

Legion News



VOLUME 87, NUMBER 2

STILL SERVING AMERICA

OCTOBER 2019

A Tribute to Heroes

By Governor Kristi Noem



Above: Leaders from across the state take part in the groundbreaking ceremony for the South Dakota State Veterans Cemetery on September 9th, 2019.

PIERRE—President Harry Truman once said this: “Our debt to the heroic men and valiant women in the service of our country can never be repaid. They have earned our undying gratitude. America will never forget their sacrifices.”

Earlier this month, I was honored and humbled to join veterans and South Dakotans as we broke ground on South Dakota’s first State Veterans Cemetery. Despite pouring rain, more than 100 veterans and South Dakotans gathered at the site just outside Sioux Falls for the momentous occasion.

South Dakota is home to more than 72,000 veterans who served their country and made incredible sacrifices for our freedom. Of these, 50,000 live on the eastern side of our state – hours away from the nearest veterans cemetery. This new site will ensure that veteran families on both sides of the state have the ability to bury their loved ones near their homes and communities.

But this cemetery is about more than providing a peaceful resting place for our heroes. This cemetery is a tribute to patriots. It immortaliz-

es the sacrifices that have been made for our freedoms. Even more than that, though, it’s a way we can show the next generation that sacrifice does not go unnoticed.

One thing that was particularly special was that this was a project for veterans by veterans. Many of our South Dakota veterans spent over a decade working to bring a state veterans cemetery to South Dakota. It was their passion for this project that kept the momentum going and made the dream a reality. Others played a part, too. The city of Sioux Falls gifted the state over 60 acres of land, and the federal Department of Veterans Affairs awarded us a \$6.9 million grant to get this project across the finish line.

I think it’s incredibly special and symbolic that there were so many players to get us to the point where we could break ground. Because we all must be committed to caring for our veterans. Saying thank you isn’t just a city issue, or a state issue. Gratitude isn’t something we can count on someone else to do. It’s a personal responsibility that requires action from each one of us.

This cemetery is a token of our gratitude. It’s how we’ll remember and honor their stories and sacrifices forever.

To all those who have served and to the families who stand beside you, thank you. You are what makes this nation great.

James W. “Bill” Oxford Elected National Commander



James W. Oxford National Commander 2019-2020

James W. "Bill" Oxford was elected national commander of The American Legion on Aug. 29, 2019, in Indianapolis, during the organization's 101st national convention. He has been a member of the nation's largest veterans organization since 1986.

A native of Lenoir, N.C., Oxford is a paid-up-for-life member and past commander of Post 29 in Lenoir. He served as department (state) commander of the North Carolina American Legion from 2010 to 2011. A

veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps, Oxford was an aviation electronic technician for the A-6 Intruder and served in Vietnam during his initial enlistment. After being discharged as a sergeant in 1970, Oxford joined the North Carolina National Guard. He subsequently attended officer's candidate school and transferred to the U.S. Army Reserve, where he ultimately retired as a colonel after more than 34 years of military service.

Oxford has served at every level of The American Legion. A former mayor and city council of Cahah's Mountain, N.C., he has worked since he was a high school student, with most of his career choices being in the maintenance and engineering field. He earned a bachelor's degree in environmental studies and multiple safety and environmental certificates.

Oxford has volunteered as a coach, umpire, referee and administrator in several youth athletic programs, including service as the public address announcer for the Post 29 American Legion Baseball team.

An active volunteer with several organizations, Oxford is a member of Masonic Lodge-York Scottish Rite and the North Carolina Army

Continued on page 2



New Emblem on Display with Department of South Dakota American Legion Gear

The South Dakota American Legion is utilizing the recently approved department emblem to create brand awareness throughout the state, starting with a new line of clothing offered through Sign Design of Colton, SD.

The line includes a large variety of items: ballcaps, jackets, polo shirts, quarter zips, long and short sleeve dress shirts and t-shirts. Items can be purchased in multiple colors, with no minimum order required. Additionally, the T-shirts and jackets are available with the general American Legion emblem. Shipping is available.

Sign Design is owned and operated by Shane Lamer, an Army veteran and member of the Ruste-Wahl Post #154 of Montrose, SD. Lamer is excited to bring high-quality gear to the Department for this project, and welcomes suggestions for any future products.



Find the store here:

americanlegion.signdesign1977.club



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Americanism

Doug Harris
State Americanism Chairman



Hello fellow Legionnaires!

It's Fall, and schools are back in session. That means its "Americanism" season. This is the time of year to contact your school principals and counselors so you can share the good news of our exceptional Americanism programs. Ask these principals and counselors for dates/times to come and address their students. Get their attention by focusing on the large dollar scholarships available for the Oratorical competition. Then tell them about the leadership experience their students can gain at Boys/Girls State and Youth Trooper Academy. There are scholarships available in each of those programs as well.

Some of you are lucky enough to have a long-standing rapport with your school leaders, while others must work hard to pry open those school-house doors. Whatever your situation, you are not alone, don't be afraid to ask for help from the other officers/members of your post. Don't hesitate to contact myself or the Boys State Staff for assistance. Our contact information can be located online at the Department directory (<https://www.sdlegion.org/department-directory/>). As a LAST RESORT, you should mention that SD Senate Bill 83, passed in 2018 "authorizing certain patriotic societies access to public schools" and ensures your right to address the students "during the first quarter of each academic school year." Again, I stress that this should only be used as a last resort. We will have better results by convincing them that giving us access will be profitable for their students.

Once you've contacted the principals and counselors to set up dates/times to address the students, you should also talk to the speech, history and government instructors to explain how our programs can help their students. These are the people who know the students and can recommend their best. One more excellent asset will be the debate instructor/coach. The students who compete most successfully in our Oratorical contests and during elections/debates at Boys and Girls State are debate team members.

Thanks to all our outstanding Post/District Americanism Officers for the time and effort they put into making our programs a success. I ask that all members do what they can to assist these individuals and make 2019-2020 a truly outstanding year.

Doug Harris
State Americanism Chairman

Legionnaires Attend Membership Workshop at National Headquarters, Indianapolis



Pictured above are the attendees to the National Membership Workshop held in Indianapolis, Indiana, on August 8-10, 2019. Pictured above from left to right sporting their new 2019 membership polo shirts are Department Commander Fred Nelson, District 7 Commander Rod Smith, District 2 Commander Eugene IronShell Jr., District 1 Commander David Booze, Department Service Officer Courtney VanZanten, District 2 Vice Commander Jon McDonald, Department Membership Chairman Ed Stringer and Department Adjutant Travise Flisrand.

Oxford Elected National Commander

Continued from Page 1

Retirees Council. His theme as national commander of The American Legion is "A Foundation for the Future," as the organization enters its second century of service.

Oxford and his wife, Frances, have been married since 1967. They have a son, Charles (married to Deah Reid), and a daughter, Jackie (married to Mike Carr). They also have four grandsons, Isiah, Micah, Jaggar and Dawson. Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations where he helped coordinate the input of 23 veterans service organizations in crafting veteran-friendly legislation and advocating the proposed legislation before the governor and General Assembly. He is also a tenured past department historian and was recently bestowed an honorary life membership by the National Association of Department Historians of the American Legion.

He is a past Legionnaire of the Year from Post 270 and a member of the Sons of The American Legion Squadron 10 in Manassas. His wife, Jessica, and his family, are proud members of the American Legion Family.

His theme as national commander is "Celebrating Our Legacy," with special emphasis on the organization's centennial.

“Carry on the Legacy”

Fred Nelson
State Commander



Legionnaires,

As I write this article, my thoughts are with our Legionnaires, their families, and communities who were affected by the tornado, flooding, and devastating storms. I am also sending my deepest sympathy to our Department Adjutant Travis Flisrand and his family for the loss of their son. Though words cannot take his loss away, we hope our thoughts and prayers comfort him today and tomorrow.

August in South Dakota was special to three WWII Veterans, Kenneth R. HIGASHI, 97, of Spearfish, Jimmy J. TRAUPEL, 96, of Mitchell, and Orville B. LEREW, 97, of Faulkton, who were awarded France’s highest distinction for their participation in the liberation of France during WWII. The French Legion of Honor is the highest distinction that France can bestow upon those who have achieved remarkable deeds for France.

Despite a steady downpour, on an historic day, September 9 brought together South Dakota government officials, veteran organizations, veterans and their families, as well as dedicated community members and the City of Sioux Falls for the groundbreaking ceremony of the future South Dakota State Veterans Cemetery.

