



National commander coming to Vets Day on the Hill

Tour begins at Moorhead Post 21

ST. PAUL — The national commander of The American Legion is coming to Veterans Day on the Hill April 17.

American Legion Department of Minnesota Adjutant Mike Maxa coordinates the National Commander's Tour with posts across the state. This year, the tour runs from northwest Minnesota through the center of the state and ends in

the Cities. It stops in the 3rd, 4th, 7th, 9th and 10th districts.

The tour delivers National Commander Daniel J. Seehafer to Veterans Day on the Hill in St. Paul. Seehafer is slated to speak at the annual legislative gathering. The event launches from the St. Paul Armory and finishes at the Minnesota State Capitol. It brings together about 600 to 700 veterans from

several veterans organizations.

"Never before has the schedules for the National Commander's Tour and Veterans Day on the Hill matched up," Maxa said. "We already know Seehafer likes to talk about legislative matters, so it couldn't be a better combo. It will be good for Legion and non-Legion veterans to hear what we are about — helping veterans and strengthening America," Maxa said.

Seehafer is a Midwest guy, too, said Department Membership Director Pam Krill.

"We haven't had a national commander from our neck of the woods since Denise Rohan served back in 2017-18. She's from Wisconsin, too," Krill said. "Before that, we had Michael Helm of Nebraska in 2014-15."

Seehafer's home post is Post 157 in Horicon, Wis. He is a past American Legion national

chaplain and a past Department of Wisconsin commander.

Maxa, Krill, Department Commander Paul Hassing and Communications Director Tim Engstrom will depart from Bloomington Post 550 on Sunday, April 14, in the Post 550 shuttle bus, and arrive at Hector International Airport in Fargo to pick up Seehafer and Commander's Aide Mike Rohan. He is the husband of Past National

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Daniel J. Seehafer

Minn.'s PTSD doctor

Not just anyone can have PTSD; there must be certain stressors

By Tim Engstrom

APPLE VALLEY — Rarely mentioned by historians is that Socrates was an 11 Bravo.

The great founder of Western philosophy served as a hoplite in the Athenian army in the Peloponnesian War — at the siege of Potidaea in 432 BC, assault on Delium in 424 BC and the defense of Amphipolis BC in 422 BC. Hoplites were foot soldiers armed with spears and shields, commonly fighting in close formation. They were the infantry.

When he came home, Socrates walked the streets asking questions, noted Steve Lansing, a Rochester-based psychologist with Empower Treatment Center and a Vietnam veteran. He is a member of Minnesota Post 1982, the at-large post.

A man likely experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder questioned the world around him — and eventually attracted youthful followers eager for his knowledge. This led to what today is called the Socratic Method, a means of learning where the teacher asks probing questions to explore a student's views and opinions. Ironically, Socratic dialogue can serve as



Dr. Steve Lansing speaks at the 3rd District Mid-Winter Conference at Apple Valley Post 1776 on Jan. 27. He shared several slides about post-traumatic stress disorder and the way it affects the mind.

cognitive therapy for PTSD.

Lansing gives a compelling presentation on PTSD. He gave one at the 3rd District Mid-Winter Conference in Apple Valley.

Lansing said he struggled with college and joined the Air Force. He spent two years in Vietnam with the 7th Air Force doing intelligence analysis.

On the domestic flight home, a flight attendant dumped a drink on him after learning he served in Vietnam. She called him a "baby killer."

After, Lansing decided to go back to college, finished in three years, then went to grad school. In 1986, he moved to Rochester from Iowa to run a suicide hotline. He found one in three of the

callers were veterans. He learned that many Vietnam veterans were dealing with untreated PTSD.

"Seventy percent of the people in prison in the 1970s were Vietnam vets," he said.

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington was dedicated in 1982,

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Bill lets counties help fund Vets Day

ST. PAUL — It's early in the short legislative session, and The American Legion already is working on getting laws passed that benefit veterans.

One of the first ones up was allowing counties to allocate \$300 for Veterans Day observances, just like they already do for Memorial Day ceremonies. The bill, House File 3677 authored by state Rep. Steve Elkins of Bloomington, does not mandate it.

Minnesota American Legion Legislative Chairwoman Kristy Janigo testified Feb. 19 before the House Veterans Affairs Committee: "County Veteran Service Officers like our Association President Josh Beninga of Lac qui Parle County are usually the agents who administer this funding to their local Legion, VFW or other congressionally chartered veterans service organizations. And our CVSOs often are honored guests or speakers at these observances. It strengthens the relationships between veterans in the service organizations and county government, which increases their chances of seeking out assistance through the federal VA, state Department of

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Sarah Stultz/Albert Lea Tribune
Lupe Gasca of Albert Lea turns 102 on March 12. He has lived in Albert Lea since he was 2 months old.

One of the final Tarawa veterans recalls battle from 80 years ago

By Patrick Reed
Leatherneck Magazine

ALBERT LEA — On a hot November day 80 years ago, 21-year-old Pfc. Lupe Gasca found himself on the other side of the world, wading through a chest deep lagoon with Japanese bullets hitting the water to his left and right. Now 101 years old, the lifelong resident of Albert Lea recalls his involvement in one of the defining battles of World War II — the Battle of Tarawa.

Gasca was born in Texas, but moved to Albert Lea in May 1922, when he

was just 2 months old. His parents were farmers, moving to town to obtain work harvesting sugarbeets. They stayed and continued on in the town as tenant farmers. Gasca's young life was characterized by hard work — he grew up during the depression, worked as a farmhand and went to school on a part-time basis. But he always loved to visit the library and was particularly interested in its collection of images from the First World War.

When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, Gasca was working part-time as a store clerk. He knew his name would

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Mike Petersen
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First responders have families, too

Editor's note: The following is a statement the Department of Minnesota provided to the statewide media after the deaths of three first responders.

Members of The American Legion across Minnesota and across the nation express their deep gratitude and appreciation for the difficult work men and women in the first responder fields of law enforcement, firefighting and emergency medicine do day in and day out. They save lives and make our communities safer.

We share the sorrow felt over the senseless loss of life in Burnsville on Sunday, Feb. 18. Our thoughts and prayers — and

our hearts — go out to the two officers and one firefighter-paramedic who died responding to a domestic violence call early that morning.

Minnesota will miss Officer Paul Elmstrand, Officer Matthew Ruge and Firefighter-paramedic Adam Finseth. They are gone far, far too soon. Elmstrand and Ruge were 27. Finseth was 40.

In this day and age of social media, culture wars and divisive political rhetoric, it can be easy to lose compassion and kindness for others — especially our first responders. They are out in the public eye daily for all to scrutinize. We ask people to remember our shared humanity, our basic

decency. Let's remember first responders have families they deserve to come home to, just like everyone else. They have loved ones. They have lives, dreams, goals. Many of them, like Finseth, are military veterans and served our country.

Members of The American Legion, at each meeting, state the Preamble to the American Legion Constitution. The statement includes the phrase "to maintain law and order."

Thank you, first responders, for helping to fulfill The American Legion's principles.

Paul Hassing
Department Commander

Endorsements

Veronica Fernlund has been endorsed by Silver Star Post 428 in Waite Park for Department Vice Commander for the 2024-2025 year. Fernlund served in the Air Force from 1986 to 1991. She is a 22-year Paid Up for Life member at Post 428 and served as Post Commander and is currently the Historian.

On the 6th District level, she served as District Commander, Vice Commander, County Council Vice Commander, held several chairmanships and is currently the Historian and National Security Chairman.

On the Department of Minnesota level, Fernlund is currently the Children & Youth Vice Chairman and previously served on the Credentials Committee, was instrumental on past Training Committees and a recipient of the James Oldenburg Children & Youth Award. Fernlund has been a delegate to several national conventions and has taken national training courses.

Fernlund is a member of American Legion Auxiliary Unit 428, DAV Chapter 290, 40/8 Voiture 415, Past President of St. Cloud

Area Metrovets and currently the 1st Vice President actively organizing annual patriotic community events.

She and her husband, Tom (Air Force veteran and Past Department Commander), have been married 34 years and have two sons, two daughters and two grandsons. Daughter Kristen is a schoolteacher, daughter Kaitlin is currently serving in the Navy, son Michael is serving in the Minnesota Army National Guard and son Chris is serving in the Air Force.



Veronica Fernlund

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National HQ offers 3-year memberships

INDIANAPOLIS — More than 8,000 American Legion members have taken advantage of the new multiyear

membership option for renewals and new joins. Ready to lock-in a three year membership before the national per-capita dues increase goes into effect? It's easy. Here's how:

- For renewals, visit legion.org/renew and select the three-year membership option.
- For new joins, visit legion.org/join and select the three-year membership option.

"We have wanted this multiyear option for our members, and now that it's here, the excitement for it shows in the number of Legionnaires who have taken advantage of it," National Membership & Post Activities Committee Chairman Matt Jabaut said. "The multiyear membership option saves members from receiving renewal notices every year, and it's another great benefit to being an American Legion member."

The American Legion's national per-capita dues will increase from \$18.50 to \$23.50 starting with the 2025 membership year. The \$5 increase will go into effect July 1, 2024.

The Department of Minnesota

is expected to increase dues by \$3 at its convention this summer. Some districts are going up \$1 or \$2.

The multiyear memberships only are available from the national website, legion.org.

Vets home bridge closes

MINNEAPOLIS — The Minnesota Department of Administration, on Feb. 8, notified the Minneapolis Veterans Home that the historic truss bridge will close starting Feb. 12 until further notice.

The bridge spans Minnehaha Creek from Minnehaha Park to the Minneapolis Veterans Home.

The Department of Administration said the bridge will be closed to motor vehicles during routine annual inspections and repairs. It will remain open to pedestrian traffic.

The bridge became part of the state government after the Minnesota Commander's Task Force advocated the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs

to purchase it from the Minneapolis Park Board.

Minnesota American Legion Alternate NECman Peggy Moon was department commander when the issue arose in 2015, and she was the chairwoman of the Minnesota CTF.

Moon, the CTF and lawmakers felt the bridge was crucial for emergency and non-emergency transportation between the Minneapolis VA Medical Center and the Minneapolis Veterans Home.

Moon was at the ribbon cutting in January 2020, when automobiles once again could cross.

The bridge was built in 1908 and was added to the National Register of Historic Places and Structures in 1989.

"We look forward to the bridge reopening once again after a brief closure. Thank you for your understanding and patience," said the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs' Friday Digest.

Post-9/11 Veteran Service Bonus still available

ST. PAUL — The American Legion worked hard to ensure this bonus goes to all veterans residing in Minnesota, not just ones who entered the military from Minnesota.

Minnesota veterans who served sometime between Sept. 11, 2001, and Aug. 30, 2021, may be eligible for a Post-9/11 Service Bonus. More than 20,000 Minnesota veterans who served in the Global War on Terrorism have already received bonuses totaling \$21.4 million in recognition of their service.

The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs is distributing nearly \$39.8 million in bonuses. Eligible veterans are paid on a first-come, first-served basis, so veterans should apply today before the funds are gone.

Be sure to visit minnesotaveteran.org/servicebonus.

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- Silver Dollar City
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- Dean Z - The Ultimate Elvis
- Dublin's Irish Tenors & Celtic Ladies
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June 17-23, 2024

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- RV Hall of Fame

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\$799.00 pp Double Occupancy

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- Deluxe motorcoach transportation
- 3 Nights accommodations
- 6 Meals: 3 breakfasts, 1 lunch and 2 dinners
- Luggage handling (1 pp)
- Mississippi River Museum
- Lunch Cruise "Hits of the Decades" on the Celebration Belle
- Circa 21 Dinner Theater "Menopause the Musical"
- John Deere Pavilion Tour
- Deere Wiman Home Tour
- QC Botanical Center
- Field of Dreams Movie Site
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Washington D.C.

September 13-17, 2024

\$1,799.00 pp Double Occupancy

Included in your tour:

- Accompanied by a 4 Seasons Tour Director
- Round trip Delta flight from Minneapolis to Washington D.C.
- 4 Nights accommodations in the Washington D.C. area
- 8 Meals: 4 breakfasts, 4 dinners
- Guided Memorial & Monuments Tour
- Tram ride through Arlington National Cemetery
- Two full-day guided tours of Washington D.C.
- WWII Memorial, Capitol Hill, Embassy Row, Korean War Veterans Memorial, Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Smithsonian, Martin Luther King Jr. National Memorial, Lincoln Memorial and much more!

Nashville Get-away

July 20-25, 2024

\$1,799.00 pp Double Occupancy

Included in your tour:

- Accompanied by a 4 Seasons Tour Director
- Deluxe motorcoach transportation
- 5 Nights accommodations
- 10 Meals: 5 breakfasts, 1 lunch, 4 dinners
- Luggage handling (1 per person)
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Good Earth Village - Spring Valley, MN
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Faith Haven Camp near Battle Lake, MN

Reserve your spot to meet the national commander

Continued from Page 1

Commander Denise Rohan.

The first stop is that evening, with dinner and a program at Moorhead Post 21.

On Monday, April 15, the tour visits the Fergus Falls Veterans Home, followed by a luncheon and a program at Fergus Falls Post 30. That evening, dinner and program will take place at Willmar Post 167.

Breakfast and a program on Tuesday, April 16, are at Howard Lake Post 145. Le Center Post 108 will host a lunch and a program. That evening, Golden Valley Post 523 hosts dinner and a program.

Veterans Day on the Hill is Wednesday, April 17. The national commander will spend time that morning with the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs staff at the Veterans Service Building, before heading over to the St. Paul Armory, where he is the keynote speaker after lunch.

Later in the day, the National Commander's Tour stops at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center for a briefing and a tour.

Seehafer and Rowan fly out the morning of Thursday, April 18, to their next state tour.

Presentations of checks to the National Commander's Project can be made at the end of each stop's program. His project is the American Legion Veterans & Children Foundation. Posts are encouraged to bring donations.

Members are able to get a photo with Seehafer after the program at each stop.

Seehafer is a native of Merrill,

American Legion National Commander's Tour

Please call to reserve your spot.

Location	Meal	Time	Contact
Sunday, April 14 Moorhead Post 21	dinner*	6 p.m.	701-261-6973 (Tim Haugen)
Monday, April 15 Fergus Falls Post 30 Willmar Post 167	lunch dinner*	noon 6 p.m.	218-736-2708 (Post) 320-235-8136 (Post)
Tuesday, April 16 Howard Lake Post 145 Le Center Post 108 Golden Valley Post 523	breakfast lunch dinner*	8:15 a.m. noon 6 p.m.	320-543-2904 (Jean Schmidt) 507-357-4787 (Post) 480-695-6574 (Erika Fossen)

Wednesday, April 17
Veterans Day on the Hill doors open 10 a.m. Open to all veterans and their keynote speaker lunch 11:30 a.m. supporters, at St. Paul Armory * includes 5 p.m. social hour

Read the story to find out about non-public-oriented stops on the tour.

Wis. He received a bachelor's degree in pastoral ministry from Concordia University in Mequon, Wis., and a master of divinity from Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Ind.

He was commissioned as a naval officer in March 1995. He spent time with sailors in San Diego; Newport, R.I.; Everett, Wash.; aboard the destroyer USS Paul F. Foster; and with Marines at Camp Pendleton, Calif.

In August 1997, he came to Horicon, Wis., as the assistant pastor of St. Stephen Lutheran Church & School. In October 2000, he accept his current role of administrative pastor at St. Stephen.

He has been a Legion member for 17 years. After joining Horicon Post 157 as a PUFL, he was elected post adjutant. Eventually, he became post, county and district commander. He was the state chaplain of Wisconsin in 2006, the national chaplain in 2010-11 and a 2012 graduate of American Legion College.

He is a member of the Sons of The American Legion, too. Seehafer is married to his wife, Denise. They have two children, Jacob, 8, and Emma, 4. They reside in Beaver Dam, Wis.

Veterans Day on the Hill
Doors open at 10 a.m. for coffee at the St. Paul Armory for Veterans Day on the Hill 2024.

The free lunch is at 11:30 a.m. Be sure to thank the Disabled American Veterans of Minnesota for the meal and for renting the armory.

Seehafer will speak after the meal.

The veterans march is at 1 p.m. At 1:15 p.m., the Minnesota Commander's Task Force and the Minnesota Association of County Veteran Service Officers present Rally in the Rotunda. It ends at 2 p.m.

Organizers are asking participants to contact their legislators in advance and ask them either to visit the armory or make time for an office appointment to discuss veterans issues.

The American Legion Legislative Priorities are on Page 10.

THE AMERICAN LEGION Department of Minn. Commander's Project

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

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

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

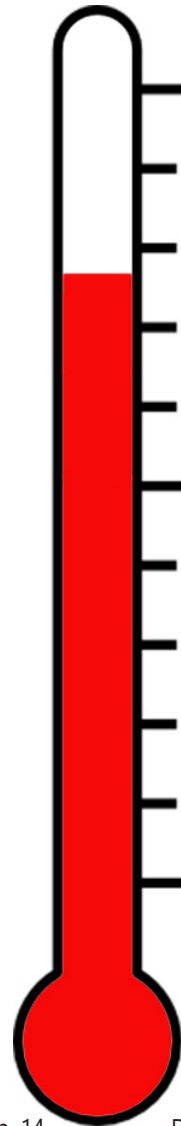
Date of graphic: Feb. 14

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\$41,570 was raised since the last thermometer reading Dec. 18.

