



The Hezzie Gazette

Official Newsletter of Hezzie Griffis American Legion Post 30

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September 2025



Commander's Comments

All Hands on Deck

The American Legion (TAL) draws from a unique population: people who know how to work effectively as a team. It's a skill forged through military service and sometimes during life and death situations. Every veteran knows the benefits of successful cooperation.

At Post 30, we never take for granted the teamwork that is key to our day-to-day operations. It's both the members behind the scenes and those who are our public face that keep our post running smoothly.

Who keeps our lights on, paper towels stocked, and recently supervised our new HVAC replacement? Our building committee maintains the facilities, handles repairs, oversees lawn care, manages pest control, and checks the building after rentals, among other tasks. Our many comforts are the result of their diligence.

Where would we be without the great suppers at every meeting?

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Behind the Afghan Veil

It has been four years since the United States military left Afghanistan after a 20-year war. The conflict was precipitated by four coordinated Islamist terrorist suicide attacks on September 11, 2001, by 19 members of al Qaeda, a Sunni Muslim jihadist militancy spearheaded by Osama bin Laden. Two commercial



U.S. Army National Guard overlooking a stockyard in Qalat, Afghanistan.
(Photo by Daniel Bohmer via DVIDS)

airliners hijacked as weapons bulldozed into the World Trade Center, twin skyscrapers in New York City, a third hit the Pentagon, and another was diverted by passengers, plummeting into a Pennsylvania field. Approximately 3,000 Americans lost their lives. Nothing like this had ever happened before, save Pearl Harbor in 1941.

Bin Laden, residing in Afghanistan at the time, admitted full responsibility. But the Taliban, the Afghan Sunni Islamists governing Afghanistan, refused to surrender him for prosecution. U.S. and British forces, with other allies, responded by invading Afghanistan, beginning what would be known as the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). The ensuing Afghan war racked up about 89 operations of various descriptions, 42 major battles, and more than 78 recorded insurgent attacks.

An estimated 1,922 Americans were killed in combat, another 20,769 wounded. Others were left with

lingering mental health issues. The U.S. spent approximately \$2.313 trillion on the war, the third most expensive and the longest. To give you an idea of the enormity of that sum, a stack of \$2.313 trillion in one-dollar bills would rise approximately 156,974 miles high, over halfway to the moon.



*U.S. Army on security patrol in Kandahar City, Afghanistan.
(Photo by Richard Simonsen via DVIDS)*

As of last July, Afghanistan remains under Taliban de facto control, now called the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. It's one of the poorest countries in the world. More than half of the population, 22.9 million people, requires humanitarian assistance, with 4.8 million facing acute food insecurity. Growth of the economy is dismal, infrastructure hindrances stymie recovery, and the financial system is isolated worldwide.

Further, the Taliban's strict interpretation and practice of Sharia law, based on the Islamic Quran holy book and teachings of their Prophet Muhammad, have sharply constricted human rights for girls and women in education, employment, travel, and freedom of speech, to mention but a few. It's significant as of late 2025, only Russia has recognized the Taliban as the legitimate government of Afghanistan, although China, Pakistan, Iran the United Arab Emirates, and a few others in Central Asia have established diplomatic ties and engaged with the Taliban. But most countries, excepting Russia, China, Iran and Turkey, consider Afghanistan's political leadership, the Taliban, to be a terrorist organization.

-- J. W. "Pete" Peterson, correspondent-at-large

Post 30 September Birthday

Let's wish a Happy Birthday to Steve Crossland!

Post 30 Landscape Makeover

(First appeared in the Edgefield Advertiser)

American Legion Post 30 is about to get a fresh new look, thanks to a group of future agricultural experts. The Strom Thurmond Career and Technical Center (STCTC) agriculture students, led by instructor Jacob Laughlin, are rolling up their sleeves to give the Post's front yard a landscaping makeover. As part of their annual community project, Laughlin's class is preparing a low-maintenance design with plant variety and curb appeal.

Instead of hiring an outside company, Post 30 approached the students, stemming from a desire for community partnership and to foster connections among veterans and local youth. There's no doubt that students passing the completed project will feel pride in their accomplishment for years to come.

Phase One of the project got underway when students visited the post on Penn Street Wednesday, August 6, to assess the current landscaping, take measurements, and brainstorm on plant selection.



