



MAY, 2011

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**Bill Watson**  
2nd Vice Commander

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Commission

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**Paul Goerke**  
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**Robert C Potter**  
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**Sam Thal, MD**  
Post Doctor

**Art Mauck**  
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**Kai Azada**  
Webmaster

**Squadron Officers**

**Thomas Boyer**  
Squadron Commander

**George Gomez**  
1st Vice Commander

**Alexander Hamilton Association**

**Carl Tebell**  
President

**Post Meetings**

3rd Thursday each Month  
1900 hrs  
Room 202  
Veterans' War Memorial Building  
401 Van Ness Avenue  
San Francisco

**ALEXANDER HAMILTON Post #448****Veterans Advocate Kills Self After War Tours**

By Kimberly Hefling, Associated Press

Handsome and friendly, Clay Hunt so epitomized a vibrant Iraq veteran that he was chosen for a public service announcement reminding veterans that they aren't alone.

The 28-year-old former Marine corporal earned a Purple Heart after taking a sniper's bullet in his left wrist. He returned to combat in Afghanistan. Upon his return home, he lobbied for veterans on Capitol Hill, road-biked with wounded veterans and performed humanitarian work in Haiti and Chile.

Then, on March 31, Hunt bolted himself in his Houston apartment and shot himself.

Friends and family say he was wracked with survivor's guilt, depression and other emotional struggles after combat.

Hunt's death has shaken many veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan. Those who knew him wonder why someone who seemed to be doing all the right things to deal with combat-related issues is now dead.



"We know we have a problem with vets' suicide, but this was really a slap in the face," said Matthew Pelak, 32, an Iraq veteran who worked with Hunt in Haiti as part of the nonprofit group Team Rubicon.

After news of Hunt's death spread, workers from the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors met with veterans visiting Washington for the annual lobbying effort by the nonprofit Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans, or IAVA. A year earlier, Hunt had been with other veterans in dark

suits calling on Congress to improve the disability claims process.

He had appeared in the group's ads encouraging veterans to seek support from an online network of fellow veterans.

Snapshots posted on Facebook reflect a mostly grinning Hunt. In one, he has a beard and is surrounded by Haitian kids. A second shows him on the Capitol steps with fellow veterans. There's a shot of him from the back on a bike using his right arm to help push another bicyclist who is helping to guide an amputee in a specially modified bike.

Friends and family say Hunt suffered from depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. But with his boundless energy and countless friends, he came across as an example of how to live life after combat.

"I think everybody saw him as the guy that was battling it, but winning the battle every day," said Jacob Wood, 27, a

*(Continued on page 5)***C.O.'s MEMO**

Spring has Sprung! Now that the weather is clearing up for most of us, its a great time to get out of the house and go for a walk out in the fresh air. Although I only spent five years in

the Marine Corps, I can't get out of my short hair habit. I tried growing my hair longer a while back but couldn't decide on how I should comb it. My hair was all over the place. Well, there's nothing better than an old fashion high and tight. Anyway, I chipped my tooth on a bottle awhile back and finally had it ground smooth last week, funny how



**UPDATE**

Click to send us your contact information!

POST FINANCIAL REPORT	
Post 448 Balance Sheet—for 07 MAY 11	
Account	Balance
<b>Assets</b>	
<b>Cash and Bank Accounts</b>	
Wells Fargo Checking Acct—9136	<b>\$1,117.24</b>
Wells Fargo Savings Acct—4206	<b>\$222.56</b>
Sterling Bank CD—2704 <i>(no change from last month)</i>	<b>\$13,582.91</b>
Sterling Bank CD—2712 <i>(no change from last month)</i>	<b>\$15,558.07</b>
<b>TOTAL Bank Accounts</b>	<b>\$30,480.78</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>\$30,480.78</b>

★★★ Minutes for General Monthly Meeting of 21 APR 2011 ★★★

Meeting commenced at 1912 with the Presentation of the Colors, recognition of the POW/MIA chair, and the Pledge of Allegiance. Approval of the minutes after a motion was made and was seconded (carried unanimously).

