THE ARKANSAS LEGIONNAIRE

DECEMBER 2019

VOLUME 101, NUMBER 2

A Publication of The American Legion Department of Arkansas

2020 Department Mid-Winter Conference

The 2020 Mid-Winter Conference will be held January 11-12 at the Riverfront Wyndham Hotel, North Little Rock. Hotel reservations can be made by calling the hotel direct at (501) 371-9000. Schedule events:

Saturday, January 11th
0800 Opening Ceremony /Guests bring greetings
0900-0930 Announce the purpose of meeting
0930-1130 Recess for Committee meetings and training
1130-1230 Lunch
1230 DEC Reconvenes
1230-1700 Regular Business Meeting to receive committee reports from: Area Vice Commanders, Judge Advocate, Membership, Americanism, Real Property Management, Policy, C&B/L, Public Relations, C&Y, Service Officer, Training, Budget & Finance, Commander
1700 Adjourn

Sunday, January 12th
0800 Patriotic Memorial Service
0900-1200 DEC Reconvenes to complete unfinished business, adopt any Resolutions and accept Finance Report

Mid-Winter Training Opportunities
Training will again be conducted during this Mid-Winter Conference Saturday, January 11th. Courses are focused toward Post-level officers, but all members are encouraged to attend. If you currently serve as a Post or District officer or you aspire to serve in that level, please make plans to attend this training. This is the Mid-winter training schedule with assigned trainers:
- Finance Officer 0930 – 1100 Joy Hendrix
- Leadership Skills 0930 – 1100 Bill Sheets
- Post Adjutant 1200 – 1300 Jim Wilbanks
- Post Operations 1200 – 1300 Bill Sheets
- Service Officer 1330 – 1500 Tony Gordon
- myLegion.org 1330 – 1500 Bill Sheets

NOTICE
Resolution 1 was adopted by the NEC Oct. 16 during Fall Meetings in Indianapolis, which amends "the Great Wars" to "all wars."

Change your recitation of the Preamble from "to preserve the memories and incidents of our associations in the great wars" to:
"to preserve the memories and incidents of our associations in all wars"

2020 Department Mid-Winter Conference

National Commander Oxford Visits Arkansas

American Legion National Commander William Oxford arrived by flight on Monday December 16 along with his aide Larry Cline. After a relaxing and rainy evening, the next day they continued their visit to the Capitol of Arkansas, Veterans’ Hospitals and several American Legion Posts in the area. Commander Oxford met with dignitaries and veterans to discuss membership, mental health and other key issues. His trip concluded with visits to Posts in Northwest and Northeast Arkansas where his message was “A Foundation for the Future.”

(submitted by Kirk Williams, Department Historian)
DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dan Nicholson - Candidate for Department Commander

American Legion Post 58 of Texarkana and the 12th District are proud to announce their support for Walter “Dan” Nicholson for the position of Commander of the American Legion Department of Arkansas for the year 2020-2021. Dan’s membership serving the American Legion began 31 years ago. He has held many offices: Post Adjutant, Finance Officer, Building and Grounds Committee Chairman, Vice Commander, Commander, 12th District Vice Commander, District Commander and District Executive Committeeman. Dan served as Southwest Vice Commander for 1992-93. Due to a death in Department Commander Dr. Dale Alford’s family, Dan was called upon to conduct the Mid-Winter Conference meeting in 1993. Upon the request of Bob Legan, Dan served as Finance Officer of the American Legion Foundation from 1995 to 1999. Dan is the only living Founding Charter Member of the Foundation. As a founding member of the Texarkana Area Veterans Council, Dan served as President for three years working with AL, VVA, DAV, VFW and MCL. Dan has served as the VAVS Officer for Overton Brooks VA Hospital since 1994. As Chairmen of the Korea-Vietnam Memorial, which covers Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas and Louisiana within a 50-mile radius of Texarkana, in 1988, Dan designed the memorial and oversaw the construction. In 1991, Dan was asked to find a new post home for the Texarkana American Legion and obtained the donation of the current Post Home at 525 East Broad Street. After drawing up plans, he oversaw the remodeling of the building. Dan worked with Art Candelaria and Nick Bacon to bring a VA Clinic to Texarkana.


