



CONTENTS

Message from the Commander	1-2
Future Marines Take Oath at Rooftop Oath Ceremony	4-5
American Legion History	6
What Does A Chaplain Do?	6
Post 593 Four Chaplains Ceremony	7
Post 164 Four Chaplains Ceremony	8
Post 145 Recruiting Reaps Rewards	8
Post 460 February Activities	9
BASE Visit to JBSA-Fort Sam Houston	10-12
Troop 151 Conducts Winter Court of Honor	13
Troop 1096 Working on Cycling Merit Badge	13
Post 174 3rd Annual Chili Cookoff	14
Pack 151/1096 Conduct Pinewood Derby	15
New Pack 1096 Presents First Awards	15
Post 472 250th Anniversary Army, Navy, Marine Military Ball	16

Message from the Commander

The Importance of Developing Mission Statements for American Legion Posts

Creating a mission statement is vital for American Legion posts because it provides a clear and unified purpose, guiding members and leadership in their actions and decisions. A well-crafted mission statement helps define the post's values, goals, and commitment to serving veterans, their families, and the local community. It also serves as a foundation for planning activities, recruiting members, and communicating with stakeholders, ensuring that everyone understands the post's objectives and the impact it strives to make.



Additionally, a mission statement fosters accountability and motivates volunteers by connecting their efforts to a larger cause. It can be used to inspire pride and belonging among members, strengthen partnerships with other organizations, and support fundraising initiatives by articulating the post's vision and purpose. Overall, developing a mission statement is an essential step in building a strong, effective, and cohesive American Legion post.

Below is the mission statement for The American Legion – National:

“The American Legion strengthens our communities, states and nation with programs and services for our veterans, the military and their families.”

Guiding Principles and Steps for Crafting a Purposeful Statement

Developing a mission statement for an American Legion Post is a thoughtful process that begins with reflection on the organization's core values and the unique needs of veterans, their families, and the broader community. A strong mission statement offers clarity, inspiration, and direction – serving as both a rallying point and a guide for all activities undertaken by the Post.

1. Engage Stakeholders

Invite members, veterans, and community partners to participate in discussions about the Post's purpose and aspirations. Gather input through meetings, surveys, or informal conversations to ensure a wide range of perspectives are considered.

2. Identify Core Values and Goals

List the foundational values, such as patriotism, service, fellowship, advocacy, and civic responsibility. Discuss the Post's principal goals – whether it's supporting veterans' rights, strengthening community ties, honoring military service, or providing outreach programs.

3. Define the Post's Unique Role

Reflect on what distinguishes your Post from others – perhaps a focus on youth programs, a commitment to historic preservation, or a tradition of community events. Incorporate these distinctive qualities to personalize the mission statement.

(continued)

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Executive Director
William West

Editor
G. Adams

Send all correspondence
and submissions to:
The Legion Times
PO Box 140527
Austin, TX 78714
T: 512.472.4138
F: 512.472.0603

www.txlegion.org

E-mail: times@txlegion.org

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4. Draft and Refine the Statement

Use clear, concise language that is easy to remember and inspires pride. Paraphrase or build on statements like: "Our mission is to serve veterans, their families, and our community by fostering patriotism, honoring military service, and supporting those who have served our nation." Ensure the statement covers advocacy, fellowship, and legacy for future generations.

5. Review and Adopt

Share the draft statement with members and leadership for feedback. Revise as necessary, then formally adopt the mission statement. Display it prominently — in newsletters, meetings, and on the Post's website — to reinforce its importance.

By following these steps, your American Legion Post can create a mission statement that truly embodies its purpose, guiding its actions and strengthening its commitment to veterans and the community.

Now for an example from Post 667 in the 20th District:

Vision Statement

"To be the heart of Universal City and Randolph AFB's community — honoring service, fostering unity, and inspiring future generations to carry forward the legacy of American veterans."

Mission Statement

"American Legion Post 667 exists to support veterans, military families, and our community through service, remembrance, and fellowship. We preserve tradition while embracing innovation, ensuring every member feels valued, connected, and empowered to make a difference."

Strategic Objectives

1. Honor & Remembrance

- Uphold ceremonies, memorials, and traditions that recognize the sacrifices of veterans.
- Create inclusive events that blend nostalgia with modern touches to engage all generations.

2. Membership Growth & Engagement

- Expand outreach to younger veterans and active-duty personnel.
- Continue activities and senior-friendly programs to keep members connected.

3. Community Impact

- Partner with local schools, organizations, and businesses to strengthen civic pride.
- Lead charitable initiatives that support military families and underserved neighbors.

4. Financial Sustainability

- Secure sponsorships through Project NEXT50 for upgrades necessary for mission sustainability.
- Expand revenue while continuing to monitor costs to create a sustainable operating budget.