*Instructor Jacob Laughlin outlines the project to the students.
(Photo by Diane Peterson)*

But the visit wasn't just about design. The Strom Thurmond students learned they are key players in a bigger strategy for Post 30's growth over the next few years. Their efforts will culminate in the new face of the post's quarters and be a living billboard announcing Post 30's revival. The class also discovered the history of the Edgefield structure erected as a part of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) to ease unemployment during the Great Depression.

Post 30 welcomes donations of mature plants, soil, mulch, irrigation materials, or cash to help bring their landscaping project to life. Contact us at alpost30sc@gmail.com.

-- Winston Boddie, Post 30 Commander

From the Adjutant's Desk

Crosses of Valor

Edgefield County, South Carolina, keeps faith with its fallen through a field of crosses that bear the names of fathers, sons, brothers, and neighbors who never came home from war. The Crosses of Valor initiative began when Post 30 member John Pettigrew, Sr., noticed a small Georgia town honoring with crosses its service members Killed in Action (KIA) or held as Prisoners of War (POW). He shared the idea with Post 30's then-Commander Matthew McGinnis in 2003, sparking a mission to ensure our community heroes would never be forgotten.

Edgefield County Veteran Affairs Officer John Rikard helped identify 79 KIA and POW service members. With Post 30's support, inmates from the Federal Correctional Institution in Edgefield built wooden crosses and personalized them with the names and conflicts of the 79 KIA/POW service members. By Memorial Day (believed to be 2004), the Edgefield Town Square reflected the county's shared sacrifice in a new way, as families and neighbors stood together among the crosses to honor their own.



For years, the wooden crosses silently bore witness to the community's gratitude and the cost of freedom. As they weathered, welding students at Strom Thurmond High School in 2014–2015, guided by teacher Bill Cheatham, fabricated replacement metal crosses that are still used today. On May 20, 2015, the students installed the new crosses, replacing the wooden ones in a ceremony that honored those remembered and affirmed a commitment to preserving their memory. The original wooden crosses were ceremoniously retired on April 21, 2016, at American Legion Post 30 as a poignant reminder of the lives they represented.



On October 4, 2020, the Veterans Memorial Park in Edgefield was dedicated. On Memorial Day, May 31, 2021, the metal crosses found their permanent home there. Each year, for a week before and after Memorial Day, these stoic sentinels stand tall, reminding all who pass by of the heroes they represent. The Veterans Memorial Park offers a sanctuary for reflection, a symbol of the community's enduring respect for its fallen. The shimmering crosses stand as a silent yet powerful declaration of gratitude and respect for Edgefield County's KIA and POW service members.

The history of these crosses is a beautiful narrative of community, remembrance, and dedication. It exemplifies the enduring American spirit and the profound impact a small town can have in preserving the memories of its heroes for generations. The transition from wood to metal is not a change in sentiment, but a steadfast reminder that Edgefield County will forever cherish its KIA and POW fathers, sons, brothers, and neighbors.

--Jane Doolittle, Post 30 Adjutant

Membership Update

- Welcome to our newest members, joining at our August 2025 meeting: Steve Wingler (Army), Amanda Wingler (Navy), and Steve Clauson (Marines).
- 60% of our membership have paid their 2026 Dues of \$60. Our goal remains 100% dues paid by Veterans Day. This can be done in several convenient ways:
 - In Person: Cash or check at our monthly meeting.
 - Mail: Check payable to American Legion Post 30 sent to address P.O. Box 30, Edgefield, SC 29824.
 - Online: Mylegion.org. **NOTE:** Multi-year membership option locks in the current dues rate for three years and avoids dues increases.

Chaplain's Corner

U.S. Army Chaplain Corps Celebrates 250 Years

On August 1, I had the privilege of attending the U.S. Army Chaplain Corps 250th Anniversary Ball in Columbia. As I enter my final year of being an active-duty Army Chaplain, I look back with pride, honor and humility at being part of such a unique group. The Chaplain Corps



was formed on July 29, 1775, and began at the request of General George Washington, Commander of the Continental Army. From the beginning, he saw the critical need for religious support to men in battle.