During The American Legion’s 101st National Convention, delegates approved changes to the Constitution and Bylaws to replace the word “wife” with “spouse,” related to the membership criteria for the American Legion Auxiliary (ALA). The American Legion, which was chartered by Congress, created the ALA. For that reason, the ALA operates as a separate corporation and does not need congressional approval for an eligibility change. The American Legion’s bylaws have always set the eligibility requirements of the ALA. In addition to the changes of eligibility for the ALA, Legionnaires are eligible if they served during wartime, determined by Congress under the new “Legion Act.” The bill was signed July 30 declaring that the United States has been in a state of war since Dec. 7, 1941. Beside these two changes, all other criteria for TAL, ALA, SAL and Riders still apply. Make sure to contact our department membership chairperson, Ed Stringer or Department Headquarters for details.

After two trips to Indianapolis in August for the National Membership Workshop and the National Convention, I was able to stop in Huron at the State Fair, participate in the Labor Day Parade in Wagner, witness the groundbreaking ceremony for the State Veterans Cemetery, and be at five Fall District Meetings. Despite the weather conditions, only one District was postponed. District 7 Commander Rodney Smith described it best when he said that the members had resiliency.

James W. “Bill” Oxford from the Department of North Carolina was elected National Commander for 2019-2020. His slogan for this year is “A Foundation for the Future.” To receive his National Membership Incentive Pin, recruit three new members, and make sure their memberships were processed before submitting the certification form. The pin will be mailed to the recruiter or the post. Contact Headquarters for the form.

The busy season is upon us with Veterans Day programs and contacting schools to promote the American Legion Oratorical Scholarship including all other Americanism programs. Are you planning a “Buddy” visit or phone call? Do you plan to attend the Midwinter Convention in Oacoma February 21-23, 2020? Rooms can be reserved now.

I look forward to visiting your Posts, events, dedications, or membership recruitment activities. Contact me by email or phone call to add your request to the main calendars. Many have events on the same dates. I will make as many as I can. Our members make our organization strong and respected. In the meantime, watch “Legion on the Road” on our Department Facebook – It is unbelievable that I have been able to serve as your Commander for three months already! I thank you for your support. What a great year for our American Legion Family!

For God and Country – “Carry on the Legacy”

Fred Nelson
Your State Commander

National Executive Committeeman

Jim Huls
NEC



Legionnaires,

At the National Convention in Indianapolis Mr. Bill Oxford (NC) was elected National Commander of the American Legion. Commander Oxford will be in South Dakota for Mid-Winter conference next February. The leading candidate for Commander 2020-21 is Paul Dillard (TX) who was in South Dakota for the Mid-Winter Conference last February in Spearfish. The 2nd leading Candidate 2021-22 is Randall Fischer (KY). The National Vice Commander elected was Bruce Feuerbach (IA). We expect Vice Commander Feuerbach and Randall Fischer to visit our Department this year. Arrangements are forthcoming.

The Spring Meeting of National Executive Committee brought a change to the Constitution of the American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary. Being Pro-Active the National Judge Advocate proposed changing the American Legion Auxiliary membership Eligibility criteria by changing one word in the Constitution, that being “Wives to Spouses”. This allows spouses (husbands- men) to be members of the American Legion Auxiliary. This follows in line with several Supreme Court decisions ie. (Boy Scouts) and others. IRS also gets involved in this as no change could affect our tax exempt status.

Finally the “Legion Act” was approved by the Senate shortly after the Senate bill S504 and House Bill SB 1641 were entered and passed the House on July 23 with President Trump signing the bill on July30 with key Legion Leadership attending the signing in the White House. So all who have served one day on active duty under title 10 orders after December 7, 1941 are eligible for membership in the American Legion. Till new membership applications are printed just add Legion Act for war era. This also changes membership eligibility for the Auxiliary and the Sons of he American Legion. The Legion Act expands the membership pool for the American Legion family. Lets get to work.

For God and Country,

Jim Huls
National Executive Committeeman

Annual State Legion Golf Tournament a Success



The Humboldt American Legion Post 62 and the Hartford American Legion Post 118 co-sponsored the State American Legion Golf Tournament on September 21st and 22nd at the Central Valley Golf Course in Hartford. State American Legion Commander, Fred Nelson, welcomed the golfers on Saturday before the banquet. There were eleven teams from Rapid City, Hermosa, Wakonda, Pierre, Watertown, Garretson, Tripp, Volga and Hartford. After play on Sunday, the team from Hermosa came in First and teams from Watertown and Wakonda received Second and Third respectfully. The players were impressed by the course and the host posts. *Picture and story courtesy of Fred Lee, Post 62.*

DISCLAIMER

The *South Dakota Legion News* is published six times a year to serve its members and interested parties by informing them of and about Department activities and other relevant issues concerning the veterans of South Dakota. The paper is also the voice of the members. We welcome articles from members. The news and opinions expressed in this publication does not necessarily reflect the views of The American Legion Department of South Dakota, its officers, members, or the Editor. The Editor has the right to edit all articles.

Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

Courtney VanZanten
Department Service Officer



Greetings Legionnaires!

With the flooding the past week, it's been an interesting time around Madison. Driving around town, there's blocks of basement belongings out on the curb—heartbreaking seeing the loss. That said, I'm always impressed with small communities and their ability to rally around one another, making sure those in need are getting help and aid. Meals were offered, and a free rummage was held to help replace lost items.

As a veteran community, we need to do the same for our own. I've been in a Service Officer position for over three years now, and it still amazes me how many veterans I see that didn't know resources were available, or that they were eligible. As a Veterans Service Organization, we should be doing our best to make sure our fellow veterans are getting the help they need. Be an advocate for the VA—encourage veterans to enroll.

That said, veterans are a notoriously proud and stubborn bunch. I hear the same lines, over and over, on why veterans aren't enrolled in the VA for healthcare. I'd like to address a few.

"There are veterans who need it worse than me."

By and far, this is the most common line I hear. I definitely relate; when I got out of the Air Force, I had delegated the VA to amputees, elderly and the like. I was young, healthy, and WRONG, for two main reasons: 1) The VA is a government entity, that runs a budget no differently than we did in the military—use it or lose it. Use more, get more. The more veterans that use the VA, the bigger budget they're allocated, and the better care veterans will receive. You aren't taking away healthcare from that amputee by enrolling. You're improving it. 2) Presumptive diseases, like those associated with Agent Orange, were recognized because veterans who were in the same areas at the same time, were seeing the same doctors, who could then establish a pattern. Going to the VA means that your medical information is part of a data set unique to veterans, and could possibly help others who served with you, near you, or around the same time as you. Younger vets—I'm aiming this at you. You may be healthy now, but we don't know if an Agent Orange type environmental exposure exists in our future. There are already some Gulf War presumptives, but we're just at the beginning—our Vietnam counterparts were all young and healthy once too. Be part of that data by getting a physical once a year—our generation will depend upon it some day.

Speaking of younger Veterans...

"I don't want to abuse the system. I don't need a monthly check."

Again, I understand. Had the VA let me enroll for healthcare outright, I'd have likely never filed for disability. However, being young and working, I was by far over income guidelines, and wasn't eligible otherwise. I was encouraged to apply by a fellow Service Officer. Turns out, I had a few Gulf War presumptive diseases. Who knew?

And I'm not telling you to abuse the system. Don't claim disabilities you don't have, but don't be stubborn in admitting you can't hear the TV anymore, either. I also highly encourage veterans to review the presumptive lists for their war era—you might be like me and have a condition that you didn't realize was caused by your service. I've attached copies of the Gulf War and Agent Orange lists to the right.

"Others did more than me."

Being a veteran is not a contest. Did you sign the dotted line? Yes? We all had different experiences, mostly dictated by when we were in and where Uncle Sam put us. Not everybody is going to be a front-line operator, but as a Logistician, I can tell you that in order for that front-line operator to be successful, there's a long support line—from stateside to overseas—that needs to be functioning first. Bottom line, you served. And the VA is here to take care of you now.

"I've heard not-so-great things about VA Healthcare."

Granted, the VA has made the national news in the last decade with some abysmal headlines. Know, however, that we are more than fortunate in South Dakota to have incredible VA hospitals and clinics. Ask your fellow local veterans what their experiences with the VA have been.

"I don't know how."

The VA can be daunting. It is a bureaucratic government entity that requires a lot of paperwork. Fortunately, there are people around to help! In every county, there is a Veterans Service Officer specifically trained to help veterans and their families navigate the VA system. Invite them in to your Post Legion meetings. Help host informational gatherings. And take care of your fellow veterans by bringing them in to that VSO office, so they can get the help they need.

