



WWII Army Nurses: Courage Under Fire

Irene Dickerson

Over 59,000 American women served in the Army Nurse Corps during WWII. They were deployed across every theater of war—Europe, the Pacific, North Africa, and the home front. Nurses worked closer to combat than ever before. They served in field hospitals, evacuation hospitals, hospital trains, ships, and even as flight nurses on medical transport planes. Their skill and dedication helped achieve an exceptionally low post-injury mortality rate—fewer than 4% of wounded soldiers died after receiving care.

In Anzio, Italy, nurses dug foxholes outside their tents and treated patients under German shellfire. In the Philippines, 67 Army nurses were captured and held as POWs for 37 months, continuing to care for patients in brutal conditions. Wartime experience advanced understanding of shock, blood replacement, and resuscitation. Nurses helped develop recovery wards and pioneered air evacuation techniques. After the war, Army nurses led public health efforts in devastated regions—preventing epidemics, running prenatal clinics, and supporting psychological recovery in places like Hiroshima, Munich, and Hamburg. Their bravery and professionalism not only saved lives but also elevated the status of nursing as a respected and essential profession in both military and civilian life.

This week we salute Jeanne Doyle. Born October 9, 1923, Jeanne Doyle answered the call to serve her country with courage and compassion. Graduating nursing school at just 18, she joined the U.S. Army as a corporal and served during World War II from 1941 to 1942. Stationed at California debarkation hospitals, she played a vital role in triaging wounded servicemen arriving from overseas—offering care, comfort, and hope in the most critical moments. Jeanne's dedication to service runs deep. Her father served in World War I, and her brothers continued the legacy in Korea. She raised four children, instilling in them the same values of resilience and patriotism that defined her own life. She celebrated her 103rd birthday on October 9, 2025. On Wednesday, October 8, the American Legion Post 47 in Hamilton—planned by Deb Strickland, the District 5 Commander and Nancy Dezell, the post commander—came together to honor Jeanne's extraordinary contributions. I was honored to attend the ceremony presenting a certificate from the American Legion Department of Montana. The ceremony was a heartfelt acknowledgment of a woman whose quiet heroism helped shape a generation. Jeanne Doyle's story is not just one of wartime service, it's a testament to the enduring spirit of those who heal, protect, and persevere. Her legacy lives on in every life she touched.

Department Commander

Kim Kay C McCarty Martin

Fall is upon us as felt by the cooler nights and mornings. It is also almost the end of the Fall District Meetings with Fall Conference in Helena soon to follow. What have we gathered from our meetings with our fellow comrades? What have I gathered from manning a standdown booth, visiting Lewistown Post16's booth at the Chokecherry Festival, and manning a booth at a gun show for 3 days? I learned that there are veterans who want a place to have conversations, to have comradery, to talk to someone who understands their language and where they served, and relate to what they did in the service. What better place to gather than your American Legion Post!

Invite your fellow veterans to your post for a cup of coffee or beverage to socialize over. Don't have a post home?, No worries, the local café serves coffee too! I talk with fellow veterans over coffee at our Veterans Center and at Dennys. Every month my post goes to the local nursing home and we have coffee with the veterans there. Every veteran I have had the pleasure of talking with have inspired me to continue doing what I love to do. For me that is giving back to veterans. Giving back to fellow veterans doesn't have to be monetary. Just your time and attention makes a huge difference in the life of a veteran who just wants to talk to someone who can relate to them.

As we gather knowledge, and understanding from others let us prepare for the fall months ahead. We need to prepare for our programs such as the Oratorical Contest, Constitutional Essay, and The American Legion Boys State/Auxiliary Girls State program. What programs are unique to your post? What programs or events like Veterans Day are you preparing for? What programs or events can we share with nearby posts to strengthen us? Working

together in a post and supporting each other will help us grow as individuals and as we grow, we can grow our posts. Don't forget to communicate and include posts in your District or area so

we can grow The American Legion Department of Montana.

While we are gathering and preparing for the months ahead, one significant item of interest to all of us in Montana is a Visit from National Commander Dan K Willey to Great Falls on the 7th – 10th of November. It is a short visit, one that American Legion National Commander Willey is looking forward to as he was stationed at Malmstrom Air Force. It is a visit we want him to remember for a long time, so give him a Big Montana Welcome.!

Inspire each other this fall, as we prepare for our fall events and Veterans Day. Believe in your self, your ideas, your goals, and those of your fellow post members. With teamwork and sometimes compromise, we can achieve our current goals and make new goals. Don't forget all the veterans in your community and the Legionnaires that don't make it to a meeting. Buddy Checks are not just for September and for fellow Legionnaires – remember, one small act of service, or kindness makes a big impact on others.



Montana Legion Bourbon: A Tradition of Service in Every Pour

The American Legion of Montana is proud to share some exciting news—a unique partnership with Willie’s Distillery to create the Montana Legion Bourbon label. This collaboration is more than just a new bourbon; it’s a tribute to the values of service, camaraderie, and tradition that define our Legion family.

From the flight line to the pier, from the front gate to the long road home, service members have always known that it’s the little things that carry us through. A laugh with your squad. A letter from home. A weekend stop at the canteen before a barbecue. These simple moments became traditions—and those traditions became the bonds that still connect us today.

Montana Legion Bourbon was crafted with that same respect for detail. Patiently aged and carefully blended, it honors the memories we hold dear while raising a toast to the future. Each sip is a reminder of the friendships we’ve made, the service we’ve given, and the legacy we carry forward.

But the heart of this project is what it gives back. Just as the canteen once built morale and strengthened community, every bottle of Montana Legion Bourbon supports the American Legion of Montana and our programs for Veterans and military families. By raising a glass, you’re also raising up those who served—and ensuring that the mission continues.

This bourbon is more than a drink; it’s a story worth sharing. Be it Soldier, Sailor, Airman, or Marine—raise a glass. Share the story. Carry the legacy forward.

