



Annual reports to the Convention of The American Legion Department of Minn.

Commander

The National Membership Workshop was held virtually last July. Our leadership team missed out on traveling to our National Headquarters in Indianapolis and interacting with national leadership and other departments.

The leadership team improvised and got together for a weekend in St. Cloud the same time and place as the American Legion Baseball Division State Tournament. We met and watched a few games.

The membership director and five vice commanders and I held our own training, had an educational tour of the St. Cloud Stand Down and a driving tour of St. John's University, where Boys State is held.

We ended the weekend by handing out trophies at the baseball tournament. This was just one of the many memorable events that kicked off the year.

One of my goals this year was to be visible, display our logo and make the most of our opportunities for in-person events. We had some new, historic committees start this year.

The first is the Media & Communication

Committee. Chairman Teresa Ash and the rest of the members brought talent and enthusiastic energy to our organization. Their live-streaming and photos on social media brought instant awareness and interaction of our events and members to a mass audience.

A long overdue program, Minnesota American Legion Girls Fastpitch Softball is currently underway. SAL member Mike Arvidson volunteered to take the challenge of being the committee chairman. His experience and talents helped make the program a reality.

The Department of Minnesota American Legion consistently maintains our organization's motto, "Veterans Strengthening America," by our involvement with the Minnesota Commanders' Task Force. We witnessed the signing of the Veterans Restorative Justice Act last summer and, most recently, the historic Veterans Omnibus Bill by the governor.

These were legislative priority items brought to the table through the combined efforts of the congressionally chartered organizations that make up the CTF and the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs. We continue to be proud partners of the Minnesota Veterans Outdoors Program.

This group of dedicated volunteers make it possible for veterans with disabilities to participate in outdoor activities. My project was to raise \$10,000 for each of the five Veterans Homes' recreation funds, \$5,000 for a new dishwasher at Legionville and \$5,000 for a new utility trailer at Legionville.

We surpassed our goal for the projects thanks to all of you. The donations directly enhance the quality of life for our veterans and continued success of a treasured youth program.

I am grateful for every visit and opportunity to meet so many of our American Legion Family members this past year. Your smiles and hospitality my wife and I encountered will be remembered forever. Thank you all for what you do for "Veterans, Family, Community!"

Tom Fernlund
Commander

Adjutant

It's hard to believe it's that time of year we are, to write reports and prepare for our department convention. The department has

2022

had another busy year and anticipate another busy year for 2023. We rolled out the updated Minnesota Veterans Assistance Fund (MVAF), 1 November 2021, and to date we have helped 13 Veterans and paid out over \$52,000.

The MVAF, assisted with vehicle purchases, home window replacement, rent, utilities and vehicle repairs. The program is designed to have the local posts involved, validate the need, and assist with filling out the application. A lot of positive feedback on this program so far. The Minnesota American Legion Riders are planning a Fund 85 Run to raise donations for the Minnesota Veterans Assistance Fund to help sustain the fund. Their run is planned for 30 July 2022, at Post 37 ALR Chapter, St. Peter, are the organizers.

The department started The American Legion Department of Minnesota Family Suicide Prevention Coalition. We began in January 2022 and have had monthly informational and organizational meetings. The goal is to provide the tools to the posts and districts to assist veterans and their families to seek the help they might need. Currently we are focused on the St. Cloud and northeastern regions.

The Minnesota Department of Veteran Affairs commissioner has identified these two areas as areas of concern. Suicide in these two areas among Veterans is on the increase and the age of Veterans suiciding is 60-years plus. Veterans Affairs is launching a new crisis hotline number in July, 988-press 1 for Veterans, and will maintain the 800 number also, 1.800.273.8255, PRESS-1. If you would like to join the coalition, please reach out to me.

The legislative year had a couple of huge successes. The first-ever Veterans stand-alone omnibus bill passed hands down in the Senate and House of Representatives, with only one representative voting against our Veterans bill. The department put out the call for our Legionnaires to contact their senators and representatives to support the Veterans Omnibus Bill and you responded, close to 3,000 contacted their respective lawmakers to support our bill. The post-9/11 Veteran bonus pay was passed in that bill, and the application and rules can be found on the MDVA website.

We asked for an increase to the Veterans Service Organizations annual grant that has not seen an increase since 2009, and lawmakers passed the increase starting in FY 2023. We continued to ask for zero property tax for our posts and watch gambling legislation affecting charitable gambling. This legislation needs more involvement from our posts. If you want to change tax law, charitable gambling regulations, THE POST voice needs to be heard. The department can only go so far and we walk a fine line when it comes to legislation affecting the business side of the post. I am again proud of our involvement in the legislative process involving our Veteran issues.

Finally, the Department staff continues to assist our leadership and committees of The American Legion Department of Minnesota, to fulfill their missions. The challenges continue

with, declining membership, updated technology (MyLegion.org), declining revenue and participation in some of our programs down. But we will overcome with hard work and determination. My report is respectfully submitted,

Mike Maxa
Adjutant

Vice Cmdr. 1st & 3rd Districts

No report.

Vice Cmdr. 2nd & 7th Districts

No report.

Vice Cmdr. 4th and 5th Districts

This past year has been the most memorable for me since joining the American Legion. It has been a busy year, and I have enjoyed every minute of it. The year started out with Commander Tom Fernlund sending out a call-in for all five department vice commanders along with the membership director. We met in St. Cloud for an overnight stay. It was part social and part business to set the agenda for the coming year. We attended the Division I Legion baseball championship game and helped pass out awards afterward. It was a good way to start the year and get acquainted with the other vice commanders.

I was proud to serve as the Department Vice Commander for the 4th and 5th districts. They held many community events some of which were done together. I applaud both district commanders, Wade Larson and Dave Dahl, for their excellent leadership in promoting Commander Fernlund's theme of veterans, family and community. I appreciate all the support I received from the 4th and 5th districts.

One of the highlights of the year was our carefully planned joint Mid-Winter Conference in January. It was one of the best ever and very educational. There were many good speakers on hand. It was a hybrid event and carried on Zoom. The entire Legion family from the 4th and 5th Districts participated. It shows what sister districts can do when they plan together.

The weekly 4th and 5th District meetings I hosted on Zoom proved to be valuable in keeping the lines of communication open between the Districts. It was also useful for passing down information from Department.

Arcade-Phalen Post 577 in the 4th District

was a gracious host for National Commander Paul Dillard's visit in April. There were many in attendance who had a good meal and heard an inspiring speech by the commander.

In the 5th District there were a couple of community events held last fall, the corn and brat feed at Veterans Park in Richfield and the pig roast hosted by Richfield Post 435 also at Veterans Park. These were good events to show the American Legion's presence in the community. Likewise in the 4th District the Veterans Day Walk and the St. Paul Winter Carnival Parade in downtown St. Paul involved the community. Arcade-Phalen Post 577 had a "Booya" in October and the North St. Paul Post 39 had a corn feed last summer.

I represented Commander Fernlund at several events during the year. Giving a greeting to the disabled deer hunters at Camp Ripley was especially memorable. The American Legion partners with other veteran organizations in sponsoring many events for our disabled veterans.

Congratulations to Paul Hassing for his hard work as our membership director and reminding us that as a veteran "You're Worth It!"

Congratulations to Commander Tom Fernlund for his great year supporting our veterans, their families and our communities. It has been rewarding for me working with him and the rest of the department officers. Thanks for the memories!

Ray Eiden
Districts 4 & 5
Vice Commander

Vice Cmdr. 6th and 9th Districts

I want to congratulate Commander Tom Fernlund, Membership Director Paul Hassing and our entire Membership Team for their hard work and dedication to our fellow Veterans and the entire American Legion Family this past year. I especially enjoyed getting to know more of the 9th District members and watching the 6th District leading in first place.

