

The Damascus Veteran

A Newsletter for Members & Friends of
Damascus American Legion Post 171 & Unit

January/February 2024

From the Post Commander

Greetings to my Legion Family.

I want to wish you a Healthy, Happy, and Prosperous New Year!

Looking back on 2023, Post 171 had a number of noteworthy accomplishments, which include: the Oratorical Contest, the Post Membership Dinner, the Veterans and Community Health Fair, the Post vestibule refurbishment, the Scholarship Awards, the much-needed boiler replacement, the Flag Retirement Ceremony, the School Award ceremonies, the Memorial Day Program – including the placement of over 700 flags at 23 local cemeteries and Fields of Poppies, the 'Know Your Legion' Exhibit at the Damascus Heritage Society Museum, the Installation Dinner, the Membership Award plaque for exceeded our goal of 287 members (101.7 %), the Blood Drives, the Post meeting room modernization program, the Laytonsville Town Picnic display, Veterans Day program, and the reestablishment of visiting our fellow veterans at the Lorien Assisted Living Facility.

These activities were above and beyond our recurring events of bingo, facility rentals, and the ever-popular pancake breakfasts. And, of course, none of these would be possible without the dedication and support of Legionnaires and Unit members. My sincere thanks and respect to all who made these contributions possible.

Looking forward to 2024 we will continue to support the Four Pillars of service and advocacy: Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, National Security, Americanism, and Children & Youth.

For God and Country

Steve Monteiro
Post Commander



Post members bringing Christmas cheer to Lorien.

Shown left to right are: Larry Mathews, Anita Trotter, Cheryl Cave (Lorien staff and played the piano), Keith Midberry, Keith Martin, Phil Purcell, and Ed Elertson. Photo by Sam Lehane.

*Taking care of veterans, and
taking care of each other*



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From the Auxiliary Unit President

I bring you Seasons' Greetings from Department of Maryland Auxiliary President Joanne Weis and everyone that comprises our Auxiliary! It has been a busy year, and 2024 promises more of the same. Unit 171 will be the center for a number of district activities in the coming year.

As we go into a new year, our Membership demands attention. As of this writing, we are at 81.25% with 65 members. Our unit goal for this administrative year is 84. Our District 8 is 68.04%, which is currently 7th place of the 8 districts. This is pretty good, considering a month ago, we were dead last! We are catching up, and everyone can help. First, have you paid your dues for 2024? What is the year on your membership card? If you have not paid, is there a problem we can help you with? Can't afford it right now? We understand. Let us know and we can work it out. The same goes for health issues. If you are having other issues, let me know and we can deal with that as well. Also, if you know of anyone in need, reach out to them and let us know. The Legion is a family. We are here to help. Finally, if you know someone that could be a member of any American Legion entity, invite them to check us out!

The American Legion Auxiliary Essay Contest is currently underway. This is another of those activities sidelined during COVID, and now it is back. Submissions are due to me on February 2. This year's topic is: "What does Freedom mean to me?" It is open to all students, including high school. As District President, I will host the winning students at Post/Unit 171 in May. Western Maryland had a National Winner last year!

With the new year, it is time to consider candidates for Girls' State and scholarships. Girls' State tuition has increased, but not by much. Registration has been simplified, too. I shall have more about that next time.

Thanks to all for your support and encouragement since being elected President of both Unit 171 and Western Maryland District 8. I'm still learning. I remain the only gentleman in an Auxiliary leadership position in Maryland. It is still a novelty to many, but I have been well-received everywhere. I do worry about spreading myself too thin with my Legion responsibilities as well. But I am ready for the new year!!

Will Trotter
Unit President and District 8 Commander, PDC

Legion Membership Report

Hope everyone had a Merry Christmas and is looking forward to a Happy and Healthy New Year. On July 1, 2024, National will be increasing their dues \$7 and Department \$2. At the December 11 Membership Meeting, we voted to increase our dues from \$30 to \$40. The \$3 difference will go into the Membership Account. The Post pays the 90-year-old and over members dues. As of December 8, we have 260 toward our goal of 295 renewals, which is 88% of our goal. You can send your \$30 renewal payment to P.O. Box 171, Damascus, MD 20872, or to me at: 11798 Sier Drive, Monrovia, MD 21770, or you can go on your computer to [Legion.org](https://www.legion.org) and click on "Renew Your Membership". All you need is your ID# (if you don't know it, or can't

find it, call or text me: 301-401-6479), and method of payment. Let me know if you have any questions.

