The newly posted 2020 American Legion Annual Report offers an illustrated snapshot of the organization’s service, advocacy and active relief efforts in a year disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The American Legion, in communities large and small, have stepped forward with Buddy Checks to make sure veterans and their families are not forgotten in a time of social distancing and stay-at-home rules. American Legion Family members have raised money to feed schoolchildren. They have conducted virtual meetings. They have saluted World War II veterans on their birthdays, from the backs of motorcycles. They have delivered groceries and stocked food pantries and more.

Meanwhile, The American Legion pressed on with national priorities, including legislative efforts to improve access to VA health care, extend benefits to veterans exposed to Agent Orange and support government efforts to prevent veteran suicide. The organization welcomed personnel from the newest branch of service – U.S. Space Force – and fought to protect the paychecks of U.S. Coast Guard members in the event of any future government shutdown.

Hundreds of local posts participated and received credit through The American Legion Emblem Sales Flag Rewards program, and a new national podcast – Tango Alpha Lima – debuted in April in the national Media & Communications Division.

And while such youth programs as the National Oratorical Contest, Junior Shooting Sports Championships and American Legion Baseball were suspended in 2020 due to the pandemic, hundreds of thousands of dollars in American Legion scholarships were awarded during the year to qualified young people pursuing their dreams.

To see the annual report, covering the 2019-20 membership year and including audited financial reports, visit legion.org/annualreport or download a copy at legion.org/publications.
Do you have an ongoing program or activity that serves your community?
Do you have a friend or relative that goes above and beyond the call of duty to help others?

Drop us a line and tell us what your story is or how you or this person is demonstrating that they are Still Serving America, but must be received by the 10th of the month, the month prior. In submitting your information, please be sure to include your full name, address and telephone number. There's a good chance the information you send us will make it into The Observer. Please send to: Still Serving America, The American Legion, 7465 East 1st Ave. Ste D Denver, CO 80230.
COVID-19 is now part of our story

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

After my election as national commander at the 101st national convention in Indianapolis last August, I was optimistic about the 2019-2020 membership year. I set a goal of a 90 percent retention rate and a recruiting goal of 100,000 new members. With the passage of The LEGION Act in July 2019 and the dedication, commitment and participation of so many posts, departments and individual Legionnaires, I believed these were achievable goals. Nationally, we have surpassed the retention goal but fell short in the new member gains. This year, we will be just over 60,000 new members. But earlier this year the world changed. The American Legion changed when COVID-19 took center stage.

Like the Marines say, adapt and overcome.

We responded to the national emergency like the patriotic servants that we are. We dedicated ourselves to helping others. I am proud of the Buddy Checks, food and supply distributions, blood drives and fundraising efforts that our American Legion Family members have undertaken in communities across the United States and overseas. When the history of the COVID-19 pandemic is written, the American Legion Family will be able to look back with pride.

But right now, let’s look ahead.

We can use our response to the COVID-19 emergency as part of our story. The story of why veterans should belong to The American Legion. The story of what The American Legion does for veterans, their communities, their departments and their nation.

The American Legion is about service. And we are about patriotism. The most important message that we have to remember is that we need every Legionnaire to be a recruiter. Remember, I’m extremely proud of your efforts and with everyone’s help and participation I believe The American Legion is, and can continue to be, a growing, dynamic, effective organization with our best days still ahead.

VA publishes final regulation for its Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) today, July 31, 2020, published its final regulation to improve and expand the VA Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) with the final regulation going into effect on Oct. 1.

Under the final regulation, PCAFC will include eligible Veterans that have a single or combined service-connected disability rating by VA of 70% or higher, regardless of whether it resulted from an injury, illness or disease.

This is a notable change to the definition of serious injury from the current regulations, among other improvements aimed at standardizing the PCAFC and improving transparency in the program.

Expansion of VA’s PCAFC to eligible Veterans of earlier eras will occur in two phases. The first phase will begin October 2020 and will include eligible Veterans who incurred or aggravated a serious injury in the line of duty in the active, military, naval or air service on or before May 7, 1975. Phase two will go into effect two years later and include eligible Veterans of all eras.

“The expanded regulation addresses the complexity and expense of keeping Veterans at home with their families who provide personalized care,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “This will allow our most vulnerable Veterans to stay with their loved ones for as long as possible. Expanding the program and eligibility for the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers ensures we can continue to meet the changing needs of America’s Veterans and their caregivers.”

Additionally, the new regulation will change the PCAFC stipend payment methodology, define new procedures for revocation and discharge, and include certain advance notice requirements aimed at improving communication between VA and PCAFC participants as well as include information for current program participants. VA is also standardizing operating procedures for the Caregiver Support Program, providing new training for staff and caregivers, and boosting operational capacity by hiring additional staff. With this expansion, Primary Family Caregivers in PCAFC will also have access to financial planning and legal services. VA is also working to fully implement the new information technology system required by the VA MISSION Act of 2018 by October 2020.

VA’s Caregiver Support Program offers support services for caregivers including training, peer mentoring, respite care, a telephone support line, and self-care courses for caregivers of covered Veterans enrolled in VA health care who need personal care services.
Colorado American Legion Family,

As we approach our first target date for 2021 membership year, I want to say thank you for your hard work and dedication to your membership. We are sitting about 1400 members away from our target of 50%. Our target date is September 9, 2020, I know we can make this big goal and we will be on track to reach out 2021 membership goal of 21,401 members! These members are already in our Posts, this year all we have to do is RENEW them in our Post! We have to keep the members we have already recruited for 2020! Retain our existing members, how can we do that you may ask? Personal contact is our key to success.... pick up the phone and call each of your members, send them a personal email or stop by for a visit. Establish a welcoming committee at your post, a calling committee, visiting committee or emailing committee. These are things that work, and our members love to hear from other Veterans from the Post.

Get out the Vote and remember to Vote!

By: Dean Noechel, Department Commander

We are approaching our election time in November; I ask that you please remember that as The American Legion we are nonpolitical and nonpartisan. What does that mean to us? This means please do not be out supporting your candidate while wearing The American Legion Emblem. As individuals we each have our own political affiliations and beliefs, however, while wearing The American Legion Emblem, we are not to endorse a candidate. I encourage everyone to Get out and Vote! Promote The American Legion! Get Out the Vote! We as Veterans want our voices heard, and in November we have a chance to exercise our right at the polls.

In closing, thank you for your hard work and support to our Veterans during this pandemic that we are facing. Please continue to monitor and follow your local city, county and our state guidelines and together we will get through this.

Never Forget 9/11
Re-Ignite Patriotism,
United We Stand

Legionnaire of the Year 2019/2020

Department Commander Dean Noechel chose Annette Johnson as the Legionnaire of the Year for 2019/2020. Thank you Anneette for all that you do for our veterans, our children and our communities.
Membership Life Cycle, Making Today a Better Tomorrow

By: Greg Jackson, Department Sr. Vice Commander

Our 2021 Membership goals / quota’s have arrived. The 2020 goal was 21,119, and this year that goal is 21,401. If you notice the goal is only a slight increase from last years’ numbers making this very achievable. Our final membership total at the end of the 2020 membership year was 21,379. I ask each and every member in the Department of Colorado to not let up on recruiting, retaining and developing our membership.

Now, more than ever, we need to be increasing our membership numbers and actively involve all our members in our programs. Programs provide assistance and structure to our Veterans, Children & Youth, while increasing an appreciation for Americanism in our communities. In these troubling times in our country our communities look towards the many Veteran Service Organizations for support. How do we do that? Develop a large membership of volunteers that can meet those challenges. This begins with recruiting, training and then retention.

