



Montana

LEGIONNAIRE

September



AMERICAN
LEGION

Suicide Prevention is Everyone's Responsibility

Irene Dickerson

Suicide remains one of the most pressing public health issues of our time, touching families, communities and especially our nation's veterans at alarming rate. Every life lost leaves behind unanswered questions and loved ones struggling with grief. That is why suicide awareness is not just about statistics, it is about saving lives, building hope, and ensuring no one feels alone in their darkest hours.

The American Legion has embraced the "Be the One" initiative, a powerful call to action for all of us. Its message is simple yet profound: Be the one to ask a veteran, a friend or even a stranger how they are truly doing. Be the one to listen without judgment. Be the one to remove the stigma of seeking help. Be the one who makes a difference.

To often, those at risk of suicide suffer in silence, feeling isolated or ashamed. By stepping forward, showing compassion, and offering

a listening ear, each of us can help break that silence. You don't have to be a mental health professional to save a life, you just must care enough to check in.

Here are a few ways we call Be the One:

Ask directly: a Simple, "How are you really?" can open the door to an honest conversation.

Listen: Sometimes the greatest gift we can give is our attention.

Connect: if someone is struggling, encourage them to reach out for professional support.

Follow up: A quick call, message, or visit shows that you truly care. Suicide prevention is not about one big act—it's about small, consistent, acts of kindness and connection that build trust and hope. Together, we can reduce the number of lives lost and remind every veteran and community member that they matter.

If you or someone you know is in crisis, call or text 988 to reach the

Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. Help is available, and hope is real. If you don't have the app, Be The One-Columbia Protocol, consider getting it on your phone or tablet. The App uses the Columbia-Suicide Severity Rating Scale and is the most evidence-supported tool of its kind with simple series of questions that anyone can use to help a person with suicidal thoughts.

Let us commit to being present, being compassionate, and being the one who helps save a life.

BE =THE= ONE

Department Commander

Kim Kay C McCarty Martin

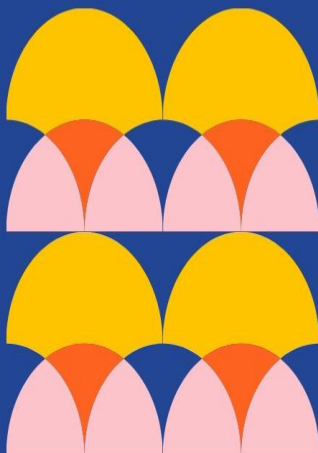
I have tried keeping busy since being voted in as your Department Commander, and I think I am succeeding with your help. July and August have buzzed by quickly. I drove with my companions to the National Convention in Tampa Bay, FL this August. Took us 4 days to drive as we did not drive at night. With 3 of us driving, we made good time. Have you been to a National Convention? It's a wonderful experience with like-minded Legionnaires from all over the United States and 4 Countries. There were 15 delegates from Department of Montana attending this year. Emblem Sales had a store set up with a variety of clothes and memorabilia in the convention center, training of various topics was available, conversation with old friends, and the opportunity to meet new friends were abound.

The American Legion Convention Floor was huge with 4 excessively big TV screens hanging from the ceiling to give everyone the ability to see what was happening on the stage. I have been to 4 prior National Conventions and it still strikes me as awesome. Where else can so many Legionnaires gather and listen to inspiring speeches, recognize the accomplishments of others and meet our National Commander. There is a spark of enthusiasm that is generated and a desire to help make The American Legion the best veterans service organization there is.

I want to bring that spark to each of you. During my campaign for Department Commander, I talked about the inspiration we can



achieve if we can imagine what we want to do in each of our posts, within the Department of MT. What programs of The Legion is your post involved in? What do you do for your comrades and for your community? Let your imagination be your inspiration to grow your post, help other vets, involve the youth in our programs and get out into the community and let them know you are there. Believe in your goals, your accomplishments and ignite a spark of your own. Share your dreams of what you believe in with others in your post. Believe in yourself and each other. With your belief, working as a team, you can achieve your goals of 100% membership, get the youth involved in our programs, and be there for your community. **IMAGINE INSPIRE BELIEVE ACHIEVE Go Get Em!**



How do I contact my State Senator and Representative?

See below links to communicate with your Legislators

- Participate Montana Legislature Site - [Participate - Montana Legislature](#)
You will need to establish an account in "Participate" to email your legislator
- Who Is My Legislator? - [Districts - Montana Legislature](#)
Click magnifying glass in upper right corner of map, then enter address
- Or, leave a message: 406.444.4800

Roger A. Hagan (Legislative Committee Chairman, MT Department of the American Legion)
117 Gerber Road, Great Falls, MT 59405, Cell (406) 459-0773

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.

On August 21, 2025, American Legion Meagher Post 25 visited White Sulphur Springs Elementary School and presented backpacks to the first grade class students complete with the school supplies requested for the current year. This tradition has been a fun time for about 6 years.

On September 11, 2025, American Legion Auxiliary Unit 25 Secretary/Treasurer, Joanne Cummins presented Maci Young with the 3rd Place award she won in the essay contest held this spring. Awards arrive after school is dismissed for the summer. Maci was very pleased with her trophy and certificate. Pictured to the right.



