



Assistant Department Service Officer Janet Lorenzo testifies Feb. 15 before the House Capital Investment Committee.

Legislation is front and center

Legion members testify on bonuses, homeless, taxes, among others

ST. PAUL — If you've been watching the public-access or YouTube channels for the Minnesota House and Minnesota Senate, you may have spotted Legion members testifying on veterans-related issues.

Department Comptroller Rachael Hill testified in February before the House Veterans & Military Affairs Committee. She testified in favor of expanding the post-9/11 bonus passed last year to include veterans who are residents but joined the military

out of state.

"No other veteran benefit in Minnesota is based on whether they entered service from Minnesota or a different state," she said. "Our state has no such residency requirement for any other programs. We don't restrict programs because somebody was born in a different state."

She grew up mostly in Moorhead, but her family moved to Ohio, and that's where she graduated from high school and entered the

Air Force. She was in the service on 9/11 and served multiple years after. After the military, she returned to Minnesota and is a member of Elk River Post 112.

"I received the Global War on Terrorism service medal, but, yet, I don't qualify for the post-9/11 bonus because I entered active duty from Ohio, which, as an 18-year-old graduating high school, it was honestly out of my control."

Continued on Page 8

What is this VRP anyway?

EMDR therapy has had striking results for PTSD sufferers

ST. PAUL — You may have heard about the Veteran Resilience Project. It was in the news for a few weeks in 2021 after the Legislature granted it an \$800,000 allocation, half in 2022 and half in 2023.

The Minnesota American Legion was among the organizations that helped VRP navigate the veterans community. But for many veterans dealing with PTSD, little remains known about the therapy it is offering. VRP hopes to change that.

The Veteran Resilience Project, a nonprofit founded in 2015, serves veterans and servicemembers who have experienced trauma, whether on the battlefield or off. It also trains therapists in EMDR, and it builds awareness of a treatment called EMDR, short for "eye movement desensitization and reprocessing."

Veteran and licensed therapist Jonna Phillips is VRP's therapy program director. Before working at VRP, she was at a Minneapolis psychiatric facility, and when EMDR came along, she was skeptical.

Continued on Page 2

More than 200 come to hear national officers

By Tim Engstrom

OSSEO — More than 200 people packed into the banquet hall at Osseo-Maple Grove American Legion Post 172 for the Sweetheart Rally, organized by the American Legion Auxiliary Department of Minnesota.

American Legion NECman Bill Barbknecht, who introduced National Vice Commander Glenn Wahus, noted it was the first time for Minnesota having a gathering with the national chaplain and a national vice commander at the same time.

American Legion National Chaplain Mark Antal said the Legion Family can lean on people of faith for support.

"We do good with the country part of 'God and Country,'" he said.

Antal resides in Apple Valley and is a member of Post 156 in Edinburg, N.D. He finished in the Army as a major and was first stationed in Europe, where he met a rabbi who asked a child, "Where is God?"

The child replied, "Rabbi, can you tell me where God is not?"

Antal sang the song "His Eye Is On the Sparrow."

The main speaker for the day was Wahus. He is a member of Watford City, N.D., Post 29.

Wahus encouraged members to

One sweet rally



Department Membership Director Linda Dvorak, center, stands with 2nd District Commander Pam Krill and 7th District Commander Karen Welander. Both districts performed well for membership efforts.

perform Buddy Checks and to "Be the One" to save a fellow veteran from suicide if needed.

"It's like when an old friend calls up," he said. "You light somebody's life up. Don't let members fall through the cracks."

He encouraged all Legion Family members to sign up for National American Legion HQ's Voter Voice, which allows people to contact lawmakers about national legislation that affects veterans. He said Voter Voice was

important in passing the PACT Act. He encouraged veterans to enroll with the VA.

"We pushed Congress on Agent Orange, Gulf War syndrome, burn pits. Get in and sign up. Enroll," he said.

Post 172 Commander Larry Fonder said there are many veterans organizations that help with immediate needs of veterans.

"The American Legion," he said, "is about the long game."

Veterans need The American Legion

for its long-term roles with Congress, the VA, G.I. Bill, state issues and veteran networking, he said.

Minnesota is eighth nationally when it comes to membership, said Minnesota American Legion Membership Director Linda Dvorak

She reported that Minnesota was at 84.16 percent membership as of Feb. 2, and it was on track to exceed the Feb. 15 goal of 85 percent. (Editor's note: It indeed met the goal. Membership goals

Continued on Page 9

Meet Mack, a Vietnam veteran who continues to serve



Ron Mackedanz is a member of Spicer Post 545. He wrote a book called "Drafted."

Book details his experiences in the war

CHANHASSEN — Combat Infantrymen's Badge. Army Commendation Medal. Two Purple Hearts. Silver Star Medal.

Ron Mackedanz, 74, survived a combat-laden one-year tour in Vietnam and lived to return home to his wife, Janet, and to be father of two daughters, Brenda and Dawna.

He details his Army experience in a book, printed in 2012, called "Drafted: Greetings, You Have Been Selected By Your Friends and Neighbors." He sat down with the Legionnaire in the back room at Chanhasseen Post 580 in January for an interview.

In 1966, Mackedanz graduated from Hutchinson High School. He worked several jobs before heading off to Whittier, Calif., in October to take a job at a stamp redemption store. By December, he came home to get married to

Janet, then he went back out to the Golden State.

Janet was pregnant, but, unfortunately, in March 1967, the baby was lost, and that meant Ron was eligible for the draft.

Janet and Ron were living in Whittier when, in December 1967, a letter came in the mail. In fact, it came two days before Christmas. He had maintained his draft registration back in Minnesota.

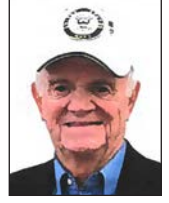
"They wanted to give me a physical in Minneapolis to

Continued on Page 10

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HB070-Y0120_8143_082022 (08/2022)

Endorsements

Knutson running for dept. chaplain

Pederson-Tripp Post 357 of Ashby and the 7th District are proud to endorse Dean Knutson for the office of department chaplain for the year 2023-2024.

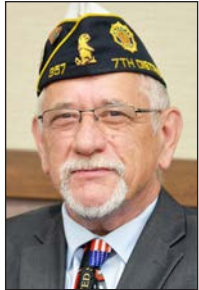
Knutson is a 34-year PUFL member of The American Legion and has held numerous offices in his post as well as in the 7th District and in the Department of Minnesota and has served at national Level on the Americanism Commission.

He was 7th District commander in 2019-20-21, serving two terms

like officers all across the country did those years. He also served as 7th District commander in 2004-05. He presently is the District 7 judge advocate.

He is a retired career Army veteran of the Vietnam era. He served 29 years total, in the Army, Army Reserve and National Guard.

Knutson currently lives in Marshall and attends Living Word Lutheran Church and is a member of Kvam Free Lutheran Church of rural Dalton, his hometown.



Dean Knutson

This therapy uses your brain to heal

Continued from Page 1

“But the patients would come back less distressed, less activated and more grounded,” she said. “They were able to notice and process versus being triggered.”

Results are results, and she decided to become an EMDR therapist herself.

EMDR involves bilateral stimulation while processing traumatic memories. Imagine your eyes following an object on a screen moving left and right while talking about a difficult experience. Or, sometimes, switching an object from one hand to the other. Or tapping a tapper or maybe a light bar. Or opening and closing the hands. First left. Now right. That is bilateral movement.

“EMDR uses somebody’s brain functions to help our trauma,” Phillips said.

The therapy still gets emotional, but the going back and forth has a desensitization effect.

“We do it in REM sleep, but we do it subconsciously. Here, we are doing it consciously,” she said.

Elaine Johnson, founder of VRP, said EMDR was first developed in 1987 to treat trauma. Israel embraced the therapy in the 1990s. The Connecticut-based EMDR Humanitarian Assistance Program found that, in 2013-14, 74 percent of patients no longer had PTSD symptoms, and 100 percent had a reduction in what bothered them.

She said EMDR probably is now the most-researched form of therapy there is.

“Because you experience trauma, it doesn’t mean it is your fault,” Johnson said. “Actually, a lot of veterans are trained to shut out the emotions associated with trauma, but it doesn’t mean they go away.”

Phillips added: “It doesn’t have to be this thing that slowly kills people.”

VRP’s goals are to provide EMDR therapy for veterans who need it and to spread the use of EMDR throughout Minnesota.

“As soon as EMDR is available everywhere in the state of Minnesota, then we’re done,” Johnson said.

Presently, the VA Medical Center in Minneapolis has two psychologists and a social worker trained in EMDR therapy.

In this legislative session, there is a bill to expand EMDR services offered by the Veterans Resilience Project to spouses of veterans and servicemembers, too. The bill would fund another \$400,000 for each year of the biennium. It is HF1353 and SF1509.

Interested in EMDR treatment for PTSD? Send an email to info@veteranresilience.org, or visit the website veteranresilienceproject.org.

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Does your post have a softball team?

Mid-winter conferences are history now. Donna and I made seven of them. It was good to see many people turn out. Obviously, they care about those fellow veterans and want to know what is going on in the American Legion Family.

I thank the Auxiliary, SAL, Juniors and American Legion Riders for attending and bringing up dates on what they are doing.

Congratulations to 2nd District Commander Pam Krill and the entire 2nd District for being in first place for membership at the Sweetheart Rally in Osseo. What district will be in first place at the Appreciation Rally on April 15 at The Park Ballroom New Prague?

Several Minnesota Legionnaires and Auxiliary Legislative Chairman Sharon Thiemeke will be at the Washington

National Report

Bill Barbknecht

Conference Feb 26 to March 1 to meet with their representatives and senators.

I thank all those posts that have donated to the American Legion Veterans and Children’s Foundation. That has helped so many veterans and their children across the country.

As we look to spring, does your post have any plans to sponsor a girls’ fastpitch softball team? Please check with your school coaches. The Minnesota American Legion Fastpitch Softball program is heading into its second season. The state tournament will be the last weekend of July in New York Mills.

Teams register at minnesotalegionsoftball.com.

In closing, I ask every one of you to contact your local senator and ask that they leave charitable gambling as is — as some of them are looking at taking away the e-tabs. It would

really hurt the youth programs as well as your community.

Also contact Gov. Tim Walz’s office as he needs to know all the good we do with that money to schools, cities and the nonprofits in our communities.

Get ready to get the garden seeds, golf clubs dusted off and the fishing poles ready spring is coming. Do buddy checks also, please. See your members. They need the Legion, and we need them.

Donna and I look forward to seeing you all in the next couple of months. Veterans Day on the Hill is March 30.

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



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Smoky Mountains

October 22-29, 2023

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- 11 Meals, 7 breakfasts, 4 dinners
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- Titanic Museum
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- Dollywood
- Hatfield and McCoy Dinner Show
- Guided Tour of Smoky Mountains
- Grand Ole Opry
- Gateway Arch
- Luggage handling (1 per person)

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Holiday Branson

2 Dates to choose from!
 November 7-11, 2023
 or
 November 14-18, 2023

Included in your tour:

- 4 Seasons Tour Director
- Deluxe motorcoach transportation
- 8 Meals, 4 breakfasts, 2 lunches, 2 dinners
- The Haygoods
- Dutton Family Christmas Show
- Clay Cooper’s Country Christmas
- Queen Esther @ Sight & Sound Theatre
- Hot Rods & High Heels Christmas Show
- Christmas Wonderland

- Osceola Cheese Store
- Russel Stove Candy Store
- Luggage handling (1 per person)

\$1,099.00 pp Double Occupancy

Department of Corrections

The birth, not death, was listed for the January issue for this centenarian veteran. (Both were year “22.”)

This is the correct entry, showing date of date:

Brown, Robert C.	100	11/15/22
Army WWII 31	Keewatin Post 452	

In a photo caption on Page 2 of the February issue, the amount of the check Lyle Post 105 donated to the Lyle Area Cancer Team was incorrect. The room was noisy, and it was difficult for all to hear the amount stated. The correct amount is \$3,500.

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SHARE YOUR POST-9/11 STORY

This retrospective study of the Minnesota experience since 9/11 chronicles individual service members and state units deployed overseas as well as a range of home-front stories.



Minnesotans were in the towers, planes and Pentagon on September 11, among the first boots on the ground in Afghanistan and some of the very last to leave in 2021...

Minnesotans also served in long and repeated deployments to Iraq and across the greater Middle East.

Closer to home, communities came together in new ways to support the families of those deployed and welcomed immigrants as it has often done before.

Together, these stories start to stitch together a shared state history in America's longest war.

The resulting retrospective will be published as a PDF in the summer of 2023 and be made available to the public without charge. Published copies will be provided to schools and libraries.

Share Your Story at mnavetmuseum.org

RELATED EVENTS

The Heartland Remembers: OIF at 20 Years
 Tuesday, March 20 at 7 PM via Zoom
 Register at mnavetmuseum.org (FREE)



GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM
 MEMORIAL FOUNDATION.



Please join us online, via Zoom, to remember the opening days of OIF and to learn of the latest plans for the Memorial in Washington D.C.. In 2017, Congress designated the Global War on Terrorism Memorial Foundation as the entity authorized to plan, fund, and build a national Memorial. The Memorial is for it to be an inclusive, reverent, and apolitical place of honor for all who have served and sacrificed in the ongoing Global War on Terrorism, as well as the countless civilians, family members, and others who have supported them.

CONTRIBUTORS

- COL Patricia Baker, Veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom
- GEN Joseph Votel, Board Member of the Memorial Foundation
- Michael Rodriguez, President & CEO of the Memorial Foundation
- Randal Dietrich, Director of the MN Military & Veterans Museum

An Evening with Medal of Honor Recipient Clint Romesha
 Saturday, April 22 at 5 PM, Minneapolis Golf Club
 Register at reunitingafterwar.org (\$45/PERSON)



REUNITING
After **WAR**



Join fellow museum members and others from the Veterans community for this special evening to benefit Reuniting After War. Clinton Romesha, fighting alongside three Minnesotans, received the Medal of Honor for his actions during the Battle of Kamdesh on October 3, 2009. Romesha was assigned to the 3rd Squadron, 61st Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, deployed to Combat Outpost Keating in eastern Afghanistan. When a force of 300 Taliban insurgents attacked the base, he was credited with rallying his comrades and leading the counterattack, directing close air support and providing suppressive fire to help the wounded to an aid station. Despite being wounded, Romesha continued to fight through the 12-hour battle.

