American Legion Family bonds against Hurricane Harvey

Dear American Legion Family and friends,

We need our families the most during life’s greatest challenges. Nowhere is this more apparent than in Texas and the Gulf Coast right now.

American Legion Post 658 Commander Gary Alston evacuated his home with his family on August 25 due to the high winds inflicted by Hurricane Harvey. Along with those winds came the water. Trillions of gallons in Texas, according to some estimates. The Alstons, that’s Gary, his wife, two sons and grandmother, have been living at the Legion post in Crosby ever since. Although the population keeps changing, there were 360 people sheltering at the post by Tuesday.

“We have blacks, whites, Mexicans and Indians,” Alston said. “They
come here without much but everybody is working together. Veterans and nonveterans. The rest of the country could learn from this.”

It brings to mind the work of DeRidder, La., Post 27, which served as a home to so many in its community during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina 12 years ago. Its shelter fostered such a family environment that two evacuees were married there less than two weeks after Katrina tore through the coast.

“This is for human life,” Post 27 Commander Bill Loftin said in 2005 of the post’s emergency efforts. “That’s what the Legion is all about. These people are at the mercy of the world.”

My theme as national commander is “Family First,” and this is a perfect example of why The American Legion Family is so important. We have always been advocates for preparedness and emergency response. After Hurricane Camille struck the Gulf Coast in 1969, the National Executive Committee created the National Emergency Fund as a one-time project to award grants to eligible Legion Family members and posts. The program was made permanent after Hurricane Hugo roared into the Carolinas in 1989. Grants of up to $3,000 are now awarded to eligible individuals and $10,000 to Legion posts. Almost $9 million of assistance has been delivered by the NEF since the program’s creation. To learn more about NEF please visit www.legion.org/NEF.

Our Temporary Financial Assistance Program is also ready to assist Legion-eligible veterans with minor children (18 or younger) who need financial help to pay for shelter, food, utilities or medical expenses. To learn more about TFA please visit www.legion.org/TFA.

In addition to the devastating impact natural disasters have on lives and homes, communications often collapse when cellular towers are destroyed and satellites fail. The American Legion Amateur (Ham) Radio Club (TALARC) was established in 2011 with such emergencies in mind. With a membership of more than 3,150 in at least 30 post clubs, these dedicated enthusiasts work closely with the Department of Homeland Security and other emergency management agencies in support of civil defense.

You can learn more about our ham radio club by visiting www.legion.org/hamradio or by emailing k9TAL@legion.org. And like any other national emergency, blood donations are always
The American Legion helps in times of need

The American Legion’s National Emergency Fund provides immediate financial assistance to Legion Family members and posts affected by natural disasters such as Hurricane Harvey. The fund provides up to $3,000 for qualified Legion Family members and up to $10,000 for posts.

Donate to the National Emergency Fund
Qualified children (18 and under) of Legion-eligible veterans may receive assistance via the Legion’s Temporary Financial Assistance program. TFA grants provide help during disasters like Harvey as they help families meet the costs of shelter, food, utilities and health expenses.

Donate to Temporary Financial Assistance
A 2013 Gallup poll revealed that a slight majority of all parents claim to eat with their family at least six times a week. Whether a gourmet meal, a backyard cook-out or just ordinary leftovers, the communication and camaraderie that occurs around a dinner table often strengthens family bonds as they provide respites from television, online media or other unproductive time-killers.

This is an activity that I would like to expand not just among The American Legion Family, but the communities in which our Legion families reside. My theme as national commander is “Family First!” And while our Legion Family consists of The American Legion, the American Legion Auxiliary and the Sons of the American Legion, it is time for us to add seats at our table for the people that our pillars are intended to serve.

First, the military. I’m asking for all American Legion posts, ALA units and SAL squadrons to reach out to their local military installations, reserve centers and National Guard units and invite them to attend
the mother of all Veterans Day dinners this Nov. 11. Many of you already hold Veterans Day parades and observances. Make them even bigger by adding a buffet. Invite participants and alumni of our great youth programs. Include veterans who may not be members of The American Legion Family but would sure enjoy a nice home-cooked meal and the company of caring people. Churches, other charitable organizations and businesses can also be included on the invite lists.

Too many American Legion posts aren’t growing. It’s easy to get insulated within our own comfort zones and familiar groups. Even if unintentional, a group that is perceived as cliquish is not likely to grow. Atrophy is an enemy. Moreover, our motto is “still serving America.” What better way to serve our communities than to invite new guests into our Legion homes?

You will see more messages and materials about this from me in the coming weeks. There is no one way to do this. I’m looking forward to hearing your ideas as well. If you have experience holding large Legion-style dinners, tell us about it at www.legiontown.org

Perhaps your dinners can serve an additional purpose as a fundraiser for our Temporary Financial Assistance and service officer programs. You can also raise money for our National Emergency Fund, which is providing needed assistance to those impacted by recent hurricanes and wildfires.

Maybe you can obtain corporate sponsorship to help cover the costs. Maybe you know people in the media who can help publicize the event in advance. But above all, think of it as a service. Don’t set prices too high for people on fixed budgets to attend. Consider free meals for the homeless or deep discounted prices for those on hard times. Dinners are great opportunities to start conversations and build on that dialog. These Veterans Day dinners could be excellent momentum-builders as we rapidly approach our organization’s centennial.

Include your local media in your plans and make frequent announcements on your Legion Family websites and social media accounts. (National is working on a kit to help posts distribute the message in their communities.) The more successful the event, the more likely The American Legion Family can benefit by local media coverage and other message magnifiers.

At first, visitors may see us serve meals. But once they get to know us, they will see us serve America.

