



THE AMERICAN LEGION



Harry White Wilmer Post 82

6630 Crain Highway, PO Box 441, La Plata, MD 20646

January 2026

www.Alpost82.org

301-934-8221

Commander's Corner

Commander's Message:

By John Flatley, Commander, Post 82

Happy New Year!

I hope you had a wonderful holiday season with your friends and family. Michelle and I spent Christmas with our kids and our 3-month-old twin granddaughters at our son and daughter-in-law's home in Virginia Beach. We truly cherished that time together, taking turns with the babies and enjoying a few much-needed days of downtime.

Point of Sale System Upgrade

In December, Post 82 upgraded from traditional cash registers to a comprehensive point-of-sale system in both the Lounge and the Hall Bar. In addition to improved administrative reporting, we can now run tabs and accept credit card payments for purchases. I am very thankful for the hard work Shannon and Chuck put into moving us forward on this project. Please be patient as our staff becomes familiar with the system and we work through any early bugs.

Security System Upgrade

At our December membership meeting, we approved an upgrade to our security system. This includes new and additional cameras, updated door sensors, and the addition of motion and smoke detectors. The work is scheduled for early January. These upgrades will provide better overall coverage for both break-in and fire protection while also reducing our monthly monitoring costs.

What's Going on at the Post?

Friday, Jan 2 Steamed Shrimp Dinner

Members & Guests 5:00 – 6:30 PM

Volunteer Sign Up - <https://bit.ly/3MlovZc>

Friday, Jan 9 Banquet Hall Paint Preparation

Saturday, Jan 10 Paint Hall Project 0800 AM

Friday, Jan 16 S.A.L. Baby Back Rib Dinner

5 – 6:30 PM

Friday, Jan 30 ALRiders Spaghetti Dinner

5 – 7:00 PM

Saturday, Jan 31- Wreaths Across America

Clean-up @ 1000

EVERY WEDNESDAY S.A.L. Queen of Hearts

Drawing in the Lounge at 6:45 PM

EVERY THURSDAY Auxiliary BINGO

Doors open at 4:00 PM

Looking Ahead

As we head into another New Year, I'm excited about what's ahead for our Post. I'll leave room for others to share updates on the work they're doing and encourage you to read all the articles in this edition. I've had several recent conversations where folks mentioned missing information from this newsletter and followed-up with, "Oh, I don't read the whole thing." As the saying goes, "You can't win if you don't play." Well—you can't be in the know if you don't read the whole thing.

Sons of the American Legion (S.A.L.) Leadership Update

Dave Tatman has informed me that he will be stepping down as Commander of Squadron 82 at the end of his term. Dave isn't going anywhere and plans to continue serving on the leadership team. However, he believes it's time for another generation to step forward and lead Maryland's number one Squadron into the future.

S.A.L. leadership elections will be held in May. If you are a member, please consider stepping up. Dave is happy to talk with anyone interested—email him or catch him at the Post.

Department Commander Visit

Our Department Commander, **Nikki Randolph**, along with Senior Vice Commander **Eric Warthen**, will visit Post 82 on **Tuesday, January 13**. Please plan to attend our membership meeting at **6:00 PM** to meet the Commander. I'm sure she'll ask if anyone has questions—so come prepared.

2025–26 Goals Update

- **Increase retention from 91% to 95%**

We are moving in the right direction. See Jamie's Membership Report for details.

- **Grow membership from 795 to 835**

Thanks to you and the activities we're involved in, new members are joining almost weekly. People want to be part of a winning organization—and you're all showcasing one worth joining. Both new members and transfers are strong. See Jamie's report for details.

- **Legion Basic Training: 50 Legionnaires**

I'm surprised that only one member has completed this training so far. I strongly encourage both new and tenured members to take time this winter to complete it. You'll gain a better understanding of why the American Legion exists and how each of us can play a role in its future. Will you take the step to learn more about *your Legion*?

register.legion.org/alei/basic-training

- **Be The One Training: 40 Post 82 Family Members**

Five members have completed this 60-minute Zoom training. It equips you to help a

friend, co-worker, or family member who may be contemplating suicide using a simple series of questions. It's quick, easy, and incredibly valuable.

Please consider registering for a session. Let me know when you complete it, and I'll present you with a training certificate, coin, and a *Be The One* decal for your vehicle window.