Rich Huntley
Department Commander

 AMERICAN
LEGION

 BE THE ONE

2025-2026 DEPARTMENT OFFICERS

Richard Huntley, DEPARTMENT COMMANDER

John Hince, National Executive Committeeman
Bret Watson, Alternate National Executive Committeeman
Tom Marty, Immediate Past Department Commander
William West, Department Adjutant
Jimmy Mitchell, Department Chaplain
Gary Sanders, Department Treasurer
William Wallace, Department Judge Advocate
Shirley Platt, Department Historian
Jerry Tatman, Department Sergeant-at-Arms
Michael Wheeler, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Michael Simon, Director of Internal Affairs
Michael Lacy, Department Service Officer
Ron Peterson, Department Service Officer
Allen Sharp, Department Service Officer

DEPARTMENT VICE COMMANDERS

Andy Lowen, 1st Division
Steve Kim, 2nd Division
Jose Lopez, 3rd Division
Chris Holt, 4th Division

DISTRICT COMMANDERS

Johnny Norris, 1st District Commander
Cheryl Williams, 2nd District Commander
Kim McCarthy, 3rd District Commander
Michael Olivarez, 4th District Commander
Tynetta Runnels, 5th District Commander
Russ Foster, 6th District Commander
Terry Batson, 7th District Commander
Irene Infante, 8th District Commander
Deborah Waldrop, 9th District Commander
Phillip Kelly, 10th District Commander
John Potts, 11th District Commander
Chad Page, 12th District Commander
Chris Garcia, 13th District Commander
Gea Clausier, 14th District Commander
Edward Villafranca, 15th District Commander
Ramon Montano, 16th District Commander
Chris Grantham, 17th District Commander
Reyna Ruiz, 18th District Commander
Kevin Bright, 19th District Commander
Eric Mayer, 20th District Commander
Don Gray, 21st District Commander
Robert Harvey, 22nd District Commander
Jose Gamez, 23rd District Commander

ARTICLE SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Do you have an article or news announcement to share with the rest of the Department of Texas? If so, please follow these guidelines for submissions.

- Submit text in Word format (.doc, .docx) or as a text file (.txt or .rtf) or as a PDF. ONE ARTICLE PER EMAIL PLEASE.
- The ideal word count for our format is 200 - 500 words (maximum), with no double spacing.
- Give your article a TITLE! Create a HEADLINE and save with a proper file name so we can easily recognize it.
- Tell us who the author is, whether it's you or if you are just forwarding it to us.
- Attach any photos or artwork for your article separately in your email. DO NOT embed them in your Word or PDF file. Larger photos are best, and high resolution JPG files of 300 dpi or better are preferred. Please name these files accordingly so we can track them along with your article.

- Let us know in your e-mail or Word doc of any photo captions, the name of the photographer, etc. Please note that due to spacing and layout requirements, we may not be able to use every photo or caption submitted (preferably 2 - 3 photos per article).
- Please spell check everything! Especially people's names, web addresses, etc. We do our best to catch typos, and make corrections, but sometimes they still slip by. You can help us greatly by simply running the spell check function in your word processing software.
- We publish on our Website on the FIRST FRIDAY of the Month, with few exceptions. E-mail everything directly to times@txlegion.org by the 20th of every month, for it to appear in the *following* issue. Submissions received after the 20th will be considered, but may be held over or discarded due to space and layout restrictions.

We hope you enjoy this issue, and hope you continue to help us grow and improve The Legion Times!

Future Marines Take Oath of Enlistment During History Rooftop Oath Ceremony

Story and photos by Legionnaire Burrell Parmer, Texas American Legion Press Association

SAN ANTONIO – (Feb. 21, 2026) – Legionnaires of the 20th District, Marines, veterans, government officials and family members of the Weslaco 8 gathered on the rooftop of 118 Broadway Street to witness The Rooftop Oath Ceremony hosted by the Conversation of the Greatest Generation (COGG).

The program began with opening remarks from WWII Historian Dennis Blocker II followed by prayer, presentation of Colors, Pledge of Allegiance, and National Anthem by the Weslaco Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps. Numerous proclamations were read by city officials of San Antonio, Weslaco, Bexar County, and Texas House District 39.

“Today, we honor these 13 Marines, hence renewing our commitment to the values they represented,” said Blocker to more than 200 guests in attendance. “The story of the 13 is more than a story of war. It is a story of hometown heroes of ordinary individuals whose service and legacy continues to inspire us to stand united and to never take freedom for granted. Let us remember their courage, their honor and their sacrifice.”

