



Rep. Collin Peterson of the 2nd District, on March 10, talks with Denise Milton and Bill Barbknect in his office in Washington, D.C. Note the hand sanitizer on the desk.

Legionnaires storm Capitol Hill

Washington Conf. covers an array of veteran issues

By Tim Engstrom

WASHINGTON — From recognizing a Minnesota doctor as The American Legion Physician of the Year to lobbying members of Congress to act on burn pits and other veterans matters, from attending a reception commemorating the 60th anniversary of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty to hearing from

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Rob Wilkie, the Washington Conference on March 8-11 was packed with action.

Minneapolis VA Medical Center general psychiatrist Megan Press was honored for being the 2020 Physician of the Year. She stood on stage with Wilkie in front of hundreds of Legionnaires at the Washington Hilton.

It is the third year that The American Legion has given the Physician of the Year award, and it the second time a doctor from Minnesota has won it.

"It has been an honor and a privilege working with veterans," Press said.

She has worked at the VA Health Care System for 15 years. Press went to medical school at the University of Arizona in Tucson and did her residency at the University of Minnesota. She was hired by the VA right after.

Wilkie sang the praises of American Legion Executive Director Louis Celli, who was nearing the end of his time with the country's largest veterans organization. After 13 years with the Legion (two as executive director, others in legislation and rehabilitation), Celli in March began as business strategy executive with Maryland-based

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Pandemic changes everything

Cancelled, postponed events dot the Minnesota military landscape

By Tim Engstrom

BLOOMINGTON — The world didn't change in an instant, like it did in so many moments of modern American history, such as JFK's assassination, the fall of the Berlin Wall or the 9/11 attacks ...

... No, the COVID-19 pandemic was altogether different. The virus, yes, may have spread faster from overseas than generally anticipated, but the news was not all-of-a-sudden-at-once. For a big deal in a 24/7 electronic world, this information crawled into American life until it was the only news and everyone was working from home and stocking up on soup and toilet paper.

Each week, each day, coronavirus messages seemed to ramp up, and people couldn't help but ask: "Is this really happening?"

Yes. It is.

The world will change, just as it had after the moments the news stopped Americans in our tracks and united everyone. We

In the know

Get the latest information. Go to the Department of Minnesota's website, mnlegion.org, and click on "COVID-19 Updates."

too often forget we are all on the same side.

Readers can and should pay close attention to local and national news reports, as well as visit the Minnesota Department of Health website, the Centers for Disease Control website and the online map produced by Johns Hopkins University.

In this story, we will share what's happening — or more appropriately, not happening — in the Minnesota military community in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Bars and restaurants close

Gov. Tim Walz has ordered — not requested — all bars

Continued on Page 14



A sign at the VA Medical Center in Minneapolis warns patients and visitors, on March 13, that they will be screened for symptoms. Within a week, the VA adopted a no-visitors policy that allowed only a few exceptions, such as helping a patient.

Learn about Enhanced Buddy Checks

By Jennifer Gedney Havlick

TWO HARBORS — Heard of Enhanced Buddy Checks?

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic American Legion National Commander Bill Oxford placed a strong emphasis on our Buddy Check program.

As I watched the pandemic begin to unfold, I thought we can do more than an average Buddy Check. I opened a note on my Facebook page and began writing what turned out to be titled Enhanced Buddy Checks.

Instead of calling and chatting, an Enhanced Buddy Check

is making sure we can do anything for aging veterans, and if we cannot help, we make sure to find someone who can.

Make sure they have the support system for everything to stay safe under the pandemic restrictions, even things such

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DEC meets mostly by conference

By Tim Engstrom

ST. PAUL — The Department Executive Committee met by remote communications on Saturday, March 21, during a time when America and the world were struggling with the COVID-19 pandemic.

The most newsworthy aspect? Pulling the meeting off in the first place.

The meeting had been planned for the Best Western Plus hotel in La Crescent as part of the Appreciation Rally. That was cancelled amid concerns of spreading the virus.

Instead, less than 10 people met in the Press Room of the Veterans Service Building in St. Paul — specifically eight people — and the rest called in through the room's conference system.

There was no rally, to be sure. But the DEC dug deep into its bylaws and conducted its business.

Commander Mark Dvorak

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Jordan student is Oratorical winner

ANOKA — A senior at Jordan High School is the champion of the Minnesota American Legion Oratorical Contest.

Jamie Jablonsky, 18, earns a \$1,500 scholarship and was to move on to compete at the national level April 17-19 in Indianapolis before the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions on gathering prompted the cancellation of it.

Finalists from seven districts across Minnesota qualified to compete at the finals on Feb. 29, held at Anoka Post 102. Jablonsky was sponsored by Jordan Post 3 and was the winner of the Legion's 3rd District.

The Oratorical Contest requires contestants to be able to deliver memorized speeches in front of a crowd. The topics are related to the U.S. Constitution. Some are eight to 10 minutes; others are three to five minutes.

Winners receive scholarships.

This was her third year competing in the Oratorical Contest. The biggest hurdle, Jablonsky said, was her own nerves. She overcame the nerves through lots of practice.

"I know my speech back to front, but when you are up there in front of everybody it can be a little nerve-wracking," Jamie said.

She said she probably will go into marketing at Minnesota State University, Mankato.

She participated in The American Legion Auxiliary's Girls State program last year, which teaches leadership and citizenship, and has been active through high school in speech, Student Council and, through Normandale Community College, post-secondary enrollment option.

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The winners of the 2020 American Legion Minnesota Oratorical Contest are Jamie Jablonsky of Jordan, Jasmine Siliznoff of Deerwood, James Hanley of St. Paul and Alexis Heins of Eyota.



This is an architectural rendering of the exterior of the proposed veterans home in Preston.

VA grant program says no to funding new veterans homes

ST. PAUL — Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs Commissioner Larry Herke said he was disappointed his agency's request for funding three new veterans homes didn't make the federal Department of Veterans Affairs budget.

The projects had all the requirements, he said. They made the deadline. They had the land, state funding and construction arrangements.

"I felt at least one would get picked," Herke said.

The three homes — Bemidji, Montevideo, Preston — ranked 50, 51 and 52 respectively in priority by the VA in its State Home Construction Grants, which was outside of what ended up being approved. However, Herke said this means the Minnesota homes



Larry Herke

tick up 11 notches to the ranks of 39, 40 and 41.

The three projects have a total price tag of \$79 million. The grant requires a 65-35 match, with state and local sources, including private donations, handling the 35 percent portion. The grant covers the 65 percent side.

The grant program awarded \$122.5 million in this cycle, out of \$512.6 million in requests. The VA approved 21 projects calling for upgrades and renovations across the country, but it only funded a single new construction — a 64-bed facility in Post Falls, Idaho.

"We were close, but not close enough," Herke said.

Herke said the projects could get the green light this year, as the VA letter said

198 more beds

Bemidji: 72 beds
Montevideo: 72 beds
Preston: 54 beds

the approvals could grow if more funding comes. That could include dollars from a federal stimulus package for the economic slowdown caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Minnesota Legislature allocated \$33 million toward the projects, and Herke said he will leave the applications in place for the VA grant program next year, then make an adjustment request with the Legislature regarding construction cost changes. His department will retain the architect, contractor and commissioning agent and expect better news next year.



This rendering shows the front of the proposed veterans home for Montevideo.



This one shows the front of the proposed veterans home for Bemidji.

Governor's Challenge' aims to end veteran suicide

ST. PAUL — Minnesota is among seven states selected for a national effort to eliminate veteran death by suicide.

The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs is partnering with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration in what's called the Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans and their Families.

Death by suicide has claimed more than 100 Minnesota Veteran lives per year during the past five years.

"As a member of the Army National Guard for 24 years, suicide in our veteran community is a tragedy that I take personally," said Gov. Tim Walz. "Those who raise their hand to serve our country deserve the best care and services our

nation and state can provide. We must work together to provide veterans with immediate access to quality, culturally competent mental healthcare and make bipartisan progress toward eliminating veteran suicide entirely. Minnesota can — and will — lead on veteran issues."

Walz is a member of Mankato Post 11.

The Minnesota Legionnaire contacted SAMHSA, which deferred to the VA, about the other six states. A VA spokeswoman said states are operating on differing timetables and the other six states are not determined.

To support this initiative, Walz has directed multiple state agencies — including the Minnesota Departments of



Tim Walz

Veterans Affairs, Military Affairs, Higher Education, Human Services, Health and Agriculture — to prioritize this effort and work collaboratively along with other state, federal and local partners. The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs will serve as the coordinator of the efforts.

MDVA is identifying additional Governor's Challenge participants from other state agencies as well as other federal and local partners.

"We are confident that using a collaborative approach — like our work to end veteran homelessness — will position us to make a similarly positive impact in the area of preventing veteran suicide," said Larry Herke, MDVA commissioner.

Herke is a member of Hastings Post 47.

Added Maj. Gen. Jon Jensen: "The Minnesota National Guard is encouraged by this collaborative effort, under Governor Walz' 'One Minnesota' approach, to ending veteran suicide. We look forward to participating in the Governor's Challenge to end veterans' death by suicide. One veteran suicide is one too many."

"Eliminating veteran suicide is a goal all Minnesotans should embrace," said Minnesota Department of Human Services Commissioner Jodi Harpstead. "We need the right behavioral health services across the state — from crisis to clinics to chemical dependency — so that veterans get the help they need."

Expertise from other state agencies such as departments of Agriculture and Health will be included in the initiative.



Oratorical winner Jamie Jablonsky poses with Jordan Post 3 Commander Joe Bares, left, 3rd District Commander Linda Dvorak and Department Commander Mark Dvorak.



Jamie Joblosky, sponsored by Jordan Post 3, holds a certificate of distinction for winning the Minnesota American Legion Oratorical Contest on Feb. 29.

Runners-up came from Deerwood, St. Paul, Eyota

Continued from Page 1

a \$700 scholarship.

Jasmine Siliznoff, a sophomore at Crosby-Ironton High School, won second place. She was sponsored by Eyota Post 551. She earns a \$500 scholarship.

James Hanley, a sophomore at Johnson High School in St. Paul, placed third. He was sponsored by Arcade-Phalen Post 577 in St. Paul. He earns

Alexus Heins, a junior at Dover-Eyota High School, captured fourth place. She was sponsored by Eyota Post 551. She earns a \$500 scholarship.

The last time a Minnesota student won the National Oratorical Contest was 2003, when Henry Shea IV of Wayzata took the title. He was sponsored by St. Louis Park Post 282.

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Legionnaire makes videos of WWII vets

An American Legion member of Bemidji Post 14 has interviewed over 60 World War II veterans from the Bemidji area and posted all the videos on a special website: www.ww2bji.org.

Also, the Post has these stories of World War II veterans running on the Bemidji area cable-TV systems.

Paul Bunyan Cable Channel 17, and in hi-def on Channel 517 and on Midco Channel 17 only. There will be a video showing every night at 6 p.m., seven days a week.

For more information, call Dave Quam at 218-335-2556 or reach him via email at quam@paulbunyan.net.

Pearl Harbor veteran dies

Dick Thill, longtime member of North St. Paul Post 39, died March 12.

He survived the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and served on the USS Ward, which fired the first U.S. shots in World War II. That starboard gun from the Ward is outside the Veterans Service Building in St. Paul.

The Ward sunk a Japanese midget submarine at the mouth of the harbor.

Endorsements Meyer for vice cmdr.

American Legion Post 113 and the 7th District proudly endorses Harold "Hal" Meyer Jr. for Department vice commander for the years 2020-2021, for the 2nd and 7th districts.

He has served on many committees in his Post has been 1st and 2nd vice commander and Post commander. In the District, sergeant of arms, vice commander Area



Hal Meyer

D twice, membership director and District commander.

Also, he has served many offices in the Sons of the American Legion. He is also a 53-year member of Marshall Post 113.

He and his wife, Pam, have five children, 10 grandkids and eight great-grandkids.

All of them are in the Legion Family.

MyLegion.org becomes the main way to get things done

With Minnesota now under a stay-at-home order by the governor for a minimum of two weeks, Department Membership Director Sy Fix is asking now more than ever to put MyLegion.org to use.

He said it is unfortunate that it takes a situation like this for members to realize how useful the MyLegion.org tool can be to process membership and look up past dues and Post 1982 members.

"Pull up those past due reports, call your fellow Post

members, send them some names to call," he said

Fix also suggests you look at the Post 1982 members and get them transferred into your Posts, especially if they have already paid their dues, in which case, there is no need to be in physical contact with them.

Fix and Commander Mark Dvorak said they are extremely grateful for all the hard work to date and ask that members keep pushing forward.

"We will get through this," Dvorak said.

BIKERS FOR CAMPERS



The American Legion Riders of Arcade Phalen Post 577 in St. Paul hand a check to Ken Larson, manager of the Veterans Campground on Big Marine Lake.

Photo by Lou Michaels

2020 HISTORY MAKER CELEBRATION

Enjoy a Live WWII USO-Style Variety Show & Themed Dinner!

5:30 - 8:30 p.m. April 30, 2020
Gorecki Center, College of St. Benedict, St. Joseph
\$75 for Museum Members | \$100 for Nonmembers

Ticket sales and donations benefit the Stearns History Museum.

For tickets and more information visit: StearnsHistoryMuseum.org or call 320-253-8424.

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MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

3 WAYS TO EXPLORE HISTORY at HOME

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA



1

EXPLORE YOUR FAMILY HISTORY

Research your roots online using our wide array of digital resources. Locate birth, death, marriage, census, immigration, and military records, as well as newspapers and historical photos. Begin your research at mnhs.org.



2

WATCH THE STORIED SERIES

Our *Storied* videos invite you to uncover the real stories and real people behind the dates—and for a short time, inhabit their lives. Watch *Storied* plus more video series at mnhs.org.



3

BECOME A MINNESOTA EXPERT

Visit **MNopedia**, our authoritative digital encyclopedia, to read about significant people, places, eras, and events in Minnesota history. Each week, we add new content and resources from knowledgeable contributors across the state. Explore at mnhs.org.



Ideas to help us shine during crisis

We are in unprecedented times, and the rapid societal changes caused by the COVID-19 virus affect us all. The magnitude of this urgent and evolving situation has not fully developed, but I wanted to take this moment in our nation's history to urge you to reflect on what it means to be in our ranks. Now is the time to be a beacon in our communities.

First and foremost, take care of yourselves. Many of us are in or near the age cohort that presents the most risk, and some of us have pre-existing medical conditions that could complicate treatment. The most current information from the Minnesota Department of Health is at www.health.state.mn.us.

Next, look after one another and check in on the members of your post and in your community. Our American Legion Buddy Check program is perhaps more important now than ever before. Rely on telephone, email or social media to communicate since person-to-person contact is not the safest option. Please be particularly attentive to seniors, a population that is especially vulnerable to the harmful effects of this virus.

For those posts that feature restaurants or bars, you have likely heard that Gov. Tim Walz has directed that all on-site restaurant and bar service close through at least March 27. I recognize the hardship that this directive causes to many locations, but I am confident that our American Legion Family will do our part to mitigate the spread of this virus. For those employed by American Legion food and beverage operations, the Minnesota Department of Employment

Commander's Column

Mark Dvorak



and Economic Development has expedited unemployment insurance. Visit www.uimn.org if this applies to you, and please share with applicable staff.

As I stated earlier, our Veteran Service Organization is a beacon in our communities. We embody service, patriotism and camaraderie. The American Legion is focused on the greater good, and I challenge you to model The American Legion at our best in your community. While striking the balance of safeguarding your personal safety and practicing social distancing, I encourage posts to consider leading the partnerships that will help your community through this challenge.

This is not a comprehensive list, but here are some Buddy Check-inspired ideas for your American Legion Post to be a beacon in your community:

- **EDUCATION:** Become a drop-off location for your local school breakfast or lunch program.

- **FOOD SECURITY:** Coordinate a food drive, with a food drop-off and/or collection point.

- **PUBLIC SAFETY:** Offer your facility, time and talent for county or city operations centers.

- **ELDERLY OUTREACH:** Develop a campaign to conduct phone calls to the elderly in your area.

- **MEALS ON WHEELS:** Establish a "meals on wheels" operation that can deliver to the socially isolated members of

your community.

- **BLOOD DRIVES:**

Coordinate with your local Red Cross and organize a community blood drive.

- **ERRANDS:** Assist in running errands to shops or pharmacies in your area.

As you determine how to serve your community, please engage the younger members of your post to mitigate the health risk concerns facing older members.

Lastly, I encourage you to keep us informed with stories and examples that champion these efforts. We want to celebrate humanity at its best, which includes The American Legion's commitment to take care of each other. Send testimonials and examples of community assistance directly to Tim Engstrom at the Legionnaire. Tim can be reached at tengstrom@mnlegion.org or 651-291-1800.

Thank you all for representing The American Legion during these difficult times. Our nation, state and community will persevere, and we will look back with pride knowing we applied our experience as veterans to lead our fellow citizens through this pandemic.

For love of country!

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

Pray for health workers, elderly, others

"He Ain't Heavy, He's My Brother"

This is a ballad written by Bobby Scott and Bob Russell. Originally recorded by Kelly Gordon in 1969, the song became a worldwide hit for The Hollies later that year and a minor hit for Neil Diamond in 1970.

This article stresses our need to watch out for each other as we patiently await the next steps as we progress through the pandemic called COVID-19, which is short for coronavirus disease 2019.

There is a lot of fear about this virus and some people are anxious out there in our communities. When facing the fear of the unknown, turning to our all-knowing God is a good response for clarity and direction.

So how can we help to reduce that fear in others? We already use our Buddy Checks with our military friends and now we need to apply that to our neighbors as well.

We can also pray for the wisdom to take good care of ourselves in a way that focuses on the good of others. Caring for ourselves is good and right. Ask God to help you care for yourselves so that others will

Chaplain's Corner

Betty Jass



not have to bear you up. Pray for the wisdom, patience, and tenacity to practice good health habits for your sake as well as for the sake of others.

Pray for the sick and those who love them; pray for those the virus takes from this life and for those who mourn. The effects of this pandemic will reach far beyond the health of individuals. Pray for those who are oppressed by fear and for those who are losing the income that sustains them.

Pray for those in the medical community: physicians, nurses, technicians, and aids; custodial staff and food service workers; and all those who have the courage to receive and care for those contracting COVID-19, for they stand in the breach at the risk of their own health and lives.

Pray for those in the scientific, research, and pharmaceutical communities who devote their time and talent to the cause of global health that their wisdom may be multiplied by the Source of all Wisdom.

Pray for chaplains and other pastoral caregivers, clergy and

lay alike, who will visit bed-sides, enter homes, and bring prayer, blessing and the sacraments of hope to the ill. Pray that they may have the courage of Constance and Her Companions, the Martyrs of Memphis, who bravely carried out their sacred duties in the face of disease and death.

Pray for our elected officials and all those who hold the common trust that their wisdom and compassion for all people will increase.

Finally, pray that our faith — your faith — may be unshakable so that our Almighty God may be our consolation during these anxiety-producing times. (Reference: Rev. Martin S. Field (Bishop Martyr), The Diocese of West Missouri.)

