



# The Veterans Observer

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## Loyalty. Unity. Valor.

By: Steven B. Brooks

As he stood on the stage of the CI Convention Center in New Orleans addressing delegates to the 105th American Legion National Convention, newly elected National Commander James A. LaCoursiere Jr. pledged to continue to maintain the mission of the organization's Be the One veteran suicide prevention program and raise funds for the Veterans & Children Foundation. "You don't fix something that's not broken," he said, referencing the work done before him by Past National Commanders James Troiola and Daniel Seehafer. "We're going to maintain the course and follow the consistency that has been set."

And then he introduced what he called his personal and secondary theme: L.U.V., or Loyalty, Unity and Valor.

"The L is the loyalty, the true compassion from the heart," LaCoursiere said. "But the unity is when we all pull together, we all work as one, for one mission. And that's to drive our organization forward, which also enhances America for the better."

"The valor ... we carry that with us in our hearts. And we sit back, and we maintain that from the day we raise our hand to serve this great country and still do that today. That's why you all are here. You do that back home with your posts, your units, your squadrons. And

for that, I sincerely thank you."

A U.S. Air Force veteran and member of American Legion Post 91 in Moosup, Conn., LaCoursiere then shifted to suicide prevention, noting that Be the One "is a very meaningful and personal program and project to me. Be the One, as you heard, is not a slogan, not a catch phrase. It's not just something that looks nice on a billboard or anything



The delegates attending the 105th American Legion National Convention during late August 2024, elected James A. LaCoursiere National Commander for 2024-2025.

such as that, but rather a direct mission statement. Far too many veterans have lost their lives due to suicide, as well as our active-duty troops and members of military families.

"As Commander Seehafer always stated, 'We, The American Legion, are about changing lives and saving lives.' Together, we can reduce

the veteran suicide rate and destigmatize the issues of mental health. Together, we want to train and educate members within our great organization and in our communities about what the Be the One mission is all about."

That includes letting individuals know that it's OK to not be OK. "We, The American Legion, are there for them. We need to listen, be compassionate, ask

Sending the right message about what The American Legion is and does is another focus for the new national commander.

"We need to make every community in the nation know and understand who we are. We are The American Legion," LaCoursiere said. "The second word ... is American. This says we represent all of America's veterans, our active duty, Guard and reserves, and their families as well. Legion is all of us united together as a family striving for the same goals: to keep the United States of America prospering and keep the promise for a stronger country through our youth, our voices in Congress, and striving for the much-deserved quality of life for all those that have served before and continuing today in our armed forces, along with their families. Do not forget the families."

"We need to go beyond the four walls of our post homes and the locations where we meet to become much more visible in every community throughout our great nation, as well as the foreign outlying departments. We do so much great work for our organization and for our great country, but we still are not identified enough as I feel we should be. Together, let's let all of America know that we are The American Legion, we are supporting veterans and their families, as we continue our service by serving America, through changing lives and

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saving lives. The world will know that The American Legion is the voice for veterans.”

LaCoursiere called for continued, and improved, legislative advocacy from the Legion Family. “We need to continue to make our voices heard in our communities, states and on Capitol Hill,” he said. “We have a fantastic grassroots program and constantly have the tools and resources at your fingertips, but in my opinion, we need a hell of a lot more of our Legion Family members to utilize the resources. I encourage – no, actually, the challenge was placed yesterday by Commander Seehafer, when he asked you all to take a brief moment, if you have not done so yet, to register for the Legislative Action Alerts by registering at [legion.org/action](http://legion.org/action), and respond to them regularly by sending messages to Congress on a regular and frequent basis.

“Make our voices heard, and let’s make our members and our numbers show ... especially when we have crucial matters on the table before them, such as The Elizabeth Dole Act supporting our caregivers; the Major Richard Star Act allowing combat-injured

veterans to receive both their earned retirement pay and disability compensation without offset; Pay The Coast Guard, ensuring the Coast Guard receives their earned pay during a government shutdown; and numerous other hot-button issues on behalf of our troops, veterans and families.”

LaCoursiere closed by reminding Legionnaires of a promise he made this summer to Legionnaires during the annual National Membership Workshop – one that’s about having fun.

“I promised everybody that if we all work together and hit the 100-percent mark by the Membership Workshop in 2025, that I, along with my aide, will appear on the stage at the workshop and a brief appearance at the national convention dressed up as cheerleaders.

“I’m cheering for all of you and am committed to working with you, as we grow our organization and let America know who we are – we are The American Legion. The voice for veterans and their families. Thank you, and God bless each and every one of you, and God bless the United States of America.”

## Rider chapter bringing Be the One suicide awareness to its community

*By: The American Legion*

During the past two years, American Legion Riders Chapter 53 in Hillsdale, Mich., has participated in Suicide Prevention Month projects in other area communities. But this year the chapter wanted to bring the issue of veteran suicide directly to local residents.

So, since Sept. 1, its Legion Riders have been placing 22 flags and 22 solar lights each day on Post 53’s property to represent the number of veteran suicides that have occurred nationwide for years. The same number of flags and lights will be placed daily by



(Chapter 53 Facebook photo)

Post 53 American Legion Family members.

The Chapter’s The Ongoing Cost of War display will stay up through Oct. 1 and is an opportunity to create a discussion about veteran suicide, as well as the Legion’s Be the One program to reduce the number of veteran suicides.

Chapter 53 had assisted with similar light displays in Hudson in 2022 and in Clayton in 2023. “It was after helping in Clayton that I knew that I wanted to bring the light display to our Legion in Hillsdale,” Chapter 53 Director and American Legion Auxiliary

### The American Legion Internet Observer

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**Still Serving America**

Do you have an ongoing program or activity that serves your community?

Do you have a friend or relative that goes above and beyond the call of duty to help others?

Send an e-mail to [chief1921@comcast.net](mailto:chief1921@comcast.net) and tell us what your story is or how you or this person is demonstrating that they are Still Serving America, but must be received by the 10th of the month, the month prior.

In submitting your information, please be sure to include your full name, address and telephone number. There’s a good chance the information you send us will make it into The Internet Observer.



Unit 53 member Angela Snyder said. "It was so moving. When you see that yard filled with 660 lights and make that connection – that's 660 souls that have been lost this month. It resonates throughout the month, but when you see that final count, it just really hits home."

Chapter 53 has received support from the post's Legion Family, Michigan nonprofits, a local business and other anonymous donors to supply the lights and flags. Each light represents a person who has died by suicide, while the flag represents that person's military service.

In addition to placing the flags and lights daily, every Tuesday at dusk throughout the month the chapter invites the community to come watch the lights come on and then discuss veteran suicides and ways to reduce them.

