

THE TRIPLE NICKEL



Published exclusively for the members of

**AMERICAN LEGION MATTHEW BLOUNT POST 555
PELHAM, ALABAMA**

VOLUME VI, ISSUE XII

IN GOD WE TRUST

DECEMBER 2019

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Comrades gather to give thanks

At least 137 members and families of Post 555 gathered Nov. 7 at the Pelham Civic Center to enjoy fellowship and celebrate the holiday season with a Thanksgiving dinner.

The dinner, catered by Bright Star of Bessemer, featured turkey, cornbread dressing, whipped potatoes, green beans and a variety of desserts.

The guest speaker was Rear Adm. (Retired) W. Kent Davis, commissioner of the Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs. He updated members on his agency's goals and efforts to improve veterans homes across the state.

The annual dinner is a tradition begun by past post commander Barry Blount.

BE SURE TO ATTEND OUR DECEMBER POST MEETING!

COMPLEMENTARY MEAL
PROVIDED BY
LITTLE CAESARS
PIZZA



Little Caesars®

DINNER BEGINS AT 6:15 P.M.

MEETING AT 7 P.M.

PELHAM SENIOR CENTER

50 RACQUET CLUB PARKWAY, PELHAM

COME JOIN YOUR FELLOW LEGIONNAIRES!

FROM THE COMMANDER'S DESK



Kenneth Paschal
Post Commander

For God and Country! The holiday season is here. The Merriam-Webster dictionary define the holiday season as: “the time from late November through January when several holidays (such as Christmas, Hanukkah, and New Year's Eve) happen”.

However, the Triple Nickel kicked off the holiday season with our Annual Family Thanksgiving Dinner during the Post November 7th meeting. We had a great turnout. Special thanks to the Family Thanksgiving Dinner Planning Committee, Legion Family, special guests, and sponsors (Post 555 American Legion and the Blount Family). We also had a record setting Wreaths Across America (WAA) Sponsorship of donations. Thanks to the Post WAA chairperson **Chuck Kiser** for spearheading this event. The success of our family dinner was truly the result of a team effort.

Also, congratulations to the individuals that were presented the Commander's Membership Award lapel pin during our November 7th Annual Family Thanksgiving Dinner and meeting: Past Commander **Barry Blount**, **Billy Blank**, **Tom McMahon**, and **Don Seibert**.

November has been one of the most active community presence months this year for the Triple Nickel. Resulting in more than sixteen programs in support of our veterans and community.

There were challenges at times but a heartfelt thank you to all that contributed and volunteered countless hours in ensuring the success of the Triple Nickel this past month.

As we celebrate Thanksgiving and approach Christmas, let's remember the American Legion mission statement and remember the reason for the season. I appreciate each of the Triple Nickel Family members and pray everyone have a blessed Christmas and holiday season.

Please continue to support the Triple Nickel entire family and programs by seeking volunteer opportunities.

December areas of interest:

- Setting the Post up for success by assigning a backup person called assistant chair for all committees. See the Post Organizational Structure chart (November newsletter, page 15) for available committees to join.
- Each committee chairperson creating a draft continuity book.
- Birmingham VA Medical Center Christmas Gift Project.
- Wreaths Across America Ceremony at the ALNC; December 14th.
- Monthly Buddy Checks
- Pro Rodeo sponsorships, volunteers, and establishing an informational meeting date.
- Legion Family and committee heads start preparing for January 31st and February 1st Revitalization and Open House participation (see enclosed Open House flyer).

(continued on page 4)

FROM THE COMMANDER'S DESK ... CONTINUED

(continued from page 3)

- Prevent stagnation and promote individual growth: Legion Family start researching job descriptions/responsibilities of interest for leadership roles for the 2019-2020 elections. I want to challenge new members and seasoned members to seek leadership positions for the upcoming Post elections.
- Mid-Winter Conference registration.
- Statewide Primary Election season. See enclosed: "challenge yourself" page.
- Preventing Sidebars during meetings: See enclosed: "challenge yourself" page.

