



The American Legion Department of Maine

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Weekly Update



December 18, 2009

☺ **SMILE** ☺

**For each one of us there is a desert to travel, a star to discover
and a being within ourselves to bring to life.**

Congratulations to the following for achieving 100% in membership:

Palermo Post 163

Holiday Reminder

The Department Headquarters office will close at 11 a.m. on Thursday, December 24 and will remain closed until Monday, December 28 for the Christmas holiday. Also, the office will be closed on January 1, 2010 for New Years.

Dues Payment

Legion membership is based on a calendar year from January 1 to December 31. If dues are not paid by Jan. 1 of each calendar year, the member becomes delinquent. If dues have not been paid by Feb. 1, the member is suspended and is not in good standing and is not eligible for transfer.

If you do not have a membership card that reads "2010", after January 1, 2010 you will be a delinquent member. Your post tries so hard to get your dues collected prior to January 1, so you do not lose any benefits of your membership, including insurance coverage. If you are in this category, please contact your local post to pay your dues so your membership in The American Legion remains continuous.

**Mid-Winter
Conference Agenda**

January 15-16-17, 2010
Farmington, ME

Friday, January 15, 2010

Post kitchen and lounge open at 4 p.m.

Saturday, January 16, 2010

Opening Ceremony
Fallen Soldier Salute – Young Marines
Welcome
Maine Blind Camp Update
Legislative Update
Special Olympics Update
Resolutions
Baseball Information and Update
Bangor Troop Greeters
Mentoring
Service Office Update

L U N C H

History Information/Update
Consolidated Post Reports/Update
Keynote Speaker
Membership Awards and Drawings
Americanism Update
Sweepstakes Drawing
Announcements
Closing Ceremony
Meetings – Past Post Commanders Club (Business and election of new officers
Resolutions Committee Meeting

E V E N I N G

Social Time, 5 p.m.-6 p.m. Post #28
Banquet
Dance Post #28

Sunday, January 17, 2010

DEC meeting, 9 a.m. at the Hotel.

Vets Shielded from Health Care Reform

The national health reform bill passed by the House last month and the Senate version to be debated in early December pose no threat to current health care benefits provided to military families, retirees or veterans, say advocates for these beneficiaries as well as congressional committee staffs.

The House-passed Affordable Health Care for America Act (HR 3962) states in Section 311 that "nothing" in the bill "shall be construed as affecting" authorities used by the departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs to provide TRICARE programs or VA health care benefits.

The Military Officers Association of America (MOAA), the Fleet Reserve Association of America, the American Legion and other veterans' service organizations have studied the legislative language of both bills. Their own reviews, and assurances they've received from relevant committees, give them confidence that the bills won't impact benefits or fees charged by TRICARE or VA, nor will these beneficiaries be exposed to any new tax liabilities.

"We have not talked to anybody – Republican, Democrat, anyone in the [Obama] administration or serving in Congress -- who is trying to do anything to affect military people" as part of national health reform legislation, said Steve Strobbridge, MOAA's director of government relations. "They all are trying to hold military beneficiaries harmless."

Steve Robertson, legislative director for the American Legion, said he has assurances from the armed services committees, veterans' affairs committees and congressional leaders including House Speaker Nancy Pelosi that health reform will not impact TRICARE programs or VA health care.

My comfort level is pretty high," Robertson said.

Confusing the issue for many beneficiaries has been an e-mail being passed among military retirees that warns falsely that the Congressional Budget Office has drafted legislation to attach new fees to TRICARE for Life, the prized insurance supplement relied on by Medicare-eligible retirees.

The e-mail is filled with misinformation. CBO has no authority to draft legislation. CBO did release a report last December presenting options for holding down federal health care costs; a few of those options would raise fees on military retirees and veterans. But neither the Obama administration nor any members of Congress have embraced any of these ideas.

Oil Coupons

The Maine Energy Marketers Association, formally the Maine Oil Dealers Association, and Bangor Savings Bank, is teaming up this year to provide oil coupons to dependent family members of service members (SM) currently serving in or on orders en-route to Iraq or Afghanistan.

Eligible family members are as follows:

Spouses or significant others who live in the SM home or those who have temporary custody of a mobilized SM child (ren). There are 80 coupons each valued at \$250 available. The Military Family Assistance Center will administer this program as follows:

1. Email the SM name, rank, unit deployed, home address, and home telephone number to the Military Family Assistance Center at Kerry.Birmingham@us.army.mil or call the MFAC at 1-888-365-9287 no later than January 29, 2010.

