

The Damascus Veteran

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

November/December 2023

From the Post Commander

Greetings to my Legion family and friends,

Let me begin by wishing everyone a Happy Thanksgiving and a blessed Christmas season. This is especially true in these troubled times. The Post 171 Business Model is complex, but our priorities continue to fall into three categories: Membership, Veteran Affairs, and Community Outreach.

Membership. Our Legion Year 2023 – 2024 goal is 295. As of October 20, Sam Baughman reported membership at 229 (75.9% of our goal of 295). This places us in 2nd place in District 8 and 12th in the State. Once again, hats off to Sam Baughman for his tireless efforts as Membership Chair. 1st Vice Commander Charles Bradsher and I continue to develop a strategic plan – Recruit, Retain, and Revitalize. We not only need more members, but also younger Veterans. Sam can't do it alone. We will need everyone's support.

- **Be the One.** 'Be the One' is an American Legion national program. The purpose is to destigmatize asking for mental health support, provide peer-to-peer support and resources, and educate everyone on how they can Be the One. It is estimated that between 17 and 22 veterans or servicemembers take their lives each day. Be the one to save one veteran. Learn how to help a veteran in crisis. [Be the One.](#)
- **Buddy Check.** We will continue our Buddy Check system by contacting all our members in the coming weeks and months. The Post 171 Membership Roster is being parsed amongst volunteers. At a minimum, volunteers will contact their assigned 'buddies' and report their status.

Veteran Affairs

- **Lorien Veterans.** Lorien - Mt. Airy is more than an assisted living, skilled nursing, and rehabilitation community. It is a home for 15 of our fellow veterans. Several years ago, an alliance was formed between Lorien and our departed PPC George Bolling. The monthly meet and greet sessions were interrupted by the pandemic. Through the efforts of Larry Matthews, this program has been reinstated. We meet on the 2nd Wednesday of every month at 9:30 a.m. at Lorien, 713 Midway Ave, Mt. Airy, MD. Some of the faces of our fellow veterans appear on the next page.

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



Damascus American Legion Post 171
10201 Lewis Drive
Damascus, MD 20872
(301) 253-0769
legionpost171.org



Each month, volunteers from our Post make presentations on their military experiences. This past month Larry Matthews gave a talk on the Army security agency during his Vietnam experience. Sam Lehain has volunteered to make a presentation in November on the U.S. Marine Corps. We are planning on having Christmas Carols for the December monthly meeting. Volunteers wishing to make presentations should contact Larry Matthews. Please come out and join us we would love to have you join us in this most worthwhile program.

Community Outreach

- **Post 171 Veterans Day Observance.** The Post will honor our Nation’s veterans on *Friday, November 10th*. Our traditional program will begin at 10:55 a.m. in the Post Main Hall. Musical selections will be provided by the Damascus High School Chorus. Our guest speaker is CAPTAIN Carlos Williams. Dr. Williams is currently serving as Director of the National Intrepid Center of Excellence at Walter Reed National Medical Center in Bethesda. The Veterans Day Program is being finalized and will be available online and at the door. Unit 171 will provide refreshments.

Past Department Commander Will Trotter has coordinated the elementary school observances shown below. Post members will speak at each of these schools, and we urge everyone to attend and show their support.

Friday, November 10

<p>Rockwell Elementary School 24555 Cutsail Drive, Damascus Appreciation Breakfast: 8:30 a.m. Program: 9:10 a.m.</p>	<p>Damascus Elementary School 10201 Bethesda Church Road, Damascus Program: 9:45 a.m.</p>
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Monday, November 13

<p>Clearspring Elementary School 9930 Moyer Road, Damascus Program: 9:30 a.m.</p>	<p>Gibbs Elementary School 12615 Royal Crown Drive, Germantown Program: 10:15 a.m.</p>
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- **Blood Drives.** The last blood drive we hosted on July 7th contributed 35 pints of whole blood and 7 pints of red blood cells to the American Red Cross. This had the potential of saving 112 lives saved. We will host blood drives at the Post on November 3 and January 5,

