



# Manuel Schneidmiller Post 154, Inc.

## Rathdrum Idaho

### Newsletter

Volume 6 Issue #9

September 2020

Email: [rathdrum154@gmail.com](mailto:rathdrum154@gmail.com)

Website: [Rathdrumpost154.org](http://Rathdrumpost154.org)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/RathdrumAmericanLegion>

Mailing Address: PO Box 1116, Rathdrum ID

Meeting at: Lions Club 16114 N. Meyer Rd Rathdrum

Editor: Jean Bledsoe



#### Post 154 Mission Statement

The American Legion Post 154 is a patriotic veterans organization devoted to mutual helpfulness to support Veterans and the Community at large. We are committed to mentoring and sponsorship of youth programs, advocating patriotism and honor, promoting a strong national security, and continued devotion to our fellow service members, veterans, and their families in our communities. Our success depends entirely on active membership, participation and volunteerism. This organization belongs to the people it serves and the community in which it thrives.

## Commander:

Hello Legion Family, I would like to start off by giving big thanks to all of those members around the Post that have helped in so many ways. Without those members helping I don't know what we would really do. Each one of them are proud of our Post. They really do not ask for recognition; they just do what they do to make our Post a better place for all of you. The summer is coming to an end, I hope that while there are still restrictions in place due to COVID-19 that everyone still had an enjoyable and safe summer.

It's great to see Membership Renewals coming in. As most of you are aware our Legion year runs from July 1st to June 30th. We ask all members to renew your membership as soon as possible. We want to continue to grow as a Post and want to be the best. Please send in your renewal as soon as you can.

We are planning on having an in-person General Membership Meeting this month if the Covid numbers stay low. The meeting will be held on September 24 with the potluck Dinner starting at 5:30. I hope to see you all there. In addition, we have started discussing plans for our Veteran's Recognition event that we hold each year in November. I will keep you updated on the plans.

Please stay safe out there and God bless you all!

For God and Country. - Dee Sasse, Commander

**Editor's Note:** Please check the home page of the Post website [here](#) and Facebook [here](#), for any meeting cancellations.



## Finance Officer:

During the month of August, the Post had income of \$1,085.00 including membership renewals of \$630 and donations of \$455. Our expenses totaled \$1,098.30 and included membership expenses paid to American Legion National of \$562.50, flags purchased for donation to the City of Rathdrum and to restock flags for sale of \$354.07 and expenses for decorations and items to be handed out during Rathdrum Days (unfortunately canceled) of \$181.73.

Our net income for the month of August was (\$13.30). – Len Crosby, Finance Officer

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## Legislative Chairman:

### Senate Passes Defense Bill:

The Senate passed [S. 4049](#), the *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021* (NDAA). This legislation includes a VFW-supported provision to add bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, and parkinsonism to the list of presumptive conditions associated with exposure to Agent Orange. The scientific community concurs that sufficient evidence exists to link these three conditions. The VFW urges the House and Senate to keep this provision in the final version of the NDAA.

### House Holds Hearing on Veterans Homes Handling of COVID-19:

On July 29, members of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Oversight and Investigation Subcommittee and Women Veterans Task Force conducted a hearing on the oversight of state veterans' homes during the COVID-19 pandemic.

VA carries out annual inspections, offers guidance, and makes federal payments to 148 state veterans' homes. These are nursing homes, domiciliary care, or adult day care facilities owned and operated by state governments. About two-thirds of the state veterans' homes are also inspected by Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. Representatives from Holyoke Soldiers' Home Coalition, National Association of State Veterans Homes, and the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) discussed the three state veterans' homes hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Veterans Health Administration Assistant Under Secretary for Health for Clinical Services Dr. Teresa Boyd explained the timeline to address the recommendations in the July 2020 GAO report, "[VA Needs to Continue to Strengthen Its Oversight of Quality of State Veterans Homes.](#)"

*NOTE: Idaho Veterans Homes are routinely inspected by the VA and Medicare / Medicaid. Our rating is always among the top ten of State Veterans Homes. To date, our Idaho homes have only had two cases of COVID-19. Len*

### Update on the Veterans Services Office Procedures:

Due to an uptick in COVID-19 cases in Kootenai County, the Veterans Services Office is closed to walk-in traffic at this time and the doors remain locked. However, the VSO staff remains committed to providing services to veterans during normal office hours.

All claims appointments with Veterans Services Officers (County and State) are being conducted by phone until further notice. In the event it is necessary to arrange for veterans to come by the office for things such as document drop-off or signatures, these and all visits will be done via appointment and/or invitation from the VSO Office staff.

(cont. below)

**Going to an Emergency Room if VA is your healthcare provider:**

If you are enrolled and actively using VA Healthcare and you need to go to a local non-VA emergency room (ER), even if your VA doctor tells you to go, you **MUST** let the VA know within 72 hours from discharge or as soon as possible if you are admitted for treatment to a non-VA facility. Failing to do so will result in you getting stuck with the bill and the VA refusing payment on your behalf.

You need to know that the VA recently established an automated call center which **requires** Veterans to call and report their care ER visit.

