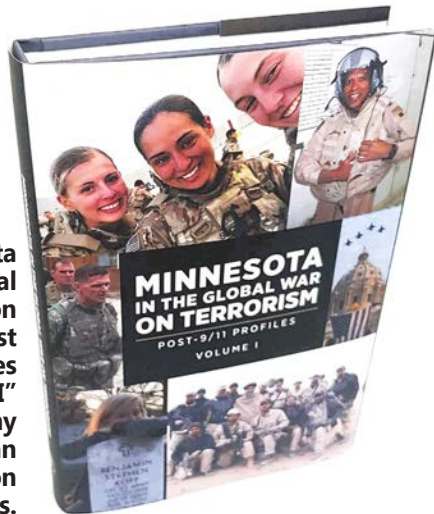




"Minnesota in the Global War on Terrorism: Post 9/11 Profiles Volume 1" features many American Legion members.



Book documents Post-9/11 veterans Museum preserves stories of Minnesotans in Global War on Terrorism

ST. PAUL — The Minnesota Military & Veterans Museum has produced a new book documenting the stories of veterans from the Land of 10,000 Lakes who fought in the Global War on Terrorism.

Called "Minnesota in the Global War on Terrorism," the book was inspired by previous work produced after other wars.

Museum Director Randal Dietrich said similar books — deliberate efforts to preserve stories — were produced following wars as far back as the Civil War and the U.S.-Dakota War.

"We thought it was important to follow the lead of our predecessors and do the same," he said.

The great thing about books is that they don't suffer from software updates or electrical outages, Dietrich noted. They can be stored and opened again a century later, available to read immediately. Meanwhile, the digital version could be obsolete.

"You can't give me a more enduring technology than the printing press," he said.

The museum only produced 400 copies of the books. They cannot be purchased. Instead,

they are made available to libraries, universities and schools. Dietrich encouraged readers to check out copies at local libraries.

The book tells the tales of Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, the aftermath, Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Inherent Resolve, Operation Freedom's Sentinel, Operation Allies Refuge, Operation Allies Welcome, the homefront and remembrances from 20 years later.

Among the people profiled are:

- Bloomington's Tom Burnett, who was

Continued on Page 2

Governor: Remove 'interim'

ST. PAUL — Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz on Dec. 20 announced the appointment of Brad Lindsay to serve as commissioner of Veterans Affairs. Lindsay had been serving as interim commissioner since September.

"As a U.S. Army veteran with extensive experience serving Minnesota's veterans and their families, I'm proud to appoint Brad Lindsay to this important role," said Walz. "As a veterans affairs leader, he has worked tirelessly to end veteran homelessness, strengthen our Minnesota Veterans Homes & Cemeteries and connect Minnesota's veterans to the services and benefits they have earned."



Brad Lindsay

Lindsay is an active member of New Prague American Legion Post 45 and was a member of Faribault Post 43 prior to 2022. He has been a member of the Legion since 2009.

Commissioner Larry Herke retired Sept. 12, prompting the need for Lindsay to take the role temporarily. Prior,

Continued on Page 2

National Guardian

Baehman founded a nonprofit org to provide 'range therapy' for veterans

By Tim Engstrom

LONSDALE — Returning from a deployment is never easy. In the active-duty military, service-members spend pretty much every day with others who went through what they went through.

In National Guard and Reserve units, they spend most days with civilians who have no idea what the deployment was like.

Eric Baehman knows. He has experienced both. He is a member of Lonsdale Post 586 and is a veteran of the fight against the Islamic State with the 1st Infantry Division and of the War in Afghanistan with the Wisconsin National Guard.

Baehman grew up in Inver Grove Heights and graduated from Simley High School in 2013.

"As a young kid, I knew I wanted to be in the military," he said. "I played Army as a kid. I like guns, airplanes and history. I was 17 when I told my parents what I wanted to do."

He left for active-duty Army in February 2014. He requested Special Forces, and he was a qualified candidate for 18X but was denied an age



Alyssa Smolen Photography

Eric Baehman rides his Arabian horse "Pearl" at Empyrean Stables south of Coates. He and his wife, Mary Grace, have several companies including horse rentals. He also founded Designated Marksman to take veterans to firing ranges around the state as a form of therapy.

waiver. He landed on 11B, which, as most veterans know, is infantryman — a grunt.

One-Station Unit Training (aka OSUT, a new infantry term combining basic and AIT) was at Fort Benning,

Ga. Then the Army sent Baehman to Fort Riley, Kan., to be part of the 1st Infantry Division, better known as the Big Red One. He was assigned to the division's 118th Infantry Regiment, but near the end of 2014, he became

part of the reactivated 2nd Battalion, 70th Armored Regiment. He would be in a tank battalion.

The 1st Infantry deployed to Iraq in September 2015. It wasn't Operation

Continued on Page 8



American Legion Pheasant Feed Chairman Glenn Mueller pins a pheasant pin on a World War II veteran on Pearl Harbor Day during the annual Pheasant Feed at the Minneapolis Veterans Home.

Legion provides more than 500 pheasants to veterans in homes

MINNEAPOLIS — Glenn Mueller of Lewiston Post 90 was appointed chairman of the American Legion Department of Minnesota Pheasant Feed Committee in 2019.

The committee provides pheasant dinners every December to veterans and guests at the five Minnesota Veterans Homes. This year is the 82nd year in a row of the Minnesota American Legion providing this specialty to the veterans in the homes.

Before the 1980s, the Legionnaires used to go hunting, and the pheasants collected were served up for lunch. After changes in U.S. Department of Agriculture regulations, the birds had to come from a company.

The prior chairman told him where the committee got the birds. It turned out that company was unable to provide them any longer in large numbers. They referred Mueller to some Indiana company. He had a dilemma to solve.

Mueller did an internet search to find where he could purchase frozen pheasants, and he stumbled across Oakwood Game Farm out of Princeton. The company sells fresh and smoked game birds. Yep, they could handle 400 frozen pheasants.

"They've been very good. They've kept their prices reasonable. It's about \$25 a bird.

Continued on Page 2

American Legion Veterans



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Continued from Page 1

The Indiana company wanted \$50 a bird," Mueller said.

Its employees delivered the birds to the veterans homes, and the staff of the home prepared the pheasant dinners. The annual meal proceeded like it had for decades. All was well.

In the second year, the COVID pandemic hit, and Oakwood Game Farm could not deliver the birds. Neither could FedEx, UPS or any other delivery service. Mueller arrived with his Ford F-150, which had a topper, and he picked up all the frozen pheasants.

First, he drove to Minneapolis and dropped off that home's share of birds. Then it was on to the State Security Hospital in St. Peter (just the veterans), then Hastings, then up north to Silver Bay.

That night, he stayed at his father-in-law's place in Duluth on a Saturday night, and they moved the pheasants into a chest freezer so they didn't thaw.

He returned to his home in St. Charles on Sunday, and on Monday, he delivered the remaining birds to the veterans homes in Luverne and Fergus Falls. Job done.

His third, fourth and now fifth years have been smooth sailing. "They usually butcher them about two weeks before they send them out," he said

A mix of resident veterans, staff, Legionnaires and Auxiliary members attended the dinner on Dec. 7 this year. Most of the residents were served the pheasant meal in their rooms.

"We served up 545 pheasants this year," Mueller said. "We had 560 last year."



The American Legion Department of Minnesota Pheasant Feed Committee donated a \$14,000 gait trainer from Second Step. From left are Committee Chairman Glenn Mueller, Minneapolis Veterans Home Administrator Doug Britain, Minneapolis Veterans Home Rehabilitation Therapy Director Derek Johnson, Minnesota American Legion Commander Paul Hassing, American Legion 3rd District Vice Commander Joe Bares and Minneapolis Veterans Home Public Affairs Director Cheryl Garrison.

The numbers were down in Luverne and Hastings, which brought the total statewide down.

The new Montevideo Veterans Home had its very first meal this year, and it ordered 20 birds. Preston and Bemidji will begin next December.

Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs Deputy Commissioner Eric Meittunen, who leads the veterans homes, said veterans like to have a mission, a purpose, and 82 years of providing pheasant dinners is the fulfillment of that sense of purpose.

Commissioner Brad Lindsay noted the pheasant dinner fell on Pearl Harbor Day, and he acknowledged a World War II veteran in attendance.

Attendees also met the new administrator for the

Minneapolis Veterans Home. It is Doug Britain. Most recently, he served as administrator for Lakehouse Healthcare and Rehabilitation Center (formerly Walker Methodist Health Center). He holds an MHA from the University of Minnesota and a bachelor's degree in business administration from Union College. Both his father and brother are Army veterans.

A new gait trainer

They also thanked the Pheasant Feed Committee for a \$14,000 piece of equipment it purchased. It is a gait trainer from Second Step Inc.

Minneapolis Veterans Home Rehabilitation Therapy Director Derek Johnson said the old overhead gait trainer was cumbersome and uncomfortable. As

a result, it didn't get used much. It had a lot of moving parts that frequently needed replacing, so that also limited use.

This new one is light and easy-to-maneuver. If its user falls, they are fully supported. It is not hanging from above. It has strong welds and fewer parts.

"We don't have to worry if they lose their balance," Johnson said.

Mueller said he is proud the Pheasant Feed Committee is able to assist veterans with rehabilitation and thanked the MDVA for partnering for 82 years.

Mueller said the Pheasant Feed Committee is looking at ways to support the new homes, such as providing the seed money needed to fundraise for new motor vehicles.

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- National Harbor
- Admission to George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate & Garden
- Two full-day guided tours of Washington D.C.
- WWII Memorial, Capitol Hill, Embassy Row, the Korean War Veterans Memorial, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the Smithsonian, Martin Luther King Jr. National Memorial, the Lincoln Memorial

\$1,799.00 pp Double Occupancy

Walz names Lindsay commissioner

he was the deputy commissioner of programs and services.

The commissioner of veterans affairs is responsible for serving the state's 300,000 veterans and their families. He also represents Minnesota

Department of Veterans Affairs at hearings before the Minnesota Legislature and United States Congress and maintains close working relationships with the veterans service organizations of Minnesota.

Book preserves GWOT veteran stories

Continued from Page 1

among the passengers aboard United Flight 93 who thwarted the hijackers' plans.

• Clarks Grove's Corey Goodnature, an Army chopper pilot who perished in the crash of an MH-47 Chinook helicopter in

Afghanistan as part of Operation Red Wings.

• Bovey's Andrew Bunderman, an Army officer who remained calm under fire at the Battle of Outpost Keating in eastern Afghanistan.

• Amboy's James Olson, a

Marine who still has shrapnel in him to this day from standing guard at an intersection in Iraq when a car bomb went off.

• New Prague's Keith Duetsch, who lost a leg on an Army convoy in Iraq and who later found success as a national champion adaptive snowboarder.

• Maple Plain's Mike McElhinney, a Special Forces soldier who was severely wounded by friendly fire as a result of a B-52 dropping a JDAM bomb on his unit.

• St. Paul's Dan Gabrielli, commander for the Air National Guard's Task Force Holloman, which became the 487th Air Expeditionary Wing, at Holloman AFB in New Mexico, which housed vulnerable Afghans after the evacuation of Kabul.

The book's three main authors are Dietrich, Minnesota Legionnaire Editor Emeritus Al Zdon and Minnesota Legionnaire Editor Tim Engstrom. The foreword is by Kyle Ward, director of social studies education at Minnesota State University, Mankato.

An electronic copy of the book is available online at www.mnvetmuseum.org/9/11-book-project.

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Minn. Veterans Assistance Fund changes lives



Department Service Officer Ray Kane, right, stands with Hastings Post 47 Commander Dustin Speed and a veteran who received a used Dodge Caravan to help her get to work.

Foundation buys minivan for vet

HASTINGS — Members of American Legion Post 47 in Hastings joined forces with Cottage Grove Beyond the Yellow Ribbon, Cottage Grove Lions Club and the Minnesota American Legion Foundation to help acquire a motor vehicle for a veteran in need.

Minnesota American Legion Department Service Officer Ray Kane said Post 47 Commander Dustin Speed and Post Service Officer Alex Fleming worked with Kane and Assistant Department Service Officer Janet Lorenzo to get the funding and to find a cooperative dealership. They found Lakeland Auto in Lakeland, a city on Lake St. Croix, south of Bayport. The dealer was able to provide a minivan within the price range.

The veteran needed the vehicle to be able to get to work. Kane said she has a long daily commute. She received the

Dodge Caravan on Monday, Dec. 11.

Funding for the Dodge Caravan comes partly from the Minnesota American Legion Foundation's Fund 85, which is the Minnesota Veterans Assistance Fund. Fund 85 is Department Commander Paul Hassing's Project. He hopes to raise \$100,000 for it by July 15 and stands at \$36,856.

He said Beyond the Yellow Ribbon and Lions Club also helped with the needs of the veteran's family for the holidays.

"As the winter chill sets in, this heartening story serves as a reminder of the difference a community can make," Kane said. "The team's excitement and fulfillment are palpable, knowing that their efforts have significantly reduced the veteran's commute, replacing a two-hour bus journey in the cold with a safe, reliable vehicle."

What Fund 85 does ...

Your charity makes a difference. Here, the Legionnaire provides our readers with Fund 85 money disbursed Jan.-July. The funds don't go to the veteran, but, rather, to the need, such as a landlord or utility. "Housing security" means preventing homelessness.

Date	Post	Funds	Comment
1/3	98	\$1,390	Housing security
1/9	1776	\$4,081	Overdue bills, housing security
1/12	1982	\$4,561	Truck payment, overdue bills
2/17	96	\$744	Past due utilities, car repair
2/22	89	\$4,044	Overdue utilities, housing security
3/6	1982	\$1,675	Housing security
3/9	1982	\$4,093	Purchase scooter
3/10	172	\$5,000	Repair water leak (BTYR helped)
3/13	260	\$5,000	Purchase motor vehicle
3/13	1982	\$564	Housing security, chair purchase
3/13	ADSO	\$1,281	Overdue bill and car payment
3/16	1982	\$1,428	Overdue phone, heat, car bills
3/21	96	\$1,135	Housing security, overdue bill
3/21	1776	\$4,870	Overdue bills, child care, insurance
4/4	1982	\$3,024	Housing security
4/14	1776	\$1,146	Car repairs
4/24	77	\$2,078	Housing security
5/3	1982	\$3,354	Overdue bill to secure housing
5/4	47	\$926	Overdue car payment
5/9	130	\$5,000	Part of car repair
5/30	47	\$5,000	Overdue housing and car bills
5/30	172	\$2,872	Reconnect electricity
6/6	47	\$4,000	Part of car repair
6/22	47	\$5,000	Housing security
6/26	72	\$5,000	Part of well replacement (no water)
6/26	47	\$2,389	Housing security, utilities
7/5	47	\$599	Housing security
7/5	47	\$1,900	Utilities, housing security
7/18	47	\$2,561	Plumbing (Homehelp paid \$1,500)
7/20	560	\$1,308	Utilities, housing security
7/20	225	\$1,946	Car, housing, insurance
7/24	621	\$4,017	Housing security, overdue bills

Note: The Department VA&R staff referred many others in need of assistance to other sources so they would not use up their \$5,000 MVAE eligibility.