Much thanks to a private individual who donated \$16,000! Shout out to posts 11, 16, 47, 57, 82, 102, 122, 207, 282, 230, 253, 303, 323, 328, 448, 579, 594, 621 & 630, units 101 & 550, Chapter 39, several individuals & Leavenworth Baseball!



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Credit belongs to members, supporters

Hello again American Legion Family,

The year continues to roll along on the road ahead. We have come across some potholes, and some construction but for the most part it has been an enjoyable ride. Thanks to the many great people that work so hard to make it a smooth ride. The weather this year has made things easier as well.

I can't believe the year is half over already. It was great traveling around the state attending all the mid-winter conferences. We were able to make it to all but the 2nd District. Thank you to everyone for all the hospitality. I know it takes a lot of people and hard work to put those together. It is very interesting to see all the different nuances of the districts. I really love seeing the American Legion family all working together.

We also had a great turnout at the Sweetheart Rally. A special thank you to the American Legion Auxiliary, and to the Forest Lake American Legion Family for hosting a very successful event. I know a lot of work goes into putting that together. I can't thank you enough for all you do.

Membership in the department is going great so far thanks to all of you and our Department Membership Director Pam Krill and the membership team. As of this writing, we are in fourth place in the nation.

Membership is no easy task, but it is vital to the future of the organization. I have always had the belief that if we are doing great things, and having some fun, members will join. We all must do our part though. If we aren't telling people what we do and letting them know why we are members, they won't know. I know we talk a lot about recruiting younger veterans, but it

Commander's Column

Paul Hassing



breaks my heart when I hear of a (older) veteran that has never been asked to join.

I know some of us feel uncomfortable asking someone to join. We feel like we are selling something. I struggled with that myself. Then I realized that if I remembered why I was a member, and told that story to people, they would join. We have a great family, and it would be a shame to deprive someone of belonging to our family.

The American Legion family has a lot of things coming up that I am looking forward to. We have the Appreciation Rally coming up on March 2 in Montgomery. It should be a good time. I always look forward to seeing everyone and catching up. The American Legion Birthday is March 15. There are many dinners around the state celebrating this event. If your post does not have one, I'm sure there is one in your district that would love for you to attend.

Please remember that National Vietnam War Veterans Day is March 29. They didn't get the welcome home that they deserved, and I know we can never make up for that but please do everything you can to honor them. Many Vietnam veterans are working hard in the American Legion to make sure the disrespect never happens again, and I thank you for that.

We have the honor of hosting National Commander Daniel Seehafer from April 14 through the 18. Please look at the website for locations and see if you can attend any of his stops. We need to show him how great the Department of Minnesota is. The

national commander will be at Veterans Day on the Hill on April 17.

We really want as many of our Legion Family to attend this event as possible. We need to show our lawmakers what kind of force we are, and how important veterans issues are to us.

I talk a lot in this article about how hard people work, and I mean that. As commander, I get a lot of credit for things that happen in our department. These things happen because of the hard work and sacrifice of all of you. None of the great things we do would happen without you. All the members, committee members, full-time staff and even some who don't qualify for membership but still believe in taking care of veterans, their families, and the community are the ones responsible for how great we are. Thank you for allowing me the privilege of taking credit for everything you all do.

With all the work that needs to be done, please remember to take time to have some fun. Take the time you need to be with your family and loved ones, and please, please reach out to someone you haven't seen in a while. And, please reach out if you need anything. Sometimes just a quick chat can do amazing things.

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

Faith is a powerful way to face anxiety

There are many references to anxiety in the Bible that helps to understand this disease.

And what we can do to help manage it when it happens in our everyday lives.

First of all: What is anxiety?

Anxiety as explained in the dictionary is a feeling of worry, nervousness or unease about an event or circumstance that has an uncertain outcome. Anxiety is normal in stressful situations such as public speaking or taking a test. It is usually an indicator of a disease when feelings become all ensuing or interfere with our daily lives.

There are many events in our daily lives that may cause us to worry more about things more than we should, but it is human nature to want things to run smoothly and not to have complications along the way.

It can be that we are feeling alone, depressed, rejected or worried about a financial situation, health situation or a personal conflict that we just do not know the answer or outcome of it.

The old saying goes: There are two things that are certain in life — death and taxes. This may be true, but I believe that there is a third and most important thing in all of our lives that is for certain, and we can always count on and that being our faith and trust in our God.

It says in the Bible: "Do not be anxious in anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, present your requests to God, and the peace that

transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds."

We need to remember that even when things become overwhelming and there seems to be no end in sight. Slow down, take a deep breath and say a prayer to God asking him to help you through whatever the problem is that you are facing. God has said that we are his children and he will never leave or forsake us.

God is always there and always hears our prayers and concerns no matter how small we think they are. God created all men in his image and we are all as important to him as anyone else- We are all equals in his eyes and loves us no matter what we have going on in our lives.

So, in time of need, take a minute to stop, slow down and say a prayer thanking him for all the gifts he has bestowed on us and cast all of your concerns on him.

"These things I have spoken to you, that in me you will have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world"

Some dates to remember in the month of March are:

March 1: Employee Appreciation Day and World

Day of Prayer
March 3:

Caregiver Appreciation Day and National Anthem Day
March 4: Hug a G.I. Day
March 10: Daylight Savings begins
March 10: First Day of Ramadan

March 15: American Legion Birthday
March 15: Ides of March
March 17: St. Patrick's Day

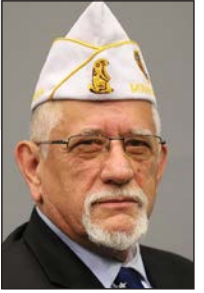
March 21: National Rosie the Riveter Day
March 23: Purim
March 24: Palm Sunday
March 28: Maundy Thursday

March 29: Good Friday
March 29: Vietnam War Veterans Day

March 31: Easter Sunday
March 31: National Crayon Day (this day has played a role in the crayon joke among veterans)

Note: Feast of the Annunciation normally falls on March 25, but because that is Holy Week this year, it takes place April 8.

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



Chaplain's Corner

Dean Knutson

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.

It's stunning how much the state gets

Writing as a "regular old Joe taxpayer," not as a post commander, I wonder why such a giving American Legion post like Post 1776 in Apple Valley, and the many others scattered around Minnesota, can't keep more of the money raised from gambling operations in the local community that supports the games, programs and posts? Why don't elected representatives fight for their local communities, our veterans and the other fine people trying to invest in our own neighborhoods?

The January Issue of the Minnesota Legionnaire had a small but insightful article on American Legion post-level charitable gambling. The article reported the top 45 posts, in order of gross gambling receipts, and the top three were Bayport Post 491, Chanhassen Post 580 and Apple Valley Post 1776.

The article mentioned 193 Legion posts and units are licensed gambling organizations in our state. What really caught my eye in this news piece was, "In the fiscal year that ended in June, 53 percent of LPE (lawful purpose expenditures) went to paying taxes and fees. That's 53 percent of the money raised did not go to charitable efforts or programs."

Wow, that's 53 percent shipped to 75 Reverend Martin Luther King Jr Boulevard, Saint Paul, Minnesota, the State Capitol. That's 53 percent that could stay in Apple Valley, Rosemount, Farmington and other small towns around Minnesota, help our veterans, and our veterans' families. Post 1776 is a very charitable organization, just ask any local school, arts organization, youth group and veteran families in need.

The Post 1776 pulltab and bingo operations isn't like BIG GAMBLING that you'll find in Onamia, Welch, Hinkley, Prior Lake or Morton. Do you think those operations give back to our communities like posts and units do around their neighborhoods

in Minnesota? I don't see any contributions coming back from casino gambling to Apple Valley and the surrounding communities, do you?

I wonder why local legislators prioritize BIG GAMBLING over local veteran organizations? As a local "regular old Joe taxpayer and voter," I'll have to raise the question next November. Is your local representative fighting for your community?

Bernie Baumann
Apple Valley Post 1776

Thanks for the airmen poem

Sending a shout-out to Sharon Brunette, New Prague Post 45, for her airmen poem in the December issue — a poem which is relatable to all branches of the military. Thank you for sharing!

Kris Nalezny
New London Post 537
retired Army veteran

Taking knee is disrespectful to war dead

I attended the basketball game on Dec. 28, 2023, at the Moorhead holiday basketball tournament, between Osseo and Dilworth/Glyndon/Felton. As much as the game was very entertaining, I was appalled at the behavior of six of the Osseo team during the playing of "The Star-Spangled Banner."

During the anthem, they chose to take a knee.

As a retired member of the

United States military of 40 years, it was very disheartening to see these young ladies on a knee to the anthem. My thoughts at first were anger

and frustration on why this is allowed by the coaching staff and school administration. The coaching staff had no reaction,
Continued on Page 7

The Minnesota Legionnaire

FOR GOD AND COUNTRY

Official publication of
The American Legion
Department of Minnesota

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

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

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

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

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

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Taps



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

Name of Deceased	Age	Date of Death	Branch	Era	Cont. Years	Post
Aho, Richard B.	79	1/10/24	Marines	Vietnam	30	Austin Post 91
Anderberg, Otto W. "Woody"	103	2/3/24	Army AF	WWII	76	Litchfield Post 104
Note: He was a gunnery instructor for B-17 Bombers.						
Anderson, Herman C.	95	1/19/24	Army	Korea	78	Bagley Post 16
Anderson, Myron K.	93	11/13/23	Navy	Korea	55	La Crescent Post 595
Note: He served as a machinist mate on the USS Yarnall destroyer off the coast of Korea.						
Anderson, Robert L.	76	5/20/23	Army	Vietnam	18	North Mankato Post 518
Anderson, Russell D.	91	1/7/24	Army	Korea	69	Elk River Post 112
Note: He served as a tank commander in the war.						
Anderson, Wayne L.	87	1/18/24	Air Force	Korea	65	Clarissa Post 213
Note: He served 1952 to 1956 but was called back to the Air Force Reserves during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962.						
Aufenthie, Robert J.	90	2/10/24	Army	Cold	14	Marshall Post 113
Balow, Eugene I.	94	12/3/28	Army	Korea	43	Red Wing Post 54
Bassett, George N.	97	7/24/23	Army	WWII	64	Blue Earth Post 89
Behnke, Richard C.	91	12/10/23	Navy	Vietnam	39	Winona Post 9
Note: He was a Navy corpsman.						
Bell, William O.	91	12/26/23	Army	Korea	11	Lyle Post 105
Note: He served with the 82nd Airborne Division.						
Bellefeuille, Eugene W.	94	1/21/24	Army NG	Korea	54	Little Falls Post 46
Bellefeuille, Marcel K.	76	2/11/24	Army	Vietnam	49	Little Falls Post 46
Note: He served in Vietnam.						
Biehn, Marvin L. "Sonny"	86	9/7/23	Army	Vietnam	45	North Mankato Post 518
Note: He served 20 years active duty, living in Germany, Colorado and Georgia, among other places.						
Blank, Ronald L.	75	1/2/24	Marines	Vietnam	40	Winona Post 9
Note: He served a tour in Vietnam.						
Bogenholm, Jerin W.	82	1/13/24	Army	Vietnam	35	Moose Lake Post 379
Note: He was a 2nd lieutenant tank commander stationed in Alaska.						
Breth, Robert J.	74	10/23/23	Army	Vietnam	50	Melrose Post 101
Bruns, Merlyn H.	91	1/1/24	Army	Korea	20	New Ulm Post 132
Note: He served with the enlisted and attained the rank of sergeant, then joined the National Guard and retired as a captain after 20 years.						
Buchert, Jerry K.	87	1/1/24	Navy	Vietnam	36	Russell Post 460
Buchholz, Albert "Abie" R.	85	1/9/24	Army	Korea	54	Breckenridge Post 53
Burns, Patrick J.	79	1/1/24	Navy	Vietnam	12	Watertown Post 121
Bussmann, Edward H.	85	7/26/23	Army	Cold	3	Melrose Post 101
Butler, Gary A.	79	2/11/24	Army	Vietnam	13	Roosevelt Post 371
Calvin, Richard L.	90	1/20/24	Army	Cold	7	Marshall Post 113
Clemens, James W.	93	1/6/24	Army	Korea	68	Eyota Post 551
Combs, Kenneth D.	95	1/25/24	Air Force	Korea	29	New London Post 537
Crawford, Edward W.	101	1/14/24	Air Force	WWII	20	Waite Park Post 428
Note: He trained as a radio operator and turret gunner, then served in the Mariana Islands of the Central Pacific Ocean as a ground-control approach operator for aircraft landings.						
Davison, Arthur N. "Bud"	92	12/29/23	Air Force	Korea/VN	20	Clarissa Post 213
Note: He served 21 years in the Air Force as a jet engine mechanic.						
De Kam, Harold L.	89	12/15/23	Army	Korea	34	Edgerton Post 42
Deis, Karl E.	89	1/27/24	Army	Korea	49	Mora Post 201
Note: In 2021, he was inducted into Minnesota Football Coaches Hall of Fame. The Mora football field is named Bergloff-Deis Field in his honor.						
Dempster, Douglas L.	87	1/7/24	Navy	Korea	65	Lakefield Post 4
Note: He served as a hospital corpsman.						
Dinga, Gustav P.	101	1/24/24	Air Force	WWII	65	Moorhead Post 21
Disrud, Dellas D.	85	2/2/24	Army	Vietnam	43	Fosston Post 114
Docken, Douglas D.	88	1/24/24	Army	Korea	36	Waconia Post 150
Dorseth, Vernon H.	94	11/21/23	Army	Korea	10	Twin Valley Post 431
Draeger, Rufus A.	87	12/30/23	Army	Cold	4	Minnesota Post 1982
Durgin, Roger W.	77	2/3/24	Army	Vietnam	52	Lanesboro Post 40
Note: He was a past commander of Plainview Post 179.						
Dvorak, Andrew N.	80	1/13/24	Navy	Vietnam	35	St. Peter Post 37
Eastes, James A.	90	1/23/22	Army	Korea	39	Golden Valley Post 523
Ellefson, James L.	76	12/16/23	Air Force	Vietnam	16	Pine Island Post 184
Note: He was a crew chief on the flight line of F-105s during Vietnam air offensives.						
Elsberry, Myron E. Jr.	86	12/27/23	Army	Vietnam	58	Cambridge Post 290
Emerson, Clayton D.	72	11/30/23	Army	Vietnam	5	Minneapolis-Richfield Post 435
Engelhart, Warren "Bud"	97	1/15/24	Army	WWII	40	La Crescent Post 595
Note: He served in the 82nd Airborne Division with the 325th Glider Infantry Regiment and saw action in Central Europe and Rhineland, earning two Bronze Stars. He was in Berlin at the end of the war.						
Erickson, Verdis "Bud"	95	11/29/23	Air Force	WWII	34	New Brighton Post 513
Evenson, Winston B.	96	12/22/23	Army	WWII	50	New Richland Post 75
Fisher, Harold W.	99	2/1/24	Navy	WWII	28	Lowry Post 253
Note: He was stationed on Guam during the war. He served on Operation Crossroads and observed nuclear testing on Bikini Atoll in 1946.						
Frank, David E.	82	8/4/23	Army	Vietnam	38	Blue Earth Post 89
Frundt, Charles K.	81	12/1/23	Army	Vietnam	56	Blue Earth Post 89
Furman, Joseph E.	91	12/30/23	Navy	Vietnam	43	Cold Spring Post 455
Note: He was a pilot who flew about 200 missions in Vietnam.						
Gaede, Donald R.	93	2/2/24	Army	Korea	45	Finlayson-Sandstone Post 151
Gimm, D.G.	91	1/25/24	Army	Korea	39	Rosetown Post 542
Gripp, Richard F.	98	1/17/24	Navy	WWII	78	Aitkin Post 86
Hackenmueller, Robert P.	77	1/23/24	Navy	Vietnam	15	Elk River Post 112
Note: He served aboard the aircraft carrier USS Enterprise and the submarine tender USS Proteus.						
Hagstrom, Clayton J.	88	12/29/23	Army	Cold	42	Middle River Post 444
Hagstrom, William R.	89	11/23/23	Army	Korea	40	Bloomington Post 550
Note: He was a past captain of the honor guard.						
Halvorson, John H.	87	1/22/24	Air Force	Korea	42	Stewartville Post 164
Hamernik, Wayne E.	89	2/14/24	Navy	Korea	35	Winona Post 9
Note: He served in Korea during the war. He was post commander 1995-95.						
Handahl, Donald H.	99	12/19/23	Navy	WWII	51	Willmar Post 167
Note: He enlisted in November 1942 and served in the Navy Intelligence unit at Pearl Harbor doing intercepting and copying Japanese coded messages.						
Hardy, Robert L.	83	2/10/24	Army	Vietnam	24	Milaca Post 178
Harms, Richard D.	88	1/22/24	Air Force	Korea	14	Duluth Post 71
Hassing, Harold E.	94	10/14/23	Army	Korea	70	Blue Earth Post 89
Note: He was a cryptographic specialist for the Signal Corps at the Pentagon.						
Hayden, Richard J.	77	1/23/24	Air Force	Vietnam	5	Le Center Post 108
Herbert, Eugene C.	93	1/1/24	Army	Korea	55	Milaca Post 178