Dan married Martha Denise Baber of Texarkana, and they have been married 46 years. Denise has helped Dan in all his work for the American Legion. She attended Texarkana College and graduated from East Texas State University-Texarkana, now TAMU-T, with a Bachelor of Business in Accounting. Her Dad, Cooper Baber, helped in remodeling the Legion home and building the Korea-Vietnam Memorial. Cooper was a WWII Army Air Corps Veteran of the China-Burma-India theater. Dan and Denise have one son Andrew who has been a SAL member for thirty years. Andrew attended Texarkana College and graduated from Texas A & M University-Texarkana with a Bachelor of Business in Management Information Systems. He now works for Texarkana College. Andrew and Dan have built computers to donate to veterans and sell as fundraisers for American Legion projects. In 1997, they held a class to teach SAL members how to build a computer. Each boy took home the computer he built.

Dan would appreciate your consideration of him for the high office of Commander American Legion Department of Arkansas.

NEC Newsletter Notes December 2019—Mary Erdman

The NEC meetings were held in Indianapolis, Indiana at National HQ in October. Unfortunately, I was home using my nursing skills on my dear husband, Dallas, and was unable to attend. However, Jake Greeling our Alternate NEC, attended in my place and did a stellar job of representing Arkansas and brought back a lot of interesting and valuable information.

Firstly, all recommendations for membership on National Commissions, Committees and Councils were approved. The list of the members who represent the Department of Arkansas is below. Please contact the appropriate member to get the latest national level information and resolutions pertaining to that area, especially in Americanism, for the change in the Oratorical contest awards. For any other information at the national level, contact me or Jake.

Secondly, be sure you’re using the new version of the American Legion Preamble which was changed to coincide with the new membership eligibility. The new version has been posted on the American Legion and Department websites.

Thirdly, I encourage you all, if you haven’t already done so, to take American Legion Basic Training (ALEI). This is a short course and a good refresher. It can be done online and is free. I also encourage, per a suggestion from National HQ, to include some training at every post meeting. It doesn’t have to be long, formal or complicated. Contact me for further information, suggestions, ideas or assistance.

Lastly, District Commanders, please contact me if you would like for me to attend one of your meetings as I am at your service. Post Commanders, get your posts geared up to complete the CPR this year. I really want to see our Department Commander walk on stage at the next National Convention and pick up an award for Department of Arkansas 100% CPR completion and submission. I offer my assistance in completing the CPR again this year.

List of Council, Committee, Commission Members

Americanism Council: Doyle Batey; Lori Jarrett; Barbara Johnson; Billy Kidd; Dominic Listermann

Committee on Youth Education: Michael Westergren

Media & Communications Council: Kirk Williams

Media & Communications Commission: Jake Greeling

Foreign Relations Committee: Marvin Jumper

Constitution & Bylaws Committee: James Caton

National Security Council: Lorenzo Rogers; Keith Dover; J.W. Smith; Wally Rosier

Veterans Affairs & Rehab Council: Antoine Gordon

Vets Education, other benefits & Homelessness (National Consultant): Estella Morris

Veterans Benefits Committee: John Voss

Veterans Employment & Education Council: Marvin Mendenhall

Veterans Affairs & Rehab Commission Mary (NEC Liaison) (501)922-6287 (501)454-7357(cell)

Thank you for allowing me to serve you and our department.

Mary Erdman, NEC

May the holiday season be happy and blessed for you and your loved ones.
Commander Doyle Batey

I know that the seven years I served as your department adjutant went by pretty dang fast, but this year as your department commander is now half over. Where does the time go? Things are running pretty smoothly at department headquarters thanks to adjutant Bob Renner and his team of Terry Haney and Evelyn Carroll. We are blessed to have such a dedicated group working for us at headquarters. A special thank you to the three of you.

The remainder of the year is filled with a lot of scheduled activities. Mid-Winter in January is right upon us. We will be visiting our two U.S. Senators and four Congressmen at the end of February. We will be letting our Congressional delegation know what the legislative priorities of The American Legion are. Spring meetings in Indianapolis, district revitalizations, attendance at post meetings and community activities are always on my schedule and are among my favorite things to do. If you want me to attend an event or your post/district meeting, please contact headquarters to let them know the date and time. I will attend if my schedule permits.

