



VETS' NEWS

Friday, December 10, 2021

Veterans Strengthening America



SAUGUS AMERICAN LEGION POST 210

BOSTON — The Massachusetts Legislature passed a \$4 billion American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) relief package on Friday, December 3, 2021

Having passed the House and Senate, the legislation now advances to Gov. Charlie Baker's desk for consideration. *(Lynn Daily Item)*

Local investments include \$20,000 for a new commercial stove and oven for the **American Legion Post 210 in Saugus.**

SHARE YOUR WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA PLANS WITH US

For more than three decades, American Legion Family members across the nation have joined with other Americans to gather in December to "remember our fallen U.S. veterans, honor those who serve, and teach children the value of freedom" through the placing of wreaths on veterans' graves.

country, and with measures taken to ensure safety during the pandemic, [2020 was no different.](#)

This year, Dec. 18 will mark the 29th National [Wreaths Across America Day](#). Annually, more than 1 million wreaths are placed across more than 2,000 locations in the United States and throughout the world, honoring the veterans buried at those gravesites.

American Legion posts and Legion Family members participating in this annual program are encouraged to email sbrooks@legion.org in advance to share your plans for potential coverage in American Legion media. Posts can share their wreath-laying stories on the Legion's web page www.legiontown.org.

American Legion Family members have long been a part of Wreaths Across America events throughout the

For more information about Wreaths Across America, click [here](#). For all social media postings, use the hashtag [#LiveTheirLegacy2021](#)

11-21 IMPACT: SCHOLARSHIPS, GRANTS, MVPS AND THE BATTLE FOR A BETTER VA

American Legion Baseball alum Bryce Harper of the Philadelphia Phillies secured his second Major League Baseball Most Valuable Player award in November, and the American League and National League Managers of the Year for 2021 also climbed to the highest levels of the game, having passed through their own respective American Legion programs on their way to the bigs.

children facing difficulties; and posts whose operations were adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Meanwhile, American Legion Junior Shooting Sports teams are getting registered for the 2021-22 season of competition, and downloads of the Tango Alpha Lima national podcast soared once again during the month.

The November 2021 American Legion Membership Impact Report also records the signing into law of long-awaited improvements in maternity care at VA facilities, and American Legion Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Division Director Katie Purswell testified last month before lawmakers on the need to address inequities in the handling of benefits claims from survivors of military sexual trauma.

Grants were distributed to veterans who suffered damages from Hurricane Ida; nonprofits that assist

[Click here to view the November 2021 American Legion Membership Impact Report](#), as well as reports from previous months.

HAVE PANCAKES WITH SANTA AT THE LEGION HALL

Sandwich American Legion Women's Auxiliary along with the Sons of the American Legion will host a "Breakfast with Santa" on Saturday, December 11, from 9 to 11 AM.

The event will be held at the Legion Hall, 20 Main Street in Sandwich.

Santa will be there with elves, and dancing Christmas trees, and even the Grinch might stop by.

Children can chat with Santa, and there will be games and crafts, too.

The event is free. (*Sandwich Enterprise*)



LETTER: A SPECIAL THANKSGIVING THANK YOU

To the Editor (*Gloucester Daily Times*):

Sadly the COVID pandemic is still in full swing with its variants but Thanksgiving is still a special holiday. It reminds us of hope, freedom and the will to overcome all obstacles, even COVID-19, and renew our determination going forward.

That determination was on full display on Thanksgiving Day at the Open Door Food Pantry. There more than 60 volunteers prepared, cooked, served and packaged more than 630 complete turkey meals with all the fixings that were then placed in more than 52 volunteers' cars and delivered to the elderly, shut-ins, veterans and regular citizens who just needed help on this holiday in Gloucester, Rockport, Manchester, Essex and Ipswich, as well as to one 80-plus veteran who was going to be alone in Salem on this day.

To those drivers, I thank you, mission accomplished. From the enthusiasm and determination of those who took precious time out of their own holiday celebration to insure that others less fortunate had an opportunity to share in this very special day, you succeeded. The looks of happiness and gratitude of those who were the recipients of these meals was precious. It's just another example of individuals and families in this great city coming together to send a message "that you are not forgotten and together we can succeed!" But this couldn't have been successfully accomplished without a lot of help and support.