Commemorative addresses were delivered by U.S. Marine Corps Recruiting Station San Antonio Commanding Officer Maj. Dylan Reidell and Historian Andrew Booher.

Afterwards, Reidell sworn in 13 future Marines mirroring the induction ceremony held on the same rooftop on Feb. 18, 1943.

One of Marines, one of the Weslaco 8 who was sworn in on that day, was Cpl. Harlon H. Block, one of the Marines who assisted in the second flag raising on Mt. Suribachi on Feb. 23, 1945.

The act, which was captured in a photograph that would become one of the most iconic and reproduced images in American history, would come to symbolize the sacrifice, courage, camaraderie, and enduring spirit of the Marines and those who answer the call to serve. Unfortunately, Block was killed in action on Iwo Jima two weeks later.

After remarks by COGG President Jeff Copsetta, he and Reidell unveiled two plaques honoring the 13 who were inducted into the Marine Corps on the rooftop in 1943 and the historic picture of the flag raising on Iwo Jima.

The ceremony concluded with the singing of Anchors Aweigh and the Marine Hymn, followed by a flyover of WWII aircraft.

Following the ceremony, attendees were invited to place rank insignia and other items onto a cedar-made memorial cross.

(photos continued)



World War II Historian Dennis Blocker II welcomes more than 200 guests and family members of the Weslaco 8 to The Rooftop Oath Ceremony



Legionnaire and retired U.S. Marine Maj. Gen. Juan Ayala, director of the City of San Antonio Military and Veterans Affairs, delivers a proclamation on behalf of the mayor during The Rooftop Oath Ceremony hosted by the Conversation of the Greatest Generation on the rooftop of 118 Broadway Street



Jeff Copsetta, president of the Conversation of the Greatest Generation (COGG) and U.S. Marine Maj. Dylan Reidell, commanding officer, Recruiting Station San Antonio, unveil two plaques honoring the 13 who were inducted into the Marine Corps on the rooftop in 1943 and the historic picture of the flag raising on Iwo Jima



Precinct 3 Commissioner and U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Lt. Col. Grant Moody delivers a proclamation on behalf of Bexar County Commissioners Court



U.S. Marine Corps Recruiting Station San Antonio Commanding Officer Maj. Dylan Reidell administers the oath of enlistment to 13 future Marines



Sgt. Maj. Harold G. Overstreet, the 12th Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps, was one of the special guests attending The Rooftop Oath Ceremony



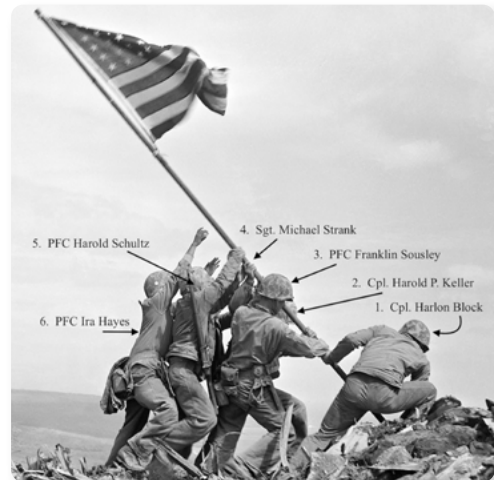
Legionnaire and retired U.S. Marine Maj. Gen. Juan Ayala, director of the City of San Antonio Military and Veterans Affairs, pins his rank insignia on a cedar-made memorial cross during The Rooftop Oath Ceremony



Harlon Block, pictured fourth from the right, was one of the 13 Marines who enlisted on the rooftop of 118 Broadway Street on Feb. 18, 1943. He was one of the Marines who assisted in the second flag raising on Mt. Suribachi on Feb. 23, 1945. The act, which was captured in a photograph that would become one of the most iconic and reproduced images in American history, would come to symbolize the sacrifice, courage, camaraderie, and enduring spirit of the Marines and those who answer the call to serve. Unfortunately, Block was killed in action on Iwo Jima two weeks later



Third Division Vice Commander Burrell Parmer of Fred Brock American Legion Post 828 with Business and Professional Post 10 Legionnaires Mike McCuan, Past Commander Sharlene McCuan and Post Commander Humberto Quintanilla at the conclusion of The Rooftop Oath Ceremony



Joe Rosenthal's photograph of the flag raising on Mount Suribachi at the southern tip of the island of Iwo Jima, taken on Feb. 23, 1945, is among the most recognized images from World War II.

American Legion History — The Merci Boxcar

Submitted by Shirley Platt, Department of Texas Historian

During the year 1949 the Government of France sent a train of their boxcars to the United States, each loaded with gifts as a token of their appreciation and in thanks for our effort in the great war. This train toured the country and then one car was given to each state and these were set up as shrines in Memory of the great war and of our assistance to the Government of France.