He ain't heavy, he's my brother! Amen.

Betty Jass is the chaplain for The American Legion Department of Minnesota.

Mail Call

Fort Snelling Rifle Squads put down their rifles

Every Wednesday I hang out with some of the most dedicated folks I have ever met. They are veterans, volunteers and they are members of the Fort Snelling Memorial Rifle Squad. My squad isn't much different than the people who serve on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. Still, we exhibit great esprit de corps for our Wednesday Squad.

On Wednesday, March 18, our squad was delivered a gut punch like I have never seen nor felt with a group of volunteers. Word came down that we would cease operations at the end of our last funeral because of the coronavirus pandemic. We felt angry, in disbelief, and that we were letting our fallen heroes down because we wouldn't be allowed to provide honors for our fellow veterans being laid to rest at Fort Snelling National Cemetery. The feeling permeated the bus as we rode to our next funeral.

Since 1979 the Memorial Rifle Squad has provided military funeral honors for those who served. The ceremonies include the Presentation of the Flag, three rifle volleys, "Taps" and the folding and presenting of the flag to a surviving family member. The Memorial Rifle Squad performs honors Monday through Friday for as many as 16 veterans each day from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The squads have never missed a scheduled service during their existence for any reason including the harshest Minnesota winters.

As of Wednesday, March 18, the Memorial Rifle Squad has conducted close to 80,000 funerals for our nation's fallen heroes.

Just before we readied ourselves for the last funeral, the director of Fort Snelling National Cemetery boarded our bus to thank the squad for being there and to tell us personally the justification for ceasing operations.

The air was pretty thick, the gut punch still being felt by the Wednesday Squad. John Knapp talked about his discussions with staff, the decision made and the support he received from Washington. John also talked about the seriousness of the virus and how vulnerable the Memorial Rifle Squad members are to the disease.

You see, the average age of the Memorial Rifle Squad is 75 years old. He wants these guys to stay safe, to stay healthy, to be able to carry on the mission

How to send ...

Send letters to the editor for Mail Call to tengstrom@mnlegion.org. Make the subject line "Mail Call" or "Letter." It's as easy as that.

when we return to serve.

Members of the Memorial Rifle Squad served during the Second World War, Korea, Vietnam and the Middle East. They belong to local VFWs, The American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, the Marine Corps League and other military service organizations. Many are active volunteers in these groups and active in the community. They are highly dedicated people.

It must have taken John some real soul searching to affect the volunteers the way he knew it would. They are truly dedicated to their mission. He knows the Memorial Rifle Squad; he truly appreciates the work we do throughout the week. It couldn't have been easy. He did the right thing; his comments on the bus were truly appreciated. His explanation that each and every family who lays to rest a veteran at Fort Snelling during this crisis will have the option to receive honors at a later date — honors that each and every veteran has earned and is well-deserved.

John knows this in his gut; he's a Marine. He could have immediately returned to the confines of his office, but he stood off to the side for the last funeral and rendered a final salute along with our Memorial Rifle Squad for the Army veteran we were there to honor.

Our last funeral, at least for the foreseeable future, on March 18 was like the thousands before it. We may have been a bit more reserved as we

boarded the bus back to the Squad Room with thoughts about our fellow veterans who will be interred while we're gone, but to a person, God willing, we'll all be back as soon as we are allowed.

The Wednesday Squad was honored to represent everyone who volunteers on the Fort Snelling Memorial Rifle Squad. We hope you know we stood a little taller, flew the flags a little higher, fired in unison, played the 24 notes of "Taps" with precision and performed the Presentation of the Flag with all the honor and dedication you do daily ...

... And will do daily, when we return.

I'm truly honored to hang out with these guys.

To learn more about the dedication of the Memorial Rifle Squad visit its website at memorialriflesquad.org or pick up a great book about the group by author Jim Hoey, titled "Honoring Those Who Honor."

Bernie Baumann
Apple Valley Post 1776

Kindest people anywhere

Thank you to the American Legion Family members who called, sent cards, texts and emails after my total knee replacement.

It is amazing the difference between days before my surgery and now. I am following my doctor's recommendations and working hard on my physical therapy.

The Minnesota American Legion Family is the best.

Marsha Bible
parliamentarian
Department of Minnesota
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The Minnesota

Legionnaire

FOR GOD AND COUNTRY

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Phone: 651-291-1800, 866-259-9163

Fax: 651-291-1057

Email: tengstrom@mnlegion.org

Web: mnlegion.org

Editor: Director of Communications
Tim Engstrom

Board of Publication: President Mark Dvorak, New Prague; Vice President Don Amundson, Blue Earth; Secretary Randy Tesdahl, Elk River; Treasurer Bill Goede, Plainview; Darrel Redepenny, Fridley; Joe Bayer, Minneapolis; Carroll Partridge, Oakdale; Paul Edwards, Brainerd; Dennis Henkemeyer, Bagley; Patti Coleman, Circle Pines; Mary Kuperus, New London



4 PILLARS
1 FAMILY

Mail call

Prayer was a factor during the war

I read the interesting article by Tim Engstrom in the February 2020 Minnesota Legionnaire. I grew up in the Netherlands and was in sixth grade when Adolf Hitler's army invaded Holland, Belgium and France.

Reading the article I noticed that an important element was missing. My comment is not in any way critical about a good article. Rather, it is to bring forth some special information to the issue. It comes from a

book: "Rees Howells Intercessor," by Norman Grubb and published by CLC, Fort Washington, PA 19034.

Rees Howells, a humble coal miner in Wales, learned to intercede with God in prayer and faith for needs of persons or causes. Along with his work in the mines, he served God in different ministries. He also served a term as a missionary in South Africa. After that, God directed him to build and lead a Bible college in South Wales.

When Adolf Hitler became leader of the German National Socialist Party, his hatred of Jews increased. That made it a need for Mr. Howells

to get involved. He began to help Jews and to bring many Jewish children to safety. Following that, God directed Mr. Howells, through prayer with staff and students of the college, to undermine Hitler's domineering war power. A group of students and staff of nearly 100 would pray on their knees each evening. What began with helping Jews gradually became a God-directed prayer effort that continued until Germany surrendered on May 2, 1945.

The prayer effort went from one battle of the German war machine to the next. The "Prayer Brigade"

in Wales prayed that England would not surrender. After Hitler invaded Holland, Belgium and France, they prayed for God's help. Then they prayed for the large Army of Brits and other soldiers, which were surrounded by German forces and had the sea at their back. It was expected that they would soon become German war prisoners.

But miraculously, the whole Army was ferried in boats, even many small ones, from Dunkirk to England over the very calm North Sea that day.

When Hitler decided to invade Russia, he did not know that God had

a "prayer brigade" in Wales that would undermine his plans. The Germany military force came close to Moscow, but it was easy for God to use the snow and very low temperatures to bog down Hitler's army with great losses. Hitler had not counted on God's plans.

God and the "Prayer Brigade" are the main answer to the question why Hitler's plans for Russia ended up in total failure.

Peter Wiering
Minneapolis

Taps



Almen, Ronald D., 91, Navy veteran of Korean War and Vietnam War, died Jan. 30, 2020. He was a pilot. He was a member of Princeton Post 216.

Aunan, Frank J., 78, Navy veteran of the Vietnam War, died Feb. 5, 2020. He was a member of Zumbrota Post 183.

Baune, Alfred "Bud," 85, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died March 2, 2020. He was a member of Hutchinson Post 96.

Beihoffer, George E., 93, Army veteran of World War II, died Feb. 20, 2020. He was a paratrooper. He was a member of Hutchinson Post 96.

Bennett, Norman M., 70, Army veteran of the Vietnam era, died Nov. 29, 2019. He was commander of University of Minnesota Post 548.

Breen, John "Jack," 81, Navy veteran of Vietnam, died Feb. 29, 2020. He was a member of Blue Earth Post 89.

Brisk, Raymond, 89, Army veteran of Korean War, died March 22. He was a member of Little Falls Post 46.

Carlson, Jerry, 85, Army veteran, died Feb. 29, 2020. He was a member of Hutchinson Post 96.

Crandall, Bruce, 76, Navy veteran of Vietnam War, died Feb. 4, 2020. He was a 54-year member of Monticello Post 260.

DeVos, Leonard, 85, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Feb. 19, 2020. He was a member of Marshall Post 113.

Dostal, Ronald L., 81, Air Force veteran of Vietnam, died Feb. 26, 2020. He was a member of Hutchinson Post 96.

Engals, Henry "Hank," 72, Army veteran of Vietnam, died Jan. 29, 2020. He was a member of Lismore Post 636.

Engebretson, Wayne A., 77, Navy veteran of Vietnam, died Feb. 28, 2020. He was a member of Marietta Post 156.

Erickson, Sander "Sandy," 101, Navy veteran of World War II, died Feb. 6, 2020. He was a member of New Prague Post 45.

Felska, Muriel C., 89, Army veteran, died March 2, 2020. He was a chief wheeled-vehicle mechanic. He was a member of Hutchinson Post 96.

Gampbell, Scott, 71, Army National Guard veteran of Vietnam era, died Feb. 13, 2020. He was a member of Blue Earth Post 89.

Gorman, Dennis, 78, Air Force veteran of Vietnam War, died Feb. 16, 2020. He was a member of the honor guard at Monticello Post 260.

Gudahl, Bruce M., 70, Navy veteran of Vietnam era, died Feb. 29. He was a member of Blue Earth Post 89.

Halverson, Vernon Garwood, 92, Army Air Corps veteran of World War II, died Oct. 20, 2019. He was a 60-year member of American Legion and his post was Laporte Post 462.

Henrickson, George, 82, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Feb. 23, 2020. He was in the 8th Armored Division, as a heavy equipment operator specializing in building bridges. He was a member of Middle River Post 444.

Holzer, Lanny, 90, Army veteran of the Korean War, died March 5, 2020. He served in Alaska. He was a member of New Prague Post 45.

Johnson, Ellis, 92, Navy veteran of World War II and Korea, died Feb. 29, 2020. He was past commander and 73-year member of North Branch Post 85.

Johnson, Warren D., 84, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Feb. 17, 2020. He was the police chief in Spring

Obituaries

The Minnesota Legionnaire reserves the right to edit all obituaries for style and brevity.

Please send to tengstrom@mnlegion.org or in the mail to the Department of Minnesota.

Grove for 36 years. He was a member of Spring Grove Post 249.

Kaufmann, Russel E., 95, Coast Guard veteran of World War II, died Jan. 25, 2020. He was a member of Park Rapids Post 212.

Kleindl, Lawrence G., 99, Army veteran of World War II, died Feb. 19, 2020. He served as military police in the Philippines and Japan. He was a member of Graceville Post 297.

Korhonen, Arthur R., 95, Navy veteran of World War II, died Feb. 24, 2020. He was a Seabee who served in Japan, Tinian and Guam. He was a 45-year member of Grand Rapids Post 60.

Long, Jerry C., 82, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Feb. 9, 2020. He was a member of North Branch Post 85.

Mack, Vernon A., 98, Army veteran of World War II, died Feb. 27, 2020. He finished jump school in December 1944 and was a mess sergeant in the 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment (of the 82nd Airborne Division). He was in Europe for six months after the Battle of the Bulge. He was a member of New Ulm Post 132.

Miller, Gordon D., 87, Navy veteran of the Korean War, died April 11, 2019. He was a member of Albert Lea Post 56.

Muchow, Darwin Hugo, 75, Navy veteran of Vietnam, died March 9, 2020. He served on the USS Newport News. He was a member of Gaylord Post 433 and managed the bar and Friday night steak fry for many years.

Myllykangas, Charles D., 77, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died March 4, 2020. He was a radio operator who served in France and Germany. He was a member of Hutchinson Post 96.

Newman, Robert, 72, Navy veteran of the Vietnam War, died Feb. 24, 2020. He was a member of Marshall Post 113.

Nielsen, Howard "Howie," 87, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Feb. 18, 2020. He was a 65-year member of Jackson Post 130.

Nord, Charles E., 87, Army veteran of the Cold War, died Dec. 29, 2019. He was a member of Zumbrota Post 183.

Oles, Donald J., 81, Army veteran of the Cold War, died March 7, 2020. He served for 30 years in the National Guard. He was a member of St. Peter Post 37.

Olson, Howard G., 87, Army veteran of the Korean War, died March 14, 2020. He spent a year in Korea after training at Fort Riley, Fort Chafee, Fort Still and Japan. He was a member of New Ulm Post 132.

Opdahl, George C., 92, Army veteran of World War II in Germany, died Dec. 19, 2019. He was a 70-year member and a past commander and gambling manager with Avoca Post 576.

Perra, John A., 93, Army veteran of World War II, died Feb. 27, 2020. He was a member of Zumbrota Post 183.

Pfannenstien, Kevin A., 80, Navy veteran of Vietnam, died Feb. 10, 2020. He was a member of Waite Park Post 428.

Redmann, Leo M., 63, Army veteran of World War II, died March 11, 2020. He was a 63-year member of Anoka Post 102.

Santema, Harold, 89, Army veteran of the Korean War, died March 2, 2020. He was a 44-year member of Milaca Post 178.

Schmidt, Paul, 87, Army veteran of the Korean War, died March 1, 2020. He was a member of Park Rapids Post 212.

Schmitt, Eldon C., 95, Navy veteran of World War II, died Feb. 24, 2020. He was a member of Albert Lea Post 56.

Schultz, Gerald J., 86, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 29, 2020. He worked in a motor pool with the 2nd Infantry Division, later was in the Reserves. He was a member of St. James Post 33.

Sell, Harvey W., Army veteran of Korea, died Feb. 6, 2020. He served in the 1st Cavalry Division.

Shasky, Willis "Will," 91, Air Force veteran, died Feb. 14, 2020. He was a 67-year member of Breckenridge Post 53.

Shoup, Robert C., 93, Army veteran of World War II, died Feb. 5, 2020. He was assigned to the 375th Station Hospital in Japan. He was a 73-year member of Winona Post 9.

Skovbroten, Orvin E., 94, Navy veteran of World War II, died March 2, 2020. He was a member of Zumbrota Post 183.

Sorenson, Herbert L., Army veteran of Korean era, died Feb. 24, 2020. He was a member of Albert Lea Post 56.

Stolee, Curtis N., 89, Army veteran of the Cold War, died Jan. 21, 2020. He served as medical officer in the 1st Cavalry Division in South Korea. He was a member of St. Peter Post 37.

Thill, Richard, 96, Navy veteran of World War II, died March 12, 2020. He survived the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. He was aboard the USS Ward, which fired the first shots by Americans of World War II, sinking a Japanese Midget submarine (and that same starboard gun is displayed near the Veterans Service Building in St. Paul). He also served aboard the USS Savannah. He was a member of North St. Paul Post 39.

Trembl, James, 76, Army veteran of Vietnam War stationed in Germany, died March 11, 2020. He was a member of Wabasso Post 263.

Uecker, Harold A., 98, Air Force veteran of World War II, died March 8, 2020. He was a sergeant in the 5th Air Force, working as a mechanic in the Pacific islands. He worked on B-24s, B-25s and P-38s. He was a member of Buffalo Post 270.

Van Horsen, Frank, 93, Army veteran of Korean War, died Feb. 22, 2020. He was a member of Adrian Post 32.

Visker, Dick "Dicky," 94, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Feb. 24, 2020. He was a past post commander and served many years in the post color guard for Ellsworth Post 196.

Wendt, Donald E., 94, Navy veteran of World War II, died Oct. 17, 2019. He was a member of Zumbrota Post 183.

Wenig, Romaine F., 80, Army and Army Reserves veteran, died Feb. 5, 2020. He was a member of Spring Grove Post 249.

Wright, Harold C., 89, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Feb. 10, 2020. He was a member of Spring Grove Post 249.

Zeller, Marvin R., 83, Army veteran of Korean era, died Feb. 23, 2020. He was a member of Albert Lea Post 56.

Zimmer, Darrell G., 87, Army veteran of the Korean War, died March 7, 2020. He served in the 18th Engineer Battalion in West Germany. He was a member of Redwood Falls Post 38.



AMERICAN LEGION FAMILY

Do you know the presumption and symptoms of Gulf War syndrome?

The Gulf War is often remembered for its spectacular effective air strikes, an infamous tank battle and the relatively low number of U.S. casualties. Although one of the quickest wars in U.S. history, the effects have contributed to lifelong, debilitating diseases for hundreds of thousands of Gulf War veterans. Still today, researchers are trying to find out the causes of undiagnosed and medically unexplained multi-chronic illnesses Gulf war veterans suffer from.

'How it went down'

Sometime in July of 1990, Iraq's leader "Hussein" delivered a speech accusing neighboring nation Kuwait of siphoning crude oil from the Ar-Rumaylah oil fields located along their shared borders. Saddam insisted that Kuwait and Saudi Arabia cancel out \$30 billion of Iraq's foreign debt and accused them of conspiring to keep oil prices low to sell to Western oil-buying nations.

Shortly after Hussein's confrontational speech, the dictator began assembling troops on Kuwait's border and on Aug. 2, 1990, Saddam ordered the invasion of Kuwait. Alarmed by these actions, Arab powers like Saudi Arabia and Egypt called on the United States and other Western nations to intervene, which initiated Operation Desert Shield. Hussein disobeyed U.N. Security Council demands to withdraw from Kuwait and on Jan. 17, 1991,

VA & Rehabilitation

Jeremy Wolfsteller



the Persian Gulf War began with a massive U.S.-led air offensive known as Operation Desert Storm.

In addition to the dominating air offensive, The Battle of 73 Easting was fought on Feb. 26, 1991, the battle was later described in a documentary as "the last great tank battle of the 20th century." After 42 days of relentless attacks by the allied coalition in the air and on the ground, U.S. President George H.W. Bush declared a ceasefire on Feb. 28; by that time, most Iraqi forces in Kuwait had either surrendered or fled. The last U.S. troops who participated in the ground war returned home on June 13, 1991. In all, about 697,000 U.S. troops had been deployed to the Gulf region during the conflict.

VA estimates that as much as 44 percent (306,680) of veterans who served in the Persian Gulf War from 1990 to 1991 have medically undiagnosed illnesses known as Gulf War syndrome. Because so many Gulf War veterans had these unexplained illnesses shortly after returning home, in 1994 Congress passed the Persian Gulf War Veterans' Benefit Act allowing VA to pay compensation to veterans suffering from "undiagnosed illnesses." With help from The American

Legion, Congress added "chronic

multi-symptom illnesses" to the presumptive list for Gulf War veterans in 2001.

VA pays compensation to veterans who exhibit objective indications of a chronic qualifying disability like undiagnosed illness (UDX), or medically unexplained chronic multi-symptom illness (MUCMI). Examples include chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia, joint pain, sleep disturbances and functional gastrointestinal disorders. If a veteran has a UDX or MUCMI, they do not need to prove a nexus (relationship) with service just that they served in the Gulf war.