"That's kind of why we're out here doing this: to elevate this communication," Snyder said. "I think it's important for each of us, as a Legion member – and it doesn't matter what hat you wear, whether you're a veteran, you're a Son, you're an Auxiliary member, a Rider member – I think it's all of our responsibility to Be the One. Each one of us is responsible for anyone we come into contact with. That's kind of our job within the Legion: to be there. To truly be setting the tone."

But the display also is meant to start a conversation with Post 53. "I feel it's important for our Riders chapter to be doing this, sponsoring this as our contribution to our post home, because I wanted our living vets to see the lights and know that we see them," Snyder said. "I feel it's especially difficult for the older generation: whatever World War II veterans we may have and our Vietnam War vets. These guys came from that quiet era. They weren't treated well when they came home, and they don't talk about what happened ... as much as the younger vets."

Our commander's a (Global War on Terror) vet, and those guys were trained to decompress, if you will. They were trained to talk about things. But our older guys, I think it's harder for them to open up. That's why I felt it was important for us to have something like this to open up that conversation for our older veterans, to get them to feel safe talking about things."

When Suicide Prevention Month comes to an end, Post 53 will host a ceremony on Oct. 1 in front of the display. The ceremony will end with a retirement of unserviceable American flags.

To learn more about The American Legion's Be the One veteran suicide prevention program, click [here](#).

## A Message From Post 123 Commander Winter

### Hope everyone survived the hot summer in good shape

by: Doug Winter, Commander Post 123

There are a few items on this month agenda that I think you may find of interest. The National convention has concluded, and we have a new National Commander. James A. LaCoursiere Jr. U.S. Air Force veteran and member of American Legion Post 91 in Moosup, Con. Commander LaCoursiere Jr. pledged to continue to maintain the mission of the organization's [Be the One](#) veteran suicide prevention program, and raise funds for the Veterans & Children Foundation. "You don't fix something that's not broken,"

Commander LaCoursiere Jr. concluded his introduction by saying "I'm cheering for all of you and am committed to working with you, as we grow our organization and let America know who we are – we are The American Legion. The voice for veterans and their families. Thank you, and God bless each and every one of you, and God bless the United States of America."

The Commanders full speech and details of the convention can be found at: [Legion.org](#) along with a plethora of information regarding our organization. THE AMERICAN LEGION.

I have just downloaded our latest membership rooster and am proud to welcome new members and thank existing members.

A quick update: Over the past year and a half the Department of Colorado charter has been under suspension. Posts and districts have functioned as normal. Our Department is being staffed by National personnel as we work toward reinstatement hopefully by Department convention.

Post 123, The Virtual Post is totally on-line. We are the first and only virtual post in Colorado and our communication is through the website: 2TWR.com. This website includes several other locations and features which you are totally welcome to. They include THE VETERANS OBSERVER which you will automatically get a copy of monthly and Kitchen Tips which is a culinary, kitchen

tips reviews and much more website. FYI and disclosure, Kitchen tips and 2TWR domains are owned and operated by Patty & Doug Winter.

Membership is important to each of us and to the organization. I grew up in an active post and know the values to Legionnaires as well as the local communities. Having said that, not everyone wants to be involved, thus Post 123, The Virtual Post. I stand glad and ready to assist anyone wanting to transfer to a local post. The bylaws call for 2 signatures on a transfer. The incoming post Commander and the outgoing Commander. I will verify the Legionnaire (you) really wants to be transferred and promptly sign-off.

Within the next 60 days our Country is facing a Presidential election, Nov 5th. This election is said to be the most important election in history. Our Country is in turmoil and Veterans have a stake in this election. Veterans housing in some states and cities has been displaced and some of our precious VA benefits in some areas have been spent on the influx of people illegally crossing our borders. That number is estimated at 15-20 million if not more. Some States and Cities are even trying to allow these illegals to vote.

There are several main issues Americans are concerned with in this next election. The first being the economy/inflation. Politicians and leaders are asking, "are you better off now than you were 4 years ago?" Will more or less government regulation help?

Next comes the border. Open border as it is now or closed and regulated?

Do your research and please VOTE – VOTE - VOTE!!!!!!

For God and Country, we associate ourselves.



## Avoiding predatory practices

### Protect Yourself and Your Pocketbook Online

From: VA's Veteran Service Member and Family Fraud Evasion (VSAFE) team

Have you ever spent money on a service only to realize it was offered for free? For example, paying to file a student loan application with a non-government site when it is free to file on the official FAFSA website? These types of practices may not be illegal scams, but they can prey on unsuspecting people and cause them to pay unnecessary fees.

One form of this type of practice particularly impacts Veterans and families: websites that charge for access to VA forms or other materials that are readily available free of charge on the VA website.

In addition to charging an unnecessary fee, these forms may also be outdated, requiring Veterans and their families to waste time completing the form again after it is submitted to VA.

To avoid this type of predatory practice, it is important to review websites and resources for accuracy. When searching for VA or other government materials, keep in mind:

- Safe search engine practices: If you are utilizing a search engine



Male looking phone with worried look, Courtesy of the VA.

(e.g., Google, Bing, or similar), the first items at the top of your search may have paid to appear there! The first item in a search result may not be the best one.

- Evaluate the URL: For government-related forms or resources, ensure the website contains .gov at the end of the URL.

Utilize search tools available on government sites: Instead of searching for materials through a search engine, use the search feature on government sites. Websites like [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov) have a search feature to assist Veterans and their families quickly reach the right resources.

- Report predatory practices: In order to ensure others do not fall victim to predatory practices, report any predatory practices or suspicious activity you experience.

Remember: Veterans or their families seeking materials or claim-filing assistance should not be charged as these are provided for free through VA and Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs).

## Breast/Chest feeding

### Latest information on infant breast/chest feeding

By: Bethany Oxender, MS, Ann Arbor VA, VA News

Here is a list of the well-known health benefits.

Caring for an infant is as challenging as it is rewarding. New parents are bombarded with advice all the while getting to know their new, tiny human. Recommendations and guidelines for taking care of an infant can change over time, especially as new information comes to light.

Despite being a natural process, breast/chest feeding may be difficult for some and may feel confusing and overwhelming. Plus, breast/chest feeding is hard work. Thankfully, there is now greater awareness of the well-known [health benefits](#):

- Protecting infants from short and long-term illnesses through antibodies in human milk.



Photo courtesy of the VA.

- Lowering the infant's risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and later development of asthma, obesity and type 2 diabetes.

The ability of human milk to adjust to the needs of a growing infant, starting with [thick colostrum](#), which promotes cell growth and develops into mature milk to keep baby nourished and hydrated.

Human milk can change month-to-month, day-to-day and even throughout a single feeding to meet the baby's nutritional demands.