MN Military & Veterans Museum • Camp Ripley • 15000 Highway 115 • Little Falls, MN 56345 • 320-616-6050 • mnmilitarymuseum.org



This project has been financed in part by a grant from the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs and the State of Minnesota from the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund through the Minnesota Historical Society created through the vote of Minnesotans on Nov 4, 2008.



The Legion is leading in legislation

For more than 100 years, The American Legion has been the leader in legislative issues affecting veterans their families and the communities they live in and serve.

Last year as a part of the Minnesota Commander's Task Force, The American Legion Department of Minnesota helped to pass the first Veterans & Military Omnibus Bill. It passed two weeks before adjournment while much of the other types of state legislation died.

The Veterans & Military Omnibus Bill focused on issues that directly affect veterans and their families. In January, the Minnesota legislative session began, and our Department Legislative Committee has been hard at work ensuring that our voices are heard by both our legislators and the governor. The 1st District invited local legislators to talk with members at their Mid-Winter Conference. Legion members, with guidance from our Legislative Committee and department staff, have been testifying in front of numerous committees in both the House and Senate.

I would like to encourage you

Commander's Column

Jennifer Havlick



all to contact your local legislators and the governor to make sure they understand our priorities. A list of our priorities can be found on our department website at mnlegion.org/legislation/.

Each district has a legislative chairman who should be working with the Department Legislative Committee to provide information on how to reach out to their area legislators. District commanders have also been sent contact information for our Legislators please contact them for assistance.

March 30 is Veterans Day on the Hill. It is my hope to see as many of our members there as possible. District commanders also have that information. We have a long way to go to get our legislative priorities passes and a short time to get there, so please get informed and get in touch with your local, state and federal representatives.

The department has met our Presidents Day membership

goal of 85 percent. Great job. I would like to reach out to members of our state at-large post. If your membership card says 1982 MN or 1982 AD, you are a member of the Minnesota Post at-large post. It is often called Post 1982.

Right now, only 53.36 percent of those at-large members have renewed for 2023. If you are a member of Post 1982 and have not paid your 2023 dues, please do so. We need you in this fight to secure the future for our veteran and their families.

The department officers are the officers for Post 1982. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact myself, our department adjutant or one of our department vice commanders, and they will be happy to assist you.

If you are in Post 1982 and would like to transfer to a local post or to your district at-large post, please don't hesitate to contact the post or district you are interested in transferring to and they will help you get that done.

Remember, we are a family. The American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary, Sons of The American Legion and American Legion Riders can accomplish great things together.

Jennifer Havlick of Duluth Wisted Post 28 is the commander of The American Legion Department of Minnesota. Her theme is "Honoring Our Past by Securing Our Future."

Sense of purpose relies on others

Dr. Merlin Tuttle spoke on a podcast recently. He shared his experience from 60-plus years of studying bats.

Any danger he had over the years was from humans, not bats, he said. He photographed and examined different bats in their natural habitat, many outside of the United States. He is credited with saving the bats from extermination under the Ann W. Richards Congress Avenue Bridge in Austin, Texas.

Tuttle created a foundation educating people on the value bats are to our ecosystem. His board of directors sought a different vision and ousted him when the vision of the foundation went beyond his vocation. He has continued via his website, which showcases bats in a positive light.

Tuttle spoke of two spiritual aspects influencing him in his vocation: self-value and purpose. The board "coup," where he was dismissed, challenged his sense of value.

A person's sense of value is developed first as child through a faith practice, family, community and education. Value is an internal compass pointing to life benefit regardless of where you live, financial status, opportunities and struggles. As a human develops, this nucleus then transfers to an internal guide nourished by self.

So I'm writing with the hopes that these words of appreciation will reach every level of the association. Thank you! Especially to the sponsors who helped make this great event happen!

I had so much fun that it should be illegal!

I hope to join you again next year, and, if you don't mind, I'm going to spread the word of this event to my circle so others can experience such appreciation. I really did have the best time. I've been bragging to anyone who will listen about the joy it brings to the snowmobile clubs (and all others included) to be able to do this for the vets. I could see it written on the faces of those leaders I happened to run into at the event.

Patrick Prose
ret. sergeant major
USMC
Richfield Post 435

Bemidji vet is 101 years old

Gerald H. Wraa Sr. was born March 11, 1922, and marks his 101st birthday in 2023. He is a longtime member of Clearbrook American Legion Post 256, and a life member of Bemidji VFW Post 1260. He joined the Navy after hearing that Pearl Harbor had been bombed and served 1942-1946 during World War II.

Gerald served aboard the destroyer USS Charles Ausburne under Adm. Arleigh Burke as a 40mm gunner. He was known as a planker (the first crew to man the destroyer). The ship was first sent into the North Atlantic and then on convoy duty to North Africa. She then was reassigned to the South Pacific and the Solomon Islands.

Chaplain's Corner

Kelley Adelsman



Merlin said a very poignant statement that illuminated his own sense of his worth: "I know I am 80, but I still have something to contribute to this world."

This shows his strong sense of his purpose in this world remains. I have learned from many people arriving at an end of their independent abilities and facing reliance upon others is a struggle in identifying purpose.

How I wish it wasn't so infused with the 21st century rugged independence that is so admired. Purpose is that which defines your individual connection to self and others, not what you are capable to produce.

I have been reading through the Christians' Holy Bible in the Old Testament's "Psalms."

In the Jewish faith, these songs comprise the "Tehillim" (songs of praise) from the book of "Ketuvim" (writings). The songs encompass despair to praise, sometimes in the same song. "Psalms" do not attribute worth to output or ability as we know it. Capability is a result of an industrious mindset.

I leave you with this poem of our century which challenges

what we see when we look upon ourselves or another. It is my prayer that we will lean into our worth as loved humans regardless of age or many other factors because God patiently loves us.

"The Little Boy and The Old Man" by Shel Silverstein

Said the little boy, "Sometimes, I drop my spoon."

Said the old man, "I do that too."

The little boy whispered, "I wet my pants."

"I do that too," laughed the little old man.

Said the little boy, "I often cry."

The old man nodded, "So do I."

"But worst of all," said the boy, "it seems grown-ups don't pay attention to me."

And felt the warmth of a wrinkled old hand.

"I know what you mean," said the little old man.

Kelley Adelsman of Pine Island Post 184 is the chaplain for The American Legion Department of Minnesota.

Earn a V.E.T.S. pin



To qualify for National Commander Vincent J. "Jim" Troiola's V.E.T.S. (veterans, education, teamwork and sponsor) expired membership incentive pin, American Legion members will need to reinstate five expired members into The American Legion for the 2023 membership year who were not a member during the 2022 membership year.

Please make sure that members have been processed before submission of this award. Pins will not be mailed until they are verified on the national database.

The deadline is June 30, 2023.

The easiest way to find the form is to search on Google for "American Legion V.E.T.S. pin."

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.

Thank you for the outpouring of support

With the sudden passing of my husband, your department chaplain, Larry Otto, please accept my sincere reflections.

Larry was so committed to our nation and his Legion Family, followed only by his love for our Heavenly Father and his family.

Larry's heart's desire was to serve fellow veterans through the positions of 1st District and Department of Minnesota chaplain.

While his term as department chaplain was cut short, I'm certain these words, penned by Larry himself and found on his side table, were intended for all of you:

"As we leave this place...
Go with the peace and grace of our Heavenly Father,
proclaiming all that He has done for you.

Go and spread the love that our Father

has for us to all you meet.

May the wind of the Spirit of

God blow you

where you need to be until we meet again.

Go in God's Love, Peace and Grace."

Matthew 28:18-20, known to many as the Great Commission, became the foundation for Larry's spiritual witness. I believe it pushes us to "pay it forward."

We, Larry's family, are so amazed and grateful for the outpouring toward us these past weeks. Prayers, acts of kindness, presence, messages and financial gifts given are representative of the love the Father has toward each of us. In so doing, you have given us the opportunity to "pay it forward" and many others will be blessed because of you.

Greeting and seeing many people from the American Legion Family at Larry's visitation and memorial service became a warm embrace to all of us. Always remember:

God is Good
All the Time
And All the Time
God is Good!

For God and Country,

**Emily, Bethany and Curt,
Josh and Kristin Otto**
Ellendale

Veterans' snowmobile ride was a blast!

A friend of mine invited me to the Vets Appreciation Ride this year.

I attended and was overwhelmed by the first-class event and the service I received! I'm writing you to try to express my sincere appreciation to the Minnesota United Snowmobilers Association and Minnesota Snowmobile Education and Advancement Fund for running this event!

I've not had this much fun since the 1970s, when I last rode a snowmobile. I was treated like a VIP, as were all the veterans I'm sure. I was invited, housed, fed and was loaned a sled!

I haven't felt this kind of appreciation since retiring from the Marine Corps! This volunteer effort doesn't just happen without the hard work, sacrifice and dedication of entire association.

The Minnesota Legionnaire

FOR GOD AND COUNTRY

Official publication of
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Department of Minnesota

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

Fax: 651-291-1057

Email: tengstrom@mnlegion.org

Web: mnlegion.org/legionnaire

Editor: Director of Communications Tim Engstrom

Editor Emeritus: Al Zdon

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Name of Deceased	Age	Date of Death	Branch	Era	Cont. Years	Post
Ardinger, Charles E.	80	1/3/23	Navy	Vietnam	54	Mabel Post 299
Note: He was a past post commander. He served in Da Nang and Mekong Delta in Vietnam, as well as at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba and many naval stations in the USA.						
Bastin, Earl J.	95	1/18/23	Army	WWII	34	Waite Park Post 428
Bergland, Peter E.	81	1/23/23	Army NG	Vietnam	56	Albert Lea Post 56
Berglund, Peter E.	81	1/23/23	Army NG	Vietnam	56	Albert Lea Post 56
Boquist, Alfred M.	97	2/12/21	Navy	WWII	75	Northome Post 499
Briggs, Roger W.	75	2/13/23	Army	Vietnam	28	Stewartville Post 164
Brookman, Calvin "Kelly"	95	1/2/23	Navy	WWII	76	Bayport Post 491
Note: The post has established a memorial scholarship in his honor. He was the first mayor of Lake Elmo.						
Buisman, James W.	91	2/15/23	Navy	Korea	71	Willmar Post 167
Note: He served aboard the heavy cruiser USS Newport News.						
Cakebread, Melvin L.	99	1/14/23	Army	WWII	21	Northfield Post 84
Campbell, Lowell F.	89	9/16/21	Air Force	Korea	51	Robbinsdale Post 251
Caswell, Stephen	74	12/29/22	Army	Vietnam	42	Rosetown Post 542
Chaplinski, Albin J.	83	1/12/23	Army/NG	Vietnam	34	Middle River Post 444
Christenson, Harold W. "Billy"	92	1/10/23	Army	Korea	62	Albert Lea Post 56
Note: He served in the war as part of the 3rd Infantry Division. He returned to Korea for the 40th and 50th anniversaries of the war's end. Tirelessly volunteering, he was twice voted Post 56 Legionnaire of the Year.						
Christenson, Harold W.	92	1/10/23	Army	Korea	62	Albert Lea Post 56
Note: He deployed to Korea as part of the 3rd Infantry Division, serving as a platoon sergeant.						
Cook, Roger L.	74	12/24/21	Navy	Vietnam	15	Northome Post 499
Cotant, Robert J.	88	2/10/23	Army	Vietnam	39	Walker Post 134
Cranston, Merlyn	86	1/24/23	Army NG	Vietnam	50	Okabena Post 608
Dahl, Harley A.	96	9/1/20	Army	WWII	32	Northome Post 499
Dolan, Mark "Spike"	93	1/26/23	Army	Korea	70	Milroy Post 274
Note: He spent two years in the Korean War and received a Purple Heart.						
Falk, Rolland W.	92	1/19/23	Army	Korea	62	Zumbrota Post 183
Fee, Larry P.	77	5/31/22	Army	Vietnam	14	Northome Post 499
Foley, Robert F.	94	1/7/23	Navy	WWII	49	Roseau Post 24
Note: He helped fund an elevator installation at the Post home, which has enabled several members to continue coming to meetings.						
Franck, James M.	81	2/11/23	Air Force	Vietnam	22	Rochester Post 92
Frank, Robert A.	89	1/27/23	Army	Korea	41	Winona Post 9
Note: He served in Germany.						
Gagnon, Ricky J. "Poobear"	65	2/12/23	Marines	Cold	11	Marshall Post 113
Note: He served overseas during the tense 1979 Iranian Revolution and Iran hostage crisis.						
Geschwill, Edmund F.	71	12/10/22	Air Force	Vietnam	6	Backus Post 368
Note: He retired after a 20-year military career.						
Gill, Robert D.	91	1/28/23	Army	Cold	26	Northfield Post 84
Goblirsch, Donovan G.	82	2/2/23	Army	Vietnam	45	Virginia Post 239
Note: He was the Department of Minnesota chaplain three times: 1993-94, 1997-98 and 1999-2000. He was 7th District commander in 1985-86, then 8th District commander in 1991-92. He served several roles at the district and post levels, too.						
Harvey, Donald G.	70	2/20/22	Army	VN-GW	8	Elk River Post 112
Holdahl, John P.	80	2/5/23	Army	Vietnam	8	Rosetown Post 542
Jewell, Robert J. Sr.	84	1/18/23	Army	Vietnam	5	Walker Post 134
Note: He served in Vietnam and received the Bronze Star.						
Johansen, Kenneth W.	92	2/8/23	Army	Korea	70	Janesville Post 281
Konen, Mary M.	98	2/14/23	Army	WWII	33	Pierz Post 341
Note: During the war, she was a Rosie Riveter at a Boeing plant in Seattle before she joined the Women's Army Corps, serving at Walker Air Force Base in New Mexico.						
Koning, Frank	91	1/23/23	Navy/AF/NG	Korea	29	Round Lake Post 461
Note: He served in the Navy during the Korean War, then Air Force, then Wisconsin National Guard. In all, he had 38 years of military service.						
Lee, Roy B.	74	1/5/23	Air Force	Vietnam	4	Savage Post 643
Leland, Donald L.	99	1/5/23	Army	WWII	53	Alexandria Post 87
Note: He served in England and France in the Signal Corps.						
Lenzen, John C.	79	9/17/22	Navy	Vietnam	58	Chaska Post 57
Liester, William T.	78	1/8/23	Army	Vietnam	57	Ashby Post 357
Lundberg, Ralph E.	94	11/22/22	Army	Korea	27	Ashby Post 357
Note: He served as a medic in the war and was awarded the Combat Medic Badge.						
Lyman, Donald R.	86	2/13/23	Air Force	Korea	42	Stewartville Post 164
McRae, Donald R.	92	1/16/23	Army	Korea	43	Elk River Post 112
Miller, Eugene B.	91	1/27/23	Air Force	Korea	4	Waconia Post 150
Murray, Richard B.	87	1/25/23	Navy	Korea	14	Pequot Lakes Post 49
Neff, William E.	91	1/23/23	Navy	Korea	69	Albert Lea Post 56
Neff, William E.	91	1/23/23	Navy	Korea	69	Albert Lea Post 56
Note: He participated in more than 2,000 military funerals with the Post 56 Honor Guard.						
Nietz, William L.	93	1/20/23	Army	Korea	20	Rochester Post 92
O'Connor, Stephen J.	78	1/15/23	Army	Vietnam	31	Spring Valley Post 68
Note: As a nurse and later as a nursing administrator, he had a medical career in the Army.						
Oliva, Barry V.	86	2/5/23	Navy/AF	Vietnam	46	Albert Lea Post 56
Ourada, Stephen G.	83	1/26/23	Army	Vietnam	57	Walnut Grove Post 267
Peterson, Orvey F.	90	2/16/23	Army	Korea	67	Lanesboro Post 40
Polzin, Charles	90	2/5/23	Army	Vietnam	38	Bayport Post 491
Reding, Duane L.	93	1/25/23	Army	Korea	22	Mazeppa Post 588
Rustad, Paul D.	88	1/17/23	Army	Korea	47	Ashby Post 357
Note: He served in Korea after the 1953 ceasefire but before the end of the war era in 1955.						
Sanneman, Richard A.	90	10/28/22	Air Force	Korea	64	Northfield Post 84
Schaffran, Dewayne	67	12/13/22	Army	Vietnam	21	Wood Lake Post 556
Schloeder, Dennis J.	85	8/25/21	Army	Korea	32	Walker Post 134
Schmidt, Michael D.	74	12/8/22	Air Force	Vietnam	69	Hutchinson Post 96
Sharp, Larry M.	79	2/9/23	Army	Vietnam	33	Minneota Post 199
Sippel, Duane A.	73	1/28/23	Army	Vietnam	1	Albert Lea Post 56
Sletten, Gerald J.	87	1/30/23	Army	Vietnam	35	Marshall Post 113
Note: He was a longtime volunteer for the Auxiliary thrift shop.						
Sonnek, Matthew J.	38	1/1/23	Air Force/Air NG		19	Wells Post 210
Note: He was an F-16 crew chief at Shaw AFB in South Carolina before moving to F.E. Warren AFB in Wyoming. Finally, he worked in vehicle maintenance for the Wyoming Air National Guard.						
Sorenson, Robert F.	81	1/6/23	Army	Vietnam	49	Lake Crystal Post 294
Note: He was past post commander, gambling manager and would volunteer whenever needed. He served in the Army as a cannoneer.						
Sorenson, Robert G.	92	1/19/23	Army	Korea	23	Round Lake Post 461
St. Aubin, Richard J.	93	2/10/23	Army	Korea	38	Marshall Post 113