 **AMERICAN
LEGION**

Chaplain's Corner

September's Call to Remember

As the air begins to cool and the golden tones of autumn start to creep across the Big Sky, September arrives with a quiet dignity that invites reflection. For many of us in the American Legion, September is more than just the turn of a season—it is a time that stirs deep remembrance and reminds us of our duty to honor, serve, and heal.

Most poignantly, September brings the solemn anniversary of September 11, 2001, a day that remains etched into the national memory. Each year, as we mark this day, we not only remember the lives lost but also the spirit of unity that emerged from the ashes. Firefighters, police officers, military members, and everyday citizens ran toward danger, not away from it. Many of us in the Legion know that spirit well—it is the same sense of sacrifice and service that called us to wear the uniform.

In remembering 9/11, we also remember our comrades who answered the call in the years that followed. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan shaped a new generation of veterans. We carry their stories in our posts and at our meetings. Let us never forget them, especially those who still bear invisible wounds.

September is also Suicide Prevention Awareness

Month. As chaplains and Legionnaires, we are called to be watchful shepherds, offering support and presence to those who may be struggling. Montana, sadly, carries some of the highest rates of veteran suicide in the nation. If you are reading this and you feel the weight of despair—or know someone who might—please remember that you are not alone. We are here. I am here. And so is help. The VA Crisis Line (988, then press 1) is always available, and so are your fellow Legionnaires.

The fall season reminds us that change is inevitable—leaves fall, days shorten—but it also tells us that beauty and renewal follow. In Ecclesiastes 3, we are reminded:

“To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven.”

September is our time to remember, to reach out, and to recommit ourselves to the sacred work of the Legion: Veterans Strengthening America.

As we gather in meetings, memorials, and community events this month, may we do so with humble hearts and open hands. May we remember those we've lost, support those who struggle, and encourage those who serve. And may we be ever mindful that our mission is not yet finished.

God bless you, and God bless the American Legion of Montana.



Together We Can Grow Membership

Irene Dickerson

The strength of The American Legion has always been its members. It's not just the programs we run, the scholarships we give, or the halls we gather in—it's the people. It's us. Veterans standing shoulder to shoulder, united by service, united by purpose, and united by our love of country.

But let's be honest—our mission is too important to stand still. We cannot be satisfied with where we are today. We must grow. We must reach out. We must invite the next generation of veterans to join our ranks. Because growing membership isn't just about numbers—it's about lives. Every new member is another voice for veterans' rights. Every new member is another set of hands to serve our communities. Every new member is another veteran who will never have to face life challenges alone.

So how do we grow? We start with the simplest, most powerful thing we can do—we ask. One question can change everything. "Have you thought about joining The American Legion?" Veterans are out there wait-

ing for the invitation. They're looking for a connection, a purpose, and camaraderie. We have it. All we need to do is offer it.

And when they do join, let's welcome them—not as a name on a roster, but as a brother or sister in arms. Let's get them involved, give them a role, and show them the pride and the power of being part of The American Legion.

A larger membership means a stronger Legion. A stronger Legion means a louder voice in Washington. It means more resources for programs. It means more help for veterans in need.

Our forefathers built this organization out of the bonds of war and the spirit of service. It is now our turn to carry the torch forward. Together, we can build a Legion that is not only strong today but stronger tomorrow.

Let's go out in our communities, let us share our story, let us extend the hand of invitation—and let us grow this great organization.

Because when one veteran joins, we all grow stronger. And together, there is nothing we cannot achieve.

"Empowering the Spirit" to Prevent Veteran Suicide

Eric Beal; Service Officer

At the Houston VA Medical Center, something special is happening. A new program called "Empowering the Spirit" is shining a light on the lives of Veterans at risk for suicide, combining the compassionate care of chaplains and nurses into a unique spiritual care bundle.

Launched as a 12-week pilot program in March, this initiative invites Veterans to explore their spirituality and discover how it can bring hope, healing, and connection.

Led by a chaplain and a nurse, participants come together weekly, using an evidence-based curriculum designed to help Veterans reconnect with their spiritual selves. It's not just about talking; it's about finding meaningful tools for healing and growth.

One of the first graduates, Army Veteran Jason Ayala, entered the program with a little skepticism. Having spent years in therapy dealing with PTSD, Ayala was unsure how a chaplain and a nurse could offer him anything new. However, after being encouraged by VA staff to join the program during a particularly tough holiday season, he took the leap.

"I thought, 'What are these two guys going to tell me that I haven't already heard?'" Ayala said.

To his surprise, the program offered him more than just words; it provided him with hope, forgiveness, and the strength to repair fractured relationships in his life. As a father of seven, the weight of his military experiences had led him to feel isolated and lost from his faith. Through the Empowering the Spirit program, he began to feel more hopeful and reconnect to his spirituality, even returning to church with his children."

For more information follow the link <https://www.va.gov/houston-health-care/stories/empowering-the-spirit-to-prevent-veteran-suicide/>

White Crosses Along Montana Roads

The Story Behind the Montana Highway Fatality Marker Program

When you travel Montana's highways, the simple white crosses standing at the roadside are more than memorials—they are a striking message to every motorist. Each cross marks the site of a fatal crash, a silent reminder to slow down and drive safely.

