American Legion calls for accountability at Holyoke and other state homes

American Legion National Commander James “Bill” Oxford called the coronavirus death toll at a Massachusetts veterans’ home, “Exhibit A, for accountability.”

“COVID-19 has been a global tragedy, but few places have been hit harder than nursing homes and assisted living facilities,” Oxford said. “The Holyoke Soldiers Home in Massachusetts is a tragedy made worse due to neglect and incompetence. At least 76 patients died, perhaps needlessly, in a facility where the governor’s investigator found co-mingling of coronavirus patients with asymptomatic residents, shortages of personal protective equipment and staff rotating between units. Whether a veteran is in a state-run facility or a center operated by the Department of Veterans Affairs, he or she has earned the right to quality care in a safe environment. Holyoke has failed to serve these patients as well as the patients have served their country.”

Oxford promised that his organization would advocate for veterans regardless of where they are located. “A veteran is a veteran no matter where he or she lives. I have reached out to The American Legion Department of Massachusetts and the Legionnaires there are all over this. The department leadership is making its concerns known to the governor. We realize that mistakes have been made in many facilities during this pandemic. But we owe it to our nation’s veterans to ensure these type of tragedies do not repeat themselves.

“At the federal level, we have noticed a significant upgrade in the quality of care since the VA Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act was enacted several years ago,” Oxford said. “No veterans’ facility should employ management or staff who are not fully dedicated to the health, safety and well-being of America’s heroes. When failures occur, those responsible must be held accountable.”

Photo courtesy of Master Sgt. Lindsey Watson-Kirwin
I asked, you answered  
By: James W. "Bill" Oxford, National Commander

Last month, I called on the American Legion Family to pay tribute to our nation’s fallen heroes at dusk on May 25, Memorial Day, by lighting candles of honor and placing them on front porches or wherever visible for passersby to see. This display was to remind everyone that our resolve to honor those who served before us will continue even as social-distancing measures limit our ability to perform traditional remembrances. Our candles reminded Americans that no matter the circumstances, we will never forget those who are no longer among us.

My call for the first Candles of Honor was answered by so many of you as you lit up the night of remembrance in red, white, and blue.

A red candle to remember those who shed their blood in combat and made the ultimate sacrifice in defense of our country. A white candle to remind us all of the POWs and MIAs who are not yet home from wartime service. A blue candle to symbolize our eternal love of those who did come home but have since left us.

Brent Shafer of Post 288 in Williamsburg, Ohio, lit a red candle for his great uncle who died during World War I in France; white for friends in arms; and blue for the safe return from service of his grandfather and himself. Post 49 in Albuquerque, N.M., made a set of the three candles with a tag that shared the meaning of each color. The candles were given to American Legion members who picked up a free lunch at the post on Memorial Day. Mulberry Memorial Post 72 in Florida lit candles in honor (see photo) of those who have passed.

So many American Legion Family members shared through social media their candles of honor. We must never forget the meaning of why we lit up the night in red, white, and blue ... and will continue to do so for years to come.

Community comes together amidst Legion post vandalism

The American Legion

John “Jack” Porath arrived at American Legion Post 282 in La Mesa, Calif., at 7:30 a.m. on Sunday, May 31, to check on the post. Before reaching visibility of the post, Porath stopped his car in front of a dumpster as a gentleman was putting trash into it. Porath asked the gentleman what was going on. He replied, “We’re cleaning up.”

The Post 282 commander looked over to see about four volunteers sweeping glass and repainting over graffiti on the exterior of the post. “I drove in, parked. I was just so upset,” Porath said.

But within minutes of his arrival, the number of volunteers quickly grew to more than two dozen – Post 282 members, members from other area Legion posts, VFW members, community members and Boy Scouts from Troop 51.

“It was just amazing how the community came together, and the volunteers and the veterans from all over … it didn’t matter if they were American Legion or VFW,” said Porath, who also is the commander of VFW O.K. Ingram Ship 1774. “Everybody just pitched in together.”

The vandalism of Post 282 occurred when riots erupted outside the La Mesa Police Station, which is across from the post, following a peaceful demonstration for Black Lives Matter. Porath listened to news of the evening events, which resulted in him waking early to assess the post.

The volunteers power-washed the facility, painted over the graffiti, cleaned up all the glass inside and outside of the post from the broken windows, temporarily boarded up the windows and cleaned up Post 282’s Vietnam War Memorial across the street. “They organized themselves and did what needed to be done,” Porath said. He added that volunteers used their own money to purchase paint and supplies, rags for cleanup and anything that was needed.

“I couldn’t believe the outpouring of support that we got.” Porath said. “I get choked up. It was just amazing. Up until this time,

(Continued on Page 6 See Community Really Cared)
The 2019-2020 Year has been really exciting, we have accomplished a lot of great things and I look forward to accomplishing many more things in 2020-2021. This is the first year since 2014 that the Department of Colorado has hit 100% membership and a renewal rate of 91.1%. This couldn’t have been done without all of your hard work, commitment, and dedication. We truly are TEAM COLORADO!! The Department of Colorado is growing its membership and we will make our goal of 25,000 members in 5 years that I set out to achieve in 2019. This is the first step in achieving that goal, this year as most of you know our quota from National was very aggressive at 21,119 members and WE achieved that. I cannot Thank you all enough for your support to RE-IGNITE PATRIOTISM!

Communication is the key to our success, we can do that through email, phone or written. Our members need to hear from you and what is going on at the local American Legion Post that they joined. Our members are ready and eager to get out and volunteer, we just have to let them know what we have planned and ask them to be involved. The more we communicate with our members the stronger TEAM we will build and the stronger TEAM we have the louder and more VETERANS we can help here in Colorado. WE ARE A WINNING TEAM!

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Don’t forget that we have rescheduled out Training and Education Conference for November 6-8, 2020 at American Legion Neil Thomas Jr Centennial Post 209 in Colorado Springs. Our special guest will be National Vice Commander Rob Leibenow, after the Training and Education Conference is over, we will be traveling and visiting members and Posts in Districts 3, 4 and 5. Please plan on attending the annual training event in Colorado Springs. We are planning to have training on Post Dues Direct, your Post Commander and Adjutant must attend training to be able to start the Dues Direct process.

It has been my pleasure and a distinct honor to serve as your 100th Department Commander, I look forward to serving as your 101st Department Commander for 2020-2021. We have made some great strides in Colorado and we want to keep Colorado moving forward for 2021. As always if there is anything that we can do to assist you please reach out to me by email at d.noechel@coloradolegion.org we are here to help and support you.

RE-IGNITING PATRIOTISM / UNITED WE STAND.
Membership, Where Are We?

By: Greg Jackson, Department Sr. Vice Commander

I would like to give a big hearty congratulations to all of Colorado for a successful membership year. Our goal this year was high, and we met the challenge. Together we have reached over 21,000 members and are moving well towards our 25,000 in 5 year goal. This year we will be rolling out new ways of doing membership.

We have led an aggressive campaign of calls, emails and letters this year and continue to encourage everyone working membership aggressively. You are probably wondering why I support and encourage diligent and aggressive membership recruitment, retention and transfer actions at the post level.

As we get ready to start recruiting for the 2021 membership, it is important to know what our membership is truly about for you and all the veterans that The American Legion represents. During the budget crisis of 2019, The American Legion helped Coast Guardsmen and their families with financial aid when our government had them cut off from receiving paychecks for several months. This big donation significantly helped these men and women to continue providing safety and protection to all our shorelines without worry about providing for their families. Then again during the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic, The American Legion stepped up and provided financial relief and aid to thousands of families not to mention the thousands of volunteer hours, and millions of dollars of aid provided by Legionnaires to communities all over the country. As the years have come and gone and for many years to come The American Legion will continue to provide much needed volunteers and aid to the many crisis that will come up for our veterans, national defense, children and youth, and in support of Americanism. All this does not come without membership. Memberships help provide funds to support the organization of these thousands of volunteer efforts as well as relief funds for the various financial aid requests during times of national crisis. Members become the backbone of our volunteer efforts in not just raising funds but providing meals, clothing, labor and many other much needed services to everyone in our communities when called upon. The more we work on increasing our membership, the more we can provide.

As we increase our Legion Family memberships the bigger our family will grow and if we engage them, we will also receive valuable new ideas to help better deal with tomorrow’s crisis. As we start our membership year please personally call each and every member of your post and involve (engage) them by inviting them to attend meetings and participating. Please assess your member’s ability as well. If you have members or veterans wanting to join but are struggling financially then offer them options towards volunteer hours or payment plans. Many posts have some sort of revenue stream like Bar, Restaurant or Gamming/Bingo going on that always requires extra volunteers. So, this is a win/win situation. At department level we have sponsor a Vet program as well.

We have Re-ignited Patriotism last year; now won’t you help us keep it ignited in 2021. Keep Rocking the Rockies as we climb to 25,000 members by 2025.

Thank you, all of The Department of Colorado, for allowing me to represent you as Senior Vice Commander during 2019/2020 it has not only been a privilege but a great honor.

VA Bristol Myers Squibb Foundation deliver cancer care to Veterans via teleoncology

Multimillion-dollar grant to help reach Veterans in rural areas

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) today announced it is teaming with the Bristol Myers Squibb Foundation (Foundation) to build new programs to enable VA oncology specialists to provide Veterans access to precision cancer care regardless of where they live.

The Foundation has committed to providing VA $4.5 million in grant funds over three years to help establish a national teleoncology center to more effectively reach Veterans living in rural communities.

The VA Center for Strategic Partnerships facilitated the grant, which will utilize VA’s telehealth infrastructure allowing Veterans access to teleoncology platforms under the Foundation’s Global Cancer Disparities Initiative. This will offer genetic counseling to Veterans who undergo sequencing and afford Veteran oncology patients a range of potentially life-saving clinical trials — even if they live a distance away from a VA medical center. Veterans enrolled in VA health care are two and a half times more likely to live in rural areas where access to specialty care is limited.

“Delivering innovative solutions through virtual care technologies is vital,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “The VA-Bristol Myers Squibb Foundation partnership will build on the Veterans Health Administration’s (VHA) recent telehealth expansion to establish a

(Continued on Page 10 See Leading-edge)
Do you have legislative suggestions?

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.


