



## Dept. looking at dues increase

### Finance Committee recommends \$3

ST. CLOUD — The Department of Minnesota Finance Committee recommended a state-level dues increase at its meeting Sept. 19 at Elk River Post 112.

Carl Moon of Zimmerman Post 560 gave a report on the Finance Committee's meeting at the Department of Minnesota Executive Committee meeting Oct. 26 the day before the Fall Conference in St. Cloud.

Moon filled in for the committee chairman, who was unable to attend. Moon was the chairman the prior year.

He said the committee recommends a dues increase of \$3 for the Department of Minnesota beginning in the 2025 year. National American Legion HQ is raising its share of dues by \$5.

"We had a budget our commander said he wanted to balance. That made it a little difficult because we were over budget by about \$175,000," Moon said.

The increase in national-level dues was approved at the 104th National Convention in Charlotte. Any state-level dues increase would need to be approved at a department convention. The 105th Department Convention is July 11-13 in Willmar.

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Carl Moon

# E-tabs in the spotlight



Allied Charities of Minnesota held a town hall forum on electronic pulltabs during its annual convention on Thursday, Nov. 16, in St. Cloud. ACM has held the meetings throughout the state since the end of the legislative session. From left are ACM Executive Director Rachel Jenner, Electronic Gaming Group Executive Director Sam Krueger, state Sen. Aric Putnam, state Rep. Bernie Perryman, state Rep. Dan Wolgamott and Protect Our Charities Executive Director Keith Franke.

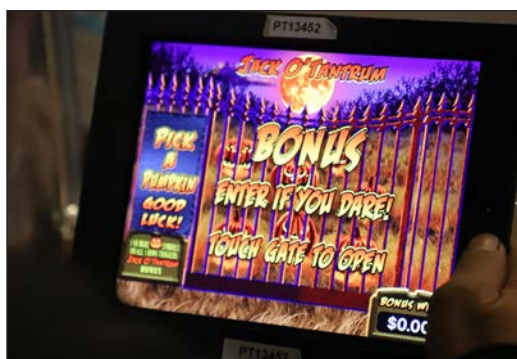
## Lawmakers from St. Cloud area debate questionable way e-tab legislation passed

ST. CLOUD — The Allied Charities of Minnesota had the highest attendance for its annual convention in its history, at 830 people. The issue of electronic pulltabs was heard throughout the gathering.

The ACM Annual Convention was at the River's Edge Convention Center in St. Cloud on Nov. 16 and 17. ACM is an organization comprising licensed charitable gambling organizations from around the state.

There are 194 American Legion posts and Auxiliary units with gambling licenses, which makes Legion charities easily the largest participant in charitable gambling in Minnesota.

For a town hall forum on e-tabs, Sam Krueger, registered lobbyist and executive director for the Electronic Gaming Group, recounted the 2023 legislative



A bar patron plays a bonus round for the e-tab game called "Jack O'Tantrum."

session and how the e-tab language skipped the committees.

"In order to get a fair shake at the Legislature, you got to go through the committee process," he said. "Finally, around mid-April, we were told something is coming and there is nothing you can do about it."

All session long, the e-tab issue discussed was the open-all button. Charities showed paper pulltabs can be opened at once by hand and not just three at a time, so e-tabs are similar.

When the tax omnibus bill came out of a conference committee, there were six hours left in the session before adjournment, and this bill had new language that went beyond merely the open-all feature, Krueger

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## Dept. of Minn. partners with book publisher to preserve stories

ST. PAUL — The American Legion Department of Minnesota has partnered with a Texas company to produce an oral history of department veterans as a means to raise funds.

"Veterans of all eras have fascinating stories, and this book will provide a way for documenting their service to the country and to their communities," said Adjutant Mike Maxa. "When a veteran shares a story, it really is a big deal and it matters."

PCI is a company out of Dallas that has access to the Legion's membership

database and is a longtime trusted protector of that database. It works with many American Legion departments across the nation. PCI stands for Publishing Concepts Inc. It is a 100-year-old family-owned business.

Executive Vice President Rex Petrasko said PCI will mail postcards to members in February asking them to call a dedicated 1-800 number to share their story in the service, in the Legion and in any other life experiences.

"It's only members who can be in this project," he said, "but you have



Shown is a similar oral history book PCI did with the American Legion Department of North Carolina.

to call us to be in it."

He said when members call the number, the company confirms that the caller, then a recorded interview commences. The average interview is 15 minutes, though some are longer.

"At the conclusion of the interview, we ask them if they would like to reserve a copy of the oral history project publication," Petrasko said.

After telling a story, there is no obligation to purchase.

The American Legion Department of Minnesota  
Continued on Page 3

## Minnesota Legionnaire debuts website at legionnaire.org

### Frequency of paper issue to drop to 9 a year

ST. PAUL — First, the good news: The Minnesota Legionnaire has a new website at legionnaire.org. Content will update 24/7 and be shareable across social media platforms.

Now, the bad news: The Minnesota Legionnaire print edition will reduce in frequency to nine issues a year instead of 12.

"The postage costs are hurting," said Editor Tim Engstrom. "About five years ago, it cost around \$8,000 or \$9,000



A screenshot of the new website.

per issue to send out the Legionnaire to all Minnesota Legionnaires. Now, even though there are fewer members, and we have the lowest possible nonprofit rate available, it is \$15,000 to \$17,000. There's nothing we can do."

The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs, near the end of last year, awarded a Support Our Troops License Plate Grant to help the Legionnaire offset rising postage costs for one year and to aid with the cost developing a new website. Until the grant could be worked out, Bayport Post 491 made a generous donation that covered the

Legionnaire's postage costs for last December's issue.

"We would be on life support without the grant and Bayport. The idea with this transition is that, on one hand, we have to reduce engagement in print, but, on the other, we can increase engagement online," Engstrom said. "And, besides, this will help us to reach younger veterans who prefer to consume media online."

The Legionnaire is a separate nonprofit from the American Legion Department of Minnesota. The Board of  
Continued on Page 2

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**MINNESOTA COMMANDERS' TASK FORCE**



The American Legion Department of Minnesota participates in the legislative efforts of the Minnesota Commanders' Task Force with other congressionally chartered veterans organizations. The CTF met Nov. 14 at Federal Cartridge in Anoka to approve its 2024 legislative priorities. Watch for them to be posted at mnctf.org.

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We are offering what's called a "voluntary subscription." The Minnesota Legionnaire comes free with membership in The American Legion in any Minnesota post. The print edition will be nine issues in 2024. By donating \$35 before the end of the fiscal year in August, we can prevent the Legionnaire print edition from reducing to just six issues next year. Let's help keep it at nine. Please send a voluntary subscription for \$35 today to:  
The Minnesota Legionnaire  
20 W. 12th St. Room 300A  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
Also, please be sure to thank our loyal advertisers and inquire about their services.

**Legionnaire asks readers to donate \$35 a year**

Continued from Page 1  
Publications approved reducing the frequency at its Sept. 28 meeting. This December 2023 issue is the final monthly issue.

Going forward, the print edition will come out every six weeks, for a total of nine per year.

The new website, however, will have fresh content daily. Want to see photos from the Fall Conference in St. Cloud? They are there. It has Taps, Listening Post, Mail Call, all the same content but as a website. St. Paul Media developed the website. "They did a fantastic job," Engstrom said.

He said it was surprising that the National American Legion Headquarters didn't already own legionnaire.org, since its main site is legion.org and its members are called Legionnaires. He noticed it was available in November 2022 and quickly scooped it up.

The Board of Publications is suggesting members pay a \$35 voluntary subscription to help offset the rising costs so that the Legionnaire doesn't drop down again to six times a year.

"Even if a quarter of our

**Support Our Troops Grant**

Posts are eligible for Support Our Troops License Plate grants during the annual application window. Learn more at minnesotaveteran.org or search "MDVA grants" online.

members donate the \$35, we would have the funds to keep the print version solid," said Board of Publications Vice President Michael Ash. "This is a valuable publication for getting information in the hands of veterans statewide."

See the box above to learn about voluntary subscriptions.

The Minnesota Legionnaire began in 1920. It came out every two weeks up until the late 1970s, when it became a monthly publication. It typically



**The November issue of the Legionnaire is shown. The publication is relied upon in the Minnesota veterans community for news, schedules, updates and veteran recognition.**

would arrive near the beginning of the month, or within the first four days generally.

Here are the 2024 dates for when The Minnesota Legionnaire is estimated to arrive in mailboxes:

- Jan. 12
- March 1
- April 12
- May 24
- July 5 (Convention Issue)
- Aug. 16
- Sept. 27
- Nov. 8
- Dec. 20

Advertising is available for purchase in the print or online versions. If more posts purchased advertisements for their bars and restaurants, that would help, too, Ash said. Contact Engstrom at tengstrom@mnlegion.org to inquire about advertising.

"I would imagine Legion Family members might like to dine out at different posts if they knew what specials were cooking or what charitable gambling they offered," Ash said. "The cost would pay for itself through increased customers."

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# 'E-tabs are the future of gaming'

Continued from Page 1

said. The language removed free plays and bonus games starting in January 2025, and it gave a smidgeon of the tax relief the charities had asked for. The top tax level, at 36 percent, became 33.5 percent, starting July 2023.

"And that is the language we are stuck with today," Krueger said.

There was a lie perpetuated during the 2023 session — politicians saying the Minnesota Court of Appeals wanted the Legislature to fix the law regarding the 2012 e-tab agreement with the tribes. Krueger said it was never the case. The courts only ruled that the Gambling Control Board improperly communicated a rule via email.

"It certainly didn't say the Legislature had to do something," Krueger said.

At the forum, state Rep. Bernie Perryman of St. Augusta said she could not properly represent her district because there was no time.

"There's nothing illegal about it. It's just icky," she said.

State Rep. Dan Wolgamott of St. Cloud said it was the most frustrating thing he has seen in his five years at the Legislature. He noted the next session begins Feb. 12 and it would be good to adjust the law before charities are impacted in 2025.

"We can't take legal action, but we can take legislative action," he said.

State Sen. Aric Putnam of St. Cloud sits on the Senate Taxes Committee. He said the matter was more than tribes and charities. He said manufacturers, providers and the Gambling Control Board are factors, too.

He said the open-all feature was not supposed to be part of e-tabs. Krueger corrected the senator and said the very first games approved by the state had open-all feature, as well as bonus games and free plays.

"No one complained until these games took off," Krueger said.

Putnam added that lawmakers were left with little time and said stuffing the language into an omnibus bill means he would have had to vote against valuable things like tax relief on Social Security income.

Perryman countered, "It should have been pulled out. It should have been a stand-alone. Why couldn't we have done that for all Minnesotans?"

Wolgamott went against his party last spring and voted against scaling back e-tabs. He said he favored sending the language back to the conference committee.

"There are times you need to stand up and buck your party," said Keith Franke, a former state representative from St. Paul Park and executive director of Protect Our Charities. "Do what's right for Minnesota and remove politics."

ACM Executive Director Rachel Jenner said the main concern of charities across the state is losses in revenue. She fears the games, after January 2025, will be less entertaining and players will drop. Lacking features limits the ability to evolve the games as software updates and improves.

"E-tabs are the future of gaming in Minnesota," she said.

Perryman said it was irresponsible of lawmakers to pass the e-tab language without a fiscal note. Vetting laws is part of the duty of elected officials, she said.

Franke shared some figures estimating 20 percent losses.