Decreasing the lactating parent's risk of breast and ovarian cancer, type 2 diabetes and high blood pressure.

Boosting prolactin and oxytocin, feel-good hormones.

For some new parents, breast/chest feeding as a sole source of their



child's nutrition may not be possible due to medical conditions or delivery circumstances. For the parents who can feed their child solely with human milk, the cost of formula is avoided, but there are other expenses to consider. Breast/chest feeding may take time away from professional opportunities, add stress to parents at home or limit moments of self-care.

### Recipes for nutrient dense snacks

Additionally, producing human milk takes energy. Lactating people should eat about [500 additional calories every day](#) in the first six months. However, calorie needs for nursing depends on the extent of breast/chest feeding. This could mean \$10 to \$25 extra dollars spent on groceries each week.

To satisfy your hunger and additional calorie needs, consider these nutrient dense snacks:

- [Berry-Yogurt Protein Bowls.](#)
- [Chocolate Zucchini Muffins.](#)
- [Avocado Deviled Eggs.](#)

## 'Soldier's Journey' unveiling completes National World War I Memorial

By: Matt Grills, managing editor of *The American Legion Magazine*.

On Sept. 13, at sunset, sculptor Sabin Howard's "A Soldier's Journey" will be unveiled during a "First Illumination" ceremony at the National World War I Memorial in Washington, D.C.

The epic 38-figure, 60-foot-long bronze relief will be lighted scene by scene during a "wonderful night of music and narration," says Jari Villanueva, executive director of the Doughboy Foundation, the nonprofit partner to the U.S. World War One Centennial Commission and steward of the memorial.

The event will start at 7:15 p.m. Eastern time. The public is invited to watch in person at the adjacent Freedom Plaza, 1325 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, or online via livestream at [www.lcc.org](http://www.lcc.org).

The U.S. Army Band, "Pershing's Own," will perform, followed by the ringing of a bell by Howard in tribute to the fallen. Twenty buglers dressed in World War I uniforms will play an opening fanfare.

"First Illumination" opens WWI Living History Weekend, a series of immersive events hosted by the Doughboy Foundation. From 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sept. 14 and 15, visitors to the memorial can see displays of World War I vehicles by the National WWI Mobile Museum, historical presentations by authors and World War I reenactors, Douglas Taurel's one-man play "A Soldier's Journey Home" and more. The lineup also includes musical performances by the American Expeditionary Forces Headquarters Band, the Community Bands of Westmoreland County, Pa., and the Old Guard Fife and Drum Corps. Belgium's Last Post Association will conclude each day with a ceremonial playing of bugle calls.

There are many considerations when deciding how to feed a baby. Often, it's a process of trial and error. If breast/chest feeding is possible, the World Health Organization (WHO) recommends infants be exclusively fed human milk until six months of age. If mutually desired by the lactating parent and infant, the WHO encourages continuation of human milk feeding for two years or longer.

Every family will find what works best for them. Breast/chest feeding and pumping human milk are among the options available. Families should work with their care teams to determine the best options for them and their baby.

For more information about healthy eating while lactating or any other nutrition concerns, please contact your local VA Registered Dietitian. Many VA facilities also offer lactation services and programs.

Contact your local VA to inquire about VA resources to help you with breast/chest feeding supplies, education, and support. Breast/chest feeding.

With the installation of "A Soldier's Journey," the National World War I Memorial is complete. And thanks to the Doughboy Foundation, it's something to experience as well as see, with the daily sounding of taps, augmented-reality mobile apps and more.

"We leave you, our deaths. Give them their meaning .... Remember us." For Dan Dayton, the foundation's chairman, these words by poet Archibald MacLeish on the memorial's Peace Fountain gave him an idea about how they might remember veterans daily, in a consistent way. That led him to Villanueva, America's foremost expert on the revered bugle call.

"He looked at me and said, 'So you want to play taps at the World War I Memorial every night at 5 o'clock, rain or shine or whatever it might be, for the rest of time?'" Dayton recalls. "I said, 'That's right.' And he said, 'I got it.'"

Villanueva organized a Daily Taps program, recruiting buglers through the nonprofit Taps for Veterans. Volunteers have included active-duty and retired servicemembers, and even

Cuban-born jazz trumpeter Arturo Sandoval. Feb. 19 marked the 1,000th consecutive sounding of taps.

The inspiration came from Ypres, Belgium, where buglers have performed "The Last Post" at the Menin Gate for nearly a century. "It's a wonderful tradition, and now we do it here," Villanueva says.

Anyone can dedicate a Daily Taps to a veteran, on a day of their choosing, at [doughboy.org](http://doughboy.org).

Other ways to engage with the National World War I Memorial

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Photo courtesy Attila Szalay-Berzeviczy



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include the WWI Memorial Virtual Explorer and Visitor Guide apps. The first allows users to walk through a digital 3D model of the memorial from anywhere in the world. With the second, visitors can access the memorial's augmented-reality features to "place" a timeline and World War I planes, ships, tanks and

other vehicles over the reflecting pool to get a sense of size and scale.

Built into both apps are Stories of Service, based on letters, memories and anecdotes about those who served in the Great War. "You can learn what they experienced, in their own words," Dayton says.

## George Fox, 'Immortal Chaplain,' receives memorial marker at Arlington

By: Matt Grills

Of everything he ever did, Army Chaplain (1st Lt.) George Fox is most remembered for his final act: removing his life vest and handing it to a frightened soldier as their transport sank into the icy North Atlantic on Feb. 3, 1943.

One of four Army chaplains – a Methodist minister, a Reformed pastor, a Catholic priest and a rabbi – who gave their lives that night to save others, Fox is revered as a model of faith, courage and sacrificial love.

When we were small, my grandfather was a larger-than-life figure to us, and someone we should all aspire to be like, to walk in his shoes to the best of our ability," said Lisa Murray Hirbour, the youngest of Fox's nine grandchildren. "I think all of us do carry that with us now."

On Sept. 4, the chaplain's family joined Army officials in reflecting on his legacy during a special service at Arlington National Cemetery, where Fox received full military honors following the installation of a memorial headstone last spring.

Maj. Gen. William "Bill" Green Jr., the Army's chief of chaplains, recounted Fox's exceptional military career, which began as a stretcher bearer in World War I. He joined the service at 17 "not with a romanticized notion of heroism, but rather with a simple burden to care for others above himself," Green said. "Ultimately, this was his selfless service to others that set him apart."

On the Western Front, Fox braved gunfire, artillery barrages and mustard gas to bring wounded men to safety, earning the Silver Star and the Purple Heart.

After the war, he had the opportunity to pursue a career in finance but chose instead to become an itinerant Methodist preacher. He and his wife, Isadore, served communities in Illinois, New Hampshire and Vermont while he studied theology, and in 1934 he was ordained.

