

JOHN E. JACOBS AMERICAN LEGION POST 68, LELAND, NC.
2019-2020 COMMANDER'S ANNUAL REPORT

SUMMARY: The 2019-2020 was a successful year for Post 68. We continued the trend of the past 5 years of meeting and exceeding department goals for membership growth. We conducted 4 successful major fund-raising events in support of our programs. We completed a significant revision to our Post Constitution & By-laws (C&B), obtained approval from the Department and implemented changes included in the revised C&B, including renaming the Post. We aided several veterans in Leland and, in partnership with other Posts in the area, aided veterans in other parts of the county and District. We continued our successful North Brunswick High School (NBHS) and Junior ROTC (JROTC) youth programs while adding a new program with our first Post Oratorical Contest. We participated in several Leland, county and regional community events which helped us continue to publicize the Post around the region and support the community and region. Many of our plans for the last part of the 2019-2020 year had to be modified and/or cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the requirement to follow public health guidelines to ensure the safety of our members and of members of our community. As we go into the 2020-2021 year, there are still many uncertainties which will have to be dealt with as we develop our plans for the fall and winter. Still, while many Posts in the state and area basically closed down and went dormant, Post 68 remained active by working to stay connected with our members and to reach out to any veterans requiring assistance. The Post is well placed to move forward and continue to build on our success of the past 5 years.

PRIORITIES: Our priorities for 2019-2020 were:

- Provide support to any veterans needing assistance.
- Support our NBHS & JROTC programs and look for opportunities to expand those programs.
- Support our community by participating in activities and events.
- Meet and exceed our goals for growth in membership.
- Maintain financial stability so that all operating and/or recurring costs can be covered.

MEMBERSHIP:

- Our membership total on July 1, 2019, was 121. On June 30, 2020, it is 181, an increase of 63 or 52%.
- A major factor in our growth were the efforts of our Membership Team (1st Vice Commander, Adjutant, Membership Coordinator and Finance Officer) to streamline our processes and get our membership roles cleaned up. This entailed focusing on current members and new members while removing the names of people who had not paid dues in over 2 years.
- Another factor was the Team's focus on a Department program of sending lists of members in the Department level 1981 Post to the Post located in the zip code with the member's home address. There was an automated process for bringing those names onto the Post roster while working with the individuals to get their commitment to join the Post.
- This was all part of change in the philosophy at the Department level whereby Post 1981 was no longer a long-term holding place for members who had not affiliated with a local Post.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS (Activities outside of the normal operations of the Post):

- C&B Revision. Thanks to months of effort on the part of a team of Post officers, a revision to the Post C&B was completed, reviewed by & approved by both the Post leadership team and membership in late spring of 2019. The package was subsequently submitted to the Department for approval. After incorporating feedback from the Department Judge Advocate the C&B was resubmitted and final approval was received in late 2019.
- Post 68 Renaming Reception. One of the major changes in the revised C&B was modifying the name of the post to honor John E. Jacobs, the only citizen of Leland killed in the Vietnam War. To celebrate the new name, the Post partnered with the Jacobs family to hold a reception which included the presentation of the new Post flag, comments from members of the Jacobs family (including parents, siblings, other family members and friends of John E. Jacobs), and the presentation of gifts to his parents. Family members came from the local area and out of state. Total attendance was 130 with coverage from local print and media outlets. This was one the best community service events ever hosted by the Post. The publicity for the Post was outstanding.
- Post Elections. In January, the Post Executive Committee (PEC) established an Election Committee to identify and confirm candidates to be on the ballot for the Elected Positions, as defined by the C&B. When activities

began to be curtailed due to pandemic public health guidelines, the Election Committee began taking action to get the ballot filled in anticipation that the election might have to be done in some remote or virtual manner. They initiated an aggressive communication program with the membership and were able to successfully develop a full ballot which was approved by the PEC. Subsequently, the Department issued a finding that true elections could not be held because the Department Convention was being cancelled and there would be no way for any elected candidates to be installed at the Convention. There were several options available on how to proceed. Since we had an approved ballot, the PEC decided to appoint every person on the ballot into the office for which they were running. The effective date of the appointments was July 1, 2020, with the term being until the completion of the next election cycle in 2021. By taking this approach, the PEC was able to sustain the ongoing success of the Post with the infusion of new members and some current members rotating into new roles.

- PEC Transition. The PEC took a much more organized approach to transition activities to get members up to speed on their new roles. Required meetings were identified and tracked. This should result in a smoother turnover to the new officers.
- PEC Meetings. With all in person group meetings cancelled due to the pandemic, the PEC began to hold virtual meeting using Zoom. This has been a successful approach which has allowed the PEC to stay engaged and focused on supporting veterans and communicating with membership.

