



**AMERICAN
LEGION**

Published exclusively for the members of
THE AMERICAN LEGION MATTHEW BLOUNT POST 555

VOLUME X, ISSUE VII AUGUST 2023

THE TRIPLE NICKEL

American Legion Baseball 19U Mid-South Regional Tournament

The 19U Division State Champions will move on to the Regional Tournament where they compete to play in The American Legion World Series in Shelby, North Carolina which is aired on ESPN. This year, the 19U Mid-South Regional Tournament will be held at Pelham High School. This tournament will have two teams representing the State of Alabama; the State Tournament Champion and the host team, Shelby County Post 555. The other teams will be the State Champions of Arkansas, Kansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, and Oklahoma. The tournament games are scheduled for **August 2-6, 2023** with the Opening Ceremony scheduled for Tues., **August 1, 2023** at 7:00 p.m. at Pelham High School. Here are the Game Dates and Pairings Times.

American Legion Baseball Game Dates and Pairings Times

Tuesday – August 1, 2023

Opening Ceremony @ 7:00pm
Pelham High School

Wednesday – August 2, 2023 (note the time changes)

Game 1 MS Champion vs. OK Champion @ **12:00 p.m.**

Game 2 MO Champion vs. AR Champion @ **2:30 p.m.**

Game 3 LA Champion vs. AL Champion @ **5:00 p.m.**

Game 4 KS Champion vs. Post 555 @ **7:30 p.m.**

Thursday – August 3, 2023

Game 5 Loser Game 1 vs. Loser Game 3 @ 10:00 a.m.

Game 6 Loser Game 2 vs. Loser Game 4 @ 1:00 p.m.

Game 7 Winner Game 1 vs. Winner Game 3 @ 4:00 p.m.

Game 8 Winner Game 2 vs. Winner Game 4 @ 7:00 p.m.

Friday – August 4, 2023

Game 9 Winner Game 6 vs. Loser Game 7 @ 10:00 a.m.

Game 10 Winner Game 5 vs. Loser Game 8 @ 1:00 p.m.
Game 11 Winner Game 7 vs. Winner Game 8 @ 4:00 p.m.

Saturday – August 5, 2023

Game 12 Winner Game 9 vs. Loser Game 11 @ 10:00 a.m. *
Game 13 Winner Game 10 vs. Winner Game 11 @ 1:00 p.m. *

Sunday – August 6, 2023

Game 14 Winner Game 12 vs. Winner Game 13 @ 1:00 p.m. **
*Game 15 if necessary @ 4:00 pm *

* Pairings for Games 12 and 13 will not match previous opponents against each other unless absolutely necessary.

** If three teams remain after Game 13, the winner of Game 11 automatically draws the bye for Game 14.

CHAPLAIN'S UPLIFT

When I was a teenager, I sat at my kitchen table one day listening to an elderly friend of the family tell me about his days when he rode with Teddy Roosevelt and his Rough Riders in Cuba. I was awestruck! Roosevelt is well known for many quotes, but his most popular and maybe my most favorite quote in life is this one. “It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually **in the arena**, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly, who errs and comes up short again and again, because there is no effort without error or shortcoming, but who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, who spends himself in a worthy cause; who, at the best, knows, in the end, the triumph of high achievement, and who, at the worst, if he fails, at least he fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who knew neither victory nor defeat.” April 23, 1910



There are not very many Roosevelts or Robert E. Lee's or Abraham Lincoln's or the like. Most of us are just ordinary people. If you Google “Striving for Greatness,” you'll see more than a couple of dozen hits on how to do just that. Most of us, if not all, have probably thought that we could never be like that. Or we may have given it the old

college try, even more than once, and have fallen flat on our faces, and we realized then that it was just not going to happen. But I have good news for us. Consider this quote in a book I have about True Manhood and Masculinity.

“**True manhood** means accepting responsibility for **others**, and making **their** welfare a primary focus of life. It means developing a capacity for right judgment, courage, honesty with ourselves and with others, generosity, determination, public-spiritedness, and self-denial in pursuit of a larger good.”

You see, there is no need to try to be something that we are not. Those around us just need us to be what we are, the way we were created to be; just ordinary men and women. Consider that along with the “synergy” of drawing strength from others, which I call the power of **working together**, and we become people that can accomplish quite a lot in the course of “time.” And time is only “a duration in which many things happen.”

