



The Hezzie Gazette

Official Newsletter of Hezzie Griffis American Legion Post 30

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October 2025



Commander's Comments

Post 30 and Unit 30 Auxiliary Build Young Leaders

Over many years, Post 30 and Unit 30 Auxiliary have helped shape young men and women of Edgefield County to become engaged and responsible leaders, thereby fulfilling one of four pillars of The American Legion (TAL): Americanism.

We are blessed with generous donors who have sponsored students to attend the prestigious Boys State and Girls State programs. Participants return home from this once-in-a-lifetime experience better prepared to assume positions of responsibility in our schools, churches, and businesses.



(l to r) Evan Williams (2025) and Piper Kerlin (2024) Oratorical Contestants. Photos by Diane Peterson.

In 2024, Post 30 sent three students to Boys State, among them **Colt Bailey** from Wardlaw Academy, now enrolled at The Citadel, where he is also on the football team. We were proud to learn that, in a nod to his leadership potential, Colt was invited back to Boys State this year as a senior counselor.

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"Shifting focus" to Wounded Veterans

The Global War on Terrorism (GWOT), brought about by attacks on the mainland United States, might be thought to have ended when we withdrew from Afghanistan in 2021. But the GWOT has profound and lasting effect on soldiers both physically and psychologically, with broad impacts on their life and lives of their loved ones.

Studies show that about 70% struggle with mental health issues, 15% with prevalence of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, and issues like depression, anxiety, and substance abuse. It's a personal toll added to the societal loss of approximately 7,091 U.S. service members who died in the GWOT up to then, with another 53,000 wounded.

Post 30 member **Will Beaver** has seen the aftermath. Chaplain Beaver, among many other assignments, had been part of the often-deployed "Sledgehammer" armored brigade combat team of the Army's 3rd Infantry Division at Fort Benning, Georgia, a key player in the liberation of Iraq. Today, he serves as Family Life Chaplain at Fort Gordon near Augusta, Georgia, engaging daily with soldiers and their families.



Chaplain Beaver in front of the Family Life Center on Fort Gordon

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My assessment of the GWOT is that it really has not eliminated terror, he says. "Terrorists are like roaches. You can eradicate them for a short time but ultimately, they return. While we as a nation were rightly focused on fighting terror and keeping America safe, our near-peer adversaries Russia, North Korea, China and others regained strength and now we have to shift focus," he adds. Chaplain Beaver believes that now is a time to properly care for our warriors of all eras, especially those from the GWOT. That's why he volunteers as a chaplain for American Legion members and their families.

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

From the Adjutant's Desk

Big news for October! Post 30 is rolling out a new text messaging service to help us stay connected. You'll start getting quick reminders about meetings, events, and fundraisers right on your phone. Here's what one might look like:



We'll be able to track those replies, which means better supper headcounts and less guessing in the kitchen. Easy for you, helpful for us.

Now for some well-deserved shoutouts to our own members:

- **Glenn Yarborough** donated a U.S. flag that flew over the Capitol, courtesy of Senator Lindsey Graham's office. We really appreciate your support.
- **Tommy and Barbara Tripp** donated a window AC unit, and Tommy teamed up with **Roger Ellis** to install it. They also gave the Auxiliary Room a good clean-up that was much needed and greatly appreciated by our Auxiliary.
- **Dave Coates** is our new Awards Coordinator. He'll be working with schools and community to recognize folks with awards like Teacher of the Year, Firefighter of the Year, Law Enforcement Officer of the Year, and more.

- **Dr. Bruce Mears** has stepped forward to be our new Outreach Coordinator. He's building a program to connect with members who can't always attend, including our shut-ins, and he needs volunteers to help make it happen. If you'd like to pitch in, let him know.



Dr. Bruce Mears, Post 30's new Outreach Coordinator.

Our Post keeps getting stronger because of members who step up. Thank you all for everything you do.

--Jane Doolittle, Post 30 Adjutant

Unit 30 Auxiliary Update

Welcome back from your summer break. At the first meeting of the year, the Unit 30 Auxiliary marked an important milestone with the passing of the gavel from Past President **Fay Vaughn** to new President **Patricia Bonsel**.



