Monthly Newsletter

AMERICAN LEGION POST 57

December 2025



Post Info

American Legion Post 57

Address:

2602 SW Main Blvd Lake City FL 32025

Phone:

Post: (386) 752-7776 Membership Office: (386) 243-8088

Hours:

Mon to Sun 11:00am to 10:00pm

Kitchen Hours:

- Lunch -

Monday Thru Friday 11:00am to 1:00pm

- Dinner -

Saturday Thru Thursday 4:00pm to 8:00pm Fridays 5:30pm to 7:30pm **Kitchen Phone:**

(386) 752-7260

Email & Website: americanlegion57@comcast.net www.americanlegion57.org



Post Officers

-Commander-

Bill Huggins

-1st Vice Commander-

Kelly Valliere

-2nd Vice Commander-

Terry Libbert

-3rd Vice Commander-

Harrison Ambrose

-4th Vice Commander-

Rick Harris

-Finance Officer-

Andrew Framer

-Adjutant-

Jason Massey

-Chaplain-

William Bell

-Historian-

Thomas Wilcutts

-Sergeant at Arms-

Matthew Fetzer

-Executive Committeeman-

George Wehrli

-Executive Committeeman-

Tony Nolan

-Executive Committeeman-

Ken Burkes

-Executive Committeeman-

Robert Preston

-Judge Advocate-

Dave Mangrum

-Service Officer-

Lisa Brown



Commanders Corner

I can't believe Christmas is fast approaching as is the end of 2025...

Kudos to Kelly and her team, November 8th saw the largest and best organized Veteran's Day parade in recent memory according to those who came out to participate or watch. Great job on making our American Legion Family (Team 57) proud to represent.

We held our Veterans Day observance on November 11th. During this event we were honored to have Quilts of Valor in attendance and participating in the event by honoring 7 Veterans with the draping of the quilts which was followed by a Dignified Flag disposal.

Following the ceremonies we served lunch of pulled pork, bratwurst and burgers with all the sides. This year we nearly doubled the attendance over last year, feeding 239 members and guests. Team 57 Proud.

Rider's Toy Run was held on Saturday, Nov.15 benefiting Voices for Children and the Wellborn Community Association. All toys were given to Toys for Tots of Suwannee County while each entity received \$2,500.00 from the event. As per usual the ride went off without a hitch. Great job to the Riders and Team 57.

We held our 2nd Annual Thanksgiving Dinner on Thanksgiving day to benefit our Veterans and members. There was so much food you wouldn't believe, we fed approximately 150 members and guests as well as the 30+ Volunteers who made this possible.

For those who don't know why we began this new tradition, it's because a large portion of our membership are couples with no family support systems and more importantly for those who would otherwise spend the day alone fighting their demons with no one to care. We are a family supporting one another.

Coming up, December 5th has the American Legion hosting the City of Lake City's Christmas party. The kitchen is catering the dinner that evening so there will be no Friday lunch or dinner as they prepare to cater the event.

December 13th the Legion Family will conduct our Wreaths across America at Olustee park at 12 noon. Members are urged to come out in support, please arrive by 11:30 and you may want to bring a portable chair for your comfort. Following the laying of the wreaths we will proceed to Forest Lawn Cemetery to place flags on the graves of our fallen Veterans. We would welcome everyone's assistance.

Tuesday, December 16th following the Legion/Auxiliary General meeting we will have our Member's Christmas Party in the lounge. The Legion will provide the meat, everyone else is asked to bring a dish to share.

Commanders Corner (Cont.)

Christmas Day, Dec. 25th we will host our 2nd annual Members traditional Christmas Dinner with ham, turkey and all the sides. There is a sign-up sheet in the lounge to let us know what you are bringing. While all members are more than welcome, just as Thanksgiving, this is geared for our members who lack family support and most especially those with no one on this day. Last year we hosted in excess of 130 for dinner and hope to see an increase this year.

Wednesday, December 31st we will have our New Year's Eve party, the menu is still being determined but we do know that entertainment will be provided by the band Late For Class. The party will begin at 6:30 and go until done.

There will be no Bingo on Christmas or New Year's Day.

Otherwise we have Bingo every Sunday, Monday and Thursday, afternoon at 3:00 pm and evening at 6:45.