The American Legion is watching VA closely as the time period VA put on these Gulf War claims is quickly approaching. VA's regulation states a presumptive condition must manifest to a degree of 10 percent disabling or more before Dec. 31, 2021 to benefit from the presumption.

Jeremy Wolfsteller is the Department of Minnesota service officer. His email is jwolfsteller@mnlegion.org.

Legion membership chart as of March 25

District	2020 Goal	Total 2019	Total 2020	Weeks Gain	Total Posts	Goal Posts	% Of Goal	
District 1	8,149	8,091	7,373	111	58	5	90.48%	7,492
District 2	6,497	6,413	5,720	31	84	10	88.04%	5,997
District 3	11,021	10,956	9,974	79	65	11	90.50%	9,995
District 4	2,136	2,118	1,925	28	18	4	90.12%	1,961
District 5	2,346	2,325	1,948	23	23	1	83.03%	2,061
District 6	10,891	10,820	9,696	99	71	11	89.03%	10,052
District 7	5,778	5,702	5,140	27	76	10	88.96%	5,309
District 8	3,788	3,748	3,337	16	40	4	88.09%	3,446
District 9	6,124	6,059	5,422	33	65	14	88.54%	5,626
District 10	9,108	9,054	8,075	71	54	9	88.66%	8,171
District 11	3,655	1,897	1,716	47	2	0	46.95%	1,709
Totals	69,493	67,183	60,326	565	556	79	86.81%	61,819

Same Date Last Year

The SAL Update:

Sons will return to East Grand Forks

Detachment commander

Dave Vulcan



Greetings to the American Legion Family from the Sons of The American Legion Detachment of Minnesota. We, as a family, have had lots of challenges with the coronavirus outbreak and its impact on what we do and how we prepare to do it.

I would like to say to all of the American Legion Family, stay home and stay safe. We will make it through these trying times and we will continue to support our veterans, their families and our communities.

We did not have our spring convention in East Grand Forks

on March 13. Due to the virus threat, we had a web conference set up for the Finance and Executive boards. I would like to announce that we will return to East Grand Forks in the year 2022 for our Spring Conference. I would like to thank the East Grand Forks American Legion Family for being ready for us and accepting and understanding that we had to cancel. My sincerest apologies from the Detachment, but

we will return.

We are doing great in membership. We are at almost at 90 percent! What a great job for our membership team! Remember, membership is everyone's responsibility! I personally feel that we will make that 12,000. Maybe this year; if not, next year for sure.

I would like to inform everybody about doing online transmittals of membership. It is very easy through MySAL.org.

Once you set up your account and after your first transaction, renewals and new members get posted to your roster within five

Service officers sure are bigtime heroes

It has to be hard to be a veterans service officer.

For that matter, it must be hard to be a veteran employment specialist or a housing specialist or any number of positions helping veterans.

Sure, I have no doubt it is rewarding when a veteran seeks help, follows the guidance, then gets help. They end up in a better place in life. That's what we all want for our fellow vets.

But people are people, including good-old and reliable veterans, and there are veterans who don't cotton to help from others.

I want to share two experiences with you.

Veteran on the corner

On March 13, at the corner of 11th Street and Jackson Street in St. Paul — that's a spotlight right before getting on a freeway — there was a veteran holding a cardboard sign saying he was a homeless veteran.

I pulled over and rolled down my window and told him I am with The American Legion. I asked him if he knew about MACV and that it can help him get shelter.

He began singing "Gimme Shelter" by the Rolling Stones. He said he knew about MACV, but he said something about having shelter would take away his saber.

"I'm sorry. What do you mean?" I asked.

He repeated himself, as if saying it twice makes it clearer. Still confusing.

It's hard to help someone who doesn't want your kind of help. I decided the panhandler either A. was not really homeless or B. was not really a veteran. I pulled onto the street and got on the freeway.

Veteran on a bench

In D.C., on March 8, I walked from the Washington Hilton to the White House and, eventually, to the Washington Monument and the World War II Memorial.

On the way to the White House, the sidewalk goes diagonally through Farragut Park, and I noticed a man with a "Desert Storm Veteran" cap on top of his extended suitcase handle. He leaned over, spit blood on the ground, then leaned back on the bench with his face soaking up the spring sunshine.

Well, I can't just walk past

All-American

Tim Engstrom



this scene. I am a veteran, too. I tapped his toe with my toe and said, "Buddy check. What's going on?"

He showed me his belly, and it was purple on one side. He was thinking it was related to serving in the Army Chemical Corps at Fort McClellan in Alabama. He was killing time until he could return to a homeless shelter that evening. I asked if there was a shelter program just for veterans in the nation's capital, and he knew of none.

I watched his belongings so he could go to a nearby restroom. He had been frustrated by the VA, and I encouraged him to return. I said I would help him with his housing situation.

I flew back to Minnesota, and, once there, I communicated with him via Facebook Messenger. He had returned to the VA and got medical help. A prior case of pneumonia hadn't gone completely away and he had coughed so hard he pushed his right-side lung through his rib cage, causing the severe bruising and blood in his sputum (which comes up the respiratory tract when people cough).

Over a few days, now and then, we exchanged messages about his Fort McClellan woes. I shared a story with him from The American Legion Magazine about toxicity there. And, of course, we chatted about the pandemic. I always reminded him to stay in touch.

Finally, on March 18, he let me know the surgery was going to be done on an outpatient basis, and he was worried he would be back on the street during a pandemic. I started calling anything and everyone in the D.C. vets world seeking a veterans-only shelter.

You know what I hate? I hate it when people who are supposed to help others tell you — right away — what they do and don't do. It just reduces a person to nothing but a pile on someone else's workload. Aren't these people being paid to care, not be robots?

[Insert unprintable military language here.]

I also discovered our nation's

capital has a major homeless veteran problem and a serious lack of addressing it.

But there was a shining light, and it was the national headquarters for the National Council on Homeless Veterans. A woman answered like it was serious, and she did care. Night and day.

In fact, she called back the very next day about a place in D.C. that houses homeless veterans called US Vets, and how my bench buddy could reach this agency's person right there at the VA.

My guy, by that point, had experienced new swelling that was keeping him in the VA hospital longer, so the housing problem wasn't as immediate. Still, it was going to become an issue once his swelling ends.

I needed to connect my guy to the US Vets guy, but my guy decided he didn't want help.

He said he was sick and tired of talking people who claimed to help but didn't help. He had bumped into too many fakers. I said what's the difference of getting help from your homeless shelter and getting help from his shelter for veterans? Besides, you're a veteran, and you deserve any help because you paid your dues to this country.

All he had to do is pick up the room phone, ask for the operator and request to speak with this person. I explained how easy it was. All of this was over Facebook Messenger.

You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink. I don't know whether he picked up the phone, but I hope he did. In-person help is more effective than far-away help.

So I got a taste of what direct veteran helpers go through. I'm nobody but a communications guy. They are the heroes. Let's give them a big thanks next time we see them.

Tim Engstrom is the director of communications for The American Legion Department of Minnesota. He can be reached at tengstrom@mnlegion.org.

LEGION ACCESS TO SAL "PROCESS MEMBERSHIP" FEATURE

PROCESSING SAL MEMBERSHIP FROM A LEGION ACCOUNT (DEPARTMENT AND POST):

1. Click "SAL" in the top-menu (blue ribbon).
2. Click "Process Membership"

From here, the process is practically identical to Legion electronic membership processing.

You will need to enter bank account information prior to processing SAL membership. If the account used for SAL

business days. You can download real-time reporting of your SAL roster. The system will not let you post a payment twice and will also advise you if a member

missed renewing from previous years.

There is no postage since everything is online. If you did send via USPS, your trans-

mittal could take weeks to post members to your roster. You send your transmittal straight to National for processing and National sends a check to your Detachment for their share of the per capita.

No excuses for missing target dates and reason to blame anyone for sitting on transmittals. And it gives you the ability to own your membership process. So try it, and let's keep the memberships coming in.

So keep up the good work for everybody and stay safe

Dave Vulcan is the commander of the Detachment of Minnesota for the Sons of The American Legion.



Legionnaires in attendance at the March 12 DEC meeting at the Veterans Service Building in St. Paul were, clockwise from bottom, Myron Ehrich, Dale Wellick, Randy Olson, Mike Maxa, Mark Dvorak, Marlyn Engh and Linda Dvorak, in addition to the one taking this photo, Tim Engstrom.

DEC: American Legion can stand out as 'a sane voice in the wilderness'

Continued from Page 1

encouraged posts to be involved in their communities while staying safe. He cited National Commander Bill Oxford, who mentioned Hayfield Post 330 in his coronavirus updates. The Post provided toilet paper to the elderly.

(See Oxford's comments in the Legionnaire's main COVID-19 story.)

Resolution

The Department Executive Committee on March 21 dissolved the Education and Training Committee, which began in 2017, and established a replacement called the Training Committee. The Training Committee will have eight members and two subcommittees — one for Legion College and one for MyLegion.org.

Five of the eight members will serve on the Legion College Subcommittee and three on the MyLegion.org Subcommittee, each with an annual rotation of appointments.

The resolution emerged from the three-person Department Training Ad Hoc Committee.

During discussion on the motion, it was noted the subcommittees would meet more frequently than the larger full committee.

Reports

National Executive Committee Man Bill Barbknecht gave a report on the Washington Conference, noting Legionnaires were able to meet with all Minnesota members of Congress save for two. In those cases, they met with aides.

Barbknecht the spring NEC meeting has been canceled. He said all gatherings of 50 or more people in Indiana are disallowed until May 5.

He said the National Convention in Louisville, Kentucky, remains as planned for Aug. 28-30, and the American Legion World Series still is on for Aug. 13-18 in Shelby, North Carolina.

He encouraged Legion members to remain involved with Memorial Day by assisting in some manner and thinking creatively.

Legionville Vice President Eugene Leifeld reported a new camp manager has been hired for Legionville, a school safety patrol training center near Brainerd.

Adam Felten lives just down the road from the camp. Leifeld said he and his brother have taken care of the camp throughout the winter and know the area well.

Legionville plans on a teleconference meeting on April 4.

Dvorak mentioned the Department of Minnesota won

the Big 12 membership contest, earning a \$2,500 grant for the Department office to offset technology costs.

"We're at 91 percent," he said. "We lead the pack there."

Denise Milton, one of the organizers for the new Minnesota version of Legion College, said the deadline to apply is April 15. Classes are planned for May 29-31 at Camp Ripley. She noted Camp Ripley's closure to civilians. An April 10 meeting will decide its status going forward.

Judge Advocate Greg Colby reviewed the governor's emergency orders. (See story.)

Boys State in Minnesota, scheduled for the week of June 14, has been cancelled.

The National Oratorical Contest Finals, intended for April 17-19 in Indianapolis, have been cancelled.

Past National Commander Dan Ludwig called on Legionnaires to know the rules for staying safe during the COVID-19 pandemic and abide by the rules. Legionnaires still can provide for their communities, particularly by being "a sane voice in the wilderness."

He called on members to be part of the solution, not the problem.

"This is an opportunity to shine," Ludwig said.

Judge advocate reviews Minnesota executive orders

Editor's note: This was written on March 20, before Gov. Tim Walz issued tighter restrictions on March 25.

NORTHFIELD — Department of Minnesota Judge Advocate Greg Colby noted, of all the executive orders issued in Minnesota in March, closing the bars and restaurants starting March 17 was particularly important for American Legion Posts across Minnesota.

Colby said the Posts can continue serving food for pickup, drive-through or delivery, but not interior consumption. They may allow no more than five members of the public inside at once for purposes of picking up their food and beverages, with people at least six feet apart while on the premises. Only Posts with off-sale licenses can sell liquor to be taken off the premises.

Colby said there is no distinction between a private bar and public bar. Disobeying the governor's order is a misdemeanor.

Unemployment claims as a result of the pandemic will not factor into future unemployment tax rates for employers.

He noted the rules for visiting Minnesota Veterans Homes do not ban visitors from end-of-life situations but have considerably authority to deny admission to work or volunteer and can isolate residents in their rooms, if needed. Personal visits via phone and video are encouraged. (See COVID-19 story for visitor policy.)

If any Legion member hears of any scams aimed at the elderly, particularly related to the pandemic, contact him and he will be in touch with the Minnesota Attorney General's Office, he said in his report to the DEC on March 21.

Colby's full report is available for download at mnlegion.org on the "COVID-19 Updates" page.

Colby cited Attorney



Greg Colby

General Keith Ellison's March 13 warning: "With the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases rising in Minnesota, scammers are increasingly preying on Minnesota consumers by attempting to sell them bogus products or unproven treatments, as well

as attempting to trick them into revealing their sensitive personal or financial information."

Colby can be reached at greg.colby.northfield@gmail.com.

"Friends," Colby wrote in conclusion, "we got through the Korean War, the Vietnam War and the Cold War without blowing the world up or destroying our Constitution, and we will survive this, too. It isn't the plague, but it is serious stuff. The American Legion is here to help communities and veterans. We can't do either if we don't take care of The American Legion."

Video chat was a big Buddy Check

Continued from Page 1

as having neighborhoods kids take the trash to the curb.

Now I must be honest the first draft of this idea was rough. I basically typed what I was thinking at that moment. Now as I write this, I've had a few days to reach out to Legionnaires across the state of Minnesota and around the country to ask what they were doing in their areas.

The first ones I reached out to was our National Legion College Alumni Association group on Facebook. I posted the rough draft of the project and asked them if any of them where doing something like this.

I immediately received input about what they were doing and their interest in reaching out to their members.

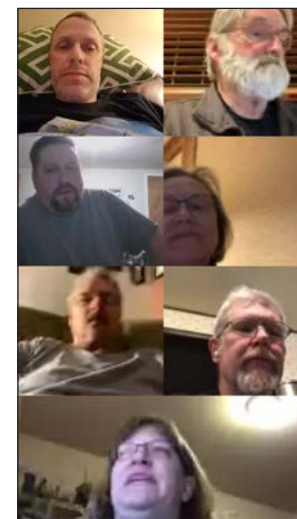
Here in Minnesota I received word from New Prague Post 45 Membership Chairman Linda Dvorak that she had seen the note and was starting to reach out their members. She is the 3rd District commander and wife of Department Commander Mark Dvorak. Mark and Linda Dvorak both are retired from the U.S. Air Force.

Next, I received word that Hollywood, California, Post 43 had put a similar program together and was making great progress in contacting its 1,200 members.

I reached out to them via their website and received an email back from Post 43 Adjutant Dianna Wilson, who is an Army veteran detailing what they were doing and how they were tracking it. She even sent me the spreadsheet they were using to track their progress.

I received a call from an Auxiliary member in North Carolina who was calling her members and checking on them to see how they are doing.

The next morning, I started working on the list of posts in the 8th District. I talked to



A screenshot of a video chat on Facebook Messenger.

Judith Gunelius, adjutant of Post 182 in Effie. Judith and her husband, Farrell, are Air Force veterans who are in their 80s living in Big Fork. We talked about the pandemic and I asked them how they and their Post members were doing and if they needed anything.

Her response made me chuckle. She said that they were fine and staying put, and they had plenty of supplies. She told me they were busy painting a room in their home. Then she told me that Farrell went out to the garage and grabbed some toilet paper they had stored. Farrell came in and handed her three rolls of toilet paper and said that they needed to be careful about how much they use because they only had a few hundred rolls left.

We both laughed and she thanked me for calling to check on them. Then I talked to Larry Pocrnich of Hibbing Post 222. Larry is an Army veteran who also runs the Veterans Community Thrift store in Hibbing. Proceeds help veterans in the area.

The store has been closed since March 17 to protect workers and is planning a meeting on March 30 to determine the possibility of re-opening. In the interim, he is

calling members and holding small coffee groups of five or six for coffee and checking in.

James Kmecik, commander of Proctor Post 106, has started calling his members and checking on them to see if they need anything.

At Two Harbors Post 109, Chaplain Chris Belfield is calling members to check on them, even though he is self-quarantined with his wife. He is an Air Force retiree.

Let's not forget the impromptu Facebook Messenger conference call of Saturday night, March 21. About 16 Legionnaires from across the state discussed cancellations, postponements and dealing with the outbreak over a group text on Messenger. One person suggested a group do a video conference call right then and there and, the next thing you know, Legionnaires from all corners of Minnesota were talking live and in person through their phones or computers.

Only eight could be on the video chat at any single time. It was a form of Enhanced Buddy Check. And it was a way to keep checking on each other.

This is just a small sampling of those in our Legion Family who I've talked with who are doing great things during this trying time. I will finish up calling my posts in the 8th District and then moving on to our unit president to see how they are doing and how we can help them assist their members.

This project is ongoing so please reach out to your members and to the families who have members deployed. Together we can ride through this storm and emerge kinder and stronger for God and Country.

Jennifer Gedney Havlick is the membership director for the 8th District and a past vice commander for the Department of Minnesota. She is a member of Two Harbors Post 109.

In times of crisis, watch for the helpers

Hello American Legion Family,

I know these are hard times. I know some of you are stuck at home. I know some of you are worried about what is going to happen next.

We have hoarding going on, and certain people are not taking this thing serious, but I also see many of you stepping up. It does my heart good to see many of you in the Legion Family putting others above yourself.

A very dear friend of the Legion Family recently passed away. Patty Swanson was the reason I joined The American Legion.

I was down and couldn't see much of a future, but Patty saw something in me and told me

Legion Riders Paul Hassing



that I would feel better if I just started doing things for others.

She told me to forget about my troubles and concentrate on others. I didn't believe her, but I promised her I would give it a try.

She was right. I soon realized that not only did I feel better, but it also made me realize how truly blessed my life was. She will be missed dearly, and I will always be in her debt.

Even Mr. Rogers said in times of crisis to look for the helpers. When I see those in the news who are helping others, and those who are forgetting their own problems in order

to make someone else's life better, it warms my heart.

Please, if you can, find a way to help others. If you need help, don't be afraid to reach out.

Be kind to one another, stay healthy, and look out for others. And of course: "Wash your hands."

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

Continued from Page 1

software company Zyter.

“He is a man of rare stamp,” Wilkie said.

Wilkie said 155 years ago, President Lincoln, in one of his final acts, created soldiers’ homes, and they were the first effort to care for soldiers after wars. They remain part of America today, he said.

He said, thanks to the Mission Act, the VA has undergone the biggest period of reform since Omar Bradley was the administrator of veterans affairs 1945-1947, and as a result, he said, wait times are down, no systemwide scandals, satisfaction is at an all-time high, loopholes are being closed to take care of Vietnam War veterans.

“That is why the Legion is so important,” Wilkie said. “The Legion means we never turn our back on warriors who saved our country.”

He said veteran suicide is preventable and said the VA intends to launch a national roadmap of suicide prevention. It will provide resources to Legion Posts on the local level.

Wilkie noted that even Audie Murphy, the most decorated soldier of World War II, slept with a pistol under his pillow and would wake up in a sweat each night. He said mental health is a very important aspect of taking care of veterans.

He hopes to use digital technology to reduce paperwork hassles for veterans, ending the sight of veterans carrying around 800-page medical records and reducing “guessing” by hometown or VA doctors.