The Chaplain Corps has continually adapted to the changing dynamics of combat and the U.S. military, but in the Army its core mission remains: Nurture the Living, Care for the Wounded, and Honor the Fallen. U.S. military Chaplains, including those in the Air Force, Navy, and Space Force (with Navy Chaplains serving the Marines) have served primarily as noncombatants since the Civil War, a distinction from many other militaries. On December 28, 1909, the War Department issued General Order 253, formally creating the Unit Ministry Team by assigning enlisted soldiers to assist and protect Chaplains in combat zones.

Today, Unit Ministry Teams serve worldwide, embedded with units both in garrison and on deployment, continuing to reflect George Washington's original intent. At moments of combat, separation from family, or personal crisis, the U.S. military recognizes its forces are not machines but humans with emotions and spiritual needs. The Chaplain and Unit Ministry Team go wherever possible to stand with troops at the moment

of crisis. This is what it means to "care for the soul" of the Army and other branches.

Chaplains and Religious Affairs have become more diverse, with today's Army including Catholic, Protestant, Buddhist, Islamic, Mormon, Jewish, and Hindu Chaplains. For other faiths, sponsoring Chaplains and trained Distinctive Religious Group Leaders provide support. Chaplains must either perform religious services or ensure access for those of different traditions, safeguarding every servicemember's First Amendment right to practice religion freely.

Throughout my career, I've seen myself as a defender of that freedom. Though I am a believer in Jesus Christ, I sponsor the Open Circle Norse Pagan chapel community because someone must. I attend twice a month—not to participate in rituals, but to observe and support their right to worship. My oath to defend the Constitution includes defending the First Amendment.

When I preach in a chapel or lead a Bible study, I can proselytize and invite others. But during the duty week, I cannot treat the Army as a mission field or impose my beliefs on those seeking counseling. Not everyone in the military is Christian, and the Chaplain Corps is not the church. It is a corps of religious leaders who serve as staff officers, counselors, ethicists, teachers, mentors, and worship leaders for all servicemembers. What a unique ministry.



As an American Legion Chaplain, I take the same approach. While most share my belief in God, I never want veterans of other faiths to feel pressured to accept my views. The Post is an extension of our military service, not a place to push political or religious agendas. I am trained to serve in this environment and led by God. I rest well knowing I can continue defending everyone's First Amendment rights even after my Army service. Thank you, Post 30, for allowing me the opportunity to serve.

-- William Beaver, Post 30 Chaplain

May we add your name to Santa's list?

Post 30 Christmas Party

\$25 Thurs, Dec 18, 6 p.m.
 Ticket purchase deadline is **Dec 4**.
 Live music & entertainment

Catered by John Abney
 Ham • Turkey • Rice & Dressing
 • Goblet Gravy • Macaroni & Cheese •
 Green Beans • Cranberry Sauce • Rolls
 • Red Velvet Cake • Tea • Coffee

Purchasing early helps us plan for this night of fun and friendship.



Comments (continued from p.1)

Our Supper Committee plans the menu, purchases ingredients, prepares a homecooked meal, and coaxes members (and spouses) to contribute delicious desserts. Before we've finished supper, every trace of their operation is cleaned up and the kitchen is in perfect order. Our Auxiliary, quietly steadfast, proudly accomplishes its goals through teamwork and is poised for even greater impact.

Post 30 is blessed with competent elected officers. Our adjutant manages membership, oversees our Boys State program, and helps veterans with VA claims and services. Our Vice Commander is the right-hand of the leadership team, capable of stepping in to run all operations. Our treasurer keeps us solvent and ensures bills are paid. Our Post 30 Chaplain is our source of spiritual guidance, and our Sergeant-at-Arms opens and closes every meeting with ceremony and dignity. The commander shapes our path toward growth and is the conduit for information from state TAL.

We have a growing number of committed volunteers who visit schools, work our tent at public events, oversee the oratorical contest, help with yearly fundraisers, and visit veterans in nursing homes.

Most importantly, Post 30 members are friendly and sociable. Whether it's a veteran walking in the door for the first time --as I was years ago, responding to an advertisement in the paper-- or a legacy member, warm greetings are extended and good conversation follows. Once the meeting ends, it's "all hands on deck": tables are folded, chairs are stacked, the floor is swept, and full trash bags disappear out the door.

