Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation (V&RA) is the largest and most important pillar of The American Legion Family. Each December, members of the Nebraska American Legion family join together to support and give back to the veterans in the state veterans homes and medical centers by hosting Christmas Gift Shop and Gifts for Yanks Who Gave. Each of these programs is funded by the donations sent in from the Posts, Units, Squadrons, Chapters, and individuals, and can only be as successful as the donations and volunteers allow it to be.

Gifts for Yanks Who Gave has had growing support from The American Legion Family in the past few years. The donations that are received at Department Headquarters are redistributed in the form of $20.00 dollars to any veteran living in a veterans home, medical center, or regional center and $15.00 dollars to any spouse of a veteran living in the facilities. Everyone at the Gifts for Yanks party receives a calendar as a Christmas gift besides the money. The veterans and their spouses are so thankful for being thought of around the holidays and appreciate the generosity of the entire Legion Family.

As for the Christmas gift shop program, volunteers from all parts of The American Legion Family help the veterans at the medical centers pick out three or four gifts for their family members and then wrap these gifts for the veteran to take home with them or to give when their family. The smiles on these veteran’s faces and the utter shock of amazement from getting these free items is why American Legion Family members do what they do. The Medical Center Auxiliary Representatives are given a certain amount of money each year, this money comes from the gift shop assessment sent out in August to each Unit, to go out and find items they think the veterans will enjoy and like to give to their kids, grandkids, and/or spouse as a Christmas present. These items vary from toys, kitchen items, household goods, and many others.

For many of the veterans and spouses in the facilities, these are the only gifts or thank you’s they receive throughout the holiday season. The American Legion Family works hard to remember those who served and wants to continue these programs and many others into the future to show our appreciation. While lots of Posts, Units, Squadrons, and Chapters have donated this year, the amount of money needed for the program was not reached. This meant that reserve funds had to be used to make sure each veteran and spouse received their gift. Thank you to everyone who has already donated! Please check to see if your Post, Unit, Squadron, or Chapter has already donated, and for those who have not, please consider making a donation to any of these projects.

Donations can be sent to American Legion Headquarters, PO Box 5205, Lincoln, NE 68505.
**Commander’s Corner**

**Gary Wooten**

Department Commander

**“TIS THE SEASON”**

Thanks to all you American Legion members, as well as the whole American Legion Family in Nebraska, who continue to serve and give. These last few days seem to really put this in perspective.

District 1 just completed their tour, that culminated in a Christmas party at the Hot Springs Veterans facility. I had the pleasure to participate in the tour with Auxiliary President Paes and Sons Commander Neel. We traveled to Posts in Ainsworth (with Wood Lake), Newport, Bassett, Springview, Valentine, Cody, Gordon, Rushville, Hay Springs, Crawford, and Chadron. Along the way we discussed American Legion, Auxiliary, and Sons programs as well as membership and activities. I thoroughly enjoyed the tour and the comradeship. We participated in Gift for Yanks at both the Hot Springs and Scottsbluff facilities. Check us out on the various Department Facebook pages to see pictures of the trip.

However, it was the giving and service to our fellow veterans that amazed me the most. I do not have a count of the dozens of cookies baked and given to the Hot Springs facility, but it is in the hundreds of dozens! That does not include the other gifts, clothes, ditty bags, and supplies. And it’s not just the American Legion family providing the gifts. At Cody, the school students make and fill ditty bags for the veterans. And I know other Districts in Nebraska do the same for our veterans.

However, there was one last surprise. President Paes, Commander Neel and I spoke at each stop about the Gifts for Yanks program and how the program provides a small monetary gift to each veteran and their spouse in veterans facilities throughout the state, as well as at Hot Springs and the eastern Wyoming facility. We also spoke about the financial deficits this program has had over the last few years and the need for Posts, Units, Squadrions, and Chapters to donate to this worthy cause. I will add that Gifts for Yanks is one of two programs I am emphasizing this year, the other being Operation Comfort Warrior. To our great surprise and delight, the members of District 1 again showed how much they cared by donating $1,235 for Gift for Yanks. Along with other donations, we ended up our tour to western Nebraska with $1,650 in total for this program!

I want to personally thank each one of you who have contributed to our American Legion programs this year. In this time of giving, I can only wonder at the donations of time and money our American Legion Family gives to make sure veterans know how much we care. I ask that you continue to sign up members to help us help veterans, their families, our youth and communities, and our Nation.

I know we remember and help our veterans year around, but at this time of year please remember.

*2019 and Beyond*

**Straight Talk**

**Philip Dittbrenner**

Department Service Officer

The Defense Department has announced expanded Commissary, Military Service Exchange and MWR access January 1, 2020 and established a standard for physical access to military installations.

Veterans and Primary Family Caregivers who are eligible and want to take advantage of in-person benefits must have a Veterans Health Identification Card, or VHIC. Primary Family Caregivers must have an eligibility letter from VA’s Office of Community Care.

Veterans use VHICs for identification and check-in at VA appointments, but will also use them for base access under the new program.

Veterans eligible solely under this act who are eligible to obtain a VHIC must use this credential for in-person installation and privilege access. The card must display the Veteran’s eligibility status (i.e., PURPLE HEART, FORMER POW or SERVICE CONNECTED).

Veterans eligible solely under this act who are not enrolled in or are not eligible to enroll in VA health care, or who are enrolled in VA health care, but do not possess a VHIC will not have access to DoD and Coast Guard installations for in-person commissary, exchange, and MWR retail privileges, but will have full access to online exchanges and American Forces Travel.

Medal of Honor recipients and Veterans with 100% service-connected disability ratings are eligible for DoD credentials under DoD policy.