All-Family Events Calendar

- March 2:** Appreciation Rally, Montgomery Post 79
- March 16:** SAL Spring Conference, Forest Lake Post 225
- March 23:** Legionville Board of Directors meeting
- March 24:** Vietnam Veterans Day, Forest Lake Post 225
- April 10:** Air Force Band, Waconia High School
- April 12-13:** ALA Dept. Jr. Conference, Detroit Lakes Post 15
- April 13:** Adult Prom, Blue Earth Post 89
- April 15-17:** National Commander's Tour of Minnesota
- April 17:** Veterans Day on the Hill, St. Paul Armory
- April 27:** President's Testimonial, Melrose Post 101
- April 28-May 2:** National President's Tour of Minn.
- May 6-9:** Spring Meetings, Sheraton Hotel, Indianapolis
- May 16-19:** Legionville Work & Play
- May 18:** 1st District Convention, Austin Post 91
- May 18:** 3rd District Convention, New Prague Post 45
- May 18:** 7th District Convention, Morris Post 29
- May 24:** American Legion Night at Target Field
- May 24:** National Poppy Day
- May 25:** 4th District Convention, North St. Paul Post 39
- May 27:** Memorial Day, local ceremonies
- June 1:** 5th District Convention, location TBD
- June 1:** 6th District Convention, Brainerd Armory
- June 1:** 10th District Convention, Fridley Post 303
- June 8:** 2nd District Convention, Fairmont Post 36
- June 8:** 9th District Convention, East Grand Forks Post 157
- June 9-15:** Minnesota Boys State, St. John's University
- June 9-15:** Minnesota Girls State, Bethel University
- June 22:** Commander's Testimonial, Montgomery Post 79
- July 11-13:** Department of Minnesota Convention, Willmar Convention Center, Willmar, hosted by Willmar Post 167
- July 29-Aug. 1:** Baseball Tier 1 Tournament, Burnsville
- Aug. 1-4:** Minnesota American Legion Baseball Div. I Sr. State Tournament, Maple Grove
- Aug. 1-4:** Minnesota American Legion Baseball Div. I Jr. State Tournament, Bloomington
- Aug. 2-4:** Minnesota American Legion Baseball Div. II Sr. State Tournament, Bird Island
- Aug. 3-4:** Minnesota American Legion Fastpitch Softball State Tournament, Bemidji
- Aug. 9-11:** Minnesota American Legion Baseball Div. II Jr. State Tournament, St. Charles
- Aug. 9-11:** Junior Auxiliary Fun Weekend at Legionville
- Sept. 5-8:** Camporee, Legionville
- Sept 12-15:** Legion Riders Romp at Legionville
- Sept. 20-22:** American Legion NS/FR Weekend, Camp Ripley
- Oct. 1-6:** John Zgoda Memorial Deer Hunt, Legionville
- Oct. 7-10:** Fall Meetings, Sheraton Hotel, Indianapolis

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Taps



Continued from Page 5

Heying, Linus H.	99	1/19/24	Army	WWII	68	Waite Park Post 428
Note: He deployed to northern France and served in the Ardennes and Rhineland.						
Hiemenz, Kenneth J.	89	12/26/24	Army	Vietnam	41	St. Joseph Post 328
Hintz, Rodney W.	95	1/13/24	Army	Korea	41	Mora Post 201
Hix, William F.	90	1/28/24	Air Force	Korea	32	Montgomery Post 79
Hock, Robert H.	76	8/14/23	Air Force	Vietnam	4	Melrose Post 101
Hocking, Lyle E.	99	1/22/24	Marines	WWII	14	Effie Post 182
Note: He served in the Pacific Theater, receiving a Purple Heart.						
Hoelz, Joel K.	83	1/2/24	Army	Vietnam	24	Aitkin Post 86
Holst, Edwin A.	87	12/24/23	Army	Korea/VN	45	Spicer Post 545
Note: He served for 37 years in the Army and National Guard, retiring as a chief warrant officer.						
Jacobsen, John R. "Jack"	81	1/28/24	Army	Vietnam	38	Bemidji Post 14
Jensen, Jerry W.	93	12/14/23	Army	Korea	50	Alexandria Post 87
Jensen, Merrill O.	95	1/4/24	Army	Korea	13	Owatonna Post 77
Note: He served in the war as a gunner, then was stationed in Japan.						
Johnson, Kendall R.	96	12/5/24	Navy	WWII	63	Albert Lea Post 56
Johnson, Orville W.	92	1/5/23	Air Force	Vietnam	14	Anoka Post 102
Ketola, Donald W.	82	12/20/23	Navy	Vietnam	17	Cloquet Post 262
Kettner, Arthur G. Jr.	85	1/27/24	Army	Vietnam	38	Springfield Post 257
Note: He served as a driver and mechanic.						
Killen, James H.	89	1/6/24	Army	Vietnam	14	Owatonna Post 77
Note: He was stationed with military psychology at the U.S. Disciplinary Barracks at Fort Leavenworth, Kan. He was a well-known wildlife artist and hunting enthusiast. The 110-acre Jim and Karen Killen Waterfowl Refuge at the Lac qui Parle Wildlife Management Area is named after their fundraising efforts to purchase the habitat. He has been inducted into multiple art-related halls of fame.						
Kovar, Peter G.	73	5/11/23	Army	Vietnam	43	Anoka Post 102
Kowalski, John J.	85	2/12/24	Navy	Vietnam	28	Moorhead Post 21
Note: During his 23-year career, he served aboard the Coral Sea, Kitty Hawk, John F. Kennedy, Enterprise and Shangi-La aircraft carriers. Before 2021, he belonged to Barnesville Post 153.						
Kramer, James J.	94	1/7/24	Army	Vietnam	51	Melrose Post 101
Note: He had a 24-year military career and served all over the globe.						
Krawiecki, Severyn H.	90	1/17/24	Army	Korea	37	Hillman Post 602
Kunz, Charles H.	88	1/27/24	Army	Korea	45	New Ulm Post 132
Note: He served with the 328th Communications Reconnaissance Company stationed in Bad Aibling, Germany. He was a traffic analyst and crypto specialist. He was a past post 1st vice commander and membership director. He was active in Legion Baseball for many years.						
Lahmers, Gerald A.	91	12/17/23	Navy	Korea	23	Melrose Post 101
Note: He was a member of the Melrose Area Honor Guard.						
Larson, Robert W.	79	1/11/24	Army	Vietnam	20	Buffalo Post 270
Note: He was a past post commander.						
Lindberg, Stephen W.	71	12/19/23	Air Force	Vietnam	14	Elk River Post 112
Note: He served for 33 years, retiring as a senior master sergeant.						
Lorentz, Edward C.	88	1/13/24	Army	Korea	50	Cannon Falls Post 142
Lovik, Roger J.	89	10/12/23	Army	Vietnam	45	North Mankato Post 518
Madson, Darrell A.	86	12/20/23	Air Force	Vietnam	34	Elk River Post 112

Continued on Page 7



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Mahoney, James W.	86	1/14/24	Army	Vietnam	9	St. Joseph Post 328
Martinson, Eugene L.	81	1/7/24	Army	Vietnam	36	Paynesville Post 271
Mason, Gary J.	80	6/27/23	Navy	Vietnam	11	Anoka Post 102
Meyer, Walter D.	80	2/10/24	Army	Korea	27	Austin Post 91
Note: He served a tour in Vietnam.						
Mients, Allen R.	85	2/6/24	Navy	Vietnam	36	Clara City Post 485
Miller, Dean L.	90	12/4/23	Air Force	Korea	33	Willmar Post 167
Mohlencamp, Richard D.	84	1/23/24	unk.	Cold	38	Windom Post 206
Mortensen, Lester R.	98	1/6/24	Marines	WWII	37	Swanville Post 313
Note: He served in Japan.						
Motzko, Ralph J. "Butch"	77	10/19/23	Air Force	Vietnam	33	Watertown Post 121
Mulholland, Russell L.	89	1/10/24	Army	Korea	35	Spring Valley Post 68
Note: He was past post commander.						
Nelson, Ronald K.	88	12/22/23	Army	Vietnam	23	Spicer Post 545
Nimps, Arnold I.	95	1/11/24	Navy	WWII	5	St. Peter Post 37
Note: He was past commander of Kasota Post 348. (The post no longer exists).						
Nordstrom, Clyde E.	95	6/24/23	Army	WWII	38	Backus Post 368
Note: He enlisted at age 18 and served in Sugamo Prison in Japan.						
Olson, Marlin D.	89	2/11/24	Air Force	Korea	29	Pine City Post 51
Note: He served with the 125th Signal Battalion of the 25th Infantry Division on Oahu in Hawaii. He was a longtime member of the Post 51 Honor Guard.						
Paulsen, Ken "K.C."	74	1/20/24	Army	Vietnam	23	Anoka Post 102
Pervisky, Richard C.	80	1/8/24	Army	Korea	41	La Crescent Post 595
Peterson, Thomas R. Sr.	72	1/20/24	Army	Vietnam	24	Spicer Post 545
Pierce, Daniel G.	69	12/26/23	Navy	Vietnam	11	Minneapolis-Richfield Post 435
Note: His nickname was "Turkey Dan" to all who knew him.						
Quast, Dale J.	76	12/24/23	Air Force	Vietnam	21	Bayport Post 491
Note: He served at White Sands Missile Range in New Mexico. He was a past post chaplain.						
Radel, Vernon R.	90	10/14/23	Navy/AF	Korea	47	North Mankato Post 518
Note: He served eight years in the Navy, then four in the Air Force. He was past post adjutant and membership director.						
Radoush, Donald R.	85	1/11/24	Army	Vietnam	12	Silver Lake Post 141
Rahe, Robert F.	89	1/25/24	Navy	Korea	23	New Ulm Post 132
Note: He served aboard the USS Prairie as a radioman.						
Ras, Gene A.	79	12/13/23	Air Force	Vietnam	18	Rosetown Post 542
Ray, James A.	91	11/4/23	Air Force	Korea	15	Minneapolis-Richfield Post 435
Regan, William E.	91	1/9/24	Air Force	Korea	10	Owatonna Post 77
Note: He founded Owatonna Bus Co.						
Retterath, Richard J.	84	1/12/24	Army	Korea	32	Eyota Post 551
Revne, Roald L.	95	1/18/24	Army	Korea	69	St. James Post 33
Rietfort, Gerald R.	85	1/12/24	Army	Korea	44	Waseca Post 228
Ritter, William H.	86	1/15/24	Air Force	Vietnam	36	Wayzata Post 118
Robb, Donovan D.	88	3/16/23	Navy	Korea	9	North Mankato Post 518
Root, Lester K.	91	1/1/24	Navy	Korea	56	Waseca Post 228
Sand, Harold E.	95	12/22/23	Army	WWII	19	St. Louis Park Post 282
Note: He served in Japan.						
Sanderson, Lester S.	102	1/24/24	Coast Guard	WWII	64	Tyler Post 185
Schatzlein, Gerald C.	100	5/13/23	Army	WWII	11	Minneapolis-Richfield Post 435
Note: He served in the Pacific Theater, in Guam and the Philippines.						
Schmid, James R.	93	7/25/23	Air Force	Korea	62	Chanhassen Post 580
Schmidt, Duane R.	89	1/6/24	Navy	Korea	12	Little Falls Post 46
Schmitz, David H.	81	12/31/23	Army	Vietnam	56	Caledonia Post 191
Schroeder, Gerald H.	86	12/22/23	Army	Vietnam	10	Waseca Post 228
Schuman, George H.	90	2/2/24	Army	Korea	68	Spicer Post 545
Schunke, Dale W.	84	5/4/23	Air Force	Vietnam	20	Spring Valley Post 68
Note: He was past commander of Post 36 in Tuscon, Ariz.						
Sladek, Harold T.	82	12/9/24	Army	Vietnam	30	Le Center Post 108
Sordahl, Leroy P.	80	1/16/24	Air Force	Vietnam	25	New London Post 537
Note: He was a radar technician and served for 21 years.						
Spangenberg, Albert V.	88	1/5/24	Army	Korea	23	Rosetown Post 542
Stanley, Warryn D.	89	12/24/23	Army	Korea	37	Coon Rapids Post 334
Staveteig, Robert C.	98	12/31/23	Army	WWII	57	East Grand Forks Post 157
Note: He primarily served in Okinawa, Japan.						
Sundermann, Victor F.	91	1/2/24	Army	Korea	36	Melrose Post 101
Note: He was a longtime member of the Melrose Area Honor Guard.						
Syverson, Marvin "Ben"	74	1/3/24	Army	Vietnam	14	Twin Valley Post 431
Tenquist, Floyd W.	82	9/22/23	Army	Vietnam	14	Anoka Post 102
Thaemert, Allen H.	92	1/29/24	Army	Korea	37	Waconia Post 150
Thoma, P. James Jr.	87	1/11/24	Army	Korea	49	Clara City Post 485
Tiggemann, Earl E.	93	1/22/24	Army	Korea	52	Cass Lake Post 284
Note: He served as an MP and spent time in Korea during the war.						
Toppin, M. Harold	95	8/8/23	Marines	WWII	77	Blue Earth Post 89
Note: He was a payroll clerk at Great Lakes Naval Base, paying battle-hardened Marines returning to the States.						
Torgerson, Marlin D.	86	2/1/24	Army NG	Korea	29	Hutchinson Post 96
Note: He served as a communications specialist and recon sergeant with the 1st Battalion, 151st Artillery Brigade. He was mayor of Hutchinson for 11 years.						
Truax, James G.	93	1/2/24	Army	Korea	39	Deer Creek Post 283
Note: He served in active combat for nine months.						
Trunk, Joseph P.	89	8/25/23	Army	Korea	49	Princeton Post 216
Tungesvik, Keith E.	75	12/13/23	Army	Vietnam	15	Winona Post 9
Valdahl, Charles E.	94	1/10/24	Army	Korea	14	Austin Post 91
Veldman, James A.	74	12/5/24	Army	Vietnam	20	Albert Lea Post 56
Verkuilen, Robert A.	89	2/11/24	Army	Cold	14	Little Falls Post 46
Voigt, Virgil C.	83	12/25/23	Navy	Vietnam	39	Hutchinson Post 96
Note: He retired as a lieutenant commander after 27 years. He was an anti-sub aircraft navigator. He was past post commander.						
Waters, Larry A.	81	12/19/23	Army NG	Vietnam	20	Austin Post 91
Note: He retired as a sergeant major after 28 years in the 34th Infantry Division.						
Wawers, Aloys "Al" H.	96	1/19/24	Coast Guard	WWII	65	Breckenridge Post 53
Note: He served on the West Coast and patrolled Pearl Harbor.						
Wilson, James R.	78	12/26/23	Air Force	Vietnam	13	Chanhassen Post 580
Zanoth, Thomas S.	77	1/1/24	Army	Vietnam	53	Silver Lake Post 141
Note: He was a past post chaplain and member of the honor guard. He received a Bronze Star and Purple Heart for his service in Vietnam.						
Zellman, Arthur A.	93	1/21/24	Army	Korea	68	Mora Post 201
Note: He served in the active-duty 101st Airborne Division, then in the Army Reserves.						

Mail Call

Continued from Page 4

which tells me this must be a normal behavior of their team during the anthem — which is unfortunate. I wondered how these six players can dislike the country that gives them so much that they take a knee during their country's national anthem!

Further, as a former coach of American Legion Baseball, we taught Americanism to our team members. We taught how the blood shed by so many Americans allowed them to live in the land of the free. Yes, this does include the freedom to protest, which is part of the First Amendment of our great U.S. Constitution.

However, kneeling during the national anthem is a disrespect to all the men and women who have shed their blood and lives for our great country. Showing an injustice to a cause you care about as an individual can be done in other ways without showing disrespect to our great military and country! I hope the Osseo school administration will discuss this with the team and make it a learning experience for the entire team and coaching staff.

In closing, your team played very well and was fun to watch. The coaching staff worked hard with their team to have them play to the best of their ability. I hope you have a great 2024!

Jeff Miller
Moorhead Post 21

Legionnaire needs to keep print edition

In reading the letter regarding putting the Legionnaire online, I have some comments.

I have been in the Legion for 45 years. I retired from the Army Reserve after 21 years of service.

I know if the Legionnaire was only online, I would not read it. My wife and I enjoy having a cup of coffee and sitting down in an easy chair to read the stories

of those who have given so much. We don't always do it in one sitting. We will send in the \$35. to keep the Legionnaire in its present form.

Also, when a soldier dies, does the subscription stop? Do family members see their soldier honored in "Taps," in one last issue? We like the schedule in its present form. What we have noticed is that the "Taps" list is sadly getting longer each issue.

Robert Schreifels
Cold Spring Post 455

Editor's note: Thanks for asking, Robert, and thanks for sending the \$35 donation.

There are no plans to have the Legionnaire exclusively online at this time. Presently, the Legionnaire is 24/7 at Legionnaire.org, and the print edition comes out nine times a year.

The \$35 "voluntary subscription" is to help us remain at nine times a year and not have to drop down to six times a year or fewer. The reason it isn't 12 times a year anymore is that it costs us \$15,000-\$17,000 per issue to mail out, and it was around \$8,000-\$9,000 just five years ago, with more receipts. Meanwhile, revenue from membership declines while costs rise.

As for a deceased member's family receiving one last issue, what actually happens is Department HQ ends up with many returns when we mail anything to deceased postal customers. We don't know whether there is a widow in the home. USPS charges us extra for those returns, and it adds up.

We encourage members to bring their copies of the Legionnaire to the families of deceased veterans in the community. Also, anyone may purchase past copies of the Legionnaire for \$3 a copy. Some Auxiliary units even purchase subscriptions for widow members for \$20 a year.

