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THE AMERICAN LEGION
Dispatch
October 2019 A National Headquarters Publication

BUDDY CHECKS

Department of Wisconsin members go door to door during a district revitalization effort. *Photo by Steve Brooks*

MAKE CONNECTIONS ON VETERANS DAY

Resolution 18 calls for Buddy Checks the weeks of Veterans Day and the Legion's birthday.

By The American Legion

American Legion posts, districts, counties and departments were called upon in March by immediate Past National Commander Brett Reistad to make "Buddy Checks" by calling Legionnaires and former members during the week leading up to the Legion's 100th birthday as a way to check in and see how they are doing.

Legionnaires who made Buddy Checks found that The American Legion's assistance is needed, whether the need is financial, food, transportation, a home visit or just to have someone listen to their military service story.

As a way to continue connecting with veterans to see how they are and what needs they have, the National Executive Committee passed Resolution 18 during Spring Meetings in May. The resolution calls upon Buddy Checks to be conducted Legion-wide on the weeks of The American Legion's birthday and Veterans Day.

With Veterans Day next month, National Commander Bill Oxford is encouraging posts, districts, counties and departments to create teams and make phone calls. "Our veterans need to know that someone cares, that we The American Legion care," Oxford said. "Taking care of veterans is what we do and a phone call goes a long way."

A Buddy Check toolkit that includes scripts for Legionnaires to use when making personal contact is available online at ***www.legion.org/membership/buddycheck.***

During Buddy Check week in March, members of American Legion Buck-Dubiel

See Make connections on Veterans Day on Page 4

NEWS ALERT

Veterans Day

A guideline speech for Veterans Day, Nov. 11, is available at ***www.legion.org/publications*** under Media & Communications.

Changes to constitution and bylaws

Delegates to the 101st American Legion National Convention in Indianapolis in August voted to change The American Legion's constitution and bylaws, and the new version is now available to download at ***www.legion.org/publications***.

Most of the changes involve reflecting the passage of the LEGION Act, and the ensuing eligibility changes to the Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary (also including the Auxiliary's own eligibility change), as well as adoption of the singular "they" style, more utilitarian than "he or she."

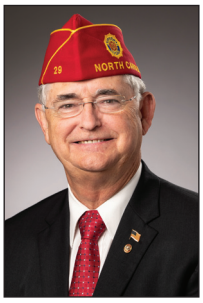
Get Out the Vote

The American Legion encourages Legionnaires to not only exercise their constitutional responsibility to vote on Election Day, Nov. 5, but to also encourage others to do the same.

To help accomplish this message, visit ***www.legion.org/vote*** to download The American Legion's "Get Out the Vote" brochure.

COMMANDER'S MESSAGE

Legion programs develop great Americans



James W. Oxford
National Commander

As you know, my theme as your national commander is A Foundation for the Future. That theme encompasses every mission of The American Legion, including our children and youth through our programs.

The Americanism Division held several conferences last month in Indianapolis to discuss youth programs such as Shooting Sports, Oratorical, Legion Baseball, Boys State and more. Our Junior Shooting Sports Program chairman and volunteers know that teaching young people marksmanship is just a very small part of what they do. They're also building confidence in these youth, providing leadership skills and teaching self-discipline. Legion Baseball chairman and coaches are doing more than teaching rules and techniques of the game as they are mentoring, teaching sportsmanship and developing good citizens.

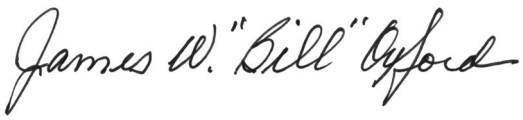
When you consider the things that we do to mentor, coach, develop and teach, we are creating a foundation for our great organization for the future.

Please remember that you are instilling far more than just the fundamentals of your particular youth programs. You are teaching fairness, discipline, sportsmanship and good citizenship.

You do this by simply being you. Proud veterans and members of The American Legion.