The VA 72 Hour Notification Call Center Number is **844-724-7842**

There are several ways to report your treatment to the VA:

- You can call for yourself
- A family member can call for you
- A hospital social worker or staff member can call for you

The VA has reported an uptick in billing issues with Veterans so we need to get the word out.

If you get anything out of this article, "WRITE DOWN THE NEW 72 HOUR EMERGENCY CALL CENTER NUMBER AT **844-724-7842** AND DON'T FORGET TO REPORT TREATMENT FROM NON-VA HEALTHCARE FACILITIES".

*NOTE: This process does not apply to receiving treatment from an in-network "Urgent Care" facility. Len available at community health care locations at **in-network urgent care/retail locations**, if it is in conjunction with a clinical visit for care at one of the authorized care centers, **in-network community care providers**, with a referral or authorization, or **emergency departments**, if the visit otherwise meets criteria for VA coverage of emergency care services.*

- Len Crosby, Legislative Chairman



**Chaplain's Pew:**

Pray for people who are infected with COVID-19 or facing quarantine.

*Jesus, during Your ministry on Earth You showed Your power and caring by healing people of all ages and stations of life from physical, mental, and spiritual ailments. Be present now to people who need Your loving touch because of COVID-19. May they feel Your power of healing through the care of doctors and nurses.*

*Take away the fear, anxiety, and feelings of isolation from people receiving treatment or under quarantine. Give them a sense of purpose in pursuing health and protecting others from exposure to the disease. Protect their families and friends and bring peace to all who love them.*

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

—Philippians 4:6 (NIV)

Submitted by Helen Kinder, Chaplain



## Service Officer:

Hello Rathdrum American Legion! It's a hot time in the old town tonight! Here is some hot news so you can keep your cool...

#1: Want an easy cool way to get your VA prescription refills during the Pandemic?

Online with [MyHealtheVet](#)

The NEW [Rx Refill Mobile App](#)

Call your local VA Pharmacy number on the prescription label

By mail: [VA Refill Form](#)

#2: Have you heard about the Veterans Directed Care Program?

What is the VDC Program? This program empowers qualifying Veterans to hire, employ and supervise Personal Care Attendants to help with daily needs. A Service Coordinator from Area VI Agency on Aging conducts an in home assessment to determine what services and goods will be needed. Together, we will review program guidelines to assist with the development of your self directed Service & Support Plan. VDC supports you as you hire employees, direct your care and manage a monthly budget to meet your personal goals.

Do I qualify for VDC? The VA Medical Center determines the eligibility of the Veteran, completes an assessment to determine the budget amount and makes a referral to the Area VI Agency on Aging-ADRC Service Coordinator. Qualification is based on the Veteran's level of need.

What services are available?

- Assistance with personal care such as bathing, toileting, dressing, grooming, and medication reminders
- Assistance with household tasks, such as cleaning, laundry, shopping, running errands and meal preparation
- Assistance with yard work and snow removal
- Accompaniment to medical appointments
- Assistance in obtaining medical equipment and supplies not covered by other payer sources
- Service Coordination to: identify service needs, develop individualized Service & Support Plans, manage VDC budget and to assist in identifying community supports and resource.

How can I apply for the Veteran Directed Care Program? If you are interested in the program, contact: Area VI Agency on Aging- ADRC Idaho: 208-610-8000 Montana: 406-883-7284 or 1-800-266-4188 The following counties are currently served by Area VI Agency on Aging: Idaho: Boundary, Bonner, Kootenai, Benewah, Latah, and Nez Perce.

#3: Have questions about voting this fall? Go to [Idahovotes.gov](#). You can check your voter record, find your polling place, request an absentee ballot and register or update your voter status.

- Ruth Aresvik, Service Officer





Our renewal drive is moving along at a steady pace! As of August 24th, our paid membership is at 60 for 2021, with two new members and one new transfer into the post. This places us at 45% of our goal, with our total membership at 134. Remember membership is everyone's responsibility.

[Once again, I highly recommend your use of the On-Line Renewal feature. It's fast and easy. Go to legion.org, click renewals. Make sure you have your](#)

[ID card and credit card available for this transaction.](#)

Take an extra minute and go to Mylegion.org and sign up for this section. Some interesting items to view.

[The information below was included in the August Newsletter, I thought it appropriate to send it out again.](#)

With the passage of the Legion Act in July 2019, membership has opened for many veterans previously not eligible. The Act basically states that any veteran that has served at least one day on Federal active duty, since December 7, 1941 is eligible to join The American Legion. I would like each Post 154 member to recruit at least one new member from now to December 31, 2020. I sent out emails to those on my Post contact list with an attachment containing a Post 154 Application Form, for use in getting new members to sign up. The only other item you will need to get is a copy of their DD-214. (Required by Congress)



Presently the Richardson's have gotten two new members and we are off to a good start. Thank you.

There are awards given by National for your recruiting efforts. The most common is the National Commanders Incentive pin given to those who recruit at least three new members. Recruits cannot have been a member in 2020.

Thank you. - Bill Kinder, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Commander, 208-661-6850 or wakinder74@gmail.com

### **MEMBERSHIP CHALLENGE 2021**

We need to build our membership! I propose that every member of post 154, sign up at least one (1) new member for 2021. In order to qualify for National awards, new members must not have been members in 2020.