(l to r) Fay Vaughn and Patricia Bonsel. Photo by Diane Peterson.

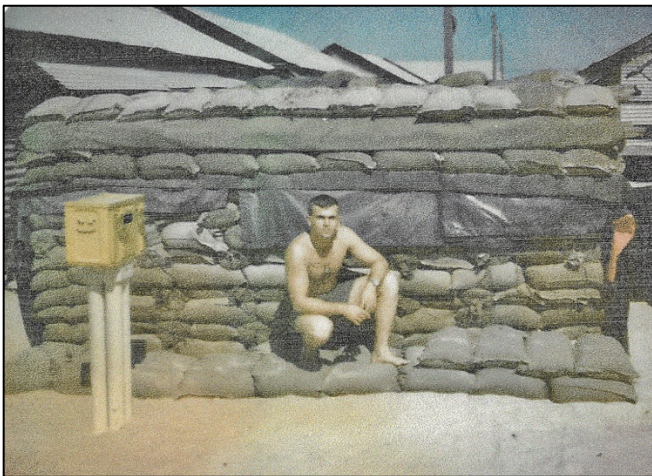
Patricia takes the helm at a time when Post 30 and the Unit 30 Auxiliary are preparing to work even more closely together, joining efforts on upcoming projects and events to make an even greater impact.

Re-discovering Your Authentic Self

How PTSD Changes Our Brain

I am in a theater, watching the movie Black Hawk Down, when I am suddenly transported back into battle. I had long ago concluded two combat tours in Vietnam, yet I am once again a machine door gunner hunkered down in response to the sounds of bullets punching holes in the sides of my helicopter, fingers of sunlight now poking through them. The experience is real to me. My heart is pounding, and my muscles have tightened. Involuntarily, I jump out of my seat and run from the theater.

This is Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The trauma creates physical changes to the functioning of the brain. We all have a gatekeeper of sensory input (the amygdala), which sorts out the important information from the mundane. When the amygdala is overwhelmed by a tsunami of traumatic events, our brain may shut down or, to prevent us from sensory overload, the impressions are diverted to long-term memory storage (the hippocampus).



Sgt. Bruce Mears, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, in 1966 at Marble Mountain Air Station south of Da Nang, Vietnam.

What we call PTSD are those traumatic memories, now hiding in the shadows of the hippocampus, unexpectedly triggered by sights, sounds, and smells. These “flashbacks” flood the prefrontal cortex and override our emotional regulation center. Though there is no actual danger, our brain’s alarm system goes on full alert. Panic! Fight or flight!

Any veteran who has experienced PTSD will likely forever view life as a journey to reclaim the person they were prior to combat. I call that inexperienced young soldier on an adventure and not yet battle-scarred, “the authentic self.” It’s our essence, our deepest sense of who we know ourselves to be. Like so many, the

experience of combat changed me. But just as our physical bodies return home, the authentic self struggles to “return home,” back to how we felt before the combat trauma.

The good news is that veterans who reach out for help will learn that the brain possesses a natural ability to adapt and re-wire itself (neuroplasticity), allowing it to gradually heal from the trauma much like a physical wound. And so, I found a way to change my thinking, literally rewiring my own brain to create a better outcome to the scars of traumatic experiences. It took a long time, and I am not done yet, but by consciously thinking and believing in a better outcome, my brain is rewiring, moving me ever closer to my authentic self. I want you to know that it is possible for you, too.

-- Dr. Bruce R. Mears, DVM

Membership Update

We’re excited to welcome **Joe and Angie Thompkins** (both Army veterans) to Post 30. They first connected with us after seeing our September meeting post on Facebook, then stopped by our tent at the Edgefield Block Party and officially joined. Welcome to the Post 30 family.

67% of our membership has paid their 2026 Dues. Our goal is 100% dues paid by Veterans Day.

Our annual dues are \$60.00 and can be paid in several convenient ways:

- In Person: Cash or check to 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 our current dues rate for the next three years and avoids dues increases.