That's the magic that helps Post 30 run smoothly and keeps us active, relevant, and successful. Every contribution makes a real difference. Thanks for being part of a great team.

-- Winston Boddie, Post 30 Commander

Post 30 had Two Rifle Raffle Winners

Ken Wingeier is all smiles as he holds the Ruger 10/22 rifle he won in The American Legion Department of South Carolina rifle raffle contest. Ken was one of two winners who purchased tickets sold by Post 30. The annual rifle raffle is an important fundraising event for us. Now we can boast that we've had not one but TWO winners. Be on the lookout to get your tickets this fall.



Photo by Diane Peterson

Post 30 Inaugural Challenge Coin Presented to Calvin Bartley

On August 19, Calvin Bartley, our oldest living member and a Korean War veteran, received a visit from Commander Winston Boddie, Adjutant Jane Doolittle, and Treasurer Doug Timmerman. Bartley, a Post 30 member for 52 years, was gifted with the very first Post 30 challenge coin and hat pin. Bartley expressed that he always looks forward to reading the monthly Hezzie Gazette newsletter which keeps him connected and up to date with everything happening at Post 30. During this pleasant visit, Bartley and Timmerman exchanged memories, sharing many stories from Edgefield's past.



Photo by Diane Peterson



Community Cadence: Our next Community Cadence walk is set for Saturday, September 6, at 7:30 a.m. on the Edgefield Walking Trail. We'll meet at the Piedmont Tech parking lot, which will now serve as our permanent meeting spot. Hope to see you there.

Veterans Experience Action Center: The next VEAC is coming to Greenville on September 11-13 at the SCNG Armory, 902 Perimeter Rd. Hours are 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. each day. The event is open to all veterans and family members, offering direct, in-person help with VA claims, healthcare enrollment, widow benefits, and connections to veteran service organizations.

We highly recommend that anyone with an open claim, submitting a new claim, or those who have been denied in the past attend this event. If you go, be sure to bring your DD-214 and any documentation related to your claim, such as medical records, past claim forms, VA decision letters, or denial forms. The earlier you arrive the better. Lines often begin forming around 7:00 a.m. and get long fast. If you're not seen that same day, you'll receive a number and automatically move to the front of the line the next morning.

September Meeting: We will shine the spotlight on our Palmetto Boys and Girls State delegates. The delegates and their families will join us as we present certificates and hear firsthand about their experiences and what they learned from the programs. We have invited the donors whose support made it possible for these students to attend these programs. In addition, the Unit 30 Auxiliary is expecting a visit by the President of TAL Auxiliary Department of South Carolina.

Free Flags for Veterans: Current and prior service members with proof of veteran organization membership card, VA ID, or current military ID are eligible to receive a U.S. flag, pole (side-of-house bracket or 20-ft. telescoping pole), and an LED spotlight. All free from Free Flags for Vets. Contact Post 30 at alpost30sc@gmail.com for applications. Visit freeflagsforvets.org for details.

Calendar of Events

NOTE: IF YOU PLAN TO ATTEND THE MONTHLY MEETING

You must call Jane Doolittle (803-480-1061) or email the post no later than the Monday prior to our scheduled meeting so we can have an accurate headcount for dinner.

September 6, 2025

Community Cadence Walk: 7:30 a.m., Piedmont Tech parking lot.

September 11, 2025

Executive Committee Meeting at 6:00 p.m.

September 18, 2025

Monthly Meeting: dinner at 6:00 p.m., meeting at 6:30 p.m. Menu is Hayes's Hearty Meatloaf, green beans & potatoes, and corn, with a Supper Committee Sweet Surprise for dessert.



October 4, 2025

Community Cadence Walk: 7:30 a.m., Piedmont Tech parking lot.

October 9, 2025

Executive Committee Meeting at 6:00 p.m.

October 16, 2025

Monthly Meeting: dinner at 6:00 p.m., meeting at 6:30 p.m.

October 18, 2025

District 17 Meeting, 10:00 a.m., Post 154, 99 Edisto, St, Johnston.

October 31, 2025

Trunk or Treat, Edgefield Town Square.

October 31 – November 2, 2025

Department Fall Conference. The Columbia Marriott, 1200 Hampton St, Columbia.