



**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
Cell Ph (703) 626-9104**

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SEPTEMBER IS SUICIDE AWARENESS MONTH



For many years, suicide was rarely discussed openly. In 2003, the World Health Organization (WHO), in partnership with the International Association for Suicide Prevention, established World Suicide Prevention Day, observed annually on September 10. According to WHO statistics, suicide claims more than 720,000 lives worldwide each year. In 2008, to align U.S. efforts with the alarming rise in suicides nationwide, Congress designated September as National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month. These efforts recognize the terrible personal and economic costs of suicide and aim to challenge myths, reduce stigma, and foster open, compassionate conversations about suicide.

Suicide respects no boundaries – not age, sex, skin color, marital status, education, or profession. It is one of the leading causes of death in the United States, with an estimated death occurring every 11 minutes. The suicide rate among male U.S. veterans is about 1.5 times that of the general adult population; women veterans experience almost double the suicide rate of women who are not veterans. The daily number of U.S. veterans who commit suicide ranges from 14 to 18.

Faced with a rising suicide rate among veterans, the American Legion launched its ‘Be the One’ program in 2022. The program has focused on eliminating the stigma surrounding veteran suicides by openly discussing the issue, raising public awareness of the signs of suicidal ideation, helping prevent suicide through training, and providing effective tools and resources to reduce suicides among veterans.



Since Be The One’s inception, the John E. Jacobs American Legion Post 68 in Leland has become recognized as North Carolina’s leading American Legion organization for the program. Today, 2nd Vice Commander John Hacker serves as the program’s State Chair. On August 29, 2026, Hacker delivered a well-received presentation to American Legion members at the Legion’s 107th Annual National Convention in Louisville, KY, briefing attendees on the Post 68 program, including outreach to the veteran and business communities, the Post-developed ‘Be The One Action Plan’ for establishing an effective program,’

and the Post-developed wallet-sized resource card used by emergency responders, law enforcement, and other service providers to help veterans and their families access the resources they need—such as housing, medical care, food, substance abuse services, and more. To learn more about the Post 68 Be The One program, visit <https://www.ncpost68.org/be-the-one>.

Increasing public awareness and taking steps to address and reduce veteran suicide are not enough. Under the theme of *Connection, Collaboration, and Service*, and with the leadership of Commander Tom Powers, the Post will expand its community work, continuing to engage with local law enforcement, elected officials, businesses, and other service organizations to make the community a better place to live. It will also work with Green Star Families of America, a national nonprofit working to secure recognition for families who have lost a veteran to suicide. The Post recognizes that families affected by veteran suicides need support from a caring community. We intend to honor those lost lives, support their families, and ensure no one carries this loss alone.

The John E. Jacobs American Legion Post 68 is committed to “Veterans Serving Veterans.” To learn more about the Post, visit <https://www.ncpost68.org/>. Membership meetings are typically held in the banquet room at Blossoms Restaurant (1800 Tommie Jacobs Drive, Leland) on the 3rd Thursday of each month. Dinner is an informal gathering for members, starting between 4:30 pm and 5:00 pm. The official meeting begins at 6:00 pm. After the meeting, members socialize over drinks in the Blossoms bar area. Everyone is welcome: members, visitors, guests, and spouses. The next Post 68 meeting is Thursday, September 17.