

Legion News

The Official Publication of the American Legion Department of North Carolina



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HAPPENINGS

HAPPY THANKSGIVING MERRY CHRISTMAS HAPPY NEW YEAR

Your staff in Raleigh and Winston Salem wish for each and everyone of you a Happy Thanksgiving, a Merry Christmas and a Healthy, Happy and Prosperous New Year!

MID WINTER CONFERENCE

Virtual conference
February 19-26, 2021 (tentative)
More information to follow.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY THE AMERICAN LEGION

March 15-17, 2021!

SWEEPSTAKES

December-January
Drawing held during Virtual Mid Winter conference at Dept. Headquarters.

RETURN ADDRESS LABELS

February- April 2021
Please support your Department 2021 address label program. Your participation and support is greatly appreciated.



Legion Riders hold inaugural North Carolina Legacy Run

Department of North Carolina American Legion Riders Chairman, Jack Ward and several other riders wanted to get an in-state Legacy Run started in North Carolina to increase donations from the department to The American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund. The committee set a goal of \$20,000 for 2020 and the current pandemic was not going to stop the Riders from conducting an in-state ride.

From October 1-3 riders from all over the state took part in the inaugural North Carolina Legacy Run. The North Carolina riders were joined by riders from several departments including the departments of Florida, Maryland, Missouri, Virginia, and Washington. National Commander, Bill Oxford served as the Honorary Road Captain for the Central Leg. The original plan was to ride from the coast to the mountains in late October but it was changed to four individual legs converging in Raleigh for the Reading

of the Names at the Last Firefight Vietnam War Memorial at the state Capitol. After the reading of the names the riders rode to the new Department Headquarters for a cookout and final donations. It is my pleasure to say that the inaugural ride exceeded the goal and brought in \$23,961.50 from North Carolina Riders Chapters, Posts, American Legion Auxiliary Units, SAL Squadrons, and districts and divisions.

Besides the National Commander and his wife Frances other dignitaries that participated were National American Legion Riders Advisory Chairman, Mark Clark and his wife Linda (MO), Southeast American Legion Riders Representative, Jim Day and his wife Jennifer (FL), West Region and Department of Washington Adjutant, Jessie Horton, Department of Washington Commander, Bob Clark, Department of Washington SAL NEC John Clark, Department of Virginia Commander

Bill Feasenmyer, Department of Virginia Riders Director Jim Althouse. Department of North Carolina Alternate Executive Committeeman Patricia Harris, Department Commander James Moore, Department Adjutant Randy Cash, Department Historian Bill Richard. The American Legion Auxiliary Department of North Carolina was represented by National Executive Committeewoman Janice MacLeod, Department President Julie Smith, and Past Department President Marie Hedrick.

The Central Leg had a short memorial service for the Late National Executive Committeeman Jerry Hedrick in Salisbury. The eastern leg did a wreath laying at the Wilson County Memorial Fountain. The ride had 94 North Carolina Riders and a total of 138 riders/participants and with donations from Maryland (\$47,100) and Virginia (\$32,000) the ride total donations to the Legacy Scholarship was \$102,356.50.

Legion posts affected by COVID can apply for \$1,000 grant

The American Legion
Oct. 29, 2020

Public health mandates in response to the coronavirus included stay-at-home orders and business closures. Those mandates financially impacted American Legion posts nationwide as member and community outreach efforts were limited, resulting in a loss of revenue.

To provide some relief during these challenging times, financial grants are now available for eligible American Legion posts.

Resolution No. 36, Mission Blue Post Assistance Program, will provide \$1,000 grants to posts that are in good standing with their respective department. These funds must be used exclusively to pay current or past due rent, mortgage, utilities and insurance.

The American Legion National Executive Committee approved Resolution No. 36 Oct. 14, during its annual Fall Meet-

See LEGION, Page 3



American Legion Post 187 in Wake Forest helping out during pandemic

Dean Verhoeven, founder of Joeveo, a small Wake Forest travel mug manufacturer, was experiencing slow mug sales. He had an idea to start making the metal nose strips for COVID masks and giving them away to DIY mask makers.

He developed a process that, with the help of volunteers, turns scrap aluminum utility cable into nose strips, and started sending them to people all over the US and the world. This project has been hosted by "The Corner" in Wake Forest. Unfortunately, that business was put up for sale and a new location was needed.

The Post 187 Executive Committee

was approached and approved the use of our front meeting room for this project. Several Post members are involved in this project especially our own Renae Hill. The production of these strips to be inserted into homemade masks is supported by Wake Electric who supplies the end of roll power cable for conversion into the strips. Volunteers fabricate the strips and pack them for shipment. The strips are offered for free and the individuals requesting them are only asked to pay for the shipping charges. So far, they have shipped over 150,000 strips worldwide, and as far away as New Zealand!

www.nclegion.org



The North Carolina Legion News
PO Box 26657
Raleigh, NC 27611-6657



Commander's Column

2020 will go down in the books as a year filled with new experiences and many challenges. Despite these challenges, The American Legion Department of North Carolina (TALNC) continues its legacy of service to God and country. On the first of April department headquarters moved from

COMMANDER'S COMMENTS

JAMES D. MOORE, JR
Department Commander



its sixty-four-year home at 4 North Blount Street to the new facility at 2940 Falstaff Road in Raleigh. The building is not only

a state-of-the-art modern office building, but it also displays our history and tells the story of the American Legion. People who have visited the headquarters have commented, "This is the American Legion." It inculcates pride in our organization, not to mention helping in the recruitment of new members and retention. It was an honor to work side by side with you on this endeavor. Just like the generation of Legionnaires who purchased property on New Bern Ave-

nue (North Blount Street) and built the first permanent home of the American Legion in North Carolina in 1956, our generation has started a new chapter in the story. It's more than just moving to a new building, it's an opportunity to dream the dream, to put our mark on the future, and to ensure that the American Legion remains the premier Veteran Service Organization in America.

See **COMMANDER**, Page 8

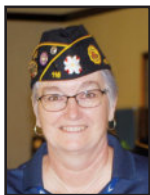
Challenges Create Opportunities

The pandemic has shutdown our Posts, cancelled too many events to count and left many of us sitting home wondering what is next for 2020. But these challenges have created Post opportunities.

