

# **Alton VFW looking for assistance in planning 9/11 dinner for vets and first responders**

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer  
March 5 2018 11:30 AM



ALTON - Many veterans are aging, and groups such as the American Legion and VFW do not seem so appealing to younger vets who came home from serving in Iraq and Afghanistan.

As the Vietnam vets are reaching their 70s, and the World War II vets are going extinct, the race to recruit younger veterans is becoming more and more serious. Some younger veterans think these places are just a place to drink and others do not feel welcomed into the ranks. Alton VFW Post #1308 commander Tom Wilson said he is working toward changing those incorrect thoughts. Wilson, who served in both Vietnam and Desert Storm, said one of his main goals since assuming command of the post in the summer of 2016 is to get younger veterans through the doors and assist them with resources and community.

One of the efforts Wilson is doing to reach younger veterans is a 9/11 commemoration dinner set for this September. During that event, Wilson said he would like to provide entertainment and a good meal to veterans of Afghanistan and the most recent conflict in Iraq as well as first responder.

"I want these people to come out and get a free meal on us," Wilson said. "They can come here and eat it or take it home. It will be open to any vets of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as our first responders. Police officers, firefighters, EMTs, nurses and doctors are all invited - as long as they serve in uniform."

But, that effort will be an expensive undertaking for an organization struggling to recruit young blood. In order to pay for it, Wilson is hoping to raise as much as \$5,000 through fundraisers leading to the event.

Fresh faces are not only sought within the membership of the post. Wilson said he is looking to do events such as band battles, basket raffles, silent auctions and other occasions not usually conducted at the VFW. In order to do new events, Wilson is hoping to make new contacts. Anyone interested in helping the post conduct an event to celebrate vets of The War on Terror and local first responders.

He is hoping to put together the first of these events as early as April.

Anyone who would like to assist with any part of this operation is invited to contact Wilson on his cell phone at (618) 823-6626.