



North Albany Post 1610

American Legion

35 North First Street, Albany, New York 12204

December 1, 2009

Dear Legion Family Member and Friends,

Well fall is here and winter is on its way. Try attending some our meetings with your busy schedule. The next regular meeting will be held on December 21st at 7:00 PM. The January executive board meeting will be held on Monday, January 4th, at 7:00 PM and the January regular meeting will be held on January 18th, also at 7:00 PM.

POST 1610 Bronze Star recipient

We would like to congratulate Cornelius (Neil) L. Gray on the award of the Bronze Star for heroism while serving as second in command from 17 June 1945 to 9 September 1945. Sergeant Gray jumped by parachute behind the Japanese line, in a blind jump in Central Burma. Sergeant Gray assumed responsibility and carried out his part of the mission in a superior manner. He trained 650 guides, he showed tact and leadership. For 77 days he was behind enemy lines with Japanese patrols hunting in numbers from 100 to 1900, using 45 dogs and many Burma informers. At one time the jungle was covered by a barrage of 37mm guns, and machine guns about 500 yards from his camp. Sergeant Gray, under fire, kept his nerve and gave confidence and courage to his native runners and guerrillas. Sergeant Gray's selflessness and dedication to duty reflect upon him, his unit, and the Army of the United States.

Sons of the American Legion

Buzz Harbour, Commander



November was a busy month with the Honor-a-Veteran program, Veteran's Day Parade, Veterans Memorial Mass and Breakfast and the 4th annual Thanksgiving fundraiser to Benefit the wounded Warrior Project. The breakfast was a blast as a contingent of Sons worked with the old hands and turned out 128 breakfasts that were terrific. We had great support from the Auxiliary and a great time was had by all. The Sons turned over \$640 in profits to the Post. Mass was well attended and the color guard did a great job as always. Father Kofi gave a wonderful sermon.

Vince Egan, Jr. led the Sons effort in the fundraising with a bike-a-thon effort that raised \$1,725 from his ride and another \$1,500 from Wells Fargo. The event is still receiving checks and will be credited with raising almost \$7,000.00 for our Wounded Warriors. It was a great event.

VETERAN ACTIVITIES

HONOR-A-VET

January's Honor-A-Vet ceremony will be held Monday, January 4th at 8:30 AM at the North Albany Post 1610.

LEGION to donate \$3,800 to Fort Hood

The American Legion

The American Legion's Operation Comfort Warriors program is donating gift cards to the men and women who were wounded during the shooting at Fort Hood earlier this month.

"Americans everywhere have reached out to these victims. It's only appropriate that The American Legion family does its share," American Legion National Commander Clarence Hill said. "We have sent

\$3,800 so each of the 38 wounded can receive \$100 gift cards to use at the Fort Hood AAFES (post exchange). This is on top of the \$10,000 of electronic games and instruments we sent in Operation Comfort Warriors donations to Fort Hood just prior to the shootings. These gifts won't make the injuries go away, but they do show that we care."

Hill said Operation Comfort Warriors meets needs for wounded servicemembers that often go unfulfilled.

"The government does a good job of providing the necessities," he said. "Through Operation Comfort Warriors we have been able to provide gifts to troops in military hospitals everywhere. These are items that usually don't appear in government budgets, such as personal sweat suits, iPods, DVDs, phone calling cards and other comfort goods. The American Legion is challenging its members and friends to continue giving to those who have already given us so much."

The American Legion has already raised more than \$217,000 for Operation Comfort Warriors since its inception last December. Upon taking office in August, Hill set a goal to raise an additional \$100,000 by year's end. Donors can make online contributions at <http://www.legion.org/ocw> or by sending a check to Operation Comfort Warriors, PO Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206. Administrative and promotional costs for Operation Comfort Warriors are paid by The American Legion, allowing 100 percent of the donations to be spent directly on the troops.

"Some people think that expecting \$100,000 during an economic recession is too lofty a goal. I don't," Hill said. "Americans are generous, and what better way is there to show our holiday spirit than to remember those who have served and are still serving?"

'I'm here to help', Legionnaire opens up service that caters to female veterans.

By Daniel S. Wheeler

When we talk about the common bond that runs through military service, we're not just referring to the bond among men and women serving side by side, united by a cause. We're talking about the bond that carries on long after they've left the military. It's a bond that says, "I know what you went through, and I am here for you when you need me."

