



American Legion Tyler Cates Post #281

Winter/Spring 2024 Newsletter

(Mailing) PO Box 67, Mt. Juliet, TN 37121

(Meeting place) Senior Activity Center, 2034 N Mt. Juliet Road, Mt. Juliet, TN 37122

<https://www.mtjulietalpost281.com/>

Commander Terry S. Ward, 615-519-6523

Adjutant Shawn Taylor, 615-642-1973

Post meetings are held the 2nd Tuesday of each month from 6-8 pm.

Parking and entrance are in the rear of the building, located next door to the Church of Christ.

Each month we have a social time starting at 6:00 pm with pizza and sodas followed by the regular meeting starting at about 7:00 pm.

Come join us for our next meeting, Feb 13th .

UPCOMING POST CALENDAR OF EVENTS:

13 Feb, Regular Post meeting, MJSAC @ 6:00 pm, with guest speaker Veterans Service Officer Zabrina Seay

24 Feb, 5th District Oratorical Contest, St. Stephens Community Church, Mt. Juliet @ 10:00 am

05 Mar, Executive Committee meeting MJSAC @ 5:30 pm

09 Mar, Central TN, Division Oratorical Contest, Post 88, Donelson, @ 10:00 am

10 Mar, DLST ends

12 Mar, Regular Post meeting, MJSAC @ 6:00 pm

30 Mar, Department Oratorical Contest, Department HQS, Donelson, @ 10:00 am

Post Commander, Terry Ward

State Oratorical Winner and National Finalist Abigail Whicker

Hello to all members and friends of Post 281. It seems that our typical six weeks of winter is holding true again this year and by the end of February we're well into Spring. Once spring arrives, our busy time will soon begin.

Proudly we can boast about Mt. Juliet's Christian Academy's Sophomore Abigail Whicker placing seventh in the National Oratorical Competition. Walking away with \$7,000 in scholarships is "nothing to sneeze at".

As I look in retrospect to the past Post 281 year, I take great pride in all we have accomplished. As always, our post offers great support in so many community efforts. Here is a quick review of 2023 for our post, and as they say, "a picture is worth a thousand words."

Pictured below are Abigail Whicker, with parents Robin and John Whicker and the Department Commander Lanny Culver and 281 Commander Ward.



Honoring America's Flag

Our support in Honoring America's Flag event in our efforts with the Mt. Juliet Exchange Club is always a big event for our post and has become a tradition of community service unique to our post alone. Proudly we consider this to be a tradition in our post for our members and for the community.



Boys State at Tennessee Tech

Boys State offers a 6-day practical experience for young men with the actual problems of government as it operates in Tennessee. We sponsored a record number (18) of high school juniors to attend Boys State in Cookeville in 2023. We will be interviewing young men who are interested in attending the 2024 event soon.



Pictured are the 430+ boys from across the state that attended Boys State and the 200+ empty pizza boxes it took to feed the herd on one night.

Post 281 Honor Guard



Left to Right: CDR Steve Wren, Jeff Mattingly, Mike Faoro, Bud Werner, Brenda Thompson, Dan Rames, Grady Thompson, Pat Costanzo, Cary Cundall

Proudly we can boast about our post Honor Guard and their continued dedication and service to the families of Wilson County veterans and special events in our area. To date, Post 281's Honor Guard has performed over 458 services or special events for veterans and their families since our post was started in 2010. The Honor Guard is always looking for new members and offers free uniform items to those who can serve, even if that service is on an occasional basis.



The Honor Guard and members of the Post 281 American Legion Riders attending a memorial service for Thomas Bonds, a local Viet Nam War Veteran.



Honor Guard Commander Steve Wren, in the middle of a rainstorm, standing fast.

Helping Veterans in Need

Veteran Danny Sexton with volunteers from our post that helped him move and recover from the Glass Creek Apartment fire, and even repaired his wheelchair ramp on the back of his car.



Community Outreach Public Awareness



Members Fred Higdon, John Herko, Pat Costanzo, and Katie Sarazine greeting the public at Wal Mart, in the spring.

Annual Post Picnic for Wilson County Veterans

Even though the weather did not cooperate, we had a good turnout for our September picnic.