We held a 6th and 9th MyLegion.org training session in October at the Park Rapids American Legion Post, which was well attended by 28-30 members. My special thank-you to Linda Dvorak for her assistance and participation and to the 6th District Vice Commander Leslie Kruff from Park Rapids for helping to set everything up. We also established Sister District Zoom meetings and I am hoping that the next Department Vice Commander from the 6th and 9th Districts will continue with these important communication opportunities.

I was very proud to have been able to represent our Department Commander at the SAL Spring Conference at the St. Augusta American Legion Post and at the 9th District Convention in East Grand Forks.

I am honored to have been able to have served our Department and the 6th and 9th Districts this past year. I am especially looking forward to seeing everyone at the Department Convention.
Respectfully Submitted,

Dr. Carl R. Moon
District 6 & 9
Vice Commander

Vice Cmdr. 8th & 10th Districts

No report.

Treasurer

As treasurer, I serve on the Department Finance Committee, Minnesota Legionnaire, and the Legionville Board Directors. It has been my pleasure to serve as your Department of Minnesota treasurer.

The treasurer is charged with the responsibility and administration of all department funds and related financial affairs with direct responsibility to the Department Executive Committee.

Some of the duties include the overseeing of accounting principles and financial processes of the Department Headquarters, assisting the department finance liaison, analyzing and prescribing financial reports and investing the assets of the department.

The following is an overview of the department's investments between June 1, 2021, and May 31, 2022.

The current allocation is 70 percent bond and 30 percent stocks. Bonds in the account are primarily high-grade corporate bonds and FIDC insured CDs. The bonds and CDs are laddered between one and five years.

The stocks are diversified between large, medium and small companies with a heavier weighting toward large companies. Interest paid to the department checking account June 1, 2021, and May 31, 2022, totaled \$47,053.54.

Again, thank you for allowing me to serve as your department treasurer, and I look forward to serving you in the future.

William B. Goede
Treasurer

Chaplain

The nation was coming out of COVID-19 masking, visiting restrictions allowing us to meet as a large congregation from July forward. One of the first tasks was equipping the district commanders with the American Legion Chaplains "How To" Manual, which has 65 pages of instruction and information and an index brimming of prayers, services examples and explanations.

One of the key pieces to all our success in carrying out the mission of The American Legion involves sharing the wealth of information available and keeping the lines of communication open. As this position and other Department level positions are one-year terms it is very important to establish some continuity.

I created the mnchp@gmail.com email, which will be passed onto the next chaplain.

In 2021 I was invited to officiate the 9-11 Remembrance Ceremony at Legionville. It was conducted with the Minnesota SAL Detachment Chaplain Stu Sonnee. We honored the deaths of all on 9/11 with rose petals and song.

Each month the printed Legionnaire (aside one month) affords the chaplain an opportunity to speak into the reader's heart, and I pray the words I shared have been a blessing. A majority of my time in and out of uniform is spent in prayer on behalf of all Legionnaires. Prayer request came through text, email, phone calls and in meeting spaces.

As we dedicate ourselves to God and Country for the benefit of all it means we have the honor of inviting God into our lives to benefit all; to be a balm when we are grieving and to enter into the halls of joy when there is celebrating to be done.

It has been quite the privilege to hear from so many across our department of their spiritual walk — with God, without God, with a god and without any gods. My year will conclude with officiating the annual Department Memorial Service with the other American Legion Family chaplains.

Thank you for sharing sacred space with me and know my prayers of celebration to lamenting will continue no matter what color my hat is as we are all equally loved by a loving God of mercy, justice and compassion.

Kelley Adelman
Chaplain

National Executive Committeeman

This has certainly been a busy year, as the COVID hopefully starts to wind down. It was an honor to install Tom Ferland as our department commander in July 2021. A sincere thank you to Mark Dvorak for serving two years, due to the COVID shutdown.

In August, our American Legion Family and Donna and I went onto Phoenix for a very hot national convention. Paul Dillard of Texas was elected there as our American Legion national commander.

In September, Donna and I attended the first Department of Minnesota American Legion Family Rally hosted by the SAL. Outstanding job as always by the SAL.

October led us to the Fall meetings in Indianapolis. Many Legionnaires in attendance there also. From there off to Kentucky for National Auxiliary President Kathy Daudistel's Homecoming. Everything was very interesting there.

We branched off before arriving at the homecoming, and toured the Ark Experience, a replica of Noah's Ark according to the Bible. Very worthwhile, we would suggest given the opportunity to do so, do it. We were limited on time, but plan the entire day if you go. We had a very good showing of Minnesota folks at her homecoming also.

Back to Minnesota for Fall Conference. At the conference, Jim Troiola of New York, the leading candidate for national commander 2022-2023, was our main speaker.

In early December, National Vice Commander Angel Narvaez of Puerto Rico visited our state. He also visited a few Legion posts, where he was warmly welcomed. You were welcomed even more warmly if you served him key lime pie, his favorite, and he made that known in advance.

Adjutant Mike Maxa arranged a virtual meeting with the Gov. Tim Walz and Commissioner of Veterans Affairs Larry Herke prior to the Pearl Harbor Rally.

Donna and I attended many mid-winters and heard concerns of many American Legion Family Members, which I shared at the recent Spring Meetings in Indianapolis. Dance-offs at the rallies were a new thing now during breaks and it was a blast seeing individuals you've worked with and are friends with for so many years, shaking a leg as well as other body parts.

Oratorical Contests were also held throughout the districts. Wow, what a job to have to judge those incredibly poised young youth. Megan Blonigen from the 7th District, won a \$1,500 scholarship from the Department of Minnesota for 1st place, as well as a \$700 scholarship from the 7th District. She went on the nationals in Indianapolis and reached the quarterfinals, where she took home a \$2,000 scholarship. Thank you, Megan, and everyone that participated. I am sure judging as I said would be a nightmare, those youth are all very talented. Please involve youth in your district to become involved next year.

National Commander Paul Dillard visited the southern half of our state in April. Many Legion posts and units invited him also with a warm Minnesota welcome, which was much needed in April. Thank you to those American Legion Family members in Minnesota, for the meals and coffee breaks.

Adjutant Mike Maxa, Commander Tom Ferland, Membership Director Paul and Communications Director Tim Engstrom escorted the commander and his aide, Walter Ivey. Good job of driving was done by Adjutant Maxa in those horrible spring winds.

In April, Donna and I attended the LIT Legionnaires Trust Insurance meeting in Scottsdale, Ariz. This was a very good year; Minnesota received a GOOD chunk of change from LIT. This is because of you all purchasing their products throughout the year.

Then off to Spring Meetings in Indianapolis along with many Legionnaires, and a few Auxiliary Members out there for educational classes. Good news from there was that *no dues*

increases. Bad news membership is unfortunately really down.

Are we all working hard enough along the membership lines? Are we doing Buddy Checks, going to the veterans home and asking them to renew or even calling them? A little assurance that they know they are missed goes a long way.

Now we are starting many district conventions. Congratulations to all newly elected officers.

I thank the department staff for all of your help this year. Adjutant Maxa does a fabulous job of keeping schedules straight and arranging travel itineraries.

Legionnaire newspaper is the best. Thank you, Tim Engstrom, for what you do., also.

Commander Fernlund, Membership Director Hassing, Alt NEC Peggy Moon, you all are doing a great job, and I so appreciate your listening ears.

We look forward to seeing many of you at our upcoming Department Convention in Willmar July 13-16.

It has been an honor and privilege to serve all of the Minnesota American Legion Family.