Thanks to the Cape Ann Savings Bank and the Institution for Savings for their generous financial support as well as all others who contributed financially. What is truly gratifying is that not only did Cape Ann Savings Bank step up financially but that the president, Marianne Smith, the former president, Bucky Rogers and Vice President Leo Bergeron were all volunteer drivers — the true example of a community bank. To Virgilio's Bakery and Table Talk Pies for the food donations, which were the highlights of many of the meals (after the turkey of course!). To all of my volunteer servers and cooks, especially my two cook

chaplains, Paul Krueger and Brian Torkildsen, who appeared to constantly be praying over their cooking to make sure that they didn't burn the turkeys! To state Sen. Bruce Tarr, who again led by example and volunteered and worked as a server throughout the entire process and not just for a photo op! He is the epitome of a true public servant and has always been a friend to veterans and we will never forget that.

A special shout out Lt. Robert Palazzola and all the U. S. Naval Sea Cadets Corps of the David G. Ouellet Division and to Master Sgt. Carcel A. DuBose (USMC Ret.) and the Gloucester High School U.S. Marine Corps Junior ROTC cadets who loaded all of those meals into the trunks of the volunteer drivers' cars to be delivered throughout Cape Ann. People who, but for this gesture, would have faced another dark and lonely day and been denied the opportunity to enjoy a Thanksgiving holiday meal. We have a saying in the military, "leave no one behind," and this applies even now as we fight this pandemic and emerging variants. **This is the mission of the American Legion now and it will be the same in the future.**

Even though the request for meals was again high this year we rose and successfully met the challenge. We did not flinch and we did not fail. We gave back!

Additionally, a very special and heartfelt thanks to Open Door President and CEO Julie LaFontaine and the staff at the Open Door who opened their hearts and their doors so that this Thanksgiving operation could take place in a safe and healthy environment. Finally, to all my volunteers and donors, I thank you from the bottom of my heart and I am honored to have met all of you who participated in this event. I am not sure that you can begin to understand what it means to those you helped, for many it meant everything. Someone cared! You are the true heroes and your efforts can and never will be forgotten.

Mark L. Nestor. Commander
Capt. Lester S. Wass, American Post 3
Gloucester

TIME FOR TURKEY: LEGION VOLUNTEERS SERVE UP 600-PLUS MEALS



American Legion Chaplain Rev. Paul Krueger, right, mixes stuffing while Robert Bauke, left, works on cranberry sauce as volunteers and members of Gloucester American Legion Post 3 prepare Thanksgiving meals at The Open Door in Gloucester on Thanksgiving morning/ The more than 600 meals were delivered to people all around Cape Ann later on Thanksgiving Day.

The ovens at The Open Door were filled with turkeys Thanksgiving morning as volunteers with the **Lester S. Wass Post 3 of the American Legion** cooked and readied holiday meals for more 600 people.

For the second year in row because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Legion volunteers did not serve up the usual sit-down meal at the Washington Street post.

The Legion provided full Thanksgiving meals — at no cost to the recipients — to more than 600 seniors, shut-ins, veterans, homeless and other members of the general public in Gloucester, Manchester, Rockport, Essex and Ipswich, said post Commander Mark Nestor.

About 50 volunteers — including members of Gloucester High School's JROTC program, Gloucester's David G. Ouellet Division of the U.S. Navy Sea Cadets and Legion staff — utilized The Open Door's kitchen and facility on Emerson Avenue to prepare a Thanksgiving meal for delivery that same day.

Then, Nestor said more than 60 volunteer drivers delivered the free meals to residents who signed up for the service over the last few weeks. *Gloucester Daily Times*)



A TRADITION LIVES ON: SENIOR CITIZENS ENJOY THANKSGIVING DINNER COURTESY AT LEGION POST 221



Guests at the 2021 Thanksgiving luncheon for Bedford's seniors.



Volunteers were central to the success of Sunday's luncheon at the American Legion.