There is a warm feeling that grows within the heart when great things happen in our communities. If you will, take a minute to travel with me on a journey through life with The American Legion. As a child your family had to struggle with being able to afford simple things and often you find yourself missing lunches on days when the school is closed. A bunch of veterans with The American Legion show up and hand out box/bag lunches and food to help your family and make sure you have a nutritious meal at least once daily. And when holidays come, they always seem to host a Safe Halloween party or help insuring you and other children have a Christmas and insure coats, hats and gloves are available for those cold winter mornings. They invite you to attend a sponsored youth program (scouting, Boys/Girls Club, etc) after school that helped with tutoring and teaching life skills. As years go by you start high school as a freshman and it is only a matter of time before you need to think of your future and college options. And then you see The American Legion offering opportunities to earn scholarships in the form of an Oratorical Contest and you decide to give it a try. Wow, the contest helped with your ability to speak publicly and learn about our great nation’s Constitution. You also learned some not well-known significant facts about it, which continually redefines our nation into the best place to live in the world. You desire to participate in Baseball and you realize that many famous Major League Baseball players have played American Legion Baseball in their High School years so you become a member of the local team and soon learn about the importance of teamwork and national pride. Not only do you now represent your local Post but you also represent your community. As you mature you now find the opportunity to extend your education in understanding why government operates as it does, and you apply to attend Boys/Girl State and follow in the footsteps of many famous leaders like Bill Clinton(US President), Michael Jordan(Basketball Legend) and Neil Armstrong(US Astronaut) and learn how to develop the 51st state of our country from the ground up. Your last year of school is coming to an end and you have decided to take those scholarships to college and start your journey into adulthood. After college, the job market is bleak and world crisis seems rampant every where we look. It is this at this point you decide to join the U.S. Military, and you now experience long deployments, loss of close friends often considered as a brother or sister. You witness many individuals who will never be a whole person again. You learn to deal with it and eventually will seek the help of the VA. But yet you want more. What can you do to not only help yourself but help others? Remember, The American Legion was there for you as a child, teen, and early adult. We are still here and now you join us and discover others to talk with and share your story. You will find an organization that wants to help and find those things that will bring a better quality of life to not only the Veterans but their families. You find helping others will often lessen any trouble you may have while understanding that you are not the only one who needed help. We can share our life’s experiences and pass those many good fortunes that The American Legion provided us, onto today’s youth the way they helped us thru our life’s journey. As you grow you will eventually take all those leadership skills to become a leader in your community, state or even nation. Can you imagine how much better our nation will be, knowing The American Legion is always present, promoting safety, education, justice, and freedom and developing our youth to be tomorrow leaders. We can change more than just one life at a time, we can change thousands annually for the next 100 years.

All these things take volunteers working tirelessly around the clock, year after year. Veterans never stop serving, so why not encourage them to volunteer with the largest veteran organization in the county, The American Legion.

Please won’t you help us attain our membership goals/quotas for this year and continue “Rocking the Rockies” for 25,000 in 5 years. If every member will recruit one member then think of the possibilities of volunteers to help create a tailored list of programs that will benefit our entire community. If membership dues and fees are an issue for a member I ask that you look at how they can do volunteer work to help pay for that membership. After all, we are asking their help in achieving many of those programs our communities so desperately need in these times of Pandemic and social unrest. Please think of how that life cycle benefits all of us from childhood to old age.
Knowledge
By: Chip Kossow, Department Jr. Vice Commander

Knowledge is good! This holds true even though Covid 19 continues to pummel us. Department has decided to cancel this year’s Colorado American Legion and Auxiliary Training and Education Conference slated for November. The conference was intended to strengthen the knowledge level on Post operations for the Blue Hat Legionnaire and give them the confidence to take a turn at running their Post. As well as possible ideas on how to make their Post better. Everyone should do their part to help run our organization, especially at the Post executive and committee level. Too many times I’ve heard legionnaires say they are hesitant to step up into the Post leadership positions because they feel they don’t know enough to do so. Do not be afraid, we are in this together and we all have been there.

ChiCom Flu aside, learning doesn’t need to stop altogether. Your Department and District staffs are willing and able to assist with your needs. We can safely have small group events, virtual meetings, or whatever works best for your Post members. Just let us know what you’re thinking and we can work together to make it happen. Requests for training can come from any legionnaire, but please work with your executive board. Don’t forget The American Legion Basic Training as a great resource to get history and general understanding of The American Legion. And the price is right – FREE!

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

Each of the past conferences have been great for the comradery, knowledge exchange, and developing friendships and contacts. We look forward to trying the conference again next year and hope to see you there.

As always, feel free to contact me with any questions, comments, or ideas.

Respectfully,

Have you heard about the 100 Miles for Hope?
By: Annette Johnson, Department Jr. Vice Commander

On August 3, 2020, National Commander Oxford issued an inspiring challenge to join him in 100 Miles for Hope. 100 Miles for Hope is a unique two-fold program devised as a distinct way to raise funds for the Veterans & Children Foundation while encouraging us to get up and start moving even though we are social distancing during COVID-19. Many of us have been a bit more homebound these days, not engaging in the types of activities we are accustomed to and possibly enjoying some of our favorite foods a little bit too much. The challenge is designed to stimulate our Legion Family in moderate activity such as walking, running, biking, rolling or engaging in any type of activity that will equate to achieving 100 miles of movement, without over stressing the body, while promoting the national recommendation of 20 to 30 minutes of physical daily activity.

The second portion of this event is designed to inspire a safe fundraising atmosphere too. During social distancing we have all discovered how much COVID-19 has impacted our fundraising capabilities. One mile per day for 100 days is not much to commit to when most of us walk approximately 2 miles or more per day in and around our home without even knowing it.

For those who do not know, the Veterans & Children Foundation (formerly known as the Endowment Fund) serves two primary functions; it provides Hope for Disabled Veterans and Children in need delivering critical grants for military and veteran parents in unexpected financial crises, and support for the 3000 Legion service officers who offer free assistance for any veteran in need. In addition, income from the foundations investments are used to fund Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation programs and Temporary Financial Assistance, which provides funds to minor children of active duty or American Legion members. This assistance includes obtaining care, benefits, opportunities, financial assistance for disabled veterans and families, military families and young people who lost parents in service to our nation. (legion.org).

So are you up to the challenge? With COVID-19 impacting many veterans livelihood and our ability to raise funds, more veterans and families are in need of assistance. Consider making
a donation of $30.00 and join National Commander Oxford, and myself, in this challenge of 100 Miles for Hope?

To register, go to the Emblem Sales site. For a $30 registration fee, participants will receive a men’s, women’s or children’s tech shirt, and a sign they can display once the 100 miles is completed. A portion of the $30.00 registration fee will be donated directly into the Veterans and Children’s Foundation. When you accept the challenge, feel free to share your 100 mile journey on social media at hashtag #100MilesForHope and do not forget your bragging rights on Instagram and Facebook too. Once you have succeeded in achieving your goal of 100 Miles for Hope you are welcome to share your story and photos on a special category of Legiontown.

This challenge will end on November 11 and remember all donations will benefit the Veterans & Children Foundation.

A Message From Department Jr. Vice Commander Hasert

Don’t get caught in a Scam!