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**District Commanders**

**Dist. 1**...................Darrell Marshall, Chadron

**Dist. 2**...................Robert Campbell, Stuart

**Dist. 3**...................Dean Ferron, Ponca

**Dist. 4**...................John Sanna, Dalton

**Dist. 5**...................Richard Colson, Papillion

**Dist. 6**...................Jeffrey Conz, Genoa

**Dist. 7**...................Doug Dole, Grantham

**Dist. 8**...................David Doolen, Elmwood

**Dist. 9**...................Mel Divis, Elwood

**Dist. 10**..................James Doyen, Hastings

**Dist. 11**..................Glenn Schwalb, Beatrice

**Dist. 12**..................David Glantz, Denton

**Dist. 13**..................Ken Mandl, Tecumseh

**Dist. 15**..................Gerald Wolf, Lincoln

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**District Officers**

**Commander**................Gary Wooten, Wilber

**Senior Vice Commander**.....Larry Mach, Prague

**Area A Vice Commander**.....Daryll Harrison, Thurston

**Area B Vice Commander**.....Boyd Yochum, Ashland

**Area C Vice Commander**.....Bonnie Bower, Elmwood

**Area D Vice Commander**.....Dennis Kennedy, Culbertson

**Adjutant**....................Dave Salak, Lincoln

**Activities Director**.........Brent Halag-Pelt, Lincoln

**Public Relations Officer**...Vacant

**Chaplain**...................Dr. William Jackson, Jr., Lincoln

**Historian**...................Jennifer Salak, Omaha

**Judge Advocate**............William Harris, Omaha

**Finance Officer**.............Mark Novak, Dawson

**Sergeant-At-Arms**..........Shannon Falk, Norfolk

**Asst. Sergeant-At-Arms**...Doug Frahm, Amelia

**Service Officer**............Philip Dittbrenner, Beatrice

**National Executive Committee**...Bill Crosier, Kearney

**Alternate NECman**.........Fred Craige, Lincoln

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**Dist. 1**............................Darrell Marshall, Chadron

**National Executive Committeeman**...Bill Crosier, Kearney

**Alternate NECman**.........Fred Craige, Lincoln

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**Postmaster:** Please send address changes to The Nebraska Legionnaire, P.O. Box 5205, Lincoln, NE 68505-0205. (USPS 370-180) (ISSN 0028-1875)
Dear Fellow Legionnaires,

My name is Larry Mach and I am seeking the high office of Commander of the Department of Nebraska. I served in the U.S. Navy from 1970-1972 stationed in San Diego, California. I am a 47-year life member of the Prague Post 254. I have held the offices of Commander, Vice Commander, Adjutant, Chaplain and Color guard at my local Post. I was also the Saunders County Commander and Vice Commander. I served as District 7 Commander and Vice Commander, Area B Commander, District 7 Children & Youth Chairman, Department Americanism Committee member, Department Vice Commander and a charter member of the Prague area Jaycees.

I have held many local and state offices. I was on the Neumann High School Advisory Council, I am a member of St. Cyril and Methodius Catholic Church and was trustee of the church for three years and the cemetery board. I have held President of the Prague National Hall Association, Saunders County Livestock Association, and am presently on the board. I have served two terms on the Nebraska Cattlemen’s Board as membership Chairman District 7 and presently seed stock Vice Chairman. I am currently serving my second term as a Saunders County Supervisor.

I have been married to my wife Marty for 40 years. We have three children, Ross (Emily), Ryan (Ashley), and Wendy. We have four grandchildren. I have the full support of my family and my Legion Post and District.

I hope to see you in Kearney in January at the Mid-Year Conference and get to visit my hospitality room. I would appreciate your consideration and your vote. I am retired and have time to travel to represent The American Legion. For God and Country.
Chaplain’s Corner
Dr. William Jackson, Jr.
Department Chaplain

“A New Day”

There once was a kingdom of light and joy, where women and men and their children worked and played and became educated about their universe, inclusive of the most important item, their God.

He was once known as the Creator of everything that was anything: the Father, the Holy One, and God Almighty. And His kinghood had no end. All that was-in and will be was ever in His hands, and available for His faithful followers if...if...those followers would continue their faithfulness. Alas...that was not to be...

The Book—His Word—taught His devoted and faithful followers that even though His people had transgressed His Laws for living rightly, He would endeavor to save them from their error. But...they rebelled against again...and again...and again...

Their world became wind-stuck with terrible weather patterns, falling sky rocks, rumbling grounds, and all sorts of devastating happenings to literally shake the very fiber of living cells until there was little left to attend and heal.

What animals and other life left through this holocaust—leviathans on land, in the sea, and in the air—kept going only by the sheer effort of their animistic wills...often...to no avail...Life as anyone would comprehend...was dead.

And now for the good news of the day. Obviously, the Earth we’re now on is still here—for how long no one knows—so this tale of woe is OFF COURSE not about US humans who are right there with our knowledge and of our God—or...maybe not...

If God is our Creator, and He is Omnipotent, Omniscient, and Omnipresent (Genesis 17:1), then the least we could afford His deity is our honor, worship, and faithfulness. But wait: some of us don’t care to honor God anymore, for whatever reason, in this day and age. Ssssooo...what or who do we attribute our success—and failures—to? Ourselves? Our pets? Our ancestors? Or...nothing...?

Depending upon where you stand on the issues of prayerful concerns to God, or, just living the life without any other obligation but one’s self, is there a future...reckoning...to come...?

How ever you answer this really important question will determine your ultimate future. For instance, take that little yarn at the beginning of this treatise. The Holy Bible says there IS a Day of Reckoning coming. As it just so happens, several other “holy books” acknowledge the same. The followers of all beliefs from a Western & Middle Eastern focus: Ragnarok, of Norse mythology; al-Qiyamah, in the Qur’an; the Moshiah, in Judaism; and for Christianity, the Judgment, or Day of Atonement (Romans 1:32).

Far Eastern philosophies take the stance that humankind is apart from, and part of, this vast universe of ours. Some believe in reincarnation, some in karma (i.e., psychological and spiritual cause and effect influences), and some in far more idolatrous behaviors (Colossians 3:5). Some of those unrighteous behaviors deserving of God’s Judgment start from Romans 1:21...“because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.”

Now no one should accuse any one of their Judgment to come, except the Lord Jesus Christ, in accordance with the Holy Bible (Revelation 15:4). Sin being an offense to God through a lack of showing us don’t care to honor God anymore, for whatever reason, in this day and age. Ssssooo...what or who do we attribute our success—and failures—to? Ourselves? Our pets? Our ancestors? Or...nothing...?