A Legacy of Service and Safety

The Montana Highway Fatality Marker Program was established in 1953 after a tragic holiday weekend accident claimed six lives the year prior. Floyd Eaheart of American Legion Hellgate Post #27 proposed placing white crosses where lives were lost, and the idea quickly gained statewide approval. Over seventy years later, Montana remains the only state in the nation with a formally sanctioned highway fatality marker program. This initiative is entirely run by volunteers from The American Legion, Sons of The American Legion, and other Legion Family members. It receives no state or federal funding, relying solely on donations and donated materials.

A Powerful Reminder

Each cross is mounted on a red post, placed approximately four to five feet off the ground, and painted bright white to ensure visibility. If multiple lives were lost in a single crash, multiple crosses are mounted on the same post. Volunteers throughout Montana research accident sites, obtain permissions, install new markers, and maintain existing ones annually.

Clusters of crosses are often seen along Montana's busiest roads, where they serve as unmistakable reminders of the consequences of unsafe driving.

Seven Decades of Dedication

For more than seventy years, volunteers have kept this tradition alive, maintaining thousands of markers across Montana. The program is a testament to the commitment of veterans and community members who dedicate their time and resources to highway safety.

How You Can Help

The Highway Fatality Marker Program depends on public support to continue. You can help in the following ways:

- Donate by Mail

Send monetary donations to:

- Department of Montana American Legion
- PO Box 155
- Fort Harrison, MT 59636

Please write "Fatality Marker" in the memo line.

- Donate Online

Visit www.mtlegion.org/highwayfatalitymarkers.html and use the secure donation option.

- Give Materials or Volunteer

Donations of paint, posts, lumber, or time are always welcome. Contact the Department of Montana American Legion Headquarters to arrange material support or volunteer opportunities.



Montana's white crosses are more than roadside markers; they represent a powerful message of safety and community service. By donating or volunteering, you ensure this iconic program continues to save lives and honor those lost on Montana's roads.

Department Historian

Ray Read

106th Department Conventions in the book. The gathering in our capital city was eventful and rewarding. As the Re-Elected Department Historian, I would like to emphasize the following. A full report is in the 106th Convention Reports Book.

During the 2023 Department Convention a resolution was submitted and approved at the Convention for Montana Department for The American Legion, to participate and assist in the celebration of America's 250th Birthday of the Declaration of Independence. The National program is known as the America 250 Semi-quincentennial. The State of Montana established a State Commission, and the Department resolution was our announcement and intent to participate in the events surrounding the Birthday. The Montana Commission can be reached at www.america250mt.org.

Since the passage of Montana Department's Resolution, truly little has been said about the Legion's program and in fact there is no current plan on the books. I, as the Department Historian, have begun to research back to the Nation's 200th Birthday and Montana's participation in that program to find out how it was done.

On May 25th the National executive Committee approved and published the following Executive Resolution that now gives clear guidance 250th Anniversary Action at Department level. The Resolves are provided for your planning at Post level with the regard of moving forward with a program of celebration that will culminate on July 4, 2026.

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE AMERICAN LEGION May 7-8, 2025. Indianapolis, Indiana Resolution No. 5: Celebration of the 250th Anniversary of the United States Origin: Internal Affairs Commission Submitted by: Internal Affairs Commission – now, therefore, be it RESOLVED, By the National Executive Committee of The American Legion in regular meeting assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, on May 7-8, 2025, That The American Legion is hereby authorized to work with the U.S. Semi-quincentennial Commission, the congressional caucus, the advisory councils and individual staff to enhance the celebration of America 250; and, (Complete Resolution available on Legion.org) be it further RESOLVED That departments are encouraged to actively participate in their state 250 commissions to enhance state and local efforts to celebrate America 250; and, be it finally RESOLVED That The American Legion, comprised of members whose selfless service to this great nation and its founding principles are criteria for membership, be historically referenced as a civil society leader which ensured that 250 years of a constitutional republic was justly and successfully celebrated.

American Legion National

For 2025 on, the digital department history contest will be judged in August. Rules for the 2025 contest will be announced by Oct. 13, 2024. Departments may also submit one digital and one hard-copy post history for a best-practice showcase. These will not be judged at the national level contest, but digital submissions will be posted on the Omeka platform, and hard-copy submissions are planned to be displayed at the national convention. Although post-level histories will no longer be judged on the national level, departments are encouraged to conduct their own contests in whatever way they choose.

American Legion National History Contest Guidance

In 2025 and beyond, as approved in Resolution No. 20, the national contest for posts will become a showcase. Department will be able to submit:

- 1 one-year digital Department history for contest (these entries will be judged and showcased on the online exhibit)
- 1 one-year hard-copy Post history for showcase (these entries will be showcased at National Convention)
- 1 one-year digital Post history for showcase (these entries will be showcased on the online exhibit)

Entries in the department digital contest should consist of one PDF file not to exceed 100MB and should be submitted digitally no later than Aug. 1, 2025. Submission details, including the website for submission, will be provided directly to Department Adjutants via communication from the national historian.

Post submissions for the national showcase (digital and hard copy) need to be received by the national library no later than Aug. 8, 2025. Submission details, including the website for digital submissions, will be provided to the Department.

