

# THE AMERICAN LEGION

JOSEPH B. WESTNEDGE POST #36

NEWSLETTER 17-4

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## COMMANDER'S POST- The Time is Now.

Next year is the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of The American Legion. Our District and Post will play an important role in the celebrations. As I reported to you previously, Kalamazoo has been selected to host the state convention next summer at the Radisson Hotel. We will need volunteers from our Post and others to help make the centennial convention a huge success.

One thing that you can do NOW to help us get ready is to renew your membership today. Your post leadership can then focus its efforts on planning and executing its responsibilities for the convention. Please do not be one of the last 10% that are still receiving renewal notices and phone calls next May.

Another thing to consider is the expansion of The American Legion Family at our Post home. Some spouses and children of our members have been very generous with their time and talents in supporting our Post activities. We have suggested the starting of a women's auxiliary. I'm sure there are other members' partners who would help if asked. It is also time to form a Sons of The American Legion Squadron. We have received inquiries from eligible men wanting to join a local "Sons" group. Let's act on this.

Lastly, we must continue to honor our fellow veterans by participating in Veterans Day activities. Please join us at our October meeting to discuss our upcoming plans and the other issues in this newsletter.

FOR GOD AND COUNTRY, Jim Saur



Thanks to the Western Michigan University Office of Military and Veteran Affairs for inviting us to present the American Legion to student veterans attending the fall orientation sessions.

## ADJUTANT'S CORNER- Can You Explain Why?

Recently, several American Legion and Dispatch articles have challenged us as members to- "Know the why to Join" and to know the answer to- "Why should a veteran want to be part of The American Legion?" If you can explain why you joined and why you want to be a member, then you can share that with other veterans to persuade them to join our veteran family.

I knew I wanted to join the American Legion after attending a few Friday night dinners at the local Post, on the way to high school football with my family. I saw the members and their families, having fun, serving the community and each other. After attending a Post meeting, I realized the Legion does a lot more than we saw when we just stopped by for dinner or a beer.

As our new American Legion National commander, Denise Rohan asks- "Are you ready to... as part of the nation's largest veteran service organization's family... show the nation that we are a family that not just takes care of our own members, we stand ready to take care of our active-duty military and their families, we take care of our veterans and their families and,... when you look at our four pillars and our programs, are you ready to continue to take care of our entire nation's families?"

So please, think about why you are a member and also ask yourself, "If not us, then who?" I would say that in many cases, if not The American Legion, then no one. That's why!!

Keep encouraging our fellow veterans to become members, as the organization's founders did nearly a century ago, when so many of their comrades were coming home with needs only other veterans could understand. They knew their "why?"

STILL SERVING! Don Gillespie



Americanism on display- our float and the patriotic crowds attending the Schoolcraft Fourth of July Parade!

## American Legion Charities

American Legion Charities was launched in 2010 as a 501(c)3 nonprofit to allow members and friends to make donations to The American Legion, or choose a specific program to support. All contributions are tax-deductible according to IRS regulations. And, they take zero funds for overhead, salaries or anything else. 100 percent of donated funds go directly to the charity.

To donate, please visit [www.legion.org/donate](http://www.legion.org/donate)

**The National Emergency Fund** directs immediate cash grants to Legionnaires who are recovering from natural disasters. Legion posts are also eligible for emergency assistance.

**Endowment Fund.** Income from the Endowment Fund provides resources for veterans in need. It funds Temporary Financial Assistance grants to veterans with children in need and Department Service Officer Schools so service officers can provide quality assistance to veterans.

**The American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund** provides scholarship money for children whose parents have died on active duty since Sept. 11, 2001. One hundred percent of all donations go directly into the fund to be used for scholarships.

**The Child Welfare Foundation,** has operated as a separate 501(c)3 nonprofit organization since 1954. It awards grants to other nonprofit organizations to educate the public about the needs of children across the nation.

