

THE 1889 LAND RUN



DEPARTMENT
OF
OKLAHOMA



American Legion Newsletter

50th Edition, September 1, 2026

Department Commander



Hello Legionnaires!!

Each of you are incredible Veterans. You continue to amaze me with the positive attributes that you each bring to your community. The service you provide to other Veterans and your community is invaluable. Please keep doing what you do best.

I have been fortunate to visit some of the Posts this last month. It is great to hear about the different activities that each of them have been involved in. I enjoy visiting with the members of the Posts and hearing about their individual stories.

The membership goal that I would like to see our Department reach is 12,000. At this time, we are at 5,554. That is not quite halfway. We need to reach 6,000 by September 5th. That will hit the 50% goal for National. Let's continue to show National that we are moving forward.

The National Membership meeting held early in August was productive. There were a lot of good ideas that were exchanged between Departments. I know that we struggle somewhat with retention, but that seems to be a common thread between all Departments. It would be great if we could stop the loss of current members. Try to get your members involved in something within your Post and community.

With all the good that I am seeing throughout the Department, there is unfortunately a downside in the passing of some of our members. My Post lost two WWII Veterans recently, and our Department lost a Past Department Commander. The Legion Riders also lost a Rider from Kansas during the 2026 Legacy Ride. We are going to experience these types of losses. Remember that we can reach out to our Brothers and Sisters in the American Legion for support and comfort when needed.

There are many of us who are preparing to attend the National Convention in Kentucky. This will be another time to interact with Veterans from across this great nation. May everyone arrive safely, experience good comradeship, and have a safe journey home.

I recently held the first Senior Leadership Meeting. Thank you to Mustang Post 353, for coordinating the Mustang Community Center for our meeting. It was well attended by several members and staff. Multiple discussions were held regarding various issues or concerns. The next Senior Leadership Meeting will be held September 15th at 1000 at Post 88 in Norman, OK. You are welcome to attend.

The next DEC meeting is scheduled for October 10th at 1000. Additional information will be posted on the Department webpage when available.

Thank you again for everything you do.

"Be The One"

Legion Family moving forward as One.

Respectfully,
Shirley May
Commander
Dept of Oklahoma American Legion

Department Senior Vice Commander

VOICE OF THE SENIOR VICE

National Membership Meetings

Department Senior leadership attended the 2026 National Membership Meetings in Indianapolis, IN August 7-8. We had a great time learning, planning and networking!

We met with the National Command team to discuss 2027 Membership goals and improvements. Our 2027 Membership goal is 11,775. Commander May and I believe we can make 12,000 through improved retention as well as new members. We can do it!

We are kicking off our membership competition! Your team coaches are: Me, Commander May, VCE Karen Cruice, and VCW Wayne Flowers. We will be reaching out to our teams in the next couple of weeks!



Hanging out Matt Shuman National Commander Trailing Candidate!
#I'mWithSHU!

Proverbs 20:5 (ESV)

“The purpose in a man’s heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out.” You don’t have to be a Licensed or certified counselor, you just need to Be The One!

Be the One

To listen

To give a hug or a smile

To reach out

To save a life.

FYI:

1. I am leaving at 0400cdt in the morning for National Convention in Louisville, KY. I am looking forward to communicating not only our needs to National Leadership, but learning, networking and communicating with YOU what I learn!

2. I will have weekly office hours Wednesdays 1030-1530 at the Oklahoma Department HQ in Warr Acres. Come by and see me if you’re in town! I am available via email, text, and phone other days of the week.

3. I would LOVE to come see you at your post events! While I can openly attend public events without invitation, IAW our C&BL’s, I do need an invitation (email, letter, or text) to attend your post meetings and events—even an open invitation needs to be sent via email, letter or text. I will do my best to attend all I can!

4. In the next few months, I will be sending out a survey to capture data on members who leave the organization. Please prepare to help me capture this data, which will help us identify how to keep our members engaged. Clarifying instruction will publish when the survey is sent out.

5. Look for more to come as we start the race toward an outstanding membership year in the coming month, prepare for District Fall Meetings/Conferences, and begin planning for Midwinter and 2027 Summer Convention!

THANK YOU!

Patricia Mathes-Kerr

For God and Country!
Patricia Mathes-Kerr

Department Vice Commander – East

Greetings Legion Family,

As I write this month's article, I have just arrived in Louisville, Kentucky, for The American Legion National Convention. Once again, I have the honor of representing the Department of Oklahoma on the Veterans Employment and Education Commission. I look forward to hearing what is happening at the national level and, more importantly, bringing that information home so we can better serve Oklahoma's veterans. There is a great deal we can learn from one another when Legionnaires from across the country come together, and I hope to return with information and ideas that will benefit our Posts and our veterans.

Back home, our new Department leadership team is already hard at work. We are putting together a membership plan that I think will bring some fun and friendly competition to this year's membership drive. Each member of the leadership team will be working with Posts from across the state, encouraging them and helping them reach their goals. You will find more information about the contest later in this newsletter, and I am excited to see how our Posts respond to the challenge!

We are already seeing some great membership results on the East side. District 1A has reached its 50% membership goal, and we have Posts in every one of our eastern districts that have already reached 50%—well ahead of the September 9 target date. Congratulations to those Posts! To those still working toward that first goal, keep pushing. Membership is a team effort, and every renewal, every new member, and every conversation with a veteran makes a difference.

September also means the beginning of Fall District Conference season, which will certainly keep our Saturdays busy! I encourage Post officers and members to attend their District Conference. These meetings are an opportunity to hear what is happening throughout the Department, learn from other Posts, ask questions, share ideas, and get to know your District and Department leadership. Most importantly, they give us another opportunity to work together toward the same mission.

As we begin this new Legion year, I am excited about where we are headed. Whether it is membership, training, programs, or simply helping a Post work through a challenge, please

remember that I am here as a resource for you. I may not always have the answer immediately, but I will work to help you find it.

I look forward to seeing many of you as I travel across eastern Oklahoma during our Fall District Conferences. Until then, keep doing the great work you are doing in your Posts and communities.

Be The One

Karen Cruice

Vice Commander East

Department of Oklahoma

Department Vice Commander – West

Wayne Flowers, Vice-Commander West

Cdrpost273@yahoo.com

National Executive (NEC) Committeeman

Greetings Legionnaires!

Most of the Senior Leadership is attending the National Convention at time of this posting. We have 70 members of the American Legion Family attending. This is a new record for Legion Family attendance at a National Convention in the past several years.

National Commander Dan Wiley is still encouraging all American Legion members to go on Legion.org/action where you will be able to send a message to our two National Senators and your National Congressman from your District in Oklahoma where you live to support the Take Care of America's Veterans Act. You can also do this by joining grassroots.org and signing up for their newsletter.

We have an opportunity to usher in an era of sweeping legislation that will positively impact the lives of veterans and their families for generations to come. But we need your support — now is the time to make your voice heard! **Tell your senators to pass the Take Care of America's Veterans Act via our [VoterVoice portal](#).**

The House paused a vote on TCVA last week, but the Senate is considering this legislation that incorporates 62 veteran-friendly bills, including ones The American Legion has testified on in recent years including the Major Richard Star Act, Love Lives On Act and more.

