

# THE AMERICAN LEGION



## IDAHO FALLS POST 56

FEBRUARY 2021

### Message from the Commander

In normal years, you would have had this newsletter in hand before we rang in the New Year. But 2020, as everyone knows, was a year like no other. I remember starting the year with optimism, while looking forward to progressing our reputation as a pillar of our community. But then, the curve ball was thrown.

In March, Governor Brad Little issued the state-wide stay at home order. I am sure this was not an easy decision to reach, but one that was born out of necessity. In the blink of an eye, we went from business as usual to what appeared to be a complete stop. But was it really a complete obstruction of our aims and goals? True, we faced uncertainty for the foreseeable future. And it is also true, that we had to adapt to restrictions placed on us, in order safeguard the health of our community. But in case you missed it, we did see some positive throughout the year.

Just when I was starting to think our Post Everlasting Ceremony, District 7 Spring meeting and the American Legion Birthday Dinner would be our last opportunities to embrace fellowship and compassion, I was once again proven wrong. And for that, I am profoundly grateful.

As the impact of COVID-19 began to unfold in our community, we were no longer able to meet face-to-face. Instead, we utilized Mail Chimp to reach out to our members, using identified email addresses. The message was simple, we are still here and stand ready to assist as needed. We may be distanced, but you are never alone. Shortly after the first message was sent, in true form for our Legionnaires, there were several that responded, "If assistance is needed please call on me. I am ready and able to help any Brother or Sister in need". And once again, camaraderie and compassion have been proven to be alive and well.

While we had to suspend some of our annual gatherings, due to public and private assembly restrictions, with the All-Veteran's Picnic, Veterans Day Events and the Veteran's Christmas Party topping this list; we had members who refused to let the Veteran Stand Down fall victim to the pandemic. It was not a large crowd that gathered by any means, but the homeless Veterans that took us up on our charitable cause, received a hot meal, a chance to get out of the cold and cold weather gear to help raise their quality of life.

And Thanks to our influence in the community, undoubtedly through our Children and Youth, plus Americanism programs, we had a couple of young adults who stepped up to help Veterans in need. Claire Yoo, an Idaho Falls Sophomore opened a reading-based fund raiser on Go Fund Me, where an excess of \$1,200 were raised (in two weeks' time) and donated to the Military Affairs Committee. Additionally, Claire took the time to sew 100 face masks and donated them to Veterans as well. Similarly, Trayson Standley stepped up with his own fund raiser to benefit our local Veterans. And when the Pocatello State Veterans Home announced that they would rather take cash donations to replace kitchen equipment, instead of the normal Food Convoy donations they normally receive, Rocky Mountain Middle School raised \$837 in a short period of time, to assist with this endeavor.

These are just a few of the events that come to mind, when reflecting on the remarkable community we live in and the unyielding support of our Legionnaires. I am sure there are other examples that I have missed, while writing this article, so if you have some positive stories to tell, please feel free to share them at our next Legion Meeting. Meetings are still being held, via zoom now, and they are surprisingly easy to attend. If you have a smart phone, laptop, tablet, or computer

*(Continued on page 2)*

*(Message from the Commander - Continued)*

that has video and audio capability you are set. Our Chaplain, Joe Behling, will keep the meeting link up updated on the [idahofallsveterans.org](http://idahofallsveterans.org) website. Or, if you would prefer, send Joe your email address using [navygm@gmail.com](mailto:navygm@gmail.com). We would love to keep you in the loop, for latest news and look forward to seeing you online.

In closing, I would once again like to say “Thank You” for your Service and continuing to serve. Your positive impact on our community has not gone unnoticed. Your daily example and selfless acts have helped to foster some truly amazing young adults, who are stepping up to pay their kindness forward. They embody the spirit of Americanism and good citizenship and for this I am both humbled and grateful.

Darrel Homer  
Commander  
Idaho Falls Post 56

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### **A Message from the 2nd Vice Commander**

Post 56 has had a particularly challenging 2020 related to post activities. Since March 2020, numerous events had to be canceled and the prospects for get togethers in the winter/spring of 2021 do not look promising. Recently, we did have a successful Veterans Day Breakfast and mini-homeless veteran standdown on November 8, 2020; although, attendance was limited due to COVID requirements. We had great help from several volunteers and Mayor Casper. Post 56 also supported the food convoys for both the Pocatello and Boise Veterans homes in November. The Memorial Team has continued to provide military rites for local veteran’s funerals throughout all the COVID-19 complications and requirements from the governor.

We are certainly hopeful that we can get back to some of our other normal activities by late spring, but time will tell. If you have any ideas on activities that you would like us to consider for 2021 and beyond, please do not hesitate to give me a call or send an email.