All-Family Events Calendar

March 15: TAL 90 percent membership target
March 15: American Legion Birthday
March 15: ALA 85 percent membership target
March 15: ALA scholarships due
March 15: Chaplain Training, via Zoom
March 17: SAL Detachment Executive Committee, Rochester VFW Post 1215
March 17-18: SAL Detachment Spring Conference, Rochester VFW Post 1215
March 18-April 22: Minnesota American Legion Bowling Tournament, Sundance Lanes, Dayton
March 22: Chaplain Training, via Zoom
March 25: ALA DEC Meeting, Dept HQ
March 25: Lt. Col. Hortense McKay Congressional Gold Medal Ceremony, Gichi-ziibi Center for the Arts, Brainerd High School
March 30: Veterans Day on the Hill, St. Paul Armory (doors open at 10 a.m.), then march to State Capitol
March 31: Girls State reservations due
April 1: Boys State funding due
April 14-15: ALA Junior Conference, New Prague Post 45
April 15: DEC/Appreciation Rally, New Prague Post 45
April 17-21: National Commander's Tour of Minnesota
April 19: TAL 95 percent membership target
April 19: Chaplain Training, via Zoom
April 20-23: Minnesota Legion College, Camp Ripley
April 22: Department President's Testimonial Dinner, Spicer Post 545
April 22: Military Ball, Fest Building, Spring Grove
April 22: Women Veteran Appreciation Event, LC's Venue, Rochester
April 22: Military Muscle Foundation Fun Run & Walk, US Bank Stadium, Minneapolis
April 29: 4th District Family Testimonial Dinner, North St. Paul Post 39
May 1: Boys State reservations due
May 1-3: National President's Tour of Minnesota
May 8-11: Spring Meetings, National HQ, Indianapolis
May 13: Department Commander's Testimonial, New Prague Post 45
May 17: TAL 100 percent membership target
May 26: National Poppy Day
May 29: Memorial Day, local ceremonies
June 11-17: Minnesota Boys State, St. John's Univ.
June 11-17: Minnesota Girls State, Bethel Univ.
June 13: ALA 95 percent membership target
June 16: Last Man Club Golf Classic, Shoreland Country Club, St. Peter
June 23-24: SAL Detachment Conference, Anoka Post 102
July 4: Forest Lake Post 225 Fourth of July Parade
July 12: DEC, Jackpot Junction Casino, Redwood Falls
July 13-15: Department Convention, Jackpot Junction Casino, Redwood Falls
July 26: Legacy Run Kickoff Party, location TBD
July 27-30: Minnesota American Legion Baseball Div. I Sr. State Tournament, Rochester
July 27-30: Minnesota American Legion Baseball Div. I Jr. State Tournament, Burnsville
July 28-30: Minnesota American Legion Baseball Div. II Sr. State Tournament, Roseau
July 28-30: Minnesota American Legion Fastpitch Softball State Tournament, New York Mills
Aug. 4-6: Minnesota American Legion Baseball Div. II Jr. State Tournament, Granite Falls
Aug. 15-20: American Veterans Traveling Tribute, Murray County Fair, Slayton
Aug. 19: Fund 85 Run (Minn. Veterans Assistance Fund), Forest Lake Post 225
Aug. 25-31: National Convention, Charlotte, N.C.
Oct. 12-15: Minnesota Legion College, Camp Ripley
Oct. 26-28: Department Fall Conference, River's Edge Convention Center, St. Cloud

Past Department Chaplain Donovan G. Goblirsch passes

VIRGINIA — The Department of Minnesota has lost one of its past officers.

Donovan G. Goblirsch of Virginia Post 239 served as the department chaplain for three separate terms. He first was state chaplain in 1993-94. He served again in 1997-98, was away for a year, then returned for the 1999-2000 term. He served as 7th District commander in 1985-86, and 8th District commander in 1991-92.

He served various district and post roles, too.

He served in the Army National Guard during the Vietnam era. He farmed with his father for over 20 years near Belview. He later worked as a real estate agent in Marshall and Gilbert and was active at Gilbert Post 138 before moving to Virginia. He was active in his church and brought his singing talent to groups such as the New Ulm Concord Singers. He was a former Gilbert city councilman. He had many children, step-children and grandchildren. Survivors include his wife, Barbara.



Donovan Goblirsch

Minnesota DRIVE HOME YOUR SUPPORT!

Purchase a "Support Our Troops" Plate.
 Call: 651-4TROOPS
 Visit: www.minnesotaveteran.org

Taps

Continued from Page 5

Steinmetz, Vernon K.	92	1/6/23	Marines	Korea	64	Chaska Post 57
Stowe, Merle	95	1/15/23	Navy	WWII	54	Foley Post 298
Supan, William "Billy"	73	1/20/23	Army	Vietnam	53	St. Stephen Post 221

Note: He received the Purple Heart.

Teufer, Milton F.	94	10/31/20	Navy	WWII	20	Northome Post 499
Tvrdik, Alvin J.	93	1/20/23	Army	Korea	66	Alexandria Post 87

Note: He served in the 187th Airborne Infantry Regiment in the war and made 22 jumps during his enlistment.

Winter, Richard J.	74	1/22/23	Navy	Vietnam	52	Marshall Post 113
Wottreng, Thomas J.	98	12/30/22	Army	WWII	17	Browerville Post 293

Note: He was stationed on Tinian.

2023 & 2024 TOURS

sponsored by GRHS

July 30, 2023: FABULOUS AFRICA
 This tour visits Botswana (Chobe Game Park), Zambia, Zimbabwe (Victoria Falls), South Africa (Kruger Game Park), fly to Port Elizabeth and do the Garden Route (for whale watching) to Cape Town. LIMITED PARTICIPANTS.

October 17, 2023: SICILY & ITALY
 Palermo, Agrigento with the Valley of Temples, Siracusa, Taormina and to the top of Mt. Etna in Sicily before we fly to Naples, Italy and visit Pompeii, the Amalfi coast, Sorrento and then go on to Rome, Sienna, Florence, Ravenna and end in Venice. Sign up deadline March 15th.

April 27, 2024: GREECE
 You'll see everything from the Acropolis in Athens to Olympia, where the Olympic games began in 776 AC.

June 2-14, 2024: 80th Anniversary of D-day
 Visiting Holland, Belgium, France and Germany-WWI & WWII sights.
NEW! I have included many WWI sights and all of the WWII sights of my previous tours.
Tour already half sold!
EVERYONE WELCOME!

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Mail Call



Gerald and Edna Wraa at their home in Bemidji.

plane had been shot down. Gerald was self-employed as a farmer/logger before becoming a cement mason, a skill that he asked the Lord to teach him, and he became a natural. Gerald also served his local community as a township officer for 60 years. During his retirement years, he and his wife, Edna, attended numerous reunions with his former shipmates. A memorial bench with Gerald's naval highlights is in the Clearbrook Veterans Memorial in Clearbrook. He and his wife celebrated their 75th wedding anniversary last year. They have three sons, seven grandchildren and 14 great-grandchildren. Please send birthday cards and greetings to Gerald Wraa, Neilson Place/Strawberry Neighborhood #302, 1000 Anne St. NW, Bemidji, MN 56601.

Jerry L. Wraa Jr. Bemidji

We don't need to ride bikes to raise money

Legion Riders
Ted Berg

Greetings, Legion Family. Another month has passed, and I know there has been a lot of fundraising going on in the state. Just goes to show we don't have to ride to raise money, and the Riders in Minnesota have proven that. Thank you one and all for the hard work. With the rallies going on and all the mid-winter events, there has been a lot of travel in the state. It's great to see people getting out and about. As a reminder, the project that I picked to raise money for, Forgotten Heroes Ranges & Retreats, is coming along even though construction is currently on hold do to winter setting in. They will be back to building when the ground thaws this spring. If any ALR, SAL, Legion or Auxiliary would like me or Brett Sample

(the man that started this project) to come to your location for an explanation of what the range is or what the goal is, please feel free to contact me. I currently have packets I can get out to show what the range is and about. In closing, I have seen bikes out the last few weeks, and, yes, I am jealous. Well, kind of. It's still chilly out. Everyone be safe and watchout for each other, and prayers being sent out to any and all Legion Family members that are not feeling well and hope for speedy recovery to all.

Ted Berg of Bloomington Post 550 is the director of the Minnesota American Legion Riders.

CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL CEREMONY



2:00 P.M. | March 25 | 2023
 Gichi-ziibi Center for the Arts, Brainerd
 602 South 5th St., Brainerd

LTC HORTENSE MCKAY
 U.S. Army Nurses Corps - Angel of Bataan and Corregidor

Public is invited
No charge to attend

Sponsorship for this ceremony provided in Great Honor of Stewart C. Mills, Jr., who knew and respected LTC Hortense McKay.

The SAL Update:

Winter isn't giving up; neither are we

Greetings and SALutations! The days are getting longer and the temperatures are getting — well — some things just never change.

It's hard to believe that just nine short months ago I began my second year as your Detachment of Minnesota commander, and I have to say that it has been an honor and privilege.

This is the time of the year where our membership numbers start to stall. Please keep making those buddy checks and talk to those members that may have not renewed as of yet to find

Detachment commander

Tim Weaver



out why.

The Detachment of Minnesota Spring Conference is March 17-18 and is hosted by Rochester Squadron 446. Information on the Spring Conference is printed below.

The weekend of March 17 is also the start of the American Legion Family Bowling Tournament. I wish all the bowlers the best of luck.

Please remember to keep

our service personnel, both domestic and abroad, in your thoughts and prayers.

Tim Weaver of La Crescent Squadron 595 is the commander of the Detachment of Minnesota for the Sons of The American Legion.

SAL Spring Conference is shaping up

ROCHESTER — The Sons of The American Legion Detachment of Minnesota Spring Conference takes place March 17-18 in Rochester.

Meetings will be at VFW Post 1215, which is at 2775 43rd St. NW. The phone is 507-289-6299.

The Finance Committee meets at 7 p.m., with the Executive Committee to meet 15 minutes after the close of the Finance Committee meeting.

SAL National Commander Christopher Carlton is expected to attend. Bring donations for projects and good items for the Child Welfare Auction.