Service Officer

Eric Beal

NATIONWIDE -VA PACT ACT from 08/10/22 to current

Total Claims Submitted : 2,841,193

Total Claims Completed : 2,609,602

Approval Grant Rate: 73.5 %

Retroactive Benefits: \$12.04B

MONTANA -VA PACT ACT from 8/10/22 to current

Total Claims Submitted: 13,000

Total Claims Completed : 11,736

Approval Grant Rate: 80%

Retroactive Benefits: \$65,119,304.46

After Sept. 30, 2025, Veterans will have two secure options to sign in to VA.gov and VA mobile apps—a Login.gov account or ID.me account. Most Veterans have already made the switch. If you’re still using a DS Logon username and password, we want to make sure you’re prepared when this option is discontinued by the end of September.

How to Transition:

-Visit Creating an account for VA.gov for detailed instructions on setting up your Login.gov or ID.me account.

-Follow the step-by-step guide to create your account and verify your identity.

-Use your new account to access VA services online as you did before.

-Key Benefits Continued security: Protects against identity theft and fraud to help prevent scammers from stealing your VA benefits. -One sign-in account: Access VA and other government services with one account. Compliance with Federal standards: Meets the latest security requirements. Ensure uninterrupted access to your online VA services If you already use a Login.gov or ID.me account, you’re all set!

If you are still using DS Logon, switch to a Login.gov or ID.me account today. Visit VA Secure Sign-In Changes for more information and assistance. If you’re ready to create your new account, follow our step-by-step guidance. If you need help, we can connect you with support. And if you need more time or don’t want to get a new account, we can help you find ways to manage your VA health care and benefits by phone, mail or in person.

<https://news.va.gov/142310/switch-from-ds-logon-login-gov-id-me-sept-30/>



Montana Legion: Driving for the End Zone in Membership

The whistle has blown, the ball is in play, and the Montana American Legion is on the field with one goal in mind: to be the top Department in the Western Region for membership!

The challenge is tied to one of the greatest rivalries in sports – the Army–Navy Game. Sixteen tickets are on the line, with eight winners each receiving a pair. Montana wants to make sure some of those tickets end up right here in Big Sky Country!

Here's how it works:

- **Top Recruiters:** From October 1 through November 11, the top three recruiters in the nation (minimum of five new members) will each win two tickets.
- **Regional Champions:** On the November Target Date (November 13), the top Department in each region will also win two tickets.

That means if Montana wants to claim victory in the West, we have to hit our mark. The goal line is 65% of our membership target – 5,828 members – by November 13.

This is our championship drive, and every Post, Squadron, and Unit can help move the ball down the field. Recruit new members, renew those who haven't yet, and encourage others to be part of the team.

And the fun doesn't stop there – Posts are encouraged to host Army–Navy Game watch parties. A special kit will even be available through Emblem Sales so you can tailgate Legion-style.

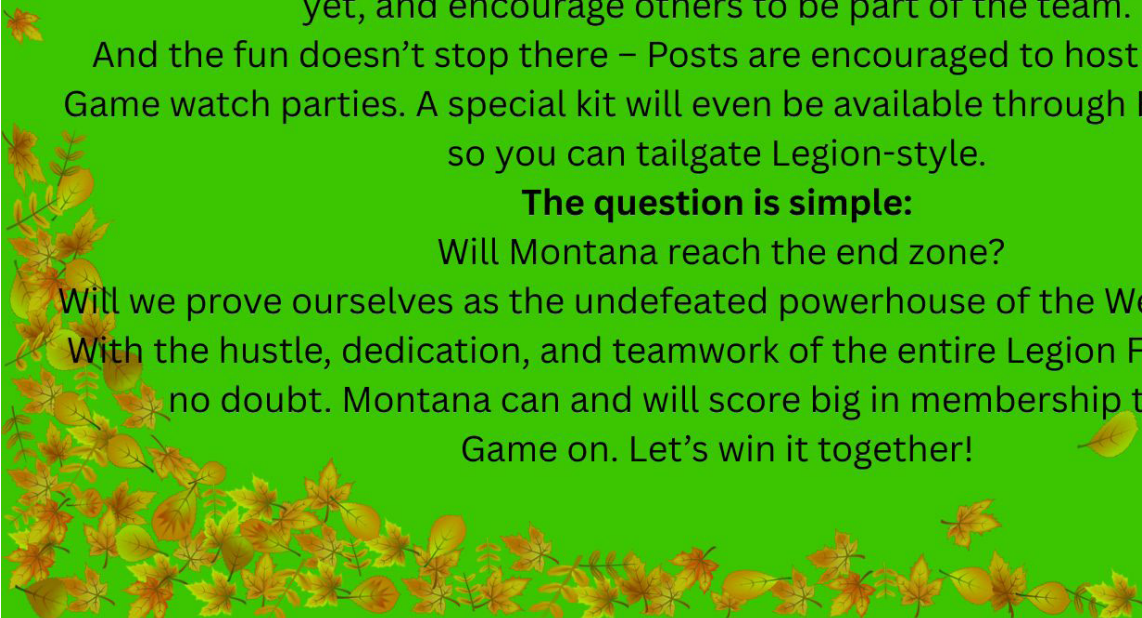
The question is simple:

Will Montana reach the end zone?

Will we prove ourselves as the undefeated powerhouse of the Western Region?

With the hustle, dedication, and teamwork of the entire Legion Family, there's no doubt. Montana can and will score big in membership this fall.

Game on. Let's win it together!



Missing in Action for 77 Years

Irene Dickerson

In November 1943, the United States launched Operation Galvanic. Operation Galvanic primary objective was to capture the Gilbert Islands. Gilbert Islands included the heavily fortified island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll and Makin Atoll. When the outbreak of war occurred, the Japanese quickly moved to occupy the Gilbert Islands. The first US offensive occurred on February 1, 1942, with a carrier raid. The US needed the islands to build an airbase. The islands were later subjected to multiple attacks, which had minimal impact. Aircraft loss was significant. By June 1943, the Allied Combined chiefs of Staff made the Marshall Islands a priority target, Admiral Nimitz implemented a plan to take the Gilberts, as a stepping-stone to the Marshall Islands. Tarawa was a primary target due to the fact it had an airfield, the second island identified was the Makin Island, suitable for building an airfield. The Battle of Tarawa occurred November 20-23, 1943. Around 4,500 Japanese defended Betio Island, resulting in intense combat for the US Marines. Due to low tides, the Marines could not get the landing craft close to shore and the Marines had to wade through deep chest water. The Marines were finally able to secure the Island after 76 hours of fierce fighting, with 1,696 men Killed in Action. The battle for Makin Atoll occurred November 20-24, 1943. The battle ended quickly, as the Marines faced little resistance. Taking control of the two islands, solidified the US control over the Gilbert Islands.