"I personally feel it's going to be a lot worse than that. People are going to be mad."

## Charitable gambling stats

Jenner, citing recently released figures from the Minnesota Gambling Control Board, said charitable gambling in Minnesota in the 12 months ending June 30 had \$4,572,210,494 in gross receipts. Gross receipts are customers paying cash to play the games.

There were \$3,907,332,817 in prizes paid to those customers.

That left \$664,877,676 in net receipts. Net receipts get turned into two kinds of expenditures by each organization: allowable expenses and lawful purposes.

Allowable expenses are costs related to the conduct of gambling: wages, purchasing games, rent, license scanners, attending the convention. Lawful purposes are charitable donations, program expenditures, regulatory fees and state taxes.

There were \$335,195,312 in allowable expenses. There were \$330,364,035 in lawful purpose expenditures (LPE for short). Do the math and you see \$665,559,347 in total expenditures, which is more than the net receipts. That just means \$681,671 in retained funds from the prior year were spent down.

Of the LPE, \$193,129,939 went to state taxes and \$137,234,097 went to charitable contributions, nonprofit program costs and regulatory fees. It's easy to notice that more goes to the state than to the many good causes around Minnesota.

Overall, charitable gambling in Minnesota went up 6.4 percent over the prior fiscal year.

## New GCB portal

Gambling Control Board Director Tim Mahoney said his staff was asked more questions than anyone could recall, and they were happy to provide

## Legislative stance for 2024

There is plenty of debate over what happened in 2023, but what are nonprofit organizations asking from the 2024 Legislature?

Here it is:

- Provide meaningful tax relief. Last session, the lawmakers granted tax relief bringing the top-tier from 36 percent to 33.5 percent, a slim reduction. Charities want that level to be 25 percent but would accept 30. The corporate income tax rate in Minnesota is 9.8 percent. Why are charities being taxed so harshly in comparison? The funds charities raise largely go back into their local economies and the good causes they donate to provide a valuable safety net for the disadvantaged.

- Broaden the tax structure. Right now, once an organization reaches \$157,000 in combined net receipts for their fiscal year, they already are at the top tier for monthly taxes. ACM and other organizations want to modernize the tier structure for the current economy. This, too, would provide some measure of tax relief. The other tiers presently are 25 percent for over \$122,500 accumulated, 17 percent for over \$87,500 accumulated and 8 percent for starting off.

- Reinstate bonus games and free plays. Bonus games and free plays do not mimic slot machines in any way, and courts have ruled on this. What determines slot machines are variable prize structures, jackpots and unlimited bets — not bonus games or free plays. Besides, what's the difference between awarding a free play on a \$5 game or a \$5 prize? Nothing. The tribes only asked for removal of the open-all feature last session. Inserting additional language was a punitive action by some anti-charity lawmakers.

- Push back the enactment date by one year. This e-tab industry took 10 years to build, and the Legislature asked the gaming industry to revamp it in one year. That's not possible. What if by January 2025 there have only been four games approved? What if there are 25 games approved but they are all dull? Either way, gaming revenue crashes. There remains a lot to figure out in the next year. Move enactment to January 2026.

answers.

"Our goal is to make you successful," Mahoney said.

Mahoney spoke about a new computer portal coming out soon. His comments reflected what was printed in the GCB's Gaming News, that testing is ongoing: "Since each enhancement will need to be completed before the next one can be started to see what effects it has, we do not have an anticipated launch date."

Mahoney said he called on his agency to mail out the quarterly publication called the Gaming News in an effort to have more gambling managers look at it.

He hopes to continue mailing it. He also spoke about an increase in staffing, citing how the agency has maintained staffing levels for a long time.

Classes at the ACM gathering were on the topics of security, theft prevention, paper pulltabs, bingo, e-tabs, audits, marketing, legal matters, software, inventory, problem gambling, oversight of sellers, new ideas, best practices — and staying out of the Gaming News.

The Gaming News lists citations issued by the Gambling Control Board. That's why no organization wants to find itself listed in the Gaming News.



Gambling Control Board Director Tim Mahoney addresses nonprofit gambling managers, assistants and members at the Allied Charities of Minnesota Annual Convention in St. Cloud on Nov. 16. On the left is ACM Director Rachel Jenner.

# Postcards will ask members to call in

Continued from Page 1

Minnesota receives a guaranteed royalty of \$25,000 from PCI to assist it in its mission of serving veterans.

The books are coffee-table books, hardbound, color, with glossy paper. Contact information for the interviewed veterans is not published.

The Department of Minnesota did a similar partnership with PCI in 2018. Instead of an oral history publication, it was a member directory. There was a 54 percent response rate.

"We are hoping to crush that in this go-round," Maxa said. "We want to assure our



## The 2018 member directory from PCI.

members that PCI and the Department of Minnesota are working together. They are a trusted friend of the Legion and will work with our veterans."

# Department of Minn. Commander's Project

Department Commander Paul Hassing's Project raises funds for the Minnesota Veterans Assistance Fund, which operates under the Minnesota American Legion Foundation.

Mail to American Legion Dept. of Minnesota, 20 W. 12th St. Room 300A, St. Paul, MN 55155-2000.

Make checks out to: **Minnesota American Legion Foundation**  
Memo: **Fund 82**. If you make it out to Fund 85, that's accepted, too, but 82 is the fund for the commander's project. The foundation is a 501(c)3. Gambling funds are permitted.

Date of graphic: Nov. 21

Goal: \$100,000

Shout out to posts 373, 464, 561, 149, 643, 577, 493, 602, 627, 241, 131, 11, 491, 586, 443 and 172.

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Thanks also go to Squadrons 16 and 172, Chapter 89, a handful of individual donors and Pampered Chef.



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# Deep down we all want the same thing

Season's greetings, Minnesota American Legion Family.

I really hope everyone is getting a chance to relax a little and spend some time with family and friends. We tend to put too much pressure on ourselves during the holidays. Sometimes wanting everything to be perfect ends up making things worse. Remember to have some fun.

From the feedback we have received, Fall Conference was a big success. A lot of people worked very hard to make that happen. Thank you all for the hard work, and thanks to all that attended. I hope you learned a lot.

More importantly, I hope you took what you learned back to your districts and posts. Knowledge is only worth something if it is used and shared.

The Veterans Day programs throughout the state were amazing. I couldn't attend all of them, but the ones I did were incredible. Thank you to all those hard-working people that put those together as well. Montgomery Elementary School kids and staff. All the players that put the state program together, and Bayport American Legion Post 491 for the fantastic dinner and great company. It really puts things in perspective as to what we are all doing this for.

I got the chance to attend a surprise birthday party for a very good friend and a great veteran Gary Oppedal. He is a Vietnam veteran who has done, and continues to do, so much for the community, veterans and the families of veterans. He doesn't like the limelight, but he is always there when needed. He is truly a great American and a friend.

We had a great meeting with the Minnesota Commander's

## Commander's Column

Paul Hassing



Task Force. Several state senators and representatives were in attendance and showed a lot of support for what we are trying to accomplish. We are hoping to get another clean Veterans Omnibus Bill passed this year.

Our legislative priorities in Minnesota are:

- Modernize the Homestead Market Value Exclusion.
- Amend a law to help our CVSOs receive important documents.
- Waive license fees on hunting, fishing and trapping for all veterans.
- Fix a property tax oversight for Gold Star spouses.
- Eliminate vehicle registration fees for them.
- Provide property tax relief for veterans organizations.
- Allow counties to appropriate funding for Veterans day.

Other measures we favor are allocating proceeds from military and veteran license plates to the support our troops license plate fund, and approval of seven new license plates.

As I am writing this, the weather outside is not too bad. We've had a warm November. It's not very often that I can ride my bike in November. December is coming up though and who knows what will happen. Please remember to reach out to those that you haven't seen in a while. Make sure to check on those that have a harder time shoveling and getting around in winter. Please don't wait for them to reach out. As we know, a lot of us do not like to ask for help.

Thank you to everyone in the Minnesota American Legion Family for all that you do. Things get hard sometimes, and we don't always feel like it matters. Trust me, it does. We don't always agree with the way things are being done, or we may get frustrated with the way things are going, but I think everything can be worked out by reaching out and talking it through.

Deep down, we all want the same thing. Making sure our veterans and their families are being taken care of properly.

We still have a long way to go on the road ahead, but so far, it's going well. I enjoy getting to travel around the state to see just how great and unique our state is. I still say Minnesota has the best veterans in the world.

Thank you so much for the honor of being your commander, and please don't hesitate to reach out if you need anything. My number is 612-598-0419. If I don't answer, please leave a message and I will call you back when I can.

I'm not tech-savvy enough to take calls when I'm driving, and it can also be hard taking a call when the grandkids are climbing on me.

You are awesome.

*Paul Hassing of Bloomington Post 550 is the commander of The American Legion Department of Minnesota. His theme is "The Road Ahead."*

# There are 4 kinds of unconditional love

Unconditional love is a love when you love someone no matter what they do and expect nothing in return. This love is also the love that God shows to us every day of our lives and it is given to us freely with no questions asked and he does not expect anything in return.

To love unconditionally, we obey God's command to put on love and respect regardless of the circumstances. If we refuse to obey this command, we tend to rationalize (tell ourselves rational lies) and believe that others have caused us to be harsh and rude.

In the Scriptures, there are four kinds of love mentioned. These four types of love are: agape love, philia love, eros love and storge love.

We need to take a look at each of these loves to understand the different ways we show love to one another.

**First:** Agape love is the love of mankind and is God's divine love for all mankind. It is the faithful love of God for humans as well as the human reciprocal love for God. This is the highest form of love and is contrasted by eros (erotic love) and philia (brotherly love). Agape love can also be explained as a love that is willing to make sacrifices for the good of the beloved. Jesus showed agape love for us by his death on the cross.

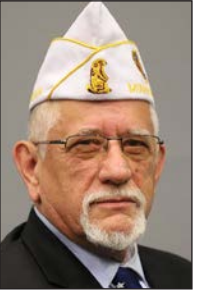
**Second:** Eros love is the passionate love or romantic love. It is the love shared by married couples or long-term couples.

**Third:** Philia love is the love of friends and equals. It is the love among close friends, warriors or extended family.

**Fourth:** Storge love is the

## Chaplain's Corner

Dean Knutson



We need to love others as God first loved us.

In this holiday season, how can we show agape love to our family, neighbors, communities and someone you may know who is in need? Sometimes just a friendly word or a kind act is all it takes to help make someone's day bright instead of dark and gloomy. Maybe someone needs help getting to a store, a medical appointment or a hot meal.

How can we help our fellow man and show them the love that God has shown us?

Some of the events in the month of December that we need to remember are:

- Start of Advent: Dec. 3
- Pearl Harbor Day: Dec. 7
- Start of Hanukkah: Dec. 7
- National Guard Birthday: Dec. 13
- Bill of Rights Day: Dec. 15
- Start of Yule: Dec. 21
- Christmas Eve: Dec. 24
- Christmas: Dec. 25
- Start of Kwanzaa: Dec. 26
- Boxing Day: Dec. 26
- New Year's Eve: Dec. 31

Wishing all of you a very joyous holiday season and let us show our fellowman the love that God first showed us — unconditional love.

*Dean Knutson of Ashby Post 357 is the chaplain for The American Legion Department of Minnesota.*

# Mail Call

Send letters to the editor for Mail Call to [tengstrom@mnlegion.org](mailto:tengstrom@mnlegion.org).

