THE PROUD WARRIOR

FIRST BATTALION NINTH MAR

DECEMBER 2024



New Tun Tavern Breaks Ground in Philadelphia

The new Tun Tavern broke ground on November 10, expected to finish construction in 2025.

2025 Strategic Plan

Get a sneak peak at the 2025 Strategic Plan.

Local Chapter Campaign Starts

Campaign to stand-up local chapters across the nation began in Phoenix on November 2.

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The First Battalion Ninth Marines Association is embarking on an exciting new chapter: a comprehensive rebranding project to ensure our mission, history, and values resonate not only with our members but also with the general public.

SIG-EVENT CALENDAR

2025

JAN 9	Annual Dues Due Date	N/A
JAN 17	State of the Association Presentation	Virtual
FEB 21	February Live Members Discussion	Virtual
MAR 21	March Live Members Discussion	Vrtual



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

By James Vierstra, President

Dear 1/9 Marines, Sailors, and Families,

As 2024 comes to an end, I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to all of you for your unwavering support and dedication to the 1st Battalion 9th Marines Association. Your contributions have been instrumental in helping us thrive as an organization. With the new year on the horizon, I am filled with excitement about the opportunities that 2025 holds.

The board and I have been diligently working on numerous initiatives to expand and enhance our association. One of our primary goals is to further engage and integrate your families into the association. We believe that your families are a vital part of your legacy, and we aim to make them feel as much a part of the "Walking Dead" family as you do. Extending membership to families is a significant step in strengthening our community.

I am also thrilled to announce the launch of a rebranding initiative for the association. This effort is designed to help us increase involvement with business sponsors and establish the association as a meaningful contributor to our members, their families, and the broader community. Please note that this rebranding will not alter our unit logo. Instead, we aim to create a new association logo that may incorporate elements of the unit logo, reflecting both our heritage and our vision for the future.

In addition, we are working to expand our network of local area coordinators, building on the success of those in Arizona and Philadelphia. If you are interested in serving as an area coordinator, please reach out to Doc Hopson for more details. Your involvement in this capacity could make a significant difference in strengthening our community connections.

We will continue hosting our monthly Zoom meetings on the third Friday of each month. These meetings provide an opportunity for you to engage directly with me and the board, ask questions, and share your thoughts. To stay updated and ensure you receive meeting invitations, please visit our website and subscribe at the bottom of the homepage.

If you're considering joining the association or becoming more actively involved, we encourage you to visit our website, click on the "Join" tab, and complete the membership process. One of our board members will follow up with you to finalize your membership. For those who may be hesitant, I invite you to reach out to me personally. I would be honored to share more about what the association is doing and how it serves as a home for our members and their families.

The possibilities for our association's growth are boundless, and I look forward to connecting with each of you as we continue this journey together. The 1/9 family is excited about what lies ahead, and we are committed to building an even stronger and more vibrant community.

Thank you for your continued support. We could not achieve our goals without each and every one of you. Stay safe, and I wish you all a Happy New Year 2025!

Semper Fidelis,

James Vierstra, President



MEMBERSHIP GOALS FOR 2025: A BOLD STEP TOWARD GROWTH AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

By Doc Hopson, Director, Membership Chairman

As the Membership Chairman of the 1/9 Walking Dead Association, I am thrilled to share our ambitious and forward-thinking membership goals for 2025. These objectives align seamlessly with our overarching strategic mission of growth and enhanced engagement—not just within our current membership but also extending our reach to a broader community.

Our Vision: Growth Through Innovation and Inclusion

We've set aggressive membership goals for 2025 that will not only grow our numbers but also deepen our impact. These goals reflect our commitment to expanding the association's reach, providing value to our members, and building a lasting legacy for the 1/9 Walking Dead Association. Here's how we plan to do it:

Leveraging Technology:

In an increasingly digital world, technology offers untapped potential for engagement and outreach. We are exploring enhanced digital platforms to better connect with members, streamline communications, and facilitate recruitment efforts. From optimized websites to dynamic social media campaigns, we are committed to meeting our members where they are—online and beyond.

Strategic Alliances:

Partnerships will be a key pillar of our 2025 strategy. By aligning with like-minded organizations, veteran groups, and community leaders, we will broaden our influence and create mutually beneficial relationships that strengthen our mission.

Restructuring to Broaden Our Base:

Adapting to new challenges and opportunities, we are exploring ways to restructure certain aspects of our organization to make membership more accessible and inclusive. This approach is designed to attract a diverse group of individuals who share our values and vision.

Local 1/9 Chapters: A Major Initiative

One of the cornerstone initiatives for 2025 is the establishment of local 1/9 Chapters across the country. These chapters will serve as hubs for community, camaraderie, and collective action.

First Stand-Up Success:

We are proud to announce the successful launch of our first local chapter in Mesa, Arizona (Phoenix market). This event marked a significant milestone, demonstrating the power and potential of localized efforts.

Future Roll-Outs:

Our next targets for chapter launches include:

- Atlanta
- Dallas
- San Diego
- Philadelphia

These cities represent just the beginning of our ambitious expansion plan. As we continue to roll out additional chapters, we aim to strengthen our presence across the nation and create opportunities for members to connect and collaborate more closely.

Looking Ahead: Excitement and Commitment

As we advance and implement our strategic plan, I can confidently say there is much to look forward to. These are exciting times for the 1/9 Walking Dead Association, and we are just getting started. By pursuing innovative approaches, fostering strategic partnerships, and building local chapters, we are positioning our organization for sustained growth and success.