Wilkie quoted President Ronald Reagan, who said, when giving the Presidential Medal of Freedom to Gen. Matthew Ridgway: “Heroes come when they are needed; great men step forward when courage seems in short supply.”

Legionnaires from across the country met with their lawmakers or their aides.

Department Vice Commander Bill Brockberg of Worthington Post 5, like all others, ran through the Legion’s legislative agenda. He visited with Rep. Jim Hagedorn’s aide, Andrew Lutz, who himself is a veteran.

- Presumption of exposure when it comes to burn pits and toxic exposures. This particularly matters to veterans of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

- Health care for women veterans and victims of sexual trauma.

“Trying to get them into the VAs is something that needs to be emphasized,” Brockberg said.

Heather Larson, the Department of Minnesota’s VA&R administrative assistant, was in the meeting with Brockberg, and she noted sometimes she gets stereotyped at the VA by being viewed as a spouse or volunteer.

- Pay the Coast Guard in times of a government shutdown.

- Implement and oversee recent laws. Department Service Officer Jeremy Wolfsteller was with Brockberg, and he informed Lutz that congressional reform of the VA needs oversight from Congress so that the reform is enacted properly, from the Appeals Modernization Act to the Mission Act.

Lutz said his office has been following the issue closely, because Mayo Clinic is in Hagedorn’s district.

Wolfsteller noted the



From left are National Commander Bill Oxford, Provider of the Year Mary Ballard of Oklahoma, Physician of the Year Megan Press of Minnesota, VA Secretary Rob Wilkie and American Legion VA&R Committee Chairman Ralph Bozella of Colorado on March 10 at the Washington Hilton.



Rep. Jim Hagedorn’s legislative aide Andrew Lutz meets with Minnesota Vice Commander Bill Brockman, VA&R administrative assistant Heather Larson and Department Service Officer Jeremy Wolfsteller on March 10 at the Cannon House Office Building in Washington, D.C.



Past National Commander Dan Ludwig, background, listens to National Commander Bill Oxford address a joint House-Senate hearing on veterans affairs on March 11.

third-party care goes through Minnesota-based Optum, too.

- Help end veteran homelessness.
- Protect the G.I. Bill.
- End desecration of the U.S. flag.
- Support the VA’s suicide-prevention efforts.
- Reaffirm commitments to allies.
- Fully fund the national defense.
- Provide support for Gold Star families.
- Expand Vet Centers in Minnesota. This one wasn’t part of the national legislative agenda but is a Minnesota matter that goes through the federal government. The VA runs Vet Centers,

which provide readjustment counseling to veterans who have experienced combat, and their families, on a walk-in basis without it being part of their VA medical record. They also expose veterans to other VA services.

Wolfsteller said the three Vet Centers in Minnesota in no way can serve all the veterans who would benefit from their services.

- Not take disability benefits out of military retirement pension. This also was not in the national legislative agenda, but it was an item Brockberg would like to see fixed. He said he is rated less than 50 percent disabled by the VA, and his

disability is subtracted from his retirement.

Wolfsteller added, “We like to say if a veteran has a full pension, he or she should get the full benefits.”

Conversations like this were repeated through the halls of Congress.

One such talk was with Rep. Collin Peterson, who met with Denise Milton of Bagley Post 16 and NEC Man Bill Barbknecht of Underwood Post 489.

They thanked Peterson for sending a letter to VA Secretary Wilkie calling for the expansion of Vet Centers in Minnesota. Peterson is on the House Veterans Affairs Committee, a role he garnered after Tim Walz



Legion members Denise Milton and Bill Barbknecht meet with Rep. Collin Peterson at the Longworth House Office Building. Peterson’s main D.C. office, however, is in the Rayburn House Office Building. He had just come out of a meeting of the House Agriculture Committee, which he chairs, so they used the chairman’s office.



Rep. Jim Hagedorn speaks with Minnesota Legionnaires at a reception March 9 commemorating the Japan-U.S. alliance.



Rep. Ilhan Omar poses for a photo with Legislative Committee Chairman Robert Hart of Stillwater Post 48.

left Congress to seek the Minnesota governor’s office. Other House members from Minnesota signed Peterson’s letter.

Barbknecht and Milton noted that the Department Convention would be in Peterson’s district in July, at Redwood Falls. They also discussed the new Fargo National Cemetery.

Peterson, who had just come from an Agriculture Committee meeting, noted how veterans are included in the farm bill to help with careers in agriculture.

Legionnaires who met in Sen. Amy Klobuchar’s office also thanked the aide for her penning a letter to Wilkie in support of expanding Vet Centers in Minnesota. Her letter was joined by Sen. Tina Smith.

Before storming Capitol Hill, Legionnaires were invited to a reception at the Capitol Visitor Center hosted by the Japanese embassy. They heard from dignitaries such as Maine Sen. Angus King: “Japan is the cornerstone of the alliance in the Indo-Pacific region.”

They heard from Rep. Mark

Takano of California, chairman of the House Committee on Veterans Affairs (and who spoke at the 100th American Legion National Convention in Minneapolis), who spoke of Japanese-Americans serving in the U.S. military while their parents and grandparents were interned by the U.S. government.

“They trusted America would become a more perfect union,” he said.

Not only was it the 60th anniversary of the alliance treaty, it was the 75th anniversary of the end of fighting.

“They have transformed from bitter enemies to the closest allies,” Takano said.

“The biggest victory to come out of World War II was a liberal democracy for our people,” he added.

From a Japanese admiral to the ambassador himself, several people took turns sharing their gratitude. Spectators were treated to Japanese sushi and other delicacies, including Japanese whiskey that costs \$750 a bottle and is hard to get even in Japan.



American Legion members from Minnesota gather March 8 for a caucus on membership and a photograph. **Front, from left, are** Patti Coleman of Circle Pines, Denise Milton of Bagley, Norma Tramm of Cold Spring, Carl Moon of Walker, Heather Larson of St. Paul. **Middle, from left, are** Peggy Moon of Walker, Tom Schottenbauer of Minnetonka, Mark Dvorak of New Prague, Eugene Leifeld of Zumbrota, Robert Hart of Oak Park Heights, Dan Williams of Bastrop, Texas, Mike Maxa of Montgomery. **Back, from left, are** Dan Ludwig of Red Wing, Bill Barbknecht of Battle Lake, Bill Brockberg of Worthington, Curt Norenberg of Roseville, Jeremy Wolfsteller of Plymouth, Wilson Spence of Duluth, Dan Tengwall of Chaska.

Recruiting advice: 'Treat young veterans with respect'

WASHINGTON — When recruiting young veterans to join The American Legion, Legionnaires have to do more than merely sign them up, said Past National Commander Dan Ludwig.

They also need to treat them respect and hear their ideas.

"If you want to live in yesterday, you ain't got no future," Ludwig said.

Three past national commanders addressed Department commanders and adjutants of the Midwest Region during a session midday Sunday, March 8, to talk about membership.

Ludwig, of Red Wing, Minnesota, said Legionnaires are asking a lot of young veterans — carry on the missions and programs of The American Legion. Posts in Minnesota that are doing well are the ones blending young and old well.

"Treat them with respect and great things will happen," he said.

David K. Rehbein, a past national commander from Ames, Iowa, said tackling a large problem of membership is a big task. The best thing a leader can do is, in leading



National Vice Commander for the Midwest Region Bruce Feuerbach, of Iowa, speaks to Department commanders and adjutants about membership during the Washington Conference at the Washington Hilton on March 8.

by example, is do a bite-size portion.

"What part of that problem can I affect?" Rehbein asked.

Past National Commander Jimmie Foster said young veterans indeed want to join The American Legion.

"Treat people like you want to be treated," Foster said. "If you be positive, it'll come around."

Foster presently is the adjutant of the Department of Kansas but was from Alaska when he was national commander.

National Vice Commander Bruce C. Feuerbach of Keystone, Iowa, encouraged members to display pride in The American Legion.

"We've got to have brand awareness with our pride," he said.

He called for departments to have a strategic plan and focus on teamwork.

"You need a large membership team," Feuerbach said.

When signing a young veteran, he said, be sure to mentor them, too. Tell prospective joiners about the service officers and how the Legion helps other veterans and pushes for their benefits, he said.

Solid Start, Forever G.I. Bill, secure payments

Under secretary talks about VBA initiatives

WASHINGTON — Most of the calls the Veterans Benefits Administration receives are young veterans asking about their benefits.

Solid Start is a program the VBA launched on Dec. 2, where the VA reaches out to new veterans in their first year after their military time ends.

"This is establishing a life-long relationship," said Paul R. Lawrence, under secretary for benefits with the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Lawrence briefed Legionnaires from across the country

at the Washington Conference on Monday, March 9, on the activities of the VBA.

Performance

He said the agency is hitting targets and shared a comparison of 1st Quarter data from 2019 and 2020:

- Compensation, claims completed: 315,000 to 325,000.
- Compensation, average days to complete: 104 to 94.4.
- Fiduciary, field exams: 19,800 to 24,988.
- Education, days to process original application: 27.5 to 18.5.
- Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment, positive outcomes: 3,932 to 4,299.

"We're doing more, faster," Lawrence said.

He said he intends to raise targets in the coming year, in the eight different areas the VBA operates, using the social media hashtag #bestyear ever.

Forever G.I. Bill

The G.I. Bill was revamped with the Colmery Act, passed by Congress in August 2017. It took effect in August 2018, then reset in November 2018.

Lawrence shared numbers on the VBA's role since that time:

- 950 STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) scholarships awarded.
- 7,000-plus certificates of eligibility to veterans for VET TEC, where the VA pays for training and housing for veterans to enter high-demand technology work, and veterans can

get nine additional months of G.I. Bill enrollment.

- 2,300-plus Purple Heart recipients had benefits increased.
- 17,000 months of G.I. Bill benefits restored.
- 695 schools offered priority enrollment.

Banking program

Lawrence said some veterans still receive their benefits via paper check or debit card, which he said is a risky way because of theft or loss.

"We've got to get these people banked," he said.

The VBA is working with 22 banks and credit unions to offer free checking to veterans so they can receive direct deposit and avoid problems receiving their money.



Dr. Matt Miller, the director of suicide prevention for the VA, speaks before The American Legion at the Washington Hilton during the Washington Conference on March 9.

VA suicide prevention doc: Can suicide really be halted?

WASHINGTON — The director of suicide prevention for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs struggles with the notion that suicide is preventable.

"I have a love/hate relationship with that saying," Matt Miller told a room of Legionnaires at the Washington Conference of The American Legion on Monday, March 9.

As the chief of mental health at Vance Air Force Base in Enid, Oklahoma, Miller spoke with the airmen about suicide prevention every six weeks. That included a good friend, a pilot named John, who, unfortunately, died by suicide using a firearm. The death made Miller feel like all of his efforts were for nothing.

He left the military, grew his hair out and holed himself up indoors.

One day, he watched "60 Minutes" on CBS. It had a segment on veteran suicide that was not encouraging.

"That was an eye-opener for me," Miller said.

He thought he could either get up off of his ass and do something or he could wallow in questions and guilt.

"I figured the best way to honor John was to do something," Miller said.

He applied to work for the VA and got a call from Saginaw, Michigan. Google, he said, wasn't kind to Saginaw, but he and the staff there liked the place. He was the chief of mental health there.

"We called it Saginawesque."

Now, preventing suicide is not just his day job. He said he felt John's death was the result of an impulsive choice, and he shared with the Legionnaires the three fronts of the VA's efforts to prevent suicide.

1. A community-based coalition, where everyone is paying attention down to the county and city levels.

2. A veteran-to-veteran coalition, where veterans are tending to buddies.

3. Governor's challenges to raise awareness and communication.

He said the time between the decision to die by suicide and the act of suicide ranges between five and 60 minutes. Efforts will focus on introducing a time and space between the two.

"Lethal means safety" is a term for limiting access to lethal means of self-harm, which has been a proven way to reduce suicides, Miller said.

That particularly regards firearms, without impinging the Second Amendment, Miller said, but practicing safety and security.

Veteran suicide by firearms in 2017 among male veterans was 70.5 percent. Among female veterans, it was 43.2 percent.

He said people tell him, "Matt, they will just find another way to do it."

Miller said that is untrue and that 90 percent never attempt suicide after an intervention.

There were 6,139 veteran suicides in 2019, up from 6,010 in 2018.

The rate of suicide was 2.2 times higher among female veterans compared with the non-veteran population. The rate of suicide was 1.3 times higher among male veterans compared with the non-veteran population.

Male veterans ages 18-34 experienced the highest rates of suicide, while 55 and older experienced the highest count of suicide. (Counts and rates are different approaches, and, of course, there are more veterans over 55 than between 18 and 34.)

"Both need careful attention," Miller said.

He noted veteran suicide is set against the larger context of suicide as a problem among the general population. Suicide, Miller said, is now the second leading cause of death in the United States.

Suicides in the United States in 2005 was 31,610. Suicides in 2017 was 45,390. That's a 43.6 percent hike.

Veteran suicides in 2005 was 5,787. Veteran suicides in 2017 was 6,139. That's up 6.1 percent.



Legionnaires from across the country listen to National Commander Bill Oxford on March 10.

Oxford: Time to 'Act Legion'

National commander motivates Legionnaires

By Tim Engstrom

WASHINGTON — James W. “Bill” Oxford called on Legionnaires to “Act Legion” during the Commander’s Call at the Washington Conference on March 10.

“You may recall that last year one of our agenda items was the Legion Act,” he said. “But this year, instead of the Legion Act, I’m asking you to Act Legion.”

“What does Act Legion mean?” Oxford continued. “It means being professional, nonpartisan, motivated and knowledgeable.”

That means reminding members of Congress and their staff members there is no higher calling than the care of veterans, active-duty military and their families. This includes paying the members of the U.S. Coast Guard during government shutdowns.

Acting Legion, Oxford said, means protecting and

improving the G.I. Bill Act, closing the 90/10 loophole, which encouraged for-profit colleges to count G.I. Bill-enrolled veterans as private money, when, in fact, it was taxpayer dollars, in calculating Title IV funding. The colleges developed sham marketing schemes aimed at vets.

“You will hear me tell Congress tomorrow that these benefits are not some sort of entitlement program. They are earned. They have been earned through sweat, sacrifice and blood,” Oxford said.

Too often, he said, the colleges would award false degrees or worthless certificates, and veterans would find themselves without careers and their college benefits drained. In some cases, the schools actually shut down.

Acting Legion means amending the Constitution to allow Congress to protect the flag — the flag used to cover the caskets of fallen members

of the military, he said.

Acting Legion is standing strong against any effort to shutter the Department of Veterans Affairs medical system in favor of a private, profit-driven model, he said.

“The private sector didn’t send veterans to war,” Oxford said to standing applause. “Uncle Sam did.”

He recently visited a VA medical center during the National Commander’s Tour, where the seriousness of fighting the coronavirus came up. At the hospital, a senior official asked: “If we spend billions of dollars fighting coronavirus, why can’t we spend the same amount to prevent more than 20 veterans a day from committing suicide.”

The audience at the Washington Hilton stood and applauded.

“We do know that veterans, when offered services by the VA, are less likely to take their own lives,” he said.

Acting Legion means advocating for the Blue Water Navy veterans and their long-overdue disability benefits.

“Acting Legion means treating all veterans equality, regardless of race, creed, gender or orientation,” Oxford said.

Acting Legion is ending military sexual trauma.

“We must condemn all acts of sexual violence and support the brave men and women who have been exploited through shameful acts of military sexual trauma,” he said.

Acting Legion, he said, means continuing the serve at home, whether it is through mentoring youth or supporting fellow veterans. This includes supporting the commander’s project, the Veterans and Children’s Foundation, which has a \$25 million fundraising goal.

It means supporting and saluting the Greatest Generation, the millions of Americans who won the bloodiest war in world history 75 years ago, he said.



With 7th Minnesota District Rep. Collin Peterson.



With 3rd Minnesota District Rep. Dean Phillips.



Minnesota Commander Mark Dvorak shares The American Legion’s legislative agenda at Sen. Amy Klobuchar’s office on March 10.



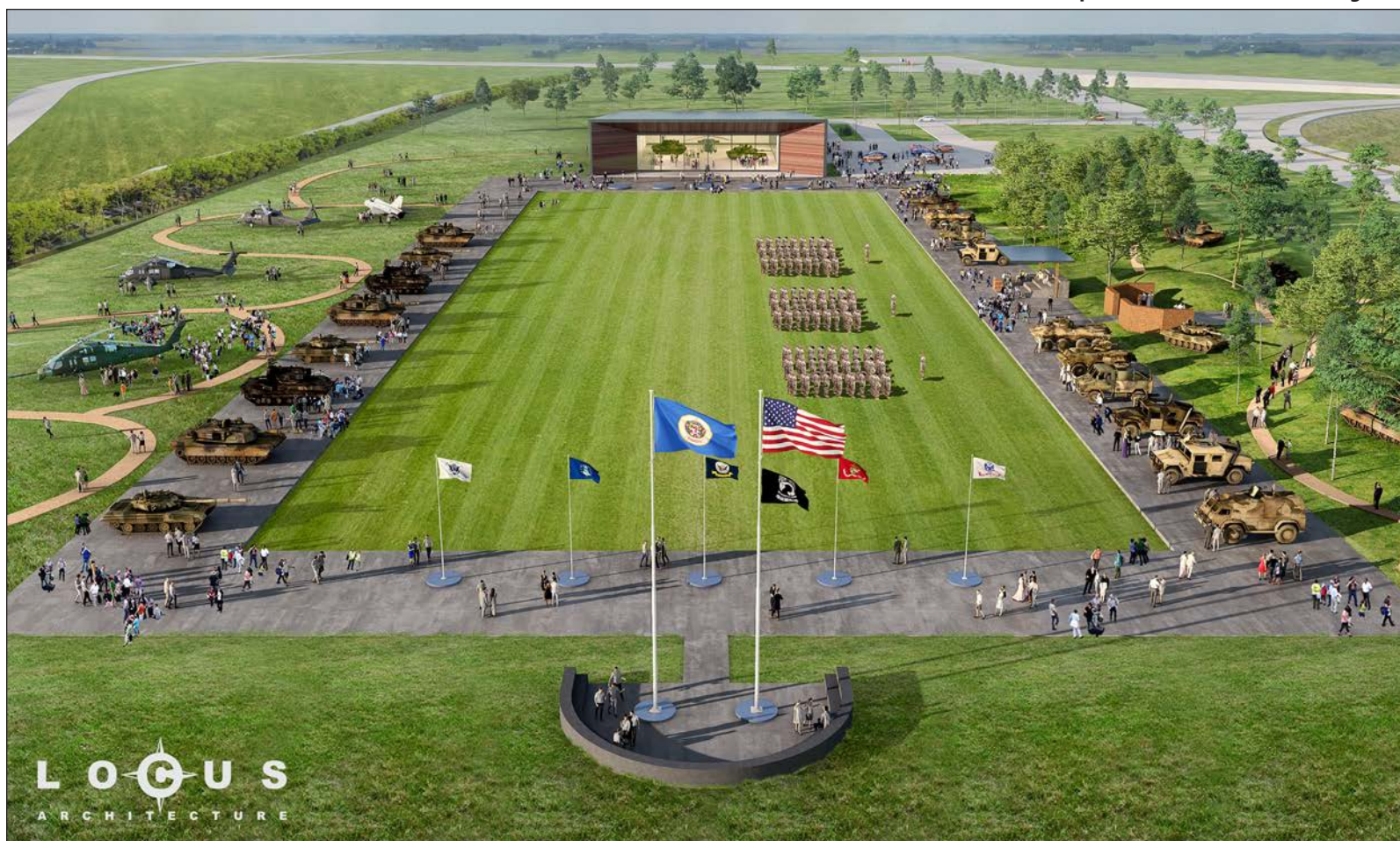
Cold Spring’s Norma Tramm, chairman of the Auxiliary’s National Legislative Committee, takes a photo of the Minnesota contingency where the national commander speaks before a joint House-Senate hearing on veterans affairs.