November at a Glance:

- Presentation to Hope Christian School Student Government Association about the American Legion youth programs
- Flag Placement for Veterans' Day, ALNC, Section 8 and Pelham Cemetery (SAL)
- Annual Family Thanksgiving Dinner/Meeting
- Veteran's Donuts hosted by Pelham Senior Center
- Birmingham Bulls Hockey Military Appreciation Night
- The Home Depot - Veteran's Keepsake Box Workshop
- National Veterans' Awards Dinner at the Sheraton Birmingham Hotel
- Veterans' Day Program at Texas Roadhouse Restaurant with over 100 attendees
- Participated in the City of Pelham Chief of Police Assessor Panel
- Hope Christian School's Key Club "Saluting Those Who Served" Thanksgiving Meal
- 23rd District Leadership Meeting hosted by Post 45 in Sylacauga
- University of Alabama Military Appreciation Night partnership and custom jersey auction. The University of Alabama Planning Committee did an excellence job.
- Second partnership with Shelby County Character In Action by implementing The American Legion School Award Medal Program (presented five medals and certificates to Columbian, Wilsonville, Shelby School students).
- Texas Roadhouse Collection Card Fundraiser for the month of November – chaired by Comrade Chris Combs.
- First Vice Commander attended and graduated the National American Legion College in Indianapolis. The first for Post 555. Congratulations to First Vice Commander McClain.
- Presence at the first Re-Opening meeting for Montevallo AL Hendrick-Hudson Post 96

How can you help? – Seek self-improvement via the American Legion Online Basic Training course. Visit the Post website to stay informed at ALPOST555.com. Seek volunteer opportunities to brand the Triple Nickel by ordering and wearing the American Legion gear to Post events/activities. Recruit one member before December 31st.

Remember, working together, we can achieve more!

For God and Country!

A season of gratitude. A season of giving thanks.

1ST VICE'S COMMENTS



Jerry McClain
1st Vice Commander

By the time you read this message, Thanksgiving 2019 will have come and gone. I hope your Thanksgiving was truly a day of giving thanks for the many blessings we enjoy in this great country.

Now we press on to the Christmas season where there will be many opportunities to sit with family, love on family and be a blessing to the family. Hold them ever close and remind them of just how special they are to you and the God we serve. Please keep those in your prayers who struggle with the holidays due to the loss of loved ones and those family members stationed around the world in harm's way.

As your elected Vice Commander, I am grateful for the opportunity to still-serve this great nation and the Triple Nickel Post 555! I send you greetings for love, grace for travel and forgiveness for overeating!

God Bless America,
God Bless the Triple Nickel Post 555
And God Bless you!
Merry Christmas and

Let'er Buck!

POST 555 OPEN HOUSE

Saturday, February 1, 2020, 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

American Legion Post 555 gives Revitalization a new look during the 23rd District Revitalization efforts.



Blood Drive/Blood Pressure
Check



Mobile Vet Centers (MVCs) of the
Department of Veterans Affairs



Pro Rodeo Charity Fundraiser
Ticket Sales



Open to the public. We hope to see you there! Spouses and children are welcome to attend.

2ND VICE'S CORNER



Nancy Waller
2nd Vice Commander

Hopefully everyone had a wonderful Thanksgiving with family, friends, and perhaps even some comrades within Post 555. My "Turkey Day" was spent with my husband, Sparkie (a fellow Post 555 member) and my son, Nathan (also a fellow Post 555 member). The turkey was excellent, as was the bread dressing (not cornbread; I am from New York originally...), and the green bean casserole was prepared for my husband's southern appetite. We ALL love cranberry sauce, so that was a common ground. Great family time!!

As you saw in the November 2019 newsletter, November was PACKED with events, and things are slowing down a little for the next few months so that we can rest and regroup. Be sure to check the "Upcoming Events" pages in this newsletter to see what is coming up in which you might want to get involved as a Volunteer, or just to enjoy the event. At the end of the "Upcoming Events" page, don't forget to check-out the Guest Speakers we have lined-up, too.

I am really looking forward to the RSVP Christmas and Awards Brunch on December 4, 2019 where our Post will be receiving an award for the Volunteer hours that are reported by those of you who are 55+ years young and have signed-up to participate by recording your hours on my Monthly Station Form that I pass around at every General Membership Meeting. If you are 55+ years of age or older and have not signed-up, please let me know at the December 5, 2019 meeting and I will make sure you have an application to complete. Your time driving to a meeting, attending the meeting, and returning home COUNTS, so please consider joining with us to record every hour you contribute every month. They add up quickly!!