With the COVID-19 pandemic continuing there has been little activity on the federal bills I am tracking so the status from last month is largely unchanged. The Pay our Coast Guard Act (H.R. 367 & S. 21) continues to wait Congressional floor action. Veterans Burn Pit Act (S. 2950, S. 191, and HR 663) have been assigned to the Senate Veterans Affairs, House Health committees. 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. National Suicide Hotline (S 2661) passed the Senate on 5/14/20 and was sent to the House. Two bills have been added to our list for monitoring: S. 3761 – VA 48 hour rule reinstatement and S. 3813 – Care for all WW II veterans at the VA. Both were assigned to the Senate Affairs Committee on 5/20/20.

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.

Although, due to the COVID-19 pandemic the Colorado General Assembly 2020 session has completed a shortened session, some veterans’ issue bills were passed. HB20-1051 – Identification of Veteran Remains for Proper Burial. HB20-1275 – In-state Tuition at Community College for Military families without Colorado domicile status. SB20-041 – National Guard Parks and Wildlife Benefits (park Passes). SB20-069 – Disabled Veterans Free State Park Access (documentation). SB20-082 – Department of Military and Veteran Affairs Awards. SB20-091 – Minimum Pay for State Military Forces. A late bill (HCR20-1001) to change the Colorado Constitution concerning Colorado Bingo was passed so there will be a ballot measure on the November ballot. A complete list of bill statuses will be posted on the UVC web site www.uvcoc.org. Now we need to start looking at what issues we want to present to the UVC Legislative committee for next year. I hope you will take some time to put together a wish list for me to present to the UVC during the coming months. You may email your suggestions to me at 1gforce@prodigy.net.

Cory drove to Post 282 with an extra flag and rope from his home. He shimmied up the 60-foot flagpole standing above the Vietnam memorial to thread a new rope, then raised the American flag. He also left clips for a POW/MIA flag.

The La Mesa Fire Department brought its ladder truck to hang new rope and an American flag on the flagpole in front of the post. And the county veterans service officer showed up to Post 282 with a new POW/MIA flag in hand within 30 minutes of talking to Porath about needs of the post.

“That’s how everybody just came together in this community,” Porath said. “I can’t be prouder of a community than this one when I saw what they did.”
A Message From Department Historian Davis

A Year in Review 2019 - 2020
By: Deb Davis, Department Historian

The future depends on renewals and new memberships

We will get through this, as we always have - COVID-19 is a public health threat the likes of which we have not seen since the influenza outbreak of 1918. More than 5,000 veterans in recovery from coronavirus, VA says

Side by side, for a century – Legion and Auxiliary

USAA says it will return $520 million to its members due to coronavirus lockdown. USAA, The American Legion’s preferred provider of financial services, will give customers a 20% credit on two months of premiums if they had an auto insurance policy in effect on March 31.

Awarding of 2020 Samsung American Legion Scholarships suspended

Boys State and Girls State programs are being canceled due to COVID-19; this scholarship is eligible for delegates who attend these programs.

American Legion Baseball activities encouraged to be put on hold

Commander Oxford presents American Legion legislative agenda to Congress. National Commander James W. “Bill” Oxford presented a three-step mission to lawmakers during a joint session of the Senate and House Committees on Veterans’ Affairs March 11.

Bayview Cross victory result of American Legion Supreme Court decision. American Legion national commander welcomes another court decision as a sign veterans memorial will have permanent legal protection.

American Legion attends bill signing for STEM fields for veterans. President Trump signed into law Supporting Veterans in STEM Careers Act.

American Legion testifies on military sexual trauma. American Legion Health Policy Coordinator Tammy Barlet: ‘There are veterans who do not return to the VA because they experienced a hostile environment.’

Legion provides written statement for suicide prevention hearing. The House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs held a hearing Jan. 29 on the veteran suicide epidemic.

Legion-supported Memorializing Veterans Act signed into law. The signed legislation will establish a grant program for cemetery research and production of educational materials for the Veterans Legacy Program.

Legion aims to help ease transition for servicemembers. Through workshops and a job fair information booth, Department of Texas and national staff provide resources for servicemembers preparing to return to civilian life.

VA now processing Blue Water Navy veteran claims, Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019 extends disability benefits for diseases related to Agent Orange exposure.

Efforts to prevent veteran suicide

Legion comes to rescue of Coast Guard families

Congress moves to expand Legion eligibility

Buddy Check helps identify veterans’ needs

Training and Education Conference scheduled for November 6-8, 2020 in Colorado Springs. Watch for details in upcoming issues of the Observer or through other means.
Chaplain's Corner - Happy New Year

By: Stanley Hamamoto, Department Chaplain

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

Some of you may say WHAT! HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!! Well it is the start of the American Legion new fiscal year. July first the newly elected or those that carry over will take office and start a new year for all of our Post, Department and National offices. We work on a fiscal year and not a calendar year. The New Year starts on July first and ends on June 30th. I would like to wish all of the newly elected and those who are carryovers a good and fulfilling year. May this year be the year when many of the things that we wanted to do but was unable to do, be done? I pray that these things will be according to God’s will and that it will be of benefit to the community, all veterans, and all legion members. Always know that God is always with you no matter how hard the situation may be. HE is by your side and all you have to do is just ask HIM, and HE will provide you with what you may need. Just keep in mind, that HE does things in his own way and on HIS own time.

As we start a new year, there are many things that we can do that will be of benefit to all veterans, their families, the community, and our country. Just keep in mind that this is HIS doing and that way it will be of benefit to all and not just you. I have seen in my going around that there are times when we do things that are more personal rather than for the good of the Legion. We ask questions that pertain only for our own benefit and not for the good of the Legion. We object to things because we do not understand or want to understand. Many times, we are doing things to benefit only us, and not thinking of the Legion as a whole. Keep in mind when you represent your district or post that you are asking on their behalf and not for your own personal gain. God will lead you if you only ask HIM. God never does things because HE knows it is not right, you have made the decision to make the presentation for your own benefit not because HE has told you to do so.

I am again looking forward to meeting all of you at your District Fall meeting if we have one and I pray that we will. I enjoy meeting friends that I have made over the past five years and really look forward to making new friends. As your Department Chaplain, I try to help whenever I can. There are times when I am called to do something by a District Commander, the first thing I always ask is, did you ask your District Chaplain? Or if it is for a post, I would ask, did you ask your District Chaplain? The one thing I do not want to do is to overuse my position. This is why I say, all chaplains MUST have COMPASSION. God will lead the chaplains in what they are doing, all they have to do is ask for HIS help.

Again, as we all start the new year, please keep in mind the many who are out there that really need our help but are too proud to ask for it. You must make the first move to offer them assistance and maybe this will open them up to accepting assistance. God is always there to help you and to help all of those who are in need, all they have to do is ask for HIS help. Keep safe and take good care of yourself and your families. I say, God does take a bad thing and turns it around and make it become a good thing. God is telling us all something and maybe in a short time HE will make it known to us. Bless you all and keep up the good work and again, if there is anything that I can do to help you, please call, or e-mail me.

My last three words to all of you are: GO TO CHURCH!!!!!!
It’s truly an unusual time in our department's history

By: Pat Smith, Department Adjutant

July 1st is the beginning of our new American Legion year. Because of the corona virus our annual convention was cancelled. Part of the provision of the resolution that cancelled the convention was that all of the elected and appointed officers would remain in place, with the exception of anyone desiring to resign. In place of the convention the Department Executive Committee held an email vote to ratify the officers and committees and to approve the replacements of those who resigned. Gary Force resigned as Jr Vice Commander from District 4 and was replaced by Shane Hastert of Johnstown Post 70 in District 4. Annette Johnson, immediate past District 6 Commander was appointed to fill a vacant Jr Vice Commander position. Deb Davis resigned as historian and we are looking for a volunteer to fill that position. Tim Grabin was appointed to the position of Past Department Commanders representative to the DEC to replace Carol Kennedy and that was ratified. Carol will still be part of the team since she was elected as the DEC for District 8.

All of the chairmen of department committees remained the same with the exception of the Legislative Chairman. Norm Steen was appointed to replace James Phelps. Norm is the current Teller County Commissioner and well versed in Colorado politics. He will make a great chairman for that important position. Robb Smith resigned as the PR chairman and we are looking for a replacement for Robb. Any volunteers?

In the history of the department of Colorado there has been only 2 other times where a department commander has served more than one year. Dean Noechel will become the third. It truly is an unusual time in our history.

Dean will retain his re-ignite Patriotism as his theme. It worked extremely well this last year. We achieved our national goal and became the #4 ranked department in the country. Our membership should continue to climb after this successful year. Who knows what effect the Pandemic will have? We must continue to work hard to take care of our veterans, our families and our communities. That was the basis for this organization over 100 years ago and is still our mission today.

Thanks to all of you who have remained loyal to the organization and have continued to pay your dues every year. We are a community based membership organization and you are the lifeblood. Please enjoy your 4th of July weekend. Stay safe, observe all of the rules and don’t catch COVID-19.

VA national cemeteries resume committal and memorial services halted by the COVID-19 pandemic

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) national cemeteries will resume committal services starting June 9 in all but two VA national cemeteries.

VA national cemeteries will contact families who were unable to hold a committal service due to the COVID-19 pandemic to arrange memorial services for their loved ones beginning in July.

“During the last 10 weeks VA national cemeteries have continued performing our essential mission — to inter Veterans and eligible family members,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “We believe we have a robust set of measures in place that will allow us to conduct committal and memorial services while protecting the health and safety of Veterans, their families and our team members who serve them.”

While VA is eager to resume normal operations, the department’s national cemeteries have remained open for interments and visitation throughout the pandemic. However, as a matter of health and safety, committal services and military funeral honors have been deferred since March 23.

Interments scheduled on or after June 9, will be offered the option of a committal service at the time of interment. At Calverton and Long Island national cemeteries, that option will be available starting June 22, provided state and local guidance permit. Military funeral honors, customarily provided by the Department of Defense and volunteer honor guards, will be based on local availability.

VA national cemeteries will continue adherence to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines to prevent the spread of COVID-19 by limiting the number of individuals attending committal services, practicing physical distancing between individuals not from the same household, ensuring all attendees and employees wear face coverings, encouraging frequent use of hand sanitizer and asking sick individuals to stay home. The number of permitted attendees will vary based on state and local guidelines for gathering sizes provided the facility can accommodate increased attendees while maintaining physical distancing. Families may continue to choose direct interment and opt for a memorial service later when all restrictions have been lifted.

Memorial services for Veterans and eligible family members who were interred without a committal service between March 23 and June 8 will commence in July.
leading-edge hub for teleoncology which will serve as a model for oncology specialists in every health care system.”

