



AMERICAN LEGION
POST 712
PLEASANT HILLS
January (2024-I)

Elected Officers

Commander – Dave Halpern

1st Vice Commander –
Lloyd Ray

2nd Vice Commander –
John Dillon

Finance – Thad Weidmann

Executive-At-Large –

1. Susan Coville-Cook
2. Nick Krawec
3. Don Rottman
4. Ed Harmon

Appointed Officers

Adjutant – Terry Choate

Chaplain – Susan Coville-Cook

Judge Advocate – Nick Krawec

Service Officer – Don Rottman

Webmaster – Thad Weidmann

Editor – John Dillon

On-Line

American Legion Post 712

[Link to Post 712 webpage](#)

American Legion Post 712

[On Facebook as American Legion
Postsevenonetwo \(Pleasant Hills\)](#)

American Legion Riders

[On Facebook as American Legion
Riders Chapter 712](#)



American Legion Post 712

AMERICAN LEGION POST 712

As we kick off 2024, let's review the

Mission Statement of American Legion Post 712

1. Provide support and assistance to Veterans.
2. Honor Service Members who have died in Service to our Nation and Veterans who are deceased.
3. Develop and implement activities for the enjoyment of Veterans.
4. Create and implement programs and Out-Reach activities to build Post 712 Veteran membership.
5. Provide guidance, information, and training for Veterans who want to take an active role in Post Leadership and activities supporting the community.
6. Participate and provide support to our communities with support groups and First Responders including Police, Fire, EMT, and Medical personnel.

If you want to become involved in helping others, supporting Veterans, and enhancing the Community attend a Post 712 meeting or contact an Officer for more information.

Save the Date

January 2024

- **January 16 (Tuesday): Post Meeting, 7 PM**
- **January 20 (Saturday): Volunteer Opportunity – Wreath Cleanup at Cemetery of the Alleghenies, Bridgeville, PA**
(Will be discussed at the January meeting)
- **January 15 (Monday): Martin Luther King Jr. Day**
National Holiday
- The January Legion Riders Meeting has been cancelled.
- The January American Legion Auxiliary (ALA) Meeting has been cancelled.
(Historically organizations often cancel their January meeting given the limited ongoing work this time of year)
- Honorable Mention - January 27 (Saturday):
National Chocolate Cake Day
(No kidding! Treat yourself and Enjoy!)



Meeting Times and Location

Meetings are held the third Tuesday of the Month at 7 PM

Meetings at 3801 Saw Mill Run Blvd, Brentwood 15227

Mailing Address

American Legion Post 712
610 Old Clairton Road
Pleasant Hills, PA 15236

Phone Number 412-901-0327

Email

LegionPost712@gmail.com

Recognition Ceremony

Return of Past Commander's Photo's and Name Plaques

On December 19th, the Post held its first Open Holiday Meeting in which guests participated. First Vice Commander Lloyd Ray chaired the meeting and included a recap of activities from 2021 to the Present explaining the challenges the new Post leadership overcame to reconstitute Post 712 to once again become a viable American Legion Post. Also included was a briefing on activities during 2023 and an overarching Financial Report.

Though the most memorable moments of the evening were the presentations of the Commander's Photograph and Plaque to family members.

Family members of two former Commanders participated in a simple ceremony, Mrs. Candy Scrima, spouse of former Commander John Scrima (1989-1991) and Ms. Annette Thieret, daughter of former Commander William Thieret (2003-2004). During the presentation we remembered each of these Leaders and their commitment to others as displayed in so many ways, including through Commanding Post 712. The photographs and plaques were presented as a memento of thanks for their Leadership and Volunteer Service to others.

In addition, Veteran and Legion Member John Caliguire accepted the photo and plaque on behalf of Past Commander Edward Clark Jr. (1983-1985) and will present the items to Commander Clark Jr. in person. *Thank you to all who participated and who volunteer their time and effort to go above and beyond!*



Photo 1: Lloyd Ray with photo of Past Commander William Thieret (2003-2004), Terry Choate, Ms. Annette Thieret, John Dillon with framed newspaper articles, and Thad Weidmann.