Whether they express this verbally to you or not, these young people are looking at you. They are looking at you as mentors, leaders and adult role models. What you do and say matters. The people leading American Legion youth programs do far more than produce good marksmen, baseball players, orators, Scouts or civic leaders. They produce something even more valuable. They produce good Americans.

Our foundation and our future will always require great Americans.



MEMBERSHIP

Recruit three new members for 'A Foundation for the Future' pin

American Legion National Commander James W. "Bill" Oxford will award his national commander "A Foundation for the Future" membership excellence pin to any Legionnaire who obtains three new members into The American Legion.

A new member is any eligible person joining for the 2020 membership year who was not a member of The American Legion during the 2019 membership year.

Each member listed must be eligible for membership in The American Legion. Forward names of Sons of The American Legion members or Auxiliary members to your detachment or unit for use in their respective incentive programs.

Only one pin will be awarded per individual. Upon receipt, national membership staff will confirm the names and mail the pin directly to the person who earned it.

Download the incentive pin form online at ***www.legion.org/commander/pin***.

MEMBERSHIP

Legion Family Honor Ribbon

American Legion National Commander James W. "Bill" Oxford will award his 100 percent American Legion Family Ribbon to any American Legion Family that achieves 100 percent membership by May 30, 2020.

For this award, the Legion Family is defined as a post and any combination of an Auxiliary unit, Sons of The American Legion squadron or Legion Riders chapter.

Each branch must achieve 100 percent membership to qualify for the award.

Download the form at ***www.legion.org/commander/ribbon***.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT'S MESSAGE

Remember SAVE for veteran suicide prevention

American Legion department chaplains learn the most important steps to suicide prevention: signs, ask, validate, encourage.

By Daniel S. Wheeler

American Legion department and post chaplains have a very valued role in The American Legion. Whether it's counseling a veteran or servicemember in need or their family, or providing relief during a natural disaster, chaplains are there to provide hope in situations that can appear hopeless. You are a pivotal part of our American Legion.

A time when veterans often turn to chaplains is when they are dealing with a crisis, like thoughts of suicide.

Christa Sutton, a suicide prevention case manager and community outreach specialist at the Richard L. Roudebush VA Medical Center in Indianapolis, shared with American Legion department chaplains during their conference in September that on average, there are 764 suicide attempts per month among veterans receiving recent VA health-care services.

Suicide is a "public health crisis, and we need everyone on board," said Sutton. "We believe you may be the first person (veterans) turn to for comfort, guidance and help when they are facing mental health issues." Sutton added that health issues can be depression, anxiety or thoughts of suicide.

Sutton shared one of VA's many suicide prevention efforts, which is SAVE: signs, ask, validate and encourage. The acronym can be used to help American Legion chaplains remember the important steps to suicide prevention:

- Signs of suicidal thinking should be recognized (example, withdrawing from family and friends; looking for ways to die; talking about death, dying or suicide; feeling like there's no reason to live; anxiety, agitation, sleeplessness or mood swings). "We want to take all comments regarding suicide seriously and address it like it is a crisis. That's what it is," Sutton said.
- Ask the most important question of all – "'Are you thinking about killing yourself?' It's a difficult thing to say if you haven't had to ask that question. But it's very important to ask clearly and concisely," Sutton said. "Have a level of comfort asking that so it doesn't make that person feel like they're being judged. Because there's a lot of shame that comes along with admitting that, like I'm not strong enough, saying that makes me weak."

- Validate the veterans experience (example, recognize that the situation is serious; do not pass judgment; reassure that help is available).
- Encourage treatment and expedite getting help. "The intention is not for you to make a diagnosis, we do not expect you to treat that person from a mental health professional standpoint," Sutton said. "Get them to seek help immediately, whether that be to the ER or calling the Veterans Crisis Line."

Call 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1 for veterans, text to 838255, or chat online at ***www.veteranscrisisline.net*** to receive confidential crisis intervention and support available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

"There's a licensed professional on the other end of that phone who will talk to that person, who will assess that person, put a safety plan in place with them and help them get with their VA or linked with community resources," Sutton said. "Or you can call (the Veterans Crisis Line) and say 'Hey, I'm not sure what to do here.' They will help.

