



AMVETS Tallahassee Post 1776 Cyber Newsletter

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Commander's Corner Happy New Year to all!

November and December were again busy months for all of us. November brought us a month of recognition for veterans. We had another great Veterans Day Parade, with a thank you to Vets Inc. and for us Marines we had another great Marine Corps Ball sponsored by the NROTC at FAMU. The Cadets did another great job. Although, the event did highlight their new Commander Colonel RD "Mike" Michael replacing our good friend Colonel Benjamin Ringvelski. In fact, some of us attended Colonel Ben's retirement ceremony which was quite an event if you haven't attended a formal retirement ceremony for a Marine.

The Parade this year was again preceded by an "Operation Thank You" a breakfast sponsored by our Leon County Commission. Dignitaries from around town were found on the serving lines and thanking the tremendous turnout of veterans. They again honored a couple of veterans, one of our own, Tim Griffith, for his continuing efforts to help homeless veterans in the Big Bend area.

Also, in November we had our 2nd Annual Turkey Shoot, please see a short article on it on following pages. And, with the initiative of Lew Wilson, we participated in our 3rd Annual Blanket Drive for homeless veterans in our area. We work directly with Tim Griffith that helps us deliver almost \$1,000.00 worth of blankets and sheets this year, to Homefront and Vet Village (see Lew's article). **(Continued on page 2)**

AMVETS National was chartered in 1947 and the Tallahassee AMVETS Post 1776 was chartered in July 2009. AMVETS Post 1776 meets the first Thursday of the month at American Legion Post 13, 229 Lake Ella Drive, Tallahassee, Florida 32303. We invite honorably discharge veterans, including Guards and Reserve, from all branches to Join us. We are a small post doing big things

www.amvets1776.org

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And for a final event in November, I was invited to speak at our Chaplain Ernest Reeds Church in Crawfordville. See another short story on that event on the following pages.

In December the Tallahassee National Cemetery had another successful Wreaths Across America program with our Post contributing hundreds of dollars' worth of wreaths. Of course, Christmas was celebrated bringing us to this new year of 2026.

As always, thank you all for all you do for veterans and your continuing service to our Country, our County and our Post.

Semper Fi

Gordon

Chaplain's Corner

Our Prayer for the Sick

O God, in our hearts, we name those who are facing illness and pain. We join our prayers with the prayers of all who love them. Give them renewed comfort and courage. Strengthen in them the healing powers You have placed within us all. Guide the hands and hearts of those who are entrusted with their care. May the knowledge of Your love and ours give added hope to them and to their dear ones. May they find even greater strength because our prayers are linked with theirs.



Chaplain Ernest Reed

Chaplain Ernest Reed

AMVETS Participates in 4th annual Blanket Drive for 2025 (Article submitted by Lew Wilson)

Community appreciation of its local veterans comes in many forms, yet this 2025 holiday season was the 4th Annual Blanket Drive and proved to be a banner year to help keep our veterans warm and comfortable this winter season and for months to come. Each November after Veterans Day the call to action goes out around the community. AMVETS Tallahassee Post 1776 of Tallahassee got the annual call from Danielle Galvin and again partnered to help spearhead this important cause. The 4th Quarter Bar & Grille volunteered its place of business to serve as a collection point for all the donations.

On December 18th, 2025, AMVETS Commander Gordon Lightfoot and Member Lew Wilson loaded up their sleighs and delivered over 350 items, including blankets, comforter sets, throws, sheets, sleeping bags and more which were donated and gathered by Santas elves for distribution to our local veterans in need.

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(AMVETS Participates in 4th annual Blanket Drive for 2025 Continued from page 2)

Veterans while housed or in the woods benefit from this annual drive to include three Veteran communities: Veterans Village, Homefront Apartments and Balkin Apartments. Danny Burke from Veterans Village exclaimed: *"I just wanted to personally thank you for the Christmas items you brought out today. It really made a difference and was truly appreciated. Thanks again for stepping up and helping make today better for all our Veterans"*.

The event was made possible by a Veteran organization in partnership with the business community that treasures our Veterans and always turns out when the call to action arrives to include: AMVETS Tallahassee Post 1776 of Tallahassee, Danielle Galvin, Todd Powers, the 4th Quarter Bar & Grille employees/patrons, Synovus Bank, Sports Clips, The Swingers Golf Group, Florida Assisted Living Association, Concrete Yeti, Raymond Paul Rogerson finance officer of AMVETS, Tim Griffith of Homefront, Tallahassee Board of Realtors including their members, and AMVETS and VFW Post 3308 member, Our sincere thanks to everyone who donated and supported these efforts to help our Veterans have a warm and comfortable Christmas season to bring in the new year.