(As some of you frequent Taps-senders at the posts know, when I am asked, I mail out a copy for free in a first-class envelope to a widow whose husband is listed in Taps.)

Yes, I want to help out The Minnesota Legionnaire

We are offering what's called a "voluntary subscription."

The Minnesota Legionnaire comes free with membership in The American Legion in any Minnesota post. The print edition will be nine issues in 2024. By donating \$35 before the end of the fiscal year in August, we can prevent the Legionnaire print edition from reducing to just six issues next year. Let's help keep it at nine.

Please send a voluntary subscription for \$35 today to:

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

DRIVE HOME YOUR SUPPORT!



Purchase a plate and support MN Military members, Veterans and their families.
MinnesotaVeteran.org/SOT



LEGION NIGHT AT TARGET FIELD WILL BE FRIDAY, MAY 24!



Past National Commander Dan Ludwig, right, stands with Col. Wayne Quist on Jan. 27 at the 3rd District Mid-Winter Conference at Apple Valley Post 1776.

'Never ask a vet if you killed anybody'

Continued from Page 1

and in 1984, Lansing attended a conference in the nation's capital. He visited the wall, and a man said, "What's that ugly thing?"

Lansing replied, "The good thing is my name is not on that wall."

The stranger said he didn't realize the wall was dedicated to the Vietnam veterans.

One day, Lansing was at a bar. A man kicked a pop can, and Lansing dived on it. He said people with PTSD live in a parallel universe, with possible triggers all around, from thunderstorms to the silence of night.

"We are aliens on a strange planet," he said.

It's why veterans back into parking places and don't sit with their back to the door.

Lansing spoke against Hollywood celebrities and other civilians who claim PTSD over the slightest of grievances, watering down the seriousness of the term.

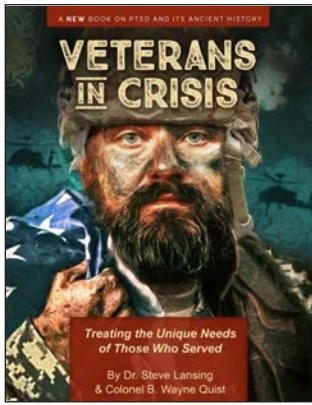
He added there have been famous actors who indeed struggled with PTSD: Audie Murphy and Jimmy Stewart are among them.

PTSD, according to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, or DSM-5-TR (i.e.: fifth edition, TR is "text revision"), requires one or more stressors. Not just any stressor, like a divorce or a job loss, but much worse stressors.

"PTSD is the only event-related mental disorder," Lansing said.

The stressor is being exposed to one or more events that involved death, threatened death or actual injury or threatened serious injury or sexual violation — and in one of the following ways:

- Directly experiencing the event.



"Veterans in Crisis" by Dr. Steve Lansing & Col. B. Wayne Quist

- Witnessing the event as it occurred to someone else.
- Learning a close relative or friend experienced the event.
- Experiencing repeated exposure to distressing details of an event.

The results are intrusive thoughts, avoidance, exclusion, negative cognition and moods, depersonalization, derealization, and alterations in arousal and reactivity.

Common examples are nightmares, guilt, poor judgment, loss of motivation, flashbacks, anxiety, lack of feelings, negative self-image, helplessness, depression, apathy, stress, irritability, anger, rage, frustration, communication problems, short-term memory, poor concentration, startle reflex and intrusive memories.

Civilians may ask: So you were shot at. So you saw dead bodies. So you witnessed dismemberment. What's the big deal?

There are three parts of the brain, Lansing said, and whether veterans who experienced trauma like it or not, the PTSD affects all three parts. The hippocampus shrinks. The prefrontal cortex shrinks. The amygdala

grows.

The doctor said hippocampus transfers and stores information into memories. A mind with PTSD stores memories incorrectly and retrieves them incorrectly.

The prefrontal cortex covers complex thinking and decision making. PTSD causes a dysfunctional thought process and leads to inappropriate responses to some situations.

The amygdala helps process emotions and is linked to fear responses. With PTSD, it sets that "fight or flight" in response to memories or thoughts about danger.

Lansing shared scans of brains: one healthy, one dealing with PTSD. The PTSD brain showed a busier prefrontal cortex.

"This is a brain working harder and harder than a brain is supposed to do," he said.

The bad news? There is no off switch, he said.

The good news is being in the right environments and getting the proper therapy can help. He said people with PTSD are 10 times more likely to relapse than people struggling with drugs or alcohol.

"The legal system historically has not understood trauma cases, and it screws veterans who are in the court system," Lansing said.

He added that veterans courts have been a good step in the right direction. He has taught PTSD to veterans courts.

Veterans also face PTSD from moral injuries caused by stressful circumstances. When someone does something that goes against their beliefs, this is an act of commission. When they fail to do something in line with their beliefs, it is an act of omission.

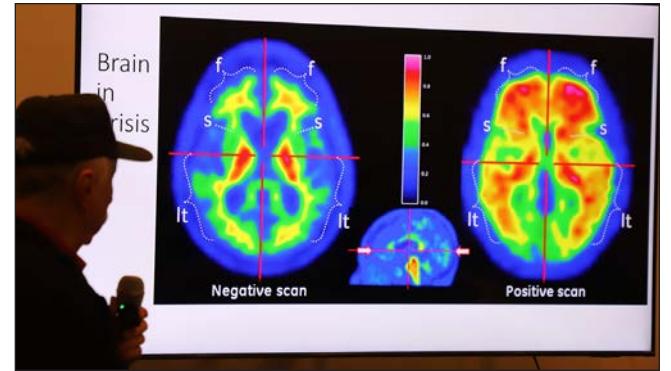
Lansing used examples. One was an officer ordering a bomb raid that stopped the threat but killed hundreds of civilians. Another was a soldier at Normandy who feels bad about surviving and guilty about killing the enemy because "those men had families, too."

There are three things people can give veterans, and they can give each other, Lansing said:

1. Understand. "Never ask a vet if you killed anybody."
2. Empathy. "I appreciate what you did. Thank you for serving."
3. Support. "What can I do to help?"

Sharing the stage with Lansing and introducing him was ret. Col. B. Wayne Quist, a Legion member with Red Wing Post 54. Quist and Lansing have authored a book about PTSD in veterans called "Veterans in Crisis." The book shares the long and ancient history of veterans dealing with trauma, including the tale of warrior philosopher Socrates.

There is a memorable quotation from Athenian Gen. Thucydides, who had quoted



One of Steve Lansing's slides compared brains with and without PTSD. The one on the right has PTSD.

the Spartan king: "The nation that makes a great distinction between its scholars and its warriors will have its thinking done by cowards and its fighting done by fools."

And the book discusses current wars such as Ukraine and Gaza, and it discusses the growing destructiveness of combat, including nuclear armageddon.

The book states, "The U.S. Army concluded during World War II that almost every soldier, if he escaped death or wounds, would break down after 200 to 240 combat days. Breakdown

was inevitable; about one-sixth of casualties were psychiatric, but most combat troops did not survive long enough to go to pieces psychologically. The pattern of 'combat fatigue' was universal on all fronts."

"Veterans in Crisis" is found at vetsempowered.org and on Amazon for \$17.95 starting May 7. Pre-orders are allowed.

If you are a veteran struggling with mental health, find a Vet Center near you for free, off-the-medical-record counseling. Minnesota has Vet Centers in Anoka, Duluth and St. Paul.

Veterans with PTSD often come in multiples

Dr. Steve Lansing shared a slide from a RAND survey that said 50 percent of veterans with PTSD report experiencing multiple traumatic events.

- Having a friend who was killed or seriously wounded: 49.6%
- Seeing a dead or seriously injured noncombatant: 45.2%
- Witnessing an accident with serious injury or death: 45%
- Smelling decomposing bodies: 37%
- Physically moved or knocked over by explosion: 22.9%
- Injured without hospitalization: 22.8%
- Blow to the head from accident or injury: 18.1%
- Injured with hospitalization: 10.7%
- Engaging in hand-to-hand combat: 9.5%
- Being responsible for the death of a civilian: 5.2%

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PTSD before it was PTSD

By Dr. Steven Lansing

How the language has changed over the years

- Civil War: Nostalgia, soldier's heart, railway spine
- WWI: Shell shock, war neurosis
- WWII: Combat fatigue, combat stress reaction, flack happy
- DSM-I (1952): Gross stress
- DSM-II (1968): Adjustment reaction to adult life
- DSM-III (1980): PTSD coined, multiaxial, multipopulation
- DSM-IV (2000): Defined as direct exposure to extreme trauma, modern character symptoms established as anxiety disorder
- DSM-5 (2013): No longer an anxiety disorder; now trauma- and stressor-related disorders
- DSM-5-TR (2022): No major changes; narrowed Criterion A (stressor) slightly

'I felt warm from my legs, and tried to move, and I fell down

Continued from Page 1

be called in the draft, and remembering the images of trench warfare from the library, made a choice.

"I said, 'Well, I'm not going to join the Army,'" Gasca recalled. "I'm going to go in the Marine Corps, because I'll get the easy job. I'm not going to be crawling in the mud like those guys."

And so, he joined the Marines.

When Gasca went overseas, he was first sent to New Zealand. There, he joined his unit, 1st Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment. The regiment was resting and refitting after participating in fighting at Guadalcanal, the first major American ground offensive in the Second World War. The United States had prevailed against the Japanese at Guadalcanal, halting their imperial ambitions, protecting Australia, and taking the first step in a long journey of "island hopping" across the Pacific. When Gasca arrived, he was assigned to a machine gun team in B Company, under the command of Capt. Maxie Williams. The Marines of B Company were preparing for the next offensive, a landing on a small island called Betio.

Betio is an island in Tarawa Atoll, located in the Gilbert Islands of the Central Pacific Ocean. Though just over two miles long, and 800 yards across at its widest, Betio was home to a runway from which Japanese aircraft could delay the American advance toward Japan. Despite its size, and sitting just ten feet above sea-level at its highest, the Japanese had intensely fortified Betio.

They had constructed concrete-reinforced fighting positions and command posts, and surrounded the island with a log seawall, complemented in places with barbed wire and mines. Garrisoned there were 2,600 Japanese naval infantry, considered Japan's first-rate troops. The island also had a natural wall, a barrier reef surrounding it. At low tide, the reef was insurmountable to conventional landing craft, rendering an amphibious invasion difficult, if not impossible. Reflecting on Tarawa's defenses as the invasion loomed, the garrison's commander, Rear Admiral Meichi Shibusaki said, "A million Americans couldn't take Tarawa in 100 years."

After rehearsing the landings, the Marines of the 2nd Marine Regiment, along with the rest of the 2nd Marine Division, set sail for Tarawa. Gasca's 1st Battalion was assigned to be the regimental reserve, meaning they would land following the 2nd Regiment's other battalions. Even so, at about 2 a.m. on Nov. 20, 1943, Gasca and the other Marines of the 1st Battalion shuffled into the ship's galley for their pre-invasion meal. After breakfast, they climbed down cargo nets strung over the sides of the transport ships, and into landing craft idling in the water below.

"It was just pitch dark as could be," Gasca remembered. "I could see the shadows of the other ships, and some Higgins boats already making their circles. And just as I got down on the Higgins boat, I heard this funny whistling noise, right over the top of us. It was a shell! I'd never heard anything like that."

The sun rose, and the Marines in the landing craft continued to wait to head for shore. To surmount the island's barrier reef, a very limited number of new amphibious tractors, called "amtracs" had been procured. These tracked amphibious vehicles were able to crawl over obstacles that might have stopped traditional landing boats. But precious few were available. So a system was devised where the amtracs would make a shuttle service, ferrying waiting Marines from the landing boats to shore. However, the system didn't work as



Lupe Gasca, center, stands with two other Tarawa veterans at a reunion.

smoothly as had been hoped.

"They said, 'They're landing, and they're going to come back,' and so we were waiting for that 15 minutes it was supposed to take," Gasca said. "It was hours before I finally got there."

However, Gasca didn't need to wait hours to be introduced to the harsh realities of war.

"To my left — and I could almost see the shell!" he remembered. "Their coxswain was hit and just disappeared." He watched helplessly as the Marines in that landing craft were thrown about, becoming casualties before even reaching the island. When the amtracs arrived to shuttle Marines in, there wasn't room aboard for Gasca and his gunner, Alfred Lewis, so they continued to wait in their landing craft. Finally, a lieutenant aboard their boat ordered the coxswain to take them ashore. They weren't quite there when the landing craft ground to a halt, scraping bottom on the reef.

"And then, the ramp went down," Gasca recalled. "We were still about 200, maybe 300 yards from the beach. And we were very lucky that when the ramp went down and we started walking, the water was only up to here," Gasca said as he drew a line with his hand in the middle of his chest.

"There were no holes. But what happened to some other people — tanks completely, even — the ramp went down, and the unit went down. The sailors dropping us off were just as green as we were, they didn't know." Gasca began the long walk in to shore, with Japanese bullets hitting sporadically all around him.

"At that time, I'm just hoping I don't get hit," he said. "When I got off of the Higgins boat into the water, there was no reason to be scared because there



Lupe Gasca c. 1945

was nowhere to go but forward. Lewis and I weren't even talking, we operated just on instinct."

Having made it to shore, he and his gunner recognized nobody. The Marines they encountered were from a different unit — the landing was completely confused. Many landing craft did the same as Gasca's, dropping Marines off on the reef to walk ashore rather than waiting for amtracs. And then came the trouble of logistics — supplies were missing, communications were inoperative, and the Marines had encountered fiercer resistance than expected. As a result, the first waves didn't move inland, and the following waves had piled up on the beach behind them.

"There was a bunch of debris, and I could see to the left the big bunker. I couldn't see any of the enemy. They were underneath this debris and tin, and they could see us, and they were close," he recalled. "There must have been buildings there, because there were tin roofs on the ground, with coconut trees fallen over on top of them. It was just like being in a pile of junk. And we just kept firing at the tin."

Having joined a platoon of Marines fighting from Red Beach 2, Gasca and Lewis spent that first night on Betio stuck on the beach just yards from the water, and in the midst of many dead and wounded Marines.

One the second day, the two Marines were able to rejoin B Company. They spent the rest of that day and the next partnered with Marine riflemen assaulting the incredibly well fortified and concealed Japanese fighting positions. The fighting was exhausting, both physically and mentally. Danger was ever present, and hard to see coming. Once the enemy combatants had been located, it was a substantial effort to neutralize them. Often, Japanese positions were thought secured, only to present an active threat again later in the day.

On the night of Nov. 22, the third night of the battle, Gasca was dug in on the south side of Betio Island. He and Lewis' machine gun was pointed towards the water, to stop any enemy who might try to swim out and infiltrate from the sea. Gasca was on watch, when he noticed movement on a Japanese position.

"At about 11 o'clock, I thought I saw some movement at this bunker. Now before it got dark, I hadn't seen any door there. But pretty soon, I saw a couple of other guys moving. I had a rifle right next to my machine gun, and I picked up the rifle and I fired. And

I hit him," Gasca recalled. "Just as I fired, on top of the bunker — which was high and covered in sand and debris — about 20 guys came over the top! They were firing at us, and I spun my machine gun around and opened up. I didn't even fire a belt, I probably only fired about 15 seconds. All the other guys opened up with rifles and BARs and everything," he remembered. "And about the same time that I was doing this, a hand grenade landed to my left and killed some of the guys, and that's when I got hit. I felt warm from my



Lupe Gasca draws out a map of his path across Tarawa, while speaking to a reporter in his home last year.

legs, and tried to move, and I fell down. So that's when I got wounded. I'll never forget that."

For this action, Gasca received a Commendation with Ribbon. His citation notes:

"Serving as a machine gunner during a heavy enemy counterattack on Tarawa, although wounded, he maintained a continuous and accurate rate of fire upon the hostile forces until the counterattacking element was repulsed. His aggressive spirit and determination in this instance were typical of his conduct throughout."

Gasca was evacuated from Tarawa, and sent to a hospital in Honolulu. He recovered in time to join B Company in the rest of its campaigns in the Pacific, surviving the fighting on Saipan, Tinian and Okinawa. He served in the postwar occupation of Japan, witnessing firsthand the devastation wrought by the atomic bomb

in Nagasaki, before returning home to Albert Lea.

The Battle of Tarawa is one that remains legendary in Marine Corps history. Of the notoriously vicious campaigns in the Pacific, Tarawa is remembered as one of the most brutal. In just 72 hours, there were over 3,000 American casualties on the island a little over a half-square mile in size. The Japanese had 4,690 men killed — only 17 soldiers and 129 of the Korean laborers brought to Betio by the Japanese survived. Casualty reports and images from the battle, particularly those shown in the 1944 Oscar-winning documentary "With the Marines at Tarawa," shocked the American public.

The battle though, was important. Admiral Chester Nimitz, commander of Allied Forces in the Pacific said, it "knocked down the front door to Japanese defenses in the Central Pacific," and it influenced American doctrine in amphibious operations to come.

For the first time, Americans encountered a deeply entrenched enemy in the Pacific — a strategy used by the Japanese throughout the rest of the war, and made famous in places like Peleliu, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa. Eighty years on, remnants of the battle are abundant on Betio, and efforts continue to recover the remains of Marines still buried in lost graves on the atoll, among them Arthur Wende, who was killed leading Gasca and Alfred Lewis to a fighting position.

Though 80 years have passed since his first combat experience at Tarawa, the scene remains etched in Lupe Gasca's mind.

