CVSO group marks 75 years
Organization works toward consistency

NEW ULM — This is the 75th year of the Minnesota Association of County Veterans Service Officers, but their plans for the big year were wiped out by the COVID-19 pandemic.

But you know how a first convention takes place in the zero year? That mean the MACVSO 75th convention happened last September, in the 74th year of the organization.

“Who would have thought that the next year we would have to cancel our gatherings marking the anniversary?” said MACVSO President Greg Peterson.

Funny enough, the MACVSO bylaws say they must have an annual meeting, and Peterson hopes that can be accomplished online. The bylaws specify voting with paper ballots, so they will have to address that aspect.

The county veteran service officers help veterans, but, as a professional society, MACVSO helps the county veteran service officers, Peterson said the organization is developing a vision, with goals and objectives.

“We want all CVSOs to operate consistently on a core set of standards,” Peterson said.

For example, the Minnesota Department of Veteran Affairs sends

Continued on Page 2

Vets organizations desire to be heard by lawmakers

By Tim Engstrom

ST. PAUL — The Minnesota Commanders’ Task Force, a body that meets monthly and pushes for veterans-related legislation, voiced their displeasure and frustration with lack of access to state lawmakers at their June meeting.

“I’m very concerned that other interests will take the day next year,” Robert Hart, legislative director for The American Legion Department of Minnesota, told lawmakers on June 16.

The CTF is made up of nine congressionally chartered veterans organizations, and the chairman, Paralyzed Veterans of America Vice President Todd Kinnery, had invited House and Senate leadership to the June 16 discussion held virtually over Zoom.

Instead, District 39A Rep. Bob Ecklund, Republican and Legion member with Forest Lake Post 225, and District 3A Rep. Rob Ecklund, DFLer and International Falls resident whose Legion membership is with Crosslake Post 500, joined the meeting. Both serve on the House Veterans Affairs Committee, and Ecklund is the chairman.

Ecklund said every veterans-related bill went through the House Veterans Affairs Committee, then went elsewhere to die.

“This whole COVID thing just upset the whole apple cart,” he said.

The Legislature took a five-week hiatus when the pandemic restriction began in mid-March.

He said if there is a session in July — and now, one is expected, as Gov. Tim Walz would like to see a bonding bill passed — there is hope for getting veterans-related legislation approved.

Dettmer said the main piece of funding the Legislature secured was $6.2 million in COVID-19 grants for veterans financially impacted by the pandemic. (See story on Page 2.) Lawmakers also secured $250,000 for the Medal of Honor Memorial outside the Veterans Service Building in St. Paul.

He said the Legislature in June approved $62.5 million in grants for small businesses impacted by COVID-19, of which $2.5 million

Continued on Page 2

Continued on Page 10

Quilts of Valor out of Dent, Maine Twp., Fergus Falls fulfills orders for veterans

DENT — Five thousand four hundred masks.

From a partnership between Quilts of Valor and The American Legion.

For veterans and staff at VA hospitals and state veteran homes.

All made by a dedicated group of quilters.

This is patriotism in action during the age of COVID-19.

Quilts of Valor members award quilts to veterans “touched by war,” but when it began in 2004, the quilts went to veterans who experienced combat in the Global War on Terror. That morphed over time to GWOT veterans wounded physically or psychologically. Then to any war. Then to its present phrase “touched by war.”

The coordinator for Quilts of Valor is Jenny Caughey, and she is one of 33 members of the Dent-based group of quilters, and they call themselves Comfort for Courage. Dent is about 10 miles away from Perham, and the members are from around those towns.

They work closely with two other Quilts of Valor groups in the area—Fergus Falls and Maine Township.

Fergus has about 80 quilters and calls itself Caring Hearts. Maine has a little more than 20 and goes by Loving Hands.

Like many quilters, they aren’t ones to tout their story. They create and give and create and give and create and give some more, because the two actions make them feel good inside. It’s not about getting ink in the newspaper or the attention of the community.

But Caughey is a big advocate for her dedicated volunteers and she told a brief history of the Comfort for Courage group of women.

By 2016, they had created and given quilts to many of the qualifying veterans in their area. They contacted Andy Riewer, whose brother, Greg, of

Continued on Page 2

Mary Ann Strauch, left, and Debra Larsen, center, remove fabric cut in the shape of facemasks from the AccuQuilt fabric cutter on June 2, while Janelle Lotzer sets the pieces on a cutting mat.

Paulette Hoebelheinrich of Fergus Falls drops off finished masks at the Dent Community Center on June 2. The Quilts of Valor group in Dent gets them to The American Legion’s distribution network, bringing them to veterans’ medical care facilities across the region.
Veterans treatment courts would save $1.3 million in 2 years

Continued from Page 1

must go to veteran-owned businesses. Walz later signed the measure.

Dettmer said he hopes the Legislature can address issues such as adjusting the Homestead Market Value Exclusion so surviving spouses of veterans can do a one-time transfer of property to a lesser value, so they can live in a more manageable home. He said he wants to back veteran-oriented job fair, recruiting in college campuses and initiatives to reduce veteran suicides.

“We look to the CTF to give us priorities and awareness of veterans issues,” he said.

Veterans Restorative Justice Act

The main piece of legislation the veterans organization members said they would like to see get through the Legislature in July is the Veterans Restorative Justice Act, otherwise known as veterans courts.

It almost passed in 2019, dying in conference committee, and it has received bipartisan support, as well as support from the state Supreme Court chief justice and the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs.

Minnesota Management and Budget studied veterans courts, and its estimates it would save $1.3 million in the first two years.

It allows judges to withhold pleas and assign help for veterans facing criminal behavior that can be connected to combat and other service-based trauma.

The American Legion passed a resolution at the 2016 National Convention in Cincinnati aproving the establishment and expansion of veteran treatment courts.

Legion Posts often are instrumental in working with judges to help defendants with PTSD find specific treatment options, too, as well as personal support.

It has existed in 27 counties as a pilot program started in 2008. The MDVA and CTF want it all across Minnesota as a regular part of the court system. There are zero upfront costs. It merely allows judges to take action.

Ecklund said the bill died in the Senate Judiciary Committee.

“I worked the senators as hard as we could. It never moved in the Senate,” he said.

He said he was over in the Senate Finance Committee.

He credited Dettmer for his efforts, too.

“Maybe we need to re-evaluate the bill to see where we are getting pushbacks,” Dettmer said.

Ecklund said no legislation is ever perfect.

MDVA Legislative Director Ben Johnson said legislators who want to appear in favor of something but are really against it, instead, will find fault with wording rather than the intent, which is directly opposed. The VRJA has been altered already.

“At this point, it seems like a fishing expedition to find fault, to find reasons not to support it,” he said.

Dettmer and Ecklund suggested new strategies, such as using other legislators so they can get the political gain from supporting veterans legislation.

For a separate bill to the same old faces,” Dettmer said.

“I agree,” Ecklund said, “especially freshman.

They also suggested veterans statewide call the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee: Warren Limmer of Maple Grove.

His phone number is 651-296-2159.

In related news:

• Johnson and MDVA Chairman Mike McCarty re-ported the MDVA was able to get 263 homeless veterans off the streets to safety before the protests and riots occurred in Minneapolis and St. Paul.

• As of the Legionnaire’s press time on June 26, the CTF is nailing down a time to meet virtually with Gov. Tim Walz in July and form its specific request of him and other lawmakers for the July session. The VFW’s legislative officer, Tommy Johnson, said Walz promised during his campaign he would meet with the veterans on a quarterly basis. No meetings have since occurred since he took office.

• CTF is forming its 2021 legislative agenda much further in advance than the 2020 one, which it was done in December. This cycle, the body is hoping to solidify its platform in July and August, which gives it time to publicize the proposed measures through the fall and garner statewide support.

“CTF is starting to grow some legs, it seems,” said Kemery, the chairman.

Fall Conference is on for Breezy Point Resort

Breezy Point Resort was a popular place for the rich and famous in the Roaring 20s.

Today, it features a convention center, three 18-hole golf courses, a boat marina, an ice arena, four restaurants, four bars, cabins, condos and a resort hotel.

Fall Conference is on for Breezy Point Resort

Continued from Page 1

out bronze star flag holders to CSVOS for Memorial Day.

Brown County disperses them to each Legion Post, and the county veteran service officers in rural offices know their vets.

There’s plenty o’ money in the COVID grant fund

ST. PAUL — Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs Deputy Commissioner Brad Lindsay said veterans still can apply for grant money if they have been financially impacted by COVID-19.

“There’s still money available,” he said. “We would like to spend it by the end of the calendar year, but we’ve got until June 30, 2021, technically.”

Lindsay said the best way for vets to apply for the grant right now is to see their county veteran service officer, who then helps with the forms. The MDVA also has a website at minnesotaoveterans.org/covidrelief.

For the Minnesota Legislature, when passing the late March COVID-19 relief package, allocation of $1.2 million for veterans impacted by the statewide COVID-19 shutdown.

The MDVA administers the funds, and the amounts are $1,000 for the Disaster Relief Grant and $5,000 for the Special Needs Grant.

The first kind goes to Minnesota statute-qualifying veterans impacted by the pandemic. The second is a one-time assistance to a qualifying veteran or surviving spouse in financial trouble, and the money goes directly to the vendor or creditor, not the applicant.

Lindsay said the MDVA has spent $15,000 on the Disaster Relief side and $59,665 on the Special Needs side. That means $3,987,335 remains, as of 3 p.m. June 23, when The Minnesota Legionnaire interviewed the deputy commissioner.

The MDVA has received 4,973 applications. Its staff has approved 2,153 of the Disaster Relief Grants and 29 of the Special Needs Grants. It has deposited $249 of the Disasters and 41 of the Specials. It has requested additional information on 2,145 Disasters and 48 Specials.

Processing, Lindsay said, is down to 5.9 days. It was more than a month when the program began and applications flooded in as a result of the shutdown.

He said the staff averaged 139 decisions a day, and, at 3 p.m. June 23, there were 188 to process. The staff would have caught up by June 24 or 25. He said it can double back on the ones where additional information was sought.

By comparison, MDVA typically processes about 250 applications for the State Soldier’s Assistance Program in a month. This one-in-a-lifetime help assists with finances and, of course, was in place before COVID-19. Veterans apply through the local CSVOS.

Lindsay said the MDVA was able to shift resources to have people, from campus representatives to the clients to veterans preference offices, working on the financial assistance.

“Either you are at the cemetry, a veterans home or you are processing COVID-19 grants,” he said.
Memorial Day in Albert Lea was a rainy day without wind. The ceiling was only 200 feet with low visibility, and glassy water is like a mirror, making it hard for the pilot to determine height. Pilot Jim Hanson flew over Bridge Street and Katherine Island, Memorial Day in Albert Lea was a rainy day without wind. The ceiling was only 200 feet with low visibility, and glassy water is like a mirror, making it hard for the pilot to determine height. Pilot Jim Hanson flew over Bridge Street and Katherine Island, feet with low visibility, and glassy water is like a mirror, making it hard for the pilot to determine height. Pilot Jim Hanson flew over Bridge Street and Katherine Island, Feet with low visibility, and glassy water is like a mirror, making it hard for the pilot to determine height. Pilot Jim Hanson flew over Bridge Street and Katherine Island, Feet with low visibility, and glassy water is like a mirror, making it hard for the pilot to determine height. Pilot Jim Hanson flew over Bridge Street and Katherine Island.