Stay tuned—there's more to come. A lot more. Together, we will achieve our 2025 membership goals and elevate the 1/9 Walking Dead Association to new heights.

Semper Fi,

Doc Hopson, Director, Membership Chairman



Above: Lifetime member Stephen Weldon at the Camp Pendleton event at the 2024 National Reunion.

NEW AND RETURNING MEMBERS

We are pleased to recognize and welcome each of our new and returning members who have joined us since the last issue of the Proud Warrior. Their involvement strengthens our community and ensures our association continues to thrive. Each member brings their unique experiences and perspectives, and we look forward to their contributions:

Renewals

- Ronald Bailey
- Conrad Bohlman
- George Brisby
- Davd Buck
- Brad Chappell
- Sergio Chau
- James Clark
- Currie Clement
- Kenneth Coleman
- Ronnie Delaplain
- Bryan Donegan
- Daniel Driscoll
- Lowell Goutremout Jr
- Jonathan Gray
- David Halley
- Joseph Harrigan
- Brian Heinze
- Steven Hossner
- Frank Kampsen
- Mark Kohlmaier
- Thomas Kraft
- Stephen LaRose
- Frank Libutti
- Roy Lobue
- Russell Loller
- John Mannion
- Alvin Mays
- John E Miller
- Roger Moreau
- Dennis Muchow
- Jackson Ollis
- Keith Price
- Matt Schavel
- Peter G Sciortino Sr
- Eugene Spanos
- Michael Sullivan
- Phil Sutherland
- Barry St Onge
- Juan Tamez
- Henok Tefera
- Norman Thomas
- John Waisath
- Samuel Werley
- Ryan West
- John Whitehead
- Shannon Whitehead

New Members

- Matthew Ferguson
- Kevin Johnson
- Thomas Ryan
- David Stauffacher

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to these members for their dedication, whether they are returning to continue their journey or joining us for the first time. Your active participation is vital to achieving our goals, and together, we can create a vibrant and dynamic association for all.

Local Chapter Stand Up, Mesa, AZ

Ink Mafia Tattoo and Piercings hosts First Battalion Ninth Marines for their local chapter stand up and fundraiser campaign.




ATTOO
piercing
custom tattoos
piercing
OPEN



1/9 Veterans attend the Phoenix local chapter stand up and fundraiser

LOCAL CHAPTER CAMPAIGN BEGINS IN PHX, AZ

Mesa, AZ, November 2, 2024

The First Battalion Ninth Marines Association took an important step in fostering local connections with its grassroots stand-up and fundraiser in Mesa, Arizona. This event marked the beginning of our efforts to enhance local involvement and build stronger ties within the 1/9 community.

We were honored to be hosted by Renae Valdes and her team at Ink Mafia Tattoo and Piercings. Their generosity and support provided the perfect setting for a day of camaraderie, patriotism, and community engagement.

The day began on a meaningful note as attendees stood together to honor our country with the national anthem. This sense of unity carried throughout the event, where we connected with members of the Phoenix community. A hearty barbecue brought everyone together, fostering conversations and sharing stories over great food.

One of the unique highlights of the event was the ofrenda organized by Ink Mafia Tattoo and Piercings. This thoughtful display paid tribute to the community and its veterans, reflecting the deep respect and appreciation for those who have served.

The fundraiser featured a flash tattoo event, with Ink Mafia offering discounted tattoos and piercings, generously donating the proceeds to the Association. In addition, a raffle added excitement and further contributed to the event's success.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Renae Valdes and the Ink Mafia Tattoo and Piercings team for their hospitality and unwavering support. Their contributions were instrumental in making the day unforgettable. Special thanks also go to Phoenix Local Coordinator Wes Fortman for his dedication and hard work in organizing this incredible event.

We look forward to building on this momentum as we continue to expand grassroots efforts to engage, connect, and uplift the 1/9 community.






U.S. MARINE
VETERAN




U.S. NAVY
MARINES
U.S. ARMY





Tun Tavern Groundbreaking, Philadelphia, PA

Attendees of the Tun Tavern Groundbreaking celebration gather in the streets. Photo by Sgt. Jaquelyn Davis.


BLACK HORSE ALLEY
ONE WAY
NO STOPPING
Amble



Tun Tavern Groundbreaking Ceremony, Photo by Sgt. Jacquilyn Davis

TUN TAVERN GROUNDBREAKING

Philadelphia, PA, November 10, 2024

The First Battalion Ninth Marines Association proudly participated in the historic groundbreaking of the Tun Tavern reconstruction in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. This special event celebrated the Marine Corps' enduring legacy and marked the 249th Marine Corps Birthday in grand style.

The Tun Legacy Foundation is leading the effort to rebuild the iconic Tun Tavern, the birthplace of the Marine Corps, with completion planned for the 250th Marine Corps Birthday. The groundbreaking drew a remarkable crowd, including Lieutenant General Calvert L. Worth, Jr., Commanding General of II Marine Expeditionary Force, and Medal of Honor Recipient Major General James E. Livingston, USMC (Ret.).

Thanks to the dedication of our Philadelphia local coordinator, Brian Welsh, the Association was well-represented at this significant event. Brian set up a booth to connect with attendees, sharing the mission and accomplishments of the First Battalion Ninth Marines Association. He also seized the opportunity to connect with other 1/9 veterans who attended, fostering camaraderie and strengthening the bonds within our community.

We are grateful to Brian Welsh for his hard work and to the many 1/9 veterans who came out to celebrate this momentous occasion. Events like these remind us of the shared pride and enduring camaraderie that define the Marine Corps family.











