

# AMERICAN LEGION

JOHN E. JACOBS LEGION POST 68 LELAND  
MEDIA RELEASE

December 21, 2025

Submitted by:

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

## DECEMBER HAPPENINGS AT LEGION POST 68 LELAND



**WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA** – The Wreaths Across America is a nationwide initiative honoring deceased veterans each December by placing wreaths on their graves. The event brings communities together across the country to remember and pay tribute to those who served, ensuring their sacrifices are never forgotten.

On Saturday, December 13, 2025, members of the John E. Jacobs American Legion Post 68 Leland, joined forces with the greater Wilmington community at the city's National Cemetery. Thanks to generous donors, over 5,000 wreaths were provided—enough to adorn every veteran's gravesite and offer a personal moment of remembrance for each.

Post 68 member Patty Kelly, as the event emcee, welcomed attendees and set a tone of gratitude and reflection. Kelly introduced distinguished guests, including Leland Mayor Brenda Bozeman and Wilmington Mayor Bill Saffo, whose words underscored the significance of honoring those who served.



Continuing the tribute, Post 68 members John Hacker, Jim Barkley, Dale Todd, and Evan Jones each stepped forward to place Memorial Wreaths representing the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, and Air Force respectively. Member Bob Page honored prisoners of war and those missing in action with a dedicated wreath, reminding attendees of their enduring sacrifice and the nation's gratitude to those who never returned home.

Following the opening ceremonies, members of the public were invited to place wreaths on individual gravesites. Doing so allowed each attendee to connect personally with the legacy of service and the lives remembered that day.



**POST 68 RECEIVES DONATION** – Inspire Brunswick Forest, the 55+ Active Adult Apartment Community in Brunswick Forest, donated \$600 to Post 68's Be the One (BTO) program. BTO is the American Legion's Suicide Awareness and Prevention Program. Lauren Andracka Cox, Inspire Community Manager, and Tracy Beinke, Inspire Lifestyle Coordinator (pictured), presented the check to John Hacker, Lead for the Post 68 Be the One program.

The donations were made possible through Inspire's Flags for Heroes Program which sought community participation in honoring veterans and active-duty members by purchasing and placing hundreds of small American flags on the community's property in Brunswick Forest.

**HONORING VETERANS AT BRUNSWICK COVE** – Each month, Post 68 Chaplain Rick Rodgers, organizes and hosts a social event for veterans residing in Brunswick Cove Living Center in Winnabow. Each veteran residing at the facility has their annual American Legion dues paid for by Post 68 and the Cove transports their veterans to Post meetings at Blossoms Restaurant in Magnolia Greens. This year, as in past years, Post 68 members celebrated the holiday season with snacks and presents for the veterans.



**CITIZEN OF THE YEAR AWARD** – Leland Mayor Brenda Bozeman presented the town's 2025 Citizen of the Year Award to John Hacker, Lead for Post 68's American Legion Be the One (BTO) suicide awareness and prevention program. Hacker has led the local program since its inception at the national level. This is the first time that a member of the Post has received the award.



Over the last two years, Hacker's leadership in developing a local outreach and training program led to Post 68 being recognized by the Legion's Department of North Carolina as the community leader in addressing veteran suicide awareness and prevention. Through Post 68's BTO Committee, local law enforcement and first responders, including Fire, Police, and EMS, have received suicide awareness and prevention training.

Hacker's efforts also led to the development of a "Be the One" wallet card app, which provides First Responders and others with critical links to County, State, and Federal resources available to assist veterans and their families in need of counseling, food, housing, employment, and other essential services. His efforts, within Leland, Brunswick County, and at the state level, have led to his appointment as the Legion's Department

of North Carolina Chairperson for the BTO State Committee.