Albert Lea Post 56 Commander Jim Olson directs the Honor Guard. Broadway Avenue and downtown Albert Lea are in the background.

Albert Lea ensures tradition goes on despite pandemic and weather

By Jim Hanson
Albert Lea Post 56

The American Legion was founded in 1919 — 101 years ago. Leo Carey Post 56 in Albert Lea was founded not that long thereafter, on Aug. 7, 1919. The Post follows the Legion mission of aiding and honoring veterans — and the Memorial Day tradition of honoring those who died on active duty.

At Albert Lea, a tradition was started immediately after World War II. The city surrounds Fountain Lake. Years ago, the Legion and the VFW decided that an appropriate way to honor all servicemen was to pay tribute to those who served on land, at sea or in the air by dropping a memorial wreath into Fountain Lake from an airplane.

Albert Lea Post 56 is situated on Albert Lea’s Broadway Avenue — right downtown — and only a short distance from Fountain Lake.

With the Post closed for the COVID-19 pandemic, the question arose as to whether the traditional ceremony could be held. Because the Memorial Day ceremony needed only two people at the pier in the lake, and the four-man rifle squad, it would be easy to maintain “social distance.” I’m proud of my Post. This is what the Legion exists for — to honor and aid our veterans and their families.

We would miss this important duty! I am the longtime manager of the Albert Lea Municipal Airport — located only a mile and a half north of the lake.

Federal Aviation Administration regulations prohibit flight over “populated areas” unless a safe landing can be accomplished — except for takeoffs or landings. I chose a lake amphibian aircraft — it can operate from land or water. Since we were to make an intentional water landing, the regulation would not apply.

The ceiling and visibility were low, but better than the “one mile and clear of clouds” required by the FAA regulations. The landing to place the wreath in the water was scheduled for 9 a.m. — with the Honor Guard and presenters in place just before due to the rain.

We landed at 8:59 and taxied by the Legion Honor Guard and presenters precisely at 9 to drop the wreath in the water as “Taps” was played and the volleys fired. We turned for takeoff, and less than a minute later, landed at the airport.

Unlike previous years, there weren’t many spectators to watch the ceremony in the rain — and that’s OK, considering the social restrictions and the weather. I couldn’t help but think that many of those being honored died in less than good conditions as well — as military veterans, we don’t ask for much, and take what we can get. We keep faith with our fellow veterans.

I was so proud of our Legion Post — and the mission of honoring our veterans, their families, and aid those who need help. We continued our tradition of honoring fallen servicemen — a string of over 70 years (and I’ve been involved in 46 of them)!

There was no way we would miss this mission to honor our veterans! It’s who we are!

Endorsements
Post 428’s Tom Fernlund endorsed for Department commander

Tom Fernlund has been endorsed by Silver Star Post 428 in Waite Park and the 6th District for Department Commander for the 2021-2022 year.

Fernlund served in the Air Force from 1981 to 1992. He is a 28-year honorary life member at Waite Park and served as post commander two terms and is currently the adjutant. On the District level, Tom served as 6th District commander, adjutant, vice commander, County Council commander, membership director and held several chairmanships.

On the Department level, Fernlund served as vice commander, membership director, sergeant-at-arms and is currently the Strategic Planning Committee chairman.

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20 W. 12th St. Room 300-A
St. Paul, MN 55155-2000
**Legion leading the way in tough times**

**Commander’s Column**

Mark Dvorak

National Commander James W. “Bill” Oxford issued the following statement today:

“The American Legion stands on principles and serves purposes worldwide that are violated when justice, freedom and democracy are not applied equally, regardless of race, color, creed or class. These principles formed the foundation of the organization over a century ago, in a very different and deeply divided time in U.S. society. As our nation grieves and tries to reconcile the unconscionable deaths of African-American citizens George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, retired St. Louis Police Capt. David Dorn, Federal Protective Services Officer Patrick Underwood in Oakland, California, and others, The American Legion stands firm in a value it has upheld, in the form of a national resolution, first adopted 1923:

WHEREAS, The fundamental law of our country guarantees to all peoples equal rights and equal opportunities and the right to worship their God as they see fit; and

WHEREAS, Membership of The American Legion is made up of those who served our country in a time of great national stress, without distinction as to race, color, creed or class; and

RESOLVED, That we consider such actions by any individual, group of individuals, or organizations, which creates, or fosters racial, religious or class strife among our people, or which takes into their own hands the enforcement of law, determination of guilt, or infliction of punishment, to be un-American, a menace to our liberties, and destructive to the fundamental law, and be finally

RESOLVED, That we consider such actions by any individual, group of individuals, or organizations, to be inconsistent with the ideals and purposes of The American Legion.

“This resolution’s place in The American Legion’s conscience is so timeless, it was reaffirmed, in full, at the organization’s 99th National Convention in 2017.

“Throughout its history, The American Legion has fought to improve racial equality not only for veterans, but for the communities they serve. In 1919, African-American veterans of World War I were among the organization’s founders who adopted a mission statement – the Preamble to The American Legion Constitution – that pledges among other things ‘to maintain law and order,’ ‘promote peace and goodwill on earth’ and ‘safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom and democracy.’

“Where the law has been broken, justice must be served. Where freedom has been denied, it must be restored, without prejudice. Our nation has much to consider as we continue to strive toward a shared goal found in the Pledge of Allegiance to our flag: ‘with liberty and justice for all.’ All means all. Anything less than complete equality in the execution of these values today is as un-American now as it was in 1923.”

The American Legion, www.amvets.org, is the nation’s largest veterans service organization and was founded in 1919 on the four pillars of a strong national defense, the care and well-being of U.S. military veterans, patriotic youth programs, and Americanism.

We salute National Commander Oxford for his timely article.

For God and Country, we continue to serve!

Mark Dvorak is the commander of The American Legion Department of Minnesota.

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**Mail Call**

2 thoughts on the U.S. flag

Two things on my mind:

Recently House Speaker Nancy Pelosi presented a folded U.S. flag. While the man she gave it to did in the manner that he did, he was not a hero! In fact, he had a history of criminal behavior. Presenting a folded U.S. flag has always been reserved as a symbol of honor to the family of someone who has honorably served their country or in the case of police officers of service to their community. The man did not deserve this action! I believe that The American Legion should strongly condemn the action of Nancy Pelosi!

The other thing on my mind is the recent discussions at the National Football League. Drew Brees stated that everyone should respect the American flag. He was immediately ridiculed and forced to apologize and to say that NFL players have a right to protest. Since when is respecting the U.S. flag controversial and something that needs to be apologized for? When I was in basic training and throughout my 25-year career with the U.S. Air Force Reserve, it was always impressed on me that when I was wearing the uniform, I was representing the U.S. Air Force and that I was not allowed to attend political events, nor should I voice political opinions on the president or others superior to me and to always conduct myself in a manner to bring respect and honor to the uniform.

When I served in the military and off duty, I had all of the freedoms of every other American. The NFL should be no different. When on the field and in sports competition, not to hear or see protests or disrespect to our flag or national anthem. The players have every right to protest when off the field and not uniform. I believe that The American Legion should strongly condemn any disrespect to our flag by the NFL and its players! Thank you for hearing my opinion.

James Mueller

**How to send…**

Send letters for Mail Call to mnelegation@mnlegion.org. Make the subject line “Mail Call” or “Letter.”&nbsp;

**The Minnesota Legioneer**

**For God and Country… still important**

Betty Jass

Editor’s note: We are happy to print your opinions. Unhappy about someone in the Legion Family? Then it makes sense to speak directly to the person first.

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Martin County Veterans Memorial event is Aug. 1

The big item on all calendars is the Aug. 1 dedication of the Martin County Veterans Memorial.

Obituaries

The Minnesota Legionnaire reserves the right to edit all obituaries for style and brevity. Please send to tsgt23@mlilegion.org or in the mail to the Department of Minnesota.

25, 2019. He was a 64-year member of Aktin Post 86.

Hassel, Frank "Pete," 90, Navy veteran of the Korean era, died April 21, 2020. He was a member of Roseville Post 542.

Hillgren, Lars ("Lars"), 89, Army veteran of World War II, died May 9, 2020. He was a member of Parker's Prairie Post 219.

Hitchcock, Richard D., 84, Army veteran of the Korean era, died March 13, 2020. He was a member of Maryland Post 30.

Hoodcheck, Robert A., 89, Army veteran of the Korean era, died May 28, 2020. He served two years as the secretary to the commanding general of Fort Hood, Texas. He was a member of Winona Post 9.

Hooker, Melvin, 88, Army veteran of Korea, died June 1, 2020. He was a 55-year member of Park Rapids Post 215.

Jensen, Scott K., Army National Guard veteran for 20 years, died June 7, 2020. He was a member of Winona Post 9.

John, James "Jim," 84, Army veteran of Korea, died June 4, 2020. He was a 46-year member of Marshall Post 113.

Johnson, Larry W., 71, Marine veteran of the Vietnam War, died April 29, 2020. He was a forward artillery observer and called in strikes. He was a member of Spring Grove Post 249.

Juettet, John, 93, Navy veteran of World War II, died May 2, 2020. He was the pastor commander and 67-year member of Hillman Post 602.

Karnes, Donald, 94, Army veteran during Korean era, died June 5, 2020. He was at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal outside Denver, Colorado. He was a 72-year member of Long Prairie Post 12 and served 15 years as the gambling officer and was quick to volunteer for other jobs.

Kinnan, Robert, 89, Air Force veteran of the Korean War, died March 18, 2020. He was awarded the Airman's Medal for saving his crew. He was a 33-year member of Crosslake Post 500.

Kvam, Lee A., 74, Navy veteran of the Vietnam era, died June 4, 2020. He was a 33-year member of Albert Lea Post 56.

Lebrash, Earl, 87, Army veteran of the Korean War, died April 18, 2020. He was a 30-year member of Lake City Post 110.

Lewis, William, 82, Marine veteran of Korea, died June 7, 2020. He was a member of Fairbault Post 43.

Lynche, Bill, 78, Marine veteran of the early Vietnam era, died March 30, 2020. He was a 40-year member and past commander of Minneapolis Courthouse Post 45.

Marquardt, Harry, 89, Army veteran of the Korean War, died May 26, 2020. He was a 53-year member of Dodge Center Post 8.

McLaughlin, Clarence, 94, Army veteran of World War II, died May 10, 2020. He spent a year of his enlistment in occupied Japan. He was a 74-year member of Marshall Post 113.

Pettay, Marvin "Bud," 93, Army veteran of World War II, died Jan. 19, 2020. He was a paratrooper. He was a 42-year member of Hillman Post 602.

Pitzl, Raymond A., 95, Navy veteran of World War II, died April 25, 2020. He served on the USS New Mexico and took part in many South Pacific battles. His ship awaited Japanese surrender while anchored off Tokyo Bay at the end of the war. He was a 37-year member of Roseville Post 542.

Regan, William C., 73, Army National Guard veteran of the Vietnam era, died May 21, 2020. He was a 44-year member of De Graff Post 365 then Benson Post 52.


Rof, David, 72, Navy veteran, died June 17, 2020. He was a 32-year member of Waconia Post 150.

Rudstad, Gordon, 93, Navy veteran of World War II, died March 18, 2020. He was a 68-year member of Moorhead Post 21 and lived in Edina.

