



AMERICAN LEGION DEPARTMENT OF MONTANA
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National Commander brings ‘Buddy Check’ Message to Montana



The Painter Brothers American Legion Post 102 Mounted Color Guard escorts National Commander Bill Oxford through Geraldine, Mont., on Sunday, March 21, 2021. – PHOTO BY LARRY CLINE

BY JOHN RAUGHTER | LEGION.ORG | MAR 23, 2021

In a scene that resembled an old western, American Legion National Commander Bill Oxford was surrounded by horseback-riding American Legion Family members as he was led into the historic ranching town of Geraldine, Mont., March 21.

While it’s not uncommon for American Legion Riders to escort the national commander, the riders of the Geraldine Painter Brothers Post 102 Mounted Color Guard prefer organic horsepower over Harleys. “I have had a lot of escorts on my travels but this was unique,” Oxford told Legionnaires attending the Department of Montana Three Rivers District 8 meeting. “Being led by horseback is an experience unique to Montana. Every post that I visit in The American Legion has its special characteristics. But they all care about serving veterans and their communities.”

The message that Oxford delivered in Geraldine was the same as what he said a day earlier to District 9 in Roy, Mont. “We have to get a handle on

veterans’ suicide,” Oxford said. “We need to continue Buddy Checks to help veterans cope with the isolation caused by the pandemic and issues that are related to their military service. The suicide rate is much lower for veterans who get in the VA system and receive help. We need to do everything we can to encourage vulnerable veterans to get the help that they need.”

In a news interview broadcast by local affiliates in markets throughout state, Oxford reiterated the need for veterans to seek help in a state where one in five suicides are committed by veterans.

“When we think about veterans, we’re a stubborn group (with an) unwillingness to reach out and ask for help. We just want every veteran to know, hey, we’re still here, we want to help, we can help but you got to let us.”

The national commander’s visit marked the end of an era for longtime Department of Montana Adjutant Gary White, who will be retiring after 19 years on April 1. White, a retired Army commander sergeant major, intentionally sought to include smaller communities as part of Oxford’s itinerary.

“Roy has a population of less than 100, yet Post 96 has 26 members. Think about that!” White said. “The post is led by young veterans and they have achieved 113 percent of their goal. Geraldine has a population of less than 200, and its post has 108 members as of today. There are a lot of

NAT’L CDR VISIT continued on page 4



National Commander Bill Oxford (L) receives a plaque from District 9 Commander Bruce Luhrson commemorating his visit to District 9 in Roy.

Harlowton High School Senior Wins The Montana American Legion Oratorical Contest



Margaret Martin receives the 2021 Department of Montana Oratory Scholarship from Dept. Commander Jeff Nelson.

sponsored by Harlowton Post 15 and then went on to take the District contest also in Harlowton a week later for the chance to compete in the state finals. Eva Bruce of Kalispell took second place followed by Angelica Sutton of Wolf Point for third followed by Ella Henslee of Big Sky in fourth.

HELENA, MT – MARCH 9, 2021: The National American Legion High School Oratorical Competition sponsored by The American Legion of Montana and its 120 Posts located throughout the State concluded in Helena on Saturday March 6. Margaret Martin of Two Dot who attends Harlowton High School prevailed over five other contestants.

Martin won the local competition

The American Legion established the annual oratorical contest in 1939 as part of its multi-faceted Americanism Program. The focus of the competition has always been the United States Constitution.

The subject of the prepared oration portion of the contest must be about some phase of The Constitution of the United States, emphasizing the duties and obligations of a citizen to the United States government. The prepared oration must be an original effort of each contestant and should be 8 – 10 minutes in length.

The Montana state winners 1st through 4th places is eligible for monetary scholarships from The American Legion of Montana. Also, as part of The American Legion program fee waiver scholarships are available from the various units of the Montana University system as well as Carroll College. Information on these scholarships is available from high school guidance counselors or the American Legion.

In addition, Martin will receive an additional \$5,000 from The American Legion National Headquarters to be applied to the college of her choice.

The American Legion State Oratorical Chairman is Jeff Holmes, Harlowton, Montana

Important Upcoming Dates

- May 1 **Certification of AL Officers** due to Dept. HQs
- May 8 Certification Form, Top Recruiter due to Dept. HQs
- May 9.....Mother’s Day
- May 12.....95% Target Date
- May 15 **Consolidated Post Reports** due to Dept. HQs
- May 15.....Dept. Officers Report due to Dept. HQs
- May 31..... Memorial Day
- Jun 14.....US Army Birthday
- Jun 20 Father’s Day
- Jul 12022 Membership Year begins
- Jul 1 2022 Big K Membership opens
- Jul 4..... Independence Day
- Aug 4–6 . Dept. Service Officers School
- Sep 6..... Labor Day Observed
- Sep 7.....Rosh Hashanah

BIG K WINNERS

The Big K \$400 winner for February 2021 was Bethany West of Bozeman Post 14. Bethany’s number was drawn by Ed Pekovitch of Malta Post 57.

The March drawing was won by SAL Squadron 135 of Lolo, Squadron 135 was drawn by Kelly Ackerman of Helena Post 2. The American Legion Birthday drawing was won by Earl Mainwaring of Harlowton Post 15. Earl’s number was drawn by Mike Mooney of Helena Post 2.

The April drawing was won by Paul Allen of Judith Gap Post 70, Paul’s name was drawn by Bill Rich of Lewis & Clark Post 2.

Disbursements of Big K dividends to the Districts, Posts, Units, and Squadrons will be done at the Spring District Meetings.

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COMMANDER NELSON

We are in the middle of District meetings and I cannot remember this good of turnout at district meetings. Congratulations to Districts 6,7,8,9 and 11 for successful meetings. Hopefully all the rest will be as well attended as these have been. I would like to give a big shout out to our past Department Adjutant Gary White for all the effort he put into making the district meetings informative and lively at times. A lot of planning and logistics go into making these meetings a success and the Adjutant has a lot to do with it.



Jeff Nelson
Department Commander

those communities that don't have a baseball program, perhaps look at surrounding areas and see if combining schools to form a team is possible.

Those white fatality markers more than likely need to be spruced up this time of year along with roadside garbage pickup. The fatality markers probably give us more public exposure than any other program and we need to dress them up with some fresh paint if need be.

Along with painting, how are the cemetery crosses looking? Memorial Day will be here sooner than we think, and it is never too late to start thinking of a guest speaker. A well put together program for this important event should be well done.

I think that should cover it for a while, I would be remiss if I didn't mention something about membership. It is probably past the point to think about new members but there are plenty of members that need to be asked yet to renew. Even if they have a reason for not renewing, stay in touch with them, keep them up to date on what the Post is doing and you may be surprised if they may rejoin down the road someday.

If you haven't made plans to attend the Department Convention yet, look into it. There is lots of information to be disseminated, leadership training, good food and beverages, and memories to last a lifetime. Helena has a lot to offer and come see The American Legion Museum before it is disassembled into a smaller version. ●

Speaking of Adjutants, a big welcome to our new Adjutant Duane Cunningham. He will have some big shoes to follow but I am sure he will make his own shoes fit the position. I am looking forward to working with Duane in the future on Legion activities.

And speaking of activities there is always another month after another month of programs and events to get ready for. American Legion Boys State is right around the corner. Have we got boys lined out and sponsors for them? Double-check and see if there possibly may be another boy wanting to attend this year. Boys State is a life-changer for so many boys given the opportunity.

Legion Baseball has to be the one program that engages more youth than any other program in our organization. Make sure the Post is involved with the board of directors and helping make decisions that may need some guidance from the Legion. For

Department of Montana Adjutant

Duane Cunningham

First, and foremost, as I start my voyage as your Department Adjutant, I must start by saying that it is an honor and a privilege to serve Montana's American Legion family. Having traveled the State for District meetings the last five years I have met some of the most dedicated, knowledgeable, and caring Legionnaires, Auxiliary members, and SAL brethren. For those of you who choose to support The American Legion through your payment of dues, I want to thank you and to encourage you to contact your nearest Post, attend a monthly membership meeting, and dip your toes in the water; the reward you receive from the experience will far outweigh the time spent doing it.



Duane Cunningham
Department Adjutant

The month of March brought a visit to Montana from the National Commander James W. (Bill) Oxford. The Commander got the royal treatment from Posts 96 in Roy and Post 102 in Geraldine, small town Montana hospitality and some amazing food.

The Commander discussed his priorities regarding the importance of membership, and what being a member of The American Legion really means. The retention of our members and using tools such as buddy checks, to show genuine concern and friendship, not a call seeking dues. He discussed why the Consolidated Post Reports (CPR) are such an important tool that can be used at the highest levels of Congress to show exactly the impact The American Legion has within the community and in developing the next generation of leaders. Montana's American Legion family stepped up and provided a great experience for the National Commander. Bravo Zulu!

From time to time, I will use my chunk of space to provide any information I pick up from the Montana VA and I bring you good news; all Veterans, their spouses and/or caregivers are now eligible for a Covid-19 vaccination through the VHA.

Who is eligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccine at a MTVAHCS vaccine clinic?

If you are a Veteran, you are eligible to receive a vaccine through MTVAHCS, even if you are not enrolled with VHA healthcare. On March 23, 2021, President Biden signed into law, H.R. 1276 (also known as the SAVE LIVES Act). The law expands VA's legal authority to provide COVID-19 vaccines to Veterans, regardless of their VA health care enrollment status, as well as Veteran spouses, and caregivers. For COVID-19 vaccine eligibility, we define a caregiver as a family member or friend who provides care to a Veteran.

FAQs

Q: I am a Veteran. How can I confirm I am eligible to receive a vaccine through MTVAHCS?

A: Veterans, regardless of discharge type, are eligible to receive their vaccine through the MTVAHCS. The only verification needed is the either a NGB Form 22 or their last DD214/215. Veterans, their spouses, or Veteran caregivers can schedule a vaccination at any of the upcoming Montana VA COVID-19 vaccination clinics.

Q: What COVID-19 vaccine will I receive?

A: The Montana VA is currently receiving allotments of the two-dose Moderna vaccine and the single-dose Janssen vaccine. You will receive one of these vaccines based on your vaccination site allotment. If you receive the Moderna vaccine, you will be scheduled for your second dose approximately four weeks after.

Q: Is there a number I can call to find out about upcoming clinics?

A: Please call 877-468-8387 (select Option 2, and then Option 2 again).