SUPPORT FOR VETERANS:

- The Post directly supported five veterans and two widows of veterans during the year. Support has consisted of getting additional resources engaged to meet a specific need (construction of a wheelchair ramp entrance for a home, etc.), putting veterans in touch with various local support organization (county Veterans Service Officers, etc.) and providing approximately \$1600 in direct financial support.
- In addition, the Post had partnered with several other Posts in the area to provide support to veterans outside of the Leland area.
- The Post Service Officer has established a program with the Brunswick Senior Center which involves monthly meetings with veterans at the Senior Center to identify any assistance requirement and to provide some companionship. The program has been very well received with the vets providing positive feedback.
- The Post Legion Riders Chapter has participated in eight funerals by standing honors and providing escorts to grave sites.
- Members of the Post and the Post Legion Riders Chapter participated in drive-by processions to honor a WW II vet and a Korean War vet.
- Numerous activities and events focused on providing support to veterans, including that 4th annual Veterans Experience Action Center (VEAC) scheduled for April 16 – 18, 2020, were cancelled due to the pandemic.

YOUTH PROGRAMS:

- Oratorical Contest. This was our first year participating in this very popular National American Legion program. Several volunteers started working with NBHS staff to identify students who were interested in the program, provide those who were interested with details on the program and assist each student as required to prepare for the contest. We finally ended up with two contestants in the Post contest which was held at NBHS on Jan 11, 2019. Our winner was a senior who received a \$500 check and moved on to the District contest the following week where she finished 2nd. Our Post 2nd place winner received a \$300 check. The Department and National contests were cancelled due to the pandemic. The Post received some excellent publicity from the contest. Lesson learned is to engage with the NBHS staff at the very beginning of the school year to start the process.
- Boys State. We budgeted to sponsor 2 delegates for Boys State. We had just begun to identify interested students but had not begun the application/interview process when the Department cancelled the program for this year due to the pandemic.
- Girls State. We also budgeted to sponsor 2 delegates to Girls State. We had identified 4 students who were interested in Girls State, had reviewed their applications and were in the interview process when we learned that the on-campus Girls State program was cancelled for this year. The American Legion Auxiliary runs the Girls State program and decided to offer a virtual program this. Three of the 4 students who had applied were interested in the virtual program, which was provided at no cost, so we submitted the applications for those 3 girls. No feedback, yet, on how the program went.

- JROTC Air rifle team. The team has been highly successful over the past few years. When they qualify for the higher-level contests (division and national) additional funding assistance is required, we provided additional funds. We also provided certificates and recognition for the members of the team.
- JROTC Medals, Awards and Scholarship. We award a Military Excellence Medal along with a \$100 check to the cadet who the highest military marks in the unit and a Scholastic Excellence Medal along with a \$100 check to the cadet with highest scholastic marks in the unit. We also award a \$500 scholarship to the student with the best overall record of achievement. Medals, awards and scholarship are usually presented at the JROTC change of command ceremony in April. The ceremony was cancelled due to the pandemic. With the assistance of the Senior Army Instructor we were able to get everything to the winners. We also got some excellent publicity in local newspapers.

FUND RAISERS: Our planned major fund raisers included:

- Belk Charity Sales. Belk holds 3 Charity Sales per year. Non- profit organizations who participate make money from tickets sold in the store and tickets sold directly to family, neighbors and friends. The Post has participated in multiple sales over the past few years and has raised a significant amount of money. In the 2nd half of 2019 we participated in the August sale (profit = \$1,711) and the November Sale (profit = \$609). In both cases, over 60% of our income came from in store sales. The 2020 May sale was cancelled due to the pandemic.
- Fish Fry. We held a fish fry at the NHBS baseball practice facility on September 14, 2019. Profit was approximately \$1,200. We have had weather issues holding this event in the fall (during hurricane season) so our plan for this year was to move the Fish Fry to the late spring timeframe. The pandemic restrictions have prevented us from having the event in the spring of 2020. We should determine if an event is feasible in the spring of 2021.
- Pasta Dinner. We held a Pasta Dinner in Blossoms Restaurant on November 24. As with past Pasta Dinners, it was very profitable. Profit = \$2,869. A pasta dinner is on the schedule for November 19, 2020.
- Poppy Day. We normally solicit our Poppy Fund donations around Memorial Day. All activities were cancelled due to the pandemic. The possibility of soliciting donations on a different date should be explored.