THE AMERICAN LEGION 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.

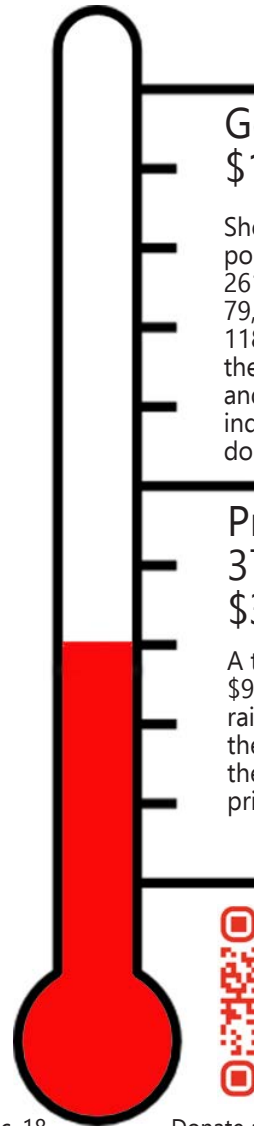
Date of graphic: Dec. 18

Goal: \$100,000

Shout out to posts 146, 101, 261, 642, 489, 79, 108, 577, 118, Unit 82, the 4th District and several individual donors.

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Our great American Legion Family is made up of many different types of people with many different personalities. We don't always agree. We don't always get along. We do have to do our best to get along for the greater good though. We have too much work to do, and a lot of veterans and families are counting on us to get things done.

They are also watching us to see if this is an organization that they would want to be a part of. We can do better. You are all dedicated and wonderful people, each one bringing something unique to the table. I am glad to know all of you.

This last month has been very busy with a lot of post-level Christmas parties. It really is the fun part of being busy. I've met so many wonderful people from all around the state. I've said before and I really believe Minnesota is the greatest department in The American Legion. The hospitality and kindness, the extra hours, the volunteerism that our communities have shown me is remarkable. Thank all of you so much.

I was contacted recently by a Minnesota Legion member who currently lives in Florida (hey, Chuck) and loves to read the Legionnaire. We had a great chat. He asked about my project, and we talked about some places we both knew.

During the conversation, he mentioned how some of the Legion posts weren't very welcoming of Vietnam veterans — even posts that knew the person before going to Vietnam. If that happened to you, I am so very sorry. A veteran is a veteran. No matter where they served.

No veteran should be turned away or made to feel unwelcome at any of our posts. If you

Commander's Column

Paul Hassing



have been turned away, please let me know.

I've put a lot of miles on this year, and sometimes when I'm going down the road, I grumble to myself about how long of a drive it is. When I catch myself doing this, I think about what it must have been like back in the 1920s when The American Legion was first starting. How did they travel around the state? Did they have a hard time convincing people to join?

Back then it was mostly word of mouth. I know they weren't all professional salesmen, yet they seemed to get the job done. I know they didn't have a lot of competition for activities back then, but they also had longer work hours and less free time. I am always amazed at the great organization that was built, and the great things that were accomplished with what little technology available to them.

I want to thank everyone who has donated to the American Legion Minnesota Veterans Assistance Fund (Minnesota American Legion Foundation Fund 85). The challenge this year is to raise \$100,000. I know that seems like a lot, but our veterans really need help.

I want to thank Department Service Officer Ray Kane and Assistant DSO Janet Lorenzo for doing such a fantastic job with the fund. This duo doesn't just give money away, but they do their best to help the veteran, so the situation doesn't happen again. Most of us at one point or another in our lives could have used the Minnesota Veterans

Assistance Fund. "There, but for the grace of God, go I," as they say. Please reach out to your posts. Gambling funds can be used, because the foundation is a 501c3, and if you have any questions, please call me.

We have a brand-new year coming up, and I am looking forward to it. I'm not much of a "New Year, New Me" type of person, but there are some things I need to work on this year. I have to find a way to shed all the pounds I've gained from the great meals.

Please remember to reach out to those you haven't spoken to in a while. Be the one that could make a difference in someone else's life.

I really hope you all had a great time over the holidays. I hope everyone was able to relax a little and enjoy being around those that you love. Sometimes family gatherings can be a little overwhelming. We don't always get along with or agree with everyone in the family. Sometimes you don't want to really be around certain family members. But you do your best to put aside your differences to make the occasion better for everyone.

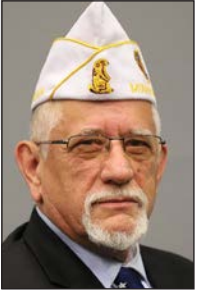
Thank you all more than you know.

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

Scriptures encourage healthy lifestyle

Chaplain's Corner

Dean Knutson



Now that we have celebrated another holiday season, I hope that yours was one of happiness and joy and time spent with family and loved ones.

With the hustle and bustle of the busy schedule and season, how we can once again think about living a more healthy, balanced and controlled lifestyle?

There are many things that may get in our way and distract us from the plans that we may think we would like to get done on a daily basis.

Whether it be something that comes up at home or at work, there always seems to be something else that needs to get done and throws us off track.

It may be a word of anger toward a loved one or a fit of road rage while you are driving or an unexpected phone call or a message from either a friend or family member.

No matter what the circumstances are, we need to be able to balance out these items of our lives with everything else we have going on.

If we are unable to find a way to balance them out, we may feel overwhelmed or stressed out.

Usually, when we hear about living a healthy and balanced lifestyle, we think of eating sensibly and exercising to some extent.

We need to remember that there is one way that we can find rest and relaxation in our lives that can get us through all

circumstances that may arise.

Making sure that we spend time reading Scriptures is a way of calming our spirit and helping us with our daily problems and concerns. God has a way of exposing the problems that we are storing up inside of ourselves. The more faith we have in His Word, He begins to expel these problems and helps us to live a happier, healthier and balanced lifestyle.

The Scriptures point out to us that our bodies are not our own, but they are a gift given to us by God. Therefore, we are asked to honor God with our bodies by taking care of them. This includes eating a healthy diet, getting enough exercise and avoiding those things that would cause harm to our bodies.

It also says that a joyful and happy heart are important to our physical and mental being. Laughter is one way for us to reduce stress, help the immune system and improve our overall well-being.

Even as physical exercise is important for our overall well-being, Godliness is even more important and of greater value to us.

It is important for us to take care of our physical selves, it is equally important for us to focus on our spiritual health and growth.

Dates to remember in Jan-

uary and February:
New Year's Day: Jan. 1

World Braille Day: Jan. 4
Epiphany: Jan. 6 (the 12th day of Christmas)

Law Enforcement Appreciation Day: Jan. 9

Martin Luther King Jr. Day: Jan. 15

National Day of Racial Healing: Jan. 16

Christian Unity Week: Jan. 18-25

World Religion Day: Jan. 21

Tu Bishvat: Jan. 24

Belly Laugh Day: Jan. 24

Holocaust Remembrance Day: Jan. 27

Feb. 1: Start of Black History Month

Groundhog Day: Feb. 2

Candlemas: Feb. 2

World Cancer Day: Feb. 4

Chinese New Year: Feb. 10

Lunar New Year: Feb. 10

Super Bowl Sunday: Feb. 11

Mardi Gras: Feb. 13

Valentine's Day: Feb. 14

Ash Wednesday: Feb. 14

Random Acts of Kindness Day: Feb. 17

Presidents Day: Feb. 19

Leap Day: Feb. 29

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.

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.

Why not just go to 6 issues?

Sorry to hear that the Legionnaire newspaper is going to nine versus twelve issues per year. Since it is a budget issue, I recommend going a step further and just making it six issues per year — or bi-monthly. Many subscription magazines publish that way. Sadly, most people don't read as much anymore and will be happy with a gap between issues.

Furthermore, I recommend a drive to solicit online subscribers. Again, that's the way our society is going — online. I, for one would be happy to read the Legionnaire online. I am willing to start today. My e-mail is above!

It's a shame to read through the paper at a single sitting and then throw it into the recycle. Wasteful.

Just a couple thoughts.
Respectfully,

Noel Allard
Delano Post 377

Editor's note: We have launched a new website to read the Legionnaire online. It is at Legionnaire.org. Also, readers



Dan Morgan/North End Post 474

"You play any heavy metal?"

are welcome to send "voluntary subscriptions" of \$35 to The Minnesota Legionnaire, 20 W. 12th St. Room 300A, St. Paul, MN 55437. We appreciate the donations we have received so far.

VA staffer shines in duties

The purpose of my letter is to commend a member of the Minneapolis VA staff, Ms. Ann Crew, for her sterling professionalism in handling my high blood pressure program.

The VA sent me a blood

pressure monitoring kit, and Ms. Crew assisted me in utilizing this health care tool properly, and educating me on how to maximize the benefit of this home health care device.

She instructed me on the benefits of creating and actually utilizing a Daily Blood Pressure Journal, the value of variability in taking blood pressure readings, and when would be the most appropriate time to take medically ordered prescriptions.

When I had questions on what a skilled medical professional might regard as simplistic, she patiently explained to me the best approach to utilizing the

blood pressure device, and why such an approach would more accurately measure my systolic and diastolic blood pressure.

Her follow up was also world-class. When I was unable to get an appropriate full week of correct readings, she had me take another week of totally accurate measurements to ensure that she could report my blood pressure status absolutely properly.

Ms. Crew is a very dedicated health care professional, and a true credit to your organization. Thank you for sharing her highly-skilled capabilities and talents with a veteran who has greatly benefitted from both her talent and her caring and concerned manner.

So very grateful for the most able health care professionals that you employ and make available to Veterans like me.

All the best!

Peter R. Bartling
Wayzata Post 118

Remove shot requirement to drive a van

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One of the reasons for refusing to take the shot is I plan to be around for a long time.

Clark C. Peterson
Hinckley Post 388

The Minnesota

Legionnaire

FOR GOD AND COUNTRY

Official publication of
The American Legion
Department of Minnesota

About: The Minnesota Legionnaire (USPS 013679) (ISSN 01644270) is published monthly by The American Legion, Department of Minnesota, 20 W 12th St., Room 300A, St. Paul, MN 55155-2000.

Periodicals postage paid at St Paul, Minnesota, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to The Minnesota Legionnaire, 20 W. 12th St., St. Paul, MN 55155-2000.

First published in 1920 as the Hennepin County Legionnaire, the Minnesota Legionnaire is now in its 101st year of publication. The Legionnaire is a member of The American Legion Media Alliance.

To advertise: 651-424-4612 or use the email below
Subscription: \$20 for non-members for one year or \$35 for two years. Members receive the Legionnaire as part of their dues. The Minnesota Legionnaire delivers anywhere in the United States, its territories or its overseas military addresses. Under our postal status, we cannot mail to international addresses.

Address: The Minnesota Legionnaire, 20 W. 12th St., Room 300A, St. Paul, MN 55155-2000

