

# THE AMERICAN LEGION

JOSEPH B. WESTNEDGE POST #36

NEWSLETTER 17-1

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## COMMANDER'S POST- THE NEW YEAR

Bringing in the New Year has always been a time of reflection and vows to improve ourselves and not repeat the errors of the past. That of course is easier said than done. Take membership for instance. We have been quite successful at signing up "at-large" Legion members by meeting with them, explaining the good things that we do here locally, and appealing to them to keep a portion of their dues in the Kalamazoo area by transferring to our Post. That works.

What we haven't done well is enlist the new members' aide in employing the many programs that we do and could do with our expanding membership and resources. So when you sit down at the table or in that comfortable "easy chair", add to your New Year's resolution that you are going to volunteer some of your time and talents toward helping your post expand its impact on the quality of life and patriotism of the Kalamazoo area citizens.

JAMES A. SAUR, Post Commander



This World War I poster was created to remind a country at war that peace is always the best gift the nation could receive.

**Monthly Trivia-** The Forty and Eight is an organization of U.S. veterans. It began as an organization within the American Legion. What does the 40 & 8's name represent?

*-The first person to give the correct answer at a Post meeting wins a prize. Sorry, you can only win once per year.*

© Congratulations to Paul Cusano, who correctly answered the 16-4 trivia question – James M. Wilson was the first Commander of American Legion Post 36, elected in 1919. Eva Westnedge was the first Post 36 Auxiliary President, elected in 1920. ☺

## ADJUTANT'S CORNER- Young Veterans are the Future

The American Legion is only as strong as its membership base. And our base is aging. To grow, we need to engage young veterans and explain to them the benefits of joining.

Nearly all of us know an active or returning service member. Talk to these young veterans and share your knowledge of the American Legion. When a veteran learns what the Legion stands for and how much we do, they are more likely to become a member. Many veterans know little or nothing at all about the Legion. Tell them what we accomplish locally, nationally, and about the American Legion website- <http://www.legion.org/>.

We need a couple of volunteers willing to focus on improving recruitment of young veterans. What do they want from their membership and what would make Post 36 more appealing? Once recruited, new members must feel welcomed and comfortable to attend meetings and volunteer for activities. Eventually these veterans need to assume leadership positions, so they can direct the future of our Post. Without them we will fade away. DON GILLESPIE, Post Adjutant



Commander Jim Saur presents a Recognition Citation for Employment of Veterans to Thermo Fisher IDD US. Accepting are Stephanie Giguere, Director Human Resources and Rob Doornweerd, Director Sales Operations & Commercial Compliance.

## SPECIAL THANKS TO- THERMO FISHER IDD US

Thermo Fisher IDD US and their Veteran's Resource Group surprised us with very generous donation of \$500. This gift will be used within our community to promote the American Legion's pillars of mentoring youth and taking care of veterans.

Commander Jim Saur and Adjutant Don Gillespie attended the Thermo Fisher Thanksgiving Lunch and Town Hall, where Post 36 presented them with a Citation for Exemplary Service in Employment of Veterans. Over 10% of their US workforce are veterans. An outstanding record of employing veterans!

Thank you again Thermo Fisher IDD US!

## Post 36's First Commander Captain James M. Wilson



Captain James M. Wilson was one of the founding members of the American Legion Joseph B. Westnedge Post 36. He was elected as the first commander of our Post, and he served as commander for two terms.

James McMeekan Wilson was born in Bloomingdale MI on June 17, 1893, the son of Charles and Mary (McMeekan) Wilson. After graduating from Kalamazoo High School and Parsons Business College, he enlisted in the Michigan National Guard in April 1912, serving with Co. D, 32d Mich. Inf. during the Jackson Prison riot and the Mexican Border Crisis. When the 32d "Red Arrow" Div. was organized James joined the regular Army and was commissioned 2LT on 31 Oct. '17.

They sailed for France on 1 Feb. 1918, with James assigned as a Scout Officer with 1 Bn, 126<sup>TH</sup> Inf. For his actions on July 8 near Ammertwiller, Alsace, James was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross. According to the citation- **"Second Lieutenant Wilson returned under fire into enemy barbed-wire to recover two of his patrol who were missing after a raid, and, although painfully wounded himself, brought them safely to the American trenches, concealing the fact of his injury until he had succeeded in his undertaking and fainted from exhaustion."** James returned to duty on Aug. 19 and was promoted to 1LT. He was gassed on Sep. 8 at Juvigny, and then severely wounded on Oct 15 near Romange. He returned to duty in Jan. 1919 and was promoted Capt. on Mar. 18th. Capt. Wilson was medically retired Jun. 10, 1919.