Thanks to everyone who attends our General Membership Meetings, and those who chose to Volunteer in some of our events this past month. All of you are what make Post 555 what it is--a wonderful place to meet wonderful Veterans and to "feel at home" even if for just a short while. I am always glad to see your smiling faces no matter where we are, so thank you for your Service to our great nation and for taking care of each other.



ADJUTANT'S AREA



Ron Koonce
Post Adjutant

The 2019 year is rapidly coming to an end. A very good year it has been for Post 555, the veterans, community and youth it has served. I congratulate our members for making it so.

Thank you to those that were able to participate and those of you that are unable to take an active part but supporting the Post 555 by being a member. Everyone one plays an important part.

Our membership continues to grow with 254 members on the roster. 2020 Renewals continue to come in with 66% of our goal at December 31, 2019. Just 74 more through the Month of December

to make 100%.

Just a reminder, 2019 memberships expire January 1, 2020. If you have not renewed your membership for 2020, try not to get behind. Renew Now.

Renew online at www.Legion.org or mail your \$45 renewal payable to "Matthew Blount Post 555" to

American Legion
Matthew Blount Post 555
50 Racquet Club Parkway
Pelham, AL 35124

The Alabama Mid-Winter Conference is scheduled for mid-January. It is open to all Family members, Legion, Auxiliary, Sons of American Legion and Legion Riders. See further details in this issue. It is a great opportunity to learn more about the American Legion and meet new legionnaires.

Many thanks to the Post Hospitality Committee and all that played a part in the success of the annual Family Thanksgiving Dinner on November 7th. More than 135 members and guests enjoyed the fellowship, great food and speakers.

Hope to see you at the December 5, 2019 Post meeting at 6:15 pm. Visitors are welcome and bring a veteran with you.

For God and Country

Ron Koonce
Adjutant.



SERVICE OFFICER NOTES



Jerry McClain
Service Officer

Part 2 of our review of benefits available to Alabama veterans: **Alabama GI Dependents Scholarship Program**

The state of Alabama will waive up to \$250 per semester hour and \$1,000 for books each semester at any Alabama institution of higher learning including two-year and four-year technical colleges, community colleges, and junior colleges.

Any dependent child under 26 whose parent is, or was, an Alabama resident veteran with a VA disability of at least 40 percent may qualify for up to five years of benefits (those whose parent has a VA disability of at least 20 percent may qualify if the VA rating was before Jul. 31, 2017.)

Spouses or un-remarried surviving spouses of veterans rated 100% permanently and totally disabled can also get five years of benefits. Spouses and un-remarried surviving spouses of veterans rated 40-90% disabled can get three years of benefits. The veteran must have had an honorable discharge.

Alabama Veteran Recreation Benefits

Discounted Fishing License

Alabama resident veterans who are at least 20% disabled can get a discounted freshwater fishing license.

Disabled Veteran Special Hunting License

A special hunting license is available to 100% service-connected veterans at a cost of \$2 plus the applicable issuance fee.

A special hunting license is available to 50% service-connected veterans at half of the usual cost plus the applicable issuance fee.

Retired Military Pistol Permit

A pistol permit is available for free to individuals who are otherwise eligible for a pistol permit and who retired from active duty the Reserves, or National Guard.

Alabama State Veterans Cemetery

The Alabama State Veterans Cemetery is located in Spanish Fort. Eligibility for interment in the State Veterans Cemetery follows National Cemetery Administration eligibility requirements.

In general, veterans discharged under conditions other than dishonorable and their spouses and dependent children are eligible. Residency requirements exist.

For spouses or dependent children, a fee will be charged on the day of interment. For veterans, there is no cost. Spouses remain eligible even if they remarry.

Visit the Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs website for more information on any of these programs.

va.alabama.gov



**ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF
VETERANS
AFFAIRS**

CHAPLAIN



Tom McMahon
Post Chaplain



We are deep into the Season of Holidays. You are busy and excited with shopping, planning and generally hurrying about anticipating Christmas. Even in Japan, December is called the 'Running Month.' I would like to emphasize what I think to be two most important areas of focus during this time of distraction and harried activity.

As a member of the American Legion and a veteran, my interest is naturally toward our servicemen and those whom have served – veterans. The military person, not to discount other sacrificial uniformed personnel among us, have been in the line of duty and often in harm's way for the sole purpose of protecting our freedoms. American military personnel have always given their best. Many have sacrificed their very lives for our freedom and right to live by our conscience and convictions.