Always here to help,

Courtney VanZanten
Department Service Officer

GULF WAR PRESUMPTIVE ILLNESSES



CHRONIC FATIGUE SYNDROME

A condition of long-term and severe fatigue that is not relieved by rest and is not directly caused by other conditions.



FIBROMYALGIA

A condition characterized by widespread muscle pain. Other symptoms may include insomnia, morning stiffness, headache, and memory problems.



FUNCTIONAL GASTROINTESTINAL DISORDERS

A group of conditions marked by chronic or recurrent symptoms related to any part of the gastrointestinal tract. Functional condition refers to an abnormal function of an organ, without a structural alteration in the tissues. Examples include irritable bowel syndrome, functional dyspepsia, and functional abdominal pain syndrome.



UNDIAGNOSED ILLNESSES

With symptoms that may include but are not limited to: abnormal weight loss, fatigue, cardiovascular disease, muscle and joint pain, headache, menstrual disorders, neurological and psychological problems, skin conditions, respiratory disorders, and sleep disturbances.

Find your County Service Officers here:

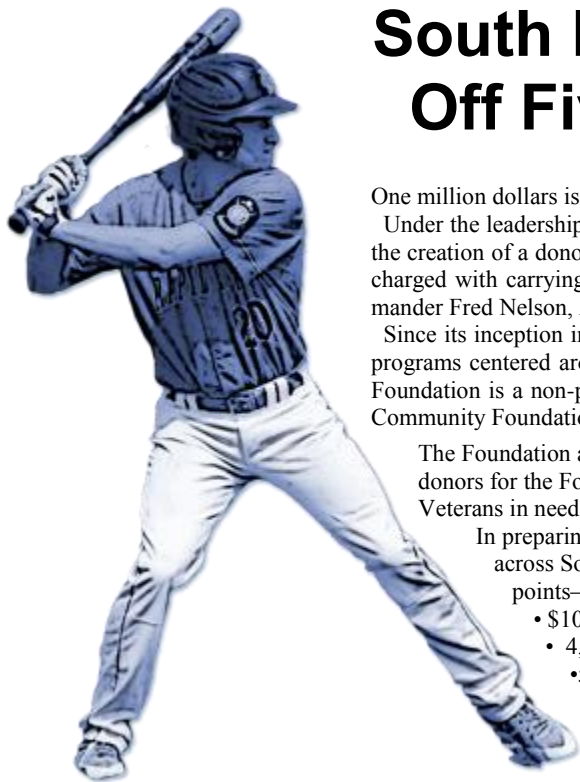
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Under the Veterans Service Officers Menu

Agent Orange Presumptives

CANCERS

- Amyloidosis
- Chloracne
- Diabetes Mellitus Type II
- Ischemic Heart Disease
- Parkinson's Disease
- Peripheral Neuropathy-Early Onset
- Porphyria Cutanea Tarda
- Chronic B-cell Leukemias
- Hodgkin's Disease
- Multiple Myeloma
- Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma
- Prostate cancer
- Lung and other respiratory cancers
- Soft Tissue Sarcomas



South Dakota American Legion Foundation Kicks Off Five Year Campaign Toward \$1 Million Goal

One million dollars is a lofty goal, but the South Dakota American Legion Foundation has kicked off a five-year campaign to get there.

Under the leadership of President Jim Kurtz, the Foundation is taking a proactive approach to fundraising. A multi-pronged approach is underway, to include the creation of a donor guide, applying for grants and establishing a potential donor list outside of the American Legion. The other Foundation board members charged with carrying out the plan include NEC Jim Huls, Tim Jurgens, Paul Evenson, Denny Brenden, Ken Sabers, Jerry Mencke, Blaine Hoff, State Commander Fred Nelson, Adjutant Travis Flisrand, Finance Officer Gary Wolkow and Judge Advocate Gary Schumacher.

Since its inception in 2010, the South Dakota American Legion Foundation has worked diligently to strengthen and grow well-established American Legion programs centered around Children & Youth, Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, Americanism, and National Security. The South Dakota American Legion Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) tax-exempt public organization and an endowed fund, with investments and distributions managed by the South Dakota Community Foundation, comprised of donations from individuals, families, organizations and businesses.

The Foundation asks each Legionnaire and Post to consider a donation. If a donation isn't in the cards, you may anonymously submit names of potential donors for the Foundation to reach out to—perhaps there's a local business owner whose kids played Legion baseball, or has a soft spot in their heart for Veterans in need. The Foundation needs your help identifying these philanthropists.

In preparing the Donor guide, the Foundation came across some remarkable 5-year statistics in regards to the phenomenal work being performed across South Dakota—exactly the kind of work the Foundation wants to fund in perpetuity. When promoting the Foundation, use these as selling points—this is your work! Some examples include:

- \$103,443 in Temporary Financial Assistance has been awarded from the Department and National levels
- 4,124 hours logged in VA hospitals by volunteer Legionnaires
- 5,832 Funeral Honors performed
- 3,428 volunteer hours hosting "Support Our Troops" Events
- Posts sponsored an average of 80 Baseball teams across 4 divisions
- 1,486 Boys State youth sponsored to attend South Dakota Boys State at Northern State University in Aberdeen, SD

"Helping Children & Veterans"

Why Donate?

Lasting. Your charitable wishes will be carried out in present and future generations because of the South Dakota Community Foundation's careful investment strategies.

Trust. Gifts will always be administered in accordance with your wishes. If there is a gift of \$10,000 or more, the donor can designate where the funds will be administered.

Flexibility. You can make contributions anytime. Additionally, the South Dakota American Legion Foundation is able to accept a wide variety of assets, other than cash.

Simplicity. One gift can benefit numerous American Legion programs.

Recognition. Unless you choose to be anonymous, your name will be honored forever.

Tax Advantage. You'll receive the maximum tax benefit from a gift to the South Dakota American Legion Foundation.

Donations can be made directly on the South Dakota Community Foundation's website at:

<https://sdcommunityfoundation.org/for-donors/south-dakota-american-legion-foundation/>

Donations may also be mailed to:

South Dakota Community Foundation
c/o South Dakota American Legion Foundation

1714 North Lincoln Ave

Box 296

Pierre, SD 57501

or

South Dakota American Legion

PO Box 67

Watertown, SD 57201



District Commander's Corner

Matt Lagerstrom
District #5 Commander



Life has been very busy for The American Legion in the Northeast corner of our Department. Our Posts are not entrenching themselves in their homes – we are out engaging with our communities and doing our best to help Veterans and their families just as we set out to do 100 years ago. From our smallest Posts to the Largest, everyone is trying to do something. Pierpont is working under the leadership of Waubay and the other Day County Posts to identify "Gold Star Mothers" buried in their local cemeteries. Toronto is leading a partnership of Posts in Deuel and Brookings Counties to help a Korean War Veteran stay independent following a series of health issues and housing problems. Clark is using their "Pillars of Freedom" monument to engage local students in what it means to be an American by hosting a series of Post-produced plays to explain the documents that serve as the foundation of our way of life. Several Posts are working on getting Sons Squadrons up and running to bring new energy and new ideas into The American Legion Family. ... The

things that our Posts are doing everyday are fantastic and we do so in our typical "it's just what we do" manner.

A recent article written by Oriana Pawlyk of Military.com (9/8/19) discussed the idea that most Americans have about The American Legion is "older men sporting ball caps, and perhaps leather-patched vests, sit in a dark bar, smoke wafting about while they talk about their war days". Take a few minutes and think about how you see Veterans Service Organizations portrayed on your favorite TV shows and movies – While I have seen a few positive examples, I have a really hard time finding a clip in popular media that doesn't use this stereotype. The author then goes on to explain how the reality is very different as the Legion is actively trying to engage with their communities and help Veterans from all eras – and especially those currently serving – not be forgotten. The article explains how our Posts work hard to help kids and communities be better places to live. The few examples that I gave above are just the tip-of-the-iceberg for what we are doing, and the sad truth is that we consider it "normal" so we don't go out of our way to tell people about it. I fully support our Department Commander's idea that Public and Media Relations are a priority for our organization. If your Post is doing something – ANYTHING – tell people about it. In the end, it helps everyone because people want to belong to organizations that make a difference. At the least tell your friends and neighbors. Now that you have done that, go talk to the local newspaper and call in to the local radio station. If you are brave enough contacting your friends at KDLT; KSFY; or KELO can get you a huge audience quickly because what we are doing needs to be told. Changing the perception from "old guys hanging out in the bar" to an organization that is out working to make things better for everyone is not going to be easy, but it is necessary, and it will be much easier if we are sharing what we are doing with others.