The Merci Boxcar designated for Texas was first set up at Camp Mabry. Later the Merci Boxcar was moved to the grounds of Travis Post No. 76, of the American Legion.

On February 18-19, 1950 the Forty and Eight made the first Merci Boxcar Pilgrimage, which was held on the grounds of Camp Mabry. To this pilgrimage 20 Voitures of the Forty and Eight sent more than 100 voyagers. This boxcar is the one so well remembered by all World War One veterans because of the prominently displayed sign, "Forty Men or Eight Horses." The Grande Voiture of Texas took charge of this valuable relic and will maintain it as a permanent shrine.

Extracted from: The History of The American Legion Department of Texas Vol II, 1949-1969, Library of Congress No. 76-18296.

What Does a Chaplain Do?

by Brad Henderson, Chaplain, Detachment of Texas, Sons of the American Legion

A Chaplain is a lay person that gives spiritual support and guidance to individuals in time of need, helping to promote healing, wholeness, and a sense of purpose and meaning in life.

We are "the hands and feet of Jesus", working beyond the walls of a church. Chaplains are found in the military, in industry, and with first responders. They serve those in prisons, hospitals, and in hospice care. Chaplains serve people of all faiths, and those with no faith at all.

Legion Family Chaplains may, in fact, be the only minister a veteran will ever know.

Legion Family Chaplains walk a tightrope. On one hand, we are forbidden from persuading a person to join our individual faith. At the same time, we have a twofold mission: to help Legionnaires and others grow in their relationships with God and one another, and to minister to people wherever there is a need.

"Hey, Chaplain – all you gotta do is send a card, right?"

Our Chaplains provide spiritual leadership to the post. They communicate with the officers, members, and community organizations. They are present at Legion events. Chaplains participate in special services, holiday events, and building dedications. They visit the ill, the bereaved, shut-ins, the disabled, veterans in nursing homes, in hospital and hospice care.

Ordained Chaplains may officiate baptisms, weddings, and funerals. Chaplains meet people "where they are", often on the worst day of their lives. We offer "The Ministry of Presence", hope, and the power of prayer. Chaplains assist those who are traumatized, and those who are grieving. Many Chaplains serve on their post Honor Guard, rendering honors to fallen veterans. They may also prepare Certificates of Transfer to the Post or Squadron Everlasting and present them to the family.

Oh – Chaplains also make phone calls and send emails and cards to those ill, injured, and those recovering from surgery.

Serving as a Chaplain is for me a ministry; and the most rewarding thing that a person can do.

"Also, I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?'

Then I said, "Here am I. Send me." (Isaiah 6:8)

Four Chaplains Ceremony Held at William M. Randolph Post 593 - Converse, TX

Submitted by Shirley Platt, Post 593

Prior to our February 4th General Membership meeting, Post 593 Chaplain and Past Detachment Commander George Alva held the Four Chaplains Ceremony at the Post.

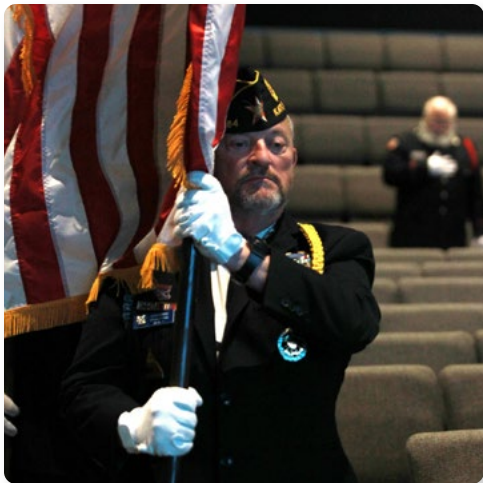
Members from the four families participated in reading about each of the Chaplains, the draping of their individual religious symbols, and lighting of a candle and placement of a rose for each.

This is a very somber and moving ceremony that all Legionnaires should witness.



Post 164 Four Chaplains Ceremony

Submitted by Sandy Krum, Commander, Post 164



On February 7th American Legion Auxiliary Unit 164 and Post 164 held our annual Four Chaplains Ceremony. The sacrifice of the Chaplains Goode, Fox, Washington and Poling were remembered, and the Four Chaplains Foundation recognized two people from the area who's lives exemplify the same type of sacrifice and dedication to their fellow man.

Harris County Deputy Sheriff Lt. Aaron Brown was recognized for his work with a woman who was threatening to take her own life while sitting in the middle of traffic on the highway.

Mr. Jack Crawford was recognized for his support of veterans primarily at the area VA facilities. Mr. Crawford continues to raise funds and make sure that the items our veterans need to make their stay in a VA facility as comfortable as possible.