Volunteer Opportunities

- **Boys State (2026)**

Registration is now open for Boys State. Participant fees are covered by our Post. Please help spread the word.

<https://www.mdlegion.org/boysstate>

For more information, contact Adjutant Chris Zabriskie at zabriskiect@gmail.com.

- **Membership Team.**

Our retention and recruitment team is up and running, currently focused on contacting members who haven't renewed yet. Plans are underway for a family event and other activities to add value to our members.

Jamie says there's always room for more on his team—email him at 82postlaplata@gmail.com if you'd like to help.

- **Oratorical Contest.**

I am excited to see Post 82 hosting a local competition. See Chris' article below for more details as to how you can help.

- **Calling All Painters**

The Hall needs some touch-up work. We currently have a team of four, but there's always room for more help. If you enjoy painting or have some skills to share, please let me know.

- Prep work: Friday evening, January 9
- Painting: Saturday, January 10, starting at 0800

Thank you again for the privilege of serving as your Commander this year. Post 82 has a proud legacy and a bright future—we are truly *better together*.

Ready to Serve.



johnflatleyjr@gmail.com

301.848.7664

1st Vice Commander's Corner

Hello, my fellow legionnaires!

Hope this newsletter finds you well and you had a wonderful Christmas and New Year's celebration with family and friends.

Our current membership status is 658 members renewed for an 81% membership rate, thank you to all that have renewed. For those that still have a 2025 membership card I am asking for your assistance to renew as soon as possible to help us reach our 100% goal with 95% renewal rate. We are currently sitting in second place in the Department for our category, please help us take back our 1st Place position by renewing now.

With your help we can easily reach our goals. You can renew online at www.mylegion.org or you can stop by Post 82 and drop off your renewal fee of \$45. We encourage you to complete this as soon as possible to keep your membership in good standing and maintain your active years of membership. You can also mail in your renewal to Post 82 PO Box 441, 6330 N. Crain Hwy, La Plata MD 20646.

We are also completing a Buddy Check on our members, if there is anything you need, please always remember your American Legion Family is here to help.

I would also like to solicit ideas for membership appreciation. If you have something you would like to share with our membership committee, a function or get together you would like to see happen, something more we can do in the lounge or a family event, please send that to me via my contact information below. Also, if you would like to join our membership committee we would love to have you on the team.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to call me and leave a message. I look forward to seeing you at our next dinner or function. If you have any changes or updates to

your address, phone, email or if you need assistance in renewing, please let us know.

Thank you,

Your 1st Vice Commander
Jamie Zayas -- Always Serving
82postlaplata@gmail.com
301-751-2822

Adjutant's Corner

Post 82 decided to revive the Americanism Committee. As Adjutant, I'd been asked to manage the Post's Oratorical Contest and our effort to support **Boys State**. These activities are part of the Americanism Committee at many Legion Posts. Our Post Constitution allowed us to have a standing Americanism Committee.



I'm looking for volunteers to be on the Americanism Committee. I welcome members of the Sons, Auxiliary, and Riders as well, so we can more effectively and coherently accomplish our tasks.

Coming up in February is the Oratorical Contest. This is an opportunity for students in grades 9-12 to deliver a speech on the US Constitution. Serendipitously, the Black Box Theater is hosting a play entitled, **What the Constitution Means to Me**, which is based on the real-life experience of a Legion Oratorical Contest contestant. See a separate article for a theatre outing on opening night.

Boy's State is another great program of the American Legion, as is **Girls State**, which is a program of the American Legion Auxiliary.

Both are now accepting nominations/applicants. If you know a student who is in the 11th grade and interested in learning more about civics and American government, and developing leadership skills, check out: <https://mdboysgirlsstate.org/>. For the parents it's a free/low-cost summer camp. For the student it's an experience of a lifetime and an opportunity to distinguish oneself on college scholarship and admission applications.

There is a lot of potential to take support of Americanism and American values in other directions. I'm happy to talk with interested members of the Legion, Sons, Auxiliary, and Riders. Some other things that might fall under this committee would be celebration of our patriotic holidays, education of US flag etiquette, promotion of voter registration and education, and more.