**GUESTS:**  
None

**New Members:**  
Jennifer Crumb, Army, 2<sup>nd</sup> Iraq War/Afghanistan, Recruiter. WELCOME!!!  
Kendra Stewardson, Army, Vietnam

**FIRST VICE:**  
Potluck - motion was made to have it at the June meeting and the Installation of Officers. Alphabetical Dish assignments will be found from past potlucks and will be distributed at the next meeting or later in the newsletter. The motion was seconded and passed over the objections of two potluck haters who will remain nameless.  
\$25 USS Hornet excursion (bus/van/pov, 6-hour day on the ship, coffee & snacks in the

officers' mess) postponed for lack of funds. There is also an opportunity for overnight stays for \$60, including dinner & breakfast.  
Motion was made to volunteer at KQED during their telethon on TV. It was seconded & passed after a short discussion. Motion was made to Host the following two events (seconded & passed):  
19 NOV 11, golden gate guards anniversary, room 207, 1800-2100 (room from 1700-2300)  
6 AUG Tenderloin Tessie, room 207, TBD  
Liquor License & Insurance will be necessary.

**SECOND VICE:**  
Discussed the possibility of foregoing printing and having an online version only.

**THIRD VICE & Sgt At Arms:**  
Thanks to all the volunteers.  
Dining out for life 28 APR 522 Jones Street, 10-1500, Dotties True Blue Café  
The Edge Bar (the Post will be the beneficiary), Monday, 31 MAY 11.  
Reminded about the May Memorial Day at the Presidio.

Royal Bunny Contest, 1700-2000 hours on 24 APR 11  
22<sup>nd</sup> AIDS Walk in July 17<sup>th</sup>.  
3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in June - Pride Parade.  
Give from the heart.

**Finance:**  
Checking \$ 485.41\*  
Savings \$ 232.55  
\*Minus -\$285 for Boy's State  
Sterling CD \$13,582.91  
Legal DF \$15,558.07

Motion made to accept the finance report, seconded & carried.  
Discussion was made to cash out the Sterling CD, accept the penalty, open a smaller CD, but another suggestion made by Bill Watson was for him to loan the Post \$1000. His generosity was thanked by the entire membership.

**Adjutant:**  
During the past week we received three returns on the form that was published in the last newsletter. This was not bad considering the newsletter was released late. Changes

*(Continued on page 3)*

**The American Legion  
Alexander Hamilton  
Post 448  
Intelligencer**

The Intelligencer is published monthly by the Alexander Hamilton Post 448 of the American Legion, located at the Veterans' War Memorial Building, 401 Van Ness Ave Room 128, San Francisco CA 94102.

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were minor and I was able to correct data directly on the National Database.

The Association membership stands at 13 with 4 paid and is 31% of goal. No change from last reported.

Members are also reminded that they should notify the Post of any change of address or email address soonest. Send all change notices to adjutant@post448.org.

**Membership:**

Post 448 248/211  
SAL 448 36/18  
Association 13/4

**Scribe:**

Will be absent between this meeting and 2 May. He will endeavor to get the newsletter out before then.

**Service Officer:**

Nothing to report at this time.

**SAL Commander:**

Nothing to report.

**Chaplain:**

There has been much discussion amongst the Chaplains about what will happen in relation to DADT, and the dire warnings that there would be many of them would leave but only 2 have retired.

**Association:**

On Thursdays at the Academy of Sciences (1800-2200): \$10. Adults only. May is probably fully booked, A suggestion would be to attend sometime in June. Another suggestion would be to pick the 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday in June (2 June). Members could meet at the Post's office and then transfer to the park, or meet there. Carl will make the reservation and send the details for inclusion in the newsletter.

**Women's Commander:**

Leather Traditions for 4-6 NOV 11  
June 25 room reservation  
Luau was a success, with dinner, dancing, music and a movie.

**Judge Advocate:**

Will set up the room, order tables and asked for volunteers to help set up the dinner for the July's potluck dinner meeting.

**Historian:**

Nothing to Report.

**District Commander:**

Berkeley, Sunday 24 APR 11 at 1100 & 1200 interviewed about DADT.  
Post 203 (inactive) had mail at the Marine's Memorial. We were told by Trustee

Myatt to pick up the mail and when the Commander arrived, was put off. We are still not in possession of the mail.