We assume everyone knows about The Legion Act which was signed into law by President Trump on July 30, 2019. The act now permits all honorably discharged veterans who served after December 7, 1941 until a future date to be determined by Congress to join The American Legion. Over 1600 service members were killed during the periods not previously recognized as conflicts or wars. We are now able to welcome you as a fellow legionnaire if you served one day of honorable active duty after December 7, 1941. This was a long time in the making and took an act of Congress which is quite an accomplishment these days. I encourage you to have your local papers publish articles about the Legion Act. Get with your local radio stations and see if you can spend a few minutes talking about this new benefit. You will be surprised at how many veterans do not know that they have finally been recognized by Congress for their sacrifices and can now join our ranks.

If you have not already done so, begin working now on the American Legion programs. American Legion Boys State, American Legion Baseball, American Legion Oratorical Contest, American Legion Junior Shooters, as well as our many scholarships which can be applied for. I also encourage you to call the programs by their first names – American Legion. The public needs to know that Legion Baseball is American Legion Baseball. Same goes for our other outstanding programs. I slip sometimes myself but I am determined to use American Legion as the first name of our programs.

Thank you for being a member of The American Legion Department of Arkansas Family and thank you for the kindness you have shown to me and my wife Debbie. Keep moving forward and may God continue to bless you and your families.

Doyle Batey, Commander

Applications for the 2020 High School Oratorical Contest are now available online at: http://www.arlegion.org/programs/oratorical.html

Applications must be submitted to Department Headquarters by 03 January 2020

Certifications must be submitted to Department Headquarters by 22 February 2020

The American Legion Welcomes President’s Signing of POW/MIA Flag Act

WASHINGTON, November 8, 2019 -- The head of the nation’s largest veterans organization thanked President Trump for signing a bipartisan act which will require certain prominent federal properties to display the POW/MIA Flag every day with the U.S. Flag.

"Yesterday I was humbled to stand with my fellow veterans inside the Oval Office and watch the president of the United States sign this symbolic but important legislation," said American Legion National Commander James W. "Bill" Oxford. "It is important that Americans never forget that there are still more than 82,000 men and women who were taken prisoner or never had a full accounting. The American Legion reveres their memory and will continue to honor them at all of our meetings. I plan to visit the headquarters of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency later this month to observe their work firsthand. DPA does a remarkable job of identifying and repatriating so many heroes who paid the ultimate price for freedom. The American Legion is eager to explore additional ways to lend our support."

National Treasurer George Buskirk passes away

George A. Buskirk Jr., the national treasurer of The American Legion, passed away Oct. 8. He was 70 years old.

Buskirk, a member of American Legion Post 510 at Fort Benjamin Harrison, was appointed national treasurer on Sept. 10, 1998, during the 80th National Convention in New Orleans. The national treasurer serves as the chief financial officer of The American Legion, and is responsible for the custody and management of the assets of the organization.

"The American Legion lost more than a national treasurer today," said American Legion National Commander Bill Oxford. "We lost a treasure. George A. Buskirk was the kindest of gentlemen. We will certainly miss his sound financial leadership, but we will mostly miss our time with this affable, decent and smart man."

The Arkansas Legionnaire  ISSN 2475-1464 (Print), ISSN 2475-1480 (Online)  An official publication of The American Legion Department of Arkansas  702 S. Victory Street, P.O. Box 328, Little Rock, AR  72203-0328  December, 2019 - Volume 101, Number 2  Quarterly: Sept, Dec, Mar, May,  Website Address: www.arlegion.org  (501) 375-1104 Email: arkansaslegionnaire@earthlink.net  Free to current members of the Arkansas American Legion and Auxiliary
Youth Cadet Law Enforcement Program

Within our Department Americanism and Children and Youth pillars we offer several opportunities for children to participate in desirable citizenship-building experiences. The Arkansas Boys State Program and the High School Oratorical Contest are just two examples. Posts that sponsor Scouting, Junior Shooting Sports, and American Legion Baseball add to these opportunities. There is another program that we as a Department need to consider adding to our Americanism programs.