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

Fax: 651-291-1057

Email: tengstrom@mnlegion.org

Web: mnlegion.org/legionnaire

Editor: Communications Director Tim Engstrom

Editor Emeritus: Al Zdon

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Taps



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

Name of Deceased	Age	Date of Death	Branch	Era	Cont. Years	Post
Aamoth, Earl A.	92	11/27/23	Air Force	Korea	75	Moorhead Post 21
Anderson, LeRoy E.	88	11/4/23	Army	Korea	30	Winona Post 9
Note: He served in the Special Forces teaching foreign languages.						
Anderson, Ralph L.	77	12/22/23	Air Force	Vietnam	9	Dassel Post 364
Anhorn, Andy L.	89	11/15/23	Army	Korea	12	Austin Post 91
Appel, Francis S.	94	11/14/23	Marines	Korea	70	Millville Valley Post 579
Armstrong, Ronald G.	82	10/31/23	Army	Vietnam	11	Winona Post 9 Note: He served in Germany.
Bajunpaa, Ronald D.	76	11/5/23	Navy	Vietnam	2	New York Mills Post 116
Banta, Lyle C.	91	10/14/23	Navy	Korea	54	Coon Rapids Post 334
Becvar, John G.	87	11/27/23	Army	Korea	8	Pine City Post 51
Block, Dennis A.	81	11/9/23	Army	Vietnam	35	Paynesville Post 271
Boedigheimer, Cecil R.	93	10/30/23	unk.	Korea	66	Cloquet Post 262
Bratland, Odell L.	95	9/19/23	Navy	WWII	78	Minneapolis-Richfield Post 435
Bredman, Calman L.	99	11/8/23	Marines	WWII	77	Ada Post 26 Note: He was wounded in action at the Battle of Okinawa and sent by hospital ship to Guam for recovery before returning to duty. He received the Purple Heart. He was a past post commander. He was the second-to-last known WWII veteran in Norman County.
Bruggeman, Randall R.	69	9/24/23	Army	Vietnam	49	Thief River Falls Post 117
Buck, Carroll E.	94	9/10/23	Army	Korea	39	Thief River Falls Post 117
Burt, Kevin R.	74	11/19/23	Army	Vietnam	51	Little Falls Post 46
Butler, Gerald E.	92	2/26/23	Army	Korea	13	Minneapolis-Richfield Post 435
Butterfield, Ralph M.	91	9/3/23	Army	Korea	58	Fergus Falls Post 30
Buzay, Richard L.	84	11/30/23	Navy	Vietnam	33	Chisago City Post 272
Carlson, Glenn H. "Gus"	87	6/5/23	Navy	Korea	61	Minneapolis-Richfield Post 435
Cowgill, Kemper M.	84	12/4/23	Army	Vietnam	21	Caledonia Post 191
Note: The doctor enlisted after dental school and was a captain in the 5th Army Dental Corps, stationed at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo. He enjoyed helping Post 191 on bingo nights.						
Crosby, Warren D.	95	12/25/23	Army	Korea	14	Moorhead Post 21
Daniel, Chester J.	86	4/15/23	Army	Cold	16	Stewartville Post 164
Desrocher, William F.	89	8/27/23	Army	Korea	37	Thief River Falls Post 117 Note: He served as an intercept operator at Camp Sobe, Okinawa.
Doran, Don T.	72	12/7/23	Air Force	Vietnam	32	Breckenridge Post 53 Note: He served as a security policeman in Germany.
Dumas, Gene R.	97	9/14/23	See note	WWII	33	Minneapolis-Richfield Post 435
Note: He served in the Merchant Marines during World War II, in the Army in Korea, then the Air Force, then 13 days in the Navy.						
Edel, Walter E.	89	12/8/23	Army	Korea	61	Montgomery Post 79
Eickhoff, Aloys L. "Al"	94	11/4/23	unk.	Korea	55	Anoka Post 102
Ellingson, Rodney D.	77	12/13/23	Army NG	Vietnam	6	Benson Post 62
Erickson, Stafford P.	92	10/31/23	Air Force	Korea	60	Coon Rapids Post 334
Evenson, Morris L. "Morrie"	81	11/8/23	Air Force	Vietnam	51	New London Post 537
Note: He was a B-52 crew chief at Lincoln AFB. The Cuban Missile Crisis found him in a B-52 bomber — loaded, in the air, ready to head to Cuba — before things ended peacefully.						
Eveslage, Gerald A.	82	12/5/23	Army	Vietnam	38	Waconia Post 150
Farrell, Donald L.	90	10/12/23	Army	Korea	26	Prior Lake Post 447
Filzen, Leander	93	11/20/23	Army	Korea	50	New Ulm Post 132
Note: He was stationed in Italy.						
Finneseth, Robert D.	93	12/8/23	Army	Korea	50	Austin Post 91
Fowler, Colin Jr.	86	11/17/23	Air Force	Korea	14	Lake City Post 110
Gauger, William G. Sr.	94	5/10/23	unk.	WWII	58	Minneapolis-Richfield Post 435
George, James J.	86	11/27/23	Marine	Korea	3	Shakopee Post 2
Gilmore, Keith J.	69	12/9/23	Navy	Vietnam	23	Pine City Post 51
Goblish, Henry J.	87	11/7/23	Army	Korea	7	Marshall Post 113
Gomer, Harold L.	100	11/14/23	Navy	WWII	62	Austin Post 91
Note: He was a past post commander and member of the honor guard.						
Gottschalk, Dennis G.	78	10/19/23	Coast Guard	Vietnam	9	Winona Post 9
Graves, David V.	72	11/15/23	Navy	Persian Gulf	22	Winona Post 9
Note: He served in the Navy from 1975 to 1996, culminating as the commander of a team of weather forecasters aboard the aircraft carrier USS Kitty Hawk. The Navy sent him to the Persian Gulf, Iraq and Somalia. He captained the Post 9 funeral burial detail for 15 years.						
Gruber, Eugene	92	11/8/23	Navy	Korea	60	Pierz Post 341
Note: He was stationed at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and traveled the Gulf of Mexico, Caribbean Sea, Atlantic Ocean and Mediterranean Sea.						
Guidinger, Gerald L.	87	11/20/23	Navy	Cold	70	Winona Post 9
Gustafson, David H.	77	12/1/23	Marines	Vietnam	28	North St. Paul Post 39
Note: He was a vice commander for the Department of Minnesota in 2009-10. He was 4th District commander 2006-07. He was a member of Rosetown Post 542 prior to 2018.						
Haala, Leon E.	78	12/10/23	Navy	Vietnam	34	Springfield Post 257
Note: He was a past post commander.						
Haglund, Richard A.	90	5/7/23	unk.	unk.	58	Minneapolis-Richfield Post 435
Note: Neither his membership nor his obituary state his branch or era, but because he was a Northwest Airlines pilot for 33 years and because he turned 18 in 1951, readers can estimate he served in the Air Force during the Korean War or shortly after.						
Hall, Norman J.	88	11/25/23	Navy	Vietnam	52	Willmar Post 167
Hamilton, Thomas A.	92	11/13/23	Army	Korea	54	Lino Lakes Post 566
Hansen, Harry T.	85	12/4/23	Army	Vietnam	16	Austin Post 91
Note: He served as an military police officer.						
Harder, Arlend J.	91	10/20/23	Navy	Vietnam	41	Greenbush Post 88
Havelka, Edward J. Jr.	79	11/22/23	Army	Vietnam	42	Hutchinson Post 96
Heinrich, Orville L.	94	5/9/23	Army	Korea	60	Minneapolis-Richfield Post 435
Helmbrecht, Royce R.	76	11/13/23	Army	Vietnam	13	Austin Post 91
Hoffarth, Arthur J.	94	12/14/23	Navy	Korea	14	Waite Park Post 428
Hoiosen, Phillip H.	83	6/15/23	Army	Vietnam	57	Minneapolis-Richfield Post 435
Hoppe, Donald	81	11/16/23	Army	Cold	24	Windom Post 206
Hughley, Brent W.	58	5/21/23	Army	Leb-Gren	6	Millville Valley Post 579
Note: He served at Fort Bliss, Texas.						
Hungerholt, Duane M.	90	12/16/23	Army	Korea	49	Lanesboro Post 40
Hylen, Michael L.	78	11/14/23	Air Force	Vietnam	38	New Ulm Post 132
Jensen, Adrian C.	84	11/27/23	Army	Vietnam	47	Albert Lea Post 56
Jensen, Steven L.	74	10/24/23	Army	Vietnam	53	Silver Lake Post 141
Note: He received the Purple Heart during his tour in Vietnam.						
Johansen, Ronald	86	12/2/23	Air Force	Vietnam	41	Waconia Post 150
Johnson, Robert C.	81	12/3/23	Army	Vietnam	58	Willmar Post 167
Jordan, Jack R.	98	11/21/23	Navy	WWII	25	Northfield Post 84



David Gustafson

All-Family Events Calendar

- 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:** State Oratorical Contest, Anoka Post 102 & Osseo-Maple Grove Post 172
- Feb. 24-28:** Washington Conference, Washington Hilton Hotel, Washington, D.C.
- March 2:** Appreciation Rally, Montgomery Post 79
- March 23:** 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 17:** Veterans Day on the Hill, St. Paul Armory
- April 27:** President's Testimonial, Melrose Post 101
- 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 24:** National Poppy Day
- 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
- June 22:** Commander's Testimonial, Montgomery Post 79
- July 11-13:** Department of Minnesota Convention, Willmar Convention Center, Willmar, hosted by Willmar Post 167
- July 29-Aug. 1:** Baseball Tier 1 Tournament, Burnsville
- 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, Bemidji
- 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
- Oct. 1-6:** John Zgoda Memorial Deer Hunt, Legionville
- Oct. 7-10:** Fall Meetings, Sheraton Hotel, Indianapolis



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Taps



Continued from Page 5

Kalk, Ernest H.	73	11/5/23	Army	Vietnam	25	New Ulm Post 132
Note: He trained as a clerk typist, but in his year in Vietnam at Long Binh he provided support to combat operations and helped as a mechanic in the motor pool.						
Karels, Donald A.	84	10/22/23	Navy	Vietnam	9	Caledonia Post 191
Note: He served as an aviation storekeeper.						
King, C. Hyatt III	80	11/29/23	Navy	Vietnam	25	Lanesboro Post 40
Knoblach, Raymond P.	79	11/30/23	Navy	Vietnam	55	Waite Park Post 428
Note: He served aboard the USS Wasp aircraft carrier, based in Boston.						
Kopischke, Dennis R.	78	9/24/23	Army	Vietnam	57	Waseca Post 228
Kortz, Donald R.	92	9/24/23	Army	Korea	17	Albert Lea Post 56
Lahmers, Gerald A.	91	12/17/23	Navy	Korea	23	Melrose Post 101
Note: He worked on airplanes that landed on aircraft carriers.						
Landis, Daryl J.	78	11/17/23	Army	Vietnam	9	Pine City Post 51
Note: He was a member of the post honor guard.						
Lang, James W.	79	11/14/23	Air Force	Vietnam	27	Austin Post 91
Langer, Richard D.	90	5/23/23	Air Force	Korea	9	Minneapolis-Richfield Post 435
Larson, Stanley T.	76	12/13/23	Marines	Vietnam	50	Windom Post 206
Note: He was shot in Vietnam during the Battle of Hue. He spent six months in a hospital and was awarded the Purple Heart. He served as a machine gun runner, carrying weapons and heavy packs of ammunition, sometimes through the knee-high water of rice paddies.						
LaRue, Richard	71	11/27/23	Army	Vietnam	17	Bagley Post 16
LaVigne, Larry E.	76	11/20/23	Army	Vietnam	53	Foley Post 298
Lindahl, LuVerne C.	96	9/24/23	Army	WWII	51	Thief River Falls Post 117
Note: He served as a medic in post-war Germany.						
Lindee, Carl R. Sr.	75	11/10/23	Army	Vietnam	25	Glencoe Post 95
Livingston, William J.	91	8/19/23	Army	Korea	69	Minneapolis-Richfield Post 435
Note: He was a past post commander. He was responsible for initiating the Christmas Santa Claus program sponsored annually by Post 435.						
Logeais, Donald A.	88	12/14/23	Air Force	VN/L-G/Pan.	41	Eden Valley Post 381
Note: He retired as a major general in August 1990 after serving for 33 years. He was the commander of the 21st Air Force, headquartered at McGuire AFB, N.J., with 34,000 personnel and 280 airlift aircraft under his command. He graduated from Eden Valley High School in 1953, St. Thomas University in 1957, George Washington University in 1977 and the National War College in 1977. He and his family made their home in Alexandria, Va. He was trained to fly airplanes and helicopters. He served in Vietnam and served several airlift-related commands during his career.						
Loken, Clark L. Sr.	92	12/9/23	Air Force	Korea	69	Mora Post 201
Lubenow, Hugo R. "Bob"	84	11/12/23	Army NG	Vietnam	46	Morris Post 29
Note: He served in the 1st Battalion, 136th Infantry Regiment.						
Lutz, Joseph M.	94	12/10/23	Army	Korea	69	Mora Post 201
Note: He was stationed in Guam for most of his time in service.						
Madel, R. Peter Jr.	93	11/22/23	Army	Korea	17	Waseca Post 228
Note: He was an aide to Gen. Maxwell Taylor, who provided Madel with two letters of commendation.						
Malewicki, Edward V.	80	11/25/23	Army	Vietnam	54	Winona Post 9
Note: He served with the 8th Special Forces Group, with a tour of duty in the Panama Canal Zone.						
Maloney, Cornelius A.	95	12/8/23	Army	Korea	38	St. Clair Post 475
Marshik, Francis W.	86	12/13/23	Navy	Vietnam	17	Hillman Post 602
Note: He served aboard the aircraft carrier USS Shangri-La.						
Mattin, Charles G.	88	10/15/23	Navy	Korea	9	Minneapolis-Richfield Post 435
McGinty, John	81	10/29/23	Army	Vietnam	47	Lake City Post 110
Note: He was a past post adjutant.						
McNamara, Daniel H.	95	12/2/23	Air Force	Korea	15	Bird Island Post 430
Miller, Dean L.	90	12/4/23	Air Force	Korea	33	Willmar Post 167
Miller, Donald H.	89	11/1/23	Navy	Korea	68	Caledonia Post 191
Mitchell, Fred R.	91	12/25/23	Army	Korea	67	Milaca Post 178
Note: He served in Korea near the end the war and after.						
Moenck, Thomas H.	70	12/11/23	Army	Vietnam	70	Caledonia Post 191
Moran, Michael J.	67	11/22/23	Marines	Vietnam	4	St. Paul Arcade-Phalen Post 577
Morken, Allan H.	91	12/19/23	Army	Korea	42	Spring Grove Post 249
Mulloy, Donald C.	79	11/14/23	Air Force	Vietnam	18	Tyler Post 185
Note: He was a mechanic, stationed in Florida, then Thailand.						
Murphy, Donald J.	97	11/6/23	Army	WWII	56	Plainview Post 179
Nelson, Eric J.	74	11/26/23	Army	Vietnam	36	Caledonia Post 191
Nelson, Robert L.	79	12/4/23	Vietnam	Air Force	29	Caledonia Post 191
Ness, Clayton G.	71	12/23/23	Army	Vietnam	24	Moorhead Post 21
Noeske, Douglas M.	72	9/16/23	Army	Vietnam	5	Winona Post 9
Note: He served two tours in Vietnam.						
Ohman, Ervin W.	89	7/7/23	Air Force	Korea	20	Pelican Rapids Post 17
Olson, Donald L.	87	12/7/23	Army	Vietnam	7	Bemidji Post 14
Petersen, Steven G.	80	11/3/23	Army NG	Vietnam	10	Hector Post 135
Peterson, Kenneth A.	99	12/2/23	Navy	WWII	14	North St. Paul Post 39
Note: He served as an electrician in the South Pacific. He worked 33 years as a civilian employee for the Department of Defense at the Whipple Building at Fort Snelling.						
Pribyl, Donald C.	82	11/15/23	Army	Korea	52	Maple Lake Post 131
Note: He was a past post commander.						
Ratke, Jerome J.	87	11/23/22	Army	Korea	37	Hamel Post 394
Renner, Franklin A.	83	10/29/23	Air Force	Vietnam	30	Kingston Post 483
Riewer, Peter A.	77	11/25/23	Air Force	Vietnam	17	Bagley Post 16
Ringger, Robert G.	85	11/27/23	Army NG	Vietnam	43	Graceville Post 297
Note: He served in Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 175th Infantry Regiment.						
Root, Raymond D.	86	11/2/23	Army	Vietnam	17	Pillager Post 100
Note: He served as a tank driver.						
Rotzien, Richard G.	87	11/8/23	Air Force	Korea	29	Hutchinson Post 96
Note: He was a nuclear weapons specialist.						
Rumsey, Glendale W.	90	12/12/23	Navy	Korea	11	Kingston Post 483
Schindele, William A.	78	12/4/23	Army	Vietnam	7	New London Post 537
Schmidt, John H.	82	12/21/23	Army	Vietnam	49	Janesville Post 281
Schroeder, John B.	77	11/12/23	Army	Vietnam	43	Caledonia Post 191
Schubert, Thomas M.	87	6/25/23	Navy	Korea	13	Minneapolis-Richfield Post 435
Schuette, Stanley H.	93	11/29/23	Army	Korea	35	Northfield Post 84
Schumacher, Donald A.	96	11/26/23	Army	WWII	46	Hutchinson Post 96
Secora, Gerald B.	76	11/20/23	Navy	Vietnam	54	Hackensack Post 202
Smith, Carl V.	96	12/12/23	Navy	WWII	75	Fairmont Post 36
Soberg, Odell M.	87	12/2/23	Army	Vietnam	35	Spring Grove Post 249
Note: He served in Germany.						
Soderlund, James W.	102	12/18/23	Navy	WWII	31	Milaca Post 178
St. Hilaire, Arnold L.	83	10/28/23	Army	Vietnam	7	Cambridge Post 290
Staloch, James M.	76	10/28/23	Army	Vietnam	23	Waseca Post 228
Note: He spent over 30 years with the Army Reserve. He was an internal investigator. He was the past chief of police						

Continued on Page 7

Taps

for Waseca.									
Stawarski, John W.	87	5/15/23	Army	Cold	19	Foley Post 298			
Stensrud, Duane A.	76	12/26/23	Navy	Vietnam	24	Stewartville Post 164			
Stephens, Mark D.	78	11/23/23	Coast Guard	Vietnam	3	Greenbush Post 88			
Stone, Anthony A.	81	7/11/23	Army	Vietnam	47	Minneapolis-Richfield Post 435			
Tenquist, Floyd W.	82	9/22/23	Army	Vietnam	14	Anoka Post 102			
VanNurden, David C.	84	12/3/23	Army	Vietnam	24	Litchfield Post 104			
VanSchaick, Donald L.	77	10/19/23	Marines	Vietnam	21	Millville Valley Post 579			
Vellema, James R.	75	12/14/23	Marines	Vietnam	42	Windom Post 206			
Note: His service included 13 months in Vietnam as a radio operator.									
Vergin, Vernon F.	95	12/5/23	Army	Korea	32	Benson Post 62			
Volk, Robert J.	91	12/8/23	Army	Korea	50	St. Peter Post 37			
Wagner, Leander A. "Corky"	88	11/8/23	Army	Korea	9	New Prague Post 45			
Wagner, Virgil D.	82	11/18/23	Army	Vietnam	58	Middle River Post 444			
Note: He served as 9th District commander 2003-04, department vice commander 2009-10 and was the current 9th District sergeant-at-arms. He served terms as district chaplain and area vice commander, too, in addition to various committees. He was a past post commander, adjutant, 1st vice commander and membership director. He was on the honor guard and a member of the American Legion Riders. He was instrumental in the development of the veterans memorial in Middle River dedicated in 2010. He served in the Signal Corps in Germany.									
Wallerich, Charles W.	88	11/6/23	Army	Cold	53	Pipestone Post 6			
Wieberdink, Donald L.	86	10/28/23	Army NG	Korea	9	Raymond Post 420			
Wigern, Duane E.	82	12/4/23	Army	Vietnam	49	Hutchinson Post 96			
Note: He served at Stuttgart, West Germany, as a pay specialist, then at Fort Bragg, N.C.									
Winkelman, Keith D.	74	10/21/23	Army	Vietnam	47	St. James Post 33			
Yort, Edward E.	85	6/19/23	Army	Vietnam	21	Minneapolis-Richfield Post 435			



Virgil Wagner

Don't miss the Sweetheart Rally

FOREST LAKE — The Sweetheart Rally takes place Saturday, Feb. 3, at Forest Lake Post 225.

