



EARL GRAHAM POST 159

BRYAN, TEXAS

# THE LEGIONNAIRE

For God and Country - Since 1920

## Commander's Comments

My fellow Legionnaires:

The celebration of the birth of our nation is coming July 4th. 250 years of freedom outlined in our Constitution and Bill of Rights. This celebration will be at the Veteran's Park on July 4th at 9:00 AM where a duplicate signing of our Constitution will take place. Members of the various veterans organizations, City of College Station and Bryan will affix their signatures as was done 250 years ago. It is an honor for me as your Commander to actually sign this document on your behalf as a member of Earl Graham Post 159. It is my hope and request that you come out to witness this historic reenactment of the significance of our form of government. I will look forward to seeing you there.

As always I thank you all for your contributions and support in my tenure as your Commander. We will meet together for my last time in July. I will step aside at our August General Membership meeting In favor of our Commander elect James Pfeffer. I look forward to his leadership and dedication as we move ahead. Much has been accomplished and much is yet to be accomplished.

For God and Country

Gary M. Banta, Commander

## Membership JOIN OR RENEW

Contact the Adjutant  
[adjutant@alegion159.org](mailto:adjutant@alegion159.org)



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# Administrative Notes

Last month, I submitted our Consolidated Post Report to both the Department of Texas and National Headquarters. This important annual report documents the activities, programs, and volunteer service performed by our Post over the past year.

I am proud to share a few highlights from Earl Graham Post 159's report. During the reporting period, our members contributed:

- 7,800 volunteer hours in community service activities
- 1,024 volunteer hours supporting children and youth programs
- 20,765 volunteer hours in other Post and veteran-related activities

These remarkable numbers reflect the dedication and commitment of our members to serving veterans, our community, and future generations. Thank you to everyone who generously contributed your time, talents, and effort throughout the year.

We are also continuing efforts to improve our online presence and enhance communication with our members. To ensure you receive email updates about Post activities, events, and important announcements, please log in to your MyLegion account and verify that your email address is current and correct. Corrections can be made online by accessing the My Information / Contact Information link on the left of the screen.

If you are unable to log into your MyLegion account, reach out to me by email at [adjutant@alegion159.org](mailto:adjutant@alegion159.org) or by phone at 979-422-5309 and I will be glad to assist you with verifying or updating your email address.

Wes Wynn  
Post Adjutant



## Post Eternal

Edward Gregg, US Army  
John King, US Army  
Gerald Markowich, US Army  
Cecil Dubois, USMC



### Weather Halts M47 Patton Progress

The Brotherhood of Tankers was hard at work in Bryan, Texas, getting the M47 Patton Main Battle Tank prepped and painted, but the skies opened up and officially shut down the operation. The crew will be back to finish the job another day! A huge thank you to the guys for pushing through as long as they could.



### Volunteer Opportunity:

We are partnering with Bubba's 33 in College Station for their "Tip-A-Veteran" event the week of July 13-17. Money raised will support Homes for Our Troops, an organization that builds specially adapted homes for severely injured post-9/11 veterans.

We need 15-20 volunteers to cover 1-hour shifts, chat with guests, share stories, and help with beverage refills to raise awareness. **As a thank-you, all volunteers get a free meal on the day they help out!**

Shift Times (Monday-Friday):

- Lunch: 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM | 12:00 PM – 1:00 PM
- Dinner: 5:00 PM – 6:00 PM | 6:00 PM – 7:00 PM | 7:00 PM – 8:00 PM

How to Sign Up: A physical sign-up sheet will be available at the Post. You can sign up for a single shift or multiple slots throughout the week.

Let's show up big for a great cause!

**<https://www.hfotusa.org/>**



Veteran Breakfast and Army Birthday

## EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

### July 2 - Membership Meeting

5:30pm - Legion Social

6:30pm - Membership Dinner

Menu ~ Hot Dogs and Hamburgers  
{Bring Side Dish or Dessert to share}

7:30pm Membership Meeting

### July 4 - America 250 Celebration

9am - The Brazos Valley Veterans Memorial at Veterans Park will host a special event in recognition of our nation's 250th birthday.

10am - The George Bush Library will commemorate the 250th Anniversary of American Independence.

### July 11 - Manage Your Crazy Self

11am to 2pm - Randy Guttenberger presents practical tools for understanding stress, communication and decision-making.

## **July 2026: Celebrating Our Nation & Post 159 Community Events**

Happy July! This month, we celebrate our nation's founding. There are several ways to get involved and represent Earl Graham Post 159:

- July 4th at Veterans Park 0900: Join us for Independence Day celebrations, where Post 159 members Gary Banta, Brad Cunningham, and other veterans will reenact the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Bring your family and friends to share in our patriotism!
- July 4th at the Bush Library: We will be on-site all day distributing educational materials, hosting games, and giving children the opportunity to make cards for deployed service members.
- 104th Department Convention: The annual American Legion Department of Texas Convention takes place July 9–12 in Austin. It is a premier event to meet legion leaders, share successful ideas, and help plan for the future.