Thanksgiving week began for dozens of Bedford senior citizens Sunday afternoon the way it has every year for at least a half-century: a free holiday dinner at **Bedford American Legion Post 221**.

Our most important citizens are our seniors – they're the foundation of the great town that we live in," said Paula Verrier, the retired Bedford High School teacher who serves as functions manager for the post.

Verrier said past Commander Gerry Hartman works with Alison Cservenschi, Council on Aging director, to spread the word about the free event and handle registration. "We bring in some new people every year," Verrier said.

Verrier was four when she moved to Bedford in the late 1950s. She remembers when her father Paul joined

other volunteers cooking the entire dinner – Ed Campbell, Ralph Park, Al and Lenny Milligan. Irene Rivet would mobilize the Women's Auxiliary.

Guests at Sunday's event included Cservenschi and her family and members of the Council on Aging. Among the volunteers was Gina Rada, Bedford and Lexington veterans services district director, who is now also an officer of Post 221. Arthur Conrad, post CFO, and Jon O'Connor, immediate past commander, took turns presiding.

Verrier said all the arms of the Legion post contributed to the event, including the Sons of the American Legion and the Legion Riders, as well as the Veterans of Foreign Wars post, which shares space in the building. She said volunteers of all ages responded to her call to support the dinner. *(Bedford Citizen)*



THANKSGIVING TURKEY BASKETS FOR VETERANS

On Thursday, November 18, **Webster American Legion Post 184**, under the direction of Commander Ron Handelson, delivered many turkey baskets to the Dudley Veterans Office. The donated turkeys and fixings came from the generous support of the American Legion members along with Webster Price Chopper who is always eager to support veterans in our Community.

Volunteers from the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post 654 of Webster and Dudley assisted Dudley

Veterans Services Officer Stephen Rogerson in distributing the Thanksgiving baskets to those veterans and families needing a little extra at this time.

As this is a time of giving thanks, please remember the veterans who have served and those who are serving still. Keep in mind that the communities of Webster and Dudley have a very large veteran population for which we should be proud and grateful.

Stephen Rogerson, VSO, Dudley

(Yankee Xpress)



LETTER: THANK YOU FOR DECORATING VETERANS WAR MEMORIAL

To the editor (*Ipswich Local News*):

On behalf of the American Legion Post 80 and all the veterans of Ipswich, I would like to take the opportunity to thank Corliss Brothers Nursery and Gordon Florist and Greenhouses for their continued service to the town of Ipswich.

The donation of Christmas wreaths and decorations will adorn the Veterans' War Memorial and the various Heroes Squares

throughout the town. It contributes greatly to the remembrance of those individuals who gave so much for our country.

Wishing you a happy holiday season,

James E. Graftum, Commander
American Legion Post 80
Ipswich



PATRIOTISM OR DESECRATION? WREATHS ON VETERANS' GRAVESITES SPARKS PROTEST

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. — A nationwide tradition viewed by some Americans as a patriotic display recognizing service and sacrifice represents for others a sectarian religious symbol amounting to desecration.

Complaints about the popular Wreaths Across America Day, when fresh evergreen wreaths are placed at gravesites of military veterans at national and local cemeteries, are climbing in the weeks leading up to this year's event, says the founder of a civil rights advocacy organization that's protesting the practice.

"We have no problem if people reach out and want a wreath on their deceased veterans' graves, but to put them everywhere, to blanket them without permission of the surviving families is unconstitutional, an atrocity and a disgrace," said Mikey Weinstein, founder of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation.

The crucifix is at the crux of the opposition.

Weinstein, who is Jewish, and his supporters — who include Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Sikhs, the Jedi Church as well as Christians — believe the wreath pays homage to Christianity.

"This should be an aspect of respect," Weinstein said. "It's almost like a fundamentalist Christian gang sign to put a symbol of the Christian season of Christmas on any grave."

Amber Caron, spokeswoman for the Maine-headquartered Wreaths Across America, said the wreaths, each hand made of 10 boughs of balsam tied with a red velveteen bow, are veterans' wreaths, not Christmas wreaths.

"We are not 'decorating graves' but honoring American heroes," she said.