Bill Barbknecht
NECman

Judge Advocate

As with most years, advice was provided to all parts of the American Legion Family.

Actual research and a review of the law was necessary to assess a matter for the Baseball Committee.

At least two districts asked for and received reviews of their constitutions and its bylaws. Several hours were needed to track down a private attorney experienced in nonprofit corporation law and contracts.

As in previous years, a number of calls were received regarding how the Minnesota Non-profit Corporation Act impacts post operations and the sale of a building. I gave a presentation at American Legion College at Camp Ripley.

Unlike most years, a significant legal case came out of the Minnesota Attorney General's Office that involved a veterans organization. We need to continue to follow the law and to demand its enforcement.

Greg Colby
Judge Advocate

Americanism

I would like to thank Department Commander Tom Fernlund for allowing me to serve as the Americanism chairman for The American Legion Department of Minnesota and wish you a successful convention in Willmar.

I would also like to thank my Americanism Committee members Larry Pocrnich and Art Tobkin, for their able assistance during the past year. I would lastly like to thank the

Americanism Subcommittee chairpersons and their assistants for their dedication and hard work over the past year.

They are:

- Boys State: Kyle Oldre and Lee Tallakson
- Community Service: Thomas Clabo
- Education: Don Skow
- Junior Shooting Sports: Jared Sturgill
- Oratorical: Jamie Woods and Amanda

England

- Safety School Patrol: James Blakesley
- Scouting: Tom Hallett
- Youth Law Cadet Enforcement: Larry Ryan
- And the district Americanism chairpersons.

Please see the individual committee reports for further information concerning these Americanism subcommittees. The last meeting of the Americanism Committee was at the 2021 Fall Conference in Mahanomen. Attending the meeting were the Americanism Committee and the respective representatives from Boys Scouts, Community Service, Education, Oratorical, Safety-School Program and six district Americanism chairpersons.

The Scholarship Selection Committee met at the Forest Lake Post 225 in April 2022. There were three Minnesota Legionnaire Insurance Trust scholarships, six American Legion Memorial scholarships awarded and three Nurses Training scholarships awarded.

This Americanism information is then transmitted to the various Americanism Subcommittees and to the respective district Americanism chairpersons. Americanism is an unflinching love of country, loyalty to its institutions and ideals, eagerness to defend it against all enemies, individual allegiance to the U.S. flag, and a desire to secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity.

Our forefathers laid the foundation for a civilization that is the envy of the world. It has brought us greater spiritual and material wealth than any people has ever known. This is our heritage.

Tess Davis
Chairwoman

Boy Scouts

No report.

Boys State

No report.

Community Service

No report.

Education

The Scholarship Committee met on Saturday, April 30, at American Legion Post 225 in Forest Lake. Six \$500 American Legion Memorial Scholarships, three \$500 Minnesota

American Legion Foundation Scholarships, and five \$1,000 Minnesota American Legion Nurse's Training Scholarships were awarded.

The six Memorial Scholarships were awarded to Braydon Wendinger of Dawson, Darby Bersie of Big Lake, Bailey Jacobson of Parkers Prairie, Mason Epeneter of Dawson, Alexander Michuda of Corcoran, and Amber Findlay of Herman.

The three Minnesota American Legion Foundation Scholarships were awarded to Elenor Kayser of Wells, Logan Melvie of Crookston and Sloan Merschman of Bagley.

The five Minnesota American Legion Nurse's Training Scholarships were awarded to Kaitlyn Sanstead of Hoffman, Alicia Koehnen of Lino Lakes, Tanya Vanderpool of Hayfield, Angela DeSoto of Cambridge, and Jeremy Van Lanningham of Eagan.

We congratulate the scholarship recipients and wish them well in their continuing education.

I would like to thank the other members of the selection committee, Tess Davis, Larry Pocrnich and Paul Orson. I would also like to thank Department Commander Tom Fernlund for this appointment. It's always a pleasure serving the Department.

Don Skow
Chairman

Junior Shooting Sports

Here is a recap of the many events the Junior Shooters participated in during the 2021-2022 season.

In January, the CMP State Championship was held at the Anoka Legion Post 102. Twenty-three juniors from four different teams arrived for the competition.

At the end of January, The Minnesota Centershots traveled to Fort Wayne, Ind., for the US Army Junior Air Rifle National Championship. The Army Marksmanship Unit was present to assist at the match.

Also in January, the American Legion Postal match was held at each team's home range. The State Champion teams are: Minnesota Centershots for precision class, and The X-Men from Robbinsdale with the Sporter class team winners. The top 15 athletes in each class will receive an invite to the nationals later this summer. Two Junior shooters from Minnesota qualified to attend the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs for the final round of The American Legion match.

In February, the Junior Olympic qualifier match was held at the St. Thomas Academy rifle range in Mendota Heights. The Minnesota Centershots had five competitors qualify for BOTH air rifle and smallbore disciplines!

March brought another match to the Anoka Legion Post 102, the CMP JO State Championship. This match had 24 competitors made up of five different teams from Minnesota.

The Minnesota Centershots qualified for the Junior Air Rifle National Championship sponsored by the U.S. Army.

USA Shooting Junior Olympic Qualifier event saw seven Minnesota Juniors with scores that earned them an invitation to the National Junior Olympic Championship at Hillsdale College in Hillsdale, Mich.

The CMP Junior Olympic State match took place at the Anoka Legion. St. Thomas Academy and the MN Centershots auto-qualified for the 3PAR National Championship at Camp Perry.

For the second time in the past three years, the CMP hosted a smallbore rifle camp in Minnesota! This allowed juniors from Minnesota and nearby states to train with NCAA rifle athletes, their camp counselors, for a weeklong camp at the Minneapolis Rifle Range in St. Francis.

The CMP 3 Position Air Rifle Nationals was held at Camp Perry, Ohio. The Minnesota Centershots finished the two-day competition in second and third places.

This year for the American Legion National JSSP Championship, Post 102's Allison Bueseler qualified third to collect an invite to the national competition. Only the top 15 scores in the nation receive an invite. Allison finished eighth overall at the match.

The Summer Olympics had former Minnesota Centershots Jr. team member, Patrick Sunderman finishing 12th in men's 50 Meter 3 position rifle! After getting back to the states, Patrick stopped by the Anoka Legion Post for a night of fun with his former Jr team as well as juniors from other clubs in the Twin Cities area.

Minnesota Centershots' Julianna Hays earned a place on the National Futures team within USA Shooting. Making this accomplishment, gave her the opportunity to compete with other national team members as well as many international competitors at the Jr World Championship in Lima, Peru, this past September.

Jared Sturgill
Chairman

Oratorical Contest

The Oratorical Contest of 2022 was held on Feb. 26, 2022, at the Anoka American Legion.

For the second year in a row, it was decided to hold both the semifinals and the finals at one post.

Eden Valley's Megan Blonigen, a 10th-grader from the 7th District, was the department winner. Congratulations to the 7th District having the department winner two years in a row.

Arcade-Phalen's Devon Selmon, a 12th-grader from the 4th District, was the second-place winner. Kasson's Abigail Erpelding, a 10th-grader from the 1st District, was the third-place winner. Falldin's Jonathan "Trent" Vickers, an 11th-grader from the 5th District, was the fourth-place winner.

This year all of our judges came from organizations outside of the Legion Family, all

with different experiences that qualified them for the tough job at hand. We are grateful for the volunteerism to our program, but most importantly, thanks to our contestants.

Thank you to Amanda England (Oratorical Committee vice chair) for all her help with all aspects of the contest; also to the people who helped as timers, tabulator and escorts. A special thank you to Department Commander Tom Fernland and Department President Patti Coleman for their attendance. Thank you to the Anoka Post 102 Family for all your help.