This is our best opportunity to pass this critical legislation.

We have received some messages in opposition to TCVA from members. But the clear majority of direct feedback from our members has been strongly supportive of this legislation.

Right now, your senators are paying close attention to what they are hearing from you, their constituents. Tell them to pass TCVA through our VoterVoice email. It only takes a minute and you can send messages each day.

Throughout The American Legion's history we have successfully pushed through legislation that was unpopular at the time, but history shows was the right decision. The GI Bill is the prime example. But there were others including legislation related to Agent Orange.

I encourage you to visit [our special webpage](#) to familiarize yourself with TCAVA, what the legislation does and what it does not do. As you process the facts, ask yourself — will this massive package of legislation have a positive impact on the lives of veterans and their loved ones? And can I justify depriving future veterans of these benefits?

This is our moment to use our collective voices as the 1.4-million member strong American Legion to lead from the front, enact sweeping legislation and do what is right for the veterans of today and tomorrow.

Dan Wiley
National Commander

Let's get this done for the veterans in our State!

V/R

Charlie O'Leary
NEC DPT OKLAHOMA

American Legion Riders

Come Ride with Our Tribe

From the Director of the Department of Oklahoma American Legion Riders

The American Legion Riders across Oklahoma continue to grow—not only in numbers, but also in purpose, service and impact.

When this journey began, our Department had eight active chapters. Today, we have grown to **22 chapters across Oklahoma, with even more in the wings**. Every new chapter represents another group of Legion Family members ready to serve veterans, strengthen their communities and carry forward the mission of The American Legion.

Our message has remained simple: **Come ride with our tribe**. There is a place among us for anyone who believes in service, fellowship and helping others. We ride for the cause, not the applause.

In May, the Department of Oklahoma American Legion Riders completed our annual In-State Legacy Run. Riders traveled across Oklahoma, visiting American Legion posts, building relationships and raising approximately **\$20,600 for the Veterans & Children Foundation**. Every dollar raised represents hope for a veteran facing hardship and support for the children and families who need us most.

In August, Oklahoma Riders proudly participated in the 2026 American Legion National Legacy Run. Under the theme **“A Mission, a Ride, a Legacy,”** the journey took us from Lincoln, Nebraska, through Iowa, Illinois and Indiana, before concluding at Fort Knox, Kentucky.

By the conclusion of the ride, more than **\$550,000** had already been raised nationally—and that is far from the final total. Much more will be presented Tuesday at the American Legion National Convention as departments, chapters, posts and individual supporters turn in their checks. It is another powerful demonstration of what the Legion Family can accomplish when we unite behind a common mission.

This year's Legacy Run was also marked by tremendous heartbreak. Our friend and brother, **Michael “Mike” Haas**, lost his life following a motorcycle accident while serving as a Road Guard for the run. Mike was doing what American Legion Riders do—serving others and helping protect the riders around him.

Our hearts remain heavy. We continue to keep Mike's wife, Terri, his family, his friends and everyone who knew and loved him in our thoughts and prayers. His absence was deeply felt as we completed the mission, and his memory will remain part of the legacy we carry forward.

The road is not always easy, but our purpose remains strong. Across Oklahoma, our Riders are supporting veterans, helping military families, participating in patriotic ceremonies, strengthening American Legion posts and raising funds that change lives. The money matters, but the true measure of our success is found in the people we serve and the communities we bring together.

I could not be prouder of the men and women of the Department of Oklahoma American Legion Riders. Thank you to our chapters, our Legion Family, our donors, our community partners and everyone who supports our mission. Together, we are proving that it is not about the miles we ride, it is about the lives we touch along the way.

The mission continues, and the road ahead is filled with opportunity.

Come ride with our tribe.

For God, Country, and Service,

Brett "Skipper" Martin

Director

Department of Oklahoma American Legion Riders

Past Department Commander's Corner

Greetings Legionnaires!

The National Convention will be over soon by the time you read this. It was really a good feeling to see the 70+ Legion Family members in attendance.

The only way we can continue to grow as a Department is by getting involved and stepping up and doing something!

District meetings are coming up in both the Fall and Spring meetings. I would like everyone to try and attend your District's meetings and become involved.

The only way we can succeed in the future is working together now.

Let's do it!

Charlie O'Leary

PDC 2021-22

Meeting Our Communities Where They Are

The future of The American Legion depends on more than what happens inside our post homes. It depends on our willingness to step outside those doors, build new relationships and meet people where they are.

Community involvement does not always look the way it did 20 or 30 years ago. Today, it can mean supporting an online gaming event that connects veterans and young people in a

positive environment. It can mean partnering with the Girl Scouts for activities such as the **Besties Bash**, helping with a school program, supporting a blood drive or opening our doors to a local nonprofit.

Some may ask what online gaming or a Girl Scout event has to do with The American Legion. The answer is simple: **community, connection and service**.

Online gaming can provide veterans with fellowship and a way to stay connected, especially for those who may not feel comfortable attending a traditional post meeting. It can also give us an opportunity to reach younger veterans in a setting they already enjoy.

Working with the Girl Scouts, schools and youth organizations allows children and families to meet veterans and learn what service looks like. These partnerships give Legionnaires the opportunity to become mentors, share our values and demonstrate that The American Legion remains an active part of the community.

Not every event must be a membership drive or fundraiser. Sometimes our most important job is simply to show up, lend a hand and let people know that The American Legion cares. When the community sees us serving consistently, relationships are built, trust grows and membership opportunities follow naturally.

Every post should ask a few simple questions: Who in our community needs a partner? Where are younger veterans gathering? What organizations are already doing good work? How can our Legion Family help?

The answers may lead us into schools, gaming communities, Scout programs, food pantries, youth events, neighborhood celebrations or places we have never considered before. That is not moving away from our mission, it is finding new ways to accomplish it. Our communities are changing, and successful posts must be willing to grow with them. We should honor our traditions while remaining open to new ideas and new partnerships. If we want people to understand who we are, we must give them opportunities to see us serving.

The American Legion is at its best when the entire Legion Family works together; Legionnaires, Auxiliary members, Sons of The American Legion and American Legion Riders. Each part of our family brings different strengths, relationships and opportunities to serve.

Community involvement begins with a willingness to say, **“How can we help?”** It grows when we listen, participate and remain present long after the event is over.

Let us continue opening our doors, but more importantly, let us keep walking through them and going out into our communities. That is where relationships are built, where our mission becomes visible and where the future of The American Legion will be found. For God, Country, and Service,

Brett Martin

Past Department Commander

American Legion Department of Oklahoma

For **GOD**, Country, and Service,

Department Adjutant

CAM RAHN BAY AIR FORCE BASE- VIETNAM

REUNION - SEPTEMBER 10 - 13, 2026

"To all Cam Rahn Bay Air Base, Vietnam veterans. A reunion is now scheduled in Colorado Springs, CO for September 10 - 13, 2026". Information/registration can be found at: dicancook@gmail.com or on CRB

Web Site at: 2026 Cam Rahn Bay Reunion Colorado Springs.

Any questions contact information below.