Denise H. Rohan
National Commander

Share this email:
Texas Legion family remains steadfast in supporting hurricane victims

American Legion Family bonds against Hurricane Harvey

Hurricane Harvey: How to support veterans in need
Dear American Legion Family and friends,

As I sit down to write this message, I am faced with a harsh reality: Just 24 hours after you read this, we will have lost 20 more veterans to suicide.

Twenty veterans who have left spouses, mothers, fathers, children, siblings and others wondering why.

Twenty veterans who won’t be with their families and friends at holiday celebrations this year.

Twenty veterans who we won’t be able to salute and say thank you to on Veterans Day.
Every day in America, we lose 20 of our comrades to suicide. That striking figure is not new but it was confirmed in a recent report by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The VA report indicates that the risk of suicide was 22 percent higher for veterans than those who have not served. While the numbers are dire, we can make a difference.

Veterans who are in crisis or having thoughts of suicide, and those who know a veteran in crisis, can call the Veterans Crisis Line for confidential support 24 hours a day any day of the year. The number is 800-273-8255 and press 1, or you can chat online at VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat, or send a text to 838255.

Additionally, if you know of a veteran who is showing signs of depression or has talked about suicide, there are many ways you can help. For example, pay the veteran a visit, meet up for coffee, or invite him or her to participate in a healthy activity like walking or biking.

The American Legion has also prepared a brochure to help with identifying symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder and where to seek help. Download "Post Traumatic Stress Disorder: A guide to identification and getting help," for free here.

This week concludes National Suicide Prevention Month. But, in reality, it’s up to all fellow veterans and their families to have the backs of our comrades every single day. Please be on the lookout for any of our brothers and sisters showing possible signs of suicide and take appropriate action.

Family First.

Denise H. Rohan
National Commander

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American Legion Suicide Prevention
Awareness message

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Dear American Legion Family and Friends,

Even in non-presidential voting years, I look forward to participating in my civic obligation to vote for the candidates of my choosing.

In fact, voting in municipal elections is considered vitally important to our democracy. Whether your city or town is casting ballots this year for mayor, city council, school board or other local offices, those elected will have the power to make decisions that affect you and your neighbors for years to come.

The American Legion strongly believes in citizens exercising their rights to vote. We also encourage Legion posts and American Legion Family members to be active in their communities before and during Election Day. Spreading awareness about where and when to vote in your community is a good first step in our commitment to community, state and nation. One way is to share and distribute this PSA about voting.
More ideas on how to participate can be found in the Get Out the Vote brochure.

As President Franklin D. Roosevelt said, “Nobody will ever deprive the American people of the right to vote except the American people themselves and the only way they could do this is by not voting.”

It’s our duty. For our country. On this Election Day, get out and vote – and help others who may need assistance in getting to the polls.

Family First.

Denise H. Rohan
National Commander

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The American Legion urges participation in November elections

Watch here

Family First Veterans Day Dinner Materials

Downloadable kit
American Legion National Commander’s Veterans Day message

Watch here

National Commander's Pin Incentive Program

Learn more
America has been blessed by its veterans

As mass murders, terrorist attacks and devastating natural disasters dominate recent news, it is easy to despair. But as Veterans Day approaches, we have the opportunity to focus on something positive. For it is usually veterans who protect us and come to our aid during the most desperate times.

Although the forces of Mother Nature cannot be stopped, there is a good chance that those handling the majority of rescues following a hurricane or other natural disaster are military veterans. Whether it’s a Coast Guard search and rescue team or a police officer with prior military service, they risk their own lives to save others.

Like many Americans, I was struck by a viral photograph that circulated the web following the horrific attack in Las Vegas last month. The New York Post published the picture with the not-surprising headline, “Hero who shielded woman from Vegas carnage is a U.S. soldier.”

The heartbreaking image of a brave man using his entire body to comfort and shield a wounded woman from further harm was not just a true depiction. It was a metaphor.

Our military – soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and Coast Guardsmen – protect, shield and comfort all of us every day. Since the founding of our American Legion, veterans have shielded us from the likes of Hitler, Imperial Japan, Marxist tyrants and terrorists.
America has been blessed by its veterans

The soldier in the Las Vegas photograph, Matthew Cobos, was off-duty. He was not wearing his uniform, yet he still offered his body to buffer bullets in a moment of peril. After pulling the woman to safety, he ran back to the danger zone to rescue others. That is what soldiers do. That is what veterans do.

A century ago, Americans were fighting a war to liberate Europe. Compared to other countries, U.S. involvement was relatively short in time. But the sacrifice was enormous. A total of 116,516 Americans paid the ultimate price. Another 200,000 were wounded. It finally ended as an armistice went into effect at 11 a.m. on November 11, 1918. The moment lives on as the designated date to reflect on the contributions that U.S. military veterans have made since the founding of our great Republic.

In 2016, President Barack Obama signed the Veterans Day Moment of Silence Act, legislation which had the full support of The American Legion. The proclamation calls for the American people everywhere to observe a two-minute national moment of silence on Veterans Day, Nov. 11, at 2:11 p.m. Eastern Standard Time.

I will be in New York during the moment of silence but even in the bustle of America’s busiest city my quiet thoughts will reflect on the sacrifice and service of the millions of men and women who have worn the greatest uniform the world has ever known.

Denise H. Rohan
National Commander

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America has been blessed by its veterans

Family First Veterans Day Dinner Materials

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Specials, discounts offered for Veterans Day

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National Commander’s Pin Incentive Program

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Issued on 11-07-2017
Thanksgiving is National Family Week

Family is obviously very important to me. I chose the theme for my year as national commander to be “Family First” not just because I am a wife, mother, grandmother, sister and daughter. My family is bigger than that. I extend family to include the fellow soldiers who I served with as a proud member of the U.S. Army. I use the term to describe my brothers and sisters who are military veterans or are loved ones of those who served. In short, The American Legion Family is my family.