Sam Baughman
Membership Chairman

The Post 171 Patriots Baseball Program

We are the Champions of the MCBA u18AA Division!!

Legion Family —

The Post 171 baseball team completed a great “fall ball” season this past fall while playing in the Montgomery County Baseball Association (MCBA). They went undefeated in the regular season (11-0) and earned the #1 seed in the division for the playoffs. They made it all the way to the final game, winning the championship game 7-2. Congrats to these young men and their coaches. While this team is very talented, I am more impressed by their character and the way they represented the Post on the field and in the dugout.

On November 19, 2023, we had our end of the year baseball banquet in which we honored the MCBA Champions and the individuals who stood out in the summer and fall seasons.



Summer Team

MVP	Connor Beall
Offense Award	Joe Stack
Defense Award	Jason Sussman
Pitching Award	Ryan Mungra

Fall Team

MVP	Colton Dewing
Coaches Award	Jheremy Reyes



Baseball banquet on November 19, 2023.

I would like to personally thank the four coaches – Tom Stack, Frank Fitzpatrick, Mark Beal, and Art Okun for coming in and coaching the team. You can tell by watching these young men play that they are not only well coached in terms of playing the game, but also in terms of sportsmanship. These fine young men make the Post proud, and it all starts with the coaches. Again, on behalf of the men and women of American Legion Post 171, thank you.

Speaking of Coaches, we are still looking for a head coach for the upcoming summer season. If anyone has any thoughts on a head coach for the summer, please let me know soonest. We would like to have a coach identified as soon possible so we can introduce him to the players

and their parents and possibly get player commitments for the summer season. I would really appreciate your assistance.

Finally, we are trying to revive the Baseball Booster Program because even though the Baseball Program receives some financial assistance from the Post, it is quite costly to run this program. So, again please consider becoming a booster for the team. There are few parents/grandparents who regularly contribute to legion baseball, and we appreciate their support.

Speaking of Coaches, we are looking for a head coach for the upcoming summer season. Coach Connor Wills has indicated he will be taking some personal time with family this summer. I want to personally thank him for his contributions to Legion Baseball over the years. If anyone has any thoughts on a head coach for the summer, please let me know soonest. We would like to have a coach identified as soon possible so we can introduce him to the players and their parents and possibly get player commitments for the summer season. I would really appreciate your assistance.

Congrats again to the MCBA Champs!

For God and Country

Fred Mitchell

Baseball Committee Chairman

2024 Oratorical Contest

The Post Oratorical contest will be held on Saturday, February 3, 2024, at the Post Home. The inclement weather date will be February 10. The contest will begin at 10 a.m., and Post doors will be secured at that time. Legionnaires who wish to volunteer to help out with the contest are asked to arrive between 8 a.m. and 9 a.m. We would like to see as many Legionnaires in attendance as possible to show support for these young scholars, so please come out and show these fine contestants the honor they so richly deserve.

The contest provides an opportunity for high school students to win scholarship money (\$1,000 for First Place, \$500 for Second Place, and \$300 for Third Place) based on their knowledge of the U.S. Constitution and to demonstrate that knowledge through a public speaking contest.

The contestants are judged by professors from Montgomery County College in accordance with rules outlined on the American Legion website. Post 171 staff will be on hand to run the contest and provide logistical support during it.

The top three finishers will receive their check immediately after the contest, and the winner will be eligible to participate in subsequent contests through the American Legion District, State, and National levels to win additional scholarship money.

Notes From the December Member Meeting

UPCOMING EVENTS

- The Post is hosting a Blood Drive with the Red Cross, on **Friday, January 5**, from 10 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. Please [make an appointment online](#) to give blood that day, and volunteer onsite if you can. See [our website](#) or contact Keith Martin for more information.
- Be sure to attend the annual Post and Unit Member Awards Event on **Saturday, January 27**. This year we'll present our annual awards and then invite the public in for hors d'oeuvres, desserts, and a big band for entertainment and dancing. The event is free for Post and Unit Members \$5 per adult 18 and over for non-members (friends, family, and the public after the awards ceremony). The agenda is:
 - **6 p.m.:** doors open to Post and Unit Members and family only
 - **6:15 p.m. – 7:15 p.m.:** presentation of annual Post and Unit 171 service awards
 - **7:30 p.m.:** doors open to the public
 - **7:30 p.m. – 9:30 p.m.:** Market Street Big Band plays
- The Post's Oratorical Contest will be held **Saturday, February 3** at 10 a.m. Inclement weather date is February 10. Arrive between 8 a.m. and 9 a.m. if you're interested in helping.