Legionnaire Patricia Harris strongly believes in that bond. A member of Post 157 in Raleigh, N.C., Harris spent 22 years in the U.S. military: 15 on active duty in the Army and another seven in the reserves before leaving the service in 2001. And since leaving the military, Harris has tried to use her own experiences to help others facing problems after reintegrating into the civilian world.

Women Veterans Support Services Inc., founded by Harris in 2007, provides services tailored to the needs of women veterans. It provides information and resources to assist needy female veterans and their families and helps them obtain state, federal and local entitlements that they might not know exist.

But equally important to Harris is that she serves as friendly face who knows what her fellow veterans might be experiencing.

"I was in the military for 22 years, and I am proud that I served. Both my husband and I served, and we are both very happy we did," said Harris, who graduated from Legion College in 2007 and came back this fall to serve as a college facilitator. "We raised a family while we were in the military. We were deployed together during the first Gulf War.

"But I had experiences in the military that were also difficult. I had sexual trauma that I had to deal with. The demons I still see from time to time are the ones I see in the women I'm trying to help now. I'm here to help. I think I understand what they are going through."

Harris founded the WVSS after she'd visited area homeless shelters and came across something she found rather disturbing: Several female veterans with small children had taken residence in the shelters.

"The numbers were staggering," Harris said. "And because of all the (Temporary Financial Assistance) claims I was filing, I was finding a lot of those involved female veterans with small children. I knew that something needed to be done to help these women."

Harris started by meeting with women at area churches. Some came to Post 157 to talk with her. "Pretty much everywhere I went I was talking to someone," she says.

The WVSS helps women deal with crises such as post-traumatic stress disorder, domestic abuse, home eviction, and alcohol or drug abuse. The agency connects the women in trouble with the organization or entity that best serves their needs while ensuring those women are using every possible veterans benefit available.

WVSS staff is made up entirely of veterans or veterans' spouses. "That's what sets us apart from other organizations or agencies out there," Harris said. "They don't have that knowledge of military service. They don't know the experiences associated with it. We do.

"Most people know me by my cap. They know I served. And they know that it's OK for them to talk to me about my service and about their service."

A 501 (c) 3, non-profit organization, the WVSS currently doesn't have a facility. "We are trying to get one because we need the office space," Harris said. "We're working through the grant process to make that happen."

In the meantime, Harris will continue her work. And the timing is critical. According to the federal government and advocates for the homeless, the rate of homelessness among female homeless vets is increasing in the United States. Women now make up approximately 20 percent of the U.S. Armed Forces, and the number of female veterans enrolled for Department of Veterans Affairs health care is expected to increase by 30 percent in the next five years.

There is a need for what Harris is doing. And when there is a need, Legionnaires like Harris always seem to step up to the challenge. It's an example of taking military experience, and the bond that goes with it, and using it to help others.

"I do truly believe that I was called to do this by a higher power," Harris says. "I want to do this. I need to do this."

POST INFORMATION

WEB PAGE

The Post web page can be accessed at <http://www.northalbanypost1610.org/>. Among other information, the monthly newsletter, Post history, meeting schedules and current activities are posted on this site.

BARTENDERS NEEDED!!!!!!!!

Mick Ryan Here! Need Bartenders, Will Train. Over the last few weeks as you drove by the post and noticed that the lights were off, it is due to lack of help in keeping the place running. Anyone interested call 465-4800 and leave a message for Mick.

Superbowl pool to be started soon by Ed Ryan, S.O.L..

MEMBERSHIP

We have 217 paid members to date, our goal is 319. All members should remember that 2010 dues are now \$30.00 for a regular membership or \$27.00 if you are age 62 and retired. Retirees should disregard the national dues notice indicating \$30.00. Those notices for 2010 dues were in the mail. We do appreciate those that send their dues in promptly. **Active duty personnel** should email nap1610@yahoo.com so we can now that if you are active or not, when verified your card will be sent out within a couple of weeks.

Members confined to home due to a long-term illness or nursing, assisted living residences should contact the Post at 465-4800 or email nap1610@yahoo.com to indicate their present status.

POST EVERLASTING

For God and Country,

Mike Swezey, Commander

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