Thank you, Jennifer Kelley and Department HQ staff, for all your help. Onward and upward for the Oratorical Contest next year.

Jamie Woods
Chairwoman

Safety-School Patrol

The Minnesota Twins are off to a good start this year. They are currently leading their division and playing a good game of baseball.

The Legionville Safety School Patrol Center is a valuable part of the Safety-School Patrol Program. It is the only facility ever developed for this purpose. Last year was a restart of the training program after the COVID shutdown. Let's hope we never have a problem like that again.

When I last checked there were still some openings available for this year's sessions. I am saddened to see Tom Sanford decide to not return as camp director this year. Tom spent many years at Legionville. He will be missed.

The latest preliminary data from the Department of Public Safety's State Fire Marshal division reports that 41 people died in fires in Minnesota last year. That is down from a final count of 53 the previous year. The leading cause of fire deaths in each of these years was careless smoking. The bulk of the deaths were in people 50 and over. A non-working smoke detector was found in about a third of the fires that resulted in death. We are at 15 deaths for this year, which is the same as last year as I write this report. The numbers will be confirmed later in 2022, after hospitals in the state report the last of their data to the Minnesota Department of Health.

Authorities are reminding Minnesotans to not leave their space heaters, candles or food cooking on the stovetop unattended. There are many little things we can do to prevent a devastating fire from happening in our homes. It is important to practice fire prevention and safety every day. Officials recommend that homeowners test their smoke and carbon monoxide alarms monthly, and also create a family escape plan in the event of an emergency.

Last year was the highest traffic death toll since 2007 when 510 died. Preliminary numbers show 488 people have been killed in traffic crashes in 2021, compared with 394 last year and 364 in 2019.

Of the 488 fatalities 24 people died in

distracted driving-related crashes, 162 people died in speed-related crashes, 124 people died in alcohol-related crashes, 109 people died who were unbelted, 58 were pedestrians, 9 were bicyclists, 67 were motorcyclist. Speed continues to be major cause of crashes on our roadways. The Minnesota State Patrol has been joined by other agencies concentrating on speed enforcement with saturation patrols. Reduced traffic during COVID is blamed for some of the disregard for posted speed limits. There were 24,862 reported arrests for impaired driving last year. Drinking and getting behind the wheel is also a bad idea. Use of drugs is also not to be done when operating a motor vehicle. There has been number of arrests made during the Christmas holiday season. Public safety organizations increase patrols during this period.

I encourage everyone to watch for pedestrians, bicyclists, motorcycles and yes - farm equipment.

I remind everyone too of the need for safety on the water and on recreational vehicles. We are known for our outdoors activities. I encourage everyone to think safety first. Nothing takes the joy out an activity as much as would an injury or death at an activity designed to be enjoyable.

Safety is not just for our youth. I encourage Posts to invite your district State Patrol Safety Officer to a meeting to present a program on this and other issues. Fire, police and other safety program professionals are available most times just for the asking. I encourage you to use them. Every community has its own safety concerns. I encourage Legionnaires to identify these areas of concern and implement programs of safety education. I am aware of many posts that are hosting safety programs and networking with other groups to provide safety training in many areas. Let's all think safety.

Jim Blakesley
Chairman

American Legion Riders

The past two months have been very busy with bike runs, district conventions and testimonials.

I would like to congratulate Redwood Falls, St. Augusta and Aitkin Legion posts for starting up new Legion Riders chapters. We are now at 86 chapters in the state. It's kind of unique that Aitkin Post 86 is the 86th chapter in the state.

Fund 85 run has been set for July 30 out of St Peter, so I look forward to seeing a lot of Riders and bikes that day as we raise money to help Minnesota veterans in need

The Minnesota Legacy Run route has been put together and is being fine-tuned. We are looking forward to many bikes and Riders for this run, also. Feel free to ride the whole run or the days you can or even if you can only ride a couple legs of one of the days. It is greatly appreciated.

For all the runs that have been done by chapters, and districts, I want to thank all of you for your hard work and dedication to your projects. This really shows the Legion Family the Riders' dedication to veterans and their families

In closing, we have three months of riding season left, and I look forward to seeing you all at one point or another. Keep the rubber down and chrome up. Ride safe.

Ted Berg
Director

Armed Forces Service Center

The Armed Forces Service Center (AFSC) at the Minneapolis/St. Paul International Airport (MSP) is open seven days a week. Current hours are 0800-2245 (8 a.m. to 10:45 p.m.). These hours will be extended when there are more trained volunteers to staff the center. The goal is 24 x 7 x 365 — as it was for nearly 50 years.

The AFSC is located inside security on Level 2 at the entrance to the A Concourse and is open for traveling active-duty military (including National Guard/Reserve traveling on orders), their dependents, former POWs, Purple Heart Recipients, and Medal of Honor Recipients. Retirees and their dependents are welcome on a space-available basis. Due to current COVID and DoD travel restrictions, they currently offer grab-and-go lobby seating for recruits, DoD civilians, and PHS personnel. An update will be posted as soon as the restrictions are lifted.

The AFSC is a one-of-a-kind facility, supported by a volunteer workforce and contributions (financial and in-kind product donations) received from various veterans' organizations, corporate and personal contributors. It is not affiliated with the USO, and does not receive funds from the US Government. It is a 501(C)(3) organization, so Post gambling funds may be used for donations. Individual donations are also encouraged. Donate now via GiveMN.org (<https://www.givemn.org/donate/Armed-Forces-Service-Center-1>).

Volunteers at the Armed Forces Service Center (AFSC) set their schedules via an online scheduling system. They are asked to work two four-hour shifts per month for a minimum of one year.

Volunteers must be at least 21 years old. A 10-year background check will be conducted on all volunteers prior to an airport badge being issued.

The AFSC relies on their volunteer workforce to provide a hospitable environment to maintain a top-rated Military Center. Duties include meeting and greeting guests, checking eligibility identification, limited food preparation, offering Center amenities, and light housekeeping tasks. Please sign up today to become a volunteer at the AFSC! The signup URL is <https://www.mnafsc.org/volunteer-ii/>.

David Dahl
Liaison

Baseball

Minnesota American Legion Baseball is going strong. We originally had over 400 teams registered to play baseball this summer, that number has since fallen to 383 because some registered teams failed to field enough players, then had to un-register.

Still, 383 is another new all-time high!

The state tournament hosts for 2022 are Burnsville for Division I, Luverne for Division II, Bloomington for Division I Juniors, and Ely for Division II Juniors. The second annual All-Star series for select Junior Legion baseball players from across the state will take place in Bloomington in August. You will see many scouts at that.

Our baseball committee is made up of the following members: Vice Director Jeff Miller oversees Division II and Vice Director Brandon Raymo is the administrative director. Jim Peck is the assistant to the director. Mike Perry is the director for DI Juniors. Scott McCready is the director for DII Juniors. Bruce Young is the chairman for the DI Senior State Tournament. Gail Kalata serves as an administrative assistant.

The following are the District Directors: District 1 is Scott McCready, District 2 is Vern Kitzberger, District 3 is Bruce Young, District 4 is Gail Kalata, District 5 is Kyle Nutting, District 6 is Wes Thompson, District 7 is Mike Gort, District 8 is Tom Coombe, District 9 is Mike Arvidson, and District 10 is Luther Dorr. Brady Sweitzer coordinates the Tier I level. Many others who are too numerous to be named run the Sub-State leagues and tournaments leading up to the State Tournaments.

The Baseball Committee has its two annual meetings, fall and spring. We have many other work items to deal with through Zoom meetings throughout the year or in person at our tournaments.