There are serious issues facing these servicemen and women. Finances and good homes may be a challenge. Depression, worry, anxiety and PTSD all attack and often stay with them throughout their life. All too many face physical challenges and pain for the rest of their lives. Sometimes the pain although unseen, is, nevertheless very real.

What can you do to assist these valuable companions of ours during this time of year? There are hospices to visit; shut-ins at home and hospitals. VA hospitals are full of injured and broken veterans. You may be able to be a friend to someone contemplating suicide. The number of those whom have given up on themselves is astounding.

Perhaps you are mobile, or may have finances to assist even one. If you do not know of anyone in need, you may ask around and find a need to fill. I am asking you to be conscious and aware of those veterans around you; maybe in church or in your own neighborhood. Ask your pastor. Of course, a visit to a rehab center or hospice would be a great place to start. Your interest will get God's attention and He will provide a person or place for your willingness to serve.

December is Christianity's time to remember, honor and worship our Redeemer. As you give your best at this time of year, look up to the one Who gave His life for our good and our Salvation. Like the soldier, Jesus died and, that willingly, for us and our abundant life. Please show your appreciation at church, home and in some type of outreach on behalf of others; preferably someone with a need.

The Gospel of Matthew tells us: "And she [Mary] shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins... "they shall call his name Emmanuel which being interpreted is, God with us." (See 1: 20-23) Remember that God is with us, He always hears us and He rewards your service to others.

I am only repeating the heart and soul of so many others when I say: For God and country.

Chaplain, American Legion Post 555

Thomas McMahon

UPCOMING EVENTS

DECEMBER 2019

Saturday, December 7, 2019, 9:00 a.m.

What: Filling Gift Bags for the Birmingham VA Christmas Caravan

Where: Pelham Senior Center, 50 Racquet Club Parkway, Pelham, AL 35124

Chairperson: Frank Lakotich

Co-Chairperson: Caroline Culpepper

Volunteers Needed: As of our last Events Committee Meeting, we should have enough Volunteers to take care of this event, but if interested, we will NEVER turn anyone down who shows-up to help.

Tuesday, December 10, 2019, 5:00 p.m.

What: Birmingham Christmas Caravan

Where: Birmingham VA Medical Center, 700 19th Street S., Birmingham, AL 35233

Chairperson: Frank Lakotich

Co-Chairperson: Caroline Culpepper

Volunteers Needed: No. We can only have a small number of members due to the amount of other organizations who participate, and those individuals have been determined.

Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday, December 11, 12, or 13, 2019; Time TBD (depends on when the ALNC Support Committee is contacted by the semi-truck driver)

What: Unloading Boxes of Christmas Wreaths and Staging on Trailers

Where: Alabama National Cemetery Storage Building, 3133 Highway 119, Montevallo, AL 35115

Chairperson: Chuck Kiser

Co-Chairperson: Nancy Waller

Volunteers Needed: Yes! The more Volunteers, the lighter the load on everyone moving boxes of wreaths out of the semi-truck in a line of Volunteers to trailers. A lot of lifting and carrying, so if you have back problems, don't consider this event.

Saturday, December 14, 2019, 11:00 a.m.

What: Wreaths Across America

Where: Alabama National Cemetery, 3133 Highway 119, Montevallo, AL 35115

Chairperson: Chuck Kiser

Co-Chairperson: Nancy Waller

Volunteers Needed: Yes! When family members are finished placing wreaths at their loved ones' gravesites, wreaths will need to be placed in front of every single headstone. Bring gloves!!

UPCOMING EVENTS

JANUARY 2020

Tuesday, January 7, 2020, 9:00 a.m.

What: Removal of Wreaths

Where: Alabama National Cemetery, 3133 Highway 119, Montevallo, AL 35115

Chairperson: Chuck Kiser

Co-Chairperson: Nancy Waller

Volunteers Needed: Yes! Volunteers will pick-up all the wreaths from the front of the headstones and deposit them at the street for the cemetery staff to pick-up and properly dispose of them. Gloves would be recommended!!

