



Commander Pat Harrell
harrell_patrick_r@sbeglobal.net

Senior Vice Comdr.
Heidi-Ann Mooney
hamooney7@gmail.com

Jr. Vice Comdr. Mike DeLuca
mdd143@gmail.com

Adjutant Chuck Berry
cberry1@comcast.net

Finance Officer John Cotter
john_cotter@sbeglobal.net

Judge Advocate Jeff Linden
jeffrey.linden@snet.net

Chaplain Barry Leghorn
bleghorn@snet.net

Executive Committee

Rob Giuffria
rob@ctrob.com

Sam Runde
dgianz5@comcast.net

Jeff Cole, Past Post Commander
'topjeffe@aol.com'

Board of Trustees

Trustee Harold Ducey
liducey@aol.com

Trustee Ray Jean
rajejan728@gmail.com

Trustee Powell Schunder
powell.schunder@gmail.com

Trustee Frank Haran
fjay46@comcast.net

Trustee Rocky Goodwin
degoodwin65@gmail.com

Trustee John Mele
'melejp@comcast.net'

Trustee Brendan Boyle
'bpboyle572@gmail.com'

Moe Fradette - Editor

Hayes-Velhage Post 96

The American Legion

45 Raymond Road

P.O. Box 370160

West Hartford, CT 06137-0160

860.233.9029

www.post96.org

*"Serving Our Veterans And
Community Since 1922"*

★ Newsletter

★ Winter - Spring 2022

Wednesday, Feb. 9th, '22, 6:30 pm	Virtual Monthly Post Meeting
Wednesday, Mar. 9th, '22, 6:30 pm	Monthly Post Meeting
Wednesday, Apr. 13th, '22, 6:30 pm	Monthly Post Meeting Nomination of Officers '22-'23
Wednesday, May 11th, '22, 6:30 pm	Monthly Post Meeting Election of Officers
Saturday, May 21st, '22, 8:30 am	Placement of flags at Fairview
Monday, May 30th, '22, 10:00 am	Memorial Day Parade
Tuesday, May 31st, '22, 5:00 pm	Military Inductees Ceremony
Saturday, June 11th & June 12th	Celebrate! West Hartford
Wednesday, Sept. 14th, '22, 6:30 pm	Monthly Post Meeting
Wednesday, Oct. 12th, '22, 6:30 pm	Monthly Post Meeting
Friday, Nov. 11th, '22, 11:00 am	Veterans Day Ceremony
Saturday, Nov. 12th, '22 12:00 pm	Centennial Banquet

Note: Location of monthly meetings can be checked by calling the Post at 860-233-9029 the week of the event.

★THE FOUR PILLARS OF THE AMERICAN LEGION★

★ A Strong National Security ★ Taking Care of Veterans ★ Mentoring Youth ★ Promoting Patriotism and Honor ★

Commander's Message

Welcome to our Centennial year!

We launched celebration activities this past Veteran's Day, in 2021, with a set of five posters depicting the 'March to 100' with the Norman Rockwell painting, scenes from the Great War, our Post's subsequent founding with pictures and short bios of Hayes and Velhage, our charter, and the four Legion pillars outlining the focus of our 100-years of service. While it might seem that we jumped the gun at the start, recent evidence uncovered shows that the Post was organized in the summer of 2021, but that it took time to officially obtain the charter.



Posters created by Hayes-Velhage Post 96 provide history as the post turns 100 years old. Veterans Day, West Hartford, Nov. 11, 2021. Photo credit: Ronni Newton

After Veteran's Day, this cluster of posters was displayed in Town Hall throughout December, and in the Noah Webster Library in January. We look forward to its placement in the high schools, and at the Community Centers. Meanwhile, we are crafting the next set, which will highlight WW2. The plan is to march thru all the war eras, telling our story.

COVID continues to haunt us in this new year, with national numbers rising higher than in previous years. Vaccinations have made a difference, and most of the people making up these higher numbers are those not vaccinated. While we have temporarily gone back to virtual post meetings, our activities continue in high gear, with various recognitions and

award presentations, donations, and pre-season baseball planning and preparations. In addition to our normal workload, we have a host of specific events planned for this Centennial year. Formal requests have been made for military bands, parade marshals, stage actors, and keynote speakers, for greater visibility in the Memorial Day Parade and the Celebrate! West Hartford event. We've also secured the town's auditorium for our Centennial Dinner Dance towards the end of the year.