25 State Departments operate their own American Legion Youth Cadet Law Enforcement Program (YCLEP). The purpose of these programs is to provide firsthand experiences and insight into the operations of law enforcement agencies. The program also affords highly motivated young people an opportunity to consider law enforcement as a potential career choice. Recruitment of high school students, both male and female, representing all communities and backgrounds in the state, is one goal of the program. Once these young people have been selected to attend the program, the law enforcement community is challenged to present a program that will instill an understanding and respect for law enforcement professionals and their techniques.

Curriculum and duration of these programs vary from state to state. Most programs include physical fitness training coupled with classroom instruction and hands-on training. Topics of instruction may include criminal law, constitutional law, patrol procedures, criminal investigation procedures, traffic crash investigation, evidence gathering techniques, arrest techniques, taking fingerprints, testifying in court, public speaking, leadership skills, vehicle operating procedures, report writing, interviewing techniques, crisis intervention, use of control and firearms training. Most programs currently being operated are conducted in the summer months and are about a week in duration. The Arkansas State Police offered a similar program a few years ago. They may have an existing curriculum that could easily be adapted, or we could borrow from other Departments that already have successful programs.

Student who qualify as candidates to the program will be male and female high school students who have completed their junior year of high school and are in good academic standing. They should be of good moral character and possess a desire to learn more about the law enforcement profession. Their high school should recommend students who meet these qualifications to local posts who are sponsoring the Youth Law Cadet Program.

Arkansas Legionnaires Invited to Attend Texas American Legion College

Jeff Perkins, Commander of the Department of Texas has extended an invitation to Arkansas Legionnaires to attend their Department American Legion College February 29th – March 1st, 2020. Commander Perkins has opened their class to Legionnaires from three adjoining states that do not yet have their own Department College.

The course will cover these subjects: Americanism & Children & Youth Programs, Leadership, Legislative Priorities, Manual of Ceremonies, Post Programs, Public Relations Administration, Officers & Committee, Writing a Resolution and How to Conduct a Meeting.

This course is an intensive session intended to grow and prepare Legionnaires to serve at all levels of leadership. Arkansas will be developing its own Legion College; attendees to this course will be the first to receive this advance training. Post and District Officers, if you cannot attend, make sure you refer your up-and-coming future officers to attend.

The two-day course will be held at the Holiday Inn Texarkana Arkansas Convention Center. This is the same location where Arkansas held its LEAD Training in 2018. Room rates are $82 for a single and $89 for a double room which includes breakfast. This room rate is good Friday night through Sunday night. Attendees must pay for their own rooms; this course cannot be claimed on Department per diem. The class will start both mornings at 8 am and conclude by 5 pm.

In order to apply to attend this training you must complete the online American Legion Basic Training course found at www.legion.org/training, download and print a certificate of completion from this course, then print a copy of the Department Legion College Application found at: http://www.arlegion.org/resources/training.html, complete the Department Legion College application and submit it and the course completion certificate to Department Headquarters by February 6th, 2020.

Successful applicants will be registered to attend the course and contacted on how to reserve their hotel room. Don’t wait to apply – this course will fill up fast.
Post 343 Presents Certificate of Appreciation to Douglas Banks

Post Commander Danny Brickey presented Vietnam War Era U.S. Army veteran Douglas Banks, left, with a certificate of appreciation, Saturday, Oct. 19, 2019, in Redfield, Ark., honoring his efforts in successfully retaining the Post’s tax-exempt status. The filing requirement, previously unnecessary for entities with $25,000 or less in annual revenue, was imposed as part of the Pension Protection Act of 2006. (Photo by Todd Johnson for The American Legion)

Monticello Post Honors Departed Veterans

Members of Post 2 in Monticello have been working diligently to place footstones at the graves of veterans. Over the last few years they have placed 381 markers honoring the service and sacrifice of both the veteran and their families. Commander Glenn Kellebrew says this footstone “brings us up to date with stones waiting at local funeral homes in our surrounding area.”