Any members signing up three or more new members are eligible to receive the National Commander's membership incentive lapel/ hat pin.

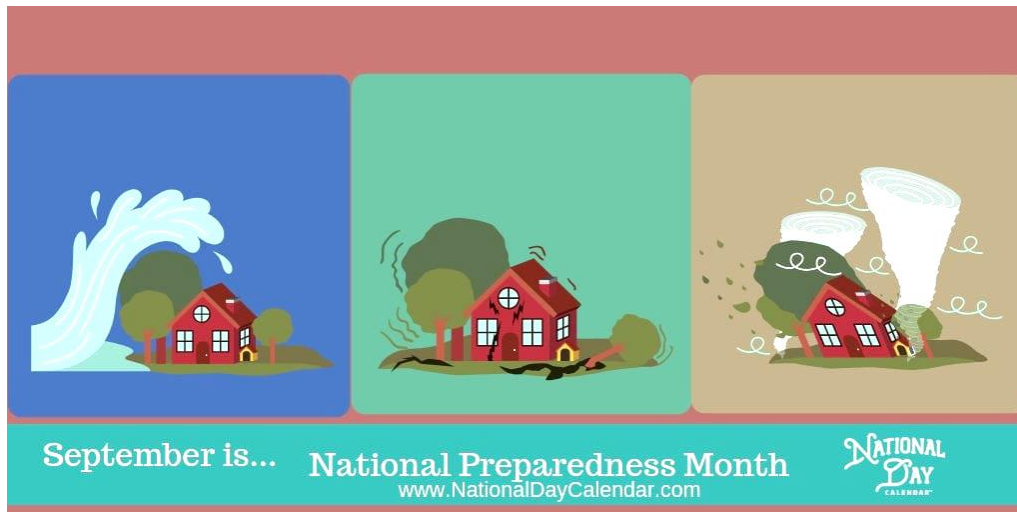
You will have until December 31st to recruit your new members. Bring them to one of our meetings and I will help you to sign them up. We have applications, so don't be afraid to get involved.

Dues remain at \$45.00 per year, checks to be made out to American Legion Post 154. Please do not have new members join on-line as National places them into Post 85 (Dept. Administrative Post) and it is time consuming to get them into our post. Thank you and good luck.

As of August 25th, we have gotten 2 new members signed up. Good work!

PLEASE CONTACT ME FOR ASSISTANCE:

Bill Kinder 1st Vice Commander - 208-661-6850 or wakinder74@gmail.com



Disasters don't plan ahead, but you can. The entire month of September observes National Preparedness Month.

No matter where you live, you are subject to disasters. Natural disaster and man-made disasters affect everyone and will cause severe damage and endanger lives. Hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, landslides, wildfires, hot spells or cold spells are all natural disasters that can be deadly to people and property. Man-made disasters such as terrorism, crime, power outages, famines, or war are just as terrifying as any natural disasters. Preparation is essential for the safety of you and your family. It can also ensure valuable personal possessions are taken care of properly before you lose them.

#### Family First

Deciding how long a disaster will last and the after-effects are the first step in preparation. Depending on the type of emergency, you may need food and water for a few days. Food that is easily stored and prepared is critical during a disaster. When disaster strikes, you want to make sure your family has water to last for a specified duration of time. It is recommended each family member have 1 gallon of water per day to remain hydrated. Having proper eating utensils, small stoves that run off propane or a grill for cooking, matches, candles, blankets and extra clothes are a few items to pack away in a safe, accessible place. Try not to forget about family activities! Pack away some board games, cards or books to help the time pass by. Having things for children to do will also keep their mind at ease.

More than half of all parents lack a designated meeting place to fall back to in an emergency. Family fire drills may seem silly, but they do serve a purpose. Unfortunately, many Americans don't have a list of emergency contact numbers either. Make sure the entire family has memorized any numbers that are of significance in the case of disaster.

#### Personal Property

Finally, personal property is always a concern when natural disaster hits. Though it's not always possible, you can do a few things to make sure you save the valuable documents that mean the most to you. If you have a computer, you can scan any documents and put them on an external drive. Store the drive someplace safe and dry. With today's technology, we can save our photo memories more easily. If saving photographs of family is important, consider scanning them on an external so you can reprint them if the originals are lost or destroyed. Most importantly, make



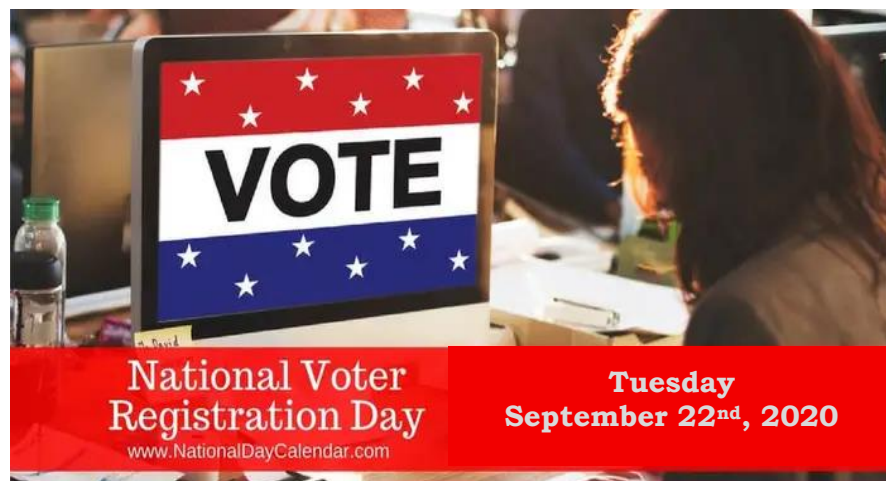
sure your insurance policies are up-to-date. You can visit your insurance agent any time to review what you have, what is covered and what options you have in the event a disaster destroys your home or vehicles.

