Washington Conference

WASHINGTON D.C. — Minnesota delegates to the Washington Conference were well-briefed on their way to talking to their congressional leaders in February.

First they heard from Department Veterans Service Officer Jeremy Wolfsteller at the Minnesota caucus on Sunday night, then from a “Know Before You Go” panel on Monday night, and then at the Commander’s Call on Tuesday morning.

The 20 or so Minnesotans then headed up on Capitol Hill to talk to representatives or staff in their offices.

The national veterans community has a lot of the general rate in the nation each day, considerably higher than the suicide rate in the general population.

“First of all, it’s really a tragedy for that family. But it’s also very hard on the continued trend of veteran suicides.

Members of the Minnesota Delegation visited with Sen. Tina Smith, D-Minnesota, in her office in Washington D.C. to talk about the Legion’s legislative proposals for this year. From left: Smith, Aide Sam Fellman, Past Department President Chris Ronning, NECman Marland Ronning, Adjutant Randy Tesdahl and Department Commander Darrel Redepenning.

By Al Zdon

The Washington Post recently ran a story about a Minnesota veteran who killed himself in the parking lot of the Minneapolis VA Medical Center over a year ago.

It was one of 19 such suicides on a VA campus in a one-year period. Despite making an intense effort to deal with the problem in recent years, the Minneapolis VA and the Veterans Administration in general have taken much criticism about the continuing trend of veteran suicides. There are an average of 20 veteran suicides in the nation each day, considerably higher than the suicide rate in the general population.

Referring back to the 33-year-old former Marine who died in the parking lot, Minneapolis VA Medical Center Director Patrick Kelly said such events have a lasting impact on everyone.

“First of all, it’s really a tragedy for that family. But it’s also very hard on the

Lake Crystal student is Oratorical winner

ANOKA — Olivia Flack, a senior at Lake Crystal-Welch Memorial High School, won the 2019 Minnesota Oratorical Contest and will represent the Department at the national contest in Indianapolis.

Flack earned a $1,500 scholarship and will receive an additional $1,500 for participating in the national contest.

Past Dept. Commander
Frank Fay, 92

Frank Fay, 92, who served as Department Commander from 1980-81, died January 30, 2019.

He was a Navy veteran of World War II and an Air Force veteran of the Korean War, achieving the rank of staff sergeant.

He was post commander of the Hutchinson Post 96 and in 1974 became Third District Commander. He was elected Department Vice Commander in

Minnesota war hero
Peter Thompson Jr., 76

Peter Thompson, one of Minnesota’s most decorated Vietnam veterans, died January 30, 2019.

Thompson served two tours in Vietnam and received six Purple Hearts, a Silver Star and three Bronze Stars.

A member of the White Earth band of Ojibwe, he was a member of Bagley Post 16.

Thompson joined the Army in 1960 when he was 17 years old.
The Mission Act

If you’ve been actively engaged in VA Health Care over the last year then you most likely have been waiting in anticipation for the VA to release regulations regarding the VA Mission Act, which became law in 2018. The Act included a consolidation of VA’s seven separate community care programs that was a bureaucratic maze difficult to navigate for veterans, their families and VA employees. The Act also would change community care eligibility rules that were previously used under the choice program. The other major change in the Mission Act includes expanding its comprehensive caregiver program to all eras of veterans. In this column I’ll be only focusing on the community care portion.

The VA was given one year by lawmakers to develop proposed regulations on its community care programs and prepare to implement the new authority. This was of highest priority for the VA because the previous Choice Program third-party administrator (TPA) contract with Health Net Federal Services was preparing to sunset September 30, 2018. Although the Act included appropriations of $5.2 billion in mandatory funding for the Choice Program to continue but under a new TPA, Triwest Healthcare Alliance charged a copayment. Keep in mind that VA has made VA’s community care network and may be included. To access this new benefit, Veterans will select a provider in VA’s community care network and may be charged a copayment. Keep in mind that VA has made tremendous progress offering veterans same-day services at VA Clinics.

These major changes within the VA are putting veterans and their families on the same playing field when choosing care. VA is proposing the same 30-minute average drive time standard currently used for primary care by portions of the TRICARE Prime program. For specialty care, VA is proposing a wait-time standard of 20 days for primary care, mental health care, and non-institutional extended care services, and 28 days for specialty care from the date of request with certain exceptions. Eligible Veterans who cannot access care within the above standards would be able to choose between eligible community providers and care at a VA medical facility.

These rules also include for the first time community care benefits for veterans involved in the course of treatment of another condition may also be included. To access this new benefit, Veterans will select a provider in VA’s community care network and may be charged a copayment. Keep in mind that VA has made tremendous progress offering veterans same-day services at VA Clinics.

Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

By Jeremy Wolfsteller

Continued from Page 1

He was sponsored by Fallden Post 555. Shannahona Emery, an 11th grade home schooler from Montevideo, was fourth. She was sponsored by Dawson Post 177. The second, third and fourth place winners received scholarships of $1,000, $700 and $500. The contest was held at the Osseo Post 172 and Anoka Post 102. There were six candidates in the state contest — the First, Ninth and 10th dates in the state contest — and the Sixth District candidate canceled because of weather.

Blacks has had a remarkable high school career. She was limping slightly at Anoka contest because she turned an ankle while playing basketball for her high school this past week. The team finished the year 21-4. She is also a runner in cross-country and track, and is part of a 4x800 relay team that holds the school record.

Blacks attended Girls State in 2018, and was elected mayor of her city. She praised the help she has received from her post and unit at Lake Crystal. “They have good members to work with at the Legion.”

This was her first attempt at the Oratorical Contest and she paid tribute to her parents and high school speech coach, Jackie Slama, for their support.

She also attributed her poise to her life-long hobby of showing horses.

The two other contestants were Christian Strommen of Hastings, sponsored by Brainerd Post 255, could not attend because of the national finalials. The national finals will be in Indianapolis on April 5-7. The top prize is $18,000 scholarship for the winner.

FINALSITIS — The Department Oratorical Contest was held in Anoka and the four finalists posed for a photo. From left, Oratorical Vice Chairman Cliff Newman, Third Place Jonathan Vickers, Fourth Place Shannahona Emery, second place Madelyn Eckhoff, Winner Olivia Flack, Department President Jean Walker, Oratorical Chairman Sy Fix, Department Commander Darrel Redepenning.

2019 Oratorical Contest

Continued from Page 1

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2019 Oratorical Contest

Continued from Page 1

She is the daughter of Keith Flack and Angie Schuck, who are both dentists in North Dakota. Their family lives in Lake Crystal.

Madelyn Eckhoff of Chanhassen, a 10th grade home schooler, was second. She was sponsored by Chanhassen Post 580.

Jonathan Vickers of Minneapolis, a ninth grade home schooler, was third.

immediate attention, such as influenza, strep throat, minor burns, pink-eye, ear infections, skin infections, and flu shots. Certain therapeutic vaccines that are furnished during the course of treatment of another condition may also be included. To access this new benefit, Veterans will select a provider in VA’s community care network and may be charged a copayment. Keep in mind that VA has made tremendous progress offering veterans same-day services at VA Clinics.

These major changes within the VA are putting veterans at the center of their own health care decisions. VA has been receiving many accolades lately. For example a 2018 RAND study generally delivers higher-quality of care than other health providers, 2018 Dartmouth study proved that VA health care providers, 2018 Dartmouth study proved that VA health care

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Endorsements

Locker endorsed for Vice Cdr.

Shadrick-LaBeau Post 303 has endorsed Robert Locker for Department Vice Commander, 8th and 10th District for 2019-2020. Locker is eligible for membership through his service in the United States Navy from 1959 to 1968. He presently serves his Post as Financial Officer and Honor Guard Commander. He is a member of Anoka Voiture 390 of the 40 and 8 where he has served as Chef de Gare.