Theatre Outing – Friday, January 16th

I'd like to invite fellow Legionnaires, members of the Auxiliary, Sons and Riders to attend the opening night performance of **What the Constitution Means to Me** on Friday, January



16th. We can gather for dinner at the Post (Sons are hosting Baby Back Rib Dinner) and then travel to the Indian Head Black Box theater for the 8 pm show.

This play is a Tony-nominated and Pulitzer Prize finalist play by Heidi Schreck that uses her own experience

winning an American Legion oratorical contest as a teenager to explore the U.S. Constitution's impact on four generations of women in her family.

Tickets are \$15, and reservations are not required.

Post Adjutant
Chris Zabriskie
zabriskiect@gmail.com
240-320-6694



Chaplain's Corner

It's probably a bit of a challenge to count one's blessings of this past year, but giving some time to thought, we should be able to come up with a surplus of them. How about the kids' performance in school? The blessings enjoyed in your marriage, good health enjoyed, your different sports teams' win/loss ratio? Even if these were additional sore spots in your past year, there is the new year coming with its blessings. The challenge is in recognizing them for what they are and taking the time to contemplate them as they are received.

Another common challenge is to avoid dwelling on the past and instead embracing the future with its blessings to be received. I offer the following previously shared quotes for your consideration:

"What a wonderful thought it is that some of the best days of our lives haven't even happened yet." — Anne Frank

"Life's not about expecting, hoping and wishing; it's about doing, being and becoming." — Mike Dooley

"I like the dreams of the future better than the history of the past." — Thomas Jefferson
"You know how I always dread the whole year? Well, this time I'm only going to dread one day at a time." — Charlie Brown

And now I leave you with the following Scripture verse:

Philippians 4:5-7 (New International Version)

"Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

May you enjoy the richness of God's blessings in this new year. Know that He is with you wherever you go and whatever your circumstances.

As always, if you or your family have any needs with which I may be able to assist, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Yours in Christ,
Paul Stockman, Chaplain
301-768-2514
papastockman@yahoo.com



Hello Twizzlers:

I hope everyone had a great holiday. We are still in need of some members to pay your dues. Please send your dues in as soon as possible to Anna Sexton.

Check in with veterans you know to see if they are doing alright with this cold weather we are having. It may be too cold for them to run to the grocery store, or pick up their medications. Help them out by going to the store for them and picking up groceries or their medications.

If you know of anyone who is sick or a love one has passed, please contact chaplain Mary

Shaffer to let her know. Her telephone number is (301) 934-4372.

Our January meeting is on the 13th at 6pm.

For God and Country,

Lesley Radcliff
Auxiliary Unit 82 President



S.A.L. Monthly Meetings are held the First Tuesday of Each Month at 1800hrs

I hope everyone had a Merry Christmas and a happy and safe New Year.

At the regular monthly Squadron meeting on December 2, the members approved a donation of \$250 to Boys State and a \$250 donation to Girls State.

I volunteered at the Charlotte Hall Veterans Home (CHVH) Gift Shop on December 12. An old friend, Past Southern Maryland Region President, Donna Alexander, stopped in with her father who has been a resident since September. It was great to hear about the excellent care he is receiving.

Gale Willett, Gary Shupe and I worked the floor at the Southern Maryland Region bingo at the CHVH on December 15th. Forty two residents attended. Four hundred ten dollars were handed out in prizes. It's always great to interact with the residents and staff.

Thanks to Gale Willett, Gary Shupe, Roy Yanosh, Alana Lentz, David Quade, Kathleen Quade, Cathy Bryant, Kevin Bryant, and Nancy Huffman who volunteered at the baby back rib dinner on December 19th. Seven CHVH

residents and two staff members attended as guests of the Post 82 family. Always good when they can attend. If you have a few hours on the 3rd Friday, come on out and lend a hand. It's not hard work and we have a little fun too. Our next dinner will be a baby back rib dinner on January 16. Check the flier on the website, www.alpost82.org.

The Squadron will sponsor an American Red Cross Blood Drive on January 26. Sign up at <https://www.redcrossblood.org/> and "give the gift of life."

As of the December 19 report, the Squadron 2026 membership is 171 which is 78.44% of our goal of 218. That puts in 3rd place of the 27 Squadrons in the Southern Maryland Region. Well done but we still have work to do. By the time you read this newsletter it will be 2026. If your card doesn't have 2026 at the top, please renew as soon as possible. Dues can be paid on-line at www.legion.org/sal-renew, by mail to PO Box 441, La Plata MD 20646, or in person by dropping it off at the Post. Please note, the on-line process is set up for renewals at the \$20 rate. Dual members and those under 21 should only use the mail or in person options.