Two New Posts Chartered in Arkansas

Season’s Greetings to our American Legion Department of Arkansas Family,

As the immediate Past Department Commander, I ask each of you to join me in welcoming our newest American Legion posts to our Department of Arkansas Family. I am honored to announce the establishment of two new Posts: Post # 2020 in Hot Springs. Comrade Curtis Craft is the Commander. And, Ouachita County Post # 2021 in Bearden where Comrade Raymond Rogers is the Commander.

Most of these members are new to the American Legion. Please make them feel welcomed at our upcoming Mid Winter Conference. Dianna and I and the entire Kinsey Family wish each of you and your family a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Respectfully,

R.D. Kinsey, 2018-2019 Department Commander

October 8, 2019, American Legion Post #2 assisting Local Scout Troops #67 with Flag Retirement ceremony. Terry Crook has worked close with our Post for around 20 years. It was heart warming to have one of the Scouts play taps on an old antique bugle.
DEPARTMENT AUXILIARY NEWS
The American Legion Auxiliary    Department of Arkansas
1415 West 7th Street - Little Rock, AR 72201
(501) 374-5836  FAX (501) 372-0855   Email: arkaux@att.net

From the desk of Nancy French

There have been and are a number of changes happening in the American Legion as we end the American Legion Auxiliary’s first 100 years and start into the next 100 years. First Legislation was enacted that broadened the eligibility for membership in the American Legion Family, then the word “wives” replaced by the word “spouse” so that the spouse of a female veteran could join the Auxiliary and recently, the American Legion Executive Committee voted to change the wording in the Preamble from “great wars” to “all wars.”

Another change comes from the IRS, which apparently has been in effect for a number of years, which states that membership in the American Legion Auxiliary is “two degrees of separation,” which essentially means that only two generations from the veteran are eligible to join the Auxiliary. Therefore, great-granddaughters and great-great-granddaughters are no longer eligible to join the American Legion Auxiliary. However, if a great-granddaughter and/or great-great-granddaughter is already a member of the Auxiliary, they will remain a member as long as they keep their membership current.

GREAT NEWS!!!! You will be hearing a new voice when you call the Department office. Meg Dunn has been appointed as our Secretary. The search/interview committee was impressed with her qualifications and past experience and felt she would be a great asset to the organization. If you haven’t already met her by telephone, you will have a chance to meet her in person at the Mid-Winter Conference in January. The office will now be open from 10:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Monday thru Friday. Meg will take a 30 minute lunch, which means that the answering machine will take calls during her lunch time.

The Fall Conference was well attended and the baby shower was a great success. The Auxiliary donated almost $1,300 in baby merchandise to the Women’s Program at the Little Rock VA.

There was much excitement, and appreciation, in the VA Volunteer Office when the items were delivered. Pictures will be shared later.

There has been a change in the way we do our midyear and year end reports. We no longer have to fill out the grids and/or answer questions. Instead, instructions in the 2019-2020 Addendum to the Five Year Plan are to write a summary of activities for each program and mail them to the Department Chairperson as well as the National Division Vice President. Please remember to include number of people working on activity, the number of volunteer hours spent on activity, the amount of money spent and the number of people (particularly veterans) who were served. The Addendum can be found on the National website. The guidelines for the wording for the Constitution and By Laws are also on the National Website.

While we went back to mailing information to the Units, we still need to be cognizant of the expense until such time as our finances greatly improve. That is why we are not mailing the Addendum to the Five Year Plan and/or the guidelines for the Constitution and By Laws.

Please remember my President’s Project, a Bakeless Bake Sale. The funds from this project are designated to help the Department.

Thank you for all you do for our veterans and your community.

Nancy

SAVE THE DATE
Mid-Winter Conference will be January 11, 2020 at the Wyndham Hotel in North Little Rock. There will be a Lingerie Shower—Sports Bras in sizes small, medium and large and panties in sizes 5-9 (new items only, still in packages). These items will again be donated to the Women’s Program at the VA.