Meeting with Beth Murray about space allocation.

Boy's State upcoming. We will be sponsoring one boy (\$285 for registration fee & \$60 for food & transportation) to participate. Nolan Isozaki - El Camino High School.

**COMMANDER:**

Lion's Club is asking us to help serve the BBQ at the Eagle for it's fund raising efforts for the Pink Triangle. The Lions will be paying for it, we would just BBQ the meat and help serve the food. Motion was made to set aside \$350 (that will be reimbursed by the Lions) to obtain meat & buns. The motion was seconded & carried unanimously.

Next month will be nominations for Post Officers. Please make sure to attend! Kendra Stewardson

Reminded us about the Potluck.

Reminded us about the anniversary of the LGBT Military Memorial in Palm Springs, May 7<sup>th</sup> 13-1400 hours.

5 Saturdays left in this year that were set

(Continued on page 7)

**The American Legion California  
Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Foundation**

401 Van Ness Ave., Room 117  
San Francisco, CA 9412-4587

**CONTRIBUTION FORM**

The American Legion California Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Foundation was established as an endowment fund auxiliary organization to the Department of California, American Legion, and is a nonprofit public benefit corporation, as provided under the laws of the State of California and Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c)(3).

The primary use of funds accumulated by the Foundation will be used to provide supplemental funding for the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Division of the Department of California. The Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Division was established to generally provide service to Veterans in their claims to the Department of Veterans Affairs and protecting the rights and privileges of all Veterans, their dependents and survivors.

The Foundation accepts both personal and corporate contributions. They can be in the form of a direct donation, bequests, grants or legacies.

Please accept my contribution in the amount of:  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY, STATE, ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Please make your contribution payable to:  
The American Legion California  
Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Foundation  
or  
TAL CA VA & R Foundation

And mail your tax deductible donation, and this form, to the following address:

ATTN: Bill Siler III  
TAL CA VA & R Foundation  
401 Van Ness Avenue, Room 117  
San Francisco, CA 94102-4587





American Flags are flying upside down at some war memorials in Danville, IL, and in front of the Vermilion County War Museum.

## Museum Director Uses U.S. Flag As Distress Signal

By Pat Phillips

Chris Perrault likes to take photos. So when he was out for a walk Monday morning and noticed the American flag at the Vermilion County War Museum flying upside down, he took a picture.

In fact, he took several to get just what he wanted – the U.S. flag, flanked by the state of Illinois and POW flags, standing out, nearly straight to the east, in the brisk morning wind.

"It's supposed to be a sign of distress, but can be a form of protest," said Perrault, of Danville. "While I was waiting to get just the right shot, a number of people stopped and were upset or angry about it. One veteran said (in some very colorful language) that he fought in Vietnam and felt totally disrespected."

Just the opposite, said the man who flew the flag upside down.

Harold "Sparky" Songer, director of the museum at 307 N. Vermilion St., Danville, said he's upset with spending cuts for the men and women



Vermilion County War Museum  
Photo by: Rick Danzl/The News-Gazette

in uniform.

"Things are such a mess in Washington," he told The News-Gazette on Monday, "the whole country is in extreme distress."

Federal law says the flag should never be displayed with the union down, except as a signal of due distress in instances of extreme danger

to life or property.

Songer said the "stopgap budget and talk of how the political parties and the president were cooperating was the last straw. Yeah, they worked until midnight Friday only to come to a short-term fix."

"They talk about who won what in this budget," Songer said. "The American people lost."

His sympathies are squarely with U.S. servicemen and women.

"They're cutting the military budget. I feel sorry for the kids who keep getting sent overseas over and over again and to think it might have come to them not getting paid," he said. "Those in the service are already having trouble keeping their families together, they're gone so much, and the number of suicides is a disgrace, and some have lost their homes and can't find jobs when they do come home. I'd just had enough, so I stopped talking about it and did it."

*(Continued on page 6)*

## Suicide Rate Triples For Female Soldiers At War

By Gregg Zoroya—USA Today and reprinted in SHOUT! Celebrating Women Veterans through the Arts

The suicide rate for female soldiers triples when they go to war, according to the first round of preliminary data from an Army study.