1/9 Veterans attending their OEF patrol base reunion at the National Museum of the Marine Corps, Photo courtesy of Timothy Leonardo

1/9 OEF PATROL BASE REUNION

National Museum of the Marine Corps, Virginia, November 7, 2024

A special reunion took place at the National Museum of the Marine Corps, bringing together 17 veterans who served together at the same patrol base during the 1/9 Operation Enduring Freedom deployment. This event was a celebration of shared history, brotherhood, and the enduring bonds forged during their time in service.

The reunion, organized by Gunnery Sergeant St. Onge and Sergeant Leonardo, offered a meaningful day for those in attendance. The group toured the museum, exploring exhibits that highlight the rich history and proud traditions of the Marine Corps. The National Museum of the Marine Corps, located in Quantico, Virginia, provided the perfect backdrop for the group to reflect on their experiences and honor the legacy of the Corps.

Following the tour, the veterans gathered in a private room for a catered meal, giving them a chance to reconnect, share stories, and strengthen the bonds that unite them. The space offered a quiet and intimate environment for reflection and camaraderie, making the event even more memorable.

The Association was proud to sponsor this event to assist with reserving the private room at the museum. This financial support is part of our ongoing commitment to fostering connections among our members and honoring the shared experiences that define our community.

Reunions like these highlight the importance of coming together to celebrate the past while looking toward the future. They remind us of the strength and resilience of the 1/9 community and the value of maintaining these connections.

We extend our gratitude to Gunnery Sergeant St. Onge and Sergeant Leonardo for their efforts in organizing this event and to all the veterans who attended for their service and dedication. Events like this are a testament to the enduring legacy of the 1/9 and the powerful bonds of Marine Corps brotherhood.


USMC-654935


WEAPONS OF WAR
Baghdad
SEVENTEEN MARCH 2003




TANNELLI FIELD
JSAS
AN SF
CAMP LEATHERNECK
HELMAND PROVINCE
AFGHANISTAN





2nd Platoon at Camp Grant 2012-2014



LCpl. Hunt at Camp Horno 1/9 Reunion 2016

1st BATTALION 9th MARINES
1 9
THE WALKING DEAD

"Stay Brutal"

- LCpl. Alex Hunt -

1st Battalion 9th Marines
Alpha Company
2nd Platoon
Leaving to redeploy to states at Camp Grant in Camp Leatherneck Southern Helmand Afghaniston

LCpl. Christopher Grant
Died October 20, 2013
Serving During Operation Enduring Freedom

"GUNNY BURNS"



"DI BO CHET"

LEON BURNS

Bravo Company
1st Battalion 9th Marines

Puerto Rico, Panama, Venezuela, Spain, France, Italy, Libya, Turkey, Japan, Okinawa, Philippines

20 Years - 20 Days

Vietnam 1964 -1967
"Operation Buffalo"
Navy Cross - Bronze Star

HURRICANE HELENE AID UPDATE: MAKING A DIFFERENCE TOGETHER

In October 2024, Hurricane Helene tore through the southeastern United States, leaving a path of destruction and displacing countless families. In response, the First Battalion Ninth Marines Association launched a campaign to extend support to those in need—and as always, our incredible 1/9 community rose to the occasion.

Thanks to your generosity and compassion. We sent a total of $3,650 to aid those affected by the hurricane in western North Carolina. The focus was on the remote communities surrounding Asheville, where recovery efforts were particularly challenging. We received an additional $5,000 from Association Lifetime member Bob Syler after the campaign closed. The additional funds will be reserved for aid in the next natural disaster.

We extend our deepest gratitude to the Hunt family, who played an instrumental role in coordinating and dispersing aid to these communities. Their dedication ensured that the assistance reached those who needed it most, bringing hope and relief in a time of great hardship.

This effort exemplifies the strength of our community and the impact we can make when we come together. To everyone who contributed to this campaign, whether through donations, time, or support, thank you for embodying the spirit of 1/9.

A MESSAAGE FROM THE HUNT FAMILY

To Our 1/9 and Marine Corps Family & Mama Tina,

We can't thank you all enough for the love and support shown during the aftermath of Hurricane Helene in Western North Carolina. As natives of WNC with many immediate family members and friends in the area, the call to help was never in question and we appreciate all of you who helped us in this effort, we couldn't have done it without you. The road back to normal will be a long one but with your donations, we were able to get immediate help to our family and friends with newborn babies as well as make roughly 100 care packages for those who lost everything.

I wish we could thank you all individually. We are so proud and thankful to be part of a family that truly pulls together to help those in need. We hope you all have a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Love,

The Hunts
Alex, Caitlyn, Carter, and Axton



THE STRATEGIC PLAN FOR 2025

The First Battalion Ninth Marines Association is laying the groundwork for an ambitious and impactful year ahead with the development of its 2025 Strategic Plan. This plan, currently in draft form, represents a comprehensive approach to fulfilling our mission and vision while addressing the evolving needs of our members and the veteran community. The plan is set to be reviewed and approved at the January Board of Directors meeting, and it promises to be a transformative guide for our organization's efforts.

Strategic Priorities: A Roadmap for Growth and Impact

The 2025 Strategic Plan is built around seven core priorities that reflect the Association's mission and vision. Each priority is designed to guide committees, programs, and initiatives in a coordinated effort to ensure measurable progress and meaningful outcomes.

1. Membership Growth and Engagement

Focus: Strengthening membership by attracting new members, retaining existing ones, and fostering active engagement.