None of this happens without 'helping-hands'. The success of our Centennial celebration will not be possible without the support and cooperation of all members. In approximately two weeks you will receive a letter with a description of the Centennial events as well as a form (sample on Pg. 11) for you to fill out and return to the Post. We need your support. Please take time to consider what events you will support and let us know. Your support is critical to the success of our Centennial activities.

Pat
Post Commander

*American Legion Auxiliary
Hayes-Velhage Unit 96*

Welcome to 2022! We only have 6 months left in this auxiliary year, and what a year it has been. Unit meetings are held in person or virtually, usually on the 2nd Saturday at 10am. Spouses, daughters and granddaughters of the post and unit members, that are not a member, are always welcome to attend a meeting or help with an event. We'd love you to visit with us and see what we do, and we have a lot of fun doing it 2022 is a year of *Celebration*. You do not want to miss this **"March to 100"** historical year. Join us in assisting the post with the celebration of their 100th birthday. Many events are planned. Contact the Post or Jeanne for dates and times.

American Legion Auxiliary "Mission Statement" includes Vision, Purposes, Values and

ALA is to support The American Legion and honor the sacrifice of those who serve by enhancing the lives of veterans, military, and their families, both at home and aboard. For God and Country, we advocate for veterans, educate our citizens, mentor youth, and promote patriotism, good citizenship, peace, and security.

Visit www.ALAforVeterans.org for information on all auxiliary programs. We are a strong auxiliary. We welcome new members. Be a part of the most Patriotic Organization dedicated to veterans, active military, and their families. Pictures below say a thousand words.

God Bless America

Jeanne Berry
President
ALA Hayes-Velhage Unit #96
cell/text 203-715-2336, or
jeanneberry@comcast.net

Elaine Kolter, Unit #96 Historian's eight grade class at Henry James Memorial School in Simsbury making stars with veteran's names for the American Flag shown below.



2021 Veterans Day

(This is an edited version of an article by Ronni Newton, We-Ha)



West Hartford Town Manager and Post 96 Member Matt Hart. Photo credit Ronni Newton

Long before he had finalized his career goals, former West Hartford Town Manager Matt Hart enlisted in the Army, out of a sense of duty and adventure, and for the future assistance of the Army College Fund, he said.

Addressing the community not in his role as town manager but as the keynote speaker at West Hartford's annual Veterans Day ceremony, Hart made an emotional plea for services for veterans.

He dedicated his remarks to Army Master Sergeant Marshall Lowery, one of his friends from his time in the Army, a quiet man who was a physically fit former high school athlete, who was found dead just a week ago, just a few days past his 53rd birthday, alone other than with his service dog.

Hart had lost contact with his friend for about 20 years but said thanks to Facebook he recently re-connected with him and many of his other fellow servicemen. While Hart – who also served in the Army National Guard in New York – used that college fund to finish his undergraduate education and earn his master's and law degrees and never saw combat, Lowery served two tours in Afghanistan. There he was significantly injured by a roadside bomb. He suffered from PTSD, but continued to be active in the veterans community

(2021 Veterans Day Continued)

“His friends and the members of his veterans network are shocked, and are grieving his loss, as he played such a significant role in their lives,” Hart said.

“Marshall’s story is not unique,” he said. “Sadly, this scenario, a younger veteran dying before his or her time, has become all too common.”

Suicide, struggles with health issues, with substance abuse, with the ability to hold a job in the civilian workforce, are far too prevalent situations in the veteran community, Hart said. “I think the systemic causes behind the challenges faced by our veterans community are much more complex,” he said.

While he doesn’t have all the answers, Hart stressed the importance of encouraging not necessarily more funding, but better allocation of resources, to “continue to support and enhance veterans services for those who need it most.” Critical is expanding VA benefits to the those who may have been exposed to toxic substances – like Blue Water Navy veterans from the Vietnam era and veterans from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan – and to those who received less than an honorable discharge because of behavior caused by PTSD, to those who were dismissed because of sexual orientation before the Pentagon changed its policy, and to those who serve in the National Guard but may not have served on active duty long enough to qualify.

“It’s important to lend a veteran a helping hand,” Hart said, and to have patience. Quoting Sen. Jon Tester of Montana, Hart said, “We do a great job making civilians into warriors, but we don’t do as good a job making warriors into civilians.”

Hart said he appreciates when he is thanked for his service, and will appreciate help for others in their transition to civilian life.