Though all Legion Family members are welcome, the event is organized by the Auxiliary Department of Minnesota. More information about the rally is in the Auxiliary Bulletin on Page 14.

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Posts, please know the dues increase

Are increases in dues necessary? The increase in dues has a history of occurring roughly every seven years and is a necessary evil. There are valid concerns on membership and what is the future of The American Legion.

Indeed, younger veterans are not joining at the same rate as veterans in the past. Why? Veterans are fragmented among the many new, only-focus-on-one-concern veterans' organizations in existence, and they fail to see all the many missions the Legion does. At the same time, the Legion too often dwells in the great accomplishments of its past and isn't hungry for what's to come.

Many young veterans assume the benefits The American Legion has won for them will always be there. So does the general public. However, we know there are interests that would like to spend that money on other things not related to veterans. Without a strong unified voice like The American Legion, veterans' benefits will fade. The Legion has been instrumental in winning VA benefits related to Agent Orange, Burn Pits, Gulf War Syndrome and other disabilities, as well as expanding the Montgomery G.I. Bill to become the Forever G.I. Bill and more.

Due to the occurrence of inflation, increases will continue. The national increase was planned for the 2026 membership year, but National HQ decided to move it up to 2025 Legion Membership Year, starting July 1 of this year.

I was among a number of department adjutants who were unhappy with their decision, and we voiced our concern and displeasure to the national organization at the National Convention in Charlotte. We received no positive results or a new timeframe for consideration to raise annual membership dues. We also recommended to stay with the 2026-year increase.

Adjutant's Corner

Mike Maxa



Crickets ...

After the dues increase, the average cost across the department will be \$55 a year. That still is a really good value. That works out to \$4.58 a month, which is about the cost of a latte at most coffeehouses nowadays. The \$55 members pay receive a free \$1,000 life insurance policy (LIT), the monthly Legion Magazine, The Minnesota Legionnaire, discounts at a variety of companies, and, especially, the ability to express concerns on



veteran issues to state and federal lawmakers. Your Department of Minnesota staff members are great stewards of the funds we budget for. We have cut way back on travel expenses. You've seen fewer staff travel to department events. We've made use of existing office equipment, rather than purchase new items. We don't do as many bulk mailings and have embraced electronic communications to get the word out. These are just some examples. Still, inflation has outpaced our efforts and negated the savings.

Without a dues increase, the question becomes: Which programs do we cut? We feel all programs are important and serve key purposes for veterans, youth — and our community, state and nation. We already receive support from grants to keep the Legion dues down. We always are looking for new sources of funding, and that includes coming up with a fundraising event and finding additional grants to apply for in the near future to maintain our programs.

No one enjoys paying more for fuel, food, housing, insurance, taxes and other costs; however, inflation happens. But there are options to keep your cost of annual dues in check. The Paid up for Life (PUFL) will lock you in at today's dues rate with no more annual

dues and no dues increases to pay. For more information about the PUFL program, contact customer service at 800-433-3318. Online applications: Visit MyLegion.org to complete an online application.

The three-year option is currently available for our members who have not renewed for 2024. For our members who have already renewed for 2024 the option for you to renew for 2025-2027 should be released by national sometime in January. Take advantages of these options before July 1 to save.

On July 1, the national dues per capita — which means the share of dues going to National HQ — will increase to \$23.50. The Department of Minnesota finance committee is recommending a \$3 increase to department per capita, which will equal \$16.50, and 25 cents will continue go to the Hospital Association at department levels.

The next factor in annual dues is the amount that will go to your districts and the amount that is retained by your post. As I have stated earlier in this article, the average annual membership dues for our posts in the Department of Minnesota will increase from \$45 to an average of \$55. I highly recommend the posts across the department take a hard look at their annual dues and raise accordingly — I suggest \$10 — to prevent being short on dues owed to district, department and national.

In closing, bottom line: We need to promote all the good we do as members of The American Legion and focus on our four pillars. Thank you for all your support and all you do for The American Legion Department of Minnesota!

Mike Maxa of Montgomery Post 79 is the adjutant of The American Legion Department of Minnesota.

REGISTRATION IS OPEN AT BASEBALL.LEGION.ORG

Minnesota DAV is in Immediate Need for Additional Volunteer Drivers

Minnesota DAV is in immediate need of additional volunteer drivers. This FREE service provides Veterans with transportation to and from their VA medical appointments and has transported over 15,000 Veterans this year

Contact your nearby VA Medical Center Voluntary Services Office and ask how to become a volunteer driver

Minneapolis: 612-467-2050

St. Cloud: 320-255-6365

www.dav.org/help-dav/volunteer/drive-a-van

Regions in high need of drivers include: Blue Earth, Brown and Sibley Counties St. Cloud Area (Morrison, Mille Lacs, Kanabec & Wright Counties)



You do not need to be a Veteran or DAV member to volunteer. Drivers must be fully vaccinated.



Baehman helped famous Japanese doctor who took several shots to the chest

Continued from Page 1

Iraqi Freedom or Operation New Dawn. Those were over. This was Operation Inherent Resolve, the effort from 2014 to 2021 to fight the militant fundamentalist group termed ISIS, ISIL, Daesh or just simply Islamic State. Its goal was to restore a Caliphate in the Mideast.

Baehman was in Baghdad at first, then the Besmaya Complex southwest of Baghdad. He eventually reached many places like FOB Speicher near Tikrit and FOB Hammer in the desert east of Baghdad toward Iran.

He ended up with a different mission than the soldiers in his unit. A good soldier known for his decision-making and esprit de corps, the brass selected him for a 12-man task force of trainers.

“The military was a good fit for me,” he said. “If you do a good job, people notice.”

They would work with other trainers from other units — SEALs, Marines, Special Forces, 101st Airborne, 82nd Airborne, among others — to train Iraqi infantry units to take back their cities.

Later on, the Department of Defense would call these teams of trainers “coalition advisors.” The Americans were there with military forces from a global coalition of 86 member countries. The American advisors became Security Force Assistance Brigades, or SFABs.



Mary Grace Baehman guides Pearl while Eric Baehman rides on Dec. 3.

Baehman’s detail taught small-team tactics, marksmanship, vehicle maintenance, weapons and body armor upkeep, tank operation and loading, repelling from choppers, how to travel and how to get off a roof, among other things. They would fly around on helicopters and spend time with Iraqi military units and other trainers in the global coalition, mainly the Spanish.

Did you know the Spanish like playing table tennis? Baehman’s team set out to purchase a pingpong table for their allies. Calling it Mission Pingpong, they flew from FOB Besmayah to the U.S. embassy, then departed in civilian clothes like polo shirts — but still carrying sidearms and passports.

They drove a Range Rover into Baghdad and searched and searched bazaars until they entered a rug store with some recreational furniture. There, they purchased the pingpong table complete with paddles and balls. They brought it to a Blackhawk helicopter and flew it back to the FOB.

They enjoyed the following week with the Spanish, which included Spanish food, and their allies loved the table.

“That’s about all that they did, because it was the only thing there was to do,” Baehman said. “It was a good week.”

On May 17, 2016, Baehman and his team were teaching security — how to operate gates and how to stand up a forward operating base — to Iraqi forces. He took an MRE lunch in his Humvee. A suicide bomber attacked the gate, and the New Zealand Quick Reaction Force responded with HIPPO

armored personnel carriers.

A wall between the explosion and Baehman absorbed most of the blast, but his right side still got some of it. Eleven Iraqis died.

“The messed-up thing is, we just drove away,” he said.

In fact, the bombing was part of a series of bombings the Islamic State did that day, leaving 101 people killed and 194 wounded.

He had to go through mobility therapy for one year after getting back to the States, and he received a VA disability rating.

Baehman came back to the USA in July 2016. A favorite memory: He enjoyed pizza at Old Chicago in Manhattan on the Fourth of July.

The Iraqi forces Baehman and his team had taught in Iraq performed well at the Battle of Mosul, which began in October 2016, after he had returned home. Their work had paid off.

He was about to get out of the Army and took a 30-day terminal leave in June 2017 as he decided whether to reenlist. He wanted the Army to send him to Fort Richardson in Alaska or send him to Airborne School at Fort Benning.

Baehman opted for college and enrolled at the University of St. Thomas. He decided to reenlist but with the

Army National Guard. He held aspirations to become an officer.

He landed with A Company, 1st Battalion of the 128th Infantry Regiment, of the 32nd “Red Arrow” Infantry Brigade Combat Team, which is part of the Wisconsin National Guard.

His next deployment was assisting with flooding in southern Wisconsin in August and September of 2017. That fall, thousands of Wisconsin National Guard troops mobilized in C-17s to Miami-Dade County in Florida in the wake of Hurricanes Irma and Maria. All the time away resulted in Baehman dropping out of college.

He decided to restart in the spring semester and, meanwhile, worked at Cabela’s in Woodbury. He was a firearms outfitter. At St. Thomas, he majored in business entrepreneurship.

Baehman met his eventual wife, Mary Grace Nelson, in spring 2018. She worked in the back at Cabela’s.

“She kept asking me to go out. I kept having to shoot her down,” he said. “The last time she tried, I said, ‘Yes, now I can because finals are over.’ I just felt bad, you know.”

She lived in New Prague, and soon transferred to the Owatonna store. The young couple wed in June 2021.

In July 2019, the 128th Infantry Regiment mobilized for a deployment in Afghanistan, and they arrived at the Jalalabad Airfield in October. They supported SFABs, flying back and forth between Bagram Air Base near Kabul and Jalalabad Airfield. The airfield encompasses FOB Fenty, where they were based.



Eric Baehman sports American Legion shirt and hat from Lonsdale Post 586 while holding an M16A4 rifle he built. He fitted it with the M203 grenade launcher.

Baehman said he ate six meals a day, worked out twice daily and weighed 200 pounds.

“I was in the best shape of my life,” he said.

The COVID-19 pandemic hit in March 2020. He said he believes a lot of soldiers in the Middle East got sick with something severe in the months prior.

“We may have had COVID and didn’t know it,” Baehman said.

All missions stopped. Nobody left base. Nobody could go to sick call. Everyone had to wear masks. Soldiers only got one MRE a day.

“It was a total shutdown,” he said. “We asked people back home to send poegee bait in care packages.”

This was during a ceasefire, and the enemy was in the far north. Things around the base became relaxed — considering a war was going on. They got TV sets, videogame consoles, nicer showers. The soldiers watched movies, read books and magazines, played videogames and cards.

After a couple of months, they returned to their missions but under new conditions. The 128th returned to COVID America at Fort Hood, Texas. Placed in quarantine, they remained in their barracks for a month. Baehman finally returned to Minnesota in August 2020.

While he was overseas, he and Mary Grace had purchased a house in Lonsdale. It was nice having a house to come home to, even if he had never seen it before.

“It was probably harder coming home in the National Guard than active duty,” Baehman said. “With the 1st Infantry Division, I lived in barracks with others who had been through what I had been through. Here, I was on my

own in Lonsdale.”

He had hurt a shoulder in Afghanistan, too. On Feb. 8, 2020, at a different FOB where his unit had performed training, he lifted a large Afghani soldier who had been shot after some inside-the-base Afghani picked up a squad automatic weapon and shot people. Baehman was using his combat medic knowledge to treat the wounded. The man was transported away, and Baehman doesn’t know whether he lived.

On Dec. 4, 2019, the famous Japanese doctor Tetsu Makamura, who spent his life showing many villages in Afghanistan how to build irrigation canals, was in Kabul working and a group killed his bodyguards and shot him. Baehman and his buddy tried to save the doctor’s life. The doctor had seven gunshot wounds in his chest. Baehman drove him in a Humvee back to the airfield medical building while two medics tried to keep him alive. They were decorated for their efforts.

Back in Lonsdale, Baehman had problems sleeping, pain, mobility and finding a regular diet (and still has those problems). He visited the VA Medical Center in Minneapolis often — massage, acupuncture, chiropractic, vibration, all kinds of treatments. He was slated to get out in June 2023, but he retired medically in March 2023. He has a 70 percent VA rating.

Their new house was across the street from Lonsdale American Legion Post 586. He became involved as an assistant gambling manager. He helps run bingo on Saturdays. Sales begin at 6 p.m. He is interested in getting on the house committee.

“Being in the Legion is valuable because I can use the lessons learned

in life and apply them to other people. I want to help people,” he said, “and it is good to get involved in the local veterans community because you meet new people. There is a lot of value in camaraderie. I love being with other veterans. They understand. They get it.”

Baehman started a 501(c)3 nonprofit in November 2022 called Designated Marksman. He took a cue from “American Sniper” Chris Kyle and found value in taking veterans to firing ranges. With all the other treatments he was receiving, the firing range provided the best hope.

“We take veterans shooting for free. It’s range therapy,” he said.

The veterans bring their own guns and ammunition, but Designated Marksman provides ammo if they need it. He said veterans enjoy shooting with others. They often use the Faribault Rifle & Pistol Club or the Minnesota Horse & Hunt Club south of Prior Lake.

Poker Night at Post 586 raises funds for Designated Marksman. He hopes someday the nonprofit can get its own firing range. For now, donations support the cost of range time, targets, target stands, lumber and to send veterans pheasant hunting all over Minnesota.