**Operation Comfort Warriors.** One hundred percent of donations to Operation Comfort Warriors are used to purchase rehabilitation and recreational items for wounded military personnel in DoD facilities.

**Soldier's Wish** identifies the unmet needs of U.S. military personnel, veterans and their families, and provides the necessary resources to meet those needs.



**The 2017 Red Arrow Fall Golf Outing** was a great success and a lot of fun. 12 teams of members, friends and supporters enjoyed a great day of golf at Indian Run. The \$1200 that this event raised will help us purchase a new boiler for heat at the Post, before the winter cold. Thanks to everyone who sponsored and attended both 2017 golf outings and to all of our volunteers.



## 2017 Student Trooper Report – by Cadet Michael Arnett

My experience at the American Legion Youth Training Academy was very helpful as I progress towards my career as a police officer. The classroom work was very informative in the different fields that the Michigan State Police offer. Physical fitness was a part of my daily routine and I enjoyed participating in the tasks. Other activities I enjoyed were learning how to form a human rescue chain in the tank and getting a glimpse of maneuvers while riding on the drive track. Meeting other cadets and getting to know them has created ongoing relationships since the end of the academy. I look forward to pursuing my career choice and I thank you for this educational opportunity.

Sincerely, Michael Arnett



**MARK YOUR CALENDARS!** - Kalamazoo County will be hosting the 2018 American Legion Department of Michigan summer convention from June 26-30. *This will be a great opportunity for us to showcase Post 36 and all the Kalamazoo County American Legion posts to local veterans and the community.* By working together, we can forge new bonds between our posts, increase Legion membership and participation, while engaging the local community and having a lot of fun. Make plans to attend this showcase event!

## **MEMBERSHIP NEWS**

Currently our membership is at 304, with 198 members renewed for 2018. We started strong, but have only had 3 renewals this Month! Help us reach 100% by renewing soon.

Let's keep growing! If you know a qualified veteran who might want to join or transfer, call Dave Sytsma or Don Gillespie. Anyone who recruits 3 or more new members (not transfers) before next June will be eligible for a 2018 recruiters pin.

**Let's keep Post 36 strong through solid membership!**

## **MEET YOUR FELLOW VETERANS- Robert Riggs**

Bob Riggs was born and raised in Three Rivers, Michigan. When he was drafted in 1945, he was following in his brothers' footsteps. In the window of their home, their mother had hung a four-star flag, one for each of her boys. "I was the youngest one," Riggs said. "I was the last to go." His service overseas became voluntary because the Selective Service would have deferred his draft orders after his brother who was serving in the Air Corps was killed in Formosa.

The war in Europe ended while Bob was in basic training in Ft. McClellan. Before he could be sent to the Philippines, Truman gave the orders to silence the conflict with Japan. Riggs' role in the war would be one of rebuilding rather than destroying. He was sent to Germany as part of the occupation.

Bob worked closely with the German prisoners of war, guarding them while they were used as labor. "Some of the toughest moments were when their family would come up," he said. "We weren't supposed to let them but we usually did let them go to the fence and talk...We had two projects- the Allied Control Authority building where the four powers met....and we built a bridge across one of the canals in Berlin."

Upon returning home, Bob worked in local grocers, eventually retiring from Harding's.

Kalamazoo Gazette article, 11/21/14



## **Taking Care of Veterans**



Commander Jim Saur presenting The American Legion Joseph B. Westnedge Post 36 Scholarship to Billy Clayton of Western Michigan University's Dept. of Military and Veteran Affairs.



Post 36 members attending our August meeting at the beautiful South Haven American Legion hall. We had a quick meeting, a great time and enjoyed a good dinner.



## **Coming Soon! Post 36 Sons of the American Legion**

We are trying to establish a Sons of The American Legion squadron at our post. Eligible members include males of all ages whose parents or grandparents served in the U.S. military and were eligible for American Legion membership. Current American Legion members can hold dual membership in S.A.L.