*Editor's note: All letters are the opinions of the writers and not necessarily The American Legion or The Minnesota Legionnaire. We do favor dialogue as key to the American form of government.*

## Bill Goede was a true leader

The Minnesota American Legion lost a great treasure with the passing of Bill Goede. He never stopped working for the betterment of this veterans organization.

I was around for a lot of Bill's career with the Legion. He was the first membership director after I became editor of the Legionnaire, and we got to know each other better on the first of my many National Commander's Tours, where the membership director is in charge.

For me, though the years, he was always someone you could approach with a new idea or even a bad idea. He would sort them out. He always had a vision for how the Legion could be a better organization, and he was willing to lend his support to new ways of doing things. More than that, he would invest his own time and talent into a project that was good for veterans.

Just one example. In about the year 2000, someone had an idea to take the stories of veterans that had appeared in the Legionnaire and put them

in a book. Not only would the stories be preserved more permanently, but the funds from the sale of the book could be used to support the construction of the new World War II Memorial at the State Capitol. In the end, "War Stories" sold over 5,000 copies and over \$70,000 was raised for the memorial. The book is sold out, but "War Stories Vol. II" and "War Stories Vol. III" remain available for purchase.

I can attest that the idea of the book would have remained an idea except for Bill Goede. He made it happen. He provided the leadership and the determination to see it through.

Nearly every one of us who knew Bill through the years can tell a story like that. He lived and breathed the Legion. He exemplified the axiom of Past National Commander Dan Ludwig, who was a mentor to both of us: "Tell the truth. Take the high road. Remember the cause."

As the Legion slowly turns toward younger leadership, those ascending leaders can have no better example than Bill Goede.

**Al Zdon  
Hibbing Post 222**

## A poem for the airmen vets

This poem is titled, "We Serve: A Veteran's Poem."

*When I thought about my life,  
I knew I wanted to serve.*

*But how to serve?  
Conservation, Peace Corps,  
Red Cross?*

*All commendable, all important,  
but I wanted more.*

*I searched my soul for the answer  
and I knew I found it.*

*I wanted to be an Airman,  
I wanted to serve.*

*I wanted to serve my country  
in the most unselfish way.*

*I wanted to serve in the U.S.  
Military.*

*I wanted to be brave  
I wanted to defend our country.*

*I wanted to protect our freedom,*

*I wanted to be an Airman,  
I wanted to serve.*

*I wanted to understand valor.*

*I wanted to be vigilant,  
I wanted to be courageous.*

*I wanted to be strong.  
I wanted to persevere.*

*I wanted to be an Airman.  
I wanted to serve.*

*I wanted to dedicate my life to something bigger than myself.*

*I wanted to make a difference.*

*I wanted to make myself and my family proud.*

*I knew that by serving there could be a risk.*

*I accepted that risk and I embraced my determination.*

*I wanted to be an Airman,  
I wanted to serve.*

*Yes, I became an Airman. Yes,  
I served.*

**Sharon Brunette  
New Prague Post 45**

## Are you ready for some snowmobiles?

Good day, donors, prospective donors, snowmobilers and veterans:

Minnesota Snowmobile Education and Advancement Fund (MSEAF) and Minnesota United Snowmobilers Association (MnUSA) will be hosting the 16th annual Snowmobile Ride for the Veterans and Active Duty Military Personnel in January of 2024 in recognition and appreciation of our veterans who have given part of their lives to serve all of us. The event is for both experienced snowmobilers and those who would like to give it a try. The registration form is available at

**Continued on Page 6**

# The Minnesota Legionnaire

FOR GOD AND COUNTRY

Official publication of  
The American Legion  
Department of Minnesota

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# Taps



Please send "Taps" entries to [tengstrom@mnlegion.org](mailto:tengstrom@mnlegion.org) or mail to 20 W. 12th St., Room 300A, St. Paul, MN 55155, or visit [mnlegion.org/taps](http://mnlegion.org/taps). Thank you.

Name of Deceased	Age	Date of Death	Branch	Era	Cont. Years	Post
<b>Anderson, Curtis T. Sr.</b>	87	11/7/23	Army	VN/Cold	67	Blackduck Post 372
Note: He served 21 years, rising to sergeant major. He was a paratrooper. He served at Fort Bragg, Fort Campbell, Okinawa, Korea, Fort Bliss, Vietnam and Dominican Republic.						
<b>Bakke, Bruce</b>	72	12/4/22	Army	Vietnam	3	Fairmont Post 36
<b>Benson, Dennis W.</b>	94	10/24/23	Army	Korea	71	New London Post 537
Note: He was a past post commander.						
<b>Breth, Robert J.</b>	74	10/23/23	Army	Vietnam	50	Melrose Post 101
<b>Brink, Delbert M.</b>	89	10/25/23	Navy	Korea	37	Worthington Post 5
<b>Brown, Eugene R. Jr.</b>	66	10/25/23	Army	Vietnam	33	Rice Post 473
<b>Cariveau, Howard T.</b>	87	10/30/23	Air Force	Vietnam	32	Rice Post 473
Note: He flew in combat in Vietnam and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his aerial achievements.						
<b>Daniels, John F.</b>	74	10/18/23	Army	Vietnam	9	Balaton Post 237
<b>Dassow, Robert H.</b>	97	10/5/23	Navy	WWII	10	St. Paul Park Post 98
Note: He maintained aircraft aboard a tender in the Philippines. He also served as a tail gunner in the Martin PBM Mariner bomber flying boat.						
<b>Fields, Paul D.</b>	75	11/8/23	Army NG	Vietnam	42	Albert Lea Post 56
<b>Flaig, Vernon F.</b>	96	11/6/23	Army	WWII	79	Willmar Post 167
<b>Foster, Charles R.</b>	101	11/3/23	Army AF	WWII/Korea	28	Albert Lea Post 56
Note: He served as a pilot and flight instructor during WWII, stationed in Texas. He returned to service during the Korean War, stationed in Newfoundland, Canada.						
<b>Fredlund, Frank Jr.</b>	90	11/8/23	Army	Korea	68	St. Peter Post 37
<b>Fredricksen, David R.</b>	76	10/21/23	Army	Korea	35	Stewartville Post 164
<b>Gilbertson, John M.</b>	77	11/4/23	Army	Vietnam	48	Willmar Post 167
<b>Goede, William B.</b>	78	11/5/23	Army	Vietnam	30	Plainview Post 179
Note: He was the treasurer for the Department of Minnesota up until Oct. 26. He served in the role since 2018. He was department commander 2001-02, department vice commander 1990-91, 1st District commander 1985-86 and department membership director 1996-97. He was chairman of the National American Legion National Guard & Reserve Forces Committee. He served a tour in Vietnam.						
<b>Gruber, Eugene</b>	92	11/8/23	Navy	Korea	60	Pierz Post 341
<b>Hanson, Douglas C. "Doogie"</b>	49	6/3/22	Army	Vietnam	49	New Ulm Post 132
<b>Henningsgaard, Roger O.</b>	94	10/7/23	Army	Korea	44	Bloomington Post 550
<b>Hesse, Joseph G.</b>	80	6/21/23	Army	Vietnam	16	Backus Post 368
<b>Hiben, Andro "Andy"</b>	97	3/31/23	Army	WWII	5	Minneapolis-Richfield Post 435
<b>Hilbrands, Leonard J.</b>	86	10/26/23	Army	Cold	41	Clara City Post 485
<b>Hoffman, Gene R.</b>	80	9/20/23	Army	Vietnam	11	Nicollet Post 510
<b>Hohler, Dennis Jr.</b>	74	10/23/23	Navy	Vietnam	13	Bagley Post 16
<b>Holm, James C.</b>	67	10/14/23	Army NG	Panama	19	Aitkin Post 86
<b>Janssen, Darrel E.</b>	88	9/2/23	Army	Korea	66	Tracy Post 173
<b>Kalk, Ernest H.</b>	73	11/5/23	Army	Vietnam	25	New Ulm Post 132
Note: He was a clerk typist, with a one-year tour of Vietnam at Long Binh northeast of Saigon.						
<b>Kascht, Cyril T.</b>	76	10/6/23	Navy	Korea	41	Paynesville Post 271
Note: He was a past post commander and gambling manager.						
<b>Kolbinger, Richard T.</b>	90	1/28/23	Army	Korea	62	Apple Valley Post 1776
<b>Lange, Eugene F.</b>	88	10/3/23	Army	Korea	50	Waite Park Post 428
<b>Litfin, Thomas F.</b>	100	10/25/23	Army	WWII	75	Milaca Post 178
<b>Littlefield, Waldron E.</b>	87	8/14/23	Air Force	Korea	19	Moorhead Post 21
<b>Lonning, Roger D.</b>	96	10/25/23	Navy	WWII	42	Albert Lea Post 56
<b>Lubben, Edwin</b>	91	10/23/23	Army	Korea	12	Edgerton Post 42
<b>Magnuson, Irvn</b>	89	10/16/23	Navy	Korea	37	Litchfield Post 104
<b>Mankowski, George F.</b>	86	2/14/23	Army	Korea	17	Brainerd Post 255
<b>Marshman, Robert H.</b>	93	10/11/23	Army	Korea	61	Plainview Post 179
<b>Mattin, Charles G.</b>	89	10/15/23	Navy	Korea	8	Minneapolis-Richfield Post 435
<b>Melby, Stanley R.</b>	73	10/8/23	Army	Vietnam	42	Greenbush Post 88
Note: He served a tour in Vietnam. He was past post adjutant and past finance officer.						
<b>Meyer, Dennis W.</b>	79	10/11/23	Army NG	Vietnam	41	Pierz Post 341
<b>Monsrud, Lalyn E.</b>	88	10/29/23	Army	Vietnam	44	Roseau Post 24
Note: He was an active member of the Roseau Memorial Honor Guard.						
<b>Narragon, Jerome L.</b>	79	10/30/23	Air Force	Vietnam	30	Bloomington Post 550
Note: He served as post finance officer for many years. In the service, he was stationed in Germany.						
<b>Nelson, Lester "Pete"</b>	98	10/12/23	Army AF	WWII	59	Litchfield Post 104
<b>Norby, Norman</b>	98	10/29/23	Army	WWII	47	Bagley Post 16
<b>Nyquist, Otto W. Jr.</b>	96	10/19/23	Army NG	Korea	67	Tracy Post 67
Note: He served in the 47th Division of the National Guard at Camp Rucker in Alabama during the Korean War.						
<b>Olson, John P.</b>	104	11/9/23	Army	WWII	59	Willmar Post 167
<b>Peterson, Douglas H.</b>	72	10/16/23	Marine	Vietnam	42	Russell Post 460
Note: He was a Purple Heart recipient.						
<b>Piepenburg, Willard W.</b>	95	10/8/23	Army/Navy	WWII/Korea	38	Litchfield Post 104
Note: "Bud" was drafted in 1946 by the Army, got out, then drafted again in 1948 by the Navy.						
<b>Prettyman, Gerald R.</b>	88	9/25/23	Navy	Korea	57	Alexandria Post 87
<b>Rateike, Alan I.</b>	76	9/25/23	Air Force	Vietnam	18	Hackensack Post 202
<b>Roehl, Benno V.</b>	91	7/8/23	Army	Korea	29	Litchfield Post 104
Note: He served at Fort Lewis, Wash.						
<b>Rowley, Larry L.</b>	87	10/27/23	Navy	Cold	10	Mora Post 201
<b>Schafer, James Sr.</b>	94	10/11/23	Army	Korea	28	St. Paul Park Post 98
<b>Scharpe, Jerry L.</b>	80	10/13/23	Army	Vietnam	36	Glencoe Post 95
<b>Sharkey, William C.</b>	89	10/30/23	Army	Korea	50	Hanley Falls Post 127
Note: He was a past post commander.						
<b>Simonson, Milward N.</b>	95	10/12/23	Army	Korea	51	Hayfield Post 330
<b>Smith, Ray T.</b>	78	9/5/23	Air Force	Vietnam	5	Benson Post 62
<b>Stern, Alan L.</b>	74	8/23/23	Army	Vietnam	10	Holdingford Post 211
<b>Strom, Donald R.</b>	96	10/25/23	Army	WWII	40	Mora Post 201
<b>Strube, Josephine G.</b>	102	10/5/23	Army	WWII	18	Jackson Post 130
Note: She served in the Nurse Corps.						
<b>Totman, Ronald G. "Tots"</b>	73	10/23/23	Army	Vietnam	9	New Ulm Post 132
Note: He was trained as an infantryman and recon specialist. He served in the 5/68 Armor Battalion in Europe.						
<b>Weirauch, Gary R.</b>	80	10/12/23	Air Force	Vietnam	7	Litchfield Post 104
<b>Young, David L.</b>	95	12/17/22	multiple	WWII/Korea	42	Sartell Post 277
Note: He served in the Merchant Marine, Navy and Air Force over the course of two wars and the Cold War, and he served in the task force that held the atomic bomb test at Bikini Atoll.						