"They lived on basically nothing," Hirbour said. "The kids went to bed hungry a lot, but that didn't dissuade him from his calling."

When the United States entered World War II, Fox volunteered to serve as an Army chaplain. He went on active duty the same day his son, Wyatt, joined the Marine Corps.

"He was already a decorated soldier, with a family to care for and a parish to pastor," Green said. "And yet knowing better than most the horrific toll that wars exact on human souls, he made a decision to return to the battlefield, not for glory, but to share Christ's presence with others in the midst of what he knew would be humanity's most trying and sometimes darkest moments."

What happened next is a story told and retold. USAT Dorchester, packed with 902 military and civilian personnel, en route to Greenland. The constant threat of a U-boat attack. A sudden explosion, followed by chaos, confusion and fear. And in the middle of it, Fox – with fellow chaplains Father John Washington, Rabbi Alexander Goode and the Rev. Clark Poling – urging calm and comforting those unable to escape. They were last seen with arms linked, braced against the slanting deck, praying and singing hymns.

Over the next two decades, the Four Chaplains – also called the "Immortal Chaplains" – were memorialized nationwide in chapels and sanctuaries, sculptures and stained glass, paintings and plaques. A viaduct in Ohio was named for them, and a swimming pool at a veterans hospital in the Bronx. In 1960, they were posthumously awarded the Four Chaplains' Medal, which has the same weight and importance as the Medal of Honor.

Only recently, though, has there been a push to count the chaplains among the fallen at America's most sacred burial ground.

Bill Kaemmer, director of the Four Chaplains Memorial Foundation, said his goal is for each to have a memorial marker at Arlington by the end of 2025,

the 250th anniversary of the Army's Chaplain Corps.

In 2021, Kaemmer joined Arlington's staff as a cemetery administrative specialist. Curious to know how Fox, Washington, Poling and Goode were represented at Arlington beyond plaques to their respective faiths on Chaplains Hill, he learned that only Goode had a headstone in the memorial section, installed in 1998.

"Once I realized that was an option, I thought it would be right to move forward," he said. "If I accomplish nothing else in my time as director, helping get all four into Arlington would be a big deal. I think it's nice closure for the families."

The request for a memorial marker must be made by the oldest next



The U.S. flag is presented to Lisa Hirbour following a memorial service for her grandfather, U.S. Army Chaplain (1st Lt.) George Fox, at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Va., on Sept. 4. U.S. Army photo by Elizabeth Fraser



of kin. Already in touch with Fox's family, Kaemmer volunteered his help if they wanted to start the process.

"At the time, my mother (Mary Fox Murray, Fox's daughter) was still alive," Hirbour said. "We lost her last year. But I still thought, 'They're all going to smile down on us if we can get this done.'"

Lost and damaged military records added a wrinkle, but with the guidance of an Army casualty assistance officer, Hirbour gathered and submitted the required documentation. Within months, a marker was approved and a date set for a long-overdue memorial service.

According to Kaemmer, Fox's headstone stands about 10 yards from Goode's. "If the other two come within a year, they might actually be next to Chaplain Fox's," he said.

Members of the 3rd Infantry Regiment – the Old Guard – conducted Fox's funeral honors as they would a traditional burial. A casket team folded a U.S. flag and presented it to Hirbour, followed by the firing of a three-volley salute and the playing of taps.

"Today we honor Chaplain Fox's memory and example, as our Army has done for over 80 years," Green said. "And we pray that the members of our Chaplain Corps, both present and future, may always be found as faithful to their sense of calling as Chaplain George Fox was to his."

After his remarks, Green gave Hirbour an Army challenge coin bearing the image of the Four Chaplains. "We remember them every day," he assured her.

Six of Fox's grandchildren were present, along with other family and friends.

"All of us were gratified to know his legacy is alive and well in the military and in the country, because we think this country needs heroes now more than ever," Hirbour said. "What they did was truly brave and should be recognized, although my grandfather himself would wonder what all the fuss was about."

American Legion National Commander Jim LaCoursiere attended the service with American Legion Auxiliary President Trish Ward and Sons of The American Legion National Commander Joseph Navarrete.

The memorial service for the Rev. George Fox was touching and special, as The American Legion has never forgotten the heroism of the Four Chaplains," LaCoursiere said. "Without thought or hesitation, they gave away everything – life vests, gloves, jackets – to save others. Their actions demonstrate loyalty, unity and valor, and are a symbol for veterans and their families. Their memories live on through the American Legion Family."

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**Department of Veterans Affairs  
Eastern Colorado Health Care System  
1700 N Wheeling St  
Aurora, Colorado 80243  
303-399-8020**

Departments	Scheduling Questions	Clinical Questions
Cardio-Thoracic	720-723-6392	720-857-2710
Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT)	720-857-5404	720-857-5571
Bariatrics	720-723-6363	720-723-4782
Urology	720-723-4775	720-857-5829
OB/GYN	720-857-5701	720-857-5377
Vascular	720-723-6392	720-723-4780
Plastics	720-723-3271	720-857-4782
Breast	720-723-6363	720-857-4780
Orthopedics	720-723-6683	720-857-5580
Podiatry	720-857-5406	720-857-5577
Colorado Springs	719-227-4690	719-227-4432
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General Surgery	720-723-6363	720-857-5816

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- Press 2 to make or change an appointment.
- Press 3 to speak to a Nurse.
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In 2024, 1,764 American Legion posts conducted or participated in Four Chaplains Day ceremonies.

Fox himself was an active member of The American Legion. His last assignment was pastoring a church in the mill town of Gilman, Vt., where he joined Walter G. Moore Post 41. He served as historian and chaplain for the American Legion Department of Vermont and was in charge of the wreath-laying at the state's 1939 Armistice Day ceremony.

His wife, the Rev. Isadore Fox, was the first ordained minister to serve as the American Legion Auxiliary's national chaplain (1970-1971). She also served as a unit president. In the February 1971 issue of the Auxiliary's National News magazine, the other Rev. Fox wrote of the Four Chaplains story, "It has become the symbol of brotherhood throughout our great land. It is a call to love in a sacrificial way for the benefit of mankind to the end that they may have a better world in which to live."

In 2023, as the Fox family looked into the possibility of a memorial marker, a huge effort was underway to save the chaplain's former church in Gilman. After over a decade of it sitting vacant, Methodist trustees put the building up for sale, and local American Legion members led a fundraising campaign to buy it. Contributions poured in from the community, the Chapel

of Four Chaplains, members of the Fox family, American Legion posts and departments, Auxiliary units, SAL squadrons, various veterans service organizations and individual donors across the country. A large donation from the late Mary Fox Murray secured the purchase.

"The American Legion was incredibly important to both of my grandparents," Hirbour said. "We are forever indebted to them."