#### HOW TO OBSERVE

Preparing for a disaster might seem like an impossible task and we hope you never have to experience one. But if you do, government agencies like FEMA and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, as well as organizations like the American Red Cross, provide excellent websites with enough information to get you started. These websites also offer suggestions on how to plan in specific instances, like being without power for weeks. Your insurance companies will also have information you can use as you prepare. Insurance companies encourage families to prepare for disasters. It makes their jobs easier once the emergency is over and it also gives you peace of mind that you were covered correctly.

*Reprinted from NationalDayCalendar.com*

Editor's Note: For more information on preparing for disasters – from any source – we have extensive lists on our website [here](#).



## Training Officer:

### Usage of the American Legion cap, emblem, facilities, and political donations

According to Article ii, Section 2, of the Constitution of The American Legion, “The American Legion shall be absolutely nonpolitical and shall not be used for the dissemination of partisan principles nor for the promotion of the candidacy of any person seeking public office or preferment.” The national charter, approved by Congress, also stipulates The American Legion as an organization is nonpolitical\*, which has been interpreted by the national judge advocate as “nonpartisan” in modern lingo. Therefore, The American Legion as an organization is prohibited from contributing, helping or endorsing a candidate. However, a member – as a private citizen and not representing the organization – can employ whatever legal and ethical means to advance his or her candidate.

The Legion cap is considered the official Legion uniform (**see p. 40**). it is not an individual Legion member’s decision on the appropriate usage of the cap and emblem. if attending a political event, the American Legion cap, or any clothing with the emblem visible, should be removed so as not to imply endorsement by The American Legion. The problem is the assumption of endorsement by those who see the emblem or name worn at an improper location, such as a partisan rally.

When using post facilities to host candidates, the post should remove the emblem and American Legion flag to avoid any impression of endorsements. Candidates for all parties must be presented equal opportunity at the same time to use the facilities on the same terms and conditions as other competing candidates.

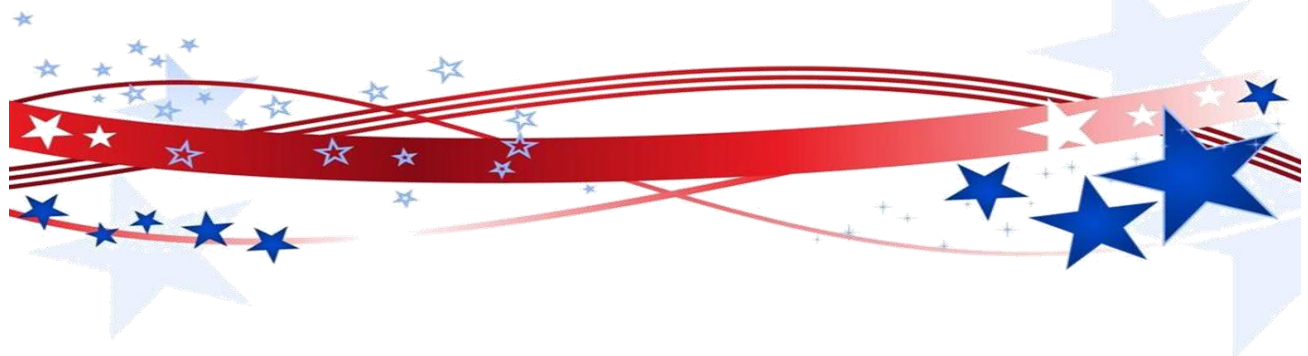
The American Legion values its independence and effectiveness on veterans’ issues. This stance is best maintained by neutrality on individual candidates or political parties. The American Legion by legal definition is nonpartisan and supports only issues that impact the Four Pillars.

The following is the position of the National Headquarters of The American Legion regarding financial contributions that might be offered by candidates for political office, campaigns, political action committees or political parties:

- The American Legion is very appreciative of donors who contribute to its programs, which enhance the quality of life for thousands of veterans, young people and their families.
- While The American Legion is pleased to see candidates address issues of concern to America’s veterans, it is a nonpartisan organization. The American Legion Constitution prohibits the organization from endorsing any candidate for political office.
- if a candidate, PAC or political party were to offer a financial contribution to The American Legion or its programs, the Legion would politely decline. While accepting the contribution may be perfectly legal, The American Legion wants to avoid even the perception that the organization supports any candidacy. Again, The American Legion values its independence and is beholden to no political officeholder or candidate.