The program will support the delivery of best-in-class care, education and practice in collaboration with VHA’s existing precision oncology initiative which has had dramatic impacts for some Veterans and will now be available to all Veterans with advanced cancer.

“The Foundation will work with VA to accelerate the growth of teleoncology,” said Bristol Myers Squibb Foundation President John L. Damonti. “By developing, implementing and standardizing workflow processes, this project will expedite the expansion of a model for delivering specialized oncology care in a virtual setting — and help cancer care teams provide the utmost patient experience in a virtual care environment.” The Foundation’s grant will also be used to create a human centered design training program.

Leaders from Bristol Myers Squibb, Bristol Myers Squibb Foundation and VHA will launch the program at the America Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) annual meeting. During the ASCO20 virtual education program, August 8-10, they will share individual capabilities and discuss how collaboration is improving cancer care for the nation’s military Veteran patient population.

“As an oncologist and a veteran of the Army, I welcome the support provided by this grant,” said ASCO President Howard A. “Skip” Burris III, MD, FACP, FASCO. “VA’s leadership in telehealth will be shared with the broader oncology community.

The teleoncology program paves the way for VA and the Bristol Myers Squibb Foundation to enhance the capabilities of VA Video Connect, a platform that allows Veterans and their caregivers to meet virtually with their VA health care teams on any computer, tablet or mobile device with an internet connection. VA Video Connect is one of the largest and most successful digital health platforms in the nation and is currently responsible for conducting more than 20,000 virtual appointments each day.

Veterans interested in VA’s participating in teleoncology services should consult with their VA health care team. For more information about VA telehealth, visit connected care.

American Legion national commander - America you can do better than this!

Provided by: The American Legion

National Commander of The American Legion James W. “Bill” Oxford issued the following statement today:

“The desecration of national war memorials, which honor veterans of all races, is an absolute disgrace. The heroes honored by these monuments fought for social justice and freedom for all. Moreover, America’s veterans, who witnessed horrific violence in theaters around the world, should not have to see the same death and destruction here at home. The American Legion has always believed in equality for all. We also believe in the decency of the vast majority of law enforcement officers. Those who break the law, whether they are police officers or violent protesters, should be arrested and prosecuted. America, you can do better than this.”

Photo courtesy of The American Legion

You Too Can Join The World's Largest War Time Veterans Service Organization And Advocate For Veteran's Benefits Too!

Call 303-366-5201
"Making a difference"
By: Nick Arceo, Commander, SAL Detachment of Colorado

My fellow Comrades, we are, in my opinion, in one of the toughest times in our country’s history, as we continue to battle a deadly pandemic, economic challenges and once again we are faced with racial disparity.

Let me remind you of my theme for the year “you can make a difference” and one of my goals, “back to basics”. In the middle of these situations please keep these two thoughts in the forefront of your everyday activities. I believe these can keep us on track and moving forward.

I believe it is timely to review our preamble to the national constitution of The Sons of The American Legion. Take time to reflect on these powerful words this month. “Proud possessors of a priceless heritage, we male descendants of veterans of all wars, associate ourselves together as “Sons of The American Legion” for the following purposes: To uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America; to maintain law and order; to foster and perpetuate a true spirit of Americanism; to preserve the memories of our former members and the association of our members and our forefathers in all wars; to inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the Community, State and Nation; to combat the autocracy of both the classes and the masses; to make the master of might; to promote peace and good will on earth; to safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom and democracy; to consecrate and sanctify our friendship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness; to adopt in letter and spirit all the great principles for which The American Legion stands; and to assist in carrying on for God and Country”. Are you living this everyday?

Thank you, Sons, for everything you do for our Veterans. I know you are still “making a difference” in these difficult times. Thank you for your continued efforts in membership. Please find time this month to celebrate Independence Day, July 4th. Spent your holiday filled to the brim by enjoying our country’s freedom made possible by our Veterans.

Allow me to quote President Ronald Regan in 1983, “Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn’t pass it to our children in bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same”.

My prayer for you and yours is to stay well and healthy. Wishing you a wonderful time this special day in American history, HAPPY FOURTH OF JULY!!

God Bless you and God bless The United States of America.

Ft Collins Post 4 Memorial Day Event

By: Dwight D. Miles, George Beach Post 4 Service Officer

Every year American Legion Post 4 and VFW Post 1781 team up to render public Memorial Day Honors at three Fort Collins locations, Grandview Cemetery, Roselawn Cemetery, and Edora Park War memorial. Post members join the Fort Collins All Veteran Honor Guard supported by the Fort Collins Parks and Recreation Division. Even though there was a restriction on public gathering numbers these organizations performed all three ceremonies as a remembrance to all veterans who gave all in service to their country.

A recording of the Grandview ceremony may be seen on you Tube: https://youtu.be/Uj-EWGb2J8M.

Photo courtesy of Dwight D. Miles. No names were provided for those participating in the ceremony.
7 Every Day Hero Award Recipient

By: Annette Johnson, District 6 Commander and CO-ALPA Member

In 2005, Tim Park answered the call of becoming a member of Bugles Across America (BAA). Currently, the State Director of "BAA" at Ft. Logan, Park ensures as many veterans and first responders as possible receive the honor of a live bugler. “I feel honored and privileged to be able to honor the sound, honor the vet,” Park said.

On Memorial Day 2020, Ft. Logan was still shut down to funeral services as well as large gatherings. Learning of the effects isolation and quarantine have had on many of our veterans wellbeing and understanding they cannot go outside the facilities to pay respects to their fallen comrades this Memorial Day, District 6 Commander Annette Johnson and BAA Director Park decided to bring the ceremony to our veterans at Fitzsimons Living Center. A bit of 11th hour effort, a lot of behind the scenes collaborations with the dedication and commitment of our Legionnaires, BSA and Honor Guard of Denver American Legion Post 1 - This was a very successful and heart felt day.

Seven-months ago Mike May, a fellow BAA Bugler, nominated Director Park to receive a 7 Every Day Hero award. Between illnesses, weather and COVID-19 coordinating this award was not easy. As the media learned of this event to bring Memorial Day ceremony to the veterans at Fitzsimons Community Living Center, channel 7 Molly Hendrickson found an opportunity.

In order to not take away from the veterans and purpose of the day, after the event was over, Tim Park received the 7 Every Day Hero award for ensuring veterans, police and firefighters are given a proper burial with a live bugler.

Upon receiving his award, Park, a Navy veteran, shares his experience and love of bugling. He started playing the trumpet when he was eight years old and admits he’s never played a song more important than these 24 notes. One of the first events he accepted was at “Grand Lake, to sound Taps for one of the very first soldiers to liberate the concentration camps in World War II. Each time I play I think of him, I think of my father, I think of Annette’s father, I think of all of our fathers and that they served. They were the greatest generation.”

Congratulations to BAA Director Tim Park for your dedication, gratitude and providing a final salute to America’s fallen heroes.

To request a bugler go to: https://www.buglesacrossamerica.org/Request-A-Bugler

Photo courtesy of Annettee Johnsons, Commander. District 6

Longtime National Judge Advocate Philip B. Onderdonk passes

Provided by: The American Legion,

Philip B. Onderdonk Jr., who served 35 years as American Legion national judge advocate, passed away June 1 after a valiant battle with cancer. He was 77.

The U.S. Army veteran of the Vietnam War and member of American Legion Post 183 in Parkville, Md., retired in 2018 from the national office he had held since 1983. He was the eighth national judge advocate in the organization’s history and the longest-serving constitutional officer.

As chief legal counsel for The American Legion, Onderdonk Jr. ensured that the organization’s National Constitution and Bylaws were upheld; the American Legion emblem was protected; national meetings were properly conducted; contracts and media releases were reviewed for legal compliance; and friend-of-the-court – amicus curiae – briefs were filed in support of positions, policies and resolutions from the nation’s largest organization of wartime veterans.

Onderdonk Jr.’s work to protect military and veterans memorials and monuments that contain religious symbols was nationally recognized in 2015. That year, at The American Legion National Convention in Baltimore, Liberty Legal Institute presented him with the first Philip B. Onderdonk Jr. Religious Freedom Award, which continues to be presented annually by the institute.

Photo by Clay Lomneth, courtesy of The American Legion
“This award is for those that have given sacrifice and had success in defending what our founders called our first freedom – religious freedom,” Liberty Legal Institute President and CEO Kelly Shackelford said when Onderdonk Jr. was surprised with the first award named in his honor. “(Onderdonk) has been instrumental in leadership and what The American Legion has done in standing to defend attacks against veterans memorials across our country.”

During his tenure, Onderdonk Jr. was also deeply involved with legislation that created the U.S. Court of Veterans Appeals in 1988, giving veterans judicial recourse to dispute VA disability claims decisions.

National American Legion officers and staff who worked with Onderdonk Jr. remember him for his civility, legal knowledge, devotion to The American Legion and wit.

“Phil was a friend who would do anything in the world to help you when needed,” American Legion National Adjutant Daniel S. Wheeler said. “He was loyal, loved The American Legion, and was a kind and gentle man. He had a great sense of humor and loved telling the same jokes over and over. It was part of his charm. I will miss him.”

U.S. Navy veteran Kevin J. Bartlett was appointed national judge advocate on Jan. 1, 2018, to succeed Onderdonk Jr. “On June 1, 2020, The American Legion lost a great man who I was fortunate enough to call my colleague and friend,” Bartlett said. “From the first time we met in 2002 until the last time we talked, we had numerous conversations, debates and discussions regarding so many legal issues. I will miss him and those talks.”

Onderdonk Jr. continued to serve as a legal consultant for the organization until August 2018.

At the time he announced his retirement, Onderdonk Jr. reflected on his time with The American Legion National Headquarters. That interview and video can be viewed here.

Condolences to his surviving wife Ann may be sent to: Ann Onderdonk, c/o American Legion National Judge Advocate’s Office, PO Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN, 46206.

Sound the Honor ~ Honor the Sound

By Annette Johnson, District 6 Commander and CO-ALPA Member

This is the motto of Bugles Across America (BAA). This motto is designed to represent the valent service of all veterans. According to the BAA website, in 2000, Congress passed legislation stating that Veterans have a right to at least two uniformed military people to fold the flag and play Taps in recognition of service to these Veterans who have provided a service to their country. Immediately after Congress passed this law, founder of Bugles Across America Tom Day took this legislation a step further in the belief that every veteran deserves the honor of a live rendition of Taps by a real bugler.

