TO MY LEGION FAMILY:

MERRY CHRISTMAS

MERRY CHRISTMAS & A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL

I apologize for the tardiness of this newsletter this month, I have been under the weather. But I am getting back on track and let’s welcome in a New Year.

WINTER CONFERENCE

The Winter Conference will be on Saturday, January 27, 2018, at the Roland E. Patnode Post 7, Rochester N.H. Refreshments will start at 8:00 am, and the joint session will begin promptly at 9:00 am. The agenda is still being worked on and will be posted in the January edition. We hope to have more interactive training.

Each Post needs to send at least one representative to at least pick up mid-winter packets.

I would just like to remind everyone of our annual Winter Raffle which will be drawn at the Mid-Winter Conference. There was an error on the mailings which indicates two different prices for purchase of all tickets at either $25.00 dollars or $20.00 dollars. We will honor which ever one you wish to include for purchase of all the tickets.
**HOLIDAY MESSAGE FROM THE DEPARTMENT COMMANDER**

To my Legion Family,

I just wanted to take a moment to wish each of you a most joyous, and safe holiday season. May each of you take a moment to reflect on the meaning of the season. It all comes back to the last line in our American Legion Preamble, “To consecrate and sanctify our comradeship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness”.

At this time of the year, many veterans and their families might not be able to have a good holiday. Seek them out in your communities and offer to help or go to your town hall and ask them if they know any veterans or families of deployed troops that may need help. How about helping by setting up a Toys for Tots box in your Post. Volunteer to be bell ringers for the Salvation Army, or attend the Wreaths Across America event at the NH State Veterans Cemetery. (wear your Legion cap)! There are many ways to live up to our preamble.

Use this season to make a difference in the life of our nation, just like you did when you served in the military.

For God and Country,
Dave Meaney
Department Commander

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**VA ANNOUNCES ROOLOUT APPLICATION PROCESS NEW VETERANS ID CARD**

VA has announced that the application process for the national Veterans Identification Card (VIC) is now available for Veterans — yet another action honoring their service.

This has been mandated through legislation since 2015 to honor Veterans, and today’s rollout of the ID card fulfills that overdue promise.

Only those Veterans with honorable service will be able to apply for the ID card, which will provide proof of military service, and may be accepted by retailers in lieu of the standard DD-214 form to obtain promotional discounts and other services where offered to Veterans.

“The new Veterans Identification Card provides a safer and more convenient and efficient way for most Veterans to show proof of service,” said VA secretary Dr. David J. Shulkin. “With the card, Veterans with honorable service to our nation will no longer need to carry around their paper DD-214s to obtain Veteran discounts and other services.”

The VIC provides a more portable and secure alternative for those who served the minimum obligated time in service, but did not meet the retirement or medical discharge threshold. Veterans who served in the armed forces, including the reserve components, and who have a discharge of honorable or general (under honorable conditions) can request a VIC.

To request a VIC, Veterans must visit vets.gov, click on “Apply for Printed Veteran ID Card” on the bottom left of the page sign in or create an account.

Veterans who apply for a card should receive it within 60 days and can check delivery status of their cards at vets.gov. A digital version of the VIC will be available online by mid-December.
Opportunity for The American Legion to Be Involved with The U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys For Tots Program

MISSION: The mission of the U. S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots Program is to collect new, unwrapped toys during October, November and December each year, and distribute those toys as Christmas gifts to less fortunate children in the community in which the campaign is conducted.

GOAL: The primary goal of Toys for Tots is to deliver, through a new toy at Christmas, a message of hope to less fortunate youngsters that will assist them in becoming responsible, productive, patriotic citizens.

OBJECTIVES: The objectives of Toys for Tots are to help less fortunate children throughout the United States experience the joy of Christmas; to play an active role in the development of one of our nation’s most valuable resources – our children; to unite all members of local communities in a common cause for three months each year during the annual toy collection and distribution campaign; and to contribute to better communities in the future.


https://www.toysfortots.org/

https://www.toysfortots.org/about_toys_for_tots/Default.aspx

POCs:

Coordinator: Sgt Justin Gordon, (339) 970-8793
Assistant Coordinator: GySgt Benitck, (603) 537-8125
Warehouse Manager: Leann LaBossiere, (978) 419-1703
Warehouse Assistant Manager: Major Armida Harper, (978) 361-3123
Regarding volunteering or toy requests, contact one of the two warehouse numbers. For all other inquiries regarding clubs or organizations, events questions, or scheduling, e-mail: toys4tots125@gmail.com

Online Exchange Shopping a Winner

The military exchanges opened their online shopping doors to honorably discharged veterans over the Veterans Day weekend. The Army and Air Force Exchange Service said their online weekend sales more than doubled over the same timeframe last year; details were not available from the Navy, Marine Corps or Coast Guard exchange systems. To shop online at any or all the military exchanges, you must first verify your eligibility through VetVerify.org.
**Wreaths Across America NH State Veterans Cemetery Boscawen: 16 December 10:30 to 12:00 PM**

Placing wreaths on graves. 12:00PM to 12:50 PM

Wreaths Across America ceremony, sponsored by NH Wing of the Civil Air Patrol

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**2018 Membership Newsletter**

**December 2017**

Let’s get crackin’ here! The Department is well below the 75% target amount. Headquarters needs as much membership in by Monday, 11 December to get a check cut and sent overnight to National. It can be very simple and easy to accomplish.

This will be short and sweet this month as the last thing a lot of leggonnaires are thinking of is paying their 2018 dues. But what a time to get it done and over with. Not only are you getting one more thing off your plate, it’s helping your post get that much closer to their goal. After renewing your dues, think of your fellow veterans, to offer to pay their dues this membership year as a gift from one considerate veteran to another. I’m sure he or she would be grateful for your generosity and thoughtfulness. Yes, you could be the Holiday Santa or New Year’s Eve baby to give a gift of membership! Some members may be experiencing financial difficulty during this time of year. Think about it and act!