Registration is \$15 per person. Make check to MN SAL and mail to: Dave Bilderback, 4409 22 Ave. NW, Rochester MN 55901. He can be reached at 507-250-1057. Leave a message if necessary.

Hotel rates for that weekend are set up at the Sleep Inn and Comfort Inn, which are right next to

each other on Commerce Drive Northwest. Both are part of Choice Hotels and share management. The phone number is 507-282-2364.

Rooms are booked under "American Legion 446." The goal was to have most rooms booked by March 1, so if you haven't yet, please book soon.

Keep in mind Rochester is a sports hub for high school sports. There will be hockey teams, wrestling teams and basketball teams, not to mention Rochester also has a national volleyball training center. If you cancel 24 hours before your reservation, you will not be charged.

There is a Costco across the street, and an Aldi grocery store nearby. Restaurants of McDonald's and Five West are next door. Rooster's Barn & Grill (not a typo) is kitty-corner.

Mark your calendars. The SAL Detachment Convention is June 23-24 at Anoka Post 102.



Osseo-Maple Grove Squadron 172 Finance Officer Jason Voss presents \$100 for Detachment Commander Tim Weaver's project. Send donations to his project to MNSAL, 20 W. 12th St. Room 300A, St. Paul, MN 55155. Make checks out to Minnesota American Legion Foundation Fund 99. Gambling proceeds are lawful. At the end of his term, Weaver will donate the funds to the American Legion Veterans and Children's Foundation.

We are March-ing to a different beat

I'm sure we've all been in this situation at one point. You go to do something and it's such a familiar task that it takes almost no thought at all to complete it.

What's worse, if an idea is proposed that may be a different process slightly, we hesitate because "it's not the way we've been doing it" or it seems unnatural.

There's always a danger with this, because as well-intentioned as we may be, that uncomfortable feeling may actually be keeping new ideas from coming forward and keeping growth from happening.

Let's take membership as an example, for years many of our members, and even officers have insisted that our membership is valid from July 1 to June 30, because after all — that's how we promote it!

In real terms, our membership is based on the calendar

SAL Membership

Matthew Verkuilen



year. So for 2023, our membership is from Jan. 1, 2023, to Dec. 31, 2023. That means that if you have a 2022 card still, or if you are a squadron (or post) that hasn't sent in a transmittal yet (for a multitude of reasons), those members are *expired* until their membership is processed at national. But you may ask "What's the big deal? It's only a couple of months!" Without a current membership, those members are ineligible for the many benefits that are available to members of the American Legion Family including some very good insurance benefits.

So as we *March* forward, instead of our members be simply numbers, let's put ourselves in the shoes of our members.

Let's set a new tone or even a new rhythm. Ask yourself, "How can we support them and what they may be going through?"

The answer may be as simple, as doing our part to get the renewals transmitted, or the members knowing that we're not looking at them as a number, we don't want them to risk losing their benefits of being part of the American Legion Family.

Matthew Verkuilen is the membership director for the Detachment of Minnesota for the Sons of The American Legion.

National Commander's Tour of Minnesota

Vincent "Jim" Troiola also visits some military sites in the Duluth and Camp Ripley areas. Below are the public stops on the tour. Please call or email to reserve your spot.

Location	Meal	Time	Contact
Monday, April 17			
West Duluth Post 71	dinner*	6 p.m.	218-628-1495 (Post)
Tuesday, April 18			
Chisholm Post 247 held at Valentini's Supper Club	dinner*	6 p.m.	218-966-0603 (Brad) (or via Chisholm Post 247 Facebook)
Wednesday, April 19			
Aitkin Post 86	breakfast	8:30 a.m.	218-927-2965 (Post, after 11 Tue.-Sat.)
Hackensack Post 202	lunch	noon	763-227-0704 (Rob)
Ironton Post 443	dinner*	6 p.m.	218-833-2117 (Anthony)
Thursday, April 20			
Underwood Post 489	breakfast	8:30 a.m.	218-770-6264 (NECman Bill Barbknecht)
Long Prairie Post 12	lunch	noon	320-732-4045 (Post)
* includes 5 p.m. social hour			

What's happening?

Appreciation Rally planned for Post 45

NEW PRAGUE — The next rally on the calendar is all set to go.

The Minnesota American Legion Appreciation Rally, hosted by the New Prague Post 45, is Saturday, April 15.

Post 45 is also known as The Park Ballroom. It is at 300 Lexington Ave. S.

Social hour is at 4 p.m., meal at 5 p.m., program at 6 p.m.

The meal is roast beef, mashed potatoes, salad, rolls and dessert.

Cost is \$17, paid in advance or at the door.

To pay in advance, go to mnlegion.org, then "Events," then "TALMN rallies," then "Appreciation Rally."

The ALA Department Junior Conference is at Post 45 that same afternoon. Early settlers for the Appreciation Rally will discover numerous kids at the place.

The American Legion Department Executive Committee meets at 3:30 p.m. at Post 45.

Minnesota American Legion Auxiliary is not holding a DEC meeting at the Appreciation Rally. Its DEC meeting, instead, is at 9:30 a.m. March 25 on the fifth floor of the Veterans Service Building in St. Paul.

Testimonial dinner is planned

NEW PRAGUE — Post 45's Park Ballroom also is the site of the Department Commander's Testimonial.

It is May 13. Social hour is 4 p.m., dinner 5 p.m., program 6 p.m.

DJ Gary Richardson, who is the 3rd District commander, will be up and running 7:30 to 10 p.m.

The meal for that event is to be chicken breast, roast beef, mashed potatoes with gravy, dressing, salad, a vegetable, rolls and brownies

Registration is in advance. Send check for \$25 with names to Park Ballroom, 300 Lexington Ave. S. You also can pay online by visited mnlegion.org and navigating to "Events," then "Commander's

Testimonial."

For lodging, New Prague has Quality Inn & Suites. Otherwise, hotels are found nearby in Shakopee and Lakeville.

Bowling balls will be rolling

DAYTON — The 2023 Minnesota State American Legion Family Bowling Tournament is planned for March 18 to April 22 at Sundance Lanes, 15240 113th Ave. N., Dayton. It is hosted by Osseo Post 172.

Singles and Doubles happen at noon Saturdays. Team action takes place at 3:30 p.m. Saturdays and noon Sundays.

Cari Lamb is the tournament secretary. She can be contacted at 612-968-4839 or crlmb74@gmail.com. Her mailing address is 3217 19th St. S., Minneapolis, MN 55407.

Visit mnlegion.org and hover over "Events" to find

the downloadable registration form.

Legionville registration is now open

BRAINERD — Registration is open for sending kids ages 10-12 to Legionville Education Center.

Legionville now has a new website. It is at legionville.org.

The registration fee is \$500, and that cost typically is paid by the local American Legion post or other sponsor, like a local school, fraternal organization or civic club.

Parents complete the registration, but it is advised to have the sponsor lined up first.

Session dates are June 11-16, June 18-23, June 25-30, July 9-14, July 16-21, July 23-28 and July 30-Aug. 4.

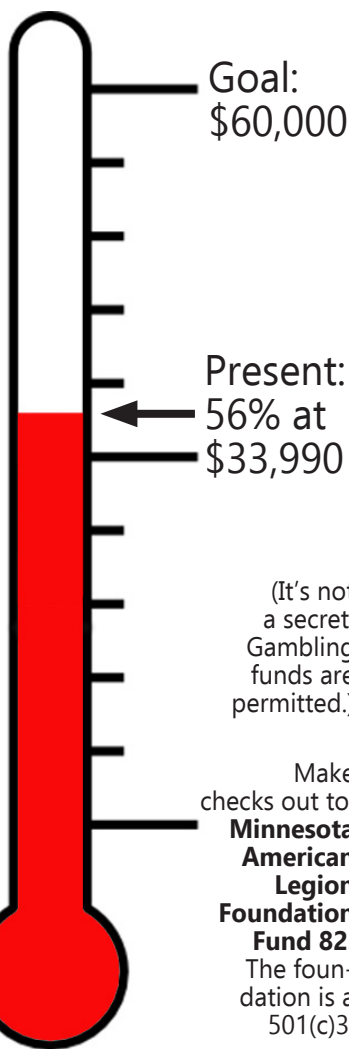
Commander's Project

C'mon, folks!

Department Commander Jennifer Havlick's Project raises funds for Minnesota families receiving mortgage-free smart homes from Tunnel to Towers Foundation.

She also hopes to raise funds for Project Delta, which creates service dogs for veterans from rescue/shelter dogs, and for Eagle's Healing Nest, which helps veterans with the invisible wounds of war.

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



Date of graphic: Feb. 19



Commander Jennifer Havlick, Legislative Chair Kristy Janigo and Gov. Tim Walz speak during a Minnesota Commanders' Task Force meet-and-greet at the Capitol Feb. 1.

'A post home is a safe haven and comfort zone for all veterans'

Continued from Page 1

Department Service Officer Ray Kane testified in February before the Senate Capital Investment Committee in favor of \$77.7 million in bond funding for the campus upgrade of the Hastings Veterans Home. State approval of the funds would free up about \$144 in federal money for the project.

Assistant Department Service Officer Janet Lorenzo also testified on the same issue but for the House Capital Investment Committee.

"The American Legion Department of Minnesota veterans rehab staff members, like me, regularly visit our Minnesota Veterans Homes to ensure the care for our veterans is being done properly, to make sure the state is holding up its end of the bargain," she said.

Department Legislative Chairman Kristy Janigo and Communications Director Tim Engstrom testified in February and January before human services committees on the monthly allowance left for sheltered homeless veterans.

Presently, if homeless

veterans enter a shelter, the state requires they give up most of their veterans benefits, such as disability or pension. They are left with \$121 a month.

"How many of you could get back on your feet if the state took 90 percent of your income?" Engstrom asked the legislators. "None of us could. How do we expect them to bounce back then?"

The bill would adjust the amount to be 30 percent of their VA income.

Janigo told lawmakers the Legion would prefer the state not take any of their income but 30 percent is better than 90. The state calls benefits income "un-earned income."

"Ask just about any veteran in the U.S. and they will tell you that compensation for injuries on behalf of their country is not unearned to them," she said. "I ask, are any of you here willing to sacrifice your hearing, or one of your arms, or perhaps deal with lifelong skin conditions, or God forbid, cancer, from toxic exposure while serving in the Middle East? And if so, what price would you put on that?"

Janigo and Department Commander Jennifer Havlick testified at the start of the legislative session before committees handling veterans affairs about The American Legion Department of Minnesota's legislative priorities. (Much of that was in last month's issues.)

The 1st District's Mike Parry, a past state senator, testified in favor of removing property taxes for American Legion and VFW posts. He is a member and past commander at Waseca Post 228.

"Their tax burden on their small building is \$7,000. Not having that tax burden would allow for more reinvestment as we've heard in youth, scholarships, baseball, softball, and, of course, helping veterans that are in need, and maintenance of their post home."

He said when post homes close, because of high tax burden (Waite Park Post 428 closed two years ago because of a \$60,000 tax burden), it affects all veterans and the entire community.

"A post home is a safe haven and a comfort zone for all veterans," Parry testified. "It's a healing place for veterans who have PTSD and other service-related issues."

Andru Peters of Minneapolis Post 1 also testified how post homes, over the years, were a place to escape from times when society acts unfriendly to veterans. They helped him to work out issues.

"The building helps out," he said. "Just like when we served, we were assigned to a fort, or a camp, or unit. We have a brotherhood. Regardless of religious or ethnic background, we were brothers."

If members of the Minnesota American Legion wish to testify while representing the Legion, be sure to coordinate with Janigo, Parry, Engstrom, Kane or Department Adjutant Mike Maxa. They will aide members with key talking points. Contact info is at mnlegion.org.

Havlick, Janigo, Maxa, Kane and others met with legislators and Gov. Tim Walz in the L'Etoile du Nord Vault Room beneath the State Capitol on Feb. 1. They were there in conjunction with other veterans organizations as part of the Minnesota Commanders' Task Force.

Other efforts on a variety of veterans topics remain, such as license plates and a veterans omnibus bill, and the situation will change, no doubt, by the time Veterans Day on the Hill arrives on March 30. The doors at the St. Paul Armory open at 10 a.m.

The issue of e-pulltabs continues to simmer

ROCHESTER — The 1st District, on Feb. 18, hosted a bipartisan legislative forum at Rochester Post 92, and e-tabs were discussed.

Sen. Nick Frenz of North Mankato said there are questions about e-pulltabs because it was designed at a time when they essentially resembled paper pulltabs. However, they have become more sophisticated, he said, and it is part of the reason for the increase in revenue, which is why casinos are concerned.

"The e-pulltab revenue is part of the discussion, because the e-pulltab revenue has accumulated to such a point that we can actually pay off the stadium," he said. "Long story short, the reason that there weren't changes made two years ago, in my opinion, is largely because of input of charitable organizations like veterans groups that said, 'Hey, why would you change it so we get less revenue?' and I think the answer is, 'We should not change it.'"

Frenz noted there has been an increase in revenue of paper pulltabs, too. It shows people are supporting their nonprofit charitable organizations whether it is paper or electronic. He also said lawmakers are looking at decreasing the tax rates.

If electronic pulltab revenue decreases, he noted, reducing the taxes could ease the impact. He also noted bar and restaurant operators have brought up the issue of rent, too.

Department Commander Jennifer Havlick has urged all members to reach out to their lawmakers to help them understand how e-tabs and e-bingo

are crucial to offset rising costs of running a gambling operation and for the rising costs faced by local charities and youth sports.

"Everything costs more. More revenue doesn't mean the money goes further," she said. "It means we can perform our mission of making our communities stronger at the same levels as in the past."

The Minnesota Commanders' Task Force, better known as CTF, met with Gov. Tim Walz on Feb. 3 at the Veterans Service Building in St. Paul.

Several issues were addressed, and Walz brought up gambling. He said there will be a major meeting to discuss all forms of gambling and about the associated taxes.

Communications Director Tim Engstrom told the governor The American Legion opposes any move to take away e-tabs. The same issue came up in 2021, and studies showed lost revenue for charities and for the state, as well as lost jobs, Engstrom said. The research showed people would continue to go to the favorite bars, not flock to casinos, if e-tabs were to go away.