Halloween in the Park, Community Support

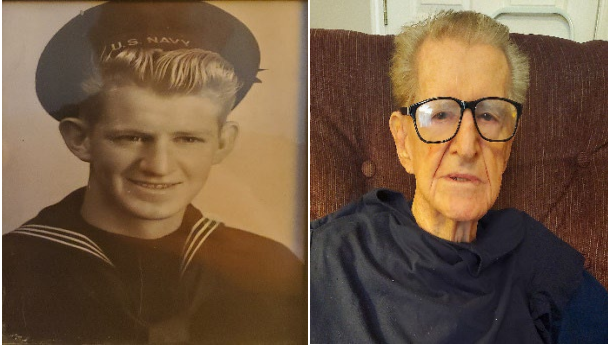
Each year our post passes out multiple big bags of candy to our local children and their parents in Mt. Juliet's Halloween in the Park.



Who cannot just love the smiling faces of the children we see and their proud parents as well and we were honored to have State Representative Susan Lynn visit us as well.

**Quilts of Valor for
WWII Veteran Glen Pardue**

What an honor it was to recognize 101-year-old WW II Navy Veteran and resident of Mt. Juliet Glen Pardue with a Quilt of Valor at his home, surrounded by his family.



Information booth at the Wilson County/State Fair.



**Mt. Juliet High School, JROTC Drill and Ceremony
exposition**



Annual Christmas Banquet



Our annual Christmas banquet has become a tradition to be proud of as we enjoyed camaraderie and an evening of entertainment thanks to member Paul Coons and member Bob Ramsey.

SAL

Sons of the American Legion

The Sons of the American Legion, Mt. Juliet Squadron 281 was recently recognized for exceeding their membership goal of members from the post and from the community. Currently the Post 281 Squadron has 32 members.



SAL Commander Dan Rham, center, Secretary FMR CDR Lew Hightower left, being awarded an achievement 100 % membership goal certificate from SAL State Membership Chairman and FMR Post CDR Pat Unger

Membership to the SAL is open to all male descendants, adopted sons and stepsons of members of the American Legion. To verify your eligibility to the SAL, contact the Secretary of Squadron 281, former Post Commander Lewis Hightower.

American Legion Post 281 Auxiliary

The mission of the Post 281 Auxiliary is to support The American Legion and to honor the sacrifices of those who serve by enhancing the lives of veterans, the military, and their families at home and abroad. The Auxiliary's annual tree sale is a great fundraiser for their purpose of supporting local community efforts and for honoring veterans. The tree sale the Auxiliary conducts is a great event for their causes which generates funds for sending young ladies to Girls State and/or other support activities as well. The 2024 Tree Ordering form is available on our post website. All orders must be submitted by April 1st.

Although I've not listed everything we have accomplished in the last year, personally, I'm just proud to be a part of this post and your continued support efforts. But yet, here is a challenge: The national commander has initiated a program called BE THE ONE. If you can make a difference in the life of one veteran, be ready to act.



I hope our members can take this challenge to heart and try to make a difference in the lives of other veterans and those around us in our local communities.

We've all taken an oath to support and defend our Constitution. Personally, I don't feel like it ended when I retired from active duty. I still feel the same commitment to my country and my fellow soldiers today.

Terry S. Ward

**Tyler Cates American Legion Post 281
Commander/State Oratorical Chairman**



...all gave some, some gave all, some are still giving...



1st Vice CDR John Herko, Buddy Checks for 2023, Quilts of Valor, and Membership Information

The Buddy Check Program became a National initiative in March 2019 as a "comradeship campaign" to let our members know that they are not alone. Several Tyler Cates American Legion Post 281 members reached out to approximately 214 fellow members to see if they were "OK" and if they needed any assistance. Our outreach included making calls, leaving voice messages, sending texts, and sending emails.

Statistically, in reviewing the results of our two efforts in 2023 (Apr-May and Oct-Nov), everyone who responded said they were "OK," or something similar, and were able to deal with their lives without Post 281 assistance. Of the average 92 telephone calls made each time, about 50% were answered or voice messages returned. For those not on individual call lists, we sent out an average of 122 emails with the same message, asking if they were "OK" or needed any assistance. About 17% resulted in a response.

Whether by telephone call or email, those who responded expressed appreciation for our efforts, and many provided updates on their situation. And, yes, there were a few who requested we remove them from our contact list!