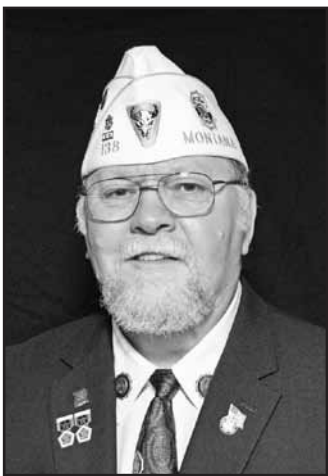
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VICE COMMANDER SHARBONO

"IT'S NOT THE PRICE YOU PAY FOR MEMBERSHIP".

"IT'S THE PRICE YOU PAID FOR ELIGIBILITY".

You may ask "What's in it for me" although its primarily about you it's also about your family, especially your children. Not only is it your strength on Capitol Hill but to help your Veteran brothers and sisters in times of need with programs like the Veterans & Children's Foundation and the National Emergency Fund, Allowing your investment in The American Legion to expire prevents you from receiving much needed benefits. Benefits you as a Veteran have earned! Please don't let this happen to you! We want you to stay a part of our family.



Glen Sharbono
Dept. Vice Commander

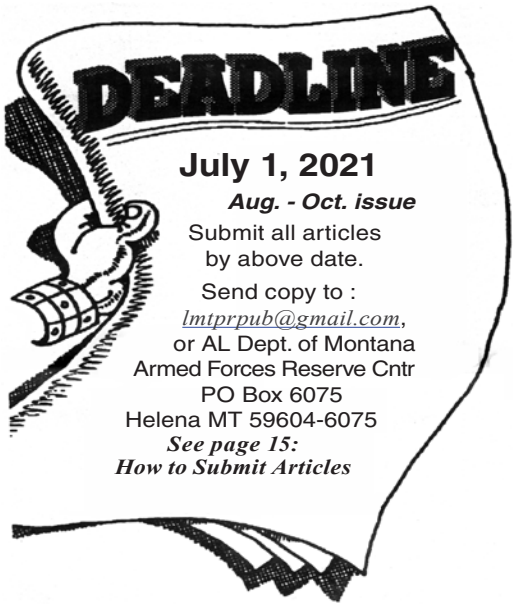
The membership year for 2021 started on the 1st of July 2020. We have had a steady flow of new members showing us that people are still interested in becoming a part of this great organization. However, it has been a tough year trying to retain our members renewals for various reasons and we are falling behind. Beyond the hardships of Covid-19 I believe one major factor was the election cycle. It seemed every time you turned around someone was calling for a donation to a candidate or political action group, not to mention the constantly annoying calls warning that your car's extended

warranty was about to expire. To the point that the renewal notices from National were possibly looked upon as just another entity hounding you for money. Buddy checks were supposed to remedy this but I'm sure not everyone was called or again the phone was not answered because of an unrecognized number. Renewing early or online can prevent the continued onslaught of renewal notices and phone calls. We would rather call to see how you are doing then ask for money, even as important as it is to keep this organization going. Contact is a two-way street, if you haven't heard from your Post in a while give them a call, show you are still interested, even if you are unable to attend meetings. Whatever the case may be rest assured that we do care about "you" not just your dues.

What do you know about the Department of Montana? Montana is one of 55 Departments worldwide that includes all 50 states, France, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Philippines, and the District of Columbia. The Department of Montana has 4 Zones, Western, Eastern, North Central, and South Central. They preside over 11 Districts. The Commanders of the Zones and Districts along with the Department Officers make up the Department Executive Committee that over sees 120 Posts consisting of over 10,800 members of The American Legion in Montana. The Department Officers and Zone Commanders are

VICE COMMANDER continued on page 5

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VICE COMMANDER - GLEN SHARBONO
ADJUTANT - DUANE CUNNINGHAM



July 1, 2021

Aug. - Oct. issue

Submit all articles
by above date.

Send copy to :

lmtprpub@gmail.com,
or AL Dept. of Montana
Armed Forces Reserve Cntr
PO Box 6075
Helena MT 59604-6075

See page 15:

How to Submit Articles

Chaplain's Corner

CHAYA "HIYA" SEMPLE, DEPT. CHAPLAIN

When we veterans think of Memorial Day the majority of us automatically think of those who paid the ultimate sacrifice while serving our Nation. Not so the general public. Thanks to the Uniform Monday Holiday Act enacted by Congress on June 28, 1968, Memorial Day was moved permanently to a Monday, creating a three-day “holiday” weekend. Now, more often than not, Memorial Day is perceived by many as a time for camping, cookouts, projects around the home, sales or even just another retail workday, resulting in very thin attendance at Memorial Day ceremonies throughout our Nation.

Few young families know the significance of the day unless a family member who served in the Armed Forces has taken it upon themselves to teach them. Most school children have

never gone to a cemetery to decorate a grave, watched a patriotic parade honoring those who died while serving, or attended a Memorial Day Ceremony as many Legion Family members did while growing up and still do.

This doesn’t mean we can’t take it upon ourselves to remember them.

While American Legion members do so silently at meetings by dedicating the space between flags as sacred to their memory, to help you remember our war dead in a more active way, see the modified responsive reading below. Feel free to share this reading with family and friends, or, if you are alone, read it aloud yourself on Memorial Day. Please take a few moments to contemplate and consider their sacrifice while you remember them.

May you be well.

WE REMEMBER

When we are weary and in need of strength,
When we are lost and sick at heart,
We remember them.

When we have a joy we yearn to share,
When we have decisions that are difficult to make,
When we have achievements that are based on theirs,
We remember them.

At the blowing of the wind and in the chill of winter,
At the opening of the buds and in the rebirth of spring,
We remember them.

At the blueness of the skies and in the warmth of summer,
At the rustling of the leaves and in the beauty of autumn,
We remember them.

At the rising of the sun and at its setting,
We remember them.

As long as we live, they, too, shall live
For they are now a part of us,
We remember them.

2021 Chaplain Training Conference

2021 Chaplain Training Conference is for ALL Legion Family Chaplains

This may come as a surprise to many: the Department Chaplain Conference to be held on Saturday, June 26, 2021, at Department Convention is for ALL Legion Family Chaplains!

Like the National Chaplain Conference, this is an opportunity to gather, meet other Legion Family Chaplains – to learn and share best practices with each other.

Additionally, you’ll go home with a “Chaplains How-To Manual” packed with ideas and resources!

If you are an Auxiliary, District, Post or Squadron Chaplain – or, if you aspire to become a chaplain, this conference is for you!

Chaplains are not ministers, pastors, or priests; although they can be when not acting as a Legion Family chaplain. Their only title when representing a branch of the Legion Family is “Chaplain.”

Chaplains reach across faith tradition lines to assist and help every Legion Family member: like military chaplains, they are inclusive in their ceremonies and prayers and do not advocate or advance their own particular faith perspective when acting as a Legion Family Chaplain. Also, like military chaplains, Legion Family chaplains can separately offer specific spiritual services to members of their faith group or tradition. If you struggle with the issue of inclusivity, information provided at this conference will help you!

This is a great opportunity to expand your chaplain education to

promote the Legion Family’s “God and Country” focus. Among the many topics to be covered: how to “be there” for others outside your faith comfort zone, moral injury, visiting the dying and those who are ill (once COVID restrictions are lifted!) understanding the VA’s Administrative Rules pertaining to faith that apply to all chaplains (or any visitor) who visits Legion members in VA facilities, and much more will be crammed into the three short hours given to us.

The training conference will begin promptly Saturday, June 26th at 1 pm at the Delta Red Lion Hotel in Helena and last until 4 pm. You do not have to register for Department Convention to attend this informative and spiritually-inclusive training opportunity.

You are not required to be currently appointed or ordained as a chaplain to attend; however, you must register by May 31st so there will be enough materials and seating for everyone.

Due to Lewis and Clark County Health Department COVID planning requirements, NO registrations can be accepted after June 5th. We will also be unable to accommodate walk-ins unless you take someone’s place if they cannot attend.

To register, please contact Chaplain Chaya Semple during the monthly Zoom (7 pm, third Saturday of each month) or chaplainsemp@gmail.com for a registration form, or call (406) 465-0163 for a registration form to be mailed to you.

A \$10 fee (for materials) will hold your seat. Please register soon!

I’m looking forward to seeing you in Helena!

Post Everlasting

AMERICAN LEGION

Jan/Feb/Mar 2021

☆ FREDERICK, 11/13/2020 – Vietnam – US Army – 22-year member of Post 61, Brockton, Interred with Military Honors

☆ ANDERSON, DAVID, 12/5/2020 – Vietnam – US Army – 42-year member of Post 12, Sidney, Interred with Military Honors

☆ BENNETT, LARRY, 05/2020 – Vietnam – US Marines – 17-year member of Post 5, Miles City, Interred with Military Honors

☆ BETZ, ALEX, 1/16/2021 – Gulf War – US Army – 2-year member of Post 2, Helena, Interred with Military Honors

☆ BIELENBERG, DONALD, 1/19/2021 – WWII – US Air Force – 20-year member of Post 86, Big Fork, Interred with Military Honors

☆ CLARK, RICHARD, 2/15/2021 – Vietnam – US Air Force – 36-year member of Post 43, Shelby, Interred with Military Honors

☆ HELMBRECHT, CHARLES, 01/02/2021 – WWII – US Army – 22-year member of Post 88, Chester, Interred with Military Honors

☆ KELLIHER, MICHAEL A., 1/11/21 – Vietnam – US Marine – 6-year member of Post 65, Ennis, Interred with Military Honors

☆ KEMPH, MONTE, 12/21/2020 – Vietnam – US Army – 19-year member of Post 130, Vaughn, Interred with Military Honors

☆ KIM, ANDREW, 1/26/2021 – WWII – US Navy – 12-year member of Post 2, Helena, Interred with Military Honors

☆ MARKS, DENNIS, 1/3/2021 – Korea – US Army – 33-year member of Post 92, Hysham, Interred with Military Honors

☆ METZGER, PAUL, 1/12/2021 – WWII – US Army – 65-year member of Post 138, Ronan, Interred with Military Honors

☆ MURRAY, JOSEPH W., 1/5/2021 – WWII – US Navy – 76-year member of Post 76, Hobson, Interred with Military Honors

☆ NEAR, JOSHUA, 12/27/2020 – Global War on Terror – US Army – 1-year member of Post 21, Anaconda, Interred with Military Honors

☆ PEDERSEN, JAN, 2/11/2021 – Vietnam – US Marine Corps – 19-year member of Post CN20, Calgary, Canada, Interred with Military Honors

☆ RED EAGLE, E. STERLING, 11/11/2020 – Vietnam – US Marine – 35-year member of Post 61, Brockton, Interred with Military Honors

☆ RIEGER, ELSIE L, 10/26/2020 – WWII – US Navy – 5-year member of Post 341, Great Falls, Interred with Military Honors

☆ RISBOLD, STANLEY B., 1/30/2021 – WWII – US Army – 73-year member of Post 17, Red Lodge, Interred with Military Honors

☆ ROSE, H.S, 2/15/2021 – Korea – US Army – 44-year member of Post 20, Dillon, Interred with Military Honors

☆ RYAN, JAMES, 2/20/2021 – Korea – US Air Force – 62-year member of Post 5, Miles City, Interred with Military Honors

☆ SAPPE, JAMES, 02/20/2021 – Korea – US Marines – 45-year member of Post 5, Miles City, Interred with Military Honors

☆ SHARPLES, FRANK, 12/31/2020 – WWII – US Army – 73-year member of Post 48, Chinook, Interred with Military Honors

☆ SHEETS, CLAYTON, 01/02/2021 – Korea – US Navy – 52-year member of Post 42, Townsend, Interred with Military Honors

☆ WALCHUK, LEO G., 3/14/2021 – WWII – US Navy – 10-year member of Post 2, Helena, Interred with Military Honors

☆ WOHLGENANT, CARL, 1/30/2021 – WWII – US Air Force – 27-year member of Post 87, Manhattan, Interred with Military Honors

Day is done
Gone the sun
From the lakes
From the hills
From the sky
All is well
Safely rest
God is nigh
Fading light
Dims the sight
And a star
Gems the sky
Gleaming bright.
From afar
Drawing nigh
Falls the night
Thanks and praise
For our days
Neath the sun
Neath the stars
Neath the sky
As we go
This we know
God is nigh.