2024. Please come out and volunteer to give blood to this critical program. Let's beat our previous record!

- **Baseball/Softball.** Fred Mitchell, Keith Martin, and the coaches have been working hard for another fall season of Legion Baseball. Anita Trotter is the point of contact for Girls' fast pitch softball, and has been coordinating its Post formation.
- **Bingo.** Join us for Bingo on Thursdays. Doors open at 5 p.m. and games begin at 7 p.m.
- **Pancake Breakfasts.** Join us for our traditional pancake breakfast, which begins again on the second Saturday of the month. Thanks to our award-winning kitchen staff: Fred Mitchell, Bill Green, and Bill Dunn. Sam Baughman reminds us that Pancake Breakfast is from 7:30 to 9:30 a.m. Come out and enjoy the camaraderie of other members and their guests. Donation only, so you can't beat the price. Menu: Pancakes, French Toast, eggs, coffee, toast, sausage gravy, biscuits, sausage patties, fruit cup, juice and milk.
- **Know Your Legion.** Once again, I want to thank Sam Lehane, Will Cole, Larry Matthews, Dave Clemmer, Kris Bradsher, Sandy Seipp, Larry Ellers, and others – for a successful exhibit at the Damascus Heritage Society Museum. The historical artifacts have been returned to our newly renovated meeting room.

For God and Country

Steve Monteiro
Post Commander

From the Auxiliary Unit President

The activity I have enjoyed the most while being a Department American Legion and Auxiliary Officer is the opportunity to visit posts and units within the State of Maryland and meeting their members and families. This includes casual visits as well as more formal settings.

Recently, I had the privilege of attending the annual POW/MIA recognition ceremony at Hampstead Post 200. I had been told to expect something really special, and I was not disappointed. This year's observance was especially moving as the guest speaker shared the story of her uncle's remains being positively identified after being MIA for over 70 years.

Sgt 1st Class James Allen Coleman was both a WWII and Korea veteran. He was declared MIA during combat in Korea. His remains had been placed in a mass grave and unidentified until recent forensic efforts were able to identify him and return the remains for proper burial. There wasn't a dry eye in the house that evening at Hampstead.

Over the last several years, I had the honor of getting to know National Presidents Nicole Clapp and Kathy Daudistel during their Maryland visits. Two very delightful young ladies. Being originally in Southern Maryland, I already knew Linda Newsome and Sandi Dutton. I consider them to be dear friends.

I also had the privilege of knowing, albeit for a short time, WMD President Georgia Myers, my predecessor as District President (and mother of Department Adjutant Russell Myers).

She passed from this life after a battle with cancer on October 17. She would have been 71 years old on October 19. Since I said I would accept the position of District 8 President, we got to know each other. She was my mentor in starting my Auxiliary journey. She will be greatly missed and lovingly remembered.

Diane Lowe of Mt. Airy Unit 191 joined us for our October Unit Meeting with information regarding the work the Auxiliary in the Western Maryland Region does for the Martinsburg VA Hospital. Diane is our District 8 Liaison. I personally was not aware of the magnitude of work that goes on there and the help we provide. Briefly, Martinsburg provides a fully staffed VA Hospital with 67 beds. Domiciliary with 265 beds, providing 4 programs (PTSD, Homeless, Substance Abuse, and Health Maintenance). A Community Living Center with 141 beds, Hospice and Palliative care, Dementia, Rehabilitation, and Long-Term Care. Adjacent to the hospital campus is The WestMar House, which provides a short-term (10-day maximum) means of housing for spouses and significant others of critically ill patients who need to stay at the medical center due to travel distances and financial needs. The American Legion family is responsible for this facility. We plan to get more involved at Martinsburg in the coming year.

For Now: Many Blessings to you and your families this holiday season!

Will Trotter
Unit President, PDC

Legion Membership Report

Our goal this Legion year is 295 members who have renewed their 2024 memberships. As of October 20, we have 224 renewals, which is 75.9% 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

A Successful "Fall Ball" Season (Thus Far!)