Troutman Post 401 started us off with the first blood drive of the shutdown. The need does not go away due to a crisis so Posts across the Department like Henderson Post

Challenges Create Opportunities

Nancy Phillips
Membership Chair



60 and many others are getting involved with helping the American Red Cross. "Someone else's Stuff can be your Stuff" according to Albemarle Post 76. They host-

ed a Flea Market and so did Edenton Post 40, Hickory Post 48 & Lincolnton Post 30 just to name a few. Many Posts have found ways to still serve their communities while complying with state directives.

There is also a whole lot of cooking going on. Adapting to Takeout/Curbside Pickup or even Drive Through has Posts known for their meals as they kept on serving their members & the public. Wilmington Post 10, Shelby Post 82, Clayton Post 71 kept the grills & griddles hot and ready to go.

Fuquay Varina Post 116 saw a need for supplies. Meat, vegetables, and paper products rapidly went missing in area grocery stores. They partnered with Sysco to create an online store to do first a weekly delivery of ordered items and as restrictions eased, they went to monthly before finally being able to shut it down when no longer needed. As part of their order form, meat orders for local food banks could be added. It was not

See **CHALLENGES**, Page 5

Service Officer Column

Hello Legionnaires,
I hope everyone is doing well during these times and staying healthy! This will be your Winston Salem Department Service Officer (DSO)/Regional Office(RO) update.

The Winston Salem Regional Office is still closed and there is no estimated time-frame of reopening at this time. It could be tomorrow or it could be next year we are unsure. However, the DSO is still available for your claim and appeal needs. We are checking our voicemail box two times a day. The best way to contact our office is to leave a voicemail or send us an email.

When the RO does open back up it will open up in stages and by appointments only. You will also be required to wear a mask to enter the building. Once we get to this point we will send out an update notifying everyone.

What are we doing, if we are not in the office some of you may ask?

Well, we are still assisting Veterans virtually via email every day. We are still conducting Board of Veteran Appeals(BVA) hearing virtually also. We are conducting outreaches to veterans on a case by case basis.

If you are pending a DRO or BVA hearing you will have two options if the RO is still closed.

- Accept a virtual hearing that will be done via a computer or cellphone.
- Postpone your hearing until in-person

Service Officer

Justin Nicholson
Department Service Officer
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RO hearings are available.

An issue I would like to bring to everyone's attention is if you are 100% P&T with or without Special Monthly Compensation (SMC) PLEASE CONSULT YOUR VSO/DSO before submitting any claims.

We are seeing a lot of Veterans being reduced because they are filing for disabilities and increases that they should not be.

We get asked all the time if I am 100% P&T, how can I be reduced.

Well, it is simple. If you are P&T the VA will not request any future exams. Meaning, the only way the VA will look at your claim is if you are reported to the OIG for fraud or you submit a claim for increase or new condition. This then opens your medical file to the VA and if they see any improvement in your conditions they can propose a reduction.

So, please consult your VSO/DSO BEFORE submitting any increase, especially if you are 100% P&T.

We hope you all are doing well and if you need any assistance with your VA Claim or Appeal, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Adjutant's Column

The Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays are upon us, and the new year is approaching. It goes without saying that 2020 has been a challenging year for our families, The American Legion, and our nation. The circumstances have dictated that we travel less, eat more take-out—or cook at home, cancel live-meetings. Considering recent events, it is increasingly hard to keep the news in perspective. Judging from what we read and hear, it seems as if the world has gone crazy, which is a distinct possibility.

Sometimes in this media-dominated age, I think we almost know too much about what is going on.

The editor of a hometown newspaper recalled that the noted columnist, Walter Lippman, once wrote that prior to the World War I, a group of Germans and Frenchmen were living contentedly and peacefully on a remote island. Months later, however, they received news that their countries were at war. Then the island's happy atmosphere changed, and the islanders did not recall that they had gotten along so well before hearing about the war. Perhaps it would have been better if they had not learned about the conflict.

On the other hand, the Battle of New Orleans was fought after an end to the War of 1812 had been negotiated by English

ADJUTANT'S CALL

TIERIAN CASH
Department Adjutant



and American representatives in London. Many soldiers on both sides died valiantly, blissfully unaware that the war was over. In that case, of course, rapid dissemination of the news could have spared many lives. Still I wonder how much "information" we really need to be happy. We would all agree that there needs to be a balance between knowing too much and not knowing enough.

Henry David Thoreau, The New England transcendentalist, who, ironically was generally obtuse, said; "Our life is frittered away by detail. Simplify, simplify, simplify! I say, let your affairs be as two or three, and not a hundred or a thousand; instead of a million-count half a dozen, and keep your accounts on your thumb-nail." If he felt a need to "simplify" during his era, what would he think of the twenty-first century?

He does, however, have a point. We can become overwhelmed by events, by the news, by the trials of and pressures of

See **ADJUTANT**, Page 4

The Times They are A Changin'

Judge Advocate Gaither Keener

Remember the lyrics to the song of Bob Dylan back in 1964; "The Times they are a Changin'" Well, as we get older, times move on and we learn to adapt to new challenges.

The Covid 19 Pandemic has been a challenge to individuals, corporations small and large, education systems, especially our teachers, medical staff and volunteers. The American Legion is one of the largest volunteer groups in the world, all based on our four pillars of Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, National Security, Americanism and Children and Youth! Each of these pillars benefit our Nation's veterans, its service members, their families, the youth of Amer-

JUDGE'S CORNER

GAITHER M. KEENER, JR
Department Judge Advocate



ica and all citizens.

As the nation's largest wartime veterans service organization, we are committed to mentoring youth and the sponsorship of wholesome programs in our communities, advocating patriotism and honor, promoting strong National Security to protect our Democracy, with a continual devotion to our fellow service members and veterans through mutual helpfulness.

We receive no federal or state funding or grants. We sustain our programs by contributions and dues.

So here is the "Changin'". Even though we have limited access to facilities, and it is harder to meet and plan local activities, we cannot give up.