We plan to conduct the next Buddy Check effort during Apr-May 2024. Let me know if you would like to be one of the callers. Although my mother liked to tell me "No news is good news," it would still be a comfort to hear from more of our members that they, indeed, were "OK" and not in need of assistance.

If your situation changes, don't hesitate to contact me, the person who previously called you, or any member of the Executive Committee. We will do the best we can to help.

Quilts of Valor



Post member Rubin Horton with QOVF director Joan Giltner and John Herko

“The mission of the Quilts of Valor Foundation (QOVF) is to cover Service Members and Veterans touched by war with comforting and healing Quilts of Valor (QOV).” Nominees for a QOV must be alive and must not have been previously awarded a QOV. Furthermore, a QOV is not intended as a surprise, gift or present for a birthday, anniversary, retirement, or other celebration.

During 2023, 13 QOVs were given to veterans of World War II, Korean Conflict, Vietnam War, and Operation Iraqi Freedom. Currently, there are nine individuals registered and awaiting their QOV. All quilts are made or presented by a representative of the Senior Activity Center Quilt Club in Mt. Juliet. Each quilt must meet the exact standards of the QOVF as to size, composition, and patriotic design.

Tyler Cates American Legion Post 281 monthly membership meetings provide the venue for the awards. However, if the awardee cannot attend, the Post and the Quilt Club coordinate a time and place for the presentation.

You do not have to be a member of Post 281 to be awarded a QOV. For the most part, the list is prioritized by oldest war/conflict first. Therefore, it may take several months, or longer, for those nominated who have served in the Vietnam or more recent wars to receive a QOV.

For additional information, check out qovf.org. You could also contact johnherkopost281mj@gmail.com if you have questions and/or would like to receive and complete a nomination for a veteran (including yourself) that has been “touched by war.” Please send all nominations to John Herko for entry into the QOVF database and added to the Post 281 QOV waiting list.



Adjutant's Corner By Shawn Taylor

Post 281 has been doing well with its membership. We've been maintaining a pretty steady number, around 274. For 2023 we ended with 96% of our membership goal being current. For 2024 we are already at 82% who have renewed for 2024. The department sets goals along the year of what they would like the posts' renewal rates to be. The current goal is 80% by January 18th, 2024. We passed that.

Check your wallets! If your membership card doesn't say 2024 in it, it is time to send me a check or you can use PayPal or Venmo for \$45 and renew! YOUR membership has power and numbers speak collectively when new policies and programs are being considered by our elected officials in Congress and the Senate.

Out of the current \$45 membership dues, the post only keeps \$14. The remaining \$31 goes to the state and national; \$12.50 to Dept of TN and \$18.50 to National. Beginning July 1st, 2024, for the 2025 renewal year, National and Department are raising their dues by \$7. The 281 executive committee is going to recommend a dues increase for the 2025 Legion year to a new yearly membership total of \$50 during the new business session of our regular meeting on Feb 13th. The National office is also offering a special three-year renewal rate for those who would like to make a one-time payment for the next three years at the current cost of \$45.00. Your payment online would be for \$135.00 and would carry you into the American Legion year of 2027 if you have already renewed for 2024. If you are only renewed for 2023, it would bring you to 2026.

For calendar year 2023 we lost 12 members who advanced to the Post Everlasting.

John Brown, Richard Leedy, Grady Lynn, Kenneth Glinski, Richard Wright, Ronald Head, Edward McHale, Mike Vanbavel, Craig Widrig, Edwin Rector, Burton Pauly, and most recently founding member Mike Scoville. Mike was a charter member of our post when

it was first organized in 2010. His family also donated a bugle to our honor guard in honor of Mike's memory.



Special Honor Guard Bugle donated by the family in memory of Mike Schoville

Additionally, we had 6 members who transferred out.

We gained 13 members who were either new to the American Legion or who transferred in from other posts to include Post 2000 which is a post on paper only when someone decides to join the Legion, but they do not select a local post.

The American Legion has 2 types of memberships. Regular (yearly) and Paid Up For Life (PUFL). In the past the regular members began renewals on July 1st for the next calendar year and you could only pay for a year at a time. Beginning July 1st, 2024, the Legion is going to allow yearly members to renew their membership up to 3 years at a time.