The Four Chaplains remembered at Laurel Post 123

Laurel Post 123 Commander Ray Southworth emcee of The Four Chaplains Ceremony in held in Laurel, on February 3, 2021.



Department of Montana Service Officer

KATE HAHN, DEPARTMENT SERVICE OFFICER



Service Officer Kate Hahn

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) policy is that all claimants (veterans, spouses, children, parents) have the right to representation before the department in claims affecting the payment of benefits of relief. This is often referred to as the “Power of Attorney.”

VA Form 21-22 – Appointment of Veterans Service Organization as Claimant’s Representative, is completed by your local Veterans Service Officer who is accredited by a State Organization like the Montana Veterans Affairs Division or a national organization like The American Legion, to serve as the representative for the claimant (veteran, spouse, child, parent) in the VA Benefits Claims Process. The term “Power of Attorney” means the VSO is granted VA representation for the claimant. It means your VSO is trained and accredited, and has completed legal formalities authorizing them to perform functions on the claimant’s behalf in business before the VA. This “POA” does not grant a VSO any functions outside the scope of the VA. This “POA” is valid until revoked. Once revoked, your (former) VSO cannot access your VA claims files and will not be able to assist you with future claims, unless you file a follow-up VA Form 21-22.

Once POA is granted your VSO can access your claims file. The VSO can see your disability rating, what conditions you are service connected for, what you receive in disability or non-service connected pension compensation, your medical records, previous claims you have submitted, the evidence submitted to support those claims, dependents, military service, etc.

The POA authorizes your VSO to change your address, phone number, email address, but it does not authorize a VSO to change your direct deposit. The POA may be revoked by filing a new VA Form 21-22 with another agency. The POA expires after 5 years but may need updating after 2 years.

For more information about the VA Form 21-22, please contact your local VSO. They have received extensive training to assist you with the claims process from start to finish. Please contact a VSO at the location nearest you for an appointment.

Thank You for Your Service To Our Great Country!

MVAD/AL accredited offices throughout the state:

Belgrade	(406) 388-4601
Billings.....	(406) 248-8579
Butte	(406) 533-0910
Great Falls	(406) 452-2265
Havre.....	(406) 265-4225
Helena	(406) 495-2080/2081/2082
Kalispell.....	(406) 755-3795
Miles City	(406) 232-1203
Missoula.....	(406) 542-2501

NAT’L CDR VISIT continued from pg. 1
miles in Montana and members travel long distances to be active in The American Legion.”

The 147,167 square miles of Big Sky Country is dotted with an American Legion presence in even the most remote areas. Since 1952, American Legion posts throughout the department have placed approximately 1,500 cross-shaped markers on Montana roads and highways to symbolize an estimated 3,300 fatalities. Since some accidents caused multiple deaths, the markers are not intended to be a tribute to an individual but more of a warning of possible hazards.

“Our highway fatality markers are not memorials, but are instead safety reminders,” said Department of



Montana Commander Jeff Nelson. “When I pass one of those markers, I’ll look again in my rearview mirror and maybe pay more attention to the speedometer. Not every fatality has a marker, since some accidents cause multiple deaths.”

Baseball is another program in which Montana’s young people rely heavily on The American Legion. Due to long and harsh winters, high schools do not offer opportunities for students to play America’s national pastime. Though the playing seasons are shorter than what can be found in many southern departments, Montana conducts a robust American Legion Baseball program, which includes eight Canadian-based teams. American Legion Baseball is viewed as “the only game in town,” according to the department.

Additionally, the department hopes to instill patriotism among young people by encouraging the legislature to pass a bill which would require the presence of an American flag in every Montana classroom.

“It’s important for young people to see that flag and remember the sacrifices that have been made on their behalf,” White said. “Americanism is one of the pillars of The American Legion, so this is an issue that we think is very important.”

The Montana American Legion is also trying to convince lawmakers to exempt military pensions from state income tax. “We are one of the few states that still taxes military retirement,” White explained. “We believe that exempting these pensions would create a major incentive for veterans to move to Montana. It would send a message that Montana is veteran-friendly and still increase revenue for the state in other areas.”

While Oxford’s travel tempo has not reached its pre-pandemic level, the Montana tour came on the heels of department visits to Iowa, Nebraska and Virginia. “Every department that I visit has shown great hospitality,” Oxford said. “We are not done with coronavirus yet, and I encourage all Legionnaires to get the vaccines, practice social distancing when they can and be safe. Even while doing all of these things, American Legion Family members still find ways to serve their communities and strengthen America.”

Schedulers will be available Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

W a l k - i n appointments are available on a first come, first served basis however, MTVAHCS strongly encourages all participants to schedule an appointment to ensure eligibility and vaccine availability. Walk-ins who are not already enrolled with the Montana VA are asked to please, bring a copy of their DD 214 or DD 215 for enrollment.



Copayment Debt: Refunds, Forgiveness:
The American Recovery Plan also waives copayments through September 2021.

VA copayments for medical care will be waived, refunded, or forgiven under the American Recovery Plan. If you’re a Veteran who receives care through VA, here’s what this means for you:

- If you received a statement with copayment charges from April 6, 2020, or later, we’ll remove these charges. You won’t need to pay them.
- If you already paid any co-pay charges from April 6, 2020, or later, we’ll send you a refund.
- If you have unpaid co-pay charges from before April 6, 2020, you don’t have to make payments until September 30, 2021. We won’t add fees or interest or take other collection action on these charges during this time. But you can still make payments if you’d like. Find out how to pay your VA co-pay bill.

You currently do not need to do anything to get a refund. We ask for your patience as we work to adjust statements and send refunds.

Co-pay charges will be waived.

The American Recovery Plan also waived VA copayments for all medical care received between April 6, 2020, and September 30, 2021, and all prescription medications ordered between April 6, 2020, and September 30, 2021. Again, if you made a payment; you will automatically be reimbursed.

BENEFICIARY TRAVEL
—*New Online Portal to Submit Travel Claims*

Beginning in May 2021, Veterans, caregivers, and beneficiaries who are eligible for reimbursement of mileage and other travel expenses to and from approved health care appointments can now enter claims in the new Beneficiary Travel Self-Service System (BTSSS). BTSSS simplifies the current claim submission process for beneficiaries and ensures timely processing and payment of travel reimbursements.

- Submit claims online 24/7, 365 days a year
- Track the status of submitted claims
- Reduce processing time for submitted claims
- Use self-help tools to make claim submissions fast and easy
- Visit AccessVA, select submit a travel claim, and logon using a DS Log on account.

ADJUTANT continued from pg. 4
Veteran Portal Instructions for Veterans Questions & Answers

Who is eligible for Beneficiary Travel Reimbursement?

Veterans and caregivers may be eligible for travel pay. A list of eligibility requirements can be found on the [VA Travel Pay Reimbursement webpage](#).

How do I submit a travel reimbursement claim?

VA is phasing in a new web-based portal to submit and process beneficiary travel claims beginning July 2020 and continuing through November 2020. The new portal, the Beneficiary Travel Self-Service System (BTSSS), is VA’s preferred method to receive travel reimbursement claims. Once implemented, BTSSS will phase out claims submitted through the facility kiosks. However, in-person claims, and hard-copy submissions will still be available. BTSSS is available through the AccessVA website.

Are there advantages to using the Beneficiary Travel Self-Service System?

The BTSSS automates the claims process to ensure timely processing and payment of travel reimbursement claims. With BTSSS, turnaround time to evaluate and settle a claim is less than 5 days. BTSSS allows Veterans and caregivers to submit claims 24/7, 365 days a year from a computer or mobile device. It also allows users to electronically track the status of a claim request.

Can I get help to file my first claim?

There are several sources of help for filing a claim. BTSSS was built with several self-help tools to guide users through the process of logging on and submitting/tracking claims. Additionally, a user’s guide for BTSSS is available on the VA Travel Pay Reimbursement webpage. Lastly, Veterans who do not have access to a computer can get help from a travel clerk at the facility.

How do I access BTSSS?

BTSSS is available through the [AccessVA](#) webpage. To submit a claim, Visit AccessVA, select submit a travel claim, and logon using a DS Log on Level 2 account. A DS Logon is an ID issued by DoD that will allows Veterans and caregivers to access many VA and DoD sites with one user username and password. [Need a DS Log on?](#)

Need Help?

There are several sources of help to file a claim. Eligible Veterans and caregivers may get help from a travel clerk at the facility or refer to the BTSSS user’s guide at <https://www.va.gov/health-care/get-reimbursed-for-travel-pay>.

Beneficiary Travel Help Desk for Veterans and caregivers: 1-855-574-7292

—And finally, as we transition into new leadership at all levels this spring, I look forward to the challenges and the opportunities that The American Legion presents. I also look to all of you for your guidance and wisdom as I am to continue the excellent leadership that Gary White has provided the last 19 years. And yes, if, and when you call the Department, the first question you will hear remains “have you read the manual?” Some traditions must be carried on. 🇺🇸

Helena veteran who trained Army sled dogs receives congressional record commendation

Phil Drake | Helena IR | Mar. 16, 2021



David Armstrong, seated, receives a congressional record tribute by Sen. Steve Daines from Denny Lenoir, a member of Daines' staff. Looking on are Mary Rose and Mark Armstrong.