Sincerely,

Jimmy M. White, Co-coordinator
Cam Rahn Bay Air Base Reunion
PO Box 334
Wadena, MN 56482-0334
218-631-3211

Oklahoma Veterans Commission & ODVA Update

Serving Oklahoma's Veterans with Accountability and Purpose

By Brett Martin

For two wonderful years, I had the honor of serving as Chairman of the Oklahoma Veterans Commission. I will always be grateful for the opportunity to serve Oklahoma's veterans and to work alongside the commissioners, leadership and employees of the Oklahoma Department of Veterans Affairs.

As with every organization, there comes a time for new leadership, new ideas and a new voice. I congratulate Daniel Orr on becoming chairman and wish him and the entire Commission continued success as they carry this important mission forward.

Although my service as chairman has concluded, I remain a member of the Oklahoma Veterans Commission. My term will expire in July 2027, and I will not seek reappointment. Until that time, I will continue fulfilling my responsibilities and advocating for the veterans of our great state.

The Oklahoma Veterans Commission provides oversight and direction for one of the largest veteran-care systems in Oklahoma. The Oklahoma Department of Veterans Affairs operates seven Veterans Homes with approximately 1,423 beds, nearly 1,700 employees and a budget of roughly \$224 million. Those numbers are significant, but behind every number is a veteran, a family and a story of service to our nation.

During my time as chairman, our focus centered on four principles: outcomes, ownership, oversight and urgency. These were more than words. They represented our responsibility to ask difficult questions, demand accountability and make decisions based on what was best for Oklahoma's veterans.

We saw meaningful progress across our Veterans Homes. Occupancy reached its highest level since 2019, with approximately 1,100 veterans receiving care. The Sallisaw Veterans Home successfully passed its federal recognition surveys, Norman maintained strong occupancy and Lawton continued improving as additional beds became available.

Just as importantly, ODVA remained financially in the black—a position the agency has maintained since 2019. Responsible financial stewardship is essential to preserving the services our veterans depend upon and ensuring that Oklahoma's system of care remains sustainable for future generations.

We also continued building the Oklahoma Veterans Foundation, a 501(c)(3) organization created to help bridge the gaps that federal and state funding cannot always cover. Government programs are important, but they cannot meet every need. Partnerships among veterans' organizations, businesses, communities and private citizens allow us to provide additional support where it matters most.

The progress we made did not happen because of one individual. It happened because commissioners, legislators, agency leaders, employees, veterans, families and advocates worked together. I am proud of what we accomplished, but we must never become complacent. There will always be more work to do, more veterans to reach and more opportunities to improve.

My time on the Oklahoma Veterans Commission has reinforced something I have always believed: leadership is not about holding a position—it is about accepting responsibility. We must remain willing to listen, ask hard questions, correct problems and act with urgency whenever the well-being of a veteran is at stake.

When my term concludes in July 2027, my service on the Commission will end, but my commitment to Oklahoma's veterans will not. I will continue serving, advocating and doing everything I can to help make Oklahoma the most veteran-friendly state in America.

At the heart of it all is a simple truth: service is our purpose, and every veteran matters.

For God, Country, and Service,
Brett

Brett Martin

Sons of the American Legion

Women Veterans Outreach

Contact Karen Ritter at RitterK4505@gmail.com or Tina Kilmer at TKilmer2003@gmail.com for suggestions.

Child Well-Being Foundation

Established in 1954, The American Legion Child Well-being Foundation is to contribute to the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being of children and youth; to aid progress in the field of child well-being; and to the sum total knowledge of children and youth through research, studies, surveys and projects, or in other ways, including but not limited to activities and programs benefiting the children and youth of this nation.

Banner Order Form

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1FktMBOH6aSTX8TXDstlW_FBhUsz1p3dI

American Legion Auxilliary



Auxiliary news.

Hello from Louisville, KY. As we are preparing for our National Convention the excitement here is very strong. Oklahoma has done an outstanding job in many areas. We have 2 winners in the National Poppy poster competition. We were recognized today for reaching over 100 percent in membership as a department. Did you know that our Oklahoma delegate won the Girls Nation Presidential election! There are more awards to come in the next few days. This is all due to your hard work and dedication to our Veterans. Thank you!

Membership is now open and the renewals are coming in. Remember we are running a PUFL membership drawing, all you have to do is pay your dues before October 31st and you will be entered to win!

Our District meetings will be starting soon, please make plans to attend. We would like at least one person from each unit to attend, bring a friend! We are looking forward to seeing you all and passing along more information about the convention and any changes.

Don't forget, our fall conference is also coming up October 17th and we have some great training planned for everyone. If there is a program you would like to learn more about please call Sherree and we will do our best to provide as much information as possible. We had such great fun last year and we hope this year will be even better.

Donna Snodgrass

Department President

American Legion Auxiliary Department of Oklahoma

Veterans Service Officer

National is currently reviewing the American Legion's VSO programs. It is a 5-year internal audit that is also being coordinated with the Office of General (the VA Lawyers) at DC.

All states are required to update and provide to National a current list of All the States' Accredited VSOs with today's criteria. There is NO "Grandfather" clause for the VA. Please call HQ with questions.

Jack Sikes Jsikesokamlvso@gmail.com
443-271-5545

American Legion Oklahoma Tool Box
<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1N7SEJNiLaggXafRX5XBSTkd2stJrhDhK?usp=sharing>

Legion News

AWARDS

Paul Ray: 405-921-5819 plainoldpaul@yahoo.com awards@mustangpost353.org

Membership



Welcome to The American Legion League!

Membership is a Team Sport

A new membership year is underway, and this year the Department of Oklahoma is bringing a little friendly competition to the field with The American Legion League!

Instead of our Department leadership simply watching the membership numbers from the sidelines, we're getting into the game.

Our four Department leaders will serve as Head Coaches, each with a balanced roster of Posts from across Oklahoma. Every team includes Posts from each of our five membership divisions, giving Posts of every size an opportunity to contribute to their team's success.

Meet the Head Coaches



Department Commander



Senior Vice Commander



Vice Commander East



Vice Commander West

Five Divisions — One Department

Heavyweight Division — 200+ members

Varsity Division — 100–199 members

JV Division — 51–99 members

Rookie Division — 26–50 members

Founders Division — 0–25 members

But here's the important part: this isn't just about which Post has the most members. The American Legion League is designed around coaching, mentoring, and improvement. Head Coaches will be working with their Posts throughout the membership year, encouraging them to reach National membership targets, recognize accomplishments, overcome challenges, and keep moving toward 100%.

When a Post succeeds, the entire team benefits.

Throughout the season, Posts will earn points by reaching membership milestones, and we'll add special challenges and opportunities to score bonus points along the way. We'll publish team standings so everyone can follow the race throughout the year.

And now it is time for our first game day...



GAME DAY #1 — OPENING KICKOFF

September 9 • 50%

Our Early Bird Kickoff is September 9, when Posts across Oklahoma will be working to reach the first National membership target of 50%.

Which team will come out of the locker room ready to play?

Which division will lead the way?

And which Head Coach will claim the top spot in our first standings?

The rosters are set. The coaches are ready. The season is underway.

Every Post. Every Member. One Team.

Let's build a stronger Department of Oklahoma together.

Be The One!