## All-Family Events Calendar

- Dec. 9:** Pearl Harbor Rally, Paynesville Post 271
- Dec. 13:** MACV Annual Winter Salute, Target Field
- Dec. 16:** MyLegion.org training, Moorhead Post 21
- Jan. 6:** 1st District Mid-Winter, Le Roy Cmty. Center
- Jan. 6:** 4th & 5th District Joint Mid-Winter, St. Helena Catholic Church, Minneapolis
- Jan. 13:** 10th District Mid-Winter, Anoka Post 102
- Jan. 20:** 7th District Mid-Winter, New London Post 537
- Jan. 20:** 9th District Mid-Winter, Detroit Lakes Post 15
- Jan. 27:** 3rd District Mid-Winter, Apple Valley Post 1776
- Jan. 27:** 6th District Mid-Winter, Aitkin Post 86
- Jan. 27:** Veterans Appreciation Snowmobile Ride, Grand Rapids
- Feb. 3:** Sweetheart Rally, Forest Lake Post 225
- Feb. 10:** 2nd District Mid-Winter, Brewster Post 464
- Feb. 24-28:** Washington Conference, Washington Hilton Hotel, Washington, D.C.
- March 2:** Appreciation Rally, Montgomery Post 79
- March 22:** Legionville Board of Directors meeting
- April 12-13:** ALA Dept. Jr. Conference, Detroit Lakes Post 15
- April 15-17:** National Commander's Tour of Minn.
- April 28-May 2:** National President's Tour of Minn.
- May 6-9:** Spring Meetings, Sheraton Hotel, Indianapolis
- May 16-19:** Legionville Work & Play
- May 18:** 1st District Convention, Austin Post 91
- May 18:** 3rd District Convention, New Prague Post 45
- May 18:** 7th District Convention, Morris Post 29
- May 24:** American Legion Night at Target Field
- May 25:** 4th District Convention, North St. Paul Post 39
- June 1:** 5th District Convention, location TBD
- June 1:** 6th District Convention, Brainerd Armory
- June 1:** 10th District Convention, Fridley Post 303
- June 8:** 2nd District Convention, Fairmont Post 36
- June 8:** 9th District Convention, East Grand Forks Post 157
- June 9-15:** Minnesota Boys State, St. John's University
- June 9-15:** Minnesota Girls State, Bethel University
- July 11-13:** Department of Minnesota Convention, Willmar Convention Center, Willmar, hosted by Willmar Post 167
- Aug. 1-4:** Minnesota American Legion Baseball Div. I Sr. State Tournament, Maple Grove
- Aug. 1-4:** Minnesota American Legion Baseball Div. I Jr. State Tournament, Bloomington
- Aug. 2-4:** Minnesota American Legion Baseball Div. II Sr. State Tournament, Bird Island
- Aug. 3-4:** Minnesota American Legion Fastpitch Softball State Tournament, location TBD
- Aug. 9-11:** Minnesota American Legion Baseball Div. II Jr. State Tournament, St. Charles
- Aug. 9-11:** Junior Auxiliary Fun Weekend at Legionville
- Sept. 5-8:** Camporee, Legionville
- Sept. 12-15:** Legion Riders Romp at Legionville
- Sept. 13-15:** American Legion NS/FR Weekend, Camp Ripley
- Oct. 1-6:** John Zgoda Memorial Deer Hunt, Legionville
- Oct. 7-10:** Fall Meetings, Sheraton Hotel, Indianapolis



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For all Veterans, Disabled Public, their Families and Friends

# Mail Call

Continued from Page 5

mnvetsnowmobileride.org. This form must be completed and returned to the address provided on the form. Veterans will be selected on a first-come, first-served basis.

We are seeking donations to help defray the costs of lodging, meals, sled rental and fuel. Donations in any amount are welcome or you may sponsor a vet for \$225.

Donations may be sent payable to MSEAF at 7040 Lakeland Ave. N. #212, Brooklyn Park, MN 55428. With a donation or sponsorship, you will be recognized at the event, in our publication and on our web site. All funds designated "Veterans Ride" will be segregated for that purpose only.

The IRS has recognized MSEAF as a 501c3 charitable organization. Donors will receive a card recognizing their donation and tax deductibility of donations. The IRS letter is available at [mnvetsnowmobileride.org](http://mnvetsnowmobileride.org)

You will also find the 2024 Veteran's Ride poster, sponsor letter and list of previous donors on this website. Please feel free to copy the poster or letter then add it to bulletin boards in VFW and American Legion posts

across the state, or other places veterans hangout, or send it to your veteran friends.

The veterans that have and will attend this event in the future really appreciate the donations you make and have made to make this ride happen! This can and has been a life changing event for veterans that attend! It allows them time to forget the past, have a great time in the present and look forward to the future.

MSEAF and MnUSA also thank you for your assistance and sincerely appreciate your support so we can keep this wonderful event going in the future!

**Larry Shepherd**  
Morristown Post 149  
event co-chair  
vice president, MSEAF  
past president, MnUSA

## A message of gratitude from an activities director

Spicer Post 545 and New London Post 537 share our

school district. Our association with the district is strong. Besides presenting the "colors" at varsity football games (joint honor/color guard), we alternate leading the high school students and staff in the Pledge of Allegiance each week. We visit with elementary students on Veterans Day and attend their program that afternoon. We supply flags to all classrooms and buildings as they may request.

Activities Director Thayne Johnson sent us this letter, copied from the school's Facebook page.

"Hello. We received the message below through the New London-Spicer School District page last week, and I wanted to share it with all of you. Please feel free to share this at your next meeting. Thank you for being a part of our football game nights and for all that you do for our community."

"Hello! I want to thank your high school and community for being so welcoming at last night's game against Annandale. My son is on the Annandale football team, and I needed to message you to tell you what an incredible opening you all put on! The national anthem, enormous American flag, color

guard, flyover — all of it was amazing! We all stood there with mutual love and pride. The community, players, fans, students, families, cheerleaders, etc., were not opponents but were FAMILY! In a world of chaos, your community quieted the noise and brought us all back to what matters. [U.S. flag emoji] I'm so thankful for fellow Americans bringing their kids up to love our great country. Thank you to each and every one of you for your hospitality and to both teams for giving us something to be proud of! What an incredible game and awesome display of what helps make our country great [heart emoji]. Standing together, Annandale Football Mom."

"Sincerely, Thayne Johnson, Activities Director, New London-Spicer Community Schools."

Both posts are pretty proud of the recognition.

**Lauren Kath**  
Adjutant  
Spicer Post 545



# Let's get the entire Legion Family to Paynesville

Happy Holidays!  
Wow, I cannot believe that the end of November is upon us. Sadly, I have parked and

covered my trike for the winter. The Riders met at Fall Conference the end of October, and it was voted for a committee to write a Constitution & By-Laws for the Minnesota American Legion Riders.

The reason this came up is because the original SOP referenced to two resolutions by the National American Legion that are no longer valid as they were superseded by the new American Legion Resolution No. 5 of 2021.

The committee will begin meeting in December and will plan to have a draft before the end of February.

The Pearl Harbor Family Gathering is a Legion event that is hosted by the American Legion Riders and will be Dec. 9 at the Paynesville American

## Legion Riders

**Jody Hassing**



Legion. Social hour will be at 11 a.m. and lunch at noon, with a program to follow. I plan to talk about the Riders and how they fit into the Minnesota American Legion family. I am looking forward to seeing many of our Legion Riders there as well as the rest of the Legion Family!

I know there are many other chapter runs and fundraisers happening across the state and throughout the year, please invite me to your events so I can see all the good things you are doing! If you would like help setting up a chapter at your Post, please let me or your district

Riders representative know so we can help you get things going.

If you are interested in having me talk to your chapter or district about the reason for writing a constitution and bylaw at this time, please contact me.

God bless and keep the rubber side down.

*Jody Hassing of Bloomington Unit 550 is the director of the Minnesota American Legion Riders.*

# Minnesota loses a lion of a Legionnaire

PLAINVIEW — Past Department Commander William Bruno Goede died Nov. 5 at age 78 in Plainview after a courageous fight with kidney cancer.

In his final moments, his family was by his side singing "God Bless America."

After high school, he attended Dunwoody Institute and Brown Institute of Electronics.

Goede served a tour in Vietnam with the Army in 1966-67. His military stint was from 1965 to 1968.

In 1969, he began his work career with Pioneer Telephone Co., which eventually became Sprint Telecommunications. He retired in 2006 as field supervisor for the Plainview/Hastings area.

He was the chairman of the National American Legion National Guard & Reserve Forces Committee. He has served in many other roles at the national level.

He was the treasurer for the Department of Minnesota up until Oct. 26. He served in the role since 2018.

He was department commander 2001-02, department vice commander 1990-91, 1st District commander 1985-86 and department membership director 1996-97.

Goede served many positions in his Legion career at the 1st District level and with Plainview Post 179.

He also was a member of Sons of The American Legion, ANAVICUS, 40&8, VFW, the Royal Canadian Legion and Lions International.

He was a past president of the Plainview Lions Club and active at Immanuel Lutheran Church.

He was a Plainview City Council member from 2010 to 2014 and mayor from 2014 to 2016.

Goede served 23 years on the Plainview Fire Department, with five years as chief.

He served on the Minnesota Gambling Control Board from 2004 to 2020, serving as chairman during part of his tenure.

He is survived by his wife of 53 years, Marie, and their three grown children, Brett, Tara and Darcy.



**Bill Goede in 2001 as dept. commander**



**Bill Goede in a 2022 photo as treasurer**

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- **On-The-Move Travel Accident** — Provides up to \$200,000.00 coverage when fatally injured in a covered accident while traveling, plus \$500.00 per day if a covered accident lands you in the hospital.\*
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# The SAL Update: Everyone's military service matters



Greetings American Legion Family. As we went through the month of November and celebrated Veterans Day, the news was full of stories of the Americans who served our country. My thoughts went to our service members past and present.