Department Adjutant

Duane Cunningham

Legislative Priorities for the 119th Congress

The American Legion has released its Legislative Agenda for the 119th Congress, outlining key priorities to improve the lives of veterans, servicemembers, and their families. This agenda is our road map for advocacy this year.

Top Issues We're Fighting For

- Accelerate Military Quality of Life Improvements
Pay, housing, childcare, healthcare, and career opportunities must keep pace with rising costs and retention challenges.
- Strengthen Border Security
Combat drug smuggling, human trafficking, and support veteran Border Patrol agents on the front lines.
- Advance Armed Forces Modernization
Invest in technology, AI, cyber defense, and rebuild America's defense industrial base.
- Fund a Robust State Department
Diplomacy is our first line of defense. Cuts to foreign operations funding put servicemembers at risk.
- Protect Coast Guard Pay
End the shameful practice of leaving Coast Guard families unpaid during government shutdowns.
- Account for POW/MIA Servicemembers
Over 81,000 remain missing. The Legion demands a full accounting and closure for families.

Montana Grassroots Action Needed
The Legion Grassroots Action Center connects members with Congress. Sadly, Montana is falling short.

Only 15 total contacts have been made: 8 by Roger Hagan, 7 by the

Department Adjutant.

We need every Legionnaire to raise their voice on these issues. Visit the Action Center, contact your representatives, and do your part.

Convention Updates

- National Convention
 - o Tampa Bay, August 22–28, 2025.
 - o Montana represented by 32 Legion Family members.
 - o New National Commander: Daniel Wiley (Kansas).
 - o Next year: Louisville, KY, August 28–Sept 3, 2026.
- Department Convention
 - o June 25–28, 2026 – Helena Civic Center.
 - o Registration deadline: June 20. Walk-up adds \$5.
- Fall Conference
 - o October 24–25, 2025 – Helena Armed Forces Reserve Center.
 - o Open to all Legion Family members.
- Montana Legion College
 - o October 22–24, 2025 – Helena Armed Forces Reserve Center.
 - o Registration online and through district handouts.

Programs & Deadlines

- Buddy Checks – September is Suicide Awareness Month. Every post should be conducting and participating in Buddy Checks.
- Consolidated Post Reports (CPRs) – Due to Department NLT May 15, 2026.
- Boys & Girls State – June 14–20, 2026 – Carroll College. Start recruiting high school juniors now!
- Oratorical Contest – March 28, 2026 – East Helena HS. Each district should send a contestant.
- Fundraisers –
 - o Cash Calendar (biggest fundraiser)
 - o Big K (now open to public)
 - o Cat/Griz Raffle (Boys &

Girls State)

- o Red Friday shirts, trivia nights, AL merchandise
- Women Veterans Symposium – May 1–3, 2026 – Helena.

Administrative Reminders

- Post Data Forms – Due April 2026. Ensure mailing, dues, and meeting info is current.
- Certification of Officers – Due May 15, 2026. Non-compliance = loss of MyLegion access.
- IRS Form 990 – Annual requirement (Posts & Districts).
- Secretary of State Corporate Report – Due annually NLT April 15.
- Ceremonial Rifles – TA-COM requires updated inventories. Non-compliance may result in rifles being collected.

For the Good of the Legion

Across Montana, too many posts are saying: “We can’t... It’s too hard... That’s how we’ve always done it... No one will step up.”

The truth is simple: we must do better.

- Montana has 115 Posts, but too many are inactive.
 - Some don’t attend district meetings or run Legion programs.
 - Worse, many members report they have never been contacted by their Post.
- This is unacceptable. Our raffles, calendars, and fundraisers are not optional—they fund our programs. Our CPRs and paperwork are not suggestions—they are requirements. The Department Executive Committee has the authority to suspend charters for Posts that fail to meet obligations. The American Legion is not a business—it is a service-driven organization.
- It is time for every Post in Montana to recommit to the mission: veterans, families, youth, and community.

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



September is Veteran Suicide Awareness Month... I can relate

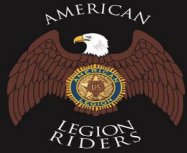
Brian Carpenter; ALR Director

Veteran suicide and veteran suicide attempt, consistently rank Montana among the highest in the nation. This high rate is driven by multiple factors including demographics, geographics, and cultural factors. The most recent statistics available for both National and State are from 2022 and 2021 respectively. In 2021, there were 6404 Veteran suicides. The national veteran suicide rate was an average of 22 per day, which is the rate most commonly associated with veteran suicide. But when you subtract attempts from completion the number per day drops to 17.6. What is important about this? The number 22 actually only represents attempted AND completed FEMALE veteran suicides. I don't know what the number 22 serves as being the most recognized number associated with veteran suicide, but keeping that in mind, In 2021, the female average was 17.6 compared to that of 33.9 per 100,000 for male veterans. The combined national veteran suicide average 33.9 per 100,000 veterans. Montana however, in 2021 there were 44 veteran suicides. Fewer than 10 females died by suicide, but this number, according to studies suggest female veterans may be significantly undercounted in suicide data. In 2021, male veterans accounted for 40 to 50 deaths. However, the staggering statistic is the Overall Veteran Suicide Rate in Montana, in 2021 was 51.2 per 100,00 veterans, compared to the national average of 33.9 per 100,000. This means with fewer veterans, in a less populated state, Montana has nearly double veteran suicide rate compared to the national average. My personal experiences in the military have left me with both PTSD and Moral Injuries. During the separation from the military in 2002 up to the present, I have had law enforcement training, earned a peer-to-peer counselor certification in Montana, and have focused copious hours on helping fellow veterans suffering the same things. I have been a shoulder, helping