Karen Cruice

Department of Oklahoma

Vice Commander East

DD Form 214 Assistance

A great tool and often a quick turnaround to assist a Veteran or loved one request their DD-214. Quicker than snail mail, as soon as the following day.

[Help with a Federal Agency - Senator James Lankford](#)

Senator Lankford's reps in the Tulsa office work with the National Archives. They have been extremely helpful in requesting and following up with any documents needed.

Very self-explanatory when completing, although I will share, if you are not a direct family member, they will ask for a document from the next-of-kin; Driver's License, Birth Certificate, Marriage Certificate, etc., which is easy enough to follow-up with.

Department of Oklahoma Fundraising Committee

★ THE AMERICAN LEGION DEPARTMENT OF OKLAHOMA ★

AMERICAN LEGION **AMERICA'S**

250
1776 ★ 2026

CELEBRATING
250
YEARS
OF FREEDOM!

HONORING THE PAST.
SUPPORTING TODAY.
BUILDING TOMORROW.

Freedom Drawing

★ YOUR \$10 TICKET CAN HELP CHANGE LIVES! ★

TICKETS \$10 EACH

EVERY TICKET YOU BUY
SUPPORTS OKLAHOMA VETERANS

Funds raised help provide vital programs and services for veterans, military families, youth and communities across Oklahoma – Together, we can make a difference!

PROUDLY SUPPORTING OKLAHOMA VETERANS!

GRAND PRIZE \$3,000

★ 10 CASH PRIZES! ★
\$10,000 TOTAL IN CASH PRIZES!

1 GRAND PRIZE \$3,000	4 4TH PRIZE \$750	7 7TH PRIZE \$750
2 2ND PRIZE \$1,500	5 5TH PRIZE \$750	8 8TH PRIZE \$500
3 3RD PRIZE \$1,000	6 6TH PRIZE \$750	9 9TH PRIZE \$500
	10 10TH PRIZE \$500	

★ YOUR SUPPORT HELPS FUND IMPORTANT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES: ★

 VETERAN SERVICE & ADVOCACY	 MILITARY FAMILY SUPPORT	 YOUTH PROGRAMS	 AMERICANISM & EDUCATION	 COMMUNITY OUTREACH	 AND MORE!
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DRAWING TO BE HELD AT THE DEPARTMENT'S MID WINTER CONFERENCE IN JANUARY 2027

★★★ *You Could Win Big While Supporting Those Who Served!* ★★★

ONE TICKET, ONE MISSION, ONE LEGACY OF SERVICE

Thank you for supporting those who defended our freedom. ★ ★ The American Legion Family ★ Strengthening America One Community at a Time

Legion Family,
Chris Sherbourne
Department Fundraising Committee Co-Chair
The American Legion, Department of Oklahoma

Department Blood Program Chair

DEPARTMENT BLOOD DONOR PROGRAM CHAIR

Simply going to say it – rough month – but that doesn't excuse us from supporting our American Legion programs. Contact Our Blood Institute (formerly Oklahoma Blood Institute, but Texas and Arkansas have joined their ranks) or the American Red Cross and schedule a blood drive. Whether the donor is a legion family member or not if you participate as the drive supporter you can claim the number of voluntary donors you signed up and the number of units donated on your Consolidated Post Report you're responsible for submitting showing your post actives for the previous twelve months (June 1 through May 31. Without your Consolidated Post Report your post cannot be recognized and awarded accolades for their year's work.

Fall conferences start happening in September, be sure your post is in attendance and ready to share their accomplishments and their concerns. Sharing with our neighboring posts can only make our Legion Family stronger.

Hoping for a milder month, even less need for brow wiping. I owe personal responses to three posts concerning blood program issues. I haven't forgotten – just been overwhelmed. I'll get with you soon.

For all, contact me for assistance as needed. Hope to learn more at the National Convention to share.

Stay cool, hydrate, and give blood.

John Bishop, [405-414-2515](tel:405-414-2515), jbishop22@cox.net
Blood Donor Program Chair,

<https://ourbloodinstitute.org/>

Veterans Employment & Education

2026 National Convention | Resources for Oklahoma Posts & Veterans

Veteran Homelessness & Housing

VA resources for veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness. The National presentation emphasized that stability requires more than housing—it can also involve employment, sustainable wages, counseling, treatment, and connection to benefits.

Justice-Involved Veterans

Information on the **Veterans Reentry Search Service (VRSS)**, which helps authorized correctional and criminal justice organizations identify veterans so VA outreach and veteran-specific services can be connected to them.

Education & Training

Resources for veterans exploring:

- VA education benefits
- Apprenticeships
- Technology training
- Career and technical education
- Other training leading to gainful employment

A major message from National was that many veterans simply **don't know these opportunities exist.**

Employment & Apprenticeships

Programs highlighted at National included opportunities through:

- Hiring Our Heroes
- Helmets to Hardhats
- International Union of Elevator Constructors – Veterans Assistance Program
- IAM Veterans Benefits Trust
- IBEW
- Department of Labor
- Technology-sector opportunities, including Microsoft

Veteran Entrepreneurship & Small Business

Veterans interested in starting or growing a business should be connected with **SBA veteran business resources**, including information about training, business development, and contracting opportunities.

Be The One & Difficult Conversations

The Cleveland Play House CARE Project demonstrated techniques for becoming more comfortable with uncomfortable conversations, recognizing emotions, listening, and engaging veterans who may be experiencing trauma or crisis.

The Message We Brought Home

Know the resources. Make the connection. Follow up.

We don't have to personally solve every employment, housing, education, business, or other challenge facing a veteran. But every American Legion Post can become a place where a veteran knows someone will listen, help identify the right resource, and work to make the connection.

Veterans Employment & Education Commission

Department of Oklahoma | The American Legion

Be The One!

Karen Cruice
Department of Oklahoma
Vice Commander East

National VE&E Commissioned Officer
Child Well-Being Foundation - Liaison to TAL

Fall District Conferences

East

- **DISTRICT 1** - 07 November 2026, TBD
- **DISTRICT 2** - 26 September 2026, TBD

- DISTRICT 3 - 24 October 2026, Durant, OK
- DISTRICT 4 - 21 November 2026, Bristow, OK
- DEC #2 - 10 October 2026, Dept HQ

West

- DISTRICT 5 - 14 November 2026, Moore, OK
- DISTRICT 6 - 19 September 2026, Mustang, OK
- DISTRICT 7 - 12 September 2026, Post 41, 1705 S HWY 183, Clinton, OK 73601
- DISTRICT 8 - 03 October 2026, Perry, OK

DEC

- DEC #2 - 10 October 2026, Dept HQ

Post Everlasting is
placed after 8B, please
forward me your
obituaries.

For
submissions,
please include
District and
Post number
in Subject line

District 1A

Rich Conn - Commander

Post 178 – Grove



The Department of Oklahoma was honored today by having two distinguished legionnaires be inducted into ANAVICUS at the National Convention in Louisville, KY.

Karen Ritter National Constitution & By Laws Committee member was sworn in during the initiation ceremony.

Congratulations to Ms. Ritter for representing our Veterans, families and communities in Oklahoma so well.

NEC Charlie O'Leary, Senior Vice Patricia Mathes-Kerr and Mike Kerr were in attendance to welcome them into the organization.