*\* This means “nonpartisan” in today’s society. The American Legion is allowed by Congress to lobby for veterans’ benefits and a strong United States of America (NJA, October 25, 2012).*

Submitted by Jean Bledsoe, Training Officer



## Faces of AO

A slightly different take this month on the Agent Orange issue. This is from John Wells of the Military Veterans Advocacy (MVA) and Blue Water Navy Association (BWNA) pages on Facebook. He is the attorney whose lawsuit against the VA opened the door for benefits to Blue Water Sailors.

I wanted to give everyone a quick update on where our efforts stand. Like everyone else, Covid-19 has affected MVA and restrained our efforts. We have not been able to make our periodic trips to Washington DC to meet with Congressional officials. Also, we have been forced to cancel a planned series of seminars/Continuing Legal Educations courses.

On the positive side the respite has allowed us to get control of our administration which has been reactive rather than proactive. We have hired a part time assistant, Robin Barr, to smooth the merger of MVA and the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Association as well as the expansion of several different sections. She is also working on a legislative tracking tool and we are planning a quarterly newsletter to start this Fall. Robin has been a force multiplier who is organizing our files and streamlining our organization's operations. Her efforts have released me to concentrate less on administration and more on helping veterans.

Our fund-raising has also been successful with the annual rifle raffle, Independence Day to Memorial Day Facebook fund-raiser, and the generosity of many Blue Water Navy folks who have finally received their benefits. To make a donation go to the MVA web site at:

<https://www.militaryveteransadvocacy.org/donate.html>.

To date, almost 18,000 Blue Water Navy veterans have been approved for benefits. Another 2700 survivors have been approved. However, there are still about 35,000 claims pending review. Almost \$585,000. in back benefits have been awarded as of the end of July. But more work needs to be done. A word of caution to those who have not received your benefits. If denied appeal. Keep the claim open and look for an MVA/BWNA approved attorney. A VSO can handle harbor cases, but if you are going to appeal outside the harbors, you need a higher level of competence.

The suit to extend the presumption area to the Vietnam Service Medal area, as well as cover those assigned to Thailand bases, is still on hold pending review of another case dealing with the Court's jurisdiction. This matter needs to be settled before our case can proceed. We have filed an amicus brief in the jurisdiction case and the full court will review that question. We are cautiously optimistic on that front.

Our case to review the VA regulations concerning appeals has been fully briefed and awaiting oral argument. That should happen soon. We also have a suit pending on Guam/Johnston Island. Briefing will start soon on that case. We have filed a rulemaking request for the Panama Canal Zone and will be supplementing that information soon. We are working on a number of other cases including one to stop the clock on time limitations when the VA acts to interfere or discourage filing.

Congress has basically been closed since Spring and we are just not able to meet with staff face to face. We hope that will change soon but that will depend on the pandemic. We intend to hit the ground running with the 117th Congress with a re-introduction of our Guam and Thailand bills as well as a bill to cover the Canal Zone. We will also be supporting other toxic exposure bills including the TEAM bill. Hopefully our new tracking system will allow you better access to what we are doing.

Expect to see more outreach programs asking you to call Members of Congress, Senators and Committee staffs. That approach was successful for the Blue Water Navy and we want to apply it to our other areas of concern.

So despite the virus we have been busy. We will continue to move forward legislatively, in the courts and through education. Hopefully 2021 will see the elimination of travel and in-person meeting restrictions. We appreciate all of your support and we hope that you will continue to support us.

The struggle continues.

Commander John B Wells, USN (ret).

Submitted by Bryan Bledsoe, Adjutant

## Post 154 Honor Guard:

For those of you not aware, our Post has an Honor Guard. They march in parades, present the colors at ceremonies, and most importantly, provide a rifle salute to honor Veterans at their funerals. Starting this month there will be an account of the honors and hours given by the men and women in our Honor Guard. However, more members are always needed to serve in this capacity. If you are interested in participating in this very fulfilling activity, contact Harold Markiewitz at 208-691-3039. Note: the first numbered column is the number of hours spent, the second is the number of guard members who participated.

Seven Honor Guard members attended the funeral of a female WWII Navy veteran in August.



## Did you know...?

Most VA appointments can be done by phone or telehealth? This includes physical therapy, primary care, podiatry, nutrition support, classes, and others. What do you need? Call and see if it's available virtually or by phone. It's easier and safer. Here's the main Spokane VSMC number: 509-424-7000.

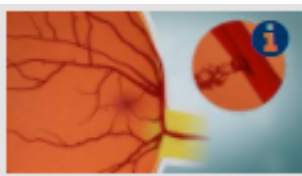
## New Post Members!

- ★ Geoffrey Richardson of Post Falls who is the son of our members Bill and Teresa Richardson.
- ★ Also new member Kristine Marin of Rathdrum. She was also recruited by Teresa Richardson.
- ★ Thomas L. Barney (goes by Lenn) of Rathdrum was a transfer recruited by Bill Kinder.

When you see a new member, please step up, introduce yourself, and make them feel welcome.



## A Healthier You: from the VA Health Video Library



[Diabetes-Related Eye Disease 4:38](#)

Diabetic retinopathy is a serious condition all too common in diabetics which often leads to blindness when diabetes is uncontrolled, and retinopathy is untreated. Follow this [link](#) to watch a short video about Diabetic retinopathy.