GARY MARSHALL, BMGPHOTOS.COM

David Armstrong sat through a small ceremony Tuesday [March 16, 2021], in which he was presented with a congressional record commendation, when he gave a reaction that those who know him said was typical.

“It’s awfully nice, but I don’t think it’s necessary,” the 100-year-old Armstrong said while sitting in a wheelchair in a nice lawn adjoining his home adjacent to the Archie Bray Foundation. “Anybody could do it.”

It’s probably where he and the handful of people at the ceremony would disagree.

Armstrong [member of Lewis & Clark Post 2, Helena, MT is the last known survivor of Camp Rimini, where sled and pack dogs were trained during World War II. He was honored by Sen. Steve Daines, R-Mont., who read a tribute to him into the congressional record honoring his military service and for reaching the 100-year milestone.

Daines called Armstrong during the ceremony to thank him. “I wish I could be there to shake your hand personally,” he said. In the Dec. 19 tribute, Daines called Armstrong “a distinguished World War II veteran who played a pivotal role in the U.S. Army’s plan to liberate Norway from Nazi occupation; as well as number search and rescue missions across northern Europe.”

Armstrong came to Helena in early 1943 to begin training sled and pack dogs at Camp Rimini, one of two sites that produced dogs for the Army’s K-9 Corps during WWII. Armstrong was stationed in Newfoundland, where he and his dogs aided in recovering downed personnel and sensitive equipment from aircraft wreckage sites in Greenland and Baffin Island.

Daines noted that after the war, Armstrong and his wife, Alice, returned to Montana and started the annual “Race to the Sky,” which preserves the legacy of the soldiers and dogs who served at Camp Rimini. The race is described as one of the most challenging and beautiful sled dog races in the world. The event was initially called Montana’s Governor’s Cup Sled Dog Race in 1986, and the first 500-mile race was in February of that year. Race to the Sky has been an Iditarod qualifier. According to the race’s website, there is now a 300-mile distance race, the 100-mile junior continuous race and the 100-mile adult continuous race.

Daines mentioned that Armstrong also preserved the legacy with his 2008 memoir “Camp Rimini and Beyond.”

“On behalf of a grateful nation, I want to thank Dave for his service to our state and to our country,” Daines said.

Denny Lenoir, director of veteran and military affairs for Daines, presented Armstrong with the congressional record tribute and a “Challenge Coin,” which the senator gives to Montanans to honor them for special achievements. One side of the coin has Daines’ name with the Capitol building in the background and the other side has the seal of the U.S. Senate.

Friend Ken Rosenbaum called the honor “tremendous” and said he worked with Armstrong on the Race to the Sky.

“I’ve seen him stand on the sled,” he said. Armstrong’s son, Mark, spoke on behalf of the family, saying they were “grateful” for the honor and praised his father.

“He was one of the best dads I could have ever asked for,” he said. “What he did after the war was pretty amazing.”

“He’s had a very interesting and rewarding life,” Mark Armstrong said.

[DAVID ARMSTRONG PASSED AWAY TUESDAY, APRIL 6, 2021 AT THE AGE OF 100.]

Post 123 Scholarship Donation

The Laurel High School asked local businesses, professional organizations and private individuals to donate to the senior class scholarship fund. The Laurel American Legion Post 123 voted to give two \$250 checks, one for a boy and one for a girl.



Pictured are: Richard Klose, Terry Fox, Sue Davidson, Kathleen Gilluly, school counselors Brent Edmond and Brandi Fox and Legion member Cliff Slater.

Murgel Receives Harrington (ANAVICUS) Scholarship

CAROL WILL, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF FINANCIAL AID, CARROLL COLLEGE

Carroll College junior communications and public relations major Emily Murgel of East Helena, MT, has received a \$1,500 Reverend Frank Lawrence Harrington (ANAVICUS) Scholarship for the 2021-2022 academic year. The award is in recognition of academic achievement, leadership potential and spiritual conduct in keeping with the best traditions of The American Legion and Carroll College. Murgel is specializing in marketing and print journalism with a minor in social media. Her long-term goal is to work in either the nonprofit sector or healthcare administration to increase awareness and funding through grant writing.

The Reverend Frank L. Harrington Scholarship was established in 1987 by the Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada, United States Unit, to honor Father Harrington, National Chaplain of The American Legion in 1947-48. Father Harrington was a spiritual leader, teacher, and patriot, as shown by his service to Mount St. Charles College (later renamed Carroll College) as dean of men and professor of mathematics. His spiritual leadership and close liaison with Canadian veterans, as members of the Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada, helped develop a close relationship which led to the awarding of honorary life membership in the Canadian group’s United States Unit to members of The American Legion, a unit which flourishes today.



(L-R) Past Dept. Cdr Dick Ellwein, Dept. VAVS Chairman Bill White, Dept. Legislative Chairman Roger Hagan, NEC David Driver, Post 2 Past Cdr Ray Stolp, Emily Murgel, Past National Vice Cdr John Pellegrini and Department Adjutant Gary White.

VICE COMMANDER continued from pg. 2
“White Caps,” the District Commanders are “Blue & White Caps.” All Post Officers and members are “Blue Caps.” Blue Caps are the foundation of The American Legion. Everything begins at this level. Once the Black & White and White Caps finish their term of Office they return to a Blue Cap and should be looked upon as mentors.

“Training Tuesdays” are held online the last Tuesday of each month by National. If you can’t make the time there are videos available to download at www.Legion.org/training, that you can watch at your own leisure. I still want to encourage every single Legionnaire to take the time and complete the “Basic Training” course available at the same link. A prerequisite to attend the Montana Legion College and the National American Legion College. Learn what this Organization that you have been investing in is all about and understand why you joined in the first place. This year we are going ahead with the Department Convention June 25-27, 2021, as though everything is back to normal and hope it stays that way. The Montana Legion College will be held the day prior to convention in Helena at the Delta Hotel starting at 10 am, Thursday, June 24th.

Registration is a simple email sent to: GASharbono@gmail.com with your contact information, Post number, current position, desired future positions, number of years with The American Legion and completion date of the new American Legion Basic Training. This is a requirement for all attendees.

Thank you, stay safe and stay healthy.🙏

DEPARTMENT OF MONTANA

MEMBERSHIP GOAL ROSTER

2021



	Year end Goal 2021	Year To Date Total	Year End 2020	percent of Goal
DISTRICT #1				
☆ 22 WOLF POINT	33	34	33	103.03%
41 GLASGOW	96	95	100	98.96%
45 HINSDALE	48	40	45	83.33%
49 HOMESTEAD	10	8	8	80.00%
55 POPLAR	27	23	28	85.19%
56 SCOBAY	47	24	38	51.06%
☆ 58 PLENTYWOOD	58	68	63	117.24%
61 BROCKTON	33	24	25	72.73%
81 CULBERTSON	92	62	89	67.39%
85 BAINVILLE	24	22	23	91.67%
☆ 122 OPHEIM	27	29	28	107.41%
☆ 140 FORT PECK TRIBES	17	17	17	100.00%
229 WESTBY	14	12	13	85.71%
TOTAL	526	458	510	87.07%

DISTRICT #2				
11 HAVRE	121	89	93	73.55%
☆ 48 CHINOOK	46	53	55	115.22%
50 BIG SANDY	24	23	24	95.83%
☆ 57 MALTA	92	98	106	106.52%
67 ROCKY BOY	25	21	22	84.00%
☆ 79 SACO	11	12	24	109.09%
88 CHESTER	34	28	32	82.35%
109 TURNER	25	15	18	60.00%
110 FORT BELKNAP	10	6	9	60.00%
TOTAL	3388	345	383	88.92%

DISTRICT #3				
☆ 36 VALIER	51	51	53	100.00%
37 CONRAD	51	41	45	80.39%
40 CUT BANK	58	38	49	65.52%
43 SHELBY	49	30	38	61.22%
69 GALATA	29	19	22	65.52%
73 SWEETGRASS	73	64	70	87.67%
127 BROWNING	26	25	26	96.15%
☆ CN20 CALGARY	45	46	47	102.22%
TOTAL	382	314	350	82.20%

☆ DISTRICT #4				
☆ 52 THOMPSON FALLS	59	61	67	103.39%
☆ 72 COLUMBIA FALLS	107	136	112	127.10%
74 EUREKA	50	48	53	96.00%
86 BIG FORK	60	52	60	86.67%
☆ 97 LIBBY	185	194	217	104.86%
106 ST IGNATIUS	50	44	55	88.00%
108 WHITEFISH	66	63	66	95.45%
☆ 112 POLSON	132	144	145	109.09%
☆ 113 ARLEE	25	28	28	112.00%
☆ 126 CHARLO	19	24	24	126.32%
129 PARADISE	72	60	84	83.33%
137 KALISPELL	233	219	235	93.99%
☆ 138 RONAN	64	71	72	110.94%
TOTAL	1122	1144	1218	101.96%

DISTRICT #5				
13 ST REGIS	61	59	64	96.72%
27 MISSOULA	356	297	358	83.43%
☆ 47 HAMILTON	126	132	135	104.76%
63 CONDON	45	39	43	86.67%
☆ 68 MISSOULA	46	46	49	100.00%
☆ 83 CLINTON	15	15	13	100.00%
☆ 91 CORVALLIS	166	192	181	115.66%
94 STEVENSVILLE	202	199	203	98.51%
101 MISSOULA	36	15	26	41.67%
124 FRENCHTOWN	69	63	69	91.30%
☆ 125 DRUMMOND	52	55	62	105.77%
134 FLORENCE	63	55	64	87.30%
135 LOLO	157	145	162	92.36%
TOTAL	1,394	1,312	1,429	94.12%

DISTRICT #6				
1 BUTTE	195	172	211	88.21%
☆ 2 HELENA	796	799	864	100.38%
☆ 9 LINCOLN	57	61	61	107.02%
10 DEER LODGE	65	60	63	92.31%
20 DILLON	175	149	159	85.14%
21 ANACONDA	235	198	223	84.26%
☆ 24 WHITEHALL	85	86	94	101.18%
31 TWIN BRIDGES	40	38	36	95.00%
☆ 42 TOWNSEND	115	116	118	100.87%
☆ 46 BOULDER	23	27	31	117.39%
☆ 89 SHERIDAN	82	98	102	119.51%
115 BUTTE	95	71	92	74.74%
TOTAL	1963	1875	2054	95.52%

AT LARGE				
105 HELENA	168	58	80	0.35%

DISTRICT #7				
14 BOZEMAN	360	354	384	98.33%
19 BIG TIMBER	178	144	164	80.90%
23 LIVINGSTON	170	162	171	95.29%
☆ 25 WHITE SULPHUR	63	66	65	104.76%
30 BELGRADE	247	190	216	76.92%
☆ 65 ENNIS	60	77	67	128.33%
78 W YELLOWSTONE	29	20	28	68.97%
87 MANHATTAN	165	139	161	84.24%
93 THREE FORKS	42	33	36	78.57%
99 BIG SKY	55	50	52	90.91%
☆ 118 GARDINER	35	38	38	108.57%
TOTAL	1404	1273	1382	90.67%