This week we salute Jack Earl Hill. He was born on March 11, 1922, the first-born son of Earl and Nellie Hill. Jack went to school in Billings, Forsyth, and Custer Montana. He was a member of the 1941 Custer football team. He enlisted in the US Marines in February 1942. Private First Class Hill served as a heavy

machine gunner in Delta Company, 1st Battalion, 6th Marines (D-1/6). His Battalion landed on Betio as part of Operation Galvanic. Jack perished on the island on November 22, 1943. He was 21 years old. PFC Hill was buried alongside fellow Marines in a shallow grave, in Row D of Cemetery 33 on Betio Island, awaiting repatriation to his family. It was not until 2019 when History Flight Inc discovered Cemetery 33 on Betio Island. The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) identified the remains of U.S. Marines through historical research, analysis of relevant



circumstances, dental records examination, and DNA testing. On June 26, 2021, his remains were identified, and PFC Hill was interred on November 11, 2021 in the United States.



Forgotten Heroine: The Story of Lt. Elizabeth Dorothy “Sandy” Sandelius

In the vast chronicles of World War I, many stories of courage go untold. One such story is that of Elizabeth Dorothy “Sandy” Sandelius, a nurse from Montana whose bravery under fire—and whose recent recognition—deserves to be known and remembered.

Early Life and Roots in Montana

Born: 1893, in Cokedale, Montana, to Swedish immigrant parents.

Sandelius grew up in a mining town set against the rugged backdrop of Montana’s mountains, a place where danger—and death—were part of daily life. Yet from these rough beginnings emerged a determined and compassionate young woman. She trained as a nurse: Sandelius graduated in 1914 from the School of Nursing at St. Joseph Hospital in Helena, Montana. Her first work as a nurse was in the small town of Columbus, Montana.

Service in World War I

As war swept Europe, Elizabeth volunteered for the U.S. Army Nurse Corps. The need was immense: the Army, the Red Cross, and other service organizations struggled to provide medical care for the wounded.

Sandelius first served at Fort Riley, Kansas, where she and many other nurses cared for large numbers of recruits. In mid-1918 she sailed for Europe, arriving after dangerous trans-Atlantic crossings during which U-boat threats were real.

Heroism Under Fire

Lieutenant Sandelius was assigned to Field Hospital 112, supporting the U.S. 28th Infantry Division in Cohan, France, during the summer of 1918 in the midst of severe German offensives. When the Germans launched heavy bombardments, the field hospital was caught in the shelling and air raids. On August 10, 1918, the hospital was ordered to withdraw to safety, but Sandelius refused. She stayed for eight consecutive days and nights, attending wounded soldiers under continuous enemy fire. During that time, bombs fell close—one pair of aerial bombs landed within fifteen feet of the hospital tents but failed to detonate. Her courage was formally recognized: General Orders No. 1 of the 28th Infantry Division cited her for “courage and gallantry under fire.”

After the War and Recent Recognition

After the armistice, she returned home to the U.S. in May 1919, reunited with her husband (whom she had quietly married shortly before leaving for war) and built a life largely out of the limelight. Sandelius passed away in May 1983. Decades later, in 2025, her story was brought back into public view thanks to the work of researcher Edward E. Saunders. It has been determined that her actions at Field Hospital 112 merit the Silver Star Medal—posthumously awarded—to her descendants.

Why Her Story Matters

Representation: In Montana during WWI, many women served—especially as nurses—in conditions that were often just as dangerous as those faced by soldiers. Their service has too often been overlooked.

Courage and Sacrifice: Sandelius embodies what many of those nurses did—choosing to stay, care, and confront danger when others might have retreated.

Restoring Memory: Honoring such individuals—by name, by story, by medals—helps correct history’s blind spots. The fact that Sandelius was only recently awarded a medal shows how long recognition can take.

A Call to Remember

Let this milestone—the Silver Star awarded in 2025—serve as a reminder that our past is still alive. That every name on a memorial, every grave, every archival report, holds a life of hope, decision, courage.





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Department Historian

Ray Read

The American Legion was founded on service, and with more than a century of accomplishments behind us, preserving that story is essential. One of the best ways for local posts to capture and share their legacy is by participating in the annual American Legion History Book Contest.

How Posts Can Participate

Every post in Montana is encouraged to compile and submit a history book for consideration. These histories serve not only as contest entries, but also as valuable archives for future generations of Legionnaires, community members, and historians.

- **Deadline:** All post history books must be submitted to Department Headquarters no later than the Department Convention in Helena, June 2026.
- **Submission:** Histories must be turned in at Department Headquarters to be certified and entered into the contest. Certified books may also be forwarded to the national level for showcase or inclusion in the Legion's permanent archives.

What a Good History Book Should Contain

A strong history book is much more than a scrapbook. It is a complete and readable record of a post's activities, achievements, and impact. Judges look for both thoroughness and storytelling. To be competitive, history books should include the following elements:

- **Cover & Title Page** – Post name and number, location, emblem, and the time period covered.
- **Compiler's Information** – Name and contact information of the historian or compiler.
- **Introduction / Foreword** – A brief narrative of the post's origins, mission, and identity within the community.
- **Table of Contents** – Clearly listing sections with page numbers.
- **Narrative of Activities** – The heart of the book. A chronological or program-based account of the post's activities such as meetings, programs, community service, ceremonies, and membership efforts.
- **Illustrations & Visuals** – Photographs, clippings, programs, and memorabilia, each with clear captions identifying people, places, and events.
- **Appendices** – Supporting material such as financial reports, membership numbers, or consolidated reports.
- **Index** – An alphabetical list of names, places, and subjects to make the book useful as a reference.
- **Consistency & Quality** – Clear writing, organized presentation, accurate facts, sharp images, and attention to detail.