Many of them served in peacetime and didn't do any of the jobs that would gain them any notoriety. My personal opinion, after talking to many veterans, is that there's a bit of — not disrespect — but a lack of recognition for servicemembers and veterans who did those mundane jobs.

As Napoleon Bonaparte said, and I paraphrase here, "An army travels on its stomach."

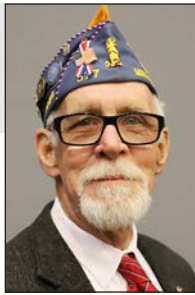
But it also travels on its psyche, as in its sense of well-being. And that's why there are chaplains and chaplain's assistants, cooks, truck drivers, nurses and other medical field people, supply and admin personal.

If any of those folks don't do their jobs, it will be felt by frontline troops. And then those troops won't be able to do their jobs to maximum efficiency.

I go here because my dad was a truck driver in World War II, and it always seemed like he didn't get the respect of his

## Detachment commander

John Weiss



fellow veterans of that era for doing the job that he was given.

We members of the Sons of The American Legion joined this wonderful organization to honor our forefather's service to our country. And my being a dual member also brings this to the forefront for me as I've heard disparaging remarks about some veterans and their jobs in the military expressed by other veterans.

Examples: "Oh, he was just a cook." "She was just a chaplain's assistant." "He was just a ramp rat in the Air Force."

It seems like quite a few veterans forget one very important thing: When you raise your right hand and become a member of the United States military, you do what Uncle Sam says you are to do, and you do your job to the best of your abilities.

To the American Legion Family, I say be proud of your service and your relative's service no matter what job you or they did in the Armed Forces. I know that I am very proud of my dad's service to our country. And of my own service and of

the other veterans whom I have had the honor of meeting who did those mundane jobs to keep our military functioning at such a high operational level.

I am also reminded of how we as American Legion Family members can and do change lives around us sometimes without even knowing it. A kind word or a piece of advice or information freely given can be immensely helpful to a person in need or someone seeking guidance. So I will summarize this column by saying — be kind to each other.

I wish each and every one of you and your families a very Merry Christmas and a Happy and Prosperous New Year!

*John Weiss of St Paul Arcade-Phalen Squadron 577 is the commander of the Detachment of Minnesota for the Sons of The American Legion. His theme is "Honoring the Past, While Moving Forward."*

# Not everyone is home for Christmas

I hope you all had a very good Veterans Day and Thanksgiving.

Did you sign up a new member? Veterans are willing to join, as they have just had a wonderful Veterans Day being honored. Is your post doing something for your members and veterans in their community for Christmas?

Dec. 9 is the Pearl Harbor Rally at 11 a.m. in Paynesville. ALL American Legion Family members are welcome.

American Legion Riders will oversee this rally. Please bring checks and donations to the Commanders Project Fund 85. Have you heard about Fund 85? This fund helps veterans and their family members in Minnesota with heat, bills, food, transportation, driving and rent. There are many veterans in need of our help and so many of their families. If you know of any of these folks, please contact Ray

## National Report

Bill Barbknecht



Kane or Janet Lorenzo, our department service officers who work out of an office at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center.

Election year is coming 2024. We can only hope our state legislators will undo all the damage they did to our communities, children, fire departments and schools by scaling back e-tabs at our posts and at local bars and restaurants. It is not too late to do what is right for all Minnesota.

Please go visit your members and "Be the One." Do buddy checks. Are you aware of a veteran, new or one that is not renewed? Please consider paying their dues. What a wonderful Christmas present that would be.

There is no difference when you were on the battlefield

helping the one next to you to stay alive. Or helping the one next to you now, in some ways.

Donna and I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and good health into the New Year. Remember our military, many will NOT be home for Christmas.

Please call if I can be of any assistance. My contact info is 218-770-6264 or billb3350@gmail.com.

*Bill Barbknecht of Underwood Post 489 is the Department of Minnesota's National Executive Committeeman.*

# Boys State is life-changing experience

Thankfulness. I am thankful for the military veterans who had the foresight to bring The American Legion into existence. I am equally grateful for those Legion members who formed the Boys State program.

The leadership that has improved the experience for participants is to be commended. I appreciate all of you who recruit for and promote Boys State.

Thank you to all the staff who give a week of their time to guide high school seniors-to-be through a leadership, relationship-building encounter. Many thanks to all of you who share your time, talent and resources to provide funding for this excellent program.

Ignorance. Though it has a

## Minn. Boys State

Neil Kruse



negative connotation, it is typically innocent. A lack of knowledge can be remedied. I believe there is a lack of knowledge about the American Legion Minnesota Boys State program.

I knew nothing about Boys State over 40 years ago when encouraged by a co-worker to become a counselor for the program. The small town where I attended school didn't have a Legion post. I don't recall any mention of sponsorship being available from the neighboring, rival town. No one I hung out with in college made mention

of Boys State.

I blindly accepted the invitation to help for a week at Gustavus Adolphus College. It was a life-changing experience for me as a new counselor. We need to continue to beat the drum and get alumni to beat the drum for this great program.

*Neil Kruse is a counselor for Minnesota American Legion Boys State.*

# Return criminal penalties for those who take advantage of disabled veterans or their families

Dear American Legion Family members and friends,

Few insults are more egregious than to take advantage of disabled veterans or their families, under false pretenses. We know it's immoral to exploit any veteran filing for VA benefits. The American Legion wants the return of criminal penalties enforced against these non-accredited violators.

The American Legion or other accredited veterans service organizations (VSO) are the best first step for veterans seeking assistance because we successfully provide expert help free of charge for hundreds of thousands of veterans a year. We also understand and support a veteran's freedom to choose representation — whether it's a VSO, another claims agency, law firm or private company.

But we support that right on a key condition: that anyone who represents a veteran in the filing of a

## National Commander

Daniel J. Seehafer



claim is accredited with the Department of Veterans Affairs. Accreditation means the representative has been vetted, is trained and is accountable to VA's rules, which include the regulation of fees that can be charged.

These rules exist for good reasons. They prevent exploitation. As it now stands, nothing stops or deters profiteers from overcharging and taking advantage of veterans. That has to end.

The American Legion continues to work with VA to share information and educate veterans about free services available through VSOs like accredited American Legion service officers who helped veterans receive \$16.8 billion

in disability compensation last year alone.

All accredited representatives who assist veterans must be held to the same level of accountability as our service officers, who have been successfully helping with claims since the birth of VA.

For God and Country,

*Daniel J. Seehafer of Horizon, Wis., Post 157 is the national commander of The American Legion. He is an ordained minister. He served as a chaplain in the Navy and the Navy Reserve. His theme is "Be the One."*

## DRIVE HOME YOUR SUPPORT!

**Minnesota 000AA**  
SUPPORT OUR TROOPS  
Purchase a plate and support MN Military members, Veterans and their families.  
[MinnesotaVeteran.org/SOT](http://MinnesotaVeteran.org/SOT)

**Help wanted**  
Est. 1969  
**Age 55+ workers needed for part-time custodial work at rest areas and state parks in Minnesota. Contact us:**  
800-969-1913  
651-639-1913  
[admin@greenviewmn.com](mailto:admin@greenviewmn.com)

**Geoffrey A. Forbes, MS**  
VA Accredited Claims Agent ★ U.S. Army Veteran  
Mobile: 612-251-9681 ★ [gforbes@vabenefitspro.com](mailto:gforbes@vabenefitspro.com)

**I WANT YOU TO WIN YOUR VA CLAIM**  
PLEASE CONTACT ME FOR A FREE CONSULTATION TO DETERMINE YOUR ELIGIBILITY FOR VA COMPENSATION  
(Appeal services are offered at no cost by VSOs.)

## Pearl Harbor Rally is Dec. 9

PAYNESVILLE — The Pearl Harbor Rally happens Dec. 9 at Paynesville Post 271 this year.

Social hour and membership turn-in are at 11 a.m. Lunch is at noon with a program to follow.

The meal is \$16. The meal is a make-your-own-burger bar with chips and a salad.

The Pearl Harbor Rally is organized by the Minnesota American Legion Riders and is an event for all members of the Minnesota American Legion Family.

Sign up in person or on Eventbrite.

## Pearl Harbor remembered

FORT SNELLING — Fort Snelling National Cemetery and the Memorial Rifle Squad host an event on Dec. 7 to remember the fallen at the Pearl Harbor attack of Dec. 7, 1941.

The ceremony begins at 8:30 a.m. Dec. 7 at the national cemetery by the main flagpole.

It is expected to end at about 8:50 a.m.

## Vets invited to ride on snow

GRAND RAPIDS — The 16th Annual Veterans Appreciation Ride takes place Jan. 27 near Grand Rapids.

All veterans are welcome to enjoy a day of snowmobiling, with lodging and meals. They can bring their own sled or have one provided.

The event is sponsored by the Minnesota United Snowmobilers Association and the Minnesota Snowmobile Education & Advancement Fund.

To register, visit: [mnavetsnowmobileride.org](http://mnavetsnowmobileride.org).

# Fall Conference kept Legion fires burning

Continued from Page 1

The Finance Committee voted in favor of a one-time withdrawal from the department stocks account of \$160,000, and anything unused at the end of the fiscal year will be put back in. In the meantime, it will be in a money market account drawing 5 percent interest.

It still left a shortfall of \$4,850.

Moon noted 64 percent of the department budget is paid by dues. At the National HQ, dues cover about 44 percent.

“The elephant in the room is membership,” he said. “We talk membership every year, and it doesn’t go anywhere. So you need to get out to your post, to your districts and talk membership and encourage them to get more members. With everything going on right now in the Middle East, I think we can rally around the flag and patriotism.”

Moon said the stocks account as of Sept. 30 had \$928,940, with a projected income of \$21,793. The fixed account, with the extra \$160,000 in it, was at \$2,054,088, with a projected gain of \$67,686.

## Legionville

Moon is the president of the Legionville Board of Directors and offered a report on the camp.

It had 213 campers all summer long and can accommodate as much as 144 every week, he said. That and a decrease in donations left the camp \$33,706 over budget.

He said 6th District Commander Anthony Koop and 3rd District Commander Rod Reifstick have Legionville as their projects, which should help with fundraising.

The camp is known for its crossing-guard safety program, but it also offers bus safety, water safety, CPR and other forms of safety. He said the camp is considering gun safety, not in the sense of shooting guns but what to do if a child encounters a gun.

“We want to stress to schools even if you do not have a crossing program to the school, how many kids ride school buses. That’s going to be the key,” he said. “A lot of schools come to our camp manager, Adam Felton, and say we didn’t know we can get sponsorship from a Legion post.”

He said he wants to begin having fire departments teach fire safety, like stop, drop and roll. He called on others to inform posts and schools statewide.

The board voted to offer six weeks of camp in 2024 instead of seven. Registration begins in February.

The next Board of Directors meeting is March 22 at Legionville. There will be discussion on revised Constitution and By-Laws.