**Earl Graham Post 159**  
**Member of**



## **Recent Milestones & Community Partnerships**

Thank you to everyone who made our Flag Day and Army Birthday events so successful last month. We had a great turnout for our Veterans Breakfast and a heartwarming flag retirement ceremony supported by Post 159 officers, Scout Troop 159, and the Earl Graham Honor Guard (with coverage from KBTX).

We are also excited to announce that Post 159 has joined the Bryan/College Station Chamber of Commerce to better partner with local businesses and VSO's. As part of this membership, we will soon host a ribbon-cutting ceremony for our new military tank memorial as it continues to take shape!

### **Looking Ahead to Fall**

Mark your calendars for September 14, when Post 159 will host the Brazos Valley's first-ever comprehensive Veteran One Stop. This one-day event will bring all veteran services under one roof, including VA health services, TVC representatives, and a mobile food pantry.

### **2027 Membership Renewal**

July marks the official start of early membership renewals for the American Legion. Members who renew this month will be entered into a prize drawing! If you are interested in a Paid Up For Life membership, you can arrange a 12-month payment plan via MyLegion.org. Our officers are standing by to help you get started today.

Have a great month!

James "Jimbo" Pfeffer,  
First Vice Commander

# A PHONE CALL THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING

BY JOSE NAVA SR., SERVICE OFFICER

There are moments in this work that remind you exactly why you serve—not in uniform, but in your community. May of 2026 gave me one of those moments.

It started with a referral. Tim Kyllonen and his wife Michelle reached out after being connected through Benny Vallejo, a proud member of the Marine Corps League 1391 here in Bryan/College Station. Michelle had noticed that a home belonging to two of their friends had appeared in the foreclosure listings. Worried, they went to check on Joseph and Peter, two veteran brothers.

What Tim and Michelle found horrified them. The brothers—one of whom, Peter, was confined to a wheelchair and depended on his brother Joseph for daily care—had been living in the home without running water or electricity. It was May in Texas. Hot. Humid.

These two men, who had each raised their right hand and served this nation—one in the United States Air Force, the other in the United States Navy—were too proud to ask for help. They had been quietly suffering, invisible to the world around them. They had less than two weeks before they had to be out.

When I arrived at the home to assess the situation, the weight of it was immediate. I made the first phone call.

Heather Huhnke (Brazos Valley Cares): One of the first to step up. With remarkable speed and compassion, Heather secured handicap-accessible motel accommodations to get the brothers out of those conditions immediately, giving us the time we needed to find a permanent solution.

Amanda Fleming (Chair, Brazos Valley Cares): Personally authorized funding for the truck rental and storage fees without hesitation, ensuring that nothing the brothers owned would be lost.

Erin Hoffman (Local U-Haul Store): Donated half the fuel for the moving truck and provided two box dollies—a gesture that spoke volumes about local businesses choosing to be part of the solution.

Peter Machiano (VFW Post 4692): Didn't blink.

He called the Brazos County Sheriff's Department, who sent three Community Service volunteers—Kevin, Edward, and Chima—to help with the move. These men showed up and worked. No fanfare. Just service.

The Kyllonen Family: The day before the move, Tim, Michelle, and Tim's son Christopher went to the home and spent hours packing, tagging, and organizing everything heading to storage. Without them, this story has a very different ending.

While all of this was coming together, I connected with Ms. Paula Woods with HUD/VASH (the VA's Housing and Urban Development-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing program). Ms. Woods located housing specifically available for homeless veterans.

Tim and Michelle—who had started this entire chain of events with a single act of concern—drove Joseph and Peter to the VA hospital in Temple, Texas. Peter was admitted for the medical care he needed, and Joseph was placed into housing.

This mission came together in roughly two weeks—two weeks that required countless phone calls, personal sacrifices, financial generosity, and cooperation between organizations and individuals who had no obligation to help, but chose to anyway.

The American Legion. The VFW. Brazos Valley Cares. The Marine Corps League. The Brazos County Sheriff's Department. A U-Haul store on a busy street. A family who saw something wrong and refused to look away. None of it would have worked without all of it.

If you know a veteran in need, please reach out. Do not wait. Be the Tim and Michelle in someone's story. Be the Heather. Be the Kevin, Edward, or Chima who just shows up and gets to work.

Because when we work together, hope is more powerful than hardship—every single time.

## CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

### JULY 2026

My Friend and Past Post Adjutant, Chuck Wilson, wrote this article about his feelings toward our Country's 250th birthday. I thought this would be excellent for our July Chaplain's Corner. Thank you, Chuck.

