Colorado receives the William F Lenker National Service Award

By: Pat Smith, Department Adjutant

For the second year in a row Colorado took first place in the annual competition for the best statewide Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation report.

National Commander Bill Oxford announced Colorado as the winner of this prestigious award with the following letter to our Department Commander Greg Jackson.

Dear Commander Jackson:

I want to congratulate the Department of Colorado as the recipient of The William F. Lenker National Service Trophy. Due to restrictions involving COVID-19, presentation for the award should be conducted at the local level.

I want to thank you and your Department for your exceptional commitment to our nation’s veterans and their families. Your unwavering support throughout the state of Colorado has earned you this distinguished award.

Sincerely,
James W. Bill Oxford
National Commander

This award is presented annually to that department of The American Legion excelling in welfare and rehabilitation work for war veterans and their dependents, providing, that the membership of that department shall be no less than 80 per cent of the preceding year.

Our Colorado VA&R Chairman Tom Florez assembled data from all of our CPR’s and other reports submitted by our posts to apply for the award. Here are some of the highlights from Tom’s report to national when applying for the award.

Over 130 posts have an active VA&R committee and 78 posts have post service officers. They assisted 1,725 veterans with claims and other needs. We have 67 posts that provide graveside funeral services for our veterans. Our members spent 20,800 hours as volunteers in our state Community Living Centers and our two VA hospitals. We disbursed over $49,000 to needy Colorado veterans with our Veterans Assistance fund. We processed 10 TFA grants from national for Colorado Veterans. Thirty of our members logged over 100 hours and three members logged over 300 hours in voluntary service to our veterans. Our Grand Junction area posts contributed over $11,000 to the Veterans One Source Center assisting veterans on the Western slope. The complete report is posted on our website.

Congratulations to all of our posts and our members for the hard work in carrying out our primary mission, serving veterans and their families in Colorado.

The award will be formally presented by National Commander Bill Oxford at our Mid-Year Conference in Colorado Springs in January 2021.

Last year at the national convention in Indianapolis Colorado received the William F Lenker award for the first time. Shown here presenting the award is then National Commander Brett Riestad to NEC Tom Florez, Adjutant Pat Smith, Department Commander Dean Noechel and past Department Commander Robb Smith.

This award was first presented by NEC resolution in October 7, 1928.
The American Legion Internet Observer

Publisher/Editor-in Chief: Charles P. Smith
Contributors: The American Legion Dispatch
Design and Layout and Editor: Darrell Myers

Still Serving America
Do you have an ongoing program or activity that serves your community? Do you have a friend or relative that goes above and beyond the call of duty to help others?
Drop us a line and tell us what your story is or how you or this person is demonstrating that they are Still Serving America, but must be received by the 10th of the month, the month prior.
In submitting your information, please be sure to include your full name, address and telephone number. There’s a good chance the information you send 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.
Are you with me?

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

Have you started your 100-mile journey? I have been walking and biking since I kicked off the 100 Miles of Hope on Aug. 3 – exactly 100 days from when the virtual challenge ends on Nov. 11, Veterans Day.

Whether you walk, run, cycle, ride your motorcycle, swim, or whatever fitness activity you love to do, I hope you join me in completing 100 miles to raise awareness of our American Legion Veterans and Children Foundation.

Your support of the foundation is helping to train The American Legion’s 3,000 accredited service officers who assist our veterans and their families with benefits claims, and other needs, all free of charge. Your donations to the fund also support The American Legion’s Temporary Financial Assistance program, which provides immediate financial grants to military families with minor children in the home who are facing a hardship.

Many of you have been sharing your 100 Miles of Hope story on legiontown.org. I have enjoyed reading about your hiking adventures on the Pacific Coast Trail, cycling part of the old U.S. Route 66, walking on the beach, and more. Keep the stories – and miles – coming!

Now, I ask, are you with me for 100 Miles for Hope?

If you haven’t already registered, registration fee is $30. Visit www.legion.org/100miles to register and read about the 100 Miles for Hope campaign, how to start your 100 miles and how the foundation supports our veterans and children. As a participant, you will receive a shirt (men, women’s and children sizes available) and a sign, as well as a link to download and print a certificate of completion.

Your participation in the 100 Miles for Hope campaign not only is an incentive to get some exercise, but also help continue what we do for our nation’s veterans, military families and youth. So join me.

VA offers debt relief to Veterans impacted by natural disasters

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced on, September 16, 2020, its commitment to extend debt relief to Veterans adversely impacted by natural disasters.

The department recognizes Veterans and beneficiaries are negatively impacted by the wildfires and hurricanes prompting the offering of financial debt relief.

“Veterans and their families should be focused on their health and safety during the natural disasters,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “VA is taking action to give those with pending debts greater flexibility during these challenging times.”

This includes the suspension of debt collection action for up to 90 days or extending repayment terms on preexisting VA debts, whichever the Veteran prefers.

To request assistance for VA financial debt relief, Veterans should contact the VA Debt Management Center at 1-800-827-0648.

Veterans Service Office
To Help Veterans submit claims to the VA for injury, illness or disease that occurred while on active duty
Open Monday-Friday from 8AM-3PM
VA Regional Offices
9155 Van Gordon Street, Rm 364 Lakewood, CO 80226
303-914-5585
Keeping Our Focus on Mission!!!

By: Greg Jackson, Department Commander

Do you know WHY you joined The American Legion? I am not going to guess what that answer would be or even categorize the different types of answers. I suspect at least part of the answer relates to at least one of our four pillars, so instead I ask you to focus on the many aspects that define our mission as Legionnaires and makes us the largest veteran organization in the country.

Many things jump in our way day to day as legionnaires that if allowed to continue, become distractions and leads us away from our mission of Veterans & Rehabilitation, National Defense, Americanism and Children & Youth. When we allow distractions to become our focus, then our Veterans and Communities as a whole suffer.

We have seen a big decline in participation in programs both from volunteers and participants in the last several years. I firmly believe there are volunteers and people wanting to participate in our programs such as Baseball, Oratorical, Boys/Girls State, Jr. Shooting Sports, holiday food drives, clothing, school supply aid to include tutoring programs visiting our Vets in Living facilities and many more activities representing every facet of the Programs. People want a reason to belong. Maybe what the community needs is not in a brochure, it’s seeing us out in the community doing something. We cannot let a distraction stop us from finding that need or benefit that can be fueled with the aid of The American Legion. Get out and find communities that really could use the benefit of American Legion volunteers to come in and make a difference.

Keeping the Flames of Patriotism Burning!

By: Greg Jackson, Department Commander

If we would spend half the energy, we spend in letting distractions consume us every day, The American Legion would be an enormous force in making quality of life better for Veterans, Veterans Families, Children/Youth, and our national defense. Yes, maybe our wants or desires get delayed for a short time, but the question is are those distractions more important than our Mission, especially in these troubling times within our country? With the current pandemic, civil unrest, hard economic times, I feel it is our duty to rise above and beyond selfish distractions and refocus all our efforts and energy into getting out into communities everywhere, working the programs aggressively and combating these life changing challenges thus giving our Veterans, and Communities an organization to not only be overwhelmingly proud of, but appeals to veterans of all ages to join and be counted as proud, unselfish American Legionnaires.

I ask everyone to help me to continue “Keeping the Flames of Patriotism Burning!” We had a great and successful 2020. Let’s work together and make 2021 even better. I am honored to be your 101st Commander and will work daily to continue making our Department of Colorado the best nationally.

Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers

Eligibility for the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) is expanding under the new final regulation and changes will begin in October. PCAFC expansion will occur in two phases, once the Secretary of Veterans Affairs has certified to Congress that VA's new caregiver information technology system is fully implemented. The first phase 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. WWII, Korea and Vietnam Veterans will be able to apply after the official launch date, which will be announced by VA in mid-September.

The final phase will occur two years following the first date of expansion and will expand PCAFC eligibility to include eligible Veterans from all eras regardless of when an eligible Veteran’s serious injury was incurred or aggravated in the line of duty in the active military, naval, or air service.

A Message From Department Sr. Vice Commander Kossow

Renewing your Membership
By: Chip Kossow, Department Sr. Vice Commander

It is true The American Legion’s most valuable asset is our members. Without you the organization would disappear. Our mission is too valuable to allow that to happen. Yet every year we struggle to get everyone renewed and find new members to fill the ranks of the veterans we’ve lost. Each member can do 2 simple things that would greatly benefit the Legion overall; Renew early and find one new member each year. If the Legion (at all levels) wouldn’t have to remind members to renew, it would save money and time.

Money spent on renewal notices and advertisement programs toward the effort of getting you to renew. I have heard figures that this cost is between 1-5 million dollars annually. The Legion annual report states we spend over $12 million annually on publications and postage. While this is for everything and valuable for letting the public know about who we are and what we’re doing, it could be reduced if they didn’t need to send renewal reminders. Regardless of the actual cost, it is definitely more than we should be spending to remind the many to get renewed. This is your money and better spent on our programs.

Time is spent writing and sending out paper and email notifications about renewals, calling events to contact all the members who have not yet renewed, conducting meetings to determine which Posts still need attention, and working the lists each month to determine who has renewed and who still needs to be contacted. Everyone’s time is better spent working our programs.

I have heard members lament about being continually reminded about getting members renewed. This could cease if everyone renewed in July. Our membership focus could then be working the finding the one new member each. More time for programs.

Finding a new member can be difficult for some. It isn’t easy for several people to approach another and strike up a conversation about the Legion. Little things can help like wearing Legion or military apparel can cause another to approach you. That is your in to brag on the Legion. Or just have your extroverted friend get 2 new members. Please be an advocate for the great things we do. It often sells itself.

Be more than a just member of this great organization. Be an early renewal and find another member. Your Post, District, and Department can assist you in making this happen.

God Bless our veterans, their families, and the United States of America!

Respectfully,

AHIA and Legion work together to raise funds for veterans

Department Adjutant Pat Smith presents a check to David Profitt from American Heroes in Action for $10,700. American Heroes in Action will use the money to assist disabled veterans through their adventure programs. The money was raised from the sale of raffle tickets for two beautiful Henry Big Boy 45 cal rifles. The first place winner was James Dickerson and he won the 100th Anniversary Commemorative rifle worth over $3,000. The second place winner was John Maloney and he won the regular rifle worth $700.00. Congratulations to both winners.

Tickets were sold by The American Legion through our raffle website at www.raffle.coloradolegion.org. Please check the website often for future raffles.
Off and running

By: Annette Johnson, Department Jr. Vice Commander and Department Membership Committee Co-Chair

Hello Everyone,

Welcome to a new year of membership. I am so excited we are off and running and some of our Post starting to open up again. September 10th is the first target date for the year. Below are the statistics, they include PUFL’s, online renewals and DMS transfers from National.

District 1: 49.02% so close, keep up the great work. Hit or exceeded the 50% target date: Posts 8, 48, 71, & 125.

District 2: 53.40% WAY TO GO!!! Hit or exceeded the 50% target date: Posts 3, 77, 81, 121, 160 & 2017.

District 3: 55.60% WAY TO GO!!! Hit or exceeded the 50% target date: Posts 19, 20, 68, 90, 96, 105, 134 & 137.

District 4: 46.09% so close, keep up the great work. Hit or exceeded the 50% target date: Posts 4, 26, 32, 70, 109, 111, 180, & 1879.

District 5: 49.32% So close, keep up the great work. Hit or exceeded the 50% target date: Posts 21, 84, 101, 103, 161, 166, 204, 2001 & 5280.

District 6: 48.89% So close, keep up the great work. Hit or exceeded the 50% target date: Posts 1, 23, 82, 206, 1260, 1992, 2002, & 2018.

District 7: 48.70% So close, keep up the great work. Hit or exceeded the 50% target date: Posts 13, 25, 171, 209, & 1980.

District 8: 48.36% So close, keep up the great work. Hit or exceeded the 50% target date: Posts 2, 16, 115, & 207.

District 9: 50.20% So close, keep up the great work. Hit or exceeded the 50% target date: Posts 110, 131, 142, & 406.

District 10: 46.02% So close, keep up the great work. Hit or exceeded the 50% target date: Posts 108 & 143.

District 11: 43.48% So close, keep up the great work. Hit or exceeded the 50% target date: Posts 12, 54, & 104.

District 12: 58.15% So close, keep up the great work. Hit or exceeded the 50% target date: Posts 55, 64, 175 & 2527.

District 13: 50.67% So close, keep up the great work. Hit or exceeded the 50% target date: Posts 37, 83, 164, 194, & 200.

District 14: 54.57% So close, keep up the great work. Hit or exceeded the 50% target date: Posts 44, 62, 74, 89 & 69.

As a Department our Quota is 21,401 members. Current renewals are 9,936 for 46.43%.

Post 211 has moved out of District 6 and placed in District 00.

District 00: Post 211 showing 57.93% & Post 123 Lowry with 25.02%.

This year ALL DMS transfers will count towards your Quota. The members in District 00 need a Post home. Many people say they cannot recruit during COVID-19, here is a great way to recruit and all you need to do is make a phone call, send an email or write a letter inviting members to join your Post. Fill out the Member Data Form, attach a copy of the transfer letter to your green Member Data Form, file in your membership book, and turn in the remainder of the form to Department HQ for the transfer to be completed.

Consider making this a monthly event and ask your District Commander to reach out to Tom Bock at pncbock@coloradolegion.org on the first of the month and request a zip code list for the new members being held in the electronic locations. By doing so each District will have a clearer idea of which Posts are struggling to make targets and which ones are excelling. When you learn the ups and downs of those Posts your membership team will have a rounded report to present at the membership meetings and who knows you may be able to provide a new recruiting strategy and help another Post who is struggling.

National will mail out another renewal notice on October 1, 2020. Remind you members of this and if they are in doubt ask them to contact you for a renewal verification.

Keep up the great work everyone; together we all will make this a successful membership year.

If you have questions or concerns you are welcome to reach out to me anytime at annettephd@comcast.net

Our next target date is October 15th with 55% membership goal.

2020–2021 NATIONAL MEMBERSHIP TARGET DATES

Target dates are the second Wednesday of the month unless a holiday falls on that day or at the beginning of that week.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EARLY BIRD/NEF KICKOFF</td>
<td>SEPTEMBER 10, 2020 50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FALL MEETINGS</td>
<td>OCTOBER 15, 2020 55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VETERANS DAY</td>
<td>NOVEMBER 12, 2020 65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEARL HARBOR DAY</td>
<td>DECEMBER 11, 2020 75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MID-WINTER</td>
<td>JANUARY 21, 2021  80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRESIDENTS DAY</td>
<td>FEBRUARY 10, 2021 85%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As we get a new start on the 2020-21 membership year, Commander Jackson has asked his Jr Vice staff, rather than focusing on a geography to focus attention and efforts on a particular and specific Pillar of the American Legion. I have been given Americanism, so I went to do some research to better understand, define and be able to answer the, ‘Tell me about Americanism program,’ questions from members and potential members. Our National website summarizes Americanism as: ‘The Legion’s pillar of Americanism embodies its devotion to law and order, the raising of wholesome youth, an educated and law-abiding citizenship, and respectful observance of patriotic holidays and remembrances.’ This pillar includes the following main components and associated programs:

- US flag protection and protocols
- Illegal immigration, citizenship, and naturalization activities
- Voter registration and participation
- Boy Scouts of America
- The Pledge of Allegiance
- Establishment of Clause Lawsuits
- Boys State/Boys Nation
- American Legion Baseball
- Multiple awards programs and scholarship opportunities
- High School Oratorical contest
- Junior shooting sports
- Youth cadet law enforcement
- Participation and community support and service for voting, flag etiquette and education, patriotic holidays and activities and organizational and national history.