***“Do you have a friend who is a Veteran?
Ask them to join our Post and celebrate
our Centennial with us.”***



Heidi-Anne Mooney, Senior Vice Commander of American Legion Hayes-Velhage Post 96, served as emcee. Veterans Day, West Hartford, Nov. 11, 2021. Photo credit: Ronni Newton

The annual Veterans Day ceremony, held at the Connecticut Veterans Memorial in West Hartford Center, was hosted by American Legion Hayes-Velhage Post 96. Senior Vice Commander Heidi-Anne Mooney served as the emcee.

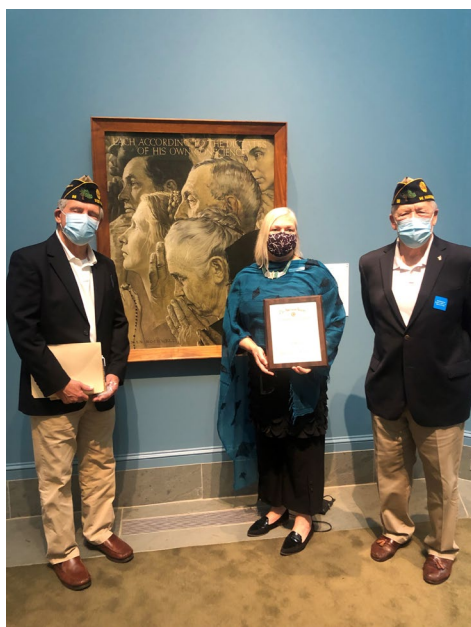


Hayes-Velhage Post 96 Commander Patrick Harrell. Veterans Day, West Hartford, Nov. 11, 2021. Photo credit: Ronni Newton

Post 96 Commander Patrick Harrell said that this Veterans Day serves as the official launch of the Post’s “March to 100,” commemorating the 100th anniversary in 2022. He noted the namesakes of Hayes-Velhage Post 96 – Waldo Hayes and Frank Velhage – both gave their lives while serving during World War I, but in very different ways. Hayes died as a result of enemy action, while Velhage – the first World War I fatality from West Hartford – died in a shipboard accident in Philadelphia.

Certificate of Appreciation Presented to Norman Rockwell Museum

Hayes-Velhage Post 96 presented a “*Certificate of Appreciation*” to the Norman Rockwell Family Agency and the Norman Rockwell Museum for the permission given to Hayes-Velhage Post 96 for use of Norman Rockwell’s painting “To Make Men Free” in our Centennial campaign, “*March to 100*”. The presentation was made October 24, 2021 at the Norman Rockwell Museum in Stockbridge, MA.



(L-R) Patrick Harrell, Post Commander, Laurie Norton Moffitt, Chief Operating Officer, Norman Rockwell Museum, Moe Fradette, Past Post Commander.

2021 Veterans Luncheon

The Elmwood Senior Center and American Legion Hayes-Velhage Post 96 held a luncheon on November 10th to honor and thank Veterans from the West Hartford community for their service. The luncheon was attended by over 50 Veterans and invited guests.

Jeffrey Cole, Past Post Commander, was emcee for the event and in his opening remarks thanked his fellow Veterans for attending the eighth time the luncheon has been held.



(Photo credit Gary McBride)

The keynote speaker for the event was Command Sergeant Major Paul Vicinus. Vicinus, who is the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment for West Hartford Public Schools, entered the Connecticut Army National Guard in 1989 and assumed the role of Command Sergeant Major of the 169th CT National Guard in February, 2017.

Vicinus’ remarks to the Veterans and invited guests centered on his experiences in the military and his perspective on the Pledge of Allegiance.



(Command Sergeant Major Paul Vicinus. Photo credit Gary McBride)

“I’m humbled to stand before you today - to celebrate you, your service, and your sacrifice. I’ve learned that the bonds born from military service unite us in ways that few outside our ranks can truly understand. Regardless of branch or MOS, station or standing, there is something unspoken, invisible and intangible in which we find connection, common ground and shared understanding. Therefore I know not what I can offer you in my words that you do not already

(Veterans Luncheon Continued)

know, no experience I can share that you haven't already lived, no mile that I've walked that hasn't been along a path you've either blazed, walked alongside or behind me. What I will share is my perspective. Perspective is the one thing the military taught me that my grandfather hadn't - perhaps couldn't - by fault of my youth.