By: Shane Hasert, Department Jr. Vice Commander

I have been an IT Security professional for 30 years and one thing has remained constant…your information is valuable! A victim’s personal information can be sold at a price ranging from $40 to $200. And bank details have a price range of $50 to $200. Cyber criminals have many attack vectors available, however they typically make initial contact with their victims by phone or email and express a sense of urgency or importance forcing their target to make a ‘time boxed’ decision they would not normally make. There are a couple of current scams that have been brought to my attention by fellow Legionnaires, and have not yet made it into some of the fraud and scam databases maintained at the state and federal levels:

Covid-19 testing scam – The caller states, “According to our system, you are likely to have been in close proximity to someone who has recently tested positive for COVID-19. This means you now need to self-isolate for 14-days and take a COVID-19 test within the next 72 hours, so can I get the best mailing address so that we can send a kit to you? And I just need to take a payment card, as there is a one-time fee of $50 for the kit and expedited processing of the results. Keep in mind there are local, state and federal penalties for non-compliance.”

Family health/legal emergence – These often come at a time when it is difficult (or impossible) to verify with your family member that they are safe. The caller claims to be a family member or is in close contact with a family member and that they had gotten into an accident and they hit a lady who was pregnant and give what they claim to be her lawyers number and that it is urgent to call the lawyer as he will explain everything. If the ‘lawyer’ is called he states that the family member is being held at the courthouse and that they have sustained some minor injuries, however if the baby were to die then they would be facing manslaughter charges, and some amount of money needs to be transferred immediately for a retainer (anywhere from $5,000 to $9,000 has been reported) in cash, credit, gift cards, or by wire.

As disasters take place, so also emerge the cyber-criminals. If you are going to donate to an organization or a cause, take it upon yourself to reach out to them…be extremely cautious if they are reaching out to you for a contribution.

Finally, I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but you probably don’t have a distant relative in a foreign country who has recently passed and the bank needs your help transferring millions of dollars to you, the IRS will never call you in regard to an investigation of payment, a computer or operating system company will not call you accusing you of network problems that only they can fix remotely (for a fee), and if you send an influential person some crypto currency, they aren’t going to return double your investment (a recent Twitter scam). If something sounds too good to be true, it almost certainly is.

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

Call 303-366-5201
Has God Been Good To You!!!!!!!

Now it is September and many of our Districts could not meet, too bad for I really wanted to get to meet some new people. But because of the corona virus, I think that it would be good for me to talk about your faith in God. Do you still have faith in God? Many will say, sure I have faith in God, but still question what is happening. Because of the corona virus I think that many of us, I think have lost our faith in God. We get upset, because we have to stay home and when we go out, we have to wear a mask. This is not our normal way of doing things, and when change comes it upsets us.

There are many scriptures about faith and here are a few of them. Hebrews 11: 1, 3-6 says: “Faith means being sure of the things we hope for and knowing that something is real even if we do not see it----It is by faith we understand that the whole world was made by God’s command so what we see was made by something that cannot be seen----without faith no one can please God. Anyone who comes to God must believe that HE is real and that HE rewards those who truly want to find HIM.” Romans 1: 17 says: “The Good News shows how God makes people right with himself----that it begins and ends with faith. As the scripture says, “But those who are right with God will live by trusting in HIM.” And Second Corinthians 4: 9, 16-18 says: We have trouble all around us, but we are not defeated. We do not know what to do, but we do not give up the hope of living. We are persecuted but God does not leave us. We are hurt sometimes, but we are not destroyed----so, we do not give up. Our physical body is becoming older and weaker, but our spirit inside us is made new every day. We have small troubles for a while now, but they are helping us gain an eternal glory that is much greater than the troubles. We set our eyes not on what we see but on what we cannot see.”

Many times I know, I myself have lost or think I have lost faith in God, because I just don’t like to stay home all the time, and when I go out, I have to wear a mask. CHANGE! I guess I am one that has a hard time with changes. Many times, we lose our faith in God because we do not see the big picture that HE has in mind for us. I have said this before and I will say it again, God can take something bad and make something good come out of it. I hope that this is the case with this corona virus. Do you remember once God got upset with his people and he flooded the whole world? HE said that HE would never do that again, and I just wonder if this is another way for the world to take a good look at what they have done to HIS world. I am glad and happy that our God is a god of love. HE loves us all no matter what we have done or what sin we have committed. God’s love is unchangeable. HE knows exactly what we are and loves us anyway. In fact, HE crated us because HE wanted other creatures in HIS image upon whom HE could pour out HIS love and who would love HIM in return. HE also wanted that love to be voluntary, not forced, so, HE gave us freedom of choice, the ability to say yes or no in our relationship to HIM. God does not want mechanized love, the kind that says we must love God because it is what our parents demand or our church preaches. Only voluntary love satisfies the Heart of God. But yet on the human level, we frequently love the one who loves us. In the spiritual realm, people do not grasp the overwhelming love of a holy God, but we can understand God’s love by getting to know HIM through our Lord. No one can grasp the love of God of the universe without knowing our Lord. God asks us all to love one another no matter who that person is. If we love others like we would want them to love us, then this whole world could be different. Keep the faith in God and love your neighbors as you would have them love you.

My last three words to all of you are: GO TO CHURCH!!!!!!
As members of The American Legion, the Auxiliary and the Sons of the Legion it is time for us to stand up and defend our law enforcement community. Calls to de-fund police departments are outrageous, preposterous, ridiculous and just plain stupid. Those that call for the defunding are being led by a faction of society that seeks to impose a different form of government that will remove those freedoms we now enjoy as citizens. Unfortunately, emotion is moving this mob in a dangerous direction.

They are attempting to redefine justice as something that will punish a whole segment of society, our law enforcers. Instead they need to focus on reforms in the law enforcement community that will eliminate those officers who break the law, abuse their power and commit acts that take the lives of innocent citizens they are sworn to protect.

American Legion Posts in Colorado need to vocally express their feelings about our great men and women we entrust to protect us. We encourage our local posts to reach out to your police and sheriff departments and express your support. We need to work closely with our community leaders to be sure that our officers are the best trained and best prepared to defend and protect us as citizens. As members of the American Legion it is time for us to take seriously the guiding principle as expressed in our preamble. “To Maintain Law and Order.”

Our founders knew that if we were to maintain our form of government that law and order must prevail. Without the rule of law and the necessary structure to back up and enforce our laws, chaos would exist. Out of chaos comes anarchism. To maintain law and order our citizens must have a deep respect for our law enforcement community. The American Legion has always supported our “men and women in blue” at all levels of our government. We know that well-educated, well equipped and well-disciplined law enforcement bodies at our local, state and federal levels are essential for us to live as free citizens. For over 100 years men and women have put on the uniform to defend and protect our freedoms. We are the best society in the world because of the sacrifices of our veterans. To maintain that status as free Americans in a free society we must support our peace officers.

The founders of our organization gave us a roadmap to follow in our founding documents. They wrote a magnificent Constitution that has led us successfully through 101 years of existence. The Preamble to that constitution laid out 10 principles and guidelines for us to incorporate in our day to day operation of the organization. I want to focus on one of those 10 principles.

The Preamble begins, “For God and Country we associate ourselves for the following purposes;

… To Maintain Law and Order…”

As you can see our founders knew that if we were to maintain our form of government that law and order must prevail. Without the rule of law and the necessary structure to back up and enforce our laws, chaos would exist. Out of chaos comes anarchism. To maintain law and order our citizens must have a deep respect for our law enforcement community. The American Legion has always supported our “men and women in blue” at all levels of our government. We know that well-educated, well equipped and well-disciplined law enforcement bodies at our local, state and federal levels are essential for us to live as free citizens. For over 100 years men and women have put on the uniform to defend and protect our freedoms. We are the best society in the world because of the sacrifices of our veterans. To maintain that status as free Americans in a free society we must support our peace officers.
My fellow Sons,

Thank you for everything you do! Despite COVID-19 you all have continued to do what The Sons are the BEST at, reaching out to our Veterans, making buddy checks, taking care of each other, friends, family, and community. I ask you continue your efforts in these areas. As we continue in this 2021 year, membership is and will remain our number one focus. Our members are the most important aspect of our organization.