"You have the power to change thousands of (veterans) lives."

Have a membership success story?

Share: ***www.legiontown.org***

Dispatch

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From Make connections on Veterans Day on Page 1

Post 101 in Somers, Conn., got together over two days for more than five hours each day and called post Legionnaires, as well as other Legionnaires in the area not committed to a specific post.

"It was an experience every one of us thought was fulfilling, and it was very much needed," Sherri Marquis, Post 101's public relations director, shared on Legiontown.org. "The team conducted after-action meetings to discuss how to be more effective in reaching our members and how best we could help our Legionnaires and their families based on the information we received from our phone calls.

"There is nothing much better than connecting with others and letting them know that you care."

Buddy Check weeks will be a new reportable item starting with the 2019-2020 Consolidated Post Report.

Seven ways to organize a Buddy Check

1. Gather up a team if possible to call or personally visit members and former members of The American Legion. If each member in a team of 10 calls just 10 Legionnaires or former Legionnaires, 100 veterans can be reached in one sitting.
2. Visit MyLegion.org for a list of members and former members.
3. Divide up the call list among your team members.
4. Start calling – either from a quiet place inside the post or from your home – to see how the members and former members are doing, ask if they need anything and invite them to any event or activity planned to help celebrate The American Legion's birthday or Veterans Day.
5. Thank the member or former member in the beginning and at the end of your call.
6. Have your post's payment procedure at your fingertips if the member or former member wishes to renew, the address to send a check or offer to stop by in person to pick it up (another opportunity to connect).
7. Leave contact information if no one answers the phone.

WOMEN VETERANS

Missouri Post 1214 creates military women scarecrows

The 22nd annual Cider Days on Historic Walnut Street Arts & Crafts Festival in Springfield, Mo., attracts nearly 10,000 visitors each year. Last month during the festival, American Legion Women Veterans Of Southwest Missouri Post 1214 provided an entry into Scarecrow Village for the first time. The entry, which was limited to four scarecrows, depicted women veterans from the U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines with an American flag backdrop and painted pumpkins representing each branch of service.

Post 1214 is the second largest of the five all-female Legion posts in the state of Missouri.

CHILDREN & YOUTH

Halloween safety tips

Halloween is a time for young people to dress up as their favorite cartoon character, music artist or superhero. It's also a holiday that The American Legion believes children and parents should know how to observe safely.

The American Legion's brochure, "Make Halloween a Fun and Safe Night," provides trick-or-treating safety tips to keep in mind on Halloween. The brochure can be downloaded on the Legion's publication's web page at ***www.legion.org/publications*** under Children and Youth.

CHILD WELFARE FOUNDATION

Your donations at work

Last year, the American Legion's Child Welfare Foundation (CWF) awarded $766,761 in grants to 24 nonprofits. A grant recipient spoke at The American Legion's National Children & Youth Conference in Indianapolis Sept. 22 to share her appreciation.

United Through Reading has connected military families who are separated for deployment or military assignment for the past 30 years by providing a bonding experience of shared story time. United Through Reading allows servicemembers to be video recorded at one of the 200 United Through Reading Story Stations around the world reading a storybook aloud to their child. The recording is reliable and repeatable; "we call it mommy or daddy on demand," said Kara Dallman, senior director of Development and Strategic Alliances at United Through Reading.

Now, servicemembers don't have to find a story station nearby for a recording; they can download the newly launched United Through Reading App on the App Store or Google Play. And thanks to a $24,875 grant from The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation, United Through Reading will be able to provide 5,000 free books to servicemembers who read through the app.

"The energy behind a book, the memories, the connections … that's what we're all about. What's special about what you all are doing is you're providing the books for those servicemembers," Dallman said.

The app will allow servicemembers to use a physical book to read and record online, or offline, and then upload the recording for the child to view anytime and as many times as they want.

The books chosen from the app will be delivered to doorsteps.