Due to frequent address changes, long separations and the inherent risks of defending our nation in war, military families understand the true meaning of sacrifice. President Trump appropriately proclaimed November 2017 to be National Veterans and Military Families Month.

“Many military spouses face the task of making ends meet while their loved ones are away and of securing new employment with each change in duty station. Children grow up living a nomadic life – periodically calling a new place ‘home’ and adjusting to different schools, trying out for new sports teams, and making new friends ...” the president’s proclamation states.

Our American Legion Family should be reaching out to these patriotic families. We should also do everything we can through our programs and our outreach to support families in our communities. Strong families mean less poverty, less crime and a generally healthier society. In short, strong families mean a strong America.
Thanksgiving is National Family Week

The American Legion has long called for Congress to establish "National Family Week," to be observed annually during the week of Thanksgiving. The president often issues an official proclamation to kick it off and delegates at our 98th National Convention renewed our **stance in 2016**.

Whether it’s opening your Legion post for a community dinner or delivering turkeys to homes in need, I would like to hear about what your American Legion post is doing to support and strengthen families in need. Please share your stories at [www.legionontown.org](http://www.legionontown.org).

As you gather around your dinner table, in your post home and elsewhere celebrating the spirit of giving thanks, I want to extend the warmest Happy Thanksgiving wishes to all of our extended family members – our Legion Family, our brothers and sisters in arms, and their families. Happy Thanksgiving!

Family First!

Denise H. Rohan  
National Commander

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Centennial Celebration: A guide to sharing your post’s Legacy and Vision

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Thanksgiving is National Family Week

Honor wins out over cold temps in NYC

'A memorial that's long overdue'

Issued on 11-15-2017
Dear American Legion Family and Friends,

In the spirit of giving this holiday season, I encourage you to consider a donation to the Commander’s Charity Fund. Perhaps there is no better day than today, Giving Tuesday, to generously give to programs that help veterans and children in need.

Throughout the year, American Legion service officers work tirelessly to help veterans understand and apply for the benefits they’ve earned through military service. Your donation to the Commander’s Charity Fund directly helps service officers and stands as an investment into the long-term needs of those who have served our country in uniform.

Donations to the Commander’s Charity Fund also supply much-needed resources for The American Legion’s Temporary Financial Assistance program. This special fund is for veterans and military
families who are facing economic difficulties with minor children at home. While supporting these families 365 days a year is important, there is no better time than now to offer your assistance during this time of giving.

Join me and other American Legion Family members across the nation in pledging our support -- $25, $50, $100 or whatever amount you feel is appropriate – to help our veterans and military families in need. To donate, please visit [www.legion.org/donate](http://www.legion.org/donate)

Family First.

Denise H. Rohan  
National Commander

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'This is what The American Legion is about'

[Read more](#)

Donate to the Commander's Charity Fund

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'Family First' hits New York City

Read more
Dear American Legion Family and Friends,

“December 7, 1941 – a date which will live in infamy.”

That famous proclamation from President Franklin D. Roosevelt still stands true today. But as 76th anniversary events take place this week in Pearl Harbor, there is a noticeable shift from the large-scale commemoration activities that occurred a year ago for the 75th remembrance services.

This year, fewer media outlets will be in attendance. Fewer guests will be in Hawaii to honor those who defended democracy amid the surprise attack by the Japanese on that Sunday morning so long ago. And, sadly, there will be even fewer Pearl Harbor survivors than in the past.

The number of survivors will continue to dwindle every year.
But we cannot – we must not – let their heroism fade from the memories of Americans. It is our duty as patriotic citizens to educate future generations on what the Greatest Generation did, starting with repelling the attack on Pearl Harbor. After all, it’s embedded in the DNA of our organization, “To preserve the memories and incidents of our associations in the Great Wars.”

I am honored to be a part of the commemoration ceremonies this year at Pearl Harbor. For those who are unable to attend, the ceremonies will be streamed live on Facebook, YouTube and the website of the World War II Valor in the Pacific National Monument’s website. A schedule, details and more information can be found here: [https://www.nps.gov/valr/learn/news/national-pearl-harbor-remembrance-day-76th-anniversary-commemoration-ceremony.htm](https://www.nps.gov/valr/learn/news/national-pearl-harbor-remembrance-day-76th-anniversary-commemoration-ceremony.htm)

Join me in honoring our commitment to “never forget” by honoring those heroes on Dec. 7. And be sure to engage your communities, your local schools and others in remembering and honoring the date that will indeed live in infamy.

Family First.

Denise H. Rohan
National Commander

Other headlines

Pearl Harbor survivor Jim Leavelle is forever linked with JFK's assassin

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Commander brings Legion Family message throughout Far East

Troop support, military strength top commander's agenda during visit to Korea
National Commander's Pin Incentive Program

This email was sent to: [REDACTED]

This email was sent by: The American Legion National Headquarters
700 North Pennsylvania Street
Indianapolis, IN 46204
Dear American Legion Family and Friends,

There is strength in numbers. And there is dedication among American Legion Family members. Combine American Legion dedication and strength through numbers, and we have a time-honored formula for meaningful advocacy for the values we share: support for veterans, our troops, young people and patriotism.

Every day, we see American Legion members supporting today’s servicemembers. Sons of The American Legion members are diligently attending to the needs of older veterans. American Legion Riders are raising money right this minute for scholarships to help young people. And Auxiliary members are working tirelessly to support their posts, chapters and squadrons.