National has set our membership goal this year at 3,311. Although this might appear to be a lofty goal, I believe in you, as we work together as a team, we will make this happen. My theme for this year is “carry on for God and Country”. Everything our organization does falls under these words “for God and Country”. Will you join me in making this a successful year for this cause?

Carry on for God and Country
By: Nick Arceo, Commander, SAL Detachment of Colorado

Remember to continue to collect 2020 renewals, these can still be turned in until December 31, 2020. Let us get a fast start on 2021 membership, do not hold on to those cards I want to challenge every squadron to compile a list of members that have not renewed or fallen off for some reason. Contact them, you have these members information, reach out to them, ask them why they are not still a member. Remind them what our organization is all about. Give them a reason to return. As summer comes to an end, take time to reflect on all the accomplishments you have been able to do during this pandemic, you will be surprised!

As we move forward this year, the Detachment of Colorado needs to fill several officer and Committee Chairmen positions. I hope you will consider stepping up and contributing to the success of the Detachment of Colorado. Open Officer positions are, Jr. Vice Commander we could use three, Historian and Asst. Finance. Committee Chairmen open are VA&R/VE&E, and Legislative. Please join The Detachment of Colorado Conference call, watch for details from our Adjutant. The call is scheduled for the second Thursday of the month.

My prayer is that you and your family stay well and healthy.

God Bless

American Legion testifies before House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs

American Legion Deputy Director of Health Policy Katie Purswell testified July 23 before the House Committee on Veteran’s Affairs on several pieces of legislation impacting veterans.

In the era of the COVID-19 pandemic, the mission of The American Legion has never been more clear, Purswell said during her testimony. She highlighted a few ways Legionnaires have supported their community members and veterans since the pandemic started, such as by collecting and delivering food, hygiene and cleaning supplies; hosting blood drives; and making face masks.

“Our national commander’s call for ‘Buddy Checks’ have increased by our members to ensure we are meeting the needs of our veterans. We have held financial workshops, resume writing seminars, virtual career fairs, townhall and networking meet-ups,” she added.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced in April that they were seeing dramatic increases in telemental health care use during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

“Legislation like H.R. 3228 (the VA Mission Telehealth Clarification Act) will afford veterans the ability to see a health care provider more quickly through telehealth by allowing veterans to be seen by a larger portion of VA,” Purswell said.

In addition to the health crisis caused by COVID-19, the pandemic has also put many veterans in precarious financial situations due to unemployment or reduced income. The American Legion believes H.R.7111, the Veterans Economic Recovery Act of 2020, will help bring down the unemployment rate of veterans who have lost jobs and critical income due to COVID-19.

“The current unemployment rate for veterans has more than doubled in the last year,” Purswell said. “With nearly 17,000 servicemembers leaving active duty service every month, these numbers will not fall any time soon. If done correctly, the Economic Recovery Act will help veterans, young and old, transition into new jobs.”

Members of the National Guard have been greatly impacted by COVID-19, as they have been constantly mobilized and demobilized to support first responders during the crisis.

“At one point in June, nearly one quarter of our entire National Guard, 120,000 soldiers, were mobilized in our communities,”
Purswell stated. “These servicemembers deserve to return to the lives they were living without fear of being jobless. The USERRA Protections for State Active Duty will allow these servicemembers to fall under the current USERRA guidelines.

“The American Legion will continue to serve our veteran population and others because that is who we are and what we do. But we need Congress to meet us halfway by providing sound legislation that supports our veterans.”

American Legion and Sen. Tester discuss Agent Orange, burn pits, VA

By: Mackenzie Wolf

“If you can afford to send them to war, then you damn well better be able to take care of them.”

This statement encapsulates why Sen. Jon Tester, D-Mont., continues to fight tirelessly for veterans suffering the effects of Agent Orange exposure.

“The folks who served in Vietnam … they know better than me and certainly better than anybody who didn’t serve in Vietnam that these sicknesses are real,” Tester said during an interview with The American Legion.

Tester, the Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Veterans’ Affairs, introduced a measure that will add bladder cancer, hypothyroidism and Parkinson’s to the 14 illnesses already covered by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for their links to the toxic herbicide.

“I was really hoping VA would just do it because it’s the right thing to do,” Tester said. However, this measure brings Vietnam veterans one step closer to having their conditions covered by VA.

Tester’s addition to the National Defense Authorization Act passed the Senate in a 94-6 vote on July 22.

“This is a no-brainer for me,” Tester said. “We send young men and women off to war all the time. And they come back changed. Some of those you can see, some of them you can’t. Some of those changes have effects 50 years later and we owe it to those folks to make sure that they get coverage for these conditions that are brought on because of their service. It’s as simple as that.”

Initially, Tester pushed to also have hypertension added to the list of presumptive conditions.

“We wanted to get all four (conditions) put in, but we were able to negotiate three,” he said. “The reason we didn’t get hypertension is because VA is waiting for two more studies and Secretary Wilkie has assured me by the end of the year they’re going to make a decision.”

Tester believes VA’s resistance to covering hypertension has a lot to due with money.

“When we send folks off to war, money is never a problem,” he said. “But when you bring these folks back from war, money better not be an excuse because it wasn’t an excuse when you sent them over. If you can afford to send them over, then you damn well better be able to take care of them.”

The post-9/11 generation is also beginning to see the health implications of burn pit exposure. The science on burn pits is not as advanced as that on Agent Orange, said Tester, but the similarities are there.

“We need to fund the research to make sure that if our military folks were exposed to burn pits and that if they have conditions that come about due to this exposure, then we take care of it.

“The parallels are absolutely there,” he added. “I think the difference is just the research to back it up. And once we get that research, if the science backs it up, then we’ve got to step up once again and take care of these folks.”

Tester said one of the best ways to ensure veterans of past, present and future are all cared for is to continue to push against the red tape. It doesn’t matter if you’re a servicemember, veteran or just someone who’s passionate about veterans’ issues. Anyone can call their congressional representatives and ask them about issues they care about.

“We need to make sure your voices are being heard and that’s really where the veteran service organizations come in. You have tremendous power when VSO’s speak with one voice. You have tremendous power when The American Legion speaks period.”

Senator Jon Tester photo courtesy of Wikipedia. Photographer is unknown
C-123 Airplanes and Agent Orange Residue

By: U.S. Air Force

Some Air Force Reservists who were crew members on C-123 Provider aircraft, formerly used to spray Agent Orange during the Vietnam War, have raised health concerns about exposure to residual amounts of herbicides on plane surfaces.

Responding to these concerns, VA asked the Health and Medicine Division (HMD) (formally known as the Institute of Medicine) of the National Academy of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine to study possible exposure and increase in adverse health effects in C-123 crew members.

HMD’s scientific report on C-123 contaminated aircraft

HMD released its report, *Post-Vietnam Dioxin Exposure in Agent Orange-Contaminated C-123 Aircraft*, Jan. 9, 2015. According to the report, from 1972 to 1982, approximately 1,500 to 2,100 Air Force Reserve personnel trained and worked on C-123 aircraft that previously had been used to spray herbicides, including Agent Orange, in Vietnam. Those aircraft were used for military airlift, medical transport, and cargo transport operations in the United States and internationally.