Why It Matters: A thriving membership body is the backbone of our Association. By growing our base and ensuring active participation, we can broaden the support network for veterans and their families, ensuring the sustainability





of our organization.

2. Financial Sustainability

Focus: Achieving financial stability through diverse revenue streams and effective budget management.

Why It Matters: Stable finances allow us to deliver essential services, host impactful events, and support our members effectively. This priority will ensure that we can continue fulfilling our mission for years to come.

3. Program and Service Expansion

Focus: Enhancing services for veterans and their families, including humanitarian aid, scholarships, and non-traditional education resources.

Why It Matters: Expanding these offerings helps us support the holistic needs of our members and their families, reinforcing our commitment to improving lives.

4. Preserving History and Legacy

Focus: Protecting and promoting the history of the 1st Battalion 9th Marines while honoring veterans' contributions.

Why It Matters: Preserving the rich history of the 1/9 fosters pride and connection among our members, bridging generations and inspiring future efforts.

5. Community Building and Events

Focus: Strengthening bonds among members through reunions, local chapter events, and social gatherings.

Why It Matters: A strong sense of community enhances member satisfaction and engagement, making our Association a cornerstone of camaraderie and support.

6. Organizational Development

Focus: Enhancing the organization's structure, leadership, and brand identity to better serve its mission.

Why It Matters: A strong foundation enables effective delivery of programs and services, ensuring that our efforts are impactful and aligned with our goals.

7. Strategic Partnerships

Focus: Establishing meaningful partnerships with nonprofits, businesses, and community organizations to enhance programs and services.

Why It Matters: Collaboration with external partners broadens our impact, brings in valuable expertise, and leverages additional resources to better serve veterans and their families.

Next Steps: From Planning to Action

The draft plan is a collaborative effort involving input from all committees to ensure alignment with organizational priorities. Once approved, it will guide every aspect of the Association's work in 2025, from committee objectives to event planning and program delivery.

The January Board meeting will mark a pivotal moment as we finalize and begin implementing this comprehensive roadmap. By focusing on these strategic priorities, we are positioning the First Battalion Ninth Marines Association for a future of growth, sustainability, and enhanced service to our members and the broader community.

Together, we are building a stronger, more impactful Association—one that honors the legacy of the 1/9 and ensures its story continues to inspire for generations to come.

Stay tuned for updates as we move forward with this exciting initiative!

2025 BUDGET: DRIVING GROWTH, ENGAGEMENT, AND SUSTAINABILITY

At the December Board of Directors meeting, the Finance Committee presented the 2025 budget, reflecting the Association's bold ambitions for the coming year. With a projected annual operating budget of $207,000 and revenue goals of $316,000, the budget aligns closely with our strategic priorities: increasing awareness for our mission and organization, securing external financial support, and expanding membership engagement.

Our approach to the 2025 budget is inspired by the idea that bold goals drive bold results. As Jim Collins, author of Good to Great, emphasizes, "Good is the enemy of great." Setting ambitious goals pushes organizations beyond the status quo, inspiring innovation, commitment, and progress that would not be achieved through incremental steps. This philosophy underpins our strategy for the year ahead, as we aim not just to meet operational needs but to elevate the Association's impact and reach.

The significant growth in annual revenue over the past three years—rising from $15,000 in 2022 to $24,000 in 2023 and over $84,000 in 2024—demonstrates the effectiveness of leadership's efforts and positions the Association for continued operational improvements and programmatic growth.

Budget Development and Oversight

The 2025 budget was developed through a collaborative process, with the Finance Committee working closely with all committees to assess funding needs. This comprehensive approach ensures that the budget reflects the organization's strategic goals while maintaining efficient allocation of resources.

Projected expenses for 2025 total $207,000, allocated across key committees and programs:

Administration: $38,000 (e.g., travel, software)

Communications: $55,500 (e.g., printed materials, promotional campaigns, brand identity, podcast)

Finance: $42,500 (e.g., merchandise, CPA services)

Historical Preservation: $16,000 (e.g., website, exhibits, podcast)

Humanitarian: $25,000 (e.g., relief efforts, suicide awareness)

Membership: $30,000 (e.g., local events, scholarships, mini-reunions)

The Finance Committee oversees the budget throughout the year, adjusting quarterly as needed to reflect changes in revenue or expenses. This proactive approach ensures financial stability while maintaining alignment with strategic priorities.

Revenue Generation Goals

To meet the ambitious revenue target of $316,000, the Association will implement a diversified approach to fundraising and income generation. Key revenue sources include:

Membership Dues: $50,000
Pledges: $90,000
Corporate Sponsorships: $80,000
Merchandise Sales: $56,000
Advertising and Subscriptions: $10,000
Local Chapter Contributions: $30,000

Phased Revenue and Expense Approach

To ensure financial sustainability, the Association will implement a phased approach:

Q1–Q2: Focus on membership dues collection, initial pledge drives, and merchandise sales to cover early-year expenses.

Q3: Align revenue efforts with programmatic needs, including local chapter events and scholarship initiatives.

Q4: Launch year-end campaigns to close revenue gaps, boost reserves, and position the Association for a strong start in 2026.

Expense management will follow a similar phased approach, prioritizing critical programs and initiatives in alignment with revenue inflows.

Building for the Future

The 2025 budget reflects the Association's commitment to growth, engagement, and sustainability. By balancing bold revenue goals with strategic expense management, we are not only meeting current needs but also building a strong foundation for the future.