Sagerhorn, Patrick J., 72, Navy veteran of Vietnam, died May 26, 2020. He was a 47-year member of Fergus Falls Post 30.


Schoephoester, Norman, 97, Army veteran of World War II, died June 8, 2020. Serving in Europe, he was awarded the Bronze Star Medal. His division was scheduled to relieve a company in Japan. Instead of being stranded in the streets of Los Angeles to celebrate V-J Day, he was a 74-year member of Marshall Post 113.

Schumacher, Donald, Army veteran of the Korean War, died April 24, 2020. He was a member of Wanda Post 385.

Starr, Dale, 88, Army veteran of Korea, died June 9, 2020. He was a 64-year member of Hillman Post 602.

Swentofskie, Thomas, 84, Marine veteran of the Korean era, died June 2, 2020. He was in Korea, Japan, Panama and Puerto Rico. He was a member of Grand Rapids Post 60.

Thoennes, Matthew J., 101, Army veteran of World War II, died June 13, 2020. He was a 39-year member of Millville Post 527.

Tobin, Michael L., 77, Army veteran of the Vietnam era, died March 27, 2020. He served in the 101st Airborne Division at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. He founded and coached a legion-sponsored color guard team. He was a member of Owatonna Post 77.

Trullinger, Gerald D., 73, Marine veteran of the Vietnam War, died June 6, 2020. He served 13 months in Vietnam, then was stationed in San Diego. He was a member of Redwood Falls Post 38.

Van Riper, Warren B., 97, Army veteran of World War II, died May 25, 2020. He was a 31-year member of Albert Lea Post 56.

Vokaty, Curtis, 86, Navy veteran of the Korean War, died May 30, 2020. He was a 49-year member of Lowry Post 253.

Wallner, Gerald, 79, Air Force veteran of Vietnam, died June 12, 2020. He was a Legion baseball coach and a Legionnaire for 55 years. He was a past commander of Minneapolis Fire and Police Post 396. He was a member of Marietta Post 156.

Wendt, Melvin W., 93, Navy veteran of the Korean War, died April 19, 2020. He was a 50-year member of Fairfax Post 205. He served on the cargo ship USS Achener (AKA-53).

Werner, Leland "Pete," 93, Army veteran of the Korean War, died June 18, 2020. He was a 65-year member and he was past commander, finance officer, Drum Corps member, Honor Guard member and honor- ary member of Jackson Post 100.

Winans, Russell L., 88, Army veteran of Korea, died June 2, 2020. He was a member of Park Rapids Post 212.

Witte, Orland G., 85, Air Force veteran of the Korean era, died June 14, 2020. He was stationed in Okinawa, Japan, as an F-86D mechanic. He was a 33-year member of Brighton Post 143.

Wood, David G., 85, Marine veteran of the Vietnam War, died April 17, 2020. He served an 18-month tour in Vietnam. He was a member of Redwood Falls Post 38.

Zimmerman, Joe, 88, Army veteran of the Korean War, died May 19, 2020. He was a 65-year member of Anoka Post 102.

Department of Corrections

An obituary for Ernest Hemp had an error. Here is how it should appear:

Hemp, Ernest Elmer, 78, Army veteran of the Korean era, died April 20, 2020. He was stationed at Fort Barstow, California. He was member of Middle River Post 444.
The 48-hour review is critical for service organizations to aid vets

The American Legion’s national commander sends President Trump a letter on behalf of veterans, service-member, families and survivors asking on the president to instruct the secretary of veterans affairs to maintain the 48-hour review, a decades-old practice allowing veteran service organizations like the Legion to review benefits decisions for accuracy before those decisions are finalized.

As the world hunkers down from life as we know it, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs decides it is a great time to make a drastic change in the way the agency conducts its business, maybe hoping nobody notices. The drastic move involves the agencies collaboration with veteran service organizations allowing them to represent veterans filing for benefits.  Just to recap, veteran service organizations like The American Legion have trained staff across the country to advocate for veterans filing claims with the VA and by law, VA recognizes VSOs as a veterans’ power-of-attorney or representative when navigating the bureaucracy of VA benefits. This great responsibility comes with special privilege for POAs to be able to effectively advocate for their clients.

This privilege grants POAs access to VA’s multiple software programs to view veterans claim files as they are being developed by the VA. Once VA has a veterans claim ready to rate, the VA contacts the POA office of jurisdiction informing them they have 48 hours to review their decision before the claim is promulgated or made final. If the VSO acting as POA finds an error during the 48-hour review they can notify the VA to address the error. This is a critical part of the advocacy process that could affect a decision on a claim, whether being granted or the level of the disability percentage being awarded among other issues like retroactive pay, award dates and inadequate C&P exams. This critical process has prevented hundreds of thousands of veterans over the years from having their claims denied and having to appeal. This has also directly assisted the VA preventing further Board of Veterans Appeals backlogs.

The Minnesota American Legion was way ahead of the importance of the 48-hour review practice and drafted a resolution addressing that the 48-hour review needs to be revalued to 48 business hours, which was passed during the 2017 National Convention in Reno, Nevada. With this resolution on file, it is The American Legion’s official position on the issue and has used this position to lobby Congress to draft legislation that if past would create a law that VA would have to allow a decision review process for POAs.

VA & Rehabilitation
Jeremy Wolfsteller

On May 19, Sen. Joe Tester of Montana introduced a bill called the Veterans Claims Transparency Act. This legislation will require VA to reinitiate the 48-hour review. This is The American Legion; how is this members make a difference. We are all of the U.S. armed forces. My point usually was about embracing diversity.

We lived, ate, worked, camped, showered, relaxed and parted with and fought alongside and took orders from people of all backgrounds across the country. We were willing to give our lives for each other, our brothers and sisters in arms. As a result, I made lifelong friends of people from all over, and today I could easily travel the country without needing hotels, staying in homes of people from varied ethnicities, religions and talents.

What do they all have in common? They have a freaking sense of humor, for one.

For two, they know how to laugh together because they care deeply. Some civilians in big cities seem to act like robots, I swear. They have lost all feelings.

And third of all, in my experience, they all enjoy playing cards. I think cards — the most portable form of group entertainment — are a requirement to become a true warrior.

Colleges and universities strive for diversity and often market how diverse they are. Ooh! Aah! Look at us! What’s more, at 70-30, colleges simply use the U of M as “medium” in terms of racial diversity.

My alma mater is Iowa State University, Collegesimply.com says it is 76 percent white and 30 percent minority. That breaks down to 4 percent black, 4 percent Hispanic, 9 percent Asian, 4 percent mixed and 9 percent who marked “international.” There were some fraction percentages, such as Native American or Pacific Islander and a smidgeon of “unknowns.” What’s more, at 70-30, collegesimply.com says it is 76 percent white and 24 percent minority. It gets a rating of “low.”

Minnesota State Mankato also is 24 percent minority. North Dakota State is 14 percent minorities.

Clearly, minority veterans have experienced far greater American diversity than your typical student who is a college graduate. It’s another reason to hire veterans. Typi- cally, military types don’t bother counting up the people based on skin color because diversity just happens throughout the armed services without an overt effort. I like to say we think in 22nd Century terms of all being on the same side, and we wish the civilian world would catch up to the military world and see us all as Americans. Sadly, it hasn’t.

I know, yes, the military has racial problems that come up from time to time, but do so universally. I know mine did. I won a Hearst Award (and a scholar- ship) for my student-paper cover- age of three black students. I was a sycophantic kansas court removed them from lead- ing black student organizations, not because these kids voiced opposition to the naming of a building.

But I think more and more colleges and universities are seeing the value of veterans on their campus, and that’s a good sign.

I know a veteran who works at a community college in the Twin Cities, and he notes that, on campuses, too often the stu- dents break up into clubs and organizations by ethnicity and don’t interact as much outside of classes as officials hope. But when you go to the veteran groups on any campus, you find people of all races in the same club.

Hearing that, I couldn’t be prouder to be a veteran.

Tim Engstrom is the director of communications for The American Legion Department of Minnesota.

Get to know American Legion Family

Greetings, American Legion Family.

The summer months are going by so fast. I hope everyone is doing OK and staying safe.

I miss seeing all of the faces in our Legion family, but it has given me time to slow things down a bit. Work is very hectic, given me time to slow things down a bit. Work is very hectic, given me time to slow things down a bit. Work is very hectic.

I would like to take this time and remind my family that we are not an MC (Motorcycle Club). We are a program of the Legion Family. We are members of the Legion Family and love riding motorcycles.

We do some great things on behalf of The American Legion. Some of us can ride a lot, while others can only ride a little. We all do what we can.

Chapters shouldn’t be penal- izing people who can’t make every meeting, or every ride. We should all be able to enjoy life, do the best we can, and make decisions based on our own priorities at the time. We are all at different stages in life, and that’s okay. We are all at such a great organization.

I urge all of you to learn as much as you can about the American Legion Family. The more you know about this great organization, the more you will see the bigger picture.

Thank you and love to all of you.

Paul Hassing is the director of communications for the American Legion Riders for the Department of Minnesota.

FOOD FOR MORE THAN THOUGHT

Heaven’s Table Director Greta Lintelman accepts a donation of $5,000 from Fairmont American Legion Post 36 Commander Steve Fosness.

Food station looks into VA

KARE-11 featured an investigative segment about the VA forcing veterans to go to examinations during the pandemic or possibly lose benefits, even after the VA told them to stay home.

Find it at kare11.com under the headline “KARE 11 Investigates: Vets penalized for missing cancelled exams.”
The Air Force sent Register to George AFB in Victorville, California, out in the Mojave Desert. The base closed in 1992 at the end of the Cold War. It is now a business and freight airport and an aircraft boneyard. The base’s water supply was contaminated by jet fuel, benzene, pesticides and other toxic chemicals.

“But we were drinking that all the time,” Register said.

There, she enjoyed working on the F-4 and F-105s again. And, again, she got the evening shift. She was used to being part of a team that strove for excellence, but, at George, the brass didn’t like that she was so good at making repairs. She said they told her not to perform so well so that they could keep their staffing budgets.

“I told them the goal for me was to keep our pilots alive,” she said.

Register became part of the Active Reserve. She was based out of Hill AFB in Utah, and the Air Force would fly her to Seattle monthly to work on C-130s.

She found that she was competing with civilian technicians who didn’t want military members fixing the planes so that civilians could get the jobs.

She got out of the Air Force in 1979 and went to school at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. She went on a church mission to Montana and Wyoming, too. She double-majored in agronomy and horticulture, and then got her master’s degree in horticulture and plant physiology.

For basic (that is, up until COVID-19; she now serves in The Minnesota Legionnaire many Valley Post 1776. She has been pictured in The Minnesota Legionnaire many times when members of Legion Posts bring donations for the Hastings Veterans Home or spend volunteer time there.

Got something to donate? Or time to spare? You go to Sue.

Right away, you can tell she was in the military. But not a lot of people know about her military years.

Register committed to the Air Force through the Delayed Entry Program while in high school in Fremont, Nebraska, where she grew up. She joined in 1973.

After basic training at Lackland Air Force Base, where all airmen go for basic (that is, up until COVID-19; so half of recruits go to Keesler AFB now), she went to Keesler in Biloxi to learn her specialty in avionics, the electronic systems on aircraft. She learned to fix bombing and navigation systems.