101st Annual National Convention – Indianapolis, IN



The 101st National Convention was held August 23-29th, 2019 in Indianapolis, Indiana. The South Dakota Delegation attended meetings, workshops and had a great time networking with Legionnaires from across the country and around the world.

Top Left: The South Dakota Commander's Van pulls the Pillars of the American Legion float in the National Convention parade. Bottom Left: Tom Perrizo from Aberdeen gifts Peter Mowry, 28th District Commander from North Carolina, a bat signed by the winning American Legion Baseball Team of 1964. Mowry represents the district of the team, and will present the bat to the home post upon return to North Carolina. Bottom Right: The South Dakota delegation at the start of the parade, bats in hand.

The 102nd National Convention is scheduled for August 28th-September 3rd, 2020 in Louisville, Kentucky. Put in your calendar now!



Support Legion Programs with Centennial Coins

By Brett Reistad, Past National Commander

This year of honoring The American Legion's centennial has been inspiring. As we remember our past century of success, dozens of stellar achievements come to mind. Programs that honor our veterans, support servicemembers and mentor youth are a testament to the dedication of our members.

American Legion service officers fight for the benefits veterans earned when they kept our nation secure from enemies foreign and domestic. Our Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA) grants help servicemembers (and veterans) with minor children cover basic costs when expenses can become overwhelming. And thousands of tomorrow's leaders experience life-changing weeks each summer at Boys State, with 100 participants moving on to Boys Nation.

These are just some of the programs that I am proud to represent this year. But these programs need your immediate help.

Not only do these programs require volunteer hours to succeed, they also need proper funding. That's where proceeds from American Legion centennial coin sales come into play.

The proceeds from this year's coin sales from the U.S. Mint help fund American Legion programs that support veterans, servicemembers, their families and the communities in which they live. For example, surcharges totaling \$35 for each \$5 gold coin sold, \$10 for each silver dollar sold, and \$5 for each half dollar sold are authorized to be paid to The American Legion.

To purchase a coin, or coins, or for more information, please visit www.legion.org/coin. For those who do not have access to a computer, call 800-872-6468.

After Dec. 31, the U.S. Mint will no longer sell these limited-edition collector's items. Individuals can order them as mementos. Posts can purchase



them and use them for fundraisers. Grandparents can pass them on to grandkids as treasured gifts.

I cannot think of a better way to honor The American Legion's centennial than by ordering a keepsake commemorative coin or coins that will help ensure that our nation's veterans, servicemembers and youth will receive the assistance only Legion Family members can provide. Order yours today before it's too late.

District Commander's Corner

Rod Smith
District #7 Commander



Greetings Legionnaires,

I started my term as Commander of District 7 with visits to several Post during their Centennial Celebrations. It was great to meet the members and their families, see the programs and review the history. The American Legion is still strong and the programs are still helping veterans, living the words of the preamble and the programs of the four pillars.

The Oratorical contest is a lot to prepare for so help the students if you can and at the very least encourage them to be thorough in their preparation by learning all about the Constitution of The United States and memorizing the speech they will give for the contest. District 7 contest will be at Humboldt Post # 62 on Sunday, January 12 at 2:00 p.m. with an alternate date of January 19 with other details remaining the same. Get into the schools and promote all of the youth programs and be visible in your communities.

During our district meetings we have had some terrible weather, tornadoes and flooding hitting during the scheduled meeting times. District 7 moved our meeting place at the last minute from Madison Post #25 to Sioux Falls Post #15. Madison experienced major flooding that made it impossible to get around with roads closed and in some cases washed out completely. Just prior to the flooding there were three tornadoes that touched down in Sioux Falls. Thank you to Sioux Falls Post #15 for stepping up and providing a meeting place on short notice.

The District meeting turned out to be well attended, and one item discussed was the programs that could help any of the veterans who need emergency help as they work to repair the damage from these natural disasters. Please contact South Dakota American Legion Headquarters, 605-886-3604 or check on their website sdlegion.org to see what help is available. Your local American Legion Post can also help point you in the right direction when looking for assistance.

Legionnaires, reach out to those fellow Legion members and their families in need and give them a hand.

For God and Country,

Rodney Smith
Arthur T. Peterson Post # 136
District 7 Commander

District 6 Commander Doug Feltman Honored with Quilt of Valor During Post #3 Centennial Celebration



Doug Feltman, a member of the American Legion Potter Post #3, was selected as the recipient of a Quilt of Valor that was presented Thursday at the Post 100th Anniversary picnic held at the Veterans Park in Chamberlain. The mission of the Quilts of Valor Foundation is to cover service members and veterans touched by war with comforting and healing Quilts of Valor. The piecing for the quilt was done by former Chamberlain resident DeEtte Turgeon Sudik. Sonya Kroupa of the Quilt Shop in Chamberlain did the machine quilting and Judy Busack did the binding. Kay Livermont from Pierre and Sarah Crum from Faulkton presented the quilt on behalf of the Quilt of Valor Foundation. Sudik belongs to the Quilts of Valor chapter in Pierre.

83rd Annual American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program Dates Set

It's not too early to start guiding high school students in The American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program.

The main purpose of The American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program "A Constitutional Speech Contest", is to develop a deeper knowledge and appreciation of the Constitution of the United States on the part of high school students.

Other objectives of the contest include the development of leadership qualities, the ability to think and speak clearly and intelligently, the preparation for acceptance of the duties and responsibilities as well as the rights and privileges of American citizenship.

The opportunity to win more than \$18,000 in scholarships awaits high school students who participate in the South Dakota American Legion Oratorical Contest. The national contest offers \$18,000 for the 1st place winner; \$16,000 for 2nd place; and \$14,000 for 3rd place.

The state winner will receive a \$1,000 scholarship and a trophy plus a plaque for display in his/her high school trophy case. Second place winner will receive a \$500 scholarship and a trophy and third place winner will receive a \$300 scholarship and a trophy. Fourth through eighth place finishers will each receive a \$100 scholarship and a trophy. The state winner will also advance to the national competition in Indianapolis where he or she is guaranteed a \$1,500 scholarship for participating in the first round of competition and an additional \$1,500 for participation in the second round but does not advance to the final round.

Local contests must be completed by January 19, 2020. The District contests must be finished on or before February 2, 2020. The top contestant from each District will compete in the State Finals which is scheduled to be held at the Arrowhead Convention Center in Oacoma, SD, Sunday, February 23, 2020, immediately following the Non-Denominational Memorial Service at the MidWinter Conference.

District contests will be held as follows:

DIST. 1 – (Butte, Corson, Dewey, Harding, Lawrence, Meade, Perkins, Ziebach counties) Chair: Ken Sabers, (ksabers@rushmore.com) 1908 Butte View Dr. Sturgis, SD 57785. District Contest to be held at Sturgis American Legion Post 33, January 12, 2020, 1:00pm. Storm date, January 19, same time and place.

DIST. 2 – (Bennett, Custer, Fall River, Haakon, Jackson, Jones, Mellette, Pennington, Shannon, Todd counties) Chair: Paul Douglas, 622 Auburn Dr, Rapid City, SD 57701. District Contest to be held at Rapid City American Legion Post 22, 818 E. St. Patrick St., Rapid City, January 12, 2020 2:00 p.m. Storm date, January 19, 2020 2:00 p.m. same place.

DIST. 3 – (Gregory, Hand, Hughes, Hyde, Lyman, Potter, Stanley, Sully, Tripp counties) Chair: Larry Madsen, (larry_madsen@hotmail.com) or 906 E Commercial Ave., Gettysburg, SD 57442. District Contest to be held at the Faith Lutheran Church Christian Living Center, 714 N Grand Ave, Pierre, SD. January 12, 2020 2:00 p.m. Storm date, January 19 same time and place.

DIST. 4 – (Brown, Campbell, Edmunds, Faulk, McPherson, Spink, Walworth counties) Chair: Dale Strom, (dale_strom@yahoo.com) 115 N. Kline St, Aberdeen, SD 57401. District Contest to be held at the Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ, 431 W Melgaard Rd, Aberdeen, SD 57401 January 5, 2020, 3:00 p.m. Storm date, January 12th, same time and place.

DIST. 5 – (Brookings, Clark, Codington, Day, Deuel, Grant, Hamlin, Marshall, Roberts counties) Chair: Shelli Romeu (shelli.romeu@gmail.com) PO Box 284, Watertown, SD 57201. District Contest will be held at Watertown Post home, Jan. 19, 2020, 1:30 p.m. Storm date, Jan. 26, same time and place.