Communities across America today are better off due to American Legion membership. I know this first-hand, having witnessed the kindness of American Legion Family members in many ways. I also
know the impact we have on veterans, servicemembers and their families can’t be always be expressed in numbers.

Yet, it’s numbers we need now, more than ever before.

Without strong numbers, our influence to fight for veterans’ rights on Capitol Hill is jeopardized. Our youth programs will mentor fewer children who need our guidance. Our charitable donations will help fewer veterans, servicemembers and their families who need us.

In my travels as your national commander, I have seen the best of The American Legion. Veterans helping veterans and strengthening every corner of our nation.

We need to retain current members and recruit new ones to continue effectively serving our communities, states and nation in ways only The American Legion Family can. This coming weekend, the national Membership and Post Activities Committee will meet to lay out plans for growth.

But we need your help. Check in with expired members and encourage them to rejoin. Connect with younger veterans and let them know how The American Legion has their backs.

There are tools to help you succeed and help us grow:

- There are wonderful flyers, presentations, posters, ads and more that you can use. Download them at the Legion’s membership page.
- Each month, we are sending three copies of The American Legion Magazine to every post – at no charge. These are intended to be resources to give to prospective members, or leave behind at places where veterans congregate – VA hospitals, doctor’s offices, etc.
- Review the Legion’s Basic Training course and encourage other members to check it out. The interactive guide features videos, digital photos, clickable links, a historical timeline and more to help visitors learn more about our organization.

Together, our dedication and the strength of numbers will allow us to continue standing tall for veterans and servicemembers as we near the beginning of a second century of service. We will fight to ensure that veterans receive the health care they deserve, that our troops are poised to succeed, that rewarding career opportunities are available for veterans and their spouses, children are educated and our nation’s flag is treated with the respect it deserves.

Family First.

Denise H. Rohan
National Commander
OCW grant helps support VA patients' financial, recovery needs

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Dear American Legion Family and Friends,

The federal government is closed. Your American Legion is not. Perhaps by the time you read this the government will re-open. After all, our federally elected officials have a constitutionally mandated responsibility to run the government. The shutdown is directly impacting the lives of our active-duty personnel, their families, veterans and federal civil servants who faithfully serve our nation every day.

These Americans do not need the additional stress of financial insecurity. I can’t help but think about the military families that live paycheck to paycheck and may not have the luxury of dipping into savings to pay their light bills.
Many Iraq and Afghanistan veterans currently using the GI Bill to go to school are understandably concerned that the shutdown will negatively impact their ability to pay tuition. Navy veteran Alyssa Myner told the Military Times, “I’m worried that if it (the shutdown) does extend further than three weeks, I will not be able to continue school because of the lack of funds.”

We’ve been told that VA will be less impacted than other government agencies. Hospitals will remain open and disability checks will continue to arrive for now. But even essential personnel need a strong support system to continue operating efficiently. This shutdown is a massive disruption to the Department of Defense. Suspended contracts and furloughed employees will impact our military’s ability to defend us.

When the shutdown ends, the top priority for the White House and Congress must be a budget agreement. Continuing resolutions are recipes for fiscal failure. Army Gen. Vincent K. Brooks, commander of U.S. Forces Korea, lamented this process to an America Legion delegation. “Nobody would run a company this way,” he said. “We have continuing resolutions every year which cause us to operate this year with last year’s requirements, which was also run by continuing resolution. Right now we are operating off a foundation from 2012. The world is not the same as it was in 2012.”

It should be noted that he made those comments nearly 14 months ago. Veterans can count on The American Legion to constantly communicate their concerns with Congress and the White House.

In a memo to the entire military, Defense Secretary James Mattis assured the military that its leadership will do its best to mitigate the impacts of the disruptions and any financial burdens faced by troops and their families.

“Steady as she goes - hold the line,” Mattis said. “I know our nation can count on you.”

The American Legion is now asking all of our elected officials: “Can we count on you?”

Family First.

Denise H. Rohan
National Commander

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Lincoln’s promises, and ours

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Inspiration during times of disaster

Dear American Legion Family and Friends,

One of the main job requirements of a national commander is to inspire the organization’s volunteers. Yet, I find that the opposite is often true.

During my recent visit to Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, it was the American Legion Family that inspired me. Still reeling from two historic hurricanes, I was told repeatedly by residents there that “We’ve been blessed, others have it worse.”

More than 40 percent of the region still does not have electric power and utilities on a permanent or consistent basis. Tarps still cover the roofs of thousands of homes. Tents in Arecibo, Puerto Rico, serve as a VA clinic.

I was concerned about the ability of The American Legion to make a difference due to the remoteness of the islands. Unlike the relief
efforts in Texas and Florida, Legionnaires weren’t able to fill trucks with supplies and drive them to the affected areas. Even commercial air travel was nearly impossible during the initial aftermath.

My concerns were unfounded.

In addition to the grants provided by programs such as the National Emergency Fund, Temporary Financial Assistance and Operation Comfort Warriors, American Legion departments and posts have matched their “devotion to mutual helpfulness” with monetary donations. The American Legion Department of Pennsylvania sent $50,000 to the Department of Puerto Rico. North Carolina added another $10,000. Florida Post 75 raised another $4,500 and Hollywood Post 43 in California contributed $2,200. All told, more than $72,000 have been raised by Legion entities.

Due to communication difficulties, Legion Family members in those islands can still apply for NEF grants beyond the February 1 deadline. Extensions can also be granted to applicants in other areas depending on their circumstances.