Congratulations to these two examples of giving back to the community.

Attendance was open to the public and several groups were represented.

Colors were presented by the combined honor guard from Post 164 and VFW Post 9182.

Recruiting Reaps Rewards

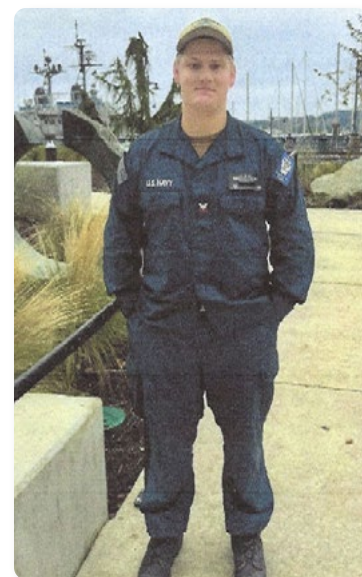
Submitted by Philip F. Shortino, Adjutant, Post 145

American Legion Post 145 Celina Texas continues to identify new opportunities to expand its visibility throughout the community and at the same time increase its membership rolls. These compatible goals were most recently reflected in the Post's initiative to broaden the recruiting activities to emphasize to interested veterans that membership is also open to those military personnel who are currently serving on active duty.

When Post 145 established a partnership with the local Yellow Rose – TX20 Chapter of the Blue Star Mothers of America, Inc., I was introduced to Cooper Shaff, who was home on leave from the Navy. Cooper was given a brief overview of the active projects and activities that our Post conducts in support of and service to our active-duty personnel, our veterans, local community residents, and students.

Cooper signed up with Post 145 and we now boast our first active-duty member! Very recently, Cooper re-enlisted for a second 4-year hitch in the Navy. Cooper currently holds the rank as Torpedoman's Mate Second Class (TM2), and is stationed in Bremerton, Washington on board the USS Pennsylvania. Thus far, albeit early in his service career, Cooper has participated in 3 Deployments, 1 Extended Refit Period, and 1 Sea Trials Period. TM2 Shaff has been awarded 3 Navy Marine Corps Achievement Medals and has twice received Admiral's Letters of Commendation. Cooper has crossed the International Dateline ('Golden Dragon') and has also crossed the Equator ('Shellback').

To acknowledge Cooper's continuing commitment of service to his country, STELZER, STALLCUP, HUTCHINGS, BURKS AMERICAN LEGION POST 145, CELINA, TEXAS has paid Cooper's 2026 annual Post 145 membership dues on his behalf. As proud as the members of Post 145 are of Cooper, it is a safe bet that his Family is even prouder of him and all he has accomplished!



Cooper Shaff, TM2, USN
American Legion Post 145, Celina, TX

Post 460 February Activities

Submitted by Abigail Figueroa, Commander, Post 460

As the Castroville Area Chamber of Commerce ended its February 5th membership meeting/luncheon at the Weiss-Wurzbach American Legion Post 460, Commander Abigail Figueroa led a special ceremony to observe Four Chaplains Day.

For decades, on or around February 3rd the American Legion Family nationwide remember Four Chaplains Day with services that pay tribute to the courageous chaplains and the brave young men who lost their lives on that fateful night of the sinking of the U.S. Army transport ship Dorchester on February 3, 1943.

In recognition of Four Chaplains Day, Post 460 displayed a table showcasing the four Army Chaplains, Reverend George Fox, Methodist, Rabbi Alexander Goode, Jewish Rabbi, Reverend Clark Poling, Dutch Reformed, and Father John Washington, Roman Catholic, who sacrificed their lives when the Dorchester ship tragically sank on Feb 3, 1943.

Post 460 thought it fitting to recognize the clergy present at the luncheon, those who serve as our shepherds or fishermen. Many thanks and blessings to the clergy that attended the Chamber Luncheon on Wednesday, Feb 5th. Post 460 Chaplain Butch Naegelin offered a special prayer to honor the clergy.

Those that attended were (from left to right) Pastor Allen Stone, Gateway Fellowship Church West, Post 460 Chaplain Butch Naegelin, Pastor Mitch Cobb, Calvary Friendship Church and Commander Abigail Figueroa.



Weiss-Wurzbach American Legion Post 460 was busy out in the community again raising funds through our annual raffle.

On Saturday, February 7th, Post 460 Commander Abigail Figueroa, Post Sergeant at Arms Stan Boncek and Post Chaplain Butch Naegelin were outside a local business selling raffle tickets.

This annual event is the biggest fundraiser for the Post. Drawing for the 56 raffle prizes will be held on Sunday, March 15th. Along with the raffle will be a brisket plate sale.