Yours in Service,

Dave Tatman
Commander, Squadron 82
tatman_david@comcast.net
301-752-8273



**ALR Meetings are held the
Second Thursday of Each Month at 1800hrs**

The latest scoop from the Steel Pony Corral:

I trust that we all had a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. As we move into 2026, The Riders would like to thank Commander Flatley for the Posts continued support of the Rider program and agenda. As we continue to support veterans causes and the community throughout the upcoming year it is your support once again that will make us successful in our charitable endeavors. To all my Riders a huge heartfelt Thank You for allowing me to be your Director and always stepping up to help and always enhancing our reputation within the community and amongst the other MD State Rider Chapters. It is an honor to be associated with the best group of women and men on the east coast. Lastly, I cannot forget all of your spouses who also participate and support us during our dinners and riding events.

Hello Riders, it is that time of year for membership renewals. Riders please renew your current memberships in the Legion, SAL, and The Auxiliary because this is mandatory for membership in the Riders. So far we have just over 70% of our members have renewed their membership for 2026. Reminder- your 2026 dues are \$15 but if not renewed by 12/31/25 you will become inactive and not allowed to vote or participate in Rider events. So, save yourself some money and renew today. Also, the resources and time used to collect dues can be allocated to other worthwhile endeavors and our Treasurer will have one less item on his "To do list".

Our 6th Annual Toys for Tots Run saw 11 bikes, 1 cage and a beautifully restored 1949 fire truck from Hughesville VFD piloted by ALR Member

Jimmy Therres delivering The Grinch and Gingerbread man instead of Santa. Along with the collected toys from the Post and the toy run, the Riders purchased another \$700 worth of toys to add to the event which included a donation from The Keepers MC. Special thanks to Mayor James and the La Plata Police Dept. for the escort out of the Post parking lot and up Charles Street to Town Hall.

On Saturday December 13, 18 Post family members participated in Wreaths Across America at the Cheltenham Veterans Cemetery and St. Joseph's Catholic Church Cemetery Pomfret MD. We laid dedicated wreaths on the graves of 76 loved ones at Cheltenham and approximately 80 veterans interned at St. Josephs. The Riders also stood the flag line honoring our Veterans at Cheltenham again this year. We had a great meal together afterwards at Napoli's Restaurant who has graciously hosted us every year.

On Friday January 30, The Riders will have their first Spaghetti Dinner of the new year. Please sign up to or come and support the dinner by purchasing some meals. The dinner runs from 1700-1900 and Chef Jamie will be cooking up his delicious sauce the turns that spaghetti into a must have dinner.

Upcoming Rides and Events:

Thursday, January 1 – Polar Bear Ride @ KSU 1100 WaWa La Plata

Thursday, January 8 - Next ALR Meeting 1800

Friday, January 30 – Spaghetti Dinner 1700

Saturday, January 31- Wreaths Across America Clean-up @ 1000

On behalf of Director Jeff Coombs, (Animal) Kevin (BIG SEXY) Bryant

“We ride In HONOR of those who have served”

DEPARTMENT SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE GENERAL SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION

Applications are due **April 15, 2026**

Scholarship Winners notified in **August 2026**

To be considered for a scholarship, the applicant must: be a **child or a grandchild** of a veteran and be a Maryland resident.

- Not attained their 20th birthday by Jan1, 2026
- Be a full-time student when he/she enters college (at least 12 credits per semester)
- Applicants may complete the online version of the application at

<https://mdlegion.org/formspage.htm>



This isn't just another class—it's a powerful, 60-minute Zoom session that could help save a life.

Through this training you will learn how to:

- Use the Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale to recognize those at risk.
- Spot key risk factors and warning signs.
- Understand the types of suicidal ideation and four urgent behaviors that indicate imminent danger.
- Communicate with compassion and confidence when someone may be in crisis.

This opportunity is open to **everyone in the Legion Family—Legionnaires, Auxiliary, SAL, and Riders. Get more information and register for a session here**

<https://www.legion.org/advocacy/be-the-one/be-the-one-training>

