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# Hayes-Velhage Post 96 The American Legion

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## Newsletter

### ☆☆ SPRING 2011 ☆☆

- Wednesday, Feb. 24, '11 – 7:30 p.m. Firefighter of the Year Award
- Wednesday, March 9, '11 – 7:30 p.m. Monthly Post Meeting
- Thurs., March 17, '11 – 12:00 to 8:00 p.m. St. Pat's Day Special
- Wednesday, Apr. 13, '11 – 7:30 p.m. Monthly Post Meeting  
– Nomination of Officers –
- Wednesday, May 11, '11 – 7:30 p.m. Annual Post Meeting  
– Annual Meeting and Election of Officers –
- Monday, May 30, '11 – 10:00 a.m. Memorial Day Parade  
—*There are no Post meetings in June, July and August*—

#### COMMANDER'S MESSAGE

My fellow Legionnaires, Auxiliary and SAL Members,

It has been a challenging year and a most rewarding one for me to serve as Commander of the premier American Legion post in Connecticut. Thank you for this honor. I had great expectations when I took office. However, in hindsight, I perhaps set my goals too high, as I must pass onto my successor some unfinished tasks of involving our membership to a greater extent in our programs.

I could not have done this job with out the help and assistance of my officers, trustees, committee chairs and members of our American Legion family who answered my call for help. I thank you all from the bottom of my heart for your support and cooperation.

Respectfully yours in comradeship of The American Legion,

Andrew J. Battistone, Commander

★★★★ THE FOUR PILLARS OF THE AMERICAN LEGION ★★★★★

A Strong National Security ★ Taking Care of Veterans ★ Mentoring Youth ★ Promoting Patriotism and Honor

### MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF AUXILIARY UNIT 96

It's not too late to send your dues in. The next meeting of Auxiliary Unit 96 is March 12 at 12:00 p.m. at the Post. We need to make plans to finish up our year. Poppy donations are still coming in. THANK YOU.

Jeanne Berry, Unit President, Phone 203-715-2336 - [jeanneberry@comcast.net](mailto:jeanneberry@comcast.net).

### SUICIDE TAKES 18 VETERANS' LIVES A DAY!

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta reports 30,000 to 32,000 suicides each year in the United States. The VA Health Care System estimates that 20% of U.S. suicides each year take veterans. Based on these figures, 18 veterans commit suicide each day. This is a national tragedy! Since the ballooning rate of suicides was recognized, the VA established a Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 in 2007. During the first year, the hotline received 10,000 calls. In 2008, the number increased to 70,000 and the following year 120,000 calls were taken by the hotline. In the first six months of 2010, the hotline received 100,000 calls. In 2009, the VA added an online "chat" option that allows veterans and their loved ones to consult anonymously with a trained counselor. To identify those at risk, all of the VA's 135 medical centers have suicide prevention coordinators, and the VA continues to improve screenings for suicide, develop education materials about suicide prevention for families and increase training for VA staff about the warning signs of suicide. Suicide prediction and reduction are pressing issues for the VA as many veterans have significant risk factors, such as mood disorders, disabling chronic medical illness, traumatic brain injury, PTSD and the skill in using firearms. Clearly a need exists for a massive public campaign to educate all Americans about the serious nature of depression, and to urge those clinically depressed to seek medical attention. For veterans, this is only a phone call away.

### ARE VETERANS PARTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE COUNTRY'S FISCAL MESS?

The former three-term U.S. Sen. Alan Simpson of Wyoming, co-chair of the presidential commission on fiscal responsibility and reform thinks so! He caused a furor in the veteran community last year when he suggested that benefits provided to disabled military veterans are partly responsible for the nation's financial crisis. The former senator said: "The irony [is] that the veterans who saved this country are now, in a way, not helping us to save the country in this fiscal mess." If this is a precursor of what the future holds for veterans, the national leaders of the American Legion will have their work cut out for them.