The findings, released to USA Today this week, show that the suicide rate rises from five per 100,000 to 15 per 100,000 among female soldiers at war. Scientists are not sure why but say they will look into whether women feel isolated in a male-dominated war zone or suffer greater anxieties about leaving



behind children and other loved ones.

Even so, the suicide risk for female soldiers in Iraq or Afghanistan is still lower than for men serving next to them, the \$50 million study says.

Findings also show that marriage somehow helps inoculate male and female soldiers from killing themselves while they are overseas. While these death rates among GI's who are single or divorced double when they go to war, the rate among married soldiers does not increase, according to the study.

Scientists say they hope these and other findings will help

*(Continued on page 6)*



*(Continued from page 1)*

friend who served with Hunt in the Marines and in Haiti with Team Rubicon.

But some knew he was grieving over several close friends in the Marines who were killed in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"He was very despondent about why he was alive and so many people he served with directly were not alive," said John Wordin, 48, the founder of Ride 2 Recovery, a program that uses bicycling to help veterans heal physically and mentally.

In 2007, while in Iraq with the Marine's 2nd Battalion, 7th Regiment, Hunt heard over the radio that his 20-year-old bunkmate had died in a roadside bombing. Hunt later wrote online about sleeping in his bunkmate's bed. "I just wanted to be closer to him, I guess. But I couldn't — he was gone."

A month later, Hunt was pinned by enemy fire in his truck as a fellow Marine, shot in the throat by a sniper, lay nearby. Hunt wrote that seeing his friend placed in a helicopter, where he died, is "a scene that plays on repeat in my head nearly every day, and most nights as well."

Three days later, a sniper's bullet missed Hunt's head by inches and hit his wrist. He didn't immediately leave Iraq. His parents say Hunt asked to fly to a military hospital in Germany a day later so he could accompany a fellow Marine who was shot in both legs.

"I know he's seen some traumatic stuff in his time and I guess he holds that to

himself," said Marine Sgt. Oscar Garza, 26, who served with Hunt in Iraq. "He was a very compassionate Marine, a very passionate person, one of the few people that I know that has a big heart and feels a lot of people's pain and makes it his own."

Hunt's mother, Susan Selke, said after Hunt was wounded, she'd hoped her son would get out of the military. Instead, he went to school to be a scout-sniper and went to Afghanistan. He seemed to do well. He was honorably discharged in 2009, married and enrolled at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles.

He was frustrated by the Veterans Affairs Department's handling of his disability claim. He also piled up thousands of dollars in credit card debt as he waited for his GI Bill payments. Hunt found an outlet to help improve the system by doing work with IAVA. He helped build bikes for Ride 2 Recovery and participated in long rides.

Using his military training, he went to Haiti several times and Chile once to help with the countries' earthquake relief efforts. He proudly told his parents of splinting an infant's leg, and after meeting a young orphaned boy in Haiti named D'James, tried to persuade his family to adopt him.

"If I had one thing to say to my fellow veterans, it would be this: Continue to serve, even though we have taken off our uniforms," Hunt wrote in an online testimonial for Team Rubicon. "No matter how great or small your service is, it is desired and needed by the world we live in today."

Hunt's friends say he was an idealist and voiced frustration that he couldn't make changes overnight. He also questioned why troops were still dying.

"He really was looking for someone to tell him what it was he went over to do and why those sacrifices were made," Wood said.

Last year, Hunt's life took a downward spiral. His marriage ended, he dropped out of school and he began to have suicidal thoughts, his mother said. She said Hunt sought counseling from the VA and moved in temporarily with Wordin in California.

Things seemed to improve for Hunt in recent months after he returned to his hometown of Houston to be near family.

He got a construction job, leased an apartment, bought a truck and began dating. He called friends to discuss the possibility of re-enlisting. In the days before he died, he hung out with friends, and he had plans the following weekend to do a Ride 2 Recovery bike ride. He even told Garza he couldn't wait to see him at a Fourth of July reunion with other Marines.

Then he was dead.

"Clay was always a fighter," Wordin said. "He was always a guy to stick things out and he basically quit life, and I was mad that he felt he had to do that at that particular time."

Hunt's friends and family count him a casualty of war — just like his buddies who died in the battlefield.





