

NATIONAL ADJUTANT'S MESSAGE

Help get a designated National Buddy Check Week

The Legion-supported STRONG Veterans Act of 2022 supports mental health care and Buddy Checks.

By Daniel S. Wheeler

The Support the Resiliency of Our Nation's Great (STRONG) Veterans Act of 2022 is legislation that The American Legion strongly endorses because it calls on the Department of Veterans Affairs to designate a "National Buddy Check Week." This is modeled after The American Legion's successful Buddy Check program, which nearly 4,000 local posts a year have used to help veterans in need since 2019. Checking on veterans in your community, whether their membership is paid up, expired or they're a potential new member, allows The American Legion to reach out to ensure basic needs are met.

In late August, members of American Legion Post 248 in Blue Ridge, Ga., conducted Buddy Checks on its 122-member roster through multiple mailed letters and phone calls. It was a way to verify accuracy of its membership roster and to check in on the well being of its members.

The post first mailed a letter to those on the roster. The letter, created by Post 248's new Senior Vice Commander, James C. "Jim" Callender, asked if the veteran was well, if they needed anything, and then it encouraged their participation at the post with programs. The response contact was to the post adjutant to "keep the information flowing in the proper channel," Callender said.

Several letters were returned, some stating that the veteran was deceased or no longer lived at that address. This helped with verifying the membership roster, bringing the active membership list to about 85 members.

After the initial letter, phone calls were made by Callender, Post Adjutant Chris McKee, Historian Howard "Catfish" Adkins, and post member Ronnie Rabun. The Legionnaires met at the post on Aug. 31, divided up the membership roster, and started making calls with a written script to help guide the



Photo courtesy Glenn Harbison, *The News Observer*

conversations. Callender reviewed The American Legion's Buddy Check Toolkit, legion.org/buddycheck, to help create the script.

"I asked the guys to read over the script before they made the first phone call to give them an idea of how the conversation should be structured," Callender said. "Who you are, why you're calling, that you're calling to check on them and thank them for their service.

"Basically, you just have a conversation. I can tell you that the vast majority of the people that we talked to, the conversation was very positive. They were glad that we called."

The Legionnaires were able to converse with about 50 members, including two members who are homebound. Those members said they didn't need help now, but "we told them if you do need assistance from us, that you can reach out to us," Callender said. "These members were passed on to our post service officer so he is aware as well." Another 18 voicemails were left, and the team identified members with incorrect or inoperative phone numbers, or no phone number listed on the roster.

A follow-up letter was mailed to those not reached by phone. It asked the member to contact the post adjutant and report that they are OK. Callender said calls are now coming in from that letter. "You need to use multiple means of communication with your membership," Callender said. "The post intends to conduct Buddy Checks once each quarter. And hopefully through this we will get more members to actively participate so that we can execute more Legion programs."

Let's get the STRONG Veterans Act of 2022 passed so more veterans, like those of Post 248, can be cared for. Support the STRONG Veterans Act at

votervoice.net/AmericanLegion/Campaigns.

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Dispatch

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From *Road map to MyLegion* on Page 1

Customer Service at 800-433-3318.

In My Groups, post and squadron adjutants have the ability to: export and print electronic membership roster; email members; view and edit member information; and access membership functions such as view members, see members renewed online, do a global member lookup, access reports and labels, process membership and manage Consolidated Post Reports and Consolidated Squadron Report.

See known issues

If you want to see if National Headquarters knows that there is an issue with MyLegion, visit the frequently updated Known Issues section under

mylegion.org/PersonifyEbusiness/Resources/Help.

Receive assistance:

Send an email to mylegion@legion.org for assistance.

YOUTH COMIC BOOK

Recognize, prevent and stop bullying

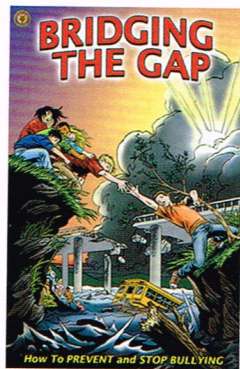
October is National Bully Prevention Month. And The American Legion has an educational comic book, "Bridging the Gap," to help middle school age children recognize, prevent and stop bullying.

"Bridging the Gap" features six main characters and includes two stories that are interwoven throughout the book. One story focuses on physical bullying and the other on cyberbullying.

Each story focuses on how to:

- Define and recognize bullying behavior
- Understand and protect the rights of others
- Prevent and stop bullying of yourself
- Prevent and stop bullying of others
- Stop cyberbullying

The comic book can be purchased through Emblem Sales, emblem.legion.org, Item No. 755.305. Cost is 75 cents apiece, or 59 cents apiece for the purchase of 100 or more.



MEMBERSHIP

Enhanced Digital Dispatch to replace printed version in '23

Effective January 2023, The American Legion Dispatch goes to a digital-only format, reaching more officers and leaders of the organization more frequently with a greater portfolio of resources. The last printed version will be the December 2022 issue.

The Digital Dispatch currently has more than 30,000 subscribers and growing. Enhancements to the monthly e-newsletter and a more robust web platform is now in production to make the Digital Dispatch a more valuable tool for post, district and department leadership.

The digital format also allows Legionnaires at every level of the organization to receive information on such topics as membership recruitment and retention, program delivery and guidance for officers at every level. The printed Dispatch has been mailed only to post adjutants, department leadership and district commanders. The printed publication has about half the circulation of the digital version. The ability to go fully digital expands the audience reach to ensure that more officers – such as committee chairpersons and program managers – have access to information they need. It also offers the ability to deliver important information in a more timely manner.

An emailed Digital Dispatch is now sent monthly to subscribers, featuring a roundup of top headlines with clickable links to the stories that are housed on the Dispatch landing page, legion.org/dispatch. This will be the standard format moving forward with enhanced features now in development. The Digital Dispatch is free of charge for anyone who registers to receive it.

Don't miss out on receiving the Digital Dispatch now and in the future. Subscribe at legion.org/newsletters. You will be directed to sign in to your MyLegion.org account. Then you will opt in to receive the Digital Dispatch.