Friday, January 10, 2020, Time TBD

What: Pelham High School Oratorical Scholarship Contest

Where: 2500 Panther Circle, Pelham, AL 35124

Chairperson: Richard Kaster

Co-Chairperson: Frank Lakotich

Volunteers Needed: Yes! As time gets closer, Richard will be asking for several positions to be filled for this event, so if interested, let him know.

Friday, January 31, 2020, 9:00 a.m.

What: 23rd District Revitalization

Where: Pelham Senior Center, 50 Racquet Club Parkway, Pelham, AL 35124

Chairperson: Kenneth Paschal

Co-Chairperson: TBD

Volunteers Needed: Yes! Volunteers will be making phone calls to American Legion members in the "administrative" Post (local members) to ask if they would like to be transferred to an active Post such as ours.

FEBRUARY 2020

Saturday, February 1, 2020, 9:00 a.m.

What: Post 555 Open House

Where: Pelham Senior Center, 50 Racquet Club Parkway, Pelham, AL 35124

Chairperson: Kenneth Paschal

Co-Chairperson: TBD

Volunteers Needed: We want everyone to come and see what is being offered during this event; LifeSouth will have their Bloodmobile for a Blood Drive and blood pressure checks, Post 555 information tables will be set-up for our upcoming events, the Mobile Vet Center from the Department of Veterans Affairs will be there, voter registration will be available by the Photo Voter ID Mobile Unit from 10:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m., and many other resources for Veterans. The public is welcome so bring your friends and neighbors!!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday, February 8, 2020, Time TBD

What: 23rd District High School Oratorical Scholarship Contest

Where: Pelham Senior Center, 50 Racquet Club Parkway, Pelham, AL 35124

Chairperson: Richard Kaster

Co-Chairperson: Frank Lakotich

Volunteers Needed: Yes! As time gets closer, Richard will be asking for several positions to be filled for this event, so if interested, let him know.

Guest Speakers / Programs at Upcoming General Membership Meetings

December 5th: Post 555 Chaplain Tom McMahon, "What is Your True Gift?" (confirmed)

January 2nd: Mayor Gary Waters and City Manager Gretchen DiFante, Status of City of Pelham (confirmed)

February 6th: Tammie Williams, Volunteer Coordinator, Comfort Care Hospice (confirmed)

March 5th: Tom Long (Post 555 Member), President of Blue Star Salute Foundation (confirmed)

April 2nd: Post 555 Officer Elections (no guest speaker or program)

May 7th: Installation of Newly Elected Officers (no guest speaker or program)

June 4th: TBD

July 2nd: TBD



THE TRIPLE NICKEL

*is published monthly for members of
Matthew Blount Post 555.*

*50 Racquet Club Parkway, Pelham, AL 35124
(205) 678-1375*

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

James Billings, Editor

Membership Renew Campaign



MEMBERSHIP

Post 555 success depends entirely on active membership, participation and volunteerism.

Renew Your Membership Today

Three easy renewal options:

1. Renew your membership online

[<https://www.members.legion.org/renewal>]

- 1) Enter your Legion ID#;
- 2) Enter your last name;
- 3) Enter your Billing Information; and
- 4) Submit

2. Mail your \$45.00 check or money order payable to: American Legion Post 555

Mail to:

American Legion Post 555

50 Racquet Club Parkway Pelham, AL35124

3. Bring your \$45.00 **renewal payment to the next Post meeting.**

Sponsorships and Volunteers Needed



Contact: Jerry McClain, American Legion Post 555 Pro Rodeo
Event Chairperson
Phone: (206) 412-3548
E-mail: rangerjermac@gmail.com
Website: www.alpost555.com



Preventing Sidebars during meetings

Sidebar conversations between meeting participants waste time and reduce meeting effectiveness. **How can we prevent them?**

Have ground rules or norms: Clarity about norms or behavioral expectations is essential. Agree together not to engage in sidebars. When a sidebar happens, agree that anyone in the meeting can ask the chair for order, but only the chair can ask the meeting in general for order. The knowledge that everyone is empowered to ask for order deters those who might be contemplating initiating a sidebar.

It's Statewide Primary Election season too! A good time for a reminder!

CONSTITUTION
The American Legion
Matthew Blount Post 555

Article III, Section 2. This organization shall be nonpolitical and shall not be used for the dissemination of partisan principles or for the promotion of the candidacy of any person seeking public office or

*Military Appreciation Night
Pelham Civic Complex
Nov. 16, 2019*