Please feel free to reach out to me to discuss these programs, a schedule of associated timeframes (and possible delays in scheduling) and how you and/or your Post can get involved in the programs of the American Legion.
Chaplain's Corner - Forgiveness
By: Stanley Hamamoto, Department Chaplain

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

Now that October is here, that means that winter is also almost here. I really do not like the cold, but being that I am in Colorado I guess I must get used to it. Like the blast we had in early September. I am so very happy that we have a loving God. Because of HIS love for us, we can pass this love on to others.

I would like to talk about forgiveness. This is a subject close to my heart and this is also something that most people dislike very much. WHY???? Because many cannot forgive others even when it is not their fault. I guess the hardest thing to forgive is when someone hurts you or someone in your family. Many times when we don’t forgive, it stays with us forever. You must let this go by forgiving. If you don’t it will eat you up inside. You must let go by forgiving or it will stay with you forever.

I recall one time when I was giving a sunrise service to a men’s group. We had this service next to the lake and the setting was just perfect. The sun was coming up and I had my back to the lake and giving this short service before breakfast. I spoke on forgiveness. There were a lot of questions and after it was through, we headed for the dining room for breakfast. As I walked a gentleman approached me and asked if he could speak to me personally, and I told him yes. We stopped and went on the side so others could go to the breakfast. He cried and told me that he had caught his girlfriend cheating on him. He told her that he forgave her as long as she would not do that again. She just laughed at him and he turned around and left. I told him, “You forgave her and if she doesn’t want to accept it, it is of her own doing, it is not your fault so do not take blame for something that you have no control over.” You should feel good; for you forgave her and your heart should rejoice in that. You cannot control how or what she is going to feel or do, you have done what God wants you to do. I told him that he should ask God for guidance and help. The next year he came up to me and told me that he took my advice and he now feels like a new man. He even found a new girlfriend and that she is much better than the other girl was. He thanked me and I told him, sometimes we do not understand why God does what HE does, but HE has HIS reasons and that we will never understand.

God does things in HIS own way and many times we do not or want to understand why HE did it that way. There are many times when we blame someone when they really had nothing to do with it, many times it is beyond their control. Many times we can blame others but what about what we have done to them? You have blamed someone when they had no control over what has happened. Many times we should look and see, maybe it was our fault but we do not want to admit it. Maybe it’s something that we should have done that could have avoided this problem and not the fault of the person that we are blaming. Passing the blame on to someone is an easy thing to do, because we do not want to admit that we could have stopped it and many times we will do just that. It’s easy to pass the blame on to someone else. God loves us all, no matter what we have done, HE forgives us so why can’t we forgive our brothers and sisters like HE forgave us?

My last three words to all of you are: GO TO CHURCH!!!!!!
In 1919 our WWI veterans met together to form our American Legion. This we know! During the subsequent Paris caucus and the St Louis Caucus they wrote our founding documents. In the preamble to our constitution they laid out 10 founding principles. Those principles have been our guiding light for 101 years. I quote portions for you here:

For God and Country, we associate ourselves together for the following purposes…

To Maintain Law and Order…

To Safeguard and Transmit to Posterity the Principles of Justice, Freedom and Democracy.

In 1923 the delegates to the national convention strengthened their position on law and order with the following resolution:

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.

In view of the events taking place all over this country, with so called peaceful protests turning into riots, we need to stand together again as an organization against those who would seek to obliterate those principles of justice, freedom and democracy that we wore the uniform to protect.

As veterans we understand the need for, and support, peaceful protests. But when individuals take over those protests and turn them into lawlessness by rioting, looting, arson, and deadly violence we need to speak out forcefully against that behavior. We need to stand with our law enforcement agencies and demand from our elected leaders that they prosecute those who break the law. It can be no other way.

There are bad people in every profession. We know we have bad cops, scout leaders, priests, stockbrokers and even bad veterans. But 99.99% of our law enforcement personnel in this country are decent, law abiding citizens of their communities. They are little league coaches for their kid’s sports teams. They serve on the local PTA’s and school boards. They are church goers and serve their

(Continued on Page 11 Column 1 See Religion)
Get out and Vote!!!

By: Nick Arceo, Commander, SAL Detachment of Colorado

Wow! Where did the summer go? I hope you are safe and well. As we continue to press on, please keep in mind my theme for this year “carry on for God and Country”.

Thank you for all you do for the Detachment of Colorado. Hopefully, you were able to get out with other members to reach out to Veterans. As we approach the month of November, take time to reflect on what it means to be an American Citizen. Part of this is your right and duty to get out and vote. I urge you to do just that.

October has a few important dates to remember. First, we have the US Navy’s birthday on the 13th, then on the 27th we celebrate Navy day. The last day of the month is Halloween. If conditions allow, I encourage you to focus on Halloween safety events and provide tips to children in the community. October 15th marks our 25% membership target date. What are you doing to help us get this number? I am counting on you! Let’s get off to a great start on our membership this year.

As posts continue to open, make sure you get in touch with the Post Commander and discuss plans moving forward.

How are you doing on your 2020 renewals? Keep a close eye on these, you can still turn them in until December 31, 2020.

Please join the Detachment of Colorado’s monthly conference call. This call takes place the second Thursday of the month. Watch for call number details from Scott. Join us with ideas & thoughts. I would love to hear about events that you have participated in and your plans moving forward.

Don’t allow this pandemic to have a lasting negative effect of you. Let’s get back to the things The Sons do best, taking care of our Veterans, Legion family members and our community.

I am looking forward to a great year, I want to challenge every Son to join me. Please contact me, let me know what I can do for you and your Squadrons. I look forward to seeing you all very soon, until then keep well and safe and continue making a difference in the lives of Veterans and the community.

God Bless

Womens Health Transition Training

Via virtual classroom through mid-December

VA’s Women’s Health Transition Training program is available virtually twice a day through mid-December. The schedule allows more women to attend than in the past. All transitioning servicewomen are encouraged to register for a virtual training session at: www.va.gov/womenvet/whtt. Program managers will soon determine the training schedule and delivery method (virtual or in-person) for calendar year 2021.

More than 1,100 women have completed the training since its inception in the summer of 2018. Many have shared positive feedback and takeaways from the training. Past attendees have said that hearing about women-specific care — including mental health and counseling — offered by VA persuaded them to enroll.

VA is a viable option for health care needs

Prior to attending the Women’s Health Transition Training, many transitioning servicewomen never considered VA as a viable option for their future health care needs.

This program focuses on educating servicewomen on the services VA offers. It addresses potential physical and mental health challenges they may face. Examples are depression, musculoskeletal conditions, chronic pain, obesity, infertility, prenatal care or MST.

All transitioning servicewomen are encouraged to register for a virtual training session. This training builds awareness and equips servicewomen with resources for their transition to civilian health care.

(Continued on Page 23 See Live interactive training)
religion with reverence and passion. Many are former military veterans and members of The American Legion. In short, they care about America, they care about its citizens and they care about the freedoms they are sworn to protect.

