



**JOHN E. JACOBS LEGION POST 68 LELAND
MEDIA RELEASE**

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Submitted by:

Eric Mens, Public Affairs Officer
American Legion Post 68 Leland
Ph (703) 626-9104

RECENT HAPPENINGS AT LEGION POST 68

Successful Community Blood Drive. The John E. Jacobs American Legion Post 68 thanks the Leland community, American Red Cross, and WWAY TV Channel 3 for helping ensure the success of its first Blood Drive in 2026. The drive at WWAY's Leland facilities was supported by WWAY staff, who worked diligently to set up and break down the event. Alongside an excellent Red Cross team, Post 68 member and First Vice Commander, Jim McAvoy, led a team that included Tom Wills, Ed Grinnell, John Hacker, Tom Powers, Lane Adrian, and Tony Schirillo to provide on-site assistance.

Every blood product collected is extremely important and eventually lifesaving. At the conclusion of the recent drive, more than 40 local donors responded to the urgent call for blood. The drive yielded four Power Red and 39 Whole Blood units. Power Red donations typically take longer to obtain, but such donations are critical for treating trauma patients, newborns, providing emergency transfusions during birth, patients with sickle cell anemia, and others suffering from blood loss.

Post 68's next blood drive is scheduled for Friday, April 10th, at WWAY, 1224 Magnolia Village Way, Leland, NC. Due to limited parking, Post 68 volunteers will provide golf cart transportation from the designated parking area to the donation center. Mark your calendars!

Annual Oratorical Contest. Each year, Post 68 holds an Oratorical Contest at North Brunswick High School (NBHS). The contest is part of the American Legion's National program and features high school students delivering prepared speeches on any aspect of the U.S. Constitution and citizens' responsibilities regarding that aspect. The event is intended to promote students' understanding of the Constitution and develop their public speaking skills.

For this year's competition, two topics were required to be addressed: 1) the main part of the contest was an original speech (8-10 minutes long) prepared by each student addressing any part of the constitution they wanted to cover with some discussion of citizens' duties concerning that part of the constitution and 2) a shorter speech (3-5 minutes) on one of 4 parts of the Constitution which were identified by the National Legion headquarters during the summer. The specific part to be addressed is selected at random during the contest. For our contest, the selected provision was Article III, Section 3 of the Constitution, which addresses treason against the United States.

Dale Todd led the Post in conducting the competition, supported by Post members Dan Dodge, Lane Adrian, Bea & Joe Frost, Patty & Kobe Kelley, John Hacker, Richard Fry, Richard Rodgers, Evan Jones, Tom Powers, Eddie Jenkins, Jim McAvoy, and Bob Page. This year's overall winner was Alexander Chisenhall, a 10th grader at NBHS, who spoke on Political Gerrymandering. Alexander won \$500. Second place went to Kyrra Crook, a 12th grader and a member of JROTC, who won \$300. Third place went to Kieran Daniels, also a 12th grader and JROTC member. The Post thanks Dr. Rollison, NBHS Principal; Mrs. Latisha Kirby, Guidance Department; and JROTC Unit Commander, CPT George King, and SFC William Bass, who helped ensure the success of this year's competition.

Continuing to Spread the Word on Suicide Awareness. Post 68's *Be The One* Project Team, led by former Post Commander John Hacker, continues to make inroads among Eastern North Carolina communities. The national Legion *Be The One* program is intended to help address the issue of increasing public awareness of veteran suicides and provide information intended to help reduce the rate of suicides.

Post 68's team developed a short training presentation to raise public awareness and highlight helpful community resources. The team created and distributed a wallet-sized plastic resource card that provides users with quick access to key services, including veterans, financial, medical, food, housing, and drug rehabilitation resources. In addition, the team developed a 10-point program to help other Legion organizations start their own initiatives.

Hacker, who is also the Legion's North Carolina Department Chair for the *Be The One* program, has been actively presenting the program to local law enforcement agencies, First Responders, and EMT personnel. Following a recent presentation by Hacker and Edie Ludgate, *Be The One* lead for Carolina Beach Post 129, the Town of Carolina Beach issued a Resolution Supporting the American Legion's *Be The One* Project (Resolution 26-2345).

Organizations, public officials, and others interested in learning more about Post 68's *Be The One* program, its resource card, and how they can get involved should contact John Hacker at jveteran13@gmail.com.

Reaching Out to Veterans. Recent Post 68 surveys affirmed that veterans in the Leland community are motivated to join the Legion not only to share the camaraderie of being with like-minded individuals but also to learn how and where they can help veterans, their families, and other disadvantaged individuals in the community. Post 68 is not a 'bricks and mortar' Legion Post and as such, is blessed with the support of Blossoms Restaurant in Magnolia Greens in providing the Post with a welcome place to hold our monthly meetings. As such, we have long recognized

the importance of engaging our members to proactively reach out to community veterans and families, identify their needs, and support them where we can, whether through Buddy Checks, donations, or in-person visits to veterans in their homes.

Our Veterans Service Officer, Lane Adrian, and Chaplain Rick Rodgers are critical to this outreach. For several years, under Rodgers's leadership, the Post has actively supported veterans at Brunswick Cove Living Center. Typically, 14-20 veterans are housed in this local assisted living facility at any one time. Post support has included funding Legion memberships, and Rodgers was instrumental in securing Brunswick Cove's support for its veterans by arranging for the facility to provide transportation to and from Post meetings. Once there, these veterans share in the camaraderie, learn about Post activities, and socialize with other Legion members. In addition, each month, Rodgers organizes birthday and holiday celebrations for the veterans, including major holidays such as Memorial Day, Veterans Day, and Christmas.

Remembering Robert Penwell. The Post mourns the recent death of an outstanding Comrade and active community leader, Robert Penwell. A resident of Magnolia Greens, Bob was a long-time Legion member and a leader in Post 68's very successful annual golf tournaments (Tee It Up For Veterans), the Wreaths Across America Program in Wilmington's National Cemetery (held each December), and Magnolia Green's Annual Fourth of July Parade. He was a compassionate, motivated, and helpful member of the veteran community, and we will miss him dearly. Post 68 extends its deepest condolences to his family.

Upcoming Events—Mark your calendars!

North Carolina Rice Festival. Post 68 will participate in the North Carolina Rice Festival on Saturday, March 7, 2026. The festival, held at Brunswick Town/Fort Anderson State Historic Site (8884 St. Philip's Road SE, Winnabow), is from 9:30 AM to 4 PM. The Festival's free, culturally focused events invite locals and visitors to learn about the region's forgotten agricultural history and the unique and enduring legacy of the Gullah Geechee. Veronica Carter, a member of Post 68, will lead the DNA-based "Ancestry Reveal" program, held in Navassa, NC, on Thursday, March 5, at the Navassa Community Center (338 Main Street, Navassa) from 6 to 9 PM. To learn more about the festival and other public events, visit <https://www.northcarolinaricefestival.org/>.

Next Post 68 Meeting. To learn more about how veterans can join the American Legion or how Post 68 Legion programs and projects benefit our veterans and community, visit <https://ncpost68.org/>. Post 68 meets at 6 pm every third Thursday in the Blossoms Restaurant Banquet Room (1800 Tommie Jacobs Drive, Leland, NC). For those who wish to participate, members gather at 4:30 pm in Blossoms Restaurant for dinner and a social hour preceding the meeting. The next Post meeting will be on Thursday, February 19, 2026.