**Mark Your Calendar:**

September 1st - Send your volunteer hours to Len Crosby

September 2<sup>nd</sup> – V-J Day

September 7<sup>th</sup> – Labor Day

**September 10<sup>th</sup> – Executive Committee Meeting via Zoom 5:30 PM**

September 11<sup>th</sup> - Patriot Day

September 16<sup>th</sup> - The anniversary of Congress' charter of The American Legion

September 17<sup>th</sup> - Constitution Day & Citizenship Day

September 18<sup>th</sup> - National POW/MiA Recognition Day

September 18<sup>th</sup> – Air Force Birthday

September 22<sup>nd</sup> – Voter Registration Day

**September 24<sup>th</sup> – General Membership Meeting – Rathdrum Lyons Club 5:30 PM**

September 26<sup>th</sup> – National Hunting & Fishing Day

September 30<sup>th</sup> – National Women's Health & Fitness Day



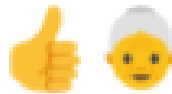
Finally...the Rebellion Has Begun ... Len

Woo hoo!

Ruth

Our elderly have been so overlooked and hugely discounted in the large scheme of political agenda.

Paula



Jean

Any other comments?

Shared by Len Crosby

## Bits & Pieces

- ★ Veterans Affairs officials are planning to expand caregivers stipends to additional families starting this October, one year after advocates had originally hoped for the financial assistance to be put in place. Read the article [here](#). And a VA article about The Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers [here](#).
- ★ **Also, please remember** to send your volunteer hours to Len Crosby so he can compile them. These include hours devoted to Veterans, Youth, Honor Guard and Community. His email is: [crosbylenmary@frontier.com](mailto:crosbylenmary@frontier.com)



## TO HELP A VET

J.A. Bertsch Heating & Cooling offers furnace for veteran in need.

In appreciation of local veterans, J.A. Bertsch Heating & Cooling is giving away a new gas furnace, including installation, to a veteran in need this fall.

"If you know a veteran who needs a reliable heat source in their home, please take a moment and go to [jabertsch.com](http://jabertsch.com) and enter them in our drawing," wrote Joel Bertsch, owner. "If you can, tell us a little about who they are. We love to hear stories about our local heroes!"

Deadline for entries is Sept.18. During the week of Sept. 21, the company will hold the drawing for a Daikin gas furnace.

"As an appreciation to our veterans we want to give back," the company said.

J.A. Bertsch Heating & Cooling is at 3645 N. Government Way, Coeur d'Alene

## FLAG VANDALISM!

**Post member Paula Atwood and husband Dale experienced an act of vandalism at their home last week.**

The cord holding their American flag and a Gadsden flag was cleanly cut and their flags removed from a 25' pole. The flagpole has been there over 13 years, well-lit at night and proudly flying the American flag. Was it the American flag being targeted? They do not believe so as there are several American flags displayed along their street that could have been easily reached. Was it the Gadsden flag that was targeted? If you don't know the significance of the Gadsden flag, [click here](#).

Now Paula and Dale need some help repairing their flagpole. They have no way to get to the top of the pole to replace the flag-raising rope. Do you know anyone who has a cherry picker or some other method to get to the top of a 25' pole? If you can help, please contact us here: [rathdrum154@gmail.com](mailto:rathdrum154@gmail.com)

## How to Get Caregiving Help From the VA

The agency offers benefits and services tailored for older veterans and their families  
by [Amy Goyer](#), Updated November 7, 2019



AMY GOYER

Amy Goyer's father, Robert Goyer, served during World War II and the Korean War.

Caregiving is like a delicate puzzle as we piece together care for our loved ones — all the support never comes from one place. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) became a crucial puzzle piece for my late father, Robert, a [World War II](#) and Korean War veteran who had [Alzheimer's disease](#).

The VA offers many benefits and services for veterans and their caregivers. Sure, it's a complicated system to navigate sometimes, but it's absolutely worth the effort.

Dad never used any of the benefits or health care he was eligible for as a veteran until he needed [hearing aids](#). Later, I applied for [VA Aid and Attendance \(A&A\) benefits](#) and gradually obtained additional services and supports for him. Eventually, he needed 24-hour care. His VA benefits and services were a huge help with his budget.

### VA programs caregivers should know about

If you're a veteran or caring for one, these benefits and services may be available. More information about eligibility is on the [VA website](#).

**VA Caregiver Support.** I started my search for information about benefits and services by calling VA's caregiver support line, 855-260-3274, and returned to those representatives whenever I got lost in the bureaucratic maze.

They were helpful and connected me with a local caregiver support coordinator who assisted me in locating the VA medical center and services in our area. Your support coordinator is a good person to call when you hit roadblocks.

**Pension, Aid and Attendance, and Housebound benefits.** As a veteran, your loved one may be eligible for certain financial benefits. Because Dad served during eligible wartime periods and met other age, financial and health criteria, he qualified for the A&A program, which offers financial help for veterans to pay for long-term care.

A&A and a related pension enhancement for aging and ailing veterans, the Housebound allowance, have distinct qualification criteria related to the recipient's physical condition and capabilities. The programs are aimed at veterans in financial need and also restrict eligibility based on income and assets.