These days, Baehman works as a banker while running the nonprofit and several for-profit companies. He got his entrepreneurship degree from St. Thomas last spring, and now he’s a serial business launcher. He and Mary Grace like horses, and one company rents horses and horse trailers to riders.

Stop in at Lonsdale Post 586, enjoy the bingo, say hello to Iraq & Afghanistan veteran Eric Baehman, and ask him about his latest business ideas. Ask to come to Poker Night, too.



Poker Night at Lonsdale Post 586 raises funds for the 501(c)3 nonprofit Designated Marksman, which takes veterans shooting at ranges around Minnesota. Poker Night is on Thursdays, and they welcome more people to join the fun. Just show up around 5:30 p.m. or contact Post 586 for details.

Pearl Harbor Rally brought out camaraderie

Who is running for department commander?

By Tim Engstrom

PAYNESVILLE — The Pearl Harbor Rally brought the Minnesota American Legion Family together for good times together.

Department Commander Paul Hassing said having video teleconferencing is good. However, there is value to meeting face to face, to being around friends and sharing camaraderie.

“I see it as hanging out with friends,” Hassing said.

He reminded the Legion Family members that his project is the Minnesota Veterans Assistance Fund. It is close to his heart because, when he entered the military, he had trouble making ends meet, and he went to the American Red Cross and begged for assistance.

“And that stuck with me still to this day, that I had to beg in order to pay my rent and food,” Hassing said.

The Pearl Harbor Rally was held at Paynesville Post 271.

Sons of The American Legion Commander John Weiss said he is sharing the same fundraising project as Hassing.

To donate to Hassing’s project, make the check to Minnesota American Legion Foundation, with Fund 82 in the memo. Fund 82 is the Commander’s Project. The funds, at the end of his term, will go toward Fund 85, which is the Minnesota Veterans Assistance Fund.

To donate to Weiss’ project, put Fund 99 in the memo. Fund 99 is the SAL Commander’s Project. Gambling funds are accepted. The foundation is a 501c3.

NECman Bill Barbknecht said Minnesota is respected when Legionnaires from across the country gather at National American Legion Headquarters.

“No other department can hold a candle to Minnesota,” he said.

He cited how the Minnesota American Legion Riders have made it so Minnesota is the only state to raise more than \$1 million for the American Legion Legacy Scholarships. He cited how Minnesota American Legion Baseball has led the nation in number of teams for more than a decade.

Barbknecht called on Legion members to be forgiving.

“There isn’t a day that goes by and I don’t make a mistake. I have a witness for that,” he said.

He encouraged building membership by talking about the charitable work the American Legion Family performs in communities throughout the state.

Junior Honorary Department President Taylor McElroy was absent. She is in the Army Reserve and was being promoted that same day to E-4. Her project is raising funds for Believet, which provides canine service partners to veterans at no charge. It is based in Northfield.

Candidates for office

Time was allotted for members to announce their intentions to run for offices. Elections are at the department and detachment conventions in July.

In the Legion, Carl Moon of Zimmerman Post 560 announced he is running for Department of Minnesota commander. Veronica Fernlund of Waite Park Post 428 is running for department historian. Donny Skow of Forest Lake Post 225 is seeking department vice commander. Randy Olson of Winnebago Post 82 is running for department vice commander. Kristy Janigo of Osseo-Maple Grove Post 172 is running for 10th District commander. Frank Grittner of Zimmerman Post 560 is running for 6th District commander.

In the Auxiliary, Judy Ackerman of Northrop Unit 522 announced she is running for Department of Minnesota president. Robin Dorf of Monticello Unit 260 is running for 1st vice president. Jean Walker of Warren Unit 27 is seeking NECman. Raleen Tolzmann of Minnesota Lake Unit 287 is running for alternate NECman.

Membership standings

In the Legion Family, membership percentages are expressions of renewals added together with

new members. If an entity had 100 members at the start of the Legion year, and there are 75 renewals and five new people, that means membership is at 80 percent, and there is another 20 percent to go to achieve 100 percent.

These reports were dated the date of the rally: Dec. 9.

SAL Detachment of Minnesota Membership Director Gary Richardson announced the 5th District was in first place with 55.93 percent. The 3rd District was in second place. The 2nd District was in third place.

He said 20 squadrons are at or above 100 percent.

Auxiliary Department Membership Director Jenny Nelson said three units were over 100 percent in membership.

She said 2nd District was in first place at 68.84 percent. The 6th District was in second place at 67.62 percent, and the 1st District was in third place.

American Legion Department of Minnesota Membership Director Pam Krill brought the poignancy of remembering the Japanese Empire attack on Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941, and how, that fateful morning, Naval Reservists from St. Paul aboard the destroyer USS Ward fired the first American shots of the Second World War when they sunk a two-man Japanese submarine at the entrance to Pearl Harbor.

She said 55 Minnesotans were killed in the Pearl Harbor attack or missing as a result of it, and these are 55 people who never were able to join the Legion and share camaraderie with other veterans. She said their families never got to be part of the Legion family.

“We must never forget those who will never be part of us,” Krill said.

She said 45 posts were above 100 percent.

She said membership was at 80.22 percent, and this was the highest it has been by the Pearl Harbor Rally in five years. The national goal for Dec. 13 is 75 percent. Nationally, Minnesota sits in fourth place. First was the Department of France. Second and third were South Dakota and Iowa. Virginia was in fifth place.

Among districts in Minnesota, the 6th District sat in first place at 85.26 percent, 4th District in second at 83.52 percent, and 3rd District in third at 82.40 percent.

To follow weekly updates to Legion membership numbers, visit mnlegion.org/membership-reports/.

Legion Riders

The Minnesota American Legion Riders hosted the Pearl Harbor Rally. Director Jody Hassing reminded the attendees that the Riders are a program of the Legion itself.

“They should give a report at meetings,” she said.

The Riders, she said, are good at raising money, and that’s a good reason to start a chapter at posts without one. She mentioned how Clearwater ALR Chapter 323 has raised lots of money for homeless veterans.

The funds the Riders raise, she said, can be included on the annual Consolidated Post Report.

This year, she is asking ALR chapters in Minnesota to report their fundraising totals to her so ALR Secretary Shawn Davis can calculate a statewide total.



Garylee Davenport of Spicer Post 545 in the 7th District sports his cowboy hat. Later, he presented a check for \$563 from Elks Lodge 952 in Willmar toward Department Commander Paul Hassing’s Project: Minnesota Veterans Assistance Fund.



Department Commander Paul Hassing speaks during the Pearl Harbor Rally at Paynesville Post 271 on Dec. 9.



Department Treasurer Mark Dvorak, center, and the 3rd District officers share a few laughs while talking district business. See more images at Legionnaire.org.

WANTED

General Manager

CHESTER BIRD POST 523 SEEKING A GENERAL MANAGER

Description:

Chester Bird American Legion Post 523 in Golden Valley seeks a General Manager to oversee all staff, budgets and operations. Responsibilities include formulating overall strategy, managing and recruiting staff and establishing policies, working with the post bookkeeper and making presentations to the board. To be successful, be a thoughtful leader and a confident decision-maker, helping employees develop skills and be productive, while ensuring our profits are on the rise. You will help our American Legion post grow and thrive.

Desirable qualifications:

- Possess a bachelor’s degree and knowledge of business functions.
- Have at least 5 years of restaurant management experience.
- Possess a valid driver’s license and be authorized to work in the USA.
- Have certification through ServSafe (preferred).
- Be able to pass a criminal and financial background check.
- Be qualified for a municipal liquor license.

This is a full-time salaried position. Post 523 offers employee discount, paid time off, health and travel allowances. The pay range is \$52,904-\$60,560, with annual performance bonus. To apply, contact Craig at 612-741-9554. Leave a message. Visit chesterbird.org for more information.

Which American Legion posts raised the most with charitable gambling?

ST. PAUL — The Minnesota Gambling Control Board came out in November with its annual reports for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2023.

It's easy to add up the totals statewide and determine that more funds were given to the state than were given to charities or programs. Add taxes, charities and programs together, and you get the amount classified as "lawful purpose expenditures."

In the fiscal year that ended in June, 53 percent of LPE went to paying taxes and fees. That's 53 percent of the money raised did not go to charitable efforts or programs.

Allowable expenses, listed below, cover wages, costs of games, equipment and other expenses related to running charitable gambling and do not play a factor in how taxes are calculated.

Total American Legion posts and units with gambling: 193

Gross receipts	Prizes	Net receipts	Allowable expenses	
\$426,029,573	\$362,599,591	\$63,429,983	\$31,127,178	
Taxes & Fees	Charities	Programs	Total LPE	%LPE for taxes
\$17,362,690	\$9,303,579	\$6,084,815	\$32,751,084	53

There isn't space to print all 193 posts and units. Download all gambling reports for all licensed organizations at mn.gov/gcb/publications/reports/.

Top gambling posts ranked in order of gross receipts:

Posts	Gross	Prizes	Net	Allow. Exp.	Total LPE	%LPE
Bayport Post 491	\$29,887,566	\$25,703,118	\$4,184,447	\$2,238,123	\$1,967,556	47.0%
Chanhassen Post 580	\$13,896,410	\$12,115,475	\$1,780,935	\$572,722	\$1,250,303	70.2%
Apple Valley Post 1776	\$11,279,313	\$9,879,934	\$1,399,379	\$486,523	\$882,523	63.1%
Forest Lake Post 225	\$8,971,253	\$7,718,867	\$1,252,386	\$514,205	\$711,028	56.8%
Monticello Post 260	\$8,414,751	\$7,367,523	\$1,047,228	\$407,288	\$606,216	57.9%
St. Michael Post 567	\$7,758,683	\$6,682,802	\$1,075,881	\$416,345	\$687,471	63.9%
Bloomington Post 550	\$7,687,651	\$6,684,928	\$1,002,723	\$367,861	\$613,983	61.2%
Brainerd Post 255	\$7,029,010	\$5,751,794	\$1,277,216	\$682,136	\$570,927	44.7%
Osseo-MG Post 172	\$6,835,904	\$5,900,411	\$935,493	\$344,159	\$682,955	73.0%
Buffalo Post 270	\$6,287,277	\$5,507,528	\$779,749	\$377,207	\$412,500	52.9%
Anoka Post 102	\$5,815,066	\$5,068,200	\$746,866	\$367,542	\$387,841	51.9%
Brooklyn Ctr. Post 630	\$5,783,269	\$5,065,286	\$717,983	\$336,571	\$418,805	58.3%
Zimmerman Post 560	\$5,596,322	\$4,850,617	\$745,705	\$309,968	\$402,088	53.9%
Ironton Post 443	\$5,432,683	\$4,758,503	\$674,179	\$403,620	\$296,406	44.0%
Big Lake Post 147	\$5,133,152	\$4,367,775	\$765,377	\$459,497	\$317,870	41.5%
Fridley Post 303	\$5,103,435	\$4,444,436	\$658,999	\$367,339	\$323,776	49.1%
N. St. Paul Post 39	\$5,020,589	\$4,250,696	\$769,893	\$375,603	\$412,812	53.6%
Hugo Post 620	\$4,991,331	\$4,403,008	\$588,323	\$263,175	\$372,632	63.3%
Backus Post 368	\$4,814,484	\$4,132,177	\$682,307	\$365,462	\$328,895	48.2%
Park Rapids Post 212	\$4,726,036	\$4,143,533	\$582,502	\$279,869	\$373,285	47.6%
St. Paul Park Post 98	\$4,452,200	\$3,855,500	\$596,700	\$259,867	\$315,929	52.9%
Rosemount Post 65	\$4,161,182	\$3,648,408	\$512,774	\$272,524	\$277,094	54.0%
Keewatin Post 452	\$4,132,691	\$3,509,621	\$623,071	\$337,069	\$259,739	41.7%
Howard Lake Post 145	\$4,028,997	\$3,490,952	\$538,045	\$205,873	\$373,813	69.5%
St. Augusta Post 621	\$3,962,076	\$3,380,406	\$581,670	\$220,400	\$371,175	63.8%
Delano 377	\$3,792,582	\$3,181,251	\$611,331	\$318,175	\$271,298	44.4%
Stillwater Post 48	\$3,627,291	\$3,130,992	\$496,299	\$296,825	\$186,184	37.5%
Cosmos Post 126	\$3,573,166	\$3,082,863	\$490,303	\$257,553	\$226,367	46.2%
Clearwater Post 323	\$3,507,245	\$2,952,133	\$555,112	\$260,129	\$273,276	49.2%
Ashby Post 357	\$3,466,836	\$3,026,558	\$440,278	\$224,655	\$213,116	48.4%
Spicer Post 545	\$3,458,311	\$2,936,783	\$521,528	\$241,918	\$269,830	51.7%
Savage Post 643	\$3,449,405	\$2,893,072	\$556,333	\$324,387	\$253,868	45.6%
St. Paul Post 577	\$3,396,096	\$2,862,832	\$533,264	\$298,479	\$263,089	49.3%
Golden Valley Post 523	\$3,335,305	\$2,778,682	\$556,623	\$259,816	\$292,618	52.6%
Elysian Post 311	\$3,333,184	\$2,795,230	\$537,954	\$292,665	\$230,717	42.9%
Maple Lake Post 131	\$3,269,095	\$2,797,163	\$471,932	\$206,238	\$275,728	58.4%
Lino Lake Post 566	\$3,206,371	\$2,770,402	\$435,969	\$257,925	\$198,037	45.4%
Stewartville Post 164	\$3,197,416	\$2,745,660	\$451,756	\$185,157	\$262,845	58.2%
New London Post 537	\$3,167,339	\$2,742,535	\$424,804	\$231,365	\$203,868	48.0%
Nisswa Post 627	\$3,064,354	\$2,560,153	\$504,201	\$314,702	\$215,298	42.7%
Rochester Post 92	\$3,061,934	\$2,536,008	\$525,926	\$255,072	\$278,508	53.0%
Moorhead Post 21	\$3,009,344	\$2,399,759	\$609,585	\$283,998	\$325,079	53.3%
Richmond Post 292	\$2,842,724	\$2,463,068	\$379,656	\$189,317	\$205,893	54.2%
Hopkins Post 320	\$2,838,491	\$2,502,834	\$335,657	\$191,887	\$170,208	50.7%
White Bear L. Post 168	\$2,817,427	\$2,445,874	\$371,553	\$188,856	\$172,759	46.5%
Pequot Lakes Post 49	\$2,797,592	\$2,341,293	\$456,299	\$205,730	\$258,060	56.6%

Legacy Run now will raise funds for assisting Minnesota veterans

Happy New Year!

It was great to see so many of you at the Pearl Harbor Legion Family gathering. We had a great turn-out even though we had some snow that morning. What a strange winter we are having so far, any snow we did have is now gone.

I even saw some motorcycles on the road just the other day. It is not looking like we will have a white Christmas, at least not in the Twin Cities and south.

With the beginning of the year upon us, it is time to start planning the Minnesota Legacy Run, which will now benefit the Minnesota Veterans Assistance Fund (Fund 85).