Larry Auman  
Second Vice Commander  
208-520-1875  
[leauman56@gmail.com](mailto:leauman56@gmail.com)

### **2021 AMERICAN LEGION POST 56 OFFICERS**

Commander	Darrel Homer	208-403-2163
1st Vice Commander	Roy McCarthy	208-360-3089
2nd Vice Commander	Larry Auman	208-520-1875
Finance Officer	Richard Kearsley	208-821-5746
Sgt-at-Arms	Mark Byers	208-206-9696
Chaplain	Joseph Behling	208-346-1963
Historian	Patrick Parker	208-701-4778
Adjutant	Allen Arnold	208-520-4021
Service Officer	Ken Collins	208-524-1561
Quartermaster	Leroy Meyer	208-523-7306
Executive Bd. Member	Mark Christensen	208-521-6695
	Denny Kemp	208-569-1683
	Bill Robinson	208-524-3806
Past Commander	Robert Skinner	208-757-7434

### **Sons of the American Legion**

The Sons of the American Legion is a patriotic service organization formed on September 12–15, 1932. The S.A.L. is made up of male descendants of people who served in the United States Armed Forces during times specified by the American Legion. The Sons of the American Legion’s mission to serve veterans, the military and their families is carried out through its hundreds of outreach programs delivered by its members, volunteers, and national headquarters. The Sons of the American Legion’s National Headquarters is in Indianapolis.

All male descendants, adopted sons and stepsons of members of The American Legion, and such male descendants of veterans who died in the service during World War I, World War II, Korean War, Vietnam War, Lebanon, Grenada, Panama, and the Persian Gulf War, during the delimiting periods set forth in article IV, section 1, of the National Constitution of The American Legion, or who died subsequent to their honorable discharge from such service, shall be eligible for membership in the Sons of The American Legion.

The Sons of the American Legion (SAL) Squadron 56, in Idaho Falls, Idaho meeting is held on the first Monday of each month at 6PM.

The SAL Squadron 56 currently has 31 members. Currently, we are at 60.78% of meeting our Goal of 51. Our SAL members continue to support the American Legion Post 56 Memorial Team that performs Military Rights and Color Guard details at various events.

## Membership Minute

Before I jump into the topic at hand, I would like to start by saying, that I hope everyone was able to enjoy a safe and healthy holiday season. While 2020 is now a chapter in the history books, it left an impression that may take considerable time to overcome. Between the COVID-19 pandemic and less than stellar display of morals and values throughout our great Nation, it seemed like we faced adversity daily. But even in troubled times, I am proud of the way our members looked out for each other and showed those around us what camaraderie is all about.

As I write this article, Idaho Falls Post 56 has 397 paid members, out of a goal of 472. From this we can say that we are at 84.11% of meeting this year's membership goal. But what does that really mean? It means that our close-knit family has 75 members who may be wondering if they will renew this year. And this also means that we have experienced a membership decline since 2019, when we broke the 500-member barrier. So, to take this explanation a little further, these numbers also mean we may have members who continue to struggle. Whether a hardship continues from the pandemic or was not identified when we reached out to the

membership to ask if assistance was needed, we have apparently missed vital information.

As a Veteran, I know all too well how difficult it can be to ask for assistance. And as a Legionnaire, I also know that we are a family who stands at the ready to offer support to those in need. During our time in uniform, we would not stand idly by and watch a Brother or Sister take on the weight of the world on their own. While our time in uniform may be over, the sense of camaraderie and commitment to one another remains. While I would rather use this article, and time, to reach out to our membership to ask, "How can I help?" I would be remiss if I did not also point out that membership is our lifeblood. It is only through your continued membership that we can carry on our goals, set within the Four Pillars of The American Legion. If we are to successfully advance our priorities of Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation, National Security, Children and Youth, and Americanism; then we need you now more than ever. So please, consider renewing your dues today and help us secure a brighter future.

### Did You Know?

There are a few remaining slots available, for new patients, at the Idaho Falls VA Outpatient Clinic. Panels for each doctor are limited, and with the third doctor hired onto this location, the Idaho Falls Clinic will be considered full to new patients once the remaining slots are filled. So, if you are currently travelling to Pocatello (or farther), please contact the Idaho Falls Clinic at 208-522-2922 to have a Primary Care Physician designated at their facility.