hand, and hand up. In May of 2025, due to a medical issue, I had an accident on my motorcycle and ended up hitting my head on the asphalt three times. Whether or not I was wearing a helmet is another discussion, however the answer is no. As a result of hitting my head I suffered memory loss, increased anxiety and depression, as well as speech issues, a bad concussion, and a TBI (Traumatic Brain Injury). The TBI was the main driving factor of the other effects. I couldn't remember the coping mechanisms and other skills I had obtained over the years. Skills that I had used and trained others on. This triggered anger, depression, and anxiety. I felt embarrassed and ashamed in the company of loved ones, friends, and fellow veterans I had been a mentor to. The feelings of being a failure, an embarrassment, and less of a leader began to grow. My memories began to return slightly but with the good memories, the "bad" memories resurfaced. Memories of combat and police work that I had long ago found a way to deal with and suppress, came crawling back like mental demons. As with all mental health issues and head injuries, when someone doesn't possess, or my case, you can't remember, the coping skills to combat depression, anxiety, and anger, often times that person turns to increased substance use. In my case it was alcohol. It's important to remember to distinguish between alcohol use and substance abuse. I was using alcohol to cope when normally I drank while socializing.

As the days and weeks progressed after the accident, I continued to struggle and then began to isolate. Isolation is also another red flag indicator of possible suicide along with increase substance use/abuse and uncontrolled emotions. In June, I had yet another vehicle accident caused by the same medical issue.

Continued on next page



AMERICAN LEGION RIDERS



Brian Carpenter continued

This time, it was the pickup that got totaled. I hit my head again and was thrown into a crisis/triggered/hypervigilant state. The memories after the accident are foggy at best. But during the night in that triggered crisis state, I had in my mind reached rock bottom with the wrecks and the alcohol, and lost memories and skills, and heightened negative emotions. I had in fact, taken the gun from the night stand and made an apologetic call to my father to say that I was sorry I had disappointed him. As we were both crying on the phone my father told me I was not a disappointment and that he was so proud of me. It was one of a handful of times I had heard him say that and also maybe the second or third time I had ever heard or seen him cry. It was enough to boost me out of the crisis mode with a reality check. Subsequently the next day I was arrested for the accident which the police felt was an intentional suicide attempt although they had no evidence of that.

I entered the Department of Montana VA Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program focusing on PTSD. I completed the 6 weeks of treatment on August 1st. The treatment I received during the program helped regain copying skills and mechanisms. While I was at RRTP, I met other residents who had been to other facilities around the country like Denver, Sheridan, and Tulsa. I was told that the MT RRTP program was

the Gold Standard program. I would have to agree with that opinion. The staff was excellent and I felt like they genuinely cared about my progress. The facility itself, was clean and orderly. I am thankful to have been in the program and received the care medically as well. Along the way, some medical issues I had been suffering from were figured out. I'm feeling better physically and mentally.

The point I want to leave you with is that if you are having thoughts of hurting yourself, experiencing heightened levels of anxiety, depression, or anger, there is help out there for you. If you are coping with some of these issues with alcohol or substances use/abuse, there is help out there. There is no judgement on seeking help or treatment. You are important to more people than you may realize. If you are reading this and can think of someone who has changed their character or demeanor, given personal possessions away, or are showing signs or making statements that are uncharacteristic of a person. Say something. Ask them how they are doing. Asking them what's on their mind. You could "Be the One" that saves a life.

As the end of riding season draws ever closer, be safe out there. Head on a swivel, painted side up, greasy side down. I hope to see a lot of faces at the Fall Conference in October. Enjoy your District meetings. And God Bless.

Best Regards

Brian "Carp" Carpenter

BE THE ONE



THE AUXILIARY SERVICE STAR



Leona Somerfeld Department President

September has arrived and with it our Fall District Meetings are beginning, please plan to attend. Rosters and Plan of Actions will be brought to the meetings. Our Delegation went to the National Convention in Tampa Bay, FL. It sounds like they learned a lot, met many people from all over, and had a great experience. It's time to renew your memberships and start recruiting new members. How can you attract and keep members? Visibility in your communities is the answer. Make sure you advertise your activities and show the positives The American Legion family has to offer. Our Website is being updated by our Public Relations and Historian, Candice Gehring, check it out. Newsletters, rosters, meetings, I think it will be another place to get and put information out. Reorganization here we come. Send pictures and articles to mtala.candice@gmail.com This is a continuing work in progress, if you have ideas please share.

Onto housekeeping... Please make note of this, it will make everyone's life easier.

**** Dept. Secretary Leila Seyfert is PO BOX 867 Glasgow, MT 59230.

**** Make all checks out to ALA MT with a donation sheet.

**** Send all Poppy orders and Poppy funds to the Dept. Secretary.

Fall Conference is in Helena on October 24th-25th, it would be great to see you. Let's get back to basics and back on track!