With U.S. Senator from Minnesota Tina Smith.



With the staff of U.S. Senator from Minnesota Amy Klobuchar.



This architectural rendering shows the proposed parade grounds with mobile artifacts nearby, such as Humvees and tanks.

Go big or go home

The Minnesota Military Museum to move out of Camp Ripley

By Tim Engstrom

The Minnesota Military Museum has existed in a building — actually several buildings — at Camp Ripley for 40 years. If all goes as planned, the museum will have a major new home in a few years.

“We are in the process to launch a capital campaign to build a new museum,” said Executive Director Randal Dietrich.

More than 80,000 artifacts are stored in a dozen buildings throughout the Minnesota National Guard’s training facility near Little Falls. Dietrich would like to get many of them out of the dark and into the light.

“Camp Ripley has been good to us to provide this space to use,” he said.

A new museum would bring the collection under a single roof and allow the Minnesota Military Museum to share more stories, Dietrich said.

Plus, building it outside of Camp Ripley most likely would increase visitation, because it would be outside the security gates. He noted how many civilians don’t realize they can enter Camp Ripley, at least prior to the COVID-19 restrictions. Presently, the museum is closed, like all museums statewide.

The plans for a new building would offer 42,000 square feet of space and show more exhibits. For example, the museum plans to show the post-9/11 experiences as part of a mobile tour next year, and then the exhibit could have a place at the new location.

Presently, the museum occupies 24,000, but most of that is storage. Only 6,000 square feet is for public viewing inside a 90-year-old battalion headquarters.

“This aging and limited exhibition space does not allow for veteran stories from across the state and all the branches to be fully represented,” says the brochure on the proposed new museum.

The new location would be on the eastern side of the Mississippi River on a 32-acre strip of land across from the Minnesota State Veterans Cemetery between Minnesota Highway 371 and the BNSF Railroad that aligns Morrison



The Minnesota Military Museum, in addition to exhibits, would offer space for reunions, meetings and other functions.

County Road 76. The south end of the land abuts Minnesota Highway 115, which leads to Camp Ripley.

(By the way, Camp Ripley is on the western side of the river.)

The land had been a sunflower field with a \$30,000 value and was donated by Bob Anderson, a veteran.

With the new site along three roads, Dietrich said, it no doubt will increase exposure and traffic.

Dietrich said the main motivator behind moving the Minnesota Military Museum is the FAA. The museum is in the crash zone for the Ray S. Miller Army Airfield at Camp Ripley. As cool as it is to see low-flying C-130 aircraft when visiting the museum, it also presents a danger. The FAA has directed the museum to move.

The plan is to have a 600-by-200-foot parade grounds with review stand and reflecting pools for each military branch. A trail called the Gold Star Trail will wind through the property.

There will be a court of honor, a veterans plaza, space for tanks and other military equipment.

Inside, the museum will offer galleries for wars from the Global War on Terror to the Civil War — in addition to the home-front efforts. There will be an art gallery, classrooms, a theater, research library, exhibit galleries, a resource center and, of course, a welcome desk.

“This is your dad’s story, your grandfather’s story or your mom’s story,” Dietrich said.

The names of all 87 counties will be etched into the walls.

“The intent of the site layout is to conceptually convey the entire spectrum of the Minnesota veteran experience,” states the brochure.

The price tag of construction is \$13.86 million. The price tag of relocation is \$25,000. Plus it needs \$1 million for indoor elements and another \$1 million for outdoor items. That rings

up to \$16 million.

Dietrich said he is seeking \$2 million from private donations. To donate, call the museum at 320-616-6051 or visit the website at mmilitarymuseum.com. The museum will sell pavers, among other ideas.

The ball got rolling on the public side last year with state Rep. Ron Kresha of Little Falls and state Sen. Paul Gazelka of Nisswa. The Camp Ripley area is in their districts. They are calling for \$26.88 million in bonding-bill funding from the Legislature this year for the project. The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs would oversee the spending of the bonding-bill money.

Dietrich wants to make sure Minnesota is able to preserve stories of the past generations while being able to carry forward stories of present and future generations.

The goal is to break ground in August 2021 and open on Veterans Day 2022.



Long-haul trucker Sharon Davis of Tennessee found herself in Minnesota without a place to go.

By Tim Engstrom

MINNEAPOLIS — Imagine suffering from a life-threatening health problem in an unfamiliar state, and then the hospital kicks you out on the street to fend for yourself because you lack proper insurance.

That's the situation long-haul trucker and Army veteran Sharon L. Davis of Henry County, Tennessee, found herself this winter. The American Legion, the Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans and the Minneapolis VA Medical Center came to her rescue after the Mayo Clinic apparently left her in a lurch.

"They should have called someone and transferred her care to the VA Medical Center in Minneapolis," said Jeremy Wolfsteller, the service officer for The American Legion Department of Minnesota.

In 1978, Davis could not get into auto-mechanic school after attending Madison West High School in Wisconsin, so she entered the Army and, after basic at Fort McClellan, Alabama, she worked as a track-vehicle mechanic. During advanced training at Fort Knox, there were 63 men and three women.

A little 5-foot-tall woman working on big, menacing machines was quite a picture.

Davis found a beau and went the stay-at-home-mom route while her husband continued to serve, three sons born at Fort Hood and two daughters at Würzburg, Germany, before splitting in 2006. They had settled in Henry County, Tennessee, where she drove a school bus and did odd jobs.

Eventually, she picked a new line of work, though she loved the schoolkids.

"They pay you a fortune to haul Cheerios. They pay you nothing to haul children," Davis said.

In the summer of 2016, she drove a straight truck and fell in love with the over-the-road lifestyle — the freedom, the people, the places.

She was on the road so much,

there was no need for renting an apartment. The truck was her home.

To get a Class A commercial driver's license, she worked for corporation out of Springfield, Missouri, for a year, now driving a semi. Then she moved Stoughton, Wisconsin, where she could be near loved ones who needed her help and work for a Green Bay paper hauler.

Unfortunately, close to three months later, a wind gust caught her empty trailer while she was crossing black ice, and it spun her rig 180 degrees.

"I was only going 48 mph when the wind caught me," Davis said. "They had to let me go because I was under 90 days."

Lawrence Transportation in Rochester hired her because she was a veteran, a woman, mature and didn't mind life away from home, she said. Davis began on March 1, 2019.

Fast forward to Jan. 24 of this year. Davis woke up at 3 a.m. in her truck's sleeper cab at the Lawrence yard in excruciating pain. She called a taxi, and the cab driver called 911. Five police officers came, along with fire rescue and an ambulance, to bring her to the Mayo Clinic.

It turns out she was processing a large kidney stone, and a doctor determined her kidneys were 50 percent full of stones. She had a hernia, too. Mayo did a minor operation: Put bags on each ankle with tubes to her kidney to drain fluid, and she was told her kidneys needed time to heal.

A doctor came to discuss her insurance. She explained, like she had when she arrived, that she had VA Health Care. The doctor explained the Mayo Clinic does not accept VA. In other words, it is not part of the third-party contract administered through Optum.

"They said to see if they can work out financing and that we would do a follow-up in two weeks," Davis said. "After that, it was like a light bulb switched."

She speaks kindly about the nurses, but she said otherwise she felt ignored after that insurance conversation. Then she was discharged with her bags and tubes and no advice.

It was Jan. 27, a Monday.

"Mayo has been known to do that to veterans because veterans are not part of their nebulous," Wolfsteller said.

Davis took an Uber to her truck at Lawrence yard. On Tuesday, her company allowed her to drive a company vehicle to Olmsted County's veterans service officer so she could transfer her VA care from Tennessee to Minnesota and get a fax of her DD214 from records at the Paris County Courthouse.

(Editor's note: Kids, when you exit the military, bring your DD214 to your local courthouse to become a permanent record.)

Davis — clearly a let's-go kind of worker, a trait common among veterans — was back on the road, doing short hauls, for less than a week. She made it to Ogden, Utah, and fought a snowstorm on I-80 in Wyoming on the way to Brownsville, Tennessee.

"When I got in late to Brownsville, I wasn't feeling too swift," Davis said. "When I woke up on Tuesday, Feb. 11, I thought I had the flu."



American Legion Department of Minnesota Service Officer assists veteran Sharon Davis in his office at the VA Medical Center in Minneapolis.

After delivering a load to Indianapolis, she came back to Rochester. She slept for three hours at Roscoe's on the Wisconsin-Illinois border. She got in late on Feb. 14, and she called the Rochester VA office to inquire about the paperwork. That was inconclusive, but she advised her to call the VA in Minneapolis. She got back to Rochester around 5 p.m.

A very good Samaritan paid for an Uber to get Davis to the Minneapolis VAMC. When she arrived, they had her in the emergency room within five minutes.

CAT scan. X-rays. New bags. Antibiotics. Cultures. Advice.

"I felt like I was finally getting cared for," Davis said. "I had a team of four doctors and daily they would come and update me."

On Feb. 20, a doctor told her she would be discharged. Davis said the doc felt really bad because she had nowhere to go. A nurse helped her download the Airbnb app, and Davis managed to find a place up the light rail line for that night.

But she needed to figure out how to get there and needed to find housing for beyond that night. The VA information desk

Alone and homeless in an unknown city

The American Legion and MACV found solutions

suggested the library. A supervisor at the library suggested she speak with Jeremy Wolfsteller of The American Legion.

Davis came to the fourth floor, found his office and walked in.

"I could tell by the look on her face she was distressed," Wolfsteller said.

It was getting late in the day, and he wanted her to have time for errands. He provided her with meal cards and gift cards for food and clothing. She headed off while he worked on her situation. By 4 p.m., Neal Loidolt, president of the Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans, had found space for Davis within MACV's new women's transitional housing.

The next morning, Wolfsteller let Davis know there was a place, and a little after 1 p.m., Davis was at the MACV main office at 1000 University Ave. They took her to the housing.

"I was in awe of all of this," she said. "Before the Legion and MACV, I was preparing for the worst. I had a piece inside of me that said I was going to be OK. The way I ended up getting to Jeremy was nothing short of a miracle."

She stayed at the transitional housing with three other women

veterans, and though they had other reasons for being there. They connected by talking about life, men, kids.

"It was a great environment," Davis said.

Once she was in MACV's hands, its staff did everything from carrying her bags to assist her with paperwork, in addition to giving her transit tokens to get to the hospital.

"I have a difficult time asking for help," she said.

David Nguyen, statewide operations manager for MACV, said: "This is an example of what homelessness looks like in Minnesota. Nobody just wakes up and becomes homeless. It stems from multiple situations."

Those often are mental health, addiction, physical health, job loss, legal issues or a medical barrier, he said.

Nguyen said MACV works on the root causes in an effort to find housing for homeless veterans.

"If a veteran remains engaged with us, we will remain engaged with them to the bitter end," he said.

Davis praised Minnesota's response to preventing a veteran from homelessness.

"To be a homeless veteran in a strange state, you are doing pretty good," Davis said. "I can't say the same for every state."

Davis was welcome to stay at the women's transitional housing until her VA care is done and she can get back on the road. Lawrence Transportation has assured her she will have a job as soon as she is medically able to drive a commercial vehicle.

VA doctors zapped the stones in her right kidney on March 23, and further procedures are in the works. Wolfsteller used American Legion funds available to him to provide emergency financial assistance and to make sure she will have transportation on the rail line and back to Rochester when the time comes.

"This 1960 Chevy is going to get all her repairs done, and then she is going to hit the road," Davis said.

Listening Post



St. Louis Park Post 282 presented a \$25,000 check to the Minnesota American Legion Foundation for the Veterans Assistance Fund 85. Presenting the check from left to right are Post Finance Officer Dick Brammer, Post Commander Bill Davies, Minnesota American Legion Foundation President Lloyd Ricker and Vice President Bruce Kottom.

St. Louis Park Post 282 hands over a big check

By Lloyd Ricker

The Minnesota American Legion Foundation Veterans Assistance Fund (Fund 85) is a fund which has given a lot of donations to Minnesota veterans' needs which are not funded with traditional funding but still needed.

Some of the donations have been to VA hospitals, State Veterans Homes in Minneapolis

, Hastings, Fergus Falls, Laverne and Silver Bay, Minnesota. Additionally, the Foundation has given funds to the two Minnesota Veteran Cemeteries at Little Falls and Preston, Minnesota. Funding has also been given to the Armed Forces Services Center at MSP Airport.

Minnesota has three new Veterans Homes which, despite the recent setback, will be coming

in a few years to Montevideo, Preston and Bemidji. Funds of \$5,000 each have been committed for their flagpoles.

The Minnesota American Legion Foundation (which is an IRS-approved 501C-3) accepts donation from post gambling funds (Account 85), other post funds, SAL, Auxiliary Units funds, individual donations, trusts, bequeathals and corporate donations.

Minnesota veteran employment stats

2018 average veteran unemployment rate	2.20 percent
Change in average veteran unemployment 2014-2018	-55.1 percent
Median veteran income, past 12 months	\$40,943
Veteran-owned businesses per 1,000 establishments	136.8
Veteran Affairs job training expenditures per veteran	\$380.23

U.S. veteran employment isn't equal when compared state by state

First, the good news: Veteran unemployment in America these days is much better than it was during the Great Recession. The unemployment rate for veterans in December was 2.8 percent, while among nonveterans it was higher, at 3.3 percent, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

During the Great Recession, joblessness among Iraq and Afghanistan veterans was around 13 to 15 percent, with general veterans around 8.5 to 10 percent. The overall unemployment rate peaked at 10 percent in October 2009. (It was at 4.7 before the recession.)

This is another way to look at things: Veteran unemployment has fallen by more than 300 percent between January 2011 and December 2019.

Now the bad news: That success is not equal among all states.

Inmyarea.com studied which states are best for hiring veterans. It considered joblessness, government hiring, median income, veteran business ownership and job training investment per veteran.

The 10 best states are New Jersey, Alaska, Virginia,

California, Massachusetts, Maryland, South Dakota, Georgia, Rhode Island and Connecticut.

The 10 worst states are Ohio, Maryland, Louisiana, Mississippi, New York, Wyoming, West Virginia, Indiana, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania.

Minnesota placed 21st. At least that's in the top half of states.

However, Minnesota scored particularly well when it came to improvement in average annual veteran unemployment over time. The study compared 2018 to 2014. Minnesota was fifth by average. (Iowa was first; Connecticut was second.) The District of Columbia scored the worst, followed by Colorado.

And Minnesota was eighth at percent change, at 55.1 percent down. (North Dakota was by far worst at 92.9 percent up, though no doubt skewed by oil industry work.)

In the study, only six states saw vet unemployment increase in the last five years: North Dakota, Ohio, Idaho, Louisiana, Pennsylvania and Vermont.

Four states, the study says, put vets at the front of the line for civil-service jobs: New

Jersey, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and South Dakota. Veteran-owned businesses are most prominent in Oklahoma and South Carolina.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs spent more than \$180 billion on various programs for veterans in fiscal year 2018, the most recent year for which the agency has published data.

National commander: Take a smart approach to coronavirus

The nature of the coronavirus pandemic is unprecedented in our lifetimes. We are all learning here, and I ask that you be patient, flexible and strong as we get through this. And we will get through this because our American Legion Family has proven our toughness throughout our first 101 years.

We must be smart about how we approach this. I have suspended all official travel for all American Legion national officers and staff unless it is absolutely imperative. This policy pertains to me as well and will last at least through the end of April. Travel beyond that date will be reassessed in a timely fashion. While I do not have the authority to mandate that departments take action, I would like to share with you how your national headquarters will be operating for the temporary future. Keep in mind, these policies are also recommended by medical professionals at the Center for Disease Control and other experts throughout the health care and emergency response communities.

We are providing a liberal leave policy for employees who are ill or who have family members who are ill. We are also providing liberal leave or telework options for those experiencing daycare

National Commander

James W. "Bill" Oxford



issues because of school cancellations. The workplace at national headquarters will be even cleaner than its usual high standards and there will be plenty of hand-sanitizers available for workers and visitors to use. We have also temporarily halted public tours of the headquarters.

We have many national youth programs, meetings and other events scheduled for the weeks and months ahead. Some will likely be cancelled or postponed. These decisions will not be easy to make but will be thought out with safety being the number one priority. Cancellations and postponements of national American Legion events will be announced promptly on our national website, www.legion.org, and by email to all departments once such decisions are made. I will keep you advised of any new measures at the national level as they occur.

I am asking every department to respect their local civil authorities as well. Different states have different measures in effect. Like veterans, they

are risking their health and wellbeing in order to keep us safe. This is a new kind of crisis for them as well.

The Buddy Check program is perhaps more important now than ever before. Rely on telephone, email or social media to communicate since person-to-person contact is not the safest option. Please be particularly attentive to seniors, a population that is especially vulnerable to the harmful effects of this virus.

I do realize that some of the measures we have taken will inconvenience many of you. Nobody wants this to last any longer than necessary. And once it is determined that the conditions are safe, operations will return to normal. I thank you in advance for your patience, resilience and continued service to our great organization and country.

James W. "Bill" Oxford is the national commander of The American Legion.

HELPING PEOPLE



"I am the commander of American Legion Post 237 of Balaton. Since the virus, people in the community have quarantined themselves. Even though social contact is preferred and contact is not encouraged, people still need to come together and look out for each other. I am letting the community know that I will deliver food for them since they are quarantined themselves and want to stay clear of others, but they still need to eat to stay healthy."

Submitted by John Daniels

TAKE JUST FIVE MINUTES
and check in on a veteran.

One phone call can change their day.

SAFE DISTANCE? YES. DISCONNECTED? NEVER.
KEEPING OUR VETERANS' SPIRITS HIGH IS AS EASY AS A PHONE CALL.

Closed ...

Continued from Page 1

and restaurants to close effective 5 p.m. March 17. This means American Legion, VFW and Amvets Posts operating bars or restaurants must close. The governor's closure order was set to end at 5 p.m. March 27.

On March 25, Walz issued a stay-at-home order for March 27 to April 10.

Drive-through, delivery and takeout can continue during the closure period. The closure does not affect grocery stores and pharmacies.