### Honoring 250 Years of Freedom and Responsibility

This July 4th marks our nation's 250th birthday—a Semiquincentennial calling every American, especially we Legionnaires, to reflect on the bold ideas that birthed the greatest experiment in human freedom. For those of us who wore the uniform, freedom is not an abstract concept; we answered the call with our service.

Yet, the work of freedom is never finished. The Founders understood this, writing in the Preamble to the Declaration of Independence:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. -That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."

These words remain radical because they place the burden of freedom squarely on our shoulders as citizens, not a king, but ourselves.

I have heard freedom described as "being allowed the opportunity to be responsible for your own actions." It is not a license to do whatever you want, nor is it chaos. It is the sacred right—and duty—to govern ourselves, to build, to dream, and to succeed or fail on our own merits.



As Legionnaires, we are the Sentinels of Liberty, charged with keeping patriotism alive. We stood on distant battlefields so these truths could endure, a commitment we continue today through the Four Pillars of The American Legion. The first two are easy: Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation by caring for those who earned our freedom, and National Security by ensuring America remains strong enough to defend it.

## CHAPLAIN'S CORNER (CONTINUED)



We put this guardianship into active practice through our community-focused pillars:

- **Americanism:** This is not blind patriotism, but a living contract between citizens and those we choose to lead us, a bond that only succeeds when both sides are informed and engaged. We put this contract into practice by teaching the true meaning of citizenship: promoting a deep understanding of our founding documents, honoring our flag, respecting the rule of law, and valuing our rights and responsibilities. It is our duty to ensure our citizens understand this incredible inheritance, and exactly what it takes to keep it.
- **Children & Youth:** Initiatives like Boys State, Girls State, and scholarships are active investments in national preservation. Freedom must be taught, lived, and modeled. By teaching the youth the truth that their unalienable rights come with a solemn duty of self-government, every young person we reach becomes another torch-bearer ready to carry the flame of liberty into the future.

This Independence Day, let us renew our vow. Let us celebrate with parades and fireworks, but more importantly, let us reflect on what we owe to the future. The children in our communities are watching, depending on us to hand them a country worth inheriting.

Our greatest act of patriotism is not just honoring what was built in 1776 but keeping it alive today. Let us show the next generation what Americanism looks like in practice and remind them that freedom is never truly inherited—it must be earned and defended by every generation. That is our mission and our legacy. With God's help, The American Legion will ensure our nation celebrates not just 250 years of liberty, but 250 more.

— By Chuck Wilson, American Legion Post 159

You're the Man Chuck!

Virgil "Goofy" Marko  
Chaplain

**HAPPY**  
**4<sup>th</sup> of**  
**July**

# Explaining the Preamble to the American Legion, Part 11

## TO SAFEGUARD AND TRANSMIT TO POSTERITY THE PRINCIPLES OF JUSTICE, FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY.

### **Preamble Reflection: Securing the Future.**

In this edition of our newsletter, I am continuing our walk through the Preamble to the American Legion. This month, we turn our focus to a phrase that directly connects our past service to our community's future: "To safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom and democracy." When we recite those words at the start of our meetings, we are reaffirming a lifelong promise to our country's future.

As veterans, every one of us took an oath to support and defend the Constitution. That Oath of Enlistment has no expiration date. Our days in uniform may be behind us, but our obligation to safeguard our nation remains. Today, that duty takes the form of teaching the next generation the true meaning of freedom, justice, and democracy, which must be continually fought for, defended, and intentionally passed on.

Our freedom is never more than one generation away from losing it. It isn't inherited; it must be taught, modeled, and protected by those who know its cost. This vital mission is the driving force behind one of the American Legion's Four Pillars: Children & Youth. We can't just hope the youth of the Bryan-College Station area grow up to appreciate a free society—at Post 159,

we actively invest in our young people to ensure our freedom continues. One clear way we live out this mission is by sponsoring local students for Texas Boys State and Texas Girls State.

At Boys and Girls State, students don't just study democracy—they live it. In an intensive week of campaigning, debating, and governing, they learn firsthand what it takes to sustain a free republic.

By sending these bright local students to Boys and Girls State, Post 159 is directly fulfilling our post-military mission. We are taking the torch of freedom we carried in uniform and firmly placing it into the capable hands of tomorrow's leaders.

Our duty didn't end when we hung up the uniform. By investing our time, mentorship, and resources into programs like Boys and Girls State, the members of Post 159 ensure that the principles we fought for will not only survive, but they will thrive long after our watch has ended.

While our enlistment may have ended, our mission to pass on the torch of freedom must continue. If you would like to get involved with our Post's youth and Americanism programs, or help support our future Boys and Girls State delegates, please join us at our next monthly meeting or contact the Post leadership.

By Chuck Wilson



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