With the support of our members and partners, we are confident in our ability to achieve these goals and continue advancing the mission of the First Battalion Ninth Marines Association.

SHAPING THE FUTURE: LAUNCHING THE ADVISORY COUNCIL

In December 2024, the Board of Directors of the First Battalion Ninth Marines Association approved an exciting new initiative: the formation of an Advisory Council. Set to launch in 2025, this council represents a pivotal step forward in strengthening the strategic direction of our organization.

The Advisory Council is designed to provide expert advice and guidance to the Association's leadership in areas such as:

- Finance
- Strategic planning
- Strategic partnerships
- Recruitment and retention
- Marketing and communications
- Corporate sponsorships

What makes this council unique is its emphasis on diversity—not just within the Marine Corps community but from the broader spectrum of industries, demographics, and life experiences. Members will bring varied perspectives and expertise, enriching the organization's approach to current and future challenges.

Building a Diverse and Inclusive Council

To ensure the Advisory Council is a well-rounded resource, we are recruiting individuals from diverse backgrounds. This includes:

Geographic Diversity: Members from various regions, offering insights reflective of different communities.

Professional Backgrounds: Expertise spanning a wide range of careers and industries, providing a breadth of knowledge and innovative thinking.

Generational Representation: Perspectives from multiple age groups and life stages to foster inclusivity and adaptability.

The Advisory Council will play a critical role in advancing our mission, providing fresh ideas, and ensuring the Association remains adaptable and forward-thinking. This initiative marks an important step in creating a resilient and innovative future for our organization.



SECURING THE FUTURE OF THE ASSOCIATION

A strong and engaged membership body is essential to the success and longevity of the First Battalion Ninth Marines Association. Over the years, we've faced challenges in growing and maintaining membership, including declining new memberships, lower renewals, and reduced participation. While efforts over the past two years have reinvigorated some areas, the need for a broader and more inclusive membership strategy is clear.

Currently, over 80% of our members are over the age of 65, with post-Vietnam generations comprising only 16% of our membership body. To preserve our heritage and secure the association's future, the Membership Committee has implemented several key strategies to expand and diversify our membership:

1. Recruitment and Retention of Post-Vietnam Generations

Post-Vietnam generations represent an incredible opportunity for growth, yet they remain underrepresented in our organization. By actively recruiting and integrating these veterans, we aim to increase their participation and invite them to help preserve the proud legacy of the 1/9.

2. Gold Star Families

Gold Star families, as outlined in our founding documents, hold full membership rights within the association. However, they remain significantly underrepresented, making up only a small portion of the 60 total family members in the organization. Our efforts will focus on identifying and reaching out to Gold Star families to ensure they are aware of their eligibility and welcome as full members. Recognizing their unique sacrifices, we are committed to integrating them further into our community.

3. White Star Families

In December, the Board of Directors approved a significant update to our founding documents, extending full membership rights to White Star families. At the time the organization was founded, the issue of veteran suicide was not as prominent or widely recognized as it has become in modern times. As such, it was not a focus for our founding members.



Today, we understand the profound impact that suicide has on veterans and their families. By incorporating White Star families as full members, we aim to ensure they are specifically included in our community and have a place within the association. This decision reflects our commitment to honoring their sacrifices, providing support, and ensuring they are integral to preserving the legacy of the 1/9.

4. Family Members

Another significant development from the December Board of Directors meeting was the creation of a new membership designation for family members of 1/9 veterans. While this designation does not carry voting rights, its purpose is vital: to integrate families into the association and ensure they play a meaningful role in preserving the legacy of the 1/9.

As it stands, the First Battalion Ninth Marines is deactivated, and we cannot predict if or when it will be reactivated. This reality underscores the critical importance of our families. They are the ones who will carry on the legacy of the 1/9 and our association. By welcoming them into the organization, involving them in our activities, and connecting them with veterans across all generations, we provide an opportunity for families to learn, understand, and be inspired by the proud history of the 1/9.

Through participation and engagement, family members can become stewards of the battalion's legacy, helping to keep our traditions, values, and community alive for future generations. The Membership Committee is currently working on a dues structure for this category to ensure it remains accessible to all who wish to join.

Integrating families into our membership body is an investment in the future of the association and a tribute to the enduring bonds that define the 1/9 community.

5. Non-Affiliated Members

The Board of Directors also approved a membership category for the general public. This category allows supporters of our mission to join the association and engage with our community. Importantly, this designation does not carry voting rights and in no way dilutes the voting rights of full members. It serves solely as a means of broadening our reach and building relationships with those who support our mission.

Looking Ahead

By expanding our membership to include these new categories and focusing on recruitment from underrepresented groups, we aim to ensure the longevity of the association while preserving the legacy of the First Battalion Ninth Marines.

Your participation and support are vital to these efforts. Together, we can grow a vibrant and diverse membership body that honors our heritage and propels our mission forward.





EXPANDING LOCAL CONNECTIONS

LAUNCHING NEW ASSOCIATION CHAPTERS IN 2025

In response to the needs of our members and their desire for more local events, the First Battalion Ninth Marines Association is proud to announce an exciting new initiative for 2025: the launch of six local chapters across the United States.

The following cities are slated for chapter launches:

- Philadelphia, PA
- Atlanta, GA
- San Diego, CA
- Dallas, TX
- Miami, FL

These new chapters are a direct result of feedback from our community, underscoring the importance of creating opportunities for local connection, engagement, and support.

To bring this vision to life, we recognize the need for dedicated leadership at the local level. Each chapter will have its own leadership team, responsible for organizing events, fostering camaraderie, and strengthening the bonds within our 1/9 community.