Remember that each Legionnaire is an ambassador for their post and the Legion itself. Wear your hats and shirts when you go out. We all meet and greet veterans every day in our daily travels. Don't be afraid to tell people about our post and what we do as well as the Legion itself and what we stand for. And don't forget to offer them a chance to come to a meeting.

Knowledge is key! And the world should know the American Legion.



Finance Officer Steve Iles

Here is a brief 2023 Recap from the Post 281 Finance Officer.

The finances of Post 281 are very healthy, and we (as a Post) are very fortunate to have many giving members that support us, not just financially, but also with time, volunteering efforts and community involvements.

A few of the areas that Post 281 has given donations to in 2023 includes:

1. \$5,525 to help fund HS boys attend Boys State (We support annually)
2. \$1,100 to help build a porch ramp for a disabled veteran
3. \$700 sent to the Toys For Tots campaign
4. \$500 donated to a Veteran in need after a fire destroyed his apartment
5. Contributing \$500 to the American Legion National Emergency Fund as well as \$250 to the AL Legacy Riders Fund (Both are funded annually)
6. \$300 for the annual AL Riders "Run For The Wall" (Annual support)
7. \$300 to support the MJ Marine JROTC by purchasing medals and certificates
8. \$200 donated to Boy Scout Troop 150 as well as \$130 donated to a Boy Scout Eagle Project
9. \$100 donated to a student that won an Oratorical contest event

Post member in the News!

Post member Tadych awarded the Star Award



On the right is TSGT Tadych holding his American Legion Star Award, presented by Department Commander Lanny Culver

Technical Sergeant (TSGT) Elliott Tadych was assigned to Mt. Juliet and the Wilson County area in the spring of 2021. Within weeks of moving to our area and joining our post, Elliott had volunteered to be the Post chairman for interviewing high school juniors to attend the Legion's state civics training camp called Boys State, based on his knowing many administrators in our area's schools and his exposure to our communities' students. TSGT Tadych was recognized for his dedication to the community by the Commander of the American Legion for the State of Tennessee with a STAR award, as well as an accommodation award for his service at the local post level for all that he accomplished. TSGT Tadych also exceeded his assigned recruiting goal, achieving just under 150 % of new enlistments quota for 3 years in a row. Fortunately for him, but unfortunately for Mt. Juliet, Technical Sergeant Tadych was recently reassigned to the Air Force recruiting school in Texas and will soon be a training instructor to future recruiters on how to achieve success in their recruiting assignments too. As a post, we wish Elliott the very best for his future and hope that he and his lovely wife Lacy will return to our community when they retire and also rejoin our post.

"Mt Juliet Mover" Meals on Wheels Manager Cynthia Brown



Post member Cynthia Brown was recently featured in the Wilson County/ Mt. Juliet Chronical for her

passion for those in our Wilson County community with needs, like seniors and homebound residents. Cynthia is the manager of the community outreach efforts through First Baptist Mt. Juliet and in cooperation with the Mid Cumberland Meals on Wheels program. Often in many of those cases those she helps are veterans as well. Mid Cumberland Meals on Wheels delivered over 500,000 meals last year to their three-county area, of which 42,400 were served in the Wilson County, thanks to the cooperation of so many agencies across Wilson County and due to the coordination efforts and efficiency that Cynthia brings to their organization.

The article highlighted Cynthia and her husband's service in our Nation's military with their careers in the US Air Force. The Browns moved to Wilson County to settle and immediately got involved in ministries to those in need in our community. Due to her countywide availability, she is often in touch with veterans in need and has been influential in helping our post connect with several veterans that needed the Post's assistance. Cynthia recently helped our post in connecting for the needs of Danny Sexton, a Veteran who was burned out in the lightning fire at Glass Creek Apartments.

Service Officer News You Can Use

By Patti Whitmore



The Veterans Affairs Tennessee Valley Healthcare System (TVHS)

If a Veteran has not enrolled in Veterans Affairs healthcare yet, call 1-877-222-VETS or sign up on www.va.gov, or apply in person at the Nashville or Murfreesboro VA campuses.