## Foundation

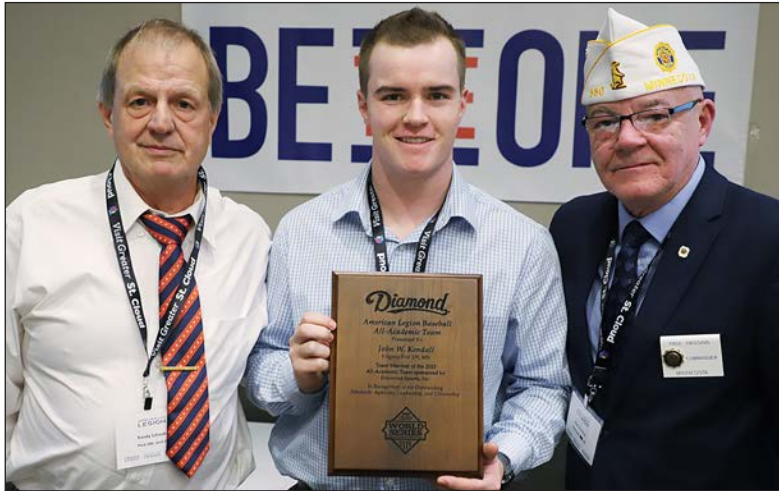
The Minnesota American Legion Foundation, annually, shares the revenue from its investments with several programs under its charge.

Foundation Director Lloyd Ricker said the foundation’s board had \$62,000 to donate to the following accounts:

- \$1,000 to Minnesota American Legion Baseball.
- \$1,000 to the Fund for Hospitalized Veterans.
- \$200 to the John Zgoda Memorial Deer Hunt.
- \$1,000 to the BSA Scholarship Fund.
- \$1,000 to Minnesota Fastpitch Softball.
- \$750 to ROTC Scholarship Fund.
- \$1,500 to the Nurses Scholarships.
- \$800 to Oratorical Contest Scholarships.
- \$1,000 to Memorial Scholarships.
- \$1,000 to Boy Scout Council Assistance.
- \$6,000 to Minnesota Veterans Assistance Fund.



Legionnaires applaud after Department Honorary Junior Auxiliary President Taylor McElroy dons a Legion cap. She is a high school senior who attended Army boot camp over the summer.



Virginia Post 239 baseball player John Kendall, center, receives a plaque designating him a member of the American Legion Baseball All-Academic Team. The recognition is a honor given to just nine Legion Baseball players nationally.

- \$3,000 to Rehab Veterans Outdoors Fund.
- \$500 to Junior Shooting Sports.

As of Sept. 30, the foundation’s net worth is \$1,926,283. Of that, \$256,211 is in cash and \$1,680,052 is in investments.

The foundation, Ricker said, is putting \$5,000 in each of two new veterans homes, in Bemidji and Montevideo, as well as \$5,000 for the new state cemetery in Redwood Falls.

Department Service Officer Ray Kane spoke on the Minnesota Veterans Assistance Fund, which is designated as Fund 85.

“We are working on different programs to make sure that we use Fund 85 effectively and it’s our last resort,” he said.

He noted multiple cases in the past quarter where he and the assistant department service officer, Janet Lorenzo, directed veterans to MACV to solve their housing issues. They also guided them to the state for use of the State Soldier’s Assistance Program grants. They helped veterans receive assistance from their county veterans service officers or Beyond the Yellow Ribbon or food shelves.

Kane told the story of rescuing a veteran from Scandia from his housing problem with temporary assistance from the Veterans Campground at Big Marine Lake. He said Lorenzo got him



Membership Director Pam Krill teaches a seminar on tracking membership.

into temporary housing for 30 days.

He thanked posts for providing money, noting Hastings Post 47 donates \$1,000 a month.

Kane and Lorenzo encourage veterans seeking help to go through a website called Unite US at uniteus.com. He said the site tracks how often the person seeking help comes back for additional needs from other non-profits, and he said the veterans the assistance fund helps are returning for help more than two or three as less often than ones being helped by most other organizations.

“That’s a reduction because we work with them to make sure they don’t have to come back to us, making sure that their needs are met 100 percent before they walk out that door,” he said.

## Legislation

The Legislative Committee put together its 2024 Legislative Priorities this fall. The DEC approved the priorities at the Oct. 26 meeting. Readers can find them in this issue, and they can find them in the “Legislative” tab of the department website, mnlegion.org.

## Charter turn-ins

Adjutant Mike Maxa reported four posts have completed the paperwork for turning in their charters. They are Minneapolis Courthouse Post 310, Minneapolis Joe Smith Post 468, Minneapolis Bearcat Post 504 and Minneapolis Patrick M. Novak Post 5222.

## Police officers

Department Judge Advocate Greg Colby brought up a case where a meth user shot four or five deputies who were serving a warrant. Fortunately, no deputies died.

He said he is a retired criminal defender who usually helped clients win cases against police officers.

“This is about criminal justice. I don’t know what the answer is, but I do know that we have got to stand up and say cops are not targets of opportunity,” Colby said. “We need good police officers, and the vast majority of them are.”



Sixth District Commander Anthony Koop presents a \$1,000 check from his home post, Ironton Post 443, to Department Commander Paul Hassing’s Project, which is the Minnesota Veterans Assistance Fund. Koop is the gambling manager for Post 443.



SAL Detachment Commander John Weiss presents a \$500 check from St. Paul Arcade-Phalen Post 577 to the Commander’s Project.



Past Department Commander Tom Fernlund presents a \$500 check to Legionville from the Minnesota American Legion Riders from the Romp and a \$100 check to Legionville from John and Jean Walker. Accepting is Legionville Vice President Victor Gades.



10th District Commander Matt Berens presents a \$541 check for Legionville, proceeds from the pork chop dinner at the Camporee.



Koop presents \$14,084 in checks from his 6th District Commander’s Project, which is Legionville.



# Outstanding Enlisted Awards

ST. CLOUD — The Minnesota American Legion Outstanding Enlisted Awards are an annual tradition.

The nominations are scored and winners determined by members of the Department of Minnesota National Security/Foreign Relations Committee during its NS/FR Weekend in September at Camp Ripley.

The recipients are notified and invited to receive their awards in front of their families at the American Legion Fall Conference. Their photos are printed in The Minnesota Legionnaire.

Interacting with the servicemembers at the conference is typically one of the highlights of attending.

An Army Reserve veteran, Commander Paul Hassing is, himself, a prior recipient of this honor.

To nominate a soldier, sailor, airman, Marine or Coastie in your part of the state for the honor next year, contact NS/FR Chairman James Kellogg via email at jamesckg@gmail.com.

There are two awards given for the Army National Guard because of its sheer size. In these photos, HHC means "headquarters and headquarters company." HHB is the same thing using "battery."



Department Commander Paul Hassing hands Boatswain Mate 3rd Class Aaron Busch of Coast Guard Station Duluth the award for U.S. Coast Guard Reserve.



Department Commander Paul Hassing gives Senior Master Sgt. Lief Christensen of the 133rd Airlift Wing the award for U.S. Air National Guard. The wing primarily drills at Fort Snelling and Camp Ripley.



Department Commander Paul Hassing stands with Staff Sgt. Brian L. Lesetmoe of A Company, 2nd Combined Arms Battalion, 136th Infantry Regiment an award for U.S. Army National Guard. A Company is in Bemidji and Detroit Lakes.



Fifth District Commander Dick Ward fills in for Sgt. Ryan Garretson, recipient for the U.S. Army Reserve. He serves with the HHC 372nd Engineer Brigade at Fort Snelling.



Department Commander Paul Hassing gives Petty Officer 1st Class Jacob Hayden of the Navy Reserve Center Fargo the award for U.S. Navy Reserve.



Department Commander Paul Hassing gives Sgt. Mercedes Klein of Detachment Support Company, 4th Law Enforcement Battalion the award for U.S. Marine Corps Reserve. The company is at Fort Snelling.



Department Commander Paul Hassing hands Sgt. 1st Class Tonya Eichner of HHB for 1st Battalion, 151st Field Artillery Regiment an award for U.S. Army National Guard. The HHB is in Montevideo.



Fifth District Commander Dick Ward fills in for Master Sgt. Amy Gillette, recipient for the U.S. Air Force Reserve. She is with the 934th Airlift Wing at Fort Snelling.

## MORE SCENES FROM THE FALL CONFERENCE



Seventh District Commander Jan Ekert watches an instructor closely during an educational session.



Sixth District Commander Anthony Koop, left, and 8th District Commander Jennifer Havlick, right, are honored with letters from the national commander for their districts contributions to the Veterans & Children Foundation.



James A. LaCoursiere Jr. of Connecticut, leading candidate for 2024-25 national commander, spoke at the conference.



The 6th District was the winner of the Kaisersatt Derby membership contest. From left are Department Membership Director Pam Krill, 6th District Commander Anthony Koop and Department Commander Paul Hassing.



Don't ask what's happening here. Just know that a lot of fun happens at the Fall Conference.

# Listening Post



Department Commander Paul Hassing swears in the officers of the Minnesota American Legion Riders. From left are Hassing, ALR Director Jody Hassing, Sergeant-at-Arms Garylee Davenport, Chaplain Paul Edwards and Secretary Shawn Davis.



The American Legion Brain Science Committee approves the two candidates, Taylor Brown and Gunner Drossel, for receiving the American Legion Brain Science Awards along with \$1000.00 scholarships. Behind them is Ray Eiden, president of Brain Sciences Foundation Committee.



Albert Lea Post 56 did another Quilts of Valor on Oct. 20. The five recipients are, from left, Thomas Lenort, Gary Anderson, Gene Lysne, William Danielsen and Bernard Van Vooren.



Members from Ashby Post 357 prepare a walleye dinner for the Fergus Falls Veterans Home. It is an annual fall tradition for the post. Gary Harris, public affairs officers for the home, thanked them.



Backus Post 368, with charitable gambling funds raised at Willards Saloon & Eatery, donated \$2,000 to a local Pine River veteran for a required renovation (in background) and done in conjunction with Minnesota Veterans Project. From left are Theresa Gould of MVP, Deb Sommerfeld of MVP, Post 368 Commander Brad Taylor, the supported veteran, 1st Vice Commander Bobbi Taylor, Doug Zaske of MVP, Ron Walton of MVP and Kim Bachmann of MVP.



Woodbury Post 501 Commander Bob Dolan holds a \$1,000 to the WHS Homerun Club, which fields the four Post 501 American Legion Baseball teams. Woodbury Blue is known for being among the ranked teams every season.



Barnum Post 415 and Auxiliary Unit 415 hosted a spaghetti supper fundraiser on Oct. 13. Proceeds will be distributed to students of Barnum High School for scholarships to attend Boys State and Girls State next June.



Hillman Post 602 welcomed Department Commander Paul Hassing to its membership dinner on Oct. 28. There are 120 people present. They were Legion and Auxiliary members, as well as spouses and guests. Commander Jim Blaisdell presented a donation to the Commander's Project: Minnesota Veterans Assistance Fund.

# Listening Post



The new Windom Area Veterans Memorial was installed in Windom this past summer.



The memorial features stations for service branches and a central one for Minnesota.

## Windom installs new veterans memorial at Lommen Park

Windom City Councilman Marv Grunig, a retired manager with Windom Electric Utility Mgr., spearheaded an effort to construct a veterans memorial at Lommen Park on Highway 60/71 in his community.

The idea for the memorial came out of a strategic planning session held by the City Council early in 2020, where, when Grunig mentioned his thoughts about a memorial, city officials supported the idea. Grunig went forward with the effort to develop the vision further.

With support from the City Council and Windom American Legion Post 206 members, and permission from the Park and Recreation Department to construct the memorial in Lommen Park, the effort then turned to fundraising.