Posts can remain open for Post meetings, though the federal government recommends gatherings no larger than 10 people and that people remain 6 feet apart. Teleconferencing is an option, too.

Violating the order to close could result in a misdemeanor, including jailtime.

Off-sale liquor only is allowed with the proper liquor license. Posts with charitable gambling can check the Minnesota Gambling Control Board website for a PDF listing several key steps for security, various types of games and paying employees during the closure period.

The American Legion Department of Minnesota

American Legion employees who work at the Department of Minnesota offices at the Veterans Service Building in St. Paul and at the VA Medical Center and federal Whipple Building in Minneapolis began working from home the week of March 23, though a few began the prior week. Email and voicemail are encouraged.

Have a claim question? Department Service Officer Jeremy Wolfsteller can be reached at 612-467-3849. His voicemail forwards to his email account, which is jwolfsteller@mnlegion.org.

Adjutant Mike Maxa is assessing present recommendation each Friday to determine next steps.

Commander Mark Dvorak on March 13 announced the cancellation of the Appreciation Rally that had been planned for March 21 in La Crescent.

The Department Convention slated for July, as well as other meetings, remain planned as scheduled.

Decisions to cancel District-level meetings and Post-level meetings are at the discretion of the respective commanders. No District conventions have been cancelled. All of them are in late May or early June. Commanders are monitoring events.

Here is a schedule of District conventions:

- 1st District: May 16, Austin Post 91
- 2nd District: June 5-6, New Ulm Post 132
- 3rd District: May 16, Faribault Post 43
- 4th District: May 30, North St. Paul Post 39
- 5th District: June 6, Holiday Inn Bloomington Airport South
- 6th District: June 4-6, at Nisswa Post 627
- 7th District: June 6, at Ashby Post 357
- 8th District: June 6, Hibbing Post 222
- 9th District: June 12-13, Warren Post 27
- 10th District: June 6, Osseo Post 172

Joint Testimonial Dinner

The Testimonial Dinner for Department of Minnesota Commander Mark Dvorak has been rescheduled for Saturday, June 20, instead of April 18.

The Testimonial Danner for Auxiliary President Mary Hendrickson will be held jointly with Dvorak's dinner.

"We believe it's the first time we have had that at the department level," Dvorak said.

The banquet still will take place at the American Legion Park Ballroom, 300 Lexington Ave. S., in New Prague,

which also serves as Post 45.

The specific event times are undetermined as of press time as organizers switch plans to two testimonials.

For information or reservations, please contact Dvorak's wife, Linda Dvorak, the commander of the 3rd District, at 952-457-2129 or ldvorak@gmail.com.

The deadline to sign up will be June 10.

There are two weddings that weekend that took up all the rooms at the hotel in New Prague. Options are:

- Mystic Lake Casino about a half hour from New Prague, 800-548-8536.
- Hometown Inn & Suites in Belle Plaine about 20 minutes from New Prague, 952-873-6017.
- Guardian Inn in Le Center about 15-20 minutes from New Prague, 507-357-2239.
- If you wish to bring a camper, the Faribo Campground is about a half hour from New Prague, and it has all the hook-ups, 507-332-8453.

VA Health Care

VA Health Care adopted a no-visitors policy on March 20 at all of the facilities nationwide. This came after the VA already was screening anyone entering any of their facilities starting March 11.

The exemptions to the no-visitors policy were:

- Hospice or critical care (and 18 or older).
- Patients who need care or assistance each can have one visitor with them.

The screening involves questions about symptoms, such as fever, cough or shortness of breath.

All dental and perio care is cancelled. Crowns and dentures will be delivered. Surgeries are delayed to June 1. The Vietnam Veteran Recognition Program on March 30 is postponed. Many other gatherings are postponed or cancelled.

If you're a veteran seeking medical care, call before visiting — even if you already have an appointment. Or you can sign in to myhealth.va.gov and send a secure message. You may be able to get diagnosed and receive care through VA telehealth without having to come in at all.

Veterans with scheduled appointments and without flu-like symptoms can plan to attend their scheduled appointments. Upon arriving at VA, all patients will be screened for flu-like symptoms before they enter in order to protect other patients and staff.

For the latest VA updates on coronavirus and common-sense tips on preventing the spread of disease, visit www.publichealth.va.gov/n-coronavirus/.

Veterans Benefits Administration

The Veterans Benefits Administration closed to the public on March 19. Regional offices will remain open but will no longer accept walk-ins for claims assistance, scheduled appointments, counseling and other in-person services.

Veterans can continue to get information about benefits or file a claim for benefits by visiting benefits.va.gov. Veterans with claims specific or other questions may request information by telephone at 1-800-827-1000.

County Veteran Service Officers

Each county government is setting its own policies and hours in response to the outbreak. Most are closed to in-office appointments but are working with veterans via telephone and email during normal business hours. Call beforehand, especially in regards to transportation.

Veterans Day on the Hill

Disabled American Veterans Department of Minnesota Adjutant Trent Dilks, in conjunction with the organizing committee, has cancelled Veterans Day on the Hill. A plan to have a virtual version has been scrapped, too.

"The COVID-19 virus has caused disruptions that limit gatherings throughout the state and nation. Current federal and state guidance requires that the scheduled Veterans Day on the Hill 2020 pre-event lunch, march and Capitol Rotunda rally will not convene in-person as scheduled on April 20," Dilks said.

Dilks strongly encourages transportation organizers to immediately contact transportation companies to let them know the event has been cancelled.

Auxiliary National President's Tour

The American Legion Department Secretary Sandie Deutsch says the National President's Tour of Minnesota, slated for April 6-8, has been canceled. National President Nicole Clapp of Iowa was set to visit Pine Island, Rosville, Osseo, Waite Park and Forest Lake.

Junior Shooting Sports

The American Legion Junior Shooting 3-Position Air Rifle National Championship, planned for July 21-26, has been cancelled.

National commander message

The American Legion National Commander Bill Oxford called on Posts to be nimble in their approach to serving their communities.

"We have faced down enemies, foreign and domestic, throughout our nation's history. While this threat is ominous, we will once again work together to overcome it," he said in conclusion.

He urged people to protect themselves by washing hands and practicing social distancing and said it is a good time to perform Buddy Checks with older veterans.

"Of course, Buddy Checks can be done with phone calls and emails so as not to risk spreading or contracting coronavirus," he noted.

Oxford, instead of touring, continued to share coronavirus updates online daily. On March 17, he mentioned Hayfield Post 330.

"We have to be creative. Nursing homes have wisely stopped visitation. Talk to administrators about whether they are assisting patients so they have access to Facetime, Skype or other video-calling technology. Even a simple phone call will do. American Legion Post 330 in Hayfield, Minn., for instance, has collected toilet paper for the elderly. There are many other posts that are stepping up during this crisis. That's what we in The American Legion do."

American Legion Baseball

The American Legion Baseball 2020 schedule for national and local remains in place, including the American Legion World Series, planned for Aug. 13-18 in Shelby, North Carolina. All activities are subject to the respective state restrictions. State and national Legion Baseball committees are monitoring developments.

The Department of Minnesota Baseball Committee plans to meet April 11, with 10 or fewer in person and at least six feet apart, and the rest of the members by teleconference, so that it can form contingency plans in the event of schedule changes.

Boys State, Boys Nation

Boys Nation, planned for July 17-25 in Washington, D.C., has been cancelled. Assessment on awarding the Samsung American Legion Scholarships is underway.

Minnesota Boys State, scheduled for June 14-20 at St. John's University in Collegeville, has been cancelled.

Both decisions were made in light of the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions on gatherings. Though the educational events happen in the summer, signing up and planning happens this spring, and it would be difficult to determine whether to accept applications without

knowing whether the restrictions would be lifted by summer.

St. John's University said it looks forward to hosting in 2021.

Women Veteran Conference

The MDVA Women Veteran Conference planned for Saturday, April 4, at the Mounds View YMCA has been postponed. A new date has not been set.

Minnesota Veterans Homes

Many Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs staff members are working from home if their duties allow it. Others remain working in their workplaces.

The five Minnesota Veterans Homes have adopted a restricted visitor policy because of the vulnerability of the residents. That policy means:

- Restricting visitors except for those visiting residents at end of life or medically necessary.
- Using a single entrance for the facility.
- Allowing essential volunteers and vendors only.
- Requiring visitors to complete a self-declaration screening at entrance.
- Conducting evaluative screening and education at facility entrance by a Home Clinical staff member.
- Assisting residents with maintaining communication with their family and friends.
- Postponing public events and entertainment.
- Restricting activities to unit levels.

MDVA claims

Fargo and St. Paul staff remain available to assist. Appeals may be submitted without claimants' signatures. The office is 612-970-5789.

MDVA cemeteries

The cemeteries remain open to visitors and interments. Committals are allowed for less than 50 people. Participants remain six feet distant. More is available here.

Fort Snelling National Cemetery

The rifle squads at Fort Snelling National Cemetery have halted funeral honors during the outbreak. It's the first time in 41 years the volunteers have missed a funeral service. However, funeral services continue.

In fact, all national cemeteries remain open. Services are adjusted to follow recommendations that prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

"Our cemeteries will remain open to visitors, but we strongly urge all guests to obey local travel restrictions and avoid unnecessary travel. Visitors should expect that certain portions of a cemetery typically open to the public may be closed (for example, public information centers, chapels). Please contact the local cemetery for more information," states the National Cemetery Administration.

Camp Ripley, armories

Gov. Tim Walz has directed the restriction of leasing to all civilian agencies at Camp Ripley and at armories around Minnesota, except for the purposes of training and public safety. The restriction is in place until May 31.

Bowling Tournament

The American Legion Bowling Tournament, set for March 21-April 18 at Sundance Entertainment Center in Dayton, has been postponed indefinitely.

"Once everything gets back up and running, I am going to meet with the bowling alley to figure out our options, and then I will call everybody to let them know the status," said American Legion Bowling Secretary Cari Lamb. She said refunds will be issued if the tournament does not happen.

Vietnam War Veterans Day Programs

National Vietnam War Veterans

Day is a holiday observed annually on March 29. Those events for 2020 have been postponed indefinitely.

Two of them in the state at American Legion Posts were at Byron Post 119 and Forest Lake Post 225. Organizers for both events say they intend to assess matters after coronavirus concerns are mitigated and, at that time, set new dates.

DAV

The Department Convention planned for early May has been postponed. It is now scheduled for June 26 at the same location, the Best Western Plus Kelly Inn in St. Cloud.

As for Chapter meetings, this is determined by the Chapters themselves. Individual can use their judgment on whether they feel safe attending.

Clothing collection continues as normal, though the DAV is forming contingency plans should the need arise.

The DAV Turkey Hunt planned for April 28-30 is cancelled.

DAV Transportation Network

The network officials are screening riders at the time of ride request and the afternoon before trips. Vehicles are supplied with sanitation items.

Rides are available only to VA facilities and health care facilities with clear screening policies, for those with no other means of transport.

The DAV strongly encourages rescheduling of non-essential rides or utilize household members to provide rides. Volunteer drivers will not be pressured to drive if they perceive risk or are at a safety risk.

VFW

The Veterans of Foreign Wars Commander Chad Solheid issued a message on the Department website that District commanders can make the decisions to change the dates of their meetings or venues to accommodate social distancing. He urged compliance with Gov. Walz's orders.

Solheid said the VFW state hockey tournament slated for March 20-23 in Thief River Falls is cancelled and not rescheduled.

The state bowling tournament has been cancelled. The state cribbage tournament is off, too, but could be rescheduled later.

The state convention for June 2020 remains scheduled as planned.

Service officers are working from home.

JWW

The April 14 meeting of the Minnesota posts of Jewish War Veterans is set to happen via teleconference instead of in person. Commander Lou Michaels is organizing the meeting. Bylaws will be amended to allow Internet-based meetings.

MACV

The Minnesota Assistance Council continues to serve veterans and is open to the homeless without the phone, text or email options. Staff is reducing physical coverage and in-person meetings. Email, texts and phone are preferred.

If you know a veteran in need of housing or employment assistance please have them call MACV at 1-833-222-6228. Please note that MACV statewide offices will be open for limited walk-ins just for those veterans without access to phones or email on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Legal clinics

The April 14 legal clinic at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center and the April 28 legal clinic at the St. Cloud VA Medical Center are cancelled.

If you know of a veteran in need of legal assistance please have them call Vetlaw at 651-200-4750 or email

Closed ...

Continued from Page 14

World War II Roundtable

The Minnesota Historical Center closed under governor’s order, and the April 9 program with Don Caldwell, who is slated to speak on tank battles in the Philippines, has been cancelled.

Vietnam Roundtable

The Vietnam War Roundtable slated for March 16 at Concordia University in St. Paul was cancelled.

The April 20 program of the Vietnam War Roundtable is undetermined, as Concordia University, which is the host, will make its determinations on campus activities.

Minnesota Military Museum

For the time being the Minnesota Military Museum at Camp Ripley is closed, just as all museums statewide are closed, and the board of directors will determine when to reopen after the governor’s executive order comes to an end.

Military Ball

As a precaution during the coronavirus public health situation, the annual

Donations needed

American Legion Posts, the following are needed at the Minneapolis VA hospital:

Hand sanitizer: Donations of hand sanitizer (Purell or other brands of alcohol-based gel sanitizer) are accepted as donations.

Bleach wipes: Donations of cleaning wipes containing bleach are accepted as donations.

Face masks: The VA is accepting surgical and unexpired N95 masks. Homemade face masks are also accepted.

Please contact American Legion service officer Jeremy Wolfsteller about deliveries at jwolfsteller@mnlegion.org.

Military Ball, that was scheduled for April 25 at Spring Grove has been cancelled.

Minnesota Military Radio

The show must go on.

Host Tom Lyons and his production crew have arranged to interview subjects over the telephone, rather than in person. For the episode that aired March 21 and 22, Lyons interviewed Minneapolis VA Health Care System Director Patrick Kelly and Dr. Mark Klein to talk about the novel coronavirus.

Lyons then spoke with American Legion Department Commander Mark Dvorak and Communications Director Tim Engstrom. You can listen to it online at minnesotamilitaryradiohour.com.

The show is broadcast on various radio stations statewide each weekend. The online version is posted each Sunday.

Minnesota Paralyzed Veterans of American

Executive Director Stephanie Dennis reminds members they cannot come to the Spinal Cord Injury Center at the Minneapolis VA unless they have an appointment or are attending for another reason.

“They are very strict on visitors at the moment,” she said.

United Veterans

The UVLC gathering for April 1 has been cancelled.

Honor Flight Twin Cities

The Honor Flight for May 16 has been postponed until Oct. 3.

Nationwide, all Honor Flights are cancelled until the end of May.

Korean War veterans, contact 651-481-8835 if you are interested in going.

Minnesota Legislature

The four legislative leaders on March 16 identified three “buckets” for initiatives, and legislation being considered should meet these criteria:

- Coronavirus/COVID-19-related legislation
- Mission critical items (bonding bill was one example provided)
- Items with broad bipartisan agreement (i.e., non-controversial issues)

The Legislature will be “on call” for four weeks.

House Speaker Melissa Hortman, DFL-Brooklyn Park, House Minority Leader Kurt Daudt, R-Crown, Senate Majority Leader Paul Gazelka, R-East Gull Lake, and Senate Minority Leader Susan Kent, DFL-Woodbury, announced the Legislature will work by alternate means until April 14.

“We expect to operate efficiently and safely to aid Minnesotans with COVID-19 preparedness and response, and to continue our work to address other pressing needs of the

state,” the four said in a statement. “While it’s important that we remain in session to swiftly respond to the needs of Minnesotans at this time, we will fully comply with Minnesota Department of Health guidelines including social distancing, limiting large gatherings, telework, and increased cleaning measures.

“The Legislative bodies and committees will meet in floor and committee session on an on-call basis from March 16 through April 14. This means there will not be standing floor and committee meetings, but we will meet on the House and Senate floors and in committees with advance notice to members and to the public. All meetings will be held in spaces that allow six feet of distance between individuals. We will implement telework arrangements for legislative employees where it is possible to do so. We encourage Minnesotans to continue to reach out to their legislators by email, telephone and mail during this period while we are operating via alternate means. We intend to take up legislation on the House and Senate floors during this time period only by agreement of the House DFL, House GOP, Senate DFL and Senate GOP caucus leaders.”

Rep. Bob Dettmer’s Military Action Group is on hold for the time being.

Know the 4 main COVID-19 scams

And know how to avoid them

The coronavirus pandemic has given rise to online scam artists offering phony cures and trying to steal scared people’s money.

Americans were told to stop selling sham vaccines, but that is the tip of iceberg and global catfishing is increasing as with all epidemics when people are most vulnerable.

SocialCatfish.com released a report on four coronavirus scams to avoid using current guidelines from the CDC and WHO and identifying common scams used during H1N1, Ebola and Zika outbreaks.

Here are four online coronavirus scams with tips on how to avoid them:

1. Family scams

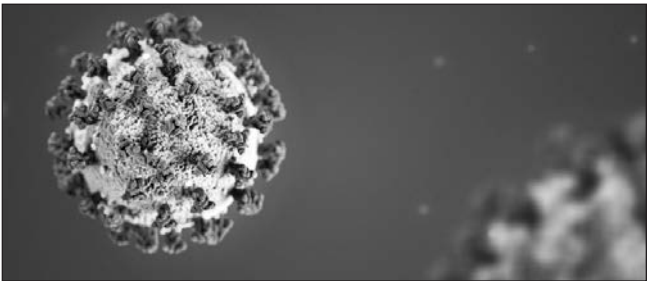
Grandparent and family scams often occur at night and target older adults. You will answer your phone and hear someone saying, “Grandma” or “Grandpa”. Maybe you’re a little tired, as it’s the evening and you don’t think twice when they ask you for a loan.

They’ll say that they’ve contracted the virus and are homebound and in quarantine. They will ask you to send them a gift card online, immediately, so they can buy delivery food or supplies. You’ll be upset and do so, without thinking twice. The caller will actually be a scammer and keep your money.

How to avoid: Always check your caller ID to make sure it is actually your loved one calling you. If you feel like scammers are masking the caller ID to make it seem like it’s your loved one, call them back on their trusted phone number to confirm and verify it’s them. Don’t send money over the phone, even if it is someone you think you trust and always give it to them in person.

2. Quack alert

You might love natural products, but if people are trying to



sell you colloidal silver or aromatherapy to combat the virus, you’re being scammed. There are currently no viable antibiotics for the Coronavirus and natural products are not, in any way, proven to do the trick and fight this illness.

The FTC is compiling these fraudulent scams and products and has released a list. You might see these scam products shared on social media with testimonials or warnings about the disease, don’t fall for them and keep your money for items you might actually need if you’re sick (like tissues or face masks).

How to avoid: Do not believe anyone who says they have found a natural remedy to cure the Coronavirus. Chances are they just want to sell you fake products so that they can take your hard-earned money to leave you broke and sick. The only ways to get better from the Coronavirus are to get rest, go to the doctor, and keep hydrated.

3. Fake vaccine

You love your friends and family and don’t want them to fall ill. However, if you are asked to contribute to a fund to develop a vaccine to fight against Coronavirus, you’re being scammed!

