

# 100 years of caring for vets

Ilwaco museum exhibit celebrates American Legion's history

By JONATHAN WILLIAMS  
COAST WEEKEND

**I**LWACO, Wash. — When most people think of the American Legion, they picture veterans in parades, on Flag Day and at Veteran's Day celebrations.

But what some may not know is the mission of the Legion.

The exhibit, "Coming Home: World War I and the Centennial of the American Legion," at the Columbia Pacific Heritage Museum in Ilwaco, hopes to remedy that.

Chartered by Congress in May 1919, the Legion is a veteran's organization dedicated to helping soldiers and their families.

"Many people don't really have any idea of what was sacrificed and what they've done and this is to help them remember," said 10th District Commander Dick Wallace, 74.

## Beginnings

Soldiers had few benefits when they returned home from war and there weren't any services for veterans with injuries or "shell shock."

By October 1919, Ilwaco formed Legion Post 48 and named it after Don R. Grable, the only man from the town to die in World War I. Washington state Sen. Dean Takko is Grable's descendant.

The Legion was able to get the first Veteran's Assistance bill through Congress. They also helped get the GI bill through Congress after World War II, which provided educational benefits.

In the exhibit, museum executive director Betsy Millard wanted to show the American Legion is an active ahistorical organization.

"I loved digging into the different histories and finding the stories of the original guys," Millard said.

The exhibit features memorabilia that spans the history of the American Legion. There are poems, newspaper articles from the Ilwaco Tribune and Chinook Observer, stories on the wall that detail local World War I history; including women from Ilwaco who served in the Red Cross, veterans' groups, prohibition in Pacific County, Liberty Bonds and clothes people wore.

It also shows the history of where the



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**ABOVE:** From left: 10th District Commander Dick Wallace, Pat Donnelly, World War II veteran James "Buck" Donnelly, Columbia Pacific Heritage Museum executive director Betsy Millard and Ilwaco Legion Post 48 commander Ron Robbins on Armed Forces Day. **LEFT:** A group in Ilwaco at the end of World War I in November, 1918.



## IF YOU GO

**Coming Home: World War I and the Centennial of the American Legion**

**When:** Now through July 6

**Where:** Columbia Pacific Heritage Museum, 115 SE Lake St. Ilwaco, Wash.

**Hours:** 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Thursday-Saturday

**Admission:** Adults \$5, Seniors 55+ \$4, Children 12-18 \$2.50, Children 12 and under free, Thursday free admission.