Come join us for a good lunch, an opportunity to win big, and for some great camaraderie.

American Legion Delegation Base Assessment, Servicemember Experience Visit to JBSA-Fort Sam Houston

Story and photos by Steven B. Brooks, The American Legion



SAN ANTONIO (Feb. 11-12, 2026) – When The American Legion planned to make a Base Assessment and Servicemember Experience (BASE) visit to Joint Base San Antonio (JBSA)-Fort Sam Houston and wanted to include Department of Texas Legionnaires, Eric Mayer wanted to be included.

Not only is JBSA in the department's 20th District, of which Mayer is the commander, but the member of American Legion Post 10 in San Antonio also has a personal connection to the base.

“No. 1, this is in my backyard,” Mayer said. “When you look at the installations in San Antonio, this is very much our family. We have a lot of members who were part of these installations, who need the services they provide, and I have a hard time finding someone who hasn't gotten care at BAMC (Brooke Army Medical Center) or one of the clinics.”

Include Mayer in the latter category. He spent about 30 days as an inpatient getting treatment for Non-Hodgkins lymphoma – including a bone marrow transplant – six months in intense chemotherapy and three years of maintenance. He's now in remission, and his experience at BAMC is why he wants to be a part of solutions at the base.

“It is personal for me,” Mayer said. “My wife is a retired nurse colonel, and she retired here, so it's personal for her, too. It's just like the Legion is personal for me.”

Mayer was part of the American Legion delegation that visited JBSA-Fort Sam Houston Feb. 10–12 for the visit. The BASE program was created in 2022 to address quality-of-life matters that affect servicemembers and their families. Modeled after the longstanding American Legion System Worth Saving program, the mission of BASE is to work with the Department of Defense to identify strategies that will ensure a strong quality of life for servicemembers and their families.

Joining Mayer on the visit were American Legion Department of Texas Commander Richard Huntley and Department Adjutant Bill West. Coordinating the visit and also participating were American Legion National Security Division Director Sean Counihan and Joshua Crisostomo, an American Legion policy analyst and the BASE program manager.

Mayer said the BASE program is important because, “It is easy for us to focus on just veterans. But having that connection with (active-duty personnel), them understanding we're there for them, us understanding where we've been and how important that is – that connection is priceless to maintain.”

Huntley, who spent most of his 30 years in the U.S. Marine Corps as a pilot, stressed to each base employee he spoke to that he wanted to take what they felt were their biggest needs and share them with members of the Texas congressional delegation when he's in the nation's capital in a little more than a week for the organization's annual Washington Conference. “That's our job,” he said. “We're here to collect the facts so we can go back and get you what you need.”

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A member of S. Mike Lacy American Legion Post No. 554 in League City, Huntley said he wanted to be part of the BASE visit “to get a firsthand look at what the program is doing. To see how it’s actually able to gather its information. And, ultimately, see how that information is being transmitted out to everybody.”

He called the tour of Fort Sam Houston “eye-opening. Seeing the amount of effort that everybody puts in... providing a community that is good for our (servicemembers) and their families and then seeing some of the shortcomings that we need to address and be aware of.”

The group of Legionnaires started the visit with a briefing from JBSA Chief of Staff Mark Tharp, who spent 20-plus years in the Air Force before taking on civilian roles at the base. He gave some pretty impressive statistics about JBSA, including:

- The entire base spanning more than 45,000 acres.
- A personnel count of more than 88,000 servicemembers, civilian worker contractors and daily military personnel undergoing some sort of training on the base.
- The 502nd Air Base Wing, the host wing for JBSA, working with 267 mission partners.

Tharp has worked at JBSA since its inception in 2010, when it consolidated Fort Sam Houston with Air Force Bases Lackland and Randolph. “It’s been a learning curve,” he said. “It’s been interesting to see it grow and morph into what it is today. When you take three large, dynamic bases... and call them one big wing... that’s a big lift to do that. It’s not only the process and logistics of it, but also the culture of trying to incorporate the Army into what is an Air Force-led organization. But I think we’re in a good place now.”

A tour of Fort Sam Houston that included multiple stops followed the briefing. The tour provided an opportunity to both learn about what Fort Sam Houston has to offer and where issues exist.