Being Grunig is on the City Council, the fundraising had to be done by a private entity and with the newly created Windom Area Foundation as the "bucket" to collect tax-deductible donations, a matching fund drive by Bank Midwest, lots of advertising by the local newspaper (the

Cottonwood County Citizen), funds came in quite fast.

Having traveled though the state looking at different memorials, Grunig then created a model of a possible memorial for Windom, just to give people an idea of what it might look like.

The model was met with approval, so a print was developed by DGR Engineering from Rock Rapids, Iowa, for concrete contractors to bid on. Local funeral director Joel Lacanne engaged his venter in St. Cloud (Sunburst Memorials) to develop monument options. A venter for the flagpoles and flags was chosen from Gaylord (Flagpole Solutions), and the project was coming together.

With a great spirit of giving, Windom area citizens and businesses stepped up with donations. With discounts from venders like Cemstone Concrete, the funding goal was reached.

The concrete was poured and jet-black monuments held by limestone blocks were installed late last summer.



The memorial is stunning when lit up at night.



Pequot Lakes Post 49 conducted a Quilts of Honor for Veterans Day. There were four recipients: Darol Hanson (Navy), Jay Hinnenkamp (Army), Cecil Kottschade (Air Force), William Mimm (Navy).



Members of Osseo Post & Unit 172 and some family and pets participated in the Lions Roar Parade in September.



Cars, trucks, vans and floats were decorated Nov. 11 for the Decorated Vehicle Parade at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center.



Members of the veteran service organizations in Farmington gave local elementary students a class in flag etiquette.



Fairmont Post 36 and the South Central Minnesota Quilts for Veterans awarded quilts to Fairmont Area Schools retired teachers who are veterans, too. From left are SCMQRV President Linda Maday, Phil Hanson (Army), Dan Kehrberg (Army), Lenny Tvedten (Coast Guard), Dale Martens (Air Force), Harry Brumbaugh (Air Force) and Post 36 Commander Steve Fosness. Not pictured are Robert Bonk (Army), Jim Simser (Navy), Sherwood Sagedahl (Army).

# VETERANS DAY



Interim Commissioner of Veterans Affairs Brad Lindsay welcomes veterans to the official State of Minnesota Veterans Day Program at the Inver Grove Heights Memorial Community Center.



Bloomington Post 550 Commander Dan Welch, who also is captain of the Bloomington Honor Guard, holds a saber during the presentation of the colors and singing of the national anthem. Beside him is Post 550 Sergeant-at-Arms Mike Mellin.



It's not a tuba. It's a baritone. A soldier with the 34th Infantry Division Red Bull Band plays a baritone during the national anthem at the beginning of the official State of Minnesota Veterans Day Program on Nov. 11.



Department commanders from various service organizations were present. From left are Jewish War Veterans Commander Stewart Mednick, American Legion Commander Paul Hassing and VFW Commander Dan Meyer.

## KING TUTS & NEFERTITIS



The 2023 Annual King Tuts Conclave and Feast of the King Tuts and Nefertitis was held at Paynesville Post 271 on Sept. 30. The King Tuts are past department commanders and adjutants. Nefertitis are spouses of King Tuts. The reference to Egyptian royalty is merely a joke about being in the past.

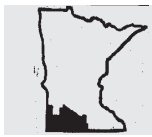


## JWV MEMBERSHIP DINNER



The annual Jewish War Veterans Department of Minnesota Membership Dinner was held Oct. 18 at Mancini's Char House in St. Paul. From left are Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs Interim Commissioner of Programs & Services Ben Johnson, Interim Commissioner of Veterans Affairs Brad Lindsay, Minnesota 40&8 Grand Chef De Gare Gary Miller, DAV Minnesota Commander Ellsworth Fields, JWV National Commander Barry Lischinsky, JWV Department Commander Stewart Mednick, VFW Department Commander Dan Meyer, American Legion Department Commander Paul Hassing, American Legion Auxiliary Department President Sharon Cross, Minnesota American Legion Riders Director Jody Hassing and Sons of The American Legion Detachment Commander John Weiss.

# District commanders



## 2nd District

James Olson



Greetings, 2nd District! As I write this, the 2nd District is sitting in 5th place in membership, but we are far ahead of the target dates for membership renewals. Get those memberships in! I will be contacting each post in the district with some tools that you can use to contact former members and hopefully gain a few memberships back. Commanders, adjutants and membership directors should watch their emails for this.

At the 2023 National Convention, a \$5 dues increase was approved by the convention and department is talking about increasing dues by \$3 for the 2025 membership year. It would be wise if all posts discuss raising

their dues to meet these increases so they don't have to eat the costs. The district will be sending out the form that will need to be filled out and sent in in order to raise post dues if your post decides to do so.

I really don't like the idea of raising dues. Dues going up can result in membership going down. It's a never-ending cycle. In a few years, we'll be talking about another dues increase if membership decreases further. If we want dues to level out, we need to get more veterans into The American Legion and keep them in.



## 3rd District

Rod Reifsteck



Hey, Thundering Third, time passes quickly and one has to slow down to make sure one is not missing their goals.

As I have visited some posts and attended meetings such as the Camporee & Harvest Rally this fall. Legionville has remained utmost on my mind as part of my 2023-24 Commander's Project. I am keeping up the pace collecting donations and appreciate all you who give. Legionville remains one of a kind camp in Minnesota that offers veterans and kids opportunities to learn and create memories while getting exposure to the camping experience. My efforts continue to focus on my travels and fundraising.

Responsibilities have taken me to posts that have issues and it takes time to turn things around for a better working post. All posts seem to have minor issues, but we need to remember we are a family and it helps when we review our Constitution and By-Laws every two years, dated and signed. If changes are to be made make sure the post family is aware of the changes. Posts need to rely on their 3rd District vice commanders to visit their posts and bring to the table

information and direction.

One last thing I would like to share from the recent Fall Conference is the importance of the post service officer (PSO). This job requires a confident, dedicated and organized person — preferably one who is ready and available to provide assistance. There are education classes for the PSO who can receive training by the department, which includes in-person or electronic. I learned that through the years the responsibility is greater than ever in today's world.

This is a great opportunity for our local PSOs to bring attention to veterans in need in their local community. It is free and aligns with "Be the One."

I am looking forward to the Pearl Harbor Rally sponsored by the American Legion Riders at Paynesville Post 271 on Dec. 9. With the holidays approaching fast, we want to remember our veterans serving and our veterans need of assistance. I wish you all a happy holiday season. *Keep up the "can do" spirit.*



## 4th District

Teresa Ash



The 4th District has started off the holiday season with a great event. We had our first-ever family holiday event celebrating every holiday from Thanksgiving past the New Year.

Department Honorary Junior Auxiliary 2nd Vice President Bree England held a toy collection for underprivileged children that she will give to Department President Sharon Cross at the Pearl Harbor Rally, and she also collected \$155 for Department Commander Paul Hassing's Project, Fund 85. Both were very successful. We had a great turnout for the event.

With the holidays approaching and winter coming, we will have our December District

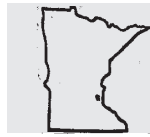
Ramsey County Central Committee meeting via Zoom Dec. 13.

If you would like to attend, we can email you the invitation or you will be able to find it on the 4th District Facebook page. We have our 4th and 5th Districts Joint Mid-Winter Jan. 6 at St. Helena Catholic Church in Minneapolis.

We will walk in the Winter Carnival Parade on Jan. 27. We will meet at Arcade Phalen Post 577 by 11 a.m. We will be taken to the step of site by bus.

Have a great and safe holiday

season. Remember your buddy checks. Everyone needs to be reached out to, if just to say hello



## 5th District

Dick Ward



As we close 2023 and approach the holiday season I am reminded of all the blessings we have shared as our American Legion Family. A very Merry Christmas and a Happy to New Year to all.

The Fabulous 4th and the Fighting 5th Districts will host a Joint Mid-Winter Conference, Jan. 6, at St. Helena Catholic Church in Minneapolis. Plans are being made, agendas developed, and we are looking forward to dynamic speakers and a great time to gather. Look for the details in the coming days.

My buddy checks have been very rewarding to converse and share time with some of our Legionnaires who have been neglected. Keep up the great work with your buddy checks. They are very much appreciated.

A big "thank you" goes out to all posts for invitations to participate in their monthly meetings. Viking Post 468 Commander Don Mix sponsored a wonderful dinner at the Knights of Columbus. Thanks, commander.

Attendance continues to be up at our 5th District meetings.



## 6th District

Anthony Koop



It is the holiday season! There were many delicious meals and celebrations for Veterans Day at local posts, schools and communities that were very well-attended. We all feasted at Thanksgiving, and now we are looking forward to our Christmas celebrations! It is a special time to be with your own family and your Legion family to celebrate all your blessings.

The 6th District is leading the way in membership efforts! It has been hard work, and it has been everyone working hard. We have 152 new members so far!

The trick now is to keep it up and push for the last renewals while finding those new members! If you still have members that haven't paid for 2023 yet, they have until the end of the month to get it done.

and how are you doing.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Informative speakers and an updated agenda have all contributed to making the gathering worth your while. Speakers are lining up, and we are pressing forward.

Membership Chairman Gary Martin tells me we are very close to the 75 percent renewal goal for the Pearl Harbor Rally. A special thank you to Martin and his membership team. We may not be the 1st place district, but we are holding our end.

Donations to my project, Every Third Saturday, are going well. Please consider a contribution to this veteran-focused organization. It supports our needy veterans every single day.

Wold-Chamberlain Post 99 hosts Post 435's Omelet Breakfast on the second Sunday and Post 99 Pancake Breakfast on the 4th Sunday. Remember to support your local posts.

*"To consecrate and sanctify our comradeship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness."*

Make those phone calls and send out those letters. It is also so important to share what the great things your Post is doing so your community knows. Talk to your local papers and community groups. They are likely willing to help out The American Legion to publish the photos and articles about what we are doing.

The Pearl Harbor Rally is being held in our district at Paynesville Post 271 on Dec. 9, and the 6th District Mid-Winter Conference is Jan. 27 at Aitkin Post 86.

I hope to see ALL of you there and at least one member from each and every 6th District post so you are represented.



## 7th District

Jan Ekert



Greetings to all of my fellow Legionnaires.

Congratulations to all of you and your hard work on membership. The 7th is moving up and once again showing our commitment to The American Legion.

As of the writing of this article, the 7th District is in third place. That is two weeks running. Congratulations on such a great job showing how hard we work at membership.

The Fall Conference has come and gone, and it was nice seeing many of you there. The conferences and conventions are a great time to learn about the programs and benefits that The

sometimes a lonely place. We need to lend each other that helping hand. We are brothers and sisters in arms.

Here is an update on what is happening at both the national and department levels. Many of you have heard that membership dues are going up. Inflation catches up even with nonprofits such as ours. At the National Convention, delegates approved an increase at the national level by \$5. At the Fall Conference, the Department Finance Committee recommended a state dues increase of \$3 for the 2024-25 year, which will be voted on at the 105th Department Convention in July.

The District Executive Committee will meet sometime after Thanksgiving to evaluate what the district is going to do with their dues as well; I would be prepared for an increase at this

level as well.

The Mid-Winter Conference will be at New London Post 537 on Jan. 20, with an inclement weather date of Jan. 27. The 7th District Convention will be held at Morris Post 29 on May 18.