Judging Criteria

Entries are reviewed on several key points:

- Format and required elements
- Comprehensiveness of post programs and activities
- Organization and readability of the narrative
- Quality and identification of illustrations
- Originality and presentation

Accuracy is essential, and factual errors or missing elements can hurt a book's chances.

Tips for Success

- Begin gathering materials early—don't wait until the end of the year.
- Maintain a running file of programs, clippings, and photos.
- Use appendices to keep the narrative clean and easy to read.
- Label every photo and document carefully.
- Balance text and visuals for an engaging presentation.
- Proofread thoroughly before submission.

Department Adjutant

Duane Cunningham

One of the most important principles of The

American Legion's structure is the clear and unquestionable authority of the parent organization. Every program whether it's a Post, a Sons of The American Legion (SAL) Squadron, or an American Legion Riders (ALR) Chapter exists under the charter and control of the body that created it. That authority exists to provide guidance, oversight, and protection for the name and integrity of The American Legion at every level.

Recently, the National Judge Advocate reaffirmed this structure in a memorandum titled "The Four Rules of an American Legion Program." It serves as both a reminder and a warning to all levels of our organization that no Legion program operates independently of its parent body. The American Legion, from National down to the local Post, has an obligation to maintain accountability in leadership, operations, and finances.

The Four Rules are simple, but their importance cannot be overstated:

#1 Leadership – All elected or appointed officers must be confirmed by the parent organization after each selection or as needed. This ensures that those representing the program are accountable to the chartering body and are acting within the authority granted to them.

#2 Rules – All bylaws, standing rules, and amendments must be approved by the parent organization before they are used. This guarantees consistency with the Legion's Constitution and Bylaws and prevents rogue or contradictory policies from being adopted.

#3 Reports – Programs must submit monthly activity reports, quarterly financials, an annual financial statement, and any additional reports requested by the parent organization. Reporting is not optional—it is a fundamental requirement of oversight.

#4 Controls – All programs must use financial accounts and tax-exempt numbers under the parent organization's control. Each account must have at least two parental signatories appointed by that organization to maintain transparency and prevent misuse.

These rules are not arbitrary. They exist because experience has shown what happens when programs, created in good faith, drift away from their oversight. Without accountability, they risk losing alignment with the Legion's mission and, in some cases, acting as independent entities using the American Legion name without authorization. That puts our brand, reputation, and nonprofit status at risk and National Headquarters has made clear that such situations will not be tolerated.

Here in Montana, these concerns are not hypothetical. Too many of our Posts have grown complacent in meeting their most basic administrative responsibilities. Year after year,

a number of Posts fail to submit their Consolidated Post Report (CPR), Certification of Officers, and Post Data Report. These forms are the foundation of our Department's records, our eligibility for recognition and awards, and our ability to demonstrate the impact of The American Legion in Montana to the National Organization and to Congress. When these reports go unfiled, the entire system suffers. The Department cannot accurately reflect on the good work being done in our communities. Posts lose out on opportunities for support and recognition. Programs that rely on proper reporting such as the Sons of The American Legion and American Legion Riders tend to follow the same pattern, failing to submit their own paperwork or drifting into operating without clear oversight from their Post. What begins as neglect quickly becomes a breakdown in structure and accountability.

Every Post Commander, Adjutant, and program leader should remember this simple truth: authority flows downward, but responsibility flows upward. When the Department calls for reports or verification, it is not a bureaucratic exercise, it is the fulfillment of our charter obligations.

The reports are our proof that we are functioning properly, maintaining our tax-exempt status, and protecting the good name of The American Legion for generations to come.

We must also recognize that the failure to report sends a broader message. It suggests disinterest, disorganization, or even disregard for the principles that hold this organization together. The Sons of The American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary, and American Legion Riders look to our Posts for leadership and example. When we fail to meet our obligations, that attitude trickles down, weakening every level of our organization.

Our mission is to serve veterans, their families, and our communities demands discipline, not just in our service projects but in our administration. Filing a report, confirming officers, or submitting bylaws for approval may not seem glamorous, but these actions are what keep us in compliance and preserve our ability to do the meaningful work we take pride in.

The Department of Montana expects every Post to comply fully with its reporting requirements and to ensure that all affiliated programs do the same. The authority of the parent organization is not up for debate it is the very foundation upon which our Legion Family stands.

Let this serve as both a reminder and a call to action: if your Post or affiliated programs are behind on reports, make it a priority to bring them up to date immediately. Accountability is not just an obligation it is a reflection of our respect for each other, for our charter, and for the proud legacy of The American Legion.

When we all do our part, The American Legion of Montana remains strong, respected, and united in service just as it was meant to be.

Cat/Griz Raffle Supports 2026 American Legion Boys & Auxiliary Girls State

The American Legion Department of Montana is excited to announce a special raffle to benefit the 2026 American Legion Boys State and Auxiliary Girls State programs. One lucky winner will receive two tickets to the Cat/Griz football game on November 22, 2025, at Washington-Grizzly Stadium in Missoula—Montana's biggest rivalry matchup.

Raffle tickets are \$50 each or three for \$100, and only 500 tickets will be sold. The drawing will take place on November 6, 2025. Proceeds from the raffle will directly support the Department's premier youth leadership programs, ensuring that Montana's next generation of leaders can continue to benefit from the Boys State and Auxiliary Girls State experience.

For more information or to purchase raffle tickets, please contact Department Headquarters at amlegmtsec@gmail.com.

Don't miss this chance to support our youth—and win your way into the Cat/Griz game!

American Legion Boys & Auxiliary Girls State Raffle

Win 2 Tickets to the Cat/Griz Game!