Legion Family —

The team is currently playing in the Montgomery County Baseball Association (MCBA) and earned the #1 seed in the playoffs by posting an 11-0 record (we had four games cancelled because of rain). The playoffs start on Saturday, October 21, 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 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.

Mark your calendars for some upcoming events:

1. On **November 7, 2023**, we will be having a presentation by Mr. Bob O'Connor who will be presenting information about collegiate baseball scholarships, etc. The presentation will begin at 7 p.m. Hope to see you there.
2. Baseball Banquet on **November 19** starting at 6 p.m. We are having it earlier this year in the hopes of getting the maximum people to attend as many travel out of town during the holiday season. Hope to see you there as well.

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.

Here is wishing the team good luck in the MCBA playoffs!

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 October Member Meeting

UPCOMING EVENTS

- The Post is hosting a Blood Drive with the Red Cross, on **Friday, November 3**, from 10 a.m. - 3 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.
- The Post will hold our annual Veteran's Day Ceremony on **Friday, November 10** and **Monday, November 13**. Please attend the school ceremonies that you can – the kids enjoy seeing the veterans! Contact school liaison Will Trotter for more information. This year we are supporting events at:
 - Rockwell Elementary School at 8:30 a.m. then Damascus ES at 9:45 a.m. on Friday, November 10.
 - And then the **Post event on Friday**. The choir/band starts at 10:30 a.m. and the ceremony at 10:55 a.m.
 - Clearspring ES 9:30 a.m. then Gibbs ES 10:15 a.m. on Monday, November 13.
- There will be a Veterans services fair at Post 41 in Silver Spring. This is Saturday, November 18 from 1 - 4 p.m. Contact our Service Officer Keith Midberry for more information.

A BIG THANK YOU!

- A big thank you for a job well done to Sam LeHane. Sam's Know Your Legion display at the Damascus Historical Society site was a big success. Thanks also to all the other volunteers that made this happen, including Sandy Seipp who presented a display for the Legion Auxiliary in conjunction with the Post display.
- Thanks to Dave Clemmer, who ordered and obtained tempered glass tops for two of the display cases. One was broken in transit and the other did not fit the case correctly. NOTE: we have some extra glass shelves and a couple of large glass panes without a purpose. If you want any glass, please see the Adjutant. Dave also completed and installed the repainted valance in the Club Room.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

- Member Larry Matthews is spear-heading the Post return to supporting **Lorien senior and veteran living**. Our Post was quite active with this service pre-COVID, and we want to get back to this important community support. The timing of the visits it to be determined but it may be the second Wednesday of every month, from 9 - 10 a.m. The first visit occurred on October 11. Larry gave a great presentation to eight Lorien residents and Post attendees got to talk to them about their service and experiences.
- Member Ryan Arnett proposed an idea to increase membership engagement, communications, and cohesion in the Post membership by implementing Platoon and Squadron structure for Post support. Each Squadron would contain 5-10 members and would target Post needs, as a group, when called upon. Volunteers for the **Platoon leader and Squadron leaders** are needed.
- **Bingo stills needs volunteers** to cook, set up, and serve at the snack bar, as well as various other help. The bingo on October 12 was extremely short handed as some of our regulars who give time weekly were out for the day. Please consider working just 2 days a month, from about 4 - 6 p.m. setup or 6 - 8:30 p.m. serving patrons, to fill this need. If cooking or prep is your thing, you can make a big pot of soup or some other delectable. You can drop it off at the Post or maybe someone will come pick it up.

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

Damascus Fair Poster Contest

The Post's support of community events is just one of the many ways we give back to the community. We proudly support the poster contest at the Damascus Fair and applaud all the patriotic artists.



Upcoming Community and Veteran Events

Donating blood is as easy as pie with the American Red Cross! Save a life at the **blood drive at the Post** Friday, November 3. See [the flyer on page 10](#) for more information and to sign up.

Post 41 is hosting a **Veterans and Family VA Benefits Fair** Saturday, November 18 from noon until 3:30 p.m. Admission is **FREE!** See [the flyer on page 11](#) for more information and to RSVP.