2. Those eligible will be listed in order by SM rank beginning with the lowest rank of E-1. Coupons will be mailed by rank order to each SM home of record until the supply has been exhausted.

This is the 7th consecutive year this program has been made available to Maine's military families. Thanks and a big HOOAH to the MEMS and Bangor Savings Bank for your continued support of Maine's military families, it is greatly appreciated.

PLEASE NOTE. AGAIN, because of the limited number of oil coupons available, only those dependent families who have a service member currently serving in or on orders en-route to Iraq or Afghanistan are eligible.

Letters

Happy Holidays. My husband Gerry and I went to put a Christmas wreath on the grave of his father, Robert Phillips, today and found that a wreath had already been placed there from Wreaths Across America. My husband was very touched. We attended the ceremony in Hermon last weekend, but Gerry had no idea a wreath would be given to his dad. So I would like to thank the individuals who took the time to do that for our family.

Peggy Cole-Phillips

Directory Changes

Pg. 57, Millinocket Post 80, telephone number 447-6877, canteen 723-8088, fax number 447-6877, e-mail: dvh80@beeline-online.net

District Meetings

District 16 – S. Aroostook: Jan 2, Easton Post 187, 1 p.m. dinner, 2 p.m. mtg.

District 3 – Androscoggin: Jan. 10, Mechanic Falls Post 150, 1 p.m. Oratorical, 2 p.m. mtg.

District 11 – Waldo: Jan. 17, Belfast Post 43, 2 p.m.

District 5 – Oxford: Jan. 20, S. Paris Post 72, 7 p.m., Oratorical contest

Kudos

Hampden Post 213 Post for their donation of \$100 to their adopted Rehab Unit at the Maine Veterans Home in Bangor.

Hermon Post 200 for their donation of \$25 to Camp Tall Pines.

Fairfield Post 14 for their donation of \$1,500 to the Fairfield Interfaith Pantry from their annual meat raffle.

Berwick Post 79 for their donations of \$400 to the Berwick Employees Benevolent Fund to provide Thanksgiving and Christmas food baskets and \$200 to the Berwick United Methodist Church. The Executive Committee authorized a Christmas gift of \$50 to all residents of Berwick serving on active duty for whom a valid address could be obtained. The Executive Committee decided to pay the 2010 dues of any member of the Post serving in the Armed Forces of the United States on a tour in excess of 180 days.

Augusta Post 2 for their donations of \$100 and wrapped Christmas gifts, \$500 and wrapped Christmas gifts to two military families of deployed soldiers, \$500 for an active duty soldier seriously injured in an automobile accident, \$500 to a woman in the community without health insurance and \$1300 to Kennebec Behavioral Health.

Portland Post 17 for their donations of \$500 to the Barbara Bush Children's Hospital at Maine Medical Center and \$500 to Camp Tall Pines.

Donations

THANK YOU

THANK YOU

THANK YOU

Winterport Post 138

\$200 – VAVS

Waterville Post 5

\$500 – Maine Blind Camp

Robert W. Jones, Sr., Mechanic Falls Post 150

\$15 – Caribou Fire Victims

La Societe De Femme Cabane #613

\$50 – Caribou Fire Victims

James W. Harper, Jr., Topsham Post 202

\$50 – VA&R

Hermon Post 200

\$25 – Camp Tall Pines (Legion camp)

Roland E. Gorman, Headquarters Post 178

\$50 - VAVS

**Sons of The American Legion
Detachment News**

The Detachment of Maine, SAL wishes everyone a very Merry Christmas. There's just seven days left until Santa flies his annual sortie so I hope our youngest Sons have been good. Note to parents and grandparents; you can sign up a son as soon as he is born and a 2010 membership card makes a great Christmas gift. Those wishing to follow Santa as he flies his mission may do so on the internet at www.noradsanta.org on Christmas eve. The North American Air Defense (NORAD) tracks Santa every year on his trip around the world.

Please remember our troops deployed and our veterans in Togus and the Veterans Homes around the state. They gave so much, a prayer and a little of our time is not so much to ask. I salute you all who have been busy collecting and donating to make Christmas a little brighter for these souls.

The Lobster Dip 2010 is only two weeks away. I hope the Sons will make a good showing as always. Our relative youth gives us an advantage at this. I'm home recovering from surgery but hoping my doctor gives me the okay to do the dip. This is a major fund raiser for Special Olympics of Maine so let's all get down to Old Orchard Beach at high noon on New Years Day for a nice warm swim in the Gulf of Maine.