The business of the American Legion Post is determined by its board, the Post Executive Committee. As a board, it can meet so long as there is no more than 25 people and we stay socially distanced and wear a mask, etc. but many Post Executive Committees meet electronically as all members of the Post Executive Committee have agreed to Zoom meetings or telephonic conferences. My earlier email letter to all Posts in April provides how you can do this.

The Department DEC just had their second Zoom business meeting. Within four hours a lot of work was accomplished.

Until we get through this pandemic and we have a cure or vaccine, we need to think out of the box.

The Department and our Charities are fulfilling its duties by awarding Scholarships to our young and providing funding for NEC, etc.

So each Post Executive Committee needs to think out of the box to meet the need of its community.

Finally, there are over 140 Posts in North Carolina that don't have a Constitution and Bylaws filed at Headquarters and been approved. Therefore, the DEC approved for the Judge Advocate to write a Post Constitution and Bylaws which will be the Constitution and Bylaws of the Posts that have not filed.

Also there are over 40 posts that have not been incorporated. That shall be remedied.

Again, "Times are A Changin'" so move with the Tide and get on board. "The American Legion Veterans Strengthening America". For God and Country.



“Your friend, Mike”

A true story written by Nancy Mikaelian Madey
Huntington Beach, CA nmadey@socal.rr.com

Hidden stories from the past uniquely find their way into the present, leaving an indelible imprint. This is one of those stories.

1970 was a challenging year for America. The United States sent an additional 334,600 active military troops overseas to Vietnam to continue the U.S. war efforts against the spread of communism. Students opposing the war were demonstrating on college campuses, and organized protests and marches were held across the country.

Meanwhile, at an elementary school in Racine, Wisconsin a third grade class was writing letters to those brave unknown soldiers who were fighting a battle across the globe—not really knowing what war was.

Somehow, a 23-year-old man already knew what it was like: the soldier who received my letter. His name was Mike Conrad, serving in the 101st Airborne. I can recall the sheer happiness and excitement upon receiving a response back in an airmail envelope personally addressed to me. And, I bet Mike was equally thrilled to receive my letter. I can remember anxiously opening up the letter dated January 26, 1970:

“Dear Nancy,

First of all let me thank you for taking time out to write. It really means a lot to all of us when we get a letter. Especially when it is one from a pretty girl like you. My name is Mike. I am from Gastonia, North Carolina. I am 23 years old. I am married but I don’t have any children. My wife’s name is Becky. It is the middle of monsoon

season here in Vietnam. This means that it rains almost all of the time. I’m glad to hear that you like school. This will help you a lot in life. Because a good education is very important. Always be sure that you do your best in everything you do. I better go for now. Thank you again for the very nice letter and the pretty picture of yourself. If you get a chance write again. Be good and study hard.

Your friend, Mike Conrad

P.S. Tell all of your family and everybody in your class hello for me. Okay?”

American soldiers were drafted to fight for freedom and ideology in Vietnam, and in a way, we all are now drafted into a different kind of war. Back then it was serving on the battlefield and keeping a clean locker. Now it’s staying home and wearing masks when we go out. During the shelter-in-place, I decide to do some deep cleaning. Tucked away in the back of our closet was a cardboard box of memories nearly forgotten with time.

I opened the box which contained my childhood keepsakes: artwork, report cards, photos, and Mike’s letter. I picked up the neatly folded letter and re-read it. I held a snapshot of history in my hands—“Your friend, Mike Conrad.” His name kept ringing throughout my head and truly moved me into action. I wondered where he was now, and if he would even remember the little girl who wrote to him 50 years ago.

Since I had his full name, I did some online research to try and connect with him. Sure



enough, I found a Mike Conrad in Gastonia, North Carolina—it had to be him! As I dug a bit deeper, I sadly learned that he passed away in January 2019. I read his obituary and also learned that Mike was an avid traveler and community volunteer—what a guy!

I was now, more than ever, determined to get a copy of Mike’s letter to his family. While continuing my research, I found the name of Mike’s wife, Becky Conrad. I sent a letter to her along with a copy of Mike’s original letter from 1970. Not knowing whether or not the address I found was current, I crossed my fingers and remained optimistic. In a time when we could all use some good news, I hoped my letter would reach her and spark something. And, boy did it ever!

“Such a touching surprise,” were her words in an email back to me, “joyful and bittersweet at the same time.” Becky emailed me a photo of Mike during his service in Vietnam, a photo of their family, and as an unexpected surprise, a copy of my letter that I had written back to Mike, dated February 3, 1970. Mike obviously treasured

my letter just as much as I had treasured his.

“Hi Mike,” my letter began,

“I was very happy to get your letter today. Our whole class got their letters today. My teacher read each one of them to the class. I went to the dentist today and got my tooth pulled and it didn’t even hurt at all. It was a baby tooth. It was very cold out today. 13 below zero. I’m learning how ice skate, but I’m a little chicken at it. Did you know I am an aunt? I have a sister Kathy 21 years old, who had a baby boy December 30th. His name is Justin. My sister lives in Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin which is a 1-1/2 hour drive from Racine. Her husband has one more year of college left. I have an 18 year old brother Curtis who goes to college here in Racine and lives at home. My mother and father send their best wishes and say they hope you will be able to come home soon. If you have a snapshot of yourself, please send it. Write soon if you have time.

Love, Nancy Mikaelian”

Not too bad for a third grader!

Now as a grown woman, wife and mother of two children, I have a better understanding of war, and what these young soldiers and their families had to endure.

I eventually spoke with Becky over the phone and she filled in the gaps about Mike’s life. He passed away from Multiple Myeloma—a cancer he contracted from the USA’s use of Agent Orange. She shared some personal stories about the young man I never knew, who grew up to be a wonderful husband for nearly 51 years, a father, and a grandfather.

Even though Mike is not here with us today, 50 years later he managed to help unite two families—all with a simple stroke of a pen, “Your friend, Mike.”