A BIG THANK YOU!

- Thank you to Hank and Carol Hartley for performing the difficult and challenging job of the maintenance on the grease trap in the Post.
- Thank you to Clint Nawara who did troubleshooting and then fixed an underground wiring issue running from the Post building to the WSSC grease trap grinder in the back field. WSSC wouldn't address the issue with their grinder because the power to it was cut so Clint had to dig to find and fix the electrical issue.
- A belated thanks to Clint also for some new and fixed electrical wiring during the summer as the boiler was being replaced. We have light in that closet now!
- Thank you to Jim Serritella and Will Trotter for presenting a short-notice Post Everlasting Ceremony for a local vet.
- Thank you to Larry Matthews, Brownie Chichester, and Bill Green for presenting a flag folding ceremony and lesson to the Kemptown church.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

- Member Larry Matthews reminded everyone that we visit the **Lorien senior and veteran living center** on the **second Wednesday of every month**, from 9:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. We have great speakers and topics lined up for January, February, and March. Come to learn something new!

- The Post 171 Baseball program is in search of new coaches. Contact Fred Mitchell or Keith Martin for more information.

See the [full minutes online](#). Minutes will be added to the website after they are finalized following each meeting.

Chaplains Corner

The events leading up to the birth of Christ were put in place by God, so the prophecies of old would be fulfilled.

From the time the census was ordered, to everyone returning to their own city to be registered, and then the birth of Jesus while Joseph & Mary were in Bethlehem, was orchestrated by God. Out of Bethlehem, a small town in the City of David, came the Messiah.



This very first Christmas, God gave the greatest gift ever. His Son! And His Son gave the gift of His life—which was why He came. Because of this, we can have relationship with God as His children. Through Jesus Christ, we are Sons and Daughters of the Most High God.

Bear in mind the 'True' Christmas story, which led to the 'True' Easter story. Let us give thanks and praise to our heavenly Father for these events, which have changed our lives forever. So whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

No matter how 'secular' the world is becoming, disregarding the truth of Christmas, let us boldly proclaim the truth about the birth of Jesus as the reason for the season. Lord, we thank you for the events that led to our Savior's birth.

Chaplain's note: The effects of the Christmas time were spread throughout the known world. Over 2000 years later, the world celebrates, in some way, the birth of Jesus. Our love of the season is shared with family, friends, and our legion family throughout the world. Our prayers also include our deceased comrades in arms. Peace be with you, and as I close each Benediction and Invocation – We Ask This in Jesus' Name. AMEN.

Jim Serritella
Chaplain

Ask the Question

Have you or a family member ever served in the military?

Suicide is a complex issue with no single cause. It is a national public health issue that affects people from all walks of life, not just veterans.

Screening for military service connection allows us to reach the military-connected community with suicide prevention resources where they work and live.

We all have a role to play in preventing suicide among service members, veterans and families in our communities. [Ask the question](#) and together we can win this fight.

How to Ease the Winter Blues

From [The American Legion](#)

What can you tell me about seasonal affective disorder? Since I retired, I feel sad and tired during the winter months.

If you feel depressed during the winter but better in spring and summer, you may have seasonal affective disorder (SAD), a seasonal depression that affects approximately 5% of Americans. In most cases, SAD is related to the decreased amount of sunlight during the winter months. Reduced sunlight can disturb natural sleep-wake cycles and other circadian rhythms that affect the body. It also causes a drop in the brain chemical serotonin – which affects mood – while increasing levels of melatonin, which can make you feel more tired and lethargic.

If you think you may have SAD, you should schedule an appointment with your health-care provider to discuss your concerns. You may also take a SAD “self-assessment” test, which is readily available online or provided by health organizations. While these tests offer some insights, they are not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice. If you find you have SAD, here are several treatment options and some non-prescription remedies that can help.

Light therapy: One possible treatment for SAD involves sitting in front of a specialized light-therapy box for 20 to 30 minutes a day within the first hour of waking up in the morning. Light therapy mimics sunlight and affects brain chemicals linked to mood.

While you can buy a light box without a prescription, it is advisable to use it under the supervision of a health-care provider and closely follow the manufacturer’s guidelines. Most health insurance plans typically do not cover the cost. Some light-therapy lamps provide 10,000 lux of illumination, stronger than typical indoor lights. These lamps also offer a diffuser screen that filters out ultraviolet rays and projects downward from the eyes. To find the most suitable light-therapy option for your needs, consult with your health-care provider for recommendations or conduct online research.