The Rev. George L. Fox Memorial Chapel is both a nondenominational house of worship and a museum. "I've got all the artifacts that my grandmother held for 40 years, and then my mother held for another 40 years," Hirbour said. "I want them to be properly displayed so people can come and see what Vermont treasures they were."

The plan is for the chapel to eventually host chaplain training and retreats, too.

Most of all, Hirbour wants to fulfill her grandmother's dream - "a chapel in memory of my grandfather, where people can come and reflect and pray in whatever fashion they want. A place where everyone is welcome and everyone is worthy, because that was their ministry. They didn't exclude anyone. We want to carry on the legacy of our grandparents and what they stood for in this life."

"We want to be there for everyone."

## Hispanic Heritage Month Event

From: VA News

We are pleased to invite you to join us in celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month with the VA Office of the

Secretary, Center for Minority Veterans (CMV), and Veterans Affairs Hispanic Association (VAHA). We highly appreciate your participation in this important event, which will occur online on VA's YouTube Channel. This event is open to all Veterans, family members, caregivers, survivors, and to any supporters.

We will be joined by distinguished guests from various backgrounds, including: The Honorable Carlos Del Toro, 78th US Navy Secretary, and The Honorable Jaime Areizaga-Soto, VA's Chairman, Board of Veterans' Appeals. Additionally, we will have other special guests who will provide their unique perspectives. William Vargas, president of VAHA, will be our event host.

We look forward to you joining us on line

Date/Time: September 18, 2024 @ 11am - 1pm

YouTube Live Link: <https://youtube.com/live/R5996jddoz8>

**VA** U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
Office of the Secretary  
Center for Minority Veterans

# HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

## WEBSERIES

**GUEST SPEAKER**  
**THE HONORABLE JAIME AREIZAGA-SOTO**  
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS  
CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF VETERANS' APPEALS

**GUEST SPEAKER**  
**THE HONORABLE CARLOS DEL TORO**  
US NAVY SECRETARY

**MODERATOR**  
**WILLIAM T. VARGAS**  
PRESIDENT, VETERANS AFFAIRS HISPANIC ASSOCIATION (VAHA)

*"Pioneers of Change, Shaping the Future Together"*

**SEPTEMBER 18, 2024** **11:00AM - 1:00PM EST**

VA CENTRAL OFFICE  
810 VERMONT AVE NW  
ROOM 230  
WASHINGTON, DC  
20420

CONTACT US  
VACOCMV@VA.GOV

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## Military recruitment panel to Legion: "Help where you can"

By: Jeff Stoffer

Young people who tend to get their information in 15-second social media bursts on mobile phones need to see, hear and learn from real veterans about the true benefits of military service in order to improve recruitment into the U.S. Armed Forces, according to panelists who spoke Wednesday in New Orleans at the 105th National Convention of The American Legion.

"We are facing a national recruiting crisis for a whole lot of reasons," 15th Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy Russell Smith said in the onstage session before thousands of American Legion members. "But the fact is, like it or not, you, myself – those who have served – are the ones right now standing in the breach between us and a national draft."

To preserve and maintain an all-volunteer force, he explained, "requires us to go out and tell our story, to be the example in our communities, to perpetuate the best of what it is we have done. What it gave me – that sense of discipline, that sense of understanding, that

All military service branches except the U.S. Marine Corps and Space Force have struggled to hit recruitment goals in recent years, some falling short, due to a range of reasons. Among the most commonly stated problems: physical fitness, behavioral issues, media and public perceptions of service and propensity to serve, based on family lineage. It all leads up to an oft-stated figure: that only about 23% of those who wish to enlist actually qualify for service. And others just don't understand the value of military commitment or its long-term rewards, nor are they learning it often enough from veterans.

"The thing that always struck me about the military, whatever branch it was, is the connection between brothers and sisters in arms," said panelist U.S. Army Sgt. Maj. Danny Basham. "You're not going to get that anywhere else. No corporation is going to give that to you. It's a brotherhood and sisterhood that you enjoy. We can't take that for granted. I think the Legion does a great job of that."

"The more we talk about it, and I think, more importantly, the more we are examples of it in our communities is how that story gets told," Smith said.

The panel was a diverse mix, all of whom extolled the virtues of military service and the frustrating difficulty of convincing young people to take that path. "It's critical that we bring the next generation within our ranks," said the Hon. Patrick Murphy, first veteran of the war in Iraq elected to Congress and former Under Secretary for the Army, who served as moderator for the panel discussion. He framed the session as a national "call to service"

where American Legion members can play a big part.

In addition to Smith, the panelists included U.S. Air Force veteran Ethan Brown, senior military fellow at the Center for the Study of the Presidency; Sgt. Maj. Allen Goodyear, Marine Corps Recruiting Command; and U.S. Army Sgt. Maj. for Analytics and Production Danny Basham.

"Service never stops," said Brown, an author and researcher on the post-Global War on Terrorism era. "We never stop being ambassadors or representatives. The challenge is on all of us in this room, and the sub-units we represent, when we all go back to our systems and Legions. Find those veteran success stories, and we have to overcome that broken-veteran stigma, in order to be an extension of our recruiting brothers and sisters."

Brown referenced the 1957 book "The Soldier and the State" by Samuel Huntington that warned of "societal fatigue" about military service and how that parallels today's situation after the longest war in U.S. history, the Global War on Terrorism. "We see some of those same problems that he identified in his groundbreaking work manifesting today, in particular the civil-military dynamic. Young Americans are reluctant to serve in a military capacity because of how they perceive the military and its role within the state today. This is due to societal fatigue after a 20-year war."

Media – social and otherwise – also contribute to perceptions on separate ends of the U.S. ideological spectrum that either deride military service as being too "woke" or too "radical."

"The single most important, tactile issue in the recruiting crisis is the politicization of U.S. military and the American body politic," Brown said. "There's buzz phrases like 'the military has gone woke' or 'it's full of radical ideologies.' Both of these are straw-man arguments. Whether they are accurate or not does not matter. It is the perception that they are (that is) damning to the men in uniform that I'm sharing this panel with and the men and women who work for them, who are trying to get that next generation of Americans to serve this country."

Brown explained that Congress directed the Department of Defense to launch a study into the prevalence of radical ideologies in the military and the results were that servicemembers "were pretty much commensurate with the rest of the United States. It's almost like the U.S. military is a microcosm of American society. Who knew?"