I mentioned the bond born from military service. The brotherhood and sisterhood that we share by virtue of our time in uniform. I want to talk about that unity and also the division that seems to be all around us. We find ourselves living in difficult times - polarized by our differences. In the midst of a pandemic, health and safety issues that should bring us together by way of our humanity have been weaponized on the political stage by both parties to drive us apart. Public education - considered an inalienable right - is on trial in the court of public opinion for teaching students anti-American views. Movements over the last several years have students kneeling for the National Anthem or not standing for the Pledge of Allegiance. As a veteran - and an educator - I ask myself what it all means and what to do.

One of the veterans organizations of which I am a member has an annual national essay contest for middle school students. The theme this year is *How Can I be a Good American?* I received a set of ten essays from a sixth grade class that I've been reading and it's caused me to reflect on my own youth and ideas I held as a child for which I now have greater perspective. I remembered something my grandfather once said about hate groups such as the KKK which he detested. He was a man of strong catholic faith and told me that groups that preached hatred or treated any group of people as less than was morally corrupt and against our values. But then he said something else. He said as much as he loathed such a group, he would defend their right to assembly. I understood the point but I don't know that I could really appreciate the depth of complexity wrapped up between our values and our freedoms and what it means when one is seemingly in conflict with the other. Freedoms are universal and we'd like to think that values are the same but this isn't always

the case which leads to the question of where is the line between a freedom and a value. Where does one end and the other begin? I was once asked, as an educator and a military veteran, does it bother you if a student doesn't stand for the Pledge. I responded that while it may bother me on a personal level, I joined the military in order to defend a person's right of refusal. That was sufficient when there were only one or maybe two individuals but after Colin Kapernick gained media attention in his expression of protest by kneeling during the National Anthem, it became a more prominent issue. I've had the privilege of hearing Buddy Bucha, a Congressional Medal of Honor recipient speak on this very issue and provide inspiring and insightful perspective that moves a person beyond the emotion of what may be perceived as a disruption to a shared value, to explaining the why of Kapernick's protest and a collective call to action to stand up and stand together to address issues of systemic inequities and injustice. Bucha's lesson teaches that we can still honor our American traditions while acknowledging and working together to repair very real flaws in our American experience.

Vicinus' remarks also included his personal interpretation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

The food service for the luncheon was prepared by Family & Consumer Sciences teacher Jessica Brand's Hall High School Culinary Class. The food service included various wraps, salads, and homemade snickerdoodle and chocolate chip cookies. All were very delicious.



(L-R, Julio Duarte, Principal, Conard High School, Jessica Blitzer Social Studies Dept Supervisor, Conard High School)

Eagle Scout Court of Honor



(Left to Right) Benjamin Cohen-Tyler, Ethan Schuck, Lucas Bush, Pat Harrell, Post Commander.

Hayes-Velhage Post 96 recognized three Boy Scouts of West Hartford Troop 44 on their achievement of the level of Eagle Scout at a ceremony held December 22, 2021 at the Universalist-Unitarian Church in West Hartford.

An additional Eagle Scout, Jackson Forrest of Troop 146, was recognized January 20, 2022 for his achievement of the level of Eagle Scout.



WWII Veteran Ben Cooper Awarded Honorary Membership by Post 96



(Legionnaire Rocky Goodwin presents WWII Veteran Ben Cooper an Honorary Membership Plaque from Hayes-Velhage Post 96. Photo Credit Ronni Newton)

(The following article contains excerpts of an article written by Ronni Newton. The complete article can be read at the following link:

<https://we-ha.com/ben-cooper-is-nearly-100-and-has-served-his-country-for-nearly-80-years/>)

Ben Cooper, who reached his 100th birthday on December 24th was honored by the West Hartford community on December 19, 2021 with a drive-by parade organized by Mayor Shari Cantor and Hayes-Velhage Post 96. A turnout of nearly 100 cars, which included vehicles from the Police and Fire Departments, passed by Ben's daughter's house to honor his service to our country.

Ben, a long time resident of West Hartford, served as a Medic with the 3rd Battalion of the 157th Infantry Regiment of the 45th Infantry Division in Europe during WWII.



45th Infantry Division

In late April 1945, Cooper left on a transport from Munich, heading to Dachau. The 45th had fought its

(WWII Veteran Ben Cooper continued)

way into Dachau he said, and had begun to liberate the concentration camp.

As the transport neared, “There was a terrific odor in the air, of burning flesh,” Cooper recalled.

Eisenhower sent as many soldiers as possible to Dachau when it was being liberated, to witness the atrocities that were found there.

“What I saw was unbearable. It was unbelievable,” Cooper said.