Currently there are 13 posts at or over 100%. Seven Districts have at least one 100% post if not three. Colebrook is now a Family Honor post with the Post and Auxiliary at 100%. Hey, Winchester, Chesterfield and Swanzey, you are so close to being 100%. I wonder which of you will get there first?

District 6 Grafton Post 97 has informed us that they will be 100% very, very soon. Look at the recently re-charted District 5 Henniker Post 78. They are holding their first Holiday basket raffles to get funds to support children and youth programs. Contact Dave Currier (ALHennikerPost78@gmail.com) to get your tickets.

District 8 is still leading the pack for the highest percentage by districts for the membership year.

If your post or District needs assistance with membership reach out to the 2018 Membership Team.
and we will gladly assist. Actually, you are a member of our Membership team so lend your support to the Department. Check with your Post to find out what your American Legion post has done in your community. This information is on the individual Consolidated Post Report (CPR) filled out each year. It can provide you with the necessary information to attract those potential members that want to know what the local post is doing for their community and youth.

So, are you ready? Say “Yes” and join the membership drive for your post and community. Stay safe in the holidays and don’t forget our service members – past and present may God bless.

Emil Ouellette, Membership Chair 2017-2018
emoilet@aol.com

Military Veterans Are Twice as Likely to Develop ALS—Inside the Search for Answers

In the early 1990s, when Maj. Randy Hebert of the U.S. Marine Corps was stationed at Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri, his body suddenly began to fail him. At first, the Desert Storm veteran tried to hide his increasing weakness from his wife, wearing a T-shirt and shorts into work with the excuse that he was working out first thing. In truth, his hands had become too wilted to fasten buttons or tie his boots, leaving him unable to get dressed without another officer’s help. Eventually, he would be diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or ALS.

What Hebert didn’t realize then was that as a member of the Armed Services his odds of getting ALS are perhaps twice as high as those of the general population. “The risk is elevated for all veterans no matter when or where they served, whether they went to combat or not,” says Hebert’s physician Richard Bedlack, M.D., who is head of the ALS clinic at Duke University Health Center. No one really knows why anyone contracts ALS, says Bedlack, who theorizes that some veterans might be genetically predisposed to develop the disease and that the stress and rigors of military service might amplify injury to the body’s nervous system.

Now 55 and living in Emerald Isle, N.C, Hebert spends his days in a motorized wheelchair that supports his head and neck. His hair remains as blond as it was in his youth but his motionless limbs have shrunken to little more than bone. Only his eyes, blue and unblinking, remain fully mobile. They are how he communicates, one letter at a time, with the world around him. “When I wake up in the morning, I thank God for giving me another day to live,” he writes.
Crystal Singer proved her strength during Army boot camp in 2006 as the only female recruit to score above 290, just shy of a perfect 300. While still in training she discovered a love of parachuting. “I can’t put into words, the feeling that I had when I jumped out of that plane,” she says through a computer she operates with her eyes. “I was hooked. I had to jump more and more.”

One day back home in the U.S. in 2011, she was addressing her platoon, when suddenly she began to slur her words. After a series of neurological tests, she was diagnosed with ALS that same year, at the age of 31. The disease has gradually claimed almost every muscle she has. “Imagine yourself buried alive,” says Singer, 37, who retired from the Army in 2012 and now lives in Kentucky. “I can’t kick, scream or try to get free. I can only lay there alone with my thoughts in my head.”
Troy Musser joined the Iowa National Guard when he was 17. The Clarence, Ia., native served tours of duty in Iraq, and later, Afghanistan, winning the nickname “The Machine” after earning maximum scores on Army fitness tests. While he was still on active duty in Afghanistan he developed an unexplained twitch in his right arm, and pulled a leg muscle that never seemed to heal. He was diagnosed with ALS a few months after returning home from his second deployment in 2011.

Today, the 36-year-old lives in Cedar Rapids with his father and a caregiver. His greatest joy comes from weekly visits with his children. “They have great imaginations, inquisitive minds, and infectious laughs,” he writes, also with an eye-controlled computer. “Unfortunately, they’ve never known me without my wheelchair, so they’re always amazed when they see an old picture of me without it.”

Yet Musser, Singer and Hebert all stopped asking “why me” long ago. Despite the physical hardships, Singer says she doesn’t focus on what she’s lost. Since her diagnosis, she has twice sponsored toy drives for a local boys’ home. Musser, too, directs his energy toward the things he can still enjoy, like spending time with his family. “We joke, laugh, and love,” he says. “We don’t really notice ALS anymore. I still have a warrior’s spirit.”

And while Hebert has always believed exposure to chemicals during the war contributed to his illness (epidemiologists have found an assortment of possible ALS risk factors such as repeated head injuries and exposure to toxic substances, heavy metals and pesticides), his sense of duty is so strong that even if he knew becoming a Marine would lay waste to his body, he says he would have signed up anyway. “I don’t really think about being a sad person because I am not,” he writes. “I have a good life and I am doing what I have always wanted to do. Sit on the beach and chill. It just happened earlier than I expected.”
I wanted to include this article this month because not only did these individuals give more to this country then just their service but they gave up their freedom to interact with their families and others as a normal healthy human being. In this season of giving, no person can give more then what these veterans have given to this country. However, they continue to strive to be a role model for those that may suffer the same fate they have endured. (Laura Beil, 12/6/2017, People Human Interest,)

Renew – Recruit - Reconnect

Please Post