EDUCATION - Dr. Barbara Johnson, Chairman

During the Fall Conference 2019, it was brought to my attention that the focus was on scholarships. Knowing that, I take this opportunity to advise our members that there is a complete Education Program which "promotes the American Legion Auxiliary’s role in providing quality education for children and adults through classroom activities, literacy programs, scholarship promotion and support of education beyond high school, with a special emphasis on children of veterans and service members." (ALA 2017-2022 Program Action Plan:Page 47)

There are considerable actions and activities that members, units, and departments can do to ensure that the service of current and past military members will always be remembered. Those same activities can be reported in your mid-year and end of year reporting methods. Many Units are working with specific schools on Americanism activities. Be sure to strengthen the contact and begin a Veterans in Community Schools programs, or work with the Media Center Director and donate books about veterans that our organization supports, be sure that scholarship information gets out to all schools in the area, support Teacher Appreciation Week, American Education Week, and Give 10 to Education program.

Let’s get something started now. If you need information or ideas please go to the Department web site and use the National Program Action Plan or call me at 501-786-8039. It is time for Arkansas to have a viable Education Program.

SUSPENDED!
Make sure your dues are paid by January 31, 2020 or you will be suspended!

Membership - Patricia Murray, Chairman

It’s been a busy and changing few months for membership. First, the Legion Act passed and all veterans who have served since December 7, 1941 and were honorably discharged, are eligible for American Legion membership. Second, the American Legion changed their Constitution, at National Convention, to allow male spouses of American Legion members to join the American Legion Auxiliary.

The third thing that has happened is very recent. Because of IRS regulations (in effect since at least 2005), National American Legion Auxiliary has updated our membership application to put us in compliance. The change is that great granddaughters and great-great granddaughters are no longer eligible for membership in the American Legion Auxiliary. This is not just for our organization but for all Veteran Auxiliary organizations.

The information I received from National is below:

The IRS regulation concerning auxiliaries to veteran service organizations states in part:

“At least 75 percent of its members are veterans, spouses of veterans, or related to a veteran within two degrees of consanguinity (i.e., grandparent, brother, sister, grandchild represent the most distant allowable relationships).”

This has been a regulation for many years, and with the recent review of the Auxiliary eligibility criteria, the issue was evaluated, and the decision was to ensure the organization was compliant.

This means that no great or great-great-granddaughters can join the Auxiliary. Current members whose eligibility relationship is great-granddaughter, great-great-granddaughter or direct descendant can continue being a member, as long as their dues are kept current.

In order to align with IRS regulations, the most distant allowable will be granddaughter.

Please use the new membership form located on the National ALA website. If you are unable to access the form, they are available from our Department Headquarters.

Make sure your dues are paid by January 31, 2020 or you will be suspended!

SUSPENDED!
Make sure your dues are paid by January 31, 2020 or you will be suspended!
Greetings everyone! The year has started off great and I am looking forward to working with you all to make it even more eventful and full of “service, Not Self” events and ideas!

Have you submitted any Good Deed or Youth Hero award nominations?! Do you know a child in your area who deserves to be recognized for the awards but not sure how to nominate them? You can go to alaforveterans.org and download the nomination forms then email me with the information! We want to ensure that all of the youth are recognized for their heroic efforts and continuous giving in their communities!

This year, being our 100-year celebration year, will be filled with surprises along the way, and especially in June. So, get those nominations turned in! I would LOVE for the Department of Arkansas to have 100 nominations!!!

Check with your local schools, churches, and volunteer organizations to find youth who are eligible for the award! Also, watch your newspapers to see what the youth are doing in your communities.

Each youth nominated will be considered for a special award at our June convention. So, get those nominations sent in! Email them to me at: charlotte964@centurylink.net.

Should you have any questions regarding the Good Deed or Youth Hero awards, do not hesitate to contact me at the address/phone number/email listed below. You can also reach out to me on Facebook with any questions!

Sincerely, Charlotte Purdy
(870) 509-1575
1121 S. Van Buren Street, DeWitt, AR 72042

National Security—Denise Smith, Chairman

Let’s borrow a page from the American Legion and do “Buddy Checks” on the veterans in our communities and Posts. It is so important that we reach out to our veterans to see how they are doing not just during special occasions but 52 weeks a year.