And in more important news, three new conditions were recently added to the list of presumptive conditions for which the VA grants service connection to Vietnam War veterans affected by exposure to the chemical herbicide Agent Orange. These conditions include bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, and Parkinsonism. The addition of these new contentions is a direct result of The American Legion's continued advocacy, as well as other Veteran Service Organizations. Now that the contentions are recognized, by way of Congressional statute, the VA is formulating policy and procedure to handle both previously denied claims and new claims. When a new law is passed, regarding Veterans Benefits, it is listed in Title 38 Code of Federal Regulations. This then becomes the law of the land for the VA but does not necessarily direct the VA on how to implement the new law. That is where the operating procedures, or M21-1, comes into play.

As operational logistics are finalized, affected Veterans are encouraged to submit Supplemental Claims, where previous claims were denied. Please make sure to list the date of the previous denial in the supplemental claim and include any new and relevant evidence required. A clinical diagnosis is still needed, for benefit award. If you are submitting a new claim, for the three (3) added conditions, a diagnosed disease/injury is required, as well as proving the correlation between the current condition and service.

Please note, contacting a County Veterans Service Officer, or accredited State Service Officer is usually preferred when filing VA claims.

## Message from the Adjutant

The 2021 Membership Year began on July 1, 2020. Membership renewal has been good to date with 86.23% renewal for our 2021 goal of 472 members. The American Legion speaks for all veterans at the national and state levels for benefits earned by proudly serving our nation.

Members are requested to disregard any PAST DUE notices if you have paid your 2021 membership. National Headquarters sends dues notices about every 3 months after the July 1st start of the current membership year. Processing of membership payment can take as long as 4 weeks, during which time a past due notice may be sent to members. **Members can renew their membership on-line @ [www.mylegion.org](http://www.mylegion.org).**

Post 56 members, with 25 years or greater **continuous** membership in THE AMERICAN LEGION, will be entered in a drawing for \$250. The drawing is normally held at our annual Post 56 Birthday and Awards Banquet, which is currently on hold due to COVID Pandemic restrictions. Membership must be current for 2021 to be eligible for the drawing.

### Veterans Information

Post 56 Information can be found online at [www.idahofallsveterans.org](http://www.idahofallsveterans.org)

**Bonneville County Veterans Service Officer**  
Skylar Hudman - 208-529-1350 Ext 1295

**Idaho State Veterans Service Officer**  
Darrel Homer – 208-235-7890

**Al Arnold - Post 56 Adjutant**



## Message from the Post 56 Auxiliary

The Auxiliary has not been meeting due to COVID restrictions. We hope everyone is staying safe and healthy. If you would like to be added to our email list or like to get in touch with the Auxiliary, you can contact us at: [alaidahofalls@gmail.com](mailto:alaidahofalls@gmail.com).

# Thank You



# VETERANS

### National Executive Committeeman

We have been holding meetings via Zoom this year and the National Legislative meeting will be no different. We are hoping the National meeting will happen this year but again, COVID-19 will be the determining factor on whether it goes or not. I am glad I am not in charge of that meeting – how would you like to be the one trying to get 12,000 people housed and set up for when you do not know whether the COVID-19 situation is going to make you cancel all you have planned. We are still looking at resolutions and the finance commission is also meeting but again all by Zoom which means sitting in front of a computer for hours and hours. We will get through all this in time – I just hope it is sooner instead of later.

The Bonneville Veterans Memorial Team is to be congratulated for all their work during the virus sequestration. In 2020 the team conducted 99 graveside honors for Veterans without a hitch. By being careful and maintaining a distance from families they performed their duties without one case of the COVID-19 virus. What a great job providing graveside services for all our brothers and sisters. Bravo Zulu.

Stay in touch with other American Legion members to make sure they are alright and to find out when the meetings will start in person again. We are still meeting but it is electronically. If you have having trouble getting into a meeting, let someone know so you can attend on your phone or computer.

Bob Skinner, National Executive Committeeman

# The Digital Age

If the year 2020 has taught us anything, it is the need for maintaining flexibility is crucial.

While the world shut down around us, during the initial stages of the pandemic response, the VA adapted to alternative methods, to guarantee that our Veteran's health needs did not fall by the wayside. As face-to-face appointments became unfeasible, the VA began to rely heavily on "VA Video Connect" to meet patient needs. While this is not new technology, by any means, online appointments became a necessary venue for both health care and mental health care needs. Patients are able to visit <https://www.myhealth.va.gov/mhv-portal-web/ss20200320-va-video-connect>, or mobile users can visit <https://mobile.va.gov/app/va-video-connect>, to request telehealth appointments.

Similarly, Veterans can visit <https://www.myhealth.va.gov/mhv-portal-web/home> to refill prescriptions, make appointments, communicate with their health care team, and view or print health records. Even VBA Appeals are facilitated through online hearings these days and have proven effective in assuring court appeals move forward.