The key to forming a new squadron will be finding members who will assume the initial responsibility. One enthusiastic member can get the job done, if he makes the commitment. We currently have over ten people interested in membership, but we need to have at least 15 members. Dues would be about \$20.

If you are eligible and interested in helping us establish a S.A.L. squadron, please contact one of our officers. If you are a Legion member, please consider a dual membership.

For more information, visit - [www.legion.org/sons](http://www.legion.org/sons)

## **Please join us in welcoming these new members to Post 36.**

### **Welcome and Thank You for Still Serving.**

- Clifford Brown - U.S. Army, Vietnam War
- James Wilson - U.S. Army, Vietnam - Panama
- Richard Pitkin - U.S. Army, Vietnam War
- Willie Harrell - U.S. Army, Vietnam War
- Neal Penny - U.S. Air Force, Vietnam War

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

GENE ROBERTS- Gene graduated from Kalamazoo Central High School in 1949. He was drafted into the U.S. Marine Corps in 1951. After serving during the Korean War, he returned home to work at Michigan Colorplate, remaining there for 46 years. Gene is survived by his wife Cecelia, their 8 children, 11 grandchildren and 4 great grandchildren.

RAYMOND HOCHMUTH- Ray was born on April 11, 1928 in Staunton, IL and grew up in Niles, MI. He served in the U.S. Air Force during the Korean War. Ray is survived by his wife Evelyn, their 5 children, 13 grandchildren and 5 great grandchildren.

TED DAVIS- Ted was born November 11, 1933. He served in the U.S. Army during the Korean War. After returning home, Ted and his wife owned and operated Davis Electronics. Ted was preceded in death by his wife Barbara Jean. He is survived by his step-children, many grandchildren and great grandchildren.

HARRY THOMAS, Jr. - Harry was born in Brooklyn, NY on July 30, 1946. He attended Lawton High School and served in the U.S. Army during Vietnam. Harry was a lifelong truck driver. He was also a very loyal member of the Red Arrow Post, helping us for many years at nearly every event. Harry was preceded in death by his wife Juanita. He is survived by his children, 7 grandchildren, 12 great-grandchildren & 1 great-great grandson.

GARRITT KORTEWAY- Gary was born November 5, 1939 in Kalamazoo and a graduate of Mattawan High School. He was a U.S. Army veteran during the Vietnam War. After serving, Gary became a paper worker, retiring from Plainwell Paper. He and his wife were also antique dealers for many years. Gary was preceded in death by his wife Gloria. He is survived by his children and 2 grandchildren. Gary was a very loyal member of the Red Arrow Post, helping at many of our events.

*All of our members will be remembered. But it is especially hard when we lose very active members, with whom we have shared many good times and memories. You will be missed!*

**PLEASE CONTACT US WITH YOUR CONCERNS-**

Please feel free to contact your Post officers with any issues and concerns about your 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.

**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.**



**COMING EVENTS**

- Tue. 10/3 Red Arrow House Meeting 6:30 – 7:30pm
- Thurs. 10/19 Monthly Meeting 7 – 8pm. Burger night.
- Sun. 11/5 3<sup>rd</sup> District Mtg. – Coldwater Post 52. Exec. Mtg. - 11:30am, Dist. Mtg. - 1:00pm.
- Tue. 11/7 Red Arrow House Meeting 6:30 – 7:30pm
- Sat. 11/11 Veteran's Day. Many local events. Thank you for your service!
- Thurs. 11/16 Monthly Meeting 7 – 8pm. Burger night.
- Tue. 12/5 Red Arrow House Meeting 6:30 – 7:30pm
- Sat. 12/9 All Post Christmas Pot luck. Bring a dish to pass and have fun. 3pm – finish. (the ARMY/NAVY game starts at 3pm).
- Thurs. 12/21 Monthly Meeting? (call to confirm) 7 – 8pm
- Fri. 1/12 Battle Creek VAMC- Bingo night 6:30 pm

**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