You might even receive a “secret” call, email, or text about a supposed government vaccine that only you and a select few are privy to. If it sounds too good to be true it is, especially in regards to the coronavirus. Don’t give the solicitor your credit card information, or it will be compromised/stolen and used!

How to avoid: Don’t listen to anyone who asks you for money over the phone, no matter what

the excuse is! If someone you don’t know asks for money over the phone, chances are they are probably a scammer trying to steal your money. Hospitals and universities will be the ones to help fund vaccines and research to try and find a cure, and they won’t bug people on the phone to help them.

4. Fake CDC and WHO emails

You receive a fake email which looks legitimate. It reads as if it was sent from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) or the World Health Organization (WHO). The email might link to a product that will “help you” However, the email is actually a scam and not really sent by the organization it appears to be from.

How to avoid: Don’t click on any email that claims it has a product to help cure you of the coronavirus. The cure will be on legitimate news pages before an email gets sent out listing a cure for this illness. If you still aren’t sure of whether to trust the email, look at the “reply to” email address and all hyperlinks in the email. They will link you to outside websites that are not secure and can collect all your financial data or download malware.

If you encounter a coronavirus scam, contact local law enforcement or file a complaint with the FTC. If your information was compromised (financial and personal data), check your credit report and request a credit freeze. While we shouldn’t panic, we can stay safe with good hygiene and remembering that most people stay healthy and recover fast, even from COVID-19.

Minnesotans, take care of mental health during social distancing

As the number of COVID-19 cases increases daily in Minnesota, across the United States and around the world, so do levels of anxiety, stress, and worry. For many, these feelings are compounded by social distancing.

It’s important to protect the health and safety of everyone, and the only way to do that is to prevent and slow the spread of the disease through social distancing and other quarantine measures. Yet while we protect our physical health during this pandemic, we can’t forget to address our mental health.

“Nationally, online screenings for anxiety have increased by nearly 20 percent over the last few weeks, and for many, social distancing inevitably means isolation and loneliness,” said Shannah Mulvihill, Mental Health Minnesota’s executive director. “It’s essential that people take care of their mental health as well as their physical health at this time, and we are working to share information, resources and suggestions that can help with that.”

Suggestions for managing mental health concerns during COVID-19/social distancing:

1. Check-in with others and connect through more than just email, text and social media.

Call or video chat with your friends and family to make sure they are okay and reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation.

2. Identify things you can do to reduce stress and anxiety. Consider what has helped you handle stress in the past, and make adjustments as needed to do those things (i.e. connecting with friends via Facetime instead of over coffee, exercise/yoga videos online instead of a group class, etc.)

3. Maintain structure in your day. Many people are now working remotely and/or are at home with their children. Creating structure/schedule in your day can help daily life to feel more “normal.”

4. Get outside if you can, even if it’s just in your yard, on a balcony, or just opening a window. Fresh air and sunshine can be very helpful in improving overall mood and decreasing feelings of depression and anxiety.

5. Take breaks from social media and news articles that are focused on COVID-19. While it’s important to stay informed, too much information can be overwhelming.

6. If you’re concerned about your mental health, take a free, anonymous mental health screening at www.mentalhealthmn.org.

mentalhealthmn.org. If you screen positive for a mental health condition, you’ll receive resources and information about next steps.

7. Know the resources that can help you, including the following:

Minnesota Warmline: A peer-to-peer line for mental health recovery and social isolation, open Monday-Saturday, 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. Toll-free at 877-404-3190 or text “support” to 85511.

Mental Health Helpline: Connections to mental health treatment and services across the state, open Monday-Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Toll-free at 800-862-1799 or via online chat at www.mentalhealthmn.org.

Minnesota Crisis Text Line: Text “MN” to 741741.

Minnesota County Crisis Response: Search by county or zip code at www.mentalhealthmn.org.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 800.273.TALK (8255).

SAMHSA’s Disaster Distress Helpline: 800.985.5990 or text “talkwithus” to 66746.

For more resources related to mental health and COVID-19/social distancing, visit www.mentalhealthmn.org.

Metro Mobility offers free grocery delivery

MINNEAPOLIS — Certified Metro Mobility customers and existing Transit Link customers can now order groceries and household essentials online from a store that has online shopping and local pick-up. Metro Mobility and Transit Link drivers will pick the order up and deliver it.

And the service is free — no fares for delivery.

Just tell the store that Metro Mobility or Transit Link is picking up and provide us your order number as proof of purchase for pick up. A four-bag

limit remains in effect.

Pickups must be scheduled at a commercial location. Drivers will verify your photo ID at drop-off.

West Zone (Transit Team)

651-602-1100
WReservations@metc.state.mn.us

East Zone (First Transit E.)

651-602-1120
EReservations@metc.state.mn.us

South Zone (First Transit S.)

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Listening Post

Editor's note: Dent Post 148 sent these last November, but with the Legionnaire adding pages to get in extra news about the pandemic, we now have space to run them. Thanks for the patience.



The principal of St. Paul's Lutheran School receives the flag.



The folded flag is given to all veterans.



Essay winners smile for the camera.

Every day is Veterans Day in Dent

On Veterans Day, Nov. 11, 2019, Dent Post 148 of The American Legion, in conjunction with St. Paul Lutheran School in Perham and St. Henry's Catholic School in Perham,

a Veterans Day program with the POW table, "Taps," the 13 folds of the flag was held. The Post presented the flag to the principal of St. Paul Lutheran School. Two students from St.

Henry's Catholic School read patriotic essays.

In the afternoon, Dent Post 148 performed the ceremony again and gave the flag to all veterans.



Steve Kohls/Brainerd Dispatch

Longtime farmer and World War II veteran Carl Eschenbacher, 92, of Brainerd recounts on Feb. 26 his years with the United States Merchant Marine. Despite suffering more casualties per capita than any branch of the Armed Services, veterans of the United States Merchant Marine — who functioned as an auxiliary to the U.S. Navy — didn't receive veterans benefits until a court ruling in 1988.

'The forgotten service': Man recounts time in Merchant Marine

By Gabriel D. Lagarde
Brainerd Dispatch

BRAINERD — Decades of hard farm labor have done little to diminish the towering frame of the World War II veteran who — at 92 years old — looks uncommonly spry, like he simply shrugged off the years much as he doggedly soldiered through the dangers of war, the loss of his first wife in 1987 and 40 years of injustice for his comrades in the United States Merchant Marine.

That's why Carl Eschenbacher, the retired farmer and part-time mail carrier from the hinterlands south of Brainerd, stopped by the Dispatch on Feb. 26 — the Merchant Marine. He's subdued, a little wary of the camera while he sits in a chair, interlaces his large age-spotted hands and recounts his life in a calm, measured sort of way.

"When I went into it, I didn't really know what it was like," Eschenbacher said. "I thought it was more like a Coast Guard. But, you know, we got to the employment service and this friend of mine, he joined and he asked me if I wanted to go. I was talking it over and I said 'Sure,' so I went home to the folks and told them I wanted to join. Well, mom, she just fell apart."

Signing up at the tender age of 17, Eschenbacher would serve from 1944 through 1947, criss-crossing the Atlantic at the tail end of World War II

and continuing to serve after its conclusion in places like the Panama Canal, Rotterdam, Spain, Germany and Italy.

As a mixture of the military and private sector support, the Merchant Marine played a low-key, if vital, role for the armed services during World War II, functioning as auxiliary seamen to the U.S. Navy and manning the supply ships that served as the lifeblood for the United States and its allies in the trans-continental conflict.

Despite this, Merchant Marine veterans were not eligible for benefits until a court ruling in 1988 — more than 40 years after the end of World War II, which left about 2,500 remaining Merchant Marine veterans out of roughly 20,000 who took up the fight. Up until that time, Eschenbacher said, a small headstone next to a veterans cemetery was about as good as you could get as a Merchant Marine.

Still, Merchant Marines remain a "forgotten service," said Eschenbacher, who pointed out that even at the Veteran's Affairs Office in St. Cloud staffers are unfamiliar with the Merchant Marine and often lump them together with the U.S. Marine Corps.

"I still get the Legion magazine and once in a while you'll see somebody who served with the Merchant Marine, but it's very seldom," Eschenbacher said. "People just don't remember the Merchant Marine."

Eschenbacher suspects the

unromantic role of the Merchant Marine as able-bodied seamen and suppliers is partially to blame for this lack of recognition, despite the inherent risk and danger of their work. Often vulnerable and unprotected on sluggish transport ships in the wide open ocean, hunted by German U-boats and Japanese bombers, more Merchant Marines died per capita than any branch of the armed forces, according to the U.S. Department of Defense.

"When the ship went down before they had convoys, there was nobody there to protect you," Eschenbacher said. "Once in a while they'd save some, but most of the time it was the end for them. ... There were a lot of ships sunk that we didn't know about until we got into the war. Such a waste, you know?"

On the other hand, World War II marked the end of an era, as the following decades saw the emergence of non-American ships being contracted to ship military supplies at a cheaper rate than the Merchant Marine. And, as the decades passed, he said, the "forgotten service" continued to become more and more obscure to the public consciousness.

But, now, with United States National Maritime Day coming up on May 22, Eschenbacher said he hopes more recognition can be given the United States Merchant Marine and the paltry few World War II veterans who remain of that service.

Congressionally mandated commission: Women should be eligible for draft

By Stars and Stripes

A congressionally mandated commission recommended March 25 that women should be eligible for the draft and required to sign up at 18.

Congress created the National Commission on Military, National and Public Service in 2017 to develop recommendations about the need for a military draft and how to foster an interest in all types of national service among young Americans. In their

final report, which was shared with the Pentagon, White House and Congress this week, commissioners recommend extending selective service registration to women.

"Women are as likely as men to be qualified for military service," said Debra Wada, vice chair of the commission and the former assistant secretary of the Army. "Ensuring they are part of the registration pool will only make sure we're more prepared. It signals that all Americans may be expected to

serve in a national emergency."

Conscription into the military hasn't been used in more than 45 years, but adult men are still required by law to sign up for selective service at 18. The commission proposed that Congress introduce legislation to amend the Military Selective Service Act to eliminate male-only registration. The policy change would expand draft eligibility to all Americans ages 18 to 26.

Over a period of nearly three years, commissioners held public meetings

and hearings, spoke to people in 42 cities, consulted more than 530 organizations and collected 4,300 public comments. The topic of extending the draft to women "evoked a range of passionate and heartfelt views," the commissioners wrote.

In the end, they decided the male-only military draft excludes women from a fundamental civic obligation, reinforces gender stereotypes about women's roles and omits a skilled population from being called into military

service during emergencies.

The commission found that 29 percent of men and slightly more women, at 29.3 percent, are qualified to meet the initial physical and educational standards to serve in the U.S. military, Wada said.

"Ultimately it comes down to making sure that at a time of critical need, we have access to highly qualified individuals," she said.

More than 224,000 women serve in the U.S. military.

District commanders



1st District

Dale Wellik

Greetings from the mighty 1st District American Legion Family.

We all need to stay strong through all of this global COVID-19 pandemic. It seems to be setting our schedules and then interrupting them, too. It is changing very fast and our commander in chief has to make some major changes.

Watch the websites mnlegion.org and mylegion.org and mnmightyfirst.org for updates. Somethings change faster than they can be updated.

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak most posts are closed temporary.

Membership revitalization in Austin was a good sign that revitalization does work. The 1st

District in Minnesota is in third place, less than 1 percent out of 1st place.

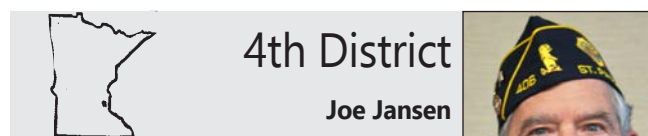
Minnesota is in first place in the nation. Good job!

Check in on our veterans, see if they need assistance with anything.

District convention is scheduled for May 16 in Austin at Post 91. Veterans Day on the Hill, planned for April 20, is cancelled.

Pray for our deployed troops and their families. Thank you for your service and support.

God bless. For God and Country.



4th District

Joe Jansen

Hello to all of you. I would normally be telling you about the upcoming meeting and what a good time we had on the third Sunday visiting with fellow veterans at the VA Medical Center, but it has been cancelled until further notice.

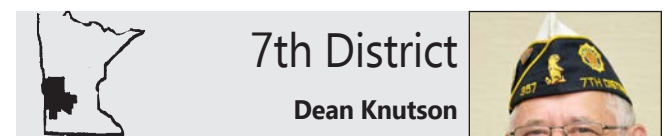
Thanks again to Ken and Sandy Gibson for getting the word out so quickly. Thanks to all the Posts that keep meeting and or exceeding membership goals.

If any of you Post commanders or members have questions about membership, please contact your vice commanders or me; we shall do our best to answer them.

The RCCC meeting this month was well-attended, but

we should be able to get representatives from more posts to attend.

Please remember my twin projects: Legionville can use both more student campers and more money. The Armed Forces Service Center needs more people to volunteer; however, the AFSC suspended operations starting at 4 p.m. March 18 and hopes to reopen April 13. It is due to two factors: First, the military has cancelled all leaves, hence no traveling GIs; second, at least half of our volunteers are over 65 years of age, the prime age group for infection.



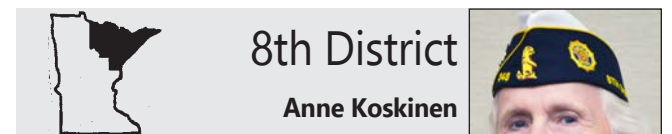
7th District

Dean Knutson

With all the news this past couple of weeks about health concerns for everyone and specifically the elderly people in your nation and communities and all of our veterans who may have underlying medical problems, we need to take all necessary precautions we can be maintain your health and the safety of everyone.

We as The American Legion have always been an orga-

nization to stand strong and united with one another through whatever may face us. Let's pray for continued strength and continue to encourage one another through this time. May God bless American Legion Family and bless this nation, and we emerge stronger than before.



8th District

Anne Koskinen

My, have things changed since my last posting.

The governor and federal administration have decided to cancel or limit the very kind of meetings that we utilize regularly. We will try to complete our business as best as possible using various methods and limiting our meetings size.

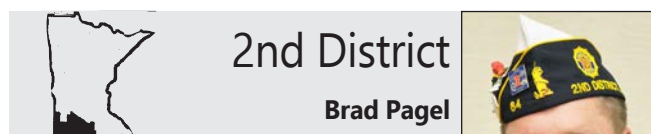
Our ad-hoc Bylaws Committee formed to review our District bylaws for revisions necessary to update them to present, and make changes to represent the present needs of our District, and stay in line with the Department and National. Tentatively, we still meet on April 4 in West Duluth Post, necessary to present the changes to the membership in the May newsletter (30 days minimum before voting on them at Convention). If you are interested, contact me, or come to West Duluth Post (check first).

Please be active in your community; there are many things to help with people being kept inside at homes without visitors now. Helping with meal deliveries is one thing that comes to mind.

I urge Legionnaires to take on work on District committees, as chair or just be a member to help out. At this time, we will still have District Convention on June 6 at Hibbing Post 222, and can sort this out there.

Follow the American Legion Twitter feed @AmericanLegion. National has been posting a lot of time sensitive information on meetings and projects (etc.) in the (temporary) era of the COVID-19.

Please comment on their posts so that the leadership gets your thoughts registered.



2nd District

Brad Pagel

I was watching one of my favorite television shows the other night, "S.W.A.T.," and at the end of it there were a couple of scenes that were pretty emotional. The background music that played was, "For What It's Worth" by Buffalo Springfield.

Some of you might remember this song from 1967. It really struck me and got my mind rolling, listening to the lyrics of that song.

There are some of the lyrics of the song that truly can be applied to The American Legion Family.

There's battle lines being drawn.

Nobody's right if everybody's wrong.

Young people speaking' their minds.

Getting so much resistance from behind.

It's time we stop.

Hey, what's that sound?

Everybody look, what's going down?

What's that sound you ask? Well, that sound you're hearing rumbling deep and loud is the younger veterans that are American Legion Family mem-

bers, who are tired of the status quo and are willing to make the sacrifices and changes needed to be the loudest voices we have for veterans' rights and benefits.

The future of this organization is the younger generations, adapting and overcoming, following the ways with new ideas, but staying with tradition at the same time, is the direction needed in order to survive, as the organization everyone looks to for guidance.

To the older members, you have had your time and leadership to make good for this organization, but now is the time to take a step back and mentor the younger members that have the passion and desire to move up and help them make this the greatest organization for the future of veterans' rights and benefits.

Is that not what this organization was founded on over 100 years ago?

Still Serving America.



5th District

Andrew Rose Sr.

Greetings 5th District Family. We're praying that you all are in good health and taking all precautions to stay that way. We have made the decision to cancel several functions so far.

Wold-Chamberlain: March 22 pancake breakfast, April 4 President's Dinner and Fundraiser, April 7 American Legion District assembly.

At last membership report we are still in last place. We can still work the phones and do mailings to get our numbers up.

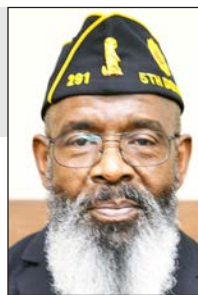
Next up is the 5th District Testimonial at Post 1 on May 2, and 5th District assembly at Post 1 on May 5, hosted by Northside Post 230.

By the time of these events, we're hoping that there will be

a let up of the coronavirus.

The commander's project, Every Third Saturday, is still accepting donations for veterans and veterans families. It is still important to donate items and also monetary donations will be accepted. Reach Tom McKenna at 952-356-5116 or tom@everythirdsaturday.com.

I know it is important to visit our sick and convalescing veterans. With restrictions in place we can call with a joyous word or two. I'm sure it would mean a lot to them. Remember there is no hospital visitation until further notice.



9th District

Lowell Philp

Greetings from the 9th District.

Please keep our deployed military personnel in your prayers. They are in foreign countries away from their family and friends. Many are facing the unknown for the first time, while others are encountering it again and again. We thank them for serving our country.

Many of our reserve members are participating in operations here in the United States. We also thank them for what they are doing.

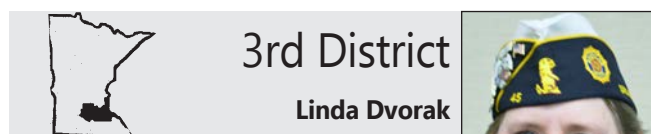
It is hard to fight against a silent predator. COVID-19 is

that threat. Please pray for our leaders and doctors.

These are unusual times that require unusual measures. Please keep yourself informed, social distance yourself and self-quarantine.

Check on our older veterans, the elderly and your neighbors. Keep in touch by phone or computer. Most of all, pray for each other.

We will get through this. *May God bless each of you.*



3rd District

Linda Dvorak

Hello, Legionnaires, The COVID-19 has sure had an effect on all of our lives, canceling events and postponing others. We will all get through this trying time, just as we have prevailed in all other times of distress.