Leland Post 68 Holds Public Service Events

On Friday, September 11, 2020, the 19th Anniversary of the 9/11/2001 terrorist attacks, the John E. Jacobs American Legion Post 68, Leland, NC hosted a Red Cross blood drive. Not only is 9/11 a day of remembrance but it’s also designated as a day of giving. It’s not often that we, as private citizens, have an opportunity to do something that has such a lifesaving impact. Alan Simmons, Red Cross Volunteer, Post 68 Past Commander, and 9/11 survivor commented “The summer months are a slow time for blood donations but the need for blood never takes a holiday. Unfortunately, COVID-19 has made donating more difficult due to safety restrictions and lack of available donation venues.” Despite these challenges, forty-three (43) of our Brunswick County residents made the trip to the Brunswick County Cooperative Extension Building in Bolivia, NC to donate blood. That’s 43 pints of blood and 129 lives saved!

What a great way to pay it forward and make an impact on people in our community and across the country. The blood drive was an incredible success and we extend

our sincere thanks to all the donors, Red Cross volunteers, and Post 68 members who made this event such a success, achieving 100% of our blood donation goal. Feedback from donors was very positive. Many praised how efficient the process was. Comments included “I felt very safe”, “Very upbeat here today”, and “Hope you can do this in Leland next year”.

On Saturday, September 12, Post 68 members held their annual Unserviceable American Flag Collection Day. All local residents were invited to drop off worn or torn American flags in the “Flag Retirement” receptacles provided that day at the Brunswick Forest Community Commons in Leland. Nearly 150 worn, torn, and tattered American Flags were collected during the daylong event.

The American Legion is one of the few organizations authorized by the US Congress to retire US flags. Therefore, Post 68 will be conducting a formal flag retirement ceremony to which ALL will be invited to attend. The Post will RESPECTFULLY retire and dispose of all the old and worn out flags collected. The specific date and time



have yet to be determined.

Richard Fry, Public Relations Officer, John E. Jacobs American Legion Post 68, Leland, NC Richard.fry8700@gmail.com, 910-769-8961



Legion

From page 1

ings. Funds for the approved grants will be provided through The American Legion National Emergency Fund (NEF).

Eligibility for a Mission Blue Post Assistance Program grant requires posts to have:

1. A Consolidated Post Report on file.

2. Filed an IRS 990 within the prescribed due date.

3. Filed all other required forms and reports as prescribed by the department.

4. Actively participated in one or more American Legion programs in the last 18 months.

5. A financial need.

6. A certificate of insurance naming The

American Legion doing business as American Legion National Headquarters as an additional insured.

7. Documentation indicating that the post is properly incorporated.

The Mission Blue Post Assistance Program grant application is available online.

American Legion posts applying for a

grant will be required to first submit the completed application to their respective department for approval before it can be sent to National Headquarters. This application procedure is the same as the NEF.

American Legion posts have until Dec. 31, 2021, to apply for an Operation Blue PAP grant.



Soldiers Reunion 2020

The 131st Soldiers Reunion looked quite different from other reunions in recent years.

The streets of downtown Newton were not filled with vendors selling food and other items. The usual parade featuring various civic, political and community organizations was missing.

Despite the cancellation of these events as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, a

group of veterans came together to ensure the tradition of honoring veterans would continue this year.

American Legion Post 544 organized a few dozen veterans for a short march in downtown Newton on Thursday August 20th.

A small cannon was fired to mark the beginning of the march. The group made its way down Ashe Street, turning onto

A Street in route to the 1924 Courthouse square.

The marchers carried American flags and symbols of the various military branches.

The group included at least two World War II veterans.

One of them was Charles Wagner, a 93-year-old U.S. Navy veteran who served in the Pacific Theater.

Once the group reached the courthouse

square, they stopped near the Catawba County War Memorial.

There was a brief ceremony that included the laying of wreaths, the firing of a 21-gun salute and the playing of "Taps."

On the other side of the square, longtime reunion organizer Wayne Dellinger, Newton Mayor Eddie Haupt and U.S. Army veteran and District Court Judge David Aycock delivered remarks.



Robert G. "Bob" Scruggs, right, of Hendersonville NC received the President's Volunteer Service Award. Pictured left, Past Department Commander R. Shuford Edmisten.

Bob Scruggs receives Presidential Award

Bob Scruggs received the Presidential Award from the Charles George Va Medical Center Director, Stephanie young and associate director George Drexel.

The president's volunteer service award honors our most outstanding volunteers and recognizes the impact he has made. Bob has over 50 years of volunteer service and 30,000 volunteer hours. Bob has the most service hours in the history of the facility and this is the first time this award has been presented to a western North Carolina VA healthcare system volunteer.

Bob is the 2020 veterans affairs volunteer service worker (vavs) of the year. American Legion National Commander Bill Oxford presented the award to Bob at the Washington Conference in March 2020.

Bob was also the American Legion 2019 service officer of the year for the department of North Carolina.

Bob also received the 2015 George H Seal Award for the Disabled American Veteran National Organization

Past Department Commander of the American Legion R Shuford Edmisten, of Hendersonville congratulated Bob for all of his hard work and dedication. "I know of no one else who deserves this recognition for service to our fellow veterans. Bob exemplifies the word "volunteer."

Bob is a 53 year member of the American Legion Post 77 and a 48 year member of the Disabled American Veterans Chapter 14 and has held various long standing office's in both organization.

Simply turn off the television, the computer, put the phone down, walk out in the yard, go to the park, and you can make contact with a calm God who is big enough to handle all of our problems.



Welcome Home!

A letter from Commander Mike Fisher, who has granted permission to include it in this newsletter

Chris,

First, thank you for all of the support from you, the 777 Club, and the Daughters of the American Revolution. Hopefully, you received a short thank you note by now, but I can't begin to thank you enough for all of the support – it means a lot! This was the first deployment I have been on where the crew has not been able to get out and enjoy the sights and tastes of the world, the result of COVID-19. This also limited the number of port call opportunities.

However, like all submariners, we made the best of it. We pulled into Guam a couple of times for some rest and relaxation. While in Guam, we found a stretch of space on the pier and played cornhole. Several Sailors found some good swimming opportunities. We also found some Wi-Fi hot spots and connected with loved ones back home. This was particularly welcome for the three Sailors that became fathers over the course of deployment.