Texas Holdem poker every Monday and Friday night at 7:00.

Queen of Hearts every Saturday at 6:00 in the lounge.

Draft beer every Wednesday \$1.75 all day

Tuesday Dec 2nd SAL meeting at 6:30, all members are urged to attend Friday Dec 5th City of Lake City Christmas party. No lunch, or dinner

Saturday Dec 6th Paddle Auction in the lounge 5-7 PM

Monday Dec 8th Special Rider's meeting for December

Tuesday Dec 9th Legion/Auxiliary Board meetings 6:30 PM

Friday Dec 12th Auxiliary Friday Dinner

Friday Dec 12th Fancy Dancers in the hall from 4-9 PM

Saturday Dec 13th Wreaths across America 12 PM Olustee Park

Saturday Dec 13th SAL Roadkill from 5-7 PM

Tuesday Dec 16th Legion/Auxiliary General meeting

Tuesday Dec 17th Membership Christmas party 7:30-10PM

Friday Dec 19th Legion Friday night Dinner Saturday Dec 20th Paddle Auction from 5-7 pm

Thursday Dec 25th Member's Christmas Dinner from 3-5 PM

Friday Dec 26th No Friday Dinner

Saturday Dec 27th Rider's Roadkill (tentative) Wednesday Dec 31st New Year's Eve Party 6:30



Chaplain

As we enter the month of December, we step into a season filled with reflection, gratitude, and hope. For many, this is a time of celebration and togetherness; for others, it may be a season of quiet challenges or memories that weigh heavily on the heart. As your Post Chaplain, I want to remind each of you that you are never walking alone. Let us also keep in prayer our members who have recently lost loved ones.

This month, we honor the spirit of service that defines our Legion family. Whether you served in wartime or peacetime, at home or abroad, your commitment continues to inspire the community around us. May this season bring you moments of peace, renewed strength, and the warmth of friendship.

As we close out the year, let us remember our comrades who are no longer with us, as well as those currently serving who will spend their holidays far from home. Keep them—and their families—in your thoughts and prayers.

May the light of this season guide us into the new year with purpose, unity, and gratitude. If you or anyone in our Post family is facing hardships or simply needs someone to talk to, please reach out. We are stronger together.

"How good and pleasant it is when families live together in unity!" — Psalm 133:1

William Bell

Chaplain

chaplain@americanlegion57.org



Membership



Happy Holidays!!

October and November were amazing months for our membership drive! Here are the lewer are currently and unofficially at 82.95% of our membership goals. We have exceede November, December and January goals already. Well Done Team 57!!



Scan to go to www.legion.org

Official Membership numbers as of November 20:

Post goal: 840

Percentage of goal Achieved: 80.71

Total Paid Memberships: 678

New Members: 103

Renewals: 3

Transfers from 400_AD (cyber post): 4

Transfers in: 21
Transfers out: 21

We did very well over the last month and a half! New Members this month: from the Veterans Day Parade 4; First Responder Luncheon 6; Veterans Day Celebration 4; Marine Corps Birthday 6; Toy Run 2; Veteran Luncheon at the Fairgrounds 6

Let's Welcome Last month's New Members to our Post!

New	Mem	bers:
IACM	MEIII	DCI 3.

Brett Cooley	USN	John Consentino	USA
Scott Cunningham	USMC	Justin Reynolds	USA
Charles Griggs	USA	Eric Bittner	USAF
Joseph Polcharzyck	USMC	Donald Higgins	USMC
Leland Newborn	USMC	Daniel Higgins	USMC
James Henderson	USMC	Harold "Wayne" Whitten	USMC
Michael Minton	USN	Jason Green	USA
James Molina	USAF	Jake Downing	USA
Thomas Palmer JR	USMC	Dallas Shumpart	USCG
Charles Quinlan	USA	Donavon Pargo	USA
Richard Williams	USA	Brian Lucas	USMC
Christopher Carmichael	USA/USMC	Kenneth Manderville	USA
Robert Donoghue	USAF	Jacob Weller	USA
Roy Armstrong	USN	Mitchell Lamons	USAF
Danny Alvarez	USA State Rep	Devon Couey	USMC AD
Angelo "Tony" Morales	USN	Kathleen Aukerman	USA
Transfers:			

Transfers:

Dan Acosta USA FI0423 Eugene Brickett USN FL0400 Raymond Zeringue SR USA FL0138 William Campbell USA FL0400 AD Mary Garner USN FL0400 James Bishop USA/USAF FL0016 William Grymes USAF FL0246 Stephen Miller USA FL0400 AD Daniel Riley USA TX157

Membership (Cont.)