We hope to see you at the

Post 30 Christmas Party

Thurs, Dec 18, 6 p.m.

Deadline is Dec 4.

\$25

Live music & entertainment

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



Purchasing early helps us plan for this special holiday event.

Chaplain's Corner

Own Your Entire Story

During my Army career as a Chaplain and a counselor, I developed a "spiritual resiliency" tool. Like other tools in the mental health profession, it honors Native Americans and their way of living holistic lives. It borrows from the concept of the Medicine Wheel.



I made the tool into a challenge coin, a circle with four quadrants, representing that each of us consists of four parts: Our strengths (black), our weaknesses (red), our past and family history (yellow), and our unwritten future (white). Many people who struggle with mental or emotional health issues overemphasize one of the quadrants to the detriment of the others. Truth is, it is better to own all the areas so we can move forward and write our future. In the middle, a cross represents, for me, God. It reminds me to trust God and let Him guide me in life. God accepts all of me. I need to own them and learn to forgive myself, be realistic, and set healthy boundaries.

How "spiritually fit" are YOU? Are you honest about yourself and own all four areas? Or do you overemphasize one area? Owning all four areas and trusting God can keep you whole and healthy.

-- William Beaver, Post 30 Chaplain

October Birthdays at Post 30

Let's wish a Happy Birthday to our members:
**William Asforis, Justin Bailey, Wayne Burton,
Stacey Coleman, Bruce Mears, Harry Taylor, Doug
Timmerman, Howell Watson, and Ken Wingeier.**

Comments (continued from p.1)

Our own **Doug Timmerman**, who Post 30 sent to Boys State in 1964, credits his experiences there with inspiring him to be a greater "part of the community, state and nation," ushering him toward membership in several municipal groups and a core role in his church. Today Doug remains widely respected as an Edgefield County civic leader and valued member of our post.

We are working to increase participation in another TAL program, the annual Oratorical Contest, through which high school boys and girls earn academic scholarships of \$25,000 or more. Over the past two years, we have stepped up our involvement in this character-building program that elevates public speaking skills and instills a deeper respect for the freedoms and responsibilities of American citizenship.

We encourage Post 30 members and our Auxiliary to help us enlist schools, attract and engage more students, including homeschoolers, reaching all families looking for leadership opportunities and generous scholarships for their children. Let us spread the word wherever we go so that every parent or grandparent of a high school student in our area knows this program is available. Together, we can make our efforts with the Oratorical Contest as strong and successful as Boys State and Girls State.

-- Winston Boddie, Post 30 Commander

Congresswoman Biggs' Message

"Veterans Come First"

At our August meeting, **Teresa Mahaffey**, Veterans Service Representative for **Congresswoman Sheri Biggs**, repeated Biggs' message that veterans come first. She emphasized Biggs' commitment to ensuring veterans receive the VA services they've earned. Members asked questions about claims and representation, and Mahaffey pledged support on Biggs' behalf. Her visit underscored Post 30's important role as a resource for Edgefield's veterans.



Mahaffey addressing the crowd. Photo by Diane Peterson

2025 Boys and Girls State Delegates

Delegates from Palmetto Boys State and Girls State visited Post 30 during our September meeting to share their experiences. This year's participants were **Kayce Ashley, Chloe Ellis, and Asa Knapp** of Fox Creek High; **Mollie Bartley, Christian Haskins, and K'Mya Moore** of Strom Thurmond High; and **Sam Coughenour and Katie Forrest** of Wardlaw Academy. They spoke about running for office, forming mock governments, and gaining public speaking and leadership skills, while also building lasting friendships. For those interested in reading more and hearing directly from the delegates, an article about their visit was published in the *Edgefield Advertiser* and is also available on our website.



Delegates (l to r) K'Mya Moore, Sam Coughenour, and Katie Forrest. Photo by Diane Peterson

2026 Oratorical Contest Gets Underway



Commander Boddie addresses students. Photo by Diane Peterson.