At the Department of Minnesota level he is presently serving as Vice President of the Brain Science Committee and is a member of the Legislator Board of Publication.

He is a member of Shadrick-LaBeau Post 303 serving as Commander, Membership Director, Adjutant, Historian and Post Development.

Contact:
Two Harbors 6 p.m. dinner March 10  218-834-4975 or 218-206-5796
Jennifer Havlick
Pequot Lakes, 6 p.m. dinner March 11  218-820-7683
or 218-568-9881 in February
Ken Meyer
Brainerd 8 a.m. breakfast March 12  218-829-2249
Anoka 6 p.m. dinner March 12  763-421-0883
Denise

All meal stops require a reservation at the above numbers. Commander Reistad will also tour the 148th Fighter Wing and St. Cloud State University. These events are not open to the public.

Peter Thompson

Continued from Page 1

began a drill instructor, and then volunteered for a tour in Vietnam where he earned three Purple Hearts. He also volunteered for a second tour, and received three more Purple Hearts.

He served 12 years in the Army and later held jobs as a police officer in Red Wing, a corrections officer at Sandstone, and a trapper for the Tribal Predator Control.

He was a founder of the White Earth Honor Guard and was a Minnesota delegate to the dedication of the Vietnam Memorial in Washington. He was married to the Dakota tribe in North Dakota.

He was survived by his wife, Evelyn, and two daughters.

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2019 National Commander’s Tour

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Greetings Legion Family,

Polar vortex, four feet of snow, 50 mph winds, it’s like lions and tigers and bears... oh no! We won’t forget the winter of 2019. March has just gotta be better.

Happy Birthday American Legion. 100 Years of Membership and Service. It’s a great time to be a Legionnaire. Let the celebrations begin. Be proud of the great organization that we all are a part of. Be sure to support all of our communities that this is indeed a big deal and we are all striving for another 100 years of service.

At the time of this writing I have just returned home from the Washington D.C. Conference. I am not a Democrat or a Republican, I am a veteran. I represent the Veterans Party. And I’m here to inform you that it appears on our Capitol Hill agenda to walk away from our veteran initiatives. I heard several times: “Well, that’s just not what the Congress people and Senator are all striving for another 100 years of service. Legionnaire. Let the celebrations begin. Be proud of the

Our facilities are used for myriad meetings, small towns. Our facilities are used for myriad meetings, events, and social occasions. These buildings are expensive to keep and maintain. As our membership ages and becomes unable to volunteer as we once did, these community hubs, along with the volunteers who do so many community services, are in danger of disappearing. When we are gone, who will look out for our veterans?

there were their five minutes to show support for veterans. Many times stating that they rely on The American Legion for direct assistance with veteran issues – walked away feeling like they not only supported some of our initiatives, they support all of our initiatives. We now turn to our own state to seek support for our initiatives. We post on 20th Veterans Day on the Hill. Let’s keep this momentum going and show up in large groups.

This month I am writing with a little help with that momentum as our National Commander comes to visit Minnesota. Minnesota is where he was elected and he looks forward to returning. Although his visit is later this year, in some ways it’s just in time. Just before our 100th birthday and our own day on the hill. I hope many of you have the opportunity to attend.

We also have another big membership opportunity this month, with our Appreciation Rally in Montgomery. This one is sponsored by our National Membership Director’s home post. A big day planned with a Strategic Planning meeting, DEC meeting, Rally and dinner. Membership Director Mike has worked hard all off this year to try to grow our Membership boat around. I’m sure this will be a rally you don’t want to miss. Hope to see you there.

A good sign of spring is planning testimonial dinners. I’ve been advised that I need to get that information out about my own. Mine will be on April 27th at my home post in Anoka. Social will be from 4:30 to 6 p.m., dinner at 6 p.m. and program to follow. I have to be honest with you: Your Department Commander loves honoring other Legionnaires but has to rally the troops to get you to come. So please do not feel obligated to bring me any gifts. The biggest gift of my life has been the honor of serving as your National Commander and the gift I will receive from you. The rest of my life. Feel free to roast or toast, but let’s just plan on having some fun.

The survey’s lack of depth and obvious slant disturbs me. The survey’s lack of depth and obvious slant disturbs me. I just received the “Area Veterans Priority Survey” in the mail and I am writing with several thoughts. One glance lets one know that you are essentially directed to respond with the first choice of answer on queries 1 and 2. One glance lets one know that you are essentially directed to respond with the first choice of answer on queries 1 and 2.

“Who will see that the young people are educated about veterans, patriotism, and respect for the flag?”

We have been asked to provide these questions for some time in Ashby, where we have a Legion member stationed in Europe for 200 but shrinking, with very few active members who are younger than the 70s.

After years of discussion we decided to advocate for the formation of a SAL squadron. This has been very successful so far, with over 50 members on our SAL register. The SAL has helped with, and even taken over, many of the jobs that Legion members have been doing. We hope we can pass along our pride and ideals to them, so that they will continue to help our shrinking Legion do the things that are important to them and to us.

One of the hopes of years, has run street dances, helped with many kinds of fund raising, directly helped veterans’ groups, done work to improve our building, and many other activities. We are grateful to have them.

We have been asked to provide these questions for some time in Ashby, where we have a Legion member stationed in Europe for 200 but shrinking, with very few active members who are younger than the 70s.

The road isn’t always smooth. We bump heads now and again, as we old Legion members reluctantly give way to the new ideas and energy of the SAL. While it is true that SAL members don’t do everything they do, we are learning to respect their thinking and to give them support for their ideas and plans.

This is certainly not the only or complete answer to the problem of the shrinking Legion, but it’s a start for us. The important thing is, at every level, Post, District, Department, and National, the Legion must recognize that yes, we need to strive as hard as we can for Legion membership, but we had better start planning and sharing thoughts about how we will continue our work with a much smaller organization. Legion posts need much more help than they are getting to figure out how to survive and prosper in this new environment.

Korea Trail

To the Editor:

I enjoy these articles you write about veterans and their experiences. The Christmas story you wrote about the trail in Korea was very accurate as my experience with the Yalu River was very accurate. My brother was on that trail and he was trapped when the Chinese entered that conflict. My brother was a medic and had about a half mile of conflict and their retreat back south. He was in the tanks of the 25th Division.

We were in the Minnesota National Guard and were activated in January of 1951 with the whole division shipped to Camp Rucker in Alabama. I was a senior in high school at that time, and after a short basic training, we were supplying replacement soldiers to go to Korea. I was very fortunate as I was sent to occupation duty in Germany and was stationed in Munich.

After years of discussion we decided to advocate for the formation of a SAL squadron. This has been very successful so far, with over 50 members on our SAL register. The SAL has helped with, and even taken over, many of the jobs that Legion members have been doing. We hope we can pass along our pride and ideals to them, so that they will continue to help our shrinking Legion do the things that are important to them and to us.

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Lived for some time of a few years in the 1970s. Our chapter left us voluntarily and I have been in Europe for 3 – 7. Yet any thinking person would likely to qualify answers, i.e. “Do you support (area) children recruiting the Peaceful Legionnaire?”

I am a Vietnam era veteran and longtime Legion member (and a past Boy’s Stater) – growing up in the 50s and 60s, I recall the pledge each day in grade school. My father was a veteran’s veteran, he served as a Marine in WWII and fought on Iwo Jima. My mother’s brother – the uncle who died in Korea Trail – fought on Iwo Jima. My mother’s brother – the uncle who died in Korea Trail – fought on Iwo Jima. My mother’s brother – the uncle who died in Korea Trail – fought on Iwo Jima. He was a naval aviator who died on Iwo Jima. My mother’s brother – the uncle who died in Korea Trail – fought on Iwo Jima. He was a naval aviator who died on Iwo Jima. My mother’s brother – the uncle who died in Korea Trail – fought on Iwo Jima. He was a naval aviator who died on Iwo Jima.