Gov. Kenneth Mapp of the Virgin Islands was appreciative of American Legion support. But he also pointed out a sad reality. Hurricanes Irma and Maria will not be the last disasters that strike the region. Elsewhere, we have seen crippling blizzards across the United States, gargantuan wildfires in California and deadly mudslides that have killed at least 21 people.

We need a strong National Emergency Fund. It’s not a matter of if but when the next natural disaster hits. Just like insurance, the hope is that you will never need it. But by giving generously, you will be helping your brothers and sisters in the American Legion Family when natural disaster strikes. Like our other American Legion Charities, one hundred percent of NEF donations go to the stated cause.

Family First.

Denise H. Rohan
National Commander

Make a donation to the National Emergency Fund

Share this email:
National commander to Puerto Rico: Your Legion Family cares

American Legion national commander issues statement on re-opening federal government

National Commander’s Pin Incentive Program

Learn more on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Pinterest, and YouTube.
Dear American Legion Family and Friends,

Like all parents Sheryl Johnson wants the best for her children, emphasizing the importance of a college education. As a single mother, she had spent many hours at her kitchen table, calculator in hand, trying to figure out how to make college payments for her oldest child, DeAndre Johns.

Johnson, a 10-year Army veteran with an 80 percent VA disability rating, eagerly awaited hearing about whether DeAndre would receive a Legacy Scholarship from The American Legion. Once the news came last spring, it changed everything.

“When I got the scholarship, it did feel like a jump start,” said DeAndre, a freshman majoring in petroleum engineering at Texas Tech University. “It made it feel like this is real. I can make my
Johnson is a first-generation college graduate. “College to me is everything,” she said. “I am so thankful that he got this scholarship because it helps us tremendously.”

Their story is among hundreds that have been made possible by American Legion Family members over the years. Just last year, 55 recipients received the needs-based scholarship to help pay for college.

The April 9 application deadline for the 2018-19 school year may seem a long way off. But it’s really not. Students should not hesitate to begin learning about the scholarship and compiling information.

Those scholarships are made possible by the dedication of our American Legion Riders who have annually helped raise $1 million or more for these scholarships. These donations are turned into scholarships for children whose parents have either died on active duty since 9/11 or have a combined VA disability rating of 50 percent or greater.

These scholarships not only help students afford college, they change lives and inspire young minds. Jacob Mussi, a physics student at Boston University, is another recipient who is full of gratitude for the American Legion Family.

“Thank you goes without saying. Thank you so much,” he said. “When you have a cause that’s important like (The American Legion Legacy Scholarship), just taking not only time out of your day but money out of your wallet to support somebody else’s problems is a type of generosity that I hope to have someday.”

Family First.

Denise H. Rohan
National Commander

FAQs for applicants, donors and others
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Lincoln’s legacy remembered at pilgrimage

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Tune in to watch the Commander's Call live

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Women's History Month is a time to reflect, but The American Legion works on behalf of women veterans daily.

Dear American Legion Family and Friends,

Women's History Month is a time to reflect on the contributions women have made throughout U.S. history. It's a time to celebrate and share the stories of civil rights pioneers like Rosa Parks, scientific adventurers like Sally Ride and those who may not be household names but whose legacies shine on.

Of course, it's also a time to honor and remember women veterans who have sacrificed so much for our country.

Take the only female Medal of Honor recipient, Mary Edwards Walker, for example. She received the medal for her heroics during the Civil War. Walker, a medical doctor, volunteered with the Union Army. Her
bravery is legendary; she crossed enemy lines to treat civilians.

More than 21,000 women served during World War I, and in World War II, women performed heroically in increasingly expanded roles as pilots, surgeons, nurses, trainers, code talkers and in other ways to ensure freedom would survive in the Pacific and Asian theaters.

Women's military roles continued to grow since then, as have their contributions to society both as members of today's Armed Forces and as veterans in The American Legion.

Vietnam War nurse and Legionnaire Diane Carlson Evans received the prestigious Patriot Award during the 57th Washington Conference on Feb. 27. Carlson Evans volunteered to serve in combat, putting her life on the line to save others. She thanked the Legion for its role in helping her vision of the Women Veterans Memorial in Washington become reality.

"Your investment has ensured the legacy of women veterans, particularly of the Vietnam War, and it leaves a shining beacon for future generations of American women," Carlson Evans said. Patriot Award goes to Vietnam combat nurse

This year, The American Legion's membership card's watermark also honors women veterans with a picture of the Women in Military Service for American Memorial which is located in Washington, D.C., at the entrance to Arlington National Cemetery.

Membership in the Legion has always been open to eligible women veterans. In fact, women veterans could join The American Legion and vote for national commander before they could legally vote for president of the United States.

That support for women veterans continues today. Among our priorities for Congress this year is to institute gender-specific health care for women veterans. It is paramount for VA to ensure women receive the gender-specific health care they have earned, as the National Executive Committee approved in Resolution 147 during the 2016 national convention. Resolution No. 147: Women Veterans

The American Legion itself carries a proud legacy — forged over nearly a century of supporting all veterans. Women veterans are not asking for special privileges. Women veterans are asking for what we have earned through our service to our nation.

While this month illuminates the legacies of women throughout history, The American Legion will continue to shine a light every day on issues confronting today's female veterans, those currently serving and women yet to take the oath in the U.S. Armed Forces.

Family First.

Denise H. Rohan
Denise H. Rohan
National Commander

MORE HEADLINES

National commander praises South Carolina lawmakers

Rohan on the air
Dear American Legion Family and Friends,

Thursday is Vietnam War Veterans Day.