(Continued on Page 10 ) See Se Said)



Moderator Patrick Murphy and panelists Ethan Brown, U.S. Marine Command Sgt. Maj. Allen Goodyear, U.S. Army Sgt. Maj. Danny Basham and Ret. U.S. Navy Master Chief Petty Officer Russell Smith speak about recruiting. Photo by Jennifer Blohm/The American Legion



(He Said Continued)ji'Om Page 9

He said one goal, beyond other obstacles to enlistment, should be to restore public trust in military service and understanding of its value. "Rebuilding the public faith in the military and its role in a democracy is a critical factor if we are going to address this problem," he said. "It's not a simple solution. It's a comprehensive one. It requires efforts by the military to realign itself for the world that we live in; the federal government to align resources and policy to support the military, to adapt to the new world that we live in; it requires communities and community leaders; and most importantly it requires us, as individual actors in a democracy, to take part in rebuilding that trust."

The panelists made several suggestions about how the Legion can improve the situation, including:

- Connecting directly with recruiters in their communities and helping them make connections with schools.
- "Create opportunities to inspire, advocate and support the recruiting effort," Goodwin prescribed.
- "See how you can help recruiters get their foot in the door," Basham said.
- "Let's not lead with victimization," Murphy said. "Be a

civic asset. It's going to set you up on a path to greatness in your life."

Smith made the point that 77% of successful Navy recruitment comes from military blood lines. "That's wonderful in some respects - heartwarming- but if you want to enfranchise a nation in the future of your military, we have to find people who have never served, who understand that through the military, you can change your family's destination in one generation. If you come in and you work hard, and you achieve, you will set your kids and your progeny up for success ... In addition to those who have families that have served, we need to find many more who haven't."

"Service never stops," Brown said. "You never stop being a part of your community. There's always places where we can engage ourselves - youth sports, assisting at public schools with physical education or civics education. There are so many more things that each and every one of us can do to take that individual responsibility for rebuilding that trust in the institution that is the U.S. military."

This is not a small problem, Smith suggested in the discussion. "If we don't stand up right now, there won't be another generation on this stage in 30 years looking out at another audience talking about the same thing. Our national destiny is at stake. That's what this is about. So, please listen and help where you can."

## Badass of the Week: Jacklyn H. Lucas

By: Ben Thompson, Published September 11, 2013, found at <https://www.military.com>

Everyone with half a functioning brain knows that diving on a live hand grenade to save your friends is one of the single most selfless, heroic acts of valor that any human being can perform. It takes a special, rare kind of person to come face-to-face with their own destruction, resist every natural impulse of self-preservation, and unhesitatingly give themselves up in a final, purely-selfless feat of bravery, trading in the most precious thing a human has to offer - their life - so that others might live.

It's such a heroic testament to the will of the human spirit that more Medals of Honor and Victoria Crosses have been handed out for this single act than for any other deed in the history of combat.

Unfortunately, despite this being a universally acknowledged feat of righteous heroic awesomeness, the fact that the entire action is over in three to five seconds combine with some horrifically tragic consequences for the hero to make grenade-hopping a pretty tough subject to write a Badass of the Week article about.

Unless, of course, we're talking about Jack Lucas of the 1st Battalion, 26th Marines.

Because Jack Lucas jumped on not one but two grenades to save his friends. And lived.

Jacklyn H. Lucas was born on Valentine's Day, 1928, in some rural town in North Carolina with a population so tiny that if everyone in the entire county showed up at UNC for a basketball game, they probably couldn't sell out one section of the Dean Smith Center. Cursed with one of the most terrible first names in history, Jacklyn

did the Boy Named Sue thing and spent his entire life training to be so ungodly hardcore that anyone who referred to him by any name other than Jack would end up forcibly swallowing their own feet, eventually enlisting as a cadet at Edwards Military Institute in Salem, NC.

Things were going fine for a while, but Jack's life changed pretty dramatically on December 7, 1941, when he got news that a super-secret ninja sneak-attack of Japanese fighter-bombers had just craterized the American battleship fleet at Pearl Harbor into a towering inferno of twisted metal.

He kind of took it personally.

So, while Lucas' 13 year-old idiot classmates were all hanging around their school doing teenage boy stuff like slam-dunking M-SOs into public toilets and super-gluing their friends' lockers shut, Lucas just got pissed. Like, super pissed. Like King Kong stopping by on the way home from work after a miserable day at the office only to find that the badass frozen yogurt place down the street is totally out of banana sherbet pissed. He stormed out of his military school (the first of many times he'd be listed AWOL in his professional career), went across the border



Photographer is unknown. Shown is Jack Lucas and the Medal of Honor.



to Virginia, bribed some notary public to swear he was 17, then hitched a ride to the nearest Marine Corps Recruiting Station, marched his hefty 5'8", 200-pound frame through the front door like he owned the place, forged his Mom's signature on enlistment paperwork, and shipped out to Parris Island for U.S. Marine Corps Boot Camp.

At thirteen.

Lucas made it through the most intense basic training the United States military has to offer, was made a Marine at 14, and was subsequently assigned to work a crappy manual labor job as part of the Training Battalion on Parris Island.

Jack Lucas responded to this unsatisfactory posting by abandoning his station, hitching a ride to Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, grabbing the first USMC officer he could find, and telling him there was a clerical error and he was supposed to be stationed on the front lines in a combat arms role.

They made him a truck driver at the Marine Corps base on Pearl Harbor.

Unsatisfied by his current status of "not blowing the hell out of the enemy at all corners wherever he could find them" and denied in all of his requests to transfer to a front-line infantry unit, Jack Lucas spend the next couple of years raising hell across Honolulu. He was arrested for starting a drunken bar fight. He was disciplined for going AWOL so he could head into town and meet girls. He was busted by a Military Policeman for walking through the barracks with a case of beer, then was subsequently arrested for punching that same Military Policeman in the face when that power-tripping a--hole tried to take the beer away from him.

Tired of spending his nights in the brig and worried that the war was going to end without him every hoisting a rifle in battle, Lucas finally decided, screw it, I'm going to go to war, and I don't give a shit who wants to stop me. He went down to the docks, snuck aboard a military transport ship headed for the front lines, then spent a month living off crumbs hiding from the crew because he was worried if they discovered him, they'd ship his ass back to Hawaii for a court-martial.

Of the 40,000 Marines who hit the beach at Iwo Jima on or around February 20th, 1945, 17-year-old Private Jack Lucas of the 1st Battalion, 26th Marines, 5th Marine Division was one of the only infantrymen who assaulted the beachhead without a weapon. He changed that pretty quickly. He grabbed one off a dead man in the surf, racked the slide, and charged into battle.

Rushing through the brutal, endless curtains of strafing machine gun and artillery fire that raked the beach, Lucas grabbed his newly acquired weapon and charged ahead, undaunted by the explosions and bullets zipping all around. He ran ahead, reached the relative safety of the tree line, and fell in with a four-man fire team that had already started working its way through the dense jungle, trying to clear out one of the most tenacious and ferociously hardcore enemies the United States ever faced.