All coaches in the state must complete background checks, abuse training and certification, and concussion training. Brandon Raymo makes sure all coaches complete these requirements. We have well over a thousand coaches/managers who must meet this standard annually!

Tim Engstrom from the Department of Minnesota handles the media relations and many administrative tasks needed to be done at the state-level for baseball. Rachael Hill keeps track of expenditures and pays the bills.

We would like to welcome Scheels Inc. as our sponsor for four of the State Tournaments. We are delighted to have girls' softball join our Legion family in 2022.

God bless our Minnesota American Legion Veterans for making this program, and now girls' fastpitch softball, available to the youth of Minnesota!

Randy Schaub
Director

Blood

Thank you, Commander Tom Fernlund, for this appointment.

Hosting a blood drive is a partnership where everyone wins: Start a new tradition this year. A tradition that brings about togetherness and strength with your family, friends, and community.

This year has been challenging as the pandemic lingers on changing the way blood is collected. Thanks go out to everyone that persevered and moved forward positively.

Organizations gain goodwill from their community and build morale and camaraderie as their members work together for a good cause.

Blood donors feel good about giving back together with colleagues, friends or peers.

Patients in the community and across the nation receive the gift of life.

1st District: Leon J Wetzel Post 9 611 units, Waseca Post 228 327 units, Dyrdal-Prolow Post 249 117 units. 30 Posts reporting total of 1432 units

2nd District: Post 33 66 units, Post 286 40 units, Post 64 37 units. 13 posts reporting total of 232 units.

3rd District: Forest Lake Post 225 360 units, Montgomery Post 79 307 units, Chanhassen Post 580 256 Units. 26 Posts reporting total of 1975 units

4th District: North St Paul Post 39 334 units, St Paul Post 8 66 units, Rosetown Memorial Post 542 19 units 7 posts reporting total of 451 units.

5th District: Mpls Post 1 7 units, Viking Post 493 6 units, Gopher Post 440 5 units. 10 Posts reporting total of 21 units.

6th District: Kriesel-Jacobsen Post 560 360 units, Otto Hendrickson Post 212 200 units, Richard Ferrell Post 46 67 units. 18 Posts reporting total of 584 units.

7th District: Willmar Post 167 242 units, 199 units, Spicer Post 545 145 units, Minneota Post 199 132 units. 15 Posts reporting total of 746 units.

8th District: Virginia Post 239 14 units, Cloquet Post 262 10 units, Grand Marais Post 413 6 units 6 posts reporting total of 30 units.

9th District: Moorhead Post 21 121 units, Middle River Post 444 58 units Argyle Post 353 35. 8 Posts reporting total of 238 units

10th District: Milaca Post 178 266 units, Coon Rapids Post 334 195 units, Fridley Post 303 171 units, 15 Posts reporting total of 815 units

148 posts reported 6524 total units.

Commander we unfortunately are down 11 posts reporting and 1919 units of blood from last year's report.

Thank you to all the district chairmen for taking their time and energy to support this life saving program of the American Legion.

Terry Larson
Chairman

Bowling

No report.

Children and Youth

The Children and Youth pillar of the American Legion emphasizes protecting children and youth of veterans and military families. It has been a challenging time because of COVID. Our usual activities were interrupted and are slowly getting back to normal. COVID did a lot of damage to the reports with few parties resulting in negative reports.

Promote your activities to the community through the local media news. Each year the Children and Youth program focuses on three primary areas of concern. They include: child health, child safety and family support. Keep your community up to date on the activities you are involved in. Wear the Legion hat proudly at the activities you support with your time and dollars.

Karen Welander
Chairwoman

Convention Corporation

The Convention Corporation Committee consists of five members plus a treasurer. The names of the above can be found on the department's website under committees. Our main duty is to solicit and schedule future conventions and fall conferences.

The 2022 Fall Conference will be held in St. Cloud on Oct. 27-29 at the River's Edge Convention Center and Best Western Hotel. There could be meetings prior to this date if called by the respective chairperson. This will be hosted by the Department Convention Committee. It should be noted that we have worked out a deal with the convention center to host Fall Conference there for the next five years.

The Convention Committee has been involved in making arrangements for next year. We are currently working with the Redwood Falls Post and Jackpot Junction for 2023.

The committee is looking for a post or a district to host future department conventions. Please consider volunteering for one of these. The Convention Committee will meet and work with you on things to do and help plan and carryout the event. If anyone has any questions or suggestions, please contact me or anyone else on the committee.

Stay safe and we look forward to working with you.

Jim Mertens
Chairman

Employment

This year we had two Veteran Employers

of the Year, one medium and one small. The medium Employer of the Year is MACV, the Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans, and the small employer is Rock on Trucks. The awards will be presented at the Minnesota Department Convention of The American Legion.

Luis Campero
Chairman

A.L. Family Hospital Association

The American Legion Family Hospital Association received seven applications seeking financial assistance for their medical bills.

ALFHA Board members, having been given these seven applications, along with instructions to review them, and pass them on to negotiator Tim Weaver. The seven applications were sent to Rachael Hill at department for processing. ALFHA has received no other applications seeking financial assistance, for medical bills, as of June 2022. ALFHA is funded, from our American Legion Family membership, at 25 cents per member. ALFHA is always seeking donations from wherever they may come.

We will always need support. We are one of hardly any other Legion Family that has such an organization. Membership is the heartbeat that keeps us growing, and with each and everyone's support Minnesota's American Legion Family Hospital Association will continue to do well supporting them.

Robert Bristo
President

Fastpitch Softball

Minnesota American Legion Fastpitch Softball is up and going. We officially registered 27 teams for the inaugural season and had the first-ever game played on Memorial Day as Howard Lake traveled to Parkers Prairie.

Commander Tom Fernlund threw out the first pitch. Each district has tried to make their first game a big event getting color guard and Legion members involved with the first pitches.

I know 27 teams doesn't seem like much, but it's the most a department of The American Legion has had in the first year of offering softball to girls. The registered teams were divided into four geographical sub-states and the top two will advance to the state tournament in Mankato July 29 through 31. It will have a banquet on Friday and games to be played at Jaycee Park on Saturday and Sunday, highlighted by a flyover for the opening ceremonies.

Our softball committee is small and really needs more people with a passion for softball and connection to the legion to help grow this program in the future. It currently consists of Vice Director Luann McMahon, Hal Meyer, and Vicki Petry.

We have had a handful of zoom meetings in the past nine months and plenty of phone

conversations as there is a lot of work to do when starting a new program. Just like baseball, all coaches in the state must complete background checks, abuse training and certification, and concussion training.

Tim Engstrom and Rachael Hill from the Department of Minnesota thankfully added more to their workload by doing what they do for baseball and now expanding for the same roles for softball.

We would like to thank all those who have donated to help get this started. It started with a vision but would not be where we are without the financial support to make it happen.

God bless our Minnesota American Legion Veterans for making this program available to the girls of Minnesota and thank you for your service.

Michael Arvidson
Director

Finance

As I started my year as Finance Committee chair, with only a year under my belt of being on the Finance Committee, I discovered many things that I was not familiar with in running the course of normal operations. With the guidance from fellow committee members as well as Rachael Hill, Mike Maxa and Bill Goede, we got through the year and managed to make it a somewhat profitable one at that.

At the end of every fiscal year, requests are sent out to all chairman of our committees and programs to submit a budget for the coming year.

Unfortunately, not all requests are returned, and that makes our task to submit a *balanced* budget quite difficult. I am asking all the chairs to please make a concerted effort to provide a realistic budget for this coming year and to get it submitted to our finance liaison, Rachael Hill, by the requested date (usually early September).

