



March 17, 2020

Commander Mark Dvorak
State Commander
American Legion Department of Minnesota
20 West 12th Street
St. Paul, MN 55155

American Legion Family:

We are in unprecedented times, and the rapid societal changes caused by the COVID-19 virus affect us all. The magnitude of this urgent and evolving situation has not fully developed, but I wanted to take this moment in our nation's history to urge you to reflect on what it means to be in our ranks. Now is the time to be a beacon in our communities.

First and foremost, take care of yourselves. Many of us are in or near the age cohort that presents the most risk, and some of us have pre-existing medical conditions that could complicate treatment. The most current information from the Minnesota Department of Health is at www.health.state.mn.us.

Next, look after one another and check in on the members of your post and in your community. Our American Legion Buddy Check program is perhaps more important now than ever before. Rely on telephone, email or social media to communicate since person-to-person contact is not the safest option. Please be particularly attentive to seniors, a population that is especially vulnerable to the harmful effects of this virus.

For those posts that feature restaurants or bars, you have likely heard that the Governor has directed that all on-site restaurant and bar service close through at least March 27. I recognize the hardship that this directive causes to many locations, but I am confident that our American Legion Family will do our part to mitigate the spread of this virus. For those employed by American Legion food and beverage operations, the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development has expedited unemployment insurance. Visit www.uimn.org if this applies to you, and please share with applicable staff.

As I stated earlier, our Veteran Service Organization is a beacon in our communities. We embody service, patriotism and camaraderie. The American Legion is focused on the greater good, and I challenge you to model The American Legion at our best in your community. While striking the balance of safeguarding your personal safety and practicing social distancing, I encourage posts to consider leading the partnerships that will help your community through this challenge.

This is not a comprehensive list, but here are some Buddy Check-inspired ideas for your American Legion Post to be a beacon in your community:

- EDUCATION: Become a drop-off location for your local school breakfast or lunch program
- FOOD SECURITY: Coordinate a food drive, with a food drop-off and/or collection point
- PUBLIC SAFETY: Offer your facility, time and talent for county or city operations centers
- ELDERLY OUTREACH: Develop a campaign to conduct phone calls to the elderly in your area
- MEALS ON WHEELS: Establish a “meals on wheels” operation that can deliver to the socially isolated members of your community
- BLOOD DRIVES: Coordinate with your local Red Cross and organize a community blood drive
- ERRANDS: Assist in running errands to shops or pharmacies in your area

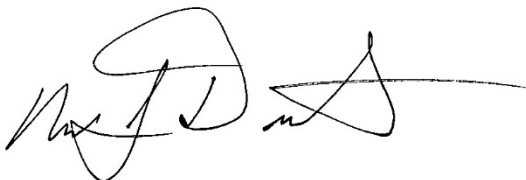
As you determine how to serve your community, please engage the younger members of your post to mitigate the health risk concerns facing older members.

Lastly, I encourage you to keep us informed with stories and examples that champion these efforts. We want to celebrate humanity at its best, which includes The American Legion’s commitment to take care of each other. Send testimonials and examples of community assistance directly to Tim Engstrom at the Legionnaire. Tim can be reached at tengstrom@mnlegion.org or 651-291-1800.

Thank you all for representing The American Legion during these difficult times. Our nation, state and community will persevere, and we will look back with pride knowing we applied our experience as veterans to lead our fellow citizens through this pandemic.

FOR LOVE OF COUNTRY!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Dvorak', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Commander Mark Dvorak
State Commander
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