

MEMO FROM EMMETT MAYOR GORDON W. PETRIE

SUBJECT: THE IMPORTANCE OF SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

I just returned from the 119th annual convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. The national VFW theme for the 2017-2018 year was “Service Not Self.” (Yes, we follow the 1 July to 30 June fiscal-year format, easily as annoying as Day Light Savings Time). I think you will agree the VFW came through this year when you read below. For now, I want to brag a little bit about just some of the great service clubs of long-standing in the Gem Community.

When there exists a \$20,000 gap per household, as there is in Emmett for average income versus the rest of the state—\$28K plus versus \$48K plus—something’s got to give. What gives, as it turns out, are our local and remarkable service organizations. You see, they also encompass the paradigm of “service not self”.

Due to time and space issues, I can only mention a few examples. If any group feels slighted, drop me an email at city hall or give me a call. Nothing would make me happier than to do another column bragging about you on this most important topic. Moreover, any slight is unintentional.

If you’ve lived in Gem County for at least the last ten years, you know the Rotary Club has figured out a way to parlay a \$10 to \$12K yearly effort into \$50 to \$60K bonanza through their annual Youth Auction. This money is fenced off by the club to address the needs of Gem Community youth throughout the year.

Not to be outdone in addressing children’s needs, the Emmett Lions Club conducts annual eye and hearing screening tests for grades K through 4 in the Emmett School District. Every year, long-time Lion Harry Granger points out, between 6 to 8% of the children screened check out for

additional health provider scrutiny. Of course the club also sponsors the annual Show and Shine and Cruise Night. It gets better every year.

Our local Kiwanians also help our youth directly. Each year the Emmett Kiwanis Club gives two scholarships to academically mid-ranged students, those with B's and C's, but who still make the appropriate effort to go on with their education following high school graduation. The Kiwanis Club also spearheads the annual Clean-Up Emmett Campaign, mentioned in the last Memo.

Our fellow comrades in Emmett American Legion Post 49 (full disclosure, I belong) provide us with one of the premier 9/11 Memorials in the state, and easily one with the most panoramic view as it sits at the midpoint on New Freeze Out Hill. The post members spend considerable time and money in keeping that beautiful garrison-sized flag flying and looking so dynamic.

Similarly, the Emmett Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 4900 annually makes a good contribution of service. For example, last fiscal year we engaged in 56 different activities involving 116 members (more accurately, the same suspects month after month) contributing 548 hours, 675 miles driven and out-of-pocket expenses contributed of \$2,226.43. Not bad for a smaller post. Yet, consider what the national organization did last year.

During our last fiscal year, VFW members nationwide volunteer nearly 10 million hours to community service projects benefiting morale, education, the environment, health sciences and civic projects. Furthermore, VFW Veteran Service Officers recouped \$7.7 Billion (that's right, with a "B") in deserved benefits for vets who were otherwise not getting them. In 2016, the VFW recouped \$7.2 Billion for deserving vets.

What an honor it is to serve our country and our fellow citizens. Why not join a group?