There were plywood barracks, built to house 400 people, but 1,400 had been forced to live in each one, people who were so emaciated you couldn’t tell if they were men or women. If they weighed 60 or 70 pounds it was a lot, said Cooper.

Cooper’s daughter Sharron said “My dad never talked about the war when we were growing up, it’s unbearable for me to think of him being there. He’s the most gentle man.”

In 1990 a local social studies teacher asked Cooper if he would participate in a videotaped interview about World War II. That began his new mission, and since then he’s spoken to countless groups of students, civic leaders, and other veterans about the Holocaust and his service in the war.



Legionnaire Dan O’Connor in his WWII jeep led cars from Post 96 in the parade. Photo credit Ronni Newton



Members of the West Hartford Police Department, West Hartford Fire Department, and Hayes-Velhage Post 96 assemble to render a hand salute to Ben Cooper. Photo Credit Ronni Newton.



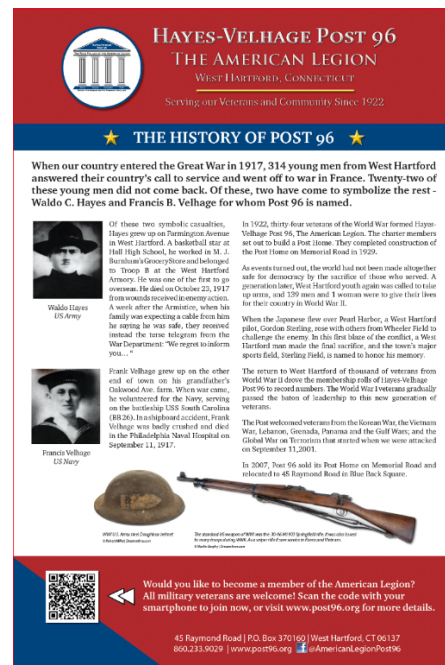
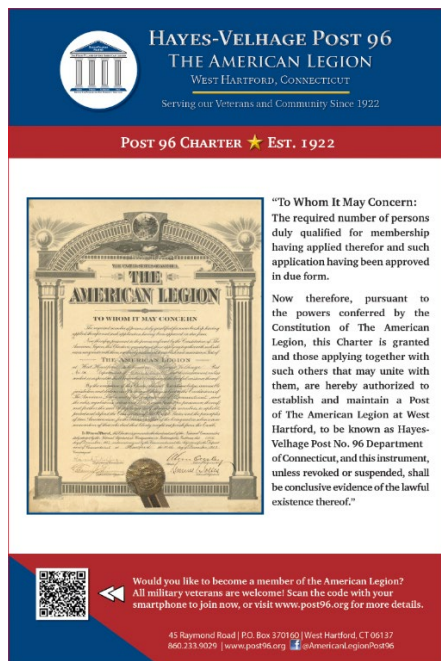
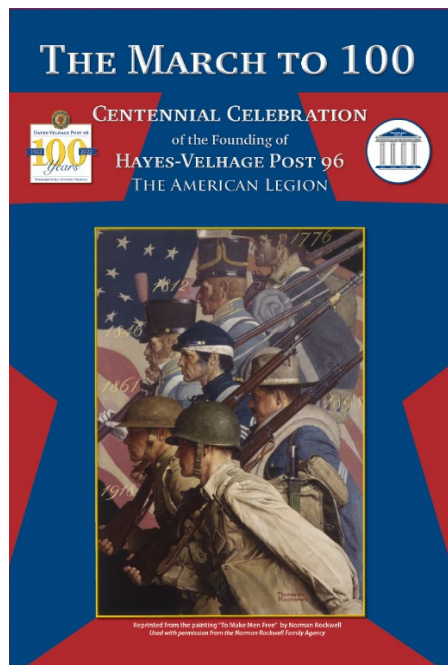
Ben Cooper and family watch parade from his daughter’s house. Photo credit Ronni Newton.