"Montana Treasures, Copper, Silver, Gold & Veterans"

Across our Nation

By Kari Hould ALA Department Chaplain

The month of September will be a busy one. Perhaps the senseless murders across the nation will slow down, it's probably asking too much to have them cease completely. One can always pray for such, we know where the one who determines it is...just a prayer away.

September. What a beautiful and colorful time of year, as the world takes a deep breath...sometimes to regather one's thought, sometimes to just take time to give thanks. If possible, celebrate the grandparents in your lives, or your kids' lives on Grandparent Day on September 7. Make a card or take them cookies, let them know you care. And if your kids don't have grandparents, borrow an elderly person and make their day. It's not always about "the blood line."

This month we observe the 24th anniversary of the terrorist acts and bombing of the World Trade Center. Better known as 9/11, the world as we know it was forever changed.

Check with your local AL and ALA to see and participate in whatever activities they have planned in observation and remembrance of those lives lost that day.

September 17, as some might recall, is US Constitution Day, which is when the US Constitution was adopted, in 1787, just five years before the founding of The Farmers

Almanac!

We cannot, or at least - should not - forget the National POW/MIA Day on September 19th. Remember those who never returned and gave the ultimate sacrifice. It also commemorates those that were Killed In Action, as well. I visited with a young lady yesterday who had NO idea what POW/MOA/KIA even stood for or meant. Which...it my world is sad. There are so many who either don't care or are not interested in these remembrances. We need to bring to light the importance of these dates and reason for their observances before no one cares.

On September 21st the world will observe the International Day of Peace. There are many ideas online for recognizing the day and, Lord knows, we need to be vigilant in working of peace and harmony across the world. What can YOU do to promote it?

And the day many have been waiting for...September 22 marks the start of fall, the Autumn Equinox, occurring at 2:21 P.M. EDT. On this date, there are approximately equal hours of daylight and darkness.

The Suicide Awareness is all month. Share what you do to spread the word to others. In the dark days we have been through, we need to remember those who are still hurting, searching or forgotten.





Delegate to the 104th ALA National Convention

District 1 Secretary/Treasurer

Corinne Simon

I had the honor of being a delegate to the National Convention. Prior to the Convention, I listened to a Finance Pre-Convention Committee meeting via Zoom. ALA National Financing is complicated, as the committee submits a proposed budget covering an accurate estimate of revenues, expenses, and investments; and for unforeseen circumstances. They are entrusted to ensure funds are used wisely and available to support programs sponsored by the Auxiliary. On Saturday 8/23, delegates attended a Constitution and Bylaws Pre-Convention Meeting where all delegates could ask clarifying questions pertaining to the wording in the 15 proposed amendments. These amendments concerned the National Constitution and Bylaws. The most confusing point was understanding what a Department Headquarters unit is. For Montana this is Unit 105.

On Sunday 8/24, delegates attended Northwestern Division Caucus, which includes Colorado, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming, led by Vice President Debra Albers. She gave a synopsis of what projects each state worked on. Montana had the honor of having Vice President Albers as a judge for the Department Oratorical Contest held in Helena on March 29.

On Monday 8/25, the convention was opened by Steve Gilliland, who has dedicated his life to inspiring people through laughter and motivational inspirations. Committee reports on Credentials, Rules, Convention Agenda, Junior Activities, ALA Girls Nation, Poppy, Children & Youth, Child Well Being Foundation, Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, Americanism, and Education were given by national officers.

Olivia Thuney, Junior Member of the Year, spoke on how the Auxiliary has impacted her life and how she has helped the Legion Family. Maanyata Raju Sri-kantamh, 2025 ALA Girls Nation President, gave very impressive speeches on what she learned during Girls State, being selected to attend Girls Nation, and being elected President of Girls Nation and how it has affected her life now and will in the future.

There were Breakout Sessions in the afternoon for delegates to attend. I attended one on Clarifying Department Roles & Responsibilities: Resolving Issues Before Escalating presented by Chris Dickey, who is with Parliamentary Procedures. After much discussion, it was determined that each Department must go by what is in their Constitution and Bylaws.

On Tuesday 8/26, the Past National Presidents in attendance were introduced. Followed by committee reports on National Security, Risk & Compliance, Finance, National Treasurer, National Secretary, National Headquarters, National Vice President, and the ALA Foundation.

This was followed by the Constitution and Bylaws Committee Report, discussion on the wording of the changes to the Constitution and Bylaws, with several amendments to the amendment being made, followed by voting on the changes. Ten of the 15 Amendments were adopted. This was a long drawn out process requiring delegates to return after lunch to finish. Wednesday 8/27 was the Nomination and Election of 2025-2026 Officers. Pam Ray was elected as the new National President. This was followed by Committee Reports on Membership, Community Service, Legislative, Leadership, Public Relations, Auxilliary Emergence Fund, National Historian, National Chaplain. There also was a presentation on the Chapel of the Four Chaplains. Installation of 2025-2026 National Officers was done in the afternoon. The National Convention was then adjourned.