I, for one, would not hesitate to stand shoulder to shoulder with any of them as they protect us from those thugs and rioters and looters and arsonists and murderers whose sole purpose is to destroy our very foundation of law and order. We cannot let this happen.

For those that want to defund the police, they are idiots. There is certainly a need to constantly review and reform policies that will lead to better policing. Rouge officers need to be eliminated from the force. Better yet, pull them out before they get the badge. That takes time and work of our elected leaders and those that administer our law enforcement entities.

So, instead of de-fund, let’s re-fund.

Refund to our officers the dignity, confidence, faith, trust and support that some of our politicians have attempted to strip away with their de-fund proposals.

Our position in The American Legion, here in Colorado, needs to be that we will support our law enforcement personnel. If we are to live up to the principle contained in our preamble, To Safeguard and Transmit to Posterity the Principles of Justice, Freedom and Democracy, we need our voices to be heard, now!

Call to action. Each Post in Colorado needs to honor their local local law enforcement agencies and their first responders. You can do this by assembling members of your Legion, Auxiliary and SAL and march down to your local precinct, wearing your American Legion caps and carrying the American flag. Walk in the door and present to them a certificate of appreciation for the work they do for the community.

Get creative, subject to COVID restrictions, on other ways to bring attention to their service. Be sure you invite the local press. Make this a big splash. Let everyone know we stand shoulder to shoulder with all of our law enforcement and first responders. We love our cops and first responders.
Proposed rule change for burial at Arlington would exclude more veterans, servicemembers

By: Caitlin M. Kenney/Stars and Stripes, SEP 16, 2020

Active-duty service members who die from an incident that was not in support of combat operations would no longer be eligible for burial at Arlington National Cemetery under a new proposed rule posted Tuesday to the Federal Register.

The current burial eligibility, can be read elsewhere in the Observer, states any service member who dies while on active duty can have an in-ground burial at the cemetery or be inurned in a columbarium. According to the Federal Register notice, recent trends show about 43 service members are buried annually at Arlington National Cemetery who died on active duty “neither as the result of armed conflict service nor from preparations or operations related to combat.”

The new proposed rule is part of several changes meant to extend the active use of the cemetery. Arlington National Cemetery is expected to run out of space for new burials by 2055 despite two recent expansion projections. In fiscal year 2019, there were 3,691 new graves at the cemetery, according to the register notice. That year’s National Defense Authorization Act included instructions for the Army secretary to develop new criteria for burial at Arlington — restrictions that would allow it to remain an active cemetery for the next 150 years. The Department of the Army oversees the running of the cemetery.

“AChanges to eligibility at Arlington National Cemetery will preserve this national symbol and shrine as an active burial ground for current and future generations of military service members,” the register notice states.

The proposed rule is part of the process to change the regulation regarding burial eligibility. The rule would allow for about 700 new in-ground burials and 1,950 above-ground burials annually at the cemetery for eligible service members, veterans and family members. The public comment period on the proposed rule is open to until Nov. 16. Go to https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2020/09/15/2020-17801/army-cemeteries to submit a comment.

Service members who are killed in action or whose death “results from preparations or operations related to combat” would be eligible for in-ground burials, according to the proposal.

Veterans and service members are still eligible for in-ground and above-ground burials if they have served in combat and received one of the following decorations: the Medal of Honor, Distinguished Service Cross (Air Force or Navy), Distinguished Service Medal, Silver Star or Purple Heart.

The proposed rule also states “without other eligibility,” such as being awarded those specific medals, veterans and service members who served on active duty for at least two years and “performed armed-conflict service” are still eligible for above-ground inurnment at the cemetery. If they do not meet these criteria, they are no longer eligible for above-ground inurnment unless they served honorably during an armed conflict prior to July 27, 1953.

Active-duty service members who do not die in combat, such as in a training accident, could still be eligible for burial at the cemetery, depending on their specific circumstances. However, Barbara Lewandrowski, a spokeswoman for Arlington National Cemetery, wrote Tuesday in an email that cemetery officials “may not provide direct responses to hypothetical eligibility during the comment period.”

The largest groups impacted by the new proposed rule are retired veterans who receive military retired pay and service members who are eligible to retire and are entitled to retired pay on the date of their death, according to the notice. They are now eligible for in-ground burial and inurnment in a columbarium, but the new change would only allow for above-ground inurnment unless they meet another eligibility. About 1,900 people in this category will remain eligible annually for above-ground inurnment.

About 1,000 gravesites at Arlington National Cemetery are also being set aside for current and future Medal of Honor recipients, according to the notice.

Note: Eligibility requirements for burial at Arlington National Cemetery is shown on Page 13.
Eligibility

Arlington National Cemetery's eligibility requirements for burial and inurnment are different from other national cemeteries that are maintained by the Department of Veterans Affairs. Eligibility for in-ground burial at Arlington National Cemetery is the most stringent of all U.S. national cemeteries. However, most veterans, who have at least one day of active service (other than for training) and an honorable discharge, are eligible for above-ground inurnment. Eligibility is determined at the time of need. An honorable discharge is required for any interments at Arlington National Cemetery.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Member With Honorable Discharge</th>
<th>Eligibility*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inurnment in Columbarium Court or Niche Wall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dies on Title 10 Federal Active Duty (other than for training)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dies on Active Duty for training only under Title X</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran – Retired from active duty; receiving retirement pay</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran – At least one day active duty other than for training</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran – Received Medal of Honor, Distinguished Service Cross (Air Force or Navy), Distinguished Service Medal, Silver Star, or Purple Heart</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any member of a Reserve component of the Armed Forces, and any member of the Army National Guard or the Air National Guard, whose death occurs under honorable conditions while on active duty for training or performing full-time service.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any former prisoner of war who, while a prisoner of war, served honorably in the active military, naval, or air service; whose last period of service terminated honorably; and who died on or after Nov. 30, 1993</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Reflects current eligibility criteria, as of July 1, 2017, in accordance with the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 32, Part 553, Section 12 and 13.

More detailed information on eligibility can be found at: http://www.arlingtoncemetery.mil/FuneralInformation/EstablishServices.aspx
48th Annual United Veterans Coalition of Colorado Awards Banquet

By: Terri L. Clinton, PDC

It’s been a year of, shall we say, doing things a little unconventionally. The United Veterans Coalition of Colorado (UVC) holds an annual awards banquet. This banquet is the only fundraiser for the lobbying organization that speaks with one legislative voice for veterans in the State of Colorado and federally. Thus, they were not immune to the COVID-19 restrictions.

But, what do they teach us in the military? Adapt and overcome; and that is exactly what the UVC did with its first-ever virtual awards banquet held on Sunday, August 23, with keynote speaker Dr. Janine Davidson, President of Metropolitan State University, US Air Force Academy graduate and former Undersecretary of the Navy.

Master of Ceremonies was Past Department Commander and Past UVC President Ralph Bozella. Awards were presented by Past Department Commander and Past UVC President, Frank McCurdy, who is also the UVC Awards Committee Chairperson. Past Department Commander and UVC Communications Chair, Terri L. Clinton, gave an address on women veteran legislation.

2020 Team Veterans Awards were presented to the following individuals:
- Senator Nancy Todd, Lifetime Achievement Award
- Senator Dominick Moreno, Legislative Achievement Award
- VA Eastern Colorado Healthcare System Public Affairs Specialist Khristie Barker, Distinguished Service Award
- Bernie Rogoff, Marvin Meyers Lifetime Achievement Award.
- Senator Larry Crowder, Marvin Meyers Lifetime Achievement Award
- Representative Lois Landgraf, Achievement Award
- Representative Chris Kennedy, Legislative Achievement Award
- Craig Warneke, Certificate of Appreciation.