Dallman said United Through Reading conducted a study and found that 99 percent of users of its program reported an increase of connection to their children and 99 percent reported an increase in their child's interest in reading and books.

"So what I'm saying is thank you very much. What you're doing really makes a difference."

Dallman also emphasized to conference attendees that the storybook reading is for all ages of children. One servicemember's daughter was graduating from high school while he was deployed so he recorded "Oh, The Places You Will Go" by Dr. Seuss. The daughter ran to her bedroom after watching it and her mother thought she was upset. Instead, the daughter was calling all her friends to come over and watch the recording of her father reading to her. ***https://unitedthroughreading.org***

EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

NEF grants help Legion posts reopen doors

The American Legion National Emergency Fund (NEF) provided $256,870 in grants to 82 members and 22 posts in 2018. A recipient of a $10,000 NEF grant was American Legion Post 64 in Pollocksville, N.C., which was devastated by floodwaters from Hurricane Florence in September 2018. The flooding did about $80,000 damage to the post.

The goal is to reopen the post by June 2020. Post Commander James Gray is still optimistic that goal can be achieved, although there's still plenty to do.

"The last few months, we did framing in the building, electric lines ran … but we don't have electricity. We've been using generators because we can't get inspected yet," Gray said.

Plumbing needs to be roughed in before the building can be inspected. Gray hopes to use some of the NEF grant to help cover the plumbing cost. The renovation process has been helped through volunteer efforts from post members, Team Rubicon and Team Red, White and Blue.

The National Emergency Fund is available for American Legion and Sons of The American Legion members who have been impacted by a natural disaster. The NEF provides up to $3,000 for Legion and SAL members with an active membership who have been displaced due to damages to their primary residence, and up to $10,000 for posts that have been damaged by a natural disaster and whose programs and activities within the community are impacted.

To apply for an NEF grant, please visit ***www.legion.org/emergency***.

Since Jan. 1, NEF has provided $81,745 in grants to 33 members and six posts. Donations to NEF can be made online at ***www.legion.org/donate***.

DID YOU KNOW?

■ The U.S. Mint and the Bureau of Engraving and Printing (BEP) has issued an American Legion Centennial Emblem Print and a different proof American Legion 100th Anniversary Commemorative Coin (a $5 gold coin, a silver dollar or a clad half dollar). The 6 by 8 emblem is exclusive to the three sets. The sets cost $8.95 more than the individually sold coins.
www.legion.org/coin

■ To date, there are 2,773 veterans who have joined The American Legion under the Other Conflicts war era since the signing of the LEGION Act.
www.legion.org/join

■ The 18 resolutions passed by delegates during the 101st American Legion National Convention in Indianapolis in August are now available to view in the Legion's Digital Archive. See the full collection at
https://archive.legion.org/handle/20.500.12203/1/discover?query=2019n*

MEMBERSHIP

Photo courtesy of Post 81

The 'why' to starting a new American Legion post

There were 56 American Legion posts chartered during 2018-2019. If you are chartering a new American Legion post for 2019-2020, we want to hear your why. Please send an email to ✉ ***dispatch@legion.org***.

The following are three posts chartered this past year.

Post 2020 in Hot Springs, Ark.

"Post 2020 was started out of a need to provide the opportunity for membership in a veterans service organization in an area in our part of Arkansas that was currently underserved. We hope to provide an opportunity for veterans to continue to serve their community through the programs offered by the Legion. In short, we hope to accomplish the mission of The American Legion whenever and where ever we can." – Post 2020 Commander Curtis Craft

Post 911 in Tulsa, Okla.

"We hope to create jobs, solve problems and inspire hope in our community. Freedom Post 911 is dedicated to rehabilitating our veterans, protecting our nation, mentoring and educating our youth, and giving our country more reasons to unite." – Post 911 Commander James Cooper

Post 81 in Melbourne, Ark.