The Pearl Harbor Rally is 11 a.m. Dec. 9 at Paynesville Post 271. The Sweetheart Rally is 11 a.m. Feb. 3 at Forest Lake Post 225. The Appreciation Rally is March 2 at Montgomery Post 79.

I look forward to seeing you there.

Don't forget my project for the veterans at the Montevideo Veterans Home. Any and all donations are appreciated. Make your checks payable to Jan Ekert, Commander's Project, and send them to me.

Remember our strength lies in our numbers.

*Veterans Helping Veterans.*



## 9th District

Steve NaSalle



Hello, Roaring 9th American Legion Family!

As the 2023 calendar year comes to an end, our membership goals continue to improve as we move forward into 2024.

Our membership numbers for our district are still meeting or exceeding our Legion goals. However, some of our posts are still struggling. Therefore, I am asking each of you for your assistance. Again, if your post is doing well, and you know of another post, close to your own, that is struggling, please reach out to them and render your expertise in helping the struggling post succeed.

Though we have a great 9th District team, it is sometimes difficult for us to be in more than one place at a time, so your assistance is very welcome.

Please continue your buddy checks to ensure our home-bound, and elderly veterans are safe and warm during the upcoming winter.

According to the Farmer's Almanac, it's going to be a frigid winter. We leave *no one* behind! Remember to be safe during your holiday travels and please plan ahead. Please remember to mark your calendars for our upcoming

MyLegion.org training scheduled for Dec. 16, at Moorhead Post 21 at 10 a.m. Please arrive early, so we may get started on time.

Department Membership Director Pam Krill, a fantastic Legionnaire, will host the training.

Dates to remember:  
• District Executive Committee at 7 p.m. Jan. 19 at Detroit Lakes Post 15.

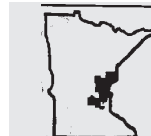
• District Mid-Winter Conference at 9 a.m. Jan. 20 at Detroit Lakes Post 15.

• District Executive Committee at 5 p.m. June 7 at East Grand Forks Post 157.

• District Convention at 9 a.m. June 8 at East Grand Forks Post 157.

Again, I would like to see at least one representative from each post in the 9th District to attend. Have a wonderful holiday season and please continue to keep up the great work.

*"As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them."*  
— John F. Kennedy



## 10th District

Matthew Berens



Holiday greetings to everyone in the Minnesota American Legion Family from all of us in the Mighty Tenth District.

I must say that this has been an enjoyable time of year so far. As of this writing, Veterans Day was recently upon us. I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to all veterans, past and present, for their service to our beloved nation. And I would like to send a special thank you to the Anoka, Mound, Fridley and Harris posts for their outstanding Veterans Day Dinners and warm fellowship.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank everyone involved in recent revitalization efforts. Not just in our district, but the department as a whole. I am happy to report that both

the Coon Rapids and Edina posts are on track to have an exciting 2024 thanks to a lot of hard work. Let's keep that momentum going!

Lastly, I wanted to send holiday warm wishes to my parents, Butch and Kathi. And to all of the Legion Family in my hometown of Benson.

It's been fun getting feedback from the veterans in the old 7th District stomping grounds. May everyone in the Minnesota American Legion Family have a happy and safe holiday season as well. As always, I can be reached at mtberens@yahoo.com. Cheers!



# The Auxiliary Bulletin

No. 24 Vol. 5

President Sharon Cross • Secretary Christie Avant, christie@mnala.org

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December 2023

## We are a true community of volunteers

The Fall Conference, held Oct. 27 and 28 in St. Cloud, always is a team effort. The American Legion Family came through once again for a very informative and educational conference.

Thank you to all who donated to Department Children & Youth Chairman Brandi Christensen's project of children's activity bags during the conference. Thank you to all the department chairmen for all their hard work on their PowerPoints and trifold presentations on our programs.

I wish to thank everyone who was so supportive and thank everyone who participated by attending the Fall Conference.

Northwestern Division National Vice President Karen Susag spoke on Saturday at the conference regarding "Be the One." The ALA National Headquarters has several awareness plans for members. These include social media posts, a blog post, magazine story and discussions at upcoming trainings. You can also go to [www.ALAforVeterans.org](http://www.ALAforVeterans.org) to watch

### President's Column

Sharon Cross



the "Be the One" webinar in the ALA Academy. The No. 1 issue facing the veteran community is suicide.

How can you "Be the One" to help?

- Ask veterans in your life how they are doing.
- Listen when a veteran needs to talk.

- Reach out when you think a veteran might be struggling.

- Increase awareness about veteran and military suicide.

- Have a list of resources in your area for veterans who may be struggling.

- Spread the word about the Veterans Crisis Line at 988.

I wish to thank all the districts, posts and units for their invitations. Also, the Veterans Memorial Community Center and the Minneapolis Veterans Home for their invitations. November was busy with multiple Veterans Day events. One highlight: The

3rd District held its ALA birthday party, and the guest speaker, Edna Thayer, was so entertaining and enlightening.

As the holidays draw near, may we all remember to live a life of gratitude and being grateful for all that is good in our lives, happy occasions, neighbors, family and friends. If you encounter a negative situation, how can you turn it into a positive one. May your Christmas be blessed with creating new memories.

*Sharon Cross of Bemidji Unit 14 is the president of the American Legion Auxiliary Department of Minnesota. Her theme is "Be The One to Dance Into the Hearts of Veterans."*

## There are many ways we help veterans

By Judy Ackerman  
VA&R Chairman

Kudos to the Department of Minnesota's members who stepped up to help out Children & Youth Chairman Brandi Christensen, for the activity bags and items to pack into bags for the children of our veterans at the VA medical centers and the area CBOCs. Members donated more than 400 bags for this great project.

Great job, Minnesota American Legion Auxiliary.

The VA&R program has different ways to recognize our veterans.

The American Legion Auxiliary has teamed up with a few fabulous organizations.

### 1. Wreaths Across America.

Don't forget to mark your calendars for Wreath Across America on Saturday, Dec. 16! A beautiful way for the American Legion family and community partners to come together to remember the fallen, honor those who have served and teach the next generation the value of freedom. It's not too late for a unit or member to sponsor a wreath (or multiple wreaths) or to volunteer to lay the wreaths! Please go to the website to order wreaths or volunteer to help lay the wreaths. Wreaths

Across America.org.

2. Check into the Honor Flight Network: Honoring American Veterans.

Minnesota is served by three areas for Honor Flights — Twin Cities, Duluth and Fargo. Please check their websites for ways to assist; donations, chaperones, welcoming committees and etc. [www.honorflight.org](http://www.honorflight.org)

3. This organization helps with blood donations, caregiver support groups, military family and veteran support groups. Check and see where your services could be helpful. Visit [www.redcross.org/get-help/military-families/services-for-veterans/military-veteran-caregiver-network.html](http://www.redcross.org/get-help/military-families/services-for-veterans/military-veteran-caregiver-network.html).

The holidays are right around the corner. Now is a perfect time to volunteer at VA facilities around Minnesota. Go caroling, donate holiday goodies (check with the facility for any restrictions), volunteer for the VA holiday gift shops, or maybe volunteer to help decorate the local VA facility.

The greatest present is your presence!

It can mean the world to a veteran if you just go sit and visit with them. Contact your local VA chief of voluntary services or volunteer coordinator at the facility to coordinate donations and/or volunteering.

## NEWS & NOTES

### Silent Auction was a big hit

The Auxiliary Emergency Fund Committee would like to start by saying a huge thank you to all who participated in our annual AEF Silent Auction at the Fall Conference.

The Silent Auction was remarkably successful due to our American Legion Family. The success was because of the material and monetary donations from the Legionnaire's, Auxiliary members, SAL members and Riders.

We could not have done it without you. The volunteers were phenomenal and working

together made a difference.

Drum roll ... We raised a grand total of \$7,439. Way to go! We are off to a great start.

— AEF Chairman Margee Keller

### Department office to be closed for the holidays

On behalf of the department staff, we wish each of you a Merry Christmas, Happy New Year and happy holidays.

We are thankful for each of you and ask you to continue to

work the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary.

The Department Office will be closed Dec. 25 and 26 for Christmas and Jan. 1 and 2 for New Year's.

— Executive Secretary Christie Avant

### Thanks for the assistance

Thank you to all the members and units that donated activity bags and extra items. Nearly 400 bags and extra items were donated.

— Children and Youth Chairman Brandi Christensen



The Auxiliary's Minnesota Veterans Home and VA Medical Center representatives stood together for a report at the Fall Conference in St. Cloud. From left are Jennifer Hurst for the Montevideo Veterans Home, Wanda Prescher for the Preston Veterans Home, Denise Milton for the Bemidji Veterans Home, Sandy Gibson for the Minneapolis Veterans Homes, Becky Olson for the Fargo VAMC, Janet Thompson for the Minneapolis VAMC and Carol Kottom for the St. Cloud VAMC.



Fifth District Auxiliary Officers Jill Davis and Julie Martin present an Auxiliary Certificate of Appreciation to Honorary Junior President Taylor McElroy for a great speech on her Girls State experience. McElroy visited the 5th District meeting in November.



Betty "Tiny" Engebretson from Marietta Unit 156, 7th District, turned 90 years old in August. She has held many officer and chairman positions. She has also been the membership chairman for many years and has decided to hand the job over to her niece Diane Billiet. Engebretson was presented an honorary life membership for her dedication and continuous membership of 59 years.



Members of the Minnesota American Legion Auxiliary enjoy company during the Distinguished Guests Dinner at the Fall Conference. The gathering was held at the River's Edge Convention Center and Kelly Inn Best Western in St. Cloud, and they are dining at the attached Green Mill Restaurant.

Rick Cross



Department Commander Hassing escorting Department President Cross during the Grand March.



Department President Sharon Cross introduces the special guest to the 2023 Fall Conference.



Membership Chairman Jenny Nelson, Department 1st Vice President Judy Ackerman and Department 2nd Vice President Robin Dorf.



Junior Honorary Department President Taylor McElroy assists Children & Youth Chairman, Brandi Christensen with the Military Child's Table Ceremony during the opening session of Fall Conference.



Northwestern Division National Vice President Karen Susag of the Department of Montana, Broadwater Unit 42, smiles for a picture with Minnesota NECman Jean Walker.



Karen Susag addresses the Fall Conference attendees on Saturday morning. Susag is eligible through husband, Vietnam veteran Michael G. Susag, U.S. Air Force; and father, Oscar Webster, WWI veteran. She has been an American Legion Auxiliary member since 1970. She has served on many different chairmanships and offices held at unit, district, and department levels. Susag is a newspaper reporter, Blood Drive chairman, Youth Leader volunteer and involved in food service at university.



Waseca Auxiliary Unit 228 donated "America's White Table" books to all elementary, intermediate, and public libraries in Waseca for Veteran's Day. Books are available for students to check out and many schools chose to read the books as part of their recognition programs.



Waseca Auxiliary Unit 228 led a winter drive for Every Third Saturday in Minneapolis. In just a few weeks, donations filled two pickup trucks with winter clothes, blankets, sleeping bags and other items for homeless veterans.



Ashby Post 357 honored veterans on Veterans Day with a stuffed pork chop dinner, baked potatoes, corn, buns, appetizers and an ice cream banana split. Members of Auxiliary Unit 357 prepared and served the meal. The Ashby High School Robotics Club helped clear the tables.



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