Post 30 is encouraging students to enter the 2026 Oratorical Contest, which offers scholarships worth \$25,000 or more. Winston Boddie recently spoke to **Tracy Walsh's** U.S. Constitution class, inviting students to enter the contest. Walsh's class provides an excellent foundation in constitutional studies, equipping students with the knowledge and confidence needed to succeed.

Dr. Jared Smith Visits Post 30

Wardlaw Academy's new Head of School, **Dr. Jared Smith**, introduced himself to Post 30 members at the August meeting.



Dr. Smith addresses the crowd. Photo by Diane Peterson.

A retired Major in the Georgia Army National Guard, Smith shared how his military service shaped his approach to education. Members asked questions about Wardlaw's academics and explored opportunities for collaboration. Smith, who retired in 2024 after 20 years of service, emphasized his commitment to veterans and his vision for strengthening "Patriot Nation." A full article about his visit appeared in the *Edgefield Advertiser* and can also be found on our website

Rick Berry Highlights ECWC Survey

Post 30 member **Rick Berry** addressed the crowd at our August meeting, speaking about his role with the Edgefield Community Wellness Coalition (ECWC). He encouraged members to complete the community transportation needs survey, noting that the results will capture the voices of residents and workers across Edgefield County and help shape ECWC programs and funding.



Rick Berry discusses ECWC survey. Photo by Diane Peterson.

Karate Classes Kick Off at Post 30

Shawn Risher has brought his growing karate program to Post 30, holding youth and adult classes every Tuesday and Thursday evening.



Students practicing their moves. Photo by Diane Peterson.

Veterans who are Post 30 members may enroll at no cost. Since moving from the former Boy Scout hut to Post 30, attendance has nearly doubled. Risher, with 25 years of martial arts teaching experience, emphasizes discipline, respect, and confidence while keeping classes fun and encouraging. His ties to Edgefield run deep, having begun his own martial arts journey here at age 7. An article about his program was published in the *Edgefield Advertiser* and is also available on our website.



Community Cadence Fitness Walk: Fall mornings are here, and with the days getting shorter we are shifting our walk to a later start. Join us **Saturday, October 4 at 8:00 a.m.** at the Piedmont Tech parking lot. Bring a friend, set your pace, and enjoy the fresh fall air on the Edgefield Walking Trail.

Post 30 Christmas Dinner: We're still looking for volunteers to help decorate. Please speak with Winston or Jane or email alpost30sc@gmail.com.

Edgefield Trunk-or-Treat: Edgefield town square will be overrun with skeletons, witches, and zombies on **Friday, October 31, 6-8 p.m.** for the annual Halloween event. Post 30 needs volunteers to hand out candy to the little goblins. We also need a vehicle to serve as our "trunk"

parked behind our table full of goodies. Last year several hundred trick-or-treaters showed up, and we had a blast. To help out, speak with Winston or Jane or email alpost30sc@gmail.com.

Annual Pecan Fundraiser: The annual Post 30 pecan sale is underway, and it's time to get your pre-orders in and start selling. Delivery is expected in early November. Pre-order slips are available from Jane or by emailing alpost30sc@gmail.com.

Calendar of Events

NOTE: IF YOU PLAN TO ATTEND THE MONTHLY MEETING

You must speak with Jane Doolittle or email the post no later than the Monday prior to our scheduled meeting so we can have an accurate headcount for dinner.

October 4, 2025

Community Cadence Walk: 8:00 a.m., Piedmont Tech parking lot.

October 9, 2025

Executive Committee Meeting at 4:00 p.m.

October 16, 2025

Monthly Meeting: dinner at 6:00 p.m., meeting at 6:30 p.m. Menu is Chris's Homemade Vegetable Soup, Country Cornbread, and Dessert from Mrs. Costco.

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, 6-8 p.m.

October 31 – November 2, 2025

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

November 1, 2025

Community Cadence Walk: 8:00 a.m., Piedmont Tech parking lot.

November 11, 2025

Edgefield County Veterans Day Program.

November 13, 2025

Executive Committee Meeting at 4:00 p.m.

November 20, 2025

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