

Legion was housed. After World War I, it was in the former space of Columbia Hall/Finn Hall, a Socialist club.

### Legion today

Today, the Legion has 10 active members and 93 total members. The membership spans from World War II veterans like James “Buck” Donnelly, 98, who fought in the Philippines in World War II to those that served in the Iraq War.

At the end of World War II, the Legion had nearly 200 members.

Pacific County also has a much higher percentage of veterans than many other counties in Washington State.

Wallace noted that wars used to last three-four years.

He said veterans from the ongoing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq don't join as much.

“So we have to try to get 1 out of 10 is success for us,” Wallace said.

The museum shares its space with the Legion.

In a previous life, one of the Legion's halls belonged to the IWW communist group and was the worker's temple. “Lenon's name used to be up there on that wall,” Donnelly said.

### Care for Vets

The Legion has a service officer who helps veterans get care.

“Part of our job here is to remind (veterans) we're here to help if you need help,” said Legion commander Ron Robbins, 70.

The Legion will help veterans with their paperwork for the Veterans Affairs, assist them in paying their power, water or light bill and their rent.

“We become advocates for them,” Wallace said.

Administrators at the VA will pay attention to a veteran's paperwork who was helped by a service member from the Legion because they know they are trained to help.

Wallace will pickup veteran's who can't drive and take them to the VA clinic in Longview.

He and others will also take veterans to the Disabled American Veterans van at the Burger King in Astoria that drives them to the VA.

For Wallace, the Legion “means we're carrying on what our ancestors did to keep us free, and it's our best way of giving back. I came through pretty much unscathed, but I know a lot didn't, especially from Vietnam,” Wallace said.

He said soldiers from Vietnam weren't welcomed home much. But he thinks people are more sensitive to what veterans go through now.

The Legion also does a variety of civic activities. They go to Blake Lake on Memorial Day and read the names of fallen sol-



Colin Murphey/The Astorian

**A new exhibit at the Columbia Pacific Heritage Museum in Ilwaco highlights the history of the American Legion.**



Jonathan Williams

**A World War I painting.**

diers, starting with Grable. They also retire old flags on Flag Day, participate in parades and provide scholarships, gun safety classes

and present community awards.

Robbins said he sees the Legion as a place where “veterans can come to ask ques-



**An American Legion Ilwaco Post 48 jacket.**

tions and get assistance. I want them to know we're here, we don't necessarily need them to join, but we want them to know that we're here and that we're here to assist them,” he said.

If you know a veteran who is struggling or needs help, Wallace can be reached at 360-642-4188. 