Applications can take several months to process. In Dad's case it took a full year before he finally started receiving benefits. But if those benefits are approved, they are retroactive to the date the application was submitted.

Some businesses offer help in applying for A&A or a Housebound allowance, but they charge a fee for their services. Beware of shady financial advisers who try to talk veterans into risky financial moves that will supposedly help them get these extra benefits, a scam called "[pension poaching](#)."

Instead, ask the VA about its recognized expert providers, known as [veteran service organizations](#) (VSOs), that help veterans with the application for free. Or ask your estate planning or elder care lawyer for assistance — ours helped me for no fee.

You can search the VA's online [directory of accredited VSOs](#) to find one near you.

**Health and caregiver services.** For the last year of his life, Dad received home-based primary care, which was a game changer for us and made caring for him so much easier for everyone.

Other services veterans may receive include these:

- **Adult day health** care services
- **Health care** or telehealth
- [Hospice care](#)
- **Light housekeeping**
- **Mental health care**
- **Personal care**
- **Physical**, occupational and speech therapy
- [Respite care](#)
- **Social workers** to help coordinate care

All of these services are especially helpful for caregivers. Most are free or available at a very reduced cost, depending on what you or your loved one qualify for.



AMY GOYER

Robert Goyer was a member of the U.S. Army's 10th Mountain Division.

#### 4 keys to working with the VA

I learned so much about how to work with the VA to maximize available support for my dad. Here are a few of my hard-earned tips.

**1. Stay positive and be patient.** Yes, the VA system can be complicated, and sometimes you don't get help right away.

But I found that everyone I interacted with — from the call center reps to the doctors — really wants to help. They all have heavy workloads because so many veterans need help.

Give them patience and understanding and you're more likely to get the same in return.

**2. Document everything.** I learned to take detailed notes about every conversation and appointment because multiple calls were usually needed, and sometimes one VA office isn't aware of what another has done or can do.

I needed to be able to connect the dots. I then followed up to make sure all steps were taken, and no balls were dropped.

**3. Always ask if other services are available.** I kept finding out about additional benefits or services for Dad.

For example, the social worker, not the doctor, informed me that we could be provided with certain incontinence supplies. And the pharmacist told me about other available assistance that the social worker wasn't aware of.

Just keep asking questions.

**4. Never give up.** Someone at VA told me once that “the squeaky wheel does get the grease,” and I definitely found this to be true.

Dad's A&A application was mired in a lot of red tape, but I persisted, and ultimately, he started getting a monthly stipend to help pay for his care.

Here's another example: At one point I tried to set up respite care and arrange help with Dad's bathing, but the VA's local contractor did not work out. They wouldn't provide respite care on Saturdays, when I really needed it.

Honestly, I gave up after two tries. But more than a year later I decided to try again, and with a new contractor it was much easier to arrange care.

Overall, the benefits Dad received were crucial supports both for him and for me and the rest of his caregiving team. I can't imagine how we would have maintained his care without them.

*Editor's note: This article, originally published in November 2016, has been updated to include new information and to reflect the passing of Amy's father in 2018.*

*Amy Goyer is AARP's family and caregiving expert and author of [Juggling Life, Work and Caregiving](#). Connect with Amy on [amygoyer.com](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), in AARP's [Online Community](#) and in the [AARP Facebook Family Caregivers Group](#).*

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- [Family and medical leave: How to tell your boss you need time off](#)
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## American Legion: Flags, grommets and bells

American Legion Post 154 collecting material for ship's bell

By BILL KINDER American Legion Post 154

Members of American Legion Post 154 in Rathdrum have been working to cut grommets from nearly 500 American flags over the past two months.

"With the project to collect 'Grommets for Bells, we decided to take some time to cut the grommets from the flags we retired this year," said Bill Kinder, Post Vice Commander.

A bell will be cast from brass grommets collected from American Legion Posts throughout the state, which will then be used to create a ship's bell.

The new Naval vessel, a Virginia class attack submarine, designated as the USS Idaho (SSN-799), is now under construction and is due to go into service sometime in 2023. The Virginia class, also known as the, SSN-774 class is a class of nuclear-powered cruise missile fast attack submarines, currently in service in the United States Navy. Designed by General Dynamics's Electric Boat and Huntington Ingalls Industries, the Virginia class submarines are the U. S. Navy's latest undersea warfare platform which incorporates the latest in stealth, intelligence gathering and weapons system technology.



The future submarine will be the fifth naval vessel to bear the name USS Idaho. The first was commissioned in 1864. It was a steam sloop and served as a store and hospital ship.

The second, a battleship, was built 1904-1908. This ship was sold to the Greek Navy in 1914. The third was a motorboat patrolling the East Coast. The fourth was a New Mexico-class battleship circa 1917 and was in action during WWII.

The new submarine has the capabilities to seek out targets onshore, with Tomahawk missiles as well as long term missions at sea. "We are happy to be able to help with this project," Kinder said. "It is extremely rewarding to be a part of this endeavor and to know Rathdrum Post 154 has played a small role in preparing this bell for the USS Idaho's sea duty."