*Be Encouraged My Fellow Vets,
Chaplain Joe*

ROVEO LUNCHEON LOCATION CHANGED

Due to the declining number of members coming together for the “ROVEO” luncheon, the eight members who got together for the last lunch (July 11, 2023) discussed changing the location for a little variety. The next ROVEO luncheon is scheduled for Tues., August 8, 2023, 11:30 a.m., at **“Wok On In”** which is immediately next door to Café Trentuno where we have met since the inception of this gathering. They offer Chinese food, so let’s see if we can energize this group of ROVEOs again and increase our attendees! If this interests you, be a part of the discussion each month to decide to continue moving around Pelham or staying in one place for a few months. We can do whatever we want to do to keep the group together!!!

SERVICE OFFICER’S “OFFERINGS”

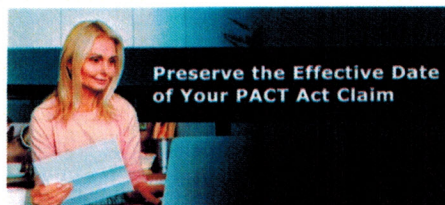


File Your PACT Act Claim by Aug. 9th

Veterans Benefits Administration sent this bulletin at 07/20/2023 12:01 PM EDT

Having trouble viewing this email? [View it as a web page.](#)

Veterans Benefits
Administration



Submit Your Intent to File a Claim

The Honoring Our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act of 2022 (PACT Act) is the biggest expansion of Veteran health care and benefits in generations. VA encourages all eligible Veterans and survivors to file a claim — or submit their intent to file a claim — for PACT Act-related benefits now. If you notify VA of your intent to file before Aug. 10, 2023, you may be able to get retroactive payments to Aug. 10, 2022, when the PACT Act became law. Learn how to let VA know of your intent to file.



Vietnam War Era Veterans

The PACT Act makes it easier for Vietnam Veterans to receive benefits for illnesses linked to Agent Orange exposure. Over 20 new health conditions are now presumed to have been caused by [exposure to hazardous substances](#) while serving in the military. A Veteran only needs to prove they have one of these "presumptive conditions" and served during a qualifying time period in a specific location to receive compensation. [Learn about Vietnam War era Veteran eligibility.](#)



Gulf War and Post-9/11 Era Veterans

If you served in the Gulf War or Post-9/11 era in specified locations, you may qualify for disability compensation if you experience certain medical conditions. VA considers certain service areas — "presumptive locations" — meaning that if you served in any of these places during specified time periods, you do not have to prove that you were exposed to toxins. [Learn about Gulf War era and post-9/11 Veteran eligibility.](#)



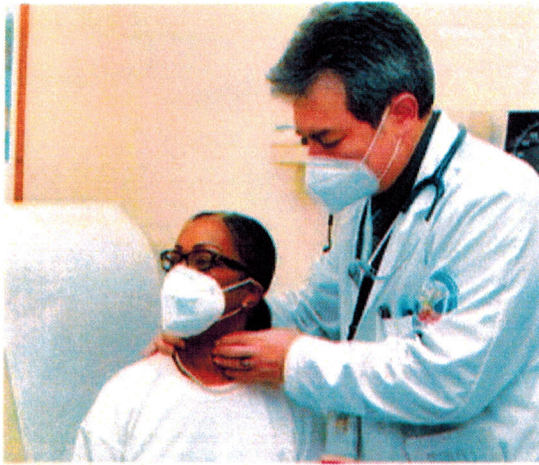
New Eligibility for Survivor Benefits

More survivors than ever before are now eligible for [Dependency and Indemnity Compensation \(DIC\)](#) due to Veterans' benefits expansion under the PACT Act. If your Veteran's cause of death was related to any of these expanded conditions or exposure locations — and they met certain service requirements — you may be eligible for DIC, VA pension, and/or accrued benefits. [Find out which benefits you may qualify for and how to access them.](#)



Track Your Pending PACT Act Claims Online

You can easily check the status of your PACT Act claim once it has been submitted. Just sign into your VA.gov account with your existing Login.gov, ID.me, DS Logon, or My HealtheVet account. If you don't have any of these accounts, you can create a free Login.gov or ID.me account. Once signed in, [follow these three steps to check the status of your PACT Act claim.](#)

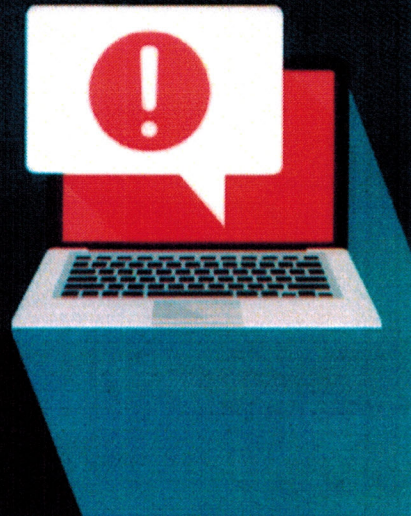


New Toxic Exposure Screening for Veterans

Veterans who enroll or are enrolled in VA health care can now receive the [new toxic exposure screening](#) at VA medical centers and clinics across the country. During your screening, if you believe you experienced toxic exposures during military service, you may be connected to resources and encouraged to [file a disability claim](#).