Upcoming events:

December 8th Pack away Memorial Crosses

We will need a few strong volunteers to help move them back into the shed. Meet at the post at 9:00 am Monday, December 8th.

December 13th: Wreaths Across America.

On Saturday December 13th, 9:30 AM we will meet at the post to do a dry run of the Wreaths Across America Ceremony, the Honor Guard, Riders, and Legionnaires who volunteered to place Wreaths should all be in attendance. The Honor Guard will leave the Post at approx 11:00AM to set up for the ceremony, they will be transporting the Public address system, flags, podium, and other equipment as required. The Riders and Legionnaires will leave the Post at approximately 11:20 am to transport the Wreaths and set them up on the Tripods and get into position for the Ceremony. The Ceremony will start at 12:00pm sharp.

The City has the Christmas Festival at the same time so if you are attending the Ceremony, parking will be difficult, as the Marion and some of the surrounding streets will be blocked off.

There are details we are still working out, and as they come to fruition, more information will be forthcoming.

After the Ceremony we will be heading to Forest Lawn Memorial Gardens Cemetery (3596 South Highway 441 | Lake City, FL 32025) to place flags on the graves of service members. Typically we are done by 2-3pm. We wish to thank those of you who volunteered for this solemn ceremony in advance for your patriotism!

For God and Country,

Kelly Valliere, First Vice Commander, US Navy Veteran, Cell: (904) 563-0618

Office: (386) 243-8088

Post57membership@gmail.com





Kitchen Hours:

- Lunch -

Monday Thru Friday

11:00am to 1:00pm

- Dinner -

Saturday Thru Thursday

4:00pm to 8:00pm

Fridays

5:30pm to 7:30pm

Kitchen Phone:

(386) 752-7260

Now you can order online on our website or scan the QR code on the menu!





Kitchen Volunteers & Cooks Needed

All Shifts

Benefits include: Tips and half price kitchen

Interested?

Contact Sharon Huggins (386) 984-9568



Riders

Hello, and welcome to December, to all of the ALR Chapter 57 Riders.

I'll start by saying this has been a rough month for Chapter 57 Riders in general, and the Officers in particular. November started off with Dan Acosta in ICU at Shands in Gainsville, recovering from a motorcycle accident that nearly claimed his life. Then our Sargent at Arms, Bob Charles lost his wife to illness after many years of marriage, while recovering from his own medical emergency. The month ended with our Finance Officer, Elaine Lagasse, and her daughter, in ICU at Shands in Gainsville, as a result of an automobile accident which claimed the life of her husband and fellow rider, Dermot Burke.

On a positive note, as the month came to a close, Dan has finally returned home to his dog and family, as he continues on a long road to recovery. Elaine is no longer in ICU, and is able to focus on the health and recovery of her daughter. And Bob is dealing with his loss by holding a Celebration of Life at his home, on December 7th, and he's inviting all Riders who wish to attend. The Officers and Riders of Chapter 57, continue to offer support and prayers, as these members recover from their injuries and deal with their personal losses.

November was a slow month for our riders for various reasons. The ride to the Domiciliary was cancelled and there were no fun rides or personal rides to report this week. Rides our Riders participated in include: The Veterans Day Parade and the Annual Toy Run. All told, our riders accumulated over 1740 miles in the saddle, over 100 hrs. riding, and \$2440 in donations to Voices for Children and the Wellborn Community Association.

Roadkill Bingo was originally cancelled after I learned of our Finance Officers accident, however, several Post 57 members stepped up and with very short notice, put together a successful night of Roadkill Bingo, raising over \$750 for Riders Programs. The Riders and Officers of Chapter 57 are grateful to those who stepped up when I could not. Thank you.

Riders (Cont.)