The American Legion Department of Colorado can be proud of our long-standing affiliation with the UVC as a Primary organization, and the meaningful legislation we have been able to accomplish with our Veteran Service Organization partners. Many Legionnaires hold positions in the UVC, and several posts belong as Affiliate organizations. This year, the American Legion Auxiliary Department of Colorado joined as an Affiliate organization.

Thanks to the sponsors, UVC leadership, membership organizations, award recipients and donors, who made the unconventional, virtually conventional.

You can watch the virtual awards banquet at: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCpwxYGua01guFuSPuQAGqmg

American Legion Post 206 Awards Program

By: Ida Tholen, Deb Davis, and Terri Clinton

American Legion Post 206, the first all-female post in the Department of Colorado, held their 5th Annual Awards Program on Saturday, August 29, at American Legion Post 1. This year the event was held virtually by live streaming it on Facebook. Awards were given for years of continuous membership in the American Legion, Community Service Volunteer of the Year, Employer of the Year, and Police Officer of the Year.

Commander Betty Jantz started the Program by saying, “We are delighted to have you here to participate and share in the 5th annual Helen K. Osmundson Post 206 Awards Program. Thank you for joining us.”

Helen K. Osmundson Post 206 is committed to actively raising the quality of life for women veterans. They want all veterans, regardless of circumstances to achieve their full potential. Their task is to make it possible by providing guidance, updated information, and opportunity to women veterans in general and use the American Legion four pillars—Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation, National Security, Americanism, and Children and Youth in support of their members and other veterans.

The Post also acknowledged Mary (Connie) Keller, a Paid up for Life (PUFL) member who went to Post Everlasting on February 5, 2020.

The Community Service Volunteer of the Year was awarded to “A
Stronger Cord” founder Mark McIntosh. Accepting the award for Mark, was Carlos Mondragon, who was helped by Mark’s organization. A Stronger Cord started out quite modestly with a challenge: “When are we going to start working out?” This statement came from a fit young man living at a mission in Denver that serves the homeless. It was directed at a volunteer chapel and workout enthusiast who would always talk to the guys about the importance of fitness to one’s overall health and wellbeing.

From that spark a mission was born. It starts with the workout. A Stronger Cord believes exercise is a great connector, equalizer, and stress reducer. The men warm up, work out, sweat, bond, grow, and hang out together. Body, mind, and spirit are all affected. The members challenge one another to become more fitness-minded, dependable, and productive. They believe it will help them build a stronger cord—thus the name—to families, jobs, and communities.

EPA was awarded Employer of Veterans award because they have a team at Region 8 that is made up of veterans and they help one another out. In Sept 2019, Cynthia Francis asked if she could put a POW/MIA table up in the lobby of the building housing the Headquarters of a Region 8 EPA. She borrowed Post 206’s POW/MIA table setting and post flag. She got the other flags from her church. The display was up for 2 weeks.

Emily Hutchings, a 16 year member of the Aurora Police Department, was awarded Police Officer of the Year. She could not attend as she and other members of the Police Department were attending her mother’s funeral. Her award will be presented to her at the Aurora Police Department Headquarters when arrangements can be made.

American Legion Post 206 Awards Program Photos

Seen here is Carlos Mondragon from “A Stronger Cord” accepting the award for Mark McIntosh. A Stronger Cord received the Community Service Volunteer Award from AL Post 206 CDR Betty Jantz and Budget Officer and Historian Deb Davis.

Officers of AL Post 206 from left PDC Terri Clinton, SGT-At-Arms Ida Tholen. Historian and Budget Officer Deb Davis, CDR Betty Jantz, Service Officer Rita Kyker, PEC Ginny Brokaw, 1st Vice Kathleen Crowe, and Adjutant Christina Lilly.
Colorado post’s Legion Family doesn’t let pandemic get in the way of service

Since the start of the coronavirus pandemic, American Legion Family members have shown time and time again the resolve to continue their mission of service to community. Stocking food pantries, delivering meals, providing face masks and other personal protective equipment, and delivering financial assistance are just some of the ways the Legion Family has helped support others during perhaps the most difficult time in the United States in more than 100 years.

Add the efforts of the Neal Thomas Jr.-Centennial Post 209 American Legion Family in Colorado Springs, Colo., to that list. Since the pandemic’s outbreak, members of the post’s American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary, Sons of The American Legion and American Legion Riders have stepped up to provide support to active-duty military and veterans in need of assistance.

For first-term Post 209 Commander Joe Schmidt, letting the coronavirus get in the way of carrying out the American Legion Family’s mission wasn’t an option.

“Being in Colorado Springs, we have one of the largest military presences (in) the country,” said the 31-year-old Schmidt, who served in the U.S. Army from 2008 to 2016, deploying to Afghanistan before being medically separated. “We know when the call comes from the servicemembers … they’re going to need assistance. And we can’t stop what we’re doing because the rest of the world has stopped. We take pride in what we do as a post, the largest post in the state of Colorado, that we make it our sole purpose to serve the veterans and the active-duty servicemembers of our community.”

In April, the post learned that a U.S. Army unit stationed at Fort Carson was struggling to fill its mandatory face mask order. The Legion Family donated several hundred dollars and searched the area to help the soldiers get the masks they needed.

More recently, a U.S. Army aviation unit deployed to Honduras and under the command of Lt. Col. Adam Bock – himself a member of Post 209 and the son of fellow Post 209 Legionnaire and Past National Commander Tom Bock – reached out to the post asking for a show of support for the soldiers in the unit.

Members of Auxiliary Unit 209 responded, forming a committee to identify what items could be sent to the soldiers that were both practical and a reminder of their service to the United States. Auxiliary members Kellie Hayes and Royce Hopper made 250 masks and cooling neck wraps and placed them in individual bags that also included a pocket flag and a note in each bag thanking each soldier for their sacrifice and service.

Members of Unit 209 also made and shipped 125 masks to the health clinic at Naval Air Station Pax River in Maryland, where Hayes’ daughter and Post 209/Unit 209 member Lt. Chelsea Thompson is stationed. And when one of Post 209’s members serving as a caregiver for his wife while she is receiving in-home hospice care broke his vertebra during a fall, a schedule was created for members of Post 209’s Legion Family to take turns preparing and delivering meals to the husband and his wife.

Past Unit 209 President Jackie Bowen said where a need exists, the American Legion Family is going to try to fill it, no matter the surrounding circumstances. “I just think it’s real important to take care of our veterans and military and families. It’s something I feel I should be doing,” she said. “The military can’t take time off if something like the pandemic happens. They still have to continue and do their service. So why should we stop when we can continue?”

Schmidt said using an entire Legion Family effort is the standard practice at Post 209. “Our post dynamic isn’t operating as the Legion or operating as the Auxiliary. It’s operating as one family,” he said. “The mission of The American Legion can only be accomplished by doing it as the family. That’s what we believe. It takes all of us together to accomplish these missions: the Sons, the Auxiliary, the Legion and of course our Riders.

“We come together and work together as one team. It’s one team and one fight. It doesn’t matter what we’re doing, from a Friday night dinner to supporting the community to a community event. We’re doing it as one. It’s a family event.”

The efforts from Post 209 are among others happening across the nation involving American Legion Family members.
Thank you, Post 209

We received the awesome package of pocket flags, masks, and neck wraps today—on 9/11. The timing couldn’t be better, tomorrow we depart for an operation on the Northern coast of Honduras along the Caribbean Sea. The fresh masks and cool wraps will greatly help morale.