DISTRICT #8				
3 GREAT FALLS	259	237	241	91.51%
6 CHOTEAU	104	94	105	90.38%
26 FORT BENTON	34	33	36	97.06%
☆ 51 AUGUSTA	36	42	46	116.67%
64 DUTTON	46	42	47	91.30%
80 FAIRFIELD	31	23	32	74.19%
☆ 102 GERALDINE	112	113	129	100.89%
103 POWER	28	26	31	92.86%
130 VAUGHN	40	36	42	90.00%
☆ 133 CASCADE	31	36	29	116.13%
341 MALMSTROM	160	113	142	70.63%
TOTAL	881	795	880	90.24%

DISTRICT #9				
15 HARLOWTON	104	89	99	85.58%
16 LEWISTOWN	409	293	355	71.64%
18 ROUNDUP	67	55	56	82.09%
☆ 53 STANFORD	26	26	23	100.00%
☆ 62 DENTON	26	28	27	107.69%
70 JUDITH GAP	69	61	77	88.41%
76 HOBSON	37	36	39	97.30%
☆ 96 ROY	22	26	23	118.18%
120 WINIFRED	31	27	29	87.10%
TOTAL	791	641	728	81.04%

DISTRICT #10				
☆ 5 MILES CITY	79	83	93	105.06%
12 SIDNEY	40	31	46	77.50%
28 GLENDIVE	105	93	97	88.57%
29 CIRCLE	16	12	15	75.00%
32 TERRY	99	86	93	86.87%
35 BAKER	109	89	100	81.65%
39 FORSYTH	93	84	87	90.32%
44 COLSTRIP	30	25	35	83.33%
60 EKALAKA	15	10	17	66.67%
114 FAIRVIEW	37	31	37	83.78%
TOTAL	623	544	620	87.32%

DISTRICT #11				
4 BILLINGS	473	433	441	91.54%
8 HARDIN	47	42	49	89.36%
☆ 17 RED LODGE	57	57	63	100.00%
☆ 34 COLUMBUS	62	66	66	106.45%
☆ 71 FROMBERG	21	46	29	219.05%
84 BELFRY	39	34	35	87.18%
92 HYSHAM	26	21	21	80.77%
☆ 100 PARK CITY	59	59	63	100.00%
117 BILLINGS	236	119	142	50.42%
☆ 119 BILLINGS HGTS	174	195	197	112.07%
☆ 123 LAUREL	114	118	123	103.51%
TOTAL	1308	1190	1229	90.98%

☆ Post or District has reached or surpassed its incentive Goal

2021 INCENTIVE GOAL	10,950
2021 MEMBERSHIP TO DATE	9949
2020 TOTAL MEMBERSHIP	10,863
TOTAL PERCENTAGE	90.86%

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TEN LARGEST POSTS

Post	2	HELENA	798 MEMBERS
Post	4	BILLINGS	433 MEMBERS
Post	14	BOZEMAN	354 MEMBERS
Post	27	MISSOULA	297 MEMBERS
Post	16	LEWISTOWN	293 MEMBERS
Post	3	GREAT FALLS	237 MEMBERS
Post ...	137	KALISPELL	219 MEMBERS
Post	94	STEVENSVILLE	199 MEMBERS
Post	21	ANACONDA	198 MEMBERS
Post ...	119	BILLINGS HGTS	195 MEMBERS

DISTRICT STANDINGS

DISTRICT	PERCENTAGE	COMMANDER
4	101.96%	Dorothy Goodwin
6	95.47%	Linda Cousineau
5	94.12%	Greg Marose
11	90.98%	Larry Tipton
7	90.38%	Bill Cummins
8	90.12%	Larry Otis
2	88.92%	Vincent Schmoeckle
10	87.32%	David Ofalt
1	86.50%	Joe Yeoman
3	82.20%	Dusty Bailey
9	81.04%	Bruce Luhrsen

SONS OF THE AMERICAN LEGION
Apr. 8, 2021

SQUADRON	GOAL 2021	TO DATE
GLASGOW #41	46	37
☆ PLENTYWOOD #58	18	28
CULBERTSON #81	21	20
HAVRE #11	18	15
☆ CHINOOK #48	23	25
☆ MALTA #57	18	24
☆ SACO #79	13	14
GALATA #69	27	23
☆ LIBBY #97	18	20
☆ POLSON #112	15	16
MISSOULA #27	18	4
HAMILTON #47	10	2
CONDON #63	10	3
☆ CORVALLIS #91	15	19
STEVENSVILLE #94	48	31
☆ LOLO #135	32	40
BUTTE #1	28	13
HELENA #2	129	118
ANACONDA #21	20	14
☆ TOWNSEND #42	22	24
BUTTE #115	10	3
BOZEMAN #14	81	70
BIG TIMBER #19	15	8
LIVINGSTON #23	46	42
BELGRADE #30	46	14
MANHATTAN #87	35	24
☆ BIG SKY #99	23	27
GREAT FALLS #3	23	20
☆ CHOTEAU #6	27	34
☆ DUTTON #64	10	10
GERALDINE #102	59	37
☆ VAUGHN #130	23	23
HARLOWTON #15	27	24
LEWISTOWN #16	149	102
MILES CITY #5	14	13
BAKER #35	30	27
FORSYTH #39	52	48
BILLINGS #4	14	11
☆ BILLINGS #117	12	17
LAUREL #123	13	5
HQS POST #9999	0	0
TOTALS	1258	1035
☆ SQUADRON GOAL MET		



Letter to the Editor

CIVICS...a lost art?

BY ED SPERRY, PAST DEPT. CMDR & CHAPLAIN

The most recent Legionnaire Magazine has an interesting article about Civics and how it is no longer adequately addressed in our schools. This is a breakthrough for the Legion as the subject has raged for at least the last quarter century. I guess it is 'political.' That seems to be the way the Legion now avoids arguments. School curricula have sure as heck become political. If we care about our youth, we need to enter the fray! Do you want to stand by and let your kids be taught that they can choose their sex? How about being taught that our society is based on systemically racial prejudice? Our Republic is being undermined in academia. Does the Legion with its wonderful youth programs really mean to just ignore what is taking place? This issue isn't one that we cannot touch. After all schools are non-partisan. School Boards have the right to influence school curricula! They just need the guts. The elections for school board member are a non-partisan occasion. The Legion has every right to advocate and encourage the election of members that give a damn about what is taught.

The School Board can greatly dictate to the staff what is proper and desired. After all they hire and fire. They are the high ground. Let's focus on the high ground as a Department and start to correct the deficiencies in teaching civics wherever found. How can this be done? It's simple; there is a mission waiting for us to engage.

Conduct School Board forums in your community. It's proper, it's non-partisan; just do it. The Department has a School Board Forum guide. Request one and proceed. What a difference it would be if over 100 schools had Board members that agree with us! I will be holding one at a local school on the 20th of April. It will be fun. Ahh, imagine what questions can be asked.

This is also a wonderful chance to reach out and participate with other concerned community organizations. One of the best ever, held in Stevensville, was presented by the Legion in cooperation with the Masons.

The Josephine and Yellowstone National Cemetery

By EDWARD E. (Ed) SAUNDERS | BILLINGS, MT | FEB 2021



the Josephine, rendered valued service and remain honored in history. The Far West carried wounded soldiers from the Battle of the Little Bighorn (“Custer’s Last Stand”) in June 1876. The Josephine forced many rapids, and holds the record of its day for the farthest upriver run on the Yellowstone River: tying up near present Billings, Montana, in June 1875.1

In 2008 visionary citizens and veterans created Yellowstone County Veterans Cemetery: forerunner of present Yellowstone National Cemetery. Plans included a small warming hut having public toilets using green technology with vent stacks, and a separate built-in meeting room. When workers finished the hut, a retired military veteran serving on the cemetery committee smiled and said, “It looks like the Josephine The moniker stuck. The small building, now partly used as the cemetery caretaker’s office, continues valued service. To this day locals honor the building at Yellowstone National Cemetery by fondly yet reverently calling it the “Josephine.”



Zunich receives 50-year membership at Post 5

Miles City Post 5 Commander Bob Prahl, left, presented Vernon Zunich with his 50-Year American Legion Membership Certificate on March 12, 2021.

PHOTO BY ZUNICH FAMILY MEMBER.

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Branch Manager
NMLS# 96766



KRIS HILL
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DEPARTMENT OF MONTANA



FAREWELL AND HAPPY TRAILS TO DEPARTMENT ADJUTANT, GARY WHITE

BY JEN DALRYMPLE, COMMANDER POST 42

His term as Adjutant for the Department of Montana has become nothing short of legendary. With laughter, great food, and many wonderful comrades, to include the National Commander Bill Oxford, Gary received the farewell so deserved after **nineteen** years as the Department of Montana Adjutant. Keeping the retirement event a surprise from Gary was an extraordinary accomplishment considering the amount of involvement he has with Montana Posts, Districts, Zones, and Department personnel. He humbly admitted that he was unaware of what was to occur but became suspicious when he saw the Past Department of Utah Commander, Paula Stevenson and her husband in the dining room.

Department Commander Jeff Nelson opened the dinner event with standard formality and after dining, guest speaker National Commander Bill Oxford delivered the keynote address before Gary was given the

floor. Amid loud groans and laughter, Gary promised to use his hour to the fullest and uniquely he did. He went around the room, one by one, subjecting the audience with a Garyism revelation of character, trivia tidbit or special event story of every individual present. Minor assertions of "What happens at National Convention stays at National Convention" just added to the joviality and cheers of comradery. After Gary's canvassing about the room, he was presented with several parting gifts from Posts and persons to include an Adirondack chair made from hockey sticks, the coveted Bobby Orr trading card and a standing ovation of farewell.

Gary, you will be missed as the voice of Department Adjutant, but may you always be a part of our Legion Family. Farewell, happy trails and best wishes in your retirement!

A huge THANK YOU to District 9 for the wonderful meal and enjoyable event! Well done.