Scammers target Veterans to access their PACT Act benefits or submit claims on their behalf.

If you need help applying for benefits, VA-accredited representatives are standing by and ready to help!



VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Protect PACT Act Benefits with Direct Deposit

Do you currently receive or expect to receive VA benefit payments under the PACT Act? Keep your benefits safe from theft by [enrolling in direct deposit](#).

Upcoming PACT Act Events

Jul. 21 — [Pact Act Claims Briefing \(Colorado Springs, CO\)](#)

Jul. 29 — [PACT Act Claims Clinic \(Chicago Heights, IL\)](#)

Aug. 2 — [Veteran Resource Fair and PACT Act Presentation \(Calumet, MI\)](#)

Aug. 7, 8, and 9 — [PACT Act Claims Briefing \(Colorado Springs, CO\)](#)

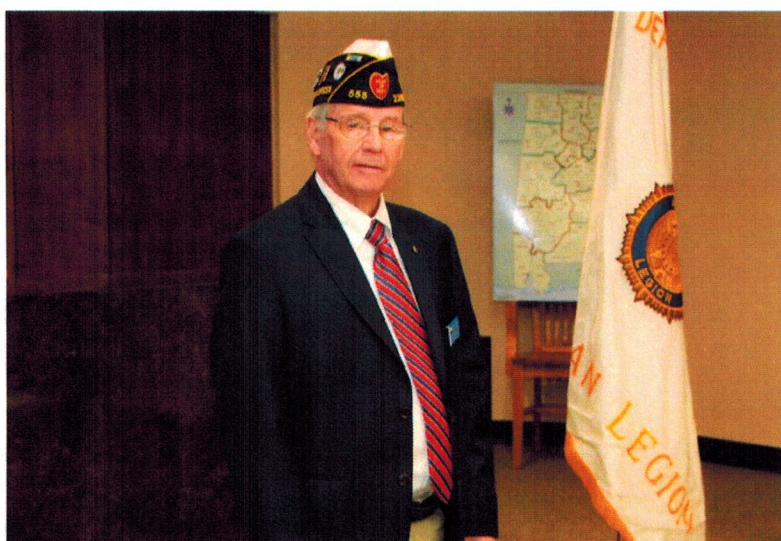
If you have any questions about these articles, contact the Post 555 Service Officer Curtis Orse at 205-603-0980. Hope this information is helpful to you or perhaps your family.



Sons of The American Legion Squadron 555



Donald Walker, Squadron 555 Commander, presenting a Sons of the America Legion class at the recent Alabama Yellowhammer Legion College held at Department Headquarters in Montgomery, July 21-23, 2023.



Post 555 Finance Officer Ron Koonce, also a graduate of the May 2022 class, serves as the Photographer and Historian for the Alabama Yellowhammer Legion College.



L/R: Sr. Vice Commander Don Madden, Tom Long, and Department NEC Representative Rico Hall presenting Tom Long with his certificate for completing the Alabama Yellowhammer Legion College, July 21-23, 2023

*For God and Country
Donald L. Walker
SAL Commander*

PROGRAMS AND EVENTS

FIRST RESPONDERS HONORED JULY 6, 2023

As I mentioned in the July 2023 newsletter, we were scheduled to honor several First Responders at our July 6, 2023 General Membership Meeting. It was a HUGE event, and there were more VIPs and guests than there were members (not sure if that is a good or a bad thing...), but it was a great evening for all. We were treated to a delicious dinner hosted by Texas Roadhouse and had just enough for the 60+ people present. Below you will read why they are being awarded their plaques, certificates, and watches as well as some photos of the award recipients with their names and awards listed under the photos.

2023 Deputy of the Year, Deputy Matthew Sulenski, Shelby County Sheriff's Office; joining him were Chief Clay Hammac and Major Jay Fondren.