Likewise, Idaho Falls Post 56 has realized the need to move into the digital age as well. During the months when we were prevented from meeting face-to-face, due to restrictions set in place by Governor Brad Little, our post membership meetings moved to an online format. Members who opted to join our "Zoom Meetings" were able to make sure their voices continued to be heard, in respect to post operations, while enjoying the ability to participate from their homes (or other locations based on circumstances). And these meetings have seen participant growth, since the online implementation.

If you would like to join the "Zoom Meeting" format, it is easier than you think. All you need is a desk top computer, laptop, or smart phone, that has video and audio capabilities (most of the devices listed have these options built in). Or if you would prefer, you may join the meeting by voice only, but we will miss the opportunity of seeing your bright and smiling face. Either way, joining the zoom meeting will afford the opportunity to make motions, vote on matters at hand, and keep current on post activities. And did I mention, you can

do all of this from the comfort of your recliner while wearing your favorite pink fuzzy slippers, if that is what appeals to you?

The meeting links, for our "Zoom Meeting" can be found on our website, [idahofallsveterans.org](http://idahofallsveterans.org), under American Legion Post 56's page. If you would prefer that a reminder, as well as the current link, is sent to your smart phone (via text) or your email address, please make sure Chaplain Joe Behling has your current contact information and preference. Joe can be contacted at [navygm@gmail.com](mailto:navygm@gmail.com), or send your information to Darrel Homer at [darrelrh@cableone.net](mailto:darrelrh@cableone.net)

And speaking of current email addresses and contact information, a few our members have opted to give up their traditional land lines, for the convenience of cell phones. If you got tired of the bombardment of telemarketer calls, or decided to reduce monthly expenses, please make sure we have your current contact information on file. It is difficult to keep our members abreast of current events if we do not have a way to pass this information along. Contact information can be sent to our Adjutant Al Arnold at [ararnold44@gmail.com](mailto:ararnold44@gmail.com), or by sending an email to Darrel Homer at the address listed above.

And lastly, if you are not already aware, the Idaho Legionnaire (our Department Newsletter) is slated to become a digital publication only. This is a measure that is intended to reduce printing and mailing costs and requires an updated email address if you would like the publication sent to your inbox. Otherwise, the publication will be available through the Department's website at <https://www.legion.org/idaho>



## VA Spotlight

On April 2, 2020, to ease financial burdens during the COVID-19 pandemic, President Donald Trump directed VA Secretary Robert Wilkie to postpone the collection of Veteran Debt. On April 6, 2020, the VA temporarily halted sending monthly co-pay billing statements, for medical care and prescription costs. While the co-pay statements were suspended, the costs accrued were not excused.

On January 1, 2021, the mailing of statements resumed, and Veterans were notified of their financial obligation. For some this was a minor expense, while for others the financial obligation came as a surprise. If a financial burden has been imposed, the VA is committed to offering relief.

This relief is offered through extended payment plans, requesting a waiver on the debt owed, or filing for a financial hardship. If you are having trouble paying your bill, please call 866-400-1238 or 800-698-2411 (TTY: 711) Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. E.T., to speak with a representative. You may also visit a County or State Veterans Service Officer as well. VA form 10-10HS may be filed to Request a Hardship Determination, VA form 1100 may be filed for Agreement to Pay Indebtedness, or VA form 5655 may be filed to request a Waiver on the amount owed.

Normally, if a Veteran is receiving either disability compensation benefit payments, or special monthly pension benefit payments, the VA may keep part or all the payment to help reduce the debt, unless another debt relief option is approved.

If you have VA direct, or VA-backed home loan and are experiencing financial hardship due directly or indirectly to COVID-19, call your loan servicer right away to request a forbearance plan. Forbearance lets you pause or reduce your loan payments for a period of time, without paying late fees or other penalties. Under a recent law, you may request up to 12 months of mortgage forbearance on a VA direct or VA-backed home loan. But please note forbearance does not lower or forgive the amount of money you owe on your loan, so you will need to work with your servicer at the end of the forbearance period to set up a repayment plan.

For Veterans who are receiving education benefits under the GI Bill, benefit payments may not be automatically altered if the school changes to online classes, or the

school temporarily closes. Please call the Education Call Center at 888-442-4551, Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. ET, for additional information.

COVID-19 vaccines are coming to Southeastern Idaho, but the availability date is pending at this point. The vaccines are currently being administered through Salt Lake City VAMC, by appointment only and travel will not be reimbursed for these shots. As logistics are being finalized for both Pocatello and Idaho Falls CBOC's, Veterans who are 75 years of age or older will be in the first priority group. Additionally, if you receive the first vaccination, you must commit to receiving the second vaccination, within the 28-day window. Further information will be released as details are finalized.