On Feb. 21, lawmakers introduced a bill to bring sports gambling to Minnesota. The bill would give tribal casinos exclusivity on sports gambling. The bill did not mention e-tabs.

Allied Charities, a statewide charitable gambling trade association, oppose reducing e-tabs and e-bingo and opposes giving casinos a complete monopoly on all e-gaming. Allied is not against casino sports betting.

State lawmakers, please don't punish the charities that made e-tabs work

Dear state lawmakers,
We ask that any bill regarding gambling, particularly e-tabs, not be fast-tracked. I ask that the bill be vetted by the full committee process, which would include giving those opposed the opportunity to voice their opposition.

Tribal gambling has had 11 years to object to the 2012 bill allowing charitable electronic gambling. E-tabs statewide are now more popular than paper pulltabs, but, to be sure, both paper and e-tabs have increased in popularity. People must like knowing their gambling dollars benefit their local community.

The only logical reason that tribal gambling now object is that electronics are hurting them financially. Is that so? If that is the case, the tribes need to open their books and make that case publicly. Short of that, there is no reason for the state to intervene at this point in time.

If passed, patrons will not make tracks to their nearest casino. Casinos will not benefit from whatever revenue charities — and the state itself — lose. A casino in the metro Twin Cities may benefit to some degree, but outstate casinos will not and will probably lose business. Groups such as The American Legion, which regularly hold meetings

at casinos throughout the state, will review using casinos for their statewide meetings. It is clear that many other organizations that offer charitable gambling or benefit from charitable gambling will do the same.

Tribes have already used legal avenues to seek redress on this issue and have been denied. Twice. Who among us has not experienced some kind of upheaval the past three years that may have included financial loss? Are e-tabs more responsible for this than worldwide turmoil and pandemic? My wife and I for example are far greater homebodies today than we were three years ago.

Since the passing of the stadium bill in 2012, charities have seen their penny profit per dollar wagered diminish. Costs rise. Is the state prepared to step in and help with scholarships, food insecurity, youth, sports, city, veteran and a myriad of other needs that are now being addressed by charitable gambling? We offset poverty issues even on the weekends sometimes. The state can't do that.

Charities did not pass the



Guest Column
Allen Lund

stadium bill that brought electronics into existence. Charities did not manufacture the games. Charities did not approve the games. But reduction of e-tabs would hurt charities and those in need the most.

Charities have had no interest in hurting tribal gambling operations or the missions that they serve. To the contrary, our members typically support casinos statewide. The bill as written is punitive to charities and those we serve. I do not understand the animus exhibited against charitable gambling operations. The degree that reducing e-tabs hurts those in need across our state is out of proportion with any damage that tribal gambling may have incurred.

Allen Lund is on the Minnesota American Legion Legislative Committee. He is the past director of Allied Charities and is a member of Osseo-American Legion Post 172.



Minnesota American Legion Department Service Officer Ray Kane testifies Feb. 16 before the Senate Capital Investments Committee. He spoke in favor of bond funding for a campus upgrade of the Hastings Veterans Home.

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Sweetheart Rally scenes



People mill about Osseo-Maple Grove Post 172 right before the Sweetheart Rally, but when they sat down, there wasn't an empty seat in the banquet hall.

2nd District places second-to-none

Continued from Page 1

are listed on the calendar on Page 5.)
Dvorak said 2nd District was in first place, 1st District second place and 6th District third place. She encouraged posts to go through the list of Post 1982 at-large members and encourage them to join the local posts.

The National Commander's Tour is set for April 17-21, and presently National Commander Vincent J. "Jim" Troiola is scheduled to stop at Minnesota American Legion College at Camp Ripley, Dvorak said.

SAL Membership Director Matt Verkuilen said the Detachment of Minnesota was at 78.57 percent as of Feb. 4. He said 1st District was in first place, 2nd District second and 5th District third.

The SAL Spring Conference, he said, is March 17-18 in Rochester.

Auxiliary Membership Director Sandy Orsall said Minnesota is in second place in the Northwest Division. She said 9th District is in first place, 1st District is in second place and 6th in third.

The heads of each part of the Legion Family

shared their project for the year.

Honorary Junior President Sydney Borntrager said her project is raising money for the adaptive sports program at the Sioux Falls VA.

American Legion Riders Director Ted Berg said he is raising funds for the Forgotten Heroes Ranges & Retreat in Aitkin County.

Sons of The American Legion Commander Tim Weaver is raising money for the American Legion Veterans & Children Fund.

American Legion Auxiliary President Mary Kuperus is seeking funds to furnish the meditation rooms at the three new Minnesota Veterans Homes. They are at Bemidji, Preston and Montevideo.

Commander Jennifer Havlick explained that her project has three parts: Project Delta, which creates service dogs for veterans from rescue dogs; Eagle's Healing Nest, which helps veterans with the invisible wounds of war; and Tunnels to Towers Foundation, providing mortgage-free smarthomes to Minnesota disabled veteran families.



American Legion National Chaplain Mark Antal gave the opening prayer prior to the meal during the Sweetheart Rally at Osseo-Maple Grove Post 172 on Feb. 4.



Minnesota American Legion Riders Director Ted Berg gestures at the podium.



Tenth District Commander Bill Gordon laughs during the social hour.



Legionville Board President Carl Moon presents National Chaplain Mark Antal, left, with a white Legionville T-shirt, and NECman Bill Barbknecht, right, presents National Vice Commander Glenn Wahus with a blue Legionville T-shirt. Seated is Department Commander Jennifer Havlick.



National Vice Commander Glenn Wahus, center, stands with Kurt Roettjer of North Branch Post 85 and Auxiliary Department Membership Chair Sandy Wersal. The Auxiliary membership drive has a Paul Bunyan theme this year.



Department Commander Jennifer Havlick shakes hands with Post 172 Commander Larry Fonder after his post donated \$500 to the Department Commander's Project.



National Vice Commander Glenn Wahus speaks to the audience at the Sweetheart Rally on Feb. 4.



Second District Commander Pam Krill speaks with Past 1st District Commander Dale Wellik.



Army Vietnam War veteran Ron Mackedanz of Spicer Post 545 stands beside the U.S. flag with the prestigious Order of St. Maurice medal around his neck. The medal recognizes significant contributions made by infantrymen during and after their time in service. Nominees must have high standards of integrity, character and dedication. The medal is named for St. Maurice, an Egyptian military leader who headed the legendary Theban Legion of Rome in the 3rd Century.

Live for his country

Ron Mackedanz earned 2 Purple Hearts in the Vietnam War

Continued from Page 1

make sure I was healthy enough to die for my country," he said.

They flew back, stayed with his parents in Olivia, then took a bus from Glencoe to Minneapolis. He passed the physical, and the couple returned to California.

He had considered joining the Air Force, but there was a six-month wait. Apparently, out in California anyway, many people had the same notion. He decided to wait for his letter.

In April, the draft notice arrived. "Greetings, you have been selected by your friends and neighbors for induction into the United States Army."

They squared away their affairs and caught a plane back to Minnesota. It was around this time they learned that Ron's cousin Lyle Mackedanz was reported missing in action in Vietnam. He had been a Huey helicopter crewmember near the A Chau Valley. The chopper was shot down by anti-aircraft guns in bad weather.

Nobody knew his status. "At that point, I knew I had to go," Ron said.

Induction was May 16, 1968. He went to basic at Fort Campbell, Ky, advanced infantry training at Fort Lewis, Wash. Janet stayed off-post. After AIT, he enjoyed a 30-day leave, before shipping off to Vietnam.

He arrived in Nam on Oct. 15, 1968, and was assigned to 2nd Platoon, Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment Mechanized, which is part of the 1st Infantry Division, better known as the Big Red One. Division HQ was in Di An north of Saigon, and the 16th Infantry base camp was north of Di An in Lai Khe.

Mackedanz gained the nickname Mack in the Army. Mack writes that, shortly after arriving, the soldiers returned from the field, and it was his first time seeing real infantry soldiers. "They all looked like they had been drug through hell, backwards. Many of these guys, in their late teens and early 20s, looked to be 30 years old or older. To say they looked like death warmed over would be an understatement."

Charlie Company was a mechanized company that hailed from the 9th Infantry Division, and in September

had been reassigned to the 1st Infantry Division and originally came to Nam from the 60th Infantry Division out of Kansas. The company, in 1967 under the command of Lt. Larry Garner, garnered the nickname "Bandido Charlie."

"Bandido" is the Spanish spelling for "bandit," though in some Spanish-speaking countries it is spelled "bandito." The 9th had been a loose outfit, and the 1st wanted to do away with the Bandido name. It wanted to call the entire 1st Battalion "The Iron Rangers," and they did. But with Bandido Charlie having just been through the Tet Offensive and other fights, with 27 dead, they weren't going to give up their hard-fought company nickname.

On Oct. 25, 1968, they headed out to Fire Base Jim. The engineers would sweep the road for mines, and the infantrymen would provide protection and watch for trip wires and booby traps. When the roads were secure, a convoy could come through.

He experienced many firsts at Fire Base Jim. First firefight. First casualties. First checking out enemy camps. First B-52s and F-4s obliterating those camps with napalm and bombs. First river crossing. And he experienced loads of misinformation. Most of all, he learned from the old-timers to not let others get too close, so he could cope easier if or when they died.

Every few days, Lai Khe was hit by Viet Cong mortars, just as the base was preparing to send out ambush patrols for the evening.

In November, they got word to head to the Iron Triangle. They were to support the 2nd Battalion of the 28th Infantry Regiment "Black Lions." Led by Capt. Wendelin Winslow, the Bandidos rolled out. They found dead North Vietnamese, caches of rice and munitions. The Black Lions were in pursuit of the fleeing soldiers.

The Bandidos set up a night defensive perimeter, then built a fire base. The Army brought in artillery. Later, it was named Fire Support Base Huertgen. They would set up listening posts several clicks away. Sometimes, they monitored NVA and VC activity and other times they called in artillery to disrupt it.

Second platoon relieved

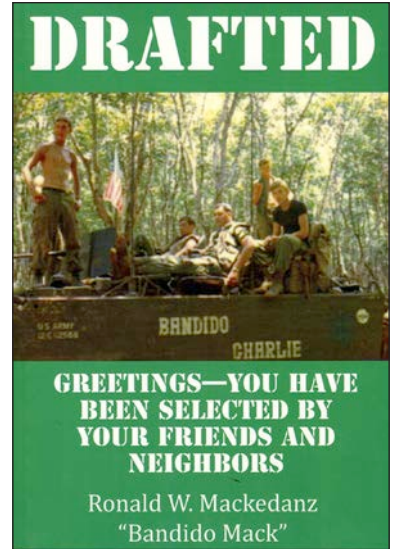
another platoon providing security for the nearby village of AnDien. At first, there was a hooch-to-hooch clearing that resulted in two dead enemy soldiers, but the farmers appreciated the security because the VC and NVA took what they needed. The U.S. sought to win the hearts of the populace.

They provided medical assistance, built playground equipment and dug wells. At night, VC soldiers would attempt to infiltrate and they would be shot or captured. At times, the next day, a local Vietnamese would show up with a gunshot wound. Where did that come from?

The village chief's wife, the Mama San, was trying to rock her 1-year-old granddaughter to sleep one day, but the toddler was crying instead. Mack asked the woman for the child, and she was reluctant. He gave his rifle to a buddy and again asked. She gave the girl over, and Mack started humming the "Rock-A-Bye Baby" lullaby.

The girl fell sound asleep. From then on, Mama San would pat him on the arm and say, "You numba one Papa San."

On Jan. 8, 1969, the platoon pulled guard around their base camp at the village. About a mile out, a squad could see through heavy fog a column of VC coming along. Not being able to see, they withheld from blowing their ambush. They radioed to the base



"Drafted" is available through Amazon or Polaroid Publications.

camp instead.

The VC marched up as expected and a fight ensued. The Americans cut loose with everything they had.

"All of a sudden, my left pant leg was wet. I thought I had wet my pants," Mack wrote. "Later, I found out that a piece of shrapnel had hit me in the back of my leg, and it was bleeding pretty good."

He headed to the command bunker and found Michael Tessaro on the ground. A rocket-propelled grenade had wounded him. Mack called for a medic, and one came. Mack and Tessaro eventually were on a chopper for the wounded, about 10 in all.

Mack learned the next day Tessaro had died, and Mack believes he passed during the flight.

He also learned that the VC broke off after that first large volley of fire. Perhaps they had expected a sleepy outpost.

The doctor left a chunk of metal in his leg about the size of a 9 mm bullet, and Mack still carries it to this day. The Army presented him with his first Purple Heart. Returning to the village, he spent time learning everything about one of the 2nd platoon track vehicles, an M113 armored personnel carrier.

Thirty years later, Mack went to see Tessaro's father in Illinois. Tessaro's sister was defensive: "Who are you and what do you want with my dad?"

Mack explained he was with her brother when he likely died, and he ended up spending Thanksgiving 2002 with their family and visited the grave.

"They treated me like the prodigal son had just returned, they were so happy to see me," he said. "I was able to put some things to rest for them."

He worked with the family and the county veteran service officer to get the form detailing Tessaro's awards.

The stories of Vietnam veterans are filled with episodic combat incidents, big and small and often deadly or scary. Mack, like others, experienced so many that it is difficult to squeeze into a Legionnaire veteran profile. His book shares many more, and it's worth reading.

In August, the Bandido Charlies, Alpha Company and battalion HQ from the Iron Rangers were sent to construct a new fire support base, which became FSB Allons II. On Aug. 12, they were ordered to go after the NVA who had attacked FSB Eagle II during the night.

They traveled through a rubber plantation, and Vietnamese people worked the rubber trees. A few hundred meters west of an old French plantation mansion, there were no more workers, a sign that something was amiss. With Alpha Company in the lead, the column halted.

The commanding officer, Lt. Col. Kenneth Cassels, went to the front to see what was taking so long and ordered them to proceed. About a click later, the lead track was struck by an RPG and a 57 mm rifle round. The driver was killed, and the platoon leader was blown off. Cassels ordered him to mount another track and engage the enemy.