Depending upon where you stand on the issues of prayerful concerns to God, or, just living the life without any other obligation but one’s self, is there a future...reckoning...to come...?

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Now no one should accuse any one of their Judgment to come, except the Lord Jesus Christ, in accordance with the Holy Bible (Revelation 15:4). Sin being an offense to God through a lack of worship of Him, His Judgment is the natural follow-through to set things right again throughout His universe. Before YOUR time comes, get right with the Lord and know where your eternity will be (Matthew 5:6).

ASK THE CHAPLAIN

Please feel free to contact me about any concern you have on the Bible and your life at: wjdoc@gmail.com or 402.613.9974 (leave a message)

MEMBERSHIP MINUTE

By Steve Bartos, Membership Chairman

Happy New Year!!

Well, we’ve turned the page on another year -- and it’s time to really bear down on the membership effort. The “easy” renewals have paid. The “tougher” ones are still out there. I hope that we get off to a good start at the Mid-Year Conference in Kearney by having a hefty membership turn-in.

While renewals certainly are important, recruiting new members is equally important. I’m estimating that Nebraska’s “market penetration” is now about 30% of eligible veterans in the state. If we had 27,000 members last year, then there must be more than 60,000 eligible veterans out there who don’t belong. And that pool of eligible veterans grew a little bit with the passage of the LEGION Act. We can’t use the lack of eligible members as an excuse for failing to grow our ranks.

We continue to meet and exceed our national target date goals. We met the December 11th goal of 75% by December 2nd. The 80% target date is January 15th -- right after the Mid-Year Conference -- and that, also, should be attainable. Let’s make sure that it happens.

As I indicated in the last issue of the Nebraska Legionnaire, I plan to make a brief presentation on the Post 500 transfer process at the Mid-year conference. As a reminder, there were still about 800 members in Post 500 who had paid their dues for 2019 but had not yet renewed for 2020. They might as well be in YOUR Post. There were another 950 or so who have already renewed their 2020 membership in Post 500 --- and they need to be contacted and asked to transfer their membership into YOUR post.

If you have any questions or need assistance with the membership process, please contact us at the Department office: 402-464-6338 or krscaggs@windstream.net.

S.A.L. Notes

Robert Neel
Detachment Commander

A new year is here. We are half way to the June Convention but still have the need to focus on the Mid-Year Conference January 11-12, 2020 in Kearney. Make your presence known throughout the community, Detachment and Nation. Reporting data should be recorded as events occur so at Consolidated Squadron Reporting time you have it in one place and the process is simplified. We are looking to have Detachment 100% Squadron reporting so get on the band wagon and make Nebraska proud.

The Department Commander Gary Kustin, President Elizabeth Paes and I, along with other Department officers, attended the District 1 membership tour. It was a great time meeting all the members during the tour. The tour started in Ainsworth/Wood Lake with breakfast provided by the Post, Unit and Squadron and a meeting followed.

The tour continued to Newport, Bassett (lunch), Long Pine, Springview, and Valentine on December 5th. That evening I attended the Valentine Squadron 90 meeting. Squadron 90 attained their 100% membership during the meeting along with donating another $100.00 to the Gifts for Yanks.

On December 6, Valentine Post 90 provided breakfast at the Bankhouse and a meeting was held. Our next Post visits included Cody, Gordon, Rushville (lunch), Hay Springs, Crawford and Chadron (supper). Christmas music was provided, and dancing took place at Chadron along with an excellent meal. I would like to add, we picked up dozens, upon dozens of cookies, coffee, ditty bags, dishes, backpack, and blankets. We had seven vehicles packed full of items to be delivered to Hot Springs VA Medical Center.

On December 7, breakfast was provided by Chadron Post 12 at a local restaurant. After breakfast we all drove to the Hot Springs VA Medical Center for the Christmas party and unload all the vehicles. The visit to the Medical Center was outstanding. Christmas decorations were up, residents were very happy to see everyone, and music was provided. There was dancing, singing and a wonderful time was had by everyone. A tour of the facility was available for first-time attendees. It is a great facility and it is very evident, District 1 members are very proud of the facility and definitely support it in several ways.

Many members do not fully know what the “Gifts for Yanks” (GFY) program is? We all have an inclination of what the funds are for, but as we traveled the District 1 tour the Department Commander, Auxiliary President and myself took on the task of providing more information and taking questions. At present every entity of Nebraska’s American Legion Family receives a letter indicating levels of donations. All donations are sent to the Department, Auxiliary or Legion. All funds donated are used exclusively for GFY. Our Veterans in the VA Medical Centers (Omaha, Grand Island) and four Veterans Homes receive a $20 gift during the Christmas holiday, spouses of Veterans in the Homes receive $15.

At present the rate of 25-cents per member does not meet the outlay of funds. We need to get behind this program and increase donations through our four organizations as well as individuals and perhaps even community donations. The fund is quickly dwindling and in five years it could possibly be gone. The GFY fund needs greater input and that can be a year-long effort.

As I indicated in the last issue of the Nebraska Legionnaire, contact Kristi at Headquarters, 402-464-6338 or krsaggs@windstream.net.

If you are interested in placing an advertisement in the Nebraska Legionnaire, contact Kristi at Headquarters, 402-464-6338 or krsaggs@windstream.net.
District 1 - Darrell Marshall

District 1 completed our membership tour, December 2-3-4. We were delighted to include National NECman Bill Croiser, Department Commander Gary Wooten, Department Sgt.-at-Arms Doug Frahm, Department Assistant Adjutant Brenda Stone, Area Commander Dennis Kennedy, and SAL Detachment Commander Bud Neel. We had a great time visiting the District Posts, talking about membership and gathering 900+ dozen cookies that we took to the Black Hills VA in Hot Springs, SD. We had a Christmas party December 4th for the veterans in the domiciliary there.

We are looking forward to the District 1 Convention at Chadron Post 12, April 4, 2020.