DIST. 6 – (Aurora, Beadle, Brule, Buffalo, Davison, Hanson, Jerauld, Kingsbury, Miner, Sanborn counties) Chair: Tim Thomas, (photostoday@midstatesd.net) 112 S Merrill St Chamberlain SD 57325. District Contest to be held at the Chamberlain High School, 1000 Sorenson Dr., Chamberlain, SD, 57325, January 5th, 2020, 2:00 p.m. Storm date, Jan 12th, same time and place.

DIST. 7 – (Lake, Lincoln, McCook, Minnehaha, Moody, Union counties) Chair: Bill Huntimer, wphejh@siouxvalley.net, 509 W. 9th St., Dell Rapids, SD 57022. District Contest to be held at Humboldt American Legion Post Home, Humboldt, SD 57035, January 12, 2020, 2:00 p.m. Storm date January 19th same time and place.

DIST. 8 – (Bon Homme, Charles Mix, Clay, Douglas, Hutchinson, Turner, Yankton counties) Chair: District Contest to be held at the Yankton Public Library, 515 Walnut St, Yankton SD 57078, January 25, 2020, 10:00 a.m. Storm Date February 1, 2020, same time and place.

We encourage Legionnaires to come out and support these very talented students at your respective contest. The National Oratorical Finals will be held in April 2020 in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Mobridge Post #4 Celebrates Centennial with Commemorative Coin

The Parker Browder American Legion Post No. 4 of Mobridge, SD has issued a 2 inch medal to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of its founding in 1919.

The brass medal, with some enameled highlights, was made by 'Coins for Anything'. The obverse main device depicts a steam powered train which was the primary mode of transportation in the northern plains during WWI and WWII for service personnel going to and returning from their war assignments.

The Post was initially named Harley Parker in 1919 to honor the first Mobridge serviceman to die during WWI while serving with the U.S. Army in France. In 1944, the Post was renamed Parker Browder to also honor Jack Browder the first fatality from Mobridge while serving in the Panama Canal Zone during WWII.

The cost of the medals is \$10.00 each, plus \$1.50 shipping and handling for one or two medals. For three or more medals the shipping and handling cost is \$5.00. Medals can be ordered from: Robert Maisch, Legion Medal Chairman, P.O. Box 98, Mobridge, SD 57601.

Have a centennial commemorative item for sale at your post? Email dso@sdlegion.org to have it put in the paper!



Clint Bolt Elected National Commander of the Sons of the American Legion



Clint D. Bolt was elected National Commander of the Sons of The American Legion in Indianapolis during the 48th national convention of the Sons of The American Legion. Clint is a proud member of the Sons of The American Legion John D. Sudduth Squadron 72 in Warrenton, Va., where he has been a member since 1998. Clint married his wife Becky in 1987, and they have one son named Jason. Jason is married to his wife Rachel, and they have a daughter named Ella Marie, who is 1 ½ yrs. old. Clint has two stepsons, Greg and Josh. Greg has a 12-year-old son named Caleb

James. Josh is married to his wife Racheal.

Clint is a restoration carpenter. His most notable work is on North Wales, a 1750's Country Estate in Warrenton, Va., once owned by Walter P Chrysler Jr. This home is listed on the National Registry of Historical Places and is one of the largest homes in Virginia.

Other prominent work is on the c.1858 private residence of The Gray Ghost, Colonial John Mosby. This home served as a museum for the town of Warrenton for several years. Now a private residence, the home is part of the Civil War history of the town and the State of Virginia.

Clint served as national vice commander in 2010. He served as Children and Youth Commission chairman, VA&R Commission chairman. He was the national representative for the Sons of The American Legion on the VA Volunteer Service National Advisory Committee. This is the only outside organization that the Sons belong to with full voting privileges to assist The American Legion.

Clint is eligible for membership through his grandfather Kennard "KC" Bolt. He served honorably in the United States Navy during World War II and was stationed at Norfolk, Va.

Clint is very proud of his grandfathers service in the war but is also just as proud of his grandmother Marie Bolt's service. She, like so many women at that time had to raise the family and work toward the war effort. She not only had her husband in the war but also had three brothers and many other family members serving. Remarkably, she managed to keep the home going raising little children, the oldest was his dad, William Bolt, but she was a lathe operator at the torpedo factory in Alexandria, Va.

Nicole Clapp Elected National President of the American Legion Auxiliary



Nicole Clapp of Gladbrook, Iowa, was elected national president of the American Legion Auxiliary (ALA) during the organization's 99th National Convention held Aug. 23-29 in Indianapolis. Clapp will serve the patriotic service organization as national president for a one-year term.

Clapp joined the ALA as a Junior member at age 4. She has held numerous leadership positions in the organization at the unit, district, department, and national levels. At the national level, she served as 1987-1988

ALA honorary national Junior president and chaired many committees and served special appointments, including national Finance Committee chair, national Children & Youth Committee chair, national Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Committee chair, Future Focus Committee member, and ALA Centennial Strategic Plan Committee member. She also served as the national vice president in the 2018-2019 administrative year.

"I feel very humbled and honored to represent us in our 100th anniversary year, and to be the first honorary national Junior president to have life come full circle by becoming the national president," Clapp said. Clapp's journey in the ALA started because she wanted to hand out poppies in exchange for donations. The little red flower is what attracted Clapp to the ALA, but its mission is why she stayed. "As a Junior member, I enjoyed how I felt each time I went to visit veterans and saw the smiles on their faces. I still have that same feeling while serving our mission," Clapp said. "For the veterans, the visits offer a sense of appreciation in a basic gesture. To see a young person paying attention to them gives them a sense of hope. They see that all of their efforts and sacrifices were not for naught. And they see that the individuals, be it Junior ALA members or others, have an understanding of their sacrifices."

Clapp graduated with honors and distinction from The University of Iowa, where she obtained her bachelor's degree in nursing followed by a master's degree in nursing administration. She then relocated to Wisconsin for a 22-year career at Grant Regional Health Center. She is board-certified in healthcare management and an American College of Healthcare Executives Fellow. Clapp was named the Wisconsin chapter's Young Healthcare Executive of the Year in 2004. She was also recognized as a one of Becker's Hospital Review's 50 Rural Hospital CEOs to Know in the United States.

A 44-year Paid Up For Life member of American Legion Auxiliary Gladbrook, Iowa Unit 127, Clapp is eligible for membership through the service of her grandfather, Roger Schroeder, who served in the Navy during World War II.

About the ALA: Founded in 1919, the American Legion Auxiliary (ALA) helps to advance the mission of The American Legion. With more than 600,000 members, it is one of the nation's most prominent supporters of veterans, military, and their families. ALA members volunteer millions of hours annually, with a value averaging \$1 billion each year. From helping to draft the GI Bill in 1944 to advocating for veterans on Capitol Hill, The American Legion Family has been instrumental in advancing legislation that improves the quality of life for our nation's veterans. To learn more and get involved, visit www.ALAforVeterans.org

Auxiliary Membership Open to Male Spouses of US Veterans and Servicemembers



INDIANAPOLIS – The American Legion has voted to extend membership in the American Legion Auxiliary to male spouses of U.S. veterans and servicemembers. During The American Legion National Convention in Indianapolis in August, delegates of The American Legion voted to replace the word "wife" with "spouse" in their constitution and bylaws, opening up membership in the American Legion Auxiliary.

Why are The American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary making this change? Currently, 1.9 million women veterans are living in the United States, and 9% of the U.S. military is female. By 2045, it's estimated that 18% of the U.S. military will be comprised of women.

"As we welcome eligible male spouses into the American Legion Auxiliary, we gain another perspective on the needs of military families — enabling the Auxiliary to support even more veterans, servicemembers, and their families," said 2019-2020 American Legion Auxiliary National President Nicole Clapp.

This new membership eligibility has much promise for growth in the American Legion Auxiliary, leading to new resources, increased funding opportunities, and additional diversity and talent among our leadership, as well as general membership.

American Legion Auxiliary members, since the founding of our organization in 1919, have been committed to meeting the needs of veterans, the military, and their families. The American Legion Auxiliary will continue its century-old legacy of Service Not Self well into the future. An increasing number of veterans, servicemembers, and their families will need support. The American Legion Family is taking a "big picture" look at how to help these future families, and keeping our membership strong.

Calendar of Events

October 2019:

- 14: Columbus Day. Legion Headquarters office closed.
- 14-16: National Fall Meetings, Indianapolis, IN
- 23: Beirut Bombing, 1983
- 25: Grenada Invasion, 1983
- 31: Halloween

November 2019:

- 3-8: National American Legion College, Indianapolis, IN
- 4: Daylight Saving Time Ends.
- 5: Election Day.
- 11: Veterans Day.
- 28-29: Thanksgiving Holiday. Legion Headquarters Office closed.