The idea of placing wreaths on deceased military members' graves began informally at Arlington National Cemetery in December 1992, when a family who owns a wreath-making business in Maine donated their leftover stock to the Army-run cemetery in Virginia.

Since becoming a nonprofit in 2007, Wreaths Across America has expanded to 3,100 burial sites including 145 of 154 National Cemetery Administration properties, Caron said.

Individuals as well as groups such as **American Legion posts** and Scouting programs, contributed \$24.9 million to Wreaths Across America in the fiscal year ending June 30, 2020, tax forms show.

Volunteers are expected to lay nearly 2 million wreaths on graves during this year's observance on Dec. 18.

The mission, Caron said, is to remember all the fallen, honor those that serve in the military and their families, and teach the next generation the value of freedom.

Weinstein calls the custom proselytizing.

"To argue that it isn't a Christian symbol is preposterous," he said. "Imagine if that was an atheist, Satanic or Jewish symbol."

Throughout history, wreaths have been laced with symbolism from various cultures, including paganism, and often denote the spiritual belief in life everlasting and the rebirth of the spirit.

Weinstein's organization requested in 2014 that Wreaths Across America not place wreaths at

headstones of departed service members that display the Jewish Star of David, known in Hebrew as Magen David.

Leaving live flowers or wreaths at headstones is normally not a Jewish ritual.

In 2017, a photo circulated with a wreath from the program leaning on a headstone with a Star of David.

Some Jewish families request the wreaths, Caron said, and sometimes, volunteers unintentionally place them at a grave with the Jewish star. Wreaths Across America's official policy states that the organization "is not affiliated with any religion or political view," she pointed out.

The program follows the policies of cemeteries that grant permission for the annual remembrance ceremony, Caron said.

At cemeteries that don't have formal policies, volunteers "do not place a wreath on the headstones of those graves marked with the Star of David, out of respect for Jewish custom," the organization's policy states.

"We simply pause and pay our respects. The only exception is when families of the deceased request a wreath, and then their wishes are honored."

The National Cemetery Administration honors that policy "to the best of our ability," said Michael Brophy, director of the Fort Logan National Cemetery complex in Denver, which has more than 105,000 graves.

The federal agency allows Wreaths Across America to set wreaths at gravesites but does not carry out any function of the program, Brophy said. Volunteers do.

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But cemetery staff check graves to see if any graves are marked incorrectly, Brophy said.

Anyone who has concerns about gravesite decorations or other issues should contact the cemetery, he said. Fort Logan keeps a list of requests regarding such matters, Brophy said, and abides by them.

“As a general matter of course, for any reason of concern we try to reach a mutual accommodation and respect the wishes of families of loved ones interred,” Brophy said.

Weinstein said his organization has received thousands of grievances since Wreaths Across America expanded nationwide 15 years ago.

This year, the office has fielded “an overwhelming number of complaints,” Weinstein said, producing hundreds of angry phone calls, letters and emails about the program.

He’s calling for cemeteries to require families’ permission instead of an opt-out system to address the matter.

Fort Logan, a National Cemetery under the auspices of the Department of Veterans’ Affairs, has not received any complaints, Brophy said.

“It seems to be quite popular,” he said of the wreath-laying event, which this year has raised enough money for volunteers to place 12,000 wreaths at Fort Logan in a

yearly rotation so that all graves are periodically covered.

He expects up to 2,000 volunteers for the public ceremony that starts at 10 a.m. on Dec. 18.

The United States Air Force Academy for the eighth time will place donated wreaths on all 1,350 gravesites on the military installation in Colorado Springs, said spokesman Dean J. Miller.

Wreaths were donated from contributions of Americans nationwide, he said, and are arriving from the Air Force Services Agency in San Antonio, Texas.

“No religious affiliation is associated with wreaths by the Academy and all requests to opt out of such honors received from families of veterans interred at the Academy Cemetery are honored,” Miller said in an email.

The academy’s mortuary affairs officer said in her nearly 30 years in her post, she has “never received a request to opt out from families of interred veterans.”

Sponsorship of the \$15 wreaths topped the goal of covering all 2,600 gravesites at the Pikes Peak National Cemetery this year, said Wreaths Across America cemetery coordinator Jennifer Kendig.