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Well , that’s just not what the Congress people and Senator are all striving for another 100 years of service. Legionnaire. Let the celebrations begin. Be proud of the
Minnesota VA deals with suicide issue

Continued from Page 1

Staff here at the hospital.

The Twin Cities VA has also implemented a "Veteran Safety Belt," a cloth strap that can be worn around the neck and attached to a wall or bed post to prevent a veteran from hanging himself. The belt is checked into the emergency room, and then spent four days at the hospital before being released. "We provided them with a fair amount of in-patient service before we released him," Kelly said. "When we release a patient, we think they're safe."

The hospital was found to have made some errors including not communicating with the family and in not determining if the veteran had access to a firearm. "We’ve spent a lot of time evaluating what we did and how we did things, and we did it differently," Kelly said. "The veteran did the right thing by himself coming to us for help. At the time, we thought we did the right thing."

During this time, the Veteran was asked seven times if he had access to a firearm, but his answers obviously did not lead the staff to conclude that he did. They knew that we have to have more structure in how we ask, so the answer is not open to interpretation."

Kelly said the VA gives away thousands of gun locks that can be used for medical purposes. "We know that most veterans have access to a weapon. "We know that we have to have more structure in how we provide our care. We are going to have to be smart in how we provide our care. The veteran will be seeking quality, and the VA will have to be good so the veterans will choose the VA."

Overall, Kelly said the medical center continues to improve. "The staff has now grown to 4,200 and space at the medical center now is at a premium. With this in mind, the Minneapolis VA is nearing completion of a project in Building 222 at the Fort Snelling campus. The building, an old barracks, will house 200 non-medical staff and will free up space in the medical center that can be used for medical purposes."

The renovation of the old building has won an architectural award for preserving its historical integrity while creating a modern work site for the hospital employees.

Dr. Krebs wins major award

The VA announced that Minneapolis VA’s Erin E. Krebs, MD, MPH, is the recipient of the 2018 VA’s Best Research Paper of the Year Award. The annual award honors a single article or collection of articles related to veterans’ health care. The 2018 article, “Effect of Opioid vs Nonopioid Medications on Pain-Related Outcomes in Patients with Chronic Back Pain or Hip or Knee Osteoarthritis Pain: The SPACE Randomized Clinical Trial,” was published in JAMA.
Looks like we’re on our way to a record year of snowfall. (February was that.) Sorry we had to cancel the 1st and 3rd Dist. Fishing Contest, but safety rules over social time. We have an opportunity on our way to the 100th birthday this March (15-17), to see its coming up fast. Are you ready for it? Are you planning any special events or activities to mark this special time in our history? How many new members have you signed up, letting them know that we’ve been around for over 100 years. (Did you sign up enough to get the National Command Post?) And we plan on being around for another 100 years and more after that.

Also in March on the 9th the Department Appreciation Rally will be at Montgomery Post 79 honoring the Vice-Commanders for a outstanding job they have done this year. As well as all the officers in the state.

We’ve been in first place now for membership for some time, 566 for final turn-in. Thank you to those who volunteered to make this a great event. 566 for final turn-in. The family had a great weekend as a PROJECT. Would like to see everyone for your prayers – the 4th District is truly an American Legion Family.

Daylight Savings Time will start March 10th so spring ahead. In spite of all the cold weather and snow and the trials of what could hold us back, Second District is keeping in step and moving forward.

This week’s bulletin showed us in 3rd place in the district for membership turn-in. Thank you so much, don’t stop now, just ask.

Second Post Reports have been sent out and due March 19th. Please let us know they are out, tell your story, we need a 100% turn in, thank you.

Thank you to VCDR Tracy Woitas and the Lake Crystal Post for hosting the membership rally, and to Commander Roberts for the Floral Presentation. If you were not there you missed a wonderful program and lunch.

Please continue to visit our veterans in the nursing and veterans homes. Thank you to all the post members that travel to Luverne and play bingo with the residents.

March 9th – Appreciation Rally, Legion Post, Montevideo.

March 16th – 2 p.m. District Rally, Legion Post, Meda.

March 16th Commander Cindy Brunk Testimonial, Legion Post, Breverst.

June 5th Legion Family Picnic, East Side Resort, Round Lake.

6th-8th Second District Convention, Pipestone.

Ice Cream Machine Unveiling and Party at Luverne Veterans Home. TBA.

In talking to the other District Commanders, we all agree that the year is drawing down at a fast pace. We, as a Legion family, are looking at a critical time, as far as the dwindling membership for the Department. The attrition through death, health problems, and the lack of interest in the Legion is taking a critical toll. If you look at the average age at most of the posts, it’s 60 to 80 years old. While still productive members, these members will be gone in five to ten years. If we do not restructure our thinking from 40 years ago to the present time, we will not get new members. I know that it is hard to change, but it must be done. I have heard theories that in the future, the younger veterans will join when their families have grown up and they are close to retirement, but this will take 15 to 20 years. In five years, those of the trend, if the members does not stop, we will not be effective to help Veterans.

Remember, membership is everybody’s job.

Jeffrey Gay

Commander

Jeffrey Gay Commander

Remember the quote from the movie “Field of Dreams”? “Build it and they will come.” A century ago Veterans “built” The American Legion and more Veterans “came.” We have enjoyed decades of working for our veterans and our communities. We thrived.

It’s time to “build it” again, increasing the odds of a resurgence of membership and community value. In other words, you put thought and energy into a project you can increase the likelihood of success. It would provide a revitalization and making a draw for veterans to come.

Much can be done without spending a lot of money, the Department Program is in place. It’s up to the commands to adopt them into our communities. Getting youth involved may also get their parents involved, prospective new members.

Educating your community about other Legion programs to help those in need and what the Legion really is all about is a must. It’s not too late.

I’m not young any more but I surround myself with not just those my age or older but many younger people which keeps me young and free from being too young or too old. Open your minds and let others in and the ideas that come with them. It’s not just good for the Legion but it’s good for you too.

I would like to remind everyone of the upcoming visit of our Purple Heart, Post Commander Donovan Goblirsch is doing better with his health and we continue to send him our best wishes to get well soon.

As well as all the officers in the state

Thank you to Larry Pocrnich and Post 222, our midway meeting went off well even if it was a little cold, about -20. We were pleased to have Post 480, Orr, in attendance, and we almost had to see if Larry was going to make it.

We are still working on our membership and encourage everyone to recruit, retain, and renew members. May God bless the USA and the American Legion family.

Now it’s not so much anymore with many Legion’s closing their doors, proud veteran members passing each day and the ex-serviceman weighing overall.

Searching for it. The people who wear our uniform and carry our flag represent a country than the people it sends into the field to fight for it. The people who wear our uniform and carry our flag represent the people that it sends into the field to fight for it. The people who wear our uniform and carry our flag represent the people that it sends into the field to fight for it.

Remember, membership is everybody’s job.

Jeffrey Gay

Commander

The 10th District has had a busy beginning of the year. The major event was our 48th annual snowmobile rally where five groups representing Family members, one each from Legion, Auxiliary, Son of the American Legion and Riders, crossed the district stopping at between 4-7 post and picking up membership. We all gathered at Lino Lakes Post 56 for final bing. The families had a great weekend as a total of 510 members were turned in. I want to say thanks to those who volunteered to make this a great event. Special thanks to one very member Patty Coleman for coordinating this event.