Lew Wilson is a USMC Veteran and is retired President & CEO of the Florida Veterans Foundation. Lew is a member of AMVETS Tallahassee Post 1776, Marine Corps League Arthur R. Meyer Jr., Detachment 472 and the Sauls Bridges American Legion Post #13.



Preparing and Delivering Collected Blanket Drive Items to help Veterans



A Promise Kept (Article by Gordon Lightfoot)

A year ago, this past November I was asked by our AMVETS chaplain Ernest Reed and his wife Shirley to give a brief presentation on Veterans at their Church in Crawfordville. I had a conflict, but I asked them to please keep me in mind for this year. They did and I did.

Ernest Reed was a career Navy veteran and is now our Chaplain for AMVETS Tallahassee Post 1776 and a past Commander of Branch 34 of the Fleet Reserve Association. Ernie, like a lot of veterans here in Tallahassee, wears a number of hats, but we all wish to participate and to serve our fellow veterans, particularly those that might not have fared as well as other veterans.



**The Miracle Deliverance Center
Church**

Ernie is a pastor at his Church the Miracle Deliverance Center in Crawfordville just a few miles south of Tallahassee. It is a rural Church but as I found out it is full of love and dedication and every November makes a special effort to honor their veterans. It was a pleasure to be a small part of their service this year. We had a couple of our members from our Post attend; Paul Rogerson and Tom Carney both very dedicated veterans and participate in nearly all our AMVETS events throughout the year.

Along with my presentation Ernie and his wife Shirley invited the current Commander to the FRA Branch 34, Mr. Bob Esztales, a former career navy corpsman that served with Ernie. Bob presented all of Ernie's Church's veterans with the Florida Department of Veteran Affairs' Florida Veterans Foundation "Veterans Service Medal". A new medal given to veterans in Florida, "Honoring Those Who Served".

It was quite an honor to share veteran's month in Crawfordville with such a caring congregation. They surely represent our "better angels of our nature" a term used in Lincoln's 1861 inaugural speech when he asked for us to be more enlightened and to use our more compassionate instincts.

Thank you, Ernie and Shirley, for the invitation. Keep up the good work.



**Ernie Reed Pastor
Miracle Deliverance
Center**



Honoring Veterans

AMVETS 2nd Annual Turkey Shoot (Article by Gordon Lightfoot)

We had our 2nd Annual Turkey Shoot on November 15th of 2025. Our attendance wasn't quite as good as our first, but we find November is filled with several veteran events in the Big Bend area and the competition is fierce. And our Turkey Shoot is still new.

We had turkeys left over from the four winnings on the range and those turkeys were drawn as door prizes. A lot of folks went home with a turkey. Our second-place prize was a box of shotgun shells. We had a 50-50 drawing, and we pulled a winning ticket for our Glock raffle.

We appreciate the Tallahassee Rifle and Pistol Club co-sponsoring this event again this year. Their contribution of time and effort and gifts of the shotgun shells help make this event something that will grow and continue to be an AMVETS special fundraising event.

And we need to thank Curtis Burnham of Arrowhead Survival for donating the Glock pistol we raffled off. That raffle alone helped make our Turkey Shoot profitable, allowing us to use our funds for area veterans in need. And Mission Bar B Q showed up with our lunch. The weather was great, and a good time was had by all. Enjoy these couple of photos and be sure to join in the fun next year.



Mother and Daughter Team Winning a Turkey and a Box of Shells



Lew Wilson Showing Off His Card and Second Place Prize



Glock 43X for Raffle



Beverly Shirley – Ambassador for Mission Bar B Q

AMVETS 2nd Annual Turkey Shoot
(Article by Gordon Lightfoot)

AMVETS Team Pictures



**Administrative Team Taking care
of Business. From Left to Right:**

**Lew Wilson
Brigitte Rogerson
Melanie Weathers**

**Taking Care of Turkeys Prizes
“Butch” Topicz**



**Judges Validating Each Target
and Selecting Group Winners**

**Walt Beyer
Eric Smith**

AMVETS Tallahassee Post 1776
Reasons for Our Request for Donations
(Article by Raymond Paul Rogerson)

When I first became a member of AMVETS, the organization was in the middle of a major fundraising effort to install a Carillon Bell Tower at the Tallahassee National Cemetery (TNC). I contributed to the campaign, but at the time I had no idea how meaningful—and how challenging—this mission truly was.

