 25, 2020</td>
<td>9:30 AM</td>
<td>Craig CO Elks Lodge, 43 Victory Way</td>
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Lawmakers approve emergency fix to ensure GI Bill benefits continue even as campuses close and classes move online

By: James Clark, Task & Purpose, Mar 19, 2020

Congress has approved an emergency legislative fix to ensure that students going to college on the G.I. Bill will continue to receive their monthly housing stipend, even as college courses transition online in an effort to limit the spread of the coronavirus.

The bill passed the Senate on Monday which was approved by the House on Thursday. It’s expected to be signed into law by President Donald Trump in the coming weeks.

Under the post-9/11 G.I. Bill, full-time students who are attending college on campus have their tuition covered, and also receive a housing stipend — based on the basic housing allowance of an E-5 with dependents for their zip code. For those students enrolled in online universities, their tuition is fully covered, but they only receive a portion of that housing stipend.

Because of how VA education benefits are approved, for students who were previously approved for on campus learning, the move to online courses could have resulted in the loss of benefits, which many student veterans count on to cover housing and to make ends meet.

“Without a legislative solution, all VA benefits payments would stop if a program only approved for in-residence learning moves to online learning,” reads a joint letter signed by veterans service organizations that was sent to the ranking members of the House and Senate Committees on Veterans Affairs on March 17. “This includes [Monthly Housing Allowance] and tuition payments because the program would be considered unapproved for VA benefits.”

Fortunately, with the House and Senate’s speedy passage of S.3503, that’s unlikely to happen.

“Students will continue to receive the SAME monthly housing allowance payments that they received for resident training until January 1, 2021, or until the school resumes normal operations of resident training,” the Department of Veterans Affairs announced on Twitter.

Once signed into law by President Trump, the bill will allow the VA to continue to provide benefits payments at existing levels in the event of a national emergency, like the current Covid-19 pandemic which has resulted in more than 7,000 deaths globally, and infected more than 190,000 people.

“This bill gives the Department of Veterans’ Affairs broad authority to continue making Monthly Housing Allowance and tuition payments to students regardless of instructional changes implemented for emergency or health-related purposes,” Jared Lyon, the national president and CEO of Student Veterans of America said in a statement. “As this bill heads to the President’s desk, we look forward to an equally swift signature to finalize these needed protections.”

About the Author: James Clark is a senior reporter with Task & Purpose who covers a mix of entertainment and pop-culture, as well as policy issues that impact the military and veterans community.
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