Spring is around the corner and people are ready to get outdoors. Make sure each post gets yours turned in. These reports are what national compiles and uses when lobbying for our benefits and programs.
This time around, it was the Auxiliary’s turn to plan a rally as the Legion, Auxiliary, Riders and Sons of the American Legion gathered at Royalton in February to participate in the Sweetheart Rally.

The Legion Family has been taking turns at organizing the rally for the past 14 years. Robin Dorf, the membership chair for the Auxiliary was the emcee for the rally. Her program for the meeting was a call for volunteers for the VA Volunteer Service, usually the emcee for the rally. Her program for the meeting was a call for volunteers for the VA Volunteer Service, usually the emcee for the rally. Her program for the meeting was a call for volunteers for the VA Volunteer Service, usually the emcee for the rally.

Department is at 9,060 members or 75.5 percent. Minneapolis V As called VA Volunteering for volunteers for the VA Volunteer Service, usually the emcee for the rally. Her program for the meeting was a call for volunteers for the VA Volunteer Service, usually the emcee for the rally. Her program for the meeting was a call for volunteers for the VA Volunteer Service, usually the emcee for the rally. Her program for the meeting was a call for volunteers for the VA Volunteer Service, usually the emcee for the rally. Her program for the meeting was a call for volunteers for the VA Volunteer Service.

The Eighth District was honored for finishing first at the Sweetheart Rally. From left: Department Commander Dave Redepenning, Vice Commander Jennifer Havlick, Membership Director Mike Maza.

To RSVP contact Jill Davis at 612-968-1172 or email jfd@pro-net.net. Thank you for all you do.

Greetings from your Sons of The American Legion. I hope you are all surviving this winter. I hope you are getting membership turned in since we are doing well. We met the 75% goal for February and we are almost to our March goal. Only 232 more memberships to go. Can we do it? Of course, the better question is how far over will we go? Make this the year to get our membership rolling again. Donations to my projects are going well. Remember they are Child Welfare Foundation, Brain Science, and Legionville. $2,000 a piece to help the youth of America, to advance the science of the brain helping our veterans with mental injuries (and many in our communities as well), and finally the youth in Minnesota. All worthy causes, all deserving some attention. Can you help them?

This is also the time to begin work on your Consolidated Squadron Reports (CSR). While not due until Detachment Convention/Campout (June 28 – 30), working early on them makes completing them easier, and will improve the % of squadrons who turn them in. For any Legionnaire who reads this, you have the CSR due at your post, follow up to ensure that this form is completed timely and submitted. It is just as important as the Consolidate Post Report (CPR) in telling the numbers of what we have done in volunteer hours and donations.

Do not forget Spring Conference. Due to several scheduling conflicts, the conference will be held in Richfield American Legion. Social will be at 5:30, Dinner will be 6:15 and program to follow. Cost is $15. To RSVP contact Jill Davis at 612-968-1172 or email jfd@pro-net.net. Thank you for all you do.

Please read this information and consider sponsoring a boy to Boys State. It’s a great way to work one of the key programs of The American Legion and recruit members for your Squadron. This information was culled from the Boys State Website.

We are excited about our 71st session and our 3rd year on the beautiful St. John’s University Campus in Collegeville, Minnesota. The Minnesota Boys State is June 9-15, 2019. This year we are expecting over 300 delegates. We would like for you to be part of this year’s class.

The efforts of many people and organizations are necessary to provide such a program for Minnesota’s best. A dedicated staff of about 100, can’t do it alone. We need your help. We need every Legion to participate by sending a delegate to the Minnesota Boys State. The gratitude of the MN Boys State staff goes out to all.

Minnesota American Legion Boys State is a week-long experience of learning about Minnesota government at the local, county and state levels by “doing”. It is a week of intensive study and involvement. The participants will actually organize and participate in the various levels and branches of government in addition to participating in athletics, music, writing for the newspaper or helping leadership positions across all levels of the program. Every boy will participate in the process of city, county and state government. Minnesota Boys State is a program for young men who have just completed their junior year of high school.

Highlight of this week is the Boys State program vital to the Sons of The American Legion. To arouse in the young citizens a determination to maintain and defend the Constitution of The American Legion. To arouse a keen interest in the detailed study of our government. Here we desire to create more than just a passive interest in the study of government; we strive to create an interest that will be born of the desire for knowledge.

To develop an understanding of American traditions and belief in the United States of America. Here we desire to impress upon the young men the glorious traditions which have made this country what it is today.

To inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, state and nation . . . “To safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom and democracy . . .”

President Jean Walker hands out membership prizes to district leaders at the Royalton Rally.

The rally was organized by the Auxiliary with Membership Chairman Robin Dorf in charge. Part of the afternoon’s festivities included a game where those at the rally put a hand on their head or on their rear end before the correct placement was called out by the emcee. After several rounds, Department Vice Director Tom Fernlund was the last man standing and received a prize.

From left are Department Membership Director Mike Maza, Dorf, Fernlund and SAL Membership Director Dave Vulcan.

Boys State program vital to the Sons of The American Legion

By Shawn Davis

Greetings from your Sons of The American Legion. I hope you are all surviving this winter. I hope you are getting membership turned in since we are doing well. We met the 75% goal for February and we are almost to our March goal. Only 232 more memberships to go. Can we do it? Of course, the better question is how far over will we go? Make this the year to get our membership rolling again. Donations to my projects are going well. Remember they are Child Welfare Foundation, Brain Science, and Legionville. $2,000 a piece to help the youth of America, to advance the science of the brain helping our veterans with mental injuries (and many in our communities as well), and finally the youth in Minnesota. All worthy causes, all deserving some attention. Can you help them?

This is also the time to begin work on your Consolidated Squadron Reports (CSR). While not due until Detachment Convention/Campout (June 28 – 30), working early on them makes completing them easier, and will improve the % of squadrons who turn them in. For any Legionnaire who reads this, you have the CSR due at your post, follow up to ensure that this form is completed timely and submitted. It is just as important as the Consolidate Post Report (CPR) in telling the numbers of what we have done in volunteer hours and donations.

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sent VA Secretary Robert Wilkie.
The act will replace the old Choice Act which had been implemented several years ago to address scheduling and other problems veterans were encountering in the VA system.

The Choice Act stumbled out of the gate with lapses in scheduling and problems in billing.
The new Mission Act will allow veterans to shop for care in private settings, but scheduling will be done by the VA.

“But it will have little effect unless we get the customer service right,” Byrne said.

National Commander Brett Reistad said, “The VA must take the lead in running the Mission program.”

Other topics the delegates talked over with their Congress people included veterans suicide, collaboration between the VA and the Department of Defense, and the Legion-sponsored bill that would change wartime eligibility dates.

Lindsay Deering, a lobbyist for the Legion in Washington, said that 14 of the 20 veterans who commit suicide daily in the U.S. never had contact with the VA system. “These are really alarming numbers.”

Deering said there should be adequate funding for suicide prevention, and that the VA needs to focus on PTSD treatment.

The collaboration between the VA and DoD has been a billion dollar project for several years, but there are still problems having a smooth, seamless transition of veterans' health records between the two agencies.

The Legion Act would open up eligibility to any veteran who served since Dec. 7, 1941 and now.

Matthew Shuman, national legislative director, said the Legion has turned down over 40 resolutions brought by Departments over the years to change the eligibility criteria. The Legion in its bylaws requires Congress to approve its eligibility dates.

The proposed legislation, Senate Bill 504, would do that.

There is no House companion bill at this time. “Over 1,600 veterans have died for their country in ‘non-war’ periods,” Shuman said.