Through determination, community support, and the generosity of donors, AMVETS reached its goal of \$100,000, and the Bell Tower was successfully installed in 2021. Today, it provides ceremonial music during funerals and military recognition services, honoring veterans with the dignity they deserve.

After the project was completed, we were left with a surplus and when I became the Finance Officer, I made a commitment that these funds would be used exclusively to support veterans and their families. Over the years, many veterans and other organizations have needed assistance, and because of the continued generosity of our supporters, AMVETS Post 1776 has been able to step in and make a real difference.

I am proud to say that since 2019, I have maintained this reserve, ensuring that our Post is always ready to help when called upon.

AMVETS has two major annual fundraising events: 1) Ray House Golf Tournament (our 15th last year) that is consistent in bringing in substantial funds to help those in need and 2) A Turkey Shoot, a newer fundraising project that started last year, and this is growing and will provide additional funds for our causes.

After maintaining a reserve as discussed above, our Post, just this last year, was able to provide financial support in excess of \$7,994.00 to the following local veteran causes:

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- 1) Tallahassee Legal Collaborative
- 2) Florida Cares, Inc.
- 3) Family Promise of the Big Bend
- 4) Sauls Bridges American Legion Post 13
- 5) Homefront, Veteran Village, Blankets Drive of 2025
- 6) Wreaths Across America

These contributions reflect our ongoing commitment to supporting veterans, strengthening our community partnerships, and honoring those who served. As Finance Officer, I will continue to safeguard our resources and ensure that every dollar entrusted to us is used responsibly and with purpose.

Bell Tower/Carillon at Tallahassee National Cemetery



Honoring Our Vietnam Veterans: Monthly Gravesite Visits

Article by David Wilson

Since 2019, local veterans and community members have come together to honor the men from our area who gave their lives in Vietnam. Each visit is a moment of remembrance, respect, and gratitude — a quiet promise that their sacrifice will never be forgotten.

What We Do at Each Visit:

Our ceremony is simple but deeply meaningful:

1. **Gravesite Cleanup** We begin with light cleanup around the grave, ensuring the site is treated with dignity.
2. **Introduction & Story** A brief reflection is shared about the veteran — who he was, how he served, and how he died.
3. **Placing a New American Flag** A fresh flag is placed, and any worn flags are respectfully removed.
4. **Memory Rock Placement** A “memory rock” is left to show family and friends that someone visited and remembered.
5. **Hero Rock Placement** A second rock — the “hero rock” — is placed to honor his service and sacrifice.
6. **Ring of the Bell** A ceremonial bell is rung in remembrance of the fallen.
7. **Honors & Salute** Veterans render honors and offer a salute, thanking the servicemember for his duty.
8. **Prayer** A short prayer is offered for the veteran and his family.
9. **Taps** The ceremony concludes with the playing of “Taps.”

Tentative 2026 Visit Schedule

Sunday, February 1 — 3:30 PM

Clifford Hill Cemetery (2 men)

Off Lonnie Rd on Clifford Hill Rd

Followed by

St. Rosa Cemetery (2 men)

3148 Mission Road

Note: This visit includes a 35-minute drive between cemeteries.

Sunday, March 1 — 4:00 PM

Southside Cemetery (4 men)

3484 Capitol Circle SW

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Sunday, March 29 — 4:00 PM

Memory Gardens Cemetery (7 men)
4037 N Monroe Street

Sunday, April 26 — 4:00 PM

Roselawn Cemetery (8 men)
843 Piedmont Drive — meet at west entrance

Further details and full addresses will be sent during the week of each event.

A Community Tradition Worth Sharing

Each visit lasts about an hour and offers a meaningful opportunity for reflection and connection. We strongly encourage families to bring children — these moments help teach the next generation the importance of service, sacrifice, and remembrance.

We hope you can join us as we continue this important tradition.



A Young Child “Rings the Bell”

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**(Continued from Page 10 - Pictures Honoring Our Vietnam Veterans:
Monthly Gravesite Visits)**



Honoring our Fallen Heros



**The "Hero Rock" is a Painted Rock with
the Man's Name and the Word Hero
Painted on it.**



AMVETS Tallahassee

Post 1776

JANUARY 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7 American Legion Commander's Coalition	8 AMVETS Post 1776 Monthly Meeting	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31