

**LEWIS G
WATKINS
DETACHMENT**



**DETACHMENT
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Tip of the Spear

VOLUME XIII ISSUE 9 DECEMBER 2023



Commandant's Corner

Hello Fellow Marines and Members,

As we come to a close on 2023, I want to take a few moments to reflect on all we have accomplished this year. We had a spectacular December with the close out of the Belk Charity Sale, Toys for Tots, and Wreaths Across America. We added about \$2,500 to our bank account courtesy of Belk which will enable us to undertake on additional community charitable projects. More than 500 needy children I received toys for Christmas, and we honored over 140 service members with wreaths at the Mountain View and Oak Grove cemeteries as our contribution to Wreaths Across America. Throughout 2023 we have been involved with charity, helped a local community center, honored many fallen heroes, and in general have been doing good things. We got some excellent publicity from *The Journal*. Those things don't happen without the hard work of all of you. I am so proud of this detachment and everything we have accomplished this year, and it is all thanks to the amazing people like you. Thank you for all that you do.

I think our most important accomplishment is all of our new members. Thanks to all of you and your hard work to find the Marines and others in our community and convincing them to join. Your work will ensure that the future of 1131 is secure. We have also been a real positive force in the community this year. Enjoy your holidays with your loved ones, and come back next year refreshed and ready.

I want to hit the ground running in January. Some items I have on my list are putting together a committee to look for worthwhile community projects. Our Bylaws change implementing a "floor" approach with funds allocated to chartable projects has been approved by the Department Judge Advocate. Its time to start putting this financial planning approach to use by finding some additional worthwhile community projects.

I would also like to have a committee to plan more social events for our members through the year. Let's get out there and have more fun together. If either of these are things you would like to be involved in, or even be the leader of the committee, please reach out to me via phone or email. My number is 843-441-1261 (text is preferred due to work schedule) or my email is magnumstr807@gmail.com and you can reach out any time.

Be safe during the holidays whether you are staying in the area or traveling. I look forward to seeing you all at our January business meeting on the 16th.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Semper Fi,

Todd Alexander
Commandant



Jim Koerner
Senior
Vice-Commandant

Fellow Marines & Members,

I want to thank you for making the Toys for Tots and Wreaths Across America events in December a huge success. I really enjoyed helping out at the TFT Toy Store. We made a difference in our community, and I was glad to see the smiling faces on the organizations that picked out toys for their TFT families.

Thanks again and keep up the good work. I look forward to seeing you in 2024.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Semper Fi.

Jim Koerner
Senior Vice Commandant



Len Rock
Junior
Vice-Commandant

Hello Fellow Marines,

We finished up the 2023 Toys for Tots campaign in excellent shape. Thanks to the generosity of our community and your help, over 500 local kids had a brighter Christmas. See the “box score” on page 4 for some details.

A sincere thank you to all our members and other volunteers who contributed to making the campaign a success by: getting the boxes into the community, collecting toys; helping out with Christmas parades, working in the store making labels and helping bag and loading toys during shopping periods. Success depends not on a few individuals but on a true team effort. You all did great.

The Blue Ridge Community Center proved to be an excellent base for our campaign. Planned store improvements for next year include a new paint job and carpeting. If funding is available we may even get a little heat.

As Marines we are taught to fight in every “clime & place” but the older I get the less tolerant I am of the cold.

As the mercury rises I plan to restart Lowe’s recruiting in February. As that approaches we’ll be looking for volunteers to man our recruiting tent.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all!

Semper Fi.

Len Rock
Junior Vice Commandant



Don Alexander
Judge Advocate

As I mentioned at the November business meeting, I forwarded our proposed changes to the Department Judge Advocate, Claude Davis, per the Department Bylaws. He has approved the changes to our Bylaws. The three changes address email voting, the past Commandant role, and our "floor" budget process. These will go into effect in January after Adjutant Jim Day makes the formal changes and the signature page is forwarded to Judge Advocate Davis for his signature.

A major action for January is the beginning of the process for selecting new officers for next fiscal year. Here is Section 305 of our Bylaws: Nominating Committee. The Commandant shall appoint a Nominating Committee of at least three (3) members in good standing in January of each year. The Nominating Committee shall prepare a recommended slate of officers for presentation during the March meeting. The Nominating Committee shall have contacted the nominees and obtained their willingness to serve, if elected. Additional nominations may be made from the floor at the March and April meetings. Election of officers shall be held annually at the April meeting. Newly elected and appointed officers will be installed during the May meeting. The Adjutant shall submit the "Report of Installation Form" of new officers to Department of South Carolina and Marine Corps League National offices prior to June 30.