Date of Game: November 22, 2025

Location: Washington-Grizzly Stadium,
Missoula, MT

Don't miss your chance to experience
Montana's biggest football rivalry in person!

Raffle Ticket Prices:

- \$50 each
- 3 for \$100

Only 500 tickets will be sold!

Drawing Date: November 6, 2025

Proceeds support the 2026 American Legion
Boys & Auxiliary Girls State Program.

For more information contact: Department
Headquarters at amlegmtsec@gmail.com



AMERICAN LEGION RIDERS



Riding Forward: Montana ALR Transitions from Summer Miles to Future Goals

As the leaves begin to turn and the temperatures start to drop, the roar of motorcycles across Montana begins to quiet. For the American Legion Riders (ALR), the change of seasons doesn't mean the end of the road it's simply a transition from summer rides to winter preparation, reflection, and planning for what's ahead.

This past riding season has been a milestone for the Montana ALR. From local fundraising rides and post events to statewide participation in veterans' causes, the Riders have demonstrated what can be achieved when passion, purpose, and the mission of The American Legion come together on two wheels.

Much of this success can be traced back to the adoption of the Department Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) in Glasgow. That moment marked a major step in uniting Montana's ALR chapters under one umbrella — bringing consistency, clarity, and shared purpose to the program.

While the road to full alignment hasn't been without its bumps, the effort has been worth every mile. Challenges are being worked through with understanding and teamwork, and a spirit of cooperation continues to grow.

Across the state, we're seeing stronger leadership emerge, better communication between chapters, and continued refinement of the SOP to ensure it remains both practical and adaptable.

As the last of the fall rides wrap up, it's time for riders to start thinking

about winter storage and maintenance. A little attention now can save headaches come spring.

A few reminders for the months ahead:

- Fuel system: Top off your tank and add fuel stabilizer to prevent condensation or ethanol breakdown.
- Battery care: Disconnect or use a trickle charger to maintain battery life.
- Fluids and tires: Change the oil, check antifreeze, and store your bike on a stand if possible, to relieve tire pressure.
- Cover and cleanliness: A clean, covered bike in a dry space will be ready to roll when the first warm day's return.

Winter is also a perfect time to review gear, plan next year's routes, and participate in post meetings to help strengthen local ALR programs. The downtime offers a valuable opportunity to plan, recruit, and keep the spirit of the Riders alive year-round.

Building on a Strong Foundation Since Glasgow, the Montana ALR has made significant progress toward becoming a cohesive, well-coordinated part of the Department structure. The SOP has provided a strong foundation for accountability, consistency, and shared goals.

More importantly, the Riders across Montana are showing that unity doesn't mean uniformity — it means moving in the same direction while still celebrating the individuality of each post and chapter. The enthusiasm, participation, and willingness to collaborate are signs that the ALR

program in Montana is not only stable but thriving.

Goals for 2026 and Beyond

Looking forward, the Montana ALR has its sights set on several key priorities for the coming year:

- Fundraising for the 2026 Montana Legacy Run. This major event will once again unite riders from across the state in support of The American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund, which provides educational assistance to the children of fallen or disabled servicemembers. Planning and fundraising efforts are already underway, and every chapter can play a part — whether through local rides, raffles, or sponsorships.
- Program Growth and Expansion. We continue to focus on adding new ALR chapters and welcoming more members into the family. The more riders we have across Montana, the greater our impact will be in serving veterans, their families, and our communities. Each new chapter adds fresh energy and new opportunities to share the mission of The American Legion.
- Continued Refinement of the SOP and Leadership Development. As the ALR evolves, so too will our framework for how we operate. Ongoing updates to the SOP ensure it remains responsive to the needs of riders and aligned with the Department's goals. Equally important, we're seeing new leaders step up — individuals who are shaping the future of the program through example, dedication, and mentorship.



Understanding the Emblem of the Sons of the American Legion

The emblem of the Sons of the American Legion is more than a design—it is a badge of heritage, loyalty, and service. Every symbol within the emblem reflects the values, mission, and responsibilities carried by our members as we honor the sacrifices of our veterans and commit ourselves to preserving the ideals of justice, freedom, and democracy.

The Central Star

At the heart of the emblem is the star, representing the United States of America. Its five points symbolize the Five-Point Program of Service that guides the Sons: Patriotism, Citizenship, Discipline, Leadership, and support of The American Legion.

The Sun and Rays

The sun represents the Sons of the American Legion itself, while its rays shine outward to reflect the loyalty, service, and devotion of our membership to community and nation.

The Blue Background

Taken from the American flag, the blue background represents justice and truth—the core values that bind our members together.

Two Gold Stars

Set upon the blue ring, one star signifies freedom and the other democracy—two principles we strive to protect and uphold.

The Wreath

Beneath the central star rests a wreath, serving as a tribute to two groups: the veterans who gave their lives in service to our nation, and the departed members of the Sons who carried on their legacy.

The Ten Points of the Outer Emblem

The ten points forming the outer ring each stand for an ideal taught to every SAL member: Patriotism, Health, Training, Knowledge, Honor, Faith, Helpfulness, Courtesy, Reverence, and Comradeship. Together, these ideals form the foundation of what it means to be a Son of the American Legion.

In short, the emblem is not just a symbol—it is a charge. It ties every member to the sacrifices of veterans, while calling each of us to live out the values of loyalty, service, and devotion to the greater good.





THE AUXILIARY SERVICE STAR



Leona Somerfeld **Department President**

Our Fall District meetings are winding down. I have met so many of our members over the past month and have seen a lot of this beautiful state. We are a very welcoming organization, thank you for your hospitality.

My President's Project is the Grace Haven for female veterans and the Grace Home for male veterans, both are for un-housed veterans in transition. Both homes are in Great Falls. I asked Patty Capps, from Sun River Valley Unit 130, to write these articles for the Service Star. Patty has been one of our dedicated warriors supporting these two homes.