If your Squadron has an event and would like it in the SMILE, contact me by Wednesday at unclebru2@aol.com.

Yours in Service.
Bruce Pierce
Detachment Commander

Auxiliary Corner

Sharing information with you this week:

ALA's new Travel Program has set up several tours that could prove to be a great deal of fun. Check these tours out at www.ALATravel.com. Remember, your participation in this program works for the Auxiliary while giving members a new benefit.

Do you receive the Auxiliary e-News? Have you checked out the new and improved Auxiliary web site? If your answer to the above questions is no, then take a minute and check them out. You will be cheating yourself if you don't. www.legion-aux.org

The Auxiliary Magazine is now available on line. If this is something that you would prefer to a paper copy, please contact alamagazine@legion-aux.org.

From our Department Historian comes the following: What a wonderful time of the year. I had the pleasure of participating in one of our Am. Legion Aux., Dept. of Maine Christmas Gift Shop Projects. From reports I have received, it was a very successful one. I wish to thank all our volunteers for their love and devotion. I saw Veterans volunteering in helping Veterans with their shopping. I saw a young Veteran who had recently returned from Iraq taking a Veteran by the arm and gently helping him with his family shopping. I also saw a couple of Border Patrol officers who gave up a days work to come and volunteer dressed in their uniforms. I saw a young mother bring her two little girls to volunteer. This surely gladdens the hearts of many and will not be short lived. This is what makes us so very proud to be an American.

For God and Country. A big thank you for all that you do straight from the heart. Here is wishing you and yours a Wonderful, Joyous Christmas, and the best in the New Year.

Margaret Johnson

-----WORKING TOGETHER BRINGS RESULTS-----

Lois M. Hubbard
ALA President
Email:misslois@mgemaine.com

1561 Mason Bay Rd.
Jonesport, ME 04649
TEL: 207-497-5949
FAX: 207-497-5949

Best Wishes,

Lloyd Woods,
Department Adjutant

WISH LIST – December, 2009
Department of Veterans Affairs Center (135)
1 VA Center
Augusta, Maine 04330
(207) 621-4886
mysti.grass@va.gov

VOLUNTEER ASSIGNMENTS:

1. Drivers for Volunteer Transportation Network (Bangor, Rockland, Rumford, Bath/Brunswick)
2. Mealtime companions for long term care patients (any lunch and dinner during the week)
3. 73 Patriot Place and Dialysis - 1-on-1 visitation/reading and talking with patient
4. Parking Lot Shuttle driver
5. Information Desk
6. Escort Volunteers
7. Supply, Process and Distribution Center

ONGOING PROGRAM SUPPORT:

1. Calling cards (60 minutes or more per card)
2. Afghans (for a twin bed)
3. Comfort Items, i.e., shampoo, bar soap, deodorant, disposable razors etc. (*No alcohol based products*)
4. Diabetic snacks funds
5. Coffee funds (provides coffee in waiting areas/wards/clinics)
6. Newspaper funds (provides newspapers in waiting areas/wards/clinics)
7. General Patient Comfort Fund including Memorial Donations
8. Adapted Sports Equipment/Outings - Recreation Therapy
9. National Rehabilitation Events (Golden Age Games, Winter Sports, Wheelchair Games, and Creative Arts)

SPECIAL REQUESTS/PROJECTS:

1. Unit 4 South activity sponsorship (*approx \$50 pizza party, \$25 ice cream social*)
2. Organizations to sponsor entertainment on 73 Patriot Place
3. Parking Lot Shuttle Vehicle Project
4. Portable DVD players 2 (*approx \$150 ea.*)
5. Electric Razors

NOT NEEDED AT THIS TIME! Books; Used Stamps; any clothing that is stained or torn; Jigsaw Puzzles; Playing Cards; Magazines over three months old; Dental Floss; After-Shave; Hand Lotion; Writing Tablets; Pens; and Envelopes. **Due to Infection Control policies we are unable to take used walkers, canes, or crutches at this time.**

The Internal Revenue Service has announced that under the Tax Code, donations to the Department of Veterans Affairs' General Post Fund for exclusively public purposes are deductible from federal income taxes in the manner and to the extent allowable. The announcement reflects the tax law provision, which makes those donations deductible as "donations to the United States". Donations to support any of the Department's programs are deductible, whether the donor directs that the donated funds be used for a specific purpose or allows the Department to decide how the donated funds will be used. Donated funds made by check should be made out to "VAVS" and sent to the address above.