He urged Legionnaires to reach out to their House members to sponsor the bill in that chamber.

National Commander Riestad said it was about time those veterans “are welcomed into our organization.”

Resolution after resolution has failed through the years to open up eligibility because the Legion leadership opposed such a change.

The delegates in Washington had a chance to hear several national leaders including Sen. John Tester of Montana and Rep. Nancy Pelosi of California.
Redefine “wartime service” period

More than 1,600 U.S. military men and women since the end of World War II have been killed or were wounded during times of armed conflict not recognized by the U.S. government. History is clear that the United States has been in a continuous state of wartime activity since the attack at Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941. In fairness to all who have served and sacrificed, not just those who fall within a government-defined window of dates, The American Legion passed Resolution 1 at its Fall 2018 National Executive Committee meeting calling on Congress to direct VA to expand the definition of “wartime veteran” to include all military personnel who served honorably under Title 10 orders for at least one day during this continuous period of armed conflict.

Support VA suicide-prevention efforts

An estimated 20 veterans end their lives every day. Most were not receiving care or support through VA that may have saved them. The American Legion supports expanding and promoting mental health treatment for veterans and urges Congress to provide VA necessary funds to hire mental health professionals and proper staffing for its Integrative Health and Wellness Program.

Implement, oversee new laws

The 115th Congress passed multiple American Legion-supported bills that help veterans and their families, from the backlog-aimed VA Appeals Modernization Act to the omnibus VA MISSION Act. The Legion now calls on the 116th Congress to ensure these measures are accurately and quickly implemented, as designed.

Fully fund a superior national defense

The American Legion supports a defense budget that reverses sequestration and its effects, rebuilds U.S. military end strength and weaponry and fairly compensates military personnel, especially in an ongoing time of global warfare.

Improve care for women veterans

VA must continue to develop and expand health-care services for the fast-growing population of female veterans, a large percentage of whom do not enroll for VA health care for a number of reasons, according to surveys. Among the factors are limited gender-specific treatment services and awareness of VA benefits. All veterans, regardless of gender, must receive fair and equal VA health-care services.

Expand Agent Orange benefits

Efforts by the 115th Congress fell short of finally extending fairness to Blue Water Navy Vietnam War veterans exposed to the toxic defoliant Agent Orange while at sea. The American Legion remains firm in its position that all veterans exposed to Agent Orange – on land, sea or air – deserve service-connected disability benefits for adverse health conditions presumed to be linked to such exposure.

Programs to end vet homelessness

To fully implement VA’s pledge to eradicate veteran homelessness, Congress must continue making investments in affordable housing and programs such as Supportive Services for Veteran Families that move veterans and their families off the streets and into stable housing with supportive services.

Re-employment rights for veterans

Veterans should not lose their jobs while deployed to protect the freedoms all Americans enjoy. When servicemembers deploy, worrying about whether they will still have employment can hinder mission focus. The American Legion urges Congress to prohibit employers from pressuring servicemembers into waiving their employment rights and protections through arbitration agreements.

Access to business capital via GI Bill

As times change, so must the GI Bill. For veteran entrepreneurs, access to capital for starting, purchasing or expanding small businesses is a serious obstacle. The American Legion supports legislation that would expand GI Bill benefits to assist veterans in obtaining access to small business capital.

Citizenship for honorable service

Immigrants to the United States often join the U.S. Armed Forces as a route to citizenship. Many veteran immigrants say they have been deported after discharge because they failed to acquire U.S. citizenship while in service.
Gene Nelson was a strapping young man from the farm country of central Minnesota. The Army gave him the task of carrying a Browning Automatic Rifle, a 20-pound weapon that kicked like a mule.

By Al Zdon

Gene Nelson had a friend in the Army named Arvid Larson. They were friends from back home and at the very beginning of the war, they stood guard duty together in California, protecting the coastline from a Japanese invasion that was probably never going to come.

"Yeah, we called each other 'Nels' and 'Lars.' We were pretty close."

At one point Larson looked Nelson in eye and said, "Take my hand. You’re going to come home and I’m not."

"I don’t know how he knew that, but that’s what happened."

Seventy-seven years later, Nelson says he still misses his friend. "I don’t know how one guy comes home and one guy doesn’t."

Eugene Nelson was born on a farm near Eagle Bend, about as close as you can get to dead central Minnesota. It’s between Wadena and Long Prairie, just a few miles east of Parker’s Prairie. It was a cow farm of 160 acres with 10 cows.

Nelson went to school in Eagle Bend, about a mile’s walk each way. "When we had a blizzard, my dad would hitch up the old gray mare to the cutter, and mom would drive us to school."

Because the local school only went through 8th grade, and there were no buses, and no convenient way for Nelson to get to the high school in Parker’s Prairie, he ended his formal education and went to work full-time on the farm.

“Sometimes, I’d work for our neighbor for 50 cents a day."

His younger brother did go to high school by staying with grandpa and grandma in town. "We’d bring him food, and on weekends, we’d get him and bring him home."

One day, he and his father were plowing, and Gene found a bank of money in the field. He looked around.

“I figured there had to be a purse, and then I found the purse. We think it may have been a pheasant hunter who lost it. My dad took it down to the bank, and there was $19 in it. I used the money to buy a suit."

He also had a job in a creamery in Rose City, a little crossroads town not far from Eagle Bend. He remembers exactly where he was when he found out about Pearl Harbor in late 1941. "I was heading for town to have a beer with the boys. It was Sunday and it was our day off. It was also my dad’s birthday."

In early February, 1942, just two months after the war started, Nelson was not thrilled when his draft notice came. He was 21 and enjoying civilian life.

“My number came up,” he said. “My dad had to drive me 80 miles to Fergus Falls so I could take a bus to Fort Snelling.”

For basic training, he was sent to Camp Wolters, an infantry training replacement center near Mineral Wells, Texas. "It was so hot, and they’d put us out in the open to talk to us. And then they just about starved you. I think they were serving goat. Anyway you could smell it about a mile away."

“I finally had to send home for some dough to go to the PX and get some snacks. I was only making $20 a month, and I had to pay for my own laundry."

It was at Camp Wolters that Nelson received word that his brother had been killed in Illinois in a motorcycle accident. "All the guys in the barracks chipped in whatever they could, and got me a ticket home. It took me three days to get there."

Nelson applied to get out of the service since he was the only son left in his farm family, but the Army ignored his request.

After six weeks, Nelson and others were sent to guard the west coast at Ventura, California. He was placed in Company C, 134th Infantry, 35th division. The Division originated out of Kansas, but many of the soldiers in Nelson’s outfit came from Beatrice, Nebraska.

“Two of us would walk a half mile up the coastline and meet another pair of guards. We had signs and counter signs. Then we’d go another half mile the other way and meet another team.”

He thinks he was a good soldier. “The Army loved us farmer boys.”

Then it was on to Camp Butner in North Carolina, Camp Kilmer in New Jersey, and then aboard the troop transport USS General Anderson for a two-week journey in a convoy to England.

"There was a storm in the middle of the ocean and a lot of guys got sick, but I didn’t.” He recalls that one of the men in his regiment met up with his brother, one of the ship’s crew.

The 35th Division landed at Bristol, England, in early 1944. They settled in at Penzance in the very tip of southern England.

“One day Eisenhower and Patton came to talk to us. You know what Eisenhower said? He said, ‘See you on the Rhine.’"

The division was still at Penzance when the D-Day landings occurred.

“I was standing guard and we could hear a lot of noise when they landed.” Six days later, his division also landed at Normandy. “We went in on an LST, and they dropped the back gate and we had to walk through the water. ‘They lined up all these divisions on the beach because Hitler said he was going to drive us back into the pond. But then we started to move inland.’"