Chaplains Corner

An Irish Blessing for Halloween

At all Hallow's Tide, may God Keep you safe
From goblins and spooks and Black-hearted Strangers,
From harm of the water and Hurt of the fire,
From thorns of the brambles, From all other dangers,
From the Will O' The Wisp Haunting the mire;
From Stumbles and Tumbles And tricksters to vex you,
May God in His mercy This week protect you.



God of Laughter and Joy

We turn to you in the way of our ancient ancestors, grateful for the abundance of food and festivity that surrounds us at this time of year.

Keep our Legion Families safe as they embark on their Halloween revels. Light their way through the dark night and enfold them in love. May the real treat in their lives be grace which multiplies in depth and breath as they grow older. We pray this with all the saints in heaven.
AMEN

Jim Serritella
Chaplain

VA Encouraging Veterans to Get Lung Cancer Screenings

From [The American Legion](#)

November is Lung Cancer Awareness Month, and included in that is National Lung Cancer Screening Day on November 11. Ahead of that, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs is urging veterans to get screened for what is the No. 1 cancer killer among veterans – and veterans are at twice the risk as non-veterans of developing lung cancer.

Veterans enrolled in the VA health-care system may qualify for lung cancer screening based on the following criteria:

- Are 50-80 years old, AND
- Smoke cigarettes now or quit within the past 15 years, AND
- Smoked cigarettes for at least 20 pack-years (a pack a day for 20 years or two packs a day for 10 years).

Veterans interested in getting a lung cancer screening should reach out to their local VA medical facility to see if any special screening events are scheduled. Find a [VA facility here](#).

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).



DONATING BLOOD IS AS EASY AS PIE



American
Red Cross

Blood Drive **American Legion Post 171**

10201 Lewis Drive
Damascus, MD 20872

Friday, November 3, 2023
10:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Register online at www.redcrossblood.org and enter Sponsor Code: "ALP171Damascus" or call the Red Cross at 1-800-733-2767 to schedule your life-saving donation!

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

Bring a friend to donate with you!

Eligibility concerns, please call 1-866-236-3276.

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

Come give Oct. 21 thru Nov. 9 and get a \$10 gift card by email. PLUS, get a chance to win a \$5,000 prize to treat yourself! You could be one of three lucky winners (one a week). Terms apply: rcblood.org/lunch



Scan to schedule
an appointment.

1-800-RED CROSS | 1-800-733-2767 | RedCrossBlood.org | Download the Blood Donor App

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**BE THE
ONE**

Veterans & Families

What: VA Benefits Fair

When: Saturday, November 18, 2023

Time: 12:00 PM to 3:30 PM

**American Legion Post 41
Cissel-Saxon
905 Sligo Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20910
Enter at 8110 Fenton Street**

Learn About VA, Plus State and Local Services:

- ✓ Filing, updating, and appealing your VA disability claim.
- ✓ VA's New "PACT Act" VA benefits.
- ✓ Enrolling for VA healthcare.
- ✓ VA benefits for spouses and children of Veterans.
- ✓ Maryland and Montgomery County services.
- ✓ How to obtain your DD214 and military records.
- ✓ Burial benefits.
- ✓ Hiring preferences for Veterans and spouses.
- ✓ Where and how to apply for financial and housing assistance.
- ✓ Free admission. Free lunch. Spouses and families welcome.

RSVP by Monday, November 14, 2023

RSVP your name to: VAbenefits41@gmail.com

Contact: Paul Sullivan, Legion Post 41 Service Officer

Questions? Call 202-491-6953 or 703-307-0074

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) 980-4500
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
Vice President	Marianne DiSomma*	marianne62@msn.com
Secretary	Cheryl Minekime	Ca.minekime@gmail.com
Treasurer	Patricia Busche	buschep@msn.com
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Historian	Sandy Seipp*	idahosss@aol.com
Sgt-At-Arms	Virginia Myers	pappydee@verizon.net

* denotes Past Unit President

⁺ denotes Past Post Department 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.