We are looking for our kick-off location, ending location and overnights. The run this year will be around southern Minnesota. If your post Legion Family is interested in hosting the Riders this year, please contact me or Minnesota American Legion Riders Ride Captain

Legion Riders

Jody Hassing

Ted Berg. Please note, National HQ is no longer accepting donations to the Legacy Scholarship Fund. I know that many of you have it in your budget to donate to the Fund 84 (the Legacy Scholarship fund). If we receive a check made out to Fund 84, the donation will be applied to the new National American Legion Riders Mission — American Legion Veterans and Children Fund.

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 bylaws, 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.



It's the time of year to reach out to lawmakers, tell them about veterans

Happy New Year. I hope everyone had a very enjoyable Christmas. Many Posts put on a meal or an event for their members.

Thanks for doing that. Now is the time to start thinking about Girls' Fastpitch Softball, American Legion Baseball and Legion School Patrol. We need more children. Find participants for Boys State and Girls State.

Has your post ever had a Valentine's Day Party for its members? Just a thought. Please do a buddy check on those members you have NOT seen for some time. Go visit them.

The new year brings our senators and representatives back to St. Paul. Please contact them. They can fix the damage they did last spring to all the nonprofits to put e-tabs back the way it was. All those dollars

National Report

Bill Barbknecht

go to help our communities, schools, emergency medical technicians, law enforcement, children and youth, and food banks. 2024 is an election year. It is not about being a Democrat or Republican; it is doing what is right for Minnesota and all the people, not a select few.

We need proper funding for our veterans, the VA hospitals, VA health care and the homeless. They love to send young women and men to war but really don't want to take care of them when they return home.

Washington Conference is coming Feb. 24 to 28. Many people from Minnesota will attend and visit with our two senators, Tina Smith and Amy Klobuchar, along with our members in the House of Representatives: Brad Finstad, Angie Craig, Dean Phillips, Betty McCollum, Ilhan Omar, Tom Emmer, Michelle Fischbach and Pete Stauber.

In closing, please sign up a new member, they need The American Legion, and we need and can help them.

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

2022 Dept. financial report

INCOME STATEMENT: SEPT. 30, 2022

Department Income	
Department Dues Income	\$784,521
Less: MN Legionnaire Portion	\$(211,614)
Revenue Enhancement Program	\$112,781
Grants	\$161,690
Investment Income	\$(433,871)
LIT Insurance - (Royalties)	\$130,724
Donations / Contributions	\$15,982
In-Kind Rent	\$84,114
Miscellaneous Income	\$18,648
Total Department Income:	\$662,975

STATEMENT OF BUDGET EXPENSE: SEPT. 30, 2022

Headquarters Expense	Budgeted	Disbursed
Administration Salaries	\$304,000	\$302,295
FICA Expense	\$23,000	\$22,482
FUTA Expense	\$350	\$212
SUTA Expense	\$300	\$764
Group Health & Life Ins.	\$82,000	\$54,827
Employee's Ret. Fund	\$40,000	\$40,715
Unbudgeted Expense	\$0	\$0
Audit Expense	\$10,000	\$7,455
Investment Management Fees	\$10,600	\$13,535
General Office Expense	\$39,500	\$33,140
Elect. Equip., Maint & Mod.	\$22,200	\$16,767
Insurance (Other)	\$9,500	\$7,996
Travel Expense	\$16,950	\$18,438
Telephone	\$5,000	\$4,166
Marketing	\$20,000	\$15,525
Misc. Expense	\$0	\$11,670
Prior Year Voided Cks	\$0	\$(395)
Loss on Sale of Assets	\$0	\$0
Total Headquarters Expense	\$583,040	\$549,592

Unbudgeted Annual Expense

Depreciation Expense	\$0	\$5,318
Rent Expense	\$0	\$84,114
2019 Accountant Adj. Entries	\$0	\$1,848
Total Unbudgeted Annual Expense	\$0	\$91,280

Special Budget

National Emergency Funds Disbursed	\$1,000	\$1,000
Operation Comfort Warrior	\$1,000	\$1,000
Total Special Budget Expense:	\$2,000	\$2,000

Rehab Expense

Salaries	\$110,000	\$107,324
FICA Expense	\$5,450	\$8,082
FUTA Expense	\$150	\$85
SUTA Expense	\$150	\$295
Group Health Insurance	\$34,300	\$32,169
Employee Retirement Fund	\$11,000	\$13,883
General Office Expense	\$7,000	\$5,158
Claims Office Expense	\$7,500	\$7,317
CVSO Travel & Training	\$10,000	\$0
Veteran Event Support	\$2,000	\$1,000
DSO & ADSO Travel	\$15,000	\$1,569
Rehabilitation Committee	\$8,000	\$1,987
Total Rehab Expense:	\$210,550	\$178,869

Committee Expense

Americanism	\$8,000	\$4,274
Blood Program	\$200	\$172
Chaplain's Fund	\$600	\$180
Children & Youth Committee	\$2,000	\$1,528
Commander's Budget	\$33,000	\$33,000
Convention Corporation	\$3,000	\$(1,353)
Dept. Convention Committee	\$4,000	\$3,474
Dept. HQ Conf. & Convention	\$25,100	\$18,223
Department Treasurer	\$3,000	\$3,000

Employment Committee	\$500	\$0
Executive Committee	\$33,000	\$27,946
Finance Committee	\$3,500	\$1,672
Historian	\$750	\$638
Insurant Trust Committee	\$1,000	\$1,488
Judge Advocate	\$8,900	\$8,900
Law & Order Committee	\$1,000	\$187
Legislative Committee	\$4,000	\$0
Membership (Inc. Vice Cmdr.)	\$40,000	\$21,603
National Executive Committee	\$4,000	\$4,000
Nat'l. Convention Delegates	\$33,000	\$29,700
Nat'l. Security/Foreign Relations	\$6,500	\$8,658
Media & Comm. Committee	\$15,000	\$14,446
Resolutions Assignment Committee	\$800	\$520
Servicemen's Center	\$0	\$0
L.I.T. Advertising	\$4,050	\$4,050
Legion Riders	\$0	\$0
USAA Expense	\$4,050	\$4,050
Strategic Planning Committee	\$1,400	\$949
Credentials Committee	\$0	\$629
Sergeant-at-Arms	\$400	\$109
Alternate NEC	\$2,000	\$2,000
Education and Training Committee	\$9,000	\$4,028
Total Committee Expense	\$251,750	\$198,071

GRAND TOTAL Budget vs. Actual \$1,047,340 \$1,019,812

Total Undesignated Revenue \$662,975
Total Undesignated Expense \$1,019,812

Change in Net Assets \$ (356,837)



Listening Post

See more in the late Feb. issue or at Legionnaire.org.



The 4th District, represented by Honorary Junior 2nd Vice President Bree England, center, donated \$155 to the Department Commander's Project. The fire truck was among a box of toys from the 4th District Family Holiday Dinner for Eagle's Healing Nest.



Minnesota NECman Bill Barbknecht presents a check for \$1,000 from his home post, Underwood Post 489, for Department Commander Paul Hassing's Project: Minnesota Veterans Assistance Fund.



Bloomington Post 550, represented by Department Commander Paul Hassing and Communications Director Tim Engstrom, donated \$3,000 to Junior Auxiliary Honorary Department President Taylor McElroy's Project, which is Believet, providing canine service dogs to veterans. McElroy was not present because she was being promoted in the Army Reserve that day. However, Auxiliary Department President Sharon Cross, center, filled in.



SAL Detachment Commander John Weiss presents a check for \$200 on behalf of American Legion Riders with St. Paul Arcade-Phalen Chapter 577. The check goes toward Department Commander Paul Hassing's Project: Minnesota Veterans Assistance Fund.



Minneapolis North Side Post 230 purchased and donated a Grand Army of the Republic medallion to be mounted next to the headstone of Civil War veteran Soren Olson, who is buried at the Glen Cary Cemetery in Ham Lake. Four members of Post 230 were present at the presentation. According to the Army, Olson fought in four battles: Island Number Ten, Perryville, Stones River, Tullahoma. He served with the Wisconsin 15th Infantry, Company B.



Backus Post 368 provided three donations to Pine River-Backus School. Shown is one of them. Presented was a \$9,000 check for scholarships, \$2,000 for the robotics team and \$2,500 in gift cards for the Tigers Den, which supports families. Presenting are Post 368 Commander Brad Taylor, 1st Vice Commander Bobbi Taylor and Squadron 368 Commander Jim Qualley. With them in this photo are Principal Chris Halverson and Counselor Abby Golish.



After the regular meetings of Dawson Post 177, coffee and cake were served in observance of Del Thielke's 100th birthday, which was Nov. 9. He is third from the right in the front row. Thielke has been a member for 78 years.



Dent Post 148 and Perham VFW Post 4020 participated in a Veterans Day program at St. Paul's School in Perham. Kindergartners led the Pledge of Allegiance.



Pequot Lakes Post 49 served over 250 people free meals on Thanksgiving Day.

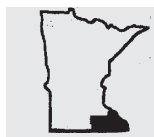


Slayton Post 64 recently received an in-kind donation from TC Energy of a 2017 Chevy Silverado pickup. Presenting the title to Post 64 Commander Brad Pagel is Jeremy Winters with TC Energy. Winters is a Post 64 member.



Mara and Preston Halvorson came up with this patriotic Christmas tree for a local Parade of Trees competition. This entry was on behalf of Twin Valley Post 431. Mara is unit president and Preston is post commander.

District commanders



1st District

Mark Maloney



Hello from the 1st District! I have always believed that we are family and that we should work as a family. I have had conversations with the other leaders of the 1st District and Department of Minnesota family about this. We have a great team and agree that, if we work together, we can do great things.

burning them out. Give them some support and volunteer to help as you can. Show them the appreciation that they deserve.

According to the latest membership reports, we should be proud of our efforts. I realize that it is tough getting memberships, but I know that everyone is working hard on coming up with creative ways to bring in new members and get current members involved.

Let's remember that we are the biggest veteran-focused volunteer family in the nation, and that our younger members are hearing and watching to see what we are doing and how we treat each other.

Also, recognize the members of your post so that we are not

We are a democratic organization, and there is no rank among us. Each member is the equal of any other, and we need and want the active and thoughtful participation of all.



2nd District

James Olson



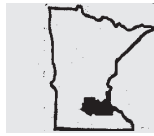
As we bring in 2024, I would like to thank every Legionnaire for their hard work so far. We have work to do as far as membership is concerned. If you have not heard, the 6th District has challenged the 2nd District to a membership competition.

can to save me a few bucks! Shake the trees and rattle the bushes. Find those Legionnaires however you can!

Whichever district has the largest percentage increase from Jan. 1 to the Sweetheart Rally in February will win. The commander of the losing district has to buy a steak dinner for the officers of the winning district.

I hope to see you all in Brewster for the Mid-Winter Conference Feb. 9-10. The District Executive Board meeting will be on Feb. 9 at 7 p.m. and the conference will kick off at 9 a.m. on Feb. 10. We have a lot of good training and information for the Legionnaires of the 2nd District. You will be missing out if you are not there!

I know that you will all do what you can to get those memberships in the next month and a half. Do everything you



3rd District

Rod Reifsteck



According to the dictionary, Americanism means a patriotic ideology centered on the American government, culture and traditions. One would have had to see and feel the patriotism over the Veterans Day weekend events that makes veterans today feel good.

to a hospital ship where doctors were unable to save his eyesight. They removed much of his right leg.

It was the actions and visibility of what veterans feel — that the country does care by showing Americanism.

After time in rehabilitation to learn Braille and how to function in the "normal" world, he went to law school and graduated with honors in 1975. He was then hired by the Federal Communications Commission in Washington and served 45 years helping to set policies and regulations for the telecommunication industry.

As for myself, it is hard not to overindulge due to the appreciation of free meals offered that are abundant to veterans, especially in the larger cities. In many of the restaurants I visited, a drill sergeant could have said "Fall in!" and I would have bet the entire restaurant would have emptied out in formation.

He was such an inspiration to everyone he met but never felt he was any different than anyone else. He was not bitter about his experience. He would always say: "I was lucky enough to be born in a free country. The price that I paid was so that my family could live in a free country."

This indeed just proves the honor we all have in today's world. It was great to feel the passion of past and current veterans. A huge "thank you" to all the businesses who support our country and its veterans.

When people would say that he gave so much more than they did, he would say, "Everyone who stood up to do whatever was asked of them, whether drafted or enlisted, whether in the Guard, Reserves or full-time service, were all equal in their service to our country."

On a more personal note, I would like to share a bit of the inspirational life of my brother-in-law Douglas, who lost his battle with cancer in September. He was a Vietnam veteran who in 1970 stepped on a landmine and was quickly flown

Amen to that.

As your commander, I would be happy to visit with anyone who wants to share personal experiences during their military career. I encourage all my 3rd District vice commanders to visit their posts. We need to

count our blessings as we enjoy our holidays with family members and friends and give special thanks to those who can't attend or be with us this season.

Keep up the can-do spirit.



4th District

Teresa Ash



The 4th District family is just that, a great family. Helping veterans and their families all year long, and especially during the holiday season.

We have some major events coming up:

4th District Oratorical Contest Jan. 3, 7 p.m.: Rosetown Memorial Post 542

4th District Revitalization Jan. 12 and 13

North St. Paul Post 39 Bring your cellphone and come join in the fun.

4th & 5th District Mid-Winter Conference

Jan. 6, 8:30 a.m.-2 p.m. St. Helena Catholic Church

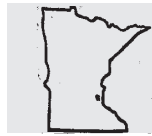
3204 E. 43rd St., Minneapolis

Winter Carnival Parade Jan. 27

Meet at Arcade Phalen American Legion by 11 a.m. Everyone is welcome to come walk in the parade with us.

Watch Facebook for all information.

Have a great and safe holiday season, remember your buddy checks. Everyone needs to be reached out to, if just to say hello and how are you doing. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.



5th District

Dick Ward



Happy New Year to you all. I hope your holidays were filled with peace and friendship. We had a wonderful time at the Hellenic Post 129 Christmas Party hosted by Commander Don Forchas.

It was a wonderful evening with live music and Christmas carols. Thanks!

The Minneapolis Veterans Home celebrated an outstanding Pheasant Dinner on Dec. 7. This event was well-attended by American Legion Family members, and other veterans service organizations and several Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs administrators.

There was a huge turnout at the Pearl Harbor Rally at Paynesville Post 271. Inclement weather notwithstanding, they turned out in droves and packed the post. The American Legion is alive and well in Minnesota.

I received word this week that Wold-Chamberlain Post 99 was

vandalized to the tune of about \$15,000 in early December.

A fundraiser will be set up soon, and we will get the word out to help them wherever we can.

Thanks to all for your continued support and the membership you transmit. We continue to meet the goals assigned by National HQ. As we near the later part of the membership, trek the hill gets steeper and increasing membership can be more difficult. Stay the course and keep 'em coming!

Post 99 hosts Minneapolis-Richfield Post 435's Omelet Breakfast on the second Sunday and Post 99 Pancake Breakfast on the fourth Sunday. Remember to Support your local posts!