ANAVICUS (Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada United States) is a unit of ANAVETS – the Canadian veterans organization founded in 1840. The United States charter was presented in 1953 during The American Legion's national convention in St. Louis where the first ANAVICUS meeting was held. There are 1,200 members in ANAVICUS, and all are American Legion past national commanders and other distinguished Legionnaires. ANAVICUS membership is by invitation only, and new members are inducted twice a year at national convention and the Washington Conference.

A list of Oklahoma inductees is located on the department website.

<https://okamlegion.org/historian>

District 1B

Andrew Fisher – Commander

Post 1 – Tulsa



Heavyweight Post Spotlight

Tulsa Post 1

Head Coach: Department Commander Shirley May

Department Commander Shirley May is sending one of Oklahoma's most historic Posts onto the field as her first **Heavyweight Post Spotlight** of the American Legion League season.

Tulsa Post 1 enters the 2026–2027 membership year after reaching 100% last year and recording its **third consecutive year of membership growth**. With 577 members at the close of last year and a new goal of 597, Post 1 is bringing back its “**Road to 600**” campaign—with an even greater emphasis on retaining the members already on the team.

But membership is only part of the Post 1 story.

More Than a Century of Service

Tulsa Post 1 was organized on May 21, 1919, shortly after the first national American Legion caucuses following World War I. Its charter was issued on June 18, 1919, making Tulsa Post 1 the **oldest continuously active American Legion Post in the nation**.

Originally chartered as **Joe Carson Post 1**, the Post was named in honor of Sergeant Joseph C. Carson, a Tulsa soldier killed in action in France on September 26, 1918. Carson, who served with the 358th Infantry Regiment of the 90th Division, was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for extraordinary heroism.

As generations passed, the names of other fallen service members were added. Today, its official name—**Carson-Wilson-Rigney-Forrester-Shoemaker American Legion Post 1**—honors American heroes from World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and Afghanistan.

There is another piece of Post 1 history that may surprise many Legionnaires. One of the 11 original signers of its 1919 charter was **Sarah F. McLane, a World War I Army Nurse Corps veteran**. From its very beginning, Post 1's membership reflected veterans from across the military community.

Building for the Future

More than 100 years of history doesn't mean Post 1 is content to live in the past.

Its **Vision 2030** initiative is focused on creating a financially secure future, strengthening existing programs and services, expanding thoughtfully, and building a Post that reflects both The American Legion and its important place in Tulsa's history.

The goal is ambitious: to become one of the premier American Legion Posts in the nation.

That same philosophy carries over to membership.

First Vice Commander **Lori Campbell** serves as Membership Chair, assisted by Judge Advocate Allen Usry, Sergeant-at-Arms Bob Walker, and the Post's Veteran Service Officers.

Post 1 began this membership year with a goal of 597 **members** after finishing last year with 577. Their game plan combines recruiting with a strong new focus on **90% retention**.

Give Veterans a Reason to Belong

One of Post 1's most successful recruiting tools has been its **\$30 New Member Special** for veterans who have never previously belonged to The American Legion.

But getting someone to sign a membership application isn't the ultimate goal.

Post 1's philosophy is to get a veteran through the door and then **show them the value of belonging**.

A major part of that effort begins with service.

Post 1 has a team of three qualified Veteran Service Officers available four days each week, including two with full VA accreditation. The VSOs help veterans navigate VA claims, appeals, benefits, and referrals. In the process, veterans who may know little about The American Legion get to see firsthand what the organization can do for them.

The Post identifies its VSOs as its strongest source of new members.

Communication, Communication, Communication

Post 1's advice to other Oklahoma Posts can be summed up in three words:

Communicate, communicate, communicate.

The Post uses email, newsletters, its website, Facebook, YouTube, podcasts, and other communication channels to keep members connected. Even a Legionnaire who rarely attends a meeting can see what the Post is doing and understand where their membership dues are going. This year, that strategy is becoming even more personal.

Instead of relying only on broad membership messages, Post 1 plans to identify members who have not renewed and reach out through emails, telephone calls, Buddy Checks, and personal contact.

New members receive personal attention as well. The Sergeant-at-Arms contacts them and invites them to the next Post meeting. When they attend, they are welcomed, introduced to the membership, and encouraged to find a program, committee, activity, or volunteer opportunity matching their interests.

Post 1 also plans to continue its **\$500 Early Bird drawing**. Every new member and every member whose renewal is processed by December 31 is automatically entered.

The underlying message is simple: don't just ask a veteran to pay dues. **Give that veteran a reason to want to stay.**

Putting the Four Pillars to Work

For Tulsa Post 1, the Four Pillars provide the framework for serving its community.

Through **Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**, its VSOs provide direct assistance to veterans and families. The Post also operates a food pantry, provides emergency assistance when possible, conducts Buddy Checks, offers clothing assistance, and maintains veteran cemetery services.

Under **Americanism**, Post 1 hosts what it describes as Tulsa's largest annual Memorial Day observance, supports patriotic education, and is developing a Digital Museum dedicated to preserving the history of Post 1 and Tulsa veterans.

Its **Children & Youth** programs continue to grow. Last year, the Post sponsored seven young men to Boys State, while its Auxiliary sponsored five young women to Girls State. Seven students also participated in the Post's Oratorical Contest.

Post leadership acknowledges that **National Security** provides an opportunity for additional growth in 2027 while remaining committed to supporting servicemembers, military families, veterans, and the principles of patriotic service.

A Post That Keeps Evolving

Ask Post 1 members what accomplishment from last year makes them most proud, and they don't point to just one.

In addition to growth in youth programs and veteran services, Post 1 received **National Best Publication honors for the second consecutive year**. It launched a podcast, published its first four episodes, and received the **National Best Podcast award**. The Post has also rebuilt its website and begun developing a Digital Museum that it hopes will eventually become a research-quality resource documenting Post 1, Tulsa veterans, and their relationship with the community. Community partnerships are growing as well. Local organizations help sponsor the free meal served during the monthly Legion Family Social Hour, creating another connection between Tulsa's business community and its veterans.

All of those efforts support the same objective: building an organization veterans are proud to call their Post.



From the Coach's Playbook

Post 1's membership advice isn't centered on a gimmick or a single recruiting event:

Build an organization people want to belong to.

Serve veterans. Keep members informed. Give them opportunities to participate. Make them proud of their Post.

Membership numbers and awards matter, but Post 1 believes the real measure of success is whether veterans are better served, young people receive greater opportunities, the community is strengthened, and the legacy of those who served before us is preserved.

That's a play every Post in Oklahoma can put into its own game plan.



HEAVYWEIGHT SCOREBOARD

Tulsa Post 1

Division: Heavyweight — 200+

2026–2027 Goal: 597

Current Membership: 277

2025–2026 Finish: 577 — 100%+

Membership Trend:  Three consecutive years of growth

2026–2027 Retention Goal: 90%

Campaign: *Road to 600*

Head Coach: Department Commander Shirley May

Every Post. Every Member. One Team.