This was the ‘70s, and she found the military presence in Biloxi was not welcomed. She recalled seeing a bumper sticker that read: “Clean up, Biloxi. Kill an airman.”

Register got involved in a drill-and-ceremony contest for the base and did well before leaving for her permanent duty station at McConnell AFB in Wichita, where she repaired KC-135 Stratotankers.

She became the first woman to earn Maintenance Man of the Month. Then she was named Airmman of the Quarter for the wing and the base. In 1975, she was Airmman of the Year for the wing, base and the 8th Air Force, ending up as a runner-up for Strategic Air Command.

She even got to work on Air Force One. Well, it was one of the backup Air Force One planes. The actual designation is for whichever one the president is aboard.

In 1976, Register was sent to California for further training before being sent across the Pacific Ocean to Okinawa Air Base in Korea. She worked on F-4 Phantoms and F-105 Thunderchiefs.

She was damned good at her job, among the very best, and she loved her line of work, too. But she got passed over for promotion because of her gender. A man got the promotion instead, high-jumped thought he needed the money because he was married.

She also found the U.S. military in Korea didn’t treat the Koreans with much respect. It rubbed her the wrong way.

“Korea was a beautiful country, and the people are wonderful,” she said.

Register was in Korea for the American Bicentennial on July 4, 1976. She and other members of the military had to paint everything red, white and blue. Then on the July 5 they began to paint it all back.

“There’s your tax dollars at work,” she said with a chuckle.

The time in Korea was for a year, and the airmen pretty much are stuck on base for that year. She worked an evening shift and would make a two-mile walk home every night after working on the aircraft.

Register did get off the base thanks to her love of sports. She was on the women’s volleyball team for the base and for all of the military in Korea. The base team got to travel to other bases, and the Korea team went all the way to the always-hot Philippines.

That was the same year that a tree just about ended the Korean ceasefire. Register worried she might not get to go home so soon.

An 80-foot Normandy poplar tree blocked the line of sight between the Bridge of No Return checkpoint and an observation post at the Joint Security Area. That’s the part of the demilitarized zone near where soldiers are face-to-face and buildings are used for negotiations. The poplar had become a problem over the years. North Korean soldiers once held U.S. troops at gunpoint, and other Americans had to go get them to bring them back safely.

On Aug. 18, 1976, two captains (one American, one South Korean), an American lieutenant and 11 enlisted United Nations soldiers, with five South Korean civilians, went out to trim the tree. A North Korean lieutenant, nicknamed Lt. Bulldog, was upset when the American captain continued to trim the tree despite his objections. Lt. Bulldog order the guards to attack, and they bludgeoned the American captain and lieutenant to death before they could defend themselves. The U.N. cadre dispersed the North Koreans.

The United Nations launched Operation Paul Bunyan on Aug. 21, when a convoy of 23 American and South Korean vehicles hauling engineers and a security detail unexpectedly drove into the JSAs. They were equipped with chainsaws and pistols. The South Koreans also sent a special taekwondo force, and the U.S. had Cobra helicopters overhead. Meanwhile, the
By Pat Dolan

DULUTH — On June 15, 2019, the future USS Minneapolis Saint Paul (LCS-21) was christened by ship sponsor Jodi J. Greene, deputy under secretary of the U.S. Navy for policy, in an exciting side launch into the Menonomee River at the Fincantieri Marinette Marine Shipyard in Marinette, Wisconsin.

The USS Minneapolis Saint Paul (LCS 21) will be one of the fastest combat ships in the U.S. Navy. The ship is designed for shallow water missions and near-shore combat and to defeat asymmetric “anti-access” threats such as mines, quiet diesel submarines, and fast surface craft. The ship will be homeported in Mayport, Florida.

In July 2019, Duluth was identified as the port where the ship will be commissioned. The commissioning is expected to take place in the spring of 2021. So why does it take so long to go from ship christening to commissioning? There are many milestones the ship and the crew must pass before the official commissioning ceremony. While the outer part of the ship’s hull is done, there is still a lot of work to be done to complete the inside of the ship. The shipbuilder at the Fincantieri Marinette Marine Shipyard is completing construction and fitting out of the ship. Fitting out includes installation of the ships power plant, engine, other machinery, installation of electrical, plumbing, and HVAC, finishing interior spaces and installation of all furnishings.

This is much like the construction of a large hotel or office building where you see the outside is done, but before the building is open, a lot of interior work must be completed. Once the interior and exterior of the ship is complete and prior to commissioning, the ship undergoes builders and sea trials in Lake Michigan. This gives the shipbuilder and the crew the opportunity to test the design, equipment, and other ship specific systems to ensure that they work properly and to identify any deficiencies that need to be corrected.

So what does the ship’s crew do during the time between christening and commissioning? USS Minneapolis Saint Paul will be manned by 140 sailors. 107 of those sailors are currently in Mayport, Florida and have been training vigorously in order to be able to operate the ship. Minneapolis Saint Paul sailors will be the first anti-submarine warfare (ASW) LCS in the naval fleet. ASW is the branch of underwater warfare that uses surface warships, aircraft, or other subma-
rines to find, track, and deter, damage, or destroy enemy submarines. Sonar technicians from the ship attended the first LCS sonar class to be taught for the fleet in San Diego to qualify on the ASW mission package. Other ship sailors have attended training at the LCS Training Facility in Mayport.

Also, sailors from the ship have gone underway with several LCS’s to support certifying events for those ships but to also receive training onboard and qualifying in their watch stations to return and train other Minneapolis Saint Paul sailors.

Crew members have also engaged in community outreach events to build relationships with their future homeport in Mayport, but also with the state of Minnesota. Sailors from the ship have supported local Jacksonville volunteer events such as building homes for in need families, beautification of four local elementary and middle schools, park clean ups, and volunteering at the USO at Jacksonville International airport.

Last year, crew members traveled to Duluth, Minnesota where they cleaned up several outdoor paths. They also attended the Minnesota Navy League Navy Ball in Minneapolis, a local high school football game, were featured on several news sites unveiling the ships crest, and attended the Minnesota Gopher and Viking football games.

In the next few months, Minneapolis Saint Paul sailors will begin Crew Familiarization training which will lead to Builders trials, Dock Trials, and Acceptance trials finally to commissioning in Duluth next spring.

The Minnesota Navy League has been designated as the lead for the commissioning of USS Minneapolis Saint Paul. The Commissioning Committee depends on sponsorships from corporations and individuals to help fulfill this obligation to the US Navy and the ship’s crew. Various levels of sponsor- ship opportunities are available.

To donate and for more information on the Minnesota Navy League Council visit our webpage at: https://navyleaguemn.org/.

Pat Dolan is vice president of communications for the Minnesota Navy League.

Sailors from USS Minneapolis Saint Paul perform beautifications at the General Joseph Finegan Elementary School in Jacksonville, Florida.

Employee: Sue Register ‘always jumps in’ and puts ‘veterans and staff first’

Continued from Page 7

Valley American Legion, she is a member of the Pine Island Legion Auxiliary and the Zumbrota VFW Auxiliary. She resides in Hastings. You could say she is very involved in the veterans community, and no one would dispute the observation.

Register has high praise for the American Legion Auxiliary members and Secretary Sandie Deutsch for their work during the COVID-19 pandemic. At the Hastings Veterans Home, all veterans and staff are wearing masks.

“The Auxiliary really stepped up. We needed masks, and we needed them now.”

She said The American Legion did a good job, too, getting a delivery network together and coordinating mask donations from My Pillow. Register has been meeting Legionnaire Randy Olsen of the COVID-19 Committee at Fleet Farm in Owatonna to receive donations for the Hastings Veterans Home.

“It really set a good precedence of stepping up when there are no big dollars available,” Register said.

Register said the Disabled American Veterans is doing some transportation, too. She said the VFW out of Austin has been outstanding in its support for the vets home.

And she had kind words for Darlene Wonda of Montgomery, The American Legion 3rd Vice-Commander representative who operates a little store at the home.

“She does sewing and mending — any clothes, blankets and quilts,” Register said.

Hastings Veterans Home Administrator Mike Anderson said Register is dedicated to the residents of the home.

“She works very hard to ensure that the residents get maximum benefit from the volunteers and the donations that are graciously given to the home,” he said.

A special MDVA newsletter that published weekly during the COVID-19 shutdown to mid-June featured staff members who could nominate other staff members. In the May 27 issue, one of them was Sue Register.

The kind words stated: “Sue always jumps in and finds everything everyone asks for! She recently helped veterans with their taxes and showed staff how to navigate the EIOR system (a state government inter-office network for purchase requests).”

She constantly puts the veterans and staff first and is willing to go the extra mile any time of the day or week.”

Sue Register, while in the Air Force, also worked on the Republic F-105D Thunderchief supersonic fighter-bomber.
Meet the Lakeville Ramp Team

This group of builders has overcome veteran discrimination and kept on building, thanks to the local VFW and Legion nonprofit would administer it.

“His exact words were, ‘I’m just not into this veteran thing.’”

— Terry Branham, Lakeville Ramp Team

LAKELIEVLE — Terry Branham’s father lost his left leg above the knee at 18 years old as an anti-aircraft gunner on the USS Downes, a Malan-class destroyer, in the South Pacific during World War II.

In his later years, he needed a ramp to get out to go to the VA hospital, visit people, attend church and so on. The family could not afford the cost of a ramp, and young Terry was still serving in the Army.

“It was a huge regret by our family,” Branham said. “Dad had this saying: ‘You can never have enough deck.’”

Branham had a 26-year career in the Army, enlistin in 1967, then going to Officer Candidate School, then Flight School. He flew Cobra helicopters in Vietnam in 1969-70, then commanded field artillery batteries. He command ed an aviation battalion in Korea in 1978, and he commanded in Vietnam in 1969-70, then commanded Officer Candidate School, then Flight Army, enlisting in 1967, then going to

Branham said. “Dad had this saying: “It was a huge regret by our family,” Branham said. “Dad had this saying: ‘You can never have enough deck.’”

Branham had a 26-year career in the Army, enlistin in 1967, then going to Officer Candidate School, then Flight School. He flew Cobra helicopters in Vietnam in 1969-70, then commanded field artillery batteries. He command ed an aviation battalion in Korea in 1978, and he commanded an Apache helicopter squadron during the Persian Gulf War.

“I would come home on leave, and we would build or rebuild decks for family and friends. I learned how to work with wood from my dad and loved it,” he said.

Branham, a Lakeville resident and member of American Legion Post 44 and VFW Post 210 in that south-metro suburb, took a medical retirement in 2009.

He learned of the St. Paul-based Metropolitan Center for Independent Living’s Ramp and Home Modification Project in 2009 when he could no longer work as a result of Agent Orange exposure. The MCIL has a program specifically for veterans, their widows or their children who needed ramps in the seven-county metro area.

“The pain in my lower legs was too intense,” Branham said. “I found that being around that I did much better, so I joined the MCIL ramp guys, and my team finally took over when a double-amputee Vietnam veteran could no longer run the teams.”

MCIL started a veterans ramp program thanks to grants and donations, then it lost the funding. A Lakeville senator and representative led the charge to garner state funding, and $100,000 was appropriated. MCIL hired a coordinator to manage the funds, and Branham handled creating ramp plans, submitted them for approval and funding, and submitting photos of the finished work.