In July 2019, Ben Cooper of West Hartford receives the Knight of the Legion of Honor Medal from French Consul General Anne-Claire Legendre. Photo credit: Ronni Newton

First Centennial Display of Hayes Velhage Post 96

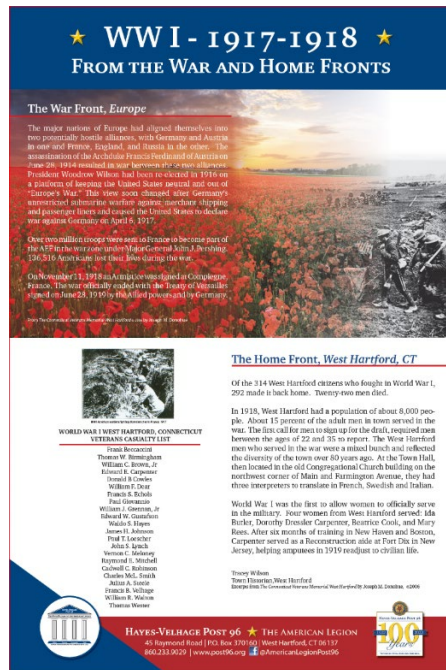
The first of our Centennial displays, designed to present the history of Hayes-Velhage Post 96 and the wars our country fought in, were introduced at the 2021 Veterans Day Ceremony held at the Connecticut Veterans Memorial West Hartford on November 11th. These first display of our Centennial *March to 100* describes the formation of the American Legion in 1919, the award of our Charter in 1922, and the service of our Post's namesakes, Waldo Hayes and Francis Velhage.



The first panel is the key panel which will be used with all future exhibits to chronical the history of Hayes-Velhage Post 96. The painting was done by Norman Rockwell and is titled “To Make Men Free” and illustrates soldiers from various American wars thru WWII. The Rockwell Family Agency and the Norman Rockwell Museum granted permission to Post 96 for use of the painting in our Centennial campaign.

The second panel is a scan of our Charter that was granted in 1922. The words on the right side of the panel are from the Charter. The third panel is brief history of the formation of Post 96 with a bio of Wado Hayes and Francis Velhage.

At the lower left corner of the second and third panels is a code which can be scanned by any Veteran who wishes to join our Post. Scanning the code with a smartphone will automatically take the user to our website and allow them to enter information to join Post 96.



The fourth panel of the display illustrates a brief history of WWI and a description by West Hartford Town Historian Tracey Wilson of what was happening in West Hartford during that time. Also listed on this panel are the names of West Hartford men who died while serving during WWI.

The final panel of the initial display outlines the “Four Pillars of the American Legion”, the foundation of why we serve as members of Hayes-Velhage Post 96.

The display was first exhibited in West Hartford Town Hall and the Noah Webster Branch of the West Hartford Public Library. Future locations of the display will be sent to members via email.

Post Elections

At the April, 2022 Post Monthly Meeting the Nominating Committee will present candidates for election to Post offices to serve the Post for the 2022-2023 term. It is critical that we fill all positions to continue the work our Post does for our members and the community. The following positions are elected each year. Please give consideration to serving your Post.

- Commander
- Senior Vice Commander
- Junior Vice Commander
- Chaplain
- Finance Officer
- Judge Advocate
- Executive Committee (2 positions)
- Trustee (4 positions)

Descriptions of each office can be found on the Post website at www.post96.org and selecting "Constitution and Bylaws" tab.

The following form, with a return envelope, will be mailed to all members of Post 96, Auxiliary, and SAL in the next two weeks. Please review and reply with your support commitment when you receive the form.

Hayes-Velhage Post 96 Centennial Programs

We have launched our Centennial “*March to 100*” and to insure the success of our planned activities we need the support of all Post 96 members including our Auxiliary and SAL. Without **YOUR** support we will need to modify or eliminate some of the planned activities. Below are the events we are planning . **PLEASE** review the schedule and indicate which programs you will be available to support. Once you have completed the form, return it in the envelope included in this mailing. Again, we need your support!

Please check the activities you want to participate in for the Centennial:

_____ Placement of Centennial displays at locations in West Hartford.

_____ Memorial Day Parade. Planning and participation in Parade.

_____ Celebrate! West Hartford. Planning and participation in event activities.
(Includes manning Post 96 tent, Military Band Concert, distribution of Post materials)

_____ Military Inductees Ceremony setup and greeting of guests.

_____ Placement of flags at Fairview Cemetery on May 21st.

_____ I would like to attend the Centennial Banquet.
I would like to bring a guest. (Circle one) Yes No

_____ Veterans Day Ceremony, November 11, 2022.

Name _____

Phone Number _____

Email _____

Thank you for your consideration and support. Please return this form in the attached envelope.



Hayes-Velhage Post 96
The American Legion
P.O. Box 370160
West Hartford, CT 06137-0160

Non-Profit Orgn.
U.S. Postage **PAID**
Hartford, CT
Permit No. 391



Hayes-Velhage Post 96



VETERANS STILL SERVING AMERICA