



Sun City welcomes American Legion Post 228

Working together for country, comrade and community

By Kara Matthews, Photos by Sherry McRae

After sacrificing so much to defend our freedom, Sun City's veterans still have more to give. One of the most influential nonprofit organizations in the United States, the American Legion has been providing support and guidance for veterans and their communities since 1919. Growing to over 12,000 posts in America in the past century, the Legion has now officially established a presence here in Sun City.

A post for change

There is often an unfortunate stigma of American Legion posts as just a group of old men swapping stories around smoke-filled bars. Sun City's new American Legion Post 228 is on a mission to

change that perspective and reinforce the Legion's original intent of creating a network of veterans who support and serve our community.

American Legion Post 228 was officially chartered on March 28, 2021 with just 15 members. Since then, membership has quadrupled to 61 Legionnaires. Although this number continues to rise, more members are needed to accomplish the ambitious goals they have for Sun City and the surrounding area.

Before the charter was even granted for this post, a few of these generous veterans regularly manned a table in the Social Center where they assisted other veterans through the paperwork

process required to be buried in the Veterans Affairs (VA) cemetery. Filling out paperwork can be stressful no matter the subject. While veterans have many resources available to them, they can be difficult to find. There are stacks of daunting and time-consuming forms to be completed and delivered to the appropriate persons.

Post 228's current service officer, Tim Moore, is dedicated to expanding upon this kind of paperwork assistance. As many Legionnaires have gone through this themselves, they have the experience and connections

Continued on the next page



10th District Commander, Jay Jernigan, right, conducts the swearing in ceremony for post 228 officers at the July meeting.

Continued from the previous page

needed to maneuver through the VA system. Whether a veteran is partially or completely disabled, or just seeking health benefits or other resources, members of Post 228 are ready to assist veterans with their disability and benefit paperwork.

Supporting and serving

It's not just the veterans and their families who benefit from this compassionate and giving organization. While they work to provide resources and guidance for veterans, spouses, military personnel and their children, the American Legion also holds fundraising events to aid and assist those around them.

Recently recognized by the American Legion Headquarters for civic services performed since receiving their charter, Post 228 Commander Larry Mladek says, "We're not going to be an organization to sit around and talk about how great we were, we're going to be an organization that's going to sit around and say, 'okay what else can we do for this community?'" With many events planned to commence next year, Mladek has quite a few ideas on how to raise money for scholarships and other ways to do good.

This holiday season, Post 228 has requested to ring the bells for the Salvation Army to generate monies for social services assistance, homeless shelters, disaster relief, children's programs, rehabilitation services, human trafficking and more. Other

future projects and events to help raise more funds for good causes include plans for an American Legion car show, a golf tournament and hosting several local dinner and breakfast events. They also hope to get more involved with organizations such as the JROTC at Georgetown High School as well as local scouting organizations. Starting this month, Post 228 will be providing a monthly guest speaker to inform and inspire the JROTC cadets. The group is also willing to provide guest speakers for other Sun City groups and clubs.

Some members offer their support by simply making phone calls to stay in touch with comrades who cannot make it out to meetings, keeping their

fellow veterans mentally active through communication and encouragement. Others pledge to visit hospitalized or immobile veterans who don't have family nearby or may be suffering from PTSD or some other disability. There are also plans to provide a network of small services, such as assisting widowed spouses with transportation to a doctor or other appointments.

With so many events and opportunities for service planned, Post 228 needs more members to help make these plans a reality. They're not just looking to fill officer's positions and fill the seats of their meeting places; they're looking to gain members who are genuinely interested in being active participants.



Guests are always welcome at post 228's meetings.

“We’re not going to be an organization to sit around and talk about **how great we were,** we’re going to be an organization that’s going to sit around and say, okay **what else can we do for this community?”**

- Larry Mladek

Richard Taylor served two years in Vietnam with the 25th Infantry. He says he joined Post 228 because, “I think it’s time for me to step up and give back.” Many others in the group feel the same. Whether inspired to join by their fathers who were active members or by friends who have already joined, the camaraderie of this group is huge, but what they intend to do for our community is even bigger.

Are you eligible?

The American Legion welcomes all veterans, regardless of overseas duty or declared war status. If there has been at least one active day served in the military, a veteran or a loved one on their behalf can join the Legion.

While an American Legion post does exist in Georgetown, the driving distance and smoking policy was very off-



Above, post 228 receives recognition from American Legion Headquarters for civic services performed earlier this year.

putting for many Sun City residents. Even though most Post 228 members are Sun City residents, this post is open to all veterans in the surrounding area. The annual dues are only \$40, and even if you’re already a member of another post, you can easily transfer to Sun City’s Post 228.

Currently ranging in age from 61 to 92 and with seven female members, the post is filled with a variety of skills and interests among its veterans, but they are always hoping for more diversity. Not restricted to one branch of military or involvement in a particular conflict, most of Post 228’s current members are Vietnam-era veterans with a few from the Korean War, Gulf War and Panama conflicts.

How to join?

If you’re interested but not yet sure of your commitment, you are welcome to

attend their monthly meeting, currently held every third Sunday at 3 p.m. at The Oaks, Mesquite Room. Anyone is welcome to attend and encouraged to bring a guest. The group also has a more informal breakfast meeting every Thursday at 9 a.m. at Mulligan’s.

While this post is currently looking for a more permanent location to hold their regular meetings, currently they do not intend to purchase or lease a building for their post home. They wish to instead focus on using any raised funds to do good things within our community - not just for our veterans, but anyone in need. Whether donated goods or funds are needed for disaster relief, volunteering and other labor services, advocacy, guidance and other forms of assistance, Post 228 is here to help.

Reach out to the Post Commander Larry Mladek at 915-276-4258 or larrygranny1@yahoo.com if you would like to join or simply receive more information regarding this growing organization. If you are a homebound veteran and would like to have a visitor to keep you company for an hour or two, contact Larry and they will arrange a visit.

While we can never do enough to recognize and honor the sacrifices of our nation’s veterans, we can aid them in their cause to improve and connect our community. If you are able, attend a meeting and see for yourself the great things Post 228 aims to achieve, and if you enjoy your freedom, take the time to thank a veteran.