For additional questions, regarding Coronavirus FAQs, please visit <https://www.va.gov/coronavirus-veteran-frequently-asked-questions/#debt-copays-appeals-and-other>. Or, for up-to-date information concerning your local healthcare facility please visit <https://www.salt-lakecity.va.gov/emergency/index.asp>.

Bonneville County Veterans Service Officer Skylar Hudman is available to provide assistance. He can be reached at (208) 529-1350 ext. 1295. Or you can reach State Service Officer Darrel Homer by calling (208) 235-7890.



### War Bonnet Roundup Rodeo Report

The War Bonnet Roundup Rodeo is hopefully going forward this year. Contracts have been sent out by the City for all the contractors and help this coming year. The Rodeo is scheduled to take place August 6, 7 and 8 we are having meetings to get some things ironed out so keep your fingers crossed that it happens this year. Hopefully, the virus will be slowed down enough with the vaccine to allow us to make it happen this year. More to follow.

Bob Skinner  
American Legion Rodeo Chairman

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### March 13, 2021

7th District Spring Meeting  
Post 56, 485 Constitution Way  
Idaho Falls, ID 83402  
Registration begins at 8:00 a.m.  
Opening Ceremony at 9:00 a.m.

### Date TBD due to COVID Restrictions

THE AMERICAN LEGION Birthday Dinner  
Veterans Memorial Building  
5:00 p.m. Social Hour, 6:00 p.m. Dinner  
Awards presentations following Dinner.

### May 28, 2021

0900 - Place flags on Veterans graves  
at Fielding Cemetery

### May 29, 2021

0900 - Place flags on Veterans graves  
at Rose Hill Cemetery

### May 31, 2021 -Memorial Day Activities

0800 Flag Colors Ceremony at Veterans Memorial  
0830 Ceremony at Fielding Memorial Cemetery  
0900 Ceremony at Rose Hill Cemetery  
1000 Ceremony at Ammon Cemetery  
1100 Ceremony at Lincoln Cemetery

### June 14, 2021

Flag Day Activities

### July 15 to 18, 2021

The American Legion  
Department of Idaho Convention  
Burley, Idaho

### July 22, 2021

All Veterans Picnic  
Tautphaus Park Shelter 1, Beginning at 5:30 pm  
Hamburgers, Hot Dogs, etc. provided by Post 56 and  
VFW Post 2146  
Bring a Salad or Desert to share

### August 5, 6, and 7, 2021 (Current Scheduled dates)

War Bonnet Rodeo  
Concessions operated by Post 56.

### August 27 to September 2, 2021

102nd National Convention in Phoenix, AZ

### September 25, 2021

7th District Fall Meeting



### Bonneville County Veterans Ceremonial Team

The Bonneville County Veterans Memorial Team conducted 99 graveside honors in 2020 to honor those who have served out country. We have conducted honors in a barn, in someone's backyard, at the funeral home, by the river, in a field and basically wherever the family needs the honors conducted. Our ceremony is about the family and the Veteran, so we always must maintain our flexibility. Sometimes the family has a member in uniform and we always invite them to be any part of our team that they would like – it sometimes requires a little training but again, it is about the family and the Veteran. We lost one of our own a few weeks ago when Harry Peterlin passed away. He was our representative from what Tom Brocaw called “The Greatest Generation” and we will miss our brother greatly. The team also conducts flag ceremonies, opens events with a flag presentation, conducts dedications and the list goes on and on. We are always ready to conduct ceremonies on Veterans Day, Memorial Day, Flag Day, Patriots Day, and other activities involving the presentation our nations flag. If you would like to join the ranks of this team let a team member know and we will get you hooked up. We take great pride in all the Team's activities.

THE AMERICAN LEGION  
IDAHO FALLS POST 56  
P.O. Box 50275  
IDAHO FALLS, IDAHO 83405-0275

### **Flag Half-Staff Days for 2021**

- **Saturday, May 15th** – Peace Officer Memorial Day  
Sunrise to sunset
- **Monday, May 31st** – Memorial Day  
Sunrise to noon
- **Saturday, September 11th** – Patriots Day  
Sunrise to sunset
- **Sunday, October 3rd** – National Fallen Firefighters Day  
Sunrise to sunset
- **Tuesday, December 7th** – Pearl Harbor Day  
Sunrise to sunset

### **POST MEETINGS**

Post 56 meets the  
1st and 3rd Monday each  
month at 7:00 p.m.  
Veterans Memorial  
Building  
485 Constitution Way,  
Idaho Falls, Idaho.