Veterans Administration Benefits

Access this Veterans Administration website and manage your VA Benefits and Health Care benefits: <https://www.va.gov/>

Tennessee State Veteran Benefits

Tennessee Veteran Services Department provides property tax relief for disabled veterans, recreational discounts, and motor services among other benefits. The website is www.tn.gov/veteran. 615-741-2345.

Wilson County Veterans Service Office

Director ZaBrina Seay and Deputy Director Lindsey Roberts of the Wilson County Veterans Service Office and Wilson County Veterans Museum are located at 304 East Main Street, Lebanon, TN 37087. Their mission is to ensure veterans receive quality care, support, entitlements and the recognition earned in their service to the nation. wilsoncountyttn.gov/departments/veteran-services (615) 444-2460.

New Home Loans for National Guard and Reserve Members

National Guard and Reserve members without active-duty service are now eligible to receive VA home loans. The new law makes Guard and Reserve members who have at least 90 days of service eligible for the home loan program, 30 days must have been consecutive.

TVHS Veteran Patients' Visitors and Guest Policy.

[https://www.tennesseevalley.va.gov/news/Changes to Visitor Policy.asp](https://www.tennesseevalley.va.gov/news/Changes%20to%20Visitor%20Policy.asp)—

Transportation to and from the VA TVHS at Nashville and Murfreesboro is available. Veterans Transportation Program (VTP). Veterans have to make an appointment with the VA in order to participate in these rides. You must call “during the last full week of the previous month (October for an appointment during November).” One day prior, you will receive a re-verifying call and confirm pick up time. 615-225-5616. <https://www.dav.org/veterans/i-need-a-ride/>

Options for non-VA Rides:

Mid-Cumberland Senior Rides 800-945-4125

<https://www.mchransit.org/schedule-a-ride>

They will take you anywhere within middle TN. \$10 each way. Must call several days in advance.

Wilson Rides: <https://wilsonridesinc.org/>

Membership is required to use this service, complete a short in person, at home evaluation to insure eligibility (55 and up). Call the Wilson Rides office Gaye Lynn Wilson at 615-622-5557 for more information.

Mid Cumberland Meals on Wheels. <http://www.mchra.com/meals-on-wheels>

Anyone age 60 and older who is home bound, or meets the needs as determined by state guidelines, is eligible for Mid-Cumberland Meals-on-Wheels. In case you were not aware, support for this program is provided via Second Harvest of Middle Tennessee with the meals distributed via Senior Citizens Centers and churches.



2024 American Legion Auxiliary Tree Sale

American Legion Auxiliary Unit 281
14th Annual Tree Sale Order Form is now available on the post's web site, <https://www.mtjulietalpost281.com>

under **Latest News, Auxiliary Tree Sale Form**

****ALL TREES ARE \$25.00 EACH *****

Checks should be made payable to ALA Unit 281 and mailed to:

ALA Unit 281, P. O. Box 67, Mt. Juliet, TN 37121.
Payments for orders must be received by Monday, April 1, 2024.

Contact Kathy @ 615 218-7541 by phone or by text,
or E-mail (preferred) aux281@comcast.net

PLEASE NOTE: You MUST have confirmation number
at time of pick-up. **Trees will be ready for
pick-up Saturday, April 13, 2024 beginning at 9:00
a.m. Location of pick-up is 1st Baptist Church, 735 N.
Mt. Juliet Rd., Mt. Juliet, TN.**

If you cannot pick up your trees on the above
specified date, please have a backup person
designated, as we cannot hold trees for anyone.
All trees MUST be picked up between 9:00 a.m. and
12:00 p.m.

Three-month Calendar for 2024:

13 Feb, Post meeting, SAC pm
24 Feb, Legion District Oratorical Contest, St.
Stephens CCC, Old Hickory, @10:00 am
5 Mar, Post Executive Committee Meeting @ SAC/
5:30 pm
9 Mar, Central TN Division Oratorical Contest, Legion
Post 88, Donelson, @10:00 pm
10 Mar, DLST begins.
12 Mar, Post meeting, SAC @6:00 pm
2 Apr, Post Executive Committee Meeting @
SAC/5:30 pm
9 Apr, Post meeting, SAC @ 6:00 pm
13 Apr, Auxiliary Tree Sales Event, MT Juliet, First
Baptist, North Parking Lot, @ 6:30am