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



6th District

Anthony Koop



Happy New Years from the Big Sixth!

I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday season! This means we are in the second half of the year, so now it is time to get back in the saddle. We have many programs and awards over the next several months, so make sure you are checking into those and getting them in on time!

Membership is also on the mind. Most posts in the 6th District are doing well, as of last check, and some only need one or two members to make goal. Get out there and talk to these people. Explain that their membership is more than just collecting dues; it is our priority to push for our veterans and servicemembers, and we do

that with "strength in numbers."

When Congress turns to The American Legion to see what we have to say about a particular bill or subject, they look at our membership numbers and what we have been doing lately. (Consolidated Post Reports are the key here.)

Make sure your members also know that they are welcome to be part of your post activities and help find them a job, a place, a position they can assist with. You never know what a person is capable of and wants to do if you just asked.

We have the Sweetheart Rally coming up Feb. 3 at Forest Lake Post 225. I have been making

plans to visit many posts as well with the weather being rather nice for getting around.

Let's not forget about 6th District Mid-Winter Conference. It



7th District

Jan Ekert



Greetings to all of my fellow Legionnaires.

To all in the 7th District and all of the other districts around this great state of Minnesota, I hope you had a happy holiday season.

The past year was a challenging year for The American Legion. Minnesota continues to strive to show all of the other states that we are strong. Membership continues to be a challenge for all of us. The 7th District sits in fourth place, but I know we have and can do better.

Let's get out there and talk to our members and to the servicemembers we know and tell them about The American Legion, what the Legion has done for them, and what we can do for them. Remember to keep our comrades in arms that are not able to be with their families this Christmas due to a deployment or a posting out of their home state, along with that remember those veterans who are in care facilities or those who are homeless and less fortunate than us.

It was nice seeing many of you at the Pearl Harbor Rally several weeks ago, and I am hoping to see all of you at the 7th District Mid-Winter Conference in New London on Jan. 20. We have set an alternate date in case of bad weather which is Jan. 27. Registration starts at 8 a.m. Pre-registration is \$15 with late registrations or paying at the door is \$18. The reason for asking for pre-registration is to allow the people preparing the food to have a basic idea of the number of attendees. Remember that the registration fee covers the cost of your meal with any

additional monies to the post or to a project identified by the Auxiliary. Watch for the registration form in the December newsletter which will go out at the end of this week.

Again, I will remind all of you about my project for the year, "Veterans helping Veterans," which is the Montevideo Veterans Home. It hosted an open house on Jan. 2 at 4 p.m. I am hoping that your post will think my project is a good cause.

Some other upcoming events that maybe of interest to you are the 7th District Convention, which will be May 18 at Morris Post 29. Department Events that are coming up are the Sweetheart Rally in Forest Lake on Feb. 3. The Department Convention will be July 11-13 and will be hosted by Willmar Post 167, which is in our district, and will be at the Willmar Convention Center.

The Department Fall Conference will be in St. Cloud again at the River's Edge Convention Center on Oct. 24-26. If you have not attended or are new to The American Legion, all of these events can help you learn more about what the Legion does for you and other veterans. I hope to see many of you at these events.

Should you have any questions or concerns, feel free to call me. I can be reached at home 320-406-2700 or on my cell 320-339-9927 or email at jancrs1@gmail.com.

Remember our strength lies in our numbers.



8th District

Jennifer Havlick



Happy New Year 8th District Legion Family,

I hope everyone's holiday season was safe and happy. So far this year our district has met all our national membership goals, which is awesome.

Let's talk programs. The American Legion has a lot of awards for our members and non-member veterans. If you need more information on those, please visit the department website for more information at mnlegion.org.

Also remember that national dues have increased for 2025 by \$5, and Department of Minnesota will be voting on a dues increase of \$3 so get with your members and make sure your dues cover those increases. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to give me a call. Our 8th District Mid-Winter Conference will be held via Zoom this year on Feb. 3 starting at 10 a.m.; the link has gone out to all of our posts. If you have not received it, please email me, and I will get that to you.

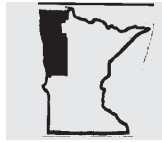
We continue to look for

district officers and program chairmen. If you are interested, please let us know. If your post is struggling with membership, we are here to help. We have received very few 2023-2024 officer reports from our posts, so I am asking that you all resend them to me at jennifer.havlick@outlook.com.

This information is important for the district, department and national. I know the demographics in our district are difficult, but I really need you to reach out to the veterans in your communities and tell them about all the amazing work we do in The American Legion. We need their help to keep the mission of the American Legion moving forward.

Let's get the 8th District back up at the top of our membership race. Thank you all for your continued support as I work out of state. Please let me know if you need anything.

District Commanders



9th District

Steve NaSalle



Happy New Year, Roaring 9th American Legion Family!

I am glad to report that we have met or exceeded the membership goals given to us by National HQ with an overall 81.08 percent average. According to our district membership director, we have 49 posts that have met or exceeded the 75 percent goal and 42 that have met or exceeded the 80 percent goal. Please keep sending in those renewals as they come in.

Congratulations to our Nielsville Post 336, Strandquist Post 466 and Gully Post 603 for reaching or exceeding 100 percent goal. Great job!

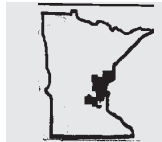
As we all know, it is that time of the year for our Mid-Winter Conference. Just a reminder; our Mid-Winter Conference will be at Detroit Lakes Post 15 on Jan. 19 and 20. Accommodations and event information will be posted on our 9th District Facebook site, as well as the Detroit Lakes Post 15 Facebook site.

For those of you who do

not have access to our Facebook sites, please contact Post 15 directly at 218-847-8533. On Friday, Jan. 19, we will host our District Executive Board meeting beginning at 7 p.m. On Jan. 20, we will host our Mid-Winter Conference beginning at 9 a.m.

In the past, we have had very low numbers in attendance. This year, I would like to see at least one representative from each of our posts in our district. The information provided at our district events is a valuable resource for aiding in your post's success. Please be safe on your travels, and I look forward to seeing you all there.

"May we think of freedom, not as the right to do as we please but as the opportunity to do what is right." — Peter Marshall



10th District

Matthew Berens



Greetings, Legion Family, from the Mighty Tenth District. 2024 is upon us, and it promises to be as exciting as ever.

It seems every Legion post I've attended since becoming commander has been filled with great people and engaging events. Beanbag tosses, meat raffles, bingo, bands and karaoke. There's always something going on at the Legion!

I'm excited to announce our Mid-Winter Conference is happening at Anoka Post 102 at 9 a.m. Jan. 13. If you've never attended a district function, this is one you won't want to miss. A day of fun learning and camaraderie.

We're also excited to an-

nounce a first-ever Commander's Cup Pistol Competition to be held at Anoka Post 102 on Saturday, Feb. 24, at noon. Everyone in the Legion Family who can legally shoot is welcome. Bring your ammo and shootin' iron and see how you rate.

That's all I've got for the unseasonably warm first month of 2024. Wishing everyone a happy and safe new year. Get out to the posts, enjoy those events, and bring in those new members. They're out there!

Don't miss out; apply for Minn. Legion College

By Mike Ash
Training Committee

Attention all Legion Family members: The 2024 Minnesota American Legion College is slated for April 25-28 at Camp Ripley, and you're invited to attend! This intensive training covers all things Legion Family-related through classroom sessions, guest speakers and panel discussions. It's a prime opportunity to expand your knowledge and leadership capabilities.

Space is limited so apply early! Cost is just \$200, likely covered by your Legion post or district. When registering, note specific topics you want covered — curriculum is adjustable based on participant interest in subjects like membership, finance, veterans benefits, working with post homes, organizational policies and more.

Ideal for any Legionnaire motivated to make a greater impact. Past graduates report feeling energized, confident and better equipped to take on leadership roles after completing Legion College. You'll love the camaraderie and connections made with Legionnaires from across the state.

Join accomplished instructors well-versed in Legion tradition and structure. Draw inspiration by interacting with department leaders also in attendance. Return home armed with greater insight and ability to enrich your post.

Act now and submit registration by March 15. Contact trainingcomm@mnlegion.org or visit mnlegion.org/legion-college/ to sign on for what previous Legion College attendees call a career-changing experience.

Invest in yourself and the future of the Legion by attending this motivational four-day training. We hope to see you there!

Minneapolis VA expanding services for veterans

Year in Review

Pat Kelly



2023 at the Minneapolis VA was a busy, successful year with many new changes and initiatives.

We focused on returning to many of our pre-COVID initiatives and to continually improving the amount and quality of services provided in our health care system.

By almost any measure, the Minneapolis VA provides high quality care. We measure this by a variety of means including surveys and inspections, visits by veteran service organization leaders and direct feedback from veterans on their experience, satisfaction and trust.

The VA nationwide is committed to being a "high reliability organization," or HRO. Our goal is zero harm in delivering patient care services.

In addition to tiered huddles to improve communication, leadership rounding, safety forums and other efforts, this year we introduced our High Reliability Leadership Academy. At the academy, we teach leaders how to create a psychologically safe environment, practice difficult conversations and to self-reflect on one's core motivations, while applying

their strengths to enhance team performance and veterans care.

We continue to connect veterans to the soonest and best care. In 2023 we provided 100,000 unique veterans and 920,000 outpatient visits between the Medical Center, 13 Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) and our Community Resource and Referral Center.

This year we extended several specialty medicine services as well as building expansions in St. James, Mankato (Lyle C. Pearson Clinic) and Maplewood, providing more services to veterans in these communities.

While hospital-wide masking due to the COVID-19 pandemic subsided this year, staff are still exercising necessary precautions. Our COVID response is not over. As 2023 came to a close, respiratory illnesses were again on the rise. We encouraged all patients and staff to get vaccinated for the flu, COVID and RSV, making it easy by offering vaccinations at our clinics

and the Medical Center.

We opened a new Specialty Care Building at the Medical Center in August. This centralized several specialty medicine services in one location and opened a ward in the Medical Center to begin conversion to more single-bed inpatient rooms.

In October we were approved for over \$6 million in funding to start the Rehabilitation & Engineering Center for Optimizing Veteran Engagement & Reintegration (RECOVER). This new center is aimed at improving community participation of veterans with amputations and spinal cord injuries. RECOVER is about recovery after injuries, but also maintaining a healthy and fulfilling life as veterans age.

In 2024 we will focus on rural care by extending specialty care

throughout more CBOCs. We anticipate the groundbreaking for our Women's Clinic here on the Minneapolis campus later in 2024. This will provide a dedicated building to deliver most women veteran services and will be separate from but connected to the main Medical Center.

We will continue to champion the services of the COMPACT Act, serving all veterans in acute suicidal crisis and promoting the PACT Act, ensuring all qualifying veterans register to receive the care and benefits they've earned and deserve.

It's a privilege to serve Minnesota and western Wisconsin veterans. We very much appreciate our partnerships with the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs, veteran service organizations, county veteran service officers and a host of other services and organizations that share our compassion and commitment to improving the lives of veterans.

Pat Kelly is the director of the Minneapolis VA Health Care System. He is a member of St. Paul 3M Post 599.

MDVA now has 4 cemeteries, to have 8 homes

Year in Review

Brad Lindsay



As we begin a new year, I am also beginning a new chapter as the commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs, also known as MDVA. It is an honor to be selected by Gov. Tim Walz to lead the agency I have been a part of for almost 20 years. I believe my experience at MDVA and as a county veterans service officer will serve me well in my new role.

I've also had the opportunity to work closely over the years with veteran service organizations such as The American Legion Department of Minnesota. I value our partnership and look forward to collaborating with Commander Paul Hassing as well as other members of the Commanders' Task Force as we continue to advocate for Minnesota's 294,000 veterans and their families.

I want to continue the precedent of the Minnesota Legislature passing — for the third year in a row in 2024 — a Veterans & Military Affairs Omnibus Bill. The 2023 legislation

consolidated a number of veteran funding requests that included:

- Expanded eligibility for the Post-9/11 Service Bonus.
- Increased benefits under the Minnesota G.I. Bill that supports education.
- Support for ongoing efforts to end veteran homelessness.
- Ability to maintain current levels of service at the Minnesota Veterans Homes and State Veterans Cemeteries.
- Funding the state's share of the cost for pre-design, design, demolition and construction of the Hastings Veterans Home campus.

This last year has seen some major accomplishments. After years of advocacy, planning and construction, MDVA completed four major construction projects: the Redwood Falls State Veterans Cemetery was dedicated in August when the

first interments were held and three new Veterans Homes in Bemidji, Montevideo and Preston are close to opening.

Minnesota now has four State Veterans Cemeteries, moving us closer to our goal to provide a Veterans cemetery location in all parts of our state. The opening of three additional Veterans Homes will provide skilled nursing care for 198 aging veterans when at full capacity.

Two of MDVA's priority initiatives continue to require our attention and action. First, we must strengthen our efforts to prevent veteran suicide that claims about 100 lives each year. I appreciate The American Legion's recognition of this tragedy and willingness

to champion programs such as "Buddy Checks" to promote connection among veterans who may be struggling.

We also will keep pushing to end veteran homelessness. Eight of 10 Minnesota areas have achieved the effective end of veteran homelessness in their communities. Hennepin and Ramsey counties have yet to reach this goal, but we are getting closer.

I am excited about the possibilities of the coming year. With your continued support and collaboration, I know we can make a difference for Minnesota's veterans. Thank you for your partnership.

As a reminder, if you need information or support on any veteran issue, please visit our website at MinnesotaVeteran.org, contact your county veterans service officer, or contact LinkVet at 1-888-LinkVet.

Brad Lindsay is the commissioner of veterans affairs in Minnesota. He is a member of New Prague Post 45.

Share your fundraisers with other communities

Detachment commander

John Weiss



Hello, Minnesota Legion Family. I hope you all had a joyful holiday season and spent special time with family and friends.

As we transition into this new year, let's remember that to be a truly outstanding organization, communication is a key ingredient to our success. After talking with many of you folks, a thought occurred to me.

I've heard of many different activities and fund-raising events, and I wondered why I hadn't heard anything about these events until after they have happened. I know that you would like wider participation at these events and more people means a better fund-raising event.

I wondered why these events aren't published on the many

different calendars of the Minnesota Legion Family. I do receive some of the district newsletters from a few of the districts, and I would like to say that I would be happy to get them from any district that publishes a newsletter. I enjoy reading about the happenings of our Legion Family. I especially like seeing the many different events that are put on to support our veterans and their families.

And I will attend as many of the events that I am able to attend. It's always good for all of us to support each other's events and to participate together as a family. So please get those

events on to one of those calendars so we can support your endeavors. I will also say that if your post, unit, squadron or ALR chapter is having an event that you would like me to attend, please feel free to contact me with an invitation.

We all have to remember that communication is the key to having a truly outstanding event and organization! The more people who know about your event, the better it will be.

Thank you all for the many

good things that you do.

May the new year bring you peace and prosperity.

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."