According to the American Heritage Field Trumpet by Getzen, every day in America, approximately 1,800 World War II and Korean War veterans pass away. These brave men and women risked their lives to defend the land they loved, and yet as many as 75% of these heroes will not be given the honor of having Taps sounded at their funeral by a live bugler (2014, Tom Day, Founder & Bugler)

Bugles Across America now has over 4000 bugler volunteers located in all 50 states and growing number overseas. Since the Department of Veterans Affairs is expecting more than 1/2 million veterans to pass every year for the next 7 years, Bugles Across America is ALWAYS recruiting new volunteers.

To this end, we are actively seeking capable volunteers to provide this valuable service to Veterans and their families.

To request a bugler go to: https://www.buglesacrossamerica.org/Request-A-Bugler
We Get Mail Too!

May 13, 2020

Dear RM Fisher House Foundation Board and the American Legion;

I am writing this letter to thank you for your generous support of Navy Veteran Andrew Hill and his family. Recently Mr. Hill was hospitalized here in Denver. At the time of discharge from the hospital, he was given the news that his life expectancy was six months.

His wish was to get back home to Farmington, New Mexico to spend as much time as he could with his family. Gunny (David Nelson) at the Independence Center in Cortez, Colorado assisted with the coordination of communication with the family. Both the Rocky Mountain Fisher House Foundation and the American Legion Department of Colorado assisted with the financial needs for a hotel for the family and with funds to make the trip back to Farmington.

The family made it home successfully and relatives were able to secure an accessible house for the family in Durango, Colorado. By relocating to Durango, the Veteran was able to be with more family and closer to needed services.

The sad news is that last week, Navy Veteran Andrew Hill lost his battle with cancer. His family was able to be at his side during this sad time. Through your care and generosity, together we helped to fulfill his wish to be at home. I thank you and the family sends their warmest regards.

During this epidemic we are all experiencing losses of many kinds. To us, losing a fellow Veteran is an extra hard hit to the heart. My belief is that as long as we look out after one another, wounded or not, we will make it through this.

Much gratitude,

If you are going through HELL, keep going

Michelle McHenry-Edrington & Edgar
Non-Attorney Advocacy Coordinator
Colorado Cross-Disability Coalition
1385 South Colorado Blvd. Suite 610-A
Denver, Colorado 80222
Direct Line: 720.897.6960 Fax: 303.648.6262
mmedrington@ccdcolline.org
she, her, canine
This is why we have our Veteran's Assistance Fund and CVKF

The thank you letter on the preceding page is in response to our assisting a veteran, the father of a minor child, and his family.

The vet had terminal cancer and was in a Denver hospital. I received a call from Izzy Abbass with the Fisher House Foundation. He said they were looking for some financial assistance for this veteran. It was more than the Fisher House could handle and Izzy wondered if we could help.

Of course, I immediately said yes, and we provided funds from our Colorado Veterans Kids Fund (CVKF). Our contribution along with the Fisher House funds enabled the veteran’s wife to come to Denver and transport him home. The result is described in the letter.

This is why we have our Veteran’s Assistance Fund and CVKF.

Thanks,

Tom Bock
Department of Colorado
Deputy Adjutant

VA’s Million Veteran Program seeking female Veterans for genetic-based studies

On this Women Veterans Day, MVP recognizes women Veterans’ service

By: Mike Richman

Rosalie Liotta and her caregiver, Cathy Adkins, are both Veterans. Liotta enlisted in WAVES, the women’s branch of the U.S. Naval Reserve during World War II. Adkins served in the U.S. Air Force from 1980 to 1995. In one of her assignments, she worked as an aerospace ground equipment maintenance technician during the Persian Gulf War.

That’s not the only commonality between the two. They’re both enrolled in VA’s Million Veteran Program (MVP), which is aimed at learning how genes, lifestyle, and military exposures affect the health of former service members. As a result, the two feel they’re making a sincere effort to give back to their country.

“MVP is fabulous,” Adkins said. “I’m very excited about it and glad that VA is allowing me to participate. I really appreciate what VA is doing for all of our Veterans.”

Women underrepresented in medical, biological research

With Women Veterans Day upon us, it’s important to recognize the contributions of female Veterans like Liotta and Adkins in the Million Veteran Program. More than 830,000 former service members are enrolled in MVP, of which 80,000 are women. Their genetic information and other health data are being used to study diseases, such as breast cancer, and to research gender differences in other common conditions, including depression and heart disease. The goal is to provide better, more personalized ways of identifying and treating diseases based upon a person’s characteristics.

Historically, women have been underrepresented in medical and biological research, leading to knowledge gaps that can result in misdiagnoses and drugs that may affect men and women differently. Although these trends have been changing in recent years, the status of women as minorities in the Veteran population can make it harder for VA researchers to recruit enough women to get valid study results. Thus, by volunteering for MVP, female Vets can make a big difference for other Veterans of today and the future.

Number of female Veterans in program on the rise

Since MVP Online was launched nearly a year ago, the number of female Veterans joining the Million Veteran Program has increased because of the ease of enrolling online. This marks an important development to ensure their proper representation in the program. When doing genetic research, it’s also key to have women from different demographic backgrounds. A person who is African-American, for example, may respond differently to a medication than a person who is white.

Dozens of studies have been published using MVP data, including a 2019 paper that looked at health characteristics among women.

Photo courtesy of the Million Veteran Program

(Continued on Page 16 See Veteran)
Veterans. The researchers found that compared with men, women were more likely to experience migraines, arthritis, gastrointestinal issues, and mental health conditions. Women reported less frequent exercise and greater use of VA for their health care needs, including the pharmacy. Depression was one of the most commonly reported conditions in women Veterans. These findings are important to inform VA screening and treatment policies, which may include easing the process for women to receive care for the conditions that matter most to them, including those involving mental health.

‘Most wonderful time of my life’

In terms of breast cancer, VA researchers use MVP data to study genetic and clinical markers on the risk of this disease and to develop more personalized screening strategies for women, rather than relying on age alone. They are also looking at how military experience and race might affect breast cancer risk. MVP provides a way to look at a more diverse population of women who served. Most current screening plans are based on studies of civilian, white women.

Rosalie Liotta and Cathy Adkins both use the New Mexico VA Health Care System in Albuquerque. Liotta thanks VA for taking such good care of her, nearly 80 years after she volunteered for the WAVES program. Stationed in San Francisco, she was assigned to type up orders from admirals. She wanted to do more but knew her duty as a yeoman was just as significant as being on a battleship.

“That was the most productive and wonderful time of my life,” Liotta said. “I felt I was worthwhile and that my life was worthwhile… that I was accomplishing something for my country. My parents had to sign for me because I was 20 years old when I went into the service. I knew I was doing something important for my country.”

About the Author -Mike Richman -

Mike Richman is a writer and editor in VA Research Communications. He joined VA in 2016 after working for 15 years at the Voice of America.

Woodland Park Post 180 Memorial Day

By: Larry Ingram

Never let it be said that a mere pandemic stopped Post 1980 of Woodland Park, CO from their obligation of honoring the fallen by placing flags on veteran’s graves.

On the Saturday before Memorial Day it is the tradition of the post to place flags on the graves of veterans buried at Woodland Park, Divide & West Creek cemeteries.

Because of the pandemic no public ceremony was performed on Memorial Day at these cemeteries. However, another tradition of the post is to put up American Flags at Lions Park which is at the crossroads of Hwy 24 & 67 in the middle of Woodland Park.

This year it was 25 deg and it had snowed the night before, but what do you expect when your post is located at 8500 ft. altitude.


Woodland Park Post 180 Memorial Day Photos

No names of those individuals shown in the photographs above or on Page 17 were provided by Post 180.
More Woodland Park Post 180 Memorial Day Photos
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.

1-877-699-2654 | usaa.com/legion

Investments/Insurance: Not FDIC insured • Not Bank issued, Guaranteed or Underwritten • May Lose Value

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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 #0E36312), 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.

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Veterans Treatment Courts go online to support Veterans during COVID-19 pandemic

To continue serving Veterans during the COVID-19 pandemic, Veterans Treatment Courts (VTCs) across the country have moved to services online.

VA’s Homeless Programs Office supports VTCs through the participation of its Veterans Justice Outreach Specialists. These VJO specialists assess Veteran defendants’ treatment needs and link them with the appropriate VA treatment services. They also provide regular updates to the court on the Veteran’s progress throughout their treatment.

To make it happen, VTCs and VJO specialists throughout the country set up daily remote options to schedule court appearances. On any given call, there can be 25 to 30 people. This includes the Veteran, the Judge, the prosecutor, the case coordinator, and others.

“When the pandemic hit, we were able to close the court down almost immediately and move to phone and online communications,” said Jessica Mann, VJO Program Specialist at the Salt Lake County Third District VTC.

“In the first two weeks of not meeting in court, we coordinated daily contact with Veterans in our program. They could call us, or we could call them for a daily check-in until we figured out how to further serve them.”

Veteran mentors now fill that role. They provide nonclinical support to the Veteran participants on behalf of the VTC. Over the past month, Veteran Al Palmer, a mentor at the Salt Lake County Third District VTC, has delivered food and made face masks for Veteran participants and their families.

“I’ve been checking in with Veteran participants every week or delegating other mentors to do so,” said Palmer. “I’ve always liked the feeling of helping people. And now, as a mentor, I get that feeling again.”

Mann said VTCs across the country wouldn’t have survived without the mentors. She said she recognizes the remarkable resiliency of Veterans in the current situation.

“During this time, I’ve been so amazed and impressed with all of the ways our Veteran participants have come together to support one another,” she said.

About Veterans Treatment Courts

VTCs offer a second chance for Veterans involved with the criminal justice system by addressing their underlying clinical needs. As a result of the shift in the way that justice-involved Veterans are managed, recidivism rates among this group are lower. Also, many have successfully reintegrated back into their communities.

As of December 2019, VJO Specialists reported serving in 561 VTCs and other Veteran-focused court programs across the U.S.

More Information

- If you or someone you know is a justice-involved Veteran, email the VJO Specialist nearest you for assistance accessing VA health care services.
- Visit the Justice for Vets website to learn more about Veterans Treatment Courts.
- Check out VA’s new resource page for information on COVID-19, its impact on people experiencing homelessness, and resources that can help.
How will you pay for expenses that Medicare doesn’t cover?