I hope you will find this project as worthwhile and needed as I do. We are making a big difference! Montana Treasures-Copper, Silver, Gold, & Veterans,

ALA Department Chaplain **Kari Hould**

As the welcoming sounds of geese and ducks overhead flying gracefully across the wide open big sky of Montana, one cannot help to feel the presence of a Higher Being. As a grateful nation, we find it easy to look toward the sky when we are searching for solitude, peace or even quiet. As free as the birds are, so are the butterflies and busy buzzing bees. There definitely is a for everything under the sun...have you whispered a thank you for their presence and role in our world lately?

It is great sadness that every time the news comes on or the internet shares the current state of the world with viewers, that my heart shakes and aches with the turmoil and hatred and unthinkable things that people are doing to others, to the elderly, to the children...and each day seems to be harsher and more cruel and definitely undesirable.

Where do we turn for answers? We turn to the Master we serve, the one above ALL, the One we turn to in need. But...are we putting a burden on His shoulders, regardless how broad they are and how strong He stands? Do we also take the time to thank Him amid the pain and discernment that is so easy to do? We know, for ourselves, how we feel when someone takes the time to spend time with us...without rushing or having ulterior motives that might be hidden or lurking

in the shadows. Just a few moments of your time, a few moments to say, 'hey it's good to see you' or 'I've missed seeing you around.' Gentle words, like the gentle Lord plants in your heart are better shared, and not hidden under a leaf, a bucket or hiding in the colorful leaves and bush that bring us feelings of happiness and gratefulness. Make it a goal to say something kind to at least one person every day. If we were to all do this, think of the positive impact on not only your circle of friends, but upon those we meet on the street, in a store or at a meeting.

Sunday, Sept. 21st was International Day of Peace. The young (ages 6 and 7) Juniors help create a display...the message was simple... 'give peace a chance' and 'Peace...Let it begin with ME!' With the massacres, slaying, assassinations, child abuse and abduction this month, my heart is heavy. It continues to grow heavier and the innocent die, as their life and existence has no value or meaning. We have work ahead of us, much work. A lot of knee time and prayers rising like incense...and we can do this by working together to for a common goal...a land where men and women and children lay down their armor and join hands for the betterment of all mankind. With faithful hearts and unification, we can make this world a better place. What can you do to help? Stay strong and vigilant...let's do this together. Doing the Lord's work, I am...



THE AUXILIARY SERVICE STAR



Leila Seyfert Secretary

Happy Spooky Season, Friends!
A heartfelt thank you to all the Units and
Districts that have submitted your Treasurer's

Bond payments! If you haven't had a chance yet, please send in your \$7.00 as soon as possible.

As I've traveled across our beautiful state for Fall District Meetings, it's been such a joy to finally meet so many of you in person. Putting faces to names has been the highlight of my journey, and I'm deeply grateful for the warm hospitality you've shown me. Montana truly is the best, and I'm honored to serve as your Secretary.

If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to reach out. I appreciate your patience as I continue learning the ropes, and I'm committed to doing my very best to represent our President, our Members, and most importantly, our Veterans—the heart of everything we do.

Wishing you a fantastic October, and I look forward to seeing you at Fall Conference in Helena!



BE
=THE=
ONE

SUPPORT OUR PROGRAMS — MAKE A DIFFERENCE TODAY!

Your contributions help us empower the next generation, support veterans, and strengthen communities.

American Legion Boys and Auxiliary Girls State (ALBAGS)

Empowering young leaders through civic education and leadership development.



Legacy Run Honoring and supporting veterans and their families through impactful community events.



Oratory Scholarship Encouraging excellence in public speaking and communication skills among youth.



Women Veterans Symposium Celebrating and empowering women veterans through education, networking, and resources.



HOW TO DONATE: Simply scan the QR code for the program you wish to support.

Every gift matters — your support fuels the mission of the American Legion.

Thank you for making a difference!

Growing Leaders Through Service

One of the greatest traditions of the American Legion is our commitment to service—service to our nation, to our veterans, and communities. But beyond what we do for others, service is also how we grow ourselves, and how we build the leaders of tomorrow.

When our members step up to participate in community activities, we empower our community and inspire future leaders. Stepping up, we are strengthening our community and shaping our leaders. Each moment of service is also a lesson in leadership: planning, working as a team, solving problems and making decisions that matter. The Legion has always been a training ground for leaders. Veterans know that leadership is forged in action, in responsibility, and in commitment to something larger than us. Through service, we pass on those lessons to a new generation, ensuring that tomorrow's leaders are prepared, not only to lead in the Legion, but in their neighborhoods, schools and civic life.

Step Up and Serve: Fall Community Activities

Fall is a season of opportunity and growth, and your post has a unique chance to make a difference in our community while nurturing tomorrow's leaders. Whether you're a seasoned member or a newer face, we invite you to step up and play an active role in your upcoming community activities.

Flag Presentations at Football Games

Help us honor our nation by volunteering for flag presentations at local football games. This is a visible and meaningful way to showcase patriotism, engage with the community, and set an example of service that inspires both veterans and youth. Your participation not only strengthens our traditions but also creates memorable moments for everyone involved.

Oratorical Promotions

Support the next generation of speakers and leaders by promoting our oratorical contests. Encourage high school students to participate, help organize events, or offer mentorship to contestants. These activities provide young people with valuable skills in public speaking, critical thinking, and citizenship, and your involvement makes a lasting impact.

Boys/Girls State Recruitment

We are actively recruiting candidates for Boys State and Girls State programs this fall. These initiatives offer youth hands-on experiences in leadership, government, and civic responsibility. Volunteers are needed to identify, encourage, and mentor participants, ensuring these programs remain a strong foundation for developing future leaders.

Mentoring: Building New Post Leaders

Fall is not just about serving your community—it's about growing ourselves and others. This is an ideal time to mentor younger veterans and youth, passing on valuable knowledge and traditions. By guiding and supporting new members, you help build a stronger, more dynamic post with fresh ideas and renewed commitment. As we gear up for these activities, remember that leadership is grown through service. Every event, every moment spent volunteering, is an opportunity to learn, to teach, and to inspire. Join us this fall—step forward, serve with pride, and be part of shaping the next generation of leaders in your post and community.