Yvonne Kostelecky Auxilliary NEC 2024-2025

I was truly blessed to finish my year as the Montana ALA NEC in Tampa, Florida. If you never traveled to the South you have to realize that there is lots of humidity but you also never know what Mother Nature will be like. So as we all arrived for the 106th American Legion National Convention. Florida was getting the remnants of the Hurricane Erin. We experienced lots of rain and humidity but that did not detour us from having a fabulous Convention. Besides spending time with our Montana AL and SAL members, our other Montana ALA members-Kathy Long, Maureen Watt, and Corrine Simon, it was wonderful to reconnect with other members from across the USA. We all were able to enjoy the attractions, wonderful food, and culture when weather was cooperative. We tried going on a dolphin cruise but because of weather it had to be cancelled.

Once we got down to official business of the Convention there were lots of amendments and resolutions to be discussed and voted on. We were able to attend different sessions that would help our Department and our

Units. We all attended our Northwest Division Caucus meeting. During the breaks we all were able to go to Emblem Sales and find different items that were for sale acknowledging the Convention in Florida. We all came home with treasures.

When going to the National Convention you get to meet the National Officers and National Chairmen. It was wonderful to meet up with our ALA National President Trish Ward and our NW Division Vice President Debra Alders again.

There was a quote that I want to share from the Lead-

ership Committee from Robin Ruff, Department of Wyoming: "For some reason, the word "leadership" sends terror into people's hearts! Do they feel threatened? Out of their depth? In reality, we are all leaders in one form or another. I see leaders in every aspect of our American Legion Auxiliary family.

I would like to share 5 Graces of Leadership-
G-Gratitude-Create a culture of appreciation

R- Resilience- Don't let fear hold you back

A-Aspiration- Make tomorrow better than today

C- Courage- Have courage to admit what we don't know

E- Empathy- Meet others where they are and understand who they are

Going to the AL National Convention is such an exhilarating experience. You go there to see how our organization works across the USA helping our Veterans and their families. At times it is so heartbreaking to see what they have gone through but then we are able to see what amazing things our organization has done to help them.

To be a part of the celebration of installing our new ALA National President, Pam Ray, her officers, new Department Presidents and NEC members is a once in a lifetime experience. ALA National President Pam Ray and the NW Division Vice President Shareen Johnson, from the Department of Wyoming have asked to be invited to our state for a visit.

It has been an honor to be a part of our ALA National President Trish Ward's NEC committee, I have learned so very much about our organization and the responsibilities of the NEC and as the Alternate NEC, I am here when needed. But it has been an extreme honor to be an officer for the ALA Department of Montana.



The Anaconda American Legion Auxiliary Unit 21 was the grand marshals of the Anaconda 4th of July parade. Pictured are Audrey Parrow, Sue Dickerson, Maureen Parrow, Marge Tucker, and Maureen Watt.

On August 1, 2025 the Montana Treasured Piecemakers QOV Group awarded Quilts of Valor to the veterans at the VA Center in Miles City. Several veterans also received their Vietnam Veteran Lapel Pin. It was a great day for a ceremony.



Douglas N; United States Navy; 1961-1965; Vietnam War



Richard K; United States Navy; 1968-1969; Vietnam War



Louie H; United States Army; 1966-1969; Vietnam War



Sylvester A; United States Army; 1953-1955; Korean Conflict

Kathy Long

Auxiliary Delegate

National Convention in Tampa Bay, FL

8-21 2025 to 8-29-2025

On Friday, all I did was go to Emblem Sales and went on a tour to the Aquarium Center.

In the pre-convention meetings (Meetings started Saturday 8- 23rd), there was a choice of 3 meetings that you could attend. Resolutions, Credentials, and Rules; I chose Resolutions. Two of the three resolutions passed at Convention. (Poppy and Girls State Resolutions passed)

There was one resolution that did not pass because it did not include all people that the delegates wanted in the resolution. The resolution was about membership. The resolution mentioned fathers, brothers, grandfathers, uncles and children of service members. The problem was members also wanted half siblings and step siblings and a few other relations not mentioned. For this reason, the resolution did not pass.

I believe all 4 of the delegates from Montana went to the Pre Convention Meeting of Constitution on Sat. Only clarifying questions could be asked at this meeting on the 15 proposed amendment changes.

There were so many questions on 5 of the amendment changes that National pulled those amendments out for on the floor of the Convention. There were other amendments that the people wanted out to ask questions about once we got to the floor of the convention as well.

We had our Northwest Division Caucus meeting on Sunday. The main function of this meeting was to elect our new NW Division Vice President for the new year. Our new NW Div VP is Shareen Johnson of Wyoming.

Lowell and I went with a delegation from Montana to the Baseball game in the afternoon. Did not get to see the game as it was rained out. Some went back that evening to the game.

On Monday we had a guest speaker (Steve Gilliland) that had just published a book entitled: It Is What You Make of It. Based on what he said this will be a worthwhile book to read. You can find the book on Amazon.

There were 5 training meetings on Monday afternoon. They were: Clarifying Department Roles & Responsibilities: Resolving Issues Before Escalating (Chris Dickey), Department Excellence Initiative in Action:

Raising the Bar for 2025-2026 (Trish Ward & Pam Ray), If Leadership is a Game, These Are the Rules (Steve Gilliland), Pitch Your Passion: \$10,000 to Bring Your Veteran Service Project to Life (Cathe MacInnes & Carley Schutz), and Relevant & Relatable: Evolving Your Message for Today's Audience (Sara Fowler & Alexa Freeman). Three of us chose to attend Clarifying Department Roles & Responsibilities: Resolving Issues Before Escalating (I was one of them). Yvonne chose to attend Department Excellence Initiative in Action: Raising the Bar for 2025-2026 presented by Tish Ward and Pam Ray.