December 2019:

- 7: Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day
- 15: Bill of Rights Day
- 20: Panama Operation Just Cause, 1989
- 21: First Day of Winter
- 24-26: Christmas Holiday. Legion Headquarters Office closed.
- 31: New Year's Eve



Process For Starting a Sons of the American Legion Squadron

The Sons of the American Legion is an excellent way to recruit and involve more community members into a local post. We all know that the veteran pool itself is shrinking—we don't fight wars with the same manpower we did 70 years ago. However, that doesn't lessen the patriotism within a community, and the Sons taps into that spirit and dedication to serve without the requirement of being a Veteran.

The eligibility requirements for SAL membership are as follows: All male descendants, adopted sons and stepsons of members of The American Legion, and such male descendants of veterans who died in service during World War I, World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, Lebanon, Grenada, Panama, and the Gulf War/War on Terrorism, during the delimiting periods set forth in Article IV, Section 1, of the National Constitution of The American Legion or who died subsequent to their honorable discharge from such service, shall be eligible for membership in the "Sons of The American Legion." There shall be no form or class of membership except an active membership.

The formation of a new SAL squadron relies first and foremost on keeping a positive attitude. Remember, you'll be rendering a service to the community and its veterans. These steps can serve as a guide:

1. The post commander (with the approval of the members) should appoint a committee of at least three members to organize a squadron within the post.

2. Survey the post membership to ascertain the number of sons, grandsons, stepsons or adopted sons eligible for membership in the Sons of The American Legion. (There is no age limit for the Sons organization.)

3. The committee should obtain information from the district or department SAL chairman or your department headquarters.

4. The post should call a meeting to discuss the possibility of forming a squadron. Invite a speaker, someone who is involved in the Sons of The American Legion, discuss the organization and its activities. It might be a good idea to invite the district adviser and/or commander to talk to the young men.

5. The organizing committee should ask the post to name a permanent chairman and at least two other interested members to head up the squadron.

6. The committee should develop a program covering at least six months, and establish a regular meeting day and time. The SAL should meet in the post home, and all meetings must be conducted by the guidelines in the SAL handbook.

7. At the first meeting of the SAL squadron, the committee should select a temporary staff of officers that will serve for a three-month period, after which a regular election can be scheduled.

8. The charter application should be completed and sent to department headquarters with national per capita of \$2 plus the applicable department per capita for each member. Be sure all four copies of the application are completed and signed.

9. The charter application (without monies) will be forwarded by the department headquarters to National Headquarters for preparation of the charter. Upon receipt of the charter at department headquarters, the charter members' membership cards will be made out and both the charter and membership cards will be sent to the post commander.

10. An initiation of the members and installation of the squadron officers should be conducted by the post officers or by some American Legion ceremonial group. The ranking Legion officer in your area should take part in the program and charge the post with its responsibility in conducting the squadron.

11. The post committee and the squadron officers should plan meetings and squadron programs for at least the next year.

12. The post committee should prepare a report for each post meeting outlining the accomplishments and goals of the squadron.

13. The post committee should be expanded until there is at least one adviser or more for each squadron.

14. Encourage squadron members to participate in all district SAL functions and in areas where there is no county or district organization, try to organize one.

15. The post should notify the squadron of all upcoming events such as parades, memorial services and other functions in which they could take part. The squadron should make itself useful in assisting the post.

National Emergency Fund Questions and Answers

Q: Who is eligible to apply?

Eligibility open to Legionnaires and Sons of The American Legion members (up to \$3,000) Legion Posts (up to \$10,000).

Applicant must have been displaced from their primary residence due damage sustained during a declared (State or Federal declaration) natural disaster.

American Legion Membership must be active at time of disaster and the time of application.

Q: What does it cover?

NEF monies are only meant to meet most immediate needs (i.e., temporary housing, food, water, clothing, diapers, etc.) during the period immediately following the disaster. They are not intended to repair or replace.

Does not cover insurance compensation or monetary losses from a business, structures on your property (barns, tool sheds, etc.) equipment or vehicles.

Q: What are the application requirements?

Application must be submitted to the Department Headquarters within 90 days of disaster.

Disaster must be a "declared" natural disaster for Legion Family members.

Supporting data (photos, receipts, repair estimates, etc.) should be included if at all possible or statements (testimony) from post/district/department officers attesting to damages to residence requiring displacement. The more information, the better.

Only one grant per household per disaster.

Post grants must derive from a declared natural disaster and substantiating documentation must provide that The American Legion post will cease to perform the duties and activities in the community due to losses sustained.

Find the application here: https://www.legion.org/documents/legion/pdf/NEF_Application.pdf



Membership is the Key to Our Success

By James W. "Bill" Oxford, National Commander

We are embarking on the next 100 years of The American Legion, and I would like to look at where we are going as an organization. It is critical to realize that we are the future of this organization. The things we did yesterday, the things we do today, and the things we will do tomorrow are the reason that my theme this year is building the "Foundation for the Future."

Our all-time high was 3.3 million members in 1946. This needs to be our ultimate goal, but we cannot expect this to happen overnight or even this year. The 2018-2019 membership goal was just a little over 1.8 million members. We need to set and achieve goals that will act as stepping stones to getting us back to attaining our all-time high.

For the 2019 membership year, our retention rate for the whole organization finished

at 86.3 percent, and we recruited 63,815 new members at the post level. Although these numbers are respectable, if we are going to have success and grow over last year's membership totals, we have to increase our retention rate and our traditional new recruiting. That is why I have set two personal goals for our great organization based on membership.

Goal one: Increase our overall retention rate to 90 percent. As of Sept. 18, our retention rate is 48.3 percent. So we are halfway to our goal. We have to continue personally contacting our members preferably with a visit, but otherwise through email, text messaging or a phone call. We cannot solely rely upon the renewal notices to make contact.

Goal two: Increase our traditional recruiting to bring in 100,000 new members. With the passage of the LEGION Act, there are an additional 4.2 million veterans now eligible to become Legionnaires. That gives us an eligible pool of over 19 million veterans. We just have to ask these veterans to join and educate them on what we do. Every member, post, district and department can help increase our visibility by engaging these veterans through our programs and events, such as a fish fry, family day, Boys/Girls State, flag retirement ceremony or an American Legion Baseball game. Invite and involve the American Legion Family to be a part of and welcome these veterans into our posts.

As we work to surpass our membership goals, we have to tell our story to complete the job. So the last goal I have is not based around membership numbers, but rather on the Consolidated Post Report (CPR). I want to increase our CPR response rate from 70 percent to 100 percent. Each post has a story to tell and when we speak collectively our strength is magnified.

As we submit our reports about American Legion programs and efforts, we must consider the people it took to make these things happen. I want to recognize any American Legion Family member for a job well done. Any Legionnaire, Auxiliary, Sons of The American Legion or Legion Rider member who recruits three new Legion members will receive my commander's membership incentive pin. Any post, district, county or department that exceeds 103 percent of their membership goal, the commander and membership chairman will receive my pin as well.

With Veterans Day coming up, I cannot stress enough the importance of conducting a Buddy Check. This is not a membership drive, but solely a health and welfare check on current, past and potential members. This is one of our reasons for existence. Assisting veterans and checking on their well-being is the essence of one of the founding pillars of The American Legion. If you have not done so, please plan a Buddy Check event and personally contact veterans living in your community.

If we meet these goals I have set in place, we will set the organization up for success. Ultimately, we have to raise The American Legion's visibility in our communities if we are going to be successful in membership. It is how we will build a foundation for the future of our American Legion.



Preventing Suicide: What the VA Wants You to Know

INDIANAPOLIS—With September being National Suicide Prevention Month, The American Legion recently interviewed Dr. Matthew A. Miller, VA's acting director for suicide prevention, about efforts to reduce the veteran suicide rate.

The American Legion: VA recently shared with American Legion members the National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide. What is the strategy's role in VA's suicide prevention program?

Miller: All of VA's suicide prevention efforts are guided by the [National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide](#). Published in 2018, this long-term strategy expands beyond focusing solely on crisis intervention and provides a framework for identifying priorities, organizing efforts, and focusing national attention and community resources, like The American Legion, to prevent suicide among veterans through a broad, public approach with an emphasis on comprehensive, community-based engagement.

TAL: What is the public health approach to combatting veteran suicide?