Nelson was a Browning Automatic Weapon man. The Army often looked for big, brawny farm kids so they would have enough muscle to carry the 20-pound weapon and fire it while absorbing a strong recoil. A Browning could fire over 500 rounds a minute. Two others were on his team, one an assistant and the other
to carry the ammunition. The 134th Regiment (“All Hell Can’t Stop Us”) had it first real taste of combat in the hedgerow country along the Normandy beach.

Charley Company quickly moved into the hedgerows, where individual sections of land were separated by large berms with thick hedges planted on top of them. “They put bull dozers on the front of the tanks so they could push through the rows.”

The fighting was lethal. “We went in there with 175 men, and in three hours we had 40 left. We just ran into some Germans. We think they were sleeping in the hedgerows. We were so close, we could hear them talking. I fired off 300 rounds. The barrel of the BAR was really hot.”

“I became a squad leader right away. “When we reorganized, we went and helped out at Hill 122.” Taking the hill was one of the toughest early encounters for U.S. troops with the German forces. It took several divisions four days to oust an elite German paratrooper regiment from the top of the 300-foot hill And then it was on to St. Lo, an even tougher battle. The U.S. forces held off 12 counter attacks by the Germans before taking St. Lo, which was reduced to rubble. I remember someone hung a dummy of a clown from the top of the only building left in town. Charley Company got into the town and dug in. We were up against a Panzer outfit and they shelled us all night. When we woke up in the morning we found we had dug our foxholes into a cemetery. That was the first thing I wrote about to my mom. Waking up in a cemetery. But when I saw the letter later, the Army censors had cut all that out.”

Nelson picked up a little shrapnel in the rear end during this time, but not enough to stop moving forward. “We’d throw our pineapples at them and they’d thrown their potato mashers at us. The wound drew blood, but not enough for a Purple Heart.” The shape of the grenades became part of the GI lingo.

The division headed down the Cotentin Peninsula. “We heading down towards Patton’s Army. I remember we were going so fast that we found a beef the Germans had just butchered. We didn’t dare eat it, thinking they had poisoned it.”

On the march, Nelson recalls a house near the road. “There were white flags coming out of every window. The officer said, ‘Sergeant Nelson, take your squad over there and find out what’s going on.’”

It turned out to be a group of Polish soldiers, who had been fighting at the behest of the Germans and now were eager to get out of the war. A new officer arrived in Nelson’s company. “We told him to keep his head down, but he didn’t. He caught a bullet right in the middle of his forehead.”

When the division encountered the Germans resisting, the fighting was often at close quarters. “I had my helmet blown off three times by concussion grenades. It’s not easy to blow a helmet off your head. I think that’s why I still have PTSD.”

Every night at exactly 11 p.m. the Germans would send a single airplane over the American troops that the soldiers called “Good time Charlie.” It would drop a parachute with a flare to illuminate the territory below and then strafe the U.S. positions.

“You didn’t get a lot of sleep on the battlefield.”

In order to better lead his squad, Nelson put away his BAR and took up an M-1, a lighter all-purpose rifle that was used by most of the ground troops. “I loved the M-1. It was a great rifle. And it only weighed eight pounds.”

The American forces pushed on ahead, meeting strong resistance.

“At one point we were surrounded by the Germans. They had just knocked the hell out of us. I thought for sure we’d become prisoners of war. Over 2,500 American bombers came over to help us. I saw three of them shot down, and there’s no way those crews got out.”

“Our tanks got pinned down. They were being attacked by the German 88s (artillery) that were zeroing in on them. The guys in the tanks just got out of the tanks and ran away. You don’t want to be in a tank when there’s that kind of ack-ack.”

“But then we did a spearhead through the Germans. It lasted all night long.”

Nelson said his squad was constantly in the lead of the company. “The captain had me spearheading every damn day.”

“And then we crossed a small river, and my bazooka man lost his bazooka.”

“One day a captain and a major came up through our lines. We told them not to go any further, but they said they wanted to see what this was all about. Only one of them came back.”

It was at Mortaine, France, that Nelson got wounded. He was leading a squad through some hedgerow country when the Germans attacked with 88 shells, one of the most feared of the enemy weapons. “Five of us got killed, including two guys in my squad.”

Nelson was hit mainly in the hand, ripping it open near the thumb. His ear drum was also shattered. “My hand bled to beat the dickens. They gave me some

*An Army newspaper Nelson acquired along the way touted the deeds of the 35th Division in Europe.*
morpine right away and took me back to an aid station. I fell asleep from the morphine.”

An ambulance took him to a tent hospital that had a red cross painted on the top. He slept on an Army cot. An airplane, a C-47 transport, then took him and others to a hospital in Birmingham, England.

As the hand healed, one of the officers in his outfit who was also a patient at the Birmingham hospital, made contact with him. “I know officers and enlisted aren’t supposed to fraternize, but he wanted me to go to London with him. He made all the arrangements. We stayed at the Winston Hotel, the highest priced hotel in London. We were there four days. We had a ball.”

“When I got all healed up, they sent me back to France. I couldn’t hold a rifle anymore, so they had me giving talks to guys who were going to the front. I remember standing on a rock talking to 175 guys one time for an hour.”

Another job, which he didn’t care for, was to go out in the French countryside and disarm the artillery shells that had landed but not exploded. “The French farmers wanted to get back in the fields, but there were all these unexploded shells. We’d go out and find them, and then attach a blasting cap to them and blow them up.”

Time passed and the war ended in Europe and then in the Pacific. “One day, one of the officers came up and said, “Sergeant Nelson, you’re going home.”

Nelson was sent to Camp Lucky Strike on the French coast and waited for transportation back to the United States.

“I was the senior non-commissioned officer in my group, so I was in charge of a group of about 50 guys.” His trip on the SS Mariposa, a converted luxury cruise liner, took six days and he arrived in Boston on Oct. 24, 1945. It was then on to Camp McCoy in Wisconsin to be mustered out.

Somewhere along the way he heard what had happened to his friend, Arvid Larson. “He and his guys were going down a road, and the Germans were lying in wait and they just moved them all down.” As his friend had predicted, he had died and Nelson had made it home.

Nelson worked for his dad for a time before settling in to a long career with NAPA as a salesman. He moved from Eagle Bend to Little Falls. He and his future wife June Taylor of Marble, Minnesota, began a letter correspondence while Nelson was still in the army. When he got home, they made plans to meet in Eagle Bend. “She was there.”

Nelson and June married the next year and they had one daughter. June died some years ago.

As he looks around his room at the assisted living center he calls home in Little Falls, he is surrounded by some of the memorabilia he has gathered through the years. He has clips for both a BAR and an M-1 rifle. He has a shadow box with his medals including a Bronze Star and a Purple Heart. And he has the small Bible his mother gave him when he was drafted. “I carried it with me every day. My mom had written in it.”

Nelson will turn 100 in November. A recent diagnosis of cancer has him worried a bit, but doesn’t seem to slow him down. He says people ask him all the time about how to live a long life.

“Be happy all the time.”

STATE TOURNEY UNDERWAY — The Minnesota State Bowling Tournament got underway in Dayton, sponsored by the Osseo Post. Throwing out the first balls were SAL Detachment Commander Shawn Davis, Department Vice Commander Tom Fernlund, filling in for Commander Darrel Redepenning, and Department President Jean Walker. The tournament will run through the end of March.