Because of some lack of budget submissions, the committee has to evaluate requests for money here at convention, and that not only take up valuable time missed on the floor, but if we don't have the funds to support it — what are we to do?

I do realize that some budget requests were reduced last year by our committee, and that put some of the committees below what they would actually spend with legitimate expenses. I and my fellow committee members will make sure that those requests get an honest review in the year ahead.

If your budget request exceeds a certain percentage increase (percentage unknown at this time), that can't be justified, you may expect a call from one of the committee members for an explanation.

Currently we are within budget, with just a couple of committees going slightly over, but again — mostly due to us cutting their original budget requests not due to any overspending. One thing I am passionate about is that when we ask our members to step up and chair these

committees, the least we can do is to make sure that they have the finances to support the jobs we are asking them to do. We all have to live within a budget in our normal lives, we should do no less with the department's money as well.

We reviewed our investment accounts in February 2022 with our financial advisor and our investments are currently at:

Fixed Income Investments:

\$1,958,823.87

(Est. annual income: \$51,000)

(Transfer of Funds in February of \$200,000 to Fidelity Multi-Income Acct.)

Stock Account:

\$1,401,696.49

(Est. Annual Income: \$21,489)

(Left this account as is to ride out the wave of ups and downs in the market)

As always, the books of the Department of Minnesota are open to any member for review; we just ask that you make an appointment as our staff is not always in the office. I want to thank my fellow Finance Committee members, treasurer and finance liaison for their dedication this past year: Carl Moon, Carl Hendrickson, Richard Wog, Richard Oelschlager, William Goede and Rachael Hill.

Respectfully Submitted,

**Mary Jo York
Chairwoman**

Law and Order

Thank you to Commander Tom Fernlund for asking me to be chairman for the Law and Order Committee and to my committee members Susan Edwards and Jeff Brokaw for assisting in the selection of the best of the best.

Legionnaires have always fostered a strong sense of honor and held law enforcement and fire agencies in the highest regard. It is our hope that these American Legion Award Programs will further encourage recognition of "America's Finest" at the post, district and department levels.

Submitted by Forest Lake Post 225, Megan Olstad was selected as the Law Enforcement Officer of the Year. With 15 years of service, Megan's recommendations included words like "above and beyond," "excellence in service" and "gives 100 percent" whether in her work in investigations, Student Resource Officer, Patrol, Community Policing or standardizing School Safety Procedures.

Megan's professionalism went into action, as she and the SRO team responded quickly to a report in March of a student possessing a gun at school, taking the student into custody and bringing the event to a peaceful resolution.

Submitted by Eagan Post 593, Paul Burgett is the definition of "hero" as our selection of Firefighter of the Year. Paul has not only served the community in his everyday duties but has been a life saver on more than one occasion,

exceeding the expectations of his profession.

Highlighted on Nov. 13, 2021, Paul responded to an icy car crash, was hit by a vehicle as he moved two people to safety and despite his injuries, Paul assisted with dragging another victim to safety. As Paul continues his recovery to return to service, we salute this 17-year firefighter, Marine Veteran, and American Legion Post 1 Member.

To read more about these two honorees, we strongly recommend that you refer to the articles in the June 2022 Legionnaire by our six-national-award-winning editor, Tim Engstrom. Thanks and congratulations, Tim!

**Patrick Logan
Chairman**

Legionnaire Insurance Trust

It was a great year for the Minnesota American Legion. It was a bonus year; therefore, Minnesota received nearly \$94,000 for products the Minnesota American Legion Family purchases, such as: long-term care, health insurance, emergency care travel insurance, life lock and others.

Legionnaire Insurance Trust hopes to roll out an eyewear program as well as a hearing aid program at a very reasonable price.

Please take a look at the products that LIT offer. Please also sign up for the free Accidental Death Insurance benefit. Once you sign up you are good for life unless you move or change your name.

I would like to thank personally, our LIT Committee members, Eric Wilkens of Detroit Lakes 9th District, and James Olson of Mankato, 2nd District, for always promoting the program. Also, a big thank you to Jennifer, Misty Racheal, Mike and Tim for placing the ads in the Minnesota Legionnaire.

LIT website is www.lit.com or call 800-235-6943.

**Bill Barbknecht
Chairman**

Legionville

I want to thank Department Commander Tom Fernlund for the appointment as Legionville Education Center chairman. Legionville is located on County Road 25 six miles north Brainerd.

I represented the Department of Minnesota and the 3rd District at Nicollett on Jan. 22 for the 3rd District Mid-Winter, which was very well-attended.

I was at Legionville for the Work and Play event on May 19-20.

Thank you, to Rick Cross and the Legionnaires of the 6th District who came to help. I was a delegate at the 3rd District Convention at Forest Lake Post 225 on May 20-and 21.

I represented Post 54, the Department of Minnesota and Legionville, and the 3rd District, the

3rd District Convention was also well-attended.

Throughout the year we have been busy at Legionville. On Saturday, Oct. 21, was the annual meeting of the Legionville Board of Directors.

The RIM Funds Reinvest in Minnesota is set to receive a check in the amount of \$147,000 this is due by the end of May 2022.

I attended Legionville Work and Play May 19-20 at Legionville. I want to Thank the Legionnaires of the 6th District for their time, efforts, and energies.

These people are getting older and can't do the required work. I sent a memo to the Board of Directors for Legionville.

So, one way we can accomplish the Work and Play is utilizing the Sentence to Serve individuals the labor cost nothing. I have heard from a couple of Board Members who are in favor.

The Sons, of the American Legion (SAL) will be having their Spring Convention at East Grand Forks.

The SAL has told me that the Camporee they feel the Legionnaires are not taking this seriously. I would like to prove that we are very much interested in continuing the Camporee.

So, can we get more people to attend? If not, we won't have Camporee next year. That would mean a loss of significant income for Legionville.

At the Spring Meeting the Legionville Board of Directors voted to and approved to have the donor wall on the East wall of the training center, when you walk into the training center you will be facing the wall. The Board of Directors believes' you will face the wall with the various donors.

So, this will take a while to complete but when this is finished it will look very nice. Legionville is has also purchased a new commercial dishwasher for the kitchen. We will have this dishwasher sometime in the next 5-6 weeks.

Legionville has purchased a new trailer, which will be available during the camping season.

This trailer is for Legionville's use only. Legionville will also be getting a new side-by-side trailer which is being built. I am looking forward as a delegate to the Department Convention which will be at Willmar July 14-16 and representing Legionville. Legionville has a total of 345 Students registered for the year.

**Eugene J. Leifeld
Chairman & President**

Legislative

Veteran service organizations at the State Capitol were pleased to see lawmakers pass a \$152.5 million veterans omnibus bill in May.

The measure includes bonuses for post-9/11 veterans, funding to furnish three new Minnesota veterans homes and an increase in the grant program for veteran service organizations.

On Thursday, May 5, the Minnesota Senate approved SF4233 on a 64-0 vote, and on Friday,

May 6, the Minnesota House of Representatives suspended the rules to skip committees and readings and took an immediate vote: 122-1.

Gov. Tim Walz signed the bill on Tuesday, May 10. There was no waiting until the May 23 adjournment deadline for veterans.

Veteran-related legislation, in the past, would be tacked on to other bills. Legislators would see veterans' requests as a means to get their measures passed. However, the typical result was veteran-related legislation would die in silence.

On Monday, May 2, the Minnesota American Legion worked with the DAV of Minnesota to raise awareness of the omnibus bill. The DAV set up a Voter Voice webpage to make it easy to contact lawmakers, and the Minnesota American Legion had the ability to email about 37,000 veterans with Constant Contact and tell them about the webpage. It worked.