Photo 2: John Dillon, Lloyd Ray, John Caliguire, Terry Choate, Mrs. Candy Scrima with photo of Past Commander John Scrima (1989-1991) and Thad Weidmann.

Photo 3: Lloyd Ray and John Caliguire with photo of Past Commander Ed Clark Jr (1983-1985).



You Can Help! Do you know a Past Commander or Family Member of a Past Commander who may want their Command Photo that was formerly displayed at Post 712. If so, please help put that person in contact with an Officer from Post 712 so that we may return their photo and thank them or their family member for their service. We could especially use some help with the following:

William S. Hoop (1952-1953 and 1959-1961)
 Russell E. Webb (1954-1957)
 Thomas Tindall (1968-1969)
 Jack Sabina (1970-1972 and 1978-1979)
 J.W. Robertson (1973-1975 and 1979-1980)
 Andrew T. Mates (1975-1978)

Rich Pruni (1985-1987)
 Rege Donnelly (1991-1993)
 Robert Burch (1993-1994)
 Dave Prop (1994-1995)
 Edward A. Swatko (1995-1998)

Email information to
LegionPost712@gmail.com

The first 6 months of the newly Chartered 712 Riders is in the books. During December, the Riders donated \$200 to [Brentwood VFW Post 1810](#) as a thanks for all the support the 1810 Team provides in support of meetings and in the spirit of Brotherhood, Veterans helping Veterans!



The Riders also donated \$250 to [Operation Troop Appreciation \(Facebook\)](#) and further donated 209 volunteer hours to local Veterans' Charities during 2023, with many of those hours being directed towards OTA.

The Riders recently held their first Annual Christmas Party which was hosted at [American Legion Post 490 Castle Shannon](#). All attendees had a wonderful time with a White Elephant gift exchange and great food from Jackie's Catering. Individual attendees paid all expenses. You may be surprised to learn that several of the Post 712 Riders are members of Post 490. Veteran's organizations are banding together to support one another as we all are facing challenging times across the board. We must evolve with the times or be left behind.

Who are the Riders? We are a Brotherhood and Sisterhood of Veteran and Civilian Legionnaires. The Riders are family and community-oriented and believe in taking care of the families of the fallen, in providing aid to those injured in service to our Nation, in celebrating service to our Nation, and in supporting our local community; and we believe in doing all of this from the back of a motorcycle. Our members ride many different makes of motorcycles. If you want to make a difference and have fun doing it, talk to a Rider.

The Riders meet the first Wednesday of the month at 7 PM at VFW Post 1810 or American Legion Post 490. Our next meeting is on Wednesday, February 7th, at VFW Post 1810. You are welcome to come by and see what we are all about reach out to us for details at LegionPost712@gmail.com

Charlie Mike,
Top



Operation Troop Appreciation Exceeds a Milestone

Serving 200,000+ Troops and Veterans

Contributed by Monica A. Orluk, CEO, Operation Troop Appreciation

When Operation Troop Appreciation (OTA) shipped its first round of care packages to a Platoon of PA National Guard Soldiers who were deployed to the Middle East during the Iraq War, the initial intent was to quickly meet an immediate need.

“OTA’s founding President, Kristen Holloway learned that some of our troops needed moisture wicking clothing to stay cool in the extreme heat,” said Monica Orluk, who is a founding member and now serves as the organization’s chief executive officer. *“Kristen mobilized a small team of volunteers from the Pittsburgh area who began sending Under Armor® T-shirts, personal hygiene supplies, snacks and other necessities to troops who were fighting in Iraq and other hot spots in the Middle East. Our plan was to continue sending care packages until the war ended. We didn’t anticipate what would happen next.”*

OTA was founded July 2004, as a PA 501 c 3 non-profit. This small band of volunteers worked out of basements and garages, collecting donations, packing boxes, and transporting shipments to the post office. It didn’t take long for the little charity to outgrow its operational space and now occupy a new building they purchased last year that serves as the charity Operations & Events Center and boast a volunteer team of more than 50 people!