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

Other features include:
- The freedom of choosing your own doctors and hospitals
- Outstanding Customer Service available from courteous representatives ready to answer your questions
- 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

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: ___________________________ DOB: ___________________________
Spouse Name: ___________________________ Spouse’s DOB: ___________________________
Address: ___________________________
City: ___________________________ State: ___________________________ ZIP: ___________________________
Telephone: (_________________________)

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

Underwritten by:
Transamerica Life Insurance Company, and
Transamerica Financial Life Insurance Company (NT)
ID RESOLVE

A New Program to Help Legionnaires Fight Back Against Identity Theft

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

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

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

There are two annual memberships available:

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

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

ID Theft
by the numbers

- Claims a new victim every 2 seconds
- 16+ mill. victims targeted in the U.S.
- $16 billion in losses

Veterans are 50% more likely to be the victim of identity theft

There were 1,579 data breaches last year

40+ hours spent resolving an identity theft case

Services provided by Generali Global Assistance. Generali Global Assistance has been a leading provider of identity and digital protection solutions, travel insurance, and other assistance services for more than 36 years. Generali Global Assistance is part of the multinational Generali Group, which for over 185 years has created a presence in 50 countries with over 74,000 employees. Generali’s success has been built on the foundation of trust that clients have placed in their ability to provide assistance in the most difficult of circumstances.
News Release from American Legion Department of Colorado District 9

At the American Legion Department of Colorado Conference held in January in Colorado Springs, the Children and Youth Ambassador of The Year Award for 2019-2020 was awarded to Dr. Thomas Miller, Commander of Monte Vista’s James G. Hamilton Post 53, in recognition of his contributions and dedication of safeguarding the health, welfare and wellbeing of Children and Youth by developing a pediatric clinic for the Monte Vista community.

Dr. Thomas Miller, Monte Vista Post 53 Commander and Navy Veteran enjoyed his career as a pediatrician while serving his country. After leaving the Navy he continued dedicating his life to the health and wellbeing of children. Dr. Miller stated that “The job of a pediatrician in rural Colorado, both the San Luis Valley and now currently in the Montrose area is all inclusive. We see the veteran’s kids, the rich, the poor…everybody. 60-70% of my patients are Medicaid – meaning they are socioeconomically disadvantaged. We do our own ordering of medical supplies as well as management of medically fragile and complex children in our community. I have patients with organ transplants, complex heart disease, genetic disorders, etc. - with the nearest specialist being 4-5 hours away.”

Dr. Miller is involved in many things most would not think of, such as “reviewing child fatalities and finding) ways to prevent and treat opioid withdrawal in newborns. We have a presence at every kid’s fair, health fair, etc. all trying to promote child health and wellbeing.”

Dr. Miller served on the “Board of Directors for La Puente which ran the PALS program: and after school program for at risk kids” and somehow found time to devote to the food bank network ensuring children had nutritional and healthy meals. Creating a program and expanding it is not an easy task.

Congratulations to Dr. Thomas Miller, recipient of “The American Legion, Department of Colorado 2019-2020 Children and Youth Ambassador of the Year Award.

Legion COVID-19 survey reveals concerns over health, well-being and economy

Hundreds of veterans throughout the nation called on The American Legion for direct assistance after participating in a COVID-19 survey between mid-April and June 15. Nearly 24,000 took the survey – 95.4% veterans – indicating their concerns over the pandemic, their well-being as a result of it and economic strains it has placed on them.

Respondents were offered opportunities to seek direct help from The American Legion in four areas. The most frequent request for assistance came in the area of VA benefits, with 1,030, who were connected to American Legion service officers. Personal contact for general support was requested by 553 respondents, followed by requests for help on emotional wellness at 411 and employment assistance at 270.

Nearly 30% indicated that the pandemic had caused a major impact in their lives, and over 38% said stay-at-home orders had negatively affected their emotional well-being.

The American Legion’s Buddy Check program proved to be on target for veterans, 40.58% of whom reported that communication with friends and family is the most important resource to address their emotional well-being. Physical activity was second among the choices at 25.26%.

While most veterans who responded to the survey said they receive health care from primary physicians, 32.84% said they were “fully confident” and 57.79% were “somewhat confident” with VA’s response to the crisis.

“VA has tackled this difficult situation as well or better than any other health-care providers,” American Legion National Commander James W. “Bill” Oxford said. “And we are not surprised. We all share in the challenge to deliver the best care anywhere and know that VA is working hard to set a standard for all health-care operations. As we deal with this historic time as a nation, The American Legion stands strong in support of all who provide care for our nation’s veterans and citizens.”

The economy and personal financial effect of the pandemic weighed on the minds of the respondents. The threat the coronavirus presents to the U.S. economy was rated as “large” by 87.05% and over 76% indicated the pandemic presents “some threat” or a “large threat” to their personal financial situation. A nearly equal percentage (35.6%) of respondents indicated they were “very concerned” about contracting the coronavirus as well as their ability to buy groceries because of it.

Survey respondents were predominantly male (91.98%) Vietnam War veterans (67.93%). Just over 90 percent of the respondents indicated they are members of The American Legion.
Use your mobile device to refill and track your VA prescriptions.

Rx Refill, VA Mobile's newest app, gives Veterans like you the option to easily access VA health care services on the go. With Rx Refill, you can request, monitor, and track the delivery status of eligible VA prescription refills.

Rx Refill lets you choose the prescription refill method that works best for your busy life. Take charge of your health by using Rx Refill today.

Through Rx Refill, you can:

- Request multiple refills. Select multiple refillable VA prescriptions at once and request refills through the app.
- Track your deliveries. Follow the estimated delivery times of your VA Mail Order Pharmacy prescriptions.
- View additional VA health information. Access your prescription history and additional medical data through My HealtheVet.
- Review your VA prescription history. View your available VA prescriptions, along with their refill status.

Want to learn more?

Access Rx Refill’s VA App Store page through the link below or by scanning the QR code.

mobile.va.gov/app/rx-refill
Department Americanism Report 2019-2020

Hello Department of Colorado Legionnaires,

Even though we won’t be together this year for our annual Convention, I was very pleased to see how many of our Posts found creative ways to work our Americanism programs. We had 47 Posts submit an Americanism report (although a few of them were blank). Here are some statistics:

- There was $217,143 reported spending on Americanism programs (Wow!)
- There was 26,429.5 Volunteer hours reported supporting Americanism Programs (Wow again!)
- We had 11 Posts submit a report for the first time ever or more than 3 years (Wow again, again!)
- For all you statistical lovers, here’s how each District fared on Americanism report submissions:
  - District 1; 4 Posts
  - District 2; 1 Post
  - District 3; 1 Post
  - District 4; 5 Posts
  - District 5; 7 Posts
  - District 6; 15 Posts (Wow!)  
  - District 7; 4 Posts
  - District 8; 1 Post
  - District 9; 1 Post
  - District 10; 1 Post
  - District 11; 0 Posts :( 
  - District 12; 2 Posts
  - District 13; 2 Posts
  - District 14; 3 Posts
- For the first time in more than 3 years, we had 4 Posts in Category 4 (251-400 members) submit a report (Wow again, again, again!). There were no Posts in that Category for the past 3 years

I read several narratives on Americanism programs worked over the past year, in spite of the COVID-19 restrictions. Kudos to all those Posts that found a way to continue serving!

Now for the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place finishers (noticed I didn’t say winners. That’s because every Post that submitted a report showing their Americanism support is indeed a winner) in each of the 6 Categories based on membership size (actually, as with last year I combined Categories 5 and 6 because there wasn’t enough American reports to break them out). The Posts identified in each Category is based on their membership total at the time I received their report (if included on the form):

- Category 1; 15-50 members: 
  - Post 168, First Place with 3,714.29% volunteer hours compared to their total membership logged toward Americanism programs/support
  - Post 94, Second Place with 948.28% volunteer hours compared to their total membership logged toward Americanism programs/support
  - Post 89, Third Place with 521.43% volunteer hours compared to their total membership logged toward Americanism programs/support
- Category 2; 51-100 members: 
  - Post 2002, First Place with 3,731.82% volunteer hours compared to their total membership logged toward Americanism programs/support
  - Post 180, Second Place with 536.96% volunteer hours compared to their total membership logged toward Americanism programs/support
  - Post 88, Third Place with 419.72% volunteer hours compared to their total membership logged toward Americanism programs/support
- Category 3; 101-250 members:
  - Post 2008, First Place with 505.83% volunteer hours compared to their total membership logged toward Americanism programs/support
  - Post 1187, Second Place with 267.97% volunteer hours compared to their total membership logged toward Americanism programs/support
  - Post 39, Third Place with 164.44% volunteer hours compared to their total membership logged toward Americanism programs/support

- Category 4; 251-400 members:
  - Post 103, First Place with 3,300.27% volunteer hours compared to their total membership logged toward Americanism programs/support
  - Post 11-11, Second Place with 107.44% volunteer hours compared to their total membership logged toward Americanism programs/support
  - Post 4, Third Place with 70.82% volunteer hours compared to their total membership logged toward Americanism programs/support

- Category 5; 401-700 members, and Category 6; 701-Above members:
  - Post 209, First Place with 206.33% volunteer hours compared to their total membership logged toward Americanism programs/support
  - Post 32, Second Place with 129.26% volunteer hours compared to their total membership logged toward Americanism programs/support
  - Post 22, Third Place with 122.77% volunteer hours compared to their total membership logged toward Americanism programs/support

On behalf of all American Legion Officers from the Department of Colorado, I extend a very hearty congratulations and “Thank You” for your efforts.

For all Posts who took the time to submit a report, I thank you. You prove by the work you did, you continue to work hard to “Re-Ignite Patriotism” and “Be Part Of The Solution!”

Commander Dean Noechel has requested I give him certificates for the above Category finishers so he can personally award it to the Posts during his District Fall Conference visits. So that should give the above Posts an additional incentive to attend their respective District Fall Conference.

Thanks again to all Posts for your Americanism efforts. It is apparent you have significantly improved the community you support and the Veterans and Youth you serve.

For God and Country,

Jay Bowen
Americanism Chairman
The American Legion, Department of Colorado
BPOTS!
Department Community Service Report 2019-2020

Colorado American Legion Members,

Colorado American Legion Posts across our great state where engaged in our communities for 2019-2020 with a wide variety of community service activities. This year 34 Posts submitted the community service report, 4 had no information reported. Their where 30 Posts that contributed to the total numbers that are being reported for this annual report, we donated $131,704.09 to our community service program and over 69,222 volunteer hours in our community. We was able to award 15 awards for 1st, 2nd and 3rd place in categories based on membership size.

Category 1 is 1-50 members, Category 2 is 51-100 members, Category 3 is 101-250 members, Category 4 is 251-400 Members, Category 5 is 401-700 Members and Category 6 is 701+. The large categories of 5 and 6 only had 3 entries and where combined together and all entries were awarded.