Semper Fi,

Don Alexander
Judge Advocate

Veterans & First Responders in Crisis

1-800-273-8255

A simple act of kindness can help someone feel less alone.
Your actions could help save a life. #BeThere

The Marine Corps DSTRESS Line

Call 1-877-476-7734

24/7 anonymous phone, chat and referral service using a
'Marine to Marine' approach

Tragedy Assistance Program For Survivors (TAPS)

Call 1-800-959-TAPS(8277)

Whether you are in emotional crisis, need to connect with
TAPS resources and programs, or just want to remind
yourself that you are a part of a loving, supportive family.

The holiday season can be a difficult time for some people. A call from a friend or acquaintance can make a huge difference in someone's life. Take a moment out of your busy schedule and reach out.

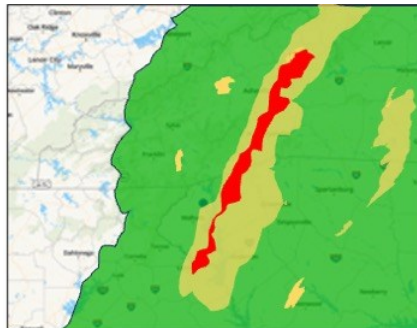
It matters.



An estimated 5,000 people watched the parade. Bob & Nancy Walker towed the float. New member Eric Nelson & Jim Day walked the route and handed out candy. We had lots of fans!

Jim Day, Jim & Nella Williams, Molly Lewis and Bill Thompson rode in the Salem Parade. A 6-wheel Gator came to the Jeep's rescue.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Seneca	November 27
<input type="checkbox"/>	West Union	December 1
<input type="checkbox"/>	Westminster	December 2
<input type="checkbox"/>	Walhalla	December 2
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Salem	December 4
<input type="checkbox"/>	Fairplay	December 9



"The weather outside was frightful ..."
Not really, just very wet so only two of the scheduled 5 Oconee County parades were rescheduled and ultimately cancelled. Candy anyone? We have lots left over.

"Local Attorney bestowed with highest civilian award" (from The Journal, December 20, 2023)



Long-time attorney and Marine Corps League member Jim Williams was presented with the Order of the Palmetto by SC State Senate President Thomas Alexander and Representative Bill Sandifer.

The award was given at a surprise presentation at the Derrick, Ritter, Williams and Morris, P.A, law offices during a holiday party.

The Order of the Palmetto, established in 1971, is the state's highest civilian honor. It is presented in recognition of a lifetime of extraordinary achievement, service, and contributions on a national or statewide scale. The Order of the Palmetto "recognizes individuals who have selflessly given of their time, resources and goodwill through a variety of different causes and pursuits to the benefit of their neighbors, fellow citizens and the fabric and prosperity of South Carolina," according to the state.

Judge Williams served a tour in the Marine Corps following graduation from the University of South Carolina and then attended USC law school. He has been a judge in Walhalla and Salem, and is very involved in the community as well as every year with the Toys for Tots campaign.



2023 TFT Box Score

Total Organizations / Children	11 / 532
Toys Collected	3,065
Toys Distributed*	2,650
Bikes Distributed	82
Books Distributed	525
Tablets Distributed (9 YO)	40

* Does not count stuffed animals & stocking stuffers

- Some Superstar Donors**
- Annual Golf Tournament
 - Keowee Key Organizations
 - Lift Technologies (63 bikes!)
 - Parkway Industries
 - Seneca Family Restaurant
 - Mountainview Restaurant
 - Sisters Restaurant
 - Bob Tate Real Estate



Keowee Key's Pickleball Club dinner netted 8 of 35 total boxes from Keowee Key club, fire station & marina..

The Annual Golf Tournament was another successful outing with lots of donated toys & bicycles..

Parkway Industries also provided a nice haul.

Toys for Tots program provides gifts for about 600 kids

Norm Cannada, Lauren Pierce Dec 16, 2023



William Certain, left, and Bridgette Boggs discuss gifts.

Photo by Caleb Gilbert

SENECA — Christmas morning will be a little more exciting for about 600 Oconee County kids thanks to a program run by the local branch of a military veterans' organization.

Toys for Tots has been in existence for 76 years and is led by members of the Lewis G. Watkins Marine Corps League Detachment No. 1131 has the responsibility for Oconee County because there is no Marine Corps Reserve Center in the county.

Bob Walker, local coordinator of the Oconee Toys for Tots program in Oconee County, said the total number of children served will be "close to 600."

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Bob Walker, local coordinator for the Oconee County Toys for Tots program, said the total number of children served will be "close to 600."

In addition to providing five "quality toys," for each child on the list, the children also get two free books each and other items for Christmas. The program also works with other organizations serving kids at Christmas to make sure they're not being served by another organization.

