

CONNECTIONS



THE AMERICAN LEGION Post-9/11 Veterans





**"I feel the post-9/11 generation
certainly has an identity.
We responded to a national tragedy.
We all volunteered. We volunteered for
a decade of war. We had options,
and we chose this. Our vision is to show
the world what we can do.
We can kick ass. We can face anything.
That's our vision going forward."**

***Chris Wilkens, a U.S. Marine Corps veteran
who fought in the Battle of Fallujah during Operation Iraqi Freedom
who now leads a 1919-chartered American Legion post
in the New York Athletic Club overlooking Central Park in Manhattan***

The American Legion soon belongs to our second-century veterans.

As the nation's largest veterans service organization reflects on a legacy of historic achievements and millions of lives positively influenced, now is the time to envision a future guided by 21st century veterans, their families, communities, needs and interests.

More than 2.7 million Americans have served in the Iraq and Afghanistan war zones, many on multiple deployments. This Post 9/11 generation of wartime veterans is a fast-growing segment of American Legion membership and leadership. In many communities, the ice breaker between the traditional post and younger veterans is a relationship with such groups as:

- **Team Red White & Blue**
- **Student Veterans of America**
- **Team Rubicon**
- **The Mission Continues**

Local posts, districts and departments also build relationships of their own with regional groups of young veterans, with specific interests. Among them are Veterans in Film and Television in Los Angeles and Summit for Soldiers, which is based in Ohio and has expanded to other states.

The American Legion, with more than 13,000 local posts worldwide and a Legion Family membership network of more than 3 million, has much to offer these groups, including physical meeting spaces, business networking, mentorship and experience in community service projects.

In 2015, The American Legion National Executive Committee passed a resolution formally commending **Team Red White & Blue, Student Veterans of America, Team Rubicon** and **The Mission Continues** as values-driven post-9/11 veterans groups with whom American Legion posts are encouraged to contact and collaborate.

In many states and communities, American Legion posts are already supporting efforts of such values-driven post-9/11 veterans groups. An American Legion of Ohio department sponsorship, for instance, has built a powerful relationship between the Legion and **Summit for Soldiers**, a non-profit group of post-9/11 veterans that uses outdoor “adven-therapy” and peer support to help others who have had difficulties adjusting to post-war life. Members of SfS, as a result of the relationship, also joined The American Legion and displayed the emblem on a trek to the top of Mt. Everest in May 2016.



“Prior to World War II... if your father didn’t go to college, or you weren’t a white male, there was a very slim chance you would have an opportunity at higher education. The Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944 fundamentally changed that. It democratized higher education and quite literally built the American middle class, educating 7.8 million veterans. Today, what we are seeing is rather remarkable because the trends hold true.”

Jared Lyon, President and CEO of Student Veterans of America



“Don’t ask me what you can do for me. Let me tell you what I can do for you.”

*Operation Iraqi Freedom veteran **Josh Eckhoff**, recipient of the Bronze Star and Purple Heart, and alumnus of *The Mission Continues**

The Legion helped bring to life **Student Veterans of America**, having provided Washington office space, and making connections between **SVA** chapters and American Legion posts on college campuses. The **SVA** and The American Legion have testified together on Capitol Hill in support of a refreshed Post 9/11 GI Bill and collaborated in many ways at the local level.

Collaborations between The American Legion and Post-9/11 veteran groups can:

- Provide better understanding of each organization’s mission, priorities, assets, practices, needs and expectations
- Give American Legion posts opportunities to increase the number of healthy, family-oriented activities
- Offer a stronger collective voice in Washington and throughout America in support of the veterans all groups strive to serve and engage
- Expand promotional opportunities among all associated groups through print, digital and social media channels
- Connect Post-9/11 veterans with the many services of The American Legion, including benefits and health-care advocacy and opportunities to volunteer in healthy, educational youth programs

The American Legion and **Team Rubicon** commonly work together to provide disaster relief in local communities nationwide, and **The Mission Continues** platoons have teamed up with Legion community-service projects in various parts of the country, as well.

To help American Legion posts find chapters of **Team RWB**, **Team Rubicon**, **The Mission Continues**, **SVA** and **SfS**, the national Legion website has posted an online locator at www.legion.org/post911veterans that offers maps and contact information.



“The American Legion family is a 4 million-person network. Think of those connections and think of that kind of clout. That’s a lot of people with a lot of the same values. That’s people in all walks of life and in every kind of business. And they’re also plugged into their local communities. That is one of the best job networks out there.”

Jesse Stevens, Marine Corps veteran and member of American Legion Post 24 in Alexandria, Va.

The American Legion has numerous assets that can benefit Post 9/11 generation groups. One in particular is the organization’s more than 10,000 brick-and-mortar post homes around the world. Other assets include nationally recognized expertise in veterans benefits and VA health care, business community connections and volunteer opportunities. Many posts also provide scholarships for student veterans.

“Veterans want to be a part of something bigger than themselves. It takes a certain person to sign up to be in the military. You don’t stop being that person when you get out.”

U.S. Army veteran and West Point graduate Chris Widell, who served two tours in Iraq, now a leader of the Houston chapter of Team Red, White and Blue



Team RWB has more than 108,000 members in chapters nationwide who are devoted to fitness activities that promote healthy lifestyles. Involvement in Team RWB events, such as 5k runs or obstacle course competitions, can help The American Legion draw attention to its own activities, programs and services.