Finally, we were unable to provide proper reports during the November meeting. As previously mentioned, our Finance Officer was unavailable to complete the financial report, and our Road Captain has a new job which has forced him to resign his position as soon as a replacement is identified. New Officers have been identified to replace the Road Captain and assist the Finance Officer, and reports will be presented during the rescheduled December meeting. We've had to adapt and overcome, but we're veterans and that's what we do best.

Upcoming Events:

December 8th - Rescheduled December Meeting: 6:30 pm to 7:30 pm.

December 13th - Wreaths Across America:

December 25th - Christmas Dinner: I'm asking Riders who don't already have plans, to step up and help purchase, prepare and/or serve Thanksgiving dinner at the Legion.

December 27th - Riders Roadkill Bingo:

For God and Country,

JD Warren Rider Director ALR Chapter 57











Auxiliary News

Our Auxiliary president, Donna Sessa, would like to thank everyone again for renewing their membership as we are now at 85% renewal, one of the highest numbers in Florida. If you do not receive your new or initial membership card within one month of paying your dues or joining please let Donna or Cathy Bell, our new membership chairperson know. Dues can be paid by mail, leaving them at the bar or online.

The highlighted event for the month of October was our safe Halloween party. It was an enormous success and continues to grow bigger each year. The party was attended by 250 children under the age of 12 and with teens and parents the total number was about 450. It was a spectacular evening filled with creative costumes and unforgettable memories. The hall was transformed into a fun space with challenge games of all kinds and lots of candy. The haunted house was a special attraction for young and old. Each child received a hot dog, chips, and a drink. It was a resounding success, thanks to the enthusiasm and the effort put into planning and decorating by the American Legion family. We would like to give a special thanks to the Freshman ROTC of Columbia High School. They helped with everything from manning the games to the final cleanup.

Another successful venture for the Auxiliary was our Poppy Day collections. We had two days, November 1st at Publix and November 8th at Winn Dixie to pass out poppies. We received many generous donations from the people of Lake City when they realized our purpose and saw our dedication to our veterans. Carolyn and Margie did a fantastic job in organizing this, especially as first time chairs for this activity. We collected over \$900

The Auxiliary continues to be enthusiastic about the making and stuffing of bears for the Boggy Creek children. Weegie Garcia led the group in delivering our first batch to Boggy Creek, 70 bears and 13 afagans, in November and will begin making more after the holidays as an ongoing project. They were able to tour the facility and were extremely impressed. The staff were most grateful for the bears and could not say enough about how the children appreciated them and often found a sense of security in having them.

Auxiliary News (Cont.)

Thank you Karen and Philip for a delicious and successful Friday Auxiliary dinner! The next Auxiliary dinner will be December 12 th with Ham, scalloped potatoes and a veggie and dessert to be determined. This dinner will help in training dogs as personal companion dogs for veterans. Please come out and support the dinners with your time and purchase of a dinner.

We are continuing to collect coats, sweatshirts, and jackets (gently used please) for the Domiciliary and for homeless children of Columbia County. Many of these were delivered in November and with the recent cold snap they were needed. We can accept items throughout the winter months for future delivery.

Irma is working with veterans at the VA to provide Christmas goodie bags to the veterans. Cracker Barrel is providing the food but contributions of items for the goody bags are appreciated. Please contact Irma for more details.

The Legion will be open for both Thanksgiving and Christmas to anyone who wishes to share these holiday meals with us. We are asking for meat dishes, ham or turkey for example, side dishes and desserts for both events.

We continue to collect soda can pop tops for the Ronald McDonald House. When you have a small (or large) plastic bag filled you can turn these into the bar, into a large container in the bingo hall or at any of the Auxiliary meetings. These tops do not need to come exclusively from soda cans. Other can tops, including those from soup and vegetable cans are acceptable.

Some of our members attended the fall conference on November 20-23. We spent our time attending as many meetings as possible to bring fresh ideas back to the membership for the coming year. We will be presenting some of these innovative ideas at future Auxiliary meetings.

Dates to remember for November-December:

November 27th: Happy Thanksgiving, dinner served at the Post in the Legion Hall from 3:00-5:00 PM. All members are invited.

November 29th: The Auxiliary will get together at 9:00AM to decorate the legion hall for Christmas. If you can attend at any time that morning please come out and help so that our legion looks festive and inviting.

Auxiliary News (Cont.)