That lasted for three years, with up to 15 projects a year, and in 2012, a new director took over at the MCIL, and he told Branham he would need to find funding elsewhere.

“His exact words were, ‘I’m just not into this veteran thing,’” the director further explained it as a risk-management decision, that someone could get hurt and sue.

Branham said no one has been hurt in all these years. He said it is another case of the Twin Cities letting the veterans and their families enjoy the freedoms they secured.

Four years ago, MCIL stopped developing ramps altogether, whether veteran or civilian, after funding was lost. The nonprofit now provides guidance. (See sidebar on MCIL.)

Branham’s team broke off on its own. They actually went to the Legislature and asked for funds where vets could apply for $3,000 ramp grants — but no state agency or
Quilters received a grant from the Legion Foundation to make masks

Continued from Page 1

Frazee, died at age 30 while on patrol in Fallujah during the Iraq War. He was a sergeant with the Minnesota National Guard. His unit was from Bemidji.

They asked Andy where the wounded soldiers from Minnesota go? He told them many go to Fort Knox, Kentucky.

So the women sent quilts there.

By January 2010, Fort Knox invited the women to award the quilts in person. American Legion Post 489 in Underwood got word of the trip, and its members began raising funds so the quilters could charter a motorcoach bus.

Forty quilters left in May 2010 for Kentucky with 612 quilts. They were gone five days and were hosted by Legion Posts all the way.

“When I say we were escorted, honestly, I say the quilts were,” Caughey said. “This was never about us.”

They stopped at quilt shops on the way back and got more fabric to begin making more quilts.

Since then, the quilters have been to Fort Riley, Fort Campbell, Fort Hood, Fort Sam Houston, Fort Bragg and back to Fort Knox.

“None of this would have been possible without the support we got from the Legion,” Caughey said.

Mary Ann Strauch of Rosalia noted the quilters on the trip had to pay out of pocket, too.

“We were all responsible for our hotels and any meals not provided by the Posts,” she said.

They had fun, to be sure.

Outside Fort Knox, the women stopped at Elizabethtown Post 113. The commander told them the bar and restaurant are open and they can order whatever they like.

“That’s the kind of hospitality we’ve gotten from the Legion everywhere,” Caughey said.

She has stories of Nebraska, Missouri and other places where Legion kindness was evident.

The Minnesota American Legion Foundation spearheaded the endeavor of making masks. Foundation President Lloyd Ricker, a Vietnam veteran and former Department commander out of Dawson, told Caughey masks were needed at VA hospitals and state veteran homes and asked if her team could make them.

“I said you tell me what you need, and we’ll get it done,” Caughey said.

Ricker said it is a good cause. He said he learned about the quilters not being able to present quilts because of COVID-19 through a conversation with NECman Bill Barkbnecht of the Underwood Post. The Foundation donated $1,000, and the Quilts of Valor make masks on behalf of The American Legion.

The money purchased an AccuQuilt cutter, dyes and fabric for the effort.

Ricker said Posts can donate further assistance, including gambling revenue, to Fund 85. It can help the women buy more fabric for more masks.

Quilts of Valor created 5,400 masks as of June 22.

No one who made those masks is younger than 60 years old.

“We’re all arthritic and farsighted,” Caughey said. “Hand-cutting 4,000 masks was just not going to happen. This has enabled us to get the job done.”

Dent Auxiliary Unit 148 purchased $300 of fabric, which went toward about 600 to 700 masks. The rest came from donations of Quilts of Valor members.

The masks were donated to the five Minnesota Veterans Homes (Fergus Falls, Luverne, Hastings, Silver Bay and Minneapolis) and four VA hospitals (Minneapolis, St. Cloud, Fargo and Sioux Falls).

The quilters in Dent let hardly anything go to waste. Leftover fabric from quilting will become masks.

The quilters are delivered via a volunteer transportation network coordinat- ed by Randy Olson, a Legion member from Winnebago in the 2nd District and a member of the Department of Minnesota’s COVID-19 Committee.

He works with Legion members across the state. In the Dent area, the quilters have turned them over to Barkbnecht or Paul Edwards of Niswau Post 627. Edwards is the 6th District commander. Jim Scott, commander of Dent Post 148, also has transported masks and so has KLN Brands retiree Wayne Caughey, husband of Jenny.

Either they go the whole way or they shuttle the masks to another Legion member partway, who then takes them to where they are needed. Edwards fitted 1,000 into the saddle bags of his motorcycle by vacuum-packing them, Caughey said.

The quilters work out of two rooms in the Dent Community Center, a former elementary school. The building kind of has two fronts. One side faces a street, and the other faces a highway.

And on the highway side, the people dropping off materials or masks made at home can use a drive-up window, rather than come indoors, because of COVID-19 restrictions.

Quilting has been curtailed. When Quilts of Valor awards a quilt, the members wrap the veteran in it: “It’s tough to do that from 6 feet away,” Caughey said.

Dent resident Debra Larsen, whom Caughey said is “the brains of this outfit,” said awarding a quilt wouldn’t be the same from far apart.

“It holds the same meaning for them or us,” she said.

Caughey said the quilters in Dent, Fergus Falls and Maine are all tight about spending money and using fabric.

Even the small scraps get used in pillows given to a kennel in Detroit Lakes for training service dogs.

“Really nothing goes to waste,” she said.

Caughey said she became involved during the post-9/11 wars. She had a bumper sticker that said “I support the troops.”

“But I wasn’t doing anything,” she said.

“Support should be an action verb.”

So she joined Quilts of Valor. She said if the small gesture of comfort of a quilt offsets any amount of anxiety from the battlefield, then it is worth it.

Larsen said she joined because Vietnam veterans were treated poorly when they returned to the United States. Her grandson was in Afghanistan, and she wanted to ensure he and other military members were welcomed home.

Strach said she was the head chef at the Perham Lakeside Golf Club on Little Pine Lake. She had always been a sewer (the dictionary’s second defini- tion of that word is “one who sews.”)

She knew many of the quilters from the golf course. Her son was in the Marines for six years and a daughter was in the Air Force for 20 years. So she joined.

Janelle Lotzer, a Comfort for Courage member from Vergas, said her father and stepdad were in the Army in Korea and the Legion. Her mother was in the Auxiliary. When she moved to the area, she was looking to do quilting.

“I think this is something I would like to do and help give back and for- ward on,” she said.

She likes the awarding presentation.

“You really feel that heartwarming feeling inside, where you present that quilt to someone who has given us that freedom.”

“I cry at all of them,” Larsen said.

“I tell them. A lot of veterans cry, too.”

A Vietnamese veteran touched her heart when he told her Quilts of Valor volun- teers were the first people to say thanks for serving.

Early on, when a Quilts of Valor group begins, the volunteers want to make sure their relatives and combat veterans in the community get a quilt.

After that, they pursue strangers, often the wounded vets.

You only do one or two awards and the mindset shifts to gratitude for each and every veteran,” Caughey said.

Vietnam vets, she said, went a gen- eration without thanks, until the public opinion shifted to gratitude during the Persian Gulf War and again after the 9/11 attacks.

Paullette Hoebelheinrich of the Fergus Falls group joined after hearing Caughey speak to a quilting guild in 2007. She helped start the Fergus Falls one in October 2007. She has a son with 21 years in the Army and Army Reserve and Air Force who has served in the Middle East.

“I’ve always been a patriotic mom,” she said.

Each quilt made by Quilts of Valor show who pieced it, who quilted it and who finished it, in addition to the veteran it was presented to and on which date. This quilt stands ready to be presented once the COVID-19 restrictions are lifted.

Quilts of Valor State Coordinator Jenny Caughey of Perham shows a Millennium longarm quilting machine. The quilters operate out of two rooms at the Dent Community Center.
Top Air Guard general visits 133rd Airlift Wing

By Anna Long

FORT SNELLING — The chief of the National Guard Bureau, Gen. Joseph L. Lengyel, visited the 133rd Airlift Wing June 17 to thank and recognize Minnesota National Guard members, including some American Legion members.

The Minnesota Guard was recently called up for state active-duty to assist with COVID-19 testing and civil unrest.

"Thank you for your service," said Lengyel, addressing members of the 133rd. "Civil unrest, working with people on the street — that is probably one of the hardest missions we do … You never know what bad things you stopped from happening. In my view, that is what we bring … Thank you for your leadership."

Lengyel serves as the 28th chief of the National Guard Bureau and as a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

American Legion member Lt. Col. Brian Winter was at the 133rd for Lengyel’s visit. Winter is currently serving in the Minnesota Air National Guard as deputy commander of the Mission Support Group at the 133rd.

During the recent activation of the entire Minnesota National Guard, Winter led the 133rd’s Emergency Operations Center. Winter joined the American Legion in Minnesota more than 10 years ago at Post 15 out of Detroit Lakes and is currently a member of 3M Post 599 in St. Paul. He said he is thankful for the comradery and support he’s received through his years of membership in the Minnesota American Legion.

“I’m proud to serve at the 133rd Airlift Wing and proud to be a member of The American Legion,” he said. “The 133rd serves the local community, state and nation, and The American Legion does as well. It is truly an honor to represent both.”

The SAL Update:

Greetings, American Legion Family members. It is your Detachment Commander Dave Vulcanc from the Sons of The American Legion here.

A few things to keep in mind. We are planning on having Camp-o-ree, a Fall Harvest Rally and the John Zgoda Memorial SAL Disabled Veterans Deer Hunt later this year. If you have anybody who would be interested in the deer hunt, please keep an eye out in The Minnesota Legionnaire for more information on an upcoming issue. Our Facebook page will have more information as we solidify plans.

As I sit here and think about the last year, it was just a year ago that I was elected has the Detachment commander for your Sons of The American Legion. It started out as a whirlwind as we went from campout (convention) right into Depart-ment Convention, and then we went from parade to parade all summer long.

I was able to attend a couple of District picnics as well, and we cannot forget about the Minnesota ALR Legacy Run that I attended with the final stop at the Osseo/Maple Grove Post. Then off to National Convention we went. Camporee and Fall Harvest Rally in early September followed with the John Zgoda Memorial Dis-abled Veterans Deer Hunt late that month. Fall Conference in October, Pearl Harbor Rally in December. January started the Mid-Winter conferences, then Sweetheart Rally in February. Then COVID-19 hit, just as we were about to have our spring conference, and everything screeched to a halt. But we’ve been busy doing phone conferences, keeping up with membership, and all the other things that we need to do to support the programs of The American Legion.

And this will continue as we begin our new year. We will get the job done.

Membership packets will hopefully be here soon (as of the time of this article being written) and distribution of them throughout this month.

Thanks for all you do.

Dave Vulcan is the com-mander of the Detachment of Minnesota for the Sons of The American Legion.
Adjutant

What a start to my first year as your Adjutant. The membership is one of our biggest challenges and the promotion and participation of our programs in Children & Youth, Americanism, Veteran Affairs and Rehabilitation, and a Strong National Defense after these events were canceled is added to the list of challenges.

Now is the perfect time to review all our programs and fine tune them to make programs better and bigger. We now have the time with no pressure of running these programs, due to everything being canceled, to take a hard look at how we can improve. We need to review how we operate and how can we grow our programs, let’s think outside the box.

