



The Hezzie Gazette

Official Newsletter of Hezzie Griffis American Legion Post 30
314 Penn Street, PO Box 30, Edgefield, SC 29824

alpost30sc@gmail.com

www.alpost30sc.org

@alpost30sc

March 2026



Commander's Comments

Rooted in Edgefield

If you have driven by Post 30 recently, you have probably noticed the old shrubs have been removed, preparing for new landscaping. It's exciting to move from planning on paper to seeing the early stages of our new look.



Ripped out, piled up, and hauled away. Post 30 after Saturday's shrub removal. Photo by Diane Peterson.

For weeks, one-on-one conversations have been taking place across town and beyond. Adjutant **Jane Doolittle** and I met with owners of businesses throughout Edgefield to outline our plan and ask for their support. Dave Coates and I carried that message to businesses in North Augusta and Aiken. Local response has been overwhelmingly generous and supportive from businesses, our members, and friends of Post 30.

Our Adopt a Plant program, offering \$20 accent plants and \$40 shrubs, provides a practical way for everyone to take part. Fundraising is progressing, but **we hope you'll adopt a plant** and move us closer to funding this project. It's not too late to show your support and we'll be accepting donations up until planting time and beyond.

(continued Comments, p. 5)

Among SC's Earliest Veterans

Commemorating America's 250th Anniversary

"First in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen" is a famous line that easily describes each of more than 20,000 South Carolinian patriots who fought for our nation's freedom in the American Revolutionary War some 250 years ago. They were a diverse group representing many walks of life and motivations for becoming militiamen and Continental Army and Navy regulars. They saw over 200 battles and skirmishes, more than any other colony. Many enlisted soldiers whom you may not have heard of distinguished themselves in battle. Here are a few worth remembering:

John Featherston (abt.1755- abt.1809-11) from Chester County enlisted in the fledgling South Carolina Navy in 1775 as a gunner aboard the schooner *Defence* to defend Charleston Harbor. They engaged two British ships, receiving 130 cannon ball hits in two days in one of the earliest naval engagements. Featherston was later wounded. He's one of very few free black combatants in South Carolina naval history.



South Carolina militia and Continental soldiers marching toward the Battle of Cowpens, 1781. (AI depiction)

James Birmingham (1750-1775) of Penny's Creek in what is now Abbeville County, was the first South Carolinian to die in the cause of freedom, struck by a musket ball during the First Battle of Ninety-Six.

(continued on next page)

Fighting broke out between Patriot and Loyalist militias in a tense, three-day standoff that ended with a negotiated truce. Birmingham's death in this first land battle against Loyalists marked the beginning of sustained violence in the South.

Sergeant Derrick Holsonback (1764-1826) most probably from the Edgefield District, was a South Carolina militia and Continental Army soldier in repeated campaigns around Augusta. He was also part in an unsuccessful French-American assault on Savannah, the second bloodiest battle of the war. Holsonback was a consistently active combat soldier in a region marked by brutal fighting in the capture of Fort Cornwallis and in the Battle of Eutaw Springs, the War's final battle in South Carolina.

William "Billy" Lee (Unk), from near today's Greenwood County was one of the few slaves formally mustered as a fighting soldier of a South Carolina militia. He was known to be a physically strong experienced horseman. Billy served as a mounted scout, a skirmisher, and a forager of supplies under fire. He fought in the siege of Augusta as an armed combatant, and historians believe he may have been freed at war's end.

Sergeant Philip Gruber (1757-1826) of the Lexington-Newberry District was among the earliest regular troops after the provincials became part of the Continental Army. His duties included transport of gunpowder from Charleston to Dorchester. He also fought in the Battle of Stone Ferry and the Siege of Charleston in an unsuccessful attempt to dislodge the British. He became a prisoner along with virtually the entire 1st South Carolina Regiment when Charleston fell.

Let's remember them with distinct honor in this 250th Anniversary year.