She’s a member of the **American Legion Auxiliary** in Falcon.

“So many people come out and support this event because it means a lot to honor the veterans that have

passed,” Kendig said. “It’s heart-warming to see.”

Fundraising produced enough money to buy more than 3,000 wreaths this year, with the overage offered to other area cemeteries or applied to next year’s ceremony, she said.

Sponsoring organizations receive \$5 from every wreath sold, some of which is donated to veterans’ organizations in the Falcon area, she added.

Weinstein said he and his wife started the organization he heads after their children attended the Air Force Academy and were subject to anti-Semitism.

Over the past 16 years, he said his organization has represented nearly 77,000 clients who oppose certain practices pertaining to the military that they believe have religious overtones. Most wish to remain anonymous, Weinstein said, for fear of retribution. But he believes they all have the right to dissent when religion — primarily Christianity — is infused into the military culture and lifestyle.

“People say you’re Scrooge Weinstein, but this is wrong and un-American to assume every veteran would want a wreath on their grave,” he said. “These veterans have given their all for this country, and they can’t fight back now. We’re going to continue fighting for them.” (*Eagle Tribune*)



NEW MISSION BLUE POST ELIGIBILITY RULES SET

It's been a year since The American Legion's Mission Blue Post Assistance Program went into effect following the adoption of Resolution No. 36 by the National Executive Committee during the 2020 Fall Meetings. The program provides eligible American Legion posts financially affected by COVID-19 government restrictions with \$1,000 grants. These funds are to pay current or past due rent, mortgage, utilities and insurance premiums.

However, of the more than 12,400 American Legion posts, only 465 have applied for, and received, this grant.

In looking at the eligibility requirements for the Mission Blue Post Assistance grant, it was identified that a possible deterrent for posts to apply is the insurance requirement. Therefore, to ensure posts in need apply for and receive this grant, the following eligibility requirements for the grant application are now in effect.

1. Any post that does not have insurance that names the national organization as an additional insured and/or has not filed a 2021 Consolidated Post Report but meets the other grant qualifications identified in Resolution No. 36, may receive up to \$1,000.

2. Any post that has met the insurance requirement and has a 2021 Consolidated Post Report on file and meets the other grant qualifications identified in Resolution No. 36, may receive up to \$2,000. Posts that previously applied for and received a \$1,000 grant, can reapply to receive another \$1,000.

[Download the Mission Blue Post Assistance Program application.](#) Eligible posts have until July 1, 2022, to apply.

Resolution No. 36 eligibility criteria for posts

1. A Consolidated Post Report on file at National Headquarters.

2. Filed an IRS 990 within the prescribed due date.

3. Filed all other required forms and reports as prescribed by the department.

4. Actively participated in one or more American Legion programs within the last 18 months.

5. A financial need.

6. A certificate of insurance for all liability coverage naming The American Legion doing business as (dba) The American Legion National Headquarters and the post's department as an additional insured. (Submit declaration page showing coverage.)

7. Documentation indicating that the post is properly incorporated.

Q: Where should applications be submitted?

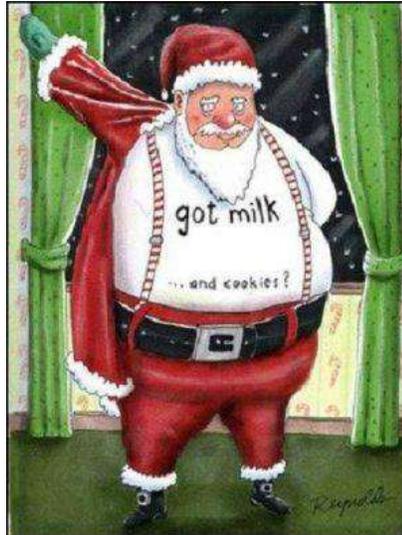
A: All applications will first need to go through the respective department prior to being submitted to National Headquarters. Department commanders and/or adjutants must certify the applicant meets the criteria.

Q: What is required by recipient posts in terms of the grant report?