By serving, we prepare the way for others. And by growing leaders through service, we strengthen both our communities and the American Legion itself.

Together, we can make this fall a season of growth, service, and leadership. Reach out to your activity coordinators or post officers to get involved today!

Southwest Montana Veterans Food Pantry

The Southwest Montana Veterans Food Pantry was founded in 2021 out of a simple but urgent realization: many local veterans were facing food insecurity, yet were reluctant to seek help from traditional food pantries out of humility and concern that they might “take from someone else who needed it more.” In response, Jay and Susan Wood—a veteran and a devoted military spouse—created a pantry dedicated exclusively to serving veterans and their families.

What began as a small operation distributing a few pounds of food has since grown into a vital regional hub for veteran support. Today, from our location at 505 Main Street in Deer Lodge, Montana, we serve veterans across 16 counties and even reach neighboring states when the need arises. In 2024 alone, we distributed more than 41,000 pounds of food and provided assistance to hundreds of veterans and their families.

Beyond food assistance, we have expanded to offer comprehensive services tailored to the unique needs of those who served. Our programs now include:

Weekly and Monthly Food Shopping – Nutritious groceries tailored for veterans and their households.

Outlying Area Food Distributions – Mobile outreach for veterans unable to travel to our physical location.

Veterans Thrift Store – Affordable clothing and household goods, with additional discounts for veterans.

Safe Place Program – Secure storage of potentially harmful items for veterans in personal crisis, supporting suicide prevention.

Underwater Soldiers Partnership – Therapeutic scuba diving to address PTSD and the invisible wounds of service.

Mental Health and Peer Support Referrals – Connections to trusted providers and VA-trained peer specialists.

Veterans Next Generation Scholarship – Assistance for children and grandchildren of veterans pursuing trade or certificate programs.

Community Outreach – Holiday meals, transportation support, clothing for homeless veterans, and collaborations with local businesses and organizations.

While we have accomplished much in a short time, we face significant challenges that threaten our ability to continue serving at this level. Our current needs include:

Purchasing our building to secure a permanent home for the Pantry (\$65,000).

Replacing the aging roof, which is in desperate need of repair (\$38,000).

Covering ongoing food purchases, which average \$2,000–\$3,000 per month to keep shelves stocked.

Replacing aging vehicles used for food distributions and veteran services.

Our mission remains clear: to ensure that no veteran in Southwest Montana goes hungry, and to provide a hand up, not a handout. We operate with dignity, respect, and deep gratitude for the sacrifices of our nation’s heroes.

We would be honored to share more about our work with your readers and to inspire veterans and communities nationwide to join us in building stronger networks of support.



HOST A SAFE & SPOOKY HALLOWEEN IN YOUR COMMUNITY

As Halloween approaches, The American Legion's long-standing "Safe Halloween" initiative provides an excellent framework to bring communities together in a fun, secure way. Since 1972, the Legion has urged Posts across the nation to organize Halloween events geared toward safety and youth engagement.

This year, we encourage your Post and community to consider hosting a Safe Halloween event. Whether it's an indoor trick-or-treat route, costume contest, haunted house, parade, or carnival-style children's party, these gatherings can reduce the risks inherent in roaming dark neighborhoods while building connections and goodwill.

Why it matters:

- Provides a supervised, monitored space for children to enjoy Halloween.
- Fosters community spirit—local businesses, youth groups, and volunteers can all participate.
- Promotes safety by keeping kids in well-lit areas and ensuring only safe, wrapped treats are distributed.
- Builds goodwill by showing families that The American Legion is here to serve and protect the community.

Ideas for Posts:

- Event formats: Haunted houses, trick-or-treat indoors, monitored routes, parades, or games.
- Food & treats: Hot dogs, snacks, candy—only sealed or individually wrapped items.
- Costume safety: Reflective tape, short costume lengths, and face paint instead of vision-blocking masks.
- Visibility & supervision: Glow sticks, flashlights, and adult supervision for younger children.
- Traffic safety: Encourage crossing only at intersections and walking on sidewalks.
- Community partnerships: Work with police, fire departments, schools, or businesses for added support.
- Promotion: Use flyers, social media, and school newsletters to spread the word.
- Prizes & recognition: Costume contests, raffles, and small giveaways can make the night memorable.

By holding a Safe Halloween event, your Post will not only provide a fun night for kids but also demonstrate the Legion's ongoing commitment to youth, families, and community service.



American Legion of Montana Launches 2026 Rifle Raffle

The American Legion of Montana is proud to announce the kickoff of the 2026 Rifle Raffle, an exciting opportunity for Montanans to support veterans' programs while entering to win a premier firearm.

This year's grand prize is a Ruger American Gen 2 chambered in 6.5 Creedmoor—a rifle known for its precision, reliability, and quality craftsmanship. Whether you're a hunter, sports shooter, or collector, this firearm is sure to be a prized addition.

Raffle Details:

- Tickets: \$20 each or 6 for \$100
- Limited Availability: Only 1,500 tickets will be sold
- Drawing Date: June 28, 2026
- Eligibility: Must be 18 years or older to purchase
- Winner: Need not be present to win
- Prize Pickup: The winner must claim the prize at Mitchell Supply in Great Falls

The American Legion extends its gratitude to Mitchell Supply for generously donating the prize and for their continued support of veterans and their families.

Why It Matters

Every ticket purchased goes beyond the excitement of winning—it fuels the American Legion's mission to support Montana veterans, their families, and local communities. From youth programs to veteran services, raffle proceeds help strengthen the foundation of service that defines the American Legion. Don't miss your chance to win a top-quality rifle while giving back to those who served. Tickets are going fast, and with only 1,500 available, they won't last long!

For ticket information, contact your local American Legion Post or visit the Department of Montana office.