With limited external support available, the crew became masters of their profession and successfully fixed a number of pieces of equipment to keep NORTH CAROLINA on station, in the fight. Several of the officers and crew earned their dolphins as well – in fact, all but three of



the Sailors that departed Pearl Harbor on 25 March came back with their dolphins (and each of these three are expected to earn them very soon)!

We returned to a picturesque Pearl Harbor on 24 September, having taken care of business at every point of the deployment including the final inspection on returning to port. We are already looking ahead at the next year and gearing up for the next deployment, only one year away!

Your support throughout the deployment, particularly including half-way night and the gift bags on our return, was greatly appreciated by everyone.

For more information about the SSN 777 Club, visit our website www.ssn-777club.org

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*Very Respectfully,
Mike Fisher
Commanding Officer
USS NORTH CAROLINA*

Adjutant

From page 2

our lives. What we need to do at times, I think, is to stop, step back, and take a look at ourselves - "simplify" things, if you will.



Department Of North Carolina

American Legion Patriotic Business Award

The intent of this award is the recognition of small, medium and large patriotic businesses that are located in North Carolina. The business must be nominated by a chartered post of the Department

of North Carolina American Legion. Awards will be judged at Mid-Winter Conference and presented at the June Convention. It is the nominating post's responsibility and privilege to present the Patriotic Business Award to the winning business.



Pictured: Legionnaires left to right: Carl Helton, Dept. Adjutant Randy Cash, Post 124 Commander Mike Sayers, Post 124 Vice Commander Sandra Edens and military veterans who work at Lowe's in Apex.

Outstanding American Patriotism Award for Medium Business

On Sept. 11, Post 124 in Apex, NC presented Lowe's Home Improvement with the Patriotic Business Award for Medium Business. This is a brand new NC Dept award and it was a big success! Lowe's Home Improvement hosted the event and there were 30+ Lowe's employees in attendance at the presentation. Some of the patriotic things Lowe's does includes: displaying many flags throughout their store, hands out parade-sized flags to their first 250 customers on Veteran's Day, has a flag ceremony with Veteran participation on Memorial Day, has dedicated Veteran parking and offers 10% Military discount everyday, participated in Operation Coming Home Hero's Home Project, etc. If you know a well-deserving patriotic business, please enter them by January 15 to compete for our 2021 awards!



Paul's Barber Shop Recognized

Paul Heyer, owner of Paul's Barber Shop in Columbus, NC was recently awarded Honorable Mention in the Patriotic American Business competition sponsored by the American Legion Department of North Carolina for year 2020. At the regular monthly meeting of American Legion Post 250, Tryon, NC Paul was recognized for his accomplishments with active duty military members and the many veterans in the Polk County area. Several of his customers come from our local Tryon Estates population. Paul's dedication to our military is very much appreciated by all who have the pleasure of one of his haircuts. The competition for this prestigious honor happens every year and is broken down into three categories based on the number of employees. Being small, only himself and a part timer he was ranked very high in the competition. Paul's pricing is very competitive and offers complimentary haircuts for active duty military servicemen and women. Thank you Paul, for your service to our community.



Post 60 2nd Vice Commander Jimmy Dixon waits to give blood and Post Member Tom Englehart works the snack bar for donors in the background.



Henderson Post 60 holds blood drive

Henderson American Legion Post 60 has found a way to support the local community even during times of a Pandemic. The Post has hosted 3 blood drives since May 2020. They have had 80 people donate and have collected 56 units of blood. The drives not only have helped with blood donations for North Carolina Medical facilities but also has gained the post 3 new

members. The three new members happened to be veterans, who were wearing military hats or shirts, who signed up to give blood and before they left they were asked about joining the post and told about what the post does in the community and decided to join. In the most recent drive 4 post members not only volunteered to work the drive but also gave blood.

Squadron Chartered at Shelby Post 82

In July 2019, American Legion Warren F. Hoyle Post 82 passed a resolution to sponsor a SAL Squadron. Under the direction of Post Commander Jim Quinlan and Past Post Commander Jim Holland, potential members were recruited to join the Squadron as a charter member. Dr. Jack Weller agreed to be the Squadron Commander and worked with the Legionnaires to obtain 25 members to charter a squadron.

Squadron 82 signed a charter application on November 11, 2019, the 100th anniversary of Armistice Day in World War I. The Squadron has met monthly, and its membership has grown from the original 25 members to 39 members, and their 2021 goal is 50 members by June 2021.

The first meeting of the Squadron was on January 27, 2020, with 16 of the 25 charter members present.

The Squadron hit the ground running by coordinating efforts with the American Legion Family to identify and decorate over 1,100 veterans graves on Memorial Day at Sunset and Webb cemeteries located in Shelby, NC.

On Flag Day, the Squadron participated in the American Legion Post 82 Flag Retirement Ceremony. The Squadron also coordinated a Patriot's Day program in September 2020 involving emergency

responders and firefighters.

Each month the Squadron focuses on community service projects to help others in need. The Squadron believes in the adage offered by Abraham Lincoln, "The best way to predict the future is to create it."

Origin of Sons of The American Legion

In 1932, the Sons of The American Legion (SAL) was formed as a way for young men to honor their fathers who have served in WWI and who became active with The American Legion. The organization follows The American Legion's ideals and principles, which focuses on duty, honor, country, and community.

In North Carolina, there are 66 Squadrons across the state with over 2,500 members. Gene Bellando serves as the current State Commander for the SAL, North Carolina Detachment.

Squadron 82 recruited members from July to November 11, 2019. The application to be chartered was signed and submitted to the NC American Legion State Office and then forwarded onto the National Office for the permanent Charter.

SAL members are sons or grandsons of active American Legion members or a deceased veteran who served our country.

Challenges

From page 2

uncommon to have 300 pounds of meat going to a food bank.

While their inside spaces may have been closed, many Posts opened their outdoor spaces for First Responders and Truckers to have a place to sit down and take a break.