Leading this effort is Doc Hugh Hopson, Director and Membership Committee Chairman. Doc is working diligently to craft a comprehensive local chapter strategy, which will establish the mission for these chapters and outline clear guidelines and responsibilities. This strategy is designed to ensure that each chapter operates effectively and aligns with the values and goals of the Association.

We believe these chapters will generate significant grassroots momentum, amplifying the impact of our work and extending our mission into communities nationwide. With the passion and commitment of our members, we are confident that 2025 will be a transformative year for the Association.

Stay tuned for updates as we continue to roll out this initiative. Together, we can achieve incredible things for the 1/9 community.

Your engagement matters. Let's make it happen.

REVITALIZING OUR LEGACY: REBRANDING THE ASSOCIATION WITH RIVYL

The First Battalion Ninth Marines Association is embarking on an exciting new chapter: a comprehensive rebranding project to ensure our mission, history, and values resonate not only with our members but also with the general public. This effort will help us gain broader support, attract new audiences, and make our association more visible and impactful. To achieve this, we've partnered with Rivyl, a professional branding agency specializing in creating compelling and effective brand identities.

Who is Rivyl, and What Do They Do?

Rivyl is a renowned branding agency known for helping organizations define and communicate their unique identity. Their expertise lies in developing brand strategies, identities, and communication tools that resonate with both niche and broad audiences. Rivyl has a proven track record of working with nonprofits, businesses, and other organizations to create brands that are authentic, memorable, and adaptable.

For the Association, Rivyl will guide us through the process of:

A New Logo: A bold and versatile design that reflects our mission and appeals to a wider audience. We aim to create a logo that is visually compelling—something that looks "badass" and can stand proudly on merchandise, much like how brands like Vans appeal to a broader audience beyond their core demographic. Importantly, this change is only for the Association's logo. The 1/9 unit logo will remain unchanged and continue to be featured on merchandise specifically for our veterans. The new Association logo will allow us to broaden our appeal and expand merchandise sales, attracting supporters who may not have direct ties to the 1/9.

Brand Identity: A cohesive visual style, including colors,

typography, and design elements, to ensure consistency across all communication platforms.

Brand Strategy: A roadmap for communicating our mission, engaging members and the public, and attracting new supporters.

Why Rebranding, and Why Now?

As our organization evolves, it's essential to adapt to the changing needs of our members and the broader community. The rebranding effort is not just about aesthetics—it's a strategic move to position the Association for greater impact and long-term sustainability.

Key Goals of Rebranding:

Attracting Financial Support: A professional and modern brand can help us gain credibility with corporate sponsors, encouraging financial contributions to support our programs.

Expanding Networking Opportunities: A refreshed identity will make it easier to gain the attention and support of prominent figures and influencers who can help us expand our reach.

Building Strategic Partnerships: A compelling brand makes us a stronger partner for like-minded organizations, helping us collaborate more effectively on shared goals.

Broadening Merchandise Appeal: The current 1/9 unit logo has a niche appeal, resonating primarily with 1/9 veterans. The new Association logo will be designed to attract a wider audience, helping us expand merchandise sales and generate additional revenue. We will still offer 1/9 merchandise for our veterans, but the new logo gives us the opportunity to reach beyond our core membership.

The Process and Benefits

The rebranding journey begins with the discovery phase, during which Rivyl will meet with Association leadership to deeply understand our mission, history, and goals. This collaborative process ensures that the new brand authentically represents us while being relatable and engaging to a broader audience.

Benefits of the Rebranding Project:

- A bold and versatile logo that looks great on merchandise and helps expand our customer base.
- A professional brand identity that boosts our visibility and credibility with members, the public, and potential sponsors.
- Clearer tools for outreach, helping us connect with supporters who may not yet know about the Association or the storied history of the 1/9.
- A brand that inspires pride and enthusiasm among members while educating and engaging the general public.

A Vision for the Future

Rebranding is not about changing who we are—it's about amplifying our story and ensuring it resonates with diverse audiences. This initiative is an investment in the future of the First Battalion Ninth Marines Association, equipping us with the tools to honor our past, engage the present, and secure our legacy for generations to come.

We look forward to unveiling the results of this effort and sharing them with all of you. Together, we'll ensure the legacy of the 1/9 continues to inspire.



HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT THE MISSION OF THE 1/9 ASSOCIATION

The First Battalion Ninth Marines Association thrives because of the dedication and support of our members. Together, we preserve the legacy of the 1/9, foster a strong community, and provide meaningful programs and services to veterans and their families. Your participation is vital to our mission, and there are many ways you can contribute to our continued success:

1. Pay Your Member Dues

If you're an annual member, staying current with your dues is a simple yet impactful way to support the Association. Your contributions ensure we can continue delivering programs, hosting events, and maintaining operations.

2. Attend Monthly Virtual Discussions

Our virtual discussions are a great way to stay informed about the Association's activities and connect with fellow members. By participating, you'll have the opportunity to share your input, hear updates, and engage with our leadership.

3. Participate in Quarterly Surveys

Your feedback matters! Participating in our quarterly surveys helps us understand your needs and preferences, ensuring that our initiatives align with the goals of our community.

4. Engage with Us on Social Media

Follow us on social media, like and share our posts, and join the conversation. Every interaction helps increase awareness of the Association and expands our reach.

5. Recruit New Members

Know a 1/9 veteran who hasn't joined the Association? Encourage them to become a member. Expanding our membership body strengthens our community and ensures the longevity of our mission.