American Legion of Montana Fall Conference Executive Board Meeting Agenda

Helena, MT – Oct 22-25, 2025

Where: **Legionnaires:** Fort Harrison RTI Building 68

Auxiliary: 25 October; RTI Building 68 Room 31

October 22

13:00 PM Department Legion College – RTI Building 68

October 23

8:30 AM Department Legion College – RTI Building 68

6:00 PM Group Activity for College Attendees

October 24

8:00 AM Department Legion College – RTI Building 68

1:00 PM Department Executive Committee Convenes

4:00 PM Resolutions Committee– At this time 2 Resolutions have been submitted

6:00 PM Leadership Reception/Dinner for those who purchased.– Hardware Café in Montana City

October 25

8:30 AM Convene Executive Board

11:30 – 12:00 Adjourn Executive Board
Lunch

1:30 PM Sons of the American Legion RTI Building 68

1:00 PM 20 & 4 Conference Room in HAFRAC

4:00 PM Legion Riders Meeting RTI Building 68

NOTICE - ALL DEPARTMENT OFFICERS AND CHAIRMEN ARE REQUIRED TO GIVE A WRITTEN REPORT FOR THE CONFERENCE RECORDER.

Conference Committees Meet:

The following committees will meet via zoom prior to Fall Conference

10/14 7PM Finance (Dan Smart, Bill Cummins, Eric Dryden, Andy Rice, Jed Damson, Jerry Collins, Eddy White and Irene Dickerson)

10/9 7 PM American Legion Boys State (Lowell Long, Tim Garrison, Jed Damson, Joe Yeoman, and Auxiliary Committee)

10/7 7 PM Constitution and Internal Affairs (Richard Klose)

10/16 7 PM Coordinated Children & Youth meeting (American Legion, ALR, SAL, ALA) committee members only

AGENDA IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE



**Order Form American Legion Department of
Montana
Red Shirt Friday TShirt or Hoodie**

Uni-sex Size	Qty	Hoodie	TShirt
S		\$45	\$25
M		\$45	\$25
L		\$45	\$25
XL		\$45	\$25
2X		\$48	\$28
3X		\$50	\$30
TOTAL			



Deliver To:

Name:		
Address:		
City:	State:	Zip:
Phone:		

You will not be charged until the shirts have shipped:

Check one:

	Visa
	MasterCard
	Discover
	Amex

[illegible]Expires: ____/____/____

CVV#				
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Send Form To:

American Legion of Montana
PO Box 155
Fort Harrison, MT 59636
amlegmtsec@gmail.com



Big K Cash Raffle: Supporting Montana Veterans in 2026

The American Legion of Montana is excited to announce the launch of the 2026 Big K Cash Raffle, a long-standing tradition that not only brings excitement to our members and supporters but also provides vital funding for the programs that serve Montana's veterans, their families, and our communities.

As the name suggests, only 1,000 tickets are available, making this a limited and highly sought-after opportunity. Each ticket—known as a “Big K”—is just \$25.00, and with that purchase, participants are entered into nine drawings throughout the year.

The raffle kicks off in January with a \$100 New Year Drawing, followed by six \$400 monthly drawings held from January through June. In March, in honor of the American Legion's Birthday, there will be an additional \$500 drawing. The excitement culminates at the Department Convention with the final drawing of \$1,800, a grand prize that brings the year of fundraising to a close.

Beyond the thrill of winning, every ticket purchased helps fund essential Legion programs that support Montana veterans and their families, from advocacy and assistance to community engagement and youth programs. This is more than just a raffle—it's a chance to give back while enjoying the fun and camaraderie that comes with being part of the Legion Family.

Tickets are available on a first-come, first-served basis, and they sell out quickly each year. Those wishing to participate are encouraged to send in the entry form along with payment as soon as possible to secure their spot in the drawings. By purchasing a Big K, you're not only entering to win cash prizes—you're making a direct investment in the strength of our programs and the well-being of veterans across Montana.

For more information or to get your ticket, contact the American Legion of Montana today.

**Order Form American Legion Department of
Montana
Glassware Sets**

Support the American Legion by purchasing a set of custom glasses featuring our Family Logos!

Product Details:

- Beer Pint Glass Set (4 glasses) - \$40 (ONLY 7 SET REMAINING 1st COME FIRST SERVED)
- Whiskey Glass Set (4 glasses) - \$40

Each set features the official American Legion Family Logos, making them perfect for gifts or personal use!

Customer Information:

- Name: _____
- Address: _____
- Phone: _____
- Email: _____

Order Details:

Item	Quantity	Price per Set	Total Price
Beer Pint Glass Set	_____	\$40	_____
Whiskey Glass Set	_____	\$40	_____

Subtotal: \$ _____

Total: \$ _____

Payment Method:

- ☐ Check (Payable to American Legion of Montana)
☐ Credit/Debit add 4% processing fee

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Legion College at Fall Conference Schedule

Wednesday

1300-1315: Welcome and Opening remarks

Commander Kim Kay McCarty Martin &
Dean Irene Dickerson

1320-1330: Video History of the American Legion

1335-1345 Introduction of Facilitators

Irene Dickerson

1350-1400 Recite Legion Preamble

1405-1415 The American Legion Preamble

Irene Dickerson
Duane Cunningham

1420-1450 Team Building

1455-1510 Leadership video

1510-1540 Leadership

Brian Carpenter
Ken George

1545-1700 Resolution Training

1700-1800 Writing Resolution-Team Breakout in Teams

Thursday

0830-0840 Recite Legion Preamble

Irene Dickerson

0845-1045 Resolution presentation

Ken George

1050-1120 Parliamentary Procedures

Ken George

1125-1155 Legislation

Duane Cunningham

1200-1300 Working Lunch

1205-1235 American Legion Relationship with Family Programs

Linda Cousineau
Duane Cunningham

1240-1310 Mentorship

1315-1345 Membership & Recruiting Brian Carpenter

1350-1420 American Legion Riders

Brian Carpenter

1425-1455 Be the One-Its Personal

Ken Simon

1500-1515 Americanism Video

1520-1630 Four Pillars

Irene Dickerson

Friday

0900-0910 Recite the Preamble

0915-1015 Test

1030-1100 Graduation

Commander Kim Kay McCarty Martin &
Dean Irene Dickerson

