



Tom Buchanan, commandant-in-waiting of the Loveland Marine Corps League, holds one of 340 flags collected since Sept. 1 when a collection box for worn-out flags was placed outside the Associated Veterans Club. Reporter-Herald/Christopher Stark

Marine Corps League collects worn American flags in its **banner bin**

Veterans group has retired 300 unwanted flags

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Loveland Reporter-Herald

Publish Date: 11/4/2008

It's a grand old flag and it's a high-flying flag — but what happens when your American flag starts looking less than glorious?

From tears to dirt, even the most well-loved flags can go from red, white and blue to looking less than new. Yet that's when the Loveland Marine Corps League Detachment 1250 can help.

Recently, the organization has set up a flag collection bin to take in worn American flags, which members help dispose of properly and honorably.

"It's important because the flag of the United States of America represents our freedom," said Tom Buchanan, commandant-in-waiting of the chapter. "It needs to be retired in a proper respect."

According to etiquette, when a flag becomes worn beyond repair, it should be burned in a dignified manner.

The local veterans club already had accepted worn flags for proper disposal; however, not everyone knew the service was available, Buchanan said.

So borrowing the idea from a New York county, Buchanan and the local Marine Corps League helped bring the first flag collection bin to the area.

Using a “Marine Red” painted post office box — which is located outside the Associated Veterans Club at Third Street and Cleveland Avenue — community members can simply drop their old flag in the bin.

Since it was started two months ago, the program has collected more than 300 worn flags. And community members are dropping off all kinds of American flags, said Buchanan, who’s seen them range in size from tiny toothpick toppers to a giant 20-by-38-foot garrison flag.

“(People) want to feel good about retiring their flag,” he said. “Everyone seems to think it’s a good idea.” Most of the flags collected in the bin are honorably burned with the help of the fire department.

A few of the flags are set aside to be used by local groups, such as the Boy and Girl Scouts, so they can learn about the proper disposal on their own.

In the future, the local Marine Corps League is hoping to install another worn flag collection bin in town, possibly in Dwayne Webster Veterans Park, to offer another opportunity for people to retire their flags. Until then, Buchanan, who unloads the bin twice a week, said he’s happy to see the constant flow of worn American flags being properly retired.

“It’s always a wonderful experience to see the flags in there,” he said.

MORE: The Loveland Marine Corps League Detachment 1250 is seeking donations to erect another worn flag collection bin in Loveland. For more information about donating or to get involved with the local chapter call 667-6269 or visit www.mcl-loveland-1250.com.

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American flag etiquette

- The flag should be lighted at all times, either by sunlight or by an appropriate light source.
 - It should be flown in fair weather, unless the flag is designed for inclement weather use.
 - It should never be dipped to any person or thing. It is flown upside down only as a distress signal.
 - The flag should not be used for any decoration in general. Bunting of blue, white and red stripes is available for these purposes. The blue stripe of the bunting should be on the top.
 - It should never be used for any advertising purpose. It should not be embroidered, printed or otherwise impressed on such articles as cushions, handkerchiefs, napkins, boxes, or anything intended to be discarded after temporary use. Advertising signs should not be attached to the staff or halyard.
 - It should not be used as part of a costume or athletic uniform, except that a flag patch may be used on the uniform of military personnel, fireman, policeman and members of patriotic organizations.
 - The flag should never have any mark, insignia, letter, word, number, figure or drawing of any kind placed on it or attached to it.
 - The flag should never be used for receiving, holding, carrying or delivering anything.
 - When the flag is lowered, no part of it should touch the ground or any other object; it should be received by waiting hands and arms. To store the flag it should be folded neatly and ceremoniously.
 - The flag should be cleaned and mended when necessary.
- American Flags Forum, www.usa-flag-site.org