The 2019-2020 Community Service Winners are as follows:

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<td>Post 1876</td>
<td>Post 2010</td>
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<td>Post 4</td>
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Thank you to all the Posts that submitted these reports for consideration, Congratulations to the winners! A job well done by all of our members. You are the reason that The American Legion is a community based organization.

Thank you all for “RE-IGNITING PATRIOTISM” in your communities and across our great state, it is because of you that we are the largest war time Veterans Service Organization in the world. We have to be proud of our 101 year old history and the many of great accomplishments that we have. We are a community based organization and community service is what we as The American Legion does to support our neighbors, friends and fellow Veterans.

Dean Noechel
Department Commander 2019-2021

Department Children & Youth Report 2019-2020

Thank you to everyone for supporting the Children & Youth Programs and to those who reached out for training and attended training at Mid-Year conference. Your interest in learning about this program has helped many others, your questions are invaluable and I encourage you to keep asking more questions.

The number one consistent question is: What it the difference between Americanism and Children & Youth? Answer: C&Y concerns the health and welfare of our children and Americanism is education.

Due to the pandemic the CWF banquet was cancelled. If you did not get to turn in you CWF fundraising please reach out to Scott Garrett at saladj@coloradolegion.org

Your 2019/2020 totals for TFA, C&Y/CVKF, and VAF Grants Awarded to date:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
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<tr>
<td>C&amp;Y/CVKF</td>
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<tr>
<td>VAF</td>
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CWF from June 1 - April 7, 2020, the SAL has raised for $7,631.00

2019/2020 Combined C&Y/CVKF/VAF & CWF:

- Year to Date total distribution: $454,439.17
- Additional donations and administration reported, not included in program reporting: $11,811.06
- Volunteer hours reported: 6885
Posts reporting on the Children & Youth Narratives:
The District with the most Narratives turned in: District 6.

Congratulations to the 2019/2020 Children & Youth Ambassador Award Winners
Jody Bracy, Meritorious Service Award - Post 168, District 1
Wayne Turner, Distinguished Service - Post 1187, District 6
Gail Prentice, Pathfinder Award – Post 30, District 3
Dr. Tom Miller, 2019-2020 Children & Youth Ambassador of the Year - Post 58, District 9

Congratulations to the 2019/2020 Joe & Jackie Ross Awardees
3rd Place Jess-Yaich, Post 183, Strasburg, District 6
2nd Place Post 22 Northglenn, District 5
1st Place Post 103, George C. Evans, Littleton, District 5

Congratulations to the 2019/2020 Detachment Jim and Judy Gates Awardees
3rd Place SAL Sqd. 207, Larry C. decker Memorial, Pueblo West, District 8
2nd Place SAL Sqd. 22, DIA Navy Seal Danny Phillip Dietz, Jr. District 6
1st Place SAL. Sqd. 97, Hubert L. Jones, District 6

Thank you all for taking the time to compile these reports. Your efforts are appreciated. These reports are your voice, so share your 2020 accomplishments we all enjoy hearing others accomplishments and remember no amount or time is too small they all add up.

Keep up the great work!

Children & Youth Ambassador Awards – While you are working on your CPRs start watching and thinking about who you will nominate for the Children & Youth Ambassador Awards. Who is it that is making a difference in your community? Who would you like to acknowledge?

Thank you for your dedication and passion is effecting change for our children.

Annette Johnson, Chairman
Department C&Y Committee

American Legion implores White House to protect vets ‘borrower defense’

The American Legion National Commander James “Bill” Oxford is imploring President Trump to sign legislation which would relieve students from repaying loans that were issued because they were defrauded by disreputable schools.

“Veterans have been aggressively targeted due to their service to our country,” American Legion National Commander James W. “Bill” Oxford said. “Student veterans are a tempting target for certain online and for-profit schools to mislead with deceptive promises, while offering degrees and certificates of little-to-no value. We urge President Trump to sign House Joint Resolution 76, which allows for a ‘borrower defense’ to be used by students to obtain discharges to loans that were issued because of these false promises. This is the type of legislation that our delegates called for when they unanimously passed Resolution No. 82 at our 2017 national convention.”

Oxford added that Trump stood with veterans in 2019 when he exercised his executive authority to order the Department of Education to forgive hundreds of millions of student loan debt for veterans with severe disabilities.

“We are hoping that President Trump will once again come to the aid of student veterans,” Oxford said. “Under current conditions, it is nearly impossible for veterans to successfully use a ‘borrower defense.’ The American Legion believes this needs to be fixed. We hope that he will sign this needed legislation.”
President releases PREVENTS roadmap a nationwide plan for ending suicide among Veterans and all Americans

The U.S Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced today, June 17, 2020, the release of the President’s Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End a National Tragedy of Suicide (PREVENTS), an historic, nationwide plan to raise awareness about mental health, connect Veterans and others at risk of suicide to federal and local resources, and facilitate focused and coordinated research into suicide.

The roadmap is the result of an Executive Order President Trump signed March 5, 2019, calling on the Departments of Veterans Affairs, Defense, Health and Human Services and several others to develop a comprehensive strategy for ending the national tragedy of suicide.

The order was signed as data continue to show 132 Americans, including 20 service members, former never federally activated Guard and Reserve members, and Veterans; die on average each day by suicide.

“Veteran suicide is a tragedy this country started measuring in the decades following the Civil War, but one that sadly went unaddressed for generations,” said President Trump. “Today, my administration is taking steps to ensure the men and women who bravely fought for us when they were called will be given the care and attention, they need during some of their darkest hours. Our Veterans will lead the way for all Americans as we end the stigma that for too long has kept us from talking openly about mental health and thwarted our efforts to provide the kind of assistance and support that will save lives.”

“Suicide prevention is VA’s highest clinical priority, and the department is taking significant steps to address the issue,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “But just as there is no single cause of suicide, no single organization can end Veteran suicide alone. That’s why PREVENTS aims to bring together stakeholders across all levels of government and in the private sector to work side by side to provide our Veterans with the mental health and suicide prevention services they need. By employing a public-health approach to suicide prevention, President Trump’s roadmap will equip communities to help Veterans get the right care, whenever and wherever they need it.”

The PREVENTS Task Force is co-chaired by White House Domestic Policy Council Director Brooke Rollins and Secretary Wilkie, and the roadmap released today calls for several steps to be taken to further this critical national goal, many of which are already underway:

National Suicide Prevention Activation Campaign

This summer, the PREVENTS Task Force will launch a nationwide public health campaign aimed at educating Americans that suicide is preventable, creating awareness of mental health and suicide prevention best practices with a call to action for ALL Americans to take the PREVENTS Pledge to Prevent Suicide.

A primary goal of the campaign is to change the culture surrounding issues related to suicide and mental health. The campaign will stress everyone has a role to play in the well-being of family members, friends and coworkers. It will create awareness about risk and protective factors and encourage people to reach out to those who may be struggling.

The campaign will rely on coordinated messaging from all levels of government and non-government partners, as well as national digital, radio and television public service announcements. Efforts will focus on dissemination in states with a high concentration of Veterans. It will also rely on high-profile ambassadors who will help amplify these messages, including Second Lady Karen Pence, and U.S. Surgeon General Jerome Adams.

Improving Suicide Prevention Research

Too often, efforts have focused on a one-size-fits-all approach to suicide prevention that fails to consider an individual’s specific risk factors. As a key element of the roadmap, PREVENTS will launch the National Research Strategy to accelerate the development and implementation of effective solutions to help prevent Veteran suicide.

A critical first step toward this goal is the optimization of the current research ecosystem, which will accelerate the impact of Veteran suicide research by enhancing interagency collaboration, evaluating the role of open science practices, leveraging team science and enhancing data resources and analysis. The PREVENTS Task Force will have an initial assessment of the current research landscape by the end of 2020 and will simultaneously work with Task Force agencies and non-governmental partners to begin moving toward this exciting goal.

The development of the National Research Strategy will result in an increase in focus on the isolation of risk factors and an identification of the most effective treatment practices and interventions for Veterans. This all of government and all of nation approach will lead to a dramatic shift in the ability to prevent suicide for Veterans and all Americans.

Building Partnerships

The PREVENTS Task Force has built relationships with dozens of organizations across the country, including faith-based groups, universities, non-profits, corporations, small businesses as well as state and local governments. The Task Force will continue to expand these relationships in order to share best practices for promoting mental health, ensuring awareness of and access to federal, state, local and tribal resources, and coordinating and implementing the public awareness campaign across sectors. The Task Force will encourage all 50 states, the U.S. Territories and the District of Columbia to sign the PREVENTS proclamation affirming their commitment to preventing suicide among Veterans and all of their citizens.

The PREVENTS Task Force has already connected with more than
150 known community boards, 27 statewide suicide prevention teams and Building Healthy Military Communities, a pilot initiative with seven partnering states. The Task Force has also completed an initial analysis of funding that will be available for suicide prevention efforts. During the next several months, PREVENTS will be implementing a plan to improve coordination among grant programs and develop a strategy to fill gaps through additional funding as well as additional public-private partnerships.

The PREVENTS Task Force is working with communities and stakeholders to develop and further efforts focused on coordinated systems of care. Government and non-government entities alike have a critical role to play in ensuring a comprehensive system of support.

View the president’s roadmap and find more information about the PREVENTS Task Force at: www.va.gov/PREVENTS.

**National Commander - unequal treatment violates nation’s highest values**

The American Legion

**American Legion National Commander James W. “Bill” Oxford issued the following statement today:**

“The American Legion stands on principles and serves purposes worldwide that are violated when justice, freedom and democracy are not applied equally, regardless of race, color, creed or class. These principles formed the foundation of the organization over a century ago, in a very different and deeply divided time in U.S. society. As our nation grieves and tries to reconcile the unconscionable deaths of African-American citizens George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmmed Arbery, retired St. Louis Police Capt. David Dorn, Federal Protective Services Officer Patrick Underwood in Oakland, Calif., and others, The American Legion stands firm in a value it has upheld, in the form of a national resolution, first adopted 1923:

WHEREAS, The fundamental law of our country guarantees to all peoples equal rights and equal opportunities and the right to worship their God as they see fit; and...

WHEREAS, Membership of The American Legion is made up of those who served our country in a time of great national stress, without distinction as to race, color, creed or class; and...