During his military career he was awarded the DSC, the French Legion of Honour, the Belgian Order of the Crown, the Meritorious Service Citation and the Croix de Guerre with 2 palms and bronze star. He received a special citation for bravery in action from Gen. John J. Pershing. And, on Nov. 11, 1932 he was accorded the Purple Heart w/3 oak leaf clusters.

After the war, James started an insurance agency, which later evolved into James M. Wilson Agency, Inc. and J. M. Wilson Corp. On April 17, 1920, James married Margaret I. Hoag. They had 3 children. Their son, James M., Jr. served during WWII. James was a staunch Republican and he was elected to Mich. House of Representatives in 1928, re-elected in '30, '32, and '34.

James is interred at Mount Ever-Rest South, in Kalamazoo.

References- Kalamazoogenealogy.org and 32<sup>nd</sup>-division.org

## WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY- The Office of Military and Veteran Affairs

The Office of Military and Veteran Affairs (OMVA) at Western Michigan University (WMU) is dedicated to providing advocacy, mentorship, and guidance to Western Michigan University student-veterans. This includes both currently and future enrolled students at WMU. We serve as a resource for information concerning the topics of Veteran Affairs (VA) Education Benefits, academic support programs at WMU, and University policy and procedures. We are here to ease the transition from service member to civilian, assist Student Veterans in finding a healthy balance between being a retired Service Member or Reserve Component Veteran currently serving, and civilian/academic life.

For more information visit - [www.wmich.edu/military](http://www.wmich.edu/military)  
Or call (269) 387-4444



## MEET YOUR FELLOW VETERANS- James A. Saur

Jim earned his eligibility to belong to the American Legion by his service in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam Conflict. He is a retired Air Force officer with twenty six years active service. During his career he served in Operations (B-52 Radar Navigator, Forward Air controller, & Operations Division Chief); Intelligence (Division chief); and Aircraft Maintenance (Squadron Commander, Wing Deputy Commander, & MAJCOM Division Chief). He retired to Kalamazoo in 1990 and worked in the aircraft industry and metal processing until he fully retired.

Soon after that, Jim joined The American Legion and has served at the post level as Finance Officer, Adjutant and Post Commander. He has also served as County Commander, District vice Commander and Third District Commander. His primary goals are the growth of membership and participation in the work of the American Legion.





**Please join us in welcoming these new or transferred American Legion members to Post 36. Welcome and thank you for Still Serving.**

- Leander Waber - U.S. Navy, Vietnam War
- John Hathaway - U.S. Army, Korean War
- Ronald Brown - U.S. Army, Vietnam War
- Donald Jepkema - U.S. Army, Korean War
- James Richmond - U.S. Army, Vietnam War
- Thomas Paccione - U.S. Air Force, Vietnam War
- John Mohny - U.S. Army, Korean War
- John Jones, Jr. - U.S. Army, Vietnam War
- Dennis Hodgson - U.S. Army, Vietnam War
- Robert Vestal - U.S. Army, Vietnam War
- David Windover - U.S. Army, Vietnam War
- Givel McGuire - U.S. Army, Vietnam War
- Donald Belote - U.S. Air Force, Vietnam War



**SERVING VETERANS- The Kalamazoo County VSO-**

The Kalamazoo County Veterans Service Office is a great local resource. The officers can help you with:

- Claims filing for VA disability benefits
- Dependents and survivors benefits
- Burial and headstone benefits
- Education benefits
- Medical treatment
- Military records and medals
- Emergency financial aid
- Michigan Veterans Trust Fund Agents
- Transport to the VAMC in Battle Creek

The Kalamazoo County Veterans Service Office will do everything possible to see that veterans receive everything to which their military service gains them entitlement.

**Phone: (269) 373-5361**

Monday, 8:30AM – 4:00PM – WALK-INS

Tues. – Friday, 8:00AM – 4:00PM – By APPOINTMENT ONLY

***Clip and save the article above for future reference***

**Let's Re-establish Post 36 American Legion Auxiliary**

The American Legion and Auxiliary were designed to serve together, to have the support and inclusion of their spouse and family members. Unfortunately, the Post 36 Auxiliary disbanded several years ago, due to low membership and participation.

If you or your spouse or eligible family member is interested in becoming a member of the American Legion Auxiliary, or if you are the spouse, mother or daughter of a war era veteran, please contact a Post Officer. Annual membership dues would be approximately \$20 - \$25 per year. An Auxiliary membership would make a nice gift for your spouse or daughter. We welcome more spouse and family member involvement at the Post.



Commander Jim Saur and Gene Frary present donation checks from Post 36 and the 40 et 8 to the Kalamazoo Gospel Mission. Each check purchased 100 Thanksgiving Day meals.

**DINNER NIGHTS ARE BACK!!-**

Relic Catering has renovated our kitchen area and they have begun serving dinner baskets at the Post every Tuesday - Thursday night at 6pm. Burger baskets are \$5 and wing baskets are \$6. They will also be preparing food for meeting nights and some of our special events. Come out and enjoy a good burger or wings and let Relic Catering know you appreciate the service they are providing for the post.