NEW SHIP PLANNED — The USS Minneapolis-St. Paul (LCS-21), a Freedom-class littoral combat ship is being built by the U.S. Navy at the Marinette Marine shipyard in Wisconsin. The ship will be the second Navy vessel to bear that name, the other being a nuclear-powered submarine that was taken off the naval rolls. The new ship will be launched and christened at a future date, and organizers will be seeking donations to fund the events that will mark the addition of the ship to the fleet. The ship is a small, multi-purpose warship with a steel monohull and an aluminum superstructure. It will be deployed along shorelines of seas or lakes.

TESTIMONY — Commander Darrel Redepenning addresses a session of the House Veterans Committee recently at the Minnesota Capitol. Redepenning talked about the history and future of the 100-year-old American Legion.

Testimonial slated for April 27

Continued from Page 1

The post is located at 400 West Main Street in the Halloween Capital. Redepenning is the son of Bud Redepenning, who was also a Department Commander. Ludwig served as National Commander from 1995-96. Prior to that he served as Department Commander and was a leader in the fund drive to raise money for a Brain Sciences Chair at the University of Minnesota and the Minneapolis VA Medical Center.
Leading up to World War II, the American government began to prepare. It wasn’t an easy task since a good portion of the country was dead set against another European war — just 20 years since the Great War. And it wasn’t easy because of the rowdiness of the Washington political landscape in those years.

Dr. James Lacey, a professor at the Marine Corps War College and a history consultant on war strategy, told the February World War II History Round Table report at Fort Snelling that a colorful cast of characters dealt with the problem of getting America prepared for the upcoming war.

A partial list of those characters included:

President Franklin D. Roosevelt. “With his over- whelming personality, he was the only one who had the presidential advisor. He had led America’s war production effort in World War I, and many of his ideas were adopted for mobilizing the U.S. for World War II. His most important contribution to preparing for war, but he was the only one who had actually done it.”

Jimmy Byrnes. Senator from South Carolina and called “the strongest man in the United States.” Byrnes had a reputation for being able to get anything through the Senate, and was nicknamed “the fixer.” “If two sides thought something was two to three, and the other side thought two plus two was six, they would leave the room both agreeing the answer was five.”

Lacey said Roosevelt could see the future. “FDR knows that war is coming, and he knows that the U.S. can’t stay out of it.”

A key player in mobilization was Donald Larson who was head of the War Production Board. Nelson showed an inability to make hard decisions with the competing interests like business, Congress, the president and other clamoring for attention.

“There is a word for people who manage by consensus, and that word is roadkill.” Nelson was removed by Roosevelt.

Harry Hopkins. Roosevelt’s Secretary of Interior and Harry Hopkins greatest enemy. He often did the dirty jobs that Roosevelt needed done, and some called him “Horrible Harry.”

Lacey noted that Roosevelt did not have complete political control. “The bill to extend the draft passed by a simple vote. It only passed through the president’s raw personal power.”

Lacey introduced three more characters into the government drama: some Kuznets, Stacy May and Robert Nation, who he called the “three heroes.” All played an important role in maximizing American production.

In a questions and answer session after the presentation, Lacey offered some interesting notes. In response to a question in his presentation, was from Minnesota. “He wasn’t a bad guy if you overlook that he was an early supporter of Hitler. During the war, he did some great things to help the war effort.”

Lacey said the true mobilization of America began in 1939 when Congress with spending billions on creating guns, planes, ships and tanks.

Even Germany did not hit full production until 1944. “They were mobilized at first for a blitzkrieg war, only doing short battles.”

The might of America became clear as the war went on. “They U.S. had three times the Gross Domestic Product of all the Axis powers put together.”

He was asked to compare present-day Washington with the Washington prior to World War II. “It was just as bad. The Democrats and Republicans were at each other’s throats. Both sides were patriots, but the fighting continued. Both sides felt they had a better way to win the war.”

He was also asked about the national debt. “We are adding a trillion a year, and on day we’ll go bankrupt and have to raise taxes to fix it. It will be a bad five years, but we’ll get over it.”
National President Kathy Dungan to visit Minnesota

First off, I would like to begin this column with a very Happy 100th Birthday to The American Legion from our 40,000 plus members of the Minnesota American Legion Auxiliary. Thank you to all of our Legos for your service to our country. I am looking forward in joining many of you at your upcoming birthday celebrations throughout the month of March.

February was a busy month. It started off up north in Karlstad as I attended the Recognition of the City of Karlstad in becoming a Purple Heart City and honoring the Purple Heart Veterans from the Karlstad Area. Then, the Ninth District Godfathers Rally in Gary, the Sixth District Mid-Winter in Waite Park, and the Sweetheart Rally in Royalton. Then to the Minneapolis VAHCS National Salute to Veterans Patients. We went around and passed out poppies, caps, and genu to the patients. Also, while I was there I got to see the entries in the Creative Art competition. They were just precious. Our veterans love them so much.

Also, went to the St Cloud VAHCS and volunteered for an event. A performance by a brass Quintet was done for the Salute to Veterans Patients. Then, on to Montgomery for their Sweetheart dinner where the Legos served the Auxiliary members. They had great attendance and I had the honor to participate in an initiation of new members as well that evening.

The month ended with my attending The American Legion State Bowling Tournament in Maple Grove and having the honor to throw out the first ball with our counterparts from the Legion and Sons of the Legion. I got 6 pins! What a good day that was! It was a gutter ball. It has been a fantastic month visiting around the state. Thank you to all for the courtesies that were extended to me throughout the month.

As our district midwinters are now finished, please remember to take the information back to your units and share with your Unit members. As I visited the different Districts (unable to make some), I noted they are each unique in their own way. The Program Chairman did a superb job on their reporting and it was great to see that they took the time to answer questions from those members in attendance. March is Community Service Month and Children and Youth Month. Take time to toot your horn by utilizing your local news media on what your unit is doing to promote both programs. Spread the word of your great work that you do for your communities and our youth.

Please keep our veterans in your prayers. This has been a very harsh winter for many of them so far. We have many that are homeless.

Again, thank you all for all you do for our Veterans, their families, and our active duty military. This is a team effort and working together for our veterans we can make a difference.

“Veterans Are Our Stars and Our Heroes.”

Scholarship applications due at the office March 15

Applications for all scholarships awarded by the Department are due by March 15th. Announcement of the recipients will appear in this column when the judging is completed. Make sure and follow all of the rules on the application. We don’t want our students disqualified because something isn’t signed.

UNIT REQUEST

All Units received a request for information on your Unit’s 2020 dues for the 2020-2021 year. The information is due in the Department office by March 15th. If your unit has not yet responded, please send in the information. The form is on the mnala.org website under the Forms tab and select 2020 Unit Data Form Direct Billing. Please keep in mind when setting your dues for 2020 the Department Dues will be increasing to $12 per Senior member and the National Dues are at $12 so the amount remitted to the Department must be $24. The Junior dues for 2020 will be $3.50 for Department and $2.50 for National so $6 must be sent into the State. If your Unit has not yet received your 2020/2021 officers list to be sure to get your 2020/2021 officers list to the Department Office as soon as possible.

2019 POPPIES

Poppies are very fast approaching. To Date, 289 out of 438 units have ordered their 2019 small and/or large poppies. To the remaining 149 units, please place your orders now.

Keep in mind who assembles these poppies. They are made by our veterans, many of whom have disabilities. If the poppies you receive do not appear as you would like, remember where they came from. Let people know who assembles these – I think you will be surprised at how many individuals don’t know.

GIRLS STATE

Remember your application for reservation and your $300 registration fee. You have until March 31st to reserve a place for your American Legion Auxiliary Minnesota Girls State citizen. If your Unit has not yet sent this in, please take care of it immediately. Reservations with the payment of the $300 registration fee for each candidate will be accepted on a “first-come-first-served” basis. Please be sure to register by March 31st. Each Unit’s reservation fee for you to receive the necessary registration packet for each citizen you are sponsoring. American Legion Auxiliary Minnesota Girls State applications are due to the Auxiliary office by March 31st.