**RESOLVED, ...That we consider any individual, group of individuals, or organizations, which creates, or fosters racial, religious or class strife among our people, or which takes into their own hands the enforcement of law, determination of guilt, or infliction of punishment, to be un-American, a menace to our liberties, and destructive to our fundamental law; and be it finally **

RESOLVED, That we consider such actions by any individual, groups, or organizations, to be inconsistent with the ideals and purposes of The American Legion.

“This resolution’s place in The American Legion’s conscience is so timeless it was reaffirmed, in full, at the organization’s 99th National Convention in 2017.

“Throughout its history, The American Legion has fought to improve racial equality not only for veterans, but for the communities they serve. In 1919, African-American veterans of World War I were among the organization’s founders who adopted a mission statement – the Preamble to The American Legion Constitution – that pledges among other things ‘to maintain law and order,’ ‘promote peace and goodwill on earth’ and ‘safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom and democracy.’

“Where the law has been broken, justice must be served. Where freedom has been denied, it must be returned, without prejudice. Our nation has much to consider as we continue to strive toward a shared goal found in the Pledge of Allegiance to our flag: ‘with liberty and justice for all.’ All means all. Anything less than complete equality in the execution of these values today is as un-American now as it was in 1923.”

**Letter from Walter Rhoades American Legion Post 111**

Indian Peaks Chapter,  
Daughters of the American Revolution  
Louisville, CO.

Dear Regent Mary Billmaier,

On behalf of the entire membership of Walter Rhoades American Legion Post 111, thank you for your time and commitment in recognizing our departed. I cannot tell you how much we appreciate your support for our Post and our community. The time your members donated to the cataloging of the markers of our veterans laid to rest, at the Louisville Cemetery made ours and the Boy Scouts placement of the flags much easier. Many families came up to us after the ceremony and thanked us for placing the flags at the markers. With respect, we informed them that in fact it was your cataloging of the veterans laid to rest at the Cemetery allowed us and the Boy Scouts to place the flags at the markers of the departed.

Thanks to the DAR, and their willingness to help our Post. We were able to demonstrate to the community and the families thee the men and women that are laid to rest maybe gone but they certainly not forgotten.

Thank you for what you do for Louisville, and our Post.

With gratitude,

Robert W. Worsley  
Commander, Walter Rhoades  
American Legion Post 111  
Louisville, CO
Memorial Day at the Fitzsimons CLC

By: Annette Johnson, Commander District 6 and Post 1 Historian

Memorial Day at the Fitzsimons Community Living Center (FCLC) is a day resident veterans anticipated and wanted to be a part of this year.

For many years, The American Legion has supported the veterans at the Fitzsimons Community Living Center (FCLC). This year, being quarantined, our veterans could not go to Ft. Logan to pay their respects or participate in a day of remembrance. Learning of this, our District 6 Legion community came together bringing a Memorial Day of Remembrance to them.

Visitors were not allowed to enter the gated center because of the risks associated with the COVID-19 virus and the veterans at the FCLC and were asked to not leave the building or fenced in enclosure of the center. Two Memorial Day ceremonies were conducted for the benefit of veterans, on the east and south side of the building’s courtyards and for veterans that chose to remain in their rooms and building were able to observe through the large balconies and windows.

Boys Scout Troop 127, 113 and 113G and Cub Scout Pack 127 did a magnificent job of presenting colors of our Nation and placing our flag, and other flags, in a manner to ensure dignity, respect, and honor. During the ceremony the flags were held in place by the Scouts and they kept all of the flags in the proper position until the colors were retired at the completion of the ceremony. There were many accolades from the veterans and guests observing the ceremony about how well the Scouts performed their duties and how conscientious they were in performing the presentation of our Nation’s colors, to include rendering honors during Taps.

Post #1 Color Guard led the ceremony with a precision drill and then provided the rifle salute and a three round volley after the flags were placed. Chaplain John Holland, Post 1, offered a prayer of remembrance for our fallen veterans, POW/MIA’s, and all veterans that had passed.

Perhaps the most impressive part of the ceremony was the music provided by Bugles Across America, which included buglers Tim Park, Mike May, and guest bugler Bob Alexander of the Colorado Symphony who performed the National Anthem and Amazing Grace. Collectively, these melodies seemed to sound more profound that day. Tears were fought back by many attending the ceremony. Taps was played by all three buglers creating a 3-way echo. The patriotic and solemn sounds carried throughout the crowd with an uplifting, then an eerie plangent sound of remembrance, reminding us of the restorative power of love - that when we are lost, we can be found. Everyone in attendance shared in emotional moments with fellow veterans, their families, American Legion members, and guests.

Colorado State Commander Dean Noechel gave the address, he spoke of the significance this day holds for him as he pays tribute and remembers his fallen brothers and sisters. In closing he asked for all of us to remember the sacrifices made by our veterans on Memorial Day asking everyone to light three candles at dusk in remembrance of our veterans—Red for our the fallen, Blue for those who have passed away, and White for our POW/MIA’s who have yet to return home.

Chaplain Holland gave the closing prayer and asked for God’s blessing for all of our veterans and made a plea to everyone to give special remembrance of those that paid the ultimate sacrifice for their country.

A sincere thank you is given to everyone who made this Memorial Day ceremony special.

Photo from Memorial Day at the Fitzsimons CLC

Female BSA Troop 113G with Dad (wearing baseball cap) and Reporter Katie Weiss in the back ground, right corner of the photo (wearing a purple dress).
More photos of the Memorial Day at Fitzsimons CLC

Tiger Scout Jesse Black rendering honors during Taps.

Buglar from Bugles Across America playing Taps. Department Commander Dean Noechel standing next to Buglar, rendering honors.

VA and GO₂ Foundation for Lung Cancer partner to improve outcomes for Veterans at risk of lung cancer

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced today it has partnered with nonprofit GO₂ Foundation for Lung Cancer to increase awareness about lung screening options and improve outcomes for Veterans impacted by lung cancer.

This partnership allows for VA and GO₂ to leverage resources, programs and services available through GO₂ Foundation’s national network of more than 750 centers of excellence.

“Research and initiatives to ensure access to early detection and treatment will greatly improve the care of Veterans with lung cancer,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “This public-private partnership will help expand the array of services that are currently available within VA and increase public awareness about Veteran-specific conditions that place Veterans at greater risk for lung cancer.”

VA diagnoses 7,700 Veterans with lung cancer each year and an estimated 900,000 remain at risk due to age, smoking and other environmental exposures during and after military service.

“This important milestone allows us to share with VA our many years of experience developing best practices for lung cancer screening and care to help improve outcomes for Veterans impacted by this disease.” said CEO, Co-founder and President of GO₂ Foundation Laurie Fenton Ambrose.

VA will help educate staff at GO₂ Foundation screening centers about Veteran-specific health factors related to lung cancer risk, prevention and response to treatment; share information about applying for VA health care and benefits; and provide access to suicide prevention resources.

This partnership will also provide VA with additional resources from the GO₂ Foundation to help support lung screening program implementation, professional development training and Veteran education. Many of these GO₂ Foundation resources are available online at https://go2foundation.org/for-professionals and support social distancing guidelines designed to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

The collaboration is managed by the VA National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention and facilitated by the Veterans Health Administration Office of Community Engagement. For more information, visit health partnerships.
Department commanders share success to 100 percent membership

The American Legion

The target date for American Legion departments to achieve 100% of their assigned membership goal for 2019-2020 was extended from May to June 17 due to the effects of COVID-19 with stay-at-home orders and social distancing. Seven American Legion departments met or exceeded the target date – Colorado (101%), Mexico, Montana, North Carolina (101%, home of National Commander James W. Oxford), Philippines (109%), Utah (101%) and Wyoming (101%).

“I believe the success of this state comes from having a good leadership in the Membership Committee. (See the department’s useful membership tools here). Also, the hard work of the members of the state,” said Department of North Carolina Commander James Moore.

A few other department commanders shared thoughts on how their respective department achieved a goal set before them.

Department of Montana Commander Jeff Nelson shared “an informal list of what an organization can achieve.”

1. I believe recognition starts at the top, and that is our headquarters staff that kept us informed daily of membership growth. They supplied the district and zone commanders, as well as membership chairmen, the information about which post were on track and which post was lagging throughout the year. These reports created a competition between district and zone commanders to encourage post commanders about the bigger picture involved in reaching post goals. I believe that every post is looking for new members in their community to bring new blood and new ideas into their organization to keep The American Legion at the forefront of veterans’ concerns.

2. Buddy Checks were an excellent means for keeping in touch with those past members that haven’t renewed in a while and to find out how they are getting along. Perhaps they may renew and perhaps not, but it built a relationship that The American Legion is alive in the community and cares about their veterans enough to just say hi and how are you doing.

3. The Mylegion.org website was perhaps one of the most useful tools in our arsenal. Many of our adjutants use this tool to keep track of DMS enrollments. They were able to find out instantly if a new member had just joined in their community, send out a letter or call, and let them know about transferring to a local post. In this letter it explained the importance of having their membership in a local post and who to contact if they don’t receive a reply from the post. It also supplied information about past members and so many tools that could be used in contacting them and keeping up with the current membership as well.

4. Monetary incentives created by National Headquarters played an important motivation. At the commanders and adjutants meeting last fall, we put in a membership bid that we felt was achievable for our department. It not only gave us an incentive to reach that goal but then put us in a position to reach other goals. The rewards helped our department invest in new office equipment that replaced older pieces that were breaking down.

5. Finally, credit goes toward every post commander and adjutant in the state of Montana that recognized the importance of membership. So many of them reached out to get new members or transferred them through DMS into their post. When we attended district meetings throughout our state, we asked those posts that were there to step up and strive for that 103 percent this year. One district took it to heart and with outstanding leadership reached over 108 percent for their district. If members can see the benefits of having new blood come into their post it is a win no matter how you look at it.

“It is the commanders in the past that have supplied our present staff with knowledge and experience on setting and reaching goals. Montana has a proud background of being a leader in a lot of American Legion programs, and I believe it is that tradition that has carried on through the years. It is always a reminder that we strive to be the best, but never allow shortcomings to set us back.

Department of Wyoming Commander Mike Cooke said, “It took a team, and it took the entire department.” He provided six ways the department achieved 100% membership.

Communication. It just involves a lot of communication with the districts and the members throughout the state. Basically, just giving everyone ownership in what we do here in the state of Wyoming and let them know that everything we do at the post level is a reflection all the way through. I encourage district leadership to have town halls with their posts, and posts commanders and leadership to have town halls with their local leaders. Communication is key; the biggest thing I wanted to see was positive communication with everyone.”

