The American Legion

For God and country

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

American Legion assists thousands through Buddy Checks

INDIANAPOLIS (April 13, 2020) – American Legion posts throughout the nation are reaching out to isolated veterans and their families through a Buddy Check program initiated in early 2019 that has helped thousands get through the current and ongoing coronavirus-COVID19 pandemic.

"If ever a veterans-service program was built for pandemic relief, it's the Buddy Check," American Legion National Commander James W. "Bill" Oxford said. "In communities large and small everywhere on the map, Buddy Checks are making big differences for veterans, their spouses and families. Hundreds of posts are reaching out in their local communities, especially to veterans whose age puts them at risk for infection. Legionnaires are using the phone, email and social media to safely find out how these veterans are doing and what we can do to help them. They might need something from the store or pharmacy. Sometimes, for a veteran who is alone and on orders to stay home, the most important thing is a phone call."

American Legion Post 272 member Leroy Lippi Jr. has completed no less than 438 Buddy Check calls around his community of Linglestown, Pa., since the pandemic began. Rod O'Connor, commander of his post, has made another 162 calls. "My main goal in all of my calls is to ensure them that if they need assistance in any way … that we are out there for them and for their needs," Lippi says. "If we can provide the service, I'm going to do that."

Woodland Hills, Calif., Legionnaires have delivered groceries and over-the-counter medicine to socially distancing veterans found through Buddy Checks. Post 43 in Tullahoma, Tenn., has worked with the Boy Scouts and Junior ROTC members to deliver food and supplies to veterans contacted through Buddy Checks there. "Our veterans and their spouses are very appreciative knowing that someone cares about their well-being and needs," Post 43 Commander Alan Harris said. "It is, after all, why we as an organization exist."

Country music singer Gary LeVox of chart-topping Rascal Flatts delivered an April 7 social media video to advance awareness of The American Legion's Buddy Checks and to urge continued outreach and participation. "Veterans need to know that we are thinking of them, that we care … just to brighten up their day," he says in the video, asking his followers to visit www.legion.org to learn more about Buddy Checks.

"Be a buddy to a veteran," he says. "We're all in this together."

The American Legion keeps its membership of almost two million wartime veterans up to date on the coronavirus pandemic, including news of Buddy Checks, blood drives, meal services and more at www.legion.org/coronavirus. Included on the site is an online publication to guide posts about how to conduct Buddy Checks in their local communities.

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