District 7 - Dan Benes

While attending District 7 events, I visit various veterans memorials. On 10 November 2019, the family members of the late Donald Maloczek Sr. dedicated a veteran's memorial in honor of him. The 120 foot flag pole fly's an American Flag, 30 foot by 50 foot, with a POW/MIA flag below. At the base there are five flag poles with flags of each branch of our Military. The Vice stone at the base depicts the Army service of Donald Maloczek Sr. Howells Post 155 Commander Glen Mlinarik did a great job as the Master of Ceremony. Members from Post 155 and 16 surrounding Posts participated and made it a class event. Over 100 people attended the dedication even though it was a cold and windy day on that country hillside 10 miles northwest of Howells. A special thank you to the Maloczek family for making this possible.

On 11 November, Veterans Day, I attended three school programs honoring veterans. Each event was very well organized. The respect and appreciation the students showed the veterans was heartwarming. This speaks volumes of our community.

County Government Day was held at several county seats this fall in District 7. Each county department official was able to share with the students what they do for the residents of the county. A great program sponsored by The American Legion that educates our high school students about local government. Keep up the great work!

Time and Place events in District 7 are:

These are just a few events of many in District 7. A special thank you to all our members. It is always a pleasure to see friends and meet new people.

District 8 - Dave Doolen

Hello fellow District 8 members. I hope your holidays are going smoothly, but don’t forget those delinquent members who are waiting to be asked for their dues. Get them asap!

Some of the activities that have been going on in this District have been very well attended. Post 274 Herman held a membership drive in September and served dinner.

For Veterans Day, Post 30 Omaha and their Auxiliary, joined forces and held a potluck dinner on Saturday, November 9th. This was very well attended, and a small, but special gift to all members who paid their dues to celebrate the 100th birthday of both organizations.

In the future, District 8 is holding a Leap Year Party with a Patriotic Silent Auction, 50/50’s and sloppy joe’s, hot dogs, and chips. This will be from 4-8 pm on the 29th of February 2020. Admission is $10 for adults, $5 for children under 16 years, and 3 and under are free. Come have some fun and conversation with friends.

Wreaths Across America

Every year in December people from all over the nation gather together at their local cemeteries to place wreaths on the graves of our nation’s heroes. Wreaths Across America was started in 1992 when Worcester Wreath had a surplus of wreaths at the end of the holiday season. The company’s owner, Morrill Worcester, remembered back to a trip that he had won when he was 12 years old and knew exactly what he wanted to do with the wreaths. Worcester was a paper boy for the Bangor Daily News and was able to take his first trip to the nation’s capital in Washington D.C. As part of the trip, he was able to visit Arlington National Cemetery and the experience would change his life forever. Worcester decided to contact Maine Senator Olympia Snowe to make arrangements to place the wreaths at Arlington Cemetery in one of the older sections of the cemetery. Volunteers from the local American Legion and VFW Posts helped decorate each wreath with a hand tied red bow and helped place the wreaths at the cemetery.

This annual wreath laying continued without much attention until 2005 when a picture of the wreaths showed up on the internet. Thousands of requests came in from volunteers wanting to help with the project. Worcester saw that there were many deserving heroes in each state and that wreaths needed to be shared with them too. He began in 2006 by sending seven wreaths to each state and with the help of other organizations, a simultaneous wreath laying ceremony was held at 150 locations.

In 2007, Worcester formed a 501(c)3 organization to continue to support the mission of the organization and expand its efforts. This past year over 1 million wreaths were laid at over 1,000 locations all over the United States. Nebraska currently has ten locations that sponsor a wreath laying ceremony each year and on December 14, wreaths were placed on over a thousand veteran’s graves throughout the state. Prague Post 254 members and community members placed 27 wreaths on the graves of local veterans. In November, the Omaha Honor Guard was able to conduct a program especially for the veterans. They gave them well earned certificates of service awards, and pinned Flags on the Veterans. We were to conduct a program especially for the veterans. We gave them well earned certificates of service awards, and pinned Flags on the Veterans. We participated with Walmart and The Military Warriors Support Foundation in a ceremony to present a new 2019 Ford Escape to a worthy combat Marine.

In December, we were present at the Capitol when Governor Pete Ricketts proclaimed December 7th as Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day in Nebraska. Governor Ricketts also proclaimed another proclamation for Wreaths Across America in Nebraska. On December 14, we participated in the annual Wreaths Across America at Wyska Cemetery. In January, we will be present at the Midwinter Convention in Kearney and hold our District 15 Convention in the month of February. Our Honor Guard will be very busy. As of this writing, we have conducted 208 events, about 150 were for Military
Ernest Gruber was born October 18, 1919. Gruber joined the Army on October 24, 1941. He served in the US Army 194th Glider Infantry and was discharged on September 23, 1945.

During his time in the service, Gruber was a truck driver and specialized in hauling personnel, ammunition, and supplies for Infantry units. He drove in Panama, North Africa, Sicily, Italy, France, Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg, and Holland. During his missions, Gruber drove through all kinds of terrain, including areas of combat and during electric black outs. He performed maintenance on planes, jeeps, trucks, and other military equipment.

Gruber remembered chauffeuring the Battalion officers in their jeeps and staff cars throughout the war.

While in the service, Gruber participated in battles in Rome – Arno, Southern France, the Rhineland, Central Europe, and the Ardennes Battle of the Bulge.

Following his discharge, Gruber met and married Arlene Gartner on May 23, 1948. The two had three boys, Terry, Ricky, and Randy.

Gruber is a proud 65-year lifetime member of Louisville American Legion Post 353. He is also a member of the 550th Airborne Infantry Association.

He celebrated his 100th birthday surrounded by his friends and family this past year.

A special thank you to his son, Rick Gruber, for the pictures and information.

Welcome to 2020!

It's the new year. A time for new resolutions, or re-enforcing existing ones. Expect new challenges, and welcome new experiences. It's a new slate in which to write your story. I hope your holidays were wonderful, your tummies are full, and your lives are filled with happiness and joy.