The staff at Legionville has embraced this concept, and they are leaving no stone unturned. I was up at 3:30 a.m. and they are walking the talking and the talk. I have never seen Legionville look so good! Please take the time to review your programs and communique with your committee per programs, the business of the day. All of our committees should have a “mission statement” and “goals” for the 2021 year. If you need help the Department here is to help, we have two Zoom accounts, and we can help facilitate a meeting for your committee.

Your Department has gone through some personnel changes due to the retirements of Randy Al and then Laura. They are all soon to be missed and we wish them all but nothing but the best in their retirement years, Lord knows they deserve it.

We have a new Communications Director, Mike Engstrom, who is doing great with our website and the Legionnaire, Rachel Hill, replacing Laura, it is in the process of absorbing Laura’s 27 years of experience here at the Department. Wish them both the best of luck and help them when needed. Don’t worry, we still have 42 years of continuity and experience at the Department with Jennifer Kelley and Misty Padilla; we will survive.

As for me I have been a real learning experience these past six months. I could not have been successful in these trying times without the great support from The American Legion Family Department of Minnesota (ALDFMN).

In closing, we are your Department here to serve you and assist with the running of the programs and analysis of The American Legion Department of Minnesota (ALDFMN).

For God & Country.

Mike Maxa
Department Adjutant

Commander

My theme this past year was “A Foundation for the Future.” In various ways, I feel we have made progress building our foundation. At the beginning of our membership year I asked all District and Legionary leadership to think about what they could do that would help our Legionnaires, Auxiliary members and Sons of the American Legion achieve success in their communities. At the end of December, Adjutant Randy Teddahl and Communications Director Al Zdon, thank you for all your efforts, made significant progress building our American Legion Family in action. We sometimes take for granted all the amazing things we do and don’t take the time to document them. There is no doubt that our messaging has gotten better and more relevant with the use of various communication outlets.

National Commander James W. “Bill” Oxford’s theme is “A Foundation for the Future.” In various ways, I feel we have made progress building our foundation. At the beginning of our membership year I asked all District and Legionary leadership to think about what they could do that would help our Legionnaires, Auxiliary members and Sons of the American Legion achieve success in their communities. At the end of December, Adjutant Randy Teddahl and Communications Director Al Zdon, thank you for all your efforts, made significant progress building our American Legion Family in action. We sometimes take for granted all the amazing things we do and don’t take the time to document them. There is no doubt that our messaging has gotten better and more relevant with the use of various communication outlets.

Increased messaging of all the great volunteerism we are involved in on a daily basis was emphasized this past year. Almost each and every day I witnessed examples of our American Legion Family in action. We sometimes take for granted all the amazing things we do and don’t take the time to document them. There is no doubt that our messaging has gotten better and more relevant with the use of various communication outlets.

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I have had a great opportunity to meet some of the best Legionnaires, Auxiliary members and Sons of the American Legion and Riders in the State — with special attention to the 1st and 3rd Districts. Some of these notes include:

• Department Fall Conference
• Veterans Day Event
• 1st & 3rd District Membership Revivals
• 1st & 3rd Membership Communication and Revitalizations
• Post 1982 MN & AD Convention
• Pearl Harbor Rally
• Peavey Plaza Memorial Dedication
• Mid-Winter Conference
• Sweetheart Rally
• National Commander Visit
• 1st & 3rd District Oratorical Contest
• Virtual COVID-19 Meetings

Thank you all who have contributed to my two projects, Wounded Warriors Guide Service (a Minnesota nonprofit) and Legionville.

Two important members of the full-time staff retired at the end of December, Adjutant Randy Teddahl and Communications Director Al Zdon, thank you for all your efforts, made significant progress building our American Legion Family in action. We sometimes take for granted all the amazing things we do and don’t take the time to document them. There is no doubt that our messaging has gotten better and more relevant with the use of various communication outlets.

Zoom teleconferences have increased at the Department, District and Post level. Some of us continue to have almost daily Zoom conferences, sometimes two and three in one day. All Post officers have their own Pro through their District command and are using it for various functions. Even after we began having meetings in person, Zoom will remain an effective tool to hold various meetings.

The last couple of months, Legion Family members have been volunteering their time, energy, and creativity on the many needed items at our Veterans Homes, VA Clinics/Hospitals, and various locations where Lego Family members were able to contribute. Since the start of the pandemic, Zoom has been a standout feature at the Department and District levels.

The success of membership could not be accomplished without leadership from Post members, Department vice commanders and the District area membership vice commanders — the true backbone of the total membership picture.

Great job, everyone! I am looking forward to the 2021 year. Stay safe and stay well.

Pat Logan
Districts 1 & 2 Vice Commander

Vice Cmdr. 1st and 3rd Districts

Upon the vacancy left when Mike Maxa became the Minnesota American Legion Adjutant, I was voted in by the Department Executive Committee and became Mike’s replacement as Department vice commander for the 1st and 3rd Districts.

This year’s travel through the 1st and 3rd Districts has been personally inspiring. I have had a great opportunity to meet some of the best Legionnaires, Auxiliary members and Sons of the American Legion.

In March, several of us traveled to Washington, D.C., to support the National American Legion legislative agenda. We divided up in teams and visited with our two senators and their representatives or their aides. All meetings went well, and I can assure you that the Legion is listened to.

They often went out of their way to personally meet with us. We all know what happened toward the middle and end of March. All travel for National officers and staff was cancelled, and we received a resolution from canceling the National Convention in August and all National officers, Committee Chairman and Committee members will remain in place until the National Convention in August 2021. It also recommended that state and local conventions be cancelled.

The Department Executive Committee voted to keep our Department’s leadership in place along with Committee chairmen and Committee members will remain in place until the National Convention in July 2021. The DEC recommended that state and local conventions be cancelled.

All Post officers who agreed to serve another year. Your commitment and dedication to our American Legion Family is inspiring.

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Mark Dvorak
Department Commander
Vice Cmdr. 4th and 5th Districts

It’s been quite a year, and just when I thought it was coming to an end, I hear about another year to come to a halt. But that’s not The American Legion I know. Working with Jennifer Hayvick in Two Harbors—virtually with the other divisions, Zoom became the way to keep in touch. I started a weekly 4th and 5th District meeting for all who wished to keep their members on top of the seemingly daily-changing “What Now?” updates.

With the generous help of our Department Membership Directory Sy Fix, every division now has a zoom account, free to use for virtual meetings and conferences for a year. Two memorable recent events included the 4th and 5th District donation totaling $600 ($300 each) worth of masks to our local Vet- erans Home and the 4th District donation more than $600 worth of goodies (kind of a cross between “nice to have” and “need- essities”) to Bars and Roads troops, recently called up for duty to assist law enforcement personnel.

We delivered them to the American Legion Riders at Post 98 in St. Paul. Wow! That felt so good to me. I want to thank all those who (assisted and taught) me during the COVID-19 pandemic. I put in another stellar year for Commanding Mark and our entire Legion Family.

Robert Locker District 6 & 9
Vice Commander

Treasurer

As treasurer, I serve on the Department Finance Committee (DFC) and the Legion Board of Directors. It has been my pleasure to serve the Minnesota Department of the American Legion.

The treasurer is charged with the responsibility and administration of all Department funds and to respond directly to responsibility for the Department Executive Committee. Some of the duties that I have been overseeing include accounting princi- ples and financial processes of the Department Headquarters, asset management, due diligence, internal auditing, song rights, and financial reports and invest- ment of the Department.

The following is a overview of the Department’s invest- ment between June 1, 2019 and May 31, 2020. We have lost a member of their family to COVID-19 and not be able to be with them they were fighting. As the family struggled with not being able to accompany them in the hospital. One of my duties was to keep up with the families to let them know how I felt we could grow. The Department.

Mike Ash
Department Historian

As being my first year as your National Executive Commit- tee member, I would like to say thanks to our NEC alternative, Peggy Moon. Peggy and I have been working together to bring much-needed attention to our Department’s chaplains. Our Chaplains have provided extra serenity in our lives in the wake of COVID-19. They have been there for us, never missing a beat. The American Legion is a proud member of the National Association of Veterans Chaplains (ANA VICUS). It has been a busy year since I have become our Department of Minnesota chaplain. I have had an opportunity to provide spiritual guidance to an amaz- ing group of veterans and share so many special events in their lives. Even though daily missin is taking care of our veterans’ families, it has taken on even more value as we navigate the major adjustments in our lives because of COVID-19. Thank you, God, and everyone our support of each other.

Through this year we have unified even more on our goals with God’s guidance. We have been blessed with an order of our faith in God and all our questions. We have been able to support our veterans and their families in that during this year the America Legion Riders at Post 357 in Lynden, a veteran who was a soldier in the U.S. Army, was on the verge of Suicide. He had worked on include summarizing the truth.

I have been fortunate to serve the Minnesota Department of the American Legion as the National Commander Dan Tidus has been very helpful. I really enjoyed the Fall National Convention. We arrived on a Saturday and left on Thursday. It was a real eye-opener.

We made the trip to D.C. for the Washington Conference. We met with our senators and congress- people. We were fortunate enough to be able to visit the grave site of General Lewis Blaine Hershey at Arlington National Cemetery. General Mike Ash, the second and longest-serving Director of Selective Service (the first only serving a few months) and as the first director of ANA VICUS. It was followed by a tour of the Selective Service and National Guard Bureau. When we got home on Wednesday, everything at the U.S. Capitol shut down due to the pandemic. Thanks also to our Adjutant Mike Maxa and Commander Mark Dvorak. We have been able to have several Zoom meetings.

The National Headquarters and the state have had many conferences and calls many conferences. I try to follow as many as I can. As a matter of fact, I was at a fall NEC meeting in Indianapolis in October. It has been good to have Donna Arends along as she had been a lifesaver.

Bill Barkebæk
National Executive Committeeman

Judge Advocate

My primary duty is to the Department’s Executive Committee and to the Department com- mander. Since January 1, 44 percent of my communication has been with the Department Commander or the Department adjutant. Major projects I have worked on include summarizing the governor’s emergency executive orders and addressing a variety of COVID-19 issues. I have advised and assisted our baseball program, Legion- ville, Boys and Girls State and the SAL. This year I have not had any communication with either of them, but there has been sig- nificant time devoted to several of the projects.

I have advised and assisted our department offices. In 2020, 18 percent of my communica- tion has been with them. I have had several communications with our department service agency, as well as our department ex- ecutive director. I have had the chance to work with one department vice commander to Tidus. The department has worked on several different legal and housing issues at a post with particularly difficult problems.

We have devoted about 13 percent of our communica- tion to Posts and Districts. I still cannot give legal advice to Posts and Districts. This has been a bar or a restaurant. Howev- er, our department adjutant has urged me to assist Posts with organizational issues such as

Continued on Page 14
The Scholarship Selection Committee, due to the coronavirus situation, met in June 2020, but after the Legionnaire deadline. There were approximately 335 CPR’s submitted in 2019, equating to 61 percent and carbon monoxide alarms. It has done much to improve the School Patrol Center is a valuable part of the Safety and School Patrol Center is a valuable part of safety education. It was held on an Olympic path for over a year. The fund’s status as of May 27, 2021 is approximately 335 CPR’s submitted.

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Children and Youth

The objectives of 4 Pillars: Children and Youth are to strengthen the family, work to provide safe children and children and provide programs that meet the needs of young people. We are accomplishing this by sending the family and organizations to benefit young people that are facing many socio-cultural pressures. We are supporting the American family to support growth in youth's development by improving the well-being of all children.