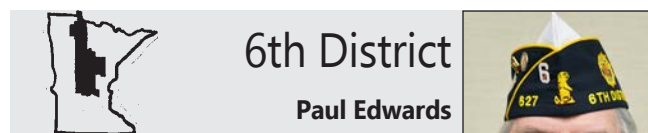
The 3rd District had its first post-level MyLegion.Org training, and it went over quite well. Not only did we cover all things membership, but we even had those posts that had not submitted their CPR to get that started as well.

It is that time of year when membership is getting harder to get, just remember the people who join now are really getting

their membership for another 9 months. The membership drive starts in July, but the membership is still valid until Dec. 31. It is a good idea to let the new members know that even though they will start getting renewal notices in July, their membership is good through the end of the year.

I like to compare it to a magazine subscription. You always start getting your notices way before your subscription lapses.

Have a safe and healthy month.



6th District

Paul Edwards

Greetings to the Legion Family,

Holy buckets, what a month! And it is only half over. Time change, Friday the 13th, full moon, coronavirus, home from a cruise with the flu, schools and bars closing, events canceled or postponed and, to top it all off, a toilet paper shortage.

You just can't make this stuff up.

As of the March 11 report, the 6th District is No. 2 in the Department for membership. We have 24 posts at 100 percent or higher and 9 posts that are at 103 percent or higher and qualify for the national commander's 103 percent award. Good work so far, but don't let up. And don't forget to talk about the Legion Act when recruiting new members.

During the months of April, May and June, the Legion is typically revving up for District and Department conventions and

elections. Many people are needed to head committees and to serve in leadership positions. Legion membership is not a spectator sport, so I encourage everyone to look at your personal skill sets and assets to see where you might be able to serve the Legion.

In Legion Education news, the first session of the Minnesota American Legion College for the 21st century will be held at Camp Ripley on May 29-31. The cost will be \$150 per person and will include materials and lodging. Applications are available online at mnlegion.org/legion-college/. Application deadline is April 15. Participation for the first session will be limited to two students per district.

Until next month, For God and Country.



Mpls. VA nixes elective surgeries

Out of an abundance of caution due to COVID-19 and to limit the risk of exposure to patients and staff, Minneapolis VA Health Care System is cancelling all elective surgeries and procedures, effective immediately and until further notice.

While the Centers for Disease Control still considers COVID-19 to be a low threat to the general American public, several veterans, staff and volunteers fall into the high-risk categories that are susceptible to this virus, according to a Minneapolis VA

news release. It says these additional measures will help protect the most vulnerable patients and reduce the risk of exposure to our health care workers.

In addition to these new measures, everyone who currently enters any VA facility is pre-screened. Since this lengthens entry times into the facility, patients are advised to allow extra time when arriving for their appointments.

Veterans can also use virtual care options such as Telehealth, and MyHealtheVet.



The Auxiliary Bulletin

No. 20 Vol. 9

President Mary Hendrickson • Secretary Sandie Deutsch

Dept. HQ: Veterans Service Building, St. Paul, MN 55155

651-224-7634

April 2020

Stay safe during difficult times of coronavirus

President's Column

Mary Hendrickson



Late March brought the world and each of us a new kind of normal: a need for social isolation, great concern for the health and safety of our family and friends, fears concerning our work status and economy.

As we know, there are no precedents to learn from, guidebooks or crystal balls to predict the future for pandemics. First and foremost, we need to take care of ourselves and our families.

Community service is such a large part of the American Legion Auxiliary philosophy and agenda. If you are able, please check on your neighbors.

They may need food supplies, medicine from the drugstore or something as simple as a "How are you doing?" telephone call.

We are a caring organization that always steps up when there are needs to be met.

Looking back, the first three weeks of March were very busy ones for me. I enjoyed the Leadership Workshop led by 2nd Vice President and Leadership Chairman Mary Kuperus held at the Forest Lake American Legion Post. There was a nice turnout of Auxiliary members even though it was a Sunday morning.

I was very pleased to see several Junior Auxiliary members at this workshop. They were active participants and made me feel confident about the future of our organization.

Before the pandemic crisis arrived, my husband, Carl, and I were able to attend American Legion birthday parties in Brownston and Anoka. I had been to the Anoka Post two weeks earlier to attend the Minnesota American Legion Oratorical Contest Finals.

All seven contestants were very good. This is a wonderful program — one we need to

encourage more participation in in our Minnesota high schools. I was saddened to hear the National Oratorical Contest Championship had to be cancelled.

Speaking of cancellations, due to medical concerns, the April 6-8 visit from our National President Nicole Clapp had to be cancelled. Our agenda included visits to several veterans homes and VA medical centers, which were now closed to visitors and volunteers.

I want to thank all the Units that had made plans to host luncheons and dinners. Your work was greatly appreciated. President Nicole would have been so impressed by the Armed Forces Service Center at the Minneapolis-St. Paul Airport, the Brain Science Center at the University of Minnesota, as well as our veterans homes and VA medical centers.

As news updates about coronavirus continue to appear at a rapid pace, I predict there will be a need for me to cancel more scheduled visits to Units and Posts.

This is a great disappointment since I've really enjoyed getting out there meeting members of the American Legion Family. I've also canceled my Testimonial Luncheon scheduled for April 25. No alternate date has been scheduled at this time.

We all need to pray for the world and everyone affected in anyway by the pandemic. Happy Easter. Stay healthy and safe in these difficult times.

Mary Hendrickson is the president of the American Legion Auxiliary Department of Minnesota.

A letter from National President Nicole Clapp

Good morning to all!

As our country faces a health crisis, let us remember that the American Legion Auxiliary is a community of volunteers! Our veterans, military, their families, our fellow members and our communities need us now more than ever.

If you or any of your members are able, please consider assisting those who may need help. Perhaps contacting an elderly member or neighbor that needs groceries or just needs to hear from you. You can do this safely while continuing social distancing, what a great community service you could offer.

Just because we're staying at home, it doesn't mean we can't reach out to one another. You can call, text, FaceTime or even sing from a balcony or rooftop — whatever it takes!

The time is now to strengthen our organization, as Past National President Opal Glynn challenged us during the Vietnam War. Our upcoming Week of Caring and Sharing is April 1-7. Like The

American Legion's Buddy Checks, it adds that personal touch to reuniting and connecting with current and former members.

Any checks made during this time at home, checking on your members, will count toward the Week of Caring and Sharing.

We realize with everything going on, it will be difficult to get those rejoins in to National. We will extend the deadline for Week of Caring and Sharing verification form to May 15 to allow extra time to get information entered, and we will count any member that is rejoined in ALAMIS (American Legion Auxiliary Management Information System) between April 1 and May 15.

We are aware that membership processing has slowed down due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We are NOT concerned. We know that the membership processing will pick up soon and we will be back on the road to reaching 100



Nicole Clapp

percent as a national organization.

Encourage your members to pay online, or to call National Headquarters and pay over the phone. Currently, they are working and able to take your phone calls and answer questions. They are practicing social distancing and want to help each of you!

Our prayer for you all is to stay healthy and move forward. Light that firecracker under fellow members and know that we are behind you all and are here for you. Thank you all for your continued efforts.

Nicole Clapp of Gladbrook, Iowa, Unit 127 is the national president of the American Legion Auxiliary. She is the first national Junior president to become the national Auxiliary president.

What's happening and now not happening ...

By Sandie Deutsch

Editor's note: This was written days prior to Gov. Tim Walz's shelter-in-place order of March 25.

This will be quite a unique two pages this month as I am not a journalist and can't think of too much to write. The following events have been altered:

- The National President's Tour is off.
- Junior Conference will be rescheduled.
- Girls State is still on for the original week. Please send in your reservation money.
- Department Convention is still on as scheduled — please make your reservations today

I want to let all of our American Legion Family know that the Department Auxiliary Office is open as usual and will continue to be open each day.

I am running the office with one person in-house every day at the present time.

I have our office set up to be able to work remotely (all employees) so we can get you whatever you need. As only one person will be answering the phones, please have patience with us and either leave a message or call back and we will get you whatever you may need.

President Mary Hendrickson's Testimonial

President Mary Hendrickson's testimonial has been cancelled for April 25 and rescheduled for June 20. Commander Mark Dvorak graciously offered

to have a joint testimonial with Mary.

It will be held at the New Prague Park Ballroom Post 45, 300 Lexington Ave. S., New Prague.

Please contact Linda Dvorak at 952-457-2129 or email ldvorak@gmail.com for further information or to make reservations. The deadline to sign up is June 10.

2020 American Legion Auxiliary Minnesota Girls State

Registration fees for the 2020 session of American Legion Auxiliary Minnesota Girls State were due on March 31.

We are still taking reservations so get your \$300 in soon. Units may send as many girls as they choose to from the same high school.

Your American Legion Auxiliary Minnesota Girls State citizens must attend a public, charter, parochial, private or home school in Minnesota or be a resident of Minnesota. Reservations are taken on a first come, first served basis. We are still taking reservations and would like each Unit to participate.

Minnesota Girls State happens the week of June 14 at Bethel University in Arden Hills.

Annual reports, trophies and awards due April 15

Annual report time is fast approaching. All Units should be preparing their reports covering the time period April 1, 2019, to March 31, 2020.



text and photo submitted by Tiny Engebretson
The Marietta American Legion Auxiliary has five members from the same family. Front: Great-great-grandmother Barb Bockes. Back: Great-grandmother Loretta Anderson, Grandma Robin Stamp and mother Angie Stamp holding Great-great-granddaughter Ella Stamp. Together, they have a collective 115 years of membership.

The white copy is all that needs to be returned to the Department Office by April 15. It is important that your Unit report your activities each year and send them in.

Trophy and Award entries are also due by April 15 unless otherwise stated in the rules. Be certain to label each entry with the name of the award you are applying for.

Follow this year's rules. A separate entry is needed for each award unless the Department winner is forwarded for National competition. Any Unit may apply for any award whether your Unit has reached its membership goal or not unless that is a requirement stated in

the rules.

I realize how you are unable to meet as a group to complete your reports but each chairman needs to do the best they can to get us in the information they have.

Even if it means each Unit chairman sends her report to the Department Office individually, we will get them all put together for you as we receive them.

Please do your best with both annual reports and also enter your members and Units for awards they so duly should be getting.

We have many members going over and above at this time with everything in such turmoil to serve our veterans.

March 23, 2020, Membership:

District	Goal	Membership To Date	Percent of Goal	Membership Last Year 3/20/19
One	4,177	3,837	91.86%	3,880
Two	4,191	3,820	91.15%	3,947
Three	4,064	3,700	91.04%	3,716
Four	624	562	90.06%	566
Five	603	536	88.89%	557
Six	5,393	4,934	91.49%	5,030
Seven	3,369	3,035	90.09%	3,164
Eight	1,363	1,245	91.34%	1,251
Nine	3,618	3,262	91.16%	3,365
Ten	4,304	3,843	89.29%	3,947
1982	178	192	107.87%	173
Totals	31,884	28,966	90.85%	29,596

Will you wear purple on April 15 for military kids?

Purple up!, Department of Minnesota American Legion Family!

Purple Up! for Military Kids Day is April 15. This is a day for communities to wear purple to show support and thank military children for their strength and sacrifices but also the whole month of April is known officially as the month of the military child.

Purple indicates that all branches of the military are supported; Air Force blue, Army green, Navy blue, Marine red and Coast Guard blue all thought to combine as a single color, purple.

We need to help build awareness for the needs of our military families and celebrate our other heroes ... our military children. This grassroots effort began in 2011 to honor the sacrifices that our military children make every day for our country.

How can we celebrate? Wear Purple on April 15; ask

local officials and businesses to wear purple on Purple Up! Day, ask local schools, sports teams, youth organizations, clubs, after school programs, and community organizations to recognize Purple UP! Day, request local businesses, stores and restaurants post a Purple Up! message in their establishments or on social media.

Use the hashtag #MNALAPurpleUp to show your activities or take selfies of yourself and members wearing purple to support our military children. Be creative and have fun celebrating our military children.

DRAWING! I will be doing a random drawing from the hashtags for one lucky American Legion Family member!

According to the Department of Defense there are over 700 military child development program facilities around the world. These facilities are welcoming around 200,000 children daily.

Children & Youth

Robin Dorf



Approximately 2 million military children have experienced a parental deployment since 9/11 and the average military family moves three times more often than their civilian counterpart.

Our military children bear a difficult burden that most children do not. They may not always understand what's going on when their parents deploy or get re-assigned, depending on their age. They are not always willing to share with other friends or adults.

We need to be available to support where and when we can. Due to privacy your unit would not be able to get names of students within your schools, but your unit can reach out to your school administration, counselors and social workers to let

them know if there are needs for these students to contact your Children and Youth chair-

man or unit representative.

The Department of Minnesota members are very proud of our Children and Youth programs throughout the state. Members take great pride in promoting a positive image of our organization in their communities, supporting and caring for the children in their communities, with the emphasis of those of veterans and military families.

Robin Dorf is the children and youth chairwoman for the American Legion Auxiliary

Secretary's Notes

Sandie Deutsch



My dear friends, where does one start?

Many of you who know me know that I am never out of words, but today I am having problems.

My heart breaks for our veterans in hospital and homes who can't have visitors and also for our own representatives who can't get in the facilities at this time and do what they love to do — serve our veterans.

I received a call from Mary Ann Davis who is bored and misses her job at the Minneapolis VA Health Care System.

What does that tell you about dedication?

I pray every day that things get back to normal for a few selfish reasons — I so want Department Convention to go on without a hitch.

I have worked closely with President Mary Hendrickson, and she has had quite an interesting and sometimes trying year so far. She has handled everything with professionalism, tact and compassion and I commend her.

I feel I have another friend for life and hope she feels the same. I have a new grandson arriving the first part of May

and so want to go down and be with my family.

My heart breaks for our Honorary Junior President Emily as we have to postpone her Junior Conference, and she has done such a tremendous job this year.

Come hell or high water, Emily will have her conference!

Please remember our office is here to serve you and if there is anything you need call anytime. I have the best staff in the world who really want to be in the office daily — they are very dedicated and hard-working.

That is my shout out for this month!

Prayers and love to you all and for a speedy end to whatever this is we are in the middle of. I have my own opinions on this entire fiasco but will save that for another time.

Sandie Deutsch is the executive secretary for the American Legion Department of Minnesota.

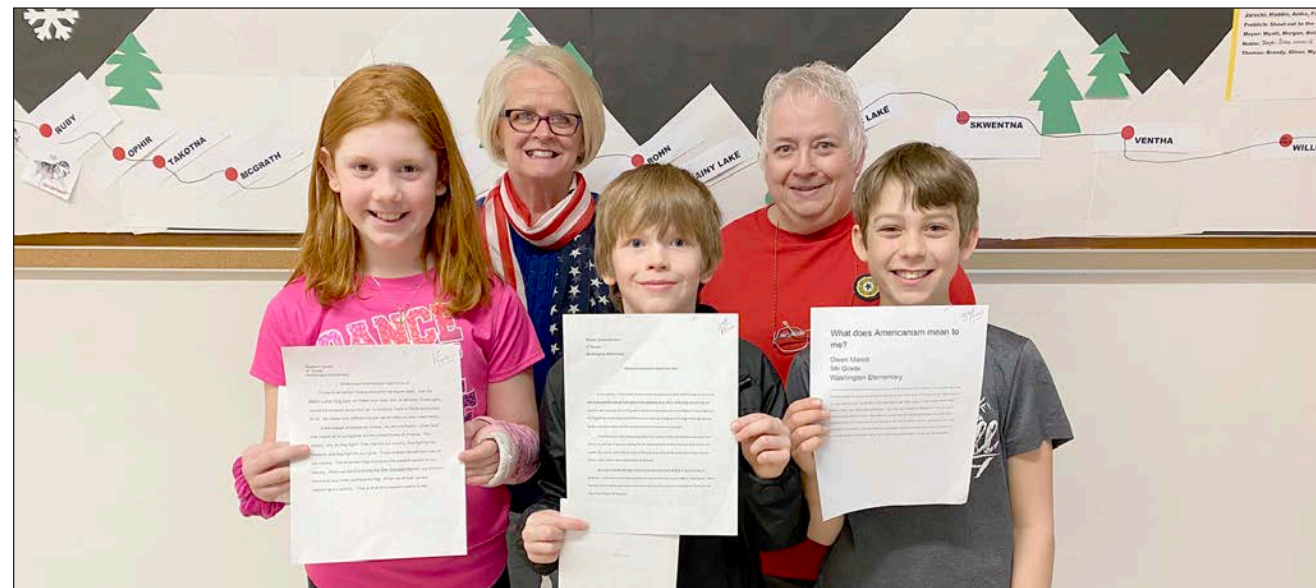
Celebration postponed

The celebration of life for Vicki Bibeau, which was planned for April 11 in Walker, has been postponed. A new day, time and place will be announced at a later date.

Auxiliary Taps

Wilhemson, Lucille H., 95, died Dec. 3, 2019. She was a member of the Spring Grove Auxiliary Unit 249.

THANKFUL



Ely Americanism Contest winners are pictured above.

A very proud grandmother, Patti Buffington from Ely Unit 248, sent this, written by Owen Marolt, who received third place in their competition:

"Americanism is being patriotic to our country. What Americanism means to me is that I am free because those who have come before that have given that right of freedom to us. When I grow up, I can pick the job I would like. I can play safe in the town I live in. I have clean water and healthy food. I can get a good education. I can say the Pledge of Allegiance. We can go to school and do what we want. We believe in being loyal by following the laws. In some other countries there is no clean water, but there is in the United States. When I get older I can vote for president if I want to. I am thankful for the people that have risked their lives for others for our country so we have these rights. We should respect our flag to show our Americanism."

STRONGER TOGETHER



National American Legion Auxiliary President Nicole Clapp of Iowa, second from left, shares the stage at the Washington Conference Commander's Call on March 10 with Sons of the American Legion National Commander Clint D. Bolt of Virginia, far left, and American Legion National Commander Bill Oxford, third from left. Speaking in this photo is Texas congressman Mac Thornberry, who was awarded the American Legion's Distinguished Public Service Award. Clapp and Bolt also appeared with Oxford before a joint Senate-House hearing on veterans affairs on March 11. Congress stopped accepting visitors on March 12 due to coronavirus restrictions.

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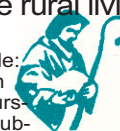


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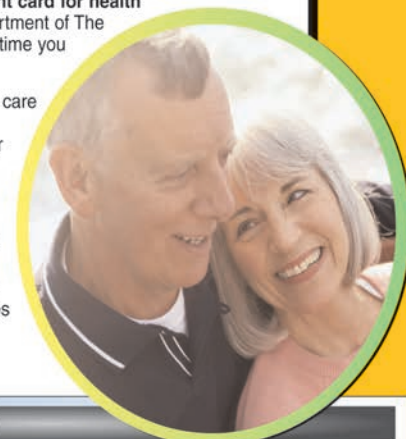
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Hearing	HearPO	30% - 62%	1,600
24-hour NurseLine	Optum	N/A	Unlimited Access
Diabetes Management	Liberty Medical	15%	N/A
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