Legion Posts affected by COVID can apply for a one-time \$1,000 grant

SUBMITTED BY CHAYA SEMPLE, DEPARTMENT OF MONTANA DISASTER AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE COORDINATOR (FROM LEGION.ORG)

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, 2020 during its annual Fall Meetings. 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:

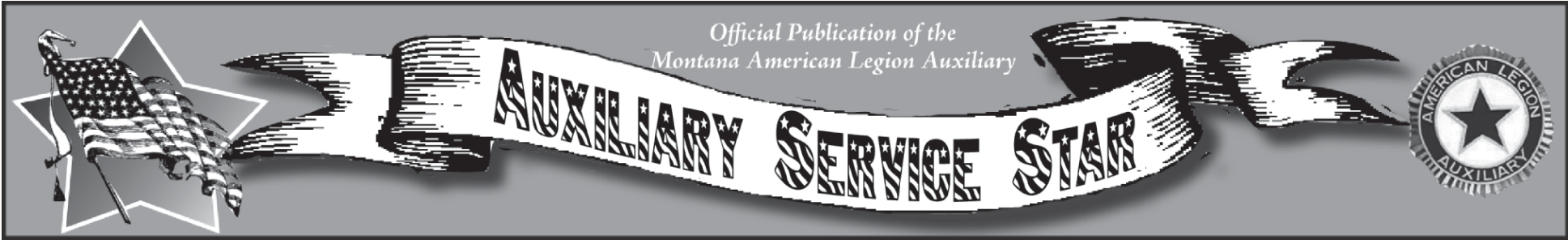
1. A Consolidated Post Report on file.

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. Search for Mission Blue Post Assistance Program.

American Legion Posts applying for a grant will be required to first submit the completed application to 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 a Mission Blue Post Assistance Program grant.



Happy Spring! This is already the last quarter for this year. Time flies even when everything else is slowed down. So many things happening the last part of the ALA year. The biggest thing to think about is our upcoming State Convention in Helena at the Delta Hotel. Make sure you have your registrations in soon! I keep watching the list of applicants and it is not that long. Please, please get them in. Our National President, Nicole Clapp, is coming and that is really an honor. She is friendly, funny and a great leader for us. Come meet her. Make sure to get your room reservations in, also. Speaking of Convention, I need my Committee Chairmen to let me know if they want to speak at Convention and present their awards, if they have them. I need to know how much time you will need so we can get the timeline worked. This is the last of getting new members in. Soon they will be kept until the new year starts for listing for your numbers. Through this most difficult time everyone has been fantastic at signing up members and getting your current members to renew. Thank you and thank you to VP Chris Nelson for all she has done. May is soon here and it is Poppy Day. Last year it was most difficult for many to even participate in one, but this year things are more open and a better chance to be out doing a fund raiser. This is such an important event because it gives you funds to help veterans and half of what you receive goes to help the Department with items needed for veterans on an even larger scale. Jamie has done a fantastic job of getting help needed in emergency times. Thanks also to Committee Chairman, Dixie Parsons!! Do not forget the decorated hats for Convention and the poppy going to National to represent Montana. This is the last article for this year before Convention and I wanted to thank everyone for their dedication to the ALA, especially those officers who chose to stay for two years. I want to thank all of you from the bottom of my heart for your support to me through these two years. It has been a challenging time, but you were all wonderful! I cannot say I am sad this time is ending, and I know Chris Nelson will be a fantastic President! I wish her all the best for her upcoming year. I am not going away, but plan on doing the ALA NEC for this next year. I am still going to be working on the quilts for the South West Veterans Home until we get the 60 quilts supplied. As soon as I can get a carry around condenser I will be traveling to Butte and get the first two Cottages delivered. We are up to 18 completed quilts and need six more completed. We have received some beautiful quilts! Thank you! The ones that completed quilt tops have been fantastic also. Now I just need to get them quilted. If you have completed quilts, please send them to me and if you do quilting please let me know. I will send you everything you need to get the tops quilted. I really want to get them delivered to our wonderful veterans. Thanks again to everyone, and we will see you shortly at Convention. Blessings to each one of you. I keep you all in my prayers every day. Taking care of the business of our veterans and our members,

*Taking care of the business
of our Veterans and our members. ★*

ALA National President Clapp to speak at ALA Department Convention

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 the future. 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.

CALL TO CONVENTION

TO: Officers and members of the American Legion Auxiliary Units in Montana

GREETINGS

The 101st Annual Convention of The American Legion Auxiliary, Department of Montana is hereby called to meet and assemble at Helena, Montana, June 24, 25, 26, 27, 2021 to transact and consider such matters as are included in this call and any other business which may properly come before it.

PURPOSE

The Convention is called for the purpose of electing officers to the ensuing year, electing delegates to the National Convention, amending the Department Constitution, presentation of annual reports, and the transactions of such other business as may be brought before it in conformity with the provisions of the National and Department Constitution.

REPRESENTATION

Representation in the Convention will be by Units. Each Unit in good standing and not delinquent in State and National Dues shall be eligible to representation at the Department Convention. Representation is based up on the paid-up Unit Membership as of the beginning of Department Convention as follows:

Units having up to 50 members are entitled to two (2) delegates; and one additional delegate for each additional 50 members or fraction thereof.

A Unit, to be in good standing must have a minimum of ten paid members and no indebtedness to the Department.

DEPARTMENT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

A regular meeting of the committee will be held on Friday, June 25, 2021 at 9:00 A.M. The first stated meeting of the Department Executive Committee following the Department Convention will be held immediately upon adjournment of the Convention. The term of office of the newly elected members will commence immediately with the adjournment of the Convention.

INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS

All Department Officers and District Presidents will be sworn into office at the conclusion of the session on Sunday morning, June 27, 2021 and will automatically become members of the Department Executive Committees.

Any inquiries for information with reference to the Convention will be answered from Department Headquarters.

Jamie DeBates
Department Secretary/Treasurer

Sue Davidson
Department President

Secretary

JAMIE DeBATES



Jamie DeBates

My, how time flies! In July 2013, I signed on to perform the duties of Department Secretary and Treasurer. It's been quite an eight-year journey and I'm confident we have a new Secretary to assist you.

I intend to continue as our Treasurer, however if anyone has the burning desire to assume those duties I will step back and hand those reigns over as well. Experience in QuickBooks is the primary requirement.

During this time of transition and training I beg your patience. I will forward your requests to the appropriate chairmen and ask you to be more aware of who those officers and chairman are. It's time to put the "Easy" button away and use the appropriate channels. I realize it's faster and easier to message the secretary, but it's a new day for our Department and I will need to be more firm. That being said, it means you won't get yours answers immediately. We will have a new email address and the forms in the secretary packets will be updated. I respectfully ask you to pay close attention to that information so your correspondence to the secretary ends up the in the correct place.

From the bottom of my heart, I thank you for the love and support you've given me. In most cases it's been an absolute pleasure to be your secretary-treasurer. I'm confident you'll show the new secretary your utmost respect. ⚡

Why I'm not a member?



No one asked!

Letter From the Editor

Greetings to the Membership of The American Legion Auxiliary,

It has come time to do some housekeeping when it comes to submitting photos for publication. We want the photos; however, I need your help with giving information with your photo submissions. Please when emailing photos send as e-mail attachments – PLEASE, JPG or PNG format is fine. When you are shooting with your cellphone/tablet please check your resolution. Set the Resolution high as it helps with the quality when it comes to printing.

- When you send your photos, please include captions to your photos as follows:
- Submitted by <name>, Unit # <city>
- Photo# - caption, etc.
- I won't know what is going on in your photo, but you do, and the more details the better.
- Don't spend time setting up photos and captions in a Word document, send original photo file as an attachment to an email.
- Do Not embed (insert) photos in the body of an e-mail. See above (if embedded in an email the photo has to be copied/pasted into Word, then copied/pasted into photo editor)
- By just attaching your photos to the email with caption and submitter information makes the job of your editor slightly easier.

If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out.

Thank you, Michelle Kandel
PUBLIC RELATIONS CHAIRMAN, SERVICE STAR EDITOR

American Legion Auxiliary

Department of Montana Fundraiser



"Dimes and Time"



Our goal is to raise enough dimes to stretch 100 miles for our programs to help veterans, and for each Auxiliary Unit to spend 100 hours in personal time to better the lives of our veterans and their families.

This is to take place November 2019—May 2021 in honor of our American Legion Auxiliary 100th Birthday celebration.

Thank you for your donation!

Convention Reminder!

~Current Membership Card Needed~

When attending Department Convention you must have your Current Membership Card. This shows you are in good standing.

Credentials will be checked at the start of each morning session.

Without a current card, you will not be allowed into the convention floor.

Membership

1st Vice President

CHRISTINE NELSON

Our membership efforts were impacted by our Covid-19 stay home as much as possible. Thank goodness now most of us have been or are able to get immunized soon. Spring is a time we all like to get out. With longer evening daylight time some social activities are resuming. If you're attending school and sports events check with those around, you if they have a parent who served in the military and remind them that it's a wonderful way to honor their service by having an Auxiliary membership.

If your Unit can reach 95 percent of its membership goal by May 7, or 100 percent by July 31, our Department will receive a financial gift which is greatly needed this year. As of this printing we are at 90 percent—so let's do this!

Dorothy "Polly Todd

Department President 1988-1989

REPORTED TO MICHELLE KANDEL, SERVICE STAR EDITOR



It is with sadness that I report the passing of Past Department President Dorothy "Polly" Todd. As Department President, her motto "Montana Pride – 100 Years, 100%" as her tenure was during Montana's State Centennial. She held many offices at the Department level starting at Chaplain before her Department Presidency. A celebration of life will take place tentatively in May 2021; depending on weather and COVID restrictions. Memorials can be made to the Christ Episcopal Church window restoration fund or Tobacco Roots Mountains Care Center or a charity of your choice.

You may read her full obituary at the following website:

https://mtstandard.com/news/local/obituaries/dorothy-polly-clark-ladue-todd-92/article_96e399ab-df41-5650-936b-ec1dff988e1b.html [Link current at the time of printing.]

Reminder

from Ashley Holmes,
Department Chaplain
Please send items
(pictures, prayers, etc.)
for President Sue's
scrapbook to me at:
ashes0805@hotmail.com

Deceased Members

JAN. 1, 2021 - MAR. 31, 2021

Unit	Unit City	Name
Unit 14	Bozeman	*Dorothy Todd
Unit 32	Terry	Barbara Macioroski
Unit 64	Dutton	Helen Christianson
Unit 69	Galata	Donnis D Benson Agnes Cole
Unit 72	Columbia Falls	Betty L. Ott
Unit 81	Culbertson	Minnie Simard
Unit 100	Park City	Marylou Berman
Unit 102	Geraldine	Jamie Tryon
Unit 129	Plains	Margaret L Mckay

*Past Department President

Corvallis American Legion Post 91 hosts Reconnect ski event at Lost Trail

MICHELLE MCCONNAHA | RAVALLI REPUBLIC | FEB 24, 2021

Corvallis American Legion Post 91 held their Reconnect for active-duty troops as a ski trip to Lost Trail Powder Mountain, Feb 18-20.