A: All recipient posts are required to submit a grant report within six months of the grant/check issue date. There is a standardized grant report that is sent out with every inclusion letter to the department for the recipient posts. A fillable PDF version is also available via email request to ia@legion.org. When completing the Mission Blue grant report, a recipient post needs to only report how the grant, which is capped at \$1,000, was utilized. For example, \$250 used for insurance and \$750 used for utilities. Reported figures should not exceed the amount that was awarded.



A BIT OF HUMOR



Santa's sexual harassment trial takes a dramatic change for the worse

Please Note:
CHISTMAS IS CANCELLED

Apparently, YOU told Santa that you have been GOOD this year ...

He died laughing

A graphic with a white background. At the top, it says "Please Note:" in red, followed by "CHISTMAS IS CANCELLED" in large, bold, red letters. Below that, it says "Apparently, YOU told Santa that you have been GOOD this year ..." in black. In the center, there is a cartoon of Santa Claus lying on his back on the ground, with his red sack of gifts spilled around him. At the bottom, it says "He died laughing" in a red, cursive font. The entire graphic is framed by a red and blue border with white stars.



POST EVENTS

AND OTHER VETERANS ACTIVITIES

ARMY***MARINES***NAVY*AIRFORCE*COAST GUARD

Executive Committee Woman Neysa Wright

Come out and support

Sponsored by:



Wm. E. Carter Post16 and MA All Nurses Post296

Where: Wm E Carter Post 16
1531 Blue Hill Avenue Boston/Mattapan

When: December 12, 2021!!!
1:00PM - 5:00PM

Luncheon Cost: \$35

All are Welcome

PLEASE RSVP:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/luncheon-to-support-committee-woman-neysa-wright-tickets-193774192827>

Please contact for more information:

Karen Scott @ 617-842-0454 or Sandra Means at reanel2@icloud.com

RSVP BY: NOVEMBER 24, 2021



**Sons of The American Legion
National Vice Commander
Richard "Dickie" Huntley
Visitation Dinner**



Saturday, January 8, 2022

2PM – 6PM at Cherry Valley Post 443

We will be holding a fundraiser for the
Detachment Commander's Charitable Project
The American Legion Veterans & Children's Foundation

Italian Buffet - Mystery Merch Raffle & More

Tickets \$15.00 contact Mark McCue markbmccue@gmail.com



PROUD TO BE AN AMERICAN

American Legion Riders Chapter 101

Presents

2nd Annual Left-Right-Center

Charity dice games



\$25.00 entry fee will get your first two games

we can have several games at different dollar amounts as needed.

We will have a cash bar and food and music

Location. George A Campbell post Woburn, Ma. 01801

Save the date. Saturday, January 29th 2022

12-4pm

we will have a 50/50 and raffle items



Contact Bruce at 978 375 4325 Or email bruce7966@hotmail.com



Join us on Sunday, February 13,
2022

Dudley Gendron Post 414
Super Bowl Potluck Gathering
5:30 p.m.-Closing

This is Free and Open to the Public; all you need to do is Dress in
your football gear and bring a dish for the Gathering to Share

**DEPARTMENT OF MASSACHUSETTS
AMERICAN LEGION CONVENTIONS**

6/24/2022 6/26/2022 Best Western Royal
Plaza
181 Boston Post Rd West, Marlborough

6/7/2024 6/9/2024 Best Western Royal
Plaza
181 Boston Post Rd West, Marlborough

6/9/2023 6/11/2023 Best Western Royal
Plaza
181 Boston Post Rd West, Marlborough

6/6/2025 6/8/2025 Best Western Royal
Plaza
181 Boston Post Rd West, Marlborough

American Legion National Convention Sites and Dates

<u>Year</u>	<u>Dates</u>	<u>Location</u>
2022	Aug 26 – Sept 1	Milwaukee, Wisconsin
2023	Aug 25 – 31	Charlotte, North Carolina
2024	Aug 23 – 29	New Orleans, Louisiana
2025	Aug 22 – 28	Tampa, Florida
2026	Aug 28 – Sept 3	Louisville, Kentucky

(Submitted to VETS' NEWS by Milton Lashus)

THE END!