**306th Military
Police Battalion
of the
Pennsylvania
National Guard**



As they approach their 20th Anniversary in July of 2024, OTA has served more than 200,000 Active-Duty Troops and Veterans representing all branches of the U.S. Military, including the National Guard and the Reserves. Monica added, *“OTA has achieved such phenomenal growth that it is now ranked among the 10 top-rated veteran nonprofits by Military.com.”*

“All of us at OTA are proud of reaching this remarkable milestone,” said Orluk. *“We couldn’t have served so many troops and veterans without the help of volunteers, private individuals, small businesses, and corporate sponsors who provide financial support, participate in collection drives, and help organize special events. It’s heartwarming to see how many people have continued to rally behind our troops and veterans.”*

The cornerstone of OTA is its Active-Duty Military Support Project. Modeled after charities such as Make-a-Wish, this program enables troops to submit wish lists and ask for items such as tactical gear, blankets, socks, T-shirts, space heaters, newspapers, sports and fitness equipment, video gaming, computers, musical instruments, phone cards, snacks, and personal hygiene supplies. OTA’s distinct difference, compared to other organizations, is they are fulfilling specific requests from military units via their web site. A recent request that OTA received was to provide clothing to troops and civilians who are receiving care at military hospitals and need clothing.

Operation Troop Appreciation Exceeds a Milestone **Serving 200,000+ Troops and Local Veterans - Continued**

"The size of each order varies," said Orluk. "We could be serving a battalion of 10,000, a platoon of 12 or anything in between. Regardless of how many soldiers, sailors, and aviators we are serving, this program gives troops an opportunity to ask for items that help contribute to their health, welfare and morale or aid them in completing the mission."

SFC Matthew Claycomb remembers when his Platoon received its first shipment of care packages in Iraq, during July 2004. His unit, 107th Field Artillery Regiment of the PA National Guard is the project that launched OTA!

"It was like Christmas in July," said Claycomb who recently retired as a Readiness Non-Commissioned Officer for the PA National Guard. "We looked forward to getting the packages because you couldn't drive to a convenience store in Baghdad. I can't tell you enough how much OTA helped to improve the quality of our lives."

"One of our challenges is securing enough financial support so we can continue our mission of serving our troops and veterans," said Orluk. "Inflation has meant that we are paying more to procure items. Consequently, individuals don't have as much disposable cash to make large contributions. To counteract that, we have been seeking more long-term financial commitments from companies and corporate sponsors. We are also stretching our purchasing dollar by looking for volume pricing and special discounts since what we provide is all new items and merchandise. What's more, because we are an all-volunteer organization, our donations are used to help our troops and veterans, instead of paying for administration salaries."

CEO Orluk added that OTA is in the process of renovating a building they purchased during 2023 in West Mifflin, PA. This 2-story building serves as the OTA headquarters and provides space for program operations and events and will allow the charity to expand its support to Veterans who reside in and around the Monongahela Valley.

"Not only will this new facility give us more room for our administrative and operational needs, but it will also provide space for fundraising events, and a venue to offer classes, job fairs and social gatherings for our veterans to reduce isolation and promote comradery. We are excited about completing building renovation, as it will meet our growing needs for many years to come," she said. Construction is targeted to be completed mid-July 2024 and OTA plans to celebrate a Grand Opening and 20th Anniversary upon completion.