The Auxiliary Bulletin

No. 24 Vol. 6

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

Dept. HQ: Veterans Service Building, St. Paul, MN 55155 651-224-7634 January 2024

Membership, legislation and Sweetheart Rally

President's Column

Sharon Cross



Attention all units! All units that reach 100 percent by Jan. 31 will receive a 100 percent ribbon from the National American Legion Auxiliary. Encourage your members to renew their dues and continue to support the wonderful things our American Legion Auxiliary does for our veterans, military, and their families.

Let's get dancing with our members and get them to recruit, rejoin and renew members!

I can't believe that I am six months into my year as the president of the American Legion Auxiliary Department of Minnesota. My year is half over, and time is passing quickly.

As we begin 2024, if you haven't already, renew your dues. Don't let your benefits lapse. If you are not a member in good standing for three consecutive years, then you cannot use benefits like the American Legion Family Hospital Association available to all members and their family or the Auxiliary Emergency Fund.

January is National Security and Legislation Month. Have your unit sponsor an event like C.E.R.T. training in your communities so everyone is prepared in case of an emergency.

Also, the S.A.V.E. Program so you are ready to identify an issue and save a life. It is also time to brush up on our veteran issues coming before the legislature and contact our congressmen repeatedly to get them onboard and support The American Legion Legislative priorities.

I will be traveling during the weeks and every weekend in January to as many of the District Mid-Winter Conferences happening around the state that I can. I am attending National American Legion Auxiliary Mission Training that is being held on Jan. 27 so that I am home in Minnesota for our Sweetheart

Rally. Visits will include a few of our units for special events I have been invited to attend.

February is Americanism month, and the Sweetheart Rally will be Feb. 3 in Forest Lake at Post 39. It is a luncheon, membership rally and is hosted by the Auxiliary for all The American Legion Family.

You will find more information included in the Legionnaire from Department Membership Chairman Jenny Nelson to register for the meal. Bring those new members as we continue the challenge for every member to sign up just one new member.

Don't let your benefits or those of your fellow members lapse. If you are not a member in good standing for three consecutive years, then you cannot use benefits like The American Legion Family Hospital Association available to all members and their family or the Auxiliary Emergency Fund. I will be traveling to the 90th American Legion Pilgrimage to Lincoln's Tomb.

A great way to finish off Americanism month will be attending the Department Oratorical Contest at Anoka Post 102. I love hearing our young men and women speaking about our Constitution. What a great learning opportunity for 9-12th grade students! It is always good fellowship and good times when we can be together.

Start the conversation and *Be the One* to save one.

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."

Come to the Sweetheart Rally

FOREST LAKE — The Sweetheart Rally happens Saturday, Feb. 3, at Forest Lake Post 225 and promises to be a good get-together.

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

The meal is \$15, whether in advance or at the door. Participants can pay online with Eventbrite. Visit the American Legion Department of Minnesota website at mnlegion.org/calendar/ to find the link. There is a small online service fee.

The luncheon is spaghetti, bread and salad.

The Sweetheart Rally is organized by the Minnesota

American Legion Auxiliary and is an event for all members of the Minnesota American Legion Family.

Leaders for the Legion, Auxiliary, SAL and ALR will speak, followed by the membership teams.

Auxiliary will have script cards and boxes of chocolates for sale.



From left are two volunteers, Gift Shop Chairman Bev Grose, President Sharon Cross, Commander Paul Hassing, 1st Vice President Judy Ackerman, Minneapolis VA Representative Sandy Gibson, Cathy Newman, Past Treasurer Cathy Radil and MaryLee Seymore. The Gift Shop is a very popular program of the Auxiliary. It provides gifts to veterans in the five veterans homes, and four regional VA medical centers, as well as to eligible loved ones.

Auxiliary gives \$44,000 in gifts

By Bev Grose
Gift Shop Chairman

The Gift Shops have happened, and all were a great success. The Auxiliary was able to hold most of the gift shops onsite although where COVID outbreaks occurred gift cards were given to the veterans.

The Auxiliary operates gift shops at the five veterans homes and four area VA medical centers during December. All veterans,

spouses and children are eligible for free gifts.

The Gift Shop supplied gifts to 1,426 veterans, 499 spouses/caregivers and 110 children, a total of \$44,686.85 in gifts.

Items were purchased from Kohl's, Walmart, Fleet Farm, Shoe Sensations, Amazon & Russel Stover. Some of the items they could choose from were men's shaving kits, ski gloves, spa bas-

kets, clutch purses, women's and men's

wallets, adult and children backpacks, squishmallows, diamond dot kits, candy, men's and women's slipper, men's and women's watches, jewelry, shawls, blankets, hairbrush sets, women's hat, neck warmer, glove sets, small games, flannel shirts, men's and women's pajama sets, flannel shirts, military hats and gift cards.

Thank you to all who helped at the gift shops and to all the units that donated.

TALLY AT THE RALLY



At the Pearl Harbor Rally on Dec. 9 at Paynesville Post 271, Minnesota American Legion Auxiliary Membership Chairman Jenny Nelson names which districts performed the best.

Know and share the 2024 Legislative Priorities

By Robin Dorf
Legislative Chairman

The American Legion Auxiliary Legislative Program provides information and assistance to members to advocate for the legislative agenda of The American Legion. We need to be aware of the issues and address them in a timely manner. Please remember we are a nonpartisan organization and we do not endorse any party. We need to be ready to act when needed to support our veterans, military, and their families.

The Auxiliary's legislative efforts are aligned with the Legion's.

The American Legion Department of Minnesota 2024 Legislative Priorities can be found at mnlegion.org/legislation/. They can be downloaded as a PDF and printed. The ones for the Minnesota Commander's

Task Force are found there, too.

Share these documents with the legislators in your area.

The 93rd Session (2023-2024) of the Minnesota Legislature is scheduled to reconvene Feb. 12. The Minnesota American Legion 2024 Legislative Priorities include to pass the Veterans and Military Omnibus Bill, charitable gambling to provide meaningful tax relief and reinstate bonus games and free plays, fix a property tax exemption for Gold Star spouses and not charge vehicle registration, provide 100 percent property tax relief for posts of veteran service organizations, amend a law to help our CVSOs receive important documents, waive license fees on hunting, trapping, and fishing for all veterans, allocate proceeds from military/veteran license plates to the Support Our Troops License Plate Grant Fund, and update the personal

needs allowance at Minnesota Veterans Homes. More information can be found in the January Auxiliary unit mailing and at mnlegion.org/legislation.

Mark your calendars to attend the 2024 Veterans Day on the Hill April 17, 2024. The schedule for the day is doors opening at 10am for coffee with lunch served at 11:30 a.m. The march to the rally will begin at 1 p.m. New this year there will be a minibus running from the armory to the House and Senate office building from 10 to 11:30 a.m. Plan to meet your lawmakers!

This is open to all American Legion Family members and your community members who want to support our veterans. Let's show our legislators we are advocating for our veterans by having a big presence. The flier is available in the January Auxiliary unit mailing and the Auxiliary website.

Endorsements

Dorf endorsed for 1st vice president

Monticello Unit 260, 10th District Past Presidents Parley, and the 10th District Auxiliary has endorsed Robin Dorf for Department of Minnesota 1st vice president for 2024-2025.

Robin has been an active member of Unit 260 for 48 years and is a PUFL member. Her eligibility is through her father, Emil W. Dorf Jr., who served in the U.S. Air Force during the Korean War.

At the unit level she has held many positions, including president two terms. On the district level, she has served as St. Cloud VA Social Activities, Junior Activities, Education, Girls State, Legislation, Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation,

Children & Youth, Poppy, Leadership, Membership, Past Presidents Parley, secretary, treasurer, Executive Committee member, 2nd vice president, 1st vice president and served as 10th District president 2014-2015.

On the department level, she has served on the Strategic Planning Committee, past Girls State Counselor, Junior Activities, Leadership, Public Relations, Membership, Children & Youth, Chaplain, Community Service, and is currently serving as 2nd vice president and legislative



Robin Dorf

chairman. On the national level, she served as the 2018 ALA National Convention vice chairman, Northwestern Division Membership chairman, Children & Youth Committee vice chairman, and is currently serving as the Junior Activities Committee vice chairman.

Robin has been employed by Wright County for 16 years and is currently the Wright County Health and Human Services Kinship/Child Foster Care Recruiter Case Aide.

NEWS & NOTES

Junior Conference will be in Detroit Lakes

DETROIT LAKES — It is time for units to begin planning for the Department of Minnesota Junior Conference.

It will be held on April 13 at Detroit Lakes American Legion Post 15 with the 9th District serving as hosts. A fun evening of activities is planned for Friday, April 12. Complete information and the Call to Junior Conference will be included in the January unit mailing.

The next dues notice goes out Feb. 1

ST. PAUL — Second dues notice goes out Feb. 1. National has advised the Department Office the second dues notices will be sent out around Feb. 1 to anyone who hasn't paid their 2024 dues.

Members who haven't paid their 2024 dues by Jan. 31 are considered delinquent and may lose

their rights, privileges and benefits of membership including their continuous years of service. If you haven't paid your 2024 dues yet, please do so as soon as possible. Ask your friends if they are up-to-date on dues, too.

Scholar applications are due by March 1

ST. PAUL — ALA national scholarships are due on or before March 1

Applications for ALA national scholarships are due on or before March 1, to your local unit. Now is a great time to contact your area high schools and send them the applications. Reminder: National scholarships can now be completed online through a fillable application.

All scholarship applications — national, department and Past Presidents Parley — are due to Department Office no later than March 15. Unit Essay Contest winners should be sent to the Department Americanism Chairman Mary Kuperus no later than March 15.



At the Pearl Harbor Rally on Dec. 9 at Paynesville Post 271, Helen Steffen, 92, mother of 10th District President Anne Steffen, celebrated her birthday that day, and the room sang "Happy Birthday" to her.



In the background, volunteers prepare for the 2023 Gift Shop at the Sioux Falls VA Medical Center. In the foreground are Sioux Falls Representative Jan Benson and Gift Shop Committee member Sandy Wersal.

Blood donors help people in need

By Carol Kottom
National Security Chairman

Has your unit sponsored a blood drive this year? According to the American Red Cross, someone needs blood every 2 seconds in the United States. It is essential for surgeries, cancer treatment, chronic illnesses and traumatic injuries.

Whether a patient receives whole blood, red cells, platelets or plasma, this lifesaving care starts with one person making a generous donation. The Red Cross provides about 40 percent of our nation's blood and blood components, all from generous volunteer donors. But supply can't always meet demand because only about 3 percent of age-eligible people donate blood yearly.

Each new donor helps us meet patient needs. Remember that January is National Blood Donor Month. What a great way to start the new year by becoming a blood donor. Go to the American Red Cross site to see where you can donate and

make an appointment today. What is the best contact for the local military installation in your community? Because the military relocates their people often, try to locate the closest State Contracted Family Readiness Group (FRG). This is a contracted employee that works right on the base.

The State FRG is your go-to contact. They can help you plan simple events, like babysitting kids during a promotion ceremony, Month of the Military child events, stocking their food pantry, identifying released soldiers who might need Temporary Finance Assistance, or scholarship assistance, baby showers, Yellow Ribbon events, or Welcome Homes.

R.E.D. (Remember Everyone Deployed) Friday was created to remind people of our heroes overseas and show that we are thinking of them. People across the country wear red every Friday to serve as a reminder and spread the message of how important it is that we keep our troops in our

thoughts throughout the year. Ready is a government-sponsored website with a wealth of information on what to do to prepare you and your family in the event of an emergency. It can best be stated by utilizing the phrasing straight from their website. Launched in February 2003, Ready is a national public service campaign designed to educate and empower the American people to prepare for, respond to and mitigate emergencies, including natural and man-made disasters. The goal of the campaign is to promote preparedness through public involvement. Visit <https://www.ready.gov> - you will find various disaster types and information to help you successfully navigate and prepare yourself.

Here are some sites you can check out for military coupons or discounts. <https://www.mymilitarysavings.com>/coupons <https://www.military.com/discounts> <https://shop.id.me/military>, <https://couponfollow.com/military>.

Americanism is more than patriotism

By Mary Kuperus
Americanism Chairman



What is Americanism?

According to the 1925 Americanism Commission of The American Legion, "Americanism is a term of vast, significance. In its large conception, it embraces every phase of an individual's relation to the community, state and nation."

Americanism defined in the Americanism Handbook of the Sons of The American Legion:

Americanism is the love of America; loyalty to her institutions as the best yet devised by man to secure life, liberty, individual dignity and happiness; and the willingness to defend our country and flag against all enemies, foreign and domestic.

What does the American Legion Auxiliary say?

The American Legion Auxiliary Unit Guide says the purpose of the national Americanism program is to promote patriotism and responsible citizenship. The Americanism work of the Auxiliary includes all activities that strengthen American ideals and uphold the principles of democracy. The security of America lies in citizens who have a true understanding, love for those ideals and principles upon which the nation was founded, and a willingness to perform these duties even at great personal sacrifice. The work of the Americanism program is educationally based and divided into three phases: work with

youth, work with adults, and work within the community. All matters about the flag or patriotic education are rightly classified as Americanism activities.

As an American Legion Auxiliary member, we show Americanism in many ways.

We show our proud heritage of patriotism every day. We do this by remembering or honoring our fellow Americans on patriotic days throughout the year. We participate in many events promoting our American Flag, showing respect by saluting her presence in ceremonies and parades. We participate in flag retirement ceremonies when the flag is not serviceable anymore.

To promote Americanism, we can continue to teach our youth about flag etiquette, teach them the Pledge of Allegiance, and encourage them to learn the history of our veterans and military. The American Legion Auxiliary has a long and vast history of caring for our veterans and promoting Americanism in many ways. Let us continue this history and promote Americanism in our homes, communities, and the world around us.

Membership as of Dec. 27

"Cruising the Sea for Members!"

DISTRICT	# of Units	Goal	Period Gain	Membership To Date	Percent of Goal	Membership Last Year	Difference from Last Year
One	47	3,762	109	2,681	71.27%		
Two	71	3,890	93	2,817	72.42%		
Three	46	3,882	149	2,671	68.80%		
Four	7	579	33	369	63.73%		
Five	7	522	12	233	44.64%		
Six	61	5,031	163	3,622	71.99%		
Seven	53	2,955	74	2,088	70.66%		
Eight	19	1,185	80	866	73.08%		
Nine	46	3,348	148	2,266	67.68%		
Ten	42	3,812	115	2,573	67.50%		
1982 Dept	2	404	3	230	56.93%		
District Totals:	400	29,370	979	20,416	69.51%	0	
Group 1 (Even)	200	14,497	484	10,247	70.68%	0	
Robin Dorf							
Group 2 (Odd)	199	14,469	492	9,939	68.69%	0	
Judy Ackerman							

RANKINGS

1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th
73.08%	72.42%	71.99%	71.27%	70.66%	68.80%	67.68%	67.50%	63.76%	44.64%
District #8	District #2	District #6	District #1	District #7	District #3	District #9	District #10	District #4	District #5



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