I want to devote this article to something else. We are losing our Veterans at an alarming rate. Veteran Suicide is taking some of our best and brightest at an average of 20-22 a day. To reference a quote I read, ""A veteran is someone who, at one point in their life wrote a blank check made payable to “The United States of America,” for an amount up to and including their life.”" The author is unknown, but the message is powerful.

Today, I found out another veteran that I served with, took their life. Leaving behind a daughter that will grow up without her father. How bad does it have to be to think that's the only solution? It's easy to point the finger and blame him for taking the easy way out. But we don't know how bad it had to get before this was the only choice that made sense.

Many of us have been to war, stared the enemy in the eye, felt like today was going to be your last day. It's a lot to process. You become hyper vigilant, on edge, and expecting the worst for months on end. If you are lucky enough to make it home again, you can't figure out how to turn it off. Your training tells you to suck it up, rub some dirt on it and carry on. That works for a time, but it creeps back, slowly but surely. Sometimes it's months, sometimes years later. Sometimes when life seems to be at its best. But your mind is still fighting some war somewhere else.

There are hundreds of resources out there. VA, Military One Source, Buddy Check 22, Suicide Hotline, etc. But none of them are any good if the Veteran doesn't reach out. So how do we reach them? How do we get help for someone that needs it, if you don't know who they are? So far, we haven't found the solution. We need to figure this out and save the lives of our brave men and women.

I don't believe there is any single solution. What works for one, may not work for the next. But I can tell you this, you have to be engaged. You have to start that conversation and listen. Most of us are pretty good at reading a persons' state of mind, but seldom are we good at engaging if the conversation gets uncomfortable. It's easier to pass the buck and let someone else "more qualified" deal with the issue. While it may take someone trained to really get in and help, the time between you talking to them, and the next person taking over may be all the time they need to decide to give up. If you really believe someone is in a bad place, stay with them. Let them talk about what's eating at them. Don't compare stories, it's not a competition. Reassure them that they are not alone. And if you really feel like they should seek some professional help, go with them. Be a friend, sit with them, be ready to commit to helping them find a better place within themselves. Individually, we can be the difference between life and death for someone. Collectively, we can beat this, and bring value back into the lives of those who were so willing to give their life in defense of our freedom.

Let's make 2020 the year we end Veteran suicides and bring these troubled Vets the rest of the way home.
Harper, Ralph, Hickman, Vietnam
Hartman, Jerry, R., Chadron, WWII
Hartwig, Edgar C., Wymore
Hayner, Ralph D., Lincoln, WWII
Heim, Val, Superior, WWII
Hicks, Eugene W., Beaver Crossing, Korea
Hoffmann, John C., Pierce
Irish, Larry L., Grand Island, SAL
Janssen, Norman J., Spencer, Korea
Jesse, Bob F., Alliance, Vietnam
John Albers, W., Humphrey, WWII
Johnson, Harvey G., Greeley, Vietnam
Kasperek Kenneth C., Lincoln, Vietnam
Kas, Lavern, Bloomfield, WWII
Kotowski, Frank, Jr., Genoa, Korea
Koster, Robert L., Greta, Vietnam
Kreis, Russell R., Tekamah, Lebanon/Grenada
Kruger, Gene M., Elkhorn, WWII
Krumbach, David, J., Shelby, Vietnam
Kult, William R., Blair, Vietnam
Labart, Robert W., Jr., Grand Island, Vietnam
Lage, Orville D., Kearney, Korea
Lannin, Gordon H., Elmwood, Korea
Launer, Donald J., Fremont, WWII
Lee, Samuel Jr., Omaha, Korea
Lewis, Robert B., Grand Island, Vietnam
Lively, Everett J., Greta, WWII
Long, Robert J., Minden, Vietnam
Lutz, Marlin, Benkelman, Korea
Lyons, Richard L., Grand Island, Vietnam
Magwire, John M., Pleasant Dale, WWII
Mahoney, Richard, Albion, WWII
Manch, Richard L., Basset, WWII
Mays, Warren, Big Springs, Vietnam
Massou, Jerome, Lawrence
McDermott, A. W., Ord, Korea
Meyer, Jerry W., Blue Hill, Vietnam
Monteforte, Joseph C., Fairmont, Korea
Moody, Edward R., Crawford, Korea
Morrison, Kenneth L., Neligh, Korea
Morten, John K., Jr., Lincoln, Vietnam
Nielsen, Chris M., Denmark, Vietnam
Olson, Leslie, York, Korea
Ostgren, Stan, Jansen, Korea
Ottmann, Steven, Dorchester, SAL
Portwood, David A., Geneva, WWII
Powell, Ralph A., Hemingford, Korea
Prokop, Kenneth J., Gresham, Vietnam
Rawlinson, James A., Valparaiso
Reis, Franklin D., Blue Hill, Vietnam
Rempe, Edward H., Superior, Korea
Rhode, Carl, Seward, WWII
Rowe, Wayne F., Lincoln, WWII
Rust, James D., Superior, Vietnam
Ryan, Paul F., Omaha, Vietnam
Sapp, James L., Wymore, SAL
Schafer, Clement E., Valentine, Korea
Shald, Donald L., Tekamah, Korea
Sheets, Stanley, Superior, WWII
Shillian, Richard John., Lincoln, Korea, SAL
Shokoski, Eugene A., St. Ed- ward, Korea
Sliva, Richard, Columbus, Korea
Spaulding, Gary G., Wallace, Vietnam
Spotskins, Gary S., Grand Island, Vietnam
Staack, Eugene W., Cook, WWII
Stancyzk, Leonard, Fullerton, Korea
Suhr, Alvin L., Seward, WWII
Svoboda, Theodore D., Lincoln, WWII
Sweeney, Edwin J., Mulliken, WWII
Sweeney, John M., Greeley, Vietnam
Szwank, Frank, Mulliken, WWII
Tatro, Alfred G., Seward, WWII
Thurman, Garnar, Grand Island, Korea
Tonjes, Norman, Scribner
Tussey, William J., Lincoln, Vietnam
Vasey, William R., Cozad, Vietnam
Wagner, Hans H., Bloomfield, Korea
Wagner, Harvey R., Millard, Vietnam
Warner, Allan K., Lincoln, Korea
Wayne, William J., Lincoln, WWII
Wemhoff, Raymond J., Humphrey, Korea
Wescott, John O., Valparaiso, Korea
West, Harry L., David City, WWII
Wilke, Barry J., Columbus, Vietnam
Williams, Leon, Columbus, WWII
Winer, Lavern, Polk, WWII
Winings, Gerald, Atkinson

Volunteers for Baseball Tournament

Hastings Post 11 has been selected to host the Mid-South Regional Baseball Tournament in 2020 at Duncan Field in Hastings.