A Unit may send as many young women to American Legion Auxiliary Girls State as they wish to. The candidate must be a Minnesota resident, attend a Minnesota school or home school.

The 2019 session of American Legion Auxiliary Minnesota Girls State will be held at Bethel University in St. Paul, June 9 - 15. We look forward to the 73rd annual American Legion Auxiliary Minnesota Girls State week and another educational and successful session.

ANNUAL REPORTS

Guess what? Annual Reports. Yes indeed it is that time of year. This is an important part of our programs. It is a requirement that all of our units have a 100% turn in this year again. All units should be preparing their reports covering the time period April 1, 2018 to March 31, 2019. The Department copy of all reports must be mailed to the Department office on or before April 15th. We need your reports by that date, unless that requirement is stated in the rules. Please apply for awards - let’s get the members recognition for the hard work they do for our organisms, it is important that everything be included in your reports. Your reports make up our Department and National reports. You have all received your forms - let’s have a 100% turn in this year.

TROPHY AND AWARD ENTRIES

Entries for any trophy and award competition are due by April 15th, unless otherwise stated in the rules. Be certain to label each entry with the name of the award you are applying for. A separate entry is needed for each award unless this is stated on the winning Department entry is being forwarded for National competition. See the rules for complete details.

You may apply for any award, whether your Unit has reached its membership goal or not, unless that requirement is stated in the rules. Please apply for awards - let’s get the members recognition for the hard work they do for our organisms. To save yourself some postmark just mail these right along in your Annual Reports envelope.
Americanism is for every month of the year

February was Americanism month, but Americanism isn’t only done in February. I encourage everyone to take some time and reflect on what Americanism means to you. The American dream is different for everyone, and so too is the meaning of Americanism. Here are several ways to work the Americanism program all year long:

- Collect unserviceable flags from your community and hold a flag disposal ceremony; invite people from your community to attend.
- Contact your schools and see if you can be a part of their Veterans Day, Presidents Day or Memorial Day programs; a POW/MIA table presentation or a flag folding demonstration are things many students like to see and find very interesting.
- Make up thank you’s and give them to businesses and individuals who properly displaying our flag.
- Create a place to display the US Flag Code, there is a lot of misinformation spread around about what we should and should not do with our flag.

We are ramping up our Americanism Essay Contest as the submission deadline approaches. This year’s topic is “How can we address and prevent veteran homelessness in our communities?”

If you have children in your life in grade 3-12, they are eligible to participate in the contest. Contact your local auxiliary for a cover sheet and the guidelines. The submission deadline is March 27, 2019.

Bethany.A.Dickert@gmail.com
Department Americanism Chairman

Third District is Hooked on Veterans

Greetings all,

Here in the Thundering Third we are Hooked on Veterans. My project this year is the Community Resource and Referral Center (CRRC). For those who may not know, the CRRC is a center that assists homeless veterans in getting the services they need with an ultimate goal of finding them homes.

I am happy to report that their shelves are now full of clothing from underwear to outerwear, inside clothes and outside clothes, hygiene bags and gift cards. Thank you all for the outpouring of support. I am asking that any additional donations be mailed to: Third District ALA and mail it to Joanne Joachim, Treasurer, 8923 Partridge Road, St. Bonifacius, MN 55375. Please note President Lynn’s project on the memo section.

There remains a need for lunches on Mondays. This could be a great opportunity for those who may have the ability to prepare and deliver lunches for 60-70 veterans. I am asking that any organization able to prepare and deliver (not serve) lunches for 60-70 homeless veteran please think about the CRRC. It could be any type of lunch from soup to a gourmet meal. Mondays are the only day they can serve lunch at the facility as the kitchen is used in the therapy program. It could be a one-time lunch or a commitment for longer.

Thank you for all of you for all of your support you give us in our military and their families, and all of our veterans.

Lynn Duffy
3rd District President

Administrative Assistant

There is an immediate opening for an Administrative Assistant for the American Legion Auxiliary Department of Minnesota. Seeking strong customer service skills. Must have experience in Word, Excel and telephone skills. Must be able to work independently in a very busy office environment. Please send resume to Sandie@mnila.org or call 651-224-7634 for more information. Salary based on experience.

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EAGAN BAGGING - Members of Eagan Post and Unit 594 participated in the Annual Open Door Super Bagging Event at Cub Foods Town Centre.

Sixth District has one team, vision, goal

The Sixth District is approximately 311 miles from north to south. The width of the district to west is about 170 miles. Logistics and traveling around our district to make visits or collecting membership is quite an adventure, especially in our environment.

Building on a membership team each year and working together as Legion Family the Sixth District members are helping their veterans, active duty military and their families in their communities all over our states. Units are thinking outside the box, doing things differently and mentoring our younger members. Unit meeting at a nursing home where some of your members are residents is a good way to include them when they no longer are able to drive to a meeting. Mid Year reports are beginning to take shape.

Mid Year reports are reporting their early accomplishments for a December Mid Year report. I am looking forward to the year end reports that are due by April 15th. Remember to be branded with your Auxiliary logo everywhere you go and let every one know that you are an American Legion Auxiliary Volunteer.

As 6th District President my theme this year is “One Team, One Vision, One Goal”. Project: Working together with the 6th District Commander Richard Cross Sr. and the SAL Commander. Collecting $10,000 to be able to purchase two new microchippers and other incidentals needed at Legionville ($1000) and help purchase and train Patriot Assistance Dogs for veterans. The cost to the Veterans for the dogs/Veteran.

Follow-up training for the team as needed.

To date there has been no need for the dogs and training provided by PAD.

Sharon Thiemecke
Sixth District President

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WHEATON DONATION — The Wheaton American Legion, Auxiliary, Sons of the American Legion and the VFW recently made a donation to the Fergus Falls VA Nursing Home and also the St. Cloud VA Hospital. Please send resume to Bethany.A.Dickert@gmail.com for more information. Salary based on experience.

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EAGAN BAGGING - Members of Eagan Post and Unit 594 participated in the Annual Open Door Super Bagging Event at Cub Foods Town Centre.
I buy and collect military items.

NYC, New England Fall Colors

New York Your vintage car Cruise

October 24-31, 2019

$2,999.00

Balcony double occupancy

Monuments of Washington D.C.
May 17-21, 2019

$1,649.00

Per Person (Double Occupancy)

Heart of Alaska
July 11-18, 2019

$3,499.00

Per Person double occupancy

Resort for Disabled Veterans, Active Duty and Able Bodied Veterans, Disabled General Public and Families.

Recreational Mortgage
The future doesn’t have to be uncertain.

Lower the Margin, the more you qualify for. Call for your low rates. Lower Margins as low as 1.5%. Call or email for a free consumer guide and a personal quote.

Let a retired active duty veteran you can trust show you how you may benefit from a Reverse Mortgage.

Independent Rural Living
Senior apartments for elderly and those with disabilities. Safe, convenient, comfortable, and affordable rural living in Southeast Minnesota.

Also available: Housing with Services, Nursing Home, Subsidized Rent.

Mailbox full?
Get your Legionnaire by email.
Go to: mnnlegion.org
Click on “Legion Publications”

All Legion, Auxiliary and SAL members can receive the Legionnaire via email.

Reverse Mortgages

The future doesn’t have to be uncertain.
The lower the Margin, the more you qualify for. Call for your low rates. Lower Margins as low as 1.5%. Call or email for a free consumer guide and a personal quote.

Let a retired active duty veteran you can trust show you how you may benefit from a Reverse Mortgage.

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INSPIRED BY YOUR SERVICE.

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