Things I learned at the training session:

1) We can have an informal meeting at any level that the meeting takes place as long as we have fewer than 20 to 25 people in attendance. If you have more than that you should have a formal meeting with motions and following proper procedures. If you do make motions with fewer people, you need to specify when you want those motions made. For example, only when you are dealing with money matters. (All members must agree on when motions should occur, if you do not all agree on this you should have informal agreements instead at your meeting.)

2) When a Chair is giving their report, they are to finish their report BEFORE taking questions, concerns, etc. And you only speak on the issue (Add no character analysis of anything that is going on.) that the Chair is discussing.

3) Follow the Right Process, which means follow your governing documents. You cannot say "This is what we are going to do and we will change our governing documents later." You have to change your governing documents first and then do the action. You bring more trust to your organization if you follow your governing document.

Meetings (training) got done about 3:30 PM

During the reports on Tuesday, the Constitution and Bylaws Report was given. It was an extra-long day as we had to go over ALL 15 amendments before we could be done for the day. In the end, 4 or 5 of the amendments were bundled into one motion so we could speed things up. We got done about 3:30 PM. Last day of our meeting was Wednesday 8-27th. Last of the reports, election of Officers (Pam Ray was elected National President), and Installation of Officers for this day, getting done about 3:00 PM.

Stayed the 28th for Legion meetings to get done and the left the 29th.

American Legion Department of Montana Fall Conference 2025 Leadership Dinner Reception

October 24, 2025

Mark all that apply

Name(s) _____ ☐ Legion ☐ ALA ☐ SAL ☐ Riders

_____ ☐ Legion ☐ ALA ☐ SAL ☐ Riders

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____ Phone _____

Friday Evening there will be a joint leadership reception at Hardware Café in Montana City co-hosted by the Department Commander, Auxiliary President, Detachment Commander and Legion Riders Director.

Leadership Reception \$40 X _____ = \$ _____

Total \$ _____

Questions

Erin Carpenter – Office Manager
C# 406-324-3989
amlegmtsec@gmail.com

**Registrations must be received by
October 15, 2025**

Send Registration Form & Payment To

American Legion of Montana
PO Box 155
Fort Harrison, MT 59636



The American Legion Family

American Legion Department of Montana
Legion College 2025

October 22, 2025 1300-1800

October 23, 2025 0800 - 1800

October 24, 2025 0800 - 1200

1956 Mt Majo in the Helena Armed Forces Reserve Center Auditorium

Name _____

American Legion Membership Number _____ Post Number _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____ Phone _____

Leadership Positions held: _____

Date Completed American Legion Basic Training _____

Registration \$50 X _____ = \$ _____

Total \$ _____

Questions

Irene Dickerson – Dean of College

C# 406-351-9775

Wildhorsemt09@gmail.com

**Send Registration Form &
Payment To**

American Legion of Montana

PO Box 155

Fort Harrison, MT 59636

**Registrations must be received by
October 15, 2025**



Montana Caucus at the 2025 National Convention

On August 24, 2025, the Department of Montana held its caucus during the American Legion National Convention in Tampa, Florida. Commander Ken Simon opened with the Pledge of Allegiance, preamble, and prayer before turning to reports from Montana's delegation. Montana delegates participated in a full range of committee meetings, ensuring the Department's voice was heard on national issues. Highlights included:

- **Americanism & Youth Programs:** Reports on national youth champions and education award recipients underscored the Legion's continued investment in future leaders.
- **Constitutional Amendments:** Delegates rejected a proposal to make the Legion "non-political," affirming that while non-partisan, lobbying is essential to advocacy. A resolution to prevent members from transferring posts to avoid discipline was adopted.
- **Finance:** No dues increase was approved for 2026. Concerns about membership retention and late renewals remain a priority at the national level.
- **Internal Affairs & Legislation:** Multiple resolutions were discussed, with emphasis on membership retention, post revitalization, and preparations for America's 250th anniversary. The Legislative Committee had no new actions.
- **National Security:** Montana's own resolution on the National Defense Budget was referred for further study. Other topics included Armed Forces service medals and flag precedence.
- **Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation:** Delegates learned of new VA initiatives such as the Solid Start program, vocational rehabilitation modernization, and home-based care pilot efforts. However, frustration was expressed that many resolutions—including Montana's—were again delayed for "further study."
- **Veterans Employment & Education:** No resolutions, but delegates were encouraged to bring forward future ideas.

Montana's caucus also heard from candidates for National Commander, including Dan Wiley (Kansas) and Jay Bowen (Colorado), both emphasizing membership growth and strengthening Legion programs.

Discussion closed with concerns over the handling of resolutions at the national level. Delegates were urged to actively advocate for Montana's proposals to ensure they are not dismissed without consideration.

The caucus concluded with prayer and adjournment, with Commander Simon thanking all delegates for representing Montana with dedication and commitment.

BE THE ONE