Miller: At its core, the public health approach is about ensuring suicide prevention is a part of every aspect of veterans' lives, not just their interactions with VA. We know that VA care is not the right choice for every veteran, for various reasons, and want to be respectful and cognizant of those choices. To save lives, VA needs the support of supporters across sectors. We need to ensure that multiple systems are working in a coordinated way to reach veterans wherever they live, work and thrive.

Our philosophy is that there is no wrong door to care. That is why we are focused on universal, non-VA community interventions. Preventing suicide among the nation's 20 million veterans cannot be the sole responsibility of VA — it requires a nationwide effort. As there is no single cause of suicide, no single organization can tackle suicide prevention alone. One example of this "all-hands-on-deck" approach is the recently signed Executive Order 13861.

The President's Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End a National Tragedy of Suicide (PREVENTS) Executive Order focuses on improving the quality of life of our nation's veterans and developing a national public health roadmap to lower the veteran suicide rate using a government approach and integrating public and private entities to work across the nation.

With a goal of eliminating suicide, everyone has a role to play: families, communities, Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs), state and local leaders, medical care, and others.

TAL: What should Legionnaires know about Suicide Prevention Month?

Miller: Although VA and our supporters work year-round to prevent veteran suicide, Suicide Prevention Month (SPM) is a national effort every September dedicated to raising suicide prevention awareness. This year, VA will expand its #BeThere campaign, empowering communities to raise awareness about mental health and suicide prevention and to make sure veterans and their families know about the resources available to them.

It can be difficult to talk about mental health, and people may not know what they can do to help prevent suicide. Understanding how to support a veteran is the first step in suicide prevention, so we want to create champions who will answer the call to #BeThere. Simple actions such as asking how someone is feeling, or inviting them to meet for coffee, can help them feel less alone and a sense of belonging.

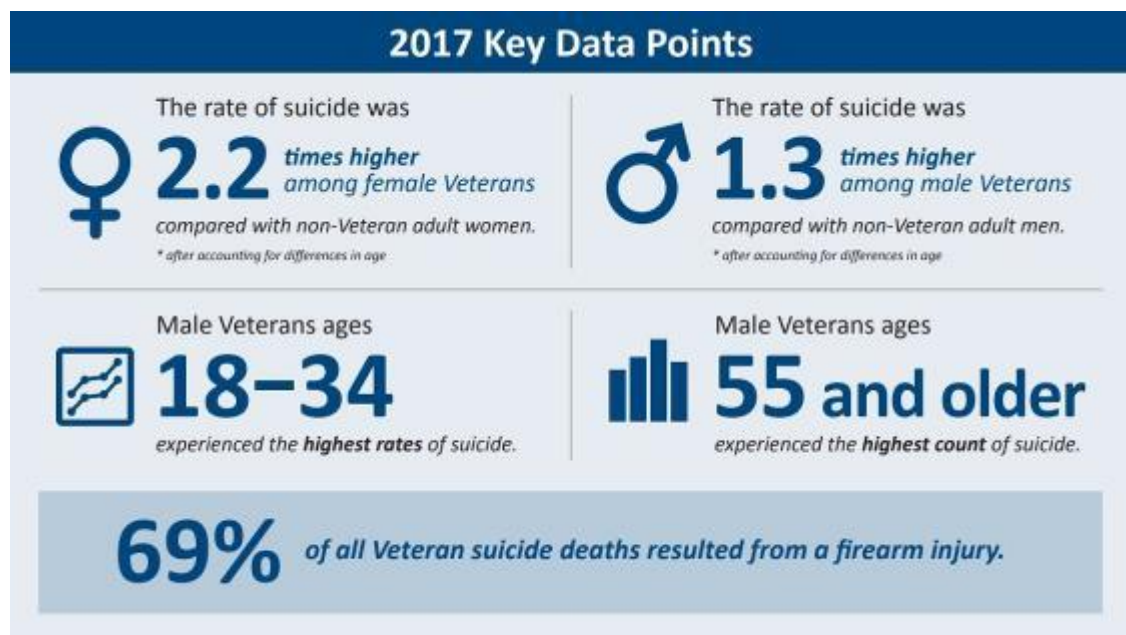
For more information, Legionnaires can visit [BeThereForVeterans.com](#), which includes resources for making a difference, a message generator tool for connecting with loved ones using safe messaging, and prepared social media content for spreading the word. The site is just one of the many new resources we will be sharing with American Legion members during Suicide Prevention Month, and we hope you will use these resources to help us prevent suicide in your communities.

TAL: We hear a lot about the 20 veteran lives lost to suicide every day. Is this statistic accurate?

Miller: In 2016, we lost 6,010 veterans to suicide. Every one of those deaths was one too many. Although the 20 per day statistic is often used, it only provides a partial picture of the suicide data VA tracks. It also represents suicide among all who have served, including current servicemembers.

To better understand veteran suicide as a whole, we need to look at trends among the broader veteran population and veteran subgroups, over time. This helps us to identify complex risk factors that may have an impact on veterans, to develop appropriate programs and resources, and to better measure our progress. This is another example of how critical it is that our partners, especially our VSO partners, embrace the public health approach to help us reach veterans outside the VA system of care.

Suicide is preventable and treatment works. Responsibly storing firearms, safely disposing of old medications, and encouraging everyone we know to seek help when they are going through an emotional crisis can save lives. Every day, people across the nation reach out for support and live healthy, productive lives. Data about how many veterans die by suicide does not capture the experiences of the vast majority of the 20 million U.S. veterans, who are thriving members of our communities.



Key Statistics from the 2019 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report

TAL: How can a caregiver or friend help a veteran who may be at risk of suicide?

There are many ways that caregivers, friends and others can support veterans:

Add the Veterans Crisis Line number to your phone contacts. The crisis line connects veterans and their families and friends with qualified VA responders. Call 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1 for veterans, text to 838255, or chat online at [VeteransCrisisLine.net](#) to receive confidential crisis intervention and support available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

Take and share S.A.V.E. training. A free training, found at <https://psycharmor.org/courses/s-a-v-e>, helps anyone recognize suicide risk factors and warning signs.

Share the #BeThere call to action. Share [BeThereforVeterans.com](#) with your fellow veterans, their families and friends, and your social media followers. Add the #BeThere campaign hashtag, #BeThere logo, and webpage to your email signature block. Make a pledge to #BeThere for veterans today and every day.

Watch and share the VA public health video. VA's goal is to prevent suicide among all veterans, including those who do not and may never, come to VA for care. To do that, VA has adopted a public health approach to suicide prevention — driven by data and best practices — that looks beyond the individual to involve peers, family members and the community. This [video explains](#) the strategy and potential impact of the public health approach.

Share Make the Connection. Visit [MakeTheConnection.net](#) to discover an online resource that connects veterans, their family members and friends, and other supporters with information and solutions to issues affecting their lives.

Share the Be There for Veterans PSA. This inspirational [video](#), which is narrated by actor and filmmaker Tom Hanks, issues a call to action that underscores VA's public health approach to preventing veteran suicide, which encourages everyone to make suicide prevention their business.

Be a suicide prevention advocate on social media. Download and share VA's [Social Media Safety Toolkit for Veterans, Their Families, and Friends](#), which equips individuals with the knowledge they need to respond to social media posts that indicate a veteran may be having thoughts of suicide.

Download the Suicide Prevention Month toolkit. Visit [BeThereforVeterans.com](#) to download Suicide Prevention Month resources, and share them throughout the month through your website, social media, email blasts and employee newsletters.

Download and share suicide prevention educational materials all year. Visit [VeteransCrisisLine.net/support/shareablematerials](#) and include these educational materials on your website, in email blasts and in employee newsletters.



For God and Country

Patrick Lewellen
Department Chaplain



Greetings American Legion Brothers and Sisters:

The year 2019 has been an unbelievable weather year for South Dakota. It snowed in May in the Black Hills and then the rain came down and the rain keep coming until the land was over flowing. And then today September 11th a tornado hit Sioux Falls, damaging homes, businesses and a hospital. The valleys of life are never ending and again God was holding us in His hands. Today reminds me of another time God was with us.

Today, as I am writing this article for the American Legion, it is hard to believe it's been 18 years since the most devastating terrorist attack ever took place in United States since the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Since then, Americans have been healing and rebuilding their lives. I remember the morning well, it was a bright, cloudless September morning when out of nowhere, news stations began reporting that a small plane had crashed into one of the Twin Towers in lower Manhattan, and as the story unfolded, the knowledge of the number of commercial planes involved, and the magnitude of what had been planned was simply unthinkable. No one could have imagined that both towers would crumble to the ground, and that over 2,977 people would lose their lives that day and more than 6,000 others were injured. We pray Americans will never experience anything like this ever again. We will never forget.