While we honor our war dead on Memorial Day and our living veterans on Veterans Day, this is a time when we give a special tribute to those who served during the Vietnam War. For many, it’s the recognition they deserved when they returned to America.

They defended our flag with honor. They supported democracy. They fought in brutal conditions.

Yet when many Vietnam War veterans returned to America, they were unwelcomed. While we cannot change the actions of the past, we can show our support and gratitude today – something that should have happened 50 years ago.
In fact, many American Legion posts and members, Sons of The American Legion squadrons, American Legion Auxiliary units and Riders chapters are supporting efforts to honor these special veterans.  

http://www.vietnamwar50th.com/

Across the nation, ceremonies will honor Vietnam War veterans this Thursday. Of course, the Vietnam Wall will play a special role in honoring and remembering those who made the ultimate sacrifice. Throughout the United States, nearly every state is planning to host commemoration events.

We should not allow this special day of recognition to fade when the calendar turns over. Join me in thanking Vietnam veterans for their service not just this Thursday, but every day.

Welcome Home.

Family First.

Denise H. Rohan
National Commander

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Time to replenish NEF funds

Dear American Legion Family and Friends,

American Legion Family members leapt into action last August to provide aid to the Texas communities devastated by Hurricane Harvey.

Post 81 in Melbourne, Fla., was among those helping out. In the aftermath of the disaster, Legion Family members there collected about $20,000 worth of relief supplies, packed everything into a truck and dispatched it to Texas.

The next day, Hurricane Irma slammed Florida, causing widespread damage. Though fortunate to be spared the brunt of the storm, Post 81 lost its roof and sustained flooding damage.
Post members rallied to reopen the building in only nine days and began to serve its community as it recovered from Irma.

“I’m really proud of our post,” Commander Tracy “Stretch” Spence said. “When it came time to replace the whole roof, we’re talking $26,000 that we just didn’t really have. The National Emergency Fund (NEF) was available to us, up to $10,000. We applied for it and they granted us $8,000, which really helped us because it saved us that money that we’re able to roll back into the programs now.”

That NEF success story is just one of hundreds from last year. In all, 348 NEF grants totaling more than $367,000 were distributed to American Legion members, Sons of The American Legion members and posts. More than 300 of those grants were related to Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria.

Not to be forgotten, smaller-scale natural disasters can wreak havoc on communities at any time. And NEF will be available to help our brothers and sisters recover, regardless of the disaster’s scale.

For example, NEF has provided assistance to those whose lives have been turned upside down by wildfires in California, tornadoes in Illinois, flooding in Louisiana and an earthquake in Oklahoma.

In the Southeast, Midwest and the Plains, springtime means it’s time to be on guard for tornadoes. Later in the summer, coastal regions will again be on watch for what is forecast to be an above-average hurricane season.

We don’t know when or where the next disaster will strike. But we do know the National Emergency Fund will be there to provide immediate financial assistance to those who qualify. Please support your fellow veterans with a kind contribution to NEF.  

www.legion.org/donate

Members of James LeBlanc Post 230 in Spring Lake, N.C., know how important NEF grants are in the wake of a disaster.

In 2016, a combination of nine-plus inches of rain and Hurricane Matthew left Post 230 under several feet of water. Drywall, furniture, wiring and flooring were damaged or destroyed.

The post has reopened and is back to serving its community.

“(The NEF grant) kept us going while I was still trying to get other funds raised,” Past Post Commander Mark Erskine said. “If it wasn’t for (the grant), we would have been doing nothing.”

Family First.
The National Emergency Fund relies on donations to help Legionnaires, posts and Sons recover from disaster.

Learn more

Make a donation

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Without volunteers, where would we be?

Dear American Legion Family and Friends,

Behind every successful nonprofit organization is a high-performing team of volunteers. In The American Legion, it’s more than a team. It’s a community.

Our volunteers run American Legion youth programs. Without their leadership, American Legion Boys State and Boys Nation would be impossible. Without American Legion Family volunteers, our Oratorical contestants — from local to national levels — would not have the opportunity to learn in-depth about the Constitution and hone their public speaking skills. Without our patriotic members who freely give their time, school children would not learn flag respect.
American Legion volunteers also provide assistance at VA hospitals, Vet Centers, long-term care facilities and more. Our members shuttle veterans to their medical appointments, spend time with them on holidays, provide chaplain services and much more.

The impact is incredible. Consider this: Last year, American Legion volunteers contributed 794,813 recorded hours for an annual savings of more than $19 million for VA. To learn more about volunteering, download our brochure on Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS).

This week is National Volunteer Week, a time for organizations across the country to honor volunteers for their selfless contributions and recognize the irreplaceable impact of their time and energy all year round.

To all of our volunteers, thank you for what you do. You have my everlasting gratitude this week in particular for what you do year-round, so often without recognition or fanfare. Volunteerism is the very soul of our organization, and this is a time to remember and recognize that.

Please join me this week in thanking American Legion Family volunteers. Chances are, you are volunteering right next to one today.

Family First.

Denise H. Rohan
National Commander


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American Legion National Commander honors volunteers

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National commander visits Boston VA with department leadership

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CWF grant helps blind youth read

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Donate to CWF
American Legion’s call to Congress: Pass the VA Mission Act of 2018

Dear American Legion Family and Friends,

There is no question that The American Legion is the largest veterans service organization, and we have the influence that we do on Capitol Hill because of our active and caring members. With that said, there is an opportunity this week for The American Legion’s voice to be heard on Capitol Hill.

The VA MISSION Act of 2018 (S. 2372) will be going for a vote in the House of Representatives on Wednesday, May 16. If passed, this bill would do several things to help veterans, including:

1. Streamlining all of the community care programs, including the
Veterans Choice Program, into one common sense program.