Trent Dilks, legislative director for the DAV of Minnesota, said nearly 3,000 messages were sent to lawmakers in Minnesota.

The bill was sponsored in the House by Rep. Rob Ecklund of International Falls and in the Senate by Sen. Andrew Lang of Olivia. Both are Legion members.

In the bill, the Legislature approved \$24.9 million to give bonuses to Minnesota residents who are post-9/11 veterans, but there's a kicker — they have to have entered the military from Minnesota.

That leaves out residents who moved to Minnesota after or during military service.

Minnesota Veterans Affairs Commissioner Larry Herke said he asked lawmakers for \$40 million so that the bonuses would include Minnesota residents who joined the military from other states.

When the staff of the American Legion Department of Minnesota testified on this bill, it was before the \$15.1 million cut.

We will push for the bonuses to go to move-in veterans next year.

The bonuses are \$1,200 to veterans with a campaign badge, \$600 to veterans who served at the time, and \$2,000 to Gold Star surviving beneficiaries as listed in state statutes. Apply at mn.gov/mdva.

The bill allocates \$10.33 million in the coming state fiscal year for the three new veterans homes, and it sets aside another \$16.54 million for the following fiscal year.

The grants had an annual allocation of \$353,000, which was divided among congressionally chartered veteran service organizations based on claims and members, and the funds went to activities that supported veterans, such as a service officer or a van for transporting veterans to the VA, not for youth or community efforts. The program got another \$147,000, bringing the annual allocation to \$500,000.

Also, the VSO grant program now is in statute.

The bill also:

- Amends the county veteran service officer program to authorize the commissioner to use unspent funds to provide additional grants for

counties that fund new and innovation ways to serve veterans and their families. The grants presently go toward training and education. The Legislature allocated an ongoing \$450,000 increase to the program.

- Appropriated \$2.8 million in new funding to expand the MDVA's efforts to prevent and end veteran homelessness. The bill says \$1.71 million of that \$2.8 million is for temporary alternative housing options and for outreach, and the remaining \$1.1 million goes to incentives for landlords and for removing barriers to permanent housing. It sets the base for each year after this fiscal year at \$950,000.

- Granted \$5.4 million to the Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans in its efforts to help veterans and their families facing homelessness. The grant helps MACV with the establishment and management of permanent supportive housing options for homeless veterans.

- Appropriated \$500,000 for the construction of a new Fisher House near the Fargo VA Medical Center.

- Increased funding for state cemeteries by \$830,000, as the MDVA now has the new Redwood Falls Veterans Cemetery in its budget to operate. Its other cemeteries are in Little Falls, Preston and Duluth.

- Granted \$774,000 to Veterans Campground on Big Marine Lake for updating wastewater infrastructure.

The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs had requested \$59 million in the bonding bill to build a new campus at the Hastings Veterans Home. If the agency received the funds, it becomes eligible to receive another \$111 million from the federal VA. But the bonding bill failed to pass.

The MDVA also requested \$10 million in asset preservation. This is the typical maintenance the agency does for its 64 buildings.

Bob Hart
Chairman

Media and Communications

The Media and Communications Committee was stood up in the year 2021 at the Department Convention for The American Legion Department of Minnesota. The committee was started with four people, three of whom were new to The American Legion. We would like to thank Commander Tom Fernlund for his encouragement and support.

The focus of the MC committee was to engage all members young and old in all forms of media as well as use media as a form of membership.

We have been able to provide a live stream for all department events as well as support each of the districts. We have supported all 10 Districts in the state to encourage an online presence along with live streaming their district events.

The social media's presence has increased

dramatically over the year. Just in the last 90 days, the 1st District presence has increased by 204 percent. The 2nd District has increased 456.6 percent. The 3rd District has increased 429.1 percent. The 4th District has increased 56.5 percent. The 5th District has increased 39.5 percent. The 6th District has increased 70.4 percent. The 7th District has increased 90.2 percent. The 8th District has increased 49.6 percent. The 9th District has increased 48.4 percent. The 10th District has increased 154.6 percent.

With the presence on social media, we are reaching all ages from 18 to over 65. The demographic for gender is pretty evenly split.

We are on Facebook, TikTok, Snapchat, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube. We are looking at other forms.

We encourage all our members to engage with the social media such as liking a post and sharing it with others and commenting. When you share a form of social media you are inviting others to join and be a part of the great organization that you are a part of.

We have had new members join due to the social media.

Thank you all for your ongoing support for the Media and Communications Committee.

Teresa Ash
Chairwoman

Membership

I would like to start by saying thank you to Commander Tom Fernlund for giving me the opportunity to be your membership director this year. It has been a great year but also tough at times.

We still have some kinks to work out, but I think we are heading in the right direction. I really thought this year would be the year that we surpass our goal. I was still thinking we would get there up until the March-April timeframe, when we hit the wall that we seem to hit every year.

Whatever the reasons are for not making goal fall on me. If blame must be put on someone, blame me. We have a great membership team, and they worked extremely hard this year. I couldn't ask for better. The amount of time, effort and energy the department vice commanders, district commanders, district and post membership directors put into helping our organization is truly remarkable. Thank everyone of you for your dedication to the American Legion Family.

Some of the things we did this year may not reflect in this year's numbers, but I believe will help in the future. We were able to get into more Reserve and National Guard venues, and with the help of the Media and Communications Team, we were able to get our message out there to more Veterans than ever before. They may not be joining right away, but they are starting to ask the right questions. They are interested, and they are watching. Keep doing great things, and they will join.

Please continue the greatness, and let the world know what we are doing. We do such amazing work, and all veterans and their families need to know how much the American Legion is responsible for the many benefits we have.

I really had a great time this year. The National Commander's Tour was incredible. A whole week of picking the brain of a national commander and getting out to see the different posts was very eye opening, to say the least. Meeting the many volunteers throughout the state, and the great hospitality of our Legion Family was also very inspiring. It made me proud to be a part of this great organization.

I would like to thank the department staff for putting up with me this year and answering the multitude of questions I had. We also have a great bunch of leaders in this state that are very willing to give up their time and share their wealth of knowledge. I am very thankful. A huge thanks needs to go to my wife, Jody, for everything she has done to help me out this year as well.

Please keep doing all the great things you do and remember to have some fun along the way. I hope to see all of you soon. God bless all of you.

Paul Hassing
Membership Director

National Security/ Foreign Relations

Your National Security/Foreign Relations Committee had a great year. A big thank you to all who helped make it happen.

Our year began with our organizational meeting at Camp Ripley. Your committee along with your 10 District Commanders, their district NSFR chairpersons, Commander Tom Fernlund and Communications Director Tim Engstrom met for the weekend.

Always the highlight of the meeting is our tour of Camp Ripley and their state-of-the-art training facilities. The training our troops receive there has helped save many of their lives. Each year we learn of new training and are able to see some of it in action. Your tax dollars are well taken care of.

Every other year during our annual visit at Camp Ripley, there is an open house for the families of the Guardsmen and women. We were fortunate to join with our department in the purchase of a new canopy to use at these and other events throughout the year and coming years.

Adjutant Mike Maxa and others helped design the shelter and it looks very nice. Those attending our meeting assisted with manning our booth. The children were entertained with games while the parents were told about the American Legion and its programs. We learned of some of their concerns and hope to help them resolve some of their issues. Because that is what we do.

Fall Conference was our next big activity. Last year with COVID cancelling Fall Conference it was great to be back together again. Thanks to the hard work of many we had a full slate of awardees for enlisted Guard and Reservist of the year. With the still limited access we had to our armories and the hard work of many we were able to honor all branches of the military, both Guard and Reservist. It is always interesting to hear their stories and learn more about them and what they do in today's modern military. Those who were not able to attend were presented their awards at their local weekend drills.