Virtual Events. Did you see how National did the 100 Miles for Hope to benefit the Children & Youth Foundation? \$30 for a tshirt and poster. Posts & Members can use the same idea to benefit local programs. Make it a coin or pin & poster or other ideas.

Post rentals appeared to come to a stop but not all Posts saw it that way. Maybe the use of their building was out for weddings & anniversaries but instead they were used for Drivers Training because schools were

closed and primary voting locations.

Masks. How about a shoutout to our Legion family of Legionnaires, Auxiliary and Sons across the Department for pulling out the sewing machines and creating masks for Members, the VA staff, and First Responders. Thousands of masks were created and distributed.

So how do we know all these actions? By following the Posts Facebook pages. Every Post is encouraged to utilize a Facebook page to get the word out about upcoming events and sharing pictures after events are done. Members are encouraged to like their Post page and share it with their friends & family.

Opportunities abound for all our Posts big & little. Members are encouraged to get with their Post leadership and generate fresh ideas to serve your fellow veterans, their families and your communities.



Amateur radio growing in popularity among Legionnaires

Over its nearly 100-year history, The American Legion has fostered a number of programs that have slipped in and out of prominence but remain steadfast in their service to others. One such initiative that's growing within the Legion is its connection to amateur radio.

The connection is a natural one. Communications training is a standard part of military service, and amateur radio offers a way to continue serving after the military, says Marty Justis, president of The American Legion Amateur Radio Club (TALARC). "Ham" networks of all kinds provide support for everything from Legion post activities to the Indianapolis Veterans Day Parade and the Boston Marathon.

Perhaps the most powerful way amateur radio can provide service is in civil defense and disaster preparedness, both of which are high priorities for the Legion. Because September is National Disaster Preparedness Month, the Legion wants departments and posts to know the importance of being ready for anything, whether that's volunteering a post home as a community shelter during a disaster or partnering with local public safety officials. The American Legion has a longstanding memorandum of understanding with the Department of Homeland Security, which encourages local organizations to get involved in emergency communications.

Based out of American Legion National Headquarters in Indianapolis, TALARC is as a conduit to encourage more localized ham radio programs. Justis and Joe March, two longtime hams and Legion employees, came up with the idea. Currently TALARC has at least 3,200 members, some in every state, and at least 30 post clubs. Bill Sloan, vice president, says TALARC is certainly one of the country's largest ham radio clubs.

An early wish for TALARC was to set up a station at National Headquarters from which to operate communication events, or "nets." During nets, anyone on the same frequency can "check in" and make contact with net operators. An old darkroom in the building's basement was requisitioned, a request went out to Legion hams for equipment, and the response was quick, Justis says. Today TALARC boasts antennae on the roof, amplifiers and other advanced resources. The club station is used mainly for special event stations, or nets to commemorate specific places or days, such as the annual Legion's birthday in March and Veterans Day in November.

The difference between a club and a station is that while a club consists of enthusiasts -- some of whom may have their

own ham equipment -- a station is a more permanent operation, with its own Federal Communications Commission (FCC) call sign like those obtained by individuals. That's the intention behind the formation of The American Legion Amateur Radio Club (TALARC).

The roots of amateur radio go back more than a century. Morse code is considered the first digital communication, and laid the groundwork for everything from radio to cell phones and beyond. During World War I, the War Department commissioned amateur radio operators as officers to teach it to doughboys.

As early as the 1930s, the Legion's National Security Commission encouraged posts to form amateur radio groups in support of civil defense. A May 1939 article in the National Legionnaire reported that the Department of California had set up a Disaster and Relief Committee, with 228 stations within the state's borders; each post was to sponsor and provide operating resources for at least one amateur station in its vicinity.

The department's commitment to amateur radio continues to this day. California was the first department to have an FCC call sign of its own. The Department of California American Legion Amateur Radio Commission is nearly 40 years old, and TALARC based much of its organization on it. Dan Curry, an Air Force veteran and chairman of the Department of California American Legion Amateur Radio Commission, travels to ham conventions across the state to "let people know who we are." He says that the recruiting goes both ways -- Legionnaires to hams, and veteran hams to Legionnaires -- and led to nearly 100 Legionnaires becoming hams last year.

"We would love to see other departments have it," Curry says of the commission. Other goals include encouraging students on amateur radio's STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) connections, having at least one post club in every district, and continuing to work on community disaster and emergency preparedness.

Chris Cancilla is trustee of the new post club at Walter E. Cole Post 187 in Wake Forest, N.C. He was turned on to amateur radio by his operator roommate while stationed in Texas during his time in the Air Force, and is currently climbing the licensing ladder.

The club brings together three of Cancilla's hobbies: ham radio, the Legion and the Boy Scouts (which have a long association with amateur radio, too): the result is "backflips-down-the-hallway kind of fun for me."

His focus is on the training and education of anyone who wants to learn amateur radio. Membership stands at 10 certified operators, and the club is open to Scouts and the community.

Post 187 assists at many community events, such as Music in the Park, and Cancilla sees ham involvement as an asset to these activities: "Communication is an important factor in pretty much everything." The post club plans to organize a station down the road. Cancilla's favorite moment of his amateur radio career was "Jamboree on the Internet", a Scouting event that utilized the EchoLink system to connect repeaters around the world using computers. Local Scouts were talking to their counterparts in Australia, and Cancilla overheard an observation shared by both sides: "Man, you sound funny." "It's a smaller world," he says. The current TALARC operations are conducted at the American Legion Post 187 located at 225 East Holding Avenue, Wake Forest, NC. Chris Cancilla (Call Sign W4CEC) is the Post's Scouting chair. He is also President of the Post's amateur radio club, WF4TAL. He is founder and club president of the Occoneechee Amateur Radio Society (OARS), Scouting chair for the Franklin County Amateur Radio Club. Over the past year, Chris has held Merit Badge events, conducted licensing classes and test sessions, participated in Get on the Air (GOTA) and Jamboree on the Air (JOTA) events. He also keeps in the loop with connections to the K2BSA Amateur Radio Association.