December 2nd: Gathering to put together blankets for the Ladies at the Domiciliary at 2:30 at the Post. The materials will be provided, we just need help putting these together.

December 6th: District Meeting in Steinhatchee, Post 291. Registration at 9:00AM, meeting starting at 10:00AM. These meetings are open to all Auxiliary members and are a terrific way to share ideas with other posts.

December 12th : Auxiliary Dinner

December 13th: Lake City Christmas Parade. The Legion will have a float in the parade.

December 16th: General meeting and members Christmas Party

December 18th: Christmas Tea for the ladies at the domiciliary. All members invited.

Look for emails from the Auxiliary if there is more information on the Christmas happenings.

Donna Sessa President Unit 57 Auxiliary For Spirit of Service, Not Self

Volunteer Spotlight

VOLUNTEER OF THE MONTH IS

ELOISE REYNOLDS

THANK YOU FOR ALL YOU AND ALL OUR VOLUNTEERS DO!

Thank You



Honor Guard

On **November 15th**, the Post 57 Honor Guard had the privilege of **posting the Colors** at the **34th Annual Veterans Day Luncheon** held at the Columbia County Fairgrounds. It was an honor to represent our Post.

During the luncheon, we also had the special opportunity to recognize **Mr. Ray, a 100-year-old World War II Veteran**, whose remarkable service and longevity stand as an inspiration to all. Moments like these remind us why we serve—honoring those who paved the way with courage, sacrifice, and unwavering dedication to our nation.

December Drill Schedule

The Honor Guard will **not be drilling** during the month of December.

We will **resume drills** in the new year on:

🃅 Wednesday, January 15th, 2026 @ 11:00 AM

We look forward to starting 2026 strong and appreciate everyone's continued commitment.

Stay Connected

Be sure to check out our **new Facebook page**:

American Legion Honor Guard Post 57, Lake City

A special thank you goes to **Mrs. Patty Koon**, who has done a fantastic job getting the page up and running. Please follow, like, and share to help us grow our online presence!

Member Spotlight

Please keep **Elaine**, one of our valued team members, **in your thoughts and prayers**, so she may be able to join our ranks again soon.

Interested in Joining?

If you would like to **join the Honor Guard** or learn more about what we do, please contact us, honorguardpost57@gmail.com, or attend one of our upcoming drill sessions. We welcome all committed Legionnaires who wish to serve in this meaningful and honorable role.



Post Service Officer

November Service Officer report we helped 6 veterans for the month of November 2025. Thanks to all of you who have donated to the VSO, you are the rest we can continue this work!

The Holidays and Veteran Suicide: Separating Myth from Reality

As the holiday season approaches, with its emphasis on family gatherings, joy, and reflection, many Americans worry about heightened emotional struggles—particularly for those who have served in the military. A persistent myth claims that suicides spike during the holidays, fueled by stories of loneliness, financial stress, and seasonal depression. For veterans, who face a disproportionately high risk of suicide year-round, this concern feels especially urgent. But what does the evidence actually show?

Contrary to popular belief, suicides do not increase during the holiday season for the general population—and the same holds true for veterans in most cases. Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) consistently show December as one of the lowest months for suicides overall. A comprehensive 2025 study published in Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior, analyzing over 133,000 veteran suicides from 2001 to 2021, found no broad holiday surge. In fact, veteran suicide rates were lower on several holidays, including Christmas and Thanksgiving.

However, the research did identify nuances. There was a notable uptick around New Year's—specifically, an increasing trend in daily suicides from December 30 to January 1, and elevated rates on New Year's Day itself (17% higher overall, and up to 64% higher among younger veterans aged 25–34). Veteran suicides also peak in summer months and on Mondays, patterns driven more by seasonal light changes, routine disruptions, and post-weekend effects than holiday cheer (or lack thereof).

The broader crisis remains stark. According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' 2024 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report (covering data through 2022), approximately 17–18 veterans die by suicide each day in the United States—a rate significantly higher than the non-veteran population. Firearms are involved in the majority of these deaths, and risk factors like PTSD, traumatic brain injury, substance use, and challenges transitioning to civilian life persist year-round. While rates have stabilized or slightly declined for some groups (such as women veterans and those in VA care), the overall toll underscores that veteran suicide is a daily tragedy, not a seasonal one.