HMD found that Reservists who served as flight crew (pilot, navigator, flight engineer, and loadmaster), ground maintenance crew, and aero-medical personnel had regular contact with the aircraft, and would have experienced some exposure to chemicals from herbicide residue. The report determined that it is possible that this exposure contributed to some adverse health effects.

How Reservists may have been exposed

TCDD, the toxic substance in Agent Orange, may be inhaled as an aerosol or ingested by contaminated food or water or from hand-to-mouth transfer.

During the Vietnam War, the U.S. Air Force used C-123 aircraft to spray Agent Orange to clear jungles that provided enemy cover in Vietnam. At the end of the spraying campaign in 1971, the remaining C-123 planes were reassigned to reserve units in the U.S. for routine cargo and medical evacuation missions spanning the next 10 years.

C-123 Airplanes and the Agent Orange Registry

Veterans (including some Reservists) who state that they flew on or worked on a C-123 aircraft between 1969 and 1986 are eligible for the Agent Orange Registry.

Health concerns?

If you have health concerns about Agent Orange, talk to your health care provider or contact your local VA Environmental Health Coordinator to help you get more information from a health care provider.

Not enrolled in the VA health care system? Find out if you qualify for VA health care.

Compensation benefits for health problems

Based on the HMD report, VA has decided to acknowledge exposure to Agent Orange for personnel whose military service involved regular contact with the contaminated C-123 aircraft. This includes individuals who performed service in the Air Force or Air Force Reserve who regularly operated, maintained, or served onboard C-123 aircraft known to have been used to spray herbicides during the Vietnam era.

The following individuals may qualify for benefits related to Agent Orange exposure:

- Active duty personnel who served in a regular USAF unit location where a contaminated C-123 was assigned who had regular contact with the aircraft through flight, ground, or medical duties between 1969 and 1986, and who developed an Agent Orange related disability.
- Reservists who were assigned to flight, ground, or medical crew duties at the following locations between 1969 and 1986, and who developed an Agent Orange related disability:
  - Fairchild C-123K Provider
  - Lockbourne/Rickenbacker Air Force Base in Ohio (906th and 907th Tactical Air Groups or 355th and 356th Tactical Airlift Squadron)
  - Westover Air Force Base in Massachusetts (731st Tactical Air Squadron and 74th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron)
  - Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, International Airport (758th Airlift Squadron)

Veterans may file a claim for disability compensation for health problems they believe are related to exposure to Agent Orange residue on post-Vietnam C-123 airplanes.

Veterans must show on a factual basis that they were exposed in order to receive disability compensation for diseases related to Agent Orange exposure. VA decides these claims on a case-by-case basis.
ECHCS awarded Most Improved Inpatient Experience

By: Brandy Morrison

The VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System (VA ECHCS) was recognized by the Veterans Experience Office in partnership with the Veterans Health Administration as the most improved VA for inpatient experience in fiscal year 2019.

Across the United States, there are 170 VA Medical Centers. Through the Patient Experience Symposium, there were only six facility awards presented to those sites with the largest improvement and or top performers in patient experience. This is a monumental win for the Veterans and employees who choose VA ECHCS.

Accepting the award on behalf of VA ECHCS, Director Michael Kilmer said, “Changing our Veteran’s perception at the VA and winning over their hearts and their minds by delivering the best experience to them, their families and caregivers was our goal.” This is a commitment that Kilmer stands behind and one that he is devoted to seeing further increases in patient experience and satisfaction across the entire health care system.

Gregory Crenshaw, VA ECHCS Veteran Experience Officer attributes the increased inpatient satisfaction scores to the men and women who care for our Veterans, as they led the charge with their desire to change the culture, increase communication and continue to provide compassionate care. Crenshaw summarized his beliefs by stating, “We will continue to make a difference with those we serve, both internally and externally.”

Emotional calls to VA highlight veterans’ pleas for help

By: Mackenzie Wolf

An Aug 12 collaboration between The American Legion and the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) allowed American Legion members to speak one on one with Dr. Paul R. Lawrence, the Department of Veterans Affairs’ Under Secretary for Benefits.

Via a tele-townhall, Legionnaires were given the chance to ask questions directly to Lawrence, while American Legion Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission Chairman Ralph Bozella co-hosted the event. Over the course of an hour, Lawrence fielded questions from Legionnaires from across the country, with the topics ranging from Agent Orange to legislation that could provide puppies to servicemembers for veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder, to a plea from one veteran who didn’t know where else to turn as his disability claim languished following years of appeals.

An Iraq War veteran called in about a claim that he filed in 2009 that was denied more than seven times before he was granted a full and permanent disability status from VA. Each time it was denied, he said, VA closed out the claim to avoid issuing back pay. “It’s very frustrating,” the veteran said, his voice full of emotion. “Now I have to wait another two or three years before I can go to court and hopefully have them hear my side of it.”

“As soon as you hang up, I’m going to have somebody call you to work with you on this,” Lawrence told the veteran. “I want to let you know you’re not alone … and the first thing we’re going to do is make sure you’re okay.

“We have a crisis hotline for folks who reach a point where they are in crisis,” added Lawrence,
urging those who may be struggling to call the hotline at 1-800-273-8255 or text 838255. The line is manned 24 hours a day, and callers are connected within seconds.

“We want our veterans to know that VA is truly changing,” Lawrence said. “We are far from perfect, but we are better today than we were just a few years ago. We continue to work to be more accessible, more accountable and more agile so we can be more responsive to the challenges our veterans face.”

“I appreciate the undersecretary’s accessibility and his work to make VBA more transparent and easier to understand,” Bozella said. “To me, he’s brought a whole new level of transparency to veterans’ benefits.”

Another question came from a Legionnaire asking about the PAWS Act. The Puppies Assisting Wounded Servicemembers (PAWS) for Veterans Therapy Act is a Legion-backed bill that would allow VA to connect service dogs with veterans dealing with post-deployment mental health needs by awarding grants to nonprofit organizations that would provide veterans with puppies to become therapeutic service dogs, as well as cover the cost of training the puppies. The PAWS Act passed favorably through the House of Representatives in February and now rests with the Senate.

“If they (Congress) pass this, then we will administer it to the best of our ability,” Lawrence said. “That being said, I think you’ve seen (VA Secretary Robert Wilkie) talk about the importance of therapy and support for our veterans in ways we never imagined.”

American Legion National Commander James W. “Bill” Oxford also called in to the tele-townhall to thank Lawrence and Bozella for taking the time to host the event. “We need to realize the value of this conversation, and I really think it shows a commitment from VA to the veterans of this country,” he said.

“We really appreciate the partnership with The American Legion and Chairman Bozella in helping us arrange this,” Lawrence told Oxford.

“These types of town halls are the events that can and do make a difference in the lives of veterans,” said Bozella, who will be participating in a virtual press event regarding Agent Orange on August 20 with U.S. Rep. Josh Harder.

3D printing innovations deliver medical breakthroughs for Veterans

VA was an early adopter of 3D printing, using the technology for years to promote health care innovation and address individual Veteran health care needs. The benefits of 3D printing are limitless—from individually customized care, such as creating hand and foot orthotics, prosthetic limbs, and reconstructive surgery, to more groundbreaking applications, such as the ability to accurately replicate a patient’s heart, lung, spine, or aortic valve. Clearly, it has had a profound impact on Veterans’ lives.

VA’s early investment in 3D printing technology has allowed the Department to innovate and improve Veteran care on an ongoing basis and permitted VA staff to quickly apply the technology to aid in VA’s COVID-19 response.