I can confidently say, the Soldiers are excited for these creature comforts from home. Many of the Soldiers assigned here have not had experiences in the Middle East, so this package was their first of its kind.

Please thank your unit for their continued support of our Service Members, our home communities, and our country.

I will send some appreciation to the unit in the mail soon.

Thanks again,

Adam R. Bock, LTC, AV
Commander, 1-228th Aviation Regiment
Winged Warriors!

Legion Baseball alum Pujols surpasses Mays for 5th Place all-time HR hitter.

Editor’s Note: This article was written prior to Albert’s September 17, 2020 661 and 662 homeruns; the headline was changed to reflex his position after hitting those 2 additional home run.

American Legion Baseball alum Albert Pujols moved into a tie for fifth-place on Major League Baseball’s all-time home run list on Sept. 13.

Pujols hit the 660th home run of his career off Carlos Estevez in the Los Angeles Angels’ 5-3 win over the Colorado Rockies. Pujols’ two-run homer off Estevez in the top of the eighth inning put the Angels ahead 4-3 and moved Pujols into a tie with Hall of Famer Willie Mays on the all-time MLB home run list.

Alex Rodriguez is fourth on the list, with 696 home runs. Another American Legion Baseball alum, Barry Bonds, is MLB’s career home run leader with 762, followed by Hall of Famers Hank Aaron (755) and Babe Ruth (714).

Last month, Pujols — the oldest active player in the major leagues — moved into second place on the official career RBI list with an RBI single against the Houston Astros on Aug. 24. Pujols has 2,097 career RBI; Hank Aaron leads the list with 2,297. While Babe Ruth has 2,281 RBI recognized by Baseball Reference, Major League Baseball only counts 1,989 as MLB does not count career RBI before 1920 because it was not an official statistic.

Albert Pujols of the Los Angeles Angels shares his stories about his experience with Legion Baseball as he is interviewed during spring training in Phoenix, Ariz. on Friday, Mar. 6. Photo by Lucas Carter/The American Legion.

Pujols also moved into fifth place on the career doubles list last weekend, passing Craig Biggio with his 669th career double in Saturday’s 5-2 win over the Rockies.

Pujols spent 11 seasons with the St. Louis Cardinals, where he was a three-time National League MVP and nine-time All-Star. And he played American Legion Baseball for Post 340 in Independence, Mo., after immigrating to the U.S. from his hometown of Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.

In a 2015 interview with The American Legion, Pujols talked about his experience in American Legion Baseball. “It was a great experience. It was something that helped me out with my game later on. … You play with the best competition around the area.”
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

Investment/Insurance: Not FDIC Insured • Not Bank Issued, Guaranteed or Underwritten • May Lose Value
USAA products are available only in those jurisdictions where USAA is authorized to sell them.
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 adviser 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.

© 2015 USAA. 219668-0315
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 15, 2020

Drive-Thru Flu Shots for Veterans across VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System

What: VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System is hosting free drive-thru clinics for Veterans across all sites of care.

Why: This year during the pandemic, it is more important than ever to get a flu shot. If a veteran is unable to attend a drive-thru clinic, they should speak with their patient aligned care team.

Varying Dates and Locations:

Alamosa VA Clinic:
October 14th from 9:00 a.m. – noon

Aurora VA Clinic:
September 19th from 8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
October 10th from 8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
October 17th from 8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Burlington VA Clinic:
October 8th from 1:30 – 3:30 p.m.

Denver VA Clinic:
September 26th from 8:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
October 24th from 8:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Golden VA Clinic:
September 17th from 8:00 a.m. – noon
October 15th from 8:00 a.m. – noon

Lamar VA Clinic:
October 6th from 7:30 – 10:30 a.m.
October 13th from 7:30 – 10:30 a.m.

LaJunta VA Clinic:
October 14th from 8:00 a.m. – noon

PFC Floyd K. Lindstrom (Colo. Springs):
September 19th from 8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
September 26th from 8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
October 3rd from 8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
October 17th from 8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
October 24th from 8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

PFC James Dunn (Pueblo):
September 23rd from 12:30 – 3:30 p.m.
September 30th from 8:00 – 11:30 a.m.
October 7th from 12:30 – 3:30 p.m.
October 14th from 8:00 – 11:30 a.m.

Rocky Mountain Regional:
September 19th from 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
October 1st from 3:00 – 7:00 p.m.
October 13th from 3:00 – 7:00 p.m.
October 17th from 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Salida VA Clinic:
October 14th from 8:00 a.m. – noon

For more information regarding the drive-thru flu clinics, please contact Brandy Morrison.

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

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

Other features include:
- The freedom of choosing your own doctors and hospitals
- 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
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 18.7 million victims, with veterans being especially vulnerable targets. Data breaches are becoming more frequent and, when an identity thief strikes, most victims are left to clean up the mess themselves, unsure of where to turn to first. We’ve heard Legionnaires’ concerns around the growing threats of identity theft and are proud to provide a new service to address this concern.

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

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

There are two annual memberships available:

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

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

Services provided by Generali Global Assurance. Generali Global Assurance has been a leading provider of identity and digital protection solutions, travel insurance, and other assistance services for more than 30 years. Generali Global Assurance 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.
THE NATIONAL VETERANS EMPLOYMENT 
& EDUCATION COMMISSION AWARDS

The first American Legion Veterans Employment and Education (VE&E) Commission Award was established in 1947, and recognized individuals across the country who had established outstanding records in the employment and retention of workers with disabilities. Since that time, categories were added to the current nine award programs.

The VE&E Commission is striving to award all possible pending awards that are available to The American Legion. We implore all departments to continue to submit award nominations for the awards with the hope that we receive all 400 + possible nominations. We are striving to reach 100% participation in this program.

1. EMPLOYER OF VETERANS AWARD (SMALL)
2. EMPLOYER OF VETERANS AWARD (MEDIUM)
3. EMPLOYER OF VETERANS AWARD (LARGE)
4. EMPLOYMENT SERVICE AWARD (DVOP)
5. EMPLOYMENT SERVICE AWARD (LVER)
6. EMPLOYER OF OLDER WORKERS AWARD (LOCAL OFFICE)
7. ENHANCE THE LIVES OF DISABLED PERSON AWARD
8. MICHAEL GUTY HOMELESS VETERANS OUTREACH AWARD

To be considered for the national award, the deadline for submittals to the VE&E Commission in Washington, DC is January 15, of the following year. Example: To be nominated for the 2018 awards the nomination must be in by January 15, 2019.

It is important that the department winners are submitted by this time to ensure that they are considered for the national award to be delivered at the annual National Convention. Each of the national winners receives a stipend to help defray the cost of their representative's travel to the convention city to accept the award.

We ask that you submit written correspondence, or fax, or send an electronic scanned copy in the form of an e-mail to our national headquarters office. Please title your letter '[Title] Awards- [Department name]'.

All entries must be accompanied by an official nomination form (see the following pages) and must not be longer than two pages of narrative. Supporting documents, which may also be submitted with the nomination, must not exceed ten pages.