- Housing. Tours of both the fort’s dorms and privatized housing were included, as was a look at a sample home for military families displaced because of renovations or property damage.
- Childcare/youth programs. The Legion delegation was provided a tour of the base’s main Child Development Center (CDC). A larger CDC is in the process of being constructed, which will have the capacity to provide space for 300 children. “JBSA has done a very good job at advocating and providing all the statistics for a new for childcare,” said Matt Kuhl with Fort Sam Houston Child & Youth Programs. “It’s a big expansion for us.”
- Transition assistance. Via the Army’s Transition Assistance Program (TAP), Fort Sam Houston provides many services to assist those preparing to leave the military, including transition coaches, financial counseling and access to U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs’ Veteran Readiness & Employment staff. The base also hosts monthly Employer Day events, which allow military personnel to connect face to face with prospective employers from the area. Eleven of those events are with a single employer, while the 12th includes multiple employers in a job fair atmosphere. During the TAP spot, the BASE delegation met with former Department of Labor employee Donna Balderston, a life member of American Legion Post 157 in Bandera, Texas, and currently an ombudsman for the Employer Support of the Guard and the Reserve. Balderston used part of the

(continued)

conversation to praise The American Legion. “You all do so much,” she said. “Everything that you are doing is fabulous. It really touches a lot of servicemembers and their families.”

- Physical fitness facilities. A stop at the 24/7 Jimmy Brought Fitness Center allowed the delegation to tour the full basketball courts, free and machine weight rooms and more.
- Brooke Army Medical Center (BAMC). The visit also included a tour of BAMC, the largest and most robust military health-care organization within the Department of Defense (DoD). With between 8,500 and 9,000 employees – 60 percent civilian, 40 percent military – BAMC provides care for more than 240,000 military beneficiaries in the area. The center also serves as a world-class burn center, the only DoD Level 1 trauma center, four Fisher Houses and the Center for the Intrepid, whose state-of-the-art technologies designed are used for rehabilitation, research, education and training.

Toward the end of Wednesday’s tour, the Legion delegation had an opportunity to spend time with a military spouse, who shared some of her concerns about Fort Sam Houston. Those included a lack of security on parts of the base where fencing can easily be climbed, base civilian security forces being drawn from the base by higher paying jobs, a lack of on-base activities for older military children, food insecurity for some families and military families not having a voice when it comes to housing issues.



She also expressed frustration with repairs being delayed among JBSA’s three bases because of shared resources. She referred to all three installations working from the “same bucket.” Base families living in privatized housing also saw a decrease in their Base Allowance for Housing (BAH) by 2 percent this year.

During an exit briefing with Lt. Col. Misty White, JBSA’s Director of Public Affairs, Crisostomo said the visit gave the delegation “a lot of data to work with. Much more than we anticipated, which is helpful. Not only does this data enable us to effectively advocate for quality-of-life challenges that JBSA faces, it also provides us with best practices that could be shared across the force.



“What stuck out to me the most was how much everyone cared for about what they are doing, which was very warming to see. Everyone was very positive. Many of the mission partners whom we’ve spoken with have been in their jobs for many years – in some cases decades – which is a testament to their commitment to serving servicemembers and military families.”

Mayer said the visit “was a reminder of how complex every military installation is. No matter how small they are, the amount of moving parts that go into having a well-run installation is overwhelming. It’s amazing to me that anyone can wrap their mind around it.

He came away impressed with the facility but also wanting to be able to assist with any potential shortcomings. “The housing looks like they really take their job seriously,” Mayer said. “I love seeing the passion that was displayed by the (Child Development Center) and them really wanting to help families. That’s personal for me. Also, there are certain aspects that I want to see improved. But that’s why we’re here: to help with those issues.”

Post 174's Troop 151 Conducts Winter Court of Honor

Submitted by BJ MacMillan, Adjutant, Post 174



On February 10th, Troop 151, chartered by Post 174, conducted their Winter Court of Honor. They had two Scouts recognized for earning Eagle Scout rank. One of the Eagle Scout's fathers is a member of Post 174. Twenty-six scouts received ninety-eight merit badges mostly earned at winter camp. In addition, the Troop Scout of the Year and 2025 Leadership Awards were presented. One of the parents and his scout made a presentation to the Scoutmaster for all he does for the Scouts, ensuring a solid program of advancement and adventure. The Troop always celebrates the accomplishments with a pot-luck dinner. It was an outstanding evening.



Post 174's Troop 1096 Working on Cycling Merit Badge

For the past month, Troop 1096 chartered by Post 174, has been working on the Cycling Merit Badge. They spent meeting time covering repair, adjustment of chains, brakes, and lubrication. The Scouts covered safety rules, laws, and checked fit of their helmets. They have spent two Saturday's conducting cycling treks working up to the required 50-mile ride.



Post 174 Conducts 3rd Annual Chili Cookoff

Submitted by Cathy Kohn, Chaplain, Post 174

Post 174 conducted our 3rd Annual Chili Cookoff this month with entries in 2 categories: “beans” and “no beans”. We had 6 competitors so by the time the judges finished their deliberations they were quite satisfied and did not need dessert! All competitors were from our Post and many of our Auxiliary members chipped in with cornbread and fixins. With prayers on her side, our Chaplain Cathy Kohn won the Chili with beans category, her 2nd win over the last 3 years. She said her Vietnam Veteran Dad is a 5th generation Texan from The Valley and he has always put beans in his chili.