They brought soldiers and their spouses to an all-expense-paid vacation to see Montana and enjoy refreshing time off. Troops from the U.S. Air Force Special Tactics Squadron, Army Rangers, Army Special Operations Aviation and 7th Infantry division from Joint Base Lewis McChord, Washington took part, and one came from Okinawa, Japan.

They toured businesses, had five-star lodging, enjoyed breakfast at Camp Sula, rentals, ski lessons and skiing at Lost Trail and nightly dinners.

Retired military and organizer Chris Kurinec said local sponsorship made it possible.

“Lost Trail is doing us a huge favor by freeing up instructors and equipment so that some of these folks who have never been to Montana and never skied are given that opportunity,” he said. “We’ve got American Legion members skiing with them, as part of the reconnect where the guys who have already gotten out or retired are seeing the younger guys that are taking their place in the unit.”

“It’s so guys like me who retired a decade ago can see the guys following in our footsteps and making bigger strides in their military careers,” Kurinec said. “Hopefully, we’ve left it better than we got it and they’re taking it that much further. It is interesting for guys that have been out 20-30 years to see the folks who are deploying to Afghanistan or Syria or wherever else they have to deploy and hear their stories.”

Michael Willeby is serving in Okinawa, Japan, where his job is “an 88 Mike.”

“Basically, I’m a driver,” Willeby said. “We set the teams up and push them out for deployments. We get them to all the crazy places that they go and ensure they are in accordance with government rules.”

Willeby said he enjoyed connecting with the retired military.

“They have been extremely accommodating,” he said. “I came with every possible problem and they were so easy going. I’ve never had anyone jump through so many hoops to ensure I could get here.”

“I could live here,” he said. “I could leave the beach; I’ve had my fun with it. It is so hot and humid. I love Montana. I’ve always wanted to be here, it is amazing. I’ve never been in a state that reminds me of Japan where you can just leave your skis that are obviously expensive, and no one will touch them. It’s really community-like. I’ve had a blast.”

Air Force Staff Sergeant parachute rigger Tim Doyle was born and raised in Springfield, Massachusetts, and is serving in Washington at Ft. Lewis.

This was his first time skiing and he enjoyed it. “I’ve played hockey most of my life and the movement kind of came natural,” Doyle said. “The first day I was falling more than I would have liked but the second and third day I only fell a couple of times. Now I have the hang of it and have been hitting some of the more advanced slopes.”

“Someone is taking the time to show their appreciation and I like how these guys are putting it together,” Doyle said. “I’ve met all the veterans. I previously worked with John [Nolan], he was at one of our jump courses. This is a really great program that a lot more people should experience.”

Mario Elias and his wife came from Ft. Lewis, Washington, where he serves as a 19-Delta Calvary Scout.

“It’s the easy way of saying we paint the picture of the battlefield for our commander, and he sends it up higher,” Elias said. “We’re pretty much the first eyes on everything.”

He and his wife are from Oregon but neither had skied before this trip and enjoyed the lessons and runs.



Some of the Reconnect active-duty troops with an American Legion Post 91 member and his family at Lost Trail Powder Mountain, Feb. 19 [2021].

He said snow was something that he sledged on two to three weeks each year growing up. He enjoyed the Reconnect.

“It’s a great location, we got to see a lot of wild-life including bighorn sheep, elk and mule deer,” he said. “The retired military are super friendly; they help us out with the skiing. We’ve been having good conversations.”

Cody (last name withheld) serves as an infantryman in the Army in Ft. Lewis but grew up in Oklahoma. He hadn’t had much experience with snow until he moved to Washington where he did some snowboarding. His favorite sport is skydiving.

“These guys are awesome,” he said. “They came before us and have a lot of knowledge and experience. It’s nice to hear stories. Every night we have supper with them and have a free-for-all telling stories.”

He was one of the few single men who came to the Reconnect.

“At first it was for married couples, then for single E6’s and below,” he said. “I’m the only single squad leader so they sent me. I am snowboarding by myself this trip, it’s great.”

Montanans John Nolan and Vern Cortes are two of the retired military (from Army special operations) invested in the Reconnect program.

Cortes said the four days was wonderful camaraderie with guys he could relate to.

“I’ve got 16 combat deployments, five years overseas fighting,” he said. “When you come back you’re just getting ready to go back again, you don’t have time to relax. To bring those guys away from the machine that just demands constantly and let them take the wheels off and have a good time is me giving back to my community.”

“The only way to do 16 deployments is taking care of the soldier and his family and there is a lot of outlets for married guys like wife retreats,” Nolan said. “My wife and I have been married 26 years and probably been together for 12 years. Some of these guys said this is the first vacation they’ve ever had. They are living like rock stars which is what we want.”

Nolan said the Reconnect has been beneficial to him also.

“It is therapy for me,” he said. “You’re in the service, then you’re out of the service and no longer part of the team. That meat grinder is still going and it’s like watching the train leave in the distance. But this way I get back with the Joes and share some stories. It’s great to teach them to ski and give them confidence in something new.”

Reconnect happens nationwide but this “Is a very aggressive American Legion,” Nolan said. “For some American Legions, it is just meeting in a bar on Wednesday night. For us, it’s Reconnects, scholarship opportunities and career day experiences for high school students. We’re showing them options that are out there.”

Kurinec thanked Lost Trail, Bitterroot River Inn, Big Sky Brewing, Camp Sula, Quality Used Cars, Joint Special Operations Fund, Corvallis American Legion Post 91, and anonymous donors.

“We’re trying to run three [Reconnects] a year, skiing, fishing, and hiking just providing that resource to the command where they can send their troops to get some good rest and relaxation in Montana,” Kurinec said.

“The experience has been amazing from the people we flew here with to the people who are providing the trip for us,” Elias said. “It has been awesome to meet our older brothers in arms, the service members who have been in longer than I have been alive.”

Cole (last name withheld), a mortar man in the Army at Ft. Lewis, is originally from Illinois.

There’s a new Secretary in town

By KATHLEEN GILLULY, OUTLOOK EDITOR

On Tuesday [April 6, 2021], selected Laurel veterans including Former State Commander of The American Legion (and Laurel City Counselor) Richard Klose and historian Ed Saunders were invited, along with Bill Kennedy, who heads Friends of Yellowstone National Cemetery, to meet with the recently confirmed Secretary of Veterans Affairs Denis McDonough and U.S. Senator Jon Tester.



Richard Klose, National VA Secretary Denis McDonough, and friends of the Yellowstone National Cemetery Pres. Bill Kennedy. 04-06-2021

The group met at Yellowstone National Cemetery just north of Laurel as part of Secretary McDonough’s visit to Montana. He’s traveling with Sen. Tester to various veterans’ service sites to gain a better understanding of the needs of Montana veterans, but especially veterans living in rural areas. Senator Tester is the Chair of the Committee on Veterans Affairs.

Previously, a long-time aide and Chief of Staff to former President Barack Obama, Secretary McDonough helped the Obama “administration’s work on behalf of military families and veterans and earned the trust of President Biden as a first-class manager with the knowledge and vision to deliver results,” according to an official announcement on his February confirmation. As a member of the National Security Council, McDonough visited troops regularly in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Although not a veteran himself, the Secretary will guide the nation’s second largest federal agency through the transition. While some groups have decried the choice of McDonough because they had hoped the job would go to a woman or a post 911 vet, he has been welcomed by many, including VoteVets.

“What the VA needs, more than anything, is an experienced manager with a deep depth of knowledge about how the agency works, how it interacts with other agencies, and how to quickly build the agency back even better,” said Will Fischer, with VoteVets, in a statement.

On Monday, the Secretary and Senator met with veterans at MSU Billings for a town-hall style meeting. They will repeat that at several other Montana locations this week.

Post 108 Bus Safety Donation



The Whitefish American Legion Roosevelt Post 108 recently donated \$3,000 for the purchase of two stop arms for school buses from Rocky Mountain Transportation, which provides bus service for Whitefish School District. Dale Duff, owner of Rocky Mountain Transportation, left, accepts a check from Bert May, Charlie Abell and Bill La Brie, all with the Legion Post. The arm extends from the left side when the school bus is stopped so that vehicles can’t legally pass the bus while its unloading passengers. LaBrie says the Whitefish Post is challenging other Posts in the state to make donations in their communities for the stop arms. “If we can save one life then that’s important,” he said. (HEIDI DESCH/WHITEFISH PILOT)

Chief Joseph Post 135

Providing Items for Local Food Bank

SUBMITTED BY DEBORAH HANCOCK, POST 135 FINANCE OFFICER

Chief Joseph Post 135 was asked to assist with food donations to the Lolo Food Bank prior to Thanksgiving. The food bank provided a specific list of items in need or in short supply. About five Post members went out shopping for the Thanksgiving event. Just prior to December 16, the Post was

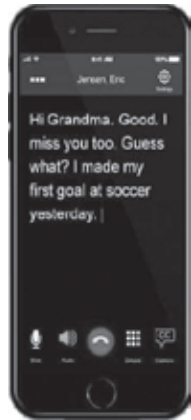
notified again that there was a need for Christmas. The turkeys and hams were already bought or donated by others.

Again a list of needs was provided. Everything was bought and delivered in time for the big day. The Post and its members showed their commitment in helping the Lolo community by being very generous with time and money for both events. Some of the main items bought were: 386 can goods, 219 (packages, boxes, sticks of butter), 24 bags of sugar, 30 packages of rolls, 18 jars of pickles and olives, 8 packages of celery, 8 Cool Whip containers, 20 loaves of bread, and 3 dozen eggs. All items for both events totaled \$845. The Food Bank staff were very appreciative and know they can count on Chief Joseph Post 135 to help again in 2021.



Pictured left to right or Department Commander Jeff Nelson, Eva Bruce, Hiliary Lamphere, Mike McCloud.

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Sutton takes Post 22 Oratorical Contest

Angelica Sutton, winner of Leonard Dethman Post 22 oratorical contest, pictured with Adjutant Eric Nelson on February 6 held at Wolf Point High School. Angelica will be competing in the District 1 oratorical competition in Glasgow on Saturday February 20.



FEMA to Help Pay Funeral Costs for COVID-19-related Deaths

In early April, FEMA will begin providing financial assistance for funeral expenses incurred after Jan. 20, 2020 for deaths related to coronavirus (COVID-19) to help ease some of the financial stress and burden caused by the pandemic. The policy was finalized today, and FEMA is now moving rapidly to implement this funeral assistance program nationwide.