The Bandidos became the right flank for Alpha Company, which was now in a full-on firefight with a dug-in NVA force. The Bandidos assaulted a hill, and an RPG went right over Mack's head and barely missed Capt. Phillip Greenwell, who was sitting on the track.

They were giving all they had when, suddenly, Mack's track wouldn't move. An RPG hit the engine compartment. Everyone was blown off the track. Mack had been wearing a CVC for the radio contact and hadn't heard the boom, but the service door for the engine hit his shoulder.

He grabbed his M-79 grenade launcher and fired at anything that moved. The battle was deafening, but he was deaf to the noise.

Fearing another RPG, he crawled out of the driver's hatch, exposing himself to enemy fire. He ran to the back of the track, where he found Al Kalchik, and 1st Sgt. "Top" Al Herrera. Greenwell



was still inside on the radios, trying to call in air support. Herrera and Kalchik were wounded by shrapnel, and Mack began aiding them until a medic arrived.

Mack climbed on the track and fired the .50-cal, but the barrel was burned out. No time to change the barrel, so he loaded a box of ammo and kept firing.

"The next thing I knew, I was dropping down inside the track."

He was hit in the neck, shoulder, right hand and right side of his back with shrapnel from an explosion in rubber trees above and behind him.

The same medic helping Kalchik and Top bandaged his hand. He and three other guys carried Kalchik on a stretcher, with Top running alongside, down the hill and toward the chopper landing zone.

One of those guys, Melvin McElreath, was shot above his right hip as he ran. They all fell, and McElreath yelled, and they started again. They reached Top's track and boarded up.

They reached the aid station, went through triage. Mack was sent on a chopper to the 12th Evac Hospital in Cu Chi. They dug out his shrapnel without painkillers, including a piece that was within a quarter-inch of his jugular vein.

"I am lucky to be here," Mack said.

Imagine being Janet at home, not hearing from her husband in a long time but receiving a second Purple Heart in the mail. A few days later, Mack's own letter from the hospital arrived.

They sent Mack to a convalescence hospital for three weeks, then back to the States for a month leave. Then to Fort Carson, Colo., to play wargames in the snow for six months. Finally, with his time up, his service ended.

Mack and Janet decided to live in Minnesota to be near family, and he ended up with a career in ag lending, and later as a railroad conductor.

Seeing the movie "We Were Soldiers" in 2000 lit a fire for his PTSD and trying to find the guys he served with. He even helped prevent one of his buddies from taking his own life. The VA, in 2003, ruled Mack was 100 percent disabled.

The connections made with his fellow Bandidos helped him with the recollections needed to write his book "Drafted."

He is a member of Spicer American Legion Post 545, and he is a local veteran advocate. He leads efforts to place wreaths on veterans' graves in Kandiyohi County, and he was involved in bringing the Vietnam Wall replica to Willmar five years ago. He is involved at the Eagle's Healing Nest in Sauk Centre, and, in 2022, he was the featured speaker at the 13th annual Gold Star Family Retreat in Virginia Beach.

The evening's proceedings are on YouTube, and if you fast forward to 2 hours and 9 minutes, you'll find Mack giving a distinguished deliverance.

He is a member of the Order of St. Maurice. It is an honor bestowed by the National Infantry Association and signed by the Army chief of the infantry.

Its ranks include Gen. John Abizaid, Gen. Colin Powell, Gen. Matthew Ridgway and Marine Capt. Dale Dye.

Listening Post



Slayton Post 64 Commander Brad Pagel accepts donations for the American Veterans Traveling Tribute coming to Slayton Aug. 15-20, coinciding with the Murray County Fair. The display includes a Vietnam Veterans Memorial replica and the Cost of Freedom display panel. At left, Pagel accepts a \$500 check from Lake Wilson Post 285 Commander Jim Hunt. At center, Pagel accepts \$1,000 from the Avoca Post 576 Family and, at right, he accepts \$1,000 from Lynn Wichmann on behalf of Balaton Post 237.



Anoka American Legion Post 102 Commander Jared Sturgill, right, hands a \$4,000 check from his post to Twin Cities Honor Flight. Representing Twin Cities Honor Flight is Jerry Kyser, left. Kyser is a member of Aviation Post 511 in Crystal.



Arlington Post 250 sent in a picture of its flag disposal container at its post home. Post 250 collects about 600 flags for retirement each year.



Bloomington Post 550 donated \$10,000 to the Bloomington Kennedy Activities Foundation. This amount came in addition to regular donations through the year for the foundation's volunteers running bingo at the Sports Page in Bloomington on Monday evenings. Representing Post 550 is Gambling Manager Tim Engstrom, right.



Ron Rollins sent in a few photos from the 10th District Sweetheart Rally. It was held Feb. 11 at North Branch Post 85, exactly one week after the Department Sweetheart Rally. Above right are Tess and Al Davis. Tess is chairman of the Department Americanism Committee, and Al is a baseball advisor, treasurer of the Convention Corporation and chairman of the Resolutions Assignment Committee. He is a past national vice commander.



St. Joseph Post 328 Commander Dennis Weisbrich presents a 50-year membership certificate to Lee Eisenschenk. In the background of these three images are Dave and Mary Menzhuber, Mike Twedt, Marilyn Court, Scott Theisen and Rich and Elaine Schleper.



St. Joseph Post 328 Commander Dennis Weisbrich presents a 50-year membership certificate to Tom Kremer.



St. Joseph Post 328 Commander Dennis Weisbrich presents a certificate for 76 years of membership to Othmar Schmitz.

District commanders



1st District

Mary Hanson



On Feb. 18, the 1st District held a rally at Rochester Post 92. The guests included Sen. Steve Drzakowski from District 20 and Sen. Erin Murphy from District 64. Sen. Murphy is the chair of the State and Local Government and Veterans Committee. Sen. Nick Frenz from District 18 attended via Zoom. Each senator was given their own time to speak and answer questions. All three showed support on various veterans issues including e-tabs, gambling taxes, property tax exemption and an omnibus bill, among other issues.

The 1st District presented Abigail Erpelding a certificate and check for being the district's oratorical winner. We will wish her well as she advances.

The district is back in third place for membership at the time this was written. We are working hard to get back up there. Everybody needs to help to make this happen.

Editor's note: State Veterans Affairs Commissioner Larry Herke has said that the typical profile of a veteran in Minnesota that dies by suicide is as follows: "Older than 65, living north of I-94, facing serious health problems." This does not mean all are in that category, but it does mean veteran suicide is not a generational issue. The commissioner was saying we tend hear a lot more about the younger ones and a lot less about the older ones.

Mike Parry, 1st District vice commander and former legislator, did an excellent job moderating the Q&A. First District Vice Commander Nick Prestby spoke about his experience with "Be The One," part of the Legion's veteran suicide prevention efforts. His experience showed the suicide age at 37 and below. He wondered if this was a generational thing. A short discussion followed.



2nd District

Pam Krill



Greetings, American Legion Family! What a wonderful day and time to come together. This year has been a journey, and I have to say thank you to each and every one of you for your continued support. Your district continues to stay on top with membership, finding creative ways to talk to veterans, whether it's at work, out at social gatherings. We are doing it!

together. As we transition through the next few months and to the district convention in June, the one thing I would like everyone to do is: Ask!

You have my contact info: pjkkrill74@gmail.com, 757-771-6901. If you need information, if you need help, ask.

We are renewing, recruiting and retaining members and are staying on top at the Department of Minnesota. So a huge "thank you" to each one of you.

From the post commanders, adjutants, membership directors, committee chairs, we need to share. We must start communicating back and forth and do not be afraid to ask. As your commander, I have done my best this year, but we have to work together to get the word out and ask when we need assistance.

My goal this year was to get out to every post in our district and visit with as many members as I could. Sometimes we set our expectations a little too high, and do not realize that may not be attainable.

I am looking forward to the next several months. Let's continue to push with membership. Stay strong and focused. Share your ideas, thoughts and concerns, and I will do my best to work with you to find a solution to make things better.

I can say, I have done my best and know my efforts are strong. I may not make it to every post, but I have had the opportunity to visit with members from at least 26 posts around our district. Whether it's a post meeting, activities or events in an area and multiple posts are present, at department events, other veterans events and even over emails with members who are receiving communications and responding to messages, I will keep responding.

Every leader should be ready to mentor, provide guidance and constructive feedback, be available to answer questions and be ready to pass the torch to our future leaders. We are developing our organization into our future leaders, be ready to share, knowledge is powerful, but not very useful if we do not share.

One thing I have learned is communication is key, but I also have learned we all need to work

there when called upon to assist our veterans, our community's needs and the betterment and education of our



3rd District

Gary Richardson



As we all prepare for the testimonials, rallies and upcoming conventions, let us not forget our purpose for being — our commitment to our communities, youth and veterans.

"Be The One" is not just a slogan; it's a commitment to be

youth.

Every Legion member has recited or at least knows the Preamble to our Legion Constitution that states what we associate ourselves together for.

We are an all-volunteer organization and as such need to remember that no one is here for the pay or the recognition, but we have committed ourselves for no other purpose but our No. 1 mission: to help our fellow veterans.

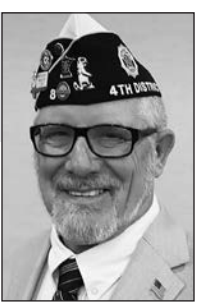
As you prepare to complete this year's obligations to the community, state and nation, remember the oath you took to become a member of this great organization and, most of all, remember as Gen. Jimmy Doolittle stated: "There's nothing stronger than the heart of a volunteer."

I have the utmost respect for everything that you all do! Until next month, stay safe and continued success!



4th District

David Dahl



What is it going to take to get new members involved in our posts? We must help them find activities which interest them. These may not be the same old programs we have been doing for years. Help our new members to get involved!

I encourage every member of The American Legion to find American Legion programs that you can feel passionate about. Participation in these programs will benefit you, other veterans and people (especially youth) from your community.

The brochure "Why You Should Belong" provides an overview of the Legion's Four Pillars and gives examples of programs which turn the ideals of the Four Pillars into day-to-day reality.

Another good overview of the programs of the American Legion Family is the online Basic Training course, with a section on the history of The American Legion plus a section for each of the Four Pillars. Each

of these offers ways which American Legion Family members can advance our values and services in our communities.

It takes less than two hours to complete. To enroll in the Basic Training course, you will need your own personal account on myLegion.org. Wear proudly your Basic Training Graduate pin!

Members who aspire to serve in leadership positions should plan to attend Legion College. There is a Department of Minnesota Legion College (mnlegion.org/legion-college/) and a National Legion College (legion.org/alei/). A prerequisite to enroll is completion of the Basic Training course.

What are you doing to help The American Legion serve veterans and serve our communities?



5th District

Lynne Nottage



A typical winter in Minnesota, as I write this, we are expecting a four-day snowstorm. Even with that coming we are working hard to meet our membership goals and set up the 5th District for transition into the new year for the new commander.

We here in the 5th are struggling. We have good people working in our district, but we could use some new people to help. We are searching for people to take on some positions. We are searching for new ideas.

If you know of anyone who

may be interested, please bring them to our next meeting and introduce them. We need officers, executive board members and committee chairs.

We have some great mentors in the 5th who will help with the transition. As for the membership, let's push to reach our goals. If you need any help at your post, or individually as a Legion member, please contact me or one of our officers. We will be there for you.



6th District

Karen O'Bar



Hello, my Legion Family. Things are starting to pick up since the Sweetheart Rally in February. I did miss this rally but the 6th District was well-represented.

On Feb. 11 we had our 6th District Mid-Winter Conference in Ironton. We had a wonderful turnout. Lots of information was put out. Department Commander Jennifer Havlick was able to attend.

Zimmerman Post 560 went above and beyond by donating \$5,000 to my two Commander's Projects. On a personal note, I

received a guitar from my Historian Susan Edwards to help me along with my Guitars for Heroes project. I'm truly blessed to call you all my family.

On Feb. 13, I attended the Morrison County Council in Little Falls. The commander always holds a good meeting.

On Feb. 19, we had our 6th District Executive Board at St. Augusta Post 621. Changes are coming down to help out our

vice commanders and County Council commanders.

March 15 is The American Legion birthday. I hope some of you have special events at your post to celebrate.

On April 15, we have the Department Appreciation Rally at New Prague Post 45 followed by the National Commander's Tour. He will be in the 6th District on Wednesday, April 19. He will be at Aitkin Post 86 for breakfast, then Hackensack Post 202 for lunch and Ironton Post 433 for supper. (See Page 7.) On



7th District

Karen Welander



How are you getting the word out on the work your post is accomplishing? Are you advertising in the local paper?

Legion Family, how do you find information on the events happening at your post or a neighboring post?

If your post doesn't have a website or Facebook page, you should look into developing one. These are powerful tools to keep you in touch with your post and community.

Our young veterans use social media to stay connected in their world. Facebook is widely used, and this is where our young veterans are communicating and searching to

Thursday, April 20, he is at Underwood Post 489 for breakfast followed by Long Prairie Post 12 for noon lunch. Please make sure you call the posts for more information or if you plan to attend.

April 21-22 is Minnesota Legion College held at Camp Ripley. As of right now, I believe we have two Legion members from the 6th District signed up.

Camp Ripley will be having their retirement fair on April 20. Lots of great information will be put out. It's a good morning event.

find what is happening around them.

If we want these young veterans to join us, we better change with the times or we will be left behind. It is amazing the power we hold in our hand that find directions, happenings and buy stuff.

Take a hard look at having a post website or Facebook page to get your story out. You do need to check frequently that it is current. Ask a veteran to join and the Legion Family will grow. Remember those spouses can join also.



8th District

Larry Pocrnich



Good day, veterans. It seems like I just finished a piece for the Legionnaire. Time seems to go by quickly. The time has come again to start contacting students for the Legion programs.

The scholarships, Boy Scouts, Girls State and Boys State. If you know of students for these programs, contact your local post and sign the students up. We need the students to attend, if the post has no funds let department know and they may have funds to send the students. These programs have a large impact on their future lives.