If you didn't know, there is a huge debate in Texas about whether real Texas Chili is made with beans or without. There is also the debate on what type of beans: Kidney or Pinto. Cathy used Pinto in line with her family's South Texas heritage. The winner of the no beans category was the first-time entry for Vietnam Veteran Ed Wesley originally of Texas City, TX so the beans/no beans debate continues! His delicious recipe was a hit for judges and members alike.

While the judging commenced, the Legion and Auxiliary members were able to enjoy all the chili as everyone's crockpots were extra large – enough to feed an Army (and Navy, Marines, Air Force, Coast Guard, Space Force).

The winners were presented with certificates and a \$50 gift card to HEB from Commander Amery Vasso and Adjutant BJ MacMillan. We are already looking forward to next year's competition!



Post 174's Pack 151 and Pack 1096 Conduct Pinewood Derby

Submitted by BJ MacMillan, Adjutant, Post 174

On January 31st, Pack 151 and Pack 1096, both chartered by Post 174, conducted their annual Pinewood Derby. The Cub Scouts had a grand time watching all the cars running on the track. There were lots of outstanding car designs from Sonic, Batman, patriotic, an ice cream sandwich among other cool designs.

Post 174 members served as judges for the design contest. This was our new Pack 1096's first pinewood derby. One of Pack 1096 Cub's cars set a record for the track!

This event is one the Post members look forward to annually.



Post 174's New Pack 1096 Presents First Awards

Pack 1096, chartered by Post 174, conducted their first award ceremony. All the active Cub Scouts earned their rank Bobcat belt loop, their rank Citizenship belt loop, and their Founder Unit Patch for their Cub Scout shirt. The new Pack is working on their Outdoor belt loops now and have a hike planned in March.

They have recruiting events and fundraisers planned for the next few months. Their two Den Chiefs from Troop 1096 are helping the Cubs complete requirements and ensuring the Cubs have fun.

Post 472 250th Anniversary of Army, Navy, and Marine Corps Military Ball

Submitted by Natividad Corona



On November 8, 2025, American Legion Harrisburg Post 472 celebrated the 250th Anniversary of the United States Army, Navy and Marine Corps with a Military Ball at River Forest Event Center in Houston Texas. 230 people showed up, of which 203 were paid ticket holders. Dinner was served from 6:00pm to 7:30pm. Next was the presentation by the Color Guard. Afterwards the speakers were introduced.

Commander Juan Ponce De Leon was the Master of Ceremony for the event. He introduced our three speakers, each representing a different branch of the military in the following order.

1. Navy Commander Alan Munoz (retired) spoke of his service in detail of all his duty stations, and of the opportunities open to Hispanics and a college education. He encourages young men and women to enlist in the U. S. Navy.
2. Army Major General Rick Noreiga (retired) spoke of his life in the military. He spoke of opportunities afforded to him and obtaining a college education. He is currently employed with the Department of Homeland Security. He too encourages young men and women to choose Army for enlistment. He also said not to forget our veterans.
3. Marine Lt. Colonel Robert "Hammer" Glover (retired) spoke about his Afghanistan experiences and life in the Marine Corps. Impassionate speech with no notes about his interaction with Afghan military and civilians. Praised his wife for being his partner through all his deployments. Do not forget our veterans but honor our men and women in uniform.

Next, the oldest and youngest veteran of each branch of the military brought up their military decorated cake, served to the guest speaker representing that branch of the military.

1. U. S. Army represented by Mr. Andrew Espinoza and a young Army man were the first to perform the custom of eating Army decorated cake and giving cake to Major General Rick Noreiga.
2. U. S. Navy represented by A J Benevidez and young Navy man were next to perform the custom of eating Navy decorated cake and giving cake to Commander Alan Munoz.
3. U. S. Marine Corps represented by Charles Salinas and young Marine were next to perform the custom of eating Marine Corps decorated cake and giving cake to Marine Lt. Colonel Robert "Hammer" Glover.

The dance started after the cake event and continued until midnight.

November 11, 2025, a Veterans Day celebration at Harrisburg Post 472. It was the most attended Veterans Day in our history. The Military Ball is what drove the attendance. The day started with our Color Guard. The highlight of the day was the posters with a picture of veterans before they left for Vietnam and a picture showing him today. The before and after event was Eddie Carrion's idea.

The Color Guard later visited St. Dominic Village Veterans Day Social, an assisted living community, and resented the colors for the veterans living there.

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