Post 308 – Mohawk



Heavyweight Post Spotlight

Mohawk Post 308 — Tulsa

Head Coach: Vice Commander East Karen Cruice

The season is underway, and **Vice Commander East Cruice's first Heavyweight Post Spotlight is already on the scoreboard!**

Tulsa's **Mohawk Post 308** has reached the **50% membership goal** and is already charging toward 60%. With a 2026–2027 goal of **419 members**, this Heavyweight team is showing that successful membership is about much more than asking someone to renew—it is about giving veterans a reason to belong.

Meet Mohawk Post 308

Mohawk Post 308 was chartered on August 27, 1964, by 28 charter members who organized at Tulsa's Mohawk Park, which became the inspiration for the Post's name.

More than six decades later, Post 308 continues to focus on the principles that helped build it: supporting veterans, carrying out the programs of The American Legion's Four Pillars, and continually looking for ways to improve the Post.

That commitment is getting noticed. In 2026, Mohawk Post 308 was named **Post of the Year**, an accomplishment its members are especially proud of.

But what makes Post 308 successful isn't limited to what happens inside the Post home.

The Post has built relationships with several nonprofit organizations that meet there regularly, including the Scot's Club of Tulsa, Irish American Club of Tulsa, Down Bikers Association, and Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association. Those relationships have strengthened Post 308's connection to the community and have also become an important source of new members.

Post 308 is perhaps best known in the community for its annual **Car and Motorcycle Show in May** and its **Halloween Festival for children in October**. The Halloween event alone typically welcomes between **450 and 500 children** for games and candy.

Membership Is a Team Effort

At Post 308, membership isn't the responsibility of just one person. The Membership Committee includes the 1st Vice Commander, Adjutant, and Communications representative, with the 1st Vice serving as Membership Chair.

Last year, the Post finished with **403 of its 416-member goal, or 96.8%**. This year's target is 419.

Their game plan includes retaining at least **95% of their 2026 membership** and conducting two membership-drive events.

Retention, however, begins long before renewal notices go out.

Post 308 keeps members informed with a monthly calendar distributed at the Post and by email.

Members have numerous opportunities to participate throughout the week, including karaoke, game nights, live-music dances, meetings, and other Post activities.

New members receive a calendar when they join, are introduced to other members, and are personally encouraged to participate.

There's a lesson in that for all of us: **getting someone to join is only the beginning. Making them feel like they belong is what turns a new member into an active Legionnaire.**

Facing a Difficult Challenge

Post 308 also demonstrates that membership numbers don't always tell the entire story.

During the 2024–2025 membership year, the Post lost **76 members to death**. After experiencing moderate growth from 2021 through 2024, losing so many members in a single year created a tremendous challenge.

Rather than allowing that setback to stop their progress, Post 308 continues looking for new ways to grow.

One strategy has been concentrating recruitment efforts on veterans between approximately **40 and 65 years old**. Post leadership believes many veterans in this age group may be at a point in their careers and family lives where they have more time to become involved with their fellow veterans and their community.

It's a targeted approach—and another example of a Post looking at its membership challenge and developing a game plan to address it.

More Than Membership

The work of Post 308 extends throughout the veteran and Tulsa communities.

The Post has a Veteran Service Officer, while three Post members volunteer at the **VA Tulsa Clinic three to four days each week**. Members support the **Claremore Veterans Center** with clothing and other needed items, host Boy Scouts, and partner annually with the active U.S. Marine Corps Reserve on the **Toys for Tots** campaign.

For Post 308, the Four Pillars aren't simply part of The American Legion's history. They provide a foundation for determining how the Post can respond to the needs of veterans and its community.



From the Coach's Playbook

When asked what advice they would give other Oklahoma Posts trying to strengthen membership, Post 308's message was simple:

Keep your members informed and never stop looking for ways to improve your Post.

That improvement might be a physical change to the Post home or a new community project.

What matters is giving members a mission and making sure they know about it.

Post 308 also believes avoiding stagnation is essential. Success means members having the satisfaction of accomplishing goals **together as one Legion Family**.

And when this Heavyweight reaches its 419-member goal?

They're planning **one big party** to celebrate—and then they'll start preparing for the next milestone.



HEAVYWEIGHT SCOREBOARD

Mohawk Post 308 — Tulsa

Division: Heavyweight — 200+

2026–2027 Goal: 419

Current Milestone:  50%

Next Target:  60%

2025–2026 Finish: 403 / 416 — 96.8%

2026 Recognition: Post of the Year

Head Coach: Vice Commander East Karen Cruice

District 2A

Kayla Rector – Commander



The Department of Oklahoma was honored today by having two distinguished legionnaires be inducted into ANAVICUS at the National Convention in Louisville, KY. Kyla Rector, District 2 Commander, was sworn in during the initiation ceremony.

Congratulations to Ms. Ritter for representing our Veterans, families and communities in Oklahoma so well.

NEC Charlie O'Leary, Senior Vice Patricia Mathes-Kerr and Mike Kerr were in attendance to welcome them into the organization.

ANAVICUS (Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada United States) is a unit of ANAVETS – the Canadian veterans organization founded in 1840. The United States charter was

presented in 1953 during The American Legion's national convention in St. Louis where the first ANAVICUS meeting was held. There are 1,200 members in ANAVICUS, and all are American Legion past national commanders and other distinguished Legionnaires. ANAVICUS membership is by invitation only, and new members are inducted twice a year at national convention and the Washington Conference.

A list of Oklahoma inductees is located on the department website.

<https://okamlegion.org/historian>

District 2B

Kayla Rector - Commander

District 3A

Scott Hilgenberg– Commander -

District 3B

Randy Dewitt - Commander

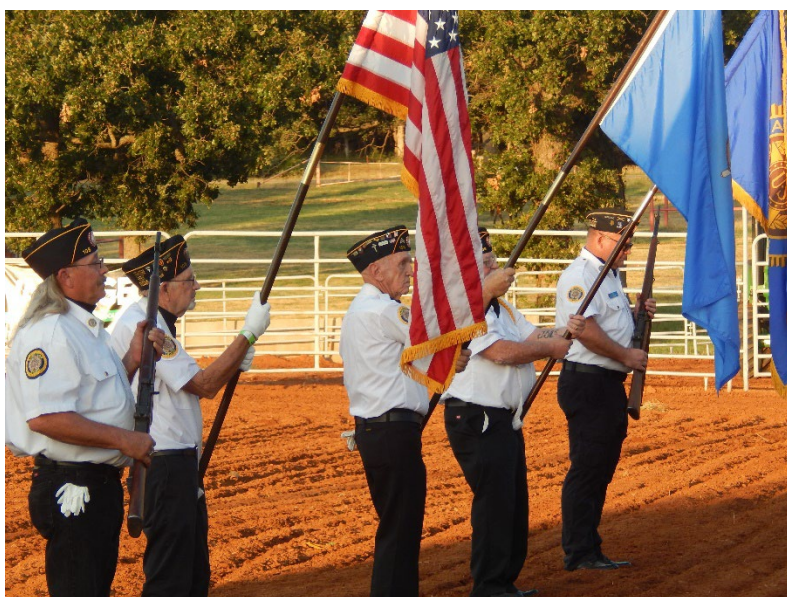
District 4

Vane Bell - Commander

District 5A

Ezekiel Jenkins - Commander

Post 108 – Cushing/Drumright



On 8-21-26 Post 108 Legionnaires James Collyar, Robert Howell, Larry Mills, John Studebaker, and Sean Martin performed a flag/rifle ceremony at the beginning of the Double Heart Rodeo Company event, Payne County Expo Center Arena, Stillwater.