Post 11 is looking for volunteers to help with the Regional Tournament being held August 5-9, 2020. If you are interested in helping, contact Gall at gailjohnjones@gmail.com for more information. Check out hastingsbaseball.org if you would like to learn more about the tournament.

Sons of the American Legion Membership
As of December 20, 2019

<table>
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<th>District</th>
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</table>

Past Department Commander Jim Costello spoke at the Centura High School Veterans Day Program.

Lincoln Post 3 held a Veterans Day ceremony at the Bickford Nursing Home. Pictured (L to R) top Dean Dumler, Jack Silbert, Gerry Wolf, Wade Graft, and Fred Chrestlin. Lincoln Post 3 marched in the Lincoln Veterans Day Parade with their color guard and Post banner. Pictured bottom.
O’Neill Post 93 American Legion Baseball received a donation of $300 from the County Veteran Service Officers Association of Nebraska in honor of former Holt County Veteran Service Officer Arnold Hall.

Valley Post 58 sponsored Bryce Feldhacker and David Merryweather to attend the Boy Scouts National Youth Leadership Training.

Beemer Chapter 159 gave away a 2018 Harley Davidson at their 7th annual raffle.


Humphrey Post 80 honored John Headley, LTC USA, Ret. with a Quilt of Valor.

Plattsburgh Post 56 participated in the Plattsburgh Harvest Festival with a float celebrating the 100th Anniversary of The American Legion and Auxiliary.

Ashland Squadron 129 held an American Legion Trap Shooting fundraiser event.

Havelock Post 342 installed new officers at their August meeting.

Cody Post 319 Commander Jerry Fullerton was presented with a certificate for 100% membership by Past District 1 Commander Gene Von Forell during the District 1 Fall Roundup. Pictured (L to R) Gene Von Forell and Jerry Fullerton.

Cook Post and Unit 360 presented Quilts of Valor to David Armknecht and LeRoy Riensche at their Veterans Day program.

Stromsburg Post 132 celebrated the 100th birthday of The American Legion.

Dix Post 292 presented certificates of continuous membership to their members. Pictured (L to R) Adjutant Larry Engstrom, 52 years; Commander Joe Singleton, 46 years; Duane Smith, 45 years; Don Maxted, 50 years; and Bert Linn, 43 years. Not pictured Howard Zieiblinger, 43 years; Charles Goinis, 47 years; and Steven Reichert, 51 years.


Venango Post 270 presented a certificate for 50 years of continuous membership to Dayton D. Reichman. Pictured (L to R) Dayton Reichman and Commander Davien Deden.

Syracuse Post 100 hosted a flag retirement ceremony with the Syracuse Boy Scout Troop 339. (Pictured top). Syracuse Post 100 presented Gene Kraenow with a Quilt of Valor with the help of his daughter and great grandson. (Pictured bottom).
WORDS FROM THE PRESIDENT

Several veterans saluted as the flag made its way up the pole and began to wave in the steady wind. We were able to see the proposed plaque that will be placed at the base of the pole. All the while they were thanking us for the flagpole, I was thinking how many veterans, military, and families had been helped with the poppies these men made for the Department.

Following the ceremony, Lisa and I were invited into their living quarters. You see, this was no ordinary ceremony. This ceremony was held at the Nebraska State Penitentiary. The veterans have their own section in which they live. They have their own “Code of Ethics” they must live by in order to remain in these rooms. Colorful paintings of each branch of the service cover the walls as well as scenes from each of the conflicts beginning with the Revolutionary War. I was told they do have some residents with PTSD, but they are a family; and they have learned how to help them through these difficult times. They talk with great pride about how they help each other out. One of the men told us he was waiting to hear when he would be able to go on work release. I couldn’t help but feel pride in our organization as well. You see, these men are not paid for the poppies they make. The flagpole was a way to pay them back. I imagine when the project started there was a great deal of discussion of what members would think about working with convicts. So, I say thank you to the Past Department President who took the chance, the members who taught the men how to make the poppies, and all the Department members who made the decision to make the flagpole happen. I smile when I remember that the flag will be raised every morning and will be treated with the respect due our country’s emblem. (PS, sorry there are no pictures, but we were barely able to take our hats, gloves, and coats in with us.)

Elizabeth Fues
Department President

meaningful in defending the U.S. Constitution. This year, if you choose to do this project for Star Spangled Kids, it should be reported under Americanism instead of Children and Youth. Thank you to all of the units that sent in your Midyear Children and Youth reports. This makes my reports to National a lot better. Thank you for all you do for our Children and Youth. If you have any questions, please contact me. You will find my contact information in the ABC Book.

Mary Sachy
Department Children and Youth Chairman

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Two very important projects within the Children and Youth Program are the Youth Hero / Good Deed Awards and the Star Spangled Kids.

The Youth Hero and Good Deed Awards are a way that the ALA can recognize youth in your community who demonstrate good citizenship, through either a brave physical act or a good deed. Look through your newspapers, TV, and neighborhoods for children and youth who have performed a heroic act of physical valor, such as performing CPR, helping evacuate someone in the event of a fire, or calling 911 for an emergency. I’m sure you have been there. Remember, they do not have to be members of our organization.

It is a good idea to contact your local schools, churches, and youth groups to make them aware of the Youth Hero / Good Deed Awards. Don’t forget to leave your unit contact information with them.