**PLEASE CONTACT YOUR POST WITH CONCERNS-**

Please feel free to contact your Post officers about health or benefits issues. You are important to us and the American Legion can assist you and help with questions you may have concerning the VA Hospital, your veteran benefits, funerals, or we can make nursing home visits. If you have questions, please call one of your Post 36 officers from the top of the front page.

**TAPS- The members of American Legion Post 36 extend their deepest sympathies to the loved ones of these fallen members.**

JOHN W. CAIRNS- John was born in Kalamazoo on Feb. 20, 1927. In January 1945, he enlisted in the US Navy and served our country for 4 years. After returning home, John served as a member of the Fire Department for many years. In 1950 he married the love of his life, Lamoine (Walter) Cairns. John is survived by his children and grandchildren. John was a 61 year member of the American Legion.

MERL STOYANOFF- Merl was born March 7, 1925 in Battle Creek, MI. He served in the U.S. Army during WWII, from July of 1943 until honorably discharged in September of 1944. Among his awards and citations were the Bronze Battle Star and Purple Heart. He retired from Eaton Corporation in 1989 after serving for 21 years. Merl is survived by his wife, Beverly, his children, 10 grandchildren and 11 great grandchildren.

*Adjutants Note- Every time we lose a member, we lose more of our links to the past. If you have memories and stories about the history of our post, please write them down and share them, so we can preserve the history of Post 36. Thank you.*

**CAN WE HAVE YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS?**

Each newsletter we can email saves us postage costs.

That's money we could spend on helping veterans.

***We also need your change of address when you move.***

**MEMBERSHIP NEWS- PLEASE READ THIS-**

If you are one of the many newly transferred in from Post 225, welcome! We are glad you have joined your hometown Post and we hope you will feel at home with our veteran family.

Currently our membership is at 309, with 240 members renewed for 2017. If you haven't renewed, please renew soon and consider renewing on-line. It saves time and money.

**Ballot results-** In October we sent a ballot to every member, asking for your vote on the upcoming Dept. of Michigan \$5 dues increase. Nearly 70 members returned their ballots, with 63 voting for the increase, 1 voting against it and 2 ballots came back with nothing selected. So, thank you for your support and beginning January 1, 2017, annual dues will be \$45.

Let's keep growing! If you know a qualified veteran who might want to join or transfer, call Don Gillespie or Jake Rickli. Anyone who recruits 3 or more new members (not transfers) to the Legion will be eligible for a 2017 recruiters pin. Our future depends on us recruiting and retaining young veterans.

**Thank you for your membership!**



**COMING EVENTS**

- Tue. 1/3 Red Arrow House Meeting 6 – 7pm
- Fri. 1/6 Battle Creek VAMC Bingo Night 6:30pm
- Sun. 1/8 3<sup>rd</sup> District Mtg. at our Post. Volunteers are needed to set-up and prepare/serve lunch. Exec. Mtg. - 11:30am, Dist. Mtg. - 1:00pm.
- Thurs. 1/19 Monthly Meeting 7 – 8pm
- Tue. 2/7 Red Arrow House Meeting 6 – 7pm
- Thurs. 2/16 Monthly Meeting 7 – 8pm
- Sun. 3/5 3<sup>rd</sup> District - Bronson Post 259. Exec. Mtg.- 11:30am. Dinner – noon. District Mtg.-1:00pm.
- Tue. 3/7 Red Arrow House Meeting 6 – 7pm
- Wed. 3/15 The American Legion's 98<sup>th</sup> Birthday!
- Thurs. 3/16 Monthly Meeting 7 – 8pm
- Wed. 3/29 Vietnam Veterans Day

**NEED A RIDE TO MEETINGS OR POST EVENTS?**

If you need a ride, please contact us. Lack of transportation should not stop anyone from participating in our Post events.

**Battle Creek VA Medical News & Numbers-**

The toll free number for appointments & info. is 1-888-214-1247. The local number is (269) 966-5600. Phone extensions are- for triage ext. 35053, prescriptions ext. 35500, and customer service ext. 31990 or at ext. 31980.

**The 24/7 Veteran Crisis Line is 1-877-927-8387.**

For further VA questions you can also go to this website- <http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel>

For assistance obtaining discharge records, visit- [www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/](http://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/)

**The Four Pillars of the American Legion**



1. Strong National Security
2. Taking Care of Veterans
3. Mentoring Youth
4. Patriotism & Honor (Americanism)

**THE RED ARROW CLUB – (269)349-7218**

Post 36 meetings are held every 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday from 7-8pm in the Red Arrow VFW Post at 1920 E. Kilgore Service Rd., Portage