“Veterans need challenges and opportunities. It’s foolish not to tap them for disaster response.”

*Former U.S. Marine scout **Jake Wood**, co-founder of Team Rubicon*

The American Legion’s National Emergency Fund has issued millions of dollars in grants and produced incalculable volunteer hours in times of natural disaster since 1969. The program was nationally recognized for quick and effective response during Hurricane Katrina, when over \$1.5 million in cash aid was urgently delivered to displaced veterans and their families immediately after the 2005 storm and floods. NEF funds and volunteers poured into Moore, Okla., after tornadoes, New York and New Jersey after Superstorm Sandy, Colorado in the aftermath of devastating floods, southern Texas, Florida and Puerto Rico after hurricanes of 2017 and other disaster areas.

The National Emergency Fund is a natural match for **Team Rubicon**, which has gained worldwide respect for relief efforts in times of catastrophe, from Haiti to Alabama to Missouri to New Jersey, Texas and Florida. In addition to the direct benefits such programs provide to communities they serve, **Team Rubicon** and the Legion’s NEF offer meaningful opportunities for veterans to continue serving after discharge.

Another nationally recognized organization that supports Post 9/11 veterans is **The Mission Continues**, with its network of platoons across the country that provide job skills, community service, camaraderie and support for veterans in transition. As The American Legion has done for decades, **The Mission Continues** delivers important community services and projects. The program has flourished in recent years, providing more than \$10 million in volunteer help through more than 30 local platoons.



“The biggest thing was, it instilled a lot of hope. People had been telling me all the things I couldn’t do. But with volunteering, I found out I could. It sounds weird, but it was the first time I realized I was a veteran.”

***Lloyd Duran**, former Operation Iraqi Freedom Marine corporal, who now works with *The Mission Continues* in Orlando, Fla.*

In communities large and small, The American Legion, **Team Red White and Blue**, **The Mission Continues**, **Student Veterans of America** and **Team Rubicon** are already collaborating to help veterans and communities, working as strategic allies, guided by the common bond of service, regardless of war era.

**NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE AMERICAN LEGION
INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA, MAY 6 - 7, 2015**

**Resolution No. 20:
Encourage Collaboration with Selected
Post-9/11 Generation Veterans Groups**

WHEREAS, The American Legion 100th Anniversary Observance Committee and 100th Anniversary Honorary Committee have developed and reported to the National Executive Committee a centennial commemoration strategy to share the organization's legacy of accomplishments and vision for a second century of service; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has worked closely in numerous local capacities with Team Red White and Blue, The Mission Continues and Team Rubicon, which are three effective and innovative post-9/11 veterans groups that share values similar to those of The American Legion and can play an important part in defining a second-century vision for the organization; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has established a relationship of collaboration with Student Veterans of America, providing office space for several months as the group was forming, and uniting to help student veterans through relationships at a growing number of American Legion campus posts; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion National Headquarters is frequently asked to provide media support or other forms of recognition from numerous post-9/11 generation veterans groups among the 45,000 the George W. Bush Institute has identified; and

WHEREAS, Team Red White and Blue's mission is to enrich the lives of America's veterans by connecting them to their communities through physical and social activity and local volunteerism; and

WHEREAS, Team Red White and Blue and The American Legion are finding healthy camaraderie and volunteer opportunities in numerous communities nationwide, to the mutual benefit of each other and the veterans they support; and

WHEREAS, The Mission Continues empowers veterans in readjustment transitions by deploying them in platoons to fulfill community service projects, often with support or involvement from The American Legion, nationwide; and

WHEREAS, The Mission Continues and The American Legion have mutually beneficial opportunities to help veterans through the readjustment process while at the same time fulfilling community service needs, which are core values of both organizations; and

WHEREAS, Team Rubicon combines the skills and experiences of military veterans with first responders and emergency workers to rapidly deploy well-trained disaster-relief teams worldwide; and

WHEREAS, Team Rubicon and The American Legion have worked together during a variety of natural disasters, including floods in Colorado, Superstorm Sandy along the northeastern U.S. coast, and tornadoes in Oklahoma, connecting victims and relief workers with the Legion's National Emergency Fund, post homes as command centers, volunteers and other assets; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion Membership & Post Activities Committee's five-year plan strongly urges engagement and collaboration with post-9/11 generation veterans in order to improve awareness about The American Legion among eligible members from that war era; and

WHEREAS, This resolution originating in The American Legion 100th Anniversary Observance Committee has the concurrence of your Internal Affairs Commission and the Subcommittee on Resolutions; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By the National Executive Committee of The American Legion in regular meeting assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, on May 6-7, 2015, That the National Executive Committee does affirm The American Legion's commitment at the national, department and post levels to seek active coordination wherever feasible with The Mission Continues, Team Red White and Blue, Team Rubicon and Student Veterans of America on initiatives that support veterans, their families, communities and camaraderie; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That American Legion posts and departments are encouraged to build and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with these post-9/11 veterans groups, and that The American Legion Marketing, Media & Communications Division highlight such relationships in print, digital and social media campaigns and seek reciprocal or similar treatment about The American Legion in the print, digital and social media of those groups.

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