In August 2015, Don Rand started an amateur radio club at Post 1992 in Gautier, Miss., with four other hams, a primary reason the Air Force veteran had joined the Legion just a couple of months before. The club's purposes are running nets and emergency preparedness. Rand runs a weekly evening 80 meter net that has attracted an audience far beyond their hopes: "We soon found out that hams throughout the country wanted an evening net," he says. "We have had check-ins from Michigan, New York, North and South Carolina, Georgia, Indiana, Texas and, of course, Mississippi." They are planning a special event station for Veterans Day and more visibility in their department, including demonstrations at department meetings.

In September 2015, the club received the donation of a communications trailer by the county ham association, and the club is working on outfitting it for both every day and emergency use. "Living on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, we have constant reminders of the need for communications,"

Rand says. "I would like to make sure all Legion posts along the I-10 highway system know about us and our capabilities." Those include members with their own equipment and a commitment to meet the needs of the Legion and the community alike. When Hurricane Harvey pummeled Texas and the Gulf Coast in late August, Rand and his cohorts were busy making connections and relaying information.

Boyle Post 46 in Danville, Ky., took a different path to obtaining a post club: it adopted one that already existed in its community. The Wilderness Road Amateur Radio Club was founded in 1960 for county ham communities, but had lost its home in the local Red Cross building. The post offered it a place in its own building and affirmed it as a "post-approved activity." According to post commander Tony Cromwell, the post "greatly benefited by the radio club becoming part of our post, and our community image was greatly enhanced."

Cromwell himself became licensed in 1973 after leaving the Air Force. He says the post/club's long-term goal is to get a fully operational emergency communications van integrated into the communication network, and to continue to grow club membership. Cromwell calls the coupling "the post entrée into providing Legion mission support to emergency support for our communities in times of natural disasters."

Any licensed Legion Family member can join TALARC, and it only takes one person to start a club after receiving approval from post leadership. After that, it's a matter of recruiting other Legionnaire hams into the club -- or creating new hams through training and education. For those interested in becoming a ham, the Legion has resources available online to help obtain an FCC amateur radio license, at www.legion.org/hamradio/resources.

Post 187 will sponsor a "World Wide -- Camping on the Air" at Camp Durant, a statewide Boy Scout camping location, October 16 thru 18, 2020. The camping weekend will prepare scouts for the Radio Merit Badge and licensing classes and test sessions. The weekend's exercises are open to all scouts and some limited family members who would like to take the national Ham Radio Operators examination.

Cromwell put it best in an article he wrote for a Department of Kentucky publication: "Like a diamond, The American Legion has many facets One of these is a mission to provide emergency communications support in communities during natural disasters."



President's Message

I miss seeing my Legion Family. Who would have thought that when we left the 2020 Mid-Winter Conference, that a pandemic would isolate us for most of the year? I pray that we will be back to normal soon.

The year 2019-2020 will go down in history as the year of change. When we left National Convention in August of 2019, we were excited about the changes in eligibility and the new membership it would bring. We welcomed our first male auxiliary members into our family. We celebrated our 100th anniversary. Then came the pandem-

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

JULIE SMITH
Department President



ic; conducting business as usual no longer existed. We had to learn new technology, such as Zoom. I am thankful for Zoom; it has allowed us to conduct our District Meetings and take care of business.

The Auxiliary has been busy since the last newsletter. I am proud of the Auxiliary. COVID 19 has not stopped the Auxiliary from working our mission. The Auxiliary has been creative with

Drive-through events. We have distributed meals, school supplies, car washes and even a baby shower using the drive through method. Many of our units have not held meeting since February. We have become proficient in using Zoom to conduct our meetings. National has provided us with some great learning opportunities. I participated in the VA Voluntary Services and the Mission Delivery webinars that were offered in September and found them highly informative. Some of the information that I learned was 1: "We must shift from membership focus to volunteer engagement." What this means is that if we are going to gain new and younger members, we must create the excitement for volunteerism and service.

If we create that excitement and the desire to serve, then we will gain new members. 2: We must change to meet the needs of a changing veterans' population. I have heard this for a few years now. Younger veterans are more family focused.

We finished the year strong with our President's Project, I would like to thank all the units, posts and individuals who donated money. A total of \$23,259.64 was raised to support the PTSD Units at the 4 VA Hospitals. This year's President's Project will remain the same. They money raised will support the PTSD Units at the 4 VA Hospitals.

*For God and Country,
ALA Proud and Strong
Julie*



Pictured left to right, Phyllis Cotton, Unit Vice President; Ebony Bailey, School Principal; Evelyn Lewis, Unit President and Connie Faison, VA.

School Supplies donated by Unit 175

On Saturday, September 9, 2020, Unit 175 in Durham distributed over 300 whiteboards, 400 whiteboard markers, and 400 earbuds to Fayetteville St Elementary School in Durham, to help students with online learning. The unit wanted to support the school with their greatest need for virtual learning. The school has 284 students enrolled in grades K-5.

Auxiliary chaplain's message of hope

Greetings American Legion Auxiliary Members:

My name is Evelyn Lewis and I am humbled and proud to serve as your Department Chaplain for the fiscal year 2020-2021. I will do my best to serve you as God would have me do. I welcome emails, calls or notes from you advising me about individuals who need special prayer. I will send out cards if you provide me with names and addresses. If you can't provide an address, I will remember them with special prayer.

As your spiritual leader, I pray for the entire Legion family each and every day. I pray that God will lift us when we are down and comfort us when we are sad.

2020 has been a stressful year. We have been placed in situations we didn't ask for. We have experienced hardships we never imagined, and have seen things we never thought we would. BUT, we have learned God will never leave us and that we are only here through his grace and mercy. As a believer, I know he will bring us through. Although we have been dealing with a

Pandemic, we must not forget our veterans, homeless veterans, military, children and youth, and many others through the programs of the American Legion Auxiliary.

I need your assistance this year in putting together my prayer book for President Julie Smith. I am asking for PRAYERS, A SPIRITUAL POEM, AND A PICTURE OF CHURCH STEEPLES AND/OR A CROSS. Please be sure to state the name of the Church and its location.