2023 Deputy of the Year, Deputy Nicholas Lemoine, Shelby County Sheriff's Office; joining him were Chief Clay Hammac and Major Jan Fondren. Chief Hammac spoke on behalf of Shelby County Sheriff John Samaniego regarding these deputies' heroic actions on August 2, 2023 when responding to a Lifesaver Helicopter crash near Highway 43 in Sterrett, Alabama. Through courageous action in the face of danger, Deputy Sulenski and Deputy Lemoine reflect great credit upon themselves, their families, and the Shelby County Sheriff's Office.

2023 Law Enforcement Officer of the Year, Officer Iliana Hayakahua, Pelham Police Department; joining her was Lieutenant James Grier who spoke about the incident to which she

responded to a call for a man who had barricaded himself in a hotel room with a gun. When she arrived on the scene, she quickly assessed the situation and immediately took charge of the negotiations by establishing a rapport with the gunman, and convinced him to surrender peacefully. Office Hayakahua's professionalism and dedication to her duty give great credit to her department with her bravery and commitment to public safety.

2023 Law Enforcement Officer of the Year, Corporal David Sharpe, Alabaster Police Department; joining him was Corporal John St. Pierre who spoke about an incident in which Corporal Sharpe played a huge role in saving a driver's life. After receiving a call to assist the Alabaster Fire Rescue service for a severe wreck with injuries, Corporal Sharpe quickly assessed the scene and confirmed the information about the driver. He then ran to his patrol vehicle and retrieved his "lock-out equipment". Returning to the vehicle, he used the equipment and stabilized the driver as medics arrived. The driver suffered an acute medical condition which caused him to go unconscious and wreck the vehicle. Corporal Sharpe's actions that day saved the driver's life, who has since made a remarkable recovery.

2023 Firefighter of the Year, Fire/Medic Brent Rejonis, Pelham Fire Department; joining him was Pelham Fire Department Chief Mike Reid who emphasized that the Pelham Fire Department responds to all kinds of incidents, not just fire and medical. This includes hazmat response, swift water rescue, rope rescue, confined space rescue, and dive rescue/recovery. Unfortunately, the latter occurs 1-2 times a year in Pelham where they respond to drownings, and Dive Rescue is one of the most dangerous technical rescues for our personnel in both the training environment and for the real life incident. In approximately 18 months, Fire/Medic Rejonis completed the Medical Dive Course, and the Public Safety Scuba Instructor and Dive Rescue/Trainer course which is a combined 240 hours of training, including 100 hours of pre-course preparatory work. His hard work and continued dedication to improving the services provided by the Pelham Fire Department gives great credit to himself, his family, and the Pelham Fire Department.

2023 Public Safety Telecommunicator, Mr. David Fuentes, Pelham Police Department; joining him was Jeanie Davis, Communications and Records Manager. Ms. Davis stated that David is always quick to lend a hand and provides much needed translations since he is bilingual for their department. He has given CPR instructions in Spanish to numerous citizens and recently was able to speak to someone in Spanish who called-in a drowning at our local state park. David continues to assist with training since his role as a dispatch supervisor, and he mentors those who need guidance as new employees come in. One of his peers stated "I can call on Fuentes for everything. Without fail, he is ready and willing to help. I know that I can count on his knowledge, expertise, and common sense in any situation. I think the world of David Fuentes, and he is an absolute asset to the City of Pelham."

2023 Eagle Scout of the Year, Mr. Jack Combs. Due to a work obligation, Jack was unable to be with us, so his father, Chris Combs spoke on behalf of his son. Chris shared that Jack's dedication to Scout Troop 404 was admirable, and thanked Post 555 for supporting Jack with his Eagle Scout Project. Jack's Eagle Project consisted of providing Pelham Park Middle School with four wheelchair accessible picnic tables so that everyone could enjoy some time together outside. Jack received help with his project from fellow Scouts, family members, and donations from Matthew Blount Post 555.

Before the end of the evening, we wanted to show support of Officer Elizabeth Minter and her family as she continues to recover from her injuries incurred by being hit by a vehicle during a traffic incident. A container with her photo and small American flags on it was passed around and I was informed that almost \$1,158 was collected from our members, and will be delivered to the Pelham Police Auxiliary on her behalf. We wish her and her family the best through this tough time for all.

The members of Matthew Blount Post 555 are proud of all of these award recipients and their tremendous accomplishments in their respective areas of expertise, and look forward to continuing to support the Shelby County Sheriff's Office, the Pelham Police Department, the Pelham Fire Department, as well as the Alabaster Police Department in coming years. We also thank THEM for what they do for all citizens!!!