Post Service Officer (Cont.)

The holidays can still be challenging for many veterans. Isolation, memories of lost comrades, family tensions, or the pressure to "feel merry" may intensify existing struggles. But they can also offer opportunities for connection—reaching out to a battle buddy, attending a community event, or simply sharing a meal.

This season, the most powerful gift we can give veterans is awareness and action:

- Check in: A simple call or visit can make a difference. Ask directly: "Are you thinking about suicide?" It opens the door without judgment.
- Know the resources: The Veterans Crisis Line is available 24/7—dial 988 then press 1, text 838255, or chat at VeteransCrisisLine.net. No VA enrollment required.
- Promote safety: Encourage secure firearm storage during high-risk periods; free resources are available through the VA.
- Build community: Programs like the VA's REACH VET and local suicide prevention coalitions work year-round to identify and support at-risk veterans.

Veteran suicide isn't confined to the holidays—it's a preventable public health crisis we face every day. By debunking myths and focusing on real, ongoing support, we honor their service not just with words, but with lives saved. If you or a veteran you know is struggling, reach out today. You're not alone.

Lisa G. Brown,

Veteran Service Office

American Legion Post 57







Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 Bingo 3pm & 6:45pm Texas Hold'em 7:00pm	2 Auxiliary Blankets 2:30pm SAL Squadron 57 Meeting 6:30pm- 7:30pm Marine Corps League Meeting 6:30pm-7:30pm	3 \$1.75 Draft 11:00am	4 Bingo 3pm & 6:45pm	5 Red Shirt Friday City of Lake City Christmas Party 3:00pm Texas Hold'em 7:00pm	Sea Cadet Drill 8:00am-3:30pm Auxiliary District Meeting (Post 291) 9:00am Paddle Auction 5:00pm-7:00pm Queen of Hearts 6:00pm
7 Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day Bingo 3pm & 6:45pm	8 Pack Up Crosses 9:00am Bingo 3pm & 6:45pm Special Rider's Meeting 6:30pm- 7:30pm Texas Hold'em 7:00pm	9 Legion & Auxiliary Executive Meeting 6:30pm-7:30pm	\$1.75 Draft 11:00am Auxiliary Bingo (Domiciliary) 6:00pm-7:00pm	11 Bingo 3pm & 6:45pm	Red Shirt Friday Fancy Dancers 4:00pm-9:00pm Auxiliary Friday Night Dinner 5:30pm-7:30pm Karaoke 6:30pm-9:30pm Texas Hold'em 7:00 PM	Cannon Creek Party (Hall Rental) Wreaths Across America Day 9:00am-1:00pm SAL Roadkill Bingo 3:00pm- 5:00pm Queen of Hearts 6:00pm Christmas Day Parade 6:00pm
14 Bingo 3pm & 6:45pm	15 Bingo 3pm & 6:45pm Texas Hold'em 7:00pm	16 Legion & Auxiliary General Membership Meeting 6:30pm-7:30pm Member's Christmas Party 7:30pm-8:30pm	17 \$1.75 Draft 11:00am	Auxiliary Tea at the Domiciliary Bingo 3pm & 6:45pm	19 Red Shirt Friday Legion Friday Night Dinner 5:30pm-7:30pm Texas Hold'em 7:00 PM	20 Sea Cadet Drill 8:00am-3:30pm Paddle Auction 5:00pm-7:00pm Queen of Hearts 6:00pm
21 Bingo 3pm & 6:45pm	22 Bingo 3pm & 6:45pm Texas Hold'em 7:00pm	23 Rider's Meeting 6:30pm-7:30pm	\$1.75 Draft 11:00 am Auxiliary Bingo (Domiciliary) 6:00pm-7:00pm	25 Christmas Day Christmas Dinner 3:00pm	26 Red Shirt Friday Texas Hold'em 7:00 PM	Queen of Hearts 6:00pm Riders Roadkill Bingo 5:00pm- 7:00pm
28 Celebration of Life 1:00pm-3:00pm Bingo 3pm & 6:45pm	29 Bingo 3pm & 6:45pm Texas Hold'em 7:00pm	30	\$1.75 Draft 11:00 am New Year's Eve New Year's Eve Party			