Supports VA clinicians and Veterans nationwide during COVID-19

3D printing has proven essential to medical staff treating patients on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic. In response to the pandemic, VA coordinated an MOU for open-source medical products with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Additionally, VA partnered with America Makes to rally health care providers and 3D printing organizations into rapidly innovating face mask designs during the pandemic.

Two VA challenges—the Fit to Face Mask Design Challenge and the COVID-19 Maker Challenge—called on innovators and designers to address problems health care workers and first responders encountered while using face masks.

For Beth Ripley, MD, Ph.D., Director, VHA 3D Printing Network and Chair, VHA 3D Printing Advisory Committee, COVID-19 raised awareness that the strength of the medical centers’ response during the pandemic existed in the collaboration and innovation of the teams.

“We are non-siloed, integrated and collaborative,” she said. “Everyone jumped on board and worked across sites to print face shields and ensure they were distributed to the appropriate locations.”

Transforming a computer file into anatomical precision

The impact 3D printing can have on a Veteran’s life and well-being is significant. Imagine your physician discovered a huge tumor wrapped around your ribs and growing on your lung. Using a 3D-printed model derived from computerized tomography (CT) or magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scans and sophisticated computer software, your medical team can hold the model of your anatomy in their hands. Using the model as a visual aid for pre-surgical planning, they can see details...
they may not see in two-dimensional imaging. Models also help clinicians determine whether you can avoid an invasive surgical procedure and painful recovery.

Veterans across the country benefit from these custom 3D printed health care solutions. They receive better health outcomes by being more informed and in control of their health care.

“We have a perfect milieu of impassioned clinicians, health care providers, and research and development staff driving us forward to make things happen for the Veteran,” said Dr. Ripley. “This 3D printing technology is all about empowering our frontline staff and patients to advocate for what they need and then to build it.”

Building One Layer at a Time

Building solutions that meet unique Veteran challenges is a hallmark of VA’s Office of Information and Technology’s (OIT) support for VHA’s 3D printing transformational technology. Nick Bogden, Enterprise Design Pattern Lead in OIT’s Enterprise Program Management Office, leads a five-person team that delivers architecture and design innovation to achieve VHA-wide 3D printing capabilities.

When the 3D Printing Advisory Committee needed to increase use and access to the limited number of stand-alone 3D printers at VA hospitals two years ago, they reached out to Bogden and his team. The result? 3D Printing Enterprise Design Patterns (EDP). The EDP operational product provides a framework of capabilities and constraining principles to aid in the development, acquisition, and implementation of IT systems and services for 3D printing.

“Our focus is to translate the requirements and business needs of the Committee from a technology perspective and furnish an enterprise solution,” Bogden explained. Network design and security, cloud-based 3D printing services, and data security are the three key EDP pillars fundamental to advancing the current 3D printing landscape at VA.

Also supporting enterprise efforts is the VHA 3D Printing Network. Launched in 2017, it is the first and largest integrated hospital-based 3D-printing network in the country. Today, the network leverages resources, expertise, and lessons learned across 33 VA medical centers (VAMCs). More importantly, it supports VHA clinicians as they care for and treat Veterans every day.

Network Wide

Collaboration and teamwork are distinguishing characteristics of OIT’s support of 3D printing advancements. Currently, Mr. Bogden’s team is developing and writing standards that describe how the 33 VA hospital sites will install multiple printers on the network. As part of the Enterprise Printer Baseline Scrum, the team addresses the business impact of creating a centralized standards document to assist local IT staff in connecting and implementing 3D printers at medical centers across the country.

Countdown to a 100 year Remembrance

By: The Doughboy Foundation

Join us for a “100-Day Countdown” to November 11, 2020, which began on August 4, 2020. Join us on our social media platforms Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. The “100-Day Countdown” features stories commemorating the 100-day offensive on the Western Front leading up to WWI Armistice, November 11, 1918 when the guns fell silent and the bells tolled on the Western Front, at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month.

During the WWI 100-Day Offensive, the U.S. and its Allies fought valiantly on the Western Front to push the Germans into retreat, resulting in an unexpected November 11, 1918 Armistice.

The fascinating details of these unprecedented 100 days, which were transformative in U.S. military history, included: key battles where an inexperienced U.S. Army came into its own and quickly distinguished itself; the Spanish Flu Pandemic traveled to Europe with our troops; chemical warfare decimated its final victims; the war in the sky and tank warfare raged; the Navy convoyed the perilous waters of the Atlantic; and much more.

Meanwhile on the home-front, Americans were contributing to the war effort with expectations of a long conflict ahead. The “100-Day Countdown” explores this through many primary sources including the NY Times and the Official U.S. Bulletin…. read this great detailed coverage to further understand how “The War That Changed the World” changed America forever.

To commemorate this moment on November 11, 2020, we invite you, your family and friends, your organizations, and your communities to toll the “Bells of Peace” and remember this pivotal moment in our Nation’s history and all those who served in World War I. Find out more about participating in “Bells of Peace” here: https://www.worldwar1centennial.org/bells-of-peace-doughboy-foundation.html.
Lu Junta Legion Post 9 Cemetery Project

Charles E. Mcfarland American Legion Post 9 is in the midst of a cemetery project at Fairview and Calvary Cemeteries. Last year with the assistance of the City of La Junta, we put up three large flagpoles. We are currently pouring a large concrete pad so that we can build a pavilion for all weather memorial services at the two cemeteries.

The pavilion will be patterned after the Pavilion at Fort Lyon National Cemetery in Las Animas, Colorado.

Because of COVID-19, we have not been able to have fundraisers. We are in need of funds to pay for contractors and materials. Any assistance will be greatly appreciated. Please send what you can to:

Cemetery Project
P.O. Box 344
La Junta, CO 81050

Contacts at Post 9 are: Leon Davis, Commander (719-853-6683); Glenn Parker (719-940-9222), Jr Vice Commander, or Ron Tomlin (719-468-7699), Adjutant;

Friendship in Death: The Nimitz Plot at Golden Gate National Cemetery

By: Richard A. Hulver, Ph.D., Historian with National Cemetery Administration

Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, the World War II Commander of the Pacific Fleet, delivered remarks at Golden Gate National Cemetery on the 10th Anniversary of V-J Day, August 14, 1955. The remains of many men who died under his command had been repatriated and rested before him. Nimitz took the loss of life made by his decisions personally and carried the burden with him throughout his life. He spoke directly to his fallen men on this occasion and promised them that the survivors of the war would honor their memory by maintaining military strength to deter future calamity.

Over the next decade, Admiral Nimitz decided that, in death, he wanted to join his men at Golden Gate with a standard military funeral and regulation headstone. He took steps to assure that the shipmates closest to him during World War II could join him as well.

Admiral Nimitz was a humble and no-frills type of man; still, his funerary and burial decisions surprised some. He was the third of four admirals promoted to the rank of Fleet Admiral of the United States Navy during WWII. All were entitled to a state funeral and three accepted.

When the Kennedy administration approached Nimitz—the last of the surviving Fleet Admirals—about planning his own state funeral and burial in Arlington, Nimitz balked. He told his wife Catherine that “He did not love Washington, he loved it out here, and all of his men from the Pacific were out here.”

Instead, Nimitz had only one special request: that the five stars of his Fleet Admiral insignia be placed in the space reserved for an emblem of belief on his headstone. His biographer, E.B. Potter, speculated that Nimitz, a religious man outside of denominations, made the decision to show that “He had done his best in life.”