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



Patriot soldiers at Cowpens (1781), some with Continental uniforms and others wearing frontier hunting shirts, with cartridge boxes, crossbelts, and bayonets typical of the period. (AI depiction)

From the Adjutant's Desk

Welcome to our Post 30 family! Preston Creech, transferred from Post 71, Air Force.

David Whatley, transferred from Post 71, Navy. **John Sherry**, new to the American Legion, Marine Corps.

Post 30 Landscape Project Gains Local Supporters:

Our Edgefield area businesses and organizations once again showed what it means to stand behind their community. Even though they face the same economic pressures we all do, they stepped up to support Post 30's Adopt-a-Plant project, and several, especially those with ties to veterans, quietly gave beyond what was asked. Post 30 is thankful to have these friends in our corner, and we hope our members will express their appreciation every time they walk through their doors.



Caring For Our Own: A couple of our fellow comrades are currently at Edgefield Post Acute and would enjoy visitors. Check with Jane or Winston for names and details. Several Post 30 members have dropped in, bringing some thoughtful treats. Caring for and staying connected with our members is at the heart of what we do, like with Buddy Checks and visits like these.

--Jane Doolittle, Post 30 Adjutant

Membership Update

98% of 2026 membership are paid. We are one member short of our 100% goal. If you haven't paid your dues, please do so soon.

Annual dues are just \$60 and can be paid three ways:

- In Person: Cash or check at our monthly meeting.
 - Mail: Check made payable to American Legion Post 30 to: American Legion Post 30, P.O. Box 30 Edgefield, SC 29824
 - Online: Mylegion.org to pay your dues.
- *Note:** Multi-year membership option locks in the current dues rate for the next three years and avoids dues increases.

National Commander Visits South Carolina

American Legion National Commander Daniel J. Wiley spent February 25 in South Carolina, meeting with Legion members at Post 6 before addressing the South Carolina General Assembly.

At Post 6, Commander Wiley focused on the Be The One mission to prevent veteran suicide. He reminded members that one in five people will experience a depressive episode and encouraged consistent buddy checks. "There is no more powerful message than letting someone know you care," he said, urging posts to make personal outreach routine.



Senator Massey and Representative Hixon applaud Wiley, as seen from the SC House visitor's gallery. Photo by Winston Boddie.

He emphasized unity across the Legion Family under the theme Better Together and spoke about the essential role of the American Legion Auxiliary, the American Legion Riders, and the Sons of The American Legion. Sharing an example from his home state of Kansas, he described a rural post with just 18 Legion members but 72 Sons members. Without that SAL squadron, he said, the post would not exist. The story reinforced his message that posts thrive when the entire Legion Family works together.

At the State House, Commander Wiley praised South Carolina as one of the most veteran-friendly states in the nation, citing tax exemptions for military retirement pay, property tax relief for disabled veterans, veterans preference in state employment, and support for six state veterans nursing homes.

He addressed staffing shortages in county veterans offices and efforts to combat predatory claims practices that charge veterans for assistance with their benefits, noting that in calendar year 2025 alone, American Legion-accredited service officers helped veterans secure \$29.5 billion in earned benefits, all at no cost.

From Post 6 to the State House, the message was the same. Support veterans, work together, and stay engaged.

American Legion Post 30 Newsletter

South Carolina on the Road to Independence

To mark America's 250th anniversary, this is part three of a seven-part series tracing South Carolina's move from British colony to a state. Each article highlights events from this month in 1776, showing how local decisions laid the groundwork for independence.

March 1776: The Looming Battle: History has a way of forcing decisions before people feel ready to make them.

By March 1776, South Carolina's leaders were learning that lesson firsthand. The colony had been operating without a royal governor for months. On March 26, a state constitution was adopted, formalizing self-government. With that step, South Carolina crossed a line it could not uncross. Citizens had the courts running, militias organized, and order was being maintained. But publicly, leaders still avoided the word "independence."