District 5B

Dave Schacher - Commander

Well Legionnaires August has been a busy month in District 5B , I have visited Post's 184, 191,194, 261,274,310 and what amazing things are happening ALL over the District!!, I hope to visit the remaining Posts in the coming months, As I head to the National Convention in KY , I will provide feedback to the Posts as to what is happening on the National level. We are still looking for any volunteers within the District who would like to become Veterans Service Officers, If you are interested please contact myself.

Our District 5 (A&B) Joint meeting with be 14 November in Moore , Ok .

September is National Disaster Preparedness Month So start working on your personal contingency plans, other items on the September agenda are :Sept 02 is VJ Day, Sept 11 Patriots Day , Sept 16 Congress Charters The American Legion, Sept 18 is National POW/MIA Recognition Day

Be safe in all your travels and Thank you ALL for what you each bring to the legion .

Dave Schacher
Commander 5B

Post 310 – Washington



A special thank you to Vice Commander West, Wayne Flowers, for attending our Post meeting and certifying the newly elected officers of American Legion Post 0310.

We sincerely appreciate everyone who continues to donate their time and service to supporting veterans and their families. Your commitment to our veterans and the American Legion is greatly appreciated.

Congratulations on your appointments, and we wish you the very best in your new position! Good luck and thank you again for your service!

Post 261 – Blanchard



American Legion - Post 261

Four Person Golf Scramble
Proceeds Benefit Veterans Programs

SEPTEMBER 12, 2026

**Brent Bruehl
Golf Course
Purcell, OK**

\$300
PER TEAM

TEE OFF 8:00 AM
REGISTRATION
6:30 AM - 7:30 AM

CALL OR TEXT TO REGISTER YOUR TEAM

Vaughn Vakulick	Mike Whaley
405-625-2925	405-818-3541

Make Checks Payable to American Legion Post 261

District 6A

Michael H. Devenitch - Commander

Post 353 – Mustang



Newly sworn 26-27 officers, l to r, Sgt-At-Arms Junior Rodriguez, Co-Chaplains George Kokendoffer and John Sears, Historian Greg Miller, Judge Advocate Mickey White, Finance Officer Marie Enderton, Adjutant Sheila Schulte, First Vice Commander Rebekah Carlisle, and Commander Paul Ray. We wish them every success.

Post 353 will host the District 6A/6B Fall Conference at the Mustang Town Center on 19 September. All posts are asked to bring their officers and prospective leaders to share and learn experience, plans, and all things to make our legion the absolute best in the nation.

Well, we had a Post election, and we have a different Commander, not necessarily a better one, just a different one. Paul Ray is the new Commander and fortunately most of last year's Post Officers decided to stay so they can carry me through the year ahead.

I am going to start with a little preaching. I am very guilty of this, and it has proven to be completely non-productive. When you are trying to recruit someone don't tell them how badly we need them. Tell them how satisfying it is to be able to continue to help the multiple communities we serve. We are an organization of Veterans still serving America. We serve Veterans, that's true enough but we also serve the communities we live in. We serve the elderly, the disabled, the infirmed. We serve the children and youth of the area where we live. We are "NOT" exclusively a Veterans Service Organization. We are a Service Organization of Veterans.

Now it is time to brag a little. The first weekend after Labor Day the City of Mustang has one of our Big Deal Days, we call it "Western Days". We call ourselves Mustang so how could we call our Rodeo Celebration anything but Western Days. One of the privileges of being an active Post is our Color Guard gets to lead the Western Days Parade every year. We still look good and get the community's attention. They know who we are. They know leading the parade is just one of the many community-oriented things we do and they appreciate us. That feels good.

So, get out and do good things in the community, give the rest of the citizens someone to look up to.

Stand Tall my Brothers and Sisters.

District 6B

Bobby Marshall - Commander

District 7

Elmo May - Commander

Had the honor of helping the VFW rifle team for Past Department Commander William “Bill” Lonkerd funeral service.

Started making my rounds by visiting the posts in district 7. Went to see the Legionnaires of post 41 in Clinton. Reminded them to continue working membership and told them about the goals we have ahead of us. Told them about the fundraiser we are doing and what it can do for their post.



Had the honor to watch the Department Commander Shirley May swear the members into their new positions. They were honored to have her in attendance.

Post 146 – Sayre





Post 146 in Sayre have been doing good things for their post and community. They recently had their grand opening and renaming dedication, there were about 65 people in attendance.



Post 146 is also one of the newest posts to get their Legion Riders chapter and plaque.

8A

Barry Vincent - Commander**Post 53 – Perry**

Commander Jeremy Hines introduced Janet Shannon, Lori St. Clair, Linda Stevens, Linda Parham, and Jeanne Carey spoke to members of American Legion Ellis-Jirous Post 53 about the work of **For the Worth of a Child**, a nonprofit serving foster children in Noble, Kay, and Payne counties. Noble County has the highest number of foster children per capita in Oklahoma. The organization assisted 252 children in 2024, 289 in 2025, and had already helped 180 children through the end of July 2026, providing thousands of essential items including clothing, shoes, books, blankets, hygiene products, and birthday bags. The speakers noted that many children enter foster care with few or no belongings, making community support essential. The group thanked Christ Lutheran Church for donating child-sized travel pillows and blankets and the First United Methodist Church for providing storage space and serving as the donation site. Local dental offices also contribute toothbrushes and toothpaste, and donations of clothing, books, shoes, personal hygiene items, and large Braum's bags are always welcome. Members also discussed the need for more foster families in Perry, noting that many local children must be placed elsewhere in the state due to the shortage of homes. The program also provides emergency assistance to grandparents and other relatives who unexpectedly become caregivers for foster children.



Newly Elected Officers were installed on 4 August 2026 (L to R) Chaplain Ron Golliver, Trustees Nikki Leach and Jeff Goldsberry, Service Officer Don Betchan, SAA Scott Moss, Vice Commander Tina Kilmer, Commander Jeremy Hines and 3rd Vice Commander Dannie Meek who installed the officers



Corbin Baumfalk was presented with a 1 year SAL membership for his son Carson at 2 weeks old.



Don Betchan and Tina Kilmer were presented with Certificates of Appreciation for all their hard work and dedication.