Education. “We educate our members on what we do at the post, district, department and national level. Once they know those answers they are able to better recruit our new members and retain our older members.” Cooke said new and longtime members are encouraged to take the Online Basic Training course for further knowledge on the organization.

Leaders. Wyoming is putting their National Legion College alumni in membership positions. “They bring in great ideas and are energizing everyone.”

Community exposure. Non-members “are seeing what the posts are doing, whether it be handing out meals to first responders or helping individuals with groceries during this pandemic. They are seeing that type of interaction with the community, and they like that positive impact and they want to be a part of that.”

Buddy Checks. “Taking care of your neighbors is one of the things that we do all of the time, and it shows.”

Sharing. “A good number of the 100% departments are out of the
West … the one thing we do is share. We do our meetings every month and talk about what’s working and what’s not working. I have utilized information from my counterparts in Colorado, Montana and Utah. It’s a team effort.”

Department of Colorado Commander Dean Noechel said, “This was a TEAM effort this year. We made over 100% membership because of our dedicated Legionnaires. They have worked tirelessly supporting the programs, and when the COVID-19 virus put us on a stay-at-home order, our posts stepped up right away with Buddy Checks. We call and let them know that The American Legion is here and ready to assist if they shall need anything. Members remember that and when they get the next renewal notice they will renew their membership because we care and we took the time to personally call them.

“We achieved our goal by working together with our districts and posts, traveling around the great state of Colorado doing membership drives and membership round ups. We had our National Vice Commander Robert Liebenow on the western slope for a week-long membership round up and he visited areas that have not seen a national officer in about 15 years.

“Our membership teams in our posts, districts and department are dedicated Legionnaires that are the driving force of TEAM COLORADO! Having a great volunteer TEAM is key to success.”

Let us continue our support for veterans and their families

By: Annette Johnson, Department C&Y Committee Chairman CO-ALP A member

“T
here can be no keener revelation of a society’s soul than the way in which it treats its children.” Nelson Mandela.

We still have many veterans and their families that are acutely in need of assistance due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Even though we have begun the process of re-opening, for many it will take months to get back on their feet. Our Veterans Assistance Fund (VAF) and Colorado Veterans Kids Fund (CVKF) are still helping our veterans and their families throughout these times. With the current COVID-19 crisis, our funds are continually being depleted. We understand people are leery, they want to help but not sure their money will go where we say it will. Well, there is always a solution to these types of questions. The solution is simple enough, remember you do have control over how you choose to help others; all it takes is designating your donation to be placed into a specific program and annotating it on your check.

Thank you to the many who have contributed to The American Legion VAF and CVKF throughout the year. We sincerely thank, Post 1, Henry L. Kaplan for his generous donation to ensure the wellbeing of our Veteran’s children during these challenging times. Individuals with an understanding like Henry’s are the types of people John F. Kennedy was speaking of when he said: Children are the world’s most valuable resource and its best hope for the future.

As we are moving into a new membership year, we are asking for your help again. Please consider participating in an act of kindness that will affect the lives of others by sending in a donation to the VAF or CVKF. Remember no amount is too small to feed a child or help a veteran’s family.

Send your contributions to The American Legion Department HQ, c/o C&Y VAF or CVKF, 7465 E. 1st Ave, Suite D, Denver, CO 80230. Your contributions are appreciated and let’s continue to help. All donations are appreciated and may be tax deductible; however, you will need to check with your tax accountant. Thank you for all you do to support the VAF and CVKF.

The future depends on renewals and new memberships

The American Legion,

I
n recent months, The American Legion has generated substantial public awareness from coast to coast. Isolated, disabled veterans have been helped through American Legion Buddy Checks, which continue. Dozens of local posts have conducted emergency blood drives to fill critical needs at hospitals. Legionnaires have made protective masks, distributed supplies, fed families and inspired the nation.

“This does not happen without an incredible membership of dedicated military veterans and their families who know what it takes to succeed in a life-and-death mission,” American Legion National Commander James W. “Bill” Oxford says. “New members help us expand our outreach and allow us to serve more people who need our help. Renewals give us the privilege of keeping up our services functioning, no matter how circumstances change.”

Oxford is urging members to renew in The American Legion today, asking former members to rejoin and inviting all honorably discharged veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces to become Legionnaires now when communities need the unique skills, compassion and mission readiness of those who have served in uniform.

Secure, convenient online membership renewal can be completed online at www.legion.org/renew. All honorably discharged veterans who have served since Dec. 7, 1941, are now eligible to join The American Legion and can do so safely and easily at www.legion.org/join.
VA Community Emergency Care Provider Notification

The Emergency Care Centralized Notification Center allows community providers, Veterans and representatives to report instances of a Veteran presenting to a community emergency department.

It offers simplified access to VA for care coordination, eligibility determination and payment authorization information. Centralized notification standardizes communication, documentation and collaboration between VA and community providers.

In most instances, Veterans are eligible to receive Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)-authorized emergency care at an in-network facility if VA is notified of the emergent event within 72 hours. Veterans do not need to check with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) before calling for an ambulance or going to an emergency department. During a medical emergency, VA encourages all Veterans to seek immediate medical attention without delay. It is, however, important for providers to promptly notify VA within 72 hours of a Veteran presenting to the emergency department.

Effective June 8, 2020, VA established a national centralized notification center to simplify the emergency care notification process.

Notification Requirements

Providers may use either of the following centralized options to notify VA with details about Veterans receiving emergent care in the community:

1. Email: VHAEmergencyNotification@va.gov must be encrypted
2. Phone: 844-72HRVHA (844-724-7842)

VA names new national cemetery in rural Wyoming

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced today Cheyenne National Cemetery for the name of the new VA national cemetery in Cheyenne, WY.

“VA recognizes the need for having a national cemetery in rural areas,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “This cemetery in Wyoming, like the others VA is opening similarly across the country, will help us reach Veterans who have not previously had reasonable access to a national or state Veterans cemetery.”

There are currently 56,948 Veterans within a 75-mile radius of Cheyenne. The closest burial option Ft. Logan National Cemetery, located 114 miles away in Denver, Colorado. The only in-state Veterans cemetery is Oregon Trails Veterans Cemetery, run by the State of Wyoming, located 176 miles away in Evansville.

VA relies on local Veterans and community leaders to submit name suggestions for new VA cemeteries. Of the names submitted, “Cheyenne National Cemetery” which was nominated by several Veterans groups, best met VA’s naming criteria and is consistent with the requirements relating to naming department property, including national cemeteries, to be named for the geographic area in which the facility is located.

VA purchased 5.04 acres of land, located on Hildreth Road near the Department of Agriculture Research Station, in January 2017. Cheyenne National Cemetery is scheduled to conduct its first interments close to year’s end. The first phase of cemetery development will have a capacity of 1,604 gravesites.

For more information about Cheyenne National Cemetery, contact the National Cemetery Administration Office of Public Affairs and Outreach at 202-632-8035.

VA to begin legal process of replacing three German POW headstones

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced today that it will initiate the process required by law to replace three German prisoner of war headstones in national cemeteries in Texas and Utah.

The headstones are controversial because they bear swastikas and other symbols and texts related to the Nazi regime that millions of Americans fought during World War II.

The headstones mark the graves of prisoners of war and are located at sites and in cemeteries protected by the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). Consequently, under NHPA, VA is not permitted to unilaterally remove them or alter them. However, later this month, under Section 106 of NHPA, VA will begin taking required steps including consultation with stakeholders about how to replace these headstones with historically accurate markers that do not include the Nazi swastika and German text.

“Americans must always remember the horror of the Nazi regime and why so many Americans sacrificed so much to free the world from its reign of terror,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “It is understandably upsetting to our Veterans and their families to see Nazi inscriptions near those who gave their lives for this nation. That’s why VA will initiate the process required to replace these POW headstones.”
The German POW headstones are located in the Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery in San Antonio, Texas, and the Fort Douglas Post Cemetery in Salt Lake City, Utah. The cemeteries were under the control of the Army when these interments occurred in the 1940s. The Ft. Sam Houston and Ft. Douglas cemeteries were subsequently transferred to VA’s National Cemetery Administration in 1973 and 2019, respectively. Once replaced, VA will propose to preserve the headstones in its National Cemetery Administration History Collection.

VA will also install interpretive signs at all VA national cemeteries where foreign enemy prisoners of war are interred in order to provide historical context about how non-U.S. service members from World War I and World War II were interred and buried on American soil.

VA educates women Veterans about Alzheimer’s disease

Dementia is an illness that impacts the brain. It can affect memory, thinking and actions. Although dementia is most common in older adults, it can happen to people of any age. Alzheimer’s disease is the most common form of dementia.

Sixty to eighty percent of dementia cases are caused by Alzheimer’s disease. Two-thirds of Americans with Alzheimer’s disease are women. Additionally, more than 60% of caregivers for those with dementia and Alzheimer’s disease are women.

Warning signs of dementia include:

- Asking the same questions over again
- Getting lost in places you know well
- Not being able to follow directions
- Getting confused about time, people, and places
- Having problems with self-care, nutrition, bathing, or safety

Other conditions have similar symptoms to dementia. Women Veterans must undergo a medical evaluation to get a diagnosis. If you are experiencing symptoms, schedule an appointment with your VA provider.

After a diagnosis

VA knows that finding out you have dementia can be scary. You may feel sad or angry. Learning more about your condition can help you and your family plan for the future. In the meantime, a dementia diagnosis doesn’t mean you can’t live your life. In fact, keeping active can reduce some symptoms of dementia.

After you receive a dementia diagnosis, VA services that may be appropriate are:

- Home-based primary care
- Skilled home care
- Homemaker and home-health aide
- Home telehealth
- Respite care

VA also offers support and services for caregivers of Veterans with dementia. VA has a support line for caregivers to ask questions and connect with a caregiver support coordinator.

Caregiver support coordinators coordinate services through VA and in the community to help caregivers of Veterans. The support line number is 1-855-260-3274.

More information on VA resources for Veterans with dementia and their caregivers is available here. We also encourage caregivers to watch our dementia caregivers video series.

The Women’s Health Office of VA is part of The Women Veterans Health Program. Created in 1988, the office streamlines services for female Veterans to provide more cost-effective medical and psychosocial care. VA Women’s Health provides programmatic and strategic support to implement positive changes in the provision of care for all women Veterans.

WORDS OF WISDOM

"Most people spend more time and energy going around problems than in trying to solve them."

HENRY FORD

Taken from Epoch Times Morning Brief
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