To be eligible for COVID-19 funeral assistance, the policy states:

- The applicant must be a U.S. citizen, non-citizen national, or qualified alien who incurred funeral expenses after Jan. 20, 2020 for a death attributed to COVID-19.
- If multiple individuals contributed toward funeral expenses, they should apply under a single application as applicant and co-applicant. FEMA will also consider documentation from other individuals not listed as the applicant and co-applicant who may have incurred funeral expenses as part of the registration for the deceased individual.
- An applicant may apply for multiple deceased individuals.
- The COVID-19-related death must have occurred in the United States, including the U.S. territories and the District of Columbia.
- This assistance is limited to a maximum financial amount of \$9,000 per funeral and a maximum of \$35,500 per application.
- Funeral assistance is intended to assist with expenses for funeral services and interment or cremation.

In the coming weeks, a dedicated 800 number will be established to help individuals who apply. In the meantime, potential applicants are encouraged to start gathering the following documentation:

- **An official death certificate** that attributes the death to COVID-19 and shows that the death occurred in the U. S. The death certificate must indicate the death “may have been caused by” or “was likely the result of” COVID-19 or COVID-19 like symptoms. Similar phrases that indicate a high likelihood of COVID-19 are considered sufficient attribution.
- **Funeral expense documents** (receipts, funeral home contract, etc.) that include the applicant’s name, the deceased individual’s name, the amount of funeral expenses, and the dates the funeral expenses were incurred.
- **Proof of funds received from other sources** specifically for use toward funeral costs. Funeral assistance may not duplicate benefits received from burial or funeral insurance, financial assistance received from voluntary agencies, federal/state/local/tribal/territorial government programs or agencies, or other sources.

More information regarding this assistance can be found at [COVID-19 Funeral Assistance | FEMA.gov](https://www.fema.gov/covid-19-funeral-assistance)

Contact Us

If you have any questions, please contact FEMA Office of External Affairs:
Congressional Affairs at (202) 646-4500 or at FEMA-Congressional-Affairs@fema.dhs.gov
Intergovernmental Affairs at (202) 646-3444 or at FEMA-IGA@fema.dhs.gov
Tribal Affairs at (202) 646-3444 or at FEMA-Tribal@fema.dhs.gov
Private Sector Engagement at nbeoc@max.gov

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FEMA Mission

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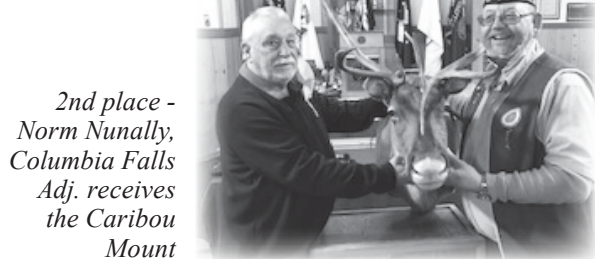
Kalispell Post 137 Raffle Winners

SUBMITTED BY RON BOESPFLUG, ADJ POST 137

- 1st place: Bill White, Ruger, m77 7mm Mag. Rifle
- 2nd place: Norm Nunally, Columbia Falls Adj. Caribou mount
- 3rd place: Pat Scanlon, Kansas - Deer Antlers



1st place - Bill White receives his Ruger m77 7mm Mag. Rifle



2nd place - Norm Nunally, Columbia Falls Adj. receives the Caribou Mount

Helena observance honors Vietnam veterans who were not welcomed home from war

CURT SYNNESS FOR THE INDEPENDENT RECORD | MAR 29, 2021



A "Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day" ceremony was held Monday at The American Legion Post No. 2 in Helena. GARY MARSHALL, BMGPHOTOS.COM

The 10th anniversary of the Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day ceremony took place Monday in Helena, although a cold March morning wind forced the cancellation of the planned walk.

The event was highlighted by the drumming of the Native American Magpie Singers, and keynote speaker Vietnam combat veteran John Quintrell of Helena.

The ceremony, which was moved from Kindrick Legion Field to the American Legion (Lewis & Clark) Post No. 2 due to the weather, kicked off with the music of the Magpie Singers.

"This was originally a funeral song," explained drummer/singer Cary Youpee, who was born and raised on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation, "but it became an honor song in the 1970s for the Vietnam War."

Next, Charmaine Lindgren of the Oro Fino Daughters of the American Revolution sang the National Anthem, followed by opening prayers by

Chaplain Chaya Semple and then Magpie member Daniel Pocha.

"This prayer was written by Francis Whitebird, and was offered at the dedication of the Vietnam War Memorial," Pocha said.

Master of Ceremonies, Vietnam veteran Col. Ray Read, noted that the U.S. Senate passed a congressional measure in 2011 recognizing March 29 as Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day nationally. The 2011 Montana Legislature established the holiday in the state with the passage of House Bill 255.

After the reading of Gov. Greg Gianforte's proclamation marking the holiday and the introduction of several guests – including Brig.

Gen. James Wilkins – it was keynote speaker John Quintrell's turn.

Staff Sgt. Quintrell served with Company C of the Second Platoon, Second Battalion, 27th Regiment of the Army's 25th Infantry Division – known as the Wolfhounds – in the Republic of Vietnam in 1968-69.

Forty-nine members of Quintrell's outfit were killed in action, with 70% earning the Purple Heart.

"But when I came back, I was not welcomed home," related Quintrell. He described having vegetables and verbal taunts thrown at him at the Great Falls airport, and then a long-respected father of a friend told him that he "should be ashamed for killing women and babies."

"I made a promise that I would never tell anyone that I was Vietnam vet, which I kept for 34 years," he said.

In 2003, he started searching for the guys he served with. The next year his Vietnam platoon members held their first reunion. He later began speaking publicly about his war experiences, after meeting former combat nurse Diane Carlson Evans of Helena, founder of the Vietnam Women's Memorial.

"We found out that Diane and I got into Vietnam at the same time, although we didn't know each other back then," Quintrell said. "She influenced me to start speaking about the war. And I just want to say thanks to all the war-time nurses and medical services, a lot of us might not be here now if it weren't for them."

Quintrell has now organized eight Wolfhound reunions – the last consisted of 104 veterans – and has authored a book about his service, "My 365 Days."

His talk also included the plight of tens of thousands of veterans who are experiencing homelessness or died by suicide, and he challenged those in attendance to "reach out to a Vietnam veteran today, let them know they're not forgotten," and urge them to seek the benefits they deserve.

"And to this day, I would still take a stand to defend this country and our freedom," he concluded.

After Chaplain Semple's closing benediction, the Magpie Singers played a moving rendition of the song "Soldier Boy."

"Thirty-six thousand Montanans served during the Vietnam era, and we believe at least 5% (about 1,800) of those were Native American Indians," Pocha said.

2021 Department Convention Guest Speaker

John A. Brieden III of Brenham, Texas, was elected National Commander of the 2.8-million-member American Legion on August 28, 2003, in St. Louis, Mo, during the 85th National Convention of the nation's largest veterans organization.



Brieden is a United States Army veteran where he served as an Infantry Officer from 1972 – 1977. During his time in the Army, he attended Ranger School, Airborne School, Jungle Warfare School, and Arctic Warfare School. He was selected to serve in the 1st Battalion, 75th Infantry when the U.S. Army was first going back to the concept of Ranger Battalions.

He joined The American legion in 1979 and for 25 years he has served in key leadership positions at the post, district, department (state) and national level. Among his national level appointments are; Chairman of the National legislative Commission; Chairman of the National Economic Commission; Chairman of the National Foreign Relations Commission and Chairman of the National Americanism Council.

After leaving the Army, Brieden went into the insurance business where he earned the professional designation Life Underwriter Training Council Fellow. He was named the Central Texas Association of Insurance and Financial Advisors Man of the Year in 1993.

Commander Brieden has served as a member of Congressman Kevin Brady's Military Academy Selection Committee: was appointed by the Texas Governor in 1998 to the Texas Veterans Commission and served a term as Secretary of that Commission in 2000 and 2001.

Married to the former Terry Weaver Dial, the Brieden's have four children and five grandchildren.

Women Veterans Coordinator

KIM KAY C. MC CARTY-MARTIN

I hope everyone had an enjoyable Christmas and New Year. With 2020 being so different due to COVID-19 social distancing and canceled events, Christmas has been hard for some of us this year. Hopefully, with the vaccine now being distributed, we can return to some normalcy.

As The American Legion Women Veterans Coordinator, part of what I do is help women veterans with answers to questions, provide resources and information related to their health and overall welfare. Some of the events held in the past were Women recognition luncheons where we had guest speakers, recognized our female WWII Heroes and some Korean War Heroes who live in Montana. We have joined together for events such as yoga, Sweat Lodge, and hikes just for women vets. Dream Adaptive, Feathered Nest, Montana Vet Program (MVP) have all been kind enough to help.

I do not have computer access to anyone's information nor do I obtain any information from the Department. I have been trying over the years to gather a data base of women veterans in the MT American Legion. I hope though that over the years you have understood that the only way I can communicate with women veterans is by either obtaining an address, phone number, or email address. Montana is a big state and there is a lot of land to cover so I have relied heavily in the past on District and Post Commanders and individuals in providing me with contact information so I may be able to reach out to women veterans and assist them in any way I can.

I may be in Great Falls but I travel to as many District meetings as possible. I would like to meet all the women veterans in each area just to talk and have some camaraderie. Plus, I want to be able to pass on the resources and information I have that may be helpful to you. I am planning on attending every Spring District Meeting coming up. I would like to meet all the women veterans in each area, weather you attend the meeting or not, at 3 pm. I'll be the one with the Cougar RV and white SUV.

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BY CORY SENA, POST ADJUTANT

Post 46 Train Project

In May 2017, American Legion Post 46 in Boulder obtained approval to restore an amusement park train that was in operation at the state owned/operated Boulder River School and Hospital from 1961 to the early 1980s. The train was part of a recreation program

instituted by Dr. Arthur Westwell, school superintendent. The train is a replica of the 1864 steam engine that transported President Lincoln to Gettysburg and was designed/built by local craftsmen who worked at the school Maintenance Shop. It operated on a half-mile track and pulled two passenger cars. In the 1980s, after the recreation program was halted, the train was obtained by the local community from the State of Montana. After 30 years in storage, Post 46 members undertook a community service project to become caretakers of the train and restore it. The restoration focused on converting the train from operating on a rail system to roadways and for resuming passenger rides. Restoration has included painting, repair of the 1940s Jeep Willys engine, installation of steering utilizing an Oliver tractor single pendant front wheel with steering box, wiring, casting front wheels to maintain the original overall shape, and installation of rear road wheels. A small trailer that replicates a coal tender was built to enable an additional passenger during events. Future restoration will include a passenger car that will seat eight people. Once restoration is complete, the intent is for the Post 46 to operate the train at events throughout the county. The necessary funding for the restoration has come from generous donations and grants from local businesses, charities, and individual donors.