British ships hovered offshore and war appeared inevitable. Along the Lowcountry, people knew that, if Britain returned in force, the coast would be the first target. So ordinary folks began preparing for the worst. On Sullivan's Island, merchants, craftsmen, and farmers worked side by side improving defenses, not as professional soldiers, but as neighbors protecting their homes. Fortifications were strengthened with whatever materials could be found. Cannons were hauled into position and local militia companies drilled with new urgency.

March marked a shift from political resolve to physical risk. Once people begin preparing to defend themselves, neutrality becomes harder to maintain, a tension that would surface sharply in April, when neighbors were forced to choose sides.



South Carolinians fortify coastal defenses on Sullivan's Island in March 1776 ahead of the British attack. (AI depiction)

Chaplain's Corner

There's Power in Forgiveness

At one time or another, all of us have been offended—sometimes deeply, sometimes repeatedly. For some, the hurt lingers for years, even long after the offender has passed away. Depending on the nature and frequency of the offense, and who committed it, moving forward with a healthy spirit can feel almost impossible.

Jesus spoke often about forgiveness. When a disciple asked how many times we should forgive, Jesus answered, “seventy times seven,” meaning forgiveness without limit. He told us to love our enemies—perhaps one of the hardest commands to follow. Most powerfully, while hanging on the Cross, He prayed, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” In His darkest moment, Jesus chose mercy.

The older I've grown, the more I've realized two truths. First, I need God's help to forgive. Some wounds are simply too deep to heal on my own. Second, forgiveness is a gift to the one who has been hurt. It is not something the offender earns; it is something freely given. Forgiveness releases the heavy burden we carry. It does not mean forgetting, nor does it eliminate the need for healthy boundaries. It means choosing freedom over resentment.

As we approach Easter, my prayer is that each of us finds the strength to forgive someone we need to forgive. Lay your burden down. Lighten your load. Try forgiveness. Peace be with you.

-- William Beaver, Post 30 Chaplain

Renewed Energy at Unit 30 Auxiliary

Unit 30 Auxiliary is enjoying a growth spurt in membership, and we are excited about the direction we are heading. To better serve the veterans in our area, we are forming committees. This creates new opportunities for those interested in community service to step forward as committee chairs and volunteers as we expand our efforts. Together, we can meaningfully support our veterans, build friendships, and improve our community.



New Auxiliary leader Pat Bonsal strategizes with the team months before the membership growth spurt. Photo by Diane Peterson.

Please help us spread the word and encourage eligible family members to apply for membership in Unit 30 Auxiliary. Eligibility is open to grandmothers, mothers, sisters, and spouses of veterans who served honorably during qualifying periods. If the veteran is living, he or she must be a current member of The American Legion. If the veteran is deceased, Legion membership was not required, provided the service was honorable.

For more information about the Auxiliary or to inquire about joining, please contact patbonsal@att.net or alpost30sc@gmail.com. I would be happy to share additional details about how you can become involved. May God bless you in the mission we all share to be our best for our veterans.

--Patricia S. Bonsal, President, Unit 30 Auxiliary

Transferred to Post Everlasting

Ronald Peterson entered into rest on February 13, 2026. A member of Post 30 for 17 years, he was known to many as a devoted friend and fellow veteran. Born July 9, 1938, Peterson served two years in the U.S. Marine Corps and was a longtime member of the Marine Corps League in Aiken. He held a master's degree from the University of Oklahoma and a bachelor's degree from Michigan State University and remained a loyal supporter of Oklahoma athletics throughout his life. We honor his life, his service, and his years of fellowship with Post 30.

Post 30 **NEEDS** You!

Veterans and community: Help Post 30 Sell Tickets

2026 Rifle Raffle

American Legion Post 30



\$25 per ticket

• 52 chances to win

• **Two tickets** drawn daily for **26 days**

Claim your gun/rifle or exchange it for a **Sportsman's Warehouse gift card** equal to the value of the prize associated with that day's drawing



Get tickets:



(1) In person: Contact a Post 30 officer

(2) Text message: Text "RAFFLE" to 864-413-7121 with your name and number of tickets.