"I remembered two things I forgot to mention last time we talked," Gasca

said to me one afternoon in his living room. "The heat and the smell. The smell of death ... I can still smell it right now. I'll never forget that."

But even so, Gasca's participation in the event doesn't loom large in his mind. He doesn't see himself as a hero. "It's a long time ago, and you know, over the years I never talked about it. I came home and got married and raised a family, and we never talked about it. In fact, even when I got back to B Company right after the battle, we never talked about it," Gasca said. "But after so many years, I wondered — why did they do it like that?"

Gasca is one of the very last who remember firsthand the fighting for bloody Tarawa. He is a 59-year member of Albert Lea Post 56. He turns 102 on March 12.

Be sure to send him a birthday card. Mail to Lupe Gasca, 1009 Fairlane Terrace, Albert Lea, MN 56007-3557.

Know the Minn. Legion's legislative priorities

Continued from Page 1

Veterans Affairs, or other entities that can provide life-changing support to those who served."

Janigo and her Legislative Committee also hosted a social gathering at Mancini's Char House in St. Paul on Feb. 6. It was an opportunity to hobnob with Republican and DFL politicians. Many came and went, and the space was filled the entire time.

"I think it went well," Janigo said. "It was great seeing them talk together about veterans issues. It's one of the areas they often agree on."

Charitable gambling continues to be a hot topic, and Janigo said gains are being made in talks with various parties involved in gambling — including the tribes — toward tax cuts. It's a topic many sides agree upon. There are other details on the table, such as sports betting and implementation dates for e-tab changes, but nothing solid to report.

"The good thing is we are having productive dialogue this session," she said. "I think something can get accomplished to help charities in their missions."

Minnesota American Legion Legislative Priorities

Below are the 2024 legislative priorities for the American Legion Department of Minnesota:

Pass the Veterans and Military Omnibus Bill

The 2023 session produced the second Veterans & Military Omnibus Bill, and this action to separate our legislation has become a Minnesota precedent. Let's not step backward. It ought to be a regular expectation, like an agriculture bill, tax bill or transportation bill.

Charitable gambling: Provide meaningful tax relief

We call on lawmakers to provide meaningful tax relief. The state has a large budget surplus and can afford to reduce how it taxes charities involved in gambling. Our posts pay more in charitable taxes than they give to the charities they support. Let's help our veterans by cutting state taxes on charitable gambling.

We also favor broadening the tax structure. Right now, once an organization reaches \$157,000 in combined net receipts for their fiscal year, they already are at the top tier for monthly taxes. We need a modern structure that also provides tax relief.

Fix a property-tax exemption for Gold Star spouses

The present law, MS 273.13, Subd. 34(d), says the surviving spouse must file within two years of the death and must live in the home at the time of the death. The statute cites the DD-1300 Report of Casualty or the DD-2064 Report of Death as indicators.

This property tax exemption law discriminates against active-duty spouses and would help only Minnesota National Guard or Reserve spouses. Clearly, active-duty spouses highly likely live on or near



American Legion Department of Minnesota Legislative Chairwoman Kristy Janigo testifies Feb. 19 on a bill that allows counties to provide up to \$300 for community Veterans Day ceremonies, much like how they already are able to do for Memorial Day observances. Download the Minnesota American Legion Legislative Priorities at mnlegion.org/legislation.

out-of-state bases when their spouses die in service to the country. When they return to Minnesota, they find they do not qualify for the Gold Star property-tax exemption. This is not in the spirit of our state's support for veterans and their families.

We also would favor changing the law to allow the spouses to remarry and retain the benefit.

These people have made deep sacrifices on behalf of our federal, state and local governments, and this would be the least our state could do to thank them.

Modernize the Homestead Market Value Exclusion

Currently, there are two levels of property tax exclusions. The first one is a maximum exemption of \$150,000 for veterans rated by the VA 70 to 100 percent disabled. The second level of exclusion is for 100 percent permanent total and disabled veterans at \$300,000.

We need to accommodate more veterans to be eligible for this benefit. Provide an exclusion for veterans rated 50 to 100 percent disabled at \$200,000 off their property tax values, and provide market value exclusion of \$400,000 for 100 percent-rated veterans.

Also, it should provide an inflationary-based increase. We support the removal of the equal or lesser value language for surviving spouses.

Provide 100 percent property tax relief for posts of veteran service organizations

Many 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations received property tax exemptions after qualifying through their county assessor and going through a three-year assessment review.

We desire Minnesota to give 501(c)(4) and 501(c)(19) organizations access to the same nonprofit property tax exemptions provided to 501(c)(3) nonprofits. This would halt an unfair treatment and reduce the disturbing trend of posts going under.

In that spirit, we desire congressionally chartered veterans organizations — because they have a federal requirement of

reporting their volunteer and charitable efforts directly to Congress annually — to pay zero property taxes. There are a handful of states that provide this same benefit as a recognition of the good veteran service organizations do for their communities, and Minnesota needs to be among them.

As a side benefit, a zero-tax measure would clear up much of the confusion city and county assessors statewide have regarding veteran posts and tax laws.

Amend a law to help our CVSOs receive important documents

Alter Statute 197.63 to include county veteran service officers in the list of entities of which "vital records" documents can be issued without a charge. This would save all kinds of "acting on behalf of" confusion at county recorder offices.

Waive license fees on hunting, trapping and fishing for all veterans

We favor the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources waiving fees for veterans who are Minnesota residents on hunting, trapping and fishing licenses.

We advocate for the Minnesota Legislature to approve the result of this proposal, as it would likely increase net license revenue for the DNR by encouraging their family members to purchase licenses and would give Minnesota veterans the health benefits that come from being in the great outdoors.

Allocate proceeds from military/veteran license plates to the Support Our Troops License Plate Grant Fund

Proceeds from sales of the Support Our Troops license plates go into a grant fund managed by the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs.

However, proceeds from all the other kinds of license plates that recognize past military service, military decorations, veterans organizations or veteran status — there are about 40 total — go into the state's general fund.

Veterans tell The American Legion they would rather have money from any military/veteran-themed license plates directed to the SOT Plate Grant Fund. They often decline to purchase those plates because the funds aren't directed toward veterans or made available to veteran service organizations through the grant process.

Administrative: Update the personal needs allowance at Minnesota Veterans Homes

No new law is needed for this matter, but The American Legion is working with the Minnesota Department of Veterans Homes to increase the personal needs allowance for veterans in the Minnesota Veterans Homes.

Presently, in a worst-case scenario, veterans are allowed to keep \$90 a month, and that has not changed in 30 years. For the sake of dignity, it's time to increase their allowance to reflect increases in the cost of living.

What costs haven't gone up in recent years?

National Report

Bill Barbknecht



Spring is on its way. It has been a very good December, January and early February for travel. Donna and I have attended many mid-winter conferences and department rallies. They were all well-attended. Thank you all for that.

The state Senate and House are now meeting in St. Paul. Please contact your senators and representatives. We need tax relief on our buildings, as well as tax relief on charitable gambling.

A dues increase is coming July 1. National HQ is raising its share of dues \$5. The Department of Minnesota is expected to pass a \$3 dues increase at the Department Convention. Some districts will be asking for a \$1 or \$2 increase at their district conventions.

There is an old saying: "It's not the price you pay. It's the price you paid to belong."

Most post dues will be about \$50 a year, which equals out to be 14 cents a day. Think of the things we do as an American Legion Family for our veterans, schools, cities as well as all our youth programs. To me, that makes it all worthwhile.

Tell me what hasn't gone up the past three or four years?

The Washington Conference will be Feb. 24-28 in the nation's capital. Minnesota will have about 25 American Legion Family members in attendance. Blake Schoolmeister of Willmar will speak at the ANAVICUS breakfast Monday, Feb. 26, with about 400-500 in attendance. He

received a scholarship last year and will talk about how it has helped with his college and career in life.

March is birthday month for the American Legion Family. I hope your post is doing something special for its members. Register your boys and girls ages 10-12 for the Legionville Camp this summer. Register your high school juniors for Boys State and Girls State.

And, of course, register your baseball teams for American Legion Baseball and Fastpitch Softball.

"Be The One" to do Buddy Checks. Go see those members you haven't seen in quite a while, whether they have renewed their membership.

Speaking of renewals, all posts should exceed last year's membership by April 1. Go knock physically on those doors; do not rely on email or texts. Personal invitations over coffee or a beverage of your choice are the best way to make feel members needed welcomed missed and included.

Donna and I look forward to seeing you on March 2 in Montgomery for the Appreciation Rally, beginning at 4 p.m.

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

Where should the Fund 85 Run start and end?

Legion Riders

Jody Hassing



The Sweetheart Rally was at Forest Lake Post 225 and a great time was had by all!

The American Legion Auxiliary did a fantastic job with the "cruising" theme. Spring is coming fast; I can only hope that the lack of snow so far this winter continues, and we have an early spring. I know most riders can't wait to get their bike out on the roads.

We are beginning to plan the Fund 85 Run for July 25-28 with the kickoff party on July 24. This year the run will be around southern Minnesota. If your Post Legion Family is interested in hosting the Riders this year, please contact me or Minnesota American Legion Riders Ride Captain Ted Berg. We are seeking a place for the kickoff party and the ending party.

Contact information for all MNALR officers is found at mnalr.org.

Please note, National HQ is no longer accepting donations to the Legacy Scholarship Fund. I know that many of you have it in your budget to donate to the Fund 84 (the Legacy Scholarship fund), if we receive a check

made out to Fund 84 those monies will be applied to the new National Riders Mission — the Veterans & Children Fund. This also is the National Commander's Project.

I know there are many other chapter runs and fundraisers happening across the state and throughout the year. Please invite me to your events so I can see all the good things you are doing!

If you would like help setting up a chapter at your post, please let me or your district American Legion Riders representative know so we can help you get things going. If you are interested in having me talk to your chapter or district about the reason for writing a constitution and a set of bylaws, please contact me.

God bless, and keep the rubber side down.

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



Many lawmakers and Legion Family members joined together for conversation at Mancini's in St. Paul. This is one among many photos taken in front of the American Legion backdrop. The legislators came from both DFL and Republican parties. They generally were excited to talk about veterans' issues.

The SAL Update: Come to the SAL Spring Conference



FOREST LAKE — Forest Lake Squadron 225 hosts the Detachment of Minnesota Spring Conference on Friday, March 15, and Saturday, March 16.

All members of the American Legion Family are welcome to attend. There is a registration fee of \$20. The deadline for registration is March 7. Make the check out to SAL Squadron 225 and send to SAL Squadron 225, 355 W. Broadway Ave., Forest Lake, MN 55025.

Please include your squadron, district and names of attendees.

The Finance Committee meets at 7 p.m. March 15, and the Executive Committee meets 15 minutes after Finance closes.

On March 16, general membership meets from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. with a break for lunch. Most attendees come for just the second day.

A special guest at the conference is Joseph Navarette of New Mexico and candidate for SAL national Commander.

The hotel for lodging, if needed, is Country Inn & Suites, 1854 W. Broadway Ave. The number is 612-464-8228. Ask for the "Sons of The American Legion group" to access the special rate of \$107. Check in is at 3 p.m. Check out is at noon.

Items for the silent auction for the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation can be brought to the conference.



Sons of The American Legion members John Weiss, Gary Richardson, Chuck Stone, Dave Arend Jr., Leroy Gonzalez and Matt Verkuilen stand with membership certificates at the Pearl Harbor Rally in December.

If you want it done, give it to a Son

By Shawn Davis

If April showers bring May flowers, then what does March bring?

A lot. March brings the need for squadrons to start preparing for a lot of reporting. Squadron Data Reports are required to be filled by Tax Day, April 15. The form is simple but it impacts a lot about membership. The membership amounts due for the squadron. The means of contacting the squadron if a member (or prospective member) has a question. The ability of members to renew online. The ability to find you online.

Important stuff especially for our prospective or newer members. Just a reminder that if you have tiered membership rates (separate rates for youth, dual members and past commanders) those will have to be

managed at the squadron level and not through national.

March also brings our yearly Spring Conference. This year it will be at Forest Lake American Legion Post 225, sponsored by SAL Squadron 225. This will be on Friday, March 15 (Finance and Executive Board meetings) and Saturday, March 16 for general membership. Registration cost is \$20 and includes lunch.

There will be a Child Welfare Foundation auction, and Joseph Navarette of New Mexico, the leading candidate for SAL national commander 2024-2025 will be our special guest. It is a lot of fun, and we look forward to seeing you there.

We also continue to support the "Be the One" program of the American Legion. Every month we should be helping the rest of the American Legion Family to destigmatize asking for mental health support,

provide peer-to-peer support and resources, and educate everyone on how they can "Be the One." There is a focus on this on the first of every month to raise awareness of this program. But in March we also celebrate The American Legion's birthday on March 15. This is another great opportunity to get "Be the One" into your community.

As we work our way through March, look forward to the additional work that is coming. Start to prepare your squadron for the upcoming squadron elections. Begin to complete the Consolidated Squadron Reports, which will be due in June.

There is so much more to do. We will get it done.

So, remember a phrase heard throughout this organization, if you want to get it done, give it to a Son. And do just that, get it done.



SAL Detachment Commander John Weiss gives the Legionnaire of the Year award to Robert "Tim" Haugen at the 9th District Mid-Winter Conference on Jan. 20. Haugen is a member with Moorhead Post 21 and a 9th District vice commander.



Two members of St. Augusta Post 621 came to Department HQ in St. Paul to deliver a check to Department Commander Paul Hassing's Project, the Minnesota Veterans Assistance Fund. Standing with the State Capitol in the background, from left are Post 621 Service Officer Mitch Pelarske, Post 621 Commander Brandon Hanebuth, Assistant Department Service Officer Janet Lorenzo, Hassing and Department Service Officer Ray Kane.

A challenge for heroes: St. Augusta Post 621 vs. Hastings Post 47

In the heartland of Minnesota, where communities thrive on the spirit of giving, two American Legion posts embarked on a remarkable mission. It all began with a challenge — a challenge to make a difference in the lives of veterans, their families and the entire community.

Mitch Pelarske of St. Augusta Post 621 and Department Historian Chris Anderson of Hastings Post 47, both devoted to the cause of helping veterans, decided to join forces in an extraordinary way. Their vision was simple: to contribute to the Minnesota Veterans Assistance Fund (Fund 85) and enhance the support system for veterans in their great state.

The St. Augusta post took the lead, pledging a generous donation of \$1,000 every month to Fund 85.

But it didn't stop there. The Hastings post, under the stewardship of its gambling manager, Anderson, stepped up with its own commitment of \$500 each month.

Together, the resolve of the two posts was unwavering, and they made sure to include these donations as a regular part of their monthly meeting agenda, approved without hesitation.

This collaboration, however, wasn't just an internal challenge; it is a call to action. The St. Augusta and Hastings posts extended a challenge to other American Legion posts and organizations to do their part in supporting Fund 85.

Their belief in the cause was encouraged by the endorsement of Minnesota American Legion Commander Paul Hassing and Minnesota Sons of The American Legion Commander John Weiss. Both men have Fund 85 as their fundraising projects.

What makes this initiative even more inspiring is the dedication of the American Legion

VA & Rehabilitation

Ray Kane



Riders. They have undertaken a four-day ride to raise funds for Fund 85, ensuring that the contributions stay within Minnesota to assist their fellow veterans.

St. Augusta Post 621's gratitude for the support they received from the American Legion Assistant Department Service Officer Janet Lorenzo was evident. She played a pivotal role in aiding their cause, and as a gesture of their appreciation, the post commander and gambling manager personally handed her a check for \$1,000. Their commitment didn't stop there; they promised an additional \$1,000 each month going forward.

Lorenzo is the lead supervisor of Fund 85. She has poured her heart and soul into the initiative, assisting veterans and their families with financial needs. The work has totaled to more than \$325,000 over the life of the fund. If we factor indirect assistance, like pointing a veteran in the right direction, the number climbs north of \$800,000.

Her dedication is admirable, but it's important to remember that even our most dedicated heroes need a break.

The challenge thrown down by St. Augusta and Hastings posts isn't just about numbers; it's about the power of unity, compassion and unwavering support for those who have served their country. As these two posts lead the way, they invite us all to reflect on the incredible impact we can make when we join forces for a cause greater than ourselves.

I would like to take a moment to recognize Mitch Pelarske

from Post 621 for his exceptional work as a post service officer.

Mitch's dedication to his community and his unwavering commitment to serving our nation's heroes truly deserve a Bravo Zulu shout out.

What sets Mitch apart is his incredible passion and drive to make a difference, despite not having any formal training as a post service officer. Rather than letting this deter him, Mitch has gone above and beyond to educate himself, spending countless hours seeking guidance from Janet and learning about the responsibilities of the position. His determination to continually improve himself is truly admirable.

Mitch has not only become an integral part of his post, but he has also become a role model for others. His selfless service and genuine care for our veterans and the American Legion have inspired those around him. Mitch's dedication and love for his community shines through in everything he does.

Please join me in acknowledging Mitch's outstanding contributions and thanking him for his tireless efforts to support our veterans. Let's continue to support and learn from Mitch's example as we strive to make a positive impact in the lives of those we serve.

Well done, Mitch! Bravo Zulu!

Ray Kane is the service officer for the American Legion Department of Minnesota.



St. Augusta Post 621 Service Officer Mitch Pelarske delivers a \$1,000 check to Department Commander Paul Hassing on Jan. 26 as Post 621 Commander Brandon Hanebuth watches.