Anyone who has flags that are tattered and worn may drop them off at City Hall, located at 8047 W. Main Street, Rathdrum. There is a drop-box receptacle in front of the Rathdrum City Hall for used flags. Brass grommets in a plastic bag can also be placed in the receptacle.

American Legion Post 154 conducted its flag retirement ceremony on Saturday, June 20, 2020. At that time 335 flags were respectfully retired from service. Another 200 flags will be retired in late September or October, when weather conditions are more appropriate.

New flags may be purchased through Rathdrum American Legion Post 154 by contacting Bill Kinder at (208) 661-6850 or wakinder74@gmail.com

Editor's Note: This article was published last week in the 41 North special section of the CDA Press.

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### **GROMMET CUTTING PARTY**

The Post has almost two hundred large (10'x15') flags that need the grommets removed. We will be sending the grommets to Boise to be made into a bell for the new USS IDAHO SSN-799, a Virginia class submarine. The ship should be completed in 2023. I need volunteers to come to my home to spend some time cutting off these grommets. The more volunteers the shorter the time necessary to finish the work. If you are willing to help with this project you need to bring two things, a pair of sharp scissors and a comfortable lawn chair. We will keep social distancing and we will be outdoors. We appreciate all the help we can get.

We plan to do this on Saturday, September 19, 2020 beginning at 10:00 a.m. If you wish to join us for the GCP call or email me.

Bill Kinder

12299 N Kelly Rae Drive, Hayden, ID 83835 (208) 661-6850 wakinder74@gmail.com



## A Whale of a Swell Swale Tale - by Ruth Aresvik

According to Wikipedia, a swale is a low or hollow place, especially a marshy depression between ridges. Sigh. Talk about depression. But let me begin at the beginning....

I live in the Prairie Sky development in Rathdrum; a lovely community with a plethora of happy shouting screaming children, one who likes to constantly blow a whistle. I will call her Riley because...well...that's her name. Anyway....

My house is on a corner lot and I have swales. I do not like them. They are low and hollow and depressing. This spring I noticed the northeast corner becoming marshy. With icky ugly water that would not drain. For one thing, the big drain hole (see photo) is higher than the lowest part, which means water won't drain. Not the smartest landscaping plan, if ya ask me. What to do.... what to do. Hmmm. I could contact my builder but pretty much figure it would result in either (1) no, that's not our problem, but contact the city, or (2) okay, we'll take a look and maybe fix it (in eight or fifteen months). I could contact the city but pretty much figure it would result in either (1) no, that's not our problem, but contact your builder, or (2) that's your property and your problem. I could (and did) contact my HOA to establish what action I could or could not take to resolve this issue. I wanted to obey the law. As an American veteran and former federal government employee, I am used to following rules and regulations - policy and procedure. And recipes.



Anyway, my HOA people didn't give a crap, so I was back to square one. I couldn't really find anything on Google. I could have called Larry Carstensen or Mike Warren. Or other fellow Legionnaires. Hmmm. Maybe I will. But I didn't. Maybe another time. Anyway.... Short of asking if Idaho Fish and Game could declare my swale an endangered wetland preserve, plant cattails and lily pads, or perhaps determine if there is a species of Pacific Northwest crane that would care to make a home there...I was at a loss. What else to do but fill it up level or higher than the drain

hole. Sounded like a smart landscaping plan, if ya ask me. So, I called Post Falls Wal-Mart. Did they still have their outside yard area set up with bark and mulch and dirt? Yes, but it's limited. End of the season and all. So, I went to Wal-Mart. I parked in the east area by the garden center where, of course, they did not have their outside yard area set up anymore. And the only open entrance was way the heck to the west. Sigh. So, I go in, walk all the way east to the garden center only to find the entire garden center full of boxes and two men ready to set things up for none other than Christmas, no doubt. I asked a question about bark and mulch and dirt. Sorry, just some potting soil. Okay. I walk west all the way back through the store to the only exit and pivot to East Jesus and my car and drive to Lowes and get four bags of topsoil and four bags of brown mulch. Now I am feeling confident and satisfied. I am on the right track. I even stop at Dutch Brothers for an iced coffee. I get home and get to work. First, I bale out the excess swale water. Yuck. I



fill the swale with three bags of mulch and three bags of dirt. Still feeling confident and satisfied. Then a nice neighbor man comes by and explains that this probably won't work due to at one time we were in a construction area, and with all the downhill water settling with miscellaneous crap, it has turned into a bottom of silt creating a pond effect. He told me what he had done to his swale and offered to help. Yes please. We undid what I'd just done - shoveled four wheel barrel loads and dumped it in my backyard on a tarp. He used a heavy metal rod to "drill" several holes through the layers. He even reprogrammed my



sprinkler system when I mentioned changing the watering in that area. Bless his heart. If I don't get along with my sewing machine, you can only imagine how it is with my sprinkler system. I start to hyperventilate when I look at the guide. Is this really for a sprinkler system or a NASA checklist for the next mission launch to the international space station? Honestly. Anyway....

I was very grateful to be done with this madness. I have good neighbors. I anticipate no future problems. I feel satisfied that my swale will drain. I also feel satisfied because I just drained my wine glass....



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**FRIDAY,  
SEPTEMBER 11<sup>th</sup>, 2020  
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