Lucas and his men were making their way through a ravine, fighting every step of the way, when suddenly some bad shit started to go down. It turned out that the Japanese had dug this ridiculously intricate series of caverns and secret passages that ran through the entire island, so just as Lucas and his buddies thought they were going to launch their final assault on a Japanese machine gun nest, they came to the horrible realization that all 11 men in that pillbox had gone into a tunnel, crawled underneath them, and popped up directly behind the Marines.

The Marines turned to fire, and in Jack Lucas' much-awaited first moments of real battle his first round went through the helmet of an enemy soldier, killing him on the spot.

His second round jammed in the rifle. I guess that's what happens with rifles you pick up in ankle-deep water on blood-soaked sandy beaches.

It was at this point that Jack Lucas saw the live hand grenade that had just landed at his feet. He threw his body on it without hesitation, screaming for the other Marines to take cover.

When a second enemy grenade landed within arms' reach, Lucas grabbed it and jammed it under his body as well.

The Type 97 Fragmentation Grenade is a 16-ounce metal ball stuffed with 65 grams of TNT and a 5 second timed-detonation mechanism. Now, a common misconception about hand grenades is that they create some huge fiery explosion that blows people into the next area code like they were launched out of a flaming death-catapult, then they proceed to ignite everything in the general vicinity up to and including the Earth's atmosphere. But, while the explosive power unleashed by a frag grenade is certainly not the sort of thing you want to wake up to every morning, what kills the majority of people isn't the bomb but the flying bits of shrapnel. Basically, the explosion is just a catalyst that shatters the metal outside of the grenade and sends tens of thousands of tiny, razor-sharp metal splinters hurtling through the air in every direction, shredding anything in their wake, and killing or maiming anyone or anything within 100 to 150 feet. You ever wonder why some grenades look like pineapples? It's because when the bomb goes off each little section of the pineapple morphs into a bullet firing off into some random direction. It ain't pretty.

And Jack Lucas just had two of those little bastards blow up straight into his torso. Sure, his friends survived thanks to his heroism, but all that metal has to go somewhere, and where it went was straight into Lucas' body.

The rest of the Marine fire team, pumped-up by Lucas' bravery and the fact that they weren't currently all dead, proceeded to fight like demons and push the Japanese back, driving them from the position and capturing that sector.

When they came back to take the dog tags off of their fallen brother, they noticed that not only was Lucas alive, he was actually still conscious.

The true unsung heroes of Iwo Jima – the Navy Corpsmen – were called in on the spot, hauling the severely wounded Lucas out of there on a stretcher while simultaneously using their .45 pistols to fight off a Japanese banzai counterattack. They fought through the war zone, got Lucas to a hospital ship, and it took 21 surgeries for them to remove 250 pieces of shrapnel from every major organ in his body.

Seven months later, Jack Lucas personally walked up to Harry S. Truman and received his Medal of Honor in person. He'd already made a complete recovery.

He was six days past his seventeenth birthday – the youngest Marine to ever receive the award.

After the war, Lucas went home and fulfilled his promise to his mother to finish school, attending his first day of Ninth Grade with his Medal of Honor around his neck. He finished college, went on a USO speaking tour, was married three times, survived his second wife's attempt to hire a hitman to murder him (she hadn't

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got the message from the Japanese that this guy was impervious to conventional weapons), and then, at age 40, decided to get over his fear of heights by enlisting in the 82nd Airborne as a paratrooper. On his first training jump, both parachutes failed to open. As his team leader astutely pointed out, "Jack was the last one out of the plane and the first one on the ground."

He fell 3,500 feet through the air without a parachute. He attempted a badass commando roll just as he was about to splat on the earth Wile E. Coyote style.

He not only lived, he walked away unscathed.



Current image of Lucas.

Two weeks later, he was back in the plane on his second training jump. That one went better. Four years later he finished his tour as a Captain in the 82nd Airborne Division.

His adventures in miraculously surviving death now complete, ran a successful business selling beef to people outside Washington, DC, wrote an appropriately-named autobiography titled *Indestructible*, met every president from Truman to Clinton, had his original Medal of Honor citation laid out in the hull of the USS Iwo Jima, and died in 2008 at the age of 80. From cancer, of all things.

## Senators push \$15M bill to study birth defects in children of veterans exposed to toxic chemicals

By: Linda F. Hersey/*Stars and Stripes*

The generational effects of chemical warfare agents and other hazardous materials on the descendants of service members would be evaluated under a bill to fund \$15 million in research on birth defects identified in the children and grandchildren of toxic-exposed veterans.

The Molly R. Loomis Research for Descendants of Toxic Exposed Veterans Act would commission multiple studies that look at the connections between toxic exposures of service members in combat zones and severe disabilities that were later diagnosed in their descendants.

The bill is included in two separate appropriations bills for the Defense Department and the Interior Department that have advanced in the Senate. House lawmakers have not offered a companion bill.

Sen. Jon Tester, D-Mont., chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee's subpanel on defense, and Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., co-sponsored the research legislation, which would fund multiple studies by federal agencies and nonprofit organizations.

"While there has been some research on the link between birth defects and generational exposure to toxins and chemicals, there has yet to be comprehensive, government-led studies into the effects of toxic exposure on descendants of toxic-exposed veterans," according to a statement from Tester's office.

The funds would support the Toxic Exposures Research Program and build knowledge on the generational impact of chemical exposures on military members and their descendants, according to Tester, who also is chairman of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee.

"This bill aims to empower the toxic exposures research group to conduct more vital research related to toxic exposure," Rubio said.



U.S. Army photo

The legislation is named after the daughter of a Vietnam-era Navy veteran exposed to Agent Orange during military service aboard the USS Ogden, an amphibious transport dock ship.

Molly Loomis of Bozeman, Mont., was born with spina bifida, a presumptive disability that has been diagnosed in the biological children of Vietnam War veterans. Spina bifida is a condition where the spine and spinal cord do not grow properly during pregnancy. Her father, Richard Loomis, died in 2013 from bladder cancer, which was presumed to be connected to his exposure to Agent Orange, according to the family.

"I try putting myself in my dad's shoes and how it might feel to face toxic exposure health issues. But then to learn your exposure could have resulted in the birth defects, disabilities, even shortened lifespans of your own children, perhaps grandchildren, too — I don't think I can fully imagine the nightmare of that," Loomis said. "Not everyone chooses to protect their country, but I'd say everyone wants to protect their children."

Service members exposed to toxic substances are more likely than



the general population to develop rare cancers, heart conditions and chronic lung conditions, according to the legislation. Descendants of toxic-exposed service members also can experience lifelong medical conditions related to their parents' or grandparents' exposure to toxic substances, the legislation said.