Example: "RAFFLE - John Smith - 2 tickets"

(3) Email: To alpost30sc@gmail.com stating the number of raffle tickets

Comments (continued from p.1)

Students at STCTC helped design the layout, a low maintenance plan with perennial plants, supported by a drip irrigation system that will serve the post for years to come. Their involvement, along with contributions from our local businesses and members, reinforces Post 30's connection to the community we serve.



Farewell, shrubs. Johnny Hensley led a team of Post 30 members and volunteers for five hours, removing the shrubs that have stood for decades. (l to r) Roger Ellis, Tommy Tripp, Johnny Hensley (on tractor), Winston Boddie, and Jon Notestein. Photo: Diane Peterson.

Installation is anticipated in late March as volunteers' schedules align and weather permits. With our nation approaching the 250th anniversary, this project ensures Post 30 looks fresh and renewed for our next chapter.

A building speaks before we ever open the door. With a new "face," we're telling our community that we're active, forward looking, and rooted right here in Edgefield.

-- Winston Boddie, Post 30 Commander

American Legion Post 30
Edgefield, SC

Landscaping FUNDRAISER

How you can help:

- Make a cash donation
- \$20 for an accent plant
- \$40 to sponsor a shrub

Adopt-a-Plant
Includes root stimulator and fertilizer.

<https://www.alpost30sc.org/landscaping-fundraiser>

For questions and to learn details about our project, email Winston Boddie at alpost30sc@gmail.com or text **LANDSCAPE** to **864-413-7121**.

Landscaping Fundraiser Supporter

Thank you from Post 30



Christine's Farm to Fork
206 Main Street, Edgefield, South Carolina 29824
803.615.0695
<https://christinesfarmtofork.com/>

Freedom Trucks Coming to SC

A fleet of six mobile museums known as the "Freedom Trucks" is traveling the country in 2026 to commemorate America's 250th anniversary and will stop in South Carolina. The interactive exhibits tell the story of how 13 colonies declared independence and secured American sovereignty. Visitors can take a "Loyalist or Patriot" quiz, digitally sign the Declaration of Independence, and explore a wall honoring 50 American heroes. They were created in partnership with PragerU and Hillsdale College and are supported by the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

March 1 to 4 – Batesburg-Leesville High School, 600 Summerland Avenue, Batesburg-Leesville, SC 29006. Open to the public March 2 and 3 from 3:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

March 3 to 6 – West Florence High School, 221 N Beltline Drive, Florence, SC 29501.

March 5 to 6 – Seven Oaks Elementary Global Magnet School, 2800 Ashland Road, Columbia, SC 29210. Open to the public March 5 and 6 from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

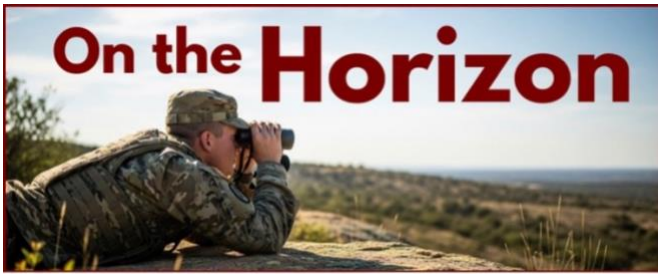
Oratorical Semi-Final Victory

Congratulations to Post 30's contestant, **Brianna O'Shea** for winning the semi-final round of the Oratorical Contest. Her performance secured a \$1,000 scholarship and advancement to the Department finals where she will compete for the opportunity to represent South Carolina at the National Finals in May at Hillsdale College in Michigan.



Brianna with her parents and Commander Boddie at the Oratorical semi-finals. Photo by Winston Boddie.

Members are encouraged to support Brianna in person when she competes again on Saturday, March 7 at 10:00 a.m. at St. Paul's Lutheran Church, 1715 Bull Street in Columbia.