L/R: Post 555 Commander Barry Blount, Shelby County Deputy Matthew Sulenski, Shelby County Sheriff's Office Chief Clay Hammac, and Shelby County Sheriff's Office Major Jay Fondren. Congratulations to Deputy Sulenski for 2023 Deputy of the Year!!



L/R: Post 555 Commander Barry Blount, Shelby County Deputy Nicholas Lemoine, Shelby County Sheriff's Office Chief Clay Hammac, and Shelby County Sheriff's Office Major Jan Fondren. Congratulations to Deputy Nicholas Lemoine for 2023 Deputy of the Year!!



L/R: Post 555 Commander Barry Blount and Pelham Police Department Officer Iliana Hayakahua. Congratulations to Officer Hayakahua for 2023 Law Enforcement Officer of the Year!!



L/R: Post 555 Commander Barry Blount, Alabaster Police Department Corporal David Sharpe, and Alabaster Police Department Corporal John St. Pierre. Congratulations to Corporal Sharpe for 2023 Law Enforcement Officer of the Year!!



L/R: Post 555 Commander Barry Blount, Pelham Fire Department Fire/Medic Brent Rejonis, and Pelham Fire Department Chief Mike Reid. Congratulations to Fire/Medic Rejonis for 2023 Firefighter of the Year!!



L/R: Post 555 Commander Barry Blount, Pelham Police Department Public Safety Telecommunicator Mr. David Fuentes, and Communications and Records Manager Ms. Jeanie Davis. Congratulations to Mr. Fuentes for 2023 Public Safety Telecommunicator for 2023!!



L/R: Jeremy Blevins, Eagle Scout Jack Combs, and American Legion Department Commander Buddy Keen. Congratulations to Jack Combs for 2023 Eagle Scout of the Year!!

*For God and Country,
Nancy J. Waller
Adjutant*

2023 AMERICAN LEGION BOYS STATE AND AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY GIRLS STATE BOTH BIG SUCCESSSES FOR POST 555-SPONSORED ATTENDEES

The 86th Annual Alabama American Legion Boys State was held at Troy University from May 28 to June 3, 2023. Young men from all over Alabama arrived to participate in the week-long program which featured hands-on practical experience in forming and running a model state government. Delegates were recommended and selected based on their character, leadership, moral conviction, and work ethic. American Legion Matthew Blount Post 555 proudly sponsored four delegates from local high schools.

The young men were all appreciative of being sponsored by our Post and are honored that they were selected to attend. During this activity-packed event, the boys had very little down time. They were tasked with forming city and state governments. Separated into two fictional parties, they developed political platforms, created budgets, and passed legislation. The boys enjoyed the challenge as well as spending time with other like-minded students.

The delegates from Post 555 were Conner McDonald and Sloan Bridges from Pelham High School, Owens Hodges from Mountain Brook High School, and Christian Monk from Hope Christian School.



Conner McDonald

Sloan Bridges

Owens Hodges

Christian Monk



At the recent Alabama American Legion Department Convention, Boys State Director, Judge Pete Johnson, read a list of over nine colleges that were awarding anywhere from \$1,000/Boy to as much as \$2,500/Boy for four years. The total per Boy was \$57,000!!! Director Johnson also mentioned that there are working with several other colleges/universities to get them to donate scholarships, and also to reach out to trade schools and junior colleges. What a wonderful opportunity for these tremendous young men!!!

Alabama Girls State was a week-long, fun-filled, hands-on learning opportunity for some of the best and brightest young women in the State of Alabama. Sponsored by The American Legion Auxiliary (ALA), Alabama Girls State is a premier youth leadership program which offers a one-of-a-kind experience to its delegates.

The 2023 Session of ALA Alabama Girls State took place June 4-9, 2023 on the campus of Troy University in Troy, Alabama. Female high school students who have completed their junior year are competitively selected and sponsored by American Legion Auxiliary units for this program, where they learn about the political process by electing officials for all levels of state government and actively running a mock government. The girls are assigned to mock cities and either the “Federalist Party” or “Nationalist Party”.

Auxiliary Unit 555 in The Matthew Blount Post 555 sponsored Ms. Anna Mann who was honored at the July 6, 2023 General Membership Meeting at the Pelham Senior Center. Anna stated, “During my time at ALA Alabama Girls State, I learned vital leadership skills that I will use for the rest of my life. This experience opened many doors to new opportunities and taught me that the true meaning of leadership is more than a fancy

title. At Girls State, I was lucky enough to be surrounded by so many wonderful and driven young women, and I am glad I got to experience this with them as well as my amazing counselors. Their impact on me will never be forgotten. During my time, I was elected District Judge and City Clerk. All in all, I would highly recommend Girls State to anyone with a true passion for leadership and government. I would not trade my time there for anything.”