What's Happening?

Appreciation Rally is set for March 2

MONTGOMERY — The Minnesota American Legion Family Appreciation Rally is set for Saturday, March 2, at Montgomery Post 79.

"The Appreciation Rally is a time for showing appreciation for membership efforts and to recharge our batteries through camaraderie," said Department Commander Paul Hassing.

The social hour and membership turn-in are at 4 p.m. The meal is at 5 p.m. Program follows the meal.

The meal is a three-meat Mexican buffet, with the ability to make tacos, burritos and salads. Meal is by Chef Dan of Taco Terco.

The American Legion Department of Minnesota Executive Committee plans to meet at 2 p.m. at Post 79.

The American Legion Auxiliary Department of Minnesota Executive Committee plans to meet at 11 a.m. at Post 79.

Legion Family members can register online at mnlegion.org/calendar.

If wanting to register offline, they can send a \$20-per-meal check to American Legion Post 79 before Feb. 26. Post 79 is at 102 Elm Ave. SW. Montgomery, MN 56069. Be sure to include the names of any attendees.

Dept. Shooting Competition to raise funds for struggling veterans

COON RAPIDS — The American Legion Department of Minnesota is hosting a new event to raise funds for Fund 85, the Minnesota Veterans Assistance Fund.

The Department of Minnesota Shooting Competition is April 6 at The Modern Sportsman gun range, 20 Coon Rapids Blvd. NW, Coon Rapids.

Registration is at 9 a.m. Competition begins at 9:15 a.m. There is a \$20 cover charge.

Event organizer James Hultgren of Osseo-Maple Grove Post 172 said The Modern Sportsman is a state-of-the-art shooting facility that supports veterans, and Legion members who enjoy firearms and shooting sports will enjoy experiencing the facility.

This shooting competition is for veterans and non-veterans alike. Proceeds benefit the Minnesota Veterans Assistance Fund, which is Commander

Paul Hassing's Project.

Handguns, rifles and shotguns (slug only) are welcome. The Modern Sportsman has training to help anyone become proficient at firing ranges.

Hultgren said he hopes the event can become an annual fundraiser.

Participants can register online in advance at mnlegion.org/calendar or they can register and pay at the door.

Legion Bowling Tournament slated for April

DAYTON — Registration is open for the 78th annual Minnesota State American Legion Family Bowling Tournament.

The tournament runs April 6 to April 28 at Sundance Lanes in Dayton. Osseo-Maple Grove Post 172 is the host.

Players will bowl in shifts, with singles and doubles at noon Saturdays and teams at 3:30 p.m. Saturdays and noon Sundays.

The tournament is open to all members of the Minnesota American Legion Family. They must have a current Legion, Auxiliary or SAL card.

Registration forms and suggested hotels are found at mnlegion.org/bowling-tournament.

Reservations can be made by contacting Tournament Secretary Cari Lamb. Her phone is 612-968-4839, and her email address is crlmb74@gmail.com.

Be sure to send Lamb the filled-out registration forms.

Lodging for the tournament is at LaQuinta Inn & Suites in Brooklyn Park, Holiday Inn & Suites in Maple Grove, Hilton Garden Inn in Maple Grove, Hampton Inn in Maple Grove and Cambria Hotel in Maple Grove.

Sundance Lanes is at 15240 113th Ave. in Dayton.

Air Force Band is coming to Waconia High

WACONIA — The Waconia High School Band program is excited to welcome the U.S. Air Force Band from Washington, D.C., as its members travel the Midwest on a spring tour.

The Air Force Band is slated to perform at 7 p.m. Wednesday, April 10, at the Waconia High School Auditorium, 1650 Community Drive, in Waconia. Tickets are free but must be

claimed prior to the performance by visiting <https://usafband.ticketleap.com/spring-tour-concert-waconia/>.

The Air Force Band will be joined by the Singing Sergeants.

Vietnam Veterans Day to be honored at Forest Lake post

FOREST LAKE — American Legion Post 225 in Forest Lake is hosting its Vietnam Veterans Day Ceremony for the 17th year.

It has been scheduled for 2 p.m. Sunday, March 24, at the post. The emcee will be American Legion Department of Minnesota Commander Paul Hassing.

The guest speaker will be retired Col. Wilbur J. Latham Jr., a Vietnam veteran and recipient of the Distinguished Flying Cross and Silver Star.

He is from Iowa and served as an Air Force fighter pilot. He flew more than 100 missions over North Vietnam in 1966. He later served with and retired from the 132nd Tactical Fighter Wing of the Iowa Air National Guard.

Event organizers announced a \$500 Vietnam Veterans Memorial Scholarship that will honor Vietnam veteran David Guerrette, who greatly assisted with the ceremony over its 17 years.

All veterans, their families and the public are welcome to attend this free event.

Medal of Honor recipient to speak in Stillwater

STILLWATER — The Hometown Hero Lumberjack Gala on March 23 in Stillwater is welcoming a Medal of Honor recipient as its speaker.

Clinton Romesha received the top military decoration for his actions during the Battle of Kamdesh in October 2009 during the War in Afghanistan.

The battle was featured in the 2020 film "The Outpost," based on the book "The Outpost: An Untold Story of American Valor" by Jake Tapper. (The outpost's commander was then-1st Lt. Andrew Bundermann, whose hometown is Bovey.)

The event is a fundraiser for Hometown Hero Outdoors, a nonprofit organization dedicated to outdoor adventures for veterans, first responders and actively serving military, with a goal

of recreational therapy, all at no cost to the members.

The Lumberjack Gala is at the JX Event Center. Doors open at 5 p.m.

Awards will be presented to HHO Person of the year, Field Staff of the Year and other honors.

Interested in attending? Inquire by calling 651-583-6304 or emailing info@hometownherooutdoors.org.

Perhaps your post could purchase a table and send a group over. Hometown Heroes Outdoors is a 501c3 organization and accepts gambling donations.

Post 39 announces Fish Fry Fridays

NORTH ST. PAUL — American Legion Post 39 announced a menu item in a news release, for which the post is well-known.

Fish Fry Fridays runs 5-8 p.m. Fridays from Feb. 16 through March 29.

The menu item features four pieces of deep-fried pollock or eight pieces of shrimp, with french fries, coleslaw and a dinner roll, for \$12.50 a person.

Hibbing's Veteran Thrift Store donates \$10,000 to veterans home

SILVER BAY — The Silver Bay Veterans Home was delighted to accept a \$10,000 donation from the Veterans Community Thrift Store in Hibbing.

A Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs news release says the donation will be used to purchase a van to help transport residents to events and other social and leisure activities in the community.

The dream of a van began in 2016 with three veteran friends: Larry Pocrnich, Army, a medically retired Iron Range police officer; Bill Bean, Navy, a former veterans service officer; and Bob Fluguear, Marine, Iron Range miner, now deceased.

They approached the Hibbing-based Salvation Army-run thrift store with an offer to purchase its local operations and physical space, continue to run and grow the business and ultimately direct all profits to veteran-specific causes. The community responded positively to this idea; in fact, just one year into their work, the store outgrew its location and moved to their current site at 2003 First Ave. N. in Hibbing.

Pocrnich is a past commander of the

8th District of The American Legion and a longtime member of Hibbing Post 222. He has raised funds in the past to improve the wood shop.

"When it's my time (to need skilled nursing care), I've already got an idea of what wing I want to live in here," Pocrnich said.

Silver Bay Public Affairs Coordinator Randall Walz has known Pocrnich for years.

"From the American Legion to the VFW, Beyond the Yellow Ribbon and many other veterans groups, Larry has an unwavering commitment to serving our nation's heroes. And the VCTS he helped co-found gets amazing support from individuals in our Arrowhead Region. They know about the care we provide, especially our niche in dementia care. Their support of VCTS' work allows VCTS to support our work."

Silver Bay Veterans Home Administrator Dani Donner said, "I'm proud of Hibbing's — and the surrounding area's — kindness and desire to ensure our veterans live their best possible lives with us. I'm also so thankful for the generosity of the VCTS Board of Directors. We look forward to continuing to partner with them on future projects."

Eagle Group helps vets find jobs

BLOOMINGTON — The Eagle Group of Minnesota Veterans meets at 5:30 p.m. on the fourth Wednesday of every month at The Toro Co. headquarters, 8111 Lyndale Ave. S.

The Eagle Group comprises veterans who are helping other veterans find employment and veteran-friendly employers. Anyone is welcome, as long as they sign up in advance at eaglegroupmn.org. There is a free meal, too.

Eagle Group also hosts a networking mixer at 5 p.m. Tuesday, March 12, at VFW Post 5555 in Richfield. Anyone can just drop by and chat.

Blue Earth to host an adult prom

BLUE EARTH — Blue Earth Post 89 is hosting a fundraiser called "A Night Under the Stars."

This "adult prom" is at 7-11 p.m. Saturday, April 13, at the post, 115 W. Sixth St. in Blue Earth.

The cost is \$25 or \$50 per couple. Proceeds benefit local veterans.

Contact the post at 507-526-2443.

SCENES FROM THE SWEETHEART RALLY



Attendees sang "God Bless America" at the end of the Sweetheart Rally, which was held Feb. 3 at Forest Lake Post 225.



Forest Lake Post 225 Commander Pat Silovich provided greetings. Auxiliary Department Membership Chairman Jenny Nelson emceed, with a theme of "Cruisin'." Hence, the ship.

Listening Post



With Minnesota Twins legend Joe Mauer being elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in January, the Fabulous 4th District has four Legion Baseball alumni who are in the hall, a rare feat indeed. From left (and which post they played for) are Joe Mauer (Attucks-Brooks Post 606), Dave Winfield (Attucks-Brooks Post 606), Jack Morris (Christie-DeParcq Post 406) and Paul Molitor (Attucks-Brooks Post 606).



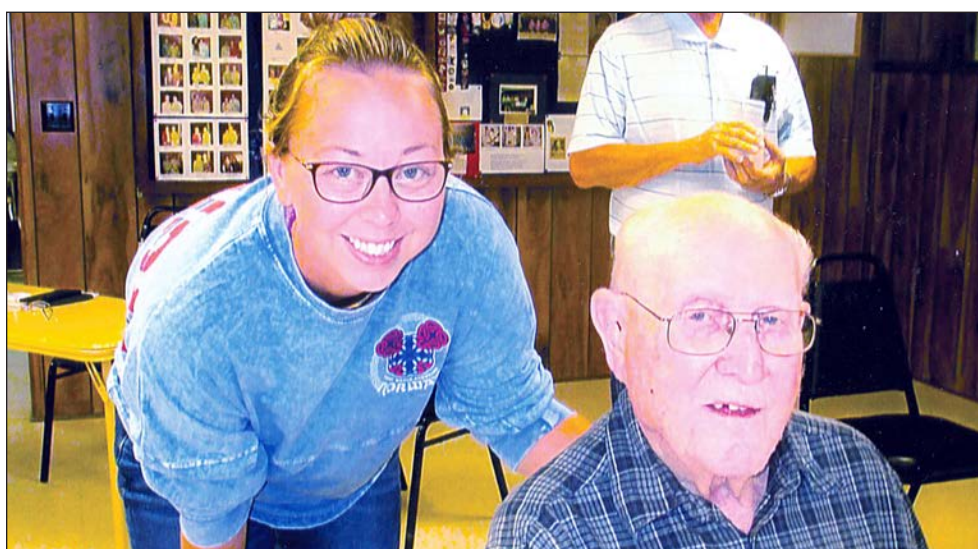
The June 17 Backing the Blues Street Dance held by Golden Valley Chester Bird Post 523 and the Hennepin County Sheriff's Foundation generated \$42,000 in scholarship funding. Three students going into law enforcement were awarded \$2,500 each in scholarships at a Dec. 8 presentation. From left are Tyler Miller of Southwest Minnesota State, Allen Jaeger of Alexandria Technical College and Luis Castaneda of Minnesota West Community College. Presenting, from left, back row, are Commander Craig Hartman, Foundation Chair Peter Brehm and Foundation Board Member Melissa Field.



Big Lake High School and Big Lake Post & Unit 147 hosted a special event called Stellabration on Jan. 6, with a special appearance from the King himself, Elvis Presley. The event celebrated Stella T. Huso's 105th birthday, which was Jan. 8. She is the nation's longest-living Gold Star Mother. The Sherburne County Board of Commissioners declared Jan. 16 "Stella Huso Day" and said she was "a relentless advocate for our nation's veterans and their families." Her son, Wayne, enlisted in the Army and served in the field artillery with the 1st Cavalry Division in Vietnam. He was 20 on Aug. 13, 1969, when he was killed by an artillery round in Tay Ninh province three months into his tour.



The team from Daniel R. Olson Post 594 in Eagan had the most attendees at the 3rd District Convention. From left are Mike Peiffer, Sergeant-at-Arms Wayne Beierman, Commander Pat Graham, 1st Vice Commander Cindy Yanchury, Chaplain Joel "Duff" Daffina and Barrett Kirchenwitz.



Afghanistan veteran Shannon Mosenden stands next to World War II veteran Irving Hagen at the Hanska Post 365 membership dinner. The photo captures the post's newest member standing with the post's longest member. Hagen has been a member for 76 years. Mosenden has been a member since July.



The Fabulous 4th District of the Minnesota American Legion participated in the St. Paul Winter Carnival Parade on Jan. 27.



The Fighting 5th District also marched in the Winter Carnival Parade on Jan. 27. St. Paul's Winter Carnival is an effort to embrace winter. The high temp that day was 34 degrees.

Listening Post



Last August, Hopkins Post 320 hosted 30 youth from Ukraine ages 14 to 17 years old on a journey to escape war for a while. They participated in a six-week mission to learn about rebuilding their country. The Legion post provided them with words of encouragement and how to support the servicemembers and veterans in their families. The experience was moving for both parties.



Melrose Post & Unit 101 had 50 members attend a wreath-laying ceremony at Camp Ripley.



Stewartville Post 164 Commander Richard Paulson, left, presents a \$5,000 check from the post to Bryan Malone, president of the Stewartville Sportsman's Club. Funds will improve the trap range and other youth projects.



St. Louis Park Post 282 Commander Dick Brammer stands in front of some of the 248 license plates on the walls. The post contends it is the largest collection in the state, now that Minneapolis Post 1 donated 100 of its plates. There are no duplicates. They are cared for by Club Manager Noah Jerve and his dad, Mark Jerve.



Jean Johnson of Honor Quilts of West Central Minnesota presented four honor quilts on Dec. 12 at Lowry Post 253. Three pictured here are, from left, Dave Johnson, Dewayne Wold and Earl Schaub. The fourth was Dale Anderson.

From left are Brandon Bolhaus, David Harrison, Rick Olson and Kevin Carpenter. Harrison, director of parts operations at The Toro Co. in Bloomington, received the Patriot Award from Employer Support of the Guard & Reserve (ESGR). He was nominated by Bolhaus, out of Toro's Plymouth, Wis., warehouse. He serves with the 4th Combat Engineer Battalion in the Marine Corps Reserve. Carpenter, vice president of global operations, said supporting Guard and Reserves members exemplifies Toro values. Olson is the CEO of Toro.



Members of the Bloomington Kennedy High School girls swim and dive team hold up a check for \$10,000 from Bloomington Post 550 to the JFK Swim & Dive Booster Club to help pay for a \$60,000 LED scoreboard at the district swimming facility. Among other improvements, spectators now will know who is swimming in which lanes.



Dent American Legion Post 148 and Perham VFW Post 4020 held a Veterans Day program at Perham Living on Nov. 10.



Members of St. Michael Auxiliary Unit 567 decorated a patriotic Christmas tree at Liberty Restaurant & Bar (name of the post's restaurant).

Listening Post

A place for hope and healing

Horse ranch up north provides healing through equine therapy

By Pamela French

BAGLEY — For many of us, it takes a few hard knocks before we wake up to the truth and His greater plan for our lives.

This was the case for Chris Reder, founder of DTOM Veterans Ranch south of Bagley. DTOM is a military acronym for “don’t tread on me.” The ranch provides equine therapy for veterans recovering from PTSD, addiction, etc.

Reder was in the Navy seven years before a life-changing motorcycle accident redirected the course of his life.

While stationed in California, instead of Spain, where his orders had him going, Reder was riding his motorcycle home when a motorist pulled out in front of him. He sustained numerous injuries including a traumatic brain injury. He was released medically from the Navy in 1999. One minute you have all the support and structure from the Navy, and suddenly it’s all gone.

For the longest time, Reder was angry at God and lived a life of “extremely” risky behavior. Though he was not suicidal, death did not scare or deter him.

Nearly everything in his life involved alcohol. For years he floundered from job to job, finding success in many places, but when promotion opportunities came up, he shipped out. He rarely had a job longer than a couple years.

In 2015, a friend suggested he try volunteering or find something of interest that involved veterans, with hopes that would help him with his struggles. After some research, Reder decided on helping a few organizations. He signed up for the Operation New Trails, a 75-mile hike in the Rocky Mountains to raise funds to build a handicap-accessible house for a severely injured veteran.

He signed up to march in the 22Kill 22K Ruck March in Dallas to raise awareness of the 22 veterans lost each day to suicide. He held a fund-raising concert to benefit K9s for Warriors, a project that trains and donates service dogs to veterans in hopes of reducing suicide.

Reder enrolled and participated in various Team Rubicon events. He participated in various Mission Continues events — all of which led him to the same conclusion: not enough being done on a daily basis to reduce veteran suicides.