6. Attend In-Person Events

From reunions to local chapter gatherings, our in-person events are where connections are made, and memories are shared. Your participation enriches these experiences and fosters camaraderie.

7. Join Our Pledge Campaign

Our pledge campaign is a critical part of sustaining the Association's financial health. By committing to a recurring donation, even as little as $10 a month, you help ensure the stability of our programs and initiatives.

8. Spread the Word

Talk about the Association with your community. Whether it's sharing our mission, promoting our events, or explaining the history of the 1/9, your voice helps keep our story alive.

9. Share Corporate Sponsorship Leads

Do you have connections with businesses or organizations that may want to support our mission? Share those leads with us. Corporate sponsorships are a vital part of our financial strategy, enabling us to grow and expand our reach.

10. Listen to "The Walking Dead Podcast"

Tune in to the Association's podcast to stay updated on our work, hear inspiring stories, and deepen your connection to the 1/9 legacy. Sharing the podcast with others is another way to spread awareness.

11. Volunteer Your Time

Whether it's helping with administrative tasks, assisting at events, or contributing your skills in another way, volunteering is a hands-on way to make a difference.

Supporting the mission of the First Battalion Ninth Marines Association doesn't always require a significant time or financial commitment. Each of these actions, big or small, plays an essential role in ensuring that we can continue to honor the legacy of the 1/9 and serve our community.

Together, we make our mission possible. Thank you for being part of this incredible journey.

JOIN THE MISSION: 2025 PLEDGE CAMPAIGN

The First Battalion Ninth Marines Association needs your support to achieve our ambitious goals in 2025 and beyond. One of the biggest challenges for any nonprofit organization is securing recurring, predictable, and reliable financial support. That's why we're launching the 2025 Pledge Campaign with a goal of reaching $90,000 in pledges.

How You Can Help

The math is simple: if every actively engaged member contributes just $10 a month, we can easily reach our goal. With a community of 15,000 members and over 700 actively engaged, your contribution can make a significant impact.

Where Your Contribution Will Go

Your pledge directly supports the programs and initiatives that make a difference in the lives of our members and preserve the proud legacy of our battalion. Here's a look at how your donations will be used:

Association Administration: Ensuring the smooth operation of our nonprofit.

Local Events and Mini Reunions: Strengthening community connections at the grassroots level.

Humanitarian Relief: Providing emergency financial support to those in need.

Scholarships: Empowering the next generation.

The Walking Dead Podcast and Proud Warrior: Sharing stories and celebrating our history.

Preserving Battalion History: Honoring the legacy of the 1/9.

Bereavement Efforts: Supporting families and honoring our veterans who have passed.

Suicide Awareness and Community Support: Providing education, awareness, and support to save lives.

2026 Reunion: Planning the next gathering to celebrate and connect.

Our Strength Is in Our Community

The success of the 2025 Pledge Campaign relies on our collective efforts. Together, we can build a sustainable and reliable source of funding to ensure that the mission of the First Battalion Ninth Marines Association continues for years to come.

Take Action Today

Make your pledge today and join us in supporting our community. Visit https://www.19walkingdead.org/1-9pledge to sign up and help us reach our goal.

Every dollar counts. Every pledge matters. Together, we stand stronger.

FROM MARINE TO MENTOR

HOW 1/9 SHAPED A LIFE OF SERVICE AND LEADERSHIP

A few months after leaving the Marine Corps, I moved to Indiana and became a police officer in the city of Indianapolis. The Lord called me to preach during the early years of patrolling and I also then served as the Chaplin for the police department. In 2017, God called me and my family to move to North Carolina to serve as missionaries at the boys home that I was in myself 17 years prior as a young man. I now serve in Mississippi, as the Dean of Students for a ministry for troubled young men.

In today's world, as time continues on, I witness a decline in the amount of young men that are disciplined and hard-working. There seem to be more and more young men that are content just doing the bare minimum to get by, living only for themselves, and having no guidance or set structure in their life. The purpose of our ministry is to take in young men between the ages of 12 and 17 that are currently struggling. We strive to provide for them an atmosphere where they may be led to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour, be given spiritual guidance that they may grow to Christian maturity, and experience solid Christian leadership and home environment with a strong fatherly and motherly image. We provide for them spiritually, academically, financially and physically, teaching them practical life

skills along the way. It is a unique and much needed ministry and I do it striving to make a difference today that will help impact the future of many.

I gained numerous skills and training while in the Corps from several good leaders within the battalion, both officers and enlisted, that have carried throughout my life. 1-9 taught me the importance of structure and self-discipline in a young man's life. It taught me the importance of training. I strive to take what I learned and now teach it to the young men in my care. It taught me what it means to have a hard work ethic and to complete the job well, and as instructed. I was taught how to take commands, instruction, and rebuke, trusting that there was a purpose behind it all. I was taught respect.

Cpl. Aaron Patton

JOINING THE NATIONAL MARINE CORPS COUNCIL

The First Battalion Ninth Marines Association is proud to announce its application to join the National Marine Corps Council (NMCC), a key step in our strategic plan to form meaningful partnerships with other Marine Corps organizations. This opportunity came about through an invitation from Master Gunnery Sergeant Ed Montanez, USMC, Vice-Chairman of the NMCC, who has been actively seeking to engage Marine Corps nonprofit organizations like ours.

The NMCC, established in 1974, serves as a vital link between the Commandant of the Marine Corps and its member organizations. Its primary mission is to facilitate the exchange of information and foster collaboration among Marine Corps-affiliated groups. Historically, the NMCC convenes twice a year in Washington, D.C., providing a forum for discussion and engagement on matters critical to the Marine Corps community.