There were spaces for six graves in Nimitz’s designated burial plot at Golden Gate. When asked if he had preference for who went into the other four graves, Nimitz said, “I’d like to have Spruance and Lockwood.”

Admirals Raymond Spruance and Charles Lockwood were two of Nimitz’s closest friends during the war and after. Their competency as warfighters and leaders contributed greatly to victory in the Pacific. Spruance delivered key victories, such as Midway, the Philippine Sea, Iwo Jima and Okinawa. Lockwood commanded the successful...
U.S. submarine operations in the Pacific.

As a bonus, another close friend and architect of all major Pacific amphibious landings, Admiral Richmond Kelley Turner already occupied a grave very close to the Nimitz plot. When Nimitz posed the idea to Spruance, he “took to the thing like a duck to water,” as Mrs. Nimitz recalled. Lockwood agreed with the plan as well.

A friend in death

Nimitz died February 20, 1966, with his wife Catherine at his side. He was laid to rest on the cold and blustery afternoon of February 24 (his 81st birthday). Admiral Spruance, recovering from the flu, respectfully stood at attention in his uniform throughout. Mrs. Nimitz found some humor in the day when an uninvited sailor who had served in the Pacific Fleet arrived at the grave dressed in his best cowboy boots and hat. He refused to leave because “This was his commander, [and] he was going to be there come hell or high water.”

While this circumstance would likely have annoyed many, this type of admiration from those who served under him embodied the leadership style of Nimitz. Two nineteen-gun salutes, a 70-plane flyover, and the playing of “Taps” concluded the service.

Funeral of Fleet Admiral Nimitz. Procession about to begin journey from the chapel to the gravesite at Golden Gate National Cemetery, February 24, 1966. (U.S. Navy Photo 1115072-B, NARA II, College Park, Md.)

American Legion joins Rep. Josh Harder, VSOs in fight for Agent Orange benefits

The American Legion

American Legion Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission Chairman Ralph Bozella joined U.S. Rep. Josh Harder and representatives from other veterans service organizations via conference call Aug. 20 in announcing the launch of an effort to expand coverage for veterans exposed to Agent Orange but unable to access support from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

Earlier this year, Harder introduced The Fair Care for Vietnam Veterans Act. The legislation would ensure Vietnam veterans with bladder cancer, certain thyroid problems and Parkinson’s-like symptoms are able to access care through VA. To become law, the amendment must now be included in the final version of the National Defense Authorization Act.


“In 1983, The American Legion sponsored an independent study by Columbia University that established the effects of exposure to Agent Orange on Vietnam War veterans. Congress received the results of this study in 1989. Since then, the Department of Veterans Affairs has recognized 14 diseases related to exposure from Agent Orange and other herbicides.”

Bozella said now is the time for VA to add the three new diseases listed in the legislation to the Agent Orange presumptive list and – noting similar legislation already has passed in the U.S. Senate – urged American Legion membership “to contact your U.S. representatives and ask each one to support this initiative, which will prove we are still welcoming home our Vietnam veterans.”

To find your Congressional representative, visit https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative.
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Richard A. Hulver, Ph.D., is an historian with the National Cemetery Administration.
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ID RESOLVE

A New Program to Help Legionnaires Fight Back Against Identity Theft

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

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

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

There are two annual memberships available:

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

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

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**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

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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 35 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.
VA Prescription Refills and COVID-19

Taking your prescriptions, and making sure you have enough, is an important step to staying healthy during the spread of COVID-19. You can ensure that your VA-issued prescriptions are refilled, shipped, and delivered directly to you on time — all without leaving the house.

Here’s how to refill your VA prescriptions remotely.

**Online with My Health@Vet**
Through My Health@Vet, VA’s online patient portal, you can request refills of your refillable VA prescriptions, track VA prescription deliveries, and view VA prescription history online. Get started at myhealth.va.gov.

**Using the Rx Refill App**
You can request refills of your refillable VA prescriptions, track VA prescription deliveries, and view VA prescription history from the convenience of your mobile device with the Rx Refill app. Learn more at mobile.va.gov/app/rx-refill.

**Via Phone Call**
Most VA pharmacies have automated phone lines for prescription refills, accessible through a phone number on your VA prescription bottle’s label. When you call, you will need the prescription number from the label and your Social Security number. For many prescriptions that are no longer refillable, you can use the automated system to request more of that medication. However, for some prescriptions, your VA care team will need to contact you first.

**Through the Mail**
A refill request form comes with every VA prescription filled. To refill your prescription by mail, complete the request form and mail it to your VA pharmacy at the address listed on the paperwork that arrived with your prescription.

**Additional Options**
Look up your local VA facility online to see if it has other options for refilling your prescription, such as drive-through pharmacy services. As a last resort, you may visit your VA pharmacy in person to request a refill. However, you may be subject to screening prior to entering the facility, your wait time may be increased, and visiting in person can unnecessarily put you and others at risk of infection.

If you forget to refill your prescription on time, or if your prescription is no longer refillable, please contact your local VA pharmacy through the phone number on the prescription’s label or use My Health@Vet’s Secure Messaging to contact your VA care team.

Remember to verify that your mailing address on file with VA is accurate. If you need to make a change, please visit va.gov/change-address.

Protect yourself from COVID-19 with the latest information and guidelines.

cdc.gov/coronavirus va.gov/coronavirus

[VA Department of Veterans Affairs logo]
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
New opportunities to support Legacy Fund in place

The American Legion

To donate to the Legacy Fund through this program now through Sept. 30, click here. Thank you for your continued support, and we look forward to riding with all of you next year.

With the coronavirus forcing social distancing and stay-at-home orders, all American Legion national events have been canceled throughout the summer. This includes what was going to be the 15th annual American Legion Legacy Run – the primary fundraiser for The American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund. Through the efforts of the American Legion Family, spearheaded by the Legion Riders – five of the previous six Legacy Runs have raised more than $1 million for a fund that since 2004 has awarded $3.6 million in aid to 401 military children of the fallen and disabled.

In order to continue raising money for the Legacy Scholarship Fund during these times, The American Legion has created a tiered donation program to provide an alternative way for individual American Legion Family members to contribute to the fund. Donations start at $15, signifying the 15th year of the Legacy Run, and will entitle the donor to various souvenirs from this year’s altered Legacy Run, as has been the case for participants in and donors to previous rides.

The tiered individual donation program is:

- Tier 1 - $15 – Donors receive a thank-you card signed by the national commander and American Legion Riders chairman.
- Tier 2 - $25 – Donors receive a 15th Anniversary challenge coin.
- Tier 3 - $50 – Donors receive a 15th Anniversary Ride t-shirt.
- Tier 4 - $75 – Donors receive a Legacy Run 15 years in review booklet, the ride’s main patch and a “Quarantined 2020 Riding in Spirit” rocker.
- Tier 5 - $250 – Donors receive all the above items.

Additionally, The American Legion maintains a reward program that recognizes $500 and above donations made by individuals, posts or departments. These donations are either sent in to national, presented at the national convention or donated at stop points on the Legacy Run. The reward structure for those donations are:

- The first $500 donor receives a plaque with a Legacy Run coin affixed within. The plaque has five coin slots for consecutive years.
- Each year after every $500 or more donated, another coin is awarded (minimum donation amount received for all 5 years is $2,500).
- When the plaque is filled with five coins, another plaque is awarded and the reward program starts over.

What Happened to Colorado’s Merci Train Box Car?