He did manage to hold a job as a long-haul truck driver for a while out of Colorado, a “million miler.” This gave Reder plenty of quiet and alone time to think and process.

Eventually he came up with DTOM 22/0 Foundation. After the formation of the nonprofit, fundraising and help was slow. About this time, his thoughts turned to God and began asking if he should give up, move on or just keep



Chris Reder kisses one of the horses. This one is named Valor.

driving trucks with a comfortable salary.

Additionally, he was being evicted from his home for no reason, making him basically homeless, buying an RV to live in at campgrounds in the mountains.

One day in May 2018, he was driving in rainy weather; no weather alerts to cause any concern. He looked to his side-view mirror and noticed the trailer rising up off the ground. Suddenly, his truck was being picked up as well.

The next thing he remembers was his truck slamming to the ground on the passenger side. Finding himself dangling from his seat belt, looking out the broken windshield.

Reder was able to undo the seatbelt and walk through that window, without a scratch. It was at this moment he realized God had a greater purpose for his life. But being hard-headed, he attempted to continue to drive trucks until August when he moved.

He moved to northeast South Dakota, where he drove for an agricultural company for about a year. He chose to resign from this job as he was attending school to become a Draper Equine sensory method therapist.

“Draper Therapy is an innovative and worldwide unique methodology, based on scientific principles of the brain-body connection and a well-defined series of equine-mounted activities. It supports and enhances participants’ abilities to think more rationally, make more socially acceptable decisions and receive hope for a successful and better life” according to Horseback Miracles.

This was the biggest step for Reder in the process that DTOM would become the DTOM 22/0 Veterans Ranch north of Warner, S.D. Initially, they were able to build an outside arena, then a barn

over the arena. The first horse was Max. Growth continued and they were able to assist veterans at no cost. It was at this time he knew he was fully committed and never looked back.

A nearly 10-acre ranch was purchased, where they worked until they ran out of room. After an exhaustive search for land, a 40-acre ranch was found south of Bagley. They moved to Bagley the summer of 2023.

The ranch currently has 10 horses. Along with the therapy horses, arenas and barns, the ranch will allow them to raise beef to give to veterans. They currently rely on donations of beef to give to veterans.

Currently, they give away emergency, monthly, Thanksgiving and Christmas food boxes to veterans — no questions, no judgement, just honoring the oath to take care of each other.

The other services DTOM Veterans Ranch is offering are: emergency assistance, job placement assistance, shelter assistance, transportation assistance, clothing assistance, mentorship, coordinating volunteerism, veteran handmade quilts, veteran pheasant hunt.

Coming in 2024: The equine assistance resumes after the new Ralph Baringer Memorial Arena (Minnesota WWII MIA/KIA hero) is built, the David Lemer Memorial Military Museum and a veteran fishing program.

Also on the property of the DTOM Veterans Ranch is the “Bradley Jobe Memorial Garden,” a peaceful, serene, quiet space for visitors to mediate, reflect and be one with their surroundings.

“This space is very sacred to us and our supporters, as well as to Brad’s family. Brad took his own life a few years ago,” Reder said. “His memory lives on.”

The DTOM 22/0 Ranch does not receive funding from state or federal agencies. The funding is strictly donations and grants, and a couple fundraising raffles per year that are listed on their website or Facebook page. Veterans are never charged a penny for any of their services.

Reder lives by the Pericles saying, “What you leave behind is not what is engraved in stone monuments but what is woven into the lives of others.”

To reach Reder or the ranch, call 605-725-3866. Donations can be made at dtom220.org.

The ranch is the recipient of the 2022 National American Legion Auxiliary Public Spirit Award.



American Legion College convened Nov. 12-17, 2023, at American Legion HQ in Indianapolis. The two students from Minnesota were James Hultgren of Osseo-Maple Grove Post 172 and Joe Bares of Jordan Post 3. Did you know there is a Minnesota desk at the National Headquarters? Each department has one.



From left are Hultgren, 3rd District Chaplain Kelley Adelsman (a past Legion College graduate), National Commander Daniel Seehafer and Bares. Seehafer is a member at Horicon, Wis., Post 157.



It was Minnesota vs. Wisconsin! Hultgren plays a game of cribbage with Seehafer after a meal. They were unable to finish, but they hope to complete the match later.



Chris Reder stands beside a pickup at DTOM Veterans Ranch.



A Christmas season parade of decorated vehicles at the Minneapolis VAMC celebrated the season and thanked veterans.

Patrol was better than base politics and cleaning latrines

By Gabe Keith
4th District Adjutant

CANNON FALLS — Spc. Daniel M. Holmes said about his time as an Army Cavalry Scout with the 1st Squadron of the 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment, while stationed in West Germany along the Czechoslovakian (Czech) and East German border in 1984-85: “If Russia invaded Europe, our mission was to hold the line for two weeks, but in reality, we had somewhere between two hours and two days before our unit would be overran.”

Toward the end of the Cold War, their unit was stationed in the Fulda Gap, an area containing two corridors of lowlands believed to be a strategic advantage for tanks to be sent in a surprise attack by the Soviets and their Warsaw Pact allies to gain crossing of the Rhine River.

Holmes was stationed with one of three units that rotated from base camp to the border camp where they conducted daily border patrols and field maneuver operations. They primarily used jeeps while maintaining a reactionary force which consisted of a tube-launched optically tracked wire-guided (TOW) missile vehicle and an armored personal carrier (M113). The tank unit stationed with them started out with M60s. Halfway through his year-and-a-half deployment, they switched to the new M1 Abrams.

One time on patrol, Holmes and the other cav scouts witnessed Czech forces remove a dead body along the border. They were not sure if the soldier along the other side of the border was killed by landmines — common in that area — or by other soldiers, but it reaffirmed the serious nature of their mission.

“I really enjoyed the border patrol — out in the field,” Holmes said. “I didn’t like being back in Camp Gates where cleaning duties and politics seemed to take up most of our time. People get bored; they end up doing dumb things, and then the whole troop gets punished for it.”

Holmes was born in Abilene, Texas, the first son of Donald and Elaine Holmes. He was preceded by two sisters, Diana, born in 1955 and Judy, born in 1956. His father started his military career as an airman who served in the Korean War, worked his way up to master sergeant before going through officer cadet training. Eventually he became a missile combat crew commander for the Atlas Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) located near Spokane, Wash.

In 1965, after the Cuban Missile Crisis, Don Holmes was transferred to Vietnam while his wife and children moved to Brainerd to be close to relatives. They would leave again in 1966 when his father returned from Vietnam and was stationed in Little Rock, Ark., where his little brother Tommy was



Members of Dan Holmes’ tank crew gather around an M113 Improved TOW Vehicle. Holmes is squatting center front of the armored vehicle, which carried a dual M220 TOW launcher. This photo was taken in the 1980s on maneuvers in Germany during the field training exercise Reforger.

‘Hold the line for two weeks’



Daniel Holmes lives in Cannon Falls with his wife, Patty. He is an American Legion member with St. Paul Post 8.



Daniel Holmes sits atop on a tank holding an M-16 rifle.

born. Then he was at the Strategic Air Command by Omaha. In 1969, his family moved back to Brainerd, and in 1970 he retired from the Air Force as a major and joined his family.

Daniel Holmes attended Lincoln Elementary, Washington Junior High and Brainerd Senior High Schools. During the summers he worked on Grandpa Pederson’s farm and Uncle Don’s as well. It was there he learned about preparing the soil, growing and harvesting wheat, rye, oats, soybeans and alfalfa. He learned how to bale hay and straw, work with machinery, hunt and trap gophers.

Little brother Eddie was born while Dan was a senior working part time at Airmotive Enterprise at the Brainerd Airport. His dad was a flight instructor

and, along with his mother, helped him get a private pilot license before graduating high school.

Holmes moved to Moorhead and went to school in Fargo, where he became certified as an aircraft mechanic. From there he got a job at a small airport in Maple Lake. When the company shut down, he attended community college in Brainerd where he received an associate of arts degree. Then he attended Alexandria Technical School for avionics and received his FCC general radio telephone operator license.

With the student loans he took out for college and vocational schooling, he was close to \$4,000 in debt. Holmes wanted to further his education, but jobs were scarce. His dad had said he thought every man should serve in the military. He began looking for possible jobs within the different military branches with the hope he could receive funding for college upon completing his enlistment.

He chose the Army cav scouts. It looked tough and exciting, was only a two-year commitment, and offered a \$15,000 scholarship. With his educational background, he entered the military as an E-3 private first class in 1983.

Holmes spent basic training in Fort Knox, Ky., where he enjoyed the daily routine of physical training. One morning session of PT, it was dark, and he slipped on the ice, and twisted his ankle. It was a personal setback, but he was still able to keep up with everyone. By the end, he received the George S. Patton Jr. Award for receiving the highest overall score in his troop during basic training.

He was selected for the TOW Missile gunner training where he scored the second highest in the group. Then he was sent to Germany where his

deployment and the rest of his enlistment was completed. He left as an E-4, along with his George S. Patton Award, two Army Achievement Medals, and a Squadron Commander’s List Good Conduct Medal.

After the Army, Holmes continued his education at first in welding at Brainerd Vocational Technical College and then began classes at St. Cloud State University. He began working for Airmotive Enterprise again but this time as an aircraft mechanic. He earned commercial, instrument, multi-engine and flight instructor certificates, and started flight instruction, flying fire patrols, and aerial photography, along with doing aircraft maintenance. He bought and started making payments on a champ 7GCB, that his dad had and offered to sell to him. It’s a beautiful airplane that he still owns today.

He enjoyed the work in general aviation, but as an aircraft mechanic, he earned \$6.50 cents an hour, and as a pilot or flight instructor, was earning \$10 per hour. Yet, he was earning more as a mechanic because the lesson planning, preflight and postflight instruction, wasn’t being paid for. He was paid only for the time the aircraft engine was running.

He only had a semester of college to go but had focused on flying and was living paycheck to paycheck when he was able to get a job with Northwest Airlines as a mechanic in 1990. The starting pay was triple what he was making, and there was also the medical, dental and flight benefits.

A year and a half later he bought a house in South St. Paul. He married Christiana (Chris) Cassen on Dec. 19, 1992, and adopted her son, Crockett James (CJ), named after his great grandfather. His wife’s parents offered them 10 acres of land if they wanted to build on their property, so they designed and built a three-quarter log home with a full walk-out basement. It had a two-by-six outer frame with plywood outer walls which they liked better than the solid log construction. The three-quarter logs were nailed to the outer plywood, creating more insulation and protection.

They had two more children, Elaina, born in 1994, and Evan, born in 1999. All three of their kids loved acting and singing and were active in school plays and choir. In 2007 his wife was diagnosed with brain cancer. After multiple chemotherapy treatments and surgeries over seven years, she passed away.

In 2016 Holmes met Patty Drinkwine, and in 2017, they were married. Now they live in Cannon Falls, where they love to host holiday events and birthday parties for their kids and grandkids. Holmes likes to read, fish, operate his amateur ham radio, and work on his 1957 Jeep Willy he received from his first wife’s family that he plans on giving to their kids someday.

He’s currently the senior engineering technician in the transonic wind tunnels at Collins Aerospace. Specifically, his role is to support the operational needs of production and engineering with environmental stress screening and performance measurements for new and ongoing production.



District commanders

1st District Mark Maloney



As I am sitting here authoring this article, I am looking at how we can thank our veterans for their service. Well, I think thanking them for their service should be more like this year's vote in office.

Our veterans deserve better care and attention from our country's government than — well, *let's not get political today*. Veterans keep us safe and give their all so we can sleep at night and go the work the next day and have our freedoms we cherish.

Entry-level active-duty soldiers make less than the minimum wage in some states. It is a shame that the people who are supposed to represent us do not think about what the majority wants and do not hear our needs or concerns.

As a veteran, we know how hard it is to make ends meet as an active-duty service member and then try to raise the family on less income than the rest of the world and try to get help and be told we will get back to you and never do. Or the paperwork gets lost or heard sorry there is nothing we can do.

So, then, it is up to us The American Legion to make sure the government gets the things. The service members and their families get a fair wage, so they do not have a part-time job, so they have three incomes and pay a price for childcare.

We also should make it so the politicians take better care of the veterans who get out with shelter for them and their families and help them reintegrate the veterans into civilian life. So let us, as Legionnaires, remember why The American Legion was formed and let us not forget what the Legionnaires before us started and all the benefits they fought for.

Well, it is up to us to do the same and not take office just to put a feather in your cap. We, as Legionnaires, have more responsibility than that. We need to remember our job at hand.

God bless our country, and God bless our troops and keep them safe.

3rd District Rod Reifsteck



To the Thundering Third District, we are six months into our tenure, and I continue to give you my thoughts and where we might be heading. From my perspective, the military family stands as pillars of strength, resilience and sacrifice. Families with veterans have sacrificed so much to their health or mental state. It is not just a gesture; it is a debt of gratitude.

Our military families today face unique challenges such as frequent relocations, long periods of separation and the continuing fear for the safety of their loved ones. I have observed through personal experience that these challenges exist and that military families have the spirit of unity, demonstrating remarkable courage and adaptability.

Anytime we can go to an event that honors military families and recognizes their sacrifices this can go a long way in showing appreciation. There are simple gestures such as offering assistance with household chores, providing emotional support or organizing community events, which can make a big impact. As I am out and visiting, I see the 3rd District continue to go above and beyond, and I am thankful to be a part of it.

It is good to recognize the

unique skills and experiences gained through military life. As a previous active-service Marine, I was lucky enough to come back to the job I was working at. I knew that I had support during deployments. I felt respected that I could contribute to my job when I returned, and I would hope that employers would continue that today.

I have become aware that military activities and events can foster a culture of gratitude like Veterans Day on the Hill, and taking advantage of our National Commander's Tour of Minnesota. I know it is important to be aware and attend activities that are organized by The American Legion.

Finally, honoring military families goes beyond mere words; it requires action and a genuine support for the sacrifices they endure. We can truly honor these heroes who stand behind our brave men and women in uniform by recognizing their unique challenges and fostering a culture of gratitude.

Our strength is coming together in the "can do" spirit.

5th District Dick Ward



The Fabulous 4th and Fighting 5th districts held a shared Mid-Winter Conference, and it was a success. Great team efforts produced a memorable event with interesting speakers, special training and opportunities to contrast and compare our gifts of knowledge and experience.

This is the winter that wasn't ... so far.

Our cold-weather activities are just a memory and now we move onto, Boys State participants, Legionville camping applications, testimonial gatherings and other spring activities. It's not too early to consider becoming a candidate for a district office position. Executive Committee member, program chair, vice commander, sergeant at arms and other positions are available to you. Simply ask your post to place your name in nomination.

The Hellenic Post 129 is really stepping up this year. A blood drive scheduled for March 9, reestablishment of their Sons of The American Legion Squadron 129, and restarting Sunday Hospital Visitation at the Veterans Medical Center in Minneapolis. Post 129 Commander Don Forchas is leading the charge. Perhaps there is a future district commander's cap in his future!

Two 5th District meetings are

left before our convention. We are looking for Legionnaire of the Year nominees. If you have candidate in mind, please forward that to the district, and we'll place it in the group for election at the District Convention in June.

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

Keep tracking your Post Consolidated Post Report (CPR) items. Each entry is important to the mission of The American Legion. As we gather this data and accumulate it up the chain of command, we grow in strength to positively affect all veterans' issues. Stay on it!

Wold-Chamberlain Post 99 hosts Richfield-Minneapolis Post 435's Omelet Breakfast on the second Sunday and Post 99 Pancake Breakfast on the fourth Sunday.

Remember to *Support your local posts!*

6th District Anthony Koop



Greetings and Salutations from the Big Sixth!

A lot has been accomplished so far this year, but there is much more to come. We all should be at 90 percent or more, but the last ones are only trickling in. It's time to get out there and talk to those last few renewals in person, and on your way out and about, look for those new members.

Spring trade shows are a great option to have new members find you! Check with your local Chamber of Commerce and see if they would publish your meeting times and a paragraph or two of what your local American Legion does for the community.

There are many programs and awards that are coming up in the next few months. Make sure you are working with your local schools (including home schools!) and talk to them about Boys State, Girls State and

Legionville. If you have baseball/softball, get them registered now so they can plan ahead.

It is also the time to make sure you are getting your CPRs together. If you haven't been keeping track throughout the year, get started now so you don't have to rush when they are due.

Remember, CPRs show Congress what we are doing and how much time and money we are putting into our programs. Don't forget about the Children & Youth reports, as they are separate.

I hope to see many of you at the Appreciation Rally this weekend! Rallies are a great place to connect with other Legion Family members in the Department of Minnesota.

8th District Jennifer Havlick



Greetings, 8th District Legionnaires,

Well, the new year has arrived. That means if you have not renewed your 2024 Legion membership, you are expired. We don't want to see any member lose their continuous years of service in The American Legion or lose your Legion benefits, so please take out your membership card and check to make sure it says 2024 on it.

If it doesn't, please send your dues to your post. If you have

issues and think you paid your 2024 dues, please contact your post adjutant. He or she should be able to help you straighten it out for you.

As a district, we continue to hover toward the bottom of our department membership rankings. Visit mnlegion.org/membership-reports/ to see the standings. As of Feb. 14, the 8th

District was in eighth place.

I know we can move back up to the top where we belong. If you need assistance with your membership, please do not hesitate to contact the district officers.