We also present scholarships to Junior and College ROTC Units each year. This is done by department and district NSFR Committee members. I wish you could all attend one of these presentations. It would reaffirm your faith in the youth of today. There is a bright future out there that we never hear enough about.

I hope to see many of you at Fall Conference this year and am looking forward to another productive year. Always remember to thank our Guardsmen and Reservist and their families for what they do and help them in any way you are able.

Jim Kellogg
Chairman

Pheasant Feed

Thanks for the donations from the Legion Family posts and Auxiliary units, Sons of The American Legion and American Legion Riders and any private donations. I cannot forget the DAV Chapter 32 and the VFW posts.

This was another challenging year. The effects of COVID still affect us with the dinners being shut down for most of us as family. It also affected how many pheasants we were able to get. We're also running into finding enough pheasants for our great program with limited farms and processing plants.

We needed 650 birds and only able to get 600, so had to do some subbing for meals. We also ran into getting them to the homes in time for their dinners. I apologize for this, but the supplier wasn't able to get them butchered as the plant was just getting back up and running after the pandemic shutdowns.

Now the good news. We had another veterans home come back on board. A big thank you to St. Cloud for rejoining us. I have talked to the vendor, and they have set aside birds for us. I'm not sure of price yet. It's probably going to be around 25 a bird maybe more. This could change with supply and demand.

Thanks for the appointment of this committee, Commander Tom Fernlund, and I appreciate everyone's help.

Glenn Mueller
Chairman

Rehabilitation

The Minnesota American Legion Department Rehabilitation Committee is a five-member committee comprised of organizational members with a background, knowledge, or professional experience related to the delivery of VA benefits, programs, and services. Committee members are appointed by the department commander to a five-year term.

The committee consists of Wilson Spence, Dan Tengwall, Jim Findley, Lynn Lyons, and Mike Rosecrans. We work very closely with Jeremy Wolfsteller, our department service officer, and Sarah Sturmer, our VA&R benefits coordinator.

District Rehabilitation Committee chairmen and the post service officers are integral members of our committee. Together, we make up Minnesota Rehabilitation. Each segment of the Minnesota Rehabilitation has an important roll in providing services to each Minnesota Veteran, and protecting the well-earned benefits provided by the United States and Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs.

Rehabilitation is one of the four pillars on which the American Legion was founded. Because of the role we play in Minnesota, it is very important to keep the Minnesota Rehabilitation Committee very strong and functioning. Due to COVID restrictions, our site visits with VA Medical Centers, VISN Office, VA Regional Office, MN DVA Veterans Homes, MN DVA Commissioners, VA Cemetery, and MACV Leadership were conducted virtually. We advocate to the United States Congress and the Minnesota Legislatures for the facilities contacted; and provide the Legion Family with information gleaned from our facility visits. All meeting minutes may be found on the department website under Rehabilitation

The Minnesota Rehabilitation Committee members take pride in the American Legion Rehabilitation and are honored to serve the veterans of Minnesota.

Wilson W. Spence III
Chairman

Resolutions Assignment

The Resolutions Assignment Committee is composed of three members: Committee Chairman Al Davis, Cliff Newman of Anoka and Jim Munson of Richfield.

Responsibilities of the committee include the review of all resolutions submitted to the Department Convention for consideration. After reviewing all resolutions, the committee assigns them to a convention committee for action of approval, rejection or amend and approved.

During the convention each committee reports on its actions to the delegates, who have the final authority on all resolutions.

The Resolutions Assignment Committee monitors all reports and prepares a final

report on the actions taken by delegates to the convention.

Thank you, Commander Fernlund, for appointing us to this committee. Also, thank you to the department staff that assists us greatly in getting all the resolutions properly completed prior to the presentation to the delegates at convention, and preparing a final report.

Al Davis
Chairman

Sons of The American Legion

No report.

Strategic Planning

What a year! It seems like we just started and then next thing you know it we are moving to Department Convention and the start of a new year.

First, I would like to give a huge thanks to everyone on the committee: Carla Tappainer, Roxanne Zoet, Mike Costello and Sylvan "Sy" Fix. Each of you have been a been a great team and I have enjoyed working with each of you and look forward to partnering with you in the future.

Department Commander Tom Fernlund, Past National Commander Dan Ludwig and Past Department Commander Mike Dvorak, "Thank you," for always keeping us on task and providing that constructive feedback when we needed the guidance.

Due to the geographical separation of the committee members, we conducted most of our meetings via Zoom, and maintained daily and weekly communication through email and Facebook messenger. We utilized all of the resources to connect, share ideas and voice opinions on where the committee was going. The one thing we all agreed on is we wanted to complete one task this year and even if it was small, we wanted to be able to provide

some data and feedback to the department on the way forward.

The Strategic Planning Committee this year built a survey to target our younger veterans and find out the "Why Not?" Being able to have a building block on what our younger veterans are looking for is a key in helping districts and post approach younger individuals for membership. We collaborated with the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs, Director of Education and Higher Education Veterans Program Supervisor to share our survey on campuses around the state. We also coordinated with our CVSO, to ask them to share our survey with veterans they came in contact with. We know it is just a baby steps, but it's a start to see if there are any similarities in why veterans are not joining.

Thank you to the Media and Communications Team, for sharing the survey on all of the Facebook pages and helping us target those who are on social media. Working as a team is going to help the success of our goals and we "thank you."

So, please, everyone continue to share the survey. Let's get some more feedback and work toward bringing in our younger veterans, strengthening our amazing organization and the future for our children, our community and our country.

Commander Tom Fernlund, thank you for the opportunity to chair this committee, my dedication and commitment is for our veterans to serve each and everyone one of you.

Pam Krill
Chairwoman

Training Committee

The Training Committee has been going great guns this year. We visited all the districts (some several times over) to train the members in all facets of The American Legion.

Most of the interactions we had via phone and email concerned the use of MyLegion.org and working with the two leading experts

in Minnesota (if not the country!), Jennifer Havlick and Linda Dvorak.

But we were not one-trick ponies by a long shot. We visited Park Rapids, Granite Falls, Redwood Falls, North Branch and other posts to teach a number of subjects requested by the district and surrounding posts. We also held a Basic Training course (along the lines of the course that is offered by the national organization online and required to attend American Legion College (national or Minnesota).

We held our third Minnesota American Legion class in April, and that was a stellar success (much like the first two — no brag, just fact!). The members who attended were fully engaged, kept the instructors on their toes and had nothing but praise for the program after completion.

We've also been planning for the future. We're not only looking at the next Minnesota American Legion College class for next April, but will be holding an additional class in (tentatively in October 2023) for anyone who would like to attend but can't make the April date. We are going to open up the class to Sons of The American Legion as well as Auxiliary (we had our first Auxiliary member attend this year).

Although the classes are Legion-centric, we do teach some valuable courses that would help any Legion Family member.

We have articles in every Legionnaire and continue to work on putting together short subject videos that will be able to be viewed online at your leisure. Further, plans have begun to form a White Cap training program, available to those members who may have aspirations to become a department officer — to include commander, vice commander and membership director. We are working hard to ensure the Department of Minnesota has a successful future with the best prepared individuals leading the organization.

As always, we are always opened for suggestions, comments and ideas to keep our committee the best of the best.

Mike Ash
Chairman

The logo for the American Legion, featuring a stylized American flag on the left and the words "AMERICAN LEGION" in a bold, sans-serif font to the right.

**AMERICAN
LEGION**