**UPDATE**

Click Here  
To Update  
Your Info!



*(Continued from page 4)*

Songer said he ran the flag up its pole in the distress position for the first time Saturday morning.

"You know, they say old soldiers never die, they just fade away. But now the World War II vets are dying at a rate of a thousand a day or more, but at least we were celebrated as heroes when we came home," Songer said. "When the soldiers came home from Korea, it was like, 'Oh, we didn't know you were gone.'

Then the ones that made it home from Vietnam and every war since haven't gotten the same treatment, yet they still served their country and some died for it.

"I'm tired. I go through the museum and see the names of the 360 from Vermilion County lost in the bow of a ship or the jungle or on an island the size of a postage stamp, but all the others lost since deserved the same respect.

"I do not consider flying the

flag upside down a disgraceful thing to do," Songer said. "I would never do anything to disgrace the flag or the museum."

Songer fought in World War II and was a prisoner of war. He re-enlisted and also served during Korea and Vietnam as well as a veterans liaison after his military service.

In *Spence v. Washington* in 1974, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that improper display of the flag is a protected form of expression.

*(Continued from page 4)*

them tease out protective social patterns — such as, for example, that sense in a marriage of mattering to someone else — that can be encouraged or instilled in all soldiers to lower the risk of suicide.

"One of the big things we're interested in now is digging into this marriage thing and saying, 'What is it you get, by being married? And how could we put it in a bottle so we can give it to everybody, whether or not they're married,'" says Ronald Kessler, a psychiatric epidemiologist at Harvard Medical School who is working

on the project.

A key goal of the five-year research effort, led by the National Institute of Mental Health, is to identify categories of soldiers most at risk for suicide. The Army suicide rate has more than doubled since 2004 from 10- to 22-per-100,000 among active-duty soldiers, surpassing the rate for civilians of the same age and gender.

This first slice of data from the study, drawn from Army records on 389 active-duty suicides between 2004 and 2008, is only a small piece of a sweeping research effort that will eventually include tracking between 30,000 and 50,000

soldiers from basic training onward, says Philip Wang, NIMH deputy director. Other findings:

- Suicide rates among men increase from 15- to 21-per-100,000 when they deploy to Iraq or Afghanistan.
- Soldiers of Asian descent have dramatically higher suicide rates than other racial groups.

Source:  
<http://goo.gl/hReH3>

Reprinted from:  
<http://goo.gl/awjMk>

**NOTICE**

Do you have comments about articles or news reported in the *Intelligencer*? Do you have an idea for an article or would like to submit an article you want considered for publication in the Post 448 Newsletter?

Send your **PDF or Word** docs to:

[postnews@post448.org](mailto:postnews@post448.org)

**Deadline for publication in the next newsletter is the 25th of each month.**

The Post has the right to refuse publication of any article without explanation.

Unless otherwise copyrighted or agreed upon, all contributions become the property of American Legion Post 448.

Due to limited space, obituaries and memorial notices will be printed on a space available basis for members in good standing only.

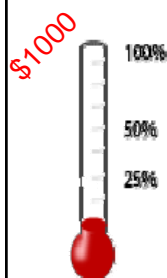


**JIMMY McCONNELL—  
WALKING FOR 22 YEARS**

Since 1987, AIDS Walk San Francisco has raised nearly \$74 million for San Francisco AIDS Foundation and other HIV/AIDS organizations in the six Bay Area counties. Established in 1982, the unrestricted funds raised by AIDS Walk San Francisco, the Foundation is able to provide direct services to promote health among those living with HIV and implement ground-breaking prevention programs to create sustainable progress against HIV.

I would really appreciate your help. Please sponsor me for AIDS Walk SF! Just visit the link below to get to my personal fundraising Web page:

<http://tinyurl.com/6cestr8>



25th ANNUAL

**AIDS  
WALK  
SAN FRANCISCO**

**JULY 17, 2011**



(Continued from page 3)

aside for Bingo. Wants officers to pick a date and come up with an activity to continue to use the rooms.