SCNG Retiree Meetings: SCNG will host meetings for retirees on March 19 at the Florence National Guard Armory and April 23 at the Columbia Bluff Road Armory. Meetings run from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. Resources include State of the Guard briefings, VA benefits and claims assistance, ID cards, Space A travel, TRICARE updates, retiree and survivor benefits, and Gray Area compensation. To register, email SCNGRetireeMeeting@gmail.com.

Community Cadence Fitness Walk: Spring weather is here, and Community Cadence is a great way to enjoy it. Join veterans and community members on Saturday, March 7 at 8:00 a.m. at the Piedmont Tech parking lot for an energizing walk or relaxed stroll to start your weekend right. Move at your own pace, enjoy good conversation, and connect with others. Bring a friend and step into spring with us. Need a reminder? Text the word **CADENCE** to 864-413-7121 to receive a text message the day before the walk.

Veterans Experience Action Center: The Midlands VEAC is scheduled for March 19-21 at the SCNG Armory, 1328 Old Dairy Dr, Columbia. Hours are 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. March 19-20 and 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. March 21. The event is open to all veterans and family members, offering direct, in-person help with VA claims (new, open, or denied), healthcare enrollment, widow benefits, and connections to veteran services.

Bring your DD-214 and all documentation, such as medical records, past claim forms, VA decision letters, or denial forms. Arrive early, lines form at 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.

Second Saturday Chess: The Edgefield Welcome Center hosts a monthly chess class on the second Saturday of each month from 11:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. New to the board or ready to test your strategy? Post 30's **David Whatley** leads this free session for players of all skill levels. Come make your move.

Fun Run for a Cause: The Ridge Healthcare Foundation will host its 3rd annual Fun Run 5K Run/Walk on Saturday, March 21, beginning 10:00 a.m. and ending

on the Edgefield Town Square. Register in advance at <https://runsignup.com/Race/SC/Edgefield/RidgeHealthcareFoundation5kFunRun> or sign up at the race at 8:30 a.m.

Under the Crown: Living History Weekend: The Living History Park of North Augusta will host Colonial Times "Under the Crown" on March 21 from 10:00 a.m. to March 22 at 4:00 p.m. at 299 Spring Grove Ave., North Augusta. This free public event features historical reenactors, hands on demonstrations, colonial games, music, and period wares, offering families a glimpse into daily life during the British occupation in 1780.

Calendar of Events

PLANNING TO ATTEND THE MONTHLY MEETING?

We need an accurate supper headcount. Sign up with Jane Doolittle, reply to the Post text message, or email alpost30sc@gmail.com no later than the Monday prior to the meeting.

March 7, 2026: Community Cadence Walk, Piedmont Tech parking lot at 8:00 a.m.

March 7, 2026: Department oratorical contest, St Paul's Lutheran Church, 1715 Bull St, Columbia at 10:00 a.m.

March 12, 2026: Executive Committee Meeting at 4:00 p.m.

March 19, 2026: Monthly meeting, dinner at 6:00 p.m., meeting at 6:30 p.m. Menu is Chop-a-licious Pork Chops, Down-Home Green Beans & Potatoes, Golden Sweet Corn, with Bethany's Homestyle Surprise Cobbler for dessert.

March 19-21, 2026: Veterans Experience Action Center, SCNG Armory, 1328 Old Dairy Dr, Columbia. Mar 19-20 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m., and Mar 21 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

April 4, 2026: Community Cadence Walk, Piedmont Tech parking lot at 8:00 a.m.

April 9, 2026: Executive Committee Meeting at 4:00 p.m.

April 16, 2026: Monthly meeting, dinner at 6:00 p.m., meeting at 6:30 p.m.

April 18, 2026: District 17 Meeting, 10:00 a.m., Post 30.

March Birthdays at Post 30

Let's wish a very Happy Birthday to our members: **Luther Beason, Hugh Chrisco, Amanda Wingler, Keith Kennedy, and The American Legion.**