Suicide is a national public health issue and veterans are among higher risk groups. We need to reach out to the veterans in our community and let them know they are not alone and there is help. Encourage veterans to seek help at their local VA facility or other service facility. There is also confidential help for veterans and their families available at: 1-800-273-8255 and press 1; chat online at http://www.veteranscrisisline.net or text to 838255.

Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Iris Murray, Chairman

The Department of Arkansas has a very successful Gift Shop for the Little Rock and North Little Rock VAs on December 2 – 6, 2019 and the Fayetteville VA Gift Shop had a successful one December 9 - 11, 2019. Both Gift Shops are successful because of our members who donate and volunteer at the events. Many thanks go out to our American Legion members who also come and help in the Gift Shops. Coffee and cookies are served at the Little Rock VA the 2nd and 3rd Saturday of each month. We would love to have you come and help us serve our veterans! You need to be a certified volunteer and the process is easy. The Voluntary Service Office at the North Little Rock VA conducts training sessions on Wednesdays and the class is approximately one hour. Call the Voluntary Service Office at 501-257-3288 to schedule your training. There are many volunteer opportunities at both VAs in Central Arkansas, there is one for you!

For volunteering opportunities at the Fayetteville VA, please call the Voluntary Service Office at 479-444-5060 to schedule your training to become a certified volunteer. The veterans always need our help.

Units! Don’t forget to send your financial obligations to Department Headquarters. If you need the form, please call Headquarters.
Steve Gray – Loss of a Legionnaire

Stephen Douglas Gray, Lt Col (ret.), USAF, passed away Wednesday, October 2, 2019, at the age of 70, after a courageous battle with cholangiocarcinoma. He graduated from Glenbrook High School, Glenview, Ill., in 1966, and from Coe College, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, in 1970. Following graduation, he was commissioned as a second lieutenant into the United States Air Force where he served for 24 years. During this time, he married Sharon Jane Lawrence (in 1975), daughter of an Air Force Pilot, and they raised one daughter, Heather Elizabeth Gray (Walk), born in 1979, who followed in her father’s footsteps as a USAF Officer.

Steve's Air Force career included serving as an Air Controller in Vietnam and later, Squadron Commander, Advisor, Staff Officer and Director. He served as a weapons controller on the EC-121 Constellation Early Warning Aircraft, Director of the Air National Guard Recruiting and Retention Program at the Pentagon and was the Air National Guard Advisor to the Commander in Chief, United States Air Forces Europe. His military awards included the Bronze Star Medal, Republic of Vietnam Cross of Gallantry, Vietnam Armed Forces Service Medal First Class, Air Force Commendation Medal, First Oak Leaf Cluster, Meritorious Service Medal, First Oak Leaf Cluster and the US Air Force Master Weapons Controllers Badge.

After retirement from the US Air Force in 1994, Steve became the Military Advisor for then Congressman Asa Hutchinson. Steve then went to work for Congressman (now Senator) John Boozman as the Senior Military and Veterans Advisor. During this time, his most rewarding accomplishment was the presentation of medals in special ceremonies that Senator Boozman’s office conducted throughout the state to honor Arkansas veterans for their military service. He conducted close to one thousand ceremonies and personalized each one for the respective veteran's military service.

Steve retired from Senator Boozman’s office in January 2015. However, he did not stop serving or working to assist Arkansas Veterans or his local community. He volunteered his time with civic and Veterans Service Organizations including American Legion Post 27, and as Vice-Commander American Legion Department of Arkansas, Veterans of Foreign Wars and the NWA Veterans Day Association.

In October 2018, Steve was inducted into the Arkansas Military Veterans' Hall of Fame. In September 2019, Mayor of the City of Fayetteville, Lioneld Jordan, proclaimed October 7, 2019, to be “Stephen Gray Day” in honor of his contributions to Veterans and his advocacy for the needs of service members across the state along with his tireless community service.

For all of his achievements, Steve was truly the happiest spending time with his family.

Steve is survived by Sharon, his wife of almost 44 years; their daughter, Heather and her family.

Funeral services were held October 18th at University Baptist Church in Fayetteville. Interment with full military honors was held at the Fayetteville National Cemetery.