The second project that I would like to talk about is the Star Spangled Kids. This project is a good way to educate children and youth on the history of the United States from the aspect of patriotism, Americanism, and the U.S. Constitution. How fun and interactive would it be to make a “Star Spangled” kids presentation to your local schools? Invite post members to help students learn how their military service was helpful to our freedom. It is a great way to pay them back. I couldn’t help but feel pride in each man in attendance. I couldn’t help but feel pride in our organization as well. You see, these men are not paid for the poppies they make. The flagpole was a way to pay them back. I imagine when the project started there was a great deal of discussion of what members would think about working with convicts. So, I say thank you to the Past Department President who took the chance, the members who taught the men how to make the poppies, and all the Department members who made the decision to make the flagpole happen. I smile when I remember that the flag will be raised every morning and will be treated with the respect due our country’s emblem. (PS, sorry there are no pictures, but we were barely able to take our hats, gloves, and coats in with us.)

Elizabeth Fues
Department President

CORNUSKER GIRLS STATE IS COMING MAY 31-JUNE 6, 2020!

FEE = $400

CALENDAR DATE REMINDERS:

- Early January 2020 --- go to local schools and talk to the Junior girls about what ALA Girls State is and how it can change their lives for the better.
- Early January 2020 --- ALA Girls State information will be coming to the units.
- March 1, 2020 --- Applications must be submitted.
- April and early May --- District Orientations for ALA Girls State.

Please contact Nicole Vance or Roxanne Huitt with questions.

Girls State Fee Update

The Girls State Committee has been making plans for another successful year. We know this cannot happen without the support of our units. As with many things in our economy, our program costs continue to increase. The University of Nebraska-Lincoln increases their fees an average of 4.5% annually. This increase is requiring the 2020 delegate fee to be set at $400 to cover expenses. The last increase to the delegate fee was in 2016. The current $375 fee did cover the 2019 session expenses. However, with the UNL increase, it will not cover the proposed 2020 budget. This increase was reviewed and approved by the Department Executive Committee. We understand this increase may be a concern to units, but we are not able to lower the fixed costs at UNL. If funding a delegate at this rate is a challenge, we encourage you to contact community businesses or other organizations for assistance with this fee.

Through the American Legion Auxiliary Cornhusker Girls State program, the delegates receive valuable leadership and government experiences --- and make lifelong friendships. This program is truly an investment in our future.

Nicole Vance
ALA Cornhusker Girls State Chairman

An open house for the community and invited guests was held in the afternoon. Memorabilia from both the post and unit were on display, as well as several military uniforms of members. A dinner and program were held in the evening, during which several were honored for continuous years of membership. Families of Charter Members were also recognized.

Pictured are three generations of Auxiliary members — Michelle Rogge, Sarah Rogge, and Barbara Lemmet.
Shubert American Legion Auxiliary Unit 222 celebrated the national organization’s 100th Birthday of “Service Not Self” on Saturday, October 12. Those attending enjoyed a display of memories from the past. Guests stood to honor the flags, advanced the flags with everyone joining hands and singing “God Bless America.” After the flags were retired, everyone filed towards to pose for a group picture. A four-course meal was served, and music was enjoyed throughout the evening.

Guest speaker and Past Department President Lynne Wild gave an overview of the organization’s first 100 years. Donna Hall presented the history of Unit 222. Vice President Lynnette Surman congratulated the unit members on their continued dedication to the American Legion Auxiliary’s mission. Donna Hall was recognized for her devotion to serving as Jr. Auxiliary Leader since the group originated 38 years ago.

Each member was thanked and recognized with awards for their continued years of service. Members Margaret Rowell (the unit’s longest-living member with 72 years in the organization) and Nellie Lockard (with 52 years in the American Legion Auxiliary) were presented with awards.

The unit has several three-generation members. Members Susan Wilhelm, daughter Elizabeth Williams, and granddaughter Evelyn Williams joined in the celebration. The festivities came to a close with everyone joining hands and singing “God Bless America.”

On November 11, the Hampton ALA #014 served a lunch after the Veterans Day Program held at the school. Pictured are our speaker, Air Force SMSgt. Jodi Jefferson, and Herb Peters, who won our door prize at our Veterans Day Luncheon. Also pictured is Roger Barnesberger, who donated the prize.
**GRAND ISLAND VETERANS CREATIVE ARTS COMPETITION AND DISPLAY FEBRUARY 25, 2020**

Mark your calendars and plan to attend the Grand Island Local Veterans Creative Arts Festival to be held on February 25, 2020 from 4:00-6:30 PM in the floor canteen at the Grand Island VA Medical Center (VAMC). Entries in creative arts therapy programs, such as creative writing, painting, sculpture, wood working, and many more will be on display during the open house.

The creative arts therapy programs allow veterans enrolled in VA health care facilities to showcase their talents, providing the opportunity to open up and express themselves. For some, these programs have literally made the difference between life and death—offering the chance to regain self-confidence and to enjoy life again.

The American Legion Auxiliary has been involved with the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival for 20 years and is a co-presenter with the VA. The national festival offers local winners the opportunity to showcase their creations and network with other veterans while attending workshops, seminars, and excursions in the host city.

Please plan to attend and experience in person the difference these programs can make in the life of a veteran.

**100 DOLLARS FOR 100TH ANNIVERSARY**

The Hay Springs American Legion Auxiliary Unit recently made a one-hundred-dollar contribution to the local Honor Flight Program in celebration of the National American Legion Auxiliary’s 100th Anniversary. Pictured from left are: Teri Hunzeker, Auxiliary President Patsy Futtere, Honor Flight Chairman George Kline of Chadron, and Auxiliary Vice President Joyce Thorsen. (Record photo)

**HAPPY 100TH BIRTHDAY AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY!**

The Leigh American Legion Auxiliary Unit of Sucha Post 302 met Sunday, November 17, to celebrate the 100th Birthday of the American Legion Auxiliary with a Birthday Tea. Leigh’s unit was established 97 years ago. Also in attendance were our District 7 President Ruth Hottovy of Dwight and District 7 Vice President Janie Nelson of North Platte.