"Post 81 was started because there wasn't any post close to our area and there are many veterans that wanted to belong to a veterans organization. Post 81 wants to be a viable organization within the community, to help with youth organizations, to be able to support needy veterans and other community members that need help." – Post 81 charter member Bill Stephens

MEMBERSHIP INCENTIVES AND AWARDS

103 PERCENT MEMBERSHIP AWARD

American Legion National Commander James W. "Bill" Oxford will award his national commander "A Foundation for the Future" membership incentive pin to any post, district, county, division, department commander or membership chairman who achieves 103 percent of their assigned membership goal for 2020.

Download the 103 percent membership goal form online:
www.legion.org/commander/103percent

POST EXCELLENCE AWARD

The American Legion's Post Excellence Award has added new criteria for the 2019-2020 membership year. To qualify for the Post Excellence Award, a post is required to achieve excellence in four areas: membership, submission of the Consolidated Post Report (CPR), attaining a 90 percent renewal rate and community activity.

The purposes of this award is membership growth, exposure of American Legion values to the youth of the community, and increased visibility of the American Legion Family through service projects. A post achieving this qualification will have had numerous post members involved in planning and achieving these goals. Many posts are most likely already active in these areas and will qualify without extra effort. Others, however, will need to increase their efforts in one or more areas to qualify for the award.

The standard to be achieved in each area is as follows:

Membership: An American Legion post must attain at least 103 percent of their membership goal. And at least one post officer attends district meetings.

Consolidated Post Report: CPRs must be submitted by July 1. The American Legion's federal charter requires the submission of an annual report to Congress on activities for the year. MyLegion.org has made it simple for a post to submit its CPR in a timely manner.

Renewal rate: The post must renew at least 90 percent of their members that were on the 2019 roster.

Community activity: The post must conduct an event that connects the local community with The American Legion post. The objective is to open your doors, welcome the community in, and educate them on what The American Legion is all about and how the post is an asset to the community. Posts do not need to have a physical building to accomplish this. This activity can be held in a park, a community center or anywhere the post can welcome and interact with the local community.

The district commander responsible for the post will certify a post as having achieved the four specified criteria. The district commander will submit a list of posts meeting the criteria to department headquarters. That list should include the post name, phone number, address and commander's name. If possible, accompany the last two criteria with copies of press releases submitted to the local media about the community projects to show that the projects were not only accomplished but that an attempt was made to enhance the image of The American Legion through local media. Copies submitted should include a date and time stamp showing receipt by the media outlet.

The department adjutant will transmit information as posts qualify to:

The American Legion National Headquarters
Attn: Membership
P.O. Box 1055
Indianapolis, IN 46206-1055

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100TH ANNIVERSARY

Districts and posts use Legion coin for raffle drawings

The American Legion asked Legionnaires to submit how their department, district or post is conducting a giveaway of The American Legion's 100th Anniversary Commemorative Coin for recruiting efforts, as a fundraiser for programs that support youth or veterans and their families, or for achieving post goals with membership. The following are ways districts and posts are promoting the coin series for membership and program growth.

- Department of Louisiana District 1 (28 Legion posts) is selling $1 raffle tickets to win the three coin proof set. Donations from the raffle will support American Legion children and youth programs and the Special Olympics.
- Department of California District 16 2nd Vice Commander Greg Somers said Districts 6 and 16 are selling 200 raffle tickets at $5 apiece where the lucky winner will win the silver coin. The districts will have another fundraiser starting in January 2020 to win the gold coin. Tickets for the gold coin will be $10 apiece and no more than 200 tickets sold.
- Clare Sullivan of Post 5 in Seward, Alaska, said the coin series was advertised in the post's newsletter "to encourage purchasing." The post also is purchasing a three coin proof set as a raffle.
- Jim Archie of Post 431 in Gowrie, Iowa, said the post is having a raffle of the three coin proof set during its centennial celebration.

To purchase the American Legion's 100th Anniversary Commemorative Coin or for additional information about the series, please visit ***www.legion.org/coin***.

PLANNER

November

3-8	National American Legion College, Indianapolis
5	Election Day
11	Veterans Day
18-22	American Education Week
24-29	National Family Week