- To learn more about Operation Troop Appreciation visit [Operation Troop Appreciation](#)
- Follow and Like OTA [Operation Troop Appreciation on Facebook](#)

Of Note – OTA is a 501(c)3 non-profit headquartered in West Mifflin, PA. Several members of the Post 712 Legion Riders are regular Volunteers and, Members of Post 712 and the ALA have volunteered from time to time. OTA is comprised of 100% Volunteers and has been named one of the Top-Rated Military Charities for 13 years in a row (2011 – 2023) by, [Military.com](#) – Editor.



Exterior view of the new location of Operation Troop Appreciation located on Pennsylvania Ave in West Mifflin, PA. Currently under renovation.

SOMEONE YOU SHOULD KNOW –

DON ROTTMAN

||| The following is the text of a speech presented by Legionnaire and then Junior Vice Commander Don Rottman to the students of Thomas Jefferson High School on Veterans Day circa 2015. The speech was reprinted in the Post 712 Newsletter during that same time frame and is once again presented as it is timeless. If you would like to meet Don, attend a Post meeting as he will usually be there – Editor |||

Good Morning. My name is Don Rottman. I am the Junior Vice Commander of the Pleasant Hills American Legion Post 712.

The Vietnam War was a long costly conflict that pitted the Communist regime of North Vietnam, supported by the Chinese and its southern allies, the Viet Cong, against South Vietnam and its principal ally the United States. Vietnam was the first televised war and as such it brought the reality of war into the living rooms of the American public for the first time in history. As the war became increasingly unpopular at home, the United States eventually ended participation and withdrew during 1973. The unification of Vietnam fell under Communist control 2-years later. More than 3 million people died including 58,000 Americans. *In Vietnam, we never lost a battle, but we could not win the war.*

Now I want to paint a picture of how it was for me ... Back then there was a draft system. Males had to register when they turned 18. My classification was 1-A. I did not apply myself in high school because I had no interest in going to college. I enjoyed working with my hands as a welder and was interested in racing cars. I graduated high school during 1964 and began working in the mill in August. I was drafted just over 1 year later in December 1965 and left Pittsburgh 2-weeks before Christmas for Fort Lewis, WA assigned as an Infantryman to the 4th Infantry Division.

We started with Basic Training, which included physical training, discipline, and working as a unit. After Basic Training we moved to Advanced Training or AIT. We were assigned a Military duty as rifleman, machine gunner, assistant machine gunner or any number of positions. I was assigned as an RTO or Radio Man. My duties were to work with the Platoon Sergeant, coordinate the Fire Teams in an attack, and call in Choppers to extract the wounded. I also had to direct Fire Support from the Choppers and call for reinforcements.



Stock photo of U.S. Forces AN/PRC-77 Transceiver, VHF, Military, Man Portable, Radio with harness and accessory bag.

Total weight with battery approximately 25 lbs. and weight of 2 additional batteries 5 lbs. each and universally called by its nickname (that is not appropriate for print) - Editor

My Basic Combat Uniform consisted of an M-16 rifle with 500 rounds of ammunition, 2 grenades, 5 smoke grenades to mark positions for the Choppers and a 25 lb. radio plus 2 extra batteries at 5 lbs. each and a large whip antenna. In addition, we each carried 4 canteens of water (1 gallon), a gas mask, bayonet, and entrenching tool, plus enough C-Rations to last 3 days. C-Rations were pre-packaged food and comfort items for field use. I noted our C-Rations were typically dated 20+ years earlier from 1943 and 1944.

We never carried tents or any kind of shelter from the weather, you just dealt with the elements. My Unit was on the Cambodian border in dense jungle. It was so thick that sometimes the sun could not get through the jungle canopy. We were always damp and wet. The average temperature was close to 100 F and the humidity was just as high, so we never wore protection gear such as Flak Jackets.

Our mission was to stop the North Vietnamese from bringing supplies and troops into the region. We ran Search and Destroy missions daily. Some missions lasted as long as 3 weeks so there were no showers or change of clothes. The only good thing was we all smelled the same, so no one noticed. We were re-supplied with food, water, and ammunition by Choppers and simply lived in the jungle on the move every day.