Ed Montanez shared with our leadership that the NMCC is undergoing a modernization process aimed at expanding its reach and strengthening its engagement with smaller organizations. This focus aligns perfectly with our Association's goals of expanding our network, enhancing our capabilities, and ensuring the enduring success of our mission.

Membership in the NMCC holds promise for valuable networking and growth opportunities. By collaborating with the NMCC and its members, we hope to amplify our impact, share our experiences, and further contribute to the broader Marine Corps community.

We look forward to working with Ed Montanez and the NMCC leadership as we continue to honor our legacy, support our members, and strengthen the bonds that unite all Marines. Together, we can achieve great things. Semper Fidelis!

Q3 SURVEY RESULTS

We conducted our Q3 2024 Survey in September and these are the results:

43 respondents participated in the survey

Overall Satisfaction with the Association:

Very satisfied: 74.4%
Somewhat satisfied: 14%
Neutral: 9.3%
Somewhat dissatisfied: 2.3%
Dissatisfied: 0%

Frequency of Communications:

Very satisfied: 74.4%
Somewhat satisfied: 4.7%
Neutral: 20.9%
Somewhat dissatisfied: 0%
Dissatisfied: 0%

Information Provided in Communications:

Very satisfied: 69.8%
Somewhat satisfied: 18.6%
Neutral: 9.3%
Somewhat dissatisfied: 2.3%
Dissatisfied: 0%

Customer Service:

Very satisfied: 67.4%
Somewhat satisfied: 11.6%
Neutral: 18.6%
Somewhat dissatisfied: 2.3%
Dissatisfied: 0%

Mission and Vision Alignment:

Yes: 81.4%
Neutral: 11.6%
No: 0%
Don't know Mission and Vision: 7%

Feedback Received:

A lot of the comments and feedback were encouraging. Mostly saying we are on the right track and the leadership is doing a great job.

Here are some of the suggestions you had to make things even better:

More regional/local events- Doc Hopson, our Membership Committee Chairman, is working hard to establish local chapters. This is a critical step in building up our network of volunteers to facilitate local events. If you are interested in being a part of our efforts, please contact Doc Hopson at hhopson@19walkingdead.org

Outreach to the OIF/OEF generations- This is a major priority for us in 2025. We will need to depend on our current OIF/OEF members to help us get the word out! Additionally, we are working with an agency to help us refine our communication strategy.

Look into advertising with the VFW/MCL to reach more 1/9 veterans- We've added this to our list of potential partner organizations to help our outreach efforts. Additionally, we've added a line item to our budget that will allow us to advertise in veterans' publications.

More pictures- We've added an element in our strategic plan to increase our content creation capabilities. Expect more pictures and videos in 2025.

More merchandise- We've added a line item in our 2025 budget for more merchandise. Additionally, our new association logo will be featured on new merchandise!

Technology limitations- We've gotten a lot of feedback about technology limitations of some of our members. We are working on ways to close that gap. Michael Saxton, our association Secretary, has volunteered to assist in any way he can with a future "Tech Talk Tuesday" which will help our members get up to speed and be more confident with the technology we use. We are also exploring other ways to help our members get the continuing education they need so they can engage with us using technology.

Notification about upcoming events and ways to volunteer- As we increase the number of our local events, we will maintain an event calendar on our website (www.19walkingdead.org/events) . Additionally, we will create a page specifically for our members to see what help we need with the association. Stay up to date with these notifications by subscribing to our newsletter. Go to 19walkingdead.org and enter your information in the footer of the page.

Time zone info for monthly meetings- Great feedback and an easy fix. We can include all US timezones in our meeting notifications.

More 1/9 history- Doc Rod Fink, our Historical Preservation Committee Chairman, is working hard to plan a more robust strategy to collect and disseminate information about our 1/9 history. We are planning to launch a website dedicated to 1/9 history in 2025.

Make a LinkedIn page- We have a LinkedIn page (https://www.linkedin.com/company/93797354) but admittedly need to post more on there. We will make an effort to keep it populated with fresh and relevant content!

Locations of 1/9 members- We launched a digital member directory map in 2024 and distributed it via email. We are looking at options for a members only webpage where you can access all the member resources (including the directory). If you need the link, please email mvalenzuela@19walkingdead.org

I don't feel connected to the unit or association- One of many reasons that makes this association special is we focus on building the community. All are welcome, no matter what generation you're a part of or what deployments you've been on. We encourage all our members to get involved, meet other members, and make those connections. It's not uncommon for our members to make meaningful connections with others that are decades apart in age and experiences.

News about other members- We'd love to share more about our members. Unfortunately we're limited to what we are able to share if you the members don't submit something to share. If you'd like to publish in the Proud Warrior, please contact mvalenzuela@19walkingdead.org

PHONE NUMBERS

MAIN PHONE NUMBER
760-349-0311

PRESIDENT
Ext. 200

EVENTS
Ext. 300

COMMUNICATIONS
Ext. 400

SCHOLARSHIP/HUMANITARIAN AID
Ext. 500

MEMBERSHIP
Ext. 600

LINKS

Website

https://19walkingdead.org

Public Facebook

https://www.facebook.com/19association

Association Facebook Community

https://www.facebook.com/groups/311736862862629

Instagram

https://www.instagram.com/19walkingdead/

LinkedIn

https://www.linkedin.com/company/first-battalion-ninth-marines-association/

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