DEPARTMENTS MAY REPRODUCE ALL FORMS FOR WIDER DISTRIBUTION

All entries must arrive at Department Headquarters no later than December 15, 2020

If you need a Awards Program Packet, call Department Headquarters and request a packet!
National Commander Oxford pledges support to storm victims

American Legion National Commander James W. “Bill” Oxford issued the following statement regarding Hurricane Laura’s destructive path along the Gulf Coast:

“The American Legion extends its support and prayers to those impacted by Hurricane Laura. Right now, priority one is saving lives. When the danger subsides, the clean-up and recovery begins. The American Legion Family has a number of support programs for our members to include Temporary Financial Assistance and a National Emergency Fund. TFA grants are also available to eligible active-duty servicemembers with minor children in the home. We have American Legion posts across the country that will offer their own forms of assistance as well. I have directed our national staff to maintain regular communications with the impacted departments to ensure that we do everything we can to help those in need. For now, people with inquiries can call our Louisiana American Legion Department Adjutant, Tony Betts (337) 652-5072 or email tonyb_la@hotmail.com or adjutant@lalegion.org. The Texas American Legion can be contacted at (512) 472-4138 or billw@txlegion.org. More details will be released at www.legion.org during the coming days.”

Oxford also pointed out that Americans can contribute to charities which help recovery efforts by donating to The American Legion National Emergency Fund or Veterans & Children Foundation at legion.org/donate or by sending a check to either of those charities at The American Legion, P.O. Box 361626, Indianapolis, IN 46236.

Louisiana National Guardsmen with the 256th Infantry Brigade Combat Team conduct boat training in Lake Charles to respond after Hurricane Laura makes landfall in southwest Louisiana. More than 3,000 Louisiana National Guard Soldiers and Airmen in preparation were activated to respond across the state. (Louisiana National Guard Photo)

This live, interactive training is led by a woman Veteran who uses VA health care. The training session has five phases:

- **Phase 1 – The Shift from Active Duty.** You will learn about VHA (Veterans Health Administration), the transition from active duty or Guard/Reserve to civilian, and making the change from the military health system to VHA.
- **Phase 2 – Understanding the VHA.** You will learn about VA, Women’s health providers, the MISSION Act, and programs that support the need for women-specific health care.
- **Phase 3 – Available Women’s Health Services.** You will hear about the health services available to you if you enroll in VA health care.
- **Phase 4—Enrolling in VA.** You will learn about eligibility and the enrollment process.
- **Phase 5 – Transition Assistance.** You will learn about other available support services and partners as you transition out of active duty.

The purpose of this training is to build awareness and equip all servicewomen with the knowledge, support and resources for their transition to civilian health care. VA cares for all Veterans and is here for you.

Shonté Gonzalez is the community readiness consultant and Sherri Curtis is a marketing strategy and communications specialist at Wright-Patterson AFB.
VA expands Veteran access to telehealth with iPad services

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced today, September 15, 2020, a new collaboration with Apple to increase Veterans’ access to virtual care benefits.

VA’s iPad program provides qualifying Veterans with cellular-enabled iPads to access telehealth services and currently helps more than 50,000 Veterans across the country connect to VA health care services virtually.

“VA will continue working diligently to provide Veterans with the tools and resources necessary to access quality health care when and where they need it,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “VA’s partnership with Apple is an integral step in helping to bridge the digital divide for Veterans everywhere. This is particularly critical during the COVID-19 public health emergency, when telehealth is being leveraged to protect the safety and well-being of both our Veterans and clinicians.”

VA has been a leader in telehealth services for decades and began the Connected Tablet program in 2016. A VA study found Veterans who received tablets, reported high levels of satisfaction with care, were less likely to miss appointments and found it easier and more convenient to access VA care.

To standardize the program and provide Veterans a consistent, quality experience, VA will exclusively distribute iPads to Veterans.

iPads offer Veterans the combination of portability, user experience, data privacy and security made possible through Apple’s integrated hardware and software platform. The collaboration between VA and Apple, facilitated by the VA Secretary’s Center for Strategic Partnerships, provides VA with Apple’s expertise to help enhance the platform and ensure Veterans and health care professionals have the best telehealth experience.

“VA’s iPad program provides unparalleled convenience and flexibility when attending my VA appointments,” said Fiona Garcia, a U.S. Air Force Veteran who served from 2001-2011. “After receiving an iPad in March, I’ve been able to receive VA care when and where I need it most. The technology also allows me to stay connected with my doctors when I am not near a Wi-Fi connection or near the VA medical center.”

As part of VA’s commitment to supporting Veteran health care, patients can also securely view and download their personal medical data using the Health Records on iPhone feature from Apple.

Veterans who don’t currently have a video-capable device or internet service and are interested in VA’s telehealth iPad program should consult their VA health care team to determine their eligibility.

VA announces new clinical trial for Veterans with COVID-19

Researchers to study blood plasma for treating seriously ill patients

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) today announced a new clinical trial to study convalescent plasma for treating seriously ill COVID-19 patients as part of a larger effort to give Veterans faster access to potential COVID-19 treatments and test the treatments’ effectiveness.

The trial is the first of multiple studies in VA Coronavirus Research and Efficacy Studies (VA CURES), a master protocol that offers a standardized framework for studying potential treatments for COVID-19 without the need for a new study design and protocol each time.

“This trial will go a long way toward helping in the fight against COVID-19,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “VA CURES will provide valuable information that will benefit our Veterans who are battling COVID-19, as well as other patients and the medical community in general.”

The trial will enroll around 700 Veterans with COVID-19 who are hospitalized at VA medical centers. A study team will randomize the study volunteers to receive either convalescent plasma or a saline placebo, and track and assess recovery and effects of the treatment.

Convalescent plasma is donated by people who have recovered from COVID-19 and have antibodies against the virus in their blood. Antibodies are proteins the body makes to fight infections.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) previously authorized the use of convalescent plasma as an investigational treatment for COVID-19 through FDA’s expanded access program. The program, used widely throughout the nation, including at many VA sites, ended Aug. 28. FDA has since authorized the emergency use of the therapy based on the available scientific evidence to date. FDA stresses further evidence from rigorous trials — such as the new VA study — is “critically important” for establishing safety and efficacy.
VA researchers to study blood plasma for treating seriously ill COVID-19 patients

By: Mike Richman

VA is launching a new clinical trial to study convalescent plasma for treating seriously ill COVID-19 patients.

Convalescent plasma is the liquid part of the blood that contains antibodies, which are proteins the body makes to fight infections, such as COVID-19. It is donated by people who have recovered from COVID-19.

“This trial will go a long way toward helping in the fight against COVID-19,” VA Secretary Robert Wilkie said in a press release. “VA CURES will provide valuable information that will benefit our Veterans who are battling COVID-19, as well as other patients and the medical community in general.”

700 Veterans to take part in trial

Some 700 Veterans who are hospitalized at VA medical centers are being enrolled in the trial, with half getting convalescent plasma and the other half in a control group. The key outcome measurement is the number of patients who died from any cause or had respiratory failure by day 28. The main secondary outcome is time to recovery by day 28.

Earlier this year, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authorized use of convalescent plasma as an investigational treatment for COVID-19 through the FDA’s expanded access program. That program was used widely throughout the nation, including about 80 VA sites, as an approach for seriously ill patients who have few, if any, options left. It ended last month. The FDA has now authorized emergency use of the therapy, based on the available scientific evidence to date. That means not only can researchers use convalescent plasma for investigational purposes, but health care providers can also use it for hospitalized patients with COVID-19.

VA initiative to give Veterans faster access to COVID-19 trials

The trial is the first of multiple studies in VA CURES, a new initiative that is aimed at giving Veterans faster access to trials for potential COVID-19 treatments and at confirming their effectiveness. VA CURES—the “VA Coronavirus Research and Efficacy Studies”—is a master protocol that offers a standardized framework for studies on many potential treatments for COVID-19, without the need for a new study design and protocol each time. Over the coming months, VA CURES studies will evaluate drugs for different stages of COVID-19 infection, from the prevention to outpatient and inpatient stages.

About 25 VA medical centers are participating in VA CURES. The program is led by infectious disease, critical care, and pulmonary experts in VA.