"It's bigger and better," Walker said of this year's program, adding that one local industry, Lift Technology raised about \$5,400 and "bought nothing but bicycles," a popular gift for children at Christmas. "They bought 73 bicycles," Walker said. "The community was very generous this year, and we were able to provide five toys (per child) instead of the typical four toys. Organizations come to us. They come in and pick (the gifts). We don't allow parents or relatives to come in and pick for the kids. This causes problems."

About 100 bikes were given away during distribution of toys, up from 90 a year ago, according to officials.

GOLF TOURNAMENT

An annual golf tournament at Cross Creek Plantation raises money in the

summer to go to Toys for Tots. Business partners Eddie Brown and T.J. Grove lead the effort each year. They said the tournament raised \$35,000 for the program, plus toys that golfers brought to the tournament to be donated.

"I wanted to give back," Brown said of his reason for getting involved with the golf tournament. "I just wanted to find a charity that I could do something for, but I wanted to do a golf tournament and wanted something that the biggest part of the money goes back to the reason for doing the golf tournament." Grove said he was brought into the tournament by Brown.

"I'm just partners with this man," he said pointing to Brown. "After he moved up here, he is eating here one night and we're chatting, and he said, 'I've always wanted to do a golf tournament. Well, I was thinking about doing this up here.'"

"I said, 'Let's do it. That was 10 years ago — every year keeps getting bigger and bigger.'"

Greg Register, who retired from the Air Force in 2005 and now lives in Oconee County, said Brown invited him to get involved with the tournament. "I did it because I met this guy (Brown) through our small group at church," he said. "We start talking, and he goes, 'Well, I've been in the golf industry for a long time. My passion is golf. I love to play golf. Eddie started telling me about this tournament he has coordinated for 30 some odd years, and I'm like, 'It's a wonderful charity to get behind. And then just to have an opportunity to go out and participate her in the community. We're kind of new to the community. We've only been here for a couple of years, but it's a wonderful way to get kind of plugged in."

"That's pretty cool that a golf tournament can impact 600 kids' lives, and it's just opened my eyes to the impact Toys for Tots has had all around the community," Register added. The fact that our golf tournament there could impact 600 kids' lives, it means a lot."

WEST UNION TOYS FOR TOTS

The town of West Union had 10 families signed up for help this Christmas. Members of town council, town department heads and others showed up Thursday morning eager to select presents for the children that were donated from all over the county. The Christmas gifts were specifically chosen based on need and age.

"Got lots of good toys for each of the kids. We had a couple of new people helping us this year, a new Councilwoman (Lisa Wilson), and her husband helped," said Mayor Linda Oliver. "They were just really surprised at the way it was done, the ease of going in there. I mean, they have everything laid out. It (was) just a wonderful experience, and everybody needs to at least try once a year."

Oliver said it "means the world to her" for her to be able to help families in need for Christmas time.

"All we had to do was basically take some of our time to do this to help families that don't have the monetary needs to get what they would like to get for their children," she said.

"It's always a lot of fun, we always have to try out the bicycles," she added jokingly. "Just like to probably see more people get involved next year. It's a wonderful organization (the Marine Corps) puts on and we need to stand behind them and help them in any way that we can."

Toys For Tots Shopping Daze



The store is officially open for business!



SCRHA shopped for Seneca, Walhalla & Westminster families



Walhalla — the largest group this year — shopped for 168 children in record time



Sleighs came in all shapes & sizes



Jim Williams' group



Salem-Tamassee area group



Westminster Baptist Church had the second largest group with over 100 children



The Detachment shopped for & delivered to Smiling Angels Day Care Center



Plenty of WBC shoppers made quick work of the toy selection & transportation



A generous donor provided 13 of the 40 of the Amazon Fire tablets handed out this year

Not pictured: Oconee Family Literacy Center & Nehemiah Baptist Church

Upcoming Meetings and Special Events

Thursday, January 4, 2024 at 5:00 pm:
Board of Trustees Meeting, at American Legion Hut, 575 N Fairplay St. Seneca, SC.

Tuesday, January 16, 2024 at 6:00 pm:
Monthly Business Meeting, at American Legion Hut, 575 N Fairplay St. Seneca, SC.

Saturday, January 27, 2024 at 8:00 am:
Monthly Family Breakfast at Seneca Family Restaurant, 515 Bypass 123, Seneca, SC.

Wreaths Across America – December 2023



Volunteers from the Detachment, BASF VETS and several other organizations participated. Nancy Walker from the local DAR Chapter was the master of ceremonies and Cara Murray from buglers.com blew Taps. The large number of volunteers made quick work of placing wreaths at the 140+ gravesites at Mountain View and Oak Grove cemeteries. Each paused for a moment of respect, and stated the individual's name before placing the wreath. Tommy Holland and Don Alexander placed a wreath at the gravesite of one of the few Marines interred at either cemetery.



Large or small, sometimes broken, but not forgotten.