2. Expanding the VA’s caregivers program to all war eras of veterans, not just the post-9/11 generation, which is critical. This program should be available to all war eras and the veterans who proudly served our great nation.

3. Providing $5.2 billion to the Department of Veterans Affairs to appropriately fund the Veterans Choice Program through the next year while the community care programs are being modified and streamlined. This means the VA will not have to continuously ask Congress for more money, which will allow veterans to receive the immediate care they need and where they need it.

Supporting these issues has long been a goal of The American Legion, and this is the time to get it done. From streamlining the multiple ways and programs a veteran can obtain care in the community into one simple program, to opening the caregiver program to all veterans of any war era, to ensuring the VA has the funding necessary to provide the best care anywhere, the VA MISSION Act of 2018 is a great step forward for veterans.

Please call your congressman or congresswoman and let them know that The American Legion supports S. 2372, the VA MISSION Act of 2018, and encourage them to pass this veteran-centric bill as soon as possible.

Throughout my year as your national commander, I have made “Family First” my theme. It’s time that Congress does the same.

There is some opposition to this legislation so your quick action can make the difference. Call now and tell your representative to support the VA Mission Act of 2018. You can find your representative’s phone number by entering your zip code at https://ziplook.house.gov/htbin/findrep_house?ZIP or by calling the congressional switchboard at (202) 224-3121; (press 2 for House).

Family First!

Denise H. Rohan
National Commander

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Dear American Legion Family and Friends,

We’re halfway there! Last week, The American Legion won another important victory for veterans when the House of Representatives passed the VA Mission Act of 2018. It could not have happened without your support.

But our work is not done. This week, the U.S. Senate is expected to vote on this important legislation that will impact the lives of thousands of veterans and their families. Once again, we need to be heard!

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Together we can this done for military veterans and their families.

Family First!

Denise H. Rohan
National Commander
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Acting VA Secretary Robert Wilkie tapped to lead the department

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Dear American Legion Family and Friends,

While Americans are divided on many political issues, most people – especially those in our American Legion Family – hold a special reverence for the flag of our nation.

For the flag does not symbolize perfection but it does conjure images of the hopes and dreams of those who built this country. Whether it’s the Apollo 11 crew planting Old Glory on the surface of the moon or New York firefighters raising the flag amidst the rubble of the World Trade Center, the Stars and Stripes make an emphatic statement about American determination and exceptionalism.

Ninety-five years ago, The American Legion chaired a National Flag
Conference in Washington. Representatives from 68 other patriotic, fraternal, civic and military organizations joined us at Memorial Continental Hall for the purpose of drafting a code of Flag etiquette. President Warren G. Harding charged the group with an important task.

“I hope you succeed in formulating a code that will be welcomed by all Americans and that every patriotic and educational society in the Republic will commit itself to the endorsement and observance and purpose of the code that you adopt here today,” Harding said.

They were enormously successful. In two days, the assembly came up with 15 rules for the proper use and care of the U.S. flag. Texas and New York made flag code instruction required curriculum in their schools. During World War II, Congress adopted the code as public law.

But still, much work needs to be done. In 1989, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that flag desecration was “free speech,” despite laws in 48 states and the District of Columbia which said otherwise. In response, The American Legion has been working tirelessly to correct the flawed ruling by championing an amendment to the U.S. Constitution which would grant Congress the authority to protect Old Glory from such vile acts.


Past polling by the Citizens Flag Alliance indicates that most Americans want to see their flag protected. Moreover, every state legislature has appealed in writing to the U.S. Congress to pass the flag amendment and send it to the states for ratification.

The National Flag Conference made history in 1923. One of its participants was Samuel Gompers, the legendary president of the American Federation of Labor.

“To us,” Gompers said, “the American flag means more than even its colors in themselves portray. It means the leadership of the democratic and humane struggle that has been carried on through all the ages.

“It is a struggle that continues to this day. And it is for this reason that we must continue to wave the flag at every opportunity.

Family First.
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Learn more about proper flag etiquette

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Celebrate Flag Day with The American Legion's flag bookazine

Receive text or mail alerts when U.S. flag is to be at half-staff
We fly our nation's colors with pride

Get yours here
Support disaster victims with NEF contribution

Dear American Legion Family and Friends,

When I was growing up, I lived in Elkader, Iowa, along the Turkey River. It was a wonderful place to be raised. To this day, I still have fond memories of our home, schools and community.

As adults, we traveled back to Elkader for a weekend visit with my parents and other family members during the summer of 1991. What started out as a simple storm turned into torrential rains which caused the Turkey River to flood its banks.

With lessons learned from an earlier flood, we hurriedly moved things out of the basement and wrapped the furnace and other appliances in
plastic to save them. Then came the evacuations.

Upon returning to survey the damage, we saw that the floods got up to about three feet on the first floor of the house, rendering our work in the basement useless. We tore out carpet and floorboards, cut into the wall boards, threw away a lot of damaged items, and started bleaching anything we could to save it.

Our experience with a natural disaster is not unique. One can happen anytime and anywhere. As summer begins, so does a new hurricane season. And, if this year is anything like last year, millions of Americans will find themselves in the wake of dangerous storms.

That’s why The American Legion National Emergency Fund (NEF) stands ready to help Legionnaires, Sons of The American Legion members and posts that have been affected by natural disasters like hurricanes, floods and others.

Last year, hundreds of NEF grants were distributed to help our brothers and sisters recover in the immediate aftermath of such tragedies. The grants – up to $3,000 for individuals and $10,000 for posts – are available due to the kindness of donors. To contribute to NEF grants for this season’s victims of natural disaster, please visit www.legion.org/donate.