District 8B

PLEASE SEND ALL
SUBMISSIONS TO
TALOK1889@GMAIL.COM

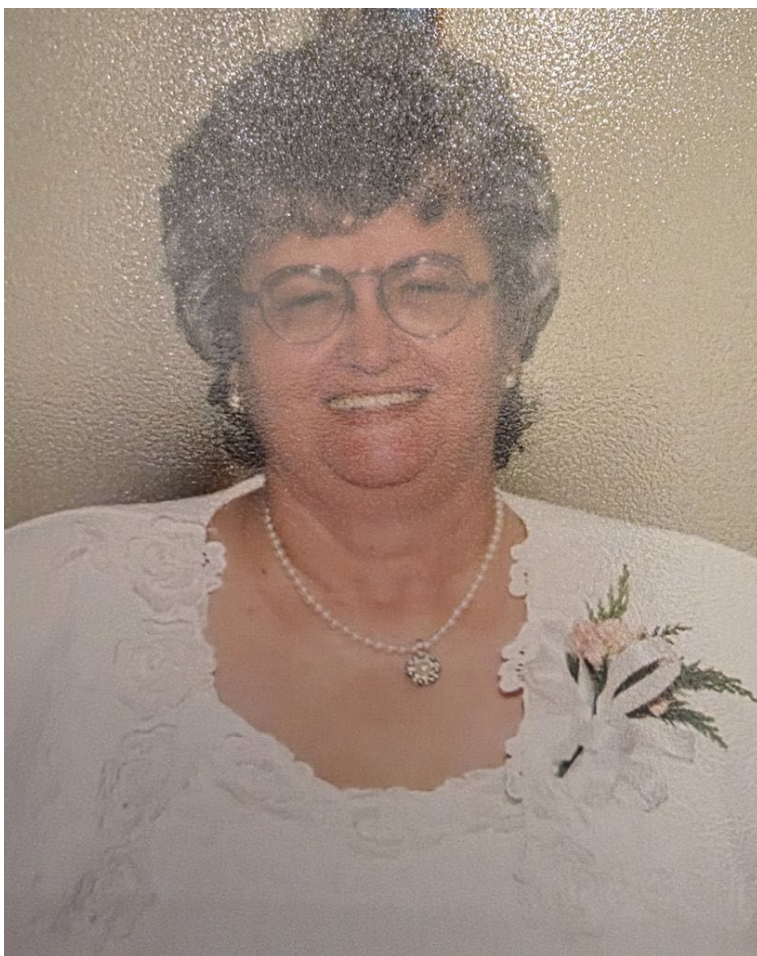
NO LATER THAN
1800hrs on the 28TH
OF THE MONTH

Please include District
and Post number in
the subject line for
submission

POST EVERLASTING



Myrna Ladwig



<https://www.sienшелtonfh.com/obituaries/myrna-ladwig>

William Earl Lonkerd



https://www.collinsvillefh.com/obituaries/william-lonkerd?ttm_pid=212009874&ttm_affiliate=legacypro&ttm_affiliatetype=standard&ttm_campaign=legacy

Michael Blain Brinkley



https://www.hometownfh.com/obituaries/michael-brinkley?ttm_pid=211976155&ttm_affiliate=legacypro&ttm_affiliatetype=standard&ttm_campaign=legacy

RL Patton



<https://www.greerfuneral.com/obituaries/RL-Patton?obId=49257572#/obituaryInfo>

Elmer 'Dean' Turner



<https://www.clifforddgarrettfamilyfh.com/obituaries/Elmer-Turner-3/#!/TributeWall>

Gene Roper



<https://www.classicfunerals.com/obituaries/Gene-Roper?obId=47466061>

Edward P. Edmiston



<https://www.smithandkernke.com/obituaries/edward-edmiston>

Steven Lloyd Hendrix



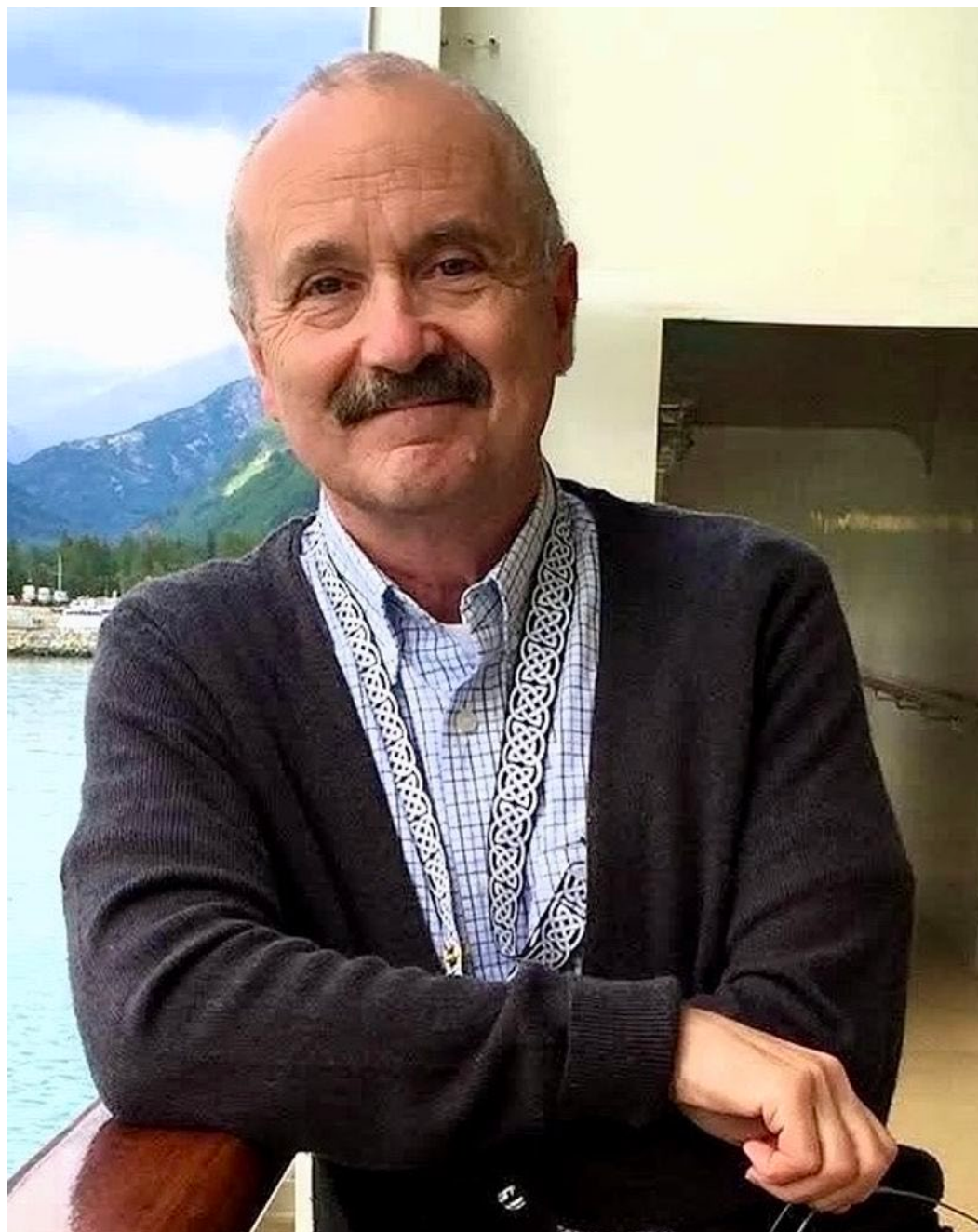
<https://www.mcneilsfuneral.com/obituaries/Steven-Lloyd-Hendrix?obId=48592249>

Roy Allen Klepper



<https://www.mcneilsfuneral.com/obituaries/Roy-Allen-Klepper?obId=48647788>

Carl Michael Tibbets



<https://www.matthewsfuneralhome.com/obituaries/carl-tibbets>