“This coordinated effort for controlled trials is very important so we can develop an infrastructure within VA to show what works with our patients,” says Dr. Edward Janoff, an infectious disease specialist at the VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System.

‘That’s our immediate priority’

VA CURES studies will evaluate new treatments, such as antiviral agents and drugs that impact the immune system. Some trials may include outpatients with mild symptoms to prevent their progression to hospitalization. The VA CURES team also plans to prioritize preventive measures for Veterans who would be at high risk for illness should they become infected.

“We will begin by carefully evaluating treatments to study that we think have the best chance of bringing about an effective treatment not only for Veterans but also for other people,” says Dr. Sheldon Brown, an infectious disease specialist at the James J. Peters VA Medical Center in the Bronx, New York. “That’s our immediate priority. The only thing we can rely on is good quality evidence. That’s exactly the purpose of having a program like VA CURES. We want to obtain the best quality evidence we possibly can so people are not misled about a benefit or the potential harm of a treatment when, in fact, it may be something that’s important to help them.”

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.
Veterans call VA Video Connect a “lifesaver”

Tele-urgent care without visit to emergency department

Back in April, Navy Veteran John Bartlett, 81, was dry heaving and experiencing severe pain. He had recently spent six days in the hospital with a lung infection which prevented him from taking the asthma medication he desperately needed.

On the same night, another Navy Veteran was also in need of assistance. Bill Scilacci, 97, served during World War II as an assistant engineering officer aboard the USS Edwards destroyer. He recently fractured two vertebrae and underwent surgery at VA Palo Alto Health Care System. Following the procedure, he received a back brace and moved into an assisted living center.

“He was doing pretty well and decided he should spend less time wearing the brace, so he didn’t wear it for a couple days,” said Carol Tanner, Scilacci’s daughter. “He ended up in a lot of pain.”

Tele-Urgent care saves trip to the ER

For both Bartlett and Scilacci, assistance came in an unexpected way: the new tele-urgent care program through VA Video Connect. Both Veterans called their local VA and, after being screened, connected with Dr. Janeen Smith from San Francisco VA Health Care System.

“I would have called my primary care doctor, but it was the weekend,” said Bartlett, a Vietnam-era Veteran who lives in Hawaii. “So, I made a call to the VA hospital here in Hawaii.”

Bartlett’s call was taken by a registered nurse who listened as he described his symptoms and then connected him to Dr. Smith, an emergency department physician who works with the VA Sierra Pacific Network (VISN 21) virtual care program.

Dr. Smith was able to assist over video chat and get the Veterans the care they needed in a timely manner.

“It was great,” Tanner said. “Dad was able to get the help he needed. He has used it a couple times since then. If that hadn’t been available, it would have been so much more difficult. It’s incredibly efficient if you think about the time we would have spent to take him to the ER. I’m very thankful.”

“It was kind of a window into something new,” said Scilacci. “I was flexible and available and happy to cooperate in any way.”

Expanded to nights and weekends

The virtual care program features nurse practitioners and physicians, all with experience in emergency departments or urgent care centers. It began in San Francisco during regular hospital hours but later expanded to include nights, weekends and holidays at the request of nurses who became accustomed to working with it during the day.

“It’s a process that we’re improving all the time,” Smith noted. “We started in April at the network level and were able to stand it up pretty fast because we already had it in San Francisco.”

Bartlett and Scilacci were two Veterans helped on the first night the program expanded beyond San Francisco.

“It’s very Veteran-centric,” Smith said. “That’s my favorite part.”

1000 Veterans treated by mid-June

On Saturday, June 13, the program marked its 1,000th encounter. Nearly one third of those were patients between the ages of 70 and 79. As a result, the program has improved access for Veterans with urgent care needs. It allows them to get the care they need without ever leaving the comfort and safety of their own home.

VA will continue to serve Veterans using the VA Video Connect technology.

Patrick Gordon is a Marine Corps Veteran and digital media specialist for the VA Sierra Pacific Network. Photo courtesy of Janeen Smith.
American Legion testifies on bill aimed at reducing veteran suicide

By: Mackenzie Wolf

Katie Purswell, deputy director of Health Policy for The American Legion, testified on Sept. 9 before the Senate Committee on Veterans’ Affairs on S. 785 – Commander John Scott Hannon Veterans Mental Health Care Improvement Act of 2019. The bill aimed at reducing veteran suicides is named in honor of retired U.S. Navy Cmdr. John Scott Hannon, who served his country for 23 years as a leader of SEAL Team Two, a member of SEAL Team Six, and Special Operations and policy staff officer at U.S. Special Operations Command. Six years after he retired from the Navy, Hannon died by suicide on Feb. 25, 2018. The bill passed the Senate in August and is expected to be taken up by the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs in the coming weeks.

“My commitment is to see a victory, not for the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee, not for the House Veterans’ Affairs Committee, but a victory for those who served our country, our veterans, and the organizations that are attempting to save their lives and provide mental health care and treatment,” said Sen. Jerry Moran, chairman of the Senate Committee on Veterans’ Affairs.

“A heartbreaking truth of veteran suicide is that nearly every veteran has been touched by it in some form or fashion,” said Purswell during her testimony. “The things that we have done and seen are now a part of us and affect us in ways we can have trouble understanding. From complications with assimilation into civilian life to reliving past traumatic experiences, we struggle at times to find a way to cope.”

Transitioning from active service is a crucial and stressful phase in a veteran’s life. Access to mental healthcare during this time is critical to reducing the suicide rate. “Through transition assistance, prevention, research, awareness and appropriate mental health-care services, we feel this whole health cycle approach will be effective in reducing veteran suicide,” Purswell said.

One of the provisions in the bill calls for a review of the data and research surrounding veteran suicide during the first year of separation from service. By better understanding this data, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and other support programs will be more equipped to develop strategic plans to address suicide during the transition period.

Another provision introduces a pilot program that would provide veterans access to alternative and complementary health-care programs such as annual therapy, aromatherapy, sports and recreational therapy, art therapy and post-traumatic growth programs. The American Legion supports this provision through Resolution No. 20: Suicide Prevention Program.

The success of these programs relies heavily on adequate staffing. One of The American Legion’s major focuses has been the recruitment and retention of the best-qualified individuals to care for our veterans.

“Through our System Worth Saving program, we have found that staffing and retention are often the culprit of delays in accessing mental healthcare,” said Purswell. “These findings are in line with the VA’s Office of Inspector General report which determined mental health providers are among the most critical in need.”

Provisions in the bill that specifically target women veterans and address the gaps in gender-conscious care and outreach programs are also included in the bill. Through Resolution No. 147: Women Veterans, The American Legion aims to ensure that the needs of the current and future women veteran populations are met.

“It is time to create an inclusive environment for them in VA facilities and represent them in staffing positions, programmatic design, and research,” stated The American Legion’s written testimony.

“Inclusivity of minority and rural veterans is paramount. Programs like the American Legion ATLAS Pilot Program, in conjunction with the bill’s expansion of telehealth services, will expand mental health-care access to these long-underserved veteran populations.

“Our organization understands mental health care does not have a one size fits all solution in preventing suicide. It is a complex problem that needs be treated at an individual level as each veteran’s situation is unique,” Purswell said. “As a Legion member, and as a veteran who has been touched by this tragedy, I am proud to say the American Legion supports this bill in its entirety.”

Photo courtesy of The American Legion
Mike Shaw Subaru
Proudly Supports all
COLORADO VETERANS

1650 W 104th Avenue • Thornton, CO 80234 • (303) 438-7500
MikeShawSubaru.com