The 8th district is holding fifth

place. I would like it if the 8th could get to at least second. Just a little push of the ones who have not paid their 2024 dues. There are still some in Post 1982 to bring into a local post also.

In May, we will be voting on officers in the Legion. Learn what the Legion does for veterans and become an officer. Younger veterans are encouraged to attend.

Thank you for volunteering in the Legion.



10th District

William Gordon



Are you dressed? The answer to this question is something I learned from members of the Legion who have been in far longer than I.

It means, "Are you carrying a membership form in your wallet?"

I have found by doing so, it helps to recruit members. The form takes up extraordinarily little room.

I carry membership forms for the Legion Post, Auxiliary and the SAL. Yes, you can sign up new members for any one of these organizations and for any post. When a new member fills out the form, I collect my post dues amount.

I also tell them that the post they signed up for maybe cheaper or more expensive. So long as you are upfront, most folks will be on board. I look up the post

address online if it's not my post and mail it off to the membership officer of that post or the adjutant.

If we all work together, we can increase our membership. What's that saying? "Many hands make light work."

Summer will be here very soon, let's reach out to our community and get the names of the students attending Legionville Safety Education Center this year.

Remember, they do not have to be dependents of veterans; any child can go between ages 10 to 13 years old.

You can find out all the

Continued on Page 13

Consider donating to Minn. Legion's Brain Sciences

Local posts may use gambling funds to support crucial research

By Ray Eiden

MINNEAPOLIS — Dr. Apostolos Georgopoulos, director of the University of Minnesota Brain Sciences Center, is doing research on seven current projects at the center.

The endowed University of Minnesota Brain Sciences Chair was created through the generosity of over \$1 million from Minnesota American Legion, Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion in the late 1980s. That donation was matched by the university, then the research chair was dedicated in 1991 at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center.

The latest project is Women Veterans Healthy Brain Aging. This project examines how the brain changes with age for healthy women who are 28-106 years old.

Other projects include: Gulf War illness (GWI), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), mild traumatic brain injury (mTBI), neurological diseases (Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, multiple sclerosis, and amyotrophic latera sclerosis), cancer and addiction.

He has also done research studying "chronic pain" with a blue light at the base of the spinal cord.

There was a discovery and development of novel, nonaddictive medications for chronic pain replacing the use of opioids.

In 1991, Georgopoulos was recruited as chair holder from the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and appointed director of the Brain Science Center at the Minneapolis VAMC, a post he still holds today.

The American Legion Family Brain Science Foundation Committee supports his research, and at our annual meeting we

provide \$1,000 scholarships to recipients selected by him.

We also donated \$30,000 for anthrax and other studies. The members on the committee are: President Ray Eiden, Vice President Mike Shaffer, Secretary/Treasurer Rosemary Niesen, Joseph Niesen, Tim



Dr. Apostolos Georgopoulos

Sanken, John Weiss, Barbara Hopewell, Kat Benjamin, Anna Eells, Bob Locker and Dan Ludwig.

Any donations to the Brain Science Foundation would be greatly appreciated. Donations can be mailed to: Minnesota American Legion, 20 W. 12th St., Room 300A, St. Paul, MN 55155. Checks should be made out to "Brain Science Foundation."

Online donations will be available soon. It will be under the "Donate" button on mnlegion.org. Keep an eye out for it. Gambling money may be used for this donation.

Ray Eiden, president of the American Legion Family Brain Sciences Foundation Committee, is a past Minnesota American Legion vice commander for the 4th and 5th districts.



Perception can be deception

By Mike Ash

We hear it far too often when we ask, "What is The American Legion?"

Too often, the answer is: "A bar."

We know that too many veterans believe exactly that — and when that answer comes from our own members, we may be closer to solving our shrinking membership.

When we are perceived to be a bar, then why would anyone want to pay \$35-\$50 a year to be a member? We need to educate our members, all our members, on the programs of our outstanding organization.

That's not always so easy. Under our Four Pillars are 30-plus programs, some (but not all) of which could be relevant to the individual you're speaking to. You have to attempt to understand where that individual is coming from and try to hone in on those programs that will seal the deal. And it gets less easy.

When we're explaining our 100-plus years in a short elevator speech, we might mention the Legion's influence in establishing the Veterans Administration, getting the G.I. Bill to be a reality, up to our leveraging our membership numbers to get the PACT Act passed or even statewide veterans courts here in Minnesota.

Because of the thought process of our younger generation, you might be surprised by the response of "What have you done for me lately?" even though the PACT Act was passed last year! Another response heard frequently is "What can you do for me?" If you're prepared for these possibilities, you can have a pocketed response ready.

How do you get the information you need to show that The American Legion is NOT a bar?

The first step would be to take the free Basic Training course offered by The American Legion at legion.org/alei. Then find a mentor, someone from your post or district, who is willing to talk with you on what the Legion means to them and on programs that are of interest to you. You could also sign up for Minnesota Legion College in April or October, a great tool to make you into a leader — and please remember, "leader" is not a title. You don't have to be an officer or committee chair to be a leader, though our posts and districts can benefit greatly by having true leaders in those positions.

So, let's all work to end the perception of The American Legion being a bar and that deception leading our great organization dwindling in numbers.

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS



St. Joseph Post 328 Commander Dennis Weisbrich stands with guest speaker West Stearns County Vice Commander Jeff Thompson at a membership dinner.

Why does the Legion often talk membership?

Membership Moment

Linda Dvorak



This past month I had an email from a concerned member wondering why we don't emphasize our programs more and often talk membership. This is a very good question and one that deserves an answer.

First of all, as we all know, The American Legion has a very strong voice in Congress. The reason we have such a strong voice is because of the number of members we have. Who do you think Congress will listen to, a group with 100 members, a group with 75,000 members or a group with 2 million members? This is why our membership is important.

Equally important are our programs. We have so many valuable programs — Boys State, Oratorical, Scouting, Baseball, Junior Shooting Sports (just to name a few). We need to emphasize our programs to attract new members and renew the members already in our posts, and bring back the ones that have expired.

I did a little research and our numbers are dwindling at an alarming rate. As of Feb 10, 2023, the number of members in the state of Minnesota has gone down by 17,622 members since the same date in 2015. In 2019, the Legion Act was signed into law. The number of eligible members has grown, but our numbers are not reflecting this. Are you getting out there and talking to these individuals?

The answer to the concerned member, in order for our organization to survive, we need members, but to get members we need to talk about our programs, so get out there and recruit!

Linda Dvorak of New Prague Post 45 is the membership director for the Department of Minnesota.

It's the time of year juniors sign up for Boys State

Minn. Boys State

Neil Kruse



Boys who are juniors in high school have been registering for the upcoming Minnesota Boys State session at St. John's University, scheduled for June 11-17. Those still desiring a spot in this year's class can do so at mnboysstate.org.

If your post hasn't a representative, contact those in your area who are Boys State alumni and encourage them to visit with potential candidates at your high schools. A large number of future leaders will come from this group. Our goal is to help them be the best they can be.

Continuing with a run-down of the week's activities: After the Sunday and Monday city elections and meetings, Tuesday begins the process of county government, as well as party caucuses and conventions.

The young men develop a platform and put forth candidates for offices. Wednesday are the state party conventions, finalizing the platform and slate of candidates for state offices.

On Thursday, the state Legislature begins its work, continuing through Friday. County government is also acting on necessary business.

That evening the parties put forth their candidates for state office, as well as their ideas to improve their government. The election for state offices takes place Friday morning, with the governor able to sign or veto bills passed by the House of Representatives and Senate.

The week is valuable to all involved. The young men learn how government works, as well as much about themselves and others. If you have an interest in being a counselor, please contact Rock County Administrator Kyle Oldre.

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

District Commanders

Continued from Page 12

Legion Family Testimonial Dinner at VFW Post 9625 in Coon Rapids.

You don't want to miss these events; they are filled with great times, laughter and friends. Oh, and don't forget to register for our district convention in June 1, 2 and 3.

The Riders will hold their convention on the 1st of June, and we will hold our banquet on the evening of the 2nd and our convention on the 3rd.

I hope to see all the 10th District officers and chairpersons at the dinner.

Minn. lawmakers who served in U.S. military

Please contact your local officials about being part of your local Legion post.

Name	Branch	Residence	Legion Post and Status
Gov. Tim Walz	Army NG	St. Paul	Mankato Post 11 (expired)
Sen. Bruce Anderson	Navy, NG, AF Reserves	Buffalo	Buffalo Post 270
Sen. Cal Bahr	Army	East Bethel	not a member
Sen. Zach Duckworth	NG	Lakeville	Apple Valley Post 1776
Sen. Glenn Gruenhagen	Marines	Glencoe	Glencoe Post 95
Sen. Jeff Howe	Navy, NG	Rockville	Waite Park Post 428 (expired)
Sen. John Jasinski	Navy	Faribault	Faribault Post 43 (expired)
Sen. Andrew Lang	NG	Olivia	Olivia Post 186 (expired)
Sen. Nicole Mitchell	Air NG	Woodbury	not a member
Rep. Matt Bliss	Navy	Pennington	Bemidji Post 14 (expired)
Rep. Matt Grossell	Army	Clearbrook	not a member
Rep. Shane Hudella	Army	Hastings	Hastings Post 47 (expired)
Rep. Jerry Newton	Army	Coon Rapids	Coon Rapids Post 334 (expired)
Rep. Bjorn Olson	Army Res.	Fairmont	not a member
Rep. Brian Pfarr	NG	Le Sueur	Le Sueur Post 55
Rep. Roger Skraba	Army	Ely	Ely Post 248
Rep. Mark Wiens	Army	Lake Elmo	Windom Post 206 (expired)



JOIN THE SAL TODAY





The Auxiliary Bulletin

No. 23 Vol. 8

President Mary Kuperus • Treasurer Cathy Radil, cathy@mnala.org

Dept. HQ: Veterans Service Building, St. Paul, MN 55155

651-224-7634

March 2023

National President's Tour of Minnesota

National President Vickie Koutz of Boonville, Ind., Unit 200 visits Minnesota in May.

Location	Meal	Time	Contact
Monday, May 1			
Redwood Falls Post 38 cost: \$18	dinner social	6 p.m. 5 p.m.	507-828-7657, jmertens3868@gmail.com register by April 21
Tuesday, May 2			
Spicer Post 545 cost \$20	lunch social	12:30 p.m. noon	320-295-6824, jodie1562@yahoo.com register by April 21
Brainerd Post 255 cost: \$20	dinner social	6 p.m. 5:30 p.m.	218-821-6575, brendashogren@icloud.com register by April 21
Wednesday, May 3			
Monticello Post 260 cost: \$15	lunch social	12:30 p.m. noon	612-483-4076, RobinLDorf@yahoo.com register by April 26
North St. Paul Post 39 cost \$20	dinner social	6 p.m. 5 p.m.	651-269-1199, flipflops55025@gmail.com register by April 21



Lincoln's Tomb is the final resting place for U.S. President Abraham Lincoln, wife Mary and three of their sons. It is at Oak Ridge Cemetery in Springfield, Ill. Department President Mary Kuperus and Membership Chairman Sandy Wersal participated in the 89th annual National American Legion Pilgrimage to Lincoln's Tomb on Feb. 12.

Let's be there for National President's Tour

Welcome to March and hopefully spring!
Happy 104th birthday to The American Legion! Celebrate the rich history and heritage that this organization has built to make our nation a better place for our veterans, military, and to remember those who have sacrificed some, or all, in defense of our nation. Thank you!

The Department of Minnesota American Legion Auxiliary would like to welcome Christie Avant as the new department executive secretary. Christie will begin on March 13. She and her husband, Lyle, will move back to Minnesota from Des Moines. What an awesome turn out at the Sweetheart Membership Rally on Feb. 4 at Osseo-Maple Grove Post 172! American Legion National Vice Commander Glen Wahus and National Chaplain Mark Antal attended and spoke. Thank you to all who came.

As I write this column, I am packing to leave for Springfield, Ill. I was so surprised to receive an invitation to attend the 89th annual National American Legion Pilgrimage to the Tomb of Abraham Lincoln. I will lay a wreath on behalf of the Department of Minnesota American Legion Family. American Legion Auxiliary Membership Chairman Sandy Wersal will travel with me.

I get to travel to more units

President's Column

Mary Kuperus



and districts in the next few weeks. I enjoy every minute of it! Visiting with members across this department is so exciting and informative of what goes on in their units, posts and districts.

National American Legion Auxiliary President Vickie Koutz will come to Minnesota on May 1-3. Information on opportunities to visit with her at stops along the tour is printed above. Reserve your spot. Also watch for it in the unit mailing.

Let's show our president that "Minnesota is Nice" and attend a lunch, dinner or both throughout the tour. Come and learn about her National President's Project — National Veterans Creative Arts Festival companions. Her project on companions is triple-tiered — money for a meal plan, travel and a separate hotel room, if needed, for non-family member companions. She is also working to raise awareness on our country's Prisoners of War and Missing in Action. Donations will be accepted along the way.

The 60th annual Department Junior Conference is scheduled for Saturday, April 15, in New Prague at The Park Ballroom, which is Post 45's home. Honorary Junior President Sydney

Borntrager would like to encourage all Junior members to attend. Please register by March 15.

The Department President's Project is raising funds for the three new veterans homes in Preston, Bemidji and Montevideo. The funds raised will go towards items for the meditation rooms, such as a movable altar, altar cloths, books for the library, music and technology, chairs, and wall paintings. Please send donations to the Department Office. Checks can be made out to "Department President's Project." Thank you all for any donations you are able to send.

As we "Serve and Honor Every Day," let's remember all veterans who have served our country at home and abroad. Thank you for all you do for our veterans!

Mary Kuperus of New London Unit 537 is the president of the American Legion Auxiliary Department of Minnesota. Her theme is "Serve and Honor Every Day."



Minnesota American Legion Auxiliary President Mary Kuperus places a wreath at Lincoln's Tomb on behalf of the Minnesota American Legion Family.



Minnesota American Legion Auxiliary President Mary Kuperus places a wreath at Lincoln's Tomb on behalf of the Minnesota American Legion Family.