Mokie Porter, communications director for the advocacy group Vietnam Veterans of America, described the legislation as another mechanism for funding an area that historically has been overlooked in research by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

"Before these Vietnam veterans pass on, they want to ensure their children are taken care of. The children and grandchildren of toxic-exposed veterans have health conditions that have not been fully addressed," Porter said. "Most of the evidence linking exposure to birth defects is anecdotal because the research isn't being done."

Porter said new research dollars also would enable studies to be done outside the VA, including universities, medical centers and other nonprofit organizations with a background in studying birth defects and chemical exposures.

The VA presumes spina bifida in biological children of certain Vietnam-era veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange and other herbicides was caused by military service. People with spinal bifida can have paralysis and require extensive surgeries and medical care. But Porter said while spina bifida is the most recognized birth defect associated with military chemical exposure; the link is still considered limited for lack of scientific evidence.

A previous bill — the Toxic Exposure Research Act — that Congress adopted in 2016 had authorized research into birth defects associated with chemical exposures during military service. But the VA has refused to act on it, said Jack McManus, an Air Force veteran and president of the Vietnam Veterans Association of America.

The VA determined research was not feasible because it would focus on the descendants and not the veterans themselves, he said. McManus, a former sergeant who served from 1965-1969, said he was a crew member on planes that sprayed herbicides in Vietnam and has experienced multiple health effects, including several types of cancer, neuropathy and diabetes. He does not have children.

The new legislation would require an interagency group on toxic exposures to work to raise awareness about associations between toxic exposures and birth defects, McManus said.

The bill also would require research and current treatments for serious health conditions identified in the descendants of toxic-exposed veterans to be published on a dedicated website.

The interagency group was established two years ago under the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act, or PACT Act. The PACT Act awards disability benefits for veterans with diseases and injuries that are presumed to be linked to toxic exposures during military service, including from burn pits, radiation and other hazardous materials.

## Preventing Veteran suicide in local communities

### *VA partnering with community organizations across the country*

*By: Sandra Foley, Director, SSG Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program, Office of Suicide Prevention, VA News*

Since its launch in 2022, the Staff Sergeant Parker Gordon Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program (SSG Fox SPGP) has helped organizations around the country provide a range of suicide prevention services for Veterans and their families. This grant program assists in further implementing a public health approach that blends community-based prevention with evidence-based clinical strategies.

The three-year SSG Fox SPGP is uniquely positioned to help tailor resources to meet the needs of Veterans in their communities while enhancing partnerships and building community. From January 2023, when most services began, through May 2024, the program's grantees completed over 31,400 outreach efforts, engaged 5,757 participants in a variety of services and facilitated 510 emergency mental health referrals for those at imminent risk.

The strength of the SSG Fox SPGP is that it allows for different approaches to fit diverse community needs. Boulder Crest Foundation and Permission to Start Dreaming, both inaugural SSG Fox SPGP recipients, offer a 90-day peer-led Warrior Progressive

and Alternative Training for Helping Heroes (PATHH) program that includes an initial seven-day in-person retreat.

"I now have the practices to keep me centered and focused."

Warrior PATHH uses the philosophy of posttraumatic growth and trains participants in multiple practices such as meditation,

journaling and daily gratitude to build and maintain a wellness triangle. This triangle is comprised of mental, physical and financial wellness and centered on a core of spiritual wellness.

"The impacts from this program have been life changing," a Warrior PATHH participant said. "I was in a huge hole of depression. I knew I needed to do things but I just could not find it. I now have the practices to keep me centered and focused and to foster a new attitude and willingness to put in the work."

Child and Family Service of Hawaii, another inaugural grant recipient, offers case management, education, clinical

services for emergency treatment, relationship coaching and mindfulness and resilience training. Amidst the devastating Maui



Suicide graphic courtesy of the VA.

*(Continued on Last Page See Fires)*



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fires, Child and Family Service was instrumental in serving soldiers and airmen during their state-activated orders to provide support during and after a challenging mission.

Once awards are announced, grantees attend monthly grant manager meetings, monthly technical assistance webinars, biannual in-person all-grantee technical assistance events, and 1:1 data and grant manager assistance.

Grantees have noted that the SSG Fox SPGP team is helpful and timely in responses, and the meetings are valuable.

Connect with Veterans who've never enrolled

Areas with limited access to medical services, such as rural communities, tribal lands and U.S. territories and areas with a high number of minority Veterans or women Veterans and a high

number of calls to the Veterans Crisis Line are a top priority for the grant program. This grant is an opportunity for organizations to connect with Veterans who've never enrolled in VA services and, potentially, introduce VA resources for the first time.

With Congress allocating \$174 million over three years to support the SSG Fox SPGP, the program continues to expand its reach. Two rounds of awards totaling \$105 million have been disseminated to 83 organizations in 43 states, Washington, D.C., Guam and American Samoa.

In its third year, awards from fiscal year (FY) 2024 will fund services in FY25. SSG Fox SPGP grant recipients for FY24 will be announced in September 2024.

See the full list of FY23 grantees and get more information on the SSG Fox SPGP.

## Together, we can reduce the risk of overdose

### *Naloxone can reverse the effects of an overdose*

By: Hans Petersen, VHA NEWS editor and Air Force Veteran

This International Overdose Awareness Day, Aug. 31, VA is amplifying the message: Together, we can reduce the risk of overdose and save lives. Whether you're a Veteran or a family member or friend of a Veteran, VA has resources to help.

Opioids are the leading cause of overdose death in the U.S. Both prescription and recreational opioids are highly addictive and using opioids recreationally or not taking them as prescribed comes with a risk of overdose.

Be prepared

If you use opioids or know someone who does, VA encourages you to:

- Know the signs of a potential overdose. These include loss of consciousness, slowed breathing, pinpoint pupils, a slowed heart rate and pale, blue or cold skin.
- Be prepared to respond. Ideally, that means having naloxone on hand and knowing how to use it. Naloxone can reverse the effects of an overdose. If you think someone is experiencing an overdose, take action:

- Dial 911. Administer naloxone if available. Turn the person on their side. Keep the person awake and breathing.

### Resources

VA has resources to help, both to save lives when someone is experiencing an overdose and to turn lives around by helping Veterans affected by substance use disorders:

- Reduce overdoses. VA has resources on preventing, [identifying and reversing an opioid overdose](#), including how to get and use naloxone.
- Get treatment. VA has information on [substance use disorders and treatment options](#), as well as other resources for those seeking help.
- Raise awareness. [Download and share ready-to-use materials](#) that highlight International Overdose Awareness Day and VA resources.



Women hugging; overdose awareness photo courtesy of the VA.

of overdose and save lives.

Together, we can reduce the risk

**AMERICAN  
LEGION**