Gary H. Olson
President

Brain Science

Thank you to all the Posts that have donated to the Minnesota American Legion Brain Science Foundation Scholarship Program. Your Posts, individual members can still do so if you desire by sending a check to the Minnesota American Legion office. The donations for the last five years are:

2015: $11,783.00
2016: $15,023.70
2017: $14,024.45
2018: $27,767.36
2019: $16,392.00

These donations will be used to enhance our American Legion Education Division for consideration and recognition. The company submitted, by the Kasson American Legion Post 333, for the small company category having 50 or less employees prior to the Degussa Tile & Granite Inc. of Rochester.

The second company, submitted by the Anoka American Legion Post 252 for the large company having 201 or more employees was Federal Cartridge Co. of Anoka. Because of the cancelation of the 2020 Department Convention, both of these companies will be recognized and a plaque at the 2020 Department Fall Conference.

We will also recognize the Rise of Lake Park submitted by 5th District Chairman Ray Eidem, the award for Excellence in the Lives of Disabled Persons.

I want to congratulate Chairman Mark Dvorak for his year as our Department Convention Chairman. I feel that he did an outstanding job of representing our organization and our veterans.

I also want to thank Chairman Mark Dvorak for the appointment as the chairman of the 2020 Legionary Year and allowing me to serve the veterans of our state for both the 2019-2020 and the 2020-2021 years.

Karen Welander
Chairman

Employment

This past year, the Employment Committee received two nominations for the Employment Chairman. Both of these companies were selected and forwarded to the National Veteran of Foreign Wars for Enhancement of the Lives of Disabled Persons.

I want to congratulate Commissioner Mark Dvorak for his year as our Department Convention Chairman. I feel that he did an outstanding job of representing our organization and our veterans.

I also want to thank Chairman Mark Dvorak for the appointment as the chairman of the 2020 Legionary Year and allowing me to serve the veterans of our state for both the 2019-2020 and the 2020-2021 years.

Karen Welander
Chairman

A.L. Family Hospital Association

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, it is my pleasure to report on this fiscal year’s accomplishments as well as the future activities from the beginning of the fiscal year August 1, 2019 through April 15, 2020. A complete fiscal year report will be provided to The American Legion, The American Legion Auxiliary and The Sons of the American Legion at our annual meeting held at the Fall Conference. Application history for new members and the fiscal (August 1st, 2019) through (June 15th, 2020) can be seen below:

FY-19 FY-20
Applications 23 20
Approvals 20 20
Disbursements $39,953 $36,481

Listed below is the breakdown on the number of claims by District:

District Claims Paid in Dollars
Second 1 $2,333
Third 0 $0
Fourth 0 $0
Fifth 0 $0
Sixth 1 $1,650
Seventh 1 $0
Eighth 2 $4,921
Ninth 7 $10,446
Tenth 3 $9,426

Total 23 $36,481

Listed below is the financial picture for the ALFAH as of June 15, 2020.

Total assets as of July 31, 2019: $242,563
Total income YTD: $11,120
Total expense YTD: $5,135
Net assets Reduction YTD: $2,780

Special thanks to Roger Myrven and Lauren Stoesz for all the work they do for the American Legion Family Hospital Association. Also thank you to the board members who have served this past year.

They are: Jennifer Havlick, Theria Ruidach, Alberta Hafs, Neldrith, Robert Bristo, Diane Hayes, Mark Dvorak, Mary Hendrickson and David Velen.

Also special thanks to the entire American Legion Family for allowing me the honor of serving as your president for the American Legion Family Hospital Association.

Rockey Stoico
President

Finance

The Department Finance Committee met at Fergus Falls 30 American Legion on Sept. 24, 2019, to set the budget for the Department for 2019-2020.

After discussion, the budgets was set to be a break-even. Our non-membership revenue remains a very important part of maintaining our programs.

It appears with two more months to go on the year, we should close to a meeting our budget forecast.

The committee thanks Chairman Mark Dvorak, Adjutants Randy Tedshall and Mike Maxa and the office staff, especially Laura Weber, for their help.

Members of the committee are Chairman Tom Burau, Lloyd Ekmen, Ray DeZarik, Richard Ochsleger and Richard Camp.

Tom Burau
Chairman

Legionnaire Insurance Trust

Another outstanding year. Considering the world as it is right now, I think a lot of us would have probably been offering a lot of support to our community and people instead of thinking about our insurance. The COVID-19 pandemic has been a time of great change for all of us, and it has had a significant impact on our lives and businesses.

In these circumstances, I can assure you that your Legionnaire Insurance Trust has been here for you, providing the support and protection you need.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank those who have made it possible for us to continue providing this vital service: the members of our Board of Directors, the staff of the Department, and all those who have contributed to our success.

We are grateful for your continued support and we remain committed to serving our members during this challenging time.

Legionville

This has been a year to remember! President Wayne Gilbertson was seriously injured on the day after Thanksgiving Day 2019. Gilbertson since that time has continued his recovery and recently returned to his position with great success. For his efforts, he has been presented the gold standard of his profession.

I want to thank the Legion whom was very fortunate, and we received nearly $49,000 from LIT Insurance to help our veterans programs.

A special thank you to Gary Lee Davenport and Eric Wilkins, who also served on behalf of the board, for their ideas and help. I would especially like to thank the entire office staff for their hard work. They are very busy people in Minnesota to have help that really cares about all veterans.

Legionville School Board

The meeting was conducted virtually due to the coronavirus that has impacted our nation. The school district, in partnership with the Minnesota Department of Education, provided us with a virtual platform for the meeting.

The meeting was called to order at the 10:20, 2018 fall meeting to hire a camp director and camp manager for the upcoming year. I would like to thank the Legionville Board of Directors for all your support! The Legionville School Board has been cancelled this year and all activities due to the coronavirus.

The Sons of The American Legion will keep moving forward with the Fall Camporee and Harvest Rally until we hear otherwise from the Minnesota Governor’s Office.

 Continued on Page 16
Continued from Page 15

Floyd

note: I completed the conservation easement application for the property to a similar or lesser value. It will probably live in a more manageable-sized home. We also sought increased compensation for our personal care attendants, many of whom care for our veterans.

Special challenges faced us this year, including the COVID-19 pandemic shutting down the state and hampering all government functioning. Most of us were working from home. Even though there may not officially be training at a race, one can still learn much just by continuing to interact with your fellow family members.

The biggest push this year was to continue to work for the 1982AD. There was some success in accomplishing that. We transferred 476 out of 1982AD, but there are still 240 left in 1982AD. It is imperative that those members be contacted. They need to be in a Post. Once we get them off the house list and put them all back up, they may be a potential leader in your Post. So, utilize the best person within your Post or District to get the word out and ring can be done without a lot of fanfare.

When you start getting active in the Legion there were some folks who were mentoring me, and I didn’t even realize it. Not getting back to email solicitation. That process of working the DMS members is my new focus. We have some falling folks in Department such as Linda Dvorak, Dick Ward, Marvin Ostrom, who have the tools to use and teach this program.

The training for my Legion.org can be held at your Post or District. Let’s give Linda Dvorak a call. Once you have the knowledge of my Legion.org, membership can be increased. We have every District and Post can do nothing but grow.

With COVID-19 playing havoc on our daily lives, we were also affected. The meetings were forced to be virtual. The idea was to present with a voice of virtualizing everything. New ideas and roadblocks. The members need to be revitalized and emphasized to go forward. The meetings were held virtually.

In addition to the state level, The American Legion Women’s Conference was well-attended. We secured meetings with all representatives and their aids. Our delegation was led with Tina Smith as well as a key aide to Sen. Amy Klobuchar. Our priorities at the national level included:

- Toxic exposure and burn pits
- Health care for veterans
- Support for VA’s suicide prevention
- Reaffirm our commitment to allies
- Fully fund a national dose of the vaccine
- Pay the Coast Guard when government closes down
- Improve access to VA veteran services
- Protect the American flag
- Help end veteran homelessness
- Support for Gold Star families
- Protect the American flag

All the congresspeople and senators received not only one message from us, but there were expanded background papers as well.

The Commander Mark Dvorak for the confidence placed in me this year and this concludes my report.

Robert Hart
Chairman

Membership

Last year we started in the top three through 2019 and beginning 2020. We then slowly started slipping to a point of where we are, as of June 18, 19th place at 95,817 percent. We had a Conference meeting and the Legion Act being signed as well as the push to get the 1982AD transferred.

Tom Sanford

Pheasant Dinner

I would like to thank all of the of property to a similar or lesser value. It will probably live in a more manageable-sized home. We also sought increased compensation for our personal care attendants, many of whom care for our veterans.

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- Toxic exposure and burn pits
- Health care for veterans
- Support for VA’s suicide prevention
- Reaffirm our commitment to allies
- Fully fund a national dose of the vaccine
- Pay the Coast Guard when government closes down
- Improve access to VA veteran services
- Protect the American flag
- Help end veteran homelessness
- Support for Gold Star families
- Protect the American flag

All the congresspeople and senators received not only one message from us, but there were expanded background papers as well.

The Commander Mark Dvorak for the confidence placed in me this year and this concludes my report.

Robert Hart
Chairman

Membership

Last year we started in the top three through 2019 and beginning 2020. We then slowly started slipping to a point of where we are, as of June 18, 19th place at 95,817 percent. We had a Conference meeting and the Legion Act being signed as well as the push to get the 1982AD transferred.

Tom Sanford

Pheasant Dinner

I would like to thank all of the of property to a similar or less...
Greetings from the 1st District American Legion Family. Thank you for your service and support.

We need to stay strong and healthy, do what we need to do, face mask and social distancing to stay away from the virus. All reports should be in by now. We should be ready to start on the 2020-2021 year.

The membership packets should be delivered by the time you read this.

The Fourth of July — the USA’s birthday — is upon us. We are working on the 2021 calendar.

The Department Training Committee is doing training virtually, Zoom webinars, so we can be informed right from our own homes one Legion Posts.

Yes, the Department of Minnesota website, mmlegion.org has lots of good information. What you need can be found here.

American Legion Posts are opening up, now leaning on the cautious side.

We need to start this year stronger.

Pray for the deployed, their families and all front-line personnel. Their tasks are hard and difficult. They need our support.

They are defending our freedom, home and abroad.

For God and Country.

Greetings from the Fighting 5th District.

It takes a lot of preparation, which is being carried out to make sure that the training committee can do its job without mailing anything.

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Meet the Hometown Hero

from Wabasha Unit 50

By Michael Smith

WABASHA — We’ve heard a great deal about Hometown Heroes during these past months as the country deals with the coronavirus pandemic. From hospital workers all the way to St. Elizabeth’s to New York City and points in between, to public health workers of all types, to grocery store check-out staff and child care providers, these people have put themselves on the “front line” of this epic battle.

But not all hometown heroes are at the hospitals — though we want to thank each and every one of them every single day, or at least we should — for all that they do. Some are contributing in this fight in their own way.

LaVerne “Red” Rumsey, a member of the Wabasha American Legion Auxiliary Unit 50 and perhaps best known by many for her years of working at the Legion Club here, has been contributing to this fight in her own way. “Red” has now made over 1,000 facemasks and she has given nearly all of them to veterans homes across Minnesota.