L/R: Ms. Anna Mann and dad, Jimmy Mann (Post 555 member).





Ms. Anna Mann at Troy University at the 2023 ALA Girls State event.

*For God and Country,
Harry "Skip" Mize IV
Boys State Chairman*

ADJUTANT'S AREA

Our membership for the 2023-2024 membership year is already up to 80 renewals!!! Unbelievable response from these members, and before I send out this newsletter, I guarantee the number will be even higher. Thanks to all who already renewed, and I am pretty sure that some of these members signed-up for auto-renewal which is a great deal. Your membership will renew from year to year without you having to do anything, and Steve Loftin told me that he receives an e-mail prior to the payment coming out of this credit card, and if I am not mistaken, he also received an e-mail after the \$45 payment processed. Very easy way to take care of your annual dues.

As we had last year, the Department set goals for each month and with Post 555 having so many members, it was a challenge last year to continue meeting the goals, so for this year, I will keep you posted but not going to harp on meeting the Department's goals. If we meet them, great; if we do not, we will just continue to increase our renewals every month and do the very best we can. You are **ALL** important to Post 555, so thank you for your renewals; I look forward to your renewals every month!!!

*For God and Country,
Nancy J. Waller
Adjutant*

AUGUST BIRTHDAY WISHES FOR OUR MEMBERS

David Coram, 08/03
Alan Farmer, 08/04
Bobby Horsley, 08/04
David Blount, 08/09
Robert Thompson, 08/10
Doyle Kernea, 08/12
Andy Burell, 08/14

Tom Hession, 08/14
Rick Waller, 08/20
William Wolf, 08/24
Paul Borge, 08/27
Edward Kennedy, 08/29
Eddie Taylor, 08/30
William Weldy, 08/30



If your birthday is in August and your name is not on this list, it is because it is not listed in MyLegion.org or you did not reply to an e-mail I sent out ages ago asking for updates, so please send it to me so I can wish you a Happy Birthday next year!!!

*For God and Country,
Nancy J. Waller
Adjutant*

NEXT GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

We meet the first Thursday of the month, but due to The 2023 American Legion Mid-South Regional Baseball Tournament scheduled August 1 – 6, 2023, we will not be having our August monthly meeting (would have been August 3rd), so **Commander Barry Blount is asking everyone to come to the first game for Post 555 baseball players at Pelham High School at 7:30 p.m. on Wed., August 2, 2023.** Our next meeting is scheduled for **September 7, 2023** with our fellowship meal at 6:00 p.m. and the meeting starting promptly at 7:00 p.m. at the Pelham Senior Center at 50 Racquet Club Parkway, Pelham, AL 35124.

POST LEADERSHIP FOR 2023-2024

Post Commander *Barry Blount*

First Vice Commander
Bill Blank

Second Vice Commander
Dorian Ross

Adjutant
Nancy Waller

Judge Advocate
Tom Long

Finance Officer
Ron Koonce

Chaplain
Joe Dunn

Sergeant-at-Arms
Anita Bennett

Service Officer
Curtis Orse

Historian
Shauna Hadley

Public Relations Officer
Nancy Waller

Post Trustees
Chris Combs (1 Yr.)
Tom McDaniel (2 Yr.)
Vashone Smith (3 Yr.)

Sons of The American Legion
Donald Walker, Commander
Ron Koonce, Advisor/Adjutant

American Legion Riders Director
Jeffrey Monday

Flag Team Coordinator
Bill Blank

Boy Scout Troop 404 Coordinator
David Coram

Jr. Shooters
Sam Richardson, Director
Darrell Lawley, Coach

Baseball Director
Kyle Phillips

School Awards Program
Barry Blount, Chairman
Frank Lakotich, Co-Chairman

Awards Program
Barry Blount, Chairman
Nancy Waller, Co-Chairman

Webmaster
Ron Koonce

The Triple Nickel

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Items for publication are accepted upon Executive Committee approval and available space. Submit articles prior to the 10th of the month for publication the following month if approved. We reserve the right to edit any submissions for the purpose of publication. Letters to the Editor must include name, address, and telephone number. Names will be withheld upon request.

Send e-mail to: editor@alpost555.com

Photos by Chic Cecchini, Post 555

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