Let us pray:

Father, we thank you for keeping us safe from all harm and danger. We lift you up with all praises and adoration. Help us to be obedient and faithful to you during these times. Father God, we are abundantly blessed and our hearts are forever grateful. We ask that you continue to give us prosperity, joy, peace, grace and mercy.

Amen.

In God we Trust,

Evelyn Lewis

NC Department Auxiliary Chaplain

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11-year-old girl creates hundreds of kindness packs for homeless in Durham

By Heather Leah

WRAL multiplatform producer

DURHAM, N.C. — When the pandemic began, many locals began pulling together to help. The ability to make a positive impact during a difficult time can be a source of empowerment — especially for kids.

For 11-year-old Addyson Hamer, it all began with helping the homeless population in Durham.

"When we would drive by a homeless person, I'd always want to give them some money," she said. "I want to help because they could use that money to get them a meal, or give them something cold to drink on a hot day."

Or," she said, "If they save up, they could go in the store and see something they want like a blanket or anything they need. When she began helping her dad deliver food to families living in McDougald Terrace in Durham, she got the idea to launch a project that would allow her to help people each week.

"She saw what I was doing, and she took some pictures," said her dad Terry Hamer. "She wanted to create some bags from the leftover food because she likes giving to the homeless."

The bags include beanie weenies, a breakfast bar, oatmeal cake, rice krispies,

goldfish, peanut butter crackers, apple cause, and cold water.

Addyson started off by making seven bags and bringing them down to the Urban Ministries of Durham. That first week, they ran out of bags, so Addyson said, "Daddy, we have to make more!"

So then she made 12 bags. Then 30. Then 40, 43 and finally 50. Each week, the line grew longer, and Addyson didn't want to let anyone down.

"It feels great to help other people who are less fortunate than me," she said.

Starting small, with only seven bags, Addyson's project showed how quickly an act of kindness can grow — and emphasizes the quote, "No act of kindness, however small, is ever wasted."

After 11 weeks of work, Addyson's initial seven bags have ballooned to an impressively heartfelt 432 bags.

"I grew up in an area that wasn't plentiful," said Addyson's father. "There were other people who had, but we didn't have as much as others. I wanted to be able to give back whenever I could." Now a school counselor, he dedicates a lot of his extra time to sharing food and compassion with his community — and his children have picked up the lesson.

Aside from creating kindness bags each week, she also practices gymnastics four



hours each day, five days a week and dreams of becoming an Olympic gymnast.

However, even as she grows older, she said she still wants to keep helping people.

With as much discipline, drive and kindness as she has at 11 years old, it seems certain she'll accomplish her dreams — and send out ripples of kindness that will continue to change the world for decades to come.

For those who want to help:

As a result of many viewers asking how they can help, Addyson's father set up a GoFundMe to help pay for even more food and

kindness bags for the homeless.

Addyson and her family will be at the Urban Ministries of Durham next Sunday at 5:45, if you want to drop off donations.

Update:

Within hours of WRAL's story going live, dozens of WRAL viewers reached out asking how to help Addyson's cause. As a result, she's raised nearly \$1000 to help create more kindness packs — all within only a few hours. What an incredible and generous spirit WRAL viewers have shown — making this a good news story that just keeps growing.



Commander

From page 2

There were other noteworthy accomplishments. Not only were we honored to have Bill Oxford serve as National Commander, but I have been honored to serve as Department Commander for one year, and due to the pandemic we are serving a second year.

BZ to Nancy Phillips and the Membership Committee for a truly remarkable year. A new standard for membership was set in North Carolina.

The American Legion Department of North Carolina (ALDNC) had a special incentive to reach 100% post reporting in Consolidated Post Reports (CPR) for 2019-2020. With the encouragement and leader-

ship of the National Commander, ALDNC mapped out a plan to achieve 100% post participation. The Consolidated Post Report (CPR) is a barometer to measure the impact and effectiveness of the Legion, and a checklist for the individual post to determine if they are fulfilling the vision of our founders. Emphasizing that the CPR is more than a "paper drill," rather a significant tool in support of our nation's veterans. The bar has been set at 100%.

With the advent of the pandemic, it became obvious that the new technology built into the new headquarters building would become essential to carry on the business of the Legion. The Department Executive Committee, Finance Commission, and other commissions

and committees have utilized the virtual platform or "Zoom" to conduct their meetings. The success of the recent Department Virtual Fall Conference is compelling evidence that the planning and insight put into these virtual platforms was providential.

On a more somber note, the department staff said goodbye to our program manager, Greg Gidding on 6 November 2020. Since his hiring as Program Manager in February 2019, Greg has performed admirably in that role and all other tasks assigned. Most notably, he was instrumental in the move from North Blount Street to Falstaff Road. He worked tirelessly to ensure the day to day details were accomplished. I will forever be grateful for his

support and expertise in making that monumental project a success. On his watch, Greg worked effectively to advance the many programs of the American Legion Department of North Carolina. While having the additional duty of helping supervise the building project, he also gave much of his time to establishing our social media platform and other IT functions. I know you join me in wishing Greg, Danielle, and the children the very best in their future endeavors.

Finally, thanks to each of you for helping to fulfill the mission of the American Legion. Your support of fellow veterans is making a difference in the lives of many. For God and Country.



Veteran Receives Home Repair Assistance

The North Wake Chapter of the Purple Heart Homes, a national organization dedicated to assisting disabled veterans receive help by making improvements to their home to accommodate their disability. Meet Henry (Hank) Pierwola. Hank is a Vietnam Veteran and has been awarded the National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal and the Vietnam Cam-

paign Medal. "It was an honor to serve a man that served for our country and our freedom", said Joe Sheehan, Chapter spokesman. Hank is a member of Walter E. Cole Post 187, American Legion and the Wake Forest Memorial Post 8466, Veterans of Foreign Wars. Purple Heart Homes were able to fix a few unsafe things in his home that he is not able to

do for himself. Put in some Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters, (GFCI) to fix some wiring issues, install new bathroom fan, outdoor flood lights and fix a dilapidated deck. Thanks to Home Depot foundation for providing materials and for the crew for giving me their Sunday! Local veterans are delighted that "Hank" is the recipient of this assistance.

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