I would like to share my story with you. I was blessed to have the opportunity to serve as a Chaplain at Ground Zero with the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. I teamed up with Reverend Samuel, a NYPD Chaplain at the little brown church, St. Paul's Chapel. The 18th century Chapel is 100 yards from Ground Zero's sixteen acres of devastation. In fact, except for a layer of ash and soot, the building survived unscathed. The only damage that I could see was in the churches cemetery. Not one tomb stone was damaged, but the bark on the trees in the cemetery was gone from the broken glass windows of the World Trade Center Towers when they came down.

St. Paul's Chapel had been spared and God had a plan. It was clear that this would be God's healing ground for the rescue and recovery workers. More than 5,000 people used their special gifts to transform Saint Paul's Chapel into a place of rest and refuge. Musicians, clergy, podiatrists, lawyers, and folks of every type poured coffee, swept floors, hugged, prayed and served more than half a million meals. It was called "the Barbecue on Broadway".

The recovery lasted for 260 days as hatred evolved into a season of God's love. The interior of the chapel was beautiful as rainbow colors of children's cards and letters and the large and small banners from all over the world graced the walls. This is where God's love was poured out through thousands of hearts, sore hands and aching feet. We prayed and cried together, but most of all we healed together.

I will always remember the Presidents 8x8 booth where the podiatrist set up shop for the recovery workers, next to George Washington's portrait hanging on the wall. I was told that this was where George Washington prayed for our country, I was moved when the Reverend Lyndon Harris of St. Paul's Chapel told this story. God always has a refuge for us to go, even when we are surrounded by reminders of hatred. I thank you, George Washington, for praying for our Country. God was with us then, and still is today. I will never forget the love of God's people at Saint Paul's Chapel, Ground Zero.

"Where was God on September 11th?"

Soon after the events of September 11th 2001, I was asked, 'Where was God when religious fanatics killed those 2,977 people?' I replied, 'Exactly where He was when religious fanatics killed his Son, Jesus Christ: in complete control of everything that happened.' This is the clear teaching of Scripture.

Those who collaborated in the execution of Jesus are described as 'wicked men', yet his death was also according to 'God's set purpose and fore-knowledge' (Acts 2:23).

As our nation remembers the 18th Anniversary of September 11th, we cannot forget that day and how it has changed our lives. But one thing has not changed, and that is that our Lord has remained constant through it all.

Oh Lord, today is a day of remembrance and celebration in memory of our Brothers and Sisters. We give thanks through their efforts and sacrifices that we may enjoy the blessing and freedom of this great country. In Jesus name Amen. Please be grateful for all we have in this season of our life.

Take time to read a portion of God's word each day, and pray for our troops and their families. God has not called us to see through each other, but to see each other through. Our God is an awesome God.

I will be praying for our Leadership and all of our American Legion Family.

God Bless you and God Bless America,

Chaplain Patrick Lewellen

Department of South Dakota Taps

July 30, 2019-September 25, 2019



"The legacy of heroes is the memory of a great name and the inheritance of a great example." *Benjamin Disraeli*

Post #4	Mobridge	Clayton Fischer	Post #92	Redfield	Glendon Lutz
Post #4	Mobridge	Emanuel Holzworth	Post #94	White River	Allen Tucker
Post #4	Mobridge	Lawayne Knecht	Post #96	White Lake	Robert Kristensen
Post #4	Mobridge	Vernard Schneider	Post #99	Pierpont	Clifford Weitgrife
Post #5	Plankinton	Rickey Smith	Post #114	Volga	Elmer Mannisto
Post #7	Huron	Harold Doolittle	Post #115	Platte	Bruce Bakken
Post #7	Huron	Lowell Dubro	Post #115	Platte	Bruce Pranger
Post #7	Huron	James Pownell	Post #118	Hartford	Roy Beck
Post #7	Huron	Eugene Saarie	Post #120	Isabel	George Boldt
Post #7	Huron	Boyd VanWinkle	Post #130	Kimball	Mark Munger
Post #9	Milbank	Curtis Hallberg	Post #132	Springfield	Harvey Erickson
Post #9	Milbank	Kenneth Keller	Post #132	Springfield	Clarence Halsey
Post #9	Milbank	William Schank	Post #132	Springfield	Jacob Namminga
Post #12	Yankton	John Cornette	Post #134	Elk Point	Clifford Haines
Post #14	Wess. Springs	Eldon Beckman	Post #135	Gettysburg	James Holzwarth
Post #14	Wess. Springs	Walter Borkowski	Post #135	Gettysburg	Donald Kunstle
Post #15	Sioux Falls	Claude Hone	Post #135	Gettysburg	Edward Zuber
Post #15	Sioux Falls	Richard Kueter	Post #138	De Smet	Gary Crook
Post #15	Sioux Falls	Arvid Olson	Post #145	Howard	Leo Feldhaus
Post #17	Codington Co.	Edmund Bouvette	Post #145	Howard	Thomas Pardy
Post #17	Codington Co.	Robert Pierson	Post #146	Colome	Douglas Kloppe
Post #17	Codington Co.	Robert Ries	Post #146	Colome	Larry Moyer
Post #17	Codington Co.	Francis Stacey	Post #147	Buffalo	William Hollister
Post #18	Mitchell	Jacque Dierks	Post #150	Avon	Loyd Crismon
Post #18	Mitchell	Carl Metz	Post #150	Avon	Kenneth Crouse
Post #18	Mitchell	James Pierson	Post #150	Avon	Robert Monfore
Post #20	Fort Pierre	Keith Williams	Post #150	Avon	Herbert Yost
Post #24	Aberdeen	Sheldon Lenling	Post #152	Menno	Roland Schnabel
Post #24	Aberdeen	C.J. Nesseim	Post #155	Scotland	Richard Isaacs
Post #24	Aberdeen	Lawrence Schuck	Post #159	Hoven	Arlyn Miles
Post #24	Aberdeen	Donald Wieck	Post #159	Hoven	Clayton Perman
Post #32	Belle Fourche	Dale Gillette	Post #162	Canistota	Delmar Giegling
Post #32	Belle Fourche	James Lang	Post #169	Winner	Leonard Bettcher
Post #32	Belle Fourche	Cornelius O'Rourke	Post #169	Winner	Allen McIntosh
Post #33	Sturgis	Pete Borup	Post #172	Edgemont	Henry Bauer
Post #33	Sturgis	James Eatherton	Post #172	Edgemont	W. Lee Gillispie
Post #33	Sturgis	Lloyd Fletcher	Post #180	New Effington	Larry Goette
Post #35	Highmore	William Busse	Post #184	Estelline	Robert Hutt
Post #37	Bryant	Millard Larrabee	Post #184	Estelline	Merlyn Nicola
Post #38	Miller	Daniel Coulter	Post #184	Estelline	Edward Saathoff
Post #38	Miller	Leo Istas	Post #186	Eureka	Ernest Fjeldheim
Post #40	Webster	Anton Wika	Post #186	Eureka	Deleano Heupel
Post #42	Arlington	Gerald Still	Post #186	Eureka	Rober Lutz
Post #44	Vermillion	Lnora Bylander	Post #193	Irene	Maynard Christiansen
Post #49	Clear Lake	Ronald Krause	Post #206	Colton	John VanLiere
Post #50	Sisseton	Wesley Erdahl	Post #206	Colton	Gerald Westberg
Post #56	Geddes	Frank Schulte	Post #213	Crestbard	Selmer Anderson
Post #58	Columbia	Deanna Garrett	Post #213	Crestbard	Ronald Graves
Post #58	Columbia	Cody Wright	Post #213	Crestbard	John Swanhorst
Post #62	Humboldt	Dale Garry	Post #217	Hayti	Roger Prouty
Post #70	Flandreau	Frederick Smith	Post #229	Big Stone City	Boyd Schnaser
Post #71	Hot Springs	Max Erwin	Post #249	Delmont	Gilbert Brosz
Post #74	Brookings	Donald Hind	Post #253	Roslyn	John Lee
Post #76	Veblen	Milton Lindell	Post #255	Bison	Irwin Tescher
Post #78	Leola	Robert Schumacher	Post #268	Virgil	Dave Diehl
Post #80	Britton	Howard Stocking	Post #268	Virgil	Gladys Hagar
Post #85	F-F-E	Tim Dech	Post #272	Pollock	Irve Hanson
Post #86	Alcester	Verlyn Johnson	Post #279	Thunder Hawk	Wayne Weishaar



Did you know?

South Dakota still has 356 POW/MIA still unaccounted for.
See the entire list here:

<https://dpaa.secure.force.com/dpaaOurMissing>