Just a quick reminder that national dues increase in 2025 by \$5 and department will ask the delegates at Department Convention to raise department dues by \$3.

This means your post dues will need to be at least \$42.50 per member or you will lose money for each renewal or new member. Post officer reports and

forms for dues remittal to national will come out in February.

That means if you're going to increase your post dues, you should do it at your February or March meeting. For the record, the best way to keep dues from increasing from year to year is by getting new members and retaining your current members.

Minnesota has more than 300,000 veterans in the state of Minnesota, so let reach out to our veterans and get them involved in the greatest veteran's service organization in the country. Keep doing great work.

9th District Steve NaSalle



Hello, Roaring 9th District American Legion Family!

Welcome to March 2024, which comes with spring right around the corner. We had a very successful Mid-Winter Conference, which I am pleased to report. Let's keep things moving in the right direction with a successful District Convention on June 8 in East Grand Forks.

Be sure to visit the 9th District Facebook page and read the 9th District newsletter for updates.

Time for post committee updates and preparing for elections. With that in mind, let's all stay ahead of our membership, which is going well in the Roaring 9th, I might add, so keep up the great work.

In addition, this is a good time for planning future events

and fundraising opportunities. Remember, teamwork is still your best key to moving forward into the future, and to success.

Let's continue to be mindful of our members who are homebound or in assisted living facilities. Remember our buddy checks.

A special thank you to all of you who kept my wife and I in your prayers during and after our surgeries. We truly appreciate all the cards, texts, calls and letters. God bless you all! "Without volunteers, we'd be a nation without a soul."

— Rosalynn Carter
Respectfully in Service.

10th District Matthew Berens



Spring greetings, Legion Family, from all of us in the Mighty Tenth District. This warm weather has got me excited for motorcycle riding and Legion fun.

I wanted to give a quick shout to the 10th District Juniors, who hosted their annual Fun Day at Monticello Post 260 on Feb. 17. There is nothing better than seeing youngsters working hard for our veterans and having a great time doing it. Congratulations to Robin Dorf, Rene Suess and the rest of the Auxiliary for organizing such a great event.

And a quick thank you to Zimmerman Post 560 in the 6th District. I had the honor of judging their chili cookoff on the same day, and all 22 chili recipes were delicious.

I want to thank Anoka Post 102 for doing a phenomenal job hosting the 10th District Mid-Winter Conference on Jan. 13. Thanks to Cliff Newman and Karen Orr, too, and to speaker Bob Bardwell, founder of

Operation Welcome Home at Ironwood Springs Ranch in Stewartville.

Who's ready for the Department Appreciation Rally on March 2? I hope everyone has been looking out for that special post that's been going above and beyond for our veterans. I'm excited to hear some great stories this year down at Montgomery Post 79.

On a more personal note, the Mighty Tenth will be having our chili cookoff in Hopkins on March 23 from noon to 4 p.m. We'd love for everyone to stop by. The American Legion Riders will be adding their chili recipes as well.

That's all I've got for this month. I'd like to close by saying let's jump on that 1982 list and get some new post members. What's a 1982 list? Email me at mtberens@yahoo.com to find out!

Veterans Crisis Line
DIAL 988 then **PRESS 1**

Registration is open
Your local Legion post typically will pay the fees to send kids ages 10-12 to camp
Visit legionville.org



The Auxiliary Bulletin

No. 24 Vol. 7

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

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

National President's Tour of Minnesota

National President Lisa Williamson of Fairbanks, Alaska, Unit 57 visits next month.

Location	Meal	Time	Contact
Monday, April 29 Sauk Centre Post 67 cost: \$15	dinner social	6:30 p.m. 5:30 p.m.	320-290-8761, Jessie Hoppe register by April 19
Tuesday, April 30 Redwood Falls Post 38 cost: TBD	dinner social	6:30 p.m. 5:30 p.m.	507-828-7656, Jennette Mertens register by April 19
Wednesday, May 1 Adrian Post 32 cost: f-w donation	lunch social	noon 11:30 p.m.	507-290-0011, Diane Strassburg register by April 22
Lake Crystal Post 294 cost: \$20	dinner social	6 p.m. 5 p.m.	507-726-2155, Barb Spencer register by April 22

National President Lisa Williamson will arrive in Minnesota late Sunday, April 28.

Department President Sharon Cross is looking forward to showing off the Department of Minnesota and all we do and have for our state's veterans. The tour will start in the Twin Cities area with a tour of the Minneapolis VA, Fisher House and the Brain Sciences Center before heading west.

Some of the confirmed stops are Eagle's Healing Nest in Sauk Centre, the new state veterans cemetery in Redwood Falls and bingo time at the Luverne Veterans Home. Stops at local Legions for lunch and dinner are listed above.

President Cross is finalizing the details. The meet and greet events will be posted on the Department of Minnesota's Auxiliary Facebook page and on www.mnala.org by March 1.



Lisa Williamson

Let's show support for President Lisa

There are several events to look forward to in Minnesota's American Legion Family.

American Legion National Commander Daniel Seehafer is coming in April. I had the privilege to hear him speak at the 90th Annual Pilgrimage to Lincoln's Tomb, just a couple weeks ago. He is inspirational and amazing!

You can hear his message by signing up for one of his post visits during his time in Minnesota (see story on Page 1) or by attending Veterans Day on the Hill.

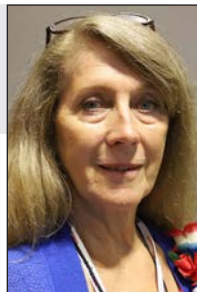
I am so excited to hear him speak at Veterans Day on the Hill at the St. Paul Armory on April 17! Contact your state representatives and state senators. Tell them to meet you there and be sure to join us that day. Let's get them onboard with the Minnesota American Legion Legislative Priorities.

I plan to be arriving with our up-north crew as they are picking up a few of us on the way down from Bemidji.

National President Lisa Williamson will arrive about 10 days later. We will show her some of Minnesota's veteran facilities and give her time to visit with veterans. Monday

President's Column

Sharon Cross



night, I hope many are able to attend dinner at the Sauk Centre American Legion Post 67 meet and greet.

Tuesday evening, we will have dinner at the Redwood Falls Post 38. Let's pack the house! If you live way south, then Wednesday, May 1, lunch will be at the Adrian Post 32 and dinner will be at the Lake Crystal Post 294. There is further information in the Legionnaire and the unit mailing. Hope to see you at one of these stops.

Williamson is a member of Fairbanks, Alaska, Unit 57 and is eligible for membership through her rather, Ray Allington, her adoptive father, Keith LaChance, and through the military service of her son, Kyle, who serves in the Alaska Air National Guard. Williamson also is an American Legion Rider.

In her professional life, Lisa worked for The American Legion Department of Alaska for eight years and has been a licensed realtor for over 20 years.

The National American Legion Auxiliary Mission Training was so informative. It is great to see our male Auxiliary members embracing their new role and listening and learning.

The national commander, national SAL commander

and national president are all embracing the "Be the One" initiative.

Are you aware that over the last decade military suicides have risen. Active-duty military suicides increased over the first three months of 2023 and 90 percent of suicide survivors do not die by suicide later.

"Be the One" to ask the question and listen when a person in crisis speaks, then connect them with help. "Be the One" to save a life.

To find helpful information, visit BetheOne.org. Also, on The American Legion website legion.org. If you are a veteran in crisis, resources are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. You can call 988 and press 1, Text 838255 or visit the VA Crisis Line website at veteranscrisisline.net. To hear the national president's special message and to find links to resources, visit ALAFORVeterans.org. The menu option is "National Officers."

Let's put a spring in someone's step. Contact that veteran or member you have not heard from in a while. How are you? What have you been up to lately? Would you like to have a cup of coffee together?

Don't just wonder why. Ask!

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

PILGRIMAGE TO TOMB OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN



Several people from Minnesota attended the National American Legion Pilgrimage to the Tomb of Abraham Lincoln in Springfield, Ill., on Feb. 11 and 12. From left are SAL Detachment Alternate NECman Casey Lenort, SAL Detachment of Minnesota Commander John Weiss, Auxiliary Department of Minnesota President Sharon Cross, American Legion National Commander Daniel J. Seehafer, SAL Detachment NECman David Vulcan, Auxiliary NECman Jean Walker and SAL National Vice Commander Central Region Robert Bristo.



From left are SAL Detachment Commander John Weiss, Auxiliary NECman Jean Walker, Auxiliary Department President Sharon Cross and SAL National Vice Commander Robert Bristo. They placed a wreath on the tomb during the annual ceremony.

MID-WINTER SMILES



January was a busy month with several districts hosting mid-winter conferences. Pictured from left, at the 6th District Mid-Winter Conference on Jan. 27 at Aitkin Post 86, are Department 1st Vice President Judy Ackerman, 6th District President Patti Gunderson and Department 2nd Vice President Robin Dorf.



At the Sweetheart Rally on Feb. 3.

Department of Corrections

In the January issue of the Auxiliary Bulletin, Diane Strassberg, department representative for the Sioux Falls VAMC, was incorrectly identified. She was pictured with Membership Director Sandy Werzal during the Sioux Falls Gift Shop.

Endorsements

Ackerman endorsed for dept. president

The Schwieger-Kahler Unit 522 in Northrop proudly endorses Judith "Judy" Ackerman for the office of President of the Department of Minnesota for 2024-2025.

Ackerman is a 66-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. She is a third-generation Auxiliary member in a five-generation Auxiliary family (her grandmother to her granddaughters).

Ackerman has held the office of president for Unit 522 for several years. Our members appreciate her leadership, her mentoring and the way she educates us on the programs of the American Legion Auxiliary. She has held the following

offices and chairmanships at the 2nd District level: President, 1st and 2nd Vice President, Executive Committee for two years, Membership, Girl State, Junior Activities, Finance, Secretary/Treasurer, Americanism, Leadership, Legislative, Poppy and many 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, Legislative and is currently the Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Chairman.

She has been employed as a medical coding specialist since 1992. She currently works for



Judy Ackerman

Regions Hospital as a Park Nicollet Home Health/Hospice coding team lead since 2015. She holds six credentials from three coding organizations.

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

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

The members of the Schwieger-Kahler American Legion Auxiliary know that Judy will represent the members of Minnesota well as the President of the Department of Minnesota.

The 5 W's of community service

By Wanda Seidler
Community Service Chairman

Who do we serve? Veterans, active-duty military and their families, senior citizens, children and youth, families, everyone in our communities being inclusive to all.

What can we do? Meet basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter. Social needs such as phone calls, visits and cards. Other needs such as home and lawn care. Aesthetic needs such as beautification of community parks. Partner with other community organizations, especially those that support veterans. Promote other ALA programs. Wear ALA branding and smile!

When do we do this? Every day is a great day for community service! March is designated as ALA Community Service Month. The 2023-2024 National Community Service Program Engagement Plan highlights the following specific days — 9/11 National Day of Service, Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service, and American Legion Family Day.

American Legion Family Day was established in 2022 to be observed annually on the last Saturday of April. Posts are encouraged to open their

doors to members of their community for the day to recognize and celebrate the accomplishments of Legionnaires, Sons of the American Legion members, Legion Riders and American Legion Auxiliary.

Use this day to bring awareness to The American Legion's "Be the One" initiative to improve access and reduce the stigma around mental health services. Partner with your American Legion Family when planning and promoting your event. Be sure to make it a family event by providing activities for all age groups. Have a variety of informational brochures on hand, and membership applications available with members ready and willing to answer questions.

Where do we serve? Our communities, each with unique opportunities and challenges.

Why do we serve? "To strengthen our local communities with uniquely identified opportunities of service by providing volunteer leadership, encouraging the stewardship of its patriotic citizens, acknowledging our country's military history, and supporting the families that have sacrificed for our freedom."

It's who we are.



On Sunday, Jan. 22, Warroad American Legion Auxiliary Unit 25 presented a plaque to Carol Parker honoring her 86 years as an Auxiliary member. The plaque, presented with sincere admiration and appreciation for her many years of service to the Auxiliary, was presented to Parker during her 99th birthday party at the Warroad Senior Living Center.



Thirteen-year-old Jonathan Werner started a Christmas gift project for children in foster care. He not only raised the money in his Boy Scout Troop but shopped, wrapped and delivered presents so they had gifts on Christmas Day. His project, now in its third year, includes four counties and over 300 children in Minnesota. He also is proud of the opportunities that he has had to be involved with veterans at the St. Cloud VA Medical Center. He would visit his great grandfather and play the violin for the residents and bring small care packages for them. He would sit with them and talk about their history and military experience. He hopes to serve his country in the Armed Forces.

Dancing into the Hearts of Veterans
Sharon Cross, President
Dept of MN 2023-2024

TESTIMONIAL DINNER HONORING

American Legion Auxiliary
Department Of Minnesota
President
SHARON CROSS

April 27, 2024

Melrose American Legion Post 101
265 County Road 173 SE, Melrose, MN

Social Hour: 5pm

Dinner: 6pm

(Menu: Chicken, Ham, Mashed Potatoes, Carrots, Gravy, Dressing, Cole Slaw, Dessert)

Program Following

Cost: \$30

R.S.V.P. By April 21, 2024

Local Lodgings:

American Lodge and Suites: 1230 Timberline Drive, Sauk Centre, MN 320-352-2800
American Best Value Inn: 322 12 Street, Sauk Centre, MN 320-351-7256
Palmer House: 500 Sinclair Lewis Avenue, Sauk Centre, MN 320-351-9100
Super 8: 231 County Road 175, Melrose, MN 320-256-4261

Name: _____ Unit _____ Post _____

Number of people: _____

Total amount of check: \$ _____

Address check as: (American Legion Auxiliary)

Mail Registration to: American Legion Auxiliary, Dept. President Testimonial, Attn.: Judy Hennen, P.O. Box 152, Melrose, MN 56352

There are many April youth options

By Brandi Christensen
Children & Youth Chairman

The Children & Youth Program is a great way the American Legion Family can support children and youth in our communities, especially those of veterans and active military.

With a Minnesota National Guard Unit being deployed recently, how is the American Legion Family stepping up for those families affected?

I know it can be hard to identify those in your communities that are military families. Word of mouth can be the most effective way. You could set up a family day for them or just a Kids Day event so spouses can have a day for themselves.

April is the month of the military child. According to the Department of Defense there are more than 1.6 million military children in the nation. April is the month dedicated to them and was established in 1986.

Even though every day we should celebrate their service and sacrifice, we can show our support by just being there for families in any way we can. It does not even have to be

an event. Just let the families know that the American Legion Family is there to lend support, even if it is just friendship.

April 15 is Purple Up Day for military kids! The reason for the color purple is it is a combination of all the colors associated with the branches of the military. Air Force is blue, Army is green, Navy is blue, Marine is red, and Coast Guard is blue. All together, that makes purple! We can show our support by promoting everyone in our communities including businesses to wear purple on this day.

With Easter coming up, your American Legion Family could start planning an Easter egg hunt for children in your community. Or you could plan other spring events for kids.

Other ways to support the Children & Youth Program without planning events is to donate to Children & Youth programs. These include scholarship programs: Child Welfare Foundation, Legionville, Baseball, Fastpitch Softball, Boys State, Girls State and Temporary Financial Assistance.

I know I have written about this before and some have

heard this before, but I really feel this is a program we all should be proud of as the Minnesota American Legion Family — Legionville! And once again here is a little bit about it.

The original camp opened in 1956 and was 560 acres with 1,500 feet of shoreline along North Long Lake near Brainerd. Since the camp opened over 90,000 youth campers have graduated from the school crossing guard program. And there has never been an accident at a school crossing that has had a graduate of the program present. With the changing of times and some schools not using students as crossing guards they have also included other youth safety programs. They still teach crossing guards but also offer water safety, CPR, bus safety and first aid.

In the future they hope to offer four-wheeler safety and snowmobile safety. The 2024 camp will have six weekly sessions with a maximum capacity of 154 campers ages 9-13. The cost per camper is \$500. The 2024 sessions will be: June 16-21 and 23-28 July 7-12, 14-19, 21-26, and 28-Aug 2.

"Cruising the Sea for Members!"

DISTRICT	# of Units	Goal	Period Gain	Membership To Date	Percent of Goal	Membership Last Year	Difference from Last Year
One	47	3,762	34	2,897	77.01%	3073	176
Two	71	3,890	20	2,972	76.40%	3053	81
Three	46	3,882	23	2,999	77.25%	3109	110
Four	7	579	15	403	69.60%	409	6
Five	7	522	5	246	47.13%	387	141
Six	61	5,031	62	3,932	78.16%	4110	178
Seven	53	2,955	26	2,231	75.50%	2362	131
Eight	19	1,185	19	952	80.34%	998	46
Nine	46	3,348	26	2,494	74.49%	2695	201
Ten	42	3,812	40	2,815	73.85%	2871	56
1982 Dept	1	404	10	253	62.62%	218	-35
District Totals:	400	29,370	280	22,194	75.57%	23285	1,091

Group 1 (Even)	200	14,497	156	11,074	76.39%	11,441	367
Robin Dorf							
Group 2 (Odd)	199	14,469	114	10,867	75.11%	11,626	759
Judy Ackerman							

RANKINGS

1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th
80.34%	78.16%	77.25%	77.01%	76.40%	75.50%	74.49%	73.85%	69.60%	47.13%
District #8	District #6	District #3	District #1	District #2	District #7	District #9	District #10	District #4	District #5





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