By: Stephanie Gilmore, Curator of Collections

Dear Legionnaires,

I am the curator of collections at the Colorado Railroad Museum located in Golden, Colorado. We are trying to solve a decades-old mystery regarding a very special train car that dates to World War II, and we are hoping that the Legionnaires in Colorado might be able to help us.

First, a little background is necessary. To assist our European allies in the aftermath of World War II, in 1947 the United States gathered resources to send to Europe. Forty million dollars’ worth of food, clothing, water, children’s toys, and personal care items were sent to Europe via what was known as the American Friendship Train. This train traveled across the United States, stopping at various depots to collect relief items. Once the train reached the east coast, the cars were unloaded onto ships that transported the materials to Italy, France, and England.

In 1949, in response to America’s generosity from the Friendship Train, France sent 49 train cars filled with gifts to the United States. This amounted to one car per each of the 48 states in existence at the time, with the 49th shared between Hawaii and Washington D.C. As the French word for “thank you” is “merci”, the collection of cars was affectionately known as the Merci Train. If you would like to learn more about the Merci Train, visit www.mercitrain.org. I have also created a video about it, which you can find on YouTube.com by searching “Small Wonders: Merci Train”.

Forty-three of the original 49 Merci train cars are still in existence, but sadly, six cars were either scrapped, burned, or are missing. Colorado’s Merci Train car is unfortunately one of the missing. At the Colorado Railroad
Museum, we do have a plaque that was once affixed to the car. How the plaque came to us is a mystery like the location of the car.

The car would be approximately 20 feet long, 8 feet wide and about 8 feet tall. I have included a photo of it from the time that it was first delivered to Colorado. Today, it could be in very bad shape, or it could be repurposed as a storage shed or structure.

The closest hint we have regarding the location of Colorado’s car is that it ended up on a ranch that belongs to an American Legionnaire somewhere in Colorado, but unfortunately, we do not know the name of the legionnaire or the property on which it is possibly located. If you have any information on the whereabouts of Colorado’s Merci Train Car, please contact me via my information below. We would love to find this car to piece together this fascinating and heartwarming part of Colorado railroad history.

Sincerely,
Stephanie Gilmore, Curator of Collections
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Golden, CO 80403
Phone: (720) 274-5159
Email: Stephanie@crrm.org

Beware of SBA Scams

In the wake of emergency assistance available to help small businesses in response to the Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19), the SBA is urging disaster loan applicants seeking federal aid to be alert to phishing campaigns and scams. These malicious actors are impersonating the SBA and its Office of Disaster Assistance to collect personally identifiable information (PII) for fraudulent purposes.

To learn more go to https://www.sba.gov/blog/be-alert-about-email-phishing-scams-bad-actors-seeking-take-advantage-through-sba-loan-application?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery

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And Advocate For Veteran’s Benefits Too!
Call 303-366-5201
Our WWII story - Ford Motor Company’s Camp Legion

By: Jeff Stoffer

By October 1944, Camp Legion at the Ford Motor Co. had trained and employed more than 11,300 World War II-disabled veterans.

The 500-acre facility in Michigan specialized in fostering civilian career opportunities for veterans who had lost limbs in the war, as well as others who came home with combat disabilities. Veterans were housed and fed at Camp Legion, paid a $3-per-day scholarship each, “growing strong, preparing themselves for more skilled jobs (until they are) mentally, physically and skillfully ready to take a job,” according to the camp’s promotional materials of the time.

Automobile-manufacturing pioneer Henry Ford, who converted much of his company’s production capacity to build planes and vehicles for the war effort, had started Camp Legion in 1938 as a training operation for boys age 17-19, many of whom were the children of disabled or dead World War I veterans. The boys were taught farming, mechanics, management and sales skills. They were paid $2 per day for their work and received training that would help them support themselves and their families in the twilight of the Great Depression.

As disabled veterans began coming home to limited opportunities in 1944, Ford converted Camp Legion into a massive program to specifically help them. The training school for boys remained in place during those years – 1944 and 1945 – and the program returned to primarily serving teens again in 1946, functioning in that capacity until 1952. It is unclear exactly when or why the training program was named Camp Legion, but American Legion support and involvement were widely publicized when the facility shifted to focus on returning veterans. The name “Camp Legion” appeared on buildings in the late 1930s.

The Ford Motor Co. had been a staunch supporter of The American Legion for many years. Ford sponsored thousands of American Legion Baseball teams nationwide. During the war, the industrialist offered a $50 war bond to each player of The American Legion Baseball World Series championship team. Ford sponsorship of local American Legion Baseball teams reportedly exceeded $1.2 million at the time, and the company hired legendary New York Yankee Babe Ruth in 1947 to serve as a consultant to promote American Legion Baseball.

Henry Ford II accepted his grandfather’s American Legion Distinguished Service Medal in 1944 on his behalf.

“Mr. Ford has been a pioneer in bettering the condition of American workers,” American Legion Past National Commander John R. Quinn said during the medal presentation. “He has been particularly interested in workers who are veterans and disabled. Because of that interest, he has been an ardent supporter and friend of The American Legion and its program for the welfare of the war-disabled.”

“Rehabilitation is not something to be taken for granted until the signing of the last armistice, as you men well know,” Henry Ford II told Legionnaires gathered for the 1944 National Convention in Chicago. “It must not wait until the peace has been declared and all of the hundreds of thousands of boys have returned to their hometowns. Rehabilitation must begin now. Rehabilitation must mean helping the lone man who may return to Main Street ahead of his comrades and is just as desperately in need of guidance as the thousands who have yet to come … Rehabilitation must be gradual to fit the man easily back into a normal life, preserve his self-respect and independence.”
You disagree with the decision on your claim, now what?

Editor's Note: If you disagree with the VA's decision, discuss your options with your VSO advocate and once a decision has been reached allow your advocate to act on your behalf. I speak from first hand knowledge, because I have disagreed with the VA several times and with the assistance of my Legion advocate, have won a reversal of a negative decision the majority of the time.

What to do if you disagree with VA's decision on your compensation claim

February 2019 marked the successful implementation of the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act (AMA), which resulted in faster and easier ways to appeal your compensation claim. AMA created a new decision review and appeals process that features three lanes for you to choose from. As always, we recommend that you work with your VSO or representative to assist in making the best decision for you.

Choice with AMA

If, after you receive your initial decision from VA, you disagree with this decision, you must choose one of three lanes: Supplemental Claim, Higher-Level Review, or an Appeal to the Board of Veterans’ Appeals (Board).

The Supplemental Claim lane is an option if you have new and relevant evidence. The Higher-Level Review lane is beneficial for those who believe there was a mistake in the initial decision. These lanes will get you a second decision in the quickest amount of time.

The final lane is a direct appeal to the Board. If you choose a Board appeal, you must then choose one of three more paths:

- Direct Review
- Evidence Submission
- Hearing with a Veterans Law Judge (VLJ)

The Direct Review path is the fastest option at the Board, and it is for those who feel there has been a misinterpretation of the law or the facts of your case.

The Evidence Submission path allows you to submit additional evidence to the Board for consideration. This option will take longer than Direct Review.

The final option is the Hearing path. The Hearing path allows you to have a hearing with a Veterans Law Judge. This path will take the longest for you to receive a second decision.

Below is a flow chart that may help you decide which lane/path is best for you:

This graph shows the possible steps to take and follow if you disagree with the decision that VA made on your claim.

More information

Additional information about Veterans choices under AMA are available here. With AMA, Veterans are experiencing more choice and control over their experience with VA and are getting their results faster.

Cheryl L. Mason is the Chairman of the Board of Veterans’ Appeals (Board).

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