Leigh Unit Auxiliary President Janet Eisenmann welcomed everyone and presided over the afternoon activities. Unit Chaplain Shirley Henke gave a prayer. Unit Secretary Mary Ann McMullin gave a very interesting 97-year history of the Leigh Auxiliary Unit. Special recognition was given to our Gold Star Sister, Theresa Krase, in memory of her brother Corporal Henry Lee Linbach. He was killed in action at the age of 21 on November 16, 1969 at Quang Nai, South Vietnam.

President Janet Eisenmann presented all Auxiliary members with certificates of continuous membership. Members with continuous memberships of 40 years or greater were Brenda Bledsoe (73), Mary Ann McMullin (55), Norma Malha (49), Henrietta Habenek (47), Alice Imholte (46), Adeline Brown (44), Betty Maloeck (44), Jackie Muehe (43), Lorraine Hold (42), Agnes Taileen (42), and Carol et Matherhoff (41).

The afternoon concluded with Bingo and enjoying Birthday cake, ice cream, and punch.

**100TH BIRTHDAY OF AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY**

Mayor Richard McKay presented a proclamation to the Hay Springs American Legion Auxiliary Unit 239 at the November council meeting recognizing the National Centennial Celebration of the American Legion Auxiliary. Pictured with Mayor McKay, from the left, are Auxiliary members Carol Brown, Sherrie Ehwood, Teri Hunzeker, Joyce Thorsen, and Patsy Futtery (Unit 239 President).

**TIME TO PROMOTE ALA SCHOLARSHIPS**

Now is the time high school seniors and college students are beginning to apply for scholarships. Your unit can make a difference by promoting the ALA scholarship program. Make plans now to arrange a visit with your school’s guidance counselor. Write an article for your local paper informing the public of the scholarships available. Send your former Junior Auxiliary college members who have remained members as an adult the new “Junior Member Loyalty Scholarship” application.

Make it a priority as citizens and Auxiliary members to assist others with the opportunity to access financial assistance for college expenses.

Sharon Borzovsky
Education Chair
Music is such an important part of our daily lives. Much of the time, we don’t even realize the songs are filling the air around us. With the Christmas season just behind us, we have enjoyed even more music in the carols and programs. Think of the opportunities we have to bring music to our veterans — the songs that inspired them and brought them hope when they were far away from home.

Unfortunately, it seems that our young people are not being taught some of those songs — such as America the Beautiful, America, and God Bless America. Maybe we could be the ones to teach them. With all the noise in our world, wouldn’t it be better to fill our ears and our minds with music?

Linda M Czarnek
Denise Wellman
Darlene Korus
Marcia Mathies
Ruth Henderson
Edith Dittrich
Hazel B Ohnich
Linda M Czarnek
Lori I Waldman
Megan K Vales
Shelby L Sawatzke
Doris Keis
Evelyn Welman

In Memoriam

December 26, 2019

Donna Delong, 60, North Platte; Marcie Mathies, 69, Chico; Phyllis L Kinraide, 78, Arapahoe; Sean Maurus, 91, Lindsay; Anne Kunz, 74, Lindsay; Arlene Kunz, 75, Lindsay; Paula Christopher, 80, Elmwood; Ann M Hascall, 78, Stapleton; Ona Bahners, 87, Johnston; Karen H Havskov, 70, South Omaha; Dorothy Hynek, 72, McCalla; Mitty A Quigley, 72, Indiana; Patricia A Brownewall, 85, Elwood; Nancy M Janyi, 80, Millard

AUXILIARY STUFFS

In Memoriam

MUSIC

Happy New Year

Happy Valentine’s Day

CRETE AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY
“PURSES WITH A PURPOSE”

Auxiliary members gathered after their November meeting to complete the “Purses with a Purpose” project. Used purses were provided by members, and appropriate items for a homeless female were stuffed into each purse. A small note was added to each purse to tell the recipient that the purse came from ALA Unit 147 in Crete, Nebraska. After loading the purses into a big tote, they were delivered to Friendship Home in Lincoln.

Happy New Year & Happy Valentine’s Day

VAMC-Omaha Veterans’ Christmas Gift Shop
During the first week in December, the Veterans’ Christmas Gift Shop opened at VAMC-Omaha. A HUGE “Thank you” to the American Legion Auxiliary units who sent money for this program. Without the support of Christmas Elves from several ALA units visiting our veterans, wrapping the gifts they picked for their loved ones, and delivering them to the rooms and clinics, we would not have been able to touch the lives of 152 Veterans this holiday season!

We would also like to “Thank” the Legion family for being there for Dollar Days and Gifts for Yanks.

Rose Shroby, VAKR
Rae Wolsman, VAKR

VAMC-Omaha Veterans’ Christmas Gift Shop

Dorchester Juniors presented a Candle Lighting Ceremony at the American Legion and Auxiliary Christmas Program. They used President Elizabeth Pess’ ceremony. Amber Kotas did the reading, and Camille Nohavice and Kendal Kalt lit the candles.

Department Junior President Allison Wiles, from Dorchester, presented The Dorchester American Legion with a cake she made for their 100th Birthday and their Christmas party.

The Dorchester Junior Auxiliary presented a Christmas Program and Happy 100th Birthday to the Dorchester American Legion and Auxiliary. Last, but not least, Santa and an Elf appeared.

Some of the ALA members who helped with the project are (left to right): Marlene Bals, Gerry Johnson, Diana Pomajl, Shirley Mariska, and Tammy Steer.

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In Memoriam

“PURSES WITH A PURPOSE”

In Memoriam

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Louise Wheeler
Music Chairman

NEC UPDATE

Many of you may have read that a new Executive Director was hired at National. Kelli Circle — of Colorado — started her job on Tuesday, November 12, and has been busy since day one.

Gerry Johnson
Diane Pomajl
Shirley Mariska
Tommy Steer

On November 1, another ALA Online Academy became available. It is entitled, How to Deal With Conflict,” and gives multiple examples of the difference between complaints and conflict — and how to approach others to get more positive results.

One last item for you to ponder. . . If you are considering a national appointment for the 2020-2021 administrative year, the application is now on the website and will be open until January 1.

Kathy Mazur
Member, National Executive Committee

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