EVENTS (Those not specifically focused on fund raising):

- Leland Founders Day, Sept 14, 2019. The Post has participated in this event for several years by setting up a table to distribute information, pass out children's favors (miniature flags) and sell 50/50 tickets. In general, it has been a good event to get exposure within the community. The 2019 event was a disappointment due the small turn-out and poor exhibit location assignment. Future participation should be evaluated.
- American Legion Continuous Service Awards, Sept 19, 2019 Post membership meeting. American Legion Continuous Service pins were presented to all members who had reached 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 45 or more years of continuous American Legion service during the 2018-2019 or 2017-2018 years. This was the first of what will be annual presentations of pins to members who have achieved appropriate years of continuous service during the previous year. This should become a tradition for the Post.
- American Legion District 9 Meeting, Oct 12, 2019. Post 68 hosted the American Legion District 9 Quarterly Meeting. This was the first time the Post had hosted a District meeting in many years. The Leland Senior Center allowed us to use their meeting room and Mission BBQ catered the lunch. The District Commander and other attendees provided very positive feedback on the event.
- Leland Trunk or Treat, Oct 26, 2019. A community event involving passing out candy and other favors to children as part of a Halloween celebration. The Post has participated for the past several years. It provides a good opportunity to support the community and publicize the Post.
- Brunswick Forest Club Fair, Nov 8, 2019. Brunswick Forest allowed clubs/organizations to set up tables to pass out information. Post 68 had a table and experienced a decent traffic flow of people looking for information.
- Southeastern NC Veterans Day Parade, Nov 9, 2019. An annual Wilmington event that the Post had participated in for the past several years. This year the parade was honoring the 100th anniversary of the founding of the American Legion. Post 68 was chosen to lead the parade based on our past involvement with the event.
- Navassa Veterans Appreciation Service & Dinner, Nov 9, 2019. An event sponsored by members of the Navassa community which involves a church service followed by a buffet dinner. This was the 3rd year that Post 68 has participated. The Post provided flags and members served as ushers, spoke during the program and passed out

Post information during the dinner. The Post also made a donation to help fund the event. Good opportunity to connect with the African American community and to meet veterans who are members of that community.

- Post Membership Hot Dog Day, Nov 10, 2019. This was membership appreciation event to allow members and their families an opportunity to socialize in an informal environment. The event received positive feedback from attendees along with recommendations to make this an annual event.
- Belville Riverwalk Memorial Dedication, Nov 11/11, 2019. Dedication of a new veteran's memorial at the Belville Riverwalk. The Post set up a table to distribute information and meet members of the community. Volunteers spoke with veterans at the event and with local government & organization leaders.
- Flag Retirement ceremony, Jan 4, 2020. The Post conducted a ceremony to retire flags which had been turned in during the previous years. Given the large number of flags to be retired, an abbreviated ceremony was held with members of the Post retiring the flags at a location provided by a member of the community. To avoid having such a large volume of flags to be retired in the future, the plan is to conduct the next Flag Retirement Ceremony as soon as possible after Flag Collection Ceremony.

NOTE – After Action Reports (AARs) for events and fund raisers are available in Post files.

AMERICAN LEGION MEETINGS (District 9 Division 2 AND NC Department):

- Post members attended the quarterly District 9 and semiannual Division 2 meetings to meet members of other Posts and American Legion leadership, to exchange ideas and to get the benefit of their experiences. All meetings after January were cancelled due to the pandemic.
- Members also attended the NC Department Fall Conference, October 18 – 19, 2019. The 2020 Winter Conference in October and annual convention in June were cancelled due to the pandemic. These meetings offer excellent opportunities to learn about the legion programs, status and operations.

CHALLENGES:

- Event Schedule. During the period of mid-September through December 2019, the Post conducted and/or participated in 11 events which required significant planning, communications and volunteer support including, 3 major fund raisers and 2 major community events. In November alone there were 7 events. That pace of operations exhausted the membership and led to fatigue on the part of our most active members. We began 2020 with a goal of spreading our events, especially the major ones, more evenly throughout the year. The cancellations caused by the pandemic is creating a major challenge to getting our important activities (from a membership and financial perspective) on the schedule and completed.
- Fund Raiser projections. Our largest fund raisers, in terms of profits coming into the Post back account, are the Belk Sales, Fish Fry and Pasta Dinner. We have built our budget with planned income based on the results of these fund raisers in the past. Current, and perhaps future, public health guidelines could impact the way our fund raisers are conducted. For instance, Belk may not reinstitute the Charity Sales until sometime next year, and even then, may not allow instore sales (which have historically contributed 60% of profits from those events). The Fish Fry and/or Pasta Dinner may have to be take-out/delivery food service events which could have a major impact on profits. Fortunately, the Post is currently in a very sound financial position with excellent reserves, but major reductions in planned income could impact our programs. The PEC will have to pay close attention to the financial health of the Post.

FUTURE PRIORITIES: I recommend that we continue with our current basic priorities but look for ways to address known and/or potential issues. For instance, we have been trying to increase the number of members who participate in Post event, attend meetings and are more active in the Post. While there has been progress there is still work to do. We have just initiated an effort to establish several standing committees to engage more members. We have also made significant strides in our internal and external communications programs. Those efforts should continue to be a priority.

Overall, the Post is in a very strong position with an incoming leadership team with the talent, energy and commitment to continue to build on the progress made to date and lead the Post to greater success.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dale E.Todd