### 2011 MEMORIAL DAY PARADE DEDICATED TO WORLD WAR II VETERANS

The West Hartford Veterans Affairs Commission is dedicating the 2011 West Hartford Memorial Day Parade to World War II Veterans. The parade steps off at 10:00 a.m. sharp on Monday, May 30th from the corner of Four Mile Road and Farmington Avenue. We are hoping to get many WWII veterans participating in the parade, either marching or riding as passengers in antique cars. Veterans who want to ride in an antique car in the parade should send an email to [alpost96@comcast.net](mailto:alpost96@comcast.net) or phone the legion office, 860-233-9029, between 9:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m., Mondays through Fridays.

### FELIX T. WNEK, R.I.P.

It is with deep sadness that we inform you of the passing on January 7th of Felix Wnek, a long time member and retiree of Post 96. He served the Post for over 25 years as our night bartender. A quiet and reserved gentleman, few members knew of his heroic record as a Marine Corps veteran of Iwo Jima. He was the epitome of Tom Brokaw's "Greatest Generation." Recent comments by some of our old timers related that Felix was recruited and hired by Past Post Commander Bill Tully. Bill made many great contributions to the Post and the hiring of Felix was one of these great accomplishments.

## FIVE MYTHS ABOUT VA HEALTH CARE

*From the USS Whitfield County Assoc. Newsletter.*

Rumor mills are permanent fixtures around water coolers in offices and shops and wherever people congregate. Most of the time they're pretty innocuous. But myths and rumors that deal with health – in this case veterans health care are a serious matter that can prevent qualified veterans from seeking the care they both need and deserve. The myths won't die unless they are addressed publicly and clearly, so we present you with the most common we hear, and the straightforward answers they need.

*Myth #1: I wasn't injured in the service, so I'm not eligible for VA health care.*

**Status: False.** One of the most common myths revolves around eligibility for health care at VA. Many think that you have to first establish a disability rating before you can start to make appointments, see doctors and receive medication. That is not the case. If you served in the military, even during peacetime, and were honorably discharged, you likely qualify for VA care. The best way to find out if you qualify is to submit an application for health benefits. You can fill one out online or at Newington VA Medical Center.

*Myth #2: I can only receive care for service-connected injuries.*

**Status: False.** You can receive care for any ailment, service connected or not, but the difference is paying for medication relating to treatment. For example, if a veteran has a service connection because of a bad knee, any treatment and medication for the knee is free of charge. However, if the same vet goes into surgery to remove an appendix and it's not service connected, he may be subject to a co-pay depending on the amount of his disability rating. Familiarize yourself with co-pay guidelines and rates.

*Myth #3: I make too much money to qualify for VA health care.*

**Status: It depends.** If you do not have a service-connected disability, you must verify your income with the VA to see if you qualify for free medication and travel benefits. If you generate too much income (a maximum income level set every year by Congress), you may have to pick up the tab for traveling and receive your medication using co-pay. Recently, the rules have changed for Priority 8 veterans who had income that exceeded the threshold.

*Myth #4: I can't use VA health care if I have private health insurance.*

**Status: False.** From VA's Health Eligibility Center Director Tony Guagliardo: "We strongly encourage veterans to receive all their health care through VA. However, if you choose to receive treatment from private doctors, the VA will work with them to meet your health care needs and coordinate effective treatment. We call this Co-managed Care or Dual Care – which means that your VA and private doctors will work together to provide safe, appropriate, and ethical medical care."

*Myth #5: If I'm a 100 percent disabled, that means I'm permanently disabled.*

**Status: False.** You could have a 100 percent disability rating as a temporary status while you undergo surgery, and have it reduced to its previous rating after you heal. A 100 percent disability rating doesn't necessarily stay with you.

We hope that this information sheds a little light on the sometimes-confusing realm of VA medical care.

## NUMBER OF VETERANS IN CONGRESS IS SHRINKING

The 112th Congress which took office in January has 87 veterans, down from 94 veterans at the start of the 111th Congress. In the new Senate, there are 25 veterans – the same number as were in the 111th Congress.