The night ambushes scared me the most. When the enemy was in your kill zone you would let the first couple walk thru and then initiate firing with everything you had. We then got out of the area as fast as we could because you never knew how many enemy soldiers were coming up behind the ones you just engaged.

My biggest regret about my time in Service is the loss of very good friends. It is amazing how close Soldiers become to your Brothers in Arms. Most of us stay connected with each other to this day. In Vietnam we did not understand the politics of war. We simply fought for each other. One negative reaction I do have to my experiences is the way some Veterans were treated when they came home. We were not accepted. We were called *Baby Killers* and *Drug Addicts*. Military Leaders told us to stay in groups in airports and train stations for our safety and to not wear our uniform to certain locations.

I believe that is why many Vietnam Veterans work with current Veterans to help them adjust to civilian life and give them the *Welcome Home*, all Veterans deserve. On this Veterans Day make a pledge to yourself to, *Thank a Vet* for his or her Service. This includes your Grandfather, Dad, or Mom, and the hero's currently serving in uniform. I cannot adequately express to you how good it will make them feel.

As for me, I received several medals for my combat service, though the one I am most proud of is the Combat Infantry Badge. My Unit also received a Presidential Unit Citation. I remember smiling when I told my Dad I received a Good Conduct Medal as he could not imagine me being on my best behavior.

Thank you for your time and God Bless America.



Combat Infantry Badge

Awarded to U.S. Army Infantry and Special Forces Soldiers who engage in direct combat with an armed enemy of the United States – Editor

LP/OP (Listening Post/Observation Post)

- Post 712 Meeting – Tuesday, January 16, 2024, at 7 PM
 - Cemetery of the Alleghenies – Christmas Wreath Pickup, Saturday, January 20, 2024, to be discussed at next meeting
 - Chapter 712 Riders Meeting – Wednesday, February 07, 2024, at 7 PM
 - Post 712 Meeting – Tuesday, February 20, 2024, at 7 PM
 - 1810 Clean-Up Day – Saturday, March 16, 2024, at VFW 1810, to be discussed at next meeting
1. Operation Troop Appreciation (OTA) has volunteer opportunities monthly to include every Tuesday from 10 - 3. If you are interested in being notified when such opportunities are available or if you would like to explore volunteer opportunities, contact John Dillon *(Special thanks to Monica Orluk, CEO of OTA, who, upon request, contributed the article about OTA to Post 712 for publication in our Newsletter – OTA is a wonderful Organization and thanks for sharing the OTA story!)*
 2. **Do** you know a Community Youth Sports Team or Club that is seeking sponsors for 2024 within the Post 712 geographic area? If so, we may be able to help. During 2023 Post 712 was a sponsor of the Thomas Jefferson High School Girls Volleyball Team and we hope to be able to continue that sponsorship and even expand to other appropriate School and Community Activities. Inquiries should be made to a Post Officer or contact the Post through our phone number or email address.
 3. *The new direction of Post 712 is focused on helping Veterans and supporting the Community and does not require a bar or alcohol sales to do so; though it does require engaged Veterans and Patriots who want to give back to the community. If you want to be part of something bigger than yourself then join Post 712 for a meeting.*
 4. The American Legion Auxiliary (ALA) Post 712 continues to do good things and we hope to incorporate ALA updates into future editions of the Newsletter.
 5. **Do** you have an idea for a Newsletter article you would like to write, or would you like to participate in the Newsletter, webpage, or Facebook page in an official manner? All Legion Family Members are encouraged to do so as the more ideas and input we have the greater our Post can be. Discuss with John Dillon, LegionPost712@gmail.com.
 6. The best way to keep up with the activities of Post 712 is to attend our Monthly meetings and to Like and Follow us on Facebook at [AmericanLegion PostSevenOneTwo](#)

In Closing - Keep your powder dry and lets all have a great, safe, and Happy New Year in 2024. See you in the next edition of, The Phoenix