Cognitive behavioral therapy: While SAD is considered a biological issue, identifying and changing thought and behavior patterns can also contribute to symptom relief. There are therapists you can seek who specialize in cognitive behavioral therapy and have experience in treating SAD. To locate a local therapist, you can ask your health-care provider for a referral or search online for reputable therapists in your area.

Lifestyle remedies: Some other things you can do to help alleviate your SAD symptoms include making your environment sunnier and brighter. Open your blinds, sit closer to bright windows and go outside as much as you can. Even on cold or cloudy days outdoor light can help, especially if you spend some time outside within two hours of getting up in the morning. Moderate exercise such as walking, swimming, yoga and tai chi can also help alleviate SAD symptoms, as can social activities.

If you sense that your symptoms extend beyond typical SAD, consult your health-care provider to ensure it is not indicative of a more serious condition. If you or someone you know is struggling with mental health issues, do not hesitate to seek professional help or call the National Alliance on Mental Illness HelpLine at 800-950-6264.

BE THE ONE

TO **ASK** VETERANS IN YOUR LIFE HOW THEY ARE DOING.

TO **LISTEN** WHEN A VETERAN NEEDS TO TALK.

TO **REACH** OUT WHEN A VETERAN IS STRUGGLING.

Let's change the narrative. Instead of talking about the staggering number of daily suicides, **BE THE ONE** to save **ONE** veteran. We can end the stigma surrounding mental health with your help!

BE THE ONE

 AMERICAN
LEGION

The American Legion is committed to helping our suffering brother and sister veterans who are struggling with the aftermath of their time in war. Let's all do our part. [Be the One](https://www.legion.org).

Find more news, information, and resources from the American Legion at [legion.org](https://www.legion.org).



**American
Red Cross**

GIVE SOMETHING THAT

Means Something®

GIVE BLOOD

Blood Drive
American Legion Post 171

Hall
10201 Lewis Drive
Damascus, MD 20872

Friday, January 5, 2024
10:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

January is National Blood Donor Month! Sign up and donate during this critical time of the year! Register online at www.redcrossblood.org and enter Sponsor ID: "ALP171Damascus" or call 1-800-733-2767 to schedule your life-saving donation.

Eligibility concerns, please call the Red Cross at 1-866-236-3276.

Please make a POWER RED donation if you are O-, O+, A-, B- and meet the criteria. Red blood cells are the component most needed!

Bring a photo ID, eat a healthy breakfast/lunch and drink plenty of water before your donation!

Contact Keith Martin at rkmgm@verizon.net or David.Hull@redcross.org or call/text 240-676-9955 for more details!



Make a Legendary Impact! Come give Dec. 18 thru Jan. 5 for NEW long-sleeved Red Cross Tee, ltd qty!



Scan to schedule an appointment.

Schedule your blood donation appointment today!

1-800-RED CROSS | RedCrossBlood.org | Download the Blood Donor App

American Legion Post 171

Officers

Commander	Steve Monteiro	(240) 401-0370
1st Vice Cmdr.	Charles Bradsher	(301) 253-9327
2nd Vice Cmdr.	Kevin O'Neill	(301) 525-2071
Adjunct	Anita Trotter	(301) 661-6904
Finance Officer	Ray Lewandowski	(301) 775-7152
Membership	Sam Baughman*	(301) 401-6479
Historian	Sam Lehane	(407) 230-3117
Chaplain	Jim Serritella	(301) 253-3600
Sgt-at-Arms	Bill Green	(301) 253-5420
Service Officer	Keith Midberry	(240) 472-5317
Judge Advocate	Fred Mitchell*	(301) 916-8395

Executive Committee

Paula Gill	Will Cole*
Keith Martin	Mandy Buckley

* denotes Past Post Commander

Visit the [Post Officers page](#) for other available contact information.

Auxiliary, Unit 171

Officers

President	Will Trotter [†]	adjutant171@comcast.net
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*denotes Past Unit President

[†]denotes Past Post Department Commander

¹denotes Current District Commander

Visit the [Auxiliary Officers page](#) for available phone numbers.

Have feedback or an article to share? Please send it to the newsletter editor, **Mandy Buckley**, at news@legionpost171.org. Articles are due by the 20th of every even month.