Discussion about Pride Parade. The Navigator will not be available this year. Since there will be a minimum of 12 people to staff a gate, it would be hard to do both the parade and gate work. Some stated that we should only do the Parade, some said that we need the

recognition from doing both the parade and the gate. Motion was made to ONLY participate in the Parade.

**NEW BUSINESS:**  
None

A motion was made to adjourn, seconded and carried unanimously, followed by retirement of the colors.

50/50 raffle = winner was Jimmy, who won \$20.



**POST 448  
2010**



DATE	EVENT & LOCATION
14 MAY	Canteen night open house in Room 202 WMVB Movie, Fundraising Info, etc. 1500-2000 Hrs.
19 MAY	Post Meeting 1900 Hrs.
<b>30 MAY</b>	<b>Memorial Day</b> ★ ☆ ★ ☆ ★
30 MAY	Muster at Room 128 WMVB @ 0900 before traveling to
04 JUN	Officers' Meeting 1200 Hrs.; Room 104, War Memorial Veterans Building
16 JUN	Post Meeting 1900 Hrs. Room 202, War Memorial Veterans Building
26 JUN	San Francisco Gay Pride Parade Stay Tuned for Details
<b>4 JUL</b>	<b>Independence Day</b> ★ ☆ ★ ☆ ★
9 JUL	Officers' Meeting 1200 Hrs.; Room 104, War Memorial Veterans Building
17 JUL	SF AIDS Walk—Golden Gate Park
21 JUL	Post Meeting 1900 Hrs. Room 202, War Memorial Veterans Building
6 AUG	Officers' Meeting 1200 Hrs.; Room 104, War Memorial Veterans Building
18 AUG	Post Meeting 1900 Hrs. Room 202, War Memorial Veterans Building
3 SEP	Officers' Meeting 1200 Hrs.; Room 104, War Memorial Veterans Building

For a more accurate, up-to-the-minute calendar, event information and special announcements, please check our website.



**Alameda Leather Forum**

Saturday 4 JUN 11, 1700-2000  
Veterans from the leather community are invited to attend!  
Contact Dick Manning @ 415-699-4403 for more information



(Continued from page 1)

the tongue was always reminding me to do something about it. Well, comrades, its almost the beginning of a new year for us legionnaires, new membership cards will be mailed out again in two months. If you are tired of having to deal with these

membership cards year after year maybe its time you look into becoming a paid up for life member. Pay once, or make installments. The National Organization is looking to raise dues again for all of us, so now is the time; or until next time.

Tony

**SUPPORT OUR FRIENDS AT COLE HARDWARE!**

Shop at any Cole Hardware store and mention that you heard about them from Alexander Hamilton Post 448 or mention account number 411. At the end of the year, the Post will receive a donation for all of the referrals. So tell all of your friends and family. Also, beginning in MAY, 2009, Cole Hardware is extending a 20% discount to all active military members and veterans on the last Thursday of each month. They call them Recession Buster days – 20% off almost everything (sale items, Muni, gift cards & special orders excluded).  
Thanks for your support!!!

**Cole Hardware**  
**956 COLE STREET**  
San Francisco, CA 94117  
415-753-2653  
Fax: 415-753-0957  
M-F 7 am to 7:30 pm  
weekends 8 to 7

**Cole Hardware**  
**3317 MISSION STREET**  
San Francisco, CA 94110  
415-674-8913  
Fax: 415-647-6554  
M-F 8 am to 7:30 pm  
weekends 8 to 7

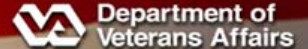
**Cole Fox Hardware**  
**70 - 4TH STREET**  
San Francisco, CA 94103  
415-777-4400  
Fax: 415-777-4453  
M-F 8 am to 7:30 pm  
weekends 9 to 5:30

**Cole Hardware**  
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San Francisco, CA 94109  
415-647-8700  
Fax: 415-674-8917  
M-F 8 am to 8 pm  
weekends 9 to 7

IT  
 TAKES  
 THE  
 COURAGE AND STRENGTH  
 OF A WARRIOR  
 TO ASK FOR HELP.....

**If you're in an emotional crisis  
 call 1-800-273-TALK "Press 1 for Veterans"**

[www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Alexander Hamilton Post 448  
 The American Legion  
 PO Box 14939  
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MAY, 2011

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