Honest Abe

Minnesota Auxiliary President visits Lincoln's Tomb

By Mary Kuperus

SPRINGFIELD — For 89 years, Springfield Post 32 in Illinois has hosted the National American Legion Pilgrimage to Lincoln's Tomb. This pilgrimage takes place on the birthday of Abraham Lincoln, Feb. 12.

As president of the American Legion Auxiliary Department of Minnesota, I was so honored to attend and participate. Department Membership Chairman Sandy Wersal joined me on this adventure.

We stopped for the night in Galesburg, Ill. Wanting to support American Legions, we decided to go looking for the post home in Galesburg. We found the building that had once been the American Legion. We found out that the Legion had walked away from the building and new owners had opened up a barbecue place. After smelling the cooker outside, we decided to have something to eat. The brisket sandwiches were delicious!

Saturday morning, we drove in to Springfield and right to the Abraham Lincoln Museum. The first people we saw were

National President Vickie Koutz and Past National President Sharon Conaster.

This museum was a great place to learn about Lincoln and his family. Many artifacts are on display. The two shows we attended were very good. One was the "Ghosts of the Library" multimedia show, in which a "ghost" explains why libraries and museums collect original materials. This show highlighted specific topics on Lincoln and Illinois' rich history. The museum included a replica of the Lincoln family's life in Indiana from his younger years.

It was so much to look at, and I am sure I didn't see it all.

From the museum, we drove over to the only home Abraham Lincoln ever owned. He bought this home for \$1,200, plus a piece of land in 1844 after his marriage to Mary Todd in 1842.

Their first-born son was very young when they moved into their new home. Three more sons were born and raised, with one of them passing away. Lincoln was in this home when the Republican delegation offered him the opportunity to represent their party in the 1860

presidential race. The family had planned to return to this home after his term was over.

They did not. Abraham Lincoln was assassinated in 1865 at Ford's Theatre in Washington. His eldest son, Robert Lincoln, relinquished the family's ownership of the home 22 years later with a goal of increasing public access to this historic property.

A number of artifacts remain in the home for all visitors to see. Walking up the stairs in this home and holding on to the railing where Abraham Lincoln once walked gave me goose bumps. Thinking about what his life had been and what had changed after he left this house made me in awe of what the stories this house could tell.

We were able to tour the home and the grounds around it. Many houses around his home are managed by the National Park Service and are part of a Historical Site since 1972.

Saturday evening, we were invited to the American Legion Family Leadership Reception. National President Vickie Koutz, National SAL Commander Christopher Carlton and National Vice Commander

Continued on Page 15

It's good to know new brandmarks

By Brandi Christensen
Public Relations Chairman

As many of you have heard the American Legion Auxiliary now has two new brandmarks. (One is shown at the top of the page. The other is to the right.)

Now the Auxiliary Emblem is not going away as it is a part of our legacy. It's just another new look, and there are certain ways to use the brandmark and the emblem.

Here is a list. And to download and get more information please visit: legion.org/brand/aux



- Business cards, letterheads, emails
- Promotional fliers or events
- Awards
- Building signage

Emblem

- Uniforms
- Flags
- Financial documents
- Histories
- Internal manuals and guides
- Reports and resolutions
- Awards
- Building signage
- Formal government documents

Brandmark

- Events (Signs, tents, backdrops)
- Apparel
- Advertising
- Digital (social media, websites, PowerPoint slideshows, presentations, apps)
- Press releases

Endorsements

Ackerman endorsed for 1st vice

The Schwieger-Kahler Unit 522 of Northrop proudly endorses Judith "Judy" Ackerman for the office of 1st vice president for the Department of Minnesota in 2023-2024.

Ackerman is a 65-year member of the American Legion Auxiliary. She is eligible for membership through her father, George Schadt, a World War II Army veteran; her grandfather, William Langholz, a World War I Army veteran; and her brother, Bill Schadt, a Vietnam Marine veteran.

Ackerman is a third-generation Auxiliary member in a five-generation Auxiliary family (her grandmother to her granddaughters).

She has held the office of president for our unit for a number of years. Members appreciate her leadership, her mentoring and the way she educates on the programs of the American Legion Auxiliary.

She has held the following offices and chairmanships at the District level: president, 1st and

2nd vice president, Executive Committee for 2 years, Membership, Girl State, Junior Activities, Finance, Secretary/Treasurer, Americanism, Leadership, Legislative, Poppy and more.

Ackerman has given her time and talents to the Department of Minnesota by holding several chairmanships that include: Junior Activities, Unit Development and Revitalization, historian, Public Relations, chaplain, Membership, Strategic Planning Committee, Finance Committee.

She presently is the legislative chairman.

She has been employed as a medical coding specialist since 1992. She works for Park Nicollet Home Care as the home health/hospice coding team lead since 2015.

Ackerman belongs to several medical coding organizations:



Judith Ackerman

AAPC, AHIMA and BMSCC. She was one of the charter members of the Owatonna AAPC chapter, starting it in 2005. She has held many offices for the chapter throughout the years.

She was selected to be a member of the AAPC National Advisory Board in 2007-2009. She holds six coding credentials from these three organizations.

Ackerman has exhibited her leadership skills through her employment, the coding organizations and the American Legion Auxiliary.

She and her late husband, Jim, were married for 32 years and had three daughters. Jim was also a member of the Sons of The American Legion.

The members of Unit 522 know that Ackerman will represent the members of Minnesota well as 1st vice president of the Department of Minnesota.

Meet the new executive secretary

ST. PAUL —The American Legion Auxiliary Department of Minnesota announced on Feb. 2, via its Facebook page, that it had hired Christie Avant as the executive secretary. The position had been vacant since last summer.

Avant is a member at-large of the Department of Iowa and resides in the Des Moines area. She is eligible for membership in the American Legion Auxiliary through her father, Harvey Kurth Sr., U.S. Army Korean War (deceased), and husband, Lyle Avant, U.S. Air Force, Grenada.

Avant has many years of experience working in non-profit organizations. Her current

position is with the Christian Opportunity Center in Des Moines, where she has worked since 2016.

Before moving to Iowa, she was the executive director with the Willmar Area Food Shelf for 10 years.

Avant has experience as a sales director at the Holiday Inn in Willmar and a meeting planner for Target in Minneapolis.

She served as the 2nd vice president, 1st vice president, and 7th District American Legion Auxiliary president in 2009-2010.



Christie Avant

Avant and her husband are excited to be moving back to Minnesota after living in Iowa for the past six years. They enjoy fishing and hunting and spending time with their family. She is the stepmom to two daughters and one son-in-law. Her "Overly Loved" (spoiled) girl is her five-year-old mixed terrier, Xena.

Avant looks forward to working with the members of the American Legion Auxiliary and the Minnesota American Legion Family and most excited to reconnect with friends.

March is Community Service Month

By Robin Dorf
Community Service Chairman

The American Legion Auxiliary community service program has been a major outreach program in our communities since 1926. Our units have demonstrated our commitment in supporting our communities, state, and throughout our nation through volunteerism. By being visible it shows who we are, what we do, and why we matter while serving others.

Emphasis has been made this past year to focus on new or revitalized events that include our veterans, military and their families, children, and seniors in our communities. Suggested focus on health, recreation, safety and beautification projects.

Another focus is to encourage units to collaborate and organize a community council in your community to bring local organizations together to work for the betterment of their community.

Don't forget to ask for their cooperation with your unit projects, as well.

This will help with needs within the community, more volunteers for bigger projects, visibility in our communities as a link to the veteran community and new membership opportunities to recruit — and new service projects.

The members of the Department of Minnesota were busy volunteering for the 9/11 National Day of Service and Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service. Many units implemented new projects for these two days of service and are planning on continuing.

April is National Volunteer Month, and we should always be celebrating our members for their service, but do you have someone working with your unit that is not eligible for membership and helps your unit.

Recognize their volunteerism with a card or acknowledgement that we appreciate them partnering with us.



Department President Mary Kuperus visits the 9th District Mid-Winter Conference in Bagley on Jan. 14. From left are 9th District 2nd Vice President Donna Rae Jacobson, 1st Vice President Becky Olson, Kuperus, President Cheryl Grover and Secretary Dennis Henkemeyer, who is a past American Legion department commander.

Feb. 21, 2023, Membership:

DISTRICT	# of Units	Goal	Period Gain	Membership To Date	Percent of Goal
One	48	3,810	46	3,119	81.86%
Two	72	3,833	13	3,066	79.99%
Three	46	3,797	35	3,144	82.80%
Four	7	570	6	415	72.81%
Five	7	515	1	388	75.34%
Six	62	4,991	22	4,132	82.79%
Seven	57	2,938	34	2,393	81.45%
Eight	23	1,237	0	998	80.68%
Nine	47	3,305	29	2,725	82.45%
Ten	43	3,758	24	2,895	77.04%
1982 Dept	1	203	3	221	108.87%
District Totals:	413	28,957	213	23,496	81.14%

8 departments attended pilgrimage

Continued from Page 14
Patricia A. Harris was in attendance and brought greetings to us all.

Later, the department presidents and their guest in attendance were able to have dinner together. It was nice to be able to visit with members from other departments.

Sunday morning brought breakfast and more greetings. The pilgrimage to Abraham Lincoln's Tomb was by car and bus. We were told it could be claustrophobic in the tomb, so be prepared.

What a beautiful building! Each department involved,

along with other dignitaries, had a wreath to lay alongside Abraham Lincoln's final resting place. These dignitaries included our National American Legion Family leadership, Lorene Bartos, Le Chapeau Nationale 8 & 40, the Illinois American Legion Family Department leadership, the Illinois 8 & 40 and 40 & 8 leadership, the mayor of Springfield and two state senators.

After the pilgrimage, we all went back to the hotel for lunch and a program with remarks from many leadership attendees.

I was so honored to represent

the Department of Minnesota American Legion Family at this event. I am so glad that Sandy and I were able to attend. We made new friends and were able to connect with friends we had met before.

My hope is that when the Department of Minnesota leadership are invited again next year, that all are able to attend. Eight departments attended this 89th annual pilgrimage. You do not have to participate in the pilgrimage to visit the museum, his home and his tomb.

If you are ever near Springfield, please stop and tour. You will be glad you did.



The membership theme is Paul Bunyan, and membership chairs, when available, from each district stood at the front of the banquet hall at the Sweetheart Rally at Osseo-Maple Grove Post 172. From left are Cheryl Grover of the 9th District, Wanda Prescher of the 1st District, Sharon Voltz of the 8th District and Hope Wilson of the 7th District.



National Vice Commander Glenn Wahus and President Mary Kuperus exchange gifts.



Robin Dorf of Monticello Unit 260 listens to the Legion's national chaplain speak.



Department Honorary Junior President Sydney Bortrager smiles and laughs during her time at the Sweetheart Rally on Feb. 4. She is from Trimont Unit 373.

AMERICAN LEGION

Geoffrey A. Forbes, MS

VA Accredited Claims Agent ★ U.S. Army Veteran
Mobile: 612-251-9681 ★ gforbes@vabenefitspro.com



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(Appeal services are offered at no cost by VSOs.)

A Freedom Rock is coming to Freeborn County

By Sarah Stultz
Albert Lea Tribune

ALBERT LEA — Freeborn County's Freedom Rock is one step closer to reality.

Crews from Dean's Towing in November hauled the 28,000-pound boulder into town that next summer will be transformed into the Freedom Rock honoring veterans and fallen military members.

The boulder was set in place outside the north side of the Freeborn County Courthouse with a large crane and crews from Meyerhofer Crane & Rigging Services.

Albert Lea American Legion Riders Chapter 56 member Scott Kallberg said the 10-foot-tall and 6-foot-wide boulder was found north of Albert Lea between Good Samaritan Society and the shooting range to the north and will be painted by artist Ray "Bubba" Sorensen II in July.

Freedom Rocks originated in Iowa by Sorensen with a 12-foot-tall boulder in southwest Iowa near the small town of Menlo.

In 1999, Sorensen painted a simple "thank you" to veterans on the boulder and has continued to honor veterans by donating his time for new murals on this boulder every May for Memorial Day, drawing in people each year to see what he has created. To expand this message further, Sorensen felt compelled to do more and set out in hopes of every county in



American Legion Riders Chapter 56 in Albert Lea are spearheading the Freedom Rock project. The rock, above, presently sits on the lawn of the Freeborn County Courthouse. The boulder was donated by Roberta Ernston.

Iowa having a Freedom Rock of their own. He has also painted a handful in Minnesota, including Kasson.

Kallberg said Legion Riders Chapter 56 made a \$2,000 down-payment to lock-in Sorensen for July and seek to raise another \$12,000 to \$13,000 to pay for Sorensen's travel and expenses. They may seek to raise closer to \$20,000 to include funds for a possible gazebo or other

structure that can help protect the rock from the elements.

He said already he has been pleased with the response from the community, including the two companies that donated their time and efforts to bring the boulder to town and set it up outside the courthouse. He also recognized Peterson Excavating and D&K Demolition & Excavation.

"We've had so much help

from people donating," Kallberg said. "The community comes together for this stuff."

The Riders continue to gather ideas for what will be painted on the boulder, though Kallberg said they know they want to honor as many people as they can. He said there will definitely be some type of recognition for Vietnam veterans, as well as Chief Warrant Officer Corey Goodnature, an area native who was killed in 2005 when his company's helicopter was shot down in Afghanistan while attempting to rescue missing U.S. Navy SEALs.

Kallberg said he and three other Riders were touring some of the Freedom Rocks in Iowa when they realized while in Alba, Iowa, that they should bring one to Freeborn County, too.

They reached out to Legion Rider Ted Herman, the 5th District Freeborn County commissioner, who helped bring the idea to the county board, and it was ultimately approved.

"Everything has come together at the right time," said Legion Rider Bruce Camerer.

"We're doing it to bring out awareness for veterans," Kallberg said.

Anyone who wishes to contribute to the cause can bring their donation to the American Legion. Kallberg said they hope to set up a fund under the Albert Lea Freeborn County Chamber Foundation to allow people to give tax-deductible donations.

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