These grants provide much-needed immediate financial aid for those in need of food, clothing, shelter or gasoline after a natural disaster. In the past, NEF donations have helped those recovering from large-scale disasters like Hurricane Katrina and Superstorm Sandy and smaller incidents of flooding, tornadoes, wildfires and more.

In our family’s case, we lost precious mementoes from the Turkey River flooding. However, we gained valuable memories as we worked together to save my parents’ home.

While Legion Family members cannot replace the memories of those affected by future natural disasters, we can support them through our generosity. Please consider a donation to NEF today.

Family First.

[Signature]

Denise H. Rohan
National Commander

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A celebration that belongs to all of us

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Legion leadership delivers $20,000 OCW grant to Landstuhl

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Dear American Legion Family and Friends,

As we mark our first century of service to communities, states and nation, we have much to celebrate and generations of Legionnaires to thank. From our founders to today’s post officers, The American Legion is successful because of hard-working, passionate and caring individuals.

Our success can also be directly attributed to the internal training that molds our leaders. For scores of Legionnaires, including me, national Legion College was essential, and I strongly recommend it. The deadline for departments to submit applicants for this fall’s Legion College is July 31.
While the most notable, Legion College is not the only way to groom the next generation of leaders.

Many departments are creating their own versions of Legion College. California, for example, **debuted its class this past April**. In Maine, the department has launched a three-pronged approach — **beginner, intermediate and advanced sessions** that graduates complete within the same calendar year.

I am so proud of the training opportunities we have to offer. Numerous options are available for members, regardless if they have been Legionnaires for one year or 40 years.

Revitalized earlier this year, **the Basic Training module on the national website** provides valuable information. It’s a great resource for recruiters so new members can familiarize themselves with the Legion and find their place in it. When I reviewed the course recently, I found it to be a great refresher and full of valuable resources. I am sure other longtime members would have the same experience.

Our national membership team has revitalized the August membership workshop into three training groups: long-term membership planning, district commanders and department membership chairmen. The leading candidate will have a two-hour session one day with department leadership and a two-hour session the following day with his department commanders. I am excited to see how this approach works.

At national convention next month in Minneapolis, there will be plenty of training opportunities for our members:

- National staff will conduct training for **newly elected district and county commanders**. It will be from 9 a.m. to noon Monday, Aug. 27, in the Marquette IV - VII, Second Floor, at the Hilton Minneapolis. Topics include: post analysis, district revitalization, MyLegion.org overview, centennial celebration, and the strategic plan for membership growth at the district and post levels.

- Subject matter **experts will host training on topics** such as VA’s Caregiver Program, traits of great posts, extending the volunteer network and membership. The training will be from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 25, and Monday, Aug. 27 at the Minneapolis Convention Center, Hall C, First Floor.

- **There will be media training** workshop for members of the National American Legion Press Association (NALPA) and those who handle communications and public relations at the post, district or department levels. Staff members will provide guidance and tips for promoting Legion activities and programs via public relations, social media, e-newsletters and more. The Digital Media Training Workshop will be 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. with a break for lunch in Room 102, Sections E & F, Level One
in the Minneapolis Convention Center.

Of course, much of this year’s national convention will be dedicated to paying tribute to our first century of success. At the same time, we need to dedicate ourselves to training the next generation of leaders who will lead The American Legion to a second century of national leadership, supporting veterans and expanding patriotism.

Family First.

Denise H. Rohan
National Commander

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Share your TAP experience

Take the survey
Commander's 'Family First' membership incentive pin still available

Learn more about NEF and download applications and resources

A celebration that belongs to all of us
Dear American Legion Family and Friends,

“We change lives every single day.”

That was an important part of my address to attendees at The American Legion’s National Membership Workshop Aug. 10 in Indianapolis.

Our youth programs, on full display over the summer, shape tomorrow’s leaders.

I had the honor to meet with our 100 American Legion Boys Nation senators a few weeks ago at Greenbelt (Md.) Post 136. As I shook
the hands of those fine, young men, I felt a sense of rejuvenation. I also felt a sense of pride in the American Legion Family.

Thanks to The American Legion’s Americanism program and our support of these boys, they are committed to giving back and serving our nation in some way.

Not only do we have an impact on the future, The American Legion’s influence is felt all across our great nation each and every day.

In small towns and large cities, American Legion posts, volunteers and staff members support and host job fairs throughout the year.

But that’s not all. We are making sure that as younger servicemembers transition out of the military, their training converts to jobs and college credits. We are keeping the GI Bill relevant with modern revisions that reflect our changing work force and education standards. All of these efforts – and others - help propel our brothers and sisters into rewarding careers.

Meanwhile on Capitol Hill and in state legislatures, The American Legion’s support for veterans benefits directly leads to improved quality of life for veterans and their families.

Our comrades also rely on American Legion service officers for assistance when it comes to understanding and applying for the benefits they earned through their service.

We also support those who are suffering from visible and invisible wounds of war.

The American Legion’s Operation Comfort Warriors (OCW) program delivers items that improve the lives of our wounded veterans and servicemembers. Sometimes wounded warriors need equipment for music, yoga or other recreational therapy. Others might require a mobile device to help them learn to communicate once again. OCW has provided the proper recovery items for countless wounded servicemembers, through the kindness of the American Legion Family.

These are just a handful of ways that The American Legion’s 2 million members are brightening the lives of veterans, servicemembers, their families and the communities in which they live every day.

None of these successes would be possible without your support and your membership. Please renew today, if you have not already for the new membership year. And don’t forget to encourage other eligible veterans to join our community of veterans who are still serving.

Family First.
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