“I have sent masks to homes all over the state,” she said during a visit outside her home last week. “I’ve sent them to homes in Luverne, the Minnesota VA Hospital in Minneapolis, the VA HCS in St. Cloud, the Hastings Veterans Home and the Veterans Home in Silver Bay. They were to be used by the veterans at those facilities, or staff, if necessary.

“And I’m still making more!”

She has also made 25 masks for the Jewel Golf Course and Clubhouse in Lake City. “People stop and ask me for some,” she added. “I made many for my son to use at his work.”

Red has been at this since Day 1, practically, of this pandemic.

She’s been using material that she’s had stocked up in her home. “I mostly use cotton and flannel … even T-shirt material,” she noted.

“The elastic has been in my basement, too. It’s elastic that is usually used to make undergarments, she chuckled. “I started with a roll this big,” she said, spreading her hands out about a foot apart. “But I’m almost out.”

She has been getting reimbursement for the postage from the Auxiliary, but otherwise, she’s doing this all on her own. “It’s something I can do. I’m good at sewing, stitching … so I can put my skills to good use this way.”

Why not? Having been married to a veteran — her husband of many years, Bernie, passed away several years ago — she understands the needs of aging veterans and their lifelong commitment to their country. So for her to pitch in and help in this way … to be a different kind of “hometown Hero,” well, it’s only natural, we’d say.

Now, if only this pandemic would just naturally go away.

LaVerne Rumsey displays a sampling of the masks she has made.

Photo by Wabasha County Herald

There still is time for recruiting new members

By Sharon Thiemecke

Membership 2019-2020 is not finished yet! There is still time to get out there and recruit, renew and rejoin members. Spous- es, mothers, daughters and granddaughters — if there is one then there is the potential for three or more.

Fighting for members. They are our gems! Membership is our organization. It is what allows us to do what we do. Membership helps us work our mission successfully — the patriotic, charita- ble, and nonprofit branch, and our military and their families need us.

Enthusiasm is contagious. Share your why! Start the conversation! 2020 membership is still coming into the Department office every week. Keep up the good work and keep those memberships coming. The Celebration Award from National Headquarters is within our reach! Let’s make President Mary proud with 100 percent for our Centennial Celebration! We are almost at 30,000 members and our Department goal is 31,754 members.

Together we can do this. We are a Team! Many hands make light work. Remember that membership is everyone’s job. These have been times to get creative for our members working our programs and our gatherings. Creative we have been as the American Legion Family works together — we do not give up — we find a way! If social distancing is important to you, dues can be submitted by calling National Headquarters at 317-569-4570 or online at alaforveterans.org.

Dues may still be paid directly to your Unit membership chairperson like we have always done. Remember that the spouse of our female Legionnaire veterans now qualify to join the American Legion Auxiliary. Welcome to a fresh prospective and new ideas.

Give back during the time of COVID-19 pandemic

By Diane Hayes

Community Service Chairman

During the COVID-19 pandemic, remember to follow the COVID-19 guidelines in your community. Donate or volunteer safely with food banks and pantries. Deliver meals and groceries to those who are unable to get out. Also check your local Meals on Wheels to learn about local services.

Help a school: Check with your area school system to see if they need volunteers to distribute food or other items to children and families in need.

Give blood: Blood donations have decreased dramatically. Help fill the need by contacting your local Red Cross or other blood donation sites.

Stay in touch: Check on your neighbors, friends and family, especially those who are older or may be alone. A phone call, text or a conversation through the door or a message written on a postcard board could brighten their day.

Sew masks: Sew and donate masks to your local community if they need more.

Yard work, window washing, caring for flowers, shrubs, road ditches, etc. Contact your local community for volunteer opportunities.

Visit the Minnesota State Service Commission’s website for details or contact your Chamber of Commerce or other organizations to see if there are any events coming that you can volunteer for while following the guidelines for COVID-19 in your communities.

Take care, be safe, God bless America.
The Department knew that many of you would want to wish Sandie well in her retirement and have one last visit with her. She will be in attendance at Fall Conference and a small celebration is being planned. Please try to attend.

The staff, Jan Lauby, Jocelyn Yasis and Marsha Bible, wish you only the very best. Don't forget to enjoy some me time and if you can.

The ALA has come through during COVID crisis

By Patti Coleman
COVID-19 Committee Representative

Our Units and Districts need to be reminded for staying connected and continuing to work the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary during these trying times of COVID-19.

Many members have taken the time to become familiar with zoom to participate in meetings, sharing and calling, or to keep in touch. Even as our Post homes are starting to open, please continue to offer the option of using zoom to our members.

Many cannot attend in person but would love to be a part of everything that you have happening in your unit. This is a great way to include all members going forward. It is a new tool in our ALA toolbox, and we need to continue to utilize the technology that is available.

Our veterans have continuously been in need during this time of COVID-19 and the ALA has come through for them. We have many members throughout the state who are supporting our veterans by ensuring that our Minnesota Veterans Homes and VA Health Care Systems have the masks they need, ear protectors, gowns and so much more.

I am proud and grateful for all of those who are sewing and sewing and sewing to fill this need. Many hands have had a role in the thousands (yes, thousands!) of items that have been donated to our VA facilities during COVID-19. The needs are not dissapating. I encourage you to help when and if you can.

When the Minnesota National Guard was called up to serve during the unrest that was taking place in the Twin Cities, The American Legion Family stepped in to ensure that they had plenty of water, Gatorade and snacks. Communities worked together to support those men and women who are our citizen soldiers. There was an awesome response and they have expressed their sincere gratitude for the support.

I encourage our Units to continue to be innovative and adapt to the changing circumstances in how you work our programs during COVID-19 and beyond.

You are doing terrific work for the American Legion Auxiliary, you are supporting our veterans, active military and their families and you are relevant in your communities. Thank you for all you do every day!

Scrip Cards and how you can help Girls State

Peggy Tesdahl
ALA Minnesota Girls State Director

Your American Legion Auxiliary Minnesota Girls State committee is committed to keeping this program at the same low cost of $300 as it has been for the last few years. We know that it has been hard lately for our Units to do any fundraising. Units and all members of the American Legion Family can help us to keep the fees down by participating in our Scrip Gift Card program.

Scrip Gift Cards are sold to you at the face value of the card and the retailer pays a commission to the American Legion Auxiliary usually ranging from 2 to 7 percent of the face value. It is a win-win for everyone.

Scrip Gift Cards are available from many retailers in many denominations. Groceries, gas, hotels, movie theaters and more all have Scrip available to purchase including Cub Foods, Walmart, Target, Amazon, QuikTrip, Starbucks, Panera, Chipotle, Best Buy, Kohl’s, Menards, Taco Bell, Dairy Queen, Great Clips, Papa Murphy’s, to name a few. They are available as physical gift cards, as downloadable printable gift cards or downloadable to the wallet app on your smart phone.

Scrip Gift Cards aren’t just for gift giving. They are usable for your every day shopping and many can be reloaded from your phone or home computer.

We will continue to have a select inventory of gift cards available at American Legion functions. They are limited to a few different retailers and they are $25 value.

Does your Unit or District purchase Gift cards for our Veterans homes or veterans in your communities? Please consider purchasing them through the ALA Minnesota Girls State program.

If you are ordering physical gift cards, we need at least two weeks lead time or more if possible. The website can be a little overwhelming at first and I am here to help you. Please call me for help or with questions at 612-715-4489 or email me at ranpeg0814@hotmail.com.

Please contact me or the Department Office to order your cards. Thank you for supporting the Minnesota Girls State program, and we hope you will use the Scrip Gift Card program.

Adios, auf wiedersheen, au revoir, sbohem, aloha

Secretary's Notes

Sande Deutsch

Editor Tim Engstrom said he needs more things for the July Legionnaire, sooooo, just a quick addendum from Secretary Sandie — you thought you were done with me, but nooooo.

HAI! As I said in my short, condensed column last month, I would probably forget some very important friends and that I did. This time, this is, for sure, and if I didn’t mention your name after this, I blame it on old age.

I do have to mention Chuck Stone and Tonia Betterman. I am so happy to have been able to get to know both of you and your turtle has its home at our Stone and Tonia Betterman. I did. This time, this is it, for forever.

One more couple that mean the world to me are Bev and Orv Ottersen. What wonderful people they are and Bev knows where to get the best Virginia peanuts in the world.

I also can’t believe I didn’t miss my other couple of favorites, Don Hayden and dear Vrzy from Montgomery.

This is it now. Finito! Again I love you all to death and keep the mission rolling!

Sande Deutsch is the deputizing executive secretary for the American Legion Auxiliary Department of Minnesota. Her final day is July 17.
Answers:
Below are the answers to the pop quiz on Page 17:

- Oscar Iverson Post 133 ... Jasper
- Lind-Gordon-Berg Post 106 ... Proctor
- Ralph Gracie Post 14 ... Bemidji
- Edward B. Cutter Post 102 ... Anoka
- Walter Riley Post 307 ... Nashwauk
- Dale E. Wayrynen Post 23 ... McGregor
- Erwin March Post 64 ... Slayton
- Abner Rude Post 481 ... South St. Paul
- Edward Born Post 343 ... Norwood
- The Hellenic Post 129 ... Minneapolis
- Pratt-Volden-Mickelson...
- Anderson Post 239 ... Virginia
- Victor Hirsch Post 263 ... Wabasso
- Woodcock-Herbst Post 216 ... Princeton
- Richard Howard Ferrell Post 46 ... Little Falls
- Adamson-Norman Post 30 ... Fergus Falls
- Cobb-Williams-Nehiba Post 222 ... Hibbing
- William Robideau Post 66 ... International Falls
- Potz Heartland Post 500 ... Crosslake
- Henry M. Guttermson Post 40 ... Lanesboro
- Joseph A. Gates Post 78 ... Kenyon
- Hogberg-Gerszewski Post 353 ... Argyle
- Earl C. Hill Post 550 ... Bloomingtown

Are you the son of a veteran? Maybe you are a veteran and the son or grandson of one? Either way, join your local Sons of the American Legion.

Reverse Mortgages
The future doesn’t have to be uncertain.

The lower the Margin, the more you qualify for. Call for our low rates. Libor Margins as low as 2%. Call or email me 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.

You SERVED YOUR COUNTRY
AS A VETERAN, YOUR LIFE OF SERVICE HAS JUST BEGUN.

HELP YOUR COMMUNITY, YOUR COUNTRY AND YOUR FELLOW VETERANS — ALL WHILE HAVING A GOOD TIME MAKING DIFFERENCES WITH PEOPLE WHO GET YOU.

BE PART OF THE LEGACY. SHARE THE VISION.

At USAA, the same values that guide our military inspire us to go above and beyond for our members. When you join USAA, you’ll be part of an organization where we have everything you need to make your membership a lifelong bond.

JOIN USAA TODAY AND GET A QUOTE.
CALL 877-699-2654 OR VISIT USAA.COM/LEGION

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On Saturday, June 20, Buffalo Post 270 hosted a car show with live music from the Everett Smithson Band and also served up burgers, dogs and beverages outside in its huge parking lot.

"We had plenty of space for social distancing. There were nearly 100 classics and antique cars in attendance. Everyone had a wonderful time!" said Adjutant Connie Herzog.

At far left is Post Commander Bob Larson watching from a distance.

The next car shows are